

A Retrospective Study on the Ecotourism Practices in Sri Lanka in terms of Sustainable Rural Development

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Abstract— Sri Lanka is one of the developing countries in south Asia practicing ecotourism since the 1980s for ameliorating the socio-economic and environmental ills as well as for achieving socio-cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability of the country. According to ecotourism principles, it basically concerns the environmental, socio-cultural, economic, and tourism sustainability through visiting relatively undisturbed natural areas. Therefore, to achieve the objectives it has to fulfill its educational, environmental, local economic, socio-cultural, and tourism responsibilities. However within last three and half a decade of Sri Lanka's ecotourism history, ecotourism has been practiced in deferent ways by different stakeholders at deferent places. Thus, it can be identified a spectrum of ecotourism destinations in terms of sustainable rural development. Despite few genuine ecotourism destinations (multi-responsible ecotourism-MRE) that complete its multi-dimensional responsibilities, there are many pseudo destinations (competitive market economy involved ecotourism-CMEIE) where marketing irresponsible tourism activities under competitive market economy with the label of ecotourism while deteriorating the existing socio-cultural, economic and environmental conditions of destinations. Between the aforementioned two ends of ecotourism spectrum (MRE and CMEIE) there are other types of ecotourism, such as environmental responsible ecotourism and environmental-local economic responsible ecotourism destinations, where partially fulfilling ecotourism responsibilities. Hence, responsible agencies should take necessary efforts to evaluate and classify ecotourism destinations periodically, and should take necessary measures to transform irresponsible and partially responsible ecotourism destinations toward multi-responsible ecotourism to achieve sustainable rural development through ecotourism.

Index Terms—Ecotourism, Ecotourism in Sri Lanka, Ecotourism Responsibility, Ecotourism Types, Pseudo Ecotourism, Sustainable Rural Development

1 INTRODUCTION

SRI Lanka is one of the developing countries in South Asia struggling with poverty alleviation and underdevelopment. According to the sustainable development definition of Bruddtland Report, needs of present should be meet without compromising the ability of future [44]. Thus, any of the problem solving approaches should be followed by the triple bottom lines of sustainability; preserving and restoring the health of living systems, achieving economic growth to deliver long-term prosperity to everyone from present to future in any part of the world, and social equity and equality [30].

Since the late 1980s, many countries started to embrace ecotourism as a panacea for hailing many socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dilemmas [8], [16]; as a means of advancing wider international economic integration; as a catalyst for modernization/localization and economic development; as a tool for regional planning and development; a conservation/preservation method of some aspects of local cultures and fragile environments for future generations; as a means of promoting local/national/international peace and understanding [14], [16], [39], [41], [43]. In other words, ecotourism has been identified as a way of achieving both conservation and development goals together [7]. Sri Lanka also practices ecotourism since the late 1980s as a remedy for ameliorating the socio-economic and environmental ills [35].

Despite of the successful ecotourism destinations, there are many pseudo-ecotourism destinations in which marketing unsustainable tourism practices are observed and this deteriorates the existing environmental, socio-cultural and economic conditions rather than ameliorating socio-economic and environmental ills. Hence, introduction of ecotourism to some rural

areas are like '*exchanging ginger with chilli*'. Simpson [33] has identified ecotourism as an agent that disguises as an environmental friendly agent but actually it destroys/pollutes/degrades fragile environment because its concept has been largely hijacked by tourism industry operators in search for competitive advantage.

In Sri Lanka, repeated and apparent in-discriminated use of the ecotourism label for marketing other forms of tourism has led to spoiling/degrading of the fragile natural and cultural wealth of destinations [3]. It would badly affect the sustainability of tourism, rural economy, socio-cultural stability, etc. Therefore it is essential to evaluate and classify ecotourism destinations based on genuine meaning of ecotourism and its responsibilities. Although there is macro level (national level) policy involvement [25], the responsible agencies of Sri Lanka still have not taken sufficient efforts to monitor ecotourism destinations (micro level) in order to achieve sustainability. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to introduce a model that can be used for evaluating and classifying ecotourism destinations and for transforming those rural destinations towards sustainability.

2 BACKDROP OF ECOTOURISM CONCEPT

2.1 Ecotourism Definitions

There are many definitions on ecotourism in ecotourism research literature. In many of modern definitions, it can be identified that it has '*embraced the principles of sustainable tourism concerning the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism*' [16].

Ecotourism was first formally defined by Caballos-Lascurain (1987), one of the environmentalists and ecotourism consultants from Mexico [7]. According to his first definition (Table 1), tourists don't have an environmental, socio-cultural, and economic responsibility to conserve/protect nature and culture and support/empower the local communities to improve their livelihoods, capacity, social harmony, dignity, etc. Furthermore, it urged researchers to consider the host community of the tourist destination as a passive component of ecotourism. Ceballos-Lascurain identified some weaknesses in his previous definition and revised it in 2005.

TABLE 1
ECOTOURISM DEFINITIONS

Author/Institution	Definition
Caballos-Lascurain, 1987 (cited in [7]), p. 5	"Traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objectives of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plant and animals, as well as existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas"
Ceballos-Lascurain 1996, (cited in [33]), p. 226	"Ecotourism is a environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features, both past, and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations"
The Worldwatch Institute Report, 2005 (cited in [29]), p. 85	"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people"
Tickell [36], p. ix	"To enjoy the world's amazing diversity of natural life and human culture without causing damage to either"
Weaver [39], p 105	"Ecotourism is a form of nature based tourism that strives to be ecologically, socio-culturally, and providing economically sustainable while providing opportunities for appreciating and learning about the natural environment or specific elements thereof"
Ziffer, 1989 (cited in [38]), p. 21	"Ecotourism is a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. The eco-tourists visit relatively undisturbed areas in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. The ecotourist practices a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and

Author/Institution	Definition
	contributes to the visited area through labour or financial means aimed at directly benefiting the conservation of the site and economic well-being of the residents"
The International Ecotourism Society, 1991 (cited in [31]) p. 124	"Purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the culture and the natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of the natural resources beneficial to the local people".
Sirakaya, et.al [34], p 413	A "type of primarily nature-based tourism that is ecologically, culturally, politically, as well as economically responsible, and specifically promotes the stewardship of natural and cultural resources"
Honey, M. 1999, [10], p. 13	"Ecotourism is travel to fragile, pristine and usually protected areas that drives to be low impact and (usually) small scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights".
Fennell, 2003 (cited in [19]), p. 1042	"Ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource based tourism that focuses primary on experiencing and learning about nature, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non consumptive, and locally oriented (control, benefits, and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation or preservation of such areas".

