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Exploring Sustainable Urban Mobility through the lens of Theory of Planned Behaviour

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Thesis/Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of
Science (Major Component of Research)

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November 2025

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work and this thesis/dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any other University or Institute of higher learning and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgment is made in the text. I retain the right to use this content in whole or part in future works (such as articles or books).

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The above candidate has carried out research for the Master's thesis/dissertation under my supervision. I confirm that the declaration made above by the student is true and correct.

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Udayangani Kulatunga

Signature of the Supervisor:

Date: 05/11/2025

DEDICATION

*I dedicate this piece of research,
Specially to
My parents
And
All the kind hearts and helping hands,
Together with me,
From the beginning to now,
Of the journey of life...*

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Finally, I offer my special thanks to nature itself for providing us with the space and peace to dwell, reflect, and grow.

Jayalath. J. A. C. D

05th November 2025

ABSTRACT

Urban areas worldwide face significant challenges in achieving sustainability, particularly within the urban transportation sector, which profoundly impacts economic, environmental, social, and mental well-being. In Sri Lanka, these challenges are exacerbated by unsustainable urban planning practices and mobility policies that inadequately reflect the context-specific factors influencing urban mobility behaviours. Therefore, the concept of sustainable urban mobility is critical for addressing these multifaceted issues, as it is fundamentally grounded in human-centred, economically viable, and environmentally responsible approaches.

When implementing the most effective sustainable urban mobility approaches, active mobility and public transport often encounter challenges arising from numerous influencing factors. In this context, the study extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a framework to systematically explore and deepen the understanding of these factors shaping urban mobility practices. Accordingly, through a mixed-method approach involving a literature review and focus group interview, six key variable categories were identified as influencing commuters' transport mode choice. A single case study, centred on a documentary review, observations, and a questionnaire survey, was conducted to investigate the most influential variables within these categories, along with their magnitude of influence and the nature of their interrelationships in the Sri Lankan context. Subsequently, expert interviews were carried out to develop thirty strategic themes directly addressing the TPB variables that shape transport mode decisions.

The resulting strategies emphasise that, beyond physical infrastructure development, context-specific interventions including age- and gender-responsive policies as well as strategies sensitive to environmental, social, and cultural values, are essential for the optimal performance of sustainable urban mobility. Ultimately, this study proposes a new paradigm in urban transport planning, arguing that sustainable urban mobility is not merely about planning for people, but people for planning, through the deep integration of environmental, social, cultural, and economic realities.

Keywords: Active Mobility; Public transport; Sustainable Urban Mobility; Theory of Planned Behaviour

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
CHAPTER 1	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Research Problem	4
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Aim	6
1.5 Objectives	6
1.6 Research Methodology	6
1.7 Scope and Limitations	7
1.8 Chapter Breakdown	7
CHAPTER 2	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Status of Global Urban Mobility	8
2.3 Concept of Sustainable Urban Mobility	9
2.3.1 Benefits of implementing sustainable urban mobility	10
2.3.2 Measurement Indicators of Sustainable Urban Mobility	11
2.3.3 Differences in the Perspectives of Sustainable Urban Mobility	12
2.3.4 Sustainable urban mobility approaches	13
2.4 Influencing factors on sustainable urban mobility	19
2.4.1 Factors influencing active mobility	19

2.4.2 Factors influencing public transport	21
2.5 Urban Mobility in Sri Lanka	23
2.5.1 National Physical Planning Policy 2050	25
2.6 Application of the Theoretical Framework to Organize SUM Influencing Factors	27
2.6.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour	27
2.6.2 Extended theory of planned behaviour	29
2.6.3 Applicability of the Extended theory of planned behaviour in Sri Lanka	30
2.6.4 Mapping Influencing Factors with the Theory of Planned Behaviour	31
2.7 Necessity of a Unique Strategy Development.....	33
2.7.1 Implementation of a Unique Sustainable Urban Mobility Strategies	33
2.8 Conceptual Framework	35
2.9 Chapter Summary	38
CHAPTER 3	39
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Research Design	39
3.2.1 Research approach	40
3.2.2 Research strategy	40
3.2.3 Research Choice	41
3.2.4 Time Horizon.....	42
3.2.5 Research techniques.....	42
3.3 Research Process	46
3.4 Chapter summary	47
CHAPTER 4	48
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	48
4.1 Introduction	48
4.2 Stage I: Focus Group Discussion	48
4.2.1 Experts' perspectives on Sustainable Urban Mobility in Sri Lanka.....	48
4.2.2 Validating Factors Influencing Transport Mode Decision	50
4.3 Case Study Area	51

