

Regenerative tourism as a complement to sustainable tourism: New horizons for Latin America



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Abstract Tourism has traditionally been conceptualized through management approaches centered on economic growth, control mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks aligned with dominant capitalist indicators. Although these approaches are frequently presented as sustainable, their practical outcomes often reveal structural limitations in addressing social, environmental, and ethical challenges. In response to these shortcomings, regenerative perspectives have emerged as an alternative paradigm capable of strengthening and expanding the scope of contemporary tourism practices. This study aims to analyze the global development of regenerative approaches in tourism and to examine their relationship with sustainability-oriented models within the Latin American context. A systematic literature review was conducted using the Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and SciELO databases. The review followed the PRISMA methodology, establishing clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure methodological rigor and transparency. As a result, 21 scientific documents published between 2018 and 2023 were selected for analysis, with Scopus accounting for the highest concentration of publications, particularly during 2023. The findings reveal that current tourism systems require substantial updates through innovative management models that go beyond mitigation strategies and seek to generate positive social and ecological impacts. Central to these models is the active participation of local communities, whose involvement is identified as a key condition for transformative tourism practices. Furthermore, the literature highlights the importance of integrating non-tourism sectors and public institutions into governance structures, promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and shared responsibility. The study concludes that tourism development in the region can benefit from approaches that incorporate ethical principles, territorial regeneration, and community empowerment, contributing to more resilient and inclusive development pathways. These findings provide a conceptual basis for future research and policymaking oriented toward transformative tourism management.

Keywords: regenerative practices, alternative tourism models, territorial development, community-based management, ethical tourism governance

1. Introduction

With the restrictions and social distancing measures adopted by various countries during the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, the environment experienced a "rest", which resulted in important changes in the economies. Among the sectors affected by such a situation is tourism, which currently represents an important source of employment, as it not only fosters economic growth but also stimulates economic development as a whole (Balsalobre-Lorente et al., 2019). In the tourism sector, there is direct contact between users and the environment; hence, it has been classified as largely responsible for the environment where it is practiced, the natural resources, and the host populations (Lalangui et al., 2017).

However, just as it generates significant contributions to the economy, tourism also has a direct impact on the natural environments of the different areas where it is developed; this is due to the rapid population increase and urban expansion that exacerbate the negative impacts of human activities such as pollution, construction, exploitation, and recreation. Hence, the pandemic has contributed to the environment going through a period of rest in which tourism activity was paused, which awakened in the tourist of the future the desire to have much more sensitive, emotional, and humanitarian experiences. However, this can only be achieved if there is sustainability aligned to a true tourism regeneration; that is, it is necessary to raise awareness and train the populations of tourist areas regarding the environmental issues and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a tourism context (Leal, 2017).

For sustainable tourism to be carried out, it is necessary to count on the contributions that regenerative tourism makes to it, since achieving more sustainable tourism is not only about knowing how to manage and control the negative impacts produced but also about generating a more responsible awareness among tourists and host populations regarding the



maintenance and regeneration of rural, natural and remote areas, to benefit the local community and keep natural destinations intact.

In the case of Latin America, tourism has become a very important sector in some areas, as it is their main source of investment and foreign exchange. In addition, their natural capital represents these areas as the best instrument to sell themselves to the world; however, human intervention, climate change, and unsustainable environmental management practices have hurt these areas over the last decades. Specifically, countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico have seen how their beaches have been polluted as a result of tourism, which in turn has caused an economic and social impact on these localities (Díaz et al., 2023). For its part, the BBC (2018) noted that in the world, there are five tourist destinations threatened by tourist action, two of which are in Latin America (Caño Cristales in Colombia and Machu Picchu in Peru).

The impact exerted by tourism on Latin American destinations urgently requires governmental and local actions, which should be focused on the recovery and sustainability of natural resources. These actions are necessary because tourism represents a tool that allows local communities to benefit economically and socially, as well as to create greater awareness and financial resources to conserve and regenerate the natural environment. Based on this, the review conducted posed the following research questions:

- GQ: How does regenerative tourism relate to sustainable tourism in Latin America?
- SQ: What has been the evolution of scientific production in terms of databases, language, year, publication journals, and their contributions?
- SQ: What aspects of regenerative tourism promote environmental sustainability in Latin America?

The objective was to analyze the role of regenerative tourism in the world and its relationship with sustainable tourism in Latin America.

2. Materials and Methods

The present study was based on a systematic literature review (Bichler et al., 2022). This type of review aims to summarize, question, and categorize existing knowledge around a topic, ensuring replicability and transparency (Moreno et al., 2018; Gunnell et al., 2022). The articles were selected following the guidelines of the PRISMA statement (Page et al., 2021). The PRISMA flowchart helps to systematically identify, select, assess the eligibility of, and include a series of studies on a given topic in the review. It also provides a graphical representation of each stage in the selection process, facilitating the search for a specific number of studies through an inclusion and exclusion procedure.

2.1. Selection of studies

To gain a comprehensive overview of the literature on regenerative and sustainable tourism in Latin America, an exhaustive literature search was conducted using Google Scholar to identify the largest possible number of relevant publications. The search began with terms commonly associated with the topic and was limited to publications in English and Spanish. Including publications in both languages ensured that the studies examined reached an international academic audience.

The databases used were Scopus, SciELO, and WoS, which were chosen for containing the largest number of high-impact journals at the academic level and for having advanced search tools. According to Abusaada and Elshater (2024), combining multiple academic databases for a review can improve the comprehensiveness and depth of search results. Furthermore, the coverage of cited references is much greater, as no single database encompasses all relevant literature (Gusenbauer & Gauster, 2025).

