An Analysis of the Push and Pull Motives for Choosing Sri Lanka as the Wedding Tourism Destination: With Special Reference to Southern Province

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ABSTRACT

Wedding tourism has increased popularity over the past decade and is recognized as a significant market segment with a possibility of enhancing effectiveness of the industry by amalgamating two segments as one destination. Tourism motivations are important factors in understanding tourist behaviour in relation to destination’s choice, especially for the wedding market. This is already existing niche market which has not been yet capitalized and can be developed as a diversified tourism product and the effects of seasonality can be minimized. Hence, the purpose of the study was to determine the various travel motivations of wedding tourism to Sri Lanka. Primary data collected by the researcher from 100 foreign tourists applying convenience sampling method. Southern province was the research area for data collection. Quantitative data analysis method was deployed. The findings revealed that wedding tourists are primarily attracted by the destination’s attributes such as the famous “sea, sun and sand” which forms part of the characteristics of small tropical islands, followed by other pull attributes. At the same time, push factors like destination marketing and promotion also encouraged tourists to marry in Sri Lanka. Thus, in order to encourage wedding tourism, increasing marketing efforts can prove to be a powerful tool. The study also confirms that destination managers should better understand travel motivations of tourists before developing and marketing product and services.

Keywords-- Wedding Tourism, Pull Factors, Push Factors

I. INTRODUCTION

Arguably, over the past decade the concept of niche tourism has entered the mainstream discourse of tourism scholarship (MacLeod, 2003; Robinson &Novelli, 2005; Hall & Page, 2006; Lew, 2008; Page &Connell, 2009; Marson, 2011; Rogerson, 2011). Niche tourism can be defined “by its heterogeneous nature” and is expanding in significance because of a shift in motivational factors by travelers (Marson, 2011: 9). The activity of niche tourism centres on the consumer market segments’ interests and travel desires ensuring that a destination is more attractive and marketable (Kraftchick et al. 2014).

Wedding tourism targets couples who want to celebrate their wedding and honeymoons away from home and are looking for a unique experience. It referred to as getting married overseas (Poon, 2009; Breg, 2013) is a new form of emerging tourism activity which is an indispensable product alternative for many small destinations and gaining popularity in Sri Lanka. Wedding event is a means for Sri Lanka to keep abreast of fierce competition that prevails in the Indian Ocean region, as it has recently been surpassed, in terms of tourist arrivals, by other 3S destinations such as the Seychelles, Maldives and even Sri Lanka (AXYS Report, 2014). Wedding Tourism is becoming a prevalent part of the tourism industry with “away wedding” growing rapidly (Travel Trends Today, 2013; Travel Daily UK, 2014). The best weddings are now about exoticism, an emerging phenomenon of customers changing trends (Breg, 2013; Smart Travel Asia, 2013). This new trend of Wedding Tourism offers new opportunities for destinations. What wedding tourist want apart from an idyllic wedding location (Carey, 2008; Cameron & Roberts, 2010), is a destination that can handle all of their wedding arrangements (Richards, Ellis & Schuurman, 2007) hence offering a personalized wedding (Travel Weekly, 2012).

Wedding tourism has increased popularity over the past decade and is recognized as a significant market segment with a possibility of enhancing effectiveness of the industry by amalgamating two segments as one destination. This is already existing niche market which has not been yet capitalized and can be developed as a diversified tourism product and the effects of seasonality can be minimized. Therefore, this research seeks to fulfill some of these gaps that have been identified and contributed to the Sri Lankan tourism industry.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW
**Event Tourism**

The events industry, including festivals, meetings, conferences, exhibitions, incentives, sports and a range of other events, is rapidly developing and makes a significant contribution to business and leisure-related tourism. With increased regulation and the growth of government and corporate involvement in events, the environment has become much more complex. Before defining Event Management, an attempt is made to define what the word ‘event’ means. The term ‘event’ is a noun that is indeed ambiguous as it can be understood in more than one way.

Various specialized academics in Event Management have presented various definitions about what Event means.

D.Tassiopoulos, (2005) defines events are becoming established as an integral and major part of tourism development and marketing strategies. Event tourism could be used to describe this phenomenon and this could be defined as the systematic development, planning, marketing and holding of events as tourist attractions. Further he presents four goals of event tourism:

- To create a favorable image for a destination.
- To expand the traditional tourist season.
- To spread tourist demand more evenly through an area.
- To attract foreign and domestic visitors.

