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### Sustainability Assessment of Park Studies in Sri Lanka: A Comprehensive Review

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#### Abstract

This study examines the alignment of park studies in Sri Lanka with the principles of sustainability. Parks play a vital role in promoting environmental conservation, socio-economic development, and community well-being. However, it is crucial to assess whether these park studies effectively incorporate sustainable practices and contribute to long-term sustainability. Using a case study approach, 49 park studies conducted in Sri Lanka were analyzed, focusing on topics, findings, and suggestions presented in these studies. The analysis revealed that while the studies covered various perspectives such as ecotourism development, socio-economic impacts, park management, and urban park studies, there was a lack of emphasis on addressing the four basic needs of parks and designing them accordingly. Furthermore, the logical relationship between the findings

and the concept of sustainability was unclear, indicating a gap in understanding and implementation. The suggestions provided by researchers mostly aimed at promoting tourism and improving visitor experiences, but their contribution to sustainability was questionable. The study concludes that the current alignment of park studies in Sri Lanka falls short of achieving sustainability objectives. It highlights the need for a clearer vision and scientific definition of sustainability in park studies and proposes further research to identify essential components for designing sustainable parks. This study serves as a call to action for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders to prioritize sustainability in park planning and management for the betterment of Sri Lanka's natural and cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Alignment, Case Study, Park Studies, Sustainability, Sri Lanka

#### 1. Introduction

Still lacking an accepted definition of sustainability (Ramsey, 2015; Purvis *et al.*, 2019) aside, many countries in the world are struggling to achieve the 17 sustainable goals as defined by the United Nations. Scholars are tempted to repeat the UN's definition of sustainability as an answer to the question of what sustainability is. In these times of enormous global problems, it is extremely important to be more prudent.

In 1958, the General Assembly established the Special Fund, a predecessor of the UN Development Fund (A/RES/1219 (XII)). The resolution states, among other things: "The General Assembly, consistent with the determination of the United Nations, as expressed in its Charter, to promote social progress and better standards of living in greater freedom, and to employ international mechanisms to that end," the promotion of economic and social progress of all peoples... [decides to set up a] special fund to provide systematic and sustained support in areas essential to the integrated technical, economic and social development of less developed countries" (UN Documentation Research Guides, n.d.). In this way, even though plans are presented to promote social progress and better standards of living in a world of greater freedom, many unpleasant problems have to be faced globally today, exceeding the positive benefits (Goodland, 2002) <sup>[17]</sup>.

In the background of such past unpleasant experiences due to academics being irrational, we should at least now think about the dangers of following someone or an organization without an open mind. Although many countries strive to fulfill the sustainable development goals with ambitious dreams, it should be noted that there are many other issues that go hand in hand with this, which overcome the lack of a specific definition. One factor is that the ghosts of failed development still operate. Conventional economists still hope or claim that economic growth can be infinite or at least that we are not yet reaching limits to growth (Goodland, 2002) <sup>[17]</sup>. Another factor is the neglect of Eastern knowledge in the face of the dominance of Western knowledge (Tricot & Sweller, 2013) <sup>[78]</sup>. Another factor is that at least the UN interpretation of sustainability is not used properly (McGill University, n.d.) <sup>[43]</sup>. Another factor is that requirements are not properly defined. The UN itself updates the list of needs from time to time (UN General Assembly, n.d.). In the face of many growing global problems, it is not wise to

follow risky trial and error methods. In such an environment, the ambition of this study is to investigate the extent to which Sri Lankan Park studies adapt to sustainability. Therefore, its content is important for all parties interested in sustainability.

## 2. Methods and Materials

**Data Collection:** Google Internet search was utilized to gather the data required for this study. The search terms 'Sri Lanka Park', 'Sri Lanka Gardens', 'Yala Park', 'Sri Lanka National Park', and 'Sri Lanka Open Spaces' were employed for data collection.

**Nature of the Data:** The data collected for this study was qualitative in nature. The focus was primarily on the interpretation and meaning of the presented terms. The data encompassed research topics, findings, and suggestions relevant to the study.

