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USAID INDO-PACIFIC OPPORTUNITY PROJECT (IPOP) – SRI LANKA TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVITY

An Impact Assessment of the Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka and the Benefits of Adopting Sustainable Practices

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An Impact Assessment of the Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka and the Benefits of Adopting Sustainable Practices

An assessment of the environmental, socio-economic, and cultural impact of tourism in Sri Lanka, identifying opportunities to create sustainable approaches in the tourism industry.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADR	Average Daily Rate
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
CEA	Central Environmental Authority
DI	Doxey Index
DMO	Destination Management Organization
DMC	Destination Management Company
DOA	Department of Archaeology
DWC	Department of Wildlife Conservation
EMS	Environmental Management System
ERC	Elephant Research Center
FD	Forest Department
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
HEC	Human Elephant Conflict
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LED	Light Emitting Diode
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPS	Net Promotor Score
NSTC	National Sustainable Tourism Certification
OTA	Online Travel Agencies
PATA	Pacific Asia Travel Association
PV	Photovoltaics
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLSEA	Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority
SLTDA	Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TSP	Tourism Strategic Plan
UDA	Urban Development Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

INTRODUCTION

This report discusses ways to achieve sustainability in the tourism sector, with a particular focus on the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that make up a significant portion of all tourism-related businesses in Sri Lanka. The report highlights key areas that are crucial to maintaining sustainability and suggests simple ways to introduce changes. It also emphasizes the importance of embarking on a sustainability journey and the benefits of implementing sustainable practices. The report features sustainability champions from the industry to inspire and motivate businesses of all sizes.

The report provides an analysis of the current positive and negative impacts on sustainability of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka, as well as a brief discussion of the indirect impacts of tourism-related development activities. This analysis underscores the need for sustainable practices to minimize negative impacts and enhance positive ones. The report also provides an overview of the sustainability landscape in Sri Lanka, which helps to identify opportunities for sustainable approaches that leverage the strengths and opportunities present in the country.

The report will serve as a persuasive tool for encouraging the tourism industry to adopt sustainable initiatives, while also laying the groundwork for developing user-friendly communication materials for all tiers and stakeholders within the industry.

DESTINATION SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is a country with a history that spans millennia. It is the ancestral home of a civilization that left an astonishing collection of ancient temples, palaces, and monasteries. Sri Lanka's thousands of man-made irrigation tanks tell the story of people that designed and developed the most sophisticated irrigation system known to man at the time - and in doing so, endowed future generations with both the intrinsic knowledge and the direction to preserve and protect the island's natural resources.

Sri Lanka is a melting pot of religions and ethnicities, vibrant cultures and expressions of living heritage. Due to its position in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka has been both a trading post and a space for exchange between people for thousands of years, making it a country where inclusivity and diversity are rooted in history and tradition.

From the days of Rome through to the British Empire, Sri Lanka has given the world three of the most sought-after commodities: cinnamon, the king of spices, said to be more valuable than gold; sapphires, rubies and many other precious stones; and Ceylon Tea, popularizing a beverage that is now one of the most well-liked drinks in the world, and still making - for many - the best single origin tea in the world.

Sri Lanka is widely acknowledged as a country rich in biodiversity with a wide range of endemic plants and animals. It boasts diverse ecosystems, from montane forests in the hills to sand dunes in the coastal areas - all packaged within a tiny island.

Sri Lankans offer travelers their own unique brand of hospitality, distinguished by the famous Sri Lankan smile and a warm and pleasant demeanor. Consistently celebrated globally as a destination offering authentic and memorable experiences to travelers, Sri Lanka has tremendous potential as a destination brand that can create national value.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA

The tourism industry is wide-ranging, including hotels, transport, tour operators, and experiences. According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, international tourism is expected to reach 80%-95% of pre-pandemic levels in 2023, dependent on the current recovery of tourism in Asia and the Pacific, the slowdown of the global economy and the situation in Ukraine.¹ In Asia and the Asia Pacific region, arrivals more than tripled in the first nine months of 2022, reflecting the opening of many destinations. However, arrivals in Asia remained 83% below 2019 levels.

Sri Lanka's tourism receipts in 2018 peaked at USD \$ 4 billion in foreign exchange earnings with the number of international tourists surpassing the 2.3 million mark. The industry also created approximately 3 million direct and indirect employment opportunities.^{2,3} The direct contribution of travel and tourism to employment (percentage of GDP) in Sri Lanka increased from 2.5 % in 2000 to 5.9 % in 2019, growing at an average annual rate of 5.18%.⁴

In 2020, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, closely followed by the Sri Lankan economic crisis in 2022, crippled the sector. Approximately 194,500 tourists arrived in 2021, a 92% reduction year-on-year.⁵ In February 2023, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) reported 107,639 tourist arrivals.⁶

Tourist arrivals in 2023 suggest hope for the future, yet Sri Lanka is still far from pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, there is optimism amongst industry stakeholders that the sector can emerge strong in the coming years, subject to political stability, economic recovery, and no further major pandemic outbreaks.

While industry stakeholders are making a concerted effort to bounce back, consultations with them have revealed that significant challenges remain. These consist primarily of a negative perception of Sri Lanka in international markets (e.g., Easter bombings, economic crisis) and a labor shortage compounded by the migration of skilled workers seeking greener pastures due mainly to the recent economic crisis.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM LANDSCAPE IN SRI LANKA

In December 2018, the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and became a national member. GSTC emphasized the importance of quality assurance in order to help Sri Lanka maintain its brand reputation of providing authentic, memorable, and safe visitor experiences - vital to the future growth of the industry.⁷

SLTDA proceeded to create a National Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme (NSTC). Recognizing the vast and complex nature of all service providers in Sri Lanka, the SLTDA decided to

¹ UNWTO. 2023. "Tourism Set to Return to Pre-Pandemic Levels in Some Regions in 2023." www.unwto.org. 2023. <https://www.unwto.org/news/tourism-set-to-return-to-pre-pandemic-levels-in-some-regions-in-2023#:~:text=Based%20on%20UNWTO's%20forward%20looking,in%20Ukraine%2C%20among%20other%20factors.>

² Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. 2018. "2018 Annual Statistical Report." Accessed January 13, 2023. https://www.sltda.gov.lk/storage/common_media/Tourist%20Board%20Annual%20Statistical%20Report%202018_Web784216427.pdfhttps://www.sltda.gov.lk/storage/common_media/Tourist%20Board%20Annual%20Statistical%20Report%202018_Web784216427.pdf

³ Hewage, Indunil. 2022. "Tourism Industry Set to Rebound, Stakeholders Call for Restraint." Daily News. October 12, 2022. Accessed January 13, 2023. <https://www.dailynews.lk/2022/10/12/local/288970/tourism-industry-set-rebound-stakeholders-call-restraint>

⁴ "Sri Lanka Direct Contribution of Travel and Tourism to Employment (percentage of GDP), 1995-2019 - Knoema.com." n.d. Knoema. Accessed January 13, 2023. <https://knoema.com/atlas/Sri-Lanka/topics/Tourism/Travel-and-Tourism-Direct-Contribution-to-Employment/Direct-contribution-of-travel-and-tourism-to-employment-percent-of-GDP>

⁵ International Trade Administration. 2021. "Sri Lanka - Travel and Tourism." www.trade.gov. September 28, 2021. Accessed January 13, 2023. <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/sri-lanka-travel-and-tourism>

⁶ Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. n.d. "Monthly Tourist Arrivals Reports 2023." SLTDA. Accessed February 3, 2023. <https://www.sltda.gov.lk/en/monthly-tourist-arrivals-reports-2023>

⁷ Global Sustainable Tourism Council. 2019. "Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority Joins GSTC." GSTC. January 26, 2019. Accessed January 5, 2023. <https://www.gstccouncil.org/sri-lanka-tourism-development-authority-joins-gstc/>

start by piloting the new certification scheme with a small group of companies in the accommodation sector. In August 2019, several hotels were awarded NSTC certificates for their sustainable practices.

In August 2021, SLTDA announced that in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sri Lanka would take forward the sustainable tourism certification for destinations scheme, aiming to certify the nine provinces with a focus on specific destinations within the provinces, beginning with Sigiriya.

The Tourism Strategic Plan 2017-2020 (TSP 2017-2020) recognizes the key role tourism plays in Sri Lanka's national economy, from generating much needed revenue and foreign exchange for the country to creating jobs and encouraging domestic and foreign investment. The unprecedented growth in visitor numbers experienced by the sector, which was on a steady growth trajectory from 2012 up until 2018, also created many challenges. These challenges included: destination positioning, low product and geographic differentiation, product positioning, and shortage of trained staff.

In April 2022, the government published a new four-year Strategic Plan for the Tourist Sector.⁸ This plan comes at a critical time because recovery and growth in the tourism sector are critical for Sri Lanka's economic stability. The plan identifies three strategic priorities, namely: Protect, Recover, and Build Back Better. The third priority specifically focuses on developing a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable tourism sector by focusing on tourism infrastructure, better environmental regulation, and creating a business enabling environment for investment in sustainable tourism products.⁹ These three strategic priorities will be implemented through a ten-pillar implementation plan.

Moving forward, Sri Lanka faces important challenges, including ensuring that the NSTC scheme, as well as the sustainable certification scheme for destinations, are both GSTC accredited. It is also important to distinguish between accreditation and recognition while furthering the NSTC, as any standard implemented at the national level will need to be accredited by a recognized organization for accreditation. Accreditation entails not only the validation of the criteria by GSTC, but also the process of certification by third party certification bodies such as Green Destinations and Travel Life.

Another challenge is to develop and expand the certification scheme across the entire industry, including the vast number of MSMEs that make up the overall mosaic of Sri Lanka tourism. Sri Lanka will need to decide on whether certification should be made mandatory across the industry or whether this will be a voluntary decision for individual businesses. Additionally, Sri Lanka could choose to adopt a combination of both approaches. For example, Singapore has set a target of 60% of businesses to be certified by any recognized certification body by 2025. It wants to help businesses obtain "internationally recognized certification." The Government of Singapore will not certify hotels itself but, instead, facilitate and encourage operators to certify themselves with a GSTC accredited certification body. The government covers 50% of the cost of certification and offers even more support for MSME's.

Other challenges that need to be addressed by Sri Lanka include waste management, over-tourism in certain locations, greenwashing, pollution, responsible use of resources, and food safety. Numerous articles and accounts from travelers on social media have highlighted these issues, which may affect the branding of Sri Lanka as a destination. Therefore, it is important that key stakeholders such as the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC), Forest Department (FD), Coast Conservation and Coastal Resources Management Department, Department of Archaeology (DoA), Central Environmental Authority (CEA), industry associations, and the private sector effectively collaborate to ensure that the vision of a sustainable Sri Lanka is realized.

⁸ SLTDA. "April 2022 Strategic Plan for Sri Lanka Tourism 2022-2025." n.d. Accessed January 5, 2023. https://www.slt-da.gov.lk/storage/common_media/Sri_Lanka-Final_V6_Edited850147500.pdf.

⁹ SLTDA. 2022. "Strategic Plan for Sri Lanka Tourism 2022-2025." *Slt-da.gov.lk*. Accessed January 6, 2023. https://www.slt-da.gov.lk/storage/common_media/Sri_Lanka-Final_V6_Edited850147500.pdf.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF TOURISM IN SRI LANKA

Tourism has both positive and negative impacts on the social, cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of a destination. This section will give an overview of these impacts to better illustrate how sustainability practices can help mitigate negative impacts and increase the positive impacts.

Positive Impacts

- Tourism is a major contributor to the national economy of Sri Lanka and a key source of foreign exchange into the country. As such, the tourism industry plays a vital role in alleviating foreign exchange pressures on the Sri Lankan economy.
- In Sri Lanka, tourism accounted for 10% of GDP in 2019 and, although it fell sharply to 3.1% in 2021, the country's reliance on tourism is expected to grow back again in the years ahead.¹⁰ As the tourism industry bounces back, the potential economic benefits will also rise. For example, the Maldives is ranked third in the world based on GDP contribution from tourism to the national economy, with the sector contributing 38.92% of national GDP and 15.74% of employment.¹¹ If managed properly, Sri Lanka has a similar potential for growth of the tourism sector and corresponding contribution to the overall economy.
- Tourism generates demand for products and services that spur a variety of businesses and creates a wide range of employment opportunities. Jobs are created along the tourism value chain. For example, money spent in a hotel helps to create jobs directly in the hotel, but it also creates jobs indirectly elsewhere in the economy such as creating business for local vegetable and fruit vendors/growers, transportation suppliers, and others along the value chain.
- Tourism promotes the physical growth of a destination by providing the incentive to undertake key infrastructure projects, including improvements to roads and railways, ports and airports, as well as improvements to utility infrastructure like energy, water supply, waste management, and telecommunications. Many local communities in Sri Lanka also benefit from the improved facilities which are undertaken or prioritized in response to the needs of tourists.

