

COMMUNITY BASED SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF THE MONERAGALA DISTRICT

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Abstract

Moneragala is considered the poorest district of Sri Lanka although it has untapped resources in abundance to thrive in key economic activities including tourism and contribute to the economic growth and development. Still, tourism industry in the district is in its infancy and the huge resource base has been left unused. One of the most popular domestic tourist destinations in Sri Lanka, Kataragama is located in this district itself, while some popular tourist districts in the island such as Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya, and Badulla are located along the border or in close proximity to the district. A large number of tourists travel through the district to reach other popular destinations, but no tangible contribution is made to the district. This article examines the potentials as well as proposed strategies to promote tourism in the district with community participation in a sustainable manner.

Key words: *Agriculture, development, environment, forest, poverty*

Introduction

It is pointed out that the unchecked and unbridled mass tourism development has been responsible not only for environmental and socio-cultural degradation, but also for less value-added contribution to the developing countries. It is alleged that even the limited economic gains have not been equally distributed among the different social groups in those countries. The quite disturbing fact is that the contacts between mass tourists and the local community are insignificant. Even, if rare contacts have been established, it is not because of economic factors but because of the sharing of the same facilities such as the beaches, parks, roads and other common facilities. The well-being of the local community has been shamefully ignored though the considerable amount of the cost to provide such facilities were borne by the local communities, either directly or indirectly (Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2000).

It is reasonable to think that the tourism is neither a savage wild beast nor an innocent pet. It can deliver both positive and negative results like many other forms of economic activities. It may generate problems, such as social dislocation, loss of cultural heritage, social unrest, spread of communicable viruses and diseases, economic dependency and ecological degradation (Wimalaratana and Silva, 2004).

Tourism in most countries is an industry and it never undermines the importance of the environment, but it has existed, and functions in an environmentally-friendly manner; as environment itself is part of it. In other words, the industry is and has always been determined to minimise the damage it would cause to environment, thus promoting and encouraging activities in a more responsible manner. Its products are often environmentally-friendly and environment-based. These include various forms of sustainable tourism such as 'nature-based tourism', 'eco-tourism', 'responsible tourism' and 'cultural tourism'. The maximisation of tourist satisfaction, maintaining of the ecological balance, and well-being of the community members are considered as the trio-fundamental requirements to achieve sustainable tourism development. Sustainability is in the balance, if community's well-being is overlooked and benefits are siphoned by a few alien interested individuals (Blangy and Epler Wood, 1993).

Sri Lanka has a wealth of resources to become one of the popular tourist destinations. The blue coastal waters and very attractive sandy, palm-fringed beaches, biodiversity, fascinating landscapes, well-preserved ruins, and ancient cities dating back to the fifth century BC are some of the major attractions. However, the country has promoted mass tourism paying little or no attention to its environmental impact and the benefits that would trickle down to the bottom of the society (Wimalaratana and Silva, 2004).

This article intends to explore the potentials and possibilities to promote Community Based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) in the Moneragala district and its surroundings, and is based on an extensive study which focused on the capacity of the communities, natural and man-made resources, institutions, merits/demerits of the destination sites in the district, administrative and policy environment, and infrastructure facilities, etc required for a firm establishment of CBST as an income and employment generating industry.

Therefore, the objective of this article is to draw attention to potentials of the rural economy to promote the community-based sustainable tourism in the Moneragala district, while providing useful food for thought for present and future policy makers to introduce tourism industry in a unique style which will become a new model in the context of eco-tourism. Having extensively travelled in the district, spoken to its constituents who comprise the three communities and taken into

consideration other factors like their cultural diversities, etc, this concept is presented as the most suited one. It can be termed as 'village tourism'¹, which can provide a firm footing for an agro-based tourism industry in the Moneragala district.

The demand driven tourism development is beyond reach of the district under the prevailing situation. A carefully nursed and nurtured supply driven strategy would do justice to fill the vacuum. Therefore, the objective will also be expanded to identify strategic tourism promotional activities in a carefully selected few sites and their peripheral locations in the district (Christ, 1998). The communities living close to the sites would benefit by way of generating new employment opportunities, creating markets for their products and services, and developing infrastructure facilities, etc.

Conceptual Overview

Tourism industry is an important alternative to diversify and develop poverty ridden regional economies in developing countries. Remote hinterlands of many developing countries have unique attraction to tourists due to their unspoiled culture, fauna and flora, landscapes, historical monuments, wholesome rural products and calm and quiet life style. This industry offers labour-intensive and small-scale production opportunities for rural communities along with their agricultural and related activities (Tudawe, 2000). The tourism industry generates job opportunities for village community, while giving higher priority and values for hitherto marginalised resources and skills. This will bring higher living standards for the local community by forcing them to nurse and nature the very sources of their income, especially the environment they live in and the culture and values they have fostered for generations (Drumm, 1998).

