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# SOUTH ASIA STATUS-QUO REPORT

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN INDIA,  
SRI LANKA AND NEPAL**

# Comparative Status-Quo Report

## Sustainable Tourism in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal

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World Tourism Organization

# UNWTO

## South Asia Status-Quo Report

### Sustainable Tourism in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal

**“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 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

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**ourism is, at present, a critical economic activity in the global economy and will create a multiplier impact on India's socio-economic growth through infrastructure development, job creation, and skill development, amongst others. Equally, it strongly relates to the socio-cultural, ecological, and economic development contexts of many parts of the globe.

The purpose of this report is to provide a comparative insight into the sustainable tourism development context in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal. It aims at identifying the need-gap of sustainable tourism sector issues and comprehensively study the policy to chart out suggestive framework for ecosystem based development of the sector contributing to economic development and social upliftment. The outcomes of the report will be input to develop the centres of excellence in these three countries under the project 'Centres of Excellence in Sustainable Tourism to boost economic development and enhance university-business cooperation in Southern Asia' (CESTour).

The report is divided into different sections, among which the first section covers the discussion based on understanding Sustainable Tourism. Keeping in mind the UNWTO's perspective, the global trends and the challenges were discussed with small case studies which reflect the good practices and initiatives taken in these three countries. An extensive literature was analysed to understand Sustainable tourism in India, followed by the comprehensive discussions conducted with an expert group to elucidate sustainable tourism need-gaps in the Indian context. The later part of the report elaborate son the prospects, and potential of sustainable tourism development, followed by the conclusions. The purpose of this is to unveil the opportunities, challenges, issues and best practices for sustainable tourism initiatives and implementations.

Overall, the report provides an inclusive insight into the status quo of the sustainable tourism context, development priorities, issues, challenges and opportunities in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal and provides a base knowledge to guide the implementation of the CESTour project.

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# 1

# CONTEXT OF THE COMPARATIVE REPORT



## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism is a way of travelling and exploring a destination while respecting its culture, environment and people. Sustainability or sustainable practice in tourism has expanded exponentially. According to UN World Tourism Organisation, Sustainable tourism is, "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and the environment and host communities." Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee the long-term sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism may be conceptualised as efforts towards :

1. Making optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
2. Respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3. Ensuring viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities and contributing to poverty alleviation.

The concept was consolidated since its first formal definition, in the Brundtland Report as (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainability has been a constant feature of tourism policy at all territorial levels.

## CONTEXT

In order to detect the main aspects related to sustainable tourism and the specific needs of India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, Work Package- 1 is starting with a status-quo analysis of sustainable tourism efforts.

This FG is starting off the Status Quo Report & Country Report. The report is designed to provide a detailed understanding of the context on the topic, in order to provide better planning



<sup>1</sup> Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers, UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12.

<sup>2</sup> The definition is conceptual guideline of UNEP and UNWTO report 'Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers', bringing in the applied context of sustainable tourism.

<sup>3</sup> Brundtland Report, also called - Our Common Future, publication released in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED).



and management of the system. A detailed literature review underpinning the domain work from the perspective of existing research and literature sources, whilst the three-country status quo reports provide a practical perspective in the region.

**The Status-Quo Report**

- Insight into concept of sustainable tourism
  - What is the common understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism?
  - How can sustainable tourism be measured and credibly demonstrated?
  - Stakeholder mapping

**Table 1: Impact Assessment of Sustainable Tourism**

Economic Impact		Social, and Cultural Impact		Environmental impacts	
Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Foreign Exchange Earnings	Economic Leakage	Preserving Local Culture	Social Change	Increased Awareness	Depletion of Natural Resources
Contribution to Government Revenues	Infrastructure Cost	Strengthening Communities	Globalization and the Destruction of Preservation and Heritage	Reduces Carbon Footprint	Increase of Heavy Infrastructure and Carbon Footprint
Employment Generation	Increase in Prices	Provision of Social Services	Loss of Naturalness and Authenticity	Optimized Management of Waste	Ignorance to Resources
Contribution to Local Economies	Dependence of Local Community	The commercialization of Culture and Art	Standardisation and Commercialisation	Promotion of Rural and Natural Living	=
Development of Private Sector	Foreign Ownership and Management	The revitalization of Culture and Art	Culture Clashes	Support to the Government and Policy Initiatives	=
Increased Incremental Trade	=	Preservation of Heritage	Increase In Crime, Gambling and Moral Behaviour	Implementation of Water Conservation	=
Regional Infrastructure Development	=	Benefits to Women	=	=	=
=	=	Support to Artisans and inclusivity	=	=	=

**Source:** Author's contribution

- Market systems and the competition
  - What are market systems and processes of delivery?
  - What is the relation between sustainable tourism and market competitiveness?
  - How can sustainability issues be integrated into the holistic management of a destination?
  - How do government programs, schemes and initiatives support making of industry
- Identifies the Factors - including the supporting mechanisms (policies, strategies and approaches) as well as the major challenges (Need-Gap analysis of industry)
- Critical review on policy, market practices, pricing and sustainability factors
- How do government programs, schemes and initiatives support making of industry







- What are key performance indicators
- What are common challenges faced when putting forward sustainable tourism initiatives

It must be underlined that the application of sustainability still depends on the attitude adopted and the relevant territorial and social context. Thus, **stakeholders' implication** in the analysis of Gap and designing process is vital for sustainable tourism development to be successful. In addition, understanding the impact of the critical dimensions of the sustainable tourism (for example- some of them are identified as dimensions) completes the value chain and sustenance of business model and industry.

To achieve this, it is crucial to analyse the Gap based on a clear methodology that will allow designing and implementing adequate framework to facilitate sustainability. Considering trends and comparing current data is necessary for this task.

#### Discussion 1 (Conceptual)

The conceptual and market context within which sustainable tourism is defined, developed, and reacting to three dominant paradigms: economic development, a community vision, and a sustainability vision OR group can discuss evolution on its understanding and scale.

What is your understanding of Sustainable Tourism?

Has this understanding changed over time, how?

Which aspects create the need for tourism to be sustainable?

How is sustainable tourism a key instrument for economic development at large?

Why community vision and empowerment is a dominant paradigm in the evolution of sustainable tourism?

How the practice of sustainable tourism has created an impact (positive or negative) on the Socio-economic fabric of the society?

Which is the fixed environment (Individual, organisational or community characteristics) that affect the process?

#### Discussion 2 (SWOT)

SWOT analysis of sustainable tourism. Factors of the market, organizations, customers, and community are important quadrants in identifying SWOT factors, it may consider the value of tourism to the community, economically, socially, politically, culturally, and environmentally.



The definition of sustainable tourism by different agencies and institutions is mapped to observe the regional priorities and policy influences.





What are the strengths of Sustainable Tourism  
What are the weaknesses of Sustainable Tourism  
What are the opportunities in Sustainable tourism  
What are the threats to Sustainable tourism  
Which SDGs are majorly connected to Sustainable Tourism?  
Do you find the supportive policy environment to meet the SDGs through sustainable tourism?

### Discussion 3 (Stakeholders)

Who are the major stakeholders, their Responsibility and how can we measure their influence and impact in the sustainable tourism ecosystem? Can we draw the ecosystem of the ST of the country covering demand, supply, and legal verticals?

#### Define the key stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism

How each of these stakeholders impacts the overall ecosystem of sustainable tourism?

Present the sustainable tourism ecosystem (inc. stakeholders) under three verticals i.e., Demand, Supply, and Legal for a clear understanding

### Discussion 4(Gap analysis)

Need Gap assessment - Identifies the Factors - including the supporting mechanisms (policies, strategies, and approaches) as well as the major challenges (Need-Gap analysis of industry)

How can the use of technology improve the growth of sustainable tourism

What reforms in legal policies we are expecting to indulge more in sustainable tourism.

How are we keeping the balance between market practices of sustainability and the economy?

What are the major challenges our industry is facing while keeping up with the expectation of improved sustainability practices?

How do we monitor and evaluate the implications of sustainable tourism in their particular organization

Are we following any proper framework to keep a balance between demand and supply?

### Discussion 5 (Challenges)

What are common challenges faced when putting forward sustainable tourism initiatives? Do we have some immediate attempt to solutions? Are we engaging for long-term solutions? What are some new and bold initiatives?

What are the existing barriers to sustainable tourism initiatives (Govt., NGO, Financial, policy, customers, infrastructure etc.)

What could be possible ways to minimize these obstacles (immediate and long-term)

What help will be most fruitful to spread sustainable tourism practices

Which are the temporary conditions that affect the process?

### METHODOLOGY AND GUIDELINES

Given the variety of the tourism contexts in the partner countries, a more qualitative research is needed to gain an in-depth understanding. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population.

### FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group is a group discussion on a particular topic organised for research purposes. This discussion is guided, monitored and recorded by a researcher (moderator or facilitator). Focus groups seem to allow for finding ideas and solutions aimed at facing specific problems. In the following paragraphs we underline the main aspects to be taken into consideration:

#### Purpose of focus groups

Focus groups are used for identifying the needs, constraints and opinions from different individuals (independent or experts in the field of tourism and its sustainability). This technique enables the generation of ideas with open answers, well-structured and with an additional qualitative component. It is based on collective views and it can capture the complexity of a given context and analyse the way in which participants in the group value and define key concepts in their own words. What's the criteria for using a focus groups?

- For research relating to group norms, meanings and processes;
- Aiming at:
  - Exploring tourism sustainability in the partner countries and collecting group language or narratives to be used in later stages of the project;
  - Clarifying, extending, qualifying or challenging data collected through other sources;
  - Giving feedback to research participants.

#### Conducting focus groups: group composition and size

The composition of a focus group needs to be carefully decided in order to get the highest quality of discussion possible. There is no 'best' solution to group composition and group mix will always have an impact on the data, according to things such as the mix of ages, gender and social professional statuses of the participants.

What is important is that they may interact with each other before the focus group proceeds. Interaction is key to a successful focus group. The optimum size for a focus group is six to eight participants (excluding researchers).

In order to ensure a genuine process of discussion, it is considered beneficial to limit the focus group to 6 to 8

participants. It should be a diverse group with participants from different backgrounds, primarily covering stakeholders. All participants should have some experience with the topic to be able to participate in the discussion. The relatively small number of respondents used in a focus group study makes it important that the sample is properly selected (Market Research Society R&D Subcommittee, 1979). That being said, it should not be assumed that the limited numbers in any one group preclude the use of scientifically drawn samples. It is recommended to include stakeholders from the following areas:

- Tourism companies such as hotels, tourism operators or other tourism service providers;
- Tourism association representatives;
- Representatives of other connected sectors which might influence and/or depend on tourism sector;
- Representatives from governmental organisations dealing with tourism management.

The Focus Group guidelines are developed in a way that the FG lead can invite different stakeholders for the discussion from 6 to 8 participant experts. FG lead may also decide to have two separated sub-groups (e.g. a separate focus group interview with practitioners, manager and/or government representative's/policy makers), if it is felt to be beneficial in that context.

#### **Focus Group Discussion/ Interview**

A focus group discussion generally starts with more general to more specific questions. Question order should be relative to importance of issues in the research agenda. Usually, less than a dozen predetermined questions are needed and, as with research interviews, the moderator will also explore and expand upon issues according to the evolution of the discussion. Focus group discussion will give qualitative data to analyse; they not only generate narrative data, but there is a lot of observational data one can gather as well.

#### **Following Characteristics for a focus group discussion / interview to be considered:**

- Participants (Carefully recruited, 5-8 people per group, Same field, Repeated Group)
- Environment (Comfortable, round Table, Tape recorded)
- Time (usually 120-150 minutes)
- Moderator (Skilful, uses pre-determined questions, establishes permissive environment)
- Analysis and Reporting (Systematic analysis, Verifiable procedures, Appropriate reporting)





A photograph of a wooden structure, possibly a porch or balcony, with a glowing lightbulb hanging from it. The background is filled with lush green foliage, creating a bokeh effect. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the lightbulb providing the primary source of illumination.

2

SUSTAINABLE  
TOURISM IN  
INDIA



## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

In any country-level context, tourism has different expressions based on the identity and scope of the region or country. In an attempt to develop a common language, UNWTO defined Tourism as- "a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents), and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure", which included tourists of all forms i.e. domestic, inbound and outbound. As we know, UNWTO is the sole agency of the United Nations which is responsible for promoting sustainable and responsible tourism.

Tourism has several possibilities to be linked with sustainability as it wields tremendous social, environmental and economic development which draws a necessity for the nations to have a sustainable vision and approach towards fostering mankind development. "According to data by UNWTO, tourism has witnessed an over 56-fold increase in

international tourist arrivals from 25 million in 1950 to 1.5 billion in 2019." This is expected to increase over the years, indicating a forecast of 2030 (Figure 1). "On the specific outcome of sustainable tourism, the ecotourism industry worldwide was estimated at 181.1 billion U.S. dollars in 2019. The sector was forecast to reach 333.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2027, registering a CAGR of 14.3 percent."

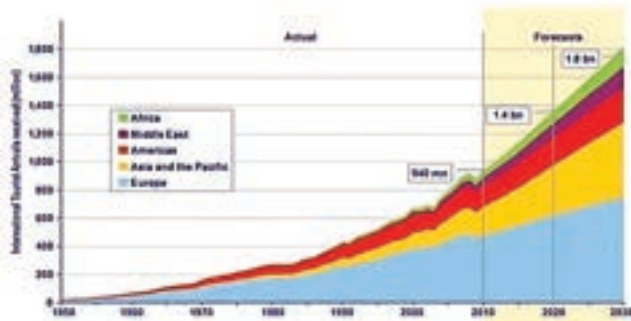
The COVID-19 pandemic is an extreme scenario of risk which has affected the world and has forced us to face a global health, social and economic crisis. The tourism industry is one of the most severely hit sectors due to the direct impact on industry actors and the restrictions on travel. According to the UNWTO data dashboard, about 1.0 billion fewer international tourist arrivals are registered, over 120 million direct jobs related to tourism are at risk and there is a loss of US\$ 1.3 trillion in total export revenues from international tourism. The impact specific to South Asia is devastating, as some of the economies have a very heavy dependence on the tourism sector. Both Sri Lanka and Nepal are severely affected not just in terms of foreign exchange but also in terms of production of goods, services and employment.



<sup>5</sup> UNWTO. (2021, March 15). Glossary of Tourism Terms. Retrieved from World Tourism Organization: <https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms>

<sup>6</sup> Lock, S. (2021, March 19). Sustainable tourism - statistics & facts. Retrieved March 24, 2021, from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/topics/1916/green-tourism/>

**Figure1: Growth, actual and forecast, in the number of tourists in the world from 1950-2030.**



Source: UNWTO

For many countries, tourism is the powerhouse of the economy. As per UNWTO data, it contributes to about 10% of the world Gross Domestic Product, approximately 30% of services exports, and 1 out of every 10 jobs, and 1 out of every 4 new jobs in the global average and is the third-highest world category in export earnings in 2015. Given the impact of the sector on the economy, none can be far from national tourism agenda, with special focus on sustainable tourism agenda. This data shows the magnitude of the impact this industry has on the lives and livelihood of millions of people.

“This industry has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it has direct influence as targets in SDG- 8, SDG- 12, and SDG- 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth (EG), sustainable consumption and production (SCP), and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources (SUOM), respectively. National priorities are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (2015). Since all three countries India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal are signatory, thus sustainability is at the core of a nation’s development policy prioritizing local traditions, resources and residents.”

**Figure 2: UN Sustainable Development Goals intended to be achieved by 2030**



<sup>7</sup> World Tourism Organization. (2014). UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2014 Edition. Retrieved March 17, 2021, from UNWTO Elibrary: <https://www.e->



### 1.1 Context and National Priorities

The National Tourism Policy guides the governance and operations of the tourism sector in every country. The national priorities are clearly aligned with the economic as well as the social interests of the country. A country that is a signatory of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) must align its policies to meet the development metrics of the same. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), comprising 169 SDG targets, set up by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2015 and to be achieved by 2030, expect the country-level policymaking to respond to the development goals. Out of these 17 SDGs, 3 SDGs namely SDG-8, SDG-12, and SDG-14 are specific to sustainable tourism. In addition, SDG-9, SDG-11, and SDG-13 (Figure-2) are very influential goals for the sustainable tourism sector. This strengthens the idea for the introduction of sustainable policies and practices in tourism for a better-paced and more inclusive growth of this massive sector.

The conceptual and policy understanding of Sustainable Tourism varies from country to country based on the social, economic, cultural, environmental and ecological mapping of the country. Influenced by such factors and national priorities, the policy of the country emphasizes the responsibility of the tourists to adapt to infallible practices which improve the well-being of host communities, leaving a positive impact on culture and heritage while generating substantial economic benefits. Sustainable Tourism is closely associated with the concepts of responsible tourism, Eco-tourism and community-based tourism. The definition of sustainable tourism by different agencies and institutions is mapped to observe the regional priorities and policy influences.

Table 2: Sustainable Tourism and Allied Definition portfolio

Sustainable Tourism Definition Portfolio				Dimensions (Economy, Social, Environmental, Cultural, Ecology)					SDG
SN	Term	Organization	Definition	Eco	Soc	Env	Cul	Ecol	SDG Mapping
1	Sustainable Development	The United Nations (UN)	“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8
2	Sustainable Tourism	Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)	“Sustainable Tourism refers to sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry, it is an aspiration for the impacts of all forms of tourism – all forms of tourism should be sustainable.”	Y	Y	Y			-
3	Sustainable Tourism	United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)	“Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”	Y	Y	Y	Y		8, 13, 14
4	Sustainable Tourism	UNEP & UNWTO, 2005	‘Sustainable tourism’ or ‘tourism in the green economy has been defined as tourism activities that can be maintained indefinitely in their environmental, social, economic and cultural contexts and despite their effect on these areas of life.	Y	Y	Y			8, 13, 14
5	Sustainable Tourism	ILO	The ILO’s definition of sustainable tourism is, that it is “composed of three pillars: social justice, economic development and environmental integrity. It is committed to the enhancement of local prosperity by maximizing the contribution of tourism to the destination’s economic prosperity, including the amount of visitor spending that is retained locally. It should generate income and decent employment for workers without affecting the environment and culture of the tourists’ destination and ensure the viability and competitiveness of destinations and enterprises to enable them to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term”.	Y	Y	Y			8, 13
6	Sustainable Tourism	German Forum on Environment and Development	“Sustainable Tourism has to meet social, cultural, ecological and economic requirements. Sustainable tourism holds a long-term view, for the present and future generations, ethically and socially just and culturally adapted, ecologically viable and economically sensible and productive”	Y	Y		Y	Y	8,14
			“Responsible Tourism is tourism which: 1. Minimizes negative economic, environmental and social impacts 2. Generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities 3. Improves working conditions and access to the industry						

7	Responsible Tourism	The 2002 Cape Town Declaration	<p>4. Involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances</p> <p>5. Makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage embracing diversity</p> <p>6. Provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues</p> <p>7. Provides access for physically challenged people</p> <p>8. is culturally sensitive, encourages respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence”</p>	Y	Y	Y	Y		8, 14
8	Ecotourism	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	<p>“Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, to enjoy, study and appreciate nature ( and any accompanying cultural features– both past and present), that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations”</p>	Y	Y	Y	Y		8, 11
9	Ecotourism	Global Ecotourism Network	<p>“Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the wellbeing of the local people, and creates knowledge, and understanding through interpretation, and education of all involved (visitors, staff, and the visited) “</p>	Y	Y	Y			8, 12
10	Ecotourism	UNWTO	<p>“Ecotourism refers to forms of tourism which have the following characteristics:</p> <p>1- All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas.</p> <p>2- It contains educational and interpretation features.</p> <p>3- It is generally, but not exclusively organized by specialized tour operators for small groups. Service provider partners at the destinations tend to be small locally owned businesses.</p> <p>4- It minimizes negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment.</p>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	4, 8, 12
			<p>5- It supports the maintenance of natural areas which are used as ecotourism attractions by:</p> <p>6- Generating economic benefits for host communities, organizations, &amp; authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes;</p> <p>7- Providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities;</p> <p>8- Increasing awareness towards the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists.”</p>						

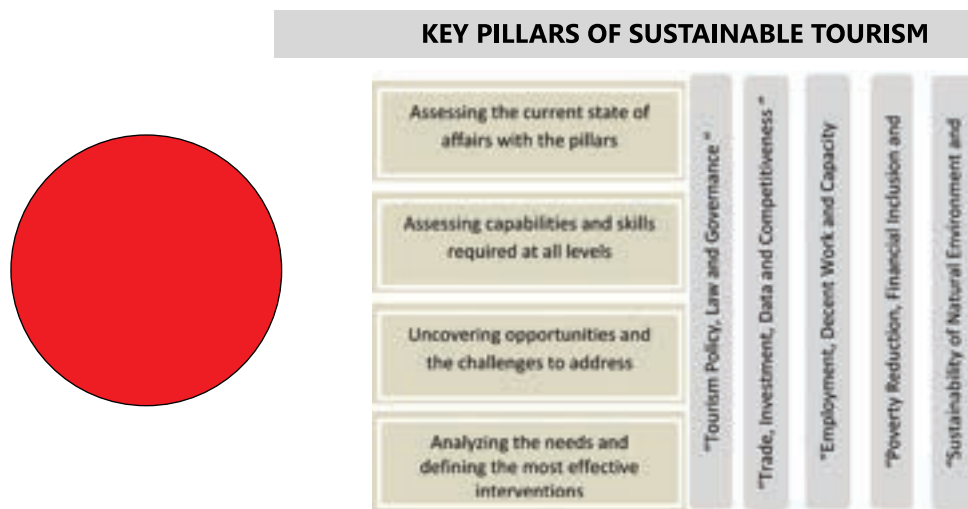


11	Geo-Tourism	UNWTO	“Geo-Tourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place— its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.”		Y	Y	Y	Y	8, 12
12	Cultural Tourism	IGI Global	“An economic activity that is related to events and organized trips and directed to knowledge and leisure with cultural elements such as monuments, architectural complexes or symbols of historical nature, as well as artistic/cultural/religious, educational, informative events or of an academic nature”		Y	Y		Y	8, 9
13	Community Based Tourism	UNWTO	“Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is defined by The Mountain Institute and Regional Community Forestry Training Centre as a visitor-host interaction that has meaningful participation by both and generates economic and conservation benefits for local communities and environments.”		Y	Y	Y	Y	8, 13
14	Religious Tourism	Travel Earth	“Religious tourism, which is also known as faith tourism, is the type of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for reasons related to religion or spirituality in their quest for meaning. It could be for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure purposes.”		N	N		N	8

The global tourism sector has not remained indifferent to the challenges of sustainability over the past years. Today, trade organizations, governments, academic institutions and international development agencies have acknowledged that without prioritizing sustainability a development benefitting all the stakeholders is not possible. National and local bodies across the world have been adapting to the tools and policies considered effective in making tourism more sustainable in the long run as the need for it is imperative for the survival of the industry as a whole.

Also, given the importance of this idea and the opportunities it brings, the UNGA declared the year 2017 as “The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.” This declaration was made to raise awareness regarding the potential of the travel & tourism industry to lead social inclusion, economic growth and environmental and social preservation. All the efforts reiterate the importance of tourism being well planned and well managed.

Figure 3: Key pillars of sustainable tourism and sector capability mapping



Source: Pillars of Sustainable Tourism

<sup>8</sup> World Tourism Organization, WTO. (2015). EU Guidebook on Sustainable Tourism for Development. Retrieved March 22, 2021, from UNWTO: <https://www.unwto.org/EU-guidebook-on-sustainable-tourism-for-development>



The mammoth tourism industry has a huge role to play in making the world more sensitive, empathetic, responsible, inclusive and sustainable. The sector has the potential to be a catalyst to an impactful and positive change. However, global and national policies need to stress upon the risk management and resilience of the sector in extreme social and catastrophic events such as the global COVID -19 pandemic.

**1.2 Sustainable Tourism – Principles, and Pillars**

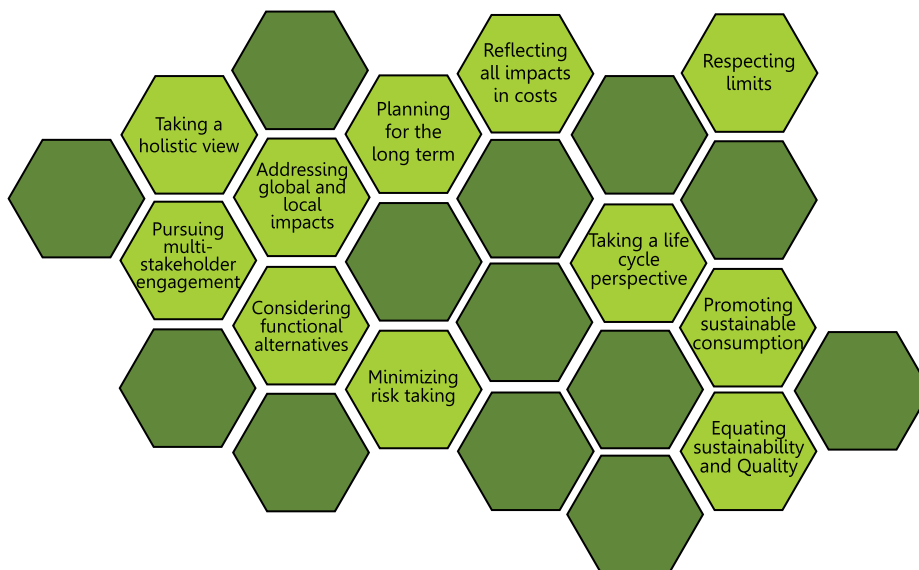
The ecosystem developments and the implementation of policies and programs for sustainable tourism are based on predominant principles, practices and approaches. These principles should be governance reassuring, economic model supportive and stakeholder friendly in order to accelerate the growth of the sector which is already ingrained with the

inherent excellence of sustainability. The guiding concepts and principles may be mapped as below in Figure - 4

The application of sustainability is governed by the stakeholder approach adopted in the relevant territorial and social context. Thus, stakeholders’ implication in the design of sustainable tourism vision and models, inquiry of challenges and designing process is vital for sustainable tourism development. Additionally, understanding the impact of the critical dimensions of sustainable tourism completes the value chain and sustenance of the business model and industry.

- **Economic Development :** Travel and Tourism have been one of the biggest employment generators and contribute significantly to the global GDP. India is a gold mine as far as tourism is concerned and, as one of the


**Figure 4: Sustainable Tourism Principle and Practices mapping**



Source: Making Tourism More Sustainable, UNEP, and WTO Report, 2005.

**Figure 5: Economic, social, and environmental aims of sustainable tourism**

Economic Viability	Local Prosperity	Community Wellbeing	Cultural Richness
Employment Quality	Local Control	Physical Integrity	Biological Diversity
Social Equity	Visitor Fulfilment	Resource Efficiency	Environmental Purity

A person with a backpack stands on a hillside at sunrise, arms raised, framed by a tent opening. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow over a valley with mountains in the distance. The person is silhouetted against the bright light of the sun.

Travel and Tourism have been one of the biggest employment generators and contribute significantly to the global GDP.







speakers had stated, we are yet to take benefit of this fact to its fullest. Skilling of stakeholders is also very important in making the overall experience more pleasant. Sustainable Tourism is a good instrument for creating jobs and helping the local economy flourish. Seamless connectivity between tourism destinations should be supported with sustainable means of transportation. Product-based tourism, encouraging local artists and the handicraft industry is not being utilized to its full potential. It is also observed that the current demand-supply shock created due to the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be countered by creating a safe, responsible and sustainable environment for tourists and supply stakeholders. This will also accelerate the growth of inbound and domestic tourism in the country.

- **Community Vision: Public, Private and Community (PPC)** participation has been a strong partnership in any sector's development which, when missing at large, develops a weaker sector. The indulgence of local communities in the idea of sustainable tourism is very critical for its success. Reports observed that the tourism industry in India is fragmented and that there is a lack of a centralized voice to represent the community stakeholders of the industry.
- **Sustainability Vision: Ensuring sustainability is not just** the function of the government; the participation of the associated industries and community is also crucial. However, while it exerts some pressure on all the stakeholders, the holistic development of the industry is ensured. The federal-level and state-level policies support and encourage SMEs, proper waste management, efficient energy management, encouraging sustainable architecture, systems to meet the commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to develop inclusive social and cultural ecosystems attaining sustainability.

The Economic, Social and Environmental are fundamental dimensions of sustainable tourism. Since the emphasis of this report is towards a holistic view on sustainable tourism's wider benefits and challenges to develop the sector, it is important to recognize that there are trade-offs as well. The tourism policy attempts to develop the tourism sector most progressively. However, if it is poorly planned, tourism will have a negative bearing on community, people, cities, parks, rivers and historic monuments, and put severe pressure on local infrastructure, environment, regional culture and resources.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

Sustainable tourism focuses not only on creating better places to travel but also aims at creating better places to live. In a nutshell, it is about visiting a place and trying to create a positive impact on its economy, society and environment. In terms of concrete benefits, there are some key points to be mentioned:

1. Helps in preserving natural resources (Environmental benefits): If humans wish to prosper during their life on this planet, they have to save the earth and understand that optimal consumption is the need of the hour. Sustainable tourism aims at exactly the right thing by handling the primary threats associated with climate change and environmental depletion. The reduction in CO2 emissions and energy consumption add huge potential to the process and can result in great payoffs for the planet as well as the coming generations. A tourist interacts with various stakeholders in different stages of their travel and some responsible practices in the journey can reap extraordinary results.

Sound management of the natural resources while providing tourism facilities could lead towards a significant improvement in environmental management. Research states that tourism accounts for over 8% of the total emissions of greenhouse gases. Through sustainable practices and approaches towards tourism, the industry can raise awareness about the needs and issues in our environment which will further lead to the systematic and waste-free use of temporal resources in the form of travelling green, conserving water, using renewable energy and reducing waste.

2. Stimulating growth in the economy (Economic benefits): A tourist contributes to the overall economic growth of an area in terms of sales, income tax revenue and jobs. Sustainable tourism dictates buying domestically produced goods, which directly impacts the economic growth of the workers, manufacturers and traders. The money from tourism and travel is directed to the local community, as opposed to large corporations, part of which promotes the development of new businesses and employment in the tourism sector. It indeed requires a monetary investment, but more than that it is about the vision that is developed in the stakeholders which provides an opportunity that should be harnessed as quickly as possible. Investing in the practice of the key players can prove to be a turnaround in the long run as it creates an atmosphere of change in the ecosystem resulting in more sustainability-oriented plans and policies.

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 through the supply of goods and services needed by tourism-related businesses. Through employment generation, tourism improves the living standards, quality of life of the people and sustains 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 or even 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 can be 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 are taking an active approach towards sustainability. Consumer expectations and the understanding that intact and/or well maintained destinations are essential for the long-term survival of the tourism industry are the

<sup>10</sup> The World Bank. (2019). International tourism, number of arrivals - Cabo Verde. Retrieved March 27, 2021, from World Bank Open Data: [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?end=2019&locations=CV&name\\_desc=true&start=2019&view=bar](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?end=2019&locations=CV&name_desc=true&start=2019&view=bar)

<sup>11</sup> International Trade Administration. (2020, September 10). Cabo Verde - Country Commercial Guide. Retrieved March 27, 2021, from International Trade Administration: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/cabo-verde-tourism>

<sup>12</sup> World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the International Transport Forum (ITF). (2019, December 04). TOURISM'S CARBON EMISSIONS MEASURED IN LANDMARK REPORT LAUNCHED AT COP25. Retrieved April 08, 2021, from UNWTO: <https://www.unwto.org/news/tourisms-carbon-emissions-measured-in-landmark-report-launched-at-cop25>

<sup>13</sup> World Tourism Organization, WTO. (n.d.). HOTEL ENERGY SOLUTIONS (HES). Retrieved April 09, 2021, from UNWTO.

main motivators for this. More and more tour operators hence 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.

3. **Harnessing the socio-cultural authenticity (Social benefits):** Sustainable tourism holds the potential to revive the standard of life of the residents drastically. Travel & Tourism is settled on the thought of exploration which makes it important for the destination to have competitiveness to provide diverse options to the tourists in the market. The growth is derived from different parameters such as employment, income, respect for the culture, personal development and increased public participation in sustainable activities. Responsible consumption by the stakeholders results in the preservation of the destination which then improves prospective investment opportunities by the government and corporate sectors and also encourages diversification by integrating the local economy.