The Chambers Dictionary, (1998) defines event as, “anything which happens; result; any incidence or occurrence a memorable one; contingency or possibility of occurrence; an item in a programme; a type of horse-riding competition, often held over three days, consisting of three sections, ie dressage, cross-country riding and showjumping; fortune or fate; an organized activity at a particular venue, eg for sales promotion, fundraising”.

According to Getz, (1991) events can become the most common channel through which visitors satisfy their desire to sample local foods and traditions, participate in games or are entertained. Local and regional events can have the added advantage of keeping the domestic tourism market active. Smaller local events have the advantage that they can make event tourists believe that they are participating in an authentically indigenous activity (From D.Tassiopoulos, 2005).

The Accepted Practices Exchange Industry Glossary of terms, (2003) defines an event as, ‘An organized occasion such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, special event, gala dinner, etc. An event is often composed of several different yet related functions.’

Getz, (1997) writes, event tourism is a systematic planning, development, and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, image-makers, catalysts for infrastructure and economic growth, and animators of built attraction. Tourism management deals with tourism development based on analyzing the behavior and motivation of all kinds of tourists. On the other hand, event management deals with event marketing, design and managing of an event. Moreover, it tries to understand the event experiences and to manage them. Hence, event tourism is in the middle of the two sectors. In other words, event tourism aims at full exploitation of the capabilities of events in order to achieve tourism development of host communities.

Events are a unique form of tourists’ attraction, ranging in scale from mega events through community festivals to programmes of recreational events at parks (Getz, 1991). Jago and shaw, (1998) explain an event should be regarded primarily as providing a leisure activity that has the potential to attract tourists. Further they propose that events be regarded as hybrid, combining both an attraction and a range of activities. Getz, (2005) quotes that a principle applying to all events is they are temporary and that, ‘Every such event is unique stemming from the blend of management, program, setting and people’.

**Wedding Tourism**

Wedding tourism can be defined as tourism that encompasses the features of a wedding. These include engagements, weddings and honeymoons. Some literature defines it under romantic tourism. This is because, couples who have a romantic holiday do not have to be getting engaged, married or going on their honeymoon. Therefore, wedding tourism is travel for the purpose of celebrating a happening of any of the three wedding features individually or simultaneously in a location other than the bride and groom’s home, typically a popular tourist destination (Major et al, 2010).

Weddings require all types of services, but mainly from the tourism and hospitality sector. To make this special moment unique, every wedding should be different with specialized service, guests, timings, and locations (Shone & Parry, 2004). Holiday firms use tangible cues so that they ease the uncertainty of clients by providing prospective wedding couples with information, assurance and proof of the services they offer; for example, brochures and website of wedding venues (Kotler et al., 2006)

**III. TOURIST MOTIVATIONS**

Tourist motivations have been developed for several decades. Literature reveals that tourist motivation theory contributes to explanation why people travel (Lundberg, 1972; Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983, Yuan and McDonald, 1990). According to Fodness (1994) most researchers who attempt to define tourist motivation typically develop a list of the reasons for travel. However, Dann (1981) disagrees with that and argues a motive is distinct from a reason, quoting Brown’s (1963) viewpoint.

In Dann’s (1981) opinion, a reason is a subset of motivation, a type of motive wherein, necessary and logical means are taken to bring about a desired end. Even if the reasons given for travel and the benefits
sought from the travel experience may represent strategies for meeting individual goals and personal needs, it does not mean that they represent basic travel motivations (Dann, 1981; Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983). For example, some individuals who travel to rest and relax state that do so in order to escape the routine lives while others travelling to rest and relax are dearly rewarding themselves by maximizing their enjoyment (Fodness, 1994).

And also, tourist motivation can be defined “as the global integrating network of biological and cultural forces which gives value and direction to travel choices, behavior and experience” (Pearce et al, 1998).

According to Seaton (1997) travel motivation is a state of stimulation of a drive or need which drives people to activity in pursuit of goals. According to Seaton once the goals have been achieved the need drops and the individual returns to the equilibrium. It takes little time because new motives arise as the last one is satisfied.