The CBST is a mutually beneficial visitor-host interaction which facilitates win-win co-operation among all stakeholders to maximise collective as well as individual benefits in a sustainable manner. This is further enhanced by the tourism related activities owned and managed by one or more defined communities, or community-private partnerships as a vehicle of utilising the

¹ A new concept to Sri Lanka's eco-tourism industry. This will certainly give a new outlook to the study and will relate to agriculture and agrarian development. The district has a wealth of resources which could be utilised to develop environmentally-friendly eco-tourism through the concept of village tourism. In some countries, a similar type of concept is promoted and it has been successful in forming a new market which is now gaining popularity among international tourists. The term 'village tourism' is given due to its nature. Simply speaking, it offers a holiday package or a stay in a typically environmentally-friendly village for a week or two or more, while engaging in a number of activities such as adventure tourism, (mountain) hiking, bird watching, etc, which are included and promoted in eco-tourism packages. This new package could be introduced to eco-tourists.

delicate resources such as natural endowments, historical and cultural heritages in a prudent manner in order to improve the community's well-being, while ensuring the tourist's satisfaction. It is pointed out that the alternative tourism development approaches, contrary to the profit centred mass tourism, have succeeded in minimising the ill-effects of the industry to a great extent, while maximising the visitor-host requirements.

The CBST is considered the best alternative tourism promotion approach, especially for developing countries, which carries the following characteristics.

- Undeniable role for the community on cost-benefit sharing principle
- Community consultation in tourism related legislations and planning
- Projects implemented with the consent and active participation of the community
- Community initiated, owned, and managed projects
- Community and private/public partnerships
- Economically viable and ecologically sound projects
- Fair distribution of costs and benefits among involved parties
- Institutional consolidation and well-developed institutional environment
- Accountability and transparency of all activities

In a nutshell, the community-based sustainable tourism development is supposed to deliver benefits to the community, while they are encouraged to develop tourism enterprises. Incentives will be created to enable community to get benefits from tourism and conserve wildlife and natural resources. Community members' skills and capacity will be utilised for tourism development, while enhancing their income levels and well-being. Community members' ethics, norms and social values are protected. Arts, music, traditional dance, folklore and other socio-cultural heritages will be promoted along with tourism development in addition to preserving and enhancing them. Tourism development will work hand-in-hand with the conservation of the environment and socio-cultural heritage.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the rapid development of mass tourism has ignored the community and its well-being. As a result, the interaction between mass tourists and the local community is insignificant (The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka, 1985). Even the prevailing trivial contacts are mostly limited to the sharing of some facilities such as the beaches, parks, streets and lanes and perhaps the local market. In particular, the economic interactions between the tourists and the local community are very limited. A tourist very rarely goes to the local community to purchase goods and services. Similarly, the local community is alienated from the hotels and other facilities developed for the tourist. It is a well-known fact that there are plenty of untapped tourism resources in rural Sri Lanka to improve the living standards of the poor.

Rationale for CBST in Moneragala

The majority of the people live in the rural areas of the district. They engage themselves in agricultural or related activities such as paddy, vegetable, fruit and dry grain cultivation, dairy/poultry farming and cottage industries as main sources of livelihood. Some people have involved themselves with sugarcane cultivation and sugar production since recently. The percentage of the population engaged in industries such as working in sugar factories, rice mills, bakeries, garment factories, and fruit processing factories is very low compared to the huge agricultural sector. The limited service sector jobs, mostly in the public sector, are mainly dominated by the migrant people from other districts with a higher level of education. The rubber cultivation in the district, though it represents a small fraction of the total cultivated lands, provides job opportunities mainly for the migrant Tamil communities. Smallholding cultivation is the main source of income for many households; not only men and women, but also children getting involved in farming and related activities. It is estimated that agriculture is the main source of employment for about 75 percent of the employed in the district. There are extremely limited opportunities for non-farm income generation activities in the district (Rasanayagam and Amarasinghe, 1999).

Agriculture, the pulsing heart of the district, is curtailed by a number of natural and man-made restrictions and barriers. Above all, the unavailability of sufficient water poses the greatest challenge for the agricultural development in the district. As the rainfall is not sufficient for agriculture, the people have to depend on irrigation facilities although such facilities are extremely limited. The Senanyaka Samudra, one of Sri Lanka's largest irrigation projects, is situated between the districts of Moneragala and Ampara, while Mutukandiya, another large irrigation project is located in the Moneragala district. In addition, the district is home to a number of small- and medium-sized ancient and recently built irrigation systems for smallholding agriculture, mainly for rice cultivation. Still, the lack of water checks the progress of agriculture and related economic activities in the district to a great extent (Rasanayagam and Amarasinghe, 1999).

Farmers without irrigation lands for cultivation are depending on rainwater. During the monsoon seasons the farmers cultivate rice, vegetables and dry grains, while some find seasonal jobs in such farm lands. On many occasions, the farmers neither produce bountiful harvest nor are rewarded with a substantial income from cultivation due to a number of problems, including extremely poor marketing network. However, their fluctuating and meagre income is supplemented by the government's subsidy schemes such as *Samurdhi*, free health, and free education programmes. As a rule, the people in the Moneragala district have to depend on the mercy of vagrant climatic conditions as well as ruthless marketing arrangements. Failure of seasonal rains as well as unwelcome off-seasonal rains

brings misery, wretchedness, and melancholy to the farming communities. Even the better weather conditions do not necessarily guarantee a comfortable living environment due to a host of other problems engulfed in the rural sector. It is maintained that the poverty is overwhelmingly a rural problem in Sri Lanka, especially in a district like Moneragala where domestic agriculture dominates the rural economy.

