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Chapter 14

Sustainable Tourism in Asia — Current Situation, Trends, and Existing Practices

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14.1 Introduction: Boosting Tourism in Southeast and South Asia

One of the world's fastest-growing industries over the past 10 years has been the travel and tourism sector [WEF, 2013]. As a major contributor to globalisation and local development, tourism has the ability to connect diverse cultures and serve as a bridge between countries. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Highlights 2014 Edition, one out of every 11 people is employed by the tourism industry. Of the 1.087 million international tourist arrivals worldwide, 248 million (23%) originated from the Asia Pacific region. Of the international tourism receipts, USD 1,159 billion globally, Asia Pacific tourism generated USD 359 billion (31%) [UNWTO, 2014].

International tourism is also a major contributor to climate change. Evidently, 705 million tonnes of CO₂ were produced globally by air operations in 2013 and Asia Pacific's share of global passenger traffic in 2012 was 31.8% [ATAG, 2014]. Tourism growth in Asia is accelerating with a predicted annual growth rate of 6.2% over the period 2014–2018

[PATAmPOWER, 2014]. Recent estimates suggest that 27% of the world's energy-related CO₂ emissions were from Asia. Asia's share is forecast to increase to 44% by 2030 [ADBI, 2013]. The relation between tourist arrivals and CO₂ emissions in selected Asian countries is one of the issues discussed in this chapter.

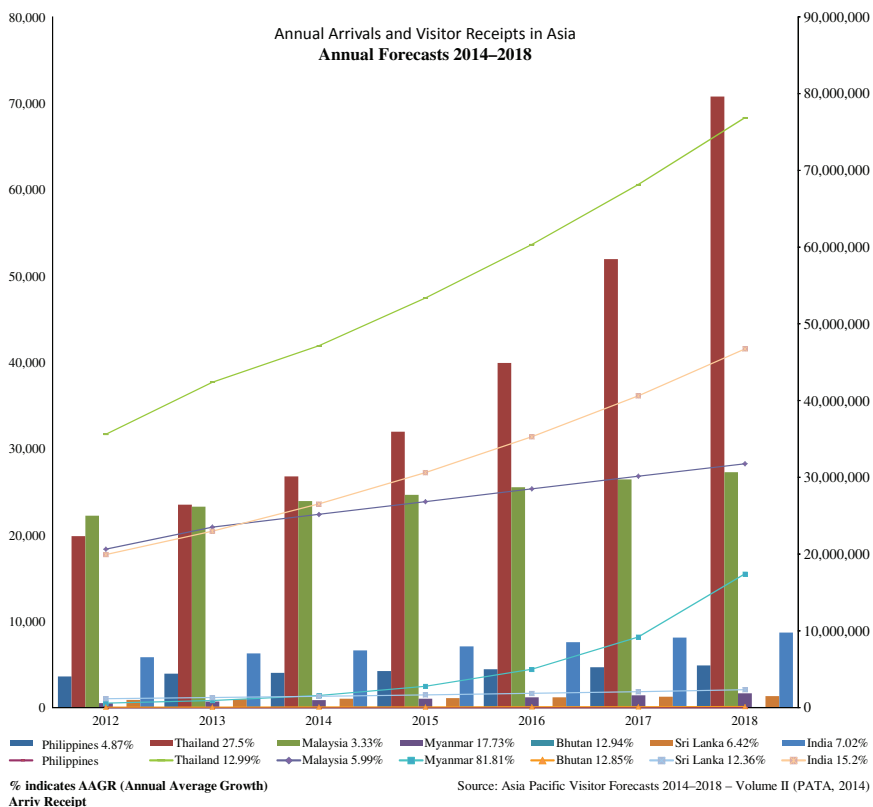
The formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 brings the region to experience a massive cultural and economic exchange that will influence the tourism industry tremendously. At the ASEAN Tourism Forum in January 2014, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) revealed that forecasts of international visitor arrivals (IVAs) in Southeast Asia is predicted to increase by almost 10%, from 105 million in 2014 to 173 million by 2018. Southeast Asia is forecast to become the top growth region in the Asia Pacific [PATA, 2014b]. AEC will be the key factor of this growth and the economic transactions will increase accordingly. According to the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement, the promotion of foreign investment to ASEAN countries is a major priority as it stimulates the growth and development of ASEAN small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as multinational enterprises.

Tourism is also one of the important cooperation areas in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). At the time of writing, the most recent 18th SAARC summit was held at Kathmandu in November 2014 with the adoption of the Kathmandu Declaration, where leaders agreed to promote South Asia as an attractive tourist destination in a sustainable manner. The declaration also sets the tone for the implementation of the SAARC Action Plan on Tourism from 2006, particularly through initiating appropriate public and private collaboration [SAARC, 2014]. South Asia is predicted to become the second largest growth region based on its IVAs, increasing by about 7% from 10 million in 2014 to 14 million by 2018 [PATA, 2014]. It is important to note that these forecasts are largely conservative; actual numbers might exceed the forecasts.

