

Demonstration Effect in Sri Lankan Tourist Destination

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is growing at a double digit rate in Sri Lanka and is deemed economically beneficial with increased foreign currency earnings, employment generation and foreign direct investments. However, according to academic critics, the benefits of Sri Lanka tourism are severely vitiated by the socioeconomic dysfunctions associated with the tourism demonstration effect. This notion, however, lacks empirical validation. Thus the main objective of this study is to identify and evaluate the demonstration effect in selected tourism destinations in Sri Lanka. The tourist destinations were selected according to the Butler's tourist area life cycle model. Observations, interviews and desk research have been the main data collection tools and the findings were analyzed using N-Vivo software for qualitative studies. The demonstration effect in this study is evaluated in terms of eating and drinking habits, clothing and costumes, language usage, attending to religious activities and social events, changes in the family structure, values, beliefs and attitudes. The findings of this study highlight that most popular tourist destination with high tourist arrivals exhibit a greater demonstration effect while the developing destinations with a relatively lesser number of tourist arrivals are slightly affected by the demonstration effect. In contrast, the most significant finding of this study is, although tourism is a very influential sector to the changes of host population and communities, there are some other encompassing influences associated with present societal modernization. Thus, it is recommended to view tourism's demonstration, effects with caution and to conduct further researches more carefully to measure demonstration and help unravel tourism's impact from non-tourism influences.

Keywords: tourism, demonstration effect, societal modernization, non-tourism influences, host population

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