

THE LANDSCAPE AND THE TOURIST ATTRACTION: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO NUWARA-ELIYA, SRI LANKA.

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Abstract

This research investigates the link between landscape and tourist attraction in Sri Lankan context. Tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner of the country and the landscape is the main tourist attraction. But there is no proper identification on the significant factors which attract tourists to those landscapes.

A well adopted tourism landscape of Nuwara-Eliya city was selected as the case study. Three most attractive locations t Nuwara-Eliya; Lake Gregory premises, Moon Plains and Mackwood-

The literature review identified six "landscape aspects" and nine "landscape components" which attract tourists to landscapes. Those aspects were "experiential", "ideological", "imaginary", "out of ordinary", "unspoilt", and "scenic" and the components were "flora & fauna", "settlements", "enclosure", "memories", "land use", "sound", "sight", "land form" and "air/climate". Thus, the study investigates which landscape aspect attracts the tourists in to a landscape and which landscape component becomes most significant and why it becomes that much significant for visitors. Mixed method of qualitative and quantitative surveys with in-situ observations, questionnaire based interviews and photographic analysis were used for data collection with thirty randomly selected tourists as the sample.

This study reveals that landscape aspect which attract tourists differ with most significant landscape component of the space. One landscape component could play different roles in different landscapes. Tourist attraction to a landscape is proportional to the endurance of most significant landscape component. Further, it was found that the visual perception is the ultimate satisfaction of tourists. The outcome of the study could be used as a design tool in the landscape architectural design developments to sustain the tourism landscapes.

Key words: Landscape, tourist attraction, landscape aspect, landscape component, visual perception.

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Introduction

“Visiting a city and being attracted by its features may not be the same” (Ashworth, 2011). Tourism is a popular leisure activity all over the world. Sri Lanka has become a well-known tourist destination. Foreign tourists from different parts of the world are attracted to the country. Each and every city of the island has a unique aspect of attraction which is different from another.

Tourism is the third largest export earner of the Sri Lankan economy, after garments and foreign remittances. Sri Lanka Tourism Authority intends to develop the country as a place for memorable, authentic and diverse experiences by 2025. In order to realize the objective it is essential to enhance the essence of the landscapes scattered all over the country. In this regard the landscape architects, architects, and town planners have an important role to play in improving and sustaining the physical environment.

Research Issue and objectives

Being a developing country and according to the Tourism development strategy 2017 – 2020, to be the world’s finest country to be travelled, it is a must to recognize tourist attraction potentials or tourist attractions of the landscape and enhance them.

There are certain landscapes which attract tourists in numbers, but not clearly defined. In such situations most probably the “attractions” fades or the particular essence of landscape degrades. But preserving and conserving landscapes is mandatory in new architectural and town development projects to sustain the tourist attractions or demands on the landscape. This study has focused on the issues of how to minimize negative impacts and how to implement landscape architectural solutions by identifying the most significant aspects, components and their essence. Based on above issue, this research was conducted focusing three major objectives. Those are, “is there any significant aspect in a landscape for develop in to a tourist attraction? Secondly, “What are the most significant landscape components which attracts tourists in to that landscape? Finally “Why have those components become significant for visitors?”

Theoretical background and theoretical framework

The theoretical basis of the research was based on the theories and statements of scholars, on landscapes and tourist attraction. There are several theories on the subject but the study has selected few which are impressive and highly related to the selected issues.

Kjersti Larsen (2000) in the article “The Other side of Nature: expanding tourism changing landscapes and problems of privacy in urban Zanzibar”. The significant statement in the article is being employed in this study as a basic theory. It is,

“Tourism is about people travelling in order to expand their experiential, imaginary, and ideological landscapes” (Larsen, 2000, p. 199).

Jhon Urry is a well-known British sociologist and he is well-recognized for his work in the fields of the sociology of tourism and mobility. In his book “The Tourist Gaze” he has noted about the

tourist attraction on landscapes deeply. One of those was also employed as a basic theory in this study.

“Tourists are searching for a set of different scenes of landscapes or townscape, something out of the ordinary, the unspoilt countries or places or landscapes”(Urry, 2002)

CarysSwanwick,, in his guidance book that he has done behalf of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, “Landscape character assessment, guidance for England and Scotland”, states ,

The Landscape results from the way that different components of our environment - both natural and cultural - interact together and are perceived by us and People’s perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape. This is not just about visual perception, or how we see the land, but also how we hear, smell and feel our surroundings, and the feelings, memories or associations that they evoke(Swanwick, 2002, p. 2).

