



The 15TH UNWTO ASIA/PACIFIC Executive Training Programme on Tourism Policy and Strategy

Domestic Tourism as the National and International Long-term Tourism Strategy

5-8 October 2021

Male, The Maldives
Hybrid Event

FINAL REPORT

World Tourism Organization

The 15TH UNWTO ASIA/PACIFIC Executive Training Programme on Tourism Policy and Strategy

Final Report

Prepared by Trevor Weltman, Anchor Consultant

Introduction

The 15th Asia/Pacific Executive Training Program on Tourism Policy and Strategy was organized by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) from 5-8 October 2021 in a hybrid format in the Maldives at the Paradise Island Resort. The Training Programme was fully sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea. Graciously hosted in person by the Ministry of Tourism, the Republic of Maldives, the training programme was attended in total by 53 representatives from 25 different Members, including 11 from 7 countries attending on site.

In sum, upon completion the 15th Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme was historic for four reasons:

1. UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili made his first visit to the region since the outbreak of COVID-19
2. First time ever the training programme was held in a hybrid format
3. Highest total number of attendees ever for this programme
4. First UNWTO ASIA/PACIFIC Executive Training Programme held in person after COVID-19

Day One: 5th October (Tuesday)

Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony of the 15th UNWTO Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme took place on Tuesday 5th October. On site, the event took place at the Paradise Island Resort in the Maldives, while participants joined the Zoom bridge from all over the world. Virtual attendees included nominated UNWTO Anchor Consultant Trevor Weltman, who attended virtually throughout.

The ceremony began with welcome remarks by **H.E. Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Minister, Ministry of Tourism, the Maldives**. His warm welcome began with thanks to the UNWTO for the opportunity to host, sharing that the Secretary-General's attendance shows the clear commitment of the UNWTO to recovery. He shared that recovery for the Maldives has had its moments of optimism beginning as early as Q4 2020, with 1.3M arrivals and 10M bed nights projected by the end of the year 2021. He shared that vaccinations rates had been a big boon, with the tourism industry at 93%, and 99% with the first dose. Minister Mausoom said the Maldives took a unified approach across government and trade to approach the crisis, with August 2020 at near 2019 levels.

With a strident focus on health standards and protocols, the Maldives strove to meet the standards set by international organizations such as WHO and UNWTO. This culminated with the Maldives winning the World Travel Awards Best Destination in 2020. Minister Mausoom is confident that 2022, the Jubilee year of Maldives, will be one of the best for the industry and tourism investment. This includes the Maldives commitment to environmental sustainability.

He then espoused the benefits of growing the domestic market for stability against shocks, and also diversifying source markets for the same. He concluded his talk on an optimistic note, hoping for a regional and global recovery for all.

Next, participants graciously welcomed congratulatory remarks by **Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UNWTO**, marking the historic first visit to the Maldives and of the Secretary-General to the region since the outbreak of COVID-19. Secretary-General *Pololikashvili* began by thanking the Government of the Maldives for their warm welcome and their hard work making this event a reality, and also commended their support for the sector during these challenging times. He shared how the Maldives is leading the way in restarting tourism, bringing hope for many thousands of people and businesses. He shared how destinations all over the Asia Pacific are committed to rethinking how the tourism sector works.

Commenting on the most recent release of the UNWTO Tourism Barometer, he said the data shows many destinations are enjoying better prospects as travel restrictions are lifted, vaccinations are rolled out and confidence returns. And, how in many places, it is domestic tourism that is driving the recovery. Thus, he shared that this programme rightly focuses on how we can capitalize on the power of domestic tourism to deliver benefits to all.

The Secretary-General concluded his remarks by first thanking the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea for its fifteen years of support of the Executive Training Programme, having grown it in size and importance and making it a reference point for the region's investment in its leaders and commitment to excellence.

Second, he welcomed all to return again in 2022 when the Maldives hosts the 34th joint meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia.

Next, a pre-recorded video of congratulatory remarks delivered by **Mr. Jeong-bae Kim, Vice Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea** was shown. After commenting on the historic downturn of arrivals in 2020 to only 16% of 2019, Vice Minister Kim said we were more concerned with each other's health and safety than ever before, and that we must work together on creative solutions to recover the industry. This includes the important focus on domestic tourism, which is creating new opportunities. But, in order to support the industry, Vice Minister Kim called on the formation of new public-private partnerships, and also a strong focus on sustainability.

Next, he commented on changes in tourist behavior, namely, how safety will continue to be the top priority, with nearby destinations with convenience access being in the spotlight, leading to the expansion of weekday travel and local experiences.

He concluded by urging everyone to take advantage of these four days of exchange to work together on building a stronger and more resilient industry.

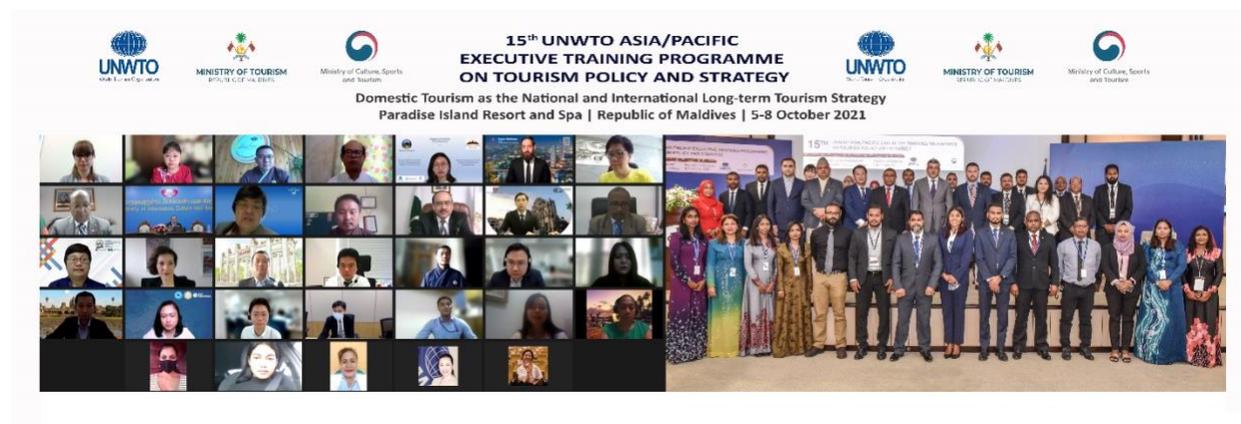
Next, the final opening remarks were delivered by **Mr. Harry Hwang, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UNWTO**. Mr. Hwang noted that this programme was the second time being hosted by the Maldives, with the first time back in 2007.

