SO SRI LANKA

Strategic Plan for Sri Lanka Tourism 2022-2025

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	Average Daily Rate
Bn	Billion
CITM	China International Travel Mart
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee
LRK	Sri Lanka Rupee
IRU	Investor Relations Unit
ITB	International Travel Berlin
MSME	Micro, small and medium enterprises
MoF	Ministry of Finance
OTM	India's largest travel fair
SLAITO	Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators

SLITHM	Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management
SLTDA	Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
SLTPB	Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau
SLCB	Sri Lanka Tourism Conventions Bureau
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
TSA	Tourist Satellite Accounts
WBG	World Bank Group
WTM	World Travel Market London
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This document is a four-year strategic plan for the tourist sector in Sri Lanka from 2022 to 2025. The plan identifies issues and opportunities to focus on and provides a structured rationale for the actions proposed. Its purpose is to set an agenda for the recovery and future resilience of the tourism sector.

The challenges facing the tourism sector globally are unprecedented. For countries like Sri Lanka, where the sector is an important pillar of the economy, focusing actions and resources on sector recovery measures is critical. Rather than being all-encompassing, this document focuses on fewer action areas (twenty in all) that are feasible and has a strategic impact, which can be implemented in the next four years. These actions are explicitly demand and data-driven and follow a careful diagnosis of the tourist sector in Sri Lanka.

The key message of this plan is that the tourist sector can recover within two years and champion a vision of a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient model of tourism that is robust and more decisive steps towards achieving this can be made in the second half of this four-year plan. The plan also supports a more dynamic private sector that spreads the benefits of tourism across the Island, supports female economic empowerment and creates a sector more resilient to external shocks and thereby contributing positively towards the improvement of the macroeconomic indicators of Sri Lanka.

The plan is grounded in and structured around the National Policy Framework and uses the mandate to support actions that resolve long-standing systemic issues in tourism.

The diagnosis reveals that the tourist sector in Sri Lanka has not been able to achieve its full potential for a prolonged period, even before Easter Sunday attack in 2019 and Covid impact from March 2020. This is caused by many macro and micro level constraints and gaps. After three years of crises, the tourism sector is in a precarious situation. This is impacting the macro-economic situation of the country and is being felt by every stratum of the society. Therefore the rapid recovery of tourism sector demand and foreign exchange flows are critical, not only for the tourist sector and the livelihoods of people and firms within it – but for all 22 million Sri Lankans. In addition, as a result of the shocks and some of the business models used, the tourism sector is itself heavily indebted to the financial sector in Sri Lanka.

However the current situation presents a real opportunity, and urgent need, to improve performance and to protect, recover and to build back better as a vital economic sector. The Central Bank's October 2021 Roadmap for macroeconomic and financial system stability provides evidence that returning the tourist sector to growth is now a national priority and this focus can be mobilised to prioritize tourism recovery.

A detailed gap analysis performed revealed 'Four systemic issues' that underpin and constrain future sustainable and resilient tourism sector growth. These include,

Gap One: Need to build a more Resilient tourism industry:
Tourism in Sri Lanka has operated on narrow margins and is thus vulnerable to any downturn in tourist demand. There is a need to increase the viability of the sector to make it more resilient to external shocks. The workforce needs to be better trained in order to deliver higher quality services and a social protection system would protect the livelihoods of workers during a downturn. The industry and support agencies need to have a better developed crisis management system. There is also a need for community support for the industry operations.

Gap Two: Need for holistic positioning, branding and marketing:
There is a need for more consistent and integrated marketing communication for destination branding. This will be supported by a clearer understanding of the segmented market which will allow Sri Lanka to find its unique place in the global market. This will support more effective product planning and the development of a more diversified tourism product.

Gap Three: Need for inclusivity and equal opportunity creation:
Sustainable tourism needs to be a key part of Sri Lanka's strategy. Inclusivity will be improved by supporting SMEs in the industry to access finance and grow. Women's participation needs to increase in the tourism workforce.

Gap Four: Need for institutional improvement with better coordination and regulation:
At present the lack of coordination between multiple public agencies is diluting their ability to provide a conducive enabling environment for the industry. This is damaging tourism planning and destination management. It is also constraining foreign direct investment in high quality tourism product and infrastructure. This is an obstacle to improving the service quality standards that are required to develop a higher value destination.

Moving from the diagnosis of problems to developing the framework to guide future actions to address them. It is concluded that the existing Vision and Mission for Tourism are in line with the expectations of most stakeholders and identify key weaknesses in the industry. Thus, the existing **Vision** and **Mission** will be retained and this strategic plan will align with them.

Derived from the gap analysis, vision and mission, the strategic objectives or goals have been expanded. They incorporate tourist arrivals and yield to support the macroeconomic needs with the necessity to formalise the tourism sector, increase the participation of women, reduce barriers to investment and champion environmental regulations and sustainability.

To achieve the objectives, three strategic priorities have been identified in the strategic plan - 'Protect', 'Recover' and 'Build Back Better'. These strategic priorities entail the following.

The first priority is to protect the tourist sector. Under the most optimistic scenario tourism demand will not return to 'normal' levels until late 2023 or early 2024. There is a need to protect assets and people who have already suffered over the last three years of sporadic business and face the prospect of two more years before a return to normality. A focus is needed to minimise permanent scarring so that, when tourists return, there is an industry left to serve them. The design of support to the sector will be cognisant of the extreme pressure on public finances. The proposed Inter-Ministerial Committee on Tourism will better coordinate diverse stakeholders in the public sector and reflect the strategic importance of the industry. Continuous dialogue with industry stakeholders is necessary to understand their needs and design effective support programmes. Efforts to formalise the informal sector as a means of extending protection to the vulnerable will be accelerated, Sri Lanka Tourism will seek external finance to better protect the sector.

The second priority is the recovery of tourist demand as rapidly as possible. This phase of the strategy will also start in early 2022 because the most effective way to protect the sector is to get tourist flows back onto the Island. The actions proposed to support this strategy are a creative marketing campaign which recognises that, because we do not know how international tourism will recover from the Pandemic, there will be a premium on being adaptive and opportunistic.

Tourists are unlikely to return in volume from some traditional source markets for some time, thus the need to reach out to newer markets.

Digital communication with the tourists in traditional source markets should be stepped up so that Sri Lanka is 'front of mind' when long-haul leisure travel returns. The health concerns of tourists must be prioritised with maintaining effective health protocols and using social distancing rationale to unblock resistance to online advance ticketing and high service quality attraction management. The domestic tourist sector, which has kept much of the industry alive for the past two years, will be developed and grown actively.

The Hotel School will focus on providing the number and type of graduates needed by the industry and active steps will be taken to increase the number of women trained to work in the sector. As tourism demand returns, enforcement capacity of SLTDA will be increased to encourage the formalisation of the sector and the effective implementation of regulations to increase service standards. Given the tight fiscal space available domestically, the excellent relationships with development partners will be strengthened. Sri Lanka Tourism will facilitate actions to address Infrastructure bottlenecks, which are constraining the dispersal and future growth of the tourist sector as part of the recovery strategy.

The recovery phase will see a significant focus on improving the positioning and branding of Sri Lanka. A Global Communication Campaign will be implemented that will be a path-breaking initiative to reposition Sri Lanka to align with its high value vision and mission for tourism.

The third priority is to build back a better tourist sector.
Once demand flows have been re-established the focus can shift to building a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable tourist sector.

The actions proposed to support this strategy are a focus on the dispersal of tourists more widely, on different routes and to different attractions. This will require improving tourist infrastructure in under-served areas as well as encouraging investment in tourism product. Effective environmental regulation will progress beyond trying to prevent damaging schemes (i.e. minimise further harm) and encourage retrofitting existing properties to create 'green' hotels (i.e. to improve existing environmental performance). The Hotel School and hoteliers are expected to provide the supply and demand side, respectively, of a gender equality transformation in the tourism workforce in Sri Lanka.

The proposed Tourism Act and the merging of three out of four tourism establishments to include the Development Authority, Promotion Bureau and Conventions Bureau, as 'Sri Lanka Tourism' is expected to strengthen the institutional performance and management to better serve the industry and to benefit the Sri Lankan economy.

Further there will be a significant focus on improving the regulatory framework to enable tourist developments to facilitate the necessary increased investments in infrastructure and tourist products.

These three strategic priorities will be implemented through a ten pillar strategic plan which spells out: creating a people centric tourism sector; facilitating an efficient public service and uplifting industry standards; enhancing technology based tourism sector; ensuring a safe and secure Country for tourists; legal and regulatory framework, building a sustainable and environment friendly tourism industry; new product developments and promotions; positioning and marketing Sri Lanka; facilitating the development of Infrastructure and services; and, championing partnerships. Under each of of these pillars, action areas and specific actions have been mapped and resources allocated to allow successful execution. These options will, collectively address the gaps identified and achieve the overall strategic objectives. The strategic action plan is presented in detail under Section 3 of this document.

Further, this strategic plan has proposed a holistic strategic framework for Sri Lanka Tourism. This incorporates the national policy framework, gap analysis, tourism policy framework and proposed strategy. This will assist the establishment in driving the sector holistically and strategically while ensuring results orientation (Refer Figure 1 for the proposed strategic framework).

1. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategically important industry for Sri Lanka contributing as the third largest export earner for the national economy, creating local jobs both direct and indirect and creating opportunities for foreign direct investments. In 2019, Sri Lanka was visited by 1.9 million international visitors who stayed an average of 10.4 days, and generated an estimated US$ 3.6 billion to the local economy. By contrast, the global Travel and Tourism industry generated $1,481 billion with 1.4 billion international arrivals (UNWTO) and created some 330 million jobs - about 1 in 10 jobs globally (WTTC). Sri Lanka has untapped opportunity to be strategically explored and capitalized.

The industry can also provide an effective platform for destination branding and communication which will create a unique national asset that can yield benefits across industries and sectors with ripple down effects benefiting the poorest communities.
Sri Lanka Tourism has consistently been recognized globally as one of the preferred, favoured and safest destinations in the world by 'Lonely Planet', 'Forbes magazine', 'Condé Nast Traveller', 'The Guardian', New York Times' and WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council) showing the potential for a formidable destination brand that can create national value.

However, Tourism is also a vulnerable industry. Sri Lankan Tourism industry suffered heavily from the Easter Sunday attacks in 2019 with a decline in tourism arrivals compared with 2018 with over 2.3 million foreign visitors, the highest ever.

Also tourism has been one of the hardest hit sectors by the unprecedented global health crisis. Tourism in Sri Lanka was put on hold due to the Covid-19 health crisis which damaged the lives and livelihoods of thousands that are dependent on the industry. The tourism industry in Sri Lanka is characterised by volatilities, uncertainties, complexities and ambiguities and the industry needs to position itself to recover rapidly, to deliver value to a wider spectrum of society. Further the tourism industry globally will play a pivotal role in post-Covid 19 economic recovery as tourism revival is one of the fastest means to re-start and rejuvenate other economic sectors.

Given the context Sri Lanka Tourism needs to adopt a strategic recovery plan that concentrates on short term survival and continuity, short to medium term for revival in terms of process improvements for value chain enhancements and medium to long term focused re-positioning, re-structuring, re-organizing initiatives to build back stronger.

Therefore this Strategic Plan comes at a critical time for the tourist sector in Sri Lanka where recovery and growth in the tourism sector are critical for Sri Lanka's economic stability.

Rich vein of previous tourism strategies

This strategic plan is based on the 2017-2020 Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP), National Policy Framework 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour', the industry wide stakeholder feedback and through an in-depth industry gap analysis. The tourist sector has already been through an extensive consultation process for the Strategic plan 2017-2020 and, more recently, the National Tourism Policy process. Building on this dialogue, an extensive secondary literature review, over thirty stakeholder interviews were undertaken to collect the evidence on which this plan is based. Earlier policy and strategy initiatives have successfully identified many of the problems facing tourism in Sri Lanka and this document builds on those along with the current gap analysis integrated. This Plan will assist the recovery efforts and restructuring of the industry to better capitalize on post-Covid 19 opportunities.

