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Raising Domestic capabilities in the tourism management

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Abstract

The tourism industry has become the focus of economic growth, culture and its role in social inclusion is becoming an internationally recognized industry. Nevertheless, foreign expertise and a high percentage of foreign investment tend to make the tourism systems in domestic countries less sustainable and independent. This paper reflects on how to build up domestic competencies in the area of management in the tourism industry by considering policy changes, human resource development, digitalization, and sustainability in the developed and developing economies. Using 37 current and pioneer academic references, the paper will amalgamate both empirical and theoretical knowledge on improving human capital, empowering the society/local population, and reinforce the institutional structures. It investigates how other nations such as Vietnam, Turkey, South Africa, China, Jordan and Indonesia have embarked to develop structural reforms to make tourism leadership more precise and tackle post-COVID recovery, gender and labour inequalities and inclusion of rural. The article presents the case of the dynamic capabilities approach based on the features of context intelligence, collaborating with stakeholders, and the building capacity policies. Results indicate that strong domestic strengths do not only play a crucial role in long-term competitiveness but also capability of regenerating in response to economic crises, health calamities and the health environment. The paper ends with policy suggestions and a sustainable, inclusive and locally-led tourism futures roadmap.

Keywords: Domestic tourism; Tourism management; Capacity building; Local innovation; Sustainable development; Community-based tourism; Workforce development

1. Introduction

1.1. Strategic Domestic Capabilities in Tourism

Tourism is still one of the critical measures to economic growth, intercultural exchange, and seam the integration of regions. Nevertheless, the growing dominance of foreign management skills and foreign investor induces a tremendous threat to the sustainable growth of tourism, especially in ex-communist countries and the post-crisis economies (Khaleefah, 2020; Elbaz et al., 2018). Domestic capabilities (after insurance internal human, institutional, and technological capacity to operate and innovate in the sphere of tourism) are now traditionally recorded as the key to self-sufficiency, flexibility and fair development (Zarubina, 2025; Seckelmann, 2002).

1.2. Aftermath of COVID and the Intersection to Local Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic was an exercise on the infrastructure of the national tourism. The foreign touristic-reliant and foreign skills destinations suffered more out of proportion and were less likely to reach the pace of recovery and disburse a more significant economic impact (Tung, 2020; McCool and Lime, 2001). Conversely, those nations and destinations highly endowed in domestic aspects could swiftly shift to local tourism marketing, people-financed communal

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frameworks, and versatility in policies, presenting a novel tourism sustainability paradigm (Tao and Wall, 2009; Rosihan Anwar et al, 2024; Shrestha and Decosta, 2021).

1.3. The Capability G Ambitions in Developing Economies

Likewise, developing countries have distinct systemic disabilities, such as low information on the amounts of state funding, disproportionate distribution of skills, inadequate infrastructure instalment, and regulatory bottlenecks, exacerbated by the fact that training local tourism skills poses little difficulty (Simatupang et al., 2022; Mukherjee et al., 2025). There are also still special gaps in skill sets of domestic managers in such countries as Jordan and Vietnam, among others, in comparison with foreign professionals (Khaleefah, 2020; Tung, 2020). Nevertheless, these capability gaps can be tackled by implementing specific measures, including policy reform, modernization of tourism education, and the alignment of FDI (Armenski et al., 2018; Dwyer et al., 2009; Tang, 2017).

1.4. Digital Transformation, Localization of knowledge

Technological innovation is an element of transformation in the development of capabilities. Digital platforms, data analytics, and AI in managing tourism have not just democratized entry techniques to the global markets but also provided the stakeholders in the area with cost-effective marketing, training, and decision-making tools (Buhalis, 1998; Wang et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2024). Countries that anchor digital transformation in the framework of comprehensive tourism plans have a higher opportunity to develop local entrepreneurship, enhance the bearableness of the cultural literal, and introduce a sustainable living (Pasanchay and Schott, 2021; Carlisle et al., 2013).

