

## **The Role of Heritage Cities in Promoting Domestic Cultural Tourism; a Case Study in the Anuradhapura Heritage City**

**H.A. Nishantha Hettiarachchi**

Faculty of Management Studies, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale  
nishanthahan@gmail.com

### **Introduction**

During the past few decades, tourism has emerged as one of the world's major industries, exceeding the importance of many manufacturing and other service industries. Most of the countries in the present world have gained socio economic and environmental advantages through tourism. They have implemented plans systematically, for domestic and international tourism sectors aiming to maximize the above benefits. Majority of the developing countries have been taking more economic contribution from domestic tourism and it is increasingly appreciated as a positive force for cultural and heritage preservation of a country or a destination. At the same time, domestic tourism is a major social phenomenon and also one of the most vibrant expressions of heritage. Further, it represents an attractive market for domestic tourists, in particular for countries recording high cultural and heritage diversities. Even though, it plays such important role, it has not received adequate attention in the process of local tourism promotion, development and planning. All most all the countries which use tourism as a strategy for local and regional development, has given special attention to international tourism, but less on domestic tourism. During the past few decades, tourism researchers have begun to discover the phenomenon of domestic tourism in

developing countries with special reference to local culture and heritage (Ghimire, 2001). Culture, religion and heritage are gaining increasing importance in the modern domestic tourism industry, and represent a significant force of attraction for domestic tourists (Rogerson and Zoleka, 2005).

Heritage cities are often important domestic tourist destinations, because they are disproportionately endowed with cultural and historical tourism resources (Ashworth, 1992). They often possess a large and varied array of sites which appeal to tourists, including monuments, museums, historic buildings, historic architecture and urban morphologies (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990). In addition, a great deal of tourism is centered in cities, even if the attractions themselves are located in non-urban areas. Further, heritage cities function as one of the country's most important touristic resources, and tourism is often centered on such historic areas. As discussed above, the role of heritage cities in promoting domestic tourism has been widely acknowledged. Since the Anuradhapura heritage city is one of the major domestic cultural tourist destinations, it is worthwhile to examine the role of this city, in promoting domestic tourism of Sri Lanka.

### **Objectives of this study**

The main objective of this study is to analyze the role of heritage cities in promoting domestic cultural tourism with particular reference to the Anuradhapura Heritage City. Further attention is given to analyze the contribution made by the city for rural and community development of the region.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this study comprises a number of steps; a) preliminary survey to select the study area, b) pilot survey to test questionnaires, c) data collection and d) data analysis. After a preliminary survey, the Heritage City of Anuradhapura was selected as the most suitable tourist attraction for the research. Using random sampling technique, hundred (150) domestic tourists who visited the tourist attractions representing each districts, thirty (30) owners of tourist hotels situated in the historic city of Anuradhapura and 290 small scale business community that are living within 02 km radius of the Historic City (villages and town) were selected for the in-depth study.

Given an exploratory nature to the research, various research techniques like field surveys, questionnaire surveys, interviews, observations, group discussions have been employed. Quantitative and qualitative analytical methods were used in combination for analysis the collected data.

### **Findings of this study**

The overall findings of this study are; the Anuradhapura Historic City has contributed to promote domestic cultural tourism of Sri Lanka by providing a large and varied array of tourist attractions. On the other hand, there is a great contribution made by the city on the preservation of archeological monuments and other related tourism resources. In addition, it functions as one of the country's most

important pilgrimage sites which locate the eight great places for veneration. Apart from this, cultural tourism industry in the study area has lead directly to the rural and community development process of the region.

### **Conclusion**

As this study explores the role of cultural tourism in alleviating poverty and improving the quality of life of the people in the traditional dry zone tank settlements of the NCP, it can contribute to policy formulation for poverty eradicating programmes and regional development strategies.

### **References**

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