



## Impact of COVID – 19 Epidemic on the Tourism Sector of Sri Lanka

Kanagasigam, V. and Rajeshwaran, N.\*

Eastern University, Sri Lanka

### Abstract

*The impact of coronavirus on the tourism sector is still skeptic. Therefore, the study focused to explore the impact of the COVID – 19 epidemic on the Tourism sector of Sri Lanka and identifying the appropriate strategies to rebuild the tourism sector by overcoming the pandemic. A qualitative approach was employed in this study by conducting 11 semi-structured interviews. The snowball sampling technique was employed to identify various stakeholders and the collected data were analysed using discourse analysis. Accordingly, findings showed that many hotels and restaurants began retrenching employees and terminating casual and temporary workers' services due to loss of income. Moreover, backward linkages, notably the association between the host community and tourism businesses in Sri Lanka have been deeply affected. It is concluded that Sri Lankan tourism has been severely disturbed by COVID – 19 because the tourism industry is extremely vulnerable, and trends of the industry are determined by several macro and micro environmental factors. The study provides some different strategies and tactics to overcome the problems faced by the tourism industry as implications. The qualitative approach was used with multiple data sources to gain more insight into the impact of COVID – 19 epidemic on the tourism industry through discourse analysis being the main originality of the study. Consequently, the findings were aligned with the Theory of Change. Recovery strategies are recommended to implement in two distinct phases with stakeholders' participation to overcome the crisis.*

Received 11 March 2021

Revised 15 September 2021

23 February 2022

10 August 2022

29 September 2022

Accepted 05 October 2022

**Keywords:** Coronavirus, COVID – 19, Source market, Tourism transformation

South Asian Journal of  
Tourism and Hospitality  
© Faculty of  
Management Studies  
Sabaragamuwa  
University of Sri Lanka  
ISSN: 2756-911X

\*Corresponding author: [rajesh@esn.ac.lk](mailto:rajesh@esn.ac.lk)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8056-9093>



Articles in SAJTH are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows reusers to copy and distribute the material in any medium or format in unadapted form only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.

## **INTRODUCTION**

World tourism contributes more than 10% to the global GDP as per the report of the World Travel and Tourism Council (Coskun et al., 2020). This scenario completely collapsed due to COVID – 19. Through international transport networks, particularly through air travel, the coronavirus spread to most parts of the world by mid–March 2020 (Gössling et al., 2020, p. 1). Therefore, the COVID -19 prevention mechanism has globally created many complicated economic and socio-psychological issues. Gössling et al. (2020, p. 2) believe that travel restrictions within the country as well as outside the country instantly affected the economy of the country, including the tourism industry such as accommodation, transport, restaurants, and sports. While designing the controlling mechanism for pandemic spreads, policymakers have to consider the cultural and social behaviours of people (Koon, 2020). Nevertheless, it is not possible to compare the impact of COVID – 19 with other global crises and their consequences. Controlling the spread of a pandemic should receive priority from the medical viewpoint (Chinazzi et al., 2020) whereas the lockdown created a complex scenario from the socio-economical perspective. Hence, the activities of the business in the supply chain are globally affected (Cheer, 2020).

Beyond economic collapse, this health crisis and its prevention that became a route for socio-economic transitions will have a remarkable effect on the travel and tourism industry globally. As it is known, changes in human mobility behaviour, entertainment and leisure activities, changes in face-to-face interaction and even food habits have been changed (Romagosa, 2020). However, questions may arise while measuring it. How is it possible to measure the impact of this crisis in the short – and long–term? An argument in tourism literature is that the impacts of tourism development are difficult to quantitatively assess (Ashley et al., 2009).

