

A STUDY ON THE REVIVAL OF HAMILTON CANAL AND ITS' CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE EVOLVING TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NEGOMBO

Sashini Fernando *

School of Architecture, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Malabe, Sri Lanka

Jeeva Wijesundara

Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

Ranjith Perera

School of Architecture, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Malabe, Sri Lanka

Abstract

Recently developed Hamilton canal system targeting enhancement in tourism industry in Negombo convinces both positive and negative effects on the local culture and the community. Creating places for people has a prime concern on what places offer to the community, the user, to enhance their quality of life. This research paper examines the relationship between the revival of Hamilton canal and the emerging tourism industry related to it. A historical and a theoretical study were carried out to understand the connection between these components. Several factors were identified which are of close relation to the emerging tourism industry other than its' revival. A questionnaire was used to collect information on the factors which attract the tourists' towards the canal and to understand their attitude towards the local cultural setting.

It was identified that with the revival, important components such as the unique local culture and the ecological value of the surrounding of the Hamilton canal too, has contributed towards the emerging tourism industry. Therefore, it was concluded that the future developments related to tourism in Hamilton canal needs to understand the cultural and natural value of the surrounding and their connection with Hamilton canal. With respect to "Caring and managing cities into transforming futures", sustainable tourism development is identified to be the best approach for the future developments regarding Hamilton canal, as this approach is closely related with the socio-cultural factors, environmental factors and the economic benefits related to tourism.

Keywords: Tourism, Hamilton canal, Local culture, Ecological value

* Corresponding Author: Sashini Fernando; E-mail- sashfern97@gmail.com

Introduction

Hamilton canal has been recently developed with the intention of boosting the tourism industry in Negombo. The revival of the canal system and the unplanned tourism industry, has both positively and negatively affected the local culture. Therefore this research is based on providing the best approach for future tourism developments in this area while proposing Negombo to be a canal based tourist destination in Sri Lanka. As mentioned in the Megapolis development plan for the western region of Sri Lanka, Negombo is the nearest major developing hub to the Aero-city and is proposed to be developed as a tourist destination. This development could open many opportunities for the capable resources to have a face lift, to stamp recognition and to take part in the country's development. As stated in the Aero-city master plan, the aim of this development is to create a world class business hub while promoting airport related activities. It is proposed to connect with the major developing hubs as follows;

- Colombo – Commercial capital
- Negombo – Tourist destination
- Ja-ela – Logistic hub
- Malabe – Science & technology city
- Mirigama – Industrial city

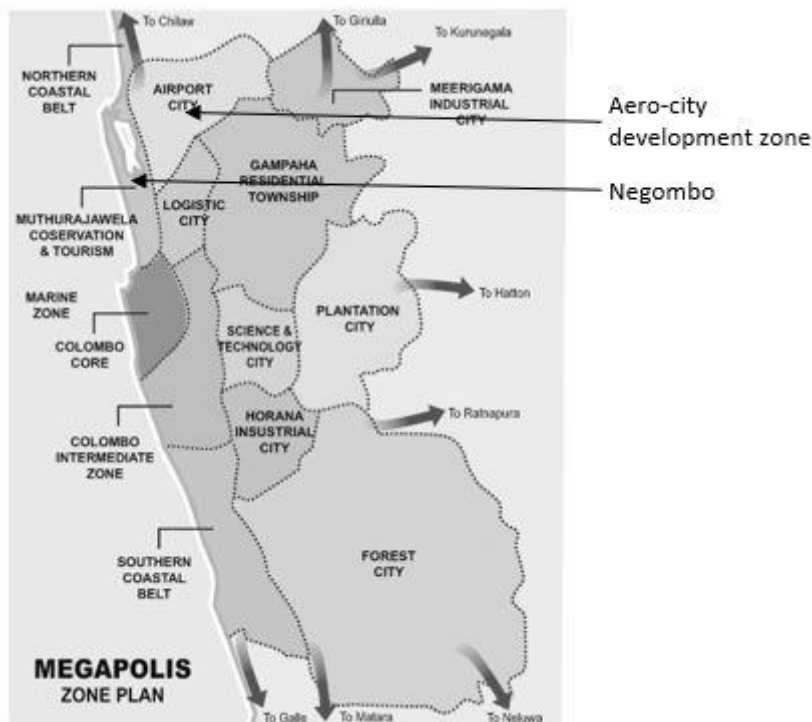


Figure 1: Megapolis development area; zoning
Source: Dissanayake, 2016, wordpress

With the proposed development plans, the activities related to tourism and the future developments need to be well merged with the local culture, the historical and ecological value of the surrounding. Therefore the study is mainly focused on the evolution of the tourism industry along with the revival of the Hamilton canal and its' connectivity with the surrounding environment and the cultural setting. This historic canal system is still being used by the fishermen and is also used to provide boat rides for tourists. The potential of the canal to be developed as a tourist destination is looked at in this study to arrive at the best approaches for development in the tourism industry with respect to the revival of Hamilton canal.

Research Problem statement

The research is conducted to determine the connectivity between the revival and the emerging tourism industry in Hamilton canal. The components that affect this relationship are examined as these are essential factors to be considered for future development projects. Accordingly, below mentioned research questions were identified and answered in the study.

- What cause the attraction of tourists towards the canal?
- How does the local community contribute towards the tourism industry in Hamilton canal?
- How do the ecologically sensitive areas in Hamilton canal contribute towards the tourism industry?
- How does the historical value of the canal, contribute to the tourism industry and related future developments?

