Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations

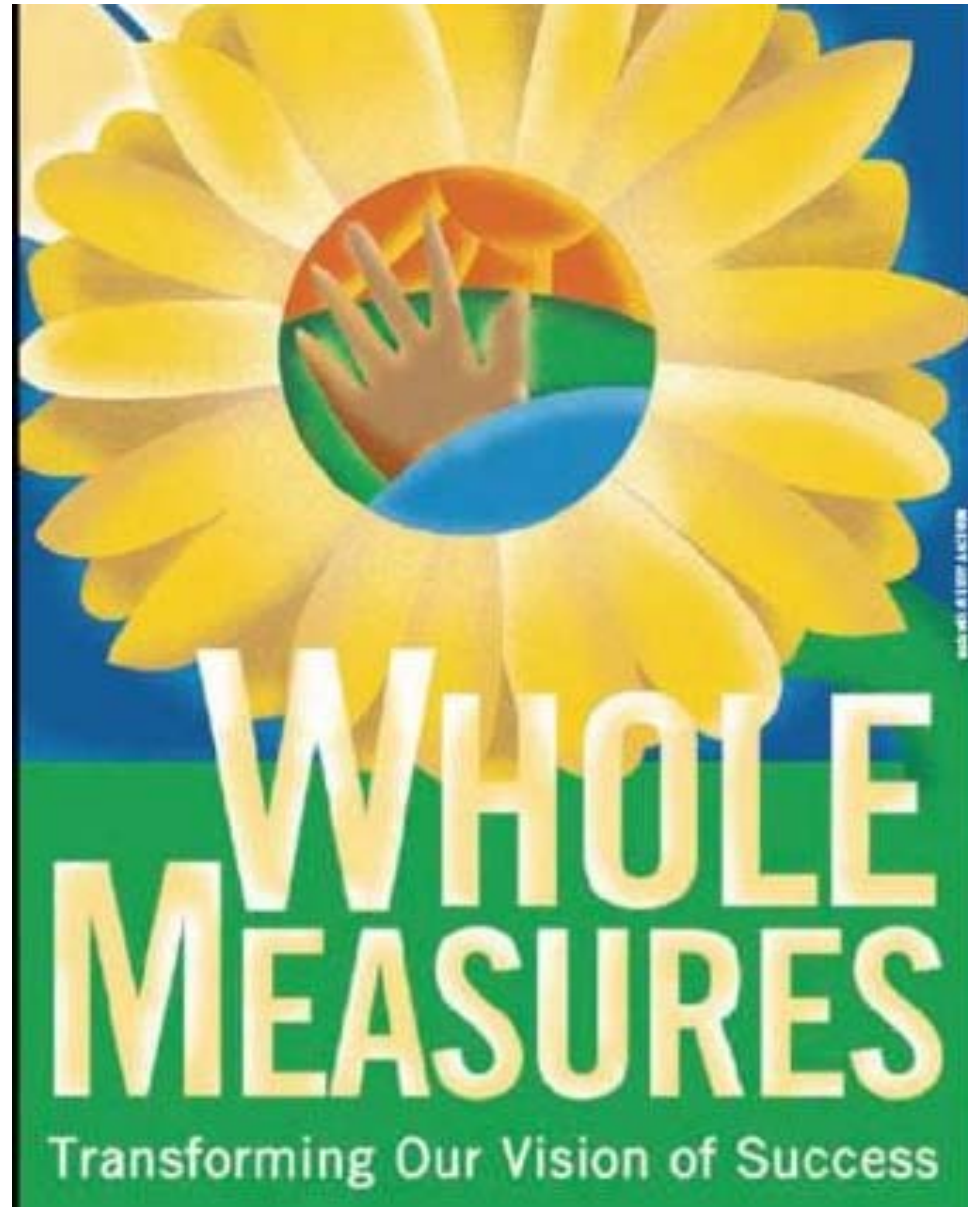**TRAVEL FOREVER**
GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL

GP RED Think Tank
Estes Park, CO
July 9-11, 2014

Bruno Maia/Naturezafotos.org

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Whole Measures for Community Health

"We envision a world in which people, land and community interact in a way that creates health and vitality for all."

measuresofhealth.net

One Theory of Change

Whole Measures for Community Health

- **Justice and Fairness**
- Providing equal access to land
- Acknowledging injustice
- Engaging the whole community
- Sharing power

- **Relationships Between People and Land**
- Increasing direct access to land
- Providing learning and inspiration
- Respecting long-term relationships to land
- Protecting the emotional and spiritual value of land

Whole Measures for Community Health

Healthy Habitat for People

- Promoting local, healthy food
- Offering safe opportunities for recreation
- Preventing or remediating pollution
- Protecting safe drinking water

Stewardship

- Providing for long-term commitment
- Reflecting community values
- Helping community care about larger landscape systems
- Depending upon local community
- Responding to climate change

Whole Measures for Community Health

Community-Building

- Creating public space for community engagement
- Uniting the community
- Empowering the community
- Building new grassroots networks

Healthy Ecosystems

- Conserving or restoring healthy wildlife habitats and corridors
- Conserving or restoring water quality
- Promoting a land ethic
- Protecting or enhancing biodiversity on the land.

