
Evaluation of Potential Resources to Develop Ecotourism: A Study of Paalameenmadu and Surrounding Areas in Batticaloa

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Abstract

Though tremendous economic progress has been recorded through mass tourism, it does indeed give rise to environmental and socio-economic issues. It has legitimated the formation of sustainable forms of tourism as Ecotourism. It is a widely recognized type of tourism with low impact on the environment with the mechanism to diversify local economies. In order to establish a sustainable form of tourism aimed at long-term benefits, it is necessary to study the regions, identify the tourism potential, and propose an appropriate way of developing it. In that perspective, the study has identified the eco-touristic potential of Paalameenmadu in Batticaloa, intended to raise awareness of tourism development among local communities, stakeholders, administrators, and policymakers for future considerations. The study was designed as a mixed approach carried out using both primary and secondary data. Furthermore, a SWOT analysis is also used to assess the eco touristic potential of the area. The study's findings indicate that the destination's beautiful landscapes, rich fauna and flora, locational importance along the bird migration route, historical significance, and rich cultural diversity are significant potentials for developing ecotourism. Contrarily, there are challenges such as inadequate promotion, lack of entrepreneurs and staff exceptionally trained with the knowledge and skills of alternate tourism, poor awareness, segregation of the local community, inadequate coordination among various stakeholders etc. Although Sri Lanka has strategic development plans, it is recommended to carry out studies to understand the region based destination resources and to propose and promote alternative tourism mechanisms and practices to achieve sustainable development.

Keywords: *Alternative tourism, Eco touristic potentials, Local communities, Paalameenmadu, Socio-economic issues*

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