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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTING FOOD TOURISM IN PETTAH, SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka as a country is well known for tourism as well as hospitality. There is an increasing trend in tourists' arrivals on the cause of archaeological and historical places, cultural activities, adventure and etc. On the same time tourists were tend to stay short period of time in the country. As tourists are encouraged to stay few nights in the country, promotion of short term tourism experiences for the tourists will be an effective utilization of available natural and man-made resources. Therefore the study is motivated to develop a conceptual framework in order to promote food tourism in Pettah, Sri Lanka. As the sample frame of the study cannot be clearly identified the convenience sampling method has been used to collect data from the field and questionnaire method was used to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with Pettah in promoting food tourism. Questionnaire method was the main source of information while unstructured interviews also occasionally carried out. Descriptive statistics, SWOT analysis, and chi-square test were used to analyze data with the assistance of SPSS version 21.0 and Microsoft Excel 2010. The results of the study identified that most of the tourists are aware of Pettah as a place where all the goods are available. But none of the tourists was tend to visit Pettah due to popularity of its foods. Also the study could identified that the majority of tourists buy some street foods from the street vendors while they are experiencing shopping at Pettah. Thereby the study could identified that there is a huge opportunity to improve Pettah as a destination for Food Tourism. Pettah could be identified as a destination where a combination of strength and opportunities as well as weaknesses and threats too. The study found that Pettah is with a preferable environment for tourists and local travelers where majority of tourists and travelers comes for shopping purposes at lower cost. There is a collection of food manufacturing companies in the country whom that can be encouraged to be an active part of promoting food tourism in Pettah. Also there can be identified wide variety of foods and diverse product mixes relevant to specific regions, religions, festivals, races, and etc. On the same time the lower level attitude towards the quality of products in Pettah and the lack of cleanliness around the area are the major drawbacks to promote food tourism in Pettah. However the study could conclude that there is a significant relationship between demographic factors of the tourists and preference to the food tourism in Pettah. Thereby the promotion of food tourism in Pettah should be align with the different requirements of the tourists along with their demographic characteristics as well.

KEYWORDS: Food Tourism; Pettah, Sri Lanka, Tourists,

INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is an upcoming tourist destination since independence from the British in 1948. Sri Lanka Tourism has engaged in attracting tourists to the island by promoting tourism related activities, facilities, events, and organizations. Over the decades Sri Lanka Tourism improved in qualitatively and quantitatively from the categories of pristine, heritage, thrills, wild, bliss, scenic, essence and festive. However when comparing Sri Lanka Tourism with the interests of World Tourism aspects, there can be seen emerging tourists interests on tasting different foods. Traditional foods, Seasonal foods, and especially variety of food cultures belongs to variety of regions and nationalities, as Sri Lanka known as a multi religious, multi ethnic, and multi-cultural country.

Research Problem

The study emphasizes on developing a conceptual framework in promoting food tourism or in other words culinary tourism in Sri Lanka with special focus on “Pettah” which close to Colombo , the capital of Sri Lanka.

Research Objectives

General Objective

The general objective of the study is to develop a conceptual framework for promoting food tourism as identifying Galle face as a tourist destination which can contribute to sustainable tourism development while contributing to National economy of Sri Lanka.

Specific Objectives

- To find why the culinary tourism is important?
- To find what are the potential roles of food tourism in *Pettah*?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Culture is an embodiment of a people’s traditions and ways of life and is illustrated in the food, rituals, dances, festivals, sculptures, building designs, religion, dressing and other practices (UNESCO, 2001). Okech. (2014) also mentioned food as a component of culture. Culinary tourism is a subset of agricultural tourism that focuses specifically on the enjoyment of prepared food and drink. Sri Lanka as a country with variety of food products has the potential to brand traditional, seasonal, cultural, and other unique foods by own language where the quality, taste, hospitality, appearance, etc. may complete the branding process in order to make the brand of Sri Lankan foods in World Tourism. According to (Renko, Renko , & Polonijo (2010), food among the other components such as religion, events, festivals, and architecture are considered to be gray zones of cultural and heritage tourism which serves as a substance in enhancing the tourists’ experiences at the destinations.

