










“Tourist attitudes towards SDGS and sustainable development: Evidence from Armenia”

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TOURIST ATTITUDES TOWARDS SDGs AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM ARMENIA

Abstract

The paper aims to explore tourists' perceptions and behaviors regarding sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Armenia. An online survey method was employed to collect data from 385 domestic tourists in Armenia from July to October 2024, enabling efficient and cost-effective access to a diverse respondent group. The sample size was determined based on a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, ensuring statistical reliability. The online format allowed for a broader reach and anonymity, making it suitable for exploring tourists' knowledge of the SDGs, comprehension of sustainable tourism, and willingness to embrace sustainable behaviors.

Interestingly, despite only 46% of respondents being explicitly familiar with the SDGs, a significant proportion (64%) demonstrated knowledge of sustainable development, 62% understood sustainable tourism, and 64% believed tourism could positively impact sustainable development. Statistical analysis, specifically the Pearson Chi-Square test, revealed a strong correlation between knowledge of sustainable development and awareness of sustainable tourism, and tourists' willingness to modify their travel habits and invest in eco-friendly options. Additionally, a sense of environmental responsibility was found to significantly influence the adoption of sustainable practices. Moreover, prioritizing sustainable tourism when selecting destinations strongly correlated with support for sustainable tourism initiatives.

While many tourists acknowledged the importance of sustainable tourism, challenges such as limited information and higher costs hindered the adoption of eco-friendly behaviors. To promote sustainable tourism and contribute to achieving the SDGs, the study emphasizes the need for intensified awareness campaigns, accessible sustainable options, and collaborative efforts between the tourism industry, government, and tourists.

Keywords

SDGs, sustainable, tourism, perceptions, attitude, survey, Pearson Chi-Square, Republic of Armenia

JEL Classification

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INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was officially endorsed during the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit held on September 25, 2015. This global framework introduces 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets, aiming to expand upon the progress made by the Millennium Development Goals and address the gaps left behind. The goals are interconnected and indivisible, and strive to maintain a balanced focus on the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainable development (UN, n.d.).

Tourism is a growing sector of the world economy. In 2023, the Travel and Tourism industry accounted for 9.1% of the global Gross Domestic Product, marking a 23.2% rise compared to 2022 and coming within 4.1% of the pre-pandemic levels seen in 2019. The sector employed around 330 million people that year. Domestic

tourism spending experienced an 18.1% increase, exceeding figures from 2019, while international tourism expenditure grew by 33.1%. However, despite this growth, it still lagged 14.4% behind the 2019 benchmark. (WTTC, 2024).

Tourism has several positive and negative impacts, and sustainable tourism was adopted to address the negative ones. Tourism can contribute to social, economic, cultural, and environmental development of destinations (Tovmasyan, 2019; Mkrtchyan et al., 2023; Matijová et al., 2023). Tourism can play a vital role in boosting regional development by generating employment opportunities, enhancing regional GDP, and helping to reduce poverty and outmigration levels (Tovmasyan & Gevorgyan, 2024; Tovmasyan, 2021).

As noted in SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), “A successful sustainable development agenda requires ... inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the center”. To achieve this, many scholars study issues addressing tourism’s connection to the SDGs (Bramwell et al., 2016; Schaltegger et al., 2016).

As sustainable tourism is a new concept, it is necessary to find out tourists’ perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism practices. Do they feel responsible for promoting sustainability? Are they willing to pay more for sustainable options? What do they do to promote sustainable practices?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism plays a significant role in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Stojanovska-Stefanova et al., 2019; Spenceley & Rylance, 2019; Buhalis et al., 2023). Sustainable tourism contributes to community well-being by empowering local and indigenous populations (Lara-Morales & Clarke, 2024; Ardani et al., 2025). As a multifaceted sector, tourism impacts the economy, environment, and society, making it intrinsically linked to the three pillars of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is a cornerstone of contemporary global policy, and tourism, as an economic driver, must be aligned with its principles. The development of sustainable tourism is closely tied to competitiveness and innovation in business operations (Pereira-Moliner et al., 2021). Furthermore, tourism’s complexity—characterized by its diversity, integrative nature, and need for coordinated planning—adds to its strategic importance in sustainable development (Streimikiene et al., 2020).

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Tourism Organization (WTO), sustainable tourism is defined as: “*Tourism that takes full account of its cur-*

rent and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities” (UNEP & WTO, 2005, p. 12).

