



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Sociology and Community Development*

## Assessing the impact of green tourism on sustainable development: A case study of the United Arab Emirates

Maya Khater<sup>1\*</sup> , Yassine Chami<sup>1</sup>, Dina Imad<sup>1</sup>, Nagwa Abouhaiba<sup>1</sup>, & Zeyad Jaffal<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Collage of Law, Abu Dhabi University, UAE<sup>2</sup>Collage of Law, Al Ain University, UAE\*Correspondence: [dr.mayakhater@gmail.com](mailto:dr.mayakhater@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Green tourism has become an important pillar of sustainable development due to its role in directing tourists to environmental tourism sites and mitigating environmental risks, while basically relying on protecting resources and reducing consumption. This study outlines the importance of this tourism in supporting sustainable development goals in the United Arab Emirates and harnessing tourism to implement development plans and evaluates the legal and policy frameworks that support its implementation. Using a descriptive and analytical methodology, the research explores legal and executive measures and initiatives taken by the UAE to apply green tourism in a manner that promises to contribute towards the promotion of a sustainable future and to enhance development at all levels. The findings reveal that the UAE has made significant progress in integrating green tourism into its overall sustainability agenda through policy interventions, infrastructure provision, and environmentally sustainable tourism policies. The UAE's approach to green tourism serves as a model for other countries seeking to establish sustainable tourism sectors. However, challenges remain in achieving full synergy between tourism development and sustainability goals. The study emphasizes the importance of law enforcement, public-private partnerships, and continuous innovation to achieve green tourism as an important contribution to long-term environmental and economic sustainability.

**KEYWORDS:** green development, green tourism, human rights, sustainable development goals, sustainable tourism, United Arab Emirates

### Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

Volume 6, Issue 2, 2025

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: 20 January 2025

Accepted: 13 March 2025

Published: 26 April 2025

### HOW TO CITE

Khater, M., Chami, Y. ., Imad, D., Abouhaiba, N., & Jaffal, Z. . . (2025). Assessing the impact of green tourism on sustainable development: A case study of the United Arab Emirates. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.58256/0m0wvr07>



Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global, an imprint of Royallite Publishers Limited

© 2025 The Author(s). This is an open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## Introduction

Green tourism has become increasingly popular and is now recognized as a key strategy for achieving sustainable development. It focuses on making the best use of natural resources without exhausting them, ensuring that both current and future generations can meet their needs in terms of sustainability, environmental protection, and cultural preservation in tourist regions.

This research provides a systematic review of the existing literature on green tourism, specifically in relation to the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It examines prominent studies and research published in renowned international journals, covering topics such as green tourism, sustainable tourism, and sustainable development within this context.

The study explores the concept of green tourism, its significance, scope, and the challenges it faces. Additionally, it examines the relationship between green tourism and the SDGs, particularly those focusing on inclusive economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity, life on land, and life below water. The research aims to identify the UAE's major green tourism initiatives, policies, and strategies that promote green tourism as an emerging trend. This reflects the nation's dedication to fostering sustainable tourism development through the preservation of the environment, natural resources, and cultural heritage, while also contributing to the well-being of society.

Accordingly, the study raises the following central question:

How does green tourism contribute to sustainable development in the United Arab Emirates, and what are the policy and legal frameworks that support its practice and effectiveness?

## Research Methodology

This study utilizes a descriptive and analytical approach to thoroughly examine the research topic, including its various aspects and outcomes. It involves gathering data and information related to green tourism, its scope, and the challenges it faces. In addition to providing a detailed description, the research analyzes the connection between green tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The study also emphasizes the United Arab Emirates' efforts in implementing the most effective legislation and policies to support green tourism. Its objective is to strengthen the foundation of green tourism and contribute to the advancement of sustainable development across social, economic, and cultural sectors. The research aims to derive practical solutions and recommendations that enhance the impact of these practices, particularly in supporting human rights, with a focus on the right to sustainable development.

## Literature Review

Saleh and Faisal (2024) concluded that green tourism aims to advance efforts in mitigating climate change impacts while promoting sustainable development. While the aspect is important globally, little understanding is being noticed in how to approach the aspect under sustainable development. As such, it is of importance that the issue has to be prioritized by taking immediate political, environmental, social, and economic measures for the promotion of this eco-friendly kind of tourism.

Papadaki (2024) presumed that green tourism develops in the presence of a supportive legal and regulatory environment at the local level, infrastructure development, and increases in local know-how, emphasizing sustainable development. Addressing the need to welcome tourists and cater for their demands, alongside the necessity of taking care of the environment and natural resources, presents a challenge.

