



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

## Resilience in Tourism:

### Building Resilience and Sustainable Development in Tourism

This course is designed for tourism professionals in management positions and anyone interested in the critical intersection of resilience and sustainability in tourism. You'll delve into the challenges and benefits of building resilience within the industry, specifically focusing on its relationship with sustainable development.

### Who is this course for?

This course is for tourism professionals in management positions in Your country, and anyone interested in this vital topic.

### What will you learn?

By the end of this course, you'll be able to:

- **Understand Tourism's Role in Sustainable Development:** Get an overview of how tourism contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **Identify Types of Resilience:** Learn about different forms of resilience relevant to tourism.
- **Explore Contextual Resilience:** Understand how a destination's or business's specific context impacts its ability to be resilient.
- **Grasp Resilience and Sustainability Concepts:** Gain a comprehensive overview of the concepts of resilience and sustainability in the tourism sector.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, tourism, management, resilience

## Introduction to Resilience and Sustainable Development in Tourism

*Hello! Welcome to the first unit of our online course, "Resilience in Tourism," focusing on Resilience and Sustainable Development. I'm Julia, and I've been working on tourism resilience for quite some time. It's a vital topic, especially for those of you in management roles. Over the next four units, I'll clarify key questions about resilience and offer practical approaches. We'll use explanatory videos, an insightful documentary, expert interviews, and episodes from my "Resilience in Tourism" podcast to guide our learning.*

*Tourism is the world's third-largest industry, accounting for one in ten global jobs. Its robust economic growth, job creation potential, and foreign exchange earnings make it highly attractive to governments, including here in Your country. Tourism also boasts low barriers to entry—meaning relatively low startup costs and few obstacles for those looking to launch a hospitality or tourism business.*

*It's no surprise, then, that tourism was embraced as a vehicle for development back in 1980. This also explains why tourism businesses are found worldwide, even in developing countries and particularly in places like small islands where other industries might have limited opportunities. Regardless of their location or size, all tourism companies share a crucial need: to **develop resilience sustainably** so they can effectively cope with crises.*

*In this first unit, we'll lay the **Foundations for Resilience in Tourism**. We'll explore key influencing factors like the **COVID-19 pandemic** and **climate change**, and delve into how resilience directly relates to **sustainability**.*

*Are there specific aspects of tourism resilience, perhaps related to recent global events, that you're particularly interested in exploring?*

## Tourism's role in sustainable development

**Sustainable tourism** is defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as tourism that fully considers its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, while addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. In Your country, this means developing tourism that benefits our local communities and preserves our natural heritage for generations to come.

Tourism has long been recognized as a crucial tool for achieving sustainable development, and more recently, the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** have emphasized its importance.

### The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In 2015, world leaders at the United Nations adopted the universal 2030 Agenda. All countries committed to pursuing **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and 169 corresponding targets. This global framework aims to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and reduce the risk of climate change by 2030, striving for a better future for all.

Tourism can and must play a significant role in delivering sustainable solutions for **people, the planet, prosperity, and peace**. The UNWTO asserts that tourism has the potential to contribute both directly and indirectly to all 17 SDGs. Notably, it is explicitly included as targets within **Goals 8, 12, and 14**:

- **Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.** Tourism is a major driver of global economic growth, currently accounting for 1 in 10 jobs worldwide. In Your country, by providing access to decent work opportunities in the tourism sector – particularly for youth and women – it can offer livelihoods to vulnerable community members.
- **Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.** A tourism sector that adopts sustainable consumption and production practices can significantly accelerate the global shift towards sustainability. To achieve this, it's essential to "develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products" (Target 12.b). Many initiatives already support these practices, and businesses demonstrating resource-efficient approaches achieve enhanced economic, social, and environmental outcomes. Customer expectations and consumer choices also play a crucial role in encouraging businesses to adopt more sustainable practices.
- **Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.** While Your country may be landlocked, this goal is vital for coastal tourism destinations globally. Tourism's largest segments, especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other coastal regions, depend on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be integrated into Integrated Coastal Zone Management policies and plans to help conserve fragile marine ecosystems.

