
PUSH AND PULL MOTIVES TO SELECT SRI LANKA AS A HONEYMOON DESTINATION

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Abstract

When planning a tourism trip, tourists require to consider different factors as to where, when, which, how etc. and those factors are influenced by the level of motives of the tourists. Honeymoon tourism is an important niche segment in economic development for the host destination. These factors are important for destination managers to develop strategies to promote destinations among the target markets. According to travel bloggers, Sri Lanka has nominated as one of the best honeymoon destinations in the world in 2020. With this opportunity, this study identifies the potentiality of Sri Lanka to develop as honeymoon destination by identifying push factors, which are influencing travel motives and pull factors, which are motivating the tourists' selection of Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination. The study adopts a questionnaire survey with 200 international tourists, selected through convenience sampling. The results offered specified knowledge about honeymoon tourism in Sri Lanka such as the most important destination attributes in destination selection. Results are highlighting the most influential push motives as intrinsic motives as a motive to romance. Personal safety, excitement, rest and relaxation and desire to escape are other push motives of tourists to select Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination. Most influential pull factors as extrinsic factors are the romance of destination. Facilities and amenities and location and attributes are other main pull factors to promote and market Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination. Finally, the study concludes the marketing implications of the findings and recommendations for the future.

Keywords: Honeymoon tourism, pull factors, push factors, Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

A Honeymoon is a trip/holiday taken or time spent by a newlywed couple for the first time to celebrate their marriage. Honeymoon tourism is a growing segment in the tourism industry. Although the official statistics on wedding and honeymoon market in Sri Lanka and global context are not available, Lee, Huang & Chen, (2010) show that U.S. honeymoon market is estimated to grow in 2007 from US\$13 billion, in 2012 to US\$23 billion. These figures are not representing the situation of the whole world. However, it is confirming that the honeymoon market is rapidly growing. Since there are new trends in weddings such as theme weddings and destination weddings, there is a huge potentiality for honeymoon tourism to develop as well.

When considering the past history, according to the past researcher, (Vidauskaite, 2015) in ancient Greek since 1800s modern type of honeymoons existed. Ngarachu (2015) states that in 2014, honeymoon and wedding tourism generated US\$28 billion in worldwide businesses. This is a once in a lifetime experience for newlywed couples since it is a first trip that couples take together which offers a lifetime opportunity to release from daily routines as well as spend time together (Lee et al., 2010). Therefore, it is not just a holiday or general vacation. Lee et al. (2010) show that honeymoon couples are willing to spend more money as well as more time as 7-9 days as three times more than a regular vacation.

There are different types of destination options available for newlywed couples. However, some destinations have not consisted of many attributes that honeymooners are searching for since they cannot compete with other honeymoon destinations in the world (Lee et al., 2010). Some destinations are more attractive and more popular than others with more value-added attractions and activities to involve with (Nuskiya & Kaldeen, 2019). This study represents the need for understanding factors influencing preferences and perceptions of honeymoon travellers when selecting their honeymoon destination.

According to travel bloggers, Sri Lanka has nominated as one of the best honeymoon destinations in the world in 2020. Therefore, it is important for researchers to identify market-specific (push) and destination-specific (pull) factors related to honeymoon tourism in Sri Lanka. In literatures, researches on honeymoon tourism are lacking. There are a few types of research done on the potentiality of Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination. Therefore, Sri Lanka still lacks enough studies to understand this niche market well. Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority has not mentioned any statistical data about honeymoon tourism in Sri Lanka and especially do not focus on honeymoon tourism rather than promoting mass tourism. Therefore, to fill that gap, this study identifies the potentiality of Sri Lanka to develop as a honeymoon destination by identifying push factors, which are influencing travel motives and pull factors, which are influencing the tourists' selection of Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination. Findings of the study suggesting some practical implications to develop destinations by positioning themselves as an ideal place for honeymooners. Similarly, this research will help to establish policies and standards related to honeymoon tourism.

2. Literature review

2.1 Honeymoon tourism

Honeymoon is a special holiday taken by newly wedded couples to celebrate their marriage usually after the wedding ceremony (Lee et al., 2010). Honeymoon tourism can be referred to as the specialized alternative tourism which can be undertaken by newlyweds (Winchester, Winchester, & Alvey, 2011). However, travelling to a tourism destination to spend honeymoon was not a famous practice at all types of societies in the past because those who work under an employer had to take vacation leaves for spend their honeymoon and that was not much possible. The short breaks that they got from their working places spent to arrange their wedding and this situation changed in the middle of the 20th century (Bulcroft, Bulcroft, Smeins, & Cranage, 1997; Bulcroft, Smeins, & Bulcroft, 1999 as cited in Fakfare & Lee, 2019).