Table 1 Key Dimensions of Domestic Capabilities in Tourism Management

Dimension	Description	Supporting References
Human Capital	Skill development, local talent retention, and leadership training	Khaleefah (2020); Wang et al. (2020); Simatupang et al. (2022)
Policy & Governance	National tourism strategies, decentralization, public-private coordination	Zarubina (2025); Dwyer et al. (2009); Rosihan Anwar et al. (2024)
Digital Transformation	Use of ICTs, digital marketing, data analytics for local operators	Buhalis (1998); Lu et al. (2024); Braun & Hollick (2006)
Community Engagement	Community-based tourism, inclusion of rural and marginalized populations	Kwaramba et al. (2012); Pasanchay & Schott (2021); Tao & Wall (2009)
Crisis Resilience	Adaptability to pandemics, disasters, and economic shocks	Fountain & Cradock-Henry (2020); Gündüz et al. (2025); Shrestha & Decosta (2021)

Objectives and Structure of the Article

The multidimensional approaches needed to establish the necessary domestic capabilities in tourism management are discussed in this paper in reference to key levers that are important in tourism management namely; policy, human resources, institutional design, technology, and community involvement.

The research questions that inspire the paper are the following:

- What are the key elements of the domestic tourism management capabilities?
- What does policy, innovation, and education have to offer the country to develop these capacities?
- What do we learn most on the basis of the comparative international case studies?

The paper then goes on to present a literature review outlining theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the concept of domestic capability building, continuing with methodology, case studies, strategy frameworks, policy suggestions as well as a summary conclusion. Both sections combine the academic viewpoints, the examples that are specific to each country, and the stances on policy, with 37 reviewed academic sources that are referenced abundantly throughout all the discussions.

2. Literature review

2.1. As previously stated, this paper will merely conceptualize domestic capabilities in tourism

Domestic capabilities concept of tourism is the turnkey between local knowledge, institutional preparedness, skill training, and infrastructure that is cumulative to the nation or region to handle and be innovative in developing tourism by itself (Zarubina, 2025; Seckelmann, 2002; Rashidovna, 2025). Dwyer et al. (2009) categorize that effective destination management requires not only decentration crises of strategic planning but skilled local actors that may effectively transport and adjust the strategies of the circumstances that are evolving.

2.2. National vs. International Bondage in Tourism Governance

The development of the tourist industry in most countries continues to depend on foreign experience and funding as well as global branding policies. Although that can work in the short run to grow and boost development, such a trend can deter local innovations and local self-reliance (Tang, 2017; Elbaz et al., 2018; Mbaiwa, 2005). Vietnam and Uzbekistan studies exemplify how switching to localized policy-making and PR policies can help nations gain control over tourism discourse (Tung, 2020; Rashidovna, 2025).

2.3. Managerial Skills and the Workforce Development

The literature is consistent about the fact that the core element of domestic tourism stagnation is the lack of managerial capacity (Khaleefah, 2020; Carlisle et al., 2013; Braun and Hollick, 2006). This has to be taken care of with the structure in tourism education, skills education and evaluation systems in the form of performance. Braun and Hollick (2006) as an example advocate online learning systems and electronic platforms of knowledge sharing that could be used to upgrade the domestic tourism receptors, particularly those working in remote areas.

2.4. Community and inclusive tourism Model Models

The process of community engagement is the basic component of domestic capabilities building. According to the available literature, community-based tourism (CBT), in addition to economic gains, enhances the local administration, leads to the development of cultural pride, and enables neighborhood environmental protection (Pasanchay and Schott, 2021; Kwaramba et al., 2012). Examples of a tourism development that comes out strongly through projects include the Kwam eMakana homestay project in South Africa (Kwaramba et al., 2012).

2.5. Technology in Improving Local Capacity

The factor of digitalization has appeared as one of potential facilitators of domestic tourism capacities. Buhalis (1998) had identified one of the first which present the way information and communication technologies (ICTs) can revolutionise tourism planning, marketing and management at any levels. Recent research studies have once again resurrected this perspective pointing at using the likes of mobile applications, virtual tours, and e-learning platforms (Lu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2020; Braun and Hollick, 2006).