As indicated in Table 1, Tickell [36] paid attention to inclusion of cultural responsibility by tourists in his ecotourism definition. However, 'conceptualizing host community as a passive component in ecotourism practice' and 'negligence of economic responsibility of tourists' are the main weaknesses of his ecotourism definition. The Worldwatch Institute Report (2005, cited in [29]) has considered the economic and nature conservation responsibilities but neglected the cultural responsibilities as well as host community responsibilities in facilitating the visitors and in conserving the destination capitals that attract tourists. A more comprehensive definition was given by Ziffer (1989, cited in [38]), but the definition also failed to emphasize the cultural responsibility of ecotourism.

Ecotourism definition of The International Ecotourism Society [TIES] (1991, cited in [31]) directly emphasizes the environmental and economic responsibility. In addition to that, TIES definition was based on seven major characteristics of

ecotourism; those characteristics are; traveling to natural destinations, minimizing impact, building environmental awareness, providing direct financial benefits for conservation, providing financial benefits and empowerment for local people, respecting local culture, and supporting human rights and democratic movements (TIES, 1990, cited in [16]). Hence, it is clear that the definition has encapsulated many dimensions of ecotourism.

Because of multidimensionality of ecotourism, Kurt Kutay (1993, cited in [16]) stated that real ecotourism is more than traveling to enjoy or appreciate nature. It includes minimization of environmental and cultural consequences, contribution to conservation and local livelihood development, environmental education, etc. Therefore, as identified by Fennell (2001, cited in [41]), value-based dimensions such as conservation, ethics, responsibilities, sustainability, education and community benefits tend to be more prominent in the more recent ecotourism offerings. Based on aforementioned definitions, the main characteristics of ecotourism can be identified as

1. Marketing or visiting natural and relatively undisturbed area;
2. For enjoying life without damaging to the socio-cultural, environmental conditions of the destination;
3. Appreciating nature and culture of the destination;
4. Learning about nature, culture and society of the destination;
5. Supporting local people to conserve nature and their cultural heritages;
6. Supporting local people to uplift their living standards, capacity building.

And genuine ecotourism can be defined as responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy, appreciate, learn nature and any accompanying cultural features of the destination while contributing for conserving/ protecting them and supporting local people to solve their own socio-economic, cultural, environmental problems and to be the ecotourism facilitator and guardian of the destination.

2.2 Ecotourism Principles

After the Reo Earth Summit, in 1992, a number of international organizations such as the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and many other researchers began to develop principles to guide tourism in order to achieve the sustainable development goals. According to Lauzorote Charter for sustainable tourism (cited in [12]) and other researchers [7], [16], [23], [39] key ecotourism principles involve traveling to natural destinations, minimizing impact, building environmental awareness, providing direct financial benefits for conservation, providing financial benefits and empowerment for local people, respecting local culture and supporting human rights. In addition to that, as identified by Blamey ([7], p 4), 'ecotourism should satisfy three core criteria; attractions should be predominantly nature-based; visitor interactions with those attractions should

be focused on learning and education; and experience and product management should follow principles and practices associated with ecological, socio-cultural and economic sustainability'. Furthermore, the basic principles of ecotourism are based on ecological sustainability (minimizing or avoid negative environmental impacts and contributing to conserve the nature while directly experiencing nature), economic sustainability (without violating other sustainability principles, contribute to enhance the livelihood of host community and ensure continuous attraction of tourists to the destination), social sustainability (minimizing or avoiding the negative social impacts such as opening of previously un-existed social divisions or the exacerbation of already existing divisions, increasing the differences between the beneficiaries of tourism and those who are marginalized with it, and the creation of spatial ghettos, either the tourists themselves or those excluded from tourism, etc. while supporting to enhance their livelihood), cultural sustainability (through active community participation to ecotourism, ensuring the reproduction of traditional cultural practices, values, lifestyles, languages, etc.) and tourism sustainability.

3 MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The analysis presented in this article is based on the data and information collected from three methods; key informant interviews conducted in Sri Lanka between 2nd and 27th of January, 2017; participatory observation done by the author as a lifelong member of Sri Lankan society; and published and unpublished secondary data. Seven key informants of Sri Lankan society participated in the interviews. Informants' personal information is treated with utmost confidentiality.

All the informants were selected to purposely understand the existing situation of ecotourism practice in Sri Lanka. Each of the key informant interviews was conducted for about 30 minutes to one hour. The main questions asked from each informant and the main idea of their responses are indicated in Table 2. Collected data was for 9 ecotourism destinations: Yala, Dambana, Pinnawala, Horton Plain, Buttala, Ranpathwila, Kudawa, Muturajawela, and Meemure (Fig.1). Collected information was presented as narrative, one of the qualitative data analysis methods with information of secondary sources.

TABLE 2
KEY IDEAS OF KEY INFORMANTS REGARDING ECOTOURISM PRACTICE IN SRI LANKA

Informant	Theme	Responses of the informant
UL 1	Problems	No proper mechanism to distinguish responsible eco tourism and irresponsible tourism; destroying fragile rural socio-cultural environments;
	Solution	policy implementation
	Roles of local and outsider	With the support of outsiders, destination community should work as facilitators as well as guardian of the destination.

UL 2	Definition	A kind of responsible business that marketing spatial variation
	Problems	Would contribute to progress or regress of existing socio-cultural, economic, environmental problems
	Solution	Destination based periodic evaluations; policy involvement
HBT	Problems	Different conceptualization; destination characteristics; external forces, attitudes, value systems of tourists;
	Reasons	Multi-dimensionality of ecotourism; involvement of insiders and outsiders of destinations
	Solutions	Evaluate cumulative results; ensure satisfaction of multiple stakeholders; policy involvement
ERM	Definition	A responsible business which marketing destination's resources while contributing conservation, reproduction and enhancing its resource base
	Problems	Deferent/mis-conceptualization;
	Solutions	Policy involvement; identify/classify ecotourism destinations based on destination ecotourism qualities
ACL	Definition	Multiple responsible travelling and hospitality activity that involve villagers, visitors, other facilitators, and others; it is a group work.
	Problems	Loss of nature, culture, and social values; create new socio-cultural problems
	Solutions	Dedicate time, money, etc for encouraging host communities to conserve/practice nature and culture that cannot see outside world.
TG	Problems	Using ecotourism term as a label to marketing other kinds of tourisms; Practicing different types of ecotourism
	Reasons	Poor governmental intervention
	Solutions	Place special attention to regulate the activities which obliterate the quality of destination.
LCD	Definition	An environmentally friendly nature visitation
	Problems	Many hoteliers do not place sufficient attention to conserve/protect nature and its components
	Solutions	Practicing environmentally friendly landscape management practices; providing public awareness regarding environmental problems.

