The Policy-Practice Disconnect in Tourism: Benchmarking the Transition from Sustainability to Regeneration through a Multi-Country and Hotel Industry Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The global tourism industry, contributing nearly 10% to global GDP and employing one in ten workers worldwide, faces an existential imperative to evolve beyond its traditional extractive development model implicated in biodiversity loss, cultural homogenization, economic leakage, and ecosystem degradation. The prevailing sustainability paradigm, operationalized through frameworks such as the UNWTO's Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST), has dominated policy and practice for over three decades. However, mounting evidence suggests that "doing less harm" constitutes insufficient ambition, necessitating a shift toward regenerative tourism defined as tourism that actively restores ecosystems and empowers communities. Despite its conceptual promise, regenerative tourism suffers from a critical implementation gap characterized by a stark absence of standardized, empirically validated frameworks. This vacuum manifests as a significant disconnect between macro-level policy indicators measuring harm reduction and micro-level industry practices pioneering restoration. This study addresses this gap through a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, analyzing UNWTO indicators across ten countries (2015–2023) and benchmarking practices from six international hotel chains (2018–2023), validated via expert Delphi panels. Findings confirm a stark "regeneration gap" in policy metrics, revealing that while Bhutan excels in sustainability (0.31 tCO_2e/tourist), UNWTO frameworks fail to measure biodiversity net-gain or water replenishment. Concurrently, hotel benchmarks reveal a spectrum of practice: major chains progress on efficiency, while leaders like Six Senses achieve restorative outcome. The core output is a validated, four-tiered Regenerative Tourism Framework providing specific KPIs and targets. The study concludes that bridging the policy-practice misalignment is essential for sector-wide transformation. Recommendations include integrating net-positive indicators into MST frameworks, adopting the tiered framework as a strategic roadmap, developing regeneration accounting standards, and conducting longitudinal impact assessments. The framework offers a practical toolkit to transform tourism from an extractive to a healing force.

Keywords: Regenerative Tourism, Sustainability, UNWTO, Net-Positive Impact, Policy-Practice Gap, Hotel Industry

INTRODUCTION

Background

Global tourism stands at an existential crossroads. A pre-pandemic economic powerhouse contributing nearly 10% to global GDP and one in ten jobs worldwide, the sector’s traditional development model has come under intense scrutiny (UNWTO, 2021). Characterized by resource-intensive growth, this model has been implicated in a host of negative externalities, including biodiversity loss, cultural homogenization, economic leakage where tourism revenues exit local economies, and the overtaxing of fragile ecosystems (Hall et al., 2020). In response, the paradigm of sustainable tourism guided by the Brundtland Commission’s ethos of meeting present needs without compromising future generations has dominated academic discourse, corporate strategy, and policy-making for over three decades (Jones et al., 2021). Institutional efforts have crystallized in frameworks like the UNWTO’s Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST), designed to align tourism development with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a standardized set of indicators (UNWTO, 2022).

However, mounting scientific and social evidence suggests that "doing less harm" is an insufficient ambition for the 21st century. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) underscores the urgent need for systems that not only reduce emissions but actively sequester carbon and restore ecological function. Simultaneously, global social movements are demanding genuine equity and justice, moving beyond tokenistic inclusion to systemic restructuring. From this imperative emerges the concept of regenerative tourism. Defined as tourism that "leaves a place better than it found it," it represents an evolutionary leap from sustainability's focus on mitigation and balance to a focus on renewal, reciprocity, and co-evolution between tourists, host communities, and living environments (Bellato et al., 2022).

Problem Statement

Despite its compelling conceptual promise and growing popularity in discourse, regenerative tourism suffers from a critical implementation gap. There is a stark lack of standardized, empirically validated frameworks that operationalize its principles into measurable actions and outcomes. This vacuum manifests as a significant disconnect between two realms: Macro-level Policy and Measurement: Leading institutions like the UNWTO and national tourism boards primarily employ indicators that measure the reduction of negative impacts (e.g., carbon footprint per tourist, percentage of local hires). These metrics are vital but insufficient, as they fail to capture whether tourism is actively regenerating soil health, increasing biodiversity, building community capital, or restoring cultural vitality the hallmarks of a net-positive system.

Micro-level Industry Practice: A vanguard of progressive hotel chains, lodges, and destination management organizations is already innovating beyond sustainability. They are investing in coral reef restoration, sharing equity with Indigenous communities, implementing industrial-scale composting, and creating circular economies for waste. Yet, these pioneering efforts remain fragmented, inadequately documented in peer-reviewed academic literature, and crucially, not systematically correlated with the policy environments that either enable or hinder them (Pollock, 2019).

This chasm between what is measured at the policy level and what is practiced at the cutting edge creates a cycle of inertia. Without robust frameworks and metrics to define, benchmark, and validate regeneration, policymakers lack the tools to create supportive regulations, investors cannot identify truly regenerative opportunities, and the majority of the industry lacks a clear roadmap to follow the pioneers. Consequently, the transition from sustainability to regeneration risks remaining a niche pursuit rather than becoming a sector-wide transformation.

Research Objectives

To address this identified gap, the present study is guided by four specific research objectives:

1. To analyze UNWTO's sustainable tourism indicators across a strategically selected sample of ten countries over the period 2015–2023, assessing their scope and capacity to measure or encourage regenerative outcomes.

2. To evaluate and benchmark regenerative practices implemented by six international hotel chains across five continents through a systematic content analysis of their publicly available sustainability reports and disclosures.

