

# Concepts and Definitions on Recreational Activities with Special References to Sri Lanka

Deepani Edirisuriya \*

Many widely accepted individual definitions for leisure; tourism and recreation are found in dictionaries. The individual academic disciplines and various public and private organizations concerned in with these use differing definitions. (Chadwick 1987, Gilbert 1990).

The concept of leisure includes activities such as passive resting at home (i.e. sleeping, viewing television, reading, etc.) that are categorized as static. In contrast tourism is a dynamic activity, and as such it is a sum of phenomena and relationships arising from travel and stay of non-residents. Thus tourism represents a composite phenomenon in comparison to leisure. However, ultimate motive of any tourist would be to engage in some form of recreation. According to Webster (1973) tourism is the practice of travelling for recreation.

Tourism is a form of recreation, but it does not include all forms of recreation. Exactly where tourism begins and recreation ends not generally agreed upon but according to Mitchell (1991), tourism includes an overnight trip that requires some minimum travel distance. Recreation is included in both dynamic and static human behavioral categories. Hence, it differs from leisure (Deheragoda 1984). It includes all active forms of leisure and sports and travel for pleasure. It may occur at the nearest park or sport complex or at a place which could be reached after several minutes of walk or drive or after a long time of travel.

Leisure is basically a time concept, whereas recreation is an activity concept. Leisure is free time and recreation a way of using such time. Recreation is also defined as variety of activities undertaken during the leisure time. Therefore recreational activities include: all indoor and outdoor leisure activities, travelling activities, social activities, aesthetics and educational activities, high adventure activities, sports activities etc: as shown in Table 1.1

Table 1.1  
Classification of Recreational Activities

**Travelling Activities**

- Walking and hiking
- Biking
- Horseback riding
- Diving for pleasure
- Boating
- Water Skiing

**Social Activities**

- Games and sports
- Camping
- Picnicking
- Swimming

**Aesthetics Activities**

- Photography Sightseeing
- Painting and craft
- Nature study (Eco tourism)
- Visiting cultural and archaeological sites and monuments
- (Cultural tourism)

**High Adventure**

- Survival trips
- Backpacking
- Mountaineering

**Survival Replay**

- Fishing
- Hunting
- Same games

**Studies on Recreation**

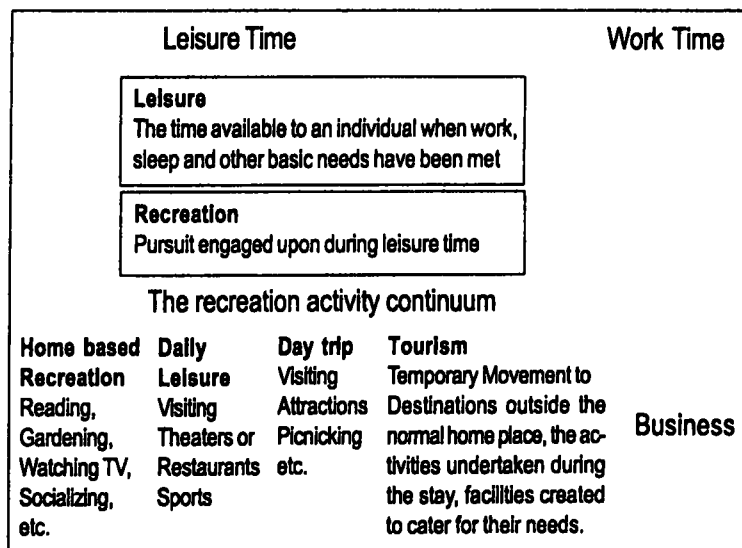
Geographers concern on forms of human behaviour arises as soon as they come into contact with the geographical space. Number of publications has had been done on recreational activities in Europe and North America during the past few decades. The first was a short review

entitled "Recreation Geography" which was included as a part of a large chapter on geography by Munury in 1954. Over the years the Munury has made changes embellishment, improvements, and modifications to the concept of recreation geography in a series of papers, abstracts, and publications (Mitchell, 1978:1979 (a), 1980, 1981, 1987,1991).

