

# Effective Management of Tourist Destinations to Minimize Negative Impacts on the Environment and Cultural Heritage

## Skuteczne zarządzanie destynacjami turystycznymi w celu minimalizacji negatywnego wpływu na środowisko i dziedzictwo kulturowe

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to develop and analyse strategies to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment and culture, focusing on recreational areas in China compared to other countries. A comprehensive approach was used, including data analysis, impact modelling and adaptation of the best international practices. The study analysed the current state of Chinese tourist areas and identified key factors contributing to the degradation of the regions. The application of the sustainable development model helped to identify the best ways to distribute tourist flows. The negative impact of intensive visits to natural areas on the environment of recreational areas was also investigated. It was found that a high level of tourist activity is often accompanied by inadequate waste management, which exacerbates the problem of pollution. The results of the study indicate the possibility of reducing the environmental burden while maintaining the economic attractiveness of the regions. As a result, the impact of intensive tourist visits on the state of natural and cultural resources was investigated, and the relationship between tourist pressure and the deterioration of infrastructure and artefacts was established. The impact of the commercialization of culture on the authenticity of cultural heritage was analysed, and the impact of public participation on the effectiveness of management strategies was determined. Thus, the study highlights the importance of environmental and cultural aspects in tourism planning, with a special focus on recreational areas in China. Various methodologies for assessing the impact of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage have been summarized, paving the way for more responsible practices. Highlighting specific examples of successful management strategies also provides valuable experience for other recreational regions facing similar challenges. The proposed recommendations will help to strengthen the capacity of regions to adapt to the growing environmental and cultural challenges associated with tourism.

**Key words:** protection of natural resources, damage to architectural monuments, preservation of folk authenticity, organization of recreational areas, ecosystem protection

### Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest opracowanie i analiza strategii ograniczania negatywnego wpływu turystyki na środowisko i kulturę, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem obszarów rekreacyjnych w Chinach – w porównaniu z innymi krajami. Zastosowano podejście kompleksowe, obejmujące analizę danych, modelowanie oddziaływań oraz adaptację najlepszych praktyk międzynarodowych. W badaniu przeanalizowano aktualny stan chińskich obszarów turystycznych oraz zidentyfikowano kluczowe czynniki przyczyniające się do degradacji regionów. Zastosowanie modelu zrównoważonego rozwoju pozwoliło wskazać optymalne sposoby dystrybucji ruchu turystycznego. Zbadano również negatywny wpływ intensywnych wizyt w obszarach przyrodniczych na środowisko terenów rekreacyjnych.

Stwierdzono, że wysoki poziom aktywności turystycznej często wiąże się z niewystarczającym zarządzaniem odpadami, co nasila problem zanieczyszczenia. Wyniki wskazują na możliwość ograniczenia obciążenia środowiskowego przy jednoczesnym utrzymaniu atrakcyjności ekonomicznej regionów. Przeanalizowano wpływ intensywnego ruchu turystycznego na stan zasobów przyrodniczych i kulturowych oraz ustalono zależność między presją turystyczną a pogorszeniem stanu infrastruktury i zabytków. Przeanalizowano także wpływ komercjalizacji kultury na autentyczność dziedzictwa kulturowego oraz określono znaczenie udziału społecznego dla skuteczności strategii zarządzania. Badanie podkreśla zatem znaczenie aspektów środowiskowych i kulturowych w planowaniu turystyki, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem obszarów rekreacyjnych w Chinach. Podsumowano różne metodologie oceny wpływu turystyki na środowisko i dziedzictwo kulturowe, torując drogę do bardziej odpowiedzialnych praktyk. Wskazanie konkretnych przykładów skutecznych strategii zarządzania dostarcza również cennych doświadczeń dla innych regionów rekreacyjnych stojących przed podobnymi wyzwaniami. Zaproponowane rekomendacje pomogą wzmocnić zdolność regionów do adaptacji do rosnących wyzwań środowiskowych i kulturowych związanych z turystyką.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ochrona zasobów naturalnych, niszczenie zabytków architektury, zachowanie autentyczności ludowej, organizacja terenów rekreacyjnych, ochrona ekosystemów

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## 1. Introduction

In today's world, tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries, bringing significant economic benefits to countries and regions. However, as the number of tourists increases, so does the pressure on the environment and cultural resources, which can lead to their degradation and destruction. On the one hand, tourism promotes economic development and cultural exchange, but on the other hand, it can lead to environmental degradation, erosion of cultural identity and destruction of cultural heritage. This creates the need to develop effective methods of managing tourist destinations that would minimize these negative impacts and ensure the sustainability of tourism practices. Recognizing these challenges, it becomes apparent that there is a need to develop and implement effective destination management strategies that take into account the need to protect natural and cultural values.

The importance of developing sustainable destination management strategies is emphasized by Kusumah (2024), who note that the integration of ethical approaches into tourism practices is crucial for the preservation of cultural identity and natural resources. These ideas resonate with the research of other scholars who point to specific ways to implement these approaches. In turn, Chen and Cai (2024) highlighted the specifics of the implementation of sustainable rural tourism in China, which aims to balance economic development and conservation of rural resources. They pointed out the need to adapt local management strategies that engage the public and protect the local cultural and natural environment. The topic of rural tourism in China has also been highlighted by scholars such as Gao et al. (2020). They concluded that good governance and sharing of responsibilities between the government and local communities are key to preserving the unique cultural landscape and its sustainable use.

In addition, the work of researchers such as Frost and Frost (2021) is worthy of note. They demonstrated how the promotion of sustainable space tourism can have an impact on resource and environmental conservation, even in such an unusual area. They emphasized the need for educational programmes that develop tourists' responsibility and understanding of the importance of environmental sustainability. Rezapouraghdam et al. (2024) investigated how tourism development affects the ecological footprint of island states. They found that taking into account the specifics of small islands with limited resources is critical to creating effective and sustainable tourism strategies that reduce negative environmental impacts. Duong et al. (2023) investigated the socio-economic and environmental impacts of land acquisition for tourism. Their study highlights the need to consider the impact of tourism on local communities and ensure their participation in decision-making, which helps to reduce social tensions and increase the overall benefits of tourism projects. Falardeau et al. (2022) examined innovations in nature tourism and their "natural" implementation. They found that the integration of innovations that are in harmony with local ecosystems and cultural characteristics can significantly reduce negative environmental impacts while providing more sustainable and attractive tourism products. Researchers such as Mekonnen and Mekonen (2024), in turn, have found that good governance and integration of local communities can significantly improve the contribution of tourism to the region's economy while ensuring the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

All these studies emphasize the need to develop and implement integrated management strategies that take into account both the environmental and cultural aspects of tourism. This will help to achieve a balance between tourism development and the preservation of unique natural and cultural values. The purpose of the study was to develop methodological approaches aimed at optimizing the management of Chinese tourist destinations compared to other countries, which will reduce their negative impact on the ecological state and cultural identity.

