CITSI MARCH – SEPTEMBER REPORT

CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND INNOVATION

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM MANAGEMENT

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2026

COMPILED BY: Dr PPS Sifolo

CURRENT STATE

1. **Name of the Director/Manager**: Dr Portia Pearl Siyanda Sifolo

2. **Purpose and goals of the CSTI**

The Centre for Sustainable Tourism and Innovation (CSTI) is an interdisciplinary research and development centre focusing on the intersection of sustainability, digitalisation, and inclusive tourism development, aiming to enhance the sector's resilience and adaptability within the dynamic global and local landscapes. The CSTI works closely with industry partners, local communities, and international institutions to create impactful, evidence-based solutions that drive social, economic, environmental, and governance sustainability practices across the tourism value chain.

3. **List of Members involved in the Centre**

Full members

- Prof Ndivhuwo N Tshipala - Assistant Dean, Teaching and Learning: Associate Professor in the Department of Tourism Management
- Dr R Naude Potgieter – Section Head, Teaching and Learning
- Dr Samantha Bouwer - Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Dr Leane Grobbelaar, Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Dr Willie Hood, Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Ms Athenkosi Ntanjana, Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Ms Jacqueline Mangwane, Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Mrs Lorraine Molefe, Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Mrs Xolile Mnisi, Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Dr Paulina Mngwevu, N-Gap Lecturer: Department of Tourism

Associate Members

- Dr M Phori, Part-time lecturer
- Dr V Verkerk, Post-Doctoral Fellow
- Dr F Achu, Post-Doctoral Fellow
- Dr N Ndlovu, Post-Doctoral Fellow
- Dr M Kuseni, Post-Doctoral Fellow

Student Members

- Ms P. Ngwenya
- Ms LA Maake
- Mr S Mbuyane

Visiting Professors

- Prof Clifford L Lewis (Charles Sturt University, Australia)
- Prof Marina Novelli, Director of the Sustainable Travel and Tourism Advanced Research Centre (STTAR-C)

4. Names of Advisory Committee members [2025-2028]

Internal Members	External
Dr Portia Pearl Siyanda Sifolo: **CSTI Director**	**Chairperson**: Mr Sthandiwe Mkhize: Thinking Pair Group Director
Dr Malefane Monyane – Head of Tourism Management Department	**Vice Chairperson:** Dr Laeticia Jacobs, National Department of Tourism, Acting Director
Mr Maluta Jerry Netshandama – Accounting Department Lecturer and Registered Tax Practitioner	Mr Caiphus Netshishivhe - City of Ekurhuleni Senior Manager: Tourism Development
	Ms Nwabisa Mjoli: Fetula Sustainability Practitioner

5. Names of Management Committee members

- Dr Malefane Monyane: HoD - Department of Tourism Management
- Dr Lisa Welthagen, Portfolio Manager: SLPs & Training - Senior Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Mr Pfarelo Manavhela: Portfolio Manager: Consultancy & Strategic Planning Direction - Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management
- Dr Beverly Nthabeleng, Portfolio Manager: Research & Collaboration - Lecturer: Department of Tourism Management

6. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Current Research Projects Registered

There were 4 current research projects registered (3 have been completed). These allocations ensure that each research project aligns with the Centre's objectives, driving innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable practices across various aspects of tourism in South Africa. There were 7 research projects registered in 2025, which are listed below

6. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Current Research Projects Registered

There are 15 current research projects registered in total, of which only 7 were registered in 2026. These allocations ensure that each research project aligns with the Centre's objectives, driving innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable practices across various aspects of tourism in South Africa.

