

RAMAYANA TRAIL TOURS IN SRI LANKA IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN TOURIST - A STUDY

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Abstract

Sri Lanka, one of the wonders of Asia is prospering at a fast pace and tourism being one of the most important sectors of its economy. The tourism contributions for its phenomenal growth are in the areas of Beach & Island Tourism and its rich heritage sites. In spite of its growth of inbound tourism from India, there seems to be less attention on the Ramayana trail sites. This study looks into the situation that prevails in Sri Lanka on the promotion of historical sites connected to the Ramayana Trail from the perspective of inbound tourists from India. With the help of descriptive analysis, the study probes into the significance of Sri Lanka's historical sites connected to the Ramayana Trail, the awareness and perception about the same among the Indian tourists. Based on the study it is revealed that the Ramayana Trail sites in Sri Lanka today are not promoted to the extent to which it becomes significant part of the nation's historical importance. Lack of promotion and information available makes the Indian tourists unaware of the historical sites of importance in the Ramayana Trail and its immense potential. However, it is understood that most of the tourists were satisfied that historical and heritage sites connected to epic Ramayana trail has been reasonably well promoted by Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Historical and heritage sites, Sri Lanka, Ramayana, archaeology, tourism marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka, the wonder of Asia is fast developing as a tourism hub in the region. Tourism has become a major source of foreign exchange earnings for developing countries which were traditionally dependent upon primary products for export earnings. Tourism in Sri Lanka has a tremendous potential, although the industry has experienced much volatility due to man-made and natural misfortunes. In the case of Sri Lanka, its inherited culture, natural resources as well as the coastal line around the island are gifts for this particular industry to flourish. Political stability of Sri Lanka was questionable in particular, with reference to the international tourist arrivals. The war ended after the Government of Sri Lanka militarily defeated the LTTE in 2009. Immediately after this, Sri Lanka's tourism sector started to flourish. International tourist arrivals grew by 4.7% in 2014 to

a total 1,138 million, up from 1,087 million in 2013. (Annual Report, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority). World Tourism Organization forecast the arrival of tourists to Sri Lanka is 2000 million and the government of Sri Lanka targets 2.5 million high spending tourists by 2020.

Tourism is a major player for economic development as it generates foreign exchange earnings and direct and indirect employment opportunities along with a range of other economic activities. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2014), international tourist arrivals grew by around 5 percent during the year 2014, despite geopolitical challenges and lingering economic recovery.

Among the South Asian countries, Sri Lanka maintained a soiled 27 percent growth in 2013 (UNWTO, 2014). In 2013, Lonely Planet identified Sri Lanka as the first among the top 10 countries to visit. Other ranking agencies also

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ranked Sri Lanka among the top ten countries to travel. Tourism was the 3rd largest foreign exchange earner for the country in 2013.

Sri Lanka has earned US\$1.8 billion revenue from tourism in 2013. Tourism sector's average contribution to the GDP during 2010-2012 was 2 percent. The Sri Lankan government had planned to establish the tourism sector at an above 5 percent contributor of GDP by 2016.

International tourist arrivals grew by 4.7% in 2014 to a total 1,138 million, up from 1,087 million in 2013. Sri Lankan tourism has boomed to a new mile stone of 1,527,153 arrivals in 2014, transcending all time high hits in the history which is an increase of 19.8% over last year's 1,274,593 arrivals. A foreign exchange earnings increased by 43.6% from Rs.221, 147.1 million in 2013 to Rs. 317,501.7 million in 2014. As in previous years, India emerged as the leading producer of tourism to Sri Lanka amounting to 242,734 arrivals accounting for 15.89% of the total traffic. Table 1 explains the arrivals of tourist and receipts to Sri Lanka from 1999-2013.

