

Tea Tourism as a Marketing Tool: A Strategy to Develop the Image of Sri Lanka as a Remarkable Tourism Destination

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Tourism is one of the world's largest industries which provides employments to more than 100 million people around the world. Niche tourism refers to strategy that specific tourism product is personalized to meet the needs of a particular tourist segment. Hence Tea tourism has been identified as one of niche Tourism segments emerged with novel concept of sustainable and nature based eco-friendly tourism. The research objective of this study is to identify the potentials to promote Sri Lanka as a tea tourism destination with special reference to Badulla and Nuwara Eliya districts by investigating the tea tourists' attitudes, expectations and destination attributes and local community involvement for tea tourism. Sample consisting of 173 tea tourists, structured questionnaire and semi structured interviews were adopted in primary data collection. The numerous potentials have been identified which will be useful in promoting tea tourism. Destination image building with the brand name of "Ceylon Tea", global promotional campaigns with the collaboration of Social Media, Marketing tools and introducing sustainable tourism experience packages were recommended in order to promote tea tourism.

Keywords: *Destination Image Building, Niche Tourism, Sri Lanka, Tea Tourism, Tea Industry*

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