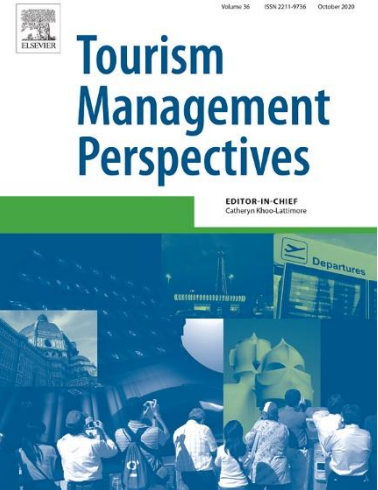


# Author Accepted Manuscript

## Transitional Domestic Tourist Gaze in a Post-War Destination: A Case Study of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100693>



Appeared in: **Tourism Management Perspectives**

Received date: 07 June 2019

Revised date: 09 February 2020

Accepted date: 05 May 2020

**To cite this article:** Samarathunga, W.H.M.S., Cheng, L., & Weerathunga, P.R. (2020). Transitional domestic tourist gaze in a post-war destination: A case study of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 35, 100693.

**Journal description:** *Tourism Management Perspectives* is an interdisciplinary journal concerned with the planning and management of travel and tourism, including tourist experiences and the consequences of those experiences for communities, economies and environments. It is also concerned with the creation of image, the shaping of tourist experiences and tourist perceptions, and the ways in which tourist organizations manage themselves and destinations.

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# **Transitional Domestic Tourist Gaze in a Post-War Destination: A Case Study of Jaffna, Sri Lanka**

## **Abstract**

The constantly changing “tourist gaze” needs much scholarly attention for globalizing, especially in the areas of “domestic tourist gaze” and “transitional tourist gaze”. The present study attempts to fill these gaps by identifying transitional domestic tourist gaze in post-war Sri Lanka. This qualitative study employs previous literature and reviews from TripAdvisor.com to identify how the domestic tourist gaze is transforming in post-war zones of Sri Lanka. The thematic analysis method was employed to analyze tourists’ reviews using NVivo 11 (QSR International) software. The study identifies that tourist gaze is changing from a “dark tourist gaze” to an “environmental gaze” and a “cultural gaze” through a strategic government mediation to reinstate conciliation in post-war Sri Lanka. The study offers implications to enhance tourists gaze in a post-war destination.

Keywords: Tourist gaze, domestic tourist gaze, transitional tourist gaze, dark tourist gaze, environmental gaze, cultural gaze, thematic analysis, NVivo

## **1. Introduction**

Tourism is a complex notion to study. It encompasses economic structures and cultural dynamics, which are greatly influenced by both internal and external factors and are subject to change over time. Thus, when tourists are making decisions, they exhibit heterogeneous characteristics that are extremely difficult to predict. Subsequently, there are different tourism typologies and types of tourists. The tourists’ curiosity has led them to travel to unanticipated destinations, where different tourism phenomena evolve. Thus, it is important to understand what tourists are willing to see and how they see it when studying tourism anthropology. Considering this, we can examine “tourist gaze,” which was introduced by an English sociologist, John Urry. Urry (1990) identified gaze as the most important tourist activity involved in travel. This is particularly true since tourists are mainly motivated to travel to see and experience. One can also argue that tourism is gazing. In this discourse, important or spectacular “sites” become “sights,” because they are merely used for gazing upon. As a result, tourists are no longer praying but taking photographs when visiting churches (Pagenstecher, 2003). Urry (2002) and Pagenstecher (2003) mentioned that the tourist gaze is subject to change over time, giving birth to new areas of tourism studies that demand the attention of tourism anthropological researchers. Thus, periodically investigating tourist gaze is vital.

During their travels, tourists are particularly interested in witnessing signs and symbols that are either unique or iconic to that particular destination. Urry (2002) further mentions that “The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves [a] collection of signs” (p. 3). To gaze upon them, tourists must be able to access to the destinations; thus, there must be a certain level of infrastructure (Pagenstecher, 2003). However, what if those signs and infrastructure are destroyed or removed? What happens if tourists find different signs after visiting a destination that was once their favorite place? These questions direct us to conduct more studies on nostalgic tourism (Hollinshead, 1999; Shono, Fisher, & McIntosh, 2008; Urry, 2002). The

nostalgic feelings directly correlate with a tourist destination's imagery and memory-making ability, subsequently shaping the construction of tourist gaze (Li, 2017; Marschall, 2015). Though there are many potential causes, war is one of the main reasons for a destination to change its shape and identity (Dunkley et al. 2011; Pieris, 2014). War causes death, destruction, suffering and pain, and losses. Yet, the world's geopolitical inconsistencies demand war as a solution to fulfill their proxy propagandas. Whoever wins, no one can return people from the dead or recover economic losses. When looking at recent examples, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia can be cited as destinations that lost their tourist appeal due to war (Farmaki et al. 2015, Fernando and Jayawardena 2013, Fernando et al. 2013, Kim & Prideaux 2003).

War and tourism have distinct relationships with one another. When there is war, the tourists are reluctant to visit the warfront areas except in war tourism. Further, immediately after the war, one can spot tourists flocking to former war zones to see: a) the places where tragic deaths, assassinations, or genocides occurred; b) people who suffered from war; c) war remnants; and d) cities affected by the war. Tourism scholars identify this phenomenon as "dark tourism" (Biran, Poria, & Oren, 2011; Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Schäfer, 2016; Seaton, 2007). However, not all post-war travels can be categorized as dark tourism since people have different objectives for visiting a post-war zone. For example, it could be nostalgic, educational, religious, or sympathetic (Dunkley et al., 2011; Yuill, 2003). The post-war tourist gaze, as the term implies, encompasses witnessing destruction or triumphalism, or becoming part of the history yet to be written (Perera, 2016). The unavoidable socio-cultural, ethnic, and religious changes and challenges after a war also contribute to the development of the post-war tourist gaze. Government involvement also plays a pivotal role in creating and redirecting domestic tourist gazes aimed at deriving reconciliation. Consequently, the tourist gaze could shift from dark to conventional tourism, leaving more space for two rivalry ethnic groups to work together as hosts and guests. This indicates how the empirical glitches contribute to the creation of domestic tourist gaze and support both reconciliation and tourism development within the region.

Sri Lanka was at war from 1981 to 2009, having two controlling parties with military power. Out of nine provinces, two were partially controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran, and the rest of the country was governed by the Sri Lankan Government. Since the country was divided into two and the war was transpiring, neither domestic nor international tourism took place in these former battlegrounds of Sri Lanka (Ranasinghe & Cheng, 2018; Samarathunga, 2019), restricting any type of tourist gaze from forming. Mei and Lantai (2018) identify this situation as structural constraints. However, since the dawn of peace in 2009, Northern Province opened its door equally to local and foreign tourists (Liyanag and Jayawardena, 2013; Buultjens et al. 2016; Ranasinghe, 2018). In her article on "Southern Invaders," Pieris (2014) pointed out that domestic (or Sinhalese) tourists are visiting war ruins and some locations of important battles where soldiers sacrificed their lives.

