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Peace through tourism: Its relevance for contemporary reconciliations trends in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka is one of the tourist destinations in the world where tourism is very quickly developing after the civil unrest was finished. People from different cultures, religions, ethnicities join together through tourism. In the Sri Lankan context, the tourism sector is massively contributing for bridging the foreign and local tourists and paves the way for the multi-cultural multi religious, multi lingual understanding through removing the barriers. Whereas peace through tourism is a new dimension of the tourism, it also enhances peace and harmony, sustainability of a country. This study is intended to examine how peace through tourism concept is deployed in the mass tourism areas to promote peace and harmony among the people through tourism activities and how peace through tourism would be an imperative tool in the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. The academic writing on peace through tourism is rare. So, there is a need for familiarizing peace through tourism concepts in the peacebuilding settings. Specially in the North Eastern province where the local tourists (Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim) are visiting and having interaction each other. Thus, this study has mainly exhausted the primary data from field visits and the interviews among the tourists especially at the Pasikuda, Batticaloa area and the northern peninsula and the secondary data from related literature on tourism and peace tourism. Peace through tourism would be a meaningful force in removing the barriers and enhancing social integration of different cultural, ethnic people and sustainable peace through incorporate effective peace-oriented programmes in the tourism activities.

Key words: Intercultural, Multi ethnic, Peace tourism, Reconciliation, Harmony