This process was executed using the keywords "Regenerative tourism", "Sustainable tourism", "Tourism development", and "Sustainable development". The literature search was performed via Boolean operators to retrieve studies published between 2019 and 2025 (Table 1).

Table 1 Database search formula.

Database	Search Terms
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("regenerative tourism ") OR tourism * OR " sustainable tourism *" OR " sustainable development *") AND (" tourism development ") OR Latin America * OR " sustainable development *") AND (" sustainability +") OR " Cultural and natural heritage *"
WoS	("regenerative tourism " OR " sustainable tourism *" OR " sustainable development *" OR " sustainability *) AND (tourism * OR " Latin America " * OR sustainability *) AND (" tourism development " OR " regenerative tourism, *")
SciELO	("Regenerative tourism " OR Latin America * OR tourism * OR sustainable development *") AND (" sustainable tourism " OR sustainability * OR Latin America *) AND (" regenerative tourism " OR " sustainable tourism *" OR " tourism development *" OR sustainable development * OR "Cultural and natural heritage *)



2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The eligibility criteria were established to ensure the selection of relevant, high-quality studies focused on regenerative tourism as a pathway to sustainable tourism in Latin America (Table 2). The incorporation of these criteria allowed for the identification of articles that met the scope of this review; conversely, the exclusion criteria eliminated documents that were of little importance or did not meet the review requirements.

Table 2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the selection of studies.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Research articles published between 2015-2025	Studies published before 2015
Publications in indexed journals	Publications in non-indexed journals
Publication in English or Spanish	Studies published in a language other than English or Spanish
Studies examining regenerative tourism and sustainable tourism in Latin America	Studies whose subject matter does not focus on regenerative tourism and sustainable tourism in Latin America
The documents must be open access	Documents without open access
Studies with a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed approach	Book chapters, theses, and conference papers

2.3. Data analysis and synthesis

The interpretive synthesis technique was used in the data analysis to ensure a comprehensive and in-depth synthesis of the selected studies. The focus of this review was on presenting the results with priority given to their legitimacy and reliability; therefore, transparent data synthesis procedures were implemented. Furthermore, to ensure the reliability of the findings, different assessment procedures were adopted. In this process, each author independently reviewed a specific number of studies and their findings, thus guaranteeing a rigorous analysis.

The initial number of documents was 650 scientific articles, and only 18 of them met all the inclusion criteria for subsequent review and final analysis. After a slightly more extensive review, 43 duplicate articles were eliminated; this process resulted in 607 documents, whose titles and abstracts were reviewed to locate the subject developed, as well as the period of publication. At the end of this stage, 230 articles were eliminated because they did not meet the inclusion criteria established in this phase of the review. Next, the 337 resulting documents were subjected to exclusion criteria referring to open access, a language other than the study language, book chapters, theses, and papers resulting from congresses, as well as in non-indexed journals; 316 articles were excluded of which 320 were excluded. Finally, a full-text review of the 21 articles that met the established inclusion criteria was performed (Figure 1).

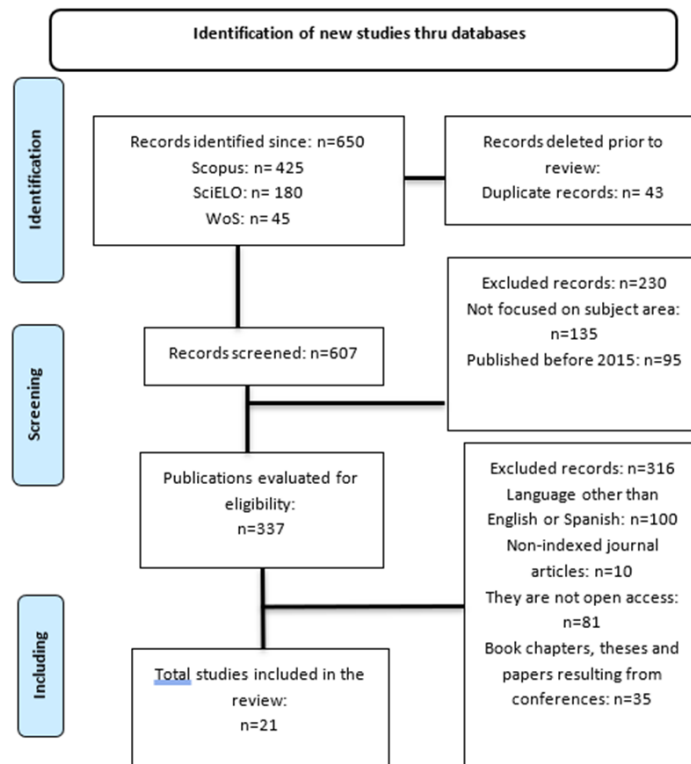


Figure 1 Prisma Flow Chart.



3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Any disagreements were resolved through discussion or consultation with another reviewer. Subsequently, the collected data were analyzed and categorized in a table containing a complete summary of each study examined. This table includes various aspects of each publication: authors, year of publication, database, language, methodology, and most important findings (See Table 3).

Table 3 Documents reviewed.