Mr. Hwang noted that the Maldives was the first destination in Asia and the Pacific which completely opened its borders to international tourism since July 2020. He went on to congratulate Minister Mausoom on the fantastic achievement of returning to pre-pandemic inbound levels during the months of August and September 2021.

He went on to thank Secretary-General *Pololikashvili* for joining, including his support in organizing a hybrid format for the first time in Asia and the Pacific since its crisis last year.

Mr. Hwang highlighted the large numbers of participation this year, including 53 participants from 25 Asia and the Pacific Members, including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China. Out of these, 11 senior officials joined in person in the Maldives.

Before thanking everyone for participating, Mr. Hwang shared his firm conviction that both participants in person and online would have invaluable opportunities to exchange more creative ideas here with senior tourism officials in Asia and the Pacific on domestic tourism.



Opening Keynote and the UNWTO Forum on Domestic Tourism as the National and International Long-term Tourism Strategy

The Forum on Domestic Tourism as the National and International Long-term Tourism Strategy took place next on the agenda. The session began with an opening keynote from **Mr. Trevor Weltman, Partner, Clickable Impact Consulting Group and UNWTO Anchor Consultant**. Titled "Domestic Tourism for COVID-19 Recovery: In Focus," Mr. Weltman highlighted the benefits of a strong domestic strategy as follows:

- Short-term: capture and divert pent-up demand to support ailing trade and tourism jobs
- Long-term: create structural change to the tourism industry that focuses on building greater industry resilience and sustainable impacts

Mr. Weltman also highlighted the following four questions as the key takeaways from the entire event for participants:

1. What is the short-term and long-term importance of focusing on domestic tourism?
2. What are key policies and programmes being implemented around the region to unlock greater domestic support?
3. What private sector engagement strategies need to be enacted to better engage the trade-in governance and product development, as well as catalyzing investment?
4. What digitization initiatives and capacity development support would have the greatest impact on the trade at this time?

Mr. Weltman concluded his presentation on an inspirational note, reminding participants that a focus on domestic tourism means participants are in reality focused on inspiring their own families, friends, and neighbors to go out and support their own families, friends, neighbors, and communities during these challenging times.

From there, the UNWTO Forum on Domestic Tourism as the National and International Long-term Tourism Strategy commenced. For forum featured seven distinguished speakers, including:

- **Ms. Sandra Carvao, Chief, Tourism Market Intelligence and Competitiveness Department, UNWTO** (online)
- **Dr. Ali Asghar Shalbafian Hosseinabadi, Deputy Minister for Tourism, Ministry of Culture Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Iran** (on site)
- **Mr. Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC)** (online)
- **Mr. Yasuhito Takahashi, Director for Travel Promotion, Japan Tourism Agency, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism** (online)
- **Mr. Javed Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Bangladesh Tourism Board** (online)
- **Dr. Zengxian Liang, Associate Professor of School of Tourism Management from Sun Yat-sen University, and Technical Expert at Monitoring Centre for UNWTO Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MCSTO)** (online)
- **Dr. Hussain Sunny Umar, Managing Director, Maldives Halal Travel & Halal Weekly** (on site)

Moderated by the UNWTO Anchor consultant Mr. Weltman, each panelist was given five minutes to share their thoughts on domestic tourism as a key recovery strategy from COVID-19. After, a discussion took place that highlighted questions like:

- What are the key ways digitalization will facilitate an increased and more resilient domestic market, and what can Asia Pacific governments do to foster this digital push?
- How has COVID-19 changed the way your ministry seeks to engage the private sector for domestic tourism outcomes?
- What are some key policies and programmes your organization has created to support, stimulate, and capture the domestic market at this time?
- What is different about these post-pandemic travelers? How have their needs, preferences, and spending differed from pre-pandemic times? Do you think these are temporary, or will they be long-term here to stay?
- What is the role of infrastructure in domestic tourism recovery? How to truly build/create tourism-driven infrastructure at this time?

Throughout the discussion, it was agreed upon that domestic tourism is indeed the key strategy for COVID-19 recovery in light of the constantly changing international pandemic situation, with tourism policy and harmonization of health guidelines and product development as key issues to address.

Ms. Carvao outlined three key points to kick off the discussion: the first point is that a long-term strategy for domestic tourism is required beyond crisis control or response. Second, domestic tourism is connected to new consumer trends emerging as part of the overall pandemic changes in the market, not simply border closures. Third, it relates to tourism KPIs, and how they need to evolve and be tied more closely to the benefits derived from strong domestic strategies.

Dr. Hosseinabadi shared that Iran is already highly dependent on domestic tourism, but with extreme fluctuations in seasonality on key days, and with a narrow geographic focus. Thus, strategies are needed to diversify demand for domestic tourism seasonality and geography to bring true sustainability.

Mr. Rana highlighted how the main concern was to create a safe return to tourism. Thus, the government created a federal action committee and created a strong national recovery strategy focused on three areas:

1. Short-term: how to help the industry survive (fiscal policies)
2. Mid-term: mainly focused on revival (SOPs, trainings, health and safety, heavily relying on UNWTO guidelines)
3. Long-term: repositioning of Pakistan and preparing for internal reopening and an eventual international reopening

Mr. Takahashi highlighted Japan's "Go To Travel" campaign in Japan. This included 35% discounts on accommodation, regional coupons, and no restrictions on the number of trips supported. This was focused on travelers travelling within the prefecture where they live.

