

# Tourism Economics

## TOURISM ECONOMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BERN

At the University of Bern, research and teaching on tourism is conducted within the interdisciplinary tourism research unit at the [Center for Regional Economic Development \(CRED\)](#). Taking into account other relevant aspects and disciplines, the unit examines tourism issues from a broad economic perspective. In addition, it is considered a point of contact for topics related to tourism and regional economic development, as well as for applied research and services.

### How is tourism economics linked to sustainable development, and how has this influenced practice?

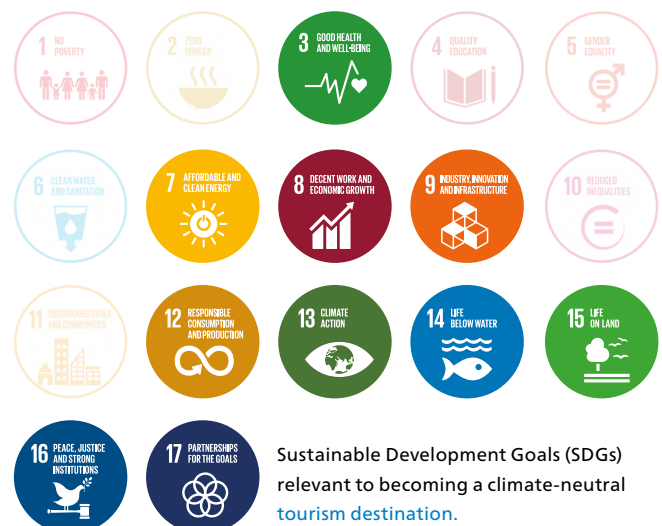
Sustainability has been a topic of tourism research from a very early stage at the University of Bern. Concepts for sustainability in tourism were already developed several decades ago by the former directors of the Research Institute for Leisure and Tourism, Jost Krippendorf and Hansruedi Müller. Jost Krippendorf's "Swiss Tourism Concept" of 1979, for example, is considered a precursor to sustainable development in tourism [1], and Hansruedi Müller designed the so-called "magic pentagonal pyramid" of sustainable tourism development in 1994. In addition to the usual three sustainability dimensions (environment, economy, and society), Müller integrated the dimensions of "guest satisfaction" and "subjective well-being of the local population" into his model. These five dimensions form the base of the pyramid, at the top of which is the generational contract. The distinction between an understanding of tourism and tourism awareness was also essentially shaped by him. "Understanding" tourism includes knowledge of procedures and processes within the tourism industry; "awareness" is broader and includes both the well-being of the local population and the impact of tourism on nature [2].

Krippendorf's Swiss Tourism Concept and Müller's magic pentagonal pyramid still influence work and teaching at the research unit today. For example, the research focal point on "Sustainable Development and Innovation in Tourism" contains a project that focuses on measuring sustainable development in tourist destinations and

anticipating and reducing conflicts of interest. In teaching, the two concepts are reflected in lectures on the relationship between tourism and the environment, as well as specifically on sustainable development in tourism. In addition, Bachelor's-level student papers on "Future perspectives of tourism economics" regularly make reference to sustainable development.

### Example: Challenges of becoming a climate-neutral tourism destination

Switzerland's goal is to emit no more CO<sub>2</sub> by 2050 than natural and technical reservoirs can absorb [3] (**SDGs 9, 7, and 12**). Government strategies ("Switzerland's Long-Term Climate Strategy" [4], "Adaptation to Climate Change: Action Plan 2020–2025" [5]) and the changing climate itself require adaptation measures (**SDG 13**) which will pose a challenge for tourism. At the same time, to achieve the net zero target, mitigation measures are needed as well. This applies to all economic sectors, and therefore to all aspects of tourism (**SDG 8**). However, distinguishing between tourism and non-tourism activities – and allocating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions accordingly – is a challenge. An additional complicating factor is that a tourism activity often involves a change in location, and that guests consume a bundle of services (both tangible and intangible) from various providers along their journey (**SDG 12**).



As a result, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions occur at several locations: during the journey itself; at the destination; and also at the location in which the consumed goods are produced (SDG 17). This makes it difficult to spatially allocate the emissions that occur and thus to fully account for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The tourism growth model has come under criticism – highlighted, not least, by the Covid-19 pandemic. While growing visitor numbers were previously considered a mark of success, such metrics are increasingly called into question, in view of the negative impacts of tourism (e.g. contribution to climate change, spread of pandemic) [6] (SDGs 13, 3, 15, and 14). This gives rise to a number of questions, such as: How can tourism-related emissions be accounted for and distributed at the destination level, in a way that makes sense? What incentives can best be given to the various actors to enable a transformation? And what role can the various policy levels play (SDGs 16 and 17)?

### How does the University of Bern's Center for Regional Economic Development incorporate the topic of sustainable development into research and teaching?

Two lectures that are part of the Bachelor's programme of the Department of Economics at the University of Bern – Introduction to Tourism Economics I and II – explicitly address the topic of sustainability in relation to tourism. They do so with respect to tourism basics as well as individual specializations from the supply and demand perspective. The first lecture discusses the interactions between tourism and the environment. For example, that – and how – environmental awareness can be created by experiencing nature, or that/how structural interventions for tourism infrastructure in nature can have a negative impact on the environment. The aim is to critically examine the factors that influence the relationship between tourism and the environment. The second lecture builds on these factors

and introduces Müller's magic pentagon of sustainable tourism development. This lecture also looks at the three (out of 17) SDGs – SDGs 8, 12, and 14 – that explicitly mention tourism, and relates these, along with other points of contact between the SDGs and tourism, to tourism in Switzerland. In doing so, it critically examines the Swiss Tourism Strategy and its stated objectives, particularly Objective No. 3 ("Backing sustainable development") [7] and the specified activities.

#### References

URLs last accessed on 12 August 2022. Sources indicated in German are not available in English.

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