

Historical evolution of ecotourism policy and regulations in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sri Lanka has around 80 years of history in tourism policy, and since 1980s Sri Lanka is practicing ecotourism as a panacea for healing many of socio-cultural, economic, and environmental ills of the country. However, the government of Sri Lanka has not placed sufficient attention to monitor ecotourism practice and destination of the country until the 21st century. Therefore that period can be considered as the 'ecotourism neglected era' within last one-half decades government placed attention to formulating the national ecotourism policy and regulations for monitoring ecotourism practices of the country. Therefore this period can be classified as 'the ecotourism policy era' of the country. Some of the socio-economic, cultural and environmental problems created by the tourism activities which marketed with the label of ecotourism during the ecotourism neglected era could be able to be solved during the ecotourism policy era. But, still, there are many ecotourism destinations where marketing/practicing irresponsible ecotourism activities that badly affect upon fragile natural and socio-cultural heritages of the country. Therefore, the article proposes to formulate micro scale (place/destination oriented) ecotourism policies and the national ecotourism policy simultaneously.

Keywords: ecotourism, ecotourism policy, sustainable rural development

Introduction

Sri Lanka is an island country with a rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and a significant number of wildlife reserves. Hence, after 18 years of her independence, Sri Lanka has identified the importance of tourism sector in developing the country. Since 1980, Sri Lanka is been practicing ecotourism as a panacea for healing socio-cultural, economic and environmental ills, preservation/conservation of nature and sustainable tourism (Sri Lanka Tourism Board [SLTB], 1995)^[14]. However, until 2000 the government has placed less attention upon ecotourism in the country. 'For the past years, a majority of Sri Lanka's tourism development plans have been targeted primarily at luxury tourism and beach holiday attractions' (Steele, Sivakumar, & Herath, 1998, p. 60)^[16]. In addition to that, the national legislative framework on environment conservation and management, especially the National Environment Act (No. 47, 1980) is not comprehensive enough to provide legal regulations for forest-based ecotourism. It provides legal regulations for only mass tourism activities and small-scale tourism activities, but ecotourism is ignored. Since forest-based ecotourism takes place in fragile natural environments and socio-cultural set-ups, a legal framework should be in place to assure sustainability.

However, the declaration of the year 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) by the United Nations is the testimony of the growing importance of National Ecotourism Policy of the country (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2002)^[18]. Since then Sri Lanka has placed attention to set up policy and regulation for planning, regulating and managing ecotourism activities. The paper explains the historical backdrop of policy, regulations, and

plans of ecotourism in Sri Lanka.

Materials and methods

One of the main problems of ecotourism researchers in Sri Lanka is the lack of information on ecotourism policy of the country. There for the main objective of the study is to provide an idea of the historical evolution of ecotourism policy of Sri Lanka. To achieve the objective of the study, the study mainly depends on published and unpublished documents. The information on ecotourism policy was organized and presented according to the chronological order in which the policy or regulation was commenced.

Results and discussion

Historical path of ecotourism policy formulation of Sri Lanka can be divided into two parts; 'the ecotourism neglected era' and 'the ecotourism policy era'. The period before the 21st century in which Sri Lanka has commenced many regulations and policies without paying sufficient attention to ecotourism is identified as 'the ecotourism neglected era' in the study and the rest of the period is identified as 'the ecotourism policy era' because the government has considered ecotourism when formulating tourism policy since 2000.

Ecotourism neglected era

History of tourism policy in Sri Lanka goes back to the colonial period of the country. Under the colonial administration, first Tourism Bureau was established in 1937, but it was ceased its operations due to the world war in 1940. Then in 1948, the year in which Sri Lanka has received the independence from the British Empire, Sri Lanka government has revitalized the Tourism Bureau again. Since then, with the

hopes of developing tourism sector of the country in a planned and systematic manner, Sri Lanka government has done several policy implications (Table 1). In 1966, Sri Lanka government commenced two acts, called ‘the Ceylon Tourist Board Act-No. 10 of 1966’ and ‘Ceylon Hotels Corporation Act of 1966’ for establishing the institutional framework for the tourism sector. In addition to that at the same year, Sri

Lanka government has introduced the First Then Year Master Plan for tourism. Then, the Tourist Development Act – No 14 of 1968 - provided the Ceylon Tourist Board with the statutory authority to develop tourism on a planned and controlled basis. After that Sri Lanka has commenced many other acts for planning and monitoring the tourism related activities in Sri Lanka (Table 1).

