

## **Community Perception of Ecotourism in Kanneliya Rainforest Area**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Ecotourism is “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustain the wellbeing of the local people and involves the interpretation and education”. It is a well constituted and remunerative concept for numerous regional development strategies. In Sri Lankan context it is very famous among tourists and tourism business as a result of rich ecosystems throughout the country. Although ecotourism popular within the context, that have been argued a lot from the perspectives by communities, residents and tourist. The relationship among perception of ecotourism, interpretation needs and satisfaction from the perspective of visitors and hosts are remained unclear. Accordingly, the current study aimed at eco-tourism visitors and host community of the Kanneliya rainforest area to investigate their eco-tourism perception, expectation and barriers to the developing ecotourism in the area. Qualitative methodology and inductive research approach to investigate the local community perception of ecotourism practices in Kanneliya Rainforest Area. Because they are highly subjective in nature within an interpretative paradigm. Hence, semi structured interviewing is deemed as a relevant research technique for data collection. Except those methods secondary data are also use such as publications done by local and international researchers regarding ecotourism, ecotourism perception and the related topics. By using above methods find there is great potential to develop ecotourism the main objective of this study is identifying the perception and expectations of local communities on ecotourism in Kanneliya rainforest area and recognize possible solutions to resolve the challenges and to maximize the existing opportunities of ecotourism development in the area.

**Keywords:** Community perception on tourism, Eco tourism, Expectation of the community on tourism

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## 1. Introduction

In the past two decades tourism industry has reach rapid growth due to the technological development, incensement of personal wealth and having free time such as paid vacations for people. Ecotourism is one of the rapidly developing form of tourism that concern with environmental protection, wildlife conservation, poverty alleviation and economic development. Ecotourism is defined as the “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustain the wellbeing of the local people and involves the interpretation and education”. (TIES, 2015). For become exact ecotourism without just use as marketing tool it should engage with the nature base areas and it should minimize the negative impact. Furthermore, ecotourism should ensure the protection of nature areas and the benefit that earn by the ecotourism should be fairly distribute among the host community. At present ecotourism has mislead by some people. Just walk in forest or nature area is not the ecotourism. That activity should be betterment to host and environment in that area. Because many types of tourism misunderstand as ecotourism. Such as nature base travel, green travel, sustainable tourism like that. Further, as earlier mention Ecotourism is best instrument for environmental conservation and community development in rural areas and its effectiveness determine by the possibilities of to provide local economic benefits by wielding ecological resource integrity through low-impact and non-consumptive use of local resources. According to the SLTDA Annual report, 84.83% of the tourists are come to Sri Lanka for pleasure. Most of the eco travelers are include to this category. They are travel to experience the environment and same time experience the rural community, culture and their settings in sustainable manner. According to McMinn, “Ecotourism has the potential to seriously impact local communities, largely due to the tendency of eco tourists to have a greater interest in the culture and nature of the areas they visit, as compared to mass tourists.

Although many literature and professionals are state the actual eco-tourism concept should be similar to the above statements, there is question and gap between reality and the theories. Especially in the targeted Kanneliya rainforest area attracted by many travelers both local and foreign. In 2018 there are 62472 of local tourists and 2037 foreign tourists are visit to the Kanneliya.

According to SLTDA, visitor participation is increase with compare to the previous year. Bird watching, hiking, waterfall watching and natural bath are some of the popular activities among them. Apart for that tourist can enjoy village foods, arts and craft also. When tourists are entering to the forest, Forest Department Officers inform them of the Reserve’s rules and regulations. However, some of the tourist are not obey for this practices. “While visitors are granted access to the Reserve at a nominal fee, Forest Department Officers also inform them of the Reserve’s rules and regulations. No polythene, no alcohol, no straying from the path and absolutely no entering the Reserve without a guide, are just some of the few rules. Obeyed by nature lovers and flouted by many other visitors, the rules are set in place, not only to protect the Reserve but the visitors as well, according to the officers” (Maneshka, 2019). Other than that many visitors have rude behaviors, especially many local tourists are act as nuisance to the environment, other tourists and villagers. “According to them, there have been many a situation where drunken visitors have caused issues, with many visitors not understanding that this is a protected nature Reserve despite all the advice given and notices displayed.” (Maneshka, 2019). For some of this casus relevant authorities do not take relevant actions as well. “ Director, ECT, Sajeeva Chamikara told Sandesaya that people living in the borders of the forest reserve continue to clear lands for tea cultivations causing a major destruction to it.