In accordance with the goal, the objectives of the study were:

1. Identifying the main types of negative impact of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage.
2. Assessment of recreational areas of the region under study to identify key factors affecting its development.
3. Analysing existing strategies and identifying effective approaches to reduce the negative impact.

4. Developing recommendations for implementing strategies to improve environmental and cultural sustainability.

## 2. Materials and methods

In order to achieve the research objective of effective management of tourist destinations while minimizing the negative impact on the environment and cultural heritage, a comprehensive approach was used, including data analysis, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis and case study research. The sample for the study is based on the analysis of tourist areas in China. The initial stage of the study focused on an in-depth and systematic literature review to identify the main types of negative impacts of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage. The collected studies were analysed to identify general trends and links between tourism activity and its impact on natural resources and cultural sites.

A SWOT analysis was carried out to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the management of tourism resources in China's recreational zones. The analysis allowed us to identify the key factors that affect the sustainability and development of each zone and plan strategies for optimal management. Four zones were selected: Guilin Li River, Zhangjiajie, Suzhou and Labrang, each of which represents unique natural and cultural features important to China's tourism appeal. In addition, the following recreational zones were selected: the Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve in Ethiopia (Africa), Zhangjiajie in China (Asia), Ha Long Bay in Vietnam (Asia), Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe (Africa), and Lapland in Arctic Finland (Europe). Within the framework of the study, Chinese tourist zones were compared with selected international recreational areas, including the Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve in Ethiopia, Ha Long Bay in Vietnam, Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, and Lapland in Arctic Finland. The selection of these zones was justified by their combination of natural and cultural value, level of tourism infrastructure development, impact of tourism on local communities, and environmental sustainability, which allowed for a comparative analysis of management effectiveness and the assessment of practices applicable in the Chinese context. This comparison was based on criteria such as environmental sustainability, cultural significance, ecotourism development potential, infrastructure quality, and regulatory policies, providing a systematic and well-founded approach to the evaluation of tourist zones. For each zone, assessment criteria such as environmental sustainability, cultural value, potential for ecotourism development, infrastructure and regulatory policies were identified. These criteria helped to focus on specific aspects that affect the management of each zone. Data collection included an analysis of existing literature, statistical reports by Statista (2023, 2024a, 2024b), United Nations Environment Programme (2023), United Nations Tourism (2015, 2023a, 2023b), and previous studies related to each of the selected zones. Thematic case studies used assessment criteria including environmental sustainability, cultural value, potential for ecotourism development, infrastructure, and regulatory policies to evaluate and compare the management of China's recreational zones. The data was systematized and analysed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each zone. The use of analytical tools helped to objectively assess each parameter.

An analysis was conducted of successful examples of tourist zone management in other countries that have already implemented effective strategies to minimize negative environmental impacts. The analysis was based on the research of scientists who covered these examples. These include the Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve in Ethiopia (Africa), where tourism contributes to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage (Abunie et al., 2023); rural tourism in China (Asia), which integrates environmental strategies into tourism activities (Chen and Cai, 2024); tourism in Vietnam (Asia), which is considered in the context of socio-economic development and natural resource protection (Duong et al., 2023); branding of tourist destinations and preservation of cultural heritage in Zimbabwe (Africa) (Chigora et al., 2023); and the tourism industry in Arctic Finland (Europe) adapting to environmental change to reduce negative impacts (Tervo-Kankare et al., 2017). The key aspects of the strategies analysed included: policy and regulation; cooperation with local communities; nature conservation; and educational programmes. Each case was analysed to identify successful practices that could be adapted and implemented in other regions. Based on this analysis, the main strategies that contribute to the sustainable management of tourist destinations were identified and recommendations for their implementation were developed.

## 3. Results

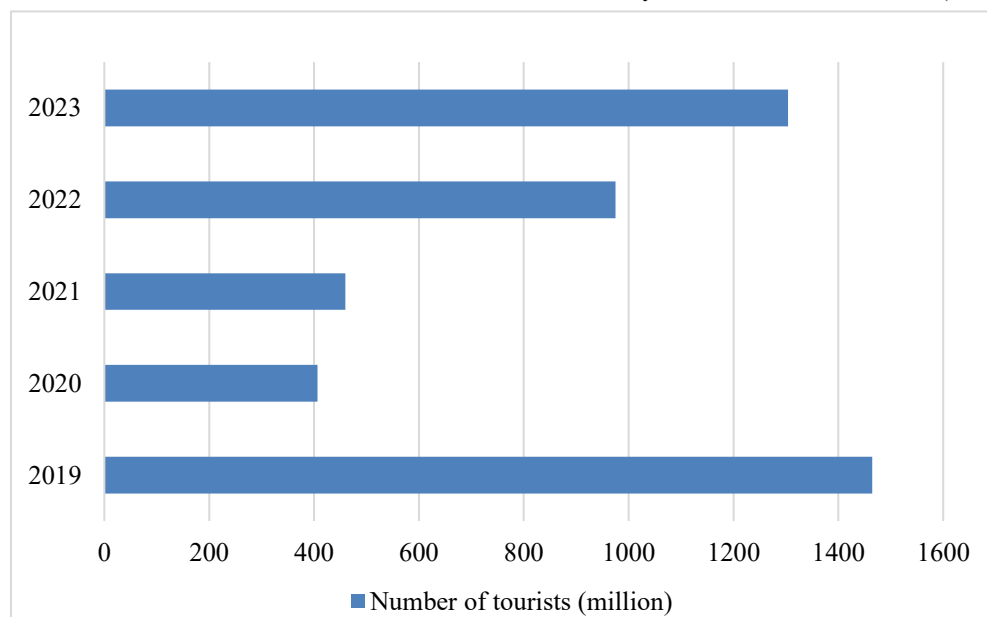
Effective management of tourist destinations is a key factor in reducing the negative impact on the environment and preserving cultural heritage. The continuous development of the tourism industry requires the implementation of sustainable management practices aimed at preserving natural resources and protecting cultural sites. An essential aspect of this process is the formation of environmental and cultural awareness among both tourists and the local population involved in tourism activities. Reasonable planning and regulation of tourist flows, as well as the introduction of environmentally friendly technologies, help to minimize the damage that tourism can cause to the environment. It is also important to develop programmes aimed at educating tourists and local residents about the importance of preserving cultural heritage and natural landscapes. Effective management of tourist destinations

