

## **Envisioning Sustainable Tourism Futures: An Evaluation of the Futures Wheel Method**

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### **Abstract**

Methods for researching the future have grown both in variety and rigour, offering new opportunities for understanding sustainable tourism. This paper discusses the value of futures research as a tool for envisioning and planning sustainable tourism futures but observes that there is greater potential for the use of futures methods in tourism. The aim of the paper is to evaluate the usefulness of a particular method known as the futures wheel as a sustainable planning tool for tourism decision makers and researchers. The futures wheel method is combined with a grounded theory approach to capture and distil the tacit knowledge of three 'expert' think tanks. The evaluation suggests that the futures wheel is a useful tool for researching sustainable tourism futures but that its potential may be enhanced if it can be combined with other futures research methods.

*Keywords:* tourism, futures studies, methods, futures wheel, forecasting, scenario planning, brainstorming, planning, decision making