
Importance of the Ecotourism and Historical Tourism for Rural Economic Development: A Study on Thalawa Divisional Secretariat Division

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Abstract

Tourism plays a major role in the Sri Lankan economy. It has been recorded that the last revenue of Sri Lanka from the tourism sector is 386 million US dollars. The majority of the population of Sri Lanka lives in rural areas and engages in agriculture as their main source of livelihood. Rural tourism is not just farm-based tourism. It not only includes farm-based holidays but also comprises special interest nature holidays and eco-tourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, etc. There are special opportunities in rural areas that can be identified based on eco-tourism and historical tourism. The objective of this study was to identify the tourism potential of the area as an additional source of income for the rural community and to explore the potential for improving eco and historical tourism. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews from a sample of 40 randomly selected farmers, officials, and youth, and the data was analyzed and interpreted using a thematic approach under qualitative analysis. If tourism is promoted in rural areas, it will be possible to start small businesses such as providing local food and beverages and businesses based on cultural activities, and these businesses will gradually reach a higher level of economic growth. Through SWOT analysis, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats linked to the rural tourism industry were identified. It would be effective to provide opportunities such as awareness programs, training, and guidance that can be implemented at the village level with the intervention of the government. Relevant officials and the public should be given a basic understanding of how the development of such an industry in rural areas will affect the economy of the community.

Keywords: *Economic, Eco-tourism, Historical tourism, Rural Community, Rural Tourism Industry*

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