Advance Innovative Research	*Electric Vehicle Ownership and Domestic Holiday Travel in South Africa (Dr Naude Potgieter) 2026*
Promote Capacity Building through Comprehensive Training	*Casino students and their progress and development through a three-year course: a longitudinal study (Dr Naude-Potgieter) 2026*

Enhance Capacity building through SLPs	*Investigating digital leadership capabilities and sustainable transformation of small to medium tourism enterprises in South Africa (Dr N Ndlovu) 2024-2026* *Assessing the Digital Procurement Impact Practices on Supply Chain Resilience and Inclusivity in the Sub-Saharan African Tourism Sector: A Case of South Africa and Cameroon (Dr FN Achu) 2025*
Foster Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Practices-	*Exploring intangible cultural heritage in South Africa through framework development and empirical investigation (Dr B Ntshabeleng & Dr. L.P. Shabalala) 2026* *Examining the adoption of digital technologies on tourist guiding practices in Gauteng, South Africa, using the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) framework (Dr B Ntshabeleng) 2026*
Empower Local Communities and Stakeholders	*Beyond knowledge: environmental literacy, place attachment, and self-identity as multi-level predictors of willingness to pay for conservation in South African national botanical and zoological gardens. (Dr Kuseni), 2026*
Lead in Thought and Practice for a Dynamic and Equitable Tourism Future	*Assessing compliance with the amended tourism Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) sector code in South Africa (Dr PPS Sifolo) 2026* *The Tall and the Short of It: Height Matters in Tourism (Dr V Verkerk), 2026*

Performance targets: 2025/6

Submission and adoption of Advisory Board Terms of Reference in 2025 was achieved. Changes in 2026 must be adopted	May 2025 - November 2026	Ongoing
Registering one more research project	August 2025	Achieved
Sharing the research impacts from the existing research projects – Locating the research within the Sustainable Development Goals	September 2025	Achieved
Hosting a research seminar	October	Achieved
Develop 2 SLPs	2025	Not achieved

6.1. Community Engagement Projects

A brief overview of key activities undertaken by the Centre for Sustainable Tourism and Innovation (CSTI) during the first quarter of 2026.



Following the successful inaugural meeting of the CSTI Advisory Committee, a foundational step in strengthening governance and leadership, the Centre held a face-to-face meeting at our new offices in Nana Sita Street.

The meeting provided team members with the opportunity to view and familiarise themselves with the new working environment.

To enhance the Centre's visibility and marketing efforts, an active, up-to-date website has been developed https://csti.co.za/.



In addition, new promotional materials, including banners, T-shirts, diaries, and bags, were procured to support branding and stakeholder engagement.

Benefits of CSTI Joining the Tshwane Tourism Association (TTA)

Becoming a member of the Tshwane Tourism Association (TTA), the official umbrella body that promotes tourism in the City of Tshwane, offers the Centre several strategic, operational, and reputational advantages. The TTA connects tourism businesses, government, residents, and visitors, and actively markets Tshwane as a destination.

1. Enhanced Visibility and Marketing Opportunities

- CSTI will be listed on the official TTA website (www.tshwanetourism.com) and the Visit Tshwane platform, with a direct link to the CSTI website.



- Opportunity to feature in the TTA's bi-weekly newsletter (reaching approximately 1,000 recipients) and to submit news, events, and updates about CSTI's academic programmes, short courses, research, and innovation initiatives.
- Access to cost-effective marketing platforms, including trade shows, media visits, and advertising features.
- Use of the official TTA logo on CSTI marketing materials, which adds credibility and signals active collaboration with the local tourism industry.

2. Networking and Stakeholder Engagement

- Regular interaction with key tourism role-players in Tshwane, including private sector operators, SMMEs, government departments (City of Tshwane, National Department of Tourism), and other associations.
- Stronger relationships with industry partners, which can lead to collaboration opportunities, student internships, industry projects, and applied research.
- Direct access to events such as the annual Tshwane Tourism Showcase, Tshwane Tourism Awards, and other networking forums, building on CSTI's successful participation in the 2026 Showcase.

