

# Barriers of Implementing Green Business Practices of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in the Tourism Industry

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**Abstract:** - The Green business practices are considered as one of the most important factor to achieve business and environmental sustainability. This research is an attempt to examine the barriers of adopting green business practices of Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry in Hambantota district of Sri Lanka. Survey method was applied and questionnaire method was used to collect data from the respondents. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Findings show that lack of access to technology and high cost for financing are indicated as the main barriers of adopting green business practices among SME tourism entrepreneurs. Further, results revealed that they could gain several benefits as well through implementing green business practices and as a result, most of them have been reduced their operating cost.

**Keywords:** Green business practices, Tourism, SMEs, Barriers, Sri Lanka

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Green business concept is not new in the world but new to the Sri Lankan context. The importance of green business concept is increased due to the environmental pollution and natural environmental related issues. Adoption of green business practices is becoming a global trend to provide solutions to many environmental issues. According to Teng, Wu, and Liu (2015), green practices are programs that encourage the hoteliers to save water, energy and reduce the solid waste, reducing operational costs and protecting the earth. The Green Restaurant Association (2005) well-defined green hotel as an environmental-friendly, whose managers are devoted to set up programs that specifically workings in conserving the environment.

Tourism industry has a high potential for income generation and provide employment opportunities in Sri Lanka after ending the twenty-five years of Civil War in 2009 which hampered the socio-economic development of the country. Thereafter, tourism industry has been boomed and created many business opportunities for entrepreneurs. According to Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report (2016), tourism has become the third Foreign Exchange Earner in the Sri Lankan economy. And 2050832 tourist arrivals recorded in 2016. In 2016 tourism income is US\$. mn.3518.5 (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2016). Tourism industry spread all

around Sri Lanka and contributes to develop the rural areas of the country while improving infrastructure facilities. Further, it helps to reduce inequality among rural and urban areas and empower rural community through community-based tourism. Moreover, Sri Lankan government mainly focused in developing the tourism industry and expecting to become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.

The Tourism industry can affect the environment in over-consumption of natural resources, expansion of tourism facilities and a high number of tourist arrivals (Robinot and Giannelloni, 2010). Tourism is a resource-intensive industry and in order to lessen their environmental impact, it is vital to adopt environmentally friendly practices. On the other hand, tourism has the potential to generate several benefits to the country. Particularly, green tourism helps to encourage conservation of wildlife and natural resources. Therefore, applying the green tourism practices to Sri Lankan tourism industry crucial. Therefore, this study aims to examine the barriers and benefits of adopting green business practices of SMEs in the Tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

### B. Research Problem

Southern province is the most beautiful province in Sri Lanka. It's highly attracting local and foreign tourists because south coastal have most popular tourist hubs like Galle, Mirissa, Hambantota. According to annual statistic report of Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2016), highest foreign guest nights in tourist hotels is 4,024,155, and 37.98 percent of the total foreign guest nights recorded from the hotels in South coastal region which are the highest proportion. Also, local guest nights in tourist hotels by South coastal region is recorded as 526,178. Hambantota district is the most tourist attractive destination in South coastal because finest beaches and beach resorts are located in this area. Not only beautiful beaches but also have a variety of tours as visits are organized to cultural sites such as the Wewurukannanla temple and the ancient Mulikirigalla rock temple. Further 'blowhole', Ussangoda and to villages that carry out traditional industries such as brass works, coir, pottery, and weaving. Wildlife and nature lover's tourist can travel to the turtle beaches of Rekawa and entire tours for bird watching at Bundala and Kalamatiya Lagoon. Likewise, the popular wild-life safaris of Yala and Uda Walawe are easily accessible.

Tourism SMEs are playing the major role in the tourism industry, they are highly contributing to developing the tourism industry, regional development, and employment generation. Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) face a variety of barriers to achieving environmental sustainability. While significant emphasis and effort has focused on sustainability challenges in large businesses in the tourism sector, less attention and research have been dedicated to challenges specific to SMEs. These SMEs are often seen as having an insignificant impact on the environment. Although each business independently may have a smaller impact than the average large corporation, their combined effect has a significant impact on the environment. (Jenkins, 2004).

