

# Sustainable Tourism Development in Jaffna District

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism has been as tool to promote socio economic development. Tourism generates employment opportunities and it helps to enhance the livelihood of the host community. In fact, poverty alleviation, export generation, job creation, investment stimulation, and promoting socio-cultural understanding, peace and harmony within the nation are being done through tourism development. This study investigates the post war regional tourism development in Jaffna District. Data has been collected through field visit interviews with various stakeholders. The result of this study reveals that tourism made a substantial contribution to regional economic and intercultural promotion in Jaffna District. Consequently, this study provides suggestions on how to improve economic and socio cultural development through sustainable tourism development in Jaffna following decades of civil war.

**Keywords:** Sustainable tourism; Socio culture; Environment and Poverty alleviation

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Sri Lanka is one of the leading industries and has been an integral component of economic development. Recently, tourist arrivals throughout Sri Lanka continue to increase. Recent Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) figures show that in the 2017, tourist arrivals of 2.25 million to Sri Lanka, representing an increase of 17.5 percent in the 2016 figures for the country Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2016) [1]. Undoubtedly, in Sri Lanka, particularly in Jaffna, tourism has been an emerging sector aftermath of civil war. Generally, Tourists arrivals to the war affected countries, including Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Germany and Franceboom continuously [2,3]. Such growth has been justified by many researchers, including Australian researchers Logan and Reeves indicate that aftermath of civil war, stakeholders, including state, soldiers, host community and other social elements have paid more attention to preserve war related memories [4]. Domestic and international tourists alike in war affected countries are having an enthusiasm to know sad full and shame full history of the nation or state and they search the causes for civil war. Further, much of tourism literature to date makes the point that many battlefields not only in Asia but also in other regions have become the popular tourist destinations [3-8]. Many scholars, within the tourism literature, have discussed the importance of sustainable tourism development in various views. For example, Sharpley and Ussi (2014) believe that tourism is seen as a major source to economic development. Similarly, as noted by Binns and Nel (2002) "the promotion of tourism has been identified as a key strategy that can lead to economic up liftment, community development relief in

developing world" [9]. It should be noted that investors' perception, tourism can generate economic advantages with a comparatively small amount investment when compared to other business investment options. Income distribution and poverty alleviation, however, particularly in developing nations, are serious unsettled issues [10,11]. Tourism in Sri Lanka is a one of the faster growing industries, and is fourth largest foreign-exchange earner in 2015(Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2016) [1]. However, over the last four decades, growth of this industry was fluctuated due to political unrest. In the case of Jaffna, presently, this industry has been received more attention. However, tourism industry in the district faces some challenges as it attempts to reposition itself as a leading sustainable tourist destination in the post war years, there are: lack of infrastructure facilities, poor institutional arrangement, ineffective marketing promotion, lack of interaction between tourists and the local community, poor environmental protection schemes and limited public private participation. In fact, this study investigates how sustainable tourism development influences on economic and socio-cultural development in Jaffna district. It should be noted that as mentioned by Pushparatnam Jaffna culture, historical background, heritage and war memories became most credible tools to attract domestic and international tourists [12]. Jaffna District (JD), which has been seen as most popular cultural identity of Tamil community, is situated in the Northern region some 462 km from the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo. Administratively, JD, which consists of fifteen divisional secretariats offices. The total district population is 610,640 and 78.8 percent of the population is in rural and remaining 21.2

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percent live in the urban areas. This study has been undertaken in Jaffna district.

### Sustainable tourism development

The concept of sustainable development implies balancing environmental protection with the generation of increased opportunities for employment and improved livelihoods. Within the tourism literature, the concept of sustainable development have been defined in different ways [13-16]. For example, Eber defines sustainable tourism as below [17]: tourism and associated infrastructures that: both now and in the future operate within natural capacities for the regeneration and future productivity of natural resources; recognize the contribution that people and communities, customs and lifestyles, make to the tourism experience; accept that these people must have an equitable share in the economic benefits of local people and communities in the host areas.

