PRINCIPLE 05

Fostering Inclusivity and Diversity

{ SRI LANKA
TOURISM
ALLIANCE

Sustainability
Principles

SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination, violence and any harmful practices against women and girls in the public and private spheres. It also calls for the full participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of political and economic decision-making.

SDG 10 aims to reduce inequality within and among countries. This SDG calls for reducing inequalities in income as well as those based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status within a country.

While all SDGs are interconnected, the targets of SDG 5 and 10, particularly align with the process of increasing inclusion and diversity within the tourism sector. Sri Lanka's tourism industry as a whole, lags behind the world when it comes to female participation. To create an enabling environment for more women to join the industry, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) within the tourism industry play a key role.

Contents

Importance and impact to business in the short and long term

An important area to think about when enabling an environment that fosters diversity and inclusion would be to first differentiate between the two and identify how they are related to each other.

Diversity is the 'what' and inclusion is the 'how'. Diversity would refer to our differences in gender, age, race, nationality or ability, among other characteristics. Inclusion in this case would refer to how these differences are valued and embraced through equity.
But, how would fostering a sense of diversity and inclusion be important to business and could it, in fact, help contribute to the success of business?

– Over the years, research has shown that financial performance has a direct increase with a more representative executive team – with greater diversity directly linked to the likelihood of outperformance. But it is not just in the numbers.
– A well represented team results in greater innovation. By embracing differences in thought, ideas and execution, decision making will be enhanced with more creativity shining through.
– By highlighting our differences, we share the idea that 'your opinion is valued' and this leads to a happier team which also serves to attract and retain new talent.
– In the long term, being able to effectively manage a diverse team will be visible in increased profits through greater team productivity as new ideas are shared and implemented.
– While the global hospitality industry has an almost even male to female ratio in their teams, Sri Lanka is far behind at just above 10%.
– Diversity management, which is how inclusion is incorporated into our business, enables us to adopt a 'blind hiring' approach to ensure the best candidate is selected despite our personal subconscious bias and this is important to SMEs sector to ensure high levels of productivity

How you can live up to this principle

01   What can we do as an SME?

SMEs play a critical role in fostering diversity and inclusion. Diversity encourages innovation, productivity and collaboration. An additional benefit to SMEs is that due to its smaller operations and flexibility, the positive results of effective diversity management become visible quicker. So, where do we start?

02   Where do you stand

It is important that you have the conversation with your team to identify what your current position is when it comes to fostering diversity. Identifying underrepresented demographics and hearing their perspective would assist in developing a well-rounded idea of the business's position while also increasing engagement with members of your team that may not have been as involved before.

03   Create a defining policy that is clear and relevant

A policy is not always a long, complex document that is intended for larger businesses. In this case, it is a guiding document which states your intent, purpose and provides clear goals on how you plan to increase diversity (for example, through a blind hiring strategy, better work-life balance, accounting for the disproportionate role women play in household duties etc.) within your teams and how inclusive your workplace is.

For an SME in Sri Lanka's tourism industry, your priorities may be gender and ethnicity whereas another SME in the same industry might focus on age and disability. While it may serve well to have an overall approach to what diversity is to you, selecting a few key areas would help to ensure your inclusion strategy is focused and effective.

04   Recruitment

Sri Lanka is a diverse country and if your team does not represent that, it may be an indicator of an unconscious bias in your recruitment process. When it comes to recruitment, hiring the right person for the right job is of absolute importance especially in smaller teams. By giving into prejudices, you may be letting go of a stellar fit for the role you have advertised just because they do not fit your typical employee based on age, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. By implementing a 'blind' hiring strategy which removes personal and demographic information, employees are hired purely based on skill. While there are paid HR tools that can be used, for a smaller business, it is as simple as managing a spreadsheet and filtering out personal information. It is important to note, although the short-listing process may be 'blind', your hiring manager may have unconscious biases that sway the in-person/virtual interview. A few ways to address this would be to have a diverse team of interviewers and effective training of hiring managers together with standardised interview questions to ensure they have no prejudice in the hiring process.

05   Training

Diversity and inclusion may not be seen as a priority for learning and development programs within the business, especially at the inception of such a policy. In order to have a team that is aware of any unconscious bias, supportive of their colleagues and productive together, training is essential. Training on diversity and inclusion do not have a one-size-fits all approach. However, certain aspects such as the purpose of implementing a diversity and inclusion policy, the benefits of it and the repercussions of not abiding by it are good places to start planning. Training needs to be ongoing and constant for the team to understand its importance to their job role. From induction/orientation programs to sensitization training for current staff, it is vital that all employees regardless of job grade are trained to identify biases, support one another and speak up against others biases.

06   Increase diversity in decision making and/or critical roles

It is easier to increase diversity in the operational levels rather than decision making levels, especially in an SME that has smaller teams made up of family or friends. If your business is to truly feel the positive impacts of a diverse workforce that is inclusive, this diversity needs to be top-down. Having diversity in decision making roles, valuing the perspectives provided and implementing these ideas are vital to taking advantage of the asset that is a diverse team.