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka indicated that the COVID – 19 epidemic is destroying the ailing Sri Lankan economy. Industry and service sectors are going from bad to worse in Sri Lanka. As stated by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2020), foreign direct investment is negatively affected due to the COVID 2019. Moreover, the unexpected expenditure of the government has continuously increased due to medical expenditures and the granting of relief measures. On the other hand, as tea, rubber and coconut are heavily affected, Sri Lanka is planning to develop tourism. As a result, Sri Lanka became one of the best tourist places in Asia and the third biggest forex earner (Sivesan, 2019). Aslam (2000) found that there was a long-run association between Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Tourism demand through exploratory analysis. As ICT usage has been increased in Sri Lanka, it is anticipated that tourist arrival will be increased in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) forecasted around 4 million tourists and an earning of 5 billion US dollars in 2020 (Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs, 2016). Unfortunately, it collapsed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Arachchi and Gnanapala (2020a) portrayed that more than 400,000 employees have lost their jobs in the tourist industry and Sri Lanka has lost foreign currency inflows leading to financial crises due to COVID-19. It was also pointed out that retaining the staff in the industry was very challenging. Further, Arachchi and Gnanapala (2020b) conducted another study on “COVID - 19 and Tourism: Crisis and Challenges of Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka”. They showed that the industry was completely affected without none of the tourists visiting. They emphasised that government intervention was essential to rebuild the industry by providing relief. Moreover, Suresh et al. (2020) found that the economy and labour market of the tourism sector was heavily affected in Sri Lanka. They highlighted that a comprehensive plan is needed to recover the tourism sector.

Most of the previous studies focused only single aspect with one or two data sources either qualitative or quantitative methods. Therefore, the phenomenon could not be fully understood. There is a dearth of studies holistically focusing on the impact of COVID – 19 on the tourism industry through multiple data sources. Thus, the present study focuses to find the answer to the following research questions. Firstly, how does the COVID – 19 pandemic impact the tourism industry of Sri Lanka? Secondly, what are the strategies appropriate to develop the tourism sector of Sri Lanka affected by COVID – 19?

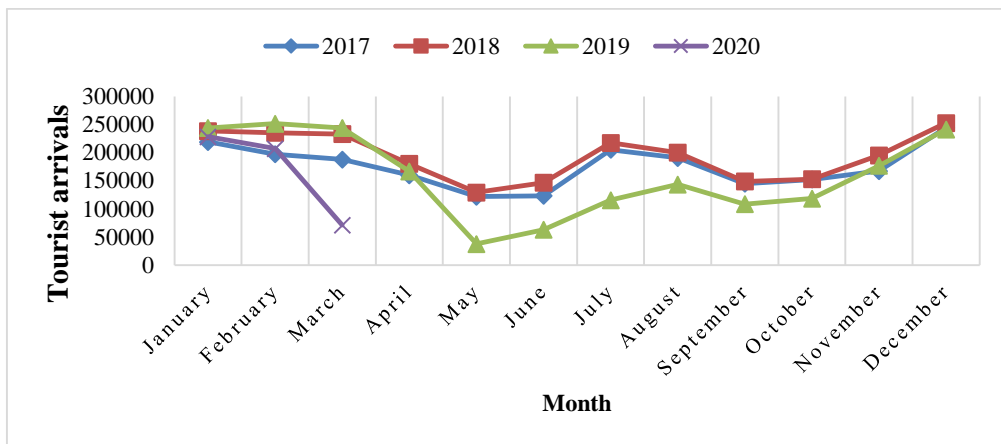
### **Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka**

After the civil war, the Sri Lankan tourism sector has been transformed through rapid diversification and expanded to become one of the major and fast-growing industries, despite many issues and challenges. Tourist arrivals were increased from a mere 18,969 when the industry was formally institutionalised in 1966 to 1,913,702 in 2019 (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2020). Tourist arrivals were lower in 2019 due to the Easter Sunday attacks. From the mid of 2019 onwards, tourist traffic to the country rose continuously until February 2020 and subsequently, it declined due to the COVID – 19 spread. In 2020, 507,704 tourists arrived including 393 tourists from Ukraine in December 2020. Accordingly, figure 1 describes monthly tourist arrivals.

Table 1 shows the important economic indicators. Contribution of the tourism industry to the balance of payment accounts at the early stage was minimal. With the growth of tourism, the contribution increased from 2 percent to 10 percent in 2019. As a labour incentive industry, tourism has accounted for almost 15,037 jobs in 1971 to more than 402, 707 by 2019 (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2020). The Tourism industry has generated and continues to generate, the largest amount of foreign exchange but it fluctuates. The receipts were restricted until open economy policies were

introduced and the civil disturbances settled from 1977 onwards. Thereafter, the liberalized environment was conducive for all sectors of the economy to grow, especially the tourism sector. Facilities were regulated and upgraded with systematic marketing and promotions affected to maximize visitor spending.

