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STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING THE ARRIVAL OF RUSSIAN TOURIST TO SRI LANKA

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the vital financial activities in the country and people from all over the world visit Sri Lanka to experience the culture, the beautiful beaches, and the wildlife (Jayawardena, 2013 & Yehia, 2019). When establishing the importance of the tourist sector in many nations, the author notes that this sector plays a pivotal role in employment opportunities and income generation across the globe. According to Yehia (2019), Sri Lanka is a recently discovered tourist hot spot that offers both culture and geographical division and nice people. Russia's position and outlook, as regards the tourism industry, if compared to other countries, presents a significant opportunity for further growth. Russian tourists have been identified as one of the significant sources of tourism in Sri Lanka and from 2018 to the present according to the data available, there were about 450000 Russian tourists to Sri Lanka (Jayavira, 2023). Russia is the second largest source market for Sri Lanka after India. Russian tourists are rather specific in their choice of holidays; they prefer exclusive service and individual approach. Knowledge of the overall Sri Lankan tourism history and culture together with the additional background about the shifting Russian tourists' behaviour will help in developing successful strategies. According to the 2023 Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority annual report,

Russian tourist average duration of stay is higher than that of Indian tourists. USD 229 million earn from Indians and USD 324.7 million earn from Russian Federation. Therefore, based on earnings from tourist arrival in 2023, it can be concluded Russian Federation made a more significant contribution to Sri Lanka when compared to India.

Table 1: Average duration of stay by source markets

Rank	Country	Number of tourists	Average duration of Stay (Nights)
1	India	302,844	4.60
2	Russian Federation	197,498	10.00
3	United Kingdom	130,088	13.38
4	Germany	102,539	11.93
5	China	68,789	6.42
6	Australia	67,436	10.32

7	France	56,251	11.39
8	United States	46,344	7.32
9	Canada	43,944	11.25
10	Maldives	37,328	5.09
11	Netherlands	29,056	14.10
12	Spain	23,905	9.95
13	Switzerland	23,556	12.93
14	Italy	22,242	10.44
15	Israel	19,517	12.28
16	Japan	19,583	5.58
17	Poland	17,946	10.40
18	Bangladesh	17,846	3.85
19	Czech Republic	12,056	11.28
20	Belgium	10,667	12.89

Source: Year in Review -2023 (SLTDA)

The significant growth in the number of Russian tourists visiting Sri Lanka presents a substantial opportunity for the country's tourism industry. However, despite the increasing arrival, there are still untapped potentials and challenges that need to be addressed to maximize the benefits of this market segment. The critical problems lie in poorly targeted marketing, direct flight capacity, language barriers, and an insufficient cultural adaptation of tourist services. In addition, the seasonality of Russian tourist flows, which peak at different coasts during different times of the year, requires a strategic intervention to evenly redistribute tourist activity throughout the four seasons of the year. This research aims to identify and analyze effective strategies to overcome these difficulties and make use of new opportunities for sustainable growth in the target market to increase the inflow of Russian tourists to Sri Lanka.

Methodology

Data collection involves questionnaires that were sent to approximately 400 passengers and collected from 384 passengers. The qualitative data were collected from travel agents, staff at hotels, and employees of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau through online interviews. Initially intend to conduct 15 interviews. However, due to saturation occurs interview process was concluded after 10 interviews. IMB SPSS Statistics software was used in analyzing quantitative data. Based on qualitative data from interviews, a thematic analysis was conducted.

Results and Discussion

The findings derived from the quantitative data collected through the survey are compared and contrasted with the findings from the qualitative interviews conducted with the participants. The dependent variable of the multiple linear regression model is tourist satisfaction and the independent variables are Marketing Effort, Bilateral

Relations and Government Initiatives, Infrastructural Developments, and Cultural Adaptation and Language Services.