**Data Analysis:** The analysis of the data prioritized the meanings and interpretations of the terms, and therefore, the use of coding techniques was intentionally avoided.

**Working Definition:** The primary objective of this study was to assess the adherence of Sri Lankan Park studies to the concept of sustainability. Hence, the working definition employed here was based on the United Nations' definition of sustainability. According to the United Nations, sustainability entails "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (vocabulary.com; nasa.gov).

However, it is important to note that the concept of needs in sustainability should be further specified as basic needs. Basic needs are widely acknowledged as food, water, and shelter (springer.com). Nevertheless, additional fundamental requirements can be included in the list, such as sleep (blanchethouse.org), safety (job security), love (simplypsychology.org), public transportation, air quality, disability support, health services, maternity care, elderly care, open public spaces, reliable basic services, safe public transportation, sanitation facilities, social protection during unemployment, water availability, and more (United Nations, n.d.).

Moreover, the Pali term for basic needs is "Sivu Pasaya," which encompasses clothing, food, housing, and health (Dhammikaweb, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>; Bruton, H. J., 1992). The concept of dependence on these basic needs is referred to as "Ulpachchathawa" or simplicity in Pali. It can be inferred that sustainability is a result of embracing simplicity (Jayantha, K., *et al.*, 2020<sup>[27]</sup>; Jayantha, K., *et al.*, 2021; Jayantha, K., *et al.*, 2023<sup>[30]</sup>). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, simplicity is adopted as the working definition, signifying a reliance on basic needs.

## 3. Analysis

Sustainable tourism strategies play a crucial role in the development and management of tourism destinations, ensuring the preservation of natural resources, supporting local communities, and providing a positive experience for visitors. In the context of Sri Lanka, a country renowned for its rich biodiversity, cultural heritage, and captivating landscapes, the exploration and analysis of sustainable tourism strategies are of utmost importance. This comprehensive analysis delves into three key aspects related to sustainable tourism strategies in Sri Lanka. Firstly, it examines the existing strategies implemented by tourism authorities and stakeholders to promote Sri Lanka as a year-

round destination, attract younger tourists, ensure gender equality, and create a welcoming environment for female tourists. Secondly, it analyzes the findings derived from various studies conducted on sustainable tourism strategies, categorizing them into distinct themes to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in this field. Lastly, it explores the suggestions and recommendations put forth by researchers and experts to enhance the effectiveness and impact of sustainable tourism strategies in Sri Lanka. By critically examining these topics, this analysis aims to provide valuable insights into the current state of sustainable tourism strategies in Sri Lanka and offer recommendations for future actions. The findings and recommendations presented here can guide policymakers, tourism authorities, and stakeholders in formulating and implementing strategies that maximize the benefits of tourism while minimizing its negative impacts, ultimately fostering the long-term sustainability of the industry in Sri Lanka.

### 3.1 Analysis of Topic on Sustainable Tourism Strategies in Sri Lanka

Our aim was to examine the extent to which the research done on Sri Lankan parks has enriched the concept of sustainability. A total of 49 research papers were considered in this effort. This number includes the research papers conducted in relation to the parks in Sri Lanka in the nearest decade from 2013 to 2023. If the numbers are considered according to years, they are as follows. 2013 and 2014, 02 papers each, 2015, 05 papers, 2016, 02 papers, 2017, 06 papers, 2018, 05 papers, 2019, 08 papers, 2020, 06 papers, 2021, 04 papers, 2022, 05 papers, finally 2023 as 04 papers. Since most of the parks in Sri Lanka are under the administration of the wildlife department, it can be seen that most of the studies conducted regarding the park are done with the subject of wildlife. Therefore, for this study too, a relatively large number of research papers related to the subject of wildlife could not be prevented from being randomly selected. However, as it does not interfere with our main ambition, the situation has been ignored. The 49 research papers that were selected as the sample of the study could be divided into 4 main categories during further investigation. That is Category 1: Ecotourism Development and Biodiversity Conservation, Category 2: Socio-economic Impacts and Community Participation, Category 3: Park Studies and Management, Category 4: Urban Park Studies and so on. Meanwhile, Urban Park Studies could be further differentiated with special reference to recreational parks in Colombo. The research papers were divided under each category as follows. Category 1: Ecotourism Development and Biodiversity Conservation 13 papers, 2: Socio-economic Impacts and Community Participation, Category 6 papers, 3: Park Studies and Management, Category 11 papers, 4: Urban Park Studies 8 papers.

