

# Factors that Affecting to Develop Buddhist Tourism in Sri Lanka

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## ABSTRACT

Over the decades, tourism has seen continuous growth and diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Sri Lanka has grown to one million tourists since the end of ethnic war, 2009. However, little attention is paid to religious and cultural purposes when visiting Sri Lanka by tourist. Therefore, the main problem for this study arises from this scenario. Sri Lanka is researching and trying to launch new products, including Buddhist tourism, for the Sri Lankan tourism industry to attract more tourists who will benefit to tourism development. Pilgrimage, spirituality, heritage sight seen and education purposes of Buddhist philosophy and culture are vital in Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. The main objectives of this study are: a) to identify the key contributory factors for Buddhist tourism development; b) to identify behavioral pattern of Buddhist tourist in Sri Lanka; c) to prospect and challenges to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. This study used open and closed-ended questions. The main source of information is a quantitative tool for in-depth interviews with 80 tourism stakeholders who play different roles in the industry. The collected data has been analyzed with the help of mean score and ranking technique used in Phi coefficients test. The chi-square test illustrates the relationship between theory and observation. The results of this study indicate that there is a great potential for the development of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka, Therefore, there are three main factors that contribute to the development of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. Those are, Buddhist tourism marketing strategies, role of qualified human resource to cater Buddhist tourism and availability of excessive amount of Buddhist venues. And also, the based-on analysis identified behavioral patterns of the Buddhist tourist in Sri Lanka.

**KEYWORDS:** religious tourism, Buddhist tourism, tourism industry, tourism marketing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is, now more special and creating sector with providing memorable experience to the traveler. Globalization has enabled the travel industry to show up at exceptional lengths with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2018) specifying that widespread the travel industry appearances created by a massive 7% in 2017, comparing to 1,322 million which was stimulated by Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Middle East and the Americas. A strong sign from these development plans also suggest that people have moreover been visiting making nations which are more obvious in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. This implies that, in a specific way, tourists have an anomaly to encounter different societies and to draw in with individuals in these destinations.

Buddhism was acquainted with Sri Lanka in the fourth century B.C. at the point when Emperor Asoka of India sent his son, Mahinda, to the island and acquainted Buddhism with King Devanampiyatissa. From that point, the nation's rulers and respectability turned out to be ground-breaking supporters of Buddhism and it turned into a vital piece of Sinhalese culture and progress and furthermore greatly affected the literacy development of the island. Today, Buddhism keeps on assuming a focal function in the lives of

most of Sri Lankans. The effect of Buddhism on socio - ethical, cultural and psychological of the Sri Lankan life is hugely striking. Buddhist archaeological remains and landmarks could be discovered all aspects of the Island. It is the Sri Lankan Buddhist heritage. The landmarks as well as great propensities for thoughtfulness and empathy, trustworthiness and honesty, virtue and mindfulness could be incorporated into this. Buddhism educated, the way where living in harmony and concordance with the social setting.

### 1.1. Buddhist Tourism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a very long history dating to over millenniums as the flag bearer of Theravada Buddhism in the world. Being close neighbor of India, Hindu also has left its mark in the country. Sri Lanka is also unique in that follows the Lunar calendar with each full moon day a public holiday.

Buddhist tourism is a significant a part of a Sri Lankan tourism industry as Sri Lanka is an area this is known for spirituality give up claimed with numerous spots of worships, tourist focuses and strict landmarks and so on. Buddhist philosophy and Buddhist heritage are more vital pieces of the Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. In view that,

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Buddhist monks, they've a robust understanding of Buddhist philosophy in Sri Lanka. Alongside those strains, making use of this qualified human asset, Sri Lanka can likely increase Buddhist tourism via heritage and the Buddhist subculture.

Sri Lankan Buddhist tourism contains of meditation, yoga, archaeological, history and pilgrimage excursions and education of Buddhist philosophy. There are numerous locations identified by using Sri Lanka tourism, arranged outdoor Colombo that may supply to the tourists who're on an enterprise to peer the reality of life. And there are hundreds of monks in and around the Kandy region, in which the Sri Dalada Maligawa or Temple of the Tooth is positioned, housing the sacred tooth belonging to Buddha. There are, in fact, 6,000 Buddhist monasteries in Sri Lanka with approximately 15,000 monks. Therefore, tourist will hear chanting coming from all directions at sunrise.

