

ECONOMIC BEHAVIOR OF RURAL COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM INDUSTRY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DODAMPAHALA GN DIVISION OF DIKWELLA DS DIVISION

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Abstract

The tourism industry has become one of the primary sources of earning foreign currency in Sri Lanka due to its strategic location, unparalleled natural beauty, and great courtesy of people. Sri Lanka has a golden opportunity to enhance foreign income generation through the tourism industry. The objective of this study is to identify the impact of the sustainable tourism industry because of the economic behavior of rural communities, focusing on the Dodampahala Grama-Niladhari Division in the Dikwella divisional secretariat division. For the sake of data collection, 100 samples were selected from the Dikwella GN area using the convenience-sampling method. To accomplish the research objectives, a mixed-methods approach has been implemented. Primary data revealed that community engagement in the tourism industry has an impact on their level of income, ownership status of their residents, nature of their residence, life status, and the ownership status of their assets, such as vehicles. Further, researchers have tested whether the sustainable tourism industry is the only revenue-generating activity in the community or not. Findings suggested that there is a significant relationship between whether sustainable tourism activities are the only revenue-generating activity of the community or not and their level of income, the ownership status of the vehicle, the ownership status of their residents, and the nature of their residence. As an implication of this study, communities engaging in the sustainable tourism industry as their main and only revenue-generating activity are way ahead of

others in all aspects. Therefore, their economic level and standard of living have increased. Further, foreigners are more attracted to the beautiful surroundings and the picture-perfect beach of the area. The study recommended that the tourism industry can be improved by paying close attention to the provision of security and infrastructure facilities in the mentioned area and should apply sustainable tourism components for the security of the resources.

Key words: Sustainable tourism industry, economic behavior, rural community, standard of living

1.0 Introduction

The tourism industry is an important industry for every country as it has direct impacts on the economy, social, and cultural sectors of a country. The Sri Lankan tourism industry is also of strategic importance because it has a large impact on the economic performance of the country. As per the well-known definition given by the United Nations in 1963 at the convention held in Rome, a tourist is 'a person who travels to a place from his usual place but does not do a job at that place' (United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism, 1963). However, according to the World Tourism Organization, the tourism industry's pleasure, business, and entertainment activities are generating out of the usual environment in less than one year'' (World Tourism Organization, 2017). Beach tourism is also another important area when it comes to the tourism industry. According to the Taxes Coastal Management Plan (2011), "the importance of entertainment activities and the tourism industry can be seen on the beaches." As mentioned by Pearce (1989), beach tourism is a very popular component of the world tourism industry. Sri Lanka, in this regard, is playing a critical role due to its picture-perfect beaches and the coastal surroundings of the country. Due to this strategic advantage of the country, many tourists are attracted to the country for the purpose of pleasure and entertainment that can be gained from the beaches of the country. According to the statistics, more than 50% of tourists visit Sri Lanka for the above-mentioned purposes. More so, they spend three days in the beach areas (SLTD Monthly Report, 2023).

More than 2 million tourists arrived in 2018, and Sri Lanka could earn around USD 4.3 billion. Due to the pandemic era in 2019, tourist arrivals to the country significantly dropped, accounting for 1.9 million, and the income was less than USD 3.1 billion. However, with the recovery of the pandemic situation, during the first seven months of 2023, approximately 763,000 tourists arrived in the country, and income increased to USD 800 million (SLTD Monthly Report, 2023).

More importantly, Sri Lanka is expecting 10 million tourists' arrivals in the year 2030 and expects to earn USD 10 billion in revenue. To get the maximum advantage from the above target, proper management of the tourism industry is much needed. In this regard, communities that are engaging in the tourism industry should focus on new avenues to promote their local tourism destination and should also focus on how to lengthen their stay during their travel period through more activities. Currently, an average tourist spends USD 172 per day, and their average length of stay is 10 days. The tourism industry can further expand by reaching out to untouched tourism destinations and thereby improving the economic levels of those rural communities.

