



## Research Paper

## Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka (With Reference to Cultural Tourism)

Chandrapala M.D.S.H <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>. B.A Special Degree in Buddhist Civilization, Assistant Lecturer, Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. [sachiniansika119@gmail.com](mailto:sachiniansika119@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

One of the largest economic sectors in the world, tourism is a key source of foreign exchange in the majority of nations. Sri Lanka has a long history in the tourism field and is a popular travel destination. One of the key sectors of Sri Lanka's tourism economy is cultural tourism. The issue with the research was the neglect of Sri Lanka's tourism industry's need to promote cultural tourism.

This study used a qualitative data analysis method while taking into account Sri Lanka's overall cultural heritage and history. Secondary sources, dictionaries, academic publications, and online resources pertaining to Sri Lanka's cultural heritage and tourism industry were employed in the qualitative data gathering process. The primary goal of the study was to investigate if cultural tourism is necessary for travel and, in turn, whether Sri Lanka's tourist business needs to be promoted.

The study found that Sri Lanka has seen a significant decline in the number of tourists visiting for cultural tourism. The fact that visitor numbers to the culture sector are falling shows how little attention the government has given to Sri Lanka's cultural tourism sector. To do this, the government must concentrate on preserving the nation's cultural legacy, promoting heritage places, and creating effective strategies to encourage tourists to do so. In the research, it was suggested that travel packages be introduced and that social media be used to promote travel to Sri Lanka and websites to promote cultural heritages. It is undeniably true that Sri Lanka's tourism business will benefit from cultural tourism.

**Key words:** Culture, Cultural Tourism, Heritages, Management, Tourism Industry

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 31 December 2022

Accepted 31 May 2023

Available online 01 October 2023

### 1. Introduction

Sri Lanka has long been a popular travel destination, and today, the country's economy is mostly driven by tourism. Tourism can be divided into categories based on the reason for the trip, including leisure, sports/adventure, health, education, business, spiritual, and cultural tourism. Cultural tourism, which includes all travel-related activities in which people go to learn about one another's cultures, beliefs, and thoughts, is important to the tourism industry. Cultural aspects can be thought of as the way a nation presents itself to tourists.

The study of cultural tourism in Sri Lanka and the necessity to manage it effectively for the growth of the tourism industry are the central hypotheses of this research. Because of the

current state of the nation, the state now has a need for the tourism industry. The Sri Lankan tourism sector is crucial to the country's economic growth, and it is this sector that primarily draws tourists to the nation. The research was put together using primary and secondary materials, dictionaries, and articles about tourism and cultural tourism. The

primary goal of the research was to conduct a research inquiry. The research problem was the tourism industry's lack of attention to promoting cultural tourism.

### 2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative data analysis method while taking into account Sri Lanka's overall cultural heritage.

Secondary sources, dictionaries, academic publications, and online resources pertaining to Sri Lanka's cultural heritage and tourism industry were employed in the qualitative data collection.

### 3. Result and Discussion

Tourism industry is the largest industry of the world and the third in the international trade. Tourism industry is used by most developed and developing countries as a media of earning foreign exchange which reinforces their economic stability by today. The term 'tourism' means the temporary movement of people to a destination from their residence place. Following definitions will be proved a further idea about what is tourism.

World Tourism Organization (1993) defines tourism as "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". (Harris and Howard, 1996, p.154)

World Tourism Organization defines an international tourist as "anybody who visits another country for more than 24 hours but less than one year irrespective of travel purpose". (Madana Bandara, 2003, p.01)

Since ancient times, Sri Lanka has drawn tourists. Sri Lanka is regarded as one of the most well-liked tourist destinations in the region because of its beautiful beaches, varied landscapes, and rich cultural heritage.

Tourists are drawn to the area because of its location and natural beauty. According to the accounts of Fa-Hien, Marco Polo, and Iban Bathutha, Sri Lanka has long been a popular tourist destination. The island's position in the middle of a shipping route and its population as a major global commercial hub are what led to the increase in tourists.