## 2. Problem statement

Buddhist tourism is an essential part of Sri Lanka's tourism industry. But, according to the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) annual statistical report, there is a lower rate of tourist visits to Sri Lanka for religious and cultural purposes from 2006 to 2019. The highest level of visitation for religious and cultural purposes was 4.8 per cent in 2013, yet again the lowest level of visitation was 0.00 per cent in 2016 and 2019.

Since then, Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka has not been properly considered by the respective authorities, the private divisions and the specialists. Sri Lanka has a disproportionate amount of human capital and plenty of Buddhist attractions relative to other Asian countries. This would also be more beneficial to attract tourists to Sri Lanka to the growth of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, however, the respective authorities do not pay much attention to the growth of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the direction of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka is not thoroughly explored and the deficiencies and problems are not properly evaluated. An in-depth analysis of the issues and problems of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka will help to improve specifically Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka and the tourism industry in general. This motivation helps to select this particular topic for research.

## 3. Objective of Study

- A. To identify the key contributory factors for Buddhist tourism development.
- B. To identify behavioral pattern of Buddhist tourist in Sri Lanka.
- C. To prospect and challengers to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka.

## 4. Literature review

There is a shortage in the literature on Buddhist tourism development to focus this study on decision making. However, the available literature on Buddhist tourism provides theoretical support for defining development concepts such as promotions, infrastructure, human resources, and many more. The aim of this work is to identify product factors for the development of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka.

Jesurajan, S. and Prabhu, V. (2012), "The Dimension of Spiritual Tourism in Tuticorn District of Tamil Nadu, India -

A Critical Analysis," identified thirteen main problems related to the Spiritual Tourism Center of Tuticorn District. they are; Pollution / lack of cleanliness, begging problems, exploitation by vehicle operators, unwanted behavior by local people, poor hotel services, fraud by traders, high entrance / parking fees, inadequate information and lack of good local guides, lack of transportation, shortage in parking lots, poor banking equipment, etc. To identify the main problems, Garret's rating is applied to those problems according to the respondents' ratings.

Pilgrims travel to places of worship and receive various modes of transportation. Transportation options depend on price, speed and safety (Pauline 1996). Hospitality is an important part of the tourism industry for pilgrimage services to keep tourists satisfaction (Sharma 1998). In many areas, pilgrimage tourism thrives only on the presence of the hotel industry, as indicated by (Aziz 2001). Moreover, Manjula Chaudhari (2000) asserts that India has the highest respect for its rich artistic and cultural heritage. However, many annoying things such as cheating, begging, unsanitary conditions and lack of security affect the mood of tourists. India cannot be positioned on the world map until these hygiene factors are increased along with other motivators.

According to Qiqia & Rovab (2018), preparing human resources that can be utilized in the tourism sector requires infrastructure built by educational and training institutions. In addition, programs must be developed that allow competent employees to adapt to changing market needs. Human resource training needs to be continuous as job demands change. As a result of this change, human resource skills need to be upgraded to maintain the required quality standards of service. Therefore, training is one of the most important aspects of the overall investment in human resources for a tourism businesses.

Suri, R. and Rao, J. (2014), "The Impact of Spiritual Marketing on Different Traveler Segments and Their Website Rankings," noted that there are four main issues affecting the tourism industry and spiritual destinations. useful. who care about promoting spiritual tourism. A lack of advertising and marketing promotion exists; Spiritual sites haven't been made famous. The quality of hotel services in spiritual destinations does not live up to standards. To enhance the experience of tourists and allow them to visit again and requires intensive efforts on the part of the government, the quality and quantity of accommodation at spiritual destinations is not good, there are bad experiences in walking and excursions to some other spiritual destinations.

### 4.1. Development theories on Buddhist Tourism

There are many theories when it comes to tourism development but I have selected only three theories and the essential things that can help to develop spiritual tourism in Sri Lanka.

#### 4.1.1. Christaller's theory for Buddhist tourism development

This theory explains how tourism develops over time. He mentioned that as Buddhist tourism destinations developed and changed, different types of tourists came to this place and, over time, Buddhist tourist experiences would change. There will be impact and involvement in Buddhist venues, and after all this there will be a new cycle that includes new Buddhist destinations.