Whole Measures for Community Health

Power of Story

- Taking time to listen and learn
- Providing the forum for community
- members to tell their stories
- Respecting the stories and lessons
- of the past
- Reconciling social and cultural ties between people and the land

Being in Service

- Engaging with existing community-based
- organizations
- Sharing decision-making authority with the
- community
- Building cultural competency
- Building trust and authentic relationships.
- Addressing climate change

Whole Measures for Community Health

Economic Vitality

- Ensuring long-term economic vitality
- Supporting active relationships between conservation and working lands
- Promoting local, land-based products
- Promoting sustainable land-based livelihoods

Community Resilience

- Balancing conservation with housing
- Balancing conservation with transportation needs
- Maintaining infrastructure necessary for accomplishing social goals.
- Supporting "smart growth" principles and practices
- Promoting resilience to hurricane, flood, drought and wildfire damage.

"The gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

— John F. Kennedy

Sustainability?

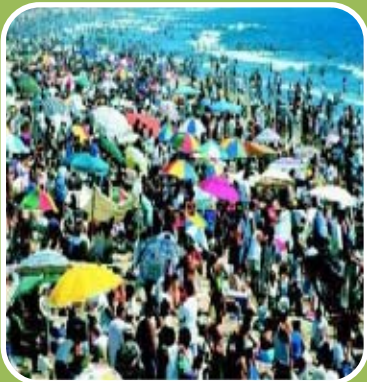People want this

So we build them this

Two Faces of Tourism

When it was good, it was very, very, good

- Profitability, local wealth, foreign exchange, infrastructure development, cultural exchange, ...
- Poverty reduction, quality employment
- Natural and cultural attractions enhanced.
- Sustainable return on investment.

When it was bad it was horrid!

- Local poverty, pollution, declining destination, ...
- Crime, drugs, prostitution
- Natural and cultural attractions damaged.
- ROI declines in the long-term.
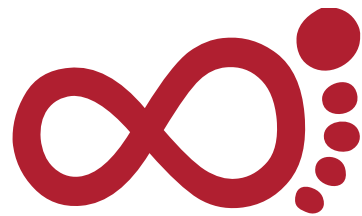
- Sustainable tourism is complex and at times confusing.
- It became more complex as the discussion has moved from consumer, to hotel, to destination.
- Our role is to make it accessible—to find the simplicity on the other side of complexity.

Finding our way…

- Sustainability is a journey, not a destination.

- The GSTC destination criteria and indicators provide a map to figure out where you are.

- The GSTC Universal Criteria is the GPS to guide you on your way.

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Response to the challenges...

GSTC Universal
Standards...

About GSTC

Global Sustainable Tourism Council

▪The international body that promotes greater awareness, understanding and adoption of sustainable tourism practices.

▪Diverse and global membership – including UN agencies, major travel companies, hotels, tour operators, SMEs, academics and social and environmental NGOs.

▪GSTC promotes universal sustainable tourism principles, tools and training to increase the demand for sustainable tourism services.
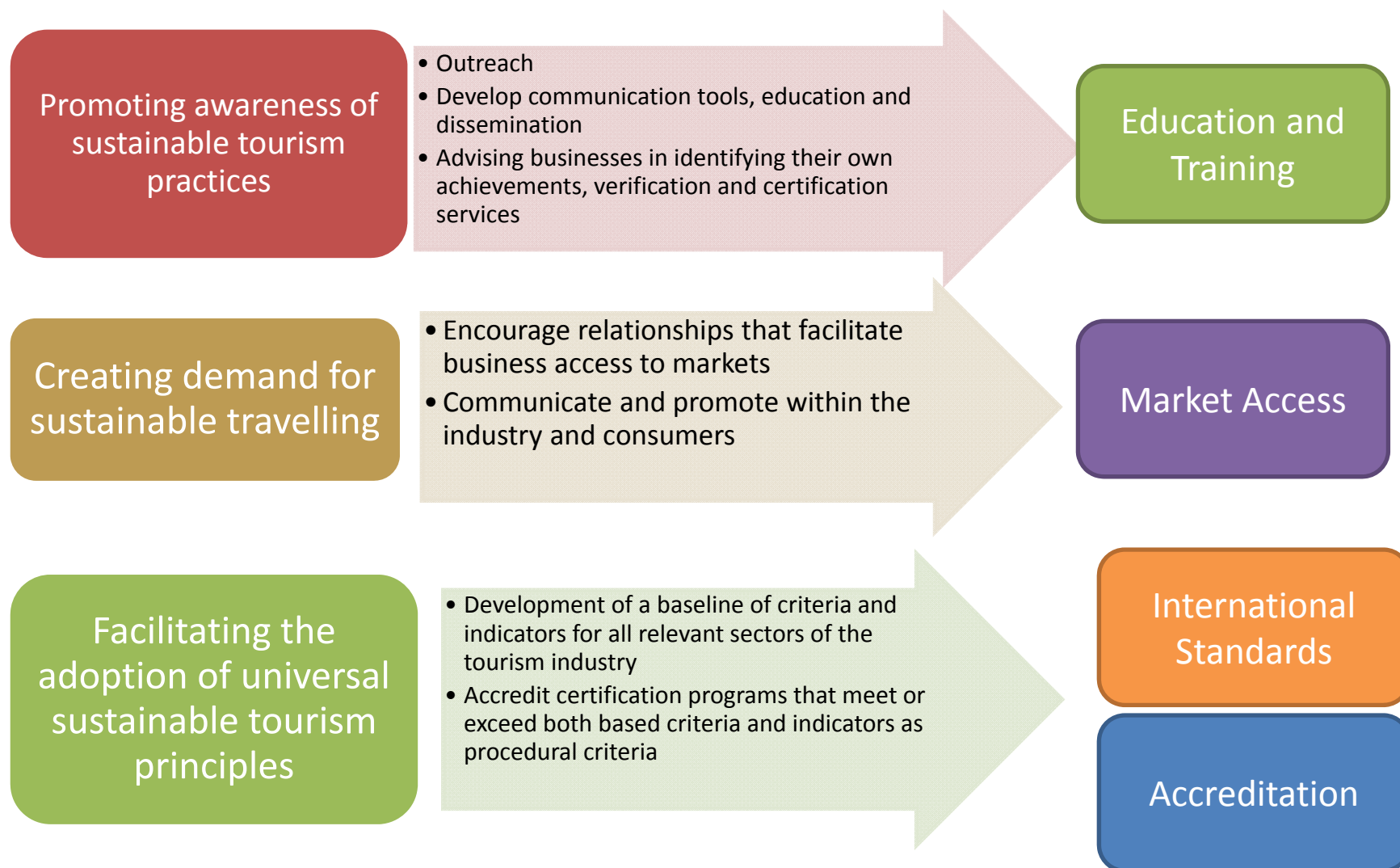
Problems and solutions

