Analyzing the Determinants of Tourists' Buying Behaviour in Sri Lanka: With Special Reference to Tourism Destinations in Down South of Sri Lanka

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author NPRD designed the study, performed the statistical analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors AAI and UGOS collectively managed the field survey and completed the literature review. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

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ABSTRACT

Aims: This study models tourists' buying behavior in Sri Lanka analyzing key determinants of tourists' buying behavior along with demographic characteristics of the tourists. The study focuses on how Marketing Mix Factors, Situational Factors and Personal Factors and other demographic factors affect tourist buying behavior in three tourist destinations in Down-South of Sri Lanka.
Methodology: Data were collected from 500 tourists who visited three main tourist destinations such as *Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna* and *Mirissa* located in Down-South of Sri Lanka. Both descriptive and econometric analyses were employed to accomplish the objectives of the study.
Results: The results of the descriptive analysis suggest that most of the tourists were from countries such as Russia, Germany and United Kingdom and their main purpose of the visits were recreation and leisure followed by education and health. Moreover, the respondents stayed 20 days on average in Down-South. However, it was observed that tourists' spending per day is significantly low and more than 69% of the tourists spent less than 100$ per day. The econometric findings emphasize that all three key determinants of consumer buying behaviour– marketing mix factors, situational factors and personal factors positively affect the tourists' buying behavior. Apart

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from that, personal factors have been recognized as the most influential factor of tourists' buying behavior in the context of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, demographic characteristics of tourists such as gender, marital status, education level and employment status also affect tourist buying behavior.
Conclusion: Hence, appropriate policies are required to enhance the quality of all indicators of the marketing mix, situational factors and personal factors in order to increase tourists' buying behavior. Similarly, the current study also recommends the implementation of efficient policies to ensure security, cultural harmony and political stability in order to uplift tourists' buying behavior pattern.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Tourism Sector: Steady Growth and a Real Industry

Globally, the tourism sector has shown a steady growth over the last two decades, transforming the touristic activities into a real industry. In the new millennium, we have witnessed a continuous growth of interest in the way people spend their leisure time. There is also great interest in the development of what people "consume" during these periods of free time, especially in times dedicated to travel and holidays. Tourism include activities where people travel to and stay in locations outside their usual surroundings for a period of not more than one consecutive year for leisure business or other purposes. Choices made by tourists are changeable due to the economic conditions in their countries of origin and perception of status associated with destination [1]. In tourism, the efforts of boosting sales are carried out with help of personal selling, advertising, promotion, public relations and sales development tools. Social media platforms provide more rapid dissemination of such rumours and hence the effects of rumours are more great [2]. With the aim of developing a model of tourist behaviour [3] has reviewed the social and psychological influences on individual travel Behavior. Moreover, Dimanche and Havitz [4] have reviewed four concepts (ego-involvement, loyalty and commitment, family decision-making and novelty-seeking) in an attempt to methodologically advance consumer behaviour in tourism studies. Tourists' consuming pattern is crucial in terms of tourism receipt which contributes to economic growth and development in different ways. As Fratu [5] indicated, it is required to consider tourists' buying behavior when promoting and selling tourism products. Omondi [6] defines tourism buying behaviour as the combination of acts, attitudes and decisions concerned with choosing buying and consuming any of the tourism products, services and its post consuming reactions. Englis and Solomon [7] further elaborated that tourism buying ehaviour consists of certain decisions, activities and experiences which required to fulfil their needs and wants. Myers and Sar [8] highlighted that consumer buying behaviour is widely affected by promotions, advertisements and also previous experiences.

Developing tourism is one of the major economic development strategies in Sri Lanka. According to the Tourism Strategic Plan, (2011) the major agendas of tourism development in Sri Lanka are create an environment conducive for tourism promotion, attracting the potential inbound tourist markets and create awareness and positive perception globally with the objective of achieving a target of twenty five million tourists within five years' time period. Moreover, success of any tourist attraction has depended heavily on giving the customer what he or she wants. Since, tourism has been the third largest foreign income earner of Sri Lanka, it is crucial to examine tourists' buying behaviour in the context of Sri Lanka. Similarly, being an island, Sri Lanka is popular for Sun and Sand tourism among the region and therefore majority of tourists prefer to visit major tourism destinations located in Down South costal area. However, lack of empirical studies on this matter leaves a huge gap that should be addressed by a proper empirical study. Therefore, the current study aims to recognize tourists' consumer buying behaviour in the context of Down South of Sri Lanka. More specifically, major destinations such as Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Mirissa are taken into account on this regard.