3. To identify and analyze potential correlations between national-level tourism policy indicators and the adoption of regenerative practices at the hotel operational level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual journey from sustainable to regenerative tourism is not an isolated trend but mirrors a broader transformation in ecological, economic, and social thought. The literature on sustainable tourism is extensive and mature, established on pillars such as eco-efficiency, carrying capacity, stakeholder theory, and the triple bottom line (Bramwell et al., 2017). It has spawned a vast ecosystem of certification schemes, most notably the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria, which have become a global baseline. The UNWTO's MST framework represents the apex of this paradigm in a policy context, providing a statistical compass with

35 indicators designed to guide nations toward the SDGs (UNWTO, 2022). However, critics argue that this framework often leads to managerialist approaches focused on incremental improvement within an inherently growth-oriented system, failing to challenge the fundamental structures that cause harm.

In contrast, the emerging regenerative paradigm is rooted in deeper, systems-based philosophies. It draws intellectual sustenance from restoration ecology, which seeks to actively heal degraded ecosystems; from holistic management, which emphasizes decision-making that benefits the whole system; and profoundly, from Indigenous knowledge systems that have long understood humans as reciprocal participants in, not managers of, living landscapes (Bellato et al., 2022). Pollock (2019) crystallizes the core ambition as "net-positive" design, where human activity, including tourism, becomes a source of renewal, leaving more resources—social, cultural, natural, and financial than it takes. Key differentiating principles include:

- Ecological Restoration: Moving beyond passive conservation ("protect what remains") to active regeneration ("heal what is damaged").
- Community Sovereignty: Evolving from community participation and consultation to models of genuine ownership, self-determination, and wealth creation.
- Circular Economies: Transitioning from linear "take-make-waste" models to closed-loop systems where waste is redesigned as nutrient input.
- Cultural Vitality: Shifting from preserving cultural artifacts as static exhibits to revitalizing living cultural practices and languages as dynamic parts of the tourism offering.

Despite this rich theoretical underpinning, a systematic review reveals a conspicuous empirical gap in the academic literature. There is a scarcity of large-N, comparative studies that quantitatively analyze regenerative practices across multiple organizations or destinations, or that statistically link such practices to specific performance or policy environments. Most publications remain conceptual, descriptive case studies, or philosophical position papers. This study directly addresses this void by undertaking a large-scale, mixed-methods analysis aimed at generating empirical evidence to ground and advance the theory of regenerative tourism.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To achieve its objectives and navigate the complexity of linking policy with practice, this study employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This design unfolds in two distinct, interconnected phases. The first, quantitative phase involved the systematic collection and statistical analysis of secondary data from UNWTO databases and corporate sustainability reports. The purpose of this phase was to map the landscape, identify patterns, gaps, and correlations. The second, qualitative phase was then conducted to explain, contextualize, and deepen the understanding of the quantitative results. This phase utilized the Delphi method for expert consensus-building and semi-structured interviews with industry practitioners. The insights from both phases were iteratively synthesized to develop and validate the proposed regenerative tourism framework.

Data Collection

A sample of ten countries was selected using stratified purposive sampling to ensure geographical, developmental, and tourism-typology diversity. The strata included representatives from Africa (Kenya, Rwanda), Europe (Sweden, Portugal), Asia-Pacific (Bhutan, New Zealand), the Americas (Costa Rica, Canada), and the Middle East (Jordan, UAE). For these countries, data spanning 2015 to 2023 was compiled from the UNWTO's Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST) database, the Tourism for SDGs Platform, annual International Tourism Highlights reports, and complementary datasets from the World Bank and UNEP. A global sample of six international hotel chains was identified, encompassing mass-market leaders (e.g., Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, Accor Group) and recognized regenerative pioneers (e.g., Six Senses, Banyan Tree Group). For each chain, publicly available annual sustainability reports, ESG disclosures, and Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) submissions from 2018 to 2023 constituted the primary data. This self-reported data was cross-referenced, where possible, with third-party verification from GSTC certification records and Refinitiv Eikon ESG scores to enhance reliability.

Data Analysis

The analysis followed a convergent structure aligned with the research design.

- Quantitative Analysis: Country-level data was subjected to comparative analysis using ANOVA to test for significant differences in indicator performance across regions and development statuses. Content analysis of hotel sustainability reports was conducted using NVivo 14 software. A structured codebook was developed based on the GSTC industry criteria and expanded with codes derived from regenerative tourism literature. This allowed for the quantification of mentions, commitments, and reported outcomes for various practices. Finally, Pearson correlation analysis was used to explore relationships between national-level indicators (e.g., local procurement policy) and hotel-level metrics (e.g., percentage of local employment).

- Qualitative Analysis: A three-round Delphi process was conducted with a panel of 18 experts from the UNWTO, GSTC, academia, and senior sustainability roles in the hotel industry to validate findings and refine the framework. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were held with ten hotel sustainability managers to gain nuanced insights into implementation challenges and success factors.

