

## Chapter 16

# Domestic Tourist Satisfaction in a Colonial Hotel and Its Implications for Management: The Case of Bandarawela Hotel, Sri Lanka

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### ABSTRACT

*The most important job and the biggest challenge in contemporary management in service industries, is making the customers satisfied. It can be argued that the difficulty faced by managers committed to customer satisfaction, is designing specific customer satisfaction strategies. This task becomes a challenge due to the lack of studies done to measure customer satisfaction in hospitality industry, which result in the lack of understanding of the governing factors and the level of customer satisfaction. In Bandarawela Hotel the significant differences between the satisfaction of domestic and foreign tourists and the dominant dissatisfaction of domestic tourists have been recognized. The reasons for dissatisfaction were studied using the mixed methodology of the research. The factors affecting their satisfaction were recognized to be in two categories; tangible and intangible. As the significant findings, some features of the hotel that exists due to the Colonial concept were recognized as the main factors that contribute to the domestic tourists' dissatisfaction.*

### INTRODUCTION

The contribution of the tourism industry to the country's economic growth is undeniably significant although the industry is a late entrant to the mainstream of the Sri Lankan economy. This industry is being increasingly recognized as an important player in the economic growth. This is evident in the strategic plan for tourism in Sri Lanka where it is expected to draw 2.5 million tourists by 2016 (Tourism

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1886-0.ch016

Development Strategy 2011-2016). A special feature that is relevant to this study in this development strategy is that the government's special attention paid to improve domestic tourism.

The problem under investigation was revealed in a preliminary study of reviewing guest comment sheets on the hotel experience of Bandarawela Hotel, Sri Lanka. The review disclosed an unusual nature of the guest satisfaction. That is, the guest satisfaction for the same product was on two different directions; a significant amount of foreign guests were satisfied in their overall evaluation of the hotel experience, while another significant amount of domestic visitors were complaining over the quality of accommodation and other amenities in the hotel. Accordingly, the objectives of this research were to investigate into this difference of satisfaction levels and to recognize the factors leading to domestic guests' dissatisfaction.

Being a reputed hotel in Bandarawela area that receives a significant amount of domestic tourists as customers, investigating this unusual behavior of the guest satisfaction will be crucial for making satisfied customers. A brief description of the hotel is available in the below.

### **Bandarawela Hotel**

Bandarawela Hotel is a colonial heritage in the Uva province of Sri Lanka; is the first hotel in the hill country and the history of which goes back to the year 1893. Its antecedents are read from the end of 19th century when it first ran as a guest house. From the beginning, Bandarawela Hotel was conceived as an exclusive club and guest house for Europeans only. Its opening in 1894 coincided with the extension of the rail link from Nanu Oya to Bandarawela. Train travelers needed a place to stay overnight and the Hotel provided an ideal facility for them. With time it became an exclusive recluse for the Europeans who were resident in Sri Lanka and was nurtured to be so until the 1950's. It even served as a convalescent home for recuperating British soldiers during World War II. Year 1924-1926 Miller & Co purchases The Bandarawela Hotel from the government of Ceylon with the sanction of the Secretary of State for the colonies. Year 1983 Management of Bandarawela Hotel is handed over to Aitken Spence Hotel Managements (pvt) limited.

As the significances, the findings of this study will be helpful in recognizing the significant differences between domestic and foreign guest satisfaction regarding the product offerings in Bandarawela hotel and the suitability of colonialism concept for the domestic and foreign tourist. As well as, the study findings will help to identify the factors of guest satisfaction and dissatisfaction in Bandarawela hotel and how customer satisfaction influence for customer loyalty in service industry. This will help the hotel to retain its customers after implementing necessary management actions to increase customer satisfaction. Further, the study findings will help to build on the body of the existing knowledge. This will help to provide reference for future researchers and they will be able to carry out research with ease since this study will provide secondary data to the researchers. Moreover, this study is very much important for the concept based hotel businesses in Asian region. And this would be a great aid for the both government and commercial sector organizations. In essence this study will assist to recognize the guest and build up delightful customers. If the organization knows about its customers, and prospective customers- their needs and desires, their attitudes and behavior- the better it will be able to satisfy their customers.

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