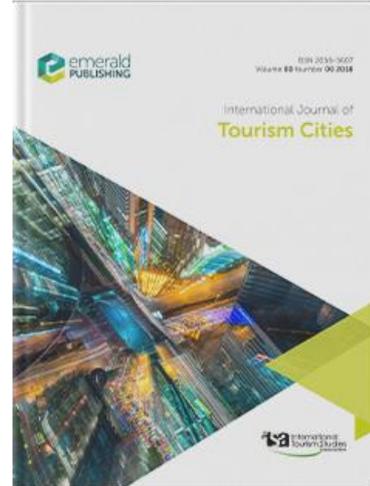


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## Post-war City to a Tourism City: the Perspectives of Local Stakeholders on Post-war City Tourism Development in Jaffna, Sri Lanka

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### ABSTRACT

Wars destroy the tourism cities by causing damages to their cultural and natural attractions. However, the post-war cities have great upward potentials to develop through careful and integrated tourism planning. Thus, the aim of this paper is to identify the perspectives of local stakeholders' on tourism development in a post-war city. The study employed qualitative methods in collecting and analyzing the data while closely referring to pertinent literature. Interviews, observations, and focus-group discussions have been the main data collection tools and content analysis was performed with NVivo (v.12) to analyze the data. Analysis of interviews, focus group discussion findings, and observations highlighted the availability of a plethora of tourism potentials within post-war Jaffna that include, both cultural and natural attractions: Hindu Kovils and Buddhist temples, colonial heritage, traditional cuisines, and way of life, beaches, flora and fauna, and sceneries. The study further identified lack of professionals, absence of a master plan, remoteness, poor infrastructure, and absence of tourist activities as main obstacles for tourism development in Jaffna. Finally, implications are forwarded based on stakeholders' perspectives to promote post-war city tourism in Jaffna. Wars are not common and post-war tourism cities are rare. The present study is focussed on a destination where the war has ended, causing much damages to the destination. The study evaluates the tourism potentials and challenges based on stakeholders' perspectives and forwards implications for city tourism development despite of post-war empirical glitches, which has rarely addressed in the tourism literature.

**Keywords** Content analysis, NVivo, post-conflict development, post-war tourism, post-war city, Sri Lanka tourism, tourism city, tourism in Jaffna, stakeholders' perspectives

**Paper type** Case study

## 1 Introduction

Tourism has been identified as a relatively less expensive and a popular development strategy for developing countries and regions by numerous local and global governing authorities (Binns and Nel, 2002; Wattanakuljarus and Coxhead, 2008). As a result, tourism oriented countries including such as Maldives, Island nations in West Indies and Pacific Island Nations majorly depend on tourism to develop the economies of their countries (Fernando, 2017). Sri Lanka is also a tourism oriented country in which tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner in the economy (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2019). Due to the rich natural, cultural and heritage-based resources, strategic location and the uniqueness of the country, Sri Lanka is perceived as one of the most famous tourist destinations in the world. However, the disturbances related to the civil war have significantly (about 21%) impacted on decline of tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka (Selvanathan, 2007).

Many post-conflict regions have seriously considered employing tourism as a development strategy since it is closely involved with sustainable practices. Many countries who had wars or tragic events in their recent history are actively promoting dark tourism (Samarathunga & Cheng, 2020) including Ground Zero in New York (Lisle, 2004), Fort Siloso in Singapore (Muzaini, Teo and Yeoh, 2007), Auschwitz in Poland (Biran et al. 2011), Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany (Beech, 2000), and Cu-chi tunnels in Vietnam (Henderson, 2000; Alneng, 2002). Promoting tourism can be viewed at a post-war destination as an attempt to develop the socio-economy of the war affected regions or the countries (Yu, 1997; Liyanage and Jayawardena, 2013; Samarathunga, 2019; WHMS Samarathunga, Cheng and Weerathunga, 2020b). Similarly, many international organizations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the European Union (EU) have recommend tourism as a tool for poverty reduction, economic diversification and regeneration, multilateral integration and peace, post-conflict stability, and socio-economic recovery (Novelli, Morgan and Nibigira, 2012). Despite of these advantage, the government support is a must to promote tourism at a post-war destination (Yoshida, Bui and Lee, 2016). Since Sri Lankan post-war context has been wetted with many empirical glitches dark tourism has not been promoted in post-war Sri Lanka (Perera, 2016; WHMS Samarathunga, Cheng and Weerathunga, 2020b) since it might disrupt the ongoing reconciliation process.

Immediately after the war in 2010, tourist arrivals increased by 46 percent over 2009 in Sri Lanka highlighting the importance of having a peaceful environment to promote tourism. The growth trend continued to year 2011 with 30.8 percent growth over 2010 and the year 2012 recorded a 17.5 percent growth over 2011 with the arrival of one million tourist to Sri Lanka. The latest statistics, arrival of 1.9 million tourists in 2019, proves that the tourism industry is ever growing in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2020). According to the vision statement given by the Ministry of Economic Development, the

tourism sector has been identified as one of the key sectors for the country's economic growth (Ministry of Tourism and Christian Religious Affairs, 2017).

Jaffna city of Northern Province in Sri Lanka suffered many years due to the war situation. As such, the development of the region was restricted. Other than the terrorist problem, Northern Province in particular suffered enormously with its restricted connectivity to the southern part of the country and to the rest of the world. The industries were collapsed and the professionals fled the region in search of asylum. At present, per person monthly income of Northern Province is Rs.5,515.00 (US \$ 30.6) and is the lowest per person income in the country (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017). All the governments elected after the end of the war identified tourism as a promising industry to develop the country. Jaffna too has a huge potential to be developed through tourism with its rich natural and cultural heritages. However, in Jaffna, tourism is at an infant stage and is poorly organized (Mathivathany and Sasitharan, 2012). The accommodation, transportation, and other touristic infrastructure, which determine the success of the tourism industry, are not sufficiently available in Jaffna (Mathivathany & Sasitharan, 2012).

