

# WORLD EXPO 2020, DUBAI



**1 OCT 2021 - 31 MARCH 2022**

## **REPORT ON BHUTAN'S PARTICIPATION (TOURISM) IN WORLD EXPO 2020, DUBAI**

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## Background on World Expo

The world expo is a mega international exhibition. The expo allows countries to showcase their unique identity, innovations and achievements in line with an universal theme through engaging and immersive activities. The great gathering is dedicated to finding solutions to pressing challenges of our time.

The first world expo was organized in 1851 in London which became very popular. Following its success, Bureau International des Expositions was established in 1928 to regulate and oversee these mega-events. Since then, World Expos have explicitly been organized around a theme that attempts to improve humankind's knowledge, takes into account human and social aspirations and highlights scientific, technological, economic and social progress.

The World Expos are unrivaled among the international events in their size, scale, duration and visitor numbers. They are large-scale platforms for education and progress that serve as a bridge between governments, companies, international organizations, and citizens.





## World Expo 2020, Dubai

The World Expo 2020 held in Dubai is the first event of such kind to be held in MEASA region. It was originally scheduled to take place from 1st October 2020 to 31st March 2021. However as the world was struck by COVID-19 pandemic and various calamities following it, the expo was also delayed by one year and it was rescheduled from 1st October 2021 to 31st March 2022.

The Expo 2020 was themed "Connecting Minds and Creating the Future" fostering human collaboration and partnership as today's engines of growth. The organizers put it as "festival of human ingenuity,"

The event is further divided into three sub-themes: Sustainability, Opportunity and Mobility. The pavilions of the participating countries are spread in these sub-thematic areas as per the country's vision and goal.

The World expo 2020 is said to be largest of its kind. 192 countries participated in the Expo 2020. It has received over 24 million visitors from 173 countries over six months period despite the challenges posed by COVID pandemic.



## Bhutan at World Expo 2020, Dubai

Bhutan is one of the pavilions assisted by the organizers. They have provided a support of USD 4 million including a pavilion structure onsite.

Bhutan pavilion was located in the Opportunity district and it was exhibited under the theme of “Bhutan - Land of Happiness and opportunities”. The overall pavilion was designed along the theme of Gross National Happiness. The panel boards, screens and some artifacts are used as the story telling board to the visitors.

As pavilion is designed on the GNH theme, the visitors are greeted by a panel board introducing GNH philosophy. Following which, the panels contained information on the pillars of GNH, unique characteristics of Bhutan, arts, culture, traditions, business and tourism opportunities in Bhutan.

An architecture models like Taktsang and a typical Bhutanese house were also displayed to provide better insight into Bhutan's culture. Further, the artifacts and national costumes, arts and crafts were also used as information medium to showcase Bhutan to the visitors.



# TCB's role in Bhutan's participation in world expo

The Ministry of Economic Affairs was leading sector for Bhutan's participation in the World Expo 2020 and Honorable Tengye Lyonpo led the Bhutan's Expo team as the Commissioner General.

The Director General of the Tourism Council of Bhutan was the Deputy Commissioner General (DCG). The Tourism Council of Bhutan contributed in different capacity towards Bhutan's participation in Expo. The following entails how TCB has contributed and participated in the expo.

- 1 Content Development and Designing
- 2 Expo Communication Management
- 3 Participation in Travel & Connectivity Week
- 4 Country Business Briefing
- 5 Representation at the Pavilion
- 6 Visa Liaison Officer for Expo
- 7 Point of Contact for Expo Business Application

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## 1. Content Development and Designing

The information panel constituted majority of the pavilion contents. There were 26 A0 panels inside the pavilion and it is the most integral part of the pavilion as the panels were used as the main communication medium for our visitors.

The Tourism Council of Bhutan took lead with the development and designing of these contents

# SOME OF THE DESIGNS FOR AO PANELS INSIDE THE PAVILION

## GNH PILLAR 4: GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good Governance is considered a pillar for happiness because it determines the conditions in which citizens of the nation thrive.

