Chapter 7
Geophysical and Cultural Realities: Tourism Policy of Bhutan and Maldives

Minh Xuan Dam, Redeem Faith J. Sabacan, Karen S. Sim, and K Thirumaran

Abstract Bhutan and Maldives have limited tourist arrivals primarily targeting quality tourists. This policy of targeting quality tourism is driven by geophysical and cultural realities undergirded by domestic frameworks. This chapter examines the literature related to constrained environments in tourist destinations that play a big role in determining the outcome of policy approaches and its implementation. Addressing the gap in tourism literature, the research locates the constraints in the two countries and how those limitations have steered the creation and implementation of policy approaches. Based on field observations and extensive library research, the two destinations are profiled as case studies combined with a synthesis of the literature.

Keywords Quality tourism · Cultural · Bhutan · Maldives · Limited tourism · Environmental constraints · Tourism policies

7.1 Introduction

Long before the crafting of the 2015 United Nations Development Goals 2030, both Bhutan and Maldives have been following the path of sustainable development that protects their cultural well-being and national resources. Since the 1970s, both countries have worked with international organizations like the United Nations and its
subsidiary bodies, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other multilateral organizations to secure development sponsorships, and create employment for their people to alleviate poverty (United Nations Development Program 2007).

Due to competition and scarcity of resources, tourist destinations go to great lengths to develop resources and provide tourists with extra-ordinary experiences that are unique to their countries (Mazanec et al. 2007). Destinations continuously work to establish sustainable relationships with travelers by providing market offerings that deliver greater value than competing destinations (Qin et al. 2018). Two economic theories in this field are resource-based approach (Fu and Ban 2012; Kozak 2006). Wernerfelt (1984) posits that competitive advantages are derived based on how the firm utilizes its resources to the maximum efficiency. Porter (1980) on the other hand, approaches destination competitiveness from the perspective of the firm’s ability to message its product to the market. The basic economic factors of production—Land, Labour, and Capital—are pertinent to any destination’s putative growth (Holden 2009). If we extrapolate firm economies into the context of destination production and marketing, an understanding can be arrived that those countries endowed with resources may achieve comparative advantage but can only achieve competitive advantage if their resources are packaged and amplified in the global market (Ritchie and Crouch 2003; see also, Barney and Clark 2007).

These aforementioned resource and product-based theoretical precepts form the basic foundation of destinations and their original tourism policy as they emerged into the tourism network of global exchange. In this regard, this chapter attempts to identify and record the constraints of two destinations, Bhutan and Maldives in the contexts of (1) leveraging on natural endowments, (2) positioning their destinations within a market segment, and (3) managing sustainability while modernizing the economy.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides a comprehensive literature review addressing environmental constraints and sustainable adaptations in tourism. The method section expounds on the extensive secondary sources employed and a brief background to the research question ‘Why Bhutan and Maldives have prefaced their tourism policy with Elite Travelers?’ Then the paper moves to analyze three factors, namely, tourism activities, environmental constraints, and sustainable adaptations, to identify the basis for the tourism policies framework of the two countries. The chapter concludes by discussing the quintessential element that has made these destinations into single theme destinations and how resource-based policies is a key determinant of the destiny of countries engaged in global tourism.

7.2 Literature Review

One of the most rapidly advancing segments of tourism includes those activities that are dependent on natural environments. Literally, millions of tourists are attracted to areas that offer scenic beauty, unique natural settings, or opportunities for experiencing exotic cultures and locations. Within this context, Ewert and Shutlis (1997)
defined resource-based tourism as those pertaining to tourism activities and experiences dependent on the attributes associated with natural and relatively undeveloped settings. These activities generally involve small groups of tourists and often include learning opportunities related to the local culture or natural environment (Tolkach and King 2015; Rahayuningsih et al. 2016). A growing number of tourism and recreational activities is encompassed by this definition, including hiking, kayaking, homestays in traditional villages, natural photography/observation, snorkeling, camping, and rafting. Other terms that have been used in connection with resource-based tourism include community, nature and unique land features (Ruban 2018).

Scholars (e.g., McKercher 1992; Williams et al. 1998) noted that the rise of resource-based tourism is often seen as competing land use for other resource-based industries. Lemelin et al. (2010) surmised that conflicts between resource-based tourism as well as other natural-resource-based industries can directly influence the development of a sustainable tourism industry. For instance, in the Province of Ontario in Canada, there is a long history of dispute between the forest industry and resource-based operators (cf. Hunt and Haider 2001; Hunt et al. 2009; McKercher 1992; Roehl and Fesenmaier 1987).

