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**MEKONG**  
**FORUM** 2024  
Breaking Through New Horizons  
Digitalization, Innovation, and Technology in the GMS

## MEKONG FORUM: TERRAIN 5—Enhancing GMS Tourism through Digital Pathways

### Enabling Smart Tourism Ecosystems—Opportunities and Challenges

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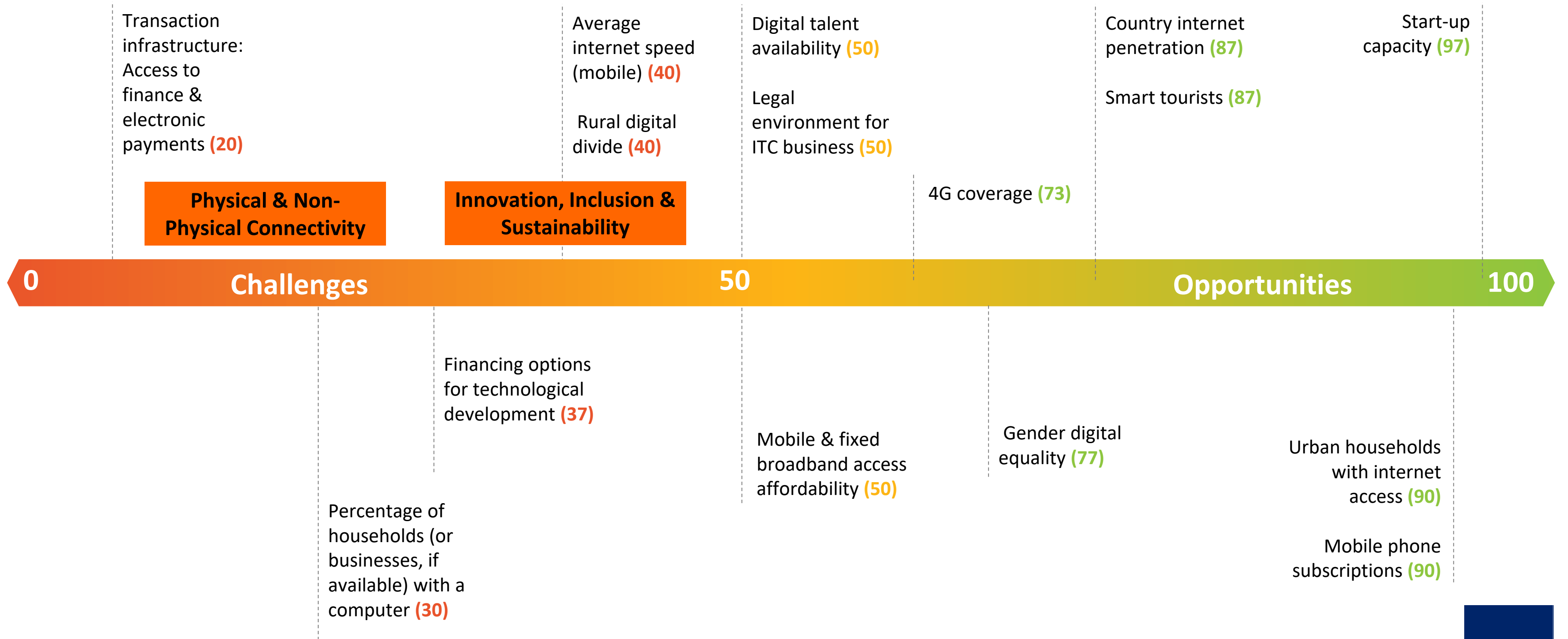


# Smart Tourism Assessment – Reference Indexes/Reports

Global Broadband Pricing League Table 2023 (Cable 2023)	ITU Flags, Connectivity Gaps, Internet Access in Philippines, other nations (Marasigan 2020)	Digital Intelligence Index: Country Dashboards (Tufts University 2021)
Digital Intelligence Index (Digital Planet 2023)	Speedtest Global Index (Ookla 2023)	The Digital Skills Gap Index (Wilely 2022)
Digital Development Dashboard: An overview of the state of digital development around the world based on ITU data (ITU 2022)	Mobile Cellular Subscriptions (per 100 people) (WBG & ITU)	Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021 (World Economic Forum)