When stated this way, sustainable tourism is connected with a resource management process. In other words, it talks about preservation of resources such as natural and cultural heritage suggesting that sustainable tourism is a managerial concept. Its application is formed by a collection of principles and policies [18]. Bramwell notes that “sustainable tourism is regularly linked with the preservation of ecosystems, the promotion of human welfare, inter and intra-generational equity, and public participation in decision-making” [19]. Such improvements facilitate regional and national development.

Recently many sustainable-tourism researchers have emphasized its importance [20-24]. Because of this, sustainable tourism can produce valuable contributions to national development at a federal economic - policy level and to host communities at a local level. For example, Lee articulates that sustainable tourism development helps to promote the satisfaction of tourists and improve the quality of host-community life [25]. Likewise, Lordkipanidze, Brezet, and Backman (2005) emphasize that sustainable tourism facilitates regional development and in the process creates new entrepreneurs [26]. Similarly, McKercher (2003) points out that sustainable tourism creates the foundation to safeguard biodiversity and preserve man-made heritage destinations [27]. As well, Neto explains how sustainable tourism is used as a powerful policy driver to minimise negative environmental impact and maximise socio-economic benefits at tourist destinations [28].

“Tourism is a global industry involving hundreds of millions of people in international as well as domestic travel each year” [29]. In fact, tourism, a worldwide industry, however, is influenced by forces of economic, politics and culture. Tourism is linked with cultural nationalism and also plays a major role in both “imaging” and “recreation” of national cultures in Asia [30]. Many researchers, within tourism literature, have discussed impact of tourism. “The impacts of tourism can be positive or beneficial, but also negative detrimental. Whether impacts are perceived as positive or negative depends on the value position and judgment of the observer of the impacts” [29]. Tourism development has an impact on human as well as natural environment. Generally, human environment consists of economic, and socio cultural factors. Natural environment is built up by plant and animals [29]. Some Sri Lankan based researchers emphasized that negative impact is relatively higher than positive impact of tourism in Sri Lankan coastal areas. Attanayake, Samaranyake, and Ratnapala (1983) focused on common issues of socio economic impact of tourism [31]. Their study indicated that

tourism development is economically providing more advantage to the host community. It, however, leads to damage socio- culture of the Sri Lankan community. Silva (1978) points out that tourism creates following key negative impacts: increasing environmental pollution; spreading of drugs, drug addiction; and increasing prostitution [32]. Meanwhile his study articulates that tourism opened a great market opportunity to local product like traditional art and handicraft. Homosexuality, prostitution, drug addiction have been increased due to the development of tourism [31,33]. Recent Sri Lankan based studies have underlined the significance of development of tourism: as noted by Reeves and Sivesan (2017), tourism continues to facilitate the revitalization of cultural heritage industry and also uplift the host community’s life standards [34]. Further, their study emphasized that it should be noted that regional economic integration can be built through development of tourism in all the regions. Through development of post war tourism, foreign direct investment and foreign exchange earnings also have rapidly been grown up. However, Buultjens, Ratnayake, and Gnanapala argue that “a number of post-conflict tourism initiatives appear to be discriminatory [35]. The government has concentrated on attracting large-scale investment in resort style development and infrastructure construction that will support the expansion of the industry”. Fernando, Bandara, and Smith observe that “there is no doubt that the Sri Lankan tourism sector can play a vital role in the post-war inclusive development strategy in terms of generating much needed foreign exchange, poverty alleviation via employment generation, accelerating economic growth and uplifting living standards of all Sri Lankan” [36]. The tourism industry in Sri Lanka generates larger amount of employment opportunity. The evidence, in 2015 direct and indirect jobs in the tourism industry is 319,436. It shows 12 percent of growth of employment [34]. Crick has discussed about employments and their types at his book on Resplendent Sites, Discordant Voices Sri Lankans and International Tourism like “a hundreds working in menial jobs in shops, cafés and hotels owed their employment to tourism, but again, no larger - scale changes were resulting, although in general the tourism industry paid wages somewhat above the norm for other blue collar and service occupations” [37]. Undoubtedly, the contribution to tourism to fulfill employment demand of host community is extremely significant. In other words, to meet employment demand of the host community, the contribution of tourism industry is significantly necessary [9,38]. The larger number of employment generation is a main justification by many developing world, including Sri Lanka, to pay attention on development of the tourism industry [36]. For example, the Ministry of Economic Development pointed out in the five -year tourism development strategy 2011-2016 that “increase the tourism related employment from 125,000 in 2010 to 500,000 by 2016 and expand tourism based industry and service all island”(Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2010) [39]. Tourism industry, in fact, is more labour incentive when compared to other industry. In the case of Sri Lanka, labour can be received at lower cost but trained and skilled employees are lacked. This is a main drawback to develop the hotel industry at international level. As noted by Brown, “One of the most important characteristics of the (tourism) industry is its relative labour intensity in an age of great technological advancement and declining relative demand for labour [40]. The industry and those industries closely aligned with it(which also tend to be labour intensive) provide many jobs, both for the unskilled and highly skilled, and it has the potential to provide many further jobs, a large number of which can be introduced with minimum delay”.

