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## **The Contribution of Cultural Tourism for Rural Agricultural Development of the Anuradhapura District**

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### **Abstract**

*Cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism niche markets in mass tourism. Over the last few decades, many developing countries have focused on it as a means of promoting rural agricultural development in the peripheral rural areas. It contributes to generate income for host communities living in rural and remote regions by creating a local market for rural agricultural productions and enhances the economic and social benefits. Rural agriculture of these regions is not only an occupation; but also a way of life, closely interwoven with other activities which attract tourists both foreign and local. The main objective of this research was to analyze the contribution of cultural tourism for rural agricultural development with particular reference to the Anuradhapura district of Sri Lanka. A representative sample of both cultural tourist sites and rural villages with rural cultural tourist attractions and activities of the Anuradhapura district was selected for the in-depth study. Twenty nine villages of the district, where cultural tourist attractions and activities can be seen were selected as the study area. A thirty percent sample from each village, hundred tourists both domestic and foreign and thirty owners of tourist hotels were selected as the sample of the study. Giving an exploratory nature to the research, various research techniques such as field surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations and group discussions were employed. Both quantitative and qualitative analytical methods were used in combination in analyzing the data. The overall findings of this research are; cultural tourism of the study area has contributed to the development of rural agriculture by creating a local market for the agricultural products of the rural villages, domestic improvement of local communities, development of small scale agro-based industries and enhancement of personal savings. Tourist visits to ancient traditional villages, agricultural practices, their life styles and cultural ambience create a new aura of improving rural agriculture and other means of livelihood begetting a new means of income of the Anuradhapura district.*

**Key words:** *Agricultural Development, Cultural and Rural Tourism, Rural Agriculture*

## Introduction

Cultural tourism is an essential component of many national and regional economic processes and can be considered as a significant device in rural, community and regional development, when managed successfully. Relationship between tourism and other sectors such as agriculture and livelihood in peripheral regions are not always competitive (Jaffari, 2008). But, tourism has presently been increasingly used for, and directly linked with rural agriculture and livelihood development in developing countries. It is accentuated that, tourism could be one of the few effective means to contribute the above two sectors if properly managed (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001). As a means of rural, community or regional development, tourism needs to be understood in comparison with traditional rural livelihoods including agriculture, fishing, traditional industries and activities in forestry. Further, tourism has been incorporated into the livelihoods of the peripheral areas in the forms of employments both regular and occasional and various collective and self-owned tourism related enterprises such as restaurants, home stays, food stalls, handicraft stores and campsites.

Rural cultural tourism is an important component of integrated and sustainable development and revitalization of villages as well as an important factor in encouraging the development of local agricultural and non farmer activities in rural areas and villages, and also a special incentive to employments. In many countries of the world, it is included in the development strategies of rural areas and villages. Further, it helps in maintaining the popularities of places of attractions, creates new jobs and contributes to socio-economic progress of outstanding areas.

When tourism established in a rural agrarian society, a common perception is that tourism will drive out agriculture (Ashe, 2005). However, such a result is not pre-ordained. Tourism induces improvements in marketing systems encourage the production of traditional, non-traditional and high value agricultural commodities. Tourism also stimulates agricultural landscaping and a host of agriculture-based service enterprises, bringing about profound positive changes that offset decreases in traditional agriculture.

Much of the agricultural goods and services consumed by tourists are provided indirectly through the tourist industry, which includes hotels, restaurants and other services catering to tourists. On the other hand, agriculture provides agriculturally based tourist attractions which are more popular among rural, cultural and agro tourists. The inter-relationships between cultural tourism and agriculture have been discussed focusing the various aspects of both fields. Rural or cultural tourism enterprises related to agriculture have been developed in rural areas of both developing and developed countries as an effective strategy of rural, community and regional development process (Irshad, 2010).

Even though, cultural tourism is considered as a foremost vehicle for rural agricultural development, it has created a wide range of problems to natural and cultural heritage of particular destinations and communities. Researchers have studied the problems of cultural tourism and rural agricultural development in different perspectives. Some of the important views of these researches can be summarized as follows. As cultural

tourism has grown very rapidly, its further development is usually effect on the changing of traditional life styles of a community since new cultural and leisure activities may serve local residents in search of a richer and denser life.

Tsai (2007) stated that the protection and management of the broader historic environments and the protection of major monuments and archeological sites are, two great challenges faced by cultural attractions. In addition to this, change of local attitudes and behaviors, depreciation of cultural resources, denigration of local culture, reduction of aesthetic value and lack of control over the future of cultural tourism attractions, overcrowding of the heritage villages, deterioration of intangible assets are some of the negative impacts of cultural tourism. In addition, Cukier, Snow and Wall (1993, 1998) have also suggested that, the growth in the cultural tourism sector has indirectly contributed to a breakdown in traditional village life.