An important peculiarity of recreation is the rather extensive use of geographical space (the natural and anthropogenic landscape). The conceptual framework for using natural areas for recreation is explained in number of scientific works on nature tourism or Eco tourism. (Nature based Tourism Peter S Valentine 1992). The environment - recreation relationship has been discussed by number of authors (Ingram and Durst, 1987 Laarman and Durst, 1987, Katay, 1989; Boo, 1990, Goudbeg, Casselles and Valentine, 1991)

The demand for recreation in resort areas as well as the ecological and economic impacts of the recreational development has critically examined in Recreational Tourism by Chris (1991) Spatial issues pertaining to recreational land use has been discussed in "Geography of Tourism" by H Robinson (1976). It provides a broad framework picture as to how natural and

Table 1.1 Leisure Recreation and Tourism



\* Lecturer in Geography, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

anthropogenic resources of UK are being used for recreation.

Further, number of interesting scientific works has been completed on the ecological impacts and recreational carrying capacities by Goldsmiths and Munton, (1971), Goldsmith, Munton and Warren, (1970), and Barkham, R (1973). An interesting discussion on destinations and the geographical resources in the: "Travel and Geography", by Burton (1991).

It proposes a model and evaluates the use of natural and anthropogenic resources for recreation. The North American perspective on recreation is presented by Brent-Ritchie JR 1981. While the use of urban areas for recreation is outlined in "Urban open space and outdoor recreation" (Balmer, K.1971).

The recreational potential of Anthropogenic resources has been broadly discussed in "Arts and Heritage Tourism" (Heather Zeppel and C. Michael Hall, 1992 p.42). Many geographers, historians and many other specialists on cultural tourism (Haulot - 1986, Almon - 1988, Smith - 1989, Zeppel and Hall - 1991, Weswood - 1989, Lavery and Stevens - 1990, Urry - 1990, Hall - 1981, Tisdell and Wen - 1991, Brooks-1990 etc.

**Recreational Geography**

Geographers concern on forms of human behaviour arises as soon as they come into contact with the geographical space. The recreational geography has a special position among the sciences studying tourism and recreation. It studies the natural and anthropogenic objects participation in recreation as well as tourist flows and infrastructure - their spatial dispersion, complexity and interaction with the environment (Deheragoda - 1984). Subject which considers the spatial aspects of the pre requisites and resources (natural and anthropogenic) and their problems and issues.

**Global Strategy for Recreational Development**

The First International Assembly of Tourism Policy Experts, held in the George Washington University, USA, in 1990 had put forward a framework to formulate a broad base policies for recreational development. A strong emphasis has been made on green tourism. The concept of "Green Tourism" means: spatially site specific and environmentally compatible tourism which adopt life styles and development paths that respect work within nature's limits to ensure sustainability.

Clearly the concern reflects a much broader social alarm about the degradation of our physical environment. Recreation however, is perhaps even more dependent upon a high quality environment for its long-term success than any other industry. From the recreational geographical perspective, recreational industry differs from any ordinary as its product is intangible, hence cannot be transported to the consumer market as other manufacturers do; it is the consumer (Tourist) who comes in search of the product, thus it becomes a resources based industry. In this context recreation is a form of an "on the spot consumption of resources". Therefore, it will have to be promoted essentially at the point of the resource due to its strong "Spatial Conservatism". On the other hand preservation of resources for recreation and tourism, as well as protecting it from tourism pollution and over exploitation is essential. In this regard, decline in the quality of land and water resources are visible in many resort destinations around the world including Sri Lanka. As a result increasing tension between protection and use of the physical environment is inevitable, because resource quality is the key to ensure high productivity as well as profitability in tourism. Therefore, tourism development, in the future, must be compatible with the environment, because it is among the better alternatives for land use due to its capability to use the same resource over and over again (Deheragoda 1994).