From these two regions, the four countries Bhutan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, in which the SWITCH-Asia Programme implemented sustainable tourism projects, are selected for further discussion. All four countries are tourism destinations with strong growth in IVAs. The Philippines is expecting 4.7 million IVAs and Thailand is expected to

receive as many as 36 million in 2015, forecast as the top fastest growth destination in Asia Pacific 2014–2018, with an annual average growth rate of 27.5% [PATA, 2014]. In 2014, Forbes listed Sri Lanka as one of the “10 Coolest Places to Visit in 2015.” IVAs to Sri Lanka is predicted to be 1.3 million in 2015 [PATA, 2014], however, that mark was already surpassed with 1.5 million visitors in 2014 [Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, 2014]. Bhutan’s IVAs were estimated at up to 58,489 in 2015 [PATA, 2014], however, the numbers already reached 116,209 in 2013 according to the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB). Despite the relatively small inbound volume in each of the four countries where the SWITCH-Asia tourism project has been implemented, Bhutan was forecast as one of the fastest growth destinations, with its average annual growth rate (AAGR) 12.94% as the highest among South Asian countries [PATA, 2014].

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The author's previous qualitative research [Kaiwa, 2014] which analysed Thailand's position on sustainability within the tourism industry and recognised the challenges in promoting it, was used as starting point for this research. In-depth interviews with industry leaders, such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Designated Area for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA), and the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I) were conducted. The author developed this chapter for the additional countries, i.e., the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan, based on desk research and in-depth interviews with SWITCH-Asia project implementers in Thailand, Philippines, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka via teleconferences and emails. Case studies in this chapter were the main results from the interview and used for discovering the uniqueness of each approach.

14.2 The Role of SMEs in Sustainable Tourism

Both Southeast Asia and South Asia are regions with high potential for prosperity and are expected to see further economic growth. However, the manner in which these regions develop their economies and its possible tensions with the countries' sustainable development objectives, will be discussed in the context of sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism has gained heightened global attention as a programme initiated in 2014 under the UNEP-led 10 Year Framework Plan (10YFP) on sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The definition of sustainable tourism by the UNWTO [2005] states, "... Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability."

The involvement of local stakeholders has been emphasised as one of the significant aspects towards sustainable tourism development [UNWTO, 2005; Byrd, 2007]. Among tourism industry stakeholders, SMEs are key players. Out of all firms excluding the agriculture sector, SMEs account more than 90% in most economies, create the high rate of employment and generate both domestic and export earnings. They are the lead player of economic growth and can act as drivers of structural change [Sharafat, Rashid, and Khan, 2014] that contribute to poverty alleviation.

Working closely with SMEs can be very effective and practical in finding solutions to sustainability. Cooperating with SMEs can avoid the bureaucratic procedures that are usually seen in larger enterprises. SMEs can often manage innovations much easier to keep up with the rapid changes in global tourism trends. Travellers looking for something unique often look for SME services, which have the ability to be successful in competing with international competitors through the local connections while being linked to global distribution value chains and networks [Imtiaz, 2008].

Partnering with SMEs also has advantages for potential investors. However, the real challenges SMEs are facing include limited competitiveness in the regional and international market, innovativeness, and most notably the lack of support from their home governments and international organisations. Severe credit conditions compared to large enterprises and equity financing make it difficult for SMEs to participate in international networking opportunities [Imtiaz, 2008].

One of the international cooperation programmes focusing on sustainability of tourism SMEs has been the EU-funded SWITCH-Asia Programme. The SWITCH-Asia projects provide local SMEs with opportunities to try out new sustainable approaches. By joining the SWITCH-Asia projects, several Asian countries have been able to gain access to an international network of sustainable tourism experts. Completed projects had shared their best practice and created positive awareness on SCP among stakeholders. Opportunities for scaling up the SWITCH-Asia project approaches by providing an outlook for the coming years and exploring potential approaches to sustainable tourism for decision-makers in Asia will be discussed below.

14.3 Unsustainable Trends of Mass Tourism

14.3.1 *Socio-economic impacts*

Mass tourism is tantamount to unsustainable tourism [Alampay, 2005; Butler, 1980]. Major challenges of Asia's mass tourism include the degradation of nature, loss of biodiversity, endangerment and extinction of wildlife, and negative impact to local communities. The number of tourist arrival represents a direct economic contribution to national economies;

however, it is important to note that the economic dimension of sustainability does not simply mean that more visitors is equal to more tourism receipts — that is expenditures by international inbound visitors. The tourism economy in total represents about 5% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 8% of total employment [UNEP and WTO, 2012]. However, tourism revenues often do not remain in the country [Diaz, 2001]. For example, about 70% of tourist expenditures flow out of Thailand [UNEP and WTO, 2012], 30% from Sri Lanka [Bowen and Pallister, 2006], and 55% from the typical developing country [FAO, 1997]. Due to international hotel chains, investors and expatriates involved in Asian tourism destinations, the financial leakage occurs and that causes only a low proportion of actual tourism revenue to remain in the host country and benefit local communities. Thus, the linkage between domestic industry and tourism should be tightened to sustain local economies [Situationer, 2006].

