

Homestay concept in heritage sites (A case study in Kegalle district)

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Heritage can be defined as ways of living, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. Tourism is one of the most important foreign generating industries as well it is a gate to a stable international relation among countries. Being a multicultural destination with eight UNESCO world heritage sites, Sri Lanka has huge potential to develop heritage tourism. The government deduced 2.5 million tourists' arrivals by 2016 and they identified 45000 rooms needed. As well, in this district, there are more than 10 heritage attractions including places such as *Pinnawala elephant orphanage, Dedigama kota vehera and the museum, Saradial village, Makndawa reserve, Handun ella, Kithulgala, Uthuwan kanda mountain, Kurulu kele, Aluth nuwara dewalaya*. Therefore, the homestay concept can be developed in Kegalle district. Contemporary there are eight homestays that are registered under the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. This concept is also a good way to promote heritage and cultural tourism. Local community achieves good income and massive benefit through homestay concept. The purpose of this study is to identify the necessity of the homestay concept in the tourism industry, the difficulties and challenges which are faced by the owners of the homestays, and to identify the main economic and social benefits. The survey was conducted randomly selected 3 homestays in Kegalle district by distributing questionnaires and developing conversations using unstructured questions. Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative data, primary and secondary data were used for the methodology. Finally, this study discusses the importance of developing the homestay concept and introduce some suggestions to minimize difficulties and challengers.

Keywords: *Heritage, Homestay concept, Kegalle district*