It is estimated that Moneragala is the poorest district of Sri Lanka, where poverty headcount ratio is estimated to be as 37 percent in contrast to the national average of 22.7 percent. When the district is ranked in terms of Human Poverty Index (HPI), it occupies the last place with the Nuwara Eliya district. This remorseful situation is further aggravated by the weaker socio-economic overhead facilities. For example; the Colombo district has the best ratio of hospital beds and medical officers to the population, whereas a medical officer in Moneragala serves over 10,639 people compared to Colombo's 1,016 people. Similarly, such dry zone districts like Moneragala, Badulla and Hambantota have reported poverty and associated agrarian crisis throughout the post - independent period, warning us against a simplistic and biased analysis of dry zone socio-economic problems. Sustainable tourism development is not only concerned about environment protection but also improvement of the well-being of the community members in the district. If CBST is correctly introduced and properly managed, it will:

- Provide manifold opportunities to improve the community's income
- Create environment where rural communities have their own sources of income rather than depending on government handouts
- Become a reliable complementary income source to volatile agricultural income
- Encourage the community to find a strategy to protect natural, cultural and historical heritage, which are now under heavy pressure due to poverty.

Methodology

Primary and secondary sources were used to collect information for this work. Primary information were collected after extensive field survey in this district with the help of government officials, community leaders, and informed individuals. Resource profiles of the district's divisional secretariats were initially examined to identify the locations of some of the tourism potentials. More information on similar locations were collected, while interviewing the caretakers and the people in the surrounding locations highlighted in the resource profiles. Secondary information were collected from administrative reports, annual reports, books, articles, websites, and booklets published by different organisations and individuals.

Tourism Potentials in Moneragala²

The area covered by the Moneragala district is well-known for its own unique natural endowments, especially rich soil, climate and biodiversity, and plenty of uncultivated tracks of virgin forest lands. It is also loaded with ancient and modern man-made structures with a great appeal for local and international tourists. Obviously, this district has a plenty of under-utilised and untapped tourist resources with different qualities, varieties, and potentials to develop CBST. Such historical sites as old monasteries, fortresses, pagodas, and statues are some of the sites with sentimental attraction to the local tourists. These are the places surrounded by scattered ruins, artificial irrigation tanks and canal systems, rich fauna and flora, and also village communities with numerous talents and skills. They are the people with traditional knowledge and practices of healing methods, folk music and dances handed down from generation to generation. Uva province in which the Moneragala district is located has made a name and fame not only for such historical sites but also for its gorgeous natural forests, greenish paddy fields, beautiful mountain ranges, conspicuous sanctuaries, sacred places of deities, and also succulent fruits, delicious vegetables, heterogeneous climate and landscapes, multi-culture and multi-ethnicity, mouth-watering cuisines and talented and skilful village communities with courteous disposition.

It is an obvious fact that Moneragala is one of the resourceful districts in Sri Lanka with huge potentials for tourism. Some localities in the district such as Kataragama, and Yala are extremely popular tourist destinations among local and foreign tourists. There are a number of other places in the district with great local tourist attractions such as Yudaganawa, Maligawila, Buduruwagala, and Dematamalu Viharaya. It is a pity that none of the warranted potentials of these destinations have been fully utilised. It is unfortunate that many other places with huge tourist potentials such as the Nilgala herbal forest, Rathugala aborigine

² As far as demand driven approach for tourism development is concerned, the Moneragala district has a wealth of natural resources which can be made use of for promoting eco-tourism. The district could be accessed from the Eastern province so that the tourists going to the eastern coast for beach stays in the future could extend or come to Moneragala for excursions, and other activities when compared to Ampara district. As already planned, an international airport will come up in the near future, if not at least a domestic airport, so that tourists both international and domestic going to the East can extend their stays in Moneragala if they wish to engage in eco-tourism or touring the countryside. Basically, there are two types of packages for tourists coming to Sri Lanka; they are beach stays and tours, some stay a week either on the beach or visiting the country, some stay two-to-three weeks staying on the beach and visiting the country. In the case of future tourists going to the East mainly for beach stays may be a targeted segment for Moneragala if it is to be promoted as a tourist destination. For eastern tourists, it is a fine venue for excursions if it could provide facilities. The most important factor that is considered in eco-tourism is 'environment'.

settlements, Maragala mountain ranges, and the Westminster Abbey (Govindu Hela/ Small Sigiriya) are still unknown even among the local tourists.

Agro-Based Tourism

Agriculture is the strongest and perhaps the weakest sector in the Moneragala district. It could be turned into a real stronger sector if warranted resources are exploited prudently in viable areas rather than being confined to traditional narrow boundaries. Agro-based tourism is one such alternative that has potentials to raise the living standard of the rural communities, while maintaining the ecological and socio-cultural equilibrium.