IV. PUSH AND PULL FACTORS THEORY

The “push” factors originated from Maslow’s hierarchy of need (Maryo and Jarvis, 1981) and have been described as motivational factors or need that arise due to a state of disequilibrium or tension in the motivational system (Dann, 1977; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Kim et al, 2003). For example, Gray (1970) in the very first classification of pleasure travelers defined two varieties of tourist namely, the wanderlust (push) and sun last (pull).

Dann (1977) puts forward the concepts of “push” and “pull” factors, around which most discussion of tourist motivation have tended to revolve. Push factors refer to the tourist as subject and deal with those factors predisposing him or her travel (Dann, 1977). In other words, the push factors vacation are socio-psychology motives that have been thought useful for explaining the desire to go on a vacation (Crompton, 1979).

Conversely, pull factors are those that attract the tourist to a given resort (Dann, 1977), that is, the motives aroused by the destination rather than emerging exclusively from within the tourist himself or herself, which have been regarded meaningful for explaining the choice of destination (Crompton, 1979). Thus, anomie and ego enhancement, both of emerge from within the tourists themselves, are regarded as socio-psychological factors, that is, push factors (Dann, 1977).

Crompton (1979) suggests nine motives based on his study, seven as socio psychological or push motives and two as cultural and pull motives. The push motives are escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationship and facilitation of social interaction. The two cultural motives are novelty and education. Iso-Ahola (1982) puts forward two major dimension of leisure and travel motivational factors; approach (seeking) and avoidance (escape). The former is believed to provide people with certain with intrinsic rewards, such as feeling of mastery and competence and the later helps they leave the routing environment behind themselves.

Mannel, and Iso-Ahola (1987) identifies two main types of push and pull factors: Personal and interpersonal. They insist that the people are motivated to seek travel activities in order to obtain both personal and /or interpersonal rewards from participation in the leisure activities concerned, such as feelings of mastery (personal), learning about other cultures (Personal), varied and increased social interaction (interpersonal), interacting with friendly motives or members of the travel group (interpersonal), etc. And to leave behind the personal and/or interpersonal problems of everyday life, for example, personal troubles and failures, co-workers, friends and neighbors, etc. However, they fail to categories these personal and interpersonal factors into push and pull factors.

Later, in an effort to explain the push and pull theory, Gnoth (1997) proposes the formation of values their role in motivation formation to understand how values and subsequent attitudes express both inner-directed and outer-directed values. Inner directed values enclose predominantly emotional drivers, while outer-directed values are mainly cognitive in nature.

Hanqin and Lam (1999) found five push factor groupings which were named as knowledge, prestige, enhancements of human relationship, relaxation and novelty. Six pull factor grouping were hi-tech image, expenditure, accessibility, service attitude and quality, sightseeing variety and cultural links group. Soo Cheong (2002) used a push and pull approach to identify key motivational factors that have significant effects on destination choice, Knowledge seeking, cleanliness and safety were perceived as the most important push and pull factors respectively.

The results of logistic regression analysis showed that the British tend to visit the U.S. for fun, excitement and outdoor activities, Oceania for family and friend togetherness and Asia to seek a navel experience.

According to Jang and Cai’s (2002) identified six push factors (novelty experience, escape, knowledge seeking, fun and excitement, rest and relaxation family/friend togetherness) and five pull factors (natural and historic environment, cleanliness and safety, easy to access and economic deal, outdoor activities, sunny and exotic atmosphere), among which knowledge seeking is the most important factor to motivate the British travelling overseas and cleanliness safety is considered the most significant that draws the British travellers to an overseas destination.

According Godfrey (2011) suggested scenery, geography, adventure tourism and Maori culture of the country are the pull factors which they pull to go away
from their home countries and escape, self-development, identity formation, acquires cultural capital, rite of passage or secular pilgrimage and opportunity are the push factors which they push to go away from their home countries.

V. METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve objectives of the research, the analysis used quantitative technique. Quantitative data was obtained by means of semi structured questionnaire. The quantitative data were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Minitab. Descriptive analysis, including means was calculated along with frequencies, graphs, charts and tables.

Based on the research objectives, this research gathered data only from 100 foreign tourists in Southern Province. The convenience sampling technique was used to select the sample and convenience sampling was employed due to the difficulty of calculating the actual number of tourists arrived by the destination.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Background Information

Table 1.1 Sri Lanka Wedding Tourist Generating continents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2017)

The demographics of the participants enables a better understanding of the type of tourists that are attracted or would have been attracted to Sri Lanka as a wedding destination. According to the table 1.1, most of the respondents are from the Indian continent followed by Asia and in third position.

