

The Tourist Interest in Museum: Special Reference to the Colombo National Museum in Sri Lanka

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1. Introduction

Cultural tourism has emerged as a growing sector of the Sri Lankan tourism industry. The Colombo National Museum plays an important role in cultural tourism in Sri Lanka. A National Museum has the potential to offer an authentic experience about the travel destination at a glance. Colombo National Museum, being located in the commercial hub of the island, is a determinant attraction in both cultural and heritage tourism aspects. The National Museum of Colombo was established in January 1877 by Sir William Henry Gregory, the then British Governor of Ceylon. (Samarathunaga, 2018)

Historical perspectives and the prestige artifacts denoted at the museum, attract thousands of visitors per annum. But it is a smaller amount than the total number of tourists visiting Sri Lanka. The National Museum of Colombo is a cultural tourism tool that can generate a lot of foreign income. A large number of tourists visit Sri Lanka every year. Some tourists visit the Colombo National Museum, but not everyone is interested. It can be identified according to the numerical data in the table below. (Sulkaisi, 2019)

Table 1. The total number of tourists arriving in Sri Lanka and Foreign Visitors visiting the Colombo National Museum.

Year	The total number of foreign visitors to the museum	Total number of tourists
2010	22061	654476
2011	31096	855975
2012	37305	1005605
2013	44751	1274593
2014	57604	1527153
2015	56387	1798380
2016	59982	2050832
2017	68107	2116407
2018	85551	2333796
2019	64877	1913702
2020	16751	507704
2021	117	194495
2022	5725	719978
2023	32645	1487303

(Central Bank, 2023)

According to the table above, it is clear that the percentage of tourists visiting Colombo National Museum is low. 1,487,303 arrived in year 2023 out of which only 32,645 of tourists arrived at the Colombo National Museum. The research problem is the lack of interest among the tourist to visit the Colombo National Museum.

Therefore, was this research aimed to solve the problem of lack of interest among tourists to visit the Colombo National Museum. This research identified many reasons for the lack of interest among tourists to visit the Colombo National Museum. Also, the strategies that can be used to motivate tourists to visit the Colombo National Museum were identified through this research.

2. Materials and Method

For a study on "Tourist Interest in Museums," several research methodologies can be employed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. A qualitative research method was used in conducting this study. Using the interview method and observation method, the data required for the research was collected. The sample of this study will number of six staff members in Colombo National Museum. There are two museum officers, two education promotion officers, and two conservation officers. In-depth interviews with museum staff members can provide insight into their personal experiences, motivations for visiting, and emotional responses to exhibits. Also, by analyzing the data, the research problem was solved and the research objectives were achieved.

3. Result and Discussion

If there is a lack of interest among tourists to visit the Colombo National Museum, it's important to identify the possible reasons for this and take steps to address them. Here are some common factors that may contribute to a lack of tourist interest

- Lack of Awareness.
- Lack of Accessibility.
- Lack of Multilingual Information.
- Lack of Variety and Scope.
- Personal Preferences.
- Competition from Other Attractions.
- Lack of Educational Programs & Tourism Promotion programme.
- Lack of Special Events and Exhibitions.

By addressing these factors, the Colombo National Museum can become more attractive to tourists and increase its visitor numbers. A strategic approach to marketing, accessibility, and visitor experience can help overcome the lack of interest among. (Weerasinghe, 2018)

Motivating tourists to visit the Colombo National Museum in Sri Lanka involves a combination of marketing, promotion, and providing a compelling visitor experience. Here are several strategies that can be used to encourage tourists to visit the museum:

1. Effective Marketing:

- Develop a strong online presence through a user-friendly website and active social media accounts to provide information about the museum, its exhibits, and events.
- Collaborate with travel agencies and tour operators to include the museum in their tour packages and Create enticing promotional materials, such as brochures, flyers, and videos that showcase the museum's collections and history.

2. Diverse Exhibits:

- Ensure the museum offers a diverse range of exhibits, including historical artifacts, art, cultural displays, and interactive installations to cater to a broad audience.
- Rotate exhibits periodically to keep the museum fresh and encourage return visits.

3. Guided Tours:

- Provide informative guided tours led by knowledgeable guides who can engage tourists by sharing interesting stories and facts about the exhibits.
- Offer tours in multiple languages to cater to international visitors.

4. Cultural Events and Workshops:
 - Organize cultural events, workshops, and hands-on activities that allow tourists to actively participate and learn more about Sri Lankan culture and history.
5. Special Exhibitions:
 - Host temporary or special exhibitions featuring renowned artists, historical events, or unique themes to attract a wider audience.
6. Educational Programs:
 - Develop educational programs for schools, universities, and other institutions to encourage field trips and learning experiences.
7. Accessibility and Amenities:
 - Ensure the museum is easily accessible with clear signage, ample parking, and public transportation options, provide amenities such as a gift shop, cafe, and rest areas to enhance the overall visitor experience.
8. Collaborations and Partnerships:
 - Collaborate with other local tourist attractions, hotels, and businesses to create joint promotions and packages that include visits to the museum.
 - Partner with universities and research institutions to promote the museum as a center for academic exploration.
9. Positive Reviews and Testimonials:
 - Encourage satisfied visitors to leave positive reviews on travel websites, social media platforms, and other review channels to boost the museum's online reputation.
10. Engage the Local Community:
 - Involve the local community by hosting events, exhibitions, or workshops that highlight the museum's significance within the community.
11. Cultural Exchange Programs:
 - Collaborate with international cultural exchange programs and organizations to promote the museum to a global audience.
12. Accessibility for People with Special Needs:
 - Ensure that the museum is accessible to people with disabilities by providing facilities like ramps, elevators, and Braille signage.

By implementing these strategies and continuously engaging with visitors, the Colombo National Museum can effectively motivate tourists to explore the rich cultural heritage and history of Sri Lanka.

4. Conclusion

Museums are some of the most significant attractions for tourists worldwide. They not only serve as repositories of history, art, and culture but also provide immersive experiences that help visitors connect with the past, appreciate the present, and engage with new ideas. The interest in museums among tourists can be attributed to several factors.

To improve the attraction of the Colombo National Museum, efforts could be made to enhance the visitor experience, update exhibits, provide multilingual information, and promote its unique features and collections. It's also important for visitors to have the right expectations and interests when visiting any museum, as each one offers a different perspective on history and culture.

The Colombo National Museum plays an important role in cultural tourism in Sri Lanka. It is

expected that if the tourists coming to visit Sri Lanka are motivated to visit the Colombo National Museum, a lot of income can be added to the Sri Lankan economy.

In summary, the scientific reasons for tourist interest in museums stem from a combination of intrinsic human drives—such as curiosity, emotional engagement, social connection, and the pursuit of knowledge. Museums are spaces that cater to these psychological, cognitive, and social needs, making them attractive destinations for tourists seeking enriching and memorable experiences.

5. Keywords

Cultural tourism, Colombo National Museum, Museum promotion, Promotion product

6. Reference

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