

# Promoting Sri Lanka as a Sustainable Tourist Destination

Kalani M.K. Chamodya<sup>1</sup> and Dimesha K.A.I. Wickramaratne<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>University Of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>kalanichamodya@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>dimeshaisu@gmail.com

---

**Abstract**—As a tourist destination Sri Lanka can compete successfully with other destinations partly because of its unique resources. Therefore to grow the tourism industry and make a significant contribution to the national economy, Sri Lanka has to focus on promoting new and effective tourism sub matters. A fresh approach has been to promote the sustainable tourism which could minimize the negative impacts and highly concern about the well-being of the host communities, environment and culture. Therefore the focus of this paper is to investigate sustainable tourism in the view of using present resources in order to uplift the well-being of host community but preserving them to the future generation too. To achieve this motive, the researchers explored a sample of 05 local people and 05 government stakeholders in Sri Lanka. The survey was conducted as an exploratory study highlighting. The practice of sustainable tourism in the view of the involvement of the host community. The study was based on both primary and secondary data including observations, interviews, structured questionnaire, books, magazines, tour itineraries & etc. The results of the study revealed some important implications which need to be addressed in the policy level. Foremost community based tourism. The researchers' investigations revealed that the education of local community in relation to the sustainable tourism concept is lack. Apart from that absence of finance, lack of infrastructure, vandalism and the lack of facilities can also be addressed as issues. Finally the research provides some important suggestions for both the host community and the tourists. Host community need to be educated about their potentials and how to preserve their unique resources for the future generation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry can be considered one of the most remarkable economic phenomena for most countries in the globe. The tourism industry and its evolution was originally started in European countries, where nationally and internationally tourism originated by travelling one destination to another. At the beginning they travel around their own countries and neighboring countries. Moreover gradually there were lots of reasons for travelling around the world destinations. After 1950s, different nations wanted to travel around the world more and more before. The main reason for this motivation was due to the development of air transportation mode. This caused to widen the world travel

and tourism activities. Finally most of the people wanted to explore more and more experiences around the world and it was a trend, which spanned very rapidly around the world. This situation was open the doors for many tourism related business simultaneously all around the world. Today, this is the world largest and fastest growing service industry in the world.

While tourism sector provides considerable economic benefits for many communities, regions and the counties, its rapid expansion can also be responsible for adverse environmental as well as socio- cultural impact. Natural resource depletion and environmental degradation associated with tourism activities pose serve problems to many tourism rich regions. The fact that most tourists chose to maintain their relatively high patterns of consumption when they reach their destinations can be a particularly serious problem for developing countries and regions without the appropriate means for protecting their natural resources and local eco systems from the pressure of Mass tourism. The two main areas of environmental impact of tourism are pressure of natural resources and damage to eco systems. Furthermore, it is now widely recognized not only that uncontrolled tourism expansion is likely to lead to environmental degradation, but also that environmental degradation, in turn poses a serious threat to the tourism activities.

In addition to pressure on the availability and prices of resources consumed by the locals as energy, food and basic raw materials were wasted. Disposal of liquid and solid waste generated by the tourism industry has become a particular problem for many developing countries and regions that lack the capacity to treat these waste materials. Apart from the above fact, tourist activities can also lead to land contamination from solid waste and the contamination of marine waters and coastal areas from pollution generated by hotels and marines, as well as cruise ships. In fact, it is sometimes argued that the rapid expansion of cruise tourism calls for "the enforcement of environmental protection 'level playing field' across the world's oceans and between the world's maritime tourism destinations" (Johnson, 2002). In

addition, relatively high level of energy consumption in hotels including energy for air conditioning, heating and cooking, fuel used by tourism related transportation can also contribute significantly to local air pollution in many host countries and regions. Local air and noise pollution, as well as urban congestion linked to intensive tourism development, can sometimes even discourage tourists from visiting some famous destinations.

Similarly, tourism can lead to the indiscriminate clearance of native vegetation for the development of new facilities, increased demand for fuel wood and even forest fires. Ecologically fragile areas, such as rain forests, wetlands and mangroves are also threatened by intensive or irresponsible tourist activity. In many developed and developing countries alike, tourism destinations are booming over developed up to the point where the damage caused by environmental degradation and the eventual loss of revenues arising of a collapse in tourism arrivals becomes irreversible. In addition, “tourism in many destinations could be particularly threatened by external environmental shocks, notably the potential threat of global warming and sea level rise. Significant rises in sea level could cause serious problems to tourism activities, particularly in low line coastal areas and small islands. Global warming is also expected to increase climate variability and to provoke changes in the frequency and intensity of extreme climate events such as tropical windstorms and associated storm surges and coastal flooding that may threaten tourism activities at certain destinations” (UN,2001b,ch.V11).

