

Reducing Structural Violence through Entrepreneurial Tourism: Case Study in Hambantota District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract. Tourism is increasingly recognized as an effective means of achieving peace in world. In this paper tourism's contribution for peace will be discussed in a broader sense with identification of structural violence as the main cause of Sri Lankan conflict. Structural violence is the process of deprivation of needs. It is characterized politically as repression, and economically by exploitation. The methodology used in this paper to identify 'how entrepreneurial tourism can contribute to alleviate structural violence' was basically qualitative. The methodology was based on the grounded theory which portrays the world as being complex and organized by both overt and hidden power structures. It was revealed during the process of data collection that the structural violence was functioning by means of polarization of the social structures such as caste, ethnicity, economic status, nobility, educational status into different strata together with grouping of people into the consequential ends leading to social uneasiness. People engaged in entrepreneurial activities are entrapped in a viscous system of unfair resource allocation and production exploitation operating through intermediaries. The paper suggests that it is necessary to seek remedies to increase the capacity of entrepreneurs to overcome the destructive force of the structural violence.

Introduction

The bleeding of the Sri Lanka is largely due to "structural violence" – an all-inclusive term to describe the causative factors of conflicts. According to [1], the term refers to any constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures. Unequal access to resources, as well as to political power, education, health care and legal standing, are all forms of structural violence. Swan's description of what constitutes "*structural violence*" is based on the concept as articulated by [1]. According to [2], "Indirect forms of violence, which underlie direct and visible forms of violence, must also be treated. They are more subtle because the violence they perpetrate is silent and invisible except for their effects. Indirect violence includes the violence inherent in societal organization. Subtly, it discriminates in favor of some and against others, resulting in the enhancement and the protection of the privileges of some and the deprivation and exploitation of other members of the community, and thus makes for the exacerbation of socio-economic inequity. Because it is institutionalized, and is intrinsic to the socio-economic and political system, it is commonly referred to as structural violence". Sri Lanka is slowly recovering from more than two-and-a half decades of violent conflict and although the protagonists have been militarily crushed, much needs to be done in

terms of economic reconstruction. During the past two decades a considerable amount of research has been undertaken on issues surrounding the impacts of tourism in the developing world, in particular assessing the contribution that the sector can make to economic development [3]. Anyhow, it remains true, as pointed out by Lea, that the extent of which tourism “can actually promote business activity in third world country has not received much attention”. Questions concerning entrepreneurs and small firm development occupy only a relatively minor role in the volumes of writing produced on tourism in the developing countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia developing world [4]. The aim of this article is to contribute such vacuum in academic literature by investigating the problems and opportunities for the development of small firms in Hambantota district in Sri Lanka. This investigation is extended further to unravel the picture of Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SME) sector complicated by structural violence and then to explore the possibilities to minimise structural violence in its practice when it is coupled with tourism industry and revenues of SME development in order to promote it as a tool of reducing structural violence.

2 Methodology

The qualitative nature of this study presented many potential frame works for investigations. But the research question is less explored so far and contentious in nature that grounded theory approach shows more suitable to this research. Before entering the study field researcher had no “preconceived” theoretical framework. The theory was to be discovered in the data gathering process of answering the research question. [5], ‘grounded theory, by its nature, moves from the specific to the general. The theory was constructed based on the meaningfulness or understanding of the conversations, observations and interpretations made at the research field. The main qualitative methods incorporated to grounded theory were participant observation, unstructured interviewing, observation and documentary materials. The specific locus chosen for the study was special in its geography and demography. Hambantota is a ‘peripheral’ area in Southern Sri Lanka which makes home for an array of tourist destinations. They provided a rich research background to let the study grow from specific to general on grounded theory basis. According to grounded theory data is central and superior. Therefore care has been taken to select the most appropriate method for gathering data. This study which is also qualitative employed 160 a purposeful sampling technique. Theoretical sampling is a method that has its roots in grounded theory. This strategy is described by Glaser and Strauss as; “Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects codes, and analyses the data in order to design what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory” [6].