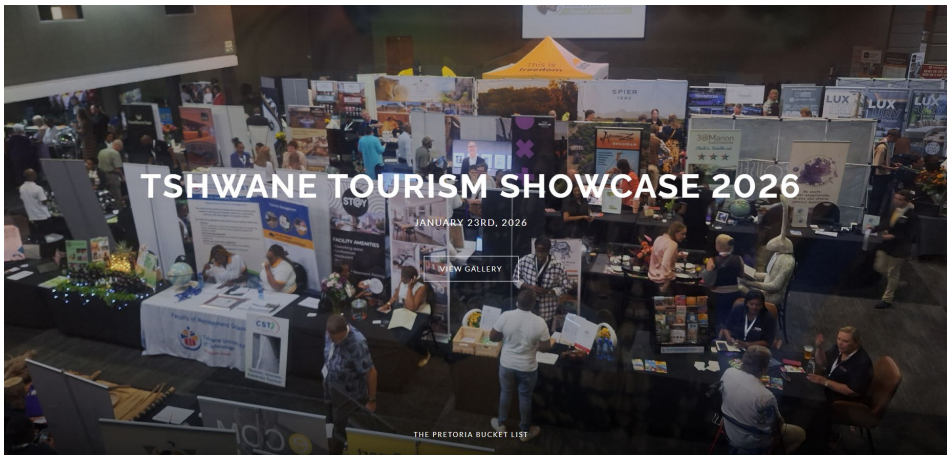
3. Industry Insights and Information Flow

- Receive timely communications from national, provincial, and local government tourism bodies, as well as updates on tourism safety, policy developments, and industry trends.

Stay informed about destination marketing strategies, challenges, and opportunities in Tshwane, valuable for aligning CSTI's research, innovation, and training programmes with real industry needs.

4. Strategic Positioning and Influence

- Position CSTI as a key academic and innovation partner in Tshwane's tourism ecosystem, reinforcing its mandate on sustainable tourism, innovation, digital transformation, and resilience.
- Opportunity to contribute to industry discussions, speak at events, and influence local tourism policy and development.
- Support for CSTI's Student-Led Tourism Innovation Initiative and research projects (e.g., the State of Transformation Survey) through broader industry buy-in and collaboration.



5. Credibility and Recognition

- Membership certificate and official recognition as part of Tshwane's organised tourism structure.
- Strengthened profile when engaging with funders, government, and international partners, as it demonstrates CSTI's commitment to practical industry collaboration.

In summary, TTA membership will significantly boost CSTI's visibility, facilitate meaningful industry partnerships, provide valuable market intelligence, and help translate the Centre's academic and innovation work into tangible impact on Tshwane's tourism economy.

Tshwane Tourism Showcase 2026



A major highlight was the Centre's participation in the Tshwane Tourism Showcase 2026 held in January. The event, themed "Shaping a Safer, Stronger Capital for Tourism", provided an excellent platform to promote CSTI's mandate.

CSTI was represented by:

- 2 Full Members
- 1 Associate Member
- 2 Interns

The team played an active role in:

- Marketing CSTI's academic programmes and short courses
- Engaging visitors at the CSTI exhibition stand
- Distributing promotional material and explaining the Centre's mandate
- Capturing stakeholder interest for future collaboration

The Director delivered a keynote address focusing on sustainable tourism development, innovation, digital transformation, and the role of higher education in building resilient tourism destinations. The

address reinforced CSTI's strategic positioning and generated strong interest from industry stakeholders, SMMEs, and destination partners.

The Director commends the professional conduct, enthusiasm, and commitment demonstrated by all CSTI representatives. Particular appreciation is extended to the Full Members, Associate Member, and interns for their proactive engagement, teamwork, and effective marketing of CSTI courses and initiatives, which significantly enhanced the Centre's visibility.

Key Operational Updates:

- **Student-Led Tourism Innovation Initiative** CSTI, in collaboration with the National Department of Tourism (NDT), is preparing to host a Student-Led Tourism Innovation Initiative scheduled for October 2026. The programme will bring together students from CSTI and five other universities across South Africa to promote innovation and practical problem-solving in the tourism sector.
- **MOU with Tourism Transformation Council of South Africa (TTCSA)** A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between CSTI and the Tourism Transformation Council of South Africa (TTCSA). This partnership has resulted in CSTI being tasked with preparing a Research Tender for the State of Transformation Survey in the tourism industry. This important project reflects the Centre's growing role in supporting transformation and policy-relevant research.

