

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES: AWARENESS AND ADOPTION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism is increasingly gaining attention as a means to balance economic growth with environmental and cultural conservation. This study explores the awareness and adoption of sustainable tourism practices among young adults, analysing factors that influence their travel decisions. The research examines how social media, education, government policies, and economic factors shape sustainable tourism behaviours. Findings indicate that while young adults demonstrate high awareness of sustainability issues, financial constraints and convenience often hinder consistent adoption. The study also highlights the role of digital platforms and community-based tourism in fostering sustainable travel habits. By identifying key challenges and potential solutions, this research contributes to developing strategies that can bridge the gap between awareness and practice, ultimately promoting a more responsible tourism industry.

Key words: *Sustainable tourism, Adoption, & Awareness*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism is an approach that aims to minimize the negative environmental, social, and economic impacts of travel while promoting responsible tourism practices. With the increasing concern over climate change, resource depletion, and cultural preservation, sustainable tourism has gained global attention. As key players in the tourism industry, young adults have a significant impact on the direction that travel trends will take in the future. The conservation of the environment, the economic benefits to local communities, and the sector's overall sustainability can all benefit from their awareness of and use of sustainable tourism practices. Tourism, while being a major driver of economic growth, often leads to environmental degradation, loss of cultural heritage, and over-tourism in many destinations. The need for sustainable tourism arises from the necessity to balance tourism growth with environmental and socio-cultural protection. Sustainable tourism encourages practices such as reducing carbon footprints, supporting local businesses, conserving water and energy, and protecting wildlife. Individuals can contribute to the preservation of cultural and natural resources for future generations by making thoughtful travel decisions.

Even though there is a growing awareness of sustainability, a lot of young travellers put convenience and affordability ahead of eco-friendly travel options. Factors such as limited awareness, financial constraints, and

accessibility of sustainable options influence their adoption of responsible travel practices. Additionally, the role of government policies, tourism industry efforts, and social media in shaping young adults' travel behaviours is an area that requires further exploration. Understanding the factors that motivate or discourage sustainable tourism adoption among young travelers can help in developing targeted strategies to promote responsible tourism behaviour.

The purpose of this study is to investigate young adults' perceptions of the economic and environmental effects of responsible travel, the factors that influence their adoption, and their level of awareness of sustainable tourism. By analysing these aspects, the research seeks to provide insights into how sustainable tourism can be encouraged and integrated into mainstream travel practices.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- 1.To assess the level of awareness among young adults regarding sustainable tourism practices.
- 2.To identify the factors influencing the adoption of sustainable tourism practices by young adults.
- 3.To analyse young adults' perceptions of the economic and environmental impacts of sustainable tourism.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study follows a descriptive research design to assess awareness, influencing factors, and perceptions of sustainable tourism among young adults.

1.3.2 AREA OF STUDY

The study was undertaken in Coimbatore city.

1.3.3 SAMPLE DESIGN

A convenient sampling method is adopted to select participants based on accessibility and willingness to participate in the study.

1.3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Two types of data collection methods are used:

- **Primary Data:** Collected through a structured questionnaire targeting young adults.
- **Secondary Data:** Sourced from academic journals, government reports, and published articles on sustainable tourism.

1.3.5 SAMPLE SIZE

The study includes a sample of 114 respondents, primarily young adults aged 18-30, to assess their awareness and adoption of sustainable tourism practices.

1.3.6 TOOLS USED FOR ANALYSIS

- **Simple Percentage Analysis**
- **Weighted Average Ranking**
- **Chi – Square Analysis**

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research by Reddy and Nair (2024) highlights the role of social media platforms like Instagram in promoting sustainable tourism. While visually appealing content raises awareness, it does not always lead to behavioral change. Influencers and travel bloggers play a crucial role in shaping young travelers' perspectives on sustainability.

Kullberg, Winther, and Turner (2024) emphasize the significance of environmental education in fostering responsible tourism behaviors. Interactive learning, such as eco-tourism workshops and sustainability-themed curricula, helps instill long-term sustainable habits in individuals.

