

An Analysis of Barriers and Opportunities of Community-Based Tourism (Special Reference to Mannar District)

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Tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of any nation and it is a prime foreign income earner. Community-based tourism (CBT) is a form of tourism that is generally small scale and involves interactions between visitors and the host community, particularly suited to rural areas. The communities in Mannar who depended on natural resources have not been benefited from tourism in terms of enhancing economic and social welfare in a positive way. Many tourism development initiatives have been designed but without incorporating the knowledge of local communities which is essential in the process. It is assumed that if tourism is going to make a positive change in the living standards of these communities, CBT can offer hope for a partnership between the investors and communities. Hence, the objective of the study was to analyse the current situation, barriers, and opportunities for CBT in Mannar. The purposeful sampling technique was used to select 15 respondents from government sectors, private sectors, and community members. A qualitative research design was adopted in this research. The information was derived from direct interviews and thematic analysis was utilized for data analysis. Findings indicated that the current situation of CBT in Mannar has interaction with the awareness of tourism and perception of CBT. The operational limitations, structural limitations, and cultural limitations were identified as barriers for CBT in Mannar. Beach, wildlife, historical sites, cultural activities and pilgrimage activities were identified as the opportunities for CBT in Mannar. There is a huge potential in Mannar to develop CBT by overcoming the barriers. An adequate government support and stakeholder participation (community participation) could help to accelerate CBT in Mannar.

Keywords: Community, Tourism development, Opportunities, Challenges