Mr. Ahmed shared that the tourism board established SOPs and 27 guidelines to recover the industry soonest, including digitization initiatives like launching new online ticketing systems. Further, Bangladesh has put a strong emphasis on infrastructure for accessibility and linkages between destinations.

Dr. Liang shared that domestic tourism is now the most important part of the Chinese tourism industry. Given the demand before the pandemic, and current recovery figures, Dr. Liang shared that he does not believe the pandemic fundamentally changed the trajectory of domestic travel in China. However, some things have changed: China outbound demand for shopping is now taking place domestically in locations like Sanya. Further, more and more tourism bookings are now taking place online.

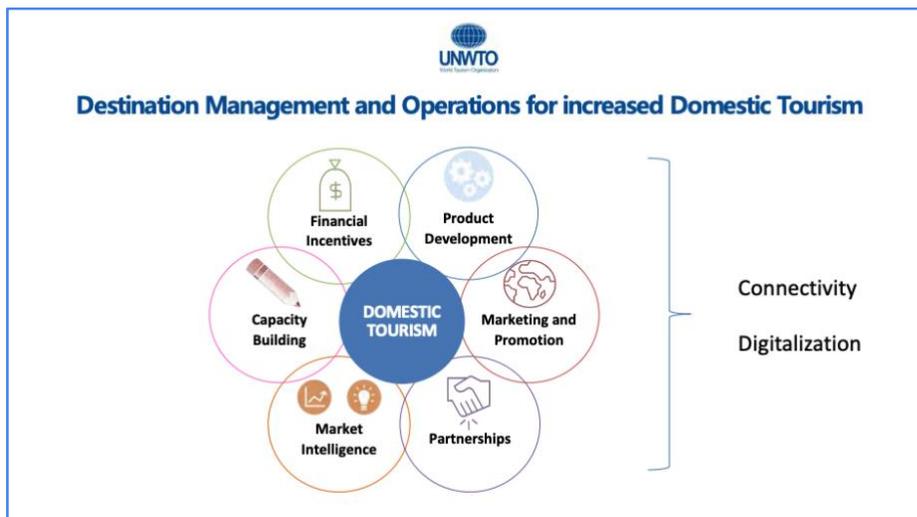
Dr. Umar highlighted how the growth of guest houses in 2015 has driven domestic tourism. This has been a huge boon for bringing far-flung and lesser-known islands and attractions on the map. From this, domestic travel is now growing very quickly. This is leading to PPPs for increased accessibility, such as new speed boats linkages to drive the cost of travel down.

Session One: Destination Management and Operations for increased Domestic Tourism

Many destinations did not have an adequate understanding of or focus on domestic tourism before the COVID-19 pandemic. With a "new normal" emerging from pandemic with a heavy strategic focus on building domestic markets, Session One provided guidance on destination management and operations to showcase governments can encourage and manage domestic tourism growth safely.

The session began with an opening keynote from **Ms. Sandra Carvao, Chief, Tourism Market Intelligence and Competitiveness Department, UNWTO**, titled: "Destination Management and Operations for Increased Domestic Tourism" In it, she covered both the global domestic market and initiatives to promote domestic tourism. After kicking off with the overall impact of COVID-19 on tourism with international tourism back to levels of 30 years ago and 100 million tourism jobs at risk, she transitioned to the global domestic market pre-pandemic. Ms. Carvao highlighted that domestic tourism was six times larger than international tourism, accounting for nine billion trips globally. From there, she transitioned to key findings about how countries are currently using it to promote domestic tourism. Key findings included:

1. Destinations around the world are prioritizing domestic tourism as a recovery strategy
2. The two most popular types of initiatives are financial incentives (vouchers, fiscal incentives or long weekends) and marketing and promotion (launch of new communication campaigns and digital promotion efforts with strong use of social media channels)
3. Other common types of initiatives are public-public partnerships at different levels, as well as public-private collaboration in marketing and promotion
4. Examples of product development, market intelligence efforts, as well as capacity building and training measures, are also being carried out in some countries



Next, the programme heard a keynote from **Ms. Iva Kutle Škrlec, Global Destination Marketing Partner, Google** about "Google data guidance on domestic tourism and indicators of travel demand and intent." Covering a wide array of data sets that Google is currently tracking from consumer behavior, Ms. Škrlec demonstrated how using Google Trends for keywords related to travel showed incipient and advanced stages of recovery for both domestic and international travel, and also shed light on changing consumer preferences for health and safety concerns as well as travel product types. She encouraged all participants to more closely monitor tools like Google Trends to inform their strategy creation for both policy and promotions.

Country Presentations

For the remainder of Day One, nine presentations were heard that highlighted destination management and policies for domestic recovery.

On behalf of Bangladesh: *Dr. Mallick Anwar Hossain, Joint Secretary, Tourism, Ministry of Civil Aviation & Tourism* presented on site. After giving a brief overview of Bangladesh's key tourism attractions, Dr. Hossain discussed their approach to domestic COVID-19 recovery. This included private sector initiatives for installing health and safety equipment to redesign products for the domestic market. Dr. Hossain also emphasized other current initiatives for COVID-19 recovery, including providing incentives for tourism stakeholders, developing SOPs for accommodation and attractions, stakeholder consultations, and vaccinating front-line workers.

On behalf of Cambodia: *Mr. Kunthea Phirum, Chief of Office of Domestic Tourism Promotion, Information Technology and Tourism Information Management* presented online. Mr. Phirum opened by discussing the impacts of COVID-19 on Cambodian domestic tourism, namely a reduction of 80% in 2020 compared to 2019 levels. At present, he noted three challenges faced by the sector: closed down businesses, talent loss, and low tourist trust and confidence. To combat these, he showed how Cambodia is providing support with SOPs, government tax and financial support, and also a more explicit domestic strategy. With Cambodia on its 9th round of stimulus measures, with key supports including:

- Domestic Airlines:
 - Extended minimum tax exemption for domestic airlines operators until the end of September 2021;
- Tourism Related Businesses:
 - Monthly tax exemptions further extended from July to September 2021; and
 - exemption on monthly contributions to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) until the end of December 2021.

