

EUROPEAN WOMEN TRAVELERS AND THEIR PERCEPTION ON SRI LANKA TOURISM: RETHINKING OF NEW SEGMENT TO PROMOTE SRI LANKA AS A DESTINATION

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Abstract

The core objective of the study is to identify and analyze ways and means to promote European Women Traveler market to Sri Lanka. In order to test the key research question, research objectives were made; such as to examine the current European women travelers' perspective of Women Travel in Sri Lanka, to analyze safety measures for women travelers in Sri Lanka, to analyze current European women travelers are satisfied with experience in Sri Lanka and finally to provide with recommendations to the Sri Lanka tour operators and travel consultants how to handle women travel itineraries.

To test the above listed objectives, a questionnaire was generated and was distributed to a sample of 50 women travelers from 5 leading travel agencies in Sri Lanka Travel Trade, out of which all 50 responses were collected and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and its facilities to assess project data using a range of graphs, charts and tables to interpret the data and as well as assess its relationship to each other. Some of the key findings included that the current customer perspective for Sri Lanka as a Women Traveler Destination remains to be positive, however, safety measures for women travelers in Sri Lanka needs improvement to protect the rights of women travelers from possible threats. It was also revealed that tour operators give little or no direction for women traveler to be safe when travelling in Sri Lanka. It was also found that the quality of the guides plays a vital role in creating satisfaction of the services offered to women travelers. It was also found from the study results that the women travelers enjoy highly adventurous and cultural experiences as they denote the traveler tribes "Cultural Purists" and "Reward Hunters", therefore, the presence of such activities in women traveler itineraries can boost customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *European women travelers, European women tourism promotion, women travel packages, women travel market segment*

1.0 Background of the Study

With the attainment of peace in the country and the development of infrastructure, the tourism industry has achieved a boom since 2009 with a growth percentage of 10% recorded in 2018. Sri Lanka has grown at a steady pace up to 2018, which is recorded to be at 10% growth rate (country.eiu.com, 2019).

According to SLTDA 2018, it is evident that Europe has a growth rate of 8.3% compared to 2017 that is an emerging tourism segment for Sri Lanka following the African continent, which is at 8.6%. The core aim of this research is to identify what best methods to enhance the Women Traveler Market in Europe for Tourism in Sri Lanka.

It is evident from the article appeared in Lonely Planet about Women Travelers to Sri Lanka (Lonely Planet, 2019) lacks security needs that has restricted the number of women travelers from the Europe to visit Sri Lanka. Above, 32.2% of the market share is controlled by the Western European Countries and a 7.7% market share contributed by Eastern European countries. This contributes a total of 39.9% towards the market share of Sri Lanka's tourist arrivals, which is the highest contribution towards Sri Lanka tourism. However, no specific research has been undertaken as to what extent women tourism has been promoted within the Western and Eastern European countries by Sri Lanka as the best tourist destination. It is also evident from various articles appearing in various secondary sources such as (Trip Advisor, 2019) where in online communities' people who has visited alone to Sri Lanka has shared mostly negative comments about various issues that they have faced during their tour in Sri Lanka.

It is evident when referring to the articles by (Lonely Planet, 2019) that Sri Lanka has become a toxic destination for women travelers with many harassments being recorded both verbally and physically towards European women travelers that has created an unpleasant situation for women tourism to be pushed to the next level. This is vital issue when considering developing European women travel market to Sri Lanka to attract this market segment to the destination. European women travel to the destination far from their original destination from Europe expect hassle-free travel. The tourism industry's growth rate of 10% in 2018 reveals an average of 8.3% increase in the European market.

Therefore, its vital to know, Sri Lanka as destination attracting enough women travelers to this market segment with the current situation by knowing the safety aspect, service quality and women traveler's satisfaction of the destination. it is important to know any other negative aspect existing threatening promoting women travelers to destination as it can shrink the market. The core objective of this study is to therefore identify the most effective strategies to boost women tourism in Sri Lanka and what measures could be taken from the travel agencies and as well as the Tourism Development Authority to encourage women travelers to visit Sri Lanka and the main research question of the study is to examine how to promote European Women Travelers to Sri Lanka.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 An empirical review of the current scenario

As evident from the report (UNWTO, 2018), security of travelers is considered one of the most crucial requirements of a traveler when decision on the travel destination regardless of the type of traveler, group, family, couple or solo women travelers. Specifically, women travelers seek more security when traveling compared to many other types of travelers to Sri Lanka. Christou & Karamanidis,(1999) reveals how globalization has made the entire world one homogeneous market place for tourism and people are given the unlimited access to information using the world wide web to make decisions related to travel that enhances the level of competition stemming from the world tourism destinations. Zeng, (2013) reveals the importance and the powerful role played by social media marketing for a country towards its tourism sales and marketing activities conducted digitally. This includes online marketing communities that are directly involved in destination marketing activities such as Sri Lanka for European Women Traveler Market. This is one possible method of enhancing women Traveler segment to Sri Lanka for the Europe.

