

THE DARK TALES OF OVER-TOURISM AND THE ECOLOGICAL IMBALANCES FACED: A CASE STUDY IN ELLA

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Abstract: Over-tourism, a phenomenon characterized by excessive tourism pressure on a particular destination, has caused an ecological imbalance in Ella, that acts as a base for eco-tourism in Sri Lanka. Ella is a top tourist destination among locals and foreigners which promotes its natural beauty along with Sri Lankan traditional culinary culture. This study aimed to evaluate the impacts of over-tourism on the environment, focusing on the challenges faced by the local community. The research conducted a sample of 30 respondents related to the small and medium-scale enterprises in the tourism industry. Data were analysed thematically and descriptively according to the themes. Sixty percent of the respondents cited the influx of tourists without adequate waste management systems as a primary contributor to pollution in Ella. Between 3-5 tons of garbage is disposed by the hotels and 35% of the respondents mentioned that the increased demand for accommodations, food, and transportation put immense pressure on the environment causing deforestation and loss of biodiversity leading to overexploitation of natural resources. Seventy five percent of the data showed that the rapid increase in tourism has caused a strain on the resources and infrastructure of Ella. In Ella city, the total length of the drainage network is approximately 50m. It is not well connected with natural drainage pattern of the city and wastewater outlets of hotels have been directed towards the existing drainage, which has caused drainage blocking and water pollution reducing ecosystem health of the downstream tank cascade landscapes in Kirindi Oya basin. Insufficient sanitation facilities, traffic congestion, water pollution, and overcrowding have become prevailing issues, negatively impacting the quality of life for residents. To tackle these challenges and restore ecological balance, it is crucial to implement sustainable tourism practices in Ella. Development of proper waste management, sustainable infrastructure and responsible tourism guidelines are needed to foster the ecological balance and sustainability of this important watershed.

Keywords: Ecological imbalance, Impacts, Over-tourism, Pollution, Sustainability