

# Sri lanka a profile tourism essay

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1. 0. Sri Lanka- a Profile.....	042.
0. Global tourism trend.....	043.
0. Introduction to The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau.....	
043. 1. The Mahinda Chintana and Sri Lanka Tourism.....	
053. 2. Markets and market size.....	053. 3.
Tourists' profile.....	064. 0Marketing
Mix.....	085. 0 SWOT
Analysis.....	116.
0Segmentation.....	137.
0Marketing Strategies.....	148.
0Positioning.....	169.
0Marketing communication activities and strategies.....	
1710. 0Brands and brandings.....	
1811. 0Network and customer relationships marketing	
strategies.....	1812. 0e-Marketing, viral and guerilla marketing
activities and strategies.....	1813. 0Role and effectiveness of Public
Relations activities and strategies.....	1914. 0Recommendations
.....	2015. 0
Conclusion.....	
22References.....	23List of
FiguresFigure 1: Market growth trends and tourist arrivals (2011)	
.....	06Figure 2: Purpose of visit to Sri Lanka (2011)
.....	07Figure 3: Age analysis of tourists (2011)
.....	07Figure 4: Occupation of tourists visiting
Sri lanka (2011).....	08Figure 5: Ansoff's growth vector
matrix.....	14Figure 6: Positioning
<a href="https://assignbuster.com/sri-lanka-a-profile-tourism-essay/">https://assignbuster.com/sri-lanka-a-profile-tourism-essay/</a>	

Map.....	16
Figure 7: SMMR model of communication.....	17

## Acronym

SLTPB ♦ " Sri Lanka Tourist Promotion Bureau  
 SLTDA - Sri Lanka Tourist Development Authority  
 Mn ♦ " Million  
 BN ♦ " Billion  
 FITs ♦ " Free Independent Travellers  
 MICE ♦ " Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibition  
 SMMR ♦ " Sender, Message, Medium, Receiver  
 IT ♦ " Information Technology  
 LTTE ♦ " Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam  
 BOI ♦ " Board of Investment

## Sri Lanka- a Profile

The tropical Island of Sri Lanka [then Ceylon] lies at the southern tip of India and was once ruled by the natives themselves and conquered by the South Indian kings, Portuguese and the Dutch at different periods of time. Finally, Sri Lanka won its independence from the British in 1948 and since then has been called the “ Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka” (bbc). The country boasts of a vibrant democracy and governed by an Executive President, Prime Minister [who is more or less, is a figure head, and a Cabinet of Ministers (Ferguson 2004). Though agriculture has been the mainstay of Sri Lankans, migrant labour, tea and tourism have become major foreign-exchange earners (Central Bank of Sri Lanka). Of the total population of 21 Mn, 7. 89 Mn. Persons are in the labour market of which 145, 215 are employed directly in the tourism sector. (Sri Lanka Socio-Economic Data 2012).

## **Global tourism trend**

According to the World Tourism Organization (media. unwto. org), a total of 457 Mn. tourists had travelled during the first half on 2012 and as at the end of 2012, a record 1 BN. people were expected to travel, thus indicating that international tourism remains firmly on track, despite concerns over global economy, the annual growth rate of 5% had been achieved. Tourism had been one of the few sectors to show remarkable growth, thus generating new jobs” (media. unwto. org). The World economic Forum in his annual report of 2011 had ranked Switzerland 1stand Sri Lanka 81stamong 139 countries surveyed (wef. org).

## **Introduction to The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau**

The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB), set-up in 2005 under Section 2 of the Sri Lanka Tourist ACT No. 38 is the successor of the now defunct Ceylon Tourist Board, Sri Lanka Tourist Board and the Sri Lanka Tourism Board (sltda. gov. lk). The decision by the incumbent government in this regard underscores its commitment to develop Sri Lanka tourism to its fullest as South-East Asia’s natural choice for holiday and leisure activities within a short time span of ten years and accordingly, the SLTDA is mandated with developing diverse, multiple and unique products and services that would meet the ever changing demands of the industry, whilst ensuring gainful employment to Sri Lankans and inflow of substantial foreign exchange (sltda. gov. lk).

