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CESTOUR  
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# STATUS-QUO REPORT

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN SRI LANKA



# STATUS-QUO REPORT OF THE FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION ON STATUS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN SRI LANKA

This report is part of the Project 'Status-Quo Report of the Focused Group Discussion on Status of Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka', which is Co-funded by Erasmus + programme of the European Union. This publication reflects the views only of the authors and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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## STATUS-QUO REPORT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN SRI LANKA

*“Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.”*

(World Tourism Organization, 1998, p. 20)

# Project Partners

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# er Institutions



## Nepal

Tribhuvan University (P9)  
Global College International (P10)

**FH JOANNEUM**  
University of Applied Sciences

FH JOANNEUM Gesellschaft mbH  
Austria



Sabaragamuwa University  
Sri Lanka

 **Universitat d'Alacant**  
Universidad de Alicante

University of Alicante  
Spain



Uva Wellassa University  
Sri Lanka

 **IULM**  
International University of Languages and Media  
Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione

Università die Lingue e Comunicazione,  
Italy



Tribhuvan University,  
Nepal

 **BIMTECH**  
BIRLA INSTITUTE  
OF MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY  
Excellence with Values

Birla Institute of Management Technology,  
India

 **GLOBAL  
COLLEGE**  
INTERNATIONAL

Global College International,  
Nepal

 **INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC ENTERPRISE**

Institute of Public Enterprise,  
India

 **NIRMA  
UNIVERSITY**

Nirma University,  
India

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Tourism is a critical economic activity in the global economy at present. Equally, it strongly relates to the socio-cultural, ecological and economic development of many parts of the globe. The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive insight into the sustainable tourism development context in Sri Lanka. It aims at identifying the need-gap of sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka to guide the effective implementation of the project named 'Centers of Excellence in Sustainable Tourism to boost economic development and enhance university-business cooperation in Southern Asia' (CESTour). At the outset, the report spotlights on a comprehensive review of literature on the thesis of sustainable tourism development followed by an analysis of sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. The comprehensive discussions conducted with a focused expert group to elucidate sustainable tourism need-gaps in the Sri Lankan context are later illustrated in the report to establish deeper insights into areas deemed to be addressed in the course of project implementation. Afterwards, the report elaborates on future prospects and potentials of sustainable tourism development, followed by the conclusion. It is essential to learn from real-world examples to understand the ground realities of any thesis, and this is fulfilled by a series of case studies presented at the end of this report on sustainable tourism initiatives, practices and implementations in Sri Lanka. The purpose of this is to unveil the opportunities, challenges, issues and best practices in sustainable tourism initiatives and implementations of Sri Lanka. Overall, the report provides an inclusive insight into the status quo of sustainable tourism context, development priorities, issues, challenges and opportunities in Sri Lanka with an eye to guide the implementation of CESTour project in the island.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# STATUS-QUO REPORT

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SUSTAINABLE  
TOURISM IN  
**SRI LANKA**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBT	:	Community Based Tourism
CESTour	:	Centers of Excellence in Sustainable Tourism
DMC	:	Destination Management Company
DMO	:	Destination Marketing Organization
FDI	:	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
GSDC	:	Global Sustainable Development Council
GSTC	:	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
ICT	:	Information Communication Technology
IUCN	:	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LDC	:	Least Developed Countries
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
NSICS	:	National Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme
NTO	:	National Tourism Organization
NTO	:	National Tourist Organization
PPP	:	Public Private Partnership
SCP	:	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDGs	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	:	Small Island Developing States
SLANRMP	:	Sri Lanka Australia Natural Resource Management Project
SLCB	:	Sri Lanka Convention Bureau
SLITHM	:	Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management
SLTDA	:	Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
SLTPB	:	Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau
SME	:	Small and Medium Enterprises
STD	:	Sustainable Tourism Development
SUSL	:	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
TBL	:	Triple Bottom Line
TSP	:	Tourism Strategic Plan
UNEP	:	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	:	United Nations World Tourism Organization
UWU	:	Uva Wellassa University



## Polonnaruwa

The ancient city of Polonnaruwa is amongst the eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Sri Lanka which cannot be missed out from the classical route while touring along the country.





## Chapter

## 01

# Introduction to the Status Quo Report

## 1.1 Introduction

This status Quo report is an approach in contributing to the research project on 'Centers of Excellence in Sustainable Tourism to boost economic development and enhance university-business cooperation in Southern Asia' (CESTour). The report emphasizes some facts on the current tourism industry determining insights and prevailing circumstances of Sustainable Tourism in the context of Sri Lanka.

The report intends to convey a detailed version of understanding on the required context of sustainable tourism in the country which is cooperating the better planning and process of the project. The report includes a well-aligned literature review and a systematic content that guide the work, reinforcing the critical identifications of the project that derive through the basements of sustainable tourism, also covering and collaborating the perspectives of existing research and literature sources towards the project.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Report

The report is developed preliminary in achieving the below-mentioned aims.

- To identify the current context of the sustainable tourism industry in Sri Lanka
- To present the findings of gap analysis in relation to Sri Lanka, emphasizing the following areas in the subsequent report;
  - The stakeholders and system
  - The influential factors and performance
- To discuss the sustainable tourism development challenges, priorities, and future prospects in Sri Lanka

## 1.3 The Process

In developing the Status-quo report, the subsequent process was undertaken.

- Extensive literature review
- Identification of key stakeholders of sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka
- Conducting the focused group discussion with selected experts and partners

- Completing the concise report based on the focus group discussion and literature review

## 1.4 Structure of the Report

The status-quo report consists five chapters, as stated below.

- Chapter 01 - Introduction to the Status Quo Report
- Chapter 02 - Overview of Sustainable Tourism
- Chapter 03 - Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka
- Chapter 04 - Sustainable Tourism Need-Gap Analysis
- Chapter 05 - Future Prospects
- Chapter 06 - Conclusion
- References
- Case Studies: Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka: Issues, Challenges and Best Practices

## 1.5 Project Partners

CESTour Project works with 10 universities in partner countries. This study is being completed by using primary and secondary data on sustainable tourism from three nations, i.e., India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.





### **Horton Plains**

Horton Plains, its surroundings forests, and the adjoining Peak Wilderness consolidate Sri Lanka's most important catchment area of almost all the major rivers. The Sambar, a deer species uniquely lives in this mystic plains waiting for whom? For responsible tourists?



## Chapter

## 02

# Overview of Sustainable Tourism

## 2.1 Introduction to Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is not a discrete or special form of tourism. Instead, all forms of tourism should strive to be more sustainable. Making tourism more sustainable is not just about controlling and managing the negative impacts of the industry. Tourism is in a very special position to benefit local communities, both economically and socially, as well as to raise awareness and support conserving the environment. Within the tourism sector, economic development and environmental protection should not be seen as opposing forces. They should be pursued hand in hand as aspirations that can and should be mutually reinforcing. Policies and actions must aim to strengthen the benefits and reduce the costs of tourism.

Swarbrooke (1999) has comprehensively defined sustainable tourism as ".....it is economically viable but does not destroy the resources in which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community."

Later, UNWTO (2014) has further modified that and defined sustainable tourism as "..... envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity, and life support systems."

Sustainable Tourism Development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing future opportunities. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems. Sustainable tourism products are products that are operated in harmony with the local environment, community and cultures so that these become the beneficiaries, not the victims of tourism development. Further, UNWTO (2014) has elaborated Responsible Tourism, Soft Tourism, Minimum Impact Tourism and Alternative Tourism in terms with a similar meaning to Sustainable Tourism., For this context, they all are included in the term Sustainable Tourism. According to the literature, the following driving forces of sustainable tourism development were identified.

- Increasing regulatory pressure
- Growing awareness of cost savings from sensible resource consumption
- Tourism professionals and operators recognize that environmental quality is essential for a competitive product
- A growing awareness of stakeholders about their potentials to influence tourism policy

## 2.2. Principles of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Thus, sustainable tourism should consider the following triple bottom line approach.

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural resources and biodiversity.
- 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, along with contributing to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities as well as social services to host communities while contributing to poverty alleviation.



Figure 2.1: Triple bottom line of sustainability

Source: Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH)/Learning Resources, 2021

UNESCO's World Conference on Sustainable Tourism held in Lanzarote, the Canary Islands, Spain, in 1995, developed a specific framework for sustainable tourism to grow from. Here are the highlights of those criteria:

- 1) Tourism development should be based on the criteria of sustainability. It should be: ecologically bearable, economically viable, and ethically and socially equitable for local communities.
- 2) Tourism should contribute to sustainable development and be integrated with all aspects of the environment, respecting fragile areas and promoting the assimilation of impacts so that these lie within capacity limits.
- 3) Tourism must consider its effects on the cultural heritage and traditions of local communities.
- 4) Participation of all actors in the process is essential.

In addition to the above principles, Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) provides ten principles for sustainable tourism as follows.

- 1) Using resources sustainably: The conservation and sustainable use of natural, social and cultural resources is crucial and makes long-term business sense.
- 2) Reducing over-consumption and waste: Reducing over-consumption and waste avoids the costs of restoring long-term environmental damage and contributes to the quality of tourism.
- 3) Maintaining biodiversity: Maintaining and promoting natural, social and cultural diversity is essential for long-term sustainable tourism and creates a resilient base for the industry.

4) Integrating tourism into planning: Tourism development integrated into a national and local strategic planning framework and undertaking environmental impact assessments increases the long-term viability of tourism.

5) Supporting local economies: Tourism that supports a wide range of local economic activities and takes environmental costs and values into account protects these economies and avoids environmental damage.

6) Involving local communities: The full involvement of local communities in the tourism sector benefits them and the environment in general and improves the quality of the tourism experience.

7) Consulting stakeholders and the public: Consulting between the tourism industry and local communities, organizations, and institutions are essential if they work alongside each other and resolve potential conflicts of interest.

8) Training staff: Staff training that integrates sustainable tourism into work practices and recruitment of personnel at all levels improves the quality of the tourism product.

9) Marketing tourism responsibly: Marketing that provides tourists with complete and responsible information increases respect for destination areas' natural, social and cultural environments and enhances customer satisfaction.

10) Undertaking research: Ongoing research and monitoring by the industry using effective data collection and analysis are essential to help solve problems and bring benefits to destinations, the industry, and consumers.

(Tourism Notes - Sustainable Tourism, 2018)

## 2.3 Global Sustainable Tourism Industry

### 2.3.1. Evolution of the Concept of Sustainable Tourism Development

The debate over the concept of Sustainable Tourism is a phenomenon of the 1990s. Sustainable generally means the development which meets the needs today without compromising the ability of people in the future to meet their needs. It is a longer-term perspective than the usual human decision-making process and implies a need for intervention and planning in a holistic approach. Hence, the concept of sustainability embraces the environment, people and economic system. Accordingly, the term “sustainability” has begun to be used explicitly in the past three decades; the idea that underpins it dates back to the earliest. Some of the earliest attempts to achieve sustainability were planned and developed towns and cities by the Romans.

Consequently, many traditional agricultural systems were developed globally, inspired by the concept of sustainability over decades. Gradually, technical intervention, population pressure, and social and economic change led to industry growth and urbanization in the global arena. According to Swarbrooke (1999), industrialization in the United Kingdom transformed the economy and society and the natural environment. From the 1960s, sustainable development became/emerged as a major problem in the so-called “Third World”. As the countries of Asia and Africa gained their independence, they were intent on closing the wealth gap between themselves and the developed countries (Swarbrooke, 1999). Since 1987, the growing interest in Sustainable development has been fueled by the Rio Summit in 1992 Agenda 21 and Environmental problems such as “Global warming” and the “Smog” which affected Southeast Asia.

### 2.3.2. Global Aspect of the Sustainable Tourism

The development of tourism in the world is concerned with the sustainable aspects of preserving cultural heritage and conserving the natural environment. Due to tourism, many destinations have begun to minimize the social-cultural impacts and the impact on the environment. Sustainable tourism is considered a suitable avenue to develop economically and socially while respecting the natural and cultural heritage. Nowadays, tourism development no longer adapts to mass tourism development but more in special interest tourism development or alternative tourism development. Today, tourism is a significant industry or a leading sector for many countries and has become the fastest-growing industry globally.

Cavagnaro, Staffieri and Ngesa (2015) have discussed how tourism development acts as an integral part of the development of other sectors that are consistently implemented in a sustainable manner that/which always synergize with various components and other supporting sectors. Elkington (1997) has clearly discussed how the rapid economic growth in the Asia Pacific region suggested a broader opportunity for the development of tourism markets in the South-East Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc. According to him, the potential of tourism in Indonesia, for instance, is rich among others.

Indonesia has a large tourism potential of cultural heritage and nature as a capital for its tourism development. In Indonesia, the tourism sector is very encouraging to the economic growth of the nation and its people. Elkington (1997) further explained how the tourism sector has already given positive effects on the economic development of the country and also some negative impacts dealing with the social, cultural, and environment of the country. Hence, he proposed a sustainable development approach as a must do to keep tourism on and beneficial for tourism stakeholders in the country. The triple bottom line also referred to as TBL, 3P (people, planet, and profit), or 3E (economy, environment, and equity), is one of the most widely used approaches to measuring sustainable tourism development.

According to the framework, sustainability requires a balanced development of social, economic, and ecological domains (UNWTO, 2005). Accordingly, the notion of sustainable tourism suggests that there must be a suitable balance between the ecological, socio-cultural and economic dimensions of tourism development (Stoddard et al., 2012). There have been several attempts to develop a global measure of sustainable tourism (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005; Yu et al., 2009). The development of such a widely applicable measurement instrument is virtually impossible because tourism destinations vary greatly in terms of biophysical attributes, community characteristics, and institutional arrangements to manage tourism. The Caribbean region has prompted several initiatives to be undertaken by major national, regional and international entities in the Caribbean. Many research, studies, projects and programs have been developed concentrating on tourism’s negative impact on the natural environment and resulting implications for the overall sustainability of the tourism product. The major tourism initiatives include the proposed establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Zone, The Global Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Hotel Association’s launched a program as Caribbean Action for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) at the sub-regional level, the Organization of East Caribbean States/Natural Resources Management Unit, and Implementation of the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Development State (Zappino, 2005).

Macleod and Todnem (2007) described the development of a sustainable tourism strategy for Scotland, examining the policy context. The authors develop an implementation road map for stakeholders. They argue for employing a bottom-up, performance-based process that stresses practical benefits rather than an emphasis on regulatory conformance. Nevertheless, the Scottish Executive and top industry body Visit Scotland’s leadership role was deemed to be essential – especially in capacity building among the stakeholders through written guidance, practical support, and case studies. It was also emphasized that tourism policy actors should link their objectives to stakeholders in other policy fields to achieve a more cohesive public policy environment.

Swarbrooke (1999) has intensively discussed the concept of sustainable tourism and its applications globally and elaborated a high level of interest in sustainable tourism



development in the developed world, specifically in countries like Germany and Scandinavia. Consequently, there is an interest in Canada and the USA, and the UK has become one of the leading players in sustainable tourism development. Interestingly, general interest in sustainable tourism has been higher in these developed countries, which have traditionally been generators rather than receivers of international tourism trips. Further, there was a little tangible interest in sustainable tourism in the less developed countries of the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and Asia. Still, their priority was short term economic development than long-term resource conservation.

#### 2.4. Benefits of Sustainable Tourism

The benefits of sustainable tourism can be discussed under three segments as Economic benefits, Environment benefits and Socio-cultural benefits.

##### 2.4.1. Economic Benefits

The main positive economic impacts of sustainable tourism relate to foreign exchange earnings, contributions to government revenues, generation of employment and business opportunities. Some of the most important economic benefits that sustainable tourism brings along are mentioned here.

**Foreign exchange earnings:** Tourism expenditures, the export and import of related goods and services generate income to the host economy. Tourism is the third-largest source of foreign exchange earnings in Sri Lanka.