1.2 Research Objectives and Structure of the Study

The main objective of the current study is to recognize the key determinants of tourists'

buying behaviour in the context of Sri Lanka. The specific objectives of the study are as follows.

1. Examine the impacts of marketing mix factors, situational factors and personal factors on tourists' buying Behavior in Down South of Sri Lanka and recognize the most influential factor out them.
2. Observe whether the demographic factors of tourists influence their buying behavior.

The current study is expected to achieve the highlighted objectives and the paper is structured as follow. The next section of the paper is allocated for the literature review where the existing knowledge is critically reviewed. After that, the methodology applied to achieve the objectives of the research is elaborated followed by the results and discussion. Finally, conclusions and recommendations of the study is highlighted along with reference.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Impact of Marketing-Mix Factors on Consumer Buying Behavior

2.1.1 Product

A components view of travel and tourism products suggests those tourism products as a category of components or elements, which consists transport, accommodation attractions and other facilities, like catering and entertainments. There are five main components of tourism products. The whole tourism product concept discusses wider view on product concept, defining tourism product as complete experience from the time tourist leaves home to the time he returns to it Middleton and Clark [9]. Leiper [10] defines the attractions as systems or the sets of interconnected elements. Leiper [10] further illustrates tourist attractions as all those elements of "non-home" place that tie discretionary travellers away from their homes. They usually include landscapes to observe, activities to participate in, and experiences to remember Kimes and Chase [11]. Tourist attraction is a system that covers three elements: a tourist or human element, a nucleus or central element, and marker or informative element. Tourist attraction comes into existence when the three elements are connected Leiper [10].

2.1.2 Price

The "price" of tourism is highly irregular due to the interdependent and seasonal nature of tourism services. Kimes and Chase [11] stated that, understanding the composition of and an interrelationships among regional tourism products is a vital prerequisite to the development of an effective pricing strategy. Flexible pricing strategies play a main role in demand management, as lower prices can be used to tourist attraction towards various destinations during their off-seasons. Similarly, higher prices can be used to limit visitors in peak seasons. Kimes and Chase [11] argued for a broader managerial view of yield management (also known as revenue management) than the more common tactical and mathematical perspective of pricing.

2.1.3 Place

An organization should pay attention to place decisions, because of the importance of the product and consumption occurring at the same time and at the same place; a place that delivers entire facts of customer, competition, promotion action, and marketing procedures. In addition, place focuses on how it can deliver the products on the right time and at the right place, and which channel has to be used to deliver the product [12]. Travel intermediaries are defined as members in the distribution chain in the tourism marketing channel. They include retail travel agents, tour packagers, incentive marketers, and tour wholesalers. They provide lodging, transportation and other travel products and services demanded by domestic and foreign tourists. Travel intermediaries have considerable influence in the decision making process of the tourist. They serve as an opinion leader and expert for taking a travel decision process. They play the role of influencers for many of their loyal customers. This implies that they are of greater importance to both the tourist and the destination marketer particularly in the cases of destinations with far greater distance from the point of origin.

2.1.4 Promotion

Promotion is basically considered a selling technique; to accomplish in every marketing program. It must be involved with communication (promotion). Promotion is vital as it provides information, advice, and persuades the target market in their buying behavior. It guides and teaches the customer or consumer to take action at a particular time and how they can utilize the product and get beneficial outcome from it. Non - search capability refers to the fact that before they are purchased intangibles cannot be searched or inspected. Physical service

attributes can be checked in advance, such as the appearance of a health club and the type of equipment installed, but the experience of working with the trainers can only be determined by experience.

2.1.5 Personnel

The level of service provided and the delivery of the service can be an important source of differentiation and competitive advantage. Service staff is the services' most visible element and the component that delivers service quality significantly. As the service staff represent the company in its interactions with the customers and deliver the brand promise, the service staff are also very much important for the service firm (from the customers' point of view) and the brand. Highly motivated service employees play a key role in anticipating customer needs, building customer relationships and building customer loyalty. Other than being an invaluable asset in high contact services, frontline staff is also crucial in low contact services where technology is largely commoditized. The firms' differentiation will then rest on these few moments of truth whether it is through the phone, email or face-to-face.

2.1.6 Process

Process is generally defined as action and function that increases value for low - cost and high - customer benefit products and is more important for service than for goods. According to Hirankitti et al. [13], both the pace of the process and the ability of the service providers are clearly revealed to the customer and form the basis for their satisfaction with the purchase. Process management therefore ensures quality availability and consistency. Given the process management's simultaneous consumption and production, it is extremely difficult to balance service demand with service delivery [14]. Designing and implementing product elements is crucial for product creation and delivery.