2.2 Factors motivating women travelers to travel to a destination

A broad literature review aiming on the factors motivating women, provide the specific motivations that driven women into travel. The multi-dimension scales consider eight motivations dimensions: (1) escape, (2) self-identity and development, (3) challenge, (4) connectedness with others, (5) learning, (6) adventure, (7) new life perspectives, and (8) autonomy; and five experience dimensions: (1) sense, (2) feel, (3) think, (4) act, and (5) relate. (Pereira & silva ,2018). By referring to previously done literature on tourist motivation, many models and theories have developed to lead the empirical study of travel motivation, including push-pull (Dann, 1977). Based on the push and pull approach, people are pushed by internal desires, such as personal escape, psychological or physical health, thrill and adventure, and social interactions (Baloglu & Uvsal, 1996).

As per studies done, Women tend to move away from luxury vacations so as to focus on relaxation, spa treatments and to spend their money on more active adventures instead and also, they tend to explore and discover destinations which are out of the ordinary and new. Women looking for “experience” when they travel. New travel trend of women is for more local and authentic experience when travelling (Mapping Megan , 2020). Further studies show, 17% Of female travelers seek educational, cultural and historical experiences, 16% travel to beach destinations, 15% traveled to adventures destinations, 13% involved in cruises. Majority of women seek for trips which guarantee an experience. Travel is considered to be source of inspiration for 69% of women while 87% of women preferred destinations which are aesthetically pleasing. Based on the activity women travelers travelling factors. Some women prefer traditional cruise while others chose educational trips which focused on culture and learning. There is also those who interest on adventure travel destinations (The wandering rv,2019).

Factors influencing tourist's decision of "where to travel". It can be referred to the destination's features, attractions, or attributes such as the landscape, culture, price, service, climate and etc. Essentially, once a traveler has made clear decision to travel, the pull factors can inspire the traveler to select one destination over another (Ratthinan & Selamat, 2017)

2.3 Global tourism industry:

As prescribed by the work of (UNWTO, 2018), it was revealed that Peace and Security of a destination is a critical element for many travelers, specifically this applies to women travelers. It also includes other requirements such as Preservation of Cultural Sites, Protection of Environmental habitats, Jobs, Economic Growth of a country and as well as Development of the Industry. One out of ten jobs in the world are related to travel and tourism industry, the global travel and tourism industry amounts to US\$ 1.6 Trillion in exports amounting to 10% of the World GDP, 7% of the Global Exports and 30% of the service exports. Therefore, tourism play a critical role in the global services industry and as well as a prominent job opportunity provider and GDP generator, specifically for under developed countries such as Sri Lanka (UNWTO, 2018).

2.4. Women as a market segment for travel industry

Bond, (2019) reveals that women travelers are overtaking the global traveler market segment, specifically, because most of the women in the world earn more, has a high level of spending power and influences a high level of travel plans even of a friend or family. Women also represent majority of the online marketing activities and as a result, 85% of the women dominate the purchases in households in the world. World women has a dominance of US\$ 15 trillion in spending power and a total of 80% of the women are the key decision makers and is expected to spend US\$ 125 billion in 2019 for various products and services. This depicts a strong trend line towards women travel market segment as a potential industry to grow for Sri Lanka. It was also revealed by Bond, (2019) that 80% of the travel related decisions are made by women regardless of who they travel with. It could be solo travel, family travel, friends or even group travel. It was also revealed from this study that 75% of the women travelers prefer cultural, adventurous and nature trip. It is also evident from the article a possible increase of over 230% in terms of number of travel agencies offering women only packages. According to the census bureau, the single women aged 35 and above has been increased to 28 million and the most adventurous traveler is not considered 28-year-old men, yet 47-year-old female travelers that could fit into a size 12 dress. This depicts the changing consumer behavior and purchase patterns and as well, as changes in consumer demographics. The largest travel market for women is aged between 25 and 39. It was also revealed by the report that the ideal way to reach the women audience is to market digitally and making use of online communities to boost awareness of travel products and packages targeted at women solo travelers (Bond, 2019).

