



SUSTAINABILITY MODEL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: INTERVENTIONS OF NGOS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS IN TOURISM SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This study proposes a sustainability model to promote social change and support tourism development. The development of the tourism sector goes hand in hand with the upliftment of vulnerable groups in urban areas and with driving social change. The study is based on secondary data and the application of various models adopted by developed countries to uplift vulnerable groups has been studied in detail. Three promotional models for three types of tourism, each collaborating with three types of vulnerable groups have been discussed. The sustainability model comprises the government and corporate sector, NGOs, and the ultimate beneficiaries, i.e., vulnerable groups of society. The first layer of government schemes and corporate CSR funding provides necessary financial and structural support. The second layer comprises NGOs that facilitate the redistribution of funds through prosocial initiatives that promote tourism in urban areas. The third layer includes three target groups: Orphans, street urchins, and widows, who carry out the initiatives while promoting niche tourism and earning financial and social independence in return.

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Introduction

The global tourism industry, now worth billions, plays a significant role in shaping national economies and fostering overall development. In particular, it holds transformative potential for cities and communities in developing nations. Beyond creating jobs, tourism contributes to social, cultural, and educational enrichment. As a result, its significance today extends well beyond economics, attracting interest from governments, NGOs, and private stakeholders due to its broader social impact (Ghasemi & Hamzah, 2014; Martinez & Olander, 2024). Historically, tourism was associated with picturesque rural retreats, coastal areas, and mountain destinations (Amiri *et al.*, 2019). However, today's travellers are equally drawn to immersive cultural experiences, heritage attractions, traditional cuisine, and sustainable

tourism offerings (Barnett, 2008). This evolving preference has turned the spotlight on regions previously overlooked for tourism because of a lack of natural beauty. As a result, these areas are now being considered for tourism-led development. According to the United Nations (2020), nearly 60% of the global population is projected to live in urban areas by 2030, further intensifying the relevance of urban tourism in future planning. This underscores the need to place greater emphasis on promoting urban tourism in planning policies for urban development and growth (ZentVelt, 2024).

According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), urban tourism is characterised by tourism that capitalises on the vast and heterogeneous range of architectural, cultural, social, technological, and natural gifts and

experiences a city can offer new travellers. Several tourism niches have been developed in this regard; the tourism industry has spawned various avenues that explore the opportunities like sustainable tourism, heritage tourism, architectural tourism, and many more that aim towards the promotion of this sector while also considering the direct social and economic impact of such promotion on the immediate community and surroundings of the tourism destination (Gkoumas, 2019). Tourism can create a platform for the voices of the marginalised and dispossessed communities in these countries. When utilised appropriately, the significant resource power held by the tourism sector can be a driver of social change and the empowerment of vulnerable groups. This potential of the tourism sector can be capitalised through strategic participation by agencies and organisations that aim to bring social upliftment (Akova & Atsiz, 2019).

NGOs in urban areas have been diligently working towards the creation of economic opportunities for socially vulnerable groups such as orphans, homeless children, and widows. However, NGOs often lack the financial resources and structural support to ensure optimal financial and social empowerment for these groups. Besides, stakeholder involvement affects economic and cultural development, mainly in urban-based tourism (Rabbani *et al.*, 2025). The present study seeks to develop a model that establishes a structural association between the development of urban tourism and the development of socially disadvantaged communities. Thus, the study seeks to answer the following question:

How can we combine promoting tourism in urban areas with efforts to uplift vulnerable communities through NGO-led interventions?

To answer this question, the study adopts a qualitative research method. In particular, the present study analyses the extant literature on tourism, NGO aid interventions, and the practices adopted in the interest of community development. The study also examines current

and suggested practices for promoting tourism in its various modern forms, as well as the impact these tourism promotion activities have on the immediate surroundings and the communities that dwell in these tourism destinations (Li *et al.*, 2016). The study collects this qualitative data from published research papers, articles, travel columns on web portals, and official tourism support guides from different travel destinations around the world, focusing primarily on practices related to the social development of disadvantaged groups in urban centres.

In return, this study makes three significant contributions to the literature relevant to the development of the tourism sector. Firstly, the findings and insights gleaned from this study enable the researchers to ultimately develop a new tourism model that stands at the intersection of the literature regarding tourism and NGO interventions for the development of socially disadvantaged communities. The three-layer model developed in this study explores the nexus between tourism promotion and NGOs to advance the development of disadvantaged communities in urban areas. Secondly, the study challenges the existing and growing body of research on tourism promotion by adding further nuance to the knowledge base by incorporating factors with multidimensional impacts on society, rather than focusing solely on economic gain. In response to gaps in research on promoting urban tourism in socially and environmentally responsible ways, the present study demonstrates that tourism promotion is not limited to a purely business or economic paradigm but also encompasses a social development paradigm. Thirdly, the study provides a fitting response to calls for a developmental framework that demonstrates practical utility and application in promoting tourism for social development in urban centres. The model developed by the researchers in the present study has been derived from insights gained through an examination of practical measures and suggestions that have either pre-existed or are in current use across different parts of the world.

The present study curates such suggestions from various quarters. It compiles them into a new model tailored to promote tourism while ensuring the socioeconomic development of weaker sections of society through NGO interventions in urban India. However, the model uniquely integrates various supporting parameters for tourism promotion into a single model. The study piques researchers' curiosity to expand further into tourism promotion, as it opens new avenues for research on how the government and corporate sectors can integrate promotional activities into tourism. These integrations across various cultural, food, and sustainable tourism types create a new perspective in tourism-based research. However, including NGOs in the model is another novelty that helped position it well in tourism research. The presentation of this study meets the challenges and demands of the modern Indian tourism industry while also rising to the objective of benefiting society at large.

Literature Review

The idea of tourism as a tool for the development and upliftment of society has gained followers over the last three decades. Its origins lie in countries such as Germany, Italy, and France, where tourism grew rapidly in the post-war era (Harrison, 2008). Today, it is known by various names such as pro-poor tourism, justice tourism, or responsible tourism, and is defined as tourism that delivers net benefits to people experiencing poverty (Zhang *et al.*, 2020; Mathew *et al.*, 2024). According to Harrison (2008), responsible tourism must be integrated into wider tourism systems, including ensuring that people on low incomes have access to markets, promoting the commercial success of responsible tourism, fostering practical

stakeholder cooperation, and ensuring effective policy implementation. Responsible tourism, therefore, combines the business of tourism with the ethical responsibilities to our society (Mathew *et al.*, 2024).