**Contribution to government revenues:** Government revenues from the tourism sector can be categorised as direct and indirect contributions. Direct contributions are generated by taxes on incomes from tourism employment, tourism businesses and direct charges on tourists such as departure tax. Indirect contributions derive from taxes and duties on goods and services supplied to tourists. Examples: taxes on souvenirs, alcohol, restaurants, etc. Sustainable revenue from the tourism business is important for the government to address the issues of poverty and unemployment.

**Employment generation:** The rapid expansion of international tourism has led to significant employment creation. Tourism can generate jobs directly through hotels, restaurants, taxis, souvenir sales and indirectly by supplying goods and services needed by tourism-related businesses. Through employment generation, tourism improves the living standards, quality of life of the people and sustain their future. It will address the pro-poor tourism issues in the destination.

**Stimulation of infrastructure investment:** Sustainable tourism can induce the local government to improve the infrastructure by creating better water and sewage systems, roads, electricity, telephone and public transport networks. All of this can improve the quality of life for residents as well as facilitate tourism.

**Contribution to local economies:** Tourism can be a

significant, even an essential part of the local economy and its sustainability. Because the environment is a basic component of the tourism industry's assets, tourism revenues are often used to measure the economic value of protected areas. There are other local revenues that are not easily quantified, as not all tourist expenditures are formally registered in the macro-economic statistics. Money from tourism is earned through informal employment, such as street vendors and informal guides. The positive side of informal or unreported employment is that the money is returned to the local economy and has a great multiplier effect as it is spent over and over again.

**Direct financial contributions to nature protection:** Tourism can contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitats. Revenue from park-entrance fees and similar sources can be allocated specifically to pay for the protection and management of environmentally sensitive areas. User fees, income taxes, taxes on sales or rental of recreation equipment and license fees can provide governments with the funds needed to manage natural resources.

**Competitive advantage:** More and more tour operators take an active approach towards sustainability. Consumers expect them to do so and because they are aware intact destinations are essential for the long-term survival of the tourism industry. More and more tour operators prefer to work with suppliers who act sustainably, e.g., saving water and energy, respecting the local culture and supporting the wellbeing of local communities.

##### 2.4.2. Environmental Management and Planning Benefits

Sound environmental management of tourism facilities and especially hotels (water and energy-saving measures, waste minimization, use of environmentally friendly material, etc.) can decrease the environmental impact of tourism. Planning helps to make choices between the conflicting interests of industry and tourism to find ways to make them compatible. Planning early for tourism development can prevent damaging and expensive mistakes, thereby avoiding the gradual deterioration of environmental assets significant to tourism. Further, tourism can provide alternative employment to development scenarios that may reduce the pressure on the environment. The community can be engaged with tourism while providing employments. Poor economies increase the negative environmental impacts. Therefore, it is essential to involve people in tourism activities to sustain the environment in the Sri Lankan context.

##### 2.4.3. Socio-Cultural Benefits

Sustainable tourism has the potential to promote social development through employment creation, income redistribution and poverty alleviation.

**Tourism as a force for peace:** Travelling brings people into contact with each other. As sustainable tourism has an educational element, it can foster understanding between people and cultures and provide cultural exchange between hosts and guests. This increases the chances for people to develop mutual sympathy and understanding and to reduce

prejudices. Application of Home-stay tourism, Eco-Tourism, Pro-poor tourism and Agro tourism can be identified as examples in this case.

**Strengthening communities:** Sustainable tourism can add to the vitality of communities in many ways. Examples are events and festivals of the local residents where they have been the primary participants and spectators. Often these are refreshed and developed in response to tourists' interests. The jobs created by tourism can act as a very important motivation to reduce emigration from rural areas. Local people can also increase their influence on tourism development and improve their job, earnings prospects through tourism-related professional training, development of business and organizational skills.

**Development of facilities as a benefit to residents:** In cases where the tourism industry supports the creation of community facilities and services that otherwise might not have been developed, it can bring higher living standards to a destination. Benefits can include upgraded infrastructure, health and transports improvements, new sport and recreational facilities, restaurants and public spaces, and an influx of better-quality commodities and food.

**Revaluation of culture and traditions:** Sustainable tourism has the potential to improve the preservation and transmission of cultural and historical traditions. It is often contributing to the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, protecting local heritage, creating a renaissance of native cultures, cultural arts and crafts.

**Tourism that encourages civic involvement and pride:** In some cases, tourism also helps to raise local awareness about the financial value of natural and cultural sites. It can stimulate a feeling of pride in local and national heritage and interest in its conservation. More broadly, the involvement of local communities in sustainable tourism development and operation appears to be an important condition for the conservation in sustainable use of biodiversity.

**Benefits for the tourists of Sustainable Tourism:** The benefits of sustainable tourism for visitors are environmental quality (clean air and water, unspoiled nature and landscapes), a healthy community with a low crime rate, thriving and authentic local culture and traditions.

## 2.5 Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism

The inherent nature of tourism generates both positive and negative effects on the community, the economy, and the environment. Hence, to be successful, tourism should be planned and managed to ensure constructive associations with its stakeholders to make it sustainable. For this purpose, influencing elements of the tourism value chain should be carefully analysed and coordinated to confirm sustainability. Researchers have discussed the impact and importance of different stakeholders in the tourism value chain.

Byrd (2007) has defined the tourism stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by tourism development in an area". Further, Ioannides (1995) has

discussed the problems that can arise when stakeholders are not engaged as a part of the entire planning and operation process and evidently extended that sustainable tourism development cannot be achieved if imposed without regarding the stakeholders' interests. According to Byrd (2007), it is strategically important to clearly understand that "who should be considered stakeholders in tourism development, and how should planners and developers involve the identified stakeholders in the development of tourism?" to get the involvement of stakeholders successfully in the sustainable tourism development process.

To answer these questions, researchers have introduced the stakeholder theory. The stakeholder theory has elaborated how stakeholder inclusion and involvement are incorporated in the basic concept of sustainable tourism development. Reviewing them, Donaldson and Preston (1995) developed three aspects of the stakeholder theory described below.

1. Descriptive/empirical: the past, present and future state of affairs of an organization and its stakeholders.
2. Instrumental: the connections, or lack of connections, between stakeholder management and the achievement of the organization or development's objectives and goals.
3. Normative: the function of the corporation, including the identification of moral or philosophical guidelines for the operation and management of corporations identifying the stakeholders based on the stakeholder's interest in the organization, not the organization's interest in the stakeholder.

However, it is crucially important to facilitate the participation of stakeholders and active engagement in the tourism development process to ensure sustainability from beginning to end in a way both formally and informally. These stakeholders may include multiple parties representing diverse levels in the society: the various levels of government (international, national, regional and local tourism organizations); tourism developers and entrepreneurs, tourism industry operators; non-tourism business practitioners and the broader community,

including local community groups, indigenous people's groups and local residents (Brokaj, 2014). Ellis and Sheridan (2014) have deeply discussed the role of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development in the least developed countries (LDCs) and presented a model to describe their integration as presented in figure 2.2.

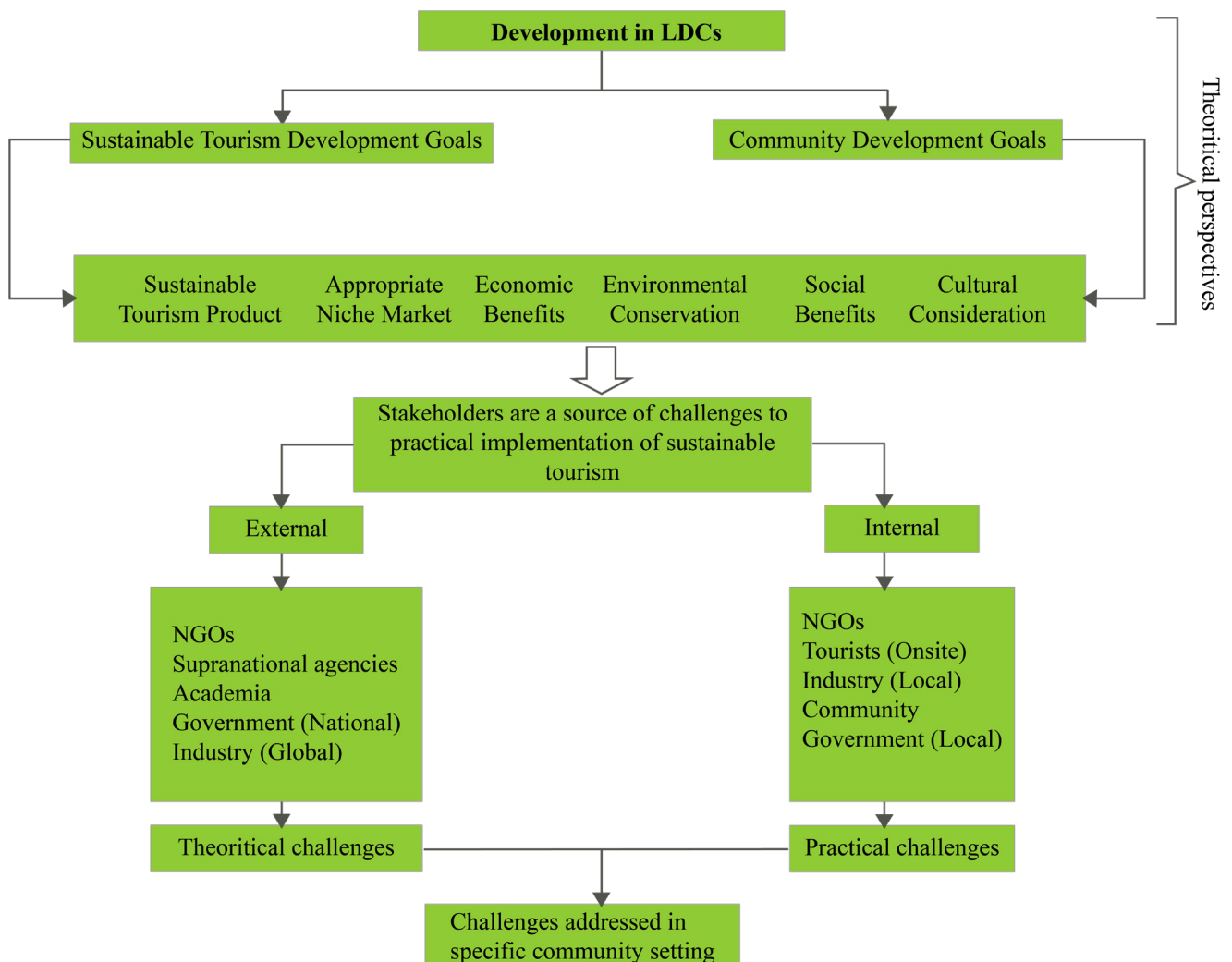


Figure 2.2: Theoretical framework underpinning the practical application of sustainable tourism in LDCs  
Source: Ellis & Sheridan, 2014



### 2.5.1. The Role of Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism Development

All the stakeholders play strategically important roles in sustainable tourism irrespective of their position. Table 2.1 has summarized the prominent roles of different stakeholders in the process of sustainable tourism development within a destination.

Table 2.1: Role of Different Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism Development

	Stakeholder	Importance
<b>Private Sector</b>	Tourism Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main providers of Employment</li> <li>• Influence Supply Chains</li> </ul>
	Tour Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence market access and sustainability through conditions placed and service providers</li> </ul>
	Transport Operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence the market</li> <li>• Destination viability and sustainability</li> </ul>
	Non-tourism Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide income and prosperity</li> </ul>
	Trade Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide leadership and help diverse sector development activities</li> </ul>
<b>Public Sector</b>	National Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shape direction and sustainability of tourism through policies</li> <li>• Plans and financial support</li> <li>• Help drive market demand through destination marketing</li> </ul>
	Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence sustainability of tourism through provincial plans and policies</li> <li>• Influence development through the provision of infrastructure</li> <li>• Influence sustainability at the local level</li> <li>• Support business development</li> <li>• (Sometimes) provide development funding</li> </ul>
<b>Civil Society</b>	NGOs/INGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence sustainable development</li> <li>• Build capacity</li> <li>• Facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration</li> <li>• (May) provide development funding</li> </ul>
	TVETs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist with market research</li> <li>• Capacity building and vocational training</li> </ul>
<b>Citizen and Consumers</b>	Host Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providers and beneficiaries of labour and employment</li> <li>• Provide supportive and welcoming destinations for tourism</li> </ul>
	Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence sustainability through travel choice</li> <li>• Influence product viability based on demand</li> </ul>

Source: Developed, based on literature survey

## Arugam Bay

Arugam Bay hides in the Eastern belt of Sri Lanka offering her radical sea waves to sporty surfers around the world. Its vibe and the culture enrich the experience of visitors in this finest surfing destination.



## Chapter

## 03

# Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka

## 3.1 Introduction to Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka

Tourism has grown as one of the world's largest industries and income generators in recent years globally, particularly among the countries in Asia. Sri Lanka has proved to be one of the fastest-growing tourist destinations in Asia and the Pacific region. Tourism is capable of contributing to any economy in numerous ways. It generates investment opportunities, direct and indirect employment, development of cottage industries, income distribution throughout multiplier effect in urban and rural communities.

Tourism brings numerous benefits to the destinations such as economic, socio-cultural, and environmental. Also, it gets more negative impacts like economic leakages, too many imports, seasonal jobs, and low paid, raising the price levels. Overcrowded and the traffic jams, cultural degradations and changing the local lifestyles, neglecting traditional industries, damage to the natural environment, exploitation of natural resources, land, sea and water pollution etc. All these negative impacts can adversely influence the sustainability of the tourism industry directly and indirectly, and finally, it will deteriorate the overall quality of the tourism development. The concept of sustainability has encompassed three significant components: environmental, economic, and social, also known as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). Sustainability has become a crucial hot topic in today's fast-moving economy, especially within the tourism industry (Byrd, 2007). Thus, sustainable practices include removing harmful substances produced by tourism operations and benefiting the environment, community, and economy.

UNWTO (2014) has highlighted that sustainable tourism development necessitates responsible participation from all related stakeholders and good political leadership to ensure broad engagement and consensus-building. In this regard, the Government, other local authorities, especially the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), and related government bodies need to play a vital role in ensuring industry sustainability. However, the SLTDA's involvement to ensure sustainable tourism development is not at a satisfactory level.

Sustainability is a crucial factor for the SLTDA in preserving and conserving the country's exceptional natural and cultural heritage and safeguarding the destinations for locals and visitors in the future since the nation is endowed

with unrivalled natural wealth, biodiversity, a distinct cultural heritage, and welcoming residents. According to the SLTDA, sustainable tourism is a long-term goal for Sri Lanka. The country cannot underestimate the importance of sustainable tourism to work towards a positive overall balance in environmental, socio-cultural, economic and experiential impacts for tourists and locals.

Further, the sustainability of the tourism industry is strongly linked with the environmental and socio-cultural aspects of a destination. Tourism can be used to raise awareness and contribute towards preserving natural and cultural assets. For instance, eco-tourism can be used as a sustainable tool in natural forest management (Wickramasinghe, 2018).

Moreover, Sri Lanka is sensitive to dangers and seeks methods to protect susceptible tourist destinations and attractions to promote sustainable tourism. In addition to that, visitors are informed and encouraged to use eco-friendly tours and sustainable consumption. Significantly, the SLTDA takes measures to make aware the tourists about the tourists' economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects before and on arrival. Simply saying what the tourists can do and what they cannot do, what is accepted and what is not accepted etc. Then we can minimize the potential negative aspects which hinder sustainable tourism development. In addition, government authorities assist locals by promoting industries that preserve cultural traditions and traditional values and supporting the dignity of local cultures.

Most of the hotels located in the countryside take various measures to help the surrounding local community improve their economy, socio-cultural conditions and preserve the natural environment. They tend to buy some logistics like fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products, provide employment opportunities for the local community as a policy, support improving the living conditions, children education, and improving the infrastructure of the areas like road, water electricity, etc. The hotel and travel industry has taken various actions and strategies to reduce the carbon footprint and other adverse impacts on the natural environment. The industry has adopted different sustainable practices like green buildings, alternative energies, waste reduction practices like the 3R concept (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), use of solar power, banning single-use plastics,



eclectic and hybrid vehicles for transport, etc. Moreover,, the event management companies have taken steps to organize the events while ensuring economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability. Therefore, the integration of the local community with tourism development and addressing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are essential to ensure sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka.