As reported by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2015) employment, which was 12078 in 1970 grew to 299, 890 by 2014 [41]. It should be noted that casual employment in the tourism and hospitality industry is relatively high. Tourism makes it possible to bring foreign capital. After the Civil War (2009), the contribution of international investment to the Sri Lankan tourism industry is more prominent, with considerable foreign capital coming from India, China and England [42]. By using such capital, sophisticated infrastructure throughout Sri Lanka is established. Although, critics strongly indicated that in the long terms, considerable effect on the balance payment can be created because investors bring back the income to their home country in the term of dividend and loyalties fees [43,44]. Within the tourism literature, many researchers have discussed the multiplier effect which is a most important and powerful tool to evaluate economic advantages of the tourism industry [45-47]. This effect is seen as a manifestation of the total income earned from tourists in an economic system. Generally, the larger the measure of multiplier effect leads to create productive economy and also provide effective services for tourists [48]. Throughout the literature, economic contribution of tourism is strongly connected with attractive tourism policies and its implementations [15,49-51]. Tourism policies in developing countries are properly not interconnected with implementation process [8,52]. This is a main drawback to reap expected outcomes from the tourism industry [52,53]. Apart from Sri Lanka, other war affected countries have paid more attention to promote tourism industry. Chheang (2008) noted that tourism in Cambodia has played and plays a key role in socio economic development and national identity promotion. Further, the Cambodian government perceives that tourism has been seen as a vehicle to earn foreign exchange in post-conflict Cambodian economic development. At the same time tourism has become a cause to some socio problems, including some health problems such as HIV/AIDS, child abuse. Jeffries (2001) observes that tourism has been identified as one of the primary industries with the possible to assist local community development with strong economic diversity [54].

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study a qualitative approach has been used. This approach works best for understanding social phenomena [55-57]. The authors realized the best way to gather the industrial practitioners a local community knowledge as well as government perspective was through interviews in Jaffna district. These were done to generate data in the absence of readily available fine gained information on tourism development in Jaffna district and its surrounding region. Figure 1 illustrates analytical framework of the study. This study has been developed based on primary and secondary data. Secondary data has been derived through document analysis of relevant documents such as annual reports of Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and Northern Province. Further, primary data has been collected through interviews. The sample size of the interviews was twenty eight and the format was that of semi structured interviews under taken with the key stakeholders. This consists with other researches Lew (2014), Daskon and Binns (2009) and Becken (2013) who have also used the qualitative method and analysis data collection in order to gain the views of different stakeholders [58-60]. During the period from October to January 2017/2018, data was collected through filed based interviews. This approach enabled a discourse analysis methodological approach to interviewees. This mean that respondents are able to discuss their thoughts on the role of tourism development in Jaffna district also long term approaches for sustainability. The interviews also

