
DEVELOPING A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF ADVENTURE TOURISTS VISITING ARUGAMBAY, SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Adventure tourism is an alternative form of tourism which has a growing demand. Arugambay is one of the top ten surfing destinations in the world (Lonely Planet, 2010). Sri Lankan adventure tourist market is not well defined and adventure tour operators in Sri Lanka meet immense difficulties when attracting and handling adventure tourists. In order to develop the Sri Lankan adventure tourism market and to assist adventure tour operators, this research aims to contribute towards the current understanding of adventure tourists in Arugambay by compiling a demographic profile of such tourists. One hundred tourists participated in this survey. The results gained from the self-completing questionnaires indicated that majority of adventure tourists visiting Arugambay are Europeans belonging to 21 – 30 and 41 – 50 age groups. Most of these young, living together couples are experienced surfers, and are spending US \$ 61 – 70 per day. Adventure tourists in Arugambay tend to be educated private sector employees who earn US \$1001 – 3000 per month. This research further makes recommendations to the national tourism organization, adventure tour operating companies and to the hosts of Arugambay in promoting Arugambay as a successful adventure tourist destination. Finally, the study recognizes the need of further researches on every adventure tourism locations in Sri Lanka in order to promote Sri Lanka as an adventure tourism destination by understanding specific needs and wants of the identified target market.

Keywords: Tourism, Adventure tourism, Tourist, Surfing

1. Introduction

Sri Lanka tourism has recorded the highest tourism growth rate in Asia after the three decades of terrorist problem (UNWTO, 2012) and the tourism industry in Sri Lanka is considered and treated as the most promising industry in the process of development (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012). The Sri Lankan government has set a target of achieving 4.5 million of tourists to the country by 2020 (Ministry Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs, 2017). In parallel to aforementioned objective, Sri Lanka achieved 2.1 million tourist's arrival in 2017 (SLTDA, 2018).

It is strategically required to move in to alternative form of tourism if Sri Lanka is to achieve 4.5 million of tourists. Sri Lanka is blessed with natural attractions within which, adventure tourism potentials are concealed. Though Sri Lanka has one of the top ten surfing destinations in the world, relative number of tourists attracted by the destination is very low compared to other surfing destinations in the world. Similarly, attention should be paid upon the type of the tourists Arugambay is receiving and the type that Arugambay should attract in future.

As a growing segment in tourism industry, adventure tourism operators should have a better understanding about their customer and market base as it helps to customize the products according to the requirements of the clientele. There is no properly designed adventure tourist profile for Arugambay. Thus designing an adventure tourist profile to this pristine destination is a timely requirement and will be a contribution to achieve Sri Lanka's national tourism objectives. Therefore, being an active tourism destination, it is very important to examine the demographic profiles of tourists to establish their support for any future tourism development. Findings of this research represent a part of a much comprehensive study which is carried out throughout the country to design an adventure tourist profile in Sri Lanka.

1.1 Research Problem

With the present tourism boom there is a notable trend of developing adventure tourism in Sri Lanka. Destinations and both private and public sectors are working very hard to attract adventure tourists. However, it is visible that anticipated development of the adventure tourism industry to be very slow. Also, the economic return from the existing adventure tourists is low compared to mass tourists. Arugambay, being one of the top ten destinations in the world attract thousands of tourists per year. However, absence of a tourist profile is well highlighted when the adventure companies and authorities are promoting Arugambay as an adventure tourism destination.

1.2 Research Objectives

General Objective

“To develop a demographic, socio-economic and psychographic profile of adventure tourists in Arugambay with the aim of assisting adventure tourism companies and the national tourism organization to carry out their marketing and promotion activities more effectively”

Specific Objectives

- i. To identify the demographic and socio-economic characteristics applicable to adventure tourists in Arugambay;
- ii. To identify the psychographic characteristics of the adventure tourists in Arugambay;
- iii. To make recommendations to improve Arugambay as a successful tourist destination.

