

Study on Lodging and Food and Beverage Facilities Available for Tourists in North Central Province

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Introduction

The Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka covers a number of major tourist attractive sites namely; Kandy, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Girithale, Sigiriya and Dambulla. The annual room occupancy rates in the area during 1997 and 1998 were around 47% and 55% respectively. These rates take third lowest place with respect to the occupation rates in the Colombo region during the same period. Moreover, it shows a steady increase in occupancy rates in the area over the decade from 1987. During this period, the numbers of excursion have increased from 2,417 to 18,265, despite the prevailing war situation in the country (Statistical reports, 1987, 1997).

On the other hand, domestic tourism in Sri Lanka is on the increase, with the change in the socio-economic structure of the country. The Tourist Board has identified that the major tourist destinations in Sri Lanka are Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Dambulla, Sigiriya, Kataragama, Nuwara Eliya and Kandy, which covers many of the areas belonging to the cultural triangle. Nights spent by local guests in the area during the year 1997 were 18,225 and are the highest in comparison with the South Coast, Hill Country and Colombo region. (Statistical report 1997).

The trend in the growth of tourism in the area is also indicated by the growth of the service sector such as hotels, inns and guesthouses. The Tourist Board is the only government institution that collects information and keeps close supervision on the activities of some of these establishments. However, accommodation and food service facilities available in the establishments that are not under the registration of the Tourist Board seemed to be ignored, even though they contribute to some extent.

It is timely, therefore, to evaluate the extent, suitability and improvements of such establishments in order to strengthen the catering capacity in the area. Therefore, the prime objective of this study is to evaluate the facilities existing in both Tourist Board registered and non-registered small units functioning in the tourist attractive major cities of the North Central Province.

Materials and Methods

Accommodation units located in the tourist attractive main cities in the North Central Province (NCP) were the target places of the survey. These included inns, guesthouses and hotels in and around Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Habarana-Girithale, Dambulla and Sigiriya. Registration of the establishment in town and urban councils of the respective area were taken into consideration in tracing the location of the establishment. Direct personal interviews were the method of data collection and were carried out by visiting all the establishments in the area concerned. The questionnaire was designed in such a way to collect detailed information on rooms and room charges, food and beverage facilities and their charges, employment status, educational backgrounds, other extra facilities and waste disposal systems. House keepers, restaurant managers, supervisory staff and in some units, the managers had also been questioned.

Number of Accommodation Units

Among the areas subjected to the study, Anuradhapura was found to have as high as 55 units in and around the city. Of this total there was a number of different categories such as guesthouses, inns, hotels and restaurants and they were in number 33, 12, 08 and 02 respectively (Table 1). These units contribute to about 32% of the rooms available in NCP. Polonnaruwa being the city having the second highest number with 19 units of which there were 11 guesthouses, 4 inns and 3 hotels but the number of rooms availability accounted for only 11.3% of total. The total number of units in the Dambulla area was 17 and they were 7 inns, 5 guesthouses, 4 hotels and 1 rest house. This number accounts for 17% of the rooms in NCP. Habarana and Girithale was a location having 6 graded hotels, 4 guesthouses, 2 inns and 1 rest house with a total of 13 units that accounted for 25% of the contribution of the rooms. Within the city limits of Sigiriya there were 9 units of which there were, 3 hotels, 3 guesthouses, 2 inns and 1 rest house. The room contribution to the area was 13.5%.

Table 1. Number of accommodation units in North Central Province

Location	Inns	Guesthouse	Rest houses	Hotels	Total	Room contributi (%)
Sigiriya	02	03	01	03	9	13.5
Dambulla	07	05	01	04	17	17.0
Herbaria/Girithale	02	04	01	04	13	25.0
Polonnaruwa	04	11	01	03	19	11.3
Anuradhapura	12	33	02	08	55	32.0

The total number of rooms available in the study area is nearly 2000. In Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Habarana, Girithale, Dambulla and Sigiriya, the numbers of rooms available are 648, 226, 503, 340 and 268 respectively. It was also found that most of the

guesthouses and inns functioning in the area (65%) are home conversions and consequently the facilities in these units are sparse and operate under low standards. The percentage of low standard rooms in Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura, Dambulla, Sigiriya and Habarana - Girithale are 65%, 50%, 20%, 13% and 9% respectively. The least number of low standard rooms in Habarana - Girithale area is due to the availability of graded hotels in the area.

The Tourist Board approved hotels located in the area under this study provides about 1265 of hotel rooms and is 10% of the national availability. Tourist Board estimation for the year 1998 was around 1238 and shows a 2% increase during 1999. It should be stated that around 25 smaller units, designated as inns and guesthouses and holiday homes mainly in Anuradhapura, Dambulla and Sigiriya had been functioning as brothel houses and they declined to give information.

