

UNVEILING THE POTENTIAL: EXPLORING PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR A HIGH-YIELDING TEA TOURISM SEGMENT

W.G.V.D Kumari^{1*}, A.C.I.D Karunarathne², G.H.V Harshani³

¹ Uva Wellassa University, Badullla, Sri Lanka, vishakadhananjani@gmail.com

² Uva Wellassa University, Badullla, Sri Lanka, chandi@uwu.ac.lk

³ Uva Wellassa University, Badullla, Sri Lanka, vinyaahewage23@gmail.com

Abstract

Tea tourism is a striking segment around the world due to the widespread tea lovers. Even though there is a huge potential to attract tourists for tea tourism while generating economic benefits for the host community, it has not developed properly as a product in Sri Lanka. Hence, the main purpose of this study was to identify the prospects and challenges of Sri Lankan tea tourism industry to make it a high-yielding tourism product. The mixed methodology was adopted as the research design and conveniently selected a sample of 350 (of local and foreign tourists) and 10 service providers involved in tourism businesses to collect primary data. Descriptive statistics, regression analysis and content analysis were used to meet the study objectives. The findings highlighted that push motive factors are more influencing for tourists to visit tea tourism establishments than pull motive factors. Moreover, tea tourists' overall perception has a significant positive impact on their perceived experience about tea tourism. This author further stated that perceptions might be of two different kinds: external stimuli (resulting from the evaluation of destination qualities) and internal (personal) stimuli (depending on how the person wishes to perceive that destination). Further the researcher has identified attractions towards tea industry, demand to Ceylon tea, available activities and resources and future plans of the service providers as prospects in tea tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the researcher has identified challenges in tea tourism industry under political, economic, environmental, operational and technological challenges.

Keywords: External Stimuli, Internal Stimuli, Motivations, Perception, Tea Tourism

JEL Classification: Q56, R11, Z32

DOI: 10.24818/CTS/5/2023/2.03

1. Introduction

The concept of tea tourism in the world is at a highest-level including India, China, Japan, Taiwan and Malaysia in the Asian region. Many countries use this niche market segment as an effective tourist attraction tool. At present, not only tea-producing countries but also tea-consuming countries are gaining many economic and social benefits through the concept of tea tourism in their countries. But considering the situation of Sri Lanka, it is at a very low level compared to other countries in the world that practice the tea tourism concept. Many studies have found that Sri Lanka's tea tourism industry has more than enough potential to uplift, but it has been revealed that it is practiced poorly. Further, they mentioned that Sri Lankan tea tourism has not gained enough publicity. The Sri Lankan tea tourism industry is limited to only a few activities. According to earlier researchers, tea tourism in Sri Lanka has not been properly planned and managed, although there is a great potential to attract tourists to tea tourism and at the same time generate economic benefits for the host community. These researchers also mentioned that tea tourism is a far-reaching concept that is poorly implemented in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is the fourth largest producer of tea in the world and the second largest exporter of tea. This clearly shows how great the demand for Ceylon tea is in the world. Through a formal study, the prospects of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka and the challenges faced in achieving these goals should be identified. Moreover, the concept of tea tourism can be used as an alternative form of tourism segment to revitalize mass tourism in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the prospects of the tea tourism industry in the context of Sri Lanka's potential and to find out the challenges that Sri Lanka faces in reaching its maximum level. Therefore, both demand and supply perspectives should be

* contact author

considered. This will be helpful in creating a high yielding tourism segment in the future. Following research objectives are formulated for this study:

- a) What are the travel motives of tea tourists?
- b) What is the impact of tourists' perception on tea tourism towards the perceived experience at tea tourism establishments in Sri Lanka?
- c) What are the prospects and challenges to develop tea tourism as a high-yielding emerging market sector?