## **The Mahinda Chintana and Sri Lanka Tourism**

H. E. President Mahinda Rajapakse [the 5th Executive President of the Democratic, Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka] in his “ MahindaChintana”  
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meaning “ Future vision” had identified tourism as a catalyst capable of generating gainful employment- both direct and indirect, thereby considerably reducing the rate of unemployment and poverty in the country, whilst generating the much-needed foreign exchange (mahindachintana 2010). The President’s objective is to1). achieve two million tourist arrivals by the year 2016, 2). target the up-scale free Independent Travellers (FITS) who are comparatively high spenders. 3). make tourism Sri Lanka’s third largest foreign exchange earner, and4). transform tourism to become the fastest job creator, which could help reduce unemployment level (sltda. gov. lk).

## **Markets and market size**

According to med. gov. lk, a 10 year medium-term strategic plan has been developed and implemented, with focus on high as well as mid-end segments. SLTBP is targeting all outbound tourist markets globally, its focus has always been in Western Europe, Asia, North America and Australasia and in this context; both the average annual growth rate and the tourist arrivals for the year 2011 are given hereunder (Annual Statistical Report of

2012)Figure 1: Market growth trends and tourist arrivals

(2011)MARKETAVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH TREND (%)TOURIST

ARRIVALSAsia9. 7393, 844Australasia9. 649, 575Western Europe9. 0371, 897North America6. 986, 727Others8. 997, 456All markets-average9. 0999, 499Source: Annual Statistical Report of Sri Lanka Tourism -2012.

## **Tourists’ profile**

In order to construct the profile of tourists visiting Sri Lanka, below are the employed geographic, demographic and buyer-behaviour segmentation

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variables. According to the Ceylon Hotels Corporation (2012), tourists are classified by “ purpose of visit” namely: 1). pleasure/leisure, 2). business, 3). religious and cultural, 4). relations and friends, 5). meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions (MICE), and 6). others. Figure 2 below shows, pleasure/ leisure seeking visitors top the list, whilst business visitors and those visiting relations and friends had come 2nd and 3rd, respectively.

Figure 2: Purpose of visit to Sri Lanka (2011) Source: Central bank of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka Socio-Economic Data 2012. Colombo. Government Press.

Tourists may also be classified by age and gender and according to the SLTPB (2012), the male: female ratio of tourists visiting Sri Lanka in 2011 was 62. 5: 37. 5. Further, the same report segments the age of visitors into six and according to this, In fact, according to the data in Figure 3, the 30-39 years group ranked 1st, followed by 40-49 group in 2nd place and 20-29 age group in the 3rd place, thus exploding the myth that it was the elderly who mostly visited Sri Lanka. This information is given in Figure 3, below: Figure 3: Age analysis of tourists (2011)

AGE-Years	PERCENTAGE	RANK
< 20	9. 85	20
20-29	18. 33	3
30-39	24. 21	1
40-49	23. 02	2
50-59	15. 44	6
> 60	9. 36	TOTAL
	100	

-

Source: Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (2012). The tourists’ profile maybe further expanded by analyzing the “ occupation” of tourists visiting Sri Lanka. This data has been grouped into eight and leading the Table is “ other occupation” (24. 3%) and “ no occupation” (23. 7%). Due to people in the West doing short-term jobs and in-between switching jobs, take a holiday, especially in winter. Data pertaining to this variable may be found

below. Figure 4: Occupation of tourists visiting Sri Lanka (2011)Source: Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (2012).

## **Marketing Mix**

As everybody knows that SLTPB promotes Sri Lanka as best tourism destination to the world using following marketing mixes which give competitive advantages since 2009 in Sri Lanka tourism which are discussed below.

## **Products/Services**

The product in service marketing mix is intangible in nature so it cannot be measured even though it is based on three major factors such as follows  
The climate: Climate is defined as the condition of the atmosphere at a particular location over a long period of time. Taverns-restaurants: SLTPB controls and monitors the industry by introducing laws and quality assurance to all kind of restaurant with regards to food and beverages which is more attracted tourism. Parking areas: SLTPB always tries to introduce some new standards and laws on spa, post shops and health centers to increase in qualities on this area.

## **Pricing**

Pricing is the key to marketing strategy and acts not only as a weapon to counteract competitors but also ensures survival of enterprise. SLTPB has major responsible towards retaining and increasing on world tourism market shares and Individual tourist needs to be realized the value is spent is worth is important when it comes to the pricing. The regulatory authority of all tourism related developments, the SLTPB is involved in establishing,

updating and regulating industry standards in the travel and tourism industry, registering and licensing tourist service providers, inspecting and monitoring tourist establishments and service providers, and formulating and regulating prices charge for tourist services.

