

The Effectiveness of Word of mouth in Generating Tourists to the Destination of Sri Lanka: A study with Special Reference to the City of Kandy

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Tourism sector is one of the most important foreign exchange generating industries in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, the industry is highly based on services compared to other major industries in the country. Therefore, it generates a large amount of direct and indirect job opportunities to the Sri Lankan job market and contribute tremendously to resolve many problems in the country. Most tourists travel to Sri Lanka by finding details using different sources such as internet, books, magazines, and with the help of word of mouth through friends and relatives. Here, the word of mouth is simply what happens when a tourists' interest in a destination's product or service is reflected in their day-to-day conversations. If the travel experience is satisfactory to a tourist, the word of mouth creates a positive image of a destination. Majority of tourists rely on their friends and relatives' words on travel experiences to get the best experience. The research problem of the study was "is the word of mouth a considerable factor in generating a large flow of tourists to Sri Lanka". And also the main objective of the research was to identify the effectiveness of word of mouth in attracting tourists to the destination of Sri Lanka. The study was mainly based on quantitative and qualitative data, and randomly selected 50 tourists in the city of Kandy were interviewed and used structured questionnaires and conversations to gather data while referring to internet, books and magazines were also done. While 58 % of tourists responded that they have highly depended on their friends' and relatives' responses in selecting the destination of Sri Lanka to get maximum satisfaction out of the travel, 36% of the respondents referred to web-sites and social Media to explore the beauty, activities, regulations, people, history and culture of the particular destination to travel. Therefore, the word of mouth is playing a vital role in generating a high level of visiting by tourists to the country and services, facilities and friendliness of people highly contribute in creating a positive word of mouth with regard to Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is easy to create a positive word of mouth and well attracted image on the island of Sri Lanka by offering well-organized services and diversified products beyond the satisfaction, updating tourism relevant web-sites using heart touching photographs, documentaries and information.

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