

EXPLORING CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MANNAR: CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Cultural and Heritage Tourism (CHT) is a widespread alternative tourism sector that encompasses all aspects of travel, providing visitors with opportunities to learn about the history and lifestyles of different cultures. It significantly contributes to the economic development of developing countries in Asia. Sri Lanka also benefits economically from CHT. However, CHT activities in the Northern Province have experienced a decline due to external shocks such as the Easter Sunday Attack and the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the region's great potential to attract tourists with its culturally rich heritage sites, which have been well-known since ancient times. This study examines the critical success factors and challenges for CHT development in the Northern Province using a qualitative research method. Sixteen tourism stakeholders were selected through purposive sampling, and in-depth structured interviews were conducted and analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that infrastructure facilities, integration and accessibility, hospitality and treatment, biodiversity, and diversification are critical success factors contributing to CHT. Moreover, the findings identified erroneous promotional activities, lack of proper planning, and poor awareness among the natives as challenges that must be addressed comprehensively. Furthermore, the study concluded that adopting an exclusive and focused CHT strategy, involving the private sector in the promotion of CHT, and promoting unique products and resources by showcasing them are recommended for the development of the CHT industry. The findings could inform various stakeholders, including the government, policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and residents, about addressing the sustainable development of Cultural and Heritage Tourism (CHT) in the Northern Province.

Keywords: Cultural and Heritage Tourism (CHT); Challenges; Critical success factors; Tourists

1. Introduction

Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that involves the movement of people to places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes (UNWTO, 2022). It is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world, continuously expanding and diversifying. Tourism is significantly linked to economic growth, making it a major contributor to socioeconomic development. Cultural attractions are crucial for attracting travelers to a destination (Mason, 2006). Culture and heritage are key pillars of the tourism industry, and the niche market for cultural and heritage tourism is expanding rapidly. According to numerous surveys of international tourist destinations, cultural heritage is a major driving force behind travel (Timothy, 2011).

Sri Lanka is an appealing tropical island in the Indian Ocean, and tourism is one of the fastest-expanding industries on the island. Cultural and heritage attractions are considered a key sector for future tourism development (Pattiyagedara and Fernando, 2020). Especially after the civil war, tourist arrivals to cultural and heritage sites have been continuously growing, with exceptions in 2019 and 2020 due to the Easter Sunday attacks and the COVID-19 pandemic.

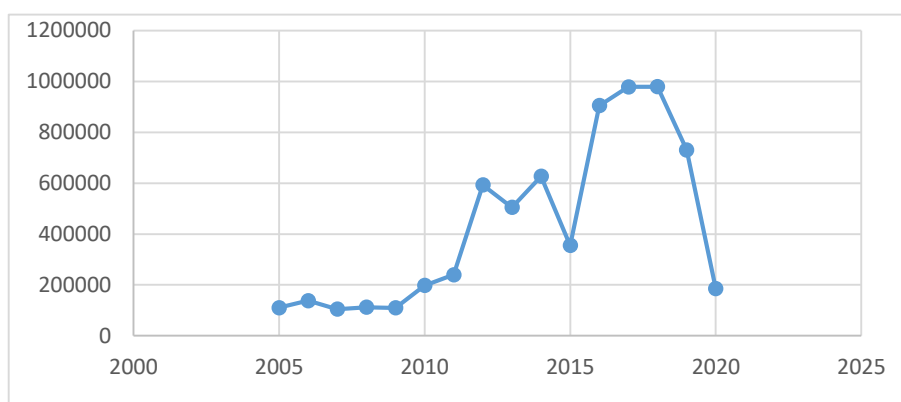


Figure 01: Number of Foreign Visitors to Cultural Triangle from 2005 to 2020

Source: SLTDA Annual Report (2020)

In addition to other noteworthy cultural treasures and attractions, Sri Lanka has eight World Heritage sites. There are many definitions for cultural and heritage tourism. For instance, it is defined as all movements of people to specific cultural attractions, such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, arts, and drama in cities outside their normal country of residence (Perera, 2010). This includes all movements of people to these attractions to gather new information and experiences to meet their cultural needs.

The government is currently creating several new tourism zones, with the Northern Province being one of them. The Northern Province underwent significant development after the war and has been working to restore its reputation since then. Even though the Northern Province has many industries contributing to the area's development, tourism is the most powerful segment that could drive rapid growth. According to the SLTDA annual

report (2020), the Jaffna district ranked second in destinations that attract domestic tourists, accounting for 40,360 visitors and generating revenue of Rs. 748,140.

Dissanayake and Samarathunga (2021) asserted that numerous historical and cultural heritage sites make the Northern Province a popular tourist destination whereas Jaffna, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, and Vavuniya are its five districts. After the civil war, there is a huge number in increasing of tourists arriving in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka (Yousaf and Aloysius, 2020). Mannar district has great potential in terms of marine resources covering significant geographic locations like islands and coastal lines. As stated by Goyal (2020), Mannar is the tip of Sri Lanka closest to India across the Ram Setu that joins the two countries. While the Indian end has the Rameswaram temple and the Sri Lankan end has the Thiruketheeswaram temple, it is a quaint coastal town that tourists have not completely forgotten. The island of Mannar boasts a rich tapestry of cultural diversity, showcased through its array of sacred sites and historical landmarks. Among these treasures are the revered Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu, the majestic Ketheeswaram Temple, the ancient Baobab Tree, the storied Mannar Fort, the iconic Talaimannar Pier, and the charming Doric Bungalow (Goyal, 2020). Each of these sites carries with it a profound history and cultural significance, offering visitors a glimpse into the vibrant heritage of the Mannar district. As a result of their enduring legacy and cultural importance, tourist footfall to the Cultural Heritage Sites in Mannar has been steadily on the rise.