Dodampahala Beach in the Dikwella area, in this regard, is surrounded by mountains, plains, and forests. This beach is popular among domestic and foreign tourists due to the inherent natural beauty and surfing facilities in this area. This area gradually rises about 600 m towards the north from sea level. Dikwella beach area is approximately 16 km long and situated in the southern province of Matara District. Native communities that live in this area engage with the tourism industry, agriculture, fishing, and business and job opportunities in the government and private sectors as their main income sources.

There are many tourist attractions in the area, like handicrafts, lakes, religious places, and natural destinations (Dandeniya Lake, Koboneela Lake, Wewrukannala Temple, Hummanaya, etc.). In addition, Ayurveda activities are popular in this area, and this place has the venues to engage with wellness tourism. Dodampahala Beach is known as "Hirikatiya Beach," and this beach area has directly impacted the communities' economic, social, and cultural changes. In the past, this area was used for the toddy industry, cattle breeding, and coconut cultivation. But in 2004, a hotel was built by a tourist, but it was not very attractive to attract tourists to this area. However, due to the strategic

advantages of the area, the Dikwella beach area is now very popular among tourists for bathing in the sea, surfing, swimming, diving, and sunbathing purposes.

The Sri Lankan tourism industry is one of the foreign currency-generating industries, and therefore, the government is further looking for ways to promote the industry. Hiking Beach inherently has a picture-perfect beach area, but communities that are engaging with the tourism industry are not getting the maximum benefits from the beach area. Simply put, they are not utilizing the area effectively, efficiently, and sustainably for the tourism industry. This study proposes the initial managerial remedies for the communities to expand the tourism industry and improve their economic conditions in a sustainable manner.

The main objective of the research is to investigate how the tourism industry affects people's economic behavior in the Dodampalaha GN. The other objectives are to examine the current tourism industry in the area and examine new trends in the tourism industry in the Dodampala division.

2.0 Literature Review

The tourism industry influences the economic performance of many countries, and every country is trying to reach the maximum level of the industry using various kinds of things that apply to the industry. Many researchers have explored the tourism industry and the economy, and they have presented various suggestions to enhance people's economic level using the tourism industry. They are concerned about their research and findings and how they can apply their research to this study. Kalani M.M. (2017) has done a case study under the topic "The emotions of community tourism among the residents," using Galkissa as the study area. The convenience sampling method has been used as the method, and primary and secondary data have been used to collect the data. To collect the primary data, we used about 120 questioners and discussions. To collect the secondary data, we used police reports from the Galkissa police station, newspapers, and the internet. According to the research, the population sample has been divided into two parts: people who are not doing activities to earn income using the tourism

industry, and people who are not doing activities to earn income using the tourism industry. Under the findings, the people who are not doing tourism activities to earn income have mentioned the disadvantages that tourism activities cause to society. But the people who are doing tourism activities are not concerned about that matter.

Ranasinghe R.W. (2014) has done research about the “social impact of the tourism industry using Hikkaduwa as the study area.” The main objective of the research is to examine the social and cultural life of the guest houses in the Hikkaduwa area and its effect on their social lives. To collect the primary data, we used questioners and discussions. The open discussions have been used to learn about the effect of the tourism industry on rural culture. According to the results of the study, the tourism industry has affected the area effectively and not effectively, and there are many job opportunities oriented toward the tourism industry in the Hikkaduwa area.

Under the topic of “Planning for Sustainable Tourism Development, Peter McHardy (2001) found out there is a straight combination between the tourism industry and the community. The community-based tourism industry creates many opportunities for society and business opportunities for the community. Further research has mentioned that community-based activities start with staying tourists, and finally, the activities aim at sustainable tourism and its effects on community development and long-term sustainability. David A.Fennell (2003) has a study under the topic "Ecotourism: An Introduction," and the study has found that the tourism industry can be mainly concerned as a community development instrument. In addition, it was further mentioned that identifying the economic advantages causes enhanced economic levels and the lives of the people.