He accuses authorities for not taking preventive action to safeguard the Kanneliya forest reserve which is a rich biodiversity hotspot in Sri Lanka.” (Daily FT , 2011).

### **1.1. Research problem**

According to the pilot survey conducted by the researcher to examine the perception about eco-tourism in Kanneliya rainforest area to examine the perception about eco-tourism in Kanneliya rainforest area to test the validity and reliability of the research the followings were identified; Most of the community are satisfied with the ecotourism practices in Kanneliya area.; Many residents mentioned that there are some key points to be consider in further development of the tourism practices in the area.; the conservation center and the sanitary facilities must be developed and maintained well.; parking facilities and traffic management practices must be further developed.; the accommodation center run by the conservation center must be further developed and maintained well.; Conditions for the telecommunication facilities must be developed.; staff of the conservation center and the guides must be trained. Accordingly many key facts have been identified in the ecotourism related practices in the Kanneliya area.

In addition to that many times the locals are educated about the value of environmental, social and cultural aspects without right standards in using them for the tourism related activities. In Sri Lanka rural poverty and environmental depletion is consecutively increase. Mainly at present this rainforest depletion become major environmental problem as a result of the ways of devastating forest utilization by the community near to the forest. As above mention, according to researchers pilot survey, some articles and other literatures there is a gap actual ecotourism concept with the existing tourism practices in Kanneliya area. By doing this research try to understand about existing condition of ecotourism, host and guest perception about ecotourism and problems & barriers for ecotourism in this area.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Definition of ecotourism**

It can be concluded that ecotourism is tourism that is inspired by the environmental history of an area, including indigenous culture. In conclusion, based on the reading and observations researcher, it can be explained that ecotourism is based on the environment that emphasizes sustainability entities. (Muhammad, et al., 2021)

### **2.2. Community and ecotourism**

When talking about ecotourism, community cannot differentiate by itself. Because ecotourism and community is closely intertwined each other topics. Generally, community can identify as a group of people living or working in a certain country or region with some similar cultural or common interests. According to Scherl & Edwards (2007), community is “groups of people with a common identity and who may be involved in an array of related aspects of livelihoods. They further note that local communities often have customary rights related to the area and its natural resources and a strong relationship with the area culturally, socially, economically and spiritually (Scherl & Edwaerds, 2007)”. However, with the current day-to-day activities and livelihood habits of people, they make a huge impact on natural environment. In some cases those activities harm to the environment consciously or unconsciously. “Community livelihood activities often contribute to the degradation of the very natural systems they depend on. Most forms of human production and consumption have the potential to degrade natural systems. Activities such as over-grazing, conversion of forest and wetlands to agriculture, and unsustainable wildlife utilization all directly degrade and deplete natural systems directly”

(Emerton, 1999). As a result of continuing these activities, it will diminish the livelihoods of the people involved. By today ecotourism practices are widely used as a cure for this type of difficulties. Since it is an excellence remedy for deforestation, conservation and livelihood problems and many other problems. “Ecotourism is a form of nature-based tourism, it should be careful of the environment and had close connection with local communities to conserve nature and thereby contribute to the sustainability of tourism reliant on natural environment” (Drumm & Moore, 2002). And also according TIES, “Ecotourism is an effective vehicle for empowering local communities around the world to fight against poverty and to achieve sustainable development” (Deshani, et al., 2015). Apart from these factors, community is one of the most important stakeholder in tourism and its development. Since they have grate ability for influence upon decision making and planning. “. Local communities play an important role in tourism development. They are regarded as legitimate and moral stakeholders in tourism development. Local community has to be involved in policy and decision making so that it will enhance the trust and confidence of the local people on the tourism industry” (Nagarjuna, 2015)