Because of foreign tourists who came to Sri Lanka for having natural aesthetic, good climate, spiritual comfort, simple life, rest, delicious food, hospitality, historical and religious values, tourism industry of Sri Lanka developed gradually. By today, tourism industry has been become as the major force of the Sri Lankan economy and it has been become as a job making media and one of main foreign exchange earning media.

#### ➤ Objectives of tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka

The reasons why people visit Sri Lanka vary weekly depending on the weather, society, and surroundings. Most tourists come to Sri Lanka for relaxation, fun, and to see beautiful sights, among other delightful goals. Due to climate change and to escape their mundane lives, the majority of European visitors visit Asian countries. Particularly, traveler arrivals to Sri Lanka between September and April based on the aforementioned grounds. There are several reasons why tourists decide to travel to Sri Lanka for recreational purposes. Among the reasons to choose Sri Lanka are the beach with lovely sand dunes, the beauty of the central highland regions, old ancient cities, religious and cultural attractions, elegant people, and delectable food.

As well as, there are various objects of travelling Sri Lanka by tourist such as;

- Pleasure
- Business
- Visiting friends and relations
- Conventions and meetings
- Sports
- Health
- Education
- Religious and cultural
- Official

According to the statistic reports of the department of immigration and emigration, the maximum amounts of tourists travel Sri Lanka with the purpose of pleasure and holiday during 2010-2019. In 2019, 83.20% amounts of tourists have come for the purpose of pleasure. As well as, minimum numbers of tourists have come for education, official, convention and meeting, sports and religious and cultural such purposes as it is depicted in appendix 1.

#### ➤ Cultural Tourism

Culture can be known as the social heritage of the human. It helps to distinguish one community from another. Culture such as knowledge and attitudes which comes from the tradition is given to the next generation. The wealth of knowledge and attitudes we acquire as we adapt to society all being to culture. The human is known as a cultural being by the social scientists because of human beings adjust their behavioral style according to the common behavioral pattern in where they live.

The term 'culture' means well-built together and it has been derived from the term 'kultur' in the German language. Firstly, E.B Tylor has been introduced the term 'culture' to English language in his book named the 'primitive culture'. Sociologists and anthropologists have been presented various interpretations on the culture as follows;

- "Culture is the whole, including the knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, habits and attitudes acquired as an individual in society".
- "Culture is the whole way of life in a society".
- "Culture is the whole of the consumer goods associated with human imagination, beliefs and customs".
- "Culture is the way how a group of people is recognized within a given lifestyle.
- "Culture is the sum totals of all membership functions, such as language in general, the etiquette of marriage, the art of etiquette, and so on".
- Culture is the sum of man's tasks, customs and beliefs".
- "Culture is faith thought methods applied arts lifestyles traditions and socially accepted practices".

The culture can be identified as a universal concept because it appears everywhere in the world. Any country has hereditary cultural aspects and it shows the national and historical identity of own country to the world. The following three approaches are important in the study of culture.

1. Sociological approach
2. Anthropological approach
3. Aesthetic approach

Sociologically, culture is the sum of man's way of life and way of thinking. The anthropological approach acknowledges that the culture of people living in a society can be identified by studying their behavior patterns. According to the aesthetic approach, culture can be identified by studying the aesthetic or recreational party of a human society. Examples are the folk poetry, dramas, paintings and sculptures found in the Sri Lankan society.

Social anthropologists have categorized the culture into two parts for the comfort of the study as follows;

1. Material culture (foods, clothes, art, architecture)
2. Immaterial culture (beliefs, offerings, customs, symbols)

Material culture refers to the tangible cultural elements that can touch. It includes a variety of man-made cultural tools. Immaterial culture is the intangible attitudes, beliefs, customs and traditions, lifestyles and ethics etc. Both two types of culture are important for any culture.