**Figure 1: Monthly Tourist Arrivals**



Source: Sri Lanka Tourism Development

**Table 1: The Key Economic Indicators**

Detail	1966	1970	1980	1991	2000	2010	2015	2019	2000
Total contribution to GDP	1.4	1.6	1.7	2.1	2.6	2.7	2.7	4.3	0.84
Total employment	N. A	12,078	47,900	64,507	37,973	132,055	316,436	402,607	347,751
Tourism receipts (US\$ Mn)	1.3	3.6	110.7	156.8	252.8	575.9	2981	3606	682
Arrivals	18,969	46,247	321,780	317,703	400,414	654,476	1,798,380	1,913,702	507,704

Source: Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and Central Bank of Sri Lanka

The growth in tourism, in the five decades to 2000, was largely driven by countries from Europe which was the dominant market region contributing as much as two-thirds of the total arrivals (Wickramasinghe et al., 2009). Asia

was the second largest source region contributing 20 – 30 percent of arrival. However, from 2000 onwards, Asia became a major tourist-generating region for Sri Lanka and followed by Europe.

**Table 2:** Sri Lankan Tourism Source Market

Region	1980	1985	1991	1995	2000	2005	2009	2015	2018	2019	2020
North America	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.6	4.3	8.5	5.6	4.7	5.00	7	6.3
Asia and Pacific	25.7	33.8	32.5	31.9	26.5	46.1	44.8	49.7	49.8	44	35.7
Europe	67.8	60.6	62	63.2	66.8	43.1	43.8	38.0	39.8	46	55.5
Middle East	1.2	0.7	1.7	0.9	1.1	1.9	5.3	5.6	4.5	2	2.0
Others	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.4	1.3	0.4	2.0	2.0	0.9	1	0.6

**Source:** Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

### **COVID – 19 Epidemic and Tourism Transformation**

Despite the tourism sector facing various challenges in the past, COVID – 19 impacted the tourism sector in multiple ways (Cheer, 2020; Stankov et al., 2020). Hoque et al. (2020) portrayed that the “Coronavirus (COVID – 19) is a very stern mounting hazard not only to the Chinese economic growth but also to the global economy” which could lead to a severe economic crisis. Part of it believed that tourism's contribution to GDP will substantially decline. Many researchers believed that the current health catastrophe created an unexpected scenario for businesses and the neighbouring community (Mostafanezhad, 2020). IATA et al. (2020) pointed out that “the contemporaneous slump has occurred unexpectedly, dashing every corner of the world, thus threatening every stakeholder in various ways”. Modern transportation with sophisticated technology also boosts the COVID – 19 epidemic.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was undertaken from an interpretivism perspective as the research philosophy. In this research, a qualitative analytical approach was applied as it was focused on exploration. The study used data from three different data sources namely interview data, secondary data from the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and Central Bank of Sri Lanka, and published research papers.

The nature of the research was exploratory which examines how COVID – 19 impacts the tourism sector. Interviews were used as a research strategy to achieve the research objectives. The extent of researchers' interference was high and the study setting was non-contrived (natural). The time horizon was cross-sectional where data collection was done for several months. The unit of analysis was a stakeholder in the tourism business.

Primary and secondary data were used in the study. Preliminary data were collected through interviews. The sample size was eleven and semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the key stakeholders. This conforms to other researchers Lew (2014), Becken (2013) and Daskon et al. (2010) who also used qualitative methods and analysis data collection in order to find the views of diverse stakeholders. Appropriate documents such as annual reports of SLTDA were taken as secondary.

During the period from March to April - 2020, data were collected through interviews who were directly connected with the tourism industry. It was conducted through Zoom based as per the convenience of the participants. The snowball sampling technique was used to identify the stakeholders. Accordingly, the following stakeholders were interviewed: three (3) executive officers from the SLTDA, two (2) academics from Sri Lankan Universities and six (6) tourism entrepreneurs including hotels, travel agents, tourist guides and

transport service providers. The duration of each interview was around one hour. Prior to the interview, the purpose of the study, confidentiality of the data and freedom of the interviewee were explained and accepted in order to ensure the research protocol. This approach enabled a discourse analysis methodology to approach interviewees. This means that interviewees were able to discuss their opinions on the role of COVID -19 in Sri Lankan Tourism.

