

## IS SRI LANKA HEADING TOWARDS OVER-TOURISM? A COMPARATIVE STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS WITH INDONESIA, THAILAND, AND VIETNAM

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### Abstract

This research assesses whether Sri Lanka is heading towards overtourism through a comparative stakeholder analysis with three impacted Asian hotspots: Bali, Indonesia; Phuket, Thailand; and Ha Long Bay, Vietnam. It aims to understand the impact of various policy frameworks, stakeholder actions, and the perceptions of the local populace on the progression and potential stagnation of tourism in these areas. A qualitative approach was executed, consisting of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 180 respondents, including officials, businesspersons, residents, and visitors, in all four locations. Thematic and framework analyses identified five contextually relevant, yet collectively shared, predominant concerns: governance fragmentation, socio-inequality, environmental mismanagement, cultural colonialism, and economic instability. Regardless, differing levels of regulatory responsiveness and community involvement suggest differing outlooks. While Thailand and Vietnam demonstrate some policy-responsive changes along with digital visitor management, Sri Lanka is most at risk due to policy fragmentation and the absence of responsive governance and proactive planning. The most important conclusion the research presents is the need for Sri Lanka to integrate sustainable tourism practices through restructuring zones, community involvement, and digital initiatives. Most notably, this research enriches the literature on tourism in the post-pandemic context by illustrating how shared vulnerabilities within a region can shape distinct development trajectories. Further studies should focus on exploring secondary tourism destinations from a geographical perspective, as well as applying mixed methods for longitudinal studies. A closer look into tourist behaviour and emerging market trends would add value in understanding the nature of overtourism and its evolution in Asia.

**Keywords:** Governance, over tourism, South Asia, stakeholder analysis, sustainable tourism

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## **Introduction**

The history of Sri Lanka's tourism industry is as captivating as it is intricate. When tourism began to develop more formally in the 1960s, it was primarily viewed as a means of opening the country to the rest of the world. The government was also beginning to view tourism as a strategic project on a national level, not just as a means of generating revenue. The Ceylon Tourist Board was established in 1966, and the first tourism master plan was created in 1967, formalising the first steps in creating a structured, organised system for the country's planned and infrastructural growth in tourism (Samaranayake et al., 2013). These initiatives were successful, and the country experienced a tourism boom in the early 1970s and 1980s, particularly from Western European countries. This, however, was brought to a standstill when civil disturbances broke out in 1983. This conflict subsequently negatively impacted Sri Lanka's reputation as a tourist destination, leading to a decline in the tourism industry.

The end of the war in 2009 provided an opportunity for the tourism sector to flourish. The post-war recovery was dramatic (Bultjens et al., 2016). This was even more the case after the 2010s established new niche markets for eco, health, adventure, and heritage tourism, all of which highlighted the country's natural and cultural resources. Unfortunately, the absence of growth management has intensified the challenges of overtourism in some vulnerable regions (Perera, 2023). This, of course, led to ecological and socio-political challenges. Perera (2017) noted that between 2013 and 2014, the country experienced a remarkable growth rate of 19.8% in tourist arrivals, with more than 1.7 million tourists arriving in 2015. Each of these aspects contributed to the sector's reawakening. The internal civil war's Northern and Eastern regions were first opened up, economically liberalised, and made accessible. New marketing strategies and the expansion of international flight routes helped facilitate movement. The newly emerging eco, health, adventure, and heritage tourism sectors helped post-war Sri Lanka establish its reputation as a tourism destination.

However, these developments can also pose challenges. Over tourism, usually associated with places like Venice, Barcelona, or Bali, has also entered conversations regarding Sri Lankan tourism. Although the volume of international arrivals has increased, the necessary developments in regulation and infrastructure have tended to lag, particularly in some coastal and cultural focal points that receive large numbers of tourists. Stakeholders are concerned with accompanying social, infrastructural, and environmental burdens, as well as cultural erosion and localised service and infrastructure overload. Similar situations in the past have provided valuable lessons in addressing these challenges on time. Thailand and Indonesia are examples in this respect. Both countries have been struggling with the same issues for years.

This study revolves around the following question: Is Sri Lanka experiencing over-tourism, and if so, how can it be mitigated? Within the framework of sustainable tourism development and economic geography, this research employs a qualitative approach to investigate the interrelated and complex policies, perceptions, and practices that comprise the current tourism market in Sri Lanka. It also contrasts Sri Lanka with Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam, countries that share cultural, geographical, and developmental similarities, albeit with different policy approaches to similar problems. Fully understanding the impact of tourism on stakeholders and participants thus requires integrating different perspectives, including those of governmental policymakers, market operators, residents of tourism destinations, and tourists. This makes it possible to integrate micro-level data and the experiences of the most affected.

This approach draws on Perera's (2017) observation that tourism data encompass not just volume metrics but must consider profile and behavioural attributes. Treatments of over-tourism often overlook critical details, such as shifts in tourists' age profiles, the narrowing of travel seasons, an increase in short, back-to-back trips, and the proliferation of mono-functional tourism zones that alienate residents. These details are critical in revealing the underlying narrative of over-tourism.

Sri Lanka's tourism sector, like that of other South Asian countries, is facing challenges where unplanned expansion is leading to the overutilization of local capital, inequity, disintegration of local socioeconomics, and socio-cultural and environmental harm and deterioration, as seen in other similar markets (Malinda & Maharani, 2024). This situation, therefore, presents a compelling case for the urgent need for more sustainable, inclusive, and regionally adaptive tourism governance frameworks to prevent permanent damage (Laksiri, 2025). Without implementing proactive governance initiatives, planned sustainable frameworks, and other measures to address Sri Lanka's socio-economic challenges related to tourism, the consequences are irrevocable and comparable to those of other over-tourism destinations (Judisseno, 2015). The situation calls for immediate resilience-designed frameworks that are diversified to manage tourism socio-economic pressures (World Economic Forum, 2025).

## **Literature Review**

The body of work focusing on over-tourism in Southeast Asia encompasses a wide range of variables related to the rapid growth of the tourism sector, including its causes, effects, and potential solutions to address the issue. While there is considerable variation in the literature, a strong consensus remains on the need to rethink the development of the tourism industry in a way that prioritises approaches that are sustainable, equitable, and resilient, rather than focusing primarily on the volume of tourism and the income generated. Sri Lanka occupies a unique position in the region, and, like its neighbours Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam, is subject to considerable pressure in its tourism development. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges Sri Lanka faces in the Asian tourism landscape, particularly its vulnerabilities and the gaps in its tourism governance.