Table 1: Tourist arrival and Receipts into Sri Lanka (Rs. Mn) 2006 to 2014

Year	Tourist arrivals	Receipts (Rm)
2006	688322	42585.50
2007	592440	4251930
2008	526170	37094
2009	537416	40133
2010	766973	65018
2011	867950	91926
2012	1132128	132427
2013	1414602	221147.10
*2014	1665250	317502.20

*Estimated

Source: STDA- Annual Statistical Report 2014

Brief Summary of Ramayana

Ramayana is considered as one of the highest of ideals of the Hindu life. It is the story of the life of Rama. Dasharatha was the King of Ayodhya. He had three wives and four sons, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughana. Rama was the Crown

Prince. He later married Sita, the princess of a nearby kingdom. Bharatha's mother is Kaikeyi, the second and the beloved wife of King Dasaratha who wanted her son to succeed Dasaratha and rule the kingdom. She played a plot and made Bharatha, the king and Rama was sent to the exile in the forest by Dasaratha for fourteen years. Sita and Lakshmana followed Rama. Bharatha pleaded Rama to return to the kingdom and rule it. But Rama refused to return to the kingdom. Hence Bharatha decide to rule the kingdom on behalf of Rama until he returns back after the exile period of fourteen years.

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana lead a happy life in the forest until Surphanaka, a female demoness who was also the sister of Ravana sees Rama and Lakshmana and get captivated by their looks. She proposed to Rama and Lakshmana in turns, but was rejected by both of them. To take revenge on them, Surphanaka tried to hurt Sita which led to Lakshmana chopping her nose. Surphanaka lost her beauty without the nose. She fled to her brothers Khara and Dasa to fight against Rama and Lakshmana. She then approaches Ravana, the demon king and the ruler of Sri Lanka to take a revenge on Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Ravana decided to abduct Sita. Using trickery and magic, he managed to lure Rama and Lakshmana away from Sita and took her to Sri Lanka.

During their search for Sita, Rama and Lakshmana came across a band of Vanaras (monkey-men) who accept to help them. Hanuman, one of the mighty warriors among the Vanaras, became Rama's staunch devotee. The Vanaras found out that Sita was held captive in Sri Lanka. Hanuman flew to Sri Lanka and confirms her presence. He informed Sita about Rama's whereabouts and promised her that they would soon take her back. Before returning to the mainland, Hanuman set fire to the city of Lanka.

Vibishana, the brother of Ravana was a great ruler. He was known for his good deeds and was considered to be god by the citizens of his country. It is said that Vibhishana's daughter Trijataka looked after the needs of Sita when she was kept captive in Ashoka Vatika.

Later Rama, Lakshmana and the Vanar army built a causeway from Dhanushkodi in India to Talai mannar

in Sri Lanka. They travelled to Lanka, where an epic battle was fought between both the

Army. Rama finally killed Ravana and won the battle and freed Sita. Later Sita proved her chastity and returned back to Ayodhya where Bharatha handed over the crown to Rama.

Later when citizens had a doubt about the chastity of Sita, he sent Sita back to the forest. The sage Valmiki

accommodated her in his ashram. She gave birth to two children there, Lava and Kusa in the ashram. At the end of Ramayana, Sita appears before Rama along with her sons and Valmiki. She goes into the Earth to never appear again and Rama went to heaven along with his followers. The Hindu god Krishna had incarnated as Rama to kill the demon king Ravana.

The sequence of events of the Ramayana on the self-validation of dates is as follows.

Table 2: Sequence of events on Ramayana

PERIOD	SIGNIFICANCE
10 th January'5114 BCE	Rama's birth
11 th January'5114 BCE	Bharatha's birth
04 th January'5089 BCE	Pre coronation Eve
07 th October'5077 BCE	Khar, Dussan episode
3 rd April'5076 BCE	Killing of Vali
12 th September'5076 BCE	Hanuman meeting Sita at Lanka
14 th September'5076 BCE	Hanuman returned from Lanka
20 th September'5076 BCE	Army march to Lanka
12 th October'5076 BCE	Army reached Lanka
24 th November'5076 BCE	Meghnatha is killed
05 th December'5076 BCE	Ravana is dead

Source: Cinmaya Mission Sri Lanka – Edition Mar'2014.