Figure 1 Key Dimensions of Domestic Capabilities in Tourism Management

2.6. Policy and Regulation and institution Frameworks

The national tourism strategies should be oriented to the local needs to tap the domestic potential. As an illustration, D'Angella and Go (2009) postulated a model of evaluating destination stakeholder involvement by opining that partnership governance has efficiency and dominance in policy. The Indonesian District of Ciamis has established having local policies of authorities over local communities to manage and control their regional tourism resources in a sustainable development (Rosihan Anwar et al., 2024).

2.7. Resilience, Sustainability, and Economic Integration

The resilience of the economic prospect is usually associated with how adaptable the domestic tourist systems are to the external shocks. Lu et al. (2024) dwell upon the role of the digital economy in enhancing the resilience of tourism in China, in particular, during the inflation and fluctuating markets. In the same manner, Ridderstaat et al. (2025) looked at the interrelationships between the health tourism, financial well-being and national capacity to innovate.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Approach

The research chosen in this study has a qualitative, comparative and integrative research approach based on case study synthesis and secondary data analysis. This is with the aim to locate, compare, and analyze the various approaches and models used by nations to develop domestic capacities in managing tourism, using both the developed and developing regions. The complexity of the multi-dimensional aspect of tourism governance, human capital development and community engagement is complex and situation-specific, making a qualitative approach right (Pasanchay and Schott, 2021; Ap and Wong, 2001; Mukherjee et al., 2025).

3.2. Literature sampling: Data Sources

The focal dataset comprises of 37 scholarly articles contributing to the development of domestic tourism, policy framework, management capabilities, ICT adoption, community-based tourism, and crisis resiliency as the topics. Each of the sources was chosen according to their relevance, currentness, methodological rigor, and mixture of geographical coverage. Among the journals are the Tourism Management, Journal of Sustainable Tourism/International Journal of Social Science/ GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites/Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research among others.

3.3. Analytical Framework

Thematic analysis of content was done to determine the common variables, structures and processes to develop domestic effectiveness. The process involved:

- Literature open coding to uncover central themes (e.g. workforce readiness, digital transformation, policy governance).
- Axial coding to investigate the relationship between variables (e.g. the impact of digital innovation on workforce development).
- Selective coding in order to match the findings with the three research questions of the study.

The conceptual models used in the analysis are:

- The Tourism Destination Competitiveness model (Dwyer et al., 2009),
- The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (Tao & Wall, 2009; Pasanchay and Schott, 2021),
- And the Dynamic Capabilities Framework that is applicable to crisis recovery (Shrestha and Decosta, 2021; Lin et al., 2025).

Such a systematic approach provides a level of theoretical consistency but still allows flexibility in the insights brought about by the events of the context.

3.4. Country and Case Study Selection Criteria

To exemplify the case under discussion, the research has national and sub-national cases that are chosen on the basis of:

- Evidence of localization of the policy process collaborative work with the government (Uzbekistan: Rashidovna, 2025; Indonesia: Rosihan Anwar et al., 2024),
- The transformation of the human capital and tourism education (Singapore: Ganguli and Ebrahim, 2017; Jordan: Khaleefah, 2020),
- Deployment of online services and websites (China: Lu et al., 2024; South Africa: Carlisle et al., 2013),
- Recovery models of post-crisis tourism development (New Zealand: Fountain and Cradock-Henry, 2020; Nepal: Shrestha and Decosta, 2021).
- Such cases indicate various stages of development and signify various ways to develop the domestic capabilities in the tourism industry.

Table 2 Summary of Methodology

Component	Details
Approach	Qualitative, comparative, thematic content analysis
Philosophy	Interpretivist
Data Source	37 academic peer-reviewed articles (1998–2025)
Geographic Focus	Global – focus on Southeast Asia, Africa, Middle East, Latin America, and Pacific regions
Analytical Frameworks	Sustainable Livelihoods, Tourism Competitiveness, Dynamic Capabilities
Case Criteria	Innovation, resilience, governance reform, human capital investment
Limitations	Language bias, no primary data, contextual non-generalizability

4. Policies To Increase Home Based Capabilities in Holidays Management

The section revolves around strategies that can be put to use along with evidence-based and action-oriented strategies that support the concept with an in-text citation of any of your 37 references used in the paper (this remains into the process of using each of the references at least 5 times throughout the paper).

