
BEACH TOURISM IN EAST COAST OF SRI LANKA: INFLUENCES OF MARKETING MIX ON TOURISTS' DECISION MAKING

Mubarak Kaldeen¹ and Issath Nimsith²

¹Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Management and Commerce, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. kmmubarak@seu.ac.lk

²Department of Arabic Language, Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. nimsith@seu.ac.lk

ABSTRACT

Service marketing mix includes product, price, place, promotion, physical evidence and process (7Ps) that can be made a greater influence on the tourist's decision on their destination. This research is mainly focused on the service marketing mix and its influences on tourists' destination decision on beach tourism in east coast of Sri Lanka. The government can make changes in marketing activities as well as the policies related to beach tourism in Sri Lanka by identifying the most effecting and least affecting factors on beach tourism. This research sample was based on the 300 international tourists engaged in beach tourism activities in eastern province of Sri Lanka. The sample was selected by using convenient sampling technique including four different destinations; Arisi Mala, Arugambay, Pasikudah and Nilaweli. A questionnaire survey data was analyzed using SPSS software. The study focused on analyzing the demographic characteristics of foreign tourist in beach tourism activities, the correlation between the marketing mix factors and the tourists' tourism decision making on beach tourism in study area. The study found out that there has been a positive relationship between all the marketing mix factors and tourist tourism decision on beach tourism. It was identified that the most influencing factors were the product and promotion. It was studied that these two factors had a strong positive relationship to the tourists' tourism decision. The personnel was identified as least influencing factor while the physical evidence identified as second least influential factor and both of them having moderate positive relationship to the tourists' tourism decision. It was learnt that Price have a weak positive relationship towards the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism in the study area. Hence, this study recommends the significance of improving beach tourism mechanism and to improve the quality of beach tourism related products in order to reduce the degree of pollution in east coast of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Beach Tourism, Service Marketing Mix, Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Personnel, Physical evidence, Process, Tourists' Destination Decision

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is one of the most important sectors in Sri Lankan economy. According to the central bank of Sri Lanka (Annual Report, 2018) it became the 3rd highest foreign exchange earner to Sri Lanka. Beach tourism is simply Sun, Sea and Sand tourism which include travel for coastal areas in a country for the purpose of leisure, business, recreational and other activities. Beach tourism is one of the best types of tourism, because it gives high

income to the place and it attracts more tourists. As Sri Lanka is an island consists of nearly 1600 km of Coastline with very attractive natural surroundings, it is an ideal destination for beach tourism. Tangalla, Negambo Lagoon, Hikkaduwa, Beruwala, Mirissa, Uppaveli, Bentota and Unawatuna beaches are popular for foreign tourists in Sri Lanka. These beaches include boutique hotels, coral reefs, gentle sandbars and undiscovered corners of paradise. Most of these beaches are popular for the activities such as windsurfing, kayaking, yachting, water skiing, scuba diving or just lazing around for the perfect tan. Even though Sri Lanka is branded as a beach tourism destination, there is a decline in the percentage of international beach tourists to Sri Lanka, it can be due to lack of proper marketing in the field of beach tourism in Sri Lanka, hence this research was conducted to identify the service marketing mix factors and how they influence on tourists decisions on selecting their beach tourism destination. Eastern province is well known and a very famous area for beach tourism in Sri Lanka. Out of the popular beaches that have indicated by the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau official website, most of them have located in eastern province, such as Arisi Mala, Arugambay, Pasikudah and Nilaweli. Therefore, this study focused on analyzing the influences of marketing mix factors on tourists' destination decisions on beach tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategies to market manufactured goods usually address the traditional four elements of the marketing mix—product, price, place, and promotion. However, the distinctive characteristics of services like tourism, including the lack of stocks and customer involvement in production, require attention to additional strategic elements. The 7Ps model highlights seven strategic decision variables for managers of service organizations, including Product elements, Place and time, Promotion and education, Price and other user outlays, Physical environment, Process and People (Lovelock C., 2005)

A product has defined by Armstrong and Kotler (2006), is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. Kotler, Armstrong, Wong, and Saunders (2008) define, price is the amount of money charged for a product or service, or the total values that consumers exchange for the benefits of having or using the product or service. Because of the intangible nature of services, price becomes a vital quality indicator where other information is not lacking or absent (Zeithaml, 1981). Place is defined by Armstrong and Kotler (2006) as a group of interdependent organizations that helps for the process of making a product available to its consumers. Hirankitti et al., (2009) considers the place as the ease of access which potential customer associates to a service such as the location and the distribution. It is defined as sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing (Borden, 1984) - A decision of how best to relate the product to the target market and how to persuade them to buy it (Lovelock, Patterson and Walker, 1998).