2.1.7 Physical evidence

This factor refers to the environment in which the service is delivered and any tangible goods facilitating the service's performance and communication. This is very important because the customer normally assesses the quality of the service it provides. Rafiq and Ahmed [15]. In addition, Rafiq and Ahmed [15] said, this factor also refers to the environment in which the services production is in. Similarly, Bitner [16] adds that other visible surroundings can affect the impressions perceived by the customers about service quality. The components of the service experience are called the "services - cape "- that is, the atmosphere, the background music, the seating comfort and the physical layout of the service facility, the appearance of the staff can greatly affect the satisfaction of a customer with a service experience [17]. The environmental decoration and design also have a major impact on the service expectations of the customer. Services cannot normally be displayed; therefore, companies should create an appropriate environment to emphasize the fact to customers [18].

2.2 Impact of Situational and Personal Factors on Consumer Buying Behavior

Marketing literature has revealed that shoppers buying decisions can be affected by many factors, including individual and psychological characteristics, cultural, social and environmental variables and promotional strategies [19]. Kotler [20] argued that other situational factors influencing behavioral affect the decision process of the buyers and that this should be considered to explain the customers ' purchase decisions. Belk argued that it is possible to classify time, place and other situational factors that influence the purchasing decision as environment. Therefore, it is acceptable that situations and behavioral settings are subunits within an environment, although what ' bound and define ' an environment is not clearly defined, it can be considered as the main characteristic that encompasses a number of factors [20].

Personal factors such as the age and state of a buyer's life cycle, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, and personality and self-concept influence the decisions of an individual [21]. Change in the lifetime of consumers and the purchase of products vary depending on age and stage of life. Factors related to age include food, clothing, recreation and furniture taste [22]. In addition, during lifetime, environment, values, lifestyle, hobbies and consumer habits are evolving. Stages of family life change the behaviour of buying and the selection of brands. Traditionally, only young singles and married couples with children included a family life cycle. Marketers today focus on alternative, non-traditional stages such as unmarried couples, childless couples, same-sex couples, single parents and later-life singles [23].

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study is designed to examine the determinants of consumer buying behaviour in the context of international tourists in Sri Lanka. As Englis and Solomon [7] indicated, series of activities which lead to make decisions to satisfy the consumers' needs and wants is known as consumer behavior. Thus, consumer buying behaviour is an integral part of tourism marketing which directly focuses on promoting and selling tourism products [5]. Further, Myers and Sar [8] emphasized that consumers make their decisions considering various factors such as influence of advertising and marketing, physical conditions of the products, consumers'' expectation and background information as well. Considering the study by Omondi [6], the present study recognizes main three factors of consumer buying behaviour in the context of Sri Lanka tourism market. The factors include Marketing Mix Factors, Situational Factors and Personal Factors. Table 1 indicates the utilized indicators to measure each factor along with the dependent variable – tourists' buying Behavior.

Three indices such as Marketing Mix Factors (MMF), Situational Factors (SF) and Personal Factors (PF) were constructed taking the average of each indicator.

3.2 Study Area, Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

The study based on main tourist destinations in down-south of Sri Lanka which include Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Mirissa. According to SLTDA (2017), South Coast has been reporting the highest foreign guest nights in graded accommodations (4,184,695 in 2017) and also South Coast accounts for the highest capacity in tourist hotels (8,270 rooms). Especially, Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Mirissa beaches have been recognized as most attractive beaches in the South Coast which enrich with essential facilities for tourist to make their stay more memorable. Consequently, aforementioned destinations were selected for the study. Convenient sampling method were applied to collect data from altogether 500 international tourists who visited three destinations. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the required data and key sections of the questionnaire such as marketing-mix factors, situational factors and personal factors were prepared based on [6].