According to Kokkranikal and Pizam (2024), gender, education, and income levels influence young adults' engagement in sustainable tourism. Women and highly educated individuals are more likely to prioritize eco-friendly accommodations and responsible travel choices.

2.1 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the awareness and adoption of sustainable tourism practices among young adults through a structured questionnaire with 114 respondents. Various statistical tools were used to analyze the collected data.

These findings highlight the need for targeted awareness campaigns, cost-effective sustainable options, and policy interventions to enhance young adults' engagement with sustainable tourism. The study's conclusions and recommendations aim to encourage broader adoption of eco-friendly travel practices.

TABLE 2.1

AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.NO	AGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	18 - 21 Years	32	28.1%

2	22 - 25 Years	66	57.9%
3	26 - 30 Years	16	14%
4	Above 30 Years	0	0%
	TOTAL	114	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that the majority (57.9%) of respondents belong to the age group of 22-25 years. Around 28.1% fall in the 18-21 years category, while 14% are aged between 26-30 years. No respondents were above 30 years.

TABLE 2.2
GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.NO	GENDER	NO. OF RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
1	Male	50	43.9%
2	Female	64	56.1%
	TOTAL	114	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table indicates that 56.1% of the respondents are female, while 43.9% are male. This suggests that there is slightly higher participation from female respondents in this survey.

TABLE 2.3
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.NO	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Up to School Level	9	7.9%
2	Under Graduation	51	44.7%
3	Post Graduation	53	46.5%
4	Others	1	0.9%
	TOTAL	114	100%

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it is observed that 46.5% of respondents have completed post-graduation, while 44.7% hold an undergraduate degree. A small percentage (7.9%) have studied only up to the school level, and 0.9% belong to other categories.

TABLE 2.4

OCCUPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.NO	OCCUPATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Student	61	53.5%
2	Self-employed	20	17.5%
3	Private sector employee	29	25.4%
4	Government employee	0	0%
5	Other	4	3.5%
	TOTAL	114	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table shows the occupation distribution of respondents. It is observed that the majority of respondents, 53.5%, are students, followed by 25.4% private sector employees. Additionally, 17.5% are self-employed, while 3.5% belong to other occupations. Notably, there are no government employees among the respondents.

TABLE 2.5

MONTHLY INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.NO	MONTHLY INCOME	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Up to ₹15,000	33	28.9%
2	₹15,001 - ₹30,000	16	14%
3	₹30,001 - ₹45,000	46	40.4%
4	₹45,001 - ₹60,000	9	7.9%
5	Above ₹60,000	10	8.8%
	TOTAL	114	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that 40.4% of the respondents have a monthly income between ₹30,001 - ₹45,000, followed by 28.9% earning up to ₹15,000. Additionally, 14% earn between ₹15,001 - ₹30,000, while 7.9% fall in the ₹45,001 - ₹60,000 range, and 8.8% earn above ₹60,000.

TABLE 2.6

FREQUENCY OF TRAVEL FOR LEISURE

S.NO	FREQUENCY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Rarely (once a year or less)	62	54.4%
2	Occasionally (2-3 times a year)	47	41.2%

3	Frequently (more than 3 times a year)	5	4.4%
	TOTAL	114	100%

Source: Primary data

The table shows that 54.4% of respondents travel rarely, meaning they take trips once a year or less. Around 41.2% travel occasionally, 2-3 times a year, while only 4.4% travel frequently, more than three times a year.

TABLE 2.7
SOCIAL MEDIA SOURCE FOR TRAVEL DESTINATION

S.NO	SOCIAL MEDIA SOURCE	NO. OF RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
1	Instagram	95	50.3%
2	YouTube	60	31.7%
3	Facebook	26	13.8%
4	Twitter/X	8	4.2%
	TOTAL	189	100%

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that Instagram (50.3%) is the most preferred social media platform for travel-related information, followed by YouTube (31.7%). Facebook (13.8%) has a moderate influence, while Twitter/X (4.2%) is the least used platform for travel information.