Andari and Setiyorini (2016) assert that green tourism plays an important role in promoting sustainable development in the tourism sector. Green tourism takes up ecologically-friendly activities that help in nature conservation and its sustainability for the future. Activities linked with green tourism are attractive to both domestic and international tourists because of their promise in caring for and enhancing the natural environment. Outside of ensuring the safety of the ecosystem, there are other ways that green tourism influences communities and institutions economically around it. These activities can also improve cultural diversity and its appreciation. Fu et al. (2024) emphasize that the global challenges in protecting the natural environment and achieving sustainable development highlight the need to promote responsible green practices across all industries, including tourism. Given the significant environmental impact of the tourism sector, effective mechanisms are necessary to

implement initiatives focused on environmental conservation, reducing the ecological footprint, and fostering sustainable tourism development.

Kiper (2013) reveals that green tourism is a complex activity, which requires tools that could assist in making effective decisions that should correspond to the requirements of sustainable environmental development. This is also important to help avoid the potential environmental hazard of soil degradation, air and water pollution, climate change, and hazardous waste, which has grown enormously as a major concern in the world today because of great risks that threaten the ecosystem and affect human and animal health.

Nekmahmud and Fekete-Farkas (2021) state that green tourism focuses on mitigating negative environmental impacts from the tourism operation and conservation of the local culture. Green tourism denotes sustainable techniques through which effective management of the needs of the environment, local people, businesses, and tourists is conducted.

Ceballos-LascuráIn (1996) explains that green tourism is concerned with making environmentally responsible visits to unpolluted natural areas to enjoy their scenery, plants, and animals and appreciate any accompanying cultural features. This enhances environmental conservation and enables local communities' social and economic development.

According to Al-Romeedy (2024), the introduction of responsible practices and the promotion of green tourism have assisted in reducing some of the negative impacts of traditional tourism, which includes degradation of the environment, cruel treatment of wildlife and animals, harm to the host communities and their culture, and air travel emissions. In applying greener practices, tourist destinations can ensure that their operations bring long-term success and economic development while seeking novel and innovative ways to promote viable development.

While many studies have highlighted the significance of green tourism and its role in driving economic and social development in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the importance of raising awareness and promoting green tourism destinations and sustainable practices, this paper takes a legal perspective with a specific focus on the United Arab Emirates. It seeks to explore sustainable tourism practices in the UAE, evaluate potential challenges, and identify obstacles, with the goal of providing recommendations to further develop and solidify a culture of green tourism.

## **1. Overview of Green Tourism: Definition, Scope, and Challenges**

Green tourism is the type of ecotourism dealing with the protection of the integrity of the ecosystem, participation in cultural activities, and bringing improvement in the well-being of the locals in the host countries. The activity in green tourism will aim at raising tourists' appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural heritage (Saleh & Faisal, 2024). Green tourism is taken as a form of sustainable tourism offering services without being destructive to the environment. It pays attention to the increase in environmental awareness of the tourists and enabling them to enjoy their journey without harming the environment (Furqan et al., 2010).

Green tourism focuses on implementing environmentally sustainable practices in natural settings. It encompasses various eco-friendly travel practices, such as staying in environmentally conscious accommodations, using green transportation, minimizing the negative impact on destinations, avoiding plastic waste, reducing food waste by mindful ordering, and prioritizing the use of local and organic products (Nekmahmud & Fekete-Farkas, 2021).

Green tourism is centered on the responsible use of natural resources, which can contribute to conserving biodiversity and natural heritage, respecting the cultural and social authenticity of communities, and preserving traditional values. It also supports long-term economic growth, ensuring social and economic benefits like job creation, access to social services, and poverty reduction within host communities (Sustainable Development | UN Tourism, n.d.).

The key dimensions of green tourism—environmental, economic, and social—are essential for sustainable development. The environmental aspect involves protecting natural resources, such as water and energy, by using them efficiently to prevent depletion. This includes minimizing waste, reducing environmental degradation, and promoting recycling and renewable resources. Furthermore, it emphasizes the preservation of natural areas from tourism-related damage and the protection of wildlife, marine life, and biodiversity (Saleh & Faisal, 2024).

The economic dimension of green tourism refers to its contribution to national economic growth (Sajwani, 2023). This dimension is linked to aspects of sustainable development, whereby revenues collected from tourism are reinvested in developing infrastructure and boosting the levels of services in the local community. In this regard, green tourism allows the stimulation of the local economy through gainful employment, income generation for local businesses, and encouraging tourists to buy local goods and services (Janusz & Bajdor, 2013).