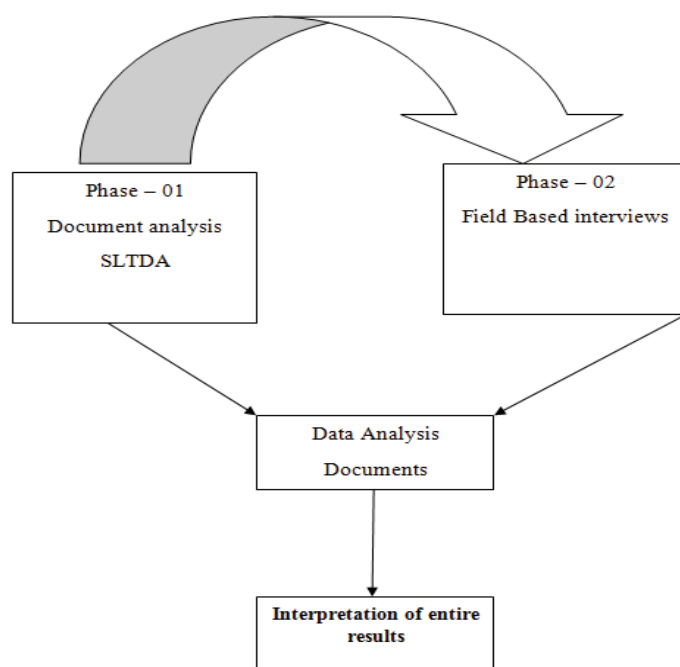


Figure 1: Research Method.

enabled more extended responses where interviewees discussed their experiences, attitudes and understanding the tourism development in Jaffna district.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Many respondents confirmed that tourism has been pursued by the Sri Lankan government for the main objective of earning foreign exchange, generating direct and indirect employment opportunities and promoting the government's income through taxes and service charges. As stated earlier, in Sri Lanka employment generation is a key factor with which to evaluate the contribution of tourism development. The tourism industry is closely associated with several service providing industries such as the hotel industry, tourist operators, tour agencies and caterers. Some industries are not directly linked with the tourism industry but also linked with other industries. For example, airport services are fundamental to enhancing the flow of tourist arrivals. Measurement of employment within the tourism industry has therefore incorporates airport employment. The volume of direct and indirect employment increased steadily from 59,914 in 1990 to 319,436 in 2015 (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2016). In fact, figures specific to Jaffna District are not available to indicate the economic gains of tourism. Therefore, national indicators are relied upon to provide a broad understanding of these gains. Yet a respondent said like following

“There is no stable growth in economy. And, this boon is not a real development as most of these were funded by the Diasporas and this may be ceased at any time as the inflow of money is mainly through hawala system which is not legalized” (R4).

Since they have money they are pumping funds and constructing buildings at a rate and this is really an abuse of land. An interviewee from UNDP, which is one of the main stakeholders in Jaffna, spends Rs.70million to develop the tourism industry particularly, human resources development in hospitality sectors, commented that:

“Tourism has higher employment generating capacities compared with other industry because many input requirement of tourism can be manufactured and supplied by local manufacturers” (R9).

Through the growth of tourism arrivals to Jaffna, demand for local products are continuously increased but manufacture and supply of local products are in limited. But this affects, local producers can received the high prices for their commodities such as agricultural and handicraft products. An interviewer pointed that:

Fine arts, crafts, dance and music have enjoyed revitalization throughout the Northern Province due to tourism, evidence in the larger number of handicraft and performing music and dance groups that have arisen since the advent of increased tourism (R1).

This statement is absolutely correct. In the district, we can see many handicraft shops with international and national tourists. It ensured that, if not for tourism, some of these traditions would have died away due to lack patronage.