Some examples include the development of the Southern Expressway that was developed to enable smoother and faster travel from the Mattala Airport located in the south of the island. Similarly, a major point of consideration in the development plans by the Urban Development Authority (UDA) for Colombo, Ella, and several other areas, was the ease of access and facilities for tourists, which would also benefit residents of the area.

- Tourism helps raise awareness and pressure on communities to better manage their environmental assets – the parks, the forests, the mountain trails, the rivers and the beaches that draw people to the destination in the first place. In many destinations worldwide – including Sri Lanka - tourism is a primary driver for biodiversity conservation, helping protect endangered species and prevent illegal trade.
- Tourism can have a positive impact on communities by helping raise the overall level of skills and education, and consequently offers great opportunities for communities to increase employment, thereby reducing poverty. For example, in Ella situated in the Uva Province, the development of infrastructure and influx of tourists have provided a range of jobs among the

¹⁰ "2022 Sri Lanka Key Highlights WTTC" n.d. Accessed January 6, 2023.

https://wtcc.org/DesktopModules/MVC/FactSheets/pdf/704/207_20220613170910_SriLanka2022_.pdf

¹¹ Mariano, Kristin. 2022. "Top 10 Countries That Rely on Tourism the Most." Travel Daily. May 24, 2022. Accessed January 6, 2023. <https://www.traveldailymedia.com/countries-that-rely-on-tourism-the-most/>

local community while also providing opportunities to develop their language and interpersonal skills through interactions with international guests.

Negative Impacts

- Tourism is responsible for roughly 8% of the world's carbon emissions.¹² The tourism value chain - from transportation and lodging to consumption - contribute to the industry's carbon footprint. Much of this footprint is emitted by visitors from high-income countries. As the number of people who can afford to travel grows, so will tourism's environmental footprint.
- Tourism puts pressure on natural resources, adversely affects biodiversity, and disrupts habitats due to unsustainable development and pollution. If not managed properly, tourism can create serious environmental problems in Sri Lanka which could have long-term consequences for both the local population and visitors alike. One example is the Yala National Park, which has had the issue of over-tourism since the early 2000s due to its popularity with both local and international tourists. According to the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC), in 2016, -Yala - a park of 378 square miles - had a total of 658,277 visitors enter the park in over 700 registered jeeps.¹³ This has led to an increase in pollution, noise and traffic congestion, as well as a decrease in the quality of the park's wildlife habitats.
- The construction of hotels and other tourist facilities often causes environmental damage due to deforestation, soil erosion, and disruption of ecosystems. Activities such as trekking, camping, and wildlife watching can disturb habitats which are home to notable species like leopards, elephants, and sloth bears.
- Tourism adversely affects the local way of life and can lead to various cultural and social issues when local culture, values, and beliefs are negatively affected as a result of tourist attitudes and behavior. Usage of controlled substances, rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and child and human trafficking are examples of such issues.
- Even though tourism creates jobs, tourism industry jobs are typically less stable. Concerns about tourism and employment in the tourism sector center around low wages, limited career opportunities, and seasonal and part-time jobs that leave workers under-employed. In some destinations, tourism is also responsible for the decline in traditional employment when workers move from industries such as farming and fishing into service jobs in the tourism industry.
- The culture of receiving commissions and dependence on tips and other monetary receipts outside the formal wage structure in the tourism industry can lead to the breach of the labor and human rights. This results in a decline in the quality of products and services offered, as well as unreasonable market prices and low wages which contribute to unsustainable tourism practices.

¹² Sustainable Travel International. 2020. "Carbon Footprint of Tourism." Sustainable Travel International. 2020. Accessed January 6, 2023. <https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/>

¹³ Imtiaz, Zahrah. 2017. Review of *Yala under Threat*. *Daily News*, October 27, 2017. Accessed January 6, 2023. <https://www.dailynews.lk/2017/10/27/features/132596/yala-under-threat>

Positive and Negative Impacts of Tourism

Positive Impacts of Tourism	Negative Impacts of Tourism
Source of foreign exchange, the most vital benefit for Sri Lanka against the current foreign currency shortage.	Tourism makes up 8% of the world's carbon emissions. ¹⁴
Export diversification, which creates demand for a wider range of products and encourages value addition.	Degradation and overconsumption of natural resources, often caused by bad management and planning.
Creation of employment opportunities, which will contribute to raising the standard of living in under-developed regions of the country.	Ad-hoc development leading to illegal settlements and improper waste management.
Supports local livelihoods and communities as local handicrafts and foods are marketed as products and through job creation.	Increase in crime and illegal activities. Tourism aggravates human trafficking, exploitation of children, and the usage of controlled substances.
Supports infrastructure development by upgrading transport services and developing public spaces, which will support the development of the country.	Over-tourism due to overcrowding of tourist attractions often affects the residents.
Better management of natural resources/assets as these are tourism products; the sustainability of natural attractions is dependent on responsible management.	Lack of stable employment due to the seasonality of jobs in the tourism sector.
Drives conservation and prevention of illegal trade of wildlife. As one of the main attractions in Sri Lanka, this will drive more finance and initiatives towards conservation.	Adverse effects on local culture and livelihoods.
Increase in skilled labor as demand for jobs in the service sector will rise.	
Poverty reduction through employment and providing business for small community businesses.	
Preservation of culture and history by marketing local handicrafts and cultural practices.	
Encourages best practices and global standards, in turn maintaining service quality.	

¹⁴ Sustainable Travel International. 2020. "Carbon Footprint of Tourism." Sustainable Travel International. 2020. Accessed January 14, 2023. <https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/>

ASSOCIATED BENEFITS AND ISSUES IN TOURISM

Associated Benefits

- Tourism helps build a case for and fund the renovation of historic buildings, the preservation of archaeological sites, and the preservation of traditional music, dance, and theater. Tourism also creates demand for locally produced traditional crafts. In this way, tourism has an important role to play in reinforcing a region's cultural identity. One example of this is the Sigiriya World Heritage Site, which has undergone many restorative and conservation efforts due to its significance as a cultural and tourist attraction. Additionally, several infrastructure facilities such as museums and visitor experience centers have been constructed to develop the site and its surrounding areas for tourism. Another notable example is the preservation efforts to ensure that the charm of Galle Fort, originally built in 1681 by the Dutch East India Company, is kept intact.
- Tourism motivates destinations to implement best practices and global standards, including sustainability standards. Standards ensure the safety, quality, and reliability of tourism-related products and services. They facilitate trade and protect our health, our communities, our distinct cultures and the environment. For business in the tourism industry, standards improve systems and processes; they reduce waste, cut costs, and ensure consistency. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) establishes and manages global sustainable standards with the aim of increasing sustainable tourism knowledge and practices among public and private stakeholders.
- Tourism promotes intercultural understanding and communication between communities as it allows people from different regions and backgrounds to freely interact.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Doxey Index (DI) is a tool developed by Professor Irvin Doxey in 1975 that measures the public reaction to tourism. It has been widely used in many countries around the world, including Sri Lanka.¹⁵

In Sri Lanka, the DI has been implemented for measuring tourist satisfaction since 2011. A study conducted by Manojkumar (2019) found that tourists' overall satisfaction levels were high, but there were certain areas of concern such as infrastructure development, communication problems, pollution control, and lack of proper waste management systems.¹⁶ The study also highlighted other factors such as the lack of proper marketing strategies and inadequate transport facilities. Another study conducted by Abeysekara et al. (2017) found that most tourists were satisfied with their experiences in Sri Lanka and would recommend it to others.

¹⁵ Abeysekara, M., Siriwardana, S. H., & Jayawardena, C. 2017. Exploring Tourist Satisfaction in Sri Lanka Using the Doxey Irritation Index Model. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 5(2), 1-13.

¹⁶ Manojkumar, P., Kauravarapu, V., & Thirunavukkarasu, I. 2019. Measuring tourist satisfaction using the Doxey Index model: A case study of Sri Lanka tourism industry. *International Journal of Business and Systems Research* 13(3), 327-342.

Associated Issues

- Inflation and tourism are two highly interconnected economic factors. Demand may push the prices of goods and services up, forcing local people to pay more for food, drinks, and transport. Local people often must pay additional taxes to help finance services which are provided for tourists, such as water treatment facilities and tourist information centers. Unreasonably inflated prices can also lead to a decrease in the number of tourists visiting a particular destination, as travelers may opt for cheaper alternatives.
- Tourism can exacerbate criminal activity and increase the rate of crime, which then has a negative effect on the country's reputation as a safe tourist destination. An increase in visitors increases crime and then in turn diminishes the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the destination, generating a negative loop.
- The influx of wealthy foreign buyers can drive up real estate prices in the area (for example, foreign buyers looking to buy second homes in popular destinations which are only used for short periods of the year by their owners) making it difficult for locals to afford housing. This is particularly true in popular coastal areas in Sri Lanka. If these properties are left vacant most of the year, they do not contribute much to the local economy or community. Similarly, second homes may also increase demand for certain vacation destinations leading to overcrowding and environmental pressure.
- Greenwashing means conveying a false impression or misleading information about how a company's products are environmentally sound. This is prevalent in all sectors of society and an increasing number of companies look to cash in on sustainable marketing.

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability has been hailed as the long-term solution to mitigate the adverse impacts of the tourism industry while also amplifying its benefits. In a sector prone to shocks, sustainability builds resilient businesses and strengthens brand image. Sustainability in the tourism industry can be achieved in many ways, from simple changes in daily operations to re-designing the business to be completely sustainable.

Even though sustainability is often perceived as costly and complicated, this does not have to be the case. Businesses can start their journey towards sustainability by taking small steps, such as training staff on how to be sustainable and encouraging better practices in daily actions. This will help businesses lower their costs while also contributing towards the overall sustainability of Sri Lanka as a destination.

There are several ways in which sustainability can be practiced and monitored at the business level, beginning from the most basic tasks to internationally recognized standards and certification.

I. Simple actions

- Starting an organic garden and supplementing it with drought resistant plants
- Buy from local vendors where possible
- Energy efficient light bulbs and electric devices
- Segregate waste
- Put up signs to ask travelers to turn off lights and air conditioners

2. Take a pledge

- A business can make their own pledge and set timely goals/targets to make their operations more sustainable
- An online pledge such as the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge is a public commitment to working towards reducing the environmental impact of a business while supporting local communities and heritage conservation

3. Have a sustainability checklist, self-assessment or self-audit

- A business can develop its own checklist or adopt an internationally recognized checklist such as the Hotel Sustainability Basics developed by the World Travel and Tourism Council
- Take stock of how much energy and is consumed and maintain a record to create a baseline to monitor progress
- Identify areas where consumption or purchasing can be reduced
- Self-audits help identify leaks, gaps or inefficiencies in operations and systems

4. Measure your impact

- Unlike a self-audit, measuring the impact of your business looks externally to see how the operations of a business affect the environment and those involved
- Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is a formal measurement of the impact of a particular product from the stage of production to waste. This system of tracing back to the source shows the impacts along the value chain
- Measuring the carbon footprint of a business shows the carbon emissions emitted by a person, product or operation, which in turn reflects its impact on climate change

5. Certification and Standards

- Certification exists to help tourism businesses and organizations work to meet internationally recognized standards
- A certification scheme is there to instill pride and a sense of achievement for organizations and businesses in the travel industry, but also to help discerning consumers make responsible choices
- Certification underpins and ensures the implementation of standards at every operational level, providing a systematic and goal-oriented approach
- Certification bodies provide a framework that includes tools, templates, training, and overall guidance

Why is embracing sustainability important?