The social and cultural dimension of green tourism focuses on preserving cultural heritage, fostering the development of local culture, enhancing the quality of life for residents, and involving the community in activities that benefit both tourists and local populations (Janusz & Bajdor, 2013; Saleh & Faisal, 2024).

Green tourism faces various challenges and obstacles. Terms like “Green Tourism,” “Environmental,” “Green,” and “Sustainable” are often associated with one another, yet these concepts can be difficult for many people to fully understand, as they are relatively new and unfamiliar (Graci & Dodds, 2008). On the other hand, the high costs of sustainable practices and the difficulty of financing green tourism projects due to associated risks are among the most prominent challenges. Financial constraints and considerations hinder the ability of tourism companies to commit to implementing measures related to environmental sustainability and green practices. (Graci, 2008) (Papadaki, 2024). In addition to these challenges, green tourism faces obstacles related to the lack of adequate infrastructure facilities, such as dedicated bicycle paths, electric car charging stations, and public networks for sustainable transportation, as well as obstacles related to the shortage of labor and the insufficiency of national cadres and competencies that have the necessary expertise and skills to work in activities related to green tourism and their ability to meet the needs of this vital sector. (Sajwani, 2023) (Saleh & Faisal, 2024)

Understanding the problems of green tourism is crucial for efficient treatment and seeking of novel solutions that may point to the way for sustainable tourism. This cannot be done without raising awareness of the importance of green tourism to all the parties involved: tourists and tourism workers. Besides that, other support will be required to develop financing of tourism projects within the financing provided for green commitment, creating full and efficient infrastructure facilities, and enhancing knowledge and skills of workers in green tourism activities.

## **2. The Role of Green Tourism in Achieving the Right to Sustainable Development**

The right to development is recognized as fundamental and inherent to every individual. As declared in Article 1 of the Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by General Assembly resolution 41/128 on December 4, 1986, economic, social, political, and cultural development are inalienable human rights. These rights are closely linked to others, such as the rights to a clean environment, health, quality education, decent work, clean water, clean energy, justice, and equality.

Sustainable development and the full realization of human rights and freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Achieving the human right to development involves the integration of human rights realization with the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that relate to development and environmental protection. Sustainable development serves as a pathway for promoting and protecting all human rights, improving living standards and well-being, and ensuring a prosperous future for current and future generations (“The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of All Human Rights,” 2019).

Green tourism is closely tied to sustainable development (Nekmahmud & Fekete-Farkas, 2021). It acts as a powerful tool in promoting sustainable development by safeguarding the natural environment, fostering sustainable community development, providing long-term benefits to local populations, and supporting sustainable livelihoods (Kiper, 2013; Saleh & Faisal, 2024). Both green tourism and sustainable development share the same goal: “to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2012).

Additionally, green tourism contributes indirectly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly through its efforts to reduce poverty, environmental degradation, and combat climate change. The table below outlines how green tourism practices align with and support the achievement of all 17 SDGs (The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development, n.d.).

	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b>	<b>Green Tourism Practices Contribute to the Achieving of Goals</b>
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 1</b>	Poverty in all forms and dimensions should be eliminated for all individuals worldwide. Convinced that the whole world needs to raise the level of living, social protection policies and programs, and guaranteeing equal rights of access to economic resources and basic services.	Furthermore, green tourism significantly contributes to poverty alleviation and enhances the income and well-being of local communities by creating sustainable job opportunities in the tourism sector. It also helps reduce unemployment within these communities (Nekmahmud & Fekete-Farkas, 2021).
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 2</b>	Achieve a world free of hunger by 2030. This goal has taken on greater importance as hunger and food insecurity continue to rise, driven by a combination of issues such as the pandemic, conflict, and climate change.	Green tourism can develop sustainable food production systems that can stimulate the principles of fairness in access to land, technology, and markets; integrate local production processes into the same logic and promote/support local products at tourist destinations. It is with these activities that food availability for all will be positively affected and, with food security, improved nutrition may be achieved (SDG 2 Zero Hunger, n.d.)
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 3</b>	Improving people's health and well-being for all at all ages.	Green tourism contributes to economic and social growth, which indirectly contributes to ensuring a healthy life and maintaining well-being. The income generated by this tourism can also be reinvested in improving health care services. (SDG 3 Health & Well Being, n.d.)



