



2<sup>nd</sup> Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers  
Empowering Sustainable Tourism, Organizational Management and  
Our Environment

19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2017 – Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

## **Tourism under the Belt and Road Initiative: Geopolitical Opportunities and Challenges of Sri Lanka**

Xiurong Wei<sup>1,\*</sup>, Li Cheng<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Foreign Languages and Cultures, Sichuan University, PR China

<sup>2</sup>Department of Tourism & Landscape Studies, PR China

\*gracewei@scu.edu.cn

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping first proposed the Belt and Road Initiative, aiming at rejuvenating the ancient trade routes used by silk traders and others. It embodies the spirit of peace, cooperation and development, which benefits not only China but also countries along the silk routes. Sri Lanka is located in the heart of the Indian Ocean. It occupies a strategic position as a key node of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, part of the “Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Economic Corridor”, and extension of the “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor”. Apart from its infrastructure projects which have received enormous funding from China, the booming tourism industry of Sri Lanka is heavily influenced by its geopolitical position. Based on the theory of geopolitics, this paper investigates the role of tourism in China’s Belt and Road strategy, the presence of India and other major countries in the Indian Ocean and Sri Lankan tourism market, and Sri Lanka’s economic and tourism policies in coping with emerging inbound tourists. For Sri Lankan tourism sectors, opportunities and challenges exist sided by side with each other. This paper, thereby, concludes with suggestions for Sri Lanka to exploit its unique advantages in terms of geographic location to make tourism a sustainable industry.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative, geopolitics, Indian Ocean, Tourism, Sri Lanka