requires the creation of a system that minimizes environmental pressure and protects cultural heritage while supporting the region's economic development. In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action) – key priorities include implementing ecological standards for tourist routes, regulating visitor flows, and developing green transport and energy-efficient infrastructure. Practical measures involve introducing monitoring systems for environmental load, enforcing rules for the use of natural resources, establishing controlled-access zones, and launching ecosystem restoration programs after peak tourist seasons. Protecting cultural heritage demands coordinated efforts among government institutions, local communities, businesses, and tourism operators. In connection with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), it is essential to promote models that support local cultural practices, safeguard historical sites, and reduce the risks associated with mass tourism. Effective tools include digital heritage documentation, virtual reconstructions, educational programs on responsible tourist behavior, the development of community-based cultural routes, and the involvement of local residents in destination management. This integrated approach ensures a balance between tourism development and the preservation of ecological and cultural values, fostering resilient destinations designed for long-term sustainability (United Nations, 2015).

At the present stage of research on destination management, there are many definitions of this concept. Thus, researchers Kusumah (2024) define effective destination management as an integrated approach that includes strategic planning, monitoring, and control of tourism activities in order to maintain an ecological and cultural balance. Effective management of tourist destinations can be seen as a complex process aimed at preserving the ecological balance and protecting cultural heritage, which includes the application of strategic approaches and innovative solutions. This process involves the definition and implementation of appropriate norms and standards that help minimize the negative impact of tourism activities on the environment and cultural sites. Effective management includes a number of procedures, such as monitoring tourist flows, assessing environmental risks, and formulating a sustainable development policy that preserves natural resources and cultural wealth for future generations (Abunie et al., 2023; Hopkins et al., 2024). This process contributes to the formation of new management approaches based on a combination of the interests of local communities, tourists, and government agencies.

On the one hand, effective management of tourist destinations leads to the creation of new environmentally oriented tourism products that meet modern requirements of sustainable development. On the other hand, there are changes in the minds of tourists and local communities, and new motives and values are being formed that contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and natural resources. The core of this process is the ability to strategically plan and adapt to changes, which ensures sustainable management of tourist destinations aimed at preserving the ecological and cultural environment. According to statistics, the number of tourists worldwide continues to grow every year, and despite a temporary decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this number is projected to only increase in the coming years (Statista, 2024b). This growth poses serious threats to the environment and cultural heritage. These trends are reflected in the chart below, which shows the dynamics of tourist arrivals from 2019 to 2023 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Dynamics of tourist flow in the world in 2019-2023, Source: created by the authors based on Statista (2024b)



The chart shows a sharp decline in the number of tourists in 2020 due to the pandemic, followed by a steady increase in the following years. However, despite the partial recovery, the number of tourist arrivals in 2023 is still slightly below the level of 2019. However, if this upward trend continues and the number of tourists exceeds pre-crisis levels, it could put additional pressure on natural and cultural resources. In this regard, the need for sustainable management strategies for tourist destinations is becoming increasingly important. Most scientific studies confirm that intensive tourism has a significant negative impact on ecosystems. The growth of tourist flows leads to several key environmental problems. Soil erosion is one of the most common environmental problems associated with intensive tourism. The increase in the number of tourists, especially in mountainous and coastal areas, causes wear and tear on natural landscapes. This is due to mechanical impact on the soil, for example, as a result of walking on trails, setting up temporary campsites, and building infrastructure for tourists. The high concentration of tourists in certain areas leads to soil compaction, which reduces its ability to retain moisture, and this, in turn, accelerates erosion processes. In addition, in mountainous areas, erosion can lead to landslides, which poses an additional risk to local ecosystems and infrastructure (Zhoya et al., 2024; Wijngaarden, 2020).

Intensive tourism often leads to a deterioration in water quality in water bodies, especially in popular tourist areas. Water pollution can occur both through direct actions of tourists and through tourism-related infrastructure. For example, uncontrolled wastewater discharges from hotels, restaurants, and other tourism industry facilities often lead to the pollution of water bodies with chemicals and organic waste. This can cause eutrophication (excessive enrichment of water with nutrients), which leads to massive algae growth, reduced oxygen levels in the water and the death of aquatic organisms. In addition, numerous tourists can contribute to the pollution of water bodies with plastic and other solid waste, which not only worsens the aesthetic appearance of the region but also poses a threat to aquatic ecosystems. In addition, tourism causes degradation of biodiversity, especially in natural parks and reserves, where there is often an excessive flow of tourists. Tourism activities can directly affect flora and fauna through trampling on vegetation, which leads to the loss of habitat for many species. For example, in areas where rare or endemic plant species grow, trampling can completely destroy these species, which can have irreversible consequences for the biodiversity of the region. In addition, noise pollution associated with mass tourism can cause stress to wildlife, forcing them to leave their natural habitats. In some cases, tourism can contribute to the introduction of invasive species that displace native flora and fauna. This occurs when tourists unknowingly bring seeds or other biological materials from other regions, which then spread and damage local ecosystems.

Intensive tourism has a significant impact not only on natural ecosystems, but also on cultural heritage, as confirmed by numerous scientific studies. This impact manifests itself in the form of physical damage to cultural sites and socio-cultural changes that can have long-lasting and sometimes irreversible consequences. Physical damage is one of the most obvious problems associated with intensive tourism. Historical and cultural attractions that attract a significant number of tourists are often subject to mechanical wear and tear due to the constant flow of visitors. Architectural monuments, such as old buildings, castles, and temples, often suffer from mechanical wear and tear when numerous tourists regularly come into contact with the surfaces of these objects. This can lead to the abrasion of parts, loss of finishes, and damage to floors and walls. Objects made of fragile materials, such as stone or wood, are particularly vulnerable, as they can lose their structural integrity over time. In places with large concentrations of tourists, the risk of vandalism increases. Writing on walls, graffiti, breaking or damaging parts of monuments – all this is a serious problem for the preservation of cultural heritage. Such actions not only destroy the aesthetic appearance of monuments, but also cause significant damage to their historical value. The growing number of visitors puts additional pressure on the infrastructure around cultural sites, which can lead to its destruction. For example, historic bridges, roads, or squares may not be able to withstand the large number of tourists, which leads to the need for frequent repairs or even partial reconstruction (Gao et al., 2020; Rivera et al., 2022). Socio-cultural changes are a less visible but no less significant consequence of intensive tourism. Tourism, especially mass tourism, can have a significant impact on the authenticity of local culture, transforming it under the influence of globalization. One of the most common manifestations is the commercialization of local culture. Under the influence of tourism, traditions, customs, crafts, and arts can be adapted to meet the needs of tourists, often losing their authenticity. For example, traditional celebrations or rituals may be shortened or altered to meet the expectations of tourists, turning them into commercial performances. Increased tourist flows can lead to the loss of cultural identity of local communities. Under the influence of globalization and interaction with tourists, local people may begin to adopt foreign habits, clothing, and language, which gradually leads to the blurring of cultural boundaries and the loss of unique features of their culture (Rosalina et al., 2023). This phenomenon is particularly acute in small communities, where every change has a significant impact on the overall cultural landscape. Tourism can affect social structures within local communities. The emergence of new economic opportunities associated with tourism can lead to changes in traditional lifestyles, encouraging young people to leave traditional occupations and crafts in favour of work in the tourism sector. This can contribute to the gradual disappearance of cultural knowledge and practices that have been passed down through generations.