When considerate the perception, It is the “process by which individuals give meaning to the given environment by organizing and interpreting their sensory impressions.” (Robbins & Coulter, 2005) In the case of developing tourism related activities in certain place while obtaining expected benefits, all the stakeholders should have sound understand about the overall image of tourism. As well as there should have sound collaboration midst each other. “Ideally, the development of ecotourism brings together local communities, tourists, suppliers, and managers to promote conservation of natural areas and economic growth in impoverished communities” (Ross & Wall, 1999). Along with, “Tourism industry does not have a single entity but it is the combination of different sectors including primary suppliers like attraction of the destination, transportation industry (air, water and surface), hospitality industry (hotels, restaurant etc.), tour operators, travel agents, banking, insurance, shopping and entertainment. In the case of secondary suppliers, it involves the suppliers of primary suppliers. e.g. a hotel required supply of vegetables, fruit and other items in order to provides its services further, therefore fruits and vegetable suppliers are the secondary suppliers of the tourism industry as suppliers to primary suppliers” (Nayomi & Gnanapala, 2015). According to Nzama (2008), there is a strong positive relationship between the extent of the involvement of community in tourism development and their perceptions towards the impacts of tourism development. With accordance to the above literatures, amid them local community is one of the key stakeholder in the tourism industry. In that manner, their perception is essential for contribute to sustain the remunerative tourism industry in a certain place.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Research site**

Kanneliya Forest Reserve located in the Galle district. This is a part of the Kanneliya-Dediyagala-Nakiyadeniya forest complex, or KDN. Kanneliya also it is reckon as one of the most biologically diverse areas in the country and also it has rich biodiversity with compare to the world heritage rain forest “Sinharaja”. KDN complex spread over 10136 hectares (Kanneliya -5306 he) and this area has been identified as one of the floristically richest areas in South Asia and also this place harbors many plants and animal species endemic to Sri Lanka. Hence, KDN complex designate as biosphere reserve in 2004 by UNESCO.

#### **3.2. Research approach**

To conduct this research, the researcher use qualitative methodology and inductive research approach to investigate the local community perception about ecotourism practices in

Kanneliya rainforest. According to Pope and Mays Qualitative methodology is “Development of concept which help us to understand (rather than experimental) setting, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experience and views of the participants.” (Pope & Mays, 1995) . Because they are highly subjective in nature within an interpretative paradigm. Thus in the qualitative researches Interviews deliver a valuable tactics for researchers to investigate about the some doubtful cases, phenomena and many more things, by giving real understanding may sometimes be complicated. At the same time if anyone done a genuine interviews through care, a well-organize, that interview approach can deliver a glorious set of data and findings. Except those methods secondary data are also use such as publications done by local and international researchers regarding ecotourism, ecotourism perception and the related topics.

Population and Sample of the Study.

The target population of this study is community who live in the peripheral villages by depend on the Kanneliya rainforest. For selection of the sample from the local community who depend in Kanneliya rain forest area purposive sampling method is use. In this Kanneliya rainforest the community has engage with several ecotourism related activities. Such as tour guides, hotel/resort/ guest house keepers, lunch pack/ take away food sellers, hotel/resort/ guest house workers, forest officers, apart from those activities other informal tourism workers/small scale operators as example small-scale businessmen who are running a corner shop, artists, mural painters, wood carvers and gardeners. Through all of this participants information are gather by above mention way of methods of data collection.

### **3.3. Method of data collection, presentation and analysis**

As the method of primary data collection, researcher use interviews as data collection method. According to Kvale in 1996 “the qualitative research interviews seeks to describe the meaning of central theme in the interviewees say. (Says, 1998)” Accordance with him its success depend on the respondent’s states and the way of interweaver understand that. Moreover interviews act as better instrument for understand and study about real picture of the relevant topic. “Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant’s experience. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, e.g... to further investigate their response”. (McNamara, 2002) As earlier mentioned researcher use in-depth interviews as data collection method and semi structured questionnaires are used for that. According to the “The goal of qualitative descriptive studies is a comprehensive summarization, in everyday terms, of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals.” (Lambert & Lambert , 2012) To proffer data that has been gathered the researcher use descriptive analysis method. As the research study done through the qualitative approach, almost all the collected information in descriptive manner. So, to adjust with the information researcher decided to use descriptive method foe data analysis. “Qualitative descriptive research is purely data-derived in that codes are generated from the data in the course of the study. Like other qualitative research approaches, qualitative descriptive studies generally are characterized by simultaneous data collection and analysis.” (Lambert & Lambert , 2012)