SMEs regularly operate differently and face different business environments. These businesses often have diverse levels of scale, regulation, operations and capital accessibility when compared with bigger corporations. As SMEs seek to become more environmentally sustainable, they encounter a variety of barriers, many of which do not exist or are insignificant in the large corporate arena. SMEs can be defined by different characteristics including size, business structure, number of employees, age, net profit and ownership through innovative and technology (Bandera, et al., 2016). The concept of green business also well-known as sustainability business has aided to shape a new strategic management approach that applies different aims, norm and knowledge along with novelty to develop more competent and promising plan (Parry, 2012). Then tourism SMEs sustainability is most important.

However, the problem is green tourism practices are highly used in large-scale tourism organizations but tourist SMEs have not seemed following green tourism practices in Sri Lanka. The environmental performance of Tourism SMEs are mostly encouraged by aim and goal of owners that run the business. It has been observed from literature that there are inadequate studies that mainly concentrated on barriers of applying green business practices in Tourism SMEs, particularly in emerging small economies like Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study attempt to address the research question of What are the barriers and benefit of adopting green practices in tourism SMEs in Hambantota district of Sri Lanka.,

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Emerging the Concept of Sustainable Tourism*

Rapid population growth increases the use of energy, natural resources, and food consumption to exceptional levels. These conditions created the context from which sustainability emerged. Academics define and redefine sustainability across varied temporal and spatial scales (Kates, 2017). Sustainability literature agrees on the presence and interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic domains (Freeman, 2011). Sustainability developed as a response to quantitative environmental and economic data that indicated that current trends in economic growth were not possible in the long run (Gibson and Management, 2006).

Problems in any of the three domains would directly affect the other two domains for present and future generations. For example, a failure in the environment, on any scale, would directly impact the social and economic activity. Thus, sustainable practices must involve all three domains of activity (Berke, 2002).

Sustainable business is one of the interests of business stakeholders in the present and future, that impact to the long-term survival of the business and it's connected social, economic and environmental systems (Edwards, 2009). In the same way, sustainable tourism practices also describe through the business and its economic satisfaction, environmental and social-cultural responsibilities, at the same time generating income, employment to residents, cultural maintenance, integrity and conserving the natural ecological activities and biodiversity (Tourism Industry Association of Canada, 2016). And this practices and guidelines are appropriate to all forms of tourism businesses; it's containing mass tourism and other various niche tourism segments.

Every business will need to decide on a strategy to move towards sustainability that meets the requirements of its present and future stakeholders and will make sure a sustainable use of resources (Raderbauer, 2011). The accommodation industry interfaces with the concept of sustainable tourism on different levels, such as location, design and development, operational management system, human resource management practices and in food and beverage catering (Raderbauer, 2011). There is are different type of establishment provide the accommodation for tourism, for instance, hotels, transport, restaurants, local guides, and various leisure and entertainment services. The impact of tourism on the environment includes depletion of natural resources, pollution, soil erosion, natural habitat loss, increased pressure on endangered species and heightened vulnerability to forest fires (SLTDA, 2016). The hospitality and hotel industry is arguing about their un-awareness of sustainability (Cavagnaro, et al., 2009). Because of the sustainable tourism practices advantage to the neighboring society, environment, and economy of the local people as well as the tourism industry. And furthermore, there are many profitable benefits included in the sustainable tourism practices (Mowforth, Munt et al. 2009).

World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future socioeconomic, cultural and environmental impacts, specifying the wants and needs of industry and their visitors, their environment, and host communities". Further, explanation of sustainable tourism is defined as "Sustaining the culture, heritage, and environment of a region whilst at the same time promoting economic expansion and social wellbeing through tourism" (Arizona Sustainable Tourism Council, 2011).

### *B. Green Business Practices in the Tourism Industry*

The environmental sustainability is the broader concept. Many tourist destinations destroy the natural assets through expansion of the tourism sector. Hotels generally rely on its bounded environment, therefore, should preserve it in order to survive in the long-run (Bader and Property, 2005). And also this is the key motive why visitors come to some particular areas. However, in the tourism industry activities create a big threat to the environment due to its high consumption of water, energy, and non-durable goods (Middleton and Hawkins 1998, Hobson and Essex 2001, Mensah 2006). And also release different types of waste to the environment. Evidence shows that tourism industry creates environment problems in the form of air and water pollution, waste generation, and energy induced emission (Bohdanowicz and Quarterly 2005, Chan, et al., 2009, Kasim, 2009).