This Strategic Plan was not drafted in a policy vacuum. At a national level, Sri Lanka has a National Policy Framework and at a sector level, the draft National Tourism Policy which is currently under-going consultation with a view to finalisation in mid-2022. The plan is expected to assist at an institutional level for Sri Lanka Tourism to align itself within this policy context and to identify specific and implementable actions that will support the overall strategic goals.
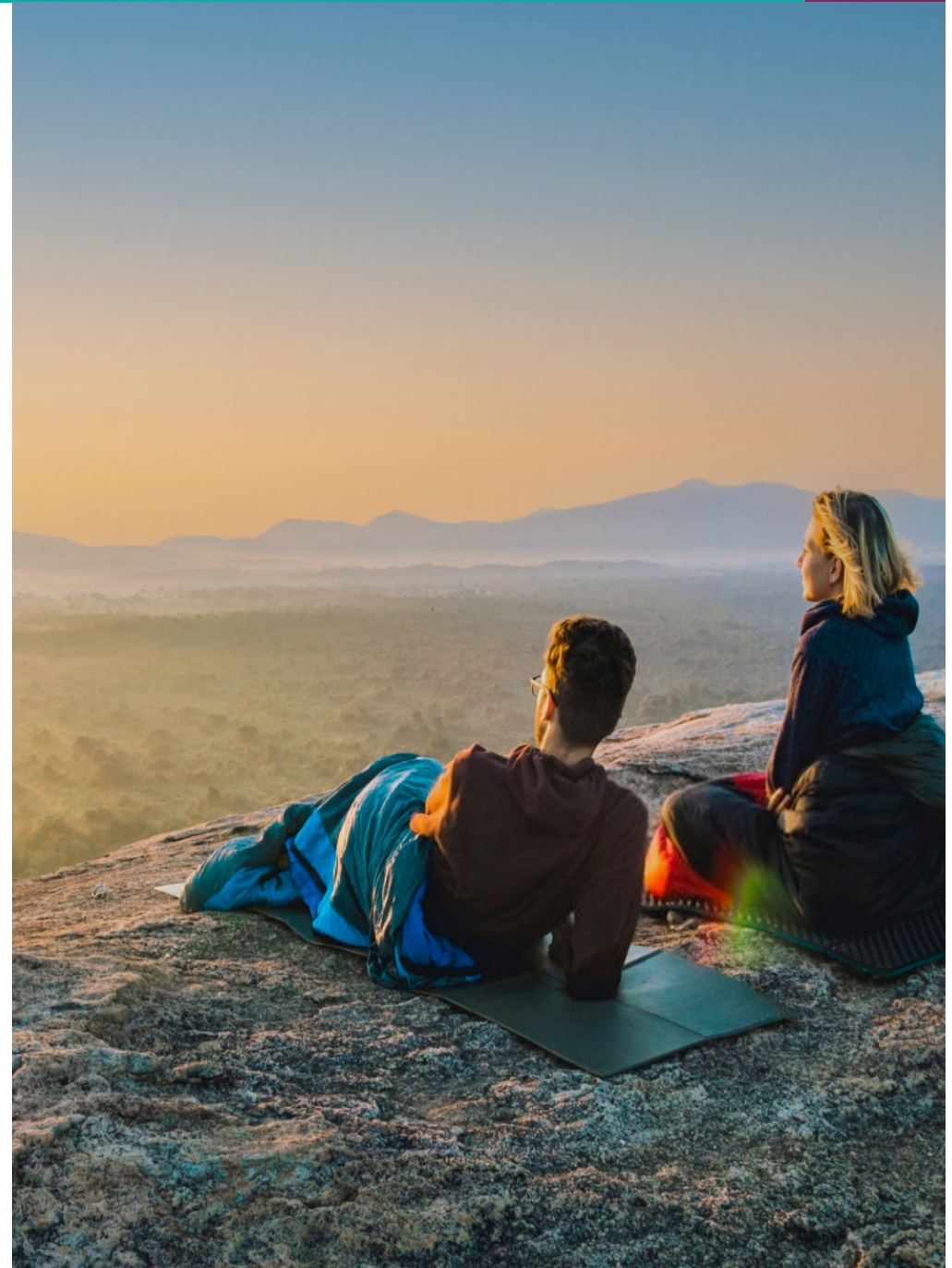
The National Policy Framework

His Excellency President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's vision as specified in the manifesto; 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour' enshrines strategic policy commitments. These are articulated in the form of the National Policy Framework for Sri Lanka and are framed by ten key policy objectives.

1   Pillar One - Priority to National Security
2   Pillar Two - Friendly, Non-aligned, Foreign Policy
3   Pillar Three - An Administration Free from Corruption
4   Pillar Four - New Constitution that fulfills the people's wishes
5   Pillar Five - Productive Citizenry and a vibrant Human resource
6   Pillar Six - People Centric Economic Development
7   Pillar Seven - Technology Based Society
8   Pillar Eight - Development of Physical Resources
9   Pillar Nine - Sustainable Environmental Management
10   Pillar Ten - Disciplined, Law Abiding and values based society

This vision has a strong focus on tourism to develop as an environmental and domestic culture friendly industry with extensive public participation. This requires a strategic alignment from Sri Lanka Tourism focused on strategic shift in value creation and delivery approach from the Tourism Industry. This policy and strategy will be delivered by activities focusing on 17 areas to include,

1. Identify new attractions in the Country for foreign tourists
2. Facilitate to hold business conferences, festivals, exhibitions and seminars to attract tourists
3. Provide investment and other facilities to the private sector to develop tourism
4. Introduce more efficient immigration and emigration process
5. Modernize internal airports
6. Set up tourist service centers at the road junctions connecting main tourist cities
7. Streamline the process of approval of tourist facilities while setting up regional offices
8. Establish tourist training schools in main tourism cities and also introduce attractive skills development courses
9. Introduce e-based facilities for reservation of hotels, transport, guides, domestic air tickets and admission card (single booking software system and electronic gate system)
10. Increase the number of workers up to one million in the tourism industry
11. Initiate a strategic marketing and advertising programme to promote tourism
12. Provide incentives to set up high quality tourist hotels and increase number of hotel rooms currently available up to double
13. Initiate an enabling environment for local performers to attract tourists
14. Revise labour laws governing tourist sector workers
15. Develop household related and community-based tourism
16. Register, train and certify all tourists guides and drivers to prevent unnecessary harassment of tourists, ensure security and protection for the tourists
17. Establish tourist police service near tourist centers

Industry Gap Analysis

A comprehensive gap analysis for the tourism sector was undertaken, based on detailed consultations with stakeholders and organisations in the industry. These highlighted the strategic improvement areas and failures in the current system and industry which need to be addressed. The gaps were then analysed to form the root causes and pain points that reflected four key areas along with their contributing factors to improve.

These include the following.

Gap One: Need to build a more resilient tourism industry

1. Need to relook at the **business model and pricing strategy** for Sri Lanka. Tourism has been a private sector led industry and for a prolonged period a 'low price strategy' has been adopted.
   This has resulted in low capital generation for the industry and vulnerability to shocks.
2. Need to **engage, train and develop tourism workforce.** Income diversification improved in the workforce
3. Need to create a **social protection system** for the tourism workforce.
4. Need to ensure both institutional and industry preparedness for **crisis management.**
5. Need to improve effective communication across **all marketing channels to ensure community support** for tourism industry operations. Specifically with crisis and Pandemic operations to ensure safety and security of the visitors.

Gap Two: Need for holistic positioning, branding and marketing

1. Need for **consistent and integrated marketing communication** for destination branding
2. Need to **improve market understanding,** visitor segmentation in carving out a unique positioning for the destination. Currently there is a lack of comprehensive visitor research, data and market intelligence which impact negatively on product development decisions and marketing strategies.
3. Need for **holistic product planning, development and diversification.** Currently limited attention is given to product diversification and destination development which has resulted in commoditized, me too, cookie-cutter products with no value addition. Limited focus on tourism experience.

Gap Three: Need for inclusivity and the creation of equal opportunities

1. Need to adopt **sustainable tourism** with a strategic approach
2. Need to ensure **support for SMEs** in the industry. Support formalisation of the sector by facilitating the registration process. There is a lack of access to investment and financing, especially for SMEs that face high costs of capital for finance.
3. **Inclusiveness and women's participation** to be improved.

Gap Four: Need for institutional improvements, better coordination and regulation

1. Need for **tourism related foreign investment** for infrastructure development and improved product service quality. Create an efficient process to facilitate and promote investments.
2. Need to improve **coordination and communication** between government ministries, institutions and stakeholders with respect to tourism planning, tourism asset management and tourism destination management. Foster partnerships and engagement.
3. Need for **improved institutional** performance, coordination, and regulation. Institutional inefficiencies, duplication of work and lack of coordination are a constraint.
4. Need to **improve service quality standards** of the industry at all touch points to ensure visitor service excellence. Make use of technology, infrastructure development and enforcing 'best practice' is important.

Based on the above national policy framework and the resultant 17 tourism focus areas of the policy framework and reflecting the gap analysis of the industry the strategic framework for Sri Lanka Tourism is proposed in this strategic plan. The key factors of the framework are the strategic priorities and the implementation orientation.

2. DEVELOPING THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPING THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Vision and Mission

New strategy processes often change Vision and Mission statements. As part of this Strategic Tourism Plan process, these statements were reviewed and it was determined they are appropriate for purpose and align well with the new strategic priorities and actions.

Vision

The current Vision is endorsed in the Strategic Plan 2017-2020 and Draft National Tourism Policy 2021, is aspirational, succinct, and clearly messages key elements in this strategy to:

*   improve **quality** ('world's finest island');
*   **authenticity** (resonating with product offering, experiences and the welcome given by the host population); and
*   **diversity** (alluding both to the compelling mix of water-based activities with cultural and historic assets in Sri Lanka and also to social inclusion.

Importantly, the Vision also has the support of tourism stakeholders. During the National Tourism Policy consultation process in 2021, a vote amongst tourism stakeholders revealed 75% 'strongly' and 20% 'somewhat' favour the Vision statement.

Therefore the vision for Sri Lanka Tourism will remain as,

"To be recognised as the world's finest island for memorable, authentic and diverse experiences"

Mission

As with the vision, the current mission was endorsed in the Strategic Plan 2017-2020 and the Draft National Tourism Policy. Further, the mission statement resonates with several key findings of this plan and articulates the goal of the strategy to 'build back better'.

Sri Lanka offers the tourist a multi-dimensional experience compared with the unidimensional sun, sea, and sand offering of many other tropical island destinations. The visitation figures for tourists of wildlife parks, historic, cultural, and religious sites demonstrate the demand from international and local tourists for the variety of experiences available. This strategy also highlights the missed opportunity represented by channelling tourists around the same handful of extraordinary (but crowded) attractions and the potential to disperse tourists onto new routes to incorporate additional attractions to the tourist offer.

Sri Lanka Tourism already has several inclusive aspects. Tourist out-of-pocket expenditure is high and local supply chains are numerous. However, the scale of the informal sector, the lack of support for SMEs, and the lack of women in the tourist workforce highlight opportunities for improved economic inclusion.

Environmental responsibility is important to align the tourist sector with the branding of Sri Lanka, as well as to leveraging the island's natural assets and contributing to the climate change goals. Weak local enforcement of existing land-use and environmental regulations undermines these efforts.

One of the few benefits of Covid-19 and its impact on tourism in Sri Lanka in 2020 and 2021, is that the importance of tourism to Sri Lanka as a country is now beyond doubt. In this context, the role of tourism to support the national economy and to raise debates about tourism strategy from the sectoral bodies to the national level seems critical.

Therefore the analysis suggests that the current mission statement retains relevance for the tourist sector in Sri Lanka and should, therefore, be retained without amendment. Thereby the mission for this strategic plan 2022-2025 will remain as,

"To be a high-value destination offering extraordinary experiences that reflect Sri Lanka's natural and cultural heritage, are socially inclusive and environmentally responsible, and provide economic benefits to communities and the country".

Strategic Objectives

The mission for Sri Lanka Tourism has been further specified under five strategic objectives proposed for the four year strategy period from 2022-2025. These include,

1. Achieve a target foreign exchange earnings of $5 Billion from tourism by 2025 (reduced from previous $10 Billion target specified under national policy framework due to Pandemic situation)
2. Increase daily tourist in-country spend to $185-$225 from a baseline of $181 in 2019 and $158 in 2020
3. SLITHM adopt and modernise the delivery of training by re-skilling / upskilling the tourism workforce to reach 10,000 trainees per year and aims to train at least 30% female trainees by 2025.
4. Increase the share of tourist room nights spent, in previously underserved areas from 6% to 15% by 2025.
5. All new tourist products should comply with environmental regulations by 2024 and schemes to enhance the performance of existing assets should be implemented by 2025.

