

Challenges and Opportunities for Community Based Tourism Development in Kithulgala

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Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries and it is a major source of income for many countries. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) concept relates more specifically to tourism operations involving local communities, taking place on their lands and oriented on their cultural and natural resources and attractions. This study especially focused on identifying challenges, opportunities for CBT development in Kithulgala, and particularly intended to study the community perception towards CBT development in Kithulgala. This study adopted a mixed-methods approach and data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews. Two separate questionnaires were used gathered data from hoteliers, tour operators, and tourists. The convenience sampling method was used to collect data from 100 hoteliers, operators, and 50 tourists, and 10 local community members were interviewed. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and exploratory factor analysis with the support of SPSS and qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. According to the results, lack community interest, lack of government, lack of awareness and training, lack of marketing and promotional activities and lack of infrastructure identified were identified as challenges and there were several opportunities identified such 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. There should be some implications for the development of tourism in Kithulagla, product diversification, and quality enhancement, develop marketing and promotion through social media and company websites, and increase government involvement.

Keywords: Community based tourism, Challenges, Opportunities, Community perception