Personnel are keys to the delivery of service to customers. In addition, according to Magrath (1986) customers normally link the traits of service to the firm they work for. Personnel are also considered as the key element in a customer centered organization as well as a way to differentiate variables with product, services, channel, and image (Kotler, 2000). Process is generally defined as the implementation of action and function that increases value for products with low cost and high advantage to customer and is more important for service

than for goods. According to Hirankitti et al., (2009) the pace of the process as well as the skill of the service providers are clearly revealed to the customer and it forms the basis of his or her satisfaction with the purchase. Physical evidence refers to the environment in which the service and any tangible goods that facilitate the performance and communication of the service are delivered. This holds great importance because the customer normally judges the quality of the service provided through it (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995). In addition, Mittal and Baker (1998) said, this factor also refers to the environment in which the services production is in.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

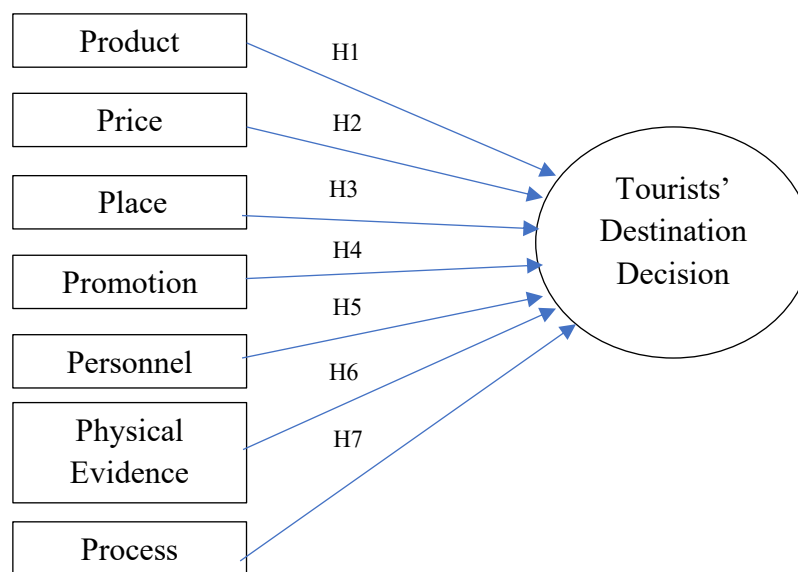


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

H1: There is a relationship between product and the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism.

H2: There is a relationship between price and the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism.

H3: There is a relationship between place and the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism

H4: There is a relationship between promotion and the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism.

H5: There is a relationship between personnel and the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism.

H6: There is a relationship between physical evidence and the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism.

H7: There is a relationship between process and the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Eastern Coastal Belt of Sri Lanka such as Arisi Mala, Arugambay, Pasikudah and Nilaweli name few. However, these popular beaches were used as the sample tourist destinations for this study. As a Sampling Technique, convenient sampling was used to select the sample from the population. About 300 number of foreign tourists in eastern province were selected as the sample for this study. Both primary and secondary data was collected. Primary data collected by using questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was included questions related to the measurement variables. Cronbach's alpha reliability test was used in order to measure the reliability. The test was significant the alpha value result more than 0.8. It assures the reliability of questions. Descriptive, Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis was used to analysis the data and for the statistical process for estimating the relationships among variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability Analysis: according to the results of reliability test all Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.7 for all the dimensions in this research. It was identified that the reliability of the questions was high. The analysis has been done for all the 295 questionnaires. Table 1, shows the Cronbach's Alpha values.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha
Product	0.723
Price	0.783
Place	0.750
Promotion	0.711
Personnel	0.781
Physical Evidence	0.708
Process	0.775
Tourists' Decision	0.738

Source: Survey

Descriptive Analysis

Researcher has used the descriptive technique such as mean as well as standard deviation for the interpretation of data. Following criteria have been used to analyze the statistical output of descriptive statistics. $1 \leq X < 2.5$ Not at all agree, $2.5 \leq X < 3.5$ Moderately Agree and $3.5 \leq X < 5$ Almost agree. According to the table 2, the mean with respect to the marketing mix factors and tourist decision making, product, price, place, promotion, personnel, physical evidence, process and tourists' tourism decision means are of $3.5 \leq X < 5$ which is considered as almost agree.

