



### **Essay 1: Bhutan – Tourism Planning and Management:**

Bhutan is honestly, kind of strange when you compare it with other tourism countries. Most governments want more tourists, right? But Bhutan has never really gone for that. Since the 70s they keep saying “high value, low volume.” What that means in practice is you literally have to pay a daily Sustainable Development Fee just to visit. Right now, it’s \$100. Some people complain it’s expensive, others say it protects the place. Hard to say who’s right but one thing is clear: this one rule shapes nearly everything about how Bhutan handles its nature and culture.

Nature is the first thing most people imagine when they hear Bhutan. Big snowy mountains, crazy steep valleys, rivers, endless forests. Still very green compared to most of Asia. Over 70% of the country is forest and about half of that is protected in one way or another (Rinzin et al., 2007). Not many places can claim that.

Tourists mostly want treks. The Snowman Trek is famous but honestly, it’s brutal. You can’t just show up and go. You need permits, guides, groups. That helps, because if thousands of people just wandered around it would trash the place. National parks also get money from the tourism fee. That cash goes into protecting animals like the takin (strange-looking but beloved) and the black-necked crane (Gurung & Seeland, 2008). So, weirdly, tourists fund the protection of the exact things they came to see.

But culture is not less important. Bhutan is Buddhist and you see it literally everywhere: monasteries, prayer flags blowing in the wind, *tsechu* festivals with masks and dances. The photo everyone takes is Tiger’s Nest Monastery. It’s dramatic, hanging on a cliff. It’s like a national brand by itself.

What’s different is the government actually tells hotels to follow traditional designs. Ads don’t just say “come and relax” but talk about happiness and authenticity. That links to the whole Gross National Happiness idea (Brooks, 2011). So, tourism isn’t just about income. It’s also a way to remind citizens, and outsiders, what Bhutan is meant to be about. Control is the keyword here. For years you could not even enter unless you booked a full package with a licensed operator. They arranged the hotel, car, and guide. Rules are changing a little but the Sustainable Fee is still very much in place. That alone keeps mass tourism away.

Famous sites like Tiger’s Nest are looked after: clear paths, limits on visitors, even security. Villages though are another story. Infrastructure is basic. So, tourists pass through, maybe stay a night, then move on.

To fight that, Bhutan tried community tourism. Villages like in Haa or Bumthang valleys now do homestays. Families share income, guests eat local food. It's small scale but it spreads the benefits more fairly (Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010).

But the system is not magic. The fee, for example, is both good and bad. It keeps numbers low but it also means only richer tourists can come. Budget travellers, or even people from neighbouring India who want to see Bhutan, might skip it. That makes Bhutan very dependent on Western markets. And if those markets collapse, it's risky. Also, not every part of the country is equal. Thimphu and Paro have good hotels, WIFI, restaurants. Villages don't. That gap means tourists don't stay long in the countryside. The exact places that could use tourism the most sometimes get the least.

So, what to do? I think Bhutan could mix things up. Add more activities: wellness retreats, craft workshops, maybe volunteering. That would keep people for longer. Villages could get better facilities, but carefully, not turning them into fake resorts. Locals also need more training, not just cooking for homestays but business and language too. And the fee system maybe could be flexible. Rich luxury travellers can still pay the \$100, but maybe students or regional neighbours pay less. That way it stays exclusive but not too exclusive.

In the end, Bhutan is often praised as a "model" of sustainable tourism. And to be fair, it really has managed to protect nature and culture better than most. The forests are still there, the monasteries are still alive, and festivals are not just shows but real events. But no system is perfect. The country is vulnerable because it depends too much on a narrow group of tourists. And villages still struggle.

So, the lesson is not "Bhutan solved tourism." The lesson is: sustainability is always a balancing act. You never finish it. It keeps changing. Bhutan just chose a very unusual path, and so far, it seems to work, but only if they keep adapting.