<b>Sustainable Development Goal 4</b>	“Ensuring inclusive, equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all” are essential for improving lives and reducing poverty and inequality. Quality education leads to lower child mortality rates, curbs the spread of HIV/AIDS, and fosters gender equality. It also “empowers individuals to lead healthier, more sustainable lives”, promotes tolerance, and contributes to building more peaceful societies.	Green tourism stimulates improved education and can be a catalyst for promoting quality education and increasing investment in the education sector, given that a well-educated and trained workforce is essential to its prosperity. (SDG 4 Education, n.d.)
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 5</b>	Equality between men and women remains an imperative for a world that has to be peaceful, sustainable, and prosperous since it is the foundation of every human right.	On one hand, it significantly promotes gender equality and women’s empowerment by providing equitable and sustainable development opportunities through job creation and paid employment in various sectors of tourism. This enables women to participate in and take leadership roles in both public and private sectors (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 6</b>	“Ensuring access to clean water” and improving the efficiency of sanitation services. This goal is becoming increasingly important due to water scarcity, population growth, increasing water needs in the agricultural, industrial, and energy sectors, and rising global temperatures associated with climate change.	Green tourism is essential for providing water and sanitation services through sustainable water management, unlike traditional tourism, which uses large amounts of water through facilities like swimming pools, irrigation, cooling systems, and drinking water. (SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, n.d.)
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 7</b>	All should have access to energy that is affordable, sustainable, and modern.	Green tourism reduces energy consumption and encourages solar, wind, rainfall, and wave energy compared to traditional tourism. This does reduce carbon emissions and fulfills the sustainability requirement, thereby regulating global warming under SDG 7 Sustainable Energy (n.d.).

<b>Sustainable Development Goal 8</b>	It involves promoting “sustained, inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work” for everyone. This can be accomplished through a proactive focus on youth employment, empowering women economically, and ensuring access to economic opportunities for people of all genders, income levels, and socio-economic backgrounds.	It also fuels economic development and growth in gross domestic product. The industry improves employment opportunities and develops new sources of income and avenues of revenue generation within the local community, enhancing the living standards while alleviating poverty (Manzoor et al., 2019) (SDG 8 Employment & Livelihoods, n.d.).
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 9</b>	Promoting sustainable manufacturing, encouraging innovation, and building resilient infrastructure.	Green tourism is closely related to the three areas of Goal 9, as it relies on improving the quality and sustainability of infrastructure, providing an environment conducive to innovation and promoting technological progress, as well as contributing to the modernization and efficiency of sustainable industries by promoting environmentally friendly industrial practices, including reliance on renewable energy and rationalization of water consumption. (SDG 9 Infrastructure, Industry Innovation, n.d.)
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 10</b>	Reducing income inequality based on gender, age, race, origin, religion, economic status, or any other status is essential because it threatens economic development and social stability and hinders efforts to alleviate poverty and social discrimination.	Green tourism promotes community development and reduces inequality by giving all foreign investors equal opportunities to invest in tourism businesses, involving all stakeholders and local populations in the development process, and helping local communities prosper through rural development and urban renewal. (SDG 10, n.d.)
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 11</b>	“Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”. Sustainable cities epitomize the future of global living in view of such challenges as air pollution, urban sprawl, and the scarcity of public open spaces.	Green tourism creates sustainable and green cities that meet tourists’ needs by creating modern tourist destinations, developing infrastructure and universal access to services, encouraging green investments in pollution reduction, efficient transportation and communication, preserving natural resources and cultural heritage areas, improving the quality of life, and providing high security. (Lu et al., 2021) Green tourism practices also use energy-saving design ideas, proper architectural design standards, and environmentally friendly building materials for all tourist facilities. (Nekmahmud & Fekete-Farkas, 2021)

<b>Sustainable Development Goal 12</b>	Ensure that consumption and production patterns are environmentally sound. It includes resource use efficiency, management efficiency, reduction of environmental impacts, and reductions in toxic substances, waste, and polluting emissions.	Green tourism encourages the adoption of environmental conservation measures and thereby minimizes its impacts on the natural environment; these include handling and managing waste and recycling-reducing carbon emissions due to global warming (Hotel Classification Manual, n.d.). This is consistent with the keenness of green tourism policies to reduce unsustainable consumption of tourism products and avoid the destruction of the tourism environment, accompanied by improving sustainable production performance, which is positively reflected in the sustainable development of the tourism industry, enhancing profits and increasing its capacity. (Fuchs & Lorek, 2005)
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 13</b>	Addressing climate change and mitigating the worsening of global warming. This goal seeks to take immediate and decisive action to effectively mitigate global temperature rise and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reforming human activities related to energy, industry, transport, food, and agriculture systems.	Green tourism helps mitigate the impacts of climate change by lowering energy consumption and encouraging tourism and hospitality businesses to implement sustainable green practices. These efforts reduce the carbon footprint, improve energy efficiency, and promote the transition to renewable energy sources (Saleh & Faisal, 2024).
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 14</b>	Preserving the oceans, seas, and marine resources and using them sustainably.	Marine and coastal green tourism prioritizes the protection of the marine environment by promoting sustainable use of marine resources, maintaining the health of marine ecosystems, and addressing issues like overfishing and marine litter. These green tourism practices contribute to mitigating the impacts of climate change and pollution on marine environments (SDG 14 Life Below Water Marine Conservation, n.d.).
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 15</b>	Preserving life on land, protecting terrestrial ecosystems, ensuring sustainable management of these systems, preventing land degradation, combating desertification, and halting the loss of biodiversity.	Green tourism supports the conservation of biodiversity by preventing harm to wildlife, preserving the diversity of habitats, animals, and wild plants, especially those threatened with extinction, contributing to combating climate change and reducing waste, and promoting low-carbon green development in host countries (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).



