



Sustainable Development in **SOUTH ASIA TOURISM**

Best Practices from CESTour's Centers of Excellence

Editors: Martha Friel and Emma Zavarrone



Sustainable Development in South Asia Tourism: Best Practices from CESTour's Centers of Excellence

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Preface

The growing need for knowledge and innovative practices in sustainability has shifted from mere discussion to a mandatory requirement, significantly influencing education and research priorities. The tourism sector, strategic for the development of many countries and communities but also controversial in its impacts on the environment and local cultures, has been among the first to recognize the necessity of innovating towards more sustainable practices. Key figures like researchers, trainers, and managers adhering to sustainable development principles play a crucial role in shaping awareness and sustainability practices in the hospitality and tourism industry.

On the other hand, actions for sustainable tourism are crucial for environmental protection, employment support, and achieving a better income distribution. Additionally, they are essential for preserving the rich cultural and knowledge values among populations underlying tourism development.

To contribute to addressing these challenges, the CESTour project (Centers of Excellence in Sustainable Tourism) was initiated with the aim of improving education quality, raising awareness in the tourism sector, and providing training for sustainable tourism in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India. Through the development of seven centers of excellence, the project aimed to integrate sustainability concepts with the tourism industry, aligning with the European Union's Sustainable Tourism Development Plan.

The innovative aspects of the CESTour project lie in its structure designed to address specific needs identified by partners in their reference contexts. This includes support for the development of training modules, enrichment of learning options through CESTour centers, promotion of multi-level collaboration, and modeling of innovative practices. The project has produced numerous national and comparative reports, along with innovative case studies on good practices in sustainable tourism development, contributing to the development of excellence centers.

The project's contribution has materialized in the creation of educational programs, enrichment of faculty and student capabilities, development of practical cases, and the establishment of academic and industrial networks to foster the growth of excellence centers over time.

Specifically, Work Package 5 (WP5) of the project was dedicated to enhancing collaboration between tourism businesses and partner universities, involving students from centers of excellence in sustainable tourism in case challenges, the outcomes of which form the core of this volume. Led by academic mentors and the business world, students competitively developed and analyzed a series of product, service, and initiative

experiences for sustainable tourism in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, creating a valuable “catalog” of best practices.

Thanks to the valuable content and significant work developed by researchers from the ten partner universities, FH JOANNEUM, IULM University, University of Alicante, Birla Institute of Technology, Nirma University, and the Institute of Public Enterprise in India, Tribhuvan University and Global College International in Nepal, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, and Uva Wellassa University in Sri Lanka, this volume aims to present the main results of this journey. The collection of case studies aspires to serve as a valuable resource for academia, industry professionals, and policymakers interested in advancing sustainable tourism practices.

The first section of the book, “CESTour and Sustainable Development in Tourism,” addresses critical aspects of sustainable tourism development and the academic contributions made by the CESTour project to the topic.

The opening chapter by Oana Driha and Harald Friedl focus on how sustainable practices, responsible tourism development, and adaptability to changing market dynamics are essential for the future development of the sector and to overcome its structural challenges. Moreover the authors also explain why sustainability in tourism is all about how we do things and why we do them, addressing the importance of adopting a comprehensive and collaborative approach from various stakeholders in the tourism industry, including governments, businesses, communities, and international organizations.

Moving to the second chapter, Rahul Singh delves into the initiatives undertaken by the CESTour project to enhance capacity and understanding in sustainable tourism within academic institutions.

In particular the chapter presents how CESTour project aimed to blend insights from Europe and South Asia for sustainable tourism and how centres of excellence can engage to develop capacity in the domain and make scientific contribution and innovative solutions to various stakeholders in the sustainable tourism in south Asian context.

Finally, Emma Zavarrone and Martha Friel provide in the third chapter an exploration of the conceptual frameworks underpinning the various cases presented in the CESTour project and elucidates the methodologies used in structuring and executing sustainable tourism-related cases.

The second section of the volume, titled “South Asian Innovative Cases in Sustainable Tourism,” is the core of this book as it showcases impactful case studies from India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka developed by students from the seven Centers of Excellence of the CESTour project with the support of academic and industry mentors.

These cases delve into diverse topics, ranging from adventure tourism, eco-friendly initiatives, and cultural preservation to sustainable agriculture, wildlife tourism, and responsible luxury camping. Each case provides valuable insights into innovative approaches and best practices fostering sustainability in the tourism industry across South Asia.

Finally, section three “Lessons learned” presents a synthesis of diverse areas of action explored by the cases and provides insights and reflections on the valuable experiences gained throughout the project. Specifically, the chapter by Emma Zavarrone, Martha Friel and Vittorio Ottaviani discuss some considerations about the cases developed by the CESTour partners, which were elaborated under the perspective of text analytics while in the last chapter of this book Harald Friedl delves into the lessons learned from the ERASMUS+ Project CESTour. In particular Harald Friedl analyses how the far-reaching changes in global and regional conditions affect the cooperation and the results of a project such as CESTour drawing also some final recommendations for further projects.

Martha Friel
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These business mentors and entrepreneurs have provided invaluable contributions to students and challengers through their experience in innovation and sustainable development in the tourism, hospitality, and events sectors.

Acknowledging this collaboration is a tribute to their dedication and commitment to shaping the future of industry professionals, thereby significantly contributing to the richness of this work.

**Martha Friel
Emma Zavarrone**

PART – 1

CESTOUR AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TOURISM

CHAPTER 1

Sustainable Development in Tourism: From Problems to Solutions, from Visions to Principles

Oana M. Driha and Harald A. Friedl

1.0 Introduction

The travel and tourism sector stands as one of the largest and most fast-growing industries, playing a pivotal role in driving economic development, fostering global connectivity, and supporting the livelihoods of communities and businesses most susceptible to, and severely impacted by, the Covid-19 pandemic (WEF, 2022). On a general basis, the contribution of travel and tourism industry to the world gross domestic product is over 10% and, before the pandemic, it was expected to get close to 12% by 2028 including direct, indirect and induced contribution. Given its size and dynamic evolution, it is also very vulnerable to drawbacks caused by economic, social and political crises or diseases and pandemics, for instance. The evolution of the travel and tourism industry stands as proof of it. In the last decades, the travel and tourism sector were shaped by different aspects, such as Covid-19 pandemic, digital transformation, sustainability focus, technological integration, rise of experiential travel, health and wellness, resilience planning, cultural exchange and diversity, hybrid and remote work impact, among others. Regardless of the challenges faced, like the Covid-19 pandemic, many of them ended up being opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and sustainable practices.

2.0 Current Problems in Tourism

Since the beginning of the travel and tourism industry, different challenges have been faced. Among them it is worth mentioning the following:

- **Pandemics and health concerns:** The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted global tourism. Travel restrictions, lockdowns, and health concerns led to a sharp decline in international and domestic travel, followed by a huge increase of domestic tourism (proximity tourism). Despite that, international tourism managed to recover almost 90% of the pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2023 with over 975 million international tourist arrivals and around USD 1.4 trillion international tourism receipts.

- **Political instability and terrorism:** Regions facing political instability or frequent acts of terrorism often experience a decline in tourism. Travelers may be hesitant to visit destinations perceived as unsafe. The terrorist attack from 11th September 2001, the Arab spring or the unfortunate wars taking place nowadays involves shifts in the travel and tourism agenda that also implies an increase of greenhouse gas emissions due to the need, for example, of taking another route (in general longer) to avoid the war regions.
- **Regulatory challenges:** Evolving regulations, including visa restrictions, taxation policies, and other legal requirements, can affect the ease of travel and tourism business operations.
- **Technological disruptions:** While technology can enhance the travel experience, it also presents challenges, such as the rise of online platforms impacting traditional travel agencies and potential cybersecurity threats.
- **Economic downturns:** Economic or financial crises can lead to reduced disposable income, causing people to cut down on non-essential expenses like travel.
- **Changing consumer preferences:** Shifting consumer preferences, such as a growing interest in experiential travel and unique, off-the-beaten-path experiences, can pose challenges for traditional tourism models.
- **Infrastructure challenges:** Inadequate infrastructure, including transportation and accommodation facilities, can limit the growth of tourism in certain regions.
- **Geopolitical tensions:** Political tensions between countries or regions can result in travel advisories and restrictions, affecting tourism flows.
- **Social and cultural issues:** Cultural misunderstandings, social unrest, or discrimination issues can impact the attractiveness of a destination to potential travelers.
- **Over-tourism:** Popular destinations may face the challenge of over-tourism, leading to congestion, environmental degradation, and strain on local resources and infrastructure. In other words, uncontrolled growth is leading to over tourism which can have a range of negative consequences on both the destination and its residents. While tourism is essential for economic development, when it becomes excessive and unmanaged, it can lead to various social, environmental, and cultural challenges. Among these challenges, environmental degradation, crowding and reduced quality of experience, cultural erosion, increased cost of living for residents, strain of infrastructures, loss of biodiversity, increased footprint, overdevelopment or social tensions are just some of them.

- **Natural disasters:** Natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and wildfires can disrupt travel plans and negatively impact tourism, especially in affected areas. See for instance the case of Turkey. The 1999 earthquake implied a decline of 40% of tourism revenues. According to the Turkish Political Research Institute, the earthquake from February 2023 didn't imply at first significant cancellations of reservations, yet, as the area hit by the earthquakes is a center of cultural heritage, it is expected that the potential decline of tourism revenue might shave off another percentage point from GDP.
- **Environmental concerns:** Growing awareness of climate change has led to increased inquiry of the environmental impact of the travel and tourism industry. Sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices are becoming more important.

3.0 Structural Reasons for Current Problems in Tourism

The tourism industry faces several structural issues that contribute to its current challenges. These structural reasons are often deeply rooted in the nature of the industry and its interactions with various economic, social, and environmental factors. Here are some structural reasons for the current problems in the tourism industry:

1. **Dependency on external factors:** The tourism industry is highly dependent on external factors such as global economic conditions, political stability, and public health situations. Events like economic recessions, political unrest, or pandemics can have a severe impact on tourism.
2. **Seasonal nature:** Many tourist destinations experience a high seasonality, leading to uneven demand throughout the year. This can result in challenges such as overcrowding during peak times and financial strain during off-peak seasons.
3. **High fixed costs:** Tourism businesses often have high fixed costs, including infrastructure development, maintenance, and operational expenses. In times of reduced demand or disruptions, these fixed costs can become a burden.
4. **Vulnerability to external shocks:** Tourism is vulnerable to external shocks such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and health crises. These events can lead to sudden declines in tourist arrivals and revenue.
5. **Lack of diversification:** Over-reliance on a specific type of tourism (e.g., mass tourism) or a narrow range of source markets can make destinations vulnerable to shifts in consumer preferences or economic downturns in key markets.
6. **Environmental impact:** The environmental impact of tourism, including issues such as pollution, habitat destruction, and carbon emissions from transportation,

poses long-term sustainability challenges. This has led to increased scrutiny and demands for more sustainable practices.

7. **Over-tourism:** Some destinations face the challenge of over-tourism, where the number of visitors exceeds the carrying capacity of the destination. This can lead to environmental degradation, strained infrastructure, and negative impacts on the local community.
8. **Technology disruption:** While technology can enhance the travel experience, it also brings challenges such as the rise of online booking platforms, the sharing economy, and the impact on traditional travel agencies.
9. **Skills mismatch:** There may be a disconnect between the skills needed in the tourism industry and the skills available in the workforce. This can affect the quality of services and the industry's ability to adapt to changing demands.
10. **Limited collaboration:** Lack of collaboration between stakeholders, including governments, local communities, businesses, and environmental groups, can hinder the development of sustainable tourism practices and effective crisis management.
11. **Regulatory challenges:** Complex and restrictive regulations, including visa requirements and taxation policies, can create barriers to travel and limit the growth of tourism.

Addressing these structural issues often requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach from various stakeholders in the tourism industry, including governments, businesses, communities, and international organizations. Sustainable practices, responsible tourism development, and adaptability to changing market dynamics are essential components of overcoming these structural challenges.

4.0 Historical Road to Global Concepts of Sustainable Tourism

4.1 “The Limits to Growth” (1972) by the “Club of Rome”

The period after the Second World War was characterized by the vision of national and global economic and social development, particularly in Europe, combined with the goals of economic and social reconstruction and growth. The relatively strong growth in holiday trips to the Mediterranean that could be observed in Central Europe at the time was an expression of this development. The social costs of this growth became visible in the form of protest and independence movements in colonized countries, whereas nature was essentially seen as a resource to be exploited and controlled.

The Club of Rome, founded in 1968 by concerned intellectuals and political decision-makers due to a growing awareness of interrelated global problems such as

environmental degradation, resource scarcity and economic inequality, prompted an initial rethink. Their landmark report “The Limits to Growth” (1972) painted a sobering picture of the earth’s finite resources and the need for sustainable development. Even though these warnings were met with widespread skepticism at the time, they have become increasingly important in today’s era of climate change and other global environmental problems. In the long term, the principles of this report have also influenced the discourse on sustainable tourism development, namely the plea for sustainable tourism practices, resource conservation and a fair distribution of the benefits of tourism.

4.2 The “Brundtland Report” (1987) of the WCED

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) published the so-called “Brundtland Report” with the official title “Our Common Future”. Written under the chairmanship of Gro Harlem Brundtland, the former Prime Minister of Norway, it provided for the first time an internationally recognised, comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the challenges of sustainable development, defined as “*meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (1987). It emphasizes the importance of a balance between economic, social and environmental considerations for the long-term well-being of humanity and the planet, thus creating a basis for the concept of the “triple bottom line”. Subsequently, the report had a far-reaching influence on the global discourse on sustainable development, including politics, economics and academic research in various sectors, including tourism.

The conviction that economic growth can be harmonized with environmental protection and social responsibility was initially received very hesitantly in the tourism industry and only by individual pioneers. This could be due to the fact that the Brundtland Report emphasized economic growth, overlooking the complexity and power dynamics within the tourism industry. For example, Duffy (2008) argued that this emphasis on economic growth could lead to the commercialisation of culture and the exploitation of local communities for the benefit of tourism companies. Saarinen (2014), in turn, critically pointed out that the relationship between tourism and development is far more complex and nuanced than suggested by the linear models of the Brundtland Report. Regardless of this criticism, the importance of the report undoubtedly lies in its far-reaching reception and the impetus for organizing the Earth Summit in Rio.

4.3 The 1992 “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro and the follow-up conferences

In 1992, the UN organized the so-called “Earth Summit in Rio”. At this international conference, the global challenges of the environment and economic development were discussed for the first time in their interdependence, which led to the adoption of “Agenda 21”, a global action plan for sustainable development. Tourism was only dealt with subordinately in Agenda 21 in chapters on the economy or transport. To monitor the implementation of this action plan, the United Nations set up the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which subsequently convened regular conferences on defined Agenda 21 topics in order to take stock of the success of implementation to date with the member states and with the prior involvement of stakeholders from business and non-governmental organizations and to decide on further necessary steps. Due to the increasing economic importance of global tourism and the considerable impact of tourism on social, cultural and ecological areas of the regions traveled to, the CSD was commissioned by the United Nations in 1997 to treat tourism as an independent topic. Accordingly, the CSD adopted the work programme “Tourism and Sustainable Development” in 1999, in which the cornerstones of tourism development based on the principles of sustainability were defined and tasks and duties were assigned to the participating interest groups of politics, business and non-governmental organizations (CSD, 1999).

To summarize, the Earth Summit and the subsequent activities of the CSD provided significant impetus for the integration of sustainability into the tourism industry, which was still hesitant at the time. The activities of the CSD were preceded by a number of important international declarations. At the “World Conference on Sustainable Tourism” in 1995, a joint declaration was adopted by organizations such as UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme), UNESCO, the World Tourism Organisation and the Commission of the European Union: the “World Charter for Sustainable Development”. This recognised the validity of fundamental principles of sustainability for the development of tourism and called for their appropriate consideration. To this end, the governments concerned should draw up urgent action plans in line with the Charter and adopt appropriate policies and measures to implement these action plans (Jafari, 1995).

The following year, in 1996, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), the World Travel & Tourism Council and the Earth Council adopted a joint declaration, the “Agenda 21 for the Travel & Tourism Industry” (WTO, 1997). This pioneering initiative focussed the sustainability goals of Agenda 21 specifically on the tourism sector. It recognised the tourism industry’s responsibility for social, environmental and economic

sustainability and called for environmentally friendly practices, cultural sensitivity and the promotion of local economies. The creation of clear guidelines paved the way for the integration of sustainable practices into global tourism activities.

4.4 The “Global Codes of Ethics for Tourism” 1999 of the UNWTO

In 1999, the World Tourism Organisation adopted the “Global Code of Ethics for Tourism” (WTO, 1999) at its conference in Santiago de Chile as an impetus for the integration of ethical standards in the global tourism industry. The code takes up the previous guidelines and recommendations on sustainability in tourism and emphasizes the importance of respect for cultural diversity, social responsibility, economic development and environmental protection. It aims to make tourism an instrument for positive change and to minimize negative impacts. In practice, the Code should act as a guide for businesses, governments and other stakeholders in the tourism sector. To this end, the “World Committee on Tourism Ethics” was also founded, which - analogous to the CSD - was to act as an international implementation body (Perez-Salom 2001, Friedl 2015a). However, ethics in tourism remained a foreign concept for many years, both in practice and in research, with a few exceptions (Friedl 2002, Fennell 2016). Only since the 2010s have there been an increasing number of initiatives and certifications that draw on the principles of this code, albeit in manageable numbers (Friedl 2017a). Irrespective of this, this declaration deserves credit for tourism being recognised as an ethically relevant topic for the first time ever.

The proclamation of the “International Year of Ecotourism” in 2002 by the UN and UNEP focussed specifically on nature tourism in protected areas. This initiative aimed to raise awareness of the need for sustainable tourism practices, particularly in nature-based destinations, and to promote them. Corresponding recommendations were adopted at the “World Ecotourism Summit” in Quebec, Canada (WTO 2002).

4.5 “World Summit”: “Rio + 10” in Johannesburg 2002

In the same year, the follow-up conference to Rio, the so-called “World Summit”, was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. In the “Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development” signed there, the signatory states committed themselves to promoting sustainable development, emphasizing the aspects of environmental protection, social justice, economic growth and global partnerships. The declaration is directly linked to tourism, as it mentions tourism as an instrument for sustainable development in the sense of economic development, provided that the environment and the social structure of the regions traveled to are not jeopardized (Friedl, 2017b).

The following year, 2003, the World Tourism Organisation adopted the “Djerba Declaration on Tourism and Climate Change” (WTO, 2003) in Djerba, Tunisia. This groundbreaking document problematised the links between tourism and climate change and called for the use of renewable energies in tourism and proactive adaptation to climate change. The declaration is politically significant as it explicitly recognises the tourism sector as a contributor to climate change for the first time (Scott & Gössling, 2022) and encourages governments to take concrete action. The declaration also calls for international cooperation and political strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in tourism. Scott & Gössling (2021) are extremely critical of the concrete contribution of this and other declarations on climate change to actually combating climate warming.

4.6 Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) of the UNWTO 2008

The UNWTO made significant progress towards integrating sustainability into tourism practice with the publication of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC). This was the first time that an international standard for sustainable tourism was created. These criteria cover four areas. Environmental protection is aimed at the protection and sustainable use of natural resources; the “social” area is aimed at promoting the quality of life of the local population; the “cultural” area is aimed at preserving cultural heritage, and the “management” area comprises strategies and techniques for the effective implementation and realization of sustainability. The criteria are divided into 120 sub-criteria and are aimed at destinations, companies and organizations.

In 2010, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council was founded as an international body to promote knowledge of sustainable tourism practices and the dissemination of universal principles for sustainable tourism and to support accreditations, products and services for sustainable tourism. Above all, the GSTC aimed at the dissemination and practical implementation of the GSTC criteria. These were further developed for this purpose. The destination criteria are aimed at political decision-makers and destination managers, while the industry criteria are aimed at hotels and tour operators. As each destination has its own culture, environment, customs and laws, the criteria are designed in such a way that they can be adapted to local conditions and supplemented with additional criteria for the respective location and activity. The GSTC criteria form the basis for the accreditation of certification bodies that certify sustainable policies and practices for hotels/accommodation, tour operators/transport providers and destinations. The GSTC does not certify products or services directly, but offers an accreditation programme for the approval of certification bodies. The

establishment of this internationally recognised organization has significantly accelerated the integration of sustainability into the practice of the tourism industry.

4.7 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, “Sustainable Development Goals”

“Unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda will become an epitaph for a world that might have been.” (António Guterres, Secretary-General, UN)

Aiming at reducing poverty, hunger, disease, exclusion and lack of adequate shelter – while promoting gender equality, health, education and environmental sustainability, a group of experts of the United Nations designed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as set time bound targets. The timeframe for achieving these goals was 2000-2015, but only some regions and some goals were achieved. Thus, based on these 8 MDGs and its 17 targets, as an urgent call for action by both developed and developing countries, in a global partnership, the experts designed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 30



Source: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The 2030 Agenda presents a collective framework for fostering peace and prosperity for both humanity and the planet. It envisions the simultaneous pursuit of initiatives to eradicate poverty and address other forms of deprivation, coupled with strategies to enhance health and education, minimize inequality, promote economic

growth – all while addressing the challenges of climate change and actively preserving our oceans and forests. There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that include 169 different targets (Filho 2020) (see Figure 1).

4.8 The “International Year of Sustainable Tourism” of the UNO 2017

The 70th General Assembly of the United Nations designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Throughout this period, UNWTO, in collaboration with the broader United Nations system, undertook efforts to heighten awareness about the role of sustainable tourism in development among decision-makers in both the public and private sectors, as well as the general public. Simultaneously, UNWTO spearheaded the coordination of various stakeholders to collectively harness tourism’s potential as a force for positive transformation.

This milestone year of recognition was celebrated in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Government policies, business practices and consumer behavior are highlighted as vital in shaping a more sustainable tourism sector capable of contributing to the attainment of the SDGs.

Moreover, the role of tourism is underlined as crucial in five key areas as follows:

- Inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- Social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction.
- Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change mitigation.
- Cultural values, diversity, and heritage preservation.
- Mutual understanding, peace, and security.

The World Tourism Organization, as the United Nations Specialized Agency for Tourism, was entrusted with the facilitation, organization, and implementation of the International Year. This collaborative effort involved governments, relevant UN organizations, international and regional entities, and other stakeholders committed to advancing sustainable tourism practices.

4.9 Conclusion for the short history of sustainability in tourism

The development of tourism is continuing unabated after the serious slump in the Covid-19 years. This applies in particular to the rising greenhouse gas emissions from tourism (TPCC, 2023). One could almost get the impression that all these milestones from the Club of Rome to the International Year of Sustainable Tourism have primarily contributed to the increasing talk about sustainability, the more important the tourism industry became in a global context and the more noticeable the diverse

consequences of tourism became. However, it should not be forgotten that the modern, global world is a highly complex process with a wide range of challenges. Meeting all these challenges and the pressure to change is overwhelming for many people. For example, all of this knowledge must first seep into all of the subsystems of tourism, such as the tourism education system, in order to be anchored there and ultimately become a matter of course for future tourism professionals. The changes towards a culture of sustainability, whether in the economy in general or in tourism in particular, therefore require time and patience, but also appropriate efforts to ensure that it is not too late. Promoting skills in the field of sustainable tourism by supporting innovative projects is therefore an essential instrument of the European Union - as in the case of the ERASMUS+ project CESTour.

5.0 Principles of Sustainable Tourism Development

5.1 Definition for sustainable tourism development

Given the complexity and diversity of tourism forms and stakeholders, it is not surprising that there is no single, universally recognised definition of sustainable tourism. The UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as “*tourism that fully considers its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, taking into account the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities*” (2013). This definition emphasizes the three dimensions of sustainable development - the economy, socio-cultural life and the environment - but also takes into account the long-term consequences of tourism. Sustainable tourism aims to strike a balance between these three dimensions and ensure that tourism benefits all stakeholders without jeopardizing the resources that make tourism possible.

In the literature and among organizations that deal with sustainable tourism (Bruyn *et al.*, 2023), there are numerous variants of definitions, the characteristics of which often consider the respective economic, ecological, social and political circumstances. However, more important than definitions, which can serve as a rough guideline, are the principles behind the definitions that should guide measures to promote sustainability in tourism. The following list discusses the most important principles of sustainability in tourism. It will become clear that there is no generally recognized set of principles here either. Ultimately, it is always about people and therefore about culture, and thus about perspectives and points of view, never about objective approaches (Amoiradis *et al.*, 2023).

5.2 Principle of system balance

The principle of system balance emphasizes the interconnectedness of the various elements involved in the tourism system and highlights the interdependence of these elements and aspects. This principle ensures that decisions and measures in one area do not have a significant negative impact on other areas. It advocates a holistic approach to sustainability and recognizes that economic, social and environmental factors are inextricably linked and that achieving true sustainability requires the harmonization of these elements (Friedl, 2015b).

This principle is crucial for the development of sustainable tourism, as it prevents economic growth from taking precedence over other aspects and leading to practices that ultimately jeopardize the viability of the entire system. Rather, by striking a balance between moderate economic gains, environmental protection and the social well-being of the populations concerned, tourism can remain viable in the long term without jeopardizing the resources and communities that make it possible (Sanneh, 2018).

5.3 Principle of long-term orientation

The principle of long-term orientation emphasizes the need to consider the future consequences of decisions on tourism development rather than focusing solely on short-term gains. It argues in favor of a strategic approach that prioritizes sustainability and resilience of the affected system, and thus of all stakeholders involved, over immediate and individual economic benefits.

This principle is essential for sustainable tourism development as it discourages reckless exploitation of resources and thus disregard for environmental and social impacts in the pursuit of quick profits. By taking a long-term perspective, tourism stakeholders can ensure that their actions contribute to the long-term viability of destinations, communities and ecosystems, promoting a sustainable tourism industry that will continue to benefit them in the near future, as well as future generations (Gössling *et al.*, 2015).

5.4 Principle of stakeholder participation

The principle of stakeholder participation emphasizes the need to involve all relevant parties, including local communities, businesses, government agencies and non-governmental organizations, in the planning and decision-making processes of sustainable tourism development. This participatory approach ensures that a broad range of perspectives and interests are considered, promoting a more inclusive and equitable

approach to tourism development (Saarinen *et al.*, 2019). By involving stakeholders at an early stage, sustainable tourism initiatives can gain valuable insights into existing issues and needs, help to facilitate consensus and allow potential concerns to be addressed at an early stage.

This collaborative approach is in line with the principle of system balance as it recognizes the interconnectedness of different stakeholders and their role in achieving sustainable outcomes (Gutierrez, 2023). By fostering a culture of participation and shared responsibility, sustainable tourism can have a holistic and lasting impact on destinations and communities. The co-operative approach is also in line with the principle of long-termism, as it prevents future conflicts as far as possible (Friedl, 2015c) and thus contributes to the sustainable safeguarding of social peace, an indispensable prerequisite for tourism development (Shafieisabet & Haratifard, 2020).

5.5 Principle of cooperative learning

The principle of cooperative learning emphasizes the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing between stakeholders in sustainable tourism development. It advocates a learning-based approach that promotes mutual understanding, capacity building and innovation among all stakeholders (Islam *et al.*, 2018). By promoting cooperative learning, sustainable tourism initiatives can capitalize on the expertise and experience of different stakeholders, leading to more effective and sustainable solutions.

This approach is in line with the principle of stakeholder participation as it encourages meaningful engagement and shared responsibility among all stakeholders. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and collaboration, sustainable tourism can achieve long-term success and positive impacts on destinations and communities. This principle is also in line with the principle of systemic equilibrium because it helps all stakeholders involved to develop their understanding of their environment and perceived challenges in an agreed way, which helps to avoid affected groups feeling overwhelmed or disadvantaged by developments (Heape & Liburd, 2018). This in turn strengthens social peace.

5.6 Principle of “Polluter-Pays”

The polluter pays principle (PPP) is a fundamental principle of sustainable tourism development, which states that those who cause environmental damage should also bear the costs of remedying and preventing it. This principle is in line with the

overarching goal of sustainable tourism to minimize negative environmental impacts while promoting responsible resource management (Ruiz-Rosa *et al.*, 2020).

The PPP is inextricably linked to the principle of systemic equilibrium, as it ensures that the costs of environmental damage are not passed on to society or other stakeholders. By internalizing these costs, the PPP aligns economic incentives with environmental responsibility, promotes sustainable practices and discourages polluters from causing excessive damage (Chamizo-González *et al.*, 2018).

The PPP is also in line with the principle of long-term orientation as it recognizes that the environmental costs of unsustainable practices, such as excessive greenhouse gas emissions, are often borne by future generations. By holding polluters accountable for their actions, the PPP encourages long-term thinking and sustainable practices that protect the environment for future generations.

Finally, the PPP is closely related to the principle of stakeholder participation as it requires cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders to be effectively implemented and enforced. By involving businesses, governments, communities and environmental organizations in the process of implementing the polluter pays principle, sustainable tourism can achieve more effective environmental protection and resource management.

In summary, the polluter pays principle is a crucial aspect of sustainable tourism development as it ensures that the costs of environmental damage are not externalized and that polluters are motivated to adopt sustainable practices. It is in line with the principles of systemic balance, long-term orientation and stakeholder participation and promotes a holistic and effective approach to sustainable tourism.

5.7 Principle of efficiency

The principle of efficiency underlines the importance of optimizing the use of resources and minimizing waste for sustainable tourism development. It advocates a resource-conserving approach that reduces the environmental impact of tourism activities while maximizing the benefits for those involved.

Efficiency is closely linked to the principle of system balance, as it ensures that tourism activities are carried out in such a way that the environment or other resources are not burdened or damaged. By minimizing the consumption of resources and the generation of waste, sustainable tourism can preserve the natural and cultural heritage that makes it so attractive (Castilho *et al.*, 2021).

Efficiency is also in line with the principle of long-term orientation, as it recognizes that sustainable practices are essential for the long-term viability of tourism

destinations and communities. By adopting efficient practices, tourism stakeholders can reduce their environmental footprint and ensure that tourism continues to thrive for generations to come.

The principle of efficiency also supports the principle of stakeholder participation as it encourages businesses, governments and communities to work together to identify and implement efficient practices. By promoting a collaborative approach, sustainable tourism can optimize resource use and minimize environmental impacts, benefiting all stakeholders.

Finally, efficiency is linked to the polluter pays principle as it encourages the adoption of practices that minimize waste and environmental damage, thus reducing the need for costly remediation measures. By promoting efficient practices, sustainable tourism can minimize the environmental impact on communities and ecosystems, which is in line with the objective of the polluter pays principle to internalize environmental costs (Balsalobre-Lorente *et al.*, 2020).

5.8 Principle of sufficiency

The sufficiency principle emphasizes the importance of limiting tourism development to a level that is sustainable for the environment, communities and destinations. It advocates a more modest and restrained approach to tourism, prioritizing quality over quantity (Fuchs, 2023). This principle is based on the realization that tourism without sufficiency can lead to overexploitation of resources, overburdening of the population and erosion of local cultures and traditions, as can be observed in the case of over-tourism. By considering the principle of sufficiency, sustainable tourism aims to preserve the integrity of destinations.

The sufficiency principle is consistent with the principle of systemic balance by ensuring that tourism development is in harmony with the delicate balance of ecosystems, communities and economies. It is consistent with the principle of long-term orientation by prioritizing the well-being of the systems involved over short-term gains, thereby enhancing the long-term viability of destinations and communities. It is consistent with the principle of participation, in that sufficiency encourages stakeholders to work together to determine the appropriate scale and impact of tourism development, considering local needs and aspirations. The link to the polluter pays principle is through the plea for a restrained approach to tourism that minimizes environmental damage and resource depletion. The sufficiency principle is linked to efficiency because it promotes efficient use of resources and waste avoidance (Binder *et al.*, 2023).

However, the principle of sufficiency is also at odds with the prevailing intentions of the tourism industry. These are the practices of mass tourism, i.e. the pursuit of large numbers of visitors and the associated profits through quantity rather than quality, which can lead to the overuse of resources. In addition, economic growth is still a fundamental paradigm in the tourism industry, as well as in the economy as a whole, where tourism is often seen as the engine of economic growth, while sufficiency calls for a slowdown or even a reduction in tourism growth. Even at an individual level, short-term profit maximization is still a widespread strategy, especially in listed companies in the tourism industry (Markard *et al.*, 2023). Incorporating the principle of sufficiency into tourism development also requires a change in thinking, combined with a willingness to prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term profits. This transition may involve adapting business models, adopting more sustainable practices and working with local communities to ensure that tourism benefits all stakeholders.

To summarize, the sufficiency principle plays a crucial role in the development of sustainable tourism by promoting a careful, resource-conserving approach to tourism. Whilst it may contradict some of the fundamental intentions of the tourism industry, it is essential to the long-term viability of destinations and communities. By prioritizing sufficiency, tourism can move away from a focus on mass tourism and economic growth towards a more holistic and sustainable approach that benefits both current and future generations.

5.9 Further relevant principles of sustainable tourism development

Sustainability in tourism essentially means overcoming a post-colonialist approach to destinations, which were previously viewed as exploitative resources for maximizing profits as quickly as possible while passing on the costs to the greatest extent possible, in favor of the long-term cultivation of a “tourism garden” so that all elements involved thrive in the best possible coordination with one another. This requires a paradigmatic change, i.e. a comprehensive transition of economic activity, which on the one hand requires permanent learning, as already mentioned in the principle of “cooperative learning”. On the other hand, this requires consideration of the principle of adaptive management (Barnard & Elliott, 2015). This means that tourism products, businesses, destinations and wider environments must be continuously monitored and, where possible, appropriate adaptive measures taken to ensure that tourism practices are in line with changing environmental, social and economic conditions (Hunter, 1997). By adopting an adaptive approach, sustainable tourism can respond to new challenges and ensure its long-term viability.

The consistency principle, according to which there must be compatibility, compatibility and consistency between the three dimensions of economy, culture and ecology, can be regarded as overriding the principles mentioned so far. Accordingly, prioritizing “economic sustainability” to the detriment of the people and habitats affected is absurd. The principle therefore requires the active identification of inconsistencies between sectors, regions and planning levels to overcome them in the best possible way. The principle is closely linked to the principles of participation, balance and long-termism, according to which conflicts between different interests and perspectives must be resolved to prevent the escalation of social or ecological conflicts (Friedl, 2014).

Here it becomes clear that the principles mentioned tend to describe different aspects of sustainability, but do not essentially name new ones. They are, as it were, different sides of the same coin. The complexity and dynamics of this “sustainability coin” and the associated requirements cause many tourism professionals to feel overwhelmed, which is why they prefer to remain faithful to their familiar pattern (Friedl, 2021) of maximizing profits while passing on as many costs as possible. The main aim of the ERASMUS+ project CESTour with its competence centers for sustainable tourism development was therefore to remedy this situation and empower tourism professionals in Asia. Nevertheless, the question remains: Is it not possible to present the complex theoretical construct of sustainability in a simpler way without simultaneously omitting essential aspects?

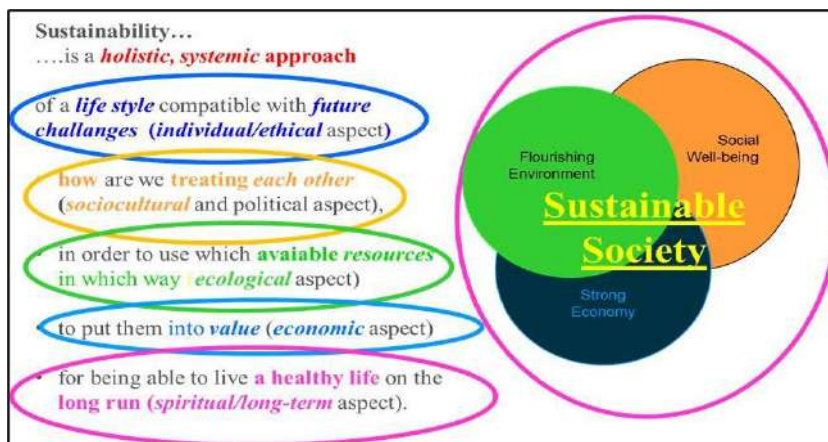
6.0 Conclusion for Sustainable Tourism Development

If we want to persuade people to make tourism sustainable and to favor sustainable tourism products over environmentally harmful and exploitative products, sustainability must become a handy, self-evident instrument. Friedl has made this attempt with his explanatory model of sustainability in tourism (2012) by focusing on the affected, living individual rather than on abstract principles.

1. First and foremost, sustainability means the result of an individual lifestyle that is future-orientated and therefore strives for the best possible protection and promotion of one’s own life. If you do not pay attention to what is good for you in the long term, including what you consume and how you travel, you won’t live a sustainable life.
2. However, the individual does not exist alone, but is integrated into a social and cultural environment. At this level, sustainability means the result of a way of interacting with one another, for example in a tourist destination, whereby this

- interaction is aimed at the best possible protection and promotion of fellow human beings so that they also protect and promote their own lives in the long term (“Tit for Tat”, Biermann, 2021). This also includes organizational forms of coexistence that promote life and relationships, i.e. political structures.
3. Every organism, including tourists, needs resources from the environment to live. At this level, sustainability means a culture of how individuals and collectives deal with the resources of the environment, which in turn is aimed at the best possible protection and promotion of this environment in order to be able to live well from it in the long term.
 4. The resources extracted from the environment are refined by our technical skills (economy) in order to create instruments to support sustainable individual and collective life. Sustainable tourism economy therefore means a culture of developing and creating products and methods that serve to promote and strengthen lasting life opportunities in the best possible way instead of impairing or even destroying them. Sustainable economy thus closes the circle...
 5. ...and links back to the immediate lifestyle of the individual, whose existential or spiritual goal is to lead a permanently healthy life in a permanently healthy society by means of a health-promoting tourism economy in the midst of a permanently healthy environment.

Figure 2: Sustainability from the Perspective of an Individual’s Life



Source: designed by H. A. Friedl.

This interplay of a sustainability-oriented lifestyle and economic culture in the midst of a healthy environment can be summarized even more simply:

1. At the center is the individual's way of life, the "**Me**".
2. Their way of life develops in the interplay of interactions with the surrounding collective, resulting in a communal "**We**".
3. "We" live in an external environment, the "**It**", with which we also interact by taking resources from the environment and "giving them back" after use.
4. We use these resources to build and develop our shared, inner "cultural" world, the "**Ours**", ...
5. ...with the aim of enabling a permanently healthy, peaceful and fulfilling life for all: a meaningful "**Why**"!

Figure 3: Sustainability as Different Perspectives of Culture



Source: designed by H. A. Friedl.

To summarize, sustainability in tourism is all about *how* we do things and *why* we do them. Sustainable tourism development aims to promote the "good life" for all concerned - locals, tourists and suppliers, as well as all living creatures in the shared biosphere - in the long term instead of impairing it. Sustainability is as simple as that. You just have to take a closer look... (Friedl, 2015d).

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CHAPTER 2

CESTour's Academic Contribution in Sustainable Tourism Capacity Building

Rahul Singh

1.0 Introduction

The demand for knowledge and innovative practices in sustainability oriented solutions is not a discussion anymore, but a requirement. Sustainability is influencing the curriculum in business education and research. In specific, tourism education and research is one of the first affected by the sustainability concept and practices since it cuts across many industries and has high impact to the carbon emissions and waste. The sustainability understanding and practices of the hospitality and tourism industry is dependent upon sustainable tourism industry actors like researchers, trainers and managers who understand and adopt the principles of sustainable development. These actors come from the university or centres that are engaged in 3 functions of the university i.e. knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination and knowledge certification.

Sustainability education has been primarily addressing the development economics domains, which became more functional to main economic functions such as energy and tourism. Actions in the area of sustainable tourism (ST) to protect the natural environment, continue generating income from tourism and to achieve a better income distribution is consequently needed in form of capacity building, improving HEI-enterprise cooperation and enhance ICT standards in Nepal, Sri Lanka and India (CSQR, 2021). To support the handling of negative impacts from tourism also the UN adopted an agenda for environment and development (Agenda 21) to achieve sustainable development (Moisey *et al.*, 2008). Melissen (2013) observes that hospitality businesses exert a direct and substantial influence on the (local) social, economic, and ecological systems within their operational context. Higher education, as highlighted by Barth *et al.*, (2007) and Stephens *et al.*, (2008), can act as a catalyst and change agent, fostering the kind of social learning essential for facilitating this transition. In Europe ST is already a widely supported concept and a prioritized topic with initiatives such as “The European Tourism Indicators System” and “The EU Ecolabel”. Both initiatives focus on advising and funding projects in the respective area to increase awareness of stakeholders.

Insufficient capacity and poor communication harm the output of initiatives. The sustainable tourism development report recommends a focus on educational bodies (incl.

unis, training institutes and individual experts), which make a significant contribution to the ST development (UNWTO, 2011). The significance of advancing sustainability education, specifically with the imperative for sustainable development, requires no additional justification. Higher education has the potential to play a pivotal role in realizing the shift necessary for achieving this goal since the education and research for economic development passes through higher education system, primarily. The concept of 'education for sustainability (Efs)' has been recognized as a priority within the framework of sustainable development (Littlelyke *et al.*, 2013).

Centers of excellence in sustainable tourism to boost economic development and enhance university-business cooperation in Southern Asia (CESTour) project aims to improve education quality, strengthen awareness of the tourism sector, including issues relating to its impact and sustainability, or more specifically: it delivers training to transfer knowledge and skills in the specific subject of ST. Actions set out in the ST development plan of the EU have guided the development of the project and translated into priorities for CESTour including the modernization of education and improvement of university-enterprise cooperation as well as more intensive cross-regional networking. The needs of enterprises are designed by applying specific training content in the area of ST, higher skilled graduates are planned to benefit from better employability - generated through CESTour.

With the purpose to excel the integration of sustainability concepts with tourism industry, CESTour project developed the model of creating seven centres of excellence in sustainable tourism in three countries i.e. Nepal, Sri Lanka and India. South Asia is rich in nature and a historical heritage, tourism needs a deep understanding of sustainability to continue the tradition. This section presents a view on the academic and practice activities that a centre of excellence can engage to develop capacity in the domain and make scientific contribution and innovative solutions to various stakeholders in the sustainable tourism in south Asian context.

2.0 CESTour Centre Design

CESTour centre of excellence aims to build the concept of sustainable tourism on a regional and national level in Nepal, Sri Lanka and India. In connection with tourism, sustainable tourism can be well added and this combination can lead to a higher perception about the importance of preserving heritage, environment, and people among society and the most important stakeholders in order to generate massive

national/regional development from the source of sustainable tourism, though in a sustainable way.

To create awareness of the concept and to foster sustainable tourism in all countries, it is important that the major stakeholders, namely higher education institutions and companies unite their strengths and share efforts.

The CESTour project aims at combining these two target groups to generate a greater impact in all countries. More specifically, the CESTour project aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) to promote sustainable tourism concepts and transfer knowledge on sustainability in tourism development to create long term change in the industry and upgrade the knowledge of HEIs in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka to ensure high quality in teaching.
- 2) to enhance the university-business cooperation in the tourism industry to foster the concept of ST and tourism development, increase teaching quality and in the long-run to increase the employability of graduates due to an up-to-date education.
- 3) CESTour consortium to develop a student innovative case challenge competition which focuses on practice based innovative learning, increasing university-business cooperation and the employability of the students.
- 4) Creating opportunity of internationalisation of HEIs by developing international cooperation with universities and companies in research and capacity building.

3.0 Specific Objectives

- a) Capacity building of experts on ST and sustainable tourism development through training creation and implementation and to show the different learning and teaching tools as well as methodologies to arrange trainings in a more attractive way.
- b) Multiplication knowledge gained within capacity building trainings during the internal multiplication trainings.
- c) To technical development of CESTs in each of the 7 HEIs in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka to operate the centers and apply the learned knowledge - technical innovations at the HEIs
- d) Implementation and operation of the 7 CESTs with different foci depending on the regional tourism industry.
- e) To enhance the cooperation HEI-Company and students learning experience by developing innovative sustainable tourism case studied in cooperation with established tourism representatives to apply the innovative methods learned and prepare the students for innovative thinking and acting in “real life” contexts;

- f) To develop collaboration network among EU and Asian HEIs and all members of the target group on ST by joint publications and organizing the international conference on ST practices.

4.0 Innovation Aspects of the Project

Relevance: In the identified countries, the governments and firms are committed to enhance the current situation of sustainable tourism activities. CESTour aims to tackle the relevant needs identified by the stakeholders.

Support: In a format of capacity building, project induces a structure of centre of excellence to develop training modules with content as well as teaching method focus – that drives the self-determined educational development plan (blended learning, F2F teaching, e-learning & available MOOCs); introducing innovative & creative concepts to tourism representatives, students, institutions, & organizations that have not been able to benefit from these developments for the betterment of tourism industry and respectively the society.

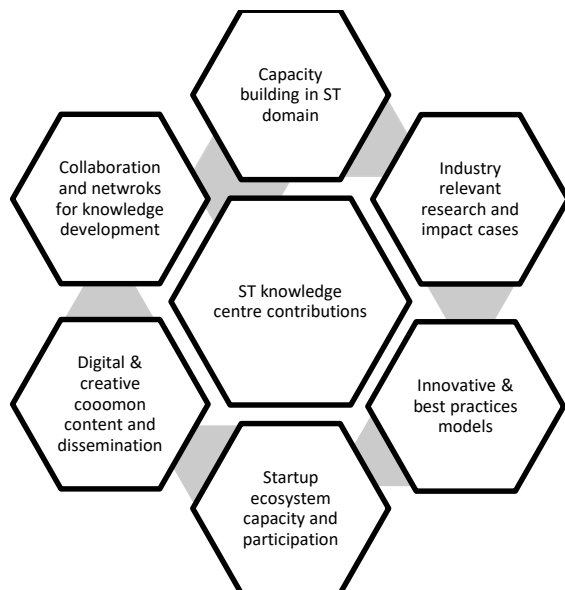
Learning options: implementing 7 CESTour centres to enhance learning options aiming to enhance their skills on strategic & sustainable tourism development & management through innovative ways of knowledge development, sharing and dissemination within the education triangle i.e. Higher education institutions (HEI)-students-tourism stakeholders.