On behalf of Hong Kong, China: *Mr. Yat-ching, Anson Lai, Assistant Commissioner for Tourism, Tourism Commission* presented online. His presentation began by showcasing the destination's vision as "Hong Kong, China as a world-class premier tourism destination," before discussing its strategies to achieve this. Critically, Mr. Lai listed out the key players and consortium of stakeholders important to tourism in the destination in multiple categories, including Tourism Commission & Coalition of stakeholders; Trade Bodies; Tertiary / Training Institutions; and Attractions. He also noted several initiatives underway to upgrade trade knowledge and skills, including Pilot Information Technology Development Matching Fund Scheme for Travel Agents; Training Programme Subsidy; and Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme. Finally, he spoke about the successful domestic tourism campaign, "Holiday at Home."

On behalf of Indonesia: *Mr. Iman Santosa, Director of International Relations, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy* presented online. Mr. Santosa began his presentation by highlighting the "Clean, Health, Safety, and Environment Sustainability (CHSE)" initiative, which was tailored to gain tourists' confidence in national tourist destinations, activities and amenities.

He also shared more about the BISA programme, which is an organized and labour-intensive programme that engages latent tourism works to revitalize site infrastructure and elevate livelihood. Importantly, he shared how National Tourism grants have reached over 7,625 restaurants and 6,818 accommodations. He ended by sharing more about Indonesia's #DiIndonesiaAja campaign.

On behalf of Iran: Dr. Ali Asghar Shalbfian Hosseinabadi, Deputy Minister for Tourism, Ministry of Culture Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts presented on site. After highlighting the key challenges faced by the industry as a result of the global pandemic, he outlined several success stories for how his ministry is supporting the trade at this time. One key initiative highlighted was the setting up of the "Committee for Tourism Crisis Management in Corona," which acknowledged the problem and the range of COVID-19's impacts on the industry; helped to manage the mental ambience of Corona; facilitated and approved financial support packages for the tourism sector, and helped accommodation units be included among centers that can be opened. He also highlighted the use of hygienic protocols and guidelines based on UNWTO and WHO recommendations. In the end, he highlighted several lessons and recommendations for the new normal in domestic tourism, including:

- Focusing on small-scale trips instead of mass tourism
- Focusing on family-oriented trips instead of group tours
- Focusing on organized tours rather than individual trips
- Shifting from long trips to short ones
- Shifting from visits of indoor spaces to outdoor
- Focusing more on Agritourism, Ecotourism, Rural Tourism and Nature-based tourism
- Using VACCINE CARD for promoting and encouraging safe travel
- Setting up a Global Fund for Supporting Tourism.

On behalf of Mongolia: Ms. Oyunshur Zandansuren, Officer of Domestic Tourism and Infrastructure, Tourism Policy Coordination, Ministry of Environment and Tourism presented on site. After showcasing Mongolia's global positioning in the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (WEF TTCI) at 93/140, Ms. Zandansuren focused on Mongolia's infrastructure development and key tourism attraction: interacting with nomadic people. On this note, she spent the remainder of her presentation focusing on how the government is supporting nomadic tourism through its GER&NATURE Scheme (G&N Scheme), a socio-entrepreneurial network which motivates greater participation of herder people in a multi-sectoral development process based on their resources, introduces efficient and innovative interventions and improved quality of livelihood by the inclusive nomadic tourism development. In short: the G&N Scheme brings resilient and sustainable solutions to rural nomadic development challenges. As an outcome, the tourist experience will remain the same if not be better, while the nomads and herders will have increased livelihood and inclusion.

On behalf of Pakistan: Mr. Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation presented online. At the outset, Mr. Rana highlighted a key point about Pakistan, namely that as compared to foreign tourism, domestic tourism is a larger market

segment in the destination, with 96% domestic and 4% inbound. For COVID-19 Recovery, he highlighted Pakistan's Three-Pronged Approach:

1. Survival of the tourism industry and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 (based on early actions)
2. Revival and accelerated recovery phase (based on actions in short term framework)
3. Positioning for the future to revamp tourism in post COVID-19 (based on actions in short to mid-term framework)

To achieve these short-term goals, domestic tourism is an important focus. This includes:

- Promotion of Domestic tourism through electronic/social media
- Vaccinating tourism and hospitality staff on a priority basis
- Fam trips for social media influencers to promote domestic tourism
- Grow awareness among domestic tourists about COVID-19 SOPs through social media
- Monitoring of SOPs implementation at tourists destinations
- Increase of domestic flight operation to mountain areas to facilitate access to summer tourist stations by domestic tourists.

In light of these pushes, Pakistan achieved nearly 6 million domestic tourists during summer 2021.

On behalf of Sri Lanka: Dr. Prasad Jayasuriya, Acting Deputy Director-General / Director for Tourism Planning, Development and Investments, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority presented onsite. In response to the extreme challenges posed by COVID-19, Sri Lanka has implemented a number of policies and programmes to support trade and promote both domestic and international tourism at this time. At the policy level, these include: Developing a new Tourism Policy and reviewing the Tourism Act; Developing and implementing the Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP); and Strategic Initiatives in Sustainable Tourism including implementation of GSTC criteria. Further, Sri Lanka has been successful in implementing the systematic "Safe & Secure" bio-bubble concept in resuming tourism which resulted in global recognition, knowledge and awareness building within the industry on future direction, and creating more connectivity and close collaboration amongst industry stakeholders. This also managed to keep the investor interest in the tourism industry of Sri Lanka, which was demonstrated by the investment increasing trend even in 2020.

On behalf of Vietnam: Ms. Mai Huong Tran, Senior Official, Tourism Marketing Department, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism presented online. Ms. Tran's presentation was an overview of tourism in Vietnam generally, and highlighted a few key issues and opportunities. Notably, infrastructure improvement is a key focus at this time as many potential tourism assets are difficult to access given a lack of synchronized tourism/general infrastructure development. Further, in-destination environmental protection is now a key focus of Vietnam, with the improved rubbish collection as a high priority. In sum, much is taking place to promote Vietnam as a friendly, safe and attractive destination.