**Tourism as a force for peace:** Travel 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. Events and festivals of the local residents where they have been the primary participants and spectators are some examples of the same. Often, these are revamped and

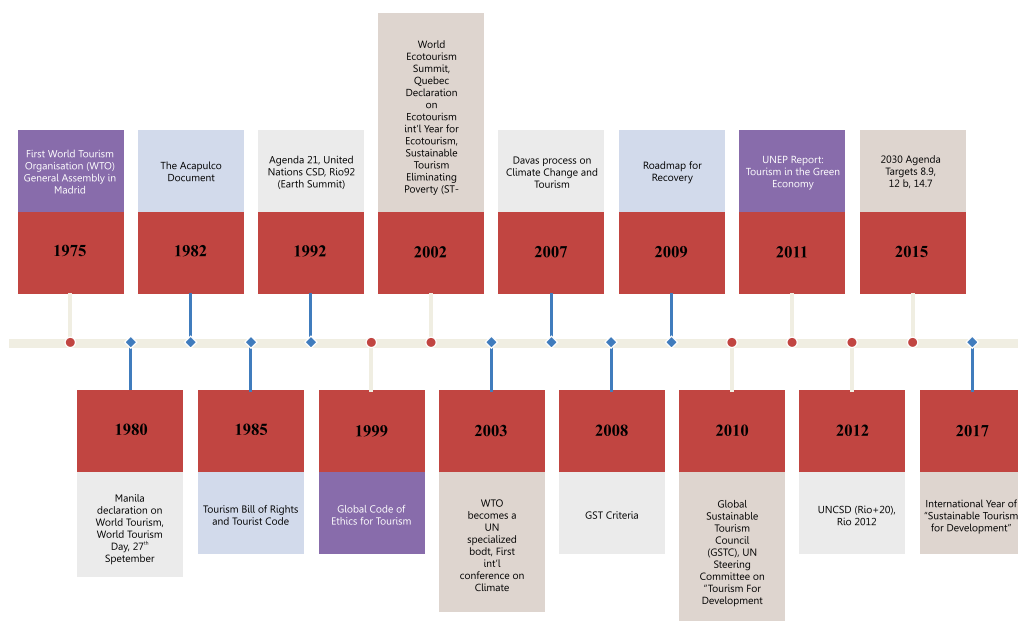
developed in response to tourists' interests. The jobs created by tourism can act as a very important motivation to reduce emigration from rural areas. Local people can also increase their influence on tourism development and improve their job as well as earnings prospects through tourism-related professional 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 may 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 often contributes 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 and sustainable use of biodiversity.

**Figure 6: Major milestones supporting Sustainable Tourism Industry**



Benefits for the tourists of Sustainable Tourism: Visitors also reap certain benefits from sustainable tourism practices, such as improved 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, etc.

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INDUSTRY- ECONOMIC CASE**

Travel and Tourism is a known employment generator, with over 330 million jobs to its name, and is also a key ingredient to the economic growth; contributing over US\$ 9.2 trillion to the world GDP. Many developing countries with significant native populations have emerged as attractive tourism destinations for international tourists in the last few decades, and with this, sustainability has come out as an important tool to support the rapidly changing local ecosystem.

One such example is an island country in the central Atlantic Ocean, the Republic of Cabo Verde, where the international tourism arrival stood at over 758,000 in 2019 against the native population of 550,000 . Another report by the International Trade Administration under the Department of Commerce, USA, states that the same country welcomed close to 820,000 tourists in 2019, up from just 145,000 in 2000. In the same year, tourism accounted for at least 24% of the GDP, and 10% of the employment in this African nation.

Natural and man-made catastrophes in the recent past have

made us firmly believe that the issues of global warming, climate change, irresponsible consumption, drinking water scarcity, etc. must be dealt with promptly. This calls for sustainability to become a part of our lifestyle, practice and policy across industries, and tourism has a very concrete role to play in the process in more ways than we can imagine. Islands remain a popular tourist destination among millions of travellers each year but they are becoming increasingly exposed to the effects of climate change from rising water levels to devastating storms. (Figure7)

The CO2 emissions related to transport in the tourism industry remain a colossal challenge. It is estimated that the emission will rise from 1,597 million tons in the year 2016 to 1,998 million tons in 2030; a staggering increase of 25%. In the same duration, domestic as well as international arrivals are expected to reach 37 billion with an almost two-fold increase in domestic tourists from 18.8 billion to 35.6 billion, followed by a growth in cosmopolitan arrivals from 1.2 billion to 1.8 billion .

Similarly, one of the largest revenue and employment drivers of the tourism industry, hotels and other means of accommodation, are very energy-exhaustive and accounts for about 2% of the total 5% CO2 released by the tourism industry globally . The demand is majorly driven by the consumers, but by increasing the efficiency and cost-saving measures, the


**Figure 7: Example of companies necessary to achieve the circularity of providing tourist services**



**Source:** Sustainable Industrial Development and Decoupling Strategies, UNIDO, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Global Sustainable Tourism Council. (2008). GSTC Criteria Overview. Retrieved March 30, 2021, from Global Sustainable Tourism Council, GSTC: <https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/>  
<sup>15</sup> Sanda Midžić Kurtagić (CENER 21, Bosnia, and Herzegovina). (2018, May 8). Circular Economy in Tourism in South East Europe. Retrieved April 11, 2021, from United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Open Data Platform: <https://open.unido.org/api/documents/13165892/download/Paper%20Circular%20Economy%20in%20Tourism%20SEE.PDF>  
<sup>16</sup> Nelson, K. M., Partelow, S., Stähler, M., Graci, S., & Fujitani, M. (2021). Tourist willingness to pay for local green hotel certification. Plos one, 16(2), e0245953.  
<sup>17</sup> Leposa, A. (2020, January 09). Stats: 32% Willing To Pay More For Sustainable Vacations. Retrieved April 20, 2021, from Travel Agent Central: <https://www.travelagentcentral.com/your-business/stats-32-willing-to-pay-more-for-sustainable-vacations>  
<sup>18</sup> Petro, G. (2020, January 31). Sustainable Retail: How Gen Z Is Leading The Pack. Retrieved April 22, 2021, from Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gregpetro/2020/01/31/sustainable-retail-how-gen-z-is-leading-the-pack/?sh=9b9c0e2ca31a>





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entire industry can be redesigned. This, in turn, will eventually positively benefit the customers at large. Despite agreeing on the fact that sustainability in tourism has a remarkable part to play in the coming times, the commitment shown by most of the relevant stakeholders has so far been shallow.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) provides accreditation for Sustainable Tourism Development Bodies. It also controls the GSTC Criteria which are global standards for sustainability in travel and tourism. To create a common language for sustainability in tourism, the GSTC Criteria are laid out in the following four pillars:

1. Sustainable management
2. Socioeconomic impacts
3. Cultural impacts
4. Environmental impacts (this includes conserving biodiversity and landscapes, consumption of resources and reducing pollution)

Research published in 2021 shows that more than 50% of tourists are now inclined to pay for sustainable hotel services. As per a survey of US adults conducted by MMGY Global, 37% of the respondents believed that overcrowding is a serious

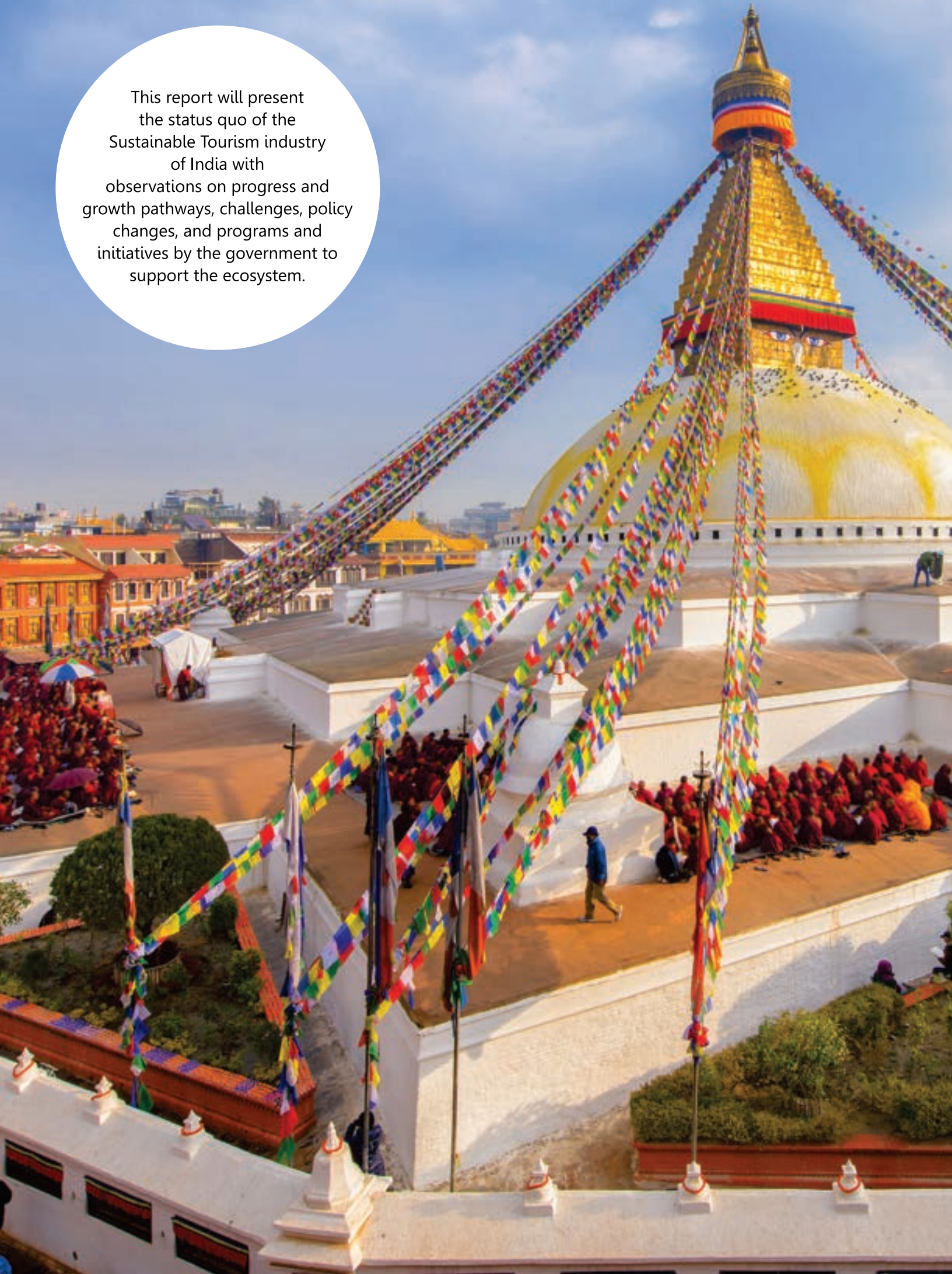
problem. 32% of respondents are even willing to pay 10% more to environmentally responsible travel service providers. According to digital research company First Insight Inc., the cohort of buyers typically 22 years of age and under is inclined to pay more for sustainable brands. 54% of Generation Z stated that they are prepared to pay an incremental 10% on products that are sustainable with fifty percent of the millennials stating the same. This compares to 23% and 34% for Baby Boomers and Generation X, respectively. In 2015, a Nielsen report found that 73% of millennials are inclined to pay an additional amount for sustainable products.

The ecosystem of Sustainable Tourism is observed to be receiving increased attention. There are new business models with innovative approaches in the sustainable tourism industry engaging economic entity stakeholders, policymakers, communities and international partners. Government initiatives and new policy introductions are supporting successful models and creating new synergy- such as the establishment of Eco-Tourism Development Boards. This report will present the status quo of the Sustainable Tourism industry of India with observations on progress and growth pathways, challenges, policy changes, and programs and initiatives by the government to support the ecosystem.





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3

INDUSTRY  
MAPPING



# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN INDIA

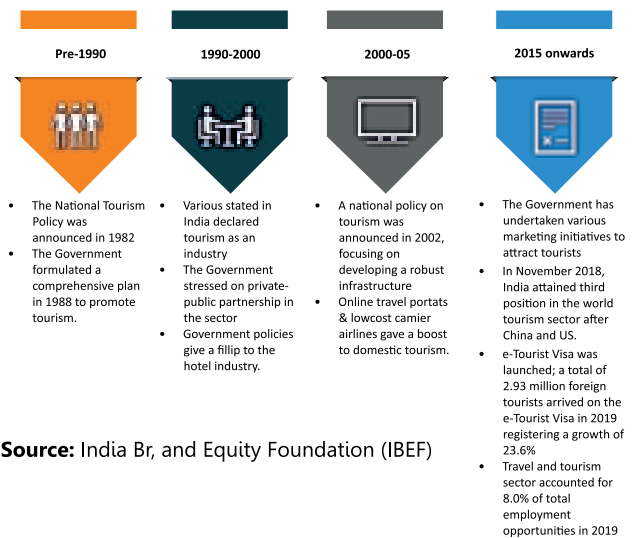
The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has been contributing significantly to the growth of the service sector of the country. Rich cultural and historical heritage, diverse ecology, attractive natural beauty and developing infrastructure are all factors that portray a very promising growth picture of the Indian tourism industry. Tourism also contributes significantly to employment generation and bringing foreign exchange into the country. With a diverse geography that further diversifies significantly into many microcosms of cultures, art, architecture and heritage, not only across the length and breadth of the country but even beyond its borders, India offers a wide range of tourist attractions for all classes of travellers. India hosts geographical diversity, 37 world heritage sites, 100 bio-geographic zones and a long list of attractive coastline beaches. India could be referred to as the cultural capital of the world with an assorted list of cultural heritage sites and home to a historically diverse community. India had also been home to the oldest universities of the world like Nalanda, Vikramshila and Takshila (now in Pakistan) which brought scholars from around the world.

According to the report on 'India Tourism Statistics 2020' published by the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, the tourism sector accounted for 39 million jobs in FY20, which was 8.0% of the total employment in the country. By 2029, it is expected to account for about 53 million jobs. The year 2019 was a notable year for India as it witnessed more than 10.93 million foreign tourist arrivals, recording a 3.5% growth over the previous year. During the same period, the foreign tourist arrival at the world level grew by 3.6%. India's rank in terms of Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) during the year 2019 was 12th in the world as compared to 37th in the year 2003. (Figure 8).

In another report by WTTC, India ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of travel & tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2019. During 2019, the contribution of travel & tourism to the GDP was 6.8% of the total economy, ~ Rs. 13,68,100 crore (US\$ 194.30 billion). In 2019 alone, nearly 4.2 crore jobs were created in the tourism sector, which is 8.1% of total employment in India.

By 2028, international tourist arrivals are expected to reach 30.5 billion and generate revenue of over US\$ 59 billion. In November 2014, the government introduced an e-Tourist Visa to facilitate the arrival of nationals from 43 countries. As of March 2021, the e-Tourist Visa facility was extended to citizens

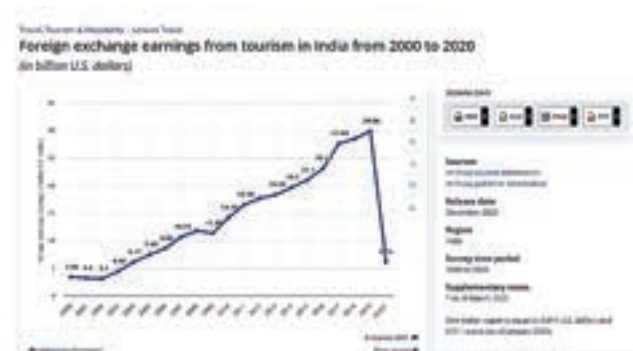
**Figure 8: Evolution of Indian Tourism and Hospitality sector**



**Source:** India Br, and Equity Foundation (IBEF)

of 171 countries. The rising middle class and increasing disposable income have helped domestic as well as outbound tourism grow in India. Domestic expenditure on tourism has grown significantly. According to the WTTC report on Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2019, it is expected to reach US\$ 405.84 billion by 2028 from being at US\$ 199.63 billion in 2018. International hotel chains are increasing their presence in the country, accounting for roughly 47% share in the tourism and hospitality sector of India by 2020, which is expected to increase to 50% by the year 2022. In November 2018, India attained the third position in the world tourism sector after China and the US. This signifies India's growing share in the global travel and tourism industry.

Another unique thing about the Indian tourism industry is that it also thrives on its unique inheritances of biodiversity,



**Source:** Source: Statista 2020



forests, rivers and its rich culture and heritage. The challenges in this industry lie in successfully preserving these in their original form and making them accessible to domestic as well as international travellers, together with safeguarding the economic interest and heritage of local communities. In 1998, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India recognized the significance of sustainable tourism by holding extensive discussions with various stakeholders of the industry and formulated 'Ecotourism in India – Policy and Guidelines' that included the Ecotourism definition, Ecotourism resources of India, Policy and planning, Operational guidelines for (i) government (ii) developers, operators and suppliers (iii) visitors (iv) destination population / host community and (v) NGOs/scientific & research institution and an Environmental pledge.

Around that time, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and UNWTO brought out a publication entitled "Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers". This lists the following aims of an agenda for sustainable tourism:

- a. Economic Viability
- b. Local Prosperity
- c. Employment Quality
- d. Social Equity
- e. Visitor Fulfilment
- f. Local Control
- g. Community Wellbeing
- h. Cultural Richness
- i. Physical Integrity
- j. Biological Diversity
- k. Resource Efficiency
- l. Environmental Purity

In 2007, the "Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria" was initiated by the Rainforest Alliance, the United



Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Foundation (UNF) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), together with a coalition of 32 prominent partners in the tourism industry. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council published the global standards for sustainable travel and tourism, known as the GSTC Criteria.

In July 2010, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, convened a National Workshop on Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India wherein a sub-committee chaired by the Joint Secretary (Tourism), Government of India and comprising expert stakeholders was constituted in 2010 for defining Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) and indicators for the accommodation sector and tour operators sector. This was a notable step in India towards sustainable tourism.

#### **TOURISM GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK IN INDIA**

The Ministry of Tourism is the nodal agency to formulate national policies as well as programs for the development and promotion of tourism. In India, the Ministry of Tourism was founded in March 1967, and the first National Tourism Policy was announced in the year 1982. Thereafter, the government formulated a comprehensive plan in 1988 to promote tourism in India. Over the decade from 1990 to 2000, various states in India declared tourism as an industry. During this period, the government stressed public-private partnerships in the tourism industry intending to increase the flow of tourists in India.

In the year 2002, a new national policy on tourism was announced, focusing on developing a robust infrastructure, harnessing the direct and multiplier effects of tourism for employment generation, economic development and providing impetus to rural tourism. This was the time when increasing access to technology and the emergence of online travel portals and low-cost carrier airlines gave a boost to





domestic tourism in India.

The Ministry of Tourism is headed by the Union Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge). The administrative head of the Ministry is the Secretary (Tourism). The Secretary also acts as the Director General (DG) Tourism. The office of the Director-General of Tourism {now merged with the office of Secretary (Tourism)} provides executive directions for the implementation of various policies and programs. Directorate General of Tourism has a field formation of 20 offices within the country, 14 offices abroad and one subordinate office/project i.e. Indian Institute of Skiing, and Mountaineering (IISM)/ Gulmarg Winter Sports Project.

The overseas offices are primarily responsible for tourism promotion, and marketing in their respective areas, and the field offices in India are responsible for providing information service to tourists and monitoring the progress of field projects.

#### **Executorial Arms of the Government**

The Ministry has a strong liaison with the executorial / functional arms which are under the aegis of different Ministries. These include Organisations, Authorities, Bureaus, Partnerships, Corporations, and Undertaking like Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Bureau of Immigration (BOI), India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), Indian Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB), Port Trust of India, Tourism Finance Corporation of India (TFCI), Experience India Society, etc.

#### **Industry Associations**

The Ministry of Tourism is in constant dialogue with Industry associations namely - the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PHDCCI), Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Indian Tourist Transport Association (ITTA), Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), Adventure Tour Operators of India (ATOI), Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Association of India (FHRAI), Hotel Association of India (HAI), Indian Heritage Hotel Association (IHHA), Federation of Associations of Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) and All India Resort Development Association (AIRDA), etc.

#### **Constitution of Tourism Task Force**

Based on the recommendations of the Sectoral groups of Secretaries (SGoS) on the Tourism Sectoral Plan, a Task Force has also been constituted under the chairmanship of Secretary (Tourism), with representatives from other Ministries including Ministries of Home Affairs, Civil Aviation, Railways/IRCTC, Road Transport & Highways, Environment & Forests, Shipping and Sports to address various issues related to tourism. These would include Air, Rail and Road Connectivity, identifying tourist destinations for airport development, international and domestic routes including North Eastern region, airports at tourist destinations which



require setting up of customs and immigration facilities, unused and underused airports located in tourist destinations, the introduction of tourist trains connecting important tourist destinations/sites including pilgrimage sites and up-gradation of the railway station, road connectivity of tourist destinations, development and promotion of cultural and heritage sites including monuments and museums, promotion of niche tourism segments including cruise tourism, adventure tourism, etc.

**National Tourism Advisory Council**

The National Tourism Advisory Council (NTAC) serves as a think tank of the Ministry of Tourism. The present NTAC was constituted on 27th October 2016 under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister (Tourism) with a tenure of 3 years. The committee consists of important Ministries, individual experts in the field of travel and tourism management and ex-officio members from industry associations. Two meetings of the council were organized during 2019-20. The first meeting was organized on 12th April 2018 in Delhi and the second meeting was held on 21st February 2019 in Gujarat. The third meeting of the NTAC was held on 4th October 2019 at VIP Lounge, Paryatan Parv, Rajpath Lawns, New Delhi.

**Roles**

The activities of this Ministry revolve around promoting internal tourism, i.e. both inbound as well as domestic tourism, in India. This is necessary to harness the direct and multiplier effect of tourism on employment and poverty eradication within the country. The other major objectives of the Ministry pertain to projecting the country as a 365 days' tourist destination, sustainably promoting tourism through the active participation of all segments of the society, assuring

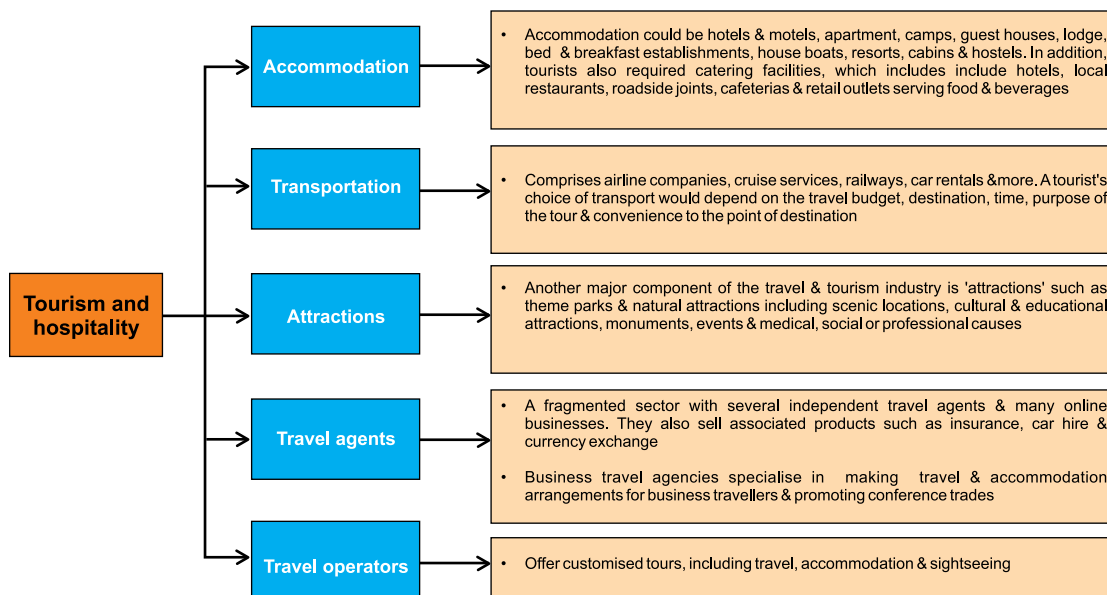


quality standards amongst tourism service providers, etc. The Ministry of Tourism functions as the nodal agency for the development of tourism in the country. It plays a crucial role in coordinating and supplementing the efforts of the State/Union Territory Governments, catalyzing private investment, strengthening promotional and marketing efforts and in providing trained manpower resources. The functions of the Ministry in this regard mainly consist of the following:

**1. All Policy Matters, including:**

- 1.1. Development Policies
- 1.2. Incentives
- 1.3. External Assistance

**Figure 9: Segments of tourism and hospitality**



Source: Dun and Bradstreet's Report on tourism in India





- 1.4. Manpower Development
- 1.5. Promotion & Marketing
- 1.6. Investment Facilitation

## **2. Planning Coordination with other Ministries, Departments, State/UT Governments Regulation:**

- 2.1. Standards
- 2.2. Guidelines

## **3. Infrastructure & Product Development**

- 3.1. Guidelines

## **4. Human Resource Development**

- 4.1. Institutions
- 4.2. Setting Standards and Guidelines

## **5. Publicity & Marketing:**

- 5.1. Policy
- 5.2. Strategies
- 5.3. Coordination

## **6. Research, Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation International Co-operation and External Assistance**

- 6.1. International Bodies
- 6.2. Bilateral Agreements
- 6.3. External Assistance

## **6.4. Foreign Technical Collaboration**

7. Legislation and Parliamentary Work, Establishment matters, Vigilance matters, Implementation of official language policy, Budget coordination and related matters, Plan-coordination and monitoring.

The Functions of Attached Office viz. Directorate General of Tourism are as given below [The office of DG (T) has now been merged with the office of Secretary (Tourism)]:

1. Assistance in the formulation of policies by providing feedback from the field offices. Monitoring of Plan Projects and assisting in the Plan formulation & Regulation:
  - 1.1. Approval and classification of hotels and restaurants
  - 1.2. Approval of travel agents, inbound tour operators and tourist transport operators, etc.
2. Inspection & Quality Control
  - 2.1. Guide service
  - 2.2. Complaints and redressal
3. Infrastructure Development:
  - 3.1. Release of incentives.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.yesbank.in/pdf/sustainable\\_tourism\\_in\\_india\\_initiatives\\_and\\_opportunities.pdf](https://www.yesbank.in/pdf/sustainable_tourism_in_india_initiatives_and_opportunities.pdf)



- 3.2. Tourist facilitation and information.
- 3.3. Field publicity, promotion & marketing
- 3.4. Hospitality programs
- 3.5. Conventions & conferences
4. Assistance for Parliamentary work
5. Establishment matters of Directorate General of Tourism

#### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

##### **The Draft Tourism policy**

The draft tourism policy of the Government of India lays immense emphasis on sustainable tourism. It talks about India's enormous opportunities which can be leveraged globally as an emerging superpower. India's strong brand value and the Government's commitment to promoting the tourism industry sustainably assume importance as we step into the 21st century with major disequilibrium and instability emerging around the globe.

The draft policy highlights the Incredible India brand and the applicability of the draft policy while sketching the mission, vision, as well as short and long-term goals. The draft policy also classifies the destinations across various important brackets while drawing out a directory of tourist circuits and destinations. The policy also details the destination management organizations and the tourism development plans. The draft reports the nine key strategic pillars and the two cross-cutting themes. These strategic pillars include sustainable and responsible tourism in a major way. Other important strategic pillars include welcoming the pillar, seamless connectivity and transport infrastructure, development and management, business development and investment promotion, development and diversification of tourism products, skill and market development, quality assurance and standardization as well as governance, institutional linkages and stakeholder management.

The overarching theme of the draft Policy is to promote sustainable and responsible tourism, which will cut across all the strategic pillars to achieve the vision of the policy to make India a topmost destination for sustainable and responsible tourism. The draft policy also commits India to UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Goal 8 is related to sustainable tourism, which reads as "by 2030 devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products". Goal 12 further provides for "develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and product.

Additionally, the impacts of global warming and climate change started exacerbating through frequent natural calamities, not only causing damage to life and property but also proving detrimental to the tourism industry globally. This included many developing and underdeveloped regions where tourism constituted a major share of the GDP. However, this also put the spotlight on tourism value chains' increasing share in GHG emissions and other indices negatively impacting the environment, including accommodation units, tour operators, MSME providers of visitor services, transporters and nature tour outfitters.

Various levels of discussions between stakeholders and the observation evolving after interactions of government agencies with the direct and indirect stakeholders indicated a strong need to bring the sustainability 'fit' to make it broader-based and acceptable to domestic as well as foreign tourists.

Talking about collaborations between government, industry and academia, Government agencies acknowledge that they existed only superficially and a lot of work needs to be done to



make the Triple Helix platform work for the purpose of promoting the Tourism industry. As we are aware, the government, due to its prime mover status, is also designated to provide the support required to promote it. Special Policy is available to develop the Tourism Ecosystem across India but more fine-tuning might well be required along with support, given the current downturn of events especially the COVID 19 pandemic which has had a very adverse impact on tourism especially after the end of 2019. Given the situation, it is evident that the Government needs to play a more proactive role to support the industry which is reeling under crisis due to the continuing COVID 19 pandemic.

Some of the important points which come out based on a literature review and discussion with close stakeholders of tourism regarding the role of government and their current work focus include:

- a) Focused Government Policies to support industry is required more than ever
- b) The government's role in creating an overall ecosystem for ST is more important than ever which it should not shy from taking over
- c) Government should look at providing support to start-ups with grants and subsidies from the industry
- d) An integrated approach from all the stakeholders is needed to develop the ecosystem but the government has a prime role to facilitate the same
- e) Take measures to preserve the indigenous practices while promoting ST
- f) Formulating guidelines for Tourists to maintain the sanctity for sustainable tourism

#### Government Initiatives

The need for Sustainable-Tourism increased due to the increased impact of human activity on the climate and environment. It helps to increase the positive impact of tourism activities. The Indian Govt asked service providers to

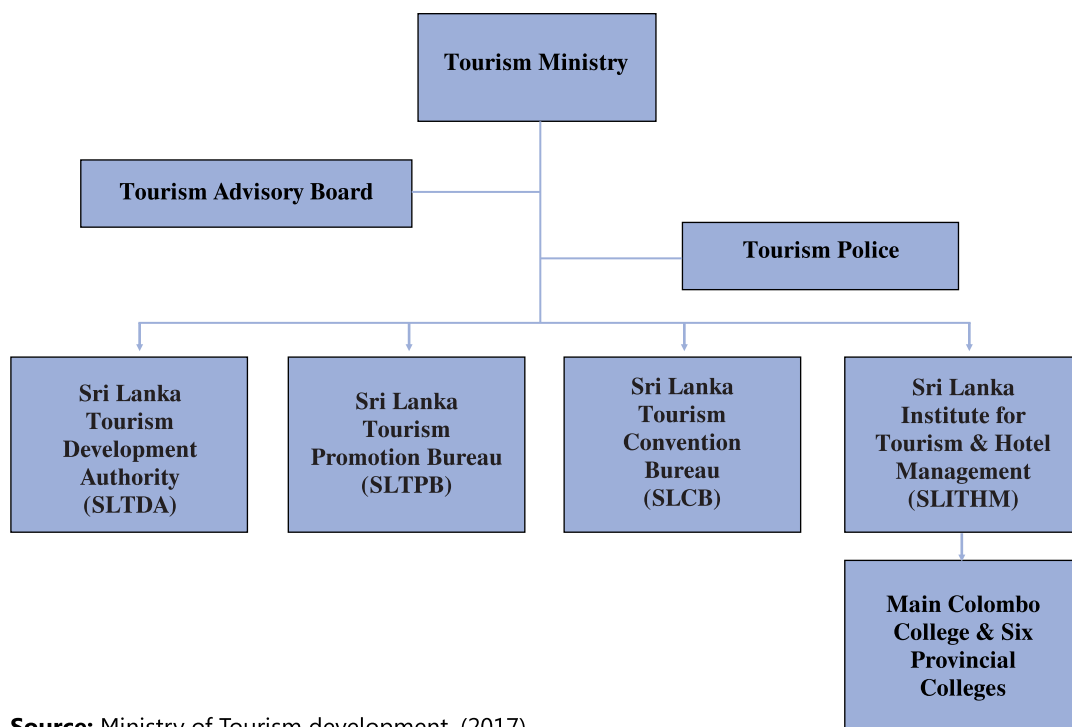


practice sustainable tourism as part of their business plans. Recently, the Government has taken several steps to provide a further boost to the sector such as:

- Efforts were taken by the Government of Gujarat to create a tribal support circuit around the Sardar Sarovar project and the Sardardham. The Statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, also known as the 'Statue of Unity', was inaugurated in October 2018. It is the highest-standing statue in the world at a height of 182 meters. It is expected to provide the tourism sector with a boost and put the region on the world tourism map.
- The Indian Government has also realized the country's potential in the tourism industry and has taken several steps to make India a global tourism hub. Major initiatives of the Government were also to improve the Indian brand as a safe, clean and healthy tourist destination for national as well as international tourists.
- India's Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India mission) was an initiative in that direction to ensure that India is a clean and green destination.
- Initiatives were taken by the Indian railways to improve the cleanliness and hygiene in the railways through clean trains, clean platforms and clean tracks by the provision of bio-toilets across all trains and this goes a long way in improving the visibility of India as a clean destination.
- Indian Railways has also been running specialized Tourist trains for International and priority domestic customers to promote several important tourist routes through world-class Tourist service Trains.
- The Ministry of Tourism has undertaken the Swachhta Action Plan (SAP) for the year 2018-19 implemented by the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) at 180 sites /places (540 activities) in selected 29 States/UTs all over the Country. The SAP activities involve spreading awareness about cleanliness amongst tourists, school/college students and tourism stakeholders. These activities under SAP are also undertaken by Central and State IHMs across the country.

