

Movement Patterns of Tourists in Sri Lanka: Analyzing the Differences between Package Travelers and Backpackers

C.N.R Wijesundara

Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies University of Sabaragamuwa, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka

Abstract

The Tourism industry of Sri Lanka is becoming increasingly important in terms of its contribution to the GDP, employment generation and related economic consequences. Identifying movement patterns of tourists is great advancement for any destination or a country. Understanding the needs of tourists and their activity patterns could facilitate to policy design, development of new tourism products and better management of visitors. By identifying tourists movement patterns, destination management companies and relevant government authorities can have better understanding about the route plans of the package tourists and backpackers. There is a shortage of research looking specifically at movement patterns of tourists in Sri Lanka and the differences between package travelers and backpackers. Hence, this study focused on observing the movement patterns of tourists in Sri Lanka and analyzing the differences between package travelers and backpackers. The study was conducted by focusing package travelers and backpackers, and required information was gathered through questionnaires filled by both package travelers and backpackers at departure terminal at Bandaranayake international airport. Tourists were asked there to mention their route plan during the tour in Sri Lanka. The simple random sampling method was employed to select the sample and extracted route plans were plotted on the Sri Lanka map to get clear idea about the variances of movement patterns of package travelers and backpackers. The findings showed the package travelers were restricted to limited number of destinations and tourist sites by tour organizers. By evaluating the backpackers route map, it was revealed that tourists are willing to visit distinct part of the country without limiting to the certain areas. Finally, it can be concluded that there is an urgent need of revising the tour packages offered by travel agents and tour operators. They have great potentials to promote more diverse range of tourist destinations and tourist sites with the prevailing condition of Sri Lanka tourism.