

## **An Investigative Study on as of Tourism Development on Cultural and Heritage Sites in Sri Lanka**

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### **Introduction**

The tourism industry has become an important industry in Sri Lanka's economy. As a developing country, Sri Lanka is making great efforts to develop tourism as an economic development strategy, targeting important cultural assets and attractions. The development of cultural and heritage attractions is considered as important directions in tourism and Sri Lanka is rich in six cultural world heritage sites declared by UNESCO. The integration of physical and social aspects of cultural landscapes with inherent cultural heritage values are the main motivating factors for tourists. However, nowadays those precious elements and values seem to have declined. Based on this background, the main objective of this study is to discuss about the negative impacts of tourism development on cultural and heritage sites in Sri Lanka. With its rich natural reserves and abundant cultural heritage, Sri Lanka has tremendous potential to offer value-added products that can meet the expectations of the high-end tourism market. Because cultural and heritage sites have different and unique features that make them stand out from other tourist attractions. However, the major concentration of cultural attractions of Sri Lanka lies within a zone called “Sri Lankan Cultural Triangle” in the central and north-central provinces, including Sacred City of Anuradhapura (1982), Ancient City of Polonnaruwa (1982), Golden Temple of Dambulla (1991), Ancient City of Sigiriya (1982), Sacred City of Kandy (1988). The other remaining cultural world heritage site; located beyond the cultural triangle is the Old Town and the Fortress of Galle (1988).

### **Methodology**

The study is carried out in the cultural world heritage sites in Sri Lanka and has adopted a range of data collection methods including document analysis, participatory observation and also gathered secondary data from online. The active participatory observation was used to collect primary data to enable an increased understanding of the behavior of the foreign tourists, officers, tour guides, vendors, pilgrimages (domestic tourists) and others. A two-week effort was made to gather information for this purpose.

### **Results and Discussion**

As a developing country, Sri Lanka faces many difficulties in allocating funds for the maintenance, restoration and development of archaeological and historical sites. Although it is recognized that cultural and heritage contributes to greater economic benefits, there are many problems and issues that need to be effectively addressed regarding the sustainability of the industry. Currently, many economic and socio-cultural negative impacts have emerged in the tourism business. Some of the problems associated with tourism development in cultural and heritage sites such as over-dependence on tourism, conflict of interest, unauthorized construction and alteration, misinterpretation through guidance, poor site

management are some of them. These issues have created dissatisfaction among tourists and ultimately created negative publicity about the destination.

- Negative Economic Impacts

The negative economic impacts of tourism include increased prices of goods and services, increased prices of land and housing, increased cost of living, increased availability of imported labor, additional infrastructure costs (water, electricity, fuel, medical, etc.) Increasing maintenance and transport system costs, creating high-risk or unemployment problems in seasonal tourism, intense competition for land with other (higher-value) economic uses, export of profits by non-local owners, low-wage jobs, etc. Galle and Kandy are two cultural heritage sites facing such negative economic impacts.

- Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts

Potential negative socio-cultural impacts include commoditization and profiteering of culture and traditions, alienation and loss of cultural identity, undermining of local traditions and ways of life, displacement of traditional residents, increased division between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries Tourism, land Conflicts over (and sometimes loss of) access to rights and resources (including attractions), damage to attractions and facilities, loss of authenticity and historical accuracy in interpretation; and the growing selectivity of heritage attractions. Galle Fort, Kandy, Unawatuna are some of the tourist areas that have been affected by such effects. Furthermore, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has strongly highlighted prostitution and sex tourism as negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism development. For various reasons, tourism can bring a dark social and cultural side to a community and have various negative effects on the host culture.

- Negative Environmental Impacts

Loss of natural landscapes and agricultural land to tourism development, loss of open space, and destruction of flora and fauna can have adverse effects on the environment due to air, water, noise, solid waste and visual pollution. Degradation of landscape, historical sites, and monuments, water scarcity, introduction of exotic species, wildlife breeding cycles are negative environmental impacts. Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Dambulla Cave Temple are some of the cultural heritage sites that have been affected by such effects.

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