## **Place**

Here SLTPB concentrates on distributional channels. It promotes more tourist agencies across the world to obtain more tourist numbers in Sri Lanka and also motivates local agencies to operate in foreign by providing several benefits such as Tax exemption, It also provide the appropriate tour time and distances from various spot, give ideas different travel routes, selecting attractions and support facilities along different travel routes, and informing potential tourists (customers) about alternative travel routes. It targets to be focused on improving in IT infrastructure for attract more business and professional people to come in to Sri Lanka.

## **Promotion**

Promotions have become a critical factor in the service marketing mix. This organization is dedicated to this one behalf Sri Lanka government in Sri Lanka. It focuses on building good relationship with every government and trying to promote Sri Lanka Tourism. It is trying to organize more international activities in Sri Lanka which gives more data about Sri Lanka to the world such as organizing Cricket World Cup 2012 in Sri Lanka. SLTPB is targeting to promote Pilgrim traffic and the heritage/cultural visitors from china. It is trying to be focused to build seven starts hotel in Sri Lanka with the help of foreign investment to attract more tourists.



## **Physical evidence**

As everyone knows, Physical evidence is most evaluated critical factor in the tourism industry. Sri Lanka is beautiful island is indeed a land like no other and uniqueness and size earned it the name 'Taprobane' and 'The Pearl of the Indian Ocean.'. Major tourist attractions are focused around the island's famous beaches located in the southern and eastern parts of the country, ancient heritage sites located in the interior of the country and lush green resorts located in the mountainous regions. The beautiful rain forests, mountain ranges and scenic plantations can be visited within a few hours (approximately 4-5 hours travel time), and visitors can experience the many wildlife sanctuaries that are located on this Small Miracle Island.

## **People**

Sri Lanka is an island with smiling and friendly people who are well known for their hospitality. Sri Lanka has the highest Literacy rate in southern Asia. These people are very famous for “ caring others”. The English knowledge of people is very attractive and standardized.

## **Process**

SLTPB needs to introduce some simple process for visa process which is very attractive for the visitors. Especially it has to look at Tourist and Business visa to the country. The complexity of this process leads to unpleasant for the tourist. SLTPB needs to be connected with aviation of Sri Lanka system and try to simplify the tourist aviation activities. Eg: introducing several separate counters for foreigners to do the custom and baggage clearing. SLTPB wants to make sure, the fasted service is provided to them in any

situation. Eg: Scheduling tours time in the night in busy cities like Colombo and Kandy.

**Above mentioned all marketing mixes are very important to achieve governments and Mahinda Chinthana goals as well.**

## **5. 0 SWOT Analysis**

SWOT analysis helps in matching a firm's resources and capabilities to the competitive environment in which it operates. Using the method we weigh up Sri Lanka Tourism's internal strengths and weaknesses against external opportunities and threats.

### **Strengths**

\* Assortment of attractions in Sri Lanka (palm fringed beaches, warm waters, diverse landscapes, ancient culture, arts, world heritage sites) and its friendly people make Sri Lanka a worthwhile tourism spots.\* Pleasant weather with ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse country.\* Significant long-term government support for the industry.\* Cultural orientation, religious values, respect for people and traditions, and sacred sites.\* Low-cost tourist destination with proximity to Indian sub-continent and South-East Asia.

### **Weakness**

\* Destruction due to natural calamity - Asian Tsunami caused severe damage to several coastal areas. Most areas have recovered but some are still in the process of recovering.\* Safety & security - Though the country has declared victory over LTTE, there is still unrest in northern and eastern province of Sri Lanka where most Tamils are based\* Medical facilities and emergency help

is severely limited or unavailable in some areas\* Limited international air connectivity\* Overlapping authorities and excessive regulation from multiple government agencies\* Past projects stalled by litigation despite having government approvals\* Economy severely impacted due to years of internal strife\* Low competitiveness rankings compared to South East Asian tourism destinations