### 3.2 Analysis of Findings on Sustainable Tourism Strategies in Sri Lanka

Ecotourism and sustainable park management are critical components of preserving natural environments and promoting responsible tourism. In Sri Lanka, numerous studies have been conducted to explore various aspects of park management, visitor behavior, community impacts, and destination image. These studies shed light on the challenges and opportunities associated with ecotourism development

while emphasizing the need for sustainable practices. This comprehensive analysis examines the findings from these studies, categorizing them into distinct themes to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of ecotourism in Sri Lanka. By understanding the key issues, motivations, and impacts, stakeholders can work towards improving visitor experiences, maximizing positive benefits for local communities, and ensuring the long-term conservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

### 3.2.1 Category 1: Visitor Discontent and Issues with Park Management/Tour Operators

The findings of the considered studies can be classified into five main categories. These categories are Category 1: Visitor Discontent and Issues with Park Management/Tour Operators, Category 2: Visitor Segments and Behavior, Category 3: Community and Socio-economic Impacts, Category 4: Destination Image and Visitor Satisfaction, and Category 5: Other. Findings 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 were included in these categories, respectively.

Under the first category, the disclosures related to park management were included, addressing visitor preferences and issues such as dissatisfaction (Perera & Kotagama, 2015<sup>[52]</sup>; Prakash, 2017b; Arachchi, R. *et al.*, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>; Egresi & Prakash, 2019<sup>[11]</sup>). Some findings focused on visitor satisfaction (Arachchi, R. *et al.*, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>; Egresi & Prakash, 2019<sup>[11]</sup>). Fees, including entrance fees (Prakash, 2017b), cost of safari tours (Marasinghe, S., & Perera, P., 2020)<sup>[41]</sup>, and safari vehicle fees (Prakash, 2017b), were also addressed. Visitor safety (Marasinghe, S., *et al.*, 2020<sup>[42]</sup>; Oshani & Wijethissa, 2015<sup>[47]</sup>) and lack of opportunities were mentioned by many researchers.

Specifically, issues with park personnel and facilities (Arachchi, R. *et al.*, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>; Prakash, 2017b), poor maintenance of nature trails (Prakash, 2017b), cleanliness of the river (Marasinghe, S., *et al.*, 2020<sup>[42]</sup>; Arachchi, R. *et al.*, 2018)<sup>[2]</sup>, diverse wildlife (Prakash, 2017b), services (Prakash, 2017b), lack of signage (Oshani & Wijethissa, 2015)<sup>[47]</sup>, park management issues (Prakash, 2017b), tour-operator related issues (Prakash, 2017b), noisy environment (Wijethissa, 2015)<sup>[18]</sup>, park rules and regulations (Oshani & Wijethissa, 2015)<sup>[47]</sup>, wildlife sightings (Marasinghe, S., *et al.*, 2020),<sup>[42]</sup> poor condition of safari vehicles (Prakash, 2017b), and traffic congestion (Prakash, 2017b) were among the findings.

These findings collectively indicate that visitor expectations are not being met. Various researchers have investigated this issue from different perspectives, consistently confirming the facts. Additionally, it has been found that over-visitation negatively affects the sustainable management of the environment (Nillegodra, L. *et al.*, 2013) and that there is a lack of concern for the environment and wildlife (Prakash, 2017b), which slightly differ from the general findings.

