

ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism is considered to be one of the fastest growing sectors in the tourism industry. It has comprised the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural components and traditions of societies. This cultural tourism sector should be expanded further in order to maximize the social and economic benefits of this sector. Tourism stakeholders are known as the key link in the ladder of development in cultural tourism. Therefore, their involvement is acknowledged as essential for developing cultural tourism. This research aims to examine the tourism stakeholders' involvement in cultural tourism development in the ancient city of Anuradhapura. Hence, the objectives of this study were to identify factors affecting tourism stakeholders' involvement in cultural tourism development in the ancient city of Anuradhapura and to explore the role of the tourism stakeholders in developing cultural tourism in the ancient city of Anuradhapura. The study's population included all tourism stakeholders in the ancient city of Anuradhapura, and it was conducted using a qualitative approach. A sample of 15 significant tourism stakeholders was selected via purposeful sampling. The data was collected via a structured direct interview, and the interview transcriptions were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings of the study revealed that profession, willingness, power, daily routine and time, family background, religion, myths and beliefs as the major factors that affect tourism stakeholders' involvement in cultural tourism development. Furthermore, the role of tourism stakeholders was defined as the preservation of cultural assets, building a good hostguest relationship, promotional efforts, maintenance activities, awareness activities, creating laws and regulations, and achieving an international market. As a whole, this study has emphasized that the success of the development process in the field of cultural tourism depends on the involvement of tourism stakeholders. To develop cultural tourism in Anuradhapura, building a proper long-term planning of infrastructure facilities, creating a system of strict legal regulations against illegal activities, implementing awareness campaigns, involving tourism stakeholders in the decision-making process, attracting more travelers through the social media platform, preserving the authenticity of indigenous arts, and promoting traditional products are suggested as recommendations.

Keywords: Tourism stakeholders, Involvement, Cultural tourism, Ancient city of Anuradhapura