A critical point concerning the social unsustainability of mass tourism in Thailand is the *induced effects* of the proportion of the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP. Induced effects represent the benefits to local community, such as hotel employees spending their income in local regions for food and housing [Stynes, 1997]. In Thailand, out of THB 2,401 billion (approx. USD 71 billion) of total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP, induced effects was only THB 386 billion (approx. USD 11 billion) in 2013 [WTTC, 2014]. Therefore, increasing the proportion of induced effects is an essential factor to be considered for sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, increasing medical tourists as one of the marketing strategies for Thailand [MOTS, 2012] is causing negative effects to local communities. Receiving about 500,000 medical tourists annually causes shortage of staff at local hospitals and the increase of medical fees for self-paying Thai patients makes it more difficult for local communities to obtain quality medical services [NaRanong and NaRanong, 2011].

Due to the emphasis on arrival numbers as an indicator of growth, the Philippines experienced imbalanced marketing and branding as a tourist destination, overriding the promotion of sustainable development. One of the popular 'sun & beach' destinations in the Philippines, Boracay, is an example of a small island facing socio-cultural challenges due to a massive influx of tourists [Ong, Storey, and Minnery, 2011]. With the growing

population in the Philippines, labour migration occurs to 'touristy' islands and it creates social tension between locals and migrants. In their field-work survey, Ong, Storey, and Minnery [2011] analysed Boracay's economic benefits resulting from tourism. Most of tourism benefits went to non-Boracay individuals, such as 'resort owners' and 'investors from outside.' To avoid such leakage, SMEs having stronger linkage with local communities would need more support in terms of financing and capacity building by the government, to be able to play larger roles in local tourism industries.

Solutions to socio-economic problems caused by mass tourism exist. A case study of Cambodia identified the benefit of rural labour migration into indirect-direct tourism industries in Siem Reap [Biddulph, 2015]. Pro-poor tourism approaches are usually perceived to tighten the link between the tourism industry and local economic benefits and to reduce poverty [Meyer, 2007]. There are strong linkages particularly with micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which are the focus of pro-poor tourism [Ashley, 2005]. In the case of Sri Lanka, community-based tourism, ecotourism and other alternative tourism are perceived to bring high spending tourists and Sri Lanka focuses on this special interest tourist segment [Kamble and Bouchon, 2014]. Pro-poor sustainable tourism is one of the focused strategies in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) including Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, and the Yunnan Province of China [ADB, 2011] and are studied well in literature [Hummel, Gujadhur, and Ritsma, 2012; King and Dinkoksung, 2013; Theerapappisit, 2009].

14.3.2 *Mass tourism and climate change*

In addition to the issues of revenue leakage and poverty, tourism also accounts for 5% of global Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. Theoretically, the tourism industry could be seen as a polluting industry mainly through emissions from transport services [UNEP and WTO, 2012; Gössling *et al.*, 2005]. Rapid economic growth and rising household incomes in many parts of Asia motivates people to travel more, and the aviation industry has increased flights and carriers to meet the demand. Low cost carriers (LCC) entering the market have accelerated more tourist arrivals [Duval, 2012] and

CO₂ emissions [Al-Mulali *et al.*, 2014; Peeters and Eijgelaar, 2014; Gössling, Scott, and Hall, 2015; Gössling and Schumacher, 2009]. The relationship between tourist arrival and CO₂ emissions is little studied, but it is critical for policy makers to understand the actual impact originating from national tourism policies towards economic expansion through increasing tourist arrivals. It is important for destination countries to create a sustainable tourism strategy and a monitoring system to minimise the negative impacts of tourism [de Sausmarez, 2007; Choi and Sirakaya, 2006]. The relation between tourist arrivals and CO₂ emissions in the selected countries are examined in more detail in the following section.

Table 14.1 shows a time series of each country from 2000 to 2010 that demonstrates correlations between IVAs, CO₂ emissions and GDP. Among selected countries in Table 14.1, Thailand marked the highest CO₂ emissions from domestic transport, about 55 million tonnes in 2010. Thailand's increment of IVAs of 6.3 million and average CO₂ emission per capita of 1.4 metric tonnes from 2000 to 2010 were also highest among the selected countries. The amount of CO₂ emissions is growing along with the number of IVAs. Interestingly, Vietnam shows the similar time series with Thailand. In fact, Vietnam marked the highest increment of 20 million tonnes CO₂ emission from transport in 10 years. The data indicate that the more arrivals a destination receives, the more CO₂ emissions are continuously produced, not only directly by tourism facilities, but also through additional economic activities.