**3.2 Tourism Governing Framework in Sri Lanka**

A well-established tourism institutional framework for destination governance is essential in achieving cooperation, collaboration and integration among the government organizations involved in various aspects of tourism, and between government and private sector enterprises, as well as between tourism policies and community interests are significant concerns for policymakers, managers, community members and academics.

According to Morrison (2013), destination governance is how a DMO/NTO is administered and who does the administering. Tourism governance involves clearly developed policies, systems and processes to ensure that all stakeholders are involved. The DMO/NTO is accountable for its results and resource usage and has a high level of transparency. The DMO/NTO needs to follow the governing principles to have well-functioning destinations. Ruhanen et al. (2010) have identified the essential dimensions of destination governance: accountability, transparency, active involvement, developing proper administrative strictures, maintaining effectiveness, and using and delegating power when necessary.

The governance and the administration of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka is happening under three levels. First, the Cabinet Ministry of Tourism Development administers the tourism industry of the country. Second, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority manages and facilitates the tourism industry in Sri Lanka as the DMO/NTO. Third, the provincial councils and the local governments manage the tourism industry at the respective levels.

Sri Lanka is a famous tourism destination since ancient times, and many tourists have visited this country. The first formal tourism governing body, Ceylon Tourist Bureau, was established in 1937 to cater for the passengers and sailors who came to Sri Lanka while travelling between the West and the East (Silk Road). However, three years later, the Tourist Bureau stopped its operations in September 1939 due to World War II.

Two decades later, the Government of Sri Lanka decided to develop tourism in a planned and systematic manner, after identifying the need to set up an institutional framework, The Ceylon Tourist Board, established in 1966 by the Act No. 10 of 1966, and the Ceylon Hotels Corporation was also formed by the Act No. 14 of 1966 to develop the tourism industry of Sri Lanka in a formalized way.

Tourism Act No. 38 of 2005 came into effect in October 2007. With the circulation of the new Tourism Act, the Sri Lanka Tourist Board Act No 10 of 1966, which was in effect for the

past 41 years, was replaced. Before SLTDA was established in 2007, these functions primarily resided with the Ceylon Tourist Board / Sri Lanka Tourist Board / Sri Lanka Tourism Board.

In terms of the provisions in the new Act, the Tourism Development Fund was legally constituted with 2 primary sources remitting finances to the fund. By way of 1/3 of the Airport Tax collections and 1% of the Turnover of all Sri Lanka, Tourist Board registered establishments (SLTDA, n.d.).

The Tourism Act provided for the SLTDA setting, thereby replacing the Sri Lanka Tourist Board. The new Tourism Act established four Tourism Boards as follows:

- Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA)
- Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB)
- Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM)
- Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB)

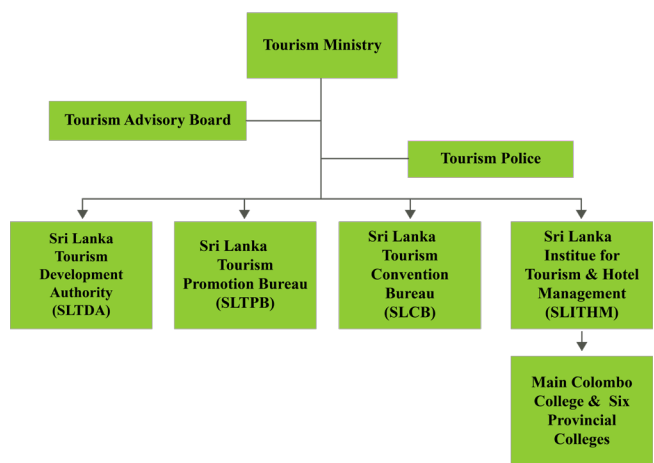


Figure 3.1: Tourism Governance Framework  
Source: Ministry of Tourism Development, 2017

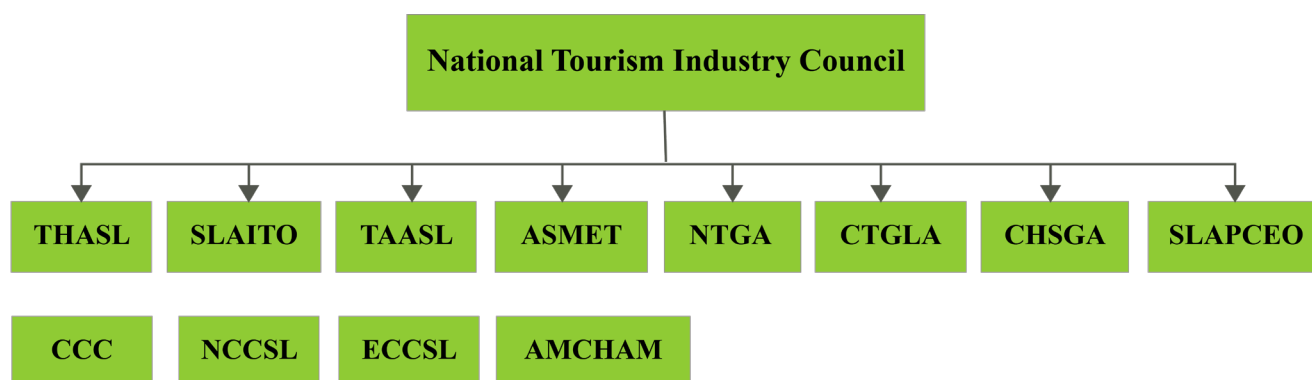
Figure 3.1 depicts the national tourism governance framework, and the Ministry of Tourism plays the focal role to manage the tourism industry. Under the Ministry, four boards are operating. The SLTDA is acting as the main DMO/NTO of Sri Lanka. The official institution is tasked with establishing, positioning, and developing Sri Lanka as a leading destination for international visitors. It is responsible for tapping into Sri Lanka's natural potential to expand and enhance its tourism offering while benefiting investors and supporting communities.

The provincial councils were established in 1987 under the Provincial Councils Act No. 42 of 1987 passed by the parliament, making the 13th amendment to the 1978 constitution of Sri Lanka. The accord required that the Sri Lankan government devolves powers to the respective provinces to decentralize the operations. Therefore, the tourism development of the relevant regions is managed by the Provincial Ministry of Tourism, and some provinces have developed an independent body like Tourism Bureau or Tourism Development Authority to handle tourism-related matters. However, there is no proper coordination and

monitoring mechanism between the provincial ministries and the SLTDA (DMO/NTO). Some activities are happening in an ad-hoc manner. The very close relationship and regular coordination, facilitation and monitoring are more critical to ensure sustainable development at regional, provincial and local levels.

The private sector plays a significant role in tourism development in the country. Therefore, in Sri Lanka, private sector institutions play the dominant role in attracting, facilitating, and satisfying the tourists' needs. Even though the private sector plays a vital role, there is no stable and healthy relationship with the DMO/NTO. It has become the major impediment to sustainable tourism development in the country. The private sector has formed some professional

associations, takes decisions, and develops programmes and actions to boost the tourism industry while undergoing various problems, issues, and inherent limitations. The private sector is the growth engine of tourism development in Sri Lanka even though they are working under pressure. Therefore, it is vitally important to concern their voice and create a conducive environment to facilitate their businesses to run businesses smoothly. The private and public sectors should work together to get the mutual benefits to win-win situations. Thus, the Ministry of Tourism Development has proposed a new mechanism that links the public sector and the private sector to go for the tourism vision of the country more effectively. Figure 3.2 displays the proposed structure.



- The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL)
- Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operations (SLAITO)
- Travel Agents Association of Sri Lanka (TAASL)
- Association of small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism Sri Lanka (ASMET)
- National Tour Guides Association (NTGA)
- Chauffeur Tourist Guides Lecturers Association (CTGLA)
- Ceylon Hotel School Graduates Association (CHSGA)
- Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition & Event Organisers (SLAPCEO)
- The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC)
- The National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (NCCSL)
- European Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (ECCSL)
- The American Chamber of Commerce in Sri Lanka (AMCHAM)

Figure 3.2: Proposed Private Sector Institutional Setup for Tourism for Consideration  
 Source: Ministry of Tourism Development, 2017

The Ministry of Tourism Development (2017), through its Tourism Strategic Plan, has highlighted the system failures which affect the tourism development of the country, such as coordination failure, institutional failure, resource failure and market failure. Out of them, the coordinating and institutional failures are directly affecting the country's effective tourism governance.

**3.2.1 Coordination Failure**

The coordination failure is due to poor coordination and communication between government ministries, institutions, and stakeholders regarding tourism planning,

asset management, and destination management. The distribution of tourism-related responsibilities across multiple agencies and government levels complicates this. Similarly, poor communication and coordination with other tourism stakeholders (e.g., concerning conservation, education, small and medium enterprises) contributes to conflict in land use and complicates and slows administrative and decision-making processes.

**3.2.2 Institutional Failure**

The Tourism Strategic Plan (2017) has highlighted three important factors related to institutional failure. First,

deficient and politicized leadership and management at all levels of government. There is a greater emphasis on institution and infrastructure building than on core functions. Political interference has hindered the overall output of government agencies and progress on key growth initiatives.

Second, limited awareness and participation in tourism by host communities. This has caused conflicts between local communities, institutions and investors and has negatively affected local perceptions of tourism-related FDI projects.

Third, inadequate attention to cultural heritage conservation and natural habitat preservation. Initiatives to monitor over-visitation and promote animal welfare and natural habitat regeneration are not prioritized. There has been a reliance on regulation to manage quality, safety and standards, but limited enforcement of the regulations. In addition, rent-seeking practices subvert the regulatory process.

A holistic approach should be taken to overcome the above-mentioned institutional failures that impede sustainable tourism. This will require meaningful communication, cooperation, and involvement of key partners from local, regional and national governments. A significant systemic transformation of tourism in Sri Lanka is required. This involves changing government views and management of the industry (institutional reform), changing government and industry understanding of and provision for targeted visitors (visitor experience), and changing the implementation process (to tangible, measurable actions).

### 3.3 Government Initiatives in Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has taken several steps to accelerate the adoption of the SDGs. One such proposal is creating a Parliamentary Select Committee on Sustainable Development to aid in adopting the Sustainable Development Goals. Further, in 2015, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife was established. Another significant milestone has been the introduction of the Sustainable Development Act No. 19 of 2017, which lays the groundwork for a well-organised structural framework to enforce the SDGs using the current public-sector infrastructure. Further, SLTDA and UNDP signed an agreement to establish the National Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme (NSTCS) for Sri Lanka Tourism to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism and incentivize tourism businesses to transition toward environmentally and socially responsible business practices.

In alignment with these steps, the Sri Lankan government requires a transformation of the tourism industry to make the island competitive in the global travel market. Hence, SLTDA launched a Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP) to propose steps and delivery mechanisms with a long-term goal of meeting the UN SDGs to ensure sustainable tourism development in the country.

As reported by Tourism Strategic Plan (2017-2020), the Sri Lankan government aimed to become a destination for unforgettable, authentic, and varied tourism experiences

with sustainable development by 2025. As a result, SLTDA has issued a vision statement for all tourism activities in the country as “to be recognized as the world’s finest island for memorable, authentic and diverse experiences”. And also, the mission statement is “to be a high-value destination offering extraordinary experiences that reflect Sri Lanka’s natural and cultural heritage, are socially inclusive and environmentally responsible, and provide economic benefits to communities and the country”. Therefore, SLTDA has initiated the following four core strategies to facilitate sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka.

1. Implementing integrated destination planning
2. Diversifying product range and creating signature experiences
3. Improving connectivity to tourism experiences
4. Focusing on destination development via transformative tourism projects

#### 3.3.1 Sustainable Tourism Projects in Sri Lanka

SLTDA attempted to establish several significant initiatives to generate new tourist hubs and experiences and establish new product categories throughout the country within Sustainable principles. One of the initiatives is to promote community-based tourism (CBT) in Sri Lanka. The goal is to develop a community tourism plan that would map the various community-based tourism activities around the country, evaluate their performance, and expand their benefits to local communities.

As a result, a comprehensive community-based tourism strategy for Sri Lanka was developed, including a detailed analysis of the NGO’s work in Sri Lanka’s tourism and hospitality sectors. The process includes strengthening the capacity of NGOs dealing with CBT and developing an online marketing platform and other tools such as websites, social media exposure, and apps to promote Sri Lankan CBT initiatives.

Furthermore, the Ranpathvila CBT project is one of the most remarkable instances of a sustainable tourism program in Sri Lanka. Ranpathvila was an isolated woodland patch in the Kurunegala district’s Ahatuwewa Divisional Secretariat Division, namely the Galgiriya forest reserve. The deforestation caused by illicit logging and forest degradation has been a severe issue, endangering the forest’s survival. Hence, this site has been selected as one of the Forest Department’s community forestry initiatives supported by the Sri Lanka Australia Natural Resource Management Project (SLANRMP). The community itself had recommended community-based ecotourism as a potential option to develop this area. However, as a result of this project, the community owns and manages the ecotourism business. The ecotourism project is intended to provide immediate benefits to 21 families. In addition, when the business matures over time, 57 households will get indirect advantages. Apart from that, villagers received the necessary information and skills through training on hazards associated with ecotourism (Wickramasinghe, 2009).

Ilukkumbura CBT project, similarly the Ranpathvila CBT project, may be considered as a sustainable tourism effort

in Sri Lanka. Ilukkumbura is a rural, isolated community with no assistance from government development efforts in the Knuckles area. A lack of infrastructure distinguishes it, and the majority of homes are impoverished. The Forest Department began an ecotourism initiative in Ilukkumbura village through an IUCN (World Conservation Union) financed initiative. Similarly, to the Ranpathvila project, people benefit from a tremendous beneficial economic effect while safeguarding the Knuckles Forest Area due to this strategy (Wickramasinghe, 2009).

Furthermore, the Sri Lanka Tourism Awards catalyze essential industry associations, government stakeholders, operators, and service providers. Some awards have been given out to recognize sustainable tourism efforts. Especially in 2019, "Heritage Kandalama Hotel" won the award for "Best Sustainable and Green Practices". In addition to that, "Madunagala Eco-Tourism Village- Aguruwathota" won the "Model Community-Based Tourism Project" award.

Moreover, SLTDA launched the "National Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme" in 2018 with the cooperation of all tourism stakeholders - government agencies and the corporate sector. It has created a forum for identifying each party's different ambitions to advance toward mutually beneficial solutions with the national interest as the primary goal. Due to all service providers' vast and complicated nature in Sri Lanka Tourism, sustainability certification applied to a sample in the accommodation sector.

Further in 2018, SLTDA collaborated with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to provide thorough training on sustainability criteria to Sri Lankan hotels based on the GSTC's globally recognized sustainable tourism standard.

At the national, provincial, and regional levels, all stakeholders, institutions and private sector organizations should collaborate to make a tremendous attitudinal change with the required knowledge, training, and development and subsidies to create sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka.

### 3.4 Integration of Sustainable Tourism with SDGs

The United Nations General Assembly formulated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and they are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. The SDGs are developed as the future global development framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals, which ended in 2015. The programme consists of 17 goals and 169 associated targets, mainly community-focused, transformative, universal, and integrated.

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries globally. It is considered one of the significant economic activities in any country, and developing countries consider tourism a development strategy. Tourism contributes to the economy through generating new employments, generating income and foreign currencies, regional development, preserving the natural environment, developing the cottage industries, etc. Indeed, well-designed and managed tourism can help

to preserve the natural and cultural heritage assets upon which it depends, empower host communities, generate trade opportunities, and foster peace and intercultural understanding.