Developing the Jaffna city through a holistic tourism approach is of concerns of the regional authorities in the Northern Province as well as many stakeholders. Therefore, it is vital to assess the stakeholders' perspectives on city tourism development for many reasons: to identify tourism potentials, challenges and impacts (Farmaki *et al.*, 2015; Gonz, 2017; Todd, Leask and Ensor, 2017) for sustainable tourism development. Although there are few studies (Dilogini and Hensman, 2014; Buultjens, Ratnayake and Gnanapala, 2016; Samarathunga, 2019; WHMS Samarathunga, Cheng and Weerathunga, 2020a) on tourism in Northern Province of Sri Lanka, they are with the exception of evaluating the stakeholders' perspectives on city tourism development. Further, comprehensive research studies in the same expanse will definitely be useful from the inception stage. Thus, evaluating stakeholders' perspectives on city tourism development in Jaffna will serve the interests of the investors, policy makers, local communities and other interested parties as well as the knowledge gap by large in city tourism literature. Therefore, the main aim of this study to evaluate the perspectives of local stakeholders' on city tourism development in Post-war Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **Stakeholder theory**

Stakeholders have a high value in the present business and socio-economic settings. As a result, both academics and practitioners are investigating on the stakeholders' perspectives on tourism development since tourism is a volatile and a sensitive industry. According to one of the earliest definitions, stakeholder theory indicates construction of value at the interest of key interested groups of the enterprise and treating it as the central driver

of the business and sharing the same with a wider social body without merely limiting it to the managers and shareholders (Freeman, 1984). Freeman (1984) further identified a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by business development in an area” (P 46). Scholars including Reed (1997), Markwick (2000), and Tosun (2000) highlighted the significance of carrying out actions related to tourism planning and development with the participation of stakeholders. Previous studies (Araujo and Bramwell, 1999; Ryan, 2002; Yang and Wall, 2009) recommend that tourism planning should integrate with stakeholders’ perspectives to forecast and address any future tourism empirical glitches.

### **War, Tourism and Destination Recovery and Resilience**

Tourism is undoubtedly a fragile industry, which is continuously threatened with terrorism, violence, pandemics, security threats, political turmoil and natural disasters (Libby and Edmunds, 2011). Libby and Edmunds (2011) give credit to Beirman's (2002) who pointed out that the field of destination recovery and restoration is an under researched discipline within tourism studies and management practice. Many authors including Alipour and Dizdarevic (2007), and Fernando, Bandara and Smith (2013) are in the opinion that tourism industry could be a backbone of the post-war development and recovery process. Further, Fernando, et al., (2013) state “tourism can play a role in poverty alleviation via employment generation, in increasing foreign exchange earnings and in accelerating economic growth including in the war-affected areas” (p.700).

However, it is imperative to normalize the socio-political context as a pre-requisite for sustainable tourism development at a post-war context (Novelli, Morgan and Nibigira, 2012; Causevic and Lynch, 2013; Fernando, Bandara and Smith, 2013). In this regards, governments have to play a proactive role at post-war destinations (Winter, 2008; WHMS Samarathunga, Cheng and Weerathunga, 2020b). In addition to that, reconstruction of infrastructure (Hall, 2003) and introduction of strong tourism development policies (Winter, 2008; Novelli, Morgan and Nibigira, 2012) are vital. Many countries including Vietnam (Henderson, 2000; Alneng, 2002), Croatia and Montenegro (Hall, 2003), Cambodia (Winter, 2008), Burundi (Novelli, Morgan and Nibigira, 2012), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Causevic and Lynch, 2011), Rwanda (Maekawa *et al.*, 2013), Lebanon (Ladki and Abdallah, 1997), and Khorramshahr (Mirisaee *et al.*, 2018), have considered tourism as an important social drive during the post-conflict development phase. Although there are few Sri Lankan studies (Fernando and Jayawardena, 2013; Liyanage and Jayawardena, 2013; Wickramasinghe, 2013; Buultjens, Ratnayake and Gnanapala, 2016) investigated on the same topic they are largely woven around the development of post-war national tourism policies, marketing and tourism developments without paying an in-depth attention to stakeholders’ perspectives on tourism development. This literature gap is addressed through the present study with the perspectives of local stakeholders’.

### Tourism Development in a Post-war Context

Within the post-war zones in Sri Lanka, still live the people who have first-hand experience in war. Since tourism encompasses with leisure and pleasure, touristic behaviour of the tourists is expected (Lam and Hsu, 2004). However, when the victims of a war seeing tourists coming and enjoying in their front and backyards, the reverse gaze that occur may not always be so positive towards the guests (Gillespie, 2006). This dichotomies become more tensed when the hosts are the victims and the guests are victorious at a war. Therefore, post-war tourism has to be operated in a way that it does not hurt the feelings of both hosts and guests who have been the subject of a long fought war. However, many scholars have identified the unique contribution of the tourism industry towards environment, socio-culture and economy in different ways. Amongst such contributions bringing peace and reconciliation to hostile communities can be listed out as one of the foremost roles of the tourism industry (Crompton, 1990; Jafari, 2002; Fernando, Bandara and Smith, 2013; Farmaki, 2017; Khalilzadeh, 2018).

Sönmez and Apostolopoulos (2000) cited the United Nations General Secretary Boutros-Ghali (1993) who proposed to introduce tourism to build confidence and restore the relations between two communities. Tourism and peace discourse is not a new one, rather it dates back to 1925 during which year “International Congress of Official Associations of Tourist Propaganda” conference was held in Hague, Netherlands, where Professor WimTreb stressed the need for “encouraging travel so that different peoples could understand and become better acquainted with each other, thus collaborating to the peace so earnestly desired among peoples, who had just survived a prolonged and deadly war” (Honey, 2008). Conflicts, political instability, wars and similar disturbing events reduce the destination popularity and as a result tourism investments would be discouraged. As a final result it will negatively affect to the country’s economic growth and development. Even though conflicts and wars adversely affect the economic growth, the end of civil war may contribute positively to the economic growth (Kang and Meernik, 2005). This is a proven factor from Sri Lanka. According to Fernando and Jayawardena (2013) re-opening of North and Eastern Provinces to the tourists offer undeniable tourism potentials that could be resourceful for the development of the regions with careful panning.