Interview data were converted into text followed by exploring codes or themes from the interview text. Hereafter, categorizing, question-by-question matrix, conceptual matrix and pattern matching techniques were used to analyse the qualitative data. Further, the collected data were analysed through discourse analysis where the language and sound were used to explore different themes.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Respondents indicated in interviews that many tourism-related businesses particularly, cultural and heritage industries such as crafts and the performing arts, have been considerably affected by the COVID – 19. Generally, these shops in the surrounding tourist destinations are also homes to families engaged in enterprises. Many of them, who live below the poverty line are struggling to address their basic needs in the current scenario. A participant from the hotel industry articulated that:

The tourism industry is a high labour-oriented service industry but monthly a large amount of money is needed to pay for all benefits. Within a year, the industry has faced two severe crises which have a wide range of effects on the industry in terms of net profit earning (Participant 06).

As a result, many hotels and restaurants began retrenching employees and also terminating the services of casual and temporary workers. Henceforth, it imposed a heavy economic burden on people who lost their jobs in the crisis.



On the other hand, Sri Lanka failed to promote the small and medium-scale hotel industry since the current crisis period encouraged people to follow social distancing measures. An interview participant indicated:

The instructions to commercial banks and non-banking sectors were made by the Government and the Central bank of Sri Lanka. They are issuing a debt moratorium period on interest, but it cannot be a long-term remedy for the recovery of industrial establishments lost (Participant 02).

Throughout the world, revenue from all tourism-related businesses has continuously declined including neighbouring the communities. A hotelier commented:

If local products are used in the service delivery process, we can offer tourists products at a lower price. Meanwhile, the income-earning capacity of local manufacturers and the livelihoods of local people can be promoted. However, since there are no tourist arrivals currently, no income is derived from the island. As a result, the local supply chain is scrapped (Participant 03).

From the host communities' viewpoint, there were opportunities for backward linkages in the tourism industry as there were facilities to market their product or services which led to enhancing the quality of life of the host community. As a result of the present health crisis, above mentioned all benefits enjoyed by host communities have socioeconomically been damaged. Many interviewees opined that Post – COVID – 19 tourism development in Sri Lanka should be rescheduled. The spread of the epidemic used to generate so many social and economic problems. The effects and trends of them, however, have to be considered when making policy decisions because it is not possible to escape from the impacts of COVID – 19.

The government and Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority have realized that the industry could totally collapse if the necessary measures are not implemented soon. But people are anxious that the pandemic may spread through the reopening of the international transport networks and the removal of travel bans to promote the tourism industry (Participant 10).

The first two cases diagnosed were closely connected with the tourism industry. The first person was a Chinese tourist and the other was a tourist guide. However, from an economical perspective, in the post – COVID 19 era, tourism promotional activities are remarkably welcomed by key stakeholders. But from the medical perspective, people's ardour to focus on health care activities than enjoying the monetary benefits from the tourism industry is laudable. People conceived that the disease would spread by increasing the international tourist traffic in Sri Lanka.

Domestic tourism development has received less attention from policymakers and practitioners. The main reason for it being that foreign exchange cannot be earned through domestic tourism. Further, it is noted that in the post-war context, this domestic tourism had been used as a tool to build peace and social harmony among minority and majority communities in Sri Lanka.

According to past experiences, the Sri Lankan source market was severely affected during past crises situations. For example, as noted earlier, the Sri Lankan tourism market before 2000 was dominated by European countries. During the civil war, many western countries including UK and Germany issued warnings to their citizens not to travel to Sri Lanka, resulting in a structural change in the source market. Many wars affected countries including Cambodia and Vietnam enjoyed the structural changes in the tourism market. Further, those countries' source markets were swinging and unpredictable

source for tourism. The changes in the tourism source market would usually be held based on several factors such as geopolitical issues and destinations' safety (Richter, 1999; Volo, 2008).