Ensuring the sustainability of tourist destinations requires a comprehensive approach that includes the implementation of effective measures to reduce the impact of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage. This will not only protect natural and cultural resources, but also ensure the long-term attractiveness of tourist destinations,

maintaining a balance between economic development and preserving the environment for future generations. Based on the research, the main methods of combating the negative effects of tourism were identified (Table 1).

Table 1. Negative impacts of tourism and ways to prevent them, source: created by the authors

Types of negative impact	Ways to eliminate and prevent negative consequences
Soil erosion	Introducing zoning of tourist areas, limiting the number of visitors, and using special routes
Decrease in water quality	Providing infrastructure for wastewater treatment, controlling waste disposal, and educating tourists on reducing plastic use
Biodiversity degradation	Restricting access to sensitive areas, implementing rules of conduct, and conducting ecosystem restoration programmes
Physical damage to cultural monuments	Restoration and protection of monuments, restriction of access to vulnerable sites, and visitor control
Physical damage to cultural monuments	Preserving the authenticity of local culture, supporting traditional practices, and regulating the commercialization of cultural sites

Given the above-mentioned environmental and socio-cultural challenges, it is important to understand how they can affect strategic planning and management of tourism resources. For this purpose, China was chosen as a case study because it has a rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage that attracts millions of tourists every year. China is one of the leading tourist destinations in the world, where the growing flow of visitors creates both opportunities for economic development and challenges related to the environmental and socio-cultural impact of tourism. The country has a variety of recreational areas that include unique natural landscapes, historical monuments and cultural sites, which are crucial for tourism attractiveness. However, intensive tourism in these areas can lead to negative consequences, such as ecosystem degradation, soil erosion, water pollution, and changes in the cultural traditions of local communities.

To gain a deeper understanding of these challenges, a SWOT analysis was conducted covering four key recreational areas in China: Guilin Li River, Zhangjiajie, Suzhou and Labrang. Guilin is known for its karst mountains and scenic views along the Li River. It is one of the most famous tourist areas in China, attracting tourists with its unique natural scenery. Zhangjiajie is famous for its huge sandstone pillars, which form a unique landscape that inspired the Avatar movie (Chen & Cai, 2024; Smith et al., 2021). Zhangjiajie Nature Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Suzhou is known for its traditional Chinese gardens, water canals, and historic buildings. The area has a rich cultural heritage, reflected in its architecture and art. Labrang is one of the largest Tibetan monasteries outside of Tibet, located in Gansu Province. It is an important religious centre and attracts tourists with its spiritual atmosphere and cultural heritage of Tibetan Buddhism.

This SWOT analysis is a critical tool for strategic planning and effective management of tourism resources in these recreational areas. It provides an in-depth understanding of current challenges and opportunities, which allows us to formulate recommendations for the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of these regions. The analysis helps to identify priority areas for investment, identify risks associated with environmental and socio-cultural aspects, and develop policies that will promote sustainable tourism. In particular, the results of this analysis can be used to formulate recommendations for improving infrastructure, preserving biodiversity, maintaining the authenticity of local cultures and ensuring environmental sustainability in the face of growing tourist pressure. Each of the areas selected for the study has its own unique natural and cultural features that make them particularly valuable for both domestic and international tourism. The analysis included criteria such as environmental sustainability, cultural value, potential for ecotourism development, infrastructure and regulatory policies (Table 2).

The SWOT analysis conducted for these Chinese recreational zones showed that each of these zones has its own unique strengths and opportunities, but faces similar threats. Whether it is environmental sustainability, cultural heritage preservation or infrastructure challenges, the main threats remain similar for each of these tourism zones. They include environmental pressure from mass tourism, the risk of losing cultural identity due to globalization, and the potential negative effects of climate change. These factors underline the need to develop effective management strategies to ensure the sustainable development of these areas. In view of this, it is relevant to analyse successful examples of tourism zone management in other countries that have already implemented effective strategies to minimize negative environmental impacts.

The analysis of the Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve in Ethiopia, in terms of the impact of tourism on the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, is based on the study by Abunie et al. (2023). This study examines how tourism can be a tool for sustainable development and conservation of biosphere areas, combining environmental, economic and cultural aspects. The Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve is an important natural area rich in biodiversity. Prior to the introduction of innovative approaches, the region faced growing pressure on natural resources and the neglect of cultural sites, including ancient monasteries. The government, together with local communities, has initiated a number of measures to support biodiversity conservation, including funding conservation programmes through tourism revenues. One of the key steps was the creation of national parks and water protection zones, which helped maintain ecological balance and preserve rare plant and animal species. In addition, international

funds were raised for the restoration of historic monasteries, which helped to increase the region's attractiveness to tourists and preserve cultural heritage.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of the main recreational areas in Ethiopia, China, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, and Finland, source: created by the authors