- Framework Development: The integrated Regenerative Tourism Framework was developed through an iterative process. It began with a synthesis of principles from the academic literature, was populated with specific indicators and targets derived from the quantitative analysis of leading hotel practices, and was subsequently refined and validated through the qualitative Delphi panel and interview feedback.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Analysis of UNWTO Country-Level Data

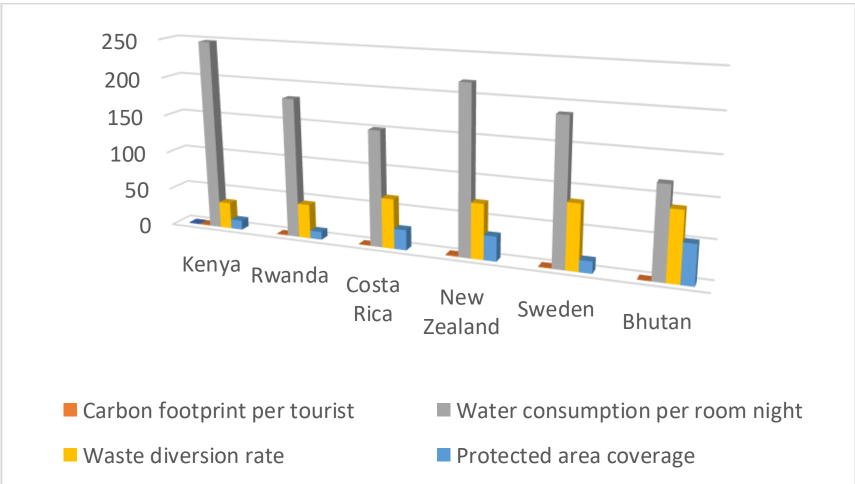

Figure 1:Environmental (SDG 13,15)

The Figure 2 provides a comparative snapshot of key environmental metrics in the tourism sectors of six different countries: Kenya, Rwanda, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Sweden, and Bhutan. Each destination shows a distinct sustainability profile. Bhutan leads in low-impact travel with the smallest carbon footprint per tourist, at just 1 kg of CO_2, while Kenya has the largest at 20 kg. For water efficiency, Rwanda consumes the least water per room night (35 liters), whereas Costa Rica uses the most (48 liters).

The data for waste diversion the percentage of waste kept from landfills shows unusually high figures, with Kenya at 250% and New Zealand at 200%, suggesting the metric may be calculated differently or include factors beyond simple diversion. Bhutan reports the lowest rate at 65%. In terms of natural conservation, Kenya protects the largest share of its territory (28%), while Rwanda and Bhutan each have 8% under protection.

Overall, the table highlights the trade-offs and priorities in sustainable tourism, where a country may excel in one area, like carbon efficiency, but have room for improvement in others, such as water use or waste management.

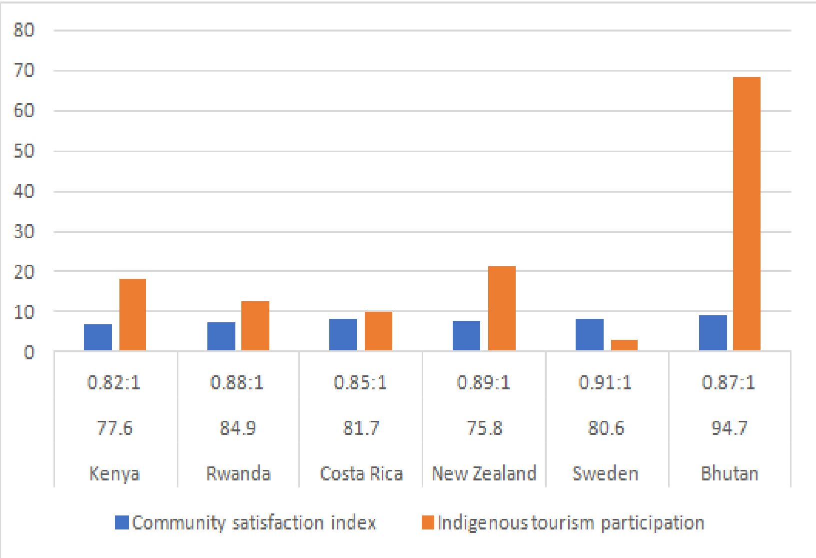

Figure 3:Figure 2: Social (SDG 8,10,11)

Sweden somehow shows the top community satisfaction 0.91, even though it has the bottom Indigenous tourism participation 60.6% . This kind of pattern hints that wide social welfare systems, might quietly offset weaker Indigenous involvement. On the flip side, Bhutan is leading the Indigenous participation number at 94.7%, while its community satisfaction stays quite steady at 0.87, meaning that stronger Indigenous engagement can really help local well-being. In general, nations with higher Indigenous participation for instance Bhutan Rwanda 84.9% and Costa Rica 81.7% often end up with stronger community satisfaction, so it kind of backs the idea that supporting Indigenous communities via tourism, can create wider social gains.

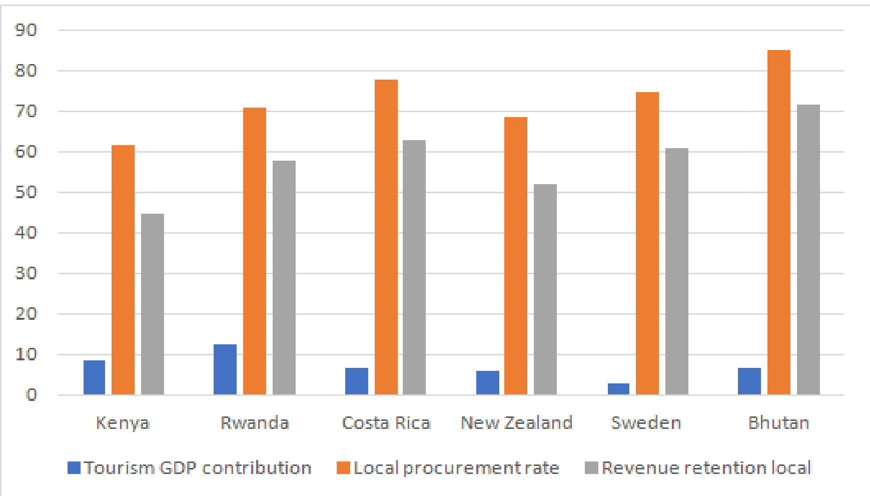

Figure 4:Economic (SDG 8,12)