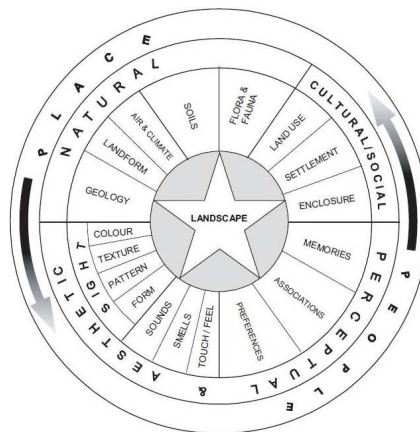


Fig. 3: Landscape component model by Swanwick
Source: author

For the further explanation, he developed a model which describes whole above statement. That is employed as the third theoretical base for this study.

The factors which were most appropriate for the study have been identified. The procedure of selecting suitable factors, can be categorized under three aspects; Strong link to the scope of the study, Relationship to the particular landscape context and Ability in measure within the study limitations. Factors which were in accordance with the above three categories were selected for further studies.

Through the literature review it was identified that a “tourism landscape” contains landscape aspects and landscape components. The study was carried out with critically selected six landscape aspects and nine landscape components. Those selected aspects are “experiential”, “imaginary”, “ideological”, “out of the ordinary”, “scenic” and “unspoilt”.

The landscape components which influence the landscape attraction are, “land use”, “settlement”, “enclosure”, “memories”, “sound”, “sight”, “land form”, “air & climate” and “flora and fauna”.

Methodology

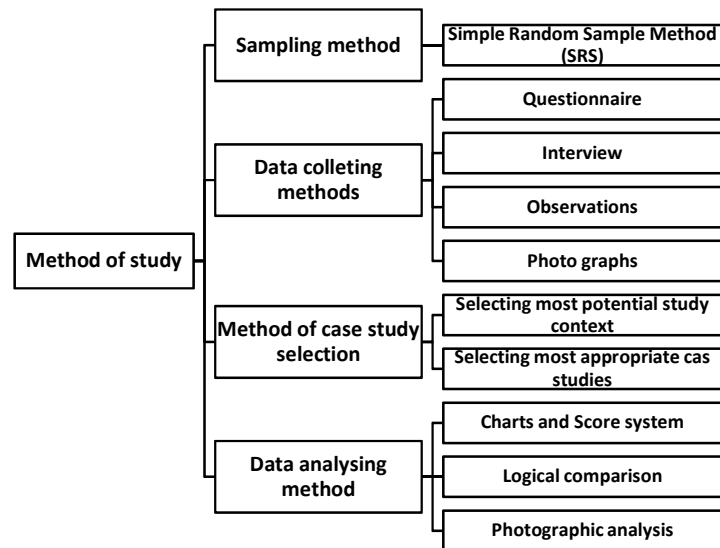


Fig. 4: The method of study
Source: author

The study was carried through five stages. They are, Literature survey, Case study selection, Detail survey, Data analysis, Conclusion. At the first stage, a thorough literature survey was carried out and three theories were selected as the basis of the study.

Secondly the case study selection is done with a pilot questionnaire. It was given to randomly selected tourists who were walking and roaming at the streets, who were sitting at the restaurants and pubs and who stay freely at outdoors. Based on the data and considering the limitations of the study the most attractive landscapes are selected.

A detail survey was done after selecting the case studies. The sample was some randomly selected tourists. Size of the sample was thirty in number. A mix method of qualitative and quantitative survey was followed. All the respondents were faced a questionnaire, meanwhile an interviews were carried out collect data.

In the analysis phase, theories were tested relevant to the case studies. Using Excel spread sheets, Charts and a photographic analysis, the raw data was analyzed. Based on the analysis of the data the conclusions and outcomes of the study were developed.

Method of case study selection

The case study selecting procedure was done through two stages. Those are, Identification of the most potential study context and sites and selection of most significant case studies.

The study was about the landscape and tourist attraction. According to the Tourism Development Strategy 2017 - 2020 Nuwara-Eliya is one of a destination which links the most popular touring routes of Sri Lanka. Landscape of Nuwara- Eliya is the most significant attraction to the city. Therefore, this hill country city was selected as the area of study.

Three of most significant sites were selected as specific case studies. The reason to reduce the case studies in to three cases is to achieve a quality outcome within the limited time frame. The main considerations in selecting those three case study areas were, Hierarchy of the attractiveness, Intensity of the tourism use according to Bogdan Włodarczyk, (2009), Location and the accessibility (Spaces located within near proximity of the Nuwara-Eliya town), Ease of study (Capability according to the limited time frame and resources).

Nuwara-Eliya as the study context

Nuwara-Eliya has its own unique geographical, historical and cultural features. This is one of a popular tourist destination and links the most popular touring route through hill country, Sri Lanka. The land has variety and complex of landform features like mountain, ranges, mountain summits, denuded plateaus, plains, parallel ranges, valleys and slopes. As Nuwara-Eliya is well known for its tourist attractions there is a great potential for an expanded tourist industry that would contribute much to the growth of economy. The natural resources of tourist attraction must be immediately protected by strong enforcement as nature based tourism is a source of foreign exchange in addition to stimulating local economics and creating employment.

