UN Tourism
UNITED NATIONS
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION

Development of Visitor Experience Model and Best Practices for Visitor Management at Select Tourism Sites in Sri Lanka

Final Report

Vol. 2:
International Best Practices

December 2025

Content

Content i

Figures iii

Tables iii

Acronyms iv

1 Introduction 5

2 Conceptual model for visitor management at tourism sites in Sri Lanka 5

3 Structure of this report on Best Practice Examples 6

4 Preliminary assessment 9

4.1 Case study: Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland (UK National Trust) – stakeholder and community engagement 9

4.2 Case study: George Town, Penang, Malaysia – Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Assessment 10

4.3 Tool: Stakeholder mapping 11

5 Define vision, objectives and policies 14

5.1 Case study: Ljubljana, Slovenia 14

5.2 Case study: Banff National Park, Canada 15

6 Develop a visitor management plan 17

6.1 Case study: Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna, Austria 17

6.2 Case study: Yosemite National Park, USA 19

6.3 Alhambra, Spain 20

7 Implement monitoring and feedback systems 23

7.1 Case study: Dubvronik, Croatia 23

7.2 Tool: smartphone app-based geolocation data 25

8 Governance & management structure 27

8.1 Case study: PraxisIMPULSE tandem program for sustainable tourism, Germany 27

8.2 Case study: Queenstown, New Zealand 29

9 Communication, marketing & stakeholder engagement 32

9.1 Case study: National Parks of Sweden 32

9.2 Case study: British Columbia 33

10 Adaptive management and continuous improvement 36

10.1 Vesuvius National Park, Italy 36

11 Sustainable funding and resource mobilization 37

11.1 Case study: San Diego Tourism Marketing District (TMD), California, USA 37

Literature 39

Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for visitor management at tourism sites in Sri Lanka. Source: own elaboration. 6
Figure 2: Visitors at Giant's Causeway. Photo by Korng Sok on Unsplash 9
Figure 3: George Town, Penang, Malaysia. Photo by stephen njau on Unsplash 10
Figure 4: Power-Interest Grid for stakeholder analysis. Source: adapted from Mendelow (1991)..... 12
Figure 5: Ljubljana, Slovenia. Photo by Katrīna Eglīte on Unsplash 14
Figure 6: Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada. Photo by David Brooke Martin on Unsplash 15
Figure 7: Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna, Austria. Photo by Allan Wadsworth on Unsplash 17
Figure 8: Yosemite National Park, California, USA. Photo by Jesse Callahan on Unsplash 19
Figure 9: Alhambra, Spain. Photo by Gio Almonte on Unsplash 20
Figure 10: Alhambra entrance and ticket sales points. Source: https://www.hiberus.com/crecemos-contigo/caso-de-exito-venta-de-entradas-alhambra/ 21
Figure 11: Dubrovnik. Photo: Arnegger (2021). 23
Figure 12: Dubrovnik real-time visitor monitoring system. Source: https://dubrovnik-visitors.hr/ 24
Figure 13: PIN locations in Sigiriya, Sep 2024 - Sep 2025 for different time periods (A: 5-6 am, B: 6-7 am, C: 7-8 am, D: 8-9 am, E: 9-10 am, F: 1-2 pm), Sep 2024 – Sep 2025. Source: own elaboration with data from GapMaps / Azira 26
Figure 14: Queenstown, New Zealand. Photo by Charlie Mitchell on Unsplash..... 30
Figure 15: Logo of Sweden's National Parks. Source: https://www.sverigesnationalparker.se/en/.... 32
Figure 16: "Golden Crown" in Hamra National Park. Source: https://whitearkitekter.com/project/hamra-national-park/ 32
Figure 17: Corporate hexagonal design reflected in an overview map of Sweden's national park on the central website. Source: https://www.sverigesnationalparker.se/en/choose-park---list/ 33
Figure 18: Super, Natural British Columbia logo. Source: https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/travel/super-natural-british-columbia-is-back-in-full-force-explorebc-1929753..... 34
Figure 19: Mount Vesuvius, Italy. Photo: Photo by _M_V_ on Unsplash 36
Figure 20: San Diego, California, USA. Photo by Derek Story on Unsplash..... 37

Tables

Table 1: Examples of relevant Best Practices for the assessed sites in Sri Lanka. 7

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BC	British Columbia
CC	Carrying Capacity
CDJ	Consumer Decision Journey
CFF	Central Cultural Fund
COC	Code of Conduct
DFC	Department of Forest Conservation
DMP	Destination Management Plan
DOA	Department of Archaeology
DWC	Department of Wildlife Conservation
F&B	Food and beverages
FEO	Federation of Environmental Organizations
GPS	Global Positioning System
IR	Inception Report
MOE	Ministry of Environment
NIP	Nature Interpretation Program
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSTC	National Sustainable Tourism Certification
OTA	Online Travel Agency
PA	Protected area
RTO	Regional Tourism Organization
SLTDA	Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
SNBC	Super, Natural British Columbia
TO	Tour operator
TMD	Tourism Marketing District
UDA	Urban Development Agency
UN Tourism	World Tourism Organization
UX	User Experience
WHS	World Heritage Site (UNESCO)
DQ	Destination Queenstown

1 Introduction

The present project focuses on visitor experience and visitor management at select tourism sites (attractions and/or destinations) in Sri Lanka. The main objective of the project is *to design an effective and sustainable visitor experience and management model for selected cultural, natural, and man-made sites in Sri Lanka with a view to helping improve the visitor experience, considering the carrying capacity of the sites.*

Specific project objectives include:

- *Examine the factors that influence the visitors' experience at the natural, cultural(heritage) and man-made attractions.*
- *Identify how the above factors, affect the experience of the visitors.*
- *Develop visitor experience models for natural, cultural. and man-made attractions in Sri Lanka.*
- *Explore current and future demand for specified locations and recognize seasonal peaks.*
- *Identify influential factors and current issues in visitor management of specified locations.*
- *Make recommendations to develop both environmental and social carrying capacity plans and approach for specified locations, including technology integration and the use of digital tools for real-time visitor management.*

This final report includes the findings of the three field missions to Sri Lanka, visiting ten selected tourist attractions and destinations (pilot sites). An introduction to the context (context overview and project rationale) is followed by the following three volumes:

- **Vol. 1:** Site-specific recommendations for the ten selected pilot sites;
- **Vol 2:** International Best Practice examples for visitor and tourism management;
- **Vol 3:** Conceptual model and guidelines for visitor management at tourism sites (destinations and/or attractions) in Sri Lanka.

This is Volume 2 (International Best Practice Examples) of the final report.

2 Conceptual model for visitor management at tourism sites in Sri Lanka

The structure of this report follows the logic of the conceptual model presented in Volume 3. For each component, select international Best Practice Examples will be presented that suit the overall Sri Lankan context. It is pertinent to mention that due to structural differences within the selection of assessed sites, some examples may be more suitable for certain sites, than others. It is thus up to managers and stakeholders to identify the best examples for their specific context, to adapt it as needed, and to come up with their own approaches. Ideally, this should be done in a participatory stakeholder engagement process, as described at numerous places elsewhere in the Volumes 1 and 3 of the final report.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for visitor management at tourism sites in Sri Lanka. Source: own elaboration.