TABLE 2.8
TYPE OF TRAVEL PREFERRED BY RESPONDENTS

S.NO	TYPE OF TRAVEL	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Domestic	51	44.7%
2	International	10	8.8%
3	Both	53	46.5%
	TOTAL	114	100%

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it is observed that 44.7% of respondents prefer traveling domestically within their country, while 8.8% prefer international travel. A slightly higher percentage, 46.5%, enjoy both domestic and international travel equally.

TABLE 2.9
AMOUNT SPENT BY RESPONDENTS ON A SINGLE TRIP

S.NO	AMOUNT SPENT PER TRIP	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Below ₹5,000	34	29.8%
2	₹5,001 - ₹15,000	38	33.3%
3	₹15,000 - ₹30,000	31	27.2%
4	Above ₹30,000	11	9.6%
	Total	114	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table indicates that a significant portion of respondents (33.3%) usually spend between ₹5,000 - ₹15,000 on a single trip. About 29.8% of respondents prefer to keep their travel expenses below ₹5,000. Meanwhile, 27.2% of respondents spend between ₹15,000 - ₹30,000, and only a small percentage (9.6%) spend more than ₹30,000 on a single trip.

TABLE 2.10
PREFERRED MODE OF TRAVEL

S. No	MODE OF TRAVEL	NO. OF RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
1	Roadways	101	55.5%
2	Railways	58	31.9%
3	Airways	23	12.6%
	TOTAL	182	100%

Source: Primary Data

The table indicates that roadways (55.5%) are the most preferred mode of travel among respondents, followed by railways (31.9%). Airways (12.6%) are the least chosen, indicating a preference for cost-effective and easily accessible travel options.

TABLE 2.11
PREFERRED MODE OF TRANSPORT WITHIN ROADWAYS

S.NO	ROADWAY MODE OF TRANSPORT	NO. OF RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
1	Personal Vehicle (Car, Bike, etc.)	91	43.5%
2	Public Bus	50	23.9%
3	Train	46	22.0%
4	Cab/Taxi	21	10.0%
5	Other	1	0.5%
	TOTAL	209	100%

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that personal vehicles (43.5%) are the most commonly used mode of transport within roadways, followed by public buses (23.9%) and trains (22.0%). Cabs and taxis (10.0%) are the least preferred option, while other modes (0.5%) have minimal usage.

TABLE 2.12

AWARENESS ABOUT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

S.NO	SOURCE OF AWARENESS	NO. OF RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
1	Social Media	86	33.6%
2	Friends or Family	63	24.6%
3	News Articles	43	16.8%
4	Travel Agencies or Tour Operators	32	12.5%
5	Posters or Pamphlets	18	7.0%
6	Government Initiatives	13	5.1%
7	Other	1	0.4%
	TOTAL	256	100%

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that social media (33.6%) is the primary source of awareness about sustainable tourism, followed by friends and family (24.6%). News articles (16.8%) and travel agencies (12.5%) play a moderate role, while posters (7.0%), government initiatives (5.1%), and other sources (0.4%) have minimal influence.

TABLE 2.13

OPINION ON AVAILABILITY OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OPTIONS

S.NO	FACTORS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Yes, I find many sustainable travel options easily	34	30.6%
2	Somewhat, but they are not always accessible or affordable	57	51.4%
3	No, there are very few sustainable options available	20	18.0%
	TOTAL	111	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that 51.4% of respondents feel that sustainable tourism options exist but are not always accessible or affordable. Around 30.6% of respondents find many sustainable travel options easily, while 18% believe that there are very few sustainable options available.

TABLE 2.14
SPENDING ON SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

S.NO	AMOUNT SPENT	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Less than ₹500	40	35.1%
2	₹500 – ₹1,500	47	41.2%
3	₹1,500 – ₹3,000	23	20.2%
4	More than ₹3,000	4	3.5%
	TOTAL	114	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that 41.2% of respondents spend ₹500 – ₹1,500 on supporting local communities while traveling. Around 35.1% of respondents contribute less than ₹500, while 20.2% spend between ₹1,500 – ₹3,000. Only 3.5% of respondents spend more than ₹3,000 on local community support.