However, tourism as a significant resource consumer is responsible for increasing environmental pollutions and other associated sustainability issues. For example, when many tourists travel worldwide, for example, 1.4 billion tourists in 2019, tourism is responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, land, air, and water pollution nationally and globally. In addition, there are many economic, socio-cultural and environmental issues and problems like economic leakages, cultural degradation, neglect of agriculture and other traditional industries. Therefore, as highlighted by UNWTO (2017), "the harnessing of tourism's positive contribution to sustainable development and the mitigation of the sector's adverse effects calls for strong partnerships and decisive action by all tourism stakeholders."

Sri Lanka has achieved a high level of human development and many successes under the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in health, education, and poverty. The conclusion of the three-decades-long conflict in 2009 has led the country to a period of peace and prosperity. Sri Lanka has demonstrated its commitment to global efforts on sustainable development by being a signatory to several environment-related international treaties and conventions, including the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Management.

As a responsible nation, Sri Lanka has undertaken several initiatives to implement within the country. It includes the establishment of a dedicated ministry for sustainable development as the focal point for coordinating, facilitating and reporting on the implementation of the SDGs; the establishment of a Parliamentary Select Committee for Sustainable Development to provide political leadership for the performance of the SDGs; and the enactment of the Sustainable Development Act No. 19 of 2017 to provide the legal framework for implementing the SDGs (Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development, 2018).

Tourism is considered one of the largest industries in any economy. It is the world's third-largest export category after fuels and chemicals and ahead of automotive products and food. Therefore, tourism has the potential to contribute, directly and indirectly, to all of the 17 SDGs. In particular, it has been included as targets in Goals 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 14 (Life Below Water) on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively (UNWTO, 2017). The Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs (2017) has highlighted that goals 08, 12 and 14 can be achieved through tourism easily through its Strategic Tourism Plan. Also, goal 11, (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and goal 15 (Life on Land) are possible to address efficiently.



Further, it is possible to address all the 17 SDGs by promoting sustainable tourism in any destination. However, it requires a clear vision, proper planning, governance structure, effective coordination and monitoring, implementation framework, adequate financing and investment in technology, infrastructure and human resources. The following section discusses the 17 goals concerning the practice in tourism.

### **Goal 1: No Poverty**

Tourism is the third-largest income earner of the country. Sustainable tourism development, and its impact at the community level, can be linked with national poverty reduction goals. According to Asian Development Bank (2020), 4.1% of the population lives are below the national poverty line; the unemployment rate is also 4.8. It is assumed that the unemployment rate will increase further due to the prevailing Covid 19 global pandemic. Poverty and unemployment are very high in rural areas. Sustainable tourism development will generate employment, promote entrepreneurship and small businesses, and empower less favoured groups, particularly youth and women.

### **Goal 2: Zero Hunger**

Poverty has a link with hunger. Sustainable tourism development in rural areas will enable the poor community to earn income through more satiable tourism practices. The agro-tourism, a growing tourism segment, can complement traditional agricultural activities. The resulting rise of income in local communities can lead to more resilient agriculture while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.

### **Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being**

Sustainable tourism development will help the impoverished community to improve their economic and social-cultural backgrounds. The earned income can be used for quality and nutrition foods. Also, the tourism development in the countryside will enhance the knowledge, awareness, and practices about good health and well-being. It will also improve locals, maternal health, reduce child mortality, prevent diseases, etc.

### **Goal 4: Quality Education**

Sustainable tourism development will improve the level of education and its quality among the community. Tourism will generate income for locals, and the income can be used to enhance their children's education. Sustainable tourism development in rural areas will increase the awareness of the importance of education among the local communities. Further, it will help to improve the knowledge of English and other foreign languages.

### **Goal 5: Gender Equality**

Women participation is meagre, and male dominates in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. At the same time, women are undergoing various economic and socio-cultural issues. Sustainable tourism development can empower women in multiple ways, providing employment and business opportunities, alternative livelihood further can improve the

level of education and capacity enhancements. Significantly, the rural and community-based tourism development will provide more business opportunities, and tourism can be a tool for women to unlock their potential, helping them become fully engaged and lead in every aspect of society.

### **Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation**

Sustainable tourism can play a critical role in achieving water access and security and hygiene and sanitation for all, especially for the marginalized communities in rural areas. Protecting the natural environment, sustainable use/consumption of other natural resources, and efficient water use in the tourism sector, coupled with appropriate safety measures, wastewater management, pollution control, and technology efficiency, can be vital in safeguarding our most precious resource. The tourism and hospitality industry has taken many measures to maintain sustainable energy consumption and waste management.

### **Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy**

Tourism is known as the largest energy consumer and waste generator. Therefore, it is very much essential to adopt affordable and clean energy for tourism operations. At present, the industry is moving toward alternative energy generations and consumptions like solar, bio-gas, eclectic cars, green buildings etc. As a sector that requires substantial alternative energy input, tourism can accelerate the shift toward renewable energy and increase its share in the global energy mix. Sustainable and alternative energy generation and consumption will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate climate change and contribute to innovative and new energy solutions in urban, regional and remote areas.

### **Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Tourism is considered as the primary economic force in any economy and is a significant economic development strategy. Tourism contributed 4.3 per cent to the GDP of Sri Lanka in 2018. Tourism generates 1 in every 10 jobs worldwide; 404,607 people were employed in the tourism sector in 2018 in the country. However, female employment has not been calculated in official statistics. The government has planned tourism and its supporting industries to employ 600,000 Sri Lankans, with women accounting for 10% of the workforce. Therefore, it is believed that sustainable tourism development will improve the quality of life of both men and women. Tourism will directly contribute to improve the economic and socio-cultural background of individuals. Sri Lanka has planned to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all by 2030. The plan also includes developing and implementing policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (Ministry of Tourism Development, 2017).

### Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Tourism development will contribute to improving the infrastructure of any tourism destinations. Also, the improved infrastructure facilities are essential for the development of other industries and attract the FDI. Further, tourism will fuel growth to supportive industries like handicraft, agriculture, fisheries, etc. which will improve these industries along with tourism development. UNWTO (2018) highlighted that tourism development facilitates sustainable industrialization, necessary for economic growth, development, and innovation.

### Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Sustainable tourism is a powerful tool to reduce inequality among the local community. Tourism development in rural areas will inject the money from the urban areas to rural areas to imbalance poor and rich communities. At the same time, most tourists to Sri Lanka come from developed countries, and there is a foreign currency inflow to developing countries. Also, it can reduce the economic and socio-cultural inequalities between male-female through empowering and capacity building among the women to participate in tourism actively.

### Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Sustainable tourism development will ensure sustainable/green cities and communities' growth if the destination can manage it effectively. It can use the monetary gain through tourism to manage the sustainable livelihood, preserve cultural and natural heritage, natural environment and other valuable assets on which tourism depends. UNWTO (2018) highlighted that the more significant investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport facilities, reduced air pollution, conservation of heritage sites and open spaces, etc.) would create smart and green cities in which both residents and tourists are benefitting.

### Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

The tourism industry is considered as the largest consumer of natural resources and waste generators. Therefore, it is necessary to promote responsible consumption and production among both hosts and guests. If the destination can promote alternative forms of tourism instead of mass tourism, it is easy to promote sustainable consumption and production. It is necessary for the tourism industry to adopt cleaner production, especially for the hotel and travel industry, to reduce the carbon footprints. UNWTO (2018) highlighted sustainable consumption practices, including resource-efficient initiatives that enhance economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

The country has identified the magnitude of sustainable consumption and production patterns. It has taken measures to develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development on sustainable tourism, which creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (Ministry of Tourism Development, 2017).

### Goal 13: Climate Action

Tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change. It is, therefore, in the sector's interest to play a leading role in the global response to climate change. By lowering energy consumption to reduce the carbon footprint and shifting to renewable/green energy sources, especially in the transport and accommodation sector, tourism can help tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time. The use of green energy and waste reduction leads to a reduction of cost and increased profit. Entrepreneurs can ensure sustainability through adopting the triple bottom line; people, profit and planet.

### Goal 14: Life Below Water

Sri Lanka is an island destination and heavily uses coastal and marine ecosystems to promote marine/coastal tourism. However, it is noted that tourism development and associated activities are heavily contributed to polluting and deteriorating the natural ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of Integrated Coastal Zone Management to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote a blue economy. Tourism will incorporate with the local community along with sustainable tourism to protect natural ecosystems and marine resources.

Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Plan, 2017-2020, has identified to conserve and use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development by 2030 to increase the economic benefits of small island destinations and low-income countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.

### Goal 15: Life on Land

Sri Lanka is known as a compact tourist destination, and it consists of a diversity of attractions except for volcanoes and snow. Tourism mainly depends on tourist attractions like beautiful landscapes, natural forests, wildlife, rich biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage, etc. Further, these attractions ensure the tourism competitiveness of the destination. Sustainable tourism can play a significant role in conserving and preserving biodiversity and respecting terrestrial ecosystems. Its efforts are towards reducing waste and consumption, the conservation of native flora and fauna and its awareness-raising activities.

### Goal 16: Peace and Justice

The tourism industry of the country is badly affected by the 30 years old terrorism problem. Therefore, the government was unable to exceed the tourism arrivals by 40000. Peace is essential to have a sustainable tourism industry in which every stakeholder is benefitting and enjoying. Tourism will enhance multicultural understanding and peace buildings. Sustainable tourism, which benefits and engages local communities, can provide a source of livelihood, strengthen cultural identities and spur entrepreneurial activities, thereby helping to prevent violence and conflict to take root and consolidate peace in post-conflict societies.

**Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals**


Tourism is a multidisciplinary subject, and therefore, it can strengthen Private and Public Partnerships (PPP) and engage with diverse stakeholders such as national, international, regional, provincial and local governments to work together to achieve the SDGs and other common goals. Public and private partnerships and local community involvement are essential to ensure sustainable tourism development and

the achievement of sustainable development goals. The effective use of tourism resources with proper strategies will ensure economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability in which every stakeholder will benefit and enhance their satisfaction.



Figure 3.3: UN Sustainable Development Goals intended to be achieved by 2030





## Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage

Despite the criticisms held by this place of ex-situ conservation, the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage facilitates the native orphan elephants in Sri Lanka from all over the country. It is a popular tourist attraction located en route to Kandy.



Chapter

04

# Sustainable Tourism Need-Gap Analysis

## 4.1 Stakeholder Mapping

The involvement of stakeholders in a community is one of the main keys to the success and implementation of sustainable tourism development. Since tourism includes an array of environmental, economic and social applications, it brings cost and benefits to the society where stakeholders have been living. Therefore, as Kristiana and Nathalia (2014) stated, the focus on more stakeholder participation emphasizes its ability to handle multiple perceived issues. A stakeholder is identified as an individual, group, or

organization that depends on the organization to fulfil its own goals. Stakeholder mapping or stakeholder analysis is a technique to identify the relationships among stakeholders within a destination. In the Sri Lankan context, several key actors/ stakeholders were identified in sustainable tourism as per the focus group discussion conducted by the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka and Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka, as shown in Figure 4.1.

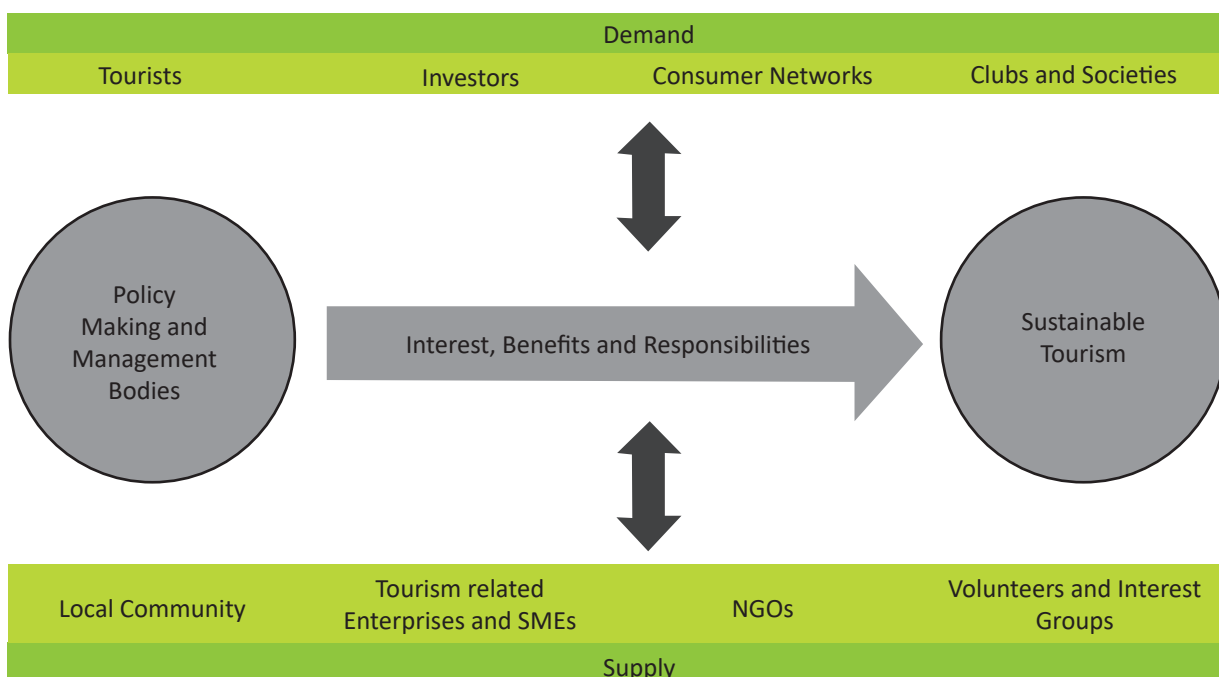


Figure 4.1 Sustainable Tourism Stakeholder Mapping in Sri Lanka  
Source: Focus Group Discussion in Sri Lanka, 2021

As shown in figure 4.1, the main three (03) segments of sustainable tourism stakeholders can be identified; policy-making and management bodies, stakeholders in the demand side and the stakeholders in the supply side.

The policy-making bodies include both national and international organizations that aid in planning, policy-making, developing and managing tourism in Sri Lanka,

- i. National Government
- ii. Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA)
- iii. Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB)
- iv. Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB)
- v. Ministries; Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Aviation, Ministry of rural Development, Ministry of Economic Development etc.
- vi. Tourism organizations and related bodies; The Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO), The Hotel Association of Sri Lanka (THASL), Sri Lanka Institute of National Tour Guide Lecturers (SLINTGL), Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM), Sri Lanka Accreditation Board (SLAB) etc.
- vii. Provincial Tourism Ministries and Authorities
- viii. Universities; Students, academics and scholars
- ix. Local Authorities
- x. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
- xi. Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)

The second segment was stakeholders in the demand side who form the critical source of income to the tourism sector. They include local and international tourists who come for leisure, pleasure and special interests, investors, consumer networks, clubs and societies. The third segment consists of the stakeholders in the supply side who engage in operational and social movements in tourism in Sri Lanka. They are,

- i. Local Community; Local Citizens, Local Government Officials, Local Retailers, Employees, etc.
- ii. Tourism related enterprises and SMEs; Destination Management Companies (DMC), Hoteliers, Car Rental Companies, Event Management Companies, Small and Medium Enterprises, Financial Institutions, Transportation and Logistics Companies, Trade Associations, Labor Unions, Telecommunication Providers, Health Service Providers, Safety and Security Service Providers, Educational and Training Institutions etc.
- iii. NGOs; International, Regional and Local
- iv. Volunteers and Interest Groups; Media

Each stakeholder has individual or collective interests, responsibilities and intention to gain benefits while engaging in sustainable tourism activities in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the critical requirement for sustainable tourism is to align various stakeholders for working effectively in the overall management and execution of plans and policies.

