

ABSTRACT

Promoting the scattered tourist attractions through emerging concepts in potential sites and developing such sites as marketable tourism products is a contemporary issue having both theoretical and empirical significance. This study focused on identify the Potentials of Experience-Based Cultural Tourism Development Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka. Polonnaruwa (UNESCO World Heritage) is one of the key tourist destinations in Sri Lanka, especially for cultural and heritage visits. Danigala Circular Rock, Angammedilla National Park, Ancient Technology Museum & Wax Museum, "Bubula" Water Source and Pimburaththewa Lake have been used as the research site. This study aims to explore the motivation factors affecting tourists to visit the cultural heritage sites, the roles of stakeholders, opportunities and challenges in developing Experience-Based Cultural Tourism (EBCT). A convenient sample of 15 tourism stakeholders and 70 tourists were drawn for the study. Qualitative data were collected through semi structured interviews from, tour operators, residents, and government officers. Moreover, quantitative data collected through self-administered questionnaire from travelers. Going by the mixed method, transcribed detailed interview outcomes were analyzed using content analysis and explorative factor analysis done to analyze the questionnaire outcomes. Findings reveal that, safe consumption, learn local culture and emotional involvement as motivation factors. It was revealed that the stakeholders have the power to push tourists to experience destinations. In sum, the study found that lack of demand, promotion, facilities, accommodation, destination planning, tourism activities, capital, and dry climate as challenges, while, the number of novel recreational activities as opportunities. Based on the findings it is recommended to introduce Tourism friendly Government regulations with inventive tourism experiences while ensuring adequate marketing. Moreover, other destinations that EBCT can introduce are potential areas for future research.

Key words: Experience-Based Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Polonnaruwa