**2008**  
First elections were held to elect the government and parliament.

**2006**  
Entrenchment of the Fifth King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the greatest Bhutan through the transition to a democratic system.

**2005**  
By Royal Decree, a draft constitution was written in consultation with the people and the process for transitioning to a democratic system was initiated.

**1998**  
The King reorganized the system of governance, creating nine administrative regions to improve the delivery of services to the people.

**1972**  
Entrenchment of the Third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the greatest Bhutan to the outside world and worked to modernize the country.

**1971**  
Entrenchment of the Third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the greatest Bhutan to the outside world and worked to modernize the country.

**1953**  
Entrenchment of the Third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the greatest Bhutan to the outside world and worked to modernize the country.

**1952**  
Entrenchment of the Third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the greatest Bhutan to the outside world and worked to modernize the country.

**1940s**  
Entrenchment of the Second King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the greatest Bhutan to the outside world and worked to modernize the country.

**1926**  
Entrenchment of the Second King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the greatest Bhutan to the outside world and worked to modernize the country.

**1907**  
After a period of civil conflict, Jigme Wangchuck was crowned as the first of the present line of the present King.

**1616**  
Bhutan was unified as a nation state by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, who established a unique dual system of governance: secular and religious.

A CHRONOLOGY OF KEY LEADERSHIP EVENTS IN BHUTAN'S HISTORY

## GNH PILLAR 1: CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT

Conservation of environment is one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness. The constitution requires to maintain a minimum of 60% of Bhutan's total land area under forest cover for all times to come. Currently, Bhutan has a forest coverage of 72% making it the only carbon negative country in the world.

In Celebration of His Royal Highness the Gyalsey's 1<sup>st</sup> Birth Anniversary

**THE WILDLIFE MAP OF BHUTAN**

WWF

## THE WORLD'S HIGHEST UNCLIMBED MOUNTAIN

# Gangkar Puensum

24,840 ft

THE BHUTANESE CONSIDER THE MOUNTAINS TO BE THE SACRED ABODE OF THE GODS AND SPIRITS, THUS MOUNTAINEERING ABOVE 6000 M/ASL WAS FORBIDDEN SINCE 1994.

## Development Philosophy of Bhutan

# GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS (GNH)

**4 PILLARS OF GNH**

- CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT
- PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF CULTURE
- SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- GOOD GOVERNANCE

GNH is a "multi-dimensional development approach that seeks to achieve a harmonious balance between material well-being and the spiritual, emotional and cultural needs of our society."

**MAP OF BHUTAN**

Key Facts

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a landlocked country in South Asia located in the Eastern Himalayas, bordered by China in North and India in South.

## DRIGLAM NAMZHA (ETIQUETTE)

Bhutanese follow a highly refined system of etiquette – the code of conduct, which is called "Driglam Namzha" in local terminology. It governs different sorts of behavior, including how to deal with others, how to serve and eat food, how to dress and even how to walk.

## GNH PILLAR 2: PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF CULTURE

"Nation Stays Alive When Culture Stays Alive"  
The rich culture of Bhutan is the essence of our unique identity.

### ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is a significant feature of the Bhutanese culture. The combination of engineering skills and aesthetic beauty is unparalleled in all structures, from massive monastic fortresses to houses and bridges. Dzongs are one of the finest examples of impressive and majestic forms of architecture in Bhutan.

### FESTIVAL

Tshechu, or the Mask Dance Festival, is the most important religious festival in Bhutan held annually in various temples, monasteries and dzongs throughout the country. The lively and highly spirited mask dances are performed as manifestation of religious significance and as an epitome of victory.

### ARTS AND CRAFTS

An essential part of Bhutan's cultural heritage are the thirteen traditional arts and crafts that have been practiced from time immemorial. Buddhist motifs permeates Bhutanese arts and crafts.

### FOLK SONGS, MUSIC AND DANCE

The folk songs of Bhutan are based on compositions which praise the celestial beings and their human manifestations such as saintly monks and benevolent kings, and their abodes, including both man-made and natural wonders. The traditional dances play an important role in the religious and social life of the Bhutanese people.