### 3.2.2 Category 2: Visitor Segments and Behavior

In this comprehensive analysis, Perera (2022) explores various aspects related to park management, the classification of park visitors, understanding their behavior and expectations, and identifying distinct visitor segments with unique motives, attitudes, and behaviors. The findings highlight that the ecotourist segment stands out for exhibiting environmentally desired motives, attitudes, and behaviors. Additionally, the majority of campsite users are categorized into the Prestige-seeker and Adventure-seeker

segments, with Prestige seekers displaying higher expectations for facilities and demanding proper maintenance of campsites. Targeting Prestige seekers as a market segment proves advantageous due to their high income, education level, and pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors.

Subsequently, the motivations of each visitor segment are examined. The motivations for visitor participation encompass being in a natural setting, utilizing free time, and spending quality time with family or friends (Marasinghe, S., *et al.*, 2020)<sup>[42]</sup>. The studies conducted by Marasinghe, S., *et al.* (2020)<sup>[42]</sup> and Oshani & Wijethissa (2015)<sup>[47]</sup> shed light on the physical and emotional factors influencing these motivations. Notably, relaxation emerges as the most significant physical motive, while freedom is identified as the most significant emotional factor. Additionally, Agyeman and Antwi-Bosiako (2022)<sup>[1]</sup> provide valuable insights into the factors influencing visitor satisfaction.

Furthermore, Perera (2017) identifies the effects of an individual's intention to participate in ecotourism. The study emphasizes that knowledge, attitudes, social influence, and perceived behavioral control significantly impact both the intention to engage in ecotourism and actual ecotourist behavior. Satisfaction assumes a crucial role as a mediator, connecting the variables of knowledge, attitudes, social influence, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions.

The analysis also delves into visitor behavior, segmented according to their respective categories. Marasinghe *et al.* (2020)<sup>[42]</sup> reveal that visitors engage in a variety of activities, such as relaxation, fun, enjoyment, boat rides, and photography. The study further underscores the significance of tour guides in enhancing visitor experiences. Moreover, Ilukdeniya and Thirumarpan (2019)<sup>[26]</sup> uncover that foreign visitors generally incur higher average costs for activities like boating and diving compared to local visitors.

This comprehensive analysis provides valuable insights into park management, visitor segmentation, motivations, intention to participate in ecotourism, visitor behavior, and factors influencing visitor satisfaction. The findings have significant implications for understanding and catering to the diverse needs and expectations of park visitors.

### 3.2.3 Category 3: Community Impacts and Socio-Economic Impacts

It can be seen that findings have been made from different perspectives regarding community and socio-economic impacts. Community Participation Perceived impacts of wildlife tourism on the community, the relationship between community participation and support for wildlife tourism (Ranasinghe, 2019); that wildlife tourism has a positive impact on the local community including job creation, entrepreneurship development, increased investment, improved quality of life and women's empowerment; differences in the distribution and recognition of socio-economic impacts between different villages and demographic characteristics (Gnanapala & Jayalath, 2022)<sup>[15]</sup>; Meanwhile, Pathmasiri, E. H. G. C., 2017b points out the relationship between ecotourism and development. Lack of sufficient attention to ecotourism, that ecotourism can have positive and negative impacts on the local community. He further points out that the positive impacts include job creation, income generation and infrastructure development. Negative impacts include cultural erosion, social inequalities

and environmental degradation. He further points out that the benefits and costs of ecotourism, community participation in ecotourism planning and decision-making processes is critical to achieving sustainable development, and that community participation in ecotourism activities has a positive impact on their attitudes and awareness of environmental conservation. Meanwhile (Lakshani, S., Gamage, *et al.*, 2018) points out the high scientific value of Horton Plains National Park and the per capita welfare benefits for visitors. According to (Kariawasam and Suriyagoda, n.d.)<sup>[33]</sup>, the outside community benefits more than the local community from tourism. In addition to these, 6 components (Egresi, I., *et al.*, 2021) are found that residents can support for tourism development. At the same time, he discovers changes in residents' attitudes towards tourism development and an understanding of their role. Finally (Udayangi, A. I., & Jayarathna, 2019)<sup>[79]</sup> finds that there is limited public awareness regarding the services provided by Yala National Park and these forest services leading to adverse human activities that threaten the forest ecosystem.