3 Structure of this report on Best Practice Examples

As outlined above, this report follows the overall structure of the general visitor management model described in the previous chapter. For each of the eight steps/components, several Best Practice Examples are presented. These can be categorized as follows:

- **Case studies** describe tourism sites worldwide and their specific approaches to aspects of visitor and tourism management and are presented for each of the 8 steps of the conceptual model;

- **Tools** present practical methods that can help carry out tasks under specific visitor management components and are presented for step 1 and step 4 of the conceptual model.

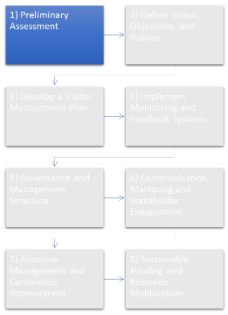
Aspects of all the described Best Practice examples should apply to all ten sites, but some may be more suitable to specific sites than others – Table 1 provides an overview. Also note that specific recommendations for action for each site are described in more detail in Volume 3 of this report.

Table 1: Examples of relevant Best Practices for the assessed sites in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Site	Most applicable Best Practices
Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage	• Giant's Causeway (stakeholder engagement) • Ljubljana (vision development) • British Columbia (marketing)
Temple of the Tooth (Kandy)	• George Town (stakeholder mapping) • Ljubljana (Vision & cultural tourism strategy) • Schönbrunn Palace (attraction management, big data) • Smartphone-based geolocation data for monitoring • Alhambra (quota ticket system)
Sigiriya	• Dubrovnik (Real-time monitoring) • Banff (regenerative tourism vision) • Smartphone-based geolocation data for monitoring • Alhambra (quota ticket system)
Pollonaruwa Ancient City	• George Town (baseline assessment) • Ljubljana (cultural tourism strategy) • Smartphone-based geolocation data for monitoring
Hurulu Eco Park	• Banff (vision) • Queenstown (Governance model) • Smartphone-based geolocation data for monitoring • Swedish National Parks (branding, signage) • Alhambra (quota ticket system)
Galle Fort	• George Town (heritage urban site) • Dubrovnik (overtourism mitigation) • Sweden (branding & signage) • Smartphone-based geolocation data for monitoring
Mirissa	• San Diego TMD (Funding model) • Stakeholder Mapping • Queenstown (Stakeholder committee)
Yala National Park	• Banff (ecological tourism vision) • Yosemite (access management) • Smartphone-based geolocation data for monitoring • Alhambra (quota ticket system)

Sri Lankan Site	Most applicable Best Practices
Nuwara Eliya	• Ljubljana (vision) • Queenstown (governance) • British Columbia (branding)
Ella	• Queenstown (stakeholder governance) • San Diego TMD (funding model) • British Columbia (branding) • Smartphone-based geolocation data for monitoring

4 Preliminary assessment



4.1 Case study: Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland (UK National Trust) – stakeholder and community engagement

Giant's Causeway, located in Northern Ireland, is an area of some 40,000 interlocking basalt columns flanked by the North Atlantic Ocean and a landscape of dramatic cliffs. The UNESCO WHS is managed by the National Trust, and a **participatory process** initiated in 2019 can be seen as a prime example for community and stakeholder engagement. It was designed to be a long-term, collaborative effort that went beyond a simple consultation, a fifteen-month process that brought the community in at the very beginning to identify their issues, and to ask what they wanted to include in the project. This required a commitment to authentic, face-to-face interactions and a genuine willingness on the part of the organization to listen and adapt its plans based on community input. A key component of this was the organization giving up control, allowing staff the latitude to make decisions, and accepting that they had to give in to the broader community's voice. The process was built on a foundation of **honesty and transparency**, where the managing organization was upfront about timelines and what was and was not feasible.

Figure 2: Visitors at Giant's Causeway. Photo by Korng Sok on Unsplash

The outcomes of this extensive process were the establishment of deep and lasting **trust with the local community**, which is crucial for achieving the site's conservation, community, and sustainability goals. This approach led to a reduction in conflict and the development of open, **transparent communication channels**, creating a more sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship for all stakeholders.

Official website:

👉 https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/northern-ireland/giants-causeway

Additional Resources:

👉https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/369/

UNESCO World Heritage Convention resources on Giant's Causeway

👉https://www.into.org/app/uploads/2021/05/Putting-the-Local-in-Global-Balancing-conservation-tourism-development-and-community-interests-at-the-sites-of-the-worlds-National-Trusts-Jun-21.pdf

The report by the International National Trusts Organization shows how some of the world's most renowned heritage sites have strengthened their conservation efforts and community engagement by re-evaluating and improving their relationships with local communities. The Giant's Causeway is one of the described examples.

4.2 Case study: George Town, Penang, Malaysia – Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Assessment

The city of Georgetown, Penang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, set a strong benchmark for **preliminary assessment in visitor management**. A research team from universities in the UK and Malaysia developed a multi-faceted stakeholder mapping model, documented in academic studies and UNESCO guidelines. This model identified six distinct **stakeholder groups** – including experts, local businesses, residents, governance bodies, and tourists – each with different levels of influence and interests at various project stages. The process began with a blended desk and field research effort: workshops, community consultations, and structured interviews established a detailed baseline of site challenges (overcrowding, resource limits, conservation pressures, visitor experience problems). Analysis focused on spatial and temporal visitor distribution, infrastructure bottlenecks, and socio-economic impacts of tourism on the heritage core.

Figure 3: George Town, Penang, Malaysia. Photo by stephen njau on Unsplash

Crucially, each **stakeholder's power-interest dynamic** shaped both the assessment results and the subsequent management strategies. Outputs included a comprehensive baseline report and stakeholder map, which guide regular monitoring and adaptive site management cycles.

The **formalized mapping and assessment framework** are now shared as best practice for similar urban heritage destinations, especially those balancing living heritage, active tourism sectors, and local livelihoods.

Note: A general, more simplified approach to stakeholder mapping is described in the next sub-chapter.

Official website:
👉 https://gtwhi.com.my/

Additional Resources:
👉 https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1223/
UNESCO World Heritage Convention resources on George Town

👉 https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/627441/2/Stakeholder%20HeRAS-v23.pdf
Research paper on George Town case study on targeted baseline and stakeholder mapping frameworks for heritage tourism.

4.3 Tool: Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder mapping for tourism (destination/attraction) management is a strategic process used to identify, analyze, and visualize the key individuals, groups, and organizations involved with a tourist site. This process helps to understand their interests, influence, and potential impact on the destination, which is crucial for effective decision-making and sustainable development.

There are numerous different approaches to stakeholder mapping, but a **general process** may follow the steps described in the following:

1. Identify stakeholders

The first step is to **brainstorm and list all individuals and groups** that have an interest in or are affected by the tourist site. It is important to think broadly to include both internal and external stakeholders.

- **Internal Stakeholders** are directly involved in the operation or management of the site. Examples include: destination management organizations (DMOs), site employees, and tourism businesses (e.g., hotels, tour operators, restaurants).
- **External Stakeholders** are those outside the immediate management of the site but who still have a significant stake. Examples include: local communities, government agencies (local,

regional, and national), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), visitors/tourists, media, and suppliers.

