

## **Environmental impacts of tourism in the Habarana area**

### **Extended Abstract**

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#### **Background**

An environmental impact of tourism on a global scale has become more evident due to increasing air travel and the use of vehicles for overland travel. Tourism also contributes to the increasing sources of greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss resulting from habitat loss (Briassoulis, 2000). It leads to increased consumption of resource and degradation of various types of environmental conditions. Increased pollution, discharges into the sea, increased pressure on endangered species and heightened vulnerability to forest fires also results from accelerated tourism. It often puts a strain on water resources and can force local populations to compete for the use of critical resources. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructures such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses and marinas. Negative impacts from tourism occur when the level of visitor use is greater than the environment's ability to cope with this use within acceptable limits of change (Sanlu, 2003). The negative impacts of unplanned tourism development can gradually destroy environmental resources on which it depends.

#### **Objectives**

Habarana area is one of the important tourism places in Sri Lanka which has a greater impact on local economy and environmental quality. In this study, the main objective is to examine environmental pollution of tourism. It focuses on the negative impacts on the environment and human settlement of local communities.

#### **Methodology**

Required data and information related to environmental impacts of tourism have been collected from the primary and secondary sources. A sampling method has been used to collect primary data through a questionnaire survey. This sample was confined to three field observation sites and interviews were conducted with hotel employees and villagers. Secondary data have been collected using various published research papers

environmental related books magazines, articles, and newspapers. Official records were available and web sources have also been utilized.

#### **Results**

At present, nature tourism is closely linked to biodiversity and the attractions offered by a rich and varied environment. Unplanned tourism can also cause loss of biodiversity when land and resources are strained by excessive use, and when impacts on vegetation, wildlife, and water resources exceed the carrying capacity. This loss of biodiversity, in fact, means loss of tourism potential. Major environmental impacts of tourism in Habarana area include water pollution, soil pollution, noise pollution, air pollution and socio-economic impacts. According to our field observations, the adjoining reservoirs were affected and water discolored. The people believe some institutes dispose of wastes directly into the Lakeland they think water is not in suitable quality for using in daily activities. Many tourists come to this area daily. Due to this reason, many vehicles are coming to this area creating much noise and smoke affecting air quality.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Natural beauty and local resources of Habarana town and its environs are being destroyed day by day due to enhanced tourism and the environment is polluted rapidly due to the irresponsible acts of some tourists. Available rules and regulations to protect the environment in Habarana area must be enforced. People should suggest to relevant authorities to apply the 'polluter pays principle strictly and identify an appropriate environmental management system for the area.

**Keywords:** Environmental impacts, Tourism, Pollution, Rules and regulations, Environmental management system

#### **References**

Briassoulis, H. 2000. *Tourism and the Environment*. Netherland: Kluwer Academic Publisher.

Sanlu, U. 2003. *Environmental Impacts of Tourism*. CIHEAM.

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