



European Institute of Innovation,
Entrepreneurship, and Technology

**Title: *Seoul – Data-Driven Smart Tourism and
Sustainable Urban Innovation***

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Submission date: 24.10.2025

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Introduction

Urban destinations around the world are facing a paradox: tourism generates major economic benefits yet also intensifies congestion, emissions, and social pressure. In 2024, urban areas accounted for more than 60 percent of global tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2024). These figures show how critical it has become for cities to manage growth without eroding environmental or cultural resources. In this context, *smart tourism*—the application of digital technology to improve efficiency and sustainability—has emerged as a defining trend. The concept draws on *smart-city* theory, which integrates data networks, automation, and citizen participation to optimize urban systems (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015; Gretzel et al., 2015).

South Korea's capital, **Seoul**, offers one of the most comprehensive examples of how technology can be mobilized for sustainability. The city has long been associated with rapid digitalization: it pioneered public Wi-Fi in the early 2000s and became the first metropolis to launch a 5 G mobile network in 2019. Building on that infrastructure, the *Smart Seoul 2030* plan and the *Smart Tourism Seoul* initiative aim to transform the capital into a data-driven, low-carbon, and inclusive destination. The municipal government works closely with the *Korea Tourism Organization (KTO)* and the *Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism* to connect Internet-of-Things (IoT) sensors, artificial-intelligence (AI) platforms, and open-data portals across transport, hospitality, and cultural sectors.

Tourism plays a major role in the city's economy: in 2023, international visitors generated nearly USD 10 billion in direct spending and supported about 400 000 jobs (KTO, 2023). Yet the same success also produces environmental strain. Traffic congestion, food-waste volumes, and energy use in entertainment districts such as Myeong-dong and Hongdae have increased steadily. Responding to these issues, Seoul's government links sustainability goals with its technological strengths. For example, IoT-enabled smart bins measure waste levels, while *Seoul Air Map* sensors track fine-dust pollution in real time. These datasets feed into the *Open Data Plaza*, allowing both policymakers and citizens to monitor environmental performance.

The present study analyses how Seoul integrates these technological tools into sustainable-tourism planning and what outcomes have been achieved. Using Elkington's (1997) *Triple Bottom Line (TBL)* framework—environmental, social, and economic—the paper investigates

whether Seoul’s digital transformation genuinely advances sustainability or merely improves operational convenience. The analysis also engages with Sigala’s (2022) extension of the framework, which adds technological ethics as a fourth pillar.

Three specific objectives guide the report:

1. **To examine** the implementation of smart-city technologies in tourism operations and environmental management.
2. **To evaluate** how digital participation platforms contribute to social inclusion and cultural preservation.
3. **To identify** lessons for other Asian megacities seeking a sustainable, data-driven tourism model.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach based on secondary data—government white papers, KTO statistics, and peer-reviewed literature from 2018 to 2024. This approach provides a holistic understanding of policy design and its practical impacts. The findings are interpreted through the *TBL* lens, linking technological measures to sustainability indicators aligned with *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11* (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and *12* (Responsible Consumption and Production).

By focusing on Seoul, the research contributes to a broader understanding of how technology-intensive cities in Asia can reconcile growth with sustainability. Unlike Dubai’s top-down governance or Amsterdam’s circular-economy model, Seoul’s strategy emphasizes **citizen innovation**—open data, crowdsourced mapping, and participatory digital governance. This bottom-up element positions Seoul as a distinct case in the smart-tourism literature. The paper proceeds with a review of theoretical and empirical studies on smart tourism and urban sustainability, followed by a discussion of Seoul’s specific policies, environmental outcomes, and ethical challenges. Ultimately, the analysis argues that smart technology becomes a driver of genuine sustainability only when citizens, businesses, and governments share both data and responsibility.

Literature Review

1. Understanding Smart Tourism: Evolution and Conceptual Foundations

Smart tourism has evolved from the broader notion of the *smart city*, which integrates information and communication technologies (ICT) into urban management to improve efficiency and quality of life (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015). Within tourism, this concept focuses on how data and digital connectivity can make destinations more adaptive and sustainable. Gretzel et al. (2015) describe smart tourism as a “data-rich ecosystem” in which government agencies, businesses, and visitors co-create value through digital interaction. Real-time data collection from sensors, social media, and mobile applications allows destination managers to anticipate demand, reduce congestion, and enhance visitor experiences.