Tourism can be used as a quick tool to develop a war affected destination (Neumayer, 2004; Hall, 2010). In this light Upadhayaya, Müller-Boeker, and Sharma (2011) state that tourism also has the ability to promote the socio-political reconciliation at a post-conflict setting. Novelli, Morgan, and Nibigira (2012) continue to argue that tourism development can diversify and regenerate the economic activities, alleviate poverty and promote peace. During their discussion on post-war tourism development in Sri Lanka, Kamble and Bouchon (2014) stated that tourism can be promoted in Sri Lanka especially with the untouched natural resources lies in the Northern and Eastern provinces of the country. They further recommend

Special Interest Tourism (SIT) as a strategy to reach reconciliation. Whilst emphasizing the importance of local residents receiving the tourism benefits, Kamble and Bouchon (2014) further suggest to promote 'War Tourism' with the light of storytelling of the experience related to war, survival and aftermath.

Ranasinghe (2018) analysed the heritage and cultural resources within the Jaffna peninsula that could be in cooperated with the tourism development plans of Jaffna. He categorizes the attractions in to six main sets: "historical – historical monuments, memorable places of significant events; archaeological monuments, ruins and places of excavations; cultural-festivals, folklore, traditions and way of life; ethnographic-ethnic groups, ethnic food and creations, cultures, language and outfit; religious-rituals and ceremonies, relics and pilgrimage places, beliefs and religious constructions; ecological-natural landscapes, wetlands, forest covers and wild life" (Ranasinghe, 2018, p6). Further to that, immediately after the war, the New York Times in USA identified 31 places to visit in 2010. According to the list, Sri Lanka became the number one destination to visit in 2010 (New York Times, 2010). Following New York Times, Lonely Planet identified Sri Lanka as one of the top destinations to travel in 2013 (Kamble and Bouchon, 2014). This is a clear indication of strong tourism potentials in post-war Sri Lanka and post-war Jaffna.

Through their study, Fernando et al. (2013) highlighted the abject poverty that was prevailing within the post-war regions in Sri Lanka. In order to alleviate this situation, they proposed tourism as a catalyst that can generate employment opportunities, earn foreign currency and to promote economic growth at the post-war areas. A different study, however, identified the post-war development related issues that include alleged human rights violations and war crimes, problems related to the rehabilitation process of the former LTTE carders, resettlement or the internally displaced people (IDP) and post-war development (Fernando, Bandara, & Smith, 2013). Ratnayake and Hapugoda (2016) wrote extensively on the post-war military involvement in civil affairs and the subsequent issues of it. Therefore, the local community has developed a misperception about the tourism development in the region (Ratnayake and Hapugoda, 2016). The issues between the post-war tourists to Jaffna and the Tamil hosts were also discussed in the post-war tourism literature. Pieris (2014) identified language as the main issue that obstruct successful relationship between the Sinhalese guests and Tamil hosts. Many scholars also noted the need of reaching reconciliation in the post-war region. de Silva (2010) identified reaching the reconciliation as the biggest challenge Sri Lanka is facing during the post war period. de Silva (2010) also paid attention to the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' which was formed by the Sri Lankan government.

In the process of achieving reconciliation, Fernando, Bandara, and Smith (2013) show the importance having a stable political environment which can be achieved through the rehabilitation, reconstruction and a versatile reconciliation process. While acknowledging the achievements made by the government in the areas of rehabilitating ex-LTTE members,

resettlement of IDPs, Fernando, Bandara, and Smith (2013) reminds the government to find a long-lasting political solution. Lokuhetty et al., (2013) also emphasise the need of establishing long lasting peace which is a pre-requisite of attracting millions of tourists to Sri Lanka. Pieris (2014) identifies the post war triumphalism and continuous criticisms of the Tamil nationalistic groups as a hindrance to reach reconciliation.

### **Study setting: Jaffna, Northern Province, Sri Lanka**

Post-war development and reconciliation are still deep rooted problems in the country. When looking back at the root cause of the terrorist struggle and the subsequent war, different authors are under different impressions on origin and continuation of the war. Although there are many scholars trying to justify this is a terrorist problem there are ample evidences to prove the root cause for the Sri Lankan war a result of result irreconcilable ethnic, language, religious and politically different ideologies (Perera, 2001; Uyangoda, 2005). Gombrich (2006) also criticizes the Sinhalese pro-policies of SWRD Bandaranaike which fuelled civil disorder. Deegale (2006) points out the Sinhalese Buddhists' notion that Sri Lanka has historically been not only a Sinhalese Buddhist country, but also one country. Veluppillai (2006) argues that Tamils had been trying to share the power but Sinhalese trying to monopolize it during the previous six decades. He could have probably been motivated with the fact of Tamils requesting fifty – fifty parliament representation at the time of the Soulbury Commission in mid 1940's in between Sinhalese and Non-Sinhalese. But he has surprisingly missed the point of ethnic composition of Sri Lanka during 1940's: 70 percent was Sinhalese and 30 percent was non-Sinhalese (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015).

Although Tamil political leaders had constantly fought ideologically with the government by that time, their voices had been suppressed and as a result the separatist war began (Veluppillai, 2006). Two key incidents before the war includes: assassination of Alfred Duraipah (the former mayor of Jaffna) in 1975 by the LTTE and burning the Jaffna library by Sinhalese thugs in 1981. These events were followed by the infamous 'Black July' incident in 1983 which began as a response to the assassination of 13 Sinhalese soldiers by LTTE in Jaffna. When the bodies were taken to the commercial capital Colombo for cremation, the Sinhalese started an anti-Tamil violent campaign which took thousands of lives of Tamils who were 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 Sri Lankan separatist war between LTTE and Sri Lankan government forces. Although Sri Lankan government revised the Sinhala Only Bill in 1987 giving an equal status to Tamil language, it was too late to reverse the consequences. Therefore, since 1983 onwards both Sri Lankan government forces and LTTE were in an open battle that ended in 2009 bringing much destruction to Sri Lanka. The war came to an end in May 2009, accounting for thousands of lives and billions of dollars of economic losses to Sri Lanka. Even a decade after the war, the country is still struggling to overcome the three decades of drawback and neglected development in Jaffna.