The Significance of Sri Lanka with Ramayana

Sri Lanka has a special significance on the Ramayana Traditions. It was the land of two principal characters; Ravana and Vibishana. Although brothers, they were men of opposite ways. Ravana swayed from the path of Dharma while his judicious younger brother was committed in his adherence to the principles of Dharma. Vibishana who became an accomplice of Rama was sanctified as Lord of Lanka

on the demise of Ravana. He was instrumental for the re-establishment of peace, prosperity, and the ancient ancestry of kings in Sri Lanka. Sita and Hanuman have found a significant place in Sri Lankan culture and tradition. Sita has been elevated to the rank of a deity and Hanuman figures prominently in for the supernatural powers.

Table 3: Some of the important places associated with Ramayana in Sri Lanka are given below

S. No	Ramayana Sites	Location	Features/Attractions
1	NUWARA ELIYA	Hill station in Sri Lanka	In the midst of beautiful forests there is a small stream flowing through the rocks, which is said to be the place where Sita is said to have rested, bathed and spent her time during her captivity.
2	DIVURUMPOLA	20kms from Sita Eliya	Divurumpola means place of oath. This is the place where Sita devi underwent Agni test.

3	ISTRIPURAM – WAVE OF CAVES	Kirivanagama, Lunuwatte (13 kms From Welimada)	These are many inter connecting tunnels and caves in this area. These are part of great ingenious network of path which is connected to all the major areas of king Ravana city
4	SANJEEVANI DROPS	Jaffna, Mannar, Habarana, Hiripitiya, Galle	In the course of Ramayana, Lakshmana was critically wounded in the battle with Maghnath, the son of Ravana. To treat Lakshmana, Hanuman is said to have brought a hillock from the Himalayan Mountains. During the transit few dropping of the herbs are said to have dropped at several places as listed. Interestingly the plants at these places have medicinal properties
5	NALA SETU- ADAM’S BRIDGE	Connecting India (Dhanuskodi) and Sri Lanka (Talai Mannar)	Nala, the biological descendant of Vishwakarma assisted Rama to cross the sea between India and Sri Lanka through a bridge which was build from Dhanuskodi on the Indian side to Talai Mannar on the Sri Lankan side. Later the Islamic leader Aadam walked over the bridge from India to Sri Lanka to do penance. Hence it became Adam’s bridge
6	RAMBODA AND RAVANABODA HILLS	On the way to Nuwara Eliya from Colombo	Two series of hills with a big valley in between. These hills on either side of the valley are traditionally called by the locals as Ramboda (camp of Rama’s army) on the Northern side and Ravanaboda (military camp of Ravana’s army) on the Southern side. This unique convergence gives credibility to the overall pictures of the trail of Ramayana in Lanka.
7	SITA KOTUWA	Gurulupotha, Hasalaka	Archeological site. Beautiful palace surrounded by water falls, streams and a variety of flora and fauna. Sita Devi was kept here. Sita Kotuwa means Sita’s Fort.
8	SRI BHAKTHA HANUMAN TEMPLE	Thawalamtenne, Ramboda	It is believed that lord hanuman was searching for Sita devi from these hills of Ramboda. A temple with lord hanuman as presiding deity is in this hill.
9	USSANGODA	On the southern coast	Soil in this area is blackened, burned scorched effect as a reminder of lord Hanuman’s escapade
10	SEETHE AMMAN TEMPLE	Seetha Eliya	There is a stream by the side of the temple. There is a footstep of lord hanuman along the river. Now there is a temple for lord Rama, Sita devi, Lakshmana and Hanuman.
11	RAVANA GODA	Kotmala area opp Ramboda rock.	It is believed that Sita devi stayed here during her transit.
12	RAVANA CAVE	From Banderawela Pass Ella to Ravana cave	These tunnels served as quick means of transport through the hills and also as a secret passage.
13	GAYATHRI PEEDAM	Nuwera Eliya town	Gayathri Peedam is believed to be the place from where Ravana’s son, Meghnath worshipped Lord Shiva and in turn was granted super natural powers by Lord Shiva.
14	KATARAGAMA	South East of Sri	This is the temple of Lord Karthikeya