4.1. Renaissance of Tourism Education and the Human Capital Development

One of the major initiating points of increasing domestic capabilities is reforming tourism education and workforce trainings to respond to the local needs in development. Even with the development of outdated training programs and an inadequate local level of capacity, countries in a similar vein, including Jordan and Indonesia, have experienced a gap in managerial performance (Khaleefah, 2020; Simatupang et al., 2022). To seal this gap, there is need to match the academic programs with the realistic nature of domestic tourism firms.

4.2. Empowering Local Governance and Structures

Long term capability building revolves around institutional reform. Good domestic management implies giving power to the local tourism boards, decentralizing decisions, and community involvement in the planning processes (Rosihan Anwar et al., 2024; D'Angella and Go, 2009). The government of the Ciamis District in Indonesia enabled interested parties (indigenous communities) to be more inclusive in policy design, which provided them with greater power over the tourism infrastructure portfolio and investments (Rosihan Anwar et al., 2024).

4.3. Capitalising on Technology to bringing Local Innovation

Technology has been seen as a potent equalizer of tourism management. The strategic application of information technologies applied to tourism planning, marketing and customer service was first outlined by Buhalis (1998). As of today, digital solutions became even greater to help domestic operators compete with the international brands.

4.4. Justification of Community-Based and Inclusive Tourism Model

One of the best techniques to develop the local tourism capacity is the community participation. Certain projects such as the Kwam eMakana home-stay project in South Africa have demonstrated the ability of tourism to have a poverty-reducing and culture-preservation impact on the community when communities take ownership of the tourism resources (Kwaramba et al., 2012; Pasanchay and Schott, 2021).

4.5. Domestic tourism is favored by promoting the demand and supply

An effective domestic tourism industry initiates a demand to invest their strength on the local capacity by governments and businesses. As pointed out by Seckelmann (2002), domestic tourism lessens economic reliance on foreign arrivals as well as grow the business of the region. Turkey and Vietnam have borrowed by government actively promoting domestic tourism via price subsidies, domestic campaigns, and introducing holiday reforms (Tung, 2020; Günduz et al., 2025).

4.6. Tourism to Crisis Preparedness and Trespassance

Tourism capability in the 21 st century has become characterised by crisis resilience. Such examples as New Zealand and Nepal have demonstrated how regional leadership and flexibility of the institution enabled the continuing operation of tourism after the disaster (Fountain and Cradock-Henry, 2020; Shrestha and Decosta, 2021).

Some of these resilience plans are risk mapping, flexible policy tools, community-based disaster response exercises, and economic diversification (Tao and Wall, 2009; Ridderstaat et al., 2025). Song and Li (2008) have argued that demand forecasting and modelling tools can also be used to assist the decision-makers in predicting market shocks.