- According to a survey by Booking.com, 73% of travelers are more likely to choose an accommodation that is carrying out sustainable practices.¹⁷ Therefore, investing in sustainability will align a business with traveler demand.
- Sustainability also helps boost your business's image as an environmentally aware and socially conscious business that gives back to local communities.
- In 2021, 81% of travelers stated they want to stay in sustainable accommodations.¹⁸

Getting started on your sustainability journey

- By building relationships with NGO's and/or local community development projects, you can better understand who is doing what in your community across all facets of sustainability such as saving water, energy, responsible consumption and production, inclusivity, and equity. This helps you make a difference not only to your brand, but also Sri Lanka as a destination.
- By becoming active members of associations within your area, you can advocate for sustainable solutions to challenges within your community and the natural environment in which you operate.
- By providing your guests with information on how to travel responsibly, respecting both nature and the local culture, you contribute towards preserving the future of Sri Lanka's tourism product offerings.

In practicing any of the above, a business will naturally contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), a global framework made up of key themes for sustainable development. As more travelers become aware of sustainability as a concept and understand the significance of sustainability, aligning the long-term goals of a business against the SDGs provides a form of credibility and demonstrates their contribution to international commitments. Tourism can be a tool for promoting sustainable development and can help to advance the SDGs by providing resources and promoting awareness of their importance. Additionally, the tourism industry has the potential to promote gender equality, combat climate change, and reduce inequality. By engaging in responsible tourism practices, businesses and travelers can help to advance the SDGs.

¹⁷ Booking.com. 2021. "Sustainable Travel Report 2021." *Booking.com*.

https://www.sustainability.booking.com/_files/ugd/6b9913_bda34290d24941b6b6aad4279d5a23c7.pdf.

¹⁸ Ibid.



Official site for the **United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals Page**
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/sustainable-development-goals-2>

In the context of Sri Lanka, the tourism industry plays a role in supporting and working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, including the tourism sector, will build towards Goal 7. Likewise, promotion of sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all, will support Goal 8. Additionally, ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, which is important for the tourism sector to maintain its environmental and cultural integrity, will also contribute towards Goal 12.

Similarly, contributions of a business to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), a set of national targets for the Paris Climate Change agreement, also shows commitment to national level climate action. Aligning a business with national and international targets increases the standing and the visibility of an initiative, which will also further the brand image of Sri Lanka as a sustainable destination.

Did you know?

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are a set of 17 global goals that were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015.¹⁹ The goals are an urgent call for action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The NDCs, or **Nationally Determined Contributions**, are commitments made by countries to reduce emissions and improve sustainability, as part of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Each country that has signed the Agreement has created an NDC outlining the steps it will take to reduce emissions and improve its sustainability. Sri Lanka submitted its initial NDCs in September 2016 as a country that ratified the Paris Agreement. The commitments are divided by sector, among which tourism and recreation is one.

¹⁹ United Nations. 2017. "Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." Un.org. Accessed January 16, 2023. <https://sdgs.un.org/>.

THE BENEFITS AND IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES IN SRI LANKA




I. Saving Energy

Why is this important for your business?

- Energy is an important part of any business and can be a large part of its operational cost. By taking action, businesses will save costs, reduce risks of shocks in the energy markets, improve brand reputation, and support compliance.
- In recent years, there has been a tremendous push by consumers to be more conscious of the environment, including saving energy, which is a major contributor to carbon emissions through its consumption and production. Both consumers and companies are becoming more aware of their impact, and many are taking action by focusing on reducing emissions and limiting their carbon footprints.

At the GSTC Global Conference 2022 in Seville, Spain, representatives from Destination Management Organizations (DMO's) around the world urged larger hotels and hospitality groups to focus their efforts on educating and supporting smaller players in the tourism ecosystem by taking initiatives such as organizing climate action awareness events, providing education on climate mitigation strategies, and even – where possible – supporting the smaller players to begin a sustainability journey, such as through sharing renewable energy.

Examples given below illustrate some ways in which organizations and businesses can minimize the impact of energy use and thus cut costs.

SDGs related to saving energy	
	Tourism can help drive the move to renewable energy sources and improve access to underdeveloped areas.
	The greenhouse gases released through tourism-related functions such as transport and building infrastructure contribute to climate change. Saving energy reduces this impact.
	Conscious consumption and production help conserve energy while also cutting emissions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO²⁰

- Conduct an energy audit
- Change light bulbs to LED.
- Make sure the default setting for air conditioning units is 24 degrees when in use.
- Take measures to ensure windows are kept closed when AC is on.
- Install occupancy and motion sensors in common areas.
- Assess if there is a better way to switch electrical equipment off when not in use.
- Shut down computers when they are not in use.
- Train your staff to consider things like the optimal load in a washing machine and the correct heat setting on a dryer.
- Look for ways to reduce the amount of vehicle transfers to save on fuel.
- When replacing equipment, always buy the most modern and efficient alternative.
- Implement a towel and linen reuse program and regularly check that it is being practiced by housekeeping.
- Consider only changing towels and sheets every four days.
- Remind guests about saving energy during their stay.
- Promote green activities on your website, social media, hotel lobby, and guest rooms.

IMPACT / BENEFIT

- ✓ Lowers operation costs.
- ✓ LED lights are up to 80% more efficient than fluorescent and incandescent lights. 95% of the energy in LEDs is converted into light and only 5% is wasted as heat.²¹
- ✓ According to the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA), the difference in the cost of using a 75W incandescent bulb and a 9W LED bulb for 4 hours a day (for a month) is Rs.75.25.²²
- ✓ Invest in solar PV (photovoltaics) which, on average, takes less than 3.5 years to pay back and saves more than 8.5 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually.²³
- ✓ A recent study suggests that a 10% reduction in energy consumption would have the same financial effect as increasing average daily room rate (ADR) by \$1.35 in full-service hotels.²⁴
- ✓ Sustainability initiatives improve your brand image and meet the demand of increasingly eco-conscious travelers.
- ✓ In air conditioners, every 1°C reduction in temperature adds 4% to the cost of energy required for cooling.²⁵

²⁰ Travelife. n.d. "Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label." Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.

²¹ Electrical Products Pty Ltd. 2022. "The Advantages of LED Lights for the Environment." [electricalproducts.com](https://www.electricalproducts.com.au/blog/led-lighting/#:~:text=Energy%20Efficient). Electrical Products Pty Ltd. 2022. Accessed January 14, 2023. <https://www.electricalproducts.com.au/blog/led-lighting/#:~:text=Energy%20Efficient>.

²² Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority. n.d. "Lighting." Wwww.energy.gov.lk. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.energy.gov.lk/index.php/en/knowledge/resources/your-home/lighting>.

²³ Sustainability Victoria. 2022. "Energy Efficiency in Hospitality." Sustainability Victoria. Sustainability Victoria. September 6, 2022.

Accessed January 14, 2023. <https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/energy-efficiency-and-reducing-emissions/in-a-business/by-sector/energy-efficiency-in-hospitality>.

²⁴ "Benefits of Sustainability Programs for Hotels." 2014. Five Star Efficiency. Accessed January 14, 2023.

<http://www.fivestarefficiency.com/benefits-of-sustainability-programs-for-hotels/>

²⁵ Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority. n.d. "Ventilation and Thermal Comfort." Wwww.energy.gov.lk. Accessed January 27, 2023. <https://www.energy.gov.lk/index.php/en/knowledge/resources/your-home/ventilation-and-thermal-comfort>.



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What You Can Do To Save Energy

1 Set air conditioning units to a **default temperature of 24 degrees** when in use

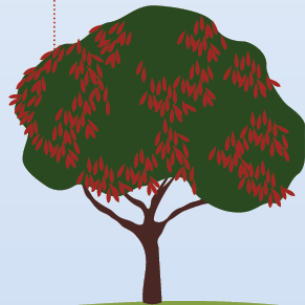
2 Keep **windows closed** while the AC is on

6 Change light bulbs to **LED**

3 **Grow native trees** to cool the surroundings and provide shade

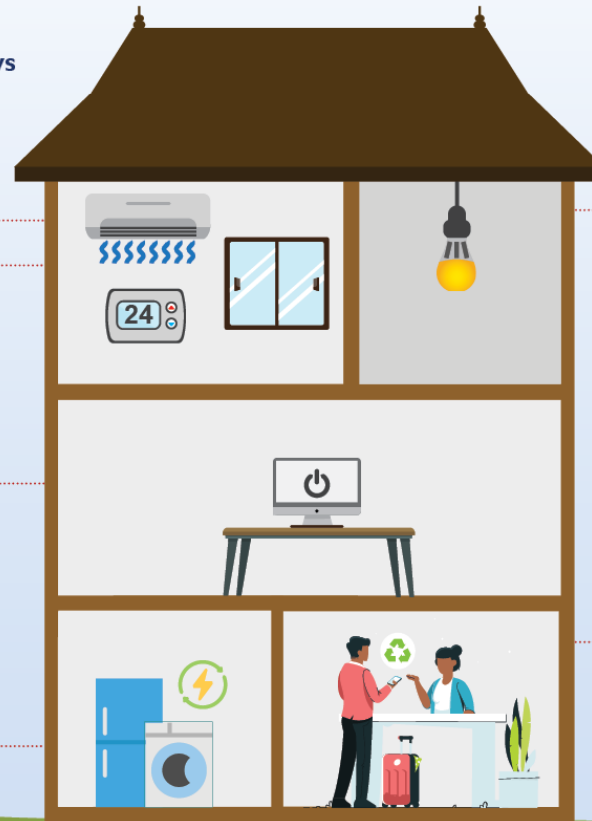
4 **Shut down computers and electrical equipment** and unplug when not in use

7 **Educate guests** about energy-saving practices during their stay



5 **Choose modern and efficient alternatives** when replacing appliances

8 **Minimize unnecessary trips** or combine multiple trips to save fuel



Did you know that **LED lights are up to 80% more efficient** than fluorescent and incandescent lights?



According to the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA), using a **75W incandescent bulb** for 4 hours a day costs **Rs.75.25 more per month** than using a **9W LED bulb**



Lowering the temperature by 1°C in air conditioners **increases the energy cost for cooling by 4%**

SRI LANKA'S INDUSTRY CHAMPS

The benefits and impact of **saving energy**:



GALKADAWALA

Galkadawala has fully solar-powered tree houses made from reused construction materials that function independently from the fossil-fuel dependent national grid.²⁶



KALUNDEWA RETREAT

Electric buggies are used to transport staff and guests across the 107-acre property. After dark, guests have the option of using their room lighting, but lights in common spaces are lit by natural moonlight/starlight.²⁷



AUTHENTICITIES

The brand's office in Colombo makes use of natural lighting and 60% of the energy consumed is solar powered.²⁸



JETWINGS HOTELS

Over 50% of the energy required across the hotel properties is sourced from renewable energy such as fuel wood, solar energy, and biogas. This is done using vapor absorption chillers, centralized hot water systems, rooftop solar PV systems, and biogas digesters across the properties.²⁹

²⁶ Galkadawala Forest Lodge. n.d. "Galkadawala, Habarana, Sri Lanka." Galkadawala. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.galkadawala.com/>.

²⁷ Kalundewa Retreat. n.d. "Luxury Villas Sri Lanka | Kalundewa Retreat Dambulla Official Site." Kalundewa Retreat. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.kalundewaretreat.com/>.

²⁸ Authenticities. n.d. "Sustainability." Authenticities. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://authenticitiessrilanka.com/protecting-cultures/>.

²⁹ Jetwing Hotels. n.d. "Sustainability at Jetwing Hotels." www.jetwinghotels.com. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.jetwinghotels.com/sustainability/>.



CEYLON WILD SAFARIS

Ceylon Wild Safaris is 100% solar powered with a system that allows the solar collection system to function through the rainy seasons as well.³⁰



ULPOTHA

Situated in a picturesque location at the foot of the Galgiriya mountains, bordering a lake and paddy fields on either side, Ulpotha is designed to function without electricity with only the use of solar lamps along paths and in accommodations reminiscent of a bygone era.³¹

³⁰ Ceylon Wild Safaris. n.d. "Ceylon Wild Safaris". Ceylon Wild Safaris. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.ceylonwildsafaris.com/>.

³¹ Ulpotha. n.d. "Ulpotha." Ulpotha Yoga & Ayurveda Retreat. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.ulpotha.com/>.

2. Saving Water



Why is this important for your business?