2.2 Honeymoon travellers

According to Bulcroft, Smeins & Bulcroft (1999), honeymoon is not only a vacation that taken by the couple just after they got married, but it can also refer as a period of harmony among the couple in the starting of their new life. While a new couple spends their honeymoon vacation, they stop their other social networks and spend time together privately at an independent place. Emotional and sexual image of the couple and remarkable, exotic and romantic elements have included in the definition of the honeymoon. Honeymoon tourists are preferring to spend more time in one destination and their tour planning process also takes more time. They spend five days or more than one week in a destination and they prefer to have relaxing and quality time in a calm environment (Bandusena et al., 2020). Moreover, they prefer to have beach vacations, a ski trip or safari that the couple can engage together (Vodenska, 2013). According to Winchester, Winchester & Alvey, (2011), the decision-making process of the honeymoon tour involves two persons and they share their personal likes and dislikes while they making the decision to select a destination for their honeymoon.

2.3 Characteristics of honeymoon destination

An attractive destination with comfortable amenities, safe and romantic atmosphere with good weather conditions, reasonable cost and the activities that can done by the couples such as historical and cultural heritage tours and best shopping areas are the unique attributes that need to have in a honeymoon destination in order to attract honeymoon couples (Kim and Agrusa, 2005). Moreover, Kim and Agrusa (2005) identified top quality accommodation, nightlife and accessibility of the honeymoon destination as key attributes that should experienced by honeymoon visitors. The hospitality of the host community also, an important destination-related attribute when it comes to the honeymoon destination (Cong, 2016; Tosun, Dedeoglu, & Fyall, 2015; Žabkar, Brenčič, & Dmitrović, 2010). Similarly, the other tourist destinations the performance of a honeymoon destination attributes have an effect on the experience that a couple get from the destination (Bulcroft, Smeins & Bulcroft, 1999).

2.4 Push and pull motives to select honeymoon destination

Push and pull motivation factors are widely discussed at different researches. Push factors are started with Maslow's' need hierarchy and considering as factors which are attracting tourists to the places (Dann, 1977; Kim et al, 2003). According to the Dann (1997), push factors are referring to the factors which influence tourists to travel. Conversely, factors which are attracting tourists or creating desires within tourists to visit destinations can be considered as pull motives (Dann, 1977).

Crompton (1979) has mentioned seven push motives; escape from a perceived ordinary environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationship and facilitation of social interaction and two pull motives; novelty and education. Mannel, & Iso-Ahola (1987) identified Personal and interpersonal as main two types of push and pull factors. According to them, people are travelling and engaging tourism activities to gain both personal and interpersonal rewards such as; mastery, learning about other cultures (Mubarak, 2020), increased social interaction, interacting with friends or

members in the group, etc.. Later Hanqin & Lam (1999) introduced knowledge, prestige, enhancements of human relationship, relaxation and novelty as push factors and expenditure, accessibility, service attitude and quality, sightseeing variety and cultural links group as pull factors. Jang & Cai (2002) suggested novelty experience, escape, knowledge-seeking, fun and excitement, rest and relaxation, family/friend togetherness as push factors and natural and historic environment, cleanliness and safety, easy to access and economic deal, outdoor activities, sunny and exotic atmosphere as pull factors.

With the reference of past literature, the current study considered, Motivation to romance, desire to escape, rest and relaxation, expecting different cuisines, prestige, income, personal safety and excitement can be considered as most driving push factors. Pull factors which attract people to the destination can be considered as; attractions, location and attributes, facilities and amenities, quality of accommodation, reasonable travel cost, the romance of destination, advertising of destination, shopping opportunities availability, climate and tourist sites/ activities.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Population

The target population of this study is all international wedding couples who planned to get married within the next 2 years or have just married and planned to honeymoon.

3.2 Sample

Sampling element of this study is 200 international wedding couples who planned to get married within the next 2 years or have just married and planned to honeymoon.

3.3 Sampling technique

Non-probability sampling technique has used to select the sample. Therefore, accidental sampling technique has applied for this study. The sample size of 200 was applied because of the limitation of the target group.

3.4 Data collection method

The instrument of this study is a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from the selected respondents. Questionnaires were consisting with close ended questions and five points Likert scale questions. Researcher used survey strategy to conduct the research. Survey has conducted in Southern province including three districts, Galle, Matara and Hambanthota. Data collected from destinations such as beaches, hotels, restaurants, national parks and different tourist attractions and activity centres in Southern province. To complete the questionnaire, interviewer physically met the respondent. Secondary data collected from websites, journal articles, blogs and books used to develop and suggest practical implications at the end of the study.