Case study one – Lake Gregory premises

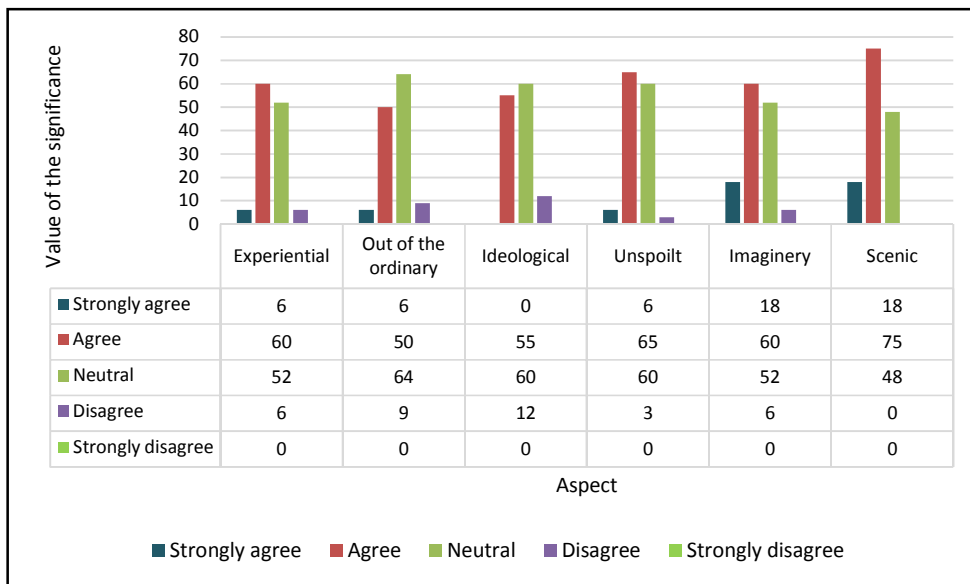


Fig. 3: Significant aspect of Lake Gregory premises
 Source: author

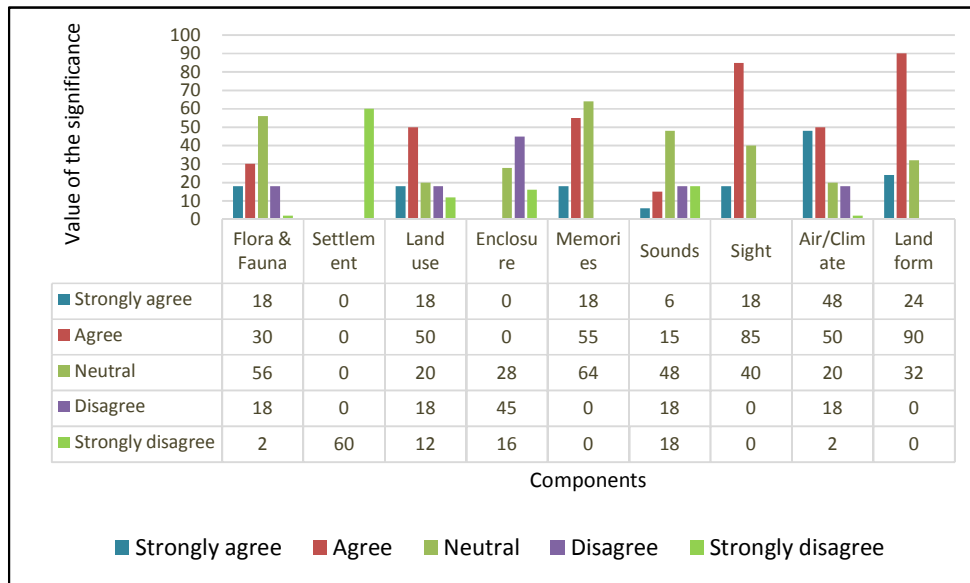


Fig. 4: Significant landscape component of Lake Gregory premises
 Source: author

Analysis of case study one – Lake Gregory premises

Considering above data the lake Gregory premises is an experiential landscape. On the other hand, the most significant landscape component of this landscape is “settlement” or the built environment. Below fig. 5 is a section through the lake Gregory premises.

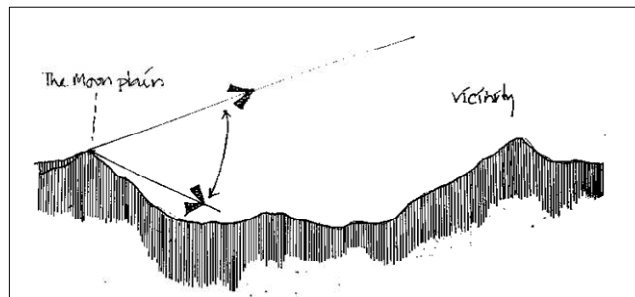


Fig. 5: Sketchy section from Gregory lake park to hills beyond the lake to show the land form & the vertical view
 Source: author

According to above sectional illustration, most significant component or the “Settlement” was a burrowed component to the site. Those are located in a separate place but when considering the spatial setting, all the settlement and the certain site is sharing the same space. Usually the Settlement pattern of the hill side is linear. But here, the settlement beyond the waterbody follow nucleated pattern (Fig. 6). And covered most of land of the single hills beyond the lake Gregory. The “pattern” of the settlement can be proposed as a reason for the “Settlement” component to be the most significant landscape component there. According to its eye catching aesthetics.