Many anthropologists (Hollinshead, 1999; Leiper, 1992; Maoz, 2006) continue to question the relevance of the tourist gaze and its implications. As a result, Urry happened to change his stance on "Tourist Gaze" through his later publications (Urry, 2002; Urry & Larsen, 2011) accepting the growing criticisms and to welcome

“performing” into the dimensions of tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Yet, a sizable number of recent publications question the generalizability of the “Tourist Gaze” into the Eastern world and in local contexts (Hocking, 2016; Rock, Yang, Hu, & Wall, 2017; Seiver & Matthews, 2016; Zhang & Hitchcock, 2017). This study also stands with the postmodernists who expect broader contribution from theory to uplift the tourism scholarship. Factors including social modernization, technological advancement, development, urbanization, and change of tourists’ motives have given birth to different types of tourist gaze discourses consisting of health, group solidarity, pleasure and play, heritage and memory, education, and nation (Urry & Larsen, 2011). This proves the changing nature of tourist gaze over time (Urry, 2002) which demands further studies in tourist gaze.

With the influence of Urry (1990, 2002), a vast majority of tourist gaze studies are confined to the gaze of Western tourists (Urry & Larsen 2011) with the exception of Hocking (2016), Rock et al. (2017), Seiver and Matthews (2016), Wu and Pearce (2013), Zhang and Hitchcock (2017), Moufakkir (2019), and Wassler and Kirillova (2019). Thus, it is important to understand how Asian tourists gaze upon a destination. Additionally, except for few studies (Maoz, 2006; Monterrubio, 2019; Stone & Nyaupane, 2018; Wassler & Kirillova, 2019), “domestic tourist gaze” also remains as a less attended area in the tourism scholarship. Examination of the domestic tourist gaze in an Asian country becomes more critical when it comes to a post-war setting where significant political, socio-cultural, and religious changes are taking place. Therefore, we intend to extend the tourist gaze notion by incorporating domestic tourist gaze in a post-war setting and proposing a framework to identify the transition of domestic gaze that can enhance both theory and practice. Thus, the aim of this paper is to identify the post-war transitional domestic tourist gaze, which has been overlooked in tourism literature.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Tourist gaze**

Tourist gaze discourse, introduced by Urry in the 1990s, is applied to explain and elaborate on tourists’ experiences at the destination, mainly based on tourists’ mental images surrounding their encounters (Urry, 1990, 2002). The tourist gaze concept can be further described as a socially organized and systematized way in which tourists gaze upon extraordinary places, scenery, townscapes, and landscapes. Thus, the gaze is created when tourists look and see the surrounding environment with great enthusiasm and curiosity (Urry, 1990, 2002). There are different types of gazes: collective tourist gaze (Urry, 1990), spectatorial and environmental (Urry, 1995), romantic, reverential, and anthropological (Urry, 2002). Other than these main tourist gazes, recent studies have further examined the notion that the tourist gaze is increasingly changing (Pagenstecher, 2003). This is why Urry and Larsen (2011) identified many factors that trigger different tourist gazes. However, the tourist gaze may not always be authentic. As per Urry (1990), tourist gaze is highly influenced by three sectors: the travel agents, guides, and locals. Therefore, tourists tend to see through the guides’ eye (Urry, 1990). Subsequently, tourists will not see what the guide wants them to see. Woodside and Martin (2015) extended this notion. According to them, the authorities also attempt to limit tourist gaze by various means. For example, only Muslims are allowed to participate in Hajj pilgrimage and rituals

and visit Mecca during festival occasions. Consequently, only Muslim pilgrims are able to construct a tourist gaze in Mecca because of the authorities' involvement. This is usually to minimize the negative impacts of the tourist gaze and only encourage native sightseers to visit the religious site (Woodside, 2015).

The tourist gaze closely relates to personal experience (Urry, 1990). Familiar surroundings, scenery, smells, and memories equally contribute to constructing tourist gaze (Marschall, 2015). Bhandari (2013) indicates that people observe the environment and tour a destination with a set of pre-defined personal emotions. He further mentions that tourists pay particular attention to what is no longer there. Rigney (2005) also shares similar ideas on the creation of tourist gaze at a destination through "secondhand" memories. Therefore, internal images significantly contribute to the construction of internal gazing. The books by Sri Lankan anthropologists—*Demala Bauddaya* (The Tamil Buddhist) by Ariyaratna (2011) and *Tourism and Monuments of Archaeological Heritage in Northern Sri Lanka* by Pushparathnam (2012)—explain the existence and destruction of Buddhist and Hindu heritage sites in Jaffna due to various reasons, including war. Additionally, Crawshaw and Urry (2002) highlight that different gazes are authorized by different discourses, and are shaped by the cultural backgrounds of the gazer (Urry, 2002). Thus, post-war travels to Jaffna are associated with witnessing the destroyed cultural heritage and ownership, creating a new Buddhist gaze among Southern Buddhists.

Post-war travels also stimulate spectator gaze, especially on the ethnic identity of the Hindu people living in Jaffna. Woodside (2015) states that the tourist gaze can boost ethnic identity, which may have been deprived because of colonialism and imperialism. Ethnic identity formation through ethnic tourism has been studied by many authors, including Buzinde, Santos, and Smith (2006), Swain and Swain (2015), Wall and Smith (2008), Yang (2011), Yang and Wall (2009), and Murti (2019). The authors suggest that heritage sites, ethnic food, temples, lifestyles, local markets, local cultural festivals, museums, exhibitions, and photos contribute to form ethnic identity. Through his second edition of "Tourist Gaze," Urry (2002) uses the Maori group in Rotorua, New Zealand to identify how ethnic identity is formed. Lifestyle of the people, historical artifacts, and recreation that includes golf courses and sun, sea, and sand have been key elements of tourist gaze of the Maori group (Urry, 2002). Medina (2003) and Boyer (2018) suggest that marketing a destination through its ethnic or cultural features can increase community interest and empower the ethnic groups.

## **2.2 Tourist gaze in post-war destinations**

Many studies on post-war or post-conflict destinations have been conducted globally. The motivation to visit such destinations, destination image, and tourist experience vary greatly from destination to destination, because the nature of the conflict is different from one case to another. In the study of Waterloo (1815 – 1914), tourists were primarily motivated to visit the ancient battleground after hearing myths of dead heroes and various stories of defeats or triumphs (Seaton, 1999). Further, the same author identified tourists' motivation to purchase souvenirs of the wars and victories. In addition, Austin (2002) and Teye and Timothy (2004) identified that tourists are seeking educational experience at post-war sites, while Biran et al. (2011) and Poria,

Butler, and Airey (2004) noted enjoying the scenery and cultural heritage as key motives to visit a post-war destination. Most tourists at a post-war destination have identified war-related museums as places that bring them an educational experience. For example, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia (Hughes, 2008), the Memorial Museum in Waterloo, Belgium, Museum of the Revolution in Cuba (Seaton, 1999), and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. (Foley & Lennon, 1996) are still popular sites among tourists. Visiting former battlegrounds have also been identified as a key experience by Stone (2006) in his studies in Rwanda and Kosovo. By investigating previous literature, many scholars (Austin, 2002; Logan & Reeves, 2009; Slade, 2003) concluded that post-war destinations have dynamic, multi-faceted attractions. They are visited for remembrance, education, leisure, or at random. Much of the post-war tourism literature (Biran et al., 2011; Kang, Eun-jung; Scott, Noel; Lee & Ballantyne, 2012; Tucker, Shelton, & Bae, 2016; Yoshida, Bui, & Lee, 2016) has been associated with the motivations of domestic tourists to visit dark tourism destinations leaving the domestic tourist gaze at a noteworthy silence. Given that the Sri Lankan war was fuelled by ethnic and social discriminations (Brown, 2003; Veluppillai, 2006), it is important to understand how the post-war domestic tourist gaze has been constructed and how it is impacted by the government's mediation. Further, socio-cultural, religious, and economic differences are also still palpable in post-war zones throughout Sri Lanka (Ratnayake & Hapugoda, 2016). Therefore, tourism can be utilized as a way for the destination to recover from its sufferings, through both domestic and international tourism (Biran, Liu, Li, & Eichhorn, 2014; Tucker et al., 2016; Cheng & Zhang, 2020).