Problems	Solutions
Lack of common understanding of sustainable tourism	Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria provide a common operational definition
Lack of recognition of standards	GSTC recognition of standards aligned with the GSTC Criteria
Lack of credibility of certification	GSTC approval or third-party accreditation of certification bodies with objectively credible procedures
Lack of critical mass for consumer recognition	GSTC market access program: Travelocity-Sabre, TUI, Amadeus, many other wholesalers

GSTC's goals

Promoting awareness of sustainable tourism practices

- Outreach
- Develop communication tools, education and dissemination
- Advising businesses in identifying their own achievements, verification and certification services

Education and Training

Creating demand for sustainable travelling

- Encourage relationships that facilitate business access to markets
- Communicate and promote within the industry and consumers

Market Access

Facilitating the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles

- Development of a baseline of criteria and indicators for all relevant sectors of the tourism industry
- Accredit certification programs that meet or exceed both based criteria and indicators as procedural criteria

International Standards

Accreditation

www.gstcouncil.org

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

- Created with the input of experts, groups and companies from around the planet.
- Define sustainable tourism in a way that is actionable, measurable and credible.
- The minimum standard of sustainability for tourism businesses and destinations across the globe.
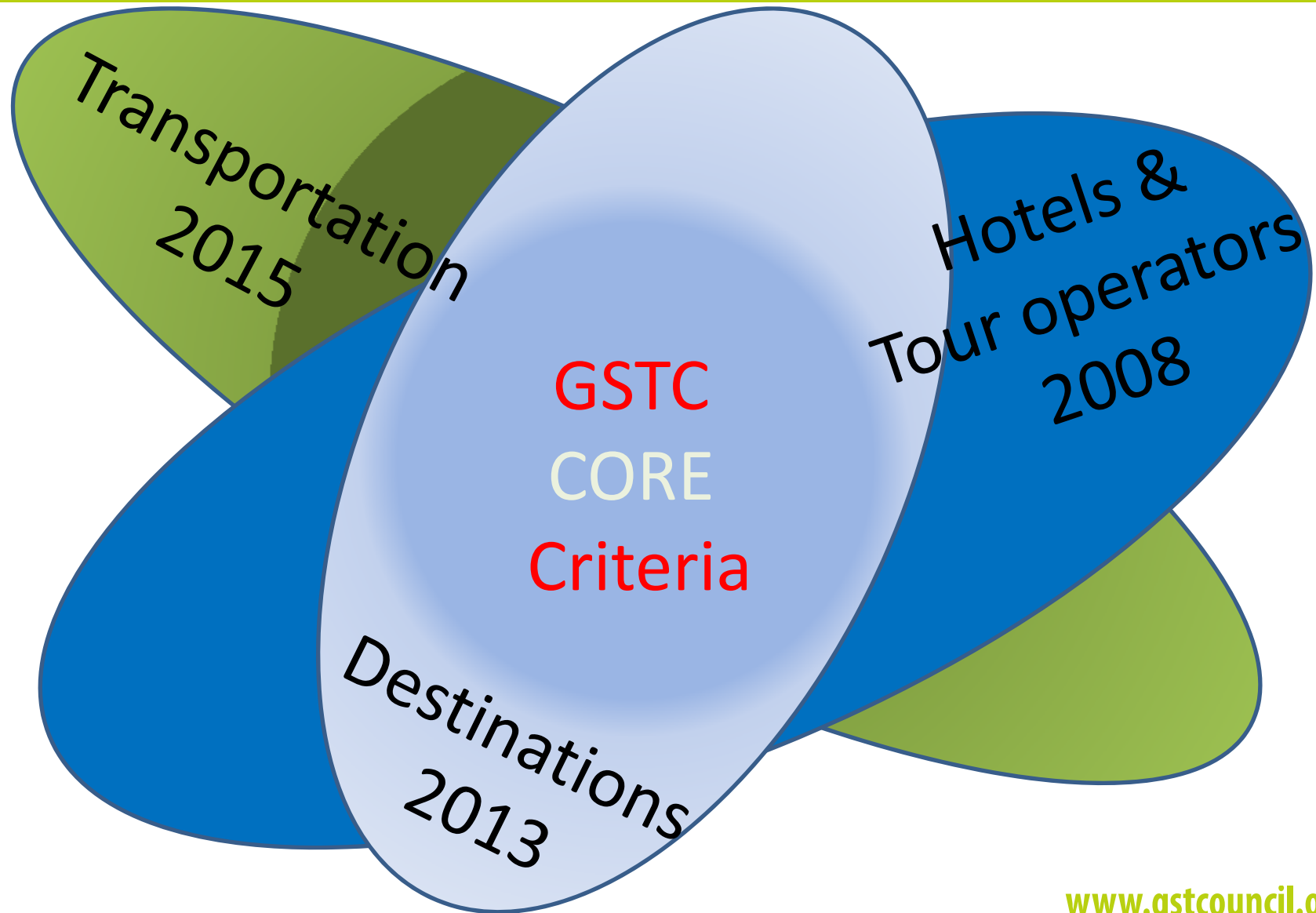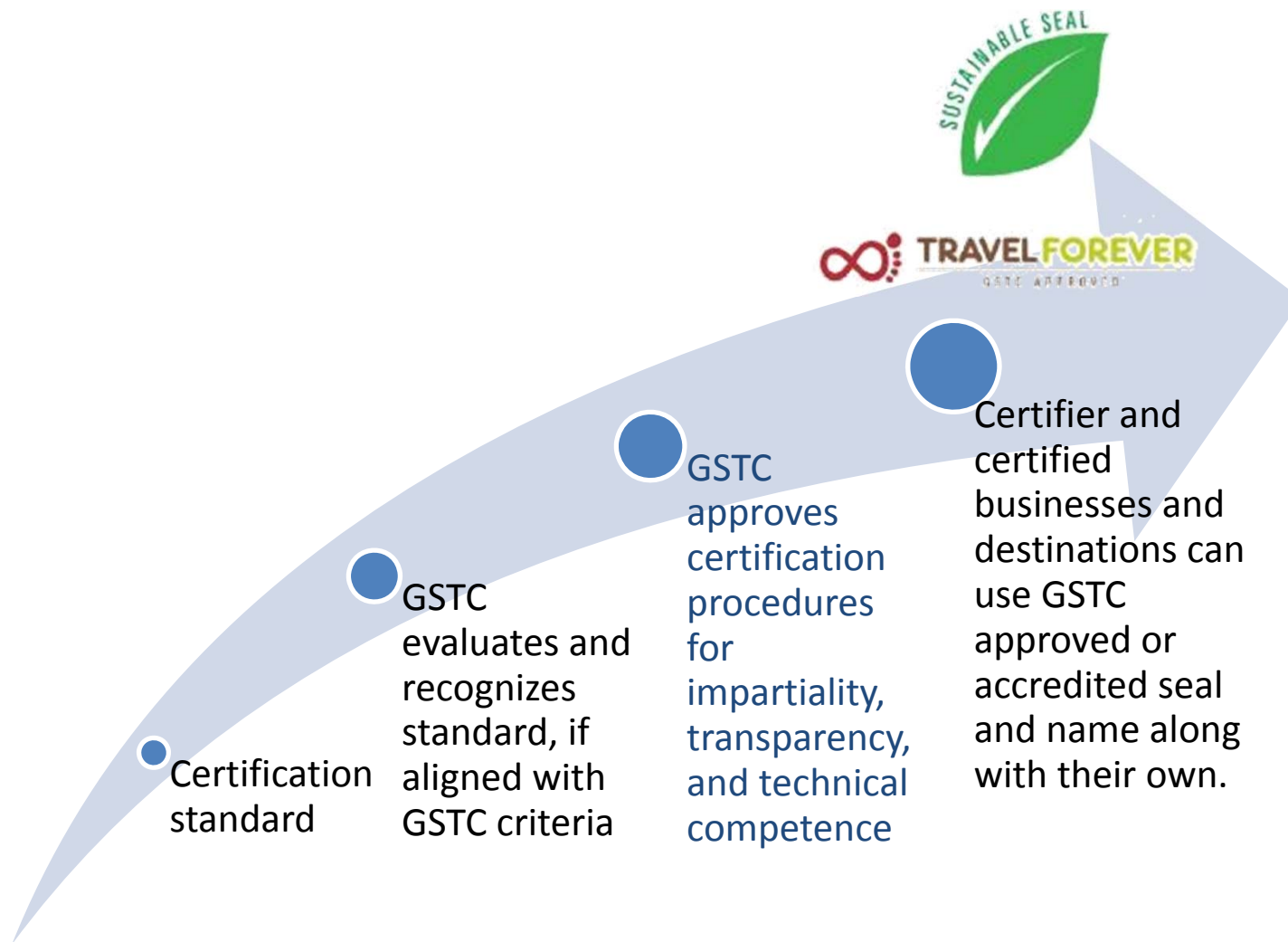
GSTC Criteria for tourism sectors

Transportation 2015

Hotels & Tour operators 2008

GSTC CORE Criteria

Destinations 2013

www.gstcouncil.org

The GSTC accreditation program

Certification standard

GSTC evaluates and recognizes standard, if aligned with GSTC criteria

GSTC approves certification procedures for impartiality, transparency, and technical competence

Certifier and certified businesses and destinations can use GSTC approved or accredited seal and name along with their own.

