

Exploring the Tourists Image in Jaffna Peninsula

Shanmuganathan K.

Department of Hospitality Management, University College, Jaffna
k.shan77911@yahoo.com

Introduction

Image is defined as “an expression of knowledge, impression, pre-judices, imagination and emotional thoughts of an individual of a specific place” (Lawson & Baud 1977). A good image is a valuable asset of a region to improve the tourism industry because, the positive image of the destinations motivates the tourists to revisit and also persuade the future tourists. Further, if the tourists do not have the positive image over the destinations, they will not visit again and this may affect the tourism industry. Therefore, researcher selectively visited Jaffna Fort, Keerimalai Temple and Delft to explore the image of the destinations.

Rationalization of the Study

Tourist image on the destination of Jaffna Peninsula has not been thoroughly studied by researchers. But, positive image of tourist will ensure revisit and visit of future tourists to the same destinations. Further, the research will be much useful to develop distinguished regional image competency in Sri Lanka and the improvement of existing destinations and identify new destinations. According to the researcher, there is a need for exploration on the above mentioned tourist places.

Research Problem

Jaffna Peninsula has many tourist destinations such as beaches, historical places, religious and archaeological sites (Mathivathani & Sasitharan 2010). Keerimalai temple is very famous religious destination (Valampuri 2015). Jaffna fort is one of cultural heritages of Jaffna and it was damaged during the war and the war ended before six years but there is lack of actions to promote tourism (Douglas 2015). Delft has many attractions for tourists and there was not enough researches conducted on Delft Island (Dilogini & Hensman 2004). Therefore, the researcher analyze how the above mentioned features of destinations influence the tourists' image and pay way for revisiting in future.

Objective

Objective of the study is to find whether the features of the destinations positively or negatively influence on tourists' image and revisit

Literature Review

Image is the people's feelings of anything that they are aware of (Boulding 1956). The image of tourist influence on travel decisions (Yates & Maanen 2015). According to Lawson and Baud (1977) destination, images influence a tourists' travel decision-making and cognition. Destination satisfaction could lead to higher tourists' return intention (Ngoc & Trinh 2013) and image of the destination influenced travel decision (Marino 2013). Positive attributes favorable impressions on the destination, whereas negative attributes are doing the opposite (Truong and Foster 2006). According to Rajesh (2013), tourist perception constructs are influenced by factors like historical, cultural attractions, destination affordability, travel environment, natural attractions. Dilogini and

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Hensman (2014) identified that Jaffna has powerful destinations (beaches, historical places, atmosphere and local products). Jaffna has many historical places for tourism and Tourist attractions (Pushparatnam 2015). Jaffna fort is the historical tourist heritage (Douglas 2015). Many rituals are carried out in Keerimalai Temples which is found as a religious tourist heritage (Valampuri Newspaper 2015).

Research Methodology

Observation and interview methods were used as tools for data collection from the local and foreign tourist at the destinations. Jaffna Peninsula in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka has been identified for the study. The three destinations were selected using convenience sampling method. Based on the identified variables, collected data were analyzed by qualitative techniques.

Result and Discussions

Jaffna Fort

Jaffna Fort is larger than Galle Fort of Sri Lanka and built in 1619 by Portuguese. After that Dutch captured the fort in 1658 and made new construction which included underground rooms, weapon store rooms, jails, administrative centers, restaurants, queen's room, Hindu and Christian religious centers (Douglas 2015). According to the researcher observation, this place fails to make the first impression because the surrounding area is not properly maintained and it is difficult to identify as heritage tourism destination. Researcher felt that there is lack of safety and security in the Fort. In addition, the following features lead to the negative image on the fort such as lack of information about sub buildings and lack of basic requirements to tourists. Researcher asked the question that "What do you feel about this destination and what is your suggestion to improve it? Many tourists responded that "there is no information board on sub buildings, there is no cleanliness, no facilities for relaxing or to take rest, no boat services around Fort and we feel lack of safety and security. They insisted that they expect all these facilities.

Destinations in Delft

Researcher observed that Delft has many tourist potentials and every day many tourists are visiting. There is a natural environment with small green jungles and wonderful fencing made by local community to their compound that cannot be seen in the other part of the country. However, there is no information center to know the destinations with route maps, lack of internal transport facilities, no accommodation, difficult for food and beverages. Tourist potential like queen tower, beach, baobab tree, religious places, Meegaman or VEDIYARASAN forts and forty feet of man's place and pure water wells are not cleaned and no information boards displayed. When interviewed about "what do you feel about destinations and how you can advise to improve"? Some tourists answered that they liked the Delft because of natural and historical features in all parts of Delft and they liked to see fences made by local lime stone. They further added that tour guides are not available, no information at the destinations, very difficult to find food and beverage facilities and there is no hotel facilities. According to them, higher price for internal transports and ordering food and beverages. Further, they also felt that there is lack of security and safety at the locations.

Keerimalai Hindu Temple

This temple is famous in Jaffna and was destroyed by Portuguese and was re-constructed by Arumuganawalar. Many rituals are accomplished by Hindus and this temple is found as one of the religious tourist heritage destinations (Valampuri 2015). During the field visit, the researcher's observations are as follows: very attractive place, clean environment, local and foreign tourists are observable, safety and security are at high

level, accommodation is available, pure sea water, natural swimming pool is maintained, reasonable price level, appreciable art galleries which show Jaffna's ancient culture and history. However, no attractive shopping malls, difficult for the basic needs and front view fail to impress. Food and beverage facilities satisfy the local tourists but foreign tourists have lack of satisfaction and poor internal road conditions. when researcher asked "What do you think about this destination?" they responded that "This is a very good religious place among other places in Sri Lanka, well cleaned environment, swimming pool is very nice since it is processed by natural sea water, good place for photographs and art galleries. The compound should be developed in attractive manner and also we expect more quality food". Further, they added People do not have places for relaxation and we feel that there is no good shopping place to purchase souvenir items. They insisted that they expect all these facilities to be developed in the future.

Conclusion

Tourists have positive image on the Keerimalai Temple and they are satisfied with many features of the destination such as clean environment, safety and security, attractive natural swimming pool, art galleries. Therefore, tourists may revisit to the destination in the future and they may contribute to the positive image of the future tourists but, the front view of the temple fails to ensure the first impression of the place. Jaffna Fort has failed to attract the tourists. They have the negative attitude and negative image of the features of the destination on many features like attraction, safety and security, basic needs, polluted environment, relaxation facilities. Because of that, tourist may not revisit to the destination again and they may insist negative image of the destinations to the future tourists. Delft makes positive and negative image on the features of the destinations. Green environment and lime stone fencing system of local community significantly contributes to the positive image and revisit to the destination. At the same time, other feature of the destinations such as availability of information, tour guides, food and beverage facilities, accommodation and transports give negative image and may significantly affect the revisit of the tourists and the arrival of new tourists.

Recommendations

Tourism developers need to focus more on making first impression in Keerimalai Temple. In addition, food and beverages and shopping facilities, places to relax should be developed. All sub buildings of Jaffna Fort should have information boards. Inside and outside environments should be cleaned and basic requirements like pure drinking water, washroom facility, cafeteria, facility for relaxations and boat service around the Fort should be developed. Information at the sub destinations of Delft should be displayed and hotel facility and internal transport should be developed. Facility for relaxation and drinking water and washroom facility should be available at each destinations and horse riding will be an attractive internal transport. The above recommendations will ensure the positive image of the destinations and revisit of the tourists.

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