### Tourism and Resilience

Beyond these direct links, tourism also connects to other SDGs that emphasize **resilience** – the ability to react to unexpected or unpredictable shocks and changes:

- **Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.**
- **Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.**
- **Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.**

As Julia notes, "It should be noted that people have questioned tourism's ability to contribute to truly sustainable development. To ensure tourism delivers benefits, it needs to be carefully planned and managed to avoid creating dependencies or increasing vulnerabilities. In a world with high uncertainty, this needs to include resilience considerations." This is particularly pertinent for Your country's tourism sector, which faces various environmental and economic uncertainties.

## Drivers of change impacting tourism

### **Change is not an exception but the norm.**

Scientists and business managers agree that we live in a time of high uncertainty where change is not an exception but the norm. Changes can bring with them a wealth of opportunities but also pose risk to tourism and tourism's ability to deliver positive outcomes identified through the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Interview with Dr. Johanna Loehr**

Dr. Johanna Loehr is an expert on sustainable tourism, climate change and system change and is speaking today on the topic of "Drivers of change impacting tourism".

### ***Lesson Scenario***

***Question:*** What are examples of changes impacting the tourism sector, and what impacts can we expect?

***Answer:*** There are slow changes to the markets in form of shifting consumer preferences, trends and expectations. With COVID-19, we're expected to see some impacts, for example, how and where tourists can travel, a change in consumer expectations around the standard of health and safety and hygiene. And also, the type of experiences sought will likely change with nature and outdoor experiences becoming more popular.

*There's also a change to the demographic of tourists, such as where customers are coming from as travel becomes more affordable and the middle classes of developed countries continue to grow. There's also change in technology, which is opening up new ways to track potential customers, but also how experiences are designed and offered.*

***Question:*** What role does climate change play in this, and are there other types of changes?

***Answer:*** Global warming is also a slow change whereby the effects of it can result in fast change and shocks, such as an increase in the severity of floods, cyclones or heat waves. Here we have the advantage because through science we actually have a fairly good understanding what some of those changes might look like in the near-term future, which means there's really no excuse not to prepare for them.

*Other examples of fast shocks or change impacting tourism include natural hazards such as tsunamis, earthquakes, and man-made hazards such as terror attacks.*

***Question:*** Why is it so important that tourism businesses are aware of the change?

***Answer:*** Change varies from destination to destination and may result in physical, financial or reputational damage. How badly change affects your business and whether it also poses an opportunity really depends on how we adapt and manage such change, but also on the context and the nature of the destination and business.

*Context here by refers to any biophysical, geographical, political, cultural and social factors that distinguish a particular tourism destination. So that means to remain viable in the future, businesses, including tourism organizations, really need to be aware of the implications of such change on the business. So to summarize, these changes can be slow or fast shocks, whereby slow changes may take years or decades to have an obvious and widespread Impact, whereas shocks and events have a sudden and immediate impact*

### **What are the drivers of change in the tourism business?**

Write down important considerations you have taken away from the interview and your own thoughts on them.

### **What is resilience?**

**Resilience** refers to the ability to react to unexpected or unpredictable shocks and changes. It's about a system's capacity to "absorb disturbance" while still maintaining its core function and structure. Essentially, resilience is crucial for effectively managing and responding to change and shocks.

For tourism destinations in Your country, resilience is absolutely necessary for their effective functioning and continued development.

### **Different Types of Resilience**

While some definitions of resilience emphasize returning to a stable state, other perspectives acknowledge that true stability is hard to maintain in our constantly changing world. These views highlight the need for **flexibility and adaptability**, enabling systems to take on new forms without collapsing. In this context, resilience is about how much change a system can absorb while still performing its essential functions.

- **Engineered Resilience:** This type focuses on stability and the speed at which a system can return to its previous stable state after a disturbance. It's easily applied to improving the resilience of physical infrastructure, such as buildings designed to withstand specific impacts.
- **Psychological Resilience:** This refers to an individual's ability to cope mentally or emotionally with a crisis and return to a pre-crisis state quickly. Psychologically resilient people develop the mental and behavioral skills that allow them to remain calm during chaos and recover from incidents without lasting negative consequences.

As Julia notes, "It has been argued that different types of change require different forms of resilience, whereby disaster responses tend to focus on engineered resilience, and responses to slow changes focus on ecological resilience."

