



# Transforming Leadership for Climate Sustainability: Advancing SDG 7 and SDG 13 in Sri Lankan Hospitality

M.B.Kiriella, SAMAS, Battaramulla, Sri Lanka, malrajarticles@gmail.com

**Abstract.** This study investigates the role of transformational leadership in advancing sustainable tourism within Sri Lanka's hospitality sector, focusing on alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and 13 (Climate Action). Using a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative insights from global and local case studies with a targeted stakeholder survey, the research evaluates how transformational leaders influence policy, engage communities, and embed sustainability within organisational culture. Drawing on adaptive and stakeholder theories, the study contextualises the unique challenges facing leaders in Sri Lanka's resource-constrained and policy-limited environment.

The findings underscore the critical role of transformational leadership in fostering energy efficiency and climate resilience. Leaders drive the adoption of renewable energy, promote community involvement, and build a workforce committed to sustainable practices. However, inconsistent government policies and limited financial incentives hinder progress. The study highlights the importance of enhanced collaboration between tourism leaders and policymakers, alongside stronger community partnerships to amplify climate action. Practical recommendations include embedding sustainability into organisational values and establishing clear performance metrics. This research contributes to the limited literature on sustainable tourism in developing economies, offering actionable insights for policymakers and industry leaders to position Sri Lanka as a global leader in eco-tourism.

**Key Words:** Transformational Leadership, Climate Sustainability, SDG 7, SDG 13, Sri Lankan Hospitality

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Global Context of Sustainable Tourism and SDGs

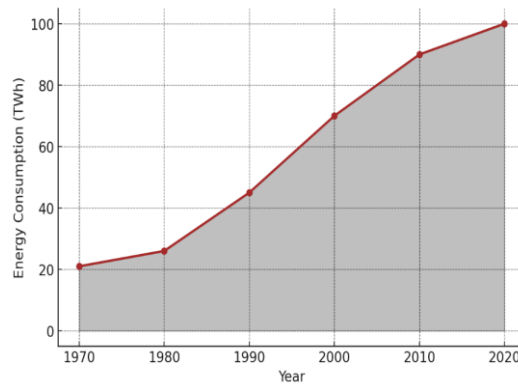
Sustainable tourism has become a critical driver of global development, closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals seek to harmonise economic growth, environmental preservation, and social equity, positioning sustainable tourism as a pivotal contributor. Representing over 10% of global GDP, the tourism industry holds immense potential to advance objectives such as affordable and clean energy (SDG 7) and climate action (SDG 13) (Bramwell et al., 2016). However, the implementation of sustainable tourism varies significantly across regions,

In developed market economies, there is strong infrastructure and well-established policies that have fostered the growth of eco-tourism and other forms of sustainable tourism. For instance, Costa Rica has demonstrated efficiency in sustainability governance through government measures that support the utilization of renewable energy and conservation (Honey, 2008). On the other hand, developing economies face several structural issues, including policy fragmentation, financial constraints, and weak regulatory systems. These differences underscore the importance of transformational leadership in addressing such challenges to enhance sustainable tourism in resource-limited areas.

Research studies on other developing economies indicate that similar challenges are evident in the adoption of sustainable tourism concepts. For example, the situations in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are not very different. However, effective approaches, such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and Community-Supported Local Sustainable Practices (CSLSP), have been identified as efficient strategies for overcoming these challenges (Kumar & Rao, 2021). The cases presented in this paper may also be applicable to Sri Lanka. Adaptive leadership and collaborative approaches among stakeholders could significantly contribute to the development of the tourism sector in a manner compatible with sustainable development goals, even within the constraints of limited resources.

## **1.2 Sri Lanka's Unique Position in Sustainable Tourism**

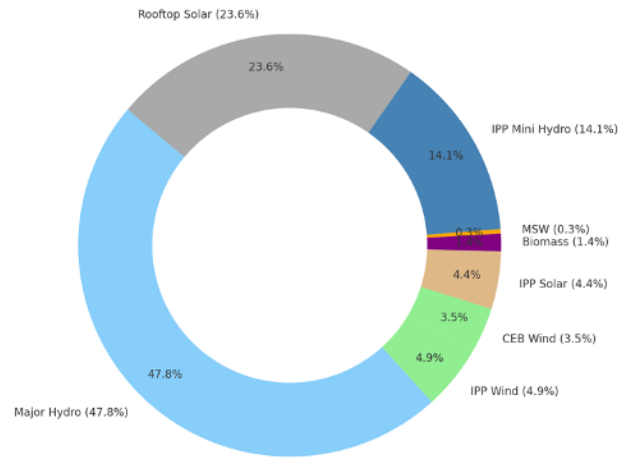
Sri Lanka's tourism sector contributes approximately 5% to the national GDP, serving as a cornerstone of the country's economy and employment. The island's rich biodiversity, cultural heritage, and natural landscapes offer substantial opportunities for sustainable tourism development. However, progress is hampered by challenges such as climate vulnerability, unregulated expansion, and socio-political instability (Perera et al., 2024; Ekanayake & Wijayawardhana, 2023). Additionally, fragmented regulations and weak environmental policies further limit the sector's ability to achieve its sustainability potential.