### **2.3 Geo-demographic information of Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is famous for its multi-ethnic groups. Although the Sinhalese are the majority (74.9%), the Tamils are the second largest ethnic group in Sri Lanka, with 13.6 percent of the total population (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015, 2017). Buddhism is the main religion in Democratic Socialist and Republic Sri Lanka—and is protected by the country's constitution, both in modern and medieval times—while the country is securing “freedom of religion” that has allowed Sri Lankans to follow any religion. The Buddhists consist of 70.2% of the population, and the other two main religions—Hindu and Islam—are followed by 12.6% and 9.7% Sri Lankans (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015, 2017). Out of nine provinces in Sri Lanka, the Buddhists are mainly confined to the North Central, Central, North Western, Sabaragamuwa, Uva, Western, and Southern Provinces. Whilst Muslims primarily occupy the Eastern Province, the vast majority living in the Northern Province are Tamils. Jaffna is the capital of the Northern Province, which is the focused research site of this study.

### **2.4 A brief history of Sri Lankan civil war**

Since the arrival of Indian Tamils during the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century—and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for tea plantation works (Pannilage, 2017)—both Ceylon Tamils and Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka faced equal problems, largely based on their ethnicity (Veluppillai, 2006). Sri Lanka practiced democracy since gaining independence. However, the interests of the main political parties were always

present to please the majority of Sinhalese Buddhist voters (Gombrich, 2006). Consequently, many constitutional amendments have transpired since the late 1950s, favoring the majority Sinhalese Buddhists. The “Sinhala Only Act” is one such example, replacing the official language of English to Sinhala without recognizing the Tamils, who had their own native language. This Act made it practically impossible for the Tamil minority to secure any prestigious government jobs (Brown, 2003). Although Tamil political leaders constantly fought ideologically with the government by that time, their voices had been suppressed, subsequently resulting in the separatist war (Velupillai, 2006). Some key incidents that occurred before the war include the assassination of Alfred Duraiappah (the former mayor of Jaffna) in 1975 by LTTE and burning of Jaffna Public Library by the mob in 1981. These events were followed by the infamous “Black July” incident in 1983, as a response to LTTE assassinating 13 Sinhalese soldiers in Jaffna. When the bodies were taken to the commercial capital of Colombo for cremation, the Sinhalese started a violent anti-Tamil campaign that took the lives of thousands of Tamils in the southern part of the country, causing a vast social and economic cost to the nation. Therefore, Black July is said to be the beginning of the Sri Lankan separatist war between LTTE and Sri Lankan government forces. In 1983, LTTE declared North and Eastern Provinces of the country as the Tamil Eelam (the alleged independent state for Tamils in Sri Lanka). Examples of violent events involving the LTTE include: 1) assassination of 146 Buddhist devotees while they were attending religious activities at the Sri Maha Bodhi in 1985; 2) Aranthalawa massacre of 33 young Buddhist monks during a pilgrimage tour in 1987; 3) assassination of Sri Lankan former president, R. Premadasa, in 1991; 4) Central Bank bombing in 1996; and 5) bombing of Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in 1998. However, many scholars (Deegale, 2006; Perera, 2016; Velupillai, 2006) believe the root cause for the war is due to the injustice faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka since the 1950s.

The idea of the separate state for Tamils is not new. Being closer to South India, Sri Lankans have frequently faced South Indian invasions since medieval times (Ven. Mahanama, n.d.), keeping the Sinhalese further to the country’s southern regions. Perera (2001) notes that separatism for LTTE was possible primarily because of the geographical distribution of Sri Lanka’s Tamil-speaking population—which is largely concentrated in the Northern and Eastern Provinces—as well as ethnic injustice the Tamils faced. Furthermore, the Indian government blindly supported the LTTE movement in its early stages (Votta, 2007), costing them Rajiv Gandhi (Samaranayake, 2007), the former Prime Minister of India. LTTE would maintain a separate state for the Tamils for nearly three decades, during which LTTE formed their own bank system, legal system, and mass media, influencing other pivotal areas for their own benefit. In 2009, this LTTE territory was overridden by the southern Sinhalese government, comprised of many Sinhalese Nationalist groups. The ancient Sinhalese Buddhist notion of *Rata* (country), *Jaathiya* (ethnicity), and *Aagama* (religion) played a leading role in this endeavor.

## 2.5 Dark tourist gaze in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka

The post-war setting of Jaffna has been characterized by human rights violations, socio-cultural issues, political tugs-of-war, Sinhalese cultural hegemony, and militarization (Skanthakumar, 2012). Although Sri Lanka is famous for conventional tourism (Samarathunga, 2018; Weerathunga, Xiaofang, & Samarathunga, 2019) immediately after the war in 2009, Southern travelers expanded their travel itineraries to Jaffna, opening lucrative business opportunities to those living in the Northern Province and along the A9 highway. The military and government recognized the Southern travelers' quest to see war remnants, making both LTTE and Sri Lankan military attractions available. Some of these included the following: 1) LTTE leader's ancestral home, 2) Koppay LTTE Mahaveerar cemetery, 3) LTTE leader's bunker, 4) a graveyard of war-damaged vehicles, 5) LTTE Sea Tiger Training Swimming Pool, 6) Victory Monument at Puthukkudiyiruppu, 7) Sri Lanka Army war museum at Puthukkudiyiruppu, 8) LTTE destroyed water tank, 9) Hasalaka Gamini memorial and the destroyed tank, 10) war heroes' Elephant-Pass Monument, and the Kilinochchi War Memorial (Hyndman, 2015; Kamble and Bouchon 2014; Pieris, 2014; Ratnayake and Hapugoda, 2017; Perera 2016). On one hand, it reassures the unitary status of Sri Lanka; alternatively, the government gained a political advantage by showing how strong LTTE was and what will reoccur if it reappears (Perera, 2016; Hyndman 2015). However, after possible backing by reconciliation issues and human rights violation allegations presented in front of UNHRC by Western countries, the government systematically began to remove LTTE-related attractions (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Systematic removal of war attractions and introduction of war memorials in the Northern Province