Scholars from prominent tourism destinations worldwide have actively addressed regional challenges, contributing to both theoretical knowledge and practical solutions (Qian et al., 2018; Zapalska & McCutcheon, 2024; Novianti et al., 2025; Puciato et al., 2023). Tourism, reflecting intertwined economic, societal, and cultural phenomena, necessitates a holistic and interdisciplinary research approach.

Key efforts in sustainable tourism include meeting the needs of tourists, protecting host regions to secure future opportunities, and balancing the economic, social, and aesthetic needs of consumers with resource efficiency (UNEP & WTO, 2005). Education also plays a vital role; sustainable tourism is often regarded as the ethical foundation of tourism education. Academic institutions must ensure graduates are equipped to be responsible stewards of sustainable tourism (Dredge et al., 2013).

A review of the literature reveals several core components of sustainable tourism development: job creation in tourist destinations, environmental preservation, climate change mitigation, pollu-

tion and waste reduction, and promotion of green consumption (UNEP, 2004; UNWTO, 2004, 2013, 2017; Hoang et al., 2024).

Stakeholder collaboration fosters innovation and integrated transformation in production systems, products, and knowledge, leading to more sustainable practices (Lopes et al., 2017; Lima et al., 2024). Employees, suppliers, and industry peers play essential roles in developing sustainable solutions (Scandellius & Cohen, 2016). Moreover, a consumer-oriented approach enhances competitiveness, drives business growth, and aligns tourism practices with sustainability (Luekveerawattana, 2018).

Partnerships between tourism enterprises and local communities support regional development and broader progress toward the SDGs (Movono & Hughes, 2020). Effective collaboration among governments, industries, and communities is crucial to shaping a more sustainable future for tourism (Scheyvens & Cheer, 2021). Birendra et al. (2021) further highlight the roles of academia, government, the private sector, and public-private organizations in supporting tourism's contribution to the SDGs.

In regions heavily reliant on tourism, environmental and socio-cultural concerns from unsustainable practices have spurred efforts to promote sustainable tourism (Neto, 2003). Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles—particularly their environmental dimension—are increasingly relevant in measuring firm-level sustainability (Kubalek et al., 2024).

Hunter (1997) presents sustainable tourism as an adaptive paradigm, emphasizing flexible, context-specific strategies. Băndoi et al. (2020) note positive correlations between tourism growth, quality of life improvements, and sustainability performance. Post-industrial tourism has emerged as a catalyst for sustainable development, offering economic and social benefits (e.g., job creation, SME support, cultural engagement) and environmental gains (e.g., green spaces, heritage revitalization) (Kuzior et al., 2021).

To monitor tourism's sustainability, Dwyer (2022) introduced a "well-being lens" using indicators that track changes in residents' quality of life, aligning tourism development with SDG objectives.

Several researchers have explored the integration of SDGs into national tourism strategies, accounting for varying tourism capacities and priorities (Seraphin & Gowreesunkar, 2021). Mason et al. (2023) highlight the need to balance quantitative and qualitative outcomes in SDG-related tourism strategies. Pimentel de Oliveira and Pitarch-Garrido (2023) developed a composite indicator tailored to regional needs, incorporating residents' views and assessing sustainability across social, economic, environmental, and political dimensions.

Different studies explore how various types of tourism contribute to SDGs, like cultural tourism (Ottaviani et al., 2024, Tovmasyan et al., 2025), urban tourism (Day & Armadita, 2024), event tourism (Jung et al., 2024), agritourism (Ait-Yahia Ghidouche et al., 2021), gastronomy tourism (Rodrigues et al., 2022), wine tourism (Martínez-Falcó et al., 2023), rural tourism (López-Sanz et al., 2021; Marzo-Navarro et al., 2020), ecotourism (Spenceley & Rylance, 2021), community-based tourism (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021), etc.

Tourism has significantly contributed to sustainable development in various countries by promoting alternative tourism models such as ecotourism, community-based tourism, pro-poor tourism, slow tourism, green tourism, and heritage tourism. These models focus on improving livelihoods, fostering local economic growth, and ensuring environmental conservation (Richardson, 2021).

Emerging technologies also play a role. Go and Kang (2023) demonstrate that metaverse tourism experiences can extend tourism's reach and provide alternative, sustainable options that align with the SDGs. Licensed, profitable digital tourism products may diversify tourism offerings and contribute to destination sustainability.

While tourism can lead to environmental and socio-cultural challenges, sustainable practices like ecotourism mitigate these impacts and ensure that economic benefits contribute to conservation and responsible resource management (Neto, 2003).