#### 4.1.2. Plog's theories for Buddhist tourist behaviour

Plog classifies tourists into three categories such as allocentric, psychocentric, and midcentric. Allocentric is a tourist looking for new experiences and adventures in a variety of activities. This person is friendly and confident in his behavior. Allocentric people prefer to fly and explore new and unusual areas than others. Allocentric people like to meet people from foreign or other cultures. Instead, they will have the freedom to explore an area, make their own arrangements, and choose various activities and tourist attractions. Psychocentric tourists who fall into this category are usually not adventurous. They prefer to return to a familiar destination where they can relax and know what types of food and activities to expect. The Midcentric category includes those that fluctuate between the two types above.

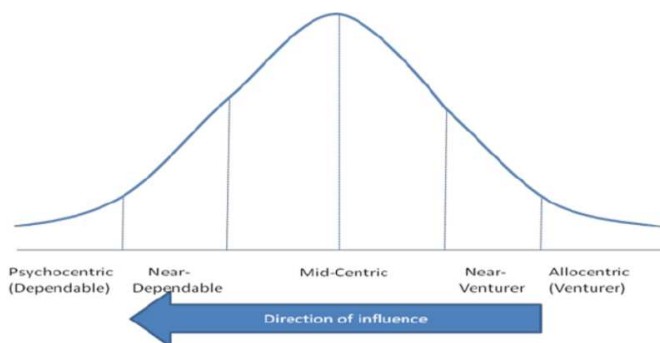


Figure 4.1: Plog's model (source: plog, 2001)

#### 4.1.3. Butler's Theory for Buddhist tourism development

According to this theory, the useful model concerned with the evolution of a Buddhist tourist era which is the Buddhist Centre Life Cycle and it goes with exploration-involvement-development-consolidation-stagnation(rejuvenation or decline).

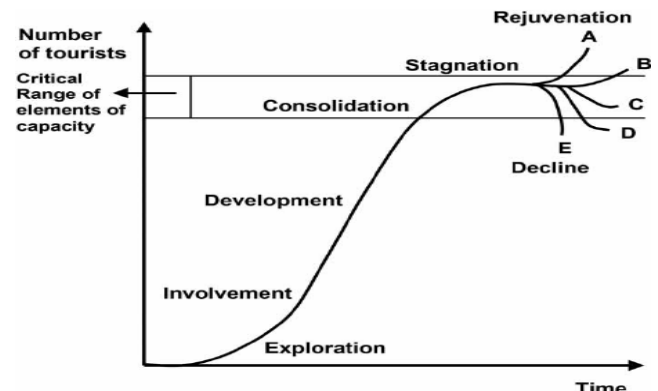


Figure 4.2: The Butler model (source: Butler, 1980)

#### 4.2. Conceptual Framework

With the intention to analyse the factors that affecting to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka, it is important to understand predominant necessities for it. The conceptual framework of contributory factors to develop Buddhist tourism version presented in figure 4. 3. The conceptual framework of this thesis primarily based at the literature review.

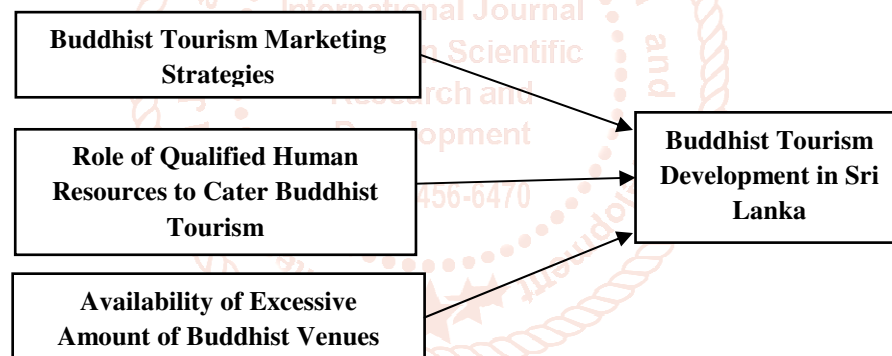


Figure 4.3: Conceptual Framework for Factors Affecting to Develop Buddhist Tourism in Sri Lanka.

