

Empirical Study on Residents Support Towards Sustainable Tourism Development in a Post-war Destination Sri Lanka: Special Reference to Trincomalee Area

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Sustainable tourism is one of the niche markets of the tourism industry and a crucial determinant that mostly deals with the local population. The success and sustainability of any development project and the support of the local population in the area has a significant association in various aspects. Sri Lanka as an island has its potential to elaborate the tourism activities to an extent level. Resident support is a key force in any form of tourism because it directly deals with tourism development. Yet few researches related to tourism development in the Trincomalee area have been conducted particularly the community-based tourism in a broader view. The main focus of this study was to identify the existing level of resident support, socio-economic and environmental impacts, and the ways to accelerate the industry towards sustainable tourism. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the 20 local residents as the sample. A qualitative research design was adopted in this research. The information was derived from direct interviews and thematic analysis was utilized for the data analysis. Findings indicated that knowledge of tourism, resident-visitor interaction, and resident's place image have the most favorable perception and they strongly influence on the existing resident support. Benefits of sustainable tourism were found as direct employment, economic growth, social empowerment, living standard, and cultural exchange. According to the results the negative impacts found were increased cost of living, cultural influences, illegal activities, pollution, and overcrowding. Further, the results revealed that adequate government support (human capital and financial) and stakeholder participation (community participation) could help to accelerate developing Trincomalee as a sustainable tourist destination. Accordingly, disciplinary actions, community awareness, and adequate government support could help to accelerate the sustainable tourism activities with the resident support.

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