

Expanding the Blue Economy in Sri Lanka: Opportunities, Challenges, and Solutions in Developing Marine and Coastal Tourism Sectors

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka is focusing on developing its blue economy, which involves the sustainable use of marine resources to promote economic progress, livelihoods, and employment opportunities while protecting the ocean ecosystem. This research analyzes the opportunities, challenges, and possible solutions for expanding the blue economy in Sri Lanka, particularly in the Marine and coastal tourism sectors. The qualitative research methodology used key-person interviews as the primary data collection tool. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders in the Marine and coastal tourism sector, and the data were analyzed using thematic Analysis. The research highlighted the geographical location of the country, diversification of the marine and coastal tourism products, human resource availability of the sector, and opportunities to expand further. The study identified several challenges in expanding the Marine and coastal tourism sector, including limited infrastructure, lack of sectorial collaboration, and insufficient private sector involvement. Potential solutions to overcome these challenges are public-private partnerships, industry infrastructure development, sectorial collaboration, and port development. The potential for Marine and coastal tourism in Sri Lanka is enormous. If the country can implement the right strategies, the blue economy can significantly contribute to its economic growth while preserving its natural resources and cultural heritage. This research's findings can inform policy decisions and guide future investments in the Marine and coastal tourism sector, benefiting Sri Lanka's economy and people.

Keywords: Blue Economy, Marine and Coastal tourism, Nautical Tourism, Port