



**PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY BASED HOME STAY TOURISM
IN ELLA AREA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a booming industry in Sri Lanka where Ella is one of the attractive destinations recently became popularized. Experiencing the unique geographical features and authentic local life are some of the important features of Ella. Therefore, budget travellers as well as home stay tourists select Ella as one of their favourite destinations. Home stay tourism in Ella was originated as a solution for excess demand for accommodation, yet Ella has become one of the preferred home stay destinations presently. However, literature do not provide much information on the opportunities and challenges for home stay tourism in Ella and points that this challenges to the growth of Industry in the area. Hence, the paper is aimed at examining the opportunities and challenges of home stay tourism in Ella. Data for the research were collected from 100 home stay tourists and 50 home stay unit operators in the area, using the convenience sampling technique and two separate semi structured questionnaires were distributed among the tourists and home stay unit operators. The main analytical technique of the study was exploratory factor analysis. The study found that the home stay tourists preferred to experience nature and adventure based activities, community based cultural activities, leisure activities, rest and relaxation, budgetary vacation as the major opportunities. It also found that the level of awareness about the home stay tourism among tourists, lesser financial and family support, lack of educational programmes, difficulties in better customer services, poor infrastructure facilities, too much competition as the challenges to the industry in Ella area. Therefore, the study recommends that it is necessary to educate the home stay unit operators and the community on prevailing opportunities for the industry and their advantages to them. Furthermore, complete regulation of the home stay units in the area is a major requirement, while providing necessary infrastructure.

Keywords: Homestay tourism, Ella, Community development