- The pumps, filters, storage, and waste systems related to water use in a business can be costly due to the purchase of specialized equipment, related maintenance, and the use of electricity. Adopting sustainable practices such as rainwater harvesting, or the use of natural filtration systems lowers these costs significantly.
- Clean and fresh water is a limited resource. With the growing global population, fresh water will become a scarcer resource. Therefore, businesses should prioritize conserving fresh water from both a sustainability and ethical standpoint.
- Wastewater containing chemicals and sewerage can contaminate water supplies. The way in which water is sourced and wastewater is released can negatively affect natural environmental flows, affecting soil erosion and biodiversity.
- Water conservation does not only include reduced consumption, but also plays an active role in avoiding water pollution and managing wastewater, which helps businesses comply with legal requirements as well moving them closer to meeting certification requirements.
- In some parts of Sri Lanka, water supply cannot keep up with current and future needs and there is a considerable environmental cost to bringing water to cities and towns, resulting in an increase in the cost of water.

It is imperative that the tourism sector understand the broader impact and pay adequate attention to the importance of water management and conservation. In some parts of Sri Lanka popular with tourists, water supply cannot keep up with current and future needs. In other parts of Sri Lanka, extreme weather because of climate change is likely to increase flooding.

The consumption of water per guest night across the tourism industry is estimated at three times that of the average domestic consumption.³² This indicates a social responsibility of those engaged in the tourism industry to ensure that the needs of the local community are not compromised.

Examples given below illustrate some ways in which organizations and businesses can conserve water and implement water efficient practices into their daily operations.

SDGs related to saving water	
	Clean water and sanitation are basic needs for all humans. Tourism can drive efficient water use and advance related technologies while combatting pollution at the source.
	Responsible consumption and production are essential to address issues such as pollution at its source. This also allows future generations to use the resources of today.

³² Wickramasinghe, Kanchana. 2013. "Tourism and Water Management: Is Sri Lanka Paying Enough Attention?" *TalkingEconomics*, September 27, 2013. Accessed January 14, 2023. <https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2013/09/27/tourism-and-water-management-is-sri-lanka-paying-enough-attention/>.

WHAT YOU CAN DO³³

- Conduct a water audit
- Implement a towel and linen reuse program and regularly check that housekeeping is following it.
- Consider only changing towels and sheets every four days during a guest's stay.
- Consider whether you are putting more towels in guest rooms than needed.
- Regularly check for leaking toilets and implement a system to ensure these are promptly reported to maintenance.
- Put notices in guest rooms reminding them of how to save water.
- When gardening, make sure all irrigation is going directly onto plants and not onto concrete or pavement.
- Irrigate when it is dark.
- Regularly check hoses and irrigation pipes for leaks.
- Put signs or stickers in kitchens and staff bathrooms reminding staff and guests to save water; ask them to report any leaks they find.
- Install controlled flow taps and bath hardware whenever possible.

IMPACT / BENEFITS

- ✓ Water use affects tourism businesses' operating costs and environmental footprints. Industry estimates suggest that finding ways to use less water can decrease operating costs by approximately 11% and water use by 15%.³⁴
- ✓ When hotel properties reduce water consumption, there are also social benefits, such as fewer water shortages for businesses and communities located in the area.
- ✓ A recent study suggests that instituting linen and towel reuse programs in guest rooms can help reduce the loads of laundry washed by 17%.³⁵
- ✓ High-performing water-using equipment and fixtures often use at least 20% less water than standard models.³⁶
- ✓ Reducing water consumption will help reduce the cost of filtration and fewer chemicals will have to be used to purify the water.
- ✓ Customers appreciate efforts to save water and appreciate businesses that do it.
- ✓ Up to 12,000 liters of water can be wasted if a faucet drips once every second, costing over \$30 a year.³⁷

³³ Travelife. n.d. "Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label." Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.

³⁴ Review of *Saving Water in Restaurants*. 2012. Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental Protection Agency. Accessed January 14, 2023. <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-01/documents/ws-commercial-factsheet-restaurants.pdf>.

³⁵ "Sustainability." n.d. The Gables Inn Sausalito. Accessed January 5, 2023. <https://www.gablesinnsausalito.com/h2otel-challenge/>.

³⁶ Energy star. 2019. "Saving Water Helps Protect Our Nation's Water Supplies." Energystar.gov. 2019. Accessed January 14, 2023. https://www.energystar.gov/products/saving_water_helps_protect_our_nations_water_supplies.

³⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2017. "Water Efficiency Management Guide Bathroom - Bathroom Suite."

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-12/documents/ws-commercialbuildings-waterscore-bathroom-resource-guide.pdf>.



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What You Can Do To **Save Water**

1 Encourage guests to elect **changing towels and sheets only every three to four days**

2 **Water the garden at dusk or dawn** to avoid excessive evaporation of water

3 Put **only the necessary amount of towels** in guest rooms

4 Stay vigilant! **Conduct regular checks for leaks** and set up a **reporting system** to promptly alert maintenance

5 **Educate guests** about water-saving practices during their stay



Water-efficient equipment and fixtures typically use at least **20% less water** than standard models



A faucet leaking just once per second can waste up to **12,000 liters of water** in a year



Implementing **linen and towel reuse programs** in guest rooms can **cut laundry loads by 17%**

SRI LANKA'S INDUSTRY CHAMPS

The benefits and impact of **saving water**:



JETWING VIL UYANA

Jetwing Vil Uyana reduced its dependence on the national water supply by using rainwater harvesting on roof gutter systems and reverse osmosis units, which desalinate brackish water from lakes and ponds on the property.³⁸



BACK OF BEYOND

Back of Beyond practices rainwater collection and uses small lakes to store excess water, which have become a life-giving source for the wildlife during the dry season.³⁹



SRI LANKA YOGA

In the process of building a rainwater catchment and filtration system, this business uses water-saving taps and showers to reduce overall water use. All water in the building is heated through solar systems.⁴⁰



UGA BAY

This property uses water-flow regulators and tap aerators in the rooms across three properties. Over 4.8 million liters of water is saved per year.⁴¹

³⁸ Jetwing Vil Uyana. n.d. "Sustainability." www.jetwinghotels.com. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.jetwinghotels.com/jetwingviluyana/sustainability/>.

³⁹ Back of Beyond. n.d. "About Us." www.backofbeyond.lk. Accessed February 28, 2023. <https://www.backofbeyond.lk/about/index.html>.

⁴⁰ Lanka Yoga. n.d. "Sustainability." Lanka Yoga. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://lankayoga.lk/sustainability>.

⁴¹ Uga Bay. n.d. "Uga Bay Pasikuda, Sri Lanka." Uga Bay. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.ugaescapes.com/ugabay/>.

3. Reducing Waste

Why is this important for your business?

- In Sri Lanka, the waste generated because of tourism varies between 1 to 12 kg per guest per day.⁴² By contrast, an average resident generates an average of 0.4 - 1 kg of waste per day.⁴³ The marked difference in waste generation indicates the need for heightened awareness as well as action in handling waste in the tourism industry.
- According to the Central Environmental Authority, only half of the waste generated is collected, leading to an accumulation of waste over time.⁴⁴ The failure to address waste management has already resulted in the degradation of tourism assets such as wetlands, coastline, rivers, and other streams which have become dumping sites for plastic, polythene, and other mixed waste.
- Businesses and service providers have a corporate responsibility to segregate, recycle, and dispose of waste responsibly. Ideally, businesses should aspire to not use single-use plastics and polythene.
- Waste management can be addressed at both the consumption and disposal stages. At the consumption stage it can lower costs. For example, by investing in glass bottles, a business can stop purchasing plastic water bottles.
- Likewise, at the disposal stage, organic waste can be used for fertilizer, saving on the cost of fertilizer as well as the cost of garbage bags and containers, plus the cost of transportation to a waste facility.

Waste management issues affect travelers' perception of Sri Lanka as a destination, undermining Sri Lanka as a brand. Poor waste management and improper waste disposal affect wildlife, which is a major asset to tourism in Sri Lanka. In 2022, the deaths of several foraging elephants garnered global attention, with Leonardo DiCaprio tweeting about the issue, while local conservationists say they have been warning about the problem for a long time.⁴⁵ Reducing waste at the source by consuming and purchasing more consciously will reduce the amount of waste in dump sites and landfills.

Businesses and organizations have a responsibility to separate the waste into perishables and non-perishables and handover non-perishables (plastic/polythene, glass, metal, etc.) to appropriate recycling centers. The industry has a responsibility to educate itself, the broader population of Sri Lanka, and consumers alike. The following examples illustrate ways in which organizations and businesses can take action and earn benefits from implementing waste management best practices and standards.

⁴² Malagammanage, Dimuthu P, Shiromi H Dissanayaka, and Harshani U Jayaneththi. 2022. "Solid Wastes Generation and Its Management in Tourist Destinations of Sri Lanka." *Global Journal of Engineering and Technology Advances* 12 (2): 106–112. <https://doi.org/10.30574/gjeta.2022.12.2.0144>.

⁴³ EFL Admin. 2018. "Status of Waste Management in Sri Lanka." Environment Foundation (Guarantee) Limited. 2018. Accessed January 16, 2023. <https://efl.lk/status-waste-management-sri-lanka/>.

⁴⁴ Hikkaduwa, H.N.; Gunawardana, K.W.; Halwatura, R.U.; Youn, H.H. Sustainable approaches to the municipal solid waste management in Sri Lanka. In Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Structural Engineering and Construction Management, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 11–14 December 2015. Accessed January 17, 2023. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Himal-Hikkaduwa/publication/311067189_Sustainable_Approaches_to_solid_waste_management_in_Sri_Lanka/links/583cfac708aeb3987e2f9e41/Sustainable-Approaches-to-solid-waste-management-in-Sri-Lanka.pdf

⁴⁵ Rodrigo, Malaka. 2022. "Poor Waste Management Turns Dump Sites into Death Traps for Sri Lanka's Elephants." Mongabay Environmental News. March 20, 2022. Accessed January 17, 2023. <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/03/poor-waste-management-turns-dump-sites-into-death-traps-for-sri-lankas-elephants/>.

WHAT YOU CAN DO⁴⁶

- Reuse and recycle as much waste as possible and ensure responsible waste disposal.
- Become active members of associations within your area, advocating for sustainable solutions to waste disposal challenges within your community and the natural environment where you operate.
- Work to replace single-use products with reusable (such as paper straws, metal straws or even no straws) or naturally degradable alternatives (such as banana leaves, lotus leaves, banana bark, and other natural alternatives). This will also help comply with local waste regulations and policies.
- Reuse grocery bags and packaging materials as much as possible.
- Direct recyclable items such as paper, cardboard, glass, cooking oil, tin, and e-waste to suitable recyclers.
- Segregate your waste and discuss how best each type can be disposed of with your local authority.
- Analyze your supply chain and investigate how unnecessary packaging can be eliminated.
- Install a compost bin - it will provide organic fertilizer for your garden while reducing the pressure on the local authorities for collection and disposal.
- Design menus and determine portion sizes in a manner that will minimize food waste and incorporate locally available food items.

IMPACT / BENEFITS

- ✓ You will save money on what you buy. Using raw materials, packaging, and equipment more efficiently means you will not have to buy as much.
- ✓ Efficient waste management will reduce the amount of waste your business produces - meaning less to get rid and lower disposal costs.
- ✗ Having effective policies and procedures in place should make it cheaper and easier for your business to comply with waste regulations. You may find that some of your waste products can even be sold to other businesses for them to reuse or recycle.
- ✓ Increased business opportunities - many large companies and government organizations will not work with a business that does not have an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place that addresses responsible waste management and disposal.
- ✓ In hospitality, preparing food in advance results in waste of up to 20% of the total food cost due to reasons such as spoilage, over production, and kitchen errors.⁴⁷
- ✓ If one million metal straws were produced in a given year, only 30,000 would be thrown away after five years. Conversely, if one million plastic straws were produced in a year, the same amount would be thrown away before the end of the year.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Travelife. n.d. "Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label." Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.

⁴⁷ Gross, Lottie. 2019. "Helping Reduce Food Waste in Tourism | Click. Magazine." Booking.com. January 9, 2019. <https://partner.booking.com/en-gb/click-magazine/trends-insights/helping-reduce-food-waste-tourism>.