Day Two: 6th October (Wednesday)

Session Two: Engaging the Private Sector to Foster Domestic Tourism

This session provided an overview of best practices and solutions from the business community that have been successful in driving the growth of domestic tourism across the tourism value chain. It also discussed the various ways in which the private sector has collaborated with national tourism administrations and relevant agencies to build a foundation for recovery.

The session began with a virtual opening keynote co-presented by **UNWTO Anchor consultant Mr. Trevor Weltman** and **Mr. Jason M. Lusk, Managing Partner Clickable Impact Consulting Group**, titled: "Innovative Strategies for Engaging the Private Sector to Foster Domestic Tourism." In it, Mr. Weltman highlighted the private sector's role in tourism governance beyond product development and promotions, noting the ability of the private sector to support the industry and also recovery with data sharing and co-investment in core tourism infrastructure, facilities, and communities. From there, he handed it over to Mr. Lusk to discuss "Catalyzing Private Investment for Domestic Tourism." Mr. Lusk began by sharing the pre-COVID-19 documented investment gap of \$26 trillion for the region to achieve the sustainable development goals. From there, he drilled down to show how destinations require significant investment to meet expected demand while enhancing economic, social and environmental outcomes. Meanwhile, with public budgets remaining focused on overall recovery, not tourism specifically, he believes NTAs must prioritize catalytic financing strategies to crowd-in private investment. He then went on to show – from his work with the development community – how tourism as a result of the crisis is finally becoming a focus, and how this can create opportunities for NTAs to engage donors and funders for programmes that engage private sector businesses and finance.

Catalyzing Private Investment for Domestic Tourism

Development Finance Institutions are (finally) realizing tourism's importance

- COVID-19 tourism sector business closures and job losses **threaten progress on SDGs 1** (ending poverty) and 8 (decent work and economic growth)
- MDBs and bilaterals organizing **tourism-specific funds and programs**
- Tourism focus expanding beyond capacity development and small-scale CBT investments to **catalytic finance**

Source: [Tourism4SDGs.org](https://www.tourism4SDGs.org)



New opportunities to leverage development finance for private sector recovery

Subnational lending

- National tourism authorities should work multi-ministerially with provincial and city managers and their private sectors to develop bankable projects
- Development finance builds private sector confidence to invest

Blended finance

- Credit guarantees
- Lending support for PPPs

Climate-linked finance

- Climate linkages can mobilize additional investment for infrastructure and nature-based destination development

New climate-linked instruments

- Green/SDG bonds
- Carbon credits

- New financial instruments are unlocking new forms of concessionality and improving the bankability of previously unbankable projects



Source: [Devex](#)

He concluded with 5 Key strategies to catalyze private investment for domestic tourism:

1. Focus investment at the subnational level.
2. Design projects in dialogue with the private sector, and leverage public-private partnerships.
3. Incentivize the transition towards low-carbon, climate-resilient tourism investments.
4. Connect tourism projects with blended finance and other emerging financial instruments.
5. Engage experts who can help prepare bankable projects that consider all available sources of development finance.

Next, participants heard an online presentation from **Dr. Zengxian Liang, Associate Professor of School of Tourism Management from Sun Yat-sen University, and Technical Expert at Monitoring Centre for UNWTO Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MCSTO)**, titled: "Governmental Support and Tourism Small Business Recovery -- practices and solutions from China." In it, he outlined numerous ways the Chinese government has supported tourism since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

1. Direct financial support
2. Tax reductions and exemptions
3. Underwriting or offering small business loans
4. New infrastructure construction and upgrades
5. Event marketing and tourism promotion
6. Offer annual card of low price to locals and specific groups (e.g. Medical staff)
7. Public investment in tourism planning and environment improvement

Notably, Dr. Liang shared how events provide a unique opportunity to attract domestic tourists while also engaging the private sector. He shared events are further attractive because they can be held outdoors and therefore in line with changing consumer preferences.

Country Presentations

For the remainder of Session Two, five presentations were heard that highlighted destination management and policies for domestic recovery.

On behalf of Bhutan: Mr. Dorji Dhradhul, Director-General, Tourism Council of Bhutan presented online. He began by sharing how – despite pilgrimages and travel for religion being a fundamental part of Bhutanese life – they and by extension domestic tourism were never considered part of the formal travel & tourism. Then, after conducting their first-ever domestic tourism survey study, they began working with their private sector to offer new domestic experiences for the local market, including glamping and hiking; hotel offers; and trekking, pilgrimage and other packages for locals by tour operators, amongst others.

On behalf of Macao, China: Mr. Io Meng Hoi, Deputy Director, Macao Government Tourism Office presented online. He began by sharing a few stats about Macao's strong recovery. For example, after a total of US\$8.6 billion in total visitor expenditure (TVE) in 2020 (-78.5% vs. 2019), Macao was experiencing a Jan-June 2021 TVE of US\$8.5 billion (+104.8% vs. 2020). Next, he shared about Macao's successful 2020 domestic campaign, "Macao Ready Go!" and various initiatives attached to it. This included the E-Platform which engaged over 680 merchants, had 10,303,684 visits to the platform, and facilitated the download of 376,654 discount coupons. He also shared about two more 2021 campaigns. First, the "Stay Dine and See Macao" which is offering locals subsidies of US\$25 for staycations. This campaign has engaged 161 travel agencies, 69 hotels and guest houses, 500 tour coaches (including barrier-free tour coaches), over 523 tour coach drivers and 449 local tour guides, and has already exceeded 80,000 local tour and hotel package bookings. Second, he showcased the "Macao Highlight Tours" campaign, which feature four profound itineraries. The main goal is to engage small groups and drive local engagement and stimulate shopping. Finally, he shared how despite the downturn, investment remained strong with six hotels and resorts opening in 2020 and 2021, and a number of new attractions online such as the new GoAirborne Macao indoor skydiving and Zipcity zipline.