Authors/year	Journal	Database	Language	Methodology	Findings
Corral-González et al. (2023)	Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing	Scopus	English	Review	The literature on regenerative tourism has grown recently, driven by increased interest due to the COVID-19 Crisis.
Dredge (2022)	Journal of Tourism Futures	Scopus and WoS	English	-----	Regenerative tourism requires a change in socio-ecological approach and awareness and depends on our ability to evolve our thinking from "I" to "we" and develop compassion, empathy, and collaborative action.
Suárez-Rojas et al. (2023)	Tourism Management Perspectives	Scopus and WoS	English	Sistematic review	Three main areas of research were established that have driven the field of research in whale watching tourism: the ecological responses of cetaceans due to human disturbances, the determinants of demand for whale watching tourism, and the impact of tourism on sustainability from macrocultural and political perspectives.
Duxbury et al. (2021)	Sustainability	Scopus and WoS	English	-----	In the time of COVID-19, improving connections with other organizations at the local and regional level can contribute to broader initiatives and the development of community-based regeneration strategies.
Sheller (2021)	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Scopus and WoS	English	Conceptual and theoretical reflection	Sustainable tourism is not simply an environmental project or a green business plan, but should be integrally linked to mobility justice projects that help support the rebuilding of resilient communities, regional ecologies, and regenerative economies.
Inversini et al. (2024)	Journal of Tourism Futures	Scopus and WoS	English	Qualitative	The results provide a regenerative hotel framework to move from a current sustainability paradigm towards local and systemic regenerative approaches in hospitality by applying place and people intelligence.
Bellato et al. (2024)	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Scopus	English	Scope Review	Tourism scholarships are not keeping pace with the evolution of regenerative tourism, which necessitates new approaches. A decolonial, transformational, transdisciplinary approach proposes a research paradigm that fully encompasses the concept of regenerative tourism and, therefore, enables the production of knowledge that facilitates pluralistic futures for regenerative tourism.
Gerke et al. (2023)	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Scopus and WoS	English	Ethnographic case study	Regenerative practices require entrepreneurs to disrupt the status quo and do things differently, such as leveraging social networks for financial



					resources, altering discourses and mindsets, and ultimately driving innovation and transformative change.
Zaman (2023)	Sustainability	Scopus and WoS	English	Quantitative	Destination competitiveness appears to amplify the positive relationship between concern for net zero commitment and regenerative tourism intention, while influencer marketing also strengthens this relationship (NZCC → RTI) with a significant moderating effect.
Landa et al. (2021)	El Periplo Sustentable	SciELO and WoS	Spanish	Document review	Tourism needs to update and generate new, comprehensive management models that take these factors into account. This implies rethinking the purpose of tourism in its practical sense.
Huerta (2022)	International Humanities Review	Scopus	Spanish	Literature review	It is necessary to link Public Relations and Social Responsibility, since Barcelona's innovative, sustainable, and regenerative tourism needs concordant, harmonized, and link-generating formulations, so that it is possible to promote Social Responsibility projects at both the level of private companies and public institutions.
Hruby (2024)	El Periplo Sustentable	SciELO and WoS	Español	Review	Regenerative tourism is an approach that provides the necessary conditions to transition towards the restoration of natural homeostasis, which has been disrupted by humans.
Miroglio et al. (2024)	El Periplo Sustentable	SciELO and WoS	Español	Mixed	This tool serves as a methodological guide for evaluating and implementing projects based on regenerative tourism principles with a bioanthropocentric approach.
García et al. (2024)	Revista Tendencias	SciELO	Español	Qualitative	Tourism entrepreneurs in the Cocora Valley have a clear understanding of sustainable tourism, as there is an economic and respectful use of the region's natural, social, and cultural resources.
Baloch et al. (2023)	Environmental Science and Pollution Research	Scopus	English	Quantitative	A significant number of people are experiencing socioeconomic benefits, including employment, business opportunities, and infrastructure development. However, the state of natural and environmental capital was found to be gradually degrading.
Moreno and Santos (2021)	BARATARIA. Revista Castellano-Manchega de Ciencias Sociales	WoS	Spanish	Qualitative	Trends linked to new tourism models, such as regenerative tourism, are important.
Major and Clarke (2022)	Journal of tourism futures	Scopus and WoS	English	-----	The model is rooted in indigenous knowledge and living systems theory. It represents a paradigm shift that allows us to view tourism as a living ecosystem and requires innovative economic models, such as social entrepreneurship, changes at the systems level, and in how tourism operates and is governed.



Mathisen et al. (2022)	Journal of tourism futures	Scopus and WoS	English	Case study	It is a challenge for small, ecocentric businesses to co-create regenerative tourism activities within a capitalist system. And for these regenerative activities to become regenerative tourism practices, they require multiple actors at all levels of operations acting as responsible stewards.
Rastegar (2025)	Annals of Tourism Research	Scopus	English	Research Note	The term “regenerative justice” is being considered, though it has not yet been fully developed in theory or implemented in practice. Part of the dominant approach to reducing harm to humans and non-humans, it supports an interconnected socio-ecological system that adapts, repairs, evolves, and regenerates over time.
Iddawala and Lee, (2025).	Tourism Planning & Development	Scopus	English	Literature review	The community-based approach was identified as the most strongly advocated aspect of regenerative tourism. This approach operates under the assumption that the tourism industry is heavily dependent on the local community of the destination. Tourism should be community-centered and prioritize the needs of the local community.
De Freitas and Meira (2025)	Heritage	Scopus/WoS	English	Qualitative	The report highlights the heritage sites with significant tourism potential along the route between Ouro Preto and Barbacena, while also emphasizing the crucial need to combat landscape degradation. It establishes a shared vision based on promoting sustainable practices that utilize natural and cultural resources, protect local culture, and foster community collaboration in regenerative initiatives.

3.1.1. Bibliometric analysis

The year with the highest scientific production was 2023 (6/21; 28.57%), followed by 2021 and 2024 (4/21; 19.04% each), 2022 and 2025 (3/21; 14.28% each); and finally, 2020 (1/21; 4.76%) (Figure 2). The database with the most article publications was Scopus (6/21; 28.57%), while WoS and SciELO each had only one publication (4.76% each). However, articles published in journals present in two different databases were found, as is the case with Scopus/WoS (10/21; 47.61%) and SciELO/WoS (3/21; 14.28%).