- In addition, the setting up of several small airports for tertiary cities across India under the UDAAN scheme and up-gradation of major airports into international specifications to handle more than 10 million footfalls every year.
- Some of the major initiatives of the Government of India to boost the tourism and hospitality sector include developing the best tourism framework or infrastructures. The Swadesh-Darshan plan was initiated by the Government for promoting tourism through improving infrastructure in the tourism hotspots. All identified projects aim to develop world-class facilities to benefit the cultural heritage and to attract tourist attention, for which 27 or more projects for Rs 2261cr were allocated for 21 States.
- The Integrated Development of identified pilgrimage destinations is being undertaken under the 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) Scheme launched by the Govt. for the development of pilgrimage /spiritual sites was another important initiative. A total number of 24 projects have been sanctioned to date, for an amount of Rs.727.16 crore under this Scheme Under Budget 2020-21, the Government of India has allotted Rs. 207.55 crore (US\$ 29.70 million) for the development of tourist circuits under the PRASHAD scheme.
- Additionally, the Indian Government is working to develop and implement tourism-related Mobile Applications to assist better engagement between various stakeholders in an effective way. The Ministry has developed a mobile application known as Swachh-Paryatan in February 2016, which allows people to report any hygiene issues at various tourist places.
- It has also set up a specialized Tourist Helpline to assist tourists. The Ministry of Tourism set-up a 24x7 Toll-Free Tourist Helpline, covering several languages, in February 2016 that can be accessed on Number 1800-11-1363. The helpline offers services in 10 international languages on top of its Hindi and English facilities.
- To promote the North-Eastern states, an International Tourism Mart is also organized every year intending to highlight the tourism potential in these regions. Under the Budget 2020-21, the Government of India has allotted Rs. 1,200 crore (US\$ 171.70 million) for the development of tourist circuits under Swadesh Darshan for eight Northeast states.
- Promotional operations in tourist-generating markets outside of India through India Tourism Offices abroad, including active participation in travel fairs and exhibitions, Road Shows and "Know India" seminars and workshops.
- 725 homestay owners from Darjeeling, Kalimpong and the foothills of Dooars were trained in marketing, sales and behavioral skills through government efforts.

**Figure 10 Tourism Governance Framework**



Source: Ministry of Tourism development, (2017)



# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN SRI LANKA

Tourism has grown into one of the world's largest industries and income generators in recent years, particularly in the context of Asian countries. 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, and income distribution throughout multiplier effect in urban and rural communities.

Tourism brings numerous benefits to the destinations such as economic, socio-cultural and environmental. Along with these benefits we see negative impacts of tourism as well, such as: economic leakages, high percentage of imports, seasonal employment, lower wages, inflated costs, etc. There are also physical impacts such as: overcrowding, traffic jams, cultural degradation, changes to local lifestyle due to foreign influence, neglect to traditional industries in favour of catering to tourists, 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 could lead to the deterioration of 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-paced 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.

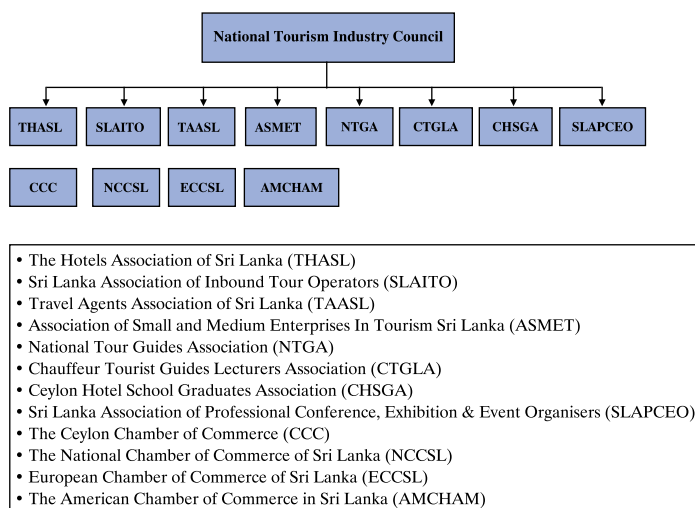
UNWTO (2014) has highlighted that sustainable tourism development necessitates responsible participation from all related stakeholders and good political leadership to ensure broad engagement and consensus-building. In this regard, the Government, other local authorities, especially the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), and related government bodies need to play a vital role in ensuring industry sustainability. However, the SLTDA's involvement in ensuring 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 as well as 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 of 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 partake in sustainable consumption. Significantly, the SLTDA takes measures to make the tourists aware of their economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects before and upon arrival. Simply stating what the tourists can do and what they cannot do, what is accepted and what is not accepted etc. This practice can help minimize the potential negative aspects which hinder the development of sustainable tourism practices. 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 communities improve

**Figure 11: Proposed Private Sector Institutional Setup for Tourism for Consideration**



**Source:** Ministry of Tourism Development, (2017)

their economy, socio-cultural conditions and preserve the natural environment. They tend to buy 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 infrastructure like roads, access to water, electricity, etc. The hotel and travel industry has taken various actions and strategies to reduce their 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 into tourism development and addressing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are essential to ensure sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka.

#### **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 by whom. 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 takes place 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 has been a famous tourism destination since ancient times and many tourists visit this country. The first formal tourism governing body, Ceylon Tourist Bureau, was established in 1937 to cater to 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)

The above figure 10 depicts the national tourism governance framework and the Ministry of Tourism plays the focal role in







managing the tourism industry. Four boards operate under the Ministry. The SLTDA acts 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 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 the 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 taking place 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 consider their voice and create a conducive environment to facilitate their businesses running smoothly. The private and public sectors should work together to gain mutual benefits in win-win situations. Therefore, the Ministry of Tourism Development has proposed a new mechanism that links the public sector and the private sector in order to attempt to achieve the tourism vision of the country more effectively. Figure 11 displays the proposed structure.





Tourism Strategic Plan, has highlighted the system's failures which affect the tourism development of the country, such as: coordination failure, institutional failure, resource failure and market failure. Out of these four, the coordination and institutional failures are directly affecting effectiveness of the country's tourism governance.

**Coordination Failure:** Coordination failure occurs 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 things. 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 down administrative and decision-making processes.

**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 as well as the 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. While there is heavy emphasis on regulations to manage quality, safety and standards, there has been limited enforcement of the same. Additionally, 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).

#### **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." Additionally, 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



## LANKA

SLTDA attempted to establish several significant initiatives to generate new tourist hubs and experiences as well as to 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 receive indirect advantages. Apart from this, villagers received the necessary information and skills through training on hazards associated with ecotourism (Wickramasinghe, 2009).

Ilukkumbura CBT project, similar to the Ranpathvila CBT project, may be considered as an example of a sustainable tourism effort in Sri Lanka. Ilukkumbura is an isolated rural community with no assistance from government development efforts in the Knuckles area. A lack of infrastructure distinguishes the community and a majority of the homes are impoverished. The Forest Department began an ecotourism initiative in Ilukkumbura village through an IUCN (World Conservation Union) financed initiative. Similar, to the Ranpathvila project, people are able to benefit from this 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 the vast and complicated nature of all Sri Lanka Tourism service providers, sustainability certification was applied to a sample in the accommodation sector.

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, development and subsidies to create sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka.

### 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 most significant economic activities in any country and developing countries consider tourism a development strategy. Tourism contributes to the economy through generating new employment, generating income and foreign currencies, regional development, preserving the natural environment, developing the cottage industries, etc. Indeed, well-designed and well managed tourism practices 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. When we look at instances of mass international tourist movement, for example 1.4 billion tourists in 2019, tourism is shown to be 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 the areas of 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 be implemented within the country. These include; 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 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.

It is possible to address all of the 17 SDGs by promoting sustainable tourism in any destination. However, this 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 generator in the country. Sustainable tourism development, and its impact at the community level, can be linked with national poverty reduction goals. According to the

Asian Development Bank (2020), 4.1% of the population lives below the national poverty line. Poverty and unemployment

rates are particularly high in rural areas. Sustainable tourism generates employment, promotes entrepreneurship and small businesses, and empowers less favoured groups; particularly youth and women.



**Goal 2: Zero Hunger**

Poverty is linked with hunger. Sustainable tourism development in rural areas will help enable the poorer communities generate income via sustainable tourism practices.

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 impoverished communities in improving their economic and sociol-cultural backgrounds.

The income generated through sustainable tourism can be used for the purposes of obtaining good quality and nutritional foods. Additionally, tourism development in the countryside will enhance the knowledge, awareness and practices around 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 as well as the overall quality of education within these communities. The income generated through tourism can be used by the individuals benefited towards enhancing the educational capacities of their respective communities. Sustainable tourism will help increase awareness around the importance of proper education in rural communities and will further help improve their access to and knowledge of English and other foreign languages.



#### Goal 5: Gender Equality

Men currently dominate the Sri Lankan tourism industry with female participation being meagre in comparison. The women in these rural areas tend to be held back due to various economic and socio-cultural issues.

Sustainable tourism development can empower women in multiple ways; by providing employment and business opportunities as well as alternative livelihood which can further improve the level of education and capacity enhancements. It is significant to note that the rise in business and employment opportunities created through sustainable tourism development can be a tool for women to unlock their potential by becoming fully engaged in 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 as well as 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 essential to adopt affordable and clean energy sources for tourism related operations. At present, the industry is moving towards alternative sources of energy generation and consumption 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 towards new and innovative energy solutions in urban, regional and remote areas.



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

Tourism is considered to be the primary economic force of any economy and is a significant economic development strategy. The tourism sector contributed 4.3% to the Sri Lankan GDP in 2018. Tourism generates 1 in every 10 jobs worldwide; 404,607 people were employed in the tourism sector in Sri Lanka in 2018. However, female employment has not been calculated in the official statistics. The government has planned for 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 for both men and women. Tourism will directly contribute to improving 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 the year 2030. The plan also includes developing and implementing policies to promote sustainable tourism that create jobs and promote local culture and products (Ministry of Tourism Development, 2017).



#### Goal 9: Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure

Tourism development contributes towards the improvement of facilities of any given tourist destination. This improvement in infrastructure and facilities proves essential for the development of other industries and helps attract FDI. It also fuels the growth of supporting industries such as, handicrafts, agriculture, fisheries, etc. as they improve alongside sustainable tourism development. It has been highlighted by the UNWTO (2018) that tourism development facilitates sustainable industrialization which is necessary for economic growth, development and innovation.



#### Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Sustainable tourism is a powerful tool for reducing inequality amongst the local community. Tourism development in rural areas will aid in bridging gap in resources between rural and urban area by injecting money from urban populace into rural economies. As most tourists visiting Sri Lanka hail from developed countries, this triggers an inflow of foreign capital into developing economies. This can also lead to bridging the inequalities between men and women by providing empowering and capacity building opportunities to rural women through participation in tourism practices.

<sup>20</sup> UNWTO: United Nation World Tourism Organization

<sup>21</sup> Westcott, M. (ed.2019). 'Introduction to Tourism and Hospitality in B.C.', C.1, History and Overview, Definition of Tourism, Para.2, line nos. 1&2, Print ISBN: 978-1-989623-68-8, E-book ISBN: 978-1-989623-69-5, Victoria, B.C., BC campus (site: <https://opentextbc.ca/introtourism/>)

<sup>22</sup> Badal, B., & Kharel, S. (ed. 2019) 'Opportunities and Challenges of Tourism Industry in the Context of Visit Nepal 2020', Para 3, line nos. 3-5, Tribhuvan University Journal, Center for Research, Vol. 33, Issue no. 1: 67-80, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal (site: <https://doi.org/10.3126/tuj.v33i1.28683>)



**Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Sustainable tourism can help ensure development and growth of sustainable/green cities, granted that the target destinations are capable of effectively managing these goals. The capital generated through tourism practices can help manage sustainable livelihood, preserve cultural and natural heritage as well as other valuable assets which tourism is dependent upon. The UNWTO (2018) has highlighted that more significant investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport facilities, reduced air pollution, conservation of heritage sites and open spaces, etc.) would help create smart and green cities in which would in turn benefit both residents of and tourists visiting these cities.



**Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**

The tourism industry is considered the largest consumer of natural resources as well as the largest generators of waste. Therefore, it is necessary to promote responsible consumption and production among both hosts and guests. Promoting sustainable consumption and production becomes easier when the destination is able to effectively

promote alternatives to mass tourism. It is necessary for the tourism industry to adopt cleaner production practices, especially for the hotel and travel industry, in order to reduce their carbon footprints. The UNWTO (2018) has highlighted that 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 best interests to play a leading role in the global response to climate change. By lowering energy consumption to reduce their 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 an increase in profit. Entrepreneurs can ensure sustainability through adopting the triple bottom line; people, profit and planet.



<sup>23</sup> Badal, B. (ed.2019). 'Tourism: Visit Nepal 2020', Discussion, P.18, para. 4, line nos. 8-11, Research Nepal Journal of Development Studies, vol.2, Issue no. 2 (site: <https://doi.org/10.3126/rnjds.v2i2.29274>)  
<sup>24</sup> ibid: Badal, B. (ed.2019). 'Tourism: Visit Nepal 2020', P.1, Introduction, Para. 4, line nos. 6&7, Research Nepal Journal of Development Studies, vol.2, Issue no. 2 (site: <https://doi.org/10.3126/rnjds.v2i2.29274>)  
<sup>25</sup> Report (2019) 'Development of Nijgadh International Airport at Bara', P.1, Background of the Project, para. 2, line nos. 3 &4, Pradhan & Associates, Maitri Marg, Bakhundole – 3, Lalitpur, Nepal (site: [http://www.pradhanlaw.com/files/P&A%20Watching%20Brief%20-%20Development%20of%20Nijgadh%20Airport%20at%20Bara%20-%202025\\_09\\_19.pdf](http://www.pradhanlaw.com/files/P&A%20Watching%20Brief%20-%20Development%20of%20Nijgadh%20Airport%20at%20Bara%20-%202025_09_19.pdf))  
<sup>26</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Impact on biodiversity found in tourist areas due to maximum visit of tourist, Global College International (GCI), Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal





#### Goal 14: Life Below Water

Owing to Sri Lanka's nature as an island destination it heavily depends upon coastal and marine ecosystems to promote marine/coastal tourism. However, it is important to note that tourism development and associated activities contribute heavily towards the pollution and deterioration of natural marine/coastal ecosystems. It is necessary for tourism development to be a part of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in order to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a way to promote a blue economy. Tourism will incorporate with the local community along with sustainable tourism in order to protect natural ecosystems and marine resources. Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Plan, 2017-2020, has identified the need 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 that consists of a diversity of natural attractions with the exception of 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.



<sup>29</sup> Sanjay Lama, S. P. (2019). An e-tourism Adoption Model & Its Implications for Tourism Industry in Nepal.



**Goal 16: Peace and Justice**

The tourism industry of the country has been negatively affected by the 30 years old terrorism problem. Therefore, the government was unable to exceed the tourism arrivals by 40000. Peace is essential to a sustainable tourism industry in which every stakeholder is benefitting and enjoying. Tourism will enhance multicultural understanding and peace-building. 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 from taking root and consolidating peace in post-conflict societies.



**Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals**

Tourism is a multidisciplinary sector and, therefore, it can help 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 ensuring 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 be able to benefit from and enhance their satisfaction.





# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN NEPAL

Nepal, with its diverse culture, geography, landscape, languages and population is a place that attracts tourists from a global spectrum every year. It offers activities in different sectors and is able to offer its visitors all kinds of different experiences that they are looking for. The number of tourists in a widespread range of possibilities calls for a structured approach to unify all operators in the field and to maximise the outcomes of the industry as well as to focus on combining the prospect of sustainability into the goals of expanding the well running sector of tourism for the country. The following chapter will focus on the existing governance framework on tourism that determines all actions and regulates the sector. Furthermore, aspects of governmental initiatives to promote sustainability in the tourism sector will be addressed and combined with existing initiatives and their results.

The term 'sustainable' refers to being able to sustain by meeting our needs. Similarly 'tourism' refers to processes of spending time away from home for recreation and refreshment. Furthermore, UNWTO defines tourism as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or professional purposes. Analyzing these definitions of 'sustainable' and 'tourism', we can clearly portray sustainable tourism as a process of travelling activities that is executed without hampering the culture, values, dignity as well as economic aspects of the nation. However, the government of Nepal has failed to make a quick response to changes that are occurring in the field of tourism in the global scenario, despite the high respect for Nepalese cultural values from both the Nepal government and the tourism industry.

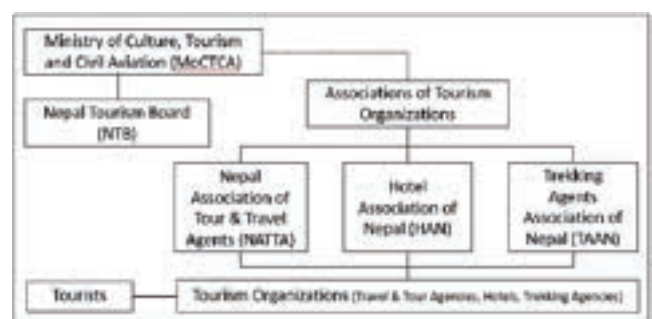
Although Nepal has huge potential to implement all these indicators, lack of proper investors along with the lack of trained manpower, problems of pollution, lack of quality hotels, inadequate advertisement at national as well as international level and the lack of proper security have been obstacles for Nepalese tourism even in modern days. Additionally, political instabilities and a lack in the functioning of labour and trade unions are further challenges faced by the industry.

Despite all these problems, the government of Nepal always focuses on the inadequate population of trained manpower

and the low budget of that specific ministry department for advertising Nepalese tourism on an international level. Similarly, private organizations working in the field of tourism mention a gap in the delivery of current working mechanisms quickly with proper policies through which all of them can work jointly to strengthen sustainability in Nepalese tourism sector.

The tourism industry has played a significant role in the upliftment of Nepal's economy. It acts as a major medium to earn foreign currency for Nepal. Additionally, it has helped to strengthen Nepal's 'soft power' and diplomacy by glorifying the image of Nepal through exchanging its art and culture with foreign tourists. Therefore, Nepal is able to increase employment opportunities for people, especially those living in the mountain and Himalayan regions of Nepal. Currently, after the political stability in Nepal, sustainable tourism has increased government revenue through different tourism based entrepreneurial works that are based on cottage as well as small scale industries created particularly focusing on foreign tourists visiting Nepal. Since the implementation of SDG in 2015, Nepal has taken several initiatives to uplift the sustainability of its tourism sector but is still lacking in areas such as employment generation. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption to international travel, twenty-eight international airlines from fourteen countries were operating flights to and from Nepal. However, due to significantly inadequate international airports, it has become hard to manage air traffic for Nepal. Nepal currently has only one international airport, Tribhuvan International Airport, with a second currently under construction in Pokhara, a major tourist destination in the mid-western region of Nepal.

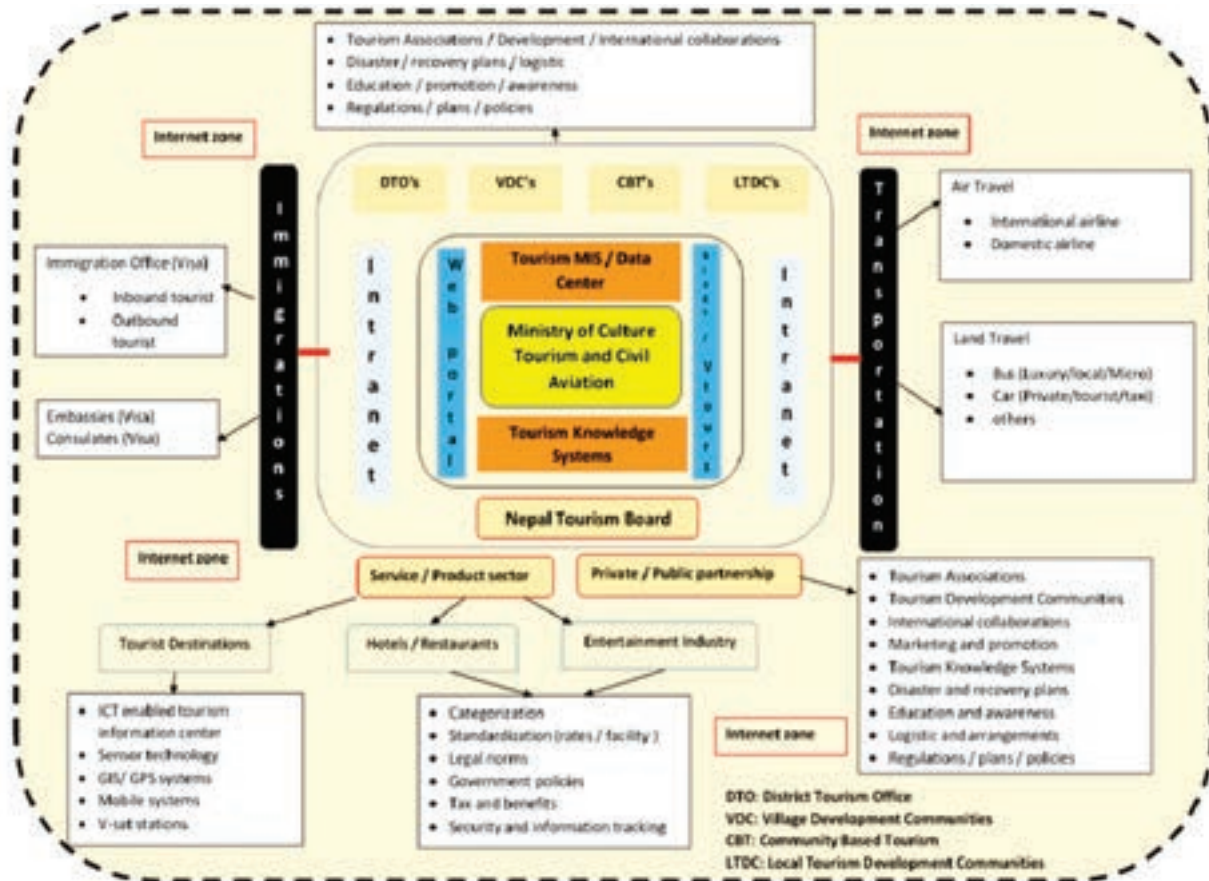
**Fig 3: Nepal tourism governance structure<sup>29</sup>**



<sup>31</sup> National Planning Commission (2020). The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 - 2023/24). Kathmandu: Government of Nepal

<sup>32</sup> National Planning Commission (2020). The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 - 2023/24). Kathmandu: Government of Nepal

Fig 1: Planned ICT Governance Framework for Nepal Tourism Industry by Government of Nepal<sup>27</sup>



In order to manage this air traffic and create a flexible environment for international tourists travelling to Nepal, in 2015 the Government of Nepal proposed its alternative international airport. This airport would be built on an eighty square kilometer plot of land in Nijgad, Bara district. This project was also focused to fulfil the tourist based goals of sustainable development by 2030 by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation. However, due to contradictory goals of environment and wildlife protection which is also a major part of ecotourism, this project of managing the flow of international tourists by operating two international airports is still not successful enough.

**TOURISM GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**

Experts advise the need for an effective amendment in the tourism governance framework. Government should make a framework looking after the product line. In the case of Nepal, a crucial problem is a lack of a product line that is based on the 'Go local' strategy from the side of the government where tourists can directly experience local food, culture, people and lifestyle through increased ethnological interactions. More importantly, in the digital era, many of the very core necessities of information technology are largely missing in many parts of the country. Inadequate and outdated websites, scattered and/or fragmented information, lack of information system regarding ecology and biodiversity, and a lack of integration of effective communication mechanisms of private, public and community are all noted problems. In order to address such issues, the proposal of ICT (Information

and Communication Technology) framework for the Nepal Tourism Industry has been made in order to address the current demands and future needs.

This model focuses on supporting sustainable tourism through the use of information and communication technology in Nepal. Moreover, it is part of a government project called 'Digital Nepal'. The Government of Nepal is flexible towards any kind of project that is based on public/private partnerships, like tourism development communities to create ICT enabled tourism industry in Nepal. It has also created the plan to connect each tourist destination with a GPS/ GIS system to strengthen communication between local people and service sectors and also provide quality services of homestay to foreign tourists.

The proposal is connected with three layers of participation; the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Tourism MIS (Data Center) and Tourism Knowledge Systems. The implementation of this framework ensures that visitors are able to gather authentic and timely information. Additionally, the visitors will be able to provide constructive feedback to the tourism industry. Since the model addresses the central elements such as cost, quality, security, legal aspects, the model provides holistic understanding of the Nepalese tourism industry. The tourism governance framework could be explained with the help of the organizational structure of the ministry of tourism. There are four main divisions under



the ministry of tourism; the Administration and Planning Division, Tourism Division, Civil Aviation Division and the Culture Division.

The cultural division encompasses the activities of archaeology, copyright, language commission, academy, museum, cultural cooperation and trust and development committees. Similarly, the tourism division includes Nepal Tourism Board, Nepal Mountain Academy, Tourist Police, Tourism committees and homestay Nepal. Further, Civil aviation includes Nepal Airline Corporation, Tribhuvan International Airport, international civil aviation organizations and aircraft accident investigation reports. Finally, the Administration and planning division encompasses personnel and financial administration, record keeping, store and procurement, office management, liaising with world tourism organization and Nepal tourism board, policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, collection and analysis of data, research and development and tourism infrastructure development.

The specialized governance structure has been created to enhance the Nepalese tourism industry. Governmental Agencies in Nepal obtain a regulatory function. Furthermore, private business entrepreneurs handle operational functions, development functions are a combined task of local and government agencies. The Nepal Tourism Board has a promotional function within the framework.

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) is the main governmental body in the field dedicated to organizing the sector and providing policies that lead to improvement and development of tourism in Nepal. It also includes an autonomous body, the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) obtaining the task of promotion and advertising for tourism on a local and global level. This is mostly done through different promotional campaigns such as the Tourism Vision Year 2020, which held the intention to attract a high number of tourists from all over the world to maximize profits and promote Nepal as an attractive destination.

Different associations represent all the organizations providing services in the sector. Among those, there are the Nepal Association of Tour & Travel Agents (NATTA), Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), and Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN). These associations are independent, non-profit and representatives of specific tourism industries, for example, HAN represents all hoteliers. Under them, more than 4,500 tourism organizations operate in the fields of travel, trekking, accommodation and other more specific activities such as elements of adventure tourism. Together with the tourists themselves, government, associations and service providers are the main stakeholders in the field (Sanjay Lama, 2019). The diagram of this governance framework of the government of Nepal is provided below.

The Tourism Division of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MOCTCA) works in liaison with the Nepal

Tourism Boards and the World Tourism Organization (WTO), promotes Tourism policy and obtains miscellaneous works. It is divided in two sections, the research and statistics section and the tourism promotion section.

MOCTCA came into existence in 1978 as the Ministry of Tourism, merging with the ministries of Culture and Civil Aviation in 2012 to reach today's name and composition. MOCTCA is dedicated to focus on the aspects of tourism that affect the Nepalese citizens directly or indirectly. Tourism generates income opportunities and supports promoting and conserving the country's art and culture. Its contribution to the national economy is high and it is therefore a significant sector for population and policy makers. The Government of Nepal promotes tourism as well as the involvement and participation of the private sector. Furthermore, it highly values conservation of natural, cultural and human resources. The Department of Tourism operates more specifically in the sector of tourism. It operates in three sections: Internal Administration and Adventurous Tourism Section, Planning & Monitoring Section.

These key stakeholders are responsible for the sustainable delivery of tourism services. Tourism associations, Nepal Tourism Board, Travel and Tour organizations under the leadership of Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation need to work collaboratively in order to meet the expectations of sustainable development goals, tourists, local communities and the private tourism organization businesses.

### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES**

Nepal as a landlocked developing country is, among others, dependent on income through the tourism sector. The 21st century offers chances as well as challenges to the industry. Increasing risk of natural disasters, human disasters, high number of road and air accidents, climate change and epidemics challenge the industry globally, especially in regions where it makes up a major share of the GDP. On the other hand, globalisation and digitization offer many opportunities to attract tourists, improve networks and develop infrastructure that is required in the field. That being said, the impacts of all activities within the sector on environment and resources must always be a major concern for policy making and strategy development.

### **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Currently, with the start of 2021, the cabinet of Nepalese ministers have passed the resolution that tourists with a negative PCR test within 72 hours of travel can obtain a visa on arrival at Kathmandu during this period of emergency. The Government formally announced the program of 'Visit Nepal 2020' on 1st of January 2020, campaigning with the goal to attract 2 million tourists to Nepal. This has been established under the parameters of the 15th Five Year Plan, where the government of Nepal had set its aspiring target of attracting 3.5 million tourists by 2025, generating US\$2 billion in national revenue from the industry. However, due to various internal political issues in Nepal, along with the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this campaign was ultimately unsuccessful.

### The Fifteenth Five Year Plan

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation is devoted to conservation of resources and nature as well as sustainability. Beginning in 1956, the government implemented an initiative called the Five Year Development Plan, of which Nepal is currently in its fifteenth, as coordinated by the National Planning Committee. In the following section its ideas on Tourism and development will be enlightened.

The plan envisions building Nepal into an attractive, safe and captivating tourism destination with the goal of putting the country on the forefront of the global tourism market.