6.2. Innovation outputs (patents, designs, trademarks, domain etc.)

CSTI trademark name cost R16,081.30 on 17 June 2026

6.3. Research Outputs (Journal Articles, Book chapters, Conference Papers)

Published papers

1. Achu, F.N.A., Sifolo, P.P.S. & Hermann, U.P. (2026). A supply chain resilience conceptual framework for climate-smart event enterprises. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 15(2), 606-617 https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.766
2. Welthagen, L. (2026). Behind the Scenes of Crowds at Large-Scale Events: A South African Perspective. Social and Health Sciences, 25 pages. https://doi.org/10.25159/2957-3645/20870
3. Ndlovu, N., Sifolo, P.P.S., & Tshipala, N. (2026). Artificial intelligence and sustainability in small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTES): A bibliometric review of their interplay. Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites, 64(1), 71–85. https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.64107-1657
4. Kuseni, M., Hermann, U.P. and Bouwer, S., 2026. Examining the Service Perceptions of Visitors at National Botanical Gardens in South Africa. *Journal of Zoological and Botanical Gardens*, *7*(2), p.19.
5. Verkerk, VA. Hermann, up. 2026. A theoretical perspective on the decentring of the human subject through virtual reality: Toward posthumanist experiences in. *Journal of Posthumanism* 6 (2), 657-670

Papers presented at a conference

1. The Catalytic Role of Ambidextrous Digital Innovation in Connecting Digital Literacy and Sustainable Transformation in South African SMTEs.

2. Njabulo Ndlovu, P.P.S Sifolo, Ndivhuwo Tshipala, 2026. 13th Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Marketing and Management (AHTMM) conference, Macau - China
3. L Welthagen. 12th International Conference on Tourism through Innovation - ICOHT, Bangkok 14 - 15 July 2026: Reimagining Event Tourism SMMES through Digital Innovation: Evidence of South Africa

Books published

1. Naudé-Potgieter, R. 2026. More Than a Getaway: Unpacking the Motivations and Quality of Life of South African Mothers on Family Vacations. In H. Schänzel, M. Yang, & C. Khoo, (Eds.), Handbook on Children and Family Tourism. Edward Elgar:155-172

6.4. Commercial Research and Consultancy work - None

6.5. Short Learning Programs (SLPs): No formalised SLP offered. But 1 in planning.

6.6. Creative Outputs - None

6.7. Masters & Doctoral Graduation Outputs – None are registered in the projects under the Centre

7. Other Training Projects (any training/courses/workshops/seminars presented during the preceding year)

7.1. Experiential Training Offered – None

7.2. Workshops

Funding Opportunities for Hosting International Academic Conferences and Seminars in South Africa

Date: 4 August 2026
Time: 10:00 – 13:00
Venue: Prestige Auditorium, Dinokeng Building 21, Tshwane University of Technology (Pretoria Campus)

The workshop provided TUT academics, researchers, and relevant stakeholders with information on available funding opportunities and strategic support for hosting international academic conferences and seminars in South Africa. It also sought to strengthen collaboration among Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB), and the City of Tshwane to promote academic events that contribute to research excellence, internationalisation, and destination development. The Assistant Dean, Prof NN Tshipala opened and welcomed the guest by reflecting on the support once received from SANCB.



Representatives from the SANCB then delivered a detailed presentation on the SANCB Bid Support Programme and the SANCB National Association Strategy. The session provided delegates with an overview of the bid support process, available financial and non-financial assistance, eligibility requirements, and the strategic importance of attracting international conferences to South Africa.

Practical guidance was also provided on preparing competitive bids and working with relevant stakeholders throughout the bidding process. There were 2 commitments to host a conference in 2029 and 1 intervention for a conference in Cape Town.



About 5 rated researchers and 2 Saachi-Chairs attended the session, which shows the need for these type of workshops. The workshop concluded with a networking lunch, which provided participants with an opportunity to establish professional connections and explore potential future collaborations.

The workshop was successful:

- Increased awareness of funding and support mechanisms available through SANCB for hosting international academic conferences.

