The Union of Myanmar Travel Association

CASE STUDY

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The authors would like to express gratitude to the Union of Myanmar Travel Association and all interviewees who shared their views and experiences, and in doing so enabled this research to be conducted.

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## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVI</td>
<td>Australian Volunteers International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVID</td>
<td>Australian Volunteers for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Executive Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Myanmar kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoHT</td>
<td>Ministry of Hotels and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToT</td>
<td>Training of trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and vocational education and training</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMTA</td>
<td>Union of Myanmar Travel Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTTC</td>
<td>World Travel and Tourism Council</td>
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1 Tourism in Myanmar

Myanmar has emerged as a hot tourist destination, experiencing rapid growth in tourism demand. In 2010, Myanmar had the lowest number of tourist arrivals of any Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) country at just 310,000, compared to 1.2 million tourists in Laos and 15 million tourists in Thailand. Since then, numbers have been rapidly increasing. Between 2011 and 2012, tourist arrivals in Myanmar increased by 29.7%, and in 2012 surpassed the 1 million mark for the first time. Average stay and spending of visitors is high, indicating Myanmar is attracting mid- to high-end tourists. Some of the key drivers of growth are the country’s political reforms, removal of international sanctions and stigmas attached to Myanmar, improving business and investment conditions, and the growing demand for international travel in regional markets. In response to the spike in demand, inbound flights have expanded rapidly and the government has implemented a visa-on-arrival system to facilitate easy entry to the country.

Myanmar has the potential to attract 26 million tourists a year just as Thailand did in 2013, but in order for this to happen, major investments are needed in the industry. Key shortcomings are in infrastructure, bed capacity and human resources development. At present, the country’s tourism workforce is struggling to provide services that meet international expectations. There are many reasons for this, including the low rate at which new entrants to the sector can be trained, as well as deficiencies in the quality of training, the qualifications of academic staff, and the skills relevant to the needs of the private sector.

1.1 Objective

The objective of this report is to identify ways for the Union of Myanmar Travel Association (UMTA) to improve the quantity and quality of workforce skills in the tourism sector, both independently and through collaboration with other stakeholders.

1.2 Methodology

The approach used for this report included undertaking a broad and relevant literature review and conducting interviews with members of the association.

Literature review

The desk review included academic literature, research and technical papers, government reports, and working papers discussing tourism and skills development in Myanmar. A certain amount of ‘grey’ literature was located through consultation with researchers and service providers, who identified sources outside the scholarly databases. More general searches were made using Google Scholar. Searches were limited to research in English.

In-depth interviews

After completion of the literature review, a total of 15 interviews were conducted with members and staff of UMTA and the Executive Committee. The questions covered the history of UMTA, the member’s background in the association, the work of the association (generally and in skills training) and the main skills challenges faced by members. The interviews provided valuable insight about the lessons learnt by UMTA and private sector members of the tourism sector.
The Union of Myanmar Travel Association (UMTA) was created in April of 2002 by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism along with 18 key business people from the sector. The purpose was to bring together travel agencies, tour operators and travel-related businesses to promote Myanmar as a premier tourism destination. Some of the main motivations behind the creation of UMTA were:

- to organise the registered travel agencies and tour companies to systematically develop the industry
- to represent the tour and travel industry at the national and international level
- to promote Myanmar as a premier travel destination
- to promote relations and opportunities between national and international travel and tour companies
- to help develop the human resources capacity of the tourism industry.

A little over a decade after UMTA was founded, its vision remains the same: to help in the systemic development of the travel and tour business in Myanmar.

2.1 Structure of the organisation:

The Executive Committee (EC), which is composed of 15 Executive Committee Members, is the body responsible for the overall leadership and administration of UMTA. Previously, EC members were appointed by the Minister of Tourism. Like many things in Myanmar, this has recently changed, and they are now chosen by UMTA members in open elections. In the last elections, held in 2013, 31 members ran for the EC and 15 were elected.