Registration of Hotels

Table 2 shows that 74 % of the inns and 79% of the guesthouses in the North Central Province are under the registration of local authorities either on urban councils or Pradeshiya councils. This has lead to operating these units with a low standard of facilities and therefore it was a distinct feature that there was no difference between inns and guesthouses with respect to their facilities. Therefore, most of these units cater for short-time occupants during daytime, frequently for illicit couples and during night time for sale representatives. In Anuradhapura and Dambulla it was observed well.

Table 2. Percent registration

Grade												
Unit	A	B	C	Non	1s	2s	3s	4s	5s	Non	Tourist Board.	Local Auth.
Inns	19	7	-	74	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	74
Guest house	9	5	7	79	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	79
Rest house	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	-
Hotels	-	-	-	-	21	8	21	8	4	37	100	-

Of those units under the registration of the Tourist Board, 26% of the inns and 21% of the guesthouses had obtained either A, B or C grades. The majority of the inns and guesthouses are under the classification of A. As the Tourist Board supervises these, and facilities are satisfactorily maintained for the local and foreign guests with adequate furniture.

In the area studied, there were about 15 star graded hotels and of these there were five 1 star hotels, two 2 star hotels, five 3 star hotels, two 4 star hotels and one 5 star hotel. The five star hotel was located in Kandalama; the majority of 4 star hotels in Habarana while many 3 star hotels were located in Girithale and Sigiriya. Many of the 2 star hotels were in and around Anuradhapura. It was also observed that the facilities in these hotels are satisfactory to cater for local and foreign guests, these included AC, telephone, TV and, in some units, a minibar.

Room Charges

It was evident that guests enjoyed lowest prices in an inn. The next highest prices were found in guesthouses and then in order, rest house and hotels. An average rate for an inn for a local person was about Rs. 560 with a variation from Rs. 310 - 850. For a foreigner it was Rs. 640 with a variation in Rs. 400 - 900. This also shows that the charge for a foreigner was approximately Rs.100 greater than that for a local person. The highest price was encountered in the Polonnaruwa area and the lowest in Dambulla. The guesthouses charge Rs.720 and Rs. 900 as an average for local and foreigner respectively. The price range for locals was Rs 500 - 1000 and foreigners it was in the range Rs. 600 - 1350. The highest prices were exercised in Sigiriya and the lowest in Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura. The charges in the rest houses were nearly Rs. 1000 and generally high prices are attributed to the rest houses in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. It was also noticed that the number of inns and guesthouses in the locality seemed to be a factor in determining charges rather than the facilities offered.

Table 3. Average room charges (Rs.)

	Locals	Range	Foreigners	Range
Inns	560	310- D 850- P	640	400- D 900- P
Guest Houses	720	500- P 1000- S	900	600- P 1350- S
Rest Houses	1000	500- H 1700- P, A	1000	550- H 1800- P.A
Hotels	2400	1800- A 4200- D	3150	1900- A. P. 5000- D

D- Dambulla
A- Anuradapura

P- Polonnaruwa
H - Herbaria

S- Sigiriya

Type of Cuisine and Type of Menu

Inns and guesthouses generally cater for Sri Lankan, Western and Chinese cuisines. In general, 50% of these establishments serve *Al' a Carte* menu and a few provide a buffet. Almost all the hotels served a *table d' hote*, *Al' a Carte* and frequently a buffet.

Table 4 shows that one could enjoy a meal at the lowest price in an inn. The price for a set menu increased in order from guesthouse through to rest houses and hotels. Breakfast was offered at the rate of nearly Rs. 75 both at inns and guesthouses. In hotels, the average price was Rs. 250. Dinner or Lunch from an inn is valued about Rs. 110, in guesthouses it was Rs. 160 and in hotels the average was more than Rs. 250. Whilst prices increased with the star grading of the hotel. The price of a set menu offered in inns, guesthouses and rest houses for a foreigner was no different from the local's rate and was nearly Rs.50. In the hotels the same meal was about Rs. 100.

Table 4. Average prices for set menu (Rs.)

	Breakfast		Lunch		Dinner	
	Local	Foreign	Local	foreign	Local	foreign
Inns	77	94	109	150	108	145
Guest Houses	79	110	160	187	151	195
Rest Houses	100	125	210	260	220	250
Hotels	200	296	390	443	482	517

Employee Analysis

Table 5 shows that employee numbers are approximately 2000 with 75% of these employed in hotels. The rest are employed in guesthouses, inns and rest houses. The Dambulla area being the highest contributor for employment generation providing about 460 positions. Of these, 300 are working in the Kandalama hotel. The other figures are 384, 326, 321 and 72 from the areas of Girithale - Habarana, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa respectively. It was also found that 75% of the total manpower in the area employed in hotels are permanent staff. This shows that the skills and experience of employees are the primary concern of employers in this field. At the time of this study about 6% of trainees were involved with on the job training and were from the hotel schools and National Apprentice Board.