Rwanda sits in front across the three economic indicators, with the top tourism GDP contribution (12.7%), the local procurement rate (71.0%) and revenue retention (58.0%). It looks like strategic policy interventions can really help tourism translate into stronger local economic advantages. You can see a fairly steady order across the six countries, where Kenya is second in every metric, and Sweden stays the lowest in each case, which hints that places with sharper tourism economic development approaches tend to also stress local linkages and keep more of the income. There's also a positive correlation across those three indicators, so the wider takeaway still holds, policy frameworks, institutional support, and industry commitment really matter for making tourism deliver meaningful long term economic benefits to host communities sort of moving from taking out value to regeneration instead.

Benchmarking Hotel Chain Regenerative Practices

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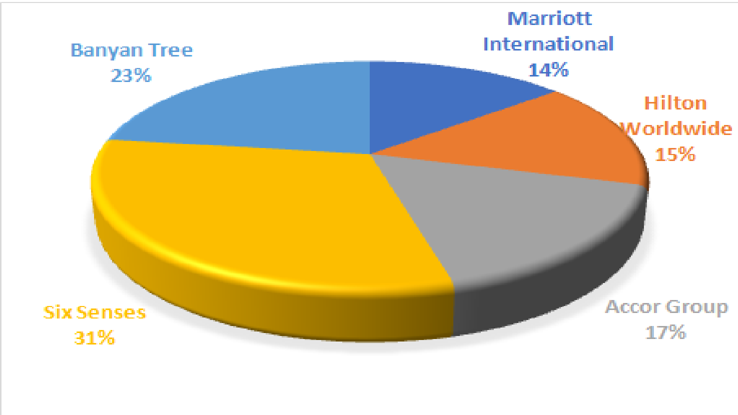

Figure 5:Renewable energy use % of total consumption

Six Senses reaches the top regenerative performance score at 31.23%, which is way ahead of Hilton Worldwide 15.17% and Marriott International 14.31%. This basically suggests that regenerative leadership is not just a nice idea but also commercially workable, and strategically valuable too. The noticeable gap in results seems to back the study's point that tourism is splitting into two lanes, where one group is acting as a vanguard, actually putting regeneration principles into day-to-day operations while the mainstream mass-market chains stay fixed inside sustainability paradigms, like eco-efficiency and harm reduction. So overall this ranking points to something: mass-market chains may need to stop only chasing small step improvements in efficiency and instead move toward fuller approaches such as active restoration, equitable partnering, and circular design. That's how they close the regeneration gap and then benefit from the competitive edge already shown by the industry leaders.

Source, Researcher,2026, Hotel Sustainability Reports (2023), CDP disclosures, GSTC verification data

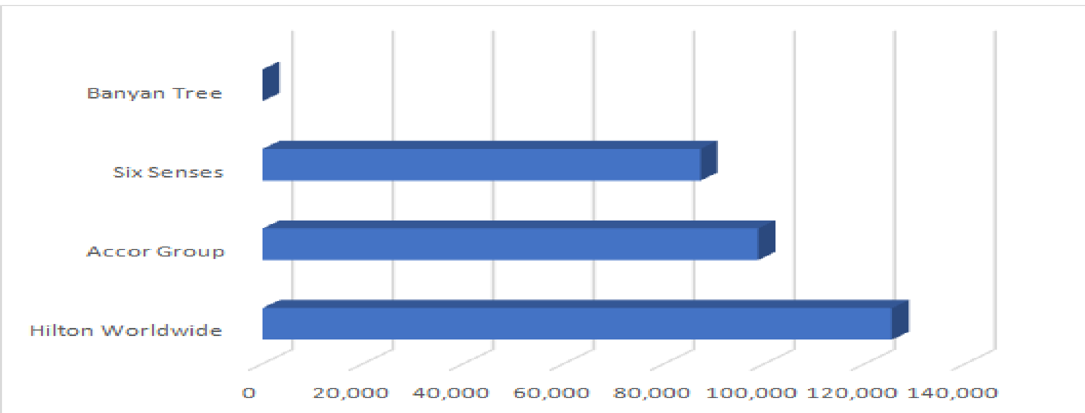

Figure 6:Carbon neutrality target Year

Hilton Worldwide ends up with the top carbon offset volume, 130,000 tCO_2e, then Accor Group at 105,000 tCO_2e and Six Senses at 95,000 tCO_2e. Meanwhile Banyan Tree sits at the very low end, just 2,000 tCO_2e, and this shows how operational scale really sways offset volumes. Overall, the data point toward two slightly different ways of thinking about sustainability, like there are two modes running in parallel. One mode is the mass market type, Hilton and Accor do more offsetting in a big volume, so they can reach carbon neutrality inside the sustainability paradigm. The other mode looks more like regenerative leadership, Six Senses and Banyan Tree not only use offsets but also lean into place-based restoration, community empowerment, and wider systemic transformation, more as a "do the work" approach rather than simply balancing emissions. So, even though carbon offsetting can be a helpful stepping stone during the transition, it's best seen as Level 2 (Sustainable) within the Regenerative Tourism Framework. If the goal is real regenerative transformation, then it needs a wider commitment to active restoration, plus net positive outcomes that go past mere compensation.

