

DEMAND FOR AGRITOURISM IN SRI LANKA

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This study has examined the factors affecting for the demand for agritourism in Sri Lanka. Demographic factors, awareness and desire on agritourism of the visitors and purposes of visiting agritourism operations have also been examined. The study was based on a survey of 128 local visitors in one of the agritourism operations in the country. Stepwise regression analysis was used to analyze the data.

Agritourism visitors are middle aged educated employees having higher monthly income. Further most of them are married and have children. The awareness level on agritourism in Sri Lankan visitors is at a lower level. Agritourism visitors have mentioned four main purposes of visiting agritourism operations such as resting, enjoyment and recreation, education. Results of the regression analysis shows that only three variables (household income, urban residency, and availability of vehicle facility) have positive effects and two variables (the distance to the agritourism destination and individual travel cost) have negative effects for the demand for agritourism in Sri Lanka.

Agritourism; Demand; Visitor survey, Agritourism operation, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

Agritourism is one of the sectors of rural tourism and also it is the combination of two big industries; agriculture and tourism. It provides opportunities to people to visit farms, engage in farming activities and buy fresh farm products. Brscic (2006) has explained agritourism as a special form of tourism which takes place with in the family farm that symbolizes a specific form of business, giving a number of benefits to the families involved. It is also makes multiple impacts on the socio-economic relations and the space in rural areas.

Agritourism is also called as agrotourism, agricultural tourism, farm tourism, farm-based recreation. Moreover, agritourism has several definitions. According to Busby & Rendle (2000) more than 13 definitions of agritourism are available. Generally agritourism can be explained as the practice of attracting visitors to agricultural land/s mainly for educational and recreational purposes (Blacka et al., 2001). Brumfield & Mafoua (2002)

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have described agritourism as a “direct marketing activity, that may provide special opportunities to growers to reduce risks via diversification in a competing and urbanizing economic environment, which may share quasi-fixed inputs (e.g. information, machinery, labor, etc.) with other enterprises and enhance business efficiency and profitability”. Therefore, the definition of agritourism used in this study is “the business conducted by a farm operator for the enjoyment or education of the public, to promote the products of the farm and generate additional farm income”.

The scale of agritourism varies depending on the type of farm, available land and how much of business is aimed at the agritourism market. Several agritourism activities are practiced by farmers to attract agri-tourists to their site of operations. Moreover, agritourism can be explained as a holiday concept of visiting an agribusiness operation. This include you pick operations, farm tours, farmer markets, petting farms, roadside stands, overnight farm stay, farm festivals etc (Adam, 2001). Thus, agritourism may be any form of farm-based tourism operation that provides economic benefits to the farm owner(s) and provide on-farm entertainment, activity or product for the visitors. Normally agritourism is small-scale, low impact and in most cases, it is mainly focused on education (Wicks & Merrett, 2003). Further, it provides facilities to educate tourists and families on how crops are planted, how to take care of animals, and how large commercial operations are managed. Business involved with agritourism could help out the local food producers by offering locally-grown food items for large meetings and events, such as weddings or company gatherings out at the commercial farms that offer ample space and furbished outbuildings. Lodging outside home will also be a point of interest, especially bed and breakfasts, which could offer packages in connection with agritourism. It can work by “fitting everyone’s needs”.

Marketing and management of agritourism entail specialized skills. Joint efforts of all stakeholders like, farmers, local villagers and district administrations, agriculture department, tourism department should need for the success of such ventures. Easy accessibility, comfortable stay, cleanliness, quality food, security, medical facilities are few pre-requisites for any tourism venture. Development of basic facilities for tourists can be undertaken either at the community level or at the individual farmer level. It is good to coincide harvesting seasons and festivals with the tourists’ season to attract many tourists. However, it needs to be communicated and marketed well among tourists.