Above material and immaterial culture of a country can be used for making a good thought towards tourists for the tourism industry. Tourists travel countries for visiting new places and for watching new things in curiosity. There are interested in looking cultural and historical places for having pleasure or knowledge. That role is done under the form of cultural tourism.

People are always curious to know more about foreign lands, their people and their culture. Culture is one of the most significant factors which attract tourists to a destination. Culture in terms of tourism gives the tourist an insight into the;

- Way of life or lifestyle of the people which one can experience;
- Dress, jewelers, dance, music, architecture, and painting and;
- Customs and beliefs, fairs and festivals, and religion practiced in the region. (Roday, Sunethra, 2009, p.46).

Cultural tourism covers all those aspects of travel whereby people travel to learn about each other's ways of life, their beliefs and thoughts. The food, beverages, hospitality, crafts, etc. appeal to the travellers. Tourism is an important aspect for promoting cultural relations and international cooperation. The way in which a country represents itself to tourists can be considered as its cultural factors.

Cultural tourism includes widening one's knowledge about other places and people, their ways of life, their cultures and includes journeys to places of art and heredity treasures, religious shrines and other civilizations, interest in religion, philosophy, history etc. to participate in cultural events such as art festivals and celebrations- music, theater, dance, folklore, festivals etc. (Roday, Sunethra, 2009, p.47).

## Cultural tourism in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, Cultural tourism is one of form of tourism which attracts tourists to the country. Specially, with the introduction of the open economy policy by the president J.R Jayewardene in 1977, a formal order was prepared for applying cultural valuable things for the tourism industry. As well as, Sri Lankan Tourism Board has been introduced seven tourists zones in the country as follows;

1. Colombo city associated zone
2. Greater Colombo associated zone
3. South coastal zone
4. East coastal zone
5. Central highlands
6. Old city zone
7. North zone

These areas include Horton Plains, Sigiriya, Pasikudah, Kandy, Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura, Trincomale, Unawatuna, Hikkaduwa, Sinharaja, Udawalawe National; Park, Vilpalthu, Katharagama and many more. Out of the above zones, Colombo and Central Colombo suburbs are the major tourist attractions for seminars and business purposes. Apart from that, other parts of the country are more attracted to the beauty of the environment and the sights of historical shrines.

With the introduction of central cultural fund in 1980, the Sri Lankan government directed to use cultural heritages for the uplift of the tourism in Sri Lanka. As a result of that, the cultural triangle was formed based on old ancient places such as Anuradapura, Polonnaruwa and Kandy. Those world heritages which are belonged to cultural triangle can be categorized as follows,

1. Alive religious cities (Anuradapura, Polonnaruwa)
2. Historical old cities (Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya)
3. Old cave temples ( Rangiri Dambulla)

Further, Gigantic temples, ruins of structures in ancient cities, spectacular cave temples and wall paintings of beautiful maidens at the Sigiriya rock fortress, the ever famous Cultural Triangle is a place where travellers can marvel upon the World Heritage Sites within a small area.

The ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa proudly display the archaeological legacy of Sri Lanka. The former royal empire, Kandy, is known as the cultural hub of the country. A major port of arrival, at a bygone era, the city of Galle, houses some of the most prominent and fascinating colonial monuments of Sri Lanka. The excellent craftsmanship is portrayed in the spectacular wood carving, weaving, pottery and metalwork. Sri Lankan ves muhunu (masks) are hand made in the city of Ambalangoda, and these make for the perfect souvenir. Ratnapura is a town made famous by the exquisite gems.

### ➤ Cultural Heritages

The human civilization inherits a continuous history that has developed step by step and there are many things that have been passed down from generation to generation as

heritage. Heritage is a cultural aspect or tradition that has been passed down through generations.

