

Planning and Management of Sustainable Tourism Spaces

Assignment 3

22.09.2025



In no more than 1000 words each,

1- Select a destination and evaluate how its natural and cultural resources have been planned and managed for tourism development. What improvements would you recommend?

Bhutan: The Mindful Mountain – A Fine Balance of Gross National Happiness

Hidden deep within the Himalayan interior, the Kingdom of Bhutan has resisted conventional models of tourism for centuries. Instead of opening its arms wide, it embarked on a journey of high intent: High-Value, Low-Volume tourism. No hype here; it's a slogan based on the country's guiding national philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). For decades, Bhutan has planned its development with care for the well-being of its people and safeguarding of its pristine natural and cultural heritage.

The secret to this management is the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF). Unlike a simple entrance visa, this daily fee is a deliberate tool. It acts as a gatekeeper, consciously capping visitor numbers while generating substantial revenue that is invested back directly. These monies are not all going towards keeping the mythic Tiger's Nest monastery up and running or supporting trekking trails. They are being invested in the country's foundations, underwriting free health care, education, and poverty reduction for its people. This is an extremely solid, moral feedback loop: tourism doesn't merely coexist with society; it helps construct it.

Strict architectural codes are imposed by the government so that even new hotels are constructed in the old Dzong-style, maintaining the country's distinctive visual flavor. Great festivals, or tsechu, while accessible to tourists, remain deeply spiritual exercises for the natives above all else. Such precise choreography avoids the culture being commodified as a tourist spectacle and maintains its spiritual integrity in situ.

But no model is perfect, and Bhutan's is changing. The most difficult has been access—not only in price, but in experience. The expensive per-day tariff, although a success, once priced Bhutan out of reach for many conscientious travelers who were not wealthy. Additionally, the tourism circuit had shifted almost entirely around a pre-designed route of western Bhutan, concentrating economic returns into a small geographic range and threatening a "Bhutan-in-a-bubble" encounter.

My suggestions to enhance are intended to deepen the GNH philosophy, not to trivialize it. To start with, the recent twist to the SDF is a classic example of adaptive management. By increasing the fee, Bhutan can increase more, still respectful, segment without undermining its low-volume strategy. The trick is to take this exercise and leverage it to induce extended stays and geographic spread. Provide a cheaper SDF for longer-than-a-few-day stays or for tourists traveling farther than Paro and Thimphu to the more distant eastern areas. This will spread economic impact more evenly and reduce pressure on key sites.

Secondly, there is the potential for more intimate, more authentic relationships. Instead of just gazing at fortresses and vistas, visitors might enjoy well-planned, low-key culture interactions. Picture learning a traditional farming technique for an hour or participating in a local family's cooking lesson not in a hotel, but in a countryside farmhouse. These low-key experiences, arranged by community co-ops, would provide direct income to farm households and give visitors a genuine sense of Bhutanese existence.

Briefly, Bhutan's planning is the world's gold standard for intentionality. The suggested changes are not a matter of transforming its essence, but of refining it—utilizing its advanced tools to build an even more inclusive, decentralized, and deeply connective model of tourism. The aim is still the same: to provide each traveler who sets foot along its trails with more than a snapshot; they depart with the feeling that they have respected a people aware of their own value.

2- Identify and discuss the key elements (attractions, accessibility, amenities, image, and ancillary services) that contribute to successful destination development. Use examples to illustrate your points.

The Architecture of Allure: Weaving the Tapestry of a Destination

It is like weaving a rich tapestry to build a successful tourist destination. It is all about putting several important threads together into harmony and into wholeness. The traditional "5 A's" model—Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, and Ancillary Services, all supported by a good Image—tricks it nicely, and Bhutan is a master weaver.

Sights are the soul of the tapestry, the "why" of a vacation. Bhutan's are deep: the stunning Tiger's Nest Monastery clings to the side of a cliff, untouched Himalayan vistas, and colorful, real-life tsechu festivals. Not views; actual cultural and natural jewels that hold out the promise of a life-changing experience, being the essence of attractions for tourists.

Accessibility is the cement that holds the world to such locations. Bhutan's mountainous remoteness has been a downside for decades. Its brilliance was in redefining it. By managing access through a limited number of flights into Paro and charging an obligatory daily tourist fee, it turned adversity into rarity. This masterful management prevents the location from getting drowned, keeping it shrouded in mystery.

There, Amenities - the Lodging and Dining basics must hold the promise. Bhutan accomplishes this with license and regulation of its hotels and touring companies. Visitors do not get standardized international chain hotels but nicely warm, traditionally conceived lodges and dining that involve local fare, preserving the experience typically Bhutanese from dawn to dusk.

Ancillary Services are the background threads that add richness to the experience. In Bhutan, this is a required, government-licensed escort. This is not a limitation but an amenity. These local guides do not simply spout history; they unlock deep cultural context, orchestrate proper introductions at holy places, and transform a modest hike into an education in local wildflowers and Buddhist philosophy. This service takes the journey from a vacation to a curated education experience.

Lastly, all these pieces are held together by Image. Bhutan has developed an image of measured restraint and happiness, not decadence, under its Gross National Happiness ideology. All of Tiger's Nest postcards, all accounts of its unspoiled surroundings, support this brand.

In life, though, Bhutan's success is not in any single showstopper, but in how it harnesses all five of them to build a nation that is as lovely and peaceful as its fabric.