Agritourism is a win-win game for all the players. Tourists get all the fun and understanding by paying very less, get a pollution free environment and chemical free diets, get a crowd free peaceful break from their work. Farmers get some extra money from their main occupation with small investments of their time and their easily available local resources, others get work in village themselves, tour operators get new destinations and new clients, and thus unknown villagers and farmers get recognition of their village and profession. It only requires concerted public private partnership to make it happen (Taware, 2006). Further, it invites for government sponsored schemes that help to develop infrastructure, manpower, and market in rural areas. Thus, agritourism is important in many ways. It has a potential to generate employment, reduce dependence on agriculture as primary source of employment, provide for an alternate to the primary income as well as alternate market for local produce, and empower women. In farm diversification, agritourism can be operated as a supplementary, complementary or primary sector (Blacka et al., 2001)

Demand for agritourism

Visitors make demand for agritourism. Demand seems to be rising in most of the nations. For example, "In England, agritourism is increasing in attractiveness with the tourist community in search for new holidays and with the farming community in search for new ways to complement their agricultural income"(Frater, 1983); "Agritourism is gaining recognition all over the United State (Veek, Che, &Veek, 2006) "Agritourism in Alberta is an rising industry. It is acting in response to a growing demand for entrance to farm and ranch lifestyles (Canada Alberta Farm Business Management Initiative, 2001). A higher level of attention has been focused on the area of motivation of agritourism visitors as a means of momentarily evading from the city life (Sidali, Schulze &Spiller, 2007).

Agritourism has created an image in the minds of people giving many families an opportunity to try their hands in agricultural operations. It is a diversification in the economic activity that takes place when travel is linked by people with agricultural products, services or experiences. This on-farm diversification makes it known to the non-farming public about farm products and creates awareness in their minds along with an education. According to the present trend, people are moving away from crowded resorts and polluted cities and are now focusing themselves on family farms as tourist destinations for reasons such as desire for peace & harmony, enjoying the benefit of a natural environment and getting away from the humdrum of city life to relish the exuberance of rural recreation and move along farms, picking and choosing whatever they like which is a cheap breakaway with curiosity about the farming industry and rural life style (Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006).

Demand for agritourism is growing worldwide continuously due to moving the tourism industry towards rural cultural heritage and tourism adventure. It is getting popular gradually among urban and suburban populations and students due to some special inherent features such as nostalgia for their roots on the farm, ability to produce healthy, clean and high quality food items including traditional crops, learning opportunities on farm, farming lifestyle, and an inexpensive gateway for tourism. English, Cordell & Bowker (1999) have reported that in America trends and future projections indicate continued increases in the number of participants, trips, and activity days for outdoor recreation as well as increase of multi-activity but shorter trips. Further, people are doing more travelling as a family, travelling by car and looking for more activities involving recreational experiences (Randall & Gustke, 2003).

According to Agritourism World (2008), agritourism is one of the fast-growing travel trends in the world, where farmers can offer their visitors the opportunity to visit farms or agricultural lands for a short period of time and to enjoy many different activities for them. Thus, it is a rural-urban relationship, which can bridge the gap between peasants and city dwellers for the benefit of both. Agritourism will improve the community infrastructure and assist in revitalizing the flagging economies of rural areas. Encouraging the development of farm stays to diversify farm income is an effort to retain farmers in business, attract new entrants to agriculture, and promote countryside's development (Ilbery, Bowler, Crockett & Shaw, 1998). Evidences are there for growing interest by the public to support local farmers (Govindasamy, Italia & Adelaje, 2002).

Demand for agritourism is seen from both adults and children as there are services for both categories. The outdoor recreational activities for children and adults during daytime are, farm tours, agricultural education programs, observation of how to grow sugarcane,

grapes, pomegranate, guava, watermelon, other fruits and studying the food values of each fruits, how to take care of cattle, nature, domestic animals, birds, farm visits and education of the different trees, demonstrations such as goat and cow milking, honey making, silk making, jaggery making, rural games that they can play as Eluwan kema, Porapol geseema, Ankeliya, Buffalo ride, bullock cart ride, watching domestic animals, tree climbing and plucking fruits.

According to Hilchey (1993), there is a good trend in consumer demand for agritourism and thus it creates a good opportunity for farmers to operate agritourism as a niche market. Further, he has found that social skills of farm-based entrepreneurs, farm aesthetic and proximity of farms to urban centers are highly important for the visitors' demand for the destination. Lohmann (2004) had reported five influencing factors for the demand for tourism as economy (eg exchange rates, inflation etc), politics (eg taxation, environment etc), crisis and threats of the country (terrorism, epidemic diseases, earth quakes etc), demographic changes of the people of the country (age structure, educational level etc) and the available technology of the country (eg transport, information technology etc).

A long-run equilibrium demand function: The Mexican Tourism has conducted by Juan, Wiston & Edgar, (2007). In this study, they have analyzed the long-term effects of tourism in Mexico, applying co integration analysis using annual time-series data. Tourism demand elasticity, relative prices of tourist products and income per capita has been calculated. Moreover, the study shows only one direction of a strongly positive Granger-causality going from number of tourists to the relative price and also income has positively affected the Mexican tourism demand.

