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Exploring the potentials, issues, and challenges for community-based tea tourism development (with reference to Hanthana Mountains)

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ABSTRACT

Community-based tourism could be one way of creating a more sustainable tourism industry. Community-based tourism brings numerous benefits to the wider community by increasing the standard of living in rural areas, which helps in reducing migration to urban areas. The study begins with an assessment of potential tea tourism products that could be developed in the community of Hanthana and the neighbouring communities. The research based on qualitative approach in-depth interview and potential identification tool for identifying the tea tourism potentials within the Hanthana area. According to the findings, Hanthana can remark as the most suitable place to promote tea tourism in Sri Lanka. Paper accomplishes research propositions in line with the empirical and theoretical justifications encouraging future research priorities.

Keywords— Sri Lankan tourism industry, Impulsive buying behavior, Consumer buying behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a major business of attracting and catering the needs of people travelling and staying outside their home communities for business or pleasure (WTO, 2016). A destination represents a mix of products and services that come together to meet the needs of the tourist or a place where tourist travel to in order to experience particular features or experiences." (Fyall & Wanhill, 2008). Meanwhile, the concept of tourism can use used to develop community within a developing country like Sri Lanka. According to Tourism Strategic Plan (2017) in the present context, Community members suffering from some initial disadvantages, such as poor housing, insufficient land or income. Therefore, this study aims to identify tea tourism potential in Hanthana and how community's lives using the tea tourism product progress.

As an area rich with all tea tourism possibilities, still, Kandy is not considered as a destination which can promote tea tourism. Therefore, the research problem is "Why Kandy is neglected by tourists as a tea tourism destination? The main purpose of this research is to Identify tea tourism potentials as a successful community-based tourism venture in Hanthana.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Tourism is one of the fast-growing industries and elected as a tool for economic development and employment generation. The rapid growth of tourism causes adverse impacts on the environment, biodiversity and community. The research is developed with a purpose to discover the hidden potential of the tea tourism industry. Additionally, another Inspiration behind this research is to examine the regional development process to the identified area. Even though Kandy is a tourism destination which was popular for the cultural and heritage sites, it is not recognized as a tea tourism destination with many tea tourism potentials. And the most considerable area of the study is the regional development process which is applied Hanthana to develop the area with the tea tourism potential with the engagement of the community.

1.2 Methodology

This paper based on a deductive approach in which arguments and explanations are mainly supported by ten in-depth interviews, observations and associated theoretical contents. Alongside, authors discuss and conclude the paper by suggesting future research directions in line with the synthesized discussions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical studies still argue "The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited" (WTO, 1994). As a tourism destination, Sri Lanka is blessed with an abundance of diversified tourism resources. Beaches along its 1585 km coastline, natural, ecological and wildlife attractions, native culture, Buddhist heritage, and remnants left by Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch and British seafarers are few of the wonders of this miraculous island. (SLTDA, 2017). According to the United Nations, community economic development is a method for creating conditions of economic and social progress for a community through active participation by the community (Joppe 1996).

Still, researchers are argued, Tea tourism, as a type of niche/special interest tourism cross many disciplinary

boundaries, therefore, has a wide and eclectic audience but less research literature and investigation projects (Sharples, 2008). Tea tourism: "tourism that is motivated by an interest in the history, traditions and consumptions of tea" (Jolliffe, 2003), consisting of tea gardens where tea is planted, tea factories where it is produced, tea shops where it is for sale or served, and institutions that preserve and interpret the tea culture (Jolliffe, 2007). And the Tea tourist: "a tourist experiencing history, culture, and traditions related to the consumption of tea" (Jolliffe, 2007). Based on empirical studies on, Gunasekara and Momsen (2006) they investigated the role of the tea industry in attracting visitors to Sri Lanka. In their views, tea tourism is linked to eco-tourism, heritage tourism, and wellness tourism and rural and farm tourism, and is identified as having the ability to be either high-end and exclusive or community-based and pro-poor. According to Jolliffe, 2007, It is noted that small-scale development may be more effective in linking tea to tourism for positive economic results for local communities. Additionally, Tourism that is going to be community-based or community managed needs to include the community from the onset of its development, beginning with the planning process. CBT initiatives that have employed an inclusive process from the onset of development have shown the greatest success (Cooper 2004). Therefore, to ensure the long-term success of the tourist destination, strong community support and participation is needed in the development process (Tosun 2000). The implementation and success of a tourism development plan are often based on the support of stakeholders in the community, which include the citizens, entrepreneurs, and community leaders (Gunn, 1994; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999).