A strategic plan that addresses the problem

This plan has the following three priorities.

- First priority - to protect entrepreneurs and workers from the worst effects of the current crisis.
- Second priority - to stimulate a rapid recovery of tourist demand
- Third priority - to build back better a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive tourist sector

Protect

As a result of a deep and protracted drop in foreign arrivals and constraints on domestic tourism, the most immediate policy priority for the plan period is to **protect tourism assets and workers** to minimise the permanent damage to the sector. The aim is to ensure that, when tourists return, there is an industry remaining which can serve tourists.

Informal sector entrepreneurs and workers have received minimal support to-date, so the focus will be to get this part of the sector formalised and so eligible for support. Because it may take a further two years for 'normal' tourism demand to return, Sri Lanka Tourism will seek to mobilise support for a larger and more comprehensive social protection programme for the sector. This will require careful consultations with the industry to track the health of the sector and 'pain points' which a programme of support could address. Working closely with Government, to review regulatory changes which could affect the sector, and also with development partners to mobilise the resources required, Sri Lanka Tourism will design a programme to improve the reliance of the sector.

For larger and more formal establishments, the key challenge will be to help businesses access working capital to enable them to respond to increasing arrivals and start servicing their debts when the moratorium on loan repayments is lifted.

Probably the most significant action in the protect phase is to establish and to strengthen an Inter-Ministerial Committee/Council for Tourism to better coordinate the tourism related matters and support required. This committee will be able to address the chronic coordination failures between the multiplicity of public agencies at all levels of the public sector that have undermined the ability of Sri Lanka to effectively implement previous tourism strategy. Moving forward with this action will demonstrate the recognition by Government that supporting the tourist sector is a national priority because it is critical for Sri Lanka's economic recovery. Sri Lanka Tourism will facilitate this initiative to benefit the industry.

Recovery

The next priority is to **accelerate the recovery.** The recovery phase will start immediately because, ultimately, the best way to sustainably protect the tourist sector is to get increasing numbers of foreign and domestic tourists to use tourist services.

This will require effective promotional activities to source markets that will deliver quick results. Operating in the context of a Pandemic that is becoming endemic in the traditional source markets in Western Europe and restrictions in most of South East Asia, this is likely to involve targeting short haul and non-traditional markets and innovative approaches to achieve success in a highly competitive environment.

There are some grounds for optimism if Sri Lanka exploits its competitive advantage of being an island. The UNWTO Barometer highlights the relatively better performance of small islands in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia/Pacific in June-July 2021 vis-à-vis the same two months in 2019 – in comparison with a global reduction in international tourist arrivals of 72% (2021). This highlights the need to provide potential tourists with the reassurance that they will be safe in Sri Lanka. This will require progress with vaccinations and health protocols and communicating these more effectively with potential visitors.

It will also require online advance time-slot ticketing for trains, attractions, guiding services, and activities to avoid crowding and the mixing of different tour groups and local people at tourist site entrances. The service quality offered at the most popular attractions should be improved during the recovery phase. The significant shortage of trained tourism workers before the Pandemic will have been sharpened with the loss of tourism workers over the past three years.

There is a need to scale-up the numbers of trainees entering the labour market with appropriate skills. Finally, the easiest tourists for Sri Lanka to attract those who are are already resident on the Island. The recovery phase is the time to pay proper attention to supporting domestic tourism.

Build back better

When tourism assets and workers have been secured and the recovery is underway, the next priority is **building back better.** The focus is building a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive tourism. It is also about creating a tourism destination that is more widely-dispersed throughout the Island, so that it is possible for Sri Lanka to absorb new growth – beyond the 2.3m arrivals achieved in 2018 – and ease bottlenecks by directing tourists into new areas and onto new tourist circuits. More women will be trained so that they can enter the workforce. The quality of accommodation will be increased by formalising establishments and implementing the building regulations more effectively.

Measures will be taken to incentivise owners to build or retrofit green hotels. Developing quality product in the new growth areas will be encouraged by Sri Lanka Tourism proactively promoting schemes to investors as attracting quality foreign investors will be a priority.

A strategic action plan that focuses on implementation

There are three central priorities in this strategy; protect, recovery and building back better. The relevance, timing and nature of the twenty action area underlying this strategy are, however, highly contingent upon circumstances in a highly volatile reality. However the strategic action plan developed, alongside this plan, based on the ten pillars of implementation, will assist Sri Lanka Tourism to adjust and to drive the actions to ensure implementation of the plan in a timely manner. The ten pillars of implementation include,

1. Pillar One - People centric tourism sector
2. Pillar Two - An efficient public service & uplift industry standards
3. Pillar Three - Technology based tourism sector
4. Pillar Four - A safe and secure Country for tourists
5. Pillar Five - Legal and regulatory framework
6. Pillar Six - Sustainable and environment friendly tourism
7. Pillar Seven - New product development & promotion
8. Pillar Eight - Position and market Sri Lanka
9. Pillar Nine - Infrastructure and services
10. Pillar Ten - Partnerships

Each pillar is comprised of activities and sub activities aligned towards the three strategic priorities and assigned with timelines and responsibilities.

The strategic framework proposed for Sri Lanka Tourism is depicted in Figure 1 below.

National Policy Framework
Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour

10 Pillars

1. Priority to national security
2. Friendly, non-aligned, foreign policy
3. An administration free from corruption
4. A new Constitution that fulfils the people's wishes
5. Productive citizenry and a vibrant human resource
6. People centric economic development
7. Technology based society
8. Development of physical resources
9. Sustainable environmental management
10. Disciplined, law abiding and values-based society

17 Tourism Focus Areas

1. Identify new attractions in the Country for foreign tourists
2. Facilitate to hold business conferences, festivals, exhibitions and seminars to attract tourists
3. Provide investment and other facilities to the private sector to develop tourism
4. Introduce more efficient immigration and emigration process
5. Modernize internal airports
6. Set up tourist service centres at the road junctions connecting main tourist cities
7. Streamline the process of approval of tourist facilities while setting up regional offices
8. Establish tourist training schools in main tourism cities and also introduce attractive skills development courses
9. Introduce e-based facilities for reservation of hotels, transport, guides, domestic air tickets and admission card (single booking software system and electronic gate system)
10. Increase the number of workers up to one million in the tourism industry
11. Initiate a strategic marketing and advertising programme to promote tourism
12. Provide incentives to set up high quality tourist hotels and increase number of hotel rooms currently available up to double
13. Initiate an enabling environment for local performers to attract tourists
14. Revise labour laws governing tourist sector workers
15. Develop household related and community-based tourism
16. Register, train and certify all tourists guides and drivers to prevent unnecessary harassment of tourists, ensure security and protection for the tourists
17. Establish tourist police service near tourist centers

Sri Lanka Tourism
gap analysis 2022

tourism industry

1. Need to relook at the **business model and pricing strategy** for Sri Lanka. Tourism has been a private sector led industry and for a prolonged period a 'low price strategy' has been adopted. This has resulted in low capital generation for the industry and vulnerability to shocks.
2. Need to **engage, train and develop tourism workforce.** Income diversification improved in the workforce
3. Need to create a **social protection system** for the tourism workforce.
4. Need to ensure both institutional and industry preparedness for **crisis management.**
5. Need to improve effective communication across **all marketing channels to ensure community support** for tourism industry operations. Specifically with crisis and Pandemic operations to ensure safety and security of the visitors

Gap Two: Need for holistic positioning, branding and marketing

1. Need for **consistent and integrated marketing communication** for destination branding
2. Need to **improve market understanding,** visitor segmentation in carving out a unique positioning for the destination. Currently there is a lack of comprehensive visitor research, data and market intelligence which impact negatively on product development decisions and marketing strategies.
3. Need for **holistic product planning, development and diversification.** Currently limited attention is given to product diversification and destination development which has resulted in commoditised, me too, cookie-cutter products with no value addition. Limited focus on tourism experience.

Gap Three: Need for inclusivity and the creation of equal opportunities

1. Need to adopt **sustainable tourism** with a strategic approach
2. Need to ensure **support for SMEs** in the industry. Support formalisation of the sector by facilitating the registration process. There is a lack of access to investment and financing, especially for SMEs that face high costs of capital for finance.
3. **Inclusiveness and women's participation** to be improved.

Gap Four: Need for institutional improvements, better coordination and regulation

1. Need for **tourism related foreign investment** for infrastructure development and improved product service quality. Create an efficient process to facilitate and promote investments.
2. Need to improve **coordination and communication** between government ministries, institutions and stakeholders with respect to tourism planning, tourism asset management and tourism destination management. Foster partnerships and engagement.
3. Need for **improved institutional** performance, coordination, and regulation. Institutional inefficiencies, duplication of work and lack of coordination are a constraint.
4. Need to **improve service quality standards** of the industry at all touch points to ensure visitor service excellence. Make use of technology, infrastructure development and enforcing 'best practice' is important.

VISION
To be recognised as the world's finest island for memorable, authentic and diverse experiences.

MISSION
To be a high-value destination offering extraordinary experiences that reflect Sri Lanka's natural and cultural heritage, are socially inclusive and environmentally responsible, and provide economic benefits to communities and the Country.

Tourism Policy

Strategic Objectives for Tourism Industry - 2022-2025

1. Achieve a target foreign exchange earning of $5 Billion from tourism by 2025 (reduced from previous $10 Billion target due to Pandemic)
2. Increase daily tourist in-country spend to $185-$225 from a baseline of $181 in 2019 and $158 in 2020
3. SLITHM adopt and modernise the delivery of training by re-skilling / upskilling the tourism workforce to reach 10,000 trainees per year. Aim to train at least 30% female trainees by 2025.
4. Increase the share of tourist room nights spent in previously underserved areas from 6% to 15% in 2025.
5. All new tourist products should comply with environmental regulations by 2024 and schemes to enhance the performance of existing assets should be implemented by 2025.

Value Driven National Tourism Strategy

Strategic Tourism Action Plan 2022-2025

Focus on three areas

Protect, Recover & Build Back Better

Strategic priorities

1. Protect
• Strengthen coordination and partnerships
• Assess current health of the tourism sector
• Mobilise additional support for tourism
• Formalise the tourism sector to enable support to SMEs

2. Recover
• Rapid promotion of the destination
• Adaptive approaches to vaccination / health / safety protocols
• Create and build Sri Lanka's digital footprint
• Online ticketing of attractions, transport and services
• Improve service quality at attractions
• Strengthen domestic tourism
• Train guides, drivers and SME staff
• Significant scale up of appropriate skills training for tourism workforce
• Strengthen enforcement capacity
• Further strengthen relationship with development partners
• Improve positioning and branding

3. Build Back Better
• Develop new product to disperse tourists and diversify the offer
• Ease infrastructure bottlenecks
• Effective environmental regulation
• Increase output of trainees and participation of women
• Strengthen Sri Lanka Tourism

Strategy Implementation through Strategic Pillars

1. People centric tourism sector
2. An efficient public service & uplift industry standards
3. Technology based tourism sector
4. A safe and secure Country for tourists
5. Legal and regulatory framework
6. Sustainable and environment friendly tourism
7. New product development & promotion
8. Position and market Sri Lanka
9. Infrastructure and services
10. Partnerships

Figure 1:
Sri Lanka Tourism Strategy Framework

SRI LANKA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

SO SRI LANKA

3. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of this strategy is organised by the ten key pillars of Sri Lanka Tourism and under each of these ten pillars the three strategic priorities emerging from this strategy: protect, recover and build back better are presented. All 20 of the key action areas highlighted in Figure 1, is presented in this Section under the relevant pillar and strategic priority. Under each action area, listed the sub actions which support the achievement of the key actions. The full Sri Lanka Tourism action plan is presented in Annex A.