## 2. Expo Communication Management

To ensure Bhutan can maximize on the opportunities presented by the Expo, the DCG highlighted on the importance of having right communication strategy and plan in place.

However, as the Expo taskforce members are from multiple agencies it was challenging to appoint communications manager.

Therefore, the High Level Steering Committee of Expo consented on the recruitment of communication manager from private firm who will manage the expo communication task on a daily basis.

Therefore, Yiga Radio was recruited as the communication manager for Expo 2020 under the management of TCB (DCG).

### Facebook Page



### Expo website



### Instagram Page



### 3. Participation in Travel & Connectivity Week

As part of the Expo, the organizer has designed events and programs to discuss subjects that impact general humanity and the planet. The Travel & Connectivity Week was one of those events that entailed discussion on tourism.

The Tourism Council of Bhutan, represented by the Director General received a nomination to speak at the thematic week forum. As the event was attended by global thought leaders and interested participants both physically and virtually, it provided a great forum for Bhutan to create awareness on brand Bhutan and tourism opportunities. Further, Bhutan garnered great publicity and media mileage through various TV presentations and media interviews received by the Director General during his visit at the Expo which is an outcome of participating in Travel & Connectivity Week.



Photos from Travel and Connectivity week  
Presentation by Director General, TCB



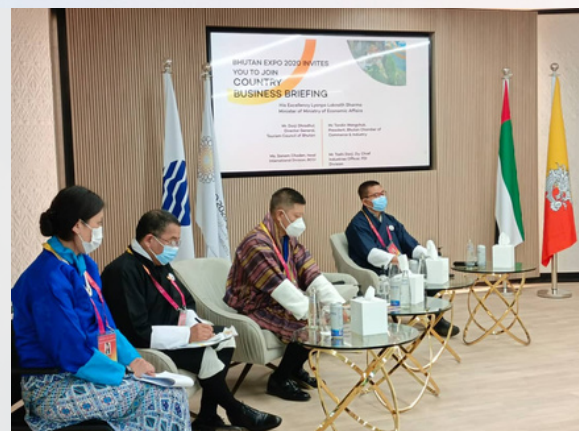
## 4. Country Business Briefing

The Country Business Briefing (CBB) session was the Expo 2020's offering to all international participants a platform to host a business briefing on National day to leverage on business opportunities and the supported the by EXPO 2020.

Bhutan's Business Briefing was organized on January 19, 2022 which was one of the highlights of Bhutan's participation in Expo. His Honorable Tengye Lyonpo, the Commissioner General of Expo 2020 Bhutan led the delegation from Bhutan for business briefing.

Other participants included officials from TCB, FDI, Kuwait RBE Kuwait and officials and private entities from BCCI. The session, therefore, included other aspects including statement by Hon'ble Lyonpo and presentations on BCCI, Tourism Council of Bhutan and Foreign Direct Investments opportunities in Bhutan respectively. The entire session was moderated by H.E. Ambassador of Kuwait and Non-Residents Ambassador of UAE.

The country business briefing provided good platform for Bhutan to share about the opportunities in trade, FDI and tourism.



## Photos from Country Business Briefing



## 5. Representation at Bhutan Pavilion

The initial team from Bhutan at Dubai has strongly recommended on having a representative from the Tourism Council of Bhutan at the pavilion as most of the visitors at the pavilion are seeking information on tourism in Bhutan. Besides, as there was acute shortage of manpower at the pavilion the interested visitors could not be entertained for a detailed discussion on travel related information.

Therefore, a representative from TCB at the pavilion was deputed from 6th January 2022 until the end of Expo.

As Expo received overwhelming number of visitors, it presented a good opportunity to promote Bhutan directly to the interested visitors.

## 6. Visa Liaison Officer

The focal for Expo 2020 from Tourism Council of Bhutan also served as visa liaison officer. The visa liaison officer was mandated to process visa for all the participants from Bhutan traveling to Dubai for world Expo. The responsibility included from documentation for visa application to ensuring the visa is processed and issued on time.