⁴⁸ Limos, Mario. 2019. "Metal Straws vs. Plastic: Their Impact on the Environment." Esquiremag.ph. August 15, 2019. <https://www.esquiremag.ph/culture/lifestyle/are-metal-straws-bad-for-the-environment-a00293-20190815>.



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What You Can Do To Manage Waste

1 Involve employees and guests in good waste management practices

2 Install a compost bin to produce organic fertilizer for your garden

3 Reduce printing and print double-sided. Refill ink cartridges instead of buying new ones

4 Reuse your bags and packaging

5 Replace single-use products with reusable or naturally degradable alternatives

6 Make your supply chain sustainable. Buy local and reusable products

7 Send recyclable items like paper, cardboard, glass, cooking oil, tin, and e-waste to appropriate recycling facilities



After eliminating the use of plastic water bottles in their operations, a small adventure tourism business in Sri Lanka has **prevented approximately 35,000 plastic bottles from polluting the environment**. This equates to about 145 plastic bottles per month.

“ **We have made a conscious decision to minimize waste and contribute to sustainability** by diverting our organic waste to a piggery. Not only does this make waste management easier for us, but it is also a rewarding endeavour. ”

~ MSME Operator in Sri Lanka

SDGs related to reducing waste



Waste management is one of the key issues in both urban and rural areas. Proper waste management is the cornerstone to preserving cultural and natural heritage upon which tourism depends.



Responsible consumption and production are essential to address issues such as waste management; the tourism sector holds the potential to pave the way to build a circular economy.

SRI LANKA'S INDUSTRY CHAMPS

The benefits and impact of **reducing waste**:



THE GRAND HOTEL

The Grand's Green Bank is a Waste Management Center providing hygienic, efficient, and economic solid waste storage, collection, transportation, and treatment or disposal of waste. Based on an innovative 12R⁴⁹ system, the Grand Hotel goes above and beyond the traditional 3Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle system.⁵⁰



TEARDROP HOTELS

Refill Not Landfill is a global initiative dedicated to reducing the use of plastic bottles by listing places where reusable bottles can be refilled. Teardrop Hotels were the first in Sri Lanka to partner with Refill Not Landfill to offer in-house and outside guests the opportunity to refill their water bottles.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The 12R system (Remember, Respect, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Return, Refill, Rot, Restore, Repurpose, Repair and Recycle) is an extension to the traditional 3R system of reduce, reuse and recycle where the sequence starts with triggering mindset changes with the addition of remember, respect and refuse.

⁵⁰ Grand Hotel. 2018. "Harmony in Sustainability." Grand Hotel. October 22, 2018. <https://thegrandhotelnuwaraeliya.com/sustainability/>.

⁵¹ Teardrop Hotels. n.d. "Our Story." Teardrop Hotels. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.teardrop-hotels.com/our-story/>.



TEA TRAILS

Instead of giving guests a fixed large menu, a more limited daily menu is provided to help reduce food waste.⁵²



ECO GRIP

EcoGrip takes waste management seriously, avoiding disposable water bottles, wet wipes, shopping bags, and single-use toiletries. They also provide their clients with information and tips on how to avoid waste and its trips are free of single-use plastic.⁵³



GRAND HOTEL

The Grand Hotel Nuwara Eliya implemented a “Straw Upon Request” initiative. Customers who want a straw can still get a paper straw on request. Annually, more than 70,000 plastic straws are saved from ending up in landfill.⁵⁴



WALKERS TOURS

‘Plasticcycle’, the Social Entrepreneurship initiative of the John Keells Group, was launched in July 2017 with the vision of being the catalyst in reducing plastic pollution in Sri Lanka. Walkers Tours Ltd. has worked closely in furthering this vision which includes promoting responsible disposal and recycling of plastic waste.⁵⁵

4. Supporting Communities

⁵² Resplendent Ceylon. n.d. “Ceylon Tea Trails.” www.resplendentceylon.com. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.resplendentceylon.com/teatrails/>.

⁵³ Eco Grip. n.d. “Eco- Grip about Us.” Eco Grip. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://ecogrip.lk/about-us/>.

⁵⁴ Grand Hotel. 2018. “Harmony in Sustainability.” Grand Hotel. October 22, 2018. <https://thegrandhotelnuwaraeliya.com/sustainability/>.

⁵⁵ Walkers Tours. n.d. “About Us.” Walkers Tours. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.walkerstours.com/about-us.html>.

Why is this important for your business?

- Tourism is intricately connected to the communities in which it takes place and can greatly influence the lives of the local people. A major benefit of tourism to communities is the creation of employment, both directly and indirectly. This can benefit businesses as it lowers accommodation and travel costs by employing people from the locality.
- Working together with communities also creates a more genuine experience, leaving a lasting impression of authentic Sri Lankan hospitality on travelers.
- Tourism helps enhance the living standards of the surrounding community, generating income, diversifying the local economy, preserving culture, conserving the environment, and providing educational opportunities. In turn, communities can supply traditional arts, crafts, food, etc. to businesses. This builds a mutually beneficial working relationship.
- Supporting communities will help raise the standard of a business. Banning child labor and providing fair wages and employee benefits garners respect among not only travelers, but also the community itself.
- Building good relationships and earning the trust of local communities helps avoid conflict and builds a united platform to work towards sustainability.

A typical itinerary around Sri Lanka takes travelers to five to seven distinct locations, many of them in rural settings spread out across the island. As such, visiting remote communities is one of the hallmarks of Sri Lankan tourism. Sri Lanka's communities are integral to Sri Lanka's tourism narratives. Udaya Wikramage, head of Sensory Indulgences - a well-known experience curator that offers experiences all over the country – says, “We promise authentic tourism articulated around rural communities. We rely on them and they, in turn, rely on us. Rural communities are something Sri Lanka has in abundance.”

Community tourism in Sri Lanka is an effective poverty reduction tool. As Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett says, tourism is “the fastest and easiest way to transfer wealth from the rich to the poor.”

One of the keys of sustainable tourism development is the need to ensure that local people are informed and actively participate in tourism development and management. A community imbues individuals with a collective responsibility to make decisions that benefit the whole. As the Sri Lankan tourism sector begins to implement sustainability practices across the island, businesses must take note and ensure wider consultation is undertaken with community members.

Businesses should commit to sustainable community engagement by drawing up policies, communicating those policies, educating staff, and putting in time and resources to address community-related challenges.

WHAT YOU CAN DO⁵⁶

- Provide your guests with information on how to travel responsibly, respecting both the local community and regional culture.
- Become active members of associations advocating for sustainable solutions to social challenges within your community.
- One safeguard of sustainable tourism requires that communities be involved in the planning and implementation process of tourism.
- Ensure your team has received training on child protection and human trafficking.
- Celebrate and promote the unique aspects of the local culture by using local materials for furniture, and upholstery; create menus and drinks using local ingredients.
- Experience first-hand all the excursions within your community so that you can confidently make suggestions and recommendations to your clients.
- Make sure that you do not block rights of way or block access to essential services such as health care and education. Better still, if you provide these services to your employees, consider extending the benefit to your community.

IMPACT / BENEFITS

- ✓ Implementing a community engagement policy can pay off in many ways. One example is reputational: National Geographic magazine stated “community tourism will play a bigger role because travelers want to make a difference”⁵⁷
- ✓ It is not unusual for communities to have an employment multiplier where each job in the tourist industry produces 1.63 other jobs at the destination.⁵⁸
- ✓ A stable and satisfied workforce makes a business more productive.
- ✓ A 2021 survey revealed that 66% of accommodation providers partnering with Booking.com believe that sustainability has a positive impact on local communities.⁵⁹
- ✓ To be able to collectively address issues faced by enterprises in the area and initiate self-development programs for all.
- ✓ Makes the business resilient against external shocks due to the interlinking connections and collaborations among the local businesses.
- ✓ In a survey by Booking.com, 66% of travelers want to have genuine experiences that reflect the local culture.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Travelife. n.d. “Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label.” Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.

⁵⁷ Brock, Steve. 2020. “Here Are 8 Ways Travel Will Change after the Pandemic.” National Geographic. October 5, 2020. Accessed January 16, 2023. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/heres-how-covid-is-changing-travel-according-to-the-experts>.

⁵⁸ Steger, Susan. 2015. “Tourism Economics - the Multiplier Effect - an Opinion.” Fernandina Observer. May 13, 2015. Accessed January 16, 2023. <https://fernandinaobserver.com/general/tourism-economics-the-multiplier-effect-an-opinion/>.

⁵⁹ Booking.com. 2021. “Sustainable Travel Report 2021.” Booking.com. https://www.sustainability.booking.com/files/ugd/6b9913_bda34290d24941b6b6aad4279d5a23c7.pdf.

⁶⁰ Booking.com. 2022. “Sustainable Travel Report 2021.” Booking.com. <https://globalnews.booking.com/download/1161485/booking.comsustainabletravelreport2022final.pdf?aid=318615:label&lang=undefined>



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What You Can Do To Support Communities

1 Create menus that feature local ingredients sourced from your community



2 Provide your guests with information on how to travel responsibly, respecting both the local community and culture

3 Celebrate the unique aspects of the local culture by using local material for building and design



4 Experience first-hand all the excursions within your community so that you can confidently make suggestions to your clients



5 Give priority to people from your local community for new recruitments

6 Become active members of associations and advocate for sustainable solutions to challenges within your community



In a survey by Booking.com, around **66% of travellers** want to have genuine experiences that reflect the local culture.



Communities may experience an employment multiplier where **each job in the tourist industry produces 1.63 other jobs.**



A 2021 survey revealed that **66% of accommodation providers** partnering with Booking.com believe sustainability has a positive impact on local communities.

SDGs related to supporting communities



Tourism relies on the natural resources it shares with communities. Therefore, it should promote sustainable development for the benefit of both the tourism industry and local community.



Tourism provides employment and opportunities to develop skilled labor and can lead the way to inclusive growth in communities.

SRI LANKA'S INDUSTRY CHAMPS

The benefits and impact of **supporting your community**:



SARAII VILLAGE

Saraii Village offers guests a series of local experiences, from village tours hosted by locals to curd making with local farmers bird watching, fishing with local fisherman, and pottery making with local clay artisans. All this income is directed to these communities and the food is sourced from local farmers/suppliers.⁶¹



HALCYON

Halcyon is a 10-room boutique hotel situated in Mawella Beach. The owners of Halcyon support the local community in various ways. One initiative involved helping the local shop to grow their business by diversifying their product offerings.⁶²

⁶¹ Saraii Village. n.d. "Walking Our Talk." Saraii Village. Accessed January 28, 2023. <http://www.saraiivillage.com/sustainability/>.

⁶² Halcyon Mawella. n.d. "Home." Halcyon Mawella. Accessed January 29, 2023. <https://halcyonmawella.com/>.



GAL OYA LODGE

Gal Oya Lodge actively works to integrate and learn from the native "Veddah" community, one of the last indigenous communities to live traditionally in Sri Lanka. Traditional access to their homelands and forest regions are protected and preserved; the Veddahs are hired as local guides and work on property with guests. The local veddahs are encouraged to continue their traditions.⁶³



THE LADY CHIEFS OF PITAWALA

Menike is part of a collective of women running homestays in the remote foothills of the Knuckles Mountains. They aptly and jokingly refer to themselves as the women chiefs. These Sinhalese villagers have lived here remotely for centuries and continue to do so in the present even as the country around them continues to change.



JETWING LIGHTHOUSE

In Galle, Jetwing Lighthouse spearheaded the Project which connected local taxi drivers to the operations of the hotel, eliminating the need for third-party hotel taxi services. This initiative was recognized with a PATA award for supporting the local community.⁶⁴



ELEPHANT RESEARCH CENTER BY UGA

Established in 2020, the Elephant Research Center (ERC) was established in Ulagalla, Anuradhapura to support elephant conservation and mitigate Human-Elephant Conflict. The ERC supports the Center for Conservation and Research (CCR) by tracking elephants near the property through a team of trained individuals, in-house guides, and members of the local community.⁶⁵

⁶³ Gal Oya Lodge. n.d. "The Lodge." Gal Oya Lodge. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.galoyalodge.com/lodge/>.

⁶⁴ Jetwing Lighthouse. n.d. "Sustainability." Jetwing Hotels. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.jetwinghotels.com/jetwinglighthouse/sustainability/>.