1.3 Previous Studies

Adventure Sport Tourism

Adventure sports tourism has been a well attended research field among the international academia for a few decades of time. Adventure sport tourism thus has been defined by many scholars with similar features. Gibson (1998) has stated that adventure sport tourism includes travel away from one's primary residence to participate in an adventurous sport activity for recreation or competition, travel to observe sport at the grassroots or elite level, and travel to visit an adventure sport attractions. Carter (2005) on the other hand, came up with a definition which carry similar factors to Gibson (1998); adventure sports tourism is defined as a specific travel outside of the usual environment for either passive or active involvement in adventurous sport where adventure is the prime motivational reason for travel and the touristic or leisure element may act to reinforce the overall experience. Adventure sports tourism, as an industry is not only patronage by tourists, but also it has now become a honey pot among many other industries. The opportunity to advertise products to a global audience, leverage business opportunities in export and new investment, on-sell event management knowledge, enhance the tourist industry of host-countries, and boost citizen morale and pride are factors which motivate both corporate involvement and public support (Getz, 2003).

Adventure sport tourism consists with some fundamental characteristics. Higham (2005) explored ten core characteristics in adventure sport tourism, which are notably accepted around the globe (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007), as follows:

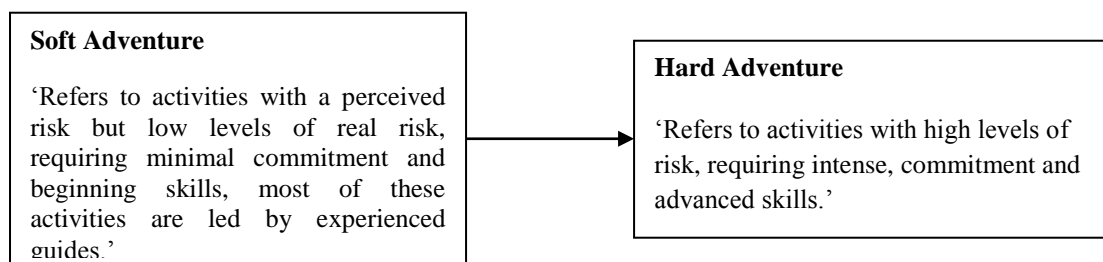
1. Uncertain outcomes
2. Danger & risks
3. Challenge
4. Anticipated rewards
5. Novelty
6. Stimulation and excitement
7. Escapism and separation
8. Exploration and discovery
9. Absorption and Focus
10. Contrasting emotions

The connection of physical activity with adventure sport tourism is possibly one of the most frequently held perceptions. The environment where this most frequently happens, the outdoors, tally with adventure because the nature provide us with the resources for number of activities that gives us risk, sensory, challenge, novelty, stimulus, discovery and many more. According to Hinch and Higham (2011) when thinking on the role of outdoor activities for younger people, suggested that adventure can be adjusted according to:

- The degree of isolation
- The level of expertise required
- The levels of effort required
- The opportunity for responsibility
- The level of contrivance

Typologies of Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism is very extensive concept, associating with wide range of products and people. According to the literature, there are two types of Adventure tourism. They are Hard Adventure and Soft Adventure.



As Standeven and De Knop, P. (1999) stated, hard adventure includes rock climbing, caving, backpacking in rugged terrain, kayaking, White water rafting...etc, while soft adventure include camping, hiking, cycling, animal watching, canoeing, photo safari and number of other activities. Normally hard adventure tourism activities are associated with high risk and require a high level of specialized skill.

Adventure Sport Tourist

According to Breivik (1996) Adventure sports Tourist can be defined as a person who travels outside of their usual environment for either passive or active involvement in competitive sport where sport is the prime motivational reason for travel and the touristic or leisure element may act to reinforce the overall experience. Supppanya and Banjongsiritas (2012) conducted a research to identify 'Factors Affecting Tourists' Decision Making on Adventure Tourism in Baan Pha-ngam state of Thailand. They developed an adventure tourist profile and they identified most of respondents are women, age between 21-30 years old, personal income between 10,000-20,000 Baht per month, working in private company and having Bachelor's degree. More than 85% of respondents know about adventure tourism at Baan Pha-ngam through word-of-mouth and Internet. World Tourism Organization (WTO) recognizes that Adventure sports tourism is now an emerging market. Certainly, over the past twenty years, the interest in sport especially elite sporting events has grown at a phenomenal rate.