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## Essay 2: Key Elements of Destination Development – Scotland

When people think of Scotland, they usually picture castles, bagpipes, or the Highlands with mist everywhere. And to be honest, those images are not wrong. But the reason Scotland has done well in tourism is not just “nice views.” It’s because several different elements work together. A classic way people explain this is the “five A’s” model: attractions, accessibility, amenities, image, and ancillary services (Cooper et al., 2008). First attractions, without them no destination has a chance. Scotland has plenty. Nature is huge: the Highlands, the islands, lochs like Loch Ness. Culture is just as strong: castles, whisky distilleries, music festivals, and especially the Edinburgh Fringe, which is now the biggest arts festival in the world. Together they give Scotland variety.

But here’s the issue: concentration. Edinburgh gets the lion’s share. Tourists flood the Royal Mile, the castle, the Fringe. Meanwhile, rural places sometimes feel left out. That means overtourism in the city and underdevelopment elsewhere. To be fair, that’s not unique to Scotland, but it’s still a problem. Now accessibility. Scotland is pretty well connected overall. International visitors arrive through Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Aberdeen airports. Rail links to London are fast, though expensive. Inside Scotland, people use trains, buses, or cars. The ferries are lifelines for island communities like Orkney or Shetland, but the weather often disrupts them. So, accessibility is a mix: good for central Scotland, shaky for remote areas.

One thing that has improved is digital access. VisitScotland’s websites and apps provide guides, maps, and bookings. Even small villages now advertise online, which makes planning easier (Hall, 2015). Still, rural transport could be better. Without a car, many places are tough to reach. Amenities cover hotels, food, and the stuff that makes a stay comfortable. Scotland actually has a pretty wide range. In Edinburgh or Glasgow, you’ll find everything from hostels to luxury hotels. In the Highlands, more boutique lodges and eco-lodges have appeared in recent years. Whisky tourism adds to this, with distilleries offering tours and tastings.

But again, rural gaps show up. In summer, beds in Skye or the NC500 route are fully booked months ahead, and prices shoot up. Sharpley (2012) pointed out that rural amenities often lag behind demand. That creates frustration for visitors and pressure on locals. Image is another big factor, and Scotland has been brilliant at branding. Think tartan, bagpipes, rugged landscapes. Films and shows like *Braveheart* and *Outlander* reinforce that. The brand is powerful, but it’s also a bit simplified. Scotland is marketed as “wild and romantic,” which attracts people, but it risks stereotyping the culture (McCrone et al., 1995).

Still, the brand works. Tourists want the fantasy as much as the reality. The trick is keeping it authentic. If visitors feel everything is staged, the image will backfire. That’s why some campaigns now highlight modern Scotland—like design, tech, and food scenes—alongside tradition.

### Ancillary Services

Finally, ancillary services: the “extras” people don’t think of until they need them. Banking, healthcare, safety, tour guides, and information centres. Scotland does well

here. The NHS provides healthcare if something goes wrong, and there's decent police presence in tourist areas. Tourists also rely on strong guiding services for whisky tours, history walks, and golf tourism.

But even here, small cracks show. On some islands, waste management and healthcare are stretched thin in peak season. Locals sometimes feel overwhelmed, especially when cruise ships arrive. So, while the basics are solid, scaling them up in hotspots is still a challenge. So, what makes Scotland successful? It's not just the Highlands or whisky. It's how attractions, accessibility, amenities, image, and ancillary services all combine. Attractions bring people in. Accessibility makes it possible to get around (at least in the central areas). Amenities give comfort. Image sells the idea of Scotland, and ancillary services back it all up.

The weak spots are also clear. Edinburgh is overloaded, rural areas lack capacity, and the national brand sometimes oversimplifies culture. If Scotland wants long-term sustainability, it needs to spread visitors more evenly, invest in rural infrastructure, and update its image beyond clichés. To be fair, it's already trying some of this, but it's a long process.

At the end of the day, Scotland shows that destination development is not about one element. It's about how all the parts connect. And when they connect well, you get a place people want to come back to again and again.

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