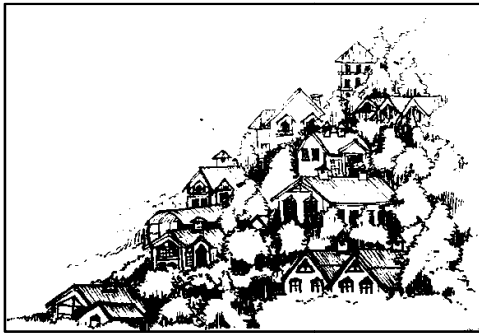


Fig. 6: Detailed sketch of the nucleated “settlement” pattern.
Source: author

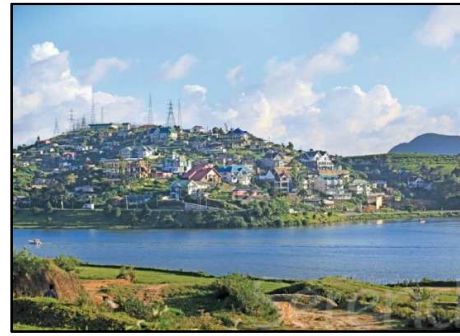


Fig. 7: The “Settlements” beyond the lake
Source: <http://serendib.btoptions.lk>

When considering about the landscape aspect more, this landscape is an experiential landscape where someone is able to gain a perceptual involvement based on experience and observation. As people can have a clear view of the settlement from the lake Gregory site (the backdrop of the lake) and the surrounded landscape. The comfortable eye soothing distance from site to the settlement may be another reason for this result. When stand on the pathway beside the lake facing it, eye level settle at upper edges of mountain range around the lake site. And one can observe the settlement without eye fatigue (Fig. 5). Therefore another reason for the result of r can be identified as the better positioning of viewer. Visual experience is more dominant than the physical experience as the effectiveness of the views and vistas are intensive.

The components like, “sound”, “Flora & Fauna” “Air & Climate” and partially the “Sight” were the components which provide a physical experience to the visitors. Among them, while the “Air & Climate” was rated intensively more than others but least than the “Settlement” by the respondents and the “Sound” component became the least significant component among the least.

There is no proper vehicles park at site. Landscape architectural solutions have not been adopted to avoid or minimize the issue creating very unpleasant physical setting for the visitors. Most of the plants are floral species and Conifer trees. They are providing a visual experience to visitors. But the visitors may not fully satisfy with this component according to their responses. As tourists are travelling around the world and they usually comparing one place with another and they search for new experiences. Therefore, the pre-experiences of tourists ought to be one reason for the “Neutral” responses for this component.



Fig. 8: The queue of vehicles at the site
Source: <https://www.booking.com>

The “land use” component plays a major role. At Lake Gregory premises both of land use types of built fabric and greeneries can be seen. With respect to the most significant “Settlement” component, the most dominant land use type at lake Gregory landscape is the Built fabric. The reason for negative responses for the “Unspoilt” aspect may be the rapid growth of buildings scattered within the lake Gregory site. The perception of the tourists may be, the natural essence and the aesthetics of the site are marred with the growth of the built fabric within the site. Buildings and some landscape developments which have been built without considering the existing scenic beauty and the ideology of the setting ought to be a severe issue which disturbs the tourist attraction there. As a result, rise of the “Unspoilt” aspect may be a cause which lowers the strongly positive responses for the “Experiential”, “Scenic”, “Ideology”, “Imaginary” aspects.

Water body is the most dominant landscape element at the site. Most eye catching natural phenomenon which attracts tourists may be the reflection of skyline and mountains on the still water plain which can be mostly seen at the morning. When talking about the natural beauty parameter, most dominant variable is the mountains at backdrop. And considering management activities, land flattened and land cleared areas can be seen beyond the water body but those ought to be reducing the attraction as those activities change the physiognomy of the landscape.

Based on the above, it is clear that the lake Gregory landscape is mostly an experiential landscape with the contribution of all the landscape components in various amounts. But the major attraction among all the landscape components at the site is the “Settlement” and it provides a great visual experience for the tourists.