Multi-level collaboration: fostering the cooperation between HEI & (sustainable) tourism stakeholders to strengthen the local & regional economic impact; Enhancing cooperation between the EU, selected Asian countries & equally important institutions.

Modelling Innovative practices: developing knowledge in the new domains like innovative practices by the companies, new models of new age firms, technology induced innovations and creating learning guides of success stories of such innovations.

Developing the knowledge on innovations and good practices in sustainable tourism, CESTour project developed a model to balance knowledge of two worlds i.e. Europe and South Asia. European good practices studies guided on the theorisation of sustainability in tourism and success cases, which are also replicable for both scalability and modelling sustainability. Whereas, south Asian innovative practice case studies enhance understanding on the integration of sustainability in tourism industry.

Figure 1: ST Knowledge Centre Contribution Mapping



Source: Authors based on CESTour project

Table 1: Europe–South Asia CESTour Knowledge in Sustainable Tourism

<p>European good practice cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 cases from Austria and Germany • 3 cases from Spain • 3 cases from Italy 	<p>South Asian innovative cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 cases from India • 10 cases from Sri Lanka • 10 cases from Nepal
<p>Knowledge and training modules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 training modules • 65 hours training material • 1 ST European network • 1 publication on case innovations 	<p>Knowledge & capacity building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 multi-country comparative report • 3 national status-quo reports • 7 focus group reports • 7 ST academia-practice networks • 70 training programs • 1 CESTour conference and proceedings

Source: Author's based on CESTour project

The knowledge and capacity building plan of the project contributed in form of developing following as structures of knowledge development and dissemination;

- Protocol and format of focus group for sustainable tourism study
- Protocol and format of good practices in sustainable tourism
- Structure of national and comparative status quo report

- Structure and format of innovative case development in sustainable tourism
- Protocol for developing case learning videos
- Protocol and design of dissemination knowledge tools i.e. blog, report, video etc
- Format of process quality management of centre development
- Framework for business plan of centre and sustainability plan

Table 2: CESTour Value Themes with Cross Reference to Individual Cases in Sustainable Tourism

Value Theme	Evidence from Cases
Experiential Learning	All the case studies described active encouragement towards learning in real-life settings. The case study are describing community engagement as essential component, online and interactive representations of the world, employing experiential learning, industrial partnerships, and some highly innovative solutions to address sustainability.
Sustainability	Many of the new tourism cases have a focus on sustainability as its first focus. Case studies connect to the critical perspective on the sustainability of tourism in developing countries, energy resource optimization, digital innovations in reducing material utilization, technology intervention and other ways of introducing sustainability concept in the market practices.
Creativity, innovation and ideas	Case studies also highlight the use of creativity in their presentation to the new ideas and their presentation to the world for innovation. These are offered in online, virtual world, interactive video, case study format with focus on creativity. Introduction of start-up integration and partnership in ST within the project is new model before the academic and business fraternity.
Interdisciplinary	We recognized that tourism industry needs to understand multiple disciplines since this itself is combination and integration of many sectors of economy. This demands cases from other than tourism and hospitality, such as business, economics, technology, geography, geo science and history, anthropology, science, media and recreation.
Internationalisation	Tourism and sustainability is a global phenomenon now, thus there is an international tune to the development of the knowledge and practices. The learnings from Austria, Germany, Italy, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Spain are great resources for the community.

Source: Adapted from the Key Values framework, Jago & Liburd, 2008.

Out of the main deliverables, CESTour produced three national status quo reports of Sri Lanka, Nepal and India and one comparative report of South Asia. The purpose of these reports are to provide a nation wise and comparative insight into the sustainable tourism development context in these countries. Report 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 have been the 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).

Another most crucial contribution is the innovative case development i.e. 35 cases from Nepal, Sri Lanka and India. These cases are developed on innovative ideas as start-ups, process innovations in firms, unique feature of products, destinations etc. Developing a creative knowledge summary of the cases, we observe few CESTour key value themes which drive the innovativeness and learnings. This ended up with case challenge competition engaging young researchers and academic and industry mentors working together.

5.0 Contributions and Future Path

CESTour project offers a futuristic insight to the development of the centre of excellence or the institutions engaged in sustainable tourism domain for knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination and knowledge certification. The approach to build capacity of the centre or institute, create training programs, enhance capacity of the faculty and students in research and publication, development of the practice cases and impact cases, creating digital resources and formats for generic usage by any discipline, creating a academic and industry network in sustainable tourism and other such activities will help the already created centres of excellence in partner universities and other universities interested in such academic and practice engagements. We hope that the knowledge and models developed in the CESTour project will contribute significantly to interested institutions.

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CHAPTER 3

Description of the Cases' Framework and Development

Martha Friel and Emma Zavarrone

1.0 Introduction: The Development of WP5 in the Broader Context of the CESTour Project

The CESTour project set out with the ambitious goal of promoting sustainable tourism and transferring fundamental knowledge to develop a more sustainable tourism industry in the project areas. This long-term commitment aimed to create a lasting impact within the tourism sector and improve the expertise level in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the involved countries - India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka - while also contributing to enhancing excellence in teaching.

At the heart of the CESTour project was the desire to strengthen collaboration between universities and businesses in the tourism sector across India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. This in order to promoting sustainable practices in tourism and enhancing education. The long-term objective was to enhance graduates' employability by providing a more current and industry-relevant education.

Strengthening collaboration between universities and businesses in the tourism sector to promote sustainable tourism brings significant advantages. This synergy allows students to practically apply theoretical concepts learned during their studies, acquiring industry-relevant skills. Additionally, it facilitates knowledge exchange between the academic and business spheres, enabling universities to tailor educational programs to real sector needs while businesses benefit from innovative ideas from academic institutions.

This close collaboration can also foster research and development of innovative projects in sustainable tourism, bridging the gap between theory and practice and preparing students for real challenges in the tourism sector. Lastly, the university-business cooperation creates internship, apprenticeship, and employment opportunities for students, ensuring education tailored to sector needs and enhancing competitiveness in the job market.

In line with these objectives and to consolidate results across other work packages (WPs), the CESTour project included specific activities in WP5 aimed at enhancing collaboration between tourism sector businesses and universities. This directly involved students from the centers of excellence for sustainable tourism.

Specifically, WP5 involved at least five students or student groups from each center of excellence in the seven partner universities in order to link them with tourism companies, entrepreneurs, NGOs, and local associations. They worked on concrete case studies on sustainable tourism, aiming to create a “catalogue” of best practices.

Through vocational training courses/research projects in WP4 and dissemination activities (WP6), as well as during regional multiplier events (WP2), students working within CESTs and tourism students had direct contact with key stakeholders. As a result of this collaboration, each student working within the CESTs and those interested in participating were matched with a stakeholder, creating a case study.

Within WP5, each student/group was tasked with analyzing a chosen sustainable tourism case—a business, experience, or destination—and developing a concise profile to examine innovative strategies, evaluate their impact, and define the sustainability and scalability of proposed solutions. Students received support from internal and external mentors throughout this case development process.

After finalizing the cases, each center of excellence organized a local event based on these case studies. During these events, students presented their analyses to a local panel of experts consisting of academic teachers and business representatives. Each case was evaluated using a common evaluation framework provided by the WP leader, and a winning case was selected for each university.

The case study challenges significantly contributed to the specific objectives of the CESTour project. They provided an opportunity to analyze the current state of the tourism industry in the involved countries, identifying and cataloguing existing sustainable practices, thus creating a vital knowledge base of best practices in sustainable tourism.

Additionally, these challenges actively engaged students in case study analysis and development, enabling them to acquire in-depth knowledge and practical skills related to sustainable tourism concepts. Involvement of business mentors provided valuable practical experience, supporting students' capacity-building in this field.

Moreover, the case study challenges contributed to enhancing the operational capabilities of excellence centres, allowing students to actively participate in initiating new activities for these centres.

A crucial aspect of these challenges was enhancing cooperation between universities and businesses in the sustainable tourism sector. They established a tangible bridge between the academic and business worlds, contributing to sharing and integrating innovative knowledge and practices.

Ultimately, the case study challenges acted as a catalyst in creating collaboration networks among European and Asian partners involved in the project, facilitating the exchange of international experiences and knowledge and further extending the impact and scope of the benefits obtained through the CESTour project. Considering the achieved results and events conducted by various partners, it can be affirmed that students involved in centers of excellence actively identified and proposed diverse and interesting case studies offering insights into various priorities and areas of intervention in sustainable tourism in individual partner countries. These cases will be discussed in the subsequent sections after a summary of the guidelines presented in the next section.

2.0 WP5 Outputs: The Guidelines for Cases' Development

For the implementation of activities outlined in WP5, the project planned that the WP leader, namely IULM University of Milan, had to develop a series of guidelines as an output. Specifically, IULM developed guidelines for case analysis, for creating presentation videos for each of the case studies intended for social media communication, and for reporting the results obtained through the challenge events.

The initial step in carrying out the WP activities was drafting the guidelines for composing the case study. These guidelines were finalized after a meeting with all partners in December 2022. The shared guidelines included directions for case drafting and producing promotional videos to showcase and promote the case studies on social media.

The template for case study descriptions was detailed, aiming to provide an in-depth analysis of sustainable tourism projects. These guidelines gathered uniform information for individual cases, making them categorizable and analyzable according to similar criteria.

The case analysis grid was divided into four main sections, each serving a specific purpose. The first section, "Case Context," introduced the operating environment of the company or institution, covering geographical, historical, and operational details, services offered, target audience, and financial structure crucial for understanding the unique context of the case study.

The second section, "Innovation in Sustainable Tourism," focused on the challenges faced by the company or institution in sustainable tourism. It detailed the sustainable initiative or project, emphasizing introduced changes and the activities required for implementation. Market trends and internal organizational dynamics were also analyzed.

The third section, “Impact,” assessed the effect of the sustainable project, considering its effects on customers, the organization itself, and the development of the Center of Excellence, if relevant. Participants were asked to evaluate social, environmental, and economic impacts for different target groups and assess the overall effectiveness of the initiative within this section.

The fourth section, “Conclusions,” provided a final reflection on project implementation. It identified the strengths of the entrepreneurial initiative/innovative project, analyzed, highlighted potential improvement areas, and evaluated the possibility of replicating the initiative in other contexts.

This structure allowed for a clear and detailed organization of necessary information to understand and evaluate case studies in sustainable tourism. Each section focused on specific elements enabling stakeholders to analyze the initiative, assess its impact, and identify key aspects for its success or potential improvement.

An example was also provided within the template to facilitate case drafting further and ensure uniformity in the case analysis approach. The provided case was solely for internal use among the CESTour project partners. Although the company mentioned in the case study was real, some aspects relating to its description and the innovation proposal in sustainable tourism were specifically structured for illustrative and exemplary purposes to help students identify key aspects to analyze in their cases.

Regarding the guidelines for social media videos, these were also provided by the WP5 leader, IULM University, and shared with the partners. The indications provided insights on increasing awareness and usefulness regarding the analyzed sustainable tourism case studies. The video production had two main objectives: one internal to the CESTour project, used for communication and development of the Centers of Excellence, and one external aimed at maximizing visibility for the studied case through social media.

During the video creation process, emphasis was placed on the primary objective of the CESTour project, providing clear directions to ensure clarity in the central message for the selected audience. Efforts were made to engage the target audience by adjusting the video length for chosen social platforms and considering using English subtitles if the local language was used.

Some guiding questions helped define the main message to convey, the key objective, the choice of the most suitable social platform, the ideal audience, the story structure in the video, and the best visual and narrative elements to communicate the desired message effectively. Students were advised to focus on a specific, innovative, or unique aspect of the case study to make the video more impactful and engaging.

Guidelines were also provided to describe the results of the Local Case Challenge Events. These guidelines focused on detailing the outcomes of the Local Events of the Case Challenge. Partners were asked to provide detailed information regarding the Agenda, Participants (including an attendee list), Date and location, Main activities and results obtained, and Media coverage (including images in the document, links, etc.). These directions aimed to ensure comprehensive documentation of the local events, capturing both logistical aspects and the primary results, including media resonance through relevant images and links.

Lastly, the final template provided to partners was related to the case evaluation grid. This was structured to descriptively assess all the different sections of the case analysis on a scale from Excellent to Not adequate. The evaluation grid also included two sections for evaluating the videos and pitches.

3.0 The Cases, Challenges and New Partnerships with the Sector

Based on these guideline documents, students, supported by their mentors, completed the analysis of 35 cases, which were then presented within the framework of the Local Case Challenge Events organized by each partner university.

The diversity within these 35 cases represents a fascinating mosaic of initiatives in the context of sustainable tourism across India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Beyond the diversified geographical distribution, these cases encompass a wide range of experiences and initiatives, providing an in-depth analysis of multiple facets within the sustainable tourism sector in these three countries. From eco-tourism and adventure tourism projects to innovative collaborations between public and private sectors, the variety of explored contexts highlights the extensive impact sustainable tourism can have on diverse communities and various socio-economic and environmental settings.

Furthermore, the broad spectrum of explored sectors, including aspects such as local community engagement, promotion of traditional craftsmanship, and adoption of low-impact environmental tourism practices, allowed students to grasp the importance of a multidimensional approach in addressing the challenges and opportunities within the sector.

The inclusion of unique initiatives among the selected cases, such as virtual tourism experiences, the establishment and growth of community-based hospitality ventures driven by female entrepreneurs, and initiatives focused on the preservation and elevation of local traditions encompassing agriculture, traditional cuisine, and craftsmanship, not only underscores the diverse tapestry of sustainable tourism but also serves as a wellspring of invaluable insights essential for forging novel partnerships.

These partnerships are instrumental in cultivating wider synergies that bridge the realms of academia, industries, and local communities, with a fundamental aim to revolutionize the paradigms governing the organization and execution of tourism experiences.

Each partner university identified an outstanding case study within the sphere of the case challenges conducted between August 2023 and January 2024. These case challenges played a dual role: significantly enhancing the Centers of Excellence (COEs) visibility while fostering a platform for extended collaboration and constructive discourse among businesses, academic institutions, and local organizations. The forthcoming sections of this volume present summaries of the 35 cases presented during the challenge (Table 1).

Table 1: Cases with Authors and Mentors

Country	University	Case no.	Case Title	Authors	Mentors
India	BIMTECH	1	Global Himalayan Expedition: Integrating Sustainability in Adventure Tourism	Samreen Kaur and Sidra Rehman	Prof. Manohar Sajjani
India	BIMTECH	2	Ecoplore: Truly Eco-friendly and Sustainable	Swati Khanna and Akanksha Kesarwani	Prof. Rahul Singh
India	BIMTECH	3	Kumbh Mela and Sustainable Tourism	Rohit Mukhopadhyay	Ms. Svadha Rai
India	BIMTECH	4	Not on Map	Anshuman Sharma	Dr. Shalini Singh
India	BIMTECH	5	Snowlion Expeditions Pvt Ltd: A Case Study on Adventure Tourism	Sweta Sinha and Piyush Khatri	Dr. Veenu Sharma
India	IPE (Institute of Public Enterprise)	6	Agri-Tourism and Local Community Development: A Case of SAMTFMACS in Aruk Valley, Andhra Pradesh	R Kishore	Prof S Sreenivasa Murthy
India	IPE (Institute of Public Enterprise)	7	Local Art Development and Sustainable Tourism: A Case Study on Mahabalipuram	K Prashanth	Prof Ch Lakshmi Kumari
India	IPE (Institute of Public Enterprise)	8	Community Based Eco-Tourism: A Case Study on Vana Vihari, Maredumilli, Andhra Pradesh, India	D Sai Venkata Sastry	Prof S Sreenivasa Murthy
India	IPE (Institute of Public Enterprise)	9	Tourism on Tribal Culture and Development: A Case Study on ITDA and TSTDC, Medaram Eturnagaram	M Sai Mouli Verma	Dr Maschendar Goud
India	IPE (Institute of Public Enterprise)	10	A Case Study on Cruise Tourism: A Case of Ponnami Tourism	N Sree Saily Siva Pujitha	Prof Ch Lakshmi Kumari
India	NIRMA University	11	Net Zero Sustainable Tourism: A Case Study of Vinyasa Ashram	Sameeksha Ahuja, Ark Dutta, Rahul Basandani, Ashlesha Sethi, Souvik De, and Himanshu Chauhan	Dr. Himanshu Chauhan

Country	University	Case no.	Case Title	Authors	Mentors
India	NIRMA University	12	Empowering local artisans through sustainable tourism: A case study on Kachchh	Nurvi Bhand, Anushka Vijaywargiya, Anushtha Seiwani, Muskan Khazanchi, Spandana Gupta, and Diljeetkaur Makhija	Dr. Diljeetkaur Makhija
India	NIRMA University	13	GMVN's (Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam) Holistic Approach to Sustainable Tourism	Prakash Paul, Rajdeep Bandyopadhyay, Bhavya Sharma, Rumela Tapadar, Sharnav Kundu, and Mayank Bhatia	Dr. Mayank Bhatia
India	NIRMA University	14	Virtual Tourism	Chaahat Sisodia, Hardik Sathe, Nikhil Sharma, Divya Gautam, Nirja Raghani, and Punit Saurabh	Dr. Punit Saurabh
India	NIRMA University	15	Sustainable Tourism – Overtourism: A Case Study on Nainital	Digesh Shah, Jainam Mehta, Anubhav Jain, Rahul Pandey, Shashwat Khandelwal, and Parag Rijwani	Dr. Parag Rijwani
Nepal	Global College International (GCI)	16	Panauti Community Homestay	Sadrish Marasini	Mr. Rishav Dev Khanal
Nepal	Global College International (GCI)	17	A Case Study on Tourism Event and Research Center	Raj Giri	Ms. Mahima Karki
Nepal	Global College International (GCI)	18	Bhaktapur Jatra Committee: The Role of Bisket Jatra in Promoting Local Traditions & Preserving Cultural Heritage	Pukar Karki	Mr. Kishor Kumar Gautam
Nepal	Global College International (GCI)	19	Bhairavnath Topi Pasal	Sumina Shrestha	Ms. Manuza Khatiwada
Nepal	Global College International (GCI)	20	A Case Study on SASA: TWA - ससः तः	Kuldeep Dahal	Dr. Dev Raj Paneru
Nepal	Tribhuvan University (TU)	21	Royal Mountain Travel	Bimal Subedi	Mr. Nishan Kumar Aryal
Nepal	Tribhuvan University (TU)	22	Kritipur Community Homestay	Devina Shrestha	Prof. Ghanshyam Bhattarai
Nepal	Tribhuvan University (TU)	23	Gorkhali Handicraft	Jenish Maharjan	Mr. Nishan Kumar Aryal
Nepal	Tribhuvan University (TU)	24	Lavie Garden	Pranav Shrestha	Ms. Sunita Khatiwada
Nepal	Tribhuvan University (TU)	25	Best Heritage Tours	Sushant Bajracharya	Dr. Pashupati Nyaupane
Sri Lanka	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL)	26	Heritage Kandalama Where Sustainability Blooms	M.Y. Sasanki and R.S.S.W. Arachchi	Prof. RSSW Arachchi
Sri Lanka	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL)	27	Loris Conservation at Jetwing Vil Uyana	G.A.K. Hasanga and W.K.A.C. Gnanapala	Prof. WKAC Gnanapala

Country	University	Case no.	Case Title	Authors	Mentors
Sri Lanka	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL)	28	Walawe Nadee: Sustainable River Safari	W.H. Yathartha and C.N.R. Wijesundara	Mr. CNR Wijesundara
Sri Lanka	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL)	29	Wild Glamping Gal Oya: Beacon of Responsible Luxury Camping	W.R.A.K.K. Ranasinghe and J.A.R.C. Sandaruwani	Ms. JARC Sandaruwani
Sri Lanka	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL)	30	Heeloya Village: Community-based Sustainable Tourism Heaven	R.A.V. Lakshan and G.V.H. Dinusha	Mr. GVH Dinusha
Sri Lanka	Uva Wellassa University (UWU)	31	CIC Agro Farm, Hingurakgoda, Sri Lanka : Icon of Sustainable Agriculture in Sri Lanka	Sampath W.S.W., Hasini G.G.A., Weerasinghe W.M.A.M., Wijerathne C.J., Sudu Arachchi S.M. and Sammani U.G.O.	Ms. U.G.O. Sammani
Sri Lanka	Uva Wellassa University (UWU)	32	Wildlife Tourism with Responsibility: The Role of Yala - Eco Teams in Promoting Sustainable Tourism	Sankalpana, K.M.S., Kumudumali, A.A.K., Wijesinghe, R.G.D.A., Niwarthana, M.L.S., Priyangika, W.M.S. and Karunarathne, A.C.I.D.	Ms. A.C.I.D. Karunarathne
Sri Lanka	Uva Wellassa University (UWU)	33	Tea Tourism and Sustainability: A Case Study of Heritage Tea Factory Hotel, Sri Lanka	A.K.R.Y. Allewela, R.A.U. Piumanthi, B.D.S.H. Dharmasena, M.K.E.A. Alwis, L.Gnanasegaram and J.P.R.C. Ranasinghe	Prof. J.P.R.C. Ranasinghe
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PART 2: CASE STUDIES

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CASE STUDY 1

Global Himalayan Expedition: Integrating Sustainability in Adventure Tourism

Samreen Kaur and Sidra Rehman

1.0 Case Context

Sustainable Development Goals target 8.9 (SDG goal) emphasizes devising policies and executing policies to encourage sustainable tourism that produces employment and promotes regional traditions and products. SDG Goal Target 12.b intends to “develop and execute methods for observing the impacts of sustainable development for a tourism sector” and also emphasizes the significance of sustainable tourism.

Inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals and their agenda for making the tourism industry more sustainable, the Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) targeted a tourism start-up and social enterprise based in Ladakh, India, founded in 2013 by Paras Loomba in Ladakh, located in northern India known for its stunning landscapes and vibrant Tibetan- Buddhist culture. However, the region faces challenges in tourism development due to its remote location and limited infrastructure. GHE operates in this context, combining adventure tourism with social impact by improving living conditions for local communities and, at the same time, enhancing the tourism experience of travellers through authentic cultural exchange. GHE’s success is well reflected in awards received from UNWTO & NTTC for developing sustainable tourism as a Catalyst for positive change in Ladakh.

1.1 Vision

The vision of the Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) is to create a sustainable and responsible tourism ecosystem in the Himalayan region. GHE envisions a world where tourism promotes environmental conservation, empowers local communities, and fosters cultural preservation, ensuring the long-term well-being of the Himalayas and its inhabitants.

1.2 Mission

GHE’s mission is to provide transformative travel experiences while addressing the challenges remote Himalayan communities face. Through its unique model, GHE

aims to bring renewable energy solutions, promote education and healthcare, and develop livelihood opportunities, thereby improving the quality of life for the local population and positively impacting the region.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

GHE's Unique products & services on offer include:

Impactful expeditions: Travellers have the opportunity to explore remote and breathtaking Himalayan landscapes while actively participating in solar electrification projects and engaging with local communities.

Solar electrification through the installation of solar microgrids: GHE specializes in implementing solar energy solutions in off-grid Himalayan villages by providing not only improved quality of life but also fostering socio-economic development in the region. Sustainable Tourism Consultancy: GHE offers consultancy services to tourism organizations, communities, and governments in the area of sustainable tourism development in responsible tourism practices, community engagement, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation, helping stakeholders to create tourism experiences that are both beneficial and sustainable.

Community development initiatives: GHE conducts various community development programs aimed at empowering local communities, including training programs, capacity-building workshops, education support, and income-generation initiatives. Advocacy and Awareness: GHE actively raises awareness about the challenges faced by remote Himalayan communities with reference to environmental conservation and sustainable tourism. As a result of its unique products and services, GHE not only offers immersive adventure experiences but also contributes to the well-being of local communities, environmental Sustainability, and cultural preservation in the Himalayan region.

GHE primarily target three key groups:

- Adventure Travellers are adventure enthusiasts who seek unique and immersive travel experiences and are eager to explore remote and off-the-beaten-path destinations.
- Responsible Travelers who are conscious of the impact of their visits on the environment and local communities.
- Corporate and Educational Institution Groups looking for experiential learning and team-building activities with the purpose of valuing responsible tourism and seeking

to engage in socially impactful projects while enhancing team dynamics and a unique education and bonding experience.

At the Village level, depending on where the hamlet that has to be electrified is located, the process for each trip varies. It usually ranges from \$1,200 (about Rs.86,00) to \$3,000 (around Rs. 2.15 Lakh) per person¹.

3.0 Impact

GHE has, through its business operations, been able to make an impact on the following stakeholder communities:

- **Customers:** Customers are an important target market for the Global Himalayan Expedition. These can include individual customers as well as corporates and other institutions, given the services of GHE, which vouch for the Sustainability of immersive experiences in the Himalayas with the communities. One gets to learn practical experience about Sustainability.
- **Local community:** These can also be proposed as community-building practices in front of corporations; this can help in getting funds and play an instrumental role in the economic development of the communities where the GHE operates. This will make the community willing and eager to cater to tourists and promote their culture while sensitizing them about preserving the environment.
- **Region's sustainable development:** Development of the local community will lead to a gradual yet incremental positive growth in the region economically and culturally. This can be looked at as the population becoming a 'collaborator' as well as a 'probable customer' in the future.

GHE's eco-friendly initiatives, such as renewable energy adoption, waste management, and low-impact tourism, contribute to preserving the fragile Himalayan ecosystem and mitigating the effects of climate change². The Centre of Excellence (CoE) within the Global Himalayan Expedition experiences enhanced expertise and knowledge in sustainable tourism practices. They contribute to the organization's growth by providing valuable insights, ensuring responsible tourism, and further establishing GHE as a leader in sustainable travel in the Himalayas (Pu, 2022).

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The awareness of leadership, teamwork, ethics, and judgement are developed through GHE Impact Expeditions. The type of self-reliance, judgement, respect, and

feeling of responsibility that may help leaders flourish in today's changing organizational context is fostered by a strong connection with the natural world.

The largest contributors to mainstreaming ethical travel are tour operators and travel and hospitality businesses. Practitioners may include the idea of Sustainability in each of their offerings before customers start to demand sustainable travel goods and services. Using a holistic strategy that combines renewable energy, community-based education, and business possibilities, IEEE Smart Village (ISV) supports communities that are energy-poor across the world. The Global Himalayan Expedition's creative ideas and dedication to the Himalayan area of India are also appreciated by IEEE Smart Village³.

GHE offers an adventure excursion that is unmatched for showcasing team and individual strengths and giving employees the chance to learn to make up for inadequacies in isolated locations where every move counts. Encouraging tales of local communities and the environment to establish standards for tourists so they interact responsibly, and providing locally made-to-order products in hotel accommodations as a luxury service are some simple practices any travel company can implement. Travel, hospitality, and tour operators may use their influence to put ethical practices in place rather than waiting for the government to establish rules and guidelines for responsible travel. Every tourist organisation needs to start a global movement of change-makers who travel and discover the world in a sustainable manner, such as GHE.

Endnotes

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CASE STUDY 2

Ecoplore: Truly Eco-friendly and Sustainable

Swati Khanna and Akansha Kesarwani

1.0 Case Context

Tourism is one of the 5Ts of India's new economy verticals, which will not only contribute significantly to the economy but also respect the principles of sustainable development. This new approach has motivated the policy to modify India's tourism policy and work on a country-level strategy for sustainable tourism in 2020. These new developments supporting a sustainable tourism ecosystem brought many incumbents and startups to create new models of tourism and new practices in the industry.

Ecoplore is one example of a transformational change in the industry. Even though India's systems are smooth and functioning well, the essence of our existence lies in recognizing that without clean air and water, everything else becomes meaningless. This realization served as the driving force behind our mission to contribute to environmental conservation. Back in 2016, when Ecoplore was founded, only a few people were actively engaged in environmental preservation, and there needed to be more concrete action on sustainability. It was at this juncture that we saw an opportunity to make a difference and combine our passion for travel with our commitment to protecting the environment.

Ecoplore was born out of the belief that travel can be a powerful tool for positive change. By providing opportunities for travellers to experience nature in its purest form, we aim to raise awareness about the importance of environmental preservation. The vision was to create a platform that not only offers unique and authentic travel experiences but also contributes to the conservation of natural resources and supports local communities. It has now been made a reality¹.

1.1 Mission

Ecoplore's mission is to raise awareness among travellers about sustainable travel practices, encourage responsible behaviour and cultural sensitivity, promote reliable and environmentally friendly travel practices, and prioritize cultural preservation and respect for local traditions. It aims to contribute to the economic growth of the destination by generating income and employment opportunities for local communities.

1.2 Vision

The vision of the Ecoplore company “is to create an environmental impact” on tourism and to make the Ecoplore a youngster’s choice. With a dedicated team of individuals who share a passion for sustainability, Ecoplore continues to grow and innovate, seeking new ways to promote responsible travel and minimize ecological footprint.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Ecoplore emphasizes Stay Local, Eat Local, Play Local, Buy Local thereby enabling local communities. Ecoplore offers a lifetime experience of living in a mud, wood, or stone house. Their eco-hotels are located near waterfalls, beside rivers, inside forests or on mountains, far from the noise, crowds, and pollution of the cities. Most of their stays grow their vegetables, fruits, and herbs. You will be served homemade organic meals. Ecoplore is the only aggregator platform that personally visits and verifies Eco-hotels.

Sustainable tourism aggregator: Ecoplore offers services to tourism organizations and cultural organizations. This is done to ensure safety, comfort, and hygiene and also encourages ‘solo woman travel’. Preservation, conservation of the environment, and helping their stakeholders to create tourism experiences that are both beneficial and sustainable.

Hotels and accommodation: as per the study undertaken by the European Union, the carbon emission generated by the luxury hotel room is 1000kg/night, and with the solution of this Ecoplore Eco-stay generated only emission of 9kg per night, so the accommodation of the customer Ecoplore provides the Eco-hotels.

Adventures experience: Ecoplore provides their customer with an adventurous experience for their vacation because most of their stays are near waterfalls, inside forests or on the mountains beside the river, so the customer can experience the beauty of nature and feel the peace and be far from the crowded area.

VAN BHOJ (Eco-Live Museum): Prerna Prasad has visited Van Bhoj in Delhi NCR, which she considers the most sustainable place she has been across India. It’s a mud house transformed into a living museum. The Eco-hotel uses 80% of its construction material from its campus and implements eco-friendly methods like anaerobic bacteria for waste treatment, rainwater harvesting, and reusing 200-year-old doors and windows. The aim is to create a living museum where visitors can experience sustainable living during their day visits from 11 am to 5 pm.

The target customers for this place are nature enthusiasts who seek to spend quality time in natural surroundings and show some level of concern for environmental conservation. It caters to families with children who wish to enjoy a holiday together. Additionally, the resort attracts environmentally conscious individuals who prioritize green services and products.

3.0 Impact

For the demand side: Ecoplore empowers travellers to explore lesser-known destinations and engage in eco-friendly activities, promoting responsible tourism practices. This, in turn, leads to a positive impact on local communities and the environment, as tourism revenues are channelled towards conservation efforts and community development.

On the supply side, Eco-hotels and resorts benefit from Ecoplore's reach and visibility, gaining access to a niche market of conscious travellers. By associating with Ecoplore, these accommodations demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices and attract more guests who prioritize environmental responsibility.

For customers, the platform offers unique and sustainable travel experiences, providing nature enthusiasts and adventure travellers with opportunities to connect responsibly with the environment. The focus on eco-friendly accommodations and local experiences contributes to the conservation of natural resources and supports local communities.

Eco-hotels and resorts partnering with Ecoplore benefit from increased visibility and access to a niche market of environmentally conscious travellers. This exposure helps these properties to grow their businesses while adhering to sustainable practices, thus enhancing their reputation and appeal to eco-conscious consumers.

The founder and team members, driven by a passion for sustainability, find purpose in promoting responsible tourism and leaving a positive impact on the environment and local communities. Their commitment to this cause aligns with their values and creates a sense of fulfilment.

Moreover, the local communities and environment also benefit from Ecoplore's focus on staying local, eating local, and buying local. The platform encourages travellers to engage with local communities, contributing to their economic well-being, and supports eco-friendly practices that aid in environmental preservation and conservation.

Overall, Ecoplore's business positively influences its stakeholders by promoting sustainable tourism, fostering economic growth in local communities, and encouraging responsible environmental practices within the travel industry.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Ecoplore's focus on sustainability and eco-friendly practices leads to a positive impact on the environment. By promoting responsible travel, supporting sustainable accommodations, and engaging in environmentally conscious construction projects, they play a role in preserving natural resources, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting environmental awareness among their customers and partners. Overall, Ecoplore's business positively influences its stakeholders by promoting sustainable tourism, fostering economic growth in local communities, and encouraging responsible environmental practices within the travel industry—resources, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting environmental awareness among their customers and partners.

Endnotes

1. Retrieved from Ecoplore: <https://ecoplore.com/>.

CASE STUDY 3

Kumbh Mela and Sustainable Tourism

Rohit Mukhopadhyay

1.0 Case Context

The Kumbh Mela (a temporary religious gathering) is one of the largest gatherings of pilgrims on earth. The festival is celebrated by religious rituals and taking a dip in the sacred river of the Ganges. The Kumbh is a celebration of spirituality and Sanatan (Hindu) faith where devotees take this as a ritual to liberate themselves through this festival of knowledge, asceticism and devotion. The 49-day Ardh (Half) Kumbh Mela that concluded in March 2019 had about 240 million visitors, including 1.03 million foreign tourists¹.

An extraordinary observation in the celebration of the festival has been the participation of millions of people, irrespective of their caste, creed, gender, religion and nationality. People, such as devotees and tourists, reach the place without any invitation. One gets to observe a conflux of all cultures contributing to the image of a 'Mini India' assembled at one site.

In order to manage a huge gathering of millions of pilgrims and devotees, it has been recognized over the years that proper amenities should be set up. Some of the amenities provided by the Kumbh are as follows –

- Temporary housing facilities
- Crowd Management facilities
- Medical facilities
- Transit and Infrastructure
- Cultural activities and exhibitions

As per information shared by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), revenues of about USD 15.5 billion in trade. The government expenditure in the planning of the event is estimated to be approx. USD 900 million.

The local government generated a revenue of about USD 2.2 billion from the Kumbh Mela. This was primarily on account of the upper-middle-class and rich-class religious tourism and contributed by about 1.03 million international tourists who attended the festival².

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

A business idea focusing on synergies between the workings of government administration, corporations, NGOs, and major community participation will be instrumental in dealing with the problem of waste management and challenges arising in sanitation and hygiene at the Mela. This Idea can be justified in a Partnership Model.

- **Segregation:** To organize awareness programs. Segregation of wet and dry waste at sources. Promoting recycling & reuse of segregated material. Program to ensure community participation in waste segregation.
- **Secondary collection:** Adequate number of covered storage bins. Colorization of the bins. Avoid manual handling of waste.
- **Transportation:** Covered vehicles. Avoid multiple handling of waste. No open dumping. Clearance frequency
- **Processing:** Recyclable should be recycled. Biodegradable waste, like compost, has to be inserted and preferably reused after processing. Etc. Processing is done at the dumping site, segregating biodegradables and processing them.
- **Disposal:** Landfill/ incineration plant
- **Community engagement and empowerment:** Collaborate with local groups to assist community development initiatives, conduct awareness programs and motivate the community to participate in waste management programs. The Ganga Action Parivar was one organization which saw the involvement of religious leaders who held teaching sessions on health, hygiene and the spiritual importance of keeping the Ganga clean; despite kumbh symbolizing bathing as a ritual and auspicious dip in the river, they did not participate in bathing The festival also included religious leaders who came to hold teaching sessions with their disciples and shared concerns about the river's pollution levels but did not participate in the bathing rituals.
- **Marketing and promotion:** Create a strong online presence and use digital marketing tactics to reach the audience. This can be made through the usage of convincing online creatives on topics of cleanliness and hygiene and a website dedicated to attracting collaboration with probable start-ups/NGOs and corporates who can contribute towards maintaining cleanliness and hygiene.

A program of such huge size demands large planning with all possible stakeholders engaged in governance, operations and security-

- **Government and regulatory bodies:** Government institutions at various levels, such as local municipalities and tourism boards, can be stakeholders. They have a

huge role in planning, managing, inviting corporates/ NGOs for collaborations and administering the entire mela. The onus of managing the entire mela lies on them.

- **Local community:** the local community, including people and businesses, can be stakeholders in waste management awareness. As often the plight or introduction of any new idea/ technology can influence their lifestyle in myriad ways.
- **Pilgrims, kalpavasis and tourists:** Considering their participation in the Mela for 55 days they play an instrumental role in affecting the environment in a positive or negative way.
- **Local youth:** Involving local youths in waste management initiatives can be highly beneficial for both the environment and the community. By involving local youths in waste management activities, we can instil a sense of responsibility, just like the concept of ‘Yuva Tourism Club’ in spreading awareness about the importance of cleanliness.

3.0 Impact

Rural India represents a microcosm of Indian Society, and since waste management remains a topic of global importance for the country, the Kumbh Mela, with the initiatives mentioned below, also gives an opportunity for sensitization apart from providing good revenue. It has an impact on the gradual behavioural change orientation towards managing and treating waste. Through the following initiatives, incremental change is possible –

3.1 Event attendees

- **Awareness and Education:** The target market, comprising event attendees, will become more aware of the importance of responsible waste disposal, recycling, and overall environmental and community well-being.
- **Practising in daily lives:** Attendees may adopt better waste management practices during the event and carry these practices forward in their daily lives, leading to reduced waste generation and improved recycling rates.
- **Word of Mouth:** Promoting the same through word of mouth in communities and affinities can go a long way, considering it comes from an ‘insider of the community’.

3.2 Environment

- **Reduced Landfill Burden:** Efficient waste management minimizes the amount of waste sent to landfills, extending their lifespan and minimizing their negative environmental impact.
- **Resource Conservation:** Recycling and proper waste sorting conserve valuable resources such as energy, water, and raw materials that would otherwise be used in manufacturing new products.
- **Prevention of Ecological Harm:** Responsible waste management prevents harm to local ecosystems, wildlife, and marine life caused by litter and improper waste disposal.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Using adequate infrastructure, which includes material, human and technical, can be of great help in minimizing the overall plight brought in by the mishandling and mismanagement of solid waste. Deploying resources is one thing; however, the proper execution on the ground makes a huge difference. The appropriate execution can take place by involving multiple stakeholder communities and working with synergies towards focused goals allocated to each. This shall not only help in the execution of the Mela but will also be a step forward in contributing to a more sustainable and resilient society. By embracing sustainable practices, championing innovation, and fostering a collective commitment to responsible waste management, we can reshape the narrative surrounding waste and forge a more sustainable path forward.

Endnotes

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CASE STUDY 4

NotOnMap

Anshuman Sharma

1.0 Case Context

NotOnMap is a trailblazing start-up revolutionizing the world of sustainable tourism. Founded in 2018, NotOnMap uses the power of travel for positive change and strives to strike a balance between traveller exploration and conservation. While the start-up, on the one hand, introduces tourists to the warm hospitality of local hosts, the depth of the existential human essence found only in diverse cultural exchange, on the other hand, it uses travel as a tool to lessen distressed migration and uplift rural communities.

It believes that every destination has a unique story to tell, and very often, these stories get overshadowed by mainstream tourism. Doing so also bridges the urban with the rural and equates the cultural and economic gap between the two¹.

Starting with a simple thought of ‘Travel with Impact’, the start-up champions the principles of sustainability, community engagement, and environmental stewardship and, by doing so, aims to leave a positive footprint on every destination it serves.

The vision of NotOnMap is to create a world where travel is a catalyst for positive change, empowerment of local communities, preservation of cultural heritage, and conservation of the environment. The mission of NotOnMap is to revolutionize the travel industry by promoting sustainable and responsible tourism practices that benefit both travellers and the destinations they visit.

The working of the organization identifies itself with the following principles –

- Empowerment of Local Communities
- Fostering Sustainability
- Curating Meaningful Experiences
- Drive Social Impact

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

NotOnMap is dedicated to developing rural tourism and community-based sustainable tourism by improving rural villages and connecting them with travellers seeking immersive experiences in rural cultures and societies. They aim to introduce

travellers to the warm hospitality of rural villages and provide them with resourceful experiences enriched with local culture.

The start-up focuses on enhancing the infrastructure and amenities in the villages to ensure a homely and comfortable environment for travellers while also providing locals with access to training, workshops, equipment, financial support, and a workforce. Through this initiative, travellers can quench their thirst for exploring rural communities, accompanied by convenience and ease. The idea of the start-up is to provide a comfortable hospitality experience to travellers, simultaneously adding value to community empowerment by way of providing the following services -

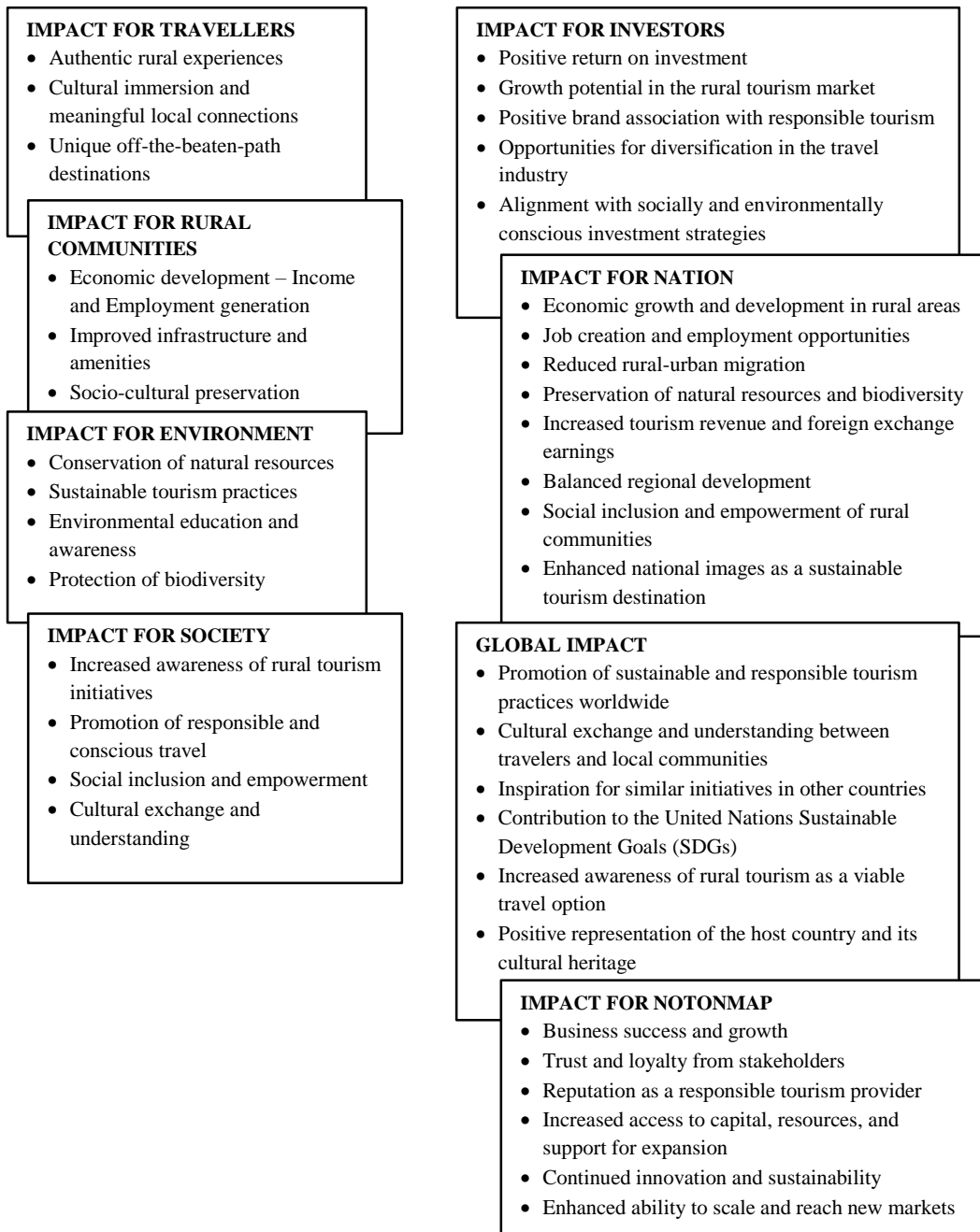
- Long-stay options are available for those who either enjoy a home away from home or want to work from anywhere.
- Customized Itineraries: NotOnMap offers personalized itineraries tailored to the preferences and interests of individual travellers, allowing them to create their own ideal travel experience.
- Give back to Society – With the belief that stakeholders must positively impact each other, NotOnMap encourages travellers to share their knowledge with the communities they travel to by organizing interactive activities, workshops and volunteering.

Through their efforts, they have empowered 500 women and 2000 farmers and craftspeople in these communities, established over 1000 employment in rural locations, and trained over 8000 youngsters. NotOnMap has interacted with and had an effect on over 3000 farmers & artisans across India and listed over 2000 indigenous products².