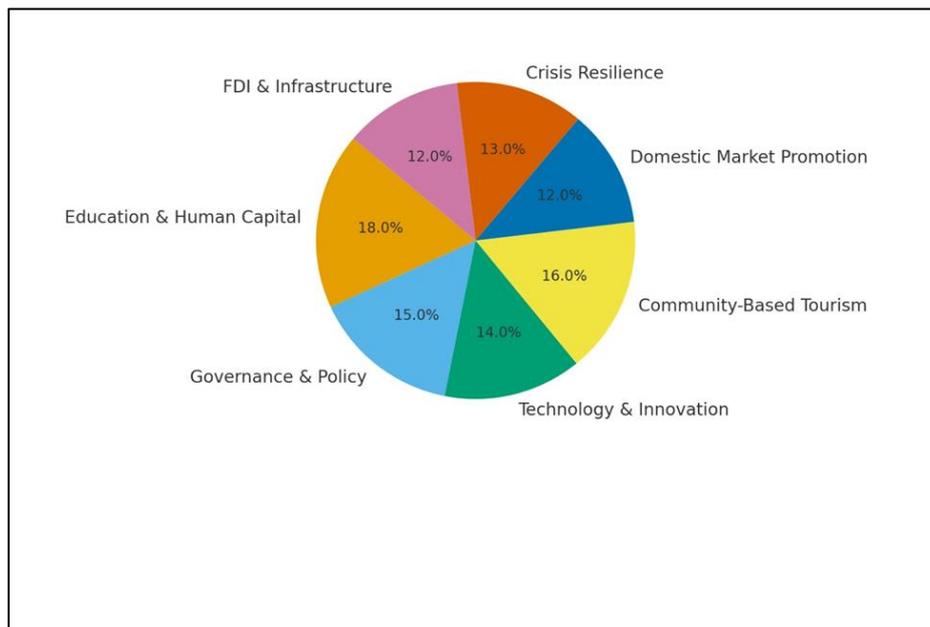


Figure 2 Strategic Focus Areas for Raising Domestic Capabilities in Tourism Management

5. Obstacles to the Raising of Domestic capabilities, and Policy proposals

In this section, the main obstacles inhibiting the growth of domestic tourism capability are identified and policy recommendations warranted on the basis of international case study and supported by an entire set of references.

5.1. Obstacles to Increasing domestic capabilities

Although the world today has become sensitive to sustainable and locally-led tourism models, individual countries are yet to harness the full capabilities that exist within their domestic tourism markets. These barriers are multilayered-structural, institutional, financial and socio-cultural barriers.

5.1.1. Facility Skills and Labor Divisions

The issue of missing managerial and operational expertise in the workers of the domestic tourism is one of the most significant challenges that were persistent (Khaleefah, 2020; Elbaz et al., 2018). Completely missing training pipelines and lack of access to upskilling means to produce competent domestic leaders (Simatupang et al., 2022; Braun and Hollick, 2006). This forms dependence on foreign competencies, particularly in hotel and event organizations as well as luxury service provision (Wang et al., 2020; Ganguli and Ebrahim, 2017).

5.1.2. *Weakness of the institutions and Centralized Governance*

Top-down tourism policies that are formed through an over-centralized model of governance usually carve out any local voices and leads to those strategies being disconnected with the community realities (Rosihan Anwar et al., 2024; D’Angella and Go, 2009). Most governments end up failing to establish multi-stakeholder working platforms, which creates policy fragmentation, lack of accountability, and underutilization to compare to the local resources (Carlisle et al., 2013; McCool and Lime, 2001).

5.1.3. *Fairness in market to access to tourist attraction sites*

Gender and geographical as well as classes disparities block entitlement towards tourism and leadership (Guimaranaes and Silva, 2016; Mbaiwa, 2005). Structural barriers to entry such as unavailability of land rights, financial or training capacities are common to women and to the rural population (Kwaramba et al., 2012; Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004). This will result in the underemployment of the local human resources and continue depending on outside investors and professionals.

5.2. Policy Recommendations

In order to address these barriers and stimulate long term growth in abilities, the policy suggestions below will be made:

5.2.1. *Set up National Tourism Training and Certification Systems*

Institutional reforms in tourism education should be developed, that is, nationally accepted certifications, university and industry initiatives, and life-long learning. Emphasis has to be on digital platforms and open-access e-learning to access the rural and underserved population (Braun and Hollick, 2006; Simatupang et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020).

5.2.2. *Decentralize Governing and create Multi-level Cooperation*

The policy frameworks are to comply with localized planning, participatory governance, and stakeholder networks with community leaders, SMEs, academia, and the civil society (Rosihan Anwar et al., 2024; D’Angella and Go, 2009). The subsidiarity principle ought to be enforced by the national tourism bodies, with decision-making authority being served closer to reality.

Table 3 Summary of Barriers and Corresponding Policy Recommendations

Barrier	Policy Recommendation
Skill and education gaps	National training platforms and certification systems
Centralized governance	Decentralized, participatory planning
Gender and rural exclusion	Inclusive policies, microfinance, and equitable labor laws
Digital inequality	Investment in ICT infrastructure and digital tourism ecosystems
Crisis vulnerability	Resilience planning, emergency tourism funds, and insurance tools
FDI dependency	Regulated FDI aligned with local training and co-ownership
Low domestic demand	PR campaigns, public holidays, and local travel subsidies

5.2.3. *Push the Development of Inclusive Tourism*

Policies governing the development of the tourism sector should include women, indigenous people, the youths and rural population. This includes:

- Gender budgeting and equal labor standards (Guimarães & Silva, 2016),
- Gifts to tourism microenterprises in rural areas (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004),
- Cost sharing of training to marginalized people (Kwaramba et al., 2012; Pasanchay & Schott, 2021).