2. Assess and Classify Stakeholders

Once a preliminary stakeholder list is compiled, each stakeholder's **level of influence** (their ability to impact the destination) and their **level of interest** (how much they care about the destination's success or issues) can be evaluated. A common and effective tool for this is the **Power-Interest Grid**, also known as Mendelow's (1991) Matrix (Figure 4).

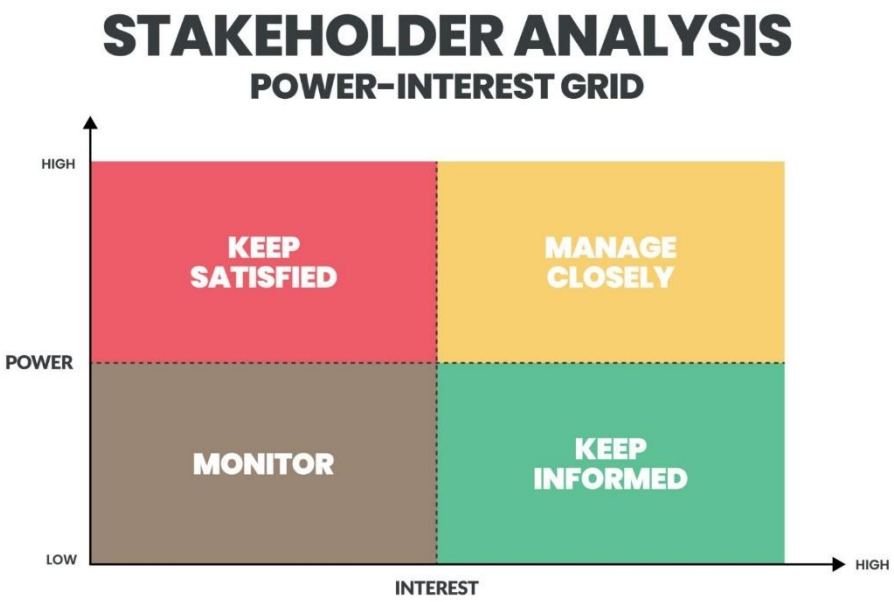


Figure 4: Power-Interest Grid for stakeholder analysis. Source: adapted from Mendelow (1991).

The grid divides stakeholders into four quadrants, with each requiring a different engagement strategy:

- **High Power, High Interest (Manage Closely):** These are the key players. They have the authority and a strong vested interest in the site. It is important to engage with them proactively and regularly. This group often includes government officials or major investors.
- **High Power, Low Interest (Keep Satisfied):** These stakeholders are powerful but not heavily involved. They should be kept informed and involved to ensure their needs are met to prevent them from becoming an obstacle. An example could be a different government department or a large, non-tourism-related company in the area.
- **Low Power, High Interest (Keep Informed):** This group is passionate and wants to be involved but may lack the authority to make decisions. They are great sources of feedback and support.

They should be kept in the loop with regular updates. This could include local residents or environmental groups.

- **Low Power, Low Interest (Monitor):** These stakeholders have minimal interest and little to no power. There is no need to over-communicate with them, but they should still be monitored for any changes in their position. They could be infrequent visitors or minor local businesses.

3. Develop an Engagement Plan

Based on an analysis of the power and interest of the stakeholders, a tailored engagement strategy can be created for each stakeholder group. The goal is to build a collaborative environment and manage potential conflicts.

- **High-Power, High-Interest:** Involve them in decision-making, hold regular meetings, and establish clear communication channels.
- **High-Power, Low-Interest:** Provide concise updates and reports, and be responsive to their concerns.
- **Low-Power, High-Interest:** Use newsletters, social media, and community forums to keep them informed and solicit their feedback.
- **Low-Power, Low-Interest:** Minimal communication is needed, but maintain a record of their existence for future reference.

Additional Resources:

👉 https://iwlearn.net/resolveuid/d20fc335-aa29-440b-ae14-f94f37321427

Stakeholder Mapping Guide by Conservation International: A comprehensive guide with templates for identifying and analyzing stakeholders.

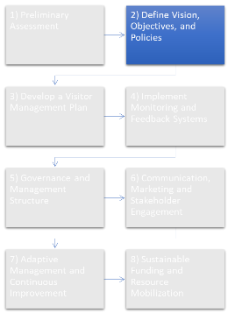
👉 https://tourismteacher.com/stakeholders-in-tourism/

Tourism Teacher (Stakeholders in Tourism): Explains who stakeholders are in the tourism industry and why they matter.

👉 https://www.canva.com/graphs/stakeholder-maps/

Canva (Stakeholder Map Tool): Provides a simple, free tool with customizable templates to visually create your stakeholder map.

5 Define vision, objectives and policies



5.1 Case study: Ljubljana, Slovenia

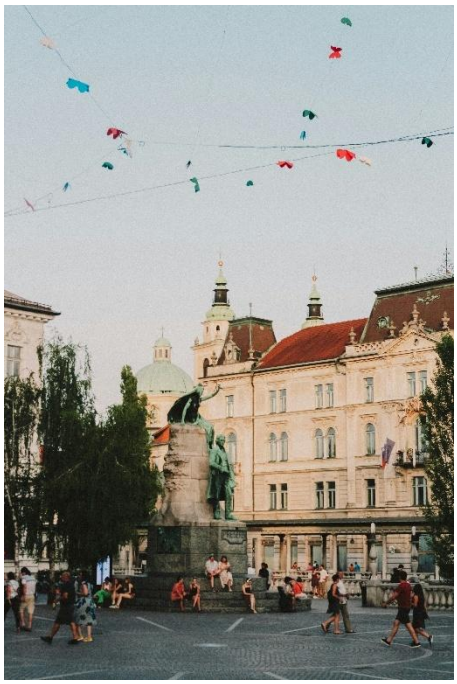


Figure 5: Ljubljana, Slovenia. Photo by Katrīna Eglīte on Unsplash

Ljubljana has been internationally recognized for its transformation into one of the most sustainable urban destinations in the world. As the capital of a country that brands itself as a "Green Boutique Destination", Ljubljana's vision is rooted in its commitment to high quality of life for residents and a low-impact, high-value experience for visitors. The city had already been awarded the title of "European Green Capital" in 2016.

Ljubljana Tourism's vision is that **by 2027 it is recognized as the leading and most creative urban sustainable lifestyle destination in the world**.

This vision is supported by several **strategic objectives**, including improving resident satisfaction, diversifying tourism beyond the city center to avoid overcrowding, and promoting sustainable mobility. This tourism development strategy was elaborated in cooperation and dialogue with more than 100 partners from the municipal and national government, tourism stakeholders within the City of Ljubljana and the region, as well partners on the national level. On the basis of analyses, interviews and strategic workshops, **seven USPs** were identified that form the pillar of Ljubljana's strategy:

- *Well-being - In Ljubljana you simply feel good!*
- *Romantic backdrop - Ljubljana is romantic!*
- *Genuine sustainability - Ljubljana means sustainability!*
- *Enticing gastronomy - To Ljubljana for gastronomic pleasure!*
- *Diversity and solidarity - Ljubljana is characterized by diversity and solidarity!*
- *Creative atmosphere - Ljubljana is creative!*
- *Plečnik's legacy - Plečnik's Ljubljana is one of the most important total works of art of the twentieth century!*

Official website:

👉 https://www.visitljubljana.com/en/about-ljubljana-tourism/

Additional Resources:

👉 https://www.visitljubljana.com/en/about-ljubljana-tourism/vision-and-strategy/

Description of Vision and Strategy and their development process.

