

# Relationship between Foreign Active Sports Tourists' Travel Motivation and Revisit Intention to Sri Lanka

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing industries across the globe as well as in Sri Lanka. Contemporarily, the relationship between sport and tourism is vastly discussed in both the industry and academic paradigms. Sport and tourism are two different industries, but the industries are always inter connected strongly. With the emerging potential for tourism in the world, Sri Lanka is in a need of redefining its strategies to increase sports tourism. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between of active sports tourists' travel motivation and their revisit intention to Sri Lanka. Survey method is adopted to conduct this empirical study and employed 250 foreign tourists who engage in sporting and event activities such as water rafting, boat riding, surfing, snorkelling and cycling in Sri Lanka using purposive sampling method. The relationship between travel motivation and revisit intention was hypothesised and tested with Spearman correlation. Results revealed a moderate level of positive relationship between two study variables. Accordingly Sri Lanka can promote its cultural events and festivals which can be means to enhance revisit intention of tourists; especially, Sri Lankan food and natural resources based adventure sports have a massive fascination among foreigners. Hence, the visitors' travel motivation and behavioural patterns can be recommended as a Sri Lankan tourism industry development mechanism. If tourism industry is capable of mounting the dimensions of motivation variable, certainly, Sri Lanka will be able to get higher tourists' magnetism through local food, cultural events and natural resources.

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**Keywords:** Revisit Intention, Active Sports Tourist, Travel Motivation

## INTRODUCTION

According to (Boev, 2018) Sport is usually defined as an organized, a competitive and a skillful physical activity which asks for devotion and fair play. All of this is regulated by rules or customs. In addition to competitive sports activities, sports and physical activities include noncompetitive activities also, like jogging, running, exercising, swimming, which are usually classified as recreational activities. Participants engage in these activities as a mode of physical, health and mental refreshment of the human body. Many sports' authorities express that, sport is a social-cultural system which has a higher level of development in different segments of its action. In the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in, especially the group sports, like Football, Basketball, Hockey, Volleyball, Baseball, even Tennis and Athletics will reach the top of the most attractive sectors in the world socioeconomic scope. These facts raise sport to the highest levels in the modern world civilization. These arguments seen from a social and socio-cultural point of view and emphasizes the importance of the central knowledge of sport. Currently sport has changed into many sub areas such as Sports Tourism, Sports Engineering, Sports Facility Design, Sports Media Marketing etc.

## Sports Tourism

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. According to (Robinson & Gammon, 2010), there are few reasons for recent development of the Sport Tourism. Some of them are,

- Popularity of international and national sporting events
- There is a broader understanding of the health related benefits that can be gained through active participation in sports.
- Governments and leaders are beginning to appreciate the value of sport with regard to both the economy and national and international relations.
- Sport people are always moveable, and they are able to communicate more effectively due to improvements in technology and global infrastructure

When it comes to the tourism industry, it is considered one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. Across the globe, it forms a very important part of the service sector that strongly influences the economy. The World Travel and Tourism Organization (WTTC) trends demonstrate that, the travel and tourism is a growing industry which generates 9.8% of global gross domestic production (GDP) in 2015 (Andajani, Rahayu, Novika, & Tedjakusuma, 2017). Goeldner and Macintosh (2010) defines tourism as follows.

*"Tourism is a collection of activities, services and industries which deliver a travel experience comprising transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home"*

**Tourism in Sri Lanka**

As cited in Hotels Association’s annual report 2018, tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner in Sri Lanka. According to the Central Bank report in 2018, Sri Lanka has recorded its highest ever number of arrivals. In 2018, over 2.3 million tourists have visited Sri Lanka. It is estimated that, the sector earned around US\$4.3 billion in 2018. It was 11% higher compared to the previous year. 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. Sri Lanka is ranked 64<sup>th</sup> out of 141 countries in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017 of the World Economic Forum. The Sri Lankan Government’s aim was to increase the tourist arrivals to 3 million in 2019, but due to the April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 terrorist attack, Sri Lanka was unable to achieve that target (as cited in the Hotels Association of Sri Lanka, 2018)

USA TODAY’ magazine has ranked Sri Lanka as the best country to visit in the winter season (December to February). Sri Lanka was able to become the number 01 country out of 20 countries in the world (USA TODAY, 2019). Google Trends search engine showed 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). 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).

