

# CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING JAFFNA AS A SUSTAINABLE TOURIST DESTINATION

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In recent years, the importance of sustainable tourism development has risen to the forefront of global consciousness. Jaffna, previously an unexplored destination, has recently emerged on the tourism landscape following three decades of war. Initially, domestic tourists were primarily attracted to Jaffna for dark tourism experiences as following a civil war, various parties, including the state, forces, the host community, and other social elements, paid more attention to preserving wartime memories. However, Jaffna possesses unique resources and experiences that differentiate it from the southern region of Sri Lanka. The inadequate identification of these tourist spots and poor administration are to blame for the poor growth and development of the tourism industry in the Northern Province. It is imperative to develop Jaffna as a tourist destination, emphasizing sustainable tourism practices tailored to its specific context. Notably, studies on sustainable tourism development in Jaffna are scarce. Research on sustainable tourism in Jaffna is scarce despite its potential. The study highlights challenges to Jaffna's sustainable tourism, with three main objectives. Assessing current sustainable practices, identifying challenges to promoting sustainability, and offering recommendations to overcome these challenges. The study used a qualitative methodology, considering the subjective responses from various stakeholders. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 11 participants, including members of the Northern Province Tourism Bureau, Jaffna hoteliers, and visitors, selected via convenience sampling. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. In Jaffna, stakeholders and the local community have adopted sustainable tourism, but challenges such as cultural barriers and poor administration persist. The study suggests increasing community awareness and responsible resource management. By embracing sustainable practices, Jaffna has the potential to become a prosperous, well-balanced tourism destination with international appeal.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Destination promotion, Jaffna tourism, Stakeholders, Sustainability