The EC is supported by a series of committees that help to implement the aims and objectives of the association. Each committee is chaired by a member of the EC but is open to the participation of UMTA members. The committees provide a way for members to participate actively in the decision-making process of the association and to voice their needs and concerns. The present EC currently oversees the following committees:

- Management committee: concerned with the general management of the association and staff duties
- Award and accreditations committee: acknowledges and awards outstanding leaders in the industry
- Human resources development committee: gathers and analyses tourism-related data and develops new tourist sites and products
- Public relations and membership committee: communicates with media and reviews membership applications
- Tourism promotion committee: promotes and showcases Myanmar at travel shows
- International relations and information committee: establishes and maintains relations with other tourism-related international organisations; distributes information to other organisations
- Fundraising committee: raises necessary funds for the association
- IT committee: develops all aspects of IT for the association
- Airlines committee: resolves any matters relating to airlines
- Disciplinary and arbitration committee: maintains discipline and resolves any disputes arising between members or with non-members.
For the day-to-day operations, UMTA relies on six full-time staff members: a Chief Executive Officer plus four staff members at the head office in Yangon and one staff member at the Nay Pyi Taw branch office. Other regional chapters, at Bagan, Mandalay and Inle Lake, operate with members helping out on voluntary basis under the direction of the head office.

UMTA is a member of the ASEAN Tourism Association and the Pacific Asia Travel Association. Activities and projects are coordinated with these organisations and also with other members of the Myanmar Tourism Federation.

2.2 Membership and activities

Representing 711 of the 1,366 registered tour and travel companies in the country, UMTA has become one of the leading associations in the sector. UMTA has national coverage, with chapters operating primarily at major tourist areas such as Mandalay, Bagan, and Taunggyi, near Inle Lake. Members are classified into four categories, with different levels of admission and annual fees. These fees are outlined in Table 1.

Since UMTA does not receive financial support from the government, members pay an annual fee to help support the activities of the association. The fee depends on the member’s type of business. Admission fees are typically paid after joining the association, while annual fees are paid at the end of the financial year.

Some of the activities that UMTA undertakes with members include the following:

**Dialogues between the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT) and the industry**

UMTA is increasingly seen as a platform for dialogue between the industry and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT), amplifying the voice of its members on critical issues of interest. UMTA has managed the difficult transition from a top-down to a bottom-up approach, nurturing a culture of listening to and dialoguing with its members. Members receive periodic updates on industry news from the association, as well as directives and notifications regarding tourism from MoHT and other relevant Myanmar ministries. UMTA membership is also an effective mechanism to help businesses inform MoHT about the various difficulties they face and seek solutions to these issues.

At the policy level, UMTA has played an active role in lobbying MoHT to help members obtain outbound tourist licenses. While inbound tourist
licenses have long been legal and easily obtained, outbound tourist licences were illegal for all but a few select companies. The ministry – largely due to UMTA’s active participation – has announced that it is now considering changing this policy.

**Training**

Workshops, seminars and other training activities are organised based on the interest of UMTA members and the resources available. The human resources development committee is responsible for making decisions and for planning the topics, content, dates, costs and duration of training provided.

UMTA has provided training in the management of small and medium travel agencies, marketing, e-marketing, and air ticketing, and this has been extremely successful amongst members of the association. UMTA has also recently conducted an outbound tour workshop in which more than 200 members participated, highlighting the significant interest of the industry. Members are also encouraged to attend training programmes held and sponsored by Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs for integration of ASEAN countries. This training is popular within the industry, as Singapore’s tourism management is seen as exemplary in the region.

Normally, seminars and workshops organised by UMTA take place during the low season (May to October) as this allows more members to participate. According to an interviewee, the ‘participation rate will vary depending on the topic; hot topics like outbound tours can have over 200 participants while other topics have fewer participants’. The association relies on individuals from the industry working as volunteer trainers, although experienced trainers are sometimes required. This poses a problem, as experienced trainers are hard to find in the industry.