3.0 Impact

NotOnMap's innovative approach to sustainable tourism has led to a significant positive impact on all its stakeholders, creating a virtuous benefitting cycle. Promoting sustainable tourism empowers local communities economically and preserves their cultural heritage. Travellers enjoy unique experiences and responsible travel, leading to increased interest and support for offbeat destinations. As the number of travellers grows, the local economy prospers, further empowering communities. The initiative's focus on environmental conservation ensures the preservation of natural ecosystems. This collective progress fosters goodwill, attracting more travellers, investors, and collaborators and reinforcing the circle of positive impacts. This symbiotic relationship among all stakeholders travellers, communities, environment, society, investors, nation and self is illustrated diagrammatically below:

Figure 1: Symbiotic Relationship among Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism



Source: Author's contribution

4.0 Concluding Remarks

NotOnMap has been an inspiring journey of learning and development, challenging conventional beliefs, changing how we view travel and tourism and having a significant impact on local communities and the environment. In addition to empowering local hosts and supporting sustainable tourism practises, NotOnMap's mission of introducing tourists to unique and authentic experiences has opened doors to undiscovered gems and lesser-known locations. NotOnMap has raised the bar for the sector with its dedication to responsible tourism and focus on protecting cultural landmarks and natural ecosystems. NotOnMap has a fantastic opportunity to solidify its position further as the demand for experiential travel keeps growing. By encouraging stronger ties and partnerships among its stakeholders, the start-up should strategically broaden its reach by embracing changes in current trends. It can draw in and acquire new travellers who share the same passion for the genuine and unusual travel experiences that NotOnMap offers by developing compelling brand stories, expanding outreach through increased engagement with its audience, collaborating with like-minded organizations and partners, and participating in networking events. NotOnMap can strengthen its position as a trailblazer in sustainable tourism while expanding its impact on local communities and enhancing the wanderlust of adventurous travellers around the world by coordinating its efforts to expand both its traveller base and its network of hosts as well as leveraging the use of technology for social and economic change.

Endnotes

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CASE STUDY 5

Snowlion Expeditions Pvt Ltd: A Case Study on Adventure Tourism

Sweta Sinha and Piyush Khatri

1.0 Case Context

Vinayak Koul Adventure Tourism Company is a renowned organization specializing in providing thrilling and memorable adventure experiences to outdoor enthusiasts. The company stands as a paragon of organizational excellence and impeccable management, striving to optimize operational efficiency, prioritize safety, and deliver unparalleled adventure experiences that leave customers thoroughly content.

1.1 Vision

The vision of Snowlion Expeditions Pvt Ltd is to be a leading provider of unforgettable and sustainable adventure experiences, inspiring individuals to connect with nature, challenge themselves, and foster a deep appreciation for the environment and diverse cultures.

1.2 Mission

The mission of Snowlion Expeditions Pvt Ltd. is to provide exceptional adventure tourism services that prioritize safety, sustainability and customer satisfaction. The company aims to:

- deliver thrilling experiences
- promote environmental sustainability
- foster cultural respect and preservation
- ensure safety and professionalism
- engage and empower participants
- contribute to local communities

By embracing this vision and pursuing their mission, Mr Vinayak Koul, through the initiative of his Company Snowlion Expeditions Pvt Ltd, seeks to provide transformative adventure experiences that leave a positive impact on individuals, communities, and the environment while inspiring a sense of adventure and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

The company stands as a beacon of thrilling adventure experiences, meticulously crafted to ignite the spirits of outdoor enthusiasts and leave them with unforgettable memories. Led by the seasoned adventurer and expert in adventure tourism, the company's offerings span a wide spectrum of pulse-pounding escapades, all designed to challenge individuals while immersing them in the awe-inspiring beauty of nature.

Trekking and Hiking are among the company's key offerings, with expert-guided trips catering to diverse difficulty levels and individual preferences. Participants can embark on invigorating multi-day treks or revel in scenic day hikes, unveiling breathtaking landscapes and forging a profound connection with the natural world.

The company also offers awe-inspiring Wildlife Safaris, inviting participants to explore majestic national parks and wildlife reserves. Accompanied by seasoned experts, participants immerse themselves in the beauty of diverse flora and fauna, gaining insights into wildlife conservation efforts and fostering a deep appreciation for nature's wonders. Adventure reaches new heights with paragliding and skydiving opportunities. Participants glide through the skies, relishing panoramic vistas through paragliding, while heart-pounding skydiving experiences provide an unmatched rush of adrenaline.

Camping and Outdoor Retreats organized by the company offer participants the chance to disconnect from the demands of modern life and reconnect with the tranquillity of nature. Activities like bonfires, stargazing, outdoor sports, and team-building exercises foster solace and inspiration in picturesque outdoor settings. One of the key segments the Company captivates is the Adventure Enthusiasts, those who crave heart-racing and audacious experiences in activities such as trekking, mountaineering, and rock climbing¹.

For experienced climbers and mountaineers, the company provides professionally guided expeditions to conquer awe-inspiring summits, catering to their expertise and need for comprehensive logistical support. Vinayak Koul Adventure Tourism Company also beckons active families, offering a variety of family-friendly activities like trekking, camping, wildlife safaris, and water sports, creating unforgettable experiences and strengthening familial bonds.

Strategically targeting corporate groups and organizations, the company designs customized adventure programs for team-building, fostering collaboration, communication, and leadership development amidst challenging outdoor environments. They recognize the importance of raising awareness among travelers and providing comprehensive educational resources, inspiring responsible behavior and encouraging

clients to become ambassadors for sustainable tourism. Additionally, the company warmly welcomes solo travelers and small groups, providing a platform for brave individuals to connect, share experiences, and embark on thrilling adventures together as a unified collective. Collaboration with diverse stakeholders is crucial for achieving sustainable tourism. The company passionately forges robust partnerships with local authorities, conservation organizations, and fellow tourism operators. By collectively developing sustainable strategies and sharing best practices, they address sustainability challenges. Through ongoing dialogue, they strive to identify innovative solutions that align with their vision of responsible and sustainable tourism practices.

3.0 Impact

Each adventure excursion is characterized by meticulous planning, with prudent destination selection, detailed route delineation, and assiduous accommodation arrangements. Transportation logistics and securing requisite permits are also handled with utmost care, culminating in well-orchestrated and seamless adventures. Customer satisfaction² is of utmost importance to the company, and a culture of unparalleled customer service permeates the entire customer journey. From initial inquiries and trip reservations to on-site support and post-trip assistance, the team ensures open communication, unwavering responsiveness, and personalized attention to meet individual customer needs and alleviate concerns.

Strategic alliances with reputable local suppliers, including accommodations, transportation providers, and equipment vendors, bolster the company's commitment to excellence and enhance the overall customer experience. The company maintains an unwavering dedication to continuous improvement, embracing feedback from participants, monitoring customer satisfaction, and conducting rigorous staff training regimens. This relentless pursuit of refinement ensures that the company remains at the forefront of industry trends and best practices. Beyond the local communities, tourists embarking on Vinayak Koul's sustainable travel experiences undergo transformative journeys. By immersing themselves in environmental conservation and cultural heritage, tourists develop a heightened awareness and commitment to responsible travel practices. The resulting positive and enduring impact on the destinations they visit cements a stronger connection between tourists and local cultures, furthering the preservation of time-honored traditions. Moreover, the company weaves sustainability into its very fabric, actively integrating into its ethos of environmental conservation, constructive community engagement, cultural preservation, and participant awareness of responsible travel behaviour. This principled approach embodies the company's commitment to both

providing exceptional adventure experiences and contributing positively to the world at large.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The active engagement of residents in tourism-related enterprises has generated economic opportunities and uplifted livelihoods. Additionally, emphasis on fostering respectful interactions between tourists and locals has instilled a profound sense of pride and ownership in their culture and heritage, safeguarding its authenticity for future generations.

By promoting respect for local traditions, the initiatives undertaken by Snowlion Expeditions Pvt Ltd play a pivotal role in the continuity of cultural practices, elevating the reputation of destinations as preservers of their rich heritage. Finally, ethical dimensions and stakeholder perspectives are closely examined, offering a comprehensive view of the CoE's ethical standing and societal impact. Opinions from local communities, governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector contribute to the comprehensive understanding of the CoE's significance and role in advancing sustainable tourism practices. In conclusion, this case study unveils the intricate and far-reaching influence of Vinayak Koul's Center of Excellence in sustainable tourism, propelling the industry toward a more sustainable and responsible future.

Endnotes

1. Buckley, R. C. (January 2006). *Adventure Tourism Research: A Guide to the Literature*. Tourism Recreation Research.
2. Lee, Y.-C. (December 2016). *An empirical research on customer satisfaction study: a consideration of different levels of performance*. SpringerPlus.

CASE STUDY 6

Agri-Tourism and Local Community Development: The Case of SAMTFMACS in Aruk Valley, Andhra Pradesh

S. Sreenivasa Murthy and R. Kishore

1.0 Case Context

Agri-tourism is the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. The present case study on Araku Valley in Andhra Pradesh is an effort to highlight the agricultural development in the regions and its integration with the tourism and the development of local communities. The movement to grow coffee began in the plantations owned by the Forest Department and later spread to individual tribal farmers. In 2007, SAMTFMACS was formed as an entity that would eventually allow the farmers to take full control of crop production, harvest, processing, and sale. Today, SAMTFMACS buys the coffee fruit and processes it centrally, providing jobs at the central level with a vision To provide livelihood to the local communities and promote indigenous art and culture giving the farmers more time to focus on the product development and convert it into unique brand. The valley and its surroundings have good potential for adventure sports and nature tourism. The mild climate attracts tourists round the year. Naandi established a new society for marketing of the coffee, thereby facilitating a sustainable linkage to high value global markets. Araku Originals Limited (AOL) facilitates sustainable linkages between global markets. The branding and marketing initiatives by AOL have attracted the national and international coffee experts and high value global markets. On one hand AOL is one of the main buyers for SAMTFMACS, on the other hand it promotes SAMTFMACS brand “ARAKU EMERALD”.

SAMTFMACS is led by a 21-member Board of Directors (three directors per mandal) and branch committees at the mandal level. The farmer members elect branch representatives, who run the branch at the mandal, and they elect a Board of Directors (chosen from the branch representatives). A President and Vice President are elected by the Board of Directors. It is inferred that the total annualized production cost of Araku Valley coffee is found to be Rs. 9.38/kg, and annualized net returns observed are Rs. 92,682.14/ha. For coffee growers, the benefit-cost ratio worked out to be 1.68, which

was favourable and more than one indicating remunerative returns per rupee of investment on coffee plantations

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

The major challenges addressed by the “SAMTFMACS” are resistance to change, cost, education, difficulty in identifying skilled manpower, reduced profit margins, financial challenges, demand, and supply gaps lack of access to credit due to small size of holdings, consistent drought. The agri-tourism concept is very new, and the local people lack proper training in this area. The present business is trying to develop new initiative to promote agricultural tourism as the primary tourism product to spread tourism and its socio-economic benefits to rural and its new geographic regions. Along with the coffee cultivation the local community adds value to agri-tourism through packaged programmes in art & craft imparted by skilled local artisans.

Abundant with forest, waterfalls and naturally occurring fruit trees, the Araku region is regarded as a particularly beautiful jewel in itself. Though its tribal inhabitants' traditional farming method (or 'shifting cultivation') damages forest cover – the natural protection of top soils by the towering higher trees – the Araku Valley has maintained both its coffee-cultivating characteristics and, its “scenic splendour.” Demand for local products like honey, bamboo arts and crafts attracted the tourist's attention and increase the agri-tourism business in general and coffee cultivation in particular. This would help in attracting more tourists, this means more the tourist inflow more is the opportunity for the business growth. The major strength of the business is its location. The place is very popular tourist destination, and the coffee has received wide marketing and gained space in international market. The major weakness is that the farming is done on a small scale due to the limitation of land and lack of proper transport facilities and connectivity with the market.

Overall, it would involve a large amount of planning, research, creative creation, and marketing to establish a new initiative or enterprise on sustainable tourism. Stakeholders' involvement plays a vital role in the business development, to draw customers, earn revenue, and to have a good influence on the business environment and local communities. With the support of the stakeholders, marketing initiatives the coffee which was initially sold to roasters all over the world launched its own brand Araku in 2015 which was sold in the French market and by internet before opening a shop in Paris in January 2017.

Table 1: Stakeholder Analysis

SI No	Stakeholders	Activity	Impact	Influence
1	Integrated Tribal Development Agency	Training in local product development	Improve skills for craftsmen and product diversification	High interest low influence
2	Local Government	Acts as a regulatory body	Increase in National and International Tourism.	High interest high influence
3	Community Leaders	Protects Local Tribal Communities and Culture	Sustained customs and traditions of Adivasis/Tribes	High interest High influence
4	Farmers	Provide access to Local agriculture mainly coffee cultivation	Coffee Plantation has received international recognition	High interest Low influence
5	AP Tourism Development Corporation	Promote local handicrafts, art of dance and heritage.	Local Art , Handicrafts and Heritage was recognized Globally.	High interest High influence
6	Local Business Community	Attract the Tourist by selling the local products like souvenirs, Terracota Jewellery and Coffee, Herbs and Oils.	Helped in improving the Socio-Economic Life of the Local Communities.	High interest
7	Transport Service Providers	Transport of final products to the local makets	Increase in International travel traffic from October to March months.	High interest High influence
8	Health Centers	First-hand health support	Promotes safe and hygiene tourism practices.	High interest high influence
9	Tour Guides / Tour Operators	Help in marketing the coffee plantation	Agri Tourism is known for its Coffee Plantataions.	High interest Low influence

Source: Author's contribution

In March 2021, Araku opened its second store in Bangalore, India, The Araku Coffee Café. Where the philosophy of Araku coffee is reflected in the design and very decor of the place. The first of its kind in India, the Araku Coffee Café offers a sensory Bar where the aroma of freshly ground coffee revive the taste buds.

The business initially created a website with in-depth information about the project, its goals, the services offered, and the contact data. Additionally, it creates social media profiles on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to communicate with stakeholders and potential customers. To inform existing customers and stakeholders about the new project/business, email marketing campaigns are employed. To increase its visibility and attract new stakeholders and clients, the business participates in local events and collaborates with other businesses, organizations, and influencers in the

sustainable tourism industry. To draw in more customers, it is also considering launching advertising campaigns on relevant websites, TV, hoardings at prime locations.

3.0 Impact

Araku Coffee was finally launched in Paris in 2017 and won the prestigious Prix Epicures Award for Best Coffee Pod in 2018. In response to a growing demand to bring Araku to Indian consumers, Araku Coffee made its retail launch in India in 2019, followed by the opening of its flagship coffee shop in Bengaluru in March 2021.

Visitors: In the village there are several products (e.g. coffee, handicrafts, terra cota jewellery, honey and jam)., mainly farm products, whose commercialization to visitors stimulated to increase the economic benefits of tourism. This has a positive impact on the village economy and stimulating local activities.

Local Community: *Before tourism development, most of the village's houses were becoming degraded, tourism contributed to their rehabilitation.* In addition, tourism development has contributed to local people feeling proud of their tangible and intangible heritage, increasing the community self-esteem people begin to be more aware that they had something of value.

Farmers: Farmers also highlight the role of tourism in social dynamics and cultural learning opportunities. One farmer remarked *'the village is more alive with visitors, and the arrival of other people in the village is a breath of fresh air.'* Farmers interactions with tourists are frequently motivated by visitors, searching information about the methods of coffee cultivation, cultural and natural attractions. However, the interactions are also very appreciated.

The agi-tourism business has a positive impact on the environment. Due to its geographical location, the destination is located at a high altitude above the sea level with good forest cover. Due to limited population, their farming activities infused new breath into the environment. This positive environmental impact has turned the destination into tourist spot attracting millions of tourists around the globe.

Thus, the present case study on SAMTFMACS has proved that to boost agri-tourism in rural areas, they must characterize it with a range of entertainments and attractions to stimulate sophisticated tourist clientele. Keeping in mind the ever-changing tourism demand and market trends, agri-tourism has linked with a varied set of recreational activities, which in turn will evolve over time and lead to the development of niche tourism products in rural areas.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Thus, the present case study on SAMTFMACS has proved that to boost agri-tourism in rural areas, they must characterize it with a range of entertainments and attractions to stimulate sophisticated tourist clientele. Keeping in mind the ever-changing tourism demand and market trends, agri-tourism has linked with a varied set of recreational activities, which in turn will evolve over time and lead to the development of niche tourism products in rural areas. Hence, to create niche tourism in rural areas, there is a need to make rural tourism an interesting destination.

This case study examines the ways government, tour operators, and local people can help each other in the best possible ways to capitalize on these new business ideas. This case study however concludes that how niche marketing of agri tourism can help the local people in creating new businesses opportunities and expand their business and therefore, tourism has great capacity to generate large-scale employment and additional income sources for the skilled and unskilled. Consequently, the promotion of Agri-tourism would bring many direct and indirect benefits to the local people by generating new job opportunities in rural areas in the farming sector.

CASE STUDY 7

Local Art Development and Sustainable Tourism: A Case Study on Mahabalipuram

Ch Lakshmi Kumari and K. Prashanth

1.0 Case Context

In recent times, the travel and tourism sector has significantly contributed to the socio-economic advancement of several nations, including India. India has a wealth of natural resources, history, and culture. Art unites India's various cultural philosophies into a single fabric. The art of "creative sculpture" offers adaptable ways to convey India's past culture. The number of artisans has increased significantly over the last 10 years. Indian stone sculptor T. Bhaskaran who is completed his art degree was looking for a good chance to start a business. He has developed a business plan for establishing his own enterprise with the goal of preserving India's cultural legacy and provide a unique range of ornamental products, such as idols, to both Indians and others throughout the world. He established the basis for "creative sculptures" at Mahabalipuram, a town in the Southeast Indian state of Tamil Nadu. India's historic monuments, the buildings found in Mahabalipuram are a remarkable example of Pallava architecture which is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Currently, the company is organized in a single line, the CEO, two in account sections, five in handling logistics, and transportation. The company provides raw stones for the foreign artist from Ireland, England, France, Germany, Sweden, the US, and Malaysia to carve into one-of-a-kind ornamental items which is helped to provide worldwide market for skill development, while promoting the "Incredible India" Programme. Considering the importance of local communities to sustainable tourism, Mahabalipuram serves as the subject of this case study. The present study considers socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors to comprehend the characteristics of sustainable tourism in the locations. Creative Sculptures focus on B2B and B2C clients in India and other countries who are interested in acquiring personalized sculptures. These objects should be displayed prominently to highlight the destination's rich cultural heritage. Many factors affect the cost structure of company, including the kind of stone used, the intricacy of the sculptures, the production method, and the expenses related to shipping and logistics when exporting the goods.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

One of the major challenges, the “Creative Sculptors” undertaken was a new initiative to implement sustainable business practices during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has hindered the development of practical skills, making it difficult for sculptors and newcomers to find trained personnel. Creative sculpting businesses struggle to maintain sustainable profit margins after Covid-19 because of disruptions in the supply chain, rising material costs, and declining demand. Managing cash flow has become an even bigger financial challenge for creative sculptors. This has made it more challenging for the company to maintain cost management and cash flow projection accuracy while making ongoing investments in expansion and innovation.

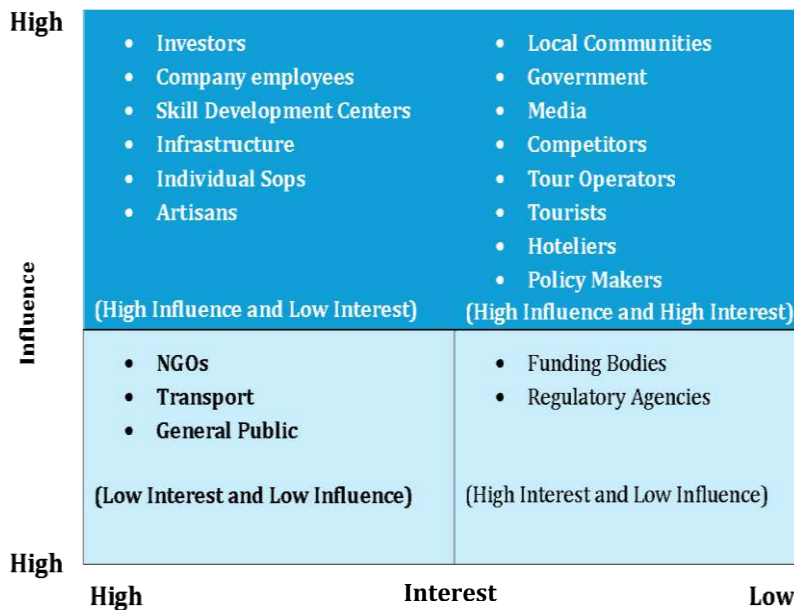
Implementing waste management techniques are examples of adopting sustainable practices. The company may have to pay for new supplies, equipment, or technology to implement sustainable practices. The major ideas to setting up renewable energy systems to increase the company’s operations, like solar panels, marketing activities on their website to close the gap between supply and demand. These provide inspirational conversations to encourage change adoption. The appropriate micro trends and changes that affect the sustainable tourism effort and company. Consumers are turning more to eco- friendly products and services, which is driving up demand for sustainable products. The company might not use many sustainable practices at the moment, which makes it challenging to adapt to changing customer needs and laws pertaining to environmental effects which is one of the weaknesses of the company. Its strong reputation, rich cultural past, and talented craftspeople may all be leveraged to highlight its sustainability measures and attract more tourists. The company’s team of skilled artisans highly knowledgeable in classic stone carving techniques is one of its strengths of the company.

The business should investigate the demand for artistic sculpture and eco-friendly travel. It would have the ability to recognize rivals and prospective customers to come up with a unique idea for both its artistic sculpture and eco-tourism offerings. To enhance its eco-friendly tourism offerings, the business would have to build a collection of sculptures with artistic qualities. A marketing and promotional strategy that would persuade people of the unique benefits of its inventive sculpting goods and sustainable tourism. To create a new business focus on sustainable tourism, launching a “creative sculpture” start-up would require extensive strategy, research, creative production, and marketing.

Stakeholders: To restore mutual support between the artisan community and tourism development from a variety of tourist stakeholders are essential. A grid with four

quadrants is used to display stakeholders. The first has high influence and low interest; the second has high influence and high interest; the third has low interest and low influence; and the fourth has high interest and low influence. Understanding the sustainable techniques used by the tourism business in-depth is aided by a case study on the artisan entrepreneurship of “Creative Sculptor”. Local businesses, government agencies, tour guides, and transportation agencies are the target audiences and the local community, municipal corporation, tour operators, and various tour destinations are the partners of the company.

Figure 1: Stakeholder Analysis



Source: Author's contribution

Finance: The Company's owner(s) obtained a bank loan by using his personal credit history and the business plan as security.

Human Resources: Creative Sculpture hire staff to complete the project successfully when launching a new venture pertaining to eco-friendly new products. Using a wide range of marketing communication channels, 'Creative Sculpture' informs its target market(s). The company first built a website and establishes social media to tell stakeholders and current clients about the new venture.

3.0 Impact

Tourists frequently incorporate art purchases and souvenir shopping into their itinerary because they believe that “seeing is believing” and that the tactile quality of tangible objects enhances “seeing.” Travelers get all the information they require regarding the sculptures when they purchase them straight from the business. This would encourage tourists to stay longer and learn more about the history and culture of the place, which is good for the tourism industry. The mahabalipuram sculptures have been sold by the local shops for a minimum of two generations. Their primary revenue stream is generated by selling locally made sculptures and souvenirs. *“Their incomes were good before lockdown, but now their business has been affected due to Covid”* as stated by Rajkumar, one of the suppliers. But the same business met their requirements and made it possible for them to have comfortable lives. Due to their multilingualism, the region was overflowing with tour guides who were invaluable to tourists. Indian tourists boost their income in April and May, whereas foreign visitors do so most in August and September. *“Without a tour guide, the tourists would not be able to understand the history behind each sculpture and monument,”* one of the guide stated. The majority of people living in this region depend on tourism for their livelihood. They work as tour guides, craftsmen, own small businesses, and staff hotels and resorts.

The craftsmen’ level of life must be raised by fostering, supporting, and elevating their abilities as they develop into natural streams. According to one craftsman, *“the sector could not develop alongside the rest of the economy because its insights, techniques, tools, and market intelligence could not keep up with the changing world.”*

Creative Sculptures has a significant environmental impact because the program emphasizes using eco-friendly techniques when making sculptures. By using locally produced materials and traditional carving techniques, they reduce drastically cut down on the amount of power tools they utilize, which reduces their energy consumption and environmental impact.

The implementation of sustainable practices yields financial benefits as they reduce costs through optimized resource utilization, reduced waste, and reduced energy consumption.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Business development of traditional craft products associated with tourism is a new direction. Traditional craft products become a source of income for corporations, while tourism becomes a consumer market for traditional craft products. Linking the

business of traditional products with tourism contributes to preserving traditional cultural values while bringing practical economic benefits to both the traditional craft industry and the tourism industry.

These products, with their values and characteristics, become a unique tourism product, creating an attraction for visitors. Meanwhile, the development of tourism increases revenue and sales of traditional products. To effectively operate the business associated with tourism, it is required to meet all the relevant requirements and conditions such as production, demand, supporting related industries, competitive conditions, business strategy, and support from the government, central, and local state management agencies.

Manufacturing, pricing, marketing, and distribution are all part of business development for tourism, which aims to provide the highest quality goods to customers. In the process of production, business establishments are affected by objective environmental factors (politics, economy, culture, society, technology), subjective environmental factors (business strategies), internal resources, and organizational structure and culture. There must also be financial, human resource, technological, and promotional support from state and local governments.

CASE STUDY 8

Community Based Eco-Tourism: A Case Study on Vana Vihari, Maredumilli, Andhra Pradesh, India

S. Sreenivasa Murthy and D. Sai Venkata Sastry

1.0 Case Context

Globally, it is evident that there need to be a shift in lifestyle to move away from a consumer driven society to one that is environmentally, economically, and socio-culturally sustainable. Sustainable eco-tourism can educate tourists and locals alike about the cultural and natural significance of an area. It has positive implications for the relationships between the tourism business and the local community and has the potential to provide a stable economic flow into local areas.

Vana Vihari' is an initiative of Government of Andhra Pradesh and Forest Department and maintained by Community Based Eco-Tourism (CBET), Maredumilli. It is formed to allow the tourists to enjoy nature and to inculcate the essence of conservation of wild resources. The business was started with a 15-member management committee with 50 percent women representation. The accounts are maintained by the management committee under a joint account opened on the name of the chairman of the management committee and Forest Section Officer concerned who is the member secretary of the committee. The present eco-tourism business has been initiated with a vision to provide livelihood to the local communities there by promote indigenous art and culture. The tourists are offered attractive eco-products at the destination. Some of the best products of Vana Vihari in Maredumilli are *Jungle Star Nature Camp*, *Vana Vihari Eco Tourism*, *Birds Nest Resorts*, *Jungle Bells Nature Camp*, *Bamboo Nest Resort*. Vana Vihari (the brand name of Community Based Eco-tourism –CBET, Maredumilli, E.G. Dt. Andhra Pradesh State) is well designed and equipped with nature-based service.

Their target groups are young people who love nature tourism. They are working on marketing efforts for its growth to improve the local people livelihoods. The eco-tourism project is managed by the local, indigenous tribal community (Konda Reddy) of Valamuru Somireddy palem and Addaraveedhi Forest Protection Committees, with the active support of the Forest Department. The operations at these centres are totally managed by local community members comprising of tribal community of Konda Reddy's. Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation provides marketing

support and training of the tribes in hospitality-related activities like food and beverage service, housekeeping, and guide services.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Ecotourism is regarded as travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas by minimizing the detrimental impact on the environment. However, the ecotourism model has many challenges. Ecotourism is sometimes considered detrimental to the cultural heritage, pollution, and the exploitation of wildlife. The major challenges that 'Vana Vihari' face are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Ecotourism Impacts and Related Challenges for Vana Vihari

Impact	Positive	Negative
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The maximum incentive for natural areas conservation with development • Educate locals and tourists about environmental ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect vegetation damage • Disturbance to wildlife • Pollution in the form of air, waste, and noise • Commercialization of natural resources • New species invasion
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign exchange means • Proper income distribution in local communities • Infrastructure building in a sustainable manner • Local economy promotion • Creation of job opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income leakage • Unhealthy economic competition increases. • The economic gap rises among locals
Socio-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation and promotion of local culture, arts, tradition, music, and other heritages • Awareness about cultural relevance • Cultural exchange • Diversification of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural degradation from foreign invasion • Social problems arise • Undesirable behaviour of visitors • Undesired commercialization of religious and cultural assets

Source: Author's contribution

This novel concept of tourism is targeted at two distinct segments: firstly, to create interest among the host communities who are an integral part of the society so that they learn to take pride in their own identity and in their environment, culture and ecology; and secondly, to attract visitors who are interested in and fascinated by the

nature, history, culture, artistic skills and lives of tribal societies, and who wish to enjoy and appreciate nature in all its forms. Vana Vihari has been implementing some of the initiatives to conduct the business in a smooth and eco-friendly manner.

This has provided an opportunity to biodiversity conservation; maintaining the well-being of local people; entails responsible action on the part of tourists and the tourism industry; promotes small and medium-sized tourism enterprises; requires the least amount of natural resource consumption possible; emphasizes local participation, ownership, and business opportunities, particularly for rural people includes the learning experience. Therefore, there is a potential for small-scale, cost-effective CBET projects in this company where there is little tourism activity, with some external assistance, and management and training skills. This external environment is a good opportunity for this business to grow in due course of time. Vana Vihari gives livelihood to 68 families and has a larger impact on local people's livelihoods. To upscale the business, proper regulatory framework need to be followed and regular training programmes to the local manpower on conducting CBET may be taken up. This initiative has brought out a social change in the destination. The business has created new marketing strategies and promotional measures through website, social media platforms to increase the business reach. AP Forest Department and AP Tourism Development Corporation are the key stakeholders in the management of the destination under which Vana Vihari improve the business with the support of tour operators, small business groups, local communities who acts as partners in the business. Government supports ecotourism, especially infrastructure and public facilities such as tourist attractions and promotions. These stakeholders have a role in developing tourism products (attraction natural resources and cultural) and promotions to increase tourist visits. The existing potential has an educational element on environmental conservation and partnership with stakeholders and the staff who are working in the business-like liaison officer, project managers, and marketing team.

3.0 Impact

3.1 Social impact

Government: In the present business operations government has a high role and high influence. Two government organizations, i.e., AP Tourism Development Corporation, AP Forest Department, play a vital role in starting the business. The business has a good environmental protection activity that has been taken up by the government.

Local communities: The local community's awareness and support for conservation efforts is optimistic about the benefits of tourism growth. Ecotourism planning direction is offered with the intention of enhancing the capacity of ecotourism to generate benefits for both the community and the tourism park, and thus contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

Service providers: The service providers like individual shop, tour guides, tour operators are the stakeholders who are highly influenced and depends more on the business. The local shopkeepers have been selling medical herbs, pure honey and the products that come from the forest. One of the shop keepers believed that their incomes are seasonal because the eco-tourism business depends more on monsoon fluctuations.

Tour guides and tour operators: Tour guides and tour operators are very much impacted by the business because without good guidance it is not possible for the tourists to plan tricks, boating, visit to botanical plants.

Tourists: The tourists are very much interested in these business activities. They were of the view that they are enjoying the natural resources very much and the service products extended through the business operations is helping them a lot to enjoy the destination and take back more peace and calm memories.

3.2 Environmental impact

The specialized tourism villages' income flow raised environmental awareness and gave incentives for new rationality in the usage of traditional resources. Tourism revenue is less likely to reverse non-traditional, degrading growth patterns in advanced stages, and tourism income can assist to unite actors to support the protected area endangered by competing for land practice. The preset eco-tourism business case study of 'Vana Vihari' would help the company to understand their impact on the local communities' livelihoods, service providers, level of dependence on their business, their present financial position and the contribution to the socio-economic development of the particular destination.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Ecotourism is the tourism industry's fastest-growing segment. It has the potential to boost local economies, encourage cultural exchange, and promote tourism's long-term sustainability. Nowadays, it is one of the most prominent forms of alternative tourism. Its supporters believe that once residents learn that conservation does not imply a loss of economic opportunities, they will feel compelled to safeguard the environment.

These products, with their values and characteristics, become unique tourism products, creating an attraction for visitors. Meanwhile, the development of tourism increases revenue and sales of traditional products. To effectively operate the business associated with tourism, it is required to meet all relevant requirements and conditions such as production, demand, supporting and related industries, competitive conditions, business strategy, and support from the government.

Manufacturing, pricing, marketing, and distribution are all part of business development for tourism, which aims to provide the highest quality goods to customers. In the process of production, business establishments are affected by objective environmental factors (politics, economy, culture, society, technology), subjective environmental factors (business strategies), internal resources, and organizational structure and culture. There must also be financial, human resource, technological, and promotional support from state and local governments.

CASE STUDY 9

Tourism on Tribal Culture and Development: A Case Study on ITDA and TSTDC, Medaram Eturunagaram

M. Maschendar Goud and M. Sai Mouli Verma

1.0 Case Context

The Warangal region has all the required qualities for emerging as a potential tourist destination in the on country. The government focus on the development of eco-tourism, and cultural tourism. Towards this end, various developmental works at seven places have been taken up under the Tribal Circuit. The present case study deals with the eco-tourism and cultural tourism development at Medaram, one of the seven places. For tourist attraction spring waters at Mulugu, and plantation at Sammakka Saralamma Jatara were developed. This destination is famous for cultural tribal festival that takes place once in two years. It also serves as a platform for cultural tourism that attracts the tribal population and tourists of Telangana. This festival as part of cultural tourism is celebrated against the two Goddess Samakka and Saralamma who fought against the rulers for the freedom of tribal population in the local community. Therefore it has become one of the best cultural tourism destination in the world. To promote this Integrated Tribal Eco-Tourism project has been proposed under SwadeshDarshan Scheme (SDS) under the Union Ministry of Tourism and a financial assistance of Rs 121crore has been sought from the Centre, and the State government (TSTDC) supported the remaining cost.

The business development of this cultural tourism destination has been taken by Integrated Tribal Development Authority (ITDA), Eturunagarm. The business focused on the development of 5.305 lakh (2011 Census) tribal local communities (Koya, Lambada, Yerukala, Nakkala, and Naikpod). Initially, the local communities were supported by the local Government through various developmental activities like Kalyana Lakshmi, High school building and hostel projects, Academic Infrastructure, Storage Points, Medaram Jathara, Education Development Schemes, Economic Support Schemes (ESS), Forest, Water Conservation Plans, and Multiple Skill Development (MSD). The main vision of the business of TWD under Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) is to promote local arts and crafts, documenting the traditions and organization of tribal festivals that attracts tourists from different parts of the State. Over a period, this destination has developed into cultural tourism destination.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Medaram is an isolated community within the Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, which is a portion of Dandakaranya, the Deccan's largest remaining forest belt. The cultural festival of the destination medaram jathara draws the greatest number of devotees in the state.

Lack of proper transportation facilities is the major challenge. People still use traditional mode of transport i.e., a bullock cart. During medaram jathara season, Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) offers private vehicles in addition to bus services for reaching the place. The major environmental problems like water pollution, air, soil, noise, and light in Medaram during Jathara season is having a major and irreversible negative influence on the flora and wildlife in the forest. Due to increasing popularity to this cultural tourism as a regular pilgrimage destination, managing and controlling solid waste as well as preventing contamination of the water, air, and soil during and after the jathara seeks the attention of ITDA.

Homestays are provided by the local communities to give an experience to the tourists about local food, culture and art. They entrain the tourist with their traditional dance and drama. Recently, ITDA has developed guest houses with minimum facilities in the forest range. The tourists have a very high opinion on this cultural festival and experienced a good feel of local culture and heritage. The livelihoods of the local communities have improved. An executive from the TSTDC stated, "*We have given employment to young Chenchu tribals to work at Haritha Hotel and different cottages at Medaram*".

Telangana tourism has chosen to invest Rs 96.67 crore to improve the tribal circuit under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme. *The pilgrims and tourists pay a token of Rs. 50 to the Environment Conservation Fund.* In addition, offerings by devotees, will be used for the festivities and other essential tourism preparations. The local government will also extend its financial support through ITDA for undertaking developmental activities to promote cultural tourism in this region.

The unrealized potential of nature, lack of infrastructure supporting cultural tourism, lack of direct transport, unskilled laborers are the major weaknesses. Still the business has developed due to its major strengths inn developing the socio-economic and cultural lives of the tribal people. It is evident by through their agriculture's prosperity, traditional huts that exhibit a strong cultural side, the surrounding environment, eco-friendly travel packages, and the area's skill in the Permakok, or Koya dance, singing and dancing.

ITDA has identified various strategies to enhance business with the cooperation of local tribes. ITDA has initiated various methods to promote local rich culture and environment.

They offer training programmes to educate the tribes in local hospitality to attract more tourists.

McKercher and Du Gros' in-depth typology of cultural tourists classifies tourists into deliberate, sightseeing, and serendipitous. The other two categories of cultural tourists are incidental and casual. The primary tourists who visit Medaram might be classified as "must see or must dos". To target these different groups of tourists various approaches like heritage planners', cultural tourism event organizers, developing skills to understand broad knowledge and comprehension of viewers have been followed.

Table 1: Cultural Tourists Classification

Deep Experience Sought	Unforeseen Cultural Tourist		Purposeful Cultural Tourist
	Incidental Cultural Tourist	Casual Cultural Tourist	Sightseeing Cultural Tourist
Shallow	Low		High

Source: Authors' on McKercher and Du Cros

Destination management and interpretive planning are collaborative processes that engage various stakeholders such as: *National and local government, cultural planners, Private operators, Volunteer organizations.*

To successfully organize the Medaram festival and preserve the rich cultural heritage, the government hire local people through ITDA and TSTDC. To properly communicate the Medaram to the target market(s), ITDA/TSTDC bring in marketing and communication specialists with experience in sustainable tourism. Waste management specialists, and energy efficiency experts are among other staff members with knowledge of sustainable tourism techniques.

3.0 Impact

Cultural heritage tourism is having socio-economic and cultural impact that include how it affects changes in family relations, moral behavior, artistic expression,

traditional rites, individual behavior, and community structure. Stated differently, these are the consequences that the direct and indirect relationships that locals have with tourists have on them. By focusing on specific markets, marketing techniques such as creating novel travel products, create a suitable brand, and improve the marketing efforts pertaining to product creation, advertising, positioning and branding, and consumer loyalty can be improved. According to one of the vendors named Medaranna, *“He is depending on agricultural products as his livelihood source now cultural tourism at Medaram increased his revenue. He is expecting some financial assistance to become an entrepreneur”*. They sell tribal crafts to the tourists. Ms Medaramma, leader in the community stated. *“Medaram is very crowded with dieties, local and domestic tourist during the festival season and throughout the year, sometimes international tourists also visit the place”*. Further, Mr. Bhimudu Sammakka said that *“ITDA offers educational and skill development programs to tribal people to become tour guides for promoting their culture”*. He continued, *“some local tribal people work as cooks, weighers, and receptionists in the Haritha hotel built by TSTDC”*.

Protecting wildlife habitats of the most significant species, raising environmental awareness, safeguarding natural resources, improving tribal appearance, accessibility to outside traffic, highlighting tribal culture, improvement of public facilities, and services are having a positive environmental impact.

For encouraging cultural tourism, the ITDA and TSTDC have been implementing various development plans and initiatives. More labor possibilities, higher resident and tribe income, enhanced material welfare, higher living standards, more sales of local agricultural goods, outside investment, and improved public amenities and services are the most important factors for a positive economic impact. Furthermore, by promoting environmentally and socially conscious business methods, handmade products solidify their position as a part of Medaram’s cultural tourism.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

This case study proves that cultural tourism has benefited socio-economic, and environmental development and brought different tribes under one community. Tribal indigenous peoples have positive attitudes about the growth of cultural tourism and are more gratitude towards ITDA for converting this remote tribal region into most attractive cultural tourism destination.

How can the tribes use their resources to enhance each other’s offerings for the growth of tourism? The tribes have a lot to offer the tourism industry, but in order to

sustain the long-term growth of tribal cultural tourism. To achieve success as a tourism destination, local government must mobilize the natural, financial, and social capital in support of a shared vision, aims, and objectives of the local business community.

We can conclude that for tourism to be sustainable and contribute positively to the growth of the Medaram, local participation must be improved. Providing a distinctive experience by organizing tourism programs in tribal areas, such as natural tourism tour packages that include activities like making traditional handicrafts like baskets, mats, and pottery, planting and pounding rice and corn, fishing, and ploughing the fields will attract more tourists.

CASE STUDY 10

A Case Study on Cruise Tourism: A Case of Ponnami Tourism

Ch Lakshmi Kumari and N Sree Saily Siva Pujitha

1.0 Case Context

Punnami Tourism is a leader in the provision of travel and tourism services to well-known tourist spots in Rajahmundry. Since its inception in 2004, they have offered river cruise services to Papikondalu and Bhadrachalam. Their office is situated on Godavari Bund Road, near Gowthami Jeevakarunya Sangam, in Rajamundry. Punnami Tourism has added several services to its operational tasks to better serve tourists' needs and give the greatest facilities possible. It offers accommodations, catering, water sports, sound and light shows, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and leisure cruises and pleasure boating in addition to providing transportation and tours with excellent performance. One of the top tourist attractions is the Godavari River cruise that departs from Rajahmundry and travels to Papikondalu, then on to Sriramagiri. This river excursion passes by several significant locations, including Pattiseema, the Maha Nandiswara temple, the Polavaram Project, the Gandhi poshamma temple, the Papi kondalu, the Shiva temple, the Perantala Palli, and Sri Rama Temple at Sriramagiri. The major target group for this business are students, families, working officials, international tourists, and national tourists. Although 'Punnami Tourism' is a small business unit it is structured as 'Top-Down' business unit which involves less flexibility for the employees because decisions will be made by the head of the company. The company includes five departments which are led by head, sale, finance, marketing, and organisation and service. The last department, in which Sub-departments are lineup like front office managers, boat managers, tour managers, supervisors. The objective of the company is to make it sustainable by itself. It is expected that the costs will systematically grow that are associated with the business are amortization, total interest and financial costs, costs of trip, rent for office space, administrative expenses, promotional expenses, and salary. The company is able to own 15 boats and each boat makes three trips a day. Each boat accommodate around 50 passengers. The price per trip is Rs. 1,500 per person. They earn Rs. 75,000 per trip and on two trips they make Rs. 1,50,000 per day.

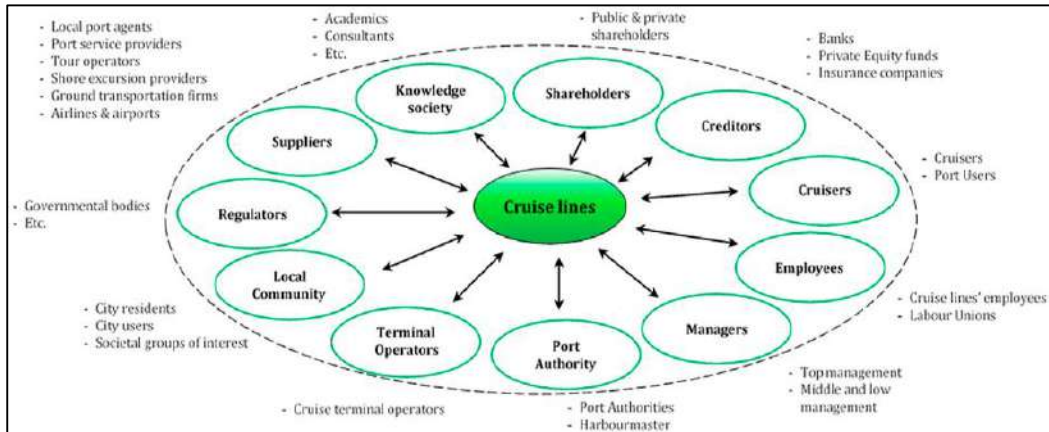
2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

The boat operator receives more visitors at certain times of the year, while there are times, they received very few or totally without any tourist at all. Competition among

the tour operators is inevitable as they are offering similar services and targeting the same group of customers. According to a manager, *“We used to charge Rs. 1500 per head for a full package, but during off-season, the price was lowered to Rs. 750 and sometimes even lower. We had no choice but to follow the other tour operators’ lead and cut costs, yet even at such low pricing, we are still able to turn a profit by cutting costs by shortening the tour and going a shorter route. There are occasions when we only send out one boatman when the group is small. He will simultaneously guide the boat and provide the tourist with an explanation. We don’t have the money to pay for another tour guide”*. In addition to these challenges, inadequate infrastructures; variable numbers of seasonal visitors; and competition among the boat operators. The new initiative of the cruise tourism business is mainly concerned with the participation of local communities, moreover, monitoring social impacts during the process of tourism is essential to reduce negative impacts and enhance positive aspects. Sustainable tourism is an industry which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture. It’s important to educate by conducting training programs to improve and manage heritage and natural resources. The “Punnami Tourism” offers relaxing moments with walking, cycling, bird watching, organized walking, climbing, mountain biking, swimming, tennis, and wellness. The company requires to attract big and small companies all over the state who want to support the environment and organize boat meetings and relax after the meeting. It’s the first business that links working officials, the environment and wellness. However, lack of proper regulatory framework for controlling, managing, cruise, no proper checks by government, NGOs and local communities, problem of insurgency should be tackled meticulously with minimum harm to locals. Lack of trained communities, and Poor pollution check points are the weaknesses. The agency will get popular, possibility to practice cultural and sports activities, new business which incorporate work, wellness, and nature all in one, and employee’s motivation to be able to guarantee environmental protection are the strengths. However, various marketing initiatives, website development, and events design should be made to enhancement of its arts, culture and history, beyond entertainment should be the goal.

The importance of each stakeholder group involved in business development is broadly classified as suppliers, regulators, local community, managers, employees, creditors, and knowledge society. Based on their interest in the development of ecotourism business, stakeholders are classified into primary stakeholders, key stakeholders and supporting stakeholders.

Figure 1: Stakeholder Classification



Source: Authors' contribution

The major target market of 'Punnami Tourism' are the tourists from different parts of India and foreign who are interested in experiencing river trips and enjoy the nature. Local community, food suppliers, and local artist are the partners to promote cruise tourism. The major source of revenue generation is by providing various cruise services along with accommodation. The capital invested in the company is three crores and the capital consisted of the contributions of each of the joint owners. The business initially created a website with in-depth information about the products, its goals, the services offered, and the contact data. In addition to this, created social media profiles on Facebook, Instagram, and 'X' to communicate with stakeholders and potential customers. The company is also encouraging the tourists to post their travel experience in the form of travel blogs, tour videos on the eco-tourism products that are offered by the company on their individual social media and # with 'Punnami Tourism'.