Table 1: Sri Lanka government policy implication in Tourism and Ecotourism Sectors

Year	Policy implication
1937	Establishing First Tourism Bureau
1948	Revitalization of the Tourism Bureau
1966	Ceylon Tourist Board Act-No. 10 of 1966; Ceylon Hotels Corporation Act of 1966; 1 st Ten Year Master Plan for tourism
1968	Tourist Development Act – No 14 of 1968
1981	Tourism Act No 57 of 1981
1987	Tourist Development (Amendment) Act-No 2 of 1987
1991	Tourist Development (Amendment) Act- No 39 of 1991
1992	2 nd Ten Year Tourism Master Plan
2000	Declare the 2000 as the Year of Ecotourism by the Ministry of Tourism
2001	Tourist Development (Amendment) Act-No 38 of 2001
2003	National Ecotourism Policy; Ecotourism Development Strategy of Sri Lanka; Tourist Development (Amendment) Act-No 25 of 2003
2004	Tourism Development Levy Act (No 11 of 2004)
2005	Tourism Act -No 38 of 2005
2008	3 rd Tourism Master Plan
2011	Five Year Master Plan 2011-2016; Visit 2011 ^[7, 8] Campaign/ Visit Sri Lanka 2011 ^[7, 8] program

Sources: UNDP, 1993 ^[17]; Lai, 2002 ^[9]; SLTB, 2003^[15]; MOT, 2003 ^[11]; MOED, 2011 ^[10]; Fernando, Bandara, & Smith, 2013 ^[3] and 2017 ^[4]; Blackhall-publication, 2014 ^[2].

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), a research agency, has presented a comprehensive plan for promotion and management of nature tourism in Sri Lanka (Steele, Sivakumar, & Herath, 1998) ^[16]. Although the study has been discussed about the nature tourism, it emphasizes the importance of environmental, economic, socio-cultural and education responsibility. As emphasized by the strategy, “nature based tourism can be defined narrowly or more broadly depending on the purpose of travel” (Steele, *et al.* 1998, p. ii) ^[16]. Hence, it can be concluded that the strategy is discussing the various ecotourism practices of Sri Lanka under

the umbrella of nature tourism.

The strategy has identified several destinations (Table 2) that practicing nature based tourism activities in Sri Lanka. Further, the study has emphasized the negative and positive impacts of nature based ecotourism on environment, economy, and society.

Based on the findings Steele, *et al.* (1998) ^[16] have recommended several activities to carry out for ensuring environmental conservation and community development of Sri Lanka. Those recommendations can be summarized as follows.

Table 2: Nature based tourism destinations of Sri Lanka ^[1]

Category	Examples	Ownership
Rainforest tracking	Knuckles, Sinharaja, Peak Wilderness (Randenigala), Ritigala, Horton Plains	Mostly by the Forest Department (except Horton Plains)
Wildlife viewing	Yala, Uda Walawe, Wasgamuwa, Mineriya tank, Sigiriya	Mostly by the Department of Wild Life Conservation (DWLC)
Bird watching	Bundala, Kalamitiya, Muturajawela, Debara Wewa, Bentota	DWLC and open access
Marine snorkeling and diving	Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna, Tangalle, Bentota, Kirinda (Great Basses)	Open access
Sport fishing	Negombo, Bentota,	Open access
Captive wildlife	Elephant sanctuaries (Pinnawala), Turtle hatcheries (Kosgoda)	State (Pinnawala), private (Kosgoda)
Botanical gardens	Peradeniya, Haggala,	Department of Agriculture
Others	Blow Hale at Kadewella, Boat trip at Madul Oya	Open access
River rafting	Kelani	Open access
Mountain biking	Throughout the island	Open access
Water sports	Negombo, Bentota	Open access