	Lanka	Subramaniyam at Kataragama.	
15	KELANIYA BUDDHIST TEMPLE	About 10kms from Colombo on Kandy road	It is believed that this is the place from where King Vibhishana ruled after being crowned by Lakshmana. Today King Vibhishana is considered as one of the four guardian deities of Sri Lanka. A temple for him exists outside the Buddhist temple.
16	MUNEESHWAR AM	About 1.2kms from Chilaw town on Karunegala road	In Tamil Mun- means long time ago and Eeswaram – means Shiva temple
17	MANAVARI	10 kms from Chilaw on Puttalam road	Manavari is the first place where Lord Rama installed Shiva lingam and worshipped it after the war. This lingam is called Ramalingam as it was made by Lord Rama. This is the only Lingam in the world that is named after Lord Rama.
18	PANCHAMUGA ANJANEYAR TEMPLE	Colombo city	A temple dedicated to Anjeneyar in Sri Lanka. Only temple in the world to have a chariot for Anjaneyar.

Source: *Cinmaya Mission Sri Lanka –Edition Mar’2014*

Brief on Tourism in India

Travel and tourism is the largest service industry in India. It provides heritage, cultural, medical, business and sports tourism. The main objective of this sector is to develop and promote tourism, maintain competitiveness of India as tourist destination and improve and expand existing tourism products to ensure employment generation and economic growth. In this section, we provide information about various tourist destinations, modes of travel, accommodation and approved travel agents. International tourist arrivals, reached an all-time high of 77.03 lakhs with a growth of 10.6% as compared to the international tourist arrivals of 69.68 lakhs with a growth of 5.9% during 2013 over 2012. The foreign exchange earnings also had a growth of 11.5% during 2014 over 2013. On the domestic tourism front, the estimates are generally prepared by MOT on the basis of data furnished from various state governments /Union territory administration and other information available with the ministry. The domestic tourist's visits during the year 2013 were 1145 million (provisional) registering a growth of 9.6 % over 2012.

Brief on IRCTC Promoting Ramayana Trails to Sri Lanka

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), A, Govt. of India undertaking under the Ministry of Railways, offer a wide range of tourism

products to cater to all categories of tourists. IRCTC tourism products include Rail tour packages, Holiday tour packages, Educational tours, Customized packages, LTC tours, Air packages, etc. Being the forerunner in the country to promote Rail Tourism, the company has also penetrated into the area of offering Air packages. From the last two years, the company has started operating air packages to popular domestic and international destinations. Air packages are available to the leisure and pilgrimage destinations and the pilgrim destinations tours are very popular. IRCTC had launched Ramayana Yatra tours to Sri Lanka from Chennai. The popularity has lead to the launch of similar IRCTC Ramayana yatra tours to Sri Lanka from Bhopal, Delhi, Kolkatta, Madurai apart from series of departures from Chennai in the current fiscal. A total of 8 Ramayana trail tours to Sri Lanka have been operated as on date and 7 tours lined up for in current financial year. The average group size is around 35 tourists. With the popularity and demand, IRCTC is also proposing a novel idea of launching a package tour that covers all major places related to the Ramayana trail in India and Sri Lanka. The Indian leg of the tour is proposed to be covered by train & road and the Sri Lankan leg to be covered by Road locally with the journey between India and Sri Lanka by Air.