### 3.2.4 Category 4: Destination Image and Visitor Satisfaction

(Prakash, 2017c) indicates that destination images influence tourist satisfaction. He emphasizes the impact of destination image, especially on return visitors to the destination. Strengthening this idea (Athukorala, P. C. C., and Satkumara, M., 2021)<sup>[3]</sup> show that the image of the Sinharaja Forest Reserve significantly affected visitor satisfaction. He further points out that visitors' satisfaction with Sinharaja Forest Reserve positively affected their overall satisfaction with Sri Lanka as a destination. The above idea is supported by the finding that tourist perception has an effect on satisfaction shown by a case study of Udawalawa National Park in Sri Lanka (Ranasinghe, R., *et al.*, 2020).

### 3.2.5 Category 5: Other Perspectives on Park Management and Ecotourism

complementarity between human capital, social capital, tourism and local livelihoods (Jayathileka *et al.*, 2019)<sup>[32]</sup>; (Nillegoda, L. *et al.*, 2013) have shown that involving local communities in park management and ecotourism development can lead to more sustainable outcomes; that effective communication and cooperation between park management, tourism operators and local communities is essential for successful ecotourism; Improving visitor satisfaction and problem solving can contribute to positive word-of-mouth promotion and sustainability of ecotourism destinations. They further emphasize that ecotourism development should aim to minimize negative impacts on the environment and local communities while maximizing positive benefits and that ecotourism can contribute to the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity if managed sustainably. Park study findings such as estimating recreational value of the park, confirming the impact of tourist perception on satisfaction can be pointed out (Ranasinghe, R., *et al.*, 2020). Meanwhile, there are other types of research that are rarely seen. For example, Estimating the recreational value of the park can point to park research findings such as confirmation of tourist perceptions of satisfaction (Ranasinghe, R., *et al.*, 2020). Meanwhile, there are other types of research that are rarely

seen. The study identifies key components and criteria for a park to be considered sustainable. (K. Jayantha *et al.*, 2021) can be pointed out. These studies try to point out the components that must exist in a sustainable park.

### 3.2.6 Conclusion

The analysis of the findings highlights the multifaceted nature of ecotourism in Sri Lanka and underscores the importance of sustainable park management, visitor satisfaction, community participation, and destination image. The research findings reveal both opportunities and challenges in promoting ecotourism as a means of conservation and socio-economic development. It is evident that visitor discontent, issues with park management and tour operators, and over-visitation pose significant challenges that need to be addressed. However, by implementing targeted strategies, such as involving local communities in park management, improving communication and cooperation between stakeholders, and prioritizing visitor satisfaction, sustainable outcomes can be achieved. Furthermore, the research findings emphasize the potential positive impacts of ecotourism, including job creation, entrepreneurship development, increased investment, improved quality of life, and women's empowerment within local communities. Effective management of destination image and visitor satisfaction can contribute to positive word-of-mouth promotion and long-term sustainability. Additionally, the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity should be a key focus, ensuring that ecotourism practices minimize negative impacts on the environment and local communities. To move forward, it is crucial to prioritize the implementation of sustainable practices, invest in park facilities and infrastructure, enhance visitor services, and engage local communities in decision-making processes. Ongoing research and analysis are necessary to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures and identify areas for improvement. By fostering cooperation among stakeholders, including park management, tourism operators, local communities, and visitors, Sri Lanka can continue to develop its ecotourism potential, creating a win-win situation that benefits the environment, local communities, and tourists seeking unique and responsible travel experiences.

## 3.3 Analysis of Suggestions on Sustainable Tourism Strategies in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's tourism industry is a significant contributor to its economy, presenting immense opportunities for growth. However, ensuring the long-term sustainability of tourism practices is crucial for maintaining the country's natural and cultural resources. This analysis examines various strategies and recommendations derived from academic studies to develop a comprehensive approach towards sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka.