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. Identify tea Tourism Potentials

Hanthana is famous mountain ranges among the Central Hills of Sri Lanka located near to the Kandy City. Rich biodiversity and untouched beauty are the reason for attracting to Hanthana. According to the interviews and observation can identify community who living in Hanthana area are suffering from economic problems and the people not getting enough advantage from their natural environment. According to them, they use tea estate and the tea museum for tourist attraction. But they do not take the full advantages from the recourses. Meanwhile, Tour operators arrange trips to Hanthana area on client request only. Rather than they are not focusing on promoting Hanthana as a tea tourism destination, but they are promoting Kandy as a cultural and Heritage city among the tourists.

3.1.1 Assessment tool: To assess the potential availability selected five people from the area of Hanthana who have a better idea about the region and as outsiders selected five people who respond to develop tourism in the region. The assessment tool develops based on the tool developed Fausnaugh (2004) and Nina Himberg (2006).

3.1.2 Results of Residents: The score points were summed, and the gross total of the regional characteristics' points was divided by 20 in order to create a standardized score. The property characteristics points were divided by 10 to get the values. In average, both the regional and property characteristics score gets a numerical value. However, when placed on the fourfold table indicating the overall tea tourism potentiality of the area is high, the numerical values locate on the high potential field. In this case, according to the residents' view, it represents 6.99 from Regional Characteristics and 7.24 from property Characteristics Score. This indicates, that the case areas are seen to have a high potential for tea tourism, although the region needs to be upgraded on the factors that are weakening the overall balance.

According to the graph, Hanthana is a region high in natural features as property characteristics but Human resource features are only 56 when comparing to the other essential factors human resource factor indicates a low value. Hence can assume community participation is very low in Hanthana even though existing with natural resources which can promote among tourists. (Appendix 01)

3.1.3 Results of outsiders: The score points were summed, and the gross total of the regional characteristic's points was divided by 20 in order to create a standardized score. The property characteristics points were divided by 10 to get the values. In average, both the regional and property characteristics score gets a numerical value. However, when placed on the fourfold table indicating the overall tea tourism potentiality of the area is high, the numerical values locate on the high potential field in this case according to the outsider's view. It is representing 7.3 from Regional Characteristics and 6.6 from property Characteristics Score. This indicates that the case area seemed to be a high potential for tea tourism, although the region needs to be upgraded on the factors that are weakening the overall balance. According to the outsider's view can recognize Hanthana as a destination rich with natural beauty. Additionally, low community participation running natural resource management projects, Local tourism businesses. (Appendix02).

3.2 Identify the opportunities and barriers for community-based tea tourism development

According to the interviews the main barrier is low skill and knowledge of the community. Skill and knowledge are one essential component of community capacity building; the most barriers to effective tourism development were a lack of skill and knowledge about tourism in general within the area among the community.

The concept of skill and knowledge is regarded as a tool to assist in tourism in local communities. Community skill and knowledge had become an important source of tourism development.

Lack of tourism expertise; lack of appropriate education, lack of local government support as main barriers of tourism development within the Hanthana area. Because the community is not motive within the area for a new concept, skill and knowledge development programs should be carried out to promote tourism in Hanthana.

Decision making takes longer with community involvement: Sometimes it can take longer to decide, but this is primarily a perception which exists because of beliefs about planning processes and political systems, again leading to apathy and a failure to understand politics low skill and knowledge about the tourism.