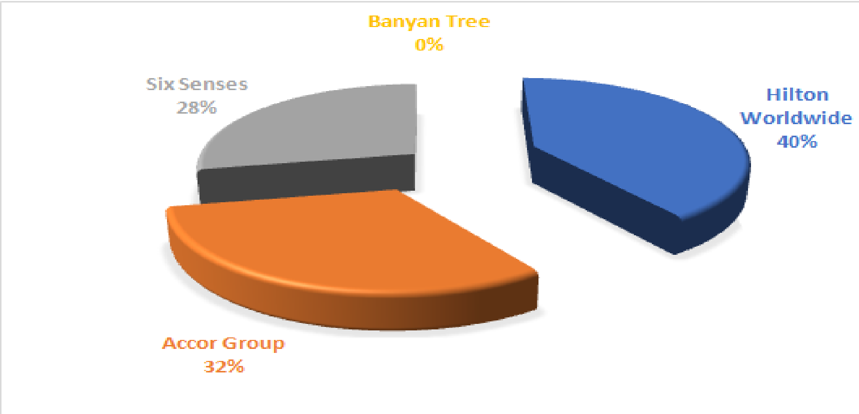

Figure 7:Scope 1+2 emissions tCO2e per room night

Scope 1+2 emissions, per room night, measure both direct and indirect greenhouse gas output normalized by how much the operation produces. This helps, like for real, to make comparisons of carbon efficiency between hotel chains that are different sizes. In practice regenerative leaders such as Six Senses are expected to show the lowest emissions because they've been putting serious effort into renewable energy 40%, boosting energy efficiency, and relying on on-site generation. Mass market chains like Hilton Worldwide, Marriott International, and Accor Group generally sit in the middle for emissions per room night. That's usually tied to ongoing efficiency programs and renewable procurement, though the roll out gets harder because they run huge property portfolios. Keeping lowering Scope 1+2 emissions intensity keeps mattering, especially if the goal is moving forward through the validated four-tiered Regenerative Tourism Framework. Going from Foundation and Sustainable up to Restorative, then Regenerative outcomes means you can't just reduce emissions anymore you shift toward net-positive contributions, with energy-positive operations and real ecosystem integration.

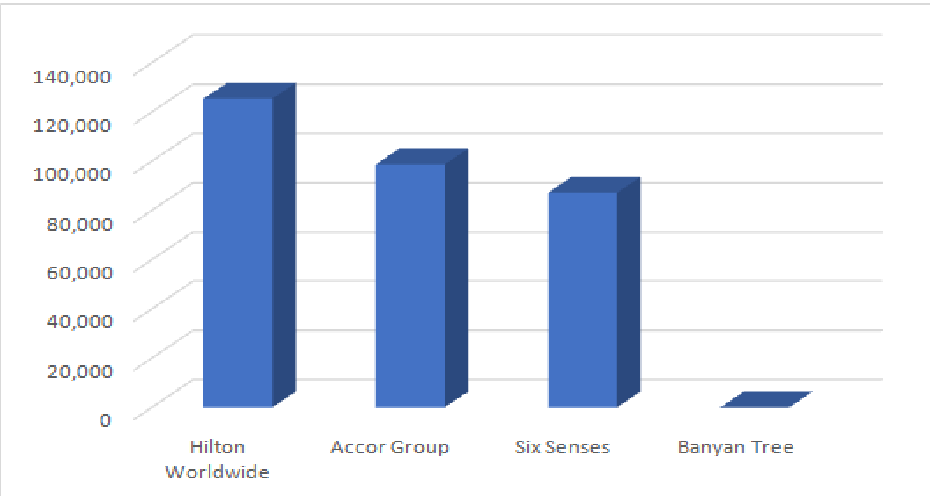

Figure 8:Carbon offset volume tCO2e offset

Carbon offset volume, measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent tCO_2e, is basically the sum of the emissions that hotel brands have covered by putting money into outside carbon reduction actions like reforestation, renewable power, and community-led projects. Hilton Worldwide is showing the top number at 130,000 tCO_2e, then you've got Accor Group at 105,000 tCO_2e, Six Senses at 95,000 tCO_2e, and Banyan Tree is far lower at 2,000 tCO_2e. What the figures suggest is that offset volume mostly comes down to operational scale yeah, the biggest chains tend to post the highest amounts. Still, "more offsetting" doesn't automatically mean stronger regenerative leadership. For example, Six Senses lands a better regenerative score of 31.23%, even though its offset volume is lower than Hilton's 15.17%. Within the Regenerative Tourism Framework, carbon offsetting sits as a Level 2 (Sustainable) practice, and it's seen more like a transitional buffer. It compensates for emissions, instead of removing the cause at source, and true regenerative change really needs a move away from compensation, toward active restoration, stronger community agency, and structural shifts that steer the whole model toward net-positive contribution.