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Features	Threats
Guilin Li River (China, Asia), the Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve in Ethiopia (Africa)	Unique karst landscapes and picturesque views; high level of cultural and natural value; well-known tourist brand that attracts international tourists.	Vulnerability to environmental pressure and soil erosion; insufficient infrastructure for sustainable management of tourist flows; commercialization of local culture.	Developing ecotourism and environmental education programmes; investing in sustainable tourism infrastructure; improving regulatory policies to protect the environment.	Further growth of tourist flows, which may exceed the ecological capacity of the region; loss of cultural identity due to globalization; climate change, which may affect the landscape and attractiveness of the region.
Zhangjiajie in China (Asia), Ha Long Bay in Vietnam (Asia)	Unique landscape with sandstone pillars; UNESCO World Heritage Site status; high level of biodiversity.	Sensitivity of natural landscapes to anthropogenic impact; insufficient infrastructure to control tourist flows; risk of degradation of cultural heritage.	Developing ecotourism and educating tourists; attracting funding for sustainable infrastructure development; expanding biodiversity conservation programmes.	Environmental pressure due to mass tourism; climate change, which may reduce tourist attractiveness; loss of cultural identity due to commercialization.
Suzhou (China, Asia), Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe (Africa)	Famous traditional Chinese gardens and water channels; rich cultural heritage, including architecture and crafts; well-developed tourist infrastructure.	Risk of loss of authenticity due to intensive tourism; commercialization of traditional cultural practices; environmental challenges associated with urbanization.	Developing cultural tourism focused on preserving authenticity; improving the environmental sustainability of urban infrastructure; attracting international investment to preserve cultural heritage.	Globalization, which can lead to a loss of local cultural identity; environmental pollution due to increased urbanization; and a decline in tourist attractiveness due to climate change.
Labrang (China, Asia), Lapland in Arctic Finland (Europe)	Large Tibetan monastery with a rich spiritual and cultural heritage; strong religious identity and significance for Buddhists; high level of authenticity and preserved traditions.	Vulnerability to the impact of mass tourism on religious practices; limited infrastructure to manage tourist flows; remoteness and inaccessibility of the region.	Developing spiritual and cultural tourism focused on preserving traditions; investing in infrastructure that supports sustainable tourism; implementing educational programmes for tourists to respect religious practices.	The commercialization of religious culture, which can lead to a loss of authenticity; the growth of tourist flows, which can overwhelm the region; climate change, which can affect the traditional way of life of local communities.

In the case of rural tourism in China, a study by Chen and Cai (2024) shows that in the past, tourism in these regions had little significant impact on the economy and social life of communities due to the lack of structured environmental and cultural programmes. The growth of tourist traffic has led to the depletion of natural resources and the loss of cultural authenticity. To remedy the situation, new environmental strategies were developed, including the use of solar energy, the organization of environmental education programmes for locals and tourists, and the implementation of biodiversity protection programmes. One of the main steps was to encourage local businesses to develop ecotourism and promote authentic culture through tourism, which not only reduced the environmental burden but also improved the economic situation of the communities.

The experience of tourism in Vietnam, as outlined in the study by Duong et al. (2023), is viewed through the prism of socio-economic development and natural resource protection. Successful strategies in Vietnam include environmental conservation measures, such as the introduction of environmentally friendly technologies in tourism facilities, the protection of natural landscapes and biodiversity, and initiatives to reduce the impact on natural resources. Local communities are actively involved in the management of tourist areas, which helps to preserve natural habitats and support sustainable development. Vietnam has faced the challenge of uneven economic development, with tourism generating revenue only for certain regions, leaving environmental and social issues unaddressed. To improve the situation, the government has developed strategies aimed at greening tourism facilities, such as the use of environmentally friendly technologies, the creation of protected areas and the implementation

of policies to support local communities. Tourist zones have been reorganized with a focus on sustainable development, in particular by reducing the anthropogenic impact on natural landscapes and increasing the level of environmental responsibility among tourists.

In Zimbabwe, before the start of active branding of tourist destinations, the country could not effectively use its cultural potential due to a lack of funding and attention to cultural sites. As noted by Chigora et al. (2023), historical sites such as the Great Zimbabwe Ruins remained underappreciated internationally. To remedy the situation, a national tourism destination branding programme was developed, which included investing in cultural festivals, restoring historical sites and promoting unique cultural traditions. In addition, cooperation was established with international organizations to create platforms for promoting cultural sites globally, which helped attract foreign investment and increase the flow of tourists. As for the tourism industry in Arctic Finland, the region suffered from overuse of natural resources before the introduction of new environmental approaches, in particular due to the popularity of winter tourism. According to Tervo-Kankare et al. (2017), the decrease in snow cover due to climate change has caused serious environmental problems, which has negatively affected the tourism industry. In response, the government and the private sector have introduced a number of innovations, including the use of alternative energy sources, the development of wildlife conservation programmes, and the transition to sustainable forms of transport for tourists. In addition, educational initiatives have been launched to raise environmental awareness among both locals and tourists, helping to stabilize tourist arrivals and reduce environmental pressure on the region.

The selected recreational zones differ significantly in their management approaches and the nature of tourism activities. In the Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve in Ethiopia and Lapland in Arctic Finland, tourism is organized to minimize environmental impact, with controlled visitor access, ecosystem monitoring, and an emphasis on educational programs for tourists. In contrast, Zhangjiajie in China focuses on showcasing its unique sandstone landscapes and attracting large numbers of visitors, requiring specialized infrastructure and crowd management systems. Ha Long Bay in Vietnam combines natural beauty with the economic needs of local communities but faces high pressure from boat-based tourism, creating additional environmental challenges. Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe stands out for its strong combination of natural appeal and cultural heritage, where tourism activities are integrated with the support of local crafts and cultural programs. Lapland also integrates Sámi cultural traditions and winter recreational activities, emphasizing adaptation to climate change and the protection of sensitive ecosystems. Each

Table 3. Policy and regulatory strategies for managing recreational areas, source: created by the authors

Strategies	Implementation steps	Recommendations
Introducing quotas on the number of visitors	Assessment of environmental capacity	Conducting research to determine the ecological capacity of each tourist site or region. This will allow us to establish the maximum number of visitors that the ecosystem can withstand without significant negative consequences.
	Quotas and limits	Based on the results of the research, quotas, or limits can be set on the number of tourists that can visit a particular area during a certain period (e.g., day, week, season). This can be implemented through advance booking systems or by restricting access during peak periods.
	Dynamic adjustment	Quotas should be flexible and take into account variable factors such as weather conditions, ecosystem conditions and the impact of previous seasons. This will allow for real-time adaptation of regulations to the current situation.
Developing rules for the conservation of natural resources	Prohibition of uncontrolled use of resources	It is important to establish rules that prohibit or strictly regulate the use of natural resources in tourist areas. For example, restrictions on the use of water for commercial purposes or a ban on the collection of vegetation and animals from natural environments.
	Waste management	Developing and implementing waste collection and disposal systems that minimize environmental impact. This includes providing access to waste sorting containers, installing waste recycling stations and prohibiting the dumping of waste in natural areas.
	Restoration and rehabilitation of ecosystems:	It is relevant to include measures to restore damaged natural areas, such as tree planting, river restoration or rare habitats. This will help to preserve the ecosystem in the long term.
Prohibition on the use of certain materials	Ban on the use of plastic	It is crucial to develop regulations that ban or restrict the use of plastic, especially single-use plastic. This includes bans on plastic bottles, bags, utensils and other items that can become litter and cause environmental damage.
	Implementation of environmentally friendly alternatives	Along with bans, it is necessary to encourage the use of environmentally friendly materials. For example, biodegradable packaging, reusable containers and bags, which will help reduce waste and keep tourist areas clean.
	Educational programmes and outreach	It is also important to conduct awareness campaigns among tourists and locals about the importance of reducing the use of plastic and other harmful materials. This may include the installation of information signs, lectures and other activities aimed at raising environmental awareness.

