

## **Eco-Tourism Practices in Sri Lankan Eco Resorts: An Analysis of Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention of Eco-Tourists**

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### **Abstract**

*Ecotourism is potentially the best growing segment in the international market. Many hoteliers in Sri Lanka promote the sustainable use of this concept as a new market oriented concept. However, arrivals of eco tourists to Sri Lanka have been less than 1% over the last decade. The study used the quantitative research approach using questionnaire survey to conduct this research. Here the researcher focuses on the satisfaction level of eco-tourists on eco-tourism components practices in the eco resorts and how it affects for the behavioral intention. Analysis of questionnaire survey showed that some major components are not practicing properly in eco resorts, it has caused for the dissatisfaction of eco tourists and their behavioral intention. As a result, Sri Lanka is experiencing less number of eco-tourists. Eco resort hoteliers' poor practice of the concept is one of the major reasons for it.*

**Key words:** Eco tourism, Eco resort, Eco tourists, Eco resort components, Satisfaction, behavioral intention

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

Tourism is currently one of the most important contributors to the Sri Lankan economy. Tourism continued as the third largest earner of foreign exchange earnings in Sri Lankan economy. Attitude of tourists have gradually changed from one that emphasized beach tourism to one that demands more, natural, cultural and social interactions. He further emphasized the new phenomenon, which is broadly termed as "Alternative Tourism". As a result, the concept of Ecotourism emerged with the collaboration of cultural, rural, nature tourism, and its related activities as a niche market (Silva, 2004).

The term 'Ecotourism' was first coined in July of 1983 by Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, an architect, environmentalist and ecotourism consultant from Mexico (Planeta). The original definition was as follows, "Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations" Being a good business opportunity and the fastest growing segment in the tourism industry, Sri Lankan tourism is changing its outlook to sustain this new product. Since Sri Lanka is rich with much cultural and natural diversity, it has the potential to develop the eco-tourism concept better than other destinations for the benefit of the Sri Lankan economy and community (SLEF, 2001). Therefore, applying the eco-tourism concept to Sri Lankan hotel industry will encourage close interaction with the natural and cultural environment and give more economic benefits to the country. Ecotourism provides many benefits to the society, which includes the protection of eco system, increase the foreign exchange of the country and living standards of the people, swift regional development, reduction of waste, minimize the negative impacts to the environment etc.

Since Ecotourism is potentially the fastest growing segment in the international market and it holds great potential for Sri Lanka as a means of conserving biological diversity and promoting the sustainable use of bio diversity, many hoteliers tend to practice the concept as a novel market oriented concept. Therefore, global coordinated marketing campaigns launched to attract eco tourists focusing their needs and wants profitably (Mid-term strategic plan for Sri Lanka tourism 2002-2004). Achieving genuine eco-tourism may be viewed as either a difficult technical challenge or an impossible task. Some observe that those who hold the reins of power and money will always prevail and, that eco-tourism will never genuinely offer benefits to local people and customers (Boo, 1990). When comes to eco-tourism, hoteliers have to practice it as meeting the expectations of the customers. If the hoteliers fail to apply the genuine eco-tourism concept properly, they will not be able to satisfy the customer expectations. Multinational hotel chains, resorts, tour operators, and powerful foreign owners often engage in unfair trade practices in eco-tourism that allow them to squeeze economic control from local communities where the tourism activities take place (Mastny,2002). Therefore, Eco tourists are trapped in their misleading the eco concept.

Based on these findings, the researcher tried to identify the issue of practicing the concept of genuine eco-tourism and satisfying the customer expectations. Then it is important to explore this phenomenon in Sri Lankan context to find out whether there is an impact of eco-tourism practices in eco resorts to the satisfaction and behavioral intention of arrival of eco tourists.

### **1.2 Research issue**

Many eco resorts in Sri Lanka are Trojan horse marketing tourism as environmental friendly, but in fact destroying the every eco system they claim to protect (SLEF, 2001). As a result, customers are dissatisfied with the service of the eco tourist hotels. It can be proved through the mid-term strategic plan for Sri Lanka tourism (2002-2004). It states that Sri Lanka had 400,414 tourists in 2000 out of which 1% percent was eco tourists. They were identified based on the purpose of arrival that they mentioned at the airport.

Comparing to Sri Lanka, other Asian, African and European countries are having many demand for eco-tourism and eco resorts. Some facts mentioned in the Eco tourism statistical fact sheet (2000) and Global eco-tourism fact sheet of TIES (2006) clearly shows it. For example,

- In Dominica, in the Caribbean, tourists using small, nature-based lodges spent 18 times more than cruise Passengers spend while visiting the island
- In Indonesia, 80% of money for all-inclusive package tours goes to airlines, hotels, and other international Companies. Eco-lodges hire and purchase locally, and sometimes put as much as 95% of money into the local Economy.
- In US, UK and Australian market, More than two-thirds of U.S. and Australian travelers, and 90% of British tourists, consider active protection of the environment and support of local communities to be part of a hotel's responsibility.