Source: Adopted from Steele, *et al.* 1998 ^[16], p. 4

Increases marketing and promotions of nature (related) tourism to assists the tourist industry: to achieve the objective, the Steele, *et al.* (1998) ^[16] have recommended

- to work collaboratively with governmental, non-governmental, community based, institutes and privet sector

- to use natural beauty of Sri Lanka as a key marketing strategy and promoting nature related tourism activities such as bird watching;
- to develop skills and build up capacity of responsible governmental institutions;
- to develop alternative sites and to support to existing sites;

To increase the environmental benefits, the strategy proposes several activities to do, such as

- establishing visitor centers and educational parks in each parks;
- training staff at parks (tourism destinations) to provide environmental information;
- developing an outreach programmes with schools near protected areas,
- developing facilities such as accommodation, sanitary, road-transportation, etc. at destinations;
- conducting campaigns to clean up the tourist pollution at nature sites;
- enforcing a ban on illegal poached animals being served in tourist establishments;
- Reducing congestion and limiting the number of vehicles enter to parks;
- Drawing up a clear strategy for allocating funds, in which collected from entrance fees, etc. by tourism destinations, for better conservation management.

To increase the economic and employment benefits of nature (related) tourism, the strategy recommended to carry out several activities, such as

- Improving the economic return from the bungalows managed by department of wild Life Conservation and the Forest Department through establishing a specific agency for managing tourism bungalows, establishing new bungalows while closing those that have not constructed environmental friendly,
- Reducing the undercutting of each other's profits by regulating entrance fees, establishing minimum prices, etc.
- promoting value added activities,
- promoting labor intensive accommodations in rural areas, upgrading the quality of jeeps,
- encouraging private tourism operators to provide job opportunity to local people for reducing environmental pressure;
- Developing a guide certificate programme for local people.

Ecotourism policy era

To lift the profile of ecotourism, the Ministry of Tourism declared the year 2000 as the "Year of Ecotourism" (Lai, 2002, p. 212) ^[9]. After holding the 13th Pacific Asia Travel Association Ecotourism Conference and Travel Mart in Colombo in February 2001, Sri Lanka received a tremendous ecotourism attraction from the world (Lai, 2002, p. 212) ^[9]. Further, the declaration of the year 2002 as the IYE by the United Nations is the testimony of the growing importance of National Ecotourism Policy (NEP) of Sri Lanka (UNWTO, 2002) ^[18]. The main objective of the declaration of IYE was to

identify the conditions of ecotourism of member countries based on the following themes.

- National policy
- Activities and publications,
- Stakeholders' participation and support
- Awareness raising
- Regulation
- Cooperation

When it was conducted the IYE, Sri Lanka had not a NEP. Thus, as a member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) since 1975, Sri Lanka also had to follow the rules of the UNWTO.

Furthermore, several studies, such as Steele, *et al.*, (1998) ^[16], Transforming Tourism (2002, cited in: Sri Lanka Tourism Board [SLTB], 2003) ^[15] have identified several issues related to ecotourism in Sri Lanka, such as;

- Lack of environmental responsibility by tourism industry, local councils, and residents;
- Tourist industry undercutting;
- Lack of assistance and helpful attitude from agencies;
- Poor to no infrastructure at natural tourism and ecotourism sites
- Political interference, vested interests, bureaucratic delay, and weak policy
- Lack of controls on private land
- Lack of effective human resource training
- State control of key (ecotourism) properties and locations;
- Lack of environmental conservation policies needed for all tourism venues
- Airport improvement needed
- Limited public amenities
- Lack of information materials
- Lack of community participation (need of community based tourism)
- Poor quality of accommodation (need to upgrade)
- Need of infrastructure maintenance at key tourist attractions
- Need of public private partnership development

The Ministry of Environment (2003, cited in SLTB, 2003) ^[15] has also identified constraints specific to ecotourism in Sri Lanka. According to that, poorly developed/inadequate infrastructure facilities, lack of information and publicity, lack of training and awareness, lack of coordination among stakeholders are the main constraints of ecotourism in Sri Lanka.