**Fig. 1.** Primary Energy Consumption in Sri Lanka (World Bank, 2020)

Sri Lanka's energy consumption is increasing rapidly (see Figure 1), with the current energy mix heavily dependent on non-renewable sources. As of the end of August 2023, the energy production portfolio comprised 35% coal, 26% thermal power, 22% hydro-electric power, 6% mini-hydro, 5% solar power, 5% wind energy, and 1% other sources. Notably, electricity generation relies heavily on imported non-renewable sources, which account for 61% of the total energy mix (Progress Report 2023, Ministry of Power and Energy, p. 6).

This reliance on fossil fuels positions Sri Lanka as a net oil importer, exposing the economy to fluctuations in global energy prices. In 2022, energy imports represented 27% of the country's total import expenditure, adding to fiscal pressures. The transport sector, which accounts for 35% of Sri Lanka's total energy consumption, is heavily reliant on petroleum-based fuels, with tourism-related transport contributing significantly to this figure. Industrial applications—including those tied to the hospitality industry—consume an additional 30%, highlighting the broader environmental footprint of energy use across key economic sectors.



**Fig. 2.** Renewable Energy Capacity (MW) in Sri Lanka as of 31.03.2023 (Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka, 2023)

Sri Lanka aims for 70% renewable electricity generation by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050. However, as of 31 March 2023, renewable capacity remains limited, with hydroelectric power, comprising approximately 62% of this capacity, heavily dependent on climatic conditions and imported fuels. Other sources—such as solar, wind, and mini-hydro—make up the remaining share of the energy mix (see Figure 2). Significant growth in these sectors is essential to reduce reliance on costly imported fossil fuels and achieve these targets. Enhanced policy frameworks and increased private sector investment will be pivotal in fostering this transition, which aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and 13 (Climate Action).

Despite these systemic barriers, innovative leadership within the hospitality sector is driving positive change. For example, Jetwing Hotels' wetland restoration initiatives and Heritance Kandalama's energy-efficient architectural design showcase the transformative potential of visionary leadership. Through the implementation of innovation, community involvement and ensuring sustainability in the organization's strategies and structures, these leaders show that it is possible to lead the sector to greatness even with limited resources.

### 1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

This study seeks to establish how transformational leadership in the community can enable the development of sustainable tourism within Sri Lanka's organizational culture, particularly in the hospitality industry. Using a case study strategy and a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research, the study aims to address policy constraints and engage policymakers and stakeholders. Through surveys and focus group discussions, the research explores the lessons developed nations

provide for creating sustainable tourism. The study focuses on identifying practical implications for tourism managers operating in contexts with limited resources, as highlighted by current literature.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Transformational Leadership in Sustainable Tourism**

Transformational leadership can be understood as a style of leadership that enables individuals to achieve goals that are important in both individual and organisational contexts, with a primary focus on values that are significant for society and the environment (Bass, 1985; Jiang & Chen, 2021). This model encompasses four main attributes—idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration—that make transformational leaders well-suited to fostering sustainable tourism (Moyle et al., 2020). In tourism and hospitality management, transformational leaders play a crucial role in shaping organisational culture, and they are known to facilitate the integration of sustainability principles throughout the organisation (Mair & Laing, 2013).

A review of the literature shows that transformational leaders who are sensitive to sustainability influences are able to affect organisational behaviour and encourage the implementation of sustainable practices. For instance, in the New Zealand hotel industry, transformational leaders have aligned their business strategies with rigorous environmental legal requirements that promote sustainability (Patterson & Jollands, 2004). Similarly, in Scandinavian countries, tourism companies have adopted Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies in accordance with prevailing cultural norms that embrace environmental conservation (Alsos et al., 2017).

The cases presented here demonstrate how transformational leadership can enhance sustainability in tourism; nevertheless, they primarily refer to contexts characterised by favourable policies and resource-abundant environments, which are often absent in developing countries.

### **2.2 Supplementary Theoretical Perspectives: Adaptive Leadership and Stakeholder Theory**

Alongside transformational leadership, this study also employs adaptive leadership and stakeholder theory to provide a richer understanding of leadership in sustainable tourism. According to Heifetz et al. (2009), adaptive leadership encompasses the concepts of flexibility, resilience, and innovative problem-solving capacity, which are essential in resource-constrained environments such as Sri Lanka. Adaptive leaders are able to engage stakeholders, foster a spirit of endurance, and encourage creativity in sustainability measures, even when faced with limitations.

Stakeholder theory, as propounded by Freeman (1984), emphasises the need to manage stakeholders to ensure sustainable performance. In the tourism industry, leaders must engage with diverse stakeholders, including local communities, government institutions, and private sector entities, to effectively implement sustainability measures.

This theory underscores the importance of a collective approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in tourism, as it fosters accountability and consensus among key players (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997).