Finally, tourist behavior is pivotal. Consumption of locally grown foods (Wani et al., 2024) and

shifts toward sustainable consumption habits (Dolnicar, 2023; Li et al., 2024; Assaker, 2024) further reinforce tourism's alignment with the SDGs.

Tourists are increasingly willing to pay more for sustainable destinations (Lopez-Sanchez & Pulido-Fernández, 2017; Jurado-Rivas & Sánchez-Rivero, 2019; Puciato et al., 2023). According to Grilli et al. (2021); this willingness is influenced by individual pro-environmental attitudes and beliefs. Breiby et al. (2020), through interviews with both tourists and residents, identified four key dimensions of sustainable experiences: interaction with the natural environment, interaction with the cultural environment, insights and perspectives, and lake-based activities. Similarly, Assaker (2024) found that sustainability concerns, social norms, frugality, and awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) positively influence tourists' sustainable behavior when examined collectively.

Xiong et al. (2023) demonstrated that environmental awe and concern mediate the relationship between environmental awareness and environmentally responsible behavior among tourists. Buffa (2015) highlighted that young tourists are particularly sensitive to sustainability issues, which shape their motivations, decision-making processes, and behaviors. In line with this, several studies emphasize the role of environmental awareness and information levels as predictors of tourists' attitudes and purchasing behavior (Streimikiene et al., 2023; Holotová et al., 2020). Tourists with higher awareness are more likely to engage in green practices within the hotel and tourism sectors (Mazhenova et al., 2016).

Ingaldi and Dziuba (2022), surveying 2,500 residents from the Visegrád Group countries, revealed a general understanding of sustainability and awareness of tourism's impact on local communities and the environment. However, many tourists still prioritize personal expectations and rights over sustainability considerations. Rajani and Boluk (2022) identify limited awareness and insufficient understanding of the SDGs as major barriers to their effective imple-

mentation in tourism. León and Araña (2020) suggest that sustainable tourist behaviors can be fostered through integrated communication strategies combining personal and impersonal messaging. Similarly, Budeanu (2007) underlines the importance of informative and awareness-raising tools to promote responsible tourist behavior.

Thus, tourism may contribute to SDGs by promoting economic growth and job creation, enhancing sustainable cities and communities, and encouraging responsible consumption and production. It supports climate action through eco-friendly practices and conservation efforts. Tourism aids in protecting marine and terrestrial ecosystems while fostering global partnerships. Additionally, it empowers women by providing employment opportunities. Overall, tourism acts as a powerful catalyst for sustainable development and global progress.

Thus, the study of the literature review shows the main role of tourism in sustainable development and tourists' role in achieving sustainability. In summary, the literature emphasizes the rising importance of sustainability in tourism, both from the supply and demand perspectives. While tourism enterprises increasingly adopt sustainable practices to enhance competitiveness and align with the SDGs, tourists also show a growing willingness to support eco-friendly destinations and engage in responsible behaviors. However, behavioral gaps persist due to limited awareness and understanding, highlighting the need for more effective communication, education, and stakeholder engagement to bridge intentions and actions in sustainable tourism development. There are no studies exploring tourists' behavior toward achieving sustainability and implementing SDGs in Armenia.

Thus, this paper aims to explore tourists' perceptions and behaviors regarding sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Armenia. The following hypotheses were formulated, which were tested with Pearson Chi-Square:

1. If people know about sustainable development, they are more likely to change their travel habits to support sustainable tourism

and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Knowledge of sustainable development is not associated with a greater likelihood of changing travel habits to support sustainable tourism or paying more for eco-friendly accommodations.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Knowledge of sustainable development is associated with a greater likelihood of changing travel habits to support sustainable tourism and paying more for eco-friendly accommodations.

2. If people know about sustainable tourism, they are more likely to increase their sustainable practices and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Knowledge of sustainable tourism does not influence people's likelihood to increase sustainable practices or pay more for eco-friendly accommodations.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Knowledge of sustainable tourism influences people's likelihood to increase sustainable practices and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations.

3. If people think that tourism can contribute to sustainable development, they are willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

Null Hypothesis (H0): The belief that tourism contributes to sustainable development is not associated with a willingness to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): The belief that tourism contributes to sustainable development is associated with a willingness to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

4. If people feel responsible for minimizing their environmental impact while traveling, they are more likely to change their travel habits to support sustainable tourism, in-

crease their sustainable practices, and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

Null Hypothesis (H0): Feeling responsible for minimizing environmental impact while traveling does not increase the likelihood of changing travel habits to support sustainable tourism, increasing sustainable practices, or paying more for eco-friendly accommodations.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Feeling responsible for minimizing environmental impact while traveling increases the likelihood of changing travel habits to support sustainable tourism, increasing sustainable practices, and paying more for eco-friendly accommodations.

