

Impact of Experiential Marketing on Destination Image Towards Sri Lankan Tourism

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This study aims to determine whether foreign tourists will perceive Sri Lanka as one of the best destinations in the world with experiential marketing. This study employed a quantitative research design to conduct this research. The population of this study was the people who recently visited Sri Lanka. The convenience sampling method was used to select the sample of this study, and 212 respondents were selected as the sample. An online survey gathered data under a structured questionnaire to measure the study's central concepts: experiential marketing and destination image. The researcher used experiential marketing as the independent variable, destination trust as the mediator variable, and destination image as the dependent variable of this study to identify the relationship between these variables. The results state that; there is a significant relationship between experiential marketing and destination image. The main limitations of the research were this questionnaire was distributed on an online platform only where there was a high possibility of neglecting the questionnaire. The research was carried out with a sample size of 212, which was small to generalize the result into the entire population. As suggestions for further research, the researcher suggests that focus on how high-end tourists perceive Sri Lanka as a destination, the pitfalls of Sri Lankan tourism, and reasons for lesser arrivals of high-end tourists to Sri Lanka. With the Covid-19 pandemic, taking relevant precautions to avoid the virus in upcoming times and letting them feel secure is essential. The study is an original contribution to the field of tourism in Sri Lanka. This research study identified that relational experience is the factor that has the highest coefficient value to the destination image and is the most significant factor when considered as an independent variable. The findings of this study will also be valuable to the tourism industry and relevant parties and authorities to make improvements in the field, thus, by engaging in numerous marketing and promotional activities to attract global travelers, especially high-end visitors, as well as by positioning the island as the most trusted destination in the world.

Keywords: *Destination Image, Experiential Marketing, Sri Lankan Tourism*