Green practices are becoming an increasingly significant focus of many organizations. Green practices will help hotel operators to recognize what makes a hotel green, and also aid hotels assess their environmental commitment and performance. There are many green practices that hotels can implement from changing a light bulb and using recyclable products to installing energy efficient equipment and systems. Green practices are also those related to Environmental Management Systems (EMSs). Nevertheless, it may undergo substantial barriers to environmental behavior change of SMEs. From the perspective of the SME owner-managers, three main barriers in preventing them from engaging in good environmental practices are the characteristics of SMEs in general, resource availability (including financial, human, and time), and their owner manager's knowledge, interest, and motivation involving good environmental management. Overcome these barriers, it was found that greening of the hotel industry decrease in energy use to lower operational costs, an organization's image and reputation enhancement, coping with government regulation, and receiving positive public attention (Han et al., 2009), and ultimately create good results and competitive advantages (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007).

It has been estimated that 75% of hotels' environmental impacts are directly associated with excessive consumption (Bohdanowicz, 2007). This is wasteful in terms of resources and it increases operational costs unnecessarily. Hotels often seek economic chances by adopting green practices in three areas, namely energy saving, water conservation, and recycling and waste management (Stipanuk, et al., 1996). Based on previous research, five key drivers of green practices have been identified. These are owner-manager attitudes (Bohdanowicz and Quarterly, 2005), environmental awareness (Roberts and Tribe, 2008), perceived benefits (Nicholls and Kang, 2012), green consumers, and competitors (Le et al., 2008).

### *C. Barriers of Implementing Green Business Practices in the Tourism Industry*

Numerous barriers have been found to hinder implementation of green practices. The common difficulties are lack of information, lack of time, regulations and ineffective spreading of regulatory or legislative information, high costs, attitudes, lack of internal champions, and lack of customer demand for environmental practices. A study done by Revell et al., (2009), through a sample of 220 small firms found that lack of information and time as main barriers to adopt green practices.

Regulations to implement green practices and lack of awareness about environmental regulations also identified as barriers for SMEs (Parker et al., 2009; Taylor, 2003). The UK restaurant owners believed that regulations were the most effective way to encourage environmentally-friendly practices in the industry even though this industry does not face a large number of environment-specific regulations (Revell & Blackburn, 2007).

Revell et al, (2009) found that increased costs as a barrier. Williamson & Lynch-Wood (2001) found that among 40 SMEs of different types, most cited waste regulations as having the highest environmental cost burden. Attitudes of SME owners and managers play a mixed role in the implementation of environmental practices. Some businesses believe that their operations have a minimal impact on the environment (Taylor et al., 2003) while others believe that they have a moral imperative to act (Jenkins, 2006). Some firms perceive implementation of environmental practices as resource and time intensive. Williamson & Lynch-Wood (2001) showed that firms rated themselves as generally aware of environmental issues but unsatisfied with their current performance; improving performance would require "quite a bit of effort".

On a more positive note, Revell et al., (2009) found businesses possessed a mostly optimistic attitude towards environmental measures. More than 80 % of SMEs believed that "environmental issues should be a high priority". Additionally, 75% disagreed that their business was too lesser to make an environmental impact. Firms cited altruism as one of the most vital reasons for environmental practices. However, a majority of firms perceived increased costs as a barrier, meaning that they may often achieve "low hanging fruit"- easy to do environmental measures- but may not proactively implement more advanced measures (Revell et al., 2009).

Williamson and Lynch-Wood (2001) found a correlation between the time spent on environmental issues and whether or not a business had a dedicated environmental manager. Out of 40 SMEs, 36 did not have an environmental manager; those 36 businesses also spent less than 3% of their time on the environmental activists. The four remaining businesses with environmental managers spent over 3% of their time on the environmental activists. In most of the firms without an

environmental manager, the director-level staff took responsibility for environmental issues by default because of a lack of resources to hire dedicated staff, and because they were already responsible for legal environmental compliance.

Yusof and Jamaludin (2014) investigated the barriers faced by Malaysian Green Hotels and Resorts. This study used qualitative case study method by choosing five cases. The results identified 12 barriers. Results indicated that the great barriers are lack of green experts and lack of resources in terms of manpower, green equipment and difficulty in balancing the quality of service with environmental performance.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

#### A. Research Design

Descriptive research method was applied because the purpose of the research is to identify barriers of using green business practices. Survey method was used with both quantitative and qualitative approaches. As the data were collected at one point of time from the respondents, study is cross sectional.