Mannar district with a heritage that centres on Hinduism and the Tamil community, is the perfect balance between colonial heritage and the Old World's legendary iconic places (Northern Province Tourism Bureau, 2021). The region has played and continues to play a crucial role in the history and cultural heritage of Sri Lankan Tamils (Sivesan, 2017) and, it explains that the history of the Mannar is rich. Through colonial and pre-colonial monuments and cultural heritage sites, that can be understood (Sivesan, 2017). This may benefit the growth of the Northern Province tourism industry. As per the Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance, Mannar presents a captivating destination where visitors can delve into the island's rich culture and history, all while indulging in the serenity of its picturesque locales.

But as it works to reinvent itself as a premier sustainable tourist destination in the years following the civil war, Mannar's tourism sector encounters significant difficulties, especially after the consequences of the Easter attack and the COVID-19 pandemic (Sivesan, 2020). According to the SLTDA Annual Statistical Report (2019), the percentage distribution of tourist arrivals to the purpose of culture and religion dropped from 0.9 % in 2018 to 0.3 % in 2019. SLTDA Year in Review (2021) reveals that Northern Province has only 4 classified hotels which ranks 7th out of the 9 provinces along with Sabaragamuwa province and ranks last in the provincial distribution of rooms which is 1.6 %. Moreover, the occupancy rates in Northern Province have been declining despite the governmental efforts to develop tourism in the region whereas zero occupancy rate was

recorded in year 2021. Additionally, Mannar district reported to have zero occupancy rates in both 2020 and 2021.

Even though the tourism industry has a myriad of challenges in the region, including a lack of appropriate planning and development, capital accumulation, infrastructure, and problems related to other service industries (UDA, 2018), the peninsula has a lot to offer to its travellers. Promoting sustainable tourism in the province requires overcoming these process inefficiencies (Vinoj and Haque, 2013). The collaborative interference of government and private sector is crucial to identify tourists' needs to cater to their right expectations in CHT in the region. Concerning past literature, it was identified a limited number of researches that contributed to Mannar cultural heritage sites during the past 10 to 20 years and the majority of the studies have focused on developing tourism in the Northern region after the civil-war (Dissanayake and Samarathunga, 2020; Logan and Reeves, 2008; Ranasinghe, 2018; Samarathunga, 2019).

Given the theoretical and practicality of circumstances, identifying critical success factors and challenges for the CHT development in the Mannar District is very important as it contributes to the growth of the Sri Lankan tourism sector. Thus, the researchers are interested in analysing the above and are interested in developing credible strategies and suggestions to strengthen tourism specifically during the post-crisis (pandemic crisis and economic crisis) thereby contributing to fulfilling the existing knowledge gap.

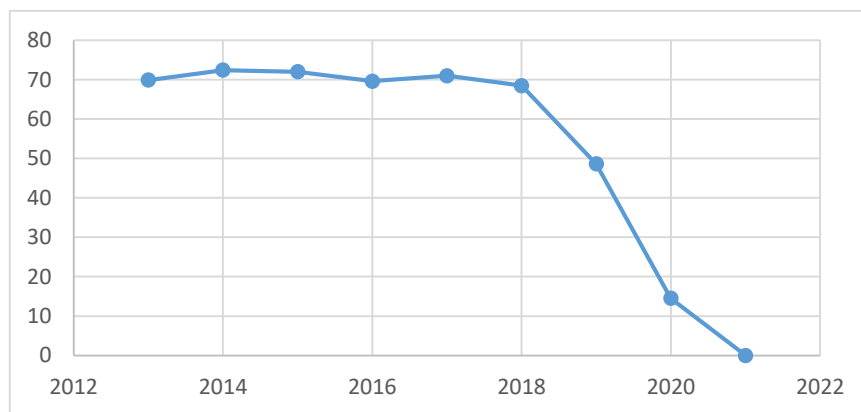


Figure 02: Occupancy Rates in Mannar District (Percentage), Sri Lanka

Source: SLTDA Annual reports of 2013-2020, SLTDA Year in Review (2021)

Based on the above background, the research questions were designed as follows.

- What are the critical success factors of CHT development in the Mannar district?
- What are the challenges of CHT development in Mannar district?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural and heritage tourism (CHT)

Depending on how culture is defined, it has a distinct connotation. The "cumulative deposit of information, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, and concepts of time, roles, and spatial interactions" is referred to as culture (Hofstede et al., 2010). Traveling for pleasure to observe or experience the unique character of a location, its people, and its products or productions is known as cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is a broad category that encompasses many different travel destinations and cultural pursuits (Palmer et al., 2008).

