

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM IN ELLA TOURISM AREA IN SRI LANKA

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as a significant driver of economic growth and development in many countries, and Sri Lanka is no exception. The country's rich cultural heritage, pristine natural landscapes, and warm hospitality have attracted a growing number of tourists in recent years. However, the rapid expansion of the tourism industry has raised concerns about its long-term sustainability and the potential impacts on the environment, society, and local communities. The sustainability of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka has become a critical area of research and policy focus, as stakeholders seek to strike a balance between fostering economic growth and preserving the country's natural and cultural assets. With specific attention to the Ella tourism area, this research study aims to identify and analyze the key factors that influence the sustainability of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

As the academic advancement, the research contributes new insights to the field of sustainable tourism by focusing on a specific case study. It expands the understanding of how different factors interact to affect the sustainability of a tourist destination and as generalizability; the findings from this research can be applied to similar tourist areas globally, enriching the knowledge base for sustainable tourism practices. The research provides evidence-based recommendations that can guide the development of effective policies for sustainable tourism, benefiting destinations beyond Ella.

When it comes to the "Ella Tourism Area", environmental preservation and Ella's natural beauty can be identified as major attractions. This research helps identify and address factors that may harm the environment, supporting its preservation for future tourists. By examining factors impacting sustainability, the research can suggest ways to safeguard local culture and heritage from potential negative influences of tourism and understanding these factors aids in creating a tourism model that boosts local economies without risking over-dependence on tourism income. Sustainable tourism practices are vital for Ella's lasting appeal, preventing issues like overcrowding or environmental degradation.

Meanwhile, research bridges theoretical knowledge with practical application, benefiting both the broader understanding of sustainable tourism and the specific well-being of the Ella tourist area in Sri Lanka.

The study explores four primary independent variables, namely environmental factors, social factors, cultural-historical factors, and economic factors, which are believed to have a significant impact on the sustainability of tourism (Dibra, 2015; Islam, 2015; Mai et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020; Streimikiene et al., 2021; Vu et al., 2020). These factors are crucial elements in understanding the complex interactions and dynamics within the tourism industry and their effects on the overall sustainability of the sector.

By examining the effect of these factors on the Sustainability of the tourism industry, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the tourism sector in Sri Lanka. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that can enhance or hinder the sustainable growth of tourism, with the specific context

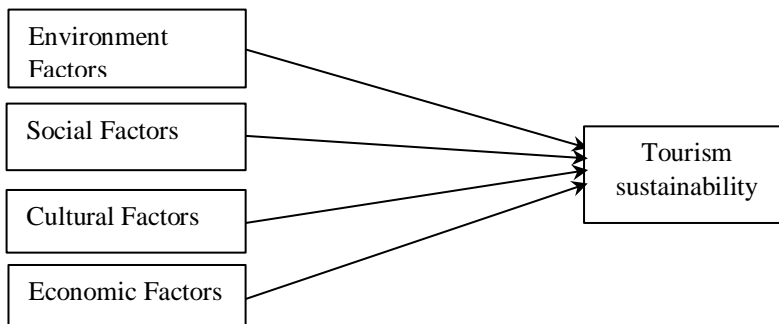
of the Ella tourism area providing a case study for broader implications. As Sri Lanka strives to position itself as a competitive and sustainable tourist destination on the global stage, this research study seeks to inform policymakers, tourism authorities, industry practitioners, and other stakeholders about the importance of adopting responsible and sustainable practices. By identifying the critical factors influencing sustainability, the study intends to propose practical recommendations and strategies that can help shape the future of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka, ensuring its continued growth while safeguarding the country's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and well-being of its local communities.

METHODOLOGY

After revising the literature pertaining to the area, the following conceptual framework and hypotheses were developed for the present study.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



H₁: There is a significant relationship between environmental factors and the sustainability of the tourism industry in Ella area

H₂: There is a significant relationship between social factors and the sustainability of the tourism industry in Ella area

H₃: There is a significant relationship between cultural & historical factors and the sustainability of the tourism Industry in Ella area

H₄: There is a significant relationship between economical factors and the sustainability of the tourism industry in Ella area Reliability analysis

This study adopts a quantitative research design to investigate the factors influencing the sustainability of the tourism industry in Ella tourism area, with a particular focus on environmental factors, social factors, cultural-historical factors, and economic factors as the independent variables. The dependent variable is the sustainability of the tourism industry in the region.