3.3 Opportunities that community face when involving in tea tourism within the area of Hanthana

Employment for local communities: Findings indicate that community-based tourism at Hanthana will become a very important source of employment for local communities, with the employing locals in a variety of jobs ranging from cleaners, drivers, guides, business venture as arts and craft etc. The creation of employment is very important when promoting rural development in this area. The community-based tourism creates an alternative means of survival for locals. Therefore, developing tea tourism in Hanthana means reducing poverty in rural areas. The people who are employed use their wages to assist family members. Finally, they will improve their living conditions.

Local development: Results from the interview with responsible authorities, they agreed on the development of a new tourism concept is a way to develop community especially tea labours within the area of Hanthana. This is, however, the involvement of the community in tea tourism has helped in diversifying rural livelihoods and creating sustainable opportunities for locals.

Sourcing of local goods and services: Focus discussions, as well as the interview with responsible authorities, has found that the sourcing of locally available goods and services is very important for this community as opportunities are created for small scale, informal sector operators, who otherwise would not have access to the mainstream tourism industry, through the provision of goods and services, is one way in which locals can sustain their livelihoods and help in the eradication of poverty.

Economic opportunities: Economic opportunities such as lodging, food, activities, and transportation can be provided by community members. Moreover, it will help livelihoods and economic alternative development strategy for poverty alleviation and women’s empowerment (e.g. through the creation of new space for women to take on leadership positions). Livelihoods and economic alternative development strategy for community revitalization and development (e.g. rural towns which are experiencing a decrease in services, local industry and may have low employment opportunities) Other than above, A ‘value add’ to an existing biodiversity conservation project to direct benefits of tourism into conservation activities and empower local communities to sustainably manage their resources or eliminate and reduce reliance on unsustainable practices.

3.4 Planning Process to Develop the Tea Tourism of Hanthana

Planning tourism at all levels is essential for achieving successful tourism and management. According to the information gathered through interviews, Assessment tool and the field observation can come up with a decision, even though Hanthana is an area rich with all the tea tourism possibilities still area is not considering as a tea tourism destination. Therefore, to avoid the problem, developing an effective planning process to the region is a critical factor according to the research.

To establish the tourism industry within the community must have clearly defined goals and objectives which can understand by the community with the community-based tea tourism potentials in the area of Hanthana.

And get the assistance from authorities who responded to develop tourism not only but also the community within the area. Assistance with the various stages of tourism development is a critical factor throughout this process.

One of the most important elements that need to be present right from the onset of any tourism development is an integrated approach. An integrated approach will begin with community meetings, which will initiate community participation and involvement in tourism development within the area. Community participation will be a crucial element as it will raise awareness in the community of their tourism potential, and it will help the tourism initiative succeed. Community participation in the process will also educate and empower the participants and it will allow them to identify and address their needs. Active community participation will be a way for the community to assume responsibility to plan, to manage, and control necessary actions for tourism development in Hanthana with the involvement of stakeholders.