Adventure sports tourism events at the international, national and regional levels have a double-barreled effect – the direct effect of the attendance of the competitors and spectators and accompanying persons, and the indirect effect of the marketing of the destination which lead to the subsequent tourism flows.

The Positive Impacts of Adventure Sport Tourism

According to Swarbrooke (2003) Adventure tourism has three types of impacts to any region. These impacts can be categorized as Economic impacts, Environmental impacts and Social impacts.

The Positive Economic Impacts of Adventure Sport Tourism:

- Injection of money into the local economy
- Direct and indirect job creation
- The generation of tax income for central and local government
- Adventure tourism offers opportunities for the local development of small and medium size enterprises and family businesses.

The Positive Environmental Impacts of Adventure sport tourism:

- Adventure tourism has had a positive impact on environmental conservation, because it has given the environment a monetary value and destination a financial incentive for conservation.

The Positive Social impacts of Adventure Sport tourism:

- Some tourists in developing countries take volunteer holidays, where they work free of charge on conservation or aid projects.
- The growth of tourism can sometimes also lead to recognition of the need to improve education level for local people.
- These activities will create number of job opportunities.

Demographic and Psychographic Characteristic of Tourist

According to (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007) Socio-Economic and Demographic characteristics of a tourist expressed statistically, such as age, sex, education level, income level, marital status, occupation, average size of a family. Demographic data will describe the characteristics of a human population. Additional demographic measures can include disabilities, mobility educational attainment, home ownership, and household composition (number of children and extended family members living within the home).

Further King, et al. (2011) stated that Psychographic factors are more fluid and subjective in nature, and relate to the psychology or behavior of the customers. Determining the psychographic profile of group would typically be useful for market segmentation. Psychographic measures include values, opinions, political views, lifestyles, behaviors, leisure activities, desires, entertainment preferences, cultural interests and social activities.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design, sample, data collection, analysis

This paper is built on a quantitative research method because of the specific information required. The sampling frame is tourists, whom have visited Arugambay during the month of August 2017. August was selected as it is the best time for surfing in Arugambay (Lonely Planet, 2013) and is considered as the tourism peak period in Arugambay (ABTA, 2017). Nonprobability sampling in the form of quota and convenience sampling methods were used to draw the sample to reach the size of 100 and self-administered technique with a structured questionnaire was used for data gathering from the tourists.

The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part one is tourist demographic information consisting of gender, age, marital status, country of residence, education level, primary area of employment, average income per month

and expenditure pattern. Part two is designed for the information of tourist's psychographic including average duration of stay, purpose of visiting Arugambay, repeat behavior, previous travel experience, mode of booking and receiving travel information and travel mode. Descriptive statistics using SPSS was used to analyze the questionnaire findings.

2.2 Significance of the study

Tourism is the best attentioned and most widely spoken industry in Sri Lanka. With the national objective of achieving 4.5 million of tourists, the authorities and the tour operating companies are now moving in to the promotion of alternative tourism in Sri Lanka. The findings of this research are significant to the national tourism organization, adventure tour operating companies and adventure tourism service providers to identify the adventure tourist profile for their marketing and promotion and adventure tourism product designing. Further, the findings are significant to researchers and students to conduct further researches and to learn the adventure tourist profile of Arugambay.

Since tourism has a greater value in the process of development, it is required to ensure the well-being of the industry. The theme of Adventure sport tourism is a very vital segment in tourism industry as we moving towards the target to achieve 4.5 million tourists by 2020. So, it is essential to reveal the profile of adventure sport tourist to design required promotional tools to motivate them. The finding of this research will helpful for tourism facilitators such as travel agents and tour operators, and the national tourism organization to fine-tune adventure tour products and packages.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Demographic and Socio-economic profile

Gender

It was revealed that 55 percent of the tourists visiting Arugambay during the month of August are female and 45 percent of the tourists are male. Although previous researches have not been carried out, according to the residents and service providers of Arugambay, this is an unusual pattern to Arugambay in 2017, compared to previous decades as it was always males who visited Arugambay most.