Strategic Pillar 1: People Centric Tourism Industry

Strategic Priority: Protect

Rationale: Although tourist demand is increasing, projections suggest that it is likely to be early 2024 before a recovery to 'normal' levels of demand. There is a danger that the collapse in demand from March 2020 and the slow recovery from late 2021 could permanently scar the sector. There are three blockages to Sri Lanka Tourism mobilising effective support for the tourist sector to counter the traumatic effects of the Pandemic.

First, although Sri Lanka Tourism engages with tourism stakeholders continuously and has industry representatives integrated into the internal management structures, a full understanding of the health of the tourist sector requires a holistic industry consultation with all geographic and functional parts of the sector. Under the upcoming amendment to the Tourism Act a Consultative Committee will be established that includes all 70 industry associations to formalise this consultation.

Prior to these formal structures being established, Sri Lanka Tourism will consult widely within the tourist sector to fully understand the 'pain points'. The action area addressing this need to understand the health of the tourist sector.

Second, Sri Lanka Tourism does not have the internal resources to support the tourist sector financially. The Government (GoSL), likewise, have limited funds budgeted to support the sector. However, GoSL can implement regulations which assist tourism – for instance, the moratorium on the repayment of bank loans by tourism businesses to the whole sector. Sri Lanka Tourism will work closely with GoSL on the regulatory environment and with development partners to mobilise resources on a scale to support the sector. The action area is to mobilise additional support for the tourist sector, working with GoSL and with development partners.

The third key blockage is that the most vulnerable participants in the tourist sector have received no support at all, because they are unregistered. The scale of the informal sector in Sri Lanka is very large. SLTDA statistics suggest that about one-quarter of total pre-Pandemic room nights were spent by tourists in informal premises (SLTDA 2019). This level of informality is a threat, both to the businesses concerned – because it precludes them from support - and represents a reputational risk to the whole sector. Sri Lanka has a mission for tourism, based on creating a high value destination, this is out of alignment with a sector where a large minority of tourists use services that operate outside any official regulation.

The action area which seeks to bring the tourist sector within the remit of regulations is formalise the tourist sector to enable more effective support to SMEs.

Thus below, the actions under each of these areas are outlined.

Action area: Assess current health of the tourist sector

When the Tourist Act has been amended to include a Consultative Committee and the draft National Tourism Policy proposes to include a private sector federation, there will be clear formal structures with which Sri Lanka Tourism can consult industry representatives. In the meantime SLTDA will work with a broad base of the industry to assess current trading conditions; health of enterprise; near-term market trends; key 'pain' points; and suggestions how to support the sector. These consultations will provide the empirical basis for designing an appropriate support package and for monitoring the effectiveness of its implementation.

The action proposed is:
- Enhance wider industry participation. Specifically, SMEs given opportunity at decision making points (Action 1.3.4 in the strategic action plan in Annex A, hereafter the action number is used)

Action Area: Mobilise additional support for the tourist sector, working with GoSL and development partners

GoSL have provided support to the tourist sector. Notably through the Central Bank moratorium on debt repayments (interest and principal) to banks, utility payment holidays and small grants to tourist entrepreneurs. However, there is a need for further support.

SLTDA will approach development partners who have already directly supported entrepreneurs during the current crisis and others to further extend support to the industry in the revival process.

The actions proposed are;
- Boost retail tourism sector by enforcing VAT refunds (1.1.1.2)
- Social protection system for individual SMEs in the industry explored (1.1.1.4)
- Support extended to ensure local authority level taxes do not unfairly treat the tourism industry (1.1.1.5)
- SME grant support for identified areas through the donors (1.2.3)

Action Area Formalise the tourist sector to enable more effective support to SMEs

A large minority of tourist flows in Sri Lanka are in the informal sector. This suggests that very large numbers of SMEs are not registered with SLTDA. This makes them ineligible for support (or effective regulation). During the crisis, the focus was on minimising barriers to registration and formalising as many SMEs as possible, so that they can be supported.

The proposed actions are:
- Continue the 'provisional registration' support to assist SMEs to register with SLTDA and to be benefitted during the pandemic (1.1.2.2)
- SLTDA registration process to be further improved and simplified and technology enabled (1.2.1)

Strategic Priority: Recovery

Rationale: Without losing sight of the Vision and objective of this plan to increase tourist yield to $185-$225 per tourist per day by 2025, the immediate need for the sector, its workforce and the national economy is to get foreign tourist arrivals back into Sri Lanka. Demand projections suggest that the bounce back from several traditional source markets may well be slow. This suggests that Sri Lanka will need to be entrepreneurial and expand existing markets with growth potential (eg. India) and rapidly develop newer markets. The action area is to Train guides / drivers / SME workers to support new markets, comply with health protocols and adopt digital technology. This focuses on the need to develop amongst Sri Lanka tourist workers the capabilities to host tourists from new destinations under continually changing Covid-19 restrictions and with a greater focus on digital communication.

Action Area: Train guides / drivers / SME workers to support new markets, comply with health protocols and adopt digital technology

Some of the source markets able to generate quick arrivals to Sri Lanka 2022-2023 may not be familiar. Service providers will need language and cultural training to prepare for these new markets.

In addition, even tourists from traditional markets will need to be kept safe from Covid and staff in tourist-facing roles have an important potential contribution in generating digital content to promote the destination. These actions will be led by SLITHM but will require close engagement with SLTDA.

The actions which will support this are as follows:
- Continuation and improvements in the driver training sessions jointly with Vocational Training Authority (VTA). Upskill for new normal operations (1.1.3.1)
- Continuous professional development (CPD) programme for registered Tour Guides (1.1.3.2)
- Review and include English, Digital marketing and Service quality modules for tour guide training to support digital empowerment, service quality standards and entrepreneurship for tourism industry (1.1.3.5)
- SME training support to capacitate the sector. Especially on digital marketing, financial literacy, etc (1.2.2.)
- Ensure Pandemic related safety and security for tourists by ensuring the updated guidelines and protocols are in place and communicated effectively (4.4)

Strategic Priority: Build back better

Rationale: It is estimated that only 10% of Sri Lanka's tourism workforce is comprised of women workers, in the formal hotel sector at least. The causes of this are both cultural beliefs amongst more traditional communities and discrimination in the labour-force. As a result, it is necessary to act on both the demand and supply side to change this barrier to inclusion.

SLITHM has a key role on the supply side. The action area is to work with SLITHM and industry employers to increase the participation of women.

Action Area Work with SLITHM to increase the participation of women

The Institute conducts tourism awareness sessions with school children and should include a gender lens to these sessions. SLITHM courses are 88% subsidised by Sri Lanka Tourism. Female students currently make up 15% of these heavily subsidised courses and increasing this share is within the direct control of the Institute. Successful projects have been implemented where donors link with progressive employers to support women to move into hospitality management positions. This is an area to seek the support and expertise of the development partners.

The actions falling under this area include:

- Promote women-based tourism SMEs and support them to advance - women entrepreneurship development (1.3.2)
- Promote women's participation in the industry through partnerships and facilitations through awareness creation, training and capacitating and an industry-wide survey (identifying the pain points that hinder women's participation in the industry) (1.3.3)
- SLITHM to promote the intake of female trainees with the aim of achieving 30% by 2025 (strategic objective)

Strategic Pillar 2: Efficient Public Service & Uplift Industry Standards

Strategic Priority: Recovery

R**ationale:** Before the Pandemic there was an estimated skills gap of 25,000-30,000 in the labour market. The impact of the Pandemic on the skills gap is not clear. Clearly many tourism jobs have been lost, which might suggest a smaller skills gap. However, qualitative evidence from employers suggests the skills gap has been exacerbated by Covid-19 with hospitality staff moving overseas or permanently into other sectors. In 2015-2020 SLITHM trained an average of 3,315 students annually. This exposes Sri Lanka to a significant up-skilling requirement for the workforce to ensure the aspirational high value strategy can be achieved. The action area addressing this is the need for significant scaling up of skills training for the tourism workforce.

As tourists flows to Sri Lanka return to 'normal' (i.e. 2018) levels, the need for more effective enforcement - to complement the easing of the registration process. It is recognised that getting this balance correct is difficult and contested. The relevant action area is to build the capacity of the SLDTA Enforcement Unit to regulate industry more effectively.

Action area: Significant scaling up of appropriate skills training for the tourism workforce

SLITHM has a reputation for providing high quality, but overly academic, training. A greater prioritisation is currently given to the small number of Diploma students for hotel management than training the large numbers of students with more basic skills needed by the industry. Also continuous professional development opportunities for the industry workforce are not a central priority. The needs of the industry must be a central focus of the School. SLITHM has a divisional plan (Corporate Plan 2022-26) to increase their output of students to 12,000 annually. It is important to ensure the volume of students increases by this magnitude (three-fold) swiftly and courses meet the needs of the industry it is mandated to serve.

SLITHM has a total budget of US$1.6m in 2022 – mainly funded by retained funds accumulated from the Tourist Development Levy and Embarkation Levy. Costs are roughly US$550 per student. Levy income will be constrained until recovery is complete. SLITHM should review opportunities for partnerships with the private sector if this is required to scale up relevant training in cost-effective manner. These actions will be the responsibility of SLITHM Academic but complemented with SLTDA for issues which impact on funding.

The actions under this area are:
- Develop and conduct skills development programmes (training programmes) for the industry on service quality and customer service (2.9.2)
- Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the tourism workforce through refresher courses and 'best practice' sharing (2.9.2)
- Continue to produce knowledge sharing products (such as podcasts, etc) (2.9.3)
- Continue to launch new programmes (academic programmes) to fill skill gaps in the industry (2.9.4)
- Open new schools to ensure inclusivity and opportunity creation (2.9.5)
- Continue to explore opportunities for PPPs for development (2.9.6)
- Income diversification program targeted at tourism SMEs to ensure the sector is resilient against macro waves (1.2.5)
- Uplifting the industry standards through courses offered by SLITHM (2.9)
- Creation of virtual / digital resources / products for the SLITHM students and industry to enhance knowledge (3.16)

Action area: Strengthen the enforcement capacity of SLTDA

The Enforcement Unit in SLTDA has human resource limitations which restrict its ability to meet its mandate. To raise the quality of tourist assets to the aspirational standard in the Vision, it is important to increase this capacity to be able to enforce the existing standards. The timing of this action should be predicated on a full recovery back to 'normal' levels of tourist demand and a return to profitability of tourism businesses.

The action linked to this area is:
* Build the capacity of the SLTDA Enforcement Unit to regulate industry standards more effectively

Strategic Priority: Build back better

The merger of three of the Sri Lanka Tourism entities, SLTDA, SLTPB and SLTCB has been a strategic aim for some time. This was also highlighted in the 2017 Strategic Tourism Plan. and also is an explicit aim of the draft National Tourism Policy. To operationalize this goal and realise the benefits from it requires actions at three different levels.

First, the legal basis for the merger through an amendment to the Tourism Act (No. 38 of 2005) should be established. Then the organisational structure of the new, merged organisation should be designed, agreed and then implemented.

Second, the operational performance of the merged organisation should be improved. Reform governance arrangements to prioritise management aligned with vision. Reform procurement and administrative regulations to enable rapid and transparent execution.

Finally, SLT should improve its research and data collection to enhance the empirical basis of decision-making.

This cluster of activities is captured by the action area - strengthen Sri Lanka Tourism to better support the sector.