Over-tourism involves excessive tourism that exceeds the biological, social, economic, and cultural limits of a destination, as indicated in various studies (Peeters et al., 2018). The European parliamentary report reiterates the stresses over tourism places on destinations when the number of visiting customers exceeds the available, even the environmental and social limits of the destinations, which is evident in the Sri Lankan case where tourist attractions like Ella, Sigiriya, and Unawatuna face degraded infrastructure, ecosystems, and conflicts with tourists, as well as weak monitoring and poorly developed policy frameworks surrounding tourist destinations.

For the unregulated growth of tourism, Indonesia, especially Bali, serves as a cautionary example. Bali is documented as suffering some of the worst impacts of over-tourism (Utama et al., 2024). These impacts include the destruction of coral reefs, depletion of groundwater resources, social alienation, and the commodification of cultural heritage. Although some pressures are being alleviated through the implementation of community-based tourism and mixed-methods assessment frameworks, the challenges persist, primarily due to the conflicting goals of economic growth and sustainability. The case of Bali illustrates the need for incorporating fully inclusive stakeholder participation, local empowerment, and the active and fully enforced implementation of prohibitive policies as the foundations of sustainable tourism and planning. These are potential building blocks for sustainable tourism that are sorely lacking in Sri Lanka's governance.

Thailand, as another major tourist destination, provides a different perspective. According to Malinda and Maharani (2024), the Thai government has taken strategic steps, including green public procurement, tightening regulations, and utilising digital platforms to alter tourist behaviour for the conservation of culture and the environment. Thailand, unlike Indonesia, has a more top-down governance model with active state involvement, which suggests the equitable impact of policy-driven sustainability in tourism. This is certainly a lesson for Sri Lanka, which has a poorly developed and piecemeal approach to regulation and unsustainable tourism driven by weak governance.

In terms of tourist segmentation, Herryani and Nugroho (2025) discussed the expansion of the backpacker phenomenon in Thailand, which has resulted in a concentration of tourist activities in specific urban and coastal regions. While there are economic benefits, especially to micro-enterprises, the uncontrolled backpacker tourism is greatly detrimental to locally managed tourism due to poorly regulated budget hostels and public facilities. This is particularly relevant to Sri Lanka, where informal tourism businesses are active, poorly regulated, and lack access to essential supporting infrastructure, resulting in over-tourism and land-use conflicts. This informal sector largely determines the use of tourism infrastructure and contributes to outdated policies in the tourism sector.

Wong (2024) is one of the few authors in this region who unpacked the techniques that can be adopted to alleviate over-tourism through time- and space-based dispersal of tourists, visitor segmentation, and urban infrastructural development. Drawing on recommendations from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), he illustrated the importance of effective integrated planning and stakeholder collaboration. For Sri Lanka, these pointers indicate the importance of transitioning from volume-based marketing to more sustainable tourism governance frameworks that integrate dispersal policies, infrastructural improvements, and visitor education.

The gap in Sri Lanka is perhaps best articulated in the European Parliament-commissioned study on macroeconomic strategies (Peeters et al., 2018). He identified tourism intensity, tourism density, and the distribution of short-term rentals as triggers of over-tourism. He argued that tourism management needs to rationalise and integrate empirical adaptive control systems within the planning process. It is particularly concerning that the study stated that over-tourism most impacts island and heritage tourism, exactly the categories that Sri Lanka falls within. The importance of developing a specific strategy in this context can thus not be overstated.

The World Economic Forum's scenario analysis (2025) presents a crucial foresight component to the discourse. The scenarios described include fragmented, environmentally driven, technologically disrupted, and harmoniously balanced pathways. This highlights the necessity of preparing, displaying, and implementing

institutional flexibility through anticipation. For Sri Lanka, this presents an opportunity to situate itself within the ‘green ascent’ or ‘harmonious horizons’ scenarios by embracing eco-friendly and equitable tourism development in the country.

The examined writings collectively suggest that over-tourism is a complex, systemic problem involving governance, markets, and socioecological interactions. For Sri Lanka, the over-tourism situation is not yet at the benchmark level of Bali or Barcelona, but the evidence is clear: the infrastructure is lagging behind a fast-growing tourist population, ecological systems are stressed, and the local population is dissatisfied. Countries that have managed to delay or reverse the over-tourism spiral have done so through a combination of inclusive governance frameworks, adequate market regulations, and diversification of tourism products.

Conducting qualitative, interview-based research becomes imperative in this scenario. Most studies conducted so far have relied on secondary data or macro-level assessments, with few investigating the lived experiences and perceptions of ground-level stakeholders, such as tourism operators, local residents, or visiting tourists. This gap in research is particularly problematic in the Sri Lankan context, where national tourism policies often fail to align with local realities or expectations. This study aims to shed light on this gap by collecting primary data through semi-structured interviews, providing empirical depth to the discourse on over-tourism.

Academically, this research is premised on three theoretical pillars. First, the ‘tourism area life cycle’ (TALC) model provides a means of understanding the evolution of a tourism destination from the initial stage of exploration to possible decline, a cycle shaped by visitation volume and the actions of relevant stakeholders. Second, the ‘limits of acceptable change’ (LAC) framework helps in understanding the maximum impact of tourism that a community and its environment can sustain without negative repercussions. Third, ‘stakeholder theory’ emphasises the involvement of different groups in tourism planning, arguing that sustainability concerns can be addressed only through integrative governance.

These three frameworks provide a valuable basis for qualitative research, as they justify considering different stakeholders, highlight the socioecological limits within which destination development can be planned, and offer a longitudinal perspective on the study of tourism in Sri Lanka. This theoretical perspective, in turn, serves to guide the research design and expand the policy scope of the research, thereby addressing both practical and theoretical concerns.

## **Methodology**

This research was developed within a qualitative interpretivist framework, seeking to understand the complex, context-sensitive, and subjective nature of over-tourism. This was explored through the perspectives of four case study locations: Bali (Indonesia), Phuket (Thailand), Halong Bay (Vietnam), and Galle (Sri Lanka). Fieldwork was conducted from November 2024 to January 2025. This timeframe was chosen for its overlap with the high and post-peak tourism seasons, thus aligning the research with a diverse set of relevant stakeholder experiences.

Choosing a qualitative approach is an expression of my ontological belief that realities are multiple and constructed. The subjective nature of over tourism, where economic, ecological, and cultural thresholds are heavily contested, makes a qualitative approach highly relevant. Therefore, the chosen primary data collection method of semi-structured interviews allowed the research to gather narrative accounts that are more valuable for understanding the complex layers of the realities of over-tourism than quantified data.