3.3 Analytical Techniques

Collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and econometric methods. The descriptive analysis was used to visualize the profile of tourists, information related to staying

Table 1. Operationalization of variables

Factors/Variables	Indicator(s)	Measuring scale
Tourists' Buying Behavior	The Product of Length of Stay and Average Spending per Day	Numerical
Marketing Mix Factors	Product	5 Point Likert Scale
	Price	5 Point Likert Scale
	Promotion	5 Point Likert Scale
	Place	5 Point Likert Scale
	Physical Evidence	5 Point Likert Scale
	People	5 Point Likert Scale
	Process	5 Point Likert Scale
Situational Factors	Physical Factors	5 Point Likert Scale
	Social Factors	5 Point Likert Scale
	Time Factors	5 Point Likert Scale
Personal Factors	Age Factors	5 Point Likert Scale
	Stage in Life	5 Point Likert Scale
	Personality and self-concept	5 Point Likert Scale
	Life Style	5 Point Likert Scale
	Income	5 Point Likert Scale

Source: Created by authors

Sri Lanka along with indices related to market-mix factors, situational factors and physical factors. Apart from that, the econometric analysis was applied to examine the impact of each factor on consumer buying Behavior. Particularly, the following regression model was estimated under Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method.

$$\ln BB = \beta_0 + \beta_1 lnMMF + \beta_2 lnSF + \beta_3 lnPF + \beta_i X_i + u_i \quad (1)$$

Where;

lnBB – Log of Buying Behavior
lnMMF – Log of Marketing Mix Factors
lnSF – Log of Situational Factors
lnPF – Log of Personal Factors
Xi – Vector of control variables which include Age, Marital Status, Education Level and Employment Status

The regression includes log transformation of the variable in order to minimize the unnecessary variability of each variable and also provide a meaningful interpretation to the estimated coefficients.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Reliability implies whether a measurement produces consistent results, when the measurement is repeated a number of times. The analysis which determines the reliability of a measurement is known as reliability analysis which takes into account the association between the scores obtained from different administrations of the scale. Hence, higher association in reliability analysis confirms consistent results for the measurement. The current study carried out the reliability analysis to determine whether the measurements related to each dimensions are reliable. Table 2 indicates the results of the reliability analysis.

The reliability of a measurement is checked based on the Cronbach Alpha value and in general the value should be 7 or above. According to Table 2, it is apparent that Cronbach Alpha values related to each dimension are higher than 0.7. Therefore, the measurements included in the questionnaire are reliable to conduct the present study.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

4.2.1 Country of origin of the tourists and purpose of visit

As Table 3 indicates, majority of the tourists who visited the key tourism destinations in Down-South area were from Russia (17.8%) followed by Germany (17%) and United Kingdom (13.8%). Apart from that, Australian accounted for 13.8% while 5% equally accounted by the tourists from Netherland and Sweden. These facts reveal that majority of the tourists to Down-South are from developed countries and however wider diversity can be seen in terms of tourist arrivals to Down-South.

Table 2. Reliability analysis

Dimensions	Indicators	Number of measurements	Cronbach alpha value
Marketing Mix Factors	Product	3	0.732
	Price	3	0.783
	Promotion	3	0.711
	Place	3	0.834
	Physical Evidence	3	0.756
	Processes	3	0.734
Situational Factors	Physical Factors	3	0.821
	Social Factors	3	0.873
	Time Factors	3	0.707
Personal Factors	Age	3	0.786
	Stage in Life	3	0.843
	Personality and Self Concept	3	0.702
	Lifestyle	3	0.785
	Income	3	0.831

Source: Computed by authors based on survey data

Table 3. Country of origin

Country	Percentage
Russia	17.8%
Germany	17%
United Kingdom	13.8%
Australia	5.2%
Netherland	5%
Sweden	5%
Ukraine	4.4%
Canada	3.4%
France	3%
Czech Republic	2.6%
Switzerland	2.4%
Other	20.4%
Total	100%

Source: Computed by authors based on field survey

Fig. 1 clearly visualizes that 85% of tourists visited Down-South for recreation and leisure purposes while 2.4%, 1.8% and 1.6% of tourists visited for education, official and business activities. Thus, it is apparent that Down-South is a more famous among tourist as recreation and leisure destination due to its locational attractions which mainly include beautiful beaches.

4.2.2 Length of stay and average spending per day

Both length of stay and average spending per day is crucial in terms of tourist receipts to Sri Lanka. Table 4 indicates the length of stay of the responded tourists. The table clearly highlights that 42.2% of tourists stayed 9-14 days in Down-South while 20.4% tourists stayed at 20-50 days. However, calculation confirms that the average length of stay of the respondents is 20 day.

Table 4. Length of stay

No. of Days	Percentage
Less than 5	1.4%
05-09	11.4%
09-14	42.2%
15-19	19.6%
20-50	20.4%
More than 50	5%

Source: Computed by authors based on field survey

Furthermore, it is indicated that tourists who stayed less than 5 days and more than 50 days are significantly low (6.4% in total).