Selected historical moments that serve as markers of group identity are promoted through cultural tourism. Culture is integral to sustainable human growth and not only a tool for it or a barrier to it. Our cultural values determine our aspirations and feelings of fulfilment (Nderi and Singh, 2020). In Asian nation-states, this process of nationalization has become particularly noticeable. Due to the complexity of the idea of cultural tourism, there has been much discussion among academics about how to define and conceptualize it (Trauer, 2006). The above two ideas mention cultural tourism as a history that is a symbol of a collective identity and the other one mentions cultural tourism is very complex.

Timothy (2011) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding heritage, delineating it into three main categories: tangible immovable resources (such as buildings, rivers, and natural areas), tangible movable resources (including objects housed in museums and documents archived), and intangible elements such as values, customs, ceremonies, and lifestyles. This encompassing definition extends to include experiential aspects like festivals, arts, and cultural events (Ismagilova et al., 2015). As heritage becomes imbued with the narrative of a country's history, it assumes a significant role, intertwining with various factors that shape its identity.

The emphasis of heritage tourism is the heritage itself, which is defined as a historical cultural value that should be preserved for future generations. The tourism industry has paid immense attention in recent decades to cultural and heritage tourism. Heritage tourism is a subcategory of the tourism industry that places a focus on historical and cultural sites. Performances, museums, historical sites, archaeological digs, cultural events, study tours, folklore or art, and pilgrimages are only a few of the diverse attractions on offer (SAARC, 2014).

Due to its extensive natural resources and rich cultural legacy, Sri Lanka has a huge potential to provide items with value addition that might satisfy high-end tourist markets. Due to the numerous and distinctive qualities that inhibit tourism, it sets cultural and heritage sites apart from other tourist attractions (Perera, 2010). India and Sri Lanka, which was formerly known as Ceylon, have an extensive cultural legacy. The Sigiriya frescoes, the Polonnaruwa ruins, the Sacred Tooth Relic Temple of Lord Buddha in Kandy, Sri Lanka, and the Taj Mahal in Agra, as well as the monuments of Prithviraj Chauhan, the

Lodi Tombs, the Siri Fort of Allauddin Khilji, the Red Fort, Jama Masjid, and Humayun's Tomb, India received more attention from tourists (Perera, 2010). Sri Lanka has a lot to offer in terms of what cultural tourism entails. With architecture that bridges Buddhism and Hinduism, a history that is rich, a culture that combines all four major religions and ethnic groups, authentic cuisine, and a literacy rate of over 90%, Sri Lanka is a country rich in arts, culture, and literature. By pure coincidence, the three cities of Anuradhapura to the north, Polonnaruwa to the east, and Kandy to the south—all of which are also UNESCO World Heritage Sites—can be connected by an imaginary triangle, with roughly 80 km on each side, and contain the majority of Sri Lanka's top cultural attractions (Gnanapala and Sandaruwani, 2016). In most of the farms and hotels, there is insufficient infrastructure, and northern tourism is still in its infancy and poorly structured. This is one of the elements affecting the industry's success. Therefore, it is crucial to provide access to essential infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and clean water. Moreover, stakeholders are not well informed about tourism and its appeal (Ranasinghe, 2019).

The Sri Lankan Northern Province has played and continues to play a significant part in the history and cultural legacy of Sri Lankan Tamils. Northern Province has a rich history, according to Sri Lankan historians (Sivesan, 2017). Colonial and pre-colonial monuments and cultural heritage sites help to explain this. This may benefit the growth of the tourism industry. Numerous historical and cultural heritage sites make Northern Province a popular tourist destination. Visitors to Sri Lanka's Northern Province have increased dramatically after the end of the civil conflict. As a result, for tourist operations to be effective and sustainable, tourism education and training in these areas are crucial (Mathivathany and Sasitharan, 2012) and pertain to the requirement of exploring the success factors and challenges the province underwent in developing heritage and cultural tourism development to fulfil the existing knowledge gap.

Mannar district with a heritage that centres around Hinduism and the Tamil community, is the perfect balance between colonial heritage and the Old World's legendary iconic places (Northern Province Tourism Bureau, 2021). The Mannar island's western region is home to environmental and tourism-related activities. Enhancing the natural features in the east of the island is intended to increase tourism. So, Mannar will serve as Sri Lanka's magnet to draw in the entire nation and stabilize the country's economy (UDA, 2018).

The city boasts the possession of the Thiruketheeswaram Kovil, one of the ancient Shiva temples, and Madhu church the most sacred Roman Catholic church, and there are other cultural sites like Mannar fort, Baobab tree, and the Doric at Arippu etc in the country (Northern Province Tourism Bureau, 2021). While Mannar district has potential as a tourist destination, particularly for cultural tourism, archaeologically important areas of the destination should be preserved. Similarly, issues relating to water, and other infrastructure issues, will have to be addressed in the development of cultural and heritage tourism activities.