SLTB developed the Ecotourism Development Strategy of Sri Lanka, at the same year (SLTB, 2003) ^[15]. Hence, the government has identified the importance of solving those problems for developing the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

By addressing aforementioned issues, SLTB developed the Ecotourism Development Strategy of Sri Lanka (SLTB, 2003) ^[15]. According to the project, it has placed attention to prepare following documents/legal frameworks (SLTB, 2003) ^[15]

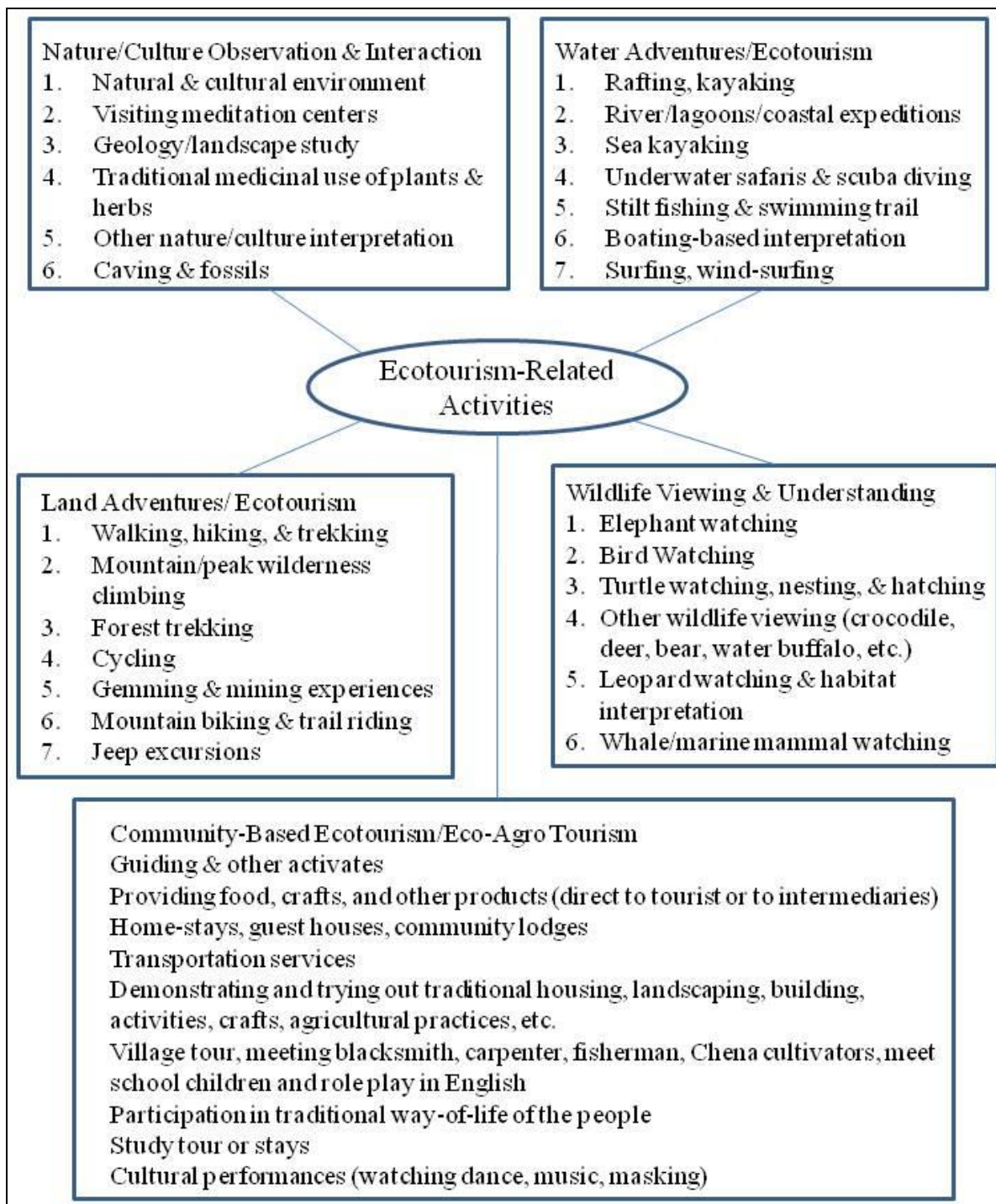
1. National ecotourism policy
2. National ecotourism regulations
3. National ecotourism site development guidelines
4. An inventory for ecotourism sites in the Southern Region
5. A strategy for ecotourism for Sri Lanka, focusing on the Southern Region
6. A series of ecotourism development and action plan for

selected priority sites, including community development and environmental protection