The cost of training is occasionally borne by the members, but usually UMTA will cover the cost from its own budget. Members have indicated their willingness to pay for training, provided that it is relevant and adapted to the needs of the local market. At the moment, training is available only to UMTA members.

Overall, feedback about the training sessions is positive, as participants are eager to learn more about the industry. However, members who were interviewed for this report mentioned that considering the acute shortage of skills in the industry, significantly more could and should be done in order to reduce this gap. Members would like to expand training not only in terms of content and topics but also through the inclusion of field trips to current and potential tourist sites so they can learn more about them.

**Networking and marketing**

In the past few years, UMTA has grown increasingly professional, benefitting from exchanges with its members and with other organisations. Members benefit from networking opportunities with tourism-related local and

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**TABLE 1: UMTA MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership type</th>
<th>Admission fees</th>
<th>Annual fees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour Operators</td>
<td>US$ 60 + MMK 60,000</td>
<td>US$ 40 + MMK 40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Agents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and resorts</td>
<td>US$ 40 + MMK 40,000</td>
<td>US$ 20 + MMK 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour Guides</td>
<td>US$ 20 + MMK 20,000</td>
<td>US$ 10 + MMK 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>MMK 20,000</td>
<td>MMK 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Operators</td>
<td>MMK 20,000</td>
<td>MMK 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Cruise</td>
<td>US$ 35 + MMK 40,000</td>
<td>US$ 15 + MMK 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airlines</td>
<td>US$ 35 + MMK 40,000</td>
<td>US$ 15 + MMK 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gem and Souvenir Shops</td>
<td>MMK 20,000</td>
<td>MMK 10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Union of Myanmar Travel Association
international organisations, participation in overseas travel shows, and other promotional activities sponsored by the UMTA. Members recognise the positive role UMTA has played in marketing Myanmar abroad, providing international exposure for the country’s tourism industry and the work done by various members of the association.

**Development of new markets**

Another important activity of UMTA has been destination management. UMTA is planning to be involved in managing Mandalay and Inle Lake and is now working on the development of Chin State, a place which until recently required case-by-case permission of the military commander to visit. After UMTA's meeting with the State Minister and the Ministry of Tourism, new markets were opened, and tourists now can freely visit Chin State.
3 The tourism skills shortage

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, travel and tourism were directly responsible for 1.3% of Myanmar’s GDP in 2012, or about 636.5 billion Myanmar kyat ($773 million), and this figure was forecast to rise by 7.6% to K684.6 billion ($779 million) in 2013.¹ This primarily reflects the economic activity generated by hotels, travel agents, airlines, and other passenger transportation service industries. The direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP is expected to grow by 5.0% per annum to K1,117.5 billion (1.3% of GDP) by 2023.

The Government of Myanmar has a long-term education development plan (2001-2030), comprising six successive five-year plans, which sets out broad goals for improving access to and quality of post-primary education in order to meet the needs of a growing economy. According to the Asian Development Bank, during the 2011-2012 school year approximately 96,000 students enrolled in 42 post-secondary technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions. No data on the number of students enrolled in tourism-related training were available. The Tourism Master Plan, also, recognises the need to invest in human resources development and has set it as one of its strategic priority programmes. However, the plan does not provide much detail on how this will be conducted and the practical implications of doing so.

MoHT and the Ministry of Education jointly introduced Myanmar’s first four-year bachelor’s degree program in tourism in December 2012. A postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Studies and Management (initiated in 2006) is offered in Yangon and Mandalay. MoHT operates a training centre that offers courses in guide training and tourism management, and ad hoc short courses for tourism language training. However, the efforts of public entities to address the shortage of skilled labour in the tourism industry have had little impact on the workforce. A handful of private schools teach elements of the tourism system through short courses (e.g., ticketing, hospitality, sales, and industry background), and the Myanmar Hospitality Professionals Association has begun to offer its own courses.

The development of appropriate workforce skills has been identified as an important economic and

¹ Conversions to $ are based on exchange rates as listed in the 2013 IMF Article IV report.
where the owner of the company also takes responsibility for the management due to the shortage of management skills’.

