

**24****Tourists' Satisfaction between Public Bus Transport Service and Railway Transport Service in Polonnaruwa Tourist Area**

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**Abstract**

Sri Lankan tourism industry has been growing rapidly since gaining independence from the British. Sri Lanka has continued to attract foreign investors and tourists to the country. The transport system is an essential factor to maintain tourists' mobility to reach their destinations. In the Sri Lankan public transportation system there are mainly buses and railways as transport modalities. Previous studies have proved that tourists are intended to use the railway as a public transportation modality in many other countries. The objective of this study is to compare tourists' satisfaction between public bus transport service and railway transport service in Sri Lanka. This study used structured interviews with tourists during their visit to Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka. Convenience sampling method was used to gather data. Frequency analysis, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and Mann-Whitney U Test was used as analytical tools. According to the results of this study, tourists showed higher satisfaction with trains

than buses regarding some service attributes such as less traffic, the availability of information, safety and security in trains and stations, space availability and ticket price while some tourists showed higher satisfaction with bus service than the railway service such as service frequency and accessibility to the bus stops. The same level of satisfaction has shown for the convenience of the time schedule regarding both transport services. Finally, this study demonstrates that the tourists' satisfaction of public bus transport services is less than railway transport service in Sri Lanka. Therefore, responsible parties should take necessary actions to improve Sri Lankan public transport services; especially for increasing tourists' satisfaction. According to the responses, a number of recommendations can be pointed out such as how tourists like to pay more for getting a comfortable and frequent travel experience for both modes' buses and trains.

**Key words:** Bus transport system; Railway transportation system; Satisfaction; Tourism