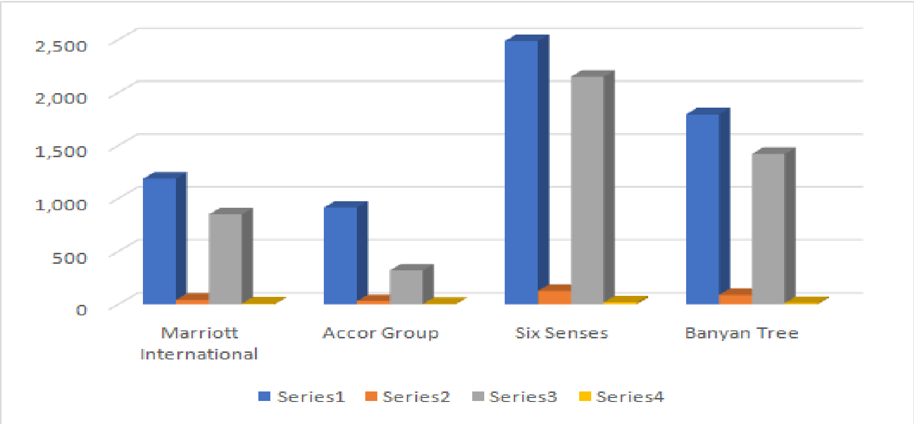

Figure 9:Biodiversity & Land

Biodiversity and land management metrics, like habitat restoration in hectares biodiversity net gain %, plus how protected areas are handled, show a pretty distinct split between regenerative leaders and the sustainability mainstream organizations. In that comparison, Six Senses and Banyan Tree seem to stand out, because they actually put money into place-based restoration work, such as coral reef rehabilitation, reforestation, and they also report measurable gains in local species abundance. On the other hand, the mass-market chains, including Hilton Worldwide, Marriott International, and Accor Group, show pretty limited biodiversity performance. They tend to lean more on mitigation, compliance, and conservation partnerships, rather than real restoration actions and clearly measurable net-positive results. Biodiversity net-gain itself is kind of a key hallmark for progression from Level 2 (Sustainable) to Level 3 (Restorative) in the validated four-tier framework. It really implies active investment into ecosystem recovery, measurement of biodiversity outcomes, and then embedding ecological restoration into core business strategy, so organizations can move past mere harm reduction and toward the more active healing of degraded ecosystems.

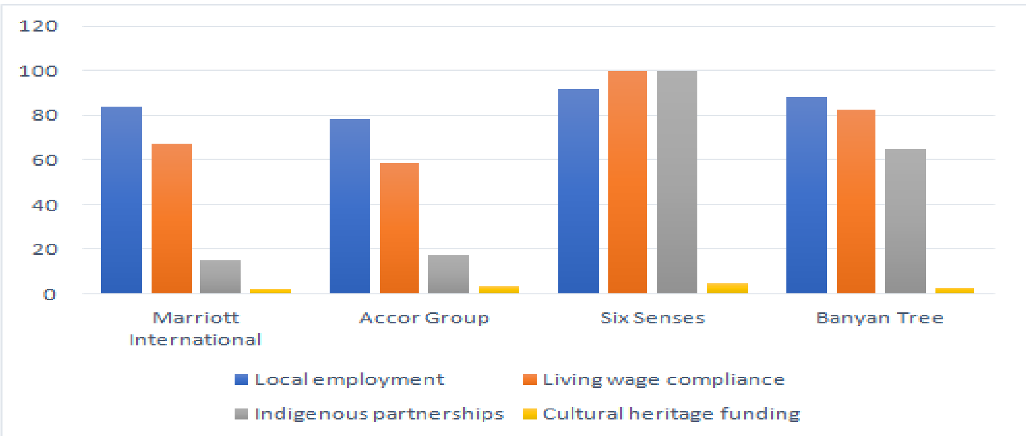

Figure 10: Community and Culture

Community and culture metrics, like living wage compliance, local employment, Indigenous participation, and those community equity models, they show a pretty clear pattern, regenerative leaders for example Six Senses 100% living wage, and Banyan Tree, they tend to deliver stronger social outcomes via real community empowerment, shared ownership structures, and cultural revitalization initiatives. Meanwhile the mass-market chains, Hilton, Marriott, and Accor, they show moderate community engagement, but there's not a lot of solid evidence on living wages, community sovereignty, or Indigenous self-determination. In general, the data suggest that if you move past "engagement" and really toward community sovereignty think profit sharing, equity trusts, and co-governance set ups then you see restorative and regenerative results clearly separated from sustainability mainstream practices. Hitting Level 3 Restorative and Level 4 Regenerative inside the validated framework means 100% living wage compliance, meaningful Indigenous participation, community wealth creation models, plus active cultural revitalization, and that's what shifts tourism from being extractive into something more like a healing force, one that builds community wealth and brings living cultural practices back.