Bennet and Lemelin (2010) reviewed Ontario’s resource-based policy within which the tourism operates. The study questioned both the impact and effectiveness of the resource-based tourism policy centered on five indicators such as: (a) the level of transparency, collaboration and representation in the policy’s development; (b) the unity of the policy direction and actions; (c) the incorporation of science into proposed policy solutions; (d) the adaptability of the policy; and (e) the completeness of the policy’s implementation to changing industry and contexts.

The development planning of cultural heritage attractions requires an understanding of the planning process and principles that govern sustainability which should ideally be based on the national policy of the country, or in its absence, then on the regional or area policy (Zyl 2005). Inskeep (1991, p. 278) warns of the problem which can surface in the early stages of development where traditional cultures can virtually disappear “with little sense of loss by the society because of the eagerness for economic progress.”

Collins (1983, p. 58) places heritage and tourism in context of cultural traditions of a country. Heritage tourism is thus an established part of the interrelated growing business of conservation and culture. Heritage tourism takes an important portion of the product now being promoted by most government tourist boards, and all indications are that it is set to grow. Similarly, it has also become overwhelmingly clear that there is a need for it to be carefully monitored and controlled in order to be compatible with conservation and community needs (Zyl 2005). To ensure effectiveness, MacManamon and Hatton (2000, p. 7) mentioned that a national policy for the conservation of cultural resources must have three components:

(a) A strong national intent to protect and preserve cultural sites, structures and other resource types.
(b) Possess political support in its implementation; and
The temptation faced by a number of heritage site managers to perceive such an increase in terms of generation of profits can ultimately also prove to be disastrous (Zyl 2005).

One of the earliest scholars in the field of cultural heritage management, Boniface (1995) opined that if countries want to manage their cultural sites appropriately, their solutions will “have to be extremely radical and require a shift in mind-set” (pp. 111–112). Tourism activities affects the lives of people and the ecology, an axiom that is indisputable. Therefore, destinations considering their limited resources and when engaging in a tourism economy must design policies and plans based on a choice of the extent they wish to “mine” the resources for visitor experience (Holden 2009). Rettie et al. (2009), emphasize that in the conservation of resources such as nature parks and animal sanctuaries, a concerted effort is required to educate the public as part of the national tourism policy. The convergence of development strategies and tourism policies while it is an important signification, the element of sustainable ecology and the support to human cultural traditions has been addressed dispersedly (Telfer 2009).

Telfer (2009), uses the development studies approach to suggest that while at the macro level, tourism policy benefits the host country with exchange revenue and employment, the local communities at the micro level are impacted either negatively or positively. Tourism can contribute considerably to poverty alleviation in developing countries (Scheyvens and Russell 2012). While the divide between the two levels can be narrowed, the concerns with the limited resources and maximizing tourist arrivals may for some destinations lead to overtourism and create both social and physical structural stresses (Koens et al. 2018). The question that literature has not quite responded is how these economic goals, development strategies, and tourism policy interplay in the allocation of resources or how these competing challenges inform tourism policy trajectory of a destination?

7.3 Study Approach

Despite the fact that there is an overwhelming literature on understanding tourists’ buying decision process, travel motivation and satisfaction, tourism literature seldom addresses the environmental constraints and how destinations actually make adjustments and at times sacrifice limited space and resources just to accommodate tourist and facilitate the global exchange and revenue that flows with it (Higgins-Desbiolles et al. 2019). Drawing on existing literature and reports, we establish the link between the environmental constraints in Bhutan and Maldives as reflective of their tourism policies. The chapter profiles the two countries in terms of their resources, offerings, locations and environmental constraints vis-à-vis their strategies to cope with the pressing tourism challenges (see also Gu et al. 2019).
Resource-based and policy framework approaches is the most suitable way to study two destinations that have limited the flow of tourism into their respective countries while at the same time ensure that those resources are sufficiently protected, preserved, and at the same time promoted (Gerber et al. 2009; Clement 2010). Indeed there is a genuine fear within emerging economies that when they engage in tourism, a heavier weightage should be placed on its cultural and natural resource use aligned with the larger national interests and a tourism policy framework that is reflective of the hosts values (Hasani et al. 2016; Mihalić et al. 2016). Unlike Maldives, Bhutan is located in the subtropical region just outside of the Tropic of Cancer. The inclusion of Bhutan in this study is aimed at showcasing as a tourism destination, it too faces similar limitations and targets a select group of tourists market. Much of the southern part are nevertheless tropical in nature. Finally, as a discipline entry, Bhutan’s inclusion is premised on the fact that it exercises limited tourism policy similar to the Maldives.