7. A marketing strategy and action plan

As a consequence of the aforementioned researches and initiatives of Ecotourism Development Project of Sri Lanka, the National Ecotourism Policy was drafted in 2003 by summarizing the principles, objectives, and actions. The main objective of the policy is to facilitate the development of a

sustainable tourism industry that contributes to resource conservation while optimizing economic benefits for current and future generations of Sri Lanka (Ministry of Tourism [MOT], 2003) ^[11]. It defines ecotourism as “travel to natural and cultural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local communities”. The SLTB (2003) ^[15] clearly describes the interrelationship of different activities with ecotourism, as indicates in Figure 1.



Source: SLTB, 2003 ^[15], p. 6.

Fig 1: Ecotourism-Related Activities in Sri Lanka

The main objectives of the NEP of Sri Lanka are,

- To promote and facilitate the development of ecotourism sites, activities, and facilities in a manner that is consistent with the principles of ecotourism;
- To educate all stakeholders that are required to develop a successful industry in Sri Lanka;
- To expand the range of ecotourism products, services, and facilities available in Sri Lanka;
- To increase the number of Sri Lankans involved in ecotourism and facilitate the development of community-owned and managed ecotourism enterprises;
- To contribute to and influence a more sustainable form of tourism in Sri Lanka, through a diverse range of measures: incentives, education, guidelines, regulations; and marketing;
- To contribute to conservation of natural ecosystems.

Further, as indicates in the policy, following 8 principles have to be adhering by ecotourism market holders in their planning, development and management activities.

- Minimize and alleviate negative environmental, social and cultural impacts;
- Optimize revenues for industry and for re-investment in conservation;
- Optimize the active involvement of, and equitable distribution of economic benefits to local communities;
- Educate visitors and citizens about the importance of conserving Sri Lanka's natural and cultural heritage;
- Promote ethical behaviors and responsibilities towards the natural and cultural environment;
- Manage operations such that there are long term benefits to resource, industry and the local community;
- Deliver a high quality, value-for-money enlightening and participatory natural resource and culture based experience for visitors;
- Encourage travel in a spirit of humanity, respect, and learning about local hosts, their culture, and the natural environment.

Through the policy, Sri Lankan government hoped to perform following activities to achieve the objectives of the policy.

1. Through planning and regulation activities Sri Lanka government expected to carry out following activities;

- Developing or modifying integrated tourism area plan/ land use/ action plans to ensure sustainable, coordinated and complementary development in areas appropriate for ecotourism;
- Not to siting civil works and constructions associated with, or in the vicinity of, conservation areas and/ or ecotourism facilities in pristine area but to locating those are in disturbed areas so as to serve as a buffer against further pressure on pristine habitats;
- Grading, regulating, licensing and certifying ecotourism facilities and operations under the authority of Sri Lanka Tourism Board (SLTB), with the involvement of other agencies, particularly those responsible for protected area management;
- Considering the Environmental Management Plan as a pre request (condition) for giving the approval for establishing new ecotourism facilities;

- In collaboration with key stakeholders, developing Ecotourism Best Practice Guidelines (EBPG) for all aspects of ecotourism planning and management in Sri Lanka;
- Updating existing procedures for grading, licensing, and certifying tourism facilities and activities to take account of EBPGs;
- Providing incentives (locational, access, technical, financial, tax, etc.) for those upgrading or developing ecotourism facilities, targeted at and linked to operations that are managed in accordance with EBPGs;
- Encouraging private landowners to initiate ecotourism projects within their lands in accordance with the National Ecotourism Guidelines, with appropriate incentives.