On behalf of the Maldives: Mr. Najmulla Shareef, Project Officer, Ministry of Tourism presented on site. His presentation focused on good practices for private sector engagement and domestic tourism. For the former, he outlined four key areas as best practices:

1. Scholarship scheme to study abroad (HR development)
2. Local suppliers (Procurement)
3. Employ the best-known technology (Technology development)
4. Local construction companies (Infrastructure development)

Next, he highlighted the concerted inclusiveness efforts of the Maldives tourism to create greater opportunities for women and people with special needs, especially in entrepreneurship and resort management. He ended his talk with five key takeaways:

1. Connectivity
2. Product development
3. Digitalization
4. Cost reduction within the value chain
5. Human resource development
6. Upstream and downstream integration

On behalf of Myanmar: Ms. Khin Myo Naing, Deputy Director, Hotels and Tourism Supervision Department, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism presented online. She began with an overview of Myanmar's governing structure, which necessitates private sector representation from the Myanmar Tourism Federation across three primary tourism governing bodies. From there, she highlighted current key challenges, including an important and honest point echoed by many others: "Uncertain how & to what extent domestic tourism can be an effective approach towards the revitalization of the tourism industry." Of the several success stories she shared, the "COVID-19 Vaccination and HSP Training" stands out. Jointly arranged by the tourism public and private sectors, this programme prioritized COVID-19 vaccinations to tourism-related staff, as well as provided Health and Safety Outsourcing Training, Skill Up Training, to both train the industry and build confidence with the first wave of domestic tourists expected to begin in Q3 2021.

On behalf of the Philippines: Ms. Anna Leah Bayot, Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority: Ms. Bayot outlined two goals of the Philippines recovery: Societal Goals (including creating a globally competitive and sustainable industry), and Programme Impact goals (mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on the industry with an emphasis on sustaining business capacity and protecting vulnerable groups). She shared how the national ministries have worked with local government to ensure vaccine rollouts to front-line and tourism workers. They have also created strong medical partnerships for subsidizing qualified RT-PCR tests for qualified domestic tourists. Further, she shared how the Philippines has created multiple social media partnerships for promoting new and important domestic events and experiences.

On behalf of Samoa: Ms. Marita Ah Sam, Principal Planning Officer, Planning & Development Division, Samoa Tourism Authority presented online. After outlining the numerous key policies and strategies Samoa is developing to offset the pandemic as well as insulate the industry from future shocks, Ms. Sam shared several success stories of the recent domestic push. These included two marketing programmes ("Kuka: Taste of Samoa" and Tafaoga "Tour Guide / Attraction Sites"); a campaign focused on night markets; the "Samoa Staycation" campaign; and the various services being provided to train the displaced workforce. All in all, Ms. Sam shared that Samoa now knows the vital importance of the domestic market and is engaging the private sector to continue developing it.

Session Three: Innovation and the Future of Domestic Tourism – Building Opportunity for Growth and Development

This session examined the innovative measures needed to stimulate domestic tourism demand, expand supply for services, and develop non-traditional jobs. It also explored the new types of jobs and employment available for local communities in destinations.

The session began with a video keynote from **Ms. Natalia Bayona, Director, Innovation, Education and Investments Department, UNWTO**. In this comprehensive talk, Ms. Bayona shared that the challenges facing the industry now are the same as before the pandemic, just accelerated. These include innovation; education; investments; added value jobs; and finally, sustainability. Thus, the ecosystem in tourism needs to be improved, especially among governments, startups, institutions, and national governments. She also highlighted the need for more value-added jobs focused on the power of tourism, which is why UNWTO had partnered with fDi intelligence from the Financial Times for development along these lines. Finally, she highlighted that "sustainability" must expand beyond environmental considerations to include social and economic priorities as well.

Next, a virtual keynote was delivered by **Mr. John Lohr, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Innovation, Hosco**. His insightful keynote was focused on how digital platforms and insights can inform workforce mobilization and recruiting in the hospitality sector. Hosco leveraged their own platform and survey capabilities to survey the hospitality sector, and learned some important insights as a result. For example, the lowlights: 59% of recent hospitality graduates have reported being unemployed, meaning the industry needs to act fast before other sectors absorb them. Further, 27% of senior talent (5+ years of experience) and 31% of hospitality students are unsure or unwilling to work in hospitality even after rebounding, meaning the industry needs to bolster its image and opportunities. For the highlights:

- 9 out of 10 hospitality talent are actively looking for a job; 94% are interested in hospitality opportunities, out of which 30% are focusing on hospitality jobs only.
- 76% of those looking for hospitality and non-hospitality jobs would return to the industry once it recovers.
- Companies have a qualified pool to choose from – recent graduates, senior, and managerial profiles - who hold the highest unemployment rate out of the six professional levels.

He then shared details on the UNWTO "Jobs Factory," powered by Hosco, launched to kick-start tourism jobs recovery. This innovative platform is open to individual member states and is designed to connect talent with employers across the sector, being the perfect solution for hospitality recruitment during COVID-19 recovery, and beyond.

Next, participants heard an online keynote from **Ms. Heayjin Lee, Director of Seoul Tourism Organization(STO), UNWTO Affiliate Member**, who spoke about Seoul's many creative initiatives that contribute to advancing tourism through innovation and digitalization. In it, she highlighted STO's key objectives: Safety Data Notification, and New-normal Digital Marketing. For

the former, Ms. Lee highlighted the partnership with Korea Telecom on the Seoul Safety Indicator Service, which is a platform that predicts any potential risks of COVID-19 outbreaks based on the average crowd density on both an hourly and daily basis in the Seoul region, thus assisting travelers in customizing their itinerary. For new-normal digital campaigns, the initial goal of STO was to offer alternative experiences to foreign travelers, which also accrued benefit to domestic promotions. This required STO to work with big data to identify customer intent, and then adopt these insights into service to achieve data-driven marketing. Unique campaigns included 360° VR videos featuring KOLs and new virtual event platforms.