These questions are used to reach the objective of this research paper and to provide a background study for a better understanding on the local cultural setting and its' connectivity with the future development plans.

Research objectives

Primary objective is to study how the revival of Hamilton canal influences the tourism industry in this area. Within these parameters, it comprehends the relationship between the tourism industry and the culture of the host community. Further it examines about the ecological value of the surrounding and its' contribution towards the emerging tourism industry in Hamilton canal. Finally, it attempts to reveal how the historical value of the canal influence the emerging tourism industry in the transformation.

Methodology

The method of study for this research is a literature based systematic review. The sources used for the review are mainly Journal articles, newspaper articles, library catalogues and professional websites on the subject matter. As the research is connected with the local community and the tourists in this study area, human perceptions, observations, interviews and questionnaires were used additionally, to collect data on real life and is analyzed to arrive at a conclusion of this research.

In order to collect data, a survey was carried out to understand the tourists' interest on the canal. Observations and structured interviews were made to understand the socio-cultural impacts of tourism along the canal belt and the perceptions of the local community on the development of the canal were taken into consideration. A conceptual framework was designed to structure the main factors that attract tourists to this historical canal and to analyze the future potentials of it.

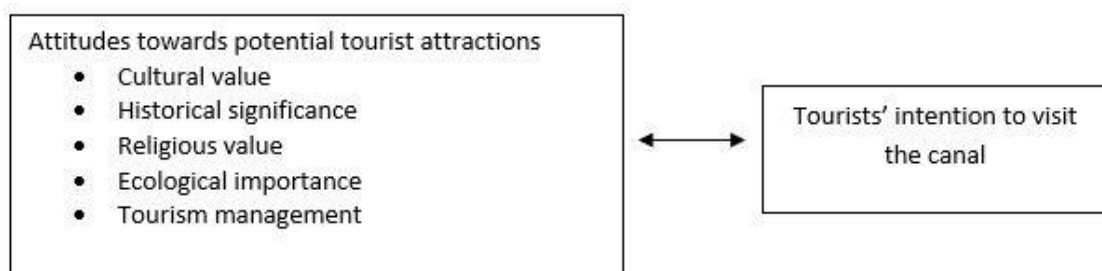


Figure 2: Conceptual framework
Source: Author

Limitations

Hamilton canal, also known as the Dutch canal is a manmade waterway that connects Colombo and Puttalam. It runs through Negombo and is approximately of 14.5km in length. The old 19th century Dutch canal (Hamilton Canal) flow from the northern bank of Kelani Ganga, and it meets the sea at Hendala. This canal also flow towards the north of Colombo, to the southern end of the Negombo lagoon, and then meet in the middle of the town, and to its' northern end point at Puttalam (<https://lanka.com>, 2019). Selected study area of this research is the canal stretch from Muthurajawela marsh to Maha Oya. It covers a large area consisting of different social groups living along the Hamilton canal. The research is limited to the fishing community and the catholic community connected with the canal system in this area.

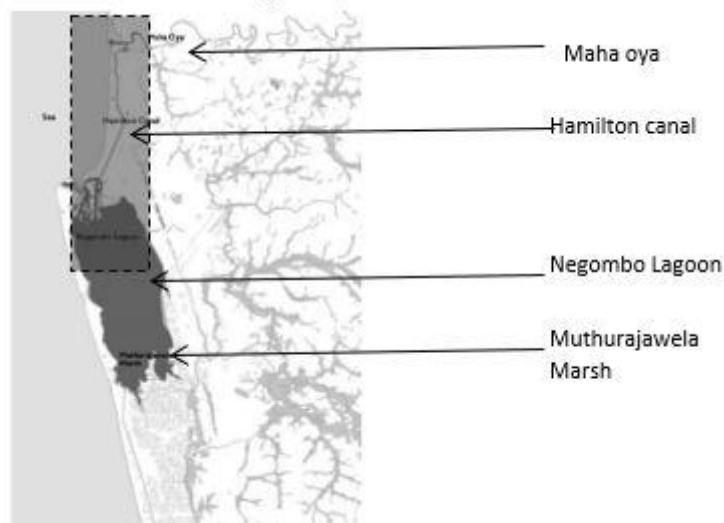


Figure 3: Study area of Hamilton canal
Source: Urban Development Authority, 2019

Being located close to the Katunayaka airport is advantageous for Negombo to be a striking tourist destination. The selected study area for this research, which is related to tourism and the revival of Hamilton canal, could project useful findings for the future tourism development projects in Negombo. Therefore Theoretical and historical background of this subject is studied.

Literature review

The revival of Hamilton canal could create a scenic attraction for the tourists under the proposed Aero-city plan. In order to examine the capabilities and the possibilities of the canal to become a major tourist attraction, an in depth study on the background and the current situation of the canal was carried out based on literature.

Tourism is defined as a movement from a person's usual place of stay to another place or a country for different purposes such as, for leisure, business and personal needs (Tabash, 2017).

"Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes"

(UNWTO, 2008).

Facilitating tourists is the purpose of tourism industry. With the globalization, tourism sector shows a rapid growth and it plays a major role in the economy of a country (Tabash, 2017).

Tourism industry has many avenues based on the interests of the tourists and the uniqueness of a country or a place. Canal based tourism is one of those which is known for providing great experience for tourists while promoting the local culture of a host community.