Case study two – Moon plain

Moon plains declared to open for public on 2014. It is classified as an Agricultural and Environmental Tourism zone by the municipal council of Nuwara-Eliya. The landscape is situated 4.7 km away from the city center and accessed passing the Government Potato Seed farm at Nuwara-Eliya. Located middle of mountain ranges and hills. It gives a 360° panoramic view of the surrounded landscapes. Piduruthalagala mountain, Namunukula mountain, Kirigalpoththa mountain, Thotupalakanda mountain, Hakgala mountain, Kikiliyamana mountain, Single tree mountain and Great western mountains can be seen with their mountain silhouettes of the infinity. This landscape is a home for Elks, wild buffalos, various kinds of monkeys and birds.

Fig. 9 explains the tourist perception on the value of significance of landscape aspect and landscape components at Moon plain.

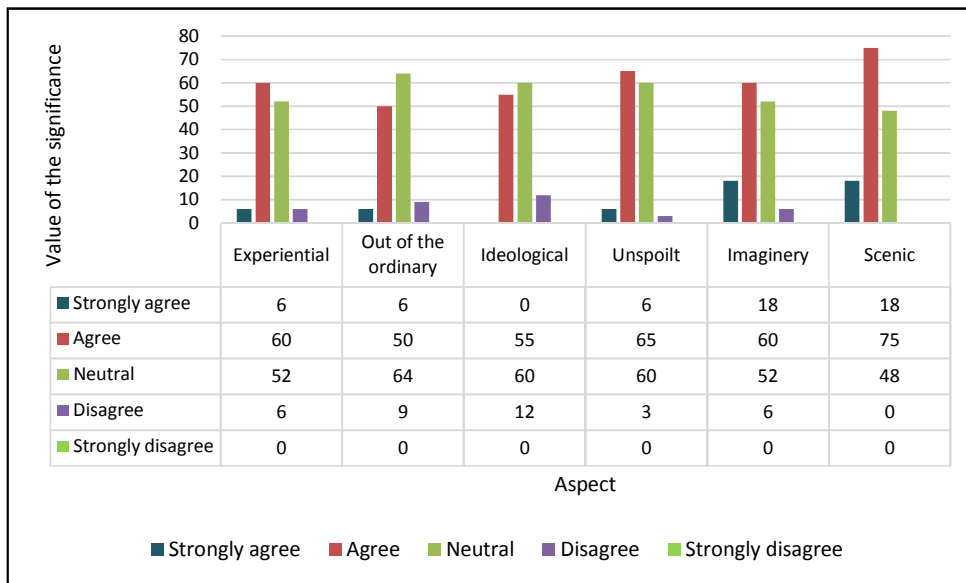


Fig.9: Significant aspect of Moon plain

Source: author

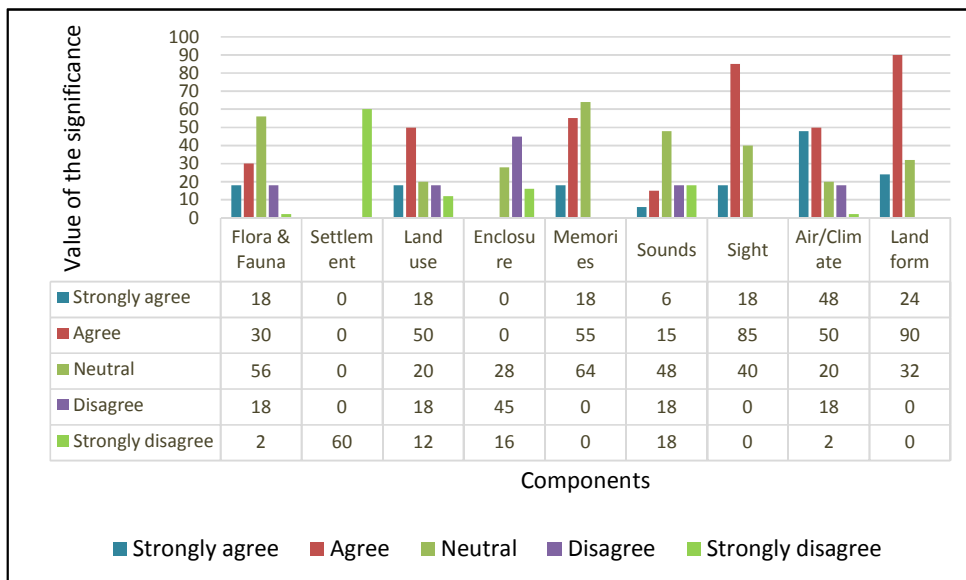


Fig. 10: Significant landscape component of Moon plain

Source: author

Analysis of case study two – Moon plain

Considering and logically comparing the above data, it is clear that the Moon plain landscape is a “Scenic landscape”, and the most significant landscape component of the site is the “Land form”. The fig. 11 is a section sketch from climax of the Moon plain to a nearest hill.