👉 https://www.visitljubljana.com/assets/Dokumenti-PDF/Strategije/ZTL_kulturni_turizem_23-27_ANG.pdf

Abstract of The Strategic Guidelines for Cultural Tourism and Events in Ljubljana 2022-2027

5.2 Case study: Banff National Park, Canada

"Lead Tourism for Good" is the official vision for the destination of Banff and Lake Louise in Canada, world-famous for the iconic Banff National Park.

The *"Lead Tourism for Good"* vision for Banff and Lake Louise was developed through a **comprehensive, community-led process** to ensure that tourism benefits both the environment and the local population.

Figure 6: Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada. Photo by David Brooke Martin on Unsplash

The vision was created over a two-year period, with the active participation of over 2,000 residents and in partnership with key stakeholders including Banff & Lake Louise Tourism, the Town of Banff, and Parks Canada, responsible for management of Banff National Park. It was developed in response to a growing need to balance increased visitor numbers with the preservation of the national park's ecological integrity. The process was designed to be inclusive, allowing for a wide range of perspectives and ideas to shape the final document. The **guiding principle** was a

shared belief that tourism can be a force for good.

This vision directly relates to tourism by **shifting the focus from simply attracting visitors to ensuring the industry is regenerative**. Instead of just aiming for sustainable balance, the vision strives for **positive contributions** to the natural, social, and economic resources of the area. It serves as a guiding document for businesses, residents, and visitors, encouraging collaborative efforts to **protect the park** and **improve community well-being**, while still providing **world-class visitor experiences**. The vision champions the tourism industry as a vehicle for protecting the park's natural legacy and for creating a thriving community.

Official website:

👉 https://www.banfflakelouise.com/lead-tourism-for-good

Additional Resources:

👉 https://banfflakelouise.bynder.com/m/2bc653227b267707/original/2023_LeadTourismForGood_October2023.pdf

Full text of the Vision and additional guiding document.

👉 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJBQvoYVFUU&t=3s

Video on the visioning process involving the tourism sector, the Town of Banff, Parks Canada, and more than 2,000 community members to create "Lead Tourism for Good".

6 Develop a visitor management plan

6.1 Case study: Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna, Austria

Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna is one of the most popular attractions in Austria and receives around 2.7 million visitors annually. It illustrates a sophisticated, site-level visitor management plan in action. Faced with growing visitor numbers, a **competition** was announced to implement a **data-driven system** for real-time monitoring as well as simulation of visitor flows.

The implementation of a novel system for the documentation and **simulation of visitor movement** is intended to enhance the utilization of room capacity in the palace and augment security measures. Simultaneously, the simulations should facilitate the consideration of potential alterations to the tours provided. Moreover, this initiative serves to safeguard the historical building materials by optimizing the flow of visitors.

Figure 7: Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna, Austria. Photo by Allan Wadsworth on Unsplash

The compiled data complements staggered ticketing with **time slots**, so visitor entrances are spread throughout opening hours and peak-pressure areas remain manageable. **Real-time digital counters** at gates track visitor flow; alternate paths and secondary attractions (gardens, exhibitions, guided walks) are enhanced to divert traffic from sensitive core areas. Conservation priorities shape everything: scheduling maintenance, setting upper visitor limits, and developing interpretive materials ensure cultural assets are not degraded by tourist pressure. The plan also includes multi-language signage, digital engagement tools, and regular feedback surveys.

Through this dynamic system, Schönbrunn not only conserves its world-famous built heritage but also improves visitor satisfaction and supports local economic linkages. The strategy's effectiveness is monitored through **annual reviews**, making it an exemplary blueprint for visitor management at popular heritage sites.

Official website:

👉 https://www.schoenbrunn.at/en/

Additional Resources:

👉https://www.unesco.at/en/culture/world-heritage/examples-of-good-practice/2018/recording-and-simulating-the-movements-of-visitors-to-schoenbrunn-palace

Description of the system for recording and simulating visitor movements at Schönbrunn Palace.

👉https://www.ait.ac.at/fileadmin//mc/mobility/Projects/IMS/Schoenbrunn/Factsheet_Schoenbrunn_en.pdf

Project fact sheet by Austrian Institute of Technology

👉 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ySqPjENvAw

Video on competition for data-driven visitor monitoring and simulation system from the perspective of the site management.

6.2 Case study: Yosemite National Park, USA

Figure 8: Yosemite National Park, California, USA. Photo by Jesse Callahan on Unsplash

Yosemite National Park receives over 4 million visitors annually, creating challenges of **congestion**, **environmental degradation**, and **visitor dissatisfaction**. To address this, the park is developing a visitor access management plan with a **new reservation system** to reduce overcrowding and traffic congestion, expand tools to better pace vehicle volume into the park, and provide equitable visitor access to inspirational experiences while ensuring operational sustainability and protection of Yosemite National Park's exemplary natural and cultural resources.

The plan is being developed with extensive **public participation**, in which stakeholders are invited to comment, discuss, and express their interests.

In 2024, to gather info on visitor access management, the park introduced a **day-use peak hours reservation system pilot**. This tested a system during a time without pandemic restrictions or major construction. Modifications from the previous 2022 reservation system included weekend-only periods, afternoon entries, and more reservations. The park staff have been monitoring the summer 2024 pilot and incorporating lessons learned into this plan and supporting analysis.

Ultimately, the plan shall balance ecological goals with visitor satisfaction.

Official website:

👉 https://www.nps.gov/yose/index.htm

Additional Resources:

👉https://www.nps.gov/yose/getinvolved/visitoraccessmanagement.htm

Description of the of the planning process, including stakeholder engagement, during development of the Visitor Access Management Plan for Yosemite National Park.

👉https://www.nps.gov/yose/getinvolved/upload/YOSE_Newsletter_508_2024-0531.pdf

Official Spring 2024 newsletter, detailing approaches to visitor experience, transportation, reservations, and other management strategies.

👉 https://yosemite.org/yosemite-visitor-access-management-plan/

"Beginner's Guide" to Yosemite's Draft Visitor Access Management Plan

6.3 Alhambra, Spain

The Alhambra and Generalife Monumental Complex in Granada, Spain, is one of the world's most-visited World Heritage Sites. In 2024, it received 2.7 million visitors. To safeguard its cultural heritage, the site relies on a highly effective time-bound ticket reservation system as a core strategy for visitor and capacity management.

Figure 9: Alhambra, Spain. Photo by Gio Almonte on Unsplash

Key Features and Implementation:

- **Strict Capacity Limits:** There is a daily maximum capacity of 6,600 visitors for the entire complex to control the overall visitor load and minimize physical impact on the site.