**Recreation Development In Sri Lanka**

The theoretical contribution to the scientific context of leisure, tourism and recreation is very little from the developing countries including Sri Lanka. Providing recreation to tourists has become a successful money making business in many parts of the world. Therefore, the resource allocation for the recreation and tourism has been done in irrational manner causing serious environmental problems. Basic concepts have not been taken into consideration in resource use for recreation and tourism in countries like Sri Lanka.

Although the post World War II period saw a rapid expansion in international tourism in many developing countries in the Caribbean, African and Asia Pacific regions, it was only in 1966 that meaningful steps were taken to develop the industry in Sri Lanka. The pressing economic problems experienced in the early sixties, the acute shortage of foreign exchange, the high levels of unemployment and slow economic growth made the government of Sri Lanka to promote tourism as a better alternative to those problems. The Governmental policy on tourism development was formulated to maximize economic benefits while at the same time minimizing the possible adverse socio-economic

and environmental impacts. The Tourism Development Act of 1968 gave the Ceylon Tourist Board the necessary statutory authority to develop tourism in Sri Lanka on a planned and systematic basis. Tourism soon became a very challenging and profitable field for investment as seen in the industry during the period of 1976 to 1982. The Ten-Year Ceylon Tourism Plan of 1967 followed by the Tourism Master Plan (1992), provide the framework plan for the development of tourism in Sri Lanka. They have been attempted to identify the natural and anthropogenic resource base of the country, which would be used for recreation.

**The recreational resources and activities in Sri Lanka**

They have been attempted to identify the natural and anthropogenic resource base of the country, which would be used for recreation. The recreational resource and activities in Sri Lanka has been exclusively published by the number authors (page, 1984, Anderson, 1984, Antonic, 1984, Guruge, 1993, Henry, 1971, Deheragoda, 1984 etc.)

The Ceylon Tourism Plan (1967) identified six recreational regions to be developed during the next ten years.

1. Greater Colombo region
2. Southern Coastal region
3. Eastern coastal region
4. Central Hilly region
5. Cultural Triangle region
6. Northern region (Map 1.2)

This system can be described as a step in the right direction towards developing tourism in Sri Lanka. However, The Ceylon Tourism Plan felt short of achieving its objectives even after ten years of its implementation.

On the basis of natural and anthropogenic resources, an interesting attempt has been made into 1984, introduce a new concept of recreational zoning for Sri Lanka by Deheragoda. In preparation of this new zoning scheme the recreational potential, existing infrastructure, level of development, economic significance of the recreational industry as well as the socio-economic pre condition of the respective are also been taken into consideration.

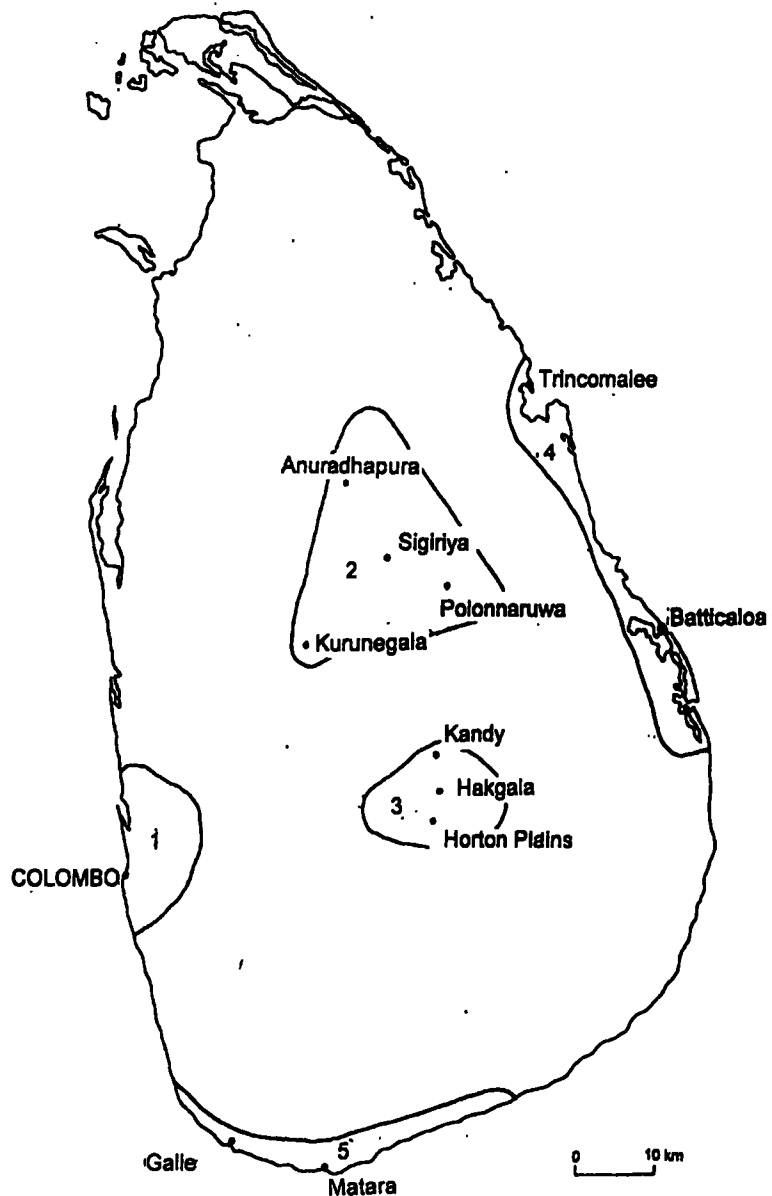
However, the latest regional concept has been adopted from the Tourism Master Plan 1992. The main objectives of the Tourism Plan (1992) are as follows:

