

## **Potentials, Problems and Obstacles Faced by the Hotel Sector in Developing Ecotourism as a Vehicle for Socio- economic Development with Special Reference to Badulla District**

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The concept of Ecotourism is no longer a new phenomenon to Sri Lanka which acts as a vehicle for rapid economic and social development in the most tourist destinations. The central problem addressed by this study is what the potentials to develop ecotourism in Badulla district are. Moreover, it identifies the problems and obstacles faced by hotel owners when practice ecotourism and to identify probable solutions to overcome them. The methodology applied to achieve these objectives consists; 1) conducting a survey through a structured questionnaire distributed among hotel operators to collect primary data, 2) collecting relevant secondary data from various sources to facilitate the foresaid 3) analyzing collected data through descriptive statistics. The findings highlighted that the hotels entered into ecotourism practices at present are few. Less attention has been paid by the government, lack of ecotourism specialists, less infrastructure facilities, poor promotion, severe competition, tight rules and regulations and huge initial investment were found to be the key obstacles and problems for facility operators. It was elicited that huge amount of resources available in Badulla district is at the stage of underutilization in ecotourism perspective. Smooth facilitation with conductive regulations, expertise contribution and policy planers focus are urgent requirements to add value to the standalone resources in Badulla district.

Key words: Ecotourism, Hotel sector