- Strengthened collaboration between TUT, SANCB, and the City of Tshwane.
- Enhanced delegates' understanding of conference bidding processes and strategic planning.
- Promoted TUT's research and internationalisation objectives through stakeholder engagement.
- Provided valuable networking opportunities that may lead to future collaborations and conference hosting initiatives.

The workshop achieved its objective of equipping participants with practical knowledge on securing support for international academic conferences. The presentations and discussions highlighted the importance of collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions, government, and the convention sector in advancing research excellence, internationalisation, and destination development. The event also reinforced TUT's commitment to creating opportunities that enhance the University's global research profile and contribute to the socio-economic development of the City of Tshwane.

7.4. Internships provided

CSTI is officially hosting two students

- 1 student under Human Science Research Council (July 2024 – July 2026)
- 1 Tourism Management student (Entrepreneurship WIL)
- 1 student intern from Research and Innovation (July 2026 – July 2027)

8. Quality Management Systems to ensure quality of service delivery

The CSTI ensures high-quality service delivery by integrating ISO 9001:2015 – Quality Management System and SANS 1162:2011 – Responsible Tourism into its Quality Management System (QMS). ISO 9001:2015 provides a globally recognised framework for consistent quality through standardised processes, stakeholder satisfaction, and continuous improvement, motivating stakeholders with credibility, trust, and team empowerment. SANS 1162:2011, a South African standard, embeds responsible tourism principles of sustainability, community benefits, and cultural preservation into operations, inspiring pride, social impact, and industry leadership. Together, they create a robust system that balances excellence with local relevance, aligning with TUT's innovation, sustainability, service delivery, and community engagement goals. Implementation involves assessing current practices, developing a unified policy, training staff, monitoring progress, and pursuing certification, fostering motivation

through global recognition, purposeful impact, and partnership appeal. This integrated approach positions the Centre as a leader in sustainable tourism, driving quality and positive change in Tshwane.

Integrating ISO 9001:2015 and SANS 1162:2011 equips the CSTI with a QMS that ensures top-tier service quality while championing responsible tourism. This combination motivates stakeholders by blending global excellence with local relevance, empowering them to drive sustainable change in Tshwane's tourism landscape. The result is a dynamic, purpose-driven Centre that inspires its community through quality, impact, and pride in South Africa's sustainable future.

For example, since its inception the Centre has achieved

- 2 Full qualifications (casino and resort management and event management)
- The number of targeted disadvantaged populations for enrollment since 2010 has tripled.
- Develop and sustain collaborative research initiatives with local and international partners.
- From 2013 – 2024, more than 15 staff members have registered their research and community projects presented and showcased nationally and internationally.
- The CSTI has employed 3 Post-Doctoral candidates who produced research outputs

9. Partnerships/collaborations or agreements

- National Department of Tourism (MoA)

In June 2024, the Centre responded to the National Department of Tourism's request for an expression of interest, submitting a proposal to be appointed to a panel to conduct research for the Department of Tourism. This was completed in 2025. In 2026, the CSTI challenged the department to host the Student-Led Tourism Innovation Summit, a collaborative platform that bridges research, innovation, and sectoral implementation. Guided by the proposed partnership with TUT, the Summit reflects national priorities on digitalisation, youth-led innovation, and evidence-based impact.

- South African National Convention Bureau

CSTI and SANCB collaborated on hosting the event.

10. Challenges experienced

Limited capacity due to a minimum number of members. MoUs have not been concluded between the Transformation Council of South Africa (TTCSA). Limited support from the Department of Tourism Management, and the MoU has not been signed or approved.

11. Highlights

Successfully hosting the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) in hosting an Academic Business Events Workshop. https://lnkd.in/p/dT8_Rt4D

- Dr Michael Kuseni's study featured on the SANParks Tourism Research Report titled "Visitor Sentiment on Barrier Impending Ethical Behaviour in Kruger National Park" https://www.sanparks.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/SANParks-Tourism-Research-Report-2026-1.pdf
- Dr Njabulo Ndlovu, Postdoctoral Research Fellow received a Best Paper Award at 13th Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Marketing and Management (AHTMM) Conference in Macau, China. This international recognition celebrates innovative research exploring how digital innovation can drive sustainable transformation in South Africa's small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs). Dr Ndlovu, was recognised for his paper, *The Catalytic Role of Ambidextrous Digital Innovation in Connecting Digital Leadership and Sustainable Transformation in South African SMMEs*. https://www.tut.ac.za/newsroom/all-news/2026/global-conference-honours-tuts-tourism-research-excellence.php