## **4. Data analysis and discussion**

### **4.1. Perception of local community on ecotourism in Kanneliya rainforest area**

#### *4.1.1. Idea about ecotourism in Kanneliya area*

When considering community idea about ecotourism in the Kanneliya area, according to many respondents, many of the people in the village earn their living from this tourism industry. In

the past, the area's main source of livelihood was tea or agriculture. So, now tourism development is used as an alternative for traditional livelihood. But now they earn more income than tea cultivation, by engaging tourism-related employments. In addition, the tourism industry has created self-employment opportunities for many women in the village, which has helped to boost their income streams. They have taken advantage of these opportunities by participating in training programs provided by the government. Especially with a number of government-initiated projects, such as SCAMP and GFE projects. The tourism industry in particular has also generated many types of income for women. Specially, by doing ecotourism Conservation is one of the key benefit can gain in certain area. Ecotourism allows protect natural habitats and pristine environment. Ecotourism permits nations and communities to construct their economies without harming the environment, this means that local flour and fauna can thrive and visitors can untouched destinations. The people of the area are paying more consideration to environmental conservation as they can earn more income from the tourism industry as compared to the previous traditional sources of income. According to most of the respondents, it enhances the knowledge and environmental awareness of the tourists coming through the tourism industry. They are of the opinion that this is going very well in the Kanneliya rainforest area, especially through the guides involved in the ecotourism industry. In addition to that ecotourism, as alternative tourism, includes traveling natural regions with the intention to study or to get Knowledge, to study, or to carry out activities environmentally friendly, that is, tourism based on the nature experience, which enables the economic and social development of local communities.

#### *4.1.2. Government contribution to tourism and conservation*

Focusing on Kanneliya In the past, the Kanneliya area was appreciated as a conservation center rather than a tourist destination. With the subsequent wave of tourism, the area developed into a tourist attraction. For this reason, it is important to focus on conservation and tourism through government support. But sixteen out of eighteen respondents said the government's contribution was minimal. As mentioned most of the respondents commented negatively on the government. Thus, at different times, due to the appointment of different governments, opinions on such tourist destinations differ from one another. Therefore, an attentiveness is given to this type of area also varies from one government to another. As a result, the spending patterns of each government change. Especially money allocation is different from one to one. Almost every government pays more attention to institutions that can generate revenue for the government. There is little attention paid to such conservation centers like Kanneliya Rainforest. Although Kanneliya is a very attractive tourist destination with a large number of tourists, the revenue generated by the place is relatively low. This is because the ticket price charged by tourists is very small. As a result, they have not been able to earn enough money for the day-to-day maintenance of the center. Moreover, due to the minimal ticket price, a large number of tourists enter the forest without any control. Some time that is exceeds the carrying capacity of the forest as well. As a conservation center, officials expect more tourists to see and study the ecosystem than to come for leisure and just have fun. According to most of the tour guides they gave their maximum effort to improve visitors' knowledge about the nature. However, all of the tour guides believe that they will not receive any support from the government. According to them, there was no contribution from the government other than the supply of uniforms and the training they and the tour guides in the Sinharaja forest on two occasions. Even their daily wage was increased from 400 rupees to 600 rupees only after they made several requests.