3 Discussion

In those societies specialisation in particular entrepreneurial activity was transmitted from one generation to the next. There were such specialized structural components of the society which had functional significance for the larger system. Durkheim proposed in his sociological theory of structural functionalism that societies which maintain internal stability tend to be segmentary, being composed of equivalent parts that are held together by shared values, common symbols, or, as his nephew Mauss held, systems of exchanges [7]. There was a segmentation of traditional Sri Lankan societies according to different entrepreneurial activities. The individual actors (a segment) received complementation from ruling elites for quality enhancement of their work. Each individual system of those societies performed different tasks, meaning that a strong interdependence should develop between them for long survival. There was a local exchange relationship and collective forms of ownership leading to a tradition of self-sufficient economy. It is not my attempt here to dissect the past social system and weigh the positive and negative characteristics of it. But with relevance to my study there was an important observation I have drawn from my field work about present day survival

of traditional social structures. Traditional knowledge originates from people and is transmitted by recognizable and experienced actors. It is systematic, experimental and handed down from generation to generation and culturally enhanced. Such a kind of knowledge supports diversity and enhances and reproduces local resources” Under that definition it appears that, traditional knowledge and wisdom are considered similar and interchangeable. A further refinement may perhaps show that, ‘wisdom’ connotes both knowledge as well as experience gained from long periods of trial and error. However, at present both expressions are often used as inter-changeable.

4 Pottery: A traditional industry

According to [8], pottery production was a well-established craft which has continued for the last 4,000 years. [8] write that archeological investigations have established a pottery chronology from 900 BCE to the present day. They further elaborate that the excavated assemblages of pottery all over the country show several changes in forms and ware types over a period of nearly two millennia. These were Black and Red Ware (BRW) and Plain Red Ware (PRW). The variation in geometric shapes, colour, decorations, function and size, make a vast array of ancient pottery types. The significance of pottery in Sri Lanka’s heritage is an un-utilized asset in the tourism industry that might be used to uphold the traditional pottery craft. [9] states that: “the artifacts reported from the survey and the excavations indicate the craft specialization of the people. This comprised (a) earthenware technology; (b) metal working; (c) stone knapping; and (d) bead making”.

He goes on to say that earthenware production was the earliest technological activity of the agropastoral community in the Lower Kirindi Oya Basin. The different grain sizes of the fabric and the quality of their surface suggest that there were different levels of technological proficiency in extracting clay. The cross-sections of some of the potsherds indicate inconsistency of oxidization and this reflects unstable temperature inside the respective kilns. A thin-section of micrographic analysis shows that the wheel was used in pottery making from the mid-first millennium BCE. The three villages selected for the study are Puwakdandawa, Koholankala and Beragama, of which, pottery production has survived as an industry mainly in Puwakdandawa. In Koholankala, some of those who survived have used mechanical means to standardise certain types of pottery products, while others have diversified their products. In Beragama, most of the potter families have given up their traditional industries and shifted to other occupations. Table 1.1 below is a comparison of the three potter villages under study.

Table 1. Comparison of the 3 potter villages under study

Villages	Puwakdandawa	Koholankala	Beragama
Location	Beliatta DS Division	Hambantota DS Division	
No. of households	1,325	1,674	2,460
Percentage engaged in pottery production	90-95 %	10 %	5 %
Samurdhi beneficiaries	52 %	30 %	48 %

Adapted from Sampath Pathikad

Judging by the percentage of Samurdhi beneficiaries, there is less incidence of poverty in the villages of Koholankala and Beragama when compared with the Puwakdandawa. It is noteworthy that in all three villages the younger generation (particularly from the potter community) is moving away in search of jobs which would provide quick returns, viz., deep sea fishing, masonry, carpentry, agro-industries, etc. They are also moving away from their villages so as to conceal their caste identities,

largely because the *Kumbal* caste of the potter community is considered to be well down the social ladder. As indicated in Table 1.2 below, in Beragama as well as in the adjoining villages, the name of the village is indicative of the chief occupation of its inhabitants. However, the main caste (Rada) is the same in all the villages.

Table 2. Name of village in relation to its occupation

Village	Occupation
Hunumulla	art-related occupations
Hakurumulla	jaggery for sweetmeats
Arawanamulla	labour for construction
Kinihirimulla	silversmith and blacksmith works
Kurundugas Aramulla	cinnamon peeling
Berawamulla	drummers
Kumbalgama	pottery