Table 4.1: Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Segment	Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibility
Policy Making and Management Bodies	International and National Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing directions that help to get all stakeholders together to ensure the development and implementation of policies and strategies</li> <li>• Implementation and execute the monitoring mechanisms of stakeholders</li> <li>• Influence on stakeholders’ performance</li> <li>• Development of facilities required for the tourism and related industries</li> <li>• Promotion of Destinations</li> </ul>
Demand	Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible Consumption/ Sustainable Consumption</li> <li>• Encourage local community on their livelihood creation</li> <li>• Value, respect and understand the local culture</li> <li>• Support for resource conservation</li> <li>• Adherence to rules, regulations or guidelines in the destinations</li> </ul>
	Investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible and Sustainable Investment</li> <li>• Usage of right resources adherence to the policies</li> <li>• Fair resolution of problems</li> <li>• Responsible communication of information</li> <li>• Clear reporting of facts</li> <li>• Networking with relevant bodies</li> </ul>
	Consumer networks Clubs and Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication of consumer behaviours and changes</li> <li>• Sharing evidence on the motivation of sustainable practices</li> <li>• Influence on innovations</li> <li>• Participating and educating on resource conservation</li> </ul>



Segment	Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibility
Supply	Local Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active involvement in tourism-related processes</li> <li>• Operating tourism-related enterprises</li> <li>• Participating in resource conservation</li> <li>• Showcasing local culture, traditions and customs</li> <li>• Ensuring safety and security of tourists visits to a destination</li> <li>• Following imposed rules and regulations by the relevant bodies</li> <li>• Protecting the destination image</li> </ul>
	Tourism-related enterprises and SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptualizing the products or services that attract certain types of tourists to destinations</li> <li>• Producing memorable tourism-related products or services</li> <li>• Careful utilization of resources</li> <li>• Practising responsible marketing, advertising, and promotion</li> <li>• Networking with other stakeholders</li> <li>• Following rules and regulations applicable to the businesses and their processes</li> <li>• Promoting sustainable practices through the business operations</li> <li>• Contribution to resource conservation</li> </ul>
	NGOs/INGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence on the performance of other stakeholders</li> <li>• Initiating sustainable activities</li> <li>• Supporting local community</li> </ul>
	Volunteers and Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible promotion of the destination</li> <li>• Careful handling of images, information etc.</li> <li>• Influence on the performance of other stakeholders</li> </ul>

**4.2 Sustainable Tourism Value Chain**

Tourism is a sector with exceptional potential for generating regional value-added and, as a result, contributing to the long-term growth of developing and emerging economies. Promoting the regional value-added created by tourism could thus be a useful tactic in the framework of development cooperation. The value chain concept is a valuable aid to understanding the many-tiered structures and processes of service delivery in the tourism sector and finding suitable entry points for specific interventions (Partale, 2020).

The proposed sustainable value chain consists of mainly two aspects: tourists’ behaviour before arriving at the destination (country of origin to destination) and tourists’ behaviour after arrival (in and around destination).

Sustainable tourism is a crucial aspect for the South Asian region since almost all the countries in the South Asian region can be considered developing economies. Sri Lanka is also a country with a developing economy where the tourism industry plays a key role in contributing to the national output. The below sustainable value chain is proposed based on the sustainable tourism value chain framework of UNWTO for the tourism industry in Sri Lanka by incorporating various direct and indirect parties related to create a sustainable tourism industry.

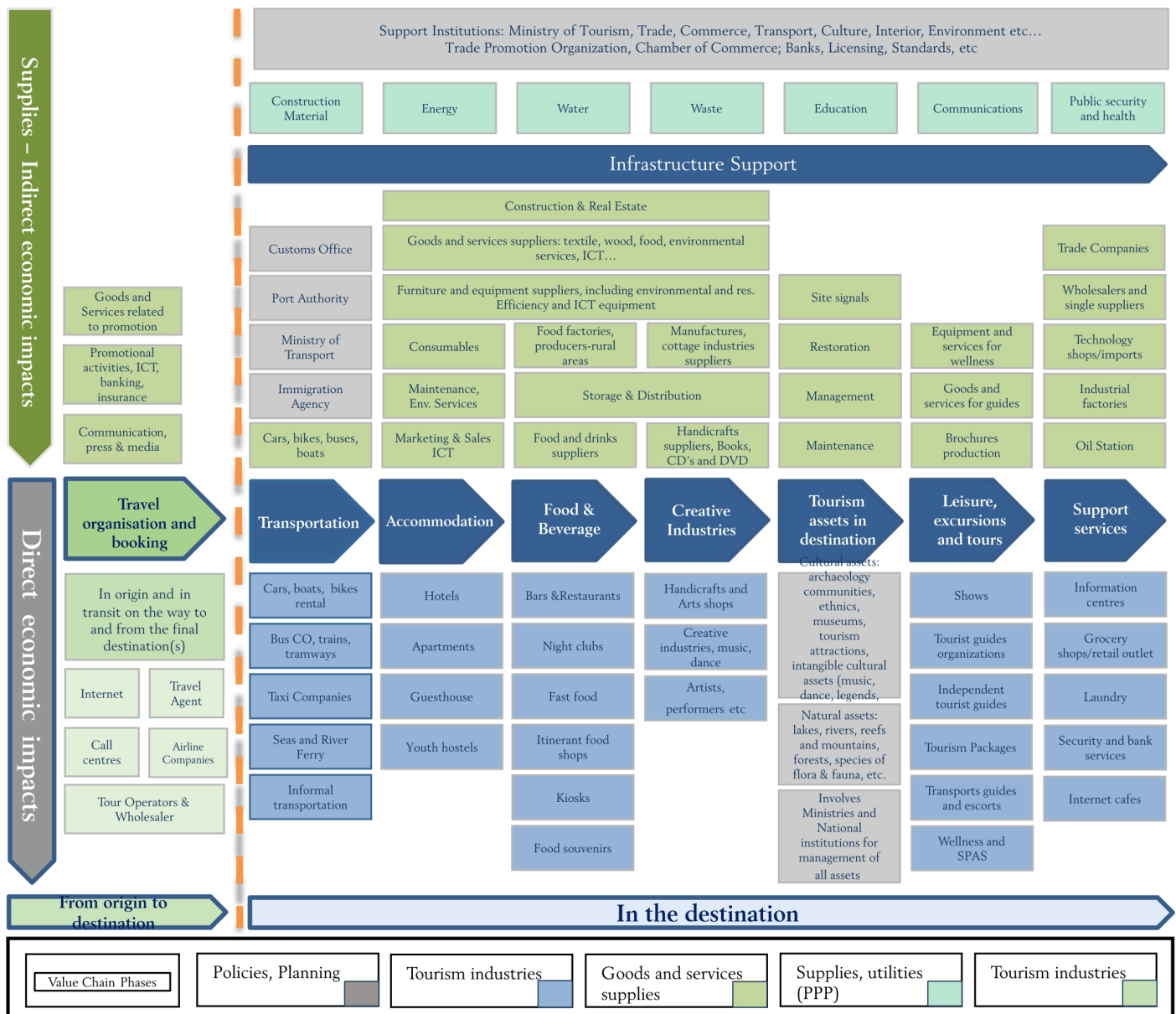


Figure 4.2 Proposed Sustainable Tourism Value Chain for Sri Lanka  
Source: Modified the United Nations Environment from ITC of UNWTO, 2015

### 4.2.1 Country of Origin to Destination

From country of origin to destination comprises the tourists’ behaviour in the pre-arrival stage, which includes organizing the travel, making the reservations, and reaching the final destination. This process involves both the direct and indirect supplier contacts that should be incorporated sustainably in creating value for the tourists from their origin until they reach the final destination.

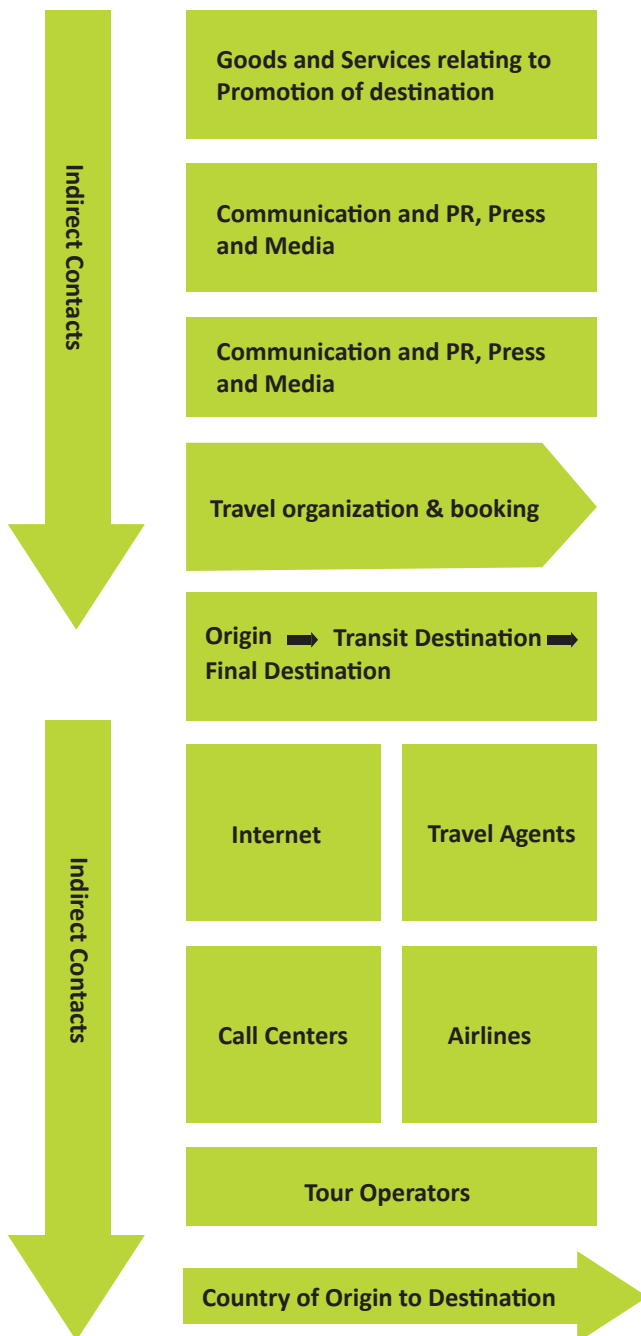


Figure 4.3 Country of Origin to Final Destination

**4.2.1.1. Direct Contacts**

The direct contacts during the pre-arrival stage include the internet which can be used for search information about destinations, call centers for direct communication purposes, tour operators and travel agents organize the travel, reservations and making necessary arrangements of the tour and the airlines used for the transportation purposes to travel to particular destination.

**4.2.1.2. Indirect Contacts**

Indirect contacts refer to the supportive parties in the decision-making process of tourists’ pre-arrival stage. Goods and services relating to the promotion of destination such as events, festivals, trade exhibitions etc. Further,

promotional, ICT, Banking and Insurance services also indirectly support organising the travel and successfully reaching the final destination. Communications, public relations, press and media activities help make decisions on the tourists’ pre-arrival stage.

**4.2.2. In and Around Destination**

The “In and Around Destination” includes the direct and indirect stakeholder contacts that involve the main experiences tourists encounter after arriving at the destination. The proposed sustainable tourism value chain comprises the main phases of the experiences that encountered by the tourists within the destinations as Transportation, Accommodation, Food and Beverage, Creative Industries, Tourism Resources, Leisure, Tours and excursions and support services incorporating the direct and indirect involvement with the value creation process.

The main supporting institutions will be the government institutions related to the tourism industry, which indirectly enhance the tourism experience in Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Tourism and Aviation of Sri Lanka is the main government authority established to govern the tourism and aviation sectors by making appropriate policy and regulatory framework, ensuring robust infrastructure development, promotion of destination Sri Lanka and exercising administrative and financial overview over institutions gazetted under the ministry. Moreover, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) is the government institution tasked with planning, development, regulation, and policy implementation of tourism and related industries on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism. Ministry of Local Government & Provincial Council will be indirectly supported in regulating and conducting tourism activities at the regional level.

In addition, trade promotion organizations like Chamber of Commerce, Banks and other financial institutions and licensing and standard bodies which regulate licenses, certificates and standards in different tourism operations will be indirectly supported to improve the tourism experience within Sri Lanka.

The value chain mentions Energy, Water, Information Technology, Communication, Health, Public Security and Education as the essential infrastructure facilities required for the smooth operation of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.



#### 4.2.2.1 Transportation

The tourists will directly use numerous transportation modes to travel around the destination once the tourists arrive at the destination. According to the proposed sustainable value chain, the direct transportation suppliers currently operating within Sri Lanka include the car and bike rental companies and public and private buses that tourists can use to travel within Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the railway is another mode of transportation currently used within Sri Lanka, which enables the tourists to enjoy memorable travel experiences to the most beautiful tourist attractions in the down south, hill country and northern parts of the country.

Moreover, taxi services, domestic airlines and E-vehicle companies are currently at the development stage in Sri Lanka. Taxi services and E-vehicle companies like Uber and Pick Me are operating only within the major cities of the country. Domestic airlines are also at their initial stage where only limited suppliers like Cinnamon Air by Cinnamon Group and Heli Tours by the Sri Lanka Air Force conduct the operations.

The sustainable tourism value chain proposes new transportation methods such as cruise companies, cable cars, and traditional transportation methods such as canoeing, carts, etc. It is suggested to initiate cruise companies where tourists can travel and visit tourist attractions through cruise ships. Implementation of cable car systems as a creative mode of transportation within Sri Lanka will be enabled to enhance the tourism experience. Further, traditional transportation modes like canoeing, carts etc., can be proposed under the value chain to create an authentic and memorable experience for the tourists incorporating sustainability.

Accordingly, institutions like Sri Lanka Customs, Ministry of Ports and Shipping, Department of Immigration and Emigration, and Ministry of Transportation support the transportation of tourists within a destination by indirectly shaping tourists' experiences.

#### 4.2.2.2 Accommodation

The accommodation has a significant impact on a traveller's entire experience of a destination. It is a significant component of tourist's expenses. Currently, the leading accommodation suppliers of Sri Lanka comprise hotels, supplementary establishments, and other establishments. The hotel sector includes the classified hotels from 1 star to 5 star and unclassified hotels such as boutique hotels, resorts etc. Supplementary establishments include Boutique Villas, Rest Houses, Guest Houses, Home Stays, Apartments, Heritage Bungalows/Homes etc. Other establishments refer to those who are not formally registered within the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA, 2019). The accommodation types like Tourists Hostels, Camping, Caravan and Tree Houses are still at the development stage which are currently operating in a very small scale within the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Under the sustainable tourism value chain, new creative forms of accommodation types such as rotels, boatels and floating hotels are proposed in order to enhance the value of the experience. Rotel refers to an accommodation facility that is on wheels typically

resorts etc. Supplementary establishments include Boutique Villas, Rest Houses, Guest Houses, Home Stays, Apartments, Heritage Bungalows/Homes etc. Other establishments refer to those who are not formally registered within the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA, 2019). The accommodation types like Tourists Hostels, Camping, Caravan and Tree Houses are still at the development stage which are currently operating in a very small scale within the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Under the sustainable tourism value chain, new creative forms of accommodation types such as rotels, boatels and floating hotels are proposed in order to enhance the value of the experience. Rotel refers to an accommodation facility that is on wheels typically customized – made on buses and trains where tourists can travel to the widest and most remote locations. Boatels are house boats that can be established around rivers and lakes in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, floating hotel (cruises) is another concept that can be implemented in Sri Lanka with the initiation of cruise companies.

Furthermore, the proposed value chain includes the indirect contacts related to the accommodation sector such as construction and real state suppliers, goods & services suppliers: (Furniture, ICT, Food, Textiles, Agriculture etc.), warehousing, distribution, raw material suppliers, maintenance, and sales and marketing suppliers which support the accommodation sector to conduct their operations smoothly.