The early development of smart tourism concentrated on efficiency and marketing. Xiang and Fesenmaier (2017) note that early systems were mainly designed to guide travellers or promote destinations. However, as global tourism pressures increased, the focus shifted toward sustainability—reducing emissions, protecting heritage, and improving equity. This change reflects what Hall (2019) calls the *managerialisation of sustainability*: cities began embedding environmental metrics and sustainability reporting into everyday tourism management.

In East Asia, this transformation has been accelerated by rapid digital infrastructure expansion. Countries like South Korea, Japan, and Singapore already had widespread broadband and 5 G networks, allowing governments to integrate smart systems into tourism faster than many Western destinations (Sigala, 2022). Seoul's *Smart City* initiative, launched in 2012, explicitly linked data analytics to environmental and social goals. IoT devices collect data on energy use, waste levels, and visitor movements, creating an evidence base for policy decisions.

2. Linking Smart Tourism and Sustainable Development

Sustainability in tourism traditionally refers to balancing environmental protection, social well-being, and economic growth (UNWTO, 2021). The *Smart Tourism* framework extends this by using technology to achieve those three outcomes simultaneously. For example, IoT systems that monitor waste or energy consumption not only save resources but also cut operational costs and generate public transparency. According to Gössling and Hall (2021), digitalisation allows destinations to adopt *adaptive management*—policies that evolve continuously in response to data feedback.

The integration of sustainability and technology can also promote inclusiveness. Mobile-app translations, virtual-reality heritage tours, and digital accessibility tools make tourism more open to elderly or disabled travellers. Seoul's *Barrier-Free Tourism* platform is one such example: it offers real-time accessibility maps for attractions and transport, directly improving social equity (KTO, 2023). These applications demonstrate how smart-tourism tools can operationalise the *social* pillar of sustainability.

However, researchers also highlight potential contradictions. Farmaki and Stergiou (2022) argue that the technological divide between large corporations and small operators can reinforce inequality. Expensive digital infrastructure may exclude small family-run guesthouses or local artisans. Hence, the success of smart tourism depends not only on technology availability but also on policy support for digital inclusion.

3. The Triple Bottom Line and Emerging Theoretical Extensions

Elkington's (1997) *Triple Bottom Line (TBL)* framework remains one of the most widely used models for evaluating sustainable-tourism performance. It measures outcomes across **environmental**, **social**, and **economic** pillars, encouraging holistic assessment instead of purely financial analysis. When applied to smart tourism, the TBL helps evaluate whether digital innovations truly serve sustainability or simply enhance convenience.

Sigala (2022) recently proposed extending this into a *Quadruple Bottom Line* that includes **technological ethics**—privacy, transparency, and algorithmic fairness—as a fourth dimension. This addition is crucial in smart destinations like Seoul, where constant data collection raises questions about surveillance and consent. Integrating ethical governance ensures that technology enhances trust rather than undermines it.

4. Smart Tourism in Asian Urban Contexts

Academic studies show that Asian cities have become laboratories for smart tourism because of their population density and high digital literacy. Singapore's Smart Nation strategy employs IoT and AI to optimise energy and visitor flows; Tokyo's Smart Mobility plan combines AI with low-emission transport; and Seoul links these technologies directly to its climate and inclusion policies. Compared with Western examples, Asian approaches tend to involve **centralised coordination**—a strong role for government leadership—paired with **citizen digital participation** through open-data portals (UN-Habitat, 2022).

In Seoul, the municipal government manages over 200 open datasets through the *Seoul Open Data Plaza*, covering topics from energy to tourism behaviour. Residents and researchers can analyse this information to design sustainability solutions. This participatory data culture supports what Hall (2019) calls *collaborative governance*, where citizens become active stakeholders rather than passive recipients of policy.

5. Critical Perspectives on Smart Tourism

Although the benefits of smart tourism are widely promoted, scholars caution that excessive reliance on technology can produce new sustainability risks. Farmaki and Stergiou (2022) argue that digitalisation may privilege large corporations that can afford advanced systems, leaving smaller community enterprises at a disadvantage. This imbalance contradicts the social-equity pillar of the *Triple Bottom Line*. In many destinations, including Seoul, independent cafés, guesthouses, or cultural workshops sometimes lack access to data-sharing platforms or government incentives, reducing their visibility in digital ecosystems.