Having an image of sustainable nation stemming from its policy and resolution that committed to remain a "carbon-neutral" for all times to come [Brown and Bir, 2011], Table 14.1 shows that Bhutan has largely maintained the same level of CO₂ emissions per capita from 2000 to 2010 while receiving 33,000 additional IVAs over this period. With limited carrying capacity as a small country, Bhutan's IVAs was the lowest among the selected countries. However, even small changes in IVAs could have a substantial bearing on the environment, though there were no data to judge Bhutan's overall tourism's impact on the environment. This is compounded by an inadequate awareness in finer distinctions between green tourism and the professional capacity in packaging and providing responsible tourism product options to visitors. Bhutan can take advantage from both the positive and negative experiences of other neighbouring countries

Table 14.1: Comparison of selected Asian countries' tourism arrivals, share of tourism of national GDP and CO₂ emissions

Country	2000			2005			Increase/Decrease [2000–2005]			2010			Increase/Decrease [2005–2010]			2013							
	IVAs	CO ₂ Emission		GDP [Bil- lion]	IVAs	CO ₂ Emission		GDP [Bil- lion]	IVAs	CO ₂ Emis- sion		IVAs	CO ₂ Emission		GDP [Bil- lion]	IVAs	CO ₂ Emis- sion		IVAs	GDP [Bil- lion, USD]			
		a	b			c	a			b	c		a	b			a	b			a	b	
Thailand	9.579mil	3	44	28.3%	122.7	11.567mil	3.9	54	25.8%	176.3	1.988mil	0.9	10	15.93mil	4.4	55	23.4%	318.9	4.363mil	0.5	1	26.547mil	387.3
Bhutan	8,000	0.7	n/a	n/a	0.439	14,000	0.6	n/a	n/a	0.818	6,000	-0.1	n/a	41,000	0.7	n/a	n/a	1.585	27,000	0.1	na	116,209	1.781
Sri Lanka	400,000	0.5	5	48%	16.33	549,000	0.6	6	46.6%	24.4	149,000	0.1	1	654,000	0.6	7	51.6%	49.56	105,000	0	1	1.275mil	67.18
Lao PDR	191,000	0.2	n/a	n/a	1.731	672,000	0.2	n/a	n/a	2.735	481,000	0	n/a	1.67mil	0.3	n/a	n/a	7.181	998,000	0.1	na	3,779,490	11.24
Vietnam	2.14mil	0.7	10	23.8%	33.64	3.477mil	1.2	19	23.9%	57.63	1.337mil	0.5	9.0	5.05mil	1.7	30	23.4%	115.9	1.573mil	0.5	11.0	7,572,000	171.4
Cambodia	466,000	0.2	1	67.3%	3.654	1.422mil	0.2	1	56.4%	6.293	956,000	0	0	2.508mil	0.3	2	51.3%	11.24	1.086mil	0.1	1	4,210,000	15.24
Philippines	1.992mil	0.9	24	36%	81.02	2.623mil	0.9	25	35.2%	103	631,000	0	1.0	3.52mil	0.9	24	30.7%	199.5	897,000	0	-1	4.681mil	272.1

Source: The World Bank Data [2013]; TCB [2014]; UNWTO [2014b]. Tourism Development Department, Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism Lao PDR.

a: CO₂ emission [metric tons per capita].

b: CO₂ emission from transport [million metric tons].

c: CO₂ emission from transport [% of total fuel combustion].

*b&c emissions excluding international marine bunkers and international aviation.

with mass tourist destinations, especially for Bhutan's tourism promotion programme, e.g., 'Visit Bhutan 2015' [TCB, 2015c].

So far, mass tourism has not yet taken hold of Bhutan, but the industry is growing and becoming more competitive. According to The Bhutanese news [2012], "clean" tour operators are losing out despite the fixed tourist tariff. Tour operators are slashing prices in order to receive more tourists in the competitive market. Regional competition could push Bhutan towards being a mass tourist destination. The challenges are to monitor the real business situation and prevent the influx of insensitive mass tourism to the country. At the same time, the Bhutanese economy does not have many other options to generate income and offer employment, increasing the number of tourists over time seems inevitable [Ethirajan, 2013].

Interestingly, in comparison with Bhutan, Sri Lanka had 0.6 tonnes per capita of CO₂ emission while IVAs tallied 654,000 in 2010 [World Bank data, 2010]. Like Sri Lanka, both Laos and Cambodia had lower CO₂ emission and higher volume of IVAs than Bhutan. Although the CO₂ figures stem not only from tourism, it is meaningful to consider these data. The proportion of CO₂ emission from transport of total fuel combustion shows that the transport sector contributes almost half of total fuel combustion in Sri Lanka, Laos, and Cambodia. It could be argued that the impact from the tourism sector is much powerful in lower GDP countries, and that might also apply to Bhutan.

On the other hand, increasing the frequency of flights to Sri Lanka and attracting more airlines to operate in the country are included in the government's policy towards achieving 2.5 million IVAs by 2016 [Sri Lankan Tourism Development Strategy, 2011]. The more tourists travel to the island, the more accommodation will be needed. Along with the targeted number of tourists, accommodation facilities will need to increase with the construction of 22,500 hotel rooms by 2016. The consumption of water and energy, and production of waste at hotels will increase respectively. That can in turn contribute to climate change that might increase Sri Lanka's vulnerability to extreme weather events affecting tourism [Moore, 2010].

In contrast with Sri Lanka, Laos, and Cambodia, higher GDP countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines have a lower proportion of CO₂ emission from transportation's total fuel combustion (Table 14.1).