### 3 Data and Methods

This study takes a form of a case study that involves direct encounters with stakeholders in Jaffna and other key tourism stakeholders in Sri Lanka. Interviews, focus-group discussions and observations were used as main data collection tools. Interviews are a commonly used method in social sciences where there is more room for new knowledge to appear than being restricted to pre-defined set of answers (King & Horrocks, 2010). The interviewees were selected based on their professional and academic qualifications. Further, the researchers adopted a convenience, non-random and snowball sampling method to reach the respondents. This method allowed the researchers to identify the most relevant stakeholders to interview and the data collection thus became relatively easy with a proper pre-planning of the interviews. Accordingly, a total of 19 interviews were conducted that include 02 tour operators, 02 community leaders, 03 officers of the National Tourism Organization and local authorities, 03 academics, 04 hoteliers, 02 diaspora investors, and 03 tourists. Questions related to the post-war tourism development, opportunities and challenges for tourism development, tourism planning and policy making were questioned from the participants. The duration of each interview range from 25 minutes to 70 minutes.

However, due to the limited number of sample drawn from the population, the data could run into risk of being biased (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Thus, to avoid this biasness issue, the study adopted triangulation method (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991) that are presented in four facets. First is data triangulation in which data are collected either from different sources or at different times. Secondly, investor triangulation could be employed by using different investigators working independently on data collection. The third method is theoretical triangulation in which a theory is abstracted from one discipline to explain a situation in another discipline. The final triangulation method is methodological triangulation that employ both qualitative and quantitative techniques to answer one focussed question. Accordingly, the present study employed data triangulation, investigator triangulation and methodology triangulation.

As the second method of collecting data, the researchers adopted observations at key tourist destinations, and sites with great tourism potential in Jaffna city that include: Jaffna local market, Jaffna Public Library, Jaffna Dutch Fort, Naga Vihara Temple, Nallur Kovil, Dutch Kachcheri Building, Archaeological Museum, and Kind Sangilian's Palace. Since almost all the travellers visiting Jaffna city visit nearby destinations, to get a holistic picture about value additions to Jaffna tourism three other nearby destinations to the Jaffna city were selected. They include: Casuarina beach, Nagadeepa Island, and Delft Island which are located 20 Km's, 35 Km's and 37 Km's away from Jaffna respectively. Spontaneous interviews and focus-group discussions were also carried out with the locals living around the tourist destinations and with the tourists visiting the destinations. In order to employ investigator triangulation, the two principle researchers formed two research teams with the research assistants and

conducted the data collection separately. In line with the data triangulation methodology, 03 focus group discussion were conducted at the Nallur Kovil (08 participants), Nagadeepa Temple (06 participants) and Delft Island (07 participants) with the participation of local residents in Jaffna. The duration of the focus group discussions varied from 30 – 45 minutes. The key two topics discussed were tourism potentials and challenges for promoting Jaffna city tourism.

The interviews and focus-group discussions were conducted with the support of a professional English-Tamil interpreter. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Accordingly, 22 source files were prepared for the analysis. Interview and focus group discussion transcriptions, industry reports, audios, and images were uploaded to the NVivo (v.12) software and the content analysed. The researchers identified content analysis as the best analytical tool since it provide in-depth visit to the data being analysed with revisits to the data to identify new insights, knowledge and facts that fairly represent a phenomenon. Further, content analysis performed with NVivo enables the researchers to make valid and replicable inferences from data to their context (Krippendorff, 2004). The researchers further used data immersion technique (Green *et al.*, 2007) not to miss any important fact emerging from the transcriptions.

The data collection took place during the months of January, July and August of 2019. These three months were selected based on the seasonality of tourist traffic to Jaffna: January a month in the off-peak season, and July and August are in the peak season for Jaffna tourism. During the off-peak season, i.e., January, the researchers travelled around Jaffna, visited many sites, performed the initial observations and conducted face to face interviews and focus group discussions. During the peak-season, i.e., July and August, the researchers could closely observe how tourism operated in post-war Jaffna and the researchers made it an opportunity to engage with many informal discussions with the visitors. Journal articles, books, book chapters, tourism plans and policies, government statistical reports were also used as the secondary data. Since Sri Lanka is still confronted with post-war empirical issues, the researchers use synonyms to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