As a tourism destination, Sri Lanka is blessed with a wide variety of natural, cultural heritage and social assets. Sri Lanka is universally perceived as providing valuable satisfaction for tourists. From the political and socio-cultural angle, Sri Lanka has a strong link with Asian countries (Participant 06).

During the last two decades, neighbouring countries including India, China and Maldives became large tourist-generating sources. In the present health crisis, the proximity of the neighbouring countries' source market can be used as a way to rebuild the Sri Lankan tourism market. Worldwide, China is the biggest global tourism source market. Meanwhile, China has fruitfully controlled the current pandemic. If China could remove the travel bans, the concerns of air pollution and overcrowding in China are more compelling reasons for those with the means to travel abroad, and this can be to Sri Lanka's competitive advantage.

As per the findings of the study, the following thematic areas were explored pertaining to the impact of COVID – 19 on the tourism industry, (i) employees lost their work, (ii) damage to livelihoods of SME entrepreneurs, (iii) revenue declined from all tourism-related businesses, (iv) local supply chain is scrapped, (v) many social and economic problems, (vi) backward linkages affected.

The subsequent sections discuss appropriate strategies as implications to develop the collapsed tourism industry.

## **Strategies to Rebuild the Tourism Sector**

This study explored how COVID – 19 impacted the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Based on the literature support, this study provides different strategies and tactics to overcome the problems faced by the tourism industry. In this case, recovery strategies should be implemented in two different phases, with stakeholders' participation.

Accordingly, the recovery strategies are as follows. Phase -01 has to be considered a short-run recovery mechanism. During the pre – COVID – 19, Sri Lanka tourism targeted higher spending capacity of tourists throughout the world, but in line with this attempt, this current climate teaches us about some significant health requisitions when compared with the implementation of new marketing strategies. One significant question that has arisen in the minds of valuable stakeholders is, How can it be possible to reopen the tourism industry with a global network? In fact, it is a big challenging question to address. But it is possible to meet it when some basic health care requisitions are taken. SLTDA should step to work with the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services in the following terms: Issuing certificates to hotels to ensure the health and safety mechanism of the hotel staff, tourists, and host community as well as safety and sanitary arrangement at airports.

1. Formulating comprehensive healthcare measures as guidelines to establish quarantine hotels with employee safety.
2. Ensuring health safety measuring of tourist guides and employees.

As pointed out in the results and discussion section, tourists, particularly international tourists, have been viewed as virus carriers by most of the tourism stakeholders. Sometimes it may be considered an attitude-related issue, but scientifically, if the spread of the virus should be controlled, we have to find remedies for that. Medical researchers suggested Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) in which every traveller should undergo this test. At all terminals of

international airports and harbours, this test should be conducted free of charge. This approach is one assured way to control the further spread of the virus in Sri Lanka through travelling and would create confidence among the host community in the context of tourism development and health care services. Positive vibrations could be gradually spread towards the tourism industry after COVID – 19. This creates a positive impact on rebuilding the tourism industry in Sri Lanka with the close collaboration of the stakeholders and various international and national funding agencies.

Phase – II focuses on the long-run recovery approaches. Region-based international tourism and domestic should be encouraged. The domestic tourism sector has a significant impact on sustainable tourism development in the country (Sivesan, 2019). Sri Lankan tourism should pay more attention to developing domestic tourism in the post COVID – 19 period. While arrivals of international tourists can be affected by many uncontrollable factors including international market conditions (Richter, 1999), civil war and terrorist attacks (Chheang, 2008; Lee, 2006) geopolitical changes (Sofield, 2006) and crises (Ritchie, 2004) affecting domestic tourism.

However, generally, domestic tourism lends support during these types of unavoidable circumstances. Gössling et al. (2020) believed the “domestic market could be anticipated to recover first. Sri Lanka, as a tourist destination, has great opportunities to extend its market within the island. Today, the significance of domestic tourism development in Sri Lanka has been perceived. Accordingly, introducing diversified tourist products to the domestic market, promoting a wide variety of leisure activities to draw the attention of domestic tourists, and encouraging Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR), are necessary to extend. The market can help to build the resilience capacity of the industry.