Age

53 percent of the tourists were in between 21 and 30 years. The second majority of the tourists were in between 41 and 50. The young adults, those who are in 31 – 40 age group represent 11 percent of the total sample. 9 percent of the total population is represented by the tourists those who are over 51.

Marital status and family pattern

According to the surveyed data, 43 percent of the tourists found to be living together whereas 18 percent of the tourists were single and 39 percent were married. Out of married couples, 63 percent of them had no children and 24 percent of tourists had one to two children. In the meantime, 13 percent had three to four children.

Country of residence

Netherland is the key source market for tourists in Arugambay, making up 20 percent, followed by France and Germany at 15 percent equally. Australia and Switzerland contributes to the tourist traffic by 13 percent and 10 percent respectively. 27 percent of the total arrivals are from countries namely: Russia, USA, England, Belgium, and Spain.

Level of Education

Tourists visiting Arugambay are well educated. All the tourists who enrolled in this survey have at least attended high school. 32 percent amongst them have college degrees or diplomas while 31 percent of them have university degrees. 14 percent of some other tourists had had Master's level and above education and 23 percent of the tourists were currently reading for their degrees.

Primary area of employment

39 percent of tourists visiting Arugambay are private sector employees and 19 percent are working in the public sector. Surprisingly, 20 percent of the total tourists were unemployed and 18 percent of them were self-employed. 4 percent of the tourists were involved in other sectors. Out of unemployed tourists, 76 percent were full time students reading for their degrees.

Average income per month

Tourists visiting Arugambay are generally low-income and middle-income earners, earning under US \$ 3000 per month are accounting for 69 percent of all the tourists. More precisely, 36 percent of tourists are earning US \$ 1001 – 3000 and 33 percent of tourists earn less than US \$1000 per month. 12 percent earn in between US \$ 3001 – 5000 and 5 percent of the tourists claim that they earn more than US \$5000 per month. Surprisingly, 14 percent of the tourists refused to answer that question.

Expenditure pattern

Majority of the tourists spend US \$ 51 to 70 per day during their stay at Arugambay. Also, it was discovered that 34 percent spending less than US \$50 per day and there were 23 percent of tourists spending over US \$71 per day at the destination. In terms of expenses, tourists ranked accommodation as the main cost element during their vacation which is followed by food and beverage costs, ground transportation and rent of surfing boards.

3.2 Psychographic Profile

Average duration of stay

A vast majority (60 percent) of the tourists stay more than eight nights in Arugambay. Survey data disclosed that 35 percent of tourists stay 13 to 16 nights in Arugambay, followed by 25 percent of tourists who stay 08 to 12 nights and 18 percent of tourists staying 04 to 07 nights. 13 percent of the tourists revealed that they stay over 16 nights and just 08 percent of the tourists said to spend below 03 nights at Arugambay.

Purpose of visiting Arugambay

The highest proportion of surveyed tourists (86 percent) have visited Sri Lanka with the purpose of surfing. 09 percent of the tourists were attracted by the cheapness of the destination and 5 percent of the tourists had visited to see the nature and culture in and around Arugambay. Also, it was revealed that 81 percent of all the tourists who visited because of surfing can surf whereas 19 percent of them cannot do surfing. They were either accompanying their surfing partners, husbands or friends. Also, it was discovered that 46 percent of tourists were expert surfers, 34 percent were average surfers and 20 percent were beginners who seek surfing classes in Arugambay.

Repeat behavior

During the survey, only 11 percent of tourists found to have visited Sri Lanka before this visit. However, a majority of tourists (60 percent) said that they have the intention of visiting Arugambay again. 20 percent of the tourists were on a dilemma to visit Arugambay again and 10 percent tourists stated that they won't visit Sri Lanka again.

