



Challenges and Opportunities for Community Based Tourism Development in Kithulgala

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries and is a major source of income for many countries similar to Sri Lanka. CBT aims to create a more sustainable tourism industry focusing on the receiving communities in terms of planning and maintaining tourism development. Kithulgala is one of the top tourist attractions which comprises with high level of biodiversity and adventure hotspot. Due to the hydro power plantation project, tourism will be drop down in future, especially white water rafting. In addition to white water rafting there are natural attractions and adventure activities available in Kithulgala. This study especially focuses on identifying challenges, opportunities and community perception towards the CBT development. The study is adapted the mixed methodology and the data is generated through questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire consists with two set of surveys: one focusing on the hoteliers and boat operators another on tourists. The simple random sampling method was used to select hotels and boat operating companies and convenience sampling method with 50 hoteliers and 50 boat operators, 50 tourists and 10 community members were interview. Quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis with the support of SPSS 21.0 version and qualitative data analyzed by using thematic analysis. According to the results lack of community interest, hydro power plantation project, lack of governments involvement, lack of awareness and training, lack of marketing and promotion activities and lack of infrastructure identified as challenges and there are number of opportunities identified as increasing revisit intention ,improvements of desire to explore remote locations, introducing novel adventure based activities, focusing on positive recommendations of the visitors and providing facilities to different experience about local culture .Finally Some precious recommendations and suggestions as production diversification, enhance government involvement, develop marketing and promotional activities and adapt to sustainable practices.

Key words: Community Based Tourism, , community perception, Challenges, Opportunities