Table 4. Strategies of cooperation with local communities for the management of recreational areas, source: created by the authors

Strategies	Implementation steps	Recommendations
Economic benefits for local residents	Creating jobs	Tourism can be an essential source of income for local communities, providing jobs in the service, hospitality, sightseeing and crafts sectors. This helps to improve the livelihoods of local people and encourages them to support sustainable practices.
	Supporting local businesses	Tourism development should take into account the interests of local entrepreneurs, providing them with opportunities for expansion and development. This may include selling local products, handicrafts, organizing gastronomic tours, etc. In this way, the tourism sector integrates with the local economy, ensuring its sustainable development.
Involvement in the decision-making process	Inclusive planning	Local residents should have the opportunity to participate in the development and implementation of tourism strategies. This can be done through the organization of public hearings, consultations, and joint working groups where opinions and suggestions on the management of tourism resources are expressed. This approach increases the level of trust in local authorities and contributes to a better understanding of the needs and problems of the community.
	Developing local initiatives	Supporting community-based initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage and protecting the environment is an important part of a sustainable tourism strategy. This may include programmes to restore historical monuments, environmental volunteering or the development of local festivals and celebrations.
Preserving cultural traditions	Maintaining authenticity	The involvement of local communities in tourism projects helps to preserve the authenticity of cultural traditions that may be threatened by mass tourism. This includes supporting traditional crafts, preserving local languages, rituals and customs, and protecting cultural sites from commercialization.
	Educational programmes for local residents	It is crucial to organize educational programmes that increase the level of knowledge and skills of local residents in the sustainable management of tourism resources. This may include training in the organization of tourist routes, excursions, ecotourism development and other activities that help preserve the natural and cultural environment.
Supporting environmental initiatives	Environmental volunteering	Local communities can be active participants in environmental initiatives aimed at protecting the environment. This may include clean-up activities, greening, biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration.
	Partnerships with tour operators	Cooperation between local communities and tourism operators can include joint conservation projects, such as organizing eco-tours where tourists participate in conservation activities together with local residents.

zone demonstrates a unique balance between tourism appeal, environmental conservation, and cultural identity, providing valuable lessons for comparing management strategies with Chinese tourist destinations.

The results of the analysis of successful examples of tourism zone management in other countries have shown that there are several key strategies that effectively contribute to minimizing the negative impact of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage. It is also worth noting that these strategies include comprehensive environmental planning measures, active participation of local communities in decision-making, introduction of modern technologies for monitoring and controlling the environment, and development of environmentally responsible tourism. In addition, it is important to create educational programmes for tourists that will help raise their awareness of the protection of natural and cultural resources. These measures, together with strong legislative regulation and ongoing monitoring of the results, can ensure that tourist areas are maintained in harmony with the environment and local culture in the long term. Additionally, attention should be paid to the diversification of tourism services, which helps to reduce pressure on popular tourist destinations and distribute tourist flows over a wider area. This may include developing lesser-known tourist destinations, promoting seasonal tourism to reduce congestion during peak periods, and introducing limited quotas for visits to the most vulnerable sites.

Another effective approach is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into the local economy, where tourism becomes not only a source of income, but also an incentive for the preservation and restoration of natural and cultural resources. Successful experience also demonstrates the importance of cooperation between government agencies, business and civil society to create a holistic management system that takes into account the interests of all stakeholders. It is also critical to note the importance of integrating innovative technologies and digital solutions into the management of tourist areas. This may include the use of intelligent systems to monitor visitors, automated platforms for booking tourism services, and mobile applications that help tourists better navigate the environmental and cultural requirements of the places they visit.

In general, the successful experience of other countries shows that only a holistic approach that covers all aspects of managing tourist areas can ensure their sustainable development. Based on the analysis, there are several key areas that should be considered when developing strategies for managing tourism zones in China. First, special

attention should be paid to the creation and implementation of clear regulations that limit the negative impact of tourism on ecosystems. This is a fundamental step to ensure the sustainability of tourist destinations and preserve the natural environment for future generations (Table 3).

Second, active cooperation with local communities is critical to the successful implementation of these strategies. The involvement of local residents in the management of tourist areas not only contributes to the economic development of the region, but also ensures the long-term sustainability of these areas (Table 4).

Third, nature conservation should be at the forefront of tourism resource management strategies. Protecting natural ecosystems and conserving biodiversity are key elements for ensuring the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations. Prioritizing nature conservation in tourism resource management strategies not only contributes to the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, but also enhances the quality of the tourism experience by making it more conscious and sustainable. This ensures a long-term perspective for tourism development that is harmoniously combined with environmental protection (Table 5).

Table 5. Conservation strategies for managing recreational areas, source: created by the authors

Strategies	Implementation steps	Recommendations
Development of ecotourism	Environmentally responsible routes	Ecotourism involves the development of tourist routes that minimize the impact on natural landscapes. These can include specially designed trails that direct tourists away from sensitive areas, such as habitats of rare species or catchment basins.
	Small groups and individual tours	Reducing the number of people in groups or offering individual tours helps to reduce pressure on natural areas. It also contributes to a more personal and educational experience for tourists, raising their awareness of the importance of conservation.
	Environmental infrastructure	The development of infrastructure that meets the principles of environmental sustainability is an important aspect of ecotourism. This may include the use of environmentally friendly materials for construction, installation of solar panels, rainwater harvesting systems and other technologies that reduce environmental impact.
Creation of security zones	National parks and nature reserves	Establishing protected areas, such as national parks or nature reserves, is an effective way to preserve unique ecosystems. In such areas, access for tourists can be restricted or regulated to prevent excessive pressure on nature.
	Restricted access mode	In protected areas, restrictions may be placed on the number of visitors or the length of stay to ensure that the impact on natural resources is minimal. For example, some areas may be closed to the public during the animal breeding season or during periods of active plant growth.
	Ecosystem restoration areas	Some areas may be set aside for the natural recovery of ecosystems after intensive use or destruction. In such areas, access to tourists may be temporarily or permanently closed to allow the natural environment to recover.
Monitoring and research programmes	Environmental monitoring	Regular monitoring of the ecological condition of tourist areas allows for early detection of changes in ecosystems and timely measures to be taken to preserve them. This may include monitoring species populations, water quality, soil conditions and other environmental parameters.
	Scientific research	Supporting scientific research in protected areas contributes to a better understanding of ecosystems and the development of effective conservation methods. The results of such research can be used to improve management strategies and introduce new approaches to nature conservation.
Education and public engagement	Environmental education of tourists	Organizing educational programmes that explain the importance of nature conservation to tourists helps to reduce their impact on the environment. These can include information centres, lectures, guided tours or the placement of information materials in tourist areas.
	Involvement of local communities	It is important to involve local communities in the conservation process by providing them with access to information and resources for environmental protection. This can include the creation of volunteer programmes where local people take an active part in the conservation of natural resources in their region.