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). According to Ross,(2001) those individuals who travel to participate in sporting events are considered in 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, and Surfing, Snorkeling are just a few examples of the sports that people travel to participate in.

**Travel Motivation**

Generally speaking, people engage in 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 variables which is explaining tourist behavior. There are a number of studies exploring motivations of people in engaging a diversity of behaviors. Furthermore, motivation is not only useful for explaining tourist behavior, but also is helpful to understand the re visit intention of the visitors(Chang, 2013). In the same way, it is indicated that, motivation is a state of need which is a driving force to display diverse kinds of behavior toward specific types of activities. Travel motivation is influenced by two forces - the

concepts of Push and Pull factors. This concept has become one of the most popular and useful frameworks to study and analyze tourist behavior. Those two factors explain causes of people travel because, they are pushed by their own internal forces and pulled by the external forces of destination attributes. Destination image is one of the key factors, which can influence tourists’ decisions to choose a destination. Most definitions of destination image refer to individual or group perceptions of a place stated that “destination image is an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations, and intentions toward a destination” which not only shows the multiple dimensions of this construct but also states their effect on the decision about a tourism destination (Allameh, Khazaei, & Jab, 2015). Sri Lanka is one of the mostly attractive destinations in the world. But due to the number of barriers which sports tourism industry is facing, this sector is still an underdeveloped sector.

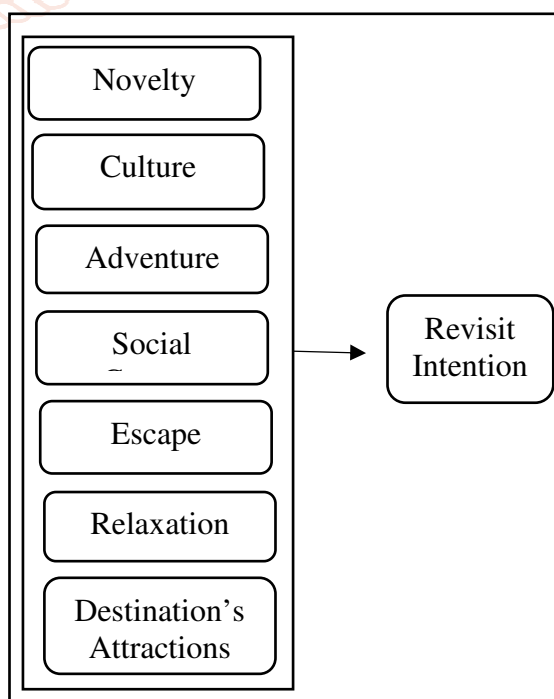
**Problem Statement**

Sport Tourism is an under developed industry in Sri Lanka. Hence, development of the sport tourism industry, will definitely be a highly income generating source to Sri Lankan Government. In order to achieve this objective, Sri Lanka needs to ensure higher tourist arrivals which will be influenced through travel motivation of tourists. Therefore, this study examines what is the ‘relationship between foreign active sports tourists’ travel motivation and revisit intention to Sri Lanka?’

Accordingly, the main objectives of the study is to determine the relationship between foreign active sports tourists’ travel motivation and revisit intention to Sri Lanka.

**Conceptualization and Operationalization**

This study has one independent variable (travel motivation) and one dependent variable (active sports tourists’ revisit intention) as presented in Fig. 1. This research focusses on the how active sports tourists’ travel motivation affect to their revisit intention. All the study variables, dimensions and questions of the questionnaire were operationalized from the validated questionnaires of past studies



**Figure 1: Conceptualization Framework**

**Hypothesis**

This study aims to examining the relationship between travel motivation and revisit intention of active sports tourists who have visited Sri Lanka. Therefore, study aimed to examine the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Following hypothesis was formed in order to analyze the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables.

Hypothesis<sub>1</sub>: Travel motivation of revisiting a destination significantly affects individuals’ revisit intention.