- Sarasavi- Sinhala Dictionary defines the term heritage as “the hereditary claim, ownership, and accredited claim”.
- Heritage is “right, ownership”. (Sri Sumangala, Madithiwela,1965).
- In pali, heritage means “Dāyajja” (Sri Sumangala, Madithiwela,1965).
- Heritage is “inheritance, genetics, inherent quality and inheritable” (Malalasekara English Sinhala Dictionary,2000)
- The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘heritage’ as “property that is or may be inherited; an inheritance’, ‘valued things such as historic buildings that have been passed down from previous generations’, and ‘relating to things of historic or cultural value that are worthy of preservation”.

Above definitions prove that the heritage means something that is passed down from preceding generations; a tradition endowed with the art, buildings, traditions, and beliefs that a society considers important to its history and culture. As well as, it is maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. Heritage is a keystone of our culture that plays an important role.

Heritage has divided for three sections such as, Natural, cultural and mixed world heritages by UNESCO. But, following Natural and cultural heritages are the two main types of heritages.

#### 1. Natural Heritage

Natural sites with cultural aspects such as cultural landscapes, physical, biological or geological formations

#### 2. Cultural Heritage

Cultural Heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. These cultural heritages are different from one country to other country.

Cultural Heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values.

In the cultural tourism, cultural heritage management is identifying, protecting and conducting cultural heritages not giving to demolish for the future generation and for using such heritages for the development of the tourism industry. According to that, religious and cultural heritage should be identified and properly protected in the heritage management. It also identifies, interprets, maintains and preserves tangible and intangible cultural heritage under cultural heritage management. Our heritage comprises;

1. The tangible - our historical sites, buildings, monuments, objects in museum artifacts and archives.
2. The natural - our waterways, landscapes, woodlands, bogs, uplands, native wildlife, insects, plants, trees, birds and animals.
3. The intangible - our customs, sports, music, dance, folklore, crafts, skills, and knowledge.

Our tangible, intangible and natural heritage and all the associated myths, legends, traditions, and memories provide us with a common language and insight that enables us to communicate on a deep level with each other and to express ourselves in a unique way to the outside world.

Not only that but also the heritage management and tourism are two concepts that are inextricably linked. Heritage tourism, art tourism, indigenous tourism such all sectors are belonged to the cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism is not only about experiencing past cultural creations, but also about experiencing the contemporary culture or life style of a particular group of people or religion. Cultural tourism includes heritage tourism which deals with ancient mythology and art tourism which combines contemporary cultural creations.

Managing the cultural heritage that contributes to the cultural tourism industry of Sri Lanka contributes to the advancement of the tourism industry and can also increase the economic benefits by increasing the number of tourists visiting Sri Lanka.

Even Sri Lanka is a country which consisted enormous cultural heritages, the amount of tourists who travel to Sri Lanka for visiting cultural sites is lack. The most number of tourists come to Sri Lanka with the purpose of having pleasure and spending holiday. But, it is sad to say that, the amount of tourists for the cultural tourism has been decreased by today even Sri Lanka is a culturally and religiously valuable country. Minimum numbers of tourists come to Sri Lanka for cultural and religious section as it is depicted in annual reports of Department of Immigration and Emigration.

In 2013, 4.8% number of tourists has come to Sri Lanka for visiting cultural and religious places and when we look at the past ten years, it is the maximum number of tourists who travel Sri Lanka for the religious and cultural section. In 2015 and 2016 years, the amount of tourists is 0.0%. So, it is proved that how the situation of the cultural tourism in Sri Lanka which consisted many historical religious and cultural monuments and sites. In 2018, the amount of tourists for cultural tourism is 0.09 and in 2019. Further the amount of tourists for cultural tourism has been decreased into 0.03. Therefore, it is essential to actuate a formal plan to promote cultural tourism and to increase the amount of tourists for the section of cultural tourism. (See Appendix 1)

## 4. Conclusion

Sri Lankan tourism includes a significant portion of cultural tourism. It is crucial to the tourism industry. Sri Lanka is rich

in cultural diversity, yet there aren't enough visitors coming for cultural tourism. To promote both Sri Lankan tourism and cultural heritage sites, a well-organized management structure is required. Using the historical importance of such locations to promote them in the tourism sector, creating packages for the visitors to visit, and setting up a tourist agency are some of the cultural tourism promotion tactics that were established following the research. To effectively assist tourists, it is necessary to have advisors who are knowledgeable about the significance of the cultural heritage places. It is obvious that proper management of cultural heritages can promote the growth of cultural tourism. Then the culture would spread around the world, and Sri Lanka's tourism sector would prosper.

