

# Towards a global framework: a systematic review of sustainability tourism indicators to inform a performance index

## Abstract

Tourism sustainability integrates economic, environmental, and social dimensions. Despite its global relevance, there is no standardized framework to assess sustainability across these three pillars, limiting comparability and informed decision-making. This study aims to address this gap by identifying and synthesizing tourism sustainability indicators, laying the foundation for the development of a composite Tourism Sustainability Performance Index (TSPI). For this purpose, a Systematic Quantitative Literature Review (SQLR) was conducted, analysing 120 peer-reviewed articles published between 2002 and March 2025. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, the review examined types of indicators used, methodological approaches, geographic trends, and how each study addressed the three sustainability pillars. The findings reveal a strong emphasis on environmental indicators, with 66% of studies adopting an integrated approach across all three pillars. Quantitative methods dominate (44.2%), followed by mixed methods (36.7%). Research is largely concentrated in Europe and Asia, with significant gaps in contributions from Africa and South America. Key areas identified for future research include indicator standardization, integration of emerging technologies, and regionally adaptable measurement tools. This review provides the necessary groundwork for developing a globally applicable TSPI. By consolidating existing indicators and research trends, it supports the creation of a unified measurement framework that can inform policy, enable global benchmarking, and guide the tourism sector toward more sustainable and data-driven decision-making.