METHODOLOGY

This paper exploits a case study approach emphasizing relevant literature related to culinary tourism as well as observations at Pettah, Colombo-Sri Lanka. The main objective of this study is to develop a conceptual framework for promoting food tourism as identifying Pettah as a tourist destination which can contribute to sustainable tourism development while contributing to National economy of Sri Lanka. Thereby the research questions emerged as, what is the role of food tourism as a part of cultural tourism and its impact on the economy, why culinary tourism is important, what are the potential roles of food tourism in Pettah. In order to address the above questions a SWOT analysis has taken into consideration with the use of an opinion survey among the customers both international and local at street vendors at Pettah. Convenience sampling included to non-random sampling techniques has been used to select the sample and the questionnaire was the main source of primary data collection as well as secondary data were referred in order facilitates the background for the study. Descriptive statistics, SWOT analysis, and chi-square test were used to analyze data with the assistance of SPSS version 21.0 and Microsoft Excel 2016.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

As the study emphasized on developing a conceptual framework for promoting food tourism in Pettah area of Sri Lanka, I is worthwhile to identify the stakeholders. Especially the customer base or the target group in Pettah area. In this sense the study has done a descriptive profile analysis of the target group. The Fig 1 shows the gender composition of tourists arrived to the Pettah area. The figure indicate that the majority of tourists were male which was recorded as 62 percent from the total and there were 38 percent of female tourists. When considering the age composition of tourists with reference to the gender, the study could identified that majority of male tourists were at 31-40 age category while the majority of female tourists were at 21-30 age category. It represents as 35.48 and 29.03 respectively (Fig 2).

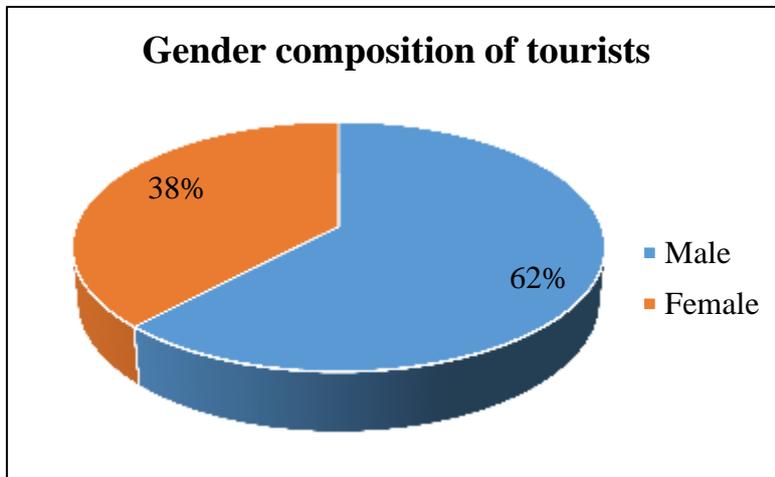


Fig 1: Gender composition of tourists

Source: Sample Survey (2018)

