Impact of Management and Development of Destination Attributes on Coastal Tourists' Visitor Experience, Negombo, Sri Lanka

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Abstract—The purpose of this quantitative study is to identify the impact of the destination attributes of Negombo on the coastal tourists' visitor experience. As an island nation, Sri Lanka is identified and well renowned for its gold sandy beaches and natural scenic beauty. Among many tourist attractions, Negombo is identified as a developed beach centric tourist destination in the country. Yet, it is identified that there are low positive reviews on the internet for Negombo compared to other beach centric tourist attractions in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study would help the policymakers and tourism service providers to identify the impact of destination attributes on international visitor satisfaction and to understand the visitors comprehensively so as to develop Negombo as a stable tourist destination while offering a memorable and satisfying experience for its visitors. In support, a self-administered questionnaire survey study was performed with 150 respondents (international tourists) in Negombo. The questions were designed based on the selected dimensions of destination attributes such as tourism service quality, infrastructure and superstructure developments, tourist information facilities and destination aesthetics and developments. The results showed that the overall satisfaction level of the international tourists who visit Sri Lanka is significantly affected by the destination attributes of Negombo. Yet, the dimensions of destination aesthetics and developments and tourist information facilities indicated a low level of mean satisfaction, paving the critique that Negombo as a beach centric tourist attraction is not serving well with its natural beauty and its destination management. Further, it is advocated that the policymakers and tourism service providers have a significant role in leading the way to attract more potential visitors to enhance their destination satisfaction and to encourage them to revisit Sri Lanka while recommending it to others. The survey was done during the off-peak season of the industry and it is suggested that the survey would have been conducted throughout a complete year.

Keywords—Destination attributes, coastal tourism, tourism development, tourist satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

TRAVEL and Tourism (T&T) has been identified as one of the most important economic activities in the world with its significant direct and indirect impact to economic and non-economic performances of countries and regions. In 2017, the international tourist arrival has grown by 7% to 1,323 million while generating a direct contribution of USD 2,570.1 billion to the world GDP (3.2% of GDP) [1].

Sri Lanka, which is located between the latitudes 5°55′ and 9°51′ N and longitudes 79°41′ and 81°53′ E and has a maximum length of 268 miles (432 km) and a maximum width of 139 miles (224 km), has been identified as a sweet spot for T&T in the international markets over the years [2]. In Sri Lanka, 2,116,407 tourist arrivals have been recorded in 2017, registering a 3.2% increase since 2016. It is also highlighted that tourism, as an industry, generated 598,356 million Sri Lankan rupees in total as foreign exchange to the country, making it the third highest net foreign exchange earner for the country [2]. Further, it is advocated that the tourism industry has played a key role in generating foreign exchange for the country and in provision of employment opportunities to the community. Also it is seen that there is a significant indirect growth in the economy with the other auxiliary industries which being facilitated by the spillover effect of T&T. In supplement a significant brand advocacy has been created for the country among the rest of the world [2].

It was mostly identified that golden sandy beaches as the mostly influenced factor of motivation for international leisure tourists to visit Sri Lanka [3]. Among multiple beach-centric attractions, Negombo, located just 7 kilometers north to Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA), is the closest proximate beach tourist attraction destination to BIA [4]. Further, it is identified that Negombo is among the major 14 tourist attractions as identified by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority [5]. Also, it is identified that the modern day tourists' travel decisions are majorly influenced by digital media and the reviews and recommendations of others in the internet based platforms. It is identified that more than 60% of the international tourists make their travel decision to visit Sri Lanka based upon reviews on the internet and recommendations from friends, peers and relatives [2].

Among the number of internet based T&T platforms, many scholars and independent reputed international bodies have identified that TripAdvisor has been the most prominent and frequently used internet based tourism platform [6]. In 2019, TripAdvisor ranked Sri Lanka among the best travel destinations and the tourists' have reviewed Sri Lanka with a score of 5.0/5.0. Yet, compared to the other main beach-centric tourist attractions in the country, Negombo and its unique beach have been ranked low and reviewed negatively with an overall score of 3.0/5.0, which also could be seen that the majority of tourists have reviewed Negombo with an average level visitor satisfaction. Therefore, a question is raised to identify the impact of management and development of destination attributes on the visitor experiences of coastal tourists who visit Negombo, Sri Lanka.

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The primary objective of this study is to find the impact of destination attributes on overall satisfaction of international leisure tourists who visit Negombo, Sri Lanka.

As Negombo is identified as a developed beach-centric tourist destination, this study aims to assist stakeholders of the industry to properly understand the visitor and in appropriate destination management while preserving and conserving the natural and cultural resources in a sustainable manner

TABLE I
TRIP ADVISOR RATINGS

City / Beaches	Trip Advisor Ratings
Negombo	3.0
Hikkaduwa	4.0
Mount Lavinia	4.0
Arugam Bay	4.0
Pasikudah	4.5
Bentota	4.5
Mirissa	4.5
Nilaveli	4.5

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

T&T has been referred to the activities of travelers/tourists and has been identified as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which enables the movement of people from one country to another or to places outside their usual day-to-day environments. World Tourism Organization identified tourist as a visitor who takes a trip to a destination outside his/her usual environment for a period less than one year for any purpose of business, leisure or any other personal purpose [1].

With the institutionalization of Sri Lankan tourism, the Ceylon Tourist Board (CTB) was formed by an act passed in Parliament in 1966. Since its inception, Sri Lanka has been performing well with tourism while giving major emphasis to local tourism industry development and in gaining a competitive advantage over the regional peers [7].

In 1985, the World Tourism Organization identified customer satisfaction as a post psychological stance which involves with the feeling of pleasure and well-being of consuming a good or service [1]. Also, customer satisfaction is identified as a post consumption evaluation which assesses the real-time experience with the preset expectations and is argued not be a universal phenomenon but as a subjective, individualistic and also relative concept, where the same hospitality experience might not claim the same level of satisfaction among all the customers [8].

As tourists' satisfaction is explained as a cognitive and an emotional state, the fulfillment of tourists' satisfaction is an important and a decisive factor in T&T as an industry which has to be considered by all the stakeholders who engaged in the sector. Therefore, studies were done to identify the factors which influence the overall tourist's satisfaction [9]-[13].

Tourism destination competitiveness is identified with significance in the scope of tourist industry competitiveness and in relation to the overall satisfaction of visitors [9]. Destination competitiveness is identified with the capacity of a particular destination to compete with another destination in creating a memorable experience to the tourists while delivering value for money [10]. Further, it has been identified that destination competitiveness is majorly dependent upon its destination attributes and has a significant impact on the overall visitor satisfaction and experience [11].

Further, scholars identified that there are no set universally accepted dimensions of destination attributes [4], [12]-[14]. Therefore, with reference to previous researches and based upon their significant findings, this study has taken 'Tourism Service Quality' [12], 'Infrastructure and Superstructure Development' [4], 'Tourism Information Facilities' [13] and 'Destination Aesthetic and Development' [14] as the dimensions of the independent variable, destination attributes.

III. SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

A self-administrated questionnaire is identified as the best suited approach in conducting this survey study. The questionnaire was developed after a comprehensive analysis of literature and with the support of the general questionnaire used by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA). The male and female international leisure tourists, who visit Negombo, Sri Lanka, were identified as the unit of analysis. The study consisted of 150 respondents identified as the sample size and represented by the regions as identified in Table II.

TABLE II
SAMPLE PROFILE – REGION OF ORIGIN

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	America-North	7	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Asia North East	24	16.0	16.0	20.7
	Asia South East	8	5.3	5.3	26.0
	Asia South	37	24.7	24.7	50.7
	Australasia	7	4.7	4.7	55.3
	Europe West	48	32.0	32.0	87.3
	Europe East	11	7.3	7.3	94.7
	Middle East	7	4.7	4.7	99.3
	Other	1	0.7	0.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The questionnaire was developed in English and distributed to respondents physically by hand. Furthermore, most of the questions are closed-ended questions which provided convenience for the respondent.

Responses to the indicators of Tourism Service Quality, Destination Aesthetics and Developments, Tourism Information Facilities, Infrastructure and Superstructure Developments of the independent variable Destination Attributes and the dependent variable Overall Tourists' Satisfaction have been captured using a 4-Point Likert-type scale varying from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Here we implemented a Linear Regression in order to develop a model which elaborates the impact of all the above dimensions of the independent variable destination attributes

(tourism service quality, infrastructure and superstructure developments, tourist information facilities and destination aesthetics and developments) to the dependent variable (overall satisfaction of international leisure tourists who visit Negombo).

TABLE III
OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE VARIABLES

Variable	Dimension	Indicator
Destination Attributes	Tourism Service Quality	1.1.1. I am happy that I was served with value for price. 1.1.2. I am happy about the cleanliness, neatness of tourism service providers and tourist service stations (E.g. Hotels, Tourists attractions). 1.1.3. I am happy about the high level warm welcoming hospitality from the tourism service providers and locals 1.1.4. I am happy about the high level of support and courtesy from tourism service providers 1.1.5. I am happy about the prompt service at the tourist service stations (E.g. Hotels, tourists information desks).
	Destination Aesthetics and Development	1.2.1. Authentic lifestyle of the area could be experienced by tourists 1.2.2. I am happy with variety of activities which are offered at the Negombo beach. 1.2.3. The area's natural beauty and beach is well preserved and managed 1.2.4. I am not happy with the night time activities that are available in this area
	Tourist Information Facilities	1.3.1. Tourist information centers are easy to locate to have reliable information. 1.3.2. I am unhappy as the locals and tourism service providers disseminate wrong and misleading information to tourists 1.3.3. I am happy that there are direction boards and sign posts (safety warning signs located at the beach)
	Infrastructure and Superstructure Developments	1.4.1. Public transport and road infrastructure is good in this area 1.4.2. Health care facilities are good in this area 1.4.3. Safety of the tourists is assured 1.4.4. Public sanitary facilities are good in this area (e.g. public toilets)
Overall Tourists' Satisfaction	Visitor Satisfaction	2.1.1. I feel good and satisfied about my stay in Negombo
	Destination Loyalty	2.2.1. I would like to revisit Negombo 2.2.2. I would recommend Negombo to others in internet

TABLE IV
COEFFICIENTS – LINEAR REGRESSION

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.266	0.036		-7.471	0.000
	DA	1.091	0.011	0.992	97.311	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: TS						

DA = Destination Attributes, TS = Overall satisfaction of international leisure tourists who visit Negombo

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1$$
$$TS = 0.992\ DA \qquad (1)$$

Accordingly, the Sig. value is identified as 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and indicated that the fitted model is statistically significant. Further, the adjusted R square value is 0.986 and depicted that 98.6% of the total variation of dependent variable is explained by the independent variable.

The correlation between the dependent variable and the individual dimensions of the dependent variable were studied to facilitate the findings.

TABLE V
SUMMARY – CORRELATION OF THE DIMENSIONS AND DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Variable	Dimension	Pearson Correlation	Relationship
Destination Attributes	Tourism Service Quality	0.978	Very Strong Positive
	Infrastructure and Superstructure Developments	0.914	Very Strong Positive
	Tourist Information Facilities	0.973	Very Strong Positive
	Destination Aesthetics and Developments	0.985	Very Strong Positive

All the variables were normally distributed and the findings support the previous studies [15]. Further, it was statistically identified that the dimension of Destination Attributes significantly impacts the overall tourist satisfaction of visitors to the study area.

TABLE VI
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS – MEAN COMPARISON OF DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES

	N	Mean
TS	150	3.0267
SQ	150	3.1040
ID	150	3.0800
IF	150	2.9272
AD	150	2.9600
Valid N (listwise)	150	

TS = Overall satisfaction of international leisure tourists who visit Negombo, Sri Lanka, SQ = Tourism Service Quality, ID = Infrastructure and superstructure development, IF = Tourist information facilities, AD = Destination aesthetics and development

As depicted in Tables VI and VII, the dimensions of tourist information services (IF) (2.9272/4.0000) and the destination aesthetics and developments (AD) (2.9600/4.0000) have recorded a low level of mean satisfaction compared to the mean satisfaction of overall tourist' satisfaction (TS) (3.0267/ 4.000), as well as the attributes of tourism service quality (SQ) (3.1040/4.0000) and infrastructure and superstructure developments (ID) (3.0800/4.0000).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study identified that the dimension of Destination Attributes significantly influences overall visitor satisfaction. Hence it is identified that the tourism service providers and policy makers have a significant role in creating a satisfying and a memorable experience to the visitors.

It is shown that the tourists' have marked a low level of satisfaction in the dimension of Destination Aesthetics and Development. Also, previously it was identified that the Negombo coast line is mere showcasing its natural setting and it has very limited options for experiential tourism [16]. Therefore, it is recommended that policy makers should encourage the tourism service providers to offer many experiences in the beach and in the areas nearby without

harming the coast and its natural settings. Further, it is also suggested that the tourism service providers should provide engagements and create much experiences to the international visitors rather than mere sightseeing. It is recommended tourism service providers to promote the activities like kite surfing, jet ski rides and deep sea fishing etc. which should be guided and regulated by the policy makers to ensure safety, avoid the environmental damage and exploit resources. It was identified that majority of the tourists expect to experience authenticity, life style and culture of Negombo and Sri Lanka [17]. Therefore, it is a must that the tourism service providers should include the authenticity and uniqueness of Negombo and Sri Lanka in their products and service delivery.

TABLE VII
INDICATORS WITH A LOWER MEAN SATISFACTION LEVEL

Variable	Dimension	Overall Mean	Indicator	Mean
Destination Attributes	Tourism Service Quality	3.1040	I am happy that I was served with value for price.	2.60
			I am happy about the prompt service at the tourist service stations (E.g. Hotels, tourists information desks).	2.76
			I am happy about the cleanliness, neatness of tourism service providers and tourist service stations (E.g. Hotels, Tourists attractions).	2.80
	Infrastructure and Superstructure Development	3.0800	Public transport and road infrastructure is good in this area	2.97
			Public sanitary facilities are good in this area (e.g. public toilets)	2.69
	Tourist Information Facilities	2.9272	Tourist information centers are easy to locate to have reliable information.	2.60
			I am happy that there are direction boards and sign posts (Caution boards in the beach)	2.96
	Destination Aesthetics and Development	2.9600	I am happy with variety of activities which are offered at the Negombo beach.	2.52
			I am not happy with the night time activities that are there in this area	2.64

As tourist information facilities directly impact overall tourists' satisfaction, the policy makers and regulators should implement official tourist information centers to give right information and right guidance to the tourists. This would even help to prevent the exploitation of tourists by the service providers and locals. Also, it is advised to establish and implement sign posts and caution boards in the beach and the nearby areas to provide necessary information and to provide a satisfactory experience in Negombo.

Even more, as the SLTDA and other reputed institutes lack data for a comprehensive understanding of the visitor, it is suggested to build up a mobile application for Sri Lanka tourism stakeholders. Where then the policy makers could encourage the international tourists to log and use that platform to get reliable and convenient information and help. This would help tourists to receive much reliable and timely information and even the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority could get the direct feedbacks and real time data from the tourists. These data would pave a future for AI to be implemented in the tourism industry. The SLTDA could encourage the country's tourism service providers to be engaged actively in using that mobile application where it would create a portal for all the stakeholders of the industry. This would encourage them to engage and to work collaboratively and would support the SLTDA in its regulation and monitoring. Further, it is identified that international visitors are not very satisfied with the prices offered by the tourist service providers of Negombo. As it is identified previously, the price discrimination for foreigners by service providers and the exploitation of the tourists by the three-wheel drivers near the beach is the major reason behind this devastating situation [4]. Therefore, it is advised that service providers should be mindful of their prices in order to have a fair pricing strategy that offers value for money. Furthermore, it is advised to increase their service quality by avoiding over charging and discriminant pricing as tourism service quality has a significant positive impact on the overall satisfaction of international leisure tourists who visit Negombo, Sri Lanka.

Summing up, it is obvious that both the policy makers of the country and service providers of the tourism industry in Negombo have a left behind role to be played in enhancing the overall satisfaction of international leisure tourist who visit Negombo. Further, it is argued that the satisfaction level of the international visitors is not merely dependent upon the factors of the industry but also on the other variables in the economy. This suggests that the Negombo as a region should be economically developed while enhancing the living standard of the community which would have ripple effects with the international visitor satisfaction.

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