Extensive documentary research and analysis are employed to posit that tourism policies are fundamentally guided by the geophysical and cultural landscapes of both countries. In order to embark on this thesis, the paper examines the resources available for tourism. Secondly, a review of the tourism policy over the past decade is presented to link policy to resources to record both destinations’ adaptability to unique environments.

### 7.4 Bhutan

The Kingdom of Bhutan’s tourism policy promotes “High Value, Low Impact” to create an exclusive image targeting high net-worth income travelers (Tourism Council of Bhutan 2020). In this section, four aspects of the counties constraints as perceived from within are highlighted that continues to hold true and shape the national tourism policy leading to a high yield tourism segment.

Located in the central Himalayan Mountains at a height of 8,000 feet above sea level, Bhutan has a unique natural environment. Unlike countries which have beautiful long beaches or green plains, this kingdom situates among steep mountains and deep valleys. Noticeably, its territory is all on land, sandwiched between China and India. Bhutan is famous for cultural tourism, besides trekking, nature-based and spiritual and wellness tourism. Although these special interest tourism exists, there are limits to its tourism industry.

While the country proudly emphasizes untouched landscape, it is not frozen in time. It has one of the most stable ecosystems in the world and has virtually no ecological damage due to its long isolation from the rest of the world until the mid-twentieth century, resulting in its largely intact environment. The restrictions on tourism and their protection of natural resources have let Bhutan preserve the beautiful scenery where one can experience the pristine eastern Himalayan view with snow-capped peaks that rise above primeval forests and hospitable traditional villages.
The Bhutanese customs and culture are deeply steeped in its Buddhist religion which travelers often find fascinating. The blending of the ancient and modern makes Bhutan endlessly intriguing. According to the Druk Journal (2019), in every corner of the kingdom, local people live in traditional buildings and wear traditional clothes. The country is culturally rich and has many special tourist destinations for sightseeing, trekking, and community-based tourism. These kinds of tourism involve heavily the local community and landscape. The local authority has done a good job in maintaining an appropriate number of tourist arrivals in the past, but because of the sudden increase in number of regional tourist arrivals, the locals are not ready to accept mass tourism. According to the exit survey in Bhutan Tourism Monitor (2018), banking services, communications and toilet facilities are the most significant problems faced by tourists. Besides, the more tourists go for sightseeing and trekking tourism, the more noise and litter pollution appears along the tracks, as well as in sacred monasteries. Hence, tourist experience is being affected (Gyeltshen 2019).

Finally, concerns about overtourism have become louder as a result of the influx of tourists from Bangladesh, Maldives, and India. A report from Tourism Monitor of Bhutan in 2016 shows that the number of tourists in Bhutan in was around 200,000, 250,000 and 274,000 in 2016, 2017 and 2018, respectively. Tourists from these three countries enjoyed visa exemption to Bhutan. This visa policy had significantly increased both tourism revenue and concerns of overcrowding. Concerns related to overtourism have been one of the growing worries among local authorities because of the increase in regional tourists a result of the visa exemption policy for citizens of Maldives, Bangladesh, and India. To rectify this policy, the Council of Bhutan Tourism established several new rules.

According to the Final Draft of Tourism Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan (2019), which will be effective from July 2020, there will be no more visa exemption for citizens from India, Maldives and Bangladesh. In general, citizens from these three countries will now have to pay US$105 more to enter the kingdom (which includes a Sustainable Development Fee of US$65 and visa fee of US$40). The Tourism Council of Bhutan (2019; Indian Express 2020), effective from January 2020, also established new entry fees to monuments across Bhutan (see Table 7.1). The introduction of new entry fees is aimed to kill two birds with one stone: generating more income and reducing number of tourists to avoid overcrowding at popular attractions.

A recent world trend for host residents to open up their residential property to tourists has also taken Bhutan in a sweep. According to Seldon (2019a), along with the rapid growth of tourist arrival is the increase of budget hotels in recent years. Many local properties and serviced apartments can be found on Airbnb at only US$10 per room per night. According to Siok Sian Pek-Dorji (2018), there are more than 70 properties on Airbnb and nearly half of the tourists stayed in non-certified hotels and homestays. If these properties are in remote areas, they can not only generate income but prevent overcrowding. However, tourists visits to cities like Thimphu and Paro, are contributing to mass tourism. In view of protecting the traditional society and natural resources, the Bhutanese government is acutely aware that allowing a conflation of budget travelers into the country does not augur well for the tourism
Table 7.1 Revision for new entry fees effective from 1 January 2020 (Tourism Council of Bhutan 2019)

