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Identifying Domestic Tourism as a Tool to Establish National Harmony in Sri Lanka

WHMS Samarathunga

Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale, 50300, Sri Lanka

Contact: manoj.susl@gmail.com

Being victorious in the three decades long war, Sri Lanka still struggling in establishing national harmony and reconciliation in Sri Lanka with different political agendas, pressure groups and international interferences. However, establishing national harmony through domestic tourism that emerged after the war situation is clearly visible and promising. Millions of Southerners in Sri Lanka are now travelling to Northern and Eastern part of the country which was elapsed during the war period and the Northern community take the pleasure in visiting the Southern part of the country. However, the true intention of making such visits should not be for pleasure, shopping and sightseeing only. Sri Lanka should now focus on using such domestic travels to both Northern and Southern parts as a pillar to establish national harmony. This study answers to a strategic question: "how to establish national harmony in Sri Lanka through domestic tourism?" To find answers to the above question the researcher carried out comprehensive desk researches, made visits to war affected areas, interviewed domestic tourists visiting Northern, Eastern and Southern parts of the country. The main findings of this research indicate that all the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka are willing to mingle with the people from other ethnic groups visiting their townships but finding it difficult to reach such domestic groups without having proper authority involvement. It was further observed that the scattered natural and multi-cultural attractions around the country will keep the domestic tourists busy visiting around the country in the future as well. This research subsequently analyses the prospects and challenges of promoting community based tourism typologies including home stay tourism, agro tourism, spiritual tourism, food and culinary tourism and cultural tourism that bring different ethnic groups of the country together with their mutual interests to establish national harmony in Sri Lanka. Finally, suitable suggestions are made for the practitioners' attention.

Key words: tourists, domestic tourism, national harmony, community based tourism