

## **An Assessment of Socio-cultural Positive Impacts of Religious Tourism in Sri Lanka**

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### **Introduction**

Tourism industry is an economical phenomenon in both developed and developing countries in the globe. Majorly, developing countries can be identified many positive advantages through tourism sector to overcome some issues such as less regional development, unemployment, problems in balance of payment and poverty. Religious tourism, Adventure tourism, Spiritual tourism, Nature tourism, Beach tourism, Sport tourism and Dark tourism etc. can be identified as the sub-segments in the tourism sector. Religious tourism can be defines as "traveling of an individual or a group of individuals of a specific religion or faith to a destination that holds religious impact." Therefore, Sri Lanka being a developing country in the third world can be easily entered to religious tourism as the whole country is well-spread out various types of religions like Buddhism, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim etc. Further, different kinds of rituals, norms, values, cultures (foods, costumes), languages, and religious sites have a possibility to add value to Religious tourism as a sub-concept in the industry of tourism.

### **Objectives**

The study is mainly attempt to identify the socio- cultural positive impacts of Religious tourism in Sri Lanka.

Further, developing a development plan to attract more tourists with the purpose of religious tourism can be taken as the secondary objective of the research.

### **Methodology**

Basically, qualitative data have been used based on internet, books, newspapers, journals, research papers and annual report of tourism 2017. Descriptive method is used to analysis the target objectives of the study.

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## Problem Statement

Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural country which is encompassing in various types religions based on different foods, costumes, believes, and rituals etc. Nevertheless, considerable arrivals of tourists are not recorded with the purpose of religious tourism to the destination of Sri Lanka comparing with other sub-tourism concepts according to the annual report 2017

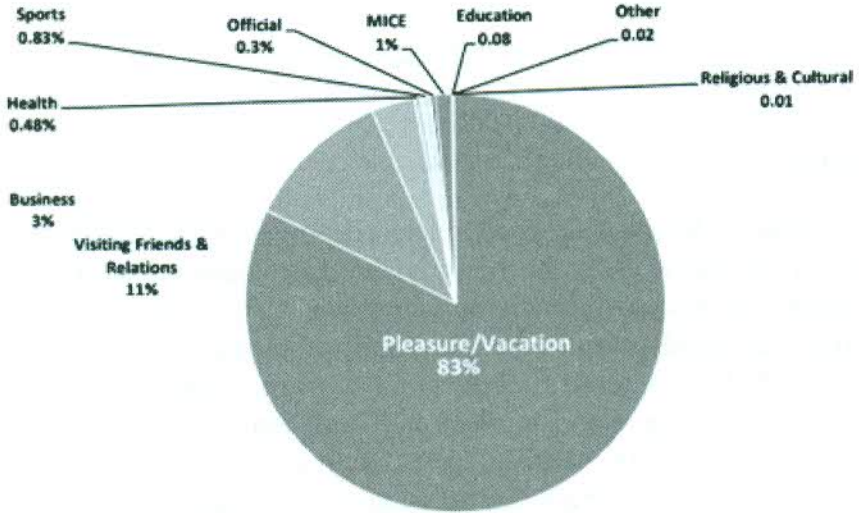


Chart 01- Distribution by purpose of visit  
Source- Annual statistical report 2017

## Findings

Religious tourism generates lots of socio-cultural benefits for developed and developing countries in the world. Generally, a large amount of religious sites and attractions are located in rural areas major in developing countries. The locations such as Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Dambulla and Thanthirimale in Sri Lanka can be identified as the major religious attractions which can be taken as the examples for the locations in rural religious attractions. There, a massive amount advantages could be well-spread out all over the country and it is caused to enhance the life statues of the community in the particular area by selling food and beverage, handy crafts etc. Further, lots of job opportunities are created in particular areas and it may cause to develop the life styles of the people. Also, through the arrivals of domestic and international tourists, the income through vehicle parks, entrance tickets, donations and funds could receive to these religious sites with the purpose of its development and maintenance. Further, it is automatically developed the infrastructure facilities in and outside of the particular attractions. On the other hand, moving and interacting with international tourists by locals via guiding, selling food items and handy crafts would lead to get the knowledge of many foreign languages, different attitudes, and good habits from different cultures in



various countries.

Also, empowering the local industries can be identified as the other major socio-cultural positive impact of religious tourism. The industries in Sri Lanka, such as brassware, lace, masks, agriculture, fisheries, and gems can be given examples for the above mentioned factor and it is affected to uplift the development of these industries through the motivations of the religious tourism as the handicrafts is one of the most considerable factors in religious tourism. And also, religious tourism would lead to create community based tourism itself.

### **Recommendations**

Sri Lanka, being a multi-national country could have high potentials to promote as a religious tourism destination in the world. For that, launching proper promotional campaigns is a vital factor to enhance the awareness and the identity on the country basically giving priorities for meditation, yoga, spiritual treatments, Ayurveda which is based on Buddhism and religious sites. Also, from the side of government, it is a compulsory factor to attract many international religious conferences to the country as the identity of the country would be easily announced to all over the world by country ambassadors.

According to the above mentioned factors, lots of religious and cultural attractions are located in rural areas which are home for rural community. There, some conflicts and issues can be arisen in between international tourists and the community. Therefore, the importance of tourism sector needs to be well emphasized through conducting workshops and awareness programs to reduce the issues would be arisen. Finally, souvenir shops in religious sites need to be developed as it is a major icon of the religious tourism in the global scenario.

**Keywords:** Religious Tourism, Socio-Cultural, Multi-National, Country, Global Senario

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