2.5. Tourism and travelers

Tourism has now been recognized as a field of study that involves people travelling from one country to another, that involves a planning process and as well as the application process along with a post tour process (Batta, 2000). According to Anand, (1997) tourism is the process of

entry, stay and movement of foreign nationals in a different country other than of their origin country, moving in and out for leisure purposes.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization defines tourism as a collaboration of activities, integrating a range of services and business industries that provides a travel experience including commuter options, places to stay, food and beverage options, shopping experiences and other extra activities and entertainment coming together business entities and hospitality service providers for either individual travelers or group of individuals travelling together (Ugurlu, 2010).

2.6. Female Tourism Trends to Sri Lanka

As appeared by the article in (Lonely Planet, 2019), Colombo, Sri Lanka and other parts of the island is categorized as unsafe for women to travel on their own due to a range of facts that has been explained in the article. The level of male attention towards female travelers is one of the key facts that has been exposed through the article. The article also reveals tips for female travelers to follow when travelling in the country on their own out of which covering legs and arms and the use of shorts and t-shirts as swim wear instead of body revealing outfits were some to be named. It was also advised by Lonely Planet to wear a wedding ring to avoid such conversations such as “Are you married?” with strangers.

As mentioned in previous studies multi dimension scales with eight motivation dimensions and 5 experience dimensions mentioned will assist to build concept of factors relating to Sri Lanka for promoting women travelers (Pereira & Silva ,2018). As per the article of CBI, the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries, mentioned Sri Lanka is among the list of popular solo tourism destinations in developing countries (CBI,2018).

3.0 Research Methodology

The key techniques used in the research methodology process along with the strategies and decisions made throughout the research methodology and as well as the reasoning for each strategy and process are given in detail in this section.

3.1. Research philosophy and design

A research process involves development of new knowledge in a given field of study. This involves generation of new theories, findings contrast to what other authors have found through their studies and as well as the process of identifying new trends and findings from various target populations. Saunders et al,(2015) refers to a Philosophy where a set of assumptions that needs to be pre-defined before arriving at the actual research methodology and research process. Research Design will thereby prescribe what the research is going to be made of and what assumptions and decisions has been made by the author to arrive at the desired results and findings of the study.

Research philosophy: the research philosophy has five main choices namely; Positivism, Critical Realism, Inter-pretivism, Post Modernism and Pragmatism. However, out of the five

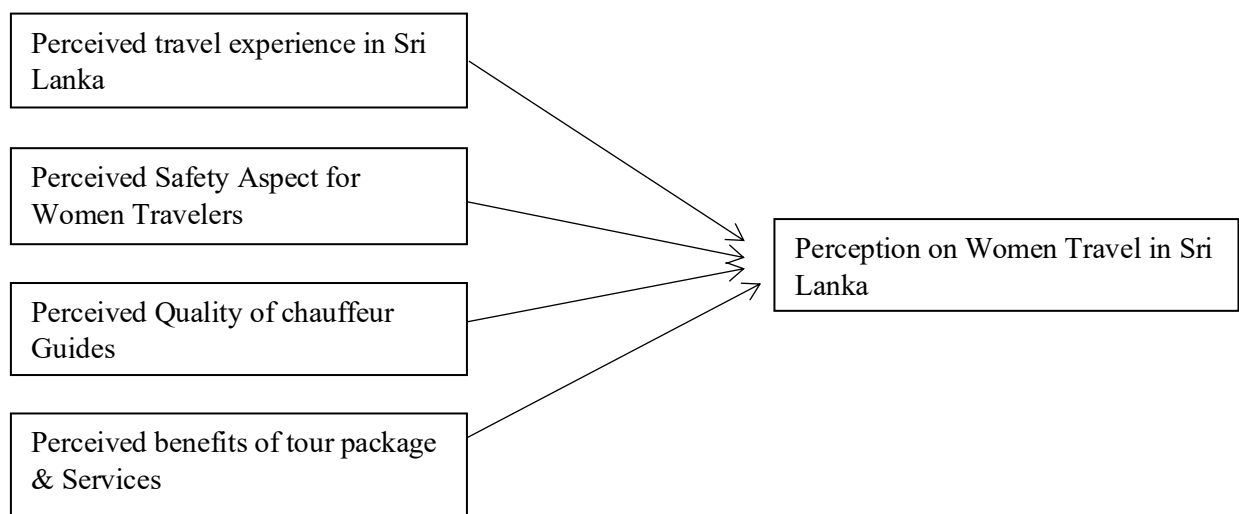
choices for the research philosophy, the most suitable is the Pragmatism Philosophy as the research is based on a deductive approach striving towards answering the research questions (Collis, et al., 2014). This philosophy helps the authors to focus on the research objectives and strive towards answering the research questions through the questionnaire of the study.