### 2.3 Global Case Studies in Sustainable Tourism

Global case studies provide valuable insights into how transformational leadership fosters sustainable tourism in diverse settings. In Costa Rica, tourism leaders adopt eco-tourism strategies that focus on energy conservation, waste management, and community involvement, supported by government policies that promote environmental conservation (Honey, 2008; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). Similarly, Vietnam's tourism industry, particularly in Da Nang and Hue, highlights the effectiveness of involving all stakeholders in the development of tourism by prioritising cultural preservation and environmental protection as key components of sustainable development (Nguyen & Hoang, 2023).

These examples underscore the key elements of sustainable tourism: strong leadership, stakeholder involvement, and an enabling policy regime conducive to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### 2.4 Addressing Gaps in the Literature: A Focus on Sri Lanka

There is a growing body of literature on the use of transformational leadership in tourism, particularly in developing economies where conditions for sustainability are challenging due to scarce resources and the absence of a coherent policy structure. However, research in these contexts remains limited. Most of the existing studies on transformational leadership in tourism development focus on settings where policy support and resources are readily available (Alsos et al., 2017).

In contrast, in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, challenges such as the absence of proper policies and financial constraints hinder the implementation of sustainable measures (Dilshan & Toko, 2022). This study addresses these gaps by examining how transformational leadership can facilitate sustainable tourism management in Sri Lanka's hotel sector. The findings may also be applicable to other developing nations.

### 2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the framework of this study, transformational leadership is identified as the most suitable theory to explain how sustainable tourism can be enhanced in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry. This framework highlights three critical dimensions necessary for achieving sustainable outcomes:

**Policy Alignment:** Examining how transformational leaders navigate fragmented regulatory systems to implement sustainable practices despite limited policy support. This involves exploring how leaders advocate for policies aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Community Engagement:** Investigating how managers engage with local communities to create mutual benefits in environmental and economic aspects. This dimension

focuses on the role of leadership in gaining community support for sustainable tourism practices that align with the SDG objectives.

**Organisational Culture:** Analysing how transformational leaders embed sustainability principles within organisations and inspire employees and stakeholders to adopt green practices. This dimension emphasises the significance of leadership in fostering a sustainability-driven organisational culture, which is essential for achieving the goals and objectives of the SDGs.

This conceptual framework offers a structured approach to understanding transformational leadership in sustainable tourism while addressing the unique challenges faced in developing economies, where limited resources and fragmented policies demand innovative and collaborative approaches.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative case studies with a targeted stakeholder survey. Five leading Sri Lankan tourism and hospitality companies—Aitken Spence, Aliya Resort by Thewa Collection, Jetwing Hotels, John Keells Group, and Serendib Hotels—were selected for in-depth analysis to explore leadership's role in advancing sustainability. To enhance the case studies, survey responses were collected from 15 stakeholders, including hotel managers, sustainability officers, government representatives, and industry experts, providing varied perspectives on sustainable tourism practices and their alignment with SDGs 7 and 13 (Aitken Spence Hotels, 2022; John Keells Group, 2022; Jetwing Hotels, 2022; Serendib Hotels PLC, 2022; Thewa Collection, 2022).

#### 3.2 Case Study Approach

The study incorporated five case studies to examine the role of transformational leadership in advancing clean energy adoption and climate resilience within Sri Lanka's tourism sector.

Aitken Spence and its flagship property, Kandalama Hotel, exemplify leadership-driven practices in sustainable energy use through the integration of solar, wind, and biomass technologies. The hotel's innovative architectural design, conceived by Geoffrey Bawa, minimizes environmental disruption while incorporating energy-efficient systems and water recycling measures, aligning with SDG 7 and SDG 13 (Aitken Spence Hotels, 2022; Bawa, 1994). Aliya Resort by Thewa Collection similarly demonstrates leadership in renewable energy, utilizing a 300-kilowatt solar system and an on-site biogas facility while promoting biodiversity conservation and reducing single-use plastics (Thewa Collection, 2022).

Jetwing Hotels' properties, particularly Jetwing Lake and Jetwing Vil Uyana, reflect a commitment to sustainability through wetland restoration projects and the installation of a 300-kilowatt solar photovoltaic system. These initiatives address climate resilience and energy efficiency, directly supporting SDGs 7 and 13 (Jetwing Hotels, 2022). John

Keells Group advances sustainable tourism through its Plasticcycle program, which promotes waste reduction and sustainable consumption, aligning with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), while substantial investments in renewable energy and community projects enhance climate resilience (John Keells Group, 2022). Finally, Serendib Hotels integrates energy and water conservation practices into daily operations, fostering environmental stewardship through staff training and local partnerships that align with SDGs 7 and 13 (Serendib Hotels PLC, 2022).

Secondary data for these case studies were collected from corporate sustainability reports, CSR documents, industry publications, and media articles. These sources provided comprehensive insights into each organization's sustainability initiatives, operational goals, and alignment with global sustainability standards.

### 3.3 Questionnaire Survey

A targeted survey was conducted with 15 stakeholders to complement the case study findings. Judgmental sampling was employed to ensure the selection of participants with relevant expertise in sustainable tourism. The sample included senior hotel managers, sustainability officers, middle managers, government representatives, and industry consultants or academic experts. These stakeholders provided a balanced perspective on leadership's influence on energy conservation, climate resilience, and overall sustainability practices within the sector.