The population of this research study comprises tourist hotels in the Ella tourism area. From this population, a sample of 191 hotels was selected using the stratified random sampling method, as per the guidelines specified in the Morgan table. Stratification ensures representation from different categories of hotels based on their size, type, and other relevant characteristics. The data were collected by administration of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to gather data related to the independent variables (environmental factors, social factors, cultural-historical factors, and economic factors) and the dependent

variable (Sustainability of the tourism industry). Internal consistency of each construct of the questionnaire was measured by administering Cronbach's Alpha test and its results revealed that all the constructs are reliable for the present study. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were used in the data analysis and to test the hypotheses of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and results of correlation analysis.

Table 1

Result of Correlation Analysis

Variable	A	B	C	D	E
A. Environment factors	(4.189)				
B. Cultural factors	0.631**	(4.232)			
C. Social factors	0.694**	0.717**	(4.263)		
D. Economic factors	0.516**	0.698**	0.514**	(4.371)	
E. Sustainability	0.647**	0.722**	0.630**	0.703**	(4.318)

() – Mean, ** $P < 0.01$

As shown in Table 1, the correlation results reveal that environmental factors, cultural factors, social factors and economic factors are significant in contributing to the sustainability of tourism in the Ella region. The regression result shown in Table 2 also supports the correlation result confirming the positive effect of all those factors in tourism sustainability in Ella area.

Table 2

Result of Regression Analysis

Variables	F Value= 27.314		t	Sig.F=0.000 ^b	
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients			
	β	Std. Error	β		
(Constant)	0.359	0.283		1.271	0.208
Environment factors	0.192	0.065	0.119	2.953	0.001
Cultural factors	0.148	0.069	0.165	2.144	0.011
Social factors	0.176	0.078	0.181	2.256	0.006
Economic factors	0.107	0.048	0.322	2.229	0.008

These results confirm the findings of the previous studies conducted in several countries (Islam, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2020; Vu et al., 2020). Environmental factors such as climate, and weather conditions are much important in attracting tourists to this region. Preserving and conserving the environment is crucial for the long-term success of the tourism industry. Implementing eco-friendly initiatives such as waste management, renewable energy use, and wildlife conservation can enhance the region's attractiveness to environmentally conscious travelers. Social factors also play a pivotal role in shaping the tourism experience for both visitors and local communities. Fostering positive interaction between tourists and locals can lead to cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and appreciation. Community engagement and empowerment can provide economic opportunities for the local community, reducing poverty and enhancing social cohesion.

Preserving cultural heritage is not only essential for its identity but also for sustainable tourism development. Celebrating and promoting local traditions, art and customers can create authentic and immersive experiences for tourists.

Economic factors are also critical for ensuring the region's long-term viability. Encouraging local entrepreneurship and promoting small-scale enterprises can spread economic benefits to a broader section of the community thereby providing better service to the tourists.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study focuses on the sustainability of the tourism industry in Ella, Sri Lanka, analyzing the impact of economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors. Economic sustainability proves essential, as tourism provides significant income and employment for the local community, contributing to regional development. However, fair distribution of economic benefits among locals is crucial. The study recommends sustainable practices that prioritize tourist experiences over sheer numbers, benefitting the community, respecting the environment, and preserving cultural heritage.

Social sustainability is crucial, requiring collaborative tourism plans that consider local social and cultural values, ensuring community benefit and cultural preservation. Developing sustainable practices that offer employment, training, and capacity building empowers the community's participation and benefits from tourism. Environmental sustainability is critical, given Ella's biodiversity and natural beauty. Sustainable practices must minimize tourism's environmental impact, promote conservation, and preserve the region's natural and cultural heritage. The study advocates for eco-tourism, providing unique experiences while minimizing environmental footprints. Cultural sustainability is important in preserving Ella's cultural heritage. Promoting cultural tourism, engaging tourists with the local community, and providing authentic experiences aid cultural preservation.

Challenges facing the industry in Ella include inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and poor waste management. The study recommends developing infrastructure and services that meet tourist needs while minimizing environmental and community impact. The study identifies economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors influencing the sustainability of Ella's tourism industry. Sustainable practices that integrate these factors are crucial for the industry's long-term viability and the preservation of the region's unique heritage.

Keywords: Cultural factors, economic factors, environmental factors, social factors, sustainable tourism,

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