5. If sustainable tourism practices are important to tourists when choosing a travel destination, they are more likely to change their travel habits to support sustainable tourism and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

Null Hypothesis (H0): The importance of sustainable tourism practices in choosing a travel destination does not affect the likelihood of changing travel habits to support sustainable tourism or paying more for eco-friendly accommodations.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): The importance of sustainable tourism practices in choosing a travel destination affects the likelihood of changing travel habits to support sustainable tourism and paying more for eco-friendly accommodations.

2. METHODS

To achieve the aim of the study, a questionnaire was developed that incorporated open, closed, and semi-closed questions. The questionnaire included several questions which may be classified into the following groups: The demographics of the participants; Knowledge about SDGs and sustainable development; Sustainable practices by tourists; Responsibility and willingness

to change the travel habits; Importance of factors when choosing a travel destination; Barriers to sustainable tourism and actions for supporting the SDGs. Based on this questionnaire, a survey was conducted in Armenia, with the population size reflecting the number of domestic tourists (of any type of tourism) in the country in 2023, which was 2.3 million (ARMSTAT, 2024). Using a sample size calculator (Calculator.net), the sample size was determined with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, resulting in a required sample of 385 participants. The survey method was selected as the primary data collection tool due to its effectiveness in gathering standardized information from a large number of participants in a cost-effective and time-efficient manner. Additionally, the survey method allows for the inclusion of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, enabling a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative insights. The questionnaire was distributed online, and data collection took place over four months, from July to October 2024. Online surveys enable access to a geographically diverse sample of tourists, allowing data collection beyond a single location. The main channels for distributing the questionnaire were social media and tourism platforms. A total of 410 responses were received, with 385 valid responses. Online surveys also provide anonymity, which can lead to more honest responses when discussing personal values, behaviors. After collecting the data, a database was compiled in MS Excel, and the results were analyzed using MS Excel and SPSS software. The data were further examined through Pearson Chi-Square statistical tests (p-value less than 0.05) to identify any significant relationships between the variables. Phi coefficient was used to measure the strength of the association, specifically designed for 2x2 contingency tables (Phi = 0 means no association, Phi ≈ 0.1 means weak association, Phi ≈ 0.3 means moderate association, Phi ≈ 0.5 means strong association, and Phi > 0.5 means very strong association).

The demographic view of the survey is as follows: 41.6% of respondents were aged between 19 and 30 years, 28.6% were between 31 and 45 years, 83.6% were female, and 80.3% held higher education degrees. Additionally, the majority of participants had an income level ranging from 100,000 AMD to 100,001-200,000 AMD (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic view of survey participants

Questions	Frequency	Percent
Your age		
Up to 18 years old	44	11.4
19-30 years old	160	41.6
31-45 years old	110	28.6
46-60 years old	59	15.3
61-75 years old	12	3.1
76 and older	–	–
Gender		
Male	63	16.4
Female	322	83.6
Education		
Student	39	10.1
Secondary professional education	35	9.1
Higher education	309	80.3
Postgraduate	2	0.6
Monthly income level		
Up to 100,000 AMD	110	28.6
100,001–200,000 AMD	113	29.4
200,001–300,000 AMD	70	18.2
300,001–400,000 AMD	29	7.5
400,001 and above	63	16.4

3. RESULTS

The survey results show that 44.9% of participants travel 2-5 times a year (domestically and internationally), and 38.2% travel once a year. 46% are familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations, while 38.4% are unfamiliar. Participants who were familiar with SDGs have also mentioned the main source of their knowledge: 51.4% have learned about SDGs from educational institutions, 40.7% from social media, and 37.3% from other media sources.