These facts obviously illustrate that if the eco-tourism service providers practice the concept properly, customer demand is very high. As mentioned earlier, in Sri Lanka, arrivals of eco tourists are less than 1% over last decade. Therefore, Sri Lankan eco-tourism market is not enjoying the benefits of it such as conservation of culturally and environmentally friendly areas, earning more foreign exchange, getting employments, regional developments( infrastructure, superstructure), increasing the living standard of community etc. (National policy of eco-tourism-SLTDA, 2003)

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

Since the contribution of tourism sector to foreign exchange earnings and the development of the society, marketing and implementing the tourism concepts properly to the customers is very much significant. While tourism being our third largest foreign income generator world tourism trend is moving from generic or bulk tourism to more of specific sectors like eco-tourism. And it serves the purpose of both high profitably as well as larger social benefits. Therefore, it is important to understand the whether the implementation of eco-tourism concept in eco resorts is successful enough to satisfy the eco-tourists.

### **1.4 Scope of the research**

This study focuses on eco-tourism sector in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. In the eco-tourism sector, there are number of sections which are dealing with the concept such as professional bodies, institutions, societies, experts, hoteliers etc.

This study will only consider the hotel sector, which practices the eco-tourism and the customers who are getting the service from them. Here, eco tourists are considered as the main customers to the eco resort. In this study, researcher considers only the self-declared eco resorts which are registered under the Sri Lanka Tourist Board hotel classification.

### **1.5 Research questions**

- How do the eco-tourism practices in Sri Lankan eco-resorts affect to the eco tourists' satisfaction and behavioral Intention?
- How does the eco tourists' satisfaction influence eco tourists' behavioral intention?

### **1.6 Objectives of the study**

- To determine the effect of eco-tourism practices in Sri Lankan eco-resorts to the eco tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intention.
- To assess the influence of eco-tourists' satisfaction to the eco-tourists' behavioral intention

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Eco tourism and misuse of the originality**

Tourism is widely believed to be the most rapidly growing global industry. According to World Tourism Organization ecotourism is believed to be the fastest growing tourism segment (Buckley, 1994; Deardon & Harron, 1993). However, there is considerable debate over what ecotourism really means. The term 'Ecotourism' was first coined in July of 1983 by Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, an architect, environmentalist and ecotourism consultant from Mexico (Planeta). His definition was later revised in 1993 to move the focus to conservation and the role of the tourist from passive observer of nature to participant with a responsibility for its preservation, "Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations"

The main problem that has stemmed from this is that often the term is misused or misinterpreted for developments which do not hold true to the original meaning of eco-tourism (Ross & Wall, 1999). This is usually attributed to the vagueness of its definitions. With the many meanings and redefinitions over the years it is hard to regulate it (Font, 2002). It is not only tourism developers who are culprits of redefining the concepts to suit their own purpose, authors of journals and books on the subject are constantly churning out new definitions each of which are slightly different, concentrating on one or more of its aspects. As ecotourism has grown in popularity, sometimes resembling traditional mass tourism, its definitions have been expanded to incorporate ideas about eco tourist responsibility; environmentally friendly destination management, profit linkages to conservation efforts, and the sustainable development of local human populations (Campell, 1999). There are many definitions of ecotourism. Some of the definitions can be tabled as follows.

**Table 1: Variations of eco-tourism definitions**

Black, R. (1996)	“An experience with a focus on the natural and/or cultural environment, and ecologically sustainable activity, an activity with a predominant educative and interpretive program, and an activity that contributes to the local community groups and projects and to the conservation of the surrounding environment.”
Che, D. (2006)	“Ecotourism has been portrayed as a form of sustainable development, primarily in Third World “pristine settings” as a means of using natural resources to support economic activity without compromising economic growth, the environmental carrying capacity, or social equity.”
The International Ecotourism Society (2006)	“Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.”
Wunder, S. (2000)	“1. Minimal physical and social impacts on the visited area 2. Ecological education of the tourist at the natural site 3 Notable economic participation by local residents”
Clarke, J. (1997)	“As the position of convergence, whereby large-scale tourism seeks to adopt the policies and guidelines of sustainability. In short, large business thinks small scale.”
The Ecotourism Society (1991)	“Purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people”
Shanklin, C. W. (1993)	“Trips taken in which travelers learn about and appreciate the environment or trips taken to advance the cause of conservation.”
Boyd & Butler (1996)	“A form of tourism which fosters environmental principles, with an emphasis on visiting and observing natural areas. The emphasis on tourism, as much as this can be separated from recreation, is deliberate.
(Lindberg, Furze, Staff & Blank, 1997).	Ecotourism is usually defined as” responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improve the welfare of the local people”

## 2.2 Eco-tourism service provider and customer

An eco-tourism firm can be recognized as a monopolistic competitor giving eco-tourism practices as a marketing strategy to set it eliminating the competition. Mainly, this firm should obtain positive economic profits. These large profits will improve the incentive to preserve the resource and to reduce the destructive externalities related with tourism. Finally, other sites, observing the accomplishment of the present firm, will come into the market, offering similar tours (Isaacs, 2000). The eco resort operator may try to cut expenses by dropping efforts to restrict external costs. They may not start costly actions to cut erosion, pollution, and congestion. As a result customers may not experience true eco-tourism in the resort (Cater& Lowman, 1994). Eco-tourism can and will be a great contributor to the education of international travelers, as well as to the growing global middle class who are traveling in their own countries, and local people who are hosting eco-tourists. It is important to practice genuine eco-tourism practices to win the trust worthiness of the customers or tourists.