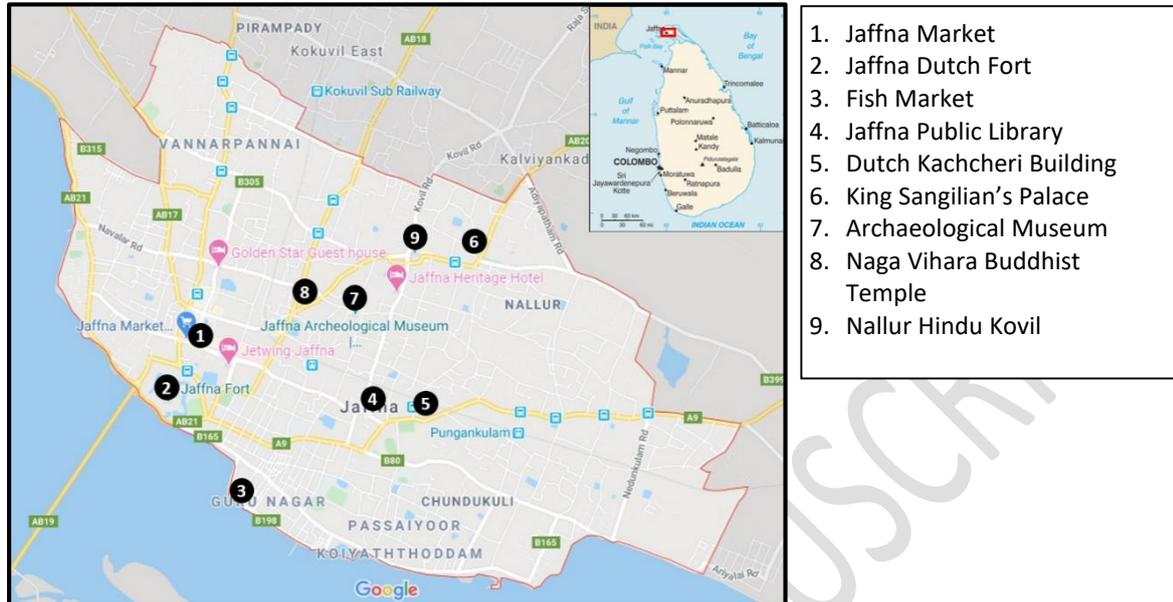
## **4 Analysis and Results**

### **Tourism Potentials in Jaffna City**

Success of a tourism destination mainly depends on availability of attractions (Inskeep, 1991). Jaffna is blessed with ample tourist attractions; tangible and intangible. Both foreign and domestic tourists now have a safe passage to Jaffna. Although studies to identify the attractions are done, the attractions themselves are far from the development. As such they are not getting popularised. Jaffna has plenty of untouched tourism potentials: natural and cultural, through which the Northern tourism could be developed upon (Mathivathany and

Sasitharan, 2012). Further, some attractions are yet to discover, for instance, Intangible Cultural Heritage (Samarathunga, 2019). Figure 1 exhibits the key attractions in Jaffna.

**Figure 1: Attractions in Jaffna city**



Source: Developed by the authors using Google maps (2020)

Some of the above historic attractions were severely damaged due to the war situation. However, due to the mediation of both central and regional governments the Department of Archaeology and other relevant authorities have taken necessary measures to renovate them. In the meantime, various tourism development strategies have been introduced by the Sri Lankan Government after recognizing the importance of developing tourism industry after the end of 30 years fought civil war. Numerous marketing and management strategies implemented by the government such as introducing and implementing 'Tourism Strategic Plan', 'Sri Lanka – Wonder of Asia' marketing campaign in terms of attracting international tourists and rebuilding the destination after the civil war. This make obvious that the Sri Lankan government is very keen to accelerate economic development of the country through tourism. According to a Senior Officer at Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority:

*“The central government and regional governments should seriously consider tourism industry as a post-war development strategy since it needs minimum investments and bring huge economic benefits if properly employed” (Participant 5, personal communication)*

Many places with enormous tourism potentials are still under-developed to get the maximum benefits out of it. Places like Casuarina beach and Delft Island tops the list while other places like Nilawarai Well, Jaffna Fort, Jaffna Library are being visited for a short period of time according to the stakeholders' viewpoints. Delft Island in particular has rich tourism

potentials with many Dutch and British colonial attractions. However, due to the transportation and accommodation issues, it is yet to enjoy the tourism benefits. The archaeological, colonial and religious values have not been properly identified by the authorities and as a result, people are also not much motivated to engage with the tourism industry. During an interview, the Tourism Officer at Delft Pradeshiya Sabha mentioned that:

*“No one is paying attention to the tourism potentials at Delft, although we are blessed with many. The Dutch Hospital, Pigeon Hall, Horse Stable, Old Fort, Queens Tower are few iconic places. Further, this is the only place in Sri Lanka you can see wild horses”*  
(Participant 7, personal communication)

**Figure 2: Horses at Delft Island**



Source: Authors (2019)

Intangible attractions in particular holds a key tourist attraction in Jaffna due to the unique Hindu culture in Jaffna. Samarathunga (2019) in his study on ‘Intangible Ethnic Tourism in Jaffna’ identified six main Intangible Cultural Attractions (ICH) categories that have a potential to develop as tourism products. They are: Handicrafts and visual arts; Gastronomy and culinary practices; Social practices, rituals and festive events; Music and the performing arts; Oral traditions and expressions; Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. During the observations it was clearly visible that due to the decades of isolation intangible attractions have been well-preserved in Jaffna. The key ICH attractions in Jaffna include: religious festivals, food, way of life and traditional industries. According to a priest at the Nallur Kandaswami Kovil (Figure 3):

*“Since 2010, millions of tourists visited Nallur Kovil not only to see the Kovil, but also to get the blessings of God Muruga. The men remove their shirts, and the women dress in Sarees as a respect to the God. Especially during the August when we have the Nallur*

*festival at least one million visitors visit the Kovil” (Participant 3, personal communication)*

**Figure 3: Nallur Festival**



Source: Authors (2019)

Traditional food and beverages hold a significant place in tourism promotions at any destination (Adongo, Anuga and Dayour, 2015). Traditional Hindu food in Jaffna is growing in popular among both domestic and international tourists in Jaffna. Some of the most famous food include Jaffna crab curry, prawn curry, fish head curry, *Panangaigpaniyaram*, *Odiyalkool*, *Pittu wada*, *thosai*, *kiriappam* and *poori* etc. Additionally, Jaffa fruits are also famous among the local and international tourists that include Jaffna mangoes, grapes, *Nelli*, Palmyra, *Itharai* banana, jackfruit etc. Further, there is a great potential of conducting traditional cookery classes for the tourists visiting Jaffna on a daily basis at central place in Jaffna.

It's both a habit and a hobby of the tourists to purchase souvenirs for themselves and to their loved ones from the destinations they have visited. Jaffna is an excellent place to purchase souvenirs. The traditional industries and crafts of Jaffna reflect the traditional arts of the people and their cultural heritage influences by the land in which they live, which is different from the rest of the island. The Jaffna people place a high value to Palmyrah product in their day-to-day life. The Palmyrah handicrafts range from mats, baskets, containers, hats, wall hangings, necklaces, bags, purses etc. (Figure 4). These products are available in Jaffna local markets that need to be promoted among the tourists.