The shortage of management skills has led to increasing levels of staff-poaching within the industry, especially from new local and international companies willing to pay higher salaries in order to obtain skilled labour. This has, predictably, translated to salary inflation. One interviewee attested to this by noting, ‘There are some skilled workers and managers, but they move from company to company because there’s a shortage. New tourism companies want skilled people straight away, so they pay higher salaries. So there is a lot of salary inflation’.

Another said, ‘Many new travel and tour companies are coming up these days. But these companies often don’t have enough resources. So they pay one of the existing managers from another company a higher salary’.

There is also a concern within the industry that increasing competition, especially from foreign companies, is creating a bubble, with employees being overpaid. An interviewee noted, ‘There are new foreign companies that are coming and paying much more. Local companies have a tough time paying as much. Foreign companies are sometimes paying two to three times the current salaries, but also the quality of the staff you get for the money you pay is not great’.

The brain drain
Many business people complained about a brain drain in the tourism sector as skilled workers have left for higher wages abroad. One interviewee claimed that ‘a shortage of human resources also exists because lots of people left

### 3.1 Skills challenges in the tourism sector

Interviews with UMTA members have identified a number of key human resources issues in Myanmar. These issues fit within a few closely related themes: the existing lack of skills in the industry, the challenge of retaining staff, and the lack of capacity to develop and enhance new skilled staff. First-hand accounts provide a comprehensive and clear picture of the human resources situation in the tourism industry. Some of the key issues mentioned are the following:

#### Acute shortage of managers and skilled workers

A large majority of the people interviewed for this report mentioned the difficulty in finding and retaining middle managers and skilled workers. As one interviewee noted, ‘It is quite difficult to get skilled workers’. With increasing demand within the industry, the lack of management skills is preventing many businesses from growing, expanding and taking on new opportunities. In their day-to-day operations, many of these businesses depend largely on the owners. Another interviewee said, ‘Most tourist companies in the country are small- to medium-size businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsector</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>44,055</td>
<td>63,668</td>
<td>84,458</td>
<td>125,403</td>
<td>224,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and beverage</td>
<td>146,850</td>
<td>212,225</td>
<td>281,528</td>
<td>418,009</td>
<td>748,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and entertainment</td>
<td>29,370</td>
<td>42,445</td>
<td>56,306</td>
<td>83,602</td>
<td>149,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation services</td>
<td>58,740</td>
<td>84,890</td>
<td>112,611</td>
<td>167,204</td>
<td>299,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel services</td>
<td>14,685</td>
<td>21,223</td>
<td>28,153</td>
<td>41,801</td>
<td>74,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>293,700</td>
<td>424,450</td>
<td>563,056</td>
<td>836,018</td>
<td>1,497,801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: World Travel and Tourism Council and Myanmar Tourism Master Plan Report

| Table 2: Estimated Direct Tourism Employment in Myanmar, 2012 –2020 |
Third, the need for training in practical and hands-on skills was highlighted. Many industry leaders mentioned the importance of building the practical skills of the workforce. Tourism professionals require a wide range of skills to help them sort and solve the many problems that can arise during a trip. Practical, hands-on skills are a must. Some interviewees noted that training programmes like the ones developed by the Government of Singapore are a good model to follow in terms of human resources development. ‘I like the Singapore courses because they are more interactive and practical – they bring out students and let them talk and work in a workshop style’.

In interviews, business people mentioned the need for more practical, hands-on skills training in a range of different areas, including the following:

- **Foreign language skills**: One of the practical skills highlighted was foreign languages, particularly for tour guides who interact with international tourists daily. Especially needed are the top three languages: English, French and German. While a variety of language courses are currently provided in the main urban centres, they are usually too short and basic to help industry staff achieve the needed fluency. One positive experience that was mentioned as a benchmark for replication is the case of the Alliance Française, which teaches French to tour guides. As one UMTA member noted, ‘French speaking tour guides are the best in Myanmar these days because the Alliance Française has been consistent about giving training regularly. They have nine-month training as well as short-term’.