⁶⁵ Uga. 2021. "Uga's Elephant Research Center – Uga Escapes Blog." Uga Escapes. 2021. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.ugaescapes.com/blog/2021/09/03/ugas-elephant-research-center/>.

5. Conserving Nature

Why is this important for your business?

- According to the 2018 Annual Statistical Report published by the SLTDA, around 1.1 million foreign tourists visited wildlife parks in Sri Lanka, generating over USD 12.3 million in income.⁶⁶ Almost every round-tour includes an element of nature or wildlife, and a very significant percentage of the tourism industry relies on being able to offer travelers an experience of nature or wildlife.
- While Sri Lanka is known for its nature-based tourism, it is also among the 34 biodiversity hotspots identified in the world and has the highest biodiversity per unit area of land in the Asia region.⁶⁷ This not only indicates a high rate of biodiversity, but also indicates that it's more vulnerable and needs to be given high conservation priority.
- Major threats to the natural assets of Sri Lanka include the ever-increasing demand for land for human habitation and related developmental activities. Poor land use planning, indiscriminate exploitation of biological resources, weak enforcement of legislation, pollution, human-wildlife conflicts, an increasing spread of invasive species, and increasing human population density are some of these threats.
- Activities such as birdwatching and whale-watching have become hallmarks of Sri Lanka tourism and are extremely popular. DMCs, travel agents, hotels, and operators often proclaim that Sri Lanka is the best place in the world to see leopards or the Asian elephant.
- Sustainable tourism principles and frameworks are already playing a role in bridging gaps and helping manage conflict between tourism and nature conservation. This includes increasing revenue as well as political support for protected areas, the creation of local jobs and opportunities for SMEs, and encouraging people to get involved and enhancing their desire to care for nature and inspire tourists to take informed conservation action.

An example of the importance of conservation from the business angle is the “Uga Elephant Research Center” by UGA Escapes, Ulagalla in Sri Lanka. Over the last three generations, the Sri Lankan Elephant population has declined by as much as 50%. Listed as endangered by the IUCN, current estimates suggest that there are around 6,000 Sri Lankan elephants left on the island. Habitat loss and deforestation has squeezed elephant ranges and brought them into conflict with rural communities.⁶⁸

In 2019 alone, over 350 elephants perished because of increased human-elephant conflict (HEC). Through its research facility and in partnership with Dr. Prithviraj Fernando, Chair of the Centre for Conservation and Research, the team at Ulagalla study the movements of elephants in the region and work closely with the local community to address the challenges they face. The team is looking for new ways to manage HEC and form a cohesive conservation strategy that involves local communities. Ulagalla involves guests by conducting jeep drives with expert naturalists into rural areas frequented by wild elephants and helps fund projects that alleviate local instances of HEC, such as the establishment of correctly positioned electric fencing/geofencing. They also organize community programs to consult with the local village communities. By supporting elephant conservation, the business has made a positive impact on the local community and environment while also conserving a natural asset that is vital to the tourism product of Sri Lanka.

⁶⁶ SLTDA. 2018. “2018 Annual Statistical Report.” *Slt-da.gov.lk*. Accessed January 17, 2023.

https://www.slt-da.gov.lk/storage/common_media/Tourist%20Board%20Annual%20Statistical%20Report%202018_Web784216427.pdf.

⁶⁷ Institute of Policy Studies. 2013. “Talkingeconomics - Biodiversity as a Cornerstone of Sustainable Development: A Sri Lankan Perspective.” *Ips.lk*. May 20, 2013. Accessed January 17, 2023. <https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2013/05/20/biodiversity-as-a-cornerstone-of-sustainable-development-a-sri-lankan-perspective/>.

⁶⁸ Review of UGA's Elephant Research Center. 2021. UGA. September 3, 2021. Accessed January 17, 2023. <https://www.ugaescapes.com/blog/2021/09/03/ugas-elephant-research-center/>.

WHAT YOU CAN DO⁶⁹

- Provide your guests with information on how to travel responsibly, respecting nature, and following best practices when interacting with wildlife. Consider a hand-out or even a pledge.
- Build relationships with nature or wildlife conservation projects and local state offices related to conservation.
- Allow your guests to donate towards wildlife and nature conservation projects, perhaps through a donation box.
- Learn to identify invasive animals and plants common to your region and actively manage and get rid of any that may be on your property.
- Try to plant indigenous or native species to Sri Lanka within your premises.
- Reduce or completely halt the use of artificial fertilizer in your garden.
- Ensure that your built footprint is minimal and supports habitat of the wildlife present (e.g., wildlife friendly lighting plans)
- Do not promote the removal of wild plants and animals, use protected species for food/drink, showing/exhibiting of wildlife species, trading of wildlife species, or selling of articles originally made from wildlife products.
- If you keep wildlife on the premises, make sure you meet local and international requirements and codes of practice.
- Advise your guests not to take part in activities which harm animals, including riding elephants.
- Experience first-hand all the excursions, such as nature walks, bird watching tours, and other wildlife experiences in your area so that you can make suggestions and recommendations.

IMPACT / BENEFITS

- ✓ According to Evolve's 2022 travel forecasts, 58% of people will be more interested in exploring the outdoors while at the same time 37% of travelers surveyed think opportunities for travelers to be involved in the preservation of tourist destinations is important.⁷⁰
- ✓ Responsible Travel, a leading British tour-operator, affirms that "watching nature in its rightful habitat, at a natural distance and with expert guides will become more popular in the future - from whale watching to leopard tracking."⁷¹
- ✓ Some tour operators, such as Steppes Travel, strictly prioritize Destination Management Companies (DMC) and hotels that work towards a cause and can demonstrably show their commitment. For example, in Sri Lanka Steppes Travel works with businesses such as UGA Escapes and Resplendent Ceylon, which benefit from nurturing and driving a conservation strategy, the former with a focus on leopards and the latter with a focus on the human-elephant conflict (HEC).
- ✓ Conserving nature helps improve and sustain the ecosystems and resources that support the tourism industry, which is dependent on the country's natural resources.
- ✓ A World Bank report found that through the promotion of nature-based tourism in protected areas, for every dollar spent by a tourist, the local income increased by more than a dollar. For example, in Chitwan National Park, Nepal local income increased by \$1.78.⁷²

⁶⁹ Travelife. n.d. "Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label." Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.

⁷⁰ Evolve. n.d. "Evolve's 2022 Travel Trends Forecast: Travel Returns -- but Expectations Have Changed." Wwww.prnewswire.com. Accessed January 14, 2023. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/evolves-2022-travel-trends-forecast-travel-returns--but-expectations-have-changed-301401609.html>.

⁷¹ "Travel Trends for 2020. Helping Dreamers Do." *Responsibletravel.com*, 2019, Accessed 22 January, 2023. www.responsibletravel.com/copy/travel-trends.

⁷² World Bank. 2021. "World Bank Report: Investing in Protected Areas Reaps Big Rewards." World Bank. 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/06/14/world-bank-report-investing-in-protected-areas-reaps-big-rewards>.



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What You Can Do To Conserve Nature

1 Plant indigenous or native species to Sri Lanka on your land

2 Learn about invasive animals and plants and remove them from your property

3 Try out local nature experiences in your area so you can make recommendations to your guests

4 Use natural colors like brown and green within your property to blend in with the environment

5 Encourage your guests to be responsible travelers by respecting nature and following rules for interacting with animals

6 Connect with projects and government agencies focused on nature and animal conservation

7 Make your staff aware of the various human wildlife conflicts and how to handle such situations



Strategically planting three or more large trees on the sunny sides of a house creates shade, cutting air-conditioning costs by up to 30% during hot summers.



Conserving wetlands helps control flooding and acts as a buffer for storms, which has an average economic benefit of \$464 per hectare per year.

SDGs related to conserving nature



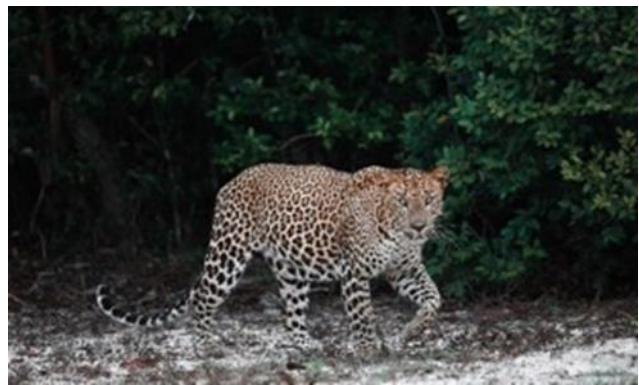
As an island nation, Sri Lanka is heavily dependent on its marine resources as a product for tourism and its conservation is essential for the future of this sector.



As one of the 34 biodiversity hotspots in the world, Sri Lanka has rich yet very vulnerable habitats that need to be strictly conserved. Tourism could help draw attention and support for conservation efforts.

SRI LANKA'S INDUSTRY CHAMPS

The benefits and impact of **supporting your community**:



CINNAMON HOTELS & RESORTS

Cinnamon Hotels recently launched “Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration Project” in collaboration with Ruk Rakaganno (The Tree Society of Sri Lanka), Forest Department Sri Lanka, and the John Keells Foundation, to restore a degraded 50-acre plot over a period of three years after which nature will take over the regeneration process. Restoring and reforesting this 50-acre site will further enrich the ecological significance of the region which also consists of numerous waterfalls and places of cultural and religious significance.⁷³

TEA TRAILS

Tea Trails created a dedicated leopard conservation station in partnership with The Wilderness and Wildlife Conservation Trust. The initiative is part of a longer-term project aiming to improve human wildlife co-existence. Guests are invited to get involved with conservation activities, including monitoring remote cameras, and observing data collected.⁷⁴

⁷³ Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts. 2022. “5 Things to Know about the Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration Project... | Cinnamon U.” Cinnamon Hotels. 2022. <https://blog.cinnamonhotels.com/5-things-to-know-about-the-cinnamon-rainforest-restoration-project/>.

⁷⁴ Resplendent Ceylon. n.d. “Ceylon Tea Trails.” Resplendent Ceylon. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.resplendentceylon.com/teatrails/>.



KULU SAFARIS

No-growth model: Kulu Safaris started with six tents and has always stuck to having six tents. This is to avoid overcrowding of sensitive lands in Yala National Park’s buffer zones, where Kulu Safaris has worked to regenerate forest lands by acquiring abandoned slash and burn cultivation lands.⁷⁵



PLANTATION VILLA

Plantation Villa supports the conservation of endangered plant species by working with professional botanists in Kandy. Several plants which are considered “extinct in the wild” are being grown in the property’s plantation along with other species considered “critically endangered.”⁷⁶

6. Nurturing a Talented, Inclusive and Diverse Workforce

⁷⁵ Kulu Safaris. n.d. “Sustainability.” Kulu Safaris. Accessed January 28, 2023. <http://www.kulusafaris.com/sustainability/>.

⁷⁶ Plantation Villa. n.d. “Conservation & Nature – Plantation Villa | Sri Lanka.” Plantation Villa. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.srimalplantation.com/conservation-nature/>.

Why is this important for your business?

- The competitiveness of Sri Lanka's tourism industry depends to a very large degree on how the travel industry recruits, hires, places, trains, and compensates staff. At its peak, the Sri Lankan tourism industry created approximately 3 million direct and indirect employment opportunities in 2018.^{77,78} Since then, it is estimated that 25,000 - 30,000 additional employees will be required each year to cater to the projected increase in visitor arrivals to the country, but only 10,000 graduates with hotel training are produced annually.⁷⁹
- Moreover, Sri Lanka is a country where perceptions associated with the sector keep many women away from working in the tourism industry. In contrast to the high levels of female participation in the tourism industry worldwide, women are highly underrepresented in Sri Lanka, with females accounting for less than 10% of the tourism workforce, compared to 54% globally.⁸⁰
- Employees at sustainable businesses tend to be happier and more engaged in their work, which leads to a more productive workforce and lowers employee turnover rates.
- A healthier work environment with good ventilation, natural lighting, and ergonomic furniture can help reduce stress and improve employee morale.
- By ensuring the ethical treatment of workers, a business can be more sustainable and more productive.

The volatility the industry has experienced in recent years has raised serious concerns regarding the sustainability of the labor force. In 2022, thousands of skilled workers have migrated overseas in search of better opportunities in places like Maldives, Dubai, Qatar, or elsewhere in the Middle East.⁸¹ In this light, it is a challenge for businesses in Sri Lanka to entice people to work in the industry and for the country to retain its skilled workers.