| Monument          | Adult (US$) | Children (US$) | Children 5 years and below |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Existing          | Revised     | Existing       | Revised                     |
| Tashichho Dzong  | 300         | 500            | 150                         | 250                         | NA                           |
| Thimphu Memorial Chorten | 300         | 500            | 150                         | 250                         | NA                           |
| Taktsang          | 500         | 1000           | 250                         | 500                         | NA                           |
| Rinpung Dzong     | 300         | 500            | 150                         | 250                         | NA                           |
| Kichu Lhakhang    | 300         | 500            | 150                         | 250                         | NA                           |
| Punakha Dzong     | 300         | 500            | 150                         | 250                         | NA                           |

policy of “Low volume and High yield.” A stricter control is being advocated. Therefore, according to the Financial Express (2019), the Tourism Council of Bhutan is working on controlling budget hotels and non-certified properties to maintain the high value-low impact tourism policy.

Another outcome of sustainable adaptations to prevent mass and overtourism, Bhutan continues to maintain its standard of living and the country’s resources well-kept. In offering a good product in terms of hygiene, during Bhutan’s observance of World Toilet Day in 2018, the audience celebrated the achievements of several districts that successfully reached Open-Defecation-Free (ODF) status and realized 100% improved sanitation coverage according to JMP standards. JMP, or Joint Monitoring Programme by the WHO (World Health Organization) and UNICEF (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund) provides regular global reports on drinking water and sanitation coverage (Xia 2018).

The sustainable practice is also enhanced by the tourism policy of limiting the number of flights into the country. The most crucial mode of transportation to enter and exit Bhutan is by air, carrying more than 98% of tourists enter and exit Bhutan in 2018 (Bhutan Tourism Monitor 2018), making the limited linkage between the country and the rest of the world. Despite the limit, Bhutan’s national carrier, Druk Air has in recent years strategically expanded its network of airports by serving the Changi, Singapore—Guwahti, India—Paro, Bhutan air route since 2018 with two flights weekly (The Telegraph 2018). Beginning September 2020, Druk Air plans to fly an extension route Paro-Bangkok-Tokyo (News Bites-Private Companies 2019). These further attests that the country is targeting and making it easier for wealthier travelers to travel via this new route apart from the Bangkok-Culcatta-Paro and Delhi-Paro routes.

The Tourism Council of Bhutan also took steps in the period following closure of the country travel and inflight, a number of schemes to only support a little over 2400 people dependent directly on the tourism trade but also the period to improve tourist facilities such as stopover toilets at various tourist attractions, provide seed funding for accommodation upgrades or facelift for the opening of the country in
the post-Covid-19 period (South Asia Monitor 2020). About US$3.8 million of the US$19.8 million dollars originally budgeted for the tourism sector has been brought forward to bring some of the works improvement projects ahead of its schedule. The types of development and continued policy agenda of limited tourism including the example of imposing a hefty visa fee on Indian nationals means that the country is on the path of ensuring its resources are not over expended for the sake of tourism (Indian Express 2020).

7.5 Maldives

In 2019, the total number of tourist arrivals was at 1.9 million which is a steady increase from 1.4 million from the previous year (Samath 2020). In the period of 2014–2019 the Maldives tourism sector received US$692 million in investment and continues to be a destination not only for investment but continued dream destination for many in the luxury segment (Hok 2019). In this section we review the Maldives tourism policy emanating from the policy of “one island, one resort” which has thus far sustained the economy and the population’s way of life. This section presents Maldives’ sustainable adaptation measures in relation to the tourism constraints identified in the foregoing section.

This nation contains thousands of islands across the archipelago with a tiny population of around 436,000 people living in 188 islands (World Bank 2019a). In the period of 2014–2019 the Maldives tourism sector received US$692 million in investment and continues to be a destination not only for investment but as a dream destination for many in the luxury segment (Hok 2019). The industry focuses only on 5-star resorts and quality service at its resorts. The limited airport capacity is a challenge because it is not easy to expand the existing airport on limited land area.

Maldives has limited capacity to expand with a small labor force and a dispersed logistics for water and food supplies. Even though the World Bank (2019b) indicated the success of Maldives through the incredible figure of 100% literacy rate, it does not mean that the local labor force is sufficiently qualified or possess enough people to be gainfully employed in the hospitality sector. To be able to work in 5-star resorts, staff need to undergo a lot of training. Based on a report by International Organization for Migration (2018), not many Maldivians choose to study and work in the tourism industry. Given the fact that the nation has a small population and people living dispersedly in many islands, meeting the growing demand from a limited workforce is a challenge for Maldives. Based on a survey conducted by Salvini et al. (2016), 32% of the total tourism workers in Maldives are locals. As such, the government has been trying to solve the issue of excessive number of workers from Bangladesh who are mostly unskilled.