Alkahtani (2009) has done a research on estimating the demand function of ecotourism in the Ibex Reserve at Riyadh Province on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It has helped to develop the demand function and also to measure the effects of functional variables on the number of visits to the Ibex reserve. Suggested entry fee was the most important independent variable in this context. According to the demand function, number of visits ranged between 1-48 visits/individual/year and the average number of visits was 6 visits/individual/year. Further, it was found that the reduction of number of visits to the reserve by 10.7% and 7.4% due to increase in the distance between resident and the reserve and increase in the family size with a ratio of 10% respectively.

A study on identifying demographic characteristics of potential agritourism visitors in Northern California had been conducted by (Jolly & Reynolds, 2005). This study also examined consumer motivations for farm and ranch visits, as well as prospects for increased on-farm revenue. Carpio, Wohlgenant & Boonsaeng, (2008) have conducted a study on "The demand for agritourism in the United States". This study has explored factors affecting farm visits by American people and the economic value of the rural landscape for the farm visitors. According to the study, price elasticity of demand for farm visits were -0.45 and the income elasticity was 0.24. Also, the important deterrents of the number of farm visits were location of residence, race and gender.

Agritourism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is consisted of 9 provinces and 24 districts. It has diverse agro-climatic conditions suitable for growing different types of crops and livestock. Since Sri Lanka is an agricultural country, agriculture plays a dominant role in its economy. The population of the country is 20 million. 68 percent of the population is directly or indirectly engaged

in agriculture. In 2010, the share of the agriculture to the GDP was 12.6 percent mainly through rice, tea, rubber, coconut, and spices (Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2010). Further, Agriculture sector of the country is very important in many aspects such as maintain food security, production of export items, raw materials for the industry sector etc. There is a very important history and a good background for the improvement of the agricultural sector of the country. Nevertheless, Sri Lanka is a beautiful island named as “Pearl of the Indian Ocean”. Since ancient time, Sri Lanka is world famous for the tourism and hospitality industry. Sri Lanka’s tourism industry which was once battered due to a long drawn civil war, which ended in May 2009, has once again begun to pick up with the island nation giving way to large scale investment projects focusing on promoting tourism. Therefore, there is a high potential for the development of agritourism industry by linking agriculture and tourism industries in the country.

There is no formal inventory and availability of statistics with the government as well as private institutions to make a full understanding, how far agritourism has advanced up to now in the country. However according to the inquiries of the author, currently there are 15 agritourism operations are in the study area (Table 1). They have started in the recent past. Since, general facilities and services are available in operations of agritourism industry at the initial stage.

Table 1: Agritourism destinations in Sri Lanka

Operation	District	Provincial council	Starting year of Agritourism operation
CIC Farm	Polonnaruwa	North Central	2003
New Zealand farm	Nuwara Eliya	Central	1995
Paradise farm	Kegalla	Sabaragamuwa	1998
Ceylinco Fruit farm	Galle	Sothorn	2001
Spice Gardens	Kandy	Central	1997
Sigiriya Village	Matale	Central	2000
Hotel Sigiriya	Matale	Central	2001
Galapita Healing Garden	Moneragala	Uva	2002
Landa Holiday resort	Ratnapura	Sabaragamuwa	1999
Adventure park	Moneragala	Uva	2001
Kanda Land Eco-centre	Moneragala	Uva	2000
Tree Tops farm	Moneragala	Uva	1997
Woodlands Net work	Badulla	Uva	1996
Walawa Nadee ecotourism	Hambantota	Sothorn	2004
Samakanda Ecological centre	Galle	Sothorn	2002

(Source: Field survey, 2009)

After reviewing literature, it was found that limited researches have conducted on demand for agritourism in the world and nothing has done in Sri Lanka. Since factors affecting the demand are changing country to country due to the variations in socio-economic factors of the people, economy of the country, geographical situation etc., it is important to study the demand for agritourism in the country. Therefore, this research is to estimate the demand for agritourism in Sri Lankan situation. Further, after the north east war in the country, now tourism is flourishing. Government hopes to attract visitors from other sectors to agritourism as a rural development strategy. Therefore, this study is timely important for Sri Lanka specially and other Asian countries generally. This study examines the demand for agritourism in Sri Lanka. This was planned to achieve through following specific objectives.

