

Port-Led Tourism Development: Prospects for Sri Lanka

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Abstract

At present, maritime connectivity is one of the biggest infrastructure endeavors that both littoral and non-littoral states across the world are equally investing in, with maritime connectivity projects amounting to 1,200 \$ million being undertaken within the South Asian region alone. Improved connectivity can significantly enhance regional economy and most connected countries can expect their GDP growth to increase up to 40% more than less connected countries. In order to maximize opportunities extended by these massive infrastructure projects, countries are adopting port-led development strategies to, its trends spilling over to the Tourism Sector, leading to a popularity in port-led tourism development strategies. Cruise tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of tourism, with an average annual growth rate of 7.4%. The market amounted to 28.5 million cruisers traveling across the globe generating a revenue \$18 billion by the end of 2018. The industry globally represented roughly \$ 133.4 billion in economic impact, \$ 43.73 billion in wages and 939,000 jobs in 2017, and figures only continue to rise. Current trends observed in port infrastructure development such as increasing private sector investment, increasing greenfield and brownfield investments, port cities, dry ports and inland connectivity and eco-friendly port cultures have created a conducive environment for cruise tourism to thrive upon. In the context of Sri Lanka, keeping to its national strategy of maritime connectivity; promoting of Sri Lanka as a logistics hub, an export/import service hub and a transshipment management hub, adopting a port-led tourism development strategy will be of benefit. The study focuses on finding out trends of port-led tourism development, its opportunities and challenges and how it can facilitate a faster development path for tourist destinations such as Sri Lanka. The study is be based on Secondary data; analyzed against a theoretical framework constructed on Theory of International Connectivity, Development Theory with special focus on Sustainable Development, Neoliberalism and Theories of International Tourism in order to address the research problem and fulfill objectives of the research.

Keywords: *Port-Led Development, Maritime Connectivity, Cruise Tourism*

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