<b>Sustainable Development Goal 16</b>	“Promote peaceful and just societies” while ensuring strong institutions are in place. This includes fostering peace, providing access to justice for all, and maintaining effective, accountable institutions.	Green tourism provides better places for people to live and visit and can make significant contributions towards consolidating peace, mitigating conflict, promoting tolerance and understanding, and achieving a prosperous and sustainable world (SDG 16 Peace & Justice, n.d.).
<b>Sustainable Development Goal 17</b>	Foster global partnerships for sustainable development by building collaborations between governments, the private sector, and civil society across both developing and developed nations.	Green tourism strengthens public-private partnerships and involves stakeholders at every level, whether local, regional, or international, for the purpose of urging sustainable tourism development toward improved social, economic, and environmental conditions (Vassileva, 2022).

We conclude by emphasizing the close relationship between green tourism and sustainable development. Its success will lie principally in the balancing act between meeting the needs of tourists and making tourism compatible with valuable social, economic, and environmental strategies for sustainability.

### 3. Key Initiatives in Green Tourism in the United Arab Emirates

Tourism occupies a vital position in the UAE economy, with the tourism sector contributing approximately AED 220 billion in 2023, equivalent to 11.7% of the country’s GDP. (Travel & Tourism in the UAE Reaches New Heights, 2024)

The UAE boasts a strategic location, stunning natural beauty, rich and ancient heritage, security and political stability, and the highest degree of tourism and entertainment establishments and projects. These features have combined to enhance the status of the State as one of the primary hubs for green tourism in the world. The UAE also concentrated on green policies that would contribute to developing and increasing the tourist industry, along with enhancing the infrastructure in a manner coherent with the best international practices in the field of sustainable tourism.

The UAE is committed to advancing green tourism by supporting destinations that promote sustainability and respect for wildlife. This includes the establishment of national parks and nature reserves such as Abu Dhabi’s Mangrove National Park, the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, and Al Wathba Reserve. The UAE has also enacted stringent laws, such as Federal Law No. 9 of 1983, which prohibits the hunting of various wildlife, including birds, rabbits, gazelles, and wild cows. In addition, the country prioritizes marine environment protection, ensuring sustainable and secure marine areas while addressing environmental challenges related to climate change, water, air, and soil quality (The Environment Agency Annual Report, 2022).

To further combat climate change, the UAE is intensifying efforts to achieve carbon neutrality and net-zero emissions through the expansion of green tourism initiatives. This includes the use of technological innovations to meet climate neutrality goals, such as the introduction of a monitoring system that tracks hotels’ engagement in sustainable practices using the Hotel Carbon Emissions Measurement System (Sustainability, n.d.).

Amongst the key initiatives in developing green tourism is the Circular Economy Policy of UAE, 2023, through the optimal utilization of natural resources by reducing material and energy waste, based on tourism according to interest in infrastructure, green transportation, and green manufacturing. Sustainable consumption also depends on the reduction and recycling of waste at tourist destinations (UAE Circular Economy Policy 2021 – 2031, 2023).

Setting up the sustainable tourism guidelines was the most vital move to reach green development and sustainability of tourism. Guides, in this aspect, are a set of recommendations for the steps the tourism sector must take to reduce emissions, mitigate global warming risks, and take action in response to climate change by finding innovative solutions. These guidelines primarily aim at how to support partners and employees of the tourism sector in applying sustainability initiatives to their various operations. This will include cultural and heritage sites, events within tourism, restaurants, hotel establishments, tourist and entertainment attractions, as well as travel agents and tour operators (Sustainable Tourism Guidelines, 2023).

