

(166)

Linking Eco-tourism Practices to Visitor Satisfaction and Future Intentions in Galle, Sri Lanka: An Analytical Approach

Withana, W.B.A.^{1*}, Manoshika, M.A.S.²

¹*Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Sri Jayewardenepura,
Nugegoda, Sri Lanka*

²*G/ Kalahe Gemunu Primary School, Kalahe, Wanchawala, Sri Lanka
[*buddhikaanushawithana@gmail.com](mailto:buddhikaanushawithana@gmail.com)*

Abstract

A strategic approach to sustainable tourism, eco-tourism promotes socioeconomic benefits for local communities while striking a balance between environmental preservation, cultural preservation, and visitor satisfaction. In Galle, Sri Lanka, a district known for its rich cultural heritage, historical sites, and coastal biodiversity, this study examines the relationship between ecotourism practices, visitor satisfaction, and future behavioral intentions within eco-resorts. Goals of the study are to determine which ecotourism practices have the biggest effects on visitor satisfaction and investigate the degree to which visitor satisfaction mediates the relationship between sustainable practices and travelers' intentions to return to or recommend eco-resorts. Using Cochran's sample size formula with finite-population correction, a working sample of 110 respondents was selected from an estimated 150 self-declared eco-resorts in Galle. Structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data from both domestic and foreign tourists leaving particular eco-resorts. The instrument assessed four aspects of ecotourism practices: environmental management, social and community engagement, economic sustainability, and educational and experiential offerings. Descriptive statistics were used to profile the respondents, correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationships between the constructs, multiple regression analysis was used to find significant predictors of both behavioral intention and satisfaction, and the Sobel test was used for mediation to look at the indirect effects of satisfaction on the relationship between behavioral intentions and eco-tourism practices. Findings revealed different Galle resorts implemented ecotourism strategies differently. Key predictors of visitor satisfaction were environmental management and educational and experiential offerings; perceived authenticity was positively boosted by social and community engagement; and perceptions of fairness and trust were strengthened by economic sustainability. Satisfaction mediated the effect of eco-tourism practices on behavioral intentions. The study suggests that visitor satisfaction increases the favorable effects of sustainable practices on the likelihood of revisit and recommendation. The framework demonstrated strong predictive power by explaining 81% of the variance in satisfaction and 73% of the variance in behavioral intentions. In order to improve visitor engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty, results highlight the imperative of improved interpretive programs, visible conservation initiatives, community partnerships, and responsible marketing. Intended to match operational plans with guest expectations, practical ramifications include the implementation of standardized eco-certification systems, resort employee capacity building, and strategic communication of sustainability practices. While anonymity and consent upheld ethics, geographic and self-report limits suggest future longitudinal, multi-regional research. The study provides evidence and guidance for Sri Lankan tourism stakeholders to align sustainability with market-driven eco-tourism and enhance visitor experience and stewardship.

Keywords: *Eco-tourism practices, Visitor satisfaction, Behavioral intentions, Eco-resorts*