Table 1.2 Purpose of Visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wedding</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honeymoon</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2017)

Honeymoon tourism is bearing up and continues to be a high-yield market for many tourism destinations especially for Sri Lanka. According to the table 1.2 the majority of respondents came to Sri Lanka for honeymoon purpose. While there is fuelling demand for Sri Lanka as honeymoon destination, newlywed’s couples biggest demand still is for beach-based holiday destination, despite the distance travelled (Lee, Guillet, Law & Leung, 2012), to celebrate the wedding life amounting to 16 of the respondents that came to Sri Lanka for the purpose of getting married (Breg, 2013). The figures show that Sri Lanka is by far preferred by honeymooners, leaving room for improvement in terms of choosing Sri Lanka as the wedding destination.

Push Factors

Table 1.3: The Push Factors of Choosing Sri Lanka as the Wedding Venue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Push Factors</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographical location of the wedding destination</td>
<td>4.1133</td>
<td>.74513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal of the Wedding Location</td>
<td>4.2904</td>
<td>.54284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2017)

According to the table 1.3 where appeal of the location generated a mean score of 4.2904. The second major push factor is the geographical location of Sri Lanka which scored a mean value of 4.1133.

Pull Factors

The major pull factors that were identified for this particular study were based on the following attributes; the reasonable cost associated with the wedding venue, the availability of services that Sri Lanka can offer as wedding destination, ease of formalities for wedding and the marketing, promotion and brand of Sri Lanka as a wedding destination.
According to the table 1.4 the majority of respondents came to Sri Lanka for the reasonable cost associated with the wedding venue.

Table 1.5: Sources of information on Wedding Packages to Sri Lanka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity in Newspapers/Magazines</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Word of Mouth</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Agencies/ Tour Operators</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2017)

The study reveals that most of the respondents found out about Sri Lanka and choose the island as their wedding destination through the internet. The second best source of information to communicate about Sri Lanka is Publicity in Newspapers/Magazines which is represented by a frequency of 24. The remaining respondent that is 16 came to know about Sri Lanka from Tour Operators and Travel Agencies.

Table 1.6: Marketing and promoting Sri Lanka as the Wedding Venue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination Marketing has made you more knowledgeable about detailed products and services offered by the Sri Lanka as wedding destination and influenced your choice to tie the knot.</td>
<td>4.2970</td>
<td>.87738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the Tour Operators or Travel Agents has facilitated your travel decision for your choice of wedding venue.</td>
<td>3.8247</td>
<td>.67864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka ‘the leading wedding and honeymoon destination in the Indian Ocean’ as destination brand has/will highly pull you towards tying the knot in the island.</td>
<td>4.1207</td>
<td>.71296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional Factors like special wedding offers and packages has matched with your wedding budget preferences in order to make your wedding in Sri Lanka possible.</td>
<td>4.2452</td>
<td>.83945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey (2017)

According to the table 1.6 destination marketing is important for tourists with a mean score of 4.2970, followed by promotional factors with a mean score of 4.2522. Destination branding is represented by a mean score of 4.1207 which is also among the major push factors influencing tourists to get married in Sri Lanka. The lowest mean (3.8247) obtained was the role of tour operators and travel agents who are not the main factors motivating tourists.

VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study demonstrates that Sri Lanka has a variety of pull motives of which could potentially attract more wedding segment to the destination. Wedding travel choices are based on push and pull factors. Thus destination attributes contribute to the perceive image of the destination. Pull attributes like appeal of the wedding location together with “facilities and services” and “affordable cost” are the core motivations to getting married in Sri Lanka. Also, wedding tourism is a growing activity for many hospitality businesses and is most commonly linked also to business tourism with the hosting of conferences or teambuilding events. The profitability of wedding tourism has attracted new hospitality businesses to enter this niche market and to raise levels of competition in this particular niche events tourism activity.

Initiating a proper promotional plan in order to remark Sri Lanka as a wedding tourism destination, preceding an active and a proper networking between all government tourism bodies, private and semi-government tourism organizations and developing a new marketing strategy will have a direct influence on developing wedding tourism in Sri Lanka.

REFERENCES