Table 5. Average spending per day

Expenditure US $	Percentage
Below 50$	38.9%
50$ - 99$	30.3%
100$ - 149$	17.1%
150$ - 200$	9.7%
More than 200$	3.9%

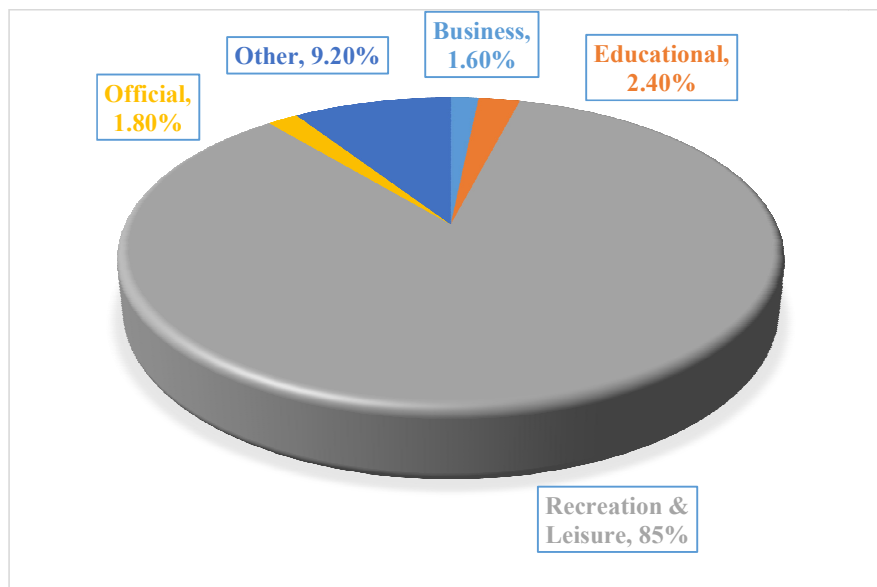*Source: Computed by authors based on field survey*

Fig. 1. Purpose of visit
Source: Computed by authors based on field survey

According to Table 5, the majority of the tourists (38.9%) spent below 50$ per day in Sri Lanka. Moreover, 69.2% of the tourists spent less than 100$ per day in and therefore more than half of the tourists who visit Down-South spend less than 100$ per day. Moreover, there were only 3.9% of the tourists who spent more than 200$ per day.

4.2.3 Impact of marketing mix factors on tourists' buying behavior

There are six indicators such as price, promotion, place, physical evidences, people and process were used to measure the marketing mix factors. The respondents were asked whether these indicators affect their buying behaviour and asked them to rank their response using five point likert scale. Indices were created for all six indicators getting the average values of likert scale provided by individual tourists. Fig. 2 depicts the index values related to each indicator of marketing mix factors.

Since, the value "3" in the likert scale is considered as the neutral value, the value "3" is considered as the reference line. If the index value related to any indicator is greater than "3", it implies that the relevant indicator affects tourists' buying behavior. As Fig. 2 illustrates, index values related to all indicators are higher than the reference value of 3 and therefore, it can be concluded all indicators of marketing mix factors affect tourists' buying behavior. In fact, Kotler and Armstrong [24] highlighted that impact

of quality of the people and also hospitality of personnel in the industry, while Taleghani and Azizi [25] confirmed the quality of products affect consumer buying behavior. Apart from that, scholars such as Goi [26], Li et al. [27] also elaborated that both price and place respectively influence consumers' buying behavior.

4.2.4 Impact of situational factors on tourists' buying behavior

The situational factors are measured using three indicators such as physical factors, social factors and time factors. As Fig. 3 indicates, index values related to all three indicators are higher than reference value of 3. It implies that situational factors such as physical, social and time factors influence tourists' buying behaviour in the context of Sri Lanka. Moreover, physical factors which include eco-friendly tourism practices, natural beauty and natural disasters have higher influence on tourists' buying behaviour compared to social and time factors.

Furthermore, the present findings are also in line with the findings of the empirical works such as [28,29].