Despite the lack of a universally agreed-upon definition of ethical or responsible tourism (Power *et al.*, 2017), several forms of tourism that operate ethically have emerged and are gaining popularity worldwide. It has fashioned itself into being a part of the international capitalist industry by actively catering to the widespread realisation that the economic, social, and political benefits of tourism should be enjoyed by the people of that land (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Caruana *et al.*, 2014). Some examples include slow-food tourism, volunteer tourism, sustainable tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism (Spence, 2018). These forms of responsible tourism provide customers with critical and reflexive thinking, as well as the satisfaction of catering to social needs (Grossman *et al.*, 2015), and self-realisation through mindful mingling with creative activities and knowledge of another culture (Wang *et al.*, 2020).

On the other side of responsible tourism are the beneficiary communities; the local communities of the tourist destination stand to gain from heightened economic activity and wider recognition, while ensuring ecological or cultural preservation threatened by conventional tourism (Musavengane, 2019). For responsible tourism to be viable, it is necessary to examine factors that can promote it, including accessibility (Velu & Anuradha, 2025), tourist perceptions (Caruana *et al.*, 2014), and capital formation (Velu & Anuradha, 2025). Table 1 presents an overview of factors that promote tourism development in a place.

Table 1: Studies on tourism promotion

Tourism Promotion	Aspect	Strategic Approaches	Societal Outcomes	Sources
Food tourism	Food tourism refers to travelling purely motivated by a desire for exotic food or gastronomic experiences. It is tourism dedicated to acquiring the taste of a place and understanding its culture and sense of place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow food fairs (Italy) • Spice market tours (Thailand) • Sale of exotic spices and ingredients (Thailand, Singapore) • Food festivals and parades (France) • Traditional cooking methods showcase (Italy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and promotion of the destination • Encourages preserving cultural diversity • Promotes local businesses 	Everett (2016); James and Halkier (2016); Ellis <i>et al.</i> (2018); Sharples <i>et al.</i> (2003); Okumus (2025)
Ecotourism	Ecotourism is an environmentally responsible tourism practice that comprises travel that is not disruptive to the natural habitat and resources of the destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier reef protection (Costa Rica) • Taronga Conservation Society (Australia) • Corbett National Park (India) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserves endangered flora and fauna • Low harmful impact on culture or environment 	Fennell (2021); Olson (2012); Buckley (2009); Linsheng <i>et al.</i> (2017); Harital (2018)
Rural tourism	Rural tourism means travel to a rural area for a considerable period, out of a willingness to experience the countryside, as a pleasurable or leisure activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cottage living plans (India) • Countryside luxury living • Adventure camps • Rural living experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injects money into rural economies • Preserves local cultures and traditions • Decreases the income gap between urban and rural areas 	Yanan <i>et al.</i> (2024); Lin (2019); Gao and Wu (2017); Dragan <i>et al.</i> (2024); Sharma (2025)
Cultural tourism	Cultural tourism refers to tourism motivated by the urge to experience the uniqueness of different cultures and traditions, or to broaden mental horizons by touring and exploring the traditions and history of communities other than your own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional costume photography (India) • Food fairs (Thailand, France) • Cultural exchange programmes (Germany, China) • Folk music concerts (India) • Folk dances and cultural parades (Singapore, India) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages cultural diversity • Preserves unique local traditions • Develops exotic and sought-after tourism destinations • Reduces income inequality for artisans and craft workers 	Smith (2015); Markwick (2018); Nyamogosa and Murrini (2020)

<p>Heritage tourism</p> <p>Heritage tourism is pleasurable travel primarily motivated by the urge to seek out architectural, cultural, or natural representations and markers of history and the legacy of an area and its people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided tours (Bhutan, Dubai) • Heritage walks (India) • Folk storytelling sessions (India, Bangladesh) • Les Invalides Museum (France) • Architectural or historical souvenirs (Germany, Japan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserves local traditions and history • Develops areas that have low natural resources • Encourages scholarly interest and historical research • Role of NGO in developing a path to tourism with the active involvement of local authorities <p>Peng and Tzeng (2019); Chong and Balasingham (2019); Jeon <i>et al.</i> (2016); Dragan <i>et al.</i> (2024)</p>
<p>Sustainable tourism</p> <p>Sustainable tourism focuses on creating tourism practices that can be maintained over the long term without harming the environment, wildlife, or local resources. Unlike traditional mass tourism, it prioritises protecting nature and ensures that tourism benefits less developed communities both now and in the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting alternative eco-friendly destinations (Malaysia) • Implementing green hotel initiatives (Japan) • Using natural resources for renewable energy and fuel (Sweden) • Offering organic farming experiences (Italy) • Protecting wildlife through parks like Corbett Wildlife Reserve (India) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages people to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours • Helps conserve local plants and animals • Supports reducing income gaps by benefiting rural and underdeveloped areas • Provides social assistance and empowerment for marginalised groups <p>Sharpley (2000), Pan <i>et al.</i> (2018); Lane (2004); Paner-Krause (2019)</p>
<p>Responsible tourism</p> <p>Responsible tourism is the tourism that is mindful of the negative social, environmental, and economic impact of reckless tourism, and therefore strives to reverse or minimise it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biosphere World Urban Destination (Gijon) • Visitor entry requirements (Bhutan) • Dolphin Discovery Centre (Australia) • Urban Blocks (China) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserves the local environment of tourism destinations • Promotes the development of backwards communities • Improve the legitimacy, authenticity, and community development <p>Mihalic (2016); Mathew and Sreejesh (2017); Liang <i>et al.</i> (2025)</p>