## **Opportunities**

\* Increased hotels facilities at tourist destinations.\* An advertising agency has been hired to build brand image and increase market reach\* Eco-tourism is now gaining popularity.\* Many regions in Sri Lanka are yet to be explored.\* Focus areas: beach tourism, cultural tourism, tea tourism, Eco-tourism, religious tourism.\* Potential to offer quality and exclusivity based packages owing to small size - an offering not always available in mass-market package destinations.\* Growing political and economic relationship with China.\* Planned new and expansion projects by international hotel chains.\* Major infrastructure investment programs planned for the Eastern and Northern regions

## **Threats**

\* Other Asian countries having similar tourist attractions, better prices and facilities could divert the tourists.\* As people are getting more aware of climate change, they may try to decrease the effect on it by taking fewer flights.\* The continuing credit crunch is affecting the tourism industry negatively\* Fluctuating oil prices have resulted in increased air ticket prices thus making prospective customers reluctant to go for tours.\* Limited air connectivity to European and American destinations could result in Sri Lanka

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becoming the place for budget travellers from India and South Asia\*

Competition from neighboring countries With the above analysis it can be seen that Sri Lanka tourism is facing a lot of threats and internally they have quite a number of weaknesses which they need to overcome.

## **6. 0Segmentation**

SLTPB understands current tourist market focuses on the following segments. RegionAgeGenderPurpose

### **Region**

SLTPB divides the total market into following region to satisfy the unique customer into one segment. AsiaAustraliaWestern EuropeNorth AmericaOthers This segmentation is closely monitoring and targeting by the Sri Lankan government, Tourist Board and SLTPB. Asian segmentation is mostly focused by the current government due to Human Violation issues. Western Europe and North America tourists have attracted to Sri Lanka tours but the current issues faced by Sri Lanka government are vital to make up this segment as well.

### **Age**

Statics show that age group between, from 20 to 60 is mostly targeted by this segmentation in tourist industry in Sri Lanka. Especially The people who is in Mid Thirties are visiting to Sri Lanka is remarkable. SLTPB needs to develop some strategies to promote teenage people to Sri Lanka.

### **Gender**

This really one of best segmentation, if which could be implemented properly in Sri Lanka. According to the past record, both male and female is not

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targeting separately but current segment includes this to attract more people to Sri Lanka.

## **Purpose**

70% of the tourists would like to visit Sri Lanka for enjoyment so this needs to be taken care by SLTPB very seriously and try to promote more people into this and also should be taken care of other purposes such as business and education, Religious and cultural activities. The above segmentation needs to be clearly communicated to tourist industry in Sri Lanka and try to understand why it cannot be generate more tourists with others.

## **7. 0Marketing Strategies**

### **Ansoff's growth vector matrix**

The Ansoft matrix is of special relevance to the SLTPB as it could benefit from market development and product development strategies. SLTPB need to study on all above mentioned segmentation and promote some of them in seriously. Figure 5: Ansoff's growth vector matrixAnsoff matrixSource: [http://www.tutor2u.net/business/strategy/ansoff\\_matrix.htm](http://www.tutor2u.net/business/strategy/ansoff_matrix.htm)

### **Market Penetration Strategy**

It focuses on offering same products and services to the existing market which can be continued for another 5 years in Sri Lanka because current tourism market is growing and strong in here. This is one of the best strategies to have on the Region wise customer, the current market is opened to the entire world and clearly targeted to Asian Market. This needs to be changed and will be more focused on Western Europe and America. It attracts more customers using this strategy even though SLTPB tries to

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increase market share in the market. Promotion and Price should be taken care to compete when operate in this market.

### **Market Development Strategy**

This strategy focuses on offering same product to the new market which gives the competitive advantages. SLTPB identifies the tourists who are very interesting to visit Sri Lanka who's from Arabic countries. This Arabic market could be new to the Sri Lanka tourism offering same products and services is identified from Market Development Strategy is very successful for last two years SLTPB needs to be identified such markets to increase market shares in the industry and supporting to Sri Lanka economy as well.

### **Market Product Strategy**

Introduction of new products to existing market is called Market product strategy which is most used concept in Sri Lanka tourism industry in the context of marketing strategy. SLTPB always tries to introduce superior services and products to the entire tourist based on their region. Building seven start hotels, easy visa processing system, improving on infrastructure and brining more attractive new services are offered to the tourist.

### **Diversification**

SLTPB needs to have some diversification strategies because nothing can be predicted easily by anybody so this needs to think as long term plan.