Data was collected from a purposefully selected sample of 180 participants, with a minimum of 45 interviews carried out at each of the four study sites. This sample size was deemed appropriate according to saturation theory (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025), which suggests that saturation is reached when no new themes are identified during data collection. The target population consisted of government tourism officers, local policymakers, private sector tourism operators, host community members, and both domestic and international tourists. These groups were selected to ensure a wide range of perspectives, as all have a direct stake and are impacted by tourism dynamics. This aligns with stakeholder theory, which suggests that all groups should be involved in the governance of a system (Bouncken et al, 2025).

The primary sampling approach employed was purposive sampling, selected for its capacity to enable the targeting of participants with experience and expertise regarding the impact of tourism at the study sites (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). This approach emphasises theoretical and contextual depth as opposed to mere statistical significance. Where formal access was restricted, this research also applied snowball sampling to the extent that referrals were used to access additional participants (Golzar et al, 2022). This enabled the obtainment of a well-rounded sample that is robust from a policy perspective. Participants highlighted aspects of overtourism, including social norms, conflicts over resources, market dynamics, pressure on infrastructure, and policy implications.

The interview guide was developed from the theoretical groundwork established in the literature review. It was predominantly grounded in three central constructs: the TALC model, LAC, and stakeholder theory. The TALC model provides insight for questions concerning perceptions around destination maturity, saturation, and the future trajectory of the region. The LAC framework provides questions focused on ecological limits, levels of carrying capacity, and resident tolerance thresholds. Stakeholder theory focuses on questions concerning the roles and responsibilities, power inequalities, and perceptions of governance legitimacy, framing questions around the perceptions that actors hold. Consequently, the guide contained thematic sections on the perceived benefits and costs of tourism, experiences related to the management of tourism, behavioural observations of visitors, tensions and conflicts created by tourism activities, and exploratory pointers for sustainability.

Internal validity and trustworthiness were ensured through the use of secure digital platforms. All interviews were conducted by the lead researcher, either in person or digitally when physical access was impossible. Interviews were recorded and fully transcribed for thematic analysis. Cross-site comparisons and thematic analysis were conducted after coding the transcripts in NVivo. Thematic analysis allowed for the development of categorised themes in a combination of deductive and inductive ways, which was important for the research to remain grounded. The chosen analytical techniques, framework and thematic analysis are appropriate for the qualitative nature of the research. Framework analysis offers flexibility in organising and comparing data for multiple case studies, aiding in the consistency of interpretation. Thematic analysis relies on the data provided by participants to identify recurring themes, which provide a rich description of the socio-ecological dynamics of over-tourism. The chosen methods are well-suited for this research in the tourism sector (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Before commencing fieldwork, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the relevant ethics review board within the institution. Information sheets were provided to the participants, who then signed consent forms. The data collection integrity for this study is ensured through the described methodological transparency, participant selection, adherence to standardised interview procedures, and data analysis, which encompass ethical dimensions, thereby establishing the integrity of the research outcomes. Data collected from participants is guaranteed to be anonymised, confidential, and qualitatively described, using pseudonymous transcripts and publications to safeguard participant identity. The research's cross-cultural dimension necessitated a sensitive approach, which involved the linguistic and contextual adaptation of interview frameworks, as well as the potential use of translators and cultural intermediaries.

## Findings

This section presents a consolidated thematic analysis of qualitative interviews and relevant literature concerning four major coastal destinations: Sri Lanka (Galle), Indonesia (Bali), Thailand (Phuket), and Vietnam (Ha Long Bay). Based on interviews with stakeholders across various sectors, the findings illuminate critical systemic issues. These relate specifically to inadequate spatial planning, socio-economic disparity, cultural appropriation, and ecological neglect. Conversely, recent innovations and policy changes, often designed using readily available local documents situated within the study localities, indicate a strong desire for change. The frameworks detailed in the subsequent narratives, along with Tables 1, 2, and 3, discuss these interrelated issues and anticipated transformations in detail.

**Table 1**  
*Thematic analysis*

Theme	Total frequency	Combined interview evidence	Included sub-codes
Governance and spatial planning failures	101	Gov. official (Phuket): "We never planned zones, so resorts eat up villages." Local (Galle): "They're building hotels on paddy fields." Tour operator (Galle): "Everyone wants the beach; nobody promotes the inland." Resident (Bali): "My farm is dying, but surfers are everywhere." Planner (Halong Bay): "We didn't study the limits before allowing cruises." Tourism officer (Galle): "We lack data to say when enough is enough." NGO Leader (Bali): "The law exists, but nobody enforces it." Tourist official (Sri Lanka): "We fear backlash from investors."	Lack of destination zoning, overdependence on coastal tourism, ignored carrying capacity assessments, and resistance to regulatory frameworks
Socioeconomic displacement and inequity	73	Vendor (Phuket): "I can't afford my own rent now." Local elder (Galle): "Tourism raised prices beyond our means." Resident (Bali): "They moved us for a hotel chain." Heritage officer (Galle): "Temples now shadowed by villas." Fisherman (Halong Bay): "Tourists block fishing routes." Resident (Phuket): "Freshwater gets diverted to hotels."	Tourism-driven inflation, displacement of locals from heritage zones, and resource conflict with local needs
Environmental degradation and mismanagement	56	Cleaner (Halong): "Trash from cruises ends up on our shores." Environmental officer (Galle): "No bins, no education." Eco-tour operator (Thailand): "They call it green but drive SUVs." Community rep (Galle): "Planting trees for pictures, nothing else."	Tourism waste mismanagement, greenwashing by operators

Cultural displacement and identity loss	57	Teacher (Galle): "Kids dance for tourists, not tradition." Elder (Bali): "Festivals are now Instagram shows." Volunteer (Vietnam): "Drunkenness at temples." Host (Phuket): "Tourists ignore dress codes."	Erosion of local cultural identity, tourist misconduct and value clashes
Tourism market volatility and instability	47	Souvenir seller (Thailand): "No sales 8 months a year." Local (Galle): "We survive on peak season only." Marketing analyst (Bali): "Every influencer posts the same waterfall." Youth (Galle): "No discovery left."	Seasonal economic vulnerability, digital influencer saturation
Futures-oriented, tech-driven solutions	32	Tech planner (Thailand): "AI helps predict overcrowding." Digital strategist (Vietnam): "We nudge demand to offbeat trails." Entrepreneur (Galle): "We built a site run by the village." Youth leader (Bali): "Now we tell our own story."	AI-driven predictive itineraries, community-led tech tourism platforms

(Source: Authors' Compilation)

Interviews conducted as part of the thematic analysis (See Table 1) identified interconnected issues that appeared multiple times during interviews across the four destinations. The experiences that give rise to these issues are not abstract. They are real and were articulated by local citizens, local tourism officials, planners, entrepreneurs, and others in the tourism value chain. The frequency and intensity of the themes contain both the specificity and the commonality of the pressures of over-tourism across a range of situations.