Action area: Strengthen Sri Lanka Tourism to better support the sector

* Tourism Act amended and the three tourism institutions (SLTDA/SLTCB/SLTPB) merged as Sri Lanka Tourism (5.1.1).
* Introduce a simple, effective and technology enabled 'monitoring, evaluation and learning' system to ensure efficient and effective public service. Introduce a tracker for progress monitoring and reporting (2.4)
* Create an internal system to identify 'best practices' in travel and tourism industry which can be adopted locally (2.5)
* Each Divisional Head made responsible to map the current divisional processes to identify pain points and service failures and to propose feasible solutions (2.3.1)
* Each division to identify process areas that can be technologically enabled to enhance public services and improve efficiency (2.3.2)

- Seek the support of donor partners to assist in integrating process improvements and to support with technology use (2.3.3)
- Reduce overdue payments in promotions to enhance effectiveness and reliability amongst suppliers. Also introduce an effective supplier database and management system (2.1.1)
- Effective cost reductions – operational losses and malpractice (2.1.2)
- Effective use of the Electronic Government Procurement system and ensure better management of the procurement process and cutting down on delays (2.1.3)
- Training of staff on procurement and finance systems (2.1.4)
- Identify duplicated areas within the organisation and organise them as shared services to ensure efficiency (2.1.5)
- Research division to take the leadership and to knowledge-share with other divisions and with the industry (2.5)
- Improve research, data collection and improve the empirical basis for decision-making (2.6)
- Tourism Satellite Accounting implemented (2.6.1)
- Research roadmap implemented. Staff coached and trained. Consumer research and insights made available for decision making and campaign planning. Ensure better coordination and support for the Global Communication Campaign set up (2.6.2)
- Streamline publication of tourism statistics (2.6.3)
- Introduce a data management system (storing, accessing, retrieving, facilitated and internal staff and GCC staff educated and trained to create a data and information driven culture) (2.6.4)

Strategic Pillar 3: Technology based tourism sector:

Strategic Priority: Recovery

Rationale: A key priority for Sri Lanka tourism is effective marketing, to accelerate the recovery to 'normal' tourist flows. The traditional means of promotions and marketing need to be reviewed and analysed as it has not given Sri Lanka Tourism the required results in terms of branding and positioning. New operations will require a more technology-based approach to marketing and promotions while servicing the new emergent customer segments such as millennial and gen z travellers will require a formidable social media reach. Action area is to create and build Sri Lanka's digital footprint in the global travel and tourism market.

Not only the promotions but also serving of visitors will require technological support to improve the service quality aspects. The introduction of the mobile app, move to advanced online slot ticketing for attractions through the app, creation and continuation of information portal for visitors and industry called 'hello again' will all contribute towards this drive and initiative. However it should be noted that these initiates have been slow to action due to many constraints. Action area is online ticketing facility for attractions and transport to reassure service quality through technology.

Action area: Create and build Sri Lanka's digital footprint in the global travel and tourism market.

As Covid-19 restrictions on Sri Lanka's source markets reduce, there will be intense competition from destinations to capture the early waves of international tourists, particularly from Asian destinations. Sri Lanka can position itself for this bounce back by starting an on-going communication with potential tourists well in advance of the decision to book a holiday. For potential tourists to Sri Lanka, marketing and retailing has increasingly gone online over the past two years and the destination has to respond to this trend if it wishes to remain relevant.

- Creation of content repository and development of digital content for Sri Lanka Tourism as a means of enabling digital footprint and shared media reach (3.3)
- Improve Sri Lanka Tourism social media reach to build a social media community and thereby reach and engage for product / destination (3.5)
- Continue the live telecasting of 'Perahara' to enhance an online engagement and viewership (3.6)
- Continue the live streaming of wildlife to enhance an online engagement and viewership (3.7)

Action area: Online ticketing facility for attractions, transport and other identified services to reassure service quality through technology.

The Pandemic has put a premium on social distancing and the receipt of foreign exchange before the tourist arrives in-country. It provides a golden opportunity to clear this long-standing blockage and rapidly implement the advance booking systems already in existence for the railways and wildlife parks and other services soon thereafter. In addition to making Sri Lanka more open to independent travellers, providing a safer and better tourist experience at attractions, reducing rent seeking around tourist sites and improving cash-flow, this system will also promote the dispersal of tourists away from over congested tourist sites. This will also improve the service quality levels of the destination.

The actions to support this area include:
- Complete the development and launch of the Tourism Travel App. Digital campaign launch to create awareness of the App (3.1)
- Working with ICTA and Technology Ministry to include online ticket booking of all Government tourist sites, trains and later to integrate into the App (3.12)

Strategic Pillar 4: A safe and secure Country for tourists

Strategic Priority: Recovery

In early 2022, the divergence in public policy toward Covid-19 restrictions in Sri Lanka's highly vaccinated key source markets, sharpened. At one end of the spectrum is China which has suffered few fatalities from the Virus because of pursuing highly restrictive domestic policies aimed at reducing infections to zero. The 'dynamic zero' policy has effectively removed China from the international leisure market for the time being. Towards the other end of the spectrum are the more 'Anglo-Saxon' countries, including the UK and US, where restrictions were primarily intended to avoid serious infections overwhelming Intensive Care capacity in hospitals. As the Pandemic evolved, this required tough restrictions for the first year, but a progressive liberalisation thereafter as vaccination coverage increased and less deadly variants of Covid-19 passed through the population. Notwithstanding high levels of infections and loss of life, the continued imposition of restrictions after almost two years has become increasingly untenable politically – although many of the elderly and vulnerable remain highly concerned about Covid-19. Countries in Eastern Europe generally combine high levels of infection with low vaccination rates and relative nonchalance towards the Virus.

The relevance is, as international tourists return to Sri Lanka, the destination will attract tourists with very divergent levels of immunity, likelihood of carrying the infection and fear of the Virus. This will present hosts with a complex and evolving challenge to meet the expectations of guests without compromising the safety of their staff and families.

This leads to the action area of an adaptive approach to vaccinations / health protocols to maintain effectiveness and reassure specific source markets.

Action area: Adaptive approach to vaccination / health protocols to maintain effectiveness and reassure specific source markets

This action area is partly aimed at enhancing the safety of tourists and the domestic population as international tourism returns to the destination. It also has a marketing dimension. To recover quickly, Sri Lanka will need to reassure tourists who remain concerned about Covid-19, that the Country has the systems to make their visit safe and secure.

- Public awareness campaign to educate the locals on the importance of ensuring tourist safety and the process to follow in case of need (4.2)
- Conduct periodic surveys to identify issues related to safety and security of tourists and inform the public, tourist police, provincial and government organisations to guide action (4.3)
- Ensure Pandemic related safety and security for tourists by ensuring the updated guidelines and protocols are in place and communicated effectively (4.4)

Strategic Pillar 5: Legal and regulatory framework

Strategic Priority: Build back better

Rationale: The World Economic Forums Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index indicates that Sri Lanka's regulatory environment needs to be improved to support tourist development more effectively. This plan includes many proposals to enhance this through: increasing the formalisation of the sector (pillar 1); scaling up training of the workforce (pillar 2); using technology to improve marketing and online sales (pillar 3); keeping tourists safe (pillar 4); improving environmental regulation (pillar 6); reducing obstacles to new product development (pillar 7); positioning and marketing the destination more effectively (pillar 8); improving tourism infrastructure (pillar 9); and, improving coordination within government to support tourism and leverage external finance (pillar 10).

In addition to these cross-cutting initiatives, this plan includes several proposals to Strengthen Sri Lanka Tourism to better support the sector.

Action area: Strengthen Sri Lanka Tourism to better support the sector

- Creating an effective and functional organisation though legal and regulatory adjustments and development (5.1)
- New organisational structure, that reflects global 'best practice' is introduced and implemented (5.1.3)
- Request an Inter-Ministerial Council on tourism covering key areas including Wildlife, Zoological, Coastal Conservation, Forests and CDF. Sri Lanka Tourism could be the convenor for the Council. (5.3.1)
- Facilitate improved guidelines and resources on the classification of accommodation (5.3.2)
- Facilitate liquor licence restrictions to be reviewed to benefit the tourism industry as appropriate (5.3.3)
- Develop the required Sri Lanka Tourism policies (organisational) to facilitate the activities of the organisation and to ensure transparency (5.3.3)
- Ensuring legal and regulatory framework required for sustainable tourism adopted and for the implementation of sustainable initiatives (5.4).
- Working in collaboration with the Department of Immigration to further streamline the tourist visa application process using technology (3.10)

Strategic Pillar 6: Sustainable and environment friendly tourism

Strategic Priority: Build back better

Rationale: Sri Lanka's environment is intrinsic to its value as a tourist destination. Tourist surveys indicate that the mix of activities spent in the sea (beach, surfing, snorkelling and whale/dolphin watching) and on land (wildlife safaris, trekking, birdwatching) are amongst the most popular activities reported by visitors. The profile of visitors from Western Europe and parts of SE Asia are amongst the most environmentally aware globally and qualitative feedback suggests a low tolerance for environmentally degradation whether in the form of poor solid waste disposal, marine pollution or inappropriate development.

As such, effective regulation of the environment is central to the viability of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. The current performance of the sector is mixed. Reasonably sound existing environmental policies can be strengthened and are not always implemented because of weaknesses in the development planning system and a lack of enforcement capacity. The actions below include activites to strengthen regulations, empower the regulators and integrate sustainability into the tourism sector in Sri Lanka.

Action area: Implement effective environmental regulation
Actions include:

Strengthen the regulations
- Develop sustainability guidelines and certification and ensure coordinated efforts for environmental sustainability (6.3)
- Developing sustainability guidelines & certification for the industry to include accommodation providers, travel agents/guides, other service providers such as restaurants, souvenir shops, etc (6.3.1)
- Ocean sustainability – introduce, develop and promote marine environment protection to ensure a healthy coastal and ocean environment (6.4)

Empower the regulators
- Establish and internal division dedicate to championing sustainable tourism (6.1)
- Develop and launch Sri Lanka Tourism's Sustainability Road Map. Based on Road Map seek donor support to implement key projects (6.2)
- Introduce and ensure central planning with BOI and UDA to ensure development are sympathetic to the environment (6.3.3)

Integrate sustainable tourism into the development of
the destination
- Sustainable goals included within classification process (6.3.2)
- Work in collaboration with Mahaweli Development Authority to develop an eco-tourism development zone in Kaluganga and Moragahakanda (6.3.4)
- Green building guidelines prepared and implemented for new investments (6.3.5)
- Yala Palatupana tourism zone to be upgraded as a Protected Conservancy Area (6.3.6)
- Creation of sustainability experiences for visitors such as creation of sustainability sights, beaches, parks and destinations, creation of green journeys / responsible holidays / adventures / gastronomy (6.5)
- Sustainability related awareness creation and promotions (6.6)
- Creation of sustainability focused marketing collaterals and tools to include a dedicated micro site, video, imagery content and copy creation (6.6.1)
- Include nature conservation in the hotel school curriculum (6.6.2)
- Local and internally focused campaigns and activations to be launched to create awareness on sustainable tourism and initiatives (6.6.3)
- Sigiriya to be developed as the first sustainable destination (6.7)

Strategic Pillar 7: New Product development and promotion

Strategic Priority: Recovery

Rationale: International tourism has demonstrated its value indefatigably by its virtual absence during the last three quarters of 2020 and 2021. Foreign visitors are needed to power demand in general for the destination and especially for high-end products to help Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserves. However, domestic tourism has been a lifeline for the tourist sector during 2021 as a counter-cyclical bulwark, dampening the effect of the demand shock to international tourism resulting from Covid-19. Over the past two decades there have been six major shocks to international tourism (9/11 in 2001, SARS in 2003, Tsunami in 2004, global financial crisis in 2008, Easter bombing in 2019, Covid-19 in 2020-2021) - an average of a shock almost each three years - and the tourist sector will remain vulnerable to the vagaries of overseas markets unless it implements its long-held strategic goal of developing domestic tourism. With a large domestic population on the cusp of Upper MIC economic status, Sri Lanka has a much more conducive environment to develop a significant domestic tourist sector than most tropical island destinations. The action area is Work with the industry to strengthen the 'captive' domestic tourism market.

Protecting the tourist sector is the top priority for Sri Lanka. However, the most effective way to protect the sector is to get tourist flows rapidly back onto the Island at volume. Notwithstanding the medium-term vision and mission of this plan, for a higher value and more sustainable tourism by 2025, the urgent priority is to capture as much of the bounce back in international tourism in 2022 and 2023 as possible.

Projections for what tourism looks like post-Pandemic are fluid. What is clear is that it will be different from before and some previously important source markets in SE Asia may be very slow to recover. This implies that Sri Lanka Tourism, in addition to communicating more effectively with potential tourists, will need to work very closely with airlines and tour operators during the recovery phase to opportunistically incentivise flows into Sri Lanka. Action area is the rapid promotion of the destination in the key international and domestic markets.