#	Name of attraction	Time
1	Valvettithurai (Prabhakaran's ancestral home)	Removed in 2010
2	Koppay LTTE Mahaveerar cemetery and other LTTE cemeteries (Uduppidi, Kodikaamam, & Vealani)	Removed in 2010
3	Thileepan memorial	Removed in 2010
4	LTTE leader Prabhakaran's bunker	Removed in 2013
5	Graveyard of war damaged vehicles	Removed in 2013
6	LTTE Sea Tiger Training Swimming Pool	Closed for public since 2013
7	MV Farah III (LTTE pirated ship)	Removed in 2013
8	Victory Monument at Puthukkudiyiruppu	Opened for public in 2009
9	Sri Lanka Army war museum at Puthukkudiyiruppu	Opened for public in 2009
10	LTTE destroyed water tank	Opened for public in 2009
11	Hasalaka Gamini memorial and the destroyed tank	Opened for public in 2009
12	War heroes' Elephant-Pass Monument	Opened for public in 2010
13	Kilinochchi War Memorial	Opened for public in 2010

Source: Sri Lanka media reports (2009 – 2019)



As the literature indicates, dark tourism and triumphalist gazes were primarily created during post-war travels. The government's present focus is to promote Jaffna and the Northern province—the two main blueprints of Sri Lanka's post-war tourism development—as a religious and heritage tourism destination, according to the Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020 (Ministry of Tourism and Christian Religious Affairs, 2017). However, tourism growth was relatively slow due to poor infrastructure (Buultjens et al., 2016), land disputes of displaced people, landmine availability (Kamble & Bouchon, 2014), reconciliation, and reconstruction-related issues (de Silva, 2010).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Collecting textual data and content analysis**

Many websites have generated different platforms for travelers to consult and review, including TripAdvisor.com, Yelp.com, Citysearch.com, and Virtualtour.com. Such online platforms have enabled tourists to freely comment or review various tourism service providers, attractions, activities, infrastructure, and experiences, subject to the guidelines of the respective websites. A considerable number of studies (Amaral et al. 2014; Cong et al. 2014; Filieri et al. 2015; Jeacle and Carter 2011; Kladou and Mavragani 2015; Lei and Law 2015; O'Connor 2006; Dissanayake & Malkanthi, 2018) evaluate tourists' experiences based on online textual data and photographs. User-generated content on travel advisory websites provides a useful insight to yield tourists' experiences (Cong et al., 2014; Ukpabi & Karjaluo, 2018).

Many scholars (Cong et al., 2014; O'Connor, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) identified that TripAdvisor is one of the most used social media websites among travelers for travel-related information. Verified users are capable of reviewing destinations, hotels, restaurants, and entertainment centers based on their experiences. Further, TripAdvisor.com has 455 million unique visitors and over 702 million reviews—covering 7.5 million attractions, accommodations, restaurants, and airlines (TripAdvisor.com, 2018)—making it the world's largest travel review website (Diaz & Rodriguez, 2018; Ganzaroli, De Noni, & Van Baalen, 2017; Ghazi, 2017; Grifoni, Ferri, & Guzzo, 2017). TripAdvisor.com reviews gained popularity among researchers because they support content analysis and thematic analysis (Banyai & Glover, 2012; Cong et al. 2014; Filieri et al., 2015; Lei & Law 2015).

The aim of this study was to elucidate transitional domestic tourists' gaze at a post-war destination. To identify the most popular destinations in Jaffna, three in-depth interviews were conducted with tourism experts in Sri Lanka: a senior tourism scholar, a senior officer at the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), and a senior hotelier and an entrepreneur of Jaffna. The validity of the selected destinations was crosschecked using the "Top Attractions in Jaffna" function provided by the TripAdvisor.com. Therefore, with the recommendations of tourism experts and the TripAdvisor.com listing, thirteen attractions were identified for data collection (Table 2). It is also important to mention that although the domestic tourists started visiting these post-war destinations since the end of 2009, these attractions got registered with TripAdvisor.com in between 2012 and 2015, as the digital infrastructure of this post-war region was at a dilapidated condition. Since this study

intends to identify the transition of the domestic tourist gaze at a post-war destination over a period of time, we decided to focus on two tourist gazes; the tourist gaze that is constructed immediately after the war and the most recent tourist gaze. The war succeeding tourist gaze is identified by closely referring to the previous studies. Further, in order to decide on the most appropriate time frame to identify the most recent tourist gaze, we referred to previous studies (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Marine-Roig, 2017; Prayag, Hall, & Wood, 2018) which have employed Tripadvisor.com reviews. Accordingly, we selected May 2018 to December 2018 as the focused time period to identify the most recent tourist gaze.

The researchers employed a purposive sampling method to select reviews for this study considering the diverse number of reviews each attraction received. The purposive sampling enabled the researchers to get the first-hand tourist gaze from a group of travelers who are diverse in age, profession, travel experience, income, education and place of birth. Thus, the reviews are more representative and suitable for the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that is sometimes applied in qualitative studies (Fallon and Robinson 2017, Park, Kang, Scott, Lee, and Ballantyne 2012). This nature of qualitative studies have no definitive sample size. Therefore, the researchers closely referred to similar studies (Cenni & Goethals, 2017; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Marine-Roig, 2017; Miguéns et al., 2008; O'Connor, 2006, 2010; Prayag et al., 2018; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) conducted using the TripAdvisor.com reviews to decide on the sample size. Accordingly, the reviews which were written by domestic Southern tourists in English who visited Jaffna in between May and December 2018, were selected to get their most recent tourist experiences. Therefore, although there were a large number of reviews, those selected for the study were limited to 173. All the selected reviews for each destination were copied into 13 different word documents, creating 13 source files for qualitative data analysis. The data collection took place in November 2018 and September 2019.

**Table 2:** Collecting textual data

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Synonym in the text</b>	<b>Number of total reviews</b>	<b>No. of selected reviews (domestic tourists)</b>	<b>No. of References</b>
Casuarina Beach	CAS	26	13	73
Dambakola Patuna	DAM	18	11	142
Delft Island	DEL	29	15	130
Elephant Pass	ELE	28	15	254
Jaffna Dutch Fort	FORT	36	20	219
Jaffna Market	MAR	15	9	218
Kadurugoda	KAD	13	9	88
Keerimalai	KIR	24	13	105
Nagadeepa Purana Vihara temple	NAG	26	13	63
Nagapooshani	NAGP	25	13	93

Ambal Temple				
Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil temple	NAL	40	14	125
Nilavarai Well	NIL	19	10	89
Public library	LIB	29	18	132
<b>Total</b>		<b>328</b>	<b>173*</b>	<b>1731</b>

\*173 TripAdvisor.com reviews, written (in English) by domestic tourists from May to December 2018

### 3.2 Thematic analysis

The researchers employed thematic analysis as the main data analytical tool. Thematic analysis is a commonly used qualitative method to identify, report, and analyze data for the meanings produced in and by people, situations, and events (Aronson, 1995; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cong et al., 2014; Patton, 2002; Riessman, 2008). Coding is the primary process for developing themes within raw data by recognizing important moments and encoding it prior to interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). Many researchers (Cong et al., 2014; Filieri et al., 2015; Lei & Law, 2015) have employed thematic analysis in their researches with TripAdvisor.com reviews.

As the first step in data coding, with the support of NVivo (11) software, 71 free codes (open codes) were generated. Two researchers collaborated to ensure no important facts are missed, and cross-coding was performed to increase the validity and reliability of the results (Boyatzis, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The total number of references identified was 1731 (Table 2). Secondly, supported by the literature, eight focused codes (interpretive codes) were identified to derive interpretive meanings (King & Horrocks, 2010). As the third and final step in data coding, three overarching themes were identified. The broad themes cover the main categories of transition of domestic tourist gaze at a post-war destination (Table 3). The data immersion technique (Green et al., 2007) was also adopted throughout the coding process to ensure that only correct and most relevant information are coded.