2.2 Critical Success Factors of CHT

Traveling to experience locations and pursuits that accurately depict the histories and cultures of the past and present is referred to as cultural and heritage tourism (Abuamoud et al., 2014). The factors such as location; climate; and environment of particular cultural heritage; facilities including transportation, accommodation, and food which are developed for attracting travellers toward the cultural heritage; availability of financial and human resources; political factors influencing development, participation of the local community of that heritage in the development of the cultural heritage; and willingness of the travellers to visit the heritage are few success factors to promote cultural and heritage tourism. A conceptual model of sustainable development was developed through a consensus of human, social, economic, technological, and cultural development and conservation, rehabilitation and enhancement of the environment, protection of the natural heritage, and preservation of the initial native ecosystem (Vuong and Rajagopal, 2019). They further suggested that the three pillars of sustainability; economic, social, and environmental should all be taken into consideration to ensure the growth of the tourism industry. Achieving recreational rewards and seeking long-term values were push factors. Multiple applications for achieving sustainable heritage management were provided by this study. Prioritizing adaptive historical reuse can be done using the selected heritage style and aesthetics. To make historical tourism more appealing, art activity programming, such as dynamic and static art activities, and creative markets, can be held (Vuong & Rajagopal, 2019). The community's role as a resident is to keep these towns alive and preserve the region's primary characteristics, which has a major impact on the rising tourism activities in this cultural heritage area (Supriharjo et al., 2016). Location, climate, geography, environment, tourism facilities, and amenities are influencing tourists to travel toward cultural heritage sites, according to a study conducted in Jordan on factors affecting the willingness of tourists to visit cultural heritage sites (Abuamoud et al., 2014).

In the Sri Lankan context, it should be highlighted that Jaffna culture, history, heritage, and wartime memories have become the most reliable weapons for drawing both domestic and foreign tourists (Pushparatnam, 2014). The Northern Province's fine arts, crafts, dance, and music have been revitalized because of tourism, as evidenced by the increasing number of handicraft and performing music and dance groups that have emerged with the introduction of increased tourism (Sivesan, 2020). Though Ranasinghe (2018) stated that community cultural values, rituals, and festivals employed in tourism are living heritages that need preservation and, if handled properly, can be important drivers of tourism development in Northern Province, it lacks findings by scholars concerning the mentioned criterion which emerged the need to explore this context. Further, tourism-related developments make significant contributions to income generation, financial quality of life improvement through increased personal income and tax revenues, career opportunities, improved investment development, financially viable local businesses, investment in infrastructure, as well as increased opportunities for shopping. Moreover, CHT can become a contributing factor to poverty alleviation in developing countries (Magradze, 2020). These effects are felt widely throughout the community and lead to new ventures (Sandaruwani and Gnanapala, 2016). Additionally, the Northern Sri Lankan

region's post-war development initiatives must start from scratch, providing an opportunity to concentrate on the long-term sustainability of development initiatives that are socio-culturally, economically, and ecologically well-balanced. It creates economic benefits and job opportunities, opportunities for introducing various cultural structures among people, and globalization. Although the industry is highly sensitive to political and economic volatility, the upward trend in dynamic situations continues.

2.3 Challenges for Developing CHT

Promoting cultural and heritage tourism creates so many opportunities, but at the same time, it is difficult to carry out because of the challenges the tourism industry stakeholders are facing in promoting heritage tourism. Major challenges following economic, social, cultural, and environmental challenges are faced by industry allies when promoting cultural and heritage tourism. More than that, satisfying the traveller with our cultural heritage is also one of the major challenges the Sri Lankan tourism industry is currently facing (Gnanapala and Sandaruwani, 2016). The development of tourism destinations, especially in the regional context requires the elaboration of appropriate policies. It is important to evaluate the decisions and actions of individual institutions. One of the hindrances in this regard is the low level of decentralization. We also have problems in terms of competence. Planning tools need to be properly formulated for an effective governance system (Magradze, 2020).

Potentially detrimental socio-cultural effects include the commoditization and cheapening of culture and traditions, alienation and loss of cultural identity, undermining of local tradition and ways of life, displacing traditional residents, widening the gap between those who benefit from tourism and those who do not, disputes over land rights and access to resources, harm to attractions and facilities, loss of authenticity and historical accuracy in interpretation, and selectivity where heritage attractions are constructed (Gnanapala and Sandaruwani, 2016). As it tries to reinvent itself as a premier sustainable tourist destination in the post-war years, the Mannar tourism industry faces a variety of challenges including a lack of infrastructure facilities, subpar institutional setup, ineffective marketing promotion, a lack of interaction between visitors and the local community, unsatisfactory environmental protection schemes, and limited public-private participation (Sivesan, 2020). In addition to that, the study reveals that although the labour is more affordable, there are fewer trained and skilled workers available to contribute to the technical aspects of the CHT development in the area. Hence, it is crucial to explore the critical success factors and challenges in Mannar District in revitalizing Northern heritage and cultural tourism in developing the region which specifically lacks findings in literature.

3. Research Methodology

The objective of this study is to identify the critical success factors and challenges of CHT development in Mannar district which plays a vital role in revitalizing the Northern tourism in Sri Lanka. Thus, the research adopted a qualitative, ethnographic research method, while choosing the Mannar district as the research site since the cultural heritage has undergone major changes in this area during the past few years. In past literature, ethnography is explained as a qualitative research technique that enables the discovery and analysis of unexpected circumstances through close engagement with users in their natural surroundings (University of Virginia, n.d.). The ethnography research approach was used to gain a thorough understanding of the attitudes and behaviours of the respondents. It provided the research insight into how those users see the CHT in Mannar and engage with its operations. Additionally, using an ethnographic research approach allowed for an accurate and thorough description of the views and behaviours of the respondents. This was helpful in identifying and analysing pertinent attitudes and emotions displayed by the interviewees. Accordingly, the Mannar district is currently expanding in the tourism and hotel industries, and on the contrary, the post-war regions are struggling to cope with socio-economic development and many people agree that tourism may help rural communities thrive while also recognizing their cultural legacies as priceless treasures (Ranasinghe, 2018).



