



TSCA Destination Standard (Module A)

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Definition: What is a Destination?

A destination is a defined and accessible geographic area with a resident community and a set of natural, cultural or recreational assets that visitors can experience, such as landscapes, heritage, attractions, local activities or other place-based offerings. A destination provides facilities and services for visitors to stay overnight, is positioned as a destination in the tourism market, and is represented for certification purposes by a destination management entity with a mandate to coordinate, promote or influence tourism strategy and action plans within a defined scope.

Eligibility of a Destination for Certification under the TSCA

The following elements should be in place for a destination to be eligible for certification under the TSCA:

- Defined geographic area, supported by a map or equivalent documentation showing the certification scope.
- Resident community, except where the assessment scope is extended to surrounding or gateway communities.
- Freely accessible areas or visitor experiences, not limited exclusively to paying guests or residents, noting that access or entry fees may be applied to manage overtourism or fund conservation and restoration, provided the area or experience remains genuinely accessible to the public.
- Accommodation facilities or equivalent visitor-stay infrastructure within the destination or its gateway area.
- Natural, cultural, recreational or other tourism assets that visitors can experience.
- Positioning as a destination in the tourism market.
- A destination management entity, normally a DMO or equivalent legal entity, with a clear mandate to coordinate, promote, implement or influence tourism strategy and action plans.

Protected, privately managed or low-resident areas may be considered as destinations where the assessment scope is clearly extended to the relevant surrounding or gateway communities for criteria related to social well-being, stakeholder involvement and tourism business participation.

Assessment scope: What is meant by "the destination" in the criteria?

Destination sustainability is usually a shared responsibility involving the destination management entity, local authorities, regional or national bodies, public service providers, utility companies, protected area managers, tourism businesses and local communities.

For certification purposes, the assessed entity shall not be expected to directly control matters outside its legal mandate. However, it shall be expected to demonstrate how it manages destination sustainability within its scope of responsibility and influence. Evidence may therefore relate to three levels of responsibility:

- Direct implementation or control: actions, policies, plans or decisions managed by the destination management entity itself.
- Coordination, promotion or influence: actions where the entity works with competent authorities, businesses, communities or other stakeholders to encourage, facilitate or coordinate improvements.
- Collection, documentation and reporting: information obtained from competent entities when the destination management entity is not responsible for implementation but must understand, monitor and communicate relevant destination-level sustainability risks and performance.

This distinction shall be applied across all criteria. It is intended to make the standard auditable, fair and proportionate, while preserving the principle that destination sustainability must be assessed as a system and not only as the internal management of the DMO.

Section A. Destination management

A1. Destination Management Entity

The destination has a DMO or equivalent destination management entity with a clear mandate for coordinating, promoting or influencing sustainable tourism development and management. The entity is adequately funded for its role and staff responsible for tourism sustainability are adequately trained and/or experienced.

A2. Tourism Strategy

The destination has a publicly available multi-year tourism strategy that follows sustainability principles and is based on a proportionate inventory of key tourism assets, impacts, risks and opportunities. The strategy specifies goals, targets or milestones related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving resource efficiency, protecting nature and biodiversity, upholding human rights, preserving cultural identity and promoting local prosperity. The strategy is developed with meaningful stakeholder participation and is periodically reviewed against measurable objectives and, where relevant, is aligned with commitments or plans of competent public authorities.

A3. Internal Sustainability Management

The destination management entity leads by example by implementing an internal sustainability management policy. This policy covers responsible environmental, ethical and economic operational practices, including procurement guidelines that give preference to local, responsible and lower-impact products and services where possible and practical.

A4. Stakeholder Involvement

The destination management entity identifies key stakeholders from local communities, civil society, the private sector and competent authorities, and involves them in planning, managing, monitoring and evaluating tourism sustainability. The level of involvement shall be proportionate to the destination context and to the entity's mandate but must be documented and meaningful. Stakeholder engagement is maintained as an ongoing and documented process throughout the implementation and review of the tourism strategy.

A5. Tourism Action Plan

The sustainability challenges, targets and milestones of the Tourism Strategy are addressed through tourism action plans using indicators, assigned responsibilities and timelines. The destination management entity is responsible for actions under its direct control, and for coordinating, promoting or documenting actions led by other competent entities where these are relevant to the tourism strategy. The action plan is periodically reviewed and updated as part of a continuous improvement process.