Fariborz Aref (2011) has supplied an article to the Life Science Journal under the topic of “Sense of community and participation for tourism development." In this letter, it is mentioned that there is a combination between the emotions of the community in Shiraz, Iraq, and the tourism industry. To confirm this combination has been used, a Pearson combination. A questioner has been used to collect the data for the article, and the finding of the questioner is that it can develop the tourism industry by developing the community's knowledge.

A study has been done under the topic "Tourism and Protected Areas: Benefits Beyond Boundaries” by Robyn Bushell and Paul E.J. Eagles (2007).

According to their study, the development of the tourism industry is a reason for the development of the economic, social, cultural, and finally life-stands of society. Further, they emphasize that the tourism industry has supplied facilities for the development of community education and skill facilities. Kyungmi Kim (2002) has done a study under the topic "The effects of tourism on the quality of life of residents in the community," using questioners to collect the data. The Chi test was used as the study method and examined how the tourism industry affects the quality of life in the local community.

The study "The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean" by Patullo (1996) found that the benefits of the tourism industry have contributed to the development of quality of life in African countries. According to the study, the tourism industry has supply-side job opportunities in hotels, restaurants, and casinos. In addition, it is a reason for the development of the agriculture industry, transportation, buildings, handcrafts, and productions. Archer (1988) defines community tourism as community-based tourism. However, the tourism industry aims to provide benefits to the local community. Here, commercial tourism manipulation takes advantage of the maximum benefits of the tourism industry. Community-based tourism is a reason to build up a network with the various countries and learn about their cultures. According to the Archer community base, tourism is entering the community and participating. The meaning of this is that the local community should be included in the tourism planning and management process. On the other hand, many benefits should flow to the local community from the community-based tourism process.

3.0 Methodology

Mixed methodology was used as the research methodology, and both primary and secondary data were used to collect the data. 100 native people were selected using the convenient sampling method for discussion, and a descriptive method was used to present the findings. The study area was Dodampahala Dramaniladhari division, and it belongs to Dodampahala North, South, East, and West.

Data collection

Used both primary and secondary data to collect the data and to collect the primary data used questionnaires, discussions, field visit and open questions. Under the secondary data collection, we used central bank reports, reports of the Sri Lankan tourism development authority, and resource profiles in the Dikwella secretariat. To discuss the information, the Drama Niladhari, economic development officer, and Samurdhi officers.

