

## A perception analysis of tour operators on the implementation of sustainable tourism practices

H.R.N.R. Habaragamuwa - Department of Economics

The study investigates the perception of tour operators on the implementation of sustainable tourism practices for their tour operational activities. As tourism is a growing field and one of the most influential industries in the Sri Lankan economy, considerations of its sustainability are quite important. Therefore, this research analyses the current status of sustainability among tour operators, factors which determine their sustainability and the challenges they face. Referring to the current perceptions and challenges among tour operators, the main objective of this study is to investigate possible strategies and methodologies that can be implemented to enhance the positive attitude of tour operators about sustainable tourism practices. The primary data was collected from a random sample of twenty respondents using a structured questionnaire along with in-depth interviews. The collected data was analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Perception was analysed with reference to the years of experience and firm size of the selected sample. As per the collected and analysed data, the respondents show higher levels of awareness on sustainable development and poor levels of awareness on sustainable tourism. The generated results depict that most of the tour operators have emphasized only on environment factors as sustainability, neglecting economic and social factors. Although most of them have an awareness of sustainability, only a few tour operators are currently implementing and managing sustainable tourism criteria. Finally, the overall study concludes that the lack of better knowledge on sustainable tourism and the lack of national tourism planning with appropriate policy procedures are the main reasons for the lower levels of perception on sustainable tourism among tour operators. If public-private sector partnerships can be increased with a proper national planning procedure, the perception of tour operators on the importance of sustainability in the tourism industry can be enhanced, resulting in the implementation of sustainable tourism practices in their tour operational activities.

**Keywords:** *perception, tour operators, sustainability, tourism practices*