A6. Managing Tourism Pressure

Tourism pressure is monitored and managed with priority given to local community well-being, cultural values, nature and visitor experience. Where relevant, the destination management entity collects or uses data on visitor flows, mobility and traffic, housing pressure, short-term rentals, cost-of-living concerns and pressure on sensitive sites and works with competent bodies to prevent or reverse overtourism.

A7. Sustainability Reporting

A sustainability report or equivalent public reporting mechanism is made available at least every two years. It presents progress against the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, key sustainability indicators, relevant destination-level risks, measures taken by the destination management entity, and information collected from competent entities where implementation falls outside the destination management entity's mandate.

A8. Visitor Satisfaction

Visitor satisfaction with the sustainability and quality of the destination is regularly monitored. Results are evaluated and used to inform improvement actions. Key findings are publicly reported or included in sustainability reporting in a proportionate manner.

A9. Visitor Management

Impacts of tourism activities and visitor numbers are regularly monitored, particularly where they may affect residents, cultural heritage, nature or sensitive areas. Where negative impacts are identified, the destination management entity implements, promotes or coordinates appropriate visitor management measures with relevant authorities, community stakeholders and experts.

A10. Destination Promotion

Destination promotion focuses on authentic attractions, activities and events that benefit local communities, local employment, cultural identity and low-impact or regenerative tourism objectives. The destination management entity avoids promoting activities, attractions, events, facilities or services that are known to have significant

negative impacts on local communities, environmental values, animal welfare or cultural heritage. Sustainability-related communication and claims are accurate, evidence-based and avoid misleading environmental or social claims.

A11. Accurate Marketing and Promotion

The entity ensures that all promotional and marketing communications are accurate, transparent, and not misleading with regard to its products, services, and sustainability-related claims, and do not create unrealistic expectations regarding sustainability impacts or outcomes.

A12. Sustainable Customer Choices and Behaviour

The entity promotes and prioritises more sustainable products, services, and visitor behaviours through clear information, customer guidance, and the active promotion of more sustainable alternatives. Customers are provided with appropriate guidance on responsible behaviour and, where relevant, applicable codes of conduct for sensitive activities and destinations.

Section B. Environment

B1. Nature Conservation

The destination management entity supports the conservation and/or restoration of valuable ecosystems and biodiversity within its scope of responsibility and influence. It monitors or collects information on tourism-related impacts on nature and works with competent authorities and stakeholders to prevent, correct or mitigate negative impacts.

B2. Invasive Alien Species

Risks related to the introduction and spread of invasive alien species associated with tourism are identified where relevant. The destination management entity supports prevention and awareness actions and coordinates with competent environmental authorities when ecosystem, biodiversity or wildfire risks are identified.

B3. Natural Resources

Natural resources such as water, soil, minerals, wood, rock and landscapes are protected through applicable policies and regulations. The destination management entity collects relevant information from competent authorities and promotes responsible tourism practices that avoid unsustainable use of natural resources.

B4. Wildlife Protection and Interactions

Applicable regulations for the conservation of protected species are respected and promoted. Wildlife viewing and organised interactions between visitors and free-roaming wild animals follow applicable regulations and recognised good practice to protect wildlife and people. The destination management entity communicates expectations to tourism stakeholders and visitors where relevant.

B5. Animal Welfare

The destination management entity informs relevant tourism stakeholders about applicable laws and recognised standards for the welfare of animals used or displayed in tourism. Where animal welfare risks are identified, it supports reporting, awareness and cooperation with competent authorities.

B6. Land Use Planning

Tourism-related infrastructure and development projects are subject to applicable planning and impact assessment requirements. Where the destination management entity does not have planning authority, it shall demonstrate how it collects relevant information, participates where possible, and promotes the consideration of socio-cultural, environmental, climate and ecosystem impacts in tourism-related development.

B7. Noise and Light Pollution

Noise and light pollution affecting residents, wildlife, sensitive sites and visitor experience are monitored or considered where relevant. The destination management entity implements or promotes measures to minimise tourism-related noise and light impacts, including cooperation with competent authorities on high-impact vehicles, events or activities.