#### **4.2. Local community contribution to tourism and conservation**

Although a large number of people visit the Kanneliya area, its facilities as a tourist destination are never adequate. When a large number of people come in one day, their need is not enough for the food and parking facility they need. For example, in the past one day, between 3,000 and 4,000 school children visited the Kanneliya Center, and in such a case, the restaurant in the center was not adequate at all. This is because it can only feed a maximum of 150 people at a time. Also, there is no large parking space at the center. In such cases, the tour guides who work at the center use their connections with the villagers to provide them with the food and parking they need. The current situation in the country in particular has led to a sharp decline in tourist arrivals. As a result, people who live in the tourism industry on a daily basis are inconvenienced. Also, the ongoing development activities have been hampered due to the tourism industry. In the future, they hope that the status quo will be restored soon and tourist arrivals will increase in the near future. Apart from the tour guides, hoteliers, and or homestays who generate revenue directly through the Kanneliya Tourist Center, people from Udugama town to Panangala, Thawalama, and Hiniduma areas also earn an income from the Kanneliya tourism industry. The Kanneliya tourist area indirectly enriches the livelihoods of the people, especially those who make certain snacks, bite makers and confectionery, dairy products, and kithul related products as well as ornaments such as cane products. But sometimes people in the surrounding areas see Kanneliya as a source of income only for tourist guides and hotel owners. Many women in the village have been a source of strength to the family economy, especially due to the Kanneliya tourist center in the village. In particular, the Ruhuna Tourism Bureau and the government have created self-employment opportunities for joint ventures. These projects have provided self-employment opportunities to large unemployed housewives. The Eleventh Respondent is the best example of those who focused on food production through that expansion. There she gained a good knowledge of making jam cordials and other food products by disposing of village waste through training programs conducted by the government and is currently engaged in this industry. The three forest officials who were interviewed by the researcher gave a negative response to the contribution of the villagers. According to them, most people do not contribute to the conservation of the environment. That is less than ten percent. People living close to the forest border are increasing the size of their lands by cutting down trees and removing boundary stones. Wildlife is also affected by its activities. Some people kill wild animals and cut down plants such as Agar wood and venereal. Tea and palm oil plantations, in particular, thrive in the Kanneliya forest area, so lands in the Kanneliya forest have been forcibly taken over by them.

#### **4.3. Satisfaction about their own contribution to the tourism industry in Kanneliya rainforest**

Most of the respondents had a positive attitude towards their contribution. Here, many of the rural community associated with the Kanneliya tourism industry are tour guides. Accordingly, many guides stated that they are satisfied with the environmental knowledge and understanding they provide to tourists. But some senior tour guides say they can personally do more to increase the knowledge of their newly hired young tour guides. Also, according to the officials of the Kanneliya Tourism Center, although they have taken steps to work towards the conservation of the forest and the development of the tourism sector, the top management does not consider their ideas and suggestions. Many village women are involved in self-employment training programs launched by the government. According to them, they provide unique healthy food to tourists. Also, some tourist guides said that they used their identities to help them find the food and accommodation they needed when there was not enough space at the Kanneliya Tourist Center.

#### **4.4. Possible solutions to resolve the challenges and to maximize the existing opportunities of ecotourism development in Kanneliya rainforest area**

Local community is one of the key stakeholder in the tourism industry. In that manner, their perception is essential for contribute to sustain the remunerative tourism industry in a certain place. Within the tourism development, enough goals, and competence amongst the local people are important. And also it has to fit each other, if not planning perhaps destroy the industry possibilities. "Local communities play an important role in tourism development. They are regarded as legitimate and moral stakeholders in tourism development. Local community has to be involved in policy and decision making so that it will enhance the trust and confidence of the local people on the tourism industry. In order to improve plans and service delivery, local community involvement in decision making is very essential and it also promotes a sense of community involvement who share common goals" (Muganda, Sirima, & Peter , 2013). Consequently, while locals engaging in with an actual understanding of the tourism it allows conserving the nature as well as the culture, traditions and their values as properly. Accordingly, there is direct connection between the residents' attitude and their behavioral intention. Thus, on behalf of his research local community had a positive attitude and sufficient perception towards in tourism all the time. Withal, positive attitudes are case to encourage the community development, improvement of agriculture market, income generation and also it is grate help for the development of the tourism sector. (Lepp, 2007). In fact, the Kanneliya forest is surrounded by many villages. As such, it is constantly under the effect of human activities. Therefore, in the past few decades, Kanneliya and the remaining parts of the adjoined forests are extremely affected by human activities. Further to those activities, there are destructively have an effect on biodiversity, and each day the individuals who around the Kanneliya have been clearing the forest and capturing the forest area for their activities. So as mentioned above, most of the locals are depending on the forest from the forest for generations. And their livelihoods tied to the forest. Because of that, it is sometimes harmful for the forest as well. However, with the invention of the tourism industry, step by step community use freed from the traditional livelihoods that were bring damage to the forest and become involved in the tourism industry. But still, there are some people who try to do harm because of the anticipation of money. However, according to the third objective of the research, the respondents were asked about possible solutions to prevent damage to the tourism sector and the forest in general. Regarding the field of tourism, many of them said that knowledge and understanding of the forest should be increased. There, it was mentioned that attention should be paid to the flora and fauna endemic to Kanneliya. Many also said that the environmental knowledge of the villagers, tourists, and guides should be further enhanced. In fact, the facilities at the Kanneliya Conservation Center are minimal compared to the number of visitors. In addition, the amount of facilities provided is very limited. If these facilities are rehabilitated, the center will be able to earn more revenue and attract more tourists. Especially when a large number of tourists arrive in one day. In particular, access to sanitary facilities and food is minimal. Road and accommodation facilities should also be further developed. Although affordable accommodation is available at the Kanneliya Center, it is adequate for a small number. There is a number of homestays and hotels, but due to their high price and high cost of food and drink, tourists are sometimes inconvenienced. In addition, with the contribution of many villagers, Kanneliya can be developed as a more successful tourist destination than the current tourism industry. Also, limited knowledge of travel guidance and language communication skills should be developed. This is due to the fact that the level of communication skills and knowledge of some of the people who have recently joined as tour guides is very low. They were recruited due to the large number of tourists arriving, not because



