Assessing the Walk-Score of Walking Paths in Kandy City Area for Better Walking Experience for the Tourists

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Abstract

Walking has been always considered as a sustainable method of transportation which is more suitable for short-distance trips. The concept of "short distance trip" changes with the convenient maximum walking distance of a human being. However, it is observed that tourists would prefer to walk more than residents in cities with many tourist attractions located within close proximity. The City of Kandy, in Sri Lanka, can be recognized as one good example for such cities. Even though the tourists are willing to walk longer distances, this study has assessed the walking experience of a pedestrian in the city limits of Kandy, based on a walk score. Several walkability characteristics are taken into account to generate the walk score for segments of roads in the city and Pedestrian Level of Service (PLOS) was also considered. PLOS does not have considerations for tourists, it was used only to assess the basic requirements for pedestrians. A study done by Hall and Ram in 2018 comparing TripAdvisor ratings and Walk Score found that more specific assessments of walkability are required to evaluate the tourist requirements. Considering several works of literature as such, this study used an evaluation criterion developed by Dias in 2012 to obtain the walk-score and tourism specific features such as availability of shops and ATMs were taken into account. The objective of this study was to recognize the best walking paths between the tourist attractions using these qualities. The study area was based on the tourist attractions in Kandy and the importance of walking for the tourists within the city. Data were collected through field surveys in 2018 to identify walking facilities provided and to estimate PLOS in the selected street segments. Recommendations are proposed to improve the walking experience for the tourists. Twenty-six road segments were selected for the study and the Walk-score ranged from 24% to 60% with an average of 45% which cannot be considered as a satisfactory situation. As a walk score criteria were used, there was no requirement to do an opinion survey among tourists who walk these paths. Availability of amenities for pedestrians is one factor in estimating the walk-score in which the availability of bank facilities, restaurants, shopping malls, transportation terminals (bus stops and train stations), roadside benches etc. However, the results showed the lack of such amenities in many street segments which can be discouraging tourists to choose the street segment for their route. According to the results, it is important to remove obstructions which are located in the sides of the walkway which reduce the effective walkway width creating unnecessary queues. When selecting a walking path to reach a tourist destination it is expected that they will tend to select the best walking path.

Using the results of this study, a tourist can take an informed decision on choosing the best route and also the relevant authorities can prioritize the budget allocations on improving roadside facilities.

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