TABLE 2.15
RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

S.NO	RESPONSIBILITY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Mostly the government	26	22.8%
2	Mostly individuals	25	21.9%
3	Both	63	55.3%
	Total	114	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that 55.3% of respondents believe that the responsibility for sustainable tourism should be shared between the government and individuals. Around 22.8% feel it should be mostly the government's responsibility, while 21.9% believe individuals should take primary responsibility.

TABLE 2.16
AWARENESS ON GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

S. NO	GOVERNMENT SCHEMES	AWARE	NOT AWARE	AWARE PERCENTAGE	NOT AWARE PERCENTAGE
1	Swadesh Darshan Scheme	45	69	39.5%	60.5%
2	PRASHAD Scheme	36	78	31.6%	68.4%

3	Adopt a Heritage Project	47	67	41.2%	58.8%
4	Responsible Tourism Mission (Kerala)	45	69	39.5%	60.5%

Source: Primary data

The table shows that Adopt a Heritage Project is the most recognized scheme (41.2%), followed closely by Swadesh Darshan Scheme (39.5%) and Responsible Tourism Mission (39.5%). However, PRASHAD Scheme has the lowest awareness (31.6%), with 68.4% respondents unaware of it.

TABLE 2.17

RANKING OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES

S.NO	SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES	TOTAL SCORE	RANK
1	Staying in Eco-Friendly Hotels	291	Rank I
2	Supporting Local Businesses	283	Rank II
3	Reducing Plastic Waste	275	Rank III
4	Avoiding Harm to Wildlife	267	Rank IV
5	Conserving Water and Energy	259	Rank V

Source: Primary data

The table shows that Staying in Eco-Friendly Hotels is Rank I, indicating it is the most important sustainable tourism practice for respondents. Supporting Local Businesses is Rank II, followed by Reducing Plastic Waste as Rank III. Avoiding Harm to Wildlife is Rank IV, while Conserving Water and Energy is Rank V.

Staying in Eco-Friendly Hotels is Ranked I, indicating it is the most important

TABLE 2.18

RANKING OF AVAILABILITY OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES

S. NO	FACTORS	WEIGHTED SCORE	RANK
1	Enough Awareness	378	Rank I
2	Eco-friendly Hotels & Transport	368	Rank II
3	Affordable Options	364	Rank III
4	Social Media/Family Influence	362	Rank IV

5	Government Discounts	340	Rank V
6	Easy Transport Access	340	Rank VI

Source: Primary data

The table shows that Enough Awareness is ranked I, followed by Eco-friendly Hotels & Transport at rank II. Affordable Options is ranked III, indicating moderate satisfaction. Social Media/Family Influence is ranked IV, while Government Discounts and Easy Transport Access are both ranked V.

TABLE 2.19 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MONTHLY INCOME AND SPENDING PER TRIP

FACTORS (Comparing Monthly Income and Spending Per Trip)	Df	Sig. val	S/NS
Monthly Income vs Spending Per Trip	12	0.15	NS

Note: S: Significant (p-value ≤ 0.05), NS: Not Significant (p-value > 0.05)

Source: Primary Data

H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant association between monthly income and spending per trip.

From the table, the significance value of the chi-square test is 0.15, which is greater than 0.05. Since the p-value exceeds the standard significance level of 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis (H_0) and reject the alternative hypothesis (H_1).

This implies that there is no statistically significant association between monthly income and spending per trip. The findings suggest that an individual's travel expenditure is not necessarily determined by their income level.

TABLE 2.20 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION AND AWARENESS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES

Factor (Comparing with Educational Qualification)	Df	Sig. Value (p-value)	S/NS
Awareness of Sustainable Tourism Practices	2	0.008	S

Note: S: Significant (p-value ≤ 0.05), NS: Not Significant (p-value > 0.05)

Source: Primary data

H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant association between educational qualification and awareness of sustainable tourism practices.

From the table, the significance value (p-value) of the chi-square test is 0.008, which is less than 0.05. As a result, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1).