The UAE tourism authorities encourage sustainable or eco-friendly hotels that reduce tourism's negative impacts on nature, reflect local culture, rationalize traditional energy consumption, use alternative renewable and low-carbon energy sources like solar energy, conserve water, manage waste and recycle, and reduce the use of harmful chemicals (Hotel Classification Manual, n.d.). Tourism policies also encourage responsible, low-impact tourism activities such as hiking, animal and bird watching, and enjoying beautiful beaches, historical landmarks, traditional markets, and local culture. They also support the local economy by buying local products and eating at local restaurants or food outlets in hotels. (Hotel Classification Manual, n.d.)

The research concludes that this effort by the United Arab Emirate authorities to protect the environment and preserve the culture has started to bear fruit since they have succeeded in achieving the desired balance between greening of tourism and its sustainability on one hand, and maintaining a high level of tourism services and attracting more tourists and tourism investments on the other hand, which has strengthened its position as a leading example to integrate green tourism into the thriving tourism industry.

These may be done by diversifying tourism products and increasing the variety of the same tourism products that the UAE offers to green tourists. It would be possible by devising integrated programs that will market green tourism sites in order to further promote the green tourism sector.

#### **4. How does Green Tourism in the UAE Promote the Right to Sustainable Development?**

Julia Simpson, CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council, recognized the UAE's success in transforming tourism into a driver of sustainable development. She emphasized that the UAE has harnessed tourism's potential, significantly contributing to building a prosperous economy (Travel & Tourism in the UAE Reaches New Heights, 2024). The UAE's efforts to create a sustainable tourism sector have not only maintained a clean environment for present and future generations but have also advanced one of today's most important human rights: the right to sustainable development (Kabbani & Mimoune, 2021).

The UAE actively promotes green tourism as a means of achieving the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aimed at protecting the planet and ensuring peace and prosperity for all. These goals include eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring good health and well-being, providing quality education, achieving gender equality, and securing clean water, sanitation, and affordable energy. Green tourism also fosters decent work, economic growth, and innovation while promoting sustainable cities, responsible consumption, climate action, and the protection of life on land and underwater. In the UAE, green tourism ensures a high quality of life and contributes to comprehensive economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

Economically, green tourism has played a vital role in the UAE's development, boosting economic diversity and prosperity. The sector has contributed AED 450 billion to the national economy's gross domestic product, attracting AED 100 billion in investments. This has generated employment across various sectors, including hotels, travel agencies, airlines, and passenger transport services. Additionally, tourist spending has risen in sectors like shopping malls, restaurants, entertainment, and cultural centers. These efforts align with the UAE's sustainable economic development strategy, which aims to restructure economic activities, diversify income sources, reduce dependency on oil, and embrace renewable energy (The UAE's Green Agenda - 2030 | The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.; UAE Tourism Strategy 2031 | The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.).

Environmentally, the significance of green tourism in the UAE lies in its role in preserving nature and ecosystems, reducing pollution and consumption, and minimizing waste, all of which ensure a high quality of life. The adoption of the circular economy policy has greatly improved environmental health by promoting clean production, conserving natural resources, and supporting the UAE's vision of becoming a global leader in green development (UAE Circular Economy Policy 2021 – 2031, 2023).

In terms of social development, the UAE's sustainable tourism efforts, under the "We the Emirates Vision 2031," have enhanced global confidence in the UAE's tourism brand. This initiative has elevated the country's status as a leading global tourism destination, respected for preserving its cultural heritage and traditional values (UAE Tourism Strategy 2031 | The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.).

The UAE's approach to sustainable development through green tourism has positioned it as a model for other nations striving to balance an enjoyable tourism experience with environmental preservation. This approach is critical to securing a sustainable future for communities and future generations.

## **Conclusion**

It has been cleared that green tourism is not a slogan, but a style of responsible travel with concern for enjoying the beauty of nature and efficient use of environmental resources with respect for heritage, culture, and customs of locals. Therefore, countries have to give priority to this tourism for achieving sustainable development to support companies for greener tourist destinations.

The study concludes that green tourism and the human right to sustainable development are deeply interconnected, as both focus on ensuring that future generations have the right to enjoy today's tourist destinations. Green tourism practices not only support sustainable development but also promote other human rights, including those related to education, work, equality, well-being, and justice, as well as the right to a clean and healthy environment, access to clean water, and renewable energy.

The study examined the policies and measures implemented by the United Arab Emirates to encourage green tourism, particularly through environmental protection laws and the promotion of sustainable practices within the tourism sector. These efforts align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aim to enhance the sector's contribution to the national economy, attract new investments, and achieve lasting economic, environmental, and social benefits, ultimately attracting more tourists and visitors.