Research design: The research approach is deductive study as the research objectives and questions are made before data collected and collection of data are done to answer the questions. The key data collection tool will be the questionnaire that will be given to a sample of European female tourists who has visited the country through five major travel agents based in Sri Lanka. A total of 50 respondents will be chosen for each company given with 10 questionnaires to be filled. Therefore, mono method quantitative is the methodological choice made for the purpose of the study. The research strategy is a survey with a cross sectional time horizon to conduct the study as the data is collected only once from the target population sample.

3.2 Conceptual framework and Hypotheses Development

This section of the report depicts the Conceptual Framework that will underpin the decisions made throughout the research methodology and as well as how they are interlinked to define the key hypothesis of the study.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: Adopted and Modified from (Frost & Sullivan, 2017; Bond, 2019)

The following hypothesis were developed based on the literature and conceptual framework:

- H_{1a} – Current women travelers’ perception regarding women travel in Sri Lanka is Positive
- H_{2a} – The safety measures for women travelers in Sri Lanka is sufficient and effective to protect women travelers from possible threats
- H_{3a} – Qualified and Educated chauffer guides play a critical role in Women Travelers being fully satisfied with the services of a tour operator
- H_{4a} – Women Travelers require highly adventurous or cultural experiences included in their package to achieve satisfaction

3.3. Data collection and Analysis

The key data collection method used in this study is the Questionnaire as the main data collection tool with a combination of question categories; Numeric, Multiple Choice Questions, Rating Scale, Binomial, Multiple Choice with Multiple Answers and as well as Open Ended question at the end to collect qualitative type of information as well.

The data was collected from European Women Travelers who visited Sri Lanka through local travel agents. The questionnaires were given only to women travelers and only 10 questionnaires per travel agency chosen for the purpose of this study. The data collected in six sub categories such as; Demographic Connection to Traveler Choice, Current Customer Perception, The Safety Aspect of the Women Travelers, Quality of Guides, Customer Satisfaction and Customer Feedback on Overall Service Quality.

The collected data through the questionnaire will be mainly stored using Microsoft Excel to feed in the filled data to the spread sheets and thereby to sort the collected data and categorized data into data categories to be able to sort them into various graphs, pie charts and tabular formats for the readers to be able to interpret and understand the various sets of data.

3.4 Population and Sampling

The Data population of the study includes the total European Travelers visiting Sri Lanka for the Women Traveler Category. However, the exact data population is unknown as it is not provided in the literature supporting the study. Therefore, the population size remains unknown for the study.

The key sampling method used in this study is cluster sampling method targeting 10 Women Travelers selected from a total of 5 Established travel agents in Sri Lanka. The agents, who are most established travel agents in the country. All companies are based in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

4.0 Data Analysis

4.1. Interpretation of data analysis and discussion

Age: The most popular traveler age group for women traveler is age aged 40 and above. This is supported by findings of (Bond, 2019) that also reveals 44% of the travelers are aged 55 or older. In this study 30% of the travelers are 51 and above. Therefore, most prominent market for women traveler market is aged 51 and above.

Travel Duration: Most of the travelers' travel for more than 72% of the travelers visiting for more than 6 days and travel up to 15 days of travel. Therefore, travel packages should be made for between 6 to 15 days of travel for travelers to select from.

Frequency of Visit: At least 72% of the travelers' travel to Sri Lanka only once in a lifetime. This is a crucial finding, not many one-time travelers are inspired to be repeat travelers. Women tourism is a new market segment, this needs to be promoted through word of mouth and as well

as converting one-time travelers into repeat customers. Only 28% of the travelers visit as repeat customers.

Effective Communication Sources for Women Tourism to be promoted: Web based advertising such as Search Engine Optimization, Pop up ads and Pay Per click has shown 54% popularity among the target market, which means that this would be the ideal digital marketing technique that travel agents should look at to promote women travel packages. It is also found that word of mouth played only 16% of the communications process, however, this can be further improved if the customer service quality can be improved.

Purpose of Visit: The purpose of visit for most customers is at 46% for cultural heritage sites which is also supported by the work of (Frost & Sullivan, 2017), who has identified the tribe “Cultural Purists” who strive towards experiencing various cultures in the world through travel experiences. Therefore, women traveler market is mostly found as “Cultural Purists”. 24% of the travelers would prefer Leisure and Beach experiences depicted by Simplicity Searchers who strive towards simple processes, wanting simple experiences that has been planned through professionals. 16% of the travelers are seeking for Health and Ayurveda experiences depicted by “Reward Hunters”. They are traveler tribes who strives towards achieving quality of life through wellness and Ayurveda experiences.