- **Ethnic minority Myanmar languages**: Language skills are also important when engaging with local ethnic minority communities. Many regions of Myanmar are inhabited by ethnic minority groups who speak little or no Burmese. As international tourists increasingly venture to more-remote destinations, communicating with members of these ethnic minorities will be essential to providing a quality experience for international tourists. One interviewee noted that ‘There is a lack of language skills. In some remote areas, people don’t speak Burmese, and they need to speak a common language they can communicate in’. Developing local guides who are able to communicate with remote ethnic communities could open up a range of new tourist destinations and have important development impacts for these ethnic minority communities.

- **Soft skills**: Many interviewees emphasised the importance of developing not only hard skills but also soft skills. As one business owner noted, ‘People also need to learn soft skills: attitude and manners for engaging with international tourists’. These skills are rarely taught in government universities and also are lacking from most private training courses. Also mentioned was that people need training in practical skills such as customer service, hospitality, basic bed-and-breakfast management, etc.
Middle-manager training: Business people noted that increased training for middle managers was needed in areas such as marketing, sales and IT. One interviewee said that for his company, an ideal program targeting mid-level managers would ‘take ten to fourteen days, giving them more in-depth knowledge on how to deal with customers, how to manage a team, how to deal with clients, how to devise a tour programme, and how to close deals with customers’.

Inadequacy of government-run training
While the government runs several schools providing training in tourism and hospitality in Myanmar, there is an overall perception that training is too academic, long, ineffective and out of touch with the needs of the market and the private sector. As one interviewee commented, ‘Existing training programs are very formal, too old-style for the modern industry, but it is all we have’.

In December 2012, the government started offering a new bachelor’s degree in hospitality and tourism, which will train students in hotel management, hospitality services, ticketing and management of tour operators. However, the first graduates from this four-year program will not join the industry until 2017, while the needs of the sector are immediate. Furthermore, many think that unnecessarily stringent entrance requirements and the high costs of attending university will prevent many talented students from accessing the program. Based on past experiences, the industry’s overall attitude towards academic hospitality and tourism programmes is sceptical at best, as most of these programmes have lacked quality and relevance. One interviewee bemoaned the shortcomings of the university system: ‘People learn from the university, but they don’t know about the industry because they don’t have any practical experience and they don’t even know how to operate a computer’. Another interviewee said, ‘I employ university graduates, but I still have to train them’.

Geographical concentration of training
Tour operators outside the major urban areas in Myanmar who want to access training face monumental challenges. Most available training is concentrated in Yangon and a few other urban areas, and the financial and time costs of attendance for individuals in more remote areas is often a major deterrent. Many operators...
mentioned the potential to further develop other regions, but training would be necessary to do so, from basic language courses to more specific skills.

Lack of good trainers
A common concern across the board has been the absence of qualified and competent local trainers. As one interviewee succinctly put it, ‘Finding skilled trainers would be a big challenge’. There is an exponential opportunity for the industry to grow and develop, but being able to provide good quality training is critical for this to happen. Another interviewee mentioned ‘There are a very few qualified trainers in this country. They cannot cope with the huge demand and number of trainees.’ Currently, most of the private training provided by associations is conducted by people with experience in the industry such as former and current business owners, government officials and others. However, many of them do not have the pedagogy to train, or the time to do this on a constant basis. These challenges heighten the need to build and develop experienced instructors and to provide training of trainers, for individuals who could then work to train the next generation of managers. An interviewee insightfully noted that it is essential that trainers have a wide range of skills and expertise, including ‘knowledge of the local context, knowledge of international tourism standards, and practical experience implementing training programmes’.
4 Strategies and recommendations

The tourism sector is a very complex industry, covering a wide range of economic activities across many regions of Myanmar, and relying on substantial investments in human capital. As tourism is a service industry, upgrading human resources is critical for improving the competitiveness and employment opportunities in the sector. An adequately skilled workforce is imperative to maximising the benefits of the tourism industry, including contributing to socioeconomic development, job creation and business opportunities. The involvement of the private sector is essential, to achieve this goal.

