

**A STUDY ON THE FACTORS AFFECTING A
LOCALITY TO BECOME A POPULAR TOURISM
DESTINATION: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
BADULLA**

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Degree of Master of Science in Environmental Planning

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work and this thesis/dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any other University or Institute of higher learning and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgement is made in the text. I retain the right to use this content in whole or part in future works (such as articles or books).

Signature:

Date:

The above candidate has carried out research for the PhD/MPhil/Masters thesis/dissertation under my supervision. I confirm that the declaration made above by the student is true and correct.

Name of Supervisor:

Signature of the Supervisor:

Date:

DEDICATION

To my dearest little daughter, Tiana Ganepola, this dissertation is a testament to the joy and inspiration you bring into my world. And to my loving husband and family, whose unwavering support made this possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to the completion of my thesis on a study on the factors affecting a city to become a popular ecotourism destination: with special reference to Badulla municipality. Special thanks to my dedicated supervisor, and special thanks to my dedicated supervisor Dr. Chethiks Abenayake, for her invaluable guidance and unwavering support. I am also grateful to the MSc course coordinator, the Head of the Department of Town and Country Planning, all lecturers, and technical staff for their assistance and insights. My appreciation extends to the Commissioner, Secretary, and staff of the Badulla Municipal Council, the Provincial Director of Tourism, and officials from the Uva Provincial Council and the Central Environmental Authority for their cooperation. Their contributions were essential to the successful completion of my research. I am thankful for the enriching academic environment provided by the department and the support of my family and friends throughout this journey.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine the factors hindering the development of Badulla Municipality as a popular ecotourism destination, with a focus on sustainable tourism practices. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative and qualitative data collection through surveys and in-depth interviews with stakeholders. The research investigates tourists' experiences, motivations, and satisfaction levels, alongside key factors such as natural beauty, cultural heritage, and their influence on tourism popularity. Quantitative data analysis, including descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, reveals a preference for eco-tourism activities, particularly hiking and trekking, among the 25–34 age group. Social media and word-of-mouth emerge as significant influencers of travel decisions. While tourists report high overall satisfaction, challenges related to accommodations, transportation, and infrastructure are highlighted. Correlation analysis shows complex relationships between demographic factors and satisfaction levels across eco-tourism aspects. The findings of the Grounded theory of qualitative analysis emphasize the need for a strategic, sustainable approach to developing Badulla's tourism potential. Key recommendations of this study include enhancing marketing strategies, fostering stakeholder collaboration, addressing environmental conservation, and improving infrastructure. Additionally, the research suggests further comparative studies and long-term strategies to optimize Badulla's eco-cultural tourism development and support local authorities in policy planning.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Badulla Municipality, Mixed-methods approach, demographic factors, sustainable tourism development

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
MC	Municipal Council
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
WTO	World Tourism Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
USA	United States of America
EA	Eco-tourism Australia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
GTA	Green Tourism Association
UGT	Urban Green Tourism
UN	United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SLTDA	Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
NEA	National Environmental Act
BMC	Badulla Municipal Council
GND	Grama Niladhari Divisions
DSD	Divisional Secretariat Division
BU	Built-Up Area Index
CEA	Central Environmental Authority
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (a software)
LKR	Sri Lankan Rupee
SL	Sri Lanka

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