### 3.3.1 Comprehensive Approach to Sustainable Ecotourism and Wildlife Conservation

The sustainable development and maintenance of ecotourism require a comprehensive approach with a focus on education, integrated management strategies, empirical evidence, policy revision, and global standards alignment (De Zoysa, 2022)<sup>[8]</sup>. To ensure wildlife conservation within ecotourism, it is essential to treat native animals with

respect, discourage a narrow focus on specific species, and regulate the behavior of jeep drivers and guides (Egresi & Prakash, 2019) <sup>[11]</sup>. Visitor management and education play a vital role in enhancing the visitor experience while minimizing ecological disruption (Perera *et al.*, 2022). This includes raising visitor awareness, implementing surveillance systems, establishing activity zone management, enforcing campsite policies, and continuously evaluating and adjusting management strategies (Perera *et al.*, 2022; Perera, 2017). Moreover, the quality of the ecotourism product can be improved by focusing on controllable factors, building infrastructure for wildlife viewing, and enhancing on-site education and information services (Perera, 2017). Management interventions, reallocation of resources, and continuous research are necessary to improve visitor satisfaction with tour guides (Agyeman & Antwi-Bosiako, 2022) <sup>[11]</sup>. Policy makers and park management can use standards derived from studies as a guide for visitor management strategies and should consider diversifying tourism activities (Rathnayake & Gunawardena, 2014) <sup>[72]</sup>. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of visitor numbers and acceptance levels are essential for effective management of sustainable conservation practices (Rathnayake & Gunawardena, 2014) <sup>[72]</sup>. By implementing these suggestions, which are supported by the cited research, the majority of the recommendations aim to promote the development of the park, tourism industry, and local economy while ensuring the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

### 3.3.2 Strategic Planning and Sustainable Practices for Park and Ecotourism Development

Developing a strategic plan that incorporates sustainability considerations and addresses both positive and negative factors identified in the study is crucial (Prakash *et al.*, 2019). Improving the quality of services in the whale watching industry through training, policies, and regulations is necessary for enhancing visitor satisfaction (Prakash *et al.*, 2019). Collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, and tour operators, is essential for effective implementation of the strategic plan (Prakash *et al.*, 2019). Ecotourism managers should focus on enhancing the features and amenities of their facilities to improve visitor satisfaction and consider the travel motives of international tourists to encourage revisits (Simpson *et al.*, 2020). Aligning management practices in Sri Lankan eco-lodges with international best practices is crucial for long-term sustainability (Simpson *et al.*, 2020). Implementing ecotourism standards consistent with international principles and receiving support from the government and relevant authorities are important steps to ensure sustainable practices (Fernando & Kaluarachchi, 2016) <sup>[14]</sup>. A comprehensive rating system should be implemented to assess ecotourism destinations' fulfillment of responsibilities, discouraging irresponsible tourism practices (Pathmasiri, 2017a). Formulating and implementing small-scale ecotourism policies tailored to each destination's unique characteristics and needs is recommended (Pathmasiri, 2017a). Continuous research and evaluation are necessary to monitor the effectiveness of implementing ecotourism principles in urban parks and address potential issues (Gunawardhana *et al.*, n.d.) <sup>[18]</sup>. Creating and developing urban parks in Sri Lanka can provide various benefits to urban societies and should be

integrated into future urban planning projects (Rajapaksha *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[63]</sup>. Park managers should use an indicator-based approach to evaluate and improve park facilities, services, and safety measures based on user expectations (Pussella & Li, 2019) <sup>[62]</sup>. Continuously evaluating and enhancing park characteristics are essential to meet the needs of park users and prioritize factors that have the greatest impact (Pussella & Li, 2019) <sup>[62]</sup>. By implementing these recommendations, which are supported by the provided citations, the majority of the suggestions aim to promote park development, tourism, sustainability, and visitor satisfaction.