- **Time-Bound Access (Nasrid Palaces):** The most delicate and high-demand section, the Nasrid Palaces, requires a specific, time-bound ticket. Visitors must pre-select a non-transferable, specific 30-minute time slot for entering the Nasrid Palaces, which is explicitly printed on the ticket. In addition to the abovementioned daily cap for the whole complex, there is an additional cap of 300 visitors allowed in the Nasrid Palaces every 30 minutes. The general admission ticket itself is valid for the rest of the complex (Alcazaba and Generalife) all day on the date of the visit, offering visitors flexibility outside of the palaces.

Figure 10: Alhambra entrance and ticket sales points. Source: https://www.hiberus.com/crecemos-contigo/caso-de-exito-venta-de-entradas-alhambra/

- **Points of sale:** Tickets can be bought online, in special ticket vending machines on-site, or at ticket counters.
- **Rigorous Enforcement:** The 30-minute time slot is strictly enforced; visitors who miss their allocated time window are refused admission to the Nasrid Palaces without exception. This rigidity ensures a disciplined, constant flow of people through the palaces, preventing overcrowding in narrow or fragile areas.
- **Advance Booking and Personalization:** Tickets are personalized with the visitor's ID or Passport number at the time of purchase and must be purchased well in advance (weeks to months in high season) via the official online system. This practice manages demand and helps prevent ticket speculation.

Official website:

👉 https://www.alhambra-patronato.es/en/visit

Additional Resources:

👉https://www.hiberus.com/crecemos-contigo/caso-de-exito-venta-de-entradas-alhambra/

Description of the ticket reservation system (in Spanish).

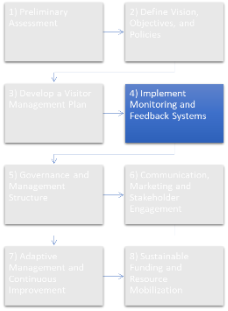
👉https://www.tickamore.com/en/iacpos-incorpora-nuevo-sistema-de-acceso-a-la-alhambra-de-granada-english/

Description of Alhambra ticket access system.

👉 https://yosemite.org/yosemite-visitor-access-management-plan/

"Beginner's Guide" to Yosemite's Draft Visitor Access Management Plan

7 Implement monitoring and feedback systems



7.1 Case study: Dubvronik, Croatia

Figure 11: Dubrovnik. Photo: Arnegger (2021).

Dubrovnik, Croatia, offers a prime example of a modern, state-of-the-art **visitor monitoring and management system** implemented to **address overtourism** and preserve its UNESCO World Heritage status. With nearly 1.3 million overnight visitors in 2018 and daily cruise ship passenger arrivals exceeding 9,000 during peak season, Dubrovnik faced significant challenges including overcrowding, traffic congestion, degradation of heritage assets, and resident alienation. Dubrovnik's appeal has been further driven in recent years because it was one of the main filming locations for the popular tv show "Games of Thrones".

In response, the city launched a comprehensive visitor monitoring system that became fully operational in 2019. This system uses surveillance cameras at the city gates to track visitor numbers and enforces a strict cap of 8,000 people allowed simultaneously in the Old Town, thus directly controlling crowd density in real time.

In addition to real-time counting, Dubrovnik introduced the **"Respect the City" initiative**, which uses digital tools and data-driven strategies to manage tourism flows sustainably. The initiative includes a **Digital Dubrovnik Pass** that encourages tourists to **explore less crowded areas beyond the Old Town** by offering entry to various attractions and access to shuttle transportation. This helps disperse visitors, reducing pressure on the historical core. Research under this initiative also includes a "digital detox" study that found tourists without digital navigation tools tended to avoid crowded hotspots and ventured into less visited areas, a behavior desirable for managing overtourism. The city collaborates with the cruise industry to limit daily ship arrivals to no more than two, with a maximum of 4,000 passengers at a time, which has been critical in controlling visitor influx and congestion.

A **real-time monitoring web-based application** is publicly accessible and provides insights into the number of visitors currently in the old city, as well as influx of visitors at different access points, based on cameras. It includes a **traffic light system** to quickly indicate real time thresholds and allows the local administrators to take measures:

- Red: when the number of visitors is over 8000 – traffic is diverted and entry is prohibited and/or limited;

- Yellow: when the number of visitors is between 6000 and 8000 – entry to the old town is limited and/or restricted;
- Green: when the number of visitors is under 6000 – visitors may enter freely.

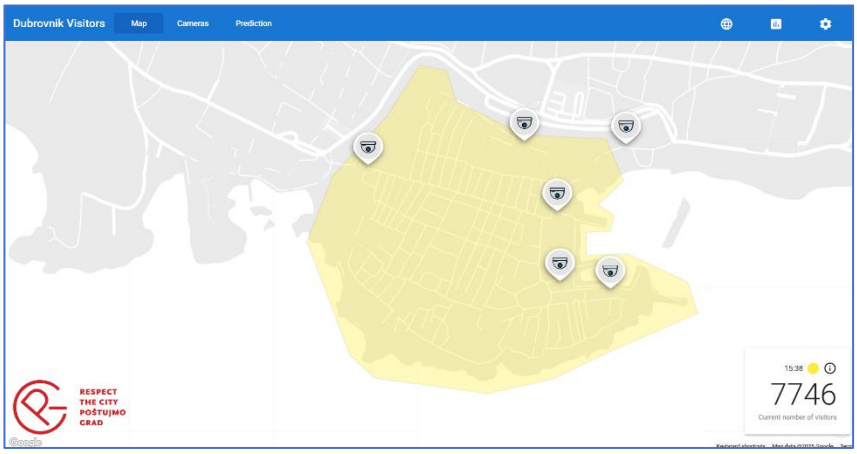


Figure 12: Dubrovnik real-time visitor monitoring system. Source: https://dubrovnik-visitors.hr/

The monitoring system is supported by extensive **stakeholder engagement** and policy adaptations targeting transport control, public space management, and local resident participation. Overcrowded streets have been eased by removing illegal vendors and excessive restaurant tables, improving mobility and visitor experience. Smart city solutions such as the abovementioned web platform, smart parking, bus ticketing via digital tools, and camera surveillance on city roads support the system's operational framework.

Official website:

👉 https://visitdubrovnik.hr/

Additional Resources:

👉https://dubrovnik-visitors.hr/

Publicly accessible real-time visitor monitoring data.

👉https://www.interregeurope.eu/tib/news-and-events/news/managing-dubrovniks-tourism-insights-from-dr-tina-segota

Documentation on a workshop on Dubrovnik's digital technology and data-driven strategies to manage tourism flows, improve visitor experiences, and maintain sustainability.

👉 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10548408.2020.1828230

Academic research paper on Dubrovnik's digital visitor monitoring scheme.

7.2 Tool: smartphone app-based geolocation data

Geolocation data based on GPS coordinates logged by smartphone apps is an innovative source of data for visitor monitoring. It allows for detailed analyses of visitor structures in time and space (e.g., to identify locations and times when crowding occurs). In comparison with other approaches, such as counting ticket sales, automatic counting machines or cameras installed at certain locations, app-based geolocation data covers much larger area (basically, the whole area of a defined attraction or destination), including parts where few visitors go and where installing costly counting machines or cameras would not make economic sense.

There are various providers worldwide for such kind of geolocation data.