Certified businesses and destinations can use GSTC approved seal alone or alongside the certification body's

What has the GSTC achieved?

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators
(version 1 - 2008; version 2 - 2012)

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations
(version 1 - November 2013)

Recognition of standards

Approval of certification processes

Accreditation of certifiers

Market commitment -- Sabre-Travelocity, TUI, Royal Caribbean
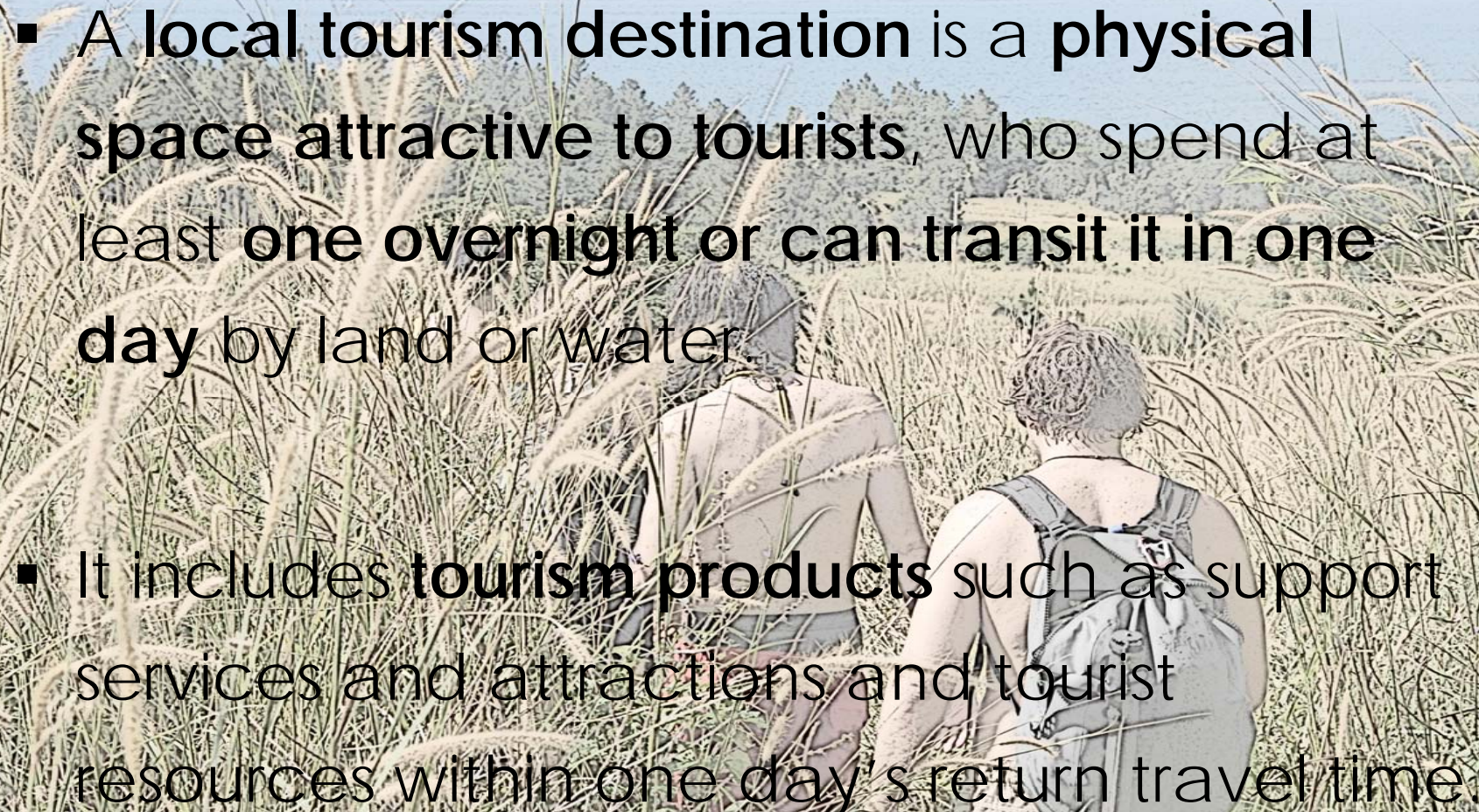
About
destinations
and sustainability