B8. Water Management

Water resources and use are managed or monitored to support long-term sustainability. Where water risks exist or may arise, measurable targets, actions or cooperation mechanisms are established to reduce water use from sources at risk, particularly in tourism and related sectors, within the entity's scope of responsibility and influence.

B9. Drinking and Recreational Water Quality

Drinking water and recreational water quality are monitored by competent authorities and quality issues are addressed and communicated in a timely and appropriate way. The destination management entity collects or links to relevant official information and communicates it to visitors and tourism stakeholders where appropriate.

B10. Wastewater

Wastewater treatment and discharge are managed according to applicable regulations. The destination management entity collects relevant information from competent authorities and promotes tourism practices that prevent negative impacts on communities, ecosystems and water bodies.

B11. Waste Management and Reduction

The destination has measurable objectives or actions to reduce solid waste, improve waste separation and increase effective recycling. The destination management entity promotes waste reduction in the tourism sector, including reduction of single-use items and food waste, and monitors progress using feasible indicators or credible proxies.

B12. Climate Footprint of Tourism

The destination monitors or estimates the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions from tourism, including transport to, from and within the destination where feasible. Targets or improvement objectives are set to reduce the climate footprint of tourism, supported by an action plan and periodic reporting. Priority is given to direct greenhouse gas emission reductions before considering carbon credits or compensation mechanisms.

B13. Low-impact Mobility

The destination promotes and supports walking, cycling, public transport and other lower-impact mobility options. The destination management entity implements or coordinates measures to reduce traffic-related air pollution and congestion in touristic zones and works with competent authorities to restrict or manage high-impact vehicles where appropriate.

B14. Energy Transition

The destination promotes reduced fossil fuel use, renewable energy, energy efficiency and responsible energy practices in tourism. Where energy policy is outside the destination management entity's mandate, the entity supports awareness, partnerships and data collection from competent bodies and tourism enterprises.

B15. Climate Change Mitigation

The destination management entity promotes and supports measures aimed at reducing tourism's carbon footprint. Carbon credits or offsetting shall not be used as the primary justification for continued high emissions; priority should be given to direct reductions and, where relevant, inseting initiatives such as renewable energy, ecosystem restoration or local resilience projects.

B16. Climate Adaptation and Risk Information

Climate-related risks and opportunities relevant to tourism are identified, including heat stress, water scarcity, flooding, coastal erosion, wildfire risk or other context-specific risks. Adaptation measures are pursued for the siting, design, development and management of tourism facilities where relevant. Residents, tourism enterprises and visitors are informed about relevant risks and emergency information.

B17. Environmental Awareness and Information

Visitors, tourism enterprises and local communities are informed about key environmental challenges in the destination and how they can contribute to reducing environmental impacts. Information on protected areas, wildlife sensitivity, responsible behaviour in natural settings, water, waste and climate-related issues is actively shared through appropriate channels.

Section C. Socio-cultural

C1. Tangible Cultural Heritage

Tangible cultural heritage is protected and promoted respectfully in consultation with competent experts or authorities. This includes built heritage, traditional architecture, urban design, cultural landscapes, historical and archaeological sites. The destination management entity supports responsible visitor integration and avoids promotion that may damage heritage values.

C2. Intangible Cultural Heritage

The destination identifies and supports its intangible cultural heritage, including local traditions, performing and visual arts, crafts, music, language, rituals and gastronomy. Promotion and visitor engagement are developed in

consultation with appropriate community stakeholders to protect local cultural identity and avoid trivialisation or misuse.

C3. Accessibility

The destination management entity actively coordinates and promotes progressive and inclusive access to tourism facilities, services, natural and cultural sites for residents and visitors with diverse abilities. Improvements are planned, prioritised and monitored within the entity's scope of responsibility and influence, while safeguarding cultural and natural values.

C4. Human Rights

The destination management entity upholds internationally recognised human rights standards by operating in compliance with applicable laws and implementing documented policies, practices or a code of conduct to prevent, identify and report risks of human trafficking, modern slavery, commercial or sexual exploitation, discrimination, harassment or abuse linked to tourism. It communicates expectations to tourism stakeholders, provides or signposts accessible reporting channels, and cooperates with competent authorities where risks are identified.