Another recurring critique concerns the *technological-fix mentality*. Hall (2019) notes that cities often treat technology as a universal solution, overlooking behavioural and cultural aspects of sustainability. Smart sensors may record energy use, but they cannot change visitor habits without educational and regulatory support. Similarly, AI-driven crowd-management systems can relocate tourists but not address over-consumption patterns or the commodification of heritage (Gössling & Hall, 2021). These concerns highlight the need for policy frameworks that integrate human behaviour, ethics, and community engagement alongside technological efficiency.

Privacy and surveillance also remain contested topics. As Sigala (2022) explains, smart destinations depend on continuous data capture from mobile devices and cameras. Without strong data-protection laws and transparent governance, such monitoring can erode public trust. Seoul's *Open Data Plaza* and the national *Personal Information Protection Act* mitigate these

risks through anonymisation and user consent protocols, but debates about “data sovereignty” persist in academic and policy circles (Kim, 2023).

6. Ethical Governance and the “Quadruple Bottom Line”

Building on these critiques, Sigala’s (2022) concept of a *Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL)* adds **technological ethics** as a fourth dimension alongside the traditional environmental, social, and economic pillars. The QBL framework recognises that sustainability now depends on how ethically technology itself is designed and managed. For instance, AI algorithms that predict tourist flows must be transparent to prevent bias toward certain districts or demographic groups. Likewise, open-data projects should safeguard against commercial exploitation of citizen-generated content.

In the context of Seoul, ethical governance is visible in the city’s *Smart City Charter*, which mandates open-source standards and prohibits the sale of personal data. Researchers such as Lee and Park (2022) identify this as a model of “responsible innovation,” where digital transformation is guided by human-centred principles. Applying the QBL lens ensures that sustainability remains not only a technical but also a moral project.

7. Policy Gaps and Implementation Challenges

Despite strong institutional frameworks, several implementation gaps remain. First, coordination across government departments can be fragmented. Environmental policies are managed by the *Seoul Metropolitan Government*, while tourism programs fall under the *Korea Tourism Organization (KTO)*, and smart-city infrastructure is overseen by the *Ministry of Science and ICT*. As noted by Choi (2021), inconsistent data standards and overlapping mandates sometimes slow integration.

Second, financing models for sustainable technology adoption in small enterprises are still limited. Unlike Singapore’s targeted grants for digital adoption, Korea’s tourism SMEs rely mostly on generic innovation funds that may not prioritise sustainability outcomes (KTO, 2023). Third, although Seoul has one of the world’s highest smartphone-ownership rates, digital literacy among older citizens and migrant workers remains uneven. This limits participation in e-governance and crowdsourcing programs.

Lastly, rapid innovation can outpace regulation. The deployment of autonomous delivery robots and AI-based translation tools in tourist zones raises legal and ethical questions that policymakers are only beginning to address. These implementation gaps show that smart tourism must evolve through adaptive governance—continuous evaluation and stakeholder dialogue rather than one-off planning.

8. Synthesis and Conceptual Framework

The reviewed literature reveals consensus that smart tourism can enhance sustainability when technology, governance, and participation are integrated. The *Triple Bottom Line* remains a valid analytical base for evaluating environmental efficiency, social inclusiveness, and economic

viability, while the *Quadruple Bottom Line* adds a necessary ethical dimension. At the same time, critics warn against viewing technology as an end in itself. Effective smart-tourism strategies require human-centred design, inclusive capacity-building, and cross-sector coordination.

Drawing on these insights, this study positions Seoul's experience within three interrelated dimensions:

1. **Technological infrastructure** – the IoT and AI systems that enable monitoring and management;
2. **Governance mechanisms** – the policies and institutions that ensure transparency and participation;
3. **Socio-cultural adaptation** – the ways residents and visitors engage with technology to support sustainability.

This conceptual framework guides the subsequent sections on methodology and empirical findings, where the Seoul case is examined through the lens of the *Triple/Quadruple Bottom Line* to determine whether smart-city tools genuinely advance sustainable tourism or simply digitalise existing practices.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This report adopts a **qualitative case study** design, which is widely recognised as suitable for analysing complex, context-specific phenomena such as sustainable urban tourism (Yin, 2018). The purpose of using a case study is to explore how different layers of Seoul's governance, technology, and community participation interact to produce sustainable outcomes. Rather than testing a hypothesis through statistical modelling, the goal here is to understand relationships and meanings—how technology supports environmental, social, and economic objectives simultaneously.