Currently, the Sri Lankan source market is dominated by Asian countries like China, India and Maldives, which claim 32.8 percent of total traffic to the

nation. Usually, the demand for tourism used to come from the nearest countries after crises. During the post - Tsunami era and War, many tourists from neighbouring countries visited Sri Lanka (Fernando et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2008). Therefore, Sri Lankan tourism can target Asian countries. Globally, China retained its position as the largest international tourism source market. Meanwhile, China has successfully controlled the present pandemic. If China will remove the travel ban, the concerns of air pollution and overcrowding in China are more compelling reasons for those with the means to travel abroad, and this can be rooted in Sri Lanka's competitive advantage. Top – ten Chinese outbound tourism source markets (Singapore, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, America, Maldives, and South Korea) have been halted by COVID – 19.

Further, the geopolitical climate against China has changed. Some European and American leaders have given controversial statements against China. It will have an impact on China's tourism market. As pointed out, earlier China was one of the leading countries to supply tourists to the world. It has a big outbound tourist market and great socio-economical, cultural, and religious linkage with Sri Lanka. Such situations can be used at the optimum level to bring a large number of Chinese tourists to Sri Lanka in the future.

Suresh et al. (2021) identified that tourists prefer to visit value nature-based tourism such as national parks. They also suggested that less visited parks will have more opportunities to grow in the future as tourists like to entertain in such parks. Therefore, it is necessary to promote tourists to visit the national park where tourists could considerably maintain social distancing.

Today, in this health crisis, relaxations are necessary for all. So, wellness tourism has to be developed with all healthcare services. As noted by Mueller and Kaufmann (2001, p. 5), "...wellness is seen as a new market segment and is being strongly encouraged through imaginative package deals". Sri Lanka

offered and offers the best Ayurveda, Siddha, and Indigenous medical spa services for travellers. These places should be inspected to see whether they conform to the health and safety conditions of staff and tourists. If so, a new segment of tourists could be targeted.

## **CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The first objective of the study is to explore the impact of the COVID – 19 epidemic on the Tourism Industry of Sri Lanka. It is found that revenue from all tourism-related businesses has continuously declined including neighbouring communities. Further, it is identified that many hotels and restaurants began reducing employees and also terminating the services of casual and temporary workers due to a lack of tourist arrivals. It is concluded that Sri Lankan tourism has been severely disturbed by COVID – 19 because the tourism industry is extremely vulnerable. In Sri Lanka’s tourism history, for the first time, the industry faced zero income and zero tourists. It brought many undesirable consequences like a reduction in the size of the labour force.

The second objective was to identify appropriate strategies to rebuild the tourism industry by overcoming the COVID -19 epidemic. This research emphasises that in the post-pandemic era, the priority should be given to controlling the outbreak of COVID -19. The research has explored six strategies. As the first strategy, SLTDA with the support of the health sector should issue certificates to hotels to ensure the health and safety mechanism of the hotel staff and tourists. Secondly, every traveller should undergo a PCR test while entering to country. Thirdly, Sri Lankan tourism should pay more focus to attract regional tourists like Asians in Sri Lanka. Fourthly, uplifting domestic tourism by encouraging Visiting Friends and Relatives. Fifthly, promote wellness tourism like a spa. Sixthly, promote tourists to visit national parks with

health guidelines. The above strategies are useful to recover the industry from this pathetic scenario.

A qualitative approach was used to gain more insights into the impact of COVID – 19 on the tourism industry whereby discourse analysis was the main originality of the study. As contributions, the study has explored the prominent impact of COVID – 19 epidemic on the tourism sector, namely, (i) employees lost their work, (ii) damage to the livelihoods of SME entrepreneurs, (iii) revenue declined from all tourism-related businesses, (iv) local supply chain is scrapped, (v) many social and economic problems, (vi) backward linkages affected. Further, strategies are provided to rebuild the tourism sector by overcoming the pandemic.

The research was conducted to explore how COVID – 19 impacts the tourism sector. To understand the real phenomena, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders. The findings were aligned with the Theory of Change. Theory of Change defines “long-term goals and then maps backwards to identify necessary preconditions” (Brest, 2010). The theory explains the process of change to achieve long-term outcomes (Clerk and Taplin, 2012). On the other hand, the Theory of Change in tourism focuses to gain more insight into why and how change happens. A full understanding of challenges is necessary to move forward in developing the tourism industry.