Country Presentations

For the remainder of Day Two, two country presentations were heard that highlighted destination management, innovation and digitalization, and overall recovery.

On behalf of India: Mr. Enkatesan Dhattareyan, Regional Director, Ministry of Tourism presented online. He began with an interesting and important statistic: One in every four Indians is directly or indirectly engaged in tourism-related manufacturing or services activity, and how an increase in domestic tourism will provide the much-needed thrust to keep these activities alive and enable the value chain to stay employed. In line with the "AamirbarBharat" or "India Self-Reliance" philosophy, Prime Minister's message to 1.3 billion Indians is to visit at least 15 places by 2022, including important destinations related to India's freedom struggle. According to Mr. Dhattareyan, the success of these campaigns can be seen in the market, as over 9000 students have enrolled for the Tourist Certification Facilitator Programme, and job creation is on the rise again in the industry. He also shared details on a long-term domestic tourism strategy, which in the short term (<1 year) may include restricting the capacity of some destinations to 50%, and also shifting products from mass tourism to FIT and Special Interest tours.

On behalf of China: Mr. Liu Shijun, Inspector, Bureau of International Exchanges and Cooperation, Ministry of Culture and Tourism presented in a pre-recorded video. In it, he covered China's strong domestic tourism recovery since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. He began by emphasizing China's strong COVID-19 containment and vaccination efforts. Then, he shared some telling statistics on China's domestic recovery: 1.871 billion domestic trips, \$250 billion domestic revenue, \$135 average consumption per person per domestic trip. Next, he shared how the digital economy is reconstructing China's domestic tourism industry on both the supply and demand sides, but offering efficiencies of quality and scale to the former while great accessibility and convenience to the latter. He also shared how digitalization has helped promote greater social employment for domestic tourism, with more workers able to work remotely while still supporting the industry. As a final note, he shared how people are now more concerned about the safety of tourism products and services, and have raised higher requirements for the quality of domestic tourism with the concepts of contactless, personalized, tailor-made products and services gaining growing popularity.

Day Three: 7th October (Thursday)

Special Session: Restarting International Tourism beyond Domestic Tourism

After two days hearing a breadth of opinions, data, and practical approaches to stimulate and capture increased **domestic demand** for COVID-19 recovery, a special session on international recovery was convened, titled: "Restarting International Tourism beyond Domestic Tourism." For all attendees, the topic couldn't have been more exciting, timely, or relevant. This session provided best practices and cases from Asia and the Pacific and other regions that have been successful in reopening international tourism.

On behalf of Fiji: Mr. Kartik Pratap, Acting Director for the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism, and Transport presented online. He began with an assessment of the impact: the largest economic contraction in history (15.7%) at -84% decline in arrivals. He then introduced the "Love our Locals Fiji" campaign. However, looking beyond domestic, given low case counts and high vaccination rates (96% first dose/77% second dose), Fiji is again open. One key programme implemented is the Fiji "Blue Lane" initiative, designed to restart Fiji's blue tourism industry. Since launching, 140 yachts and superyachts with 600+ crew were welcomed in 2021. Further, they have implemented the CareFiji Commitment, ensuring travellers' safety while traveling. Also, Mr. Kartik "looked forward to welcoming everyone to Fiji," a warm parting comment welcomed by all.

On behalf of Italy: Mr. Francesco Paolo Schiavo, Directorate for Development and Promotion of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism presented online. After suffering enormous losses in 2020 (arrivals down -68% and losses of 103 million €), Italy implemented two important short-term strategies: first, mandatory COVID Digital Certificate for accessing certain contexts (e.g. indoor venues, crowded events), and second, a set of Digital Marketing measures including thematic magazines articles and social network advertising, aimed at recapturing a portion of inbound tourism from neighboring countries (e.g. Spain, France, Austria). The results have been strong: not only recovery in the number of tourists (2021 vs 2020) +1,1% and domestic tourists +18,8%, but also significant arrival improvements from neighboring countries. Mr. Schiavo also highlighted Italy's strategic approach to leveraging the downturn to address three critical issues: "territorial divides" or disparities among regions and seasonality; "structural factors" such as low overall digitalization, low strive for innovation; and "Polarization on big destinations" with Venice, Florence and Rome accounting for 20% of tourist flows. To support solving these issues, Italy has created Innovation and Digitalization Tourism Hubs that focus on B2C services, data aggregation and interoperability, and being a platform for digitizing B2B services.

On behalf of Maldives: Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Minister, Ministry of Tourism presented on site. Minister Mausoom began by saying the Maldives was the world's leading destination in 2021 and welcomed all to come and return. He outlined the needs of COVID-19 recovery for the country, namely protecting and recovering significant jobs and GDP contribution. As a result of the Maldives remaining open, strong vaccine prioritizations for the industry, the Maldives has

experienced a strong recovery, nearly achieving its arrivals goals (3% more than 2019 in August 2021), without traditional markets of China, Japan, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Further, the length of stay was longer. This means to reach or beat 2019 bed nights in 2021. In terms of leading source markets, India and Russia (22.5% and 20% respectively) have emerged as new dominant plates, thrust giving the Maldives more varied source markets going forward.

On behalf of Nepal: Dr. Dhanajay Regmi, Chief Executive Officer, Nepal Tourism Board presented on site. Near the beginning of this informative presentation, Dr. Regmi highlighted how Nepal was able to get priority vaccinations for tourism workers and local population in key tourism destinations as part of a concerted effort across all public and private stakeholders, with almost 90% tourism employees and entrepreneurs in Kathmandu and Pokhara are almost fully vaccinated. From there, he shared that COVID-19 exposed an over-focus on mountain tourism, which by definition has a limited season. When looking to stimulate the domestic, and also international markets, Nepal took this downturn to reimagine its destination focus. It shifted more toward hills and plains – which individually and combined also comprised significantly more of the local population. This led them to the following priorities going forward:

1. Different product
2. All season product
3. All age group products
4. Focus on the short-haul destination

Republic of Korea: Ms. Jeongeun Lee, Director of the International Tourism Division, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism presented online. In her presentation, Ms. Lee shared a number of strategies the ministry is currently using. These include opening up duty-free shopping and flights to nowhere; numerous online promotional strategies to stay in touch with traveler audiences; a virtual trade show/Korea showcase using the Metaverse platform; and even—incredibly—the use of a virtual/AI influence, Rui Li.