This implies that educational qualification has a significant impact on the awareness of sustainable tourism practices. Respondents with higher education levels tend to be more aware of sustainable tourism concepts compared to those with lower education levels. Therefore, initiatives to increase awareness should particularly target individuals with lower educational backgrounds to promote sustainable travel practices effectively.

TABLE 2.21

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCCUPATION AND FREQUENCY OF TRAVEL

Factor (Comparing with Occupation)	Df	Chi-Square Value	Sig. Value (p-value)	S/NS
Frequency of Travel	4	16.6	0.0023	S

Note: S: Significant (p-value ≤ 0.05), NS: Not Significant (p-value > 0.05)

Source: Primary data

H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between occupation and frequency of travel.

Since the p-value (0.0023) is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0). This means occupation influences how often people travel.

- Students travel less due to financial and academic constraints.
- Employed and self-employed individuals travel more frequently, likely due to work flexibility and financial stability.

This suggests that occupation plays a key role in travel habits.

TABLE 2.22

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION AND SUPPORT FOR LOCAL CULTURE

FACTOR (Comparing with Educational Qualification)	Df	Sig. Value (p-value)	S/NS
Support for Local Culture	3	0.013	S

Note: S: Significant (p-value ≤ 0.05), NS: Not Significant (p-value > 0.05) Source: Primary data

H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between educational qualification and support for local culture.

Since the p-value (0.013) is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0). This means that educational qualification has a significant impact on support for local culture.

- Higher-educated individuals tend to be more aware of the importance of preserving local traditions and heritage.
- Those with lower education levels may not actively engage in cultural preservation due to a lack of awareness or interest.

This finding suggests that educational programs can play a role in promoting local cultural support among travellers.

3.2 SUGGESTIONS

- **Strengthening Awareness Campaigns:** Governments, tourism boards, and influencers should promote sustainable tourism through social media, workshops, and travel programs.
- **Incorporating Sustainability in Education:** Schools and universities should integrate sustainable tourism concepts into their curriculum to instill responsible travel habits.
- **Promoting Eco-Friendly Travel Options:** Incentives should be provided for travelers choosing public transport, electric vehicles, or eco-friendly accommodations.
- **Encouraging Local Community Engagement:** Travelers should be motivated to support local businesses, cultural tourism, and ethical purchasing to benefit local economies.
- **Introducing Reward Programs:** Discounts, tax benefits, or exclusive perks should be offered to travelers who adopt sustainable practices.
- **Enhancing Government and Industry Collaboration:** Stronger partnerships between policymakers and businesses can establish guidelines for responsible tourism and environmental conservation.
- **Developing Sustainable Infrastructure:** Governments and tourism authorities should invest in eco-friendly infrastructure, such as renewable energy sources, waste management systems, and nature conservation projects to minimize tourism's environmental impact.

3.3 CONCLUSION

The study highlights that while young adults are increasingly aware of sustainable tourism practices, their adoption of these practices remains inconsistent. Social media plays a crucial role in shaping their awareness, with platforms like Instagram being the primary source of travel-related information. However, despite their awareness, many young travelers prioritize factors like affordability, convenience, and personal preferences over sustainability. The findings indicate that education level has a significant impact on awareness of sustainable tourism, while financial stability influences the frequency of travel and spending on eco-friendly options. Although many respondents believe that both the government and individuals share responsibility for promoting sustainable tourism, there remains a gap in proactive participation. To enhance sustainable tourism adoption, a multi-faceted approach is required. Awareness campaigns should be strengthened to educate travelers on the long-term benefits of responsible tourism. Additionally, making sustainable travel more accessible through financial incentives, better infrastructure, and policy support can encourage more young adults to adopt eco-friendly practices. Strong collaboration between government authorities, tourism businesses, and local communities is essential to ensure a balanced approach that benefits both the environment and the economy. By addressing these factors, sustainable tourism can transition from being an occasional choice to a standard practice among young travelers, ultimately fostering a more responsible and eco-conscious travel culture.

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