#### B. Population and Sample

This research aims to study the barriers of adopting green tourism practices by SME entrepreneurs in Hambantota district. Study population is all the SME tourism enterprises who are located in Hambantota district. There are around 920 Tourism SMEs registered in according to the records of Divisional Secretariat. Popular tourist areas were focused and 14 popular tourist villagers were chosen to collect data. Out of those 14 villages, 345 tourism SMEs were selected to send questionnaires. Convenience sampling method was applied to gather data from the sample because of no proper records about Tourism SMEs are available. Sample represents tourist hotels, restaurants, transportation and other tourism services. Respondents were the owner/manager of tourism SMEs.

#### C. Data Collection and Analysis

The study collected all primary data through a questionnaire and interview. Questionnaire was the ideal method of collecting data from large number of respondents with a limited period of time. Questionnaire consisted of three parts, first part consisted of the profile of respondents and the business. Second part includes the existing green business practices and third part addressed the barriers and benefits of adopting green business practices. This part includes 23 questions which measures the barriers related to entrepreneurs' awareness, time, rules and regulations, cost and financing, entrepreneur attitude, customers demand, political policies, technology, social and cultural factors and natural environment effect on green tourism practices. Operationalization of barriers were identified through extensive literature review and pilot study as illustrated in Table I. A pilot study was conducted with 08 owners of SMEs to have a better understanding of the green practices and barriers. The items were measured using a five-point Likert scale anchored by "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".

Data were collected in July and August 2018. Out of the selected sample, 196 usable questionnaires were received yielding a 56% response rate. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data.

TABLE I  
MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

Variable	Source
Cost & Financing	Taylor et al. (2003) Revell et al. (2009) Williamson & Lynch Wood (2001)
Awareness and knowledge	Revell et al., (2009) Schaper, (2002); Revell & Blackburn, (2007)
Customers demand	Jenkins' (2006) Revell et al.'s (2009)
Entrepreneur attitude	Jenkins (2006) Taylor et al., (2003) Revell et al., (2009).
Legal factors	Parker (2009) Taylor (2003) Williamson & Lynch-Wood, (2001)
Time	Revell et al. (2009) Jenkins (2006) Revell & Blackburn, (2007)
Technology	These measures are identified by pilot study
Natural environment	
Social factors	
Political policies	

### IV. FINDINGS

#### A. Profile of Respondents

Out of all the respondents, 82% are male and 18% are female. Based on the level of education, 40% of the respondents have ordinary level, 54% have Advance level and 6% have Degree. Out of all SMEs, 38 % of the SMEs are hotels 48 % are tourism restaurants, 10% are tourism transportation services and 4% are other tourism services.

#### B. Motivations to use Green Business Practices

Out of all the respondents, 91% of SMEs are adopted green business practices to gain economic benefits and 78% expected to attract green customers. Further, 73% are embraced green business practices to access new technology and 24% represent to comply with current rules and regulations, 21% represent environment concern, and only 5% are in accordance with ethical and social responsibility.

#### C. Deployment of Green Business Practices

Considering the deployment of green business practices, results show that 86% of the SME tourism entrepreneurs are adopted green energy. Especially most of them used Energy efficient electric bulbs; Ex: CFL, LED bulbs and also Use energy efficient equipment; Ex: inverter A/C and refrigerators, energy star equipment and use renewable energy sources; Ex: solar panels, solar hot water system, bio-energy etc. Buildings and decorations related green practices are adopted by 39% of the respondents. They constructed their

buildings by using environmentally friendly materials and used environmental friendly decorations. The results also show that 36% of the SMEs are implemented waste management systems. Most of them reduce over consumption and wastage; Ex: lower packaging and recyclable packages. Reuse and sorting the wastage and Recycling the wastage; Ex: compost also used by

them. Further, 28% of SME tourism entrepreneurs are adopted efficient use of water. Most of them are used water-efficient

equipment; Ex: low flow showers, low flow commode, low flow tap and take necessary actions to reduce excessive water usage. However, SME tourism entrepreneurs are not using waste water filtering and reusing systems. Purchasing related green practices are used by 23% of respondents. They Purchase lower packing and recyclable packing goods and purchase by organic farmers and suppliers. Moreover, 8% of the SME tourism entrepreneurs are adapted green transportation like use electric, hybrid, and biodiesel vehicles.

