Relationship between Foreign Active Sports Tourists' Travel Motivation, Past Travel Experience and Revisit Intention; Empirical Evidence from Nuwara Eliya Tourist Area

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ABSTRACT: Tourism which has been diversified and connected with many other industries is recognized as a focal industry in both developed and developing economies due to its growing contribution towards economic development. Over the time, a well-established interconnectedness is observed between sports and tourism due to their several common attributes. The main objective of this cross-sectional study is to examine the relationships between travel motivation, past travel experience and revisit intention of foreign active sports tourists with special reference to Nuwara Eliya tourist area which is a highly attractive destination among foreign tourists. Data was collected from 100 active sports foreign tourists, who engaged in popular sporting activities in Nuwara Eliya by using purposive sampling. Based on empirical studies, variables are operationalized and a Likert scale questionnaire was adopted as the survey instrument. Data was analyzed using SPSS 23.0 version. The hypothesized relationships were tested with Spearmen correlation after checking for outliers, internal consistency and normality. While revisit intention was revealing a moderate positive relationship with past travel experience, there was a poor positive relationship with travel motivation. Accordingly, Nuwara Eliya public and private institutions should initiate more strategies to enhance the availability of natural resources based adventure sporting activities and seasonal sporting tournaments to attract more sports tourists.

Keywords - Active Sports Tourist, Past Travel Experience, Revisit Intention, Travel Motivation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sport tourism refers to the experience of travel to engage in or view sport-related activities. It is generally recognized that there are three types of sport tourism. Sport Event Tourism, Active Sport Tourism, and Nostalgia Sport Tourism (Ross, 2001). Those individuals who travel to participate in sporting events comprise the active sport tourism category. These participatory events can take on a wide variety of forms in a wide variety of sports. Golf, Kayaking, Tennis, Water Rafting, Fishing, Surfing, and Snorkeling are just a few examples of the sports that people travel to participate in. Sri Lanka is one of the attractive sports tourists' destinations in the world. But due to the number of obstacles which the industry has been faced, still sports tourism sector considered as an underdeveloped sector.

The relationship between Sport and Tourism is most definitely gaining momentum in both industry and academic circles. Sport and Tourism are two different industries, but the industries are always connecting each other strongly. Tourism industry is considered one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. As a worldwide amount, it forms a very important part of the service sector that strongly influencing the economy (Andajani, Rahayu, Novika, & Tedjakusuma, 2017).

As cited in Hotel Association of Sri Lanka, tourism was the third largest foreign exchange earner in Sri Lanka in 2018. According to the Sri Lanka Central Bank's annual report in 2018, Sri Lanka has recorded its highest ever number of tourist arrivals. Sri Lanka offers a mix of attractions including beautiful beaches, wild life parks, rain forests, beautiful mountains, tea plantations, ancient ruins, Buddhist cultural sites, and festivals (The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka, 2018).

Sri Lankan Tourism has been ranked by world's famous magazines in recent past. USA TODAY' magazine has ranked Sri Lanka as the best country to visit in the winter season (December to February). According to that, Sri Lanka was able to become the number one country out of 20 countries in the world (USA TODAY, 2019). Meanwhile, Google Trends search engine displayed that among Americans trying to locate places of interest, Sri Lanka topped the list beating the Superbowl venue and Area 51. In Google's Year Search List for 2019 showed, Sri Lanka topping the 'Where is?' category (News First, 2019). Apart from that, Sri Lanka topped the list in Lonely Planet's best tourist destination and other similar awards from travel publications such as Travel and Leisure and Conde Nast Traveller (News First, 2019; Lonley Planet, 2019).

In the intervening time, Nuwara Eliya plays an imperative role among number of beautiful destinations in Sri Lanka. Nuwara Eliya is considered as an ancient heritage area in Sri Lanka. The Nuwara Eliya town was planned by the British, in keeping with the patterns of their own mother land and declared it as a town in the year 1828. Aftermath of the Uva Wellassa battle, the British stabilized themselves at Kothmale. While on their habitual hunting sprees, they set foot on Nuwara Eliya known as Patan which was barren and had black soil, treated them with the familiar cool English climate. This natural enrichment propelled them to commence the tea industry (Nuwara Eliya Info, 2020).