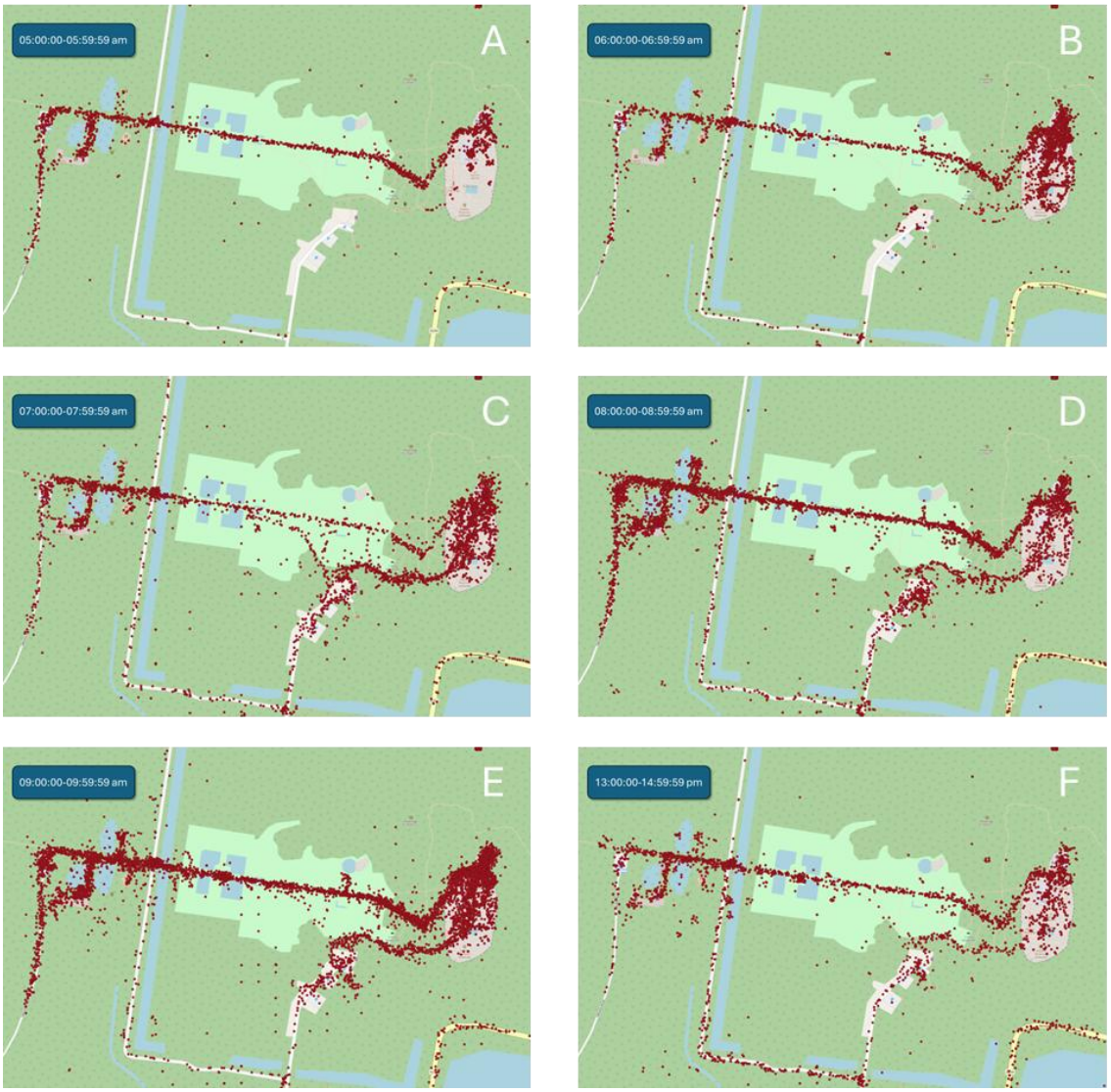
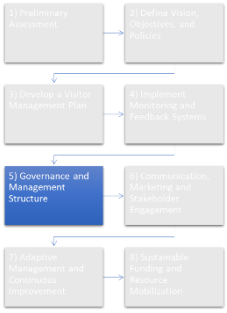


Figure 13: PIN locations in Sigiriya, Sep 2024 - Sep 2025 for different time periods (A: 5-6 am, B: 6-7 am, C: 7-8 am, D: 8-9 am, E: 9-10 am, F: 1-2 pm), Sep 2024 – Sep 2025. Source: own elaboration with data from GapMaps / Azira

The data usually comes in form of a table and includes a unique device ID, the latitude and longitudes, as well as a timestamp of the visit.

Data can be imported into **GIS software** such as QGIS and analyzed and visualized further, e.g., to compare **visitor distributions** during different time periods, or create heatmaps that show visitor concentrations. As an example, Figure 13 shows PIN locations at Sigiriya during different time periods of the day (5-6 am, 6-7 am, 7-8 am, 8-9 am, 9-10 am, and 1-2 pm).

8 Governance & management structure



8.1 Case study: PraxisIMPULSE tandem program for sustainable tourism, Germany

The *PRAXISIMPULSE Tandem Program* in Germany was designed to accelerate climate- and biodiversity-friendly tourism by fostering **collaboration** between DMOs in Germany. Destinations were paired in "tandems" to **jointly analyze challenges, exchange knowledge, and co-create practical solutions**. Each tandem was accompanied by an expert "mentor".

This structured **peer-learning model** proved highly effective in motivating tourism stakeholders, building capacity, and embedding sustainability into destination strategies. The program was implemented in over a nine-month period in 2023/24

It is highly recommended for Sri Lanka as a useful approach to strengthen stakeholder engagement, ownerships and networks.

Key features of the program included:

- **Peer-to-Peer Collaboration:** DMOs worked in pairs (or trios) to address shared sustainability challenges, ensuring mutual learning and accountability.
- **Practical Tools & goal orientation:** Each tandem developed concrete outputs such as guides, checklists, and communication toolkits (e.g., a "Compass for Sustainable Tourism" or climate communication manuals).
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Local tourism businesses were actively involved through workshops, network meetings, and interactive formats like climate mapping.
- **Systematic Knowledge Transfer:** Best practices were documented and shared across regions, enabling replication and scaling.
- **Supportive Ecosystem:** The program was embedded in a wider initiative with stakeholder dialogues, certification guidance, capacity building measures based on identified needs, and national conferences.

Teams had regular virtual meetings, as well as some in-person meetings. During in-person meetings, workshops to develop specific project outputs were held; however, another important goal of these meetings was also to gain direct experience on challenges and solutions in the tandem destinations.

The **main results** of the program were:

- Increased **motivation** among tourism stakeholders to participate in sustainability initiatives to advance their destinations and tourism sites – based on strengthened collaboration and co-creation both within and across tourism sites and destinations.
- Improved **communication** between DMOs and stakeholders on climate and biodiversity issues.

- Creation of **practical, user-friendly tools** that support long-term implementation.
- Strengthened **networks** and **trust** among regional actors, leading to more resilient destination management.