1.5 India as a major inbound tourism market to Sri Lanka:

On perusal of the tourist inflow into Sri Lanka, it can be seen that India is on the top of the table with the highest number of tourist visiting Sri Lanka year on

year. This is followed by UK, Germany, Maldives, France and other countries (see table 4)

Table 4: Tourist arrivals from top 8 countries of residence – 2009 to 2013

S.No	Country of Residence	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1	INDIA	83634	126882	171374	176340	208795
2	UK	81594	105496	106082	114218	137416
3	GERMANY	29654	45727	55882	71642	85470
4	MALDIVES	31916	35791	44018	47572	79474
5	FRANCE	15886	31285	48695	56863	64388
6	AUSTRALIA	26068	37290	46467	57776	60836
7	RUSSIA	11834	13278	21385	28402	51235
8	USA	14241	19093	24386	29907	34690

Source: STDA- Annual Statistical Report 2104

Table 4 highlights that India has been consistently among the top 8 countries contributing to the inbound tourist market for Sri Lanka. Over the years from 2009 to 2013 the inflow of tourist from India to Sri Lanka has experienced manifold increase (see table 5). The Sri Lanka, wonder of Asia campaign as an emerged very successful as has been for many other tourism markets. The campaign has appeared as a very powerful phrase which has been well related to the Indian Tourist.

Though, there has been considerable increase in the inflow of Indian tourist into Sri Lanka between 2009, 2010 and 2011 year on year, there has been a drastic decline in 2012 due to travel advisories on disease outbreak, and many other factors which subsequently has picked up during 2013. This trend is expected to continue with the Indian Economy projected to perform better in the years ahead inspite of global economic recession decline in 2012 due to travel advisories on disease outbreak, and many other factors which subsequently has picked up during 2013. This trend is expected to continue with the Indian Economy projected to perform better in the year's ahead inspite of global economic recession.

Table 5: Tourist arrivals from India into Sri Lanka

Year	Arrivals	(%) Increase
2009	83634	
2010	126882	51.71
2011	171374	35.07
2012	176340	2.90
2013	208795	18.40
Year	Arrivals	(%) Increase
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2012	176340	2.90
2013	208795	18.40

Source: STDA- Annual Statistical Report-2014

India accounts for the large section of tourist arrivals into Sri Lanka year on year closely followed by UK. It can be seen from the table 6 that taking into consideration the contribution by top 10 countries for inbound tourist into Sri Lanka during the year 2013, India remains highest with 27% followed by UK with 18%, Germany 11%, Maldives with 10% and Netherlands at the 10th place with 3%. This % contribution is arrived only with the total of the top

ten countries whereas the overall arrivals into Sri Lanka from various countries with the percentage of Indian tourist is listed for the years from 2008 to 2013. (See table 6)

Table 6: Tourist arrivals of top ten countries of residence to Sri Lanka between 2009 to 2013

S. No	Country of Residence	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	% of 2013
1	INDIA	83634	126882	171374	176340	208795	27%
2	UK	81594	105496	106082	114218	137416	18%
3	GERMANY	29654	45727	55882	71642	85470	11%
4	MALDIVES	31916	35791	44018	47572	79474	10%
5	FRANCE	15886	31285	48695	56863	64388	8%
6	AUSTRALIA	26068	37290	46467	57776	60836	8%
7	RUSSIA	11834	13278	21385	28402	51235	7%
8	USA	14241	19093	24386	29907	34690	4%
9	JAPAN	10926	14352	20586	26085	31505	4%
10	NETHERLANDS	11291	17861	23966	26754	22281	3%
	TOTAL	317044	447055	562841	635559	776090	100%

Source: STDA- Annual Statistical Report- 2014

While Comparing the overall tourist inflow into Sri Lanka with the inflow from India for the years from 2008 to 2013 as can be seen from Table 7, the arrivals from India into Sri Lanka has been steadily increasing year on year from 2008 with an exception of 2012 only. On a comparison with overall inbound tourist into Sri Lanka across the globe and inbound from India into Sri Lanka there has been an average of 18% to 20% during the years from 2008 to 2013. It can also be seen that the overall percentage from India is also gradually decreasing from 19% during 2008 to 16% during 2013. ((See table 7)