07   Lead by example

Leaders need to lead by example by strengthening accountability for progress on increasing diversity and enabling inclusion within all facets of the business rather than just HR functions. Mangers within the business need to be held responsible for creating an environment that is transparent, accountable and has zero-tolerance towards discriminatory practices. This allows employees to feel safe about speaking up about instances where they or a colleague have faced prejudice and create a culture which values its diverse teams.

08   Measure, measure, measure

Hiring a diverse team is just the first step. Success lies in their experience once they are hired. Indicators of this experience include equality, openness and belonging which serve as core components of inclusiveness. So how can these be measured?

While these indicators and metrics would be different from business to business, start by identifying what your goals are. Increasing diversity in leadership? Increasing job satisfaction? Better representation? By identifying your goals and establishing suitable measurements for it, you will be able to track your progress on your diversity policy and be flexible in your adaptations to the policy as the needs of your team, market trends or your business changes. Remember, keep your goals focused and manageable.

What can we do as an industry?

Collaborate to establish foundations for diversity and inclusion

We're all on this journey together. Knowing that as an industry, diversity and inclusion are lacking, sharing knowledge and best practices are important. Join other SMEs in the tourism industry to discuss existing biases against the industry such as it being an unsafe place for women. Question the current norms, identify the processes in place that have built this reputation and work together to change these perceptions.

Provide training and vocational services to equip people with the right skills

Access to training and vocational services poses a significant barrier to increasing diversity in Sri Lanka's tourism industry. By developing the skills of people in local communities through trainings, career workshops, personal etiquette seminars, disadvantaged demographics would have greater access to employment opportunities.

How can you influence others?

Communicate your intentions

Public commitments to diversity and inclusion are an important first step in not only accountability for your business but inspire others to do the same. Use your social media platforms to share with others your commitment to increasing diversity in your business. Share the reasons for doing so and be genuine and transparent. By taking others on this journey, sharing challenges and wins will influence others in the industry to follow suit.

Speak up

The best way to advocate for change is to speak up against biases. Be the change you wish to see and others will follow until diversity and inclusion is no longer a strategy for better business performance but it is the norm.

Local Best Practices Case Study

The European Commission: Diversity within small and medium-sized enterprises best practices and approaches for moving ahead

This document provides SMEs with guidance on implementing diversity strategies while illustrating examples of best practices undertaken in Europe. Although it provides a European perspective, it is a document that can be used to inspire your journey.

Read more here: https://op.europa.eu/s/v2oc

Accessibility and Inclusive Tourism Development in Nature Areas Compendium of Best Practices

A compendium developed by the World Tourism Organization aimed at increasing accessibility of destinations. Through examples of best practices, it draws in best practices of creating an inclusive environment for those with disabilities by making nature accessible to all.

Read more here: https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284422777

Organizations and institutions
that can help you on your journey

Tourism for SDGs

Provides recommendations on how tourism stakeholders can increase diversity through the SDGs by ensuring substantial female participation and local community upliftment through employment and training opportunities. Read more on these recommendations here:

https://tourism4sdgs.org/act/companies/

UNWTO

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation approach to diversity and inclusion is through increased female participation and increased accessibility of destinations. Learn more on taking action on these key areas here:

https://www.unwto.org/ethics–culture–and–social–responsibility

International Labour Organisation

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion through workplace adjustments: a practical guide. This guiding document provides workplaces regardless of size on how they can implement actions for certain groups including employees with disabilities, employees of varying beliefs and pregnant women. Read more here *https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/energy/*

Target Gender Equality

Developed by the UN Global Compact (UNGC), this is an accelerator program for members of the UNGC to advance female participation and leadership representation. Membership of the UNGC is subsidised for SMEs and provides learning opportunities and access to industry peers to embark on your sustainability journey.

https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take–action/target–gender–equality

Global Sustainable Tourism Council

GSTC Destination Criteria V2.0 provides basic guidelines for tourism operators across a range of sustainability areas. One such area (B2) includes Decent work and career opportunities under the broader thematic area of socio–economic sustainability. View the criteria here *https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc–criteria/gstc–destination–criteria/*

Key words and definitions

Diversity

Diversity in the workplace describes a team that represents all members of the society in which the business operates. Though different elements describe individual uniqueness, we subconsciously define diversity as social differences such as gender, ethnicity, age etc.

Inclusion

Inclusion can best be described as the practice of providing equal opportunities to all regardless of social differences. Inclusive actions go a long way in making everyone feel heard and respected.

European Commission (2015)

Diversity within small and medium sized enterprises – best practices and approaches for moving ahead.
https://op.europa.eu/s/v2oc

Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka IPS (2020)

So Sri Lanka; More like, So Where are all the Women in the Hotel Industry?
https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2020/02/24/so-sri-lanka-more-like-so-where-are-all-the-women-in-the-hotel-industry/

McKinsey & Company (2020)

Diversity wins: How inclusion matters.
https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters

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