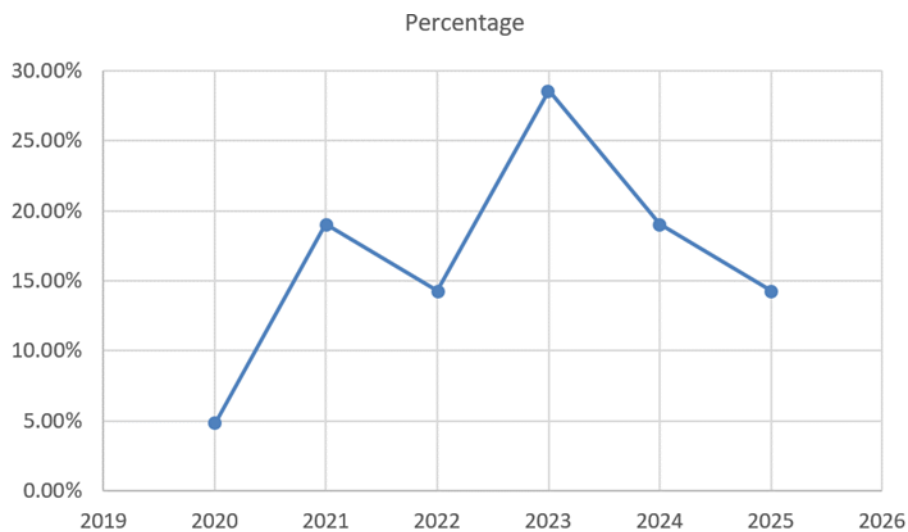


Figure 2 Year of publication of the documents reviewed. Source: Scopus, WoS and SciELO Database.



Of the 21 documents reviewed, only 6 (28.60%) were published in Spanish and 15 (71.40%) in English (Figure 3). The largest number of publications was found in the journals *Journal of Tourism Futures*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, and *Sustainability*; the main characteristic of these journals is that they belong to the Q1.

Regarding the most frequently used methodology for publishing studies on regenerative and sustainable tourism, literature reviews stand out with 7 documents (33%), followed by qualitative studies with 4, representing 19%. Three articles were found that did not present an explicit methodology in their text (14%). In addition, two (2) quantitative studies represented 11% of the total examined. Two case studies were presented (9.5%); reflection, research notes, and mixed methods were presented only once each (4.70% each) (See Figure 4).

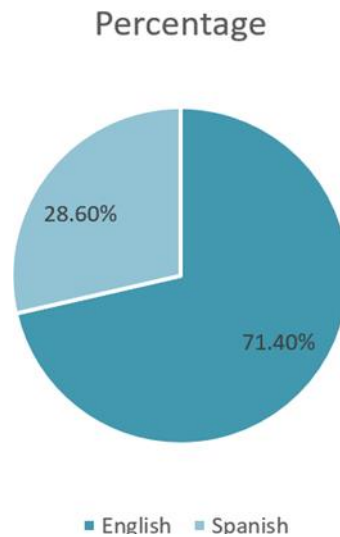


Figure 3 Publication language. Source: Scopus, WoS and SciELO Database.

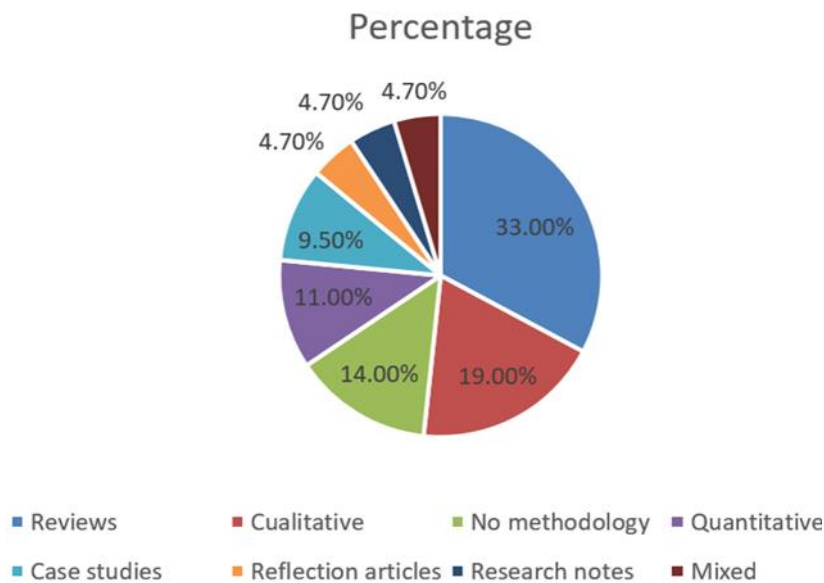


Figure 4 Publication language. Source: Scopus, WoS and SciELO Database.

3.1.2. Sustainable tourism (ST)

According to the World Tourism Organization [UNWTO] (2005), sustainable tourism is tourism that considers current and future social, economic, and environmental repercussions so that visitors to the surrounding area and host localities see their demands and needs met. However, some time ago, Butler (1999) managed to distinguish sustainable tourism from tourism framed within sustainable development. For this author, ST manages to be viable in a physical space for an indefinite period. In addition, he stated that tourism in the context of sustainable development is developed and maintained in a specific place and on a scale that allows it to be implemented over time, and that does not degrade or alter the environment.

