

Sustainable Tourism Indicators

When considering the overall success of sustainable tourism, it is important to consider three aspects: environmental (how is the island physically coping with tourism), social (how is local culture and overall satisfaction of residents being influenced by tourism) and economic (how are the islands financially benefitting from tourism). A successful management plan must find a way to balance these three aspects.

Environmental Indicators

It is often difficult to balance the economic benefits with the environmental toll placed on these islands. This includes both the environmental impact along with utility management, such as energy production, wastewater and solid waste disposal. Managing the environmental impact can be done using indicators such as carbon footprint, land and water quality analysis and state of nature reports. Utility management must take into account the increased demand from tourists for electricity and water usage, water being of particular issue as the Dutch Caribbean islands which have limited or no access to fresh water and rely on desalination to meet its needs. Waste management indicators should take into account how waste is being disposed and what recycling or waste reduction measures are put in place to minimize stress on the islands.

Societal Indicators

Societal indicators must take into account overall satisfaction of both the tourists and the locals. This can be measured through community involvement in ecotourism activities, tourism revenue generated within the community, number of local workers employed in tourism, training of locals for ecotourism jobs, percentage of return visitors and overall resident satisfaction. Although tourism can be a great way to generate revenue for an island, it cannot be at the expense of local cultural or way of life.

Economic Indicators

Its already been stated that tourism is a huge economic driver for the Dutch Caribbean islands, however, there are a variety of ways of measuring this success. Indicators highlight trends in seasonality, such as overall number of visitors, hotel occupancy by month, and changes in unemployment rate throughout the year. Other indicators might highlight the overall economic benefits enjoyed by the islands, such as average daily spending rate and length of stay, number of same day visitors, or tourism's contribution to GDP. Lastly, understanding how tourism rates are affecting employment percentages can give a better indication of how tourism is directly impacting local populations. A successful sustainable tourism model must decide the relationship between these indicators and put emphasis on those deemed most critical.