To maximize the impact of green tourism in advancing the right to sustainable development, the research offers the following recommendations:

- Adopt additional initiatives to enhance the UAE's reputation as a leading global destination for green tourism.
- Expand cultural and heritage programs to enrich tourists' experiences and increase green tourism activities.
- Allocate part of green tourism revenues to finance and support projects preserving sustainable environmental development.
- Raise public awareness about green tourism through media, conferences, and films, emphasizing the importance of balancing tourism and environmental protection.
- Engage social media influences to promote green tourism areas, initiatives, and campaigns.
- Provide training courses and workshops to develop the capacities of national professionals in green tourism-related fields.

Finally, developing green tourism to contribute to sustainable development is not without its challenges. It is quite important that natural resources be preserved, and different tourist destinations protected, particularly against an increasingly grave environmental pollution that is detrimental to social and economic welfare in the world. The effort is well worth it, at any rate.

**Funding:** This research was funded by Abu Dhabi University.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors thank Abu Dhabi University for its academic and financial support in conducting this research and publishing it in a reputable journal. They also extend special appreciation to reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions on earlier manuscript drafts.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Disclaimer Statement:** The work is not part of a thesis submitted to any university for the award of any degree.

### **Biographies**

The first author, Dr. Maya Khater, is an Associate Professor of Public International Law and a faculty member at the College of Law at Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates, where she is involved in legal research and academic activities, focus on international law, particularly the protection of human rights.

The second author, Dr. Yassine Chami, is an Assistant Professor of Civil Procedures Law and a faculty member at the College of Law, Abu Dhabi University. His academic work is related to law and legal studies.

The third author, Dr. Dina Imad, is an Assistant Professor of Public Law, and Chair of Public Law Department at the College of Law, Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates.

The fourth author, Dr. Nagwa Abouhaiba, is an Associate Professor of Civil Law and a faculty member at the College of Law, Abu Dhabi University.

The fifth author, Dr. Zeyad Jaffal, is an Associate Professor of Public International Law and a faculty member at the College of Law, Al Ain University, United Arab Emirates. His academic work is related to international law and human rights protection.

### **Authorship and Level of Contribution**

Dr. Maya Khater: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. Dr. Yassine Chami, Dr. Dina Imad, Dr. Nagwa Abouhaiba and Dr. Zeyad Jaffal: Writing – review & editing, Validation, Data curation, Funding acquisition.