## 5. References

Bandara, Herath Madana, 2003, *Tourism Planning in Sri Lanka*, Malvana, R.S Printek Pvt Ltd.

Harris and Howard, 1996, *Dictionary of Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Terms* (1<sup>st</sup> ed), Hospitality Press.

**Malalasekara English Sinhala Dictionary**,(2000)Colombo,M.D Gunasena and company.

Rev. Sri Sumangala, Madithiwela,(1965),**Pali Sinhala Dictionary**,Colombo, M.D Gunasena and company.

Sunetra, Roday, (2009),**Tourism operations and management**, New Delhi, Oxfard University Press.

**The Free Dictionary [Online]** Available from <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/paper+currency#:~:t=1,as%20a%20substi+tute%20for%20specie>. [Accessed on 31st August 2020].

## Appendix 1

Annual Report- Percentage Distributions of Tourists by Purpose of Visit 2006-2019

Purpose	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Pleasure/Holiday	78.9	80.4	74.4	72.7	67.95	66.6	83.4	82.4	81.72	83.20
Business	12.7	8.0	9.0	5.2	1.33	1.3	1.8	3.3	3.95	3.65
Visiting Friends and Relations	5.4	8.2	11.7	12.4	27.45	25.5	11.5	11.3	1.84	1.48
Convention and Meeting	1.0	1.7	2.2	2.0	0.29	0.3	0.8	1.3	1.71	0.99
Religious and Cultural	0.8	0.3	2.2	4.8	0.01	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.09	0.03
Health	-	-	-	-	0.53	3.2	0.6	0.5	0.89	0.59
Sports	-	-	-	-	0.53	0.7	0.4	0.8	0.64	0.72
Official	-	-	-	-	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.06	0.01
Education	-	-	-	-	0.11	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.06	0.32
Others	1.2	1.4	0.5	2.9	1.49	1.7	1.2	0.0	0.04	0.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Department of Immigration and Emigration

## Appendix 2

Tourism growth trends 2010-2019

Year	Tourist Arrivals	Tourist Nights (,000)	Official Tourist Receipts			Receipt per Tourist per day in US\$	Employment	
			Rs.Mn.	US\$ Mn.	SDR Units Mbn.		Direct	Indirect (Estimated)
2010	654,476	6,548	65,018.0	575.9	376.9	88.0	55,023	77,032
2011	855,975	8,560	91,926.0	838.9	530.2	98.0	57,786	80,899
2012	1,005,605	10,056	132,427.0	1,038.3	677.7	103.0	67,862	95,007
2013	1,274,593	10,909	221,147.1	1,715.5	1,128.8	156.5	112,550	157,600
2014	1,527,153	15,119	317,501.7	2,431.1	1,600.3	160.8	129,790	170,100
2015	1,798,380	18,163	405,492.0	2,980.6	2,129.7	164.1	135,930	183,506
2016	2,050,832	20,918	512,593.6	3,518.5	2,531.3	168.2	146,115	189,544
2017	2,116,407	23,068	598,356.0	3,924.9	2,499.4	170.1	156,369	202,846
2018	2,333,796	25,205	712,027.3	4,380.6	3,097.1	173.8	169,003	219,484
2019*	1,913,702	19,902	646,362.3	3,606.9	2,611.1	181.2	173,592	229,015

\*Provisional

Source: Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority