

Sharing Economy Business Models: A Case of Accommodation Sector in Sri Lanka

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The tourism industry has long been one of the largest export earners in the Sri Lankan economy. Accommodation is a major sector in the tourism industry that needs to be thoroughly investigated for the potential benefits to be reaped through the successful integration of ICT. The sharing economy is defined as an economic system in which assets or services are shared among individuals and/or organizations either free or for a fee, usually through the use of the Internet. Airbnb is among the best examples for such businesses that connect hosts and travelers, facilitating the process of renting without owning any such facility. However, the opportunities brought by ICT integration in the tourism industry are yet to be grasped by the Sri Lankan rural community which is nearly four times the urban population. Taken together, the main aim of the proposed study is to investigate the sharing economy business models to adopt them in the accommodation sharing business in the rural areas of Sri Lanka. The study would be supported by a comprehensive review of sharing economy business models adopted worldwide. Further, a SWOT analysis is to be carried out analysing the respective competitive environment. Based on the findings the study aims to provide a set of guidelines and recommendations to be adopted in creating and revising relevant government policies and regulations and to develop a business model for successfully implementing a sharing-based accommodation business by the Sri Lankan rural community. As a pilot study, a questionnaire survey will be carried out centering Dickwella city, Matara district employing different stakeholder groups including hosts, travelers, and relevant institutions. As also investigating the associated key concerns including sustainability, security, and privacy, the study is believed to help enhance the participation of the rural population in the sharing-based accommodation business and thereby towards improving the national economy.

Keywords: Sharing economy, Business model, Tourism industry, Accommodation sector, Sri Lanka