Action area: Work with the industry to strengthen the 'captive' domestic tourism market
The action in this area is:
- Domestic tourism / local community engagement initiatives (7.9)

Action area: Rapid promotion of the destination in the key international and domestic markets to encourage rapid bounce back in demand
- Joint promotions to be carried out with Airlines, Travel agents, Tour operators, global Media stations (print and electronic) covering key tourism markets (7.3)
- Continuation of the Visiting Journalists Program (VBP) / Visiting Journalist Program (VJP) (7.4)
- Efforts to ensure earned media coverage and campaigns for Sri Lanka in key tourism markets (7.5)
- Social media campaigns to enhance visitor information, engagement and shares (7.6)

Strategic Priority: Build back better

Rationale: Limited attention has been given to product diversification and destination development which has resulted in commoditized, cookie-cutter products with limited value addition. This restricts competitiveness, recreation and tourism choices, development of niche markets, and the ability to add value to the visitor experience. The emphasis to date has been predominantly on copycat construction, without a holistic approach, which has affected the authenticity and uniqueness of the Sri Lankan product. More importantly, it has led to geographic disparity, with significant tourism growth in only a few areas.
Post Covid-19 travellers seek are likely to seek more authentic cultural and adventure-based experiences Thus the need for new product and experience development. The action area is to develop new products, particularly to support the dispersal of tourists and the diversification of the destination.

In addition, there is an urgent need to signal to both international and the domestic market of the new niche tourism experiences available on the Island. The action area is to create awareness about new products and experiences to gain interest, promote the destination in the key international and domestic markets.

Action area: Develop new products, particularly to support the dispersal of tourists and the diversification of the destination

The actions include:
- Continue new product developments (such as wellness, helewedakama, shipwrecks, under water, digital nomads, etc) and promotions to attract new segments, to enhance user experience and to achieve product diversification (7.1)
- Support the private sector to create new experience. Support to be extended in terms of training support, promotional support, co-creation support (7.2)

Strategic Pillar 8: Position and market Sri Lanka

Strategic Priority: Build back better

Rationale: Strategic positioning of the destination is a top priority for Sri Lanka as no holistic, integrated and consistent brand building and positioning has taken place for the destination. This is a critical failure that needs to be immediately corrected given the current opportunity in the global travel and tourism market post pandemic. Therefore, the introduction of the 'Global Communication Campaign' and its implementation during the period from 2022 to 2025 will be a core element and a decisive factor for Sri Lanka Tourism. Complementing the campaign ensuring international recognitions and accolades, conducting joint promotions to ensure reach and engagement in the marketplace, development of a routes development strategy, MICE branding and achieving visitor service quality excellence are important aspects of the overall branding and positioning efforts.

Action area: Improve positioning and branding of Sri Lanka

- Appoint the agency framework to ensure the successful implementation of the planned Global Communication Campaign (8.1)
- Launch the GCC and strategically position the destination. Achieve the alignment of planned 'Wellness' and 'Sustainability' campaigns to GCC (8.2)
- Route development strategy for Sri Lanka (8.3)
- Strive to achieve service quality excellence to align with the positioning. Carry out mapping of the visitor journey, identify the touch points to enhance service quality to deliver service excellence (8.4)
- Obtain recognition and accolades for Sri Lanka (8.5)
- MICE Related Promotions and Activations to position Sri Lanka as a MICE destination (8.6)

Strategic Pillar 9: Infrastructure and services

Strategic Priority: Recovery

Rationale: Foreign tourist departure surveys show very high levels of satisfaction with the welcome from Sri Lankan people and good satisfaction with accommodation, food and value for money. However, satisfaction with the management of tourist attractions is much lower. Tourist sites are often congested, dirty and lacking registered guides and basic facilities. This is the consequence of complex institutional responsibilities for attraction management and a tolerance of rent-seeking behaviour. Sri Lanka Tourism recognises that this is unacceptable and a priority to improve during the recovery phase. Action area is Improve the service quality at Identified Key Tourist Attractions

The concentration of tourist flows in Greater Colombo, South Coast, Hill country and cultural triangle is not only restricting the diversity of the destination offerings but is creating congestion and an artificial bottleneck on the future growth of the industry. Road infrastructure development is opening tourism potential in the North and East of Sri Lanka. Some of the constraints are more regulatory than physical infrastructure. Therefore the need for a coordinated effort, through an inter-agency collaboration. The action area is to ease infrastructure bottlenecks to tourist dispersal and service quality.

Action Area: Improve the service quality at Identified Key Tourist Attractions
- Establish inter-departmental collaborations for service quality improvements (2.8.1)
- Implementation of signage / information boards for key provincial attractions (2.8.2)
- Develop a comprehensive report on the service quality improvements and additions required in each of the key tourist attractions and identifying the bottlenecks for improvements. (2.8.3)
- Use of augmented reality at identified key tourist sites/ attractions to enhance visitor experience (3.9)
- Continue to leverage on key tourism sites through better offerings, facilities (i.e toilet facilities) and reduction in congestion (9.2)

Strategic Priority: Build back better

Action area: Facilitate easing of infrastructure bottlenecks to tourist dispersal and service quality.
- Improve tourism support services by strengthening inter-agency collaboration (eg Immigration and emigration, airports, railways, UDA, MEPA, etc) (9.3)
- Continue to introduce, develop, improve and promote major tourism development projects – Yala, Kuchchawell, Kalpitya, Dedduwa and Zoning plans (9.4)

Strategic Pillar 10: Partnerships

Strategic Priority: Protect

Rationale: Many of the constraints facing tourist development in Sri Lanka are a consequence of lack of coordinated effort among the government agencies. Given the national priority to restore and grow the industry, SLTDA will strengthen the existing initiatives to improve the coherence among its partners. This will lead to the facilitation of a proposed Inter-Ministerial Council on tourism covering key areas including Wildlife, Zoological, Coast Conservation, Forest and CCF, etc. The action area is to Strengthen the coordination among the relevant government organisations and build partnerships with development agencies.

Action area: Strengthen the coordination among the relevant government organisations and build partnerships with development agencies

- Presidential Task Force proposed to be established to coordinate the tourism related development work enabling faster decision making, approvals and development initiatives. The current Inter-Ministerial Committee/council could also be integrated into the Presidential Task Force (10.4)
- Creation of regional tourism offices (tourist information centres) to ensure service quality and better coordination. 12 regional offices are planned to be established (2.7)
- Continue to work in collaboration with all Sri Lanka Foreign Missions (10.1)
- Continue to work in collaboration with all Foreign Diplomatic Missions (10.2)

Strategic Priority: Recover

Sri Lanka Tourism will work in partnership with the development partners to better strengthen its existing relationship to facilitate resources to accelerate implementation of this plan. This will generate additional funding for the tourist sector. Action area is Build partnerships with development partners

Action area: Further strengthen relationships with development partners

- Continue to seek multiple donor support for development and improvement. Coordinate with multiple donors to assist identified projects of Sri Lanka Tourism. Hold a donor round table and report on progress (10.3)

Monitoring and Progress Reporting

The strategic action plan compiled under annexture A will assist Sri Lanka Tourism to continuously monitor the progress made under each of the pillars and activities and also will assist in timely progress reporting and management of the establishment. Each department or unit falling under, each of the four divisions of Sri Lanka Tourism can prepare their respective divisional action plans for divisional management and progress monitoring. This operational mechanism will ensure the achievement of the overall activities and spectrum proposed within this strategic plan for Sri Lanka Tourism.

ANNEX A: ACTION PLAN

## Strategic Pillar 1: People Centric Tourism Industry

1. People Centric Tourism Sector

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency (SLTPB/SLTDA/SLCB /SLITHM)	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
1.1	**Tourism Industry Support to ensure survival & recovery during the pandemic time**	■								
1.1.1	**Ensure Strategic government support**	■								
1.1.1.1	VAT exemptions for the Tourism Industry enacted	■			SLTDA	DG/Planning		■		
1.1.1.2	Boost retail tourism sector by enforcing proposed VAT refund	■			SLTDA	DG/Planning		■		
1.1.1.3	National tourism policy development	■			SLTDA	DG/Planning	■			
1.1.1.4	Social protection system for individual SME 's in the industry explored	■			SLTDA	DG/Planning		■	■	
1.1.1.5	Support extended to ensure local authority level taxes do not unfairly treat the Tourism Industry	■			SLTDA	DG/Planning		■	■	
1.1.1.6	Creating new opportunities for the Tourism industry such as 'Digital Nomads' 'Bubble for Non Vaccinated' etc to assist the Industry operations during the pandemic period for survival		■		SLTDA/SLTPB	Planning/NPD		■	■	
1.1.1.7	Crisis management team appointed and a system put in place to ensure swift and effective management of crisis situations for Sri Lanka Tourism and Tourism Industry. (Internal Process in place)	■			SLTDA	DG/Planning		■	■	
1.1.2	**Ensure Tactical government support**	■								
1.1.2.1	Liquors license fee waiver as a support to industry & soft liquor licence to all classified hotels with reduced restrictions	■			SLTDA	Standards		■		
1.1.2.2	Continue the 'Provisional Registration' support to assist SMEs register with SLTDA and to be benefited during the pandemic time	■			SLTDA	Standards		■		
1.1.2.3	Continuation and improvement of the color-coded identity cards system for tourism guides and drivers	■			SLTDA	Standards		■		
1.1.2.4	Support extended to the industry to continue the 'Bubble operation' for unvaccinated tourists	■			SLTDA	Planning		■		
1.1.3	**Enhance the skills & knowledge support for the industry ensuring faster and effective revival**	■								
1.1.3.1	Continuation and improvements in the driver training sessions jointly with Vocational Training Authority (VTA). Upskill for new normal operations		■		SLTDA	Standards		■		
1.1.3.2	Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program for the registered tourist guides				SLTDA	Standards		■		
1.1.3.3	Awareness on 'Disaster & Crisis Management' for the industry		■		SLTDA	Planning/ Domestic		■	■	
1.1.3.4	Continue with the upgrading of the syllabus for tour guides with the support of Australian Skills Development. This aims at bridging the gap with destinations such as South Africa, Thailand, and Australia. Also conduct TOTs to ensure sustainability	■			SLTDA/SLITHM	Academic/ Standards			■	
1.1.3.5	Review and include English, Digital Marketing and Service Quality modules to the tour guide training to support digital empowerment, service quality standards and entrepreneurship for tourism industry		■		SLITHM	Academic			■	■
1.1.3.6	Business Continuity Planning and Crisis Management courses introduced for industry specially SMEs to ensure future survival and minimum interruptions for the industry.	■			SLTDA	Planning		■	■	

