



Economic Impact of Tourism at Knuckles Forest
Reserve;
A Case Study in Atanwala Village

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka tourism has achieved a new milestone with the increased number of arrivals in 2019 compared to past years and tourism was able to upgrade its rank to the third level as the largest source of foreign exchange earner of the national economy in 2019. Sri Lanka is rich with the tropical rain forests; Knuckles forest reserve is one of them. Knuckles forest reserve is a major nature-based natural attraction. Also, nature-based tourism has gained an important position in contributing to the dual goals of generating an income from the natural environment and nature conservation. Knuckles forest reserve can be accessed through three main entrances and 'Atanwala' entrance being the uprising entrance. Therefore, Atanwala entrance and Atanwala village are selected as the study area in this research. Knuckles forest reserve has a favourable condition for nature-based tourism. But visitor arrivals remain low. Visitor records of the Knuckles forest reserve evidenced a considerably now it has been increasing day by day relative to the other tropical rain forests in Sri Lanka. Also, like a tropical rain forest if it comparing with other tropical rain forests like Sinharaja forest, Sinharaja forest had more visitors than Knuckles forest reserve. Also, number of researches carried out in these areas is negligible. Hence this study investigates economic impact of tourism at Knuckles forest reserve; case studying Atanwala village. This study mainly focusses on economic impact of households who lives in Atanwala village and Atanwala entrance, identify the community perception towards tourism, current situation of tourism and identify strategies for tourism development in Atanwala-Knuckles forest area. A judgemental sampling technique was used. Data were collected by distributing questionnaire among the households who live in Atanwala- Knuckles forest area. Also, personal interviews were used. According to the findings of the research there were challenges for community tourism development such as assessing funds for tourism development, lack of transportation facilities and infrastructure facilities, social problems, etc. Also, research finds that attraction of knuckles forest reserve community favorable to tourism development.

Keywords: *Economic Impact, Employment, Income, Knuckles, Eco Tourism*