As has been discussed earlier, in the context of employment generation, in Jaffna the development of tourism industry is in initial stage. Hence quality tourism job is low and larger amount of unskilled workers have attached with the tourism industry. It offers seasonal employment opportunity. This in line with previous researchers [11,37,61]. A civil servant from Northern Province confirms that:

“In the district post war tourism development programme has been implemented. However developers failed to take appropriate destinations to develop as tourist destination”. (R2)

It is considered as a main challenge to tourism boom in Jaffna district. Through field visit interviews, it can be observed that the tourism industry has made, and continues to make, a valuable contribution to Northern Provinces' economic and socio cultural development. One respondent said “First the Northern Provincial Council should establish an association for the tourism service providers. This particular association should be the contact point for all entering into the province and business must be shared among the members”. In Jaffna district, stakeholders including host community and investors, are having a high expectation and insist to create an institutional body to build sustainable tourism. In fact, different types of tourism (package tourism and independent travellers) produce various types of economic and social benefits for the host communities. An interview with an international tourist from Canada indicates that “Sri Lanka is one of the cheapest countries in the world for budget travellers to visit”. Through this quotation, it can be perceived that cost cutting is a main reason to growth of annual tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka. Because of rent for accommodations and charges for foods in Sri Lanka are relatively lowest compared with other South Asian countries. Further, tourists can gain maximum satisfaction within the budget. Hotelist and other tourism entrepreneurs have an interesting perception regarding to spending power of different types of tourists. That means, independent tourists are having higher spending power compared with package tourists. Generally, independent tourists have larger budget. Business people point of view, independent tourism should be motivated not only for monetary purpose but also tourist satisfaction. In the case of package tourism, it consists of selected destinations into travel package. Another significant indicator of backward linkages is the multiplier-coefficient, which calculates the overall effect on the economy of a unit of tourist expenditure. In Sri Lanka this is relatively high, which means that for every rupee that a tourist spends, that a gross output in economy increases by that. This strong backward linkage to the economy generates employment and revenue for host communities, but can also have negative repercussions. In fact, this negative effect has been proved through field base interviews,

“Where tourists products are in limited supply, demand from the tourism sectors may drive the prices up. In Jaffna the prices of fresh produce have increased considerably” (R11).

Many respondents indicate that government should pay more attention to maintain sustainable prices for tourists' products. Stakeholders believed that one of key strength of the tourism industry is that it continues to provide new job opportunities compared with traditional agricultural sectors. Hoteliers indicate jobs in the tourism industry are acceptable standard, their productivity is desirable. However, hotels offer skills development programmes including communication skills and body language to employees. Through interview with host communities different types of tourism provide different types of economic benefits for the local communities. General perception is that the different in spending power between independent and package tourists is decreasing. Independent travelers generally have larger budgets. They would prefer to home stay system, which leads to promote the income level of inhabitant. Through interconnection of international tourist and host communities, host communities can learn tourist's behaviour, and perceive foreign exposures. This learning has become a strong foundation to establish socialized and civilized the host communities. In the coastal areas of Jaffna most people are casually involve in tourism and tourism related industries. A host community member confirmed that “earning opportunities are opened through post - war tourism development. And we learned and learn different types of culture, tradition, and behavior from tourists, who would like to communicate with us. However, language became a significant barrier to share ideas and notions”. Integrated communication between tourists and local people is essential to construct the social capital) [62-65].

## CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Tourism is a growing industry all over the world in recent years. In many war affected countries it has been noted that national investors and international investors have engaged themselves in investing more on the tourism industry as well as they are more eagerly waiting to invest more in the near future Ashley, Boyd, & Goodwin, (2000); Ioannides & Apostolopoulos (1999); Teye (1986). In Jaffna district, Foreign Direct Investment has been increased in the tourism industry after the end of 30 years of civil war. This study found out that tourism makes a substantial economic socio cultural contribution to regional development and also promote intercultural connections. In Sri Lanka, tourism generates economic advantage with a comparatively small amount of investment when compared to other business investment option. Furthermore, the tourism development board has to make effort to design policies for sustainable tourism and they need to be implemented in the Northern Region. Ultimately, this study provides many practical implications. Given that sustainable tourism development; the main practical applications would appear in organizations concerned with fostering particular destination.

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