Maldives also addresses the constraint on limited labor force by proposing in the 5th Tourism Master Plan the new minimum wage from basic US$250 to US$600 per month (Junayd 2019). The introduction of a higher minimum wage will not only make tourism workers happier, but also uphold the service standards for elite
tourists in luxurious resorts. For a Small Island Developing State (SID) like Maldives, tourism is promoted in policy agendas on the grounds where it can enhance the lives of local people through the creation of employment and wages (Wilkinson 1999). However, Maldives has too small a population to support tourism that it leads to a reliance on expatriate labor. In the context of SIDs “tourism, offers the best chance for development in terms of creating growth and employment, generating foreign exchange and reducing poverty” (Croes 2006, p. 455). Indeed, equitable patterns of local employment are essential for sustainable poverty reduction and enhanced quality of life within local communities (Jamieson 2003). However, tourism’s contribution to the national economies can be severely diminished with high leakages of foreign revenue as a result of high dependency on expatriate labor (Wall and Mathieson 2006). Therefore, a key question is whether the use of expatriate labor, coupled with the type and nature of employment created by tourism activity, is legitimately generating economic benefits for Maldives, and in turn, contributing to the sustainable development policy objectives of the country.

Another classic challenge all islands are facing is the sustainability of water and food supplies. In order to maintain a high level of service, good and stable sources of water and food are prerequisites. The distance between Maldives and the nearest land (Sri Lanka and India) is around 1,000 km, making the transportation and preservation of fresh food and water supply a challenge. World Health Organization (2015) mentioned that the water access in the country is high, but due to poor sewage systems, water degradation is a real risk. In 2019, under the collaboration between the United Nation Development Programme and Ministry of Environment and Energy in Maldives, the Adaptation Fund was established to improve facilities and physical systems in 3 Maldives islands (Derler 2019). To ensure the success, it requires efforts from the government, and engagement from the local people and other stakeholders. If successful, this will be the model for the whole nation to solve the water issue.

Transport and telecommunications among islands is not as convenient. Main local transportation between islands is by ferries. Even Male international airport is a standalone island itself. The local tourism industry depends heavily on ferries, which is time-consuming and costly. Lohrmann (2019) mentioned that the local ferry network only connects the main island Male to occupied islands, but not daily to resorts, which means that tourists may find it hard to explore on their own. Other means of transportation is by private air services, which is even more costly.

One interesting approach to tourist arrivals is that the Maldives though presents itself as a luxury destination, has a number of budget airlines bringing in visitors. This means that the country though has islands portending luxury assets such as 4–5-star hotel on the high end of service, there are also aspirational and budget travelers who may be traveling only for the weekend. Additionally, the fact that there are budget travel flights, the demand for budget accommodation is a definite phenomenon. Therefore, the question remains, how does the Maldives balance or promote itself to the international travel market?
7.6 Discussion

Tourists are enticed by Bhutan for its high mountains and monasteries with genuine tranquility. Meanwhile, Maldives attract tourists with its untouched coral reefs and deep blue sea. Each country has its own features and offerings which in turn help the locals to benefit from the tourism industry. The two tourist destinations are challenged by scarcity in resources and labor for the tourism industry. As they reach record high tourist arrivals, both Bhutan and Maldives face the problem of water scarcity and proper sewage system. Both countries acknowledge and share the notion that high tourist arrivals may result in harm to the environment and wildlife. As such, to develop a long-term tourism industry plan, these shortcomings must be addressed.

To sustain a manageable flow of tourists, Bhutan government plans to implement in July 2020, a new visa requirement and a raise in the entrance fee in tourist attractions will be applied to reduce the tourist arrival in the country. To address the constraint on the limited capacity to expand, the Maldivian government has been developing an alternative for budget travelers. Budget travelers can now find accommodation in guesthouses built on inhabited islands (Table 7.2).