## References

- Al-Romeedy, B. (2024). Sustainable Tourism Innovations- A Green Entrepreneurship Perspective. In Dimensions of Regenerative Practices in Tourism and Hospitality. Bharti Publications.
- Andari, R., & Setiyorini, H. (2016). Green Tourism Role in Creating Sustainable Urban Tourism. *South East Asia Journal of Contemporary Business, Economics and Law*, 11(2), 18–26.
- Ardiansyah, R., Yusmur, A., Marlinda, S., Supriyanto, N., & Bigcas, E. V. (2023). Ecotourism and Biodiversity Conservation: Paradigm Shifting and Future Action. *Biodivers*, 2(1), 19–26. <https://doi.org/10.56060/bdv.2023.2.1.1992>
- Ceballos-Lascuráin, H. (1996). Tourism, Ecotourism, and Protected Areas: The State of Nature-Based Tourism Around the World and Guidelines for its Development. IUCN. <https://www.iucn.org/resources/publication/tourism-ecotourism-and-protected-areas-state-nature-based-tourism-around>
- Ecotourism and Protected Areas | UN Tourism. (n.d.). <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/ecotourism-and-protected-areas>
- Fu, M., Huang, S., & Ahmed, S. (2024). Assessing the Impact of Green Finance on Sustainable Tourism Development in China. *Heliyon*, 10(10), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31099>
- Fuchs, D. & Lorek, S. (2005). Sustainable Consumption Governance: A History of Promises and Failures. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 28(3), 261–288. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10603-005-8490-z>
- Furqan, A., Matsom, A. P., & Hussin, R. (2010). Promoting Green Tourism for Future Sustainability. *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, 5(17), 64–74. <http://um.ase.ro/no17/5.pdf>
- Graci, S. R. (2008, January 24). Environmental commitment in the tourism accommodation industry in Sanya, China. Waterloo: University of Waterloo. <https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/bitstream/handle/10012/3536/final%20thesis%20submission%20Jan%2025.pdf?sequence=1>
- Graci, S., & Dodds, R. (2008). Why Go Green? The Business Case for Environmental Commitment in the Canadian Hotel Industry. *Anatolia an International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality/Anatolia an International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 19(2), 251–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2008.9687072>
- Hotel Classification Manual. (n.d.). Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi. Retrieved July 10, 2024, from <https://dct.gov.ae/DataFolder/Files/Hotel-Classification-System-Manual.pdf>
- International Institute for Sustainable Development. (2012). Sustainable Development. <https://www.iisd.org/sd>
- Janusz, G. K., & Bajdor, P. (2013). Towards to Sustainable Tourism – Framework, Activities and Dimensions. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 6, 523–529. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2212-5671\(13\)00170-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2212-5671(13)00170-6)
- Kabbani, N., & Mimoune, N. B. (2021, January 31). Economic diversification in the Gulf: Time to redouble efforts. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/economic-diversification-in-the-gulf-time-to-redouble-efforts/>
- Kiper, T. (2013). Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development. InTech eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.5772/55749>
- Lu, C. W., Huang, J. C., Chen, C., Shu, M. H., Hsu, C. W., & Bapu, B. T. (2021). An Energy-Efficient Smart City for Sustainable Green Tourism Industry. *Sustainable Energy Technologies and Assessments*, 47, 101494. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seta.2021.101494>
- Manzoor, F., Wei, L., Asif, M., Haq, M. Z. U., & Rehman, H. U. (2019). The Contribution of Sustainable Tourism to Economic Growth and Employment in Pakistan. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(19), 3785. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16193785>
- Nekmahmud, M., & Fekete-Farkas, M. (2021). Green Marketing, Investment and Sustainable Development for Green Tourism. In *Tourism in Bangladesh: Investment and Development Perspectives* (pp. 339–361). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-1858-1\\_21](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-1858-1_21)
- Papadaki, E. (2024). Promoting Green Tourism Synergies with Cultural and Creative Industries: A Case Study of Greece. *Sustainability*, 16(2), 633. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16020633>
- Sajwani, A. (2023). Empowering Young Nationals to Create a Developed and Sustainable Tourism Sector. The Official Portal of the UAE Government, January. <https://u.ae/en/participate/blogs/blog?id=953>
- Saleh, M., & Faisal, S. (2024). Green Tourism Promotes Sustainable Development and Combats Climate Change. *Clinical Medicine and Health Research Journal*, 11(12), 70–89.
- SDG 10 Reduce Inequality Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth



Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/equality>

SDG 13 Climate Change Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/climate-change>

SDG 14 Life Below Water Marine Conservation Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/marine-conservation>

SDG 16 Peace & Justice Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/peace-justice-strong-institutions>

SDG 2 Zero Hunger Purpose Tourism for Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/zero-hunger>

SDG 3 Health & Well Being Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/health-well-being>

SDG 4 Education Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/education>

SDG 6 Clean Water & Sanitation Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.-b). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/water>

SDG 7 Sustainable Energy Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.-b). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/sustainable-energy>

SDG 8 Employment & Livelihoods Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/employment-livelihoods>

SDG 9 Infrastructure, Industry Innovation Purpose Tourism For Sustainable Development — Earth Changers. (n.d.). Earth Changers. <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/infrastructure-industry-innovation>

Sustainability. (n.d.). Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi. <https://dct.gov.ae/en/doing.business.with.us/sustainability.2023.aspx>

Sustainable development | UN Tourism. (n.d.). <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development#:~:text=Sustainability%20principles%20refer%20to%20the,guarantee%20its%20long%2Dterm%20sustainability>

Sustainable Tourism Guidelines. (2023). Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi. <https://dct.gov.ae/en/doing.business.with.us/sustainability.2023/sustainable.tourism.guidelines.aspx>

THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development. (n.d.). United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The Environment Agency Annual Report. (2022). Abu Dhabi. Retrieved July 9, 2024, from <https://indd.adobe.com/view/79297453-b680-4b2b-86e1-eccd27616a5b>

The UAE's Green Agenda - 2030 | The Official Portal of the UAE Government. (n.d.). <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/the-uaes-green-agenda-2030>

Travel & Tourism in the UAE Reaches New Heights. (2024). The World Travel & Tourism Council. <https://wttc.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=qjjfgwNRRYA%3d&portalid=0>

UAE Circular Economy Policy | The Official Portal of the UAE Government. (2023). <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/policies/economy/uae-circular-economy-policy>

UAE Tourism Strategy 2031 | The Official Portal of the UAE Government. (n.d.). <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/tourism/uae-tourism-strategy-2031>

Vassileva, A. (2022). Green Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as an Instrument for Sustainable Development. *Journal of World Economy, Transformations & Transitions*. <https://doi.org/10.52459/jowett25221122>