The survey design consisted of structured and open-ended questions aimed at gathering qualitative data. Key areas of inquiry included the role of leadership in promoting sustainability, current energy conservation initiatives, barriers to sustainable practices, and alignment with SDGs 7 and 13. Additional questions explored broader reflections on cultural and sector-specific challenges. This design facilitated the collection of in-depth stakeholder insights while enabling cross-comparison with case study findings.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis employed a thematic approach for both case studies and survey responses. For the case studies, themes such as policy alignment, community engagement, and organizational culture were identified to evaluate how transformational leadership influences sustainability initiatives. This thematic analysis highlighted specific actions taken by leaders to align practices with SDGs 7 and 13, including energy efficiency measures and strategies for climate resilience.

Survey data were analysed using thematic coding for qualitative insights. Recurring themes included the role of visionary leadership in fostering a culture of sustainability and the operational challenges posed by fragmented policies and limited resources. Combining these analyses enabled a comprehensive understanding of transformational leadership's role in advancing sustainable tourism within Sri Lanka's unique context.



### 3.5 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability, the study employed several strategies. Secondary data were cross-verified across multiple sources, including sustainability reports and corporate websites. Triangulation was achieved by integrating survey findings with case study data, enhancing the robustness of the analysis. The judgmental sampling method further ensured the selection of knowledgeable participants, providing reliable insights into leadership practices.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were rigorously followed throughout the study. Participants in the survey were informed of the research's purpose, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained, and responses were anonymized to protect participant privacy. Secondary data used in the case studies were publicly available, ensuring no confidentiality concerns. All data were securely stored, and only aggregate findings were reported.

### 3.7 Limitations

This study has several limitations that may impact the findings:

- i. **Context-Specific Findings:** Focusing on Sri Lanka's tourism sector with a limited selection of local and global case studies restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions or sectors. Insights on transformational leadership in sustainable tourism may differ significantly across regulatory, economic, and cultural contexts. Future research could broaden geographic and industry scope to enhance applicability and provide wider insights.
- ii. **Judgmental Sampling:** The use of judgmental sampling for selecting survey participants and case studies could introduce selection bias, potentially overrepresenting stakeholders already supportive of sustainability. This may limit the diversity of perspectives, particularly from those with alternative or critical viewpoints within the tourism industry.
- iii. **Sample Size and Diversity:** While the survey includes fifteen diverse stakeholders, the small sample size limits the breadth of perspectives on transformational leadership in sustainability. Future studies could expand the sample to include a broader range of stakeholders, such as more government officials, local community representatives, and small-scale tourism operators, to enhance depth and generalizability.
- iv. **Reliance on Secondary Data:** The study's dependence on secondary data sources, like sustainability reports and publicly available documents, may limit insights into the leadership actions and decision-making processes. Primary data collection, such as direct interviews with leaders, could provide a more nuanced understanding of transformational leadership's impact on sustainable practices.

These limitations highlight opportunities for future research to expand sample size, integrate primary data sources, and explore diverse geographic and industry contexts,

enhancing the understanding of transformational leadership's role in promoting SDG-aligned sustainability within tourism.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The study is analysed using the conceptual framework's major themes: policy congruence, stakeholder participation, and organisational culture. These themes illustrate the impact of transformational leadership on sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka, particularly in the implementation of SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Each theme is discussed with the support of local and global examples, while the findings are derived from survey responses, offering a comprehensive perspective on the successes, strategies, and challenges faced by leaders in ensuring sustainability within Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

### 4.1 Transformational Leadership and Policy Alignment for Sustainable Tourism

**Global Case Studies.** Examples from other countries, such as Costa Rica and New Zealand, show that proper policy support can enhance the effectiveness of transformational leadership in advancing renewable energy and climate change adaptation (Garcia & Martinez, 2019; Patterson & Jollands, 2004). For instance, in Costa Rica, government encouragement for the adoption of renewable energy sources has enabled the tourism sector to implement energy conservation measures. Similarly, government collaboration on sustainable tourism policies has allowed leaders to integrate environmental concerns into their operations. These examples underscore the importance of government policies in strengthening leadership initiatives for sustainable tourism. Consequently, there is a pressing need for similar policies in Sri Lanka to support leaders committed to sustainability.

Building on these examples, an analysis of similarities with other developing regions, such as Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, reveals additional ways to address policy challenges. In sub-Saharan Africa, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have played a critical role in advancing renewable energy for tourism. These collaborations leverage foreign investment and domestic entrepreneurship to fill gaps left by government action, offering valuable lessons for Sri Lankan tourism leaders (Kumar & Rao, 2021). Similarly, community-based sustainability initiatives in Southeast Asia demonstrate how local actors can contribute to achieving national targets while bridging the gap between global standards and local conditions.