This phenomenon shows that the contribution ratio to CO₂ emission from the tourism sector tends to be lower along with economic growth in the country, though the amount of CO₂ emission from transportation tends to be high. The Philippines also have a similar time series compared with Thailand and Vietnam, except for the increment of CO₂ emission. The Philippines maintained the same amount of CO₂ emission during 10 years, whereas Thailand and Vietnam marked high increase along with the high increment of IVAs. High volume of IVAs means high impact in economic figures but also in emissions. Therefore, the Philippines showing slower increment of IVAs than Thailand and Vietnam in the 10 years with less CO₂ emission is an indication that the number of tourist arrivals can have a substantial influence on CO₂ emissions.

14.4 Sustainable Tourism Policies in Asia

The need for sustainable tourism policies and monitoring systems to manage the potential negative impact from tourism has been described above. Initial tourism developments can become a political and marketing promotion to set a pathway for sustainable tourism. Setting down sustainability standards and regulations early on will channel tourism industry in being responsible for the environment, culture and community. Particular sustainable policies under national tourism offices were not yet found in the studied countries, except Bhutan. The sustainability concern in Bhutan's strategy and development plan is clear from the relevant documents of the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment.

In addition to policies, sustainable tourism monitoring systems are vital to manage the destinations sustainably [Manning, 1999; Choi and Sirakaya, 2006]. As internationality is an unavoidable notion in the tourism sector, following international sustainable tourism standards is a way forward. Possible standards and indicators on which to base national monitoring systems include the UNWTO indicator system [UNWTO, 2004], Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria and indicators programme [GSTC, 2012], Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) for sustainable organisations [GRI, 2013] and the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) for sustainable destinations [European

Commission DG Enterprise and Industry, 2013]. The following sections discuss national policies and institutions relevant for sustainable tourism development.

14.4.1 *Thailand*

TAT principal role is to guide the direction of tourism industry. As a government body, TAT must follow the appropriate structure, hierarchies, and procedures, which are laid down in the 11th National Economic and Social Development and the National Tourism Development Plan. Common goals of the government are: (1) sustainable tourism, (2) quality tourism, (3) creative tourism, and (4) competitiveness. The government's focus is "quality" rather than "quantity." IVAs of Thailand reached 24.77 million in 2014 [TAT, 2015b] despite the political instability that year. It seems that even without much promotion, Thailand's IVAs as in "quantity" are steadily increasing; whereas the "quality" is harder to promote, to implement and to measure. Therefore, TAT's action plan for 2014 focused on the core theme of "Higher Revenue through Thainess." The plan aimed to attract tourists through an authentic or typical Thai experience, Thai way of life, and Thai culture. Icons such as elephants, for example, represent the image of Thailand for many tourists. However, elephant rides cause the endangerment of Asian elephants and cases of baby elephants having been tortured to let humans ride on top of them have occurred in Thailand [Karsten, 2013].

The key measurement of IVA's "quality" has been the expenditure of tourists. Though this still seems as if the indicator focuses only on profit, the desirable meaning of a quality tourist for Thailand is one who understands and cares about the economy, environment, community, and local culture. The quality tourist would purchase handcrafts at the local market, would not litter at the beach and would not behave disrespectfully to locals. The balanced strategy based on expenditure and behaviour of tourists is important for the socio-economic aspect of sustainable tourism [TAT strategy, 2014]. Awareness of sustainability is a "first step" to become a quality tourist, and for host destinations in harnessing and organising local efforts and attitudes towards sustainable tourism

development. Regarding the environmental component, ecotourism is one of the observable elements to raise awareness. A case study of Phuket [Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005] investigated the relation between mass tourism and ecotourism which are inseparable due to the financial factor of the tourism industry. In the past, mass tourism in Phuket began to shift to ecotourism in late 1980s by community-based tourism ventures. Recognition of the harm from mass tourism spurred to create awareness and demand for ecotourism activities among mass tourists. Uncontaminated areas in which ecotourism usually occurs are still close by the areas, which attract mass tourists. Therefore, it is an opportunity and challenge for ecotourism companies and sustainable tourism initiatives to draw attention with innovative ideas by transforming mass tourists into sustainability-minded tourists.

14.4.2 *Bhutan*

Sustainable development can be said to be the core philosophy and component of all of Bhutan's development policies, influenced by the 'middle path' that originates from Buddhism. The Middle Path: National Environment Strategy for Bhutan [1998] stated that the terminology of Middle Path is closely related to the concept of sustainability. His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck has recognised that Bhutan must follow the middle path to develop, which means integration of Buddhist knowledge into other sectors of society and economy. This stance is represented in Bhutan's existing tourism policy that values both economic benefits as well as environmental and cultural aspect for sustainable growth and development. The Royal Government of Bhutan states strongly that its tourism policy is one of "High Value, Low Impact." The vision of the TCB is "to foster a vibrant industry as a positive force in the conservation of environment, promotion of cultural heritage, safeguarding sovereign status of the nation for significantly contributing to Gross National Happiness (GNH)" [TCB, 2015b].