Also, it was interesting that 63.6% knew what sustainable development is and 62.3% knew what sustainable tourism is, while 23.6% and 23.9% were not sure, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Knowledge about SDGs and sustainable development

Questions	Frequency	Percent
How often do you travel in a year (domestically and internationally)?		
Once a year	147	38.2
2-5 times	173	44.9
6-10 times	38	9.9
More than 11 times	27	7.0

Table 2 (cont.). Knowledge about SDGs and sustainable development

Questions	Frequency	Percent
Are you familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations?		
Yes	177	46.0
No	148	38.4
I am not sure	60	15.6
If yes, how did you learn about the SDGs? (participants could choose several options)?		
Educational Institutions	91	51.4
Media (TV, Radio, Newspapers)	66	37.3
Social media	72	40.7
Work/Professional Training	66	37.2
Other (please specify)	30	16.9
Do you know what sustainable development is?		
Yes	245	63.6
No	49	12.7
I am not sure	91	23.6
Do you know what sustainable tourism is?		
Yes	240	62.3
No	53	13.8
I am not sure	92	23.9

Table 3 shows that 63.9% think that tourism can contribute to sustainable development, and only 0.8% strongly disagree with this. 76.9% think that tourism may promote cultural preservation, 76.1% think that tourism may promote economic growth and job creation, and 71.7% think that tourism may contribute to community development.

81.8% are mostly concerned about pollution when traveling, and 51.7% about waste management issues. 71.7% are concerned with cultural preservation issues, and 52.2% with local community well-being issues when traveling.

The main sustainable practices that participants followed during traveling were: supporting local businesses (33.2%), reducing plastic use (31.7%), using public or eco-transportation (28.6%), staying in eco-friendly accommodations (21.03%), while 19.5% did nothing.

Table 3. Sustainable practices by tourists

Questions	Frequency	Percent
Do you think tourism can contribute to sustainable development?		
Strongly Disagree	3	0.8
Disagree	12	3.1
Neutral	60	15.6
Agree	246	63.9
Strongly Agree	64	16.6

Questions	Frequency	Percent
Which of the following aspects do you believe tourism can impact positively? (Participants could choose several options)		
Economic growth and job creation	293	76.1
Environmental protection	150	38.9
Cultural preservation	296	76.9
Community development	276	71.7
Infrastructure improvement	209	54.3
I do not know	3	0.8
Other	3	0.8
Which environmental issues are you most concerned about when you travel? (Participants could choose several options)		
Pollution (air, water, noise)	315	81.8
Wildlife conservation	150	38.9
Deforestation	162	42.1
Climate change	99	25.7
Over-tourism	88	22.9
Waste management	199	51.7
Nothing	10	2.6
Other	3	0.8
What cultural or social issues are you most concerned about when you travel? (Participants could choose several options)		
Cultural preservation	276	71.7
Human rights	162	42.1
Local community well-being	201	52.2
Fair labor practices	90	23.4
Gender equality	59	15.3
Nothing	16	4.2
Other	3	0.8
How often do you consider sustainability when choosing a travel destination?		
Never	20	5.2
Rarely	60	15.6
Sometimes	105	27.3
Often	127	33.0
Always	73	19.0
What sustainable practices do you follow when traveling? (Participants could choose several options)		
Staying in eco-friendly accommodations	81	21.03
Supporting local businesses	128	33.2
Using public or eco-friendly transportation	110	28.6
Reducing plastic use	122	31.7
Participating in conservation activities	59	15.3
Nothing	75	19.5
Other (please specify)	7	1.8

51.7% feel very responsible for minimizing their environmental impact while traveling, while only 35.6% are definitely willing to change their travel habits to support sustainable tourism, and only 23.6% are definitely willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities (Table 4).

The average score of responsibility for minimizing the environmental impact was 4.15, the average score of willingness to change travel habits to support sustainable tourism was 3.83, and the average score of willingness to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations was 3.50.

Table 4. Responsibility and willingness to change travel habits

Questions	Frequency	Percent
How responsible do you feel for minimizing your environmental impact while traveling? (Rate from 0 to 5, with 0 being not responsible at all and 5 being very responsible)		
1 – Not responsible at all	15	3.9
2 – Not responsible	17	4.4
3 – Neutral	62	16.1
4 – Responsible	92	23.9
5 – Very responsible	199	51.7
Would you be willing to change your travel habits to support sustainable tourism? (Rate from 0-5, with 0 being not willing at all, and 5 being definitely willing)		
1 – Not willing at all	19	4.9
2 – Not willing	30	7.8
3 – Neutral	86	22.3
4 – Willing	113	29.4
5 – Definitely willing	137	35.6
Would you be willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities? (Evaluate with 1-5, with 1 being not willing at all, and 5 being definitely willing)		
1 – Not willing at all	30	7.8
2 – Not willing	32	8.3
3 – Neutral	128	33.2
4 – Willing	104	27.0
5 – Definitely willing	91	23.6