Strategies to upgrade skills in the tourism industry show a trend towards more holistic and integrated solutions, based on partnerships and dialogue between training institutions, the tourism industry and other major stakeholders, such as public authorities. Business associations such as UMTA play an active role in these strategies and are essential stakeholders in the drive to improve skills. However, it is essential for UMTA to identify its role as one actor among many that are working to develop tourism sector skills. This should be part of a coherent, long-term strategy that maximises the benefits to UMTA and the industry.

Based on interviews with UMTA, we identify five potential strategies that the association could adopt to improve the quantity and quality of skills training in the tourism sector in Myanmar:

1. Model 1
   Create partnerships with international institutions in order to develop tailored curricula for training and access experienced trainers

   Many organisations and governments, both within the region and more broadly, have vast experience of skills development in the tourism industry. UMTA can capitalise on this expertise by partnering with international organisations to provide advice and guidance for the development of tailored curricula reflecting local needs, as well as assistance in accessing expert trainers. With many experienced tourism organisations in the region, it would be interesting for UMTA to consider partnerships with training centres in neighbouring countries, centres which could easily operate in Myanmar.

   Under this model, the biggest challenge will be strategically selecting partnerships, maintaining them, and growing them successfully. At a moment when foreign direct investment and donor money is flowing into the country, many organisations are overwhelmed with requests from international organisations. This model depends heavily on identifying partners that share the same goals and interests of UMTA as well as aligned strategic priorities that focus on serving members. Maximising the number of partners is not important, and could be counterproductive.

   UMTA already has experience in establishing this type of partnership. If the association decides to move in this direction, it will need to build its internal capacity to manage these partnerships and establish a mechanism for reviewing and evaluating partnerships based on their performance.

2. Model 2
   Provide in-house training and develop a training of trainers (ToT) programme

   Several UMTA members emphasised that providing training on a regular and structured basis could be a double win for UMTA by helping...
Several members mentioned the importance of developing a ToT programme as a way to help train the next generation of trainers. The first step in developing such a programme is to design the curriculum. This will depend on the background of the students in the class. The range of possible backgrounds for these future trainers includes:

- current teachers/professors at government universities/schools
- teachers at private schools
- business owners/managers (private sector reps)
- independent trainers.

The ToT programme should be designed to meet the different needs of different audiences. For example, while UMTA may want to teach university professors how to bring practical lessons and hands-on stories into the classroom, it may want to teach business owners and managers how to develop curricula and teaching methods.

When designing a training course, it will be important to keep the curriculum short, focused and practical, providing trainers with a relevant and customised curriculum that brings value to the market place. UMTA should promote practical skills training that includes industry-related trips and special seminars by industry experts. This will allow participants to network with leaders and professionals of the tourism and hospitality industries. Practicing industry professionals should be invited as guest lecturers to provide insights about the latest

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 3: POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF SKILLS TRAINING IN THE TOURISM SECTOR IN MYANMAR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1: Brokering partnerships with international organisations that can deliver training in Myanmar using their existing expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2: Developing internal capacity to provide training and facilitate training of trainers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3: Supporting the development of local private sector training through delivering public goods such as feedback mechanisms on training, sectoral market research, and certification/recommendation processes for training schools and trainers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4: Engaging with government, specifically MoHT, to enhance existing programs and to found new programs based on member inputs and industry needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5: Developing a hybrid of Model 1 and Model 2, providing training in areas of widespread interest while establishing partnerships with international organisations to provide training in areas where specific technical skills are required and local expertise is lacking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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UMTA already provides a limited amount of training to members in several areas. Some of these training programmes have proven to be extremely successful, such as the outbound tour training, which answered a specific market need. More training could be organised by the association in order to respond to members’ needs. A clear programme schedule would need to be developed along with the proper curriculum, making sure that recommendations from members about training are taken into account.
Develop a process in which UMTA ‘recommends’ high quality local private sector training schools and trainers. To do this, UMTA would work independently or with partners to develop a basic and straightforward set of criteria in order to determine if training schools and trainers meet specific standards. This process could help to improve quality and eliminate variability in private training while positioning UMTA as the industry authority. Schools and trainers that meet the standards could be branded as ‘recommended by UMTA’.