- To study the demographic characteristics of agritourism visitors in the country
- To assess the awareness and desire on agritourism by the visitors
- To evaluate the purpose/s of visiting of agritourism operation
- To identify the factors affecting for the demand for agritourism in Sri Lankan context

Research Method

This study was carried out in Paradise Farm at Kitulgala, in the Sabaragamuwa Province in Sri Lanka (Table 1). The farm has designed to promote sustainable agriculture by training villagers in effective organic practices and improve their standard of living, while inspiring a deeper respect and love for nature's abundant resources. It has opened its doors for paying guests to find finance for the project. Paradise Farm is located in a pristine rainforest area, with lush green vegetation in a beautiful landscape overlooking mountains, forests, rivers and waterfalls. The pristine nature has inspired to create an exceptional concept in agritourism with ayurveda and other health products, including adventure experiences for rejuvenation of body and spirit.

Activities included hiking / walking, swimming, bird watching, organic farming, plant life / flora and fauna, cultural insight, local home stay, peaceful hideaway, ayurveda treatments, meeting villagers and cultural shows. There are good accommodation facilities in three categories; large size luxury bungalows, Medium size luxury bungalow and Farm houses. This has designed for Nature lovers, organic-food lovers and anyone looking for peace and quiet in beautiful natural surroundings. This is medium size agritourism operation with average level of agritourism activities and accommodation. Climate, geography, landscape, location are ideal. Therefore, this operation was selected for the research study.

This is an explanatory type of research and it was based on a visitor survey at the Paradise farm during October 2009-April 2010. Further, three group discussions with visitors and participatory observations were made to understand the situation clearly. Data was collected from 128 local visitors using self-administered questionnaire. Since the number of visitors were low, all the visitors older than 20 years were included in the survey.

Questionnaire consisted of four sections. While the first section was the questions related to demographic factors, second one was to gather information on awareness and desire about agritourism. The third section was organized to gather information about the purpose of visit and the final section was to gather data for the factors affecting the demand for agritourism. After the review of literature, factors that seem to be important for the demand for agritourism in Sri Lankan situation were included in the study. They were age, gender, marital status, educational level, employment status, total monthly income of the family, family size, availability of an own vehicle, residential area of the family, distance to the agritourism operation, number of other tourism places available

in the area and landscape of the area. Demand for agritourism was measured by the average number of visits done by the visitors during the last two year and it was taken as the dependent variable. The questionnaire was translated to Sinhala language and pre-tested by using five respondents. On the basis of the result obtained from the pre-test, the questionnaire was revised and three local graduates were used to assist in the survey. SPSS software version 14 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were applied to analyze the demographic characteristics, awareness and desire on agritourism and purposes of the visit. Linear regression analysis (stepwise) was used to analyze the factors affecting the demand for agritourism. Here, dependent variable is the average number of visits to agritourism destinations by the visitors (Y). The independent variables are age (X1) , gender (X2), marital status (X3), educational level (X4), employment status (X5), total monthly income of the family (X6), family size (X7), availability of an own vehical (X8), residencial area of the family (X9), distance to the agritourism operation (X10), number of other tourism place available in the area (X11) and landscape of the area (X12) Table 2.

Table 2: Independent Variables and Measures of the Study

Variable	Measure/s
1. Age (X ₁)	Age of the respondent(in Years)
2.Gender (X ₂)	Gender of the respondent(Male/ Female)
3.Marital status (X ₃)	Marital status (Married/Single)
4.Education (X ₄)	Education of the respondent(in Years)
5.Employment status (X ₅)	Employment status of the respondent (Employee/ Unemployed/Employer/ Retired/ Student/ Unemployed/ Employer/)
6.Total monthly household income (X ₆)	Total household income (Rupees/ month)
7.Family size (X ₇)	Number of members in the family (Number)
8. Availability of own transport facility (X ₈)	Availability of an own vehicle/s (Yes/ No)
9.Urban residency (X ₉)	Living in an urban area(Yes/No)
10.Distance (X ₁₀)	Number of kms to the agritourism operation
11.Individual travel cost (X ₁₁)	Travel cost in Rupees
12.Availability of alternative tourism operations (X ₁₂) in the area	Other tourism operations in the area (Yes/No)

The model is specified by the following formula.