When considering the Nuwara Eliya as a tourists' destination, there are number of activities around the Gregory Lake such as, Motor Boat Riding, Water Jet Ski, Swan Boats, Cycling around the lake, and Play Stations. Apart from that, there are some Sports related activities like, Golf, Tennis, and Horse Riding also widely spread in Nuwara Eliya area. During the season of Nuwara Eliya, tourists have the chance to engage with Motor Racing experience as well. Main attractions during April include, Motor and Horse Racing events. Motor racing comes alive with the Mahagastotte and Radella Hill Climbs, the former being running since 1934 (Foxhill Motor Cross). The Nuwara Eliya Road Race and the 4X4 Lake Cross on edge of Lake Gregory attract a fair share of enthusiasts. Parties are held nightly in the hotels and the season culminates in the nine furlong (1811 m). Governor's Cup at the Nuwara Eliya Racecourse, Golf Tournaments at the Nuwara Eliya Golf Club, and the flower show at the end of the month are also considered as major events in Nuwara Eliya (Horton Towers & Cottages, 2016).

Generally speaking, people engage in a particular behavior for many reasons. Everyone may have several different needs to be satisfied when they plan to engage in some behavior. Thus, it is important for tourism managers to identify tourists' needs in order to effectively develop and design properly the products or services to meet their needs. Motivation is one of the variables which are explaining tourist behavior. There are number of studies exploring motivations of people in engaging in diverse behaviours. Motivation is not only useful for explaining tourist behaviour, but also it is helpful to understand the revisit intention of the visitors (Chang, 2013). Furthermore, the past travel experience can influence tourist attitude, both positively and negatively. If tourists have positive mind towards the past travel experience, they will have a higher probability to revisit. An individual's overall satisfaction of a destination can be observed as equivalent to a subjective evaluation of all past travel experiences in the destination. People are more likely to revisit a destination if they have had satisfactory past travel experiences with it (Huang & Hsu, 2009).

1.1 Problem statement

Sport Tourism is an under developing industry in Sri Lanka. Hence development of the sport tourism industry, will definitely be a highly income generating source to Sri Lankan Government. To achieve this macro level objective, the relevant stakeholders need to consider about increasing tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka which will increase the income generated in Sri Lankan gross national production through sports tourism. Therefore, from this study, authors have examined, about the 'relationship between foreign active sports tourists' travel motivation, past travel experience and revisit intention to Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka.'

1.2 Objectives of the Research

- To identify the relationship between foreign active sports tourists' travel motivation and revisit intention to Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka.
- To determine the relationship between foreign active sports tourists' past travel experience and revisit intention to Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka.
- To provide brief recommendations to develop the Sri Lankan sport tourism industry.

2. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND OPERATIONALIZATION

This study consists with one dependent variable and two independent variables. The dependent variable of this study is Active Sports Tourists' Revisit Intention to Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka. According to the study, Revisit intention is depending on Active Sports Tourists' Travel Motivation and Past Travel Experience.

This research focuses on how active sports tourists' Travel Motivation and Past Travel Experience affect on their Revisit Intention. All the study variables, dimensions and questions of the questionnaire were operationalized from the validated questionnaires of past studies (Dayour & Adongo, 2015; Huang & Hsu, 2009)

2.1 Hypothesis

This study aims to examine the impact on Travel Motivation and Past Travel Experience towards the Revisit Intention of active sports tourists who visited Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka. Therefore, the present study examined the correlation between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable. The following hypotheses were postulated between the variables in this research study in order to analyze the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. Figure 01 shows the conceptual framework of the present study.

Hypothesis$_1$: Travel motivation of revisiting a destination significantly correlates with active sports tourists' revisit intention to Nuwara Eliya.

Hypothesis$_2$: Satisfaction with past travel experience in a destination significantly correlates with active sports tourists' revisit intention to Nuwara Eliya.
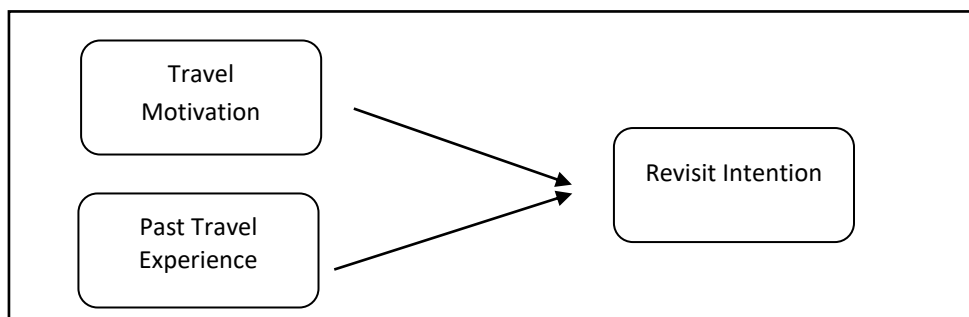

Figure 01 – Conceptualization of the research study

3. METHODOLOGY

A standard questionnaire was developed by using validated questionnaires based on past studies on the same study domain and distributed among active sports tourists during January-February 2020. This research used purposive sampling method to collect the data. Sample size of this study was 100 and the sample was gathered from Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka. In addition to that, secondary data gathering techniques such as annual reports, journal articles and web articles were also used. .