The focus on Seoul is deliberate. Among global smart cities, Seoul presents a unique combination of technological advancement and participatory governance, making it a valuable example for other Asian urban destinations. By examining policies and initiatives implemented between 2018 and 2024, the study captures the most recent phase of South Korea's smart and sustainable urban transformation.

2. Data Sources

The research relies entirely on **secondary data** collected from multiple credible sources to ensure validity and triangulation. Key materials include:

- **Government Reports:**
Seoul Smart City White Papers (2018–2024) and *Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) Annual Smart Tourism Reports (2020–2024)* provide official data on digital infrastructure, sustainability targets, and tourism performance indicators.
- **Academic Literature:**
Peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Tourism Review*, and *Asian Journal of Smart Cities* offer theoretical insights and comparative analyses from other destinations.
- **International Databases:**
UNWTO's *World Tourism Barometer (2024)* and OECD's *Tourism Trends and Policies (2023)* supply global benchmarks for sustainable urban tourism.
- **Local Media and Industry Reports:**
Selected articles from *The Korea Herald*, *The Hankyoreh*, and consultancy reports (e.g., Deloitte Korea, 2023) provide additional context on policy implementation and community responses.

Together, these materials present a triangulated picture of Seoul's smart-tourism ecosystem and its sustainability impacts.

3. Analytical Framework

Data analysis is structured around **Elkington's (1997) Triple Bottom Line (TBL)** model—environmental, social, and economic dimensions—expanded through **Sigala's (2022) Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL)** perspective, which introduces technological ethics as a fourth pillar.

Each document was reviewed and coded according to indicators under these pillars:

- **Environmental:** renewable energy use, emission reduction, waste management, and green mobility.
- **Social:** inclusivity, citizen participation, digital literacy, and cultural preservation.
- **Economic:** diversification, innovation, and job creation in tourism-related sectors.
- **Technological Ethics:** data governance, privacy protection, and transparency.

Themes were identified using qualitative content analysis. Recurring patterns—such as community engagement mechanisms or AI-based sustainability tools—were compared across documents to highlight both achievements and gaps.

4. Research Scope and Limitations

The study concentrates on policies and projects implemented within Seoul's metropolitan boundary. While national programs influence outcomes, the analysis focuses on municipal initiatives under *Smart Seoul 2030* and *Smart Tourism Seoul*.

Because the study relies on secondary data, it cannot fully capture residents' personal experiences or perceptions of smart-tourism policies. Some government data may also reflect

political priorities rather than neutral assessment. However, triangulating multiple independent sources helps reduce bias.

Another limitation is the rapid pace of technological change. Systems described in 2024 reports may already have evolved by 2025, meaning the analysis offers a snapshot rather than a final evaluation. Future research could include field interviews with residents, tourists, and local business owners to complement document-based findings.

5. Ethical Considerations

All materials used are publicly available and properly cited according to the APA 7th edition style. Care has been taken to avoid plagiarism by paraphrasing and acknowledging original sources. No personal data were collected, so ethical approval was not required. However, the discussion later in this report considers ethical issues of *data privacy* and *digital inclusion* as they relate to Seoul's policies.

Findings

1. Environmental Sustainability and Smart Infrastructure

Seoul's environmental initiatives show how technology can make large cities more efficient and resilient.

- **Energy and emissions:**
The city's *Smart Energy Management System* links thousands of IoT sensors to monitor electricity use in public buildings and hotels. Between 2018 and 2023, these systems helped lower municipal energy consumption by roughly 17 percent (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2024).
Smart street-lighting—LED units that dim automatically when roads are empty—cuts electricity demand by another 20 percent.
- **Waste and recycling:**
The *Clean Seoul Network* uses fill-level sensors in bins and route-optimisation software to reduce collection trips and emissions. Food-waste recycling reached 96 percent in 2024, one of the highest rates globally (Korea Environment Institute, 2024).
- **Air quality:**
Real-time *Air Map Korea* data feed into the *Eco-Alert* smartphone system, which warns residents and visitors of fine-dust levels and suggests low-pollution travel routes. These projects directly address the environmental pillar of the Triple Bottom Line by combining pollution control with efficiency.