Table 7: Overall Tourist arrivals vs Indian tourist into Sri Lanka

Year	Arrivals from all countries	Arrivals from India	% comparison
2008	438475	85238	19%
2009	447890	83634	19%
2010	654476	126882	19%
2011	855975	171374	20%
2012	1005605	176340	18%
2013	1274593	208795	16%

Source: STDA- Annual Statistical Report- 2014

Objectivities of Study

This study was conducted with the following objectives.

- To understand how Ramayana trails in Sri Lanka generates inbound tourist demand from India.
- To evaluate the image of Sri Lanka as a potential cultural historical tourist destination with specific reference to the Ramayana trails based on the opinion of the inbound tourist from India.

METHODOLOGY

Survey method was used to gather data required for this study. The respondents were International visitors to Sri Lanka and had experiences of visiting different destination in Sri Lanka including historical, archeological sites. The survey was specially focused on the Ramayana Trail sites in Sri Lanka. The Respondents were identified from among Indian tourists visiting various Ramayana Sites at locations in Sri Lanka generally based on convenience of sampling technique. In all a total of 220 tourists responded to the survey.

As Colombo is the most frequented entry and exit point to and from Sri Lanka, and the only international airport is at Hambantota in the southern part, mostly all inbound tourists would pass through Colombo before proceeding to other parts of the country and this factor influenced our decision to choose Colombo. Other relevant data were collected from secondary sources like Sri Lankan tourism authority websites, publicity materials & brochures.

Primary data was collected through field survey with the help of a structured questionnaire as the tool. The areas covered in the questionnaire were the demographic aspects like age, sex, income as well issues like purpose of visits, Ramayana sites visited, tourists satisfaction levels and the rating of the Ramayana sites in terms of the degrees of attractiveness of the sites.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The primary data was analysed in SPSS. The results were as follows:

Age and Sex:

About 73% of the respondents were between the age group of 45-60, the single largest group and about 57% were found to be males. About 48% of the respondents have visited Sri Lanka before and for 42% it was the first visit. About 65% of the respondents had an income between Rs 6, 00,000/- to Rs 8, 00,000/-. Per annum.

Purpose of Visit:

As regards to purpose of Visit to Sri Lanka, about 30% of the respondents visited the country for Pleasure and Vacation followed by 17% for visiting friends and relatives. Visits for Business accounted for 14% and the visits for Religious and cultural tourism including Ramayan trail constituted 14%. The remaining 25% were under the categorization of visits for Sports, Official and other purposes. (See table 8).

Table 8: Purpose of visit from India

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Pleasure/Vacation	65	30%
Visiting Friends & Relations	37	17%
Business	32	15%
Religious & Cultural	30	14%
Sports	20	9%
Official	18	8%
Others	18	8%
TOTAL	220	100%

Ramayana Sites in Sri Lanka

As far as Ramayana sites were concerned, 62% of respondents had visited temples connected to the Ramayana trail, 21% respondents have visited the caves on the trail and 17% of the respondents had visited the other sites namely Nuwara Eliya town among others. (See table 9).

Table 9: Ramayana sites visited

S.No	Ramayana Sites	Frequency	Percentage
1	Nuwara Eliya	25	11%
2	Divurumpola	2	1%
3	Istripuram-Wave of caves	0	0%
4	Sanjeevani Drops	0	0%
5	Nala Setu - Adam's Bridge	0	0%
6	Ramboda and Ravana Boda hills	7	3%
7	Sita Kotuwa	10	5%
8	Sri Bhaktha Hanuman temple	20	9%
9	Ussangoda	0	0%
10	Seetha Amman Temple	20	9%
11	Ravana Goda	20	9%
12	Ravana cave	20	9%
13	Gayathri Peedam	20	9%
14	Kataragama	6	3%
15	Kelaniya Buddhist temple	25	11%

16	Muneeshwaram	10	5%
17	Manavari	10	5%
18	Panchamuga Anjaneyar temple	25	11%
	Total	220	100%

Rating Sri Lanka for Ramayana Trail Sites

In terms of rating Sri Lanka as a destination for the cultural history with respect to Ramayana trail sites, 34% of the respondents opined that the country is only somewhat cultural and 27% say Sri Lanka is an average destination for the cultural sites pertaining to Ramayana trail.(see table 10).

