

A Study on the Potentials for Development of Tourism Activity in Nuwara Eliya Municipal Council Area

A. V. D. K. Abegunasekara^a, P. C. Kaluthanthri^{b*}

^a*Department of Estate Management and Valuation, kaushalya970117@gmail.com*

^b*Department of Estate Management and Valuation, prathap@sjp.ac.lk*

Abstract

Sri Lanka is identified as a one of the top ten world tourist destination in 2021. Nuwara Eliya, a city located at the mean-sea level of 1889 meters of upcountry commonly popular as Little England is a main tourists' destinations which recorded overwhelming crowd in every year. Even though the city recorded overwhelming tourist arrival in every year, city is still depending on one or two flagship tourism events which organized by the local authority in every year. Non availability coordinated year-round event plan hinder the true tourism potential of the Nuwara Eliya and city is still not harvest its tourism potential at highest level. In this context, the purpose of this study to identify potential tourism activities that could further enhance the tourism industry of Nuwara Eliya. The population of the study includes tourist service providers based in Nuwara Eliya city limit. Respondents of the study select using convenience sampling method and met at their location. Data were collected via a semi structured interview. The method of analysis is qualitative in nature. The results of the analysis confirmed that street food culture, zip line adventure, and hiking are potential tourist activities for Nuwara Eliya which are in line with the Nuwara Eliya Urban Development Plan 2019-2030. Tourist service providers believes that coordinated implementation of these activities help to boost the tourism of the city of Nuwara Eliya.

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Keywords: Tourism; Tourism activities; Potential Tourism Activities; Tourist attraction.

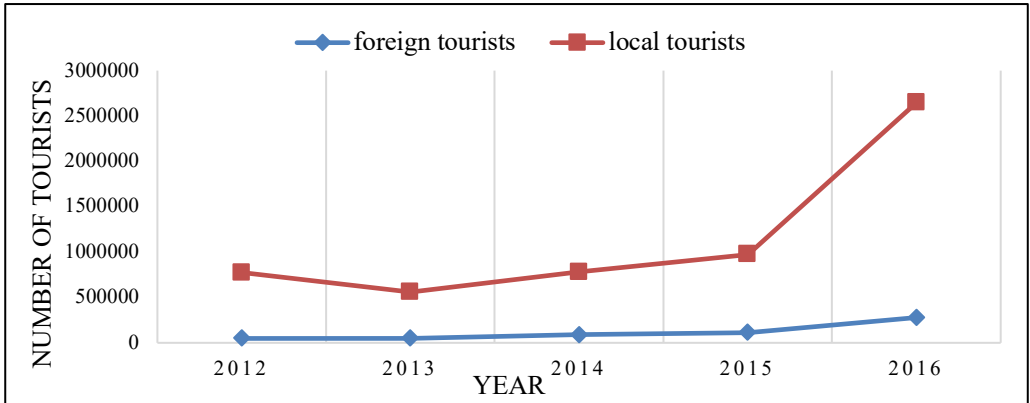
Introduction

According to the Lonely Planet (2021), Sri Lanka is identified as one of the top ten tourist destination of the world. Nuwara Eliya, a city located at the mean-sea level of 1889 meters of upcountry commonly popular as Little England is admired not only within foreign tourists but also local visitors as destination for travel. From 1830 Nuwara Eliya was a hill station used by the British residents of what was then Ceylon. Because of the elevation, the vegetation is of the temperate sort, and European fruit and vegetables are grown. Although part of a major tea-growing region, the town is also a market centre for rubber, vegetables, rice, and fish. The salubrious climate has led to its development as a hill resort and health spa as well. It is the site of a meteorological observatory. The unique natural environment, climatic condition and the horticultural activities of flowers and vegetables and tea cultivation as in commercial nature creates potential tourism for Nuwara Eliya. Further, unique locations namely Gregory Lake, Horton Plains, Victoria Park, Haggala Botanical Garden etc... creates competitive advantage to Nuwara Eliya over other destination in Sri Lanka. Other than unique natural setting of the city of Nuwara Eliya, the city enclosed with number of archaeological buildings namely, Holy Trinity Church, The Hill Club and Post Office, which were constructed within the colonial time. These buildings give British architectural format to the city.