<p>Urban tourism</p>	<p>Urban tourism refers to tourism based in urban spaces characterised by a non-agricultural economy. Tourism in these areas is instead based on the offer of a broad and heterogeneous range of cultural, technological, social, architectural, and natural sights, experiences, or products for business or leisure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of urban assets • Development of urban centres for leisurely exploration • Create architectural, technological, and social marvels for building attractive destinations • Develop a multicultural and heterogeneous culture and environment • Alignment with environmental sustainability goals • Develop a system aligned with economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves as a tool for the sustainable and inclusive development of cities • Provides new employment opportunities in the highly concentrated job market • Provides multicultural exposure and brings social and cultural development • Regulate the spatial inequalities, social exclusion, and degradation of the environment 	<p>UNWTO (2015); Rogerson and Rogerson (2024); Qunn and Ryan (2016); Giordano and Ong (2017); Adamo <i>et al.</i> (2019); Novy and Colomb, 2016; Li & Wu (2025), Lopes <i>et al.</i> (2025); Light <i>et al.</i> (2021); ZentvFeld (2024)</p>
<p>Pro-poor tourism</p>	<p>Pro-poor tourism refers to tourism promotion that caters explicitly to the fulfilment and upliftment of people with low incomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of poor people's representation in decision-making • Focus on the development of designated economic zones • Create jobs and new economic opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the eradication of poverty • Greater participation of poor people in the decision-making • Sustainable social and economic development 	<p>Musavengane (2018); Bakker and Messerli (2017)</p>

Methodology

The current study is based on secondary data analysis of existing models in the literature on tourism promotion, NGO interventions, and community development initiatives. For this study, relevant models were curated and critically studied. This objective was facilitated by reports from international organisations such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), as well as government reports from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Sustainable Development Ministry in India. Furthermore, the study delves into the existing practices and implementation of tourism promotion structures in niche fields such as cultural, food, and sustainable tourism.

The older articles from 1995 to 2000 and from 2001 to 2005 have been reviewed to develop insights into shifting trends in the

tourism sector and to examine successful models of the past. The literature from 2006 to 2010 has been reviewed to examine the development of interest in niche tourism sectors worldwide. The literature from the first half of this decade, i.e., from 2011 to 2015, has been examined to adjudge the applicability of previous tourism development models in the present context. Finally, a majority of the literature reviewed for this study was published in the latter half of the current decade, i.e., from 2016 to 2020.

The study has included sources from online blogs and websites dedicated to promote food, travel, and lifestyle experiences. Similarly, news and magazine articles, as well as official tourism department websites were consulted to gain exploratory insights into noteworthy destinations and tourism practices.

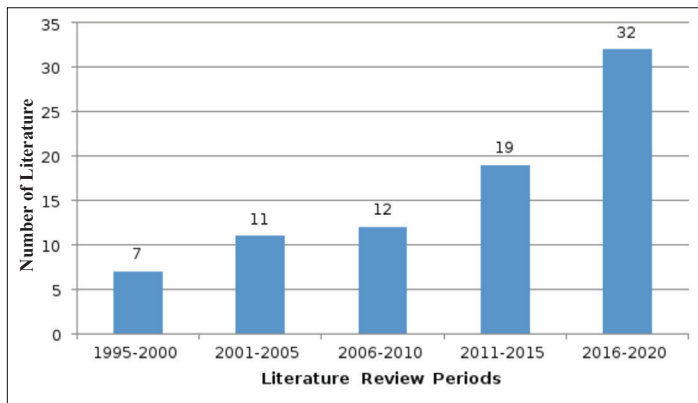


Figure 1: Period covered in review literature

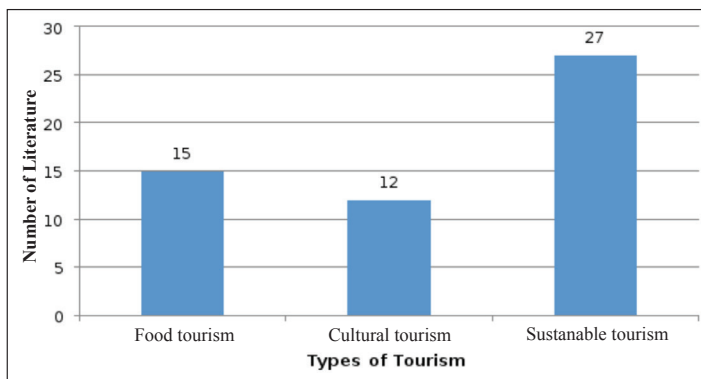


Figure 2: Types of tourism covered in review literature

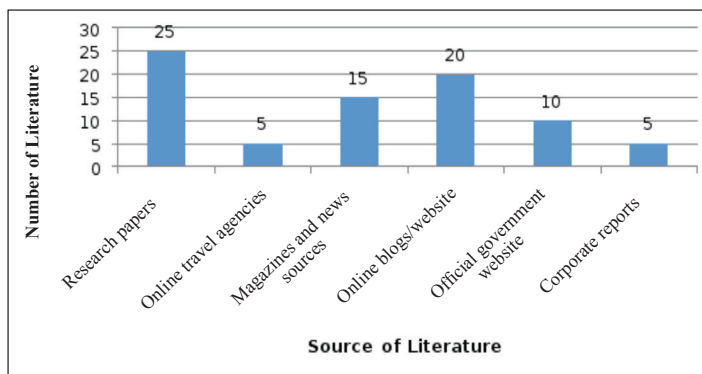


Figure 3: Types of sources

Table 2: Country-wise sources of information

Tourism Promotion	Countries Quoted	Sources
Food tourism	France	Food blogs (La Route des Gourmets), tourism magazines
	Thailand	Online tourism agencies (TourRadar), hotel websites (Four Seasons)
	Malaysia	Tour agency (Heena Tours and Travels), research papers (Raihan, 2024)
	Italy	Online tourism agencies (TourRadar, MakeMyTrip)
	South Korea	Online tourism agencies (Tripadvisor, MakeMyTrip), food and travel blogs
	India	Food and travel blogs (MissMalini, Curly Tales, My India), magazine and news articles (Times of India, Lifestyle, Vogue India)
Cultural tourism	China	Travel blogs (Inspirock)
	Malaysia	Online articles and blogs, government websites (southafrica.net)
	Canada	Government websites (heritagetoronto.org)
	France	Online travel agencies (Tripadvisor, TourRadar)
	India	Official websites (heritagewalkahmedabad.com), travel blogs, magazine and news articles
Sustainable tourism	Indonesia	Research papers (Hotimah <i>et al.</i> , 2015), news articles
	Costa Rica	News articles, online blogs, magazine articles, tourism agency (MakeMyTrip)
	India	State government websites (megtourism.gov.in), news articles (The Economic Times, Times of India), magazine and online articles (villagesquare.in), research papers (Risteskia <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Wani & Jan, 2018)

While this study is based on secondary data, it acknowledges its limitations in terms of generalisability and the absence of local context. Future validation should incorporate participatory and spatial methods to enhance local relevance and stakeholder empowerment (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Ramos *et al.*, 2022).