Key: UL 1 - University lecturer; UL 2 - University Lecturer; HBT - A former head of the Board of Tourism; ERM - Manager of a ecotourism resort; ACL - Aboriginal community leader; TG - tour guide; LCD - Landscape designer

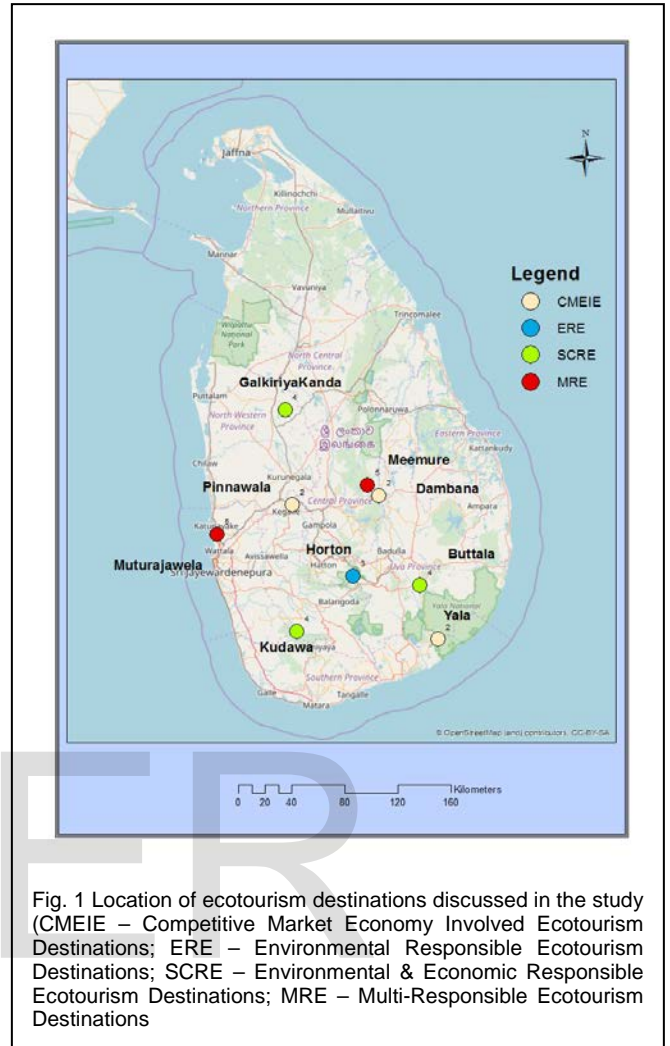


Fig. 1 Location of ecotourism destinations discussed in the study (CMEIE – Competitive Market Economy Involved Ecotourism Destinations; ERE – Environmental Responsible Ecotourism Destinations; SCRE – Environmental & Economic Responsible Ecotourism Destinations; MRE – Multi-Responsible Ecotourism Destinations

4 ECOTOURISM IN SRI LANKA

In Sri Lankan context, deferent ecotourism stakeholders define ecotourism differently. National Ecotourism Policy (draft) of Sri Lanka defines ecotourism as “travel to natural and cultural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local communities” [22]. Some of the ecotourism operators, such as 4th key informant of Table 2, have identified many of the basic principles of ecotourism. According to the key informant,

“Ecotourism is a responsible business that markets nature and culture with the help of local people and other responsible agencies. All those who involve in the business as sellers and buyers have responsibilities to minimize the pollution of destination conditions, to protect destination resources that ecotourism depends on, to eradicate the place and peoples’ poverty, and to give opportunities to tourists to live with nature and local people and to understand the nature and local socio-cultural wealth of rural area”

However, on the other hand, many stakeholders engaging in ecotourism in Sri Lanka are still defining ecotourism as ‘nature-related tourism’ ‘environmental conservation tourism’ ‘wildlife-related tourism’ ‘nature and culture related tourism’

([3] p. 162). The key informant interviews of the study also provided the aforementioned narrow conceptualization of ecotourism (Table 2). According to them, “many of Sri Lanka ecotourism stakeholders such as hoteliers, eco resort owners, tour operators, and etc, use the term ‘ecotourism’ as a label without genuinely practicing ecotourism; they offer a few numbers of components that include the ecotourism concept”. These grassroots level definitions provide evidence that some of the main components of genuine ecotourism, such as socio-cultural responsibility, local economic responsibility, and active community participation have not been considered for conceptualizing the ecotourism concept. Then “it leads to disconfirm the expectation of tourists as well as local community”. “Due to narrow conceptualization of ecotourism, Sri Lanka has failed to capitalize the potential socio-economic, cultural and environmental benefits of ecotourism”. “But we should not forget that there are some places where ecotourism practices are at good standards”. The aforementioned information indicates that there are considerable differences among ecotourism activities in different destinations within the country.

Therefore, according to the ecotourism conceptualization and identification of its basic principles, it can be identified as a spectrum of ecotourism activities in Sri Lanka. Some ecotourism operators, as explained by the hotel landscape designer, consider the tourists' satisfaction and environmentally friendly landscaping and resource management practices inside the hotels, estate, and resort territory. Although they place more attention on nature, culture, society, etc inside their territory, they place less attention or neglect nature, culture, society, etc outside their property territory. Many tourists who come not only to see the beauty of the hotel or resort but also, most probably, to see and experience the nature, culture, etc outside their hotels or resorts. However, some ecotourism operators place equal attention on both sides. According to them, all stakeholders including tourists, operators, host community, etc have a responsibility to ensure socio-economic, cultural environmental, and tourism sustainability. Thus it is clear that, different stakeholders conceptualize ecotourism differently and as identified in the key informant interview, that is one of the main issues in ecotourism in Sri Lanka

4.1 Ecotourism Types in Sri Lanka

Findings of the study revealed that ecotourism is conceptualized and practiced differently by various stakeholders in Sri Lanka; however, some are genuinely practicing ecotourism principles and contributing to SRD, while others are using the term ecotourism as a label for marketing other types of tourism products. It has led to spatio-temporal variation [24], in other words, a spectrum of ecotourism activities (Fig.2). In the study, four types of tourism that market with the label of ecotourism have been identified. These are competitive market economy involved ecotourism, the environmental responsible ecotourism, the environmental and economic responsible ecotourism, and multi-responsible ecotourism. The progress (or regress) of an ecotourism destination depends on embracement (or renunciation) of ecotourism responsibilities as well as tangible and intangible qualities of places (destination and other places interacting with the destination) and people (not only visitors, but also operators and local community).