Out of the 101 coded segments, the largest single issue was described in the categories of Unmanaged Governance and Spatial Planning Failures. There was an impression of lack of order, and in some cases, lack of any planning and of chaotic irregularity. Respondents from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam described considerable frustration at the absence of regulated zoning and the overdevelopment of and resource concentration on the coast, as well as the absence of any political interest, data, or analysis in the establishment and evaluation of boundaries for development. Remarks such as "We never planned zones" and "We fear backlash from investors" capture the sense of lack of planning and structural avoidance of setting governance frameworks that are authoritative and long-term.

The accounts illustrate the inequities and inequitable displacements occurring as the rapid growth of tourism creates uneven socio-economic burdens. Respondents reported displacements in the form of removals from formerly owned homes, rising costs of living, and inequitable access to water. Respondents' statements also conveyed a sense of growing inequity as the burdens of tourism development increased. A vendor in Phuket exclaimed, "I can't afford my own rent now," and an elder in Galle remarked, "Tourism raised prices beyond our means." Both statements evoke the sense of inequity that accompanies the growth of a tourism economy, as profits flow to investors and enterprises located outside the region, while host communities and less affluent tourists bear the burdens of socio-economic inequities from poorly managed tourism growth and unequal socio-economic development.

In the domain of Environmental Degradation and Mismanagement, respondents from Halong Bay to Bali voiced discontent concerning the lack of difference that substantive action on the so-called sustainability agenda would bring. The term "superficial green" captures the lack of waste management, poorly regulated cruise tourism, and the performance of environmentalist activities like "planting trees for pictures, and nothing else." Others complained about the lack of basic facilities like trash bins, pointing to an absence of both theoretical and functional infrastructure for waste management and education.

Displacing Culture and Identity Loss were other major concerns, particularly since several community hosts, educators, and older community members reflected on this theme. Surveyed individuals noted that traditions were increasingly modified and focused on for tourists, leading to a loss of meaning and destruction of purpose. "Kids dance for tourists, not tradition" and "Festivals are now Instagram shows" emphasise how culture is packaged for tourists. Stakeholders felt a global audience negatively affected the preservation of culture, identity, and meaning. While local hosts and visitors felt culture was repackaged for tourists, identity preservation stakeholders noted the repackaging was done negatively for tourists.

Concerns with Tourism Market Volatility and Instability undersell tourism destinations digitally overly focused on seasonal peaks and maintain homogeneous marketing strategies. Many locals described a seasonal tourism window, a singular and concentrated period of tourism flow within the year, and year-round low socio-economic stability. Young locals described the saturation as an endless, monotonous, and homogeneous digital copying — "every influencer posts the same waterfall." The comments reflect not only concerns around income and economic level but also the loss and erosion of uniqueness in the narratives around the tourism destinations of the community as a whole.

Futures-Oriented, Tech-Driven Solutions encourage optimism in how stakeholders are thinking. Although this theme was less reported, it captures the more positive, future-oriented approaches to managing tourism. As described by the respondents, there are no limits to the innovative uses of digital and community technologies to forecast, diffuse, and reclaim narrative ownership of tourism. An AI developer in Thailand described how "AI helps predict overcrowding," and a Galle entrepreneur explained, "We built a site run by the village." These observations demonstrate the understanding of digital technologies as a means of envisioning a new and more equitable tourism economy, should efforts to adapt new AI tools to local contexts and digital technologies be used to promote more equitable and sustainable tourism.

### Cross Case Analysis

Table 2 juxtaposes the challenges and prospects for tourism across the four case studies: Sri Lanka (Galle), Bali (Indonesia), Phuket (Thailand), and Halong Bay (Vietnam). Each destination is analyzed based on prospective risks, opportunities, and trends for various stakeholders. This section integrates qualitative data from stakeholder interviews concerning tourism governance, socio-economic displacement, environmental degradation, and cultural tourism. It also examines the integration of policy and sustainability through the management of overtourism and the development of resilience and inclusiveness in the tourism sector.

**Table 2**  
*Cross-case analysis*

Destination	Stakeholder Insights	Forecasted Trends & Evidence	Risks Identified	Opportunities for Transformation
Sri Lanka	Participants revealed widespread dissatisfaction with unregulated expansion, lack of inclusive planning, and the growing disconnect between local communities and central policy actors. They pointed to infrastructural gaps and cultural exploitation in hotspots like Galle, warning of irreversible socio-ecological damage without urgent policy realignment.	Sri Lanka's inability to reform tourism governance could exacerbate overtourism, eroding local culture and investor confidence. However, literature suggests integrated resilience planning and regional eco-linkages could reposition Sri Lanka as a slower-paced, culturally rooted destination (Perera et al., 2023; Article 2).	Loss of cultural identity, infrastructure fatigue, political instability, and tourism-induced inequality	Integrate climate-resilient tourism planning with local governance and cultural immersion
Indonesia (Bali)	Respondents shared concerns over land dispossession, unsustainable development, and over-tourism fatigue among locals. Community voices were often ignored in zoning decisions. Operators highlighted growing dependence on short-term rentals and a collapse in rural-urban balance. Calls for zoning and tourism taxation were frequent.	If zoning and taxation reforms are adopted, Bali could emerge as a leader in niche eco and wellness tourism. Academic sources confirm a policy shift toward carrying capacity enforcement and tourism decentralisation (Wijaya, 2024; Article 4).	Community displacement, land speculation, and ecological threshold breach	Empower rural communities via eco-retreat licensing and enforce ecological zoning
Thailand (Phuket)	Local operators and community leaders expressed worry over tourism intensity, rising cultural commodification, and infrastructure bottlenecks. Complaints centred on tourism monopolising public resources, diminishing traditional economies, and unequal policy benefits. Respondents supported regulated caps and cultural heritage zoning.	Phuket may transition to a controlled tourism economy emphasising decentralisation, cultural zones, and visitor tech-tracking. Research forecasts stronger circular governance frameworks and smart-tourism applications in managing demand (Tan & Krit, 2023; Article 6).	Cultural loss, infrastructure stress, and economic overdependence on tourism nodes	Establish tourist caps, redistribute tourism to inland provinces, and strengthen cultural zoning
Vietnam (Halong Bay)	Interviewees highlighted increasing pollution, marginalisation of fishing families, and weak enforcement of marine protections. They emphasised the need for co-managed ecotourism, integrating community voices into state strategy. Waste from tourism was framed as a governance and cultural problem, not only an environmental one.	Halong Bay could develop into a model of eco-governance through community-embedded tourism models and hybrid governance. Literature supports co-management initiatives, linking tourism with sustainable marine and agrarian practices (Laksiri et al., 2023; Article 1).	Marine degradation, exclusion of smallholders, and regulatory enforcement failures	Scale pilot co-management ecotourism, create circular models combining tourism, fisheries, and culture