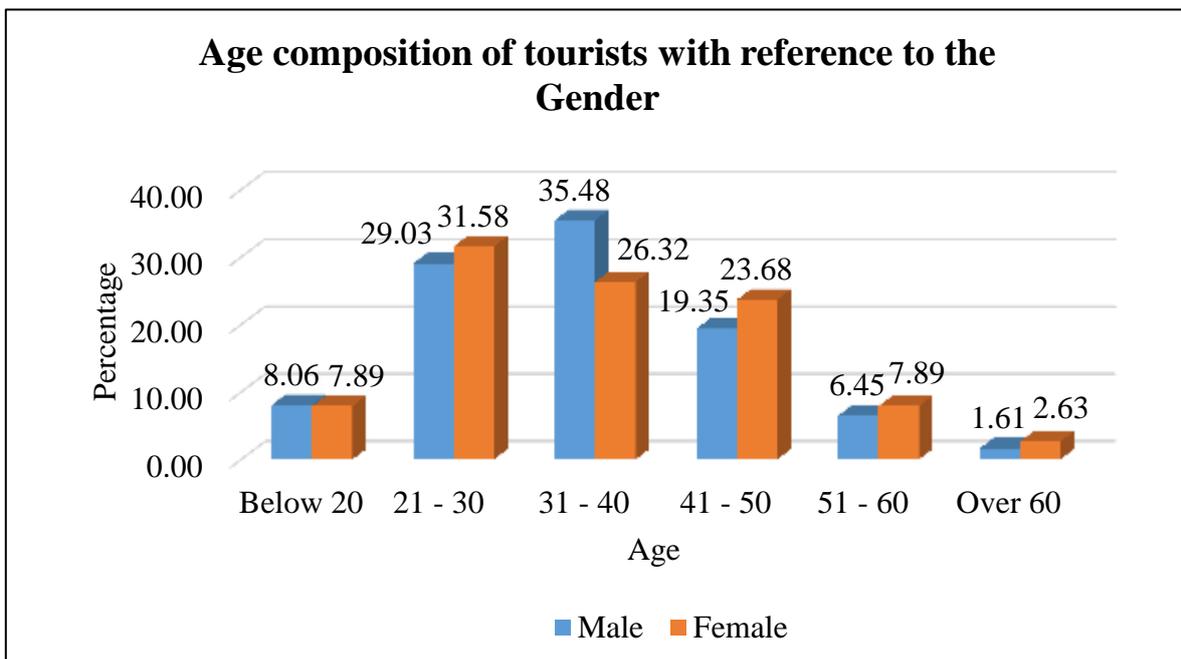


Fig 2: Age composition of tourists with reference to the Gender

Source: Sample Survey (2018)

Thereby the study could identify the basis of the customer profile in terms of gender and age in order to decide what food items are most preferable. The previous studies have highlighted that age and gender have an impact to the food preference of the

people. Thereby gender difference and age difference should be considered when developing the conceptual framework in promoting food tourism. However the conceptual framework should in line with the preference of the young generation.

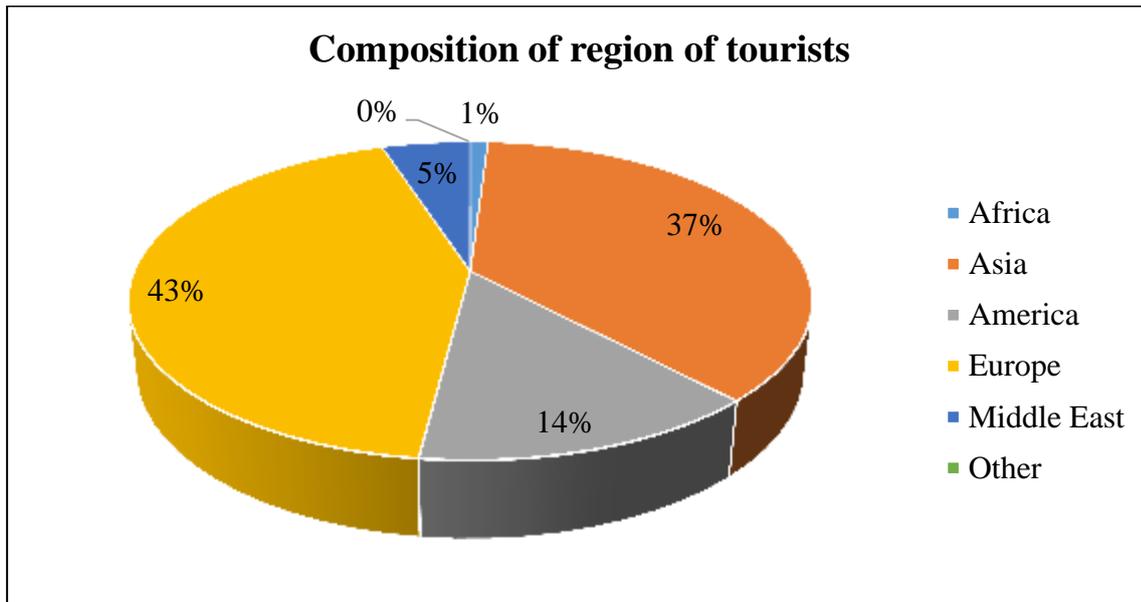


Fig 3: Composition of region of tourists

Source: Sample Survey (2018)

The Fig 3 implies the composition of regions of tourists who were met in Pettah area. The majority of tourists were from European countries and next most arrivals were from Asian countries which recorded as 43 percent and 37 percent respectively. There were only 14 percent from American region

and another 5 percent from Middle East region. Thereby the preference of European countries and Asian countries should be given priority when developing the conceptual framework in promoting food tourism in Sri Lanka as they represent the majority of arrivals.