The questionnaire contained 07 demographic questions and it included, Country of tourist, Purpose of visit, Occupation, Age, Sex, Number of previous visits to Nuwara Eliya and Duration of the visit. The 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) questions were used to collect data about study variables. In motivation part 1, there were 25 travel motivation related questions. Travel motivation has described through Novelty, Culture, Adventure, Social contact, Escape, Relaxations and Destination's attractions. In past travel experience part, there were 04 questions. And in the section of Revisit intention, there were 07 questions.

Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) programme was used to analyze the data collected. The first step was to clean the data and check for outliers and missing values. Secondly, demographical analysis of the respondents was done. After that, reliability test was done to check the reliability of the survey instrument in the present study. Thereafter, normality test was done to identify whether sample data has normally distributed or not. Since sample data was not distributed normally, Spearmen correlation coefficient was used to analyze data.

4. FINDINGS

According to figure 02, many non-Asian tourists had visited Sri Lanka during January-February 2020 and most of them are from Germen. In addition to that, Indians and Saudi Arabians had also visited Nuwara Eliya during that time period. And most of the tourists had visited Sri Lanka at least one time or more than once before. Furthermore, many of the tourists are willing to stay in Sri Lanka for more than a week since Sri Lanka has a uniform routine as, Colombo, Kandy, Sigiriya, Nuwara Eliya, Ella and down south or coastal areas in east Sri Lanka. To cover up these areas, tourists are supposed to stay at least more than a week. More importantly, Nuwara Eliya is one of the prominent destinations among tourists in their Sri Lankan visit. While revisit intention is revealing a moderate positive relationship with past travel experience, there was a poor relationship between travel motivation and revisit intention.
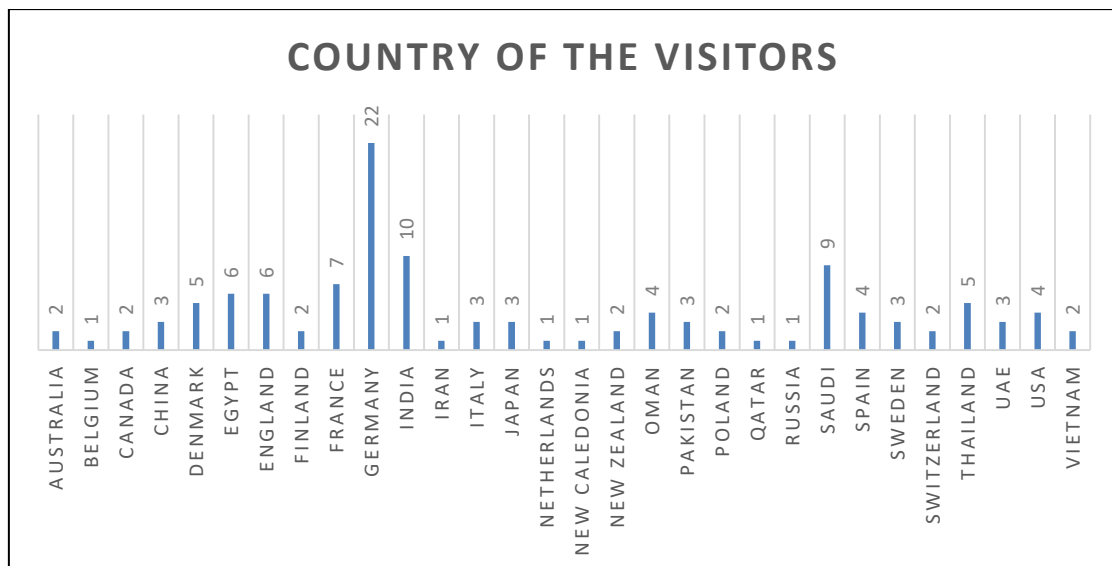