if their knowledge and skill. Furthermore, there is a need to further educate the public about the importance and uniqueness of Kanneliya. Internet and social media can be easily used for those promotions. This is because many foreign tourists visiting Kanneliya have been misled by external guides, Kanneliya as Sinharaja. Also, there is very little understanding among local tourists about the biodiversity value of Kanneliya.

## **5. Discussion**

Ecotourism is outlined as a tool for education and aware communities to conserve and protect the environment through visiting in natural areas while giving benefits to travelers and at the same time to the local community. "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustain the wellbeing of the local people and involves the interpretation and education". (TIES, 2015). Therefore, Ecotourism can offer local people with monetary assistance via providing employment opportunities as tour guides, park rangers, and service workers in hotels, restaurants, and lodges. With eco-tourism, income is earned from preserving the environment, and forest clearing is discouraged due to the fact it is detrimental to income. Also, "ecotourism can reduce the need for poaching and hunting of forest animals for income." (Butler, 2012). Hence, by developing eco-tourism practices it affords lots of effective benefits for the environment, community, and travelers. Through promoting ecotourism in a specific area it makes an opportunity to earn revenue to the country or relevant area. By parallel to other countries as a tropical island, Sri Lanka has unequalled natural beauty with the finest hospitable tradition that can attract more and more visitors to the country. "Sri Lanka is listed as one of the world's 25 biodiversity hotspots possessing a natural advantage that can be utilized for the development of forest-based ecotourism (Wickramasinghe, 2014)". Among those valuable natural and cultural inheritance, Kanneliya Rainforest is a paradise for thousands of Floras and faunas which endemic and engaged. Therefore, it is not impossible to develop the eco-tourism industry in the Kanneliya rainforest.

Here, after analyzing the interviewed facts, the researcher became capable to obtain the objectives of the study. According to the first objective, the researcher identified the local community perception about ecotourism practices in the Kanneliya Rainforest area. Generally ecotourism is define as, 'Environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature, that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact and provides the beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations'. (Ceblllos-Lascutain, 1993).

After analyzing the conducted interview with the residents of Kanneliya, the researcher realized that they are well aware of the contribution of the eco-tourism industry to the conservation of the environment, the income, and other benefits to the community. Due to these reasons, the people of Kanneliya are very interested in the development of the ecotourism industry and the number of tourists. According to their opinion, they have received many benefits after starting the ecotourism in the Kanneliya area. Increasing the environmental awareness of tourists through tour guides, many infrastructure developments, job opportunities, deforestation, and cessation of poaching took place after the launch of the tourism industry. In addition, self-employment opportunities were created for unemployed women in the Kanneliya area. The researcher has found that they have a good understanding of the ecotourism industry when considering all the facts. That means they have a positive perception about the ecotourism practices in the Kanneliya rainforest area.