There was much inter-dependency among the people vis-à-vis the specific goods and services provided by them. This gave the castes a sense of ‘recognition’ and status. The villagers also participated in traditional rites and rituals irrespective of caste differences. One example is the *Sanghika Kumbura*, where a segment of each paddy field was set aside to meet the food requirements of the monks; another was the *Kurulu Paluwa*, where a small portion of each paddy field was set aside for the birds. While both practices were considered meritorious, the latter served a practical purpose as well, since the birds have learned over time to feed from their own patch and leave the rest of the fields alone. There is no caste bias in any of these situations. Households also join together in a collective effort during the preparation of the field, sowing and harvesting. This social cohesion among traditional villagers is not something that is found in modern societies. Today, there are substitutes for goods and services which the castes provided in earlier times. Such substitution is provided by aluminum and plastic ware, which has devalued the hereditary clay and pottery ware. It has also eliminated the interdependency between the castes, reducing the caste factor to a social stigma. In his study on *‘Social Groups in Ancient Sri Lanka’*, [10] reveals that social groups specialized in garment, pottery, iron, gold, carpentry, fine arts, education, astronomy, trade, and security. Providing evidence from Sri Lanka’s written history, he affirms that these groups attained economic prosperity while fulfilling their social tasks. This social system, sustained by its own internal dynamics, went into decline during colonial rule, for the most part with the introduction of merchandise and wage labour. At the time of colonial intervention indigenous people were heading towards a development paradigm of their own social evolution. Today, one can see traditional practices, rituals, etc., in only a very few villages in the district. The potter caste of Puwakkandawa faces an intensifying problem of finding the raw material (clay), which is available in the river basins of *Landewewa*, *Kadawarawewa*, and *Ampitiyawewa*. In the old days, when the villagers dug clay from the lakes they did so in the dry season, when there was less water in the basins, and they were careful to keep the optimal depth of the lake. But excessive digging by settlers and others during the last few years has led to the reduction of the raw material. The villagers claim that the government is responsible for the situation where the clay dug from their sources had been sold to large-scale tile producers and ceramic companies. Problems other than over exploitation are lack of technological advancement and lack of market know-how. This is reflected in the fact that there has been no change in the equipment, techniques, and even the design and shape of the clay vessels made by potter communities. In addition, there have been no new products other than the usual range of clay pots, jugs, roof tiles, flower pots, etc. Having lost their traditional raw material sources, the Puwakkandawa potters have to travel 15-20 km to places like Mulkirigala, Okewela, Villaddara and Netolpitiya to find clay. Once they have dug the clay they have to transport it to the village by means of a small tractor, which adds to their cost of production. However, the ancient irrigation system, which

consisted of a number of small tanks and (*Diya bubulu*) water holes which fed the whole area in the dry season has been replaced by a modern tank project in the 1990s and expected to meet the water needs of the villagers for farming and industry.

5 Micro credit to the pottery industry

The Regional Director of the Industrial Development Board (IDB) claims that the villagers had not used the micro-credit facilities provided to them in an effective manner. Instead they had used that money to meet personal expenses. Responding to this criticism, a villager, Kiribanda, pointed out that the people do not receive micro-credit in time. In other words, they receive micro-credit for production long after the production process has begun. So then, the villagers use the credit for other purposes such as personal needs. To prevent a recurrence of such incidents, micro-credit was given to small groups rather than individual borrowers. These small groups have a predominant membership of women, who manage the disbursement and recovery of loans, keep records and attend meetings regularly. One of the strongest bodies in the area is the *Walawe Kantha Maha Samuluwa*, a federation of about 300 small groups with a membership exceeding 3,000 women members. Group lending proved to be more effective since the system of peer group pressure entailed prompt repayment. Micro-level borrowers were then able to go to their second and third loan cycles. Since there was an inbuilt limitation on the maximum amount that could be disbursed under the micro credit schemes, villagers automatically turn to the *Mudalali*, or the village money lender. Although he charges excessive interest rates, the *Mudalali* performs a social function in the village and is often the intermediary between the village and the market. However, if due to vagaries of weather or other circumstances the borrower is unable to repay the loan, then he or she gets caught to a debt trap from which it is difficult to emerge. When people are indebted to the '*Mudalali*' they have no option but to sell their products to him at whatever price he may quote. According to the data from the potters and from the market the cost and the prices of pottery products are given in Table 1.3 below:

Table 3. Cost and prices of pottery products

Selling price per unit (Rs.)	35
Selling price to wholesale by <i>Mudalali</i> (Rs.)	50
Profit to <i>Mudalali</i> (%)	42.8
Selling price to the Market (Rs.)	100
Profit to wholesale (%)	100
Market price (Rs.)	175
Profit to market (%)	75
Actual net profit lost to the producer (%)	132.2