Figure 02– Country of the visitors

According to figure 03, most of the tourists have stayed in Sri Lanka for more than 11 days which is close to 70 as a percentage of tourists in the study sample. According to the results of the study, Nuwara Eliya can be identified as one of the famous destinations among the foreigners throughout their journey in Sri Lanka.
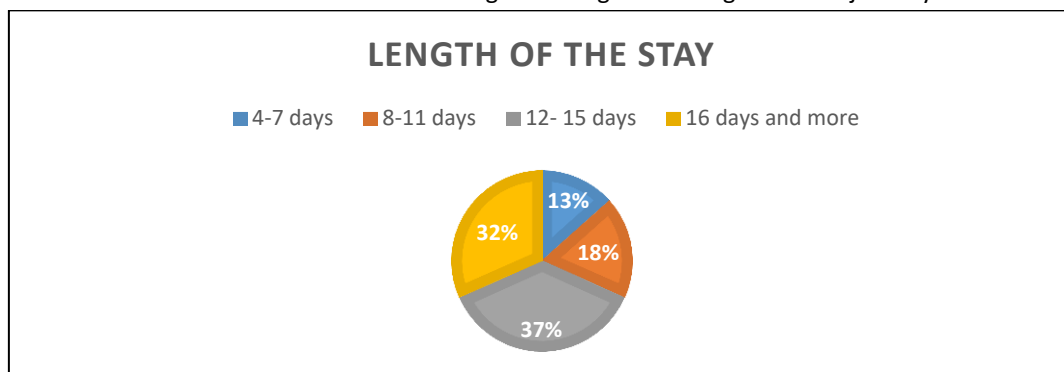

Figure 03– Length of the stay

Figure 04 shows that more than 70 percent of tourists have been to Sri Lanka for their second time. According to the results of the study, every tourist has been to Sri Lanka more than once and Nuwara Eliya was a prominent destination of their journey.
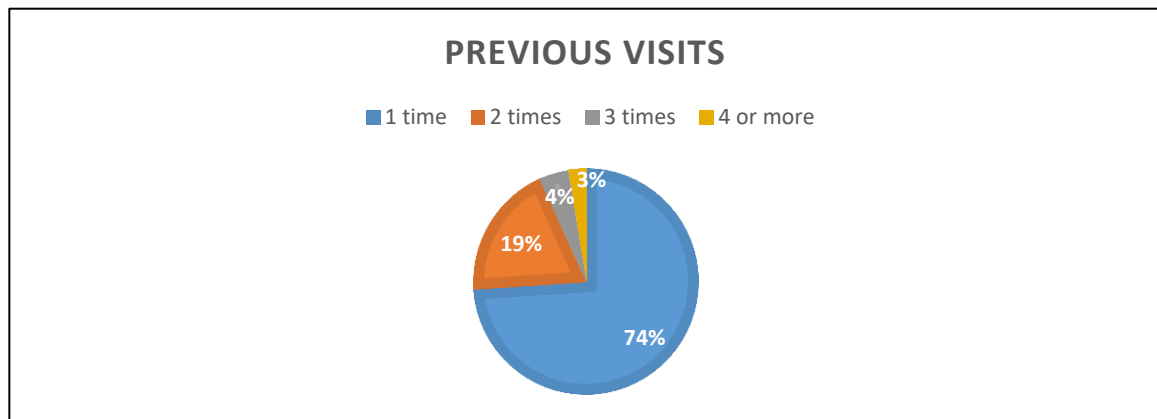

Figure 04 – Number of previous visits

Table 1 shows the reliability statistics of all study variables. All variables exceeded Cronbach's Alpha value more than 0.7 and therefore, the reliability of the survey instrument is accepted. .

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Variable	Travel Motivation	Past Travel Experience	Revisit Intention
Cronbach's Alpha	0.886	0.889	0.821

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable of the present study. According to the results, revisit intention is revealing a moderate positive relationship with past travel experience and there is a poor relationship between travel motivation and revisit intention.

Table 2. Correlation between Independent Variables and Revisit Intention

Independent variables	Travel Motivation	Past Travel Experience
Correlation coefficient	$.388^{**}$	$.490^{**}$
Sig (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000

5. CONCLUSION

The study indicated that, past travel experience of tourists' positively affected to revisit intention. Accordingly, the policy makers and planners need to improve the sub dimensions of travel motivation variable like, local food, cultural events and natural resources based sports activities around Nuwara Eliya area. Furthermore, upgrading facilities available for tourists including relevant infrastructure facilities will increase more tourist arrivals to Nuwara Eliya area. Development of a tourist friendly environment through the development of proper infrastructure facilities in Nuwara Eliya area will make the tourist's Nuwara Eliya stay a comfortable one which will be a memorable experience ultimately in tourist's mindset. More importantly, this will impact over tourist's attitudes towards revisiting Nuwara Eliya due to positive past travel experience and also certainly they will tend to recommend Nuwara Eliya as a preferred destination in travel itineraries of active sports tourists known to them. Furthermore, mountains areas like Horton plains, Piduruthalagala, and Kirigalpoththa are capable of attracting more sports tourists like, hikers and mountain climbers. And also, flora and fauna in Nuwara Eliya is one of the calmest attractions among tourist who visited Nuwara Eliya. As a conclusion, by increasing fascination of above mentioned natural resources and facilities, revisits to Nuwara Eliya can be

increased with using an effective effort.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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