Figure 03: Map of Mannar District

Source: Survey Department (2005)

Accordingly, sixteen respondents from the Mannar district were selected using the purposive sampling technique. The researchers purposefully selected the most suitable respondents who are willing to participate in the research from Mannar and this selection was made in line with the study's objective. Before conducting the interviews, the purpose of the study was conveyed to the selected sample to deliver an understanding of the study's aim, and to gain accurate data from the sample's end. Respectively, the respondents were key tourism stakeholders such as residents, small-scale tourism business operators, government officials and religious leaders, handy craft manufacturers, restaurants, and

hotel operators who are interested in related to the cultural and heritage tourism field. After obtaining their verbal consent, in-depth semi-structured, direct interviews were carried out and recorded using an audio-recording device. The interview guideline consisted of 16 questions and each interview lasted for about 15-20 minutes. All the data that were collected were transcribed and all the transcriptions were done parallel with the interviews conducted and later transferred into an Excel sheet to facilitate the data analysis. Content analysis technique was adopted to analyse the primary data where it facilitated to determine the patterns of repetitive words, themes, and concepts to achieve the research objectives. Based on that, general codes were refined, and categories were developed.

4. Results and Discussion

The data collected from the Mannar society revealed many unique factors of each area, as well as some common factors, which contributed to the development of cultural and heritage tourism in the Northern part of Sri Lanka, specifically on Mannar Island.

4.1 Critical Success Factors for the Development of CHT

Infrastructure Facilities: Venues and Technology

Venues are considered the most important aspect of CHT in terms of infrastructure facilities. It was identified that there is a wide variety of opinions regarding the venues. Most of the interviewees were insisting on the location of the environment of Mannar district and the tourist places. The location plays a main role in giving cultural value and the history of the ancient culture in the Northern part of Sri Lanka (Sivesan, 2017). The geographical location of the Thiruketheeswaram Kovil, Madu Shrine, and Alli Rani Fort (which was the former Governor's Bungalow) reveals that they are situated not far from each other. It is evident in the map itself because Mannar Island is a small island in Sri Lanka. Since it is situated close to India, the cultural values, the infrastructure facilities, and the building structures are more identical to the architecture of Indian structures (Ganesan et al., 2019). The structures and the architecture are shown in the designs and the ancient skills that have been used by the Kings in the architecture of the Thiruketheeswaram Kovil. Findings of Cochrane (2010) asserted that one of the common factors that affect CHT is proper travelling facilities from other parts of Sri Lanka. Since Mannar is an island, the way of transport can be done only through the single bridge that connects the island with the mainland and the railway track.

It was widely known that the civil war had an impact on the development of the Northern part of Sri Lanka. But it is to be exclaimed the findings showcased that within a short period of time, people of this region were able to recover their position and set the standards above the level as they were before. Significantly, travelling facilities and transportation facilities were assured by the respondents to be developed activities that can be seen as major developments in Mannar's tourism sector.

Integration and Accessibility

The integration with other geographical regions in Sri Lanka has majorly affected the promotion and development of CHT in the Mannar district. Even though people have

moved from one place to another using limited transport facilities back in a decade (Ihjas, 2020), it can explicitly be seen that presently there are ample and more roadways and railways transportation facilities created by the government in promoting the interaction and integration of the public in all ways possible. This ultimately supports in development of CHT for the tourists to travel from the central and different regions in Sri Lanka and for the foreigners who are visiting during their winter seasons. The in-depth analysis carried over the transportation accessibility of Mannar further revealed that public buses and trains that are available to travel to Mannar from Colombo are the main, convenient, and joyful transportation modes that many foreigners are likely of.

Hospitality and Treatment

One of the most well-known examples of hospitality in Asian nations is Sri Lanka. According to Sivagowri (2013), the Tamil culture in Northern Sri Lanka is well-known for its warmth and consideration for visitors. As a result, this could be considered a rare and exclusive benefit bestowed upon Mannar. Responses seemed to highlight that Mannar residents' innate hospitality is shown in how they greet and care for visitors who come to see Sri Lanka's natural beauty. As a result, the services and hospitality shown to strangers or guests are a significant component in supporting and advancing CHT in Mannar. The traditions that were practiced from the ancient days include the hospitality of Tamils in Northern Sri Lanka. These traditions and the level of hospitality have been highly appreciated by international tourists. Findings proclaimed that Tamils are embedded with a habit of respecting others over themselves giving more colour to the sense of hospitality. Hence, this factor, directly and indirectly, promotes cultural and heritage tourism in the Mannar district.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is one of the key alternative components that link with CHT in Mannar, especially due to migrant birds. The findings of Narayanan et al (2018) show that many tourists visit Mannar, Sri Lanka during the months of February, March, and April and the respondents of our study indicated that it is mostly related to seeing the diverse migrant birds. Hence, biodiversity is identified as a factor that influences the CHT in Mannar. The importance of the cultural heritage is felt in view of giving a hostage to the migrant birds. Further, it was explored that the location and its uniqueness have made the migrant birds come, stay safe, have their nests, hatch new eggs, and bring forth their young during this season. Supporting the literature, the findings also showcased this biodiversity as a factor that adds more beauty to the site during the winter season in European countries.