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_nX_n$$

Where, Y is the dependent variable, b₀ is the intercept, b₁, b₂ ... b_n are the coefficients of explanatory variables and X₁, X₂... X_n are the explanatory variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demand for agritourism

Agritourism is a service and it has a demand from visitors. Demand for agritourism form a specific market segment. It is better to understand the features of that specific market segment to provide a better service. Important demographic feature of them have been explained in the Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic Profiles of the Visitors

Variable	Local visitors %(n=128=63%)
Male	52.9
Female	47.1
Age (Years)	
20-35	14.2
36-45	44.6
46-55	31.2
Above 56	10.0
Marital Status	
Married	71.2
Single	28.8
Educational level	
Primary	03.9
Secondary	23.5
Degree	41.2
Post-graduate	31.4
Employment status	
Employed	49.8
Unemployed	09.2
Retired	05.6
Other	35.4
<20001	05.5
20001- 40000	39.1
40001- 60000	45.8
60001- 80000	09.0
80001-100000	02.6
100001-200000	00.0
200001-300000	00.0
300001-400000	00.0
>400000	00.0
Residential sector	
Urban	73.4
Rural	26.6

Source: Case Studies, 2009-2010

According to those information, it was noted that most of the visitors were middle aged male (52.9%), married (71.2%) and had children. Out of the total respondents, (41.2%) were graduates and employees (49.8%) in different institutions. Demand for greater accountability by manufacturers and producers, higher demand for organic products, greater concerns about food safety, more likely to want healthier food alternatives are caused to increase demand of educated consumers (http://www.agmrc.org/media/cms/Agritourim_Laux_and_Pike_BD8CEC9D77D92.pdf, 2011). Most of the visitors (45.8%) had received a monthly income of 40001-60000 rupees. Wealthy consumers attempt to this because of more dining away from home, price often a secondary consideration, higher demand for fruits vegetables, yogurt and cheese, increased demand for quality and convenience http://www.agmrc.org/media/cms/Agritourim_Laux_and_Pike_BD8CEC9D77D92.pdf, 2011)

Further, most of them (73.4%) live in urban areas of the country. These findings are somewhat similar to the findings of the study on demographic characteristics of the agritourism visitors in Northern California by Jolly & Reynolds (2005).

Awareness and desire of the visitors on agritourism

Awareness on agritourism of visitors is important for the demand for it. Therefore, it is time to study the basic information related to visitors of agritourism such as awareness and understanding about agritourism, sources of getting agritourism information in the country, awareness on existing agritourism operations, willingness to visit, visiting frequency, season (s) of visiting and desired length of stay. These information were collected and presented in the Table 4.

Table 4: Awareness and Interest of Local Visitors

Factor	Visitors(n=128)	
	Number	Percentage
Awareness on the concept of agritourism		
Yes	34	26.4
No	94	73.6
How do you knowing about agritourism operation		
Not response	95	74.0
Word-of –mouth	05	04.2
Brochures	12	09.3
Website	13	10.1
Other	03	02.4
Awareness on other agritourism destinations operations in the country		
Yes	28	21.5
No	100	78.5
Willingness to revisit this operation		
Yes	42	32.6
No	86	67.4

Willingness to visit other agritourism operations

Yes	95	74.6
No	33	25.4

Willing length of stay

0.5 day	25	19.3
1.0 day	57	44.8
2.0 days	28	21.5
Not response	18	14.4

Desired time/season to visit

March - April	18	14.4
July - August	66	51.4
December - January	26	20.5
Not response	18	14.4

Nature of the group

Alone	04	03.1
Couple	15	12.2
Family members	81	63.3
Relatives/ Friends	23	17.5
Organized group	05	03.9

Travelling Distance (km)

>50	11	08.5
50 – 99	32	25.0
100 – 199	58	45.0
200 – 299	19	15.0
>299	08	06.5

source: Visitor Survey, 2009-2010

Results show that less number of visitors (26.4%) had the understanding about the concept of agritourism. Also a few numbers of visitors (21.5%) were aware of other agritourism operations in the country. The most common source of information for the visitors was website (10.1%). Brochure was (9.3%) also a good source of information. According to Jolly & Reynolds (2005), the most common sources of information on agritourism operations for the visitors in Sacramento and Yolo counties in California were word-of-mouth, newspaper articles, magazine articles business sign and internet. Furthermore, while certain number of visitors willing to revisit this agritourism operation (32.6%), large number of visitors (74.6%) were willing to visit other agritourism operations in the country in future. Moreover, majority of visitors were willing to spend one day in an agritourism operation (44.8%). Most of the visitors (51.4%) wished to visit agritourism operations during July – August. This is the main school vacation in Sri Lanka. These findings are in line with the finding of English, Cordell & Bowker (1999) and Randall & Gustke (2003)