3.5 Reliability analysis - pilot test

A pilot test was conducted with the involvement of forty tourists to measure the reliability of the data collection instrument. The reliability of the instrument was assisted by the Cronbach's Alpha test and the results are illustrated in Table 1. All the Cronbach's Alpha values meeting the threshold values of 0.7 (Mihail & Kloutsiniotis, 2016) and can be used for further analysis.

Table 1: Reliability analysis – Cronbach's Alpha

Item	Cronbachs' alpha
Push Factors	.886
Pull Factors	.838
Motivation to choose Sri Lanka as honeymoon destination	.881

Source: SmartPLS output from field information

3.6 Data analysis techniques

SmartPLS 3.0 statistical software has used to analyse the collected data. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, correlation of coefficients through path coefficient analysis has used to analyse the data and achieve research objectives (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt 2013).

4. Data analysis and interpretation

4.1 Profile of the respondents

To analyse the profile of the respondents, descriptive statistics have used. The demographics of the respondents enables a proper understanding of the type of tourists that are attracted or would have been attracted to Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination.

Table 2: Profile of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Occupation	Public Sector	27	13.5%
	Private sector	133	66.5%
	Self-employment	21	10.5%
	Other	19	9.5%
Tourist generating continent	Asia	82	41%
	Europe	45	22.5%
	Australia	24	12%
	America	33	16.5%
	Other	16	8%
Duration of stay	3 to 7 days	34	17%
	7 to 10 days	113	56.5%
	10 to 14 days	37	18.5%
	More than 14 days	16	8%

Source: SmartPLS output from field information

As seen in the above table 2, most of the respondents 66.5% are working in a private sector and 13.5% is working in the public sector. 41% of tourists are from the Asian continent followed by Europe 22.5% and in the third position, America, which here only represents

16.5% of the respondents and Australia represents 12%. When it comes to duration of stay, most of the tourists, 56.7% are willing to spend 7 to 10 days in Sri Lanka and 18.5% willing to stay from 10 to 14 days to spend their honeymoon.

4.2 Identify the push and pull factors

Researcher has conducted the factor analysis to identify the push and pull factors to select Sri Lanka as honeymoon destination.

Table 3: Factor Loadings of Factors

Factors	Push factors	Pull factors
Motivate to romance (MR)	0.842	
Desire to escape (DE)	0.560	
Rest and relaxation (RR)	0.768	
Expecting different cuisins (EC)	0.396	
Prestige (PR)	0.603	
Income (IN)	0.519	
Convinience (CO)	0.356	
Personal safety (PS)	0.823	
Exitement (EX)	0.720	
Attractions (AT)		0.742
Location and attributes (LA)		0.785
Facilities and amenities (FA)		0.811
Quality of accommodation (QA)		0.834
Reasonable travel cost (TC)		0.826
Romance of destination (RD)		0.839
Shopping opportunities availability (SO)		0.458
Advertising of the destination (AD)		0.597
Tourist sites/ Activities (TA)		0.617
Climate (CL)		0.472

Source: SmartPLS output from field information

After getting factor loadings of the factors, the researchers have identified some factors are having factor loadings less than 0.5 (mentioned in bold). For the PLS measurement model, it has taken individual items which have outer loadings more than 0.5 only (Barclay, Thompson, and Higgins, 1995). By following that rule researcher has removed some factors and all other factors which are met the criteria have used for the further analysis of data.

By looking at the results, expecting different cuisines and convenience were removed since they have shown factor loadings less than 0.5. All other factors can be considered as push factors which are influencing motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination. Motivate to romance is showing the highest factor loading and honeymooners are selecting a honeymoon destination based on the motivation to be romance. Next, honeymooners are seeking for personal safety within the selected destination. Also, rest and relaxation and excitement are other push factors of tourists to motivate to select Sri Lanka as

a honeymoon destination. Desire to escape, income and prestige are other push factors which are internally motivating honeymooners to select Sri Lanka for their honeymoon.

Climate and shopping opportunities availability has removed from the list of pull factors and others were considered for the analysis. The romance of destination is the factor which is having the highest factor loading, which means romance of the destination is the most attracting factor of honeymooners to the destination. Next, quality of accommodation, reasonable travel cost and facilities and amenities are considering as pull factors which are attracting honeymooners to Sri Lanka. Apart from that, location and attributes, attractions, tourist sites/ activities and advertising of the destination can be considered as other pull factors.