#### 5. Methodology

On this study, an effort were to find out the factors that affecting to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. This study covers the Buddhist temples, experts in tourism enterprise and local community of the area. The primary data for this study gathered using established questionnaire from the 80 participants who visited and based on kandy, matale and anuradhapura district Buddhist venues in sri lanka. The target population were age above 25 years old male and female in the period of May 2019 to December 2019. Convenience and judge mental sampling method used for information collections. Each open and close-ended questions had been used, the primary source for information become the quantitative tool of in-intensity interviews with industry stake holders. Most importantly used secondary statistics assets which includes preceding studies i. e. Books, journals, reviews, magazines and on-line records assets. Statistical analysis can be achieved the usage of the SPSS software program. Statements are measured on a likert-type scale (strongly agree =five, strongly disagree=1). The accumulated statistics has been analyzed with the help of the

chi-square take a look at describes the connection between concept and observation.

The chi-square value is calculated as below,

$$X^2 = \sum (O-E)^2/E$$

All the tests were carried at the 5% level of significance.

#### Relationship between marketing strategies and Buddhist tourism development

##### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.736 <sup>a</sup>	2	.008
Likelihood Ratio	13.630	2	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	.294	1	.588
N of Valid Cases	80		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.00.

According to Chi-square tests, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an association between marketing strategies and Buddhist tourism development at 0.05 significant level.

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.349	.008
	Cramer's V	.349	.008
N of Valid Cases		80	

Since the value of Phi coefficient is 0.349 when the level of marketing strategies increase in one unit, the possibility of Buddhist tourism development increases in 0.349 times.

#### Relationship between availability of excessive amount of Buddhist venues and Buddhist tourism development

##### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.105 <sup>a</sup>	2	.017
Likelihood Ratio	12.037	2	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	.031	1	.861
N of Valid Cases	80		

- a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.60.

According to Chi-square tests, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an association between availability of excessive amount of Buddhist venues and Buddhist tourism development at 0.05 significant level.

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.318	.017
	Cramer's V	.318	.017
N of Valid Cases		80	

Since the value of Phi coefficient is 0.318 when the level of availability of excessive amount of Buddhist venues increases in one unit, the possibility of Buddhist tourism development increases in 0.318 times.

#### Relationship between role of qualified human resource and Buddhist tourism development

##### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.048 <sup>a</sup>	2	.011
Likelihood Ratio	12.247	2	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	.781	1	.377
N of Valid Cases	80		

- a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.85.

According to Chi-square tests, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an association between role of qualified human resource and Buddhist tourism development at 0.05 significant level.

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.336	.011
	Cramer's V	.336	.011
N of Valid Cases		80	

Since the value of Phi coefficient is 0.336 when the level of qualified human resource in one unit, the possibility of Buddhist tourism development increases in 0.336 times.

#### Behavioral patterns of Buddhist tourist

The questionnaires have been used to gather data from the tourism stakeholders to identify the tourist behavioral patterns in the Buddhist venues in Sri Lanka.

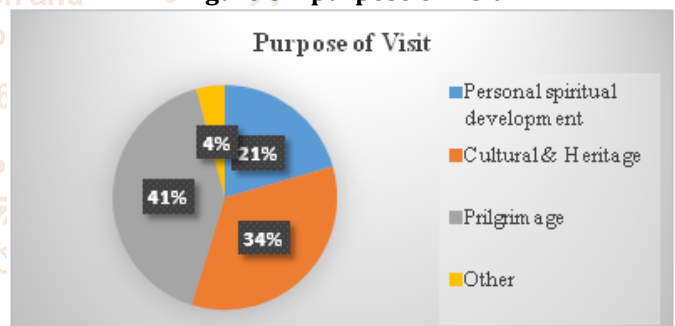
**Figure 5.1 Acquaintance of visit of the Buddhist tourist**



Source: Survey data, 2019

According to the figure 5.1, majority of the Buddhist tourist (56%) visited destinations with their friends. And also, minority of them (20%) visited with their families.

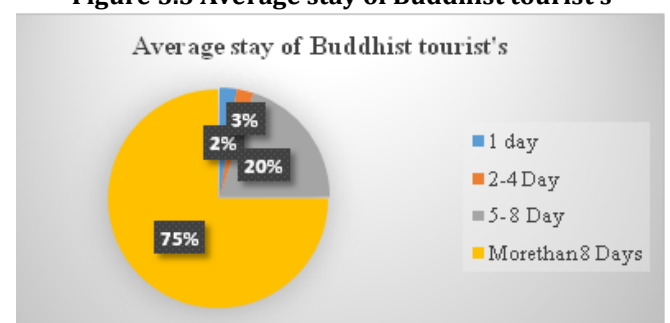
**Figure 5.2 purpose of visit**



Source: Survey data, 2019

According to the figure 5.2, majority of the Buddhist tourist (41%) visited destinations for the pilgrimage purposes. There are 34% of them visited for cultural and heritage purposes with their friends. And also, minority of the tourist (25%) visited for spiritual and other purposes.

