

Identifying the Potentials to Promote Ayurvedic Tourism during the Covid 19 Pandemic (Special Reference to Western Province)

H.D.M. Chathumini^{1*}, C.J.P. Kulathilake² and A.A. Idroos¹

¹*Department of Tourism Studies, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Management Sciences, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

**Corresponding Author E-mail:chathuminihdm12@gmail.com, TP: +94718907969*

Ayurvedic tourism is one of the niche markets identified as a potential segment to promote in Sri Lanka and in recent times, there was a shift in attention towards Ayurveda due to the COVID 19 pandemic. However, the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic has severely affected the progress of the tourism industry. Even though the number of tourists arriving Sri Lanka in 2019 has decreased, there has been a significant increase in the number of tourists arriving Sri Lanka for the purpose of Ayurveda treatment. In such a context, the aim of this study is to identify the potentials to promote Ayurvedic tourism during the COVID 19 pandemic. This study enabled us to make proper use of the resources of the country and to identify Ayurvedic business opportunities. The study mainly depends on the primary data that has been collected from the stakeholders. Primary data collected from 14 respondents in selected Ayurveda hotels who have registered in Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, Ayurveda centers, Ayurveda practitioners in the western province and Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. The samples were selected using purposive sampling technique and structured interview techniques were used to analyze the collected data using content analysis. The results of the study showed that Sri Lanka has all the key elements: attraction, available packages, accessibility, amenities, activities and ancillary services to develop the Ayurvedic tourism industry. Further, Ayurvedic medicine, issues related to Ayurvedic doctors, government support, fraud committed by those involved in the Ayurvedic industry and promotions identified as barriers and challenges to promote Ayurvedic tourism. This study concludes with some recommendations for Ayurvedic tourism such as promotion in different countries, improving the knowledge of the staff, introducing new Ayurvedic related products with the COVID 19 pandemic, increasing government support etc.

Keywords: Ayurvedic Tourism; COVID 19 Pandemic; Tourism Industry; Stakeholders