The rural agriculture centred on artificial irrigation tanks and complex irrigation canal system especially during the *maha* season that coincides with the tourist season of the country. It also consists of fruit and vegetable gardens, mixed home gardens, shifting cultivations and many other closely and distantly related activities. The harvesting period of most of these crops, vegetables and fruits also coincides with the tourist season, and thus making the sector more attractive to the tourists. A number of adventure parks and tourism villages for foreigners could be developed close to huge irrigation tanks to promote the agro-based tourism. These types of tourism are mostly designed to cater to the niche segment of the guests and they are rich enough to afford sea planes which could be employed to ferry them from Colombo to their respective hotel-villages in the remote Moneragala district. Developing of tourism villages close to irrigation tanks will carry some added advantages since they offer wide opportunities for tourism related products. Boating and other water sports in tanks, fun fishing, birds and animal watching are some of them. The low temperature, calm and quite environment, and fresh air close to reservoirs are some of the welcome factors to promote inbound tourism in the district.

It seems that access to the Moneragala district is difficult and time consuming when compared to some places in Sri Lanka. Still, there are plenty of potentials to develop tourism within the prevailing setup itself, if such advantages mentioned below are taken into account.

- The district is located bordering/close to popular tourist destinations in the Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Matara, Hambantota, and Batticaloa districts.
- In fact foreign tourists travel to Batticaloa's popular beaches cum surfing locations via the Moneragala district.
- One of the most popular local tourist destinations, the Kataragama Temple, is also located in the district bordering Hambantota.

- Standard road networks are available up to Embilipitiya. It is not difficult to develop a main road from there to the Moneragala city or beyond.
- Rail road link could easily be extended either from Badulla or Batticaloa.
- The district is surrounded by both attractive dry and wet forests with their birds, wild animals and mountain ranges, in addition to historical monuments and ancient ruins
- The district has skilful and courteous village communities with their agricultural products, arts and crafts, etc. Huge irrigation tanks and canal systems are also tourist attractions in the district.

It is pointed out that the growth of domestic tourism could lay down a concrete economic foundation for the development of international tourism, particularly for the inbound international tourism development. Opportunities open for local communities to get involved with tourism industry would be higher under such circumstances (The International Eco-tourism Society, 1993). It is safe to say that the domestic tourism would create a socio-economic environment for the promotion of international tourism. Similarly, it would generate a well experienced, properly stabilised, and adequately informed tourism culture among the local community. Above all, the potential spillover effects created by strong forward and backward linkages would improve the well-being of the poorer segments of the society, if policies are well focused, finely formulated, and timely executed (Stronaza, 2000).

A few alternative tourism promotional themes are highlighted for the sake of promotional purpose. For example, there are specialised tourism areas such as agro-tourism, eco-tourism, green tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, and sports tourism. There are substantial opportunities for the rural community in each and every sector in these alternative fields rather than the hitherto emphasised mass tourism industry.

The Moneragala district has already two excellent tourism villages for inbound tourists, in Tanamalvila and at the 19th mile post, Buttala. Both have extremely limited relationship with the community, but it is quite easy to build a strong bridge between the village community and these types of tourism villages. This would be only after some awareness programmes for the village communities as well as for the hotel management and employees. The two hotel-villages referred here are facing some severe threats from the nearby villages due to weak relationship with the community. In contrast to some tourist villages in the country, one village called Ulpatha in Ehetuwewa of the Kurunegala district

provides an excellent example on how to make inroads into the local community to develop tourism on the CBST approach.

Another attraction to foreign tourists would be organic agricultural products, if they are carefully nursed and nurtured. A growing number of tourists prefer natural products to chemically processed products. It is not difficult to promote chemical-free farms close to tourist villages, if the producers are rewarded with fair dividends. Community based products such as vegetables, fruits, bee honey, herbs, yoghurt, curd, pickle, cane and wood products, coconut shell based products, pottery, jewellery, and handlooms have great market potentials, if the production is properly organised and supervised. These products could easily be linked to the agro-based tourism projects since they are part of the same traditional agriculture.

The sugarcane cultivation and sugar production plants are tourist attractions in the district. Two plants located at Sevanagala and Pelwatte are the only sugar production factories in Sri Lanka at the moment. These two locations have great potentials to promote local tourism; including educational excursions. A few traditional local villages can either be created or preserved in their pristine form to attract the inbound and local tourists. It may contain small irrigation tanks with canals, tracks of paddy fields, forest reserves for animals, forests for firewood and shifting cultivation, gravel roads, Buddhist temples, shrines dedicated to deities, indigenous physicians, homesteads with gardens, greenery, oxen, bullock carts, traditional oil mills, grinding mills, clay pots, mats, etc.