**Local Case Studies.** In Sri Lanka, the transformational leadership of Aitken Spence Hotels and Jetwing Hotels ensures the implementation of renewable energy strategies, even in the absence of substantial policy support. For instance, Aitken Spence's flagship property, Heritance Kandalama, has incorporated solar, wind, and biomass energy, demonstrating the company's commitment to achieving SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean

Energy) (Aitken Spence Hotels, 2022; Owen, 2008). Similarly, Jetwing Lake has installed a 300-kW solar photovoltaic system and a biomass boiler, which together provide 40% of the property's energy requirements (Jetwing Hotels, 2022).

This demonstrates that effective leadership can bridge policy gaps by prioritising sustainability within organisational structures (Jetwing Hotels Sustainability Report, 2023). This view is further supported by Lalith and Fernando (2018), who found that such initiatives benefit both the environment and the local economy by creating employment opportunities and involving the community in sustainability efforts.

**Survey Insights.** The survey findings indicate that all stakeholders agree on the importance of policy support for the growth of renewable energy in the tourism sector. Some respondents suggested that government incentives could enable leaders to make significant investments in energy initiatives aligned with SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). This underscores the need for transformational leadership in advocating for policy changes that advance sustainability goals. Simultaneously, it highlights the role of leaders operating within existing policy constraints who strive to bridge policy gaps through innovative and resourceful approaches.

#### **4.2 Transformational Leadership in Community Engagement and Stakeholder Collaboration**

**Global Case Studies.** Global case analyses from Vietnam and the Maldives demonstrate how the tourism industry can incorporate community-based strategies for climate change mitigation (Nguyen & Hoang, 2023; Shihab, 2021). In Vietnam, the tourism industry collaborates closely with local populations in the implementation of conservation measures, ensuring that community involvement is a key component of sustainability efforts. Similarly, the Maldives engages local communities in coral reef rehabilitation, integrating environmental awareness into tourism activities.

These examples illustrate how the involvement of local populations can significantly enhance sustainability. They clearly highlight the importance of partnerships with communities in implementing climate action, offering valuable insights for Sri Lankan tourism managers seeking to adopt similar strategies.

**Local Case Studies.** In Sri Lanka, Aliya Resort by Thewa Collection and the John Keells Group have demonstrated that community engagement can be effectively implemented through strong leadership. For example, Aliya Resort stands out as a socially responsible company by organising sustainability-focused initiatives. These include providing environmental education, training local stakeholders in organic farming, and implementing plastic reduction measures (Thewa Collection, 2022). The John Keells Group's Plasticcycle program actively involves local communities in plastic waste management, supporting responsible consumption and aligning with SDG 13 (John Keells Group, 2022). These initiatives reflect how Sri Lankan leaders prioritize community collaboration to build climate resilience, demonstrating the pivotal role of transformational leadership in aligning community actions with sustainability goals.

**Survey Insights.** Survey findings reveal strong stakeholder support for community-based sustainability efforts. Respondents noted the benefits of involving communities in sustainability initiatives, particularly for raising accountability and awareness. Transformational leaders who actively engage with local stakeholders create a lasting impact on environmental consciousness, aligning with SDG 13 by fostering local climate action and reinforcing the importance of community-oriented leadership.

#### **4.3 Transformational Leadership in Organizational Culture and Sustainable Practices**

**Global Case Studies.** International examples from Costa Rica and New Zealand highlight the integration of sustainability within organizational culture as a means to promote energy efficiency and climate resilience (Garcia & Martinez, 2019; Patterson & Jollands, 2004). In Costa Rica, tourism operators embed eco-friendly practices into staff training, driven by a leadership commitment to sustainability. In New Zealand, sustainable tourism practices are ingrained in company culture, motivating employees to participate in energy-saving initiatives. These cases exemplify how transformational leaders can embed sustainability within organizational culture, serving as a model for Sri Lankan tourism operators to emulate.

**Local Case Studies.** In Sri Lanka, Jetwing Hotels and Heritance Kandalama demonstrate how transformational leaders can foster a culture of sustainability through active employee engagement. At Jetwing Vil Uyana, wetland restoration supports SDG 13 by creating a natural carbon sink that contributes to climate resilience (Jetwing Hotels, 2022). At Heritance Kandalama, leaders involve employees in energy-saving initiatives, aligning operational practices with SDG 7. These examples show how transformational leadership can cultivate environmental values within an organization, motivating staff to support long-term sustainability goals.

**Survey Insights.** Survey responses indicate that stakeholders highly value a robust organizational culture of sustainability. Many noted that transformational leaders inspire employees to adopt eco-friendly practices, emphasizing that when sustainability is embedded within an organization's values, employee engagement in energy conservation and climate action is significantly enhanced. Patel and Kumar (2021) suggest that in South Asia, fostering climate resilience within organizational culture is crucial for tourism sustainability, especially in addressing climate-related challenges.