### 3.3.3 Enhancing Urban Development, Green Spaces, and Sustainable Practices in Sri Lanka

The paper recommends revising the existing definition of urbanization in Sri Lanka to provide a more accurate understanding of urban areas, which can have implications for political and legislative efforts related to urban development and planning (Weeraratne, 2016) <sup>[87]</sup>. The revised definition would enable policymakers to make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively, promoting sustainable urban development in Sri Lanka (Weeraratne, 2016) <sup>[87]</sup>. Socio-demographic factors should be considered in the planning and design of residential areas to ensure the presence of green spaces, and urban planners and policymakers should prioritize the preservation and promotion of residential green space (Jayasinghe *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[31]</sup>. Educating residents about the benefits of green space can encourage its maintenance and expansion in residential areas (Jayasinghe *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[31]</sup>. In tropical climates, the results of the study suggest incorporating the findings into the planning and design of urban streetscapes, considering visual complexity levels to create sustainable and user-friendly environments (Kawshalya *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[35]</sup>. Improving visual complexity within an optimal range can enhance perceived safety, comfort, and preference among urban road users (Kawshalya *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[35]</sup>. The problem of green space reduction in smaller administrative units in Colombo should be analyzed, highlighting the importance of attention from policymakers and planners to implement sustainable solutions and develop a comprehensive urban plan focused on preserving and increasing green spaces (Li, 2017) <sup>[39]</sup>. To improve the resilience of coastal cities to tsunamis, the proposed framework for planning and designing public open spaces (POS) can be utilized by urban planners and designers in Sri Lanka (Jayakody, 2019) <sup>[59]</sup>. Policy makers should consider the research findings when formulating policies related to POS, and other countries can adapt the framework to their own coastal contexts (Jayakody, 2019) <sup>[59]</sup>. When designing and developing urban parks, it is important to consider the different types of users and their social interaction patterns, prioritize accessibility, and provide shady green spaces and a variety of activities based on research findings (Lokuliyana & Ratnayake, 2020) <sup>[40]</sup>. In formulating strategies for wetland tourism development, policy makers and tourism planners should consider the perspectives and needs of residents, engage the local community, and continuously monitor and assess resident attitudes and satisfaction (Egresi *et al.*, 2021). When supporting the growth of the tourism industry, policy makers should implement favorable policies, prioritize the development of infrastructure and facilities, and promote sustainable practices and responsible tourism (Munasinghe *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[44]</sup>. By considering these recommendations

supported by the provided citations, efforts can be directed toward the development of urban areas, green spaces, tourism, and sustainable practices.

### 3.3.4 Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Visitor Experiences in Sri Lanka

Tourism authorities and stakeholders should focus on promoting Sri Lanka as a year-round destination, implementing targeted marketing strategies to attract younger tourists and ensuring gender equality and a welcoming environment for female tourists (Perera, no year) <sup>[51]</sup>. Cooperation between the tourism industry and local businesses can create employment opportunities and enhance the overall tourism experience (Perera, no year) <sup>[51]</sup>. Further analysis and research are necessary to understand the factors driving the significant increase in tourist arrivals from specific regions (Perera, no year) <sup>[51]</sup>. To promote sustainable tourism practices, it is essential to prioritize environmental protection and minimize disturbance to wildlife, including responsible wildlife viewing and minimizing the ecological footprint (Perera *et al.*, 2023). Engaging local communities in tourism planning and decision-making processes is crucial to ensure their active participation, benefit-sharing, and ownership of the industry (Perera *et al.*, 2023). To improve park experiences, clear and accurate information about park attractions, rules, and regulations should be provided through improved park information services (Arachchi *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[2]</sup>. Additionally, investments should be made in park facilities, infrastructure, amenities, and visitor services to meet visitor expectations (Arachchi *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[2]</sup>. Training and capacity building for park staff are also important to ensure their knowledge, friendliness, and excellent customer service (Arachchi *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[2]</sup>. Increasing community awareness and understanding of forest ecosystem services can be achieved through awareness campaigns, workshops, and outreach programs (Udayangi & Jayarathna, 2019) <sup>[79]</sup>. Implementing and enforcing new laws and regulations is crucial to prevent destructive activities and promote sustainable forest management (Udayangi & Jayarathna, 2019) <sup>[79]</sup>. Developing sustainable tourism practices that minimize negative impacts on the forest ecosystem while providing visitors with an opportunity to appreciate and learn more about its services is essential (Udayangi & Jayarathna, 2019) <sup>[79]</sup>.