This policy, so far, appears to be working well; Bhutan has been able to secure tourism benefits while avoiding mass tourism and keeping its natural and cultural resources intact. The principles and purpose of the

country's sustainability policy have created an image of exclusivity and high-yield for Bhutan. The Royal Government of Bhutan has set a daily tariff of USD 250 per head to control the number of tourists. Visas and a minimum daily package are arranged through agents. However, there is criticism about this practice and the restrictive policies, which only allow selected high-end tourists to enter the country. As a result, Bhutan saw a relatively low IVAs in 2013, with 116,209 visitors — the smallest number amongst the countries studied (Table 14.1) — though it was the highest tourist number in the country's history. Tourist revenues, however, were overwhelmingly high compared to the number of visitors, at USD 28 million in 2013 [TCB, 2014]. This is mainly due to the 'low volume, high yield' policy that only allows only high-income tourists to visit Bhutan [Dorji, 2001; Richter and Richter, 1985].

14.4.3 *Sri Lanka*

The Ministry of Economic Development in Sri Lanka has laid out a Tourism Development Strategy for the five-year period of 2011–2016. The main target is to achieve 2.5 million tourists annually by 2016. The plan commits to introducing a programme to develop the tourism industry and to fulfil the infrastructure needs amongst other requirements in order to attract tourists. The investment promotion for hotels and other facilities are being made available for potential investors as well. However, sustainability is not explicitly stated in the plan and ecological conservation is only mentioned in the context of wildlife protection. The former president of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa previously stated,

“My intention is to generate environment friendly sustainable tourism instead of relying only on leisure seeking popular tourism.”

[Mahinda Chintana, 2005]

The strategies related to the five-year plan are:

1. creating an environment conducive for tourism,
2. attracting the “right type” of tourists,
3. ensuring that departing tourists are happy,

4. improving domestic tourism,
5. contributing towards improving the global image of Sri Lanka.

Creating tourism-related employment is also one of the key objectives in the five-year strategy; the plan aims to increase jobs from 125,000 in 2010 to 500,000 by 2016. By creating employment, the multiplier effect of tourism development is expected. Many of the tourism-related companies are small and medium in size. Thus, SMEs can take advantage from the five-year strategy and link to micro-enterprises as well as to large-scale businesses and corporations through a variety of economic activities. Overall, there is still much room for further specific provisions to promote sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka's future tourism development strategies.

14.4.4 *The Philippines*

The Department of Tourism (DOT) of the Philippines has included a statement on sustainability in the National Tourism Development Plan 2011–2016 [DOT, 2011]. The 2016 target is 10 million IVAs and 35.5 million domestic travellers. A common stakeholders' goal envisions "An environmentally and socially responsible tourism sector that delivers more widely distributed income and employment opportunities." On the national level, sustainable tourism indicators were in place [DOT, 2011]; however, there are still challenges to apply these tourism indicators in practice at the local level.

DOT and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) launched the National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan (NES) at the 5th World Ecotourism Conference (WEC) in 2014. The NES plan (2013–2022) includes sustainable management of destinations, education and awareness raising, involvement of local communities, development of tourism products, and improvement of tourism infrastructure and services, and human resource opportunities.

The SWITCH-Asia project "Zero Carbon Resorts" is an example of a pilot project for a local sustainable tourism programme in the Philippines, which also contributed to local tourism policy developments in Palawan. The project is now being replicated in Thailand (see Box 14.1).

Box 14.1 SWITCH-Asia project case study — Zero Carbon Resorts

The four-year SWITCH-Asia project “Zero Carbon Resorts” (ZCR) was completed in 2014 as a first phase which focused on switching from the use of fossil fuels to renewable energy for SMEs, such as hotels, resorts, and restaurants located in the Philippines. One of its accomplishments included international recognition of the project and ZCR members.

The first success factor was the selection of the pilot location, selected after careful observation. Palawan is an ecotourism destination and inhabitants are environmentally conscious and protective of their land. The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is a multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary body composed of representatives from different local government units, NGOs, business, and minority groups. They worked closely with the lead project implementer, the Center for Appropriate Technology (GrAT), where all parties had a common vision of how sustainable development in Palawan should look like. The stakeholders in Palawan were ready to accelerate their sustainable development together with the SWITCH-Asia project.

One of the project aims was to link the tourism industry with the existing Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) clearance system. In order to participate in the ZCR project, Palawan tourism-related establishments were required to pass through the SEP clearance system. A total of 150 (new or renovated) establishments have already been issued SEP clearance with ZCR terms and conditions. These properties are required to follow the 3R (reduce, replace, redesign) strategy when renovating or establishing a new building. By being a member of ZCR, properties receive guidance on how to become ‘zero carbon.’ The ultimate goal of the SEP modification is to be able to include efficiency targets as a monitoring instrument.

The second phase of the project, “ZCR towards Sustainable Development in the Philippines and Thailand” (ZCR for Sustainable Tourism) was launched in Thailand in May 2014 and will run till May 2018. This second phase aims to contribute to sustainable development in the tourism sector as well as its value chain in both the Philippines and Thailand. Incorporation of the entire tourism product value chain means that the acquisition and consumption of all resources (energy, water, waste, etc.) are considered, with a focus on the reduction of resource consumption and CO₂ emissions in both countries.

