

Factors Influencing Leisure Travel Decisions among Residents in Kandy District of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In Sri Lanka, domestic tourism is gaining increasing importance, making it essential to understand the factors that influence leisure travel decisions. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of six key variables including budget and affordability, destination image, social media influence, weather conditions and climate, peer recommendations and social influence, and safety and security concerns on the leisure travel decisions of residents in the Kandy District. Adopting a positivist research philosophy, a structured quantitative methodology was employed, and data were collected from 144 residents using a validated and reliable questionnaire. Statistical analyses, including t-tests, ANOVA, and bivariate correlation, were conducted using SPSS. The findings indicate that all six variables significantly influence leisure travel decisions, with budget and affordability, destination image, and social media influence emerging as the most impactful predictors. These results highlight how both economic constraints and cognitive-perceptual factors shape domestic travel behaviours. The study contributes to tourism literature by framing domestic leisure travel decisions through a multidimensional lens. It highlights the increasing influence of digital and peer-driven information channels in shaping travel intentions. Practically, the findings provide strategic guidance for tourism marketers and policymakers, emphasising the importance of affordable travel packages, enhanced destination branding, and digital engagement campaigns. Although limited to one geographic region and a cross-sectional dataset, the study lays the groundwork for future mixed-method and longitudinal research exploring evolving consumer preferences across diverse demographic and regional contexts in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: domestic tourism, Kandy district, leisure travel, residents, travel decision-making