

IDENTIFYING THE POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES OF PROMOTING ATANWALA VILLAGE IN MATALE DISTRICT AS A RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION

H.M.L.K.K. Jayasekara^{1,*} and J.A.P.M. Jayasinghe²

^{1,2}*Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Faculty of Management Studies,
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka*

*Corresponding author (Email: jayasekara1127@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential challenges of promoting Atanwala Village in the Matale District of Sri Lanka as a rural tourism destination. This research aims to explore the village's unique attributes and identify both opportunities and obstacles in establishing it as a notable tourist spot. The research centers on the underutilized potential of Atanwala, despite its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, and the need for strategic planning to develop it sustainably. The purpose of this study was to assess the feasibility of promoting Atanwala Village by evaluating its natural attractions, infrastructure, economic impacts, and socio-cultural dimensions. The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including local residents, tourism organizers, and business owners. Data were collected through purposive sampling and analyzed using content analysis techniques with NVivo to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the village's tourism potential. Major findings revealed that Atanwala Village boasts significant natural attractions, such as scenic mountain views, waterfalls, and rich biodiversity, presenting strong potential for eco-tourism and cultural tourism activities. However, the study also highlights challenges including inadequate infrastructure, limited accommodation facilities, and the need for effective marketing strategies to enhance visibility. The economic prospects of rural tourism in Atanwala include job creation and increased income for local residents, while sociocultural benefits encompass the preservation and promotion of traditional customs and heritage. This study's implications suggest that targeted efforts to improve infrastructure, community engagement, and sustainable tourism practices are essential for the successful promotion of the village. Recommendations include developing eco-friendly accommodations, enhancing road connectivity, and implementing community-based tourism initiatives to ensure inclusive growth and the equitable distribution of benefits.

Keywords: Atanwala village, rural tourism, stakeholder perceptions, tourism challengers, tourism potentials