● Assist in linking private businesses and trainers with international partners. These connections could be facilitated by events, electronic communications, etc. International partners could be either potential business partners, international training programs, donors or other stakeholders. This model is somewhat different from the first, in that UMTA acts as a facilitator between private businesses and international partners instead of as a partner to international organisations itself.

In this model, UMTA works to support private sector development, instead of competing with private sector training schools by offering its own training programmes. Therefore, donor engagement in this model should avoid funding training programmes that directly compete with private sector schools if it will crowd out the private sector. One area where this competition is possible is the training of tour guides in Western languages such as English, French and German. Here donors run the risk of artificially increasing the supply of tour guides, thus decreasing the potential pay of guides who seek out such training on their own. If engagement were to happen in foreign language training programmes, it would best be done in a way that does not distort the market, potentially by offering loans to aspiring tour guides to help reduce barriers to entry.

Model 3
Develop into an industry body that facilitates relevant private sector organisations that build capacity in travel and tourism

Under this model, UMTA would serve as an industry body providing public goods. Among the specific actions it could take are the following:

● Conduct market research on the needs of UMTA members through short annual surveys that are completed with the renewal of membership. These surveys could be a useful mechanism to communicate needs to UMTA and private trainers. For example, surveys could collect information on skills needs, salaries, challenges in the labour market, etc. Given internal capacity constraints, UMTA could consider working with external firms to conduct market research.

● With the consent of members, provide information (anonymously) from market surveys to private sector training organisations. This could help convey needs and also generate a small revenue stream for UMTA. Alternatively, UMTA could make the information available to all members at no charge.

● Collect member feedback on the quality and value-for-money of private sector training schools and individual trainers. This information could be made available for public use.

Model 4
Engage with government, specifically MoHT, to enhance existing programs and to found new programs based on member inputs and industry needs

Government is currently the largest provider of training for Myanmar’s tourism industry. UMTA already engages regularly with MoHT on a variety of issues, and is therefore uniquely positioned to begin engaging with government to enhance the quality of training. Potential avenues developments in the industry. UMTA should also consider linking its training programmes to apprenticeships, internships or on-the-job-training opportunities for students. This would help not only to enhance their experience but also to reinforce the practical, hands-on side of the course.

UMTA should work with current members to develop and implement courses, using its existing resources and networks. This will help to lower costs and will show the strong commitment of the association. For example, some members work with, or own, hotels in different parts of the country, which could be asked to help out with apprenticeships and/or internships. One interviewee who owns a hotel noted that since it was closed for part of the year, it often provided training during that time, from May to October. UMTA could approach members with similar resources to explore the potential of developing joint training courses.

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for engagement include the following:

- Collecting feedback from members on specific aspects of government training, and recommendations for improvement.

- Developing a working group between the private sector and MoHT. This group could meet on a regular basis with the defined objective of increasing the quality of government-provided training and the quantity of students who can access the training.

- Facilitating training of trainers for government teachers, preferably with significant involvement of industry representatives.

**Model 5**

**Hybrid model**

Provide training in-house while at the same time establishing partnerships with international organisations to provide training in areas where specific technical skills are required and local expertise is lacking. The fifth strategic model for UMTA is essentially a combination of the first two. This option would require building considerable internal capacity in order to manage both fronts.

The strategy allows UMTA to develop the resources needed to meet the regular needs of members while also being able to access technical and highly skilled trainers from international partners. In-house resource development should focus on skills that are in high demand by members, are applicable to a large number of businesses and staff (especially in high turnover positions), and for which training sessions can be held on a regular basis. Training in soft skills would meet these criteria. Engagement with international organisations could centre on highly technical training programmes that apply to a small number of staff, happen irregularly, and are not in high demand.