Table 10: Ramayana Trail as a Cultural product

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Very Cultural	45	20%
Reasonably cultural	75	34%
Average	60	27%
Poor in cultural resources	30	14%
Very poor in cultural resources	10	5%
Total	220	100%

Satisfaction Levels of Tourists in Response to the Ramayana Sites in Sri Lanka

As regards to the level of satisfaction of tourists in respect of the Ramayana sites in Sri Lanka, about 65%- of the respondents are quite satisfied with the existing sites on the trail. (See table 11).

Table 11: Satisfaction levels among the tourists

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	35	16%
Very Good	85	39%
Good	65	30%
Average	25	11%
Below Average	10	5%
Total	220	100%

Information, Promotion and Advertisements on Sri Lanka Historical Ramayana Trail Sites

60 % of the respondents opine that they did not have enough information on cultural/historical sites including Ramayana trail sites of Sri Lanka .In terms

of promotion and advertisements on the Ramayana Trail sites in Sri Lanka, 70 % of respondents think that there is not enough promotion done by the Sri Lankan tourism authorities and the stake holders.

Potential of Ramayana Trails as a Circuit across Sri Lanka

Looking at the extent of the Ramayana Trail sites in Sri Lanka, 46% of the respondents believe that Sri Lanka has the potential to be a popular historical / cultural destination due to its rich historical / heritage sites including the Ramyana Trail sites which dates back to history which has been listed out through the inventories in the study are promoted through aggressive publicity in the target countries.

CONCLUSION

This study implies that cultural / historical sites including Ramayana trail sites are not the main drivers of the Indian tourist's visits into Sri Lanka. The awareness for Sri Lanka's rich historical / cultural resources is invisible and the image of the country as a heritage/cultural destination has not appeared up to its potential. For the Indian tourists, the sites and attractions other than the culturally rich Ramayana trail sites have appealed mostly as can be seen from this study. Important and must see Ramayana trail sites namely Sanjeevani Drops (at Jaffna, Mannar, Habarana, Hiripitiya, Galle), Nala Setu - Adam's Bridge, Ussangoda, Divurumpola, Kataragama and many other sites do not form an important part in these itineraries of the Indian tourists circuits visiting Sri Lanka.

Moreover inspite of having a wide range of historical resources encompassing pre- historic, Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and colonial heritage , the cultural rich Sri Lanka has not ensured the emergence of the Ramayana sites as an important contributor to development of its cultural tourism.

It was found that, most of the tourists revealed by the study visit Sri Lanka for the reasons other than the cultural and heritage tourism sites including Ramayana sites and that may be due to the dearth of information on Sri Lanka's historical attractions and insufficient promotion/advertising. Nevertheless most of the respondents rated Sri Lanka as a reasonably good destination for the heritage rich Ramayana sites and the satisfaction levels of the

respondants were quite satisfactory for the cultural /historical sites. These opinions of the respondents were based largely on their experiences they got while visiting some of the rich cultural and historical sites.

Promotion is needed in the adequate level. Word of mouth information that comes out as an outcome of personal experiences of the tourist at the Ramayana Sites in Sri Lanka can play a vital role in promotion. A favorable destination image should be created through appropriate promotional efforts so that cultural, historical or archeological sites including the Ramayana sites in Sri Lanka are given special emphasis like other areas of tourism interest. More in depth study in this area may be done based on this study to get a better view of the issue.

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