

(215)

Sustainable Tourism Pathways in Madampe: Applying the TRO-TOUR Concept for Eco-Cultural and Community Development**Shammika, D.L.A.H.*, Weerasiri, A.T.Y.D.***Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Department of Public Policy,
University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka***shammikauor@yahoo.com***Abstract**

Madampe, located in Sri Lanka's Puttalam District, possesses significant eco-cultural and community-based tourism potential that remains underutilized due to weak infrastructure, fragmented governance mechanisms, and limited local participation. This study aims to examine how the TRO-TOUR Tourism Concept-Trust, Respect, Ownership, Transparency, Opportunity, Unity, Responsibility, Transformation, Uniqueness, and Resilience can be operationalized to promote sustainable tourism development in Madampe. A qualitative Grounded Theory approach was adopted to generate theory directly from community realities. The study employed theoretical sampling and engaged 50 participants across four stakeholder categories: local community members and fishers (n=20), tourism-related micro-entrepreneurs (n=12), public officials and policymakers (n=10), and religious and cultural custodians (n=8). Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, two focus group discussions, field observations, and document analysis. Each TRO-TOUR principle was examined using context-specific qualitative indicators, including levels of stakeholder trust and collaboration, perceptions of cultural respect, degree of community ownership in tourism initiatives, transparency in decision-making, livelihood opportunities generated, collective action, environmental responsibility, socio-economic transformation, destination uniqueness, and adaptive capacity to environmental and market changes. Data analysis followed open, axial, and selective coding procedures to identify categories and relationships among themes. Findings reveal that eco-tourism initiatives linked to the Pambala Mangrove Reserve, sustainable boating and recreation at Thinipitiya Lake, improved access to the Samadhi Statue and Taniyawallabha Temple, and the revitalization of the Pambala fishing area demonstrate strong alignment with multiple TRO-TOUR principles. Cultural and religious assets such as Senanayake Monastery, Punchi Kataragama Temple, and the Pambala Mangrove Museum further enhance destination uniqueness and resilience. The emergent core theory indicates that sustainable tourism development in Madampe depends on strengthening community trust and ownership while integrating eco-cultural resources with inclusive entrepreneurial opportunities. The study concludes that the TRO-TOUR framework provides a practical, community-centred model for developing resilient and replicable rural tourism pathways in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Madampe tourism, TRO-TOUR, Sustainable tourism, Grounded theory, Community-based tourism*