Source-A regional planning process: Michael Hall

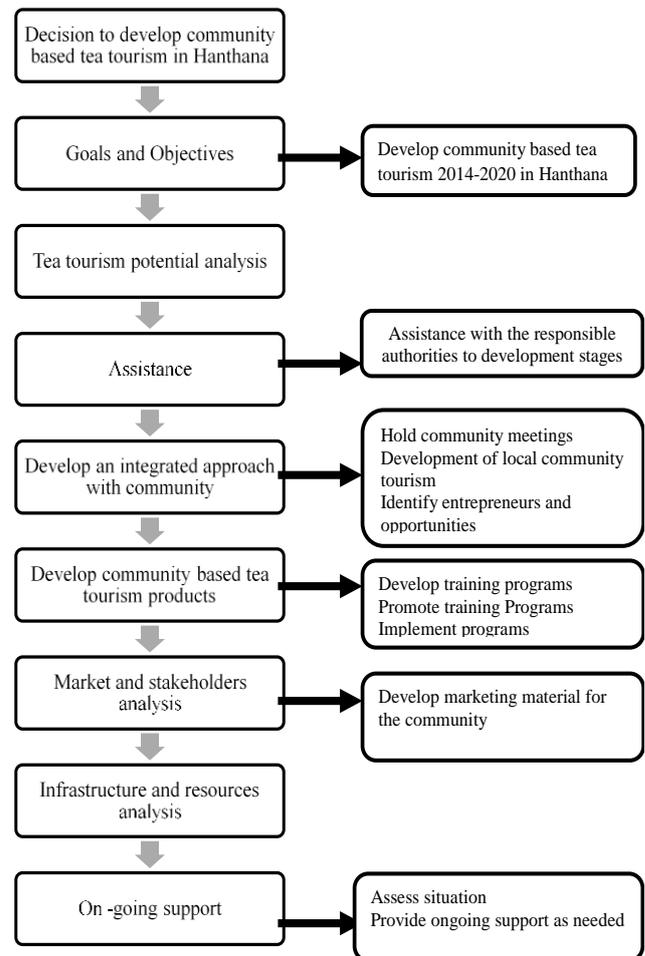


Fig. 1: A regional planning process

Once products have been identified, it is essential that training programs specific to the needs of the identified entrepreneurs, products and tourism committee be developed so they can develop their tourism products effectively and the training programs should focus on skills development, business planning and marketing. With these programs, viable and suitable tourism products will result. As these products are going through the development stages, it is essential that the community begin to market to tourists. At the same time developing the necessary infrastructure is essential.

Tourism would stand to benefit the region significantly through sustainable economic development. If the process of tourism development is carefully executed with the community’s needs and desires always at the forefront, the chances of success will be greater. The current barriers to tourism development in Hanthana will need to be addressed to ensure successful and sustainable development in the near future.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Since Tourism is a leading industry and the fastest growing economic sector in most developed countries’ economy, it is still important for Sri Lanka to maintain financial stability. Meanwhile, it is ranked as the fourth largest foreign exchange earner in the country. It has been easy to promote Sri Lanka as a historic, cultural and beautiful tourist destination.

Because our country is heavily depending on traditional markets, alternative forms of tourism should be implemented so that the country could attract high spenders. In the area of agro-tourism, there is much potential to promote the Tea Industry as a new market segment. The 140-year of tea history, agricultural history,

beautiful tea plantations and brand name of Ceylon tea are all unique features that can be explored to develop tea tourism in Sri Lanka.

There are numbers of advantages that we can achieve by promoting tea- tourism in the Hanthana Area. Because it is situated at the top of the Kandy city, it has more scenery for tourists to shoot at. If we can attract more tourists, there would be vast development in social, economic sector and infrastructure. Because the city is world renowned for its ancient glory, most tourists visit the city from all around the world. So this will be an added advantage to promote the area.

SWOT analysis witnessed there are more opportunities and strengths other than weaknesses and threats. According to Regional Characteristics and property, Characteristics Score it scored 6.99 and 7.24. This indicates that the area has a high potential for tea tourism. Tourism can act as a generator of community development in the area. It has more potential than Bogawantalawa, Maskeliya, UdaPusellawa, Badulla and Talawakele.

The Destination Potential Evaluation graph indicates that Hanthana has a high score in natural beauty, cultural and social characteristics but low in existing tourism activities due to low involvement of the community. Finally, based on primary data can conclude Hanthana is the most suitable place to promote tea tourism in Sri Lanka.

4.1 Suggestions

Because Sri Lanka is among the leading tea producers in the world it is easy to promote tea tourism in the Hanthana area along with National Tea Museum. Estates bungalows can be converted to into luxury plantation villas, tea factories can be converted to Luxury hotels. Finally, tea estates can be used for leisure activities like Nuwara-Eliya.