4.2. Existing customer perception:

Overall Customer Experience Grading: Overall Customer Experience for Sri Lanka, only 34% of the customers has graded 5 out of 5, which means that the remaining 66% of the customers are not fully satisfied with the overall Sri Lanka experience. This is similar to the findings where 72% of the customers would visit Sri Lanka only once in a lifetime, which means due to low level of satisfaction, women travelers are not converted to be repeat customers, most of the travel population to Sri Lanka are one-time travelers, which can shrink the market in the future.

Quality of Services offered to Customers: The quality of additional activities, excursions and experiences has been graded 5 out of 5 for by 50% of the respondents and Graded 4 out of 5 by 20% of the travelers which concludes that 70% of the travelers were offered with good quality service providers. However, 30% of the customers were not given with good quality service providers which depicts that there is room for improvement for travel agents to select better suppliers to work with in their day to day business negotiations.

Competencies of the Travel Coordinator: Human resources play a major role in day to day service delivery process to reduce the gap between customer perceived value and customer expected value (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). Therefore, as per the study, majority of the travel agents are informative as the key competency followed by Promptness and Efficiency and Courteous as following competencies. As per work of (Chaffey, 2018), being responsive is one of the key competencies that online customers would look for. Therefore, Sri Lankan travel agents needs to further develop this competency in human resources to be able to compete with the global demands of the travelers.

Quality of Services Provided by the Travel Agencies: Most of the travel agencies, amounting to 70% has been able to offer customers with fully services hotels, a knowledgeable and skillful chauffer guide to deliver the services. However, 20% were not offered with the services of a knowledgeable and skillful guide and 10% revealed that they were happy only with the services of the guide. Therefore, 30% of the customers were not offered a complete offer plan which needs to be improved to be able to offer complete packages to customers.

Value provided for the Price Paid: The packages are priced at different levels for different customers, however, price of a package plays a major contributing factor for business conversion (Chaffey, 2018). Only 50% of the customers were given with packages that are within the budget that they planned to have. 34% were given with overpriced offers that did not meet their budgeting requirements while another 16% of them were underpriced with the packages while they wanted to go for better hotels. Therefore, at least another 50% of the customers are read and understood incorrectly. This can not only lead to poorer bottom line for the travel agents, but also the creation of dissatisfied customers who will not want to visit through the same agent next time. This can also impact the positive word of mouth of customers.

4.3. The safety aspect of women travelers

Overall Safety Rating: Only 20% of the customers has graded as the overall safety rating to be “Exceptional” and another 10% grading “Good”. This would mean that 70% of the travelers has not experienced a safe environment to travel freely within the country that can be recommended to another traveler. This is one of the crucial findings that has been found from the study. It is therefore agreed with the findings of (Bond, 2019) who confirms that most women travelers would want a travel companion for support whose role is supported by a knowledgeable, friendly and caring chauffer guide to lead them in their travel arrangements.

Availability of Safety Tips: Most travelers today in the global scenario read prior to their arrival in a destination. This was also supported by the work of (Chaffey, 2018) where the power of Web 2.0 comes into play and customer driven review basis and sharing of experiences of past customers help potential guests to know more about a destination. However, most of the safety incidents are not covered in the online sources available about Sri Lanka as 46% of the respondents has not been able to have clear access to details. In only 30% of the overall guests has been able to gather information which is “Good” or “Exceptional”. Therefore, advisory available only for women traveler market could be another method of avoiding such incidents to happen and re-assure the safety of the women travelers.

Overall Experience as a Women Traveler: It was found from the study that only 8% of the women were able to enjoy a “Hassle Free” travel experience in Sri Lanka which means that the remaining 92% of the travelers were either verbally abused, physically harassed or both. This reveals that Sri Lankan culture and mannerism of people has proven to be women traveler aversive which can be a major contributing factor in developing such a market.

Positive Word of Mouth: Even with the negativity of the travelers in terms of safety, 64% of the travelers has agreed that they would recommend Sri Lanka for family, friends and colleagues while 36% chose “No” as the answer. However, the point that is critical at this stage of the question is that even though the country as a destination is shared as positive word of mouth, this does not necessarily guarantee that there will be repeat customers. The threat of market being lost or deprived in the future without repeat travelers is a major concern Travel Agencies should look at.

Most Effective Online Source of Information for Women Travelers: Trip Advisor was found as the most used online source for women travelers followed by Lonely Planet. Therefore, Blogs and information shared through travel agents has failed to provide effective source of information for travelers. This is another learning point for travel agents to have a Blog on their website sharing information; specifically, when targeting to develop Women Traveler market.

4.4. Quality of chauffer guide services

Completeness of Information Provided by Chauffer Guides: Majority of the travelers amounting to 68% were given with guide name and number prior to arrival so that they are capable of connecting with the guide prior to arrival which initiates the first impression and first connection with the chauffer guide. However, 32% of the guests were not provide with this information which can cause doubt in the minds of the customer and difficulty in tracing the guide on arrival.