The similarities in tourism constraints above show some common attributes in both Bhutan and Maldives. In Maldives, tourism is the top income contributor to GDP. The ambitious government is aiming for the number of 2.5 million by 2023. The more tourists coming, the more vulnerable the environment will be. This target implies that if there were no change in preserving the environment, it would be affected. Bhutan’s GDP generated from tourism industry comes second place (after agriculture). The tourist arrivals had passed the record high of all time at 274,000 in 2018. Noticeably, if both countries want to pursue high value-low volume strategy. In case of Maldives: 72% of total bedroom capacity is in luxury resorts, while in case of Bhutan, all foreign tourists will have to pay visa fee regardless where they come from. The 2 destinations have similarities as limited kinds of transportations within the countries and natural landscape risk deterioration. Both are trying to live with their own tourism constraints to achieve higher tourism revenue. This is

| Table 7.2 Tourism constraints—similarities |
|-------------------------------------------|
| Tourism constraints | Bhutan                                               | Maldives                                      |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Risk of landscape damage | Cultural life & natural landscape | Natural Landscape |
| Main transportation | Into the country: Air (98%) Within the country: Land | Into the country: Air (99%) Within the country: Sea |
| Influx of tourist arrivals | Cut off visa exemption, raise entrance fee, only accepting high-budget tourists | Develop guesthouses for low-budget tourists and luxury resorts for high-budget tourists |
| Tourism Education to develop skilled human resource | Highly lacking but desirable | Highly lacking but desirable |

Source Synthesised Information
because of the concern for both countries share that high tourist arrivals may lead to harmful environment and nature wildlife, which must be sustained in order to build a long-term tourism industry development, while the basic infrastructure is not yet ready.

The two destinations share differences in tourism constraints as shown in the Table 7.3. While limited water and food supplies is not an issue for Bhutan as the country can always import everything from China and India with cheap transportation costs, it is for Maldives because of its location standing alone in the ocean. Therefore, the country is cooperating with UNDP on fresh water projects to solve the problem and to meet the high standard of luxury resorts.

Likewise, while the under-developed infrastructure is not yet an issue in the Maldives because its tourists spend most of their time at luxury resorts on isolated islands, this is an issue for Bhutan because tourists want to trek and harmonize in pristine nature and cultural life. That is why Bhutan has applied the Defecation Fee status and recognized JMP standards to several districts to manage tourists’ behaviors and somehow educate them. Lastly, Bhutan is not facing the issue of limited labor force because the actual number of elite travelers coming to the country has not surpassed the capacity of the industry. Seldon (2019b) mentioned the average occupancy rate in Bhutan in 2018 was 36% and most hotel employees are locals. Maldives, on the other hand, is relying on Bangladesh’s work force as 32% of them are working in the Maldivian tourism industry and the government is planning to improve the quality service by raising minimum wage for them.

The Maldivian government has been developing an alternative for budget travelers in guesthouses. All of guesthouses are built on inhabited islands and many of them can be located on one island while all luxurious resorts are in separated uninhabited islands following the policy “one resort one island”. This policy helps Maldives to continue appealing to many tourists without harming its natural coral reef and sea wildlife.

Bhutan continues with the “high value-low impact” tourism policy. Upon analyzing recent reports about tourist behaviors and local feedback, the government noticed that regional tourists are making negative impacts on its nature. They decided to apply a new visa policy with no more exemption for citizens of Bangladesh,
Maldives, and India. Reports from Bhutan Tourism Monitor (2018) also showed that a “regional tourist” who travels to Bhutan without any tour package (mostly from the 3 countries) spent an average of one-third of an ordinary international tourist. By applying new visa requirements and raising entry fee to their monuments, the government is expecting that the number of tourists will reduce, yet the ones that come to Bhutan will spend more, resulting in an increase in revenue in the end.

Also, at the time of this chapter writing, the COVID-19 pandemic have had its reach to both countries. Unlike many other countries, because of the limited tourism policies, Bhutan have seen a very low incidence rate of 102 infections as of 2 August 2020 while Maldives has 1398 people infected (GeoRank 2020). While Bhutan has followed much of the world in closing its border to international tourism during the periods of from February 2020 onwards, Maldives has taken the brave step of opening its isolated resorts for tourism with no quarantine requirements beginning July 15, 2020 when the pandemic health crisis still continues (Macan-markar 2020; Steinmetz 2020).

7.7 Conclusion

Bhutan and Maldives emerged from a unique regional setting with specific geophysical realities and cultural contexts. These conditions converged to create an apt tourism policy that protects local cultural practices and sustains the treasured touristic landscapes (Thirumaran 2009; Asian Development Bank 2015). Inskeep (1991) warns of the problem which can surface in the early stages of development where traditional cultures can virtually disappear “with little sense of loss by the society because of the eagerness for economic progress” (p. 278). Distinct to other conventional tourism where the marketing thereof is mainly in the hands of the private sector operators, heritage tourism products are an essential part of a nation’s identity and the gatekeepers thereof should resist the temptation to follow competitive destinations that allow for multitude types of tourists. The economic benefits for a country or community are undoubtedly the prime motivator for ‘exposing’ its cultural heritage to tourists, and, for an impoverished community this is a great temptation. However, without careful management of this asset, it could vanish forever (Zyl 2005).