Canal based tourism:

The concepts of canal based tourism have been popular in many of the European countries in attracting tourists and providing scenic water experience through their cities and villages. In this review, two popular examples from European and Asian contexts were chosen. Similarly, Hamilton canal also show continuous revival with time in a different scale.

Example 01 – Dutch canals in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Canals have played a vital role in the early Dutch cities and has been used mainly by the merchants, for drainage, defense and for sewage. The earth that was cleared to construct the canal was used to raise the bordering streets. Towards the end of 19th century, these canals were filled in, to create more space for the cities as the canals had lost their purpose with time. Therefore these canals had to be restored and they now function as inland transportation systems (Iamexpat.nl, 2019).

These canals are used for canal cruises, swimming, recreational activities, fishing, house-boats (floating houses) and for canal festivals. The most important facts about these Dutch canals in the Netherlands is, that they are the most popular tourist attractions. Amsterdam canal tours, with 3 million passengers a year and 200 different tour boats and the old canals have been listed in the UNESCO world heritage list. The Dutch and their water are considered to be closely connected where the canals have shaped some of the most important towns in the Netherlands, and will always remain an indispensable part of the Dutch city scape (Iamexpat.nl, 2019).

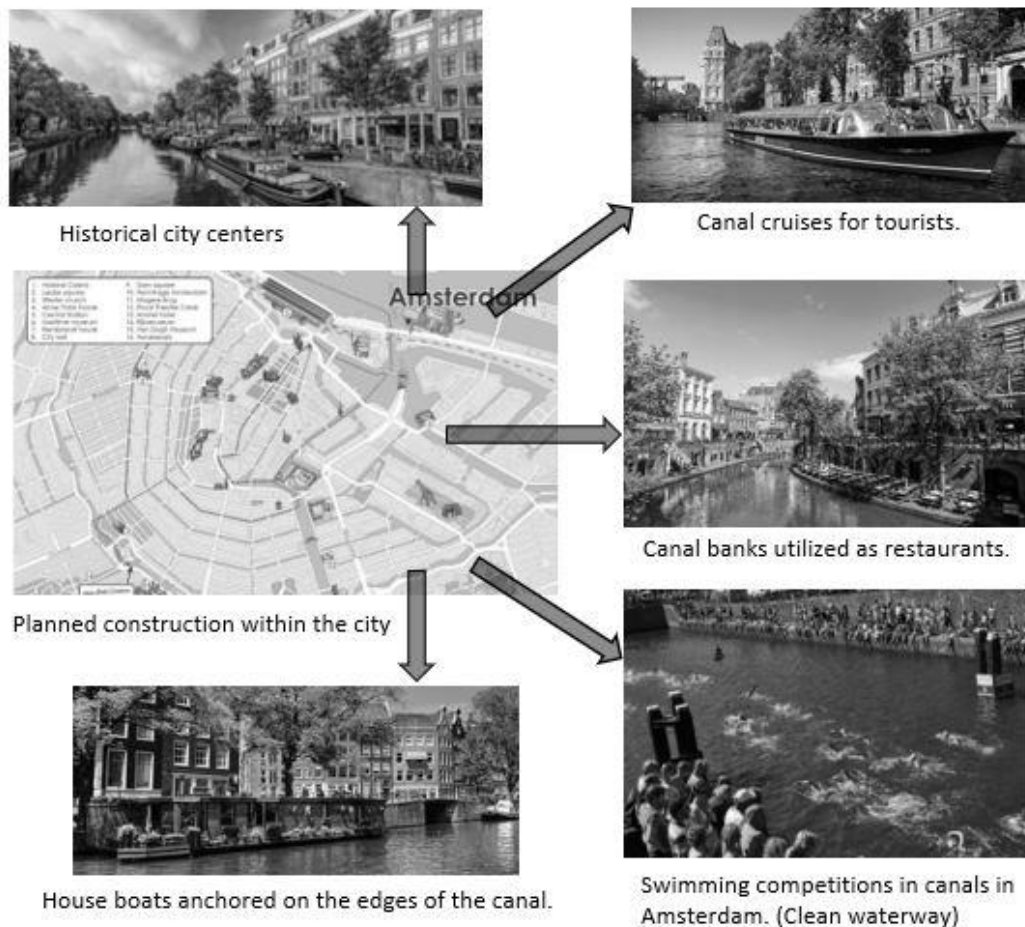


Figure 4: Significant features of the canals in Amsterdam, Netherlands
Source: lamexpat.nl, 2019

Example 02 - Canals in Bangkok, Thailand

Canals in Bangkok often appear to be littered. Regardless of what is seen to the eyes of a visitor, these canals are a way of life for some, a form of entertainment for others which carries a deep and winding history. The history of these canals also started with trading in the 16th century. These waterways started to split up until the city started to connect with these channels in the 19th century, many of which reached the far outskirts of the city and it was called the “Venice of the East”.

The exploration of this city by a visitor is usually done through these canals. With the provided boat ride facilities, the tourist attraction to these canals have increased. The historical value of these canals and the unique cultural identity of the city could be experienced through these boat rides which indeed make the canals a tourist attraction (Iverson, 2019).