What is a local tourism destination?
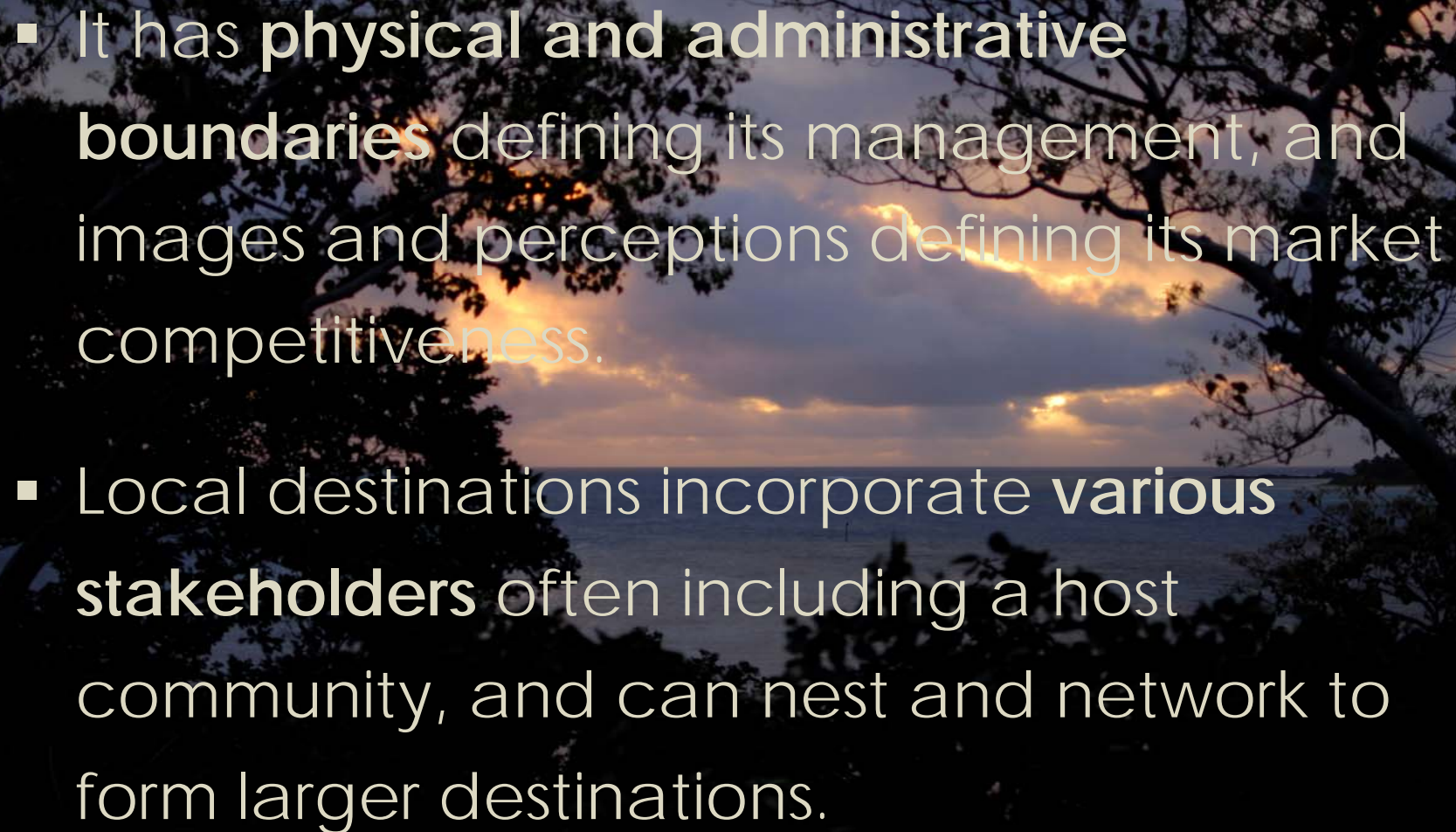
- A **local tourism destination** is a **physical space attractive to tourists**, who spend at least **one overnight or can transit it in one day** by land or water.

- It includes **tourism products** such as support services and attractions and tourist resources within one day's return travel time.

After, UNWTO, modified by GSTC

What is a local tourism destination?

- It has **physical and administrative boundaries** defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness.

- Local destinations incorporate **various stakeholders** often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations.

After, UNWTO, modified by GSTC

Sustainability covers all types of tourism and all destinations…

- "Sustainable tourism applies to any trip that may include even "mass tourism", which makes an effort to reduce its environmental and adverse sociocultural impacts." – UNWTO

- It includes therefore city hotels, beach resorts, rural tourism, ecotourism, cruises, golf and marine, among others.

- A sustainable destination can hold its visitation, attractions and its social, cultural and environmental surroundings indefinitely.

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International standards for destinations

The origin of the
GSTC-D

Initial Process

- Task force established independently to devise destination criteria, but in coordination with GSTC Partnership.

- With the establishment of the GSTC, task force becomes GSTC Destination Working Group.

- Consultants use similar process to hotel and tour operator criteria to compare and combine existing criteria from all over the world.

A multitude of destinations guidelines and criteria

UNWTO Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations	Biosphere Responsible Tourism (Instituto de Turismo Responsable)
National Geographic Geotourism Principles	Zagreb Declaration for Healthy Cities
Audubon Sustainable Communities	UN Habitat The Sustainable Cities Program-Asia
EarthCheck Community Standard	ASEAN Environmentally Sustainable Cities
European Commission Tourism Sustainability Group's Indicator System for 'Sustainable Tourism Destinations'	Sustainable Regional Tourism Destinations: Best practice for management, development and marketing
IDB Scorecard	National Geographic Ficha de Destino
Sustainable Travel International's Greening Municipalities Standard	SustainLane City Rankings
ICOMOS Charters	Global City Indicators
Destination Competitiveness: Determinants and Indicators	Ethical Traveler's The World's Best Ethical Destinations
Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean Destination Evaluation Form	WTTC Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Stewardship Award
Enterprise Green Communities	Costa Rica's Bandera Azul Ecológica (BAE)
Pan Parks	NRDC Smarter Cities
Aalborg Commitments	Blue Communities standard
Italian Touring Club's Orange Flag Program (Bandiere arancioni)	EUROPARC Sustainable Tourism Destinations Magic Number Assessment
CED System of Measures for Excellence in Destinations	IRT Standard for Destinations
TransFair Canada	IFC's Tourism Diagnostic Tool
Blue Flag	Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Management Toolkit
Fairtrade Foundation	The Utah Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)

