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A Case study on Tourism Developments in Arugam Bay Tourism Destination from Stakeholders' Perspective

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Abstract

Tourism industry in Sri Lanka has been evolving following the end of the civil war. In order to cater the ever increasing demand, significant investments are taking place in the identified tourism site and location. However, there has been no comprehensive assessment on these aspects in many places including Arugam Bay. In this backdrop, the paper aims to assess and identify the potential of tourism resources in order to promote and attract tourism and to have more tourists in the area. This research carried out through survey using structured interview among 100 respondents comprising many tourism related stakeholders in the study area. A focus group discussion also carried out to validate the findings of the survey. The research concluded that Arugam Bay has the potential resources to promote as a tourism destination yet, many resources are unutilized and underutilized. Among those attractions, respondents preferred to develop were small

independent businesses such as gift shops, cultural and folk events, prearranged attractive, flexible tour packages, guide services, concerts, arts and crafts, dances, and festivals. And also, they supported information for tourists to attract more tourists to their communities.

Key word: Evolution of tourism, Tourism development, Potential, Assessment, Tourism expectation, and Tourism trend

Introduction

Nowadays tourism is regarded as one of the world's most economic prosperity activity.

This industry in most of world's countries has more prompt growth in comparison to other economic sectors and through creating new job opportunities, is regarded as a progressive industry. Tourism is so effective on economic and social development of countries; in which, economists call tourism as "invisible export". Therefore, in order for having permanent development and replacing new resources instead of income of oil reserves, it is required to use from all facilities and abilities. Thus, fundamental requirement of each country is developing tourism industry; in which, economists believe that this is third dynamic and growing economic phenomenon after oil and automobile industry (Madhoushi and Naserpour, 2006).

Tourism is regarded as ability of a country to create added value and increasing national wealth through resource, processes and attractions management. It is obvious that one of the most important factors on developing tourism is organizations involving in tourism including: hotels, travel agencies, tourism organizations

The Island of Sri Lanka is a small universe; it contains as many variations of culture, scenery, and climate as some countries a dozen times its size it is hard to believe that there is any country which scores so highly in all departments – which has so many advantages and so few disadvantages. Lovely beaches, beautiful landscapes, impressive ruins, a vibrant culture and charming people.

Arugam Bay offers something for everyone. It is the third highest ranked among the

world's top ten surfing destinations. There is a variety of Accommodation with the hotels and guest houses, restaurants rank from small, local rice and curry, cafes to the largest restaurants rank which serve western cuisine for every budget.

The attractions of Arugam Bay are so, numerous and cater to visitors with different interests. It is just amazing that so many attractions should lie so close together.

Even the off season here is great for those who want some peace and quiet. Besides this, tourists can view birdlife, crocodiles and elephants in the nearby areas very easily.

Arugam Bay Profile

Arugam Bay situated in the Pottuvil Region Eastern part of Sri Lanka is located on the world map, North latitude between 60°53'N and east meridian between 30°50'E and 3.6 meters high from sea level to differentiate. Pottuvil is bordered by Thirukkivil DS Division from the North, the Bay of Bengal on the East, and Lahugala DS Division on the South and West. The total land area of the Division is 269 square kilometers with a length of 21 kilometers and a width of 6-15 kilometers. Nearly half of the total land (47.03%) remains unexploited. 6.2% of the total land is utilized for dwelling purposes while 24.46% is under cultivation. Another 18.28% of land has been identified as cultivable but is not used for cultivation.

The Division comprises 63 villages which come under the administration of 27 GN Divisions. Before 1960, the Division was part of the Batticaloa District. However, after the formation of Ampara District in 1961, the Division was formed as an AGA Division. The Pottuvil electorate is included partly into the Dhigamadulla electorate Division.

The population of Pottuvil is 36940 the composition of the population by Religion is Islam 78.14%, Hindu 18.82%, Buddhist 2.09% and others 0.95% (Pottuvil Resource Profile – 2010). Language constitutes an important fact of the cultural mosaic of the community. Sinhala and Tamil are official languages while English, which is the link language, is widely spoken countrywide.

