

## **Ontology Beyond Borders: Tourist Gaze and the Sense of Universal Appreciation in World Heritage Sites in Sri Lanka**

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From an ontological point of view, tourism sites which host World Heritage stamp have faced an existential crisis; the reality that sustains its monumental significance gets altered and lost in the face of commercialization. The holistic appearance that attracts the tourist's nostalgia is irreparably damaged by the community who struggles for survival in these sites. However, tourism as a modern cultural phenomenon is possible only when man develops a generalized interest that catches the gaze of the tourists who are driven to travel beyond his particular habitat. For those who present a reality to the tourist must also have a Kantian 'public sense' of universal appreciation, aesthetic judgment and cultural awareness in things that can existentially attract and excite them. The cosmological sense of appreciation that transcends from government agencies to community stakeholders, as this paper reviews, not only preserves the historical and holistic integrity of the site itself, but may advance the tourism industry which can sustainably promote these sites for the alienated tourists. By reviewing the empirical evidence through observations and stakeholder interviews in Kandy City and Galle Dutch Fort in Sri Lanka, where serious site mismanagement issues and stakeholder interference can be found in disturbing holistic aesthetic integrity that caters the tourist gaze, this paper suggests that tourism ontology on holistic universals should be taken into account rather than spatiotemporal particulars such as abstract individual and political interests of those who struggle in the respective sites.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic integrity; Galle Dutch Fort; Kandy City; Tourism Ontology; Universal Appreciation