C5. Community Well-being and Tourism Acceptance

The destination regularly monitors local communities' aspirations, concerns, satisfaction and perceptions related to tourism through structured dialogue mechanisms, surveys or other proportionate methods. Community feedback is documented, analysed and addressed through defined actions, responsibilities and timelines, and outcomes are publicly reported or included in sustainability reporting. The destination communicates how community feedback has informed planning, decision-making and improvement actions.

C6. Health and Safety

Tourism-related health and safety risks are identified and addressed, including crime-related risks, safety hazards, public health threats and climate-related risks. The destination management entity maintains or coordinates access to up-to-date tourism-relevant emergency and safety protocols, developed with competent authorities, and communicates relevant safety information to visitors and tourism stakeholders.

C7. Legal Compliance

The destination management entity operates in compliance with applicable laws and maintains mechanisms to identify, manage and, within its scope of responsibility and influence, promote legal compliance across tourism-

related activities and partnerships. Where compliance is the responsibility of other authorities or private operators, the entity shall provide guidance, signposting or cooperation mechanisms where relevant.

C8. Ethical Code

The destination management entity has an ethical code or equivalent policy in place, including provisions to prevent corruption and bribery and to protect whistle-blowers. Commitment to the code is recorded by relevant personnel and governing bodies, and reporting channels are communicated where appropriate.

C9. Socio-Cultural Awareness and Information

Visitors and residents are provided with clear, accessible and culturally appropriate information about local culture, traditions, sensitive sites and community norms. Information is kept up to date and disseminated through appropriate channels in coordination with relevant local stakeholders, especially where cultural sensitivities or visitor pressures are identified.

Section D. Economy

D1. Economic Impact and Retention of Tourism

The destination regularly monitors and analyses tourism's economic impact and local retention using proportionate and relevant data sources. Where direct measurement is not feasible, credible proxy indicators may be used. The analysis considers distribution and equity of tourism-related benefits across the community and informs destination planning.

D2. Seasonal Variability and Economic Stability

The destination monitors the monthly or seasonal distribution of tourist arrivals, overnight stays or other relevant indicators and analyses implications for resilience and economic stability. In cooperation with tourism providers and community stakeholders, the destination management entity promotes measures to encourage a more balanced temporal and spatial distribution of tourism where this supports community well-being, local economy, culture and the environment.

D3. Fair Employment and Workforce Development

The destination collects or uses up-to-date data on tourism employment and workforce trends and identifies key challenges such as seasonal employment, labour shortages, local workforce participation, skills gaps and demographic change. Within its scope of responsibility and influence, the destination management entity promotes fair, inclusive and family-friendly working conditions through awareness, dialogue, capacity-building and good-practice initiatives, without imposing employment conditions on individual employers unless legally mandated.

D4. Green Economy

The destination management entity promotes and facilitates the adoption of environmental policies and practices by tourism enterprises, focusing on local priorities such as waste reduction, food waste, reduction of single-use items, energy and water efficiency, responsible purchasing and renewable energy. Progress is monitored using feasible aggregate indicators, uptake data or credible proxies.

D5. Sustainability Standards

The destination promotes and supports the adoption of credible sustainability standards and certifications, with particular support for micro and small enterprises through capacity-building, mentoring, group approaches or simplified entry pathways. The destination prioritises internationally recognised schemes with independent verification or audits, and provides guidance on sustainability claims to reduce the risk of misleading communication and greenwashing. Enterprises with recognised sustainability practices and/or certifications are made visible to visitors where feasible. The destination management entity supports tourism enterprises through mentoring, training and capacity-building activities to facilitate the adoption of recognised sustainability standards.

D6. Local Food, Products and Services

The destination promotes and supports responsible local food, products and services that strengthen local livelihoods, local ownership and cultural heritage, regional value chains and circular economy approaches where appropriate. The development or re-introduction of traditional products and services is supported where appropriate through facilitation and collaboration with local producers, community members and tourism stakeholders.

D7. Economic Impact Awareness

The destination raises awareness among local communities, visitors and tourism enterprises about how individual and collective choices can support local livelihoods and the local economy. Awareness actions may include responsible purchasing, local employment opportunities, community-based tourism initiatives and promotion of locally owned services. Key messages are kept consistent and up to date.