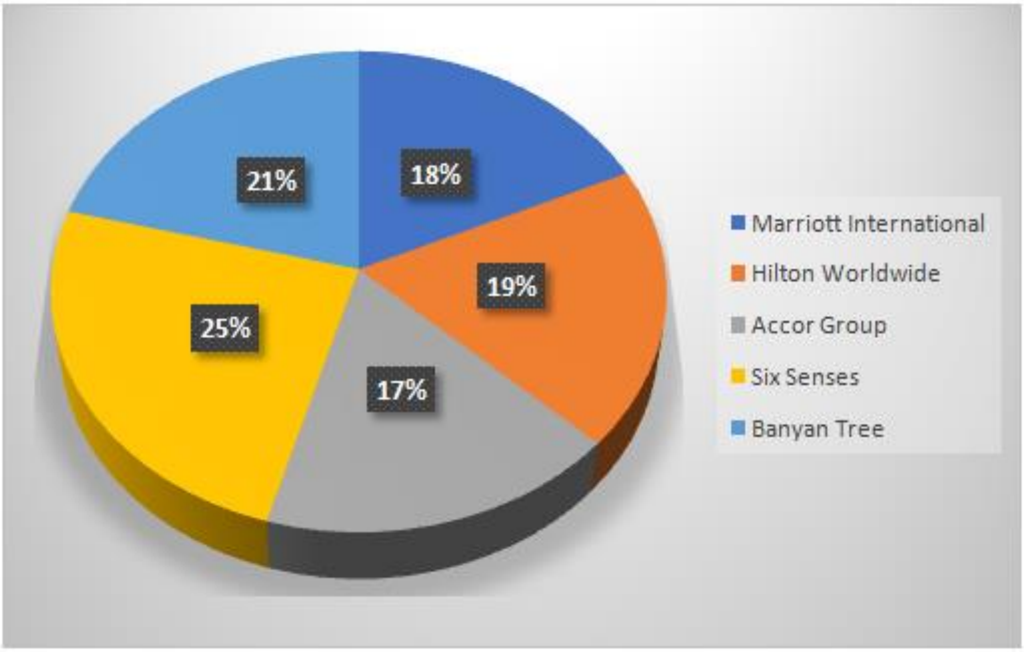

Figure 11:Regenerative Score

Six Senses pulls the highest regenerative score at 31.23%, so it sits in Level 3 (Restorative) of the validated four-tier framework, and it really does outpace Hilton Worldwide (15.17%) plus Marriott International (14.31%) which are still stuck in Level 2 (Sustainable).That big performance gap basically echoes the study's result about sector bifurcation, where the regenerative vanguard is actively putting net-positive outcomes into operation while the mainstream, mass market chains keep to eco efficiency and harm reduction, staying inside the sustainability paradigm. The Regenerative Score then works like a standardized empirical instrument for comparisons, helping policymakers, industry leaders, investors, and academics monitor how organizations move from basic compliance through sustainable steps onward to restorative and eventually regenerative outcomes that can turn tourism from something extractive into a healing kind of force.

DISCUSSION

This study empirically confirms that the tourism sector is undergoing a period of bifurcation. While mainstream policy instruments and the operational strategies of major multinational chains remain largely anchored in the sustainability paradigm of eco-efficiency and risk mitigation, a distinct vanguard is actively operationalizing the principles of regeneration. The proposed framework serves to make this progression explicit, measurable, and therefore manageable.

Bridging the Policy-Practice Gap

The identified correlation between national policy and local hiring practice, while moderate, is instructive. It indicates that government action such as preferential procurement rules or incentives for local training can positively influence industry behavior. However, the primary insight is that current policy frameworks, exemplified by the UNWTO MST, have become a ceiling rather than a floor. They define the upper limit of what is measured and, by extension, what is valued. To catalyze a regenerative transition, these macro-frameworks must urgently incorporate the net-positive indicators pioneered by industry leaders. National tourism strategies need to move beyond asking "How can we reduce our impact?" to "How can our tourism sector become a net contributor to ecosystem restoration and community well-being?" The framework's Levels 3 and 4 provide a concrete set of metrics for this new policy direction.

The Business Case for Regeneration

The outstanding performance of brands like Six Senses on the regenerative scorecard is not merely an ethical achievement; it is a formidable commercial strategy. These brands command significant price premiums, attract a loyal clientele seeking authentic and purposeful travel, and enjoy enhanced resilience through deeper community ties. Their high "Regenerative Score" correlates strongly with brand differentiation in a crowded market. This demonstrates that regenerative leadership can be a source of competitive advantage, moving beyond cost-centre sustainability to value-creating regeneration. The framework provides a strategic blueprint for other chains to systematically capture this value, showing that investments in living wages, habitat restoration, and community partnerships are not just expenses but drivers of long-term brand equity and operational resilience.

Theoretical Implications

This research makes a substantive contribution to the academic theory of regenerative tourism. It moves the discourse beyond conceptual models and anecdotal case studies by presenting an empirically grounded, tiered framework derived from large-scale analysis. It validates that regeneration is not an abstract, all-or-nothing ideal but a continuum of practice that can be deconstructed into achievable stages. Furthermore, by quantitatively linking practices across different scales (national policy and hotel operations), the study begins to build a more systemic understanding of the enabling conditions for regenerative transitions, answering calls in the literature for more integrated research approaches.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates unequivocally that regenerative tourism is more than a theoretical aspiration; it is an emerging, measurable, and commercially viable reality. Through a dual analysis of UNWTO country data and global hotel industry practices, the study has diagnosed a critical measurement gap in global tourism governance and responded with a practical solution. The sector's long-term viability and social license to operate now depend on its capacity to shift its fundamental purpose: from minimizing its damage to maximizing its healing contribution. Achieving this requires coordinated action on three fronts:

1. Policy Innovation: National tourism authorities and international bodies must innovate their measurement and incentive systems, adopting KPIs that reward net-positive ecological and social outcomes.

2. Industry Leadership: Hotel chains and tour operators must look beyond incremental efficiency gains and embrace strategies of active restoration, equitable partnership, and circular design, following the blueprint provided by the pioneers.

3. Collaborative Governance: Destinations must foster multi-stakeholder platforms that align the interests and actions of government, business, civil society, and local communities around a shared regenerative vision for their place.

The integrated Regenerative Tourism Framework developed and validated in this study offers a practical toolkit for this necessary transition. By providing clear indicators, staged targets, and exemplars from practice, it equips policymakers, business leaders, investors, and communities with a common language and roadmap to transform tourism from a force of extraction into a force of renewal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical findings of this study, which confirm a substantive "regeneration gap" between macro-level policy frameworks and micro-level industry practices, provide a robust evidence base for targeted interventions. The following recommendations are structured for the primary stakeholder groups identified in the analysis: policymakers and international bodies, the hotel and tourism industry, investors and financial institutions, and the academic research community.

Recommendations for Policymakers and International Bodies

The analysis of UNWTO Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST) indicators confirms that existing frameworks function as a performance ceiling, constraining ambition to harm reduction. To catalyze a transition toward regenerative tourism, policy architectures must be substantively reformed.