For the promotion of agro-based tourism, the following initiatives are needed to be emphasised:

- Accommodation facilities with traditional local flavour
- Support services such as renting of bicycles, guide services, etc
- Promotion of old modes of transport such as bullock carts, elephant and horse riding
- Development of infrastructure facilities
- Awareness programmes for the community and other involved parties
- Seasonal markets and fairs
- Cultural shows and pageants portraying local identity
- Development of special cycle routes
- Marinating cleaner environment
- Special zones for fruit gardens
- Tree planting campaigns

Nature Based Tourism

The district has a vast resource base for nature based tourism. A number of sanctuaries and national parks in the district with tropical virgin forests, rich wildlife, and beautiful landscapes including mountain ranges, water streams, and abandoned ancient irrigation tanks are welcome resources for this purpose. In addition to these, other special resources such as the extremely rare Nilgala herbal forest, Handapanagala elephant corridor, Makaraya site, Arawakumbura waterfall (seasonal), Mini World's End, Westminster Abbey, etc provide immense opportunities to promote nature based tourism in the form of adventure tourism³ which has become increasingly popular among tourists.

As a complementary to nature based tourism, the district has potential for development of corresponding tourist attractions⁴ which are part of the nature based tourism such as open zoo, a restricted zoo, a bird paradise, a botanical garden, a park, an elephant orphanage could be developed taking into

³ The adventure tourism is part of eco-tourism, principally to generate the sense of discovery by using largely unspoilt areas with very little or no man-made infrastructure facilities. Mountain and rock climbing, cycling in hilly areas and difficult terrains, elephant and horse riding in forests, wild camping and wild safari are some of the activities related to adventure tourism. The Moneragala district has immense potentials for adventure tourism if we target the correct sites. Among other things, the following locations will generate a special attraction to the tourist.

- Westminster Abbey: Interchangeably 'Small Sigiriya' or 'Govindu Hela' terms are used to refer to this attractive location.
- Maragala-Geelon mountain range with special climatic condition closer to Bandarawela and special kinds of birds and animals would be another attraction.
- Makaraya site where the water of Gal Oya vanishes into the earth is another special attraction. It is located in the thick forest of the upper Senanayake reservoir.
- Sanctuaries such as Gal Oya and Yala, elephant corridors such as Handapanagala, Mini World's End are some other interesting locations to promote adventure tourism in the district.

⁴ As a complementary measure to develop CBST in the Moneragala district, a few strategically important facilities could be developed parallel to promotion of selected tourism destinations. The following facilities could be developed in medium and long-term with the participation of the private sector.

Botanical Gardens: The biodiversity in the Moneragala city area itself makes a strong claim for a botanical garden in its vicinity. This could easily be created close to Maragala/Geelon areas. The garden may consist of cycle routes, kiosks, walking paths, and nursery and plant sales centres.

Parks with Open Zoos: Two parks could be developed at the initial stage as one at Maragala and the other closer to the Buttala campus. These parks will consist of cycle routes, children parks, flower gardens, walking paths, ponds, kiosks, horse/pony riding facilities, sales centres of local products such as handicrafts, handlooms, herbs and herbal products.

Elephant Shelter: Elephant shelter could be developed in a suitable place in the district. Such locations as Tanamalwila, Handapanagala, Nilgala, Mutukandiya and Ethimale could be considered seriously for this project. The elephant shelter will consist of an elephant orphanage in addition to providing such services as elephant safari (wildlife safari) and elephant play (e.g. polo and foot ball).

consideration the availability of the vast land area, animals and other resources. Community participation is an essential component in all these developmental work. Their income will grow up as a community supplying to the industry such as local products, labour and other services.

Wildlife safari by auto rickshaws, bullock carts, elephants, horses, and push bicycles, bird and reptile watching, camping with day/night animal watching (living in ground huts, tree top huts, hill top huts, huts close to water pools), trekking, nature study tours, etc really attract the inbound and local tourists. A very few investors in adventure cum tourist village in Tanamalvila are capitalising on its resources, although they have problems with the sustainability due to destruction caused by the neighbouring village communities and outsiders. The community participation is an essential element, if this type of tourism is to promote further in a sustainable manner.

Cultural Tourism

The cultural diversity and uniqueness of the district provides a competitive edge over many other districts to promote cultural tourism. The cultural multiplicity ranges from Rathugala vedda⁵ community to a common worship place of all faiths in the country. The district is a home for all the major three communities and all the four major religions. Followers of all faiths make pilgrimages to Kataragama. The latter is a kind of magnet among all races and faiths of Sri Lanka. There are still vast potentials to promote cultural tourism to improve the well-being of the community.

Kataragama has a potential to be developed as a universal holy city which could attract more visitors not only locals but also foreigners from countries like India. The improvement of basic facilities for visitors, clean and tidy city, purging of all vices, standardisation of accommodation and other facilities call for urgent attention in this endeavour. The environmental pollution, unorganised stalls; dirty streets and parks are some of the obvious challenges.

The resources and skills available within the community could be employed for cultural tourism related activities such as traditional dancing, arts, music, religious practices, handicraft, especially during the religious festive periods.