The implementation of these approaches in the Chinese recreational areas under consideration will not only help to reduce the negative impacts of tourism, but will also ensure the long-term sustainability of these unique areas. Such an approach ensures that future generations will be able to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of these regions while preserving their value and beauty. In addition, sustainable management of tourism resources opens up opportunities for the development of innovative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism, cultural tourism and agritourism. These areas not only contribute to environmental protection, but also attract tourists who value authentic experiences and a responsible approach to travel. This, in turn, helps to diversify the regions' tourism products and provides additional sources of income for local communities.

It is also important to note that the implementation of effective tourism management strategies should be supported at all levels, from local initiatives to national policy. Coordination of efforts between the government, local authorities, tourism operators and communities are key to successful conservation of natural and cultural resources.

The successful implementation of these strategies can also serve as an example for other regions in China and the world, demonstrating that sustainable tourism is not only a necessity but also a real opportunity to preserve the wealth of our planet. Such approaches can ensure the harmonious development of tourism, which combines economic benefits with responsibility towards nature and cultural heritage.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of the study show that effective destination management has a significant impact on the creation of environmentally friendly tourism products and the strengthening of environmental awareness among tourists and local communities. This is in line with the findings of Abunie et al. (2023), who also emphasize the importance of strategic planning for sustainable tourism development in the face of increasing pressure. However, in contrast to their approach, the results of this study show that specific measures, such as zoning tourist areas and limiting the number of visitors, are crucial to preventing the degradation of natural resources and cultural sites. Abunie et al. also point out the importance of adaptive management, which implies flexibility and the ability to respond quickly to new challenges, such as changing environmental conditions and pressure on cultural heritage. However, while their research points to this need, it does not examine in detail the mechanisms for implementing such approaches in practice. This study shows that zoning and regulation of tourist flows is not just a theoretical necessity, but also a practical strategy that has proven to be effective in real-world conditions, especially in the context of China's tourist zones. The management of tourist zones has a direct impact on environmental sustainability, as proper planning of visitor flows and control over tourist activities helps minimize the degradation of natural resources. This supports Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action) and Goal 15 (Life on Land).

The growth of tourist flows causes significant environmental problems, the most common of which are soil erosion, water quality degradation and biodiversity degradation. Intensive tourism in mountainous and coastal areas leads to mechanical wear and tear on natural landscapes, soil compaction and landslides, which threaten local ecosystems. Cultural heritage preservation in tourist regions is ensured through restricted access to sensitive sites and the integration of local cultural programs into tourism routes. This reinforces SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and strengthens the cultural identity of local communities. Pollution of water bodies by chemicals and organic waste from tourism infrastructure causes serious consequences for aquatic ecosystems, including eutrophication and the death of aquatic organisms. The degradation of biodiversity in natural parks and reserves caused by trampling of vegetation and noise pollution is also a critical issue. As noted by Duong et al. (2023), intensive tourism can cause significant environmental problems, such as biodiversity degradation and water pollution. However, a study of tourist zones in China shows that the introduction of new regulations and active cooperation with local communities have reduced the negative impact on the environment. This shows that the success of tourism management strategies depends on local conditions and the level of community participation in the decision-making process.

The economic dimension of sustainability is realized through the creation of jobs for local residents and the development of crafts and services in tourist areas. This approach aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and ensures fair distribution of income. Intensive tourism also has a significant impact on both natural ecosystems and cultural heritage, as confirmed by numerous scientific studies. Physical damage to cultural sites is one of the most obvious problems caused by the constant flow of visitors. Ancient buildings, castles, and temples, especially those made of fragile materials, are subject to mechanical wear and tear, loss of parts and structural integrity. In addition, the growing number of tourists increases the risk of vandalism and puts additional pressure on the infrastructure, which requires frequent repairs or reconstruction. Socio-cultural changes are less visible but no less significant consequences of tourism. Mass tourism can have a significant impact on the authenticity of local culture, contributing to its commercialization. Traditions, customs, and crafts can be adapted for tourists, losing their authenticity, leading to the loss of cultural identity of local communities and the blurring of cultural boundaries. In addition, tourism can affect social structures, changing traditional lifestyles and contributing to the gradual disappearance of cultural knowledge and practices. The COVID-19 pandemic (2019–2023) significantly affected tourist flows, causing a sharp decline in visitation and revenues across all zones. This created a need for rapid adaptation of management strategies and the implementation of new safety measures. Tourism operators and management authorities introduced sanitary protocols, digital ticketing, and group size limitations to ensure safe visits during the pandemic. These measures demonstrate how crises stimulate innovation and more sustainable management models. The pandemic also influenced ecology, as reduced tourist activity allowed some natural environments to recover. This highlights the importance of visitor flow management for long-term biodiversity conservation.

The conclusions about the impact of intensive tourism on cultural heritage are in line with the study by Korvenkangas (2024), which highlights the physical deterioration of historical monuments due to excessive tourist pressure. However, unlike Korvenkangas, who focuses mainly on physical damage to cultural sites, this study also highlights the socio-cultural changes that result from the commercialization of local cultures. Such commercialization often leads to the loss of authenticity of cultural traditions, as local communities adapt their customs and

crafts to meet tourist needs. This confirms that preserving the authenticity of local culture should be one of the central aspects of destination management strategies. While Korvenkangas focuses on the preservation of physical cultural heritage sites, this approach broadens the discussion by adding the importance of preserving intangible elements of culture, such as traditions, customs and social structures, which are often threatened by mass tourism. The implementation of digital technologies, such as online tours and virtual museums, enabled the maintenance of tourist interest without physical pressure on sites. This approach combines economic and environmental sustainability objectives. This integrated approach allows for the consideration of both tangible and intangible heritage, which is key to preserving the cultural identity of local communities in the long term.