4.3.1 Stage II: Findings from the Documentary review	53
4.3.2 Stage III: Findings from Observation	58
4.3.3 Stage IV: Findings from the Questionnaire in Kiribathgoda City	61
4.4 Stage V: Key Findings from the Expert Interview.....	78
4.4.1 Formulate sustainable urban mobility strategies in Sri Lanka.....	79
4.5 Discussion	86
4.6 Chapter summary	95
CHAPTER 5	96
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	96
5.1 Introduction	96
5.2 Overview of the objectives	96
5.3 Limitations	99
5.4 Contribution to knowledge.....	99
5.5 Recommendations for Industry Practitioners.....	100
5.6 Recommendation for Academic Research.....	100
5.7 Conclusion.....	100
References	101
Appendix-A.....	113
Appendix-B.....	114
Appendix-C.....	119
Appendix-D.....	123

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Description	Page
Figure 2.1	Conceptual differences between traditional & sustainable mobility approaches.....	13
Figure 2.2	Components of a sustainable urban street	16
Figure 2.3	Summary of the Factors Influencing Active Mobility & Public Transport....	23
Figure 2.4	Vehicle Distribution in Sri Lanka.....	24
Figure 2.5	Graphical depiction of the theory of planned behaviour	28
Figure 2.6	Extended theory of planned behaviour.....	30
Figure 2.7	The Necessity of an Inherent Human-Centered strategies to Sustainable Urban Mobility.....	35
Figure 2.8	Summary of the literature findings.....	37
Figure 3.1	Research Onion	40
Figure 3.2	Summary of Research Process	47
Figure 4.1	Focus group discussion summary.....	51
Figure 4.2	Kiribathgoda town is located within the Colombo-Kandy corridor.....	50
Figure 4.3	The spatial distribution and functional arrangement of Kiribathgoda City....	53
Figure 4.4	Average hourly temperature	54
Figure 4.5	Daily chance of precipitation.....	54
Figure 4.6	Summary of climate data for the study area (1991-2021).....	55
Figure 4.7	Frequency per hour public transport service- Kiribathgoda city.....	58
Figure 4.8	Inadequate pedestrian facilities in Kiribathgoda city	59
Figure 4.9	Overview of features in Kiribathgoda City	60
Figure 4.10	Sample distribution.....	61
Figure 4.11	Current & Future usage patterns of urban mobility modes	60
Figure 4.12	Regression Analysis summary of Public Transport Intention Level.....	74
Figure 4.13	Regression Analysis summary of Active Mobility Intention Level	76
Figure 4.14	Tree planting layout.....	83
Figure 4.15	Conceptual framework of the Extended Theory of Planned Behavior: tailored to public transport mode intention	87
Figure 4.16	One Green Mile Street project, Mumbai	88
Figure 4.17	TPB Variables and Their Alignment with Active Mobility Strategies	93
Figure 4.18	TPB Variables and Their Alignment with Public Transport Strategies	94

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Description	Page
Table 2.1	Sustainable urban mobility measurement indicators	12
Table 2.2	Sustainable urban mobility approaches	14
Table 2.3	Methods for assessing Active mobility strategies.....	17
Table 2.4	Mapping Influencing Factors with TPB	31
Table 3.1	Scale Ranges for Levels of Influence	45
Table 4.1	Summary of road accidents in the last two years.....	55
Table 4.2	Details of Public transport services connected to Kiribathgoda city	55
Table 4.3	Mean value & P value comparison of personal attributes	63
Table 4.4	Mean value & P value comparison of travel characteristics.....	65
Table 4.5	Mean value & P value comparison of environmental characteristics.....	67
Table 4.6	Mean value & P value comparison of behavioural beliefs	69
Table 4.7	Mean value & P value comparison of social beliefs.....	71
Table 4.8	Mean values & P value comparison of control beliefs	70
Table 4.9	Summary of Key Influencing Factors.....	77
Table 4.10	Profile of the Interviewees	78
Table 4.11	Proposed strategies for Objective Variables	79
Table 4.12	Proposed strategies for Subjective variables.....	84
Table 4.13	Formulated strategies for sustainable urban mobility in Sri Lanka	90

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
PT	Public Transport
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SUM	Sustainable Urban Mobility
SWB	Subjective well-being
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Description	Page
Appendix - A	Observation Checklist	113
Appendix – B	Sample Questionnaire	114
Appendix – C	Expert Interview Guideline	119
Appendix – D	Detailed Calculations	123