**Table 3:** The coding spectrum

Overarching themes	Focused codes	Free codes	Freq.	Percentage (%)
<b>Dark Tourist Gaze (20.2%)</b>	War memorials	Sri Lanka Army war memorials; LTTE war memorials; peace memorial; story of war heroes; Hasalaka Gamini memorial; Thileepan memorial	15	3.4
	War attractions	War blown locations; places of war history; Jaffna; final moments of the war; military bases; LTTE bases; destroyed fort; ruined church; Elephant Pass; Jaffna Library	46	10.5
	Destructions & ruins	Topless Palmira trees; destroyed temples; damaged Kovils; destroyed Dutch fort walls; neglected bunkers; burnt books; ruined fort; remnants of war	28	6.3
<b>Removal of War Attractions (11.3 %)</b>	Reconciliation	Tamils & non-Tamils at Nallur Kovil; national reconciliation; conflict resolution; encourage Northern travels; win the Tamils' hearts; winner's side story; multiple ethnicities; new chapter in Sri	22	5.0

		Lankan history; war memories to be forgotten; political issues; strengthened the reconciliation process; symbol of peace		
	Renovation	Renovating the Fort; archeological excavations and renovations; war ruins brings bad memories; restoring the historical sites; preserving for future	20	4.5
	Removal	LTTE leftovers; LTTE war hero statues; LTTE war heroes cemetery; LTTE leader's home; Elephant Pass war heroes memorial; Thileepan memorial; government policy decision; removed by the government	8	1.8
<b>Environmental &amp; Cultural Gaze (68.25 %)</b>	Natural attractions	Beaches, natural sceneries; features of the natural environment; flora and fauna; ocean and other water bodies; parks and recreational areas; enjoying the nature; swimming and bathing	76	17.35
	Cultural attractions	Ancient forts, ports & colonial heritage; bottomless well; Buddha and deities; Buddhist temples; Hindu Kovils; Ancient burials sites; features of the built environment; Jaffna Public Library; lifestyle of Hindu people; local people; museums; participating and observing religious activities; rituals and prayers; shopping; stories, legends, myths and believes	223	50.9

The study adopts an interpretivism research paradigm. Interpretivism was possible in this study, as the first and third authors are Sinhalese Buddhists from the Southern part of Sri Lanka and have first-hand experience of the Sri Lankan war and its aftermath. The second author is a renowned tourism anthropologist who has been to Jaffna several times for research purposes. The continuous discussion and interpretation of social practices and norms in Jaffna helped the researchers to come to conclusions successfully.

#### 4. Results and findings

##### 4.1 Demographics of the respondents

Almost three quarters (74.4 %) of the reviewers were male, with one-quarter of the respondents being female. The respondents between the ages of 25 to 49 comprised 76 percent (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Respondent demographics

Description	Respondents (reviewers) (n = 173)	
	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	128	74
Female	45	26
Age (n = 173; missing = 22)		
18 - 24	14	9.2
25 - 34	68	45
35 - 49	48	31.8
50 - 64	16	10.6
Over 65	5	3.3

On TripAdvisor.com, there is an option for tourists to rate their level of satisfaction based on their experience with the destination. Accordingly, 50.86 percent of reviewers have rated destinations in Jaffna as “Excellent,” with 27.16 percent responding with “very good.” Less than 9 percent rated Jaffna destinations “poor” or “terrible” (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Tourist ratings of Jaffna destinations

Rating	Respondents (reviewers) (n = 173)	
	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	88	50.86
Very good	47	27.16
Average	22	12.71
Poor	12	6.9
Terrible	4	2.3

## 4.2 Thematic analysis of the reviews

The initial coding process generated 438 reference points and 71 free nodes (Table 3). With the support of the literature, the 71 free nodes were allocated to 8 focused codes (interpretive codes). The deep look into the focused codes helped researchers identify three overarching themes: 1) Dark tourist gaze; 2) Removal of war attractions; and 3) Environmental and cultural gaze. The environmental and cultural gaze earned the highest number of references (68.25%), while dark tourist gaze has the second-highest (20.2%). The removal of war attractions theme has about 11.3 percent of the total references.

### 4.2.1 Theme 1: Dark Tourist Gaze at a Post-war Destination

‘Dark tourist gaze’ is a sensitive and an imperative theme developed during the data coding process. This theme is explained by war memorials, war attractions, and destructions and ruins.

#### 4.2.1.1 War memorials

Although it’s been over a decade, there are war memorials in Jaffna despite of many criticisms. They stand for both Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE. One of the key war memorials located at the neck of Jaffna peninsula is Hasalaka Gamini war memorials. According to a traveler, “*The Hasalaka Gamini memorial depicts the scarification of a soldier to prevent a mass destruction to his brigade [sic]. Therefore, this is a must see place for all*” (ELE6). Another traveler worries about the same memorial: “*I don’t think we should keep it forever. We don’t have to take the war memories to the future which will keep us remembered the dark memories every day*” (ELE9). Additionally, a commenter has noted the absence of an LTTE war memorial: “*I searched for Thileepan’s memorial, which I have heard of sometimes back, but it was nowhere to be found & I did not want to ask about it either*” (NAL1). The purpose of constructing of war memorials is also identified: “*...many war memorials built*

around Jaffna peninsula give an opportunity to the Sinhalese tourists to remember the hardships and the cruelty of the long fought war” (LIB13).

#### **4.2.1.2 War attractions**

The purpose of the travelers visiting Jaffna immediately after the war is to witness the war related attractions and to become a part of its history. Therefore, the domestic tourists have planned their itineraries accordingly: “*The attractions for these people include all major LTTE bases that were captured, including the homes of the former LTTE leader*” (NAG1). The tourists’ intention to visit Jaffna has been identified by many other travelers as well. One traveler reviews: “*The tourists are still interested in seeing the destructions caused by the war, war memorials, and the places where important military activities happened*” (FORT5). Further to that, another traveler predicts what the war-zone travelers are searching for: “*The trees and the nature has been destroyed by bombs and shells. People are curious to know what the once war-affected battle zone has in store*” (ELE3). One traveler identifies Jaffna as the home of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict and he recommends all others to visit Jaffna: “*This place is a must for all those wishing to learn about the war, its origin and the history of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka*” (LIB13).



**Fig. 1.** War blew Jaffna Dutch *Kachcheri* Building with a few numbers of visitors

#### **4.2.1.3 Destructions & ruins**

One tourist identified Dambakolapatuna Temple as an area where battles took place: “*This is one of the war-blown locations during the civil war of Sri Lanka*” (DAM2). Furthermore, tourists have commented on Jaffna Dutch Fort, which was also affected by the war: “*Sri Lankan forces used the Fort to fight against LTTE and was the only one plot they secured in the area [sic]*” (FORT7). The memory of burning down the Jaffna Public Library during the war was resurrected by most visitors with deep emotions. By gazing at the reconstructed library through the ashes, they are reminded how brutal the war was, stating, “*The library was built in 1933 and got destroyed in 1981 during the civil war. This was known to be one of the largest*

libraries in Asia back in 1980's [sic] that had around 100,000 books and other relevant material. After the destruction that took place in the 80's [sic], it was renovated in 2001 and, today, it is the second main public library [on] the island" (LIB3).