4.2.5 Impact of personal factors on tourists' buying behavior

Personal factors which represented by the indicators such as age, stage in life, personality & self-concept, lifestyle and income are also important to recognize the patter of tourists'
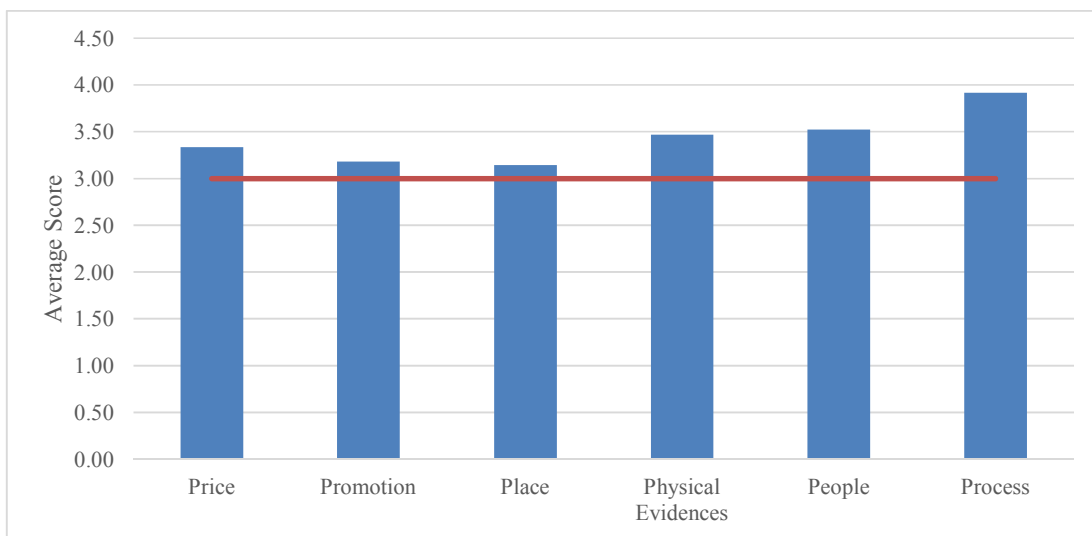

Fig. 2. Impact of marketing mix factors on tourists' buying behavior
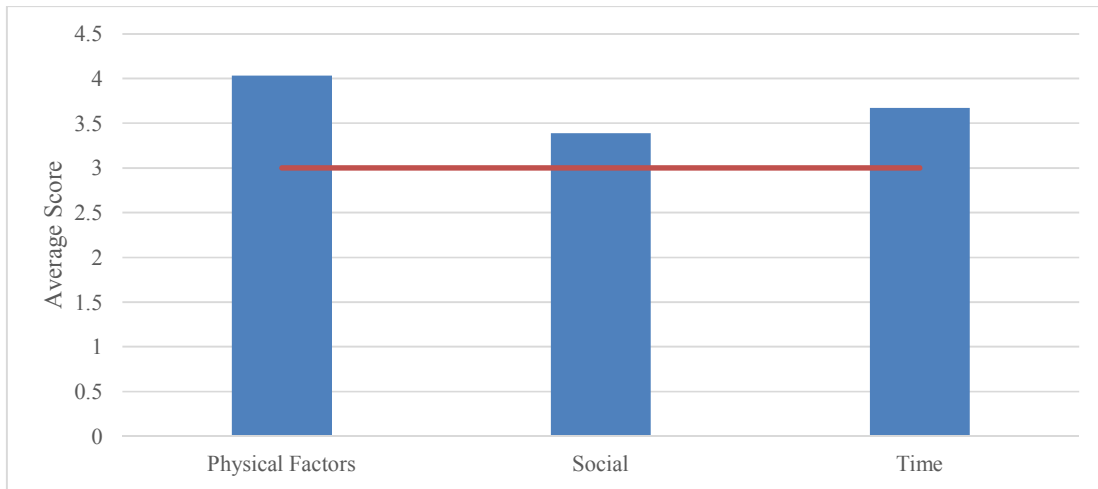*Source: Computed by authors based on field survey*