1. To formulate a long-term, comprehensive, strategic plans for the development of international and domestic tourism.
2. To prepare a 5 year Tourism Development Programme within the framework of long-term plan.
3. To develop tourist resorts, including major cultural, historical and wildlife attraction.
4. To promote domestic tourism.

Ten Year Tourism Master Plan (1992) have also identified a number of new areas including Ratnapura, Bopath Ella, Kitulgala, Deniyaya, Limestone cave in Waulpane, Rakwana, Kegalle and Sinharaja forest as potential areas to be developed. Further, the above mentioned places of natural beauty have been identified as ideal places for Eco-tourism. In this regard the Belihuloya Pambahinna areas will become one of the major areas identified by the Tourism Master Plan (1992) for future development.

Presently all the provincial councils excluding Northern Provincial Council are promoting tourism, in the Uva and the Sabaragamuwa the recreational potential is yet to be tapped. The areas adjacent to Udawalawe tank and natural game reserves and Belihuloya areas are to be developed for Eco-tourism, while the area around Balangoda for cultural tourism. Also the Provincial Council of Sabaragamuwa has identified the University of Sabaragamuwa as a suitable place to train cadre for the industry,

**Resource use for Recreation in Sri Lanka**  
Sri Lanka has not adequately recognized the environmental aspects in tourism development. As a result existing tourism infrastructure which is based on order values and life styles have now become obsolete in the context of Green Tourism. Consumers are more educated, more demanding and more sophisticated, with respect to both the kind of travel experience sought and the information they require in making decisions on travelling. No destination could afford to overlook those trends, in seeking economically viable, socially adaptable and environmentally friendly kind of development (Deheragoda 1994). Nevertheless, the resource use strategy for recreation in Sri Lanka is not based on environmentally friendly considerations; thus the mass tourism is being promoting to the neglect of the environmental aspects. Generally much of the legislation pertaining to the natural resources has not kept abreast with the changing needs of the society, and is oriented towards exploitation rather than the sustainable use of such resources.



1. Greater Colombo Region
2. The Ancient Cities Region
3. The Hill Country Region
4. Eastern Coastal Region
5. The Southern Region

Figure 1.2 Five Recreation Regions in Sri Lanka

Some laws have suffered from lack of implementation for social, economic or political reasons. The government and its agencies responsible for tourism development in the country seem to be ignorant of the vital need to safeguard environment and ecological factors in tourism development, but

showing more concern on economic feasibility of such projects. Therefore, a rational allocation of resources for recreational development is very much necessary to ensure a sustainability.