Promotion and Diversification

Promotion and diversification were some of the most important factors that were able to be identified by analysing the collected data. All the participants highlighted different types of ideas in terms of different aspects of CHT promotion in Sri Lanka, and diversification was one of the crucial factors that was highlighted by most of the participants. It is to be noted that religious places are also a reflection of cultural values and beliefs. Therefore, there is a need to protect them and promote them for the future and

the preservation of cultural values. The initiation of the above-mentioned promotional activities must be taken by the government and supported by the people in the society as well in order to promote cultural and heritage tourism in the Mannar district.

Identifying Markets and Uniqueness

The unique characteristics of the places play a crucial role in CHT industry. The CHT has not grown faster comparative to other industries in the Asian context, but it has the uniqueness and its special value in identifying its specific importance from the other factors. According to Alcázar-Ortega et al. (2015), in a scenario like identifying the right market and identifying the demand is very important to get the maximum benefit of the resources. Participants of the research also highlighted these points and gave their differentiated perspectives and opinions regarding this. It was widely agreed by most of the participants that Mannar is having difficulties in identifying the right markets for CHT promotions even though many specific characteristics have been unknowingly still carried by the people in many villages. It is to be noted that the cultural dramas that are conducted on specific occasions named 'Naddu Kooththu' in many parts of Mannar play another role in promoting the CHT in Mannar. These skills still exist among the elders but there is a need for them to be announced to the outside world because many are still not aware of such kinds of aspects, which promote CHT and attract more foreigners to enjoy its uniqueness. These cultural factors play a major role in attracting foreigners to Sri Lanka to see and to know more about our traditions and the health habits that have been exercised throughout the year by Tamils in Northern Sri Lanka.

Government Support

Although past literature stated that it is a major role of a country's government to develop and promote every industry in many different ways (Yacoub & ElHajjar, 2021), participants of the research expressed different opinions of their own regarding the government's support of the industry, and the duty of the government to assist the industry with suitable implications. Thus, it was identified that the promotional projects brought for the development of CHT in the Mannar district have been left unattended for a longer time. These kinds of accusations have a higher tendency to reduce the promotion of CHT and its future. Therefore, it was explored that government officials must put more effort into promoting CHT and enforcing mechanisms to bring these types of projects to completion. Further, respondents declared the involvement of the private sector must also happen to develop and carry on with promotional activities for the betterment of the CHT in the Mannar district.

Abundance of Natural Resources

Given the ample resources such as sea, paddy fields, gardens, natural forests, tanks, ancient buildings, ancient trees, specific animals, unique birds, etc, exist in Mannar, there is a high tendency for a large-scale tourist attraction to the destination. When analysing the collected data, it was specifically identified that the protection and promotion of tourism will help the CHT in Mannar to another level of development. The findings of Athukorala (2016) declared many development projects have been introduced after the end

of the civil war for more than two decades, and this study's participants also supported those findings by highlighting that these opportunities need to be addressed carefully and must be given a proper concern to develop the cultural and heritage tourism in Mannar district. The migrant birds are the main source that Mannar district is adorned with during this specific season with a high tendency for tourist arrivals. Further, the respondents assured an existing understanding of 'there are no other places in Sri Lanka that accommodate ample migrant birds like Mannar district'. It has been identified as a critical success factor in promoting CHT in Mannar compared to other destinations. And, apparently, it could be asserted that indirectly these migrant birds help the hotel industry to be further developed such as the establishment of Palmyra hotel.

Cultural Harmony among the Populace

As assured by Mallawaarachchi (2019), Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, and Mannar is not an exception to it. This aspect adds more value to the development of CHT in the Mannar district. According to the respondents, Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and cultural country where Catholics, Hindus, and Muslims living in Mannar live in harmony with each other and promote their culture with the support of the other communities. Hence, through the analysis, it was identified that this horticultural society is the strength to develop the CHT in Mannar. Each community does their part in a particular manner so that there will not be any disturbance or break in the chain. Moreover, it was evident in Mannar, that the running of the district has been divided generally among the people and it has been well organized. And it was also explored that the common intention of developing the society can be seen in the minds of all the citizens in Mannar.

Availability of Well-Educated Youngsters

One of the most important and valuable opportunities came up with the availability of well-educated youngsters in the Mannar district and their dedication to developing the cultural heritage of Mannar Island. It was also mentioned in the findings of Warnasuriya (2019), stating that this brings out the love and care they have for their motherland and the sense of belongingness as citizens of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the respondents expressed those human resources in the form of educated personnel are available in the Mannar district to contribute for the development of CHT to provide more and more job opportunities, and to protect the cultural values in the ancient places. This will further pave the way in forming a well-standard information centre and or any tourist guides association in Mannar in the near future. The aforementioned statements of the participants were also proved in this academic work as well since the researchers are also from the same locality and have selected the specific topic of promoting CHT in the Mannar district.