If ecotourism stakeholders (tourists, host community, and others) do not pay attention to practicing other ecotourism principles that are not being practiced at the place, the destination cannot transform towards sustainability; and sometimes, it would lead to deterioration of qualities at the destination. Not only that, if stakeholders do not pay attention to maintaining the embraced good qualities, it can lead to regress of the destination towards un-sustainability. The summary of basic characteristics of some of ecotourism types in Sri Lanka are indicated in Table 3.

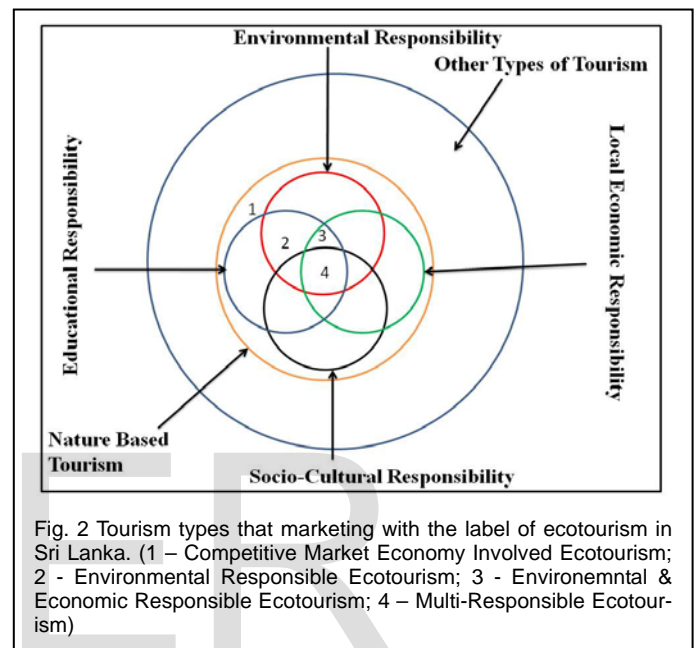


TABLE 3
BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ECOTOURISM TYPES IN SRI LANKA

Criteria	Indicators	Types			
		1	2	3	4
Environment	Nature (and accompanying culture) visitation	O	O	O	O
	Intentional financial support/legal regulations for nature conservation (Environmental responsibility)	X	O	O	O
	No of tourists	VH	H	M	<CC
	Environmental pollution/degradation	H	L	L	L
	Active local participation in nature conservation (as the guardian of the place)	X	X	X	O
Economy	Intentional financial support for local people (Local economic responsibility)	X	X	O	O

Criteria	Indicators	Types			
		1	2	3	4
Culture	Active local participation in ecotourism as a facilitator	X	X	O	O
	Respect to local culture (Cultural responsibility)	X	X	X	O
	Culture pollution/degradation	VH	VH/H	VH/H	L
Social	Reproducing traditional practices (as the guardian of local culture)	X	X	X	O
	Financial Support for local empowerment	X	X	O	O
Education/ awareness building	Support for local social stability and harmony	X	X	X	O
	Building tourist's awareness on environmental uniqueness of destination	X	O	O	O
	Building tourist's awareness on socio-cultural uniqueness of the place	X	X	X	O
	Financial support for local capacity build-ings to be local tourist facilitators	X	X	O	O

Key: O – Intentionally place attention; X – don't place attention; VH – Very High; H – high; L – Low; CC – carrying capacity

4.1.1 Competitive Market Economy Involved Ecotourism (CMEIE)

As indicated in the Table 3 & Fig. 2, the type of ecotourism destinations are characterized by the visitation of irresponsible tourists who primarily seek spiritual renewal and rejuvenation of the mind as the first priority for their holidays to relatively undisturbed/natural/protected areas for enjoying their life. Some tourists identify some destinations as alternative destinations where they can enjoy their lives. Sometimes, such a visitation is a part of multi-purpose trip. Irresponsibility and less commitment (socio-cultural, economic and environmental) of tourists lead to socio-cultural, environmental degradation. However, due to lack of publicity and facilities, the number of visitors is relatively low at the initial stage; hence, the intensity of negative impact on the destination would be low. Furthermore, contribution of such a visitation on fulfilling ecotourism principle is passive.

Because of increasing demand, 'many travel and tourism businesses have found it convenient to use the term 'ecotourism' in their literature, and governments have used the term

extensively to promote their destinations, all without trying to implement it of the most basic principles' (Lindberg, 1991 cited in: [6], p. 472). These type ecotourism destinations are the places where ecotourism is largely hijacked by tourism industry operators in search of competitive advantages. It is evident that higher portion of built, financial, human resources of CMEIE destinations are owned by multinational hotel chains, resorts, tour operators, and powerful foreign/outside owners.

On one hand, CMEIE destinations tend to typify by the characteristics of soft (passive) ecotourism characteristics explained by Weaver and Lowton (cited in: [40]), such as involvement of tourists who embark on relatively multi-purpose trips expect a higher level of comfort and services during their trips, and more likely to rely on interpretation, etc. On the other hand, hoteliers and tour operators of CMEIE destinations place much attention to provide eye-catching service and facilities to attract more tourists, and to give an awareness pertaining to personal safety and security of their customers, but very rarely place attention to provide information related to the sensitive, fragile nature/culture of destinations, negative impact minimizing methods, etc.

Furthermore, highly competitive operators often engage in unfair trade practices in this type of ecotourism that allow them to squeeze economic control from local communities. Hence, Arachchi, et.al [3] says that the ecotourism trapped by hoteliers would mislead the whole ecotourism practice in the country. According to them 'many eco resorts in Sri Lanka are Trojan Horse marketing tourism as environmentally friendly, but in fact destroying every ecosystem they claim to protect' ([3] p. 156). Hence, CMEIE is introducing new problems while deteriorating the existing problems. Therefore, CMEIE cannot be considered as a kind of sustainable tourism activities.