2. For developing, managing and operating ecotourism facilities and activities, Sri Lanka government expected to carry out following activities;

- Reviewing, streamlining, and coordinating the role of national and local authorities in regulating and monitoring environmental management practices under the overall authority of the Central Environmental Authority (CEA) to ensure the establishment and enforcement of universal standards;
- Enforcing ecotourism and related facilitators to dispose waste (sewage and garbage) in an environmentally safe manner, to treat effluents for avoiding pollution of ground and surface waterways; (In order that) collaborating national, regional and local governments for developing suitable waste management infrastructures;
- Serving ecotourism facilities as a model of environmental best practices to the wider tourism industry, wherever feasible using sustainable materials and techniques, and implementing best practices in water conservation, waste management, sewage management, renewable energy, minimal emissions, and sensitive operations;
- Designing and operating ecotourism facilities so as to prevent noise pollution, visual pollution, and light pollution;
- Revising, expanding, and integrating the Tourism Board's training with placing greater emphasis on interpretation and conservation, and with giving the opportunity of graded career progression to guides;
- Formulating the tourism industry as one that catering to both local and foreign tourists, of all socio-economic strata, providing relevant facilities and services, bearing in mind the needs of the physically handicapped and the elderly;

3. For managing ecotourism in natural and cultural heritage sites, Sri Lanka government expected to carry out following activities.

- Managing ecotourism activities in conservation and heritage areas on the principle of 'user pays'; those 'using' or profiting from Sri Lanka's protected areas (visitors, travel agents, tour operators, agencies, etc.) must contribute sufficient funds to conserve the cost of measures needed to manage and alleviate the impacts of their activities. (To this end, a percentage of visitor

entrance fees to protected and other visited areas will be 'earmarked' to contribute specifically to the cost of protected areas management and enhancement);

- Undertaking an assessment of potential nature and culture based tourism attractions by the tourism Board in collaboration with relevant governmental agencies and the private sector;
 - Developing management plans for all protected areas and key sites of heritage/ cultural importance with specific strategies for managing and mitigating negative impacts from ecotourism and related forms of tourism;
 - Giving permission to the disturbance of pristine natural areas in order to facilitate ecotourism or other forms of tourism (e.g. the creation of paths, walkways, sign-boards, etc) only if the disturbances are minimal, reversible, consistent with relevant zoning plans and in conformity with the minimum requirements necessary for visitor safety, education, and awareness;
 - Encouraging ecotourism operators, protected area managers, local communities and the research community to work together to (1) develop local research skills, (2) accumulate data on the biodiversity of the areas in which they operate, (3) identify impacts associated with specific activities, and (4) develop effective strategies to manage, monitor and alleviate said impacts. (Relevant data will be made freely available to all stakeholders, and actively disseminated by relevant governmental agencies and industry associations.
4. For achieving community/local economic development through ecotourism, Sri Lanka government expected to carry out following activities.
- Facilitating the development of economically-viable and environmentally-sustainable community- managed ecotourism enterprises, which tap into traditional local knowledge;
 - In order to enhance capacity of local areas, developing ecotourism business development and vocational training courses and made available through outreach training programmes in plantation and other educational establishments (e.g. Thondaman's Vocational Training Center, National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority, The National Business Development Institutes)
 - Enforcing ecotourism operators to ensure that their activities are respectful of the social and cultural concerns of the country and of the communities with which they interact;
 - Enforcing ecotourism operators to use appropriately trained and certified local residents as guides/ interpreters trackers where they exist, and to work in partnership with local communities to identify opportunities for income, generation through provision of complementary goods and services;
 - Facilitating to the Ministry of Tourism/ Sri Lanka Tourism Marketing Bureau (in collaboration with other agencies) for establishing a market research and dissemination program for providing timely and effective analysis to ensure appropriate product/market match;

5. To achieve the conservation, education and awareness

objectives of ecotourism, Sri Lanka government expected to do following activities.

- Expanding the Environmental Pioneer Scheme to cover all school, in association with the CEA and other relevant institutions;
- Conducting ecotourism training workshops for local, regional and national planners and operators to raise awareness of the requirement of successful ecotourism development, and of the effects of other industries on tourism and the natural/ cultural areas upon which the industry depends;
- Enforcing the SLTB to collaborate with appropriate partners and periodically provide information and messages to be disseminated at locations such as protected areas, tourism facilities, and other outlets;
- Encouraging all stakeholders (government, private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and community based organizations) to engaging in conservation awareness-raising activities through (1) the news media, (2) the generation of books, posters and television documentaries aimed at increasing local and international awareness of biodiversity conservation in Sri Lanka, (3) the development of conservation awareness/ interpretation centers at key visitor destinations, protected areas, and heritage sites.