Ijjaali et al. (2023) point out that ST is an approach that seeks to take advantage of the decisions made in the tourism sector, recognizing its positive and negative benefits for the current and future population. In this sense, the UNWTO (2005)

points out that the environmental, economic, and sociocultural elements constitute the foundations of sustainability, whose long-term maintenance is given by the balance between these three aspects (Figure 5).

The three aspects considered in sustainable tourism represent those indicators that have a direct impact on the natural environment of a population, region, or country. Thus, the economic impacts at the tourism level are the economic benefits and costs generated by the development of these activities. In other words, the populations experience economic well-being as a result of tourism activity, which generates a sustainable and equitable income for these areas.

The socio-cultural impact is due to the coexistence between tourists and residents of the receiving localities. Depending on the interrelationship established in this coexistence, some variables may be affected, for example, the way of life, behavior, values, safety levels, culture, and traditions. However, this impact should not affect the social or cultural structure of the community where it is carried out.

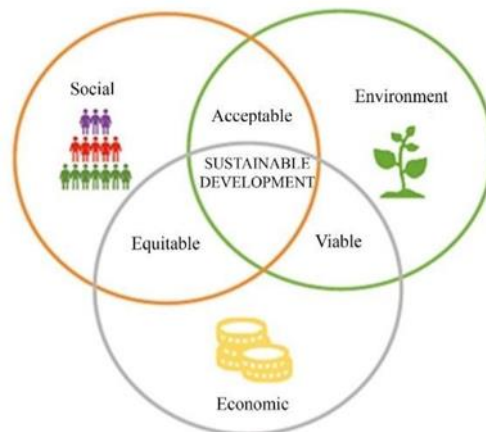


Figure 5 Elements involved in sustainable tourism. *Source:* Taken from Bernal et al. (2019).

Finally, concerning environmental impacts, it should be noted that these are the result of the high demand for tourist sites; however, when these activities are planned, they have little impact on natural resources, especially protected areas (Cáceres-Colmenares et al., 2021). Therefore, when tourism is characterized by being spontaneous, disorderly, and without consideration for the environment, it is necessary to create sustainable tourism.

When these three elements are valued together, there is an ST with equal opportunities for all stakeholders, seeking that each of them contributes to the development of society and the tourism site (Singh et al., 2023). In addition, ST is part of sustainable development, which has among its objectives to minimize the socioeconomic impacts of tourism and maximize the socio-economic benefits for the host community (Matiku et al., 2021).

On the other hand, to increase tourism and maintain the long-term objective of sustainability of this sector, appropriate facilities for tourists and quality service are required; this aspect is essential because although tourists seek environmental peace, biodiversity change, and socio-cultural change, they also want to feel comfortable and arrive at facilities in good condition. Regarding the quality provided in a tourist destination, the WTO (n/d) states that it is the result of a process in which the requirements, needs, and expectations of each visitor are satisfied concerning tourism products and services; this is by prices, reception conditions, and general aspects such as hygiene, safety, accessibility, communication, facilities, and public services.

3.1.3. Regenerative tourism (RT)

Regenerative tourism has been defined by various authors, who also explain in which economic sector it originated and how it has been adapted to the tourism sector. Mei et al. (2024) point out that the concept of RT comes specifically from the fields of agriculture, forestry, urban design, and architecture. Concerning regenerative agriculture, it is concerned with managing and improving conditions for the continuous renewal of life and living systems (Hutchins & Storm, 2019; Morseletto, 2020; Dredge, 2022; Hussain & Haley, 2022). All of this occurs in a natural environment, in which constant interactions occur among its constituent elements.

In this sense, Hussain & Haley (2022) explain that in the natural environment, there are different relationships between species, where some act as the predator and others as the prey. This comparison is exemplified by a process in which one parasite feeds on another without killing it immediately, or where both benefit from this interaction. For these authors, tourism can be seen as a parasite, since it extracts value from a community, its culture, and its environment without giving much or anything back to it. Hence, the TR seeks to imitate nature by becoming symbiotic, i.e., the elements that integrate it should benefit, creating a win-win situation. When tourism becomes symbiotic, a process occurs in which it is necessary to evaluate and measure all its impacts; in addition, it seeks the acceptance of the host community, environmental improvement, biodiversity restoration, cultural valorization, economic well-being, and resilience (Hussain & Haley 2022).

In this sense, the RT takes some principles from agriculture and natural sciences, as well as regenerative economic models and designs (Mei et al., 2024), in which it is necessary to have long-term systemic thinking, in which tourism is closely linked to the populations and involves them in decision-making. According to this approach, the TR is responsible for designing activities that allow the tourist to recover knowledge and sensations so that he/she can feel part of a force that governs the planet and thus respects nature and encourages its protection (Marcondes et al., 2023).

TR is seen by Bellato et al. (2024) as an alternative paradigm that reorganizes and reorients tourism objectives towards an interdependent and interconnected living world, in which the traveler is an integral part of nature and of the processes of co-creation and co-evolution that shape the world (Figure 6). Focusing on stewardship rather than extraction, the TR focuses on the need to create opportunities in which tourism destinations are healed, balancing the socioeconomic-environmental impacts of tourism, addressing the climate problem, and the depletion of the planet's existing resources; it also aims at decreasing the environmental impacts of tourism to make it more meaningful (Sharmaa & Tham, 2023).