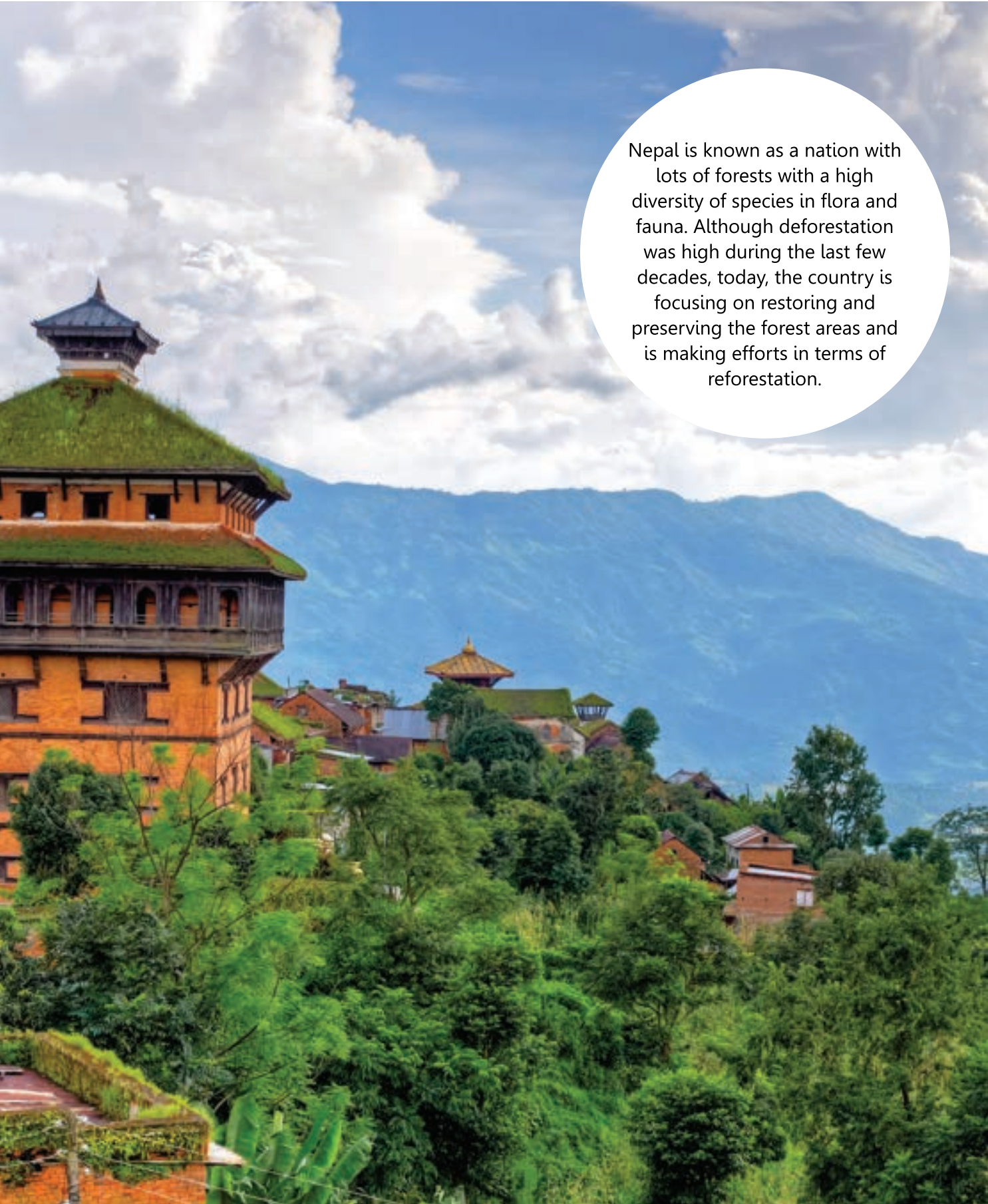
#### To reach this goal, three major objectives were developed:

1. To develop Nepal as an attractive tourism destination by making it safe, quality focused and tourism friendly.
2. To increase the contribution of tourism in the economy by diversifying tourism destinations and products.
3. To ensure that the benefits of tourism are distributed equitably at the ordinary people's level.

While 701,000 international tourists travelled to Nepal in the base year of 2015/16, by 2018/19 this number had increased by 71 percent at 1,197,000. There were several factors that played a major role behind this achievement, including greater political stability, reconstruction and restoration of tourism sites damaged by the 2015 earthquake, expansion of international air services, and an increase in the number of airports operable year round and at night. Learning from the implementation of previous plans, it is imperative that a







Nepal is known as a nation with lots of forests with a high diversity of species in flora and fauna. Although deforestation was high during the last few decades, today, the country is focusing on restoring and preserving the forest areas and is making efforts in terms of reforestation.





system of prioritizing the programs and projects based on the return of resources and means has to be developed in order to improve project management.

Emphasis has to be given on the implementation of infrastructure construction, governance reform, and fiscal federalism focusing on development, prosperity and gradual implementation of the constitution by prioritizing the plans and programs based on available resources and means. Development of backward areas and communities, provincial balance, the building of self-reliance, rapid economic growth and equitable distribution has to be taken forward. It is also necessary to pay attention to urban development, science and information technology, research and development, and human resource development, as well as in the development of agriculture, energy, minerals, and the tourism sector (Commission, 2020).

Due to the unique nature, diversity and cultural heritage of Nepal, the sector has comparative advantages which could be of great potential for Nepal's economy. Mountain areas and religious sites, as well as cultural and archaeological heritage all have a high potential to attract tourists. The Constitution of Nepal incorporates policies for developing tourism as a key driver of the national economy by developing these sites as tourist destinations. Those destinations therefore should be protected and diversified.

In 2018/19 the tourism sector accounted for 2.7 percent of Nepal's GDP, offering employment to 200,000 people. The goal is to prolong the average time of stay in Nepal from 12.7 days to 15 days and increase the daily expenditure of tourists to enhance their impact on the national economy. Given the large populations of its neighbouring countries, Nepal is likely to see an increase in the number of tourists within the next few years.

Challenges to the plan are the poor development and diversification of tourism products and activities, the inability to promote tourism internationally effectively, underdeveloped infrastructure and the failure to adequately involve the private sector in heritage preservation. Furthermore, entrepreneurship is not adequately linked to tourism development. Tourism activities are yet to become more technology-friendly and benefit distribution must become more equitable.

Major challenges include improving air safety, security and reliability and the expenditure of air services. The quality of tourism services and facilities must be enhanced and new destinations shall be identified and diversified. Furthermore, the sector needs investments in the form of a public-private-partnership model and private investments for infrastructure.

Nepal's vision of becoming a tourism-based economy must be clearly defined. The effects of climate change must also be mitigated and skilled human resources must be trained and



managed. To increase the attractiveness of the country, tourism services must become smart, tourist-friendly, secure and reliable and enhance the use of modern technologies and tools. Encouraging environment for tourism created by all three levels of government under the federal structure: progress in the reconstruction of cultural heritage damaged by the earthquake; development of new tourist destinations; progress in the construction of tourism infrastructure including international airports; proximity to rapidly developing neighbours. Natural beauty, great feeling of peace and spirituality, birthplace of ancient knowledge and philosophy, biodiversity, and the possibility of Nepal being a tourism hub because of unique tourism destinations and products, create opportunities for developing tourism as a river of prosperity.

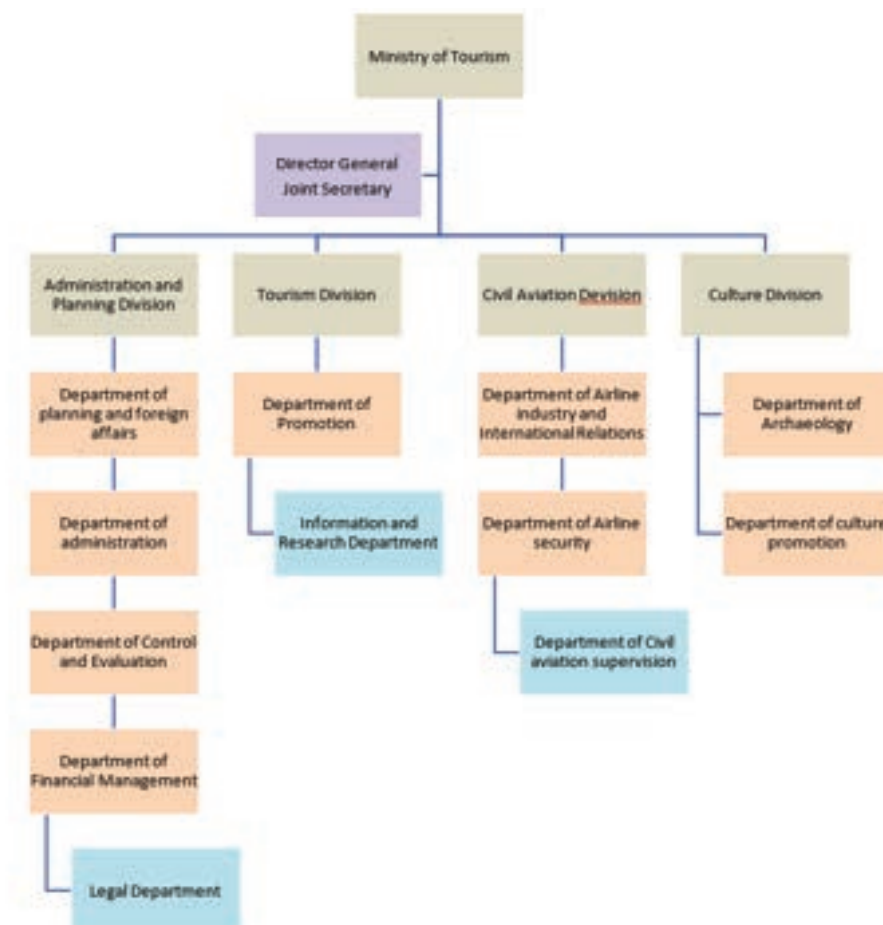
#### Expected Results

"In the final year of this plan, the arrival of foreign tourists will have reached 3.5 million. The average length of stay of foreign tourists will have increased to 15 days, with average daily spending of USD 100 per person. An additional 382,000 direct jobs will have been created during the Plan period and the contribution of tourism in GDP will have amounted to 10 per cent".

#### Strategies and Working Policies

Nepal is known as a nation with lots of forests with a high diversity of species in flora and fauna. Although deforestation was high during the last few decades, today, the country is focusing on restoring and preserving the forest areas and is making efforts in terms of reforestation. Although the government of then monarchical system had done lots of work in the field of tourism by bringing the initiative of 'Mahendra Nature Protection Funds', which is currently known as 'Nepal Nature Protection Funds', to protect natural forest, wildlife as well as indigenous wild animals like 'one horned rhino' to help strengthen wildlife tourism and tourism related to jungle safari in Nepal, current government's role is comparatively significantly inadequate to preserve those national parks which are major entity of sustainable tourism. However, infrastructure development often leads to the cutting of forest areas in order to make space for new infrastructure. This leads to negative impacts on the environment and ecology and increases the risk of natural disasters such as landslides as a result of neglecting the sustainable development goals. This has caused an increase in the climatic temperature of mountains, directly weakening mountains as well as adventure tourism of Nepal.

Fig 2: Organizational Structure of Ministry of Tourism<sup>28</sup>



Source: Ministry of Tourism Development, (2017)

**Table 3: Strategies and Working Policies**

Strategies	Working Policies
<p>1. To undertake extensive publicity and promotion of Nepali tourism in neighbouring countries and major tourism markets.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information, communication, education (ICE) materials for recognition of Nepal will be developed, produced, and disseminated in international tourism markets for shaping the perception and image of Nepal among international tourists.</li> <li>2. Tourists coming to Nepal repeatedly will be honored as 'brand ambassadors' of Nepal.</li> <li>3. Promotional programs such as "Visit Nepal 2020" will be carried out along with tourism publicity within the country and abroad by using technologies, including ICTs</li> <li>4. Domestic and international tourism will be promoted by identifying, developing, and promoting new tourist destinations with provincial balance.</li> <li>5. A master plan will be prepared and implemented for the overall development of tourism in collaboration with all three levels of government, the private sector, and communities.</li> <li>6. Tourism activities will be carried out with tourism being promoted as a high-yielding sector. The private sector will be encouraged to be involved in the development of human-created tourism products/infrastructure, including hill stations targeted to tourists seeking entertainment, utilizing leisure time, and seeking to escape from the heat.</li> <li>7. To distribute the benefits of tourism equitably, tourism products and destinations focused on convention, conference, symposium, and exhibition will be diversified and beautified.</li> <li>8. Modern tourism products such as cinema tourism, adventure tourism, amusement tourism, research tourism, trade tourism, eco-tourism, agriculture tourism mountaineering, trekking will be developed in collaboration with the private sector.</li> <li>9. Sensitive tourism destinations and cultural heritages vulnerable to climate risks will be identified and protected.</li> <li>10. Standards and criteria will be developed to regulate and control pollution and waste caused by tourism.</li> </ol>
<p>2. To promote integrated tourism development by bringing together other sectors with tourism potential, including education, health, and sports.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timely reforms will be introduced in tourism policies and laws.</li> <li>2. An integrated tourism development model will be developed including education, health, and sports sectors.</li> <li>3. Tourism satellite account will be prepared for an accurate accounting of tourism's contribution to the national economy.</li> <li>4. Tourism products and the tourism industry itself will be made sustainable by mitigating vulnerabilities induced by climate change.</li> <li>5. Disasters will be managed by strengthening weather forecasting</li> </ol>
<p>5. To distribute benefits of the tourism sector to the local level by connecting tourism outputs to the value chain.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use of local resources and products will be encouraged in the development of tourism products.</li> <li>2. Collaboration with provincial, local and community levels will be secured for sustainable and effective management of the tourism sector. Furthermore, waste and pollution will be controlled in this sector.</li> <li>3. Community-based rural and home-stay tourism will be expanded and the benefits of this sector will be taken down to the community level. The development of tourism destinations and homestay arrangements reflecting local specialties will be carried out in collaboration with the local level.</li> <li>4. Himalayan trekking routes will be developed from Taplejung to Darchula, and infrastructure, including cable cars will be developed in mountain areas.</li> </ol>



Environmentalism is a major factor for bringing sustainability in tourism. However, due to current political unrest, the government initiative in Nepal is ineffective in terms of its laws and policies with respect to implementing environmental conservation. In Nepal, the law of one sector creates obstacles for another sector. Due to this reason, if one group comes out with sustainable development for an eco-friendly environment, within no time there arises another group with counter laws and ideas for sustainable development with the name of industrialization for economic development for which they start to destroy the biodiversity to create the areas for industrial buildings. This also threatens the act of sustainable tourism in Nepal as about 70% of sustainable tourism is based on ecology and wildlife resources that are dependent on the forest resources of Nepal.

Presently, the Government of Nepal has partnered with the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), as well as different tourism

associations such as TAAN, HAN and NATTA in order to create a flexible operative system like on arrival health check-up of western tourists in Nepalese tourism.

Cooperation between government agencies and tourism service providers is another key factor to promoting sustainable tourism in Nepal. There is a vital need for proper communication, coordination and collaboration in the flow of information between the two sectors, as well as more effective circulation of policy information to the private sector.

There are significant initiatives, lately, by the government, as demonstrated below. For effective implementation, the MoCTCA (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation) will supervise the performance of various departments and agencies, while performance monitoring of all Divisions of the ministry will be made at Secretary Level.

**Table 4: Key Government Initiatives**

Work	Activities	Expected Results
Improvement of TIA (Tribhuvan International Airport) Effective implementation of National Pride Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To operate TIA for at least 21 hours every day in order to reduce the Air Traffic Congestion.</li> <li>To include feasibility study of Domestic flights from other areas than TIA including Thulichaur of Kavrepalanchowk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There will have been reduction in prevailing problems in TIA and facilities will have been ensured for travellers and tourists.</li> </ul>
Effective implementation of National Pride Projects	<p><b>Second International Airport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To approve the Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) report.</li> <li>To finalize a modality for construction of airport</li> </ul> <p>Gautam Buddha International Airport: To complete 40% of the physical development of runway, tower and other civil construction work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EIA report will have been approved</li> <li>Construction modality will have been finalized</li> <li>40% of the progress shall be achieved in construction work</li> </ul>
	<p>Pokhara Regional International Airport: To appoint Design Review and Supervision Consultant</p>	<p>Appointment of the consultant will have been done</p>
	<p><b>Pashupati Area Development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To produce and publicize a documentary film depicting religious importance of Lord Pashupatinath along with historical, archaeological and mythological importance of Pashupati area.</li> <li>To re-conduct the long obstructed Bagmati Jatra which has great religious and cultural significance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentary film will have been produced.</li> <li>Historical Jatra will have been conducted</li> </ul>

<p>Reconstruction of Historical Heritages Damaged by Earthquake</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To complete the conservation work of Manimandap and Krishna Mandir of Lalitpur.</li> <li>• To complete the retrofitting of the outer wall and roof of Gaddibaithak in Hanumandhoka along with the main structure and to complete the reconstruction of Laxmi Narayan Temple, Kageshwar, Saraswati and Mahadev Temple.</li> <li>• To complete the reconstruction work of Anantapur in Swayambhu and Kimdole Monastery and 80% of Anandakuti Vihar.</li> <li>• To complete the stone carving work for reconstruction of Khokana Machhindranath.</li> <li>• To complete the reconstruction work of Balambu Shed (Paati) in Changunarayan and Chinnamasta Temple. To prepare the architectural structure along with drawing/design for reconstruction of Angchhe in Hanumandhoka and Degutaleju Temple in Patan.</li> <li>• To complete the preservation work of Bhaktapur based Mahamanjushree Sattal, Taleju Temple, Mahalaxmi Dhonchhe, Suryabinayak Ganesh Aama Temple, Gopinath Temple, Dwimaju Chowk of Taleju.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 82 out of 753 heritage sites damaged by the earthquake have been reconstructed.</li> </ul>
<p>Policy and Legal Reforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of a Think Tank Group of people having expertise in Culture, Tourism and Aviation sectors so as to solicit suggestions and feedback on a regular basis.</li> <li>• With a vision to establish a tourism university to ensure good human resource development and sustainable flow of such Human capital, a memo shall be sent to Nepal Government (Cabinet) to acquire approval for drafting a legal document on the same.</li> <li>• Revision of Tourism Policy 2065 in compliance with New constitution and country's changed context ( with Sunset Provision)</li> <li>• Signing of A Memorandum of Understanding between Government of Nepal and Government of Thailand for mutual cooperation in tourism promotion. Expediting the implementation of MoU between the Government of Nepal and</li> </ul>	



	<p>Government of Srilanka.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drafting of a concept paper on deputing tourism attaché at five major tourism source markets for tourism promotion as envisioned in National Strategic Tourism Plan ( 2016-2025)</li> <li>• Drafting of an amendment to a Tourism Act 2035 in accordance with time. · Submitting a memo to the Government of Nepal (cabinet) for acquiring approval to prepare casino Act.</li> </ul>	
Reforms on working procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Standard Operating Procedures(SOP) at the offices of Department of Tourism, Department of Archaeology, Civil Aviation Authority Nepal, Nepal Airlines Corporation, Nepal Tourism Board so as to increase work efficiency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service seekers will be benefited with the implementation of clear working procedures.</li> </ul>
Preservation and promotion of culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of National Culture Policy, 2067 (with the inclusion of Sunset provision) in compliance with the new constitution and country's changed context.</li> <li>• Making documentaries of; Devghat during the celebration of Makar Sakranti, Barahakshetra Mela, Bull Fighting of Nuwakot District, and Saali Nadi during the celebration of Swasthani Puja. Publication of a calendar that depicts annual festivals of various 59 ethnic /indigenous groups of Nepal.</li> <li>• Documentation of study report on intangible cultural products of five different ethnic/indigenous groups and five different marginalized groups of Nepal.</li> <li>• Distribution of awards such as National and Provincial talent award, Puspala National Award, Mahakabi Devkota Award, Bhagat Sarbajit Rastriya Manav Maryada Award</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work of preservation and promotion of culture will have received major contributions.</li> <li>• Various National and Provincial talents will be encouraged by means of recognition through awards.</li> </ul>
Preservation of heritages that are of Historical, Archaeological and Religious significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To complete the preservation work of Ranimahal of Palpa and Bhairavsthan Sattal, Indrabhakteshwor Sattal of Pachali, Chataraghat and Ramdhuni Pokhari of Sunsari District, Kichak Vadh Archaeological site of Jhapa District, Rudrayani Pati of Khokana Lalitpur, Kanaka Sundari Temple located at Jumla district.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To complete the contract agreement for 14 projects including Shiv Mandir in Sarlahi Murtiya, Kailash Ashram in Nawalparasi, Ambikeshwari temple in Dang etc</li> <li>To complete the excavation of archeological place Dohani and Southern part of Tilaurakot of Kapilvastu.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preservation work of 7 heritages that are of Historical / Archaeological/ Religious significance will have been completed.</li> </ul>
Digitalization and consolidation of Archives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out of 31,000 hand-written manuscripts on various topics collected in National Archives, 11,550 hand written text, 6,55,000 images will be catalogued, tagged and uploaded.</li> <li>Out of packets collected from Kumarichowk, 35 packets of archives containing five thousand pages will be digitized and 3100 pages will be archived.</li> <li>Digitalization of Gorkhapatra from 1958 (B.S) to 1968 (B.S)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digitization and record keeping of archives of national importance.</li> </ul>
Management and construction of museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build Madan Bhandari Museum in Morang, Gurung Museum in Ramkot, Syanja, Kavi Siromani Lekhnath Museum in Leknath Kaski and Majhi Museum in Sunsari.</li> <li>To construct a building of Siddhicharan Museum in Okhaldung</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of construction and management of museum</li> </ul>
Sustainable tourism management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NTB will research in cooperation with private sectors to find out the possibilities of alternative trails in order to compensate for the important trekking trails which were destroyed/damaged due to the construction of roads.</li> <li>To prepare the parameters in order to make the environment of touristic attractive places clean and environment friendly. Also, to make the agencies concerned responsible for this effect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The construction of tourism friendly infrastructures and management of sustainable tourism will be started.</li> </ul>
Standardization of touristic services and facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To analyze and review the current situation of hotels, resorts, restaurants, home-stays and online booking systems. To fix the new standard for conducting the hotels, restaurants and resorts businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardization Formulation process will have been initiated.</li> </ul>



<p>Integrated tourism infrastructure development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prepare a detailed project report (DPR) to develop model tourist destinations in each of seven provinces. (Province 1: Ilam, Sandakpur, Province 2: Dhanusadam, Province 3: Indrasarovar, Mankanpur, Province 4: Panchase, Province 5: Debadaha, Province 6: Rara, Province 7: Kailali, Bhadagaun) To prepare background for making master plan of famous and religious tourist destination Muktinath. · To initiate the preparation of the Master Plan for Swargadwari religious site.</li> <li>• To complete the construction of a view tower in Sailung, the border between Dolakha and Ramechhap. · To initiate the Rebuilding process of Manaslu, Khumbu, Annapurna Circuit, Dolakha Mude-Sailung foot trail. Similarly, completing 80% of the rebuilding process of Helambu region, Langtang region, Makalu Barun region and Doakha Lakhanpur foot trail.</li> <li>• To build at least 10 km each Gurella trail and Yarsa trail.</li> <li>• To complete 20 km each construction of Jagat-Tasinam Daldung-Bathing trail in Dolakha and Rasuwa's Parbatikunda- Somdang trail of the Great Himalayan Trail (GHT).</li> <li>• To complete the construction of the Tourist Information Center in Janakpur and Rara (Talcha).</li> <li>• Completing the under construction Bhanu Shikahar Kateri Ramayan Building in Tanahun.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning of the development of integrated tourism infrastructures in important touristic places will have been ensured.</li> <li>• A 40 km important trail will have been built and improved.</li> <li>• Two information Centers building will have been finalized.</li> </ul>
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### KEY INITIATIVES IN VARIOUS STATES

All the states of Nepal do have similar initiatives regarding sustainable tourism. Even if the local governments have the authority to create their own plans and laws, the core initiatives of each of these states revolve around national initiatives that are passed through the national parliament. However, factors like pressure from competitors to adopt e-tourism because of other players adopting similar kinds of technologies, as well as other market forces like 'market readiness and size' for e-tourism adaptation have strengthened the scope of e-tourism and use of other technologies in the field of tourism in each state of Nepal. This also depends on the capacity and budget of that state. However, due to a lack of research from the governments of different states of Nepal about what areas of tourism are strong, every policy created from the top-down module from the government side has not been conducive for the tourism industry.

It is vital for effective policies to explore the problems, challenges, prospects and objectives of each specific state in order to be fruitful for Nepalese tourism industry and be in accordance with the tax policy in the tourism industry. Therefore, proper policy and private sector ownership of the

laws and guidelines provided by the government will help the private sector be transparent and accountable for contributing taxes in the country. Government initiatives are required to structure the tax system in the sector in order to utilize the funds successfully for improvements and investments in the industry.

### BEST PRACTICE CATALOGUE

Planning sustainable tourism should strive to excel in three central elements: social, economic and environmental development. This can be achieved if emphasis is made to align all dimensions of public policy in cooperation, at both the national and regional/local level. This includes tourism policy, industrial policy and biodiversity conservation.

#### Narayani Safari Hotel

One example of successfully practicing this harmony in Nepal has been the Narayani Safari Hotel and Lodge, built just outside Chitwan National Park. Although the preference was to build within the park, and permission could have been easily achieved (there are already seven lodges in operation inside the park), the company believed that one should not encroach on the conservation area and so decided to set up their facilities outside of the park's protected zone.



### Heritage Conservation in Bhaktapur

There have been various efforts from Nepalese individuals, communities and tourism based organizations, as well as in government, to improve the sustainability of the tourism industry as an integral part of the country's development. One such example can be found in Bhaktapur, an ancient city in Kathmandu Valley and a popular tourist site. Here, a locally known curd is traditionally served in biodegradable bowls made from mud. However, this tradition has declined due to the increased use of plastic cups, which has in turn increased plastic pollution in the city and around popular tourist sites. As such, initiatives promoting traditional native practices could encourage a new, sustainable aspect to the tourist experience focused on native cultural traditions and heritage. This could not only reduce pollution but also encourage and revitalise traditional industries in Nepal such as pottery, boosting the economies of these communities largely dependent on tourism.

### OTHER POTENTIAL AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The focus group discussions also suggested a number of other aspects of traditional Nepali lifestyle that could be promoted through Nepal's cultural heritage, such as by encouraging a greater food culture rooted in popular traditional cuisines of various Nepali cultures, and centred around incorporated traditional Nepali food and drink into a 'fine dining' experience.

To encourage this approach, though, this growth should come with greater cooperation with the entrepreneurial sector, in order to empower the youth and society to promote Nepal's economy. Specific business training, increased market value

and quality products, prices and products within the tourism industry can be learned and adapted to generate more income. With a smart approach to local business, more opportunities can be created in Nepal and decrease the need of Nepali youth to leave the country for income generation.

Another path for development is the greater promotion of domestic tourism, including research-based travels by the academic sector. With this approach, the knowledge of the upcoming generation of tourism professionals can be broadened. One option to achieve this is through implementing two days of weekly holiday instead of one, or by encouraging greater emphasis on national holidays. If implemented, this hopefully develops a culture of visiting many different domestic destinations for leisure, expanding the domestic market. Domestic tourism has the capacity to promote both skilled and unskilled manpower by generating employment opportunities for all. Because of Nepal's tremendous diversity of its culture, geography, languages, technology and social structures, Nepal can profit from a variety of tourists, ranging from domestic and foreign travellers to the high value.

There are many ideas, thoughts and innovative projects surrounding sustainable tourism in Nepal. Connecting such ideas and information within the sector and within local communities is, therefore, crucial to achieving sustainability. Unless local communities do not take ownership of such ideas, it is a goal that cannot succeed. Hence, they must be involved in tourism development from the first stages of planning and inception.

<sup>41</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Relationship between Indigenous Technology and Sustainable Tourism, Global College International (GCI), Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>42</sup> This data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by Global College International (GCI), Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>43</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Culture, Global College International (GCI), Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>44</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Poverty, Global College International (GCI), Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>45</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and poverty, Global College International (GCI), Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>46</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Culture, Global College International (GCI), Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal



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.





# 4 NEED GAP ANALYSIS AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING





## NEED GAP ANALYSIS AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING- INDIA

Tourism is a highly diversified industry that requires the support and coexistence of all stakeholders involved in the process. The plans and policies framed for the holistic growth and development of the social, economical and environmental arrays can only yield positive outcomes when there is a smooth flow of activities with proper awareness maintained. Stakeholder participation and alignment is the key element while developing a potential to tackle existing challenges and issues in the tourism sector.

Stakeholder categories can vary as per the different segments of Policy, Demands and Supply, which segments the industry in a relevant manner. The tourism sector needs to align a common understanding among all the participatory bodies to successfully achieve its sustainability imperatives.

Each stakeholder has its distinct yet vital impact on the sustainable tourism ecosystem. The key requirement for sustainable tourism is to align various stakeholders for working effectively in the overall management and execution of plans and policies. The stakeholders cannot be considered individually but the relationships between them should be understood to successfully link the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of sustainability and minimize adverse impact on the environment.

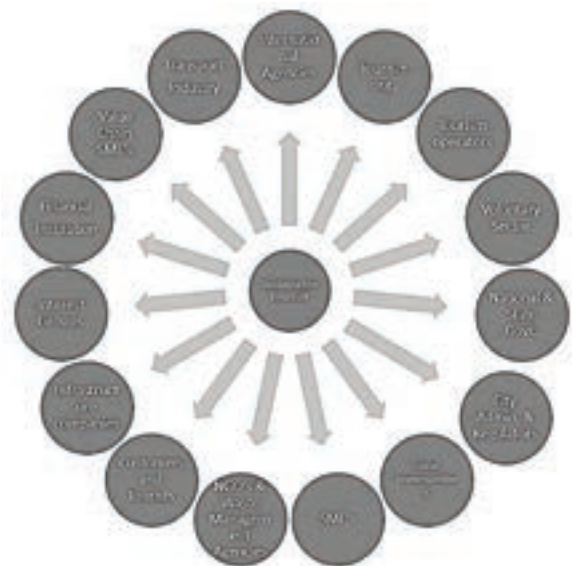
In recent years, there has been significant growth in the contribution of the tourism industry towards economic and social development, especially in developing nations like India where it confers over 7% of GDP annually. The European Union, other international bodies and governments have also been actively identifying and implementing interventions in sustainable tourism.

Despite the continuous efforts from the bodies at both national and international levels, there are several challenges and disparities at the stakeholders' end whether it is Policy, Demand, or Supply-side. In the focus group discussion with the industry stalwarts, there were several key aspects highlighted towards which are being addressed, and need to be addressed.



The gap analysis on the global level will consist of several key factors that crop a major challenge in terms of implementation and execution of plans and policies but it can vary with the nation as the goals of a country and set timelines are different at the local level. The inferences stated here are somewhat taken from the discussion with the relevant stakeholders in the industry. Stakeholder initiatives of sustainability reside majorly on the Policymaking and Demand side of the mapping which includes the management bodies, and the end consumers. They need to be well aware of the recent trends, potential and requirements as per the geographies and demographics of the nation.

**Figure 12: Segmentation of the Stakeholders**



**The segmentation of the stakeholders is as follows:**

**POLICY-** These policy-making bodies are responsible for creating tourism plans and policies to successfully dictate good practices, rules and requirements. This includes:

- Government (National and State)
- Ministries-Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and others
- Tourism Organizations- Indian Tourism Development Corporation, Association of Tourism Trade Organizations, India (ATTO), etc.
- Regulators- Ministry of Tourism, National Tourism Policy 2002, Tourism Finance Corporation of India, City Administration, Law Enforcement
- Local Authorities
- Resource Management Bodies
- Government delivery agencies

These stakeholders ensure the development and implementation of tourism policy and strategy, management and building of local infrastructure, and relating tourism to wider plans and policies.

**DEMAND-** These stakeholders form the key source of income to the sector, these are:

- Consumers/Tourists
- Individual and Group travellers
- Families

- Couples
- Businessmen
- Consumer networks, clubs, and societies

Demand side actors form an ecosystem that ultimately executes all the directives formed in the policies through behaving responsibly and communicating opinions fairly and accurately to others.

**SUPPLY-** The bodies within this vertical reflect the operational and social movements in tourism:

- Tour Operators
- Local Communities-Local citizens, Local Govt. officials, Roadside vendors, Local Retailers and workers, Architect
- Small and Medium-sized enterprises
- Waste Management Agencies
- NGOs (International, Regional and Local)
- Volunteers & Interest Groups
- Infrastructure Companies
- Financial Institutions (Banks or NBFCs involved in funding/financing of tourism associated projects or ventures)
- Transportation & Logistics Companies
- Trade Associations & Labour unions- ATTOI ( Association of Tourism Trade Organizations)
- Employees and related bodies
- Educational & Training institutions

#### 4.2 Sustainable Tourism Value Chain

A value chain can help in increasing the overall efficiency of any industry. It portrays the relationships among several key elements involved in the process of entire value creation and also connects different functions for fluid understanding and experience.

Tourism is one such industry that requires inclusive and continuous participation among various stakeholders. These interrelationships help various elements of the whole tourism ecosystem in providing a thorough and accurate understanding of the Status Quo and the Need Gap.

“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, this ancient phrase (Meaning: “The world is one family”) resembles India’s spirit when it comes to the subject of inclusive and sustainable development. As one of the more fast-paced economies which draws inspiration from its longstanding heritage and traditions, India’s development agenda is replicated in the Sustainable Development Goals. Hence, the Travel and Tourism industry has an integral part to play in India’s journey to becoming a more inclusive economic superpower.