In the course of six months, the visa liaison officer has processed over 36 visas under visitor visa for expo related travel.

## 7. Point of Contact for Expo 2020 Business Application

The Expo 2020 B2B Application which was an extended digital portal designed by World Expo that was primarily focused for business entities to engage in meetings to network, explore partnerships and develop business relations in the World Expo 2020, Dubai virtually.

The Point of Contacts (PoC) are responsible for managing Country's B2B App profile page on the daily basis. The team managed profile contents and managed meeting requests for different sectors that was requested through the participants profile for the duration of the expo.

Other PoC included focal from BCCI, Mrs. Deki Chhoden and focal from BBS, Mr. Ashok Tiwari



## Tour Operators at Expo 2020

Considering the fact that expo is a mega event with projected visitor number at 26 millions by the organizers, the Tourism Council of Bhutan has facilitated the participation of Bhutanese tour operators at expo 2020 to promote their business.

The selection of the tour operators were done through a very transparent procedure with calling of expression of interest by announcing on mainstream media, announcement on TCB media pages and sending direct mass-email.

Although, 27 tour operators registered initially as interested participants, only three agents participated in the event. Many tour operators withdrew their participation owing to the uncertainties of travel business posed by the COVID pandemic.

Although, the invitation was also included for hoteliers, no one turned up for the registration or participation.

### List of Tour Operator Participants

| SI No | Company                   | Name            | Email                        | Contact   |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1     | Window To Bhutan          | Tshering Dorji  | tshering@windo wtobhutan.com | 17627266  |
| 2     | Bhutan Soul Tour & Travel | Lango Dorji     | langadorji15@gmail.com       | 1717 8888 |
| 3     | Wangchuk Tours/Hotels     | Chencho namgyel | chenchonamgyel@gmail.com     | 17110503  |

# Feedback from Tour Operators

| Window to Bhutan   | Wangchuk Tours  | Bhutan Soul Travel   |
|--|---|--|
| <p>1. It was a heart-warming experience to attend the expo and represent Bhutan in sharing with visitors about travel and tourism and also talking about Bhutan in general.</p> <p>2. Through this expo, I got to learn a lot about different countries and its cultures, ethnicity, innovation, art and music and list goes on.</p> <p>3. I also got to know from visitor's interaction, how much appreciation and interest that they have to Bhutan in respect to its GNH, culture, Buddhism, environment conservation and People's happiness.</p> <p>4. Expectations not up to mark in terms of travel connections of B2B as compared to participation in Travel forum and shows.</p> | <p>1. Good in-terms of opportunity to market Bhutan for FIT individual mainly. Definitely a good platform for marketing.</p> <p>2. Most visitors are looking for direct flight from Dubai to Bhutan</p> <p>3. Most people still think our government only allows a limited no of tourists into Bhutan. They think that \$250 is only a visa fee so there is still clearly a lot of misconception about our tourism policy.</p> <p>4. It was a good opportunity to see how Dubai maximized the Covid times by putting in a lot of safety procedures in place to ensure visitors safety n convenience for them to travel and the tourism industry did not suffer as badly. There were lot of people from Europe who came to Dubai just because there was no quarantine and combined it with visits to the Expo.</p> <p>5. A lot smaller Bhutanese's goods like handicrafts, stamps etc. Could have done very well in sales.</p> <p>6. Bhutan's presence in the expo was very good for promoting tourism and showcasing Bhutan and hope that tour operators are included in the next expo as well.</p> | <p>1. Unlike the other travel fairs, at Expo 2020 it was quite different experiences. It was almost 100% B2C;</p> <p>2. At our pavilion maximum visitors were to get the stamp in their passport;</p> <p>3. I observed 5 – 10% visitors were genuinely keen to look around the information and artefacts displayed mainly European/US/UK citizens;</p> <p>3. I do not know why but our pavilion location was wrongly placed. It should have been near India, or Nepal, or Thailand or even Mongolia but placed in the middle of black countries participants such as South Africa, Nigeria etc.;</p> <p>4. It was really good idea to give opportunity to participate TO's at the Expo. It gives platform to display TO's brochures and other relevant information, explain about unique tourism policy, clarify false information that has spread in the past such as limited number of visitors are allowed, visa fee so high etc.</p> <p>5. I would like to suggest if TCB could facilitate one small table to display brochures and chair to the TO's participant(s) and place conveniently near entrance to enable interested visitors to pick up the brochures/business cards. Alternatively it can be placed near exit;</p> <p>6. For upcoming Expo in future, TCB may accommodate 2 TO's participants simultaneously for the period of one week to 10 days. Duration could be determine depending on how many interested TO's are taking part.</p> |