Chauffer Guide Characteristics and Capabilities: Only 10% of the guides were found with “Protective” as a key trait. Others shared traits such as Knowledgeable, Informative and Friendly guides. These too are important for women travelers to have quality of the overall experience, however, being “Protective” of the guest is crucial as women traveler market is a sensitive market segment for traveler safety.

Overall Quality of Service Delivery: Only 30% of the customers agreed that the overall service delivery of the chauffer guides was “Exceptional”. 26% of the travelers graded chauffer guides at “Good”, therefore a total of 56% are categorized as good chauffeurs and high in-service delivery dimension. Chauffer guides play a critical role in the service delivery process where the final Gap of the service quality is determined (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). Therefore, it should be made crucial to provide training and development for chauffer guides from the Sri Lanka Tourist Board.

4.5. Customer satisfaction

Choice of Activities: It was also found from the study as shown by table 5, most of the travel agents would only prescribe Safari at Yala National Park, Local Train Ride, Village tours with cooking experience for women travelers. The women traveler market segments’ demographics and tastes have changed, where women travelers aged 50 or more are much fitter than younger female travelers, they would want to experience more and more adventure while staying at fully serviced hotels (Bond, 2019). This is also supported by secondary study made by Bond illustrated above where women travelers mostly appreciate value of independence when they

travel alone and they are also willing to spend around US\$ 5000 per visit which is quite substantial with a low exchange rate in Sri Lanka compared to Europe. By only suggesting low cost experiences for a traveler market whose spending power is higher than anticipated would mean that the customers will miss out on more enjoyable experiences and as well as lack of business profitability through tour programs that fails to capture the exact requirements of the customer.

Quality of Value Addition Services: 60% of the travelers would grade “Good” or “Exceptional” for the for the quality of extra activities and excursion services offered to them while the balance 40% would not be satisfied with the quality of the extra activities. This depicts rooms for improvement in service providers which was also clear. 70% of the customers agreeing for travel agents to provide with fully serviced hotels and knowledgeable guides. The extra activities are mostly coordinated by the guides which adds on to the overall experience of the customers.

Persuasive Marketing Skills of Travel Consultants: This question proves that Travel Consultants were not persuasive enough to recommend good value additions to customers apart from the hotels and chauffer guide selection. This is another crucial finding of the study. This is an important skill that Travel Consultants should have when dealing with customer inquiries to be able to upsell packages including good and enjoyable experiences that can add value to customers.

5.0 Findings of the Study

Majority of the independent women travelers are aged 41 and above which is also similar to the findings of (Bond, 2019). The women travelers were also found to be travelling from 6 to 15 days travel period with most guest is one timer to Sri Lanka. This is found to be threatening for the continuity of the new market segment as the women travelers to Sri Lanka are not repeating customers at least 72%. This is a crucial finding and as well as a sub outcome of the project. It was also found based on the Future Traveler Tribes by the work of (Frost & Sullivan ,2017), that Women Travelers come in Tribes of Cultural Purists the most followed by Reward Hunters and as well as Simplicity Searchers as they are high in spending power (Bond, 2019).

Current customer perception of women travelers was tested through five questions in the questionnaire from questions 6 to 10 out of the five questions; three questions were found with positive answers, they are:

- 70% of the travelers were offered with good quality services by Travel Agents
- 70% of the travelers were provided with quality hotel recommendations along with quality chauffer guide recommendations by Travel Agents
- Overall Grading for customer experience is therefore at 54% positive

The negative answers found were as follows:

- Only 30% of the tour coordinators displayed the traits of Prompt and Efficient response system which is a crucial element for business conversion as per the work of (Chaffey, 2018).

▪ Only 50% of the travelers were given with packages that were Value for Money. The remaining 50% were underpriced or overpriced.

Therefore, from the above 5 question analysis, three out of five are found positive, therefore H_{1a} is True,

The Safety Measures for Women Travelers in Sri Lanka: Safety Measures play a vital role in encouraging women travelers to visit Sri Lanka and in order to test the current level of the safety measures in place and their effectiveness, five questions from question 11 to 15 were directed at the sample of the study. The positive findings included:

• Even with the negative experiences that the travelers have experienced, 64% of the customers would recommend the destination to their friends, family and colleagues. However, this does not guarantee any possible impact on repeat customers.

In Negative findings the following can be stated:

▪ Only 30% of the customers graded as “Good” or better for the overall rating for safety aspects in Sri Lanka.