**D. Benefits Gained through Implementing Green Business Practices**

Out of all tourism SMEs, 91% of the SMEs are saved their operating cost, and 41% of them are increased demand for their goods and services through adopting green business practices. The results show that 34% of the SMEs are enhanced goodwill and reputation 22 % of them are minimized environmental threats as shown in Table II.

TABLE II  
BENEFITS GAINED THROUGH GREEN BUSINESS PRACTICES

Benefits	Valid	
	N	Percent
Reduced operating cost	86	91.0%
Earned extra income	15	16.0%
Enhanced goodwill and reputation	32	34.0%
Increased demand for goods or services	39	41.0%
Minimized social threats	4	4.0%
Minimized environmental threats	21	22.0%
Reduced legal threats	9	10.0%

**E. Barriers of Implementing Green Business Practices**

Lack of access to technology and high cost are shown as the main barriers of adopting green business practices among SME tourism entrepreneurs with the mean values of 4.51 and 4.42 respectively as illustrated in Table III. Lack of awareness/information, political policies, and time pressure also considered as important barriers that shows the mean values of 4.27, 4.18, and 4.07 respectively. Least preferred barrier among SMEs are attitude of entrepreneur with a mean value of 2.34. Barriers are also categorized and ranked based on their mean values like high, moderate and low as indicate in Table IV.

TABLE III  
BARRIERS OF IMPLEMENTING GREEN BUSINESS PRACTICES

Barriers	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Awareness /information	3.33	5.00	4.276	0.356
Time	2.00	5.00	4.070	0.670
Rules and regulations	2.67	4.67	3.546	0.399
Cost and financing	3.33	5.00	4.420	0.403
Attitudes of Entrepreneur	1.00	4.50	2.340	0.766
Demand for Customers	1.00	3.50	1.860	0.562
Political policies	3.00	5.00	4.180	0.492
Technology	4.00	5.00	4.510	0.443
Natural environmental factors	2.50	5.00	3.470	0.599
Social and cultural factors	1.50	5.00	2.840	0.731

TABLE IV  
RANKING OF BARRIERS

Barriers	Mean	Rank
<i>High effected barriers</i>		
Technology	4.510	1
Cost and financing	4.420	2
Awareness /information	4.276	3
Political policies	4.180	4
Time	4.070	5
Rules and regulations	3.546	6
Natural environmental factors	3.470	7
<i>Moderate effected barriers</i>		
Social and cultural factors	2.840	8
<i>Low effected barriers</i>		
Attitudes of entrepreneur	2.340	9
Demand for Customers	1.860	10

**V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

Present study revealed that most SME entrepreneurs in Hambantota district of Sri Lanka has a positive attitude toward adopting green business practices. However, lack of access to technology and high cost for financing are shown as the main barriers of adopting green business practices among SME tourism entrepreneurs. Further, results show that they could gain several benefits through adopting green practices and most of them have reduced their operating cost. Findings of the present study matched with some previous research findings. Cost and financing barrier are consistent with previous research (Revell et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2003).

To overcome the barriers of implementing green business practices of SME tourism entrepreneurs, below recommendations can be suggested to encourage tourism SMEs in Sri Lanka.

- To remove barriers of access to technology, government needs to develop a mechanism for transferring technology among SMEs and provide wider awareness regarding green technology.
- Develop environmental education, particularly in secondary and higher education, as part of the new National Plan for Sustainable Development.
- The government should initiate more special financial and non-financial schemes for green entrepreneurs like “SuryaBalaSangramaya (Battle for Solar Energy) renewable energy project”. The Ministry of Power and Renewable Energy in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority, Ceylon Electricity Board and Lanka Electricity Company launched the SooryaBalaSangramayain 2016, with the intention of promoting and setting up small-scale solar power plants on rooftops of households, religious places, hotels, commercial establishments and industries, it is expected to add 200 MW of solar electricity to the national grid by 2020 and 1000 MW by 2025.
- To increase the tourist awareness of sustainable tourism practices should be important to protect and preserve the place for the next generation
- To achieve economies of scale by encouraging communities to cooperate most effectively and coordinate their actions. (collection methods, recycling programmes, selective sorting)
- Implement the General Waste Management Plan with more efficient measures for achieving the principal objectives.

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