The main building blocks of the local economy of Pottuvil DS Division comprise:

1. Agriculture (e.g. paddy, coconut, other field crops and horticulture)
2. Livestock rearing,
3. Coastal and inland fisheries,
4. Micro and small industries,
5. Tourism, and
6. Trade.

Evolution of Tourism in Arugam Bay

At the beginning it was a fishing village and that time tourist visit Arugam Bay as hippie tourist. These people loved the nature and suddenly they saw the huge waves in Arugam Bay and the prepared a surfing board using the coconut stud. Then the message spared mouth to mouth by them and step by step the tourist identified that it was a good place to surf and start to arrive to Arugam Bay.

Thereafter the fisherman saw the incoming tourist and thought how to provide accommodation for them, and started to rent their kajan huts for them. Afterward the amount of the tourism starts to increase and the fisherman's started to build small guest houses.

According to the tourism arrivals 1985 was a pick season in Arugam Bay. Then they found that the hotel requirements were further and it slowly another 10 hotels were created. In 1986 100% were occupied and in during that period there were no facilities in this area...

Arugam Bay was affected in 1987 by civil war although still the tourism arrived to Arugam Bay and though they faced many difficulties such as water, electricity, and mainly it was under poverty. But the tourist enjoyed the nature of Arugam Bay and was more interested in the organic food such as hot roties, big bananas and coconuts sambols were the famous food in Arugam Bay.

Day by day, Month by month, year by year, tourist arrival was improved and in 1990 the war became a big problem and cleaned out numerous activities got stopped. Then 1992 very small amount of the guests begin to approach and they identified 12 surfing points in PottuvilPradeshiyaSabha Area and the PradeshiyaSabha gets a little profit from the tourism industry.

In 2001 year the Arugam Bay was visited by locals and tourist. Then people started to recognize there were more attractive souses such as, Yala National Park, cultural sites, Lahugala national park, arceo logical sites and the hoteliers started to let know to the visitors about these places. In 2004 due to the incensement of the tourism level the surf competition was started with the help of Sri Lanka tourism board, Sri Lankan Air lines, British Pro Surfers Association (BPSA) bringing the top ten surfers to Arugam Bay. But unfortunately on 26.12.2004 the huge waves (Tsunami) destroy the Arugam Bay and many valuable lives as well. But the locals and the tourist who have visited to Arugam Bay in the past supported to the hoteliers to rebuild their business back.

After the tsunami in 2005 while it was growing up slowly, suddenly the civil war started to the maximum level again. Therefore tourism was congested and the hoteliers lost their income and faced many difficulties to survive their lives as well as the Local Authority.

Finally in 2009 thanking to our President his Excellency MahindaRajapaksha, the war became to end under the policy of MahindaChinthana. Afterwards the tourism, Infrastructure facilities, and many more has been developed in to a better stage. As the tourism industry improved the income of the hoteliers has been improved as well. Through issuing the trade license, Environment Production license, Garbage license and Urban Development Authorities approvals the PradehiyaSabha (Pottuvil) gets more income and support to developed Arugam Bay Tourism Industry.

Review of Literature

As a result of the dramatic increase in tourism activity over the last few decades there has been growth in the extent of tourism-related research (Bushell et al., 2001).

In the tourism literature, researchers have identified and evaluated tourism resources. The most common objective of tourism studies has been to provide more useful knowledge about an attraction inventory for tourism planning, development, and marketing in a given region, or site. Many

different methods and perspectives have been utilized to describe the components of tourism resources. Subsequently, theories, models, and frameworks of tourism attraction systems have been developed and discussed (Fondenness, 1990; Leiper, 1990). Such research efforts have resulted in critical information and sources for tourism planners and marketers to increase destination market values and competitiveness.