From the cases presented above, it can be concluded that tourism constraints can be an opportunity to develop new policies and practices. Tourism practitioners may look at these challenges as steppingstones so the destination can cope with the changes and continuously be part of tourists’ choice. With tourist destinations evolving everywhere in the world, traveling has been and will be an instinct of the humankind. People will always travel. It is important therefore governments try to make their tourism sustainable and avoid overtourism as much as possible for long-term benefits. Because of the constrained conditions both by geophysical settings and a need to protect local way of life, Bhutan and Maldives have prefaced their policy toward elite travelers as much as feasible.
References

Asian Development Bank (2015) Maldives: overcoming the challenges of a small island state. Country Diagnostic Studies
Barney JB, Clark DN (2007) Resource-based theory: creating and sustaining competitive advantage. Oxford University Press, Oxford
Bennett N, Lemelin H (2010) A critical analysis of Ontario’s resource-based tourism policy. J Rural Community Dev 5(1/2):21–35
Bhutan Tourism Monitor 2018. Retrieved from https://www.tourism.gov.bt/uploads/attachment_files/tcb_xx8r_BT M%202018%20_fin al.pdf
Boniface P (1995) Managing quality cultural tourism. Routledge, London
Business Bhutan 2019 Tourism Contributes US$ 85mn in 2018. Retrieved from https://www.businessbhutan.bt/2019/04/12/tour ism-contributes-us-85mn-in-2018/
Clement F (2010) Analysing decentralised natural resource governance: proposition for a “politicised” institutional analysis and development framework. Policy Sci 43(2):129–156. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-009-9100-8
Collins R (1983) Tourism and heritage conservation—the Pacific experience. Heritage Aust 2(2):58–59
Croes RR (2006) A paradigm shift to a new strategy for small island economies: embracing demand side economics for value enhancement and long term economic stability. Tour Manag 27(3):453–465
Derler Z (2019) How three islands have inspired the Maldives to fight water shortages. Retrieved from https://www.climatechang enews.com/2019/11/18/three-islands-inspired-maldives-fight-water-shortages/
Druk Journal (2019) Tourism in Bhutan: autumn edition. Retrieved from https://www.tourism.gov.bt/uploads/attachment_files/tcb_jlocRL3Q_The%20Druk%20Journal%2010.pdf
Ewert A, Shutlis J (1997) Resource-based tourism: an emerging trend in tourism experiences. Parks and Recreation. Retrieved from https://www.questia.com/read/1G1-19855027/resource-based-tourism-an-emerging-trend-in-tourism
Final Draft Tourism Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan (2019) https://www.tourism.gov.bt/uploads/attachment_files/tcb_Hw70_FINAL%20DRAFT%20TOURISM%20POLICY.pdf
Fu JP, Ban M (2012) Karst cave tourism system in Zhejiang province based on resource regional analysis. 中国地理科学:英文版 22(4):496–506. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11769-012-0552-y
Garrigós-Simón FJ, Galdón-Salvador JL, Gil-Pechuán I (2015) The economic sustainability of tourism growth through leakage calculation. Tour Econ 21(4):721–739
Georank (2020) Bhutan vs Maldives coronavirus cases by date. Retrieved from https://georank.org/covid/bhutan/maldives
Gerber J, Knoepfel P, Narrath S, Varone F (2009) Institutional resource regimes: towards sustainability through the combination of property-rights theory and policy analysis. Ecol Econ 68(3):798–809. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2008.06.013
Gu YQ et al (2019) In Ecology reported (Evaluation of Agricultural Cultural Heritage Tourism Resources based on grounded theory on example of ancient Torreya Grandis in Kuaiji Mountain). Leisure Travel Week 23 (23 Feb). Retrieved from https://link-gale-com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/apps/doc/A574451801/TOF?u=james_cook&sid=ITOF&xid=a041367d
Gyeltshen N (2019) Concept of Ecotourism. Druk J 5(2):47–55
Hasani A, Moghavvemi S, Hamzah A (2016) The impact of emotional solidarity on residents’ attitude and tourism development. PLoS ONE 11(6):e0157624. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0157624
Higgins-Desbiolles F, Carnicelli S, Krolikowski C, Wijesinghe G, Boluk K (2019) Degrowing tourism: rethinking tourism. J Sustain Tourism Tourism Degrowth 27(12):1926–1944. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1601732
Hok YC (2019) Market Snapshot: Asia Pacific 2019. Hospitality Net, 11 Nov. Retrieved from https://www.hospitalitynet.org/opinion/4095789.html
Rettie K, Cleverger A, Ford A (2009) Innovative approaches for managing conservation and use challenges in the national parks: insights from Canada. In: Jamal T, Robinson M (eds) The SAGE handbook of tourism studies. Sage, London, pp. 397–416. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857021076.n22

