

Potentials and Prospects of Religious Tourism in Katharagama

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Abstract: Today, the tourism and hospitality industries are constantly searching for new customer segments and for methods of improving competitiveness. The religious tourism was the more focused sector of main-stream tourism and it improves the competitiveness. It is becoming better outlined and determined by religious reasons. However many countries offering religious tourism have been struggling to sell their product in market. Religious tourism has been a great reason of uplifting rural economies. Thus Kataragma is chosen to explore the religious tourism in relation to the local economy. This study emphasizes the potentiality and prospectus of religious tourism in the area. The study has identified main economic activities around the sacred city, spin-off effects, social and cultural changes due to tourism and the need of promoting the area as a destination to international tourists. The study discusses about how the small shops around sacred area have become an influential economic activity in the area and the kind of economic benefits it brings. This study further explores the challenges faced by business people, how they manage to overcome them and promoting Katargama as part of other main tourist attractions in the region since it is difficult market itself alone. The semi-structured interviews, mini-questionnaire are used as main data collection tools of the study. At the end, it discusses about the lack of academic research of the discipline relating to Sri Lankan context and forecast the future research possibilities of the area.