Basically, tourism destination is the essential component of a tourism system, and constitutes multifaceted elements and attractions such as social/natural resources, culture, transportation, facilities, services, and other infrastructures. These destination attributes have been considered as key components for tourism developments.

Tourism resources have been assessed to evaluate their contributions to destination attractiveness (Kozak&Rimmington, 1998; Leiper, 1990; Witt &Moutino, 1994). Often, these analyses have been done from the tourism demand perspectives. It is believed that the attributes and elements of tourism destinations are the basic criteria of tourist preferences and are the major motivators or determinants of travel decision choices (Fodness, 1990; Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000; Ross, 1994).

Additionally, resources have been considered as major determinants or factors in tourism destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993). An understanding of the key determinants of market competitiveness is critical to sustain destination market growth and vitality (Hassan, 2000). The most common examples of destination resources are natural/cultural components, heritage/historical resources, supporting facilities/services, infrastructure, sports/recreation activities, transportation /accessibility, and cost. It has been suggested that knowledge of these components of destination resources is not only basic to understanding tourism planning, but also is essential for successful tourism development (Gunn, 1994; Pearce, 1997).

Research Question

Tourism in Sri Lanka has been growing in the recent past due to prevailing conducive

environment in the country. There are plenty of projects under taken by the government and other tourism organization to promote the Eastern province as one of the best tourism destination in the country. Arugam Bay has been promoted as the strategic location for tourism promotion but proper assessment and identification have not been much expressed. Therefore there is a need to have a look upon the preference of stake holders on tourism resources of Arugam Bay to further promote as one of the best tourism destination in the Eastern part of country and gain more destination competitiveness.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the tourism potentials in the study area to promote as a best tourism destination in the country.
2. To identify the preference of stake holders on tourism development for further development
3. To Gain destination competitiveness by way of promoting tourism resources/ attraction in the area.
4. To recommend strategy to attract more tourist to the study area.

Methodology and Research Design

Primary data for this study were collected through survey using structured interview methods. The interview included the several items on the following dimensions: tourism attraction developments; hindering for tourism developments; and tourism destination competitiveness. Researchers conducted interview among 100 respondents comprising local people, local tourist, foreign tourist, and hotel owners in the area.

Focus group discussion also conducted with tourism expert and other tourism promoting bodies in the area to validate the findings.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that tourism stakeholders' preferences about tourism resources development are a function of perceived tourism development impacts as well as place attachment. As previous research discussed (Jurowski, 1994, Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1987; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2000) if people perceive more benefits than costs

from tourism development, they are more likely to support future tourism development.

Rather than the environmental and physical benefits from tourism development discussed in other studies (Davis, Allen, & Cosenza, 1988; Getz, 1994; Lankford & Howard, 1994), this study demonstrated that the more tourism stakeholders perceive economic benefits from tourism development, the more they are likely to support future tourism resources for example, positive perceptions in terms of job creation and investment.

Among those attractions the respondents preferred to develop were small independent businesses such as gift shops, cultural and folk events, prearranged attractive, flexible tour packages, guide services, concerts, arts and crafts, dances, and festivals. And also, they supported information for tourists to attract more tourists to their communities.

The tourism resources that tourism stakeholders in this study preferred to develop were small independent businesses, cultural and folk events, and information for tourists. The more their preference for developing tourism attractions, the more likely they were to support destination competitive strategies such as marketing efforts and activities, and destination development activities. Accordingly, this finding implied that this relationship could represent the best combinations or matches between tourism attractions and destination competitive strategies in order to enhance destination competitiveness. These combinations may produce more and a better quality of tourism resources that are marketed effectively or efficiently to current and potential tourists.

Following are some of tourism resources preferred by the stakeholders to promote the destination and to gain destination competitiveness.

1. A wide sweeping sandy beach in front of the village of Arugam Bay is an attraction for swimming all year-round. Arugam Bay Beach with its coral reef being home to an abundance of tropical fish affords delightful snorkeling opportunities.