ITU = International Telecommunications Union, WBG = World Bank Group

# Regional Opportunities & Challenges (average scores)

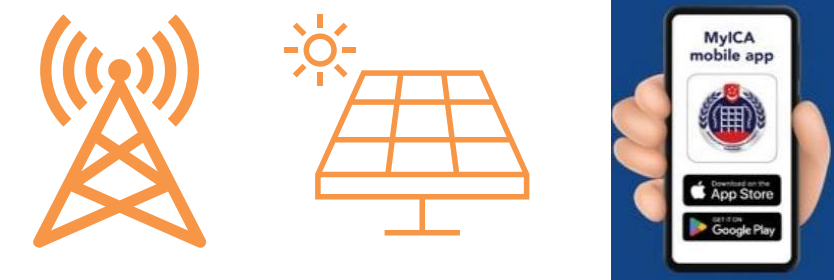


# Solutions Menu

- Thematic research & working papers
- Policy dialogue & capacity development



- Project finance
- Policy based lending



- Training, project preparation
- Asian Development Fund, Trust Funds (e.g., ROK E-Asia Knowledge and Partnership Fund; High Level Technology Fund)



Grants and Technical Assistance

Private Sector Debt and Equity

- Debt & equity
- Concessional finance



- Legal & regulatory reforms
- PPP planning, structuring, transaction advisory



Public Private Partnerships

Innovation Platforms

- Innovation challenges
- Technology start-up support





# Summary Recommendations

- Accelerate investments that improve digital access, reliability, and affordability in lagging areas
- Use digital technologies to make it easier for travelers to cross borders, especially at secondary destination ports of entry, reduce congestion in tourism hotspots, and protect tourism assets
- Provide SMEs with affordable finance, business advisory services, and skills training to help them take full advantage of digital resources
- Convene experts and policy makers often to explore how to regulate technology without stifling innovation and inclusive business opportunities

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## KEY POINTS

- Establishing smart tourism ecosystems with digital technologies improves destination competitiveness and facilitates greater inclusion and sustainability.
- Despite national tourism policies prioritizing digitalization backed by strong tourist and industry demand, smart tourism ecosystem development in Southeast Asia is constrained by insufficient finance and limited digital skills, urban-rural digital divides, and an evolving legal and digital policy environment.
- To overcome these constraints, countries should allocate more public resources to attract private investment in information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, and enhance skills training. Additionally, regional cooperation platforms should be used to exchange relevant knowledge and experiences for improving the smart tourism ecosystem legal and policy environment.

## Smart Tourism Ecosystem Development Readiness in Southeast Asia

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## INTRODUCTION

This brief assesses the enabling environment and technological readiness of Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam to develop smart tourism ecosystems.

Smart tourism ecosystems are defined as tourism systems that employ advanced technologies to improve destination competitiveness by enhancing the tourist experience, driving entrepreneurship and innovation,<sup>1</sup> and increasing sustainability through resource optimization.<sup>2</sup> Smart tourism ecosystems encompass (i) digital technologies, (ii) consumers, (iii) businesses, and (iv) the tourism destination.<sup>3</sup> These transcend siloed development and employ systemic thinking and design to integrate and manage technology.

Notes: The Republic of Korea e-Asia and Knowledge Partnership Fund and Spanish Cooperation Fund for Technical Assistance supported the production of this brief. The authors acknowledge the contribution of Oscar Badiola, Senior Programs Officer, ADB. In this publication, \$ refers to United States dollars. ADB recognizes "China" as the People's Republic of China; "Hong Kong" as Hong Kong, China; Laos as the Lao People's Democratic Republic; "Turkey" as Türkiye; and "Vietnam" as Viet Nam.

<sup>1</sup> Dana, L. P., A. Salamzadeh, M. Hadizadeh, G. Heydari, and S. Shamsoddin, 2022. Urban entrepreneurship and sustainable businesses in smart cities: Exploring the role of digital technologies. *Sustainable Technology and Entrepreneurship*, 1(2).

<sup>2</sup> Boes, K. D. Buhalis, and A. Inversini. 2016. Smart tourism destinations: ecosystems for tourism destination competitiveness. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 2(2), pp. 108-124.

<sup>3</sup> T. Gajdošik. 2018. Smart Tourism: Concepts and Insights from Central Europe. *Czech Journal of Tourism*, 7(1), pp. 25-44.

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