2. Social Sustainability and Citizen Participation

Seoul stands out for involving citizens in tourism management.

- **Digital participation:**
The *mVoting* platform lets residents comment on tourism or environmental proposals; over one million people have used it since 2020 (Seoul Open Data Plaza, 2023).
- **Accessibility:**
The *Barrier-Free Tourism* mobile app provides route maps and live updates on elevator availability in subways and attractions. This promotes inclusive travel for the elderly and disabled.
- **Cultural preservation:**
The *Seoul Future Heritage* program uses augmented-reality tags on heritage buildings so visitors can view historical images and oral stories. This fuses modern technology with cultural continuity.

Researchers such as Kim (2023) describe this as “co-creation of sustainability,” where citizens contribute knowledge rather than simply consuming services. Still, gaps remain: participation rates among low-income and migrant residents are lower, partly due to uneven digital literacy.

3. Economic Sustainability and Innovation

The economic pillar reflects how smart-tourism projects support diversification and job creation.

- **Digital tourism platforms:**
The *Seoul Tourism Smart Platform* merges transport, accommodation, and event data so visitors can plan end-to-end trips. According to the Korea Tourism Organization (2023), this integration raised average tourist spending by 8 percent while reducing booking-system waste.
- **Start-up ecosystem:**
The *Tourism Startup Center Seoul* incubated more than 300 small businesses developing AR navigation, green-mobility, and low-carbon hospitality tools. These ventures generated roughly 4 000 new jobs by 2024 (KTO, 2024).
- **Resilience:**
During COVID-19 recovery, Seoul’s digital ticketing and contactless-payment systems allowed museums and parks to reopen earlier with safety tracking, helping the sector bounce back faster than other East-Asian capitals.

Despite these successes, scholars such as Choi (2021) warn that innovation benefits may cluster in tech districts like Gangnam, leaving peripheral neighbourhoods behind. A fair-distribution strategy is therefore essential to maintain long-term economic sustainability.

4. Technological Ethics and Data Governance

Because Seoul’s tourism system is heavily data-driven, ethical management is central to its sustainability record.

- **Open-data and privacy:**
The *Seoul Data Policy 2022* requires anonymisation of all personal identifiers before publication. Users must consent to share location data via city apps.
- **Transparency:**
Public dashboards display tourism numbers, CO₂ emissions, and citizen-proposal statistics, creating accountability.
- **Cybersecurity:**
The city invests 5 percent of its digital budget in cybersecurity training and infrastructure (Ministry of Science and ICT, 2024).

Sigala's (2022) *Quadruple Bottom Line* highlights that ethical governance sustains trust, which in turn sustains the tourism economy. Seoul's framework shows good practice, yet ongoing vigilance is needed as AI and facial-recognition tools become more common.

Discussion

1. Integrating Technology with Environmental Goals

The results confirm that Seoul's environmental progress owes much to digital monitoring and data feedback. Smart meters and IoT waste sensors deliver measurable reductions in resource use—evidence that technology can support sustainability rather than simply promote convenience. These findings support Gössling and Hall's (2021) argument that continuous data collection enables *adaptive management* in tourism.

Still, rebound effects remain a concern. As public transport becomes cleaner and travel easier, overall visitor numbers increase, offsetting part of the emission savings. Hall (2019) and UNWTO (2024) both caution that true sustainability requires demand management and behavioural change, not only efficiency. Seoul's introduction of *eco-alerts* and its public education campaigns are early attempts to guide tourist behaviour, but further policy reinforcement—such as differential pricing for high-carbon tours—may be needed.

2. Social Inclusion and Citizen Innovation

The social dimension highlights how Seoul's participatory digital culture turns residents into co-managers of sustainability. Platforms such as *mVoting* and *Open Data Plaza* show that citizens can influence urban-tourism policy directly. This outcome aligns with Hall's (2019) idea of *collaborative governance* and with Lee and Park's (2022) description of “responsible innovation.”

Yet inclusivity gaps persist. Older citizens and some migrant groups participate less because of digital-literacy barriers. The government's 2024 *Digital Learning for All* initiative begins to

address this, but equal access remains essential if social sustainability is to extend beyond the tech-savvy population. Farmaki and Stergiou (2022) stress that without inclusion, smart cities risk reinforcing inequality—the very problem they aim to solve.