#### 4.2.2 Theme 2: Removal of War Attractions and Reconciliation

The 'removal of war attractions and reconciliation' theme is consisted of three focused codes: removal of war attractions, renovations, and reconciliations. Two most important focused codes are presented below.

##### 4.2.2.1 Removal of war attractions

The systematic removal of war attractions was also identified by the social media reviews. Many war attractions that used to be Northern trip highlights few years ago are no longer available. One traveler has commented on the absence of an LTTE war hero monument: *"The Thileepan memorial has now been removed it seems. Only the foundation exists [sic]"* (NAL11). Another traveler mentions about the removal of LTTE war memorials: *"Further towards the east, all war memorials (now) have been removed, including former LTTE leader's ancestral home"* (FORT3). The removal of LTTE war heroes' cemetery is also notable: *"In 2003 I remember spotting the high rise flags of Kopay LTTE war heroes' cemetery, but not its long gone"* (FORT5). One reviewer has identified the reasons behind removal of war attractions: *"The policy of the Northern Provincial Council is to remove the war attractions. I hope one day, all these monuments will also be removed"* (ELE4).



**Fig. 2.** The foundation of the removed Thileepan (a diseased LTTE member) memorial with a temporary decoration

#### **4.2.2.2 Reconciliation**

The reviewers have identified Jaffna Public Library as a symbol of peace and reconciliation since the central government took immediate actions to re-build the burnt library after securing Jaffna: *“In a sense, it is a symbol of peace”* (LIB12). A visitor to Nagadeepa has given a broad meaning to reconciliation: *“There is no point of just visiting Jaffna for the sake of visiting. We must try to establish a good dialog between the south and the north. If you can win one Tamil person it will be equal of you worshipping the Nagadeepa”* (NAG2). Similarly, reconciliation is also promoted through Nallur Kovil. According to one reviewer: *“Nallur is the [only] place in Jaffna where a large number of Tamils and Sinhalese come on pilgrimage and worship. What better place than Nallur to begin the task of national reconciliation and conflict resolution? [sic]”* (NAL2). Alternatively, there are some critics over the Sri Lanka Army war heroes’ monument constructed after the war. According to one traveler, *“Elephant Pass is a very important area at the final stage of the war. However, it is very unfortunate that only the winner's side of the story is told at Elephant's Pass”* (ELE1). In order to strengthen the reconciliation process one visitor suggests few steps: *“First, the social order of Jaffna should be reestablished. A positive mental condition should be restored. We have to make them believe on the existing redevelopment and reconciliation process”* (LIB11).

#### **4.2.3 Theme 3: Environmental and Cultural Gaze**

Tourist gaze on the attractions in Jaffna can be divided into two main sub-themes: environmental gaze and cultural gaze. The cultural attractions are highly frequented by the tourists than that of the natural attractions.

##### **4.2.3.1 Natural attraction**

As a post-war destination, Jaffna is frequently surprising tourists in many ways. Usually, the pre-visit destination image to a post-war area, even after some time, is to gaze upon the war ruins, destructions, and excess militarization (Perera, 2016). Paradoxically, tourists find different gazes in Jaffna and comment on key attractions they experienced. Jaffna is blessed with pristine beaches, lagoons, marshy areas, sceneries, and abundant flora and fauna. Tourists are now taking the opportunity to gaze at the natural attractions in Jaffna while enjoying and protecting it. One reviewer not only states his experience about the Casurina Beach, but also recommends it to others: *“Nice beach. Totally worth going”* (CAS3). Further, the natural beauty of the Delft Island has also been a key attraction: *“There is a list of attractions - Ponies, Baobab tree, old fort / ruins, natural water resource wells, lighthouse, a nice beach for swimming”* (DEL8). The Dambakolapatuna beach has also got the tourists’ attention: *“The place is very calm and quiet and the beach next to the temple is really nice with white sand, like in Maldives”* (DAM9). Additionally, the tourists are opening the eyes of authorities to promote the natural attractions in a more effective manner: *“The natural beauty of Delft Island has not been identified & marketed”* (DEL1).



### 4.2.3.2 Cultural attractions

There is a huge influx of tourists visiting Buddhist Temples, Hindu Temples, and colonial attractions in the Jaffna district. After gazing upon the cultural and historical value of Nagadeepa temple, a tourist mentions, *“Nagadeepa is said to be the site of [the] second visit of the Lord Buddha to Sri Lanka. One of the sixteen places most worshiped by Buddhists in Sri Lanka. If you are visiting the Northern area of Sri Lanka, it must be a compulsory item of your itinerary [sic]”* (NAG6). Similarly, Nallur Hindu Temple is a highly recommended cultural attraction in Jaffna. *“When visiting Jaffna, Nallur temple is a must. Beautiful interior and a good experience”* (NAL12). Out of many colonial sites in Jaffna, Dutch Fort stands tall. One traveler comments: *“This is one of the main attractions in Jaffna. This historical fort was built by Portuguese about 3 centuries ago”* (FORT7).



**Fig. 3.** Southern domestic tourists walking to the Nagadeepa Purana Vihara from the Jetty

The locals at a tourist destination are also a part of the tourist gaze. A tourist stated his experience with the locals, *“It was great to visit the beach [on] the weekend & to be [met] with lots of smiling and welcoming faces”* (CAS5). Shopping is something that all types of tourists willing to engage while at a destination. Although all the tourists don't buy souvenirs, most at least purchase some local fruits, regional food and beverages to experience during their visits. Jaffna Market is a must-visit destination among tourists. The initial gaze at the Jaffna market is: *“This is one of the best market places in Jaffna. You can find local sweets, fruits, vegetables, cordials and few handmade items.”* (MAR4). Tourists are also recommending the Jaffna market to others: *“This is your typical local market and has many interesting items for sale. We bought many typical items from this part of the county, such as Nelli crush and Jaggery. We also ate ‘Jackfruit’.....”* (MAR2). Thus, the tourist gaze is not limited to their enjoyment and experience but is also present in recommendations. Further,

tourists have also reviewed rituals and prayers, the lifestyle of Jaffna people, ancient burial sites, and myths and legends in Jaffna with interest.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Many countries that experienced recent wars or tragic events are promoting dark tourism at locations where deaths, genocides, suicides, and other destructions took place. Auschwitz in Germany (Biran et al., 2011), Ground Zero in New York (Lisle, 2004), Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany (Beech, 2000), Fort Siloso in Singapore (Muzaini, Teo, & Yeoh, 2007), and Cu-chi tunnels in Vietnam (Alneng, 2002; Henderson, 2000) are some examples. Immediately after the Sri Lankan war, domestic Southern tourists flocked to the Northern Province to gaze upon war remnants (Buultjens et al. 2016; Kamble and Bouchon, 2014; Pieris 2014), creating dark tourism in Jaffna and North Province of Sri Lanka. However, eventually, the Sri Lankan government and the military systematically started removing dark tourism attractions in the Northern Province (Perera, 2016), including the former LTTE leader's bunker, ancestral home, Sea Tigers' Training Swimming Pool, and the *Mahaweerar* (great heroes') cemetery. Subsequently, domestic tourists who visited Jaffna followed their curiosity by visiting the natural and cultural attractions. Thus, the dark tourist gaze has begun shifting towards the conventional tourist gaze.