(Continued)

Box 14.1 (Continued)

Good practice from the first phase of “ZCR” project in the Philippines is now being replicated in Thailand. With the project, these two countries can deepen their understanding through cross-country visits and cross-cultural learning. The Green Leaf Foundation (GLF) in Thailand is one of the project partners and has developed a Green Leaf Certification Programme that can be enhanced further with ZCR measures, for implementation in Thailand, the Philippines, and beyond. During a stakeholders’ meeting, the project attracted many participants, ranging from small to large hotels in four locations, Krabi, Kanchanaburi, Hua-Hin (Prachaup Khiri Khan), and Bangkok. The widespread acceptance and enthusiasm for the “ZCR for Sustainable Tourism” project from hotel owners was encouraging. The project also provides capacity building for engineers and professionals, with an additional focus on access to finance, strong policy dialogue, value chain development, and an overall emphasis on the reduction of resource consumption and CO₂ emissions.

The ZCR project implementation in Thailand builds upon previous results through its local partner, GLF, including the 2004 initiative ‘Zero Carbon Destination at Kho Chang,’ and the joint project, ‘Dissemination of experience in the implementation of climate protection policy in nature-oriented tourism,’ implemented by the German International Cooperation (GIZ) and DASTA (Guideline Low Carbon Destination Management in Thailand, 2012). Within this “ZCR for Sustainable Tourism” project, the GLF provides an online tool for the Thai tourism industry to calculate its carbon footprint. The project’s main activity fields are energy efficient buildings and management, renewable energies, transport, nature conservation, water saving, and waste management.

14.5 Sustainable Tourism Governance: Top-down or Bottom-up?

The following section provides a brief analysis of various governance structures in the four selected Asian countries and shows how these governance approaches influence the development of sustainable tourism.

Table 14.2: Hofstede's power distance indicators for selected Asian countries

		2013			Power Distance Indicator [PDI]
	Country	Population	Income Level	Religion	
Kingdom	Thailand	67.01mil	Upper Middle	Buddhism	64
	Bhutan	753,900	Lower Middle	Buddhism	94
Republic	Sri Lanka	20.48mil	Lower Middle	Buddhism	80
	Philippines	98.39mil	Lower Middle	Christianity	94

Source: The World Bank Data [2013]; The Hofstede Centre [2014].

To propel sustainable development through tourism, the contexts of government policies and interventions need to be well structured in accordance with national culture. For both top-down and bottom-up approaches in governance, challenges are commonly unpredictable structural changes, changes in personnel, and shortage of budget; all of which lead to only temporary trends in sustainable tourism, but do not achieve long-term sustainable development. Therefore, Bramwell and Lane [2011] recommend that adaptive governance systems which implies flexibility to changing circumstances and learning by doing, and continuous monitoring shall contribute to success for sustainable tourism in the long run. To navigate the political implications towards sustainable tourism development, communication with tourism stakeholders, especially with local communities, is essential. Many actors should be included in the process as governance has a broader meaning than just government policy. Therefore, participatory planning is an important element. In the broader contexts of participation, cross-border partnerships will help to manage destinations as an end destination of sustainable tourism. ASEAN AEC, GMS, and the SWITCH-Asia Programme are some of the international cross-border affiliations for integrating Asian countries to collaborate in their prosperities, along with environmental stewardship and socio-cultural protection, as well as economic benefits. Interestingly, the four countries studied in this chapter are comparable in terms of governmental approaches towards sustainable tourism development, as detailed below.

14.5.1 *Kingdoms of Bhutan and Thailand*

Thailand and Bhutan are both kingdoms with the majority of the population being Buddhist and the monarchy being especially revered. By using the widely used framework by Hofstede [1983], governmental characteristics of each country have been examined [see also Hofstede, 2011; Lee, Pillutla, and Law, 2000]. Hofstede describes national cultures consisting of four different dimensions, which are individualism versus collectivism, large or small power distance, strong or weak uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity. The power distance score is perceived to analyse political systems. High power distance contexts are usually hierarchical and low power distance tends to be more egalitarian [Adaba, Wilson, and Sims, 2014].

The high power distance for Bhutan was shown in Hofstede's study (see Table 14.2) and royalty structures tend to support high power distances. Additionally, low population numbers in Bhutan facilitate a top-down structure. By imposing a high tariff (USD 200/250 per person per night) for international tourists [TCB, 2015a], Bhutan is also able to control the number of arrivals. Pros and cons on the tariff by direct tourism implementers, including tour operators, could be grouped for real need-based proposals as bottom-up approaches that will not be contradictory to the overall national objectives and structures. The efforts would need to have their own "middle path" approaches that combine top-down and bottom-up solutions. While Bhutan is developing and modernising, municipalities and communities with strong private sector stakeholders would need to be given opportunity to apply their bottom-up approaches for sustainable development in the tourism sector.