Heritage and Spiritual Tourism

Promotion of heritage and spiritual tourism by exploiting the warranted resources in a sustainable manner will generate benefits not only from these sites

⁵ Term used for aborigines in Sri Lanka

themselves but also for the communities, especially those who are living close to these sites. The available resources suggest that Buddhist and Hindu religious practices could be promoted towards development of spiritual tourism. When pilgrimage tourism is taken into account, the local demand seems to hold a key stake of the potential market. A number of meditation centres similar to Budugallena could be developed to attract more local tourists.

It is also possible to promote these kinds of heritage and spiritual tourism products among a certain percentage of the inbound tourists. Tourism packages consisting of meditation, yoga, non-alcohol and vegetarian foods, specially designed accommodation facilities in calm and quiet locations, possibly close to historical sites or in forests, could easily be promoted among foreign tourists. Tours to important religious and historical sites in the district could also be included in the packages.

Health Tourism

There is a great demand for alternative health related tourism products in the world. The indigenous medical treatment based health tourism could be developed by exploiting the know-how and talents of the local communities. Still, there are a quite sufficient number of people practising traditional healing and treatment methods. Potential health tourism activities for community benefits can be developed through development of ayurvedic centres⁶ such as ayurvedic hospital in Kiriara and development of medicinal herbal and other medicinal resources such as the herbal parks like Pitakumbura herbal plantation; promotion of ayurvedic spa and massage treatment resorts; development of teaching centres for ayurveda philosophy and ayurvedic studies; promotion of traditional oil baths for various ailments; strengthening of community's involvement for the supply of various inputs for these holiday services; conducting community awareness programmes on protecting of medicinal trees and plants and harvesting in a sustainable manner; promotion of indigenous medical practices among community members; developing of walking tracks for health purposes such as walking around water tanks, river banks and grasslands, etc. Promotion of health tourism would help to:

- Create job opportunities for local community members
- Produce herbal and other products

⁶ Ayurvedic Health Clinics- The setting up of ayurvedic treatment centres, spa and massage treatment resorts should be encouraged. In addition to that, potentials should be explored for such facilities at existing ayurvedic hospitals/clinics such as at Pitakumbura and in medicinal forests such as Nilgala. These facilities could also be introduced in specially designed meditation centres for niche tourists.

- Preserve medicinal and other plants and trees
- Propagate and promote traditional healing methods
- Link with other alternative/complementary methods such as yoga and meditation practices and acupuncture treatments.

Factors for the Success of CBST

Like any other economic activity, the growth of tourism is not a spontaneous penchant. It is attributable to a number of closely and distantly related factors. Any successful sustainable development of tourism has to focus on crucial factors to achieve the planned objectives. In this study, a number of such important factors have been identified which are examined in brief here.

Markets Issues

This concerns whether there is a potential demand for products based on CBST development or they can be supplied continuously, qualitatively, and sufficiently. There is an increasing demand for this type of holiday services with the emerging of new types of tourists. It is obvious that the demand itself would not guarantee a faster growth in the industry in an unknown backward area like the Moneragala district. Supply driven approach would make a difference under such circumstances, where new destinations and fresh products induce the tourist to taste the difference. The real tourist attractions have to be identified first in this endeavour and then make them more attractive by transforming such places into tourist friendly locations. The gap between the host and tourist should be bridged through information. Each destination has its own uniqueness that provides special protection from severe competition in the industry.

1. Quality of the product is vital not because of mass production but of mass customisation. Product diversification addresses the individualistic interests and demand patterns.
2. The tailor-made approach for this type of tourism promotion is important rather than a ready-made approach, where a similar product makes no fresh feelings of curiosity.
3. Upper top segment of the tourists with higher purchasing power would demand the unique products at a special price. They, as exceptional persons, would naturally expect exceptional products with higher quality.
4. The niche market carries little or no negative effects to the society and the environment of the destination since it is easily manageable even at a higher cost.

Environmental Impact

One of the priority areas of the CBST is sustainable environment, where every effort is made to maximise the positive impacts and minimise the negative impacts. Every project related renewable and non-renewable resources and inputs such as energy, labour, and forest are assessed and employed in the industry with utmost care to maintain the delicate balance (Metha, Baez and Loughlin, 1998).

Not only wildlife, forest, water resources, and mountains but also social and cultural heritages are being checked in areas such as Buttala, Bibile, Tanamalvila, Rathugala, Nilgala, Siyabalanduwa, Kataragama, and Geelon due to ruthless hunting, logging, forest clearing and burning, and vandalism, etc. Urgent measures have to be taken to arrest this disastrous trend to maintain sustainability in these areas.

The immediate concern of the community is their livelihood, which is intrinsically involved with forest and wildlife. The CBST can make a real change by providing them with alternative income sources, since it generates income for the community out of forest, wildlife, and cultural heritages, etc.