Models for the Upliftment of the Vulnerable Groups

To understand the promotion of tourism through a partnership with NGOs, it is vital to examine the existing literature and proposed models for tourism development and community

upliftment. The following section includes a critical review of four models.

Model 1: Promotion of Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

Mihalic (2016) has presented a model of responsible and sustainable tourism, an amalgamation of the responsible and sustainable tourism models. The researcher argues that for responsible tourism to remain beneficial to the community in the long run, it must be combined with sustainable tourism. Thus, the proposed model is based on three principles. According to this model, the first pillar concerns the community's economic sustainability. This includes focusing on stakeholder participation, cooperation, consensus-building, and the development of local leadership to promote community-wide interests. The second pillar refers to environmental sustainability. This pillar is strengthened by steps that increase environmental awareness, expand education and information, and uphold ethical environmental obligations in tourism development.

The third pillar in the model is sociocultural sustainability. This includes ensuring tourist satisfaction with tourism services and experience. Ensuring tourist satisfaction by providing them with a memorable sociocultural experience lends to the long-term development of the tourism destination (Light *et al.*, 2025). Thus, this model paves the way for choosing effective strategies to promote tourism. However, the model does not focus on the steps required to ensure the upliftment of marginalised groups from their disadvantaged social status. Hence this model is limited in providing a roadmap to its implementation towards a responsible and sustainable tourism policy.

Model 2: Linking Tourism Development to Community Upliftment

Polynotee and Thadaniti (2015) introduced a model to adapt community-based tourism to encourage sustainable tourism while addressing environmental, social, and economic challenges in local communities. Their approach suggests five main strategies to help improve the lives

of people living there. First, political strategies focus on empowering locals by involving them in decision-making, campaigning, and giving them the knowledge and authority to manage their natural resources. Then, environmental strategies focus on keeping resources sustainable by raising community awareness and promoting proper waste management. Social development strategies aim to improve the quality of life, ensure safety, and fairly distribute roles and responsibilities among different groups (Zentveld, 2024). The model also stresses the importance of creating community management organisations. Cultural strategies encourage respect for local traditions through activities such as history-sharing and art exchanges. Lastly, economic strategies aim to directly benefit locals by raising money for community projects and creating jobs and businesses.

Overall, this model gives a broad view of how tourism can support sustainable development in a community. However, it mainly focuses on how the community interacts with local government and does not examine the role of local businesses or industries. Also, it does not pay much attention to marginalised groups like ostracised women, orphans, or people with disabilities, who often need specific plans and support to help them grow and be accepted in society.

Model 3: The Role of NGOs in Facilitating Community Upliftment

Ramirez *et al.* (2014) developed a model that focused on the direct involvement of the local community, in partnership with NGOs, to foster ownership, engagement, and future financial stability. The model focuses on training and execution and also encourages entrepreneurial skills among communities in need. The cyclic model begins with identifying community needs such as financial stability, social support, etc. The next step in the cycle is to develop partnerships with local NGOs and community leaders who can help resolve the problem. Thirdly, it is followed by encouraging community-led projects designed and implemented with full stakeholder or community member

participation. Lastly, the outcomes of these projects are monitored and evaluated to ensure their long-term sustainability and viability. The model by Ramirez *et al.* (2014) presents a framework for NGOs' role in uplifting local communities through specialised projects that involve community members. The model also ensures the long-term viability of community-driven projects by including evaluator checks and balance systems. However, the model has a gap: It fails to identify the structural frameworks through which community-driven projects can be idealised. The scope of the model is vague and broad, and thus requires further elaboration on practical implementation strategies.

Model 4: Role of NGOs in Facilitating Community Development

Nikkhah and Redzuan (2010) have developed a framework to illustrate the relationship between the functions performed by NGOs and their impact on spreading empowerment among disadvantaged sections of a community and on ensuring sustainable community development in an area. According to this model, an NGO's functions are to help the community directly through microfinance, capacity-building, and self-reliance measures. These can be achieved through developing local production, encouraging participation in awareness-building initiatives, and developing human resources. The impact of these measures is three-way: Economic, individual, and social empowerment. According to this model, sustained empowerment leads to overall community development. Thus, the model provides a framework for understanding the nexus between the functions NGOs perform and the communities they empower. However, the model is limited in scope and does not examine the roots of the measures NGOs adopt to uplift the community. The model does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question of what influences NGOs to act in society's favour.

Additionally, the model is a theoretical framework and does not include specific strategic measures or pathways. It is not open to examining the influence of other sectors of society such as the government and industries.

These two sectors are important stakeholders in community upliftment and should be considered when discussing a model for sustainable community development.

Promotional Model for Food Tourism

In the past decade, food or culinary tourism has emerged as a motivating factor behind travel to certain places, offering a lucrative "tourism experience" strategy to promote obscure or less picturesque destinations (Urry, 1992; Everett, 2016). These destinations use their unique food identities to represent their cultural experiences, status, and communication (Baruah, 2016). The activities in food tourism are not limited to eating a local dish; they involve involvement with the local community on a larger scale. It comprises an authentic gastronomic journey through local history and traditions for tourists. Food tourism can include cooking with locals through special workshops or at homes, food and drink tours, collecting ingredients such as exotic spices, or visiting food markets and fairs (Sidali *et al.*, 2015). Deliberate food tourists also show concern for the origins of food and sustainability, hence seeking to make decisions that benefit the communities of the area (Gendzhva, 2014). The local communities, thus gain direct economic, cultural, and social benefits from the promotion of food tourism (Sidali *et al.*, 2015; LUNCHAPRASITH, 2017).