While the tourism industry is highly susceptible to crises, it has also been one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy in recent decades. Additionally, the tourism industry offers excellent opportunities for anyone starting their career journey, as there are many roles that do not require any specific qualifications. Furthermore, tourism offers additional career pathways and skill development opportunities compared to other sectors that drive the economy.

⁷⁷ SLTDA. 2018. "2018 Annual Statistical Report." *Slt-da.gov.lk*. Accessed January 28, 2023.

https://www.slt-da.gov.lk/storage/common_media/Tourist%20Board%20Annual%20Statistical%20Report%202018_Web784216427.pdf.

⁷⁸ Hewage, Indunil. 2022. "Tourism Industry Set to Rebound, Stakeholders Call for Restraint." *Daily News*. October 12, 2022. Accessed January 26, 2023. <https://www.dailynews.lk/2022/10/12/local/288970/tourism-industry-set-rebound-stakeholders-call-restraint>.

⁷⁹ Wijayasiri, Janaka. 2020. "So Sri Lanka; More Like, so Where Are All the Women in the Hotel Industry?" *Talking Economics*, February 24, 2020. Accessed January 26, 2023. <https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2020/02/24/so-sri-lanka-more-like-so-where-are-all-the-women-in-the-hotel-industry/>.

⁸⁰ Wijayasiri, Janaka. 2020. "So Sri Lanka; More Like, so Where Are All the Women in the Hotel Industry?" *Talking Economics*, February 24, 2020. Accessed January 26, 2023. <https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2020/02/24/so-sri-lanka-more-like-so-where-are-all-the-women-in-the-hotel-industry/>.

⁸¹ Wipulasena, Aanya. 2022. "'I Must Stay Strong': Hardship for Workers Fleeing Sri Lanka's Broken Economy." *The Guardian*. June 24, 2022. Accessed January 26, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/24/i-must-stay-strong-hardship-for-workers-fleeing-sri-lankas-broken-economy>.

WHAT CAN YOU DO⁸²

- When recruiting, do not discriminate against groups of people. Consider applicants regardless of their nationality, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, beliefs, thoughts, ideas, religion, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- Ensure you have a non-discrimination policy.
- Ensure your staff are receiving a living wage aligned with the current cost of living. Any differences in pay and other employment conditions should relate to the responsibility of the position and relevant experience.
- Make sure you comply with the legal requirements about working age, working hours, and time off.
- Have a written disciplinary and grievance procedure in place that all employees understand and have access to.
- Set targets towards a more diverse and inclusive workforce.
- Work to remove any barriers, physical or cultural, that hinder the employment of woman. Make sure women are given the same opportunities as men.
- Offer employees time off in lieu of wages for any extra time that they work. Accurately record this so you can demonstrate that you are giving time off for all overtime worked.

IMPACTS / BENEFITS

- ✓ Organizations with an inclusive and diverse workforce tend to be better at fostering innovation and building business capacity. Moreover, they enhance their public image by being seen as good corporate citizens.
- ✓ A diverse workforce comprising different backgrounds such as age, gender, and race will help your organization better understand the needs of diverse customers and market segments. They also become more resilient and are better at attracting and retaining talent.
- ✓ Women are statistically more loyal to their companies than men.⁸³
- ✓ People are less likely to give their business to companies that give less opportunities for women.⁸⁴
- ✓ A study conducted by e-Hotelier found that women manifest leadership styles that relate positively to efficiency and female leaders tend to be rated by others as more effective than male leaders. The survey revealed a positive link between transformational leadership style and employee motivation.⁸⁵ Thus, female leadership affects employee motivation in a positive way.

⁸² Travelife. n.d. "Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label." Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2022. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.

⁸³ Narayan, Liji. 2018. "Invest in Women Employees, They Are More Loyal." HR Katha. September 18, 2018. <https://www.hrkaatha.com/research/invest-in-women-employees-they-are-more-loyal/>.

⁸⁴ Darioly, Annick. 2019. "Why the Hospitality Industry Needs Women in Managerial Positions: The Positive Influence of Female Leadership on Employee Motivation." Insights. September 23, 2019. Accessed January 28, 2023 <https://insights.ehotelier.com/insights/2019/09/24/why-the-hospitality-industry-needs-women-in-managerial-positions-the-positive-influence-of-female-leadership-on-employee-motivation/>.

⁸⁵ Darioly, Annick. 2019. "Why the Hospitality Industry Needs Women in Managerial Positions: The Positive Influence of Female Leadership on Employee Motivation." Insights. September 23, 2019. <https://insights.ehotelier.com/insights/2019/09/24/why-the-hospitality-industry-needs-women-in-managerial-positions-the-positive-influence-of-female-leadership-on-employee-motivation/>.



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Nurturing an **Inclusive and Diverse Workforce**

1 Open Doors for Everyone: When hiring, treat everyone fairly. Look at applicants without caring about where they're from, their gender, age, abilities, background, beliefs, thoughts, ideas, religion, relationship status, or sexual orientation.

2 Fair Play Always: Create clear rules for handling problems and complaints in the workplace. Make sure all employees know and can easily access them.

3 Empowering Women: Break down obstacles that stop women from working. Ensure women have the same chances as men.

4 Sustainability is Good for Workers: Employees at sustainable businesses tend to be happier and more productive, which lowers employee turnover rates.

5 Compliance is Key: Follow the rules for age, work hours, and breaks set by labour law.

6 Balancing Work and Life: Encourage employees to utilize their paid time off regularly.



Studies from e-Hotelier found that women often have leadership styles that are seen as more efficient, effective and beneficial for employee morale


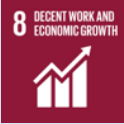



Companies with a diverse workforce experience 2.5 times more cash flow per employee.



Inclusive work teams are over 35% more productive.

SDGs related to nurturing a talented, inclusive and diverse workforce

	<p>Tourism can empower marginalized people by providing employment and health benefits that drive social equity.</p>
	<p>As the tourism industry grows, the demand for skilled labor will also grow, providing opportunities for people in all parts of the country.</p>
	<p>Tourism brings together many sectors of the community to provide services. This engagement can help raise the standard of living in rural areas.</p>

SRI LANKA'S INDUSTRY CHAMPS

The impact of a **talented, inclusive, and diverse workforce**:



AMBA ESTATE

AMBA Estates only hire staff from the local community, sharing profits and reinvesting back into the community. The Estate creates value added products from on-property produce that is then exported to global markets, generating significant additional revenue to the local community.⁸⁶



JOHN KEELLS HOTELS PLC

Currently the percentage of females employed by John Keells Hotels is 12%, and females in a leadership position make up 4%. By 2025, Cinnamon Hotels aims to increase the percentage of females employed in the workforce to 24%.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ AMBA Estate. n.d. "Impact." AMBA Estate. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.ambaestate.com/sustain>.

⁸⁷ John Keells Hotels PLC. 2022. "John Keells Hotels PLC, Sustainability Report 2021 - 22." *Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts*. <https://cinnamonweb.blob.core.windows.net/cinnamonweb-prd/brochures/Cinnamon%20Hotels%20%26%20Resorts%20-%20Sustainability%20Report%202021%3A2022.pdf>.



HALDUMMULLA BUNGALOW

This guest house and the estate is predominately run by women previously employed as tea pickers in the area. Having grown up in this organic culture, the people are keen to showcase what they have learned.



UGA ESCAPES

In two years, UGA has increased the number of female employees in the company by 2% - from 11% to 13%. Although still far from the global average, UGA is actively prioritizing the employment of women, ensuring women have adequate facilities and staff training.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Uga Escapes. n.d. "Sustainability at Uga." Uga Escapes. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.ugaescapes.com/sustainability-at-uga-sustainable-practices.html>.

7. Sustainable Supply Chain Management

Why is this important for your business?

- According to the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), global supply chains account for 80% of the planet's carbon emissions. Of these, more than 90% of the companies in the supply chains are small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).⁸⁹
- Due to an increased awareness of global environmental issues, today's consumers place high importance and value on business practices that protect the environment and mitigate the social impact of their purchases. Due to this, travelers are attuned to looking for logos such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), and fair trade to make sure their products are sourced/produced sustainably.
- The fundamental principle of sustainable supply chain management rests on collaboration between companies and their suppliers to create unique, market satisfying products and services that will satisfy their customers.
- Travelers to Sri Lanka are not just looking at price, quality, convenience, delivery, and security. They are also deciding who to buy from based on their environmental credentials and are increasingly expecting "traceability." Traceability means consumers can verify certain sustainability claims about commodities and products, helping ensure good practices and respect for people and the environment in supply chains.⁹⁰
- To keep up with consumer demands, businesses and organizations across many different industries are increasingly focused on improving transparency in environmental reporting.
- Travelers prefer the concept of farm-to-table, and many hotels are joining the movement with their own produce-rich gardens and farms.

Tour operators and Online Travel Agency (OTAs) are now effectively gathering information that indicates the supplier's sustainability credentials and status. Suppliers include DMCs, accommodation suppliers, and destinations. The following are examples of how travelers check to ascertain sustainability credentials.⁹¹ In turn, they also represent a to-do list for operators.

⁸⁹ Burchardt, Jens, Michel Frédeau, Miranda Hadfield, Patrick Herhold, Chrissy O'Brien, Cornelius Pieper, and Daniel Weise. 2021. "Supply Chains as a Game-Changer in the Fight against Climate Change." BCG Global. January 26, 2021. <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2021/fighting-climate-change-with-supply-chain-decarbonization>.




⁹⁰ Beier, Julia. n.d. "How Does Traceability Advance Sustainability in Global Supply Chains? Sustainable Business Network and Consultancy". [bsr.org](https://www.bsr.org/en/blog/how-does-traceability-advance-sustainability-in-global-supply-chains). Accessed January 22, 2023. <https://www.bsr.org/en/blog/how-does-traceability-advance-sustainability-in-global-supply-chains>.

⁹¹ Jong, Anne de. n.d. "How to Select a Sustainable Tour Operator for Your next Trip? - Blog - Fair Sayari." Fairsayari.com. Accessed January 5, 2023. <https://fairsayari.com/blog/how-to-select-a-sustainable-tour-operator>.

What tourists look for when choosing sustainable businesses ⁹²

Claims on a supplier's website	Policies and practices should be mentioned on their website and their mission and vision should be shared.
Certifications	Certification by a GSTC accredited or recognized certification scheme. Examples of reliable certification schemes are: NSTC, Green Destinations, Travelife, TourCert, and Green Destinations.
Statements on carbon footprints	A business is taking measures to minimize their environmental impact and to reduce their carbon footprint as much as possible. Travelers look for statements on reducing plastic, carbon offsets, and reforestation projects.
Animal welfare	A business that prioritizes animal welfare and does not offer any activities or excursions with captive wildlife or interactions with wild animals. This includes the adoption of animal-conscious practices and building designs.
Communicate local benefits	The business that benefits local communities with their tourism activities, makes statements about their positive, and gives back to communities through specific projects.
Collaboration with local research and conservation projects	A business that works with local research and conservation projects to magnify the impact of their beneficial activities.
Consideration for carrying capacity	A business that is aware of over tourism and how to avoid it, such as redirecting travelers to lesser-known areas and attractions.
Responsible traveller tips	A business that promotes sustainable and responsible behavior to help travelers mitigate the negative effects of tourism.

SDGs related to sustainable supply chain management.

	Increasing demand for sustainability across the tourism supply chain will drive innovation towards circular and green economies.
	Sustainability needs to be incorporated into every part of the supply chain in order to make a tangible difference. Businesses can begin by sourcing goods and services locally and reducing packaging.
	Many businesses look at their emissions within their property, but their total emissions are calculated along the supply chain. Doing regular audits can help identify areas where emissions can be reduced.

⁹² Jong, Anne de. n.d. "How to Select a Sustainable Tour Operator for Your next Trip? - Blog - Fair Sayari." Fairsayari.com. Accessed January 5, 2023. <https://fairsayari.com/blog/how-to-select-a-sustainable-tour-operator>.