(Source: Authors' Compilation)

The primary challenges and opportunities related to sustainable tourism in Galle, Bali, Phuket, and Halong Bay are summarised in Table 2. The perspectives of various stakeholders, along with their expectations and potential risks, provide the context for the complex destination analyses that follow. Sri Lanka, for instance, faces unresolved political and structural environmental challenges, and the overlooked issues of diffuse and fragmented governance, recorded in the table, resonate with the urgent need for reform and widespread political dissatisfaction. Similarly, the risks identified for Bali, Indonesia, relate to the overconcentration of tourists and the displacement of local communities, reinforcing the importance of zoning laws and the enforcement of carrying capacity for viable, sustainable tourism practices. The context of the table also applies to Phuket and Halong Bay, where the need for visitor restrictions and the governance of culture and communities to mitigate over-tourism, as discussed, is paramount. Sri Lanka's climate-resilient tourism frameworks also show potential. The co-managed ecotourism initiatives in Halong Bay and climate-resilient tourism frameworks in Sri Lanka are prime examples for all destinations seeking to address over-tourism while enhancing the protection of their cultural and environmental legacies.

### **Sri Lanka: Tourism profile and policy overview**

According to interviews conducted in Sri Lanka, there is considerable, indeed 'overwhelming,' precariousness in the tourism sector, marked by political conflict, economic dislocation, and environmental neglect. Respondents noted that while tourism is vital for the country's revenue and income generation and employment, the absence of a primary crisis-management plan renders it incapable of responding to cascading crises. There is a 'seemingly permanent disconnectedness' between the national tourism plan and the 'ground' and local reality. The 'remote,' 'hierarchical,' and 'delegated' aspects in regulating, for example, 'urban zoning, tourist infrastructure enforcement in and around protected areas, and rapid urban tourism' contribute to 'overbuilt and layered tourist sprawl' around and in targeted places. Recent work by Laksiri (2025) places Sri Lanka within a politically and economically volatile environment, neglecting climate-adaptive infrastructure, and pushing tourism development to the brink of potential collapse from over-tourism. Within the next decade, provided the country implements the 'needed influential shifts in governance and regional, intersectoral, and effective policy engagement' and 'planning,' Sri Lanka can attempt to reposition itself as a 'resilient heritage' tourism destination in the 'global south,' leveraging current slower-paced tourism and deeper, authentic experiences.

### **Indonesia: Policy responses to over-tourism**

In Bali, feedback provides a sobering perspective on a travel destination over the decades. For tourism concentrated in southern Bali, the real estate market has become over-inflated, and entire communities have become disconnected from their traditional farmlands and temple complexes. The interviews emphasised the urgent need to establish capacity limits and enforce ecologically responsible zoning. Stakeholders highlighted the consequences of unchecked mass tourism on the local populace and both rural and urban ecosystems. Research, especially following Oratmangun et al. (2025), points out that local ecological efforts are undermined by macro-level development across overstretched borders and calls for strategic development in a high-yield, low-volume market while prioritising digital tourism infrastructure and robust zoning to protect Bali's strategic reputation in transition tourism governance. Bali could serve as a unique example in the region for transitional tourism on the governance continuum.

### **Thailand: Managing tourism pressure in popular destinations**

During interviews, respondents noted the resulting oversaturation of tourist-focused experiences, leaving little room for local culture. Thailand, and particularly Phuket, faces issues of spatial saturation and economic monoculture, where the port, water, and waste infrastructures are poorly aligned. Phuket stakeholders warn of the risks of over-tourism without deliberate tourist diversification and limits. This dominant theme in the commodification of Thai identity and the risk of becoming a less distinctive destination (Articles 3 and 6) receives little attention in the literature and risk management. Looking ahead, stakeholders envision preserving the cultural integrity of secondary nodes and uplifting areas through economic diversification. With civil governance and smart tourism implemented, Phuket could become a regional leader in managing the legacies of over-tourism.

### **Vietnam: Community-based tourism and state regulation**

Halong Bay embodies a paradox of surging arrivals and endangered authenticity. Interviews showed how rapid growth has stressed traditional fisheries, increased pollution, and caused cultural erosion, yet also revealed strong community interest in co-managing tourism. Local stakeholders called for a combination of state oversight and grassroots initiatives such as sustainable cruise operations and community-run homestays. Research by Laksiri et al. (2025) supports this view, identifying Vietnam as an emerging regional leader in community-integrated ecotourism policy. The future of Halong Bay depends on scaling these experimental initiatives—embedding environmental offsets, boosting local profit retention, and developing governance models that support both

tourists and traditional livelihoods. If successful, Halong Bay could become a regional benchmark for eco-conscious, community-led coastal tourism.

**Framework matrix**

Table 3 presents a framework matrix that synthesises stakeholder insights, policy implications, and cross-case evidence across four key tourism destinations: Sri Lanka, Bali, Phuket, and Halong Bay. The table highlights common challenges such as governance failures, socio-economic displacement, and environmental degradation while offering actionable policy recommendations and opportunities for transformation.