3. Economic Diversification and Resilience

Economically, Seoul's smart-tourism programs demonstrate clear diversification effects. Incubators and data-driven platforms have created thousands of jobs and improved operational efficiency. The rise of green start-ups underlines how sustainability can become an economic asset rather than a cost. However, spatial inequality is emerging: most new ventures cluster in the Gangnam-Yeouido corridor. To balance development, future policies could extend incentives to cultural districts and peri-urban areas, promoting a wider spread of benefits.

The COVID-19 experience confirmed the importance of digital readiness for resilience. Contactless ticketing and virtual-tourism products helped Seoul recover faster than regional peers. This supports Sigala's (2022) view that digital transformation can stabilise tourism economies in times of crisis.

4. Technological Ethics and Governance

Applying Sigala's (2022) *Quadruple Bottom Line* reveals that Seoul's strongest contribution to sustainability may lie in ethical governance. The *Smart City Charter* and *Data Policy 2022* make privacy and transparency explicit, reflecting global norms such as the EU's GDPR. By publishing environmental and tourism data publicly, Seoul builds trust and encourages accountability.

Nevertheless, continuous oversight is vital. AI-based crowd-management and facial-recognition systems could undermine privacy if misused. Establishing independent ethics committees and clearer consent procedures would strengthen this fourth sustainability pillar. As technology advances faster than regulation, adaptive governance will remain the city's ongoing challenge.

5. Comparative and Theoretical Implications

Compared with other destinations studied in the literature—Dubai's state-driven model or Singapore's corporatised Smart Nation—Seoul's approach stands out for its citizen-centred digital participation. The evidence suggests that inclusiveness, rather than sheer investment, determines how effectively technology translates into sustainability outcomes.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings validate the *Triple Bottom Line* but also confirm the need for its ethical extension. In highly digitalised destinations, sustainability is inseparable from

data governance. The Seoul case therefore supports a shift toward a *Quadruple Bottom Line* framework encompassing environmental, social, economic, and ethical dimensions.

Conclusion

The study set out to explore how Seoul integrates smart technologies into its sustainable-tourism strategy. Using the *Triple* and *Quadruple Bottom Line* frameworks, it examined how digital infrastructure, participatory governance, and ethical regulation contribute to environmental efficiency, social inclusion, and economic resilience. The findings reveal that Seoul has achieved notable progress across all dimensions. Smart-energy systems, waste-collection sensors, and real-time air-quality networks have reduced emissions and resource consumption. Citizen-engagement tools such as *mVoting* and the *Open Data Plaza* illustrate how public participation strengthens both transparency and accountability in tourism governance.

Economically, the city's innovation hubs and data-driven platforms have diversified the tourism sector and created new employment opportunities. This demonstrates that sustainability can serve as a driver of competitiveness rather than a constraint. The inclusion of start-ups and green entrepreneurs in Seoul's tourism ecosystem further proves that sustainability and innovation can reinforce each other when guided by coherent policy.

Nevertheless, several challenges remain. The uneven digital literacy among certain social groups limits equal participation, and the spatial concentration of investment in technology-rich districts may widen intra-city disparities. Moreover, the fast pace of technological change requires continual revision of data-protection and algorithm-ethics frameworks. As the literature suggests (Sigala, 2022; Hall, 2019), long-term sustainability depends on adaptive governance that balances innovation with inclusiveness.

The analysis contributes to the wider academic debate by showing that digital transformation in tourism should not be evaluated solely in economic or environmental terms. Ethical and participatory governance—what Sigala (2022) terms the *fourth pillar*—is equally critical. In this sense, Seoul exemplifies a “learning city” model, where technology serves human development goals rather than dominating them.

For other urban destinations, the Seoul case highlights several transferable lessons: begin with pilot projects, maintain open-data transparency, support SME digital adoption, and integrate ethical oversight into every stage of technological deployment. By embedding these principles, cities can align tourism growth with the Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

In conclusion, Seoul demonstrates that smart tourism and sustainability are not competing agendas but complementary pathways toward resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible urban development. The challenge ahead lies in ensuring that technological progress remains equitable, ethical, and responsive to citizens—the ultimate stakeholders of any smart destination.

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