Considering all the above factors, it can be stated that cultural tourism can play an important role in the agricultural development process of peripheral regions of developing countries including Sri Lanka. Hence a study which focuses such approach to utilize cultural tourism for agricultural development is timely and significant.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the research was to analyze the contribution of cultural tourism for rural agricultural development with particular reference to the Anuradhapura district of the North Central Province (NCP) of Sri Lanka. Further, attention was given to analyze the contribution of cultural tourism for the overall rural and community development of the study area. Other specific objectives of the research were to identify the problems faced by the community engaged in cultural tourism and recommend appropriate measures. The objectives of the study were structured within cultural tourism and rural, regional and community development in order to identify the role of cultural tourism on the development of agriculture of the Anuradhapura district.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this research comprised a number of steps; a) selection of the study area, b) selection of the sample, c) methods of data collection and d) data analysis. The Anuradhapura district of the NCP of Sri Lanka was selected as the most suitable sub national region in the periphery for the study of the contribution of cultural tourism for rural agricultural development. After a preliminary survey, the Anuradhapura historic city, Mihintale and Tantirimale cultural sites and traditional villages which have a great potential to develop cultural tourism, were selected as the study area. A representative sample of both tourist sites and traditional villages of above attractions were selected for the detailed study. It includes above three sacred/historic cities and twenty nine (29) villages in the vicinity of the sacred cities. These villages were selected by using the judgment sampling technique from three DSDs of Mihintale, Nuwaragampalata Central and Mahavilachchiya. A thirty percent (30.0%) sample of host communities was selected from each village, employing the stratified random sampling technique. In addition, hundred tourists both domestic and foreign and thirty owners of tourist hotels located in the proximity of 10 Km from the Anuradhapura historic city were selected.

After selecting the sample, primary data were collected through questionnaire surveys, observations, interviews (semi structured and in depth interviews), group discussions, case studies and event records, over a period of two years. Before conducting the research, a pilot survey was conducted in the sacred cities of Anuradhapura, Mihinatalle and Tantirimale.

Collecting secondary data was the second step of this study. Main sources of collecting secondary data were books, research publications, journals and other secondary sources of information related to cultural tourism, agricultural development, cultural tourism and regional and community development.

In order to analyze the collected data, both qualitative and quantitative analytical methods were employed. Most of the information collected through the informal discussions, case studies, life histories, event records and observations cannot be numerically analyzed. Therefore, qualitative analytical methods such as using photographs, summarizing and rearranging data, making list of important facts and drawing visual displays were employed. Quantitative analytical methods were employed for the analysis of measurable data collected through the questionnaire survey and other secondary sources. Both simple and advance statistical methods such as central tendency (mode, medium, mean) were used for analysis of the data relating to income, demographic data, tourist arrivals and other related data. In addition, the advanced statistical methods such as time series analysis (arrivals of tourists by years), simple and multiple regression analysis (numbers of tourist and income by years) were applied.

## **Results and Discussion**

Agriculture is identified as the principal mean of life sustenance in the Anuradhapura district while others such as livestock, cattle breeding, pottery, trade in minor scale and fresh water fishery are identified as sub categories. Agriculture mainly serves as paddy cultivation, slash and burn cultivation and vegetable cultivation. Especially, cultural tourism of Anuradhapura district has directly affected the improvement of the traditional life styles and livelihoods of the agricultural community and their related development. In this sense, the contribution of cultural tourism for agricultural development and its peculiarities on rural, regional and community development of the Anuradhapura district can be described as follows.

There is a greater demand for regional agricultural products among tourists both domestic and foreign and the tourist hotels, tourist bungalows, guest houses and rest houses. Tourist hotels and other related lodgings are willingly interested in purchasing the regional agricultural products such as rice from the new harvest, fresh vegetables, fruits, animal products including curd, eggs, milk and bee honey, other fresh cereals and spices from the slash and burn cultivation. Out of the total interviewed families, 173 (39.31) people sell their agricultural and other subsidiary products to tourist hotels and guest houses or directly deal with the domestic and foreign tourists. Table 1 depicts the various products sold to the tourists and tourist hotels and the number of persons engaged in.

**Table 1 : Miscellaneous Items Sold by the Regional Business Community**

<b>(I). Direct Selling to Tourist Hotels</b>		<b>(II). Direct Selling to Tourists</b>	
<b>Item Sold</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Item Sold</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>
Rice	28	Earthen products	08
Vegetables	34	Ornamental products	12
Fruits	11	Handicrafts	18
Green leaves	09	Vegetables	09
Dried products	16	Fruits	05
Animal products	05	Dried products	07
Other	11	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>173</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2011-2013.