The landform of this area is full of hills, slopes and the peak of the Moon plain is a flat area. One of the reasons for the “land form” to become the most significant landscape component in this area would be the “wavy setting of the land. The most aspect is that one can observe purely natural waves of the topography or most of the land form characteristics here at the Moon

plain. The climax view point of the Moon plain gives a panoramic view which settle the eye to the infinity or the on the peek edges of the mountain ranges located vary far such as Namunukula.

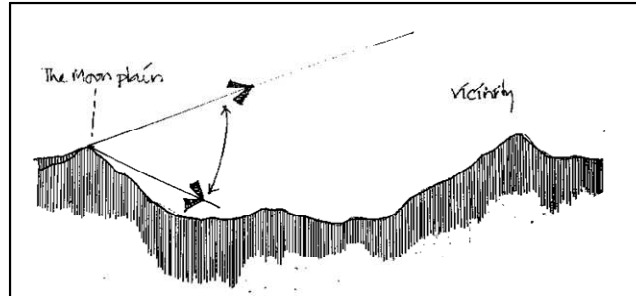


Fig. 11: Sketchy section from Moon plain peak to a nearest hill – land form
Source: author

Other than 360°horizontal panoramic view, another most attractive asset of the place is the vertical view plane of more than 90°. Considering all above, most related reason for the scenic aspect of this landscape is the unlimited burrowed landscapes beyond the physical boundary of the site and the 360°panoramic view plus vistas. The “Imaginary” aspect scored higher than the “Scenic” and “Unspoilt” aspects.

The “Sight”, it is the most attractive, most significant landscape component according to the data. There four variables of the component together create the attraction to the site.

Colour, fluctuates within the greenish and bluishrange. All together the colour of the landscape is very sober bluish green in the macro scale, due to the wilderness which creates the natural boundary between the Central and Uva provinces, the mountain ranges, agricultural areas and other natural and man-made plantations. This tone is a main reason for the “sight” to be a significant component within Moon plain.



Fig. 12: Panoramic view through the peak of the moon plain
Source: <http://www.moonplains.lk>

The land form is the most dominant appearance of the form h at the Moon plain. The mountains, hills, basins, terrains and terraces all together represent the form here.

The clusters of various species of hill country vegetation, decorate or sometimes changes the land form and create attractive landscapes. If flora and fauna adjacent as a component, the unique species of the “Fauna” at the Moon plains attract tourist separate with the flora.

The texture, at Moon plains varies with the scale. Further the scale fluctuates with the distance. In considering the aerial view of the macro scale mosaic of the site and the surrounding, a textural pattern can be identified which have three main belts (Fig. 13). The texture of the vicinity and the immediate landscape is the most significant texturally. It highlights and embosses the far landscapes.

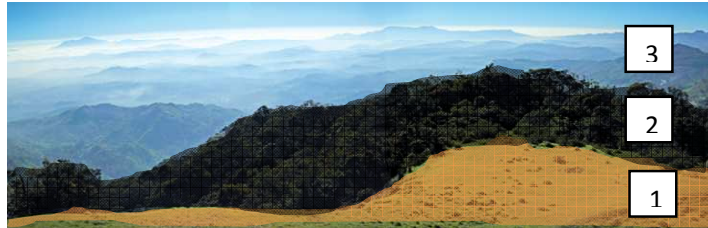


Fig. 13: The textural pattern belts – created with the flora with respect to the scale
Source: author

If the “land form” is the most dominant component which empowers the “Scenic” of the Moon plain, there are four other parameters and variables which fluctuate the “Scenic” aspect of the space. One of them is the “land use” and it is a landscape component. When considering the land use, the only variable is the man-made Greenery at the Moon plain. The Potato seed farm (Fig. 14) can be seen within the vicinity and estates at the Single tree hill and other far away agricultural fields can be seen from there.



Fig. 14: Journey through Potato seed farm
Source: <http://www.moonplains.lk>



Fig. 15: Scenic beauty – burrowed landscapes to the infinity.
Source: <http://www.moonplains.lk>

In considering the “natural beauty”, “natural greeneries and natural mountain ranges are the elements which attract the tourists intensively.

Responses for the “Enclosure” component is bias towards the negative side. The reason for the result could be the power of the climax space. Degree of enclosure is mostly nonexistent at the climax space of the moon plain. Tourists respond to the questions after the journey and the attractiveness of the climax fades the sceneries of the route up to the Moon plains. The authorities provide Safari jeeps to travel up to the plain and visitors spend more time at the climax than the time of the drive. All those factors contribute to the responses.

Reason for the considerable amount of responses for the “Experiential” aspect at the site is due to both the visual and physical experience. “Fauna”, the sub component is playing a major role here. The Elks or the most dominant fauna species at the site creates a visual experience and the trekking up to the peak of the Moon plains gives a physical experience for the tourists. Considering all aforementioned factors and findings, It can be proposed that the “land form” component is the most significant factor to Moon plain to be a “Scenic landscape” for the tourists while the other factors contribute in various ways .