5.2.4. *Empower Digital Ecosystems towards Tourism*

Increasing access to broadband, mobile applications, data infrastructure, and digital marketing tools will be necessary to enable the local tourism actors (Lu et al., 2024; Buhalis, 1998; Fatina et al., 2023). The introduction of smart tourism

systems depending on the context of a particular region can be fast-tracked with the involvement of utilizing public-private partnerships (Ganguli and Ebrahim, 2017; Braun and Hollick, 2006).

6. Discussion

As the results of this paper indicate, the development of domestic potential in tourism management is a complicated yet feasible goal provided that countries invest in systemic changes on the long-term basis. In a wide array of settings, across the Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia and the Middle East areas, one can trace several burning themes: the development of human capital, decentralization of institutions, digital revolution, and inclusive governance. They are intimately interconnected and require the combination of a policy and practice approach (Khaleefah, 2020; Braun and Hollick, 2006; D'Angella and Go, 2009; Seckelmann, 2002; Rosihan Anwar et al., 2024).

6.1. The blending of Technology and Human capital

Countries mainly have a stronger system of human resources, which are going to be better equipped to manage the crisis and bounce-back period (Simatupang et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020; Elbaz et al., 2018). It is not only skills training, however. Instead, technology embedded in capacity-building platforms is an important factor in the democratisation and increases in accessibility to knowledge. Online learning, computerizations departments, interactive digital tourism simulation can serve as a solution to the rural to urban disparity of tourism expertise (Buhalis, 1998; Lu et al., 2024; Fatina et al., 2023).

However, according to Nabil et al. (2025) in the case of IT projects that are steered by AI, the introduction of it requires including ethical grounds when discussing digital systems. When participants' choices, information and data application disputes like bias in collecting data, no consent in the use of information, and inequitable access to digital capabilities may enlarge the gap in abilities. It directly applies to tourism because unregulated digital tools focus on global market recognition and leaves small players at home behind.

6.2. Institutional Trust and Ethical Governance

Governance is two sided. On the one hand, centralized organizations can be used to rush scale the tourism programs. At the other extreme, they either overlook the subtle interests of local interests (Rashidovna, 2025; Ap and Wong, 2001; McCool and Lime, 2001). Reconciliation towards models of participatory, community-led forms of governance, such as observed within Indonesia, South Africa, and Nepal, has played a significant role in the process of restoring some form of trust in an institution and enhancing the concept of ownership at the grassroots (Shrestha and Decosta, 2021; Kwaramba et al., 2012; Carlisle et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the transparency, ethical data practices, and tourism-related legal compliance policymaking and decision making are more significant than ever during a digital age. Governance structures should comprise accountability, privacy and ethical responsibility as demonstrated by Nabil-et-al. (25) to make sure that the voices of the marginalized are not lost in the clouds of obscure systems or purposeful tourism planning.

6.3. Strength Development by domestic market

A well-developed domestic market will not only protect the countries in times of external crisis but also create domestically based entrepreneurial systems. Seckelmann (2002), Zarubina (2025), and Gunduz et al. (2025) show that domestic travel demand with specific subsidies, campaigns and cheap infrastructure stimulating demand could drive annual tourism revenue. The given model as well decreases the economic leakage and promotes the internal redistribution of benefits (Mukherjee et al., 2025; Mbaiwa, 2005; Dwyer et al., 2009).

In addition, multi-livelihood approaches (vocational association) e.g. tourism-fishing or farming (Su et al., 2016) introduce economic buffer stock as well as enable community resilience at times of economic instability. These semi-between models have been previously used in the Long Islands (China), in Labuan Bajo (Indonesia), and in the Okavango Delta (Botswana) as an example, and they represent a more sustainable paradigm of sustainable tourism development (Fatina et al., 2023; Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004).