## Promotional Activities

### 1. Distribution of Information Flyer:

Tourism Council of Bhutan has distributed over 7000 copies of Bhutan information flyer during the 6 months duration of expo. However more than 80% of the flyers were distributed in last three months after deputation of a tourism focal in the pavilion as it was convenient for tourism focal to coordinate the printing and distribution of the flyer as and when required.

### 2. Distribution of Bhutan Post cards

TCB also distributed about 15000 copies of Bhutan Post Cards to the visitors. The postcard were specially selected with good photographs representing top tourist attractions in Bhutan and it carried Brand Bhutan message. The postcard distribution was targeted towards creating brand Bhutan awareness and promoting destination and inciting people to visit Bhutan. In some cases, the tourism focal also engaged in writing a personal message on the postcard for visitors which was well received by the visitors.



## Promotional Activities

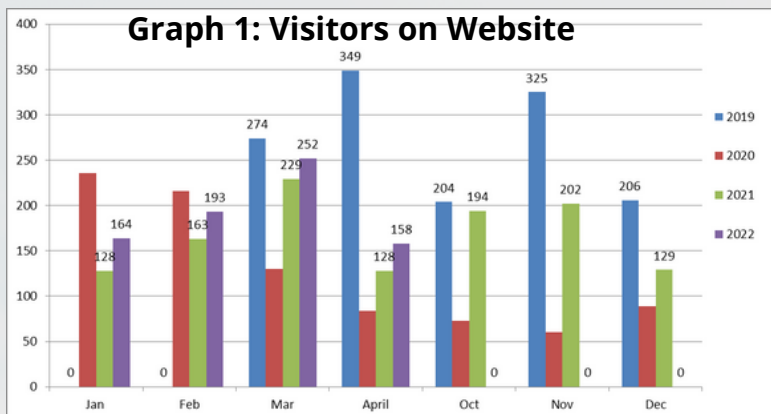
### 3. Attending Country Business Briefings and Network events

The tourism focal also attended few country business briefings and network events organized by other countries. TCB also facilitated the participating tourism operators from Bhutan to participate in some of the events. However, as most of these events are curated towards promoting their own destinations, there wasn't direct impact apart from learning about how other countries are managing and promoting tourism.

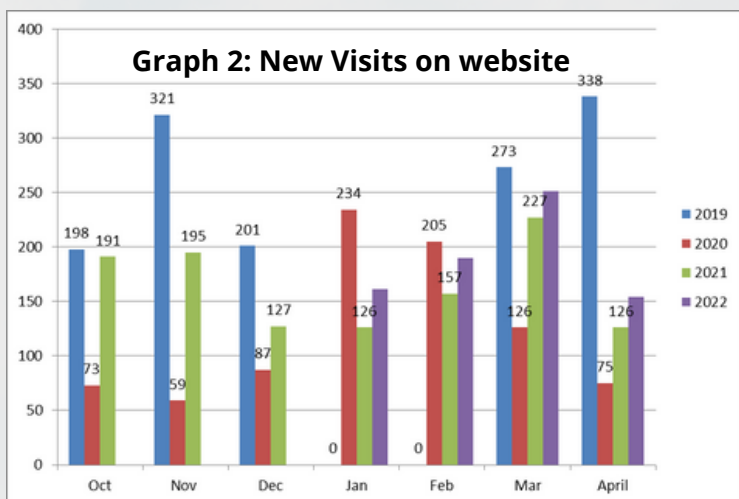
Nevertheless, by attending these events we could make a presence of our country and create awareness indirectly.

