

Role of Tourism as a Community Development Tool with Special Reference to Patna, Deniyaya

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Community development is a way of empowering civic activities and strengthening civil society and their perspective on social, economic, and environmental policy development. Tourism can play a critical role in empowering local communities. The tourism industry has many economic, social, and environmental benefits to the rural community. Rural tourism is a major contributor to rural development. This research aimed to identify the role of tourism in the context of rural community around Patna. Patna is a rapidly growing destination and in its early stage of tourist destination life cycle, ponders a range of opportunities through tourism. It is situated proximity to Deniyaya town just outside of Sinharaja Rain Forest. It is a rural village belongs to the Wiharahena Grama Niladhari Division. This research focused on factors influencing the development of the tourism industry, community development, and outlook. Using purposive sampling, twenty (20) tourism stakeholders was drawn for the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews from the participant; visitors, community members, and government officers (Grama Niladhari, Economic Development officers). The transcribed detailed interview outcomes were scrutinized and analysed using thematic analysis techniques. Findings revealed that lack of infrastructure, lack of government involvement, negative environmental and social impacts have disturbed tourism and related community development potentials while tourism seems as an effective tool to improve the income level of the community. In sum, the study found that tourism has a limited impact on the Patna community with little improvement in their income levels. Based on the findings it recommended to improve government involvement, improve infrastructure facilities in the Patna area. Moreover, effective promotional techniques, promoting tourism-related community enterprises are some potential areas for future research.

Keywords: Community-based Tourism, Community empowerment, Rural tourism, Tourism development, Tourism impacts.