3.0 Impact

Tourists are more affected by cruise tourism. They would get the chance to interact with the locals and experience their cuisine, culture, and natural beauty. When using tour operators, visitors would gain a thorough understanding of the socio-economic circumstances of the destination. Stakeholder analysis is the process of identifying important parties involved in a specific business activity and evaluating how much influence these parties may have over the business performance. The government would gain from tourism related money as well as tax revenue from boat operators.

Socio-economic factors have a significant impact on the local population. A portion of the local people living on the margins attempts to find work in business when cruise tourism grows in that area. This would influence their socio-economic status. The stakeholders who have the greatest influence and reliance on the business are the service providers, such as individual shops, tour guides, and tour operators.

The marine environment is greatly impacted by noise, an underappreciated contaminant, because of increased traffic and the fact that noise is amplified in water. The primary causes of marine noise pollution are ship engines, which impair the ecosystem's ability to operate both temporarily and permanently. In addition to air and water pollution, the cruise industry has an adverse effect on the environment. The business would be able to better understand its impact on the livelihoods of local communities, the degree of reliance of service providers on it, their current financial situation, and contribution to the socio-economic development of the specific destination with the aid of this business case study on "Punnami Tourism". The CoE would be aware of the weaknesses in the current organizational structure and work to close them over time.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Cruise tourism is a popular form of travel and tourism. A tourism related business cannot succeed unless it satisfies all relevant requirements and conditions, including those related to demand, supporting industries, competitive environment, business plan, support from federal, state, and local management agencies. The cruise industry's present operational activities are successful because they actively market to tourists and utilize their soft abilities to convince people to enjoy cruise holidays at the destination. To give customers, the best products possible, business development for the tourism industry includes marketing, distribution, and pricing strategies. The company uses a flexible pricing strategy because the industry is increasingly competitive. They require the 5 R's (Relevance, Recognition, Receptivity, Responsiveness, and Relations) to further strengthen the business. "Punnami Tourism" offers its clients the amenities they require to unwind and work. Being original and distinctive for the consumers is what makes you stand out, which is why "Punnami Travel Agency" offers sustainable travel. As a result, it may get closer and provide them with comfortable lodging options and a wide range of activities. For this agency the best way to do it is in magazines, through direct mailings, a movie on "Youtube" and blog on "My space" because the business wants to take care of their clients with special attention.

CASE STUDY 11

Net Zero Sustainable Tourism: A Case Study of Vinyasa Ashram

*Sameeksha Ahuja, Ark Dutta, Rahul Basandani,
Ashlesha Sethi, Souvik De and Himanshu Chauhan*

1.0 Case Context

Vinyasa Earth, located in Maheshwas village, Jaipur, is a pioneering eco-friendly dance ashram founded by Mr. Sankalp Sharma. With a rich background in dance education from global institutions, Mr. Sharma's vision led to the creation of a sustainable space that harmonizes ecological responsibility and economic sustainability. The ashram, constructed from organic materials, offers six distinct earthen cottages, each uniquely themed. Vinyasa Earth attracts a global audience seeking a blend of artistic experiences and a sustainable lifestyle.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Vinyasa Earth's innovation lies in its seamless integration of sustainable practices with a unique dance and art experience. The challenge addressed is to establish a sustainable tourism model that balances environmental stewardship and economic viability. The ashram offers diverse experiences, including Nature Walks, yoga, meditation, sculpting, and movement therapy. The unique eco-friendly cottages, recycled seating, and a commitment to self-sufficiency define Vinyasa Earth's approach to sustainability.

3.0 Impact

The impact of Vinyasa Earth's initiative on sustainable tourism is multifaceted. Ecologically, the use of organic materials and recycling contributes to environmental conservation. Socially, the ashram fosters a deeper connection between guests and nature through activities like harvesting and movement therapy. Culturally, the themed cottages and artistic initiatives reflect a celebration of diverse expressions. Economically, Vinyasa Earth's success demonstrates the viability of sustainable tourism, attracting a global clientele and creating economic opportunities locally.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Vinyasa Earth stands as a beacon of innovation in sustainable tourism, successfully addressing the challenge of coalescing artistic expression with environmental consciousness. The case study highlights the ashram's unique features, impact on various dimensions, and the crucial balance achieved between ecological responsibility and economic sustainability. Vinyasa Earth serves as an inspirational model for the tourism sector, showcasing the potential for meaningful, sustainable experiences that resonate with a global audience.

CASE STUDY 12

Empowering Local Artisans through Sustainable Tourism: A Case Study on Kachchh

*Nurvi Bhand, Anushka Vijaywargiya, Anushtha Seiwani,
Muskan Khazanchi, Spandana Gupta and Diljeetkaur Makhija*

1.0 Case Context

This case meticulously explores the transformative journey of Kachchh, Gujarat, from a historically rich region steeped in cultural heritage to a paradigmatic model of sustainable tourism integration. Kachchh's narrative unfolds as a testament to the intricate interplay between cultural preservation, economic advancement, and environmental sustainability in the context of contemporary global challenges.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Initially rooted in a tapestry of diverse artisanal traditions spanning weaving, pottery, metalwork, and embroidery, Kachchh's identity burgeoned into a focal point for sustainable tourism. The case vividly illustrates this evolution, shedding light on the delicate balance artisans had to maintain between traditional craftsmanship and adapting to shifting market dynamics catalyzed by globalization.

Central to this exploration is the imperative role of stakeholders—ranging from local governments to grassroot organizations and communities—in nurturing Kachchh's artisanal heritage. It articulates the imperative of cultivating harmony among economic progress, cultural legacy preservation, and environmental resilience, particularly in the context of the Rann Festival—a pivotal event attracting a global audience while straining the region's ecological equilibrium.

3.0 Impact

Challenges pertaining to inadequate infrastructure, disparities in economic gains, seasonal fluctuations, and the exigency for comprehensive policy frameworks are meticulously dissected. This case prescribes a multifaceted strategy encompassing infrastructure enhancement, diversification of festival offerings, advocacy for eco-

conscious travel, capacity- building for artisans' marketing acumen, and collaborative governance-community endeavors.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Conclusively, Kachchh's narrative stands as an exemplary archetype for regions aspiring to foster sustainable tourism, uplift local artisans, and safeguard intangible cultural heritage. The study accentuates the intricate nexus necessitating a harmonious fusion of community engagement, governance strategies, economic development, and environmental stewardship to ensure the enduring success of sustainable tourism initiatives.

CASE STUDY 13

GMVN's (Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam) Holistic Approach to Sustainable Tourism

*Prakash Paul, Rajdeep Bandyopadhyay, Bhavya Sharma,
Rumela Tapadar, Sharnav Kundu and Mayank Bhatia*

1.0 Case Context

Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN) is a government organization that has been working to develop tourism in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, India, since 1976. They have built hotels, guesthouses, and tourist bungalows to cater to budget travelers and luxury seekers alike. They also offer transportation services, organized tours, and adventure activities like trekking and river rafting. GMVN also facilitates pilgrimages to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri.

The organization's vision is to transform Uttarakhand into a flourishing tourist destination by enhancing its accessibility, appeal, and opulence. They believe that tourism can be a powerful engine for economic growth and development. GMVN's mission is to provide high-quality tourism products and services that meet the needs of all visitors.

Here are some of the specific products and services that GMVN offers:

Accommodation: GMVN operates over 90 hotels, guesthouses, and tourist bungalows across the Garhwal region. These accommodations range from budget-friendly guest houses to luxurious hotels offering panoramic views.

Transportation: GMVN offers organized tours, comprehensive transportation packages, and secure travel options for sightseeing and adventurous escapades. This includes bus and train travel arrangements, as well as taxi services for exploring the region.

Adventure tourism: GMVN arranges trekking, mountaineering, river rafting, camping, and various other adventure pursuits amidst the Garhwal Himalayas.

GMVN is committed to responsible tourism practices and takes steps to minimize the environmental impact of its operations. They also work to promote the culture and heritage of the Garhwal region.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

2.1 Introduction to the initiative

GMVN (Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam) has been at the forefront of promoting sustainable tourism in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, India. Recognizing the pressing need to balance tourism development with environmental preservation and community well-being, GMVN embarked on an innovative initiative to further advance its sustainable tourism endeavors. This initiative aimed to address the challenge of minimizing the environmental impact of tourism while fostering economic growth and inclusivity within local communities.

2.2 Challenges addressed

The primary challenge addressed by GMVN's initiative was to enhance the sustainability quotient of tourism activities across the Garhwal region. The initiative focused on co-creating an innovative approach that not only mitigated the negative environmental effects of tourism but also empowered local communities, while ensuring economic stability and growth in the region.

2.3 Tourism project description

Sustainable infrastructure development: GMVN initiated a comprehensive plan to revamp its existing infrastructure to align with sustainable practices. This involved the retrofitting of existing properties with eco-friendly technologies, such as solar panels for energy generation, water conservation systems, and waste management facilities. New construction adhered to green building standards, utilizing sustainable materials and incorporating energy-efficient designs.

Community engagement and empowerment: The initiative extensively engaged with local communities to co-create tourism experiences that highlighted their cultural heritage and supported local livelihoods. GMVN collaborated with artisans, craftsmen, and producers to incorporate locally made products into its offerings. Additionally, it provided training and support for community members to participate in the tourism value chain, encouraging entrepreneurship and inclusive growth.

Eco-conscious tourist experiences: GMVN restructured its tourism packages to emphasize responsible and eco-conscious travel experiences. This included curated tours focused on environmental education, wildlife conservation efforts, and activities aimed at minimizing the ecological footprint of tourists, such as tree planting initiatives and clean-up drives.

Technology integration for sustainable practices: GMVN introduced technological innovations to streamline sustainable operations. An enhanced online booking platform not only simplified travel arrangements for tourists but also promoted eco-friendly options. It educated visitors about sustainable choices, including public transportation routes, eco-certified accommodations, and low-impact excursions.

2.4 Activities and implementation

Infrastructure upgrade: GMVN conducted a comprehensive assessment of its properties and initiated renovation and construction projects to integrate sustainable features. This involved collaborations with architects, engineers, and environmental experts.

Community workshops and training: GMVN organized workshops and training sessions for local communities, educating them about sustainable practices and providing skill development opportunities for product creation and service provision.

Tourism package redesign: The tourism packages were revamped to include eco-friendly activities and experiences. GMVN collaborated with environmentalists and local guides to design and implement these curated experiences.

Technological integration: The development of an advanced online platform involved collaboration with tech experts to create an intuitive interface that showcased sustainable travel options and facilitated bookings.

2.5 Deliverables and beneficiaries

Products and services: Sustainable infrastructure, community-engaged tourism experiences, eco-conscious travel packages, and an advanced online booking platform promoting responsible tourism.

Beneficiaries: Local communities gained economic empowerment through increased participation in tourism activities. Tourists benefited from immersive and sustainable travel experiences. The environment received protection through reduced ecological impact.

2.6 Results

GMVN's initiative yielded significant results:

Reduction in environmental footprint: Implementation of sustainable infrastructure and tourism practices resulted in a notable decrease in energy consumption, waste generation, and water usage across GMVN properties.

Community empowerment: Local artisans and producers experienced increased income and recognition due to their involvement in tourism-related activities, contributing to the socio-economic development of the region.

Enhanced tourist satisfaction: Travelers appreciated the unique and responsible experiences offered, leading to positive feedback and increased visitor numbers.

Recognition and industry leadership: GMVN's initiative garnered recognition within the tourism industry as a pioneer in sustainable practices, setting a benchmark for other organizations to follow.

3.0 Impact of GMVN on Sustainable Tourism

GMVN has a significant positive impact on the Garhwal region in several ways:

3.1 Economic impact

- **Job creation:** GMVN directly employs a large number of people in its hotels, transportation, adventure tourism, and other departments. It also indirectly creates jobs through partnerships with local businesses and service providers. According to the case study, every one crore invested in tourism creates 475 jobs, compared to 126 jobs in the manufacturing sector, highlighting the potential of tourism for job creation.
- **Increased revenue:** GMVN generates revenue through various sources like accommodation, transportation, adventure activities, and pilgrimage facilitation. This revenue contributes to the local economy and supports the development of infrastructure and amenities.
- **Support for local businesses:** GMVN sources products and services from local businesses whenever possible, promoting their growth and sustainability. This benefits the local community and fosters economic development.

3.2 Social impact

- **Improved accessibility:** GMVN's hotels, transportation services, and online booking platform make the Garhwal region more accessible to tourists, promoting regional development and cultural exchange.
- **Community engagement:** GMVN collaborates with local communities in various ways, such as involving them in decision-making processes, promoting their cultural heritage, and providing employment opportunities. This empowers communities and fosters a sense of ownership and pride.

- **Educational programs:** GMVN raises awareness about sustainable tourism practices among tourists and local communities, educating them about responsible tourism behavior and minimizing environmental impact.

3.3 Environmental impact

- **Sustainable tourism practices:** GMVN implements various initiatives like solar power, water conservation measures, recycling programs, and reforestation projects to minimize its ecological footprint. This showcases their commitment to responsible tourism and helps protect the environment.
- **Conservation of natural heritage:** GMVN promotes eco-friendly tourism options like camping and nature walks, encouraging visitors to appreciate and protect the region's natural beauty.

3.4 Cultural impact

- **Preservation of local culture:** GMVN promotes and sells locally crafted products through its "Hilan" outlets, supporting traditional crafts and cultural heritage. This helps to preserve the region's unique identity and traditions.
- **Cultural exchange:** GMVN facilitates interaction between tourists and local communities, fostering cultural exchange and understanding. This appreciation for the local culture can lead to greater respect and preservation of traditions.

GMVN's impact on the Garhwal region is positive and multifaceted. It contributes to economic growth, social development, environmental protection, and cultural preservation. By promoting sustainable tourism practices and collaborating with local communities, GMVN plays a crucial role in ensuring the long-term prosperity and well-being of the region.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

GMVN's unwavering commitment to sustainable tourism stands as a beacon of inspiration within the landscape of travel and hospitality. Through pioneering initiatives, GMVN has exemplified how responsible tourism practices can coexist harmoniously with economic growth, environmental preservation, and community well-being.

The journey towards sustainability in tourism is an ongoing endeavor, and GMVN's strides serve as a testament to the power of innovation, collaboration, and dedication. By aligning with global sustainability goals and fostering partnerships with

local communities, GMVN has not only elevated the tourism experience in the Garhwal region but has also set a precedent for the industry at large.

As GMVN continues to pave the way for responsible travel, its legacy extends beyond infrastructure and operations; it echoes a profound commitment to safeguarding the rich cultural heritage and natural splendor of Uttarakhand. By embracing sustainability as a core ethos, GMVN exemplifies how the fusion of visionary leadership and concerted action can shape a future where tourism thrives in harmony with the environment and local communities, leaving a lasting positive impact on generations to come.

CASE STUDY 14

Virtual Tourism

*Chaahat Sisodia, Hardik Sathe, Nikhil Sharma, Divya Gautam,
Nirja Raghani and Punit Saurabh*

1.0 Case Context

Virtual tourism is changing the tourist business and solving environmental issues. This novel method lets people discover areas without traveling, decreasing carbon emissions and the environmental impact of conventional tourism. Digital technology has expanded virtual tourism's uses beyond traditional travel.

Virtual tourism research has grown to 1652 documents and 93 journals with over 85,000 references from 2000 to 2021. Virtual tourism has increased because to the global Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, VR technologies create intense encounters that blur the actual and virtual worlds.

Google Jones, Zco Corporation, Cubix, VARS, Giga Works, VizioFly, World Travel VR, Infinito VFX, Immersion VR UK, Ascape VR, and 3D Walkabout contribute to virtual tourism. Google Earth models and Unreal Engine are used to exhibit lesser-known destinations and create a sustainable and accurate virtual travel experience.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Virtual tourism has become a major driver in sustainable tourism, lowering carbon emissions. Digitally exploring culturally and ecologically vulnerable places protects historical monuments and practices from mass tourists. Virtual tourism also lets pupils experience historical events and other cultures, enhancing their global perspectives.

Complex processes including data collection, AR/VR modeling, interactive components, and rigorous testing underpin virtual tourism. Google Earth and Maps APIs are crucial to functionality, usability, and accessibility. These APIs enable live, interactive maps, street-level views, and realistic geographic representations, improving virtual reality.

Virtual tourism is accessible to people with physical limitations, cost-effective since it eliminates trip costs, and convenient because users can explore destinations from home. Virtual tourism preserves culture and offers immersive learning while reducing travel dangers, environmental effects, and safety concerns.

The negatives are the lack of physical experience, potential loneliness, tourism revenue loss, inauthenticity, technological dependence, employment displacement, privacy problems, cultural misrepresentation, health issues, and over-reliance on virtual encounters.

Virtual tourism affects sustainability beyond individual experiences. It has reduced travel's carbon footprint, protected fragile ecosystems, promoted sustainable practices, and increased tourism accessibility. Google Earth, Machu Picchu 360, VR Museum Tours, and Virtual Diving Expeditions exhibit natural elements, UNESCO World Heritage sites, and museums in 3D, reducing travel-related environmental impacts.

Harmonizing virtual and real-world tourism to sustain local economies is essential for a balanced strategy. Virtual tourism will reach US\$26 billion by 2033, demonstrating its expanding importance. Tourism stakeholders must work together to promote sustainable tourism and innovate to balance virtual and physical travel.

3.0 Impact

Virtual tourism has reduced travel's carbon footprint, protected vulnerable ecosystems, promoted sustainability, and increased accessibility. Google Earth, Machu Picchu 360, VR Museum Tours, and Virtual Diving Expeditions exhibit natural elements, UNESCO World Heritage sites, and museums in 3D, reducing travel-related environmental impacts.

Harmonizing virtual and real-world tourism to sustain local economies is essential for a balanced strategy. Virtual tourism will reach US\$26 billion by 2033, demonstrating its expanding importance. Tourism stakeholders must work together to promote sustainable tourism and innovate to balance virtual and physical travel.

Virtual tourism is accessible to people with physical limitations, cost-effective since it eliminates trip costs, and convenient because users can explore destinations from home. Virtual tourism preserves culture and offers immersive learning while reducing travel dangers, environmental effect, and safety concerns.

The lack of physical experience, potential loneliness, tourism revenue loss, inauthenticity, technological dependence, employment displacement, privacy problems, cultural misrepresentation, health issues, and over-reliance on virtual encounters are negatives.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Finally, virtual tourism offers a novel answer to traditional tourist's environmental issues. Its immersive experiences, cultural preservation, and accessibility make it a sustainable option. The industry's future is bright, despite problems like balancing virtual and real- world encounters. As virtual tourism evolves, the global tourist community must work together to promote sustainability, innovation, and responsible tourism for a better, greener future.

CASE STUDY 15

Sustainable Tourism – Overtourism: A Case Study on Nainital

*Digesh Shah, Jainam Mehta, Anubhav Jain, Rahul Pandey,
Shashwat Khandelwal and Parag Rijwani*

1.0 Case Context

The case delves into Nainital, a renowned hill station in Uttarakhand, India, once celebrated for its natural beauty and cultural allure. The area has seen a surge in tourism in recent years, straining its delicate ecosystems, cultural landmarks, and infrastructure. This escalating influx of visitors has precipitated various challenges, including environmental degradation, strained resources, and social tensions, reflecting a broader global concern known as over-tourism. The region, situated amidst the Kumaon foothills of the outer Himalayas, faces issues related to water scarcity, traffic congestion, and waste management due to the overwhelming number of tourists. Despite its picturesque landscapes, serene lakes, and agreeable climate, the charm of Nainital has been marred by issues stemming from excessive tourism. This context underscores the urgency for sustainable tourism practices, focusing on a harmonious balance between economic progress, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural welfare to ensure the long-term viability of Nainital's tourism industry.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

In response to the pressing challenge of over-tourism in Nainital, a comprehensive initiative focusing on sustainable tourism practices has been envisioned. The initiative is a collaborative effort involving local authorities, businesses, and communities aimed at redefining tourism in Nainital, mitigating the adverse effects of over-tourism, and ensuring the long-term health of this picturesque destination.

The primary challenge addressed by this sustainable tourism initiative lies in establishing a balanced and resilient tourism model. This involves addressing the indicators of over-tourism, such as escalating visitor numbers, strained infrastructure, environmental degradation, and social conflicts. The initiative strives to foster a more sustainable tourism ecosystem by implementing measures that harmonize economic growth with environmental preservation and socio-cultural welfare.

At its core, the sustainable tourism initiative encompasses multifaceted strategies:

- 1. Visitor Management Plans:** To alleviate congestion and limit the strain on local resources, the initiative proposes comprehensive visitor management plans. This includes measures such as limiting vehicular access to certain areas, setting daily admission limits for popular attractions, and encouraging tourists to explore lesser-visited regions.
- 2. Infrastructure Development and Upgradation:** Investments in sustainable infrastructure and waste management systems are pivotal. This involves upgrading roads, public facilities, and transit options to cater to the rising number of tourists while minimizing the environmental impact.
- 3. Community Engagement Initiatives:** Empowering local communities is essential. The initiative encourages communities to actively participate in tourism development through homestay programs, cultural tourism, and environmentally friendly practices. This not only benefits the communities economically but also fosters authentic cultural experiences for visitors.
- 4. Educational Programs:** Creating awareness among tourists and residents is critical. Educational programs emphasize sustainable practices, eco-tourism, and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. These programs aim to cultivate a sense of responsibility among tourists towards the environment and local communities.
- 5. Waste Management and Infrastructure Upgradation:** The initiative focuses on modernizing waste management systems, including proper disposal and recycling measures. Additionally, it aims to regulate activities like horse rides around the lake, known for contributing to pollution.

The deliverables of this sustainable tourism initiative encompass a transformed tourism landscape in Nainital. By implementing these strategies, the initiative aims to achieve several outcomes:

- **Balanced Tourism Growth:** Striking a balance between economic benefits and environmental conservation.
- **Preserved Natural and Cultural Assets:** Safeguarding the delicate ecosystems, heritage sites, and local traditions.
- **Enhanced Visitor Experience:** Offering tourists diverse and sustainable experiences while minimizing the impact on local resources.
- **Community Prosperity:** Empowering local communities through economic opportunities and cultural engagement.
- **Long-term Viability:** Ensuring Nainital's sustainability as a tourist destination for future generations.

3.0 Impact

The sustainable tourism initiative in Nainital is poised to yield a multifaceted impact across ecological, social, cultural, and economic domains, catalysing a transformative shift in the tourism landscape.

Ecologically, the initiative foresees a substantial positive impact on the local environment. By implementing comprehensive waste management systems and limiting activities that contribute to pollution, the initiative aims to curb environmental degradation. This includes the preservation of the pristine Naini Lake, reduction in air and water pollution, and the protection of the region's delicate ecosystems, promoting biodiversity conservation.

On a social front, the impact resonates deeply within the local communities. The initiative's emphasis on community engagement through programs like homestays and cultural tourism fosters economic opportunities for residents. Moreover, it encourages a sense of ownership and pride among locals regarding their cultural heritage, ensuring that traditions are preserved and celebrated. This community involvement also leads to heightened social cohesion and a sense of belonging.

Culturally, the initiative endeavors to safeguard and promote the rich heritage of Nainital. By encouraging responsible tourism practices that respect local customs and traditions, it aims to prevent the dilution or exploitation of cultural assets. This initiative fosters authentic cultural experiences for tourists while ensuring that the cultural integrity of Nainital remains intact.

Economically, the impact is multifaceted. By promoting sustainable tourism practices, the initiative aims to create a more diverse and resilient economy for Nainital. Local businesses and entrepreneurs benefit from increased tourist engagement, fostering a more sustainable economic model that extends beyond seasonal fluctuations. Moreover, the initiative's focus on community-based tourism initiatives generates direct income opportunities for local residents, empowering them economically.

The collective impact of these initiatives is a holistic transformation of Nainital's tourism paradigm. It envisages an ecosystem where economic prosperity aligns harmoniously with environmental preservation, cultural vibrancy, and social inclusivity. This approach ensures that the benefits of tourism are not only sustainable but also inclusive, ensuring a thriving future for Nainital and its inhabitants.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The sustainable tourism initiative in Nainital stands as a beacon of hope and possibility, illustrating the power of conscientious, community-driven efforts in transforming tourism paradigms. As we conclude this exploration, it's evident that sustainable tourism isn't just an abstract concept but a tangible, actionable pathway toward a more balanced and resilient future.

The comprehensive strategies employed—from waste management to community engagement—showcase the potential for inclusive growth. Nainital's journey highlights the imperative of preserving natural and cultural assets while fostering economic prosperity.

This initiative is a testament to the collaborative spirit driving change. It demonstrates that by aligning economic progress with environmental and social stewardship, we pave the way for a more sustainable, equitable, and enriching tourism experience—one that not only benefits visitors but also nurtures the very essence of Nainital for generations to come.

CASE STUDY 16

Panauti Community Homestay

Sadrish Marasini

1.0 Case Context

Community Homestay Network (CHN) began in 2012 with a single house in Panauti, Nepal, and has since grown to include 36 communities across the country. Panauti Community Homestay, operating under CHN, focuses on providing an authentic Nepalese experience to tourists. Founded by Mr. Shiva Dhakal, the homestay aims to blend cultural preservation, sustainable tourism, and community empowerment. It operates with 17 houses in Panauti, offering visitors a chance to choose their host family and immerse themselves in the local lifestyle. The homestay provides private bedrooms with bathrooms, allowing guests to enjoy the natural beauty of the surroundings.

Panauti, located around 30 kilometers from Kathmandu, relies on tourism as a major source of income. The homestay endeavors to preserve authenticity while attracting cultural tourists and hikers seeking a genuine Nepalese experience. The community-run initiative promotes local cuisine, music, dances, and traditional dresses, fostering cultural exchange. With cultural programs and activities, guests are actively involved in experiencing and preserving Nepalese traditions.

The target market for Panauti Community Homestay includes tourists seeking an authentic cultural experience, with a focus on cultural enthusiasts and hikers. The homestay operates under the larger umbrella of CHN, which targets global tourists through digital platforms.

Managed by the people of Panauti households, the homestay operates through a website managed by CHN. The startup company oversees 36 community homestays in Nepal, with a Chief Operating Officer (COO) at each homestay serving as a mediator. The cost structure involves a revenue-sharing model, with 80% going to the household and 20% to CHN, which further allocates 20% to a Community Development Fund. The funds are utilized for marketing, promotion, product development, and facility upgrades. The impact of Panauti Community Homestay goes beyond tourism, as it is fully run by women. A survey indicates increased confidence, empowerment, control over family decisions, and improved living standards among the women. Economic incentives have revived local traditions, such as the reintroduction of the traditional musical instrument “Dhime,” contributing to cultural preservation.

In other word, Panauti Community Homestay stands as a unique initiative promoting sustainable tourism, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. With a strong focus on authenticity, it has become a model for community-based tourism, positively impacting the lives of women and preserving Nepal's rich cultural heritage.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Panauti Community Homestay confronts challenges related to the sustainability of its tourism model. The average tourist stay is limited to two days due to a lack of activities to engage them for a more extended period. The income of households during peak seasons is modest, impacting their sustainability. Specific guest requirements, such as attached bathrooms and spacious rooms, pose operational challenges, affecting the homestays' ability to accommodate guests efficiently.

The scalability and sustainability issues stem from a flawed business model, hindering both individual households and the broader Community Homestay Network. To address these challenges, the business aims to innovate by transforming individual homestays into a community-based model. However, funding constraints and a lack of resources hinder the expansion and development required for sustainability. Despite these challenges, the homestay leverages its strengths, including diverse local cultures, predominantly female-run operations, and a focus on preserving authentic cultural aspects.

The venture targets budget-conscious backpackers, cultural enthusiasts, and nature lovers, offering them an immersive cultural experience and access to scenic hiking trails. Despite setbacks during the Covid-19 pandemic, safety measures have been implemented to attract tourists, contributing to increased tourist flow.

The Panauti Community Homestay has received international recognition, including grants and awards, enabling its expansion and the enhancement of facilities. To overcome limitations, the project requires additional funding with proper resource allocation, potentially introducing new resources like 'Rodhi Ghar' to extend guest stays. Despite challenges, the homestay's impact on stakeholders, including economic empowerment for women, community development, and cultural preservation, positions it as a transformative force in Nepal's tourism landscape.

3.0 Impact

Panauti Community Homestay has brought about transformative changes for its stakeholders, particularly empowering women who now contribute economically,

leading to enhanced societal standing and improved living conditions. The community, benefiting from increased income, enjoys amenities like electricity, internet, and solar power. This initiative has positively impacted children's education, provided winter clothing, and facilitated water access for isolated households. Moreover, it has played a crucial role in preserving local cultural elements, including food, dresses, dances, music, and art, contributing to the identity and authenticity of the community. The continuous positive impact suggests a promising trajectory for further growth.

In catering to the target market, Panauti Community Homestay offers a genuine immersion into Nepalese culture, providing a unique experience of regional traditions, cuisine, and scenic beauty. Travelers have the opportunity to support sustainable and responsible tourism, making a positive impact on the community. The lodgings offer insights into Nepal's cultural philosophy, making it a meaningful choice for those seeking authentic cultural experiences.

From an environmental perspective, the homestay model aligns with responsible tourism by directly benefiting the community, reducing the need for imported resources, and creating bio-degradable waste. This initiative promotes sustainable practices and serves as a positive example of how tourism can contribute to environmental preservation and community development simultaneously. For Community Homestay Network (CHN), the success of the Panauti Homestay is evident in its expanded market base, reaching 36 communities across Nepal by 2023. The social-entrepreneurship model employed by CHN has proven unprecedented in the Nepalese tourism industry, showcasing the potential for growth and positive impact through community-focused initiatives.

The Center of Excellence (CoE) engaged in this research gained valuable insights into the dynamics of the tourism business, learning from the successes and challenges of the Panauti Community Homestay. The research process provided exposure to local business ethics and structures in Nepal, emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation for sustained success in the dynamic tourism market. The evolution and continuous improvement of CHN and the homestay operators serve as valuable lessons for CoE researchers, highlighting the significance of adaptation for sustainability and growth. This comprehensive impact assessment underscores the transformative effects of Panauti Community Homestay, encompassing stakeholders, the environment, the company, and the research center, and exemplifies the potential for positive change in community-based tourism initiatives.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

This business thrives on the unique power of diversified cultural heritages, skills, practices, and a distinctive way of living within a single community. However, challenges exist in its business and operating models, which can be addressed through specific grants and funds allocated for community use. Introducing new resources, such as ‘Rodhi Ghar,’ can contribute to extending guest stays. The potential for improvement and progress in the homestay concept is evident, requiring supportive hands to aid its rise. With the hope and determination of the hosts in Panauti, the contribution of helping hands can lead to the prosperity of tourism in Nepal and the nation as a whole.

CASE STUDY 17

A Case Study on Tourism Event and Research Center

Raj Giri

1.0 Case Context

Tourism Event and Research Centre (TERC) is a unique event organizing company in Nepal, specializing not only in managing meetings, conventions, and exhibitions but also in conducting programs that explore and promote natural diversities while focusing on their preservation. The center is dedicated to research, promotion, and organization of pollution-free events, striving to minimize environmental impact, particularly from fossil fuels. TERC aims to revolutionize the tourism business in Nepal through continuous efforts and research, ushering in a new era of tourism prospects. TERC defines any event organized with a tourism theme as “Tourism Events.” Events organized with tourist involvement and foreign currency earnings are specifically termed “tourism events” by TERC. The center actively promotes cultural, social, and environmentally related events that engage people in cultural preservation, social awareness, and eco-friendly practices, all with the participation of tourists.

The company is situated in Kamaladi, Putalisadak, operating as a sole proprietorship. Founded by Mr. Manoj Kumar Giri, the organization is staffed by five regular employees, supplemented by volunteers as required during event organization. This entity is dedicated to the conceptualization and execution of signature events with a systematic and professional approach.

Tourism Event and Research Centre (TERC) is driven by a comprehensive vision and mission aimed at preserving and promoting the cultural richness of Nepal while fostering economic development and youth engagement. At the core of TERC’s objectives is the preservation of local culture, encompassing cuisine, costumes, cultural activities, art, trade, tradition, and the native language. Through meticulously curated cultural tourism events, the center strives to showcase these elements on the global stage while ensuring their authenticity remains intact. In line with its mission to position Nepal as a global hub for diverse international events, TERC actively seeks to attract conferences, meetings, seminars, expos, and exhibitions of international repute. This initiative not only enhances Nepal’s standing as a preferred destination but also facilitates cross-cultural exchanges and collaborations. TERC envisions a Nepal that serves as a vibrant and dynamic host for a spectrum of international gatherings.

A fundamental pillar of TERC's mission is the generation of substantial employment opportunities. By empowering the youth community to initiate their businesses in local areas, TERC contributes significantly to local economic development. The center recognizes entrepreneurship as a catalyst for economic growth, fostering a spirit of innovation and self-reliance among the youth. TERC's commitment to youth engagement is integral to its broader mission. Actively involving Nepalese youth, including college and university students, in various tourism activities serves a dual purpose. It not only provides meaningful experiences for the youth but also contributes to the overall development of the tourism sector. TERC envisions a future where the youth play a vital role in shaping the trajectory of Nepal's tourism landscape.

TERC's commitment to environmental sustainability sets it apart, with a focus on minimizing pollution from events, especially those associated with fossil fuel usage. This aligns with global efforts to address climate change and promotes responsible tourism practices. By actively organizing events that combine tourism themes with cultural preservation, social awareness, and environmental friendliness, TERC ensures that tourism becomes a force for positive change in Nepal. The center's vision and mission underscore a dedication to preserving and showcasing the richness of local culture, creating economic opportunities, and involving the youth in the country's tourism endeavors. TERC's emphasis on attracting international events not only contributes to the global visibility of Nepal but also fosters cross-cultural exchanges and collaborations. TERC's approach to tourism extends beyond mere economic considerations. The center recognizes the importance of preserving the distinct cultural identity of Nepal, ensuring that economic development occurs in harmony with the country's rich heritage. Through youth engagement initiatives, TERC is not only creating a skilled workforce but also nurturing a sense of responsibility and pride in the local cultural and natural heritage.

Tourism Events and Research Centre (TERC) targets a global audience, including tourists, the corporate sector, and college and university youths. Offering services such as event organizing, research, cultural exchange programs, bouldering competitions, and MICE tourism, the centre aims to cater to diverse interests and preferences, providing unique and enriching experiences for its customers.

The company engages in multidimensional revenue streams to sustain its operations. Primarily, it sells event tickets, generating revenue to cover associated expenses. Additionally, the sale of tour packages contributes to the company's financial sustainability. The provision of training services to other agencies and members serves as another revenue-generating avenue. Furthermore, the company secures sponsorships during event organization and occasionally receives donations, diversifying its income

sources. On the other side, the company incurs various costs essential for its operations. Monthly rent payments cover the office space and any additional items such as vehicles, tents, tables, and chairs rented for events. Employee expenses include regular salaries and occasional allowances, especially during profitable events. The company invests in training for its employees, covering the associated costs. Utilities, including bills and overhead costs, are part of the operational expenses. Marketing and advertising expenses are allocated to promote and boost event visibility. Additionally, the company fulfils its tax obligations, including a 13% VAT payment to the government along with income tax contributions.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

The Tourism Event and Research Centre (TERC) in Nepal addresses the critical need for entrepreneurship support, specifically focusing on the deficiencies in international marketing skills among local entrepreneurs. While the Nepal Tourism Board's efforts in international tourism marketing are commendable, TERC recognizes the specific challenges faced by hospitality entrepreneurs who may lack expertise in promoting their ventures in international expos, seminars, and conferences. TERC steps in to provide comprehensive solutions, offering guidance, booth design services, and orientation to entrepreneurs before their international endeavors. The company's revenue model revolves around training services, ensuring sustainable income.

TERC strategically positions Nepal as an attractive destination for international event organizers, emphasizing cost efficiency and the convenience of organizing events in Nepal compared to European or American counterparts. The company leverages Nepal's on-arrival visa facility for most countries, making it a feasible choice for participants. TERC actively promotes cultural events, emphasizing carbon-free practices for a positive environmental impact.

In the context of challenges, TERC acknowledges financial crises, the scarcity of qualified human resources, and the absence of ideal venues for diverse events. External factors like the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian blockades, and local issues further add to the complexities. However, TERC sees vast opportunities in Nepal due to the limited competition in the field, allowing the company to pioneer innovative strategies that attract emulation from other agencies.

The challenges faced by TERC include the lack of ideal venues and administrative hurdles, hindering the organization of mega events. The solution lies in infrastructure development, streamlined governmental processes, and improved safety

measures to instill confidence in clients. Overall, TERC emerges as a crucial player in shaping Nepal's tourism landscape, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting the nation's rich cultural heritage on the global stage.

However, TERC engages with various stakeholders, including tourists, hotels, vehicle rental companies, local bodies, government bodies, media, online media, and the host community. The company collaborates with Guthis, community-based organizations responsible for organizing cultural events. TERC's impact on stakeholders ranges from providing cultural experiences to tourists to supporting employees with a conducive work environment and training opportunities. The company's financial backbone comes from founder self-financing, and it strategically partners with organizations such as the Pashupatinath Development Trust.

The target market and beneficiaries encompass cultural tourists, youth and students engaging in adventure events, and international event organizers attracted to Nepal's unique offerings. TERC's financial model, human resource utilization, and marketing activities, predominantly through digital platforms, reflect a comprehensive approach to its operations.

3.0 Impact

The impact of Tourism Event and Research Centre (TERC) is multifaceted, benefiting its target market, stakeholders, the environment, the company itself, and the Center of Excellence (COE). For the target market, tourists gain a rich cultural experience of Nepal through TERC's organized events, while youth are drawn to tourism activities, fostering an attraction to the industry. TERC serves as a comprehensive solution for various tourism-related activities, connecting every event with tourism elements.

In terms of stakeholders, TERC contributes to capacity development by providing valuable experiences and knowledge in facing challenges, enhancing working capacities. The stakeholders also benefit financially, receiving assistance and gaining experience for future events. Learning opportunities in marketing strategies are provided during TERC-organized events, fostering innovation and strategic thinking. Additionally, stakeholders engage in experience sharing, exchanging ideas and insights after each event.

TERC's commitment to organizing pollution-free events underscores its positive impact on the environment. Through effective management and cleaning initiatives, the company ensures that the venues for cultural events remain environmentally friendly and well-maintained. The company itself faces both challenges and opportunities, leveraging

the latter to create openings and acquiring the knowledge necessary for successful event management. The impact on the Center of Excellence is notable as it plays a crucial role in supporting research endeavors by providing mentorship and guidance, contributing to research mobilization among tourism stakeholders. TERC's innovative models in cultural and sports tourism further enhance the Center of Excellence's mission. Overall, the collaborative efforts of TERC, its stakeholders, and the Center of Excellence contribute to the sustainable growth and development of the tourism sector in Nepal.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

TERC tries to implement sustainable tourism practice through the innovative approach. Various way of implementing event organizing, company emphasis on promoting the cultural events Jatra (cultural festivals), local cuisine of Nepal and try to promote Nepalese authentic culture to the global market. As they are concern about environment protection they try to organize pollution free events. It trying to create the jobs conducting skill training, knowledge workshop and seminars. As company aim to attract international conference, expo, convection, exhibitions in Nepal company promote Nepal as a best destination for such activities. TERC promote and brand any events which involve tourism activities as tourism destination to its target market. It always makes sure that if any event can attract tourist around the world TERC try to include tourism activities in such events.

CASE STUDY 18

Bhaktapur Jatra Committee: The Role of Bisket Jatra in Promoting Local Traditions & Preserving Cultural Heritage

Pukar Karki

1.0 Case Context

The context of this case study revolves around the Bisket Jatra, a traditional festival in Nepal's Bhaktapur district, holds deep cultural significance, celebrated over eight days with rituals dedicated to Hindu gods Bhairava and Bhadrakali. Marked by erecting tall wooden poles, flying colorful flags, and lighting oil lamps, the festival is a cultural heritage symbol lasting over a thousand years. Cultural activities, chariot displays, traditional music, and dance are integral to the celebration. A unique tug of war between two communities, Thane and Kone, symbolizes good fortune for the winning team. Drawing international visitors, Bisket Jatra showcases Nepal's unique customs, serving as a reminder of its rich cultural legacy.

The Bhaktapur Jatra Committee, led by Laxmi Bhakta Ghyemasu, oversees the festival's planning and execution, ensuring proper celebration. Comprising six leaders and supporting members, the committee operates as a non-profit organization formed in the 12th century. Originating from various families in Bhaktapur, the committee manages and preserves the jatra sustainably, involving 55 houses in the central region. Passed down through generations, the committee's responsibility is to uphold the cultural tradition for the community, contributing to the festival's continued significance and success.

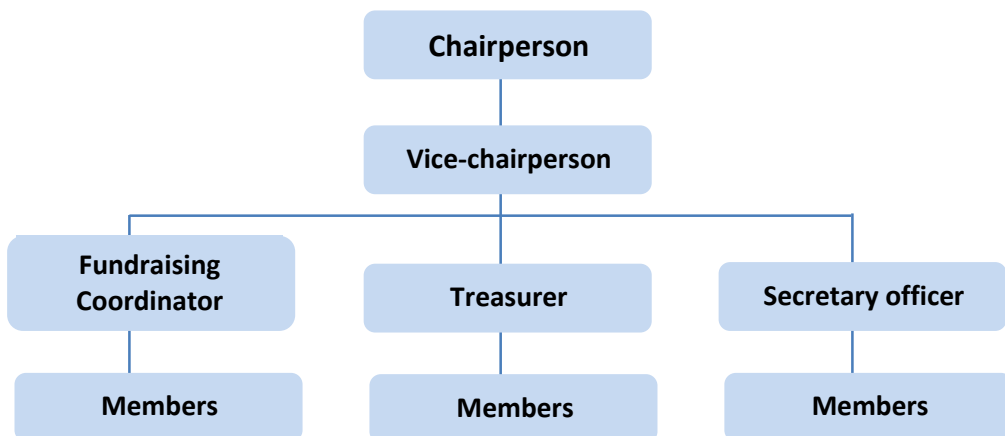
The committee envisions preserving and promoting the cultural significance of Bisket Jatra, integrating it with domestic tourism. Their goal is to maintain the festival's original style, showcasing local culture, and involving the younger generation. With a focus on sustainability amid modernization, they believe Bisket Jatra is vital for social cohesion and cultural identity.

To attract more tourists, the committee plans to enhance infrastructure, implement safety measures, and provide detailed information. They aim to raise awareness among locals and visitors about the festival's cultural and historical significance, supporting the local economy by promoting businesses and traditional goods during the event.

The Bhaktapur Jatra Committee, a nonprofit organization, ensures the sustainability of Bisket Jatra by organizing cultural events and providing services without charge. The festival features traditional musical, dance, and theatrical performances, offering a platform for artists. Religious ceremonies for worshipping gods Bhairava and Bhadrakali are conducted by six Bhairava Pujaris. The chariot procession, a major attraction, is organized by the committee, allowing spectators to participate. A unique service during Bisket Jatra is the erection of tall wooden poles, called “lingo,” symbolizing the victory of goodness over evil. Skilled artisans raise these poles, adding to the festival’s cultural significance. The committee also provides information on event schedules, locations, safety precautions, and festival rules, enhancing the experience for participants and visitors alike.

The Bhaktapur Jatra Committee, led by Laxmi Bhakta Ghyemasu, operates with a hierarchical structure. Ghyemasu, an experienced leader, oversees the festival’s proper and organized execution. Five supporting leaders, including Bhairava Pujari, assist in non-worship matters. The Pakhabhari, a group of four, is responsible for obtaining the special wood required for chariot and lingo construction. Ram Krishna Naga handles finances, while the youngest leader, Krishna Bhakta Chukang, serves as the figurehead, overseeing all activities due to his knowledge of the jatra. The committee follows a Guthi-based organizational structure to ensure the festival’s proper execution and visitor guidance.

Figure 1: Organizational Structure of Jatra Committee



Source: Authors' contribution

As a non-profit organization, the Bhaktapur Jatra Committee lacks a fixed income source. The funds from the Guthi group and voluntary donors, totaling NPR.24,00,000, fell short of the required NPR.29,00,000 for the jatra. Leaders, including Laxmi Bhakta Ghyemasu, personally contributed additional funds to bridge the gap, ensuring the successful and sustainable execution of the festival despite the financial shortfall.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Bisket Jatra faces several challenges to sustainable tourism, primarily centered around the lack of youth participation, modernization, and a generation gap. The minimal involvement of the younger generation poses a threat to the transfer of cultural knowledge and traditions, potentially affecting the festival's long-term popularity among tourists. The impact of modernization, influenced by Western patterns, could diminish the cultural significance of traditional celebrations like Bisket Jatra, as contemporary entertainment gains prominence. Bridging the generation gap becomes crucial to ensuring the festival's survival, requiring efforts to engage and educate the youth about its historical and cultural relevance.

In response to these challenges, the Bhaktapur Jatra Committee has initiated various measures. These include focusing on improving the chariot procession with durable ropes, using high-quality wood for the chariot, and involving youth groups to enhance the effectiveness of the festival. The committee has collaborated with the Red Cross Society for medical support during the jatra and employed modernization while preserving cultural elements for sustainability. Additionally, awareness programs through youth clubs aim to engage the next generation in the continuation of cultural customs.

External analysis reveals positive outcomes from the committee's initiatives, such as increased youth participation, environmentally friendly measures, and a sense of community cohesion. The festival's successful management of tourism contributes to the local economy, generating employment and promoting cultural arts. However, threats like westernized cultural activities pose challenges to traditional practices.

Internally, the committee's strengths lie in its commitment to continuing the jatra without financial gain, effectively managing resources, and employing quality materials. Activities during Bisket Jatra, including the chariot procession, lingo erection, musical performances (Mali Baja), and cultural dances/drama, contribute significantly to preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

Stakeholders in Bisket Jatra include locals (Newari people), local businesses, visitors/tourists, government authorities, and artists/performers. Locals benefit by celebrating and displaying their traditions, fostering cultural pride and community. Local businesses thrive with increased tourism, and visitors gain a rich cultural experience. Finances for the festival primarily rely on funds from the Guthi group and voluntary donors, supplemented by personal contributions from leaders to bridge funding gaps.