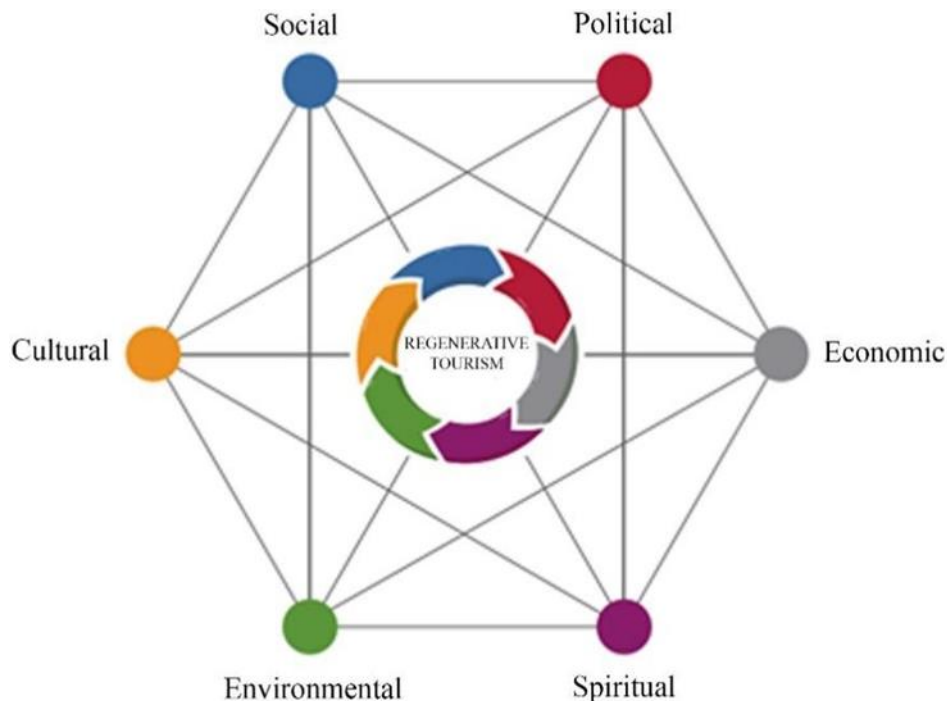


Figure 6 Areas of sustainable tourism. Source: Taken from Socatelli (2022).

3.1.4. Differences between regenerative tourism and sustainable tourism

The definition of regenerative tourism and sustainable tourism has many similarities, which is why many specialists have found it difficult to see the difference, to the point of pointing out that the term "sustainable tourism" is no longer in vogue, while "regenerative tourism" is currently the buzzword in the tourism sector. In this regard, Hruby (2024) points out that RT is associated with post-vaccine tourism (COVID-19) since it began to be used more strongly after the pandemic that originated worldwide.

On the other hand, according to Hussain (2021), Mohedano (2022), and Ramírez (2022), the differences are:

- For the TR, the tourist activity should leave a better place than before, while the TS seeks to leave something as it is and to keep it that way.
- The TR is characterized by having a different objective, in which it is necessary to change the economic model and how society is viewed; this is because the ST aims to grow in volume, while the TR is oriented towards more qualitative growth.
- In tourism, traditionally, sustainability is constituted as a series of actions to be taken in order not to make things worse; on the other hand, the TR seeks mainly the regeneration of resources. Hence the assertion that "sustaining is not as inspiring as regenerating".
- The ST focuses on generating the least possible damage to the environment, while the TR seeks to conserve, regenerate, and repair.

These differences are located between the two models, and each, in turn, presents three basic principles to achieve its purposes. On the one hand, in the TS, the principles for achieving sustainability are implemented, and in the TR, the most important aspects for achieving the regeneration of living organisms are presented (Figure 7).

3.2. Discussion

Almost all the articles reviewed were written in Europe and Asia; this shows the importance that tourism represents for these nations. In this regard, Bellato et al. (2024) point out that tourism specialists recognize that tourism studies are dominated by European and Anglo-Saxon knowledge production systems and extractive paradigms. However, in Latin America, this economic sector has aroused great interest since it has become a market that stands out for the prominence of its diverse regions, which are characterized by their great wealth of biodiversity and cultural heritage. This aspect has led the academic world to turn its gaze to the tourist destinations offered by this territory, offering them the possibility of adopting and readjusting to their reality models that have been effective in other areas of the world.

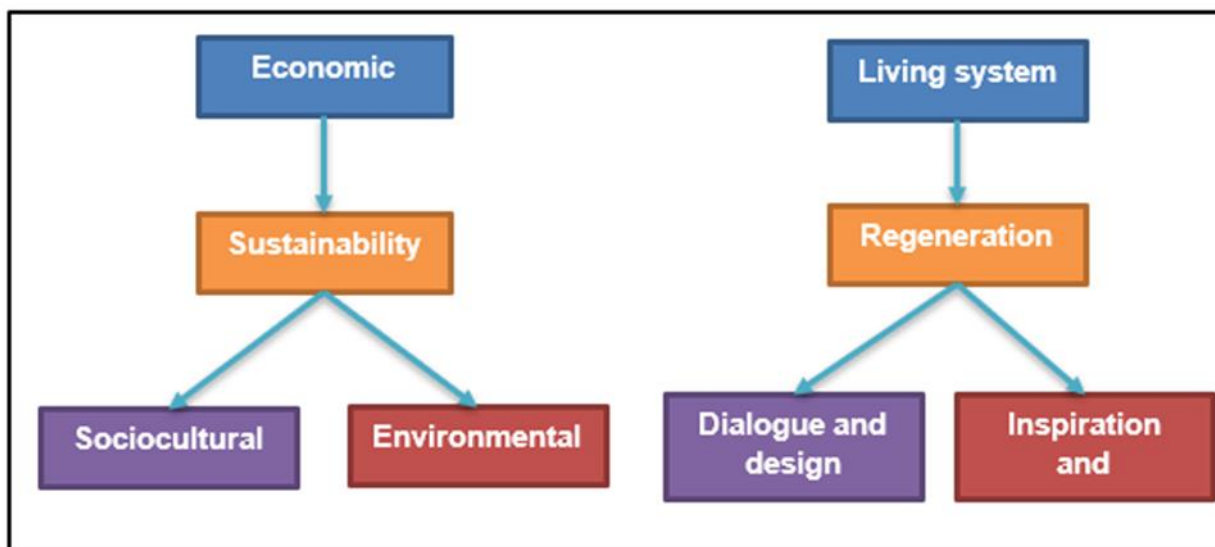


Figure 7 Main aspects of sustainability and regeneration. Source: Taken from Reyes & Casasola (2021).

