

Determinants of Length of Stay of Asian Tourists in Sri Lanka; What Makes their Stay Long or Short?

N.G.B.M. Premasiri^{1*}, A.C.I.D. Karunaratne¹, T.M.P.S.I. Tennakoon² and U.G.O. Sammani¹

^{1*}*Department of Tourism Studies, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Public Administration, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

The emerging industry remarks indicated a growing average length of stay over the years in Sri Lankan tourism. Length of stay denotes the amount of time that the tourist spends at a given destination whereas the durations of tourism trip refer to the length of time between departure from and return to home. However, Asia, the top source region to Sri Lanka has continuously reported the lowest length of stay over the years compared to all other regions. Therefore, the current study was carried out to identify the determinants of length of stay of Asians tourists in Sri Lanka in terms of socio-demographics, travel characteristics, destination attributes, and travel motives. Further, this study examined the contribution of travel agencies to extend the length of stay of Asian tourists in Sri Lanka. To achieve these objectives, primary data were collected through structured questionnaires from 150 Asian tourists who visited the cultural triangle and occupied structured interviews for managers of 8 travel agencies who handled the inbound tourism in Sri Lanka with the Asian market. A convenient sampling technique was employed to select tourists and travel agents in the sample. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Accordingly, the socio-demographics, travel characteristics, and destination attributes indicated a significant relationship with the length of stay of Asian tourists in Sri Lanka. Further, the budget and the free time were two of the most significant reasons for the lower length of stay. Problems with the allocated budget, language barriers, and itinerary changes were the most critical reasons for the lower length of stay as highlighted by the travel agent. Customized and improved tour package, integrated marketing communication, flexible pricing strategies, and, lowering the tax/levy and other charges will make a significant influence on the extended length of stay of Asian tourists' in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Length of stay, Cultural triangle, Travel motives, Asian tourists, Sri Lanka