Human resources, mainly managed by the committee and supported by youth clubs and governmental security providers, are sufficient for festival operations. Despite being a non-profit, Bisket Jatra indirectly utilizes various print media and travel agencies for marketing, relying on the festival itself as a significant form of promotion. Overall, the Bhaktapur Jatra Committee's efforts demonstrate a proactive approach to address challenges and sustain the cultural significance of Bisket Jatra.

3.0 Impact

The younger generation's increased participation in Bisket Jatra, particularly in activities like Mali Baaja, reflects a positive impact on cultural preservation. With youth joining clubs, learning rituals, and guiding visitors, there's a renewed interest in cultural practices. This inclusivity enhances safety during the festival, and the reinforced chariot adds to the joy of the chariot procession. The initiative has positive effects on stakeholders, local businesses, and the environment. Stakeholders benefit from increased tourism, and the emphasis on eco-friendly tourism promotes responsible travel practices.

For the environment, Bisket Jatra encourages eco-aware behaviors and supports local products, fostering a sense of environmental responsibility. The committee's commitment to passing down cultural traditions ensures the festival's sustainability, preserving heritage for future generations. The Center of Excellence (CoE) plays a vital role by providing mentorship and guidance, contributing to knowledge transfer, best practices, innovation, and policy influence. CoE's involvement enhances its reputation, visibility, and potential for further contributions to sustainable tourism. Overall, the collaborative efforts contribute positively to cultural preservation, environmental awareness, and the advancement of sustainable tourism practices.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

With active local participation, the Bisket Jatra organizers executed the festival more smoothly, constructing a higher-quality chariot with improved materials.

Additional services like water, tiffin, and accurate information were provided to visitors with the support of the committee and youth clubs. Despite minor challenges in transporting the lingo log and issues in chariot construction due to unreliable builders, the organizers navigated the ceremonies well. To address these challenges, counseling for builders, educating the younger generation on cultural performances, and consulting with local authorities for transportation improvements are suggested. Implementing these measures would enhance overall efficiency and effectiveness in organizing future festivals.

CASE STUDY 19

Bhairavnath Topi Pasal

Sumina Shrestha

1.0 Case Context

Bhairavnath Topi Pasal, an 80-year-old family legacy run by Kiran Pradhananga, specializes in traditional Nepali clothing, with a focus on Bhadgaunle Topi. Located near Bhaktapur Durbar Square, the shop offers Dhaka Topi, Daura Suruwal, and more. Kiran took over a decade ago, continuing her family's mission. With a wide selection, personalized shopping experience, and emphasis on authentic, handwoven products, the business targets in-state tourists and residents during peak seasons like weddings and festivals. Managed by Kiran and her brother, the store empowers women, sources local materials, and thrives on seasonal sales, ensuring quality and cultural preservation.

1.1 Cost structure and revenue streams

Sales of topi are seen to be more in numbers and profit in comparison to other goods in the store.

Table 1: Budget Data Based on Usual Sales

S. No.	Product Name	Cost Price	Selling Price	Profit Margin
1	Dhaka Topi	130	300	56%
2	Bhadgaunle Topi	110	250	56%
3	Daura Suruwal	750	1600	53%
4	Waistcoats	600	1300	54%
5	Coat sets	800	2000	60%
6	Woollen caps	250	400	38%
7	Weaning dress	800	1800	56%

Source: Author's contribution

Since the sales are seasonal, the revenue structure varies and is not fixed. The profit made during the sales of the products in the peak season is utilized to manage and deal with the cost structure of the store in the off-seasons.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

The sustainable tourism challenge centres around Bhadgaunle Topi, a traditional Nepali attire handwoven with locally sourced cotton, contributing to cultural preservation and local employment. However, seasonal demand and market competition pose hurdles. A crucial concern is the scarcity of skilled employees adept at traditional crafting methods, impacting ethical sourcing. In the era of essential online presence, the absence of an online platform restricts market expansion and global outreach. The business strategy initially focused on Dhaka Topi and Bhadgaunle Topi but expanded to include a variety of traditional attires, addressing market competitiveness. This diversification, coupled with a focus on quality, helped sustain the business, providing employment opportunities and supporting local cultures. External analysis indicates a growing interest among residents and in-state tourists due to the use of local resources. The business, leveraging 10 skilled employees, faces challenges in technological resources and raw material sourcing. Key activities involve market research, employing skilled workers, finding new suppliers, and expanding the store's capacity. Stakeholders include employees, suppliers, the local community, and tourists. Target markets include in-state and diaspora tourists, offering them sustainable and culturally rich choices. Partnerships with suppliers and local communities have been crucial for raw materials and production. Finances initially came from company profits and later received funding from close connections due to increased costs. Human resources expanded with the addition of 10 full-time employees, enhancing efficiency and meeting rising demand. Marketing efforts included offline promotions, special discounts, and word-of-mouth advertising. The business's commitment to tradition, quality, and community engagement positions it as a sustainable and culturally significant player in the market.

3.0 Impact

The impact of the project on the target market is profound, offering a platform for cultural preservation and promotion. Through showcasing unique heritage, the project facilitates cultural exchange, fostering respect and understanding among diverse communities. Locals can proudly display their traditions, strengthening their connection to roots, while drawing tourists enhances the local economy. Stakeholders, encompassing locals, benefit from job opportunities, financial security, and the celebration of community heritage. The project's emphasis on local resources bolsters regional businesses, contributing to sustainable development and economic growth.

With a commitment to sustainability, the project minimizes environmental footprints by utilizing locally sourced raw materials and implementing waste reduction measures. This not only supports local businesses but also sets a precedent for ethical and environmentally friendly production. Strategically, the project strengthens the company's market position and product offerings, ensuring competitiveness. Despite initial financial challenges, the project's later stages yield substantial profits, ensuring the company's sustained economic viability.

The Center of Excellence (CoE) experiences significant positive impacts, serving as a hub for innovative techniques and information transfer in sustainable tourism. Through case study projects, the CoE disseminates best practices, fostering knowledge transfer and encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices in the tourism sector. The initiative also stimulates innovative thinking and entrepreneurial efforts, acting as an incubator and providing guidance to aspiring entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism. The CoE's role in driving positive change and fostering creativity in addressing sustainability challenges is instrumental.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The project, initiated in response to intense market competition, proved highly successful for the business. Essential components, including human resources, raw materials, financial support, and suppliers, were vital for project execution. While local connections facilitated human resource acquisition, staff motivation through bonuses for strong sales could have enhanced effectiveness. Strong supplier relationships ensured reliable raw materials, improving overall product quality. Offline promotion was effective, but incorporating online strategies could have widened the market reach globally. Despite areas for improvement, the project showcased the business's adaptive capacity, resource utilization, and supplier relations, underscoring the value of strategic decision-making and continuous market trend assessment. Addressing staff rewards and online promotion can further strengthen the business's competitive edge and growth trajectory.

CASE STUDY 20

A Case Study on SASA: TWA - ससः त्वाः

Kuldeep Dahal

1.0 Case Context

The context of this case study revolves around the Sasa: Twa Restaurant that is situated in the culturally rich town of Kirtipur. This restaurant invites guests to immerse themselves in the vibrant tapestry of Newari culture. Founded by Mr Phiroj Singh, a dedicated citizen of Kipu City, the restaurant combines creative architecture with historical tradition, creating an immersive experience that transports visitors to another era. “Sasa” in Nepal Bhasa represents warmth, while “Twa” signifies the vibrant community. Committed to delivering opulent treatment akin to sons-in-law, Sasa: Twa offers a gourmet feast of delectable Newari cuisine and drinks in a meticulously curated setting.

Sasa Twa’s vision is to promote indigenous knowledge, customs, and values of the Newa community, aiming to protect cultural assets and derive value from local products. The mission is to share the rich indigenous knowledge globally, uplifting women, promoting social entrepreneurship, and enhancing the value of local products. The restaurant aspires to serve a broader market while contributing to the Nepali economy and global promotion of Newa culture.

With live music performances at its core, Sasa Twa’s services showcase the best of Newari cooking, featuring a menu with iconic dishes like Yomari, Bara, and Choila. Aila, a traditional local beverage, enhances the cultural experience. Sasa Twa acts as a cultural ambassador, displaying infrastructure and heritage sites, adorned with beautiful Newari artwork. Traditional cultural performances such as Kumari Dance and Dhime Nitra allow guests to personally experience age-old rituals.

Sasa Twa’s diverse target markets include cultural enthusiasts, domestic and foreign travelers seeking an authentic cultural encounter, families, and the youth demographic. The restaurant also offers banquet services with a distinct cultural touch for corporates, governmental bodies, and private events.

Managed by a dedicated team led by Mr Phiroj Singh and Mrs Binita Singh, the restaurant embodies Newari culture. With 75% of the workforce being female, Sasa Twa employs around 109 people, working collaboratively to realize the organization’s vision. The management structure ensures effective integration and execution of Sasa Twa’s

goals. In summary, Sasa: Twa Restaurant combines exquisite Newari cuisine, cultural experiences, and genuine hospitality to create an unforgettable journey, promoting and preserving the essence of Newa culture on a global scale.

Sasa Twa offers a diverse range of goods and services dedicated to preserving the captivating Newari way of life. Central to its offerings are live music performances, immersing audiences in Nepal's vibrant soundscape. The thoughtfully designed menu showcases the best of Newari cooking, featuring mouth-watering dishes like Yomari, Bara, and Choila, prepared with locally sourced ingredients. Visitors are encouraged to indulge in Aila, a traditional local beverage, enhancing the cultural experience with its distinctive flavour. Beyond culinary delights, Sasa Twa serves as a cultural ambassador, highlighting infrastructure and heritage sites reflecting the character of the Newa people. The restaurant's architecture, adorned with beautiful Newari artwork, invites exploration, with every angle telling a tale. Sasa Twa also provides opportunities to engage in traditional cultural performances such as Kumari Dance and Dhime Nitra, offering a first-hand experience of mesmerizing rituals and expressions passed down through the decades.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Sasa Twa encounters substantial challenges in the realm of sustainable tourism and innovation, as it endeavors to augment marketing strategies, safeguard Newari cultural integrity, and mitigate adverse impacts. A primary obstacle involves the establishment of a resilient supply chain for raw materials and vegetables, sourced ethically from local farmers and vendors, aligning with the company's commitment to sustainable business practices. Effectively managing resource demand and availability amid seasonal fluctuations in visitor arrivals poses a complex challenge.

Educating visitors about sustainable tourism and fostering a gradual shift in their behavior represents another formidable hurdle. Sasa Twa recognizes the significance of empowering and motivating visitors to adopt sustainable practices during their stay, thereby positively influencing the environment and local community. Sustaining adherence to sustainability standards necessitates proficient supply chain management. To ensure the seamless flow of goods while upholding sustainable practices, Sasa Twa must cultivate robust relationships with suppliers and institute efficient logistical procedures.

Comprehensive employee training emerges as a critical factor in fostering staff loyalty and sustainability. Providing thorough training on sustainable practices equips

staff members with the necessary tools to actively support the company's sustainability objectives. Sasa Twa's sustainable flourishing is contingent upon the modernization and standardization of traditional activities, such as the production of Aila and Chhyang. Striking a balance between tradition and innovation involves embracing technological advancements while preserving the essence of local expertise.

To accomplish its objectives of promoting sustainable tourism, preserving Newari culture, and contributing positively to the environment and local community, Sasa Twa must address these challenges proactively. Implementation of sustainable tourism methodologies and the application of innovative approaches will be instrumental in navigating these complexities. Sasa Twa exemplifies an innovative approach to sustainable tourism, prioritizing stakeholder participation and maintaining a consistent monitoring and assessment of its sustainability initiatives. The company showcases a commitment to sustainable waste management through measures like adopting mud containers for dustbins and redirecting leftover food to a local pig farm. Demonstrating a passion for preserving Newari culture, Sasa Twa reflects this dedication in its naming and location decisions.

Implementing energy-efficient strategies, such as utilizing energy-saving lighting systems and prudent energy consumption, contributes to minimizing the carbon footprint. The emphasis on trash segregation aims to promote recycling and reduce landfill waste. Sasa Twa employs established procedures to produce alcohol while preserving the authenticity of traditional drinks like Aila.

Collaboration with government agencies enhances policy formulation and reinforces initiatives for sustainable tourism. Moreover, Sasa Twa maintains accessibility to a diverse clientele, ranging from the working class to students, through the moderation of pricing components. In presenting itself as a sustainable tourist enterprise, Sasa Twa champions cultural preservation, stakeholder participation, and environmental responsibility through these cutting-edge approaches. Sasa Twa generates revenue through various streams, primarily relying on food and beverage sales as its main source of income. The restaurant's authentic Newari cuisine and drinks attract diners, forming a significant portion of their earnings. Additionally, the establishment offers cultural tours and experiences, providing guests with an immersive exploration of Newari customs through tour packages. Collaborating with tourism companies and travel agencies further enhances revenue opportunities through referrals and joint marketing initiatives.

To diversify its offerings, Sasa Twa extends its revenue streams by organizing cooking classes and workshops. These sessions allow patrons to delve into the intricacies of Newari culinary specialties, contributing to increased sales and customer engagement. Another lucrative avenue is private event bookings, where the restaurant offers its lounge

and banquet space for weddings, parties, business gatherings, conferences, and various events. As a result, this diversified approach to revenue generation underscores Sasa Twa's commitment to not only providing exceptional dining experiences but also tapping into cultural tourism, educational initiatives, and event hosting to maximize financial success.

3.0 Impact

Sasa Twa's sustainable tourism venture has left a profound impact on its target market, stakeholders, the environment, the company itself, and the Center of Excellence (CoE). Through a commitment to offering traditional Newari cuisine and providing exceptional customer service, Sasa Twa has not only met the culinary needs of its patrons but also educated them about the distinctive tastes and culinary customs of Newari culture. The company's dedication to sustainability extends beyond customer satisfaction, influencing business growth, expanding the local market, and reaching new potential clients through effective marketing efforts.

For stakeholders, Sasa Twa's sustainable tourism initiative has brought about positive economic outcomes by generating employment opportunities and monetary benefits for the local community. By showcasing Newari cultural customs, rituals, and creative expressions, the company plays a pivotal role in cultural preservation and branding. Additionally, Sasa Twa's promotion of locally sourced goods supports traditional crafts and agricultural sustainability. The establishment of alliances with groups and travel companies fosters cooperation and mutual growth in the tourism industry, benefiting all stakeholders involved.

Environmental impact is a key consideration for Sasa Twa, which implements various projects and practices to reduce its carbon footprint. Indigenous techniques and skills are employed to minimize transportation-related emissions. The use of sustainable items like Tapari (Leaf Plates), brassware, and clay pots further contributes to environmental conservation. The company actively participates in tree-planting initiatives and employs efficient water and waste management strategies to maximize resource use. Through these measures, Sasa Twa demonstrates its commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism, fostering eco-consciousness.

The impact on the company itself is multifaceted and rewarding. Sasa Twa not only generates wealth through various business ventures but also contributes to social transformation by implementing an innovative social entrepreneurship approach. By empowering the community, creating job opportunities, and promoting economic

diversification, the business improves both financial success and social well-being. The prioritization of preserving and advancing Newari culture has strengthened Sasa Twa's brand image, earning global acclaim and establishing it as a key player in the sustainable tourism sector. As the brand becomes associated with authenticity, cultural experiences, and sustainable practices, its value rises.

The collaboration with the Center of Excellence (CoE) through the CESTour project, funded by Erasmus+ and the European Union, has been transformative for Sasa Twa. This partnership with academic institutions has created a platform for research, innovation, and knowledge exchange. It has facilitated more informed decision-making processes and the implementation of sustainable practices across various aspects of the organization's operations. The collaboration with academic institutions has improved the organization's relations with the academic community and facilitated seamless collaboration in the realm of sustainable tourism. The CoE has promoted an innovative culture and new viewpoints by involving students in real-world projects, allowing them to apply their knowledge and skills.

In essence, Sasa Twa's sustainable tourism initiative has had a wide-ranging and inspirational impact on the host organization. This includes the creation of wealth, a fresh perspective on social entrepreneurship, environmental improvement, and the construction of a solid brand framework that attracts awareness and value appreciation. The collaborative efforts with the CoE have further elevated the organization's position, making it a leader in university-business collaboration, economic growth, and sustainable tourism in Nepal.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Sasa Twa has successfully implemented sustainable tourism practices through its emphasis on preserving Newari culture, offering authentic delicacies, and incorporating eco-friendly measures. The use of indigenous techniques and technology, such as an online booking system, has contributed to a strong customer base and improved efficiency. Strategic digital marketing efforts have expanded the venture's reach. However, opportunities for scalability and collaboration with industry partners to disseminate knowledge should be explored. Implementing a robust evaluation framework from the project's inception would enhance effectiveness and identify areas for refinement. Ongoing communication and collaboration with stakeholders, including travel agencies and cultural institutions, are crucial for sustained success. Sasa Twa's implementation process serves as a model for sustainable tourism initiatives, with potential for broader impact through strategic enhancements.

CASE STUDY 21

Royal Mountain Travel

Bimal Subedi

1.0 Case Context

Royal Mountain Travel, established in 2005 and based in Kathmandu, Nepal, stands out as a leading travel company specialising in authentic and unique experiences. The company excels in organising tours, treks, mountaineering expeditions, and community-based activities across Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan. Renowned for its commitment to sustainable tourism, Royal Mountain Travel has received accolades, including the Travelife “Excellence in Sustainability” certification, recognizing its compliance with over 160 sustainability criteria.

At the heart of Royal Mountain Travel’s mission is a dedication to economic empowerment, waste reduction, green tourism, and sustainable communities. The company’s three core values for sustainability focus on community empowerment, environmental stewardship, and giving back. Through its initiatives, Royal Mountain Travel actively engages in community-based tourism, particularly in rural areas of Nepal, aiming to redirect the tourist flow and minimise negative impacts.

The company’s vision is to become a leading travel company promoting sustainable tourism that benefits both travellers and local communities, while preserving the environment and cultural heritage. Their mission involves creating lifetime experiences, connecting travellers with local communities, contributing to Nepal’s economic development through community-based tourism, and advocating for sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

Royal Mountain Travel offers a range of products and services, including trekking and hiking packages, cultural tours, adventure activities, and customised itineraries. The company actively develops community-based tourism products, such as homestay experiences, community-based treks, cultural immersion tours, and volunteering opportunities. These offerings provide travellers with the chance to connect with local communities, learn about their culture, and contribute positively to sustainable tourism.

The company’s target market includes adventure seekers, cultural enthusiasts, sustainable and responsible travellers, volunteer travellers, and family/group travellers. The organisational structure of Royal Mountain Travel is hierarchical, led by a

Managing Director overseeing departmental managers responsible for day-to-day operations.

Revenue streams for the company come from tour packages, customised tours, trekking and mountaineering expeditions, and commissions from partners. In addition to its commercial activities, Royal Mountain Travel is actively involved in community development, empowering women through entrepreneurship, promoting gender equality, and supporting education, healthcare, and community initiatives in Nepal. The company is committed to advocating for sustainable tourism practices in Nepal's policies, emphasising environmental conservation, and minimising its own environmental footprint.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Royal Mountain Travel (RMT) has emerged as a prominent player in sustainable tourism, addressing the challenge of balancing sustainability with profitability. The company excels in organising tours, treks, mountaineering expeditions, and community-based activities across Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan. Committed to sustainable tourism, RMT has received the Travelife "Excellence in Sustainability" certification, reflecting adherence to over 160 sustainability criteria.

The primary challenge RMT faces is harmonising sustainability with profitability in the tourism sector. The company actively engages in community-based tourism in rural areas of Nepal, redirecting tourist flows to minimise negative impacts. One noteworthy initiative is supporting homestays by installing solar panels in areas lacking hydropower, promoting clean energy and sustainability.

Environmental stewardship is a top priority for RMT, evidenced by the use of reusable aluminium bottles, reducing single-use plastic. The company follows the three Rs of waste management (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), emphasising waste reduction, item reuse, and recycling.

The philosophy of "Giving Back" drives RMT's commitment to community development, including initiatives in education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship for women. Additionally, the company advocates for sustainable tourism practices in Nepal's policies, emphasising environmental conservation.

RMT faces challenges in community-based homestay tourism, where active participation, ownership, and cooperation of local communities are crucial. The success of tourism depends on balancing economic benefits with social and cultural considerations. RMT collaborates closely with communities, providing training and capacity-building programs.

The business idea centers on the “Community Homestay Network,” a social enterprise supporting a network of community homestays in Nepal. This initiative empowers women, promotes gender equality, and contributes to local development. The network offers diverse packages, combining homestay experiences with trekking, volunteering, cultural immersion, and adventure activities.

External trends, such as increased consumer awareness and industry shifts towards sustainability, present opportunities for RMT. Collaborations and partnerships between stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and local communities, are becoming integral to addressing sustainability challenges.

Internally, RMT's strengths lie in its experienced team, strong partnerships with the Community Homestay Network, and a robust reputation in the industry. The company's activities encompass carefully curated homestay packages, emphasising cultural immersion, adventure, and volunteer experiences.

Stakeholders, including travellers, local hosts, and industry partners, play vital roles in promoting the Community Homestay Network. The network benefits local communities, tourists, and businesses, aligning with government goals for equitable tourism distribution.

RMT's financing initially relied on its own resources, later gaining support from NGOs and international recognition. The human resources required for the initiative were primarily within the existing RMT team, supplemented by local hosts.

Communication channels for the initiative include online promotion through the RMT website and social media. Offline methods involve brochures, visiting cards, participation in travel fairs, and an educational tour for journalists.

In summary, RMT's sustainable tourism initiative revolves around the Community Homestay Network, addressing challenges through community engagement, environmental stewardship, and innovative tourism packages. The company navigates the delicate balance between economic growth and cultural preservation, contributing to Nepal's sustainable tourism landscape.

3.0 Impact

Community homestay tourism, as facilitated by the Community Homestay Network in Nepal, brings about significant impacts for both the target market, stakeholders, environment, and the involved organisations.

Staying at a community homestay offers customers a unique and authentic travel experience. The homestays, often designed to be eco-friendly, raise awareness of

environmental issues and sustainable practices. Customers learn about sustainable living from their hosts, fostering an understanding of local customs. Interacting with locals builds connections, fostering relationships between people of different cultural backgrounds. The experience broadens perspectives, leading to personal growth and development as customers immerse themselves in the local culture.

The Community Homestay Network significantly impacts various stakeholders:

- **Host Communities:** The program provides income opportunities, reducing poverty, and improving the standard of living. It also preserves and promotes local cultural traditions, enhancing community pride and identity.
- **Guests:** Travellers benefit from authentic cultural immersion, gaining insights into local customs and traditions. Homestays offer an alternative to traditional hotels, providing more affordable and sustainable options.
- **Local Businesses:** The network supports local businesses, including handicraft shops and restaurants, experiencing increased tourism.
- **Environment:** Homestays encourage responsible environmental practices, such as waste reduction, water conservation, and the use of renewable energy, promoting sustainable tourism.
- **Government:** The program contributes to local and regional economic development, supporting the country's image as a destination for sustainable tourism.
- **NGOs:** NGOs supporting sustainable tourism and community development can collaborate with the network, achieving shared goals of poverty reduction and cultural preservation.

Community homestay programs actively contribute to sustainable tourism practices by encouraging responsible environmental behaviour. This includes waste reduction, water conservation, and the use of renewable energy, minimising the impact of tourism on the environment. Additionally, some programs may support conservation efforts and raise awareness about environmental issues, contributing to positive environmental impacts.

For the case organisation, the impact is strategic, competitive, and economic. The expansion of the catalogue of offers has broadened the market base and improved competitive positioning. The initiative has diversified income sources, reducing risks, and generating additional revenue.

The CoE experiences potential impacts in the development of new training materials, creation of internships and jobs in partner companies, and collaborations for communication or the development of new sustainable tourism products and services.

This initiative contributes to the CoE's growth and engagement in various aspects of sustainable tourism.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Royal Mountain Travel, established in 2005 and based in Kathmandu, Nepal, has achieved success through an unwavering commitment to sustainable tourism. Specialising in eco-friendly tours across Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan, the company has earned accolades such as Travelife's "Excellence in Sustainability" certification. Recognized internationally by organisations like SKal International, PATA, and IIPT, Royal Mountain Travel is esteemed for its dedication to responsible tourism.

The company's success is attributed to its diverse range of experiences and the expertise of seasoned travel professionals, solidifying its position as a trusted name in the industry. Despite its sustainability achievements, there's room for improvement in transparency. Providing more detailed information on how sustainable practices are integrated and showcasing specific positive impacts on local communities would enhance the company's narrative. Exploring innovative sustainability practices, collaborating with local NGOs, and keeping clients regularly updated on initiatives' progress would further solidify Royal Mountain Travel's leadership in sustainable tourism, ensuring both customer satisfaction and positive contributions to the destinations it serves.

CASE STUDY 22

Kritipur Community Homestay

Devina Shrestha

1.0 Case Context

Kirtipur Community Homestay, established in 2075 B.S. in Kathmandu, Nepal, focuses on responsible tourism by providing unique and authentic homestay experiences. Committed to social development through tourism, it creates a family environment for guests, aiming to revitalize Kritipur's culture and promote sustainable cultural tourism. Core values include employing local women, involving the community, and preserving traditional culture. The homestay aims to offer genuine and indigenous experiences, reflecting simplicity.

Vision: Kirtipur Community Homestay aspires to be a leading sustainable tourism provider, preserving and showcasing Kritipur's culture, heritage, and lifestyle, benefiting both travelers and local communities. The mission involves creating authentic experiences, involving the community, supporting local businesses, and contributing to social and economic development.

Products/Services: The homestay offers various experiences, including homestay accommodation, traditional Newari food, cultural tours, trekking, volunteer programs, handicraft workshops, and yoga/meditation classes. It emphasizes a unique cultural immersion.

Target Markets: Targeting cultural, eco-tourists, adventure seekers, volunteers, culinary enthusiasts, and budget travelers, the homestay aims to cater to those seeking an authentic cultural experience, outdoor activities, and community engagement.

Organization and Management: Operated as a cooperative owned by the local community, Kirtipur Community Homestay has a management committee, local hosts, community volunteers, and an advisory board to ensure community participation, effective management, and sustainability.

Additional Information: The homestay provides comfortable and affordable accommodation, local cuisine, and has received awards for its contribution to sustainable tourism and community development. It collaborates with local NGOs and government agencies for community initiatives. Awards include the 2019 PATA award for Best Community-Based Tourism Initiative, highlighting its commitment to sustainable tourism and community development.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Kirtipur Community Homestay faces common sustainable tourism challenges, such as managing growing tourist numbers, balancing cultural heritage with diverse tourist expectations, and ensuring positive impacts on the local community. Challenges include a lack of manpower, commitment, quality and quantity of tourists, and issues with space and community engagement. To address these, the homestay promotes eco-tourism, supports community development, preserves cultural heritage, minimizes environmental impact, and collaborates with stakeholders.

External Analysis: The homestay aligns with the global shift towards sustainable tourism, meeting the demand for responsible travel. It utilizes local resources and involves women, contributing to economic and environmental sustainability. The broader industry trend towards sustainable practices benefits Kirtipur Community Homestay

Internal Analysis - SWOT:

- **Strengths:** Rich in natural and cultural heritage, preserved traditions, easy outreach from the capital, and involving women in the homestay business.
- **Weaknesses:** Lack of role models, community ownership, exposure, and effective promotion. Modernization affecting traditional look, insufficient infrastructure investment, and underdeveloped marketing.
- **Opportunities:** Scope for various tourism types, local community and city vibe attraction, regeneration of cultural landmarks, government support, and professional training.
- **Threats:** Lack of effective channels, capital, and networks, loss of indigenous products, and potential commercialization.

Activities: Kirtipur Community Homestay offers diverse activities, including homestay experiences, village tours, hiking, cultural programs, cooking classes, and volunteer activities, providing an authentic cultural immersion.

Stakeholders: Stakeholders include the local community, tourists, government authorities, tour operators, local businesses, and NGOs. Collaboration and partnerships are essential for addressing sustainability challenges effectively.

Target Market(s) and Beneficiaries: Targeting tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences, the homestay benefits the local community, homestay owners, tourists, local businesses, and the environment. The government gains revenue and supports sustainable practices.

Partners: Local hosts are crucial partners, offering insights into Newari culture. Collaboration and partnerships contribute to the success of community-based tourism.

Finances: Early-stage activities were funded from community resources. While initial support came from local authorities, the homestay now seeks to diversify funding sources.

Human Resources: Local community members manage planning and operations. Specialized manpower may be needed for social media, and the community seeks external assistance for training and research programs.

Marketing and Communication Activities: Promotion involves online activities through Facebook, brochures, visiting cards, and participation in tourism projects. Coordination of a comprehensive social media strategy and training for community members is essential.

3.0 Impact

Kiritipur Community Homestay, situated in Nepal, faces various challenges in implementing sustainable tourism practices. The initiative strives to strike a balance between tourism development, community needs, and environmental conservation. To address issues such as overdevelopment, lack of manpower, and inconsistency in tourist flow, the homestay has implemented sustainable practices like eco-tourism, community development, and cultural preservation.

The key sustainable tourism challenges include maintaining a balance between tourism growth and environmental preservation, lack of manpower and commitment, and the need for quality and quantity of tourists. Kiritipur Community Homestay is working towards sustainable solutions by promoting eco-friendly activities, supporting local businesses, and collaborating with stakeholders. Challenges like motivating community members, space constraints, and the lack of government involvement are being addressed through various measures.

The homestay provides cultural orientation, activities, and events to offer an authentic experience while supporting the local community. Despite challenges, the initiative aims to contribute positively to community development, economic growth, and environmental conservation.

In the external analysis, Kiritipur Community Homestay is positioned favorably in the growing market for sustainable tourism. With increased consumer awareness and demand for responsible travel, the homestay leverages its cultural and authentic experiences, engaging women in the community. The tourism industry's shift towards sustainability aligns with the homestay's objectives.

The SWOT analysis reveals strengths like rich cultural and natural heritage, but weaknesses include a lack of effective promotion and infrastructure. Opportunities for development and collaboration with stakeholders exist, but threats include modernization impacting traditional practices.

The homestay offers diverse activities such as cultural tours, trekking, handicraft workshops, and volunteer programs. Stakeholders, including the local community, tourists, government, tour operators, local businesses, and NGOs, play crucial roles in the homestay's success. The target market is tourists seeking authentic experiences, with benefits extending to the local community, homestay owners, local businesses, and the environment.

The impact analysis for the target markets highlights cultural exchange, authentic experiences, economic benefits, and sustainable tourism promotion. Stakeholders, including local families, tourists, the government, and NGOs, all experience positive impacts, fostering economic development, cultural preservation, and sustainable practices.

The environmental impact analysis underscores the homestay's positive contributions to environmental awareness, local preservation, and sustainable practices. While there may be negative impacts like increased resource consumption and waste generation, the homestay's commitment to responsible tourism minimizes such effects.

For the company, political, economic, technological, and competitive environments can influence operations. Positive impacts include brand reputation, revenue generation, customer loyalty, community engagement, and business development.

The Center of Excellence (CoE) gains valuable insights from the homestay's practices, positioning itself as a thought leader in sustainable tourism. The report recommends that the CoE use this case study to share best practices, offer training, and collaborate with other institutes, thereby contributing to the development of sustainable tourism in Nepal.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The assessment of Kirtipur Community Homestay's sustainable tourism initiatives reveals positive strides, particularly in the implementation of eco-tourism practices. The information, gathered through interactions with the chairperson and community members, highlights the need for a clearer understanding of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of these practices. The homestay has made

commendable efforts in promoting sustainable tourism within its local community. However, the reflection emphasizes the continuous need for improvement and refinement of these initiatives to ensure their effectiveness, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

Despite the positive steps taken by the homestay, there remains a crucial requirement for increased attention from local authorities and the government. The community, as well as the homestay itself, would benefit from heightened awareness and promotion of tourism in Kirtipur in a more sustainable manner. This reflects the broader need for collaborative efforts between the homestay, local stakeholders, and governmental bodies to enhance the impact and longevity of sustainable tourism practices in the region.

CASE STUDY 23

Gorkhali Handicraft

Jenish Maharjan

1.0 Case Context

Gorkhali Handicraft, established in 2000 AD, specializes in handmade products crafted from sheep wool, primarily imported from New Zealand and Australia. Located in Thamel, the heart of Kathmandu, the company focuses on felt-based items, including caps, shoes, bags, and dolls. Founded by Mr. and Mrs. Ramji Adhikari, Gorkhali Handicraft aims to provide employment to women through proper training in skilled, time-consuming handicraft making.

The company envisions becoming a brand that promotes sustainable tourism, benefitting both travelers and local communities. Its mission centers on enhancing Nepal's culture by offering handmade, environmentally friendly felt products, contributing to women's economic development, and encouraging sustainable practices and awareness.

Gorkhali Handicraft predominantly targets international tourists, constituting 90% of its customer base, with products attracting a diverse age group. The organization's structure involves ownership by Mr. and Mrs. Ramji Adhikari, management of raw material import and processing, staffing with trained individuals (mainly female), and effective communication with customers, mostly foreigners.

Revenue streams primarily rely on exports, with 80% of sales directed to European countries such as Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. The cost structure involves importing raw materials, processing, and labor, resulting in a net profit of around 10%. Revenue sources include individual clients (20%) purchasing at the retail shop in Thamel, and corporate clients (80%) dealing with international export.

Despite facing challenges, including the impact of Covid-19 causing an 80% reduction in sales, Gorkhali Handicraft continues to contribute to the local economy by providing employment opportunities for around 25 people, particularly women. The company emphasizes continuous training programs to upgrade skills and enhance product quality. Overall, Gorkhali Handicraft strives to sustain itself and overcome challenges through the support of distinguished organizations in the post-pandemic era.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

The analyzed initiative revolves around Gorkhali Handicraft. The primary challenge faced is to sustainably uplift undereducated women by providing employment through skill development in the field of felting. The company acknowledges the importance of sustainability in tourism and focuses on implementing eco-friendly practices in its handicraft production.

The felting process involves complex factors such as crimpiness, flexibility, and hygroscopic quality, with various environmental contributors like temperature, moisture, and pH affecting felting properties. Gorkhali Handicraft addresses sustainability by incorporating several practices:

- Use of natural, organic, and recycled materials to reduce environmental impact.
- Local sourcing to minimize the carbon footprint and support local economies.
- Adherence to certifications like GOTS and Fair Trade to ensure sustainable and socially responsible production.
- Implementation of sustainable dyeing methods, such as natural or low-impact dyes.

In the external analysis, the initiative aligns with global trends favoring sustainable development and collaborations among stakeholders. Opportunities include a rising demand for handicraft products in developed countries, particularly in the fashion industry, and the growth of e-commerce and internet distribution channels.

However, threats involve competition from businesses providing cheaper products, especially those produced by machines in countries like China. The initiative sees a decline in sales post-Covid-19, emphasizing the need for support to sustain and overcome challenges.

Internally, Gorkhali Handicraft exhibits strengths such as a large and diversified market, a strong retail infrastructure, and a flexible production process. Weaknesses include a lack of infrastructure, communication facilities, and awareness about international market requirements.

Activities undertaken to implement the initiative involve offering packages to travelers interested in experiencing authentic Nepali culture, providing live sessions for learning the felting process, and raising awareness about sustainable products. The stakeholder analysis identifies consumers, raw material distributors, associations, the local community, investors, and employees as crucial players.

The target markets for the initiative encompass family cyclists and tour cyclists interested in authentic cultural experiences. Beneficiaries include local communities gaining employment opportunities and tourists seeking genuine cultural encounters.

Partnerships are formed with hosts offering insights into Nepali culture, the Nepal Tourism Board, and memberships in associations like the Felt Industries Association of Nepal. Finances for the initiative were initially provided by the founder's family, with subsequent investments from profits, leading to a current net worth of around 40 million Nepalese Rupees.

Human resources required involve providing skilled training programs for uneducated workers to enhance their livelihoods. Marketing and communication strategies encompass online and offline channels, including websites, social media, and participation in travel marts. Gorkhali Handicraft values customer feedback and maintains open communication to ensure customer satisfaction with their handmade felt products.

3.0 Impact

The impact of the analyzed initiative on target markets is significant, as handmade handicrafts align with sustainability principles. The use of natural and eco-friendly materials, promotion of local production, fair trade practices, waste reduction, and support for artisan livelihoods contribute to sustainable practices. Government initiatives further emphasize the use of natural energy and light in the crafting process, fostering responsible environmental practices.

Stakeholders, including artisans and local communities, experience positive impacts. Handicrafts promote sustainable tourism by encouraging environmental responsibility, aiding in the promotion of handmade products, increasing local product value, providing skill development through training, and supporting local and regional economic development. The initiative enhances the visibility of society and its culture, contributing to the country's image as a destination for sustainable tourism.

Environmental impacts of the initiative include waste reduction through the use of scraps and upcycling, energy efficiency in traditional handicraft techniques, and support for the local economy by reducing the carbon footprint associated with transportation. Handmade items are often produced locally and sold directly to consumers, minimizing the need for extensive transportation.

For the company (Gorkhali Handicraft), the initiative places them in the realm of the slow fashion movement. Embracing slow fashion principles involves creating

unique, timeless pieces, using sustainable materials, promoting ethical labor practices, and ensuring transparency in production processes. This approach fosters a more sustainable and fashion-conscious ethos, emphasizing care and respect for the environment and individuals involved in the production process.

The impacts for the company extend to ensuring safe working conditions for artisans, avoiding child labor, respecting cultural diversity, promoting transparency and accountability in production practices, and contributing to community development. Handmade businesses can support local communities through various social services, aligning with sustainable and ethical business practices.

As for the Center of Excellence (CoE), the initiative helps analyze the current status of the handicraft industry in Nepal, identifying sustainable tourism efforts. It contributes to capacity building by providing training and fostering collaborations between EU and Asian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The CoE plays a crucial role in implementing sustainable tourism practices and furthering the development of a collaboration network in the field.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Gorkhali Handicraft specializes in producing wool products, including bags, slippers, dolls, jewelry items, mats, baskets, holders, scarves, etc., primarily designed for indoor use. The popularity of their products stems from the comfort and warmth provided by high-quality materials. The company avoids using mixed wools unless specifically requested by clients, offering customization options based on their preferences. With over 21 years of experience, the design team at Gorkhali Handicraft is well-regarded for creating products known for their quality at reasonable prices.

The paragraphs emphasize the untapped potential of Nepal in sustainable tourism, acknowledging obstacles hindering its full realization. Organizations like NTB, NATTA, HAN, FAN, and NATHM are encouraged to take the initiative in developing handicrafts, allowing tourists to easily choose and purchase personalized products.

Regarding the possibility of replication, the growing tourism flow indicates a potential for business expansion. The economic significance of handicrafts in Nepal contributes to both economic growth and sustainable tourism. The study suggests that replication is feasible, supported by the availability of data and information from various sources, emphasizing the role of handicrafts in Nepal's economic development and progress towards sustainable tourism.

CASE STUDY 24

Lavie Garden

Pranav Shrestha

1.0 Case Context

The Lavie Residency, a distinguished restaurant chain with outlets strategically located across the country, is renowned for its commitment to sustainability and customer satisfaction. Founder Sudarshan Paudel's vision was to create a unique and memorable dining experience, fostering a sense of celebration and enjoyment. The main outlet in Boudha offers a diverse culinary experience, while specialised outlets such as Biryani Adda and Lekali Bhoj Thakali cater to specific cuisine preferences.

Sustainability is a key focus for The Lavie Residency, with initiatives like locally sourcing ingredients to support communities and reduce carbon footprints. The commitment to minimising environmental impact includes reducing food waste and implementing energy-saving practices. The Lavie Residency's dedication to customer satisfaction is evident in the quality of its food, warm hospitality, and attention to decor, making it a preferred choice for families, friends, and food enthusiasts. The restaurant's success lies in combining culinary excellence, sustainability, and a welcoming atmosphere.

The vision of The Lavie Residency is to be a leading exemplar of sustainable tourism, contributing to an environmentally harmonious future. The mission involves implementing sustainable practices, supporting local communities, preserving cultural heritage, and educating guests about sustainability.

The Lavie Garden, formerly known as The Biryani Adda, emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, emphasizing quality and the joy of savoring its signature Matka Biryani. The restaurant targets food enthusiasts, locals, professionals, and event planners, offering dine-in, takeaway, delivery, and online ordering services.

The organization and management structure ensures smooth operations with a diverse and skilled workforce. The company culture emphasizes sustainability, customer service, and a welcoming atmosphere.

The cost structure includes categories like food and beverage costs, labor costs, rent and utilities, equipment and supplies, marketing and advertising, and miscellaneous expenses. Revenue streams primarily come from food and beverage sales, with potential supplementary income from catering, private events, and retail merchandise.

In summary, The Lavie Residency has positioned itself as a leader in the hospitality industry by seamlessly integrating sustainability, exceptional customer service, and culinary excellence. With a robust vision, mission, and organizational structure, the restaurant aims to contribute to a positive change in the hospitality industry.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

The Lavie Residency, founded by Sudarshan Paudel, prioritises sustainable tourism, offering a unique dining experience across its three outlets. The Boudha main outlet, Biryani Adda in Baluwatar, and Lekali Bhoj Thakali in Maharajgunj provide diverse culinary options. Sustainability initiatives include local ingredient sourcing, carbon footprint reduction, food waste minimization, and energy-saving practices. The Lavie Garden, established during the pandemic, specializes in Matka Biryani and caters to food enthusiasts, locals, professionals, and event planners through dine-in, takeaway, delivery, and online services. The organization, led by Sudarshan Paudel, emphasizes effective communication, a strong company culture, and values like sustainability and exceptional customer service.

In sustainable tourism, The Lavie Residency focuses on sourcing, waste and energy management, water conservation, sustainable transportation, and stakeholder engagement. It addresses challenges through external and internal analyses, considering market trends, competition, and environmental impact. Activities encompass sustainable sourcing, waste and energy management, water conservation, sustainable transportation, and education programs. Stakeholder engagement involves customers, local communities, employees, suppliers, and regulatory bodies. Target markets include conscious travelers, food enthusiasts, and the broader industry. Collaboration with local farmers, NGOs, tourism associations, and industry suppliers is key.

Financial strategies involve sustainability investments, cost optimization, strategic pricing, revenue generation through food sales, and seeking grants. Human resources initiatives focus on a skilled workforce, training, employee engagement, and health and safety. Marketing includes branding, digital efforts, community engagement, customer education, collaborations, and feedback. The Lavie Residency aims to position itself as a sustainable tourism leader, attracting eco-conscious customers and contributing to restaurant growth.

3.0 Impact

The Lavie Residency's commitment to sustainable tourism positively influences its target markets, comprising local customers and tourists. The impact on these markets is multifaceted. Firstly, it enriches the dining experience for customers who prioritize sustainability. The restaurant's focus on locally sourced ingredients, organic choices, and eco-friendly packaging elevates their dining experience, offering a unique and environmentally conscious ambiance. Secondly, The Lavie Residency's emphasis on using fresh and nutritious ingredients contributes to the health and well-being of its customers. The restaurant accommodates various dietary preferences, further enhancing its appeal.

Culturally, The Lavie Residency plays a significant role in preserving Nepali culture. By offering traditional Nepali cuisine, the restaurant preserves authentic flavors and culinary traditions. This cultural preservation contributes to a rich experience for both local customers and tourists, allowing them to explore and appreciate the local gastronomy.

The positive impact extends to stakeholders, including employees, suppliers, and the local community. Employees experience heightened job satisfaction in an organization that values environmental responsibility, potentially leading to increased productivity and retention. The restaurant's focus on locally sourced ingredients fosters strong partnerships with local farmers, producers, and suppliers, contributing to the local economy and building community relationships.

The Lavie Residency's active engagement with the local community through support for initiatives, participation in events, and contributions to environmental projects enhances its reputation as a responsible corporate citizen. This community involvement strengthens positive relationships, fostering goodwill and enhancing the restaurant's overall image.

Internally, the sustainable tourism practices have a direct impact on The Lavie Residency as a company. Firstly, the commitment to sustainability differentiates the restaurant, providing a unique selling proposition that attracts environmentally conscious customers. This differentiation positions The Lavie Residency as a leader in responsible business practices. Secondly, the sustainable practices contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of the company. Initiatives such as waste reduction, energy-saving measures, and efficient resource management lead to cost minimization, improving profitability and resilience in a competitive market. Lastly, the restaurant's sustainable tourism initiatives build a positive reputation and enhance its brand image.

Customers perceive The Lavie Residency as an environmentally responsible establishment, attracting new customers and fostering loyalty among existing ones. The combination of differentiation, financial sustainability, and a positive brand image positions The Lavie Residency as a leader in sustainable tourism within the hospitality industry.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The Lavie Residency's pursuit of sustainable tourism emerges as a transformative journey, fundamentally altering the restaurant's ethos and customer experience. The commitment to sustainability has not only become a core aspect of its operations but has also resulted in the creation of a distinctive dining environment. This environment resonates particularly well with customers who prioritize and value eco-conscious practices. The transformative nature of this journey indicates a significant shift in the restaurant's identity, marking a departure from conventional approaches and embracing a new paradigm centered around environmental responsibility.

The success achieved by The Lavie Residency in implementing sustainable tourism practices serves as a beacon, illuminating the potential for replication within the broader hospitality industry. The restaurant's accomplishments showcase innovative approaches that other establishments can learn from and integrate into their own operations. This dissemination of sustainable practices has the potential to foster a more eco-friendly future for the entire tourism sector. The scalability of The Lavie Residency's initiatives underscores the adaptability of its strategies, suggesting that various restaurants and businesses can customize and implement similar practices. This adaptability bodes well for the wider industry, as it implies that the positive environmental impact achieved by The Lavie Residency can be replicated on a larger scale, contributing collectively to a sustainable and responsible future for the hospitality and tourism sector.