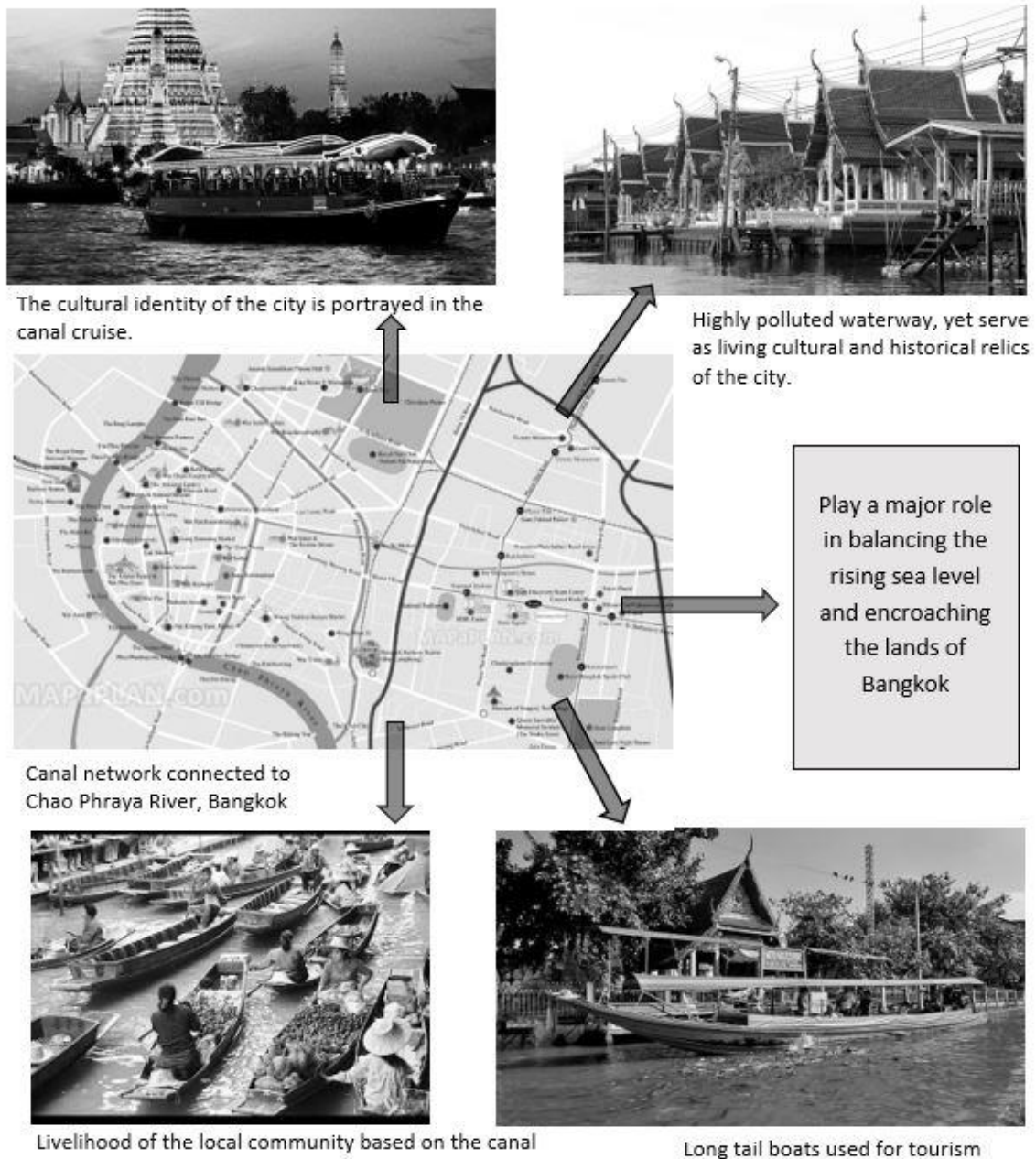


Figure 5: Significant features of the canals in Bangkok, Thailand
 Source: Iverson, 2019, Culture Trip

These examples show that, many canals were made to transport goods in the history. With time they have evolved, some were destroyed and the remaining canals have become tourist attractions due to the canal based tourism. It has become a trend and tourists are excited to explore cities using these water based transportation systems. The boat rides and unique features such as floating houses, floating restaurants and canal based sporting has increased the tourist attraction in these cities. These canals not only provide leisure activities but also serve important services such as protecting the biodiversity, controlling the tidal effects and they help to maintain the heritage value of the surrounding environments.

Similar to many countries with a history of evolving tourism, Sri Lanka has a history running back to the 13th century where it was known as 'Serendib', 'Ceylon' among the travelers and merchants

who used to visit the country. Tourism was mainly based on pilgrimage in the early days and later with the increasing facilities of the ports of the country, ships started to make port in Colombo and the foreign tourists started sightseeing the country. Later with many ups and downs after the colonial period, tourism development was reorganized in the country and it is now a major income generator to the countries' economy (Fernando, 2017).

Tourism industry in Negombo:

Negombo is located in the coastal area of Gampaha administrative district and is in close proximity to Bandaranaike International Airport, the first international airport of Sri Lanka. Therefore, a significant number of tourists are attracted to Negombo as a starting point of their visit to Sri Lanka. Since the 1960's, Negombo has been a significant tourist attraction in Sri Lanka, categorized as, archaeological, natural and religious. Quaint colonial artistry and its influence on Sri Lankan architecture could be experienced by the visitors who explore Negombo. The rich styles including gothic and neo classicism are reflected on the churches found in this charming city. Archaeological and Religious attractions are considered to be of higher value, as most of the places in Negombo are connected with colonial era, and the Roman Catholic remarks are significant than the Buddhist aspects in this city (Gunasekera, 2014).