Studies on tourism show that its practice worldwide produces around 5% of CO2 emissions. Transportation accounts for 75% of the sector's emissions (50% of which come from air transport), while accommodation accounts for 22%, and activity tourism makes up the remaining 4%. Although tourism is not considered a polluting activity per se, it is estimated that due to the expansion of tourism activities, emissions will quadruple by 2035 (Jiaqi et al., 2022; Raihan, 2024). Because of these impacts, a comprehensive approach to tourism management and oversight is needed to formulate and implement national and international tourism policies (Duxbury et al., 2021; Gerke et al., 2023).

This is how this sector is at the forefront of a regenerative business transition worldwide, catalyzing a true transformation in terms of regeneration. The aspects that integrate the TR will allow the tourism sector to become more resilient and regenerative; because it favors the coexistence of diverse economic practices, such as capitalist, alternative capitalist, and non-capitalist (Cave & Dredge, 2020); an aspect that contrasts with old purely mercantilist practices, since those approaches centered on capitalism limit the development of regenerative practices (Mathisen et al., 2022).

However, the reality of tourism worldwide leads authors like Rastegar (2025) to ask: why has tourism, promoted as a tool for sustainability, failed to achieve its goal? The answer lies in the very concept of sustainable tourism, as it does not address the root causes of the current social and environmental crises. According to Rastegar (2025), these inequalities must be confronted, and the entrenched systems that sustain them must be dismantled; otherwise, tourism will remain merely an attempt at "transformation," resulting in superficial sustainability and justice within the tourism sector. In this sense, regenerative approaches offer an excellent way out of these inequalities, as they promote the transformation of socio-ecological systems within tourism.

Latin America and the Caribbean present quite defined characteristics regarding tourism, some of them according to neoliberal thinking, which conceives it as a sector that favors development and mitigates social backwardness and poverty; while the other, from a critical point of view, exposes how territories and their inhabitants are commodified, creating benefits only for the industry, but not for the communities (Landa et al., 2021). Despite these conceptions, Latin America requires models that adequately guide the policies and strategies adopted in the tourism sector. An example of such approaches is represented by the TR and the TS, which have been of great help to international tourism.

It should be noted that in Latin America and the Caribbean, the tourism sector is based on a peripheral development model of sun and beach (Martínez & Nieto 2023); this aspect makes it vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as floods, hurricanes, cyclones, increased sea levels, and loss of marine biodiversity. These aspects bring to the forefront the resilience that characterizes this territory in the face of the changes generated in its natural environment due to climate change. Resilience is an essential element for sustainability since a socio-ecological system, such as the tourism sector, is not considered sustainable if it is not also resilient.



However, the aspects that are part of the RT and that promote environmental sustainability are three: the living system, the dialogue design, and the inspirational experience. These three elements offered by a TR are integrated with those proposed in the ST, namely: economic, sociocultural, and environmental (Reyes & Casasola, 2021). Thus, the living system is composed of the different ecosystems, while the regenerative design is composed of the different technologies and strategies applied in the ecosystems through an adequate interrelation, which seeks to regenerate, rather than deplete, and where the inspiration-experience is given by the link established between the socioecological elements. In this regard, de Freitas and Meira (2025) point out that the regeneration of territories through tourism demands a genuine commitment and the active participation of all stakeholders. Such collaboration is fundamental for the promotion and protection of heritage and culture, guaranteeing sustainable development that respects local traditions, preserves cultural identities, and fosters economic growth.

Likewise, in the RT there is an interrelation between its three main pillars, in which the systemic totality is analyzed to generate benefits that nurture the natural environment. In addition, it deals with the relationships that arise between the participants of the local populations (Iddawala & Lee, 2025), the link established between the tourist himself and the place, and finally, it creates the conditions for each element involved in the process to be able to develop its full potential through experiences worth repeating (National Geographic, 2024).

Hence, the TR drives greater changes compared to the ST. However, it should be taken into consideration that sustainability is very important and should not be discarded, since it generates socioeconomic benefits, such as employment, opening of businesses, and infrastructure development (Sheller, 2021; Baloch et al., 2023). In this regard, Spatz (2021) asserts that the TR, in addition to considering the conservation of destinations, also focuses on improving their status quo. This can only be achieved by examining the purpose of tourism and seeking new economic initiatives and models for businesses to prosper by valuing people and the planet as much as profits (Major & Clarke, 2022).

At this point, the question arises as to how the TR relates to the ST. The answer to this question is given when it is stated that the model presented by the TR is also developed following the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting among them the following: SDG 8, favors economic progress and allows the creation of decent jobs for the members of the receiving localities; SDG 17, allows the different members of the process to integrate and be created networks, projects or global partnerships; SDG 16, 10 and 3, these objectives involve regenerative projects where all actors are considered, promoting equality and providing benefits not only to tourists, but also to the receiving populations. In SDGs 6, 7, 12, 14, and 15, we can see a decrease in the consumption of natural resources, new and more renewable energy sources, conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, forests, and biodiversity, and finally, achieving sustainable production and consumption.