CASE STUDY 25

Best Heritage Tours

Sushant Bajracharya

1.0 Case Context

Nepal, a nation boasting rich cultural and natural heritage, holds significant potential for heritage tourism, capable of contributing substantially to the country's economy through promotion and preservation. Heritage tourism, focusing on the history, culture, and heritage of a destination, necessitates sustainable practices to ensure its continued growth and popularity. Best Heritage Tours, a tour company dedicated to sustainability, plays a pivotal role in promoting heritage tourism in Nepal. The company, founded with the objective of providing an outstanding heritage sightseeing experience while prioritizing sustainability, offers diverse tours and activities, such as mountain biking, jungle tours, and photography tours.

The success of Best Heritage Tours in implementing sustainable practices sets an example for the wider hospitality industry. The company's commitment to preserving and promoting cultural and natural heritage aligns with the growing importance of sustainable tourism. Measures to reduce environmental impact, support local communities, and contribute to heritage preservation further solidify its position as a responsible tourism operator.

Best Heritage Tours, with the tagline "Best, Comfort, and Luxury Tour Operator," distinguishes itself by providing exceptional services while preserving the cultural and natural heritage of Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. The company offers traditional heritage and adventure tours, including biking and trekking, along with homestays and customized heritage trails. This diverse range of offerings ensures guests have an unforgettable experience while adhering to sustainability and responsible tourism practices.

The target market for Best Heritage Tours encompasses individuals and groups interested in exploring historical, cultural, and adventurous aspects of destinations. Tailoring tour packages to cater to diverse groups, including senior travelers, educational groups, and family travelers, the company aims to attract those who appreciate learning about different cultures and traditions.

Best Heritage Tours operates with a hierarchical organizational structure, led by a Managing Director overseeing various departments such as Operations, Sales and Marketing, Accounting and Finance, and Customer Service. The experienced

management team ensures a strong focus on sustainable tourism practices and customer service, while trained tour guides contribute to an exceptional guest experience.

The cost structure involves operating costs, employee salaries, marketing, transportation, accommodation, and tour guide fees. Revenue streams include tour packages, customized tours, photography tours, adventure tours, homestays, and referrals, reflecting a comprehensive business model.

Awards and accolades, partnerships, social responsibility initiatives, technological integration, and a commitment to safety and security contribute to Best Heritage Tours' prominence in the industry. The company's emphasis on sustainable practices, community development, and leveraging technology underscores its dedication to providing a holistic and responsible tourism experience in Nepal and beyond.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Best Heritage Tours, a sustainable heritage tour company based in Kathmandu, Nepal, is dedicated to promoting and preserving the cultural and natural heritage of Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. The company offers various services, including traditional heritage tours, adventure tours, photography tours, homestays, and customized heritage trails. Targeting individuals and groups interested in historical, cultural, and adventurous experiences, Best Heritage Tours operates with a hierarchical organizational structure led by a Managing Director, supported by experienced professionals in the tourism industry.

The new initiative/business focuses on sustainable tourism, capitalizing on the growing trend and demand for eco-friendly and responsible travel experiences. The strengths of the initiative lie in its alignment with sustainability, potential positive publicity, attraction of environmentally conscious customers, and cost savings through sustainable practices. However, challenges include higher initial costs, competition from larger companies, communication hurdles with customers less familiar with sustainability, and regulatory limitations.

Meso and macro trends impacting the initiative encompass climate change, globalization, technological advances, social awareness, policy changes, changing consumer preferences, and economic factors. These trends offer both challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism, with increased emphasis on responsible practices, authentic experiences, and environmental conservation.

The implementation of the sustainable tourism initiative involves extensive research, development of policies, collaboration with stakeholders, education and awareness programs, assessment and certification, sustainable infrastructure

development, marketing, and continuous improvement. Stakeholders crucial for the initiative include investors, local communities, the tourism industry, government agencies, NGOs, academia, and visitors.

Beneficiaries of the initiative include tourists, local communities, the environment, the tourism industry, and the government. Partnerships with local communities, government agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and academia contribute to the initiative's success.

Financing for the initiative can come from private investment, crowdfunding, government grants, loans, donations, partnerships, and sustainable tourism certification programs. The initiative's human resources include project managers, sustainability experts, marketing specialists, community outreach specialists, tour guides, trained staff, and IT specialists.

Communication channels used for marketing and informing stakeholders include social media, websites, email, events, press releases, media outreach, and partnerships. A diverse range of communication channels ensures effective engagement with the target market(s) and stakeholders.

In summary, Best Heritage Tours' sustainable tourism initiative is a comprehensive approach to promoting responsible travel experiences in Nepal and neighbouring regions. The company's commitment to sustainability, collaboration with stakeholders, and strategic communication contribute to its success in the dynamic tourism industry.

3.0 Impact

The new initiative/business on sustainable tourism has significant positive impacts on customers, stakeholders, the environment, and the involved organization, Best Heritage Tours.

For customers, the initiative offers authentic experiences, allowing them to immerse themselves in local cultures and traditions. It contributes to environmental conservation by protecting natural resources like wildlife, forests, and waterways. Additionally, sustainable tourism supports local communities by creating jobs and economic opportunities, providing customers with a sense of fulfillment knowing their travel choices positively impact local businesses. Moreover, the initiative offers educational opportunities, enhancing travelers' awareness and understanding of sustainable tourism practices.

Stakeholders, depending on their involvement and interest, experience varied impacts. Local communities benefit from increased economic opportunities and improved infrastructure, leading to enhanced living standards. Governments, NGOs, and environmental groups see positive impacts through the promotion of sustainable practices and protection of natural resources. However, responsible implementation is crucial to avoid negative consequences, such as ecosystem degradation and harm to local communities. Stakeholder engagement throughout the implementation process ensures concerns are addressed, and the initiative remains responsible and sustainable.

The impact on the environment is significant, given the initiative's focus on promoting sustainable practices. The reduction of waste, energy conservation, and minimal water usage contribute to mitigating the negative environmental effects of tourism. Tourists are encouraged to participate in eco-friendly activities and support conservation efforts, further promoting environmental responsibility. Protection of local ecosystems, reduction in carbon emissions through sustainable transport, and the use of renewable energy sources positively impact climate change and biodiversity.

For Best Heritage Tours, the organization implementing the initiative, there are financial benefits in the long run. Cost savings result from energy efficiency and waste reduction, while increased revenue comes from customers willing to pay more for sustainable services. Sustainability initiatives also contribute to attracting and retaining motivated employees. However, challenges include the initial investment in time and resources, requiring changes in processes, employee training, and adoption of new technologies. The complex nature of the tourism industry and the need for collaboration with various stakeholders pose additional challenges.

The Center of Excellence (CoE), representing the organisational entity, can experience a shift in brand perception, becoming recognized as a leader in sustainable tourism practices. This can lead to increased customer loyalty, positive media coverage, and improved relationships with partners and suppliers. While investments in new technologies, training, and resources are required, the long-term benefits include reduced operating costs, increased efficiency, and improved sustainability performance. An increase in demand for sustainable tourism products and services can create new business opportunities and revenue streams for the CoE. The overall impact is contingent on the successful implementation and communication of sustainable tourism practices by the organisation.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the implementation of the sustainable tourism initiative has seen notable success through effective partnerships, a strong focus on sustainability, and a commitment to training and evaluation. However, there are opportunities for improvement, particularly in transparent financing communication, the development of a more comprehensive communication strategy, and the implementation of robust impact measurement and reporting mechanisms. Addressing these areas will not only enhance the initiative's effectiveness but also strengthen its credibility and engagement with stakeholders.

CASE STUDY 26

Heritage Kandalama Where Sustainability Blooms

M.Y. Sasanki and R.S.S.W. Arachchi

1.0 Case Context

Heritage Kandalama is a shining example of sustainable luxury which is considered one of the most unique and eco-friendly hotels located in Dambulla, Sri Lanka. The five-star hotel was established in 1994 and designed by renowned architect Geoffrey Bawa. Their services can be categorized as Accommodation, Dining, Spa, Leisure Activities, Business Facilities, Weddings and Events. In addition to the general services offered by the Kandalama, the hotel continued to preserve the rich flora and fauna that surrounds it by maintaining 211 acres of land adjacent to the thoughtfully designed hotel building as a conservation forest creating a rich base habitat endemic to the area. The hotel building takes up only 8 acres of the 200-acre property which are used for research purposes as well as guided nature tours for guests. It includes an eco-park that acts as a wildlife orphanage and rehabilitation centre for injured animals, compost fertilizer pits, solid waste recycling plants, wastewater recycling and an herbal garden. Further, the hotel is carrying out a community tree-planting campaign. The hotel targets Eco-tourists, Cultural tourists, and Luxury and Experienced-based tourists who seek authentic nature and cultural experiences as their market. The property is managed by the Aitken Spence Corporate Head Office. Their vision is to be the global leader in sustainable tourism, attracting intelligent stakeholders seeking high-quality eco-luxury experiences. The mission is centred on delighting all stakeholders through world-class business ethics, continuous improvement, and the development of human assets. The diverse revenue streams include room revenue, food and beverage services, excursions, the promotion of cultural tours and ancillary services, reflecting high-quality and environmentally conscious hospitality experiences. There are sustainable practices in its operations, including Water Conservation, Energy Efficiency, Waste Reduction, Local Sourcing and Community Engagement. Heritage Kandalama Hotel has received numerous awards and certifications, including the Travel Life Gold Certification, Green Globe Certification, ISO 2200: 2018 certification, ISO 14000: 2015 certification, ISO 50001: 2011 Certification, LEED certification and the National Energy Efficiency Award.

In 2023, Kandalama won the leading designer hotel and eco-friendly resort in South Asia Travel Awards and Travelers Choice and Review award.

Kandalama is the first LEED-certified green hotel in Asia (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certified by the United States Green Building Council).

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Heritage Kandalama is developing short excursions to community areas and villages, providing an authentic rural life experience. These excursions comprise as packages and include activities such as cycling to villages, cultural awareness programs, authentic food experiences, nature walks, bird watching, and water-based activities. The establishment is also expanding its offerings to include agriculture-based and organic products such as organic fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, tea, and rice sourced from local farmers, enhancing the overall guest experience. In terms of architectural and environmental sustainability practices, the hotel focuses on building orientation and natural lighting, incorporating a natural rock pool that utilizes natural rock elements for pool edging with natural filtration systems. Notably, the implementation of “Kalawel” - Living Walls not only improves air quality but also enhances aesthetic appeal. Furthermore, a Biomass Gasification Plant System is employed for hot water, contributing to a reduction in non-regeneration fuel usage.

The external analysis highlights the increasing consumer demand for eco-aware tourism, catering to the growing desire for experiential travel. On a macro scale, there is a growing awareness of climate change, leading to an emphasis on sustainability and a strict regulatory environment for waste management and water usage, along with partnerships to fortify sustainability initiatives and technological advancements. Internally, the hotel's strengths lie in eco-friendly construction and environmental conservation initiatives. However, challenges such as high energy consumption, workforce shortages due to migration, and seasonal variations affecting operations and occupancy rates are acknowledged as weaknesses. Stakeholders involved in these activities include hotel management, staff, guests, local communities, shareholders, suppliers, government bodies, regulatory bodies, NGOs, industry associations, media, and online platforms. Partnerships are encouraged by local communities, NGOs, universities, banks, investors, government organizations, and industry associations to collectively advance sustainability goals.

Heritage Kandalama contributes a portion of its operating budget to the funding of eco-friendly travel initiatives. Some sustainable tourism initiatives may result in long-term financial gains or cost reductions. For instance, spending money on energy-efficient technology can eventually result in lower utility expenses. The hotel creates a reserve or

fund that is specially designated for funding eco-friendly tourism initiatives. In addition, it is looking to collaborate or sponsor outside businesses or groups who have a similar interest in sustainability

3.0 Impact

The target market is comprised of visitors engaging in distinctive, eco-friendly activities. Employees stand to benefit from a positive work environment, skill development, and a sense of pride. Local communities experience economic and social gains, while authorities witness ethical corporate conduct aligning with environmental policies. The impact on the environment is great, as conservation efforts contribute to biodiversity preservation, reduction in carbon emissions, water conservation, and improved air quality. Waste management practices follow the 7R concept, minimizing pollution and environmental impact. For the company, there is a considerable increase in reputation and a competitive edge that attracts environmentally concerned tourists.

Heritance Kandalama's dedication to sustainability contributes to the development of a powerful and favourable brand image. The hotel has gained a reputation as a responsible and environmentally concerned enterprise, drawing eco-tourists and environmentally conscious visitors. Heritance Kandalama stands out from rivals in the hospitality sector thanks to its sustainable business methods. Being a leader in sustainable tourism can provide the hotel with a competitive edge and draw in a particular clientele of eco-aware tourists. Further, the hotel takes actions to minimize the legal and reputational risks connected with non-compliance with environmental standards by using sustainable practices that lessen its environmental effects. The sustainable business strategies help ensure the company's long-term success. The hotel assures a sustainable future for both itself and the area it serves by protecting the environment and helping the local community. People are more inclined to join and stay with an organization that shares their beliefs. The hotel's sustainability initiatives foster a healthy work atmosphere and can aid in luring and keeping competent workers who care about the environment.

Positive experiences not only enhance customer loyalty but also lower risks, ensuring long-term survival. The commitment to sustainability strengthens talent attraction and retention. The impact on the Center of Excellence (CoE) is significant, as collaborative opportunities with Heritance Kandalama elevate the CoE's role in providing sustainable tourism training. Students benefit from internships and job opportunities, gaining industry exposure. Partnerships with businesses and academia to further support sustainable tourism initiatives.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

In the post-pandemic era, there has been a noticeable increase in interest in sustainable tourism, which is being pushed by tourists who want to leave as little of an environmental impact as possible. This includes local communities, businesses, and cultures in addition to the environment. The desire of tourists to take an active role in conservation is reflected in the rise of ecotourism. The Kandalama Hotel's eco-friendly policies put it in a position to benefit from this trend, offering great prospects to take the next travel market and establish itself as one of the world's leading eco-resorts.

CASE STUDY 27

Loris Conservation at Jetwing Vil Uyana

G.A.K. Hasanga and W.K.A.C. Gnanapala

1.0 Case Context

Jetwing Vil Uyana is a renowned eco-luxury resort situated in Sigiriya, Sri Lanka. Established in 2006, the resort stands as a testament to sustainable tourism, seamlessly blending luxury with environmental conservation. The vision of Jetwing Vil Uyana is to create a harmonious retreat where guests experience the epitome of luxury while actively contributing to wildlife preservation. Their mission is to provide guests with unparalleled luxury experiences while actively engaging in wildlife conservation, community empowerment, and sustainable practices.

The resort offers eco-luxury accommodations, wildlife-centric experiences, and actively supports conservation projects such as the Loris Conservation Project. It caters to environmentally conscious travelers, wildlife enthusiasts, and those seeking luxury experiences aligned with sustainable values. Led by a team committed to sustainability, the resort operates under the broader Jetwing Hotels brand, known for its eco-friendly approach to hospitality. The resort generates revenue through accommodation bookings, wildlife tours, and various eco-friendly initiatives, contributing to both luxury and sustainability.

Sri Lanka's tourism sector is vital to its economy, and the region around Sigiriya is a hub for cultural and wildlife tourism. Jetwing Vil Uyana plays a pivotal role in shaping sustainable tourism practices in this context. The tourism industry in Sri Lanka has been evolving, with a growing emphasis on sustainable and responsible tourism. Jetwing Vil Uyana, through its innovative approaches, contributes to shaping this landscape. Jetwing Vil Uyana's commitment to sustainability, luxurious offerings, and active involvement in conservation projects positions it as a leader in redefining the narrative of responsible tourism in the region.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Jetwing Vil Uyana's Loris Conservation Project addresses the challenge of integrating sustainable wildlife tourism into a luxury resort setting while actively contributing to the conservation of the endangered slender loris and its habitat.

The Loris Conservation Project focuses on sustainable wildlife tourism by offering eco-friendly nocturnal tours, environmental education, and community collaboration. The project involves habitat restoration, scientific research, community outreach, and wildlife rescue and rehabilitation.

Habitat Restoration and Preservation create a suitable environment for the loris population. This includes reforestation and conserving native vegetation, ensuring the loris has adequate food sources and shelter to thrive. Supported scientific research and monitoring programs to better understand the behavior and ecology of the loris. Conducting community outreach and educational programs to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the loris and its habitat which fosters a sense of stewardship and encourages sustainable practices among residents. Sustainable tourism practices like energy-efficient measures, waste reduction, and promoting responsible guest behavior to avoid disturbing wildlife, including the loris. Establishing wildlife corridors that connect fragmented habitats, allowing the loris and other wildlife to move freely between different areas. This initiative aids in maintaining genetic diversity and population sustainability. Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation to provide necessary care and support for injured or distressed lorises, making sure that affected lorises receive appropriate treatment and can be released back into the wild if possible.

The project deliverables include eco-friendly nocturnal tours, educational programs, sustainable accommodations, research insights, wildlife corridors, and engaging with local communities to promote eco-friendly practices and support sustainable tourism.

The loris conservation initiative at Jetwing Vil Uyana involves a diverse range of stakeholders with varying levels of interest and influence. The local community is highly interested and influential due to economic benefits. Environmental NGOs offer conservation expertise. Tourists indirectly influence the initiative through eco-friendly preferences. Government authorities shape policies. Resort management and staff control daily operations. Wildlife researchers are interested but have low influence. Media has a moderate role. Local businesses, competitors, investors, and shareholders have varying degrees of interest and influence on sustainability efforts.

These Sustainable Tourism Initiatives embody a powerful collaborative effort, uniting diverse stakeholders to champion responsible and environmentally conscious tourism practices. Through this collective endeavour, a profound ripple effect of positive change is set in motion. By fostering an understanding among tourists about the crucial need for loris conservation, these initiatives serve as educational platforms that inspire a deeper connection with the local ecosystems.

This movement in Sri Lanka focuses on preserving its rich biodiversity through sustainable travel and ethical guidelines. Travelers play a crucial role in conservation by choosing responsible options and gaining insights into the delicate ecosystem. Supporting local businesses with sustainable practices helps boost the economy while minimizing ecological harm. Community involvement, exemplified by collaboration between villages like Sigiriya, Kandalama, and Kimbissa with Jetwing Vil Uyana, promotes empowerment and economic growth. These initiatives create an interconnected network that harmonizes tourism, conservation, and community well-being, fostering a holistic approach to responsible travel in Sri Lanka.

3.0 Impact

Socially, local communities benefit through employment opportunities, community engagement, and awareness programs. Collaborations with conservation organizations and educational initiatives provide a platform for stakeholders to actively participate in wildlife preservation. Culturally, the project enhances appreciation for Sri Lanka's rich biodiversity, particularly the endangered slender loris. It fosters a culture of environmental stewardship, aligning with the nation's commitment to sustainable tourism and conservation.

Economically, the initiative generates employment for guides, researchers, and support staff, contributing to the livelihoods of local communities. The resort's differentiation in the eco-luxury market attracts environmentally conscious tourists, positively impacting the region's tourism economy.

Environmental impacts include habitat restoration, wildlife corridors, and reduced human-wildlife conflict. The project aligns with global and national conservation goals, contributing to the preservation of endangered species and their ecosystems.

The Centre of Excellence (CoE), experiences positive impacts through collaborative research, habitat restoration, and community outreach. The CoE becomes a knowledge-sharing platform, influencing regional and international conservation discussions.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The Loris Conservation Project at Jetwing Vil Uyana is a commendable effort showcasing the resort's commitment to wildlife preservation and sustainability. Success is attributed to creating a suitable habitat, involving staff and guests in conservation, and

collaborating with experts and local communities. However, opportunities for improvement exist, such as enhancing monitoring and research efforts for better conservation strategies. Expanding outreach and education programs for guests and the community could also create a network of passionate advocates for long-term wildlife preservation beyond the resort's boundaries.

Jetwing Vil Uyana's loris conservation initiative offers a replicable model for safeguarding endangered slender lorises. Key elements include creating diverse habitats, like wetlands and forests, and establishing wildlife corridors to promote genetic diversity. Community engagement fosters local support, and collaborations with researchers and conservation organizations enhance knowledge sharing. Moreover, the resort's sustainable practices, such as green building and responsible waste management, set a valuable example for eco-luxury properties looking to contribute to wildlife preservation. By replicating these strategies in other regions, we can work towards the conservation of slender lorises and their fragile ecosystems.

CASE STUDY 28

Walawe Nadee: Sustainable River Safari

W.H. Yatharthi and C.N.R. Wijesundara

1.0 Case Context

“Walawe Jungle River Safari” is the name given to a river safari, which has been originated by a community-based organization called “Walawe Nadee Eco-tourism Organization”. The project locates in Ambalantota, which is in the Hambantota district, Southern province of Sri Lanka. This spectacular river safari starts from Ambalantota and the visitors/tourists are taken down the famous “Walawe River” in a motor-boat up to the Godawaya beach, which is known as the ancient seaport of Hambantota, a distance of the journey around 2.5 km (one way) and then bring back to the starting point. It is one of the liveliest experiences to any nature-lover and specially to those who are interested in bird watching. Since this amazing boat ride running down along the green scenic route, travellers can enjoy the nature and wild life (specially birds) during the journey. The Walawa jungle river safari popular among locals and tourists will take them through a rich biodiversity area complete with six varieties of mangroves, 52 fish species, 72 bird species, 38 plant varieties and 28 animal species. Recognized for its biodiversity, scenic landscapes, and cultural immersion, the trip offers a cherished experience for both individuals and groups. This sustainable tourism initiation works for the vision of ‘Keep the nature better for everyone, while offering the real jungle river safari thrill’ and mission for ‘Offer a wide range of well-planned sustainable offerings to the prospective eco-minded travellers, while generating positive impacts to the local community and safeguard the nature’. This foundation fosters sustainable tourism, empowering the local community through inclusive decision-making and generating revenue from boat safaris for a holistic visitor experience.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Walawe river safari offers a unique boat safari proceed by a community group and they awarded for this program as the best community-based tourism project in Sri Lanka. This boat excursion on the Walawe River will be treasured. As travelers travel down this magnificent river, they will experience a once-in-a-lifetime voyage; listen to the peacocks calling from their roost, cormorants extend their wings to dry, white-bellied sea eagles soar overhead, and curious langur monkeys peer through the trees, water

buffalo paddling along, huge crocodiles peering out of the water, trees full of sleeping bats, etc.

Night camping on the beach offers a sustainable and thrilling lodging experience, blending nature's tranquility with the soothing crash of waves. Picture yourself on the sandy shore, under the vast Indian Ocean and starry night sky. Setting up camp allows a unique connection with nature, pitching tents in the soft sand for a cozy refuge. A bonfire adds warmth and a focal point for gathering. To promote inclusivity, the objective is to structure offerings accessible to all tourists. Beach camping encourages outdoor activities, fostering a connection with nature, relaxation, and engagement in beach-related recreation. It provides an escape from city life, allowing individuals and families to enjoy sunrises, sunsets, and create lasting memories. Beyond fun, beach camping offers solitude for self-reflection, promoting inner peace amid nature. Emphasizing environmental awareness, campers are urged to protect coastal habitats and adopt sustainable practices. The overarching goal is to provide an immersive, sustainable outdoor experience for relaxation and appreciation of the beach's unique beauty.

Beach camping's surge in popularity aligns with heightened environmental awareness, as campers adopt eco-friendly practices. Walawe Jungle Safari Operators can capitalize on this trend, offering diverse leisure activities and equipment rental. The camping project addresses the need for digital detox, catering to society's concern. Post-pandemic, the demand for beach camping has risen, driven by a desire for outdoor experiences and nature-focused activities while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Walawe Jungle River Safari's strengths in the Beach Camping project lie in local expertise, enhancing visitor experiences, cultural preservation, sustainable development, and community ownership. However, limited financial resources, coordination challenges, and a lack of professional skills pose potential weaknesses for community-based tourism initiatives.

3.0 Impact

Beach camping offers a serene experience with natural beauty and diverse activities, fostering a community of outdoor enthusiasts. For stakeholders, it brings economic benefits, boosting local businesses and promoting regional tourism development. The emphasis on sustainable practices contributes to environmental conservation, safeguarding coastal ecosystems. Furthermore, beach camping encourages

longer stays, promoting slow tourism and increasing the economic impact on destinations.

Beach camping enhances community engagement by fostering social interactions and cultural exchange. The camping project prompts infrastructure development, benefiting both the industry and the broader community. For the company, it brings diversification and strengthens community ties. The Community-based Eco-tourism organization experiences increased economic capacity and improved community spirit through the integration of beach camping, contributing to sustainable business growth.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

In general, the term “beach camping” refers to the action of erecting a campsite on or near a beach, where people or groups spend the night or a considerable amount of time. Depending on the geography and the cultural context, beach camping might imply different things to different local communities. Camping is typically done on sand beaches or in approved places along the coast. For many coastal communities, beach camping is a popular recreational activity that allows people to enjoy the natural beauty of the beach environment, experience outdoor living, and engage in various beach-related activities. It provides an opportunity to relax, unwind, and connect with nature. Beach camping often includes activities such as swimming, sunbathing, beach games, picnicking, fishing, hiking, and stargazing. In general, for the “Walawe People” beach camping refers to the act of maintaining a temporary camp construction along the coast. To the local population, this practise has several implications, including recreation, a sense of connection to nature, and potential economic advantages.

CASE STUDY 29

Wild Glamping Gal Oya: Beacon of Responsible Luxury Camping

W.R.A.K.K. Ranasinghe and J.A.R.C. Sandaruwani

1.0 Case Context

Wild Glamping Gal Oya (WGGO), under Thema Collection provides ‘responsible luxury’ through its award-winning ecotourism project near Gal Oya National Park in Sri Lanka. WGGO combines sustainable architectural practices with a commitment to the principles of people, planet, and profit. As a beacon of responsible luxury, WGGO aims to inspire change by fostering meaningful connections between guests and the Rathugala Vedda community (Aboriginal community).

The WGGO outlined their vision as ‘to be a beacon of responsible luxury, where nature and culture intertwine seamlessly. They aspire to be a catalyst for change, inspiring the world with our unique blend of eco-conscious hospitality and community-driven initiatives by fostering meaningful connections between the guests and the Veddah community. They envision a future where Wild Glamping Gal Oya serves as a model for sustainable tourism, showcases the resilience of indigenous traditions, and contributes significantly to the conservation of nature’.

At Wild Glamping Gal Oya, they are committed to creating an extraordinary eco-friendly heaven that celebrates the pristine beauty of the Gal Oya region while empowering and uplifting the underprivileged local communities. Therefore, their mission is to provide an exceptional, sustainable, and culturally enriching glamping experience that harmonizes with nature, supports community development, and leaves a positive, lasting impact on both our guests and the local ecosystem.

The site offers luxury camps while providing comfort and a connection to the nature. The diverse range of activities includes safari tours, trekking, excursions to nearby attractions, and unique experiences like authentic food. WGGO caters to nature enthusiasts, adventure seekers, eco-conscious travellers, culture explorers, and those seeking sustainable experiences. The organization operates with a team of 34 highly skilled butlers, with 80% recruited from the Vedda community, emphasizing community involvement. WGGO’s revenue streams include accommodation, tours, recreational activities, farm produce sales and eco-friendly merchandise. Recognized with the Green Building Platinum Award, WGGO stands as a model of sustainable hospitality, promoting green design, renewable energy, organic farming, and water conservation.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

WGGO confronts the challenge of fostering environmentally conscious tourism while protecting the Gal Oya National Park. Their goal is to provide a distinctive and immersive glamping experience that immerses visitors in nature while having the least possible negative effects on the ecology. This challenge encompasses a variety of topics, such as lowering the use of single-use plastics, effectively managing waste, and using solar power to conserve energy. They also focus on empowering and supporting the local indigenous community, the Veddas, by employing them and involving them in their operation farming practices at the organic farm. The site encourages ecotourism while helping guests to develop a greater understanding of the environment and local culture by involving guests in a variety of activities, such as trekking to the lost monastery of Rajagala or engaging in a boat safari to observe swimming elephants at Gal Oya. In this way, WGGO tackles the issue of sustainable tourism by making sure that visitors have a memorable time while protecting the area's natural assets.

WGGO is dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism practices and has implemented several initiatives to face this challenge. The facility's efforts to reduce single-use plastics, promote the use of eco-friendly materials, and apply sustainable design and construction methods demonstrate its commitment to minimizing its negative environmental effects. WGGO was recognized as the first hotel in the hospitality industry to receive a Green Building Council Platinum Rating. The site was built with natural resources including Clay, Illuk grass, Earth bricks, and Cajan leaves to reduce its impact on the environment.

The property's emphasis on organic farming methods at its organic farm displays its commitment to sustaining food production and helping the neighbourhood. The site gives back to the surrounding by hiring the Veddas, the native people who live in the Rathugala the village and provide visitors the chance to learn about unique farming methods. Also, WGGO exemplifies its commitment to sustainability through various initiatives. They are committed to conserving biodiversity through research and educational initiatives, as evidenced by their participation in the Bio-diversity Educational Research Initiative (BERI). The site supports environmental education, appropriately manages waste, and utilizes solar electricity. By providing distinctive and ethical tourist experiences including boat safaris and hikes to historical places, the area's beauty is highlighted while respecting its rich cultural history. The site is an outstanding example of eco-friendly and community-driven tourism since it places a strong emphasis on hiring members of indigenous communities, which promotes sustainable development and strengthens the local community.

WGGO shows strengths such as eco-friendly infrastructure and unique excursions but faces challenges like a remote location and limited on-site facilities. To enhance market reach and awareness, addressing these weaknesses is crucial. The lodge's activities encompass waste management, nature trails, and cultural engagement, contributing to environmental conservation and community development. Stakeholders, including the local community, indigenous Veddas, guests, and NGOs, play vital roles as beneficiaries and advocates.

The lodge collaborates with the Vedda community, NGOs, local businesses, and travel agencies, forming a network of partners for sustainable development. Financed by a significant investment from Thema collection, WGGO demonstrates a commitment to responsible tourism. Human resources include community engagement specialists, sustainability experts, and conservationists, crucial for integrating sustainability successfully.

Communication channels include a website, social media, email newsletters, and collaborations with travel agencies. WGGO actively participates in conferences and industry events, showcasing its sustainability initiatives. This approach aligns with the lodge's vision of being a model for sustainable tourism. Overall, WGGO stands as an ideal place of responsible luxury, harmonizing nature, culture, and community through its unique and eco-conscious hospitality.

3.0 Impact

WGGO profoundly impacts its target market, stakeholders, company, and the environment. Guests enjoy a visually stunning and sustainable retreat, engaging in activities that offer a true sense of sustainability. The Vedda community can improve their living standards and economic growth. Employees seek fulfilling work experiences aligned with social and environmental values, enhancing WGGO's competitiveness in the talent market. Suppliers are motivated to adopt sustainable practices. NGOs discover collaboration potential, opening avenues for partnerships and funding. The government benefits as WGGO aligns with sustainable tourism objectives. Environmentally, WGGO's initiatives contribute to preserving the local ecosystem. The company achieves cost savings and positively impacts surrounding communities. As a Center of Excellence (CoE), WGGO serves as a model, fostering university-industry collaboration and innovation in sustainable tourism.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

WGGO's sustainable practices highlighted Vedda community contribution for the operation, eco-friendly construction, reducing impact while elevating guest experience. Also, the areas for improvement include enhancing marketing efforts to increase awareness, strengthening collaborations with stakeholders, and maintaining adaptability to emerging sustainable practices and technological advancements. Continuous monitoring ensures alignment with sustainable goals. WGGO pioneers eco-conscious luxury and cultural vibrancy, leaving a legacy of stewardship in the wilderness.

CASE STUDY 30

Heeloya Village: Community-based Sustainable Tourism Heaven

R.A.V. Lakshan and G.V.H. Dinusha

1.0 Case Context

Tucked away in Sri Lanka's enchanting Kandy District, Heeloya Village stands as an embodiment of idyllic charm amidst nature's splendor. This serene hamlet, nestled amidst verdant forests, meandering rivers, and cascading waterfalls, beckons travelers to a haven of tranquility and authentic Sri Lankan life.

Named after the serene river Sihil Oya, Heeloya is a picturesque escape, where nature's beauty intertwines with a vibrant cultural heritage. With a backdrop of the Knuckles Mountain Range, it invites nature lovers to explore its mesmerizing trails and breath-taking vistas. For history enthusiasts, this village is a treasure trove, revealing the clandestine refuge of King Sri Wikrama Rajasinha and ancient agricultural marvels like the "Gal Kamath" stone rice mill and the historic irrigation system, "Wee Atuwa."

What truly distinguishes Heeloya is its commitment to community-based tourism. Homestays with local families provide an immersive experience, showcasing Sri Lankan warmth, cultural richness, and culinary delights rooted in tradition.

Catering to backpackers, hikers, cultural enthusiasts, and volunteers, Heeloya Village invites those seeking an authentic escape. Its organizational structure, led by a community-founded tourism group With a transparent revenue model, tourists enjoy affordable homestays and guided tracking tours, ensuring mutual benefits between visitors and the 256 families that call Heeloya home.

Heeloya Village aspires to be a beacon of sustainable rural development, aiming to set a benchmark for transformation through tourism. Its breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural tapestry, and community-driven initiatives epitomize the harmonious coexistence of nature, culture, and responsible travel, welcoming all to embrace the charm of authentic Sri Lankan life.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

The Heeloya Village Sustainable Tourism Project is a community-led initiative that aims to promote sustainable tourism in the village. The project will focus on conservation, community engagement, and authentic and sustainable guest experiences. The project will work to conserve the natural environment of the village, including its

forests, rivers, and wildlife. It will also engage the local community in the development and implementation of sustainable tourism practices. The project creates exceptional guest experiences that promote environmental stewardship and connect visitors with the local culture. The project has the potential to be a successful and sustainable venture. These excursions are thoughtfully designed to minimize negative impacts on the environment while engaging with the local community in a respectful and responsible manner.

Heeloya Village promotes eco-friendly homestays, conservation initiatives, and local support to promote sustainable tourism. Their mission is to support the local community and preserve the environment by providing one-of-a-kind, eco-friendly experiences.

Travelers get the chance to stay with a local family and to experience Sri Lankan hospitality and a way of life first-hand. The homestays give visitors the chance to experience local cuisine, discover traditional culinary techniques, and take part in cultural events and everyday activities. It is a wonderful location to unwind and take in the silence where tourists can enjoy a sense of tranquillity that is difficult to find in other areas of Sri Lanka because the community is largely unspoiled by tourism.

Rainwater collection is an essential technique, to collect rainwater from their roofs, they built tanks and gutters. Villagers use this water for their day-to-day consumption. Particularly in Sri Lanka's dry climate, it helps people conserve water. Another essential method used in Heeloya Village is composting. They create compost from leftover food and yard trash, which they then use to improve their paddy fields. Reducing waste and improving soil quality are two benefits of composting. Along with these actions, the villagers also cultivate their own food and recycle and reuse materials. They collaborate to address issues and have a strong sense of community.

External factors influencing the project include favorable government policies but face challenges due to economic instability. The village's rich culture and natural beauty are assets, but infrastructural limitations hinder accessibility. Key activities involve feasibility analysis, strategy development, partnerships, eco-awareness initiatives, sustainable actions, and continuous evaluation.

Stakeholders like local communities, government bodies, tourism enterprises, environmental organizations, and tourists influence and benefit from the initiative. Collaborations with residents, government, travel companies, and environmental groups are vital for success.

Finances rely on tourism contributions distributed among villagers, while human resources are developing through training programs. Communication primarily relies on tourism organizations, and governmental, and industry bodies for outreach.

Communication channels like tourism management organizations and word-of-mouth promote Heeloya Village as a unique travel destination. The initiative strives to educate tourists and locals about its sustainable practices through PR campaigns and tourism-related organizations

3.0 Impact

The impact of the Heeloya Village project on its target market and stakeholders is transformative. It offers tourists authentic, life-changing experiences in sustainable practices and cultural heritage, altering travel preferences towards responsible tourism. The local community gains economic growth but faces potential cultural changes and infrastructural challenges. Tourism-related businesses benefit financially but may encounter issues related to excessive commercialization. Government bodies witness increased revenue but may face infrastructure stress.

Environmental impact highlights Heeloya Village's positive contributions, promoting responsible environmental behavior through organic farming, biodiversity support, and waste management. The project positively influences the company involved by enhancing its reputation, fostering partnerships, and attracting like-minded investors. Moreover, the Centre of Excellence (CoE) learned valuable lessons from this project, using it as a case study to promote sustainable tourism practices and foster collaboration within the industry. The Heeloya Village initiative signifies a transformative force, shaping responsible tourism while addressing challenges and opportunities for various stakeholders.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

Sustainability in tourism is a goal that the Heeloya Village Kandy has been aiming toward. They've taken part in community outreach as one of their initiatives. Early on in the planning and development of the tourism project, they included the village elders and locals. This has made it easier to guarantee that the project will be beneficial to the community as a whole and will be in line with its requirements and interests. The Heeloya Village in Kandy has also employed sustainable methods. They implement sustainable techniques into every facet of their tourism business, from the building of the lodgings to the disposal of waste. For instance, they construct their lodgings from recycled materials and use a composting system for food leftovers. As a result, the project's environmental impact is reduced, and the destination becomes more

environmentally friendly. However, areas such as marketing and monitoring need improvement. Enhancing promotional efforts and establishing a robust monitoring system could further boost tourism and ensure better sustainability performance. Addressing these areas will propel the village towards becoming a fully sustainable tourist destination.

CASE STUDY 31

CIC Agro Farm, Hingurakgoda, Sri Lanka: Icon of Sustainable Agriculture in Sri Lanka

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1.0 Case Context

Agro Tourism CIC Seed Farm, located in Windsorpark, Habarana Road, Hingurakgoda, was acquired by CIC in 1998. The farm spans 1,300 acres, with 700 acres under paddy cultivation during the Yala and Maha seasons. The Argo Farm in Hingurakgoda focuses on crop cultivation and experimentation, serving as a research and development center for agricultural practices. The farm uses modern techniques and technologies to optimize crop yields while minimizing environmental impact. The CIC Argo Farm aims to develop innovative farming methods to address challenges faced by Sri Lankan farmers, such as improving soil fertility, implementing efficient irrigation systems, adopting crop protection measures, and exploring advanced cultivation techniques. The farm plays a vital role in the agricultural sector of Sri Lanka by fostering innovation, conducting research, and promoting sustainable farming practices. Other seed farms in the area include Hingurakgoda, Palwehera, and Tawalama.

1.1 Vision

To be the most respected and admired corporate for the positive impact we make on society by nurturing the lives of those we touch.

1.2 Mission

Harnessing science and modern technology, we will provide solutions of superior quality which are efficient and safe. We will build rewarding and lasting relationships with our stakeholders and be a significant entity in every sector we operate.

The CIC agro farm is managed by the CIC Holdings PLC where top management oversees operations and strategic direction, while department heads/managers manage specific functions such as crop production, livestock management, research and development, sales and marketing, finance, human resources, and administration. Operations staff includes agronomists, farmers, field workers, livestock caretakers, irrigation specialists, and equipment operators.

Table 1: Products and Services Offered by CIC Agro Farm

Product or Service	Description
Seed Production and Distribution	Cultivate 10 popular varieties of paddy seeds and distribute high-quality seeds for a range of crops. They might create and provide hybrid seeds, enhanced varieties, or specialty seeds appropriate for the region.
Livestock and Poultry	The high yielding Murrah & Nili Ravi breeds of buffalo herd is maintained at the farm for milk production as well as breeding purposes. Currently, the Hingurakgoda farm has the best buffalo herd in the country and produce Sri Lanka’s best quality curd which is made under very hygienic conditions and sold in all reputed supermarkets. The farm is equipped with a milk processing center and a laboratory. The milking is fully mechanized.
Banana Cultivation	50 acres of banana plantation has been cultivated under high technology and modern agricultural methods, for export purpose. Special, modern sprinkler irrigation system has been introduced for irrigation and fustigation.
Plant Nursery	Maintains a plant nursery to supply quality planting materials to farmers and produces fruit plants like mango, orange, guava.
Commercial Vegetable Cultivation	Dry zone vegetables and most of the up-country vegetable are grown with incorporating modern agriculture practices and using appropriate technology. Latest introduced hybrid vegetable varieties and modern irrigation system like sprinkler and drip are used to improve the production and the productivity of the land.
Seed Processing	Have seed drying and seed processing Machines. The seed drying capacity is 1200 bushels per day and the seed processing capacity is 2000 bushels per day and maintains a high physical purity of seed paddy by using the processing machine.
Mango Cultivation	The first plants of a few varieties (specially Willard, Karthcolomban, Vellei Kolomban, Ambalavi and Neelum) which were planted in Sri Lanka, is in the Hingurakgoda farm. Hingurakgoda Willard, which is one of the popular mango varieties, was discovered at the Hingurakgoda Farm.
CIC Agri Resort	The CIC Agro Resort is situated in a 1380-acre, agriculture farm where the city dweller can experience serenity and can educate himself on agriculture, the beauty of the place and enjoy the surroundings. Seven air-conditioned Cabanas (including two family apartments) are now available. Including other several facilities such as an Open Restaurant surrounding cram and peacefully Garden to have your meals, a bar that offers a hedonistic range of cocktails, offers a range of rejuvenating concoctions to provide a burst of energy in style, also, a swimming pool.
Events	Auditorium -Meetings & Events B.B.Q Nights Wedding Hall
Entertainment	Bicycle Ride and Evening Walk Fishing Bird Watching Games at Windsor Park Day Outings

Source: Authors’ contribution

Research and development teams conduct experiments, trials, and studies to develop new agricultural technologies and improve crop varieties. Sales and marketing teams promote and sell the farm's products, while support functions ensure financial management, employee recruitment, administrative support, and compliance with regulations.

The target market for the CIC agro farm includes the farmers, wholesale buyers and distributors, retail consumers, livestock industry, export markets, agricultural research and development institutions, government tenders, and local and foreign tourists. The farm's organization and management hierarchy include top management, department heads/managers, operations staff, research and development team, sales and marketing team, and support functions.

The cost structure includes operational costs, infrastructure and equipment costs, input costs, research and development costs, and administrative and overhead costs. Revenue streams include crop sales, seed sales, livestock and poultry sales, research collaboration, training and consultancy services, and value-added products, including revenue from tourists.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

2.1 Sustainable tourism challenges

"CIC Farm," envisioned as a rustic haven for ecotourism and sustainable agriculture enthusiasts, faces several challenges in ensuring sustainable tourism practices. The success of such a venture hinge on addressing critical issues related to environmental stewardship, resource management, conservation efforts, community engagement, infrastructure development, and waste management.

One of the primary obstacles is the absence of adequate visitor facilities. The lack of restrooms, parking, seating areas, shade, and sanitary facilities diminishes the overall visitor experience, potentially deterring individuals interested in exploring the farm. Transportation within the farm becomes a challenge due to insufficient road facilities, limiting accessibility for guests. Furthermore, the farm lacks essential amenities like dining rooms, restaurants, fitness centers, spa facilities, and entertainment options, which are integral for providing a comprehensive and enjoyable visitor experience. Additionally, weak telecommunication facilities pose a hurdle in communication, limiting the connectivity of the farm to the outside world.

The farm's unique setting introduces risks associated with animal hazards during tourist experiences. Buffaloes, dogs, and rats may pose threats to visitor safety,

necessitating robust protective measures. In the event of crop damage, swift removal and replanting are imperative to maintain the farm's aesthetic appeal and agricultural functionality. Managing the farm's lake during the dry season presents another challenge. The difficulty in maintaining water levels raises concerns about the sustainability of the ecosystem and its impact on the overall farm experience. This emphasizes the need for strategic water management practices to ensure the lake's viability as a key attraction.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that combines environmental consciousness, community involvement, and strategic infrastructure development. Overcoming these obstacles will not only enhance the appeal of CIC Farm but also contribute to the promotion of sustainable tourism practices in the agricultural context.

2.2 Innovative business idea – CIC greeny package

Accordingly, CIC Agro Farm is embarking on a visionary journey to redefine the tourism experience with the introduction of an innovative ecotourism venture. This bold initiative aims to elevate sustainable travel offerings, taking a significant step beyond the traditional farm tour currently offered through the CIC Agro resort. The overarching goal is to revolutionize sustainable agro-tourism experiences, providing guests with a unique blend of luxury, sustainability, and immersive eco-adventure. Nestled against the picturesque backdrop of lush paddy fields, the CIC Agro resort is poised to introduce a new era of sustainable luxury. The key feature of this transformation is the crafting of cabanas from locally sourced and eco-friendly materials, setting the stage for an unparalleled guest experience.

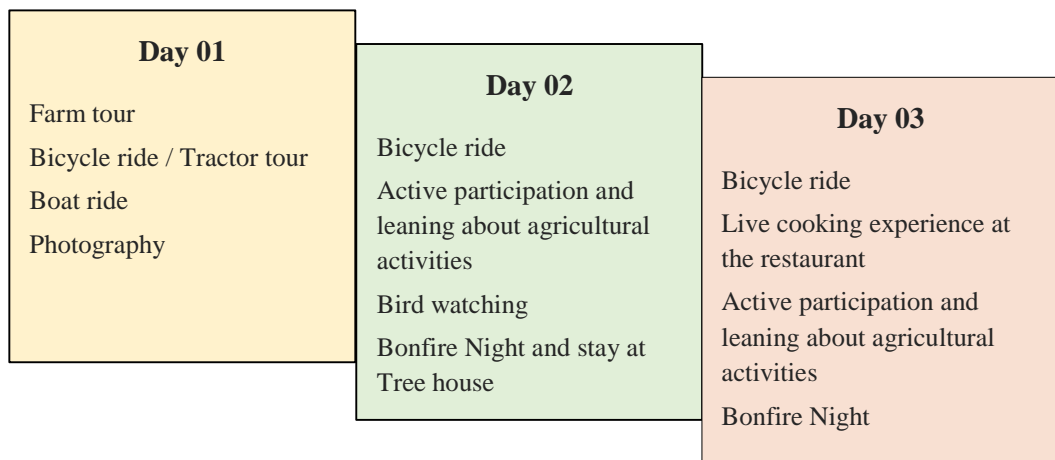
The heart of this innovative approach lies in the "CIC Greeny" package, designed to offer visitors a series of special experiences not provided by any other farm or hotel in Sri Lanka. The "CIC Greeny" package unfolds as an immersive journey that seamlessly integrates sustainable hospitality and eco-adventure. Encompassing a vast paddy area, the resort plans to construct several cabanas and tree houses using natural materials. This not only provides guests with unique accommodation but also aligns with the commitment to eco-friendly practices. Guests, as part of this exclusive package, are not only treated to a farm tour but also have the opportunity to spend a night in one of these thoughtfully crafted cabanas, adding a touch of eco-luxury to their stay.