Financial Matters

Financial aspect could be considered the centre of gravity in any commercial venture in the modern liberal economic environment. The underlying philosophy of the CBST is not essentially promoting the profit maximisation motive but fair profits plus environmental and social responsibility. Three major financial concerns have to be addressed in the process of CBST promotion.

a) Funds for Infrastructure Development: The provincial council and the central government have to take the collective responsibility regarding the infrastructure development, while giving only the marginal areas to the private investors. Transport, electricity, water supply and telecommunication are the most critical areas. Above all, transport comes first, not because of sheer distance between Colombo and Moneragala, but it is the only thing available at the moment. It is a well-known fact that the time you spend to get to Moneragala is somewhat close to your travel time from Europe to the Bandaranaike International Airport, Katunayake. This is a serious challenge in developing the tourism industry or any other sector in this district. A few alternative strategies could be implemented to counter this situation to a great extent.

- a. Development work of the proposed international airport in Wellawaya has to be accelerated.⁷
- b. A fairly good road network needs to be built from Colombo to Embilipitiya. This has to be extended at least to Bibile town via Moneragala town.⁸
- c. Sea plane transport could be developed to ferry niche tourists from Colombo to Moneragala. Larger reservoirs such as Senanayke Samudra and Mutukandiya would be useful in this exercise, since these reservoirs have sufficient water throughout the year. Even smaller irrigations tanks are available during the peak tourist season, as most of these tanks are at their full capacity during the season.⁹
- d. Selected by-roads have to be developed not only to facilitate the tourism industry, but also to develop agriculture, livestock and small industries of the district.
- e. Gravel roads have to be maintained properly in areas where nature tourism is concerned.
- f. Clean city concept has to be adopted at least for every major city in the district. Moneragala could be developed as the clean city centre, while selecting a few others as satellite clean cities.
- g. Electricity, water supply, and telecommunication facilities have to be developed on priority basis in selected areas.
- h. Maintenance of activities has to be undertaken with same vigour. The community participation and awareness is extremely essential in this endeavour.

b) Capital for Tourism Products: Investment in hotels and related tourism activities is a responsibility of the local and international investors. The provincial

⁷ **International Airport:** The development work of the proposed international airport in Kudaoya, Wellawaya has to be accelerated with the private sector participation. This will not only fulfil the long felt need for alternative international airport to Katunayake but also will bring a tremendous development to Uva-Wellassa area.

⁸ **Road Development:** Poor transport facility is the major obstacle to access the district rather than the actual distance from Colombo. This problem could be solved successfully, if roads, connecting highways, and rail roads are developed to meet the modern requirements. The following projects could be considered seriously in this endeavour.

- a. Connecting of Colombo-Badulla rail road with the proposed Kataragama rail road via Bibile, Moneragala and Buttala.
- b. Extending of Colombo-Embilipitiya highway up to Bibile via Buttala and Moneragala.
- c. Upgrading of other roads in the district

⁹ **Domestic Airports:** Air taxi service and sea plane services could be introduced to arrest the weak roads and transport facilities. The proposed Wellawaya international airport could first be developed as a domestic airport for small aircraft and helicopters. Larger reservoirs in the district could be made available for the sea planes.

council and the central government with their agencies have to work as facilitators and service providers to the investors.

- a. The services of the national/regional chambers of commerce/industries, Ministry of Tourism, Board of Tourism, Board of Investment, NGOs and other interested groups could be taken to attract private investments to the district.
- b. A token of issued shares of quoted companies could either be gifted or sold at a reduced price to well focused community members/community based societies. The community will develop the sense of ownership of hotels under this scheme in addition to getting opportunities to air their views at shareholder-meetings.

The district neither has a sufficient number of entrepreneurs to invest in the tourist related activities nor specialists in the field of leisure industry. Tour operators and tourists do not have sufficient information about the exciting facilities in the Moneragala district and they are of the view that the district has no hotel and other recreational facilities to develop the tourism industry. Only the limited number of restaurants and tea/coffee shops are operating but they are not up to the expected standards of the industry. The collaborations and commercial ventures with investors from other districts and other countries would be important in this regard. Such small investors as Kinkini Hotel in Bibile, Victoria Hotel in Moneragala, and Nethmini in Siyambalanduwa will get benefits out of this and it would carry the spread-over effects to other investors as well.

- c. The dissemination of investment opportunities in the district would attract local and foreign investors with their market networks. A dedicated website, information booklets, advertisements in the media, press conferences, and investors' conference are some of the strategies to attract potential investors to the district.

c) Distribution Effects: Small-scale, locally originated, community-based tourism products are promoted under CBST development along with the medium/large-scale foreign/local owned tourism projects. This kind of strategy would create its own mechanism to trickle down the fortunes generated by the industry to the down trodden groups of the society such as those in the Moneragala district.

- a. Community will have an opportunity to dispose their products at a reasonable price, while they get avenues to earn income from their cultural heritages. Among many other products, the excess fruits and vegetables in

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- the district will find a good market, if the local and inbound tourism industry is developed.
- b. Direct employment opportunities will generate income to the community members. They could be prepared to accept the challenges posed by unknown and unskilled jobs by providing with necessary training and skills. The community in the district already has the skill to work as tourist guides, room attendants, cooks, garden keepers, etc. They need a little fine-tuning for these types of jobs. In the long run, they could be prepared to accept even top posts of the industry, as they would have the necessary skills and talents for any challenging career in the industry.
 - c. Such small-scale tourism production units as kiosks, shops, bakeries, and cab services could be started and managed by the community members. In addition to that, the traditional goldsmith, blacksmith and handloom maker will have opportunities to modernise and expand their production units.
 - d. Infrastructure development would help to create higher values for community's wealth, higher prices for community products, lower cost for production inputs and related services, and easy access to essential services such as education and health to the community members. Similarly, the local government will have new revenue sources coming out of profit making tourism as related ventures which would be channelled to improve the living standards of the community where the projects are located. The highly backward isolated villages in the Moneragala district will benefit from the tourism industry.