▪ Only 30% of the customers were able to refer to safety tips for Sri Lanka as women travelers. Out of which the travel agents have failed to provide customers with safety tips

▪ Only 8% of the travelers were able to experience a “Hassle Free” journey while 92% were either physically or verbally harassed or both.

Therefore, from five questions three has proven to be negative answers which proves that H_{2b} is true, therefore, safety measures for women travelers in Sri Lanka is not sufficient and effective to protect travelers from possible threats.

Quality of Chauffeur Guide Services: Quality of chauffeur guides were measured with three questions projected at the customers included in the sample of the study. The positive feedback can be listed as follows:

• 68% of the guests were given with complete information prior to their arrival at the airport including chauffeur guide name and contact number which is paramount in building the first connection with the chauffeur guide who is delivering the final service to customers.

• 56% of the customers agreed that the service delivery of the chauffeur guides was “Good” or better.

The negative aspects of the findings include:

▪ Only 10% of the chauffeur guides displayed “protectiveness” as one of their key traits
Therefore, it is proven from the study that two out of three questions are positive, therefore, H_{3a} is true; Qualified and Educated chauffeur guides play a critical role in Women Travelers being fully satisfied with the services of a tour operator.

Value Added Experiences Offered to Women Travelers: Customer Satisfaction is directly linked with the quality of the packages sold to them which includes not only hotel accommodation and transportation, but also the value-added excursions and experiences that adds to the overall travel experience. This was tested with three questions for which the answers can be summarized as follows for positive outcome:

- 60% of the customers graded “Good” or better for Quality of Value additions experienced

The Negative aspect of the findings can be listed as follows:

- Market upselling experiences such as Trekking, Hiking, Surfing, Diving, Kite Surfing, Ayurveda, Yoga, Meditation, Hot Air Ballooning, Sailing, Aerial View and Domestic Flights are not marketed properly to guests provided that they are reward hunters and cultural purists and as well as high in spending power.

- 56% of Travel Agents are not persuasive marketers of such value additions, hence they fear away from recommending major activities that can better suit the requirements of the women traveler market.

Therefore, out of the three questions, two are found negative. Thereby, H_{4b} is proven to be true; Women Travelers require highly adventurous or cultural experiences included in their package to achieve satisfaction.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, women traveler market is a lucrative market segment that Sri Lanka should develop as the customers of this segment would enhance the quality of tourism through high spending power and as well as the operation of adventurous experiences that are out of the ordinary track of tourism in Sri Lanka.

Not only the women traveler market currently is positive as per the study, it was also proven that the safety requirements for women traveler in Sri Lanka is not sufficiently built. This contrasts the findings of (Bond, 2019) where women travelers have not complained about the safety aspect before, however, as 92% were either physically or verbally harassed or both, this has become a growing concern of the women traveler market visiting Sri Lanka. Safety is one aspect that the country should therefore think of developing if the women traveler market is to develop in Sri Lanka for European travelers.

It is also conclude that women traveler market us from age 40 and above that is similar to the study results of (Bond, 2019) who reveals that such travelers would like adventurous tours and try out new experiences that can enhance their quality of life, these findings coincide with the findings of (Frost & Sullivan ,2017) who prescribed 6 types of traveler tribes that will invade the world from 2020 to 2030.

Quality of services vary; however, the final service delivery plays a vital role to close the fifth Gap of Service quality as prescribed by (Parasuraman, et al,1985) and therefore chauffer guides play a pivotal role in providing a quality service to customers, therefore, not only knowledge and experience, chauffer guides should also provide the safety aspect for the women travelers specifically.

It is also concluded that women travelers visiting Sri Lanka would enjoy value added services that are unique, adventurous and as well as spiritually enriching. These are supported by the

work of (Bond, 2019) who reveals that the customers who enjoy a vacation to the core are the women travelers who are mostly solo travelers or in some cases arrives in group travel. Therefore, it was found from the study that H_{1a} , H_{3a} are true while H_{2a} , H_{4a} are not supported.

6.1 Recommendations for promoting women tourism in Sri Lanka

In recommendation, the study provides insight for mainly the Travel Agents and as well as the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority what measures to be taken to improve the women traveler market to Sri Lanka, specifically the European Travel segment.

6.2 Recommendations for the Travel Agents

It was found from the study that most women travelers would range their travel period from 6 to 15 days, therefore, when creating travel itineraries, it is better to have a variety of travel itinerary options for women traveler segment as their date range is high. It was also revealed that the women traveler market has high purchase power, therefore, upselling packages can be made easier with women traveler market segment. In order to achieve this, it is best to have more options presented to women travelers along with their package to choose from.