Strategic Pillar 1: People Centric Tourism Industry

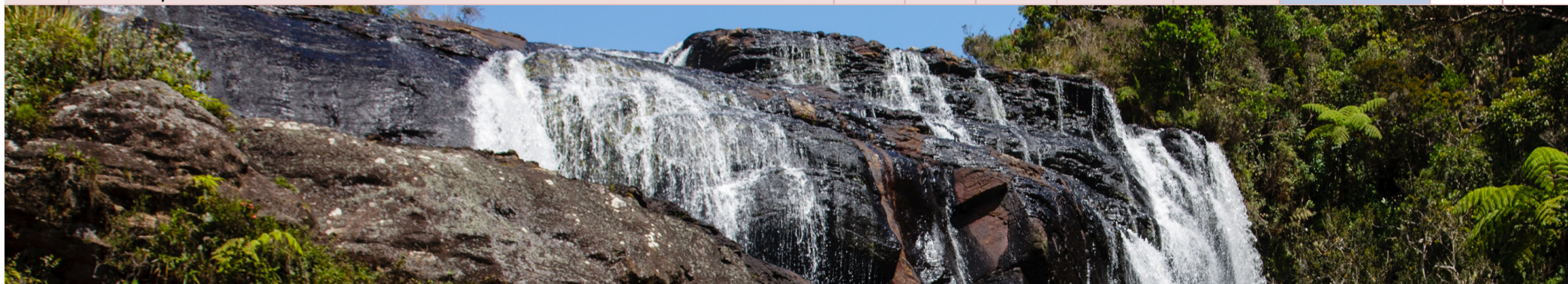| 1.2	Supporting SMEs in Tourism							
1.2.1	SLTDA registration process to be further improved and simplified. Technology enabled	▨			SLTDA	Standards	▨	
1.2.2	SME training support to capacitate the sector. Specially on Digital Marketing, Financial Literacy, etc		▨		SLTDA/SLITHM	Standards/ Academics	▨	
1.2.3	SME grant support for identified areas through the donors		▨		SLTDA	DG/Standards /Planning	▨	
1.2.4	Improve SME Tourism Market linkages - opportunity to be created through Tourism channels		▨		SLTDA	DG/Standards /Planning	▨	
1.2.5	Income Diversification Program' targeted at Tourism SMEs to ensure the sector is resilient against macro waves		▨		SLTDA/SLITHM	DG/Standards /Planning/ Academics	▨	
1.3	**Enhance Women's participation in the industry & Create an Inclusive Tourism Industry**							
1.3.1	Hotel School Scholarship Program continued and enhanced for an inclusive workforce and opportunity creation for industry		▨		SLITHM	Registrar	▨	
1.3.2	Promote Women based tourism SMEs and support them to advance (women entrepreneurship development)			▨	SLTDA/SLTPB	Planning/PR		▨
1.3.3	Promote more women's partcipation in the industry through partnerships and facilitations through awareness creation, training and capacitating and an indstry wide survey (identifying the pain points that hinder women's participation in the industry)			▨	SLTDA/SLTPB	Planning/PR		▨
1.3.4	Enhance wider industry participation. Specially SMEs given opportunity at decision making points	▨		▨	SLTDA	Standards/ Planning	▨	
1.3.5	Accessibility Tourism program launched. Create a concept paper identifying the scope to be implemented for a 4 year period.				SLTDA	Domestic	▨	
1.4	**Dollarization of the Tourism Industry**							
1.4.1	Support the tourism industry convert to a dollarised system. Create awarness and facilitate with the required infrastructural coordination. This will ensure the industry and SMEs are benefitted from the export status.			▨	SLTDA/MOT	DG/Planning	▨	
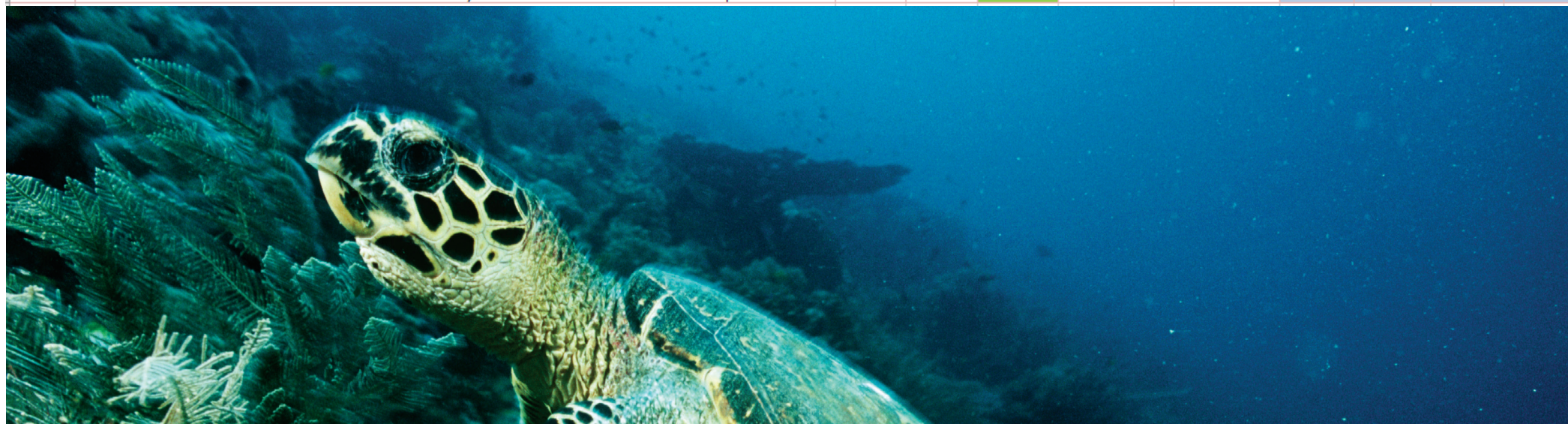
## Strategic Pillar 2: Efficient Public Service & Uplift Industry Standards

2. An Efficient Public Service & Uplift Industry Standards

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
2.1	**Reduced overheads/transaction cost of procurements**									
2.1.1	Reduce overdue payments in promotions to enhance effectiveness and reliability among suppliers. Also introduce an effective supplier database and management system			■	SLTPB/SLTDA	Finance	▩			
2.1.2	Effective cost reductions - operational losses and malpractices			■	SLTPB/SLTDA	Finance	▩			
2.1.3	Effective use of the Electronic Government Procurement (e-GP) system and ensure better management of the procurement process and cutting down on delays			■	All agencies	Finance	▩			
2.1.4	Training of the staff on procurement and finance systems			■	All agencies	Finance/HR	▩	▩		
2.1.5	Identify duplicated areas within the organisation and organise them as shared services to ensure efficiency			■	All agencies	Finance/HR	▩			
2.2	**Enhance Tourism Investments**									
2.2.1	Further Streamline process of approvals for new tourism investments. Digitise the application process			■	SLTDA	Planning/ICT	▩	▩		
2.2.2	Creation of a Digital Land Bank			■	SLTDA	Planning/ICT	▩			
2.2.3	Better promotion and facilitation of Tourism Zone Investments. Prepare investor pitch with opportunities and promotional plan through embassy network			■	SLTDA/SLTPB	Planning/ Advertising	▩			
2.2.4	Tourism investment promotional plan developed and implemented			■	SLTDA/SLTPB	Planning/ Advertising	▩			
2.3	**Improve organisational processes to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of public service**									
2.3.1	Each Divisional Head made responsible to map the current divisional processes & to identify pain points/service failures and to propose feasible solutions			■	All Agencies	All Divisions			▩	
2.3.2	Each division to identify process areas that can be technologically enabled to enhance public service and improve efficiency			■	All Agencies	All Divisions		▩		
2.3.3	Seek the support of donor partner/s to assist in integrating process improvements and to support with technology use			■	SLTDA	DG	▩	▩		
2.4	**Introduce a simple, effective and technology enabled 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning' system to ensure efficient and effective public service. Introduce a tracker.**				SLTDA	ICT/HR	▩	▩		

Strategic Pillar 2: Efficient Public Service & Uplift Industry Standards

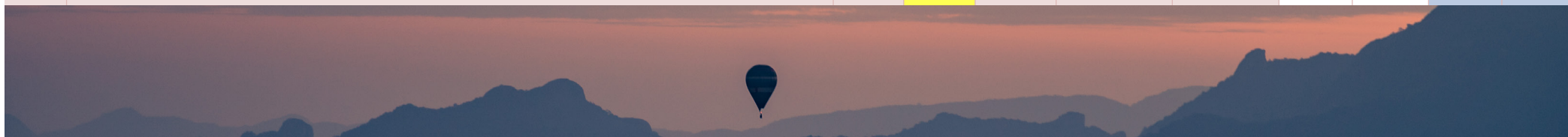|						Agency	Division			
2.5		Create an internal system to identify 'best practices' in the travel and tourism industry globally which can be adopted locally. Research division to take the leadership and to knowledge-share with other divisions and with the industry				SLTDA	Research			
2.6		Improve research, data collection and enhance decision making								
	2.6.1	Tourism Satellite Accounting implemented				SLTDA	Research			
	2.6.2	Research Road Map implemented. Staff coached and trained. Consumer research and insights made available for decision making and campaign planning. Ensure better coordination and support for the Global Communication Campaign (GCC) set up				SLTDA	Research			
	2.6.3	Streamline publication of tourism statistics. (User friendly, Periodic, Distribution plan)				SLTDA	Research			
	2.6.4	Introduce a data management system (storing, accessing, retrieving facilitated and internal staff and GCC staff educated and trained to create a data and information driven culture)				SLTDA	Research			
2.7		Creation of regional tourism offices (Tourist Information Centers) to ensure service quality and better coordination. (12 regional offices are planned to be established). The role, scope and KPIs of these regional offices to be specified, resources and staff to be allocated.				SLTDA	DG/Domestic			
2.8		Improve the service quality of the identified key tourist attractions in the country								
	2.8.1	Establish Inter-departmental collaborations for service quality improvements				SLTDA	DG			
	2.8.2	Implementation of signage/information boards for key provincial attractions (short term)				SLTDA	Domestic/ Planning			
	2.8.3	Development of a comprehensive report (each regional tourism office to be responsible) on the service quality improvements and additions required in each of the key tourist attractions and identifying the bottlenecks for improvements. Prepare a cabinet paper proposing a mechanism to address the bottlenecks and to improve the service quality. Seek donor support for the proposed improvements. (Medium-Long Term)				SLTDA	Domestic/ Planning			
2.9		Uplifting the industry standards through courses offered by Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM)								
	2.9.1	Develop and conduct skills development programs (training programs) for the industry on Service Quality and Customer Service				SLITHM	Academic			
	2.9.2	Continue to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the organizational workforce including resource personnel. Refresh courses and best practice sharing				SLITHM	Academic			
	2.9.3	Continue to create knowledge sharing products (such as podcasts etc)				SLITHM	Academic			
	2.9.4	Continue to launch new programs (academic programs) to fill the skill gaps in the industry				SLITHM	Academic			
	2.9.5	Open new schools to ensure inclusivity and opportunity creation				SLITHM	DG/Academic			
	2.9.6	Continue to explore opportunities for PPP for development				SLITHM	DG			
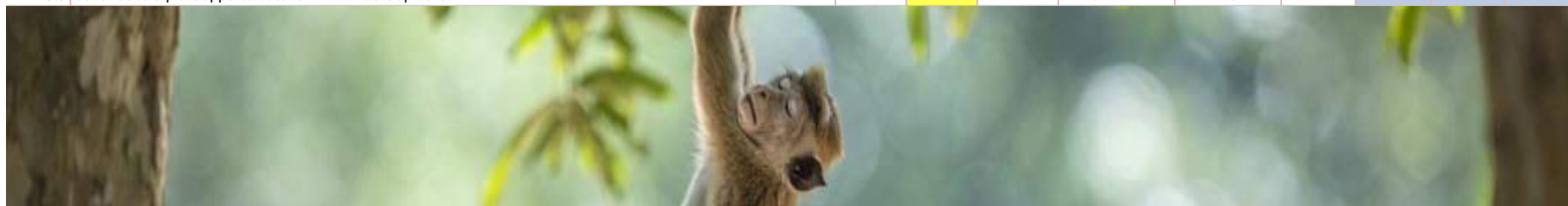
Strategic Pillar 3: Technology based tourism sector:

3. Technology based Tourism Sector

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
3.1	Complete the development and launch of the proposed Tourism Travel App. Digital Campaign launch to create awareness about the app		�		SLTDA/SLTPB	ICT/Advertising		■	■	■
3.2	Complete the revamping of the tourism's consumer website			▓	SLTPB	ICT/Advertising		■	■	■
3.3	Creation of a content repository and continuous creation of digital content for Sri Lanka Tourism (Videos, Imagery, Soundtracks etc) as a means of enabling digital footprint and shared media reach. (This could be linked to website and app)		▓		SLTPB	ICT/Advertising		■	■	■
3.4	Continuation of the creation of the comprehensive tourist information D-base of attractions/experiences and creating content for the identified sites/experiences.		▓		SLTPB	NPD		■	■	■
3.5	Improve on Sri Lanka Tourism's social media reach to build a social media community and thereby reach and engagement for the product/destination		▓		SLTPB	Advertising		■	■	■
3.6	Continue the Live telecasting of Peraharas to enhance an online engagement and viewership		▓		SLTPB	NPD/Advertising		■	■	■
3.7	Continue the live streaming of wildlife to enhance an online engagement and viewership		▓		SLTPB	NPD/Advertising		■	■	■
3.8	Introduce a technology driven tourist/customer engagement center to enhance better customer service			▓	SLTPB	PR/ICT		■	■	■
3.9	Use of augmented reality at identified key tourist sites/attractions to enhance visitor experience		▓		SLTDA	RESEARCH		■	■	■
3.10	Working in collaboration with the Department of Immigration to further streamline the tourist visa application process using technology	▓			SLTDA/MOT	DG/Planning		■	■	■
3.11	Continuation of the 'information portal' 'Helloagain' to communicate with visitors on new developments of travel to Sri Lanka.		▓		SLTDA/SLTPB	Planning/ Advertising/ICT		■	■	■
3.12	Work with ICTA and Technology Ministry to include online ticket booking of all Government tourist sites and trains and later to integrate into the proposed mobile app		▓		SLTDA	DG/Planning		■		
3.13	Enabling tourist protection by engaging the tourist police through technology		▓		SLTDA	Domestic/ Tourist Police/ICT		■		
3.14	Continue and introduce improvements to the online/digital applications for tourism industry registrations			▓	SLTDA	Standards/ICT			■	■
3.15	Develop and further improve the current technology based monitoring system (Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning - MEL) system) for Sri Lanka Tourism			▓	SLTDA	DG/ICT			■	■
3.16	Creation of virtual/digital resources/products for the SLITHM students and industry to enhance knowledge		▓		SLITHM	Registrar/ Academic			■	■