WHAT CAN YOU DO⁹³

- Develop a green purchasing policy. Give your suppliers and sub-contractors a copy of your sustainability policies.
- Buy goods made/grown locally where possible instead of imported goods. Use local companies to provide services whenever possible, instead of using national/multinational companies.
- When buying products, look for and choose those which are made from recycled materials or are recyclable, sustainably produced/sourced.
- Choose to buy products with less packaging.
- Commit to asking your suppliers to reduce, reuse, or eliminate packaging (or use more sustainable alternatives).
- Discontinue the use of single-use plastics where possible and encourage suppliers to do the same.
- Insist that suppliers use re-usable crates, cane boxes, cardboard cartons and boxes, or wooden boxes where possible.
- Have an organic farm and grow frequently used vegetables.
- Prioritize the use of organic vegetables, fruits, meat, chicken, eggs, and other food items.
- Seek eco-friendly alternatives to chemicals whenever possible.

IMPACTS / BENEFITS

- ✓ Working with sustainable suppliers will naturally reduce energy and water consumption, generate less waste, and better manage inventory to avoid overstocking and reduce logistics-related emissions.
- ✓ Diversification of the supply chain can reduce costs and offer a diverse range of products to the consumer. It will further improve logistics, minimizing emissions resulting from transport.
- ✓ Developing a sustainable business opens opportunities for grants and tax concessions from both national and international agencies.
- ✓ Automation and digital transformation are two important sustainable supply chain management strategies that can also cut costs. Doing business digitally will minimize the need for human resources and its associated costs.
- ✓ If you can show that you and your supply chain are equitable and socially progressive, it can be easier to attract high-quality workers and savvy consumers, which in turn will help increase profits.

⁹³ Travelife. n.d. "Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label." Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2022. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.



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How to Manage a Sustainable Supply Chain

1 Shop Smart! Choose Eco-Friendly: When buying products, look for goods made from recycled or recyclable materials or sustainably produced.



2 Support Local Goods: Choose local goods instead of imports and use local companies to provide services whenever you can.

3 Less is More: Choose products with minimal packaging. Ask your suppliers to reduce, reuse, or eliminate extra packaging.

4 Discover a cleaner approach! Embrace eco-friendly alternatives instead of chemicals whenever you can.

5 Say No to Single Use Plastics: Do your part for a greener world by getting rid of plastic straws, water bottles, and other single use plastics. Encourage suppliers to do the same.

6 Grow Your Own: Travellers love farm-to-table. Join the movement with your own home-grown or local garden or farm.



A recent study by Deloitte revealed that 46% of businesses now demand that their business partners throughout the supply chain fulfill certain sustainability requirements.



88% of consumers will be more loyal to a company that supports social or environmental issues.



Companies with sustainable supply chains experience up to a 20% reduction in total supply chain costs and see a 15% boost in brand reputation, driving increased consumer loyalty and market share.

SRI LANKA'S INDUSTRY CHAMPS

The impact of **sustainable supply chain management**:



CHILL CAFE

Chill Café stopped using plastic bottles and persuaded its local supplier to make the necessary investments to offer glass bottles instead. The opening of a bottled plant by the supplier has also benefited other businesses in the community.⁹⁴



KANDALAMA HOTEL

The Kandalama Hotel prioritizes purchasing from local suppliers within a 20km radius of the property.⁹⁵



GAL OYA LODGE

The bungalows draw their character from rural Sri Lankan villages, created using local techniques. The tables and chairs are handmade by the local village craftsmen using teak and mara wood, applying traditional craftsmanship.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Cafe Chill. n.d. "CSR." Cafe Chill. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.cafechill.lk/cafе-chill-csr-events.html>.

⁹⁵ Heritance Hotels and Resorts. 2016. "Sustainability." Heritance. 2016. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.heritancehotels.com/green-philosophy.html>.

⁹⁶ Gal Oya Lodge. n.d. "The Lodge." Gal Oya Lodge. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.galoyalodge.com/lodge/>.

8. Other Drivers of Sustainability that Businesses Can Work On

Quality Assurance

When assessing quality, it is important to understand that businesses or destinations do not exist in isolation from each other. Accommodation, meals, and experiences are all a part of the mosaic of what the traveler perceives as a “journey” or “holiday” and, thus, businesses should be viewed in a holistic manner.

Maintaining quality and ensuring good guest experiences goes beyond a business and its immediate property – it depends on the destination as a whole. A hotel may be certified and tick all the sustainability boxes, separate its garbage, have an inclusive and diverse workforce, and may even run entirely on renewable energy. However, the efforts of one business may be undermined when a guest leaves a property to go to an adjacent national park, public beach, or archaeological site and feels that the sites are neglected, over-crowded, or unsafe.

A commitment to maintaining high standards of quality and safety for your products and services is essential for any business. Quality extends to sustainability, as travelers should be assured that they are engaging in an activity that will truly benefit the environment and the community. Overall, quality can be ensured by complying with standards or certification and at the most basic level, through customer feedback. This could be by way of direct surveys with customers or indirectly monitoring online reviews and social media.

To comply with global sustainability standards, the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) needs to implement and uphold a quality assurance policy to ensure everyone in the business understands and subscribes to the commitments that are stipulated.

Ensuring quality in services and products will also keep a business or brand clear of “greenwashing” claims. Greenwashing is a term used when businesses intentionally mislead consumers to believe that their product or service is more sustainable than it actually is.

Experience first-hand all the excursions, hikes, swims, bike rides, cooking classes, and walking tours within your community so that you can confidently make suggestions and recommendations. By doing so, the quality of the experience will be elevated, resulting in satisfied customers who will want to visit again.⁹⁷

Marketing and Communication

If Sri Lanka wants to make the most of tourism, it is critical for destination managers – especially those involved in the promotion and development of a destination – to analyze consumer perceptions to target consumers that best align with Sri Lanka’s intrinsic value proposition.

Statistics show that 90% of consumers will look up online reviews first before they decide to buy something; 88% of them claim to trust online reviews as much as personal ones.⁹⁸ A study also suggests that 32% of customers will read at least 4-6 reviews before they trust a business.⁹⁹ From a quality assurance standpoint, responding to online reviews is critical.

In addition to targeted marketing, businesses need to ensure that guests understand and appreciate their commitment to sustainability by keeping them informed. This can be done through having a notice board or a fold-out map / brochure containing responsible travel tips, a list of sustainable

⁹⁷ Travelife. n.d. “Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label.” Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.

⁹⁸ “Top 4 Reasons Why You Should Pay Attention to Your Online Reviews.” *Correct Digital*, 31 Jan. 2019, Accessed January 26, 2023. <https://correctdigital.com/importance-online-reviews/>

⁹⁹ Ibid.

excursions or activities, and showing them ways in which they can contribute in-kind or as a donation.¹⁰⁰

Promoting green activities through an official website, social media, in the hotel lobby, and guest room directories will also help meet the demand from increasingly eco-conscious travelers.

Health and Safety

Health and safety should encompass all aspects of a traveler's experience in a destination including food safety, general hygiene, medical, general safety (e.g., low crime rates, no sexual harassment, etc.), and financial safety. Lack of proper safety measures will dampen a traveler's experience, thereby leading to low satisfaction ratings, poor quality, and negative word of mouth for a destination.

Additionally, health and safety considerations extend to the visitor's experience outside the property of a business, covering issues such as concern about encountering wild animals when walking around a locality.

Inter-Business/Enterprise Support

It is important that the larger hotels and hospitality groups help smaller enterprises to ensure that all businesses thrive equally, making the destination sustainable in the long run. For example, by providing learning opportunities for MSMEs based on the large business's best practices, smaller operations can better streamline their efforts towards sustainability. Larger businesses can also play a crucial role in rallying other industry stakeholders to overcome challenges pertaining to making destinations more sustainable.

¹⁰⁰ Travelife. n.d. "Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label." Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>

WHAT CAN YOU DO¹⁰¹

- Resident Manager, Duty Manager, or assigned staff member should speak to all guests before checkout and request their overall feedback.
- Provide your guests with a feedback form, preferably digitally. One of the most accurate methodologies that have helped many companies measure, manage, and improve customer satisfaction is NPS (Net Promoter Score). The metric is based on a straightforward question that investigates how likely a customer would recommend a brand to a friend.
- Monitor feedback on OTAs and always respond to any negative feedback you receive.
- Ensure there is a medical kit available. Ensure your business complies with all the government sanctioned health and safety standards. Ensure all guest windows and doors can be properly locked at night.¹⁰²
- When responding to negative online reviews, owners and managers must acknowledge the customer's pain points. When responding to positive online reviews, they should thank the reviewer and incentivize additional purchases.

IMPACT / BENEFIT

- ✓ Travel agents, tour operators and booking engines are now effectively prioritizing sustainable properties and services. The immediate consequence of failing to implement sustainability standards is the loss of potential new bookings as well as negative feedback. For any tourism business, guest feedback is critical. If the guests feel you are not keeping up with current sustainability trends, negative feedback will follow. And negative feedback can be costly.
- ✓ A recent study suggests 95% of people say they usually tell at least one other person about a bad customer experience with a company, while 54% said they share it with at least 5 other people.¹⁰³
- ✓ Finally, promoting your green activities on the company website, through social media, in your hotel lobby, and guest room directories will help meet the demand from increasingly eco-conscious travelers.
- ✓ Establishment of proper health and safety measures will increase the confidence in your customers and generate more business.

¹⁰¹ "Travel Trends for 2020. Helping Dreamers Do." 2019. Responsibletravel.com. 2019. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://www.responsibletravel.com/copy/travel-trends>.

¹⁰² Travelife. n.d. "Sustainable Hotel and Accommodation Certification Label." Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Travelife Accommodation Sustainability. Accessed December 28, 2023. <https://travelifestaybetter.com/>.

¹⁰³ Marketing Charts. 2013. "Bad Customer Service Interactions More Likely to Be Shared than Good Ones." Marketing Charts. April 15, 2013. Accessed January 28, 2023. <https://www.marketingcharts.com/digital-28628>.



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What You Can Do To Drive Sustainability

1 Health and Safety:

Adhere to food safety standards and good hygiene practices. Have a first aid kit and know who to call if there is an emergency.

2 Communicate Your Values:

Travelers want to know about your sustainability practices. Keep them informed.

3 **Ask for Feedback:** Encourage guests to share their feedback and monitor online comments.

4 Connect Customers with Local Businesses:

Help your guests discover local goods and services that will enhance their experience.

5 Contribute to Sustainability in Your Community:

Ensuring good guest experiences goes beyond a business and its immediate property – it depends on the destination as a whole. How can you help your community be more sustainable?



Reviews are POWERFUL!

90%

of shoppers read online reviews before deciding to buy

88%

of people trust reviews as much as personal advice

32%

of customers read 4-6 reviews before trusting a business

95%

of people share bad customer experiences with others and 54% spread the word to at least five others

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND WAY FORWARD

Sustainable tourism is of utmost importance for Sri Lanka. Every small effort made by businesses will contribute to making Sri Lanka a top travel destination while ensuring long-term sustainability in the tourism sector.

There is a global demand for sustainable travel choices. Travelers are aware of the potential negative ramifications of their travel and actively want to reduce their impact. Therefore, sustainability has become a decisive factor for consumer choices in tourism, highlighting its importance more than ever before.

Often, sustainability is seen as expensive. However, businesses can take small steps towards this goal by implementing various easy and cost-effective initiatives. These simple interventions, when combined, can make a significant difference, and can be implemented while businesses work on a more comprehensive sustainability strategy.

Furthermore, there are tangible business benefits associated with sustainability, including increased market competitiveness, lower operating costs, higher customer satisfaction and positive publicity, employee attraction and retention, innovation opportunities, access to financing, business stability, and improved risk management. Improvements in the areas of environment, societies, culture, and management promote economic sustainability, something that is especially important during challenging times.

The impact of tourism sustainability goes beyond the industry itself; it plays a crucial role in helping Sri Lanka achieve its sustainable development goals and fulfill its national commitments. As tourism is interconnected with essential supply chains and economic sectors, the implementation of sustainability initiatives within the tourism industry will contribute significantly to the country's overall sustainability efforts.

The purpose of this impact assessment is to emphasize the various strategies that MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) can embrace to contribute towards making Sri Lanka an authentic sustainable travel destination. This report offers valuable content to create awareness materials for each thematic area and highlights the business benefits of practicing sustainability. These materials will be utilized during planned outreach sessions aimed at raising awareness on initiating a business's sustainability journey.