

# **Identifying the potential to develop Nuwara Eliya as a tea tourism destination Demand and supply perspectives**

M.J.R.S. Fernando and J.P.R.C. Ranasinghe  
*Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka*

## **Introduction**

It is in the areas of tea services, tea attractions, tea tours and tea destinations that tea is clearly directly connected to tourism, as contemporary tourists seek out unique and authentic experiences related to the consumption and appreciation of the beverage called 'tea'. As a result, demand for the satisfaction of tea related tourism services increased and catering to such requirements became a popular way of income generation. Many countries which are possessed with tea related resources are making great efforts to brand those destinations related to tea tourism. According to Jolliffe (2007), in Sri Lanka, tourism related to tea has been recognized as a potential strategy for the diversification of tea plantations and the encouragement of sustainable development in tea-producing regions. Ceylon Tea and Tourism are inseparable words as Sri Lanka's tea growing areas are undoubtedly the most beautiful places in the island (Ceylon Tea Land, 2013). This expresses the capability of Nuwara Eliya, the main tea region and one of the main tourism regions in Sri Lanka, to combine tourism and tea (Gunasekara & Momsen, 2004). The literature survey emphasizes the importance of carrying out a research focusing on both demand and supplier perspectives to get a broader picture since most of the existing studies are based on supply perspective. Therefore this research focused on identifying the potentials of tea tourism in Nuwara Eliya district considering the profile of potential tea tourists, expectations of tourists who travel to a tea related destinations and the capabilities of Nuwara Eliya as a tea tourism destination from both demand and supply points of view.

## **Methodology**

A mixed approach was used for this study including both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Since this is a new area of investigation and lack of recorded data about tourists who visit tea tourism destinations in Nuwara Eliya district, Convenient Sampling Method was used in this study. Sample was based on tea estate bungalows and tea establishments namely Heritance Tea factory hotel, Labookele tea centre, The Tea Cup, Blue Field Tea Centre and Tea Trails which are located in Nuwara Eliya area, as a reasonable amount of tourist arrivals are reporting from particular locations and they were recognized tea tourism suppliers in Nuwara Eliya according to SLTDA (2014). Sixty of foreign tourists were given questionnaires and five tea tourism establishments have been interviewed to achieve the objectives. Therefore the actual amount of members of the sample was sixty nine including those 64 tourists and the five establishments or the suppliers. Data analysis techniques used were exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Graphical representations and Friedman

mean rank analysis of SPSS version 21. Transcriptions were developed and coded to summarize data which were collected by the interviews.

## Results

Findings depict that both genders (yet females show a significant higher percentage of 65%) have visited tea related attractions, who belong to 31-40 age group, and they have a positive attitude towards tea drinking (76%), and it was revealed that they often drink tea (73%). The majority of the visitors found in the survey were full time employed. This percentage is very higher which is 78% while the majority of the tourists (75%) told that they are willing to pay more than \$50 for tea tourism activities and products. 94% tourists were aware about Nuwara Eliya prior to their visit and the general perception on Nuwara Eliya as a Tea Tourism destination among tourists was higher (79%). The ranking they gave for Nuwara Eliya related to tea tourism is a prominent among other international competitors (a mean rank of 1.35). “Tea related attractions” group was identified as the most important destination capability for developing tea tourism in Nuwara Eliya which explained 23% of the variance (eigen value is 5.097).

Table 01: Destination capabilities of Nuwara Eliya as a Tea Tourism destination on demand perspective

Statements	Factor Loading	Communalities	Eigen value	Variance (%)
Tea Related Attractions			5.097	23.169
Natural Landscape is appealing	.737			
Historical Value is remarkable	.457			
Ceylon Tea is well known	.800			
Richness of tea plantation	.793			
Establishments use international language	.534			
Tea related Lodging and retail shops			2.560	11.637
Availability of information sources			1.645	7.476

Tea Related events and festivals			1.362	6.189
Basic infrastructure			1.140	5.183
<b>Total Variance</b>				<b>70.61</b>

“Getting the tea tourism experience” group was the most important expectation of tourists to visit a tea related destination. The given factors under this group were lodging near tea gardens, visiting tea museums Participate in varied tea activities, tea Garden viewing tour, buying tea products. This factor explained 32.96% of variance (eigen value is 5.93). Still the trends like festivals yet to be introduced. The historical value, locational superiority, abundant tea tourism resources and high popularity of local tea were pointed as strengths from suppliers’ view point. It was also revealed from the interviews that basic infrastructure within district and promotions from relevant authorities, both should be more enhanced since they are not in the expected level.

### Conclusions

It can be concluded that the potential tea tourists are both females and a considerable amount of males in the age 31-40 who are interested in tea culture and have a fair history of tea drinking habit. It is possible that the potential clients are full time employed and willing to pay a more than 50 USD (approximately 6500 LKR) for tea tourism activities. Moreover these potential tea tourists have a positive image on Nuwara Eliya related to its tea and they are aware about Nuwara Eliya regarding tea even prior to their visit. This helps to conclude that Nuwara Eliya has already been spotted as a tea related destination among foreign tourists. Comparing the expectations and capabilities recognized from both demand and supply perspectives also indicates well that Nuwara Eliya is capable of catering to the expectations of tourists regarding tea tourism. Main barriers in this regards are poor quality of infrastructure, government attention and lack of tea related events which are popular in those of other competitors.

### Policy Recommendations

The outcome of this research is relevant to tourism ventures, tourism authorities to strengthen the capabilities of the region as a tea tourism destination. The recommendations included considering customers’ demographic factors in tea serving or selling, initiating activities like tea festivals events, improving the basic infrastructure especially the transportation and sanitary facilities and enhancing overall planning to build tourist image of Nuwara Eliya.

### References

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