Removing statues of former political leaders and artifacts representing certain ethnic groups or a culture is common after warfare. For example, toppling down the statue of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein brought much scholarly attention (Aday et al., 2005; Fahmy, 2007; Fahmy & Kim, 2008; Major & Perlmutter, 2011). Major and Perlmutter (2011) cite an interview given by the former U.S. Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, who explained this event as a "symbolic celebration of liberation of Iraq from a dictator." Further, controversial cases, including attacks on statues of Joseph II in Eastern Europe since the end of World War II (Wingfield, 1997) and the removal of Gandhi's statue from the University of Ghana (Safi, 2019), reflect that people still wish to re-establish nationalism in their territories—a clear ethno-nationalistic movement. Recently, the media reported a request of some local activists to change the inscription of the statue of Captain James Cook—who is responsible for massacres of aborigines when he was invading the Eastern belt of Australia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Smyth, 2017)—in Sydney, Australia. Similarly, the "Make It Right" project has identified ten confederate statues across the U.S.—including Texas, Virginia, Illinois, Washington, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia—that represent White Supremacy, which need to be torn down (Holloway, 2018). Both Australian and American examples reflect civic-nationalism movements, in which people need to correct historical mistakes. These directions indicate that, although old monuments are removed and new monuments are being erected, the future might make drastic decisions that could be backed by ethnic or civic nationalism.

British Broadcasting Corporation quotes a Sri Lankan military spokesperson about the post-war tourism boom as "a temporary phenomenon" (BBC, 2013). It should be noted that during the first three years following the end of the war, the Sri Lankan government strongly encouraged Southern Sinhalese domestic tourists to visit Jaffna to help reestablish Sinhalese Nationalism in Jaffna. Therefore, only domestic tourists

had the opportunity to witness LTTE war remnants and monuments at former battlegrounds. Alternatively, it was necessary for the Southern government to show what happened in the North to the Southern people. Subsequently, LTTE war remnants, bunkers, and places of significance were maintained for a short period. Both the Sri Lankan government and the military justified the removal of war attractions, saying there is no need “keeping the ghosts of terrorism” (BBC, 2013).

Van Der Auwera (2012) explains the destruction and removal of cultural properties as a strategy of psychological warfare. Consequently, the rest will not be motivated to have a second uprising against the ruling party. Alternatively, Burch-Brown (2017) mentions that removing symbols or cultural artifacts erases the history and sanitizes the past. Therefore, it is too early to say whether the removed war remnants are ghosts or not. Although there is no uniformly agreed definition for terrorism, we wish to quote the famous statement cited by Ganor (2002): “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” (p. 1). Removal of cultural objects and symbols, as seen in Iraq and Ghana, may help to establish Sinhalese Nationalism for a time; however, when looking back on history, Sinhalese Nationalism led by shortsighted political leaders was equally responsible for the three-decades-long war. Therefore, Burch-Brown (2017) warns over removal of cultural remnants and recommends careful strategies.

The post-war tourist gaze is presented under three main themes in the data analysis (Table 3): dark tourist gaze, removal of war attractions and reconciliation, environmental and cultural gaze. The recent geopolitical changes in Sri Lanka, backed by reconciliation efforts have directed the domestic tourists to increasingly gaze upon Hindu and Buddhist temples, way of life, Jaffna market, prayers and rituals, ancient burial sites, myths, and legends. Further, colonial attractions also have gained sufficient attention among tourists. Additionally, an environmental gaze is created through beaches, lagoons, sceneries, wild horses, birds, and adjacent islands in Jaffna. Only the Jaffna Public Library and the Sri Lanka Army war hero monument at Elephant Pass can be identified as places that are still creating a dark tourist gaze. Therefore, it is evident that tourists in post-war zones are increasingly engaged with non-dark tourist gazes in Jaffna as a result of the government’s policy decision on avoiding promotion of dark tourism, followed by systematic removal of war remnants from the North Province since 2009.

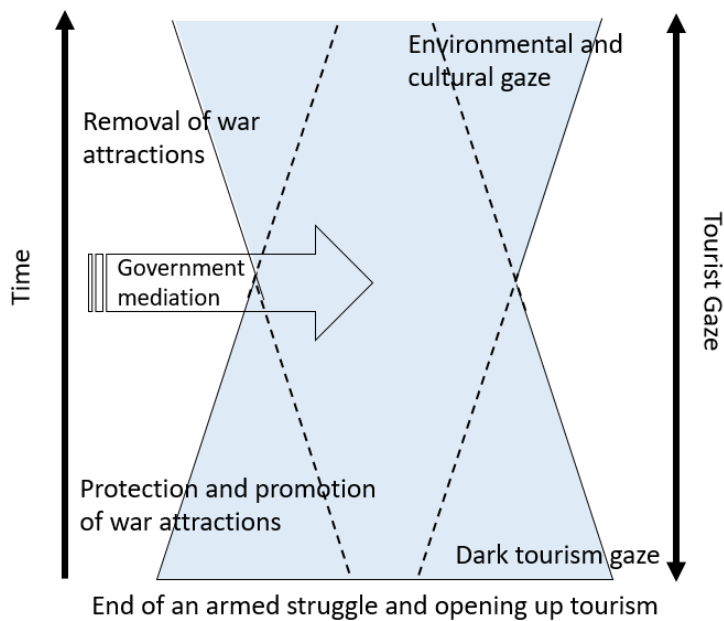
Government support is inevitable to create a dark tourist gaze within a country (Yoshida et al. 2016). In Sri Lanka, although some catastrophic events occurred during the brutal war period, the government’s decision is not to promote dark tourism (Perera, 2016) but to rebuild the conciliation between Sri Lanka’s two main ethnic groups, Sinhalese and Tamil. Thus, dark tourism potentials are being removed. As discussed in the results and findings section, domestic tourists are increasingly gazing upon natural and cultural attractions within the former war zone. Biran, Liu, Li, and Eichhorn (2014) also note, “In terms of tourism recovery following a disaster... it should be recognized that a disaster may change the destination’s attributes and appeal” (p. 2). Therefore, it can be identified that in light of reconciliation, the dark tourist gaze has been altered to environmental and cultural gaze within the context of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Parallel to the government’s decision, the SLTDA has identified

Jaffna as an emerging tourism hub with many natural and cultural attractions (Ministry of Tourism and Christian Religious Affairs, 2017). Further, the SLTDA has proposed building an “Asian War Museum,” which is too early to implement considering the existing reconciliation process. These actions will secure the existence of environmental and cultural gaze in Jaffna, while leaving space for dark tourist gaze to re-emerge when the time comes.