Participants have also evaluated the importance of some factors when choosing a travel destination (Table 5). Natural beauty and cultural heritage are the main factors that are very important for tourists when choosing a destination. Only 15.1% eval-

Table 5. Importance of factors when choosing a travel destination

Factors	1 – Not important at all (% of answers)	2 – Not important (% of answers)	3 – Of medium importance (% of answers)	4 – Important (% of answers)	5 – Very important (% of answers)	Average score
Natural beauty	9.4	10.6	5.5	29.4	45.2	3.90
Cultural heritage	9.6	9.9	7.5	33.5	39.5	3.83
Adventure activities	9.4	25.2	27.0	23.4	15.1	3.10
Sustainable tourism practices	8.1	22.6	24.2	30.1	15.1	3.22
Cost	5.5	18.2	11.4	39.2	25.7	3.62
Accessibility	6.2	18.7	7.0	35.6	32.5	3.69

uated sustainable tourism practices as very important, and for 30.1% it was an important factor; the average importance score was 3.22 on a 1-5 scale.

49.6% do not know if their travel choices can make a difference in achieving the SDGs, while 47.5% think positively.

Tourists mainly think that their travel habits can impact the following SDGs: sustainable cities and communities (43.9%), decent work and economic growth (38.9%), clean water and sanitation (35.3%), quality education (31.4%), no poverty (31.9%), good health and well-being (28.6%), partnerships for the goals (26.2%) and peace, justice, and strong institutions (25.2%).

The biggest barriers to sustainable tourism, they consider lack of information (58.7%), higher costs (48.8%), lack of consciousness (47.5%), and lack of interest (38.7%) (Table 6).

The factors that will encourage them to adopt more sustainable travel practices are: financial incentives and discounts (65.9%), more information and education on the topic (46.8%), easier access to sustainable options (44.7%), and positive experiences from others (37.9%).

Participants have mentioned the actions that should be taken in the tourism industry to better support the SDGs: provide more education and awareness programs (54.02%), increase promotion of sustainable tourism options (52.5%), and support local communities and businesses (44.7%).

Also, it is important that 71.4% plan to increase their sustainable travel practices in the future.

Table 6. Barriers to sustainable tourism and actions for supporting the SDGs

Questions	Frequency	Percent
Do you believe your travel choices can make a difference in achieving the SDGs?		
Yes	183	47.5
No	11	2.9
I do not know	191	49.6
Which SDGs do you think your travel habits could impact the most? (Select up to five)		
No Poverty	123	31.9
Zero Hunger	57	14.8
Good Health and Well-being	110	28.6
Quality Education	121	31.4
Gender Equality	40	10.4
Clean Water and Sanitation	136	35.3
Affordable and Clean Energy	99	25.7
Decent Work and Economic Growth	150	38.9
Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	92	23.9
Reduced Inequalities	52	13.5
Sustainable Cities and Communities	169	43.9
Responsible Consumption and Production	92	23.9
Climate Action	54	14.02
Life Below Water	23	5.9
Life on Land	42	10.9
Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	97	25.2
Partnerships for the Goals	101	26.2
What do you see as the biggest barriers to sustainable tourism? (Participants could choose several options)		
Lack of information	226	58.7
Lack of interest	149	38.7
Lack of consciousness	183	47.5
Higher costs	188	48.8
Inconvenience	83	21.6
Limited availability of sustainable options	121	31.4
I do not know	15	3.9
Other (please specify)	3	0.8
What would encourage you to adopt more sustainable travel practices? (Participants could choose several options)		
More information and education on the topic	180	46.8
Financial incentives or discounts	254	65.9
Easier access to sustainable options	172	44.7
Positive experiences from others	146	37.9
Stronger regulations and policies	90	23.4
I do not know	8	2.1
Other (please specify)	2	0.5
What actions should be taken in the tourism industry to better support the SDGs? (Participants could choose several options)		
Increase promotion of sustainable tourism options	202	52.5
Implement stricter environmental regulations	154	40

Questions	Frequency	Percent
Offer more eco-friendly travel packages	169	43.9
Support local communities and businesses	172	44.7
Provide more education and awareness programs	208	54.02
I do not know	20	5.2
Other (please specify)	5	1.3
Do you plan to increase your sustainable travel practices in the future?		
Yes	275	71.4
No	8	2.1
Not sure	102	26.5

To assess the significance of certain factors and test the hypotheses, Pearson Chi-square testing was performed. The results revealed significant relationships between several factors. The people who know what sustainable development is, are more willing to change their travel habits and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

People who think that tourism can contribute to sustainable development are willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

People who feel very responsible for minimizing their environmental impact while traveling are more willing to change their travel habits to support sustainable tourism and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations, as well as plan to increase their sustainable travel practices in the future.