Fig. 3. Impact of situational factors on tourists' buying behavior
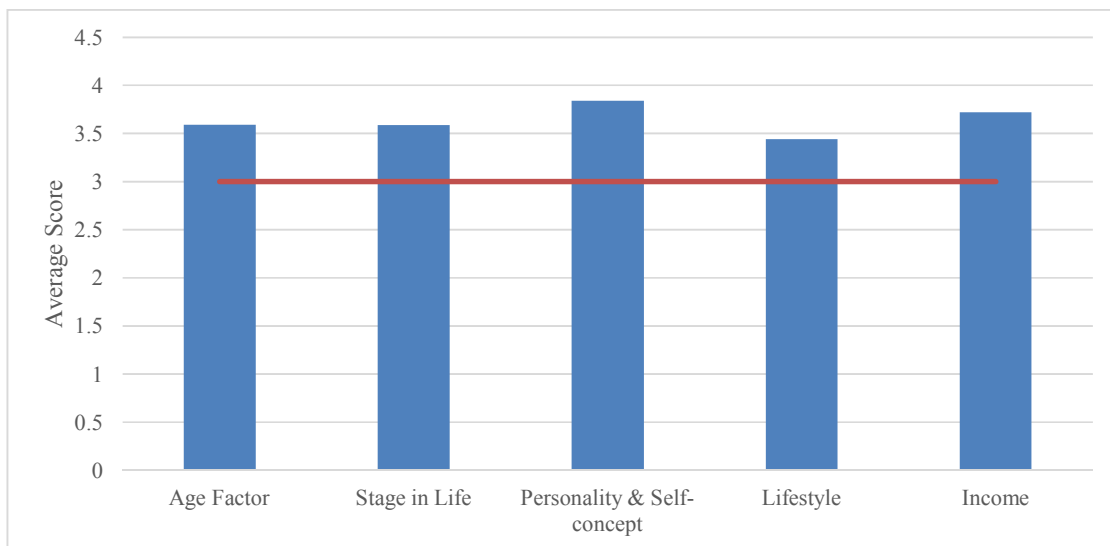*Source: Computed by authors based on field survey*

Fig. 4. Impact of personal factors on tourists' buying behavior
Source: Computed by authors based on field survey

buying behavior. Fig. 4 illustrates the index values related to each indicator in comparison with the reference value of 3. According to Fig. 4, it is apparent that index value related to all indicators are higher than that of the reference level. Hence, indicators such as age, stage in life, personality & self-concept, lifestyle and income affect tourists' buying Behavior.

In addition to the present findings, Moschis [23] emphasized that age structure, family life stage and personal preferences highly affect tourists' purchasing behaviour on tangible and non-tangible goods and services. Similarly, scholars

such as [30] and Alvarez and Asugman [31] also discussed about how self-concept and personality affect consumers' buying behavior. Particularly, Alvarez and Asugman [31] stressed that both self-concept and personality change over time and hence impact of self-concept and personality on consumers' buying behaviour is dynamic.

4.3 Econometric Analysis

The descriptive analysis above clearly indicated how the marketing mix factors, situational factors and personal factors individually influence

Table 6. Estimated results of the regression model

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Errors	t-Ration	P-value
LnMMF	0.3943*	0.2322	1.70	0.090
LnSF	0.3554*	0.1846	1.93	0.055
LnPF	0.5970***	0.1978	-3.02	0.003
LnAGE	0.9302***	0.0324	28.63	0.000
Gender(Female)				
Male	-0.0932*	0.0536	-1.74	0.083
Marital status (Unmarried)				
Married	-0.0974*	0.0526	-1.85	0.065
Education (School)				
University	-0.2094***	0.0755	-2.77	0.006
Above University	-0.1534*	0.0840	-1.83	0.068
Employment status (Unemployed)				
Government	-0.0653	0.1038	-0.63	0.530
Semi Government	-0.0290	0.1274	-0.23	0.820
Private	0.0343	0.0858	0.40	0.689
Self Employed	0.0135	0.0999	0.14	0.892
Employer	-0.0509	0.1023	-0.50	0.619
Retired	0.2388*	0.1409	1.69	0.091
Constant	4.0562***	0.2928	13.85	0.000
R2	0.6549			
F(14,475)	64.39			
Prob > F	0.0000			
Observations	490			

Source: Calculated by authors based on survey data
*Note: *- Significant at 10%, ** - Significant at 5%, ***-Significant at 1%*

tourists' buying behavior. However, a solid statistical approach is required to assess the impact of each factor on tourists' buying behaviour quantitatively. Thus, regression analysis which is indicated in equation (1) in the methodology sections was estimated under OLS method. Table 6 summarises the estimated results of the regression analysis. Log of buying behaviour is assigned as the dependent variable of the model along with number of independent variables.