This comparison shows the low prices obtained by the potters for their product, which is barely sufficient to cover the production cost; but they have no means of escaping this vicious cycle. The *Mudalali* is one among the political and other elites who maintain power and authority over the poor. This was revealed through observation, interviews and discussions during visits to the study areas. My approach was to explore the human interactions based on the fact that human consciousness is the key to understanding the world. To fulfill this epistemological approach and to interpret how people interpret their world I needed to have a close relationship with people of every strata in the village with data gathered with each visit to a study site. One such important exploration was the domination of the *Mudalali* and those in power positions. The top-down efforts taken by the government and local government authorities so far have failed to provide relief to the entrepreneurs to carry out their

businesses. Due to this people have lost their trust on government and try to cope with the existing *Mudalali* system. Analyzing these situations one can realize that the salvation expected from the *Mudalali* has driven them deeper into a debt trap. Finally, the top-down approach of government policy is also another strategy to disempower local communities. Modern systems and institutional arrangements allow policy makers to take decisions on behalf of the bottom level. Traditional knowledge, which many people consider to be rather primitive and simple, is yet of central importance to enhance the quality of enterprise and uplift people lives. Traditional knowledge originates from people and is transmitted by recognizable and experienced actors. It is systematic, experimental and handed down from generation to generation and culturally enhanced. Such a kind of knowledge supports diversity and enhances and reproduces local resources. A further refinement of traditional knowledge may perhaps show that ‘wisdom’ connotes both knowledge as well as experience gained from long periods of trial and error. Accordingly, traditional knowledge stands on a stable base because throughout history a number of people have contributed to the development of this knowledge. However, due to many reasons, there is less and less value ascribed to indigenous knowledge systems and it is feared that these will eventually vanish from the people’s collective memory.

6 Disruption of evolutionary socio-economic organizations based on the caste system

Discussions with the villagers showed that state-sponsored settlement schemes have contributed to changing the social dynamics of village life, causing some blurring of caste lines vis-à-vis their hereditary occupations. This induced me to examine how the caste system evolved in Sri Lanka. Although the origins of the Sinhala caste system, a form of social stratification, can be traced to the rigid South Indian system of *Jati*, it had, during the course of time, developed its own distinctive characteristics such as craft specialization and service obligation (*rajakariya*). The custom of *rajakariya*, which existed during the feudal period, involved two types of compulsory services, viz., (i) the contribution of labour for public works, and (ii) caste-related services to the king and nobles. Additionally, the land tenure system at that time was also closely linked to *rajakariya*, where land was granted to the peasants in exchange for services rendered. In the Kandyan areas, the *Radala* caste is considered to be at the apex of the caste system; while there is no visible caste system among the Muslims and Malays. In the study areas of Hambantota district the caste factor was identified in relation to different aspects of people’s lives. Mainly the social organizations in the researched villages showed significant relationships between livelihood and caste. Castes and sub-castes differentiate from each on the basis of notions, rituals, customs, vocabularies, technical knowledge and skills, which factors supported them to develop unique codes of conduct. Furthermore, the caste system had developed mechanisms and strategies to facilitate access to resources and ensure the fair sharing of duties and responsibilities, which implied a fair sharing of benefits. Analysis of this information leads to the concept of a traditional village as being an efficiently coordinated, harmoniously regulated, self-administrative autonomous entity. Instead of competition and rivalry, there was cooperation and inter-dependency among the different castes so as to make their existence economically and environmentally sustainable. Threatened traditional livelihood practices in the face of modern substitutes, establishment of new settlements and fragmentation of the villages due to demarcation disputes have been identified as the main influencing factors that disrupted the social cohesion that formerly existed in traditional societies. When these traditional societies, which had loyalty to family, clan or village, were transformed into modern communities the social ties became less important for individual survival. Unlike traditional societies where state sector employment and state-sponsored development were almost non-existent and mass dependence on subsistence agriculture was prevalent, the modern society’s complex social interactions are mediated through official and unofficial institutions. State-sponsored development reaches village through political actors and institutions. In allocating resources or providing opportunities political authorities in the

respective area tend to favor the people from their respective castes. In this regard caste acts as a form of defining in-groups and out-groups. Low castes, as out-groups in political practice, remain poor and underprivileged because of discrimination in the distribution of opportunities allied to a welfare state. However, many of the underprivileged caste groups in Sinhala society have gradually managed to uplift their status and living conditions over a period of time due to free education, employment, and political patronage. These opportunities, however, have not evenly benefited all such caste groups. There are many depressed caste pockets where poverty, landlessness, low dignity, unemployment and poor living conditions in general exist side by side with continued discrimination on the part of surrounding communities as well as government institutions such as schools. When the relevance of the hereditary occupations of the so-called 'low-caste' people began to decrease, caste became a mere 'label'.