Ensuring the sustainability of tourist destinations requires a comprehensive approach that includes the implementation of effective measures to reduce the impact of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage. These measures will not only protect natural and cultural resources, but also ensure the long-term attractiveness of tourist destinations. This, in turn, will maintain a balance between economic development and preserving the environment for future generations. The study results showed that the main methods of combating the negative impacts of tourism include zoning of tourist areas, limiting the number of visitors, implementing wastewater treatment infrastructure, restoring and protecting cultural monuments, and preserving the authenticity of local culture. These methods are aimed at minimizing problems such as soil erosion, reduced water quality, biodiversity degradation, physical damage to cultural sites, and socio-cultural changes. In this case, the research also echoes the findings of Tolkach and Pratt (2019), who emphasize the importance of developing ecotourism and introducing modern technologies to monitor the state of ecosystems. However, in contrast to their approach, more attention is paid to regulatory aspects, such as limiting the number of visitors and zoning areas that prove to be important for the conservation of natural environments.

This analysis has allowed us to identify several key areas that are necessary for the development of effective strategies for managing tourism zones in China. Local communities were actively involved in planning tourism activities during the pandemic, increasing their participation in decision-making and strengthening social resilience. This aligns with principles of equitable development and supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The most relevant of these areas is the creation and implementation of clear regulations aimed at limiting the negative impact of tourism on ecosystems. This is a fundamental step in ensuring the sustainability of tourist destinations and preserving the natural environment for future generations. The results of the study point out the importance of clear regulations and active participation of local communities in the management of tourist areas, which is also confirmed by Gao et al. (2020). They note that the integration of environmental and cultural strategies into tourism management is crucial to ensure the sustainability of tourism zones. However, their study also points to the need to balance the preservation of cultural sites with meeting the needs of tourists. In contrast to other studies, this paper emphasizes that cooperation with local communities contributes not only to the effective management of natural resources, but also to the protection of cultural identity, which is particularly relevant in the face of increasing tourist pressure. Experience from different countries shows that crisis-adaptive strategies include flexible zoning, limits on simultaneous visitation, and additional educational programs for tourists. This ensures the simultaneous preservation of nature and cultural heritage.

The study by Çiki and Tanriverdi (2023) also highlight the importance of a multi-level approach to the management of tourism areas, where national, regional, and local authorities need to coordinate their actions to ensure sustainable development. Their emphasis on the need for coordination between different levels of government is an essential addition to the findings of this study. In particular, Çiki and Tanriverdi point out that a lack of coordination can lead to inefficient resource management, which exacerbates the negative impacts of tourism on ecosystems. Our findings confirm that a lack of coordination between levels of government can make it difficult to implement measures such as visitor restrictions and zoning, which are critical to protecting both natural and cultural resources. In addition, it is important to note that the study by Gao et al. (2020) emphasizes innovation in management approaches, in particular the possibility of creating new tourism products based on environmental and cultural sustainability. This approach not only helps to protect resources, but also opens up new economic opportunities for local communities. This also echoes the findings of Çiki and Tanriverdi (2023), who highlight the importance of developing ecotourism and introducing the latest technologies to monitor the state of ecosystems. These technologies allow controlling environmental risks and ensuring more accurate regulation of tourist flows. In light of the pandemic, tourist zone management must incorporate long-term planning and risk scenario modeling, ensuring preparedness for future emergencies. This approach enhances overall resilience of tourist regions and integrates international best practices into the Chinese context.

In general, the results of this study coincide with the opinions of the scholars whose work was studied. They emphasize that the impact of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage is an extremely crucial issue that requires a comprehensive approach. As with many other studies, it was found that the implementation of effective measures aimed at minimizing the negative impact of tourism is key to ensuring the sustainability of tourist destinations. Thus, the results of the study contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of tourism on natural and cultural resources and suggest concrete steps to preserve them for future generations.

## 5. Conclusions

Effective management of tourist destinations is key to reducing the negative impact of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage. This requires a comprehensive approach that includes strategic planning, monitoring, and the implementation of sustainable practices and innovative solutions. The basis of this process is the ability to adapt and cooperate among all stakeholders – local communities, tourists, and government agencies. Given the steady increase in the number of tourists, especially after the pandemic, it is becoming increasingly to ensure sustainable tourism development that simultaneously supports economic growth and preserves natural and cultural resources for future generations.

The environmental impacts of intensive tourism are multifaceted and include serious problems such as soil erosion, reduced water quality and biodiversity degradation. These issues require an integrated approach to managing tourism destinations. Tourism has a significant impact on cultural heritage, manifested in both physical damage to cultural monuments and profound socio-cultural changes. To preserve cultural heritage, it is important to implement effective strategies for managing tourist flows, including both physical protection of sites and measures aimed at preserving the authenticity of local culture. The SWOT analysis of China's recreational areas has shown that each of them has its own unique natural and cultural features that create significant tourism potential. However, despite these strengths and opportunities, all of these areas face similar threats, such as environmental pressure, loss of cultural identity due to globalization, and the negative effects of climate change. This underscores the importance of developing strategies aimed at ensuring sustainable development that will preserve these valuable natural and cultural resources for future generations.

Based on the analysis of successful examples of managing tourist zones in other countries, it can be concluded that effective reduction of the negative impact of tourism on the environment and cultural heritage is achieved through clearly formulated strategies. The study analysed successful cases of managing tourist zones in other countries and proposed strategies that can be adapted to the specifics of the studied recreational areas. The proposed strategies included the introduction of clear regulations to govern tourism activities, active involvement of local communities in decision-making, development of ecotourism, and the implementation of educational programmes to raise awareness of the importance of environmental and cultural heritage preservation. This approach will allow for effective management of tourism resources, ensuring their sustainability and preservation for future generations.

In summary, the implementation of the proposed strategies in China's recreational areas will preserve their unique landscapes and cultural heritage, ensuring their sustainable use for many years to come. This will not only contribute to the preservation of the environment and cultural identity, but will also increase the attractiveness of these regions for tourists seeking to experience the true beauty and richness of natural and cultural diversity.

The statistics for 2019-2023 reflecting the dynamics of tourist flows may be distorted by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the analysis covered only four recreational areas in China, which does not provide a complete picture. The study of successful cases was also limited to five countries, so the findings may not fully reflect global trends in tourism.

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