#### 4.2.2.3 Food and Beverage

Food and Beverage play a crucial role in tourists' stay in a destination. Food and beverage encompass both a fundamental need plus the cultural value of a particular tourist destination. Restaurants and bars, nightclubs, fast food outlets, street foods, food kiosks & cafes are currently operating widely. Nevertheless, the food festivals and food souvenirs are still unpopular methods where tourists can be directly contacted and operate on a small scale within the country. It is suggested to develop these food festivals and food souvenirs that can contribute to sustainable tourism by enhancing authentic and valuable tourism experiences. Floating restaurants are proposed under this sustainable tourism value chain based on the local rivers and lakes as a creative tourism experience.

Construction and real state suppliers, goods and services suppliers: (Furniture, ICT, Food, Textiles, Agriculture etc.), food and beverage producers and suppliers, warehousing, distribution, waste food and management can be considered under the existing indirect contacts of the food and beverage sector.

#### 4.2.2.4 Creative Industries

The term 'creative industries' describes businesses with creativity at their heart, for example, design, music, publishing, architecture, film and video, crafts, visual arts, fashion, literature, performing arts etc. The handicrafts and art shops, music and dancing, theatres, artists, performers, photography, video studios, and cinema villages can be considered existing creative suppliers that directly contact tourists. Moreover, the construction and real estate, goods and services suppliers: (Furniture, ICT, Food, Textiles, Agriculture etc.), warehousing, distribution, handicrafts,

souvenirs and arts etc., manufacturers and suppliers are indirectly related with the direct contact personnel of the creative industries.

**4.2.2.5 Tourism Resources**

Sri Lanka is rich with diversified natural, cultural, and built resources that mainly play a major role in attracting tourists. Natural resources are beaches, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, forests, reefs, mountains, national parks, flora and fauna, etc., available within and around the country. Further, archaeology, festivals, museums, ethnic groups, and intangible cultural assets (music, dancing, folklore, languages, traditions, rituals, etc.) are related to the country’s cultural resources. Unique architecture, Infrastructure, and tourism superstructure such as conference centres, towers, ports, etc., can be considered as built resources available within Sri Lanka that directly contact the tourists. Signage and direction of natural and cultural sites, restoration, management, preservation, conservation, and promotion of resources indirectly support enhancing tourists’ experience within the destination.

**4.2.2.6 Leisure, Tours and Excursions**

Leisure, tours, and excursions can be considered the main activities that directly contact tourists to create value-added experiences. Entertainment events, tourist guides, beach boys, tour packages, boat and jeep safaris, tourism-related activities such as eco-tourism activities, adventure activities, agro-tourism related activities etc., are currently conducted and directly involved in creating a valuable experience. The health and wellness spa and spiritual centres are operating in the developing stage related to the Ayurveda and yoga activities.

Planning and organization, equipment and fittings suppliers, sales and marketing activities are indirectly contacted with related to the tourists’ leisure, tours and excursions.

**4.2.2.7 Supportive Services**

Sri Lanka provides several direct contact support services such as information centres, shopping complexes, grocery shops, retail outlets, laundry and cleaning services, banking services, internet cafes and security services (private security services, tourist police, etc.) to shape the tourist’s experience.

Trade companies, manufacturers, distribution, fuel and energy suppliers, IT specialists and software (Property Management Systems, Travel Management Systems), research, training and consultancy services provided by especially higher education institutions can be considered as indirect supportive service suppliers prevailing within Sri Lanka. In addition, waste management companies (recycling plants, renewable energy companies, etc.) are proposed under the sustainable tourism value chain.

**4.2.2.8 Environmental Impacts**

Tourism often burdens natural resources through over-consumption, often in places where resources are already scarce. Tourism can put enormous pressure on an area and lead to impacts such as greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, wastewater, food waste, packaging waste, solid

waste, chemical waste, land use, biodiversity loss, noise pollution etc. Hence, it is necessary to minimise these negative impacts when conducting direct and indirect tourism-related activities through sustainable tourism activities.



Figure 4.5: Environmental Impacts

### 4.3 Issues, Challenges, and Barriers in Developing Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka

The meaning of sustainable tourism has clearly defined in the above chapters. However, most organizations, individuals merely perceive sustainable tourism or sustainability in terms of green color just concerning the environment when the core of sustainability is focusing on the triple bottom line: planet, people, and profit. According to the global agenda, all nations and industries follow sustainable development goals (SDGs), ensuring sustainability. As an industry, tourism also adapted to SDGs primarily at the policy level. In practice, the term “responsible tourism” is used and implemented based on SDGs. The Cape Town Declaration in 2002 has clearly defined what responsible tourism is. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, which UNWTO introduced in 2001, also supports sustainable tourism by guiding tourism practices to being responsible. Therefore, economic development, enhancement of per capita income, quality job creation, fair income distribution, environmental conservation, cultural preservation, uplift the quality of life by enhancing the pride of the local community like attainments are concerned with the sustainable tourism development execution in real terms. Depending on this fundamental, factors which challenge practices of sustainable tourism are discussed below.

- **Lack of understanding, training, technical support, and guidance of sustainable tourism operations by all stakeholders**

The real meaning of sustainable tourism operation must be understood from top to bottom and vice versa. The point which was clearly made out from the focus group meeting about understanding the sustainable concept of the top was relatively straightforward. Still, when it is flowing back to the general community, the idea is basically smudged. Somebody has argued that this knowledge must be individually taken. However, the issue is, tourism makes a considerable impact on the local destination. In most cases, tourism is merely a planting of an alien seed in fragile indigenous land. If anybody is planning to practice tourism, they must ensure the awareness of the local community and should take responsibility for the mentioned triple bottom line.

The country’s National Tourism Organization (NTO), SLTDA initiation, is essential at the planning level. So far, they have just conducted a training program to SLTDA staff about making a national sustainable certification program that comes from the agreement signed with UNDP. A team from the Global Sustainable Development Council (GSDC) has trained some of their staff. However, SLTDA’s initiations after that would rather be questionable as they later conducted a kind of plantation project only.

In concern with stakeholder perspectives, numerous tourism industry-related associations are there. Some of them are registered in SLTDA, and some of them are not registered. Different kinds of associations like these and other organizations that could consider stakeholders are involved in the tourism industry with different objectives.

Some associations are more towards profit, and some are for welfare. As such managing their objectives to work collaboratively in the common platform of sustainability is more challenging.

- **Insufficient incentives to operate sustainability**

As mentioned above, why even NTOs could not proceed with new sustainable development agendas would be insufficient incentives in terms of motivation and financial backing. Many government servants who are in NTOs have assigned duties and responsibilities. Paying attention and work to develop a sustainable tourism context is always coming up with more extra workload with less motivation.

- **Limited systematic implementation of existing sustainable tourism plans and projects**

At the national level, many projects are proposed and partially implemented in Sri Lanka. Deddowa Lake Resort project can be taken as an example. The Kalpitiya tourism project ends up with half of the development and local communities who have ended up with frustration. Lack of investments, lack of planning, and efforts to attract investors can be identified as the major reasons there.

Even during the 1st wave of COVID-19, the tourism minister has ensured at least 5000 LKR allowance to everybody in the tourism and hospitality industry unless being an employee in the organization. Yet, the government was not able to distribute that amount among all vulnerabilities due to many reasons. Apart from political reasons, not having a database of those stakeholders was the major weak point.

- **Weak enforcement of existing regulations and policies**

Sri Lanka does not have a properly developed and comprehensive tourism policy to guide the industry at the upper level. The country’s tourism industry is driven by a strategic plan which was set for 2017-2020. Therefore, at the moment, Sri Lanka does not have a tourism policy to implement. However, documenting this report, the tourism ministry has announced its initiative to develop a national policy for tourism.

- **Good governance and transparency (no corruption)**

Good governance and transparency are a matter when NTO and the ministry operate with the public funds. Often government services not only in tourism receive the complaint about transparency. If such malpractices are there, they should be eliminated.

- **Protracted and disjointed government decision-making and approval processes**

This is becoming the key issue in Sri Lankan tourism. The tourism ministry and NTO are rarely taking joint decisions. Sri Lanka Tourism Promotional Bureau (SLTPB), SLTDA, Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (SLITHM), and Sri Lanka Conventional Bureau (SLCB) operate under different leaderships. When these organizations make decisions about tourism, they are not often matched with each other and are driven by each chairman’s view. It is accepted that national tourism is operated under one umbrella with one leadership. Recently, the chairperson of SLTDA has been working on getting SLTDA, SLTPB, and SLCB under one roof, which is a good initiative. However,



as mentioned above, some tourism associations are not showing a favourable attitude to that movement.

- **Inconsistent policy and political interference in infrastructure priorities and limited inter-ministerial collaboration in implementing sustainable development and management practices**

This is basically regarding main facility development in the tourism and hospitality industry. In most cases, when the local community is involved, they do not know how they should develop their hotel or homestay unit due to the lack of communication. Though SLTDA has prepared basic guidelines, members of local communities sometimes do not understand or follow them prior to their development. When they are trying to take tourist board approval, it is not being granted. These things often happen when the country does not have a policy on tourism which leads to ad-hoc tourism development making unfavourable income distribution and impacting natural and socio-cultural environments. E.g., Hikkaduwa, Ella, Arugam Bay, etc.

- **No formal, organized destination management framework linking central, provincial, and local governments**

According to the tourism strategic plan 2017-2020, the public sector institutional framework for tourism has the ministry of tourism with four main NTOs: SLTDA, SLTPB, SLCB, and SLITHM, included with six provincial colleges. The matter here is some provincial councils are also playing a role in developing tourism in their respective boundary lines. Are they independent? or whether it is coming from the ministry level is a problem. If not, all provincial councils should represent the public sector institutional framework for tourism. If it is so, the role of the SLTDA is also problematic. Therefore, the operational wheels of NTOs, ministry, provincial councils, and supporting non-government organizations (NGOs) are working independently without focus and collaborative effort.

- **The economic disparity between areas, particularly the inaccessibility during the ethnic civil war**

Sri Lanka, as an island nation with many natural and cultural attractions, can practice tourism anywhere, but much attention was given to areas like Colombo, Kandy, cultural triangle, southern coastal belt, and a few more places. Areas like Jaffna, especially the northern part of Sri Lanka, have many potentials differently with their unique culture. As a result of this disparity of concern, income generated from tourism is limited among a few areas. 100% reduction of disparity and perfect equality cannot be expected, but some opportunities can be given to the other regions of the country as well.

- **Cases of over and underdevelopment was leading to destinations not evolving individual “personalities”**

Supporting the above point, the entire country as a destination should open up untapped potentials with different levels of controlled development. There, reaching a quick stagnation should not be the target. Attractions for drifters should be remaining for a long time as it brings lower impact to the area plus destination personality. Over-

development and unplanned tourism practices like Ella will lead to mere frustration.

- **Extended travel time because of road conditions and congestion**

The poor road system and unavoidable urban traffic exploit the tourist leisure time of the tour. During the off-season in the southern coastal belt and the eastern belt is activated, it takes around six to seven hours to reach Passikudah, Kalkudah, and Trincomalee areas. It is said by many that beaches like Passikudah will be like Bali. But poor accessibility restricts the development.

- **Limited vital connectivity infrastructures such as highways and domestic aviation and leisure infrastructure such as cruise facilities, tourist jetties, and marinas**

The colonial channel system in Colombo is being forgotten without using them in tourism. The connectivity of highways is still poor, but developments are going on. The use of domestic aviation for internal transportation is still at a minor level and expensive. Proper mass air transportation can avoid traffic and save time. As an island nation surrounded by sea in 360 degrees could not be able to develop a better cruise operation with the potentials available.

- **Lack of established tour routes to north, east, northwest, and southeast**

Seasonality is somewhat affected by this, but the traditional tourist route has been established, and destination marketers do not change the track. Colombo, cultural triangle, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Yala, and southern belt are included in the dominating itinerary practised by many DMCs. Even they are somewhat reluctant to have an edge from this route. However, DMCs like Eco Team has come up with off-the-beaten itineraries and products, but there are issues of market and marketing as a destination.

- **No active presence and involvement of universities and research organizations in developing scientific, academic, and educational markets for sustainable tourism practices are being noted. Individually driven agendas have become the course of these issues. Even research findings are not reached to the industry or industry is not aware.**

- **More focus on supply-side driven sustainability and lack of tourist engagement in sustainable tourism practices**

Lack of promoting sustainable travel for tourists and no priority is given to embedding ‘sustainability’ in tourist stories and creating their own sustainability stories during their vacation in Sri Lanka.

#### 4.4 Sustainable Tourism development Priorities in Sri Lanka

- **Ensure all stakeholders have a common understanding and appreciation of sustainable tourism management and operation**

In engaging stakeholders in sustainable tourism development planning and execution, an enhanced understanding of the concept and mechanisms involved in operationalizing should be there with stakeholders. That understanding would be the cornerstone for sustainable tourism development and management practices that apply to all tourism operators.

Sophisticated training, education and capacity building and outreach programmes are required to educate all stakeholders representing from industry big players to the grassroots players in sustainable tourism.

- **A systematic approach is needed to design a holistic, sustainable tourism development plan that assimilates into the local tourism strategic plan**

A strategy is needed to provide an agreed framework for all the tourism stakeholders to work together to develop and manage sustainable tourism in the destination successfully. ST planning is required for a more holistic perspective that considers all the sectors and resources upon which tourism relies. Further, there should be a systematic procedure for executing and constant monitoring mechanism of sustainable tourism action plans cascading towards provincial and regional tourism governing bodies.

- **Establish partnerships with different stakeholders**

Effective collaboration and synergy among different tourism stakeholders (from the national governing bodies, businesses, and local communities) are crucial for successful sustainable tourism management and operations. This facilitates a more balanced system of decision making as the priorities of various sectors are considered. Further, it requires the informed participation of strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus-building.

- **Need a radical change in the sustainable tourism perceptions of local people**

Sustainable tourism development requires the participation of residents at the planning stage. Their involvement and the local consultation reduce conflict as the plan progresses. Tourism administration bodies need to run community awareness programmes for promoting sustainable tourism.

- **Strengthen tourism business operators' capacity to manage sustainable practices in the tourism ecosystem**

Sustainable tourism management and operations need to equip local businesses with skills to succeed. Workforce development and training are therefore integral to a successful strategy. A proper incentive system needs to be introduced to promote sustainability in their operations, then the sustainable and innovative development of tourism will be guaranteed and promoted. Sustainable measures need to be included in the mandatory requirements for registering and licensing tourist establishments to scrutinize the continuation.

- **Develop and promote sustainable tourism products and services while respecting the local community values**

It is required to do an initial comprehensive grass root survey to collect all existing sustainable offers within the island and then encourage the creation of local authentic experiences, products and services that are produced by indigenous/local people, reflecting pride, identity, customs, and local values that create memorable experiences for the visitors.

- **Develop a visitor management system that minimizes negative impacts and enhances the visitor experience**

Need to formulate a holistic visitor management plan for the destination and requires quantifying the carrying capacity by conducting assessment studies at the sites while strengthening proper monitoring and evaluation systems. It should assure the distribution of the tourist flow around the country as it brings some level of equal opportunities for the marginalized areas with tourism potentials. Provide an infrastructure plan to support sustainable tourism at tourists' sites to ensure the least potential disruption to the environment. Further, it is required to formulate sustainable travel packages and travel patterns to improve the quality of life of the local communities while minimizing the negative impacts.

- **Focus on demand-side driven sustainability**

Tourists being the focal point of tourism, need to be engaged in sustainable tourism practices. Responsible travelling is becoming the trend among most travellers. Sri Lanka should prioritize embedding sustainability in tourist stories and creating their own sustainability stories during their vacation in Sri Lanka. This can be achieved through creative experience designing with the collaboration of destination managers, operators, the local community in creating experience opportunities where the tourist becomes the creator, producer, and teller of their own personal sustainability story. This would lay the path towards a meaningful experience for the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices, ultimately leading to a high level of tourists' satisfaction. On the other hand, the travel and tour companies should focus more on quality tourists than quantity in designing travel packages that contribute to a better economic multiplier.





### **Ambalangoda Masks**

The southern belt of Sri Lanka is popular not just for the golden sandy beaches but also for its rich cultures like masks and puppet crafts. See, even the devil's face is smiling rough in Sri Lanka.



