

Study on Community Involvement in the Development of Tourism in Coastal Regions of Passikudah and Kalkudah, Batticaloa, Srilanka

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master
of Spatial Planning, Management and Design

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DECLARATION

I, Mr. P.Surenthira, hereby declare that the Thesis/Dissertation titled "Community Involvement in the Development of Tourism in Coastal Regions of Passikudah-Kalkudah, Batticaloa, Srilanka" is my own work and does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a Degree or Diploma in any other University or institute of higher learning. The information presented in this dissertation is accurate and original to the best of my knowledge, and all sources used have been appropriately acknowledged. I confirm that this dissertation has not been submitted for any other academic award or degree, and it is a result of my independent research. I understand that any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty is strictly prohibited and will lead to the rejection of this work.

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the relationship between community empowerment, community support, and the development of coastal tourism in the Passikudah–Kalkudah region of Sri Lanka. Recognized as one of the nation’s emerging marine tourism zones, the area has undergone rapid transformation following the end of the civil conflict and post-tsunami recovery initiatives.

The study examines how empowering local communities and fostering their participation in tourism planning and management can lead to more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable tourism development. It aims to identify the extent to which community empowerment influences community support for tourism and how this, in turn, affects tourism growth within the coastal zone.

A quantitative research design with a positivist approach was adopted, using structured questionnaires distributed to 384 respondents comprising local residents, tourism workers, and industry professionals. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), applying descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation, regression, and mediation analyses. The findings revealed strong positive correlations between community empowerment, community support, and tourism development ($r > 0.85$). Regression results confirmed that community empowerment significantly influences both community support ($\beta = 0.854$) and tourism development ($\beta = 0.869$). Mediation analysis further indicated that community support significantly mediates the relationship between community empowerment and tourism development (indirect effect = 0.4323, $p < 0.05$).

The study concludes that sustainable coastal tourism depends on empowering local communities to actively participate in decision-making and ensuring that tourism benefits are equitably distributed. It highlights that empowered communities not only strengthen their support for tourism initiatives but also contribute to improved environmental management, cultural preservation, and socio-economic growth. The research

recommends the establishment of a formal stakeholder engagement platform, targeted capacity-building programs, and inclusive policy frameworks to enhance community-driven tourism. The outcomes contribute to the body of knowledge on community-based tourism (CBT) and offer policy insights for developing sustainable coastal tourism models applicable to other regions in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Community empowerment, community support, tourism development, coastal regions, Passikudah, Kalkudah, sustainable tourism, mediation analysis, Sri Lanka.

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