In modern day society where the identities are constructed and maintained by political actions and institutions, the caste system too has been changed into a system of attaining superiority and benefits for favored groups. In the case of the Sri Lankan conflicts, caste identity has also played a role in mobilization. According to [11], caste has been relegated to an underground phenomenon rarely discussed in public, but remain bottled-up within individuals and local communities only to be rekindled from time to time in caste-inspired political loyalties during elections, social conflicts and social uprisings. The JVP of 1971 and 1988-89 certainly exploited the unresolved caste as well as class grievances in Sinhala society, even though it never identified itself as a "low caste" movement as such [12]. Social grievances among some of the middle-level caste groups (Karawa, Bathgama and Wahumpura) have been responsible for political radicalism and anti-establishment mobilizations in political movements based on Marxist philosophy. Hence, the leader of the JVP, Rohana Wijeweera as well as many of his core group of political actors came from the Karawa (fishermen) caste. From its inception, the LTTE leadership came from a lower middle class background, usually with white-collar occupational ambitions but vernacular grounded in both education and orientation in contrast to the Western orientation and bilingual skills of the Vellāla elites of the previous decades. Moreover, the LTTE, that has established military control over pockets of Northeast Sri Lanka, imposed a ban and a kind of censorship on the caste system identifying it as an obstacle to the unified Tamil ethnic homeland it sought to establish in the North and the East. This research study notes the necessity to give due consideration to the features of the evolutionary caste system in policy making or policy implementation. This is also true of the post-conflict situation in the North, where caste-based occupations should be taken into account when resettlement projects for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are implemented. In Sri Lanka, the foreign powers that ruled for 450 years, accelerated the modernization process without giving due consideration to the systems already prevailing in the country. In the present day, collective and cooperative behavior has been replaced with individualistic and ego-centric behaviour leading to social isolation. Traditional societies, which were once efficient and self-contained units, became weak and dependent on the state for every need. As time passed, society became fragmented into different groups, which depended on political patronage to achieve their requirements. In turn, politicians have used their power to offer licenses, permits, lands, and other incentives to retain voter loyalty. Tourism's contribution to the economic, social, political and environmental advancement in developing countries is contingent upon the able implementation of suitable scientific, technical and technological factors, as well as the appropriate deployment of available resources to maximize benefits and minimize disadvantages [13].

7 Economic reconstruction via tourism MSMEs for reducing structural violence

Economic reconstruction includes rebuilding damaged infrastructure, homes, roads and bridges, health centres, and schools; currency stabilization, and monetary reform; de-mining; agricultural re-establishment; job creation; and means of addressing poverty, which war amplifies [14]. Even though

the term *reconstruction* often denotes the above-mentioned tasks, I have discussed it in a broader context to incorporate other dimensions. The issues in development discourse have been dealt with in the analysis undertaken to explore the causes of the Sri Lankan conflicts. As the field research revealed, modern development superimposed on traditional social systems carries with it the seeds of structural violence. The study also examined community initiatives in heritage tourism with potentials to transcend the identified structural violence. This part of the study provided the answer to research question: “*What possibilities are there in the MSME sub-sector to reducing structural violence?*” The initiatives taken by MSMEs provide better economic options for the communities to reconstruct their economic abilities and thereby reduce the possibilities of returning into pre-crisis conditions. The contribution of MSMEs towards greater employment promotion arising from the smaller capital-output ratio and regional development, in particular rural peripheral areas, has been widely recognised. The MSMEs which are based particularly on traditional industries can be launched with locally available human and natural resources. Therefore, in the economic reconstruction process, when the country is seeking solutions to uplift the living conditions of the peripheral communities, it is important to establish mechanisms to restore the destroyed, or suppressed, traditional livelihoods of the villages so that affected communities and societies can move forward. Fisher contend that often the communities are not given the chance, as big business moves often disguised as aid programs. Materials are dumped in the area, and outside experts are provided to supervise the process. Resources are eaten up by the high costs of maintaining foreign personnel, and also by corruption. The authors further state that: ‘The principles that underpin the recovery process should acknowledge the local cultures and way of life as basic to all planning.

8 Conclusion

The plight of SME sector in contemporary Sri Lanka is a complex scenario having contradictions with cultural, political, and economic spheres of the Sri Lankan society. For the people who engage in small entrepreneur activities their businesses are not only their means of income but also a determinant of their way of socio-cultural interactions. In traditional societies of pre-colonial Sri Lanka the entrepreneurial activities streamlined their lives. A major pitfall in today’s development strategies is that they often stress only the economic process virtually ignoring the cultural process of social development. This one sided view has led to alienation of cultural life of people from the economic process. Both cultural and economic dimensions shape the strategies that people devise to sustain or enhance their livelihood.

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