The challenge: universal criteria for destinations

- Operationally define what is a sustainable destination.
- Applicable to north and south, city and country, rainforests, tundra, beaches
- Based on what already exists, consolidating the common elements
- Usable for multiple purposes:
  – Evaluating performance of destinations
  – Gap analysis
  – Certification
  – Marketing

Process to develop the GSTC Criteria-D

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Conception 2009-11
- Conceptualization and assessment of need for a standard - November 2009 - February 2010
- Terms of reference and methodology
  - March 2010 to September 2011

Draft 1 2011-12
- Consolidation of all external criteria
- Expert evaluation (consultants, GSTC Secretariat and Working Groups)
- Public consultation in 6 languages
- Field tests on 6 destinations
- Consolidation and evaluation of public consultation comments and field testing expert evaluation

Draft 2 2012-13
- Public consultation in Spanish and English
- Five new pilot destinations
- Consolidation and evaluation of public consultation comments and field testing
- Expert evaluation

Version 1.0 Nov-13
- Approval by the GSTC's board – October 31, 2013
- Publication - November 4, 2013
- **Global launch**
  - **P3 Costa Rica: November 5, 2013**
  - **WTM London: November 6, 2013**

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Differences between GSTC Criteria for enterprises and for destinations

GSTC Criteria - Hotels and Tour Operators	GSTC Criteria - Destinations
Impacts under the company's control	Cumulative impacts of all activities in the destination
Specific impact mitigation actions	General impact mitigation actions
Benefits the immediate community	Involves the whole community as actors
Competitive advantage for the company	Competitive advantage for the destination and all of its businesses
Outreach to a tour company and its customers, employees and neighbors	Outreach to the community, tourism businesses, other businesses and local governments
Requires an involved management and trained employees	Requires one or more organizations as manager(s) of the destination

Refining the criteria

- GSTC Destination working group and international standards working group review and refine the criteria.

- Revised criteria and indicators are used for early adopter program to determine which criteria are most applicable and which are not.
    - Mount Huangshou, China -- National Park
    - Teton County, USA -- County, USA
    - Saint Kitts & Nevis, Caribbean --- Small Islands
    - Lanzarote, Spain --- Small island.
    - Okavango Delta, Botswana -- Region
    - Fjord Norway -- Region

Refining the criteria

- In parallel, draft criteria are published for 60-day public consultation in 6 languages.

- Over 600 substantive comments were received to date.

- Results from consultation and early adopters collated and evaluated by consultants.

Early Adopters…

- Jackson Hole, Wyoming, USA
- Mt. Huangshan Scenic Area, China
- Okavango Delta, Botswana
- Fjords, Norway
- St. Kitts & Nevis, Caribbean
- Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain
- Cuzco and the Sacred Valley, Peru
- Lago Llanquihue, Chile (Lake District)
- Southern Sardinia, Italy
- Mara Naboisho Conservancy, Kenya
- St. Croix, US Virgin Islands
- Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, Mexico
- Samoa, South Pacific
- Riviera Maya, Mexico

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GSTC Destination Criteria

The criteria…

- View a destination as a unified entity of communities, tourism-related activities, and the cultural and ecological surroundings.

- Consider cumulative impacts of all tourism activities.

- Emphasize the role of destination management organizations in planning, voluntary initiatives, and regulation.