**Methodology**

Survey strategy is adopted for this cross sectional study. The unit of analysis, an active sports foreign tourist, who engaged in sporting and event activities such as water rafting, boat riding, surfing, snorkelling and cycling in Sri Lanka. A Likert scale questionnaire developed based on past studies (Dayour, Adongo, 2015), (Huang & Hsu, 2009) was adopted as the survey instrument after assessing the internal consistency through a reliability analysis of the pilot test for this cross sectional study.

The questionnaire contained 07 demographic questions including, country of tourist, purpose of visit, occupation, age, sex, past travel experience and duration of the current visit.

Travel motivation is operationalized using seven dimensions namely, novelty, culture, adventure, social contact, escape, relaxation, and destination’s attraction. The 7-point Scale questionnaires were used to collect the data of the research. 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Data collected from 250 foreign tourists using purposive sampling method. This research used purposive sampling method to collect the data and data gathering is conducted through questionnaires and using Google forms. The relationship between travel motivation and revisit intention was hypothesised and tested with Spearman correlation.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS software 23.0 version. 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 internal consistency of the survey instrument. Thereafter, normality test was performed to identify whether sample data has normally distributed or not. Since sample data was not normally distributed, Spearman correlation coefficient was used to analyze data.

**Results and Discussions**

According the data analysis, most of the visitors are from Germany. In addition, Indians and Australians also takes place a higher number. However, according to the results, higher number of tourists are non-Asians. This study considered only two sectors in terms of purpose of visiting Sri Lanka. Tourists’ who visited for pleasure and vacation purpose takes place 88 percent and rest of the tourists’ are representing from sports activity sector. Altogether, most of the tourists were females and majority of tourists were in 20-40 and 40-60 age groups. According to the results, professionals have arrived comparatively higher than other occupations. It can be include sports professionals such as sports coaches who are living in Sri Lanka and other sportsmen in Sri Lanka. Data analysis revealed that, more than 60% of tourists were visiting Sri Lanka for their second time and most of the tourists intended to stay 12-15 days in Sri Lanka

Table 1 shows the reliability statistics of all study variables. All variables exceeds Cronbach’s Alpha level more than 0.7 and they are in the acceptable range.

**Table 1 Reliability Statistics**

Variable	Travel Motivation	Revisit Intention
Cronbach’s Alpha	.889	.763

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient between the independent variable and the dependent variable of the study. Significance value is lesser than 0.05 (0.000<0.05) and correlation coefficient is 0.421 which reflects a moderate level positive relationship between travel motivation and revisit intention.

**Table 2 Correlation between Travel Motivation and Revisit Intention**

		Mean_MOT	Mean_RI
Spearman's rho	Mean_TM	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	250
	Mean_RI	Correlation Coefficient	.421**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	250

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

When it comes to the conclusion part of the research, the travel motivation of tourists and revisit intention indicated that, there is a positive moderate relationship between the variables. If Sri Lankan authorities can develop the sub categories of travel motivation variable, certainly Sri Lanka will find it easy to achieve greater tourists’ attraction. As an example, if Sri Lankan government is able to promote cultural events in country, more tourists’ attraction will be able to realize, through the events. Furthermore, Sri Lankan

food has a massive attraction from the foreigners. Therefore, Sri Lankan tourism also can be emphasized among tourists by using Sri Lankan food as well.

As a final point, this study has been proved that, many of tourists are willing to stay in Sri Lanka more than a week since, Sri Lanka has a uniform routine as, Colombo, Kandy, Sigiriya, NuwaraEliya, Ella and down south or coastal areas in east Sri Lanka. To cover up these areas, tourists have to stay at least more than one week.



When considering the literature of the study, Sri Lanka has a massive tourist attraction. But when it comes to sports tourism sector, it is still a developing sector in Sri Lanka. Even if, there are some private institution for sports tourism, due to the lack of administrative institutional attention towards this industry, sports tourism sector is presenting meagre expansion. If tourism industry is capable of mounting the dimensions of motivation variable, certainly, Sri Lanka will be able to get higher tourists' magnetism through local food, cultural events and natural resources.

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