### 3.3.5 Conclusion

Sustainable tourism strategies in Sri Lanka should encompass various dimensions, including promoting the country as a year-round destination, implementing sustainable practices, and enhancing visitor experiences in parks. These strategies require collaboration among tourism authorities, local communities, businesses, and other stakeholders. By adopting a comprehensive and proactive approach to sustainable tourism, Sri Lanka can safeguard its natural and cultural assets, promote responsible tourism practices, and create a positive and memorable experience for tourists, while simultaneously benefiting the local communities and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry.

## 4. Discussion

In this study, a total of 49 studies on parks in Sri Lanka were analyzed, focusing on their topics, findings, and suggestions.

The topic analysis revealed that these studies primarily revolved around four main perspectives: 1) Ecotourism Development and Biodiversity Conservation, 2) Socio-economic Impacts and Community Participation, 3) Park Studies and Management, and 4) Urban Park Studies, among others. However, the challenge of balancing Ecotourism Development and Biodiversity Conservation was evident. Most of the topics aimed at promoting tourism, while none of the studies specifically addressed the identification of the four basic needs of a park and designing a park accordingly. Consequently, these topics deviated from the principles of sustainability.

The findings of the studies were categorized into five main groups. Through a thorough analysis, the researchers summarized the essence of their findings, providing insight into their intentions. The main terms extracted from their findings included community participation, stakeholder cooperation, destination image, engagement of local communities in decision-making, improved visitor services, entrepreneurship development, enhanced quality of life, improved communication, increased investment, park facilities and infrastructure development, involvement of local communities in park management, job creation, challenges and opportunities in promoting ecotourism, prioritizing visitor satisfaction, socio-economic development, visitor dissatisfaction, women's empowerment within local communities, and word-of-mouth promotion. While terms like long-term sustainability and sustainable park management were mentioned, the logical connection between these findings and the concept of sustainability, defined as simplicity in this study, remained unclear. However, one finding related to the reduction of over-visitation could be somewhat associated with sustainability according to the working definition of this study.

Examining the suggestions provided by these researchers shed light on their alignment with sustainability. Their overall aim was to position the country as a year-round destination, enhance the visitor experience in parks, foster cooperation between tourism authorities, local communities, businesses, and stakeholders, create a positive and memorable experience for tourists, and generate benefits for local communities. However, it is questionable how these suggestions contribute to sustainability. Furthermore, the researchers emphasized the need for ongoing research and analysis to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures and identify areas for improvement. These tendencies indicate that they are still entrenched in a model that promotes patterns of overconsumption and does not prioritize sustainability.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the degree to which park studies in Sri Lanka align with sustainability. Simplicity, which serves as the fundamental definition of sustainability, was employed as the criterion. The concept of simplicity, focusing on satisfying basic needs, was supported by the literature review. Through this conceptual framework, it becomes evident that none of the park studies in Sri Lanka fully embrace sustainability. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that these studies were conducted in good faith, with the intention of bolstering the tourism industry and contributing to the country's development. While these intentions may be associated with development, it is crucial to recognize that they do not necessarily align with

sustainability.

In the face of the numerous global crises we currently face, it is of utmost importance to act with a clear vision. The findings of this study serve as a wake-up call for those who seek to address global crises, prioritize sustainability, formulate policies, conduct research, devise strategies, and develop plans.

## 6. Recommendations

I propose conducting further studies to establish a scientific definition of sustainability based on the principle of causality. Additionally, I recommend investigating the essential components that should be encompassed within a simple park. These endeavors will contribute to a deeper understanding of sustainability and guide future research and planning efforts.

## 7. References

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