TS practices, according to the articles reviewed, can be strengthened by the contributions of the RT, since this is an approach that provides the necessary conditions to make a transition towards the restoration of natural homeostasis, broken by human beings (Hruby, 2024). Moreover, certain emerging industrial practices reveal that the TR can be operationalized. Thus, instead of insisting on reducing environmental pollution, some destinations expect visitors to be proactive, for example, by planting trees, providing educational resources to local children, or participating in community activities where there are cultural exchanges. Actions such as these show that TR is a philosophy and way of life that contributes greatly to ST, and which manages to be defined and developed in different destinations (Sharmaa & Tham, 2023).

This review provides valuable information that will guide the processes and help the sustainable tourism industry to adopt regenerative practices. In this sense, Dredge (2022) points out some principles of the RT that should be considered in the ST and thus reinforce the objectives of this sector, among which are, firstly, the holistic approach, which in the case of tourism is characterized by being multisectoral, multidisciplinary, multiscale and multifaceted. Secondly, there is the principle of nature as our teacher. In this sense, the design element raised by Reyes & Casasola (2021) can be extracted from nature; in addition, support, resource optimization, replenishment, circularity, and recognition of the role of nature through form and function are included in this principle. The third principle has to do with care and respect. Mutual respect and not harming others, both humans and nature, represents the basis for regenerative action. The fourth has to do with the agents involved. The inspiration-experience element is deployed in this principle, for in diversity are found knowledge, ways of knowing, and creativity.

Likewise, Dredge (2022) mentions the "dynamic and evolutionary" principle, which shows how a tourism system is part of a more complex, dynamic, and evolutionary system. Likewise, the collaborative principle is related to genuine and trustworthy collaboration, as this is the way to drive systemic change and innovation. Lastly, there is the principle of continuous learning, which holds that the ability to evolve thinking is the key to innovation. When it is possible to discuss and interpret the principles raised, it is quite likely that opportunities for tourism reinvention will be created in three key areas: systems change, mindset change, and practice (Major & Clarke, 2022; Gerke et al., 2023; Hruby, 2024).

5. Future Perspectives

Based on the results achieved, future research on regenerative tourism should be conducted in Latin America, given the significant economic contribution this market offers due to its great wealth of biodiversity and cultural heritage. Likewise, these studies should incorporate a comprehensive analysis of the elements involved in promoting RT, namely: strategic planning, community participation, and the inclusion of non-tourism companies and government actors. However, the continued

commodification of Latin American territories and their inhabitants, characteristic of the neoliberal model, would become the main obstacle to further research on this topic.

The studies to be carried out should incorporate longitudinal or experimental approaches and comparative case studies, in order to evaluate the robustness of the RT framework in different Latin American destinations over time. It is important to note that the major challenges facing Latin America in terms of promoting sustainable and regenerative tourism will facilitate the study of aspects that have not yet been reported in the literature. These are aimed at assessing the restoration and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage as basic elements of the well-being of the inhabitants of the regions where RT is promoted. A clear example of this is the beaches of Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico, which have not yet been subject to a clear system of strategies to ensure their conservation and regeneration.

The review provides some very interesting findings on tourism practices, especially for those responsible for designing and formulating policies, destination managers, and community actors whose purpose is to properly manage tourism and move toward more regenerative approaches. In this regard, governance among all stakeholders must be strengthened, strategies must be designed, communities and populations must be provided with the tools for true self-management, and tourism sustainability policies must be implemented. Similarly, technological advances are crucial in promoting sustainable tourism in Latin America, so their use is essential for digital training and the promotion of immersive experiences in destinations, including local products and sites.

Finally, different areas of knowledge play a key role in the study and promotion of RT, since, according to Dredge (2022), tourism is characterized by being multisectoral, multidisciplinary, multiscale, and multifaceted. Thus, it is possible to observe how the economy, culture, financing, communities, natural systems, governance, planning, and territorial management, among many other sectors, are essential for the flourishing of RT in Latin America.

6. Final Considerations

When the pandemic generated by COVID-19 appeared, it was necessary to rethink and generate a new vision of the foundations and objectives of the tourism sector; in addition, climate change, as a decisive aspect in the life of the planet, has been showing the consequences of unsustainable activities on the part of mankind. These scenarios demand regenerative actions that allow for better and greater results both for the host populations and for their natural and cultural environment.

The RT, although less known, has awakened great interest in academics and professionals; this is because the ST has not given the expected results in terms of its initial purposes. Thus, the RT emphasizes the link between man and the other and the land, making visits to a place to create experiences and deep connections between the tourist, the host community, and the natural systems present. In this process, the integration of each member or agent in the design, co-evolutionary alliances with nature, and systemic thinking are prioritized. In other words, with regenerative tourism, sustainable tourism achieves improved infrastructure and greater urban accessibility, promoting regeneration and preserving cultural and natural heritage. This is related to SDG 12, which promotes the use of more efficient transportation and the reduction of air pollution, among others.

Concerning Latin America and the Caribbean, the review of the documents shows that these territories face great challenges in promoting sustainable and regenerative tourism since their political, social, and economic reality do not favor the implementation of regenerative principles at the tourism level. In this sense, the proposals, strategies, and measures adopted should go beyond avoiding negative impacts on the environment; instead, they should lead to the restoration and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage, thus improving the well-being of citizens.

In Latin America, although there are different types of tourism, the principles of sustainability, ethics, and regeneration should be considered to execute effective planning, implementation, operation, and territorial management. This system of strategies ensures the conservation and regeneration of the cultural and natural heritage (the main tourist attraction) of the nations that make up this territory.

7. Declarations

7.1. Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

7.2. Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript.

7.3. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

7.4. Funding

This research did not receive any financial support

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