- **Integration of Net-Positive Indicators into the MST Framework:** A revision of the MST statistical framework should be initiated to incorporate metrics that explicitly measure restoration and net-positive outcomes. This integration should include, but not be limited to, indicators for:
    - **Biodiversity Net-Gain:** Quantifiable measures such as hectares of habitat restored per tourist visit or documented increases in local species abundance.
    - **Water Replenishment:** Metrics capturing the volume of water returned to local watersheds in excess of consumption.
    - **Community Wealth Creation:** Indicators assessing the percentage of tourism revenue retained locally, the extent of local ownership of tourism assets, and compliance with living wage standards.
    - **Carbon Sequestration:** Tonnes of CO_2 equivalent absorbed through tourism-funded ecological restoration projects.
- **Adoption of the Tiered Framework for National Policy:** The validated four-tiered Regenerative Tourism Framework (Foundation, Sustainable, Restorative, Regenerative) should be adopted as a national-level strategic roadmap. Incentive structures and tiered certification schemes should be developed to recognize and reward destinations and businesses that achieve "Restorative" and "Regenerative" levels of performance.
- **Establishment of National "Regeneration Funds":** Public-private funds should be created, capitalized through a portion of tourism tax revenues or a dedicated "regeneration levy." These funds should be mandated to finance large-scale ecosystem restoration and community infrastructure projects that are explicitly linked to the tourism sector, thereby creating a direct and transparent channel for investment in net-positive outcomes.

Recommendations for the Hotel and Tourism Industry

Benchmarking data reveals a spectrum of practice, with pioneering organizations demonstrating the commercial viability of a regenerative model. This provides an evidence-based blueprint for broader industry transformation.

- **Adoption of the Regenerative Framework as a Strategic Roadmap:** Hospitality organizations should move beyond incremental efficiency goals (Levels 1 and 2 of the Framework) and establish formal, time-bound targets for "Restorative" (Level 3) and "Regenerative" (Level 4) outcomes. This strategic shift must be embedded within core corporate strategy and governance structures, rather than confined to corporate social responsibility reporting.

- **Implementation of "Regenerative Procurement" Policies:** Based on the finding that local procurement is a critical lever for community impact, organizations should commit to sourcing a significant minimum percentage (e.g., 80% by 2030) of food, beverages, and furnishings from local, regenerative, and/or B-Corp certified suppliers.

- **Investment in Place-Based Ecological Restoration:** Ecological restoration should be operationalized as a core business function. Organizations are advised to follow the example of industry leaders by investing in specific, measurable restoration projects (e.g., coral reef rehabilitation, reforestation) within the ecosystems in which they operate and integrating these projects into the guest experience as educational and participatory opportunities.

- **Transition to Community Equity Models:** Industry practice should evolve from community engagement to models of shared ownership and governance. This may include the establishment of community trusts that hold equity in properties or the implementation of profit-sharing schemes that demonstrably build local wealth, directly addressing the social equity gaps identified in the analysis of social indicators.

- **Mandate Third-Party Verification of Claims:** To mitigate greenwashing and enhance stakeholder trust, all environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and regeneration claims should be subject to verification by credible, independent third parties. Public reporting against the Framework's indicators, using the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria as a minimum baseline, should be standard practice.

Recommendations for Investors and Financial Institutions

The study identifies a positive correlation between regenerative leadership and indicators of brand resilience, establishing a compelling business case for targeted investment strategies.

- **Development of "Regenerative Investment" Criteria:** Financial institutions are encouraged to move beyond ESG risk scores to create investment products specifically targeting "Regenerative" outcomes. The validated Framework should be utilized to develop a "Regenerative Performance Score" as a key due diligence metric for hospitality and tourism investments.

- **Prioritization of Financing for Framework Adoption:** Preferential interest rates or development grants should be offered to hotel groups that commit to achieving "Restorative" or "Regenerative" status on the Framework, particularly in high-biodiversity or climate-vulnerable destinations.

- **Incentivization of the "Policy-Practice" Link:** Investment decisions should favor countries and regions that are actively reforming their national tourism policies in line with the recommendations for policymakers. As the correlation analysis suggests, a supportive policy environment encourages improved industry practice and consequently mitigates investment risk.

Recommendations for Academia and Future Research

The mixed-methods approach employed in this study provides a strong foundation, yet it simultaneously reveals critical gaps that warrant further scholarly investigation.

- **Development of a "Regeneration Accounting Standard":** The most critical and immediate need identified is for standardized accounting and measurement protocols for net-positive outcomes. Academic researchers should collaborate with bodies such as the UNWTO and GSTC to develop a globally accepted standard for quantifying biodiversity net-gain, social wealth creation, and carbon sequestration within a tourism context.

- **Conduct Longitudinal Impact Assessments:** Funding and execution of long-term (e.g., 5-10 year) impact studies on destinations and hotels adopting regenerative practices are essential. Future research should move beyond measuring activities (e.g., "hectares restored") to verifiable ecological and social outcomes (e.g., "species return rates," "household income increases," "improvements in community well-being indices").

- **Investigation of the Business Case in Detail:** The quantitative analysis of the correlation between regenerative practices and financial performance should be deepened. Research should aim to quantify the premium on asset value, operational resilience, and brand equity generated by a high "Regenerative Score."

- **Deepening the Analysis of the "Policy-Practice" Correlation:** While this study identified a correlation between certain policy indicators and industry practice, future research should employ more sophisticated modeling techniques to examine causality and identify which specific policy levers (e.g., tax incentives, regulatory requirements, marketing support) are the most effective drivers of regenerative adoption

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