Theoretically, the research contributes to the tourism literature by connecting the main components of the Theory of Change namely inputs, activities, output, outcomes, and impact in order to develop the tourism sector. Coronavirus was one of the main inputs for destroying the tourism sector. Consequently, controlling the spread of the Coronavirus and inputting various resources with proper strategies to develop the tourism industry for achieving desired outcomes will positively impact society. Additionally, the study provides different strategies in two phases short and long run to owners or



managers of tourism businesses and government, particularly, policymakers for rebuilding the tourism sector by overcoming the current health crisis.

There is also a need to research COVID – 19 related issues. It would be helpful to improve our understanding of the impact of COVID – 19 and its consequences which are associated with the tourism industry, including case study approaches are important to understand the ground situation in the Sri Lankan tourist destination. In fact, this approach will offer additional information to create and draft marketing and tourism development strategies to uplift the industry throughout Sri Lanka.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

### **REFERENCES**

- Arachchi R.S.S.W. & Gnanapala W.K.A.C., (2020a). Impact of COVID-19 and the Future of Tourism Employments in Sri Lanka: A Route to Recovery and Resilience [Special Issue], *Journal of Management and Tourism Research*, 15-26, [http://www.uwu.ac.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/JMTR\\_SI\\_ch2.PDF](http://www.uwu.ac.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/JMTR_SI_ch2.PDF)
- Arachchi R.S.S.W. & Gnanapala W.K.A.C., (2020b). COVID - 19 and Tourism: Crisis and Challenges of Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka, In Zutshi, V., Chowdhary, N., Singh, A. K., and Lakhawat, P. (Eds), *Rebuilding Tourism and Hospitality Sectors COVID-19 Crisis, Policy Solutions and the Way Forward*, 25-35, Bharti Publications.
- Ashley, C., & Mitchell, J. (2009). *Tourism and poverty reduction: Pathways to prosperity*. Taylor & Francis.
- Aslam, A. L. M. (2000). Long-run relationship between ICT and Tourism Demand in Sri Lanka, *Journal of Information Systems & Information Technology (JISIT)*, 5(1), 68-74.
- Becken, S. (2013). Developing a framework for assessing resilience of tourism sub-systems to climatic factors. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 43, 506-528.

- Brest, P. (2010). *The Power of Theories of Change*, Stanford Social Innovation Review. Spring.
- Carroll, A. B., & Näsi, J. (1997). Understanding stakeholder thinking: Themes from a Finnish conference. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 6(1), 46-51.
- Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2020). *Annual Report 2020*.
- Cheer, J. M. (2020). Human flourishing, tourism transformation and COVID-19: a conceptual touchstone. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 1-11.
- Chheang, V. (2008). The political economy of tourism in Cambodia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 13(3), 281-297.
- Chinazzi, M., Davis, J. T., Ajelli, M., Gioannini, C., Litvinova, M., Merler, S., Piontti, A. P., Mu, K., Rossi, L., & Sun, K. (2020). The effect of travel restrictions on the spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. *Science*, 368(6489), 395-400.
- Clerk, H. & Taplin, D. (2012). *Theory of Change Basics: A Primer on Theory of Change*, Acknowledge.
- Coskun, I. O., Othman, N. Aslam, M. & Lew, A. (2020). *Travel and Tourism: Sustainability, Economics, and Management Issues*, Proceedings of the Tourism Outlook Conferences, v-iv, Springer
- Daskon, C., & Binns, T. (2010). Culture, tradition, and sustainable rural livelihoods: exploring the culture–development interface in Kandy, Sri Lanka. *Community Development Journal*, 45(4), 494-517. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsp019>
- Fernando, S., Bandara, J. S., & Smith, C. (2013). Regaining missed opportunities: the role of tourism in post-war development in Sri Lanka. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(7), 685-711.
- Garau-Vadell, J. B., Gutierrez-Taño, D., & Diaz-Armas, R. (2018). Economic crisis and residents' perception of the impacts of tourism in mass tourism destinations. *Journal of destination marketing & management*, 7, 68-75.
- Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C. M. (2020). Pandemics, tourism, and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(1), 1-20.