Some ecotourism destinations, located nearby Yala national park, Dambana aboriginal village, Pinnawala elephant orphanage, Ella were given by the key informant as examples for CMEIE destinations. As explained by the tour guide of Yala, the number of visitors and the Jeeps that enter into Yala national park has increased dramatically during the last five years. According to him,

"New Jeep drivers don't care about the conservation principles; the new drivers think only about money, they drive very fast; wildlife behaviors are disturbed by these impolite/irresponsible drivers".

Furthermore, according to him, the situation in Pinnawala elephant orphanage is also same. This ecotourism destination is established to protect elephants, one of charismatic species in Sri Lanka. He argues that although visitors can see many elephants at the destination, due to overcrowded visitors, lack of local participation and ownership of the destination cannot be considered as a genuine ecotourism destination. The situation is more clearly identified at Dambana.

According to Gunawardena (2009, cited in [5]), tourist arrivals to Dambana is about 4000 (3250 domestic tourists and 650 international tourists) per week. The tourism marketing with the label of ecotourism at the destination has gifted good and bad consequences to the place. The aboriginal people (Vadda) produce and sell handicraft, honey, indigenous medicine, etc. to tourists. However, those products are not properly organized and cannot be considered as commercial basic enterprises [5].

According to the aboriginal chief of Sri Lanka, ecotourism of Dambana would benefit them only if the visitors are good people (responsible) who behave well and are willing to help local people. But, according to the key informant,

“Many people come only for enjoying their lives. They don't know the true values of our culture. They do not respect our people. There are many Polythene and plastic containers here and there. We are seen as a tourism attraction by the outside communities but it brought us many negative effects ... There are a lot of interferences from outside societies which disturb our community, culture, and nature. Environmental pollution, environmental changes, landscape changes, new diseases (such as dengue), prostitution (sex tourism) are some of problems which gifted us by this tourism. 'Before [we] faced to this sadness, there was no sickness, no fevers like dengue, nobody ever died in childbirth. Now people are suffering many of problems as outside people. So, we should think about what is the satisfaction. Is it going to the moon? People are not happy. They have destroyed nature and now nature is punishing all of us. There is no way to escape from it'.

Bandara (Undated) also has identified the situation and stresses that 'commercialization, demonstration effect, prostitution, destruction of family relationships, begging, degradation of the environment etc. are becoming prominent' at Dambana ecotourism destination.

Therefore it is clear that many of ecotourism operators of aforementioned destinations (CMEIE destinations) pay less attention (or sometimes do not care about) on the environmental, social, economic, and cultural responsibility and more attention on profit of their business. They are using ecotourism as a label for selling sex tourism or mass tourism without practicing ecotourism principles.

4.1.2. Environmental Responsible Ecotourism (ERE)

Due to involvement of competitive market economy, visiting a large number of tourists, the relatively less or moderate environmental and socio-cultural commitment, etc. visitor-induced environmental pollution and degradation of ecotourism destination are increased. Environmental degradation leads to change the affection negatively that developed based on the previous direct/indirect experiences at the place. 'As an ecotourism destination become more popular, it begins to lose its appeal, thereby prompting operators to move into new, pristine areas, with the cycle repeating itself indefinitely if not controlled' ([7] p. 14). As summarized in Table 3 & Fig. 2, the governmental agencies have taken policy measures to control/minimize environmental pollution, degradation and strengthen nature conservation. Ecotourism business holders, especially hoteliers and tour operators, also have identified that such movements would badly affect their business. Thus, by giving environmental education to the visitors, they try to minimize the tourists' activities that lead to environmental degradation/pollution. On the other hand, through policy instruments, national and local governmental agencies force ecotourism operators to do so. Eco-tourists as well as national and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations directly support for environmental education, nature conservation, and minimize the environmental pollution and

degradation by funding. Therefore, identification and performing some of the environmental responsibilities of visitors and facilitators are main characteristics of this kind of ecotourism destinations. Mostly they conceptualize ecotourism as 'traveling to natural areas for experiencing nature, enjoying life, and learning about nature while contributing to conserving nature, especially in protected areas'. However, due to the involvement of outside hotel chains, leakage of economic benefits away from the destination is prevailing. Hence, some researchers, such as Boo (1990) say that 'ecotourism will never genuinely offer benefits to local people and customers' (cited in [4] p. 156). That is why this kind of ecotourism destinations can be categorized as environmental responsible ecotourism (ERE) destinations.

Horton plain was mentioned as an example for ERE destinations by the key informants. According to landscape manager of a hotel in Nuwaraeliya, due to the world environmental conservation movement, the hotel management has place attention to adopt environment conservation principle to hotel management. Recently they have established a separate land area for a wetland. In the wetland, foreign and local visitors can experience some of wetland flora and fauna species. In addition to that, the hotel management contributes to nature conservation by organizing many workshops for students on global warming, environmental pollution, etc. However, social, cultural and local economic responsibilities have still not been identified as their responsibilities by the operators. Thus, ecotourism operators at ERE destinations have paid sufficient attention on profit maximization, visitor satisfaction, and environmental conservation but have neglected the socio-cultural and economic sustainability of destinations.

4.1.3. Environmental & Economic Responsible Ecotourism (EERE)

Although regional planners introduced ecotourism as a magic panacea for solving socio-economic and environmental problems of rural areas, many researchers have identified that heavy tourist load, economic leakage away from destinations, etc. badly impact on local community and their culture, covering language changes, land tenure, desecration of community life, begging, prostitution and crime, etc. ([7], p 4). But there are some other ecotourism destinations where operators as well as tourists intentionally contribute to local people to upgrade their living standards and economic conditions while contributing to environmental sustainability (Table 3 & Fig. 2). Furthermore, national and regional governmental institutes place attention for integrating ecotourism development into regional development strategies to grasp potential economic benefits of ecotourism to rural development. Hence, locally owned accommodation, tours operators, transport facility providers and so on can be identified at such destinations. Hoteliers and tour operators consider the rural community as a responsible stakeholder for the sustainability of tourism business. That is why ecotourism stakeholders and planners place attention to give education and training to the local community members regarding ecotourism to be a responsible facilitator to their customers. Thus, such ecotourism destinations can be categorized as environmental and local economic responsible ecotourism.