Next, she outlined the response to digitalization with the "Smart Tourism City Project", the leading model of Korea's smart tourism plan which effectively addresses the five components of smart tourism – experience, convenience, service, mobility, platform – in cooperation with local governments and the private sector. All are aimed at building back traveler trust through enhancing safety.

On behalf of Spain: Ms. María Llinares Sanjuan, Director Spanish Tourism Office, Spanish Embassy in Beijing presented online. Ms. Llinares began by saying three factors have created a strong foundation for tourism recovery in Spain:

1. Safety net deployed to save businesses
2. Highly successful vaccination campaign
3. Relaxation of mobility barriers

In terms of recovery, in July and August 2021, domestic tourism exceeded 2019 levels, with international arrivals recovering strongly (August 2021 saw 5.2 million arrivals, at +95% compared to 2020).

She then reinforced her minister's key point that "the best economic policy is vaccinations" (80% of the total population vaccinated) before outlining the wage subsidy programmes provided by the government and their success in maintaining employment. By the end of 2020, 750,000 employees were part of their wage aid programme (50% tourism); by the end of August 2021, the number was down 30%, with only 123,000 tourism workers enrolled.

Finally, she spoke about marketing and Spain's success leveraging marketing to overcome three challenges: dismantling the fear of travelling; removing the fear of travelling outside of ones' country; encouraging people to come to Spain.

She also shared about Spain's successful joining of the EU Digital COVID certificate, issuing 25.1 million COVID certificates to date.

Closing Ceremony and Final Conclusions and Recommendations

Following the special session, it was time to begin winding down the 15th Executive Training Programme. Mr. Trevor Weltman delivered a brief talk on the five main points covered during the programme. Namely:

1. **Recommendation One:** Nearly two years into COVID-19, and domestic tourism remains the definitive first step and priority to restart our industry.
 - There is no more efficient, nor certain, strategy than domestic.
 - In many countries, domestic trade will not offset international losses. However, a continued focus will bring about: Short-term economic recovery, and long-term structural change to the industry that makes it more sustainable and resilient to external shocks in the future.
2. **Recommendation Two:** Financial incentives remain the predominant strategy.
 - From the many country presentations, a variety of financial incentives have been adopted along the following lines: vouchers, fiscal incentives or long weekends.
 - We heard many examples of countries supporting the trade by waiving license fees, concessional lending, and waiving taxes amongst others.
3. **Recommendation Three:** New campaigns, with new branding, showcasing safety but emphasizing opportunities targeted at domestic consumers are a must.
 - As part of robust branding and marketing, many countries also create voucher schemes to assist travelers with making booking decisions.
 - Further, new communication campaigns and digital promotion efforts with strong use of social media channels remain popular strategies of marketing and promotion.

4. **Recommendation Four:** Public-public partnerships at different levels, as well as public-private collaboration, are essential to creating a balanced, inclusive, and innovative recovery in the short and long term.
 - In the short term, PPPs in marketing and promotion efforts such as communication campaigns, online platforms, tourism fairs and discounts are essential.
 - In the long term, PPS will lead to the co-development of a more sustainable, data-driven sector, with greater and more positive impacts on our local communities.
 - Further, it was also highlighted how changes in international development finance are creating new opportunities for national and subnational tourism actors to catalyze private sector investment despite a soft investment climate at this time.
5. **Finally, Recommendation Five:** Use early learnings and successes from domestic push to prepare for the reopening of international tourism in due course.
 - The special session taught that domestic tourism prepared the trade and locals to again welcome visitors to their destinations safely and profitably.
 - It also saw how marketing and product development efforts must reflect the actual changing needs and behaviors of travelers in the post-COVID-19 context.

From there, a vote was held to recognize the Best Presentation of the entire programme. The voting was closed with **Dr. Prasad Jayasuriya, Acting Deputy Director-General / Director for Tourism Planning, Development and Investments, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority** being recognized by his peers as having delivered the best presentation.

After, closing remarks were heard from **Dr. Naushad Mohamed, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Tourism of the Maldives** on site. Dr. Mohamad began with the Maldives "one island, one resort" strategy, and sharing the target had been international – not domestic – tourists. As a result of this training and many other exchanges with the international community for best practices during this challenging time, Dr. Mohamad believes the Maldives has benefited and can be seen in the country's current tourism successes. He then thanked again all delegates for attending the programme.

Next, **Mr. Harry Hwang, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UNWTO**, delivered his closing remarks. He was delighted to tell everyone that the 15th ETP was one of the most successful and memorable for the largest number of participants. In addition, he extended his heartfelt appreciation to the government of the Maldives for hosting this historical programme in a hybrid format which was the first of its kind organized in Asia and the Pacific during the pandemic.

Mr. Hwang mentioned how the Maldives may be small in size but is now one of the world's biggest tourism success stories, and how UNWTO will work alongside the Ministry of Tourism of the Maldives to ensure that tourism continues to be a pillar of the country's socio-economic progress and development. He also mentioned how UNWTO will return to the Maldives in the biggest way as the Maldives will celebrate its Golden Jubilee Year of Tourism, marking 50 years since the inception of the tourism industry for this island nation.

He concluded by thanking the technical consultant, the UNWTO team and speakers, and of course, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea who has made this programme possible over the past fourteen years. Mr. Hwang also announced that the Republic of Korea shall host this programme next year.

With that, online participants "signed off," while a certificate ceremony was held for those in person.

Day Four: 8th October (Friday) – Technical Tour

The Ministry of Tourism of the Maldives organized a half-day technical tour of a local Island (Kaafu Huraa), situated 20.42 km towards the northeast of the country's capital, Male for participants and UNWTO officials.