Other than traditional Hindu religious festivals and handicrafts, which are already patronage by the tourists, there are many traditional sports enjoyed by the Jaffna Hindus. A pastime typical of Jaffna is Musical Kite. Made in varying patterns of bird or animal form, the more common are the peacock and a conventionalized form of the bird kite, the form popularity called *Paruntukkodi*, a stylish pattern of the *Brahmin* Kite. *Kitti* and *Pullu* play are

also very popular with children, with a wide distribution in both South India and Sri Lanka. In addition to that the “Bullock Cart Race/Festival” is a very popular Hindu sport in Jaffna which takes place twice a year.

**Figure 4: Palmyrah Handicrafts**



Source: Authors (2019)

Due to the three decades of war, infrastructure development projects were hindered in Jaffna. Also, the existing infrastructure was severely damaged due to the war. As at now road network, railway, telecommunication, digital infrastructure, water supply and electricity have been re-installed. It has thus made the tourists to reach and stay in Jaffna conveniently. Further to that, the investors are finding a favourable investment environment in Jaffna due to ongoing infrastructure development projects. According to the interview findings, diaspora is very much interested in investing in Jaffna, especially in the tourism and hospitality sector. Additionally, local investors in the hospitality industry are now investing in Jaffna. One Jaffna local hotelier and a diaspora investor commented about the investor friendly environment in Jaffna as follows:

*“The road is done, railway is done and the international airport will be opened in few months. With all of these Jaffna will be unstoppable provided government supports us”* (Participant 11, personal communication)

*“Although we live in abroad, we love Jaffna. There are about 2 million Jaffna diaspora living in abroad and they come back home round the year. So I see a lucrative business opportunity in Jaffna, thus decided to invest in a hotel with my family”* (Participant 15, personal communication)

Since the dawn of the peace, a drastic attitudinal change among the Jaffna public could also be identified. This is mainly due to the fact of change of political ideology from isolated

dictatorship to vibrant democracy. Fast development, increased arrival of visitors, well established transportation network has paved more opportunities for the Jaffna residents to cultivate more favourable attitude towards tourism and tourists. As such, the Jaffna residents are now willing to accept and adapt to the changes of the societies. Tourism being an international industry, the employees need to possess an open mind about the behaviour of the tourists and to correct the tourists if the need arises. According to the participatory observations and focus group discussions the tourism and hospitality employees have identified the requirements of the industry and now possess the correct attitude to welcome and host tourists. In addition to that focus group discussions revealed that, local investors are also having a very good attitude about the tourism industry and they are making significance investments in the industry. During the focus group discussion with community members, following ideas were presented:

*“We are happy to see tourists coming to Jaffna. When tourists come they bring money. Also, when more tourists are coming there going to be more hotels and our children can get employment opportunities there”* (Focus group 2, personal communication)

In addition to that, a hotelier expressed his view about the public attitude as follows:

*“Compared to few years ago, now the people have very positive attitude towards tourism. Unlike those days, more people are asking for jobs in hotels and the students go to hotels school to get the required qualifications”* (Participant 13, personal communication)

None of the above potentials will be realistic without having the existing peace in the country. End of the three decades war is the greatest opportunity that Jaffna and the entire North Province ever experienced. Although the reasons lead to the war is subject to great debates all should look forward to develop the region with positive attitudes. The prevailing democracy and the stable political situation is a blessing to the residents in Jaffna to engage with any industry that they believe promising.

### **Challenges for Tourism Development in Jaffna City**

Physical development itself cannot develop a destination. Availability of a competent workforce will always add value to the physical developments of a country. The thirty years war lead a number of professionals to flee both the region and the country. As such there are no sufficient number of professionals to work in the tourism and hospitality industry and other related industries in Jaffna. Especially there is a big vacuum in professionally qualified chefs, guides, front office staff, housekeeping staff, technicians in the region to operate the existing hospitality businesses. Not only the private sector is suffering due to lack of professionals, but also the public sector including provincial council, divisional secretariats

and even the educational institutes are not having sufficient number of professionals to run their operations. The view of an academic regarding the shortage of the labourers is as follows:

*“Although there is a tourism boom in Jaffna, the relative number of professionals available are of limited. The existing workforce is not fully competent thus reducing the service quality”* (Participant 8, personal communication)

According to Inskip (1991), any destination must have a master plan if it is supposed to develop tourism within the destination. One of the main challenges to develop Jaffna tourism is unavailability of a tourism master plan. As a result many unplanned tourism developments can be seen with the initiative of the regional public sector (Figure 5). For instance, there is no single resort area officially declared by the authorities within the Jaffna District. Also, no development guidelines suggested by the authorities for hoteliers, restaurateurs, and other service providers. The environmental, social and economic costs of such unplanned developments may be not revisable in the long run.

**Figure 5: Unplanned & neglected facility developments in Delft Island, Jaffna**



Source: Authors (2019)

Unlike other destinations in Sri Lanka, Jaffna has a single out geographical disadvantage by being located in the Northern cap of Sri Lanka. The distance to Jaffna from Galle, Colombo, Kandy, Sigiriya, Anuradhapura and Trincomalee are 509, 400, 318, 246, 194 and 237 km's respectively (Survey Department of Sri Lanka, 2013). As such, the tour operators are discouraged to add Jaffna as a tourist destination to their traditional round tour itineraries unless the tourists ask for it. The vast time consumption in travelling, unavailability of other attractions between Anuradhapura (the closest main tourist destination) and Jaffna which is 200 km's, high cost in private transfers always discourage both tourists and tour operators to promote Jaffna as a must visit destination. A tour operator highlighted this fact during an interview:

*“We know the tourism potentials in Jaffna, but it just does not match the tourists’ demand. It’s far, takes a lot of time to travel, only a couple of hotels available. So we send them [tourists] to the Eastern belt instead”* (Participant 1, personal communication)

Although the renovation of both A9 road and Northern Railway Line is completed, it does not meet the needs of regional travel. The local travels within the Jaffna District is still at a poor condition. The Free Individual Travellers (FIT’s) are facing lots of difficulties in finding public transportation to their preferred destinations in Jaffna. Further to that, public water system, electricity and health and medical services are limited to city areas. There are many villages in Jaffna District with limited infrastructure facilities. Thus the tourists are discouraged to travel to such areas. It is further unfortunate to note that available number of hotels are not sufficient to meet the tourists’ demand in Jaffna. Also, most of the hotels are not purposely build hotels, but mere conversions of traditional Hindu houses to hotels.