People who consider sustainable tourism practices important when choosing a travel destination are more willing to change their travel habits to support sustainable tourism and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities.

Phi coefficient measures the strength of the association between the two variables. In some cases, the association is moderate, and the association is very strong between the variables of feeling responsible for minimizing the environmental impact and willingness to change travel habits and pay more (Table 7).

Based on the analysis, the null hypotheses may be rejected, indicating that:

- Tourists' knowledge of sustainable development is linked to a greater likelihood of ad-

Table 7. Pearson Chi-square analysis

Factors	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Significance level	Phi Coefficient
Do you know what sustainable development is? * Would you be willing to change your travel habits to support sustainable tourism?	29.607	0.000	0.277
Do you know what sustainable development is? * Would you be willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities?	22.737	0.004	0.243
Do you know what sustainable tourism is? * Would you be willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities?	28.402	0.000	0.272
Do you know what sustainable tourism is? * Do you plan to increase your sustainable travel practices in the future?	23.980	0.000	0.250
Do you think tourism can contribute to sustainable development? * Would you be willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities?	34.075	0.005	0.297
How responsible do you feel for minimizing your environmental impact while traveling? * Would you be willing to change your travel habits to support sustainable tourism?	260.081	0.000	0.822
How responsible do you feel for minimizing your environmental impact while traveling? * Would you be willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities?	128.707	0.000	0.578
How responsible do you feel for minimizing your environmental impact while traveling? * Do you plan to increase your sustainable travel practices in the future?	59.948	0.000	0.395
The importance of sustainable tourism practices when choosing a travel destination * Would you be willing to change your travel habits to support sustainable tourism?	99.324	0.000	0.508
The importance of sustainable tourism practices when choosing a travel destination * Would you be willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities?	42.190	0.000	0.331

justing their travel habits to support sustainable tourism and paying more for eco-friendly accommodations.

- Awareness of sustainable tourism positively influences individuals' likelihood to adopt more sustainable practices and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations.
- Belief that tourism contributes to sustainable development is associated with a greater willingness to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities among tourists.
- A sense of responsibility for minimizing environmental impact while traveling enhances the likelihood of tourists modifying their travel habits to support sustainable tourism, increasing sustainable practices, and choosing eco-friendly accommodations.
- The importance placed on sustainable tourism practices when selecting a travel destination affects tourists' propensity to change travel habits to support sustainable tourism and to spend more on eco-friendly accommodations.

4. DISCUSSION

The analysis provides several significant findings for discussion (also revealed by other studies mentioned in brackets).

Survey results reveal that a considerable portion of respondents (38.4%) are still unfamiliar with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while only 46% reported being familiar with them. The primary sources of SDG information, according to respondents, are educational institutions and social media.

Interestingly, although just 46% of respondents were familiar with the SDGs, about 64% had knowledge of sustainable development, 62% understood sustainable tourism, and 64% believed tourism could contribute to sustainable development, which is encouraging.

Over 70% of respondents view tourism as a potential driver for cultural preservation, economic growth, job creation, and community development (similar findings by Mkrtychyan et al., 2023; Tovmasyan & Gevorgyan, 2024; Lara-Morales & Clarke, 2024; Kuzior et al., 2021).

Most participants expressed concerns about pollution, waste management, and cultural preservation when traveling.

While 19.5% reported not following any sustainable practices while traveling, about 30% mentioned supporting local businesses (Wani et al., 2024), reducing plastic use, and opting for public or eco-friendly transportation.

One notable finding was that although 52% felt a strong responsibility to minimize their environmental impact while traveling, only 36% were definitely willing to change their travel habits to support sustainable tourism (Dolnicar, 2023), and around 24% were willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations or activities (Lopez-Sanchez & Pulido-Fernández, 2017; Jurado-Rivas & Sánchez-Rivero, 2019; Ingaldi & Dziuba, 2022).

Additionally, only 47.5% believe their travel choices can make a meaningful impact in achieving the SDGs, while about 50% were uncertain.

Tourists believe their travel habits can impact specific SDGs, including Sustainable Cities and Communities, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Clean Water and Sanitation, Quality Education, and No Poverty.