Kumbuk River, Ranpathwila, and Kudawa ecotourism des-

tinations were mentioned by the key informants as EERE destinations in Sri Lanka. Environmental conservation activities of EERE destinations can be divided into two groups: activities done in the resort or hotel land territory and outside their property territory.

As EERE stakeholders, EERE operators also place attention to maintain the quality and natural beauty in their property territory (hotel or resort land area). They follow environmentally friendly techniques and materials for constructions, renewable energy sources, proper waste management practices etc. Most of the facilities of the eco resort cooperate with nature. By explaining those practices, the resort manager says

"We place attention not to use or to minimize much as possible of any artificial materials, such as plastics, Polythene, bricks, concrete, cement for construction. Always we try to go with clay, mud, wood, Iluk (for roofing), etc. They are natural. Even natural material, it is a big investment. For example, Iluk is very costly material. But still, it does not matter. According to our objectives and concept, it is worthy. ... We had to pay a lot of money for mineralized drinking water. So, we did the entire scientific test to establish a river water purification system for fulfilling all water needs of the eco resort. ... Very soon, we are going to go for an alternative energy source, for solar panel".

By explaining the activities which have been done for conserving the nature outside their property territory, the ecotourism resort manager says,

"This area was plundered and vandalized by fortune hunters, by treasure hunters, by loggers, and by poachers. We came here to stop these activities. After we came in, we manage to bring police posts to the destination and to curtail the illegal activities up to a great extent"

In addition to environmental responsibility, they have identified their social responsibility as intentional support to local people for enhancing their livelihood and living standards. By explaining this responsibility, he says that

"We are continuously doing our part to protect biodiversity, to protect the environment, to give sustainable environment, to help the people around here who are one of the poorest in this country, to help the children for their education and for their future, to give opportunity for the villagers to see the world, for children to learn and understand foreign languages, to expose themselves to the world. So, everyone has better future than what they are having now. ... When we came in, the people of the village were very poor; their opportunities were very fewer/limited; they did not have means of income other than treasure hunting, poaching, logging, illegal gem mining. They have done those things for surviving their lives. Then we thought that through this whole project we would be able to provide employment opportunities to the people of the village. As we thought we did. There are six permanent employees working in our resort and all of them are from the village. Furthermore, directly and indirectly nearly 40 families are benefited by our resort".

Ranpathwila destination (which is based on Galkiriyakanda forest reserve, an isolated forest patch of Kurunagala district) and Kudawa ecotourism destinations (which is located in buffer zone of Sinharaja World heritage forest reservoir) provide

evidence of EERE as well as several issues of facing EERE destinations.

Galkiriyakanda forest patch is managed by the Forest Department (FD). However, illegal logging and other activities which lead to forest degradation had been a severe problem before the introduction of ecotourism practice into the area. Natural environment and archaeological monuments of the area are the main features that attract tourists to the place. Now the forest is used as community owned and community managed ecotourism business. For carrying ecotourism activities more effectively, in 2006, the community of the village has established a community-based organization (CBO), called Ranpathwila Ecotourism Foundation (REF), with the help of the FD and other Sri Lanka Australia Natural Resource Management Project. Now, ecotourism has become one of the main alternative economic activities of a considerable amount of local households. As identified by Wickramasinghe [42], about 21 households are directly benefited and another 57 households are indirectly benefited by the ecotourism activities of the area. According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that has been signed by the REF with the FD, 70% of the revenue earned through entrance fees is retained with the CBO. In addition to that, local community can earn money by providing accommodation facilities, foods, etc. to tourists. Few members of the CBO work as interpreters and they provide information on the unique features of the forest reserve, culture and traditions of the village to visitors. Furthermore, the members can invest their net profit which is earned by engaging ecotourism activities for the development of the ecotourism business of the area. After two years, profits will be shared among the investors based on the investment they have made.

Ecotourism development of the area, directly and indirectly, contributes to conserving the Galkiriyakanda forest reserve too. According to the MOU, 30% of the entrance revenue is allocated to the FD for conserving the forest as well as establishing tourist facilities in the forest. Based on the ecotourism practice of the area and its contribution to forest conservation, Wickramasinghe [42] says that 'active community involvement in ecotourism and attitude towards conservation would serve a vital support for the FD ... for carrying out management activities efficiently' ([42], p. 21).

As identified by Wickramasinghe ([42], p. 22) 'sometimes conflicts have arisen among the members of the local community in benefit sharing. Villagers who do not receive direct benefits tend to have a negative attitude. The business has not reached a mature step to fund community development activities and so far has not been able to show the community the benefits that everyone thrives'.

The situation in Kudawa-Sinharaja ecotourism destination is different from Ranpathwila ecotourism destination in several ways. According to the biologists, more than 60% of flora and fauna species in Sinharaja Forest are endemic to Sri Lanka [21]. This rich biodiversity has opened opportunities to develop ecotourism in buffer zone area of the forest. Within a small area, tourists can see a large number of endemic flora and fauna species. Furthermore, natural landscape which consists of many waterfalls and rivers, tree resource based traditional culture, (such as Kitul tapping, bee honey collecting, etc. and handicraft products) do a vital role in attracting tourists to the

destination [21].

More than one-third of villagers are benefited from ecotourism activities. About 36% of the local community of Kudawa GND is involving in ecotourism related activity as their subordinate income generating activity. Villagers are earning money by providing accommodation facilities and services, safari vehicles, and working as drivers, supplying foods, working as tour guides, etc. Governmental and nongovernmental organizations such as *Sewalanka* Foundation and *Gemi Diriya* Project have financially assisted to local people to invest money in ecotourism activities such as establishing accommodation facilities. In addition to that, the land price of the village has been increased due to ecotourism. Traditionally the village has been excluded by high caste people. Therefore, the land price of the village had been very low before the 1980s. Yet the situation has gradually changed after introduction of ecotourism to the destination [21]. However,