Ritchie JRB, Crouch GI (2003) The competitive destination: a sustainable tourism perspective. CABI, Wallingford. https://doi.org/10.1079/9780851996646.0000

Roeh WS, Fesenmaier DR (1987) Tourism land use conflict in the United States. Ann Tourism Res 14(4):471–485

Ruban D (2018) Karst as important resource for geopark-based tourism: current state and biases. Resources 7(4):82. https://doi.org/10.3390/resources7040082

Salvini A, Bruni M, Castagnone E (2016) Measures to increase Employment of Nationals in Expatriate Dominated Occupations and promote decent work among all workers. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—asia/—ro-bangkok/—ilo-colombo/documents/publication/wcms_554714.pdf

Samath F (2020) Maldives may reopen borders by July. TTG Asia, 11 May. Retrieved from https://www.ttgasia.com/2020/05/11/maldives-may-reopen-borders-by-july/

Scheyvens R, Russell M (2012) Tourism and poverty alleviation in Fiji: comparing the impacts of small-and large-scale tourism enterprises. J Sus Tour 20(3):417–436

Seldon P (2019a) Airbnb and accommodating tourists in private apartments is illegal: TCB. Retrieved from https://thebhutanese.bt/airbnb-and-accommodating-tourists-in-private-apartments-is-illegal-tcb/

Seldon P (2019b) Hoteliers worried about a Hotel Bubble as occupancy rate drops to 36 per cent in 2018. Retrieved from https://thebhutanese.bt/hoteliers-worried-about-a-hotel-bubble-as-occupancy-rate-drops-to-36-per-cent-in-2018/

South Asia Monitor (2020) Bhutan announces tourism stimulus package, April 17. Retrieved from https://link-gale-com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/apps/doc/A621089469/STNDu=james_cook&sid=STND&xid=cf3992f8

Steinmetz JT (2020) What about quarantine in an overwater bungalow in Maldives? eTurboNews

Telfer D (2009) Development studies and tourism. In: Jamal T, Robinson M The SAGE handbook of tourism studies. Sage, London, pp 146–166. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857021076.n9

The Financial Express (2019) Now Bhutan planning to control tourist flow. Retrieved from https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/global/now-bhutan-planning-to-control-tourist-flow-1559655361

The Telegraph (India) (2018) Druk air Guwahati-Singapore flights a boon—Changi seen as hub for onward travel, and direct link a huge savings in time, Oct 24. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/docview/2191102785?accountid=16285

Thirumaran K (2009) Keeping tourists performances indigenous in Bali and Bhutan. Lond J Tourism Sport Creative Ind 2(1):43–52

Tolkach D, King B (2015) Strengthening community-based tourism in a new resource-based island nation: why and how? Tour Manag 48:386–398. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.12.013

Tourism Council of Bhutan (2019) Announcement on the Revision of entry fees for Monuments. Retrieved from https://www.tourism.gov.bt/uploads/attachment_files/tcb_4wR8MvI0_announcement%20on%20the%20revision.pdf

Tourism Council of Bhutan (2020) Tourism Policy. Retrieved from https://www.tourism.gov.bt/about-us/tourism-policy

United Nations Development Program (2007) Assessment of Development Results: Bhutan. Retrieved from http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/documents/ADR/ADR_Reports/Bhutan/ADR_Bhutan.pdf

Wall G, Mathieson A (2006) Tourism: change, impacts, and opportunities. Pearson Education, Harlow

Wernerfelt B (1984) A Resource-based view of the Firm. Strategic J Manage: 171–180

Williams PW, Penrose RW, Hawkes S (1998) Shared decision-making in tourism land use planning. Ann Tourism Res 25(4):860–889
Wilkinson PF (1999) Caribbean cruise tourism: delusion? Illusion? Tour Geogr 1(3):261–282
World Bank (2019a) The World Bank in Maldives. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/maldives/overview
World Bank (2019b) The World Bank in Maldives. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/maldives/overview#4
World Health Organization (2015) Maldives. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/investments/maldives-10-nov.pdf?ua=1
Xia L (2018) Bhutan celebrates World Toilet Day. Retrieved from http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-11/20/c_137619067.htm
Zyl CJV (2005) The role of tourism in the conservation of cultural heritage with particular relevance for South Africa (Unpublished Dissertation). University of Stellenbosch. Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/37318992.pdf