### 4. Sensitization on Minimum Daily Package Rate and Tourism Policy

It seemed like most of the visitors in Bhutan pavilion who are interested in visiting Bhutan are mis-informed about the tourism policy of Bhutan and Minimum Daily Package Rate. Most of them inquired if Bhutan restricts visitor number and MDPR is the entry fee. Therefore, it was good opportunity to clarify on these misconceptions and provide better information to them.



The Graph 1 represents the website visitors from UAE country on [www.bhutan.travel](http://www.bhutan.travel) from 2019 to 2022 for Expo durations Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, March and Graph 2 shows new visitors on the website during same time period. The figure for April month is also accessed to learn about the impact of Expo on UAE market.



The graph shows the website visitor from UAE market picked from March 2019 and it coincides with the time TCB participated in Arabian Travel Mart with tour operator. Then on, there is constant visitors on website that slightly dipped in 2020 and again picked in 2021 & 2022. So we can attribute this growth to promotional presence in the market.

## Observations

1. Bhutan is mostly known to the outsiders as the 'Happiest Country in the World'
2. There is great admiration for Bhutan especially among the people who have visited Bhutan.
3. MDPR is one of the biggest mis-conception and deterrent for people who want to visit Bhutan.
4. There is great potential for tourism in GCC market for Bhutan as people there are constantly looking for new destination. As Bhutan garnered good publicity and awareness through expo, it will be important to tap the market immediately. However, the unavailability of direct flight is one of the challenges.
5. The Bhutanese local produce has high market potential in UAE there is dearth of premium organic products.

## Conclusion

The participation in world expo is great opportunity to promote our country to the outside world. It is a gateway to our culture, tradition and values besides trade and tourism.

Bhutan pavilion also engaged in commercial retailing of Bhutanese produce which generated around Nu. 1.8 million benefitting the small and cottage industry players in the country. Moreover, it was great opportunity to create gateway for local produce in the international market.

Bhutan's participation in world expo was a milestone for creating awareness about the country and opening economic doors/opportunities. Nevertheless, a better planning and strengthening cooperation from relevant stakeholders and playing pro-active roles can further boost the benefit out of attending such events.



In 2018 we have been in Bhutan.  
It was wonderful there!  
We were very impressed of the  
tiger nest and the whole country  
and the kindness of the people.  
Be encouraged to go there.  
We are sure, you will enjoy!  
The bottom of my heart  
On happiness and confidence  
Dag and Jürgen Gaiswiler  
Germany


I enjoyed visiting Bhutan pavilion.  
The guide is very friendly and  
accommodating.

We visited Bhutan before Covid.  
An end of life. Monasteries, Trekking  
to Tiger Nest etc.

BHUTAN  
IS AN AMAZING COUNTRY  
AND ITS REMINDS ME THE  
OLD CULTURE.

BHUTAN  
IS SUCH AN AMAZING  
PLACE. THEY ARE RICH  
IN CULTURE.

## SOME MESSAGES LEFT BY VISITORS

Dear Bhutan,  
You have inspired me with your 9 pillars  
of happiness, your high literacy rate, and achieving  
a Guinness Record of highest number of trees manhour!!  
Also, who knew an elephant can be friends with a  
rabbit, monkey, and bird!  
Inspired to visit, and thank you for the content  
and being at Expo   
Amed from the U.A.E

What an amazing Kingdom. Truly beautiful.  
If all countries in the world would respect  
nature & life like you, the world would be a  
much better place.

Truly inspiring.  
Thanks

Sikander (Germany)

A lovely, colourful pavilion  
showcasing beautiful Bhutan!  
Very well done!  
See you soon in Bhutan  
A must-visit pavilion!





photos from  
inside the  
pavilion



# Photo Collage from Expo 2020

