



## Potential to Promote Ayurvedic Tourism During the COVID 19 Pandemic in Western Province

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### ABSTRACT

Ayurvedic tourism is one of the niche markets identified as a potential segment to promote in Sri Lanka, and in recent times, there has been a shift in attention toward Ayurveda due to the COVID 19 pandemic. However, the COVID 19 pandemic's outbreak has severely affected the progress of the tourism industry. Even though there is a rapid fall in tourists' arrival in 2019, according to the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) there is a light increase in arriving tourists for Ayurveda in Sri Lanka. However, in the Sri Lankan context, there is less information available regarding Ayurvedic tourism. In such a context, this study aims to identify the potential to promote Ayurvedic tourism during the COVID 19 pandemic. The study mainly depends on the primary data that has been collected from the stakeholders. Primary data were collected from 14 respondents in selected Ayurveda hotels who have registered in Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, Ayurveda centers, Ayurveda practitioners in the western province and Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. Structured interviews were used with the purposive sampling technique. A qualitative data analytical method was employed, and the collected data were transcribed and analyzed by using content analysis. The study's findings revealed that Sri Lanka has all the key elements: attraction, available packages, accessibility, amenities, activities and ancillary services to develop the Ayurvedic tourism industry. Further, Ayurvedic medicine, doctors' issues, government support, fraud and promotions identified barriers and challenges to promoting Ayurvedic tourism. This study concludes with some recommendations for Ayurvedic tourism, such as promotion in different countries, improving the knowledge of the staff, and introducing new Ayurvedic products with the COVID 19 pandemic, increasing government support etc.

**Keywords:** *ayurvedic tourism, covid 19 pandemic, tourism industry, stakeholders*