2. Arugam Bay has the best surfing areas in Sri Lanka during the East coast season and offers some exceptionally fun point breaks .The most popular sites are the point, a long right-hand break where the waves can reach up to two meters high for a 400 meter ride
3. OakandaMalai is at the northern boundary of the Kumana Bird Sanctuary. A rocky outcrop much venerated by the local inhabitants and pilgrims to Kataragama
4. Monuments related to the Southern kingdom of Magama almost a thousand years old are found in Pottuvil town, by the dunes and within the Lahugala sanctuary
5. A ½ hour tuktuk ride to the south will leave you with a twenty minute walk along another beautiful beach to reach Crocodile Rock.
6. This temple is said to be built by King Kavanthissa in the 2nd Century BC on the location where the King married the princessViharaMaha Devi. 'Magul'
7. Long and beautiful coastline along the Indian Ocean and a tropical climate
8. Cultural orientation, religious values, respect for people and traditions,and sacred sites
9. Very Low-cost tourist destination with proximity to Indian sub-continent and South-East Asia
10. Sri Lanka has a rich and exotic variety of wildlife and long tradition of conservation. The most popular of Sri Lanka's protected areas. We have multiple national parks that are home to varieties of elephants, leopards, sloth bears, wild boar, porcupines, sandbur, deer, monkeys, wild buffalo, ant-eaters, civet cats, jackals, mongoose, Loris (unique to Sri Lanka), several varieties of lizards, squirrels, reptiles, amphibians and whole host of bird life.
11. More than 60% of the mangrove forest in Pottuvil Lagoon has been destroyed over the past two decades, a consequence of the recent civil conflict. Now the mangroves are threatened by new development and by expanding farming activities.

Impediments for Tourism development in Arugam Bay tourism destination

The following items highlighted by the respondents in the study as major constraint for the tourism development in Arugam Bay.

1. Inadequate in transport and tourism infrastructure
2. Limited international air connectivity
3. Unclean environment
4. Economy severely impacted due to years of internal strife
5. Low competitiveness
6. Increasing theft in the beach area in the evening time
7. Sea plan destination under threats ofseasonal variation
8. Shopping avenue for tourist in the Arugam Bay area is very limited
9. Lack of entertainment facilities for tourists

Strategy to improve tourism development and attract more tourists to Arugam Bay

Researchers recommend following strategy to promote the destination to attract more tourist and gain destination competitiveness in the long run.

1. Improve tourist attractions and have guided tours to Yala , Kumana and Uhantha
2. Should device mechanism to avoid Cultural constraint
3. Attract long-term government support for the industry
4. Organize more social events for instance food festival
5. Promote the independent business
6. To attract lager crowd identify and establish theme park in Arugam Bay area
7. Promote local and other indigenous medical treatment packages
8. Provide opportunities for tourists to experience the village life and culture (e.g. village traditional cooking)
9. Promote beach tourism
10. Maintain eco- friendly and clean environment

Conclusion

According to the results of this study, it revealed that Arugam Bay has the potential resources to promote as a tourism destination. Although the study area is flourished with resources, but most of them are not yet, turned to be tourism product. They are mostly unutilized and underutilized in promoting tourism in general and attracting tourists in particular. So that few strategies proposed by the researchers in order to reap more benefit from the tourism development in the study area.

The study also concluded, that rather than the environmental and physical benefits from tourism development stake holders like more economics and cultural benefits. And they preferred to develop small independent business such as gift shops, cultural and folk events, prearranged attractive, flexible tour packages, guide services, concerts, arts and crafts, dances, and festivals. And also, they supported information for tourists to attract more tourists to their communities.

This study may further conclude that in successful tourism development and management for destination competitiveness, a more thorough understanding of tourism stakeholders' attitudes and preferences toward tourism should be made. As key players in tourism destination competitiveness, their preferences about tourism resources and support for destination competitive strategies should be understood so that more competitive destination environments and positions can be achieved.

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