Beyond the confines of traditional tours, the "CIC Greeny" package introduces a bicycle tour as a feature, allowing guests to explore the farm expanses in a sustainable manner. This commitment to sustainable transportation is further underscored by the inclusion of bicycles or tours with tractors, empowering guests to navigate the extensive

farm without compromising the integrity of the environment. The farm tour, a central component of the “CIC Greeny” package, offers a series of enriching activities meticulously curated to showcase the farm’s unwavering commitment to ecological conservation. The uniqueness of this package lies in the array of special activities organized for guests during the farm tour. These activities include a bicycle ride, a farm tour in a tractor, capturing the best photography moments around the farm, and a boat ride in the lotus flower tank. The lotus flower experience goes beyond mere observation, involving visitors in activities like plucking lotus flowers and creating various designs from lotus flowers and leaves.

Active participation and learning opportunities are woven into the fabric of the farm tour, allowing guests to delve into different sections of the farm. From dairy production and the machine yard to the tissue cultivation yard and the cultivation of various agricultural products, visitors gain firsthand insights into the diverse facets of sustainable agriculture. The “CIC Greeny” package also introduces bird watching, connecting guests with the rich biodiversity of the farm. Adding another layer to the guest experience, a restaurant is planned near the lotus tank, offering a live cooking experience using vegetables grown on the farm. This culinary adventure is designed to provide tourists with the opportunity to learn about the preparation of traditional Sri Lankan meals, cooked in wooden stoves and served in clayware, enhancing the authenticity of the experience.

Figure 1: “CIC Greeny” Package



Source: Authors' contribution

As the day turns into night, the “CIC Greeny” package extends its offerings with a bonfire night and an exclusive cabana experience, ensuring that guests have a diverse range of activities to enjoy during their three-day stay. To enhance safety and facilitate seamless participation in these activities, a guide is provided to guests.

The flexibility of the “CIC Greeny” package allows visitors to customize their experience based on their preferences, ensuring a tailored and memorable stay. Whether guests choose to stay for the suggested three days or extend their visit, the package aligns with the principles of ecotourism, emphasizing Leave No Trace ethics. This commitment ensures that guests not only have a memorable experience but also contribute to the delicate balance of the environment. This “CIC Greeny” package represents a transformative approach to ecotourism, combining sustainability, luxury, and immersive experiences to create a new standard for farm-based tourism in Sri Lanka. CIC Agro Farm’s commitment to innovation and ecological conservation shines through, offering guests a unique and unforgettable journey into the heart of sustainable agro-tourism.

2.2.1 Activities

CIC Agro Farm’s foray into sustainable agro-tourism centers on four strategic pillars: employee training, the creation of immersive tourist packages, widespread online visibility, and fostering key relationships with industry stakeholders. At the heart of this endeavor is the introduction of the “CIC Greeny” package, a meticulously designed offering that encapsulates sustainable luxury and experiential agro-tourism. Critical to the success of the sustainable tourism initiative is the comprehensive training and awareness program for CIC Agro Farm employees. This initiative ensures that staff members are well-versed in the principles of agro-tourism and sustainability. Through training, employees become ambassadors for the farm, capable of effectively communicating its commitment to eco-friendly practices, thereby enriching the overall guest experience.

The cornerstone of the project is the development of the “CIC Greeny” package, a three-day immersive experience that marries sustainable hospitality with unique agro-adventures. Activities include a bicycle ride, tractor tour, lotus flower engagement, live cooking experiences, and an exclusive night in eco-friendly cabanas. These activities serve as deliverables, comprising the distinctive products and services that set CIC Agro Farm apart in the competitive tourism landscape. To reach a broader audience, the “CIC Greeny” package is strategically published on the CIC Resort website. This online platform becomes a virtual gateway for potential visitors, providing detailed information on the package’s offerings, accommodations, and the farm’s commitment to

sustainability. The website acts as a central hub for bookings, inquiries, and engagement, facilitating seamless interaction between the farm and its audience.

Crucial to the initiative's success is the cultivation of relationships and partnerships with key stakeholders in the tourism industry. By collaborating with tour guides, travel agencies, tour operators, and hotels, CIC Agro Farm aims to expand the reach of the "CIC Greeny" package. These partnerships contribute to the package's inclusion in tour offerings, targeted marketing to eco-conscious travelers, and recommendations from affiliated hotels, thus maximizing exposure and participation.

The CIC Agro Farm's sustainable agro-tourism initiative revolves around comprehensive employee training, the development of a unique "CIC Greeny" package, strategic online publication, and the establishment of symbiotic relationships with industry stakeholders. The deliverables, manifested in the diverse activities and experiences offered by the package, showcase the farm's dedication to sustainability while providing guests with an authentic and memorable agro-tourism journey.

2.3 Target market and beneficiaries

Agricultural and tourism related research and development institutes:

These institutes often seek partnerships with farms that can promote new agro tourism based practices. For example, a CIC Agro Farm could partner with relevant institutes to conduct field trials of new agricultural varieties and incorporation agricultural practices into tourism aspects to enhance the experience of the tourists.

Domestic and foreign tourists: Agro tourism is a growing industry. People are interested in visiting farms, seeing how food is grown and even participating in farm activities. CIC Agro Farm runs a program of farm tours, farm classes, or 'pick-your-own' events to attract tourists. For example, vegetable or fruit picking events can attract tourists.

Eco-Tourists: These are travellers who are interested in nature and the environment. An agro-farm offers them a first-hand experience of farming practices, crop cultivation, and sustainable agriculture.

Foodies and culinary enthusiasts: The restaurant component can attract those who are interested in farm-to-table experiences, tasting local produce, and exploring traditional dishes.

Families: Farms can be educational for kids, offering them an opportunity to learn about where their food comes from, interact with animals, and enjoy outdoor activities.

Travelers seeking authentic experiences: Those who wish to understand the local culture and lifestyle may find such places appealing as they can interact with local farmers, learn about traditional farming methods, and experience rural life.

Couples: Farms can offer romantic getaways for couples, especially if the restaurant provides fine dining or unique culinary experiences.

Educational groups: Schools, colleges and higher education institutes may consider agro-farms for field trips as they offer practical knowledge about agriculture, biology, and ecology and agro tourism.

Wellness travellers: Some people look for retreats that offer fresh air, organic food, and a break from the hustle and bustle of city life.

2.4 Partners

Fertilizer companies: As an agricultural enterprise, CIC Agro Farm requires different types of fertilizers to ensure the health and growth of their plants. They have partnered with fertilizer companies that supply these essential fertilizers. For example, the fertilizer company supplies CIC Agro farm with various types of fertilizer that are optimized for the growth of seeds and bananas. This partnership can be mutually beneficial, with the fertilizer company gaining a stable customer and CIC Agro Farm gaining access to high-quality fertilizer, at a lower cost or with favorable payment terms.

Seed importing companies: To diversify their products and improve crop yields, CIC has partnered with seed importing companies. These companies give CIC Agro farm the access to a wide variety of seeds from around the world. For example, they import special varieties of bananas that are more disease resistant or have better yields. This partnership allows CIC to improve the variety and quality of its products, and the seed importing company gets a stable buyer for their products.

Retail buyers – supermarkets: After planting and harvesting bananas and other crops, CIC must distribute and sell its produce to the agricultural farm. Supermarkets are the main retail buyers to whom CIC's products can be sold to end consumers. For example, a contract can be made with a supermarket chain for regular supply of bananas and other products. This provides a consistent and predictable outlet for CIC's products, and supermarkets can ensure customers are served fresh and locally sourced goods.

3.0 Impact

3.1 Impact on the target market(s)

Employment opportunities for the community: The surrounding villagers of Agro Tourism CIC Seed Farm/CIC Agro Holiday Resort are very significant. By

providing jobs, the resort improves the economic well-being of the local community, enabling them to meet basic needs, access better healthcare and education, and contribute to the local economy.

Nutritious food for the consumer's: Consumers benefit from consuming fresh, chemical-free produce grown on-site, improving their overall well-being. CIC Agro Holiday Resort-to-table culinary experience offers consumers nutritious meals that contribute to better health outcomes and promote a healthy lifestyle.

A secure place for accommodation for tourists: This fosters positive guest experiences, leading to increased word-of-mouth recommendations and higher bookings. As a result, the resort experiences a rise in tourist demand, contributing to revenue growth and enhancing the; reputation of Holiday Resort as a preferred destination for travelers seeking a serene and secure agro-tourism experience.

Networking and events: The resort facilities, including an auditorium and wedding hall, provide space for events, meetings, and gatherings. It fosters networking opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to share knowledge, ideas, and experiences related to agriculture, technology, and sustainable living.

3.2 Impact on the stakeholders

Profit for the shareholders: Agro Tourism CIC Seed Farm/CIC Agro Holiday Resort Multifaceted operations, including innovative crop cultivation, livestock management, and agro-tourism services, generate substantial revenue and steady growth. Shareholders benefit from consistent dividends and capital appreciation driven by the Farm & Agro Holiday Resort's sustainable practices, high-quality products, and positive societal impact.

Increasing health benefits for consumers: Having high-quality fruits, vegetables, and dairy products free of harmful chemicals enhances the nutritional value of their diet. As consumers consume healthier produce and dairy products, they enjoy improved overall health and well-being.

Economic benefits for the community through employment opportunities: By working at the farm or resort, nearby villagers earn stable incomes, improving their financial status and overall livelihoods. The wages received allow them to meet basic needs, access better healthcare and education, and contribute to the local economy. Additionally, reduced seasonal unemployment provides consistent earning opportunities, enhancing economic stability and social welfare within the village community.

Educational enrichment: The CIC Agro Farm focuses on education and providing live learning experiences for tourists and relevant students of hotel schools and

undergraduates of higher education institutes about different agro-tourism-based activities.

3.3 Impact on the environment

Sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry: By experimenting with advanced cultivation techniques, efficient irrigation systems, sustainable soil management, water management, dairy production and crop protection methods, the farm contributes to reducing the negative environmental impact of traditional farming methods.

Biodiversity: Having a plant nursery that produces various fruit plants like mangoes, oranges, and guavas helps to maintain and enhance the local biodiversity. Growing different types of fruit promotes a diverse ecosystem and provides a habitat for different species.

Eco-friendly infrastructure and recreational activities: CIC Agro Farm facilitates eco-friendly infrastructure facilities like cabanas with more open spaces and natural ventilation designed to enhance the connection with the natural environment. Offering activities like biking, bird watching, photography, and boat tours encourages the visitors to connect with nature by providing awareness and education on the environment.

Positive community impact: CIC Agro Farm's involvement in sustainable agricultural practices such as seed production, distribution, and innovative agricultural techniques as well as sustainable agro-tourism activities can positively impact local communities by contributing to food security, economic development, and knowledge sharing.

3.4 Impact on the company

Increasing revenue: The increase in income of Agro Tourism CIC Seed Farm/CIC Agro Holiday Resort is based on various factors. Increased bookings and higher occupancy rates lead to increased revenue from accommodation and hospitality services.

Development of the CIC brand image: The resort and farm's eco-friendly practices, employment opportunities for villagers, and focus on providing high-quality seeds and nutritious food to consumers create a strong reputation for CIC as an environmentally friendly and community-oriented company. The improved brand image leads to increased trust and loyalty among consumers, attracts more tourists and investors, and ultimately contributes to the long-term success and recognition of the CIC brand in the market.

Innovation: CIC Argo Farm & Resort's research and development efforts through their own resources and networking with higher education institutes not only benefit farm operations but also contribute to the advancement of sustainable technology-driven agro-tourism practices. The introduction of new crop varieties, irrigation techniques, and sustainable methods can lead to breakthroughs that positively impact the industry as a whole.

3.5 Impact on the CoE

Research and learning opportunities: The Agro Farm serves as a research and development center for various agricultural practices. This presents an opportunity for university students to engage in hands-on learning experiences, gain insights into modern agricultural and tourism related techniques, and contribute to research initiatives aligned with sustainable farming practices.

Educational exposure: The Agro Farm provides a unique platform for university students to immerse themselves in the agricultural environment, understand the significance of agriculture, and witness first hand how sustainable tourism agricultural practices can be implemented. This exposure enhances their knowledge and appreciation for agriculture, aligning with the goals of the university's Sustainable Service Unit.

Sustainable tourism education: The CICI Agro Farm focuses on educating visitors about agriculture and sustainability aligns with the objectives of the Sustainable Service Unit. University students can learn how tourism can promote and support sustainable agricultural practices, thereby contributing to the local economy and environment.

Collaborative partnerships: The Agro Farm and Resort offer opportunities for collaboration between Uva Wellassa University and CIC Holdings. Such partnerships can lead to joint research projects, internship opportunities, and knowledge-sharing, benefiting both the university and the industry.

Skill development: Exposure to the farm and resort operations can help university students develop a wide range of skills, including agricultural practices, sustainability concepts, hospitality management, event planning, and more. These skills are valuable for their academic and professional growth.

Promoting sustainable practices: The Agro Farm and Resort serve as examples of how sustainable practices can be integrated into the agriculture and tourism sectors. University students can learn how to promote and advocate for sustainable practices, aligning with the goals of the Sustainable Tourism Unit.

Tourism development: The presence of the Agro Farm can contribute to the development of sustainable tourism in the region. Students studying tourism can analyze the resort's impact, evaluate its sustainability practices, and propose strategies for enhancing the tourism experience while minimizing environmental impact.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The Argo Farm in Hingurakgoda focuses on crop cultivation and experimentation, serving as a research and development center for agricultural practices. The farm uses modern techniques and technologies to optimize crop yields while minimizing environmental impact. The main aim is to develop innovative farming methods to address challenges faced by Sri Lankan farmers, such as improving soil fertility, implementing efficient irrigation systems, adopting crop protection measures, and exploring advanced cultivation techniques. The farm plays a vital role in the agricultural sector of Sri Lanka by fostering innovation, conducting research, and promoting sustainable farming practices.

The target market for a farm is farmers, wholesale buyers and distributors, retail consumers, livestock industry, export markets, agricultural research and development institutions, government tenders, and local and foreign tourists. The farm's organization and management hierarchy include top management, department heads/managers, operations staff, research and development team, sales and marketing team, and support functions. The cost structure includes operational costs, infrastructure and equipment costs, input costs, research and development costs, and administrative and overhead costs. Revenue streams include crop sales, seed sales, livestock and poultry sales, research collaboration, training and consultancy services, and value-added products, including revenue from tourists.

The Argo Farm in Hingurakgoda focuses on crop cultivation and experimentation, serving as a research and development center for agricultural practices. The farm uses modern techniques and technologies to optimize crop yields while minimizing environmental impact. The main aim is to develop innovative farming methods to address challenges faced by Sri Lankan farmers, such as improving soil fertility, implementing efficient irrigation systems, adopting crop protection measures, and exploring advanced cultivation techniques. The farm plays a vital role in the agricultural sector of Sri Lanka by fostering innovation, conducting research, and promoting sustainable farming practices.

CIC Agro Farm's venture into sustainable agro-tourism faces challenges that require a holistic approach for success. The absence of adequate visitor facilities,

including restrooms, parking, and seating, limits the overall experience and accessibility. Insufficient infrastructure, weak telecommunication, and potential animal hazards pose additional obstacles. Managing the farm's lake during the dry season and addressing crop damage are crucial for maintaining ecological balance.

In response to these challenges, CIC Agro Farm introduces the "CIC Greeny" package, a transformative ecotourism initiative. Crafted from locally sourced materials, eco-friendly cabanas offer luxury in harmony with sustainability. The package includes a bicycle tour, tractor tour, lotus flower engagement, farm exploration, bird watching, and a live cooking experience, providing guests with a comprehensive and immersive agro-tourism journey. The flexibility of the package allows for customization, aligning with ecotourism principles.

Activities encompass employee training, the development of the "CIC Greeny" package, online visibility, and partnerships with industry stakeholders. Employee training ensures staff serve as ambassadors for eco-friendly practices, while strategic online publication maximizes reach. Collaborations with tour guides, travel agencies, and hotels expand the package's exposure.

The target market includes research institutes, domestic and foreign tourists, ecotourists, culinary enthusiasts, families, cultural explorers, couples, educational groups, and wellness travelers. CIC Agro Farm's dedication to sustainability, coupled with unique experiences, positions it as a pioneer in redefining farm-based tourism in Sri Lanka.

Agro Tourism CIC Seed Farm and CIC Agro Holiday Resort in Hingurakgoda, Sri Lanka, exert a profound impact across multiple dimensions. The resort serves as a hub for economic development by providing employment opportunities, fostering community well-being through enhanced healthcare and education access, and ensuring a secure and comfortable stay for tourists. Consumers benefit from the farm-to-table culinary experience, enjoying fresh, chemical-free produce that promotes healthier lifestyles.

Stakeholders, including shareholders, local villagers, and consumers, experience positive outcomes such as increased profits, improved economic stability, and enhanced well-being. The resort's commitment to education creates live learning experiences, raising awareness about agro-tourism activities.

Environmentally, the operations prioritize sustainable agriculture and responsible animal husbandry, contributing to biodiversity and eco-friendly infrastructure. The agro-niche generates educational opportunities, fostering awareness and informed consumer choices. For the company, the impacts translate into increased

revenue, a strengthened brand image through sustainable initiatives, and potential breakthroughs in agro-tourism practices through innovation. The Centre of Excellence (CoE) further transforms the farm into an agro-tourism attraction, offering educational tours, hands-on activities, and cultural interactions. In essence, Agro Tourism CIC exemplifies a model where sustainability, community development, and education converge, creating an attractive agro-tourism destination with positive impacts on the local economy and environmental conservation.

CASE STUDY 32

Wildlife Tourism with Responsibility: The Role of Yala - Eco Teams in Promoting Sustainable Tourism

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1.0 Case Context

Eco Team- Sri Lanka was instituted in the year 2000 as a sui generis pioneer in eco and adventure tourism operations. It offers customized tour solutions in wildlife, birding, luxury travel, biking, trekking, and diving as a trouper and cater to over 140 national and international companies, offering exceptional tented accommodations and wildlife experience.

‘Eco Team- Yala’ sited to the border of a precious National Park in the country is one of the fascinating glamping sites, dedicated to offer experiential travel and wildlife tourism combo with an assortment of sustainable amenities and intimate glamping experience. This private mini reserve concept allows its guests to engross sustainable cognizance upkeeping the natural resources, aiming at becoming a global leader in environmentally conscious tourism. The ultimate goal of this conglomerate is to generate an optimistic effect on the country’s nature by encouraging the rivals and to embrace ethical practices by means of innovation, teamwork, and unremitting growth. Reducing the negative impacts on the environment, promoting conservation, encouraging sustainable behaviours, and improving the general well-being of the nation are the prime objectives of them.

Nature trails, learning tours, wildlife safari, and wildlife glamping are the most demanding and leading activities offered by the Eco Team- Yala, Sri Lanka. They offer two exclusive packages; Mahoora-Yala and Big Game Camp-Yala. Mahoora-Yala, affordable for high end exclusive segment looking for luxury, offers a comfortable extended facilities including private space with a bedroom, living room, and bathroom. Big Game Camp-Yala, affordable for those on a tight budget, allows guests to experience the luxury on a budget. Both packages are designed to cater distinctive needs of visitors delivering the essence of camping experience blended with modern grandeur. They are predominantly engrossed with sustainable and responsible connexion. Apart from the aforesaid activities, it also offers guided night walks, special celebrations and

merriments, birding packages, wilderness stay with dinner and breakfast, and some other customised services aligning with their scope and vision.

The target market of Eco Team- Yala is mainly the travellers with an eco-conscious mindset, those who love wildlife tourism, and those who seek for sustainable travel experience including natural exploration and authentic cultural involvement. They dwell a significant value towards the ethical tourism conduct at every possible way during the activities such as seeing animals, taking pictures, and birding in Yala. In addition, Eco Team- Yala also encompasses the services such as wildlife photography and education to niche tourist groups interested in eco-tourism, wildlife tourism, and experience travel activities.

Currently there are nineteen employees serving in the Eco Team- Yala in administration and operation activities. Apart from that, marketing and booking are directly operated by the head office located in Colombo. The Site Manager is the operational and administrative in charge of the property. Expressly, the Eco Team- Yala has a highly enthusiastic team with a strong interest in the field of work in Yala.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Eco Team (Pvt) Ltd., the mother company of Eco Team- Yala is dedicated to refine their regular operations merged with innovative exertions and confronted to boost sustainable tourism. Thus, the Eco Team- Yala is induced to develop their own game plan to cope with abundant challenges.

Being a site located at a wilderness area, the Eco Team- Yala has a significant issue of attracting and retaining skilled labour in the site. Hence, they have started to recruit a few employees with minimum qualifications from the community area along with the two or three fresh graduates from hospitality schools. All of them are extended with a strong intensive programme and training and development programmes. Consequently, this effort addresses SDG 8- decent employment and economic growth, as Eco Team- Yala offers the obligatory training and development opportunities, and incentive schemes to bring out the best in their workforce. Moreover, the Company may encounter certain challenges because of climate change. Within the context of Sri Lanka, Yala is situated in dry zone. As a result, Eco Teams-Yala experienced arid weather and occasional droughts. In accordance with SDG 13, Eco team - Yala is proceeding with some strategies to avoid these issues, such as planting Nuga trees to cool the surrounding area and recycling organic waste while maintaining a minimum carbon foot print.

Eco Team- Yala also confronts certain challenges due to a lack of awareness on tourism and related operations among the local community. In the meantime, they have acknowledged this crucial stakeholder group as a significant part of the business and has started to extend more opportunities through generating local jobs, CSR initiatives, and awareness projects to the host community to raise awareness about the company and the world beyond the village. Eco Team- Yala also purchases its supplies from regional vendors to upkeep the positive ties with the host community. Additionally, they host CSR initiatives including the Ellanga System-powered drinking water supply for the Buttala Gonagasgala site village. The tank cascade system known as the Ellanga System is an ancient irrigation system in Sri Lanka. These initiatives also support the SDG 1: Eliminate poverty and SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation.

During the last two years, Sri Lankan tourism industry has severely affected with the economic recession. Soaring inflation made the operations harder. In order to face the contests during this challenging period, they revisited all the expenses and made all possible efforts to minimize redundant costs while enhancing exclusive guest experience blended with the nature in environmentally responsive manner. Accordingly, Eco Team, Yala initiated an on-site organic garden that allowed them to harvest a range of foods by organic/biodynamic farming techniques. This effort cut a part of the material costs and impressed the guests with an unconventional experience. Further, to avoid the high energy cost, illuminating the space with “Kakuna Thel Pandam” foster the sustainability and extraordinariness avoiding the usage of light bulbs and electricity. These efforts have made them align with the SDG 12 and SDG 7.

In Sri Lanka, adequate policy implication for tourism businesses is problematic. The impasses of recent instability in the political arena also resulted negative consequences in the sector. In order to avoid dilemmas and elude the consequences of poor regulatory procedures to deal with tourism activities and tourists' rights, Eco Team-Yala has tried to align with the international standards as well as other related statutory demands. That makes the Eco Team- Yala more competitive and responsible as a sustainable operation.

Eco Team- Yala makes every possible effort to stretch out their target audience with its presence on appropriate marketing and communication channels. Thus, it is continuously motivated to use contemporary, carbon-free advertising tactics to grasp their target demographics. The company website facilitates the reservations and maintains a vigorous communication with clients on social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The testimonials from past guests also are available

on these networks. Participation in tourism trade shows, unique learning tours, and telephone communication are among their offline marketing initiatives.

3.0 Impact

All the guests in Eco Team- Yala receive an immersing Glamping and Safari experience within the boundaries of Yala National Park. However, the climate change makes some unfavourable impact on tourist experience. Thus, the Eco Team- Yala has implemented more environmentally friendly SOPs to avoid the negative consequences of the operation. Creation of direct and indirect employments, strengthening sustainable livelihoods for surrounding community, environmental conservation and education, contribution for national economy with foreign exchange, extending a positive image on the country and its tourism are key impacts made by this wonderful operation. They also maintain optimum circulation of organizational structure and guests to avoid crowding in the buffer and park area. Moreover, the initiatives such as preserving the native flora and fauna, sustainable waste management practices, minimized energy consumption, and promoting environmentally conscious travel experiences have led the Eco Team- Yala to intensify their responsibility with positive impact on earth.

However, the expansion of infrastructure development has led to deforestation. They try to fit in with the natural surroundings by planting trees when they take down trees due to expansion.

Eco Team- Yala boosts its reputation in sustainable ways. Yet, they face safety issues due to the threat of wild animal attacks. However, the greater compassion of the team as well as the knowledge and awareness of the team on sustainable principles have led to unveil the gaps in the tourism niches and have made Eco Team a pinnacle of sustainability.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

In the case of Eco Team– Yala, it is dedicated to deliver a pragmatic novel experience in a sustainable essence of wildlife tourism. Glamping with comfort has led an extraordinary sensation beyond generic wild life; yet it is experiential and responsible travelling. Eco Team serves to this market niche ensuring ethical and sustainable tourism. There is still a potential for further improvement in this niche segment. In conclusion, Eco Team is a sustainable tourism business operation deeply concerned on delivering a superior experience for its guests with unique resources and unique capabilities.

CASE STUDY 33

Tea Tourism and Sustainability: A Case Study of Heritage Tea Factory Hotel, Sri Lanka

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1.0 Case Context

The Heritage Tea Factory Hotel is the only tea factory in Sri Lanka that has been converted into a hotel with a unique idea. Nestled within lush tea estates and enveloped in natural surroundings, the hotel offers guests the chance to indulge in modern amenities, breathtaking vistas, and the best Ceylon tea, all while reliving the charm of a tea industry rooted in the Colonial past. This hotel, which dates back to the nineteenth century, is situated in Kandapola, Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka. The Heritage Tea Factory Hotel is currently owned by Aitken Spence PLC and is run as a five-star establishment under the Heritage brand. Mr. G.C. Wickremasinghe was the director with planting experience on the main board of Aitken Spence, the proposal to turn the Tea Factory into a hotel.

Table 1: Heritage Tea Factory Products and Services

Products and Services
As a hotel, Heritage tea factory hotel's main service is providing accommodation. But there are more products and services they provide
Accommodation - In Heritage tea factory hotel there are 50 rooms. There have superior rooms, Executive floor deluxe rooms, Premium rooms and junior suite room
Restaurants and Bars - There have unique bar concepts as TCK 6685 restaurant, Hethersett bar, Goatfell bar etc.
Spa - The spa gives ayurveda treatment, beauty and wellness treatments under different packages.
Other Activities - Ella Tour, excursion tour to Horton Plains, Kandapola high tea, cycling in Nuwara Eliya, tea plucking, walk in nature, tea tasting etc.

Source: Authors' contribution

1.1 Vision and Mission

Vision: "A heritage of tea at the highest elevation, offering an experience of nature, adventure, tea culture and fine cuisine with friendly service to the discerning traveller".

Mission: *“To provide a unique tea experience to the discerning traveller to enhance shareholder value through maximum utilization of resources to maintain sound business relations with suppliers in order to maximize benefits to develop human resources for the benefit of the community”.*

1.2 Target market

The conversation with the Heritage Tea Factory hotel revealed that their primary target clientele is the high-end customers. Additionally, Heritage Tea Factory Hotels cater to tea enthusiasts by providing experiences like tea tasting, tea plucking, and cycling around tea farms.

1.3 Organisation management

A tall organizational hierarchical structure is followed by the Heritage Tea factory hotel. This organizational form has multiple levels of management and clear lines of power, much like a conventional pyramid. Decision-making typically occurs at the top level, with information flowing down from there as well. The Resident Manager is the primary accountable person for this organization, which employs more than fifty people on hotel property. There are six departments in total under the resident manager and they are; front office, kitchen, food and beverage, housekeeping, human resources, finance, and maintenance.

1.4 Revenue streams

Their main source of revenue is room revenue, which is earned by the renting of guest rooms. Additionally, revenue from spa services, fitness centers, and wellness initiatives, as well as revenue from on-site dining, room service, and banquets associated with food and beverages, produce funds for the hotel.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

2.1 Biomass gasifier and heat pumps

In order to meet the energy-saving challenge, the Heritage Tea Factory hotel has integrated sustainable concepts. As solutions, they developed Biomass Gasifiers and Heat Pumps, as well as awareness raising and team member training, as well as energy-saving techniques at the hotel. The biomass gasifier uses only three types of wood. This sustainability idea addressed the issue of energy conservation and CO₂ emissions to the environment. It primarily reduces the use of diesel in hotel operations. When it comes to biomass gasifiers, they primarily reduce the need of diesel for the boiler. According to

the hotel data, they have been able to save over Rs. 28,464,402.00 since October 2007 up to March 2021. They were able to save 100 liters of diesel each day on the boiler that provides hot water to the hotel by using heat pumps.

2.2 Waste management unit – 7R concept

Waste management is one of the main sustainability concept that the hotel follows which processed under the 7R concept. It has different disposing methods according to the type of waste which add value to them in the future. To add a value to the waste, the hotel processed under the 7R concept. The waste is collected separately which has standard color codes for waste bins. And to reduce the usage of plastics bottles, they replaced them with the glass bottles which can re-use. Encourage guests to avoid wasting food, having training sessions for recycling and waste management, having rules and regulations for disposing chemical waste, paint, solvent and light batteries are some sustainability measures that Heritance Tea Factory applied in waste management. Additionally, they have a compost unit which is processed by using waste. They produce packaging, papers by using waste materials.

2.3 Waste water conservation system

Conservation the water resource is another challenge that Heritance Tea Factory hotel faced. Therefore, they have stated to develop the best sustainable way to minimize water wastage and to maximize its reuse through the water saving and recycling systems in their activities produced. Some sustainable measures of relating water saving are, re-using of waste water: 80% of the waste of is recycled and is reused on hotel's gardens and lawns, efficient showers and basins with flow reducers and timers, building a tank which can hold 100000 litres of rainwater, dual flush buttons in bathroom fittings also some Periodical inspections of machinery and water distribution devices to prevent leaks and water loss.

2.4 Energy saving practices

Apart from using gasifier and heat pumps, the hotel follows some other sustainable practices to save the energy. The hotel uses LED and low energy lighting, timer control lights synchronized with daylight. For the awareness about energy saving, they have switch off policy, training session on energy saving and display notices of reminding power saving. This year the hotel has planned to implement solar panels as a new sustainable project in order to save electricity usage.

3.0 Impact

Impact for the Target Market(s) - The Heritage Tea Factory in Sri Lanka stands as a beacon of sustainability, leaving a profound impact on its target market. By weaving eco-friendly practices into its operations, the hotel not only captures the hearts of conscious travellers but also sets a precedent for responsible tourism. Tourists seeking immersive experiences that align with their values are drawn to the hotel's commitment to energy efficiency, waste reduction and community support. This distinct focus enhances the hotel's appeal, attracting a niche market of environmentally mindful visitors who appreciate the authentic and responsible approach to hospitality.

Impact for the Stakeholders - The Heritage Tea Factory in Sri Lanka places a strong emphasis on sustainability, with a range of stakeholders playing pivotal roles in its impact. The local community benefits from increased economic opportunities through employment and engagement in various tea-related activities. The factory's commitment to sustainable practices contributes to the region's environmental well-being by promoting responsible land use, water conservation, and waste reduction. Additionally, the engagement of tourists not only supports the factory's operations but also raises awareness about sustainable practices and local culture, positively influencing the broader community. Overall, the Heritage Tea Factory's sustainability engages stakeholders in a balanced way, fostering economic growth while preserving local heritage and environmental integrity.

Impact for the Environment - The Heritage tea factory contributes positively to Sri Lanka's sustainability efforts through measures such as water management, biodiversity conservation, carbon footprint reduction, soil health, waste reduction and environmental protection.

- **Water Management:** Reduces water consumption and pollution of local water resources by implementing efficient water use and waste management practices.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Maintaining biodiversity in a tea garden protects local flora and fauna by conserving natural habitats and reducing the use of harmful pesticides.
- **Carbon Footprint Reduction:** Adopting renewable energy sources and reducing carbon emissions in the manufacturing process can contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of the industry.
- **Soil health:** Using sustainable agricultural practices to maintain soil health and prevent soil erosion ensures the long-term productivity of a tea garden.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The Heritage Tea Factory Hotel is the only tea factory converted to a hotel in Sri Lanka, and it's regarded as a concept builder in the hospitality sector owing to its distinctive sustainable icon. The valuable hotel concept was established by the Aitken Spence hotel group. Additionally, this hotel is a sustainable role model for the hospitality businesses and numerous recipients of awards are committed to their commendable sustainable practices and initiatives. Key sustainable practices include waste management, waste water conservation systems, biomass gasifier units, heat pumps, and more. By implementing these sustainable practices, the hotel was able to lessen its impact on the environment, cut down on wasteful spending, and manage its resources for future generations. Hence, it can be concluded that Heritage Tea Factory hotel is a one of the leading sustainable brand maintaining companies in Sri Lanka.

CASE STUDY 34

Sustainable Whale Watching in Sri Lanka: A Case Study on Sayuri Whale Watching

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1.0 Case Context

“Sayuri Whale Watching Private Limited” is a well-known whale-watching enterprise in Sri Lanka. Established in the year 2012, “Sayuri” is situated in the coastal town of Mirissa, which lies along Sri Lanka’s southern shores. Mirissa, with its tranquil beaches and warm waters, has gradually evolved into a hotspot for marine-based tourism activities.

Sayuri, a whale watching service provider, will provide a range of products and services to tourists interested in experiencing the unique opportunity to observe whales in their natural habitat. The primary service they provide is the guided whale watching tour. These tours take tourists out to sea on whale-watching boats. The institute’s knowledgeable guides accompany tourists to provide insights into whales and the marine ecosystem.

Additionally Sayuri Whale Watching provides on-board snacks, refreshments and breakfast for tourists during the whale watching cruise. This is actually an industry standard.

Mirissa is one of the best locations for whale watching in Sri Lanka. However basically the tourists who visit Mirissa to see whales are usually the target market. They include both local and foreign tourists. However, as compared to the number of tourists visiting other down south locations, Mirissa has a lower capacity because except for whale watching, Mirissa has no other activities or developed tourism attraction. Therefore, Whale watching tour operators in Mirissa have to put a little effort to attract tourists to the destination. Because of that, Mr. Prabhanath, always keep his antenna tuned to the tour operators and travel agencies, to get a flock of tourists on board.

Sayuri Whale Watching PVT. LTD. is a small scale company and therefore they do not have a very well organized organizational structure. But, according to Mr. Prabhanath he is the Chief Manager who primarily deals with tour operators and who does the managing part, and they have four other captains for boat operating and seven other helpers including a chef.

1.1 Cost structure

1. **Boats and Equipment:** The initial cost of starting Sayuri Whale Watching PVT LTD was to purchase suitable boats for whale watching. Boats should be equipped with safety gear, communication devices and viewing platforms to ensure a comfortable and safe experience for tourists.
2. **Staff and Guides:** Recruiting and training experienced guides and staff members with knowledge of whales, marine life and safety protocols is essential. Salaries for crew, including captains, guides and customer service personnel, are a significant part of the cost structure.
3. **Operating Expenses:** Includes various day-to-day operating expenses for boats such as fuel, maintenance and repair expenses, and utilities. Also food ingredients are purchased on a daily basis.
4. **Marketing and Advertising:** Basically this is discounts and commissions for the travel agencies, transportation costs and telecommunication charges.
5. **Permits and Permits:** It is essential to obtain the necessary permits and licenses from the relevant authorities (from the government) to conduct whale watching tours. This includes paying fees and meeting regulatory requirements.
6. **Training and Sustainability Initiatives:** As previously mentioned, the agency incurs costs in educating staff and implementing sustainability initiatives to promote responsible whaling practices.
7. **Taxes:** Per each tourist they have to pay a tax daily to the Wildlife department.
8. **Repair and maintenance:** Repairing boats usually cost a lot since needed materials are not available.

1.2 Sources of income

1. **Whale Watching Tour Tickets:** The primary source of income is selling tickets for whale watching tours. 4000 rupees are charged from Sri Lankans and 12,000 rupees from foreigners.
2. **Seasonal Variations:** Certain times of the year attract more tourists interested in whale watching, revenue streams fluctuate due to seasonal demand.

It's essential to remember that Mirissa's current infrastructure facilities are relatively minimal, with even basic amenities like proper toilets being insufficient. This existing infrastructure shortcoming emphasizes a critical problem that requires attention and development. Improving infrastructure, especially facilities such as public restrooms, is critical not just for tourist convenience and comfort, but also for the general growth and sustainability of the area's tourism business. Mirissa can create a friendlier

environment for guests and ultimately increase its tourism potential by resolving these issues and investing in better infrastructure.

It's important to realize that Mirissa's current infrastructure is relatively limited, with even basic conveniences like adequate toilets lacking. This present infrastructure deficiency highlights a crucial issue that requires attention and growth. Improving infrastructure, particularly public restrooms, is crucial not just for tourist convenience and comfort, but also for the overall growth and sustainability of the area's tourism industry. By correcting these challenges and investing in better infrastructure, Mirissa can create a more welcoming environment for visitors and, as a result, increase its tourist potential.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

Through our study we were able to identify a few challenges faced by whale watching businesses based on our research.

A major challenge is the decrease of marine biodiversity. Mr. Prabhanath established the Sayuri Whale Watching Company in 2012, and the whales that were present when Mr. Prabhanath started the company are no longer visible, in his experience. The decrease in whale population is believed to be caused by boat operators' unsafety tourism practices. Further some boat operators do not adhere to some of the rules imposed by the government.

Although the government has taxed whale watching companies to protect the whales, the government has not yet implemented any program to preserve the whales. Additionally, the Mirissa Sea is surrounded by an international shipping line, which means that ships frequently pass through it. We believe that this is one of the causes of the current decline in the whale population.

Threats affecting whales and marine ecosystems if not adequately controlled, whale watching activities have the potential to disrupt the natural behavior of whales and other marine animals. When exposed to regular boat traffic and noise pollution, whales can become stressed, have communication problems, change their migration patterns, and even collide with boats.

Furthermore, poor waste management and boat emissions can lead to water pollution and endanger marine biodiversity. Mr. Prabhanath said that in the last period of 2012 and 2013, whales would come back without being able to see them for about 6 months. But today tourists are not able to see whales 5 or 6 days a month. Many whales appear to be in distress.

Due to these reasons, when the number of whales in the sea around Mirissa decreases, the arrival of local and foreign tourists also decreases. Therefore the company is unable to operate the boats and the sustainability of the company gradually decreases.

Whale watching is an important tourism activity in many coastal regions, including Mirissa. Apart from whale watching, Mirissa can further increase its tourist attraction if people can do other recreational activities. The revenue of Mirissa will rise along with the number of tourists if the tourism attraction is enhanced in the future by giving tourists greater facilities and the below-mentioned recreational activities.

Whale watching is an important tourism activity in many coastal regions, including Mirissa. Apart from whale watching, Mirissa can further increase its tourist attraction if people can do other recreational activities. The revenue of Mirissa will rise along with the number of tourists if the tourism attraction is enhanced in the future by giving tourists greater facilities and the below-mentioned recreational activities.

2.1 Organizing a community awareness sessions

A major problem that the whale watching in Mirissa having is the lack of knowledge and under-education of people who were in the industry as well as the people in the surrounding.

Normally, the community in this area has a lesser education and their usual behaviour tend to be more aggressive and fast-reactive. Therefore educating them the rules and regulations are quite a work and expecting those people obeying to those rules are hardly possible. Therefore as the first stage we are suggesting to organize a well-planned, step-by-step education program from child to the adult is crucial. As the university undergraduates we will also be able to take part in this educating programs collaborating with the experienced government and private sector service personals. Changing the whole education system is not possible yet the small programs organized by the organizations could be great initiation. For instance, we could do a social norm teaching session to the children in the area collaborating with the Rotaract/Leo clubs of the university or in the area. And then as the second step, well recognized personality could address the community of the area.

2.2 In some countries provide the experience with swimming the whales and dolphins

This program could be implemented under a considerable financial and time investment, after performing a well-planned feasibility test in the area. In here many people get the experience and some of people are like to do that. But in Sri Lanka there

is not that kind of facility and for that reason some of tourists such as Chinese people not satisfy with the service in Sri Lanka. But most of animal lovers and the people who love to care those animals and thing, actually they don't like to go near to the whales also. They like to see the whale in such kind of distance, because they think when the boats near to the animal, it is not comfortable and not good for the animals.

But in other hand in Wild life Enthusiasts, Scuba Divers and Snorkelers, Adventure Seekers, Nature Photographers and also Eco-Tourists are wish to swim with whales but as an industry Sri Lanka can't provide that experience.

2.3 Sustainable practices could be applied creating job opportunities

In the whale watching industry "Going Green" is hardly possible. But still the industry can initiate various actions to protect and minimize negative impacts on natural environment. Mainly by properly disposing operational waste which are fiberglass, plastic, regiform and nylon. In the Mirissa fishing harbor this was not in practice. Mr. Prabhanath said even though they inform urban council to collect that disposal, they intentionally avoid that and also the boat operators do not urge to take any action to remove those disposal. On that note, we are suggesting to establish a proper mechanism to collect disposing fiberglass and grind up into very small particles converting it to a powder and use to make thermoforming molds or other structures. Also we can grind up into small pieces for about 2 cm squares and use as fuel for concrete furnace. This will minimize the final wastage by reversing the logistics.

2.4 Diversification of offerings

Expand the industry with adding various types of eco-friendly activities such as bird-watching, coastal tours, and visits to marine conservation centers. In Mirissa area, tourists can go to Koggala forest area, Kanneliya forest reserve for watching birds. Yala National Park and Bundala National Park are not far from Mirissa and offer opportunities to learn about marine conservation as well as terrestrial wildlife. Visit nearby sea turtle conservation projects, such as the Kosgoda Sea Turtle Conservation Project, where you can observe efforts to protect and rehabilitate sea turtles. Those type of diversification we can expand the industry.

3.0 Impact

The idea has an added advantage for the tourists who are the target demographic. For example, it provides unusual and fascinating methods to explore the surrounding area, providing a new perspective on the site. Being connected to the environment not

only enhances the entire tourism experience, but it also improves physical well-being through the use of biking. Tourists can now interact with the place in a sustainable and immersive way that corresponds to their passions and desire for responsible travel.

The effort has a good impact on the many stakeholders engaged. It contributes to the region's economic vitality by supporting slow and sustainable tourism practices. Tourists that remain longer to take advantage of the increased options benefit local motels and businesses. Indicators such as increasing overnight stays and longer average stays demonstrate this. Furthermore, the initiative's emphasis on local cultural assets elevates attractions such as museums and monuments, resulting in increased visitor traffic. The additional tourism services boost destination desirability and visibility, as seen by increased social media participation and TripAdvisor reviews.

The project shows its environmental commitment by encouraging soft mobility techniques. The effort reduces the carbon footprint associated with tourism activities by promoting biking and other sustainable transportation choices. This helps to preserve the local environment by ensuring that tourism development works in conjunction with ecological conservation.

This effort may have a revolutionary influence on Sayuri Whale Watching Private Limited. Strategically, the corporation diversifies its product line by entering previously untouched market sectors. This results to a stronger competitive advantage and greater exposure in the tourism business. Economically, the initiative's variety of income streams decreases risks associated with seasonal changes or market demand fluctuations.

The program benefits the CoE by creating new training materials that are consistent with the spirit of sustainable tourism. This, in turn, accelerates the creation of internships and career opportunities inside partner companies, contributing to the industry's growth of competent people. Collaborations on communication strategies and the co-development of innovative products and services broaden the CoE's influence and contributions to sustainable tourism practices.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

4.1 What worked well

Diversification of Offerings: By expanding tourism experiences beyond whale watching to include activities like swimming with whales, bird-watching, coastal tours, and visits to conservation centers, the initiative enhances the value of tourists'

experiences. This diversification aims to attract a broader range of visitors and potentially extend their stay, ultimately benefiting the local economy.

Environmental Considerations: The initiative prioritizes environmental sustainability, waste management, and responsible engagement with wildlife. This focus aligns with conservation efforts, ensuring the preservation of marine biodiversity and minimizing adverse effects on the ecosystem.

Strategic Use of Technology: While acknowledging potential limitations in technological accessibility, the proposal suggests leveraging technology for improved communication and environmental monitoring. Collaborations with organizations such as the Coast Guard can enhance safety measures and overall satisfaction for tourists.

4.2 What could be improved

Financial Sustainability: Despite innovative ideas, addressing the financial challenges faced by Sayuri Whale Watching and other operators remains crucial. Finding solutions to mitigate high taxation, seasonal fluctuations, and maintenance costs is essential for enhancing the initiative's long-term sustainability.

Infrastructure Development: Acknowledging the necessity for improved infrastructure, particularly waste disposal facilities and public restrooms, the proposal should outline detailed plans for funding, implementation, and maintenance. This added information would strengthen the plan's feasibility.

Local Engagement: Although the case highlights collaboration with the local community, further insights into how their needs, concerns, and ideas were integrated are necessary. Especially considering the current scenario of limited collaboration, actively engaging with the community early on is vital for the initiative's success.