2. Literature review

2.1 Tea Tourism

Through travel and consumption, tea is linked to tourism, and it is frequently used in hospitality settings. Researchers have linked tea and tourism to the image of destinations (Fernando, Rajapaksha and Kumari, 2017). Tea tourism is defined as travel motivated by a fascination with tea's past, present, and future. Instead, of only visiting tourist locations, tea tourism emphasizes having a real experience of a tourism activity or event while also having education and recreation. This is a diversified tourism idea from mass tourism. According to Knollenberg, enhanced experiences are offered through tea events, tours and courses that provide more encompassing and intensive involvement, as reflected by food and beverage experiences. Recent study has shown the relationship of the tea preferences of tourists to destination development (Gupta et al., 2022). For many people, drinking tea and learning about its history are enjoyable pastimes (Luo, 2019). Collecting tea-related items, such as teacups and teapots, or seeking out and gathering tea-related experiences, either on one's own or as part of a planned tea tour, are examples of this activity.

Although tea is grown in roughly 36 different nations worldwide, production is largely confined to a small number of them. Five nations—India, China, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Indonesia—collectively produced about 80% of the world's tea (Su, Wall and Wang, 2019). Jolliffe (2007) indicate some activities attached with tea tourism concept including plantation sightseeing, tea museums, holding tea events or festivals, organizing tea tour visiting tea producers' workshop to learn about the tea production process, tea cultural shows, supplying tea to hospitality industry to promote service quality and also the brand image of producers. While Sri Lanka has beaches, wildlife, cultural and archaeological sites, as well as other natural and man-made attractions, tea estates have not been given enough prominence in the country's tourism industry. The nation has six main production regions: Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Uva, Rathnapura, Dimbula, and Galle. Sri Lanka offers abundant resources to offer tea-related tourism experiences, including nature hikes through tea gardens, charming lodging in tea factories and planter bungalows, tea tasting and retail in cafés with views of tea plantations, and factory tours (Fernando, Rajapaksha and Kumari, 2017). Despite playing a crucial role in Sri Lanka's socioeconomic environment, the development of tourism in the tea plantation industry has received little attention. The industry realizes that greater expenditures should be made in value addition rather than bulk exports in order to increase market retention and stability for tea, which has slowly declined in the face of competition (Kumara and Kulathunga, 2013).

Research conducted on 'What innovations would enable the tourism and hospitality industry to rebuild' has indicated best practices that should be focused on in order to revive Sri Lanka's tourism industry. One of most important considerations is the enhancing the agro-based tourism activities as much as possible. Many of the previous researches have shown that there is more than enough potential to promote tea related tourism in the area of agro-tourism in Sri Lanka. Another researcher describes Sri Lankan tourism in the context of the present pandemic and other difficulties, and suggests creative fixes to revive the industry (Gamage and Samarathunga, 2020). Further he has revealed that niche tourism concepts like health, wellness, Ayurveda and spiritual tourism, rural tourism, tea tourism and eco-tourism as emerging tourism products in Sri Lanka.

A number of studies have been conducted by countries such as India, China and Japan to examine the challenges faced by the tea tourism industry. Every tea tourism practicing countries has their own shortcomings. Cheng et. al (2012) mentioned that the development of tea tourism in China did not realize its full potential material of close cooperation and the development of tea tourism seemed fragmented, uncoordinated and strategic convergence with less than expected service quality. He further

mentioned that Co-ordinated tea tourism marketing is essential Key infrastructure should be available and support product/service development in the tea tourism industry.

Accordingly, in the Sri Lankan context, the tourism industry was affected by various contemporary issues. Among them, the Easter Sunday Attack, the Covid-19 outbreak, Russia-Ukraine war and Current Economic Crisis are the main ones. Apart from that the ban on the use of imported chemical fertilizers taken by the government had a great impact on the tea industry. The ban is result in a 40 to 50 percent drop in production and export volume, which will reduce Sri Lanka's market share in the global tea industry from 14.5 percent to 10 percent. According to CTTA, this decline in production will greatly affect the country's economy.

Furthermore, the researchers have identified the following prominent literatures on tea tourism from various contexts.

