

Optimizing Inputs for Sustainable Heritage Tourism with Reference to Kandy Heritage Site in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka has been a tourist destination for centuries because of its strategic location and uniqueness. Cultural and heritage scenarios are considered as one of the important pull factors for the future development of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. This has the potential to establish well-stabilize heritage tourism in the country. Being a place of six world cultural heritages, the country itself possesses the foundation to promote heritage tourism. This study focused on the optimization of inputs in order to establish sustainable heritage tourism for Kandy Heritage Site (KHS). The purpose of foreign arrivals to the country was studied for a six-year period along with the number of tourist who visits cultural heritage sites to distinguish the perception on KHS. The study was based on secondary data obtained from a comprehensive literature survey and annual tourist statistics of the period from 2010 to 2016. And also, cultural tourist typology and heritage assets in the area were identified through direct observations and metric maps. SWOT analysis was used to find out the strengths and weaknesses of existing situation of heritage tourism in KHS. MS Excel used for data analysis. It was noticed that the perception of cultural interest has reduced significantly and only the year 2013 can be identified as a year which indicates a higher number of arrivals, i.e., about 65,495 where most of foreign visitors were from South Asia and Western Europe. This has reduced up to 390 in 2016. Other heritage sites have more potential to establish as stable heritage tourism sites than the KHS. Although those who arrived for various purposes to the island stay in Kandy area, their primary purpose was far from heritage tourism. The weakness identified through the SWOT analysis in KHS also influenced this rapid decline of visitation. Though there are various cultural assets, less popularity has influenced this drawback. However, the study has identified the possibility to optimize inputs of heritage tourism. Introducing new cultural experiences such as cultural theme parks, cultural villages are the strategies to increase heritage tourism in KHS. Therefore, adopting a sustainable concept, heritage tourism in the island can be established in a new approach paying attention to the optimization of potential inputs of the heritage tourism in Kandy.

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