6. For implementing the NEP, Sri Lanka expected to carry out following activities.

- Developing mutually complementary ecotourism development strategies and plan for the regions in a manner that is consistent with the NEP;
- Appointing and empowering a senior official at the SLTB with responsibility for implementing ecotourism policy, to coordinate the related activities of all government agencies, the private sector and relevant NGOs;
- Establishing an inter-agency coordination unit for coordinating all projects and plans with ecotourism components, chaired by the SLTB ecotourism coordinator;
- Providing responsibility to the coordination unit for ensuring that the land use planning and activities in tourism and ecotourism areas are coordinated and complementary, and that appropriate conservation and responsible development is planned, and will authorize local representatives to assist in planning and coordination;
- Providing authority to the coordination unit to create a national ecotourism fund to be used for priority community-related conservation and ecotourism activities;
- With the facilitation of the ministry of tourism, creating a Small Scale Ecotourism Operations' Network through technical assistance, marketing, and other support.

Since 2003, Sri Lanka places attention to develop tourism sector through a new strategy called the Tourism Cluster Establishment. Sri Lanka government has identified that it is essential to engage in pilot best practice ecotourism projects and to establish standards for eco-lodges for establishing Tourism Cluster in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, with hopes of developing tourism sector as a sustainable manner, Sri Lanka

government has commenced the Tourist Development (Amendment) Act (No 25 of 2003), Tourism Development Levy Act (No 11 of 2004), and the new Tourism Act (No 38 of 2005). The Tourism Act of 2005 was commenced by replacing the Sri Lanka Tourist Board Act No 10 of 1966, which was in effect for the past 41 years, and it was commenced with the following objectives (Blackhall-publication, 2014))^[2].

- to develop Sri Lanka as a tourist and travel destination both in Sri Lanka and abroad;
- to advise the Minister in charge of the subject of Tourism on matters relating to travel and the tourism industry, within the policy formulated by the Cabinet of Ministers, in relation to this sector;
- to provide guidance to the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau to develop, promote and market Sri Lanka as a tourist and travel destination both in Sri Lanka and abroad;
- to provide guidance to the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management to undertake human resource training and development activities;
- to work towards the enhancement of the tourism and travel sectors in order to secure a contribution for the expansion and development of Sri Lanka's economy;
- to develop and promote adequate, attractive and efficient tourist services, inclusive of the hospitality industry in a sustainable manner;
- to license and accredit tourist enterprises in order to develop, enforce and maintain locally and internationally accepted standards in relation to the tourism industry and other related industries;
- to encourage persons or bodies of persons in the private sector to participate in the promotion of the tourism industry and the promotional and training activities connected with such industry;
- to do all such other acts as may be necessary or conducive to the attainment of all or any of the above objectives.

Under the Tourism Act of 2005, for achieving above objectives Sri Lanka government set up four new Tourism Boards; The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, The Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management, The Sri Lanka Convention Bureau. In addition to that the act included several other features related to tourism, such as establishing Tourism Development Fund, Tourism Advisory Committee, and Commissioner for Tourism Administration, and Tourist Police Division.

In 2011, Sri Lanka government set up a Five Year Master Plan for developing tourism industry as well as economy of the country (Ministry of Economic Development [MOED], 2011)^[10]. There are five main strategies in the plan;

1. Creating an environment conducive for tourism

- Creating policy framework to support investors and the industry
- Revising and modifying the existing regulations /guidelines while introducing new regulations/guidelines related to tourism products (there are 22 tourism products have been mentioned in the plan, such as adventure sports centers, apartment hotels, camping sites, cruise

liners/luxury vessels, eco lodges, elephant safari, guest houses, heritage hotels, house boats, home stay units, boutique hotels & villas, *Ayurvedic* hotels/centers, professional event organizer, restaurants, safari tours by vehicles, spa and wellness centers, spice gardens, tourist bungalows, tourist hotels, tourist shops, travel agencies, whale and dolphin watching. Although ecotourism has not been considered as a tourism product in the plan some of products mentioned in the plan is selling as ecotourism products of Sri Lanka).