**Table 3**  
*Framework matrix*

Theme	Stakeholder Voices	Policy Implications	Cross-Case Evidence
Governance and Spatial Planning Failures	Sri Lanka: “They’re building hotels on paddy fields.” (Local - Galle) Phuket: “We never planned zones.” (Gov. Official) Halong: “No study before cruises.” (Planner)	Urgent need for zoning laws, carrying capacity audits, and integrated regional planning to prevent saturation.	Seen in all four sites: Galle, Bali, Phuket, and Halong Bay. Lack of zoning and reactive planning is a shared pattern.
Socioeconomic Displacement and Inequity	Bali: “They moved us for a hotel chain.” (Resident) Phuket: “I can’t afford my own rent now.” (Vendor) Galle: “Tourism raised prices beyond our means.” (Elder)	Need for equitable tourism policies addressing gentrification, land rights, and community benefit-sharing mechanisms.	Appears strongly in Bali, Galle, and Phuket, where tourism-induced displacement is documented. Halong shows a rising trend.
Environmental Degradation and Mismanagement	Halong Bay: “Trash from cruises ends up on our shores.” (Cleaner) Galle: “No bins, no education.” (Env. Officer) Bali: “They call it green but drive SUVs.” (Operator)	Call for enforceable environmental regulations, transparent reporting, and penalties for greenwashing.	Reported by all coastal locations, especially Halong Bay and Bali. Sustainability rhetoric is rarely backed by action.
Cultural Displacement and Identity Loss	Galle: “Kids dance for tourists, not tradition.” (Teacher) Bali: “Festivals are now Instagram shows.” (Elder) Phuket: “Tourists ignore dress codes.” (Host)	Cultural preservation strategies include heritage zoning, ethical tourism guidelines, and community-led festivals.	Cultural tensions and tourist disrespect were commonly reported in Phuket, Galle, and Bali.
Tourism Market Volatility and Instability	Galle: “We survive on peak season only.” (Local) Thailand: “No sales 8 months a year.” (Seller) Bali: “Every influencer posts the same waterfall.” (Youth)	Introduce tourism stabilisation policies such as seasonal subsidies, secondary destination marketing, and price floors.	Economic fragility linked to peak season reliance was clear in Galle and Phuket. Redundancy of tourism content noted in Bali.
Futures-Oriented, Tech-Driven Solutions	Thailand: “AI helps predict overcrowding.” (Planner) Vietnam: “We nudge demand to offbeat trails.” (Strategist) Galle: “We built a site run by the village.” (Entrepreneur)	Governments should invest in digital infrastructure, community-tech partnerships, and predictive tourism planning platforms.	Tech optimism was highest in Vietnam and Thailand, but community-led tech platforms are emerging in Galle and Bali too.

(Source: Authors’ Compilation)

Results from the framework analysis (Table 3) show complex and systemic patterns of challenges and opportunities in tourism development in Sri Lanka, Bali, Phuket, and Halong Bay. Utilizing interview data supplemented by recent literature, this text aims to provide a thematic narrative synthesis that captures and integrates stakeholder voices, identifies concerns, implications for action, and insights across contexts.

Concerns of inadequate governance and failures in spatial planning were noted across all four destinations. This points to a common regional problem of uncontrolled tourism expansion. Stakeholders in Sri Lanka and Thailand echoed the same frustrations as a Galle-based participant who stated, “They’re building hotels on paddy fields,” similar to a candid government official in Phuket: “We never planned zones.” This is indicative of a systemic absence of spatial policy frameworks. Stakeholders’ frustration about the absence of tourism carrying capacity reports, reactive state intervention, and planning aligns with literature on the South and Southeast Asian tourism governance gap (Perera et al., 2023). The need for integrated zoning is now urgent. The absence of cohesive and coordinated land-use policies, integration of regulatory frameworks, and transboundary tourism planning will lead to the rapid depletion of destination resources. The need for integrated zoning is now urgent.

Alongside issues of governance are longstanding problems of socioeconomic inequity and displacement. Socioeconomic inequity and displacement were among the top concerns of local communities in Bali, Galle, and Phuket. As one resident from Bali recounted, “They moved us for a hotel chain,” and one vendor from Phuket stated, “I can’t afford my own rent now,” highlighting the dispossession and gentrification experiences of local communities. The inequities outlined in the case studies seem to stem from a lack of effective community participation and revenue sharing. That is, the socioeconomic inequities regarding the benefits from tourism suggest the need for the incorporation of social equity as a core value in tourism planning. Literature by Wijaya

(2024) supports this, highlighting how decentralisation and community-managed licensing could restore balance between profit and people.

Disregard for sustainability is apparent not only in the discourse but also in the management of environmental resources. Halong Bay and Bali illuminated the shortcomings of sustainability rhetoric. A Halong Bay cleaner recounted, "Trash from cruises ends up on our shores." Liber Bali denounced the environmental hypocrisy of "green" Bali: "They call it green but drive SUVs." These testimonials relay the glaring absence of enforcement and oversight from the state on so-called "eco" initiatives. With "eco" governance, the state needs to do more than superficial commercial branding to address direct infractions of overexploitation of the community and the commons.

Place and identity loss occurred in the cases of Bali, Galle, and Phuket. There are many community sectors where cultural scripts perform culturally discordant performances and embody community values. In Galle, a teacher lamented, "Kids dance for tourists, not for tradition." An elder in Bali stated, "The festivals are now Instagram shows." Such comments pertain to the commodification of cultural heritage and the loss of cultural authenticity. In relation to the culturally driven commodification of cultural performances, there are cultural tourism strategies for de-marketing purposes. Efforts for community and cultural tourism strategies must be grounded in community, community control, respect, and ethics.

Respondents highlighted the economic fragility of Galle and Phuket, particularly concerning the shortness of peak seasons and inconsistent international demand, further emphasising the perils of Galle's tourism dependency. One local said, "We survive on peak season only." Bali experiences similar digital fatigue. This suggests the need for improved and expanded domestic tourism and policy innovation, as well as the need for content innovation driven by the desire for depth of experience rather than volume. The hope for the future of tourism, as discussed in Vietnam and Thailand, stems from the use of technology. These tourism planners spoke of the use of AI for visitor management and the digital nudging of tourist flows. "AI helps predict overcrowding," noted a planner in Thailand. "We built a site run by the village," said an entrepreneur from Galle. This shows the promising adoption of technology in the governance of tourism. Future planning must prioritise the digital gap by ensuring the local, as opposed to the corporate, community leads the digital charge.

These themes highlight the weaknesses and possibilities that affect the governance of tourism within Asia. The apparent uniformity of stakeholder narratives across diverse geographies suggests a likely overtourism crisis. This is attributable to unregulated, retention-centric, and exclusionary development practices. That said, community-initiated and technological innovations, along with stakeholder consciousness, represent constructive and proactive opportunities for tourism governance. This is contingent upon their application within participatory governance and comprehensive policy frameworks.