In contrast, Thailand does not have a high PDI (see Table 14.2), although the King is very well respected by the people. According to the World Bank [2014], Thailand's income level is stated as upper middle, while the rest of studied countries are lower middle. The growth of the middle class leads to more interactions with the world and that can change the perception of the country, which in the end contributes to the perceived PDI. With information from the Internet readily available and no government censorship on social media, most Thai people are closely connected with modern society. The pro-poor sustainable tourism approaches in the GMS Tourism [ADB, 2011]

would not have been possible to implement in a top-down approach. Case studies in Northern Thailand have shown the importance of stakeholder commitments, especially at the local level in the process of pro-poor sustainable tourism development [Theerapappisit, 2009]. At the very beginning of tourism planning that should be developed from the grassroots up to global levels, locals need to be involved in order to sustain the sense of community and culture diversity in tourism attractions.

14.5.2 Republic of Sri Lanka and the Philippines

The population of Sri Lanka is the second lowest among the four countries, with a higher PDI (see Table 14.2). It seems that the top-down approach would work with a higher power distance and manageable population numbers like Sri Lanka. Income gaps in developing countries like Sri Lanka tend to create an uneven playing field in the market, thus governmental involvement (e.g., policy, regulations, financial support to SMEs) is needed in the process of developing sustainable tourism.

The PDI of both the Philippines and Sri Lanka are high, with the Philippines having the highest population among the four countries (see Table 14.2). With a relatively large population, a high PDI could contribute to effective sustainable tourism policy implementation. Government involvement might cause a slowdown in business activities due to bureaucratic red tape; however, all SMEs would be obliged to comply with national policy and could be required to share their good practice in the context of sustainable tourism development. By sharing their experience and best practice, SMEs or grassroots efforts can have a stronger voice. The Philippine National Eco Tourism Steering Committee stated in the National Ecotourism Strategy (NEC) 2002 that both bottom-up and top-down approaches are important for the country. It remains to be seen how the mixed approach will be realised.

14.6 Outlook for Sustainable Tourism in Asia: Up-scaling of SWITCH-Asia Projects

As discussed earlier, growth in tourism and IVA in Asia are certain. Without regulations to control unsustainable tourism activities in competitive tourist

destinations, sustainability of the tourism industry cannot be ensured for the future. This study found that from the four countries studied, Bhutan has a stronger national sustainable tourism development policy than the other three. This policy, with a direct message of sustainable development combined with restrictions on numbers of tourists, could support the creation of demand for sustainability in the mass tourism market, should Bhutan choose to follow this trend. Destination appeal for branding is clear; Bhutan supports spiritual tourism in the 'Visit Bhutan 2015' promotion programme. Through this promotion, the government may increase the tourist tariff in the future, as in the late 1980s [Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010]. In the meantime, Thailand is promoting medical tourism as a main strategy [TAT, 2015a], which has both positive and negative influences on sustainable development. Without appropriate government strategy, locals will suffer from increased medical fees and shortage of quality medical staff (overloaded staff tend to have lowered service quality at hospitals).

In the development of sustainable community-based tourism, it is essential to share the economic benefits with locals. Yet, proactive activities in promoting sustainable tourism with strong economic benefits for communities are barely seen in the industry. It seems that comprehensive understanding of the terminology of sustainability and its environmental benefits is still developing in Asia. Sustainable tourism strategies should address community development issues that normally receive less attention. Therefore, it is crucial for governments to enact policies and regulations to mitigate tourism's negative impacts on communities before pursuing mass tourism pathway. Sri Lanka and the Philippines are recently focusing on increasing the number of IVAs. The window of opportunity to implement strong measures ensuring the sustainability of tourism activities is still open.

Investigation of priority issues of the countries where the SWITCH-Asia projects are implemented might be needed to ensure the projects' effectiveness, e.g., investment priority on sustainable tourism infrastructure along with soft skills components. In order to strengthen the awareness of sustainability issues among tourism stakeholders, it is recommended to enact a sustainable tourism policies based on "tested experiments" or "proven approaches". The SWITCH-Asia projects offer such approaches

as they are advancing SCP practice among SMEs in various industries. Voices from 'the bottom' should be considered and taken into account when forming national tourism policy. Financial support schemes for sustainable investment from the government, especially for SMEs embedded in communities, are crucial in order to continue growth in the tourism sector. At the same time, efforts for human resource development in the tourism sector should be considered. Expanding the local network to reach technical expertise is also vital as external experts in many cases do not have sufficient knowledge of local conditions. Persuasive materials based on project lessons to convince decision makers to enact sustainable tourism development policy should be disseminated.

This study also found that there is a lack of an overall comprehensive sustainable tourism monitoring system in the countries where the SWITCH-Asia projects are implemented. The ETIS for sustainable destinations was commissioned by the European Commission in 2013; this system is still evolving, but it could be developed for or adapted to the needs of Asian countries. The Okinawa prefecture of Japan implemented tourism indicators that consist of sustainable tourism principles [Okinawa Prefectural Government, 2014] and the ETIS system was referred to in order to develop those indicators. The SWITCH-Asia projects in the four studied countries have developed indicators to monitor their progress, which are useful and practical for local SMEs. However, a persuasive proof based on a recognised international standard will be required for decision makers to enact national policy.

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