The study of the domestic tourist gaze is highly valued in the existing reconciliation process, especially as the majority of the Northern citizens are Hindu Tamils and the majority of the Southern citizens are Sinhalese Buddhists. Both parties have shed blood and lost their loved ones during this brutal war. As the results indicate, at least some years after the war, the Southern domestic gaze is being shifted from dark tourism to a more conventional tourism, indicating a positive sign for the reconciliation process. People are no longer gazing upon the attractions embodied with death, sorrow, and pain; they are attracted to the narratives of environmental and cultural gazes. This dichotomy highlights that Sinhalese nationalism is fading in Jaffna, leaving more space for minority groups to experience more freedom like never before. This freedom also allows the Tamil minority in Jaffna to reform their own identity. Woodside (2015) states that the tourist gaze can boost the formation of ethnic identity. The three-decades-long war has adversely affected protection and promotion of ethnic identity of the Hindu community living there, which needs to be revisited. As Marshall & De Villiers (2015) identified, people change their behavior when they see they are being observed. Thus, the existing tourism boom will help the impacted community to re-establish its own identity in the light of the tourist gaze.

The following model (Figure 3) explicates the transition of tourist gaze from dark narratives to environmental and cultural narratives over time in three stages: protection and promotion of war attractions (dark tourism), removal of war attractions, and promotion of environmental and cultural gaze. The literature review provides strong evidence of the availability of dark tourism attractions immediately after the war which was very popular among the Southern domestic tourists who were motivated by Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism and triumphalism (Perera, 2016). Immediately after the war, the government in fact wanted to attract the Southern Sinhalese tourists to North as a part of securing their victory in North and for politically motivated purposes. However, after facing the challenges related to reconciliation, and local and international political pressure, the government supported the removal of war attractions. Further to that, in order to promote tourism as a solution to burning socio-economic demands, the government has adopted a form of tourism development, which is away from dark tourism that rests on environment and culture. As a result, the most recent tourist gaze is mainly narrated around natural and cultural attractions according to the TripAdvisor.com reviews. The study reveals that although dark tourist gaze has emerged immediately after a war, it is impacted by many peripheral factors that has changed its development and directions. Through this study we validate that the dark tourist gaze has been maintained for some time, and altered to environmental and cultural gaze because of two main reasons: to overcome the reconciliation challenges imposed by local and international politics, and to change its focus to a form of tourism development in the

Northern Province that would rely on environment and culture which encourages locals to participate in tourism.



**Fig. 4.** The transition of tourist gaze at a post-war destination

By studying the shift from dark gaze to a more conventional tourist gaze in the complete removal of remnants of the conflict times that would be more conducive to dark gaze, the findings broaden the tourist gaze literature in three ways. First, the study is conducted at a post-war destination where the tourist gaze is constructing and transforming both before and after the removal of dark tourism attractions. Second, the study focuses on identifying domestic tourists' gaze within an Asian country that has been rarely addressed in the literature. Third, the study focusses on the gaze of the members of one society upon a similar society and a culture that were both ideologically and geographically separated temporarily due to nationalistic motives. Dark tourism is closely associated with post-war and post-disaster tourism and most related literature is confined to identifying motivation to visit, creation of destination image, dark tourism experience gained, and identification of tourism products within dark tourism sites (Biran, Avital; Hyde, 2016; Biran et al., 2011; Podoshen, Yan, Andrzejewski, & Wallin, 2018; Robb, 2009; Tucker et al., 2016). Hence, transition of tourist gaze from dark tourism to conventional tourism is an important area of study, especially in a post-war context.

The study of tourism in Christchurch, New Zealand, followed by two major earthquakes in September 2010 and February 2011, identified that tourism narratives can transition from destruction and loss to renewal and hope (Tucker et al., 2016). The case of Vietnam indicates that, although war is always part of the history, attractions can be diverted to beach, shopping, and food (O'Lemmon, 2017). However, this study suggests that narratives of dark tourism can be shifted to the narratives of environmental and cultural tourism. Several other studies also highlight that, eventually, tourists are visiting dark sites for educational purposes (Austin, 2002; Teye & Timothy, 2004) and to enjoy the sceneries (Poria et al., 2004), with the

exception of government mediation to remove dark tourism attractions aimed at reconciliation. Further, Poria et al. (2004) explained that all tourist sites with dark tourism potential are not necessarily engaged with dark tourism, and tourists visiting such places may not be familiar with the site's attributes. This study also supports the previous claims made by the researchers (Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Heslop, Lu, & Cray, 2008; Heslop, Nadeau, & O'Reilly, 2010) regarding the length of time as a factor that reduces the effects of a conflict. Accordingly, absence of new hostile incidents at post-war destinations are helping the travelers to construct conventional tourist gaze than dark tourist gaze. Therefore, in the case of Sri Lanka, although most tourists are well aware of the former battlegrounds and war remnants, the absence of the dark tourist gaze has led them to experience an altered tourist gaze. Therefore, it can be concluded that the dark tourist gaze at a post-war area can be altered to cultural, environmental, religious, pleasure, and educational tourist gaze through strategic government mediation.

## **6. Management implications**

The analysis of TripAdvisor.com reviews provides the following implications to enrich and enhance the tourist gaze in a post-war destination blessed with natural and cultural attractions:

*Encourage locals to participate in tourism:* Tourism in Jaffna is mainly run by the Jaffna elite community, the diaspora, Sri Lanka military, and reputable companies in Sri Lanka. Therefore, most domestic tourists only communicate with locals who run tourism businesses. As a result, the local community misses the chance to be with the southern domestic tourists, to speak with them, and to share their experiences with each other. A strong dialog between hosts and guests will help to establish a deeper understanding of one another through creating relationships and thereby memorable tourist gaze and host gaze among Northern Tamils and Southern Sinhalese. Therefore, promoting locals' participation in tourism, through approaches such as community-based tourism, is strongly suggested.

*Introducing a behavioral code to hosts and guests:* Since the Northern Province is a new tourist destination, it is imperative to mitigate the negative consequences of tourism from the beginning. Thus, authorities should educate the tourists and locals on how to behave responsibly in each other's presence when rendering or gaining a service from the other. Therefore, training and awareness programs should be conducted, targeting the locals. Moreover, materials about the Northern Province, along with "to do's" and "not to do's," should be developed and distributed among tourists through local travel agents, Jaffna hotels, and railway stations.

*Facility development:* Most tourists had relatively bad experiences with the facilities available within Jaffna attractions. Thus, it is recommended to pay closer attention to the improvement of facilities that include sanitary services, drinking water, changing areas, parking, guiding services, information hoardings, etc.

*Educating both local and foreign tourists on the distinct nature of the destination:* The entire Northern Province is still recovering from its dark past. Therefore, it is important

for both hosts and guests to understand sensitive topics and behaviors that might disturb the other or the existing reconciliation efforts.

*Training and educating both locals and tourism practitioners on tourism:* It is also important to promote tourism education and teach English and Sinhalese languages to locals and tourism practitioners in the area. It will open up a new avenue of communication between hosts and guests. Furthermore, to ensure tourists receive quality tourism service, industry employees should be trained in catering, housekeeping, cleanliness and personal hygiene, personal grooming, communication, etc.

*Actions towards reconciliation:* The study also recommends following actions to be taken to strengthen the existing reconciliation process in between the two ethnic groups: paying attention to the controversial victory monuments and taking possible actions to make Tamil people to become a part of the history; prioritizing the issues related to land disputes, displacements, war crimes, and human rights violations and support both victimized Sinhalese and Tamil families; teaching Tamil language in Sinhalese schools and Sinhalese language in Tamil schools; promoting inter-cultural events where the two ethnic groups can get together; encouraging Northern Tamil people to travel in Southern parts in Sri Lanka; promoting inter-cultural marriages.

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