Respondents identified the main barriers to sustainable tourism as lack of information, higher costs, and limited awareness or interest (Rajani & Boluk, 2022). However, factors that could encourage them to adopt more sustainable travel practices include financial incentives, greater access to information and education on sustainable options, and positive experiences from others (León & Araña, 2020; Budeanu, 2007).

Encouragingly, 71.4% of respondents plan to increase their sustainable travel practices in the future.

The Pearson Chi-Square analysis indicates that knowledge of sustainable development and aware-

ness of sustainable tourism are linked to tourists' willingness to change their travel habits and pay more for eco-friendly accommodations (Assaker, 2024; Mazhenova et al., 2016; Puciato et al., 2023; Holotová et al., 2020). Additionally, a sense of responsibility for minimizing environmental impact enhances the likelihood of adopting sustainable practices. Furthermore, the importance placed on sustainable tourism when selecting travel destinations significantly influences tourists' decisions to support sustainable tourism initiatives.

Survey participants offered several suggestions for enhancing sustainable tourism development. Key recommendations include increasing awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in destination advertising and organizing training sessions for citizens and tourists. Participants also suggested making sustainable options more affordable, educating tourists about sustainable practices through travel agencies, and creating online platforms for sharing positive experiences, expanding partnerships between all stakeholders, using promotional marketing (Movono & Hughes, 2020; Scheyvens & Cheer, 2021; Birendra et al., 2021; Streimikiene et al., 2023; Devkota et al., 2023). Additionally, promoting ecotourism, rural, cultural, gastronomy, and wine tourism, and volunteer opportunities can contribute to local communities and environmental protection (Ottaviani et al., 2024; Rodrigues et al., 2022; Ait-Yahia Ghidouche et al., 2021; Martínez-Falcó et al., 2023; López-Sanz et al., 2021; Marzo-Navarro et al., 2020; Spenceley & Rylance, 2021; Pasanchay & Schott, 2021; Richardson, 2021; Neto, 2003). Tourists are encouraged to support local businesses, choose eco-friendly accommodations, prioritize tour operators offering sustainable packages, maintain clean environments, and reduce resource consumption. Finally, they suggest visiting lesser-known areas to mitigate over-tourism and utilizing recyclable materials to support sustainability initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the paper aimed to explore tourists' perceptions and behaviors regarding sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Armenia. The findings of this analysis underscore the critical role of awareness and knowledge in shaping tourists' behaviors toward sustainable tourism. While a significant

number of respondents recognize the importance of sustainable development and its potential benefits, a substantial portion remains unfamiliar with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This gap highlights the necessity for enhanced educational efforts, particularly through targeted advertising and training programs that inform travelers about sustainable practices.

Despite a strong sense of responsibility towards minimizing environmental impact, the willingness to adopt sustainable habits and invest in eco-friendly options is still limited. Barriers such as high costs and lack of information persist, but encouragingly, many respondents express a commitment to increasing their sustainable travel practices in the future.

The recommendations provided by participants offer a roadmap for promoting sustainable tourism. By fostering collaboration among stakeholders and increasing the availability of affordable, eco-friendly options, the tourism industry can significantly contribute to sustainable development. Ultimately, empowering tourists with knowledge and resources will be key to transforming travel behaviors and supporting a more sustainable future for tourism.

The results of this analysis offer significant theoretical and practical insights for various stakeholders in the tourism sector.

Theoretically, the findings enhance the understanding of the relationship between awareness and sustainable travel behaviors, contributing to the existing body of literature on sustainable tourism. They provide a framework for future research to explore the psychological and social factors influencing tourist decisions related to sustainability.

The results are valuable for tourism industry stakeholders, policymakers, educational institutions, NGOs, and tourists. They can guide tourism operators and travel agencies in developing strategies that promote sustainable practices, inform policymakers on effective educational campaigns, and help NGOs advocate for greater awareness and engagement. Furthermore, by highlighting the importance of informed decision-making, the findings empower travelers to adopt more responsible behaviors that positively impact destinations and cultures. These insights can foster a collaborative approach to sustainable tourism development, benefiting the industry and the environment.

LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study applied only a survey to gather a large number of responses. Future studies may include more participants and apply additional methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with various tourist groups, which can yield richer data about tourists' perceptions, motivations, and barriers regarding sustainable practices, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the issue.

Another suggestion for future study may be examining the effectiveness of specific educational interventions or campaigns aimed at increasing awareness of sustainable practices and their influence on tourists' behaviors.

Also, it will be important to investigate the role of technology, such as social media and mobile applications, in shaping tourist awareness and behavior regarding sustainable tourism, which will provide valuable insights for future strategies.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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