- introducing a conducive taxation strategy for tourism
- developing a set of national tourism guidelines to improve the performance standards of the industry
- Developing tourism related infrastructure to meet the industry requirements
- Upgrading existing transportation system and introducing alternative ways. Under the strategy Sri Lanka government place attention to promote the use of sea planes and light aircrafts, to modify the current railway tracks and improve the carriages, to introduce tour bus service, to increase the air lines/aviation facilities and to introduce airport taxi service.
- filling the human resources gap

2. Attracting the right type of tourists to the country

- In the plan attention has paid for three primary areas 1) segmenting the market and identifying the right target customers, 2) marketing communication and promotion activities, 3) facilitating the visits. In addition to that the government has declared 2011 as the visit Sri Lanka year. In the Visit 2011^[7, 8] Campaign/“Visit Sri Lanka 2011^[7, 8]” program” (Hohler & Mai, 2011)^[7, 8], Sri Lanka government hoped to promote eight product categories under the theme ‘8 wonderful experiences in 8 wonderful days’. Those 8 tourism products were beaches, sports & adventure, heritage sites, mind and body wellness, scenic beauty of the country, wild life & nature, people & culture, year-round festivals.

3. Ensuring that departing tourists are happy.

- Based on previous researches, the government has understood the important of ensure the conformation of expectation and satisfaction of tourists. Hence, to ensure that departing tourists happily, the government hoped to performed following activities (MOED, 2011)^[10];
 - Reducing congestion at immigration counters by increasing staff and also by making certain process improvements such as workflow
 - Training for airport and immigration staff to provide a better customer experience
 - Improvements to the airport facilities and the surroundings
 - Training airport taxi drivers
 - Introducing rate cards for taxis operating from the airport and the port
 - Involvement of tourist police to minimize tourist harassment
 - Attempts to regularize the pricing structure
 - Improvements to the access roads and other comforts at

- key attractions
 - Developing the SLTDA website to be more informative and of practical use
 - Improving the cleanliness of beaches and other key tourist attractions
 - Effective use of media to create positive sentiments about tourism amongst the public
4. Improving domestic tourism
- To achieve the objective government hoped to invest into and manage the rest houses, to upgrade the standards of bungalows, to create greater awareness of lesser-known attractions using different media accessible to the domestic tourists
5. Contributing towards improving the global image of Sri Lanka

For improving the global image of Sri Lanka, the government placed attention to perform following activities;

- building a closer rapport with international media, identifying journalists who could create the most significant impact in the respective markets and arrange them to participate in our 'visiting journalists programs,
- establishing links with major tour operators in the respective countries and promoting the country and at the same time helping them build links with local tour operator companies
- promoting tourism related investments opportunities in Sri Lanka amongst potential investors

Conclusion

Based on the historical evolution of tourism policy of Sri Lanka, it can be concluded that Sri Lanka policy on tourism has been shifted toward sustainable tourism, especially ecotourism. The second half of the 20th century Sri Lanka places much attention on mass tourism development and management. But, at the end of the century many researchers and institutions identified that although there are economic benefits, mass tourism oriented policies have led to deteriorating the socio-cultural, environment values of the country. And International organization and conferences have also mentioned the importance of environmentally friendly ecotourism. Many researchers have identified the potentiality of the country to develop tourism sector based on pristine natural resources of the country. Thus Sri Lanka government has also placed much attention to shift the tourism policy towards nature based tourism. At the same time, Sri Lanka government has identified the negative effects of nature tourism. Hence, to mitigate those negative issues and manage nature related tourism practices, the government has commenced the NEP. All tourism acts and plans commenced after the NEP has been considered the regulations and recommendations of NEP for ensuring the socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of the country. However, after the decade, irresponsible tourism activities still exist at many ecotourism destinations. Therefore, responsible agencies of ecotourism should place attention for formulating micro scale policies (place/tourism destination oriented

policies) simultaneously macro scale national ecotourism policy.

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