Apart from the sandy beaches, tourist attractions in Negombo can be stated as, Old Dutch fort gate built in 1672 now a part of the prison, Old Dutch churches, fishing villages and the historic Dutch canal which is still being used by local fishermen, and was used as a supply route to the Dutch administration (Gunasekera, 2014).

Tourism and Hamilton canal:

The historic canal which was initially built by, the King of Kotte, Veera Parakramabahu VIII (1477-1496) was mainly to transport spice and to facilitate transport and access from the port to the kingdom. During the colonial period it was developed under both Dutch and the British. The canal was mainly constructed by the Dutch; it was expanded during the British era. The name 'Dutch canal' changed to 'Hamilton canal' with the change of Dutch control to British control of the country (Lankalibrary.com, 2019).

Hamilton canal has further developed under the Tourism Resources Development Program of Ministry of Economic Development. This refurbishment of the canal has been completed in lengths of 2.5km which mostly went through urban and sub-urban environments in order to rehabilitate and restore the canal system. The revival of Hamilton canal has added some features such as, a suspension bridge for pedestrians with an eye-catching castle tower design, broad pavements punctuated with mature trees, saplings newly planted to provide future shade, decorations have been added that depicts sailing ships and sea creatures and furthermore, on one section overhangs are used with expansive slabs of glass paving through which water can be observed by anyone travelling overhead (Wijesinghe, 2016)

In addition, the canal would also be cleared of the silt-and steps would be taken to prevent pollution, so that tourists would be given the opportunity of travelling by boat from Negombo to places such as Negombo Lagoon, Muthurajawela marsh and Maha Oya along the Hamilton Canal with no difficulty (Daily news, 2013).



Figure 6: Highly polluted canal system
Source: Gil, 2019, PhotoBlog



Figure 7: Canal system after the revival
Source: Pathum, 2013,
skyscarpercity.com

As mentioned in the Negombo development plan 2019-2030, the Western Region Megapolis plan has proposed the water transportation along the Hamilton canal with the aim of increasing the tourist attraction through providing boat rides along the canal (Urban Development Authority, 2019). The revival of Hamilton canal has given this canal system a pleasant appearance which encourages people to visit this canal as a popular tourist attraction.

“Hamilton Canal project was launched in 2013, with the objective of developing the Negombo Tourism Zone. In connection with this, steps have been taken to protect the rich biodiversity of the area thus protecting different species of fish, flora and fauna in and around the canal. The canal and its vicinity is of much environmental importance since the area is home to different species of fish, birds and plants and is rich in bio-diversity, making it ideal for ecotourism. The objective of this project was to convert the canal to a scenic attraction in order to boost tourism in Negombo”

(Daily news, 2013).

A striking number of foreign and local tourists visit the historic Hamilton Canal since it was developed. According to a Western Province Tourism Ministry spokesman, this canal has become a major attraction to foreign tourists and it is observed to be crowded on weekends.

“The potential for tourism is enormous, as the Canal has been developed to make it a scenic attraction for tourists. It is the perfect venue for the tourist who wants a little adventure and at the same time experience the beauty and history of the colonial settlers’ ancient spice trade. The tour will no doubt add a little ‘spice’ to the modern tourist’s agenda”

(Wijesinghe, 2016).

The most popular tourist activity in the Hamilton canal at present is the boat rides. Boat rides down the Hamilton canal provides visual experiences of some interesting moments in the life and culture of the fisher folk living on the banks of the canal knit together with some scenic views and eco-friendly habitats. The cruise is on the calm waters of the historic Hamilton canal, shows a glimpse of the life of fishermen doing their various chores such as getting ready with their fishing nets for the next sail, while little children smile and playfully wave at the passing boats. The cool breeze and the serenity could be experienced on the way down to the beautiful Maha-Oya. (Exploresrilanka.lk, 2013).

The connection of the canal and the wetlands of the surrounding has created homes to an array of flora and fauna and is rich with biodiversity and also have some species who are listed as endangered. The rehabilitated stretch reaches up to Puttlam from Negombo.

Consequences of the revival of Hamilton canal:

As the revival of Hamilton canal has increased the facilities for water transportation, boat rides have become popular in the canal. Even though Hamilton canal and Maha Oya are considered to be the major elements of the aquatic ecosystem of this area, 51% of Canal banks and river are used as backyards of homesteads and boat anchoring places. Due to this reason, tourist attraction towards Hamilton canal shows a decreasing number and has created a disturbance for the active water transport (Urban Development Authority, 2019).

The extensive blue - green network of Negombo blends natural eco systems of lagoon, river, sea, canals, mangroves and bio diversity. Therefore, Negombo Lagoon, Sea, Maha-oya, Hamilton Canal, Depa-Ela play a major role assuring the environmental balance of the city (Negombo development plan, 2019-2030). This is a positive aspect of the revival of Hamilton canal which was looked upon in the development project to participate in balancing the environment of the city while being home to the rich biodiversity found in the periphery (Urban Development Authority, 2019).

Connectivity between local community and the tourism industry with Hamilton canal:

Hamilton canal connects the visitors both culturally and environmentally with the surrounding. The rehabilitated stretch along the canal gives an experience of the daily life of the local fishing community. Many of the villagers along the canal stretch are Roman Catholics mostly the decedents of the Catholics who used to live in the Portuguese colonial era (Urban Development Authority, 2019). Daily routine of the fisher folk such as, working on their boats after selling fish at the market, anchoring their boats alongside the canal, mending the fishing nets and sitting on the canal during day time are some of the popular scenes of the local community that could be observed by the tourists who visit this canal. At present they also provide boat rides to the tourists as an additional source of income.

“The natural environment surrounding the canal also adds upto the value of the canal. About 6 kms up, the Hamilton Canal reaches the Muthurajawela marsh, a paradise of tall grasses and pollarded trees, with white flowers, birds, fish and butterflies, and also, the occasional crocodiles and pythons. Along with it, the Mudiysansage Ela is encountered, which flows inland and connects with the Hamilton Canal. It is located on a beautiful and lush section of the Canal, just before it empties into the Negombo Lagoon”

(Exploresrilanka.lk,
2013).

Apart from the significance in cultural identity, Negombo has significant natural heritage value to it. Negombo lagoon, Muthurajawela marshes are the main natural heritage attractions in the present situation. The rich biodiversity in the lagoon and the marsh have attracted a significant number of tourists to this area. Bird watching and boat rides in the lagoon are considered the most popular tourist activities in this area. These natural resources have been closely connected with the local community for their livelihoods for a long period. Therefore the natural resources have a major impact on the local community around the Negombo lagoon and the Muthurajawela marshes.

Therefore it is evident that Hamilton canal has the potential to be a popular tourist destination in the proposed Aero-city with its' revival, considering the cultural and heritage values of the local community and the surrounding environment.



Figure 8: Catholic statue placed near the canal bank
Source: Wijesinghe, 2016, Sunday Observer

The placement of religious statues on either sides of the canal, gives an idea about the cultural background of the society that lives along this canal belt. These are considered to be significant elements which are added to enhance the cultural identity of the local community.

Hamilton canal has the potential to become the major tourist attraction in Negombo because of its Historical significance, close relationship with the local culture and the environmental importance of the surrounding. The Undiscovered potentiality of the Hamilton canal to be developed as a major tourist attraction in Negombo, is aimed to be found in the next chapter using data collection and analysis.

Presentation and analysis of data

As reviewed, Negombo has several factors which attract tourists, and Hamilton canal is identified as one of them. The evolving canal based tourism activities are limited to boat rides in the present day. The fishermen, the host community and the tourists are the major parties who are directly involved in this tourism activity. Therefore in order to understand the present situation of this canal based tourism in Negombo, a survey was carried out.

A sample of 25 tourists was selected to collect data using a questionnaire who were found on the surrounding of Hamilton canal. The motive of travelling, interests on the Hamilton canal, the methods of getting to know about the canal and their overall idea towards the host community was assessed from this questionnaire.

From the data collected with the survey (Ref. Table-1), it was identified that most of the tourists travel for leisure purposes and they are much interested in nature related activities. The main intention to visit the canal is its' ecological importance and the connectivity with the water bodies such as the Negombo lagoon, Muthurajawela marsh and Maha Oya. The rich biodiversity of these waterways promote tourism and increase the attraction towards the Hamilton canal. It is identified that the cultural value of this area also play a major role in attracting tourists due to unique identity they share as the fishing community and the catholic community.

After the revival of the canal, it was promoted through social media offering a wide range of boat rides and it was stated as 'a must visit place' in Negombo on websites such as 'Lonely planet'. This

has promoted Hamilton canal as a tourist destination and it was also evident through the survey as most of the tourists voted for social media as the source of getting to know about this canal. Most of all these tourists showed interest in connecting with the locals as they were interested in enjoying locally sourced food and were delighted to contribute to the livelihoods of the locals while exploring their active daily chores. Such as fishing and selling fish along the canal banks.

Table 1: Main characteristics of the sample population selected
Source: Author

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age distribution		
Less than 24	8	32%
24 - 39	2	8%
40 - 55	5	20%
Over 55	10	40%
Purpose of travelling		
Leisure	15	60%
Business	2	8%
To meet friends or relatives	6	24%
Other	2	8%
Main interests in selecting a location		
Adventure	5	20%
Culture	2	8%
Nature	12	48%
Rest	4	16%
Other	2	8%
Main intention to visit Hamilton canal		
Cultural value of the surrounding	8	32%
Historical significance	2	8%
Ecological importance	12	48%
Tourism management	1	4%
Other	2	8%
Most interesting part of the boat rides		
Sightseeing the fishing activities	7	28%
Bird watching and exploring the biodiversity	10	40%
Boat ride along the Lagoon	5	20%
Other	3	12%
The way of getting to know about the canal		
Social media	10	40%
From someone who had visited before	6	24%
Recommended by a tour guide	4	16%
Found while walking along the street	3	12%
Other	2	8%

Furthermore, a SWOT analysis was carried out in order to have a better understanding on the current tourism related activities in the Hamilton canal, and key factors identified in this analysis are discussed. The connection of these factors with the tourism and future developments, need to be closely analyzed in order to create better environments to both local community and the tourists.

Table 2: SWOT analysis on the current tourism activities in Hamilton canal
Source: Author

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Continuous connectivity between Hamilton canal, Lagoon, Maha Oya and the sea. ⊕ Hamilton canal being proposed to be developed as a mode of transportation under the aero-city development plan. ⊕ Connectivity with the Muthurajawela marshes ⊕ Connectivity with the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Majority of the waterfronts being treated as backyards of developments and improper utilization of Hamilton canal. ⊕ Encroachment of land and illegal settlements ⊕ Conflict between fishery community and tourism activities.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Provides local community with economic opportunities such as boat ride facilities for the tourists. ⊕ Opportunities to develop water sports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Pollution due to anchoring of boats and contamination of water due to oil spill ⊕ Use of the canal as a dumping spot for garbage ⊕ Tourism influences on drug addiction ⊕ Increase of beggars along the canal belt because of tourism activity.

Effects of unplanned tourism:

It was found that some development activities around Negombo were unplanned. The impacts caused have made adverse effects on the host community. As a result, negative impacts were identified as, beggars on streets, sexuality and drug addiction, destruction of cultural sites and child abuse. In order to mitigate this problem, Government intervention and new laws should be brought to act. The effects of this unplanned tourism could be a threat to the future tourism industry in Negombo as a whole. Therefore education on Sri Lankan cultural value and the way to respect each other's cultures should be taught to both foreign tourists and locals. A meaningful approach to control negative impacts of tourism is to change the attitudes of the society.

Pollution of the canal system:

Pollution of the canal system is a major threat to the emerging tourism in the canal area. Observations and the reviews made on the boat rides along the canal, states that this situation is caused because of the mentality of the locals and their lack of understanding of the importance of this waterway. The potential to grow as a tourist destination is enormous with this historic canal; it needs to be understood by the locals as well as by the government in order to overcome this situation.

Contamination of the water by oil leaks of the boats, use of the canal as a dumping ground for garbage by the locals are the main modes of pollution which was identified in the canal system. Oil spill happen mainly due to the use of motor boats. In the present situation motor boats are used for fishing activities as well as for boat ride facilities. Alternative ideas such as 'Padda boats'

(Initially used for transportation in Hamilton canal) to decrease the use of motor boats could help to protect the waterway and to protect the biodiversity present in the canal system.

As mentioned in the Negombo development plan 2019-2030, it is implemented to have better sewage systems and proper garbage disposal methods. Therefore the use of the canal as a garbage dumping spot will be mitigated and the canal would be a clean waterway adding more value to the environment. Also, Land Reclamation & Development Corporation has brought in an act to provide reservation from the canal bank, and these policy decisions are to be implemented.

Table 3: Representation of the reservation criteria from the canal
Source: Land Reclamation & Development Corporation (Amended) Act No: 35 of 2006.)

Surface width of canal (m)	Reservation from the canal bank (m)	
	For open canals	Surface covered canals
1.0 - 1.2	1	0.3
1.3 - 3.0	2	1
3.1 - 4.5	2.75	1
4.6 - 6.0	3.5	1.5
6.1 - 9.0	4.5	1.5
More than 9.0	6.5	2

This reservation is used to create an environmental buffer zone to protect the canal system. This type of government acts make a great impact in protecting developments along the canal stretch creating an environmental buffer zone, and the canal would be protected from many harmful outcomes caused by the pollution.

Potential strengths of the existing canal system:

As identified in this research, the strengths of this canal to be developed as a tourist destination are, connectivity with the ecologically sensitive areas such as Muthurajawela marshes, Negombo lagoon and Maha Oya, Being directly connected with the fishing community and their cultural significance, historical significance of this canals as it has the Dutch origin and the future proposal to be developed as a transportation system in the Aero-city development plan. Hamilton canal and its connection with the natural resources, the cultural values of the local community and the recent development have created a canal based tourist attraction in Negombo.



Close connection with the natural environment along the canal system.



Daily activities of the fishing community along the canal stretch.



Recent development giving a pleasant outlook to the canal.

Figure 9: The factors which encourage and promote tourism in Hamilton canal

Source: Wijesinghe, 2016, Sunday Observer

As declared, the connection between the canal system, ecology and the local community is what makes this canal unique. Therefore this connection needs to be maintained for the developments related to Hamilton canal and tourism to function effectively, benefitting the local social setting.

Therefore tourism development needs not only improvements in infrastructure; it also should be carried out concerning the connectivity with local community and the ecology of the connected water bodies.

Conclusion:

This study on the emerging tourism industry with respect to the 'Revitalization of Hamilton canal' was carried out with the primary objective of identifying how this revival influenced the tourism industry of the canal system. With the analysis and the referred literature, it showed that the revival of the canal has indeed enhanced the tourism but it is not the only factor that has attracted tourists towards the canal. Factors such as ecological importance and connectivity with the local community and culture have played a major role in promoting tourism in this canal.

The relationship between the tourism industry and culture of the host community was examined and it was found that this relationship is of great importance. The interviews and observations showed that the tourists are interested in connecting with the locals and to contribute to their living while experiencing their daily life routines and activities which can be observed along the canal stretch. Subsequently, the contribution of the ecological value of the surrounding towards the emerging tourism industry was investigated. The study showed that this is one of the major factors for the tourists to visit this historic canal as it is closely connected with the nature and the rich biodiversity is considered to be of great value for tourism in this canal stretch. Historical value of this canal is also a promoting factor. Tourists choose to visit this ancient piece of Dutch engineering because of its historical value. All of these factors need to be concerned for tourism developments related to Hamilton canal.

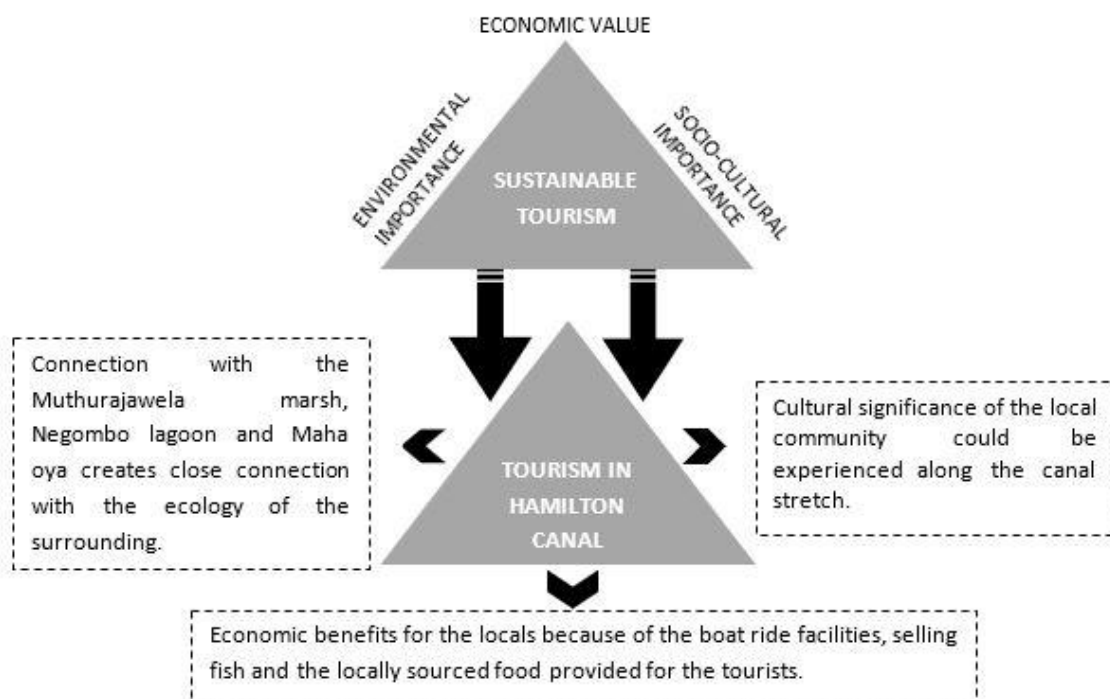


Figure 10: Sustainable tourism development approach for Hamilton canal
Source: Author

As Hamilton canal is closely connected with the local community and the ecology of the surrounding, sustainable tourism is the best approach for the future developments related to this

canal system. Sustainable tourism approach could be considered to the developments proposed for Hamilton canal and the connectivity with the surrounding natural environment, cultural identity and the economic benefits are significant, as it creates a balance between environmental, economic and socio-cultural phases of tourism development. With consideration of the above mentioned facts, Hamilton canal shows potential in serving the tourism industry in Negombo which could become a canal based tourist attraction in the future.

References:

- Daily news (2013). Hamilton canal to boost tourism. [online] Available at: <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2013/02/20/bus01.asp>
- Damithah, V. (2019). Hamilton Canal. [online] Stranger times. Available at: <https://damithah.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/hamilton-canal/>
- discovered, you must explore..... Available at: <http://exploresrilanka.lk/2013/09/the-hamilton-canal-a-past-and-future-waterway/>
- Dissanayake, C. (2016). Megapolis: The City of Dreams. [online] Forum for Peaceful Coexistence, Sri Lanka. Available at: <https://mffcoexist.wordpress.com/2016/03/27/megapolis-the-city-of-dreams/>
- Fernando, S. (2017). The Tourism Led - Development strategy in Sri Lanka. [online] Fcms.kln.ac.lk. <http://fcms.kln.ac.lk/dep/dcfm/images/pdf/sriyantha/thetourismleddevelopmentstrategyinsri-lanka.pdf>
- Gunasekera, I. (2014). A Study on the impacts of unplanned tourism developmet - with reference to Negombo tourism hub, Sri Lanka. [online] 1(1), pp.1-4. Available at: <http://file:///E:/3rd%20year/sem%201/CDP/findings/journal%202.58-61.pdf>
- <https://lanka.com>. (2019). Hamilton Canal - A Memorable Past and Future Waterway. [online] Available at: <https://lanka.com/about/attractions/hamilton-canal/>
- lamexpat.nl. (2019). Canals in the Netherlands. [online] Available at: <https://www.iamexpat.nl/lifestyle/sightseeing-attractions-netherlands/dutch-canals>
- Iverson, K. (2019). How Bangkok's Canals Have a Story to Tell. [online] Culture Trip. Available at: <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/thailand/articles/how-bangkoks-canals-have-a-story-to-tell/>
- Options., B. (2019). The Hamilton Canal: A Past and Future Waterway. [online] Explore Sri Lanka - Once
- Tabash, M. (2017). The Role of Tourism Sector in Economic Growth: An Empirical Evidence From Palestine. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues*, 7(2), p.103.
- Urban Development Authority (2019). Negombo development plan 2019-2030. Battaramulla, pp.21-36.
- Wijesinhe, M. (2016). Hamilton Canal :An ingenious waterway feat. *Sunday Observer*. [online] Available at: <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2016/11/20/hamilton-canal-ingenious-waterway-feat>