

Tourists' Attitudes towards Tea Tourism in Sri Lanka: A Case in Badulla District

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Introduction

Tea, coffee and cola are three major beverages widely consumed in the world (Yang, 2007) and tea is an integral part of food service (Jolliffe, 2007). As widely accepted, Ceylon tea is popular all over the world. In Sri Lankan context, Tea tourism concept is a type of tourism concept which can be promoted especially in Badulla district in Uva province since there are more than sixty (60) tea estates which were located at beautiful landscapes with a cool climate. Hence, Badulla district is a district where there is a possibility of promoting tea tourism (Fernando, 2010). Tea tourism is 'tourism that is motivated by an interest in the history, traditions and consumption of tea' (Jolliffe, 2007). However, the academic research of tea tourism falls behind the industry and it is an under-researched area. Very little researches on tea tourism could be found both in the Chinese or English language, particularly those researches question on: who are the tea tourists? What are their attitudes towards tea and tea drinking, Are the tea tourists and non tea tourists differ in their attitudes towards tea? This research aims to answer the above questions while searching the attitudes of foreign tourists towards tea tourism in Badulla district which is having obvious potential in developing tea tourism.

Methodology

The study was based on Badulla district since it has been identified as an area where tea tourism can be promoted. Since it is practically impossible to consider whole population during the particular time period, a sample of 100 foreign tourists was selected using the convenience sampling technique in order to collect primary data. However, the random sampling method was adopted in Halpewatte tea factory and the Tea resort hotel which is belonging to Halpewatte tea factory as these are two popular tea tourist attractions in Badulla district. As questionnaires are appropriate to research on self-reported beliefs or behaviors (Neuman, 2000) a standard questionnaire was used in this study. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, primary data were analyzed by using descriptive statistical techniques (tables, pie charts and bar charts), ANOVA table and Chi square data analyzing method.

Results and discussion

In order to explore who the potential tourists are, respondents were divided into three groups as tea tourists, possible tea tourists and non-tea tourists, based on their willingness to travel for tea tourism in Badulla district in the future. It was identified that tea tourists are as respondents who were very much interested in tea tourism in the future in Badulla district (36%) and respondents who were interested (42%) in tea tourism in Badulla district the future. Possible tea tourists were the respondents who had moderate idea in participating in the future tea tourism activities in Badulla district (10%). Non tea tourists were the respondents having low (9%) and no interest (3%) towards tea tourism in the future in Badulla district. Mainly tea tourists were in between 21-30 years of age levels. The identified percentage of the tea tourists according to the results is 47% in the sample and in that percentage there are both male and female and the female percentage is 79% and male percentage is 21%.

When the tea tourists' attitudes towards tea and tea drinking are considered, 87% of the tea tourists said that they had heard about Ceylon tea before coming to Sri Lanka. Most of the tea tourists (37%) drink tea several times per day. Especially, almost all the tourists have drunk tea at least one time in their life while more than 50% of the tourists drink tea at least one time per day while there are 2% who never drink tea. Within the identified tea tourists in the sample

(47%), 72% of the tea tourists drink tea for more than 10 years and it shows that most of the tea tourists are people who drink tea for a long period of time and at the same time 13% of the tea tourists have been drinking tea for more than 5-10 years. Out of tea tourists (47% in the sample), 49% drink black tea and 25% of them drink green tea showing high interest in those two types. However, 96% of the sample (100) believes that tea drinking is healthy and it indicates the tourists' belief on tea as healthy drinking and it shows the future stability of tea and tea tourism market converting tourists into tea tourists. It was recorded that the most of the tea tourists are coming from France (25%) compared to Australia, England, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland as identified in the sample. Considering the difference between tea tourists and non tea tourists, the three groups (tea tourists, possible tea tourists and non tea tourists) manifested significant variation of their knowledge regarding tea showing 0.015 P-value in ANOVA.

Table 1. One way ANOVA test of attitudes and knowledge regarding tea

Questions		Tea tourists	Possible tea tourists	Non tea tourists	ANOVA
Level of knowledge regarding tea	Mean difference	3.2436	3.7000	3.9167	F=4.39 P=0.015

Source - Researcher's findings

Therefore, it is clear that tea tourists have more knowledge regarding tea than other tourists. The three groups (tea tourists, possible tea tourists and non tea tourists) do not differ significantly in how often they drink tea, belief of drinking tea is as healthy, and how long they have been drinking tea. Concerning the differences among the tea tourists, possible tea tourists and none tea tourists, in willingness of tea tourism and gender, age, buying tea as souvenir, previous tea tourism experiences and heard about Ceylon tea before coming to Sri Lanka, particularly according to the chi-square test, there is a significant association between only 'heard about Ceylon tea before coming to Sri Lanka' and willingness of tea tourism showing p value as 0.045 in chi-square test. Further, there is no significant association between the tea tourists, possible tea tourists and none tea tourists, in willingness of tea tourism in terms of gender, age, buying tea as souvenir, previous tea tourism experiences since the p value is higher than the value 0.05 in the chi-square analysis. Therefore it is very clear that having heard about Ceylon tea by tourists before coming to Sri Lanka affects a tourist to be a tea tourist in Sri Lanka and other factors like gender of the tourist (p value = 0.076), age level of the tourist (p value = 0.069), buying tea as souvenir while travelling (p value = 0.108) and previous tea tourism experiences (p value = 0.209) do not affect to become a tea tourist for a traveler.

Regarding the tourist facilities in Badulla district, 55% of the tourists said that the accommodation facilities are high in Badulla district while many of the tourists said that the accommodation facilities are moderate and low in the area (42%). Many of the tourists (52%) are satisfied with the infrastructure facilities in town area while some of them said that the facilities are poor especially when it comes to the village areas in the district. Most of the tourists get information about the tourist attractions of the area using books (42%) while many tourists take information from guides (30%) and comparatively internet information searchers are very low. Regarding the language fluency of tourists' guides in Badulla district, considerable amount of tourists said that the guides are not that much professional in their speaking. Satisfaction of tourist information in Badulla district is considered, most of the tourists (86%) are satisfied with tourist information services available in Badulla district while numbers of tourists are not satisfied with the tourist information services in Badulla district.

Conclusions

This research identified the tourists' attitudes towards tea tourism in Sri Lanka and through that who the tea tourists are, what kind of attitudes are there towards tea tourism, differences between tea and non tea tourists in their attitudes and problems faced while promoting tea tourism in Badulla district.

Tea tourists and non tea tourists differ in the level of knowledge regarding tea. Therefore, tea tourists have good knowledge regarding tea and non tea tourists do not have that much of knowledge and there is a possibility of a tourist to be a tea tourist if he has got good knowledge regarding Ceylon tea. Therefore, promotions have to be used regarding Ceylon tea among tourists to visit Sri Lanka in order to make them aware of tea tourism.

When comparing with other competitors promoting tea tourism, for example China and India, there should be better and new type of accommodation facilities here in the Badulla district. Moreover the government bodies in Badulla district must pay attention on arranging fair transport facilities to tourists visiting Badulla district with the support of the private sector while developing other infrastructure facilities such as roads, communication facilities in the district. Tourists' guides have to be trained in a standard way and then they will be able to give a memorable experience to the tourist. Multiple language speakers especially those who can speak French and German are needed to further promotion of tea tourism.

References

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