## 2.3 Eco-tourism practices in eco resorts

Environmental anxiety about tourism impacts have increased and the tourist accommodation sector has identified the necessity to improve its sustainable management and process (Trauer, 1998). The development of eco-tourism resorts is one example of this change to more sustainable tourist accommodations. Eco resort is an establishment where providing hospitality services to the eco tourists while performing eco-tourism principles. All eco resorts imitate the inventive plans and entrepreneurialism of business founders, rather than large multinational companies. Eco resorts often contribute towards maintaining official protected areas, because they are frequently quite reliant on appropriate management of government-controlled reserves. These eco resorts may enthusiastically contribute to trail maintenance, volunteer research programs, clean-up days, or the checking of visitor usage, depending on the local condition (The International Ecotourism Society, 1993). Green globe 21 standards have given guidelines of practicing eco-tourism concept in eco resorts. There are eight principles.

- Concentration on giving visitors the opportunity to individually and directly experience nature (Natural Area Focus)
- Offer chances to experience nature in ways that lead to better understanding, respect and satisfaction (Interpretation)
- Stand for the best practice for environmentally sustainable tourism (Environmental Sustainability Practice)
- Contribute directly to the conservation of natural areas (Contribution to Conservation)
- Offer endless help to the local community (Benefiting Local Communities)
- Be sensitive to understand and involve the culture/s existing in the area (Cultural Respect)
- Every time meets consumer needs (Customer expectation) and
- Be marketed and encouraged sincerely and honestly so that practical expectations are formed (Responsible Marketing).

(Green globe 21 standards)

The analysis of this research is also based on these guidelines. Since these guidelines covers all the factors in various explanations given by the various scholars regarding the practice of eco-tourism, researcher believes that this is a perfect guideline to this study.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

When conducting a research, it is important to identify the framework for the study. Here, the researcher used the quantitative research approach to conduct this research. The researcher believes that he can become closer to the actors perspective through questionnaire survey. Here the researcher focused on the satisfaction level of eco-tourists on eco-tourism components practices in the eco resorts and how it affects for the behavioral intention.

#### 3.2 Conceptual model of the study

Based on the literature review, the researcher developed and tested the following model in Sri Lankan context.

**Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study**



##### 3.2.1 Hypothesis

H1: There is a statistically positive relationship between Practices of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists' behavioral intention

H2: There is a statistically positive relationship between Practices of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists' satisfaction on eco-tourism practices

H3: Eco tourists' satisfaction the eco-tourism practices in the eco resort mediates the significant relationship between the practice of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists' behavioral intention

H4: There is a statistically positive relationship between eco tourists' satisfaction on the eco-tourism practices in the eco resort and eco tourists' behavioral intention

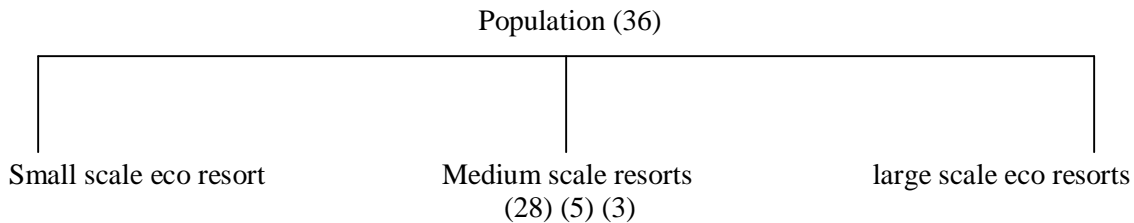
#### 3.3 Selecting cases for the study

The target study area for this study was self-declared eco resorts, which are registered under the Sri Lanka Tourism and Development Authority. 36 Eco friendly resorts were identified based on the accommodation guide of the Sri Lanka Tourism and Development Authority. Those selected resorts were confirmed as eco-friendly resorts, after verifying their web sites. When selecting the cases for the study, scales of number of rooms were used to categorize the resorts according to their size. It is the international scale to classify the hotels in relation to their size. The scale provides following standards to classify the hotels

- Small scale hotel -Number of rooms (0-50)
- Medium scale hotel -Number of rooms (50-100)
- Large scale hotel -Number of rooms (more than 100)

As a result of categorization, following continuum was obtained through the identified population

**Figure 2 – Continuum of resort classification**



Out of 36, thirty two (32) resorts were selected for the study based on the Krejcie and Morgen scale of sample selection. These resorts were selected randomly proportionate to the size of the hotels.

- 23/36x32= 20 small eco resorts (= RANDBETWEEN (1, 23))
- 8/36x32 = 7 medium eco resorts (= RANDBETWEEN (1, 8))
- 5/36x32 = 5 large eco resorts

**3.4 Population and Sample**

Questionnaire analysis was conducted to identify the eco tourists’ satisfaction level and behavioral intention. Here, questionnaire was prepared and distributed to eco tourists. Since the target population for the study (eco tourists) is unknown (No sample frame work) the researcher used the following formula to identify the sample of the unknown population.

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2} = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = 385$$

- n = Sample size
- Z = Confidence level
- p = Degree of variability
- e = Level of precision

The ‘level of precision’, sometimes termed the ‘confidence interval’ or ‘sampling error’, is the range in which the population’s actual value is assessed to lie. Here the researcher used an exact practice with a precision rate of ±5 per cent.

