

Perceived Barriers for Employment in Tourism Industry among Rural Communities

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ABSTRACT

Present Tourism Strategy focuses on increasing tourism related employment in Sri Lanka. It is difficult to attract entry level employees to tourism industry given many reasons. This study aims identifying barriers for potential employment for people in rural areas and it will facilitate human resource builders in tourism industry. As a rural area with pool of job seekers, Kotmale was selected for this study. The sample size has been determined by using stratified sampling method and convenience sampling method was used to select respondents. Primary data collected through a pre-tested structured questionnaire and secondary data were used for the study. Mixed methodology was employed to analyze data. The results revealed social considerations, recruitment process, skills development, progression pathways, cultural barriers and lack of infrastructure facilities are significant barriers for tourism employment in rural areas. It is recommended to address the above to make tourism employment attractive for rural job seekers.

Keywords: Barriers, Job Seekers, Kotmale KDS, Tourism Employment

1. INTRODUCTION

Kotmale is one of the rural administrative divisions in Nuwaraeliya district which bounded, to the North by Nawalapitiya division secretary, to the South by Nuwaraeliya division secretary, to the East by Walapane & Hagurunketha division secretaries and to the west by Ambagamuwa division secretary. It is wonderful and charming valley filled with natural assets like, water

stream, waterfalls, forest reserves, delightful sight and sceneries, manmade resources like, Kotmale Dam, Upper Kotmale hydroelectric power project, Mahaweli Maha Saaya and historical values have been related to King Dutugamunu. These resources are welcoming the tourism industry which is favorable for the local economy.

The economy of many People's where live in KDS is driven by agriculture namely, growing

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vegetables and tea. Particularly, older generation work in their own land for growing vegetables while women are contributing to low paid works at tea estates in the area. Younger generation is mainly working for garment factories just after their school education by receiving low remunerated packages from their employers. The rest of the work force of KDS engage with temporary works related to minor crops cultivation, retail businesses, animal husbandry, special projects under private or public sector etc. Especially women without jobs are seeking assistance from the government as well as from the private sector to strengthen their individual households (Data base of GN officers in 2013). As a potential rural tourism product; KDS can successfully engage with tourism industry to gain benefits to the people in rural community. Because, as one of the largest industries in the world, tourism contributes to employment, enhance income, leisure time relaxation, and fair distribution of wealth, cultural exchange and international relationship. It is also one of the surest and economical means of gaining exchange income (Rezvani, 2004)

1.1. Research Problem

Travel and tourism is one of the fastest growing industries and considered to be the world's largest service industry (Hui, Wan, and Ho, 2007). Sri Lanka also with its unique geographical location, diversity, quality human resources, peace and stability has all the ingredients in place to play a key role in the regional development as a fast emerging market economy in Asia. The specific strategies related to tourism in the five year master plan are, creating an environment conducive for tourism, attracting the right type of tourists to the country, ensuring the departing guests are happy, improving domestic tourism and contributing towards improving global image of Sri Lanka. In Sri Lankan context, it is estimated that 2.5Mn tourist arrivals by 2016 will require around 45,000 hotels rooms and 500,000 employees catering to the industry (Tourism development strategy 2011). Especially capable employees should be

recruited to the main sections like front office, housekeeping, food and beverages department and kitchen department.

Under the tourism strategies finding new tourism products like eco-tourism, ago tourism, pro poor tourism, rural tourism etc. and product development are very important to achieve goals and objectives of the country. Rural tourism can be dated back to the mid- 19th century. At that time, people suffered from high intensity and pressure of work caused by industrialization and urbanization. They want to get relaxed through outdoor activities, thereby; rural areas come to be first choice (Rui, Jiawei and Chunya, 2002). Nowadays rural tourism has turned into a leading economic activity and studies show a positive relationship between developing rural tourism and an increase income. It can be suitable way to enhance economic advantage and employment (Naser, Abbas and Sayyed, 2011). Rural tourism could be considered as the principal route for increasing employment of rural labors, while studying French rural tourism development (Noel, 1990). Sri Lankan tourism industry is now running with human resource shortage in the accommodation sector and in related services. As the annual output of about 1500 graduates is the requirement for the industry (Tourism development strategy 2011). The responsibility of building the human resources to the tourism industry has been taken from individual groups in public and private sectors., such as; 1) local authorities, 2) local universities, 3) industry partners 4) private sector education institutes, 5) potential training providers of public and private sectors and 6) NGOs and CBOs to meet the emerging demand

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Many researchers related to tourism industry, have been identified the link between the importance of rural tourism development and creating human resources from rural areas to the industry. Tourism is a rather important field in rural development which can build up opportunities and facilities especially for employment and regional income and play a crucial role in

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