It was also revealed that the women travelers are highly adventurous and as well as looking forward for opportunities to culturally enrich their lifestyles through travel plans. Therefore, providing them with experiences that are culturally rich and as well as adventurous will have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Reading customer requirements through communication is critical to be able to provide customers with the exact requirements in the tour plan.

Next, it is also important for travel agents to provide chauffer guides with training and development to enhance their skills and not only knowledge and their capabilities, but also to provide the protection required by the women traveler market. For instance, the tour executive at the tour briefing with the chauffer guide should point out the safety requirements that needs to be met when handling women traveler market.

With respect to the women travelers and their safety, it is also good for travel agents to display safety tips on their websites so that the customers can read and be aware before travelling to the country. To prepare the travelers better, the safety aspects could be highlighted in the email correspondence so that the customers will be prepared to visit the country and perhaps provide them with a “Hassle Free” experience.

It is also recommended to travel agents to have more persuasive ability by training tour executives to provide the right information in right quantity at the right time so that upselling of the package can bring in more revenue for the travel agency and as well as more satisfaction for the customer as they get to experience unique and off the beaten tracks when visiting Sri Lanka which can convert them into repeat customers than giving once in a life time experience.

6.3 Recommendations for the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and other policy makers

One of the key findings of the study is the lack of safety measures taken by the relevant authorities for the women travelers to enjoy a “Hassle Free” experience when visiting Sri Lanka. To do so, it is compulsory for the relevant authorities to take measures to develop the existing systems and procedures that has failed to provide the guests with a safe and hassle-free experience.

For instance, it was revealed by the study that the tourism police units are not to be found in most tourist locations, they are found only in few and most popular tourist locations, therefore, it is recommended to boost the availability of tourist police services for foreigners and as well as to recruit personnel who has sound knowledge of English language to be able to provide guests with good assistance and resolve issues as and when they arise.

It was also revealed from the study that the chauffer guides are in general informative and knowledgeable, however are not vigilant for the safety requirements of the guests on board. Chauffer guides association of Sri Lanka, coming under the direct supervision of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board, should therefore, conduct evaluations and provide chauffer guides with national level training to enhance their skills of providing customers with required safety features of the service quality that needs to be polished and given with care. This can further enhance the customer satisfaction and as well as lead to a “Hassle-Free” experience for customers.

It is also recommended for the Tourism Development Authority of Sri Lanka to have a mechanism to reduce the number of vendors found in various tourist locations and as well as restrict the sale of various items to foreigners unless they are established shops that regulates under the Tourist Board. The side guides too can be replaced with an application for travelers to read on the go and to gain knowledge through the application than having to hire side guides. This can enhance the knowledge of the travelers and as well as provide them with the enthusiasm to learn more through own research. This application is the latest technology that can in return enhance the customer satisfaction.

Another recommendation to authorities to implement tourist police patrol unit specially in the beach prosperities and tourist most frequently visited areas to minimize any harassments a women tourist could come across. Also, special hot line for women travelers could get assistant from an English-speaking female in case of any reporting on an incident they would like to report.

Authorities relate to tourism could also have a web link for female tourist could give feedbacks on their post tour so that moving forward, it will provide vital information's and findings relate women travel to Sri Lanka and will be a guideline for the measures need developing the European women travel market and increase repeat travelers to the destinations form Europe.

6.4 Recommendations for the academics and industry

It is also recommended for the universities and institutions providing academic knowledge for future work force in the tourism industry to provide more knowledge on women tourism and its potentials for the industry development. Having a syllabus which covers the safety aspect for women tourism and what needs to be done to full fill this requirement. Studies on how to market the European women travel market to Sri Lanka. Organizing workshops relate to women traveler's safety aspects and have awareness on taking those measures. Develop studies relate to upselling skills on people and how add value additions to tour packages when promoting the destinations. Also, to identify women travelers' market while understanding their requirements when travelling to Sri Lanka and create packages as per their potential spending power and guarantee satisfaction the tour which lead to repeat travelers.

6.5 Direction for Future Research

In this study, a sample of 50 women travelers were chosen from five established travel agents to assess the methods and strategies to promote Women Tourism for the European market. However, if the same research was conducted with a larger sample of 100 or more, the results could be different or if the samples are taken from those travel agents targeting a niche market such as women traveler segment, the quality of such travel agents could be found to be better as the efforts are focused.

However, for future research, it is recommended to measure the relationship between customer satisfaction for women traveler market and the various variables that was tested in this study. Before marketing a destination for women traveler market, it is also important to study the level of satisfaction of customers and the relationship between satisfaction and travel agent services, quality of chauffer guide services and as well as the range of activities provided to offer a unique experience in Sri Lanka.

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