Countries and regions where the economy is driven by the tourism industry have become highly concerned with the environmental as well as the socio- cultural problems associated with unsustainable tourism. As a result at present most of the tourism destinations have attempted to preserve their unique host environment and the culture.

In this background Sri Lanka has been a tourist destination for centuries because of its strategic location and uniqueness. Sri Lanka is one of the South Asian countries that had been reviewed by the World Tourism Organization and it has specified the relative values of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment generation, growth pattern, tourism investments with the ranking of Sri Lankan tourism in the world with its absolute size and the importance. Since the past few years Sri Lanka Government pays a huge attention to carry out the tourism industry in a sustainable manner. Mainly Government involves for making rules and regulations, policies, principals regarding to conduct sustainable tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is truly blessed with one of the most diverse and unique natural environments in an island of its size. In addition Sri Lanka is a country which encompasses with a green coverage enclosing mountains, waterfalls, rivers, sanctuaries, forests which having rare flora and fauna. Therefore Sri Lankan tourism industry has huge potentials to promote new tourism sub markets for the guests as nature tourism, green tourism, eco-tourism and community

based tourism and etc. it is very important to keep in mind which I mentioned above the tourism sub markets are directly give the contribution to promote the Sri Lanka as a sustainable tourism destination.

## 2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Tourism can be a major source of revenue for a destination, but as we clearly identify at present even in Sri Lanka there can be increased some of the negative tourism impacts due to the mass tourism industry. Therefore in this paper, the research problem is to identify how we can use and protect the resources in Sri Lanka while maintaining maximum positive impacts and minimizing negative impacts through sustainable concept?

## 3. THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND AIMS

- I. To identify the overall perception of involvement of host community towards the sustainable tourism
- II. To find out the government stake holders opinions on sustainable development in Sri Lanka.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The study was based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data required to the study were gathered through books, magazines, annual reports, inventories of the hotels while the secondary data were gathered through structured interviews and questionnaires. All relevant information could be collected from both above methods as researcher required.

## 5. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term ‘sustainable tourism’ refers to tourism developed in the way that does not cause serious ecological or socio-cultural problems, preserving and even improving the overall quality of the environment at the site, while ensuring the tourists are completely satisfied and that all levels of society benefit from tourism. “Sustainable tourism developments concepts are come to the present world in early 1990’s along with the different academic researches” (Weaver, 2006).the Brundland report launched by World Commission of Environment and Development (WCED) discussed the world conservation strategy alone with the report which could identified, the sustainable development as “the developments that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Essentially sustainable development advocates the wise use and conservation of resources in order to maintain their long term viability. Further it requires minimization of negative impacts and maximization of positive impacts of tourism.

In the available literature at Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA, 2010) the sustainable tourism had been explained as a fine culmination of 3S’s (sun, sand, sea) to generates the economic benefits for local people and enhance the wellbeing of local communities, is a

vindication of the area's potentially for eco-friendly sustainable tourism. According to Weaver and Lawton (2010), "today world tourism and environment are closely connected. Tourists are becoming more demanding the environmental quality of the destination than past eras and this has led to a rethinking of tourism development, with greater concern on sustainable tourism concepts such as eco-tourism, green tourism, community tourism and nature tourism". Moreover, Weaver (2010), mentioned that "many tourism development approaches in the general world especially community based tourism development and Poo-poor development approaches whereas applying sustainable tourism development concepts compelled to concern about the local community". Many researchers reveal that the tourism development and investments and the host community are having a strong relationship in terms of possible impacts.

Ministry of Economic, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau have had taken an important role in developing sustainable tourism development works in national level which covers many projects in the tourism areas "by identifying sustainable concepts and the issues from tourism development, that it had been taken attempt to develop sustainable indicators to the tourism destination managers from 1990's onward. The recent workshops and publications of WTO of 1996, held in Hungary and Mexico in 1999 in Sri Lanka and in Cyprus 2003 were led to introduce the sustainable tourism indicators to the world" (Weaver,2006).

## 6. RESULTS BACKGROUND

The focus of this study is the sustainable tourism development impact in Sri Lanka, including a specific case study. The purpose of this study is mainly to identify the overall perception of host community and stakeholders on tourism development impact in Sri Lanka. The primary data were collected from the observations, interviews and a questionnaire. The results were presented fewer than two main sub headings for easy understanding as follows,

### 1) Host Community in-depth interview results analysis

There were five local people to this in-depth interview, which were 10 minutes of maximum length. In here the actual and potential hosts who were interviewed are labeled as host - 1.....to host 5 in the content analysis of the interviews to ensure the privacy those investors required at the interviews. In first, the host 1 mentioned that they have understood "the tourism industry of Sri Lanka will enhance the national sustainable tourism industry, tourism investments and more tourists' receipts to Sri Lanka. The locations of Sri Lanka are very sensitive to coastal and mangrove area, which it should develop very carefully". Further the interviewee pointed out, "this sustainable tourism development will be a competitive development as Malaysia based tourism development under the right project implementation approaches with real investors in the field".