Figure 01: Data Collection

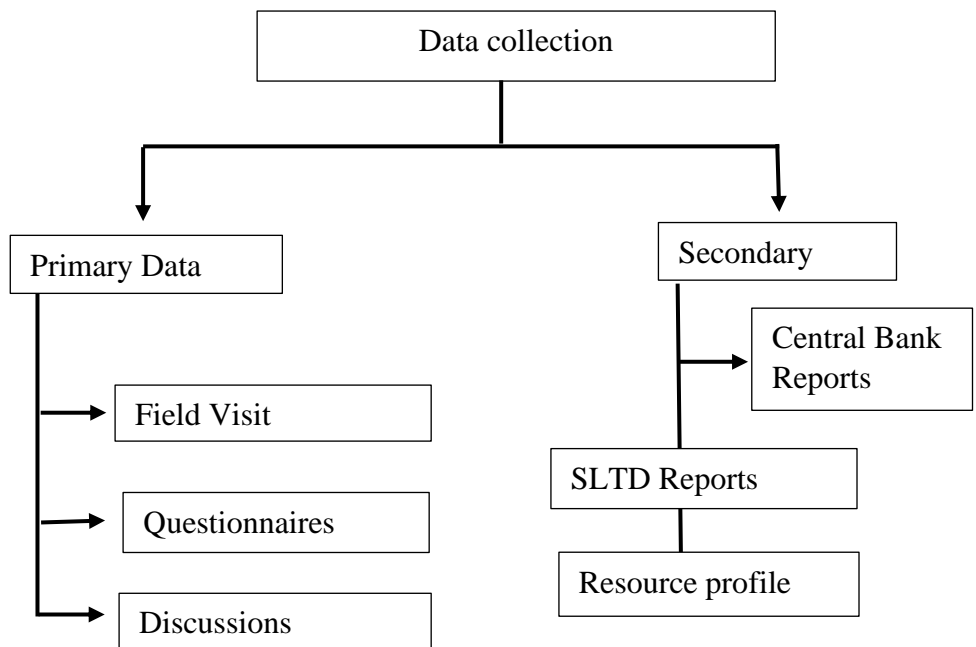


Table 01-Data collection

4.0 Findings

As a foreign income-earning industry, the tourism industry is becoming the main source of the Sri Lankan economy. Because of the Easter bomb attack, Corona pandemic, and economic crises, the industry faced a very difficult situation but gradually became very healthy. Therefore, many people engage with the tourism industry because of the many income opportunities it offers. Today, Dikwella has become a sleepless area with the tourism industry, and

this is popular among local and foreign tourists as a tourism destination. Here are concerns about the contribution of the tourism industry to people's economics in the Dodampaha in Dikwella divisional secretariat area.

According to the research, it can be identified as a clear difference in people's income according to whether they engage with or not with the tourism industry. When people engage directly or indirectly in the tourism industry, their income level has been determined, and their lives also depend on that component. Further, it could be found that there is a combination between the nature of the resident and the nature of the person engaged in the tourism industry. Therefore, it says the nature of the residence and the nature of the engagement with the tourism industry have direct combinations. In addition, there is a combination between the nature of the engagement with the tourism industry and the ownership status of the vehicle. This study is concerned with the tourism industry, whether it is income-based or not, and according to the data, the life-stand of people who have the only income from the tourism industry is great. So, it says the tourism industry is a main reason for the development of the people's lives in the Dodampahala area, and their main problem was not getting the government to mediate to develop and expand the tourism industry to enhance their income level. In addition, lack of infrastructure facilities is also a main problem, and water cuts, raising the price of electricity, water, and gas, also have a bad effect on the tourism industry in this area. In addition, spreading illegal activities in the tourism industry is a social problem, and it has bad effects on people's day-to-day lives. Further irregular garbage disposal is a main problem in the area, and it is creating environmental problems.

The knowledge of the tourism industry and new trends in the industry of people who are engaged with the industry is not satisfactory, and it is an issue for the development of the tourism industry in the Dodampahala area. Not only that, but price competition between the people who are running businesses in the area is a problem for the price establishment. Illegal buildings, mobile business activities, and the collapse of traditional industries are other issues in this area, and illegal buildings cause the beaches to lose tourists. The traditional industries can be engaged with the tourism industry, and it is a good market for the traditional productions. However, unfortunately, traditional

production is at its minimum level, and it is gradually disappearing. The taxi drivers charge high prices for their taxis and use loud music in some restaurants. In addition, the businessmen use more polythene and plastic in their daily lives, and the number of dogs on the beach is an issue in the area.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

To solve the issues of the tourism industry, the Dodampahala Drama Niladhari division should apply sustainable tourism activities with awareness programs to the area, which can play a great role in preventing environmental issues and getting the maximum result from the tourism industry. Especially Dandeniya Lake and Koboneela Lake can be used for lake tourism, but there should be a sustainable program to protect them for the next generation. This is a reason to enhance today's income and protect the resources for the future generation.

In addition, take the steps to develop the tourism knowledge of the people who are engaging with the tourism industry, manage the garbage, develop the infrastructure facilities, take legal action against illegal buildings on the beach, and confirm the security in the area should be applied to the development of the tourism industry as a main economic way in the Dodampaha area gradually should apply the sustainable tourism industry to protect the natural environment and take the maximum economic, social, and cultural benefits to the society.

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