1. Now, the villagers not only are in a rat race to earn money but also compete with each other to gain better social states' through ecotourism. It has negatively affected on healthy social relationship among the members of the villages.
2. Many of youth people who are engaging in ecotourism practice ignore the traditional values and practices. This is a common problem in many society in which capitalism is superimposed.
3. Currently, capitalist values and traditional values are mixed up in the area. As a result of these kinds of socio-cultural changes, local people have failed to work as a team (loss of traditional social capital) and most of the senior villagers are worried about this situation.
4. This individualistic culture has led to develop a jealousy competition among very close relatives to achieve higher economic states. 'Even if community based ecotourism targets equality and improvement in the quality of life of the marginalized local community, the individualistic superimposed capitalism structure does not support achieving this goal' (Kumara, 2016, p 147). Unequal distribution of ecotourism generated benefits among the members of the community has resulted unequal development, social conflicts etc.
5. Although Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) aims at enhancing and protecting the traditional culture, under the superimposed capitalism the traditional socio-cultural practices are under threatened; and many of them have been changed.
6. 'Development of ecotourism practices have created a new socio-economic structure in Kudawa-Sinharaja ecotourism site with superimposed values and this structure is different from western capitalism or the traditional Sri Lankan socio-economic system' (Kumara, 2016, p 181).
7. Although some local youth members have established a CBO called '*Sinharaja Sumituro*' with the help of the FD for conserving nature while using its wealth for ecotourism, still youth people have not become the guardian of

the forests and their cultural heritage. They have become only facilitators of the tourist who visits the forest. According to some traditional old tour guides, that is the main reason behind some illegal activities such as wildlife smuggling and forest genetic resource stealing (Kumara, 2016).

Therefore some researchers such as Jamal, Borges & Stronza [18], Kumara [21], have suggested redesigning ecotourism practice with the concepts of cultural equity and participatory practice in order to minimize the aforementioned issues.

4.1.4. Multi- Responsible Ecotourism (MRE)

The fourth type of ecotourism destinations identified in the study is multi-responsible ecotourism (MRE) destinations where genuinely practicing ecotourism principles (Table 3 & Fig. 2). As explained by UNESCO (2007), in many societies, nature, culture, and social heritage are inextricably linked and thus cannot be separated (cited in [12], p. 29). According to some research institutions such as the Australian National Ecotourism Strategy, "natural environment includes cultural components, and that ecologically sustain involves an appropriate return to the local community and long-term conservation of resources" (Allcock et.al, 1994, cited in [7], p. 12). Furthermore, they have identified the role of socio-cultural practices of the local community in conserving the nature. Ecotourism promotes a virtuous circle, whereby tourism revenues provide a local incentives to protect what tourists are coming to see, but extends the principle beyond nature and ecology to incorporate all characteristics that contribute to a sense of place, such as historic structures, traditional culture, landscapes, cuisine, arts and artistry, as well as local flora and fauna ([12], p 14).

To maintain the qualities of the destination, ecotourism operators place attention to prepare travelers for the destination by giving an education related to the culture of the ecotourism destination to behave in a manner that will not obstruct the day to day life of the local community, and tourists can have a participatory education on locale culture.

In addition to that, the cultural impact can often be minimized by involving local communities in decisions that affect them, particularly regarding the kind and amount of tourism that should occur [32]. "The participation of a community in local tourism stimulates locals through arousing a feeling of belonging to that place and making them feels responsible for maintaining their cultural heritage" (de-Costa & Nascimento, 2008, cited in [12], p. 12). Active participation of local community in ecotourism practices will lead "to ensure the intra-generational equity and intergenerational equity" as well as to motivate local communities "to protect or maintain a resource base in a form that is suitable for tourism, if they stand to benefit from it" ([7], p. 12). In other words, it motivates rural communities to work as the guardian of nature where they are living and interacting as well as to be facilitators of ecotourists.

Integration of locale community in ecotourism planning and development leads to keep the number of tourists below the social-cultural and environmental carrying capacity of the ecotourism destination. Host communities and eco-tourists, as

well as other stakeholders, work together for ensuring the sustainability of nature, culture, and ecotourism practice in the destination. In addition to that, MRE is characterized by the characteristics of hard/active ecotourism, such as strong environmental commitment, enhancement sustainability, specialized trip, long trip, small groups, physically active, few if any services expected, emphasis on personal experience (cited in [40]). Furthermore, eco-tourists intentionally support the local community to improve their livelihood and living standards. At this step, ecotourism contributes to the sustainable economic development and cultural reproduction of destination in many ways.

1. It stimulates innovative local enterprises (small businesses, cottage industries, and new jobs) and generates new sources of revenue for ecotourism and eco products.
2. It supports to establish local craft and replicas as well as other local products. The product and services, which tourists can buy, are categorized into two categories; original offers and derived offers (Reynard, 2008 cited in [12]). The original offers consist of the set of eco sites (e.g., ecosystems, biodiversity, landscapes, cultural monuments, traditions, customs, rituals and ceremonies, etc.) while the equipment developed for accommodation and transportation of tourists, specifically derived scientific goods (such as books, maps, guide books, etc.) that facilitate to tourists to experience the original offers, and interpretative services (such as museum, visitor centers, exhibitions) are considered as derived offers. Host communities can sell decorative, ornamental, and commemorative products (such as local handicrafts) as well as edible products ([12], p. 47). Therefore, visitors can actually take away manufactured goods together with emotions and knowledge from tourist destinations. On the other hand, it provides main or supplementary income for many people.
3. It opens the door for ecotourism activities such as walking, cycling, introducing courses on environmental friendly man-environmental relationships, organizing research projects and exhibitions, providing educational packages for schools, etc. All these venues create new job opportunities and market demand for local products.
4. It tries to improve the welfare of local communities through innovative activities and consulting with the local businesses, tour operators, accommodation providers, hoteliers, artists, etc.

Local people also work as facilitators to the eco-tourists to learn about nature, man-environmental relationship (interrelationship between nature and culture), enjoy the life at rural, etc. Then, it helps to achieve the long-term objective of environmental education that changes the attitudes and behaviors of tourists and makes environment-friendly and responsible people. 'Individuals who do not normally consider in any detail their impacts on the environment may adopt a more reflective, sensitive, and enlightened perspective once engaged in ecotourism experiences, which may last beyond the life of that experience' [7], p. 10). Hence, such a participatory environ-

mental education contributes to sustaining the nature, especially biodiversity outside the tourist destinations. 'Local communities can be educated regarding the sensitive nature of natural areas and how best to protect these areas and maximize tourism related revenues and benefits' ([7], p 10).