On the other hand, the beauty of Knuckles and Hunnasgiriya mountains can be observed on the top of Hanthana Mountain. Stakeholders such as Aitken Spence and Jetwing should encourage both the general public and government in order to promote tea tourism in Hanthana area. Transport service of the area should be improved along with the tea tourism promotional activities such as plucking tea leaves and nature walks. Moreover, awareness programs and training programs should be implemented within the area to improve local participation in tea tourism activities. Finally, Tea-tourism will generate additional income for the people of the area by creating more jobs in Hanthana area.

4.2 Future Recommendations

Even though the academic researchers are very advanced about the topic of community-based tourism, there are lots of possible fields to conduct researches. It might be interesting to deeply undertake a study in order to explain and know local cultural systems.

And this study would help us how sustainable tourism can be obtained and what initiatives we would undertake. Another point to consider for future research is the community-based eco-tourism near forest reservations. Finally, the recommendation would be to explore stakeholders’ perception of community-based tourism and gain the participation of the community to build a sustainable tourism destination an eco-entrepreneurship based on CBT in the future.

3. APPENDIX

Regional Characteristics	Average
Natural beauty	24.8
Cultural and social characteristics	21.8
Recreational facilities	17.8
Shopping and commercial facilities	17.4
Public infrastructure	16.8
Accessibility	18.2
Attitudes towards visitors	13.6
Existing tourism activities	9.4
GROSS TOTAL	139.8
Divide Gross Total by Standardizing Factor 20	
Net Regional Characteristics Score	6.99
Property Characteristics	
Natural features	20.4
Built features and cultural artifacts	18.8

Fig. 2: Results of residents
(Source: By author using an assessment tool)

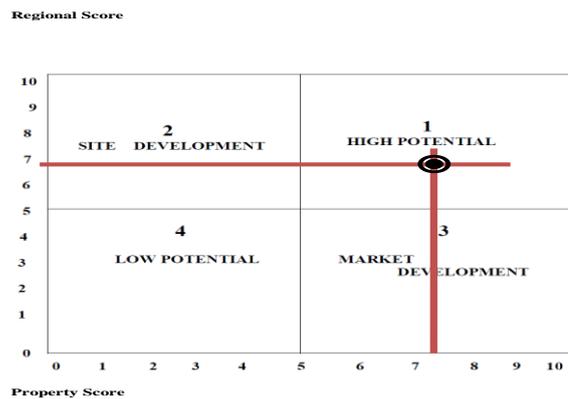
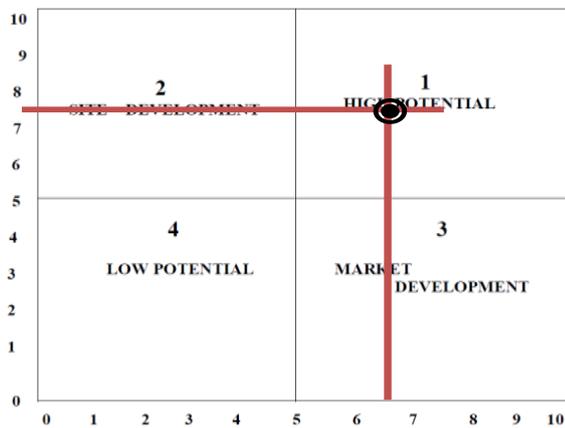


Fig. 3: Destination potential Evaluation Grid (Source assessment tool)

Regional Characteristics	Average
Natural beauty	23
Cultural and social characteristics	22.6
Recreational facilities	20.2
Shopping and commercial facilities	17.8
Public infrastructure	18.2
Accessibility	17.4
Attitudes towards visitors	12.6
Existing tourism activities	14.2
GROSS TOTAL	146
Divide Gross Total by Standardizing Factor 20	
Net Regional Characteristics Score	7.3
Property Characteristics	
Natural features	19.8
Built features and cultural artifacts	16.4
Site infrastructure	17

Fig. 4: Results of outsiders

Regional Score



Property Score

Fig. 5: Destination potential Evaluation grid

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