The left side of the STVC portrays the activities undertaken in the outbound area i.e. the tourists’ place or country of residence while the right side shows the activities taking place in the inbound i.e. the tourists’ destination.

The lower half of the STVC accommodates all the activities that are directly associated with the tourism industry and hence cause the direct economic impact while the upper half consists of all the indirectly linked activities that impact the economy indirectly.

**All the elements and the stakeholders of the STVC can be fundamentally classified among the following categories:**

- **Travel Organization and Booking:** Huge amount of information is available digitally for making informed decisions regarding travel and tourism. The tickets can be booked and reservations can be made in a completely online manner. Generally, this reduces the need for carrying hardcopies of receipts, itineraries, maps and tickets; saving space, money and paper.
- **Transportation:** This includes all the formal and informal modes of transportation. Indian Railways is now focusing more on comfort, safety and overall experience of the passengers than ever, encouraging tourists to travel via public means of transport. The various subsidy and incentive schemes by the Government for local electric vehicle manufacturers and purchasers are also key motivators. Several public and private enterprises are already in the process of developing e-vehicle associated infrastructure including charging stations to promote citizens to adapt to electric vehicles. Seaplanes have reduced the dependency on traditional aviation infrastructure which may harm and disturb the local ecosystem.

#### CHALLENGES, BARRIERS AND DRIVERS

As discussed above, sustainable tourism is an industry that is still at a nascent stage of development globally. It requires adequate research and development to be implemented and executed successfully while keeping the factors varying with every nation in mind. Thorough understanding of the latest developments and marketing them in the right direction will help in creating awareness, and developing an understanding among the key stakeholders regarding the need for sustainable tourism.

The tourism industry in India is a major economic supporter but the performance and impact of the sector has not been identified, measured and analyzed in comparison to the other developing nations. Some major challenges across the way are required to be bridged while reducing the margin of incompetencies globally and shaping the future of the upcoming generations.

The key challenges identified are as follows:

##### 1. Social awareness, and inclusion in the best practices for sustainability

- The collective push from all stakeholders to adopt sustainable practices of tourism is one of the biggest challenges faced due to varied reasons. Some experts define it as the lack of initiative from the bodies in branding and promoting the cause among people, others conclude it to be the sole responsibility of each citizen who is aware of the fact. Though different opinions might arise at different platforms, one thing that remains intact is that it is required to be done at a faster pace than what we are moving to right now.
- The government and other statutory bodies need to reach out to a set of people who may have the

<sup>47</sup> Lascurain, H. (2001) 'Integrating Biodiversity into the Tourism Sector: Best Practice Guidelines', Best Practice Guidelines, P. 11, Point nos. 1-3 (site: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/case-studies/tour/cs-tour-uneep.pdf>)

<sup>48</sup> Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Global College International (GCI), Kathmandu, Nepal



capabilities to influence people for such a cause. Ultimately, when a consumer becomes aware of the nuances, it will impact the overall value chain because the consumption patterns and demand might change. In terms of India, sustainability, and tourism are not well-researched and made a part of the curriculum unless opted as a specialization, this fact decreases the possibility of awareness in the younger generation who are ready to write the future after us.

## 2. Lack of alignment between the stakeholders

- The aforementioned stakeholder map dictates a holistic view of the key stakeholders in the tourism industry. The tourism sector is said to be one of the biggest employment creators in the world and India which means there is a need for a structured plan of action to be followed for the betterment of the industry. In the context of tourism, stakeholder analysis, and alignment is a complex task that requires a detailed assessment of all the prospects and entities involved.

- There have been several instances where improper execution of the plans and policies has sharply trimmed the experience of the end customer. The net value derived from the overall experience comes from a holistic approach from all ends of the journey and when these multidisciplinary bodies develop conflicting relationships, it creates a long-term negative impact on the value.

## 3. Policy, Implementation, and marketing

- This factor is undermined when it comes to the challenges faced by the tourism industry in the context of sustainability. A roadmap should inhibit all the phases and actors of the process, and it must be promoted in a way that creates widespread awareness. Sustainable tourism is a term that is unclear to a major chunk of the population in India which poses a critical threat to its implementation. Word of mouth creates much more awareness than any form of marketing and this requires an aggressive approach towards putting out the concept in public and to responsible organizations.

- The government needs to be on its toes and present the idea proactively among the industry stakeholders to ensure quicker implementation. A long-term vision and clear roadmap with effective promotion strategies, ranging from offline to online in terms of reach, to make the message clear among people.

## 4. No formal organization for monitoring collaborative efforts central, state, and local bodies

- A single authority to guide organizations and perform audits of the performance levels can bring a vital change if transparency is maintained. The natural phenomenon of irresponsible behaviour by the stakeholders can occur at various levels of the roadmap which will be required to be treated and rectified.

- Government should identify a body of experts who can look over the execution part of the process, and take necessary steps to improve the overall performance. This will not only ensure collaborative efforts but also will make sure that the set timelines are being followed.

## 5. Poor infrastructural development, and connectivity discouraging domestic travel

- India's domestic travel has seen exponential growth in the last few years. In 2019, over 2.3 billion domestic tourist visits were made across the nation. Our nation has a huge potential to generate decent revenue from domestic travel itself. Despite this potential, improper connectivity and poor infrastructure support have sunken the hopes of several local manufacturers, traders and organizations.

- Sustainable tourism goals can only be met when we allow for our domestic trade and tourism facilities to prosper. It needs to be aligned with the long-term vision of making people more aware of the kind of materials used in manufacturing and ways of supply, and sell in the market.

## KEY TRENDS, AND FACTORS AFFECTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN INDIA

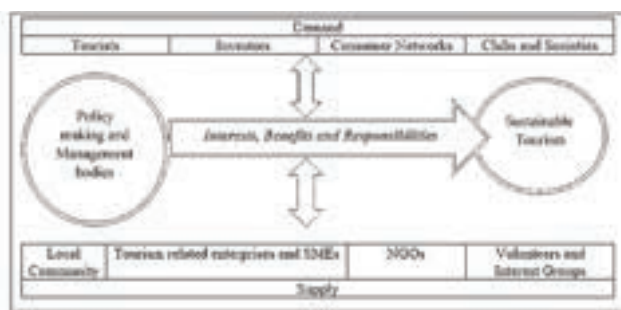
1. The COVID 19 pandemic has had a very direct and severe impact on the Travel and Tourism industry. By reducing the number of cases, easing restrictions on the lockdown, ensuring better availability of modes of transportation, mass vaccination programs and following COVID appropriate behaviour, if people remain vigilant enough, the industry shall bounce back and get back on its growth trajectory sooner than later.
2. Tourists are now more aware of hygiene and safety than ever. They have become more conscious about their choices.
3. Indian Prime Minister's vision for 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' meaning 'Collective Efforts Inclusive Growth' may have a tangible positive impact on the folk artists, painters, craftsmen and other artisans.
4. Goals, initiatives and projects such as UDAAN, BHARATMALA, SAGARMALA, High Speed/Bullet Trains, etc. are meant to reduce the rural-urban divide and will help in making India a more tourist-friendly destination.
5. Development and promotion of niche tourism products in India. These products may include sports, adventure, spiritual wellness, medical, and Meetings Incentives Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE), film and rural tourism among others. This will help India in becoming a 365 days tourism destination.
6. India's commitment to reduce its carbon emission as per the Paris Agreement is also helping the country in adopting more sustainable practices across industries.
7. Gen Z and Millennials will drive consumption in this era. These aware and digitally literate consumers are changing the tourism landscape in the country already.
8. Circular economy and Sharing economy are shaping the landscape of the Indian economy. Ola, Uber, Zoomcar, Airbnb, OYO, etc. are some of the many companies working under the concept of a sharing economy.

## NEED GAP ANALYSIS AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING- SRI LANKA

The involvement of stakeholders in a community is one of the key factors for 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 in the sustainable tourism context were identified as per the focus group discussion conducted by the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka and Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka.

**Figure 13: Sustainable Tourism Stakeholder Mapping in Sri Lanka**



Source: Focus Group Discussion in Sri Lanka, 2021

As shown in figure 13, 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 for the tourism sector. This includes 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

**Table 5: 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>



Segment	Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibility
	Consumer networks	<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>
	Clubs and Societies	
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>

Medium Enterprises, Financial Institutions, Transportation and Logistics Companies, Trade Associations, Labour 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 intentions to gain benefits while engaging in sustainable tourism activities in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the critical requirement for sustainable tourism is to align various stakeholders towards working effectively in the overall management and execution of plans and policies.

#### Sustainable Tourism Value Chain

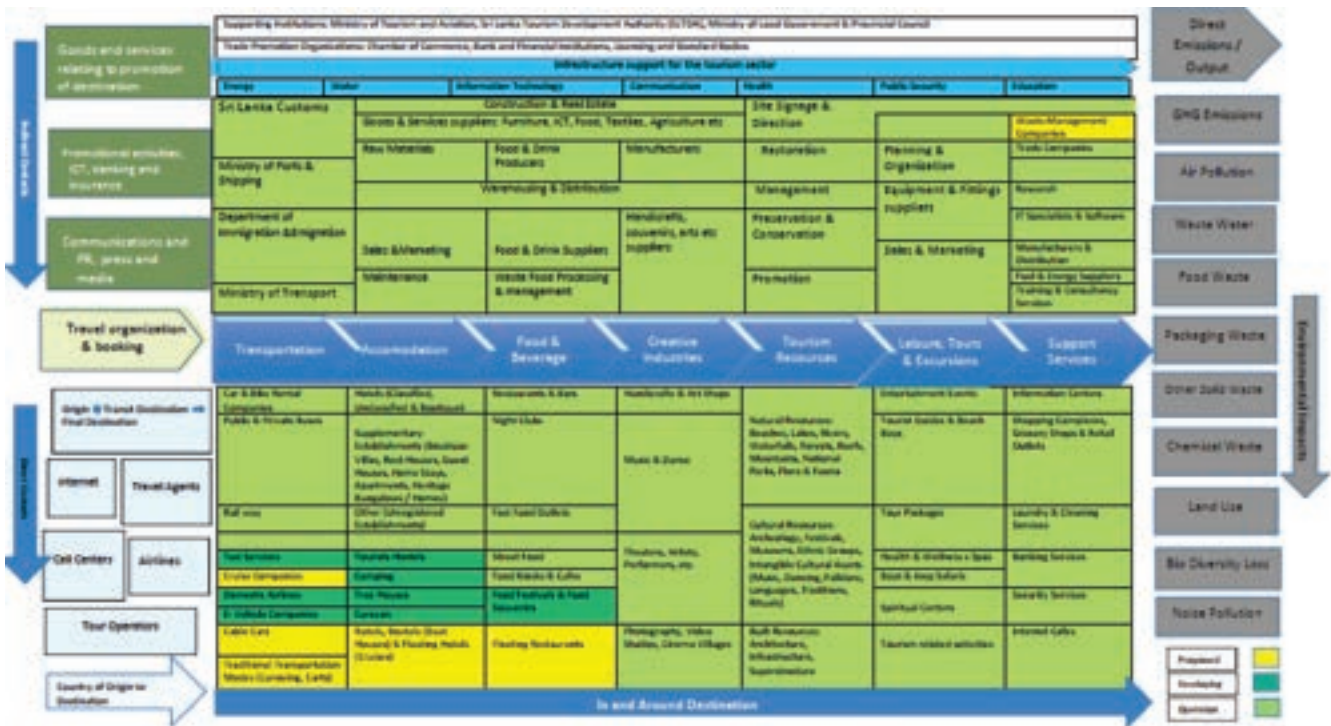
Tourism is a sector with exceptional potential for generating regional value-added and, as a result, contributing to the long-term growth of developing and emerging economies. Promoting the regional value-added created by tourism could

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).

Sustainable tourism is a crucial economic 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 the UNWTO for the tourism industry in Sri Lanka by incorporating various direct and indirect parties related to create a sustainable tourism industry.

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).

**Proposed Sustainable Tourism Value Chain**



**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 place of origin until they reach the final destination.

**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.

**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 the destination such as events, festivals, trade exhibitions, etc. are included in this category. 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.

**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 are 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. The 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.

### **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 the 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.

### **Accommodation**

The accommodation has a significant impact on a traveller's entire experience of a destination. It is also a significant component of tourists' 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 Tourist Hostels, Camping, Caravan and Tree Houses are still at the development stage and are currently operating at 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 and 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 estate 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.

### **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 estate 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.

**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.

**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.

**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 at 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 being related to the tourists' leisure, tours and excursions.

**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 tourists' 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.



**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.

**Issues, Challenges, and Barriers in Developing Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka**

The meaning of sustainable tourism has clearly been defined in the above chapters. However, most organizations, individuals merely perceive sustainable tourism or sustainability in terms of green colour, only 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 regarding 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 becomes smudged. It has been that this knowledge must be individually taken. However, the issue is that tourism makes a considerable impact on the local destination. In most cases, tourism is merely the planting of an alien seed in fragile indigenous land. All those planning to practice tourism 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 only conducted a training program for the SLTDA staff about making a national sustainable certification program that comes from the agreement signed with the UNDP. A team from the Global Sustainable Development Council (GSDC) has trained some of their staff. However, SLTDA's initiations after that would be rather questionable as they later only conducted a plantation project of sorts.
- In concern with stakeholder perspectives, numerous tourism industry-related associations exist. Some of them are registered in SLTDA and some are not. 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 geared towards profit while others 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, insufficient incentives in terms of motivation and financial backing are the main factors behind why even NTOs could not proceed with new sustainable development agendas. Many government servants who are in NTOs have assigned duties and responsibilities. Paying attention and working 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 has ended with half of the development and local communities in frustration. Lack of investments, lack of planning and efforts to attract investors can be identified as the major reasons for the same.
- Even during the 1st wave of COVID-19, the tourism minister has ensured at least 5000 LKR allowance to all parties in the tourism and hospitality industry, with the exception of employees in the organization. Yet, the government was not able to distribute that amount among all vulnerable parties due to various reasons. Apart from political reasons, not having a database of those stakeholders was a 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, while 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 of concern when NTO and the ministry operate with the public funds. Oftentimes government services, not only in tourism, receive complaints about transparency. If such malpractices are detected, they should be eliminated.
- **Protracted and disjointed government decision-making and approval processes.**
- This is becoming the key issue for Sri Lankan tourism. The tourism ministry and NTO are rarely making 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 often out of sync 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 this 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 the 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 a 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 try to obtain the tourist board's 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 that some provincial councils are also playing a role in developing tourism in their respective boundary lines. Whether they are 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 focus its tourism practices anywhere, but much attention was given to areas like Colombo, Kandy, cultural triangle, southern coastal belt and a few others. Areas like Jaffna, especially the northern part of Sri Lanka, show much potential and stand out due to their unique culture. As a result of this disparity of concern, income generated from tourism is limited among a few areas. A 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 are 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, it takes around six to seven hours to reach the Passikudah, Kalkudah and Trincomalee areas. It is said by many that beaches like Passikudah have the potential to be like Bali but poor accessibility restricts their 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 much use in the tourism sector. The connectivity of highways is still poor, but developments are currently on-going. The use of domestic aviation for internal transportation is still operating at a minor level and not cost effective. Proper mass air transportation can avoid traffic and save time. As an island nation surrounded completely by seas, there is great potential in developing a better cruise operation for tourism purposes.
- **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 have 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 either do not reach the industry or the industry is never made aware of them.
- **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.

#### **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES IN SRILANKA**

- 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 installed within the stakeholders. This 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, from the big industry 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-upon 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 the locals.**  
Sustainable tourism development requires the participation of residents at the planning stage. Their involvement and local consultation reduces 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; as a result 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 tourist 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 down 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 tourist satisfaction. On the other hand, the travel and tour companies should focus more on quality of the tourists than the quantity in designing travel packages that contribute to a better economic multiplier.



### NEED GAP ANALYSIS AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING- NEPAL

The third largest industry in the world comprises involvement of different individuals, groups and organizations which are all involved at different levels. In that sense, we can say that every stakeholder holds the same importance at different levels. With a stable base we can ensure that the further steps will move accordingly, following the pattern. So, for tourism to be sustainable, the government plays the role of base creator and therefore plays an integral role in paving the way for the sustainable tourism. The plans and policies drafted by the government show the direction of tourism development. If the government manages to come up with proper plans and policies along with the proper strategies of its execution considering all the possible hurdles that can obstruct its way beforehand and come up with the strategies to eradicate the obstacles in the best possible way.

Since plans and policies serve as a blueprint, if proper emphasis is given to these practices the development will be successful. On the other hand, the government is the key player responsible for the infrastructural development which is one of the prerequisites for the development of tourism which supports successful implementation of policies and all other stakeholders. In this regard, plans and policies drafted by the government along with their own interest towards the development and maintenance of infrastructural factors plays an important role. Likewise, the government plans and formulates the plans and policies considering all the aspects at national level. Some authority should be disseminated to the local government since they do have a proper insight of the resources available there and may come up with a better way or approach. Considering all the strategies beforehand in order to preserve the available resources and methods that can be applied in order to minimize the negative impact of tourism without hampering the needs and wants of the visitors is necessary.

However, local participation is crucial as, in its absence, local governments alone cannot function properly. It is important to build strategies to involve the local people for the long run. This is because tourism is an activity which seeks for the involvement and interaction of the people, both visitor and host community, so all the drafted strategies fail to act if one fails to involve local people in the best possible way. If local participation fails to be achieved and they do have a negative perception towards tourism then it will be much more difficult to achieve the goal of sustainable tourism. Lisa (2012) argued that local authorities or institutions should have greater responsibility and participate in planning and developing tourism destinations. Research shows that local governments need to facilitate the agendas of sustainable tourism, and the lack of powerful leadership from industries, top-down directives from state and federal governments, power struggles and the lack of participation of the local community have contributed to the prevention and inhibition toward the development of sustainable tourism.

At the same time, the host community in coordination with the local government can come up with the legal restrictions required in an area for preserving and maintaining authenticity in the destination; which is one of the major criteria to be followed for the development of sustainable tourism. Tsung (2013) showed that close connection and

participation of the community are important factors affecting the level of support for the development of sustainable tourism. In this globalized world, what sort of tourists will be visiting the destination totally depends upon the travel associations and enterprises, as they are the one who acts as the bridge between the destination and that of the origin.

If they happen to come up with better package system and marketing strategies then it definitely can attract the quality tourists who can spend a quality amount of money at the time of their visit and their length of stay will also be higher and, as a result, there won't be as much pressure on the environment and cultural factors of the destination offering various tourism products to that of the tourists.

Wray et al. (2010) argued that the marketing for tourism destinations is an option of "best practice or best travel destination" or "local marketing in tourism development" which attracts visitors and needs to be planned in the best way, managed by the local government and widely advertised in the media.

NGOs and voluntary groups also aid in the sustainability of tourism. For instance, NGOs can conduct various awareness programs along with vocational training programs in coordination with that of governmental organizations which directly and indirectly helps to enhance the knowledge of all the concerned and may motivate them to practice for the same in order to preserve the available resources and eradicate the negative impacts of tourism in the best possible way. This will support the sustainability of the tourism industry.

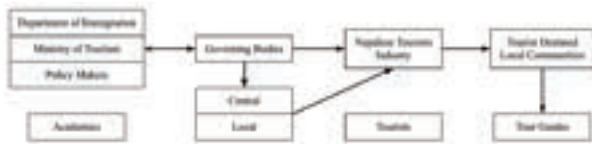
Educational institutions are the ones who create the future of tourism. The content of the education provided needs to match the practical scenario in order to create professional manpower. Tran (2011) stated that, for tourism development, human resources for tourism have a great influence on sustainable development; human resources here are understood as human resources directly serving the tourism industry such as employees working in tourism businesses and also officials working in tourism authorities in the locality.





The following illustrated chart will help us to understand the correlation of the stakeholders in the simplest form.

**Fig 14: Stakeholders Mapping of Tourism Industry of Nepal**



The above figure 14 shows the mapping of different stakeholders in Nepal. The Ministry of Tourism, National policy making bodies as well as immigration departments are major stakeholders of Nepalese tourism industries. All these stakeholders are also a major part of the governing body of Nepal with respect to Nepalese tourism industry. With the division of national governing bodies at the central as well as local state level, the tourism industry is doing its work in affiliation with governing bodies of each local state along with central state as its major source of policy making. The Nepalese tourism industry is currently focused on 'tourist destined local communities' affiliating itself with local governing bodies of Nepal which require trained tour guides. Currently, Nepalese tour guides experience a lack of training due to a mismanagement of resources and a fundamental gap in policies and guidelines for their requirements.

#### **GAP BETWEEN BEST PRACTICES AND REALITY**

Nepal has a substantial capability in the tourism sector. However, there is a huge gap between best practices that are needed to be implemented in the Nepalese tourism industry and the real practices that are being carried out in the same.

There are various kinds of scientific best practices in the tourism sector throughout the world concerning strengthening the coordination of public and private actors in the sector, conserving biodiversity and dynamic and practical inter-sectoral mechanisms for coordination. Communities that are focused more towards tourism based activities can be successful to start these kinds of inter-sectoral mechanisms.

Similarly, short-term participation of biodiversity conservation by all the planners in meetings that deal with tourism planning and the participation of tourism planners in discussions of biodiversity conservation issues is required. Internal collaboration within the conformed tourism destined areas and central government with the mission of forming reliable tourism friendly policies and information exchange must be established.

Nepal currently lacks both of those coordination types, creating the scarcity of proper tour guide who are knowledgeable about tourism of the tourist destined areas. Income generation activities are often not sustainable due to a lack of knowledge, training and coordination among the different stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the cooperation of institutions such as the Ministry of Tourism, the Immigration Department and the Policy making bodies of Nepal. These bodies currently act as separate entities of Nepalese governing bodies which creates a gap in information flow and the effective implementation of policies. Proper flow of information exchange between government agencies and people from tourist destined local communities

is minimal due to a lack of technology as well as lack of proper knowledge regarding new and emerging tourism policy for the native people as well as tour guides. There is a gap in coordination regarding flow of information between the ministry of tourism, policy making institutions, policy makers and immigration departments.

#### **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM VALUE CHAIN**

The supply chain diagram presents different relationships which could potentially exist between its participants such as: suppliers, aggregators (Global Distribution Systems, Computer Reservation Systems and wholesalers), principals (tour operators), distributors (travel portals, travel agents) and consumers. Enterprises will typically occupy a single position within the supply chain and will have commercial agreements with other companies which reside in other parts of the supply chain (Kaukal, Hopken, Werthner, 2000).

A tourism supply chain can be defined as the network of tourism organizations supplying different components of tourism products/services such as flights and accommodation for the distribution and marketing of the final tourism products at a specific tourism destination, and involves a wide range of participants in both private and public sectors (Song, 2012).

Many organizations are directly or indirectly associated with tourism, so the involvement of different sectors is crucial for its smooth operation. As a result, it will have a multiplier effect on most of the areas.

In order to create a complete value chain for sustainable development in Nepalese tourism industries, the following parties play a vital role. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture is the head governing body in the sector of Nepalese tourism. However, the Ministry of Environment also plays an important role in creating sustainability in tourism as sustainable tourism is also related to environment and biodiversity protection, especially in the nation where ecotourism and nature based adventure tourism is given more priority.

The following list gives examples of the different types of businesses within each stakeholder group:

- A. Travel Organization and Booking: In origin and transit destinations- Internet, call centre, travel agent, airline companies, tour operators and wholesalers
- B. Transportation in Destination: Car rental, bus companies, taxi companies, river ferry, informal transportation
- C. Accommodation in Destination: Hotels, apartments, guesthouse, youth hostels
- D. Food and Beverage in Destination: Bars and restaurants, night clubs, fast food
- E. Handicrafts: Handicraft shops, craftsmen, handicraft workshops
- F. Leisure, Excursions and Tours: Shows, tourists guide organization, independent tourist guide, transport guide and escorts, tourism packages, wellness and spas
- G. Support Services: Information centers, grocery shop and retail outlet, laundry, security and bank services
- H. Infrastructural Support: Waste management, construction materials, energy, water, education, communications, public security and health

The above mentioned chains will obtain direct benefits from that of sustainable tourism. Apart from this there are many indirect factors that sustainable tourism will have a positive impact on. The most important factor to be considered is that the whole system that is engaged will ultimately help in the contribution of GDP which will have a direct impact on the development of the country.

**5.3. BARRIERS AND DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

In the context of Nepal, geography acts as a strength as well as weakness. Because of the diverse geographical scenario, required infrastructural development is a major challenge. The tourism industry is led by the private sector and is supported by the public sectors. Both parties are trying their best to work for the welfare of the overall development of the tourism industry. However, the clash arises when the motives do not match. To lead the industry in a systematic way, the government attempts to implement different strategies which directly or indirectly have an impact on the private sector.

Political instability is one of the major barriers of the overall development of the country, including the tourism industry. A frequent change in the government results in frequent changes in the plans and policies which leads to unstable working conditions and expectations. For sustainable tourism development, political stability of the country/ host community is essential.

Infrastructural development seeks for higher investments and underdeveloped countries like Nepal cannot make a huge investment at a time. As a result most sell-able attractions remain ideal. The economic challenges lead to many resources being left unused and possible tourism destinations remaining unexplored. Hollier and Lanquar (1996) argued that, to develop sustainable tourism, countries need to build an effective tourist transport system, improve public facilities at tourist destinations, increase support activities at tourist destinations in bad weather, develop appropriate pricing policies for the high and low seasons and the supply of tourism activities must target specific groups of customers. The tourism business is seasonal and is very volatile in nature so internal as well as external factors will have great impact on tourism. That is the reason why there is always some sort of risk for the rapid development of any community based on tourism only.

Factors like natural disasters, economic depression, etc. play an important role in determining the sustainability of tourism in any given country. Nepal has high potential in small scale sustainable tourism businesses which can positively impact the overall development of the local communities. For instance, local business, indigenous products and family operated home stay are the major components of the sustainable tourism industry. However, ineffective marketing, promotional strategies and usage of monetary resources decrease the compatibility of Nepal with outside markets and create a barrier for sustainable tourism.

Decentralization of the authority to the local government is another important initiation in order to enhance and facilitate the concept of sustainability. Tourism is a joint effort so it is essential that every stakeholder, directly or indirectly associated with the tourism industry, should be effectively involved in planning and implementation processes.

On the other hand, the concept of luxury should be converted into the concept of authenticity involving various activities which can keep the visitors engaged. Consultation with the local community of the destination can act as the best driver for the enhancement of tourism in the destination ensuring that the negative impact is minimized.

Understanding the essence of tourism and creating the packages using local products can attract the local communities to be more involved and may lead to higher quality in hospitality. Since tourism seeks social interaction, the behaviour shown by the local people and their attitude towards the visitors must be taken into major consideration.

The following illustrated table will help us understand the correlation of the barriers and drives in the simplest form. It includes all the criteria from infrastructures to human capital as well as socio- cultural challenges of Nepal that are affecting the sustainability of the tourism industry in Nepal<sup>49</sup>.

**Table 6: Tabulation of Factors Affecting Sustainable Tourism of Nepal**

Criteria	Barriers	Drivers
Human Capital	Disorganized Networking	Inner self-centered and self-promotion based competitions among government institutions that are responsible for Tourism.
Infrastructures	No reach of local peoples of regions like Karnali to save their local technologies due to high price in maintenance	Advertisement and popularization of their local technology by the Ministry of Tourism by showing pictures and videos related to those technologies while advertising the 'Tourism year'.
Role of Educational Institutes	Unable to provide practical ground based tourism education and teaching just to cover-up the academic criteria of education rather than providing in-depth knowledge regarding ground-based practical problems.	Organize different tourism related practical information based weekly if not monthly national seminars either virtually or live by each institution who are teaching hospitality and tourism.



Moreover, the local culture itself can be both a barrier as well as a driver for sustainability. For example, there are communities who still rely on fire for their daily cooking which impacts health, hygiene and environment. On the other hand, local culture is also a driver for sustainability as local communities often have thorough knowledge about the best practices concerning conservation of the natural environment and resources in their home. This can lead to mutual learning, if correctly implemented.

### CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN NEPAL

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017) "Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future." This definition is short and concise; however, it is too general since it refers to meeting only the needs of current and future visitors without taking into account the needs of the local community, culture, society, ecological environment, and biodiversity.

#### Development of Infrastructure

Infrastructure is one of the most important aspects for the development of tourism. The travel routes between the tourist destinations and attractions must especially be well developed in order to facilitate easy and safe movement. Chen and Chen (2011) argued that infrastructure in general alongside tourism infrastructure, in particular, are in many cases the factors determining the success or failure of regional economic development.

The basic infrastructure in tourism development may include: road, residence facility, transport and electricity. In order to establish, promote and develop home stay, the mentioned factor plays a very crucial role. So, it is very essential to work on the proper management of the basic infrastructure.

Electricity is a very important factor to be considered and in order to eradicate this challenge, the local authority and their locals must join hands and move forward. Although being conducted rapidly, development activities often lack proper planning which reduces the probability for them to be sustainable.

#### Development of Management

Management is another major challenge of the sector. It includes skill management especially concerning the training and deployment of human resources (training, hospitality and cooking). Additionally, change management shall be prioritized in the context of Nepal. The practice of adapting primitive methods is still in existence. As a result, the pace of changing trends in the global context is not being met so the attraction of tourists is not being increased to that extent which it was supposed to be.

#### Registration

Registration Practices require concrete policies and laws, whereas a very complex registration process may disinterest the entrepreneurs. It is an important factor for management and planning processes.

#### The following points can be a possible solution to address the problem;

- The provision of proper training should be conducted by the concerned authorities with an objective of filling the gap and in order to convert their weakness into strength
- Concrete policy from central level must be implemented
- Implementation of regulations and by-lines
- Rules must be simple, clear, comprehensive and easy to understand
- Provisions in government budget is very essential

#### Marketing and Promotion

There have undoubtedly been efforts made by concerned authorities towards promotional activities. However, the concern is that today's market seeks for adequate and effective marketing and promotional strategies. So, it is very essential that, based on the research, effective marketing and promotional tools should be conducted with proper market segmentation. The more one lacks marketing and promotion, the more chances of getting dissolved from the competitive market. The following can help to minimize the problem:

- Extension of marketing and network (tour operator, government entity, etc)
- Participation of concerned stakeholders such as TAAN, NATTA, NTB, etc. during the home-stay package and design
- Establishment of national and regional level network for home-stay tourism promotion
- Advertisement and promotion of home-stay via local media
- Providing Leave Travel Concession for public servants and promoting them to go home stay tourism.

#### Benefit Sharing

Tourism is a joint effort. For its success, every individual of the host community holds the same level of importance. However, failure in the understanding of this important relation is a major factor creating obstacles for the overall long term development of tourism in Nepal. For instance, in the case of sustainable home-stay, benefit sharing may be one of the major challenges the host community may have to face going forward. So, in order to minimize that possibility, one can adopt the following strategies:

- Priority to community based home-stay
- Prioritize product based on local agriculture, culture and custom
- Promote alternative and local food items
- Provide loan subsidy to the poor
- Establish community tourism fund

The understanding of the importance of internal tourism must be considered a priority for development. The actual focus is made only on the international tourists. To stop the decrease of the number of tourists, targeted and effective mechanisms are required. For instance, for the success of home-stay for the long run one must come up with the most attractive and reasonable packages. The following strategies must be adopted before the mentioned problem occurs.

Preparation of innovative home-stay packages by individual home-stay groups as well as organic farming with local tourism might enhance this practice.

<sup>49</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>50</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Culture, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

### Lack of Research and Development

An importance of research and development is being noticed, however. So, a good research team must be formed and work accordingly for the betterment of the tourism industry as a whole.

Similarly, it is a huge challenge for the Nepalese tourism sector to come up with proper translation that can be native to native culture and society regarding what should be given to native tourist and tourism workers on those activities and entities that have been prescribed by other developed nations through their long time practice in their homeland. This helps to create secure working modules as well as policies for the government and other tourism based organizations through which they can attack more stakeholders in the sector of Nepalese tourism industry.

The global COVID-19 pandemic is challenging and threatening the tourism industry worldwide. However, developed countries are coming up with packages and subsidies to reduce the impact on the tourism sector in their respective countries. Nevertheless, countries like Nepal are trying to be involved in the category of developing countries. Economic challenges are one of the major issues due to a lack of budget and economic growth rate. It might be even more challenging for Nepal and its tourism entrepreneurs to continue to survive and to rebuild their business activities in a quick manner. Therefore, it is vital for the government to prioritize and give extra efforts to sustain the tourism sector in Nepal.