Table 1. Prominent Literature on Tea Tourism

Authors	Country	Findings
Cheng <i>et al</i> (2010)	China	Tourists' attitude towards tea tourism
Cheng <i>et al</i> (2012)	China	Stakeholders' View on tea tourism development
Jolliffe and Aslam (2009)	Sri Lanka	Study of tea heritage lodging
Jolliffe <i>et al</i> (2023)	Global	Routledge Handbook of Tea Tourism
Magar and Kar (2016)	India (Assam)	Socio-cultural element and socio-economic development
Bennike (2017)	India (Darjeeling)	Tourism and Darjeeling tea
Ranasinghe, Thaichon and Ranasinghe (2017)	Sri Lanka	Product, place, Co-branding in Ceylon tea
Su <i>et al.</i> (2019)	China	Sustainability of community livelihood
Chen <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Germany	Uniqueness of tea traditions and impacts on tourism: the East Frisian tea culture
Gupta <i>et al.</i> (2022)	India	Foreign tourist's tea preferences and relevance to destination attraction in India
Yeap <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Malaysia	Have coffee/tea, will travel: assessing the inclination towards sustainable coffee and tea tourism among the green generations

Sources: Developed by the Researcher based on the Reviewed Literature

2.2 Tourists' Travel Motives

The traveler's inclusive preference of a tourism destination is significantly influenced by tea (Jolliffe and Aslam, 2009; Su, Wall and Wang, 2019). Numerous studies have examined into the variables that affect tourists' preferences for food and drink (Gupta, Khanna and Gupta, 2018). They further suggested five aspects in this regard. They are motivational, sociodemographic, religious and cultural, personal, and experience. These factors were further divided into three categories: demographic (gender, marital status, age, religion, educational attainment); and motivational (intimacy, respect, status, sensual appeal, positive experience, etc.). Accordingly identifying motives factors of tea tourists is vital for developing tea tourism as a high-yielding marketing segment in Sri Lanka. The term "motivation" refers to the internal energy that drive people to take certain actions (Kim and Ritchie, 2012). Numerous academics have investigated the motives of tourists to comprehend their behavior and decision-making process (Yoon and Uysal, 2016; Jang *et al.*, 2019). According to Jang, Bai, Hu and Wu (2019) motivation theory based on push and pull variables frequently examines why people want to travel.

Pull factors are those that draw a person to a certain location after push motivation has been established. Push factors are based on "socio-psychological needs that predisposition a person to travel" (Jang *et al.*, 2019). In other words, "pull factors are external to the individual and are sparked by destination attractions, whereas push factors are internal to the person and establish the desire to travel" (Jang *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, it is important to identify pull and push factors that help to tea tourists to visit tea tourism destinations. According to previous researchers, the researcher identifies following indicators as push and pulls motives to visit a destination. Push factors are for novelty and Knowledge-Seeking, Ego Enhancement, Rest and Relaxation, Appreciate Natural Resources and Socialization. Pull factors

are Environment and Activities, Tourism Facilities, Outstanding Scenery, Weather/Climate and Value for Money (Mohammad and Som, 2010; Jang et al., 2019).

2.3 Tourists' Perception

According to Hansen (2005), tourists' motives, attitudes and perceptions have a significant impact on their choice of location or tourism segment. When enjoying goods and services, travelers compare the situation with their expectations before making a purchase. Their assessment of the effectiveness of the product and the quality of the service is a key factor in the evaluation process. According to Robbins and Coulter (2002), perception is the process by which people organize and interpret their sensory impressions to give meaning to their surroundings. Tourists form an opinion about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their vacation spending based on their attitudes and perceptions of what they have seen, consumed and experienced. As mentioned in the case study by Cheng et al. (2010), the attitudes and perceptions of Chinese tea tourists towards tea and tea tourism were quantitatively investigated and the profiles of potential tea tourists were identified. The results showed that tea tourists are mainly tea lovers who are interested in tea and tea culture. However, these studies did not examine the demand or supply side of tea tourism in detail. An examination of the reasons why visitors are likely to choose a particular area for their tourism experience is an essential prerequisite for understanding human behavior related to travel (Scorrano et al., 2018). Marketing incentives can be divided into two categories: primary or intrinsic and secondary or extrinsic (Ha and Perks, 2005).

