

Tea Tourism: Exploring the highlands of Sri Lanka

Malsa Maaz

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

This paper explores the impacts of tea tourism in Sri Lanka. Tea tourism has been growing increasingly popular as a result of global food tourism. Foods travel just like people, simultaneously transforming the cultures they travel through. After the British Empire established the tea plantations in Sri Lanka, it became one of the leading tea producing countries in the world - with its prominent Ceylon tea brand image - and remains as the main source of income for the country. The tea industry in Sri Lanka currently generates approximately USD 1.5 billion in revenue which provides the livelihood for millions around the country.

Tea tourism in Sri Lanka is still in its experimental stages. Some tea plantations have started providing services such as tours of the tea estates and factories, experiencing tea leaf plucking with a local worker and even staying overnight at old tea factories. In order to explore its impacts at an initial stage will help develop efficient ways to carry out tea tourism in Sri Lanka. This will include exploring how tea tourism would shape the culture and economy of Sri Lanka. Moreover, it would explore the impacts on the tea plantation workers, and how tea tourism would affect their communities, as these communities usually live together in close-knit communities.

This paper will also aim to develop and recommend sustainable methods of production. This would ensure that the tea plantations are regulated which facilitates the tea plantation workers to work in an exploitation free environment. Moreover, the importance of health and safety regulations will also be discussed as heavy machinery and hazardous chemicals can sometimes be used in tea plantations. Furthermore, the environmental impacts of tea tourism will also be examined in order to come up with sustainable solutions. Although tourism may have its advantages and disadvantages, it is important to examine both, to make it a pleasant experience for both the workers in the host countries, as well as the tourists.