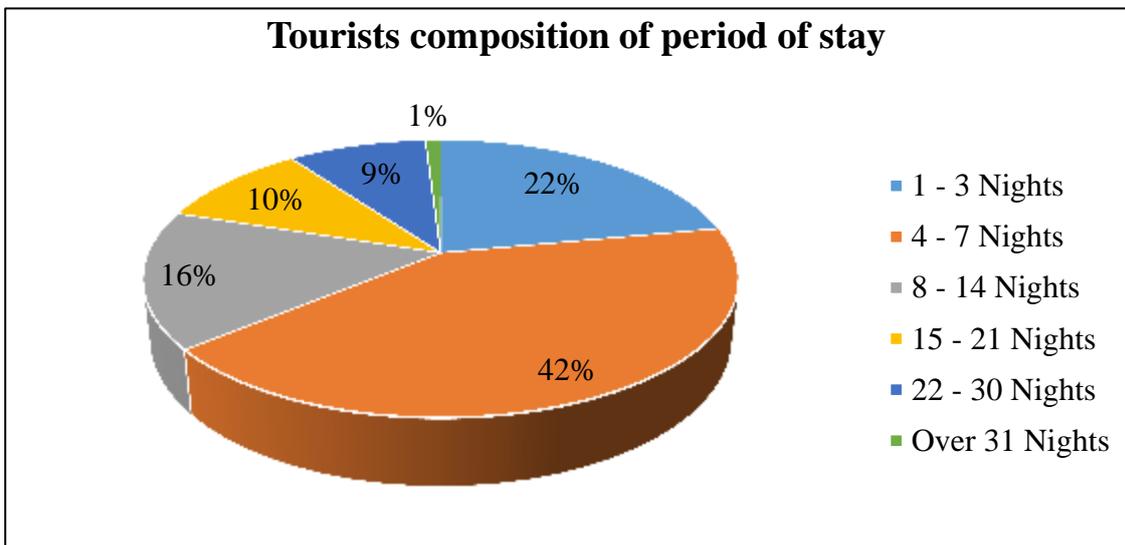


Fig 4: Tourists composition of period of stay

Source: Sample Survey (2018)

Food is a concept that have wide varieties and variations specifically to the different countries and cultures as well. It is worthy to identify the levels of food preference to each type of foods such as traditional foods, cultural foods, fast foods, and etc. Thereby the staying period of tourists within the country is useful to be known in order to decide the

quantity of foods in each type. The Fig 4 shows that majority of tourists were tend to stay 4-7 nights which is recorded as 42 percent and another 22 percent of tourists tend to stay 1-3 nights in the country. Thereby the tourists could spend at least 1-2 days in the pettah area as the main purpose of majority of tourists are not to visit Colombo area.

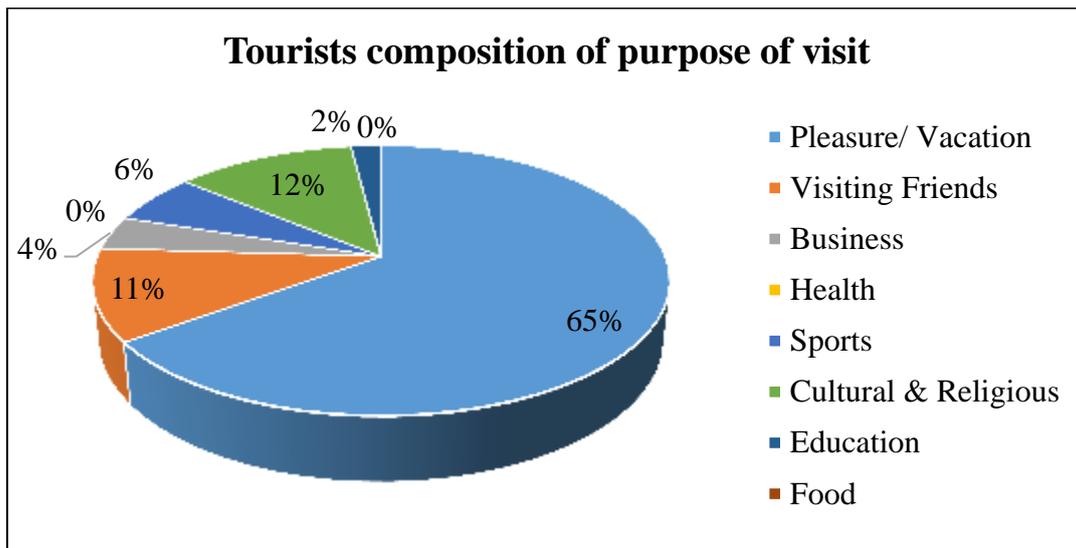


Fig 5: Tourists composition of purpose of visit

Source: Sample Survey (2018)

The above figure reveals one of the most important findings of the study where none of the tourists is visit Pettah for Food. The majority of tourists arrive to Sri Lanka for the purpose of pleasure and to spend the vacation. It represents 62 percent of the tourists. Some other purposes were to participate in cultural and religious activities, visiting friends, business and sports where recorded as 12

percent, 11 percent, 4 percent and 6 percent from the total tourists arrivals.