#### **4.4 Summary of Findings**

Overall, these findings illustrate the significant impact of transformational leadership in advancing sustainable tourism within Sri Lanka's hospitality sector. By navigating policy constraints, engaging communities, and fostering a sustainability-focused organ-

izational culture, leaders in Sri Lanka's tourism industry make meaningful contributions to SDGs 7 and 13. The case studies and survey results highlight the importance of enhanced policy support and community partnerships to amplify these initiatives' impact.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated the role of transformational leadership in promoting sustainable tourism within Sri Lanka's hospitality sector, focusing on alignment with SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Through detailed case studies of Aitken Spence, Aliya Resort by Thewa Collection, Jetwing Hotels, John Keells Group, and Serendib Hotels, supplemented by global best practices and stakeholder insights, the study reveals how leadership-driven initiatives address policy gaps, enhance community engagement, and embed sustainability into organizational culture.

Findings suggest that transformational leaders in Sri Lanka's tourism sector are advancing sustainability goals, particularly in energy conservation and climate resilience. However, the lack of policy support and government incentives limits their impact. International examples demonstrate the potential for transformational leaders to achieve broader sustainability outcomes when supported by cohesive policy frameworks and incentives. Enhanced collaboration with government agencies, community organizations, and industry stakeholders could further strengthen the sector's commitment to sustainability.

The study highlights that community engagement and organizational culture play a critical role in achieving sustainable outcomes. Leaders who actively involve local communities and model sustainable practices foster eco-friendly behaviours across their organizations, creating a ripple effect that promotes sustainable practices throughout the industry.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations aim to strengthen the role of transformational leadership in advancing sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka:

#### 5.2.1 Policy Advocacy and Collaboration with Government

*Strengthen Policy Support.*: Tourism leaders should actively engage with government stakeholders to establish incentives for renewable energy adoption, such as tax breaks or subsidies specifically targeting solar and wind installations. Additionally, sector-wide sustainability training programmes, supported by the government, could foster eco-friendly practices across the industry, further aligning with SDG 7 and SDG 13 targets.

*Establish a Tourism-Government Task Force*: Creating a dedicated task force with tourism leaders, government officials, and sustainability experts would facilitate policy

discussions, enabling industry practices to align with SDG objectives and address structural barriers.

### 5.2.2 Strengthen Community Engagement Initiatives

*Invest in Community Training Programs:* Hotels should collaborate with local organizations to implement sustainability training for community members, strengthening local capacity in energy conservation and climate resilience.

*Expand Local Sourcing and Partnerships:* Developing partnerships with local suppliers and community groups can reduce energy consumption, increase local engagement, and foster a shared commitment to sustainable tourism goals.

### 5.2.3 Embed Sustainability into Organizational Culture

*Implement Structured Sustainability Training.* : Regular workshops and training sessions can raise employee awareness of sustainable practices and their relevance to SDGs 7 and 13.

*Create Incentives for Sustainable Practices:* Recognizing employees for eco-friendly behaviours could enhance a culture of sustainability, promoting consistent engagement in energy conservation efforts.

*Set Clear Sustainability Goals and KPIs.*: Establishing quantifiable sustainability targets would allow leaders to monitor progress, maintain focus on SDG alignment, and ensure accountability.

### 5.2.4 Develop Broader Industry Partnerships

*Collaborate with Regional and International Partners:* Partnerships with regional and international eco-tourism organizations can provide insights into best practices and funding opportunities, accelerating Sri Lanka's transition toward sustainable tourism.

*Facilitate Knowledge Sharing Across the Sector:* Establishing a platform for knowledge sharing within Sri Lanka's tourism industry could encourage the dissemination of best practices, promoting industry-wide progress in sustainability.

By implementing these recommendations, transformational leaders in Sri Lanka's tourism sector can further align their practices with SDG goals, strengthen community collaboration, and embed sustainability into organizational culture. These actions will not only support environmental goals but also position Sri Lanka as a competitive leader in sustainable tourism on the global stage.

## References

- Aitken Spence Hotels. (2022). Sustainability initiatives. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://www.aitkenspencehotels.com/sustainability>.
- Anderson, J., & Williams, R. (2020). The role of renewable energy in tourism. *Energy and Tourism Journal*, 15(4), 190-208.