The ‘confidence level’ shows how likely it is that the real answer falls within the range confidence interval. Z depends on the degree of confidence level. (It relates to the area under a normal distribution curve) For a confidence level of 95 per cent, Z=1.96; for 90 per cent, Z= 1.64; and for 99 per cent, Z=2.58

The ‘degree of variability’ defines the dissemination of attributes in the population (Standard deviation). The more heterogeneous a population, the larger the sample size is necessary to get a given level of precision. The more homogeneous a population, the smaller the sample size required. Since the researcher doesn’t know what level of variability to expect, the researcher assumed that it is 50 per cent. Since the researcher need to survey unknown population of eco tourists to discover satisfaction level of them, a confidence level of 95 per cent, a precision rate of ±5 per cent and a degree of variability of 50 per cent are used to calculate the sample size.(Smith, 2013)

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2} = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = 385$$

The result of the calculation shows that the study should take minimum level of 385 eco-tourists as the sample for the study. Sampling technique was convenience sample which is a non-probability sample. Hence, when an eco-tourist was identified, questionnaire was given to him/her to gather information. Questionnaire was distributed using various methods for example face to face structured interview method to fill the questionnaires and keeping the questionnaire at the front desk of the hotel.

### 3.5 Data collection

As a primary source of data gathering questionnaire was prepared based on the literature and distributed to tourists with the purpose of studying their expectations and satisfaction from an eco-resort. It was distributed to the eco tourists, when they arrived to the selected eco resorts in a face to face method. It provided an overview of eco-tourists attitudes towards tourism and their opinion on practices considering future state of eco-tourism practices expected by them. The questionnaire was pre-tested using a group of 32 individuals representing all 32 selected eco resorts in the study. The appropriateness of constructs used to measure variables, and necessary adjustments to the questionnaire were made based on pre-test results. It was helpful to check the validity of the questionnaire before finalizing it. The questionnaire was distributed in all the 32 selected resorts. From each resort at least 12 eco tourists were identified and questionnaire was given to them. It provides an equal attention to each resort. It also increased the trustworthiness of the research and reduced the bias.

Questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS Statistical package. To draw the valid conclusions and test them empirically, an exhaustive use of statistical technique of Factor Analysis was made. To further determine reliability of the data, alpha co-efficient was used to identify the sampling adequacy. Correlations were used to identify the relationship among factors determined. In addition, regression analysis was used to analyze quantitative data of relationship among factors.

#### 3.5.1 Analyzing the mediator effect

Specified variable may function as either a mediator or a moderator contingent on the theory being tested. In this study Sobel's equation was used to test the mediation effect. The statistical methods for testing mediation have progressed from the initial testing of regression models (Baron&Kenny,1986) which was more elaborate methods developed more recently (Dudley et.al, 2004). The study used the following Sobel equation.

$$\frac{b * c}{\sqrt{(b * S_{eb})^2 + (c * S_{ec})^2}}$$

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of the participants (eco-tourists)

There were 386 respondents in the survey. The demographic characteristics of participants such as gender, age, education and occupation was examined using the descriptive analysis as mentioned in table 2 Distribution of the gender indicated that male respondents were more than female respondents. But it is not very much significant. It is only 3% difference. The main age groups of the distribution were 26-35 and 18-25. The cumulative percentage of them represents 54% of the respondents. It denotes that majority of the eco tourists are youth. Most of the respondents were graduates and diploma holders. It represents more than 70% of the respondents. It is a significant number. It gives an idea that eco tourist's education level is very high. It can be further proved through the occupation categories of the respondents. Majority of them are professionals and researchers (31%). In addition to that, Private sector managerial and executive level and businessmen denotes more than 21%. It symbolizes that the education level and occupation is having a relationship too. 22.3% of the occupation category represents non-occupied and students. Most of them are following degree and diploma courses and they are very young who are interested to the practices of eco-tourism. There are few retired and non-occupied respondents in the occupation category. It is an insignificant number comparing to others.

**Table 2 Demographic profile of the respondents**

Variable	Frequency (%)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	200	51.8%
Female	186	48.2%
Age		
Below 18	36	9.3%
18-25	100	25.9%
26-35	108	28%
36-50	88	22.8%
Above 50	54	14%
Education		
Graduate	164	42.5%
Advanced dip/Dip	110	28.5%
Secondary	84	21.8%
Primary	16	4.1%
Others	12	3.1%
Occupation		
Researcher	62	16.1%
Businessman	42	10.9%
Professional	60	15.5%
Private (Managerial/Exe)	42	10.9%
Private (Operational)	42	10.9%
Public	34	8.8%
No occupation/Students	86	22.3%
Others (Retired)	18	4.7%

#### 4.2 Regression of Customer satisfaction of Eco tourism components practices (Natural Area Focus, Interpretation, Sustainability, Conservation, Community Involvement, Cultural Respect, Responsible Marketing),

**Table 3 Results of Regression of Customer satisfaction of Eco tourism components practices (Natural Area Focus, Interpretation, Sustainability, Conservation, Community Involvement, Cultural Respect, Responsible Marketing),**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.277	.158		1.754	.080	-.034	.588		
natural	.075	.017	.119	4.335	.000	.041	.109	.451	2.218
interpretation	.240	.031	.289	7.809	.000	.180	.301	.247	4.046
sustainability	.085	.030	.101	2.870	.004	.027	.144	.271	3.690
conservation	.292	.037	.279	7.796	.000	.218	.366	.265	3.773
community	-.031	.038	-.021	-.801	.423	-.106	.045	.479	2.089
cultural res	-.017	.021	-.021	-.802	.423	-.059	.025	.506	1.975
responsible	.276	.021	.370	13.227	.000	.235	.317	.432	2.314

In the above table, it depicts those five eco-tourism components constructs p-values are less than 0.05. They are natural area focus, interpretation, sustainability, conservation and responsible marketing. As such these five eco-tourism components constructs are significant predictors of customer satisfaction on eco-tourism practices of eco resorts. In the table 3, the VIF values are less than 5. Hence there is no multicollinearity. However, cultural respect and community involvement constructs p values are more than 0.05.