GSTC-D's goals

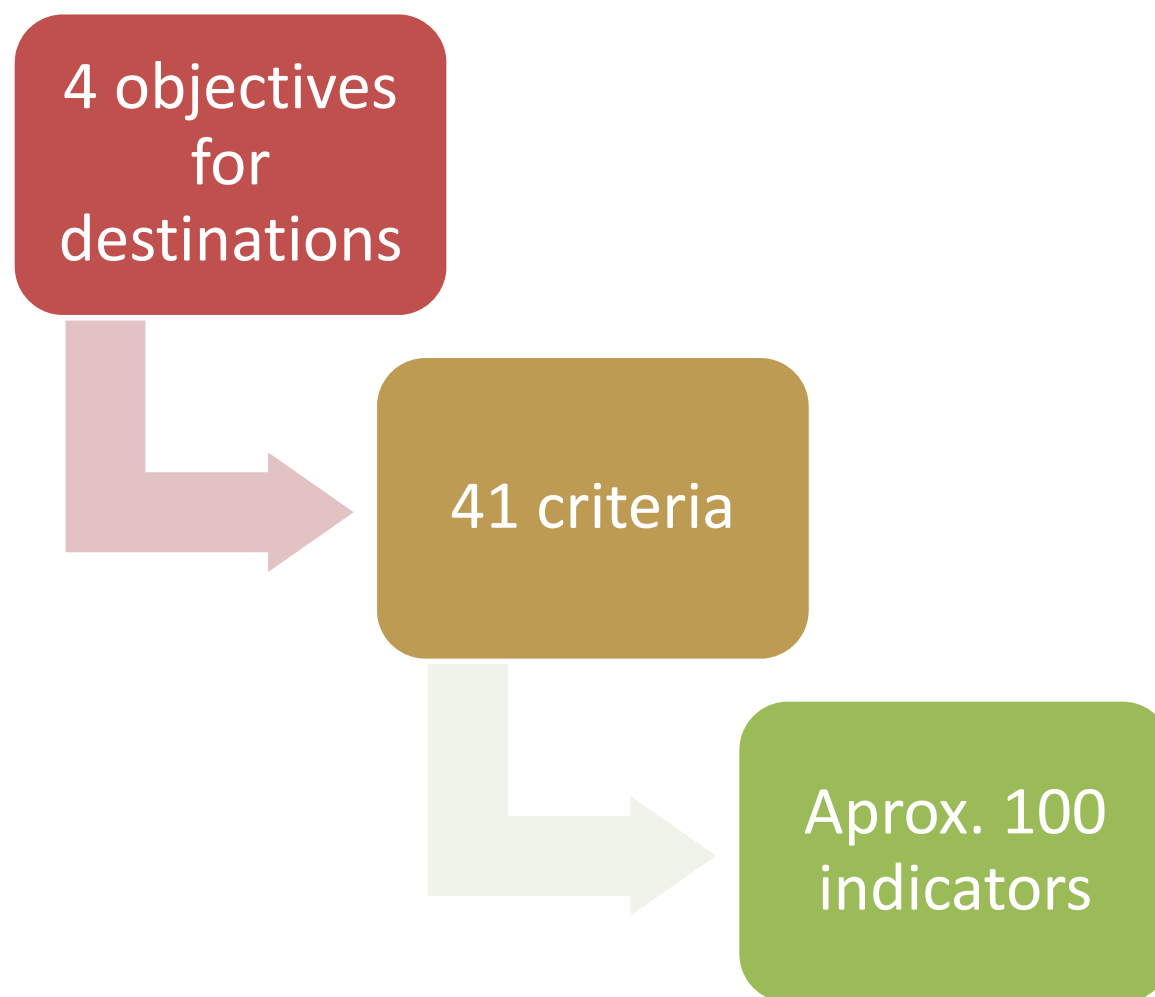Highlight sustainable destinations for consumers

Guidelines for destinations: what to do?

Common denominator for communication

Guidelines for regulations: starting point

Harmonize certification standards

Criteria organization

4 objectives for destinations

41 criteria

Aprox. 100 indicators

Action-Objectives for sustainable destinations

Demonstrate sustainable destination management.

Maximize social and economic benefits for the host community.

Maximize benefits to communities, visitors and cultural heritage and minimize impacts.

Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.

Relationship between objectives and criteria

Sustainable management	14 criteria
Socio-economic benefits	9 criteria
Benefits to communities, visitors and cultural heritage	6 criteria
Benefits to the environment	12 criteria

A. Demonstrate sustainable destination management

A1 Sustainable destination strategy The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year destination strategy that is publicly available, is suited to its scale, that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health, and safety, and aesthetic issues, and was developed with public participation.	**A2 Destination management organization** The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector and public sector. This group is suited to the size and scale of the destination, and has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues. This group's activities are appropriately funded.
A3 Monitoring	**A4 Tourism seasonality management**
A5 Climate change adaptation	**A6 Inventory of tourism assets and attractions**
A7 Planning regulations	**A8 Access for all**
A9 Property acquisitions	**A10 Visitor satisfaction**
A11 Sustainability standards	**A12 Safety and Security**
A13 Crisis and emergency management	**A14 Promotion**

B: Maximize economic benefits to the host community and minimize negative impacts

B1 Economic monitoring The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored and publicly reported at least annually. To the extent feasible, this should include visitor expenditure, revenue pero available room, employment and investment data.	**B2 Local career opportunities** The destination's enterprises provide equal employment, training opportunities, occupational safety, and fair wages for all.
B3 Public participation	**B4 Local community opinion**
B5 Local access	**B6 Tourism awareness and education**
B7 Preventing exploitation	**B8 Support for community**
B9 Supporting local entrepeneurs and fair trade	

C: Maximize benefits to communities, visitors, and culture; minimize negative impacts

C1 Attraction Protection The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve natural and cultural sites, including built heritage (historic and archaeological) and rural and urban scenic views.	**C2 Visitor management** The destination has a visitor management system for attraction sites that includes measures to preserve, protect, and enhance natural and cultural assets.
C3 Visitor behavior	**C4 Cultural Heritage protection**
C5 Site interpretation	**C6 Intellectual property**

D: Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts

D1 Environmental Risks The destination has identified environmental risks and has a system in place to address them.	**D2 Protection of sensitive environments** The destination has a system to monitor the environmental impact of tourism; conserve habitats, species, and ecosystems; and prevent the introduction of invasive species.
D3 Wildlife protection	**D4 Greenhouse gas emissions**
D5 Energy conservation	**D6 Water management**
D7 Water security	**D8 Water quality**
D9 Wastewater	**D10 Solid waste reduction**
D11 Light and noise pollution	**D12 Low-impact transportation**

www.gstcouncil.org/sustainable-tourism-gstc-criteria/criteria-for-destinations.html

www.gstcouncil.org

A long road...

Thank you!

One standard. One vision we can all embrace.