Case study three – Tea plantation (Mackwoods – Labookellie)

“The tea fields of Ceylon are as true a monument to courage as is the lion of Waterloo.”
 -Sir Arthur Conon Doyle.

Sri Lanka is one of world’s largest tea exporters. In middle 19 century Nuwara-Eliya was the capital of Tea industry and in current situation there are more than 21 estates at Nuwara-Eliya district. In the case of Ceylon tea, Sri Lanka is world famous not only for the taste of it but also the mesmerizing beauty of the numbers of acres of tea fabric at the hill country and especially at Nuwara-Eliya.

MackwoodsLabookellie is the major tea fabric which covers the both sides of Chenkaladi road (Kandy to Badulla) that tourists use to visit or gaze while travelling. There is a tea center there at the entrance and beyond it the tourists can experience the view, tea plucking and hike beneath the tea plantations as well.

Fig. 16 describes the tourist perception on the value of significance of landscape aspect and landscape components at Tea plantation (Mackwoods – Labookellie).

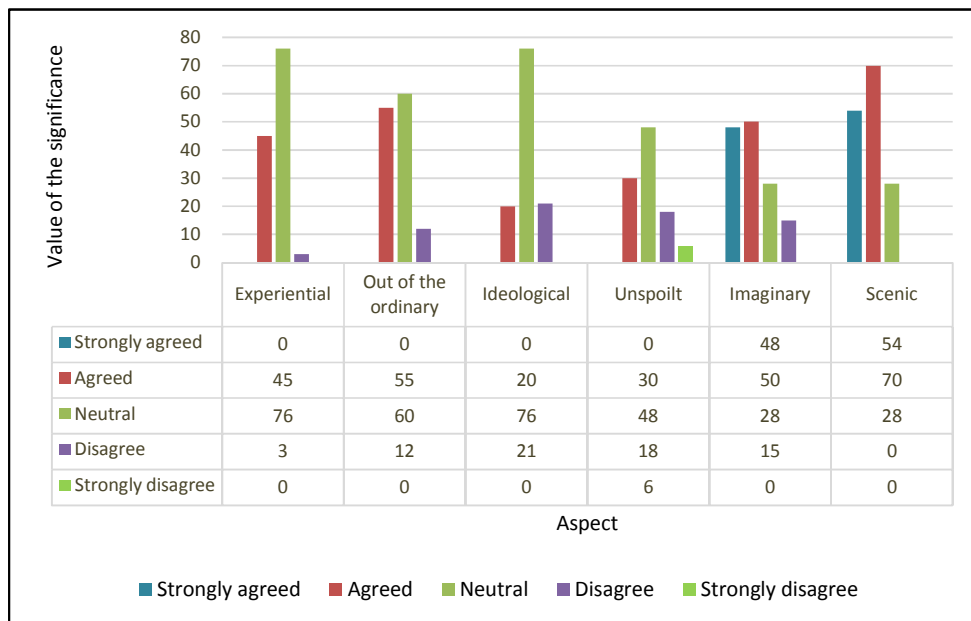


Fig. 16: Significant aspect of Tea plantation
 Source: author

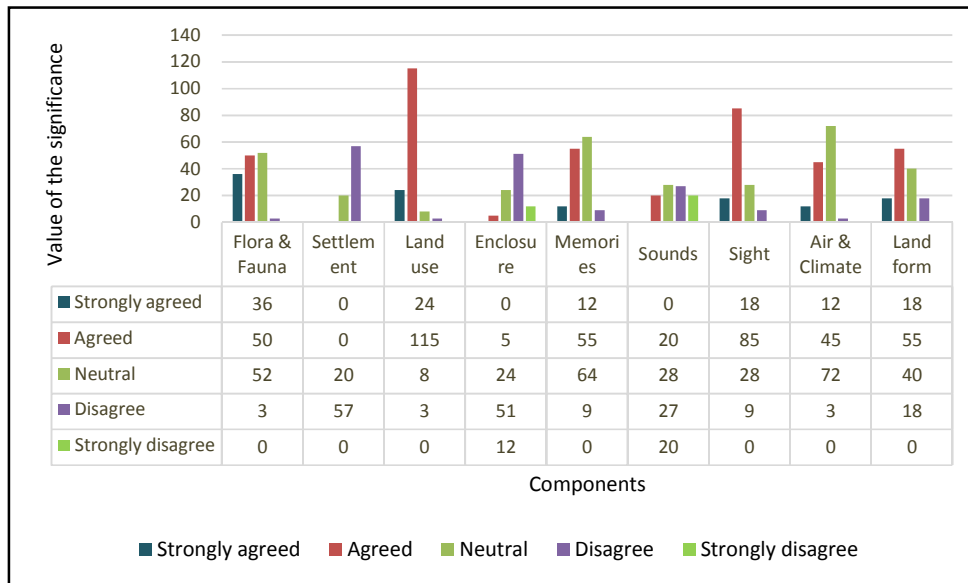


Fig. 175: Significant landscape component of Tea plantation
 Source: author

Analysis of case study three – Tea plantation (Mackwoods – Labookellie)

The Tea plantation landscape becomes mostly a “Scenic landscape”, according to the study. The most significant landscape component was the land use in this site, which was created by British and still it is keeping the same essence of the character of the tea plantation. It seems more scenic with the wavy topography of the hill country (Fig. 18).