Hence, they are not a significant predictor of customer satisfaction on eco-tourism practices in eco resorts. The results of stepwise regression analysis are presented in the table 4.

**Table 4 Model Summary results from Stepwise regression of Customer satisfaction of Eco tourism components practices (Natural Area Focus, Interpretation, Sustainability, Conservation, Community Involvement, Cultural Respect, and Responsible Marketing)**

Model	Change Statistics									
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F Durbin-Watson
1	.803 <sup>a</sup>	.645	.644	.63498	.645	698.445	1	384	.000	
2	.900 <sup>b</sup>	.811	.810	.46449	.165	334.640	1	383	.000	
3	.918 <sup>c</sup>	.843	.841	.42409	.032	77.446	1	382	.000	
4	.930 <sup>d</sup>	.865	.864	.39310	.023	63.591	1	381	.000	
5	.934 <sup>e</sup>	.872	.870	.38412	.006	19.034	1	380	.000	1.972

- a. Predictors: (Constant), responsible marketing
- b. Predictors: (Constant), responsible marketing, sustainability
- c. Predictors: (Constant), responsible marketing, sustainability, conservation
- d. Predictors: (Constant), responsible marketing, sustainability, conservation, interpretation
- e. Predictors: (Constant), responsible marketing, sustainability, conservation, interpretation, natural area
- f. Dependent Variable: eco satisfaction

According to the above table 4, the total explained variation was 87.2%. The adjusted R-Square is 87%. This means 87% of the variation in customer satisfaction on eco-tourism components practiced in the eco resorts can be explained by responsible marketing, sustainability, conservation, interpretation and natural area focus. Here, the Durbin- Watson value is 1.972. It is close to 2. It means that the residual are random.

**Table 5 Co-efficient results from Stepwise Regression of Customer satisfaction of Eco tourism components practices (Natural Area Focus, Interpretation, Sustainability, Conservation, Community Involvement, Cultural Respect, and Responsible Marketing)**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.833	.088		20.809	.000	1.660	2.006		
	responsible	.598	.023	.803	26.428	.000	.553	.642	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	1.062	.077		13.795	.000	.911	1.213		
	responsible	.436	.019	.586	23.261	.000	.399	.473	.778	1.285
3	sustainability	.388	.021	.461	18.293	.000	.347	.430	.778	1.285
	(Constant)	.191	.121		1.573	.116	-.048	.430		
4	responsible	.367	.019	.493	19.428	.000	.330	.404	.641	1.560
	sustainability	.268	.024	.318	11.287	.000	.221	.315	.519	1.926
5	conservation	.285	.032	.272	8.800	.000	.221	.348	.433	2.311
	(Constant)	.099	.113		.873	.383	-.124	.321		
4	responsible	.273	.021	.367	12.969	.000	.232	.315	.442	2.261
	sustainability	.105	.030	.125	3.507	.001	.046	.164	.279	3.582
5	conservation	.344	.031	.328	11.126	.000	.283	.404	.408	2.452
	interpretation	.232	.029	.280	7.974	.000	.175	.290	.288	3.475
5	(Constant)	.184	.112		1.641	.102	-.037	.405		
	responsible	.275	.021	.369	13.340	.000	.234	.315	.442	2.261
5	sustainability	.084	.030	.100	2.842	.005	.026	.143	.272	3.677
	conservation	.279	.034	.266	8.284	.000	.213	.345	.328	3.048
5	interpretation	.227	.028	.273	7.968	.000	.171	.283	.287	3.482
	natural	.073	.017	.116	4.363	.000	.040	.107	.477	2.098

a. Dependent Variable: eco satisfaction

The regression equation can be written as

$$CS = -0.184 + 0.275(\text{responsible marketing}) + 0.084(\text{sustainability}) + 0.279(\text{conservation}) + 0.227(\text{interpretation}) + 0.073(\text{natural})$$

In the residual plot, all residual values were random and are within  $\pm 3$ . The distribution of the residuals was normal.

**Table 6 Test of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Unstandardized Residual	.033	386	.200*	.988	386	.002

#### 4.3 Regression of Customer satisfaction of eco-tourism components upon overall eco-tourism components practices in eco resorts

**Table 7 Results from Regression of Customer satisfaction of eco-tourism components upon overall eco-tourism components practices in eco resorts**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
	1 (Constant)	.013	.100			.133	.894	-.184	.210
Eco components	.969	.024	.902	40.904	.000	.922	1.015	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: eco satisfaction

Table 7 above depicts those overall eco-tourism components constructs p-value is less than 0.05. As such, it is a significant predictor of customer satisfaction on eco-tourism components practice. In the table 7, the VIF values are less than 5. Hence there is no multicollinearity. In the residual plot, all residual values were random and are within  $\pm 3$ . The distribution of the residuals was normal.