Table 5. Total employee number in each area

Place	Inn	Guest H.	Hotels	Total
Sigiriya	04	22	321	347
Dambulla	13	24	460	497
Girithale Habarana	09	21	384	414
Polonnaruwa	31	38	72	141
Anuradhapura	35	174	326	562

Table 6. Qualification status of employees in percentages

	Waiters	Cooks	Chefs	Supervisors	Managers
Up to O/L	84	84	33	66	31
A/L	08	11	28	22	42
Hotel School	08	05	39	09	17
Degree	-	-	-	02	09

Table 6 shows that the majority of employees had studied up to 'O' level or were qualified to 'O' level standard. This comprised waiters, cooks, chefs, supervisor grades and a few managers. Twenty two percent of the supervisors and 42% of the managers have qualified in A/L examination or studied up to A/L. Table 6 also shows that the majority of the executives in the kitchen hold hotel school diplomas. 2% of the supervisors and 9% of the managers were qualified to degree level.

15% of employees had hotel school qualifications, even though several star graded hotels functioning in the area were overwhelmingly in the greater part of the cultural triangle. A probable cause as to why there are a smaller number of hotel school diploma holders is that the war situation in the north has affected their earning potential. The flow of well-trained staff to occupy the hotels in the southern region seems to be unavoidable. The study also revealed that some university graduates were also employed in the trade. At present this accounts for nearly 2% of the total. These employees hold positions in the supervisory and managerial grades.

Other Services

Of the 125 units that were surveyed, only 43 units (34%) possess a license to sell local and foreign liquor while 14 units have a license to sell beer only. Local and foreign liquor is sold under license by 24 hotels, 8 inns 11 guesthouses and all the rest houses. However, their view was that they serve beer even without a license. With regard to conference facilities, 16 hotels had conference halls, with an average utilisation of 8 conferences a year. In 56 guesthouse and 10 inns there were function halls, particularly for catering for wedding ceremonies.

Regarding other facilities, 16 hotels maintain swimming pools and they have the facilities for on-call doctors, recreation centres and Ayurvedic treatment centres. From the survey it was understood that star hotels are environmentally friendly as an example of good practice and to reverse the negative attitudes of local people, waste water and solid waste matter were disposed of in a systematic way.

Conclusion

Nearly 75% of the inns, guesthouses and almost all hotels operating in the area were registered under one of the local authorities concerned. However, the establishment under Tourist Board registration maintains adequate facilities up to a satisfactory level. Hence in the improvement of the facilities and the accommodation sector in the area, the attention of the Tourist Board should be drawn through registration regulations. Apart from this, encouragement of the management for Tourist Board Registration would also be a measure in the course of promotion. Even though there were about 130 establishments in the NCP, only 113 had been able to be accessed for information. Particularly the accommodation units functioning for prostitution were not added. In Sigiriya, Habarana and Girithale, there were lesser number of small accommodation units' i.e. as inns and guesthouses. Therefore, there are opportunities for new entrepreneurs to enter the industry to cater for particular segments of the market. These new ventures would appear to be viable as room charges in the area were found to be comparatively high. On the other hand, in Anuradhapura, the number of smaller, low standard units, were greater than the potential market required. Having more units than tourist's demand has caused some owners to engage in malpractice.

The most noticeable feature observed from the survey was that in both room charges and food and beverages, prices increased with the title of the establishment. Usually, inns charged lower rates while hotels charged higher prices and medium prices in guesthouses. In the star hotels, it was apparent that the higher the grade the rates also increased. There was sufficient evidence from the survey results to support the fact that the number of units available in the area and the area itself has an effect in the variability in prices. Inns located in Dambulla area offered facilities at cheaper rates whilst in Polonnaruwa the opposite was the case. Rest houses in Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura

charged substantially higher prices while hotels in the Anuradhapura area charged lower prices.

Room charges for locals and foreigners did not appear to show a difference in the inns and guesthouses. In star hotels, however, there appeared to be difference of about Rs. 600; the variation in price depended on the star grade. The difference in food and beverage varied by about Rs.100 to 200 for the set menu.

There were about 2000 employees directly occupied in the area studied. Nearly one fourth of the work force was concentrated around Dambulla and this high figure is due to the work force of 300 employees from the Kandalama Hotel. This indicated that five star operations provide more employment opportunities for the people in the area. Other five star hotels that are emerging provide not only increased job opportunities, but also attract increasing tourist numbers to the area.

The most salient feature found with employees was that nearly 31% of the managers, 66% supervisors and 33% of the chefs were qualified up to 'O' level standard. The survey also revealed that the dearth of technically and academically qualified staff in an area was one of the constraints in the process of upgrading activities directly related to the industry.

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