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis

	Item Statistics			Result
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	
Product	4.3898	.79528	295	Almost agree
Price	3.8864	.69688	295	Almost agree
Place	4.0395	.81345	295	Almost agree
Promotion	4.0684	.72227	295	Almost agree
Personnel	3.9401	.92765	295	Almost agree
Physical Evidence	4.2542	.81008	295	Almost agree
Process	3.7305	.81405	295	Almost agree
Tourist's Decision	4.3616	.75665	295	Almost agree

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to identify the strength of the relationship between dependent and independent variables of the study and it provides the outcomes of positive relationship or negative relationship. This analysis used to measure the relationship between these two variables. Marketing mix factors of product, price place, promotion, personnel, physical evidence, process, and Tourists' tourism decisions one beach tourism. Each interpretation of correlation coefficient is exhibiting the strength of the relationship between two variables and the hypothesis were stated in order to identify whether the relationship is significant or not at 99% confidence level. Decision Rule: If the level of significance (p value) is < 0.01 , the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. The purpose of a correlation analysis is to identify whether two measurement variables co vary, and to quantify the strength of the association or relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable of this study.

Table 3 Correlation of Marketing Mix and Tourist's decision

Marketing Mix	N	Tourist's Decision	Sig.
Product	295	.688**	.000
Price	295	.470**	.000
Place	295	.682**	.000
Promotion	295	.720**	.000
Personnel	295	.632**	.000
Physical evidence	295	.668**	.000
Process	295	.612**	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the above table 3, correlation between Product and Tourist decision is 0.688 and which implies that there was a moderate positive relationship between product and tourist tourism decisions on beach tourism, because the value is more than 0.5 and less than 0.7. Further the p -value between product and the tourists' decision is 0.000, which emphasize that there was a highly significant association between these two variables at 0.01 significant level. Therefore, null hypothesis H_0 was rejected and alternative hypothesis H_1 was accepted

hence, there is a significant positive relationship between product and the tourist tourism decisions on beach tourism.

Price and Tourists' decision is 0.470 and which implies that there was a weak positive relationship between price and tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism as the value is more than 0 and less than 0.5. Further the p-value between price and the tourists' decision is 0.000 which emphasize that there was a highly significant association between these two variables at 0.01 significant level because the p value is less than 1%. Therefore, null hypothesis H_0 was rejected and alternative hypothesis H_2 was accepted hence, there is a weak positive relationship between price and the tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism.

Place and Tourists' decision is 0.682 and which implies that there was a moderate positive relationship between place and tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism as the value is more than 0.5 and less than 0.7. Further the p-value between Place and the tourists' decision is 0.000 which emphasize that there was a highly significant association between these two variables at 0.01 significant level because the p value is less than 1%. Therefore, null hypothesis H_0 was rejected and alternative hypothesis H_3 was accepted hence, there is an average positive relationship between place and the tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism.

Promotion and Tourists' decision is 0.720 and which implies that there was an strong positive relationship between promotion and tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism as the value is more than 0.7. Further the p-value between promotion and the tourists' decision is 0.000 which emphasize that there was a highly significant association between these two variables at 0.01 significant level because the p value is less than 1%. Therefore, null hypothesis H_0 was rejected and alternative hypothesis H_4 was accepted hence, there is a strong positive relationship between promotion and the tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism.

According to the data collected, correlation between Personnel and Tourists' decision is 0.632 and which implies that there was an moderate positive relationship between personnel and tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism as the value is between 0.5 – 0.7. Further the p-value between personnel and the tourists' decision is 0.000 which emphasize that there was a highly significant association between these two variables at 0.01 significant level because the p value is less than 1%. Therefore, null hypothesis H_0 was rejected and alternative hypothesis H_5 was accepted hence, there is a moderate positive relationship between personnel and the tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism.

Physical evidence and Tourists' decision is 0.668 and which implies that there was an moderate positive relationship between physical evidence and tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism as the value is between 0.5 to 0.7. Further the p-value between physical evidence and the tourists' decision is 0.000 which emphasize that there was a highly significant association between these two variables at 0.01 significant level because the p value is less than 1%. Therefore, null hypothesis H_0 was rejected and alternative hypothesis H_6 was accepted hence, there is a moderate positive relationship between physical evidence and the tourists' tourism decisions.