#### 4.4 Regression of eco-tourism components and Behavioral intention

**Table 8 Results of regression of service quality components and behavioral intention**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
	1 (Constant)	1.103	.268			4.115	.000	.576	1.630
natural	.055	.029	-.073	-1.855	.064	-.003	.112	.451	2.218
interpretation	.110	.052	.112	2.115	.035	.008	.213	.247	4.046
sustainability	.131	.050	.131	2.588	.010	.031	.230	.271	3.690
conservation	-.057	.064	-.046	-.900	.369	-.182	.068	.265	3.773
community	-.108	.065	.063	-1.653	.049	-.235	.020	.479	2.089
cultural	.171	.036	.176	4.755	.000	.100	.242	.506	1.975
responsible	.532	.035	.604	15.066	.000	.463	.602	.432	2.314

a. Dependent Variable: behavioural intention

Table 8 above depicts that four eco-tourism components constructs p-values are less than 0.05. They are interpretation, sustainability, cultural respect and responsible marketing. As such these four eco-tourism constructs are significant predictors of behavioral intention of eco tourists. In the table 8, the VIF values are less than 5. Hence there is no multicollinearity. However, natural area focus, conservation and community involvement constructs p values is more than 0.05. Hence, they are not significant predictor of behavioral intention of eco tourists. The results of stepwise regression analysis are presented in the table 4.32.

**Table 9 Model Summary results from Stepwise regression of eco-tourism components and behavioral intention**

Model	Std. Error Change Statistics									
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	of the R Estimate	Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F Durbin-Watson
1	.808 <sup>a</sup>	.653	.652	.74293	.653	723.132	1	384	.000	
2	.843 <sup>b</sup>	.711	.709	.67910	.058	76.570	1	383	.000	
3	.854 <sup>c</sup>	.729	.727	.65863	.018	25.181	1	382	.000	
4	.855 <sup>d</sup>	.732	.729	.65596	.003	4.118	1	381	.043	
5	.857 <sup>e</sup>	.735	.731	.65303	.003	4.426	1	380	.036	2.006

- a. Predictors: (Constant), responsible
- b. Predictors: (Constant), responsible, cultural
- c. Predictors: (Constant), responsible, cultural, sustain
- d. Predictors: (Constant), responsible, cultural, sustain, interpretation
- e. Predictors: (Constant), responsible, cultural, sustain, interpretation, community
- f. Dependent Variable: behavioural intention

According to the above table 9, the total explained variation was 73.5%. The adjusted R-Square is 73%. This means 73% of the variation in behavioral intention on eco-tourism components practiced in the eco resorts can be explained responsible marketing, cultural respect, sustainability, interpretation and community involvement. Here, the Durbin- Watson value is 2.006. It is close to 2. It means that the residual are random.

**Table 10 Co-efficient results from Stepwise Regression of behavioral intention on eco-tourism components**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.109	.103		10.757	.000	.906	1.311		
	responsible	.712	.026	.808	26.891	.000	.660	.764	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	.759	.102		7.411	.000	.557	.960		
	responsible	.578	.029	.657	20.219	.000	.522	.635	.716	1.397
3	(Constant)	.276	.032	.284	8.750	.000	.214	.338	.716	1.397
	cultural	.520	.110		4.729	.000	.304	.737		
4	(Constant)	.545	.029	.619	19.101	.000	.489	.601	.677	1.478
	cultural	.200	.034	.206	5.865	.000	.133	.267	.575	1.739
	sustainability	.169	.034	.169	5.018	.000	.102	.235	.626	1.599
5	(Constant)	.565	.112		5.056	.000	.345	.785		
	responsible	.517	.032	.587	16.334	.000	.454	.579	.546	1.832
	cultural	.182	.035	.187	5.177	.000	.113	.251	.538	1.860
	sustainability	.118	.042	.118	2.818	.005	.036	.200	.401	2.494
5	interpretation	.099	.049	.101	2.029	.043	.003	.195	.285	3.504
	(Constant)	1.066	.263		4.055	.000	.549	1.584		
	responsible	.527	.032	.598	16.535	.000	.464	.590	.533	1.877
	cultural	.185	.035	.190	5.280	.000	.116	.253	.537	1.863
5	sustainability	.141	.043	.141	3.275	.001	.056	.225	.375	2.669
	interpretation	.113	.049	.115	2.307	.022	.017	.210	.280	3.571
5	community	-.122	.058	-.072	-2.104	.036	-.237	-.008	.600	1.666

- a. Dependent Variable: behavioural intention

The regression equation can be written as

$$BI = 1.066 + 0.527(\text{responsible marketing}) + 0.185(\text{cultural respect}) + 0.141(\text{sustainability}) + 0.113(\text{interpretation}) - 0.122(\text{community involvement})$$

In the residual plot, all residual values were random and are within ± 3. The distribution of the residuals was normal.

**4.5 Regression of behavioral intention upon overall eco-tourism components practices in eco resorts**

**Table 11: Results from Regression of behavioral intention upon overall eco-tourism components practices in eco resorts**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-.260	.180		-1.441	.150	-.613	.094		
Eco components	.959	.043	.755	22.544	.000	.875	1.043	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: behavioural intention

Table 11 above depicts those overall eco-tourism components constructs p-value is less than 0.05. As such, it is a significant predictor of behavioral intention of eco tourists. In the table 11, the VIF values are less than 5. Hence there is no multicollinearity. In the residual plot, all residual values were random and are within ± 3. The distribution of the residuals was normal.