As Table 6 indicated all three key factors of tourist buying behaviour positively and significantly affect tourists buying behaviour decision in the context of Sri Lanka. Particularly, one percent increase in MMF index leads to increase consumer buying behaviour index by 0.39 percent and the estimated coefficient is statistically significant at 10% level. In fact, this finding is in line with Perreault et al. [32] who confirmed all dimensions of marketing mix factor are highly associated with tourists' buying behavior. Similarly, Perreault et al. [32] mentioned that combined effect of market mix factors is higher than that of individual component of market mix factors. Moreover, Kotler and Armstrong [24] also found the same

relationship between tourists buying behaviour and market mix factors. Apart from that, situational factors also significantly affect tourist buying behaviour and one percent increase in the index of situational factors results to increase buying behaviour by 0.35 percent. In fact, major points considered under situational factors such as physical factors, social factors and time factors are crucial for tourist not only to select destinations but also to decide their consumption pattern and length of stay. The present finding related to situational factors also confirmed by [6,19,20] and they highlighted that sub-components of situational factors affect tourist buying behaviour over different tourism products and holiday packages. Unlike marking mix and situational factors, personal factors have become to most influential factor determinant of tourist buying behavior. More specifically, one percent change in the index of personal factors causes to change buying behaviour index by 0.59% and the estimated coefficient is significant at 1% level. Consequently, it is confirmed that impacts of personal factors on tourist buying behaviour are significantly higher than both marketing mix factors and situational factors in the context of Sri Lanka. In fact, personal factors such as age structure, stage in life, personality, income and

lifestyle play a vital role when people make decisions. Similar findings related to personal factors have also been observed by [22,23,6]. Further, Palani and Sohrabi [22], indicated that pattern of consumer buying behaviour varies during the lifetime of the consumer [6].

In addition to above discussed key determinants, demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status and educational level also affect tourist buying behaviour in Sri Lanka. According the Table 6, it is apparent that tourist buying behaviour index increases with the age of tourists and also the relationship is statistically significant at 1% level. Scholars such as [5,6,23] also recognized age as an important determinant of consumer buying Behavior. Apart from age, gender variation in tourist buying behaviour is captured by introducing a dummy variable in which female is assigned as the reference group. According to the estimated coefficient, male tourists' buying behaviour is lower than that of female tourists'. Similarly, unmarried tourists have higher buying behaviour nature than their married counterparts. In fact, it is generally accepted fact that unmarried have lack of responsibilities and hence they tend to spend more on leisure activities and other tourism products. Estimated coefficients for both gender and marital status are significant at 10% level.

The current study also observed a statistically significant relationship between educational level and tourists' buying behavior. Interestingly, it is examined that tourists who have only 'school' level education have higher consumer buying behaviour compared to the tourists who have 'university' or 'above university' educational qualifications. Better education is essential to make rational decisions and thus more educated tourists might spend carefully and also might postpone their buying decisions due to various reasons whereas tourists with comparatively low educational qualifications spend more on tourism products as their Marginal Propensity to Consume (MPC) is considerably higher than that of more educated counterparts. Apart from that, employment statuses do not significantly affect tourist buying behaviour decisions. It implies that, tourists' buying behaviour decisions do not vary across various employment statuses. However, tourists who are retired from their employment account for significantly higher buying behaviour pattern compared to all unemployed and employed counterparts and the estimated coefficient is statistically significant at 10% level.

The estimated model is statistically significant at 1% level (Prob>F = 0.0000) and therefore the model accurately estimates how the tourists buying behaviour correlates with its determinants. Moreover, coefficient of determination (R2) also confirms the same fact as all the independent variables jointly explain 65% of total variation of the dependent variable – tourist buying Behavior.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDA-TIONS

The main objective of this study is to examine the determinants of tourist buying behaviour considering the tourists who visit tourism destinations in Down-South in Sri Lanka. Data were collected from 500 tourists from three main tourism destination namely Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Mirissa. The descriptive analysis suggests that most of the tourists were from countries such as Russia, Germany and United Kingdom. Moreover, majority of the tourists visited Down-South for recreation and leisure purposes while only a negligible amount of tourists visited for business, education and official purposes. Considering the length of stay, the respondents stayed 20 days on average in Down-South and however, 69.2% of the tourists spent less than 100$ per day and therefore more than half of the tourists who visit Down-South spend less than 100$ per day. The econometric analysis highlights that all three key determinants of consumer buying behaviour– marketing mix factors, situational factors and personal factors positively affect the tourists' buying behaviour while personal factors have been recognized as the most influential factor of tourist buying behaviour in the context of Sri Lanka. Apart from that, demographic factors such as gender, marital status, education level and employment status also significantly affect tourist buying Behavior. Thus, the current study proposes to adopt necessary policies to enhance the quality of the all the marketing mix factors in order to increase tourists' buying behavior. More specifically, policies related to transparent and stable price policies, better promotional campaigns, efficient business process are strongly recommended. Apart from that, appropriate policies to ensure security, cultural harmony and political stability are also crucial. Moreover, it is essential to consider the demographical factors of tourists when implementing such policies.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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