Some popular culinary destinations around the world that have used food tourism to develop their people include Malaysia, France, Japan, and Korea. In Malaysia, the multiracial and multicultural identity is highlighted through street food fairs, "Pasar Malam" (night markets) for exotic ingredients, and traditional or niche food festivals such as the Malaysia International Halal Food Showcase (Raji *et al.*, 2018). These events and activities provide immense sales and networking opportunities for the community, including retailers, small cafes and restaurants, hotels, local fruits and vegetable vendors, tour guides, etc. These activities are supported by the Malaysian government's Ministry of Tourism through the promotion of local food outlets

in guidebooks, on websites, and through the organisation of food competitions and festivals. In France, La Route des Gourmets offers culinary tourism interspersed with glimpses into the rich local history and lifestyle. Similarly, in Hangzhou, China, Four Seasons Hotel offers private dinners paired with tours of local food markets for an authentic Shanghai and Cantonese culinary experience.

Cooking workshops for tourists are also held in Japan (Boutique Japan, Tsukiji Fish Market Tour) and Korea (ZenKimchi, Hello K Cooking Class), where tourists are often taken to visit gardens and farms to collect the special raw ingredients and then cook a traditional meal from scratch with the help of experienced local chefs. In India, culinary tourism is still surprisingly nascent, despite a treasure trove of culinary heritage and history to offer (Yasmeen, 2019). Luxe hotels such as The Taj, Four Seasons, and Radisson Blu in metropolitan cities offer private cooking workshops that bring local expertise into gourmet-style cuisine for international tourists. Specially curated tours such as Taste of India, Indian Vegan Food Adventure, and South India Real Food Adventure also offer culinary trips across the vast hinterland of the country, delving into local food stories. Some Indian food and beverage companies, such as ITC Limited and Anand Milk Union Limited (AMUL), also offer factory tours that allow tourists to visit farms and interact with local people. These culinary tourism initiatives in India and around the world show that there is a growing demand for memorable food tourism experiences, which can be translated into income and recognition opportunities for local communities. These opportunities can then be responsibly leveraged to uplift socially disadvantaged groups within these communities, with the help of NGOs.

Promotional Model for Cultural Tourism

Some of the most sought-after cultural tourism destinations are China, South Africa, Italy, and India. Culture and heritage tourists usually visit cultural heritage attractions such as historic buildings and other attractions; archaeological

sites; state, local, or national parks; concerts, plays, or musicals; art galleries or museums; ethnic or ecological heritage sites; and like attractions (Della Corte *et al.*, 2010; Dragan *et al.*, 2024). In China, Shanghai City Tours include visits to historically significant sites such as former French concessions and Buddhist monasteries. In South Africa, Johannesburg heritage tourism takes tourists on a journey through the country's turbulent colonial past, while in Canada, Toronto tourism agencies offer visitors the opportunity to experience the city's modern, multiracial, and multicultural diaspora (Santa & Tiatco, 2019). The tourists who are interested in cultural exploration often prefer to shop at smaller shops and businesses rather than chain franchises or malls (Li & Hunter, 2015; Richards, 2018).

Additionally, cultural tourists are more likely to delve into the historical background of a community's status and lifestyle, thereby empowering these people directly rather than big corporate interests (Barber, 2019). India has a rich, golden heritage and spectacularly diverse traditions, which make it one of the most sought-after travel destinations in the world. With as many as 37 recognised world cultural heritage sites, these heritage tours are offered in several cities. With their rich royal history and architectural beauty, cities like Udaipur and Jaipur offer walking tours that delve into the region's landscape and historical tales. These tours are often led by local history experts, people from the local artisan or craftsman communities who have lived there for generations. Similarly, in Gujarat, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation offers "Heritage Walk Ahmedabad", a guided tour of the city's many temples and mosques. Heritage tours can also help dispel myths and stereotypes about disadvantaged communities, empowering them financially and socially (Seyfi *et al.*, 2019).

In Dharavi, known as the largest slum in the world, heritage tours are conducted by NGOs and by slum residents themselves, with profits supporting the education of students in the slum. These tours showcase a new reality of the area,

including visits to the local recycling factory, potter's colony, and community centre. These tours also support small businesses operating in the slum by providing shopping opportunities for travellers. Thus, cultural and heritage tourism can provide a platform to exert a positive, beneficial influence on local communities, especially those in remote areas, through the revitalisation of cultures and traditions, the appreciation of local arts and crafts, and the restoration of local architecture and faith (Akova & Atsiz, 2019).

Promotional Model for Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is recognised as the need of the hour in popular tourist destinations such as Antarctica, the Maldives, and Caribbean islands, where the fragile biodiversity of flora and fauna needs to be preserved. According to the Nature Conservancy and the World Conservation Union, sustainable tourism includes environmentally responsible practices, the encouragement of local culture and traditions, minimal visitor interference, and active socioeconomic involvement of local people. In Indonesia, tours to Bogor Botanical Gardens were redesigned to create a friendlier environment for the endangered bird species found there (Hotimah *et al.*, 2015). Workshops, cultural festivals, and information centres were opened to increase conservation efforts while maintaining the area's tourism revenue.

In the Latin America and Caribbean region, environmentalists advocated for tourism policies that shifted to less commercialised practices such as using only pedestrian-friendly trails, visitor guidance by local leaders, and building scattered, eco-friendly accommodation lodges instead of chain hotels. While tempering the ecological footprint, such activities and business initiatives can also create a pressure point for an equitable local share in the economic benefits of tourism. Similar initiatives were seen in Costa Rica's Irazu and Poas National Parks in the early 2000s, where tourism concession programmes offered services such as entrance

fee collection, tour guide support, security and groundskeeping, and souvenir stands as bids to local small businesses and residents of the community to profit as well as maintain the parks' resources. These business practices, led by an NGO called FUNDECOR, became a real and effective way to promote inclusiveness within the community and to create mutually beneficial tourism practices between people and the environment in a sustainable manner.