The general opinion of the host- 2 is also interesting in this regard. According to this interviewee, "the tourism in Sri Lanka needed such a mega development for the sustainable tourism industry very soon. This area has a great potentials to develop the tourism with its own and unique attractions. The investments and development can easily develop the tourism industry and the tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka. In here what SLTDA should create sufficient infrastructures to assist the growing demands in for the investment in Sri Lanka.

According to the views of prominent host 3 pointed out "invest in Sri Lankan tourism sector as a timely introduction to the industry, as per of the tourism market situation, country's safety and future demand pattern in the industry. On our opinion the location owned more resources which are required a right planning approach. As well the location has a huge potential for tourist accommodation as five stars up to home stays. Number of viable tourism products would be introducing with our investment within limits of approved investment plan of the government". Therefore as a country Sri Lanka could follow the principles of the sustainable concept in near future it will be a great opportunity to become a pioneer of the south Asian tourism market.

Host 4 and 5 mentioned the negative impacts regarding the sustainable concept as "tourism investments in as a good contribution for the national tourism sector. But there are insufficient infrastructure developments for the investments up to now. Furthermore they pointed out inflation, lack of the finance, lack of involvement of the private sector and less awareness towards the particular concept are addressed as major negatives".

2) To identify what are the stakeholders' opinions on sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka

Prominent Sri Lankan government stakeholders who were interviewed namely Coastal Conservation Department (CCD), Sri Lanka Tourism Convention Bureau (SLTCB) Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), The Urban Development Authority (UDA) Sri Lanka Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) for this study were asked their general opinions and perception of the sustainable tourism investments and more perception on impacts of tourism developments. The results of the interviews reflect more similarities, they pointed out such as "tourism in Sri Lanka needs such an active development for the industry very soon. But it must be well planned while concerning on protection and preserving natural and cultural resources. They suggest it's compulsory to follow sustainable tourism rules and regulations with the proper guidance of tourism specialists".

## 7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The summary of major findings, discussions with the suggestions for the researches are presented in this part.

### Discussion and recommendation on objective-1

To identify the overall perception of involvement of host community towards the sustainable tourism development

The overall perception of positive and negative impacts of sustainable tourism development was the major area for the overall perception of host community. "Tourism development and its impact of physical development, economic, socio and cultural aspects were mentioned by Gunce (2003)". Further "the poverty alleviation, employment creation and remote area development were key concepts mentioned by Smith (1995)".

The study about stakeholders perception on tourism investment was adopted three major areas of tourism impacts and the concepts of Dogan and Genny (2004) from the literature review for the community survey research instrument". Those major concepts are economic, social, and cultural and environment impacts of tourism development. The first objective of the study, overall perception about tourism investment of the host community in Sri Lanka was surveyed and interviewed. The development of the sustainable tourism industry and the possible impact were among the perception of host community. The results are shown that the host community' perception had little differences and similarities too. The study could find that both positive and negative aspect of sustainable tourism impacts as of their perceptions. In terms of perception of the host community on economic aspect of sustainable tourism investment and the developments in Sri Lanka most of the views were positive. The results of socio cultural impacts of the host community are shown the overall perception in terms of social and cultural aspect in this development. Most of the views regarding this sector were negative and they suggested new tricks to minimize those negative impacts.

### Discussion and recommendation on objective-2

To identify what are the stakeholders' opinions on sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka

The stakeholder interview results with the opinions on sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka are shown the important aspect of this study. "The wise use of resource and their long term maintenance, long viability and minimizing negative impacts and maximizing positive impacts were the key concepts of this sustainable tourism development'" UNCTDA (2010). The study could find the following focal points for the sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka area as preparation of plans and designs to ensure the right developments, an active involvement with stakeholders, follow EIA to make a sustainable development and community awareness programs

### REFERENCES

- [1] Cornell and Sapiro. A; 1987 "*Corporate stakeholders and Corporate Finance*". University of California, Los Angeles.
- [2] Gunce, E; 2003 "Tourism and local attitudes in Grime". Northern Cyprus.
- [3] Jafari and Wall. G; 1996 " Sustainable tourism in island and small island" N/D
- [4] Johnson, D; 2002 "Environmentally sustainable cruise tourism" marine policy 26
- [5] Kemal, K. 2006; "Perception of foreign investors on the tourism market in central Asia" N/D
- [6] Pearce, J and Robinson, R; 2003 "Formulation, implementation and control of competitive strategy". 8th edition , New York
- [7] Peter, M; 2005 " Tourism impact, planning and management, An introduction to tourism impact, USA
- [8] Totak, S and Roy, S; 2007 " A survey of investors current perception and valuation" Euro journals publications