Process and Tourists' decision is 0.612 and which implies that there was a moderate positive relationship between process and tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism as the value is between 0.5 to 0.7. Further the p-value between process and the tourists' decision is

0.000 which emphasize that there was a highly significant association between these two variables at 0.01 significant level because the p value is less than 1%. Therefore, null hypothesis H_0 was rejected and alternative hypothesis H_7 was accepted hence, there is a moderate positive relationship between process and the tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 4: Model Summary

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.831 ^a	.691	.683	.42584	1.572

a. Predictors: (Constant), Process, Price, Product, Personnel, Physical Evidence, Promotion, Place

b. Dependent Variable: Tourist's Decision

When considering about the above figures, the coefficient of determination or R square value indicates how much variability can be occur on tourists decision by all of its marketing mix factors. In this case, R square for the model summary is obtained as 0.691. It shows that, 69.1% of variability in tourist decision is explained by all of the independent variables. Therefore, it can be identified that there is 30.9% of unexplained variation available in this model. However, 0.691 is substantially high and therefore it is significant. Adjusted R square is represented the modification of R square that adjusted for the number of explanatory in a model which shows the value of 0.683 based on the above table. Then the standard error of the estimate represents the standard deviation of sampling distribution. When considering about the above table, the value of standard error of the estimate is 0.42584. It implies that this model is fitted sound because value of standard error of the estimate is less than mean value of dependent variable, where the mean value of tourists' decision shows 0.42584.

Coefficients

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Coefficients ^a						
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.399	.173		2.303	.022		
Product	.246	.046	.259	5.384	.000	.465	2.149
Price	-.027	.045	-.025	-.595	.552	.616	1.624
Place	-.006	.056	-.006	-.101	.920	.296	3.377
Promotion	.254	.059	.243	4.315	.000	.341	2.936
Personnel	.134	.038	.164	3.530	.000	.500	2.000

Physical Evidence	.143	.047	.153	3.030	.003	.421	2.378
Process	.225	.038	.242	5.968	.000	.657	1.523

a. Dependent Variable: Tourist's Decision

According to the table, it indicates the beta coefficients, one to go with each predictor. Therefore, based on this the equation for the regression line can be;

$$\text{Tourists Decision} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ product} + \beta_2 \text{ price} + \beta_3 \text{ place} + \beta_4 \text{ promotion} + \beta_5 \text{ personnel} + \beta_6 \text{ physical evidence} + \beta_7 \text{ process} + e \text{ ----- (1)}$$

$$\text{Tourists Decision} = 0.399 + 0.246 (\text{product}) + (-0.027) (\text{price}) + (-0.006) (\text{place}) + 0.254 (\text{promotion}) + 0.134 (\text{personnel}) + 0.143 (\text{physical evidence}) + 0.225 (\text{process}) + \epsilon$$

By using this equation, the values given for the determinants can indicate the significant factor with a prediction for the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism. Therefore, the most significant factor for the tourist decision on beach tourism can be identified by using the above analysis table and the equation. When considering about the coefficient values of the above table and equation the most influencing factor to the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism is the promotion, because it has the highest coefficient value of 0.254. The second highest coefficient value is for the "Product" and it is 0.246, therefore it is the second highest independent factor that influencing on tourists tourism decision on beach tourism. The third highest coefficient value is for the "Process" and it is 0.225, therefore it is the third highest independent factor that influencing on tourists tourism decision on beach tourism. The fourth highest coefficient value is for the "Physical Evidence" and it is 0.143, therefore "Physical Evidence" is the fourth highest independent factor that influencing on tourists tourism decision on beach tourism. The fifth highest coefficient value is for the "Personnel" and it is 0.134, therefore "Personnel" is the fifth highest independent factor that influencing on tourists tourism decision on beach tourism. The sixth highest coefficient value is for the "Place" and it is -0.006, therefore "Place" is the fifth highest independent factor that influencing on tourists tourism decision on beach tourism. The least influential factor that affecting on tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism is the "Price" it has the least coefficient value when comparing it with the other independent variables that affect the tourists' tourism on beach tourism and the coefficient value of "Price" is -0.027.

According to the above Table, the values of the VIF of all the variables are less than 10 (the accepted threshold) and this shows a clear indication that the variables are not suffering from the problem of multicollinearity. The regression results reported in above Table reveal that marketing mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Personnel, Physical Evidence and Process) variables are significantly impact tourist's tourism decision ($p > 0.05$).