**4.6 Regression of behavioral intention upon satisfaction on eco-tourism components practices in eco resorts**

**Table 12: Results from Regression of Customer satisfaction of eco-tourism components upon behavioral intention of eco tourists**

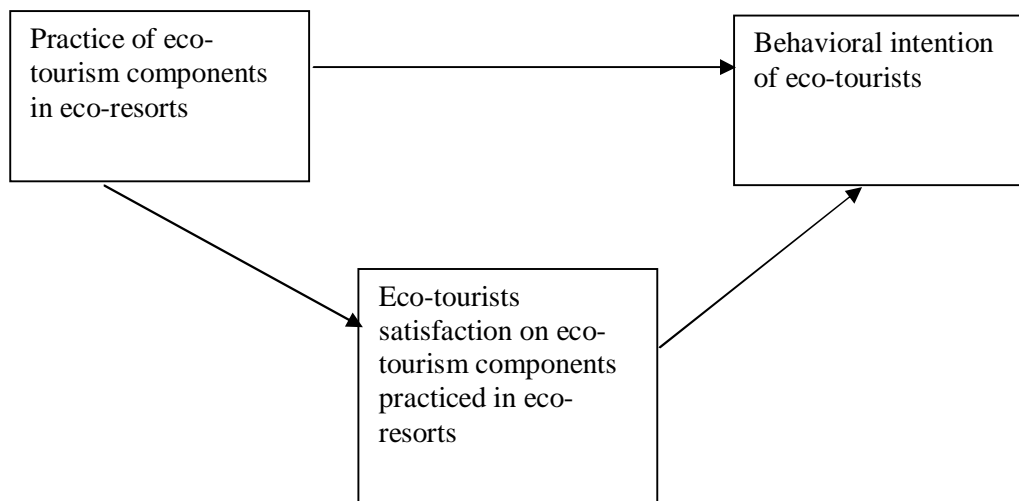
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-.055	.153		-.359	.720	-.356	.246		
Eco satisf	.936	.037	.791	25.321	.000	.863	1.008	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: behavioural intention

Table 12 above depicts that satisfaction on eco-tourism components construct p-value is less than 0.05. As such, it is a significant predictor of behavioral intention of eco tourists. In the table 4.38, the VIF value is less than 5. Hence there is no multicollinearity. In the residual plot, all residual values were random and are within ± 3. The distribution of the residuals was normal.

**4.7 Testing the mediating effect of eco-tourists satisfaction on eco-tourism components to the direct relationship between practice of eco-tourism components in eco resorts and eco-tourists behavioral intention**

**Figure 3 Mediating effect of eco-tourism components satisfaction**



a=0.959  
 Se (a) =0.043  
 P=0.00  
 b=0.969c=0.936  
 Se (b) =0.024 Se(c) =0.037  
 P=0.00P=0.00

To test the effect of mediating effect of eco-tourism components satisfaction to the relationship between practice of eco-tourism components in eco resorts and eco-tourists behavioral intention, the sobel’s equation was used (Mackinnon & Dwyer, 1993). It was justified in the methodology chapter.

$$\frac{b * c}{\sqrt{(b*Se_b)^2 + (c*Se_c)^2}}$$

Indirect Effect (IE) = b \* c = 0.969 \* 0.936  
 Variance in IE = (b\*Se<sub>b</sub>)<sup>2</sup> + (c\*Se<sub>c</sub>)<sup>2</sup> = (0.969\*0.034)<sup>2</sup> + (0.916\*0.037)<sup>2</sup>  
 Z = (0.906/√0.0417) = 22.09

Therefore, the Z value is higher than 1.96 (Z>1.96)

The p-values are 0.00. They are less than < 0.05

Thus, the indirect effect is significant

In this case, since DE is significant too, eco-tourism components satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between practice of eco-tourism components in eco resorts and eco-tourists behavioral intention.

**5. Discussion and Conclusion**

During the discussion it expects to take a critical look at meeting the objectives set for the study by answering the research questions. Subsequently, research hypothesis are re-examined to check the hypothesis are accepted or not.

**Table 13 Hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Supported/Not supported
H1: There is a statistically positive relationship between Practices of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists’ behavioral intention	Supported
H2:There is a statistically positive relationship between Practices of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists’ satisfaction on eco-tourism practices	Supported
H3:Eco tourists’ satisfaction of the eco-tourism practices in the eco resort mediates the significant relationship between the practice of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists’ behavioral intention	Supported
H4:There is a statistically positive relationship between eco tourists’ satisfaction on the eco-tourism practices in the eco resort and eco tourists’ behavioral intention	Supported

**5.1 Relationship between Practices of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists’ behavioral intention**

This study tested seven eco-tourism components of an eco-resort which are significant contributors towards behavioral intention of arrival of eco-tourists. It was revealed from the findings that there was a positive relationship between the combinations of all seven components namely natural area focus, interpretation, sustainability conservation, community involvement, cultural respect and responsible marketing.

Based on the stepwise regression analysis of behavioral intention of eco-tourists upon eco-tourism components practices in eco-resorts dimension, there was a positive significant relationship between five eco-tourism components. They are interpretation, sustainability, community involvement, cultural respect and responsible marketing. This is due to the p-values of all these components less than 0.05 and the beta values were positive. Hence these dimensions are significant in the analysis.

In accordance with the regression analysis, natural area focus and conservation dimensions were insignificant. P-values of them were more than 0.05. According to the table 4.32, the total explained variation was 73.5%. The adjusted R-Square is 73%.