To further improve this argument and highlight the originality of the Sri Lanka case, the relevant data must be connected more clearly to the theoretical frameworks of the TALC model, the LAC model, and Stakeholder Theory. One indicator of the originality of Sri Lanka's tourism development experience is the internally governed, fragmented tourism system. This is both a pathological characteristic of the system and a component cause of over-tourism. Local stakeholders emphasise the poorly coordinated spatial distribution of tourism activities and the lack of administrative controls. Over-tourism is conceptually understood through the scrutinised case studies of Bali and Phuket. In contrast, Sri Lanka is developing its tourism system, and the challenges of governance provide a different narrative. Within the literature, the dominant Sri Lankan narrative focuses on socioeconomic, spatial, and political ungovernance vulnerabilities, inequitable environmental exploitation, and the political ungovernance that exposes the gap.

The application of the LAC framework in this instance is ground-breaking, as it denotes that tourism policies within the Sri Lankan context remain to define what 'impact on communities and ecosystems' consists of in practical terms. This is especially pertinent to the study of 'limits of acceptable change' in circumstances that so far lack such legislation and policies. Given Sri Lanka's relative vulnerability in this context and the developing systemic transformations, it is different compared to the rest of the destinations studied. This has implications for the theoretical constructs and the policy approaches likely to be put in this context.

## **Discussion**

Key findings in this research point to a multitude of inequalities and tensions, which are both relational to, and necessary for, positive change in the tourism contexts of Sri Lanka, Indonesia (Bali), Thailand (Phuket), and Vietnam (Halong Bay). The four destinations have unique and overt manifestations of overtourism, but taken as a whole, they tell a regional narrative of fragile equilibrium characterised by rapid growth, reactive governance, and poorly developed socio-ecological systems.

### **Sri Lanka: Governance vacuum and potential for revival**

To have a meaningful discussion on the tourism governance vacuum in Sri Lanka, there must first be some governance structure in place. Respondents pointed to the lack of correspondence between national tourism governance arrangements and the tourism realities on the ground. The inability to contain urban sprawl, especially within the heritage areas of Galle, is primarily a governance failure. The loss of agricultural reserve lands to hotels and unproductive urban sprawl is a hallmark of a governance deficit. The absence of genuine zoning regulations makes Sri Lanka comparable to the situation Wong (2024) describes, where tourism hyper-concentration occurs due to the lack of effective spatial controls. Political and economic instability render the Sri Lankan state particularly ill-equipped to address the negative consequences arising from unmanaged growth in the tourism sector. However, unlike a majority of the stakeholders in this research, the interviewees displayed an understanding of the positives. The Sri Lankan grassroots tourism movement, coupled with the community's sense of pride and rich cultural traditions, provides a fertile ground for the revival of tourism governance.

### **Bali, Indonesia: Inequitable growth and ecological harm**

The high price placed on economic achievements in Bali, Indonesia, indicates the possible repercussions of inequities in growth and development. Isolated escapism remains a strong image of the island. However, this image is built on cultural homogenization, dilution, and serious environmental harm—issues that stakeholders tend to ignore. Of greater concern are narratives on land dispossession and ecological harm that accompany the unfettered growth of tourism and real estate speculation (Utama et al., 2024).

Community zoning proposals at the micro-scale and other initiatives offer instances for optimism. The key issue is the degree to which grassroots efforts can grow and whether the official state will support them. Perera et al. (2024) explore the idea of transitional tourism governance, for which Bali exemplifies the potential for mid-course corrections. It is neither a cautionary tale nor a utopian paradise; there is still the possibility of progress in a positive direction.

### **Phuket, Thailand: The intensity of disorder**

Concerning Phuket, Thailand, the problem is not a lack of order but rather the intensity of the disorder. Phuket is a perfect example of the overtourism problem. The destination has the wrong type of state-supported marketing and hospitality infrastructure. Many respondents talked about cultural and infrastructural decay as well as unsatisfactory economic disparity due to the commodification of the space. Malinda and Maharani (2024) highlight the economic and geopolitical spatial issues caused by the centrifugal distribution of tourism infrastructure and poorly circulated economic resources for tourism activities. The Thailand example provides a fine illustration of state tourism. Phuket has stated policies of dynamic tourism, tourist traffic technologies, and heritage zoning. Phuket's stakeholders and citizens understand that there is a need for tourism control. This cultural acceptance of limits is something that Sri Lanka and tourism economies of a comparable caste can work towards.

### **Halong Bay, Vietnam: Hybrid model and co-management**

The mosaic that is Halong Bay, Vietnam, is a region that bridges the gap between community aspirations and system outcomes. In contrast to the privatised accommodations found in Bali or the top-down governance model in Phuket, Halong is a hybrid model with an active community willing to partake in sustainable tourism development, although policy gaps exist. Of course, the primary concerns are pollution and the marginalisation of fishing and tourism stakeholders. Many people interviewed demonstrated their strongest aspirations toward co-management models, reflecting Laksiri et al.'s (2025) expectation that Vietnam has the potential to become a regional leader in community tourism governance. Halong is also unique in that it is the only case in this study with a rich tourism potential and adjacent traditional livelihoods that can run alongside tourism.

### **Cross-cutting insights and strategic direction**

Cross-cutting insights that are present and which would benefit from additional exploration can be viewed from the four-case study. The unchecked expansion of tourism is bound to create additional costs; in this regard, displacement, inflation, and alienation were sentiments expressed uniformly across residents. Third is the inequitable burden mass tourism places on tenuous and vulnerable ecosystems, be they natural or social.

The negative consequences of tourism mismanagement and the eventual degradation and exhaustion of resources are evident in coral reefs, freshwater resources, and social customs. In every one of these instances, the local agency is extraordinary, employing technology in grassroots ways to contest the dominant tourism frameworks, re-channel tourist footfall, and reclaim tourism narratives in the digital realm. There is an immense opportunity in the refusal to quit tourism and, instead, to redistribute tourism by geography, society, and technology.

Having observed the neighbor countries, listened to local stakeholders, and engaged in limited sustainable shifting, there is no reason for Sri Lanka to remain in its current condition. Sri Lanka is positioned to confirm the primary discussion point for the study. Sri Lanka should avoid sustainable tourism development frameworks and tourism development plans, even if they mean to establish such collaborative frameworks. Recognising the barriers, involving the local citizenry, and protecting the limited destination are priorities, rather than focusing on the excess destination tourism. As countries in Southeast Asia enter the more digitally disturbed, climate-changed, and ethically compromised consumer tourism, they will continue to thrive if they focus, at the core, on authentic tourism. Those countries will thrive.