In addition to that, the amenities are not widely available within the region and the available amenities are of at a dilapidated condition. Especially when it comes to public toilets, signage, retail shopping, restaurants and cafes, visitor centres, telecommunications, hospitals, banking services, saloons, salons, security and emergency services, the tourists are not satisfied with them. Further, since those amenities are available within city limits, the tourists always try to stay within the city that discourage overall tourism development in the region. Few international and domestic tourists also commented about the amenities in Jaffna:

*“We just returned from Casuarina beach in Kareinagar. There my wife wanted to use a toilet, but we found none”* (Participant 18, personal communication)

*“There are only two or three restaurants at Delft Island and we went for one of them to have the lunch. A very average meal did cost us around Rs.1000.00”* (Participant 17, personal communication)

*“If you wish to travel in Jaffna using public transportation, well... think twice. You will not find ample buses away from the Jaffna city area”* (Participant 19, personal communication)

In the book of “Tourism Planning; An Integrated and Sustainable Development Approach” by Inskip (1991) the importance of availability of tourist focussed activities are well highlighted. However, the tourists focussed activities are not well developed in Jaffna. It has made the tourists to stay a shorter time period within Jaffna. Due to the same reason, locals are losing substantial economic advantages. Sightseeing, photography, sea bathing and travels to Nagadeepa Island are some of the activities available ass at now which are not invented by purpose. Further, proving the famous saying “battle is won, not the war” still there is an ongoing political tension within both Northern and Eastern Provinces. The

cooperation between the provincial government and the central government is still on the fence. According to the local political authorities, they are discriminated by the central government on the basis of resource allocations through the budget. Further to this situation, central government is keeping a prying eye over the activities of the local government since they demand land and police rights. One community leader stated:

*“In our lands, now there are hotels run by the army. Still there are some lands on which some military camps have been established. Some of the beach front land with high tourism value still belong to the government high-security zone”* (Participant 4, personal communication)

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

Sri Lankan post war period has been controversial with sensitive geo-political issues that include fractured and fragile political behaviour and socioeconomic complexities, human rights issues, authorization and militarization (Skanthakumar, 2012). Boyce (2007) also predicted the complex socio-economic and political challenges soon after a conflict situation. Pieris (2014) pointed out that post-war regions are facing many challenge of attending to numerous socio-economic development processes when uplifting the socio-economic wellbeing and increasing the employment opportunities of the war affected communities who have been suffering for years. When finding solutions to the aforementioned post-war challenges tourism industry opens new avenues to consider alternative ways of development strategies (Buultjens, Ratnayake and Gnanapala, 2016; Samarathunga, Cheng and Weerathunga, 2020).

The “Sri Lanka Tourism Development Strategy 2011 – 2016” was presented by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), aiming at post-war tourism development. However, immediately after the way due to the socio-economic, political and security issues, the government did not pay much attention to promote tourism in Jaffna. Yet, the domestic travellers made it an opportunity to travel along the A9 highway to gaze on the post-war destination which was long being missed. However, this plan failed to identify tourism potentials in Sri Lanka, probably due to the post-war empirical glitches. Similar to the 2011 document, the government presented the second tourism strategic document “Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020” aiming at holistic tourism development of Sri Lanka, which, however, paid some attention towards tourism in Jaffna.

Similar to any other post-war destination, Sri Lanka’s economy and the tourism industry grew considerably since the end of the war. For example, the Gross Domestic Product has increased by 8.02 percent, 8.25 percent and 6.41 percent between the year 2010 and 2013, while the growth of the tourism industry recorded a noticeable improvement of 46 percent in year 2010, 30 percent in the year 2011 and 17 percent in, 2012 and 18 percent in

2013 (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2019). However, the sudden increase tourist influx to Sri Lanka created some problems at the ground level without being able to cater the increased tourism demand including the post-war cities of Sri Lanka. According to the local and international tourists who participated in the study, the accommodation sector, for an instance, could not cater the tourist demand and it set a high price for hotel rooms around Sri Lanka. Still the North Province and the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka had very little number of rooms which discouraged the tourists to explore Sri Lankan new destinations. On the other hand, infrastructure, which include rail, road, telecommunication, were at a very poor situation without meeting the needs of the tourists the stakeholders further added. Therefore, the government happened to implement many projects targeting the war affected areas. Reconstructing A9 highway, renovating the Northern railway line and opening up Jaffna International Airport are some of these initiatives.

Community leaders explicitly expressed their frustration over the land issues in Jaffna peninsula where the government had established hotels in certain native home lands of Tamil people. The resettlement of internally displaced people (IDP's) become more intense when they go back to their own land. Most of the land which were neglected during the war, have been occupied by the government armed forces for military activities (Ratnayake & Hapugoda, 2016). Even later, some lands have been identified as sensitive security areas and the government has declared High Security Zones displacing more people even after the war. This brought more international attention and concerns of many civil society organization (Green, 2010). However, then the military gradually began using those lands for different purposes other than military purposes. Two of such key areas are hospitality and farming (Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project, 2014). Bradley (2013) also noted the change of military discourse from war and security actions to leisure and recreation and engagements with resort development, restaurant operations, air passenger transportations and even whale watching. Fonseka and Jegatheeswaran (2013) also state that military occupancy in civilian lands, whatever the purpose it may be, has restricted the civilians to return and settle back in their ancestral homes. One of the most common examples of military involvement in tourism, especially at the controversial areas is construction of '*Thalsevana Resort*', where the area was earlier highly frequented by the local fishermen (Ratnayake & Hapugoda, 2017).