### **Resilience in the Tourism Sector**

In the tourism sector, resilience applies to both **infrastructure** (like hotels, roads, and beaches) and the **people** living and working in a particular destination. To truly build resilience in Your country's tourism industry, both aspects must be considered. This means adapting buildings to future risks, such as increased rainfall due to climate change, and ensuring people are trained on how to react effectively during a crisis.

### How Pandemics and Climate Change Affect Tourism

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change have profoundly impacted the tourism industry, and their influence will continue to shape its future. Rekha Yanti, Resort Manager at Mandapa Ritz-Carlton Reserve in Bali, along with her colleagues Dama (Assistant Director of HR) and Yossi Marsitha (Guest Experience Executive), share their experiences and the solutions they've found.

#### *Description*

**Rekha:** *Mandapa is a Ritz Carlton reserve property which is located in Ubud, Bali. Bali is well known for being one of the best tourist destinations in the world. Bali is so blessed with beautiful nature, mountains, jungles. My name is Rekha. I'm the resort manager of Mandapa Ritz-Carlton Reserve. My responsibilities are making sure that daily operation runs smoothly and also answering our guest's satisfaction level together with the team.*

**Dama:** *My name is Dama. I'm the Assistant Director of Human Resources at Mandapa Ritz Carlton Reserve. Meaning that I take care of all our employees and to make sure that they are happy - because happy employees mean happy customers.*

**Yossi:** *My name is Yossi Marsitha. I'm a guest experience executive in Mandapa Ritz Carlton Reserve.*

**Dama:** *We call our employees „ladies and gentlemen“, who are the important resources in our service commitment to our guests.*

**Rekha:** *At the moment we were told about the virus spreading strongly in many areas. We inform our ladies and gentlemen to stay healthy and to stay safe.*

**Yossi:** *There were starting to come a lot of questions from the guests. “How about here?”, “How about you?”, “Do you have any information” or something like that? So, what we tried to do that time is maintain our calm and giving accurate and valid information to our guests.*

**Dama:** *Some countries have closed their border and have their people come back to their home. That's why there are lots of checkouts.*

**Yossi:** *Lots of cancellation for the upcoming bookings. But it was not like everyone tried to leave Bali in a rush. Everything - I can say - runs smoothly.*



**Rekha:** We actually had lots of discussions on how to handle the situation in a way of making our ladies and gentlemen feeling save.

**Dama:** The management has established a business contingency plan in order to retain the business. For example like reducing the working hours and temporary layoff of our ladies and gentlemen, energy efficiency.

**Rekha:** It is required to use face masks and also constantly wash your hands and use hand sanitizers.

**Yossi:** This pandemic gave us an upgraded level of the health protocols which - even though this pandemic ends - I think we still can keep doing those protocols because it's not only for COVID-19.

**Dama:** So the executive decision that we took during this pandemic was to close the hotel since April 2020. It was a very hard decision.

**Yossi:** For example, now we had pandemic hit us, everyone cannot travel. It's really a disaster for the tourism industry. There is nothing we can do if people cannot travel, right?

**Dama:** For me, the hardest part of this pandemic is to lay off some of our ladies and gentlemen. Mainly for contract employees and also some of the expatriates. It's very emotional for me because we have built a very strong connection with all of them because they are part of the Mandapa family.

One thing that we have learned from this pandemic is the digitalization.

**Rekha:** We invited our ladies and gentlemen - all of them - to do virtual meetings with the guidance team.

**Yossi:** Technology such as WhatsApp groups and Teams meetings were really helpful.

**Dama:** We are no longer face to face during meetings, during trainings.

**Yossi:** But we with this application or technology we can give or deliver the information faster. Accurate, not from a third person but directly from the leader.

**Rekha:** With the cross exposure, it is actually an opportunity for all ladies and gentlemen to learn something new.

**Dama:** We assigned some of our ladies and gentlemen to do lateral service. Meaning that they help other departments like housekeeping, landscaping and also the loss prevention department.