Table 2: Correlation between dependent variable and independent variables

	Pearson Correlation	Significant
Marketing Effort	.457**	0.000
Infrastructural Developments	.426**	0.000
Cultural Adaptation and Language Services	.352**	0.000
Bilateral Relations and Government Initiatives	.528**	0.000

According to the Pearson Correlation, coefficients in Table 2, all the values are above 0.3. This value indicates that all independent variables positively correlated with the dependent variable. Also, p-values less than 0.05 indicate that the correlation is statistically significant. An adjusted R² value of 0.377 suggests that the explanatory power of the model is only slightly significant. The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.453) indicates a moderate level of prediction accuracy. The FStatistic of 47.156 with a p-value of 0.000 shows that the predictors as a group significantly explain the variance in the dependent variable (Tourist Satisfaction). The Regression Sum of Squares (48.385) explains a substantial portion of the total variance (125.749) indicating the effectiveness of the model.

Table 3: Coefficient value determine the impact of dependent variable and independent variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.044	.177		5.907	.000
	Marketing Effort	.221	.051	.228	4.346	.000
	Infrastructural Developments	.068	.061	.067	1.127	.260
	Cultural Adaptation and Language Services	.365	.05	.352	7.351	.000

Bilateral Relations and Government Initiatives	.320	.052	.334	6.129	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction					

According to the regression output in Table 3, Marketing Effort has a positive and significant impact on Tourist Satisfaction ($\beta_1 = 0.221, p = 0.000$). Infrastructural Developments have a positive but not significant impact on Tourist Satisfaction ($\beta_2 = 0.068, p = 0.260$). Also, Cultural Adaptation and Language Services have a positive and significant impact on Overall Satisfaction ($\beta_4 = 0.365, p < 0.001$). Further, Bilateral Relations and Government Initiatives have a strong positive and significant impact on tourist Satisfaction ($\beta_3 = 0.320, p = 0.000$).

Discussion & Conclusion

The analysis of the quantitative results showed a direct positive correlation between the efforts expended on marketing and the general satisfaction of customers with a correlation value of 0.457. The regression analysis supported the marketing areas and their positive and significant relationship with the dependent variable of tourist satisfaction; $\beta_1 = 0.221, p = 0.000$. This is consistent with the strategies received from the qualitative interviews where among others the main approaches like the collaboration with Russian tourist's satisfaction and engagement with social media influencers were identified.

Bilateral relations and government initiatives showed the strongest positive correlation with tourist satisfaction in the quantitative data and were also significant predictors in the regression model ($\beta_2 = 0.320, p = 0.000$). Qualitative interviews corroborated this, highlighting the effectiveness of visa facilitation, strategic partnerships, and direct flights in attracting Russian tourists.

On the infrastructural development and tourist satisfaction results, the quantitative analysis presented the former as having a positive relationship with the latter, with $r=0.426$; however, the regression analysis did not find a significant effect ($\beta_3= 0.068, p = 0.260$). On the other hand, qualitative interviews highlighted the need for hygiene, censure of facilities, and better physical infrastructure in transport for heightening tourists' experience.

Notably, the regression analysis showed that while there was a significant positive association between Cultural Adaptation and Language Services and tourist Satisfaction ($\beta_4 = 0.365, p < 0.001$), participants in qualitative interviews called for improvements in Russian-language services and culturally tailored experiences in today's organizational environment.

The objectives of this research were to determine and evaluate measures that contribute to the promotion of the number of Russian tourists visiting Sri Lanka. The findings underscore the importance of targeted marketing efforts, infrastructural

developments, cultural adaptation, and streamlined visa processes in influencing the satisfaction and arrival of Russian tourists to Sri Lanka. Overall, high satisfaction levels among Russian tourists, especially regarding Sri Lankan hospitality, suggest that they are likely to recommend the destination to others, highlighting the significance of continuous improvements and strategic efforts to sustain and grow this market segment. However, some of the many highlighted issues are the high cost of accommodation, transport challenges, and language. Solving these problems is critical if one wants to improve the experience of the tourists and, as a result, have repeat customers.

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