

# POLITICS AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF NORTHERN PROVINCE - SRI LANKA

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## Abstract

The concept of tourism development has become the focus of increasing attention among tourism practitioners and scholars alike. Little research, however, has been undertaken to investigate the relationship between politics and tourism development in Sri Lanka from the perspective of stakeholders. The main objective of this study is to explore the relationship between politics and tourism development in Northern Province – Sri Lanka. Drawing on study in Northern Province in Sri Lanka, it reveals the ways in which political instability and political interferences have viewed as major obstacles to tourism development. Further, this study concludes that stakeholders, including the state, the provincial authorities and investors, have a willingness to promote the industry. This study offers meaningful information for developing strategy on the part of tourism management in the absence of political interferences.

**Key words:** tourism development; Sri Lanka; political instability; liberalize economic policy

## 1.0 Introduction

Tourism in Sri Lanka is one of the faster growing industries, and was the fourth largest foreign- exchange earner in 2015 (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2016). Over the last four decades, however, growth of this industry fluctuated due to political unrest. This notion is accepted by Sri Lankan researchers Samaranayake, Lantra, and Jayawardena (2013, p. 424), pointed out that “the biggest challenge Sri Lanka has faced since independence was the ethnic war that commenced in 1983 arising from demands for an independent state (known as Tamil Eelam ) by a militant Tamil group – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)”. Many researchers including

Hall (1994), Richter (1999), Robinson (2008), and Samaranayake (2012), who emphasised that the difficulties of tourism development in developed countries and developing countries arising from the political power struggle among different stakeholders. In Sri Lanka, last thirty years Civil War and political instability have become critical issues in development of the tourism industry. This study is an attempt to investigate the association conceptually and empirically, between the concept of politics and tourism development in Northern Province. For this study a qualitative approach has been used. This approach works best for understanding social phenomena.