Pilot projects for CBST Development

At present, Moneragala is not a popular tourist attraction in Sri Lanka. It is clear that the promotion of a massive multi-faceted tourism plan with essential infrastructure and other facilities is beyond reach, at least in the short run. Neither it is reasonable under prevailing resource constraints nor the existing capacity of the district itself.

Two-phased strategic plans consisting of short-and medium-term strategies would be a practical solution at the early stages of tourism promotion in the district.

A few carefully selected locations with higher tourism potentials are to be developed and to be promoted along with the minimum infrastructure development. This initial phase could also be considered as the trial and error period of a long-term tourism development strategy in the district. A few well-known and straightforwardly marketable, easily accessible sites with lower investment expenditure should be selected for this initial phase. A sound long-term strategic plan has to be prepared after a careful and extensive research in the

field by considering the national and global trends of tourism development. It will consume more resources, time and energy than a short-term exercise. Projects should be proposed to initiate in view of tourism development in the district within a manageable limit.

These projects should focus on foreign and local niche tourist markets. This district has the highest concentration of sanctuaries and national parks with full of virgin forests, wild animals, birds, herbs and wild berries. Therefore, the parks, sanctuaries and reservoirs are ideal for future projects.

Six national parks, Nilgala medicinal sanctuary, Makaraya site, Inginiyagala reservoir area, Mutukandiya reservoir area, Handapanagala area and Ethimale lake area and some other natural attractions could make a great impact on the CBST of the Moneragala district.

Activities and accommodation have to be organised within the adventure and eco-tourism approach, which has gained popularity in recent years in response to the worldwide trend of preserving the natural environment.

The task of promoting eco-tourism lies heavily on the ability of the local communities in managing the resources and tourist products. The degree of community's capacity to manage the eco-tourism resources and services at the local level will ultimately decide the national target in this sector of tourism.

Summary and Conclusion

The traditional mass tourism development (MTD) practised by many countries like Sri Lanka has ignored a number of positive aspects as proposed by the CBST. This gross negligence has led not only to environmental and cultural degradation but also to raising questions about economic viability and distribution of income generated from the tourism industry among the rightful stakeholders. This study is carried out to examine the sustainable strategies that might facilitate the promotion of CBST in the predominantly-domestic-agriculture-related-activity-centred-Moneragala district of the Uva province, Sri Lanka. The report evaluates some warranted potentials of the district to promote the industry, and also to win a fair share of the huge tourism market, especially global market, by attracting visitors to the natural, socio-cultural and historic localities of the district, while continuing with the CBST approach.

It is fair to say that the community based tourism (CBT) has become a growing trend in the world in the recent past. The CBT, as an alternative approach, implies that the community has substantial control over involvement in the tourism

industry and the majority of benefits remain in the community itself. However, the community based sustainable tourism (CBST), an off-shoot of the CBT, does not necessarily consider only the community's benefits but also the tourists' satisfaction and ecological balance simultaneously. The CBST consisting of new vision and new agenda makes every effort to keep the delicate balance between tourism development, and the preservation and promotion of the nature and socio-cultural heritage, while opening up new avenues for the community to improve their living standards. The community is thereby forced to nurse and nurture their income earning means for their own survival.

The potential tourism products of the Moneragala district are usually characterised by its assorted sunny climate, numerous hills and mountain ranges, breathtaking landscapes, lush green forests with their animals, birds, insects, flowers, and wild berries, spectacular historic monuments and structures, the smiling people with their unparalleled courteous disposition, cultural heritages, local products such as vegetables, fruits, and dry grains. The abundance of resources and their diversity have ensured an exceptional place for the Moneragala district in the CBST promotion in Sri Lanka.

The trial and error approach would be more pragmatic in this exercise since strategies are needed to be reformulated, refined, and reprioritised where necessary. The traditional short, medium and long-term strategies and planning would be imperative in the process. It is obvious that developing the district as a demand driven tourist destination is beyond reach at this stage. Therefore, it is not a major tourist destination in the country though it has vast potentials. Supply-push strategies, therefore, are largely emphasised here for the initial stages until both supply-push and demand-pull strategies are equally applicable in the future.

The participation of community, private investors, public sector, and other related stakeholders are extremely important in achieving the targeted goals. This would ultimately ensure the prime goal by the CBST motto of '*Tourism and Prosperous Community*' while maintaining the socio-cultural equilibrium of the region. It is quite obvious without the well-being of the community; any tourism development strategy would be a losing battle in a hostile territory.

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