Many other tourism related projects are presently in place all around the post-war destinations in Sri Lanka that include both Northern and Eastern Provinces. Still, the rapid development of those areas are greatly affected by clearing of land which were planted with land mines, and the issues related to ownership. Two major tourism projects were, however, introduced both in Kuchchaveli and Passikudah, in the Eastern Province, with capable investors who seek for prime locations. Although such mega scale resort projects have not been introduced to the Northern Province, some private investors are contributing for the regional development by introducing hotels, restaurant and recreational opportunities to the

visitors (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 2010). The diaspora investors are very much keen on investing in Jaffna after identifying tourism as a lucrative business to step in. The investor interviewees are willing to bring more investments down to Jaffna provided there is a strong investor friendly environment and conducive policies to secure their investments. The investors are also in the opinion that Jaffna has not been sufficiently looked after by the Central Government and ad-hoc tourism developments are taking place almost everywhere due to the same reason. Absence of proper planning in Jaffna is noteworthy even after a decade since the end of the war. Planning is much needed at the post war phase. Although the National Tourism Organization has identified tourism as a post-war development strategy, the tourism plans have not reached to grass root levels and as a result the regional bodies tend to waste money according to the Tourism Officers who participated in the study. The policies should be drafted with clear objectives that will help to avoid emergency situations and to lay a strong foundation for taking long-lasting decisions that which support operations (Jenkins, 1987). This situation has isolated Jaffna tourism to develop on its own.

Based on stakeholders' perspectives the study makes following suggestions to overcome the barriers faced by Jaffna as a post conflict tourist destination: encourage investors to invest on tourism and hospitality industry in Jaffna; focussed development of infrastructural facilities; identification and development of tourist attractions through a tourism master plan; bringing a sustainable resolution for ongoing political tension in Jaffna; empowering the existing hotel school and other training centres with competent professionals and equipment to produce required human resource to the industry; strategic management of high security zones; introducing directions boards to tourist destinations; introducing a behavioural code for the visitors. Further to that, to make Jaffna more accessible, the authorities must enhance the air, sea and land connectivity through introduction of airports, sea ports and highway road networks connecting Jaffna to other main tourist destinations of the country. The entrepreneurs should focus on inventing and introducing tourists focussed activities which need to be selected carefully considering the existing Hindu culture of the region. The tourism development needs to be decentralised through introducing amenities to the other parts of the peninsular as well.

In addition to that, initiatives should be taken to reduce the cost of overnight stays. The tourism development projects which are initiated by the local and central government should be continued while introducing more legislations to encourage private investments since the government support in private sector development is essential at this stage. Small and middle level investors, particularly for providing accommodation facilities, should be encouraged to reduce the cost of overnight stay and to increase the numerous accommodation alternatives. Community centric forms of tourism including 'community based tourism' could be introduced successfully in Jaffna to ensure the fair distribution of tourism benefits among local communities. The government should negotiate with the Jaffna stakeholders about land use and must make good use of land in the beach front areas. The

policy makers can also consider the best practices of Lebanon on land use (Ladki and Abdallah, 1997). Finally, in order to position Jaffna as a tourist destination, careful research need be carried out to identify the core tourism product and necessary actions need to be taken with the mediation of all the stakeholders including SLTDA, Northern Provincial Council and other regional bodies.

The duties, roles and responsibilities of the Jaffna tourism stakeholders is vital to convert the post-war city to a tourism city. Primarily, the tourism authority should introduce conducive and flexible tourism policies to promote tourism in Jaffna. In the meantime, the national tourism organization and its regional bodies should allocate sufficient resources required for tourism planning, implementation, training and development and monitoring. As the next step, more in-depth studies are required from the tourism academics. It is also required that the local and diaspora investors secure their tourism investments and attract more investments to the post-war region. On the other hand, the community need to cultivate tourist friendly attitude and participate in the tourism development process of the city. The tour operators should also continue to promote the unique selling propositions of Jaffna thereby to avoid geographical barriers. The tourists may need to acknowledge and adapt to different conditions and facilities available in the Jaffna city since it is still a growing destination.

Jaffna is a post-conflict destination that attempt to rise from the ashes. The socio-cultural, political and economic issues faced by the Jaffna city are unique due to the de-facto status of Jaffna. As a result, the implications of this study can only be adopted to other destinations that share similar features of post-war complexities and tourism potentials. Additionally, the study recommends to conduct further studies on post-war host-guest relationship since most of the travellers visiting Jaffna are Sinhalese and the hosts are Tamils whose disputes are yet to be attended. Investigation of destination image and behavioural intention among the guests will have an equal value in the tourism literature. Finally, the study recommends to conduct an in-depth studies on mutual gaze to identify the true insights of both hosts and guests on each other.

The present study is not without limitations. First, there are few post-war cities in both Northern and Eastern Provinces namely: Kilinochchi, Mannar, and Mullaitivu. Further, Vavunia, Trincomalee and Batticaloa cities were also badly affected by the war. During their tours, both domestic and foreign tourists tend to visit most of those cities. Thus, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding on post-war city tourism development present tourism developments and challenges in other post-war cities are also need to be considered. Secondly, time and resources imposed great barriers in conducting this study. Thus, the study employed a convenience, non-random and snowball sampling method to reach the respondents from various stakeholder groups. Therefore, the findings would have sharpened if the sample drawn from each stakeholder group had expanded.

Jaffna as a city has great potentials to develop through tourism with its untouched natural and cultural attractions. The focus of this paper has been to identify stakeholders' perspectives on tourism development in a post-war city. During the study, certain aspects through the stakeholders' lenses were considered: tourism potentials, challenges, facilities, existing developments and way forward. The opportunities will not remain same in the future as competitiveness is always on the rise, thus creating challenges of different nature. Stakeholder participation is vital from the beginning for sustainable tourism development (Markwick, 2000; Tosun, 2000) especially at a post-war setting. Therefore, a cross sectional representation is vital to make the basics correct when getting the support of the stakeholders in tourism planning. Unless otherwise post-war city tourism development could be a missed opportunity in Jaffna.

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT