

A Study on the Tourist Attractions in Colombo City

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Introduction

Colombo is the most populous city in Sri Lanka, with the population of 2,309,809 in 2012. Especially Colombo City is being developed including all the infrastructure facilities such as new star class hotels, residencies, restaurants, entertaining areas, gardens, shopping complexes, and transportation modes opening vast attractions for both domestic and foreign tourists. In cultural tourism both ancient and modern cultural aspects are attracted by the tourists. Colombo City the hub of Sri Lanka has been extremely blended with colonial, traditional, historical and even modern tangible and intangible heritages. The major objective of this research was to identify the foreign tourists' perception regarding Colombo city as a tourist destination. The research focused on tourists' motivations for visiting the city, major attractions and visitor satisfaction on the services and facilities related to travel and hospitality industry. Being a heritage city mixed with both ancient heritages and modern life style the city of Colombo has something to offer for anyone.

Methodology

The research was conducted to identify the tourists' perception on the tourist attractions in Colombo city. Observation method was carried out with field observations, interviews and questionnaires. Some of the major cultural attractions at Colombo City were selected as the field to conduct the survey. The research sample was included 100 of foreign tourists who were randomly selected at various modern cultural attractions located in Colombo City including Floating Market, Liberty Arcade Square, Majestic City Complex, Liberty Plaza, Galle Fort Court, Galle Face Green, Race Court, ODEL shopping mall, Casinos, Tourist Hotels etc. 100 foreign tourists were given structured questionnaires which were entirely based on the visitor motivation, visitor satisfaction, visitor facilities, and tourist attractions in the city. Most of the tourists were individually interviewed to collect qualitative data regarding the visitors' perception on the cultural attractions located at Colombo City. During the research both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered and they have been analyzed hereafter.

Result and Discussion

The foreign tourists are interviewed with structured questionnaires for getting their perception about the cultural attractions. Foreign tourists' motivation to visit Colombo City was observed and the following figure illustrates various motivations with different scales to visit the city. (See Figure 1) Most of the foreigners are arriving at Colombo for the Business purposes including business conferences, trade exhibitions, meetings and other business related purposes. Still Colombo city,

being the major commercialized city in the island bears priority in MICE tourism. Leisure purposed foreign tourists are recorded as 23% and they are highly attracted by the luxurious accommodation facilities and hospitalities service offered at the star class hotels in Colombo city and its periphery. Night life of the city has been attracted by 15% while 12% of tourists are arriving at Colombo with the purpose of shopping. Their major attractive shopping destinations were Majestic City, Liberty Plaza, Unity Plaza, Arcade Square, House of Fashion and Cool Planet. 17% of tourists are arriving at the city with educational purposes based on researches and academic purposes. They had mentioned in their comments that rather than the modern attractions or leisure based locations they are strongly attracted by the locations and sites where they can observe culture, history and arts, including the places such as Colombo National Museum, National Art Gallery, Colonial buildings at the city etc.

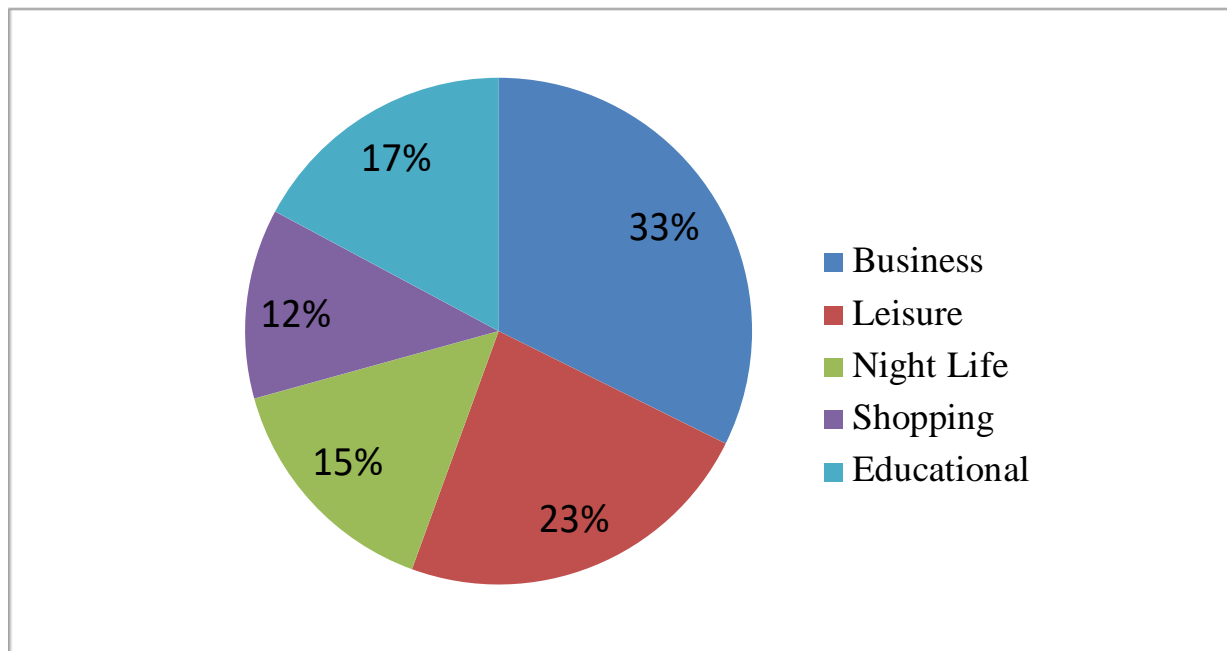


Figure 1: Motivations for visiting Colombo City

Then the foreign tourists' perception on Colombo City was measured basically in aspects such as accommodation facilities, hospitality service, transportation, and attractions. (See figure 2) As the figure 2 depicts more than 60% of tourists are extremely satisfied with the accommodations, hospitality and attractions in Colombo City. Star class reputed hotels located in the city offer a great hospitality experience for the tourists in its maximum level as it is proven by the figure. But only 8% tourists are extremely satisfied while 30% are dissatisfied with the transportations at the city due to the long traffic jam they experienced during the tours in Colombo City.

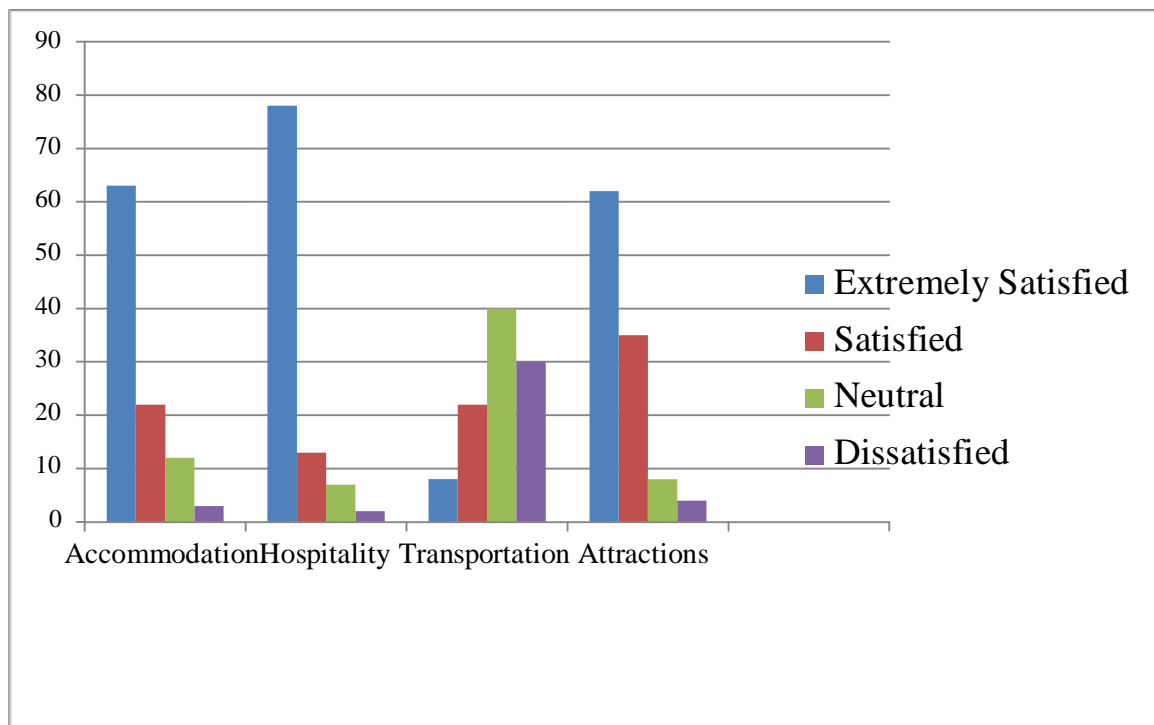


Figure 2: Tourists' Perception on Colombo City

Tourists' attention on the Colombo City based on the major attractions was specifically observed and evaluated during the research. (See Table 1) Colombo National Museum, Gangarama Temple, Shopping Complexes, Galle Face Green and Night Life were selected as the major attractions to identify their choices to visit and to enjoy them. 39 tourists have been attracted by Colombo Night Life, Galle Face Green has been selected by 35 tourists, Colombo National Museum has been selected by 34 of tourists and 27 of tourists have selected shopping complexes as their first choice from the given attractions to mark their choices as they preferred. Gangarama Temple has been attracted by the visitors in a neutral way because there are several religious and cultural heritage sites located far away from Colombo such as Kandy, Dambulla, Anurdhapura, and Polonnaruwa. Therefore the temple is only covered as a location by the travel agents to continue the Colombo City Tour. According to the table it is not apparently depicted that the choices of the tourists are varied according to their personal attitudes and interests. The tourists were given only five attractions and there would be other attractions more than them based on their individual interests.

Table 1: Tourists' Attention on major attractions in Colombo City

Attraction	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice	5 th choice
Colombo National Museum	34	25	19	13	09
Gangarama Temple	12	18	31	26	13
Shopping Complexes	27	33	18	12	10
Galle Face Green	35	26	10	14	15
Night Life	39	27	10	13	11

Conclusions

Colombo, Sri Lanka's largest city is very colorful, vibrant and the largest city as well as the commercial capital of Sri Lanka. An interesting mix of modern life and colonial ruins, Colombo is located on the west coast of the island and adjacent to Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte. After the research it was apparently evaluated the behavioral patterns of the tourists, their motivations, attitude regarding Colombo City as a famous tourism oriented commercial city in South Asia. Without any contrast both historical and modern attractions have been attracted by the foreign tourists. Average number s of foreigners have been highly attracted by the night life as there are a huge opportunities for those who like to enjoy Colombo Night Life along with modern cultural features. By present Colombo City Tour is also being organized by the travel agencies/tour operators covering both ancient and modern cultural attractions. Infrastructure facilities is concerned the transportation modes should be further developed for giving a delightful traveling experience for the visitors. Tourists should be motivated to visit the city with the purpose of education as this is like an educational city due to the mixture of ancient colonial buildings, historical legends, ancient arts and architecture etc. Colombo city tours should be created to cover each and every valuable attraction in the city while they are given the chance to enjoy modern culture as well.

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