Under a hybrid model, short-term and long-term strategies could be useful.

- **Short-term:** Continue to work with established partners and increase the amount of training through these partners. Use these experiences to assess and learn about successful partnership models that work best for UMTA.

- **Long-term:** Map regional organisations that provide the kind of training needed by UMTA, and work to establish and implement partnerships to develop this training. At the same time, work with international partners to build the internal capacity of UMTA to effectively and successfully deliver in-house training programmes.

Depending on the model adopted, there are a number of other activities that UMTA could consider conducting. However, the implementation of these may depend on the strategy adopted. Other suggested activities include the following:

**Create training programs to help open up new tourist destinations in disadvantaged parts of Myanmar**

As tourism in Myanmar grows rapidly, the industry is working to expand the number of destinations offered for international tourists. Many of the most promising potential destinations lie in parts of Myanmar inhabited by ethnic minority groups, which have different languages and cultures, and little or no interaction with international tourists. There are multiple types of training for different audiences that would be useful to help open up these destinations, including

- language training for tour guides in ethnic minority languages, which is essential to facilitate communication between tourists and locals

- engagement with local communities to recruit and train local staff as tour guides; or recruitment of trilingual tour guides who speak an ethnic minority language as well as Burmese and a foreign language such as English, French or German (however, these might be uncommon)

- training for local communities in the delivery of services needed to attract international tourists. This could include instruction in accommodation, food preparation, sanitation and other areas, and could be provided at the company or association level.

**Develop mobile training units to deliver training in remote areas**

Given the difficulties of delivering training in remote and rural parts of Myanmar, some members suggested the creation of mobile training units. These could help better serve existing members who live outside of Yangon, and reach distant and isolated communities that need training in order to develop their regions and new
products and services. Given the high costs of transportation, lodging and food, using mobile training teams would be more cost-effective than bringing participants to urban centres to receive training.

**Engage with international programs such as Australian Volunteers International (AVI).**

In order to help build internal capacity, UMTA could consider working with AVI. AVI has been at the forefront of international volunteering for 60 years, and has enabled over 10,000 Australians to work in other countries. Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID), a part of AVI, was launched in July 2011, an Australian Government initiative delivered in partnership with AVI, Austraining International, and Australian Red Cross. AVID assignments concentrate on developing capacity, and helping strengthen local organisations, communities and networks. AVID is already working in Myanmar on assignments focusing on governance and education, and has experience working with volunteers with a tourism background. AVID would typically ask about what skills are needed to build the capacity and strengthen the work of the host organisation, and then recruit people with the right mix of skills and experience to work with the organisation. A partnership between UMTA and AVID could be an opportunity for UMTA to bring in human resources with relevant expertise who could help members develop curricula that address the needs of the industry. Partnerships of this type could help address the demands of members who think UMTA could and should do more about training.

**Build up the reputation of the industry**

Some members interviewed for this report hold the view that the general public has either a neutral or a negative perception about the industry, or lacks the necessary understanding of how businesses operate in the industry. ‘People lack an understanding of the basic concepts of travel’. Reaching out to the public and engaging with young graduates through job fairs and educational institutions could be a good way to change the perception of the sector, build the reputation of the industry, and attract talented human resources.
Skills development and training is an area where the potential role of the private sector is clear, and one in which UMTA, as a leading organisation in the tourism industry, could play a stronger role in helping overcome the shortage in the sector. The five proposed models address the issue in different ways and have different implications for the strategic direction of the association. While there is no unique path to be followed, serious attention should be paid to the considerations each model implies in terms of building UMTA’s internal capacity and delivery capability.

Engaging with donors, maintaining and growing existing partnerships and establishing new ones, and increasing engagement with members are just some of the different mechanisms UMTA could use to help achieve its potential and position the association and its brand to be the preferred partner in the tourism sector.
## References

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