- Anderson, T., & Ramirez, L. (2023). Policy support for sustainable tourism: Lessons from Latin America. *Sustainable Tourism Policy Journal*, 12(3), 199-220.
- André, L., & Valenciano-Salazar, L. (2020). Carbon-neutral tourism practices in Costa Rica: Policy frameworks and industry alignment. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(2), 254-267.
- Baker, L., & Fisher, S. (2021). Sustainability through leadership: Case studies in tourism. *International Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 22(2), 133-150.
- Barnes, P., & Kumar, H. (2020). The intersection of tourism and environmental sustainability. *Environmental Policy Review*, 14(2), 150-165.
- Bawa, G. (1994). Architectural design of Kandalama Hotel. *Architectuul*. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://www.architectuul.com>.
- Chowdhury, S., & Pathak, M. (2021). Climate resilience in South Asian tourism. *Journal of Climate Policy in Tourism*, 7(2), 225-238.
- Costa, H., & Silva, P. (2022). Energy efficiency in hospitality: Strategies for sustainable tourism. *Hospitality and Environment*, 10(3), 280-297.
- Dalton, M. A., & Chen, S. (2019). Transformational leadership in tourism: A critical analysis. *Leadership in Tourism Studies*, 5(1), 88-101.
- Desai, P., & Ramanathan, K. (2019). Community involvement in sustainable tourism: A case study of India. *Asian Journal of Community Tourism*, 11(4), 309-324.
- Diéguez-Castrillón, M., González-Rodríguez, M. R., & Martínez-Ruiz, M. P. (2022). Sustainable Tourism Indicators: A review and implications for future research. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 41, 100886.
- Dilshan, M., & Toko, F. (2022). Survey insights on sustainable leadership practices in Sri Lanka's hospitality sector. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Studies*, 19(3), 45-56.
- Ekanayake, M., & Wijayawardhana, P. (2023). Community resilience in Sri Lanka's tourism sector. *Journal of Tourism Development*, 17(1), 44-60.
- Fernando, D., & Silva, J. (2018). Sustainable practices in Sri Lankan tourism: Analysis of the Jetwing model. *Journal of Sustainable Business Practices*, 5(3), 190-204.
- Garcia, R., & Martinez, L. (2019). Climate resilience and tourism management: The Costa Rica example. *Sustainable Tourism Review*, 13(2), 98-111.
- Gomez, M., & Tanaka, Y. (2020). Transformational leadership for environmental responsibility in the tourism sector. *Journal of Tourism Leadership*, 14(2), 115-129.

- Herath, S., & Seneviratne, G. (2020). Transformational leadership in developing countries: The role of vision and resilience. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 6(3), 60-78.
- Hernandez, L., & Green, S. (2022). Renewable energy initiatives in hospitality: A global review. *Energy and Hospitality Review*, 15(3), 245-259.
- Iddawala, A., Kumara, T., & Ranasinghe, R. (2023). Challenges in achieving sustainable tourism practices in Sri Lanka. *Asian Journal of Tourism Management*, 15(2), 89-101.
- Jetwing Hotels Sustainability Report. (2023). Sustainability practices and renewable energy initiatives at Jetwing Hotels. Retrieved from <https://www.jetwinghotels.com/sustainability>.
- Jetwing Hotels. (2022). Sustainability at Jetwing Lake. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://www.jetwinghotels.com/jetwing-lake/sustainability>.
- John Keells Group. (2022). Sustainability and Plasticcycle initiatives. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://keells.lk/esg/#sustainability>.
- Jones, A., Smith, D., & Taylor, R. (2020). Methodological approaches to sustainable tourism research: A mixed-methods guide. *Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(4), 98-112.
- Jones, E., & Patel, R. (2022). Localized sustainable tourism practices in Sri Lanka.
- Jones, M., & Ratnayake, D. (2022). Aligning tourism practices with SDGs: Insights from Sri Lanka. *Tourism Policy Review*, 18(2), 122-139.
- Kandler Rodríguez, S. (2020). The role of tourism in environmental conservation and sustainable development goals. *Environmental Research Journal*, 25(3), 302-314.
- Kemp, D., & Williams, S. (2023). Climate change adaptation in tourism: Case studies from the Maldives and Pacific islands. *Journal of Tourism and Environmental Studies*, 19(1), 84-99.
- Khizar, S., Mirza, M. J., & Asghar, M. (2023). Transformational leadership and organizational culture in sustainable tourism. *Journal of Tourism Leadership Studies*, 9(1), 77-89.
- Kumar, R., & Rao, A. (2021). Climate adaptation strategies in hospitality: Lessons from Maldives and Sri Lanka. *Environmental and Hospitality Management*, 11(2), 203-221.
- Lalith, S., & Fernando, W. (2018). The impact of sustainable tourism on local communities. *Community and Tourism Journal*, 15(1), 52-70.
- Li, W., & Huang, J. (2021). Renewable energy adoption in eco-friendly resorts. *Journal of Green Hospitality*, 16(4), 377-392.
- Madhavan, N., & Silva, K. (2021). Sustainable tourism practices and the role of technology. *Journal of Tourism Innovation*, 13(4), 199-215.