4.3 Correlation of coefficient

Table 4: Path Coefficients

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
MR -> MC	0.743	36.536	0.000
DE-> MC	0.446	5.243	0.000
RR-> MC	0.525	6.563	0.001
PR-> MC	0.290	5.243	0.000
IN-> MC	0.169	3.235	0.000
PS-> MC	0.729	34.094	0.000
EX-> MC	0.552	9.622	0.000
AT-> MC	0.300	3.004	0.003
LA-> MC	0.643	10.358	0.000
FA-> MC	0.716	24.390	0.000
QA-> MC	0.331	5.772	0.000
TC-> MC	0.201	2.920	0.004
RD-> MC	0.729	34.094	0.000
AD-> MC	0.134	1.994	0.000
TA-> MC	0.283	2.862	0.000

Source: SmartPLS output from field information

According to the above table 5, the coefficient values of each path are statistically significant at 0.05 statistically significant level. All the coefficient values are positive, which means all factors having positive relationships with motivation to select Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination. All the t statistics values are higher than 1.96 and statistically significant.

Push Factors

Motivation to romance is having (0.743) strong positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Desire to escape is having (0.446) moderate positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Rest and relaxation is having (0.525) moderate positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Prestige is having (0.290) weak positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Income is having (0.169) weak positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Personal safety is having (0.729) strong positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Excitement is having (0.552) moderate positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Pull Factors

Attractions are having (0.300) moderate positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Location and attributes are having (0.643) moderate positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Facilities and amenities are having (0.716) strong positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Quality of accommodation is having (0.331) moderate positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Travel cost is having (0.201) weak positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

The romance of destination is having (0.729) strong positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Advertising of destination is having (0.134) weak positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

Tourist sites/ Activities is having (0.283) moderate positive relationship on motivation to choose Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination

5. Conclusion and recommendation

According to the results, there are a number of push and pull factors which are motivating honeymooners to select Sri Lanka as their honeymoon destination. Destination attributes contribute to the destination image and identified pull factors as the romance of the destination along with the facilities and amenities and location and attributes are developing destination image to attract honeymooners to Sri Lanka. Personal safety, romance, excitement and rest and relaxation are key internal desires which are motivating tourists to

travel or select Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. Those are the push factors which internally motivate honeymooners to spend honeymoon within Sri Lanka.

Honeymoon tourism is an emerging trend in the tourism and hospitality industry and it is a niche tourism segment which tourism businesses can focus on. With the profitability of the business, the level of competition is increasing and to cater the demand, there should be a proper plan and variety of related products and services. As marketers, service providers should initiate a proper plan to promote Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination by touching the push and pull motives to identify through the research. All the tourism stakeholders in all levels such as public, private and semi-government organizations should be collaboratively working to implement new marketing strategies to develop Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination.

Sri Lanka is a country with abundant of natural resources and can offer the traveller a remarkable combination of stunning landscapes, pristine beaches, captivating cultural heritage and unique experiences within such a compact location. Therefore, country has high potential to attract honeymooners, but honeymoon tourism in Sri Lanka has not gained enough publicity. At least Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) Annual report does not mention information about honeymoon tourism. Therefore, SLTDA, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotional Bureau (SLTPB) and other responsible authorities should take necessary steps to make a proper information base regarding newlywed tourists' arrival and honeymoon market. There should be proper promotional plan to promote tourism destinations to honeymoon couples. It is a more trustworthy if it is promoted via an official authority than through individual operators. A massive promotional campaign can be implemented through Sri Lankan ambassadors in foreign countries. Moreover, SLTPB should develop more videos, upload photos and information on social networks, websites and travel blogs which can promote among honeymoon couples. According to research findings romance of destination, facilities, amenities, location and attributes are main pull factors to promote and market Sri Lanka as a honeymoon destination, therefore hotels, destination management companies and SLTPB collectively can develop and upload virtual tours at honeymoon hotels, natural environment and tourism destinations.

By the way of conclusion, this research has some unavoidable limitations. Because of the time and financial constraints, the study surveyed only honeymoon couples visited to Southern province and only limited areas around Matara, Hambantota and Galle districts. This study did not reach tourists who travelled to other provinces in Sri Lanka and some other destinations in Southern province. Moreover, survey was conducted during the destinations high season and consequently could not compare perceptions of destination attributes and services in off season. The sample consisted of only international tourists limiting the researcher ability to compare perceptions of domestic and international tourists. Similarly, due to niche market segment there was limited number of honeymoon couples visited to above areas and therefore, it was very difficult to collect data from 200 tourists.

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