Participation in R&I Projects within TUT

Faculty of Management Sciences seminar

a) Postgraduate orientation (August 2026)-Facilitation and engagement of master's and doctoral students during the seminar

Centre for Sustainable Tourism & Innovation Student-Led Program

b) Dr Verkerk's contribution and participation in the student-led innovation summit, in partnership with the NDT.

(i) List of publications, papers, awards, patents, copyrights, and service to the community, internal and external collaborations and any other relevant activities.



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Unlocking conference funding opportunities for public universities

The University, in collaboration with the South African National Convention Bureau for Tourism and the City of Tshwane, recently hosted a workshop on funding international academic conferences and seminars in South Africa.

The workshop, organised by the Centre for Sustainable Tourism and Innovation and the Innovation and Technology Transfer Office, demonstrated incredible momentum within the academic community to bring world-class research, global dialogue, and impactful international gatherings to South African shores.

Key outcomes from the workshop included actionable insights in the form of direct exposure to strategic funding pathways and key financial mechanisms; meaningful engagement by means of a dynamic platform for collaboration, networking, and interdisciplinary partnership, as well as knowledge sharing through practical strategies to successfully pitch, secure, and host prestigious international events.

The Deputy Director for Innovation and Technology Transfer Office, Dr Kim Lamont-Mbawuli, thanked everyone who participated and contributed to the success of the workshop.

Alleged metro salary funding shortfall comes under scrutiny

Awards honour Tshwane tourism industry

(ii) List of conferences attended and institutions visited, locally and abroad.

- Tshwane Tourism Association
- Sustainable Travel and Tourism Advanced Research (STTAR) Centre, a research hub at the Nottingham University Business School

(iii) List of researchers from other Centres, Institutes, Technology Stations, Hubs and Incubators, local and overseas, who visited and contributed to research activities.

ENGAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM AND STTAR CENTRE

Dr. PPS Sifolo visited Nottingham, United Kingdom, to engage with academic and entrepreneurial initiatives at the University of Nottingham, with a focus on the Sustainable Travel and Tourism Advanced Research Centre (STTAR). The visit included participation in key networking, strategic, and thematic workshops aligned with entrepreneurship, women and youth entrepreneurship, community-based development, and the visitor economy in the East This session aligned closely with themes of sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, place-based entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic development. Discussions explored how collections and cultural assets across the East Midlands can drive visitor economy growth, scholarship, exhibitions, publications, and public engagement.

The emphasis on collaborative research pipelines supports potential future partnerships involving women and youth entrepreneurship, community-based models, and sustainable

travel. While the primary focus was Day 1, the visit overlapped with preparations or related programming for the “Shaping Tomorrow with Women and Youth Entrepreneurship” conference (24 April 2026, Business School North, A34). This event featured sessions on women entrepreneurship/intrapreneurship, youth entrepreneurship, community/place-based entrepreneurship, and funding landscapes — many of which connect directly to Dr. Sifolo’s expertise (as evidenced by her mention alongside Portia Sifolo & Marina Novelli in related programming on youth & women entrepreneurship in the Global South).

Key Outcomes and Reflections

1. Networking & Collaboration: Strong connections made with EIR community, Ingenuity Lab, Haydn Green Institute, and STTAR researchers.
2. Research & Funding Opportunities: Exposure to the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Landscape Award bid and alternative funding pathways for projects linking collections, heritage, visitor economy, and inclusive entrepreneurship.
3. Thematic Alignment: Reinforced synergies between sustainable tourism (STTAR), place-based and cultural entrepreneurship, and women/youth empowerment models.
4. Strategic Insights: Gained understanding of university innovation support structures (Bronze/Silver/Gold mentoring models) and regional visitor economy development frameworks.