Strategic Pillar 4: A safe and secure Country for tourists

4. A Safe and Secure Country for Tourists

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
4.1	**Use of Tourist Police Service Effectively to reinforce the safety and security of the tourists**									
4.1.1	Establishing tourist police centers near tourism regional offices/key tourist sites		▓		SLTDA	DG/Domestic				
4.1.2	Establishing an effective process for complaint lodging and follow up on progress on the complaints made		▓		SLTDA	DG/Domestic/ Tourist Police				
4.1.3	Tourist police training on handling the tourists and progress reporting. Seek the support of a donor for th training		▓		SLTDA	Domestic				
4.1.4	Use of technology to ensure safety and security - integrated to app		▓		SLTDA	Domestic/ICT				
4.2	**Public Awareness Campaign launch to educate the locals on the importance of ensuring tourist safety and protection and about the process to follow in case of need**		▓		SLTDA	Domestic				
4.3	**Conduct periodic surveys to identify issues related to the safety and security of the tourists and create the tourist police, provincial and government organisations informed for action. Also use the information to develop public awareness campaigns**		▓		SLTDA	Research/ Domestic				
4.4	**Ensure pandemic related safety and security for tourists by ensuring the updated guidelines and protocols are in place and communicated effectively**		▓		SLTDA	DG/Planning				

Strategic Pillar 5: Legal and regulatory framework

5. Legal and Regulatory Framework

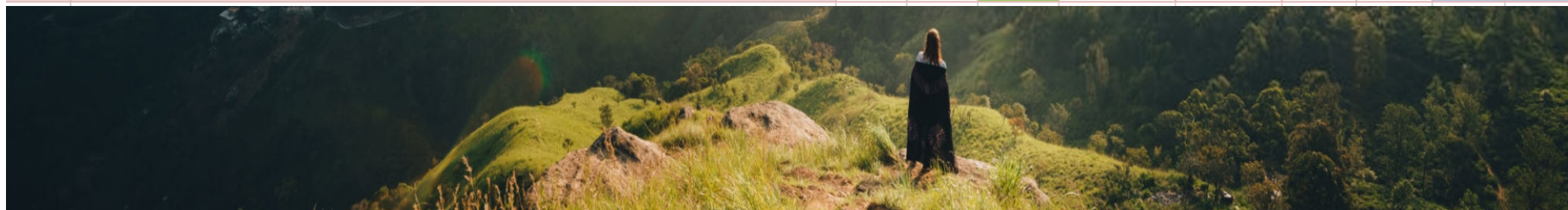| #	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
5.1	**Creating an effective and functional organisational set up through legal and regulatory adjustments and developments**			■						
5.1.1	Tourism act amended and the three tourism institutions (SLTDA/SLCB/SLTPB) merged as Sri Lanka Tourism			■	SLTDA/MOT	Legal				
5.1.2	SLITHM upgraded to degree awarding institution			■	SLITHM	Academic				
5.1.3	New organisational structure, that reflect global best practices, is introduced and implemented			■	SLTDA	CO/DG/HR				
5.2	**Develop the regulatory and legal framework required to facilitate potential investments in tourism (To encourage areas of eco-tourism, adventure, camping, water-based tourism, boutique and villas and high-end properties)**			■	SLTDA/MOT	Standards/ Planning/Legal				
5.3	**Create and Develop a regulatory and legal framework to facilitate tourism stakeholders and activities**			■						
5.3.1	Facilitate an Inter-Ministerial Council on tourism covering key areas including Wildlife, Zoological, Coast Conservation, Forest and CCF (Many countries have a single Parks Authority that oversee all cultural and natural attractions. In the absence of such a structure in Sri Lanka, there needs to be much better cooperation to ensure a quality offering at all locations). Tourism could be the convener for the council and draft a concept note to cover the scope, responsibilities, meeting frequency, etc.			■	SLTDA/MOT	DG/Planning				
5.3.2	Facilitate to improve guidelines and resources on classification of accommodation			■	SLTDA	Standards				
5.3.3	Facilitate liquor license restrictions to be reviewed			■	SLTDA	Standards				
5.3.4	Develop the required Sri Lanka Tourism Policies (Organisational) to facilitate the activities of the organisation and to ensure transparency (eg: Events Policy, Sponsorship Policy, Partnership Policy)			■	SLTDA/SLTPB	DG/MD/Legal/ HR				
5.4	**Ensuring legal and regulatory framework required for Sustainable Tourism adoption and for the implementation of sustainable initiatives**			■	SLTDA	Legal/Planning				
5.5	**Ensuring legal and regulatory framework required for Sustainable Tourism adoption and for the implementation of sustainable initiatives**			■	SLTDA	Legal/Planning				

Strategic Pillar 6: Sustainable and environment friendly tourism

6. Sustainable and Environment Friendly Tourism

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Protect	Recover	Build Back Better	Lead Agency	Responsible Division	2022	2023	2024	2025
		Tourism Strategic Priorities					Timeline			
6.1	**Establish an internal division dedicated to championing Sustainable Tourism. (Scope and responsibilities defined, resources allocated and staff trained)**			■	SLTDA	DG/Planning				
6.2	**Develop and Launch Sri Lanka Tourism's Sustainability Road Map. Based on the road map seek donor support to implement key projects**			■	SLTDA	Planning				
6.3	**Developing Sustainability guidelines & certification and ensure coordinated efforts for environmental sustainability**			■						
6.3.1	Developing sustainability guidelines & certification for the industry to include accommodation providers, travel agents/guides, other service providers such as restaurants, souvenir shops, etc			■	SLTDA	Standards				
6.3.2	Sustainable goals included within classification process			■	SLTDA	Standards				
6.3.3	Introduce and ensure central planning with BOI and UDA to ensure developments are sympathetic to the environment			■	SLTDA	Planning				
6.3.4	Work in collaboration with Mahaweli Development Authority to develop an Eco Tourism Development zone in Kaluganga and Moragahakanda			■	SLTDA	Planning				
6.3.5	Green Building Guidelines Prepared and implemented for new investments			■	SLTDA	Planning				
6.3.6	Yala Palatupana Tourism Zone to be upgraded as a Protected Conservancy Area			■	SLTDA	Planning				
6.4	**Ocean Sustainability - Introduce, develop and promote marine environment protection to ensure a healthy coastal and ocean environment**			■	SLTDA/SLTPB	NPD/PR/Planning				
6.5	**Creation of sustainability experiences for visitors such as creation of sustainability sights, beaches, parks and destinations, creation of green journeys/responsible holidays/adventures, creation of green gastronomy/menus etc**			■	SLTDA/SLTPB	NPD/Planning				
6.6	**Sustainability related awareness creation and promotions**			■						
6.6.1	Creation of sustainability focused marketing collaterals and tools to include a dedicated Micro site, video, imagery content and copy creation			■	SLTPB	PR/Advertising				
6.6.2	Include nature conservation in the hotel school curriculum			■	SLITHM	Academic				
6.6.3	Local and internally focused campaigns and activations to be launched to create awareness on sustainable tourism and initiatives taken			■	SLTPB	PR/Advertising/ NPD/Planning				
6.7	**Sigiriya to be developed as the first Sustainable Destination**			■	SLTDA	Planning/ Research				
6.8	**Introduce accessibility tourism. (Create awareness and interest, Identified key sites taken as pilot to be disability friendly, Inclusion of differently able people as employees in tourism)**			■	SLTDA	Domestic				

Strategic Pillar 7: New Product development and promotion

7. New Product Development & Promotion

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
7.1	Continue New Product Developments (such as wellness, helawedakama, shipwrecks, under water, digital nomads, etc) and promotions to attract new segments, to enhance user experience and to achieve product diversification			███	SLTPB	NPD				
7.2	Support the private sector to create new visitor experiences. Support to be extended in terms of Training support, promotional support, co-creation support.			███	SLTDA/SLTPB	NPD/Planning/ Domestic				
7.3	Joint promotions to be carried out with airlines, travel agents, tour operators, global media stations (print and electronic) covering key tourism markets		███		SLTPB	Marketing/ Advertising				
7.4	Continuation of the Visiting Journalists Program (VBP) / Visiting Journalist Program (VJP)		███		SLTPB	PR				
7.5	Efforts to ensure earned media coverage and campaigns for Sri Lanka in key tourism markets		███		SLTPB	PR				
7.6	Social media campaigns to enhance visitor information, engagement and shares		███		SLTPB	PR/Advertising				
7.7	Select and participate in the most prominent travel fairs and ensure earned media coverage to achieve higher ROI		███		SLTPB	Marketing				
7.8	Condut Selected tactical tourism promotions with Sri Lankan Missions overseas		███		SLTPB	Marketing				
7.9	Domestic tourism/local community engagement initiatives		███		SLTPB	PR/NPD				
7.10	Develop an events calendar on annual basis and promote internationally		███		SLTPB	Events				

Strategic Pillar 8: Position and market Sri Lanka

8. Position and Market Sri Lanka

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
8.1	Appoint the agency framework to ensure the successful implementation of the planned 'Global Communication Campaign' (GCC).		▓		SLTPB	Advertising			▓	
8.2	Launch the GCC and strategically position the destination. Achieve the alignment of planned 'Wellness' and 'Sustainability' campaigns to GCC.		▓		SLTPB	Advertising		▓		
8.3	Route development strategy for Sri Lanka		▓		SLCB/SLTPB	Marketing	▓			
8.4	Strive to achieve service quality excellence to align with the positioning. Carry out mapping of visitor journey, identify the touch points to enhance service quality to deliver service excellence.		▓		SLCB	Marketing	▓			
8.5	Obtain recognitions and accolades for Sri Lanka		▓		SLTPB	PR		▓	▓	
8.6	MICE related promotions and activations to position Sri Lanka as a MICE destination		▓		SLCB	SLCB	▓			

Strategic Pillar 9: Infrastructure and services

9. Infrastructure and Services

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
9.1	Support extended by way of inter government agency coordination support to expand Sri Lanka's recreational opportunities (eg: diving, trekking, etc)	■			SLTDA	Planning		■		
9.2	Continues to leverage on key tourist sites through better offerings, facilities (eg: toilet facilities) and reduction in congestion.		■		SLTDA	Domestic				
9.3	Improve tourism support services by strengthening Inter-agency collaboration (eg: Immigration & Emigration, Airports, Railways, UDA, MEPA, etc)	■			SLTDA	Planning				
9.4	Continues to introduce, develop, improvements, promotions into major tourism development projects - Yala, Kuchchaweli, Kalpitiya, Dedduwa, Zoning plan, etc			■	SLTDA	Planning				

Strategic Pillar 10: Partnerships

10. Partnerships

#	Key Activities to be Achieved	Tourism Strategic Priorities			Lead Agency	Responsible Division	Timeline			
		Protect	Recover	Build Back Better			2022	2023	2024	2025
10.1	Continue to work in collaboration with all Sri Lanka Foreign Missions	■			SLTPB	Marketing				
10.2	Continue to work in collaboration with all Foreign Diplomatic Missions	■			SLTPB	PR				
10.3	Continue to seek multiple donor support for development and improvements - Coordinate with multiple donors to assist identified projects of Sri Lanka Tourism. Hold a donor round table session and report on the progress.	■			SLTDA	Research				
10.4	A presidential task force proposed to be established to coordinate the Tourism related development work enabling faster decision making, approvals and development initiatives. The current Inter-ministerial committee could also be integrated into the presidential task force.			■	SLTDA	Planning				
10.5	Explore co-operative agreements with governments in key markets to promote destination and to enhance travel flow		■		SLTDA	Planning				

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