*Corresponding author: prathap@sjp.ac.lk

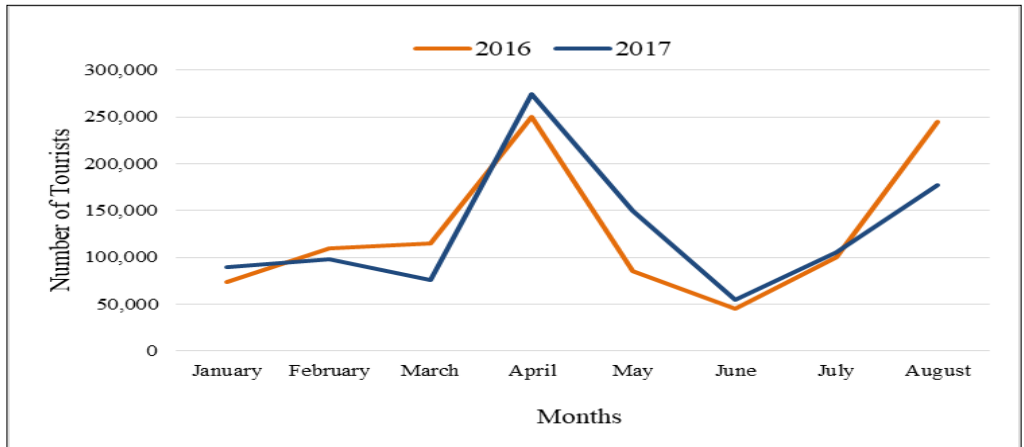
Nuwara Eliya Municipal council as the local governing body organize number of events to attract visitors to the city throughout the year and the event called Wasantha Sanakeliya is the flagship event of the city which held during the month of April of every year. As per the statistics of the Urban Development Authority (2019) around 250,000 - 300,000 tourist arrivals recorded during the month of every April. The higher level of arrival is mainly due to the event of Wasantha Sanakeliya. However, during the other months, the city attracted by the lower tourist arrivals which is all about 100,000 per month. Refer figure No 01 and 02 for more details.

Figure 01: Tourism Arrival in Nuwara Eliya



Source: Urban Development Authority (2019)

Figure 02: Tourist Arrival in Month wise in 2016-2017.



Source: Urban Development Authority (2019)

Thus, lack of coordinated events all over the year hinder the true potential of the city. This confirmed that city is not harvest its highest potential and just focuses on the months of April and August. In this context, the study argued that Nuwara Eliya city council should be attentive on potential activities during the other months of the year to increase the total visitor arrival to generate maximum revenue to the city. In this context, the aim of the study is to identify potential tourism activities in Nuwara Eliya area for tourism development. The realization of this objective may succour for the tourism development of the city and boost the local economy.

Literature Review

According to the SLTDA, traveller is a person who take a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year for any purpose like business, leisure, or other personal purpose (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2019). According to Kara (2012) tourists are attracted to a destination when it provides the unique destination characteristics and exposure to them. Tourism is a border discipline which consist with three components which includes tourists, service providers and places (Slehat, 2019). As it noted, Nuwara Eliya naturally encompassed with unique places and services provides and tourist, which should coordinate at a central point to harvest its true potential.

New event organization will helpful to increase the tourism within the respective area and it increase the destination image also (Miralbell-izard & Gonza, 2009). Planned events are spatial–temporal phenomenon, and each is unique because of interactions among the setting, people, and management systems including design elements and the program. Much of the appeal of events is that they are never the same, and person have to ‘be there’ to enjoy the unique experience fully; if miss it, it’s a lost opportunity. Planned events are all created for a purpose, and what was once the realm of individual and community initiatives has largely become the realm of professionals and entrepreneurs. These planned events may be cultural celebrations, political state, arts and entertainments, business and trade, educational and scientific, sport competition and private functions (Getz, 2005).

The term ‘event(s) tourism’ was not widely used, if at all, prior to 1987 when The New Zealand Tourist and Publicity Department (1987) reported: “Event tourism is an important and rapidly growing segment of international tourism”. An article by Getz in 1989 in *Tourism Management* (‘Special Events: Defining the Product’) developed a framework for planning ‘events tourism’. Prior to this it was normal to speak of special events, hallmark events, mega events and specific types of events. Now ‘event tourism’ is generally recognized as being inclusive of all planned events in an integrated approach to development and marketing.

As with all forms of special-interest travel, event tourism must be viewed from both demand and supply sides. A consumer perspective requires determining who travels for events and why, and also who attends events while traveling. However, in this study, it focused on suppliers side. On the supply side, destinations develop, facilitate and promote events of all kinds to meet multiple goals: to attract tourists (especially in the off-peak seasons), serve as a catalyst (for urban renewal, and for increasing the infrastructure and tourism capacity of the destination), to foster a positive destination image and contribute to general place marketing fostering a better place in which to live, work and invest), and to animate specific attractions or areas.