The Maturajawela Visitor Center (MVC) has been identified as a good ecotourism practice by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) when they compile the good practices related to small and medium ecotourism enterprises [42], [45]. Maturajawela marshes are situated in the Negombo lagoon in Gampaha district. This brackish, integrated coastal ecosystem is the home of many wildlife species including a variety of mangroves and other types of flora species, numerous types of birds, crocodiles and other amphibian species, etc. Because of its biological diversity, the northern section of the wetland has been declared as a wildlife sanctuary in 1996. Aforementioned natural beauty and the canal system which was built by Dutch government about 200 years ago and the lifestyles, as well as culture of local people, attract a vast number of people including eco-tourists, ecologists, bird watchers, students, ecophotographers, poachers, fishermen, etc. Annually, the Maturajawela Visitor Center (MVC) receives about 15,000 visitors per year.

Ecotourism practice of the destination contributes to livelihood development of the local community in many ways. It has created many job opportunities, such as MVC managers, nature guides, boat operators, aides and restaurant staff, etc. Many of these job opportunities have been filled by the members of local community. In addition to that, local community members are earning money by selling local products, including handicrafts at the souvenir shop, providing accommodation facilities, etc. Canoes are hired from fishermen in the area. Thus, it is clear that ecotourism practice of the destination is, directly and indirectly, contributing to economic development of the local people.

Many opportunities are available for the tourists to learn about the traditional lifestyle of fishermen and other inhabitants of the area. But boat trips have been scheduled in the way that to minimize the disturbance to local life and pristine nature.

Then, while utilizing the wildlife sanctuary for ecotourism activities, the MVC has taken many efforts to minimize the visitor-induced negative impacts on nature. It has created awareness among various stakeholders, including governmental bodies, private companies, and local companies on conservation activities and related issues in the area. In addition to that it has voluntarily applied its own codes of conduct to minimize environmental and social impact: for examples, it has limited the number of boat trips per day; it is using only a selected route for boating although there are many canals and waterways available in the area; the boats are equipped with electrical engines in order to minimize the pollution; it encourages visitors to use canoes for their trips; it is practicing environmentally friendly garbage management practices such as converting solid waste into compost fertilizer.

Meemure ecotourism site is another ecotourism destination that can be categorized into MRE. Meemure village is one of the most remote villages located in Kandy district. Further, it is a buffer zone village of Knuckles forest reserve. The only way to reach the destination is from Hunnasgiriya, which is

about 50 km far from Kandy city and about 33 km far from Meemure. Because of its remote location, there is no cellular service or direct mail delivery service available. Before cardamom, cultivation in the forest was prohibited by the government since 1982 under the Forest Conservation Act, cardamom was the main income generating activity of the village. In addition to that, pepper cultivation in the buffer zone and encroached forest area was another economic activity. But now the village basically depends on ecotourism, traditional subsistence agriculture (paddy, homegarden), and forest resource gathering (mainly Kitul- *Caryota urens* L- tapping). Traditionally main meat source of villagers was Knuckles forest. But due to higher demand of tourists, villagers buy broiler chicken from outside markets. Hence, it is clear that ecotourism development of the destination has, directly and indirectly, contributed to the forest and its biodiversity conservation.

Biodiversity, natural landscape, and cultural landscape, traditional cultural practices including rituals, agricultural practices, etc are some of the rural capitals which attract vast numbers of local and foreign visitors to the destination. Villagers charge 1500-2500 rupees per day for accommodation. Each week about 1000-1200 of tourists visit the village. Over 50% of households of the village are involving in ecotourism directly. Therefore, ecotourism has become one of the main income sources of the destination.

There are several activities and sites which tourists can visit engage in, such as tracking in Knuckles forests, Nawarathne waterfall tour, hike to Lakegala, Sooriya Arana water world tour and Taalikata adventure sport place, nitro cave exploration, Heenganga river exploratory tour, and several village programs. Visitors can select what they want to experience and study. Tourists can select few of them as 3 day package tours. Additionally, visitors can experience and actively participate in traditional agricultural practices, such as paddy field preparing, cultivating, harvesting, and processing. They can taste traditional foods such as Madu Pittu, buy traditional handicrafts, food products, non-timber forest products, experience traditional clothes in Sri Lanka, learn traditional irrigational techniques, gardening techniques, dam techniques, crop preservation techniques, music, and folk drama/ritualistic practices such as Shantikarma (devil dance), and can see traditional, environmentally friendly housing methods and utensils which are using for agriculture, cooking, etc. Therefore, this tourist destination works as a living Museum of traditional culture.

However, on the other hand villagers have placed attention to minimize the damage of their customers to their pristine nature and culture by practicing the following measures;

1. Isolating some traditional practices from outsiders who do not care about traditional values of village;
2. Separating tourists and household members by establishing traditional huts/cabanas/tents for tourists away from the accommodation of the household;
3. building huts/cabanas by using natural and traditional materials (many of them are free of charge), so, anyone of the village can start ecotourism business;

4. mixing modern technology, facilities with traditional architecture and practices for ensuring hygiene, satisfaction, security, and minimize waste and resource usages;
5. Working as a group to minimize cost, ensure security, minimize customer induced environmental and socio-cultural pollution, expand profit, etc;
6. Use rumors and real incidents/accidents to control tourists' misbehaviors;
7. Practicing their own codes of conducts to minimize pollution, waste management, and ensure the visitor's satisfaction;
8. Use 'Facebook' social network to advertise the destination and individual accommodation providers;
9. Provide opportunity to tourists to learn local culture and nature through participatory observation and discuss with community members;

Aforementioned activities evident that the destination practicing ecotourism principles genuinely. Thus, local community has become the gradient of rural capital of destination and facilitator to tourists. Therefore, Meemure and Maturajawela ecotourism destinations can be identified as sites which fulfill multiple responsibility of ecotourism and contribute to sustainable rural development.

5 CONCLUSION

The notion of development in the traditional rural context in Sri Lanka encapsulates not only economic development (livelihood development) but also maintaining the natural wealth of their land, empowerment of local people, and reproduction of traditional social-cultural value systems, norms, practices, etc. It can be achieved through ecotourism, if genuinely practiced ecotourism principles. However, due to various natural and socio-spatial reasons, there is a spatial variation of application of ecotourism in Sri Lanka. Some of the ecotourism practices are deteriorating socio-cultural, economic, and environmental conditions of rural areas while multi-dimensional ecotourism contributes to SRD in Sri Lanka. Therefore the ecotourism practice of many places should embrace multi-dimensional ecotourism to achieve sustainable rural development through ecotourism. Thus, responsible agencies should take sufficient efforts to classify ecotourism destinations periodically and should take necessary measures to transform irresponsible ecotourism destinations towards multi-responsible ecotourism.

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