4.2 Challenges to Develop CHT

Erroneous Promotional Activities

In any activity or project that is to be done under the development, there must be proper suitable promotional steps that will develop the activity as such. Recognizing the most suitable promotional methods is very important to promote the CHT industry in Mannar (Font and McCabe, 2017). Yet, this was stressed by many participants in the interviews.

According to most of them, it was identified that the way of doing promotions and the promotional strategy is very crucial. They further stated the problems which link different aspects of promotion and the things which are related to the promotion must be used accordingly and not for the sake of using it.

Lack of Government Planning

If an activity or a development is made for the sake of doing it, then the result will be worse than everything else. It is necessary for the development of any industry to have proper planning before the project has been implemented. Frey and Briviba (2021) asserted the development of the CHT industry also depends on the infrastructure and proper planning. But, most of the participants mentioned lack of proper planning as the major challenge that Mannar CHT facing at present. Further, they stated that the officials who were vested with the powers of deciding the matters must be notified and educated before they decide and come to a conclusion on the location of any development project. The environment and the locality give more significant importance to the development of the CHT in Mannar. These types of unplanned, unintelligent, and unorganized activities of the government make the CHT fall short in development. Therefore, proper planning must be done and the funds that are allocated for promotional activities must be used for the particular purpose for which it has been granted.

Another issue is the improper issuance of licenses without proper assessment, which disturbs the locality and destroys the CHT locations on a large scale. This must be addressed and the officials who misused their power for money and allowed unwanted development should be punished. This was evident in the case of a newly built resort in the Talaimannar area. This resort had been newly built in the coastal area. But these hotel buildings cover and destroy the beauty of the entire beachside and the landscape.

Lack of Awareness among the Natives

Another important challenge that was identified by the researchers was that there is a lack of awareness about the development on the part of the authority proposing it and the people in such a location. This brings conflicts between the authority and the public. Most of the participants agreed that one of the most crucial challenges that they have to face is fewer statistics. There were so many development activities that were at the pending stage because the people protested that development. As stated by Kim (2019), the awareness of the development and the importance of the promotional activity must be conveyed to the public who has negative ideas about the project. Therefore, the importance of keeping the natural environment must be taken into consideration. Not only visitors who come from various parts of the world but also the natives who profit from the same environment as a part of the same locality must be aware and protect such natural harmony between the human world and nature in a balanced way.

Table 01: Code Summary

Objective		Categories
One	Critical Success Factors of CHT Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Facilities (venues and technology) • Integration and Accessibility • Hospitality and Treatment • Bio-Diversity • Promotion and Diversification • Identifying Markets and Uniqueness • Government Support • Abundance of Natural Resources • Cultural Harmony among the Populace • Availability of Well-Educated Youngsters
Two	Challenges to CHT Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erroneous Promotional Activities • Lack of Government Planning • Lack of Awareness among the Natives

Source: Survey Data

5. Implications

Almost all the interviewees were of the view that cultural and heritage tourism is a crucial segment in the promotion of the tourism industry in the Mannar district. The outcome that was incurred from the content analysis method of the research showed that Mannar district has all the potential capacities to promote cultural and heritage tourism and to gain revenue and development through CHT. The recommendations were proposed in the form of solutions for the challenges faced and the opportunities that are available in promoting CHT in the Mannar district. First, long-term planning and implementation of the infrastructure facilities related to CHT development in Northern Province is crucial. The infrastructure is identified to be the basement for any development has been taken for promotion. In alignment with Mannar, some issues have been faced in the long-term planning. For instance, the location of the court complex has been just next to the Fort, which is a main tourist spot in Mannar. This affects the location and limits the number of visitors during court hours. This must be taken into consideration that the location must be properly planned for any infrastructure, and the road leading to Puttalam through Wilpaththu forest has been abandoned driving destruction to the shortest way to Mannar, and the locations and tourist spots such as the old Governor's Bungalow (Alli rani kottai) have lost their popularity because of the distance from the main road. These kinds of infrastructure facilities must be developed in such a way that it may attract more tourists, which will give more promotion to the CHT in Mannar. Secondly, the active involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process should be uplifted, the hoteliers and their participation must be taken into consideration when configuring the impactful challenges identified. It is because, the hoteliers have more contacts and direct dealing with the issues, and they may have better practical solutions by themselves, or solutions proposed by the

tourists as well. Therefore, mainly the government sector when deciding on the development and decision making in relation to the tourism industry must include the participation and suggestions for the hoteliers. In this way, the tourism industry needs the collective effort of the private sector as well to give more space to take part in the decision-making process about CHT industry. Thus, a holistic approach is very helpful in promoting the industry.

Furthermore, conducting awareness programmes at all possible levels for the industry stakeholders should be executed. Promotion of CHT can be effective if awareness about this industry is brought among the people at the social level, to the students at the school level, and to the tourists at the tourism level. When considering the social level, opportunities that will be created in promoting livelihood and the same way to contribute to the development of the CHT can be seen in providing licenses to the boaters who can do the services with their equipment as a part-time earning with proper facilities by obtaining the licenses. They may also be able to profit from their equipment even during the off-season. Also, the awareness leaflets and notices must be given to the visitors and tourists explaining and giving the real picture and the importance of the places in Mannar district so that it may give more insight to the guests, and they may not let pass any important sites that they were yearning to visit within a limited period.