## **8. 0 Positioning**

High Quality

## **Western Europe**

**&**

## **North America**

## **Australia**

Low Price High Price

## **Asia**

Low Quality Figure 6: Positioning Map Above figure shows how SLTPB is positioned the target audience in tourism. Clearly it shows that the people who are from UK and USA expect high qualities hotel and services which can offer at high price. Secondly SLTPB is more focused on Asian with the strategy of low quality with lowest price which is very effective since 2009. Most of the Asian countries are very cost conches so which is positioned into this category. Australia is positioned as Low Price and High Quality. Their expectation is very high with the reasonable price which is very difficult to offer even though to attract and keep the number remains, SLTPB wants to maintain this strategy. The positioning of tourism in Sri Lanka according to SLTPB market segments is very effective to keep a step forward in tourism. Sri Lanka is more focused on Asian Market which is not that profitable because This Island is facing Human Rights violation issues since 2009.

## **9. 0Marketing communication activities and strategies**

This process of selection also enables the Bureau to overcome the cultural barriers in communicating to foreign target markets. The marketing communications activities and strategies may be further analyzed by employing the “SMMR” model of communication, as shown in Figure 6,

below: Figure 7: SMMR model of

communicationReceiverMessageMediumSenderFeedbackSource: Bovee, C. L., Thill, J. V., and Schatzman, B. E. (2002). Business Communication Today. (7th Ed.). New Delhi. Baba Barkha. The sender is the SLTPB, the message is “A Land Like No Other” , which is based on a “fantasy” platform, and the medium is primarily foreign TVs in high potential markets such as: Germany, France, and the UK, and the receivers are the potential tourists. The SLTPB collects statistical data on all aspects of tourism including arrivals, nationality, occupation, gender, nights spent, and money spent among others and considers this data as feedback information for making improvements of the elements of the SMMR model. The SLTPB also uses celebrity endorsements as a strategy, which is consistent with Kotler’s (2004) writings on the topic. It is also noteworthy to mention here that the DLTPB has standardized its communication irrespective of the country the promotion is conducted in, the only change being the language it adopts in line with the market it intends covering. The SLTPB’s marketing communication is based on “pull” [i. e. enticing and attracting tourists] and not on “push” [hard sell] strategy.

## **10. 0Brands and brandings**

The SLTPB too has branded itself by adopting a message or slogan “Sri Lanka - A Land Like No Other”, believes that this is consistent with the views held by travellers from ancient times, including Marco Polo, who claimed that there was no place on earth like Sri Lanka [then Serendipity] (Perera 1998). Branding Sri Lanka as a land like no other makes it very unique and hard to copy by rivals and compares favorably with the established “location



branding” exercises found in the hospitality and the travel trade the world-over. Sri Lanka had uniqueness and that is authenticity, compactness and diversity. Therefore, visiting Sri Lanka is a refreshing experience. The eight categories under which Sri Lanka is branded such as Beaches, Heritage, Scenic beauty, Wildlife, Festive, Thrill, Bliss and Essence. Developed key marketing strategies to enhance the image of brand “ Sri Lanka”. SLTPB should develop brand strategies together with clients to enhance clients’ brand image and value.

## **11. 0Network and customer relationships marketing strategies**

SLTPB has been very successful in establishing, cultivating and managing relationships with various stakeholders, particularly, travel agents, charter operators, event management companies world-wide with in an attempt to generate greater inbound tourist traffic into Sri Lanka. Some of the strategies adopted by the SLTPB are: hosting cocktail parties, participation in tourism seminars, exhibitions and other events, organizing sight-seeing and hosting fact-finding tours for leading international travel agents.

## **e-Marketing, viral and guerilla marketing activities and strategies**

### **e-Marketing activities and strategies**

Whilst eMarketing is one of the many activities of marketing, particularly marketing communication, ideally it should be supported by other forms of marketing and promotion so as to create synergy (Kotler and Armstrong 2007). It may be stated that the SLTPB uses Internet extensively to communicate, educate and persuade the target market on a regular basis,

and this is done through professional eMarketing service providers and Such service providers assist the SLTPB in many ways including, product/service launches, repositioning the brand, and build corporate image, among others. However, SLTBP has found no evidence on the use of viral and guerilla marketing at the SLTPB to-date.