In India, the Ministry of Tourism has released comprehensive guidelines for maintaining sustainability in tourism operations across the country under the 12th Five-Year Plan (Wani & Jan, 2018). Essentially, these guidelines address the challenge of developing tourism without sacrificing a place's natural heritage. The government facilitates tourism service providers and other supply chain stakeholders in accepting these sustainable service agreements while also considering sustainable tourist satisfaction. The government of India has adopted a ground-level approach to encouraging sustainable tourism through campaigns such as "Atithi Devo Bhava", "Incredible India", and "Swachh Bharat". The development of niche tourism products has also been encouraged by the government, including support from the private sector; these include pilgrimage travel, film tourism, wellness, and adventure tourism. Due to stringent checks and repeated stress on being green and clean tourism, popular destinations such as Spiti Valley and Ladakh have banned travellers from spreading plastic waste in the area. In places like Khonoma, Nagaland, vehicles are banned to reduce pollution. Similarly, in Meghalaya, smoking and the use of plastic have been banned in tourist spots, and littering is strongly discouraged. While such ecologically responsible practices can help avoid additional waste from tourism, the scope of sustainable tourism can be further expanded by practices that actively aim to reduce existing pollution or reverse ecological harm at these destinations (Risteskia *et al.*, 2012).

Sustainability Model for Social Change and Tourism Development

The Functioning of the First Layer

The first layer of the model comprises the two major sectors that drive the development of tourism in the country, namely the government and the corporate sector. The government can facilitate tourism promotion through budgetary allocations, including growth-oriented schemes, expansionary benefits, and strategic subsidised costs at tourism destinations. On the other hand, the corporate sector can push forward the agenda of tourism development by utilising funds mandated under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Thus, the primary function of these sectors is to provide financial or structural support for tourism development in a region.

The Functioning of the Second Layer

The success of the economic aid and resources provided in the first layer depends on their proper distribution and facilitation among communities through an appropriate implementation mechanism. This forms the second layer of the suggested model, which comprises NGOs.

NGOs serve as the intermediary agencies between the people and the authorities, as well as between the people and the industrial sector. The government can hire NGOs to ensure that the resources allotted under various budgetary schemes for tourism development benefit the backwards sections of society at the given tourism destination. Similarly, the corporate sector ensures proper and just redistribution of its CSR funding by granting NGOs spending authority. The NGOs will then identify vulnerable and disadvantaged target groups in society.

The Functioning of the Third Layer

The third layer of the suggested model comprises the target vulnerable groups chosen by NGOs for implementing projects that not only aim to develop tourism but also promote the economic and social upliftment of these groups. This model identifies these target groups to be homeless children or street urchins, widows, and orphans. Among several other backwards

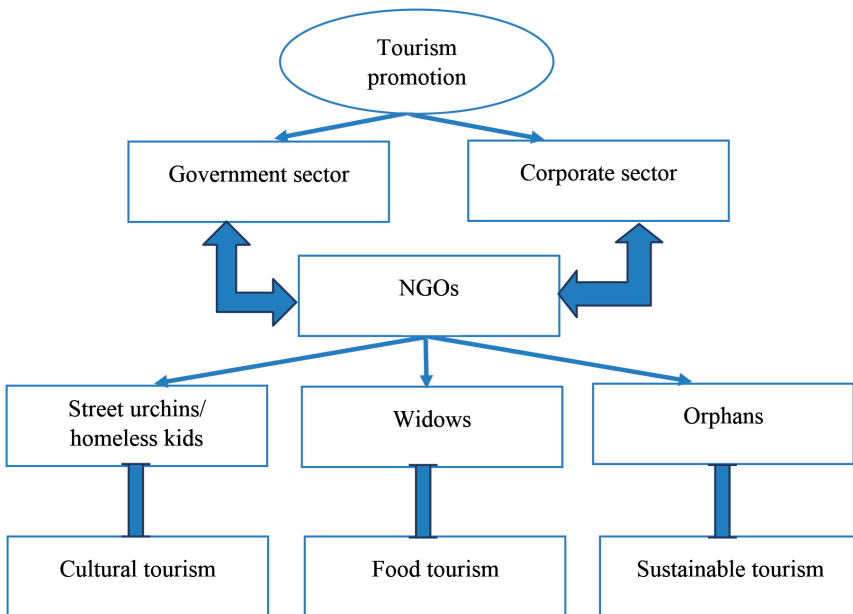


Figure 4: Sustainability model for social change and tourism development

sections of society, these groups are specifically chosen due to the absence of any familial or structural support available to lift them out of situations like poverty or social ostracism. These vulnerable groups are thus often unable to improve their situations without external aid. Once these groups are identified, NGOs can develop specific plans and projects to support their financial and social growth, while also promoting tourism development in the area. For this purpose, NGOs can allocate these projects to specific niches of tourism such as cultural, culinary, and sustainable tourism.

In the case of street urchins who are above the minimum age for employment, NGOs can provide the necessary training for them to host guided tours in a culturally relevant destination or showcase dance or music exhibits to tourists in exchange for money. Examples of similar practices can be found at street dance fairs in Malaysia or at Khajurao Temples and Heritage Walk in India. This allows them not only to gain financial independence but also to work part-time while pursuing their education. Similarly, to financially empower widows, NGOs can focus on promoting culinary tourism in a destination. The NGOs can utilise the traditional wisdom and knowledge collected by these women over generations and apply them to monetise the growing preference for slow food tourism among travellers. Modern tourists prioritise exploring local traditional dishes over generic fast food while travelling, to expand their cultural awareness and enjoy the benefits of the region's healthy diet. These tourism experiences can be enhanced by hiring widowed women, who can be trained in food storytelling and gourmet-style traditional cooking.

Additionally, these women can be financially empowered through trading in spices and other exotic cooking tools and ingredients specific to the destination. These ingredients can be prepared by widows at home and sold to tourists interested in purchasing them as souvenirs or gifts (Giampiccoli & Kalis, 2012; DeBruin, 2019). Similar practices can be seen in India, where small businesses sell pickles, papad, and spices in states like Rajasthan and

Gujarat. Lastly, in the case of orphans and disabled people, NGOs can organise workshops to provide training in promoting sustainable tourism through the sale and purchase of environmentally conscious products such as upcycled souvenirs like bags made from plastic and delicate baskets woven from old newspapers. These items are highly sought after by environmentally conscious international tourists who prefer to spend their money on green, clean products. These handcrafted items can be manufactured in small, homely units with minimal initial investment and do not require lengthy, specialised training. Thus, it is a quick and sustainable way to create employment and income opportunities for these groups while also fostering eco-friendly, sustainable practices to boost tourism in India.

