

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE SRI LANKA (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLOMBO DISTRICT)

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on tourism development in Sri Lanka. Tourism is a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's economy, contributing significantly to GDP and employment. However, the industry faces challenges, such as fluctuating tourist arrivals, increased global competition, and the need for enhanced service quality. This study examines how AI can address these challenges, drive sustainable growth in the tourism sector, and explore the advantages, challenges, and managerial significance of AI. A qualitative approach was used for data collection, involving primary data gathered from interviews and focus group discussions with tourism professionals. Ten structured interviews were conducted with professionals from the travel and hospitality sectors. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents, as knowledge of AI is uncommon among travel industry professionals. Questions related to AI adoption in the tourism and hospitality industries, availability of digital infrastructure, cost of high technology, impact of AI on business promotions, management attitudes toward AI, and challenges in introducing AI for tourism development were posed and discussed during the interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and identify patterns and themes in three main areas: AI-driven decision-making, benefits and challenges, and recommendations. The findings contribute to the understanding of AI adoption in Sri Lanka's tourism sector and include recommendations for improved stakeholder communication, skill training, and addressing challenges in technological implementation and ethical considerations. The study concludes with key findings and suggestions for the hospitality and travel agency sectors, along with a comprehensive discussion of the implications of AI adoption for tourism development in Sri Lanka. AI-driven decision making significantly enhances customer engagement and operational efficiency, as demonstrated by AI-based language translation and the integration of AI chatbots on websites. While challenges such as cost and skill gaps hinder widespread adoption, smaller organizations may struggle to bear the cost of technology implementation. Additionally, there is a limited pool of human resources in Sri Lanka, with requisite knowledge and expertise in AI. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and industry professionals, aiming to leverage AI for sustainable tourism growth in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence in tourism, AI adoption in Sri Lanka, thematic analysis, Sri Lanka tourism