Purposes of visiting agritourism operations

The main purpose of the visitors was to see and enjoy farming (98.6%). The second and third purposes were resting or relaxing (82.2%) and engage in educational activities (72.6%). Some visitors hoped to improve their health and well-being (30.8%) by having peaceful environment and fresh air (Table 5). However, meeting friends and relatives was the purposes of very few agritourism visitors. (Wilson, Thilmany & Sullins, (2007) have discovered findings somewhat similar to this. According to them, “enjoy rural scenery”, “learning where food comes from”, visit family or friends”, “watch or participate in farm activities”, “purchase agricultural products”, “pick fruit or produce” etc as main purposes of agritourism visitors in Kansas in USA.

Table 5: Purpose of Visiting Agritourism Operations (Multiple Responses)

Purpose	Visitors(n=128)	
	Number	Percentage
To see and enjoy farming	124	98.63
To explore, learn and education	93	72.65
To rest and relax	118	82.19
To improve health and well-being	45	30.82
To buy fresh farm products	87	67.97
To visits friends and relatives	11	1.28

Estimation of demand function

The results of the regression analysis are given in the Table 6 and Table 7. Results of the regression analysis showed that only three variables have positive effects and two variables have negative effects on the number of trips for agritourism destination. Thus, for every unit increment in monthly household income, urban residency, availability of vehicle facility, leads to make a positive change in the number of trips to the agritourism destination by 0.43 and 0.354, 0.215 respectively and one unit increase in the distance to the agritourism destination and individual travel cost leads to decrease the number of trips to the agritourism destination by 0.009 and 0.002 respectively (Table 7).

Table 6: Summary of the Step-Wise Regression Models

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.755 ^a	.570	.566	.827
2	.797 ^b	.635	.629	.765
3	.812 ^c	.659	.650	.742
4	.824 ^d	.679	.668	.723
5	.834 ^e	.696	.683	.706

a. Predictors: (Constant), Monthly Income

b. Predictors: (Constant), Monthly Income, Individual travel cost

c. Predictors: (Constant), Monthly Income, Individual travel cost, New Vehicle

d. Predictors: (Constant), Monthly Income, Individual travel cost, New Vehicle, Distance to the operation

e. Predictors: (Constant), Monthly Income, Individual travel cost, New Vehicle, Distance to the operation, New Residential

Table 7: Coefficients of Independents Variables Included In the Regression Model #5

		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
5	(Constant)	2.796	.528		7.184	.000
	Monthly Income	.430	.000	.251	2.662	.009
	Individual travel cost	-.002	.000	-.249	-4.239	.000
	New Vehicle	.215	.156	.197	3.299	.001
	Distance to the operation	-.009	.002	-.254	-3.446	.001
	New Residential sector	.354	.194	.166	2.610	.010

a. Dependent Variable: Number of visits

The value of the intercept was 2.796. Therefore, the demand function for agritourism in Sri Lanka was specified as follows:

$$Y = 2.796 + 0.43 X_6 + 0.354 X_{10} + 0.215 X_9 - 0.009 X_{11} - 0.002 X_{12}$$

Y = Number of trips/visitors/year

X₆ = Monthly household Income

X₁₀ = Urban residency

X₉ = Availability of own transport facility

X₁₁ = Distance to the agritourism destination

X₁₂ = Individual travel cost

It says that 1% increase in total monthly income of the visitor would increase 43% number of visits by the visitor. Similarly, 1% increase the number of visits to agritourism operations in results 35% increase population in urban areas of the country and 1% increase in distance to agritourism operations leads to decrease in number of visits by 0.30%.

When there is not the effect of total monthly income, residential sector, distance, Availability of own transport facility and Individual travel cost the average number of agritourism visits is 3. Normally a typical Sri Lankan family goes on 5-7 trips in a year. Out of that 3 trips for agritourism may be possible. Income of the visitors is the most important factor for the demand for agritourism since it is associated with purchasing power and spending ability. Families with higher income and other financial support can go trips often than others. Same as other tourism, agritourism is also a costly activity. Lots of expenses occur when people are going on trips. Unless they have sufficient amount of money, most of the people don't like to go on trips. According to the economic theory also, income is one of the most important variables in tourism demand.

