

ABSTRACT

Tourism has been regarded as one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries. Its rapid growth and expansion, large inflows of foreign exchange, and infrastructure development activities have an overall impact on the economy's sectorial performance. Niche tourism is concerned about the consumer market segment's interests and travel desires making the destination more attractive, responsive and marketable. Tea tourism is one of the key niche tourism segments that emerged with a new trend of sustainable tourism. Since, Sri Lanka has a prominent Ceylon tea brand image embedded with a quality value proposition to worldwide consumer segments, tea could also be turned into multiple channels of revenue generation to the tourism sector. Meanwhile, Sri Lankan tea estates find unique natural beauty with landscape and comfortable climatic condition to attract tourists to involve in tea tourism activities. This study aims to investigate the potentials, barriers, and challenges for tea tourism development in Post-COVID 19 with special reference to Kallebokka Estate. The study is based on qualitative approach and uses semi structured interviews. The sample was drawn using convenience sampling method and sample size consists with 15-20 residents, tea suppliers, related government officers, tour operators, tourists and hoteliers in Kallebokka area. Moreover, the findings highlighted, Kallebokka has a good potential in natural beauty, cultural and social qualities, but a low score in present tourism activities due to poor community engagement. Equally, Kallebokka Tea Estate can remark as the most suitable tea Estate to promote tea tourism in Sri Lanka in Post COVID-19 period as per the findings. As the results of the developing tea tourism, it would contribute to the local economy in direct and indirect ways. Finally, these barriers can be avoided by community participation, recreational activities, training programs and publicity with wider stakeholder engagement.

Keyword: Tea Tourism; Tourism in Post COVID-19; Kallebokka Tea Estate; Niche tourism; Qualitative inquiry