

# **Impacts of Tourism and Community Attitude towards Tourism: A Case Study in Dambulla world Heritage site**

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## **Introduction**

Tourism comprises 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 **Invalid source specified**. Tourism is divided mainly into Local, Foreign, Natural and Cultural etc. Tourism has become an important industry and significant income generation source in Sri Lanka. Tourism industry supplies a huge foreign exchange to our country. It was the fourth largest source of foreign exchange for Sri Lankan economy in 2013 (Gnanapala and Sandaruwani, 2016). Local residents' support is essential to ensure long-term success in tourism development, and this is particularly important in regional destinations. Research suggests that it is impossible to sustain tourism to a destination that is not supported by the local people (Ahn, Lee & Shafer 2002; Twinning-Ward & Butler 2002; McCool, Moisey & Nickerson

2001). Therefore, an understanding of residents' attitudes and perceptions and how these perceptions are formed regarding tourism development would be valuable knowledge for the tourism industry particularly for regional tourism development projects. This paper documents a study investigating the local residents' perceptions toward tourism development of a small tourism city of Sri Lanka. This study investigates the tourism impacts on the local community of a reputed tourism destination in Sri Lanka known as Dambulla. This tourism city was selected for study as it provides an ideal example for analyzing the conflicts between the local community and the tourism industry. This small tourism city had become a focal attention among the community of Sri Lanka several years back when the local community and several pressure groups were organizing huge protests against certain tourism projects of the area. Dambulla is a small tourism city which is reputed for over 80 caves in

the surrounding. Major attraction is the Dambulla Rock Temple consisting of five cave temples dating back to the 1st century BC **Invalid source specified**. Now it is one of major tourism attractions in Sri Lanka among tourists. The visitation has been further facilitated by recent constructions of fine hotels (especially the Hotel Kandalama), the international cricket stadium and the local agricultural market which is selling the finest fruit and vegetables. However, there was a huge unrest among the local community when the Kandalama Hotel was being constructed. The construction planned for a pristine lakeside of this tranquil city has upset the local villagers and prompted to organize resistance toward the construction. Together with environmentalists and opposition politicians, they objected to the hotel on the ground that it was being built on a protected water-catchment area of Kandalama reservoir, cutting water supplies to farmers. They also said it would encourage prostitution, which along with drug dealing which has often been associated with the tourist industry in Sri Lanka. However, the project had full support of the government, aiming intensive promoting tourism, a major foreign-exchange earner, and encouraging the construction of more hotel rooms outside Colombo to meet demand. The government said the project would provide jobs and told the hotel management that it would counter all

criticism. Finally, the hotel management and the government completed the project in the midst of huge resistance from community leaders, villagers and several other pressure groups. For tourism development to be successful, it must be planned and managed in a sustainable manner (Inskeep 1991; McCool 1995; Southgate & Sharpley 2002; Yuksel, Bramwell & Yuksel 1999).

### **Objectives**

This study aimed to analyze the Impacts of Tourism and Community Attitude towards Tourism in Dambulla. Further to study the impacts to environment in Dambulla. And to examine the present community perception of tourism among the locals focusing more attention places in Dambulla area.

### **Methodology**

This study was based on literature survey relevant to the objectives and the study area is concentrated to Dambulla heritage city. For this purpose secondary data sources; books, research papers, reports and data on websites were used. Quantitative data was analyzed by using statistical analysis methods and qualitative data was analyzed by using descriptive analysis methods. Data presentation methods were using graphs, charts

## **Results and Discussion**

The findings of the case study confirmed that generally, there is a favorable perception and a positive attitude toward the tourism development of the destination under consideration. Many of them expect tourism to grow further and more tourists to arrive to the area. It is obvious with the findings that one major reason behind this changing attitude and perception of tourism is perceived positive impacts of tourism on the local community. The overall impact of tourism on the local community was positive and significant according to the findings. The positive impacts are developing self-employment and infrastructure facilities, contribution of income generation and increasing cultural value in Dambulla area. The negative impacts are waste generation, societal corruption, destruction of environment. It emphasizes that local community support is very important for successful completion of such projects. Both the effective communication and taking the local community interests in to consideration are essential to prevent possible resistance to tourism projects especially in regional destinations.

## **Recommendation**

The present study and previous research suggest that it is impossible to sustain tourism to a destination that is not supported by the local community.

Therefore, the officials need to get them involved in making decisions and understand their aspirations when planning tourism projects. Community participation allows officials to get input for their decisions and communicate the correct picture to community as well. It is obvious that local residents' support is essential for the success of any tourism project. When evaluating projects, the local community pays a notable attention to the benefits they can receive from the projects under consideration. Officials need to always encourage tourism projects in line with sustainable tourism practices.

## **References**

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