*Yossi: Some of us have been helping other department who needed help - such as the loss prevention or landscaping team. Because, even though the hotel is closed, we still need to maintain the property.*

*Dama: Our guidance team executive committee conducts monthly meetings and they finally decided to reopen our hotel in December 2020.*

*Yossi: Closer to our reopen we also had training that we need to complete which comes from the Commitment to Clean programme. This training takes a lot of time because it's super new. It was never done before.*

*Dama: Even before the pandemic, we always tried to keep balance with our nature, with our environment. That's why we have a lot of initiatives to go green.*

*Rekha: We reduce the amount of energy usage - especially for the lights when no one's in the office or the AC - as much as we can to just take advantage of being in Ubud and in the nature with the cold weather, so we don't need to use the AC that much in the office. We also reduce the amount of working hours and some people work from home, meaning that there are not so many people working at the same time while we are actually focusing on social distancing.*

*Dama: A thing that I have learned as a human resources specialist during this pandemic is how important mental health is. Mental health, for me, is the key. We need to inform our ladies and gentleman to take care of their mental health - to always try to be happy. Even though we know that there is a crisis, though we know that we have financial issues, we need to keep strong and think positive.*

*Rekha: Since the pandemic, I noticed that there is so much less traffic. And no traffic means no pollution. Also the consumption of plastic reduced and probably this is the first time I have seen or noticed that Kuta beach and Seminyak Beach are so beautiful and garbage free. I hope that in the coming years we continue, or people in Bali continue, to maintain and look after our own home, our own island. To be able to have more tourists and come back to normal tourism or hospitality – maybe stronger than ever?*

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study from Mandapa Ritz-Carlton Reserve**

Bali, known for its stunning nature, faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mandapa Ritz-Carlton Reserve, which considers its employees "ladies and gentlemen" and vital resources, had to adapt rapidly.

**Initial Response and Challenges:** When the virus began to spread, the team focused on ensuring their "ladies and gentlemen" stayed healthy and safe. Guests quickly started inquiring about the situation, prompting the resort to maintain calm and provide accurate information. As countries closed borders, a wave of checkouts and cancellations hit. The management swiftly implemented a business contingency plan, including reducing working hours and



temporary layoffs, which Dama described as a very hard decision, especially for contract employees and expatriates with whom strong connections had been built. The resort eventually closed its doors in April 2020.

**Lessons Learned and Innovations:** The pandemic forced the resort to implement upgraded health protocols, like mandatory masks, handwashing, and sanitizers, which Yossi believes should continue even after the pandemic ends. A major learning curve was the embrace of **digitalization**. Virtual meetings and training sessions via WhatsApp and Teams became the norm, allowing for faster and more accurate information delivery directly from leadership.

The resort also implemented **cross-exposure programs**, where "ladies and gentlemen" were assigned to help other departments like housekeeping, landscaping, and loss prevention. This lateral service provided staff with new skills and ensured the property remained maintained even during closure.

Mandapa Ritz-Carlton Reserve eventually reopened in December 2020, following extensive new training from the "Commitment to Clean" program.

**Beyond Operations: Mental Health and Environmental Shifts:** Dama emphasized the crucial importance of **mental health** during the crisis, encouraging staff to stay positive despite financial uncertainties. Rekha observed a significant reduction in traffic and pollution during the lockdown, leading to cleaner beaches. This highlighted the potential for more sustainable practices post-pandemic, hoping Bali continues to maintain its natural beauty even as tourism returns, perhaps "stronger than ever."

### **Broader Impacts and Required Innovations**

The COVID-19 pandemic forced most tourism businesses to close as border restrictions and social distancing made traditional business models unviable. This spurred innovation, with hotels adapting by providing space for quarantine, accommodation for health workers, or long-term stays for essential personnel.

**Climate change** also demands innovation. To mitigate its impact, the tourism industry needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (climate mitigation). Simultaneously, workable solutions are needed to adapt to climate change effects, such as planting mangroves to protect beaches from erosion.

These challenges mean that **resilience activities** in tourism must be comprehensive. They involve ensuring physical structures are resilient to potential impacts and having mechanisms and plans in place for rapid disaster response and recovery. Crucially, resilience also involves making fundamental changes to the products, services, and activities offered to remain viable and sustainable in an unpredictable world.