Previous travel experience

All the tourists who responded have previous travel experience in countries other than their own. Again it was revealed that 69 percent of tourists had visited surfing destinations before and 31 percent had visited at least one of Asian countries.

Mode of booking and receiving travel information

57 percent of the tourists who visited Arugambay during the month of August had done their bookings through internet without the assistance of a third party. 33 percent of the tourists had got the assistance of their friends or relations who have previously visited Arugambay. Also, 10 percent of the tourists had contacted travel agencies to make their bookings in Arugambay. It was again noted that word of mouth to be the most successful method of promoting a destination as 39 percent of tourists had heard about Arugambay through their friends and

relatives who have previous travel experience. 31 percent said that they read about Arugambay in internet and 14 percent disclosed that they got information about Arugambay through public media channels.

Travel mode

48 percent tourists had used public transport methods to reach the destination. 35 percent of the tourists have used hired vehicles. They have hired the vehicles either from the previous destination that they were staying, from the airport upon the arrival or Arugambay hotels are sending vehicles to pick them up from the airport. 12 percent mentioned that they were given transport by local friends.

4. Discussion

4.1 Demographic and socio-economic characteristics

The data indicate that the number of female tourists in Arugambay slightly over number male tourists during the month of August. It reveals that both genders have equal interest towards adventure sports. However, this is a noticeable different when compared with the total tourist arrivals in August, 2012. It is evident that young tourists (21 – 30) are more interested in visiting Arugambay compared to all other age groups. The reason is that they are not bound by family affections and job responsibilities. Again the middle ages (41 – 50) hold the second majority tourist segment. It is assumed that they have come to a certain stable position in their life cycle to find sufficient time for a vacation. The percentage of living together couples was very high among the young (21 – 30) tourists. Also, a vast majority of the married tourists have no children. Again, it was discovered that one fourth of the married couple to have either one or two children. It can be concluded that tourists visiting Arugambay are in the early stage of their life cycle which is free from responsibilities. It was disclosed that main market source to Arugambay as Italy since one fifth of the tourists were from Italy. Switzerland, Germany, Australia and Russia are promising source markets to Arugambay. Overall, it can be stated that Arugambay is mostly visited by Europeans compared to all other regions in the world.

Tourists visiting Arugambay have a sound education background according to the survey. A significant majority of the tourists have university education and the rest of the tourists have at least high school education. Majority of the tourists visiting Arugambay are working in the private sector while a significant percentage is working in the public sector. The unemployment ratio among the young students recorded a high percentage. The vast majority of the tourists recorded that they are earning less than US \$ 3000 per month. Amongst them one third of the total tourists earn less than US \$ 1000 per month. Again this is visible among young tourists who are working in either private sector or unemployed. Tourists visiting Arugambay spend US \$ 51 - 70 per day. The main cost elements were accommodation, food and beverages, ground transportation and renting the surfing boards. It is thus clear that tourists visiting Arugambay are spending only for their basic needs.

4.2 Psychographic characteristics

More than one third of the tourists visiting Arugambay prefer staying average 13 – 16 nights at the destination. Also one quarter of the tourists stay 08 – 12 nights. The number of tourists staying less than 03 nights is neglectable. So it is clear that adventure tourists prefer staying a longer time in Arugambay. Spending a considerable amount of nights in Arugambay is not a surprising factor as surfing requires a long duration of period to learn, practice and enjoy. The findings again show that young tourist; living together and married, without having children, exhibit a greater enthusiasm in staying a longer period. It is due to the reason that they have no family obligations to comply with.