Around the world, similar practices are found in Bali and Indonesia, where local artisans produce and sell traditional hats and baskets made from plastic or natural materials such as dried bamboo leaves (Siswanto, 2015). In India, the popular tourist attraction "Rock Garden" in Chandigarh promotes this practice through sculpture masterpieces made from materials such as glass, stones, plastic bottles, and other waste (Chaudhary & Tewari, 2008). Hence, the proposed three-layer model can create business opportunities for three vulnerable groups of society, with the help of NGOs, which can help uplift them out of social ostracism and poverty, by justly utilising government and corporate resources while also ensuring the healthy development of tourism in urban areas in India.

Table 3 is an in-depth review of previous literature on tourist promotions. This study's output covers food tourism, cultural tourism, and sustainable tourism, and analyses them from the perspectives of tourism practices and the groups involved in their promotion and societal impact. Various kinds of literature have been connected to these insights, but bringing these multiple insights into a single model is the study's and the proposed model's novelty. Additionally, this model outlines how various types of tourism activities are conducted within these pillars.

Table 3: Model outlines

	Tourism Promotion	Food Tourism	Cultural Tourism	Sustainable Tourism
Tourism (existing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking workshops with locals Sale of spices and ingredients Food festivals Guided food and winery tours Local spice and fish markets Factory visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit cultural and heritage attractions Historical tours and guided cultural tours Local shopping from small businesses Slum heritage and history tours Handicraft fairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low visitor impact policies like regulated visit hours Tourist guidance about environmental care by local leaders Eco-friendly tourist lodges Sale of sustainable products like cloth and jute bags
Groups involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local people Corporate sector (FMCG sector, tourism, and hospitality sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local businesses Artisans and craftsmen Corporate sector (hospitality and tourism sector and home and lifestyle products sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local businesses Homeless people Corporate sector (tourism and hospitality sector and FMCG sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local businesses Homeless people Corporate sector (tourism and hospitality sector and FMCG sector)
Impacts on society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social inclusion Economic development of backwards communities Preservation and promotion of local food culture and traditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preservation of local culture Promoting historical significance Financial empowerment to artisan and craftsman communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting the fragile flora and fauna Equitable local share by promoting small businesses Long-term reduction of air, water, and land pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting the fragile flora and fauna Equitable local share by promoting small businesses Long-term reduction of air, water, and land pollution
Model Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting NGOs in their practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct training workshops for orphan and homeless children to become guides to local food traditions Facilitate direct sale and purchase of spices and ingredients from widows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate employment of socially vulnerable groups Provide training to orphans and destitute kids to become cultural guides Conduct communication workshops for better interaction with tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct training for children to become ecotourism guides Workshops for widows for making eco-friendly goods like cloth and jute bags, or clay pots Establish sustainable local markets and support enterprising activities among widows and orphans

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise CSR funds to help widows set up small businesses around the sale of ingredients or homemade traditional food • Conduct food festivals and fairs for tourists, promoting the sale of food-related souvenirs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cultural handicraft-making training to widows for sale as souvenirs • Organise tourist-friendly fairs and festivals in remote areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of new tourism industries like wellness tourism, adventure tourism • Utilisation of CSR funding in eco-friendly campaigns • Stable economic support through business profits • Income via work in eco-friendly projects as tour guides, security, managers, etc. • Social appreciation for the environment-conscious activities
<p>Connecting corporations in these practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilisation of CSR funding; • Advertising FMCG brands to tourists • Promotion of hotels and tour companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of unique tourist attractions for better profitability in the hospitality sector • Advertising home/lifestyle goods and products to tourists as souvenirs • Escape from social neglect and apathy • Direct income and profits from jobs or business • Reduction in poverty and the wage gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct profits from the sale and purchase of spices or ingredients • Opportunity for stable income from business or jobs • Social upliftment through living a better standard of life
<p>Benefits to vulnerable groups from the intervention of NGOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise local heritage landmarks as tourist destinations by the government • Partnerships between tourism agencies and NGOs for promoting local cultural experiences • Establish tourist-friendly spaces and infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denouncing unhealthy practices like plastic use • Setting up of pedestrian-friendly or bike trails • Promotion of eco-friendly accommodation and tourism • Develop niche sectors like film tourism or wellness tourism
<p>Strategies to be suggested</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships between hotels and widows via NGOs for promoting traditional food • Promotion of food-based tours and festivals by the government • Establishment of tourist-friendly local spice markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships between hotels and widows via NGOs for promoting traditional food • Promotion of food-based tours and festivals by the government • Establishment of tourist-friendly local spice markets

Various previous studies have examined different stakeholders; interestingly, this research also cites these studies in its model of the impact of multiple stakeholders. Nevertheless, this study is unique because it focuses on the NGO's connectivity to these tourism promotions and how such groups are vulnerable in the NGO's interventions. Strategies are also suggested constructively from the various previous literature. This model attempts to bring these different contexts into a single model.

Guidelines for the Functioning of the Model

The model's success hinges on local governance and institutional setup. Bianchi (2017) emphasises that political structures and power relations play a significant role in shaping how well community-based development initiatives actually work. The NGOs selected for the task must be duly registered under adequate trusts and statutes in India such as the Indian Societies Act, Companies Act, or Indian Trusts Act. This can reduce the risk of corruption and embezzlement of resources allotted under budgetary schemes or CSR funds. The projects organised by NGOs for the development of target groups should be methodically planned and executed through proper committees set up for this purpose. The NGOs must commit to follow a strict ethical code that guides their actions and initiatives. This includes disclosing conflicts of interest, maintaining a professional attitude, and working with due diligence and in good faith. Training workshops and programmes for street urchins and orphans must not include children below the minimum age of employment under Article 24 of the Indian Constitution, i.e., 14 years old. Ignoring this law will not only lead to illegal child labour practices but may also open the gates to child abuse, including child prostitution or bonded labour.