## Chapter

## 05

## Future Prospects

**5.1. Prospects of Sustainable Tourism Development in Sri Lanka**

Tourism has undoubtedly been identified as a force of transformation of communities of economic prosperity (Saidmamatov, 2020). Accelerated infrastructure development and enhanced road network all over the island have opened up every nook and corner of the country to the world. The second international airport, extended expressways and Colombo Port City are collusive development projects that could lead tourism to its best in the next decade on the island. Tourism has seriously been considered in the national development priorities in Sri Lanka, and sustainable tourism development has been a topic for major national conferences concerning ecological, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism and development. Equally, ensuring ecological and socio-cultural stability in the transformation process becomes the nexus for the long term sustainability of the industry since tourism thrives and survive on ecology and society (Ranasinghe & Pradeepamali, 2019).

A strong emphasis on the United Nations' SDGs and rapid shifting of consumer perceptions towards sustainable and responsible consumption provides ample opportunities for sustainable enterprises. Sustainability of economic activity is becoming a compulsory endeavour and no more seen as an option, and this notion is driven mainly through the evolving consumer values. Thus ecological, socio-cultural, and economic sustainability of tourism development efforts and enterprises have become the future of this sector (Pan et al., 2018). Mainly, UN SDGs 8 and 12 focus on devising and implementing sustainable tourism development initiatives to create decent employment opportunities and promote local culture and local products. Equally, SDG 14 focuses on conservation, effective use and creating economic opportunities through marine resources specifically for small island nations. Sustainable aquaculture, fisheries, and whale and dolphin watching are promising options for Sri Lanka in this context. The coastal belt of Sri Lanka spreads over 1340 Km, and over half of this is still not being used for tourism and related economic activities (Sati, 2020).

In future, people will be more concerned about the following aspects.

- Mode of Transport - Consider more walking or cycling or using public transportation, use companies that have environmentally friendly practices,
- Buy local products - low carbon footprint and benefit the local people,
- Choose programmes that strengthen conservation efforts,
- Use water, energy, and method of disposal of waste that is efficient and environmentally friendly,
- Participate in "greening efforts" - undertake low impact, low carbon activities,
- Encourage tourists to contribute - plants; recycle; re-use, etc.
- Awareness and capacity building for tour guides on carrying capacity and local actions to protect local eco-systems.
- Climate change is a global phenomenon, and its impacts are transboundary; however, the major effects will be felt on the local and regional scale.

Sri Lanka is still on the way in tourism and related infrastructure development and still has the potential and opportunity to start fresh following sustainable approaches and guidelines in its future development endeavours. With its vast biodiversity, socio-cultural diversity and intermediate economic condition, the island is best positioned for sustainability-driven development strategies with the support of all key stakeholders. The strong regulatory structure, particularly for forest conservation, wildlife conservation, coastal and marine conservation and empowered institutional structure are good opportunities for the prior (Ranasinghe & Pradeepamali, 2019). Equally, traditional agriculture-based lifestyle and cascading irrigation management systems are still in operation. At the same time, culture and tradition preservation are evident at Sigiriya and Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy. Therefore, sustainable initiatives and sustainability-driven development is the best fit for Sri Lanka and implementation and continuous progress review to ensure the expected goals are met is invertible.

## Fire Workers in Kandy Esala Perahera

The Kandy Esala Perahera, the oldest and the royal festival is held based on the Temple of Tooth Relic in Sri Lanka. These fire workers light the Perahera and become photogenic in the cameras of Western tourists who visit Sri Lanka during their summer vacation.





## Chapter

## 06

## Conclusion

**6.1 Conclusion**

Based on two focused group discussions held, the Status-quo report has deeply discussed the current status of sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. Prominent stakeholders representing diverse tourism stakeholder categories in Sri Lanka were part of these focused group discussions. The report has deeply explained recognized issues in the current context of sustainable tourism such as lack of awareness, unavailability of a strong regulatory framework to address the issues related to sustainable tourism, poor coordination and participation among stakeholders, absence of farsighted visionary direction and national policy, poor participation and encouragement of grassroots level towards sustainable tourism initiatives, issues in the value chain in developing sustainable tourism initiatives, poor monitoring mechanism, an insufficient blend of technology for sustainability tourism, etc. and the ways and means to overcome such issues also were discussed. A comprehensive and very illustrative tourism value chain and tourism stakeholder mapping were presented during this report in Sri Lanka; however, we expect those will be much elaborative in many competitive contexts to address sustainable tourism initiatives.

The way forward for Sri Lanka requires all tourism stakeholders to come together and join hands in the phase of planning and implementation, and monitoring. Sustainability is not just a technical term. It is a thing that everyone should practice in day today life. The responsibility of stakeholders is to learn more about sustainability and simultaneously practice it as much as possible whenever they have the opportunity. Also, in terms of tourism, Sri Lanka still has opportunities to develop an excellent sustainable model.

Further, provincial and regional bodies have to play a major role in developing sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. Government should empower them to do that by recognizing and appreciating them. Further, more awareness programs should be conducted to make all stakeholders aware of guidelines or frameworks developed by the policy makers. It has to come down from top authorities, regulating bodies, the provincial level to the grassroots community level.

Sri Lankan tourism industry has been badly affected recently due to the Easter Sunday bomb attack in April 2019 and the

COVID 19 pandemic from March 2020. Employees in the tourism sector have been extremely affected by the crisis around the globe, and developing countries like Sri Lanka are at the top among them. The government should take policy decisions to provide wage support staff packages for sustaining the livelihood of employees. Further, the industry should be facilitated with favourable loan schemes, tax concessions. The policy makers and tourism researchers must identify the global change, and a collective effort is needed to take in order to face uncontrollable environmental incidents like a pandemic, natural disasters and terrorism. It is vital to take needed and timely actions to convert the industry to a more sustainable one.

Thus it is evident; a strong tourism resilience plan should be developed to face this kind of situation in future to assist the sustainability of the industry. Moreover, it will safeguard the interest of the stakeholders and retain them in the industry. However, it will not be easy without addressing the sustainability dilemmas in the industry. In future, the technology will play a critically significant role in the global tourism industry; smart cities and smart tourism applications with more online transactions, adaptation of artificial intelligence, online reservations, virtual promotions will be in high demand than ever before. Hence, the authorities and industry officials should take necessary steps to upgrade their systems to address the growing trends in the market. Economic performance and competitiveness will be based on technology transformation, and all stakeholders should be in line for this purpose. Further, it is essential to empower the community to start their own ventures and small and medium businesses to strengthen sustainability.

Finally, sustainability is not a meaningful term without community, nature and future orientation.



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### **Sri Padaya, a view from Colombo**

Sri Padaya (Adam's Peak) is an iconic religious mountain in Sri Lanka worshiped by multi-religious pilgrimage travellers. It is located in Sabaragamuwa Province, Sri Lanka. The mountain's shadow is said to be visible from shore as evidently spoken by many ancient travellers like Ibn Battuta.



**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN SRI LANKA:  
ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES  
CASE STUDIES**





# SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS CULTURAL TOURISM

## The Case of Vedda Communities in Dambana and Rathugala

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Indigenous communities and their cultural heritages are of immense significance in rapidly changing world (Buultjens et al., 2005). Entire globe has just only a handful of indigenous communities whose existence has tremendously challenged by the waves of concurrent socio-economic, political and hegemonic forces. The indigenous cultural tourism in Sri Lanka is yet to reach its potential and is having all required qualities to be one of the excellent tourists experiences that Sri Lanka can produce (Ranasinghe & Li, 2018). Increasing interest and attraction of indigenous community and their cultural heritage has paved the way for several rituals and ceremonies to reach out to tourist markets both international and domestic contexts. The comprehensive museum erected at the Dambana indigenous village is a timely and a forward-looking endeavor to preserve the millennia long indigenous cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. Moreover, several tourist hotels based in Mahiyangana promote an indigenous cultural tourism package which consists of an informative exploration of the history, heritage, practices and way of life of Vedda community in Dambana village, a discussion with Vedda chief and a cultural programme in the evening together with a snack with the Vedda community chief. The programme benefits both the community and operators economically while a rich indigenous cultural experience is received by the visitors. Equally, the education on indigenous cultural heritage and their cultural fragility promotes the sustainability of indigenous cultural heritage tourism. A similar cultural center has been erected at Rathugala indigenous community village by Central Cultural Fund and the community of this village is afraid to take it over thinking that they will fail to manage it. Significantly, the fragility of Rathugala community is even greater comparatively given the fading away of language from the community as at present. Thus, it is a great need an hour to develop a management mechanism for the cultural center to preserve this critically threatened indigenous community at Rathugala.



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# WHALE WATCHING IN MIRISSA, SRI LANKA

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Whale watching has become a popular tourism activity in Sri Lanka during the past few years. Three locations on the island are famous for whale watching, such as Mirissa in the south-west, Trincomalee in the north-east and Kalpitiya on the west coast. The two species of whales in these locations are the blue (*Balaenoptera musculus*) and sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) (Bultjens et al., 2016). Among these locations, Mirissa has become more popular among both domestic and international tourists. Therefore, the visitation has increased during the last few years from 620 people in 2008 (O'Connor et al., 2009) to over 100,000 participants in 2018. The growth of visitor number has created more business opportunities for the locals, especially providing boats and other related services. The number of vessels has increased rapidly; at the beginning, there were few boats, and currently, around 50 boats are providing whale watching tours. Also, most fishing boats are converted as passenger vessels with basic facilities. The Sri Lankan Navy also operates whale watching tours from Galle Port at weekends from November to April. Even though whale watching has become one of the significant socioeconomic activities in Mirissa are, it is recorded that there are many issues associated with the sustainability with industry and directly affecting visitor satisfaction (Ministry of Tourism Development, 2017). The issues are; over-visitation (too many boats with too many passengers), unethical practices of the operators (approaching closer to the whales, harpooning of Dolphins, swimming with whales), poor quality boats (less comfort, lack of safety, inadequate sanitary facilities), seasick, overpricing, lack of visitor education and interpretations, etc. The boat operators have also identified the blame they are getting and are taking much effort to overcome them. The researchers are voicing that it is necessary to involve all the relevant parties to secure the future sustainability of the whale watching tourism in Mirissa in which all the stakeholders are enjoying and benefitting.



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# WILDLIFE TOURISM IN YALA NATIONAL PARK, SRI LANKA

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Wildlife is one of the country's major tourist attractions, and the Yala National Park (YNP) has become the most popular and highly visited wildlife destination in Sri Lanka. In 2018, 434,337 tourists (foreign 206,843 and local 227,494) visited the YNP; therefore, it earned LKR 2,858,790,894.31. The YNP is world-famous for Leopards and other wild animals, and also, the park is situated very close to a famous pilgrimage site, Kataragama. Therefore, many vehicles enter the park every day. The Park has become overcrowded and exceeds the carrying capacity, especially during the (long) weekends and school holidays.

YNP has brought many economic and socio-cultural benefits to the area. However, it has created many damages to the wildlife, natural ecosystems. The Park management has identified the carrying capacity and has made efforts to limit the number of vehicles entering the park at once. However, it was not succeeded due to political and other influences. The Park management need to concern about the poor road condition, lack of sanitary facilities, lack of visitor management techniques, vehicle speed, unethical behaviours of the drives, overcharging, poor/lack of visitor education and interpretations etc. (Ministry of Tourism, 2017). It also recorded that some animals, even Leopards, have been killed due to road accidents. Since so many vehicles at once, the tourists will go to the park without wildlife trackers. All these things negatively affect visitor satisfaction and negative publicity. The local community is voicing that they are not getting direct benefits through YNP. Most of the employees are from other areas, and the safari jeeps are also from prominent business people.

The YNP is a good asset for tourism in Sri Lanka; the researchers are urging; the relevant authorities must take remedial measures to overcome the burning problems and issues to ensure socio-cultural and environmental sustainability.



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# TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ISSUES IN ELLA, SRI LANKA

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Ella is an attractive green hamlet located in a lush hilly in Uva Province approximately 200 kilometres (120 mi) east from Colombo at an elevation of 1,041 metres (3,415 ft.). Beyond its beauty as a sleepy mountain village, Ella was popular among international tourists as a transit destination. The legends have created a value to Ella with a history of 7000 years attached to King Rawana, beyond the facts that Ella has the Pure Oxygen. There are number of caves scattered in the forests with difficult access, and, today half of the village is covered with beautiful tea plantations. With the recent trends in the world with backpacking and FIT, the Ella received its ever-highest arrivals after the ethnic war in Sri Lanka. Even though many destinations in Sri Lanka experienced a severe drop of tourist arrivals after the Easter Sunday Attack in 2019, Ella mounted stronger as a destination.

However, Ella and surrounded area has experienced a massive change socially, environmentally and economically over the last two decades without proper understanding on the fact that the environment is the catalyst of their business. The new growing trends and demand has converted the natural environment towards a built environment without proper planning and responsible intervention. The community and investors migrated from various corners in the country have a severe conflict and hence, making collective decisions has become a very difficult. The irregular and haphazard development has damaged entire eco system in Ella and surrounding area and now in a huge risk of landslides. The lush mountain view has severely blocked by the visual barriers of improper constructions all over the area. The improper waste management and has caused the environmental pollution, the dumping center near by main tourist hot spot (Ella Junction) has made an unpleasant experience for travellers. The surface water and ground water sources are at huge risk not only because of the garbage, but also blocking the natural ground water streams with improper random constructions.

The Ella also informally popular among backpackers as a destination for locally grown Marijuwana which is an illegal drug in Sri Lanka, as well as many other illegal drugs. The illegal prostitution, spread of STDs, and risk of child beggars have created many social issues in households of community and it has made the children become helpless. Homestay has become the key source of income for majority of community in the area and many of these places are still unregistered at Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority as they are not compiled to the minimum standards, or else illegal constructions. Hence, majority of the community-based investments in the area were not received any compensation from the government during the COVID 19 pandemic. The sleeping village of Ella is gradually moving to an area full of night life. The social changes happened to Ella with these changes during the last two decades should be separately assessed. The rising rates of services and facilities, land price, Tuk Tuk rates are already unaffordable for the local community.

The carrying capacity of Ella need to be managed with a strong intervention to control the unhealthy operations and constructions in the area. In order to ensure the long term sustainability, the area needs to be sensitively developed assessing future trends while providing infrastructure facilities for both residents and tourism development.