According to Table 1, the number of persons selling agricultural and animal products to the tourist hotels is 103, while 11 persons sell earthen products, flower pots, floral plants, souvenirs in the form of carvings, cameos and agricultural products of slash and burn cultivation. It is an attractive source of income to sell these items to the hotels and the guest houses in the district notwithstanding their original prices to be decided on daily basis. According to the above discussion, it shows that 173 people are beneficiaries, directly benefited making themselves as outright contributors sustaining their agricultural livelihoods serving livelihood improvement in the region.

Fresh water fishery is flourishing in medium and large scale tank villages of the Anuradhapura district as a traditional means of livelihood and a part of rural agriculture. Out of the total fishing families of the study area, 68.2 percent supply fresh water fish to tourist hotels and guest houses. They engage in fishing in Tissawewa, Nuwarawewa and Basawakkulamawewa in the vicinity of Anuradhapura historic city, Mahakanadarawewa tank in the proximity of Mihintale sacred city and Mahavilachchiya tank in the Mahavilachchiya DSD and from other minor tanks and dyke reservoirs. Eleven (11) fishing families sell fresh water fish to domestic tourists on the way of tourist attractions.

When the various ways and means of the buying and selling process related to agricultural products of this minor business community is considered, few important facts can be discerned. Dealers in agricultural related market, sell vegetables, finger millet, cowpea, gingerly, dry chilies, products from slash and burn cultivation and dry-zone fruits. In further analysis, it reveals that out of the total number (165), 29 small businessmen (17.6 percent) sell the items produced in the region itself, while other 136 businessmen do various outsourcing. Within the Anuradhapura district itself, 51 small scale dealers carry on their trading activities centrally stationed. Only 19 (11.6 percent) dealers move out of the district for their trading and commercial activities. Table 2 depicts the various modes of item collection of the business community of the Anuradhapura district.

**Table 2 : Collection Modes of Agricultural Items of the Small Scale Business**

**Community**

<b>Mode of Collection</b>	<b>Number of Sellers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Selling own items	29	17.6
Neighboring villages in the district	39	23.6
Outskirts villages out of the district	26	15.6
Service centres within the district	22	13.3
Service centres outside the district	19	11.6
From brokers/middle men	14	08.6
Other	16	09.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2011-2013.

As shown in Table 2, the group which purchases selling items of agriculture in the region itself buys their goods from Mihintale, Mahavilachchiya, Viharapaluagama, Oyamaduwa, Pandulagama and some items from the Anuradhapura new town. According to this, the total number of sellers obtain or purchase the agricultural items of selling within the district itself is 116. When this situation is concerned, selling agricultural products and the circulation of other local products creates a splendid market for the local community of the region. On the other hand, 19 business people collect their sales items from the contiguous areas of the district such as Dambulla, Habarana, Sigiriya, Kala Oya and Galewela. This buying and selling process shows distinctly how many types of products flow into the region from the contiguous areas. Twenty (20) persons buy their sale of items from the brokers. These brokers come from the distant cities from Anuradhapura like Trincomalee (06), Vavuniya (03), Jaffna (02), Mannar (02) Puttalam (03) and Kurunegala, Matale, Polonnaruwa and Batticaloa one (01) by each, which the ultimate result is creating a problematic situation for the development process of the region itself. Even though this situation creates a problematic situation, it is a contribution in bringing positive effects too such as exposing village people into different business culture and buying local agricultural products by these brokers when they are return back.

Cultural tourism of the Anuradhapura district has contributed to establish, promote and develop the small and medium scale industries; including cottage industries such as producing handicrafts, mushroom, souvenirs and food processing and agro based small industries such as producing packeted dry food items and fruit productions. On the other hand, these small scale industries are eye catching cultural tourist attractions. Out of the total surveyed, 49 persons have engaged in cottage industries. They include producing of handicrafts, mushrooms, souvenirs, food processing, agriculture related products and wood carving. The number of persons who owned their own a small agro based industry or working in a same establishment is 61. In this way cultural tourism related agro based industries has contributed to generate numerous opportunities for the regional community of the district. Development and promotion of such aspect in a lagging area is a positive indication of agricultural, regional and community development process.