The vast majority of the tourists are visiting Arugambay with the intention of surfing and a few are attracted by destination cheapness. Being popular as a cheap destination negatively affect any destination. The affluent clientele will refuse visiting a destination where there are budget tourists. Also, more than three quarters of all the tourists who visited Arugambay particularly for surfing are surfers. A few those who are not surfing have accompanied their male or female surfing partners to Arugambay. This indicates that all the tourists are not interested in surfing. Apparently this is a new market segment which is untouched. Diversified tourism products thus needed to cater to that market. Although the majority of the tourists exhibited their interest in revisiting the destination, only 11 percent of the tourists have really visited Arugambay before. This is a very good sign which

exhibit Arugambay's capacity to attract repeat tourists, which is an essential factor in the process of destination growth. Also, all the tourists have previous travel experience to foreign countries and a majority of the surfers have visited one or more surfing destinations in the world. Thus the Arugambay service providers need to be careful in servicing the tourists as they have alternative destinations to visit in absence of standard services. If they are not satisfied with Arugambay, they will definitely move in to other destinations.

Adventure tourists tend to make their travel arrangements over internet. Other than that they get the assistance of their friends who have previously visited the destination. A significant proportion of the tourists have got to know about Arugambay from their friends and relations showing the power of word of mouth as a destination promotion strategy. Since word of mouth is the most vibrant marketing tool, the Arugambay community must make sure that the departure tourists are happy. Half of the total sample had used public transport services (buses) to reach the destination. However, one quarter of them have used hired vehicles either from the airport or directly from Arugambay service providers. It is not clear whether tourists want an authentic Sri Lankan travel experience or their economy mindset.

4.3 Recommendations / Implications

Suggestions are forwarded to following parties to promote Arugambay as a successful adventure tourism destination:

National tourism organization

It is recommended:

- i. to identify Europe as the main source market to Arugambay for marketing and promotions;
- ii. to identify young couples, couples without children and are willing face adventures as main market segment;
- iii. to restructure tourism marketing and promotions campaigns;
- iv. to use internet aggressively as a tool of marketing and promotions;
- v. to convert Arugambay in to a family destination;
- vi. to discourage cheap (budget) tourists arrivals to Arugambay;
- vii. to ensure the return tourists are happy;
- viii. to attract quality tourists to Arugambay;
- ix. to make access easy in between Arugambay and other tourist destinations in the region in terms of road development;
- x. to give a proper tourism education to the hosts in Arugambay
- xi. to encourage local/international investors to invest in Arugambay;

Adventure tourism companies

It is recommended:

- i. to provide more services and facilities to tourists;
- ii. to differentiate the tourism products available in Arugambay and introducing new activities which are in parallel to adventure tourists;
- iii. to implement a new pricing strategy;
- iv. to introduce recreational or sports activities for non-surfers;
- v. to introduce other water based recreational activities;
- vi. to introduce a surfing school in Arugambay accredited by a reputed international body;
- vii. to use internet in marketing and promotions;
- viii. to identify alternative surfing locations in Sri Lanka to promote Sri Lanka as a year round surfing destination;
- ix. to bundle surfing product along with other facilities: air ticket, ground transport, guiding, food and beverages, accommodations, insurance, and excursions;
- x. to re-launch the sea-plane transfers in between Arugambay and other tourist destinations in the country.

Hosts in Arugambay

It is recommended:

- i. to provide standard level of services and facilities to tourists;
- ii. to come to a common pricing scheme for the facilities and services offered;
- iii. to promote attractions in the vicinity area to the in-house guests;
- iv. to diversify tourism products to attract tourists during the off-season;
- v. to ensure the departure tourists are happy.

5. Conclusion

Arugambay, no doubly, is one of the best surfing destinations in the world that attract mainly European, budgetary minded, young, long staying tourists whose main purpose of visiting Arugambay is surfing. As such, this study clearly identifies the demographic and socio-economic backgrounds of the adventure tourists visiting Arugambay and forwards recommendations to the national tourism organization, adventure tour operators and hosts in Arugambay on how to promote Arugambay as a successful adventure tourism destination. Knowledge of the demographic profile of Arugambay adventure tourists is not sufficient to promote Sri Lanka as an adventure tourism destination. Future researches are thus needed to explore the demographic profile and key purchasing motivators of adventure tourists visiting Sri Lanka.

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