In the case of widows, special attention must be paid to ensure their dignity, safety, and privacy while dealing with international travellers who may have less understanding of Indian cultural codes. All initiatives and allocations of funds by NGOs for their fulfilment should

be regularly scrutinised through external audits by companies or through mandatory checks and reporting to government authorities. This will ensure that there is no misappropriation of funds or misleading operations in NGOs, and that the intended benefits for social upliftment and tourism promotion are sustainably delivered. There must be regular feedback loops in place to monitor the proper functioning of NGOs. The feedback must be collected from the affected stakeholders, i.e., vulnerable groups such as street urchins, widows, and orphans, to ensure they are receiving the financial and social benefits under the model. NGO feedback must also be collected by government authorities to determine whether any systemic bottlenecks are hindering the organisation's smooth functioning or the allocation of funds. This shall prevent corruption and maladministration from taking root in the system. Tourism initiatives can either empower vulnerable groups or push them to the margins, depending mainly on how governance is handled and how different stakeholders interact. As Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) point out, it is important to critically examine community participation because tourism development does not always yield positive outcomes for everyone involved.

Conclusions

The potential benefits of tourism development are highly valued for ensuring socioeconomic justice in modern society. The development of urban tourism can contribute to the economic development of the vulnerable and disadvantaged communities through a substantive channel. Vulnerable groups in society are communities that face social discrimination or lack of financial privilege due to their unfortunate circumstances. These groups are often looked after by socially conscious agencies such as NGOs, which in turn are aided in their missions by funding from the government and the corporate sector.

The present study has suggested a model to intersperse measures to promote tourism in urban centres with developmental work carried out by NGOs in the interest of vulnerable

groups. The model also identifies the need to develop multiple niches of tourism in urban centres, namely dedicated to food, culture, and sustainability. Such diversification of the tourism sector will enable two broad objectives: Firstly, the optimal utilisation of resources and offerings in urban centres, and secondly, capitalising on the ongoing trends observed in consumer preferences in this sector. The model suggested in this study is based on observations and examinations of existing tourism promotion practices worldwide and their application in the Indian context, with the added agenda of enabling social justice in urban centres through NGO interventions. The model comprises a three-layer structure; the first layer secures monetary support from the government and corporate, the second layer highlights the strategic tourism promotion measures to be devised by NGOs, and lastly, the third layer comprises the disadvantaged sections of society—widows, orphans, and homeless children—who would carry out the ground implementation of suggested practices.

Through the development of multi-niche urban tourism as suggested by the model, three goals are achieved. First, a structural framework is developed to promote urban tourism responsibly, making appropriate use of funds allocated to it through government budgets and CSR initiatives. Second, the NGOs that work towards the development of socially backwards sections can devise a formal action plan that consolidates their efforts in a structured form and also secures financial support for these measures. Third, the most immediate impact will be the upliftment of the suggested vulnerable sections of society, who shall gain participation in the workforce through tourism promotion measures and reap economic benefits from their work. Apart from direct income gains, these groups will also derive long-term social benefits.

The peripheral and long-term impact of the three-layer model will also be seen in the conservation of culture and local traditions, and the protection of the environment in urban centres. Thus, this study provides a visionary

tourism promotion model that is comprehensive in its consideration of economic development, social justice, and environmental conservation in India's urban centres. The three-layer model for NGO-driven urban tourism has been validated in some countries such as South Africa. Multi-niche tourism focuses align with global consumer trends. Besides, the study model reveals the same output. Government, corporate, and NGO integration in tourism promotion has begun in countries such as Thailand. The study's outcomes align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 8, and 10, which are developed and implemented worldwide.

Limitations and Future Scope

The study is limited to secondary data and focuses on a single cultural policy setting. Hence, applying this model across different regions requires some adjustments beforehand to fit local conditions. For the sake of brevity and clarity, the present study has concentrated only on three niches of urban tourism—food, culture, and sustainability, but several untapped niches could be explored further, including, adventure or historical tourism. While this study provides a comprehensive theoretical model for tourism promotion and social development in Indian cities, there remains extensive potential for future research in this field. The model in this study merits empirical investigation; future researchers can explore its applications in selected urban centres and analyse its practicality through rigorous, quantifiable evidence. The current model has explicitly focused on tourism promotion in urban centres; there is scope to develop similar models in semi-urban or rural areas, which could be taken up in further studies.

The methodology used in the study is based on the literature's connectivity with the existing literature on urban cities in different countries. This might affect cultural diversity and tourist consumers' attitudes towards selecting tourist places. This can be addressed by developing a common framework for selecting countries and their constituent places. Future research should include pilot testing of the three-layer model

in urban contexts, comparative studies across different vulnerable groups and tourism types, and longitudinal assessments of tourism-led empowerment outcomes.

Practical Implications

For Government Authorities and the Tourism Sector

The suggested model provides a strategic framework for government authorities to uplift vulnerable groups in society while allocating resources to promote the entire tourism industry. This implies three-fold advantages: Creating avenues for economic growth and development, aiding the government in developing backwards communities, and promoting sustainable growth of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and social health. These goals align with the United Nations' SDG for the 21st century, which the Government of India has adopted. This model has focused on promoting tourism by highlighting niche forms that are mainly ignored in India. The development of culinary, cultural, and sustainable tourism promotes the industry through innovative, long-lasting, and eco-friendly methods.

For the Corporate Sector

For the corporate sector, this model provides the benefits of a structure for equitable utilisation of CSR funding mandated under the Companies Act, 2013. Since the model promotes the direct, immediate involvement of the lower classes in their financial empowerment, it can be considered as an efficient and effective means of social and economic justice for these groups. Being recognised for fulfilling its social responsibility can boost a company's reputation and brand image. Furthermore, companies can use initiatives led by NGOs as soft advertising for their products and services to tourists for direct profit.

For Society

The proposed model emphasises empowering these groups through skill development and

employment, rather than direct financial charity or handouts. This ensures that income empowerment remains long-term and sustainable. Over generations, the changes caused by these NGO-provided catalysts can compound into the development of an entire community out of social backwardness and ostracism. As per Singh and Rahman (2012), social development initiatives should focus on creating awareness, accumulating knowledge, inculcating positive attitudes, and encouraging citizen participation. Once these objectives are achieved, this model will have successfully contributed to the nurturing of future independent citizens.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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