- Martinez, F., & Silva, C. (2020). Sustainable tourism metrics and evaluation: Applications in Southeast Asia. *Asian Journal of Tourism Metrics*, 8(2), 245-260.
- Nandasena, A., & Wijayathunga, S. (2023). The importance of cultural resilience in sustainable tourism. *Journal of Cultural Tourism*, 9(2), 109-122.
- Navarro, P., & Turner, B. (2022). Sustainable energy practices in the tourism sector: Insights from Thailand and the Philippines. *Sustainable Tourism and Energy Journal*, 10(3), 155-172.
- Nguyen, T. D., & Hoang, T. M. (2023). Stakeholder engagement and sustainable tourism in Vietnam. *Journal of Asia Tourism Research*, 14(3), 145-162.
- Ortega, L., & Chung, K. (2023). Local government initiatives in sustainable tourism: Comparative analysis. *Global Tourism Policy Journal*, 21(2), 100-118.
- Owen, G. (2008). Environmental management in Sri Lanka's hospitality sector: The case of Heritance Kandalama. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 5(4), 320-337.
- Patel, A., & Kumar, N. (2021). Tourism resilience and climate change: A South Asian perspective. *Journal of Climate and Tourism*, 9(4), 299-312.
- Pathirana, M. P., Hettiarachchi, A., & Bandara, R. (2024). Policy implications for sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka: A review. *Tourism Policy Review*, 18(2), 125-138.
- Patterson, M., & Jollands, N. (2004). Sustainable tourism in New Zealand: Strategies for resilience. *Journal of Environmental Policy*, 8(3), 207-225.
- Pereira, J., & Gomes, T. (2020). Sustainable tourism in coastal regions. *Environmental Impact and Tourism*, 12(3), 172-189.
- Perera, B., & de Silva, N. (2021). Renewable energy strategies in the tourism sector. *Journal of Sustainable Energy and Tourism*, 6(1), 99-114.
- Perez, L. (2018). Embedding sustainability in organizational culture: Insights from Costa Rica's tourism sector. *Tourism Management*, 19(4), 312-327.
- Rajendran, M., & Perera, L. (2023). Community-based approaches to sustainable tourism in South Asia. *South Asian Journal of Tourism Development*, 6(2), 45-63.
- Ramirez, S., & Owen, H. (2020). Evaluating the impact of green certifications on tourist preferences. *Tourism Research Journal*, 14(1), 109-125.
- Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Roldan, J. L., & Han, H. (2020). Indicators for sustainable tourism development in Asia. *Journal of Tourism Metrics*, 5(1), 46-59.
- Santos, M., & Weng, X. (2023). Community engagement in energy conservation: Lessons from Southeast Asia. *Asian Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 7(3), 140-160.

Serendib Hotels PLC. (2022). Annual report on sustainability practices. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://www.serendibhotels.com>.

Shamil, N., Dissanayake, H., & Gunasekara, K. (2023). Transformational leadership for sustainable tourism: Evidence from Sri Lankan case studies. *Asian Tourism Research Journal*, 15(1), 23-34.

Shihab, M. (2021). The Maldives: Case study on climate-adaptive tourism practices. *Island Tourism Research Journal*, 29(2), 175-189.

Singh, R., & Khan, Y. (2022). Sustainable energy policies in tourism: A case from Sri Lanka. *Energy and Tourism Policy Journal*, 17(3), 312-328.

Spenceley, A., & Rylance, A. (2019). Environmental and community impacts of sustainable tourism practices. *Global Journal of Tourism Studies*, 17(2), 111-123.

Spencer, J., & Adams, T. (2023). The role of transformational leadership in promoting eco-tourism. *Leadership in Environmental Tourism*, 8(2), 210-225.

Sri Lanka Ministry of Tourism Development. (2022). Tourism and climate change adaptation strategy. Retrieved from <https://www.tourismministry.lk/climate-adaptation>.

Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. (2017). Annual Tourism Report: Economic impact and sustainability initiatives. Retrieved from <https://www.slttda.gov.lk>.

Tam, S. (2019). Transformational leadership in developing countries: Tourism sector perspectives. *Journal of Management in Emerging Economies*, 4(1), 99-117.

Thewa Collection. (2022). Sustainability at Aliya Resort. Retrieved November 14, 2024, from <https://www.themacollection.com/aliya-resort/sustainability/>.

Thomas, M., & Fernando, G. (2020). Analysis of sustainable tourism practices in Sri Lanka's coastal regions. *Journal of Coastal Tourism Studies*, 9(3), 223-240.

UNEP. (2021). Global Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals: A review of progress. United Nations Environment Programme. Retrieved from <https://www.unep.org/tourism-sdgs>.

UNWTO. (2017). Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030. United Nations World Tourism Organization. Retrieved from <https://www.unwto.org/sdgs>.

USAID. (2023). Sustainability impact assessment of tourism in Sri Lanka. Impact of Tourism on SDGs Report. Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/srilanka-sdgs>.

Wang, Z., & Tran, L. (2022). Renewable energy strategies for sustainable tourism. *Journal of Energy in Tourism*, 18(2), 147-164.

Wilson, L., & Garcia, F. (2021). Case studies in sustainable hospitality: The role of leadership. *International Journal of Green Hospitality*, 14(1), 35-52.

World Bank. (2021). Sri Lanka climate resilience and tourism development report. World Bank Publications. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/srilanka-tourism>.

Xavier, L., & Roberts, P. (2021). Cultural sustainability and tourism development in Asia. *Asian Cultural Tourism Journal*, 5(4), 401-420.

Yamada, S., & Kim, J. (2020). Impact of leadership on environmental sustainability in hospitality. *Journal of Tourism and Sustainability*, 15(3), 290-305.

Young, E., & Park, H. (2022). Technological innovations for energy efficiency in tourism. *Journal of Tourism and Technology*, 11(3), 179-194.

Zhang, Y., & Chen, L. (2023). Comparative analysis of sustainable tourism practices across Asia. *Asian Journal of Tourism*, 20(3), 222-238.

Zimmerman, T., & Lee, C. (2022). Transformational leadership in tourism for sustainable growth. *Tourism Leadership Journal*, 13(2), 144-158.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