### **Theoretical contribution and practical implications**

This study expands the theoretical discussions on over-tourism by applying the TALC model, the LAC frameworks, and Stakeholder Theory to Sri Lanka and the Southeast Asian region. The friction inter and intra overlapping over tourism frameworks provides a deeper understanding of the complex interrelations of fragmented governance, inequity and socio-economic distress, and the environmental convergence that drives overtourism. This study uses the comparative case study approach to showcase the importance of participatory governance and the need for tailored frameworks and contextualised systems. Recent contributions to this debate, especially Laksiri (2025) and Judissen (2015), highlight the need for sustainable tourism governance and the importance of integrating appropriate technology and local actors, especially concerning overtourism hotspots and tourism resilience.

Strategies to reduce over-tourism must be adopted with caution. For instance, while zoning changes, tech-assisted visitor management, and dispersal tourism may assist in alleviating overcrowding, economically expanding, and lessening variances in poverty, some local stakeholders may view these initiatives negatively due to fears of reduced control, declining profits, and/or loss of cultural identity. In addition, AI and other digital systems designed to track visitors raise privacy concerns and may be highly demanding systems that exacerbate strain in less developed areas that are resource-poor. Moreover, cultural resource preservation may run counter to community tourism in economic terms, which helps to motivate the community and undermine cultural authenticity. The proposed solutions provide some hope, but their implementation needs to consider local stakeholder imbalances to minimise detrimental consequences.

The practical implications of this study can be directed towards Sri Lankan policymakers and those involved in the local industry. To solve the issue of overtourism, integrated spatial planning and strategic zoning, coupled with the development of a holistic national tourism blueprint, are needed while taking the local socio-ecological community into account. Advocates of tourism pluralism and sustainable tourism development, which promote equitable socio-economic development within and across host communities, should be encouraged. AI and digital storytelling can be utilised to assist in overtourism mitigation while allowing tourism planners to shift visitor management and cultural narrative co-creation to local communities. Sri Lanka, and places like it, should be given the ability to excel in a turbulent tourism context, and the development of adaptive co-management strategies with the appropriate degree of flexibility to address unforeseen circumstances should be encouraged.

### **Outlining obstacles and regional dynamics**

The obstacles outlined in the document can be framed according to patterns of overtourism already observed in Bali and Phuket, and, in the case of Sri Lanka, also due to the specific circumstances of the country. Weak and fragmentary governance, lack of proactive spatial governance, and politically unstable governance are also regional outliers. These conditions, along with an overwhelming reliance on coastal tourism and poorly developed tourism regulations, increase the risk of over-tourism. Unlike Bali, Sri Lanka has not experienced attempted policy changes, nor does it have the community-based tourism governance seen in parts of Vietnam. Sri Lanka's emerging tourism pressures indicate the need for the country to develop tourism policies in a more concentrated manner. The study seeks to address this by placing the Sri Lankan case within more cohesive regional dynamics.

### **Conclusion**

The stakeholder comparative analysis here focused on Indonesia (Bali), Thailand (Phuket), and Vietnam (Halong Bay). For Sri Lanka (Galle), the goal was to understand whether the island was moving toward overtourism, focusing on the identification of differences rather than mere parallels. Systemic differences in stakeholder and contextual governance patterns determine the unique tourism development pathways of these selected Asian geographies. Primary research involved qualitative interviews with 180 stakeholders across the four countries, focusing on spatial mismanagement, socio-economic displacements, and the socio-structural problems of environmental collapse, cultural commodification, and market attenuation. These themes were integrated into a detailed, regionally contextualised, and locally broad thematic and framework analysis, thereby offering both comparative and interpretive depth to the findings.

Sri Lanka is in a similar situation to other countries, but lacks frameworks to protect or defend against tourism pressure. It faces this tourism dilemma undermanned due to the absence of institutional or regulatory frameworks. Compared to Thailand, Sri Lanka does not possess a similar robust tourism framework, but it also lacks the community models of co-management seen in Vietnam. Feedback from stakeholders, particularly in Galle, demonstrated the local capacity for guiding tourism toward preferred cultural and ecological directions. The research indicates that the existence of over tourism points to deeper socio-political issues in the areas of governance, inequality, and environmental neglect, but it also highlights the emerging consciousness among communities and planners to reshape the trajectory of tourism through participatory, inclusive governance.

This study documents risks through comparative analysis, discusses new developments, and suggests recommendations on potential actions such as reforms in spatial planning, community-inclusive policy, digital visitor management, and heritage zoning. These lessons have relevance not only for Sri Lankan policymakers but also for the scholarly examination of over tourism in the post-COVID-19 period within Asia. The use of a comparative approach has enhanced understanding of how different political, economic, and socio-cultural frameworks influence and condition the experience of universal phenomena, providing a grounded, albeit positive, outlook in tourism studies.

### Limitations and future research directions

While the research contributed to the understanding of over-tourism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, some limitations need to be acknowledged. The study period was from November 2024 until early January 2025, which does not account for some potential seasonal and longer-term variations in tourism. Particularly for destinations like Galle and Phuket, longitudinal studies would be useful in fully understanding their temporal dynamics.

While the study was based on an adequate sample of 45 participants from all stakeholder groups for each of the four destinations, other relevant locations should also be taken into account. In Sri Lanka, for example, Ella and Sigiriya; in Bali, Ubud; in Thailand, Chiang Mai; and in Vietnam, Sapa. These are significant in understanding the dynamics of over-tourism, and future studies in these locations are likely to be valuable. Research on tier-two tourist destinations would be essential in reinforcing the need to address concerns about equity in regional tourism.

Future research in this field could include a mixed-methods framework that integrates geospatial mapping with tourism density metrics and environmental impact assessments that include stakeholder analyses. These methods would contribute to a better understanding of over-tourism and allow qualitative insights to be captured alongside quantitative metrics.

Future research could also look to expand the geographical focus to include Arugam Bay, Pasikudah, and Trincomalee, which are secondary tourism sites, to explore community-based tourism alternatives with a greater focus on the local population. There remains a need for longitudinal research that employs a mixed-methods approach to shift the understanding of the dynamics of change, particularly concerning tourist behaviour and structural changes in overtourism, including the anticipatory adjustments of infrastructure, governance, and policies. The behaviours of novel tourist segments, including digital nomads and eco-conscious tourists, also need to be researched to sustainably plan for future tourism demand.

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