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The main purpose of conducting this research is to identify how marketing mix factors influencing on the decision making on beach tourism with special reference to eastern province of Sri Lanka. Researchers has used service marketing mix which include product, price, place, promotion, personnel, physical evidence and process to identify how these factors influence on the decision making of beach tourists, because this will finally influence on the tourism demand in Sri Lanka, therefore it is a very important factor to consider about the tourism decisions based on beach tourism as Sri Lanka is already having a strong image as a well-known beach tourism destination in the world. To achieve this purpose researcher is going to consider about three main objectives, they are, identifying the profile of beach tourists in southern province based on four selected destinations, to identify the relationship between the service marketing mix factors and the most and least influential factors to the tourism decision making on beach tourism. Based on this three objectives conclusion is developed. When considering about the tourists preferences destination wise in all most all destinations most preferred tourist activity is swimming, preference towards the tourism activity is differed from destination and it's influenced by the available tourism activities on each destination.

The objective to find out the relationship between marketing mix factors and tourists' tourism decisions on beach tourism. When considering about the relationship between the service marketing mix factors and the tourists tourism decision on beach tourism, promotion factors are having a strong positive relationship towards the tourists decision making. product, place, personnel, physical evidence and process factors are having moderate positive relationship towards the tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism. Price evidence factors are having a weak positive relationship towards the tourists' decisions; therefore, it is clear that all the independent variables are having a positive relationship towards the dependent variable tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism.

The objective of examining the most and least influential marketing mix factors that affecting on decision making of beach tourists. According to the results of regression analysis the most influencing factor towards the tourist decision making is the product this can be due to availability of tourism activities in these destinations such as swimming, snorkeling, diving etc or else it could be availability of quality accommodation facilities available in this destinations or it could be due to tourism attractions and second highest influencing factor is the place, this could be due to Accessibility to these destinations, technology implications that allows tourists to find these destinations or else it could be because of the influence of tourism information providers. When considering about the least influential factor personnel is the least and second least factor is the physical evidence, on tourists' tourism decision on beach tourism. This part presented the recommendations and suggestions obtained from open-ended questions in the questionnaires.

The results were organized summarized, and presented as follows. Most of the tourists think that beach areas in the eastern province are mostly polluted, both the land and the underwater lives are endangered due to this pollution, therefore it is much more important to focus on proper waste management systems in beach tourism in eastern province, and one of the best tool to manage waste is "re" concept. Which include recycling, reusing and

reducing the usage of available natural resources, therefore there should be proper conservation guidelines to be introduced and they should be properly managed. When considering about the revisit intention of the tourists, it is in average level, but in marketing it is said that retaining a customer to an organization is ten times profitable than attracting a new customer, therefore same thing will apply to the tourism industry as well, but in Sri Lankan context it is in average level therefore it is much more important to increase the willingness to revisit Sri Lanka by the foreign tourists. Even though Sri Lanka has been promoted as a beach tourism destination in the world if the tourists don't see what they saw on advertisements or in the internet they will be definitely dissatisfied with their decision made on travelling to Sri Lanka. Therefore, only advertising will not influence on making tourism decision in marketing, it should be blend with all the seven aspects of the service marketing mix.

Lack of proper advertising is also another major issue that effect on the development of beach tourism in Sri Lanka, rather than the internet information there are no proper advertising campaign is carried out in most of the countries, even though Sri Lanka is a best destination for beach tourism it has not been properly positioned in customers mind, to do that there should be a proper advertising campaign should be carried out. Not only the advertising it is important to consider about all the aspects of the promotional mix as well, because advertising is only one kind of promotion that we could use to promote beach tourism in Sri Lanka, but to have a proper promotion on beach tourism all the aspects of the promotion mix are equally important. Most of the tourists think that positive word of mouth (POM) is one of the best tools to promote beach tourism in Sri Lanka, to create positive word of mouth; tourism industry in Sri Lanka should create at least satisfied guests. Delighting the guest also little dangerous as they will expect the same thing repeatedly, therefore satisfying the guest will be great and it will be sustainable, by creating satisfied tourists finally they will definitely act as agents of our promotion campaign, because they will share what they experienced in Sri Lanka with their friends and relatives which will finally influence on creating positive word of mouth towards the Sri Lankan tourism.

Finally, as an island Sri Lanka is one of the best islands in the world where beach tourism could be promoted. There are number of resources and attractions available to promote beach tourism in Sri Lanka, though it is not strong still there is a brand image to Sri Lanka as a beach tourism destination in the world, therefore this industry should be developed as it is already established. However, it should be more sustainable than the way what is now today, if the available resources are utilized effectively and efficiently, there will be no other land like Sri Lanka when choosing a best destination for beach tourism in the world.

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