**Figure 5.3 Average stay of Buddhist tourist's**



Source: survey data, 2019

According to the figure 5.3, majority of the Buddhist tourist (75%) usually stay more than 8 days in destinations. As well as, there is a 20 % of them stay between 5 to 8 days. And also, minority of tourist (2%) stay in one day in the venues.

**Figure 5.4 Challengers in Buddhist venues**



Source: Survey data, 2019

According to the figure 5.4, majority of the Buddhist tourist (54%) the most challenging problem is language difficulties to select destination. There are 40% of respondents having reliability of programme when they selected the destination for visit. The minority of respondents (6%) the challenging problem was the cost per person in the destination.

## 6. Finding and Suggestion

The first objective of this studies is to perceive contributory factors to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. Consequently, specially three foremost factors are identified to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka through the evaluation of quantitative methods.

Quantitative methods used to identify the positive relationship between following independent variables to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka with using SPSS tools of simple indices, Chi-square test and Phi coefficient.

- Buddhist tourism marketing strategies.
- Role of qualified human resources to cater to Buddhist tourism.
- Availability of excessive amount of Buddhist venues.

According to the industry professional point of view, there are three major reasons effect to visit to Sri Lanka for Buddhist tourism purpose in the present. Such as, pilgrimage, cultural heritage and spiritual experimental. Furthermore according to the findings, majority of Buddhist tourist visit to Sri Lanka with their friends and families. And also, they spend more than 8 days in Sri Lanka with engaging Buddhist activities. Language is the main barrier faced by venue operators and the tourist when they communicate.

All of the interviewees agreed about, how Sri Lanka start to develop tourism based on Buddhist tourism. Significant value of Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy in Sri Lanka attracted many people to the country from history. Due to the new big amount of international people in the region new accommodation and other services were needed. Due to the safety and stability of the region, Sri Lanka has always been known as a unsafe country to visit within the rest of other Asian countries. Therefore, Sri Lanka received less amount of tourists for all sections due to the terrorism conflicts during the period of 1983 to 2009. But, the beautiful rare nature bounding with rich cultural heritage, Buddhist temples, mountains, archaeological sites and lakes have always attracted people from neighboring countries for a vacation.

According to industry experts, Sri Lanka currently lacks an advertising campaign to develop Buddhist tourism. Therefore, the country needs an extensive marketing campaign with the support of the relevant authorities to attract the right customers while developing Buddhist tourism as a major tourism product in Sri Lanka. In addition, they suggest the following strategies for marketing Buddhist tourism development in Sri Lanka.

- The new strategy to promote travel destinations must be linked with international agencies around the world and international organizations related to Buddhism.
- Creation of awareness programs for Buddhist tourism purposes through extensive media campaigns aimed at expensive tourists at domestic and international.
- Encourage e-marketing on spiritual sites through specialized websites and other travel portals.
- Develop partnerships for marketing collaborations with specialist tour operators and travel agents.
- Develop high-quality promotional materials such as brochures, posters, travel guides, CD-ROMs, YouTube videos, social media and more.
- An advertising campaign at the airport with a pleasant welcome and attracting more tourists.
- An organize and market Buddhist conferences and programs to the global.

According to industry professionals point of view, the qualified human resources is playing a vital role to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. Specially, spiritual trainers, tour guides, venue operators etc need to be understand about their duties and responsibilities to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. The attitude of a spiritual trainer is an important element in ensuring a spiritual tourist's experience. Because as a trainer, they have to understand of the tourist's different cultural backgrounds and behaviors. Apart from that, the methods of preaching and communication used by spiritual trainers are another important factor in maintaining spiritual techniques for tourists. Because different people have different types of skills in understanding a subject, they must use different strategies to convey knowledge to understand their customers. However, in spiritual trainers in Sri Lanka they have sufficient knowledge of their field of specialization. But, due to the language barriers, there is a technical obstacles in providing knowledge for tourists. However, this can be overcome by providing language training programs and mechanisms that are suitable for trainers. Further explained by professionals in tourism industry, foreign languages such as, Russian, Chinese mandarin, Japanese, German, French and Thai languages need to be organize and facilitate to the learn for those who engaged with tourism industry and it will gain more benefits to the country.