This means 73% of the variation in behavioral intention on eco-tourism components practiced in the eco resorts can be explained responsible marketing, cultural respect, sustainability, interpretation and community involvement. As such this hypothesis of the research has been supported by the findings. The regression analyses show that responsible marketing is the most significant eco-tourism component dimension of overall behavioral intention of arrival of eco-tourists. Cultural respect, sustainability, interpretation and community involvement are the other dimensions respectively.

### **5.2 Relationship between Practices of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists' satisfaction**

This study tested seven eco-tourism components of an eco-resort which are significant contributors towards eco-tourists satisfaction. It was revealed from the findings that there was a positive relationship between the combinations of all seven components namely natural area focus, interpretation, sustainability conservation, community involvement, cultural respect and responsible marketing. Based on the stepwise regression analysis of satisfaction of eco-tourists upon eco-tourism components practices in eco-resorts dimension, there was a positive significant relationship between five eco-tourism components. They are interpretation, sustainability, natural area focus, conservation and responsible marketing. This is due to the p-values of all these components less than 0.05 and the beta values were positive. Hence these dimensions are significant in the analysis. In accordance with the regression analysis, cultural respect and community involvement dimensions were insignificant. P-values of them were more than 0.05.

The regression analyses show that responsible marketing is the most significant eco-tourism component dimension of overall satisfaction eco-tourists. Sustainability, conservation, interpretation and natural area focus are the other dimensions respectively. In the analysis it is very clear that responsible marketing, interpretation and sustainability practices of eco resorts are common significant factors of determining eco-tourists satisfaction and behavioral intention of arrival. In both occasions, responsible marketing dimension is the most significant factor. Hence, marketers have to provide the truthful information on real eco-tourism practices in the resorts to the tourists, otherwise, it causes for the dissatisfaction of them and finally affects to the arrival of eco tourists.

### **5.3 The mediation effect of Eco tourists' satisfaction of the eco-tourism practices in the eco resort for the relationship of practice of eco-tourism components in the eco resort and eco tourists' behavioral intention**

Numbers of studies have ventured in to this specific area to ascertain the mediating role of customer (eco-tourists) satisfaction upon eco-tourism components practices and behavioral intention of eco-tourists. The research findings revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship with eco-tourism components practices in eco-resorts and behavioral intention of eco-tourists. In addition, there is a significant positive relationship with eco-tourism components practices in eco-resorts and eco-tourists satisfaction. Apart from these direct relationships, further the study depicted that the dimension of eco-tourists (customer) satisfaction of eco-tourism components practices in eco-resorts performs a mediator role in the consequences of eco-tourism components practices in eco-resorts and behavioral dimension of eco-tourists. Eco-tourism components satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between practice of eco-tourism components in eco resorts and eco-tourists behavioral intention.

### **5.4 Relationship between eco tourists' satisfaction on eco-tourism components practiced in eco resorts and eco tourists' behavioral intention**

It was revealed from the findings that there was a positive relationship between eco tourists' satisfaction on eco-tourism components practiced in eco resorts and the behavioral intention of arrival of eco-tourists. As such this hypothesis of the research has been supported by the findings.

### **5.5 Conclusive remarks**

Throughout this research, the researcher tried to identify the practices of eco-tourism concept in Sri Lankan eco resorts and the effect of it to eco-tourist arrivals. There, the study found the practices of eco-tourism concept in Sri Lankan eco-resorts are different from the global context. As a result, their main customer groups of eco tourists' expectations have been neglected and it caused for dissatisfaction. Therefore, there is a possibility of losing the eco-tourism market and the business in Sri Lanka in near future. Then, the people of the country will not get the benefits of it and triple bottom line of the business will not be achieved. These results addressed and identified the causes for the research issue of this research.

In the questionnaire survey analysis of eco-tourists, the study found eco-tourism practices in eco resorts are affecting to the satisfaction and behavioral intention of eco-tourists. It clearly indicated that if the eco-tourism components are not practicing in the resorts correctly, it would badly affect to the satisfaction and behavioral intention of eco tourists. Since some major components are not practicing properly in eco resorts, it has caused for the dissatisfaction of eco tourists and their behavioral intention. As a result, Sri Lanka is experiencing less number of eco-tourists. Eco resort hoteliers' poor practice of the concept is one of the major reasons for it. It was proven from these research findings.

Attaching the "eco-tourism" label to poorly planned programmes provides local population with little besides social tension and environmental degradation, while leaving the genuine eco tourist dissatisfied and cheated. Most of the big resorts are just concrete jungles and still they claim them as eco resorts. According to the study, the issue of failing to practice the eco-tourism concept in the eco resorts happened due to the following reasons.

- Sri Lanka eco-tourism business is not being guided by international principles.
- A "National Policy Plan on Eco Tourism" is yet to be formulated by the tourism authorities in Sri Lanka
- There are no true eco resort operators, those who adhere to the eco-resort principles.
- There are no sufficient qualified people to handle eco tourists.
- Non- availability of genuinely planned eco resorts that guarantee the economic benefits to the community living around the eco resort areas.

Therefore, there is a need of eliminating these adverse practices which threaten the healthy development of the Eco tourism and eco resort practices in Sri Lanka.

It is important to understand the real volume and value of eco-tourism and its potential to diversify and induce local economies, create linkages, foster multiplier effects, and motivation for sustainable resource utilisation. Clear market is there. Demand is there for eco- tourism product. So no reason can be justified for failure?

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