

Amplify Tourism Development at Biodiversity Hotspots in Galle City, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, is at the heart of what drives the tourism industry because it is a large part of what makes tourist destinations so attractive. Tourism development is clearly linked to biodiversity-rich biomes. Galle city which is blessed with variety of fauna and flora, is a captivating tourist destination in Sri Lanka. Thus biodiversity hotspots in Galle city such as Rumassala Mountain, Kottawa evergreen forest and Mangrove forest, Koggala Lake are vital for tourism development. The objectives of this study are to explore the relationships between tourism development and biodiversity hotspots in Galle city, to explore innovative methods to enhance tourism development protecting unique and diverse ecosystems in the biodiversity hotspots and to empowering communities in the surrounding areas leveraging and mobilizing available natural resources for biodiversity financing. Brief interviews were conducted with tour guides and some tourists from various countries to identify the most attractive locations in Galle city and why they liked them. Same questionnaire was given to 03 communities living in the surrounding areas of the 03 hotspots to obtain detailed information on individual village economies and resource flows into and out of the 03 villages close to those hotspots for understanding local residents' level of dependency on materials that could affect biodiversity in the 03 hotspots. It was revealed that tourists prefer to explore the un-spoilt, rich bio diversity in those 03 hotspots. It was found that there is a significant potential for the 03 hotspots to be further developed as an eco-tourism destinations introducing novel tourism activities. As a result, the communities in the surrounding areas can be financially empowered developing tourism. It is highly recommended that tour-guides and local communities have to be offered awareness programmes on regular basis. Thus Tourism development of Galle city has a symbiotic and parasitic relationship with biodiversity hotspots.

Keywords: Tourism development, Biodiversity hotspots, Innovative methods, Natural resources

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