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# ECO-TOURISM AND MISUSE OF THE ORIGINALITY: A CASE STUDY OF SRI LANKAN ECO-RESORTS

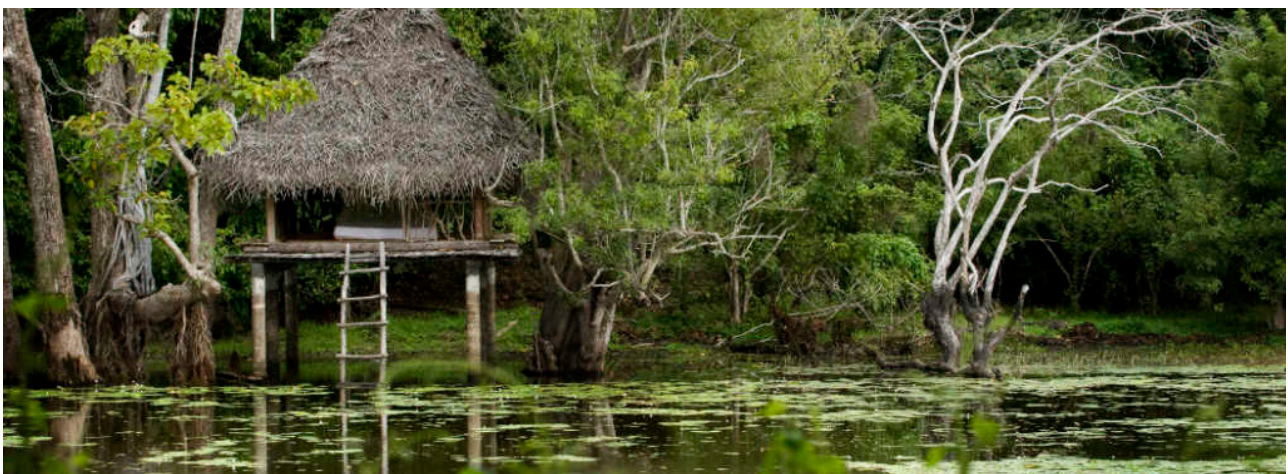
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Eco resort is an establishment which provides hospitality services to the eco tourists while practicing eco-tourism principles. All eco resorts reflect the creative initiative and entrepreneurialism of business pioneers, rather than large multinational corporations. Initiatives in energy and water conservation, waste reduction, recycle and reuse initiatives, green building and environmental education and awareness, credible certification program are essential components in Eco resorts (Arachchi et al., 2015). Many eco resorts in Sri Lanka are involving in Trojan horse marketing tourism as environmentally friendly, but in fact destroying the every eco system they claim to protect. As a result, customers are dissatisfied with the service of the eco tourist hotels. Comparing to Sri Lanka, other Asian, African and European countries are having many demands for eco-tourism and eco resorts. Multinational hotel chains, resorts, tour operators, and powerful foreign owners in Sri Lanka often engage in unfair trade practices in eco-tourism that allow them to squeeze economic control from local communities. Eco tourists are trapped by these hoteliers' misleading the eco concept. Many Sri Lankan Eco hoteliers place themselves as green, but no green practice can be found out and it creates unsatisfied customers. Dissatisfied customer would never recommend the hotel for any one and also green washing affects the behavioral intention of tourists. Misleading green marketing damages not only for themselves creates damages to the hotels that are really practicing green concept. Attaching the "eco-tourism" label to poorly planned programmes provide local population with little besides social tension and environmental degradation, while leaving the genuine eco tourist dissatisfied and cheated. Failure of genuine practice the eco-tourism concept happened due to the following reasons.

- Sri Lanka eco-tourism business is not being guided by international principles.
- A "National Policy Plan on Eco Tourism" is yet to be formulated by the tourism authorities in Sri Lanka
- There are few true eco resort operators, those who adhere to the eco resort principles.
- There are few sufficient qualified people to handle eco tourists.
- Non- availability of genuinely planned eco resorts that guarantee the economic benefits to the community living around the eco resort areas.

Therefore, there is a need of eliminating these adverse practices which threaten the healthy development of the eco-tourism practices in Sri Lankan eco resorts ensure the sustainable development.



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# TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN SIGIRIYA ROCK FORTRESS

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The Sigiriya Rock Fortress is situated in Matale district, Central Province of Sri Lanka, which king Kashyapa built during his ruling period from 477 CE to 495 CE. Due to its historical and archaeological significance dominated by a massive rock pillar about 200 m high, Sigiriya has declared as a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Moreover, Sigiriya is regarded as one of the most outstanding urban planning sites of the golden history, with a site plan that is both intricate and innovative. The surrounding area of Sigiriya is recognized as one of the earliest locations in the country where iron was manufactured and distributed.

Sigiriya has the highest tourism traffic in foreign and domestic tourist arrivals and the highest income-generating cultural heritage sites in Sri Lanka. Hence, Sigiriya has faced several sustainability issues in the recent past, such as overcrowding, a lack of affordable lodging choices for domestic tourists, Wasp attacks, and the deterioration and weathering of the rock and its paintings. Furthermore, the Sigiriya and surrounding area have been subjected to unsustainable constructions, which can threaten the site's cultural and archaeological sensitiveness.

The archaeological and historical significance of Sigiriya is not limited to the rock and its fortifications. Surrounding sites such as Mapagala, Millagala, Pindurangala, Pothana, Aligala, Ibbankatuwa, Kaludiyapokuna reveal a vast range of evidence in ancient human activities that have not yet been exposed to extensive research apart from preliminary excavations. Hence, an appropriate crowd management policy with adequate visitor facilities, sustainable accommodations within designated tourist zones that do not obstruct the site, affordable accommodations for the local tourists needed to be implemented. Also, necessary to introduce visitor management techniques to ensure the tourists' satisfaction and the destination's sustainability. A transparent, efficient, and practical framework is needed to grate the constructions around the cultural heritage site.



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# SUSTAINABLE EVENT MANAGEMENT IN SRI LANKA

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Sustainability is becoming increasingly important to ensure long term development and enhance the stakeholder satisfaction of the events industry in Sri Lanka. It can offer wide-ranging opportunities for events and improve financial performance while fostering public support. It is high time Sri Lanka showcase sustainable practices in events and other industries to get competitive advantages. Tourism and MICE have been identified as high rankers of foreign exchange earnings, and there is a demand for ever-increasing green events. Tourism is the third-largest income generator in Sri Lanka, and events also have a great potential to be a pivotal contributor to the national economy. Globally, there is a high demand to conduct events in an environmentally, socially and economically responsible way. Even though Sri Lanka does not practice sustainable event management at large, it can potentially conduct the event sustainability to benefit all the stakeholders. Branding, networking, cost reduction, standardization and value addition are the key strategies of event management organizations to gain economic sustainability. Educate society, community empowerment, corporate social responsibility, promote traditional events, comply with local culture and law, and gain the benefits from the events to the organization, customers, and society.

Usage of waste bins, avoid plastics and polythene, use technological equipment, online registration, natural air and LED equipment, environmental standards, and CSR activities to make the green events. The challenges in implementing sustainable events are cost, limited infrastructure facilities, government support and customers' mentality. Therefore, private and public sector organizations need to work collaboratively to identify the potentials to ensure the future sustainability of the event industry. It will lead Sri Lanka to be one of the best sustainable event destinations globally.

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# TOURIST HARASSMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS: A CASE OF SOUTHERN COASTAL BELT OF SRI LANKA

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Tourist Harassment (TH) being a cycle, it arises from and influences on tourism itself. Harassment of tourists appears as one of the challenges endlessly faced by Sri Lanka Tourism. As Wijesundara and Gnanapala (2019) stated tourist harassment exists as a critical factor which influences on healthiness and sustainability of the future industry. As they revealed, formerly, six forms of harassments based on Consumption, Expression, Community, Vocal, Sexuality and Drugs are encountered visiting southern coastal belt of Sri Lanka.

Typically, tourist include southern coastal belt in itineraries as either starting point or ending point of their travel. Therefore, it has been receiving higher number of tourist arrivals, on oppose it is known for hotspots of tourist harassment. Hence, according to Rathnayake and Wijesundara (2015) ensuring safety should be prioritized in tourist destinations in order to retain the higher number of arrivals where confirms the sustainability of the destination. Prohibiting begging at beaches, establishing police patrols, issuing precautions on risks, aware on access of external service providers, frequently check-ups on licenses or permission, rotating entertainment shows among performers, halting worst communication via media, conducting health clinics, educating host community and providing trailer bikes for police staff are the contemporary actions taken by the local authorities to minimize the possible harassments in destinations of southern coastal belt. But, strategies like formalizing language education, introducing a performance zone etc. could be needed to destinations itself for further reduction of potential perpetrators.

Is tourist harassment being recognized as a kind of annoying behavior of an individual or tourist all the time? Answering the question could be problematic. Because, some tourists accept and expect begging performers, local vendors, beach boys, local restaurants etc. as the showcases of existent local culture. Consequently, tourist harassment contributes to sustainability depending on its nature and the culture of the particular destinations. Then, implementing mechanisms to fully avoid tourist harassment from tourist destination will be contradicted.

Further, previous researchers argued only on tourist harassment which happens from host community towards tourists. But, a concealed harassment cycle which interrelates the occurrence of harassment among tourists, host community and potential perpetrators could be observed due to a number of reasons; local community competition in tourist interaction, adoption of local culture by tourists, intermediaries between tourists and local community, mobility in occupations, tourists being the only one way of living, seasonality of tourism industry, prioritizing indirect objects in tourist's mind, making available of quality service and businesses owned by local-foreign partnerships etc. These reasons lead to create huge competition among all parties in the cycle, who are harassed by each other as far as the tourism services being operated. Pulling out of sole tourist harassment from harassment cycle with the purpose of minimizing harassment won't be an easy task as all parties and their behaviors are inter-connected with the aspect of sustainability.

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# SUSTAINABLE TOURIST GUIDING IN SRI LANKA

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An essential element for sustainable tourism development in any tourist destination is the participation of active stakeholders and their inter-collaborations. Among them the tourist guides play a major role in the sustainable tourism 'puzzle'. Unfortunately, in Sri Lanka, tourist guides are often overlooked in sustainable tourism discussions on how to promote and ensure a sustainable tourism industry and responsible tourism practices. This is an ample opportunity missed by tourism governing bodies in Sri Lanka to communicate sustainable tourism efforts and bring tourists onboard.

Tourist guides play a ubiquitous and prominent role in the tourism industry, as they interact with tourists frequently and for sustained periods of time. Tourists themselves spend more time of their vacation with the guide. Therefore, tourist guides would be the focal point in shaping the tourists' behaviour. In Sri Lanka, most tourist guides are acting as just interpreters who tick on the places, listed in the tour itinerary given by the travel agency. The tour is fully packed, and limited time could find in between for facilitating contact between the locals and encouraging the stimulation of the local economy. Besides, tourist guides themselves focus more on personal economic sustainability than what they could bring to the local community. Some incidents have been reported where the guides spread critique allegations about the local community on the minds of tourists, where they are not allowed even to talk. These practices have to be changed via proper training and need to bring them forward towards the more sustainable and responsible way of guiding.

Tourists guides role in supporting the local community, facilitates contact between tourists and the host community. It enhances tourist experience and satisfaction by educating tourists on consuming local products and buying locally-produced handicrafts and souvenirs, bringing real economic benefit to the local crowd. The guides should have a sense of tourism resources and their vulnerability and suggest alternative attractions which could manage the over-tourism. Being unofficial destination ambassadors, guides have the convincing ability to change the tourists' behaviour. Guides could turn the tour into a more sustainable tour via educating the tourists. Interpretation should focus more on local culture, resources, and worthy of protection, disseminates additional information on lesser-known places, encourages tourists to interact with local people and to share cultural values; educate tourists on responsible aspects of their stay; advises them to consume local food and drinks or buy products made on the spot, promotes ethical principles and responsible behavior in tourism and, especially the local regulations in environmentally fragile and protected areas as well as cultural and historical settings and finally promotes sustainable best practices by setting a personal example and influencer to the tourists and other stakeholders.

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# SUSTAINABLE TEA TOURISM MODEL: KANDAPOLA VILLAGE HOUSE, NUWARA ELIYA

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Kandapola Village House locates around Nuwara Eliya in a tiny tea community village in Hethersett Estate. Mostly in Nuwaraeliya, visitors are happy with the cold weather and natural setting, commercial accommodation, Gregory Lake, Victoria Park, Hakgala botanical garden, and few places where the authenticity of the traditional tea community is not available at all on the bucket list. As a unique anthropological group, the hill country tea community and their culture, which comprises Hinduism and South Indian Tamil perspectives, can add exceptional value to the visitor experience in this area. Recognizing this gap, Mr. Suresh Sathayanathan has converted his traditional line-room into an authentic cultural manifesto. Kandapaola Village House is distinctive for two reasons; its precise formation and the story of the owner. The line room has not changed its original construction. Kitchen equipment, seating arrangements, worshiping area, and small garden area are arranged maintaining the originality. Mother and few relations of Mr. Suresh, who wears in traditional Tamil dress code welcome tourists to their cultural house. Male visitors have to wear Veshti/Dhoti, and Female visitor visitors have to wear Tamil sarees after they welcome them according to their custom. Mr. Suresh serves visitors their traditional cousin for a reasonable price, which comprises various authentic food freshly cooked on the spot with local aroma. The next most important thing here is the life story of Mr. Suresh. The life of a son who rose by traditional Tamil tea pluckers would have ended up with being the next generation of the tea pluckers' community. But, he used to study well and went abroad. Finally, he became a revenue manager for one of the most reputed tour operators in Europe for Sri Lanka. With that background, he is practicing a sustainable tourism model in his ancestry home. Those who visit here can have the food, cultural artifacts, and a meaningful, authentic experience of marginalized tea communities in Sri Lanka.



# FACTORS HINDERING THE INCORPORATION WITH SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AMONG THE SMALL-SCALE HOTELIERS

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Sri Lanka has re-established peace & harmony in 2009 by defeating the terrible civil war, which had over 03 decades. Sri Lanka has been witnessing rapid growth of international tourist arrivals since 2009. Approximately international tourists' arrivals have been increased by nearly 400% by 2019 compared to the 2009 figures. This sudden boom in the tourism industry stimulated the lodging sector by adding many hotels and guest rooms. These hotels need to incorporate some sustainable practices to meet the government strategic requirements and face global competition. An attempt has been taken to explore the prevailing barriers to adapting to sustainable tourism practices for the small-scale lodging operators in the Deep-south (Hambantota district) of Sri Lanka. It was explored that small-scale lodging operators in Deep-South face many obstacles that limit their efforts on sustainability. The key barriers are limited access to sustainable products, less priorities on sustainability, lack of incentive programmes to boost the sustainability efforts, lack of commitments to have Sustainable Tourism Practices (STPs), and lack of knowledge and awareness of hoteliers about sustainable practices.

It was further explored that lack of money to invest in sustainability and restrictive legislation were not highlighted as barriers for small-scale lodging operators to practice sustainability in their day-to-day operations.

# EDITORIAL COMMITTEE PROFILE



## **Prof. Athula Gnanapala**

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Prof. (Dr.) Athula Gnanapala is a Professor in Tourism Management attached to the Department of Tourism Management, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL). Currently, he is the Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies, SUSL. Further, he is serving as the co-editor chief of the South Asian Journal of Tourism and Hospitality. He has published his research works as books, book chapters, research articles in refereed and indexed journals, and international conference proceedings.



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Dr. Arachchi's major teaching and research areas are ecotourism, community-based tourism, sustainable tourism development, responsible tourism and homestay tourism in Asian Countries. He has involved in various administrative activities in the University and contributed his service for various government and private sector tourism projects as a consultant. He has published nearly 40 articles in well-recognized journals both in Sri Lanka and overseas.



## **Prof. Ruwan Ranasinghe**

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Professor Ruwan Ranasinghe holds a PhD in Tourism Management from Sichuan University of PRC and is the Pioneering Head of the Department of Tourism Studies of Uva Wellasa University of Sri Lanka. Further, he is the Pioneering Chairman of Uva Provincial Tourism Promotion Board and also the Director for AHEAD World Bank projects at the University. Prof. Ranasinghe has a strong interest in sustainable tourism development and management and has published over fifty research papers



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Ms. Chandi holds a Master Degree in Tourism Economics and Hotel Management and serves as a Lecturer in Department of Tourism Studies (DTS), and Project Coordinator of AHEAD World Bank Project of DTS, Uva Wellassa University, Sri Lanka. She was awarded Australia Awards to complete the Short Course on Sustainable Tourism Development in Sri Lanka in 2018. Ms. Chandi has shared her expertise as a consultant for many national and international projects and strongly interested on sustainable tourism development, and strengthening women and marginalized groups in tourism.



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Ms. Sammani has completed her Bachelor degree in BBM in Hospitality, Tourism and Events Management from Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka and currently she is reading for the MSc in Management in University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. Presently, she is working as a Lecturer (Probationary), attached to the Department of Tourism Studies, Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka from August 2020 onwards. Moreover, she is an activity coordinator of AHEAD grant of Department of Tourism Studies. She acts as a member of different committees and projects in the university and has coordinated various events organized in university. Ms. Sammani is a resource person in tourism consultancy projects in Uva province extended by the Uva Wellassa University as well as various CSR projects. Her main research interests include tourism marketing and development, cultural tourism etc.





**LET'S HAND TOGETHER  
TO CELEBRATE SRI LANKA  
& SRI LANKAN-NESS WITH SUSTAINABLE  
& TOURISM**