The government should value the participation of the private sector in the promotion of CHT where they play a pivotal role in promoting CHT nationally and internationally. There is a general misunderstanding that the private sector and the NGOs are taking away the common resources from the government and the public. But it must be remembered that the public sector and the NGOs were the instrumentals who supported the speedy recovery of Northern Province after the civil war. Also, it must be noted that the NGOs are here to bring projects for the common good, and once the projects are done, they will be handed over to the government authority in the specific area or locality. Therefore, it may not result in the misuse of funds or any other matters that badly affect the development and promotion of CHT in the Mannar district.

Continued assessment for CHT is mandatory and very important to identify the opportunities, and challenges in the CHT sector. These assignments are crucial to minimize the risk and use the limited resources more efficiently to get the maximum benefit out of the resources. For example, the SLCB plays a major role in doing this continuous assessment, and another important thing is that the SLCB has to identify the private organizations and support these organizations in terms of different aspects like financial support. That can motivate organizations to expand their business activities in CHT in Research Directions. Moreover, it is recommended to form information or tourist guiding centres in the area. The lack of information centres or tourist guide organizations has been seen as another major issue. This affects negatively the promotion of the CHT. Therefore, there must be information and guiding centres for the tourists, so that they will be guided to the correct places with the correct motives and facilities. This will reduce corruption and defrauding of foreigners, which may destroy the image of CHT in Mannar.

Additionally, it is recommended to encourage and maintain religious support to develop CHT. Every year, there are seven hundred thousand pilgrims gather in Madu Shrine in the same way around four hundred thousand pilgrims gather in Thiruketheeswaram for their religious observances. When they are done with their religious observances, they visit other places in Mannar. As indirectly these religious places promote cultural and heritage tourism in Mannar district, it was evident in the research that the importance of religious places and the participation of these places in promoting the CHT are vast. Promoting unique products and resources by exhibiting them is another way to develop CHT. The promotion of unique products and handicraft items is another development procedure in CHT. It is noteworthy, that these products are the main objects that show and reflect the culture of Tamil tradition in all aspects. But there is a lack of exhibiting these products in a common place or in a specific place. If a museum or a common area were established for every product with its unique qualities to be displayed, it would increase the promotion of the CHT in Mannar and generate income for the natives through the CHT.

6. Limitations and Future research direction

The study's main goal was to identify the challenges and critical success factors for CHT development in the Mannar district; nevertheless, the findings and conclusions were subjected to a few restrictions that could influence the generalizability of the research. First, a qualitative approach was used to conduct this study solely in the Mannar district of Northern Province, Sri Lanka. By expanding the sample across the country and using a different research approach, a similar study or comparable study can be conducted considering the significance of CHT development. Additionally, this study might be replicated in other CHT destinations to see if the results can be applied generally, and further research could assess the overall effect of CHT development on local perspectives.

7. Conclusion

Cultural and heritage tourism in Sri Lanka is a vital strength of the Lankan tourism industry. And, it has been forgotten for years because of the civil war for more than three decades. But now, the importance of the CHT has been felt by everyone including foreign visitors during their tour in Sri Lanka. In relation to the Mannar's tourism industry, a major part has been played by CHT, because many objects that are seen as tourist spots have been mainly based upon cultural aspects rather than anything else. Hence, it could explicitly be said that this CHT has been a more effective source of income for the Mannar District, and it has attracted more and more foreigners than other destinations in Sri Lanka on the base of culture and heritage.

The first research objective is to identify the critical success factors of CHT development in Mannar. The CHT in the Mannar context is still developing and findings indicate major factors that Mannar must evaluate to promote the CHT industry in Sri Lanka. Research findings revealed that infrastructure is the basic requirement that Sri Lanka is required to pay attention to. Infrastructure plays a vital role and if we are going to promote the industry it is a necessity to have more facilities that could be technologized

and performed at our capacities. Referring to our capacity, it is very much limited with the limited space. And the travelling facilities throughout the Mannar district also was an effective factor that supported promoting CHT in Mannar. It was investigated that the biodiversity and the arrivals of migrant birds have been the eminent factor that promotes CHT in Mannar. The statements of the participants engaged in the interview proved that infrastructure facilities give more development structure than the factors that generate more income for the country in the field of tourism. Mannar has a need to adopt new promotional methods and practices to enhance the CHT industry. Research findings showed that mass-scale events and potential for diversification as opportunities that can be capitalized in Mannar and it was explicit that the country's inherited uniqueness is a major opportunity that currently gives a competitive advantage to the CHT industry in the Mannar district.

The second research objective is concerned with identifying the challenges and promoting CHT in Mannar. Challenges affecting the promotion of CHT in Mannar can be listed as erroneous promotional activities, improper planning of the projects, and lack of proper awareness from the natives. The erroneous promotional activities have been done for the past few years within inappropriate seasons and that has resulted negatively in the industry's development. Also, improper planning of a project results in loss and cost of time, money, and energy for the workers. Therefore, this issue must be addressed directly and immediately to convert the wastage of time and funds into useful projects that will promote CHT in the Mannar district.

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