According to the second objective, the researcher investigated the expectations of the local community on ecotourism in Kanneliya rainforest area. The researcher explored whether

they were satisfied with the contribution of the government, the contribution of other residents of the village, and their contribution as individuals. It was realized that the villagers' view of the government's contribution as a whole was that the government's contribution is minimal. The government's contribution to the conservation and development of the tourism industry is minimal. However, the Ruhuna Tourism Bureau and the government also provide self-employment opportunities and guidance through projects.

Moreover, when investigating the satisfaction of their contribution to the tourism industry in the Kanneliya rainforest, One-third of those who commented had a positive attitude towards their contributions. This is because many of the respondents are tour guides and they are very satisfied with the environmental knowledge and understanding they impart to the tourists. According to them, they make a great contribution to popularize the Kanneliya Tourist Center and to satisfy its visitors. Also, food producers are very satisfied with the food they produce and the food they make without adding any chemicals.

As the third objective of the research, the researcher investigated the possible solutions to resolve the challenges and to maximize the opportunities of ecotourism development in the Kanneliya rainforest area. In fact, the Kanneliya forest is surrounded by many villages. As such, it is constantly under the influence of human activities. Accordingly, in the past few decades, Kanneliya and the rest of the adjoined forests are extremely affected by human activities. In addition to these activities, there are destructively affect to the biodiversity, and day by day the people who around the Kanneliya were clearing the forest and capturing the forest area for their activities. "One of the major trends observed in the Kanneliya rain forest of Sri Lanka is rapid degradation caused by over utilization of forest resources, which has been aggravated by the rapid population growth. This situation is common to many of the rain forests in Sri Lanka." (Kumara, 2013).

As described above, many people depend on the Kanneliya forest. It has been practiced by them for many years and for many generations. According to the researcher's interviews, the understanding of the forest needs to be further improved as a solution. Also, more attention should be paid to the endemic and endangered species of animals and plants in Kanneliya. "There are 78 villages surrounding the KDN forests. More than 50 % of the households in most of the villages receive food stamps as they are below the government recognized poverty line. The rural economy of villages around the KDN complex is based primarily on tea and paddy smallholdings. The homesteads are cultivated with crop mixtures. The villagers living around the forest are at least partially dependent on the forest for both timber and Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP). The use of NTFP appears to be more for substance and tradition than commercial purposes. Medicinal plants, fuel wood, poles and posts are the most frequently used forest products by the villagers." (Bandaratillake, 2003).

## **6. Conclusion**

In the present world ecotourism concept has proven fast growth. As a tropical country in Sri Lanka, ecotourism emerges as a massive trend amongst travelers. Hence with the rich biodiversity, we have received tremendous possible to develop ecotourism to improve the community's living conditions. At the moment Kanneliya rainforest area also well-known for ecotourism. There are a significant number of tourists visit the Kanneliya area to experience this extraordinary natural inheritance. The researcher first explored the community perception of the ecotourism industry in the Kanneliya rainforest area. Although the villagers do not have as much as an understanding of the tourism industry as the level of knowledge of the scholars,

they have gained an understanding from their own experience. They have a thorough understanding about the benefits of Tourism. In particular, they are well aware of the many benefits of conservation contributions, such as job creation and the contribution of tourism to development.

As the second objective, the researcher supposed to inspect the expectations of the local community on ecotourism in Kanneliya rainforest area. To obtain that goal, the Researcher explored whether they were satisfied with the contribution of the government, the contribution of other community of the village, and their contribution as individuals. The villagers are not satisfied with the contribution of the government and expect more from the government. Apart from the conservation officers, other respondents were satisfy with the contribution of the local community that not directly depend on the Kanneliya tourism. In addition, as individuals, they are satisfied with their contribution to the tourism industry and its development.

The researcher's third objective was to explore the potential factors and potential for further development of the Kanneliya tourism industry. The researcher realized that the lack of facilities in the tourist center had caused many problems. As a result, both tourists and officials are inconvenienced. Also, the affection and attention of the tourists and the government to the environment should be developed than today. In addition to that, there should be a better system to increase the awareness of foreign and local tourists about the Kanneliya Rainforest. Also, the communication ability and knowledge of the guides should be at a higher level than today. If all these factors are taken into account, the tourism industry in the Kanneliya will be able to achieve a successful level than today.

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