Relevance for Sri Lanka

The tandem model has proven extremely valuable to strengthen stakeholder collaboration, co-creation and knowledge exchange. It is **highly recommended to apply a similar project to relevant tourism sites in Sri Lanka**, to further develop and, ultimately, institutionalize, **Tourism Stakeholder Committees** that were initially formed at the Stakeholder Workshop in Colombo in September 2025.

Recommended approach for Sri Lanka:

- Form **tandems** of tourism sites that share some structural similarities, but are not direct (local) competitors (e.g., Yala National Park & Hurulu Eco Park, Galle Fort & Ella, etc.);
- Assign **expert "mentors"** to accompany the tandems;
- Establish **clear project framework** (timeline, expected outcomes), have tandems with the help of experts decide on tangible objectives (e.g., vision creation process, marketing strategy development, etc.).
- Facilitate **knowledge exchange at different levels** through regular tandem meetings (online), bilateral workshops and site visits (offline), and larger stakeholder meetings/workshops for know-how exchange across all participating sites.
- Support tandems with targeted, needs-based **capacity building** measures.

Official website:

👉 https://www.wissensportal-nachhaltige-reiseziele.de/praxisimpulse (in German)

Additional Resources:

👉https://www.wissensportal-nachhaltige-reiseziele.de/_files/ugd/e7c610_85fd00385b0143aca318808afc5b977e.pdf

Final report (in German).

👉https://www.wissensportal-nachhaltige-reiseziele.de/praxisimpulse-tandem-ansatz

More detailed information on the tandem approach (in German).

8.2 Case study: Queenstown, New Zealand

Destination Queenstown (DQ) is an excellent example of a well-organized Destination Management Organization (DMO). It functions as the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) for the Queenstown Lakes District, encompassing Queenstown, Arrowtown, Gibbston, Kingston, and Glenorchy. DQ is a **membership-based incorporated society** governed by a sector-represented Board of Directors, ensuring representation from various local tourism industry sectors. The organization is funded primarily (95%) through a **targeted tourism levy** on commercial rates collected from local businesses by the Queenstown Lakes District Council, with the remaining 5% coming from general rates. Its annual budget is approximately NZD5 million (USD3 million), which supports a staff **team** of about 20 full-time employees working across destination marketing and destination management functions.

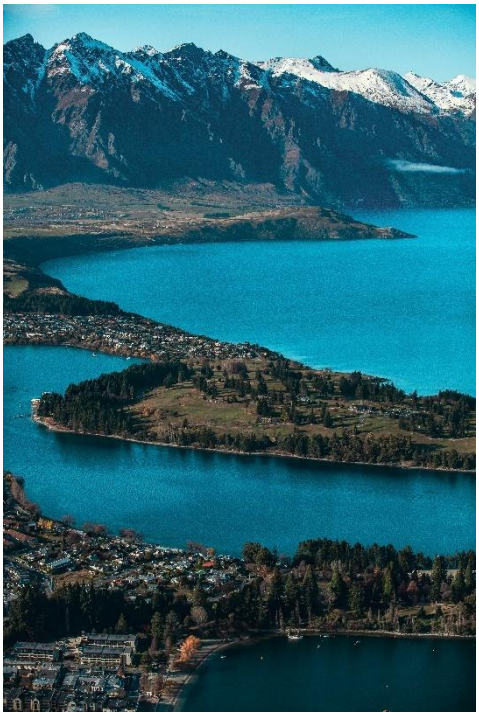


Figure 14: Queenstown, New Zealand. Photo by Charlie Mitchell on Unsplash

The **organizational structure** of DQ allows it to act as a **neutral coordinator** among local businesses, community groups, and government bodies, facilitating collaboration on tourism strategy and sustainable destination management. It works closely with partners such as Lake Wānaka Tourism and the Queenstown Lakes District Council to implement the region's **Destination Management Plan *"Travel to a Thriving Future"***, which emphasizes **regenerative tourism** and aims for a **carbon-zero visitor economy by 2030**. This partnership and inclusive governance model help align marketing and management actions with community values and sustainability goals.

DQ's scope includes **branding**, international and domestic **marketing**, trade liaison, advocacy, and local tourism industry development. The expansion of its mandate in recent years to include destination management reflects a forward-thinking approach that balances promoting visitor demand with sustainable visitor experience management. This includes initiatives to reduce overcrowding, promote responsible tourism behaviors, and support infrastructure investment, all guided by continuous stakeholder engagement and data insights.

This integrated and membership-driven approach ensures that DQ not only markets Queenstown globally but also safeguards the social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing of the local community. The organization's ability to fund its activities through a tourism levy demonstrates a **sustainable financial model** that links financial contribution to benefiting from tourism. This, combined with its governance and strategic vision for regenerative tourism, sets Destination Queenstown apart as an innovative and effective local-level DMO.

Official website:

👉 https://www.destinationqueenstown.co.nz

Additional Resources:

👉https://www.queenstownnz.co.nz/about-us/

Introduction to Destination Queenstown DMO.

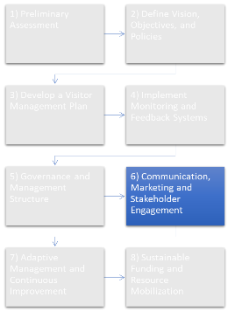
👉https://rtnz.org.nz/rto-destination-queenstown/

Link to destination management plan.

👉 https://cruxnz.substack.com/p/destination-queenstown-answers-key

Interview with DQ managers on management responses to current challenges and political trends.

9 Communication, marketing & stakeholder engagement



9.1 Case study: National Parks of Sweden

Figure 15: Logo of Sweden's National Parks. Source: https://www.sverigesnationalparker.se/en/

Sweden's national parks, which include Europe's first system of protected areas established in 1909, are a diverse collection of landscapes from northern alpine regions to southern deciduous forests. Historically, each park managed its own identity, leading to a fragmented and inconsistent experience for visitors. In the early 2010s, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket) initiated a project to create a **unified visual identity**. The goal was to **better communicate the parks' value as "crown jewels" of the nation** and to make them more accessible and recognizable to a broader audience, both domestic and international. The new design was first piloted at Hamra National Park, providing a blueprint for a nationwide rollout.

Figure 16: "Golden Crown" in Hamra National Park. Source: https://whitearkitekter.com/project/hamra-national-park/

The core of the new **corporate design** is a distinctive and symbolic logo: **the golden star**. This star, a simple yet powerful six-sided graphic that resembles a **snowflake**, when seen as a two-dimensional form from above, is more than just a symbol. In its three-dimensional form, it is extruded to become a crown, a symbol of the Kingdom of Sweden, directly referencing the "crown jewels" concept and signifying that these are Sweden's most treasured natural areas. The use of a rich golden color reinforces this idea of value and national pride. The logo is complemented by a clean, modern typography and a color palette that reflects the natural environment, moving away from a single, generic green to a more nuanced array of tones.

In Hamra National Park, a physical golden crown is hidden in the wilderness, for visitors to find, to take pictures, and to post them on social media.

