



**Role of Tourism as a Community Development Tool**  
**(With Special Reference to Patna, Deniyaya)**

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## ABSTRACT

Community development is a way of empowering civic activities and strengthening civil society and their perspective on social, economic and environmental policy development where tourism can play a critical role to empower local communities. The tourism industry has many economic, social and environmental benefits to the rural community. Rural tourism is a major contributor to rural development. This research aims to identify the role of tourism in the context of the rural community around Patna. Patna is a rapidly growing destination and in its early stage of tourist destination life cycle, ponders a range of opportunities through tourism. It is situated proximity to Deniyaya town just outside of Sinharaja Rain Forest. It is a rural village and is belong to the Wiharahena Grama Niladhari Division. This research focuses on factors influencing the development of the tourism industry, community development, and outlook. A purposive sample of twenty tourism stakeholders was drawn for the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews from visitors, community members, and government officers. Transcribed detailed interview outcomes were scrutinized and analyzed using thematic analysis technique. Findings reveal that lack of infrastructure, lack of government involvement, negative environmental and social impact disturbs tourism and related community development potentials while tourism seems an effective tool to improve the income level of community. In sum, the study found that tourism has a limited impact on the Patna community with little improvement in income level. Based on the findings it is recommended to improve government involvement, improve infrastructure facilities in the Patna area. Moreover, effective promotional techniques, promoting tourism-related community enterprises are some potential areas for future research.

*Keywords:* Community-based Tourism, Community Empowerment, Rural Tourism, Tourism Development, Tourism Impacts.