Suppliers of the tourism are the key stakeholders who designed the overall activity or event calendar for the city. As identified this should be in coordinated manner. Suppliers interested in developing their tourism potential should ideally become committed stakeholders in the community’s or destination’s tourism planning process. By working together as a lobby and marketing consortium, events can seek to influence the destination’s positioning and brand, funding and development work, research and evaluation programs, all to further the cause of specific events and the event sector.

Methods

The study applies qualitative research approach. The population of the study includes all tourist service providers based in Nuwara Eliya city limits. A semi structure questionnaire used interview at their location. The respondents includes business community hoteliers and related service providers, government organizations including Urban Development Authority, and local

authority. The study selected 18 respondents based on the convenient sampling techniques using semi-structured questionnaire which includes 2 town planners from Urban Development Authority, 01 engineer from the Municipal Council and 15 business owners. These business owners run hotel, boutiques and provides various services to visitors who arrives Nuwara Eliya throughout the year.

Results and Discussion

The interviews revealed that the only 20 percent of the hoteliers connected with the Wasantha Senakeliya directly and others have only indirect contribution or benefits from it. Even though 20 percent connected with Wasantha Senakeliya balance 80% are supposed to join with this activity in future. Further, hoteliers noted that that there should be a progammes for every weekend to attracts tourist to the city. This should be a year-round activity or progammes. This could include cultural celebrations -festivals or events such as carnivals, commemorations, religious events. As the residents of the city are in Tamil majority (total in 56 percent) vel festival which celebrate Lord Skanda's victory over the demons and also honour his sacred trident, Sinhala and Tamil new year, Thai Pongal which is celebrated to offer prayers to the Surya are identified as major events.

The next best option proposed by the respondents are sport festival which includes amateur/professional and specator/participant events as well as games for fun. This should includes horse raising at the Nuwara Eliya Racesourse , the only remaining horse racing venue in Sri Lanka. It is one of the highest racecourses in the world. Collaborative promotion should organize to promotes the meets at the racecourse include the Independence Cup in February, Governor's Cup, Queen's Cup and Sunquick Cup in April, Brown's Cup in August and the Prime Cup in December

Not only that, but water sport is also the next best option which conducted at a primary level in the Lake Gregory. This should include many activities such as canoeing, jet skiing, swan boat. One of the popular attraction is the ride on the house boat. In addition, aroundthe lake there is a cycle and walking pathway. Other activities for kids such as pony rides and bouncer should promoted.

Further to the existing events, the proposed projects are in the pipeline by the Urban Development Authority. This includes Cable Car Development Project, Tourism Root Development Project, Nature Corridor Development project at Nanu Oya Station. Further, high end projects like

- Luxury Boutique Hotel and Villas Project,
- Oaklay Cottage.
- Nuwara Eliya Horse Racing Course.
- Redevelopment of Former Cey Bank Rest Land at Nuwara Eliya
- Theme park project at Gregory lake Nuwara Eliya area

Proposed by the Urban Development Authority.

Other than that respondents recommend to encourage night life activities to the city. This includes street food area, food courts at Cargils Waththa as well as development of high-end shopping malls or square with a helipad. When analyse the possibility to conduct street food culture, zip line adventure in the area that there were possibility to conduct those activities, They suggest that the street food culture can established in Gregory lake surrounded area and the Zip line Adventure can be proposed in the area.

Next proposed development is integrated development at Hortan plains. Through this objective try to get known about the UN touched area that can developed as tourist attractive area and the possible activity that can conduct to attract tourist for the area rather than the Wasantha Sanakeliya. Respondents noted that integrated development with the Piduruthalagala Mountain range can use as tourist attractive opportunity place. Further to this Ragala, Single tree temple, The lover's leaf water fall should be designed as tourist attractions.

The hotels that have interviewed suggest that the camping, hiking has the opportunity to develop. For hiking leopard rock has recommended by them. But they comments that there need to be proper guide license system for the hiking for qualified persons. Further to that Sandathanne has the opportunity for 360° view, which should upgrade as the areas to attract tourist.

Finally, these data ensures that the existing tourism activity is not sufficient and there were huge opportunity places located within the area and with developing the existing facilities in future many number of tourists can be attracted for this area.

Conclusion

Nuwar Eliya is mostly known tourist attractive area in Sri Lanka but rather than the seasonal activity there is not much tourist attractive activities evident. The study identified and recommend potential activities that can be implemented within the area which support to ensure year round event calnder which ensure the highest level of tourism to the city. It has been recognized that environmental, social and cultural dimensions of event impacts have been neglected. From a cultural perspective, there are lot of opportunity for Nuwar Eliya and recommended 'festivalization' to describe how Nuwar Eliya exploit as cultural and sport destination.

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