Figure 17: Corporate hexagonal design reflected in an overview map of Sweden's national park on the central website. Source: https://www.sverigesnationalparker.se/en/choose-park---list/

The philosophy underpinning this design is a clever blend of national pride and accessibility. By branding the parks as "natural treasures", the design elevates their status and encourages a sense of **ownership and responsibility** among the Swedish people. The **visual system**, with its **clear signage and consistent design language**, based on a hexagonal shape, guides visitors and provides **information** while minimizing visual clutter that could detract from the natural surroundings. It transforms the parks into a **cohesive brand**, making it easier for visitors to navigate and appreciate the network of protected areas across the country.

The corporate design is applied across a **wide range of materials**, including wayfinding **signage**, informational **brochures**, **websites**, and **visitor centers**. The consistent application of the golden star logo and typography creates a strong and memorable brand presence. This unified identity has been instrumental in strengthening the national parks as a destination for nature-based tourism, while also reinforcing their primary role in conservation. The success of this branding project serves as a compelling case study on how a well-executed corporate design can not only enhance user experience but also effectively communicate an organization's mission and value.

Official website:

👉 https://www.sverigesnationalparker.se/en/

Additional Resources:

👉 https://www.naturvardsverket.se/4ac360/contentassets/240880ea97004a1eb197bdd16852534a/sveriges-nationalparker-designplattform.pdf

A detailed PDF document from Naturvårdsverket outlining the design platform and its components.

👉 https://whitearkitekter.com/project/hamra-national-park/

A project overview from White Arkitekter, one of the design teams involved in the project, with a focus on the Hamra National Park pilot.

9.2 Case study: British Columbia

Destination British Columbia's long-running ***"Super, Natural British Columbia"*** (SNBC) brand is a strong example of a regional DMO using a unified, research-driven brand to connect various tourist destinations under a common promise. It has recently been diversified with a family of sub-brands

such as *"Rainforest to Rockies"*, *"The Great Wilderness"* and *"The Infinite Coast"*, each one related to a different sub-region.

Figure 18: Super, Natural British Columbia logo. Source: https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/travel/super-natural-british-columbia-is-back-in-full-force-explorebc-1929753

The SNBC platform isn't just a logo; it's positioned as a way to help travelers find the emotional experience of BC while also creating a structure the province's many regions can plug into.

What sets this approach apart is the deliberate blending of **brand marketing with destination development**. Destination BC invested in multi-year research and extensive consultation to refresh the brand and then produced detailed industry brand guidelines and regionally focused creative toolkits so local DMOs, indigenous tourism businesses, and private operators can align their messaging while keeping local authenticity. Those brand guidelines and the broader **"brand family"** materials explain the thinking and practical elements that partners use when creating campaigns or visitor experiences.

Stakeholder involvement is built into the model. Rather than a top-down advertising program, Destination BC runs cooperative funding and **partnership programs** that let regional tourism organizations, community groups, and private operators co-invest in marketing that aligns with provincial priorities, effectively scaling local stories into global campaigns. Program rules and application guidance describe how groups with common goals can pool resources and access Destination BC support, which encourages collaboration across municipal, regional and industry lines. Destination BC also publishes stakeholder-satisfaction research that documents consultation and industry engagement as an ongoing process.

Implementation is intentionally practical and **modular**: Destination BC created **sub-brand toolkits**, **route concepts** (e.g., Rainforest to Rockies) and **industry videos** to help partners visualize and adopt the creative platform; it showcases case studies of destination development projects to inspire local replication. The refreshed brand rollout pairs global media campaigns (e.g., targeted activity in markets like the UK and California) with influencer partnerships and industry resources so the province and its many sub-regions act coherently while each stakeholder retains a local voice.

This approach combines a strong, emotionally resonant master brand with clear, accessible toolkits and partnership mechanisms that make it practical for many, smaller stakeholders to participate, creating marketing reach without erasing local distinctiveness.

Official website:

👉 https://www.supernaturalbc.com/

Additional Resources:

👉 https://www.destinationbc.ca/learning-centre/category/brand-resources/

Brand family tools & resources for application of the brand.

10 Adaptive management and continuous improvement

10.1 Vesuvius National Park, Italy

Figure 19: Mount Vesuvius, Italy. Photo: Photo by _M_V_ on Unsplash

Mount Vesuvius, near Naples, is one of the world's most famous and dangerous volcanoes, notorious for its AD 79 eruption that buried the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Today, it attracts thousands of tourists annually to the Vesuvius National Park, offering **hiking trails, crater views, and educational tours**. The region is densely populated, particularly within the designated "red zone", making **volcanic risk management** essential not only for residents but also for visitors. The Italian Civil Protection Department, together with the Vesuvius Observatory, continuously monitors seismic activity, ground deformation, and gas emissions to detect early signs of volcanic unrest. This monitoring underpins a detailed emergency plan that defines evacuation routes and safety procedures, ensuring rapid response if volcanic activity increases.

To **balance visitor experience with safety**, access to the crater and trails is strictly managed. Designated paths, controlled group sizes, and ticketing regulations allow for efficient crowd management and rapid evacuation if necessary. Guided tours and interpretive signage educate visitors about volcanic hazards and promote awareness of risk, turning **hazard communication** into an **integral part of the tourism experience**.

Official website:

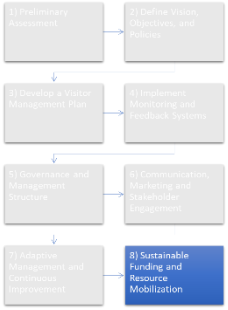
👉 https://www.parconazionaledelvesuvio.it

Additional Resources:

👉https://www.ov.ingv.it/index.php

Vesuvius Observatory website.

11 Sustainable funding and resource mobilization



First of all, it has to be stated that virtually no DMO would be able to exist without external funding (meaning, outside of contributions from local stakeholders, such as tourism businesses). That said, there are numerous funding models that can support DMO's operations.

11.1 Case study: San Diego Tourism Marketing District (TMD), California, USA

Figure 20: San Diego, California, USA. Photo by Derek Story on Unsplash

The San Diego Tourism Marketing District was established to **generate funds from hotels** (tourism-related businesses contribute through a self-assessed fee) to **support destination marketing and management** efforts. This fund finances activities aimed at boosting tourism, improving visitor experience, and sustaining tourism infrastructure. The DMO governed by the fund oversees transparent allocation of resources to promote the destination, support local businesses, and invest in infrastructure initiatives.

The TID model in California was established by legislation in the 1990s and **adopted by many regions**, including San Francisco, Vancouver, and Baltimore. San Diego's TMD uses funds collected from tourism businesses, primarily hotels, channeled into marketing and destination management projects. The **governing body** includes industry stakeholders to ensure **accountability**.

Challenges faced include legal disputes over fund collection, highlighting the importance of clear legal frameworks and stakeholder buy-in for sustainable fund management.

This example illustrates how a destination management fund can be industry-led, financially self-sustaining, and focused on direct destination benefits, balancing private sector involvement and public accountability.

Official website:

👉 https://sdtmd.org/

Additional Resources:

👉 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtKD7MG-sD4

Short video on the concept of the SDTMD.

👉 https://wrightoncomm.com/project/sdtmd-tourism-matters-case-study/

Case study on strengthening communication for the SDTMD.

Literature

Mendelow, A. L. (1991). Environmental Scanning: The Impact of the Stakeholder Concept. *Proceedings From the Second International Conference on Information Systems* 407-418. Cambridge, MA.