The following figure shows an important information where majority of tourists tend to buy street foods which is recorded as 88 percent. While the tourists’ main purpose of visiting Sri Lanka was not to taste foods in Sri Lanka, they prefer to taste unique street foods in the country.

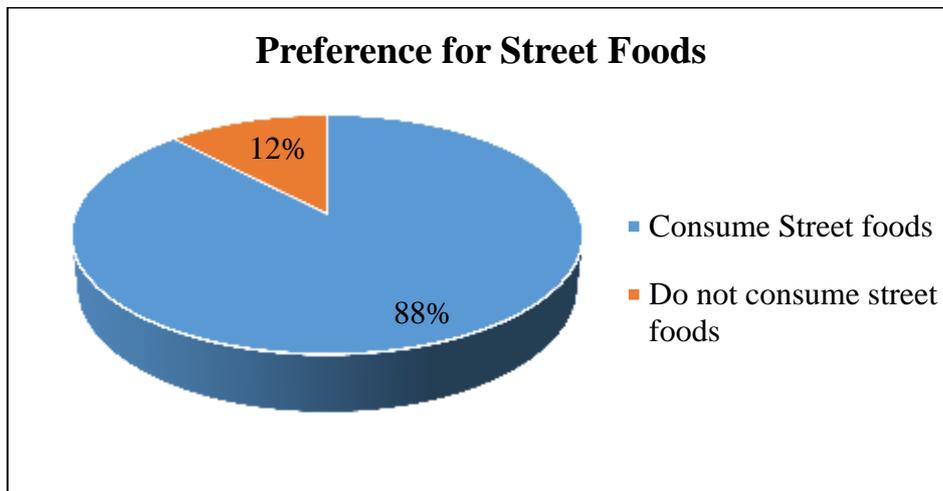


Fig 6: Preference for street foods

Source: Sample Survey (2018)

There were 59 percent of female tourists and 41 percent of male tourists among the tourists who consume street foods. Tourists’ opinion towards having food tourism in Pettah with reference to availability, quality and value of money are respectively as 58 percent, 75 percent and 88 percent. The most preferable food store was fast foods which are recorded as 67 percent and the least preferable type of store is traditional foods. As Pettah has identified as a potential to promote food tourism, thereby the SWOT analysis has taken place in order to develop the conceptual framework in promoting

Pettah as a tourist attraction especially for wide variety of foods.

However the chi-square tests show that gender and age of the tourists’ do not have an impact to the preference of foods in Pettah while region, period of stay and purpose of visit have an impact to the preference of foods in Pettah.

SWOT Analysis

When considering the strengths in promoting *Galle face* as a tourists’ destination in specializing for food tourism can be identified as the *Galle face* is a well maintained area and an unspoiled destination

which is regularly under maintenance. As well as *Galle face* is with a preferable environment for tourists and local travellers at any age where it can be a power to enrich the tourists' base to *Galle face*. There is a collection of food manufacturing companies in the country whom that can be encouraged in being an active part of promoting food tourism in *Galle face*. Also wide variety of foods and diverse product mixes relevant to specific regions, religions, festivals, races, and etc. are strengths in promoting food tourism in Sri Lanka.

On the same time the weaknesses in promoting food tourism can be identified as lack of strategies with responsible parties and effective involvement from them, lack of researches to support decision making towards food tourism. As well as inconsistency in marketing campaigns and procedures for food tourism and lack of quality framework for food tourism seems as drawbacks in promoting food tourism in *Galle face*.

With the above mentioned strengths and weaknesses that emerges internally, deals with the opportunities and treats from external. Improving customer interest towards tourism related activities and appreciation of locally produced goods are at a high level. Also there can be seen an increased tourists' attraction and arrival to the country where they are interested in quick travels. Another main opportunity for Sri Lanka to promote food tourism is the possibility to brand Sri Lankan foods in the world market with the brands already heals the world market.

On the same time inability to deliver tangible benefits to stakeholders and inability to identify consumer demand for the food products remain as treats for promoting food tourism in *Galle face* Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Colombo can be identified as a tourist hub where almost all the tourists arrive to the country should disseminate through Colombo, and thereby *Galle face* can be promoted as a tourist's destination especially identifying the lack of opportunity to tourists to experience the variety of foods in Sri Lanka. The main consideration should be on destination marketing in order to develop *Galle face* as a place with culinary tourism.

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