

**POTENTIAL FOR ECO-TOURISM AS A SUSTAINABLE
APPROACH TO UTILIZE RESOURCES IN UP-COUNTRY TEA
ESTATES IN SRI LANKA**

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In the context of tea industry in Sri Lanka, ecotourism has been recognized as an economically viable, environmentally friendly, and socially acceptable non-crop diversification mechanism to increase profits according to Asian Development Bank report, 2000.

The purpose of this study was to assess the potential for ecotourism in upcountry tea plantations in Sri Lanka. Six estates, namely: (1) Hellbodda; (2) Kaloogala; (3) Melfort; (4) Rothschild; (5) Sanquhar, and (6) Sogama that are located in the Pussellawa plantation sub district have been selected as the cases.

Collection of data was characterized by: (1) a field survey at each location to identify the availability of potential resources for ecotourism (e.g. attractions, infrastructure); (2) a community survey with the estate households; (3) a series of personnel interviews with the estate management, and (4) questionnaire-based surveys with potential local and foreign tourists to these sites.

The information collected through the field, community, and management surveys were used to develop an index – “Tourism Potential Index” (TPI), that explain the capacity of each estate to develop ecotourism. The results based on the TPI suggest that the best location for ecotourism was the Rothschild followed by Hellbodda, and Sogama. The results also show that about 75% of estate community was in favor of implementing an ecotourism project, and about 84% and 78% of foreign and local tourists, respectively, are willing to visit such a project. The results highlight the necessity of implementing sustainable alternative projects to enhance the quality of life of the estate community.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, Tea Industry in Sri Lanka, Sustainable Resource Utilization