Fig. 18: The wavy land form at tea plantation
 Source: <http://www.google.lk>

The “Sight” is the second most significant component of the site. The sight component contains four sub components named colour, texture, form and pattern. Tourists are attracted to the site by a combination of those four variables.

The colour variable does not changes a lot in the site as it is a monoculture plantation. It fluctuates within the dark to light green range of the colour spectrum. The land form is completely a neutral wave type land form here with greenish hills and watery low lying. That combination of hard and soft landscape materials under the component of sight also is also an attraction for the tourists. The “texture” and “pattern”, are coherent with each other and

contrasting variables which can be seen within the site. The texture fluctuates with the scale. Fig. 19 elaborated a texture of the tea plantation with respect to the immediate vicinity, due to the macro scale mosaic of the tea plantation landscape.



Fig.19: The patterns & textures
Source: author

The “flora”, is a monoculture in the tea plantation as above explained. The “Flora” sub component is a reason for the “Scenic” and the “Experiential” aspects of the landscape as it creates a visual experience.

The isolated single trees planted in middle of the tea clusters occupy the vertical plain of the space. Such trees create a natural screen which breaks the monotony of aesthetic at the site when gazing the tea scape while riding or driving.

“Ideological” aspect, received more neutral responses. The negative responses are higher than the positive responses. This conveys that this landscape is least ideological landscape. Most tourists who were respondents of the survey may have no idea about the history or the evolution of the tea plantation. However, the tea plantations are significant landscapes which is strongly linked to the historical political ideology or the British imperial power.

Overall analysis

The tabular and charted data expressed the significance of the aspects and the significance of landscape components of selected three cases at Nuwara-Eliya. Attraction of those aspects and component seems having an interaction with each other according to the analysis. The comparison of the three landscapes, is expresses the overall landscape attraction of Nuwara-Eliya.

When considering the landscape aspects, “Scenic” was the most significant while “Experiential” become the second best. And the least significant aspect was the “unspoilt” aspect.

In considering the three landscapes the reasons which caused for the “scenic” to be significant was the “settlements”, “land form” and “land use”. It is clear that the overall landscape of selected sites of Nuwara-Eliya is a “scenic landscape” and the major reason for that ought to be the “land use”.

Furthermore, the least responded aspect of all three landscapes was the “unspoilt” aspect. The “unspoilt” aspect of a landscape can be measured by the gross ratio of the built fabric to the gross ratio of the green fabric. Most spoiled landscape on this indicator is the lake Gregory premises, and the most undisturbed landscape is the “Moon plain”. The “settlement” component was less in both of the landscapes. But in Tea plantation landscape, the “unspoilt” aspect scores not low compared the Moon plain. It shows that the “settlement” is not the component which causes the “unspoilt” aspect.

Another important finding was on the “ideological” aspect. The ideology behind the of the Tea plantations and the lake Gregory landscapes are very important they are products of economics

and political action. But tourists have given very low responses for the ideological aspects. It argues that the tourists are only considering the aesthetic perception and the current landscape components of the site than looking deep in to the ideology of the landscape.

Conclusion

Studies on the “landscape and the tourist attraction” have become an important inlandscape as well as in tourism research because of the rapid development of “landscape tourism”. Landscape architects are the personals who have a huge responsibility to shape the landscape for people while keeping the genuine and authentic essence of the landscape. Any interference which will be done without adetailed investigation on “tourist attraction”, will degrade the attractive characteristics of landscape or sometimes whole essence of the landscape will be lost. The “attraction” is an unintentional sense and tourism meant not to force but to flow. The study has shown that landscape architects, architects, town planners and designers have an important role to play to “sustain” the attraction of the “tourism landscapes” in Sri Lanka. Further, the theoretical framework of this study can be used to drive researches on other intensive “tourism landscapes” in Sri Lanka.

Finally, the study concludes that to sustain the “tourism attraction” on landscape, the attractive components should be investigated, should be preserved, improved and sustained before they will be lost forever.

Recommendations for future studies

This study opens a new dimension in research area of the link between the landscape and the tourist attraction and can be used as a base for the future researches on aspects such as,

- The relationship between the visual landscape perception and the tourist attraction.
- Factors influencing to degrade the ideological aspect of tourism landscapes.

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