

**APPLICATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY IN TOURISM SECTOR DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF JAFFNA
DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, tourism has become the largest industry worldwide in terms of employment and share of global gross domestic product. In Sri Lanka, Tourism sector attracted a record one million tourists to the country for the first time in history in 2012. However, multiplicity of tourism sector agencies (Local Authorities, Provincial Councils and Line Ministry) has lead to fragmented and segmented system of plans, where each agency prepares a plan independently. Most decisions on development, even on local level activities, are made by bureaucrats. The main objective of this study was to examine the possibilities of community's involvement to develop the tourism sector with the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This paper investigates the practical usage of ICT for the benefit of sustainable tourism development. For this purpose, it mainly concentrates on web based systems and Geoinformatics. This research mainly focuses on Jaffna district which has a good blend of aspects in tourism. Thousands of international and local tourists are visiting Jaffna area every year. This study highlights the present status of tourism sector in this area and also point out few drawbacks. It also recommends some future initiatives for betterment of this sector. In this methodology, the traditional vertical planning process is transformed into a horizontal planning process, where local government and other planning entities work together and explore the possibilities of tourism sector planning with indigenous knowledge.

Sustainable tourism development has a lot to benefit from applying ICT. In Jaffna, application of ICT and Geoinformatics in tourism sector is still immature. Collecting accurate and updated data (spatial and aspatial) necessitates proper coordination among all stakeholders. Disseminating useful information regarding places of interest, cultural events, religious festivals, etc. to worldwide audience through websites and social media is an important step to be done professionally. Tourism management which includes suitable site selection, destination management, natural resource management, infrastructure facilities, market analysis, manage tourists flow, tracking tourist vehicles and future planning activities have a lot to benefit from using Geoinformatics. This is also considered as a tool for measuring, monitoring and forecasting tourism impacts as well as decision making. This can also be used to identify environmentally sensitive areas which should not be disturbed by tourism.

Key Words: Geoinformatics, information and communication technology (ICT), indigenous knowledge, people's participation, sustainable tourism development