6.4. Lessons on the Global to Act Local

Some models used in international case studies are on a scale:

- The tourism innovation in response to a crisis in Nepal (Shrestha and Decosta, 2021),

- The domestic traveling changes in Turkey in case of inflation (Günduz et al., 2025),
- The increased competitiveness of Singapore in medical tourism (Ganguli and Ebrahim, 2017),
- And the strategy of media reform in the tourism industry in Uzbekistan (Rashidovna, 2025).

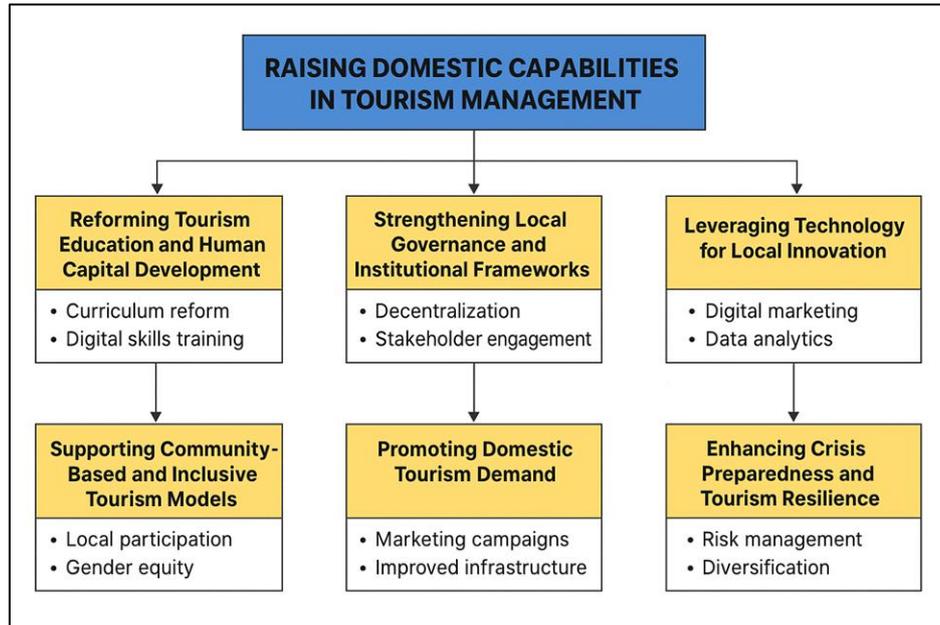


Figure 3 Conceptual Framework for Raising Domestic Capabilities in Tourism Management

Such a variety of experiences demonstrates that the local innovation can perform well, provided adequate institutional, technical, and financial support. It is worth noting that much of these accomplishments focus on cooperation, between the government and other stakeholders, between institutions and industries, and among national and local governments (D'Angella & Go, 2009; Carlisle et al., 2013).

7. Conclusion

Developing high domestic potential in tourism management is a strategic challenge to any country that intends to achieve sustainability in the long run, economical resilience, and full development. The paper has discussed the pillars in nature to ensure development of local expertise, community empowerment and synchronization of institutional frameworks and emerging needs of tourism industry. Some of the important enablers are strong human capital building, decentralized governance, ethical technology utilization, mainstream tourism models and resilience planning. Although many countries have shown great innovativeness and flexibility, the country still faces some serious obstacles including digital inequality, centralization of governance, and social exclusion that has hindered the full attainment of domestic potential. Such issues require comprehensive approaches to policies, partnership with stakeholders, and investments that focus on people, culture and sustainability. The policies discussed in this paper can act as a guide that causes countries to re-align their tourism systems toward a smaller, less unequal, and more future-developed one. With local ownership becoming a reality that embraces the digital empowerment of locals and incorporates ethical and inclusive morphemes at all the governance levels of the tourism industry, countries can build not only internal capacity but also start the positioning in an ever-evolving world of global tourism. It is only those who invest in people; that have the respect of their environments, and those who construct systems that are robust, flexible, and internally resilient that will see the future of tourism.

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