### KEY FACTORS IDENTIFIED TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT

Security is one of the key components for the development of sustainable tourism, especially in terms of its quality. In other words, the capacity of the destination to ensure and make the visitors feel that the destination is safe and secure for their visit will have a huge impact on tourism and its sustainability. For instance, in the context of Nepal, until 1998 when Nepal proclaimed "Visit Year 1998", the number of visitors in that year was nearly 4 million. However, after the hijacking of Indian fleet from the Tribhuvan International Airport, Nepal was considered as an unsafe place to travel. Also, the Maoist movement supported the cause which led to a decline of visiting tourists. After the peace agreement between the Nepal Government and Maoists, the country was regarded as a safe place to travel as a result the number of tourists increased. Security and creation of a sense of security to the tourist are therefore key factors for a successful tourism industry.

Authenticity in culture is one of the important key factors which attracts the visitors to the destinations. Travelling is done in order to explore new things and gain knowledge about the new culture and ethnicity. If there is no authenticity in the tourism product that is being offered then for the same experience tourists won't come to the destination. For instance, Ghalegau was the major tourist destination for a longer time period and the attracting factor was their culture and ethnicity. The visit of many tourists is enhancing the regional development of the destination. Mowforth and Munt

(2015) argued that the endowed natural landscapes or unique culture are key factors for the development of sustainable tourism. Therefore, countries need to preserve landscapes and indigenous cultural values for the development of sustainable tourism. The same view is seen in Nguyen (2015), Nguyen (2014), Nguyen (2013), and Vu et al (2020).

The plans and policies that the government adopts will directly impact the development of sustainable tourism. For instance, Bhutan is the perfect example; the policy that the Bhutanese government has adopted can be a milestone for those countries which are gifted by nature. Garcia-Melon et al. (2012) said that management and institutions have a strong impact on the development of sustainable tourism.

Tourism is a joint effort so collaboration with the other stakeholders is really important and among those participation of local people is utmost. As local people serve as the essential factor to safeguard the authenticity of the destination as well as play a crucial factor to understand the needs of the tourist and impact of tourism on different aspects of the society. For instance, when a service is being offered by the outsiders they may only focus on the profit without considering other factors. However, when local people are involved they may regard tourism as a source of income for the long run and work accordingly to balance the available resources along with modification in the service style without destroying an authenticity. Seldjan and Donald (2009) examined the concept of the development of sustainable tourism in urban destinations and showed that there are important similarities and differences between stakeholders (local government, tourism industry cluster, environment offices), especially, the perceptions of different stakeholders have a significant influence on the development of sustainable tourism in urban areas.

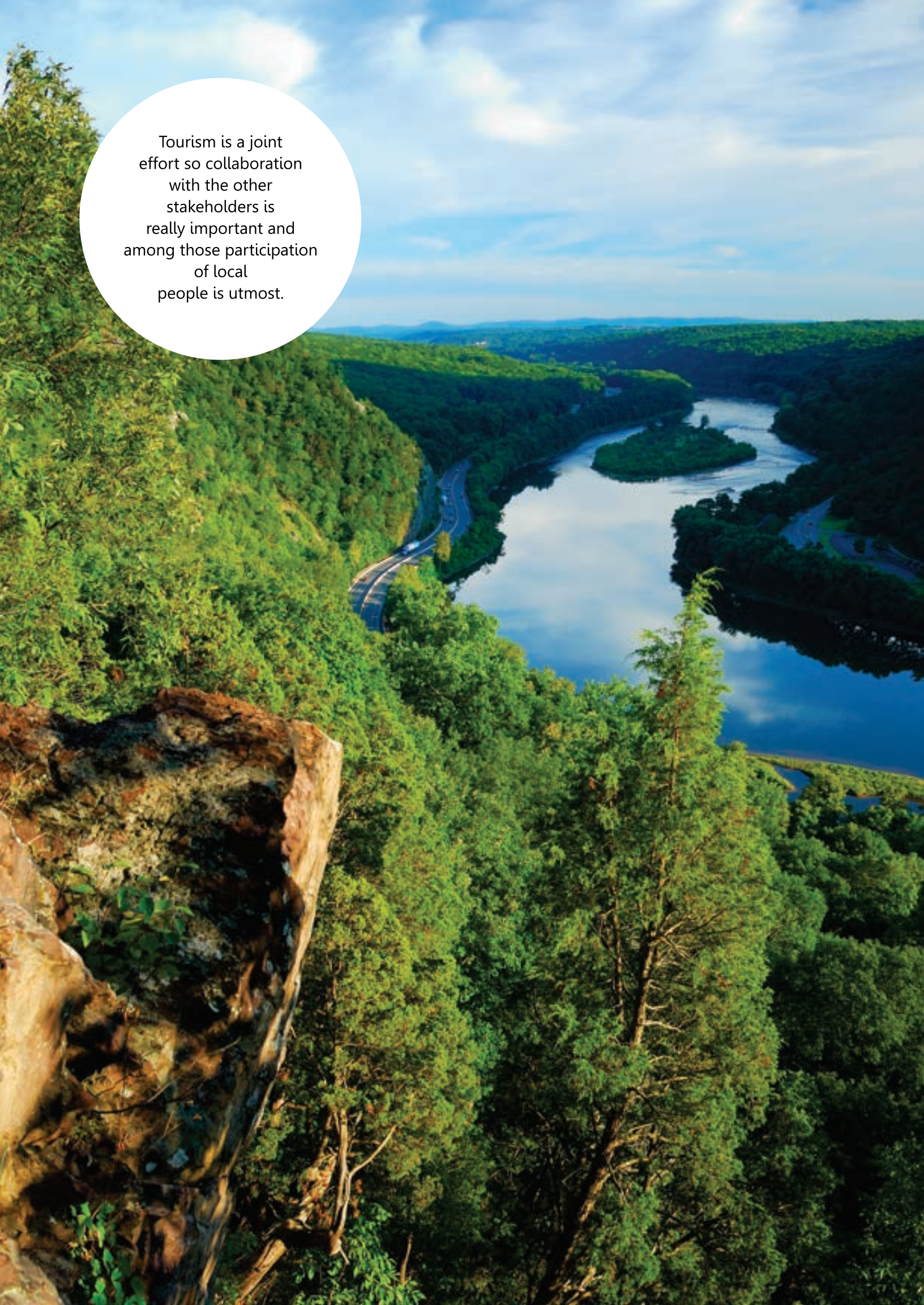
Key resources are the major attraction factor of the destinations. For the visit of any destination by the outsider the major factor that is required is attraction. Understanding the key resources on the first hand and the supply chain of it and its preservation and utilization in the best possible way coping with as per the demand of today will definitely support the development of sustainable tourism in the most effective manner.

Tourism comprises of four major components, which are: attraction, accessibility, accommodation and amenities. In the absence of one the existence of other factors cannot really give the best result. So, for the development of sustainable tourism, infrastructural development of the destination can be regarded as one of the important key factors responsible for creating a path for sustainable tourism in any given destination. Hollier and Lanquar (1996) argued that to develop sustainable tourism, countries need to build an effective tourist transport system, improve public facilities at tourist destinations, increase support activities at tourist destinations in bad weather, develop appropriate pricing policies for the high and low seasons and the supply of tourism activities must target specific groups of customers.

<sup>51</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Policies based on Sustainable Tourism concerning to current scenario of Nepalese Tourism Industry, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal



Tourism is a joint effort so collaboration with the other stakeholders is really important and among those participation of local people is utmost.





# 5 INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES





## INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA

In India, tourism as an industry has significant potential for growth and its contribution to economic development. The country's rich heritage culture, diverse ecology, beautiful terrains and places of natural beauty have received decent attention from both national as well as international travellers. The tourist expenditure on tourism allied services like transport, accommodation, food, recreation forms a significant part of its contribution to the GDP of the Indian economy.

The growing impact and stimulus created by the tourism sector position its place as an economic powerhouse, and its potential as a tool for growth are irrefutable. The tourism sector, while heading for growth, contributes to the creation of diverse and large-scale employment. By understanding various heritages, cultures and lifestyles, tourism acts as a means for building peace in the world.

Recognizing the prominence of achieving sustainable development (SD) by 2030 as per the UN Member States commitment, the Indian tourism sector has been embracing the SD concepts and supporting environmental protection, and economic development thereby augmenting sustainable livelihoods across all walks of society. In India, the tourism industry provides opportunities for not only big tourism enterprises but also for medium and small-scale business enterprises, which is mostly important in sustaining rural communities and their livelihoods.

India is known for its diverse culture with a harmonious blend of art, religion and philosophy. The tourists become attracted to and acquainted with the culture, customs and conventions. The mode of living of the local people at tourist destinations helps tourists to strengthen the bonds of friendship, cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. The tourism industry in India majorly contributes to:

- Increase in national income
- Generation of foreign exchange
- Rising of Tax revenue
- Transformation of the regional economy

### Indian tourism is attracting the world's attention day by day and the salient aspects of India's Tourism Sector are:

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) as per the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index of 2019, ranked India to the 34th position from 40 in 2018, and 52 in 2017
- India accounts for the bulk of South Asia's travel and tourism (T&T) GDP and, thus, remains the sub-region's most competitive T&T economy
- According to the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index, 2019 of the WEF, India is the only lower-middle-income country in the top 35
- The Government of India is striving towards realizing a 1% share in the world's international tourist arrivals by 2020, and a 2% share by 2025
- India has a 7500km coastline, 74% of the Himalayan Mountains and has the only living desert in the World
- India has the sixth-largest number of world heritage sites in the world
- India is the birthplace of four major religions in the world
- Of the 38 World Heritage Sites located, India is home to 30 cultural sites, 7 natural sites, and 1 mixed site.
- 10 bio-geographical zones and 26 biotic provinces are also located in India.

### SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: VARIOUS FORMS

Generally, people like to travel for various reasons. They may like to travel for recreation/leisure/ vacation/visit friends, and relatives. People also travel for business and professional engagements, for health treatment or to undertake religious and other pilgrimages, or to pursue more personal motives of interest. Based on the type of activity the tourism can majorly be classified, as in table.

**Table 7: Classification of Tourism activities**

Classification	Coverage
Sport, physical activities	Non-professional active participation in all kinds of sport and outdoor and indoor activities, e.g. golf, tennis, skiing, skating, swimming, rowing, sailing, surfing, other water sports, jogging, cycling, walking, hiking, trekking, climbing, mountaineering, horse riding, pony trekking, fishing, angling, shooting, hunting
Attending events (including sports), spectators & participants	Theatre, concerts, festivals, opera, ballet, circus, cinema, recreation parks, theme parks, amusement parks, ballroom, discotheque, dancing, casinos, gambling, betting, other entertainment, sports events.
Education, heritage, nature	Education, studying (not connected to the profession), visiting museums, exhibitions, historical sites and buildings, botanical and zoological gardens, nature reserves.
Health activities	Spas, fitness, health resorts, other treatments and cures.
Religious activities	Attending religious events, pilgrimages, Zion Christian Church (Moria City, Limpopo, South Africa) and many others around the country
Sightseeing	Sightseeing by group trips, touring, cruising, landscape or cityscape by walking, cycling or by taking a motorized drive
Shopping	Visiting stores, shops, arcades in search of merchandise, or simply window shopping.

Classification	Coverage
Meetings, and conventions	Attending meetings, conferences, congresses, conventions, seminars, trade fairs and exhibitions, incentive weekends.
Passive leisure	Relaxing, sunbathing, eating and drinking.

**Source:** Authors compilation from the literature

**GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES**

The Ministry of Tourism is the nodal agency in India for formulating national policies and programs. The Ministry coordinates the activities of various Central and State Government Agencies, Union Territories as well as the private sector for promoting the development of tourism in the country. India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) is the only public sector undertaking under the charge of the Ministry of Tourism responsible for promoting tourism. The Ministry also has autonomous institutions viz; (i) Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) (ii) National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT) and the Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs) (iii) Indian Culinary Institute (ICI).

The Ministry takes care of all policy matters that include development of policies; planning; coordination with other ministries, departments, States/Union Territory Administrations; regulation, standards and guidelines; infrastructure and product development; research, analysis, monitoring and evaluation, international cooperation and external assistance; legislation, etc. Furthermore, the Ministry has other functions such as assistance in the formulation of policies by providing feedback from the field offices; monitoring of plan projects and assisting in the plan formulation; coordinating the activities of the field offices and their supervision; regulation; approval and classification of

hotels, restaurants, Incredible India Bed and Breakfast (IIB&B); approval of travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators, etc. The Human Resource Development ministry supports developing HRD Institutions and setting standards and guidelines and all other establishment matters of the Ministry of Tourism.

A National Policy on tourism was drafted in 2002, which is in review to include special provisions for sustainable tourism i.e. Tourism Policy 2020, highlighting the importance of the tourism sector and the objectives of tourism development in the country. The policy aims to harness the direct and multiplier effects of the tourism sector for employment generation and poverty eradication in an environmentally sustainable manner. The government of India thus takes several steps from time to time for the development of the tourism industry. The government is working to gain 1% of the global international tourist arrivals pie by 2% by 2025.

In line with this growth strategy, some major government initiatives and schemes that are being aimed at catapulting tourism-based employment and income are:

**Swadesh Darshan Scheme**

It is launched by the Ministry of Tourism, for integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in India and is envisioned for positioning the tourism sector as a driving





force for economic growth, a major engine for job creation, building synergy with various sectors, etc. 'DekhoApnaDesh' webinar series was launched to promote domestic tourism and educate people on various destinations and showcase the sheer depth and expanse of the Indian culture and heritage. People were urged to visit 15 domestic tourist destinations by 2022.

Under this scheme, fifteen thematic circuits have been identified for development, namely: North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Tirthankar Circuit & Sufi Circuit. In pursual of this scheme in 2018-19, and 2019 -20, the Ministry has framed 'Development of Iconic Tourist Destinations Scheme', a Central Sector Scheme for the development of nineteen identified iconic destinations in the country.

#### **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation, and Spirituality Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) Scheme**

This scheme helps in identifying and developing pilgrim sites across the country and enriches the religious tourism experience. This scheme allows Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and runs under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) model. Twelve cities that are being developed under the PRASAD are; Ajmer(Rajasthan), Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), Amritsar( Punjab), Dwaraka (Gujarat), Gaya(Bihar), Kamakhya (Assam), Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu), Kedarnath (Uttarakhand), Mathura (Uttar Pradesh), Puri (Odisha), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) and Vellankani (Tamil Nadu).

#### **SAATHI (System for Assessment, Awareness & Training for Hospitality Industry)**

SAATHI was introduced by partnering with the Quality Council of India (QCI) in October 2020. The initiative will effectively implement Covid-19 guidelines/SOPs for safe operations of hotels, restaurants and other units.

#### **New Destinations**

In 2020, the Government of India added four new tourist attractions in Gujarat—Arogya Van, Ekta Mall, Children's Nutrition Park, and Sardar Patel Zoological Park/Jungle Safari. In October 2020, the government of India added four new tourist attractions in Gujarat— Arogya Van, Ekta Mall, Children's Nutrition Park and Sardar Patel Zoological Park/Jungle Safari.

#### **Branding, and Marketing Initiatives**

The government of India's aggressive major branding and marketing initiatives like- 'Incredible India!' and 'Atithi Devo Bhava' aim to provide a focused impetus to growth.

#### **Issuance of Medical Visa**

A fresh category of medical visa (M visa) has been released by the Indian Government to encourage medical tourism in the country.

Tax holiday for hotels around UNESCO World Heritage sites  
A five-year tax holiday has also been offered for all the 2, 3, and 4 starred hotels located around UNESCO World Heritage sites in India, except in Delhi and Mumbai.



#### **Incredible India 2.0 campaign**

Launched in 2017 this campaign aims for promoting various destinations and tourism products of India in important, and potential source markets worldwide, such as spiritual, medical and wellness tourism. Additionally, the 'Incredible India Mobile App' was launched in 2018 to support travellers and showcase their major experiences travelling in India.

#### **Tax Refund for Tourists (TRT) Scheme**

The Union Budget in 2019-20 introduced a Tax Refund for Tourists (TRT) scheme in countries like Singapore to encourage tourists to spend more in India and boost tourism.

#### **Public Service Delivery System (PSDS)**

A web-based portal was created by the Ministry of Tourism to provide all the applicants for approval of hotel projects and track their applications online on a real-time basis through a single-window clearance system. Besides these initiatives, the Government of India identified the following Niche Products under the Ministry of Tourism for development, and promotion i.e. 1. Cruise, 2. Adventure 3. Medical, 4. Wellness, 5. Golf, 6. Polo, 7. Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE), 8. Eco-tourism, 9. Film Tourism, 10. Sustainable Tourism, 11. Rural Tourism.

**Figure15: Types of Sustainable Tourism**





### **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INITIATIVES**

Globally, recognizing the impacts of climate change and global warming on causing damage to life and property and its detrimental influence on the tourism industry where tourism constituted a major share of the GDP, many developed, developing and underdeveloped regions embarked on sustainable tourism initiatives. The GHG emissions caused by tourism value chains caught major attention by all as they contribute negatively to the existence of fragile ecosystems. Recognizing this challenge towards creating a sustainable balance between tourists and their eco-friendly behaviours and heritage conservation, the government of India is constantly working to provide policy mechanisms to guide the industry towards sustainable use of resources thereby mitigating negative impacts on the environment and society.

In 1998, the Ministry of Tourism extensively pondered with the industry and other stakeholders, and came up with "Ecotourism in India – Policy and Guidelines", covering: ecotourism definition and ecotourism resources of India; Policy and planning and operational guidelines for Government, developers, operators and suppliers, visitors, destination population/host community and NGOs/scientific & research institutions. As part of these initiatives, various parameters were introduced including the polluter pays principle, regulatory issues, environment care, sustaining heritage, carrying capacity and inclusive economic growth, etc.

The Government of India also constituted the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) in 2010 and the Ministry developed GSTC criteria for sustainable tourism in the Indian context. Thus, sustainable tourism concepts were integrated proactively into the policy framework in the 12th Five Year Plan, with a major focus on the 'Atithi Devo Bhavah' initiative and involving schools, NGOs, industry associations, etc. in carrying out sustained cleanliness drives at important tourist

destinations through 'Swachh Bharat Mission By setting up of way-side amenities, biodegradable toilets, etc.

In 2016, the Ministry of Tourism launched the Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) in association with Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI), a non-profit organization formed in 2008 with the sole aim to promote and ensure environmentally responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry.

To make tourism sustainable, India with its diverse climate, hospitality, uniqueness has developed innovation in tourism by welcoming various types of tourist packages viz., rural tourism, adventure tourism, medical tourism, heritage tourism, luxury tourism and eco-tourism and pilgrim packages to both national and international tourists.

**Rural Tourism** - The aim is to develop concern in heritage and culture, and encourage visits to village settings to experience and live a relaxed and healthy lifestyle.

**Adventure Tourism** - Adventure sports are covered under specialized packages for activities that include mountaineering, trekking, bungee jumping, mountain biking, river rafting & rock climbing.

**Medical Tourism** - Medical tourism is gaining attention in India because of its competency and cost-effectiveness. India is also known for various forms of medical treatments like Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) besides its world-class expertise in allopathy. Tourists visit India seeking specialized medical treatments, mainly ayurvedic, spa and other therapies. The key intention of this kind of tourism is achieving, promoting, or maintaining good health and a sense of well-being. In recent times many conferences, and conventions have been taking place in India and the country has become an ideal location for medical tourism.



**Heritage Tourism** - Tourists visit India mainly to appreciate its vast and unique cultural heritage in various cities. The country's rich heritage is wholly reflected in religious monuments, museums, art galleries, temples, majestic forts and gardens in urban as well as rural sites.

**Luxury Tourism** - The luxury travel market in India is likely to grow at a rate of 12.8% during 2015-25, the highest in comparison with any other BRIC country.

**Pilgrimage Tourism** - India is known as a religious hub for different cultures and attracts many tourists arrive here on pilgrimage every year. Some well-known pilgrim destinations that attract a massive number of tourists in South India are: Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Mysore, Mahabaleshwar, Rameshwaram, Sabarimala, Kanyakumari, Hyderabad, Goa, Pondicherry, and in other parts of the country viz., Aurangabad, Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Jhansi, Nalanda, etc. Haridwar, Ujjain, Shirdi, Varanasi, Allahabad, Puri, Ajmer, Amritsar, Vaishno Devi, Badrinath, Kedarnath, etc. are some other places of religious importance. Srinagar, Kullu, Manali, Dehradun, Nainital, Darjeeling, Ooty, etc. are also famous tourist destinations. These tourist destinations are also famous for their handicrafts, fairs, folk dances, music and people's hospitality.

**Ecotourism**- Ecotourism is gaining a lot of attraction amongst tourists as it involves visiting fragile, and relatively untouched natural areas and is intended as a low-impact alternative to conventional commercial mass tourism. Ecotourism consciously makes earnest efforts to preserve the naturally gifted beauty of the region and conserves wildlife in their natural habitat. In the process, ecotourism glorifies offbeat places, their rich culture and traditions. A vast variety of flora and fauna in various states of India is a major factor behind the growing popularity as tourist eco destinations.

The Ministry recognized fundamental principles for the development of ecotourism such as; involving local communities that contribute to the overall economic development of the region and identifying conflicting exploitation of local resources that negate the interests of local inhabitants and their livelihoods. The type and scale of ecotourism needs to be compatible with the socio-cultural characteristics of the local community and the environment. The strategies for ecotourism development should be integrated with the overall development of the region with ample scope for expansion of public services. To this extent the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India has prepared 'Policy for Eco-Tourism in Forest and Wildlife Areas' and the Ministry of tourism has extended support to this Policy.

**In Himachal Pradesh Community**-Based Ecotourism (CBET) has been practiced. Participatory Forestry Management for the development of forests has been initiated. They have been generating revenue by exercising these initiatives. Ecosphere, an organization has been working for bio-reserve conservation and bringing into the limelight the hidden beautiful tourism destinations in the state.

The state of Karnataka is one of the popular ecotourism destinations in India. Jungle lodges, heritage sites and resorts make Karnataka a popular ecotourism destination in the country. Karnataka Ecotourism Development Board (KEDB), in association with the National Tiger Conservation Authority, has developed ecotourism policies to attract both public and private investments. To meet the growing supply, various demand generating programs like creating more awareness at the tourist hotspots and facilitating ambitious activities to attract tourists are also planned. Eco-friendly stays by Jhari Ecostay, Silver Oak Resort, and Chukki Mane are the major attractions.





The state of Kerala is another ecotourism destination. Here, the beauty of ecotourism lies in their hospitality towards travellers. It is a place for nature lovers and these Western Ghats are among the top biodiversity destinations in the world. There are many tourist activities available for people to connect with nature, such as nature walks and treks in gardens, hill stations, tea estates boating in the backwaters, etc. Thenmala Ecotourism Project is a prominent development in South India that works towards the development of the Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary Reservoir and the Deer Rehabilitation Centre. Most of the resorts in Kerala follow ecotourism guidelines.

In the capital state of New Delhi, the Ecotourism Society of India has been practicing sustainable tourism activities related to reducing carbon footprints and jointly working with enterprises in the tourism sector to create awareness on the ecotourism practices and identifying new farm stays, tourism destinations apart from the existing well-known places.

In order to showcase the cultural diversity in the State of Uttarakhand, the tourism department has introduced village treks for tourists to experience the real lifestyle of Kumaoni villagers. Homestay is another example of successful execution of eco-tourism. Additionally, the State Bird Spring Festival is a tourist attraction that has enhanced tourism in recent years.

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is home to another popular Northeast Indian ecotourism destination. NGOs like 'Future Generations Arunachal' and 'Green Pastures' have been working for the development of eco-tourism, homestays, showcasing the tribal culture and on nature protection. Various nature protection activities have been taken up by the Apatani Plateau Initiative, Ziro, and Tangsa Community Conservation Reserve activity in the State of Arunachal Pradesh.

Assam is another state that has been attracting eco-tourism with their beautiful sights, the native tribes and their exciting traditions. The Ecotourism Society of India and the Assam Tourism Development Corporation are jointly creating awareness on responsible tourism. The deprived youth are motivated to set up eco-camps in these regions.

To protect the beautiful environment, wildlife in Sikkim, a region in the northeast, sustainable tourism and eco-friendly

measures have been developed by the Directorate of Ecotourism in collaboration with the Department of Forest, Sikkim.

### PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

The Ministry of Tourism has developed Comprehensive Sustainable Tourism Criteria (STCI) after discussions with the various stakeholders for major sections of the tourism industry viz; accommodation, backwaters, lakes, tour operators, beaches and river sectors for the entire country. The Ministry has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI) which was earlier known as Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI). The main objective of RTSOI is to create awareness and educate all stakeholders in the tourism industry about the significance of sustainable and responsible tourism practices and safeguarding the interests of local communities.

As part of ecotourism promotion, several eco-friendly measures are to be adopted by the hotels, and tour operators were also suggested. The Ministry of Tourism has set guidelines for authorizing hotel projects and issued guidelines for the classification of hotels under various categories. In accordance with these guidelines, it is mandatory to integrate various eco-friendly measures like waste management systems, Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), rainwater harvesting system, etc. Once the hotel is operational the Hotel and Restaurant Approval Classification Committee (HRACC), through physical inspection, ensures that proper measures for categorization under eco-hotels, including measures for energy and water conservation, pollution control, installation of non-CFC equipment for refrigeration and air conditioning, are also undertaken by the hotel. It has also been recommended that the architecture of the buildings, especially in ecologically fragile and hilly areas, should bear in mind sustainability criteria as far as possible to conform to local ethos.

### PROMINENT ECOTOURISM INITIATIVES IN INDIA

The first planned ecotourism destination 'Thenmala' in India is in Kerala. Ecotourism is designated as a 'thrust industry' in states such as Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir as well as Uttaranchal. The government has announced a good range of incentives for ecotourism projects such as resorts, spas, hotels, entertainment/amusement parks and ropeways. Major Initiatives for Ecotourism Development in India:





- The development of Horsley Hill in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh
  - The development of Satkosi in Orissa
  - Ecotourism project in Morni-Pinjore Hills and Sultanpur National Park in Haryana
  - The project on integrated development of tribal circuits, with a focus on ecotourism in Himachal Pradesh.
  - Expansion of Wayanad in Kerala
  - Development of Tourist Circuit (Western Assam Circuit) Dhubri Mahamaya-Barpeta-Hajo
  - Expansion of Mechuka destination in Andhra Pradesh
  - Development of tourist destination in Khensa in Nagal, and Circuit
  - Udhyanandalam-Madumalai-Anaimalai, Tamil Nadu
  - Jungle Lodges and Resorts, Karnataka
  - Private initiative in Kerala-Casino Group of Hotels, Tours India Ltd. adopted 2 tribal villages in Periyar Tiger Reserve
  - GEF Project-Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu for developing ecotourism as an alternative method of livelihood and preservation of biodiversity in the region
  - Sikkim Biodiversity and Ecotourism Project
  - Corbett-Binsar-Nainital Ecotourism Initiative in Uttarakhand
  - Great Himalayan National Park, HP – Eco-Development Project
- State level Initiatives under Ecotourism**
- Andhra Pradesh partnered with UNWTO to promote sustainable tourism Coastal Tourism Circuit in Sri Potti Sriramulu, Nellore under Swadesh Darshan Scheme
  - A Community-based ecotourism development has been taken up at Bairutla and Pacharla in the Nallamala forest
  - The Assam government encouraged the 'Majuli Sustainable Tourism Development Project' to encourage a carbon-free tourism experience on the island
  - Chhattisgarh made provisions to promote eco-tourism, rural tourism, and adventure tourism and tourism advancement through Special Tourism Areas/Zones. A tribal tourism circuit has also been identified for development under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme
  - Gujarat introduced a homestay policy
  - Himachal Pradesh announced HP Eco-Tourism Policy 2017 and took up projects under the Infrastructure Development Investment Program for Tourism (IDIPT)
  - Karnataka Declared "2017 – Year of the Wild." Jungle Lodges and Resorts is a Joint Venture of the Department of Tourism, and the Department of Forest Karnataka Ecotourism Development Board (KEDB)
  - Kerala government is rebranding Kerala as 'Land of Adventure', and introduced Coracle Ride as part of the Seethathode - Gavi Popular Tourism (SGPT) project
  - Madhya Pradesh government announced the Madhya Pradesh Forest (Entertainment and Wildlife experience) Rule 2015 and established Madhya Pradesh Eco-tourism Development Board.
  - Mahabhraman Scheme Signed MoU with Airbnb to promote unique experiences Pustaka sheGaon (village of books) in Maharashtra
  - Odisha implemented Ecotourism Policy 2013 and developed 42 ecotourism facilities across 23 forest divisions
  - Sikkim implemented Ecotourism Policy 2011. Sikkim Ecotourism Council introduced Sikkim Himalayan Home Stay Program
  - Tamil Nadu Vehicle Safari at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) introduced Tree-Top Rest Houses and promoted Mangrove Ecotourism at Karankadu
  - Telangana state promoted Samskruthika Sarathi Integrated Development of Ecotourism Circuit in Mahabubnagar District and Tribal Tourism Circuit in Warangal District
  - Uttarakhand drafted Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2017 and established Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB)

**Table 8: ICT applications in Smart Tourism Destinations**

Tourism Applications	Utility Function	Destination components	Smart tourism destinations
Sport, physical activities	Sport, physical activities	Attraction	Smart people, smart mobility
Vehicle tracking and monitoring system for getting real-time information and location of vehicles	Planning	Accessibility	Smart living, smart mobility
Energy-efficient green hotels for reducing consumption of electricity and pollution green travel.	Sustainability	Amenities	Smart environment
Applications for showing available tour packages, translation of languages and providing guidance to the tourists on the visit.	Guiding	Available packages	Smart people, smart mobility
Access to information about nearby attractions to visit, visiting hours through mobile devices.	Marketing	Activities	Smart mobility

Tourism Applications	Utility Function	Destination components	Smart tourism destinations
Generating direct and quick feedback from tourists through ICTs regarding service quality and required demands.	Generating Feedback	Ancillary Services	Smart living

**Source:** Buhalis, D., & Amaranggana, A. (2014) Smart tourism destinations. In Z. Xiang & I. Tussyadiah (Eds.), Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism (pp. 553–564). Dublin: Springer.

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: MAJOR CHALLENGES**

Some of the major challenges that need attention for the promotion of sustainable tourism in India are-

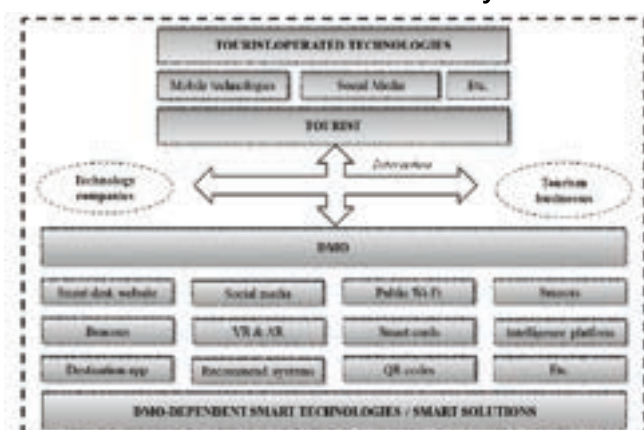
- A Cumbersome Process for Visa Facility: Several visitors in India find the e-visa facility; the process of applying for a visa is cumbersome one. Low awareness of the e-visa facility makes the entry process rather difficult for tourists. Also, a limited number of repeat visits and the number of accompanying persons are permitted under medical e-visa, which affect the entry process of tourists to the country, impeding the tourism sector in India.
- Infrastructure and connectivity: There are several drawbacks in infrastructure like living facilities, hotels, sanitation, etc., and inadequate connectivity obstructs tourist visits to heritage sites.
- Capacity Building and Skills Upgradation: There is a dearth of qualified individuals in the tourism and hospitality sector which frustrates visitors providing a world-class experience.
- Advertisement and Marketing: India’s marketing strategy is major distress for tourist places. The Existing campaigns for the places need aggressive management strategies as marketing majorly affects the tourism industry of the region.
- Safety: There are instances of tourists being mugged and robbed or cheated in India, and returned to their home countries with no proper channels for seeking justice.
- Sanitation and Health: Lack of good hygiene and sanitation in rural areas and in cities affects health care.
- Access: The continued lack of electricity and access to proper rest houses are major concerns in certain areas of the country. Gaining access to important travel related information can even prove tough for domestic travellers, foreign travellers are hence not at ease.