In the present context, challenges persist regarding the lack of collaboration from government, stakeholders, and the local community, as mentioned earlier. Adapting the initiative to this reality is crucial for success. Additionally, despite these challenges, the initiative can still pursue diversified offerings to enhance the tourism experience and contribute positively to the industry.

4.3 Possibility of replication

Mirissa's innovative sustainable tourism plan offers as a great example for replication in other areas challenged with similar problems. Several aspects of the initiative are adaptable to other contexts as well:

Collaboration: To ensure well-rounded and sustainable solutions, the collaborative approach engaging multiple stakeholders, including government entities,

environmental organizations, and local populations, can be implemented in other regions.

Offerings Diversification: Diversifying tourism offerings to cater to different types of tourists is a notion that may be utilized in a variety of destinations. Identifying one-of-a-kind events and activities can increase tourist engagement and duration of stay.

Environmental Focus: Any destination with natural features can emphasize environmental sustainability and responsible wildlife participation. Incorporating educational components and conservation activities can benefit both tourism and environmental preservation.

Technology Integration: Integrating technology for communication, safety, and environmental monitoring can improve the visitor experience where appropriate. Governments or other appropriate authorities may be involved in the implementation of such technology.

Involving Stakeholders: Participation of local communities, businesses, and professionals in planning and decision-making is critical for successful implementation. Building strong connections and considering regional requirements may enhance the initiative's impact.

CASE STUDY 35

Nature-Culture-Human Connectedness for Sustainable Tourism: A Case Study of Hiriwadunna Village, Sri Lanka

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1.0 Case Context

Hirivadunna Village is a small rural village positioned neighbouring to Dambulla and Habarana historical cities of the central part of the country, and is about 175km away from the capital city of Colombo. The village is known for its stunning natural beauty, with paddy fields and man-made lake surrounding it. Particularly, this is a home for approximately 400 farming-families with 2500 people. Merging these naturally gifted resources together with the rural community, the village offers a unique and authentic experience of travellers seeking a taste of traditional Sri Lankan life. Hence, today it has become more popular among the local and international tourists for getting an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience the nature and culture of Sri Lanka.

Prioritizing the concept of sustainability, this rural tourism destination offers a diversified bundle of touristic products and services to fulfil the expectations of tourists coming from all over the world. The target market of the business includes four main groups; leisure travellers, destination management companies (DMC), artists and travellers with educational purposes. Their main offers include traditional bullock cart ride, on-site temple tour, boat ride in the lake, a moment of tree house, u-pick, live in “gemi gedara” and traditional food experience. During the bullock cart ride, tourists are able to see beautiful rice paddies, which is of 03 hectares, canals used for crop cultivation, traditional living set up by rural people etc.

To ensure the smooth operational function, Hiriwadunna village has set up a structure with three main layers; i. community association of Hiriwadunna, ii. Tour assistants/ local tour guides/interpreters, iii. Front line connectors. However, the village itself operates as a “community-driven” tourism business specially based on mutual agreements among farming-families, who act as service providers in this rural setup. Each service provider plays important roles in welcoming tourists, cart riding, boat riding, interpreting local lives, traditional cooking, offering food and beverages, etc. This operational setup pumps out more benefits to the village community like ensuring

fair distribution of income, active community involvement in tourism, generating direct and indirect employment for its own people, preserving natural environment, reducing the environmental pollution, making loyal people, strengthening the relationship etc. Therefore, it is highlighted that they work in line with their vision, “Grow together with their own people” and also the mission, “We care for people in a local way”.

2.0 Innovation in Sustainable Tourism and Results

As a popular tourism destination, Hiriwadunna village faces sustainable tourism challenges; an appearance of healthy competition by other villages, decrease of front-line connectors to take over the business, decrease of cattle population used for transportation, social protest for temple tour and interpretation of the location, lack of government support for development and lack of sufficient water.

To overcome them, attention should be given to highlighted areas like new product development strategies and product diversification, train the youth for taking over the operation, establishing a livestock unit in the hamlet and breeding cows, water sources development, garbage management, use of storytelling as an activity and encourage visitors to engage in local village games.

Currently the village offers its customers only the village tour, which is the main income for the business. Considering the available resources in the village, it can come up with new products and services under few areas; i. Accommodation facilities-homestay development, use of tree house, use of “Gami gedara” for accommodation, promoting camping nights on the site, floating rooms on the lake etc. ii. Creating local handicrafts with available materials and iii. Expansion of organic farms with more locally grown items.

Motivating potential workers for the operation is essential to sustain the business. Hence, it requires providing proper awareness on the tourism industry. Some of the suggestions for this include; i. Conducting physical training programmes/workshops, ii. Organizing an awareness program on the importance of local culture in tourism, iii. Create additional income sources using the talents and skills of the people; performance events, cultural events, iv. Provide license or permit to carry out the tasks.

Further, the stakeholders of Hiriwadunna village typically include the local community members, government authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses operating in the area, and any other relevant parties involved in the village's development and well-being. These stakeholders play a crucial role in shaping the village's future by contributing their resources, expertise, and support to various

initiatives and projects. It is important to engage and collaborate with these stakeholders to ensure inclusive decision-making and sustainable development in Hiriwadunna village in terms of water resource management and garbage management.

Competing in the market is necessary, therefore to focus on a new target market in Hiriwadunna village, it is essential to conduct market research and understand the needs, preferences, and demographics of the local population. This information will help to identify potential customer segments like; domestic tourists, international tourists, families with children, artists (film and tele-drama producers, presenters of television programs) honeymooners, nature lovers and to form creative tourism offerings for them.

As the village seeks to expand its tourism offerings, there is a growing need for new HR strategies to support and sustain these initiatives. The human resources in Hiriwadunna village encompass various sectors of expertise, particularly in relation to the proposed activities aimed at enhancing the village's tourism potential. One key aspect of these strategies is the incorporation of trainees from tourism-related educational institutes to provide them with invaluable industry experience. In addition to that, tourism entrepreneurship can be fostered as a novel tool for ensuring the sustainability of the village. For example establishing livestock and breeding cows. As the government pays much attention to entrepreneurship in strengthening the country's economy, there could be possible local and international funding sources for starting up the businesses.

3.0 Impact

Impact of the innovative solution is positive and negative. Visitors to the village can get unique experience while engaging in activities; enjoy a nutritional Sri Lankan meal, learning about traditional rural culture and initiatives and applications of sustainability etc. However, lack of accommodation facilities, poor maintenance of sanitary facilities will be mainly caused for their travelling.

Positive impact for the stakeholders consisted with being able to interact with people in different societies. Particularly, farming families will get access to agricultural resources and support, increase of income through improved livelihoods in farming, participation of community development programs related to agriculture, receipt of advantages from infrastructure improvements that enhance the farming activities etc. Further, tour guides/interpreters/travel assistants are able to generate income from providing guiding and interpreting services to tourists. Receipt of economic

opportunities from tourism-related activities, and Support for training and skill development in the tourism sector.

Positive impact towards the environment consist of use of limited chemicals for cultivations of vegetables, fruits and paddy, less pollution with toxic gases and fuel etc. Further, negative impacts are limitation of natural habitats and animals, decreasing of cleanliness of the environment due to visitors' unaccepted behavior etc.

Considering the entire Hiriwadunna village as a company, positive impact can be increase the number of visitors, earn better income with the limited facilities and maintaining better image with their unique creativity and hospitality. Negative impacts are tourists' believes and concern about animals (They believes riding a cart is a torture/harm to the cows) and young generations' preference about the business (Do not like to be a boat rider or cart rider).

The tourism sector plays a significant role in the world economy, contributing to economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development, and Sustainable Service Unit (SSU) of Uva Wellassa University is taking part of this. Completing case study, we were able to gain valuable knowledge on application of sustainability concepts in Hiriwadunna tourism village. Especially as students who are studying tourism, we were able to identify how people use our traditional practices, beautiful nature and cultural activities to attract tourists.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

According to the results of the research conducted as a case study, it can be concluded that the existence of tourist villages has impacts that are more positive on local communities. In addition, development of tourist village will open new ways for employment opportunities, raises the culture, protect the nature, development of infrastructure, establishing network with external people/ organizations, increase of welfare of the local community etc. However, Lack of cooperation among the government, stakeholders and the local community, particularly in terms of infrastructure provision, and quality human resource development and capital, will be the obstacles faced by this village as tourist village.

PART – 3

LESSONS LEARNED

CHAPTER 4

Applied Approaches to Sustainability in Tourism in Partner Countries: A Synthesis of Sectors and Areas of Action

Emma Zavarrone, Martha Friel and Vittorio Ottaviani

1.0 Introduction

The 35 case studies discussed in the previous part offer a rich tapestry of endeavours within sustainable tourism across diverse regions in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. These cases span varied geographical landscapes and encapsulate diverse initiatives and experiences. This depth allows for an intricate exploration of multiple dimensions within sustainable tourism in these three countries. From projects centred on ecotourism and adventure tourism to pioneering collaborations between public and private entities, the breadth of contexts examined emphasises the profound influence of sustainable tourism on diverse communities and within various socio-economic and environmental frameworks.

Moreover, the comprehensive spectrum of sectors covered, including aspects such as engaging local communities, fostering traditional craftsmanship, and adopting environmentally conscious tourism practices, confirms the necessity for a multifaceted approach when addressing the challenges and prospects within this sector.

The collection of such a diverse and articulated set of organised information is also a unique opportunity for a more in-depth analysis of the significance of these case studies, both generally and within their development contexts.

The following paragraphs, therefore, will discuss some considerations about the cases developed by the CESTour partners, which were elaborated under the perspective of text analytics.

2.0 Looking at the CESTour Cases as Textual Data: Methodological Aspects

Creating these case studies has adhered to a consistent framework comprising distinct elements crucial for implementing a broad textual approach (Manning & Schutz, 1999). These reports essentially serve as input for textual data and are investigated for various facets, including:

- **Report structure:** Analysing how the cases are organised and structured.
- **Commonly used words:** Identifying frequently used terms or phrases within the cases.

- **Comparative analysis among partners:** Evaluating and comparing the cases across different contributors.
- **Semantic network:** Exploring the interconnectedness and relationships between different concepts or terms within the cases.
- **Topic identification:** Discerning and categorising the main themes or subjects covered in the cases.

To analyse these reports effectively, an essential preliminary step involved transforming unstructured data into organised information, also known as corpus. This process involves breaking the reports into individual words or phrases, termed tokens. These tokens, separated by spaces and punctuation marks, represent the fundamental terms utilised in the texts. The methodology adopted for this process is often referred to as bag-of-words (Salton & McGill, 1983), wherein each document is treated as a collection of its tokens, disregarding grammatical and syntactical roles but considering the occurrence frequency of each token. This approach enables a structured analysis of the textual content and aids in uncovering patterns, themes, and relationships within the case studies.

The pre-processing of the tokens represents the first step for studying the 35 reports, so they have been analysed and divided into individual words or phrases (known as tokens), separated by spaces and punctuation marks. Specifically, we standardised the spelling of various tokens, such as multiwords with or without hyphens, and reverted each inflected word to its canonical form. For example, we converted plural nouns and adjectives to singular and verbs to their infinitive form.

The first part of the study relies on aspects investigating lexical diversity. A text with a large range of different words is likely more sophisticated than a text with a limited range of words. This is because a work with great lexical diversity employs a broader array of intricate vocabulary, necessitating a more refined comprehension of language. Type-Token Ratio (TTR) (Herdan, 1960) offers a straightforward approach to measuring lexical variety. It involves determining the lexical diversity of a text by dividing the number of unique words (types) by the total number of words (tokens).

Finally, we eliminated uninformative words from the corpus, such as pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and non-alphabetic characters. After the pre-processing stage, the corpus has been transformed into a Document Term Matrix (DTM) with 35 rows (representing documents) and columns (representing words). To decrease the dimensionality of this matrix, we applied a filter to remove terms with low occurrence (below a sparsity threshold of 2%). We eliminated texts that had no remaining tokens

after pre-processing. A descriptive analysis of the corpus has been realised in order to highlight both the commonly used tokens and the specific ones.

The Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) (Blei *et al.*, 2003) is a probabilistic model used in natural language processing and machine learning to perform topic modelling. The assumption is that documents consist of combinations of themes, with each topic being a probability distribution over words. Latent Dirichlet Allocation postulates the existence of hidden themes inside observed documents and aims to reveal these latent topics by analysing the distribution of words in the documents.

In tourism studies, LDA has been widely applied to analysing reviews on platforms such as Airbnb (Kiatkawsin *et al.*, 2020) or TripAdvisor (Guo *et al.*, 2017; Sann & Lai, 2023) to mine the key factors influencing consumer satisfaction.

However, in addressing contemporary challenges like over-tourism and climate change, Topic modelling analysis still shows a limited application, and examples can be found, for instance, in the scrutiny of patenting trends in which LDA has been employed to measure the level of sustainable innovation in this sector (Blasi & De Noni, 2023). Therefore, the application of this method should be further explored because, in contrast to deductive studies focused on hypothesis testing, the data-driven approach of topic modelling stands out for its precision in distinguishing between topics. This precision can give managers and decision-makers subtler and more detailed insights (Kiatkawsin *et al.*, 2020).

3.0 Results and Discussion

Following the aforementioned analysis, the 35 case studies were examined, leading to some interesting findings.

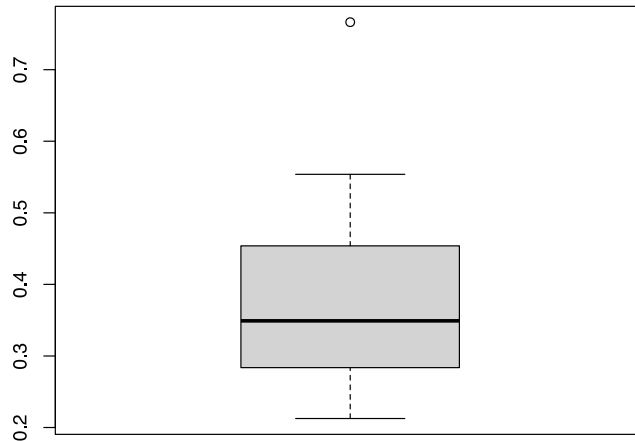
The first one regards the lexical structures of the cases (Figure 1), which exhibits the variability of lexical diversity measured by a TTR (a raw measure). Type Token Ratio ranges between 0 - which indicates very low lexical diversity - and 1, which is the maximum lexical diversity.

In detail, the boxplot computed on TTR values shows the presence of lexical variability in more than 75% of the cases. This implies that the 35 cases present a variety of terms with little repetition and a property of language that can be understood as a proxy for the level of depth and knowledge of the reality investigated.

At the end of the pre-processing, the DTM presents 35 documents and 6,837 terms for a sparsity level of 87.82%. This DTM has been obtained by applying the TFIDF weight scheme proposed by Salton & Wong (1995) in the last century, an

important condition when the documents in the corpus have different lengths. The word cloud resulting from the analysis also provides some interesting insights into the prevailing themes and priorities within case studies (Figure 2).

Figure 1: TTR Boxplot Devoted to the Lexical Diversity



Source: Authors on best practices from CESTour's centers of excellence

Figure 2: Word Cloud Related to the Corpus



Source: Authors on best practices from CESTour's centers of excellence

Not surprisingly, at the forefront of these themes are the words “Tourism” and “Sustainable,” which are the core of the CESTour project and the activity of the Centers of Excellence.

A closer examination of the cloud reveals a strong focus on “Local” and “Community.” These terms highlight a shift towards prioritising the involvement of local communities in tourism initiatives. The industry acknowledges the importance of collaboration and mutual benefit, signalling a departure from traditional tourism models that may not have been as considerate of local perspectives and well-being.

The prominence of “Experience” in the word cloud reflects a growing recognition of the significance of traveller experiences. Many of the analysed cases emphasise creating meaningful, authentic interactions beyond superficial tourism, fostering a deeper connection between visitors and the destinations they explore.

The term “Provide” stands out, encapsulating the industry’s commitment to delivering tourism services that meet travellers’ expectations and contribute positively to the well-being of local communities and the preservation of the environment. This speaks to a broader understanding that tourism should be a force for good, benefitting both hosts and visitors alike.

In the secondary cluster, words like “Impact,” “Company,” and “Travel” underscore a more comprehensive view of the tourism landscape, while the presence of the word “Impact” suggests a heightened awareness of the positive and negative consequences that tourism can have on destinations. The inclusion of “Company” implies the presence and the pivotal role businesses play in shaping the industry’s trajectory, indicating a need for responsible and sustainable business practices.

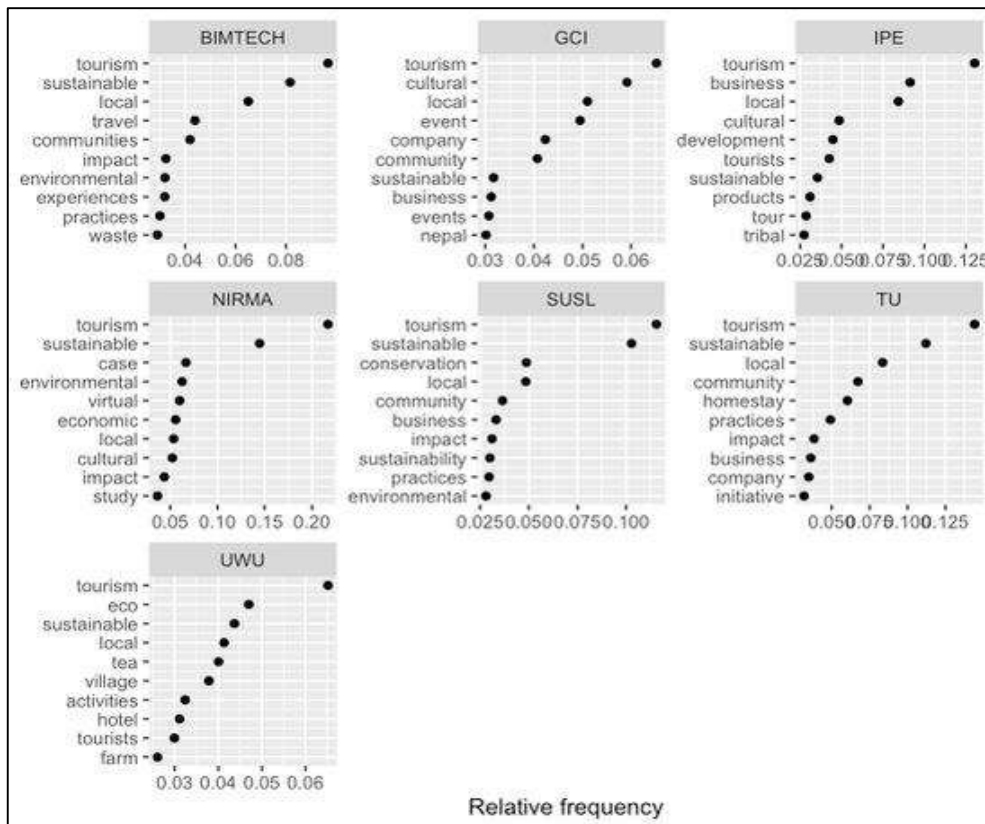
A nuanced landscape, therefore, emerges from the analysis, revealing also common thematic threads across the different countries (Figure 3) and the partner universities (Figure 4).

Again, initiatives based on community engagement stand out as a recurring motif, as reflected in case studies such as “Agri-Tourism and Local Community Development” and “Community-Based Ecotourism” from Indian universities. Similar projects, such as “Panauti Community Homestay” and “Kritipur Community Homestay” from Nepalese counterparts, further emphasise this thematic coherence. This consistent theme underscores a shared commitment to conceptualising sustainable tourism as a vehicle for community empowerment and preserving both material and immaterial cultural heritage within communities.

The preservation of cultural heritage also prominently emerges in the discourse, as evidenced by the frequency of the recurrence of the words “cultural” and

“Wild Glamping Gal Oya,” indicating a conscientious approach to responsible wildlife tourism practices.

Figure 4: Comparison of Term Frequency Distribution among India, Nepal and Sri Lanka



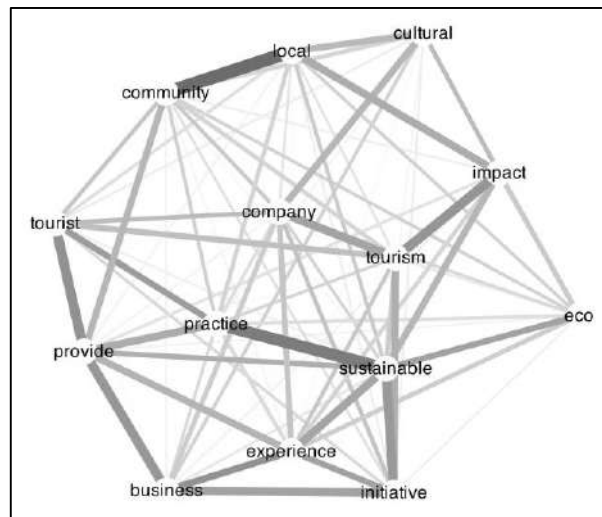
Source: Authors on best practices from CESTour’s centers of excellence

Divergent national trajectories also emerge in the comparative analysis of the case studies. The various geographical locations in India, from the Himalayas to Andhra Pradesh, exemplify a nuanced array of sustainable tourism initiatives. Nepalese case studies focused on specific communities like Panauti, and Kritipur underscores the localised nature of sustainable tourism efforts. Sri Lankan universities contribute unique perspectives, with case studies exploring tea tourism, wildlife tourism, and sustainable

agriculture, aligning these initiatives with the distinctive attributes of the Sri Lankan landscape.

Additionally, some intriguing findings emerge by exploring the interconnectedness and relationships between various concepts or terms within the cases (Figure 5). Despite the differences among the partners' various sub-corpora, a common thread is evident in highlighting correlations between terms. Specifically, it can be observed that “local” and “community” are strongly correlated, as are “practice,” “sustainable,” and “initiative.” These correlations unveil the true core that unites all 35 cases.

Figure 5: Term Correlation among Terms



Source: Authors on best practices from CESTour's centers of excellence

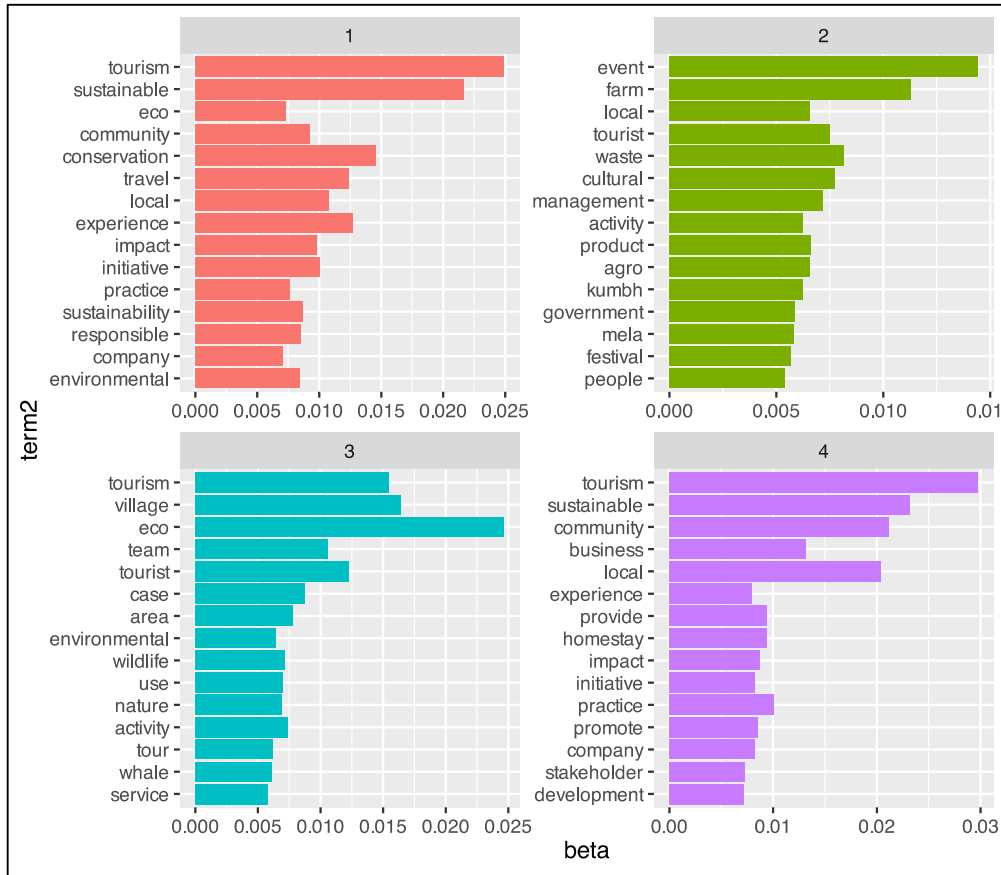
Finally, through the analysis, it was also possible to extract several hot topics from the cases, which resulted in quite well-distinguished and interpretable results.

A pattern of terms represents each topic, and each term is associated with a probability indicating its likelihood of belonging to a specific topic.

The results are presented in Figure 6, where barplots depict the main topics along with their associated terms and probabilities. Each barplot is labeled with the topic number, and the terms characterizing that particular topic are listed. The presence of the same word across different topics is noted as a common outcome. However, the

probability (beta coefficients) associated with each term may vary between topics. For example, the term “eco” may have a probability of 0.07 in Topic 1 and 0.025 in Topic 3.

Figure 6: Hot Topics and Terms Based on Beta Coefficients



Source: Authors on best practices from CESTour’s centers of excellence

The identified hot topics from the analysis are briefly outlined. The first topic concerns the novel concept of travel experiences associated with sustainable tourism and its impact. The second topic focuses on local cultural events, the third highlights adventure holidays from a sustainability perspective, and the last relates to sustainable homestays. These findings provide a structured and interpretable summary of the key themes derived from the analysis.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

The exploration of case studies on sustainable tourism initiatives reveals a concerted effort to unveil the intricacies of sustainable tourism. These cases collectively contribute to a comprehensive framework of how sustainability principles are integrated into different aspects of the tourism industry.

With regard to the tourism segments analysed by the cases it is interesting to note how ecotourism is a recurring theme. This indicates increased awareness among students, scholars, and professionals regarding aligning tourism activities with ecological sustainability. From initiatives promoting sustainable travel practices to those embracing net-zero approaches, the focus on ecotourism signifies a focus on those experiences that can be of inspiration to minimise the environmental impact of tourism initiatives.

Hospitality also emerges as a crucial sector with substantial representation in the case studies. Examining various establishments, including “Heritage Kandalama” and “Lavie Garden,” these cases carefully scrutinise the hospitality industry’s efforts in adopting and promoting sustainable practices. Such initiatives may encompass areas such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and community engagement, contributing to an overall more sustainable tourism experience.

The presence of adventure tourism cases indicates a growing awareness of the need to incorporate sustainability practices in high-intensity tourism activities. These cases delve into how adventure tourism can coexist with environmental conservation and encourage responsible tourism behaviour.

The inclusion of festival tourism cases underscores the exploration of the intricate relationship between cultural celebrations, tourism, and sustainability. Cases addressing these themes examine how festivals can be leveraged for the conservation of cultural heritage while simultaneously mitigating the potential negative impacts of mass tourism.

The diverse sectors covered in these case studies, therefore, collectively emphasise a holistic approach to sustainable tourism development in Asia, and the commitment to eco-friendly practices, community engagement, and the exploration of innovative elements collectively advance the discourse and practice of sustainable tourism in the region.

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CHAPTER 5

Lessons Learned from the ERASMUS+ Project CESTour

Harald A. Friedl

1.0 Introduction

The ERASMUS+ project had the visionary goal of promoting expertise in the field of sustainable tourism development of the highest quality in the three partner countries Nepal, India and Sri Lanka in order to support economic development in the respective regions and subsequently strengthen cooperation between universities and companies in South Asia.

This sounds wonderful, because a look into the past illustrates the enormous role that trade in goods and ideas played as a source of exchange between cultures and regions. In this way, regions gained access to valuable material and non-material resources that made new developments possible. This systemic, albeit very general, principle has not changed to this day. This could be observed, for example, in the decades since the end of the Second World War in the development and spread of tourism as a cultural practice: Until twenty years ago, there was hardly a region on this planet that had not been reached by the consumerist cultural practice of tourism and triggered corresponding processes of cultural change, as the author himself had researched using a country as remote as Niger (Friedl, 2009). Of course, this global development of tourism has also experienced repeated shocks over the last twenty years, which have led to a temporary slowdown in the growth of tourism globally and to the interruption or even impossibility of tourism development in some regions. Examples include 9/11, the global financial crisis or the Arab Spring with its regional escalations into social unrest such as in Egypt or Algeria, or even civil wars such as in Syria, Libya or Yemen. The latter countries in particular have since disappeared from the tourist map.

Despite these shocks, the belief in the power of tourism as an effective tool for “sustainable development” continued unabated, as suggested by the UN Year with the same name (UNWTO) in 2016 (Friedl, 2017). Against this backdrop, it was logical that the concept of the CESTour application met with favor with the relevant jury and was approved to start on 15 January 2021. But by this time, the world had changed fundamentally.

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, global tourism experienced its biggest and most profound disruption since the Second World War. Suddenly, the whole world went into lockdown; everything came to a standstill, no more tourists showed up,

and no more airplanes cut through the sky. The borders were closed worldwide. This suddenly presented the practicability of ERASMUS+ projects with previously unthinkable challenges. The Covid-19 crisis also led to massive economic shocks, for example due to the global loss of foreign currency income from tourism, which presented smaller partner countries with major economic and social challenges.

But as soon as the project partners had quickly and constructively switched to a culture of virtual communication and cooperation, a new event shook Europe and its self-image as a region in which war as a legitimate means of politics was considered a thing of the past with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The war in Ukraine led to a variety of upheavals in Europe in numerous spheres of domestic and foreign policy as well as in the economy and society.

And as if Pandora's box had not already been wide open, the Hamas attack on Israel sparked a new war in the Middle East, which now threatens to spread into a conflagration, as attacks by Yemeni Huthis on merchant ships in the Red Sea suggest.

How did these - from a European perspective - far-reaching changes in global and regional conditions affect the cooperation and the results of CESTour? How did the project partners deal with them? And what lessons can be learnt from these experiences for the project partners and for future projects?

2.0 Experienced Challenges of the Project CESTour

2.1 Covid-19 as an obstacle and learning opportunity

The most far-reaching impact on project implementation was probably the Covid-19 pandemic with its far-reaching restrictions. This initially led to a delayed start to the project, and the corresponding kick-off meeting had to be held online. Anyone with experience in international projects will inevitably take notice, as the main purpose of a joint kick-off meeting is to get to know the culturally and scientifically diverse project partners to "tune in" to each other in the best possible way and build trust. This purpose is usually promoted by supporting programs such as joint dinners and excursions because shared positive experiences contribute to building trust. However, it was precisely this shared learning environment that was missing, which posed a problem insofar as the author had never travelled to the three Asian partner countries Nepal, India and Sri Lanka and therefore had no experience in dealing with their cultures.

It is pointless here to discuss the opportunities and deficits of virtual communication with regard to learning and recognizing cultural nuances, because we were all ultimately "in the same boat": we had no choice, had to adapt to the circumstances and were "thrown in at the deep end" together in order to learn to "swim

communicatively” as quickly and as far as possible without any relevant prior knowledge in the context of interaction between different cultures solely on the basis of the Internet and email. The special features and challenges posed by the different cultures are discussed in the next section.

Covid-19 not only represented a fundamental challenge for the economy, society, and communication, but also an opportunity. While the international community had agreed at the COP in Paris on the goal of slowing down the global greenhouse effect by reducing emissions to a level of 1.5 degrees plus, little has happened since then. Instead, the volume of all types of greenhouse gas emitted each year has increased, particularly in the tourism sector (TPCC, 2023). With the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis, a world without high-emission travel around the world suddenly became a tangible reality. The compulsion to use digital tools to overcome a divisive space virtually and as efficiently as possible opened up great opportunities for experience and learning, not only in the area of communication, but also in the further development of the mindset. Since travelling has become possible again, the option of virtual communication as a resource and emission-saving alternative to real travel is no longer seen as eccentric environmental fanaticism but rather as an expression of reflected efforts to use resources efficiently and proportionately.

2.2 The meeting of different cultures...

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world and is also considered a global center for high mountain tourism. India has had the largest population in the world since 2023 and is characterized by almost incomprehensible cultural diversity due to its enormous size alone. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, is the smallest partner country at just under 66,000 square kilometers (Nepal approx. 148,000 sqkm, India 3.288,000 sqkm) with the smallest population of around 22 million people (Nepal: approx. 30 million, India approx. 1.4 billion), but is the most tourism-intensive partner country with 0.1 tourist arrivals per inhabitant (Nepal: 0.04 arrivals/inhabitant; India: 0.008 arrivals/inhabitant). The dimension of tourism intensity of these countries becomes clear when comparing them with Spain (0.56 arrivals/inhabitant), Italy (0.92 arrivals/inhabitant) or even Austria with 5.2 tourist arrivals per inhabitant, measured in 2019 (BMAW 2020).

Knowledge of such framework conditions makes it plausible why the European partner countries have extensive experience in tourism as well as with tourism-specific problems and solutions. However, the “head start” of the project members from these countries in terms of expertise is limited to this. “All theory is gray”, because reality

usually looks different. As already reported in the chapter on sustainable tourism development (chapter I), stakeholder participation is a key prerequisite for the promotion of sustainable processes. However, what “participation” means in concrete terms and which methods of active communicative involvement are considered “helpful” depends largely on the culture of those affected. What did this mean in concrete terms for our project?

The role a person takes on, or is even allowed or required to take on, depends on the prevailing culture. While flat hierarchies tend to develop in Western industrialized cultures, particularly in the academic sector, in which situational functions and the associated skills determine a person’s role and influence, in India and Nepal aspects such as origin from certain population groups, but especially age and the social and academic positions acquired in the process, as well as the associated social networks, appear to play a greater role in how people interact with each other. The different gender roles are of particular relevance here. When, for example, a young female project manager from Europe meets an Indian professor emeritus with extensive international contacts, this presents communicative challenges that must first be learnt to overcome.

This is not the place to discuss the theoretical dimension or the specific causes of these differences. What is important is primarily the fact that cooperation between such culturally diverse partners leads to challenges that need to be overcome if project goals are to be achieved together. But this is precisely where the teams encountered further challenges: Firstly, collaborating with partners whose stay spans five time zones requires sophisticated time management that is reasonable for everyone involved. Added to this is a different perception of time. For example, very rich societies are able to meet deadlines more easily due to their available resources and well-developed infrastructure compared to countries with poor roads, slow Internet and a frequent interruption in the supply of electrical energy. In this respect, deadlines, especially under the influence of Covid-19, fulfill more of an orientation function in project practice. At this point, we would like to thank the responsible departments of the European Commission, which responded to these circumstances in a correspondingly accommodating and flexible manner.

Another topic was the European Union’s distinct obligation to meticulously document all work steps and financial arrangements with the aim of preventing any misuse of public funding through transparency, as the misappropriation of EU funds has repeatedly played an inglorious role in the history of the European Union. The sense of such strict documentation requirements seems difficult to comprehend in regions with a less developed judicial system, whereby personal relationships promise a higher degree of legal certainty than neatly formulated contracts and accounting documents.

Questions relating to the ethics committee posed particularly great challenges in this context: What function should, and can such a body fulfill in this intercultural context? What is the best way to reach a consensus there? But what function should and can such a body fulfill at all? It should be borne in mind that ethical judgements and decisions are themselves highly culturally contextualized and, therefore, prone to conflict. Such questions are already challenging within a reasonably familiar cultural space, as only a few people deal with ethics at a professional level in everyday life. These limitations and challenges apply all the more in an intercultural context.

At this point, it would be appropriate to reflect on different concepts of understanding, communication and language, but there is not enough space for this. The only thing that needs to be said at this point is that there is no way around a joint debate on these and other culturally connoted topics. Practical experience shows that cultural differences often have to be resolved through compromises in order to remain capable of acting, even if these compromises appear unsatisfactory at first glance. However, it should not be forgotten that the focus here is on the process of intercultural learning, understood by the author as a gradual coordination of communicative and conceptual patterns. Living in a complex world, and even more so working on an intercultural project, is a learning process.

2.3 ...and the impact of different living environments

In Austria, there is the saying “Nothing is fixed”, a colloquial expression of the ancient wisdom of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, “Panta rhei” (Greek: “Everything flows”). This means that the world around us - and therefore, we ourselves - is constantly changing, and therefore also, unexpected changes are part of this normality. If, for example, Sri Lanka slips into a massive, nationwide economic crisis due to political upheaval, this has a direct impact on the purchase of equipment for the competence centers to be set up. This applies even more to Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the world: the assumption that, under such living conditions, the purchase of a few computers merely involves sending an email to a competent company is in danger of failing under such conditions. This is where the ideological concepts of a European Union characterized by efficiency and effectiveness or a reliable legal and judicial system collide. Once again, it is the concrete, active struggle of the partners involved for mutual understanding, but also for the fulfillment of minimum agreements despite such adverse circumstances, to ultimately achieve a result of this ERASMUS+ project that is acceptable to the supervisory institutions of the European Union. The emphasis here is on “Erasmus”, because here the name is also the program...

3.0 The Philosophical Intentions of ERASMUS+ Projects

The Dutch polymath Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) gave his name to this type of European funding program. The theologian, priest, philologist and philosopher was the author and editor of over 400 publications and was therefore regarded as one of the most influential thinkers of his time, as he also acted as a church reformer. From today's perspective, he is regarded as one of the most important representatives of European humanism, who became a pioneer of the European Enlightenment, particularly due to his critical reflections on numerous topics (Barker, 2021).

In his writings, Erasmus emphasized the paramount importance of education in the sense of striving for knowledge about the world in order to be able to make rational decisions on this sound basis. Erasmus also understood education in terms of the development of the individual mind, as he considered reason to be the central guiding principle for any form of education (Zweig, 2021). The European Union's ERASMUS+ projects also epitomize these principles by promoting innovation, social cohesion and personal growth through the joint cooperation of different partners on the basis of reason and respective experience in order to overcome existing problems and challenges.

The philosophy of the ERASMUS projects places a particular focus on dialogue between different nations, cultures, and academic disciplines, as well as on the associated open exchange of ideas and opinions, in order to strengthen mutual understanding and tolerance and constructively tackle common challenges in mutual appreciation. Erasmus also emphasized this in his writings, for example in letters to his contemporary Thomas More (Huizinga, 1952).

In his letters and writings such as "Encomium Moriae" ("In Praise of Folly"), Erasmus criticized narrow-mindedness and advocated openness towards different cultures and ways of thinking. In this sense, he emphasized the role of tolerance as the key to understanding different ways of thinking and living (Erasmus, 2022). In letters to Thomas More, among others, the philosopher emphasized the high value of cultural diversity and criticized ethnocentric attitudes, which in turn can only be overcome through reason-based education (Huizinga, 1952). The ERASMUS+ program is also part of this tradition. It aims to enable program participants to gain international experience of diverse ways of living and thinking in order to develop global perspectives on this basis and thus overcome the outdated conviction of Europe's role as the "navel of the world". This openness is seen as an important contribution to the development of a networked, cooperative, and innovative Europe, but in particular as a contribution to peaceful coexistence in Europe and the world.

The ERASMUS+ philosophy considers the vision of common European values such as freedom, democracy, equality, and the validity of human rights to be a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence. The promotion of education and exchange intends to strengthen these values. Erasmus of Rotterdam also advocated this vision, for example in his political treatise “In Praise of Folly” (2022). The Erasmus+ initiative, therefore, sees itself as a continuation of the Erasmus legacy, as it were, in that the principles of the philosopher Erasmus mentioned here have been taken up and further developed in order to meet the current requirements of European and international cooperation in the field of education. In this sense, further political objectives of the ERASMUS+ programme are social inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, protection of the environment and the fight against climate change, active participation in democratic life and civic engagement (European Commission 2024).

4.0 Our Lessons Learned

What have we as a project team learnt from our three-year collaboration? To what extent have we been able to fulfill the educational aspirations of both Erasmus of Rotterdam and the European Commission?

First of all, travelling has once again shown that it increases the chance of better understanding between people from different cultures. As a European partner, becoming a guest of our partners in Nepal or Sri Lanka (the trip to India is still pending at the time of writing) allowed us to understand the specific problems and challenges better, but also the ways of living and thinking of the people existing there in accordance to their specific living conditions. Due to the former success of technical and industrial products, members of European culture tended to immediately “conjure up” a “suitable solution” from their traditional repertoire for every perceived problem. In the face of global challenges such as climate change, migration and terrorism, as well as political polarization, populism and the associated radicalization, such beliefs in the usefulness of ready-made solutions can only fail. The magic word is contextual learning, cooperation, and development. This ultimately applies to every problem that arises within a project.

The Covid-19 crisis has made it clear how quickly established frameworks and certainties can be shaken, even in seemingly stable constitutional states such as those of the European Union. This is all the more true for countries with weaker legal and social systems and less economic support. However, “understanding” this as Europeans generally requires concrete experience of such formative circumstances and challenges, and in particular reflection on such regional peculiarities. Only in this way can the

horizon of understanding grow and the necessary tolerance for contextual difficulties flourish.

With this in mind, I had the special honor of being invited by a Nepalese project member on a two-day trip to his property in north-west Nepal, which enabled me to gain a better understanding of the living conditions in the hinterland of the main city of Kathmandu. Above all, however, the time spent travelling together enabled intensive discussions about the history and politics of Nepal as well as about the personal experiences and perspectives of my Nepalese colleague. This not only helped to reduce barriers to understanding, but also created the basis for a friendship.

Our colleagues from Sri Lanka also managed to provide insights into the country's ancient culture through a very well-balanced excursion program. I was particularly impressed by the visit to an indigenous community and the conversations we had with the village elders about their challenges and concerns. As I had written my dissertation on indigenous nomadic communities in the Central Sahara twenty years ago, I was very enthusiastic about this visit.

In conclusion, it can be summarized that good times spent together forge a bond that is an indispensable basis for peaceful coexistence. Of course, this bond must be regularly maintained through careful exchange. After all, good relationships are like houseplants: without a regular supply of light, water and nutrients, they wither.

5.0 Recommendations for Further Projects

What recommendations can be derived from the above reflections for future international projects based on the principles of ERASMUS+ projects?

1. The demand for intercultural learning should, above all, be placed on oneself, and this should also be seen as a central opportunity for participation in such a project. In contrast, tolerance and patience should be shown to the partners, be it those of one's own institute or those of partners from abroad. After all, building trust and mutual learning can only succeed through mutual respect.
2. Mistakes happen, and mistakes must also be corrected, and serious consequential damage minimized. This is essentially about the "art of how" shortcomings and mistakes are addressed with partners. Probably the most important principle in interpersonal and international cooperation is never to embarrass the other party. "Austrian charm" might be very helpful in paving the way here.
3. Staying alert, keeping your eyes open and actively learning as much as possible about the country and people of the partner countries. In this way, an awareness of the increasing problems that the partners are confronted with globally, nationally,

and locally will flourish. Such understanding is an important prerequisite for building trust with partners. Trust, in turn, is the prerequisite for being able to address such problems in private. Because trust is the prerequisite for any successful dialogue and any sustainable cooperation, investments must also be made time and again in cultivating trust.

4. Work on your own resilience to potential problems and difficulties (Dolce *et al.*, 2023): The world is becoming more complicated, the demands greater, the problems more complex. Anyone who desperately clings to the letter of the project plan under such project conditions will despair. As the name suggests, projects are fictitious assumptions that should be approximated to some extent - within the bounds of the possible. According to Otto von Bismarck, "politics is the art of the possible". In this sense, working with international ERAMSUS+ projects is the art of learning where possibilities exist and how these can be improved. The more sensitively, attentively, and patiently, but also self-deprecatingly, this learning takes place, the more the possibilities will emerge from the fog of strangeness into the space of flourishing trust and crystallize as tangible project results.

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Author's bio-sketch

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About the Book

The growing need for knowledge and innovative practices in sustainability has shifted from mere discussion to a mandatory requirement, significantly influencing education and research priorities. The tourism sector, strategic for the development of many countries and communities but also controversial in its impacts on the environment and local cultures, has been among the first to recognize the necessity of innovating towards more sustainable practices. Key figures like researchers, trainers, and managers adhering to sustainable development principles play a crucial role in shaping awareness and sustainability practices in the hospitality and tourism industry.

On the other hand, actions for sustainable tourism are crucial for environmental protection, employment support, and achieving better income distribution. Additionally, they are essential for preserving the rich cultural and knowledge values among populations underlying tourism development.

To contribute to addressing these challenges, the CESTour project (Centers of Excellence in sustainable tourism to boost economic development and enhance university-business cooperation in Southern Area) was initiated with the aim of improving education quality, raising awareness in the tourism sector, and providing training for sustainable tourism in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India. Partners of the project, funded by the European Union through Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education, are FH JOANNEUM Gesellschaft mbH, Austria; University of Alicante, Spain; IULM University, Italy; Birla Institute of Management and Technology, India; Institute of Public Enterprise, India; Nirma University, India; Tribhuvan University, Nepal; Global College International, Nepal; Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka; Uva Wellassa University, Sri Lanka.

The CESTour project has produced numerous national and comparative reports, along with innovative case studies on good practices in sustainable tourism, contributing to the development of excellence centers in seven partner countries. The project's contribution has materialized in the creation of educational programs, enrichment of faculty and student capabilities, development of practical cases, and the establishment of academic and industrial networks to foster the growth of excellence centers over time.

Specifically, Work Package 5 (WP5) of the project was dedicated to enhancing collaboration between tourism businesses and partner universities, involving students from centers of excellence in sustainable tourism in case challenges, the outcomes of which form the core of this volume. Led by academic mentors and the business world, students competitively developed and analyzed a series of product, service, and initiative experiences for sustainable tourism in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, creating a valuable "guide" of best practices enriched by academic contributions on key issues on sustainable tourism and its developments in Asia.

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