Government and private sectors need to be integrated to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka and they should understand their responsibilities as well. These respective authorities need to coordinate with international Buddhist agencies to attract more tourist into the Sri Lanka. Effective human resources management recognizes and utilities human assets of the organization in order to fulfill short term and long term goals. World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) indicates that qualified human resource in the field of tourism is of great importance for national economy development, in developing and developed countries. Therefore, They should have following inevitable knowledge in tourism sector to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka.

Knowledge and competencies	Managers	Expert- associate	All employees
1. Planning and organization	1. IT skills	1. Professional competences	1. Professional competencies
2. Consumer communication	2. Business planning	2. Problem solution	2. Technical skills
3. Foreign languages knowledge	3. Management skills	3. Basic IT knowledge	3. Training within work place
4. Culture difference understanding	4. Changes management	4. Knowledge innovation	4. Personal development
5. Team work	5. Results management	5. Work processes and project management	5. Safety and protection on work place
6. Flexibility	6. Decision making	6. Communication	
7. Problem solution	7. Human potential management	7. Specialistic competencies	
8. Training skills	8. Destination management	8. Presentation skills	
9. Staff management	9. Project management Education for teaching other	9. Creativity and innovation	

Sri Lanka is a beautiful tropical island where the local population has practiced Buddhism for centuries. With more than two thousand years of history in Buddhism, Sri Lanka is a so-called "Buddhist heaven". There are hundreds of places in Sri Lanka with Buddhist temples or Buddhist architecture, most of which have historical value. Therefore, Sri Lanka has excessive amount of Buddhist venues to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka.

Although many of them are known as historical and religious sites, there are some gems that are hidden from the public and known only to the local population. However, known or unknown sites remain the fact that all Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka are revered by Buddhists and revered by other minor religious sects that make the island their home. The main Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka are mainly concentrated in areas where Sri Lanka once stood, such as Anuradhapura, Dambulla, Polonnaruwa and Kandy.

Infrastructure facilities are an important element in meeting the requirements for the development of Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka, which is closely related to achieving its goals and enhancing its image (Middleton, 1994; Bresler, 2008). But, the Buddhist centre in Sri Lanka is currently less accessible to enter the center. Due to the good road conditions, it is easy to reach the place, especially by car or public bus. Reaching the destination of a temple or religious site is not easy for Free Independent Tourists (FIT) because public transportation is not arranged to go directly to tourist attractions. However, they can rent a car or van at a reasonable price through a tour operator or travel agent. And also, security has been identified as one of the five world powers that will power the tourism industry in the new millennium (Chiang, 2000).

Further explained by industry experts, accommodation facilities is another important element that has a direct impact on the continuation of the program and the satisfaction of their stay. Sri Lanka currently has a variety of hotels from small to medium sized to cater for all tourists. Temporary stays in temples are arranged either for tourists or for Buddhist practitioners with a lower level of facilities, but these should be a basic necessity of life. Sanitation facilities are another complementary facility for tourists. This needs to be more standardized and create a clean environment for consumers. Because sanitation facilities

directly affect the continuation of their program, the safety and satisfaction of its impulses.

The visual appearance of the venues is another significant factor in attracting tourists to their stays. Beautiful scenery and fresh atmosphere is also encourage to tourist stay in the Buddhist venues. This agrees with Francis et al. (2008) which states that religious sites are the main tourist attraction and that the uniqueness and competitiveness of tourist destinations is increasingly attracting increasing tourist interest.

## 7. Conclusion

The results of the study have clearly showed that Buddhist tourism is playing an important role in tourism industry in Sri Lanka. The main objective of this study is to examine the factors that affecting to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. Apart from that, behavioral pattern of Buddhist tourist in Sri Lanka also identified through this study. As a key contributory factors, new marketing strategies, human resource responsibilities and availability of excessive amount of Buddhist venues are playing significant contribution to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka. Therefore, there is a huge potential to develop Buddhist tourism in Sri Lanka Hence, the respective authorities need to be more focus on Buddhist tourism as key segment of tourism industry in Sri Lanka and also, immediately, need to be implement new strategies to achieve targets withing the industry.

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