- Hoque, A., Shikha, F. A., Hasanat, M. W., Arif, I., & Hamid, A. B. A. (2020). The effect of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the tourism industry in China. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 3(1), 52-58. <https://doi.org/file:///C:/Users/hp/Downloads/213-Article%20Text-600-2-10-20200415.pdf>
- IATA Economics. (2020). COVID - 19 Updated Impact Assessment <https://www.iata.org/en/iata-repository/publications/economic-reports/covid-fourth-impact-assessment/>
- Koon, O. E. (2020). The impact of socio-cultural influences on the COVID-19 measures–reflections from Singapore. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*. 60(2), e90-e92.
- Lee, Y. S. (2006). The Korean War and tourism: legacy of the war on the development of the tourism industry in South Korea. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 8(3), 157-170. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.569>
- Lew, A. A. (2014). Scale, change and resilience in community tourism planning. *Tourism Geographies*, 16(1), 14-22. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2013.864325>
- Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs. (2016). Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020. <http://www.sltda.lk/sites/default/files/-plan-2017-to-2020.pdf>
- Morens, D. M., Taubenberger, J. K., & Fauci, A. S. (2009). What is a pandemic? *The Journal of infectious diseases*, 198(7), 1018-1021. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1086/644537>
- Mostafanezhad, M. (2020). Covid-19 is an unnatural disaster: Hope in revelatory moments of crisis. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 639-645.
- Mueller, H., & Kaufmann, E. L. (2001). Wellness tourism: Market analysis of a special health tourism segment and implications for the hotel industry. *Journal of vacation marketing*, 7(1), 5-17. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/135676670100700101>
- Reeves, K., & Sivesan, S. (2017). Tourism, history, identity, and community resilience in the world heritage city of Kandy, Sri Lanka. In J. M. Cheer & A. Lew (Eds.), *Tourism, Resilience and Sustainability, Adapting to Social Political Economic Change*. Routledge.

- Richter, L. K. (1999). After political turmoil: The lessons of rebuilding tourism in three Asian countries. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(1), 41-45.
- Ritchie, B. W. (2004). Chaos, crises and disasters: a strategic approach to crisis management in the tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, 25(6), 669-683. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.09.004>
- Robinson, L., & Jarvie, J. K. (2008). Post-disaster community tourism recovery: the Tsunami and Arugam Bay, Sri Lanka. *Disasters*, 32(4), 631-645. [https://doi.org/ https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2008.01058.x](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2008.01058.x)
- Romagosa, F. (2020). The COVID-19 crisis: Opportunities for sustainable and proximity tourism. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 690-694. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1763447>
- Sivesan, S. (2019). Challenges of sustainable tourism in ancient cities: a case study based on Kandy, Sri Lanka. *Journal of Business*, 6(1), 57-74.
- Sofield, T. H. (2006). Border tourism and border communities: An overview. *Tourism Geographies*, 8(2), 102-121.
- Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. (2020). *Tourism Growth Trends 1971 - 2019*. [https://www.sltda.gov.lk/storage/common\\_72868.pdf](https://www.sltda.gov.lk/storage/common_72868.pdf)
- Stankov, U., Filimonau, V., & Vujičić, M. D. (2020). A mindful shift: an opportunity for mindfulness-driven tourism in a post-pandemic world. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 703-712. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1768432>
- Suresh, K., Sivaguru, T. Darmalingam, S. Suresh, J. & Wilson, C., (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on the Sri Lankan Tourism Sector and Its future prospects, *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research*, 4(11), 146-153
- Suresh, K., Wilson, C., Quayle, A., Khanal, U., & Managi, S. (2021). Which national park attributes attract international tourists? A Sri Lankan case study, *Tourism Economics*, XX(X), 1-24.
- Volo, S. (2008). Communicating tourism crises through destination websites. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 23(2-4), 83-93.
- Wickramasinghe, V., & Takano, S. (2009). Application of combined SWOT and analytic hierarchy process (AHP) for tourism revival strategic marketing planning. *Journal of the Eastern Asia Society for Transportation Studies*, 8, 954-969