## **Role and effectiveness of Public Relations activities and strategies**

The Public Relations Society of America defines Public Relations as “ A strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.” According to Kotler and Armstrong (2007), Public Relations may be employed in five ways namely: 1). press release [in order to introduce newsworthy information to inform, convince and build favorable brand and corporate image], 2). product/service publicity [this is about publicizing various goods/services], 3). corporate communication [is about internal communication, meaning informing and motivating staff, and external communication, which is information provision to customers and potential customers on goods/services], 4). lobbying [with the powers that be to defeat legislations affecting one’s business], and 5). counseling [which is [laying an advisory role to management]. According to SLTPB (2012), it is dedicated to building and maintaining excellent working relationship with all stakeholders and projects a very positive image of the organization. The same lists the following Public relations objectives: •To create awareness among all stakeholders on benefits accruing to the country via tourism. •To train, motivate and retain tourist service providers. •To encourage eco and green tourism. It may be stated that one of the strategies

adopted by the SLTPB is inculcating in the minds of school children the importance of preserving culture and cultural heritages by organizing regular tours to such places of interest (SLTPB 2011).

## **14. 0Recommendations**

Having undertaken an extensive review and strategy development propose below, a set of recommendations, which if adopted, could take the SLTPB to even greater heights in the years to come. The recommendations are as follows:

### **IEI” strategy**

The acronym IEI stands for internal marketing, external marketing and integrative marketing. Internal marketing is about training and motivating staff for excellent customer service, external marketing involves in fine-tuning the seven Ps’ so that the SLTPB’s products and services match the needs and wants of target customers namely, tourists. Integrative marketing is about employees’ skills in offering quality of service and excellent customer care

### **SERQUAL strategy**

1). gap between customer expectation and organizational perception, 2). gap between organizational perception and customer service practices, 3). gap between customer service practices and service delivery, 4). gap between service delivery and organization’s marketing communication, and 5). gap between expected service and actual service. This model as an important element is improving service quality at the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau and would strongly recommend that the SLTPB conducts a

comprehensive self-examination [internal analysis and scanning] on these lines and improve service quality where necessary.

### **The web portals and web marketing**

The web portals and web marketing should be developed. Ex: Dehiwala zoo is a tourist attraction in Sri Lanka but still it hasn't an official web site.

### **Upgrading of hotels and restaurants**

The upgrading of the hotels and restaurants should be international standard.

### **New tourist destinations**

The North and the East of the Island namely; Jaffna, Batticaloa and Trincomalle offer the greatest scope for wildlife, nature and eco-tourism, which hitherto had been inaccessible on account of the civil war. SLTPB in collaboration with the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka (BOI) actively seek foreign investments to fully develop hitherto untapped potential of these provinces.

### **Viral marketing activities and strategies**

The "word of mouth" spread of a marketing message by an organization through the use of some sort of media " typically it is shared through online social media such as You Tube, Facebook or Twitter. Promotions, events, future plans handled should be publicized on Facebook or Twitter. Using video interactive on YouTube is the best way for SLTPB. This is the best way to create interest in visiting Sri Lanka tourism in a different and memorable way.

## **Guerilla marketing activities and strategies.**

Currently SLTBP is not practicing the Guerrilla Marketing Strategies so it should follow because it is a cheap way of marketing and involves networking, both with customers and with other businesses. Having posters at airport. Billboards and posters with new ideas at tourist popular destinations.

## **Customer Loyalty strategies**

SLTPB has been very successful and should continue in establishing, cultivating and managing relationships with various stakeholders, particularly, travel agents, charter operators, event management companies world-wide with in an attempt to generate greater inbound tourist traffic into Sri Lanka. Some of the strategies adopted by the SLTPB are: hosting cocktail parties, Participation in tourism seminars, Exhibitions and other events, Organizing sight-seeing and Hosting fact-finding tours for leading international travel agents.

## **15. 0 Conclusion**

Thus, Sri Lanka has what it takes to be a top-most tourist destination, backed by a unique campaign captioned “ A Land Like No Other”. Hence, what it requires now is the adaptation of effective strategies and adequate resources, mostly financial, to see it through. Similar sentiments were expressed by the Telegraph (2012), which also predicted that the sandy beached in the North and the East would soon become tourist hotspots, as the civil war is over.