Residential sector of the visitor was the second important factor. Agritourism is mainly a rural tourism sector. Therefore, agritourism has a special demand from the urban residents to escape from the monotonous life, urban people like to visit rural areas and spend few days in natural environments.

The third factor is the availability of own vehicle facility. Visitors who have vehicle facilities make more trips than those who don't have. Having a vehicle is a good motivation factor for going on trips. Otherwise, arranging an outside transport facility is very costly and time consuming.

Distance to the destination is the fourth important factor. Most of the time, people don't like to travel long distances due to high cost of transportation, tiredness and time limitations. Instead, they prefer to travel short distances and spend more time in a destination to have more rest and relaxation than wasting time on the travelling.

The fifth factor influencing the number of trips is individual travel cost of the trip. Travel cost is a decisive factor for the visitors. Since alternative destinations are available, when the travel cost or individual travel cost is very high, visitors select cheaper and closer destinations.

Therefore, it can be concluded that, urban families having average monthly household income around LKR 50,000 with vehicle facilities, wish to spend about LKR 1700/per person to visit agritourism destinations 3 times/ a year, within about 100 km distance. This is a good situation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has explored factors affecting for Sri Lankan people to visit agritourism operations using a visitor survey. Conclusions of the study have been drawn under the four aspects namely demographic factors of the visitors, awareness and desire on agritourism by the visitors, purpose of agritourism visits by the visitors and the factors affecting for the demand for agritourism.

Demographic factors explain that the agritourism visitors are middle aged, married and educated people. They are employees in different institutions. They get monthly income above the average level. According to the survey in 2009/2010, Average monthly household income is 36,451 Rupee. (Department of Census and Statistics, 2010). Most of the visitors are from urban sector. This is a specific market segment, different from mass tourism visitors and willing to visit rural tourism niche markets. They prefer less crowded, calm, and clean natural environments.

The awareness level on agritourism in Sri Lankan visitors is at a lower level. Since this is a new industry and has very few years of history, it is new to many people. Further many people don't know about other agritourism places as most of them are situated in rural areas and low level of publicity and promotion. However, significant numbers of visitors are willing to visit the place again and most of the visitors like to visit other agritourism operations in the country. This is a very good indicator for the growth of the industry in the future. The average length of stay is one day and the desire time period for the visit is the school vacation time.

Agritourism visitors had mentioned four main purposes of visiting agritourism operations. Other than resting, enjoyment and recreation, education is also a main objective. Children and students try to explore many things in farming to have real experiences. There should be facilities for the visitors to fulfill these purposes during the visit.

Results of the regression analysis indicate that there are strong relationship between the total monthly income, residential sector and distance to the agritourism operation and Availability of own transport facility with the demand for agritourism in the country. Therefore, high total monthly income, increase in urban population and shorter distance to agritourism operations influence people to visit agritourism operations. Availability of own transport facility is also increased demand for the agritourism. The average number of visits is 3.19 per year. These information are useful to the farmers considering

agritourism enterprises and also development planners that are thinking of agritourism as an strategy for promoting regional rural development.

Recommendations

Agritourism industry has a special market segment. Therefore, operators need to pay attention on this point and provide better services to satisfy them. Since they are educated people with good income level, quality of the products and services are very important. Satisfied visitors on one hand revisit the operation and on the other hand they give a good publicity to the operation.

Need to conduct better publicity and promotion to popularize agritourism among visitors. In this regard, operators should get the help of the provincial and national governments. Further operators should add more possible tourism activities to increase the length of stay of the visitors. During the school vacation period, programs can be arranged for school children. During the off seasons, attractive packages need to be formed to attract visitors.

Since middle aged people and their children are the main visitors of agritourism, facilities for both categories should be there. Most of the visitors use their vehicles. Therefore, they expect to access the place without problems. Other important thing is that the development of complementary tourism operations in these areas, because visitors hope to visit several places in one trip than only one place,

Suggestion for further research

This study was carried out during the war time in the country, when the tourism industry had been faced a critical situation. Now the country is free from war and tourism industry in the country is flourishing. It is better to do this study again to see the changes in the visitors' demand.

Further, this study is based on one agritourism operation in the country name Paradise farm, attractive places with several facilities and services. However, in other agritourism operations, available activities, services and facilities, distance, geographical locations are different. So that, it is important to do the similar type of study in those places and compare and contrast the results with this study to finalize the findings.

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