In a recent review, Richards (2007) identified a number of new trends which should also become increasingly important in the field of cultural tourism, including visits to traditional villages. As a new trend in the cultural tourism in the Anuradhapura district,

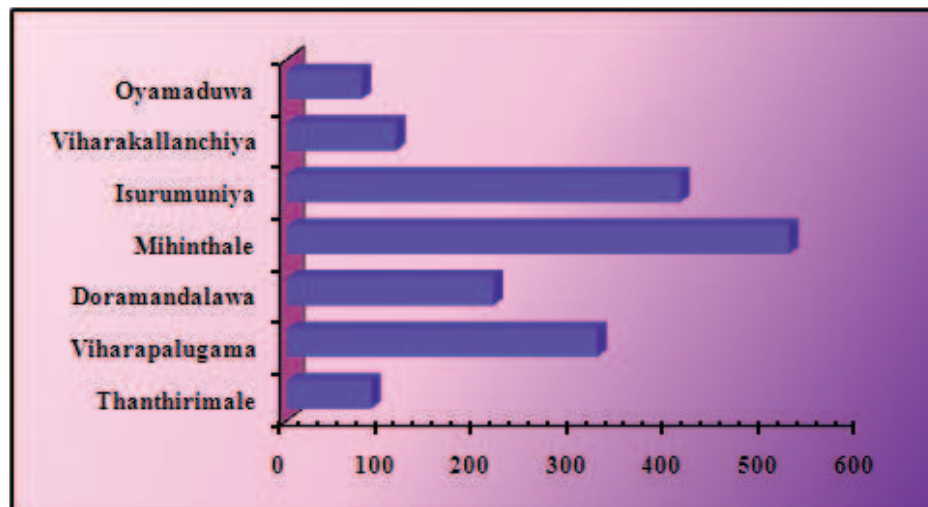


visiting ancient traditional tank villages, their life styles and cultural ambience is creating a new aura of improving cultural and other means of livelihood begetting a new means of income.

Based upon this new trend, the village community of the Anuradhapura district too has adjusted themselves from disorderliness to orderliness to attract tourists, making no harm to their income and the minds of the tourists. The unabated attention has focused especially on the traditional pottery, fresh water fishing, slash and burn cultivation and traditional culinary styles. Figure 1 shows the number of foreign tourists who visited the traditional villages in the district in the years of 2011 – 2013.

As shown in figure 1, visits to the traditional villages have been made by 1,756 foreign tourists giving priority to Mihintale, with 525 tourists and then intern 411 and 324 respectively to Isurumuniya and Viharapalugama. There are 114, 88 and 78 of tourists have visited Viharakallanchiya, Tantirimale and Oyamaduwa respectively. This increasing trend in visiting traditional villages demarcate a future positive recognition to these areas with regard to future expansion village tourism which can create more positive impacts ensuring the agricultural development process of the peripheral villages of the Anuradhapura district. There could be possibilities to intercultural exposure besides economic benefits; it creates positive circumstances.

**Figure 1: Number of Foreign Tourists Visited the Traditional Villages of the Anuradhapura District**



Source: Field Survey, 2011-2013; Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2012.

Even though, cultural tourism of the Anuradhapura district has contributed to the agricultural development of the region in numerous ways, certain problematic situation also can be identified. The majority of the demand for agricultural productions from the hotel and other accommodation related establishments are fulfilled by the region itself. But, it creates a problematic situation in fulfilling the demand of these regional agricultural products, when there is a scarcity in supply. In such occasions, the hoteliers and the owners of the tourist establishments tend to buy their necessities from other

regional hubs like Kandy, Kurunegala, Dambulla and Trincomalle which does not have a seminal influence on agricultural development process of the region. As a result of this phenomenon extraneous influx of money, causes an adverse effect on the region where this money shall have to be a regional circulation. It causes more benefits to other regions than the potential benefits to the district. When such outward leakages are there, it prompts negative effect on the regional and agricultural development process of the region.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

As discussed above, it is clear that the cultural tourism industry in the Anuradhapura district has lead directly to the agricultural development and other myriad positive impacts in different aspects of the regional and community development process of the district. In conclusion, it can be said that the cultural tourism sector plays an important role on agricultural development of the Anuradhapura district. In detailed analysis, it is further evident that, this new form of tourism has stimulated the benefits spill over to other economic activities of the region. However, when implementing tourism plans and projects, the full impact on such activities must be assessed in terms of cultural resource degradation and other impacts. The Anuradhapura district of Sri Lanka has great potential to develop the cultural tourism sector and consequently to boost its regional development including the rural agricultural development. The region has the potential resources, infrastructure, and accommodation to become a full fledged cultural tourist destination which can be stimulated for the development process of the region. The overall findings of this research can assist rural developers in the implementation of community development strategies based on rural agricultural development through cultural tourism which is one of the novel community development strategies adopted by the developing countries.

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