Tourists choose, arrange, and interpret stimuli to form a meaningful and cohesive picture through the process of perception. Some stimuli are completely, partially, appropriately, and incorrectly received. A highly personalized mental picture of sensory stimuli is produced by the perceptual process. Numerous studies have shown that the availability of information and prior experiences have a significant impact on this process of establishing perceptions (Wang et al., 2019). This author further stated that perceptions might be of two different kinds: external stimuli (resulting from the evaluation of destination qualities) and internal (personal) stimuli (depending on how the person wishes to perceive that destination). According to that study, external stimuli comprising with facilities in the location, available information, climate, attraction and available product diversification etc. Internal stimuli consisting with physical condition of the tourists, psychological state, prior experience, prior knowledge or awareness about the place and sociodemographic background / self-identity.

2.4 Perceived Travel Experience

Previous research has shown that considering tourists' preferences for tea can increase their overall satisfaction. (Gupta and Sajjani, 2020). Travelers are motivated to buy items and services because they expect a pleasant and memorable experience (Antón, Camarero and Laguna-García, 2018). To make visitors' experiences more sophisticated and enjoyable, it is crucial to investigate the elements of their tea preferences. It might also assist the parties involved in creating marketing plans that are suitable for the preferences and needs of tourists (Breakey and Breakey, 2015). Many specialized tourism segments have formed in recent decades as the global tourism business shifts towards investments centered on environment and experiences. An example of a tourism industry that may provide unique and genuine experiences for visitors is the tea industry. Another important component in determining the value of visiting a tourist destination is the perception of the visitor.

Based on the aforementioned suggestions, this study distinguishes between the cognitive and emotional aspects of perceived experiential value. The emotional component refers to emotional and spiritual sensations, which we define as escapism and fantasy, while the cognitive component refers to physical and intellectual stimuli, which we define as achievements and learning (Antón, Camarero and Laguna-García, 2018). Tourism in this sense implies that experience value includes both cognitive and emotional components. According to Arnould and Price (1993), intense emotional states are a feature of remarkable perceived travel experiences. However, several scholars (Hosany and Witham, 2010; Kim and Brown, 2012; Song et al., 2015) argue that experiences also have a cognitive component in addition to their emotional aspect.

Based on the aforementioned suggestions, this study discuss between the cognitive and the emotional aspects of the perceived experience value The emotional component refers to emotional and spiritual sensations, which we define as escapism and fantasy, while the cognitive component refers to physical and intellectual stimuli, which we define as attainment and learning (Antón, Camarero and Laguna-García, 2018).

1. **Attainment**, which is closely related to the value visitors place on their time spent traveling to the location, is viewed as the notion that the investment made has been repaid and capitalized on. It is primarily a cognitive and rational assessment of the experience's efficacy, based on the conviction that the activity has proven to be both fruitful and advantageous (Prebensen, Vittersø and Dahl, 2013).
2. **Learning** is the tourist's view of the experience as having been educational and enlightening in the sense that the journey has given them something new to learn or given them. In the context of tourism, it is crucial because one of the primary goals of travel is to educate oneself about the place visited (Hosany and Witham, 2010; Yoon and Uysal, 2016).
3. **Escapism** refers to the visitor's perception of having temporarily gotten away from everything. This emotionally charged component also reflects one of the motives for travel, namely relaxation and getting away from the grind of everyday life (Yoon and Uysal, 2016).
4. **Fantasy** is the mind's imaginative response to stimulus. It also has an emotional component, indicating the ability of the location to evoke particular feelings and emotions in the traveler. Although Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) claim that it is an important experience of hedonic consumption and Wu and Holsapple (2014) consider it a determinant factor of consumption in online gaming, it was not included as a separate dimension of experience in the earlier tourism literature (Gupta, Khanna and Gupta, 2018).

2.5 Model of study

Based on the below hypotheses the following model has been formulated by the author.

