

## **Developing Tea Tourism Niche Market in Sri Lanka: Stakeholders' Perspective**

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Tea is considered as one of the popular beverages in global context. Combining Tea with tourism, as a new niche market, is an emerging concept provides win-win situation for both Industries. Since tourism is booming in Sri Lanka, a great opportunity exists to promote tea tourism by introducing Tea with tourism. Present context the academic research has lagged behind on tea tourism, specially in Sri Lankan perspective resulted to this study on stakeholder perspective to fill the research gap. Objective of this paper is to identify the stakeholders' views of Tea tourism development, concerns and future recommendations within Tea Plantations in Central and Uva Provinces, Sri Lanka. Series of focus group interviews has been conducted with supply side stakeholders and in-depth views were taken. Sample consisted with two stakeholder groups as such; ten Tourist hoteliers engaging with tea tourism currently and potentiality to adopt the tea tourism practices and 60 tourists who were participated to Tea tourism activities. Thematic analysis method has been adopted. According to main findings following could highlighted; 1) Tea tourism is a promising sector due to grate demand for Ceylon Tea 2) Tea tourism promotion would be catered specially to the European market through social media and Websites 3) Collaboration between stakeholder groups including community is crucial 4) promoting tea estate bungalows as tea resorts/hotels as a strategy .As recommendations, development of tea tourism niche market with the brand name of "Ceylon Tea", converting Estate Bungalows in feasible Tea gardens to practice Tea tourism and Market development through promotional campaigns within European market is highlighted. Further, the participatory approach of community within Tea tourism for win-win situation for both segments is recommended.

Key words: Ceylon Tea, market development, niche market, Sri Lanka ,Tea Tourism