- Environmental damage: Tourism has also caused a lot of environmental concerns in the beaches, hills and forests across the nation.
- Banks and ATM facilities: Most tourist spots do not have Banks and ATM facilities.
- Environmental pollution: Widespread environmental pollution is another major issue that has adverse effects on India’s tourism.
- Social Communication: With India being known for its linguistic diversity and the variety in dialects, communicating with locals can serve to be a major challenge due to the language barriers.
- Packages: Cost-effective packages designed to cater to the needs of people of all strata based on the demography of the country is another issue as travel is still considered a luxury by the common people till date.

**SMART TOURISM INITIATIVES**

The United Nations (UN) has designated the year 2017 as the "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development", in the context of the 2030 Agenda for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This has made all the stakeholders in the tourism industry (particularly public administrations, private businesses and knowledgeable agents, including researchers in universities) integrate their existing business operations as well as their new business ventures with sustainable tourism. The role of tourism has taken a paradigm shift and started working towards 'smart tourism' entangled with inclusive growth. The concept of a 'smart city' is one of the sustainable development approaches that have gained considerable attention in the last few years (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2014, 2015). The same conceptual approach is tailored in the tourism sector under 'smart destination' (Yoo and Gretzel, 2016; Dos Santos Júnior, et al., 2017) as a part of sustainable development.

**Figure 16: Smart Destinations: Technology Innovation and Sustainability**



**Source:** Femenia-Serra et al. (2018) and Ivars-Baidal et al. (2017)

This concept of smart tourism is a novel incitement that has evolved with a technology-centric approach to meet the growing demand for tourism destinations. It's a part of the smart city development initiative. The process of transforming the existing tourist destinations into technology-enabled ones comes under the purview of smart tourism. Smart tourism is a social phenomenon that has emerged from the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with tourism services (Hunter et al. 2015). The capacity of ICT to support tourism has been discussed and developed in many parts of the world for quite a long time (Gretzel 2011). The European Capital of Smart Tourism defines a smart destination as "a destination facilitating access to tourism and hospitality products, services, spaces and experiences through ICT-based tools." It is a healthy social and cultural environment, which can be found through a focus on the city's social and human capital. It also implements innovative ICT-enabled solutions and fosters the development of



entrepreneurial businesses and their interconnectedness. The new ways of conducting tourism through ICT applications and improving the long-term sustainability of the business may be considered as 'smart tourism'. Smart tourism is an amalgamation of various ICT practices which form a part of smart cities.

Tourists are considered as one of the demand driving factors for the growth of smart tourism principles in tourism destinations. Tourism may be viewed from different dimensions like market competition, creativity in conducting business by providing more accessibility to the tourist destinations through a citizen-centric approach.

Development of 'state-of-art technology tourism destinations in urban, semi-urban and rural areas coupled with hybrid eco-system through the application of ICT in tourism operation, governance and service delivery would be a unique model in the tourism sector for its long term sustainability. It might be a shift towards a society with an ever-increasing focus on ICT vectors. These smart city destinations would become the preferred choices for domestic and international tourists shortly.

#### ICT Applications in Smart Tourism Destinations

The adaptation of innovative technologies in the smart tourism destination approach like online applications, social media platforms, QR codes, complex algorithms, cookies, hashtags, geo-tagging and the websites by tourist operators for giving first-hand information on the destinations availability of accommodation, reservation of hotels and travel bookings have been adopted in the tourism sector and continuously trying to improve their sustainability and competitiveness. These innovative technologies in the tourism sector may be called iTour practices. These practices may spread out new business models and markets and develop different perspectives on value creation and competition.

Adapting to the new demand response, notwithstanding the existing operational changes in the tourism domain, the application of advanced technologies would help in enhancing enterprise competitiveness. Some of the technological applications to increase competitiveness would be customer relationship management systems (CRM), business intelligence systems and competitive intelligence, marketing systems (B2B, B2C) and central reservation systems (CRS), content management systems, integration with social networks and positioning.

However, the involvement of local stakeholders and community awareness is very much needed for the successful integration and implementation of the iTour practices. Growing interest among travellers towards ecotourism destinations and the integration of technology into tourism is paving the way for the growth of eco and sustainable tourism in the long run. Smart tourism practices need to strike a balance between environmental, economic and socio-cultural issues of its habitat for improving the quality of the tourist experience.

#### ICT Perspective and Smart Tourism Initiatives in India

Smart Tourism initiative is not an independent concept. It is embraced with technology as a core factor. Firstly, it includes the governance, and ICT application, followed by innovation

in tourism destinations and finally sustainability (Chourabi et al., 2012), with public and private participation. The Smart Tourism Destination project is categorically associated with community participation besides the application of ICTs. In India, the evolution and development of smart tourism destinations mostly depend on technology, innovation, accessibility and sustainability.

- **Technology:** As mentioned earlier, the application of ICT into governance and tourist value chain [1] is the means through which tourist destinations may be transformed into smart and sustainable destinations at great speed. The development of these new landscapes coupled with ICT is not only for tourists but also ensures a better lifestyle for the local stakeholders.
- **Mobile Apps:** Internet usage through mobile devices like smartphones or tablets is the first successful step in the Indian technological revolution. This has led to the launch of mobile apps like MakeMyTrip, clear trips, redbus, Indian Railways Catering, and Tourism(IRCTC), tripigator, tripoto, audio compass, TravelKhana, in the tourism sector to handhold the tourists in gaining unforgettable experiences in their trips. This mobile app connectivity network would integrate the tourist with their required destination at any time from any part of the world.

These mobile apps would also connect tourists to the Information Exchange Centres (IEC) with the help of artificial intelligence, cloud computing, IoT etc. and share the travel information to the tourists, tourism destinations and tourism enterprises and allow them to access the necessary information. These multicultural and multilingual mobile applications would allow global tourists to interact with the tourist destination and collect a lot of information on the particular destination for hassle-free travel. Hence, Indian tourism bodies are encouraging these types of applications and employing them successfully.

- **Free Wi-Fi:** A free wi-fi connection with reasonable bandwidth at all tourist destinations is the most important service that helps tourists use tourism-related mobile applications and geo-locations to pinpoint all the places with augmented virtual reality. The importance that the Indian tourism bodies place on these types of





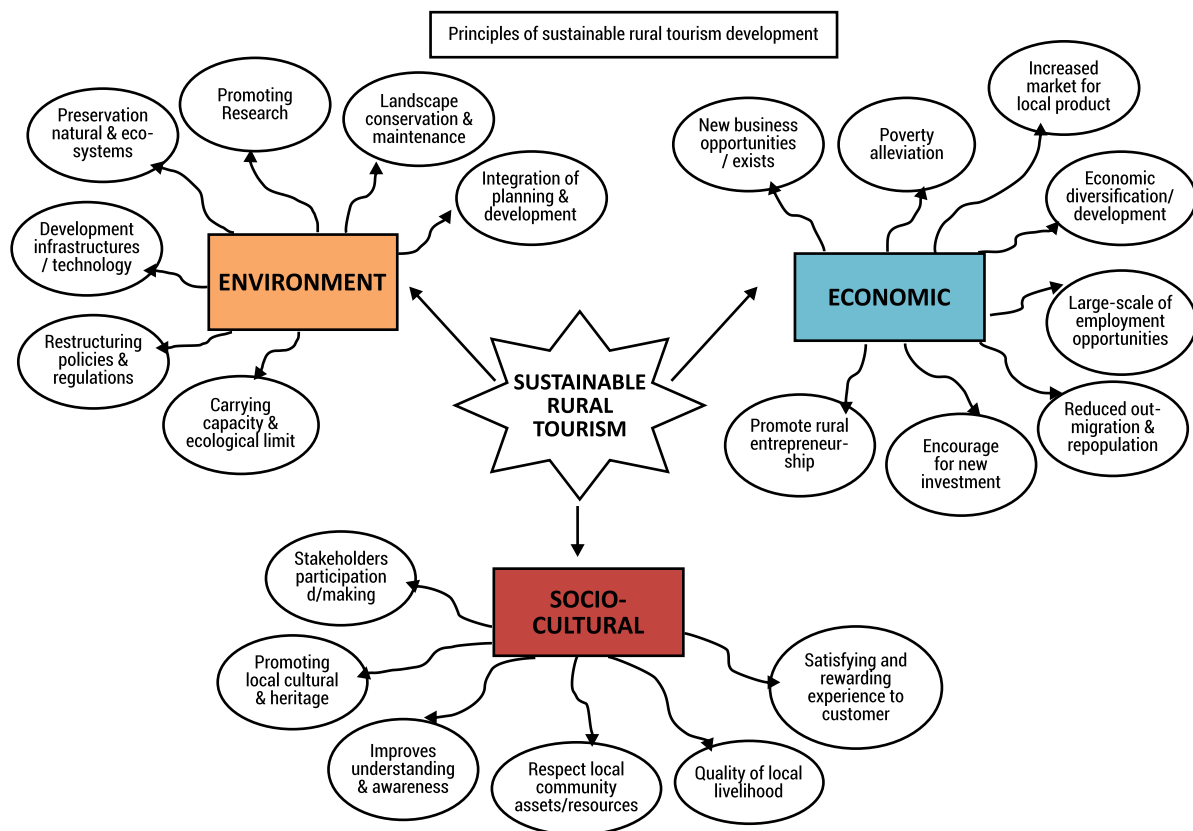
solutions is reflected in the Apps' technology, created to encourage the implementation of these types of applications.

- **QR Codes:** The usage of QR[2] codes has been introduced into the tourism sector. These QR codes allow immediate and smart communication between tourists and the destinations, providing information related to the billing process, easy money transactions for payments, shopping, nearby hospitals and many other tourism-related services which further enhance ease and transparency.
- **Big Data:** Data related to different fields like governance, security, healthcare and tourist preferences, hotel tariffs, public transport facilities, safety, nearby banks, hospitals, food courts are provided on big data platforms. This technology with large data and high update frequency provides an efficient solution for the management, maintenance and analysis of the information generated. The use of CCTVs, infra-red sensors and Wi-Fi provides data on people's mobility in private vehicles, vehicle traffic. This helps in regulating people's mobility under safe and secure measures, traffic control, parking allotment, video monitoring in tunnels, subways and unsafe areas, location sensors and crowd control at large events and shows. Thus, big data is one of the notable aspects of furthering smart destinations.
- **Innovation:** Today, innovation coupled with technology is vital for improving productivity in the tourism sector. Technological innovation linked with ICT and digital media is prominently used both from demand and supply perspectives. Therefore, tourism-centred innovation could be thought over in place of traditional tourism practices. The tourism destinations may adapt to the changing scenario by bringing alterations in the existing business models that can intervene in products and services, which requires a rethinking of the entire tourism sector to generate socio-economic, environmental and human value. Smart tourism treats tourists as heroes since their degree of spending depends purely on loyalty and value creation. Innovation also helps to create value for their customers by augmenting promotion, distribution and marketing of services, design of new products based on changing demand levels. Therefore, innovation in the tourism sector is seen as a knowledge-based ability to generate value i.e., value for companies, value for tourists and value for destinations.

Another trait of smart tourism is that the sector is service-driven. The majority of the enterprises operating here are resorts, hotels, food courts, travel agencies, car rental companies and entertainment companies that provide different services. Many of these are small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups, family businesses, etc. with moderate investments. Though innovations in this sector



Figure 17: Principles of Sustainable Rural Tourism



Source: Dwyer & Edwards (2010); Pierret (2012)

do not require huge R&D investments, small initiatives towards helping services in meeting the growing demand and supply can improve productivity. Hence, the sustained success of an enterprise depends on the futuristic vision, long-term planning and technologically innovative outlook to meet the changing demands of the tourists.

- Accessibility:** The concept of "Tourism for All" has gained importance in the tourism sector. The basic idea of travel in the mind of a traveller starts from the assessment of the accessibility of a particular destination. This aspect is more important for travellers with many challenges on account of their physical challenges such as illness, pregnancy, age and infants in a group. These groups try to evaluate the accessibility based on infrastructure facilities, transport, ICT enabled technologies like international protocols, among which are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0), the Mobile Web Best Practices (MWBP) and W3C Mobile Web Application Best Practices (World Wide Web Consortium). Thus, smart destinations would position themselves as socially responsible in the tourism sector. A smart tourist destination ideally provides necessary information on digital platforms and social media networks. The destinations focus more on improving urban infrastructure viz., airports, ports, train and bus

stations, museums, all public buildings, parks and other public spaces to become accessible. Awareness campaigns on the use of technology augment, to a larger extent, with more attention on visual aids. The more accessible the destination the higher its popularity among tourists, as there is a direct correlation between accessibility and the number of visits.

- Sustainability:** The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as that which satisfies the present needs of the regions and the tourists, protecting and improving upon future opportunities. Accordingly, greater attention is placed on conserving biological diversity, keeping cultural integrity and protecting life support systems through a life cycle balance approach. The involvement of enterprises operating in the tourism sector through their economically sustainable business models, community stakeholders in local regions by showcasing their culture, traditions and history plays a vital role in sustainable development. Eco-tourism and sustainable tourism are the two pillars of smart tourism. Eco-tourism is involved in reducing the carbon footprint by adopting environmentally friendly approaches and taking into account the host communities and their needs by the tourist agencies and the tour operators.

Sustainable tourism contemplates different aspects viz.,

waste minimization technology, energy-saving techniques, less water consumption methods, increased quality of public transportation through open tourism data, creation of green accommodation with good spaces, etc. These technology interventions in turn increase socio-economic and environmental efficiencies and boost up productivity in the tourism sector. This kind of ecotourism model, proposed by Polese et al. (2018), is called "Smart Service Ecosystem", which is quite suitable for the tourism sector. This model is focused on value creation with long run sustainability with a transition from innovation to social innovation.

The technological dimension to achieve energy efficiency, sustainable management of water resources and waste treatment are being achieved by following various sustainable energy saving measures like:

- Hydraulic, wind, biomass and solar projects for electricity and heat generation are in place
- Application of LED technology in street lighting and decorating the historical monuments
- Sphygmomanometers to measure soil moisture in parks and gardens to install smart irrigation practices
- Efficient waste management and waste treatment and recycling techniques
- Measurement of water quality, air pollution, noise pollution, etc.
- Generation of kinetic energy on roads and pavements for traffic lights, street lights
- Use of movement sensors to gauge the light intensity required in public spaces
- Video surveillance and sensor systems at traffic movement places, tourist destinations and in people gathering areas to ensure safety

Thus sustainable tourism can be achieved by transforming the existing tourism models into a global pioneer model through the integration of technology and innovation for easy accessibility of the destinations. The interests of the stakeholders who provide investment for these transformations need to be protected. Therefore, sustainable tourism must influence all dimensions of smart destination management practices for public-public and public-private cooperation, entrepreneurs and innovative enterprises.

#### **Application of Smart Tourism Initiatives in India**

In India, smart tourism is in the nascent stage and needs collaborative efforts from the government and all the tourism stakeholders for development. The outbreak of COVID-19 brought the travel plans to almost a standstill. In this situation, the smart tourism concept has been developing as a motivational idea for safe travel. The growing pandemic has had a cascading effect on tourism. Travellers are looking for tourism service providers who can offer more sustainable travel options. As an example, in the present global pandemic, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board has planned to resume its tourist movement by following safety precautions, and adopting safety operations through Uttarakhand Smart City's online portal.

#### **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM RURAL, AND INDIA**

The focus of tourism has expanded from regular tourism visits to different tourism forms like rural tourism, religious and cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism and medical tourism. The movement of tourists from their place of residence to a new destination to spend long hours in recreational activities in a rural environment on a farm, ranch, country home, or the surrounding areas may be considered as rural tourism. A Rural Tourism destination is a place where their life, art, culture and heritage are very well displayed to develop interaction between tourists and the locals for the purpose of providing the tourists with diversified rural experience.

Rural tourism is a niche tourism market that provides scope for income generation apart from farming by developing rural enterprises with major contributions from women. Therefore, the success of rural tourism lies in bringing changes in the lifestyle of rural people by providing employment opportunities. It provides forward and backward economic linkages to empower rural communities especially women.

Rural tourism shares a rich tourism experience compared to urban tourist destinations where the tourists would actively participate in understanding the rural lifestyle and enjoy delicious cuisine, music, art and dances. Rural tourism has meshed with various seasonal events like festivals, socio-economic lifestyles, arts and crafts, traditions, natural environment, agriculture, biodiversity, flora, and fauna, in the particular area. In many developing countries like India, the eco-tourism and cultural-tourism destinations are very close to rural areas.

Therefore, the development of rural tourism helps to create new ways of livelihood for the rural communities and contributes to the growth of the village economy. Rural tourism also helps in providing employment opportunities and preventing rural migration.

Tourists interested in visiting rural areas want to be able to enjoy the natural countryside and the activities it offers. These needs are to be satisfied to the maximum extent in order to generate more demand in future. Normally, people visit rural tourist destinations with friends and relatives to spend their leisure time in an eco-friendly environment. These people are the key market segment that needs to be attracted. The numbers for the same lie around 25% in several parts of the country and is expected to grow over the coming years.

The concept of sustainable rural tourism is in line with SDGs, especially with SDG 12 which deals with "sustainable consumption and production" and SDG 16 concerning "sustainable societies." The idea that rural tourism contributes to improving the quality of life of rural communities and acts as a catalyst for economic development has been often highlighted by many experts (Andereck and Nyaupane 2011; Petrović et al. 2018; Su et al. 2018; Martínez 2019). Travellers to rural areas look to enhance their mental and physical well-being due to the soothing and healing powers of nature

<sup>52</sup> Basnet, S. (2016) 'Types of Tourism in Nepal and Their Prospect', C.6, P.18, Religious and Cultural Tourism, Para. 2, line no. 2, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Kerava (site: <https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/115568/Tourism-and-Prospect-Thesis-Report.pdf?sequence=1>)

<sup>53</sup> Gundu: One of the emerging smart city of Bhaktapur district of Nepal. 10,000 ropanis (1257.1166207529843 acre land) of land from Gundu to Balkot, Changu Narayan areas in Bhaktapur for developing a 'smart city' (site: <https://kathmandupost.com/valley/2018/01/09/govt-set-to-hire-consultant-for-smart-city-plan>)



(Sharpley and Roberts 2004; Sims 2009; Kumar 2020). Many have been attracted to this tourism model to escape from densely populated areas with too much industrialization and urbanization (Liu et al., 2020). Particularly during the pandemic (COVID-19) period, rural tourism is sought as one of the stress-removing experiences by urban residents where they can participate in healthy activities like early morning long walks and practice yoga in the open-air. In one of the recent studies conducted by Zhu and Deng (2020) in China, 412 valid samples confirmed that health-related risks like pneumonia would influence behavioural willingness to accept and prefer rural tourism as a way to relax over the weekend.

Tourism is also an easy access sector for micro and small enterprises and for the self-employed, who make up a significant part of the tourism sector and community level entrepreneurship in general. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a rising interest from tourists looking for new experiences based around natural and rural areas with open air, far from congested settings. This, combined with the already rising demand for more authentic experiences that offer stronger engagement with local communities, their culture and products, as well as demand for a greener approach in all stages of the travel experience opens up immense opportunities for the economic, social and environmental revitalization of rural areas through tourism.

Harnessing the power of tourism to drive rural development also enhances the sector's contribution to achieving other SDGs viz; Goals 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work, and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequalities) 11 (Sustainable Cities, and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption, and Production), 15 (Life on Land) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), as well as the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

### RURAL TOURISM IN INDIA

In India, almost half of the population still resides in rural areas. Even though urbanization has gained momentum there are still more than 600,000 towns in India. Rural tourism in India is an added dimension of sustainable tourism.

The government of India provided funds to the local destinations for the development of possible rural activities. While developing the policy, the government has emphasized building up both hardware (tourism infrastructure) and software (capacity building). Thirty-six rural sites are also supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) towards capacity-building programs.

Indian village life also features a unique scenario that enables the tourists to experience the history of the Vedic period in places like villages of Rajasthan, Varanasi and Maharashtra. A town named Morachi Chincholi in Maharashtra is promoted and developed for agro-tourism. In Madhya Pradesh, the village of Orchha in the Tikamgarh district was identified for the promotion of historical and adventure tourism. Pipli village in Puri district of Odisha is identified for the promotion and development of appliqué work.

The Shaam-e-Sarhad Village Resort that is located in the Kutch area of Gujarat attracts global tourists from October to March every year. The resort has been designed in Gujarati style and is managed by the local communities. It is one of the initiatives of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and is sponsored by the UNDP. The travellers witness the pristine excellence of the national heritage and its rich culture, conventions and people's way of life. It serves as a good opportunity for local communities in search of new livelihood and improving standards of living.



India being a land of diverse climatic conditions and various terrains, the plethora of rural tourist destinations across all corners of the country helps to boost rural tourism with different kinds of entrepreneurial approaches.

Thus, rural tourism has a lot of potential to transform and develop a rural economy into a modern economy by utilizing the local resources to their fullest potential. Governments and all stakeholders including the local communities and the relevant institutions in a country need to work together so that the utilization, development and management of tourist areas could be given serious attention.

#### Stakeholders of Rural tourism in India

In the process of rural tourism development, multiple stakeholders like the State Government; local panchayats; local communities; religious and social groups; businesses; tour operators; travel agencies and tourists play a key role. There are various governmental and non-governmental organizations that are working to promote rural tourism, for eg; Grass Roots; Rural Tourism Network Enterprise (RTNE); DHAN Foundation; Travel another India; Culture Aangan compete; Village Ways, and Eco Login. These organizations are creating necessary infrastructure in rural tourism destinations and marketing the concept of rural tourism and are also developing capacities to attract global tourists. Key Central Government Schemes for Promotion of Rural Tourism- the Government of India has taken several initiatives and introduced policies to propagate rural tourism.

- **Promoting Village Tourism :** The Ministry of Tourism released a Rural Tourism Infrastructure Development Component, which is part of the Product Infrastructure Development for Destinations and Circuits (PIDDC) Scheme. In this scheme 100% Central Assistance is provided to showcase rural life, art, culture and heritage in villages which are known for indigenous core competence in handloom, textiles, art and craft, and natural environment. Central Financial Assistance (CFA) is provided for both infrastructure development and capacity building. These schemes support the improvement of village surroundings and village connectivity within the panchayat limits (does not include major roads which connect the village), solid waste management and sewerage management, village illumination, tourism-related activities such as procurement of equipment and providing tourist accommodation. The State governments identify the regions suited for the promotion of rural tourism and are also responsible for seeking convergence of other schemes and allocations for the broader development of the local regions to benefit local communities.
- **Scheme for Organizing Fair, Festival and Tourism Related Events:** The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India provides financial assistance to State Governments to organize fairs and festivals and tourism-related events such as seminars, conclaves and conventions.
- **Hunar Se Rozgar Tak (HSRT):** This scheme offers courses in hospitality trades of food production, food and beverage service, housekeeping and bakery and patisserie. Apart from those courses to get tourist escorts, tourist facilitators, event facilitators, security guards, tour assistants, transfer assistants and office

assistants have also been set up. This program is delivered by Institutes of Hotel Management, Food Craft Institutes and State Tourism Development Corporations, amongst others.

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) :** This is a flagship outcome-based skill training scheme aimed at benefiting youth across the country. A monetary incentive is provided to trainees upon assessment and certification. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) implements this scheme and involves the Sector Skill Councils to identify job roles for which training could be imparted through the PMKVY. Candidates who complete the courses are awarded a Skill Card. The trainees are trained for various job roles such as guide, driver, cook, housekeeping and hospitality to the locals, etc.

#### INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES 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 been seriously 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 survives on ecology and society (Ranasinghe & Pradeepamali, 2019).

A strong emphasis on the UN's 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 longer seen as merely 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 the future, there will be more concern regarding 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 ecosystems
- 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 its way towards 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 bio-diversity, 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.

#### WAY FORWARD

Based on two focus 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 explained, in depth, the 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 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 something that everyone should practice in day today life. The responsibility of the stakeholders is to learn more about sustainability and

<sup>54</sup> Basnet, S. (2016) 'Types of Tourism in Nepal and Their Prospect', C.6, P.18, Religious and Cultural Tourism, Para. 2, line nos. 7-9, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Kerava (site: <https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/115568/Tourism-and-Prospect-Thesis-Report.pdf?sequence=1>)

<sup>55</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Technology, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>56</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable tourism and technology, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

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 a major role to play in developing sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. The 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 the topmost authorities, regulating bodies, the provincial level to the grassroots community level.

The 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 make 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 that a strong tourism resilience plan should be developed to face this kind of situation in future to assist the sustainability of the industry. In the future, 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, and 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.

## INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN NEPAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND SMART CITIES

A smart city, new approaches to urban planning and living, is a high-tech, intensively connected city that uses advanced new smart technologies to create a greener metropolis, innovative commerce and enriched quality of life for its citizens. Smart city ideas absorb urban policies such as digital city, green city, knowledge city; therefore, it is a complex approach and requires long-term perspectives. Smart city is also referred to as an intelligent city as the information flow is analyzed and translated throughout the IT, social and business

infrastructures to enhance the intelligence of the city.

The concept of the smart city is to optimize infrastructures in order to ideally ensure quality of citizens' life: transportation, water and power supply, waste management, IT connectivity, efficient urban mobility, e-governance and citizen participation. It contains the domains of mobility, building, health care, entertainment, education, public safety, environment and economy; six key domains, including governance, economy, environment, mobility, living and people; four pillars of key components, including energy, environment, industry, living and service.

Presently, the demand for Smart cities in Nepal is high. Different approaches for the smart city are adopted globally and in Nepal and two different Government bodies namely, Department of Urban Development and Building Construction and National Planning Commission are created.

Although talk about city/urban tourism, religion and tourism based on art and craft culture are more popular, the construction for two smart cities is ongoing in Nepal. The current form of tourism is coined as 'Pilgrimage Tourism', and is a major sector of sustainable tourism especially in cities like Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. However, due to pollution along with over population as compared to their areas, there is no existence of ecotourism in these kinds of cities. Although some newly emerging cities of Bhaktapur like city that is being made at Gundu area and other areas of Bhaktapur looking at the development criteria of sustainable urban areas that are given in the guide of sustainable development.

The Government of Nepal introduced the Smart city in Nepal scheme through the Budget Speech in 2072-73 to develop 10 cities of Nepal. The concept of Smart City in Nepal is identified as "A smart city is a city that makes appropriate use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in establishing itself as a disaster resilient, eco friendly and people centric city-National Planning Commission of Nepal." Further, Kathmandu Valley Development Authority has planned to improve upon the existing urban space into four 'smart cities' among them and moving fast to make it a reality on the ground level. The Authority is all geared up to turn the capital city of Nepal into a smart city of international standard full of modern facilities and other amenities to give a high-class experience to city dwellers, visitors and tourists. The blueprint for constructing smart cities in the Kathmandu Valley is ready. The DPR (Detailed Project Report) of building a smart city in Bhaktapur was already prepared in 2018 and the DPR for the other two cities has also been completed in the first month of the 2019 financial year.

The Authority is still waiting for the fourth DPR to be completed for transforming the look of Kathmandu into a smart city. After all the four DPRs are presented to the Authority, the 'Project Management Committee' will be formed to start work on the ground, says Bhaikaji Tiwari, the

<sup>57</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>58</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>59</sup> <sup>100</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal



commissioner of Authority. All the four DPRs will be presented to the Council of Ministers and after receiving the approval from there, all the necessary finances will be tapped for successfully completing the project of smart cities. The Government of Nepal in the fiscal year 2075/076 BS had allocated Rs 180 million out of which Rs 120 million was given out to Bhaktapur city project and the rest Rs 60 million was distributed among the other three proposed smart cities equally with Rs 20 million to each of the three city projects within the valley.

This is how Kathmandu smart city project came to receive Rs 20 million from the allocated federal budget of Rs 180 million. As per the decision taken by Kathmandu Valley Development Committee on Baisakh 24, 2074, the demarcated land areas have been kept aside for laying the foundation of the infrastructure of proposed four smart cities.

The demarcated land kept aside for building four smart cities are named after directions used in ancient building construction popularly called Vastu Shastra. They are Ishaan (North-East), Agneya (South-East), Nairitya (South-West) and Uttar (North).

Although the concept of smart cities has not popularly flourished in Nepal, Nepalese cities can still sustain in the field of sustainable tourism due to cultural heritage they carry from past centuries. Sites like Pashupatinath Temple, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Muktinath, Lumbini, Gosainkunda, Kathmandu Durbar Square, as well as Patan Durbar Square, to mention a few, are currently major places that can help to strengthen sustainable tourism in Nepal based on urban tourism. These places are also focused on more by UNESCO as major destinations to strengthen sustainability of urban tourism in Nepal. However, due to an increase in population living in these places along with increase in pollution and number of houses, tourist destinations in urban areas are said to be endangered with respect to its sustainability.

Additionally, technology is the central element of smart cities. From the tourism perspective, traditional technologies are still in practice. For example, oil manufacturing technology, carpet manufacturing technology, simple pulley systems and potteries. Tourism is associated with development and accessibility. Thus, such local technologies need evolution and transformation so that they can be produced considering the need of the current demand, both in terms of quantity and quality. Pottery is still a popular practice because the industry embraces innovation and addresses the requirements of the customers. They evolved into ceramics and scale up their businesses. Additionally, one of the greatest concerns of the smart city is to find out the strategies to reduce the use of plastic water bottles. The solution for this is to establish the Water ATMs in the highways and driveways so that travellers reduce the use of plastic bottles.

The usefulness of Information Technology cannot be undermined here. There is a myriad of uniqueness in Nepalese community in terms of places, products, culture and religion. Such uniqueness needs to be promoted through the internet.

The lists of local technologies and products need to be displayed in search engines such as google. Moreover, Nepalese places should be visible in the google maps. Especially IT experts are in the position to promote the development of technology in Nepal, improve the structures in the sector and make Nepal more accessible to tourists from a technological point of view.

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN RURAL NEPAL

Tourism cannot survive in isolation and is a multi-disciplinary service that depends on many external factors, subsequently engulfing and benefiting a larger community. Tourism, if promoted carefully, can provide economic gain and improvement of living conditions for the entire community. Reciprocally, income generated through tourism has the potential to have a trickle-down effect providing benefits to the larger community.

Ultimately, promotion of sustainable rural tourism not only protects the resources but also promotes the identity of the place and the people's livelihood at stake due to globalization.

As a developing country, Nepal lacks resources for large scale investments and infrastructure constructions. The recent economic policies since the reinstatement of multiparty democracy has opened potential foreign direct investments, however, the internal Maoists conflict in the past decade has deterred large scale investments. Nepal still has a long way to go before the complete democracy and stability is regained, an environment not alluring the investors. Nepal has many villages and towns that can attract tourism. However, many of these villages lack basic facilities for tourists. As we all know that the spirit of Nepalese tourism lies in the natural richness and its indigenous societies with their mystic cultures which can be best showcased through the home-stay programme. Apart from the thousands of hotels and resorts catering to the tourists, the charm of home-stay is up at a satisfactory level.

Homestay, still an afterthought dimension of tourism in Nepal, is gradually becoming dominant in the hospitality market. The main reason for its growth is that it adds genuine socio-cultural components to a tourist's experience. For many travel enthusiasts, homestay provides the opportunity to socialize with the local customs, relish the local cuisine and get to know the real local lifestyle.

"As a culturally rich country, Nepal has great prospects in home-stay tourism. Tourists who are interested in experiencing culture, tradition and lifestyle of different ethnic groups of Nepal form the clientele of home-stay business," says Keshav Badal, president of Home-stay Association of Nepal.

According to the field survey conducted by the Journal and Advanced Academic Research in 2016 A.D. data shows that daily income of homestay entities from lodging only one can earn from Rs.100 up to Rs. 600 as daily income with average income as NRs. 175.25. Looking into the expenditure side with the same factor, it was found that the expenditure for lodging

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*: Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, Global College International (GCI), Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*: Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, Global College International (GCI), Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>62</sup> This primary data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by Global College International (GCI), Kathmandu, Nepal

only may range from NRs. 60 to NRs. 175 with an average of NRs. 119.75. Likewise, for vegetarian food and lodging operators may charge from 280 to 860 Nepali rupee, this results in the average income being NRs. 514.22. The daily expenditure for vegetarian food and lodging may range from NRs. 200 to NRs. 850. Similarly, non-vegetarian food along lodging will be charged from 500 to 1100 Nepali rupee. But as far as expenditure is concerned it ranges from NRs. 250 to NRs. 850. Daily income and expenditure helps to determine monthly income and expenditure from which the net profit or loss can be calculated.

Here, the data shows that the monthly income may range from NRs. 12000 to NRs. 40000 with an average income of NRs. 23053.92. Similarly, the monthly expenditure may range from NRs. 2500 to NRs. 25000 with an average expenditure of NRs. 13279.41. Net monthly income was minimum NRs. 3000 and maximum NRs. 30000 with that average net income was NRs. 12265.69. The data shows that the income level is higher than the expenditure which clearly indicates the level of net profit from homestay. An average of NRs. 25000-30000 remains sufficient for managing household expenditure which shows that rural life is comparatively easier than that of urban life; expenditure is comparatively less than that of urban life which results in saving of an income. When people can earn money, one will definitely be interested to engage in profitable businesses which ultimately results in an increase in numbers. Likewise, with reference to Nepal Tourism Statistics 2018, the data shows that, the number of homestays across the country has gone up by 14.48 percent to 324 in 2018. Until 2017, there were 283 registered home-stays in the country. The increment in the percentage also reflects that the possibility of home-stay in Nepal will definitely be rising in the upcoming years. However, in order to achieve this target it is very essential to change the mindset of considering it as a passive business for the uneducated, unemployed dependent members of a family should be changed.

Nepal homestay guidelines require that the concerned family give a taste of local culture to visitors who are to be served whatever food the homeowners themselves eat. Participating houses have to ensure cleanliness, a safe and secure environment with adequate hygiene facilities. Sirubari and Ghalegaon were the first to implement village/rural tourism now called homestay programs. Today, Kavrepalanchowk district only has over 26 registered community-based homestay homes while Chitwan has at least 10 and Makwanpur and Nuwakot have around 11 and 12 respectively.

### Community Homestay

Community-based homestays are run by a minimum of five people. Community homestays have existed for many years, staying at them is becoming increasingly popular as a sustainable way to travel and a better way for guests to get a true insight into the places and people they are visiting. Guests stay in the homes of local families and can gain a much better experience of their host culture and day-to-day life. They can get involved in activities like joining their host families in the fields, learning to cook local dishes, or volunteering to teach in a school.

### Private (Individual) Homestay

The homestay which is run by an individual is known as a private homestay. A homestay is a popular form of hospitality and lodging where visitors share a residence with a local of the city to which they are travelling. Homestays are examples of collaborative consumption and the sharing economy.

### Exemplary Achievement of Homestay in Bardia

Dalla Homestay in Madhuwan Municipality-1, which falls under the Bardia National Park account biological route area, has been declared the best in Nepal. The Taragaon Development Committee of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation has declared Dalla Homestay in Bardiya as the best. Dalla Homestay is one of the best homestays in Nepal where British Prince Harry has spent a night.

Homestay is not only a rural tourism program but also a strategy for rural development. The development of Homestay demands high commitment and understanding among the villagers. To create a successful environment for the homestay, program coordination, cooperation between the villagers is very essential. Homestay plays a vital role in socio-economic, social capital development as well as contribution to the conservation of rural areas. Homestay is one of the important sectors of Nepal which is contributing to economic growth and social change. It has contributed to more employment creation in the Nepalese economy. It is a significant source of employment, foreign and domestic income.

Homestay, still an afterthought dimension of tourism in Nepal, is gradually becoming a dominant hospitality market. The main reason for its growth is that it adds genuine socio-cultural components to a tourist's experience. For many travel enthusiasts, the homestay provides just the opportunity to assimilate with the local customs, relish the local cuisine and get to know the real local lifestyle. It is one of the inimitable chances to experience life.

### Sustainability in the Mountain Area

Sustainable tourism in Nepal does have a deep relationship with the rural life of Nepalese people. It also seems to show equal participation by people of both sexes. In fact, the majority of men go for foreign employment while women, apart from being homemakers, engage in income generating activities at the local levels such as farming, homestay and cultural shows for tourism. As the sustainable tourism of rural Nepal is based on both internal and external environments of those areas, rural tourism cannot be successful in absence of division of work in a gender friendly manner.

However, due to less population of females in slope areas of rural Nepal along with many females being busy in household activities with lots of males going out of Nepal in search of work, it is tough to find a proper guide who could carry loads of foreign tourists and take them on a proper mountain tours. Tourism is a seasonal activity in Nepal. So local tour guides have to go out of their native place in search of jobs for other seasons in Nepal. Often as a result, most of the male members of those mountain communities do not return to their native homeland. This has currently created scarcity of labour force

<sup>63</sup> National Report, 'Public-Private Partnership Policy, (2072)' P.5, Challenges and Problems, point no. 4.1, Ministry of Finance, Singhdurbar, Kathmandu, Nepal (site: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/sites/ppp.worldbank.org/files/documents/PPP%20Policy%202015%20unofficial%20translation.pdf>)

<sup>64</sup> National Report, 'Public-Private Partnership Policy, (2072)' P.5, Challenges and Problems, point no. 4.5, Ministry of Finance, Singhdurbar, Kathmandu, Nepal (site: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/sites/ppp.worldbank.org/files/documents/PPP%20Policy%202015%20unofficial%20translation.pdf>)

<sup>65</sup> <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/sites/ppp.worldbank.org/files/documents/PPP%20Policy%202015%20unofficial%20translation.pdf>



with strong physique in these rural areas.

The Nepal Tourism Board, in collaboration with the UNDP, designed a program to grant funds to five village municipalities to uplift the economic status of the community. The requirement for this was 33% female participation. Villages such as Madi have significantly less female participation due to engagement in household activities and lesser female population in such inaccessible hilly areas. The biggest concern is how the rural community will be able to remain economically sustained after the program wraps up.

Similarly, people from Madi have to go to Pokhara (an important tourist destination of Nepal) to buy each and every kind of edible item, which has directly weakened productive knowledge of the local peoples of these areas. The suggestion is to understand the availability of the local products in their own community and work on sustainable income generation which also helps at a larger level by reduction of imports of international products. Moreover, owners of homestay programs offer merely a basic service of housing and dining. Had they offered more activities such as cycling, farming and other local activities, they would have earned income from varieties of services.

Thus, creating complexity in this municipality to give proper diet services in this area will directly hamper sustainability of tourism in the long term in this area. However, if the government, private/ public agencies or any international organization could provide any kind of knowledge and training regarding 'inventory of local products and technology', these kinds of rural communities could strengthen their sustainability in the rural tourism industry. Sustainable tourism in Nepal can only exist if it can guarantee cost of living. However, in absence of other recreational activities like cycling, boating, agro-based tourist visits other than just showing the cultural shows, it has been tough for these kinds of tourist destinations to sustain themselves solely through normal homestay activities. The charges for dining are priced significantly low as the goods are homely grown. Therefore, the suggestion is not to undermine their own efforts and the value of the local products.

In order to execute rural and village based tourism activities fairly for strengthening the local economy of these kinds of communities, the native people should be taught about nutritional values of their local food products. It is because nutritional food that we find in local edible products of these kinds of community may not be suitable for tourists who came from city areas like Kathmandu, Biratnagar or any other international tourists as they are not used to of taking those kinds of highly nutritious foods that are found in these tourist destined rural areas. Similarly, products from local food resources like bread made from Barley needs lots of resources to create which directly increases the cost price of those products.

Similarly, villagers also need advanced technologies like ovens to create proper cookies from these kinds of local raw

products. However, kitchenware such as microwaves, ovens, inductions, water heaters etc are not available in these kinds of hilly based rural areas which, on the other hand, increases labour cost of these local people. Due to these kinds of reasons, host communities from rural Nepal are not able to provide tourists the food of their native tastes. However, the emphasis should be on the local ways of doing things. For example, people can produce bread locally through their indigenous knowledge. This will help the development at both levels forward and backward integration. Tourists will receive authentic services (forward integration) and local suppliers of raw materials and local resources (backward integration) will be benefitted, thereby contributing to sustainable tourism.

Although tourism is moving at its own speed in rural areas of Nepal, like the places mentioned above, it still takes lots of facilities to create itself as a sustainable tourism destination. First of all, it is necessary to change the perception of Nepalese people from considering only foreign goods as the best ones rather than their own local products. Only then, as a whole, Nepalese people can benefit economically through sustainable tourism. This again helps rural communities like 'Madhi Village Municipality' to develop their areas with both top-down and community consensus based models of development. Not only this, these kinds of activities are currently needed in these kinds of rural tourism as they help in linking the forward as well as backward linkage of development approaches of sustainability and sustainable development in a more scientific way.

#### **PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP**

Travel and tourism is diverse in nature, it is also a highly fragmented industry. Therefore, the long-term survival of the industry also depends on coordinated action between different sectors. This is both challenging but necessary in order to achieve a more sustainable industry. It demands greater dialogue, cooperation and partnerships between the public and private sectors (WTO 2001). The process of collaboration and partnership is a key element for planning and managing natural and cultural assets/products. Partnerships are at the core of sustainable development and sustainable tourism (De Lacy, et. al. 2002).

Public-Private Partnerships are essentially partnerships between public sector organizations and private sector investors and businesses for the purpose of designing, planning, financing, constructing, providing and/or operating infrastructure, facilities or related services. They represent a pooling of knowledge, expertise, capital and other resources from various stakeholders (Bramwell and Lane 2000). It ensures consistency within a framework and acts as an effective agent for planning, management, problem solving and change, and therefore enhances rather than reduces the competitive advantage of the tourism product (UNCSD 1999).

#### **Risks of Public-Private Partnerships**

As with conventional forms of service delivery, there are

<sup>65</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Are We Degrading Our Cultures Due to Influence of Foreign Tourists? Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>66</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Are We Degrading Our Cultures Due to Influence of Foreign Tourists? Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>67</sup> This primary data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by Global College International (GCI), Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>68</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism in Nepal and Culture, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>69</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Tourism and Government. Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

potential risks associated with PPPs. Governments can reduce or eliminate the risks by understanding what they are and addressing them through well-conceived negotiations and contractual arrangements, the involvement of stakeholder groups. Potential risks include:

- Loss of control by government
- Increased user fees
- Political risks and labour issues
- Accountability issues
- Unreliable service
- Lack of competition
- Reduced quality or efficiency of service

### Opportunities of Public-Private Partnerships

The Nepal Tourism Board has restructured as a public-private partnership to ensure that the national tourism organization is meeting the needs of Nepal's private sector. The Nepal Tourism Board mobilized village development committees (VDCs), district development committees (DDCs) and local co-operatives to manage homestay facilities and imparted training to ensure quality homestay arrangements in rural areas. Aside from increasing accommodative capacity, the prime aim of homestay programs is to ensure local participation in tourism activities and enhance their income. In Nepal, homestays are of two kinds; community homestays and private homestays. Areas where partnering can create PPP opportunities in tourism are summarized below:

- Technology
- Operations
- Advocacy
- Product development
- Human resources development
- Research
- Marketing
- Financing

### Public-Private Partnerships in the Mountain Area

Nepal needs to accomplish its SDG goals by 2022 A.D. to upgrade itself from a LDC to a developing country where sustainable tourism is one of them and is regarded as a major backbone of development for Nepal. As tourism is the government's responsibility, it cannot give all authority to private companies to handle as it would also decrease the reputation of the tourism board of Nepal. So, due to absence of proper policy preparation on suitable distribution of dangers while executing large infrastructure based and development based plans that are of national importance, government bodies of Nepal developed the scheme of jointly working on any tourism projects on PPP concepts. However, due to the epidemic of COVID19, the achievements are hampered. Due to the increase in the flow of tourists, the livelihood of people from places like Dhading have profited

from development. This has also brought the concept of developing their areas for the public of Dhading's through tourism by partnering with private companies working in this sector.

Over the past few years, the upper part of Dhading has seen lots of physical changes with the help of these kinds of partnerships. Presently, there are lots of good clinics, education institutes, adult literacy programs, along with various environment friendly changes occurring in this place. People are also being health conscious due to contact with lots of foreigners. It has also provided jobs to lots of people living in this part of Dhading. These groups of people living in the upper part of Dhading also invited many health related private companies with the help of a private tourism based organization of Nepal named 'Himalaya Holidays' to build local clinics in joint ventures. Partnering with the public helped private cultural food based enterprises of Nepal to grow the market of their product among tourists all over this place of Dhading area.

These people also slowly learned the business strategy and started to partner with every tourist based organization in order to grow their tourism business. Beside business, public-private partnership plays an important role in strengthening local culture. Locals know more about their own cultures than any private organizations. Tourism is one of the most important equipment of the nation to flourish its culture all over the world. But in the absence of public-private partnership Nepalese tourism is unable to transfer and teach local cultures to foreign tourists effectively, causing weakening of native culture of those places. Therefore, a good mutual relation between a group of public people and tourism based private organizations is crucial.

As previously noted, religious sites such as Pashupatinath and Swayambhunath and base camps of Everest, Annapurna and other mountains have human trash. To clean up such trash, the most important part of the solution is the awareness of stakeholders such as visitors, locals and local government representatives and public-private partnerships to end the problems of trash.

Fundamentally, government and private sectors should work together. Tourism has been enhanced since the last 60 years by the private sector contribution. Innovation in local technologies such as production of 'Dhaka' garments, oil mills, cups and plates by local papers, carpets etc. led by the private sectors should be facilitated and the patent rights protected. Additionally, the government is responsible for promoting Nepalese tourism around the world at a larger scale.

<sup>70</sup> Lacy, T. et. al (2002) 'Public / Private Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism', P. 3, no. 1.2.2., Private Sector, Para.1, line nos. 1-4, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, APEC Tourism Working Group

<sup>71</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>72</sup> <sup>70</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>73</sup> This primary data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by Global College International (GCI), Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>74</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism and culture, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>75</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism and Culture, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>76</sup> Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, What could you think can be done from the side of Nepalese government in order to promote sustainable tourism and what kinds of policies and strategies do you think that the government should undertake for the promotion of sustainable tourism? Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<sup>77</sup> <sup>76</sup> Please see above.





### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A. Central Nepal: The central Nepal consists of 10 major destinations offering home-stay facilities to the tourists, which are as follows:

- Panauti Community Homestay
- Nuwakot Community Homestay
- Barauli Community Homestay
- Kapan Gyanmala Community Homestay
- Patan Community Homestay
- Nagarkot Community Homestay
- Tharu Community Homestay
- Piprahar Community Homestay
- Bungamati Community Homestay

B. Far-Western Nepal: Far western Nepal consists of four major destinations offering home-stay facilities to the tourists. The list is as follows:

- Bardiya Community Homestay
- Rana Tharu Community Homestay
- Bhada Community Homestay
- Lafa Community Homestay

C. Eastern Nepal: The Eastern Nepal consists of three major destinations offering homestay facilities to the tourists, which are as follows:

- Illam Community Homestay
- Namche Community Homestay
- Mai Pokhari Community Homestay

D. Western Nepal: The Western Nepal consists of 4 major destinations offering home-stay facilities to the tourists, which are as follows:

- Palpa Community Homestay
- Mustang Community Homestay

- Narchyang Community Homestay
- Hemjakot Community Homestay

### PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

Private sectors deliver the basic products for tourism and facilities with essential services, such as: accommodation, transportation, restaurants, retailing activities, providing various attractions and experiences. In case of ecotourism in Nepal, it also provides clothes and other items that are necessary for adventure based tourists joining hands with the government as per the need. Private sector in tourism is also working jointly with different health based organizations to provide proper health care facilities to tourists who come here to enjoy rural tourism. Foreign tourists hardly visited the rural parts of Nepal for long durations due to absence of good health facilities. For this, private companies like 'Himalaya Holidays' have partnered with numerous government based as well as private health- posts, hospitals and health related organizations since 1990.

However, due to a lack of proper private sector participation in investment for developing health sectors and other tourism based infrastructures in these kinds of tourist based areas, along with lack of maintenance of hospitals as well as infrastructures built by the Chinese government to Nepal have weakened the scope of rural tourism in Nepal. The major places in the tourism industry of Nepal where we can see major participation of the private sector in terms of investment are hotels and tourist focused restaurants.

Private organizations have also contributed in preserving the indigenous businesses of local communities. For example, Himalayan Holidays, on their journey of providing rural health care, discovered Kami gaun and their magnificent skills of

making local weapons such as Khukuri, Hasiya etc. They used to charge 100 Nepalese Rupees back in 1992. Through the support of Himalayan Holidays with materials, the price could be increased to 10 USD (which was equivalent to about 500-600 Nepalese Rupees then).

The involvement of Himalayan Holidays led to higher environmental awareness, building of schools, launching of adult literacy programs, an improvement in sanitary facilities, but also a high increase in Christianity over the original religion.

### CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES AND APPROACHES TO ATTRACT PRIVATE SECTOR

The term “linkage” (i.e., the state of being linked) is used to explain the interactions and the relationships amongst innovative actors (Pechlaner & Volgger, 2012). There are many different types of linkages in tourism reflecting the composite nature of the tourism complex (Hall & Williams, 2008), composed of diversified sectors or companies, such as hospitality, transportation, tourist attractions and souvenir shops, where firms are commonly considered as the main innovators (i.e., novelty generators, who introduce the innovations into the market). Many different sectors are involved in tourism, including an array of suppliers and most recognizable are air travel, accommodation, tours and tour operations, restaurants, retail shops, ground transport and tourist attractions.

With strong linkages to other sector and thematic issues, tourism:

- a. Provides markets for raw and value-added agricultural products;

- b. Generates millions of jobs for school graduates—mostly women;
- c. Catalyzes additional public and private investment for roads, airports and other infrastructure that is used by both tourists and the local population to access services and markets;
- d. Generates taxes and fees to finance infrastructure maintenance and subsidize environmental services

In the case of institutional linkages, long-term contracts-enabling a high volume of exchange and frequency of interaction between firms-are likely to be useful in guarding against opportunism and facilitating sustainable alliances, which brings about a renewal in institutional and managerial innovation (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Tomlinson, 2010). Cross Institutional linkage, especially new or revised business models, can be boosted by this linkage. Linkages proved beneficial especially for product and marketing innovation. Long-term institutional linkages mirror the long-term challenges. They provide a basis for a strong partnership approach, building on our shared ties, history and common interests. Institutional linkages activities can apply across the public, private, educational and community sectors.

Both the government as well as private sectors are vitally important for strengthening the sustainability of the tourism industry in Nepal. Private sectors show what the inner problems that the government is unable to experience due to its limitations are. This helps the government to create a flexible ground- based framework regarding the tourism industry. There is much work which cannot be done by government or private- public sectors alone, so there needs to be one path to strengthen the sustainability of tourism during that situation.





Although there is a framework created by the government of Nepal, it has not clearly defined what the actual role of private sectors is and the role of the government sector in strengthening the sustainability of tourism in Nepal. Under this framework Nepal shall identify the activities dividing tourism in different parts as per the geographical and socio-cultural environment of Nepal.

The current framework is lacking practicality for implementation among tourism entrepreneurs. As society develops, new problems emerge in new and unique forms. This requires participation from different stakeholders and government effort with a focus on sustainability in tourism. For this the government must continue to focus on cross-institutional linkage to attract as many private sectors towards them as they can in order to work jointly.

In this way, Nepal will be able to create a ground-based framework related to the tourism industry as, at the end of the day, private and public sectors are major entities to work in this field rather than the government in Nepal. With a functioning framework, associations like TAAN, Himalaya Holidays etc. can work conceptually under that framework making it their base of working strategy according to time relevant.

#### **ENHANCEMENT OF CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGE**

Co-Management Arrangements Between Communities and Governments:

The simplest kind of cross-scale linkage is the one that connects local-level management with government-level management in partnerships. It also helps in conflict resolution for the cross parties.

#### **Multi-Stakeholder Bodies**

Multi-stakeholder bodies link multiple user groups and interests, local and regional, with the government, and provide a forum for conflict resolution and negotiation among users. According to Murphree (1994), stakeholder groups "can easily transform interest into a conceptual collective by a vast and amorphous circle of stakeholders."

#### **Development, Empowerment, Co-Management Arrangements**

This form of linkages seems distinct from the first two sets in terms of the emphasis on community development and empowerment, with co-management as an incidental outcome. These arrangements often involve non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other capacity-building bodies. Often there are horizontal as well as vertical cross scale linkages.

#### **Citizen Science**

Citizen science is characterized by citizen activism for environmental management and by the involvement of environmental NGOs and, hence, it differs in its primary focus from development-empowerment organizations. In India, "people's science movements" have a history since the 1960's in the southern state of Kerala where they took the form of alternative resource and environmental assessments with inputs from university scientists. Out of this emerged in the 1980's an activity called the village-level resource mapping program which formulated the understanding between rural, forest-dwelling people to living organisms and their

ecological setting, ecological changes in respect to their own development.

#### **Adaptive Management**

Adaptive management is used to integrate uncertainty into the decision-making process and to ensure that the policy makers and the managers could learn from their successes as well as failures. It emphasizes learning by doing, feedback relations and adaptive processes. It has become a particularly promising approach to study the dynamics of ecosystems.

#### **Resilience**

Partnerships of managers and users do not resolve scientific uncertainties, but they help place those uncertainties in an institutional context that encourages building trust among parties, learning by doing and developing the capacity to respond—in short, building resilient institutions. Resilience is a central idea in the application of adaptive management. It has three defining characteristics. Resilience is a measure of:

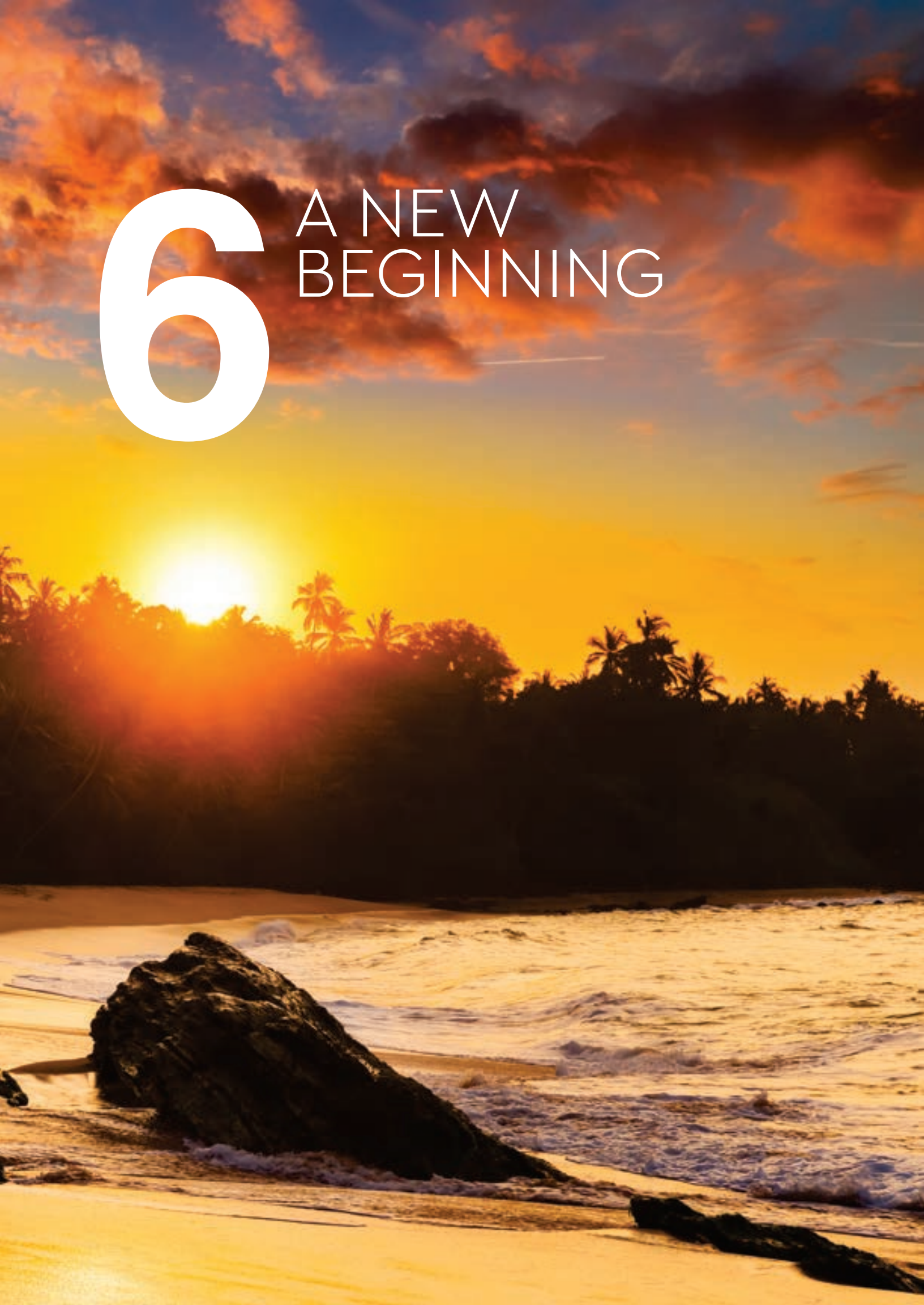
1. The amount of change the system can undergo and still retain the same controls on function and structure;
2. The degree to which the system is capable of self organization; and
3. The ability to build and increase the capacity for learning and adaptation (Resilience Alliance, 2001).

A second feature of a resilient system is the maintenance of heterogeneity and the availability of a diversity of options for selection to act on as conditions change. The resilience of any complex adaptive system is embodied in the diversity of its components and their capacity for adaptive change. The attraction of the private sector in the context of Nepal has seen tremendous growth in the past few years. The number of hotels, resorts, home stays, zip flying, paragliding, etc. has been the main investment so far. The positive growth in this trend can definitely establish a positive environment. However, Nepal currently sees a lack in promoting entrepreneurship. The multiplier effect of tourism to other big and subsidiary industries shouldn't go unnoticed with the growth of tourism. The relation of cross institutional linkage between the whole economy should be streamlined and should be driven for everybody's growth.



6

A NEW  
BEGINNING





Sustainable tourism is not a new concept and is practiced in many countries for decades as tourism product or service. With increased attention to sustainability, the tourism sector is sensitised with demand and supply stakeholders to develop philosophy, principles, models and culture of tourism with sustainability focus. Policies at state, national and multi-lateral level are evolving to create a better ecosystem which is more than only commercial.

Sustainable Tourism, much like agriculture, is a force of transformation of communities to livelihood and economic prosperity. Policymakers are modelling principles and execution norms which help to promote sustainable tourism. In South Asia, especially in Sri Lanka, Nepal and India, it is within the national development priorities and features in major national strategy documents in domains like ecological, economic, infrastructure, digital and socio-cultural aspects of tourism.

In business terms, out of the 1.4 billion visitors who travelled to foreign destinations in 2018, 343 million went to Asia creating a business transaction of US\$ 390 billion out of the global US\$ 1.34 trillion. Asia, thus, accounts for 25 percent of international visitors and 29 percent of international tourist spending. The focus of SDGs towards development of society has found several engagement models in sustainable tourism like waste and water management, alternative energy, environment friendly construction, destination management which include heritage, natural and others, responsible production, responsible investment and other economic, social and environment factors. It's required to educate the community about SDGs and ensure how to empower the society stakeholders to contribute to reducing the ill effects of carbon heavy tourism and orient towards a more socially responsible economic model. This needs to emerge from

policy, industry practices, government norms, community engagement and school and university education.

The impact of Covid-19 was completely unprecedented and the travel and tourism industry has been severely impacted due to the restriction of movement, flights being cancelled, suspension of visas, and fear of travelling due to health concerns. The industry was influenced badly and affected a large population of beneficiaries along with business sectors like airline, food and processing, hotel etc. The new approaches and tourism models are expected to be more sustainable towards SDGs identified goals including Health.

While Nepal already has clearly laid down policies in sustainable tourism, Sri Lanka is on its way to implement the sustainable tourism policy with higher effectiveness. India is still towards finalisation of the sustainable tourism and related infrastructure development, thus, in turn, having the opportunity to start fresh following sustainable approaches and guidelines in its future development endeavours. The National Tourism Policies of all three countries are comprehensive and reworking to engage sustainability and community. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2030 presents a promising action plan in wake of the global developments. The Ministry of Tourism's approach towards sustainable tourism recognises the domain and presents tourism that can act as driver of inclusive community development, contributing to resilience, inclusivity and empowerment while safeguarding natural and cultural resources.

Based on primary research with the help of focus group discussion and comprehensive literature review, it is conclusive that India, Sri Lanka and Nepal have tremendous potential in the sustainable tourism sector, and to succeed, they require the combined effort of the host community, tourists and private and public institutional actors.





The challenges to realising their full potential are also identified and include ineffective government policy/ies, lack of coordination and communication between private industries and government agencies, lack of focused government programs regarding sustainable tourism, inadequate capacity building of the sector, lack of investment and appropriate benefits of investment and other issues related to waste, water and environment. The policy structures of these nations have to lay immense emphasis on sustainable tourism, but it needs to address issues in ecosystem and systems thinking manner and not by offering solution to a specific problem.

One of the biggest challenges of India, Sri Lanka and Nepal is to leverage the brand and develop a communication strategy in the domain, which will not happen only due to tourism but is caused by many economic think tanks and networking platform activities. The policy details the destination management organizations and the tourism development plans. The draft reports the nine key strategic pillars and the two cross-cutting themes. These strategic pillars include sustainable and responsible tourism in a major way. Other important strategic pillars include welcoming the pillar, seamless connectivity and transport infrastructure, development and management, business development and investment promotion, development and diversification of tourism products, skill and market development, quality assurance and standardization as well as governance, institutional linkages and stakeholder management.

Adapting to the new demand response, notwithstanding the existing operational changes in the tourism domain, the application of advanced technologies would help in enhancing enterprise competitiveness. Some of the technological applications to increase competitiveness would be- customer relationship management systems (CRM), business intelligence systems and competitive intelligence, marketing systems (B2B, B2C) and central reservation systems (CRS), content management systems, integration with social networks, and positioning.

The involvement of local stakeholders and community awareness is very much needed for the successful integration and implementation of the iTour practices. Growing interest among travellers towards ecotourism destinations and the integration of technology into tourism is paving the way for the growth of eco and sustainable tourism in the long run. Smart tourism practices need to strike a balance between environmental, economic and socio-cultural issues of its habitat to improve the quality of the tourist experience. It is evident that a strong tourism resilience plan should be developed in order to face any critical distress in the future to assist the sustainability of the industry, safeguarding the interest of the stakeholders and retain them in the industry.

In the future, technology will play a critically significant role in the global tourism industry; smart cities and smart tourism applications with more online transactions, the adaptation of artificial intelligence, online reservations and virtual promotions will be in higher demand than ever before. Hence,







the government, community and industry stakeholders should take the necessary steps to upgrade their functioning and systems to address the growing trends in the market. Economic performance and competitiveness will be based on technology transformation. Further, it is essential to empower the community to start their ventures and small and medium businesses to strengthen sustainability. Thus, investing in sustainable tourism also requires balancing out the differences in the planning horizons of the various stakeholders involved.

We are expecting high dynamism in sustainable tourism and heavy focus on community, environment, health and economic SDG factors in new policies and strategies of governments at federal and state level to evolve this important industry of economy.

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## About the Project

### Centers of excellence in sustainable tourism to boost economic development and enhance university-business cooperation in Southern Asia

- **Programme:** Erasmus+ Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
- **Duration:** 36 Months
- **Aim:** CESTour aims to build the concept of sustainable tourism on a regional and national level in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India.
- **Number of partners:** 10

#### Project objectives:

- Analysis of the current status of the tourism industry and identification of sustainable tourism efforts in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka
- Capacity building of experts on sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development through attractive training creation and implementation.
- Multiplication of knowledge gained within capacity building training during the training.
- Technical development of the centers of excellence for sustainable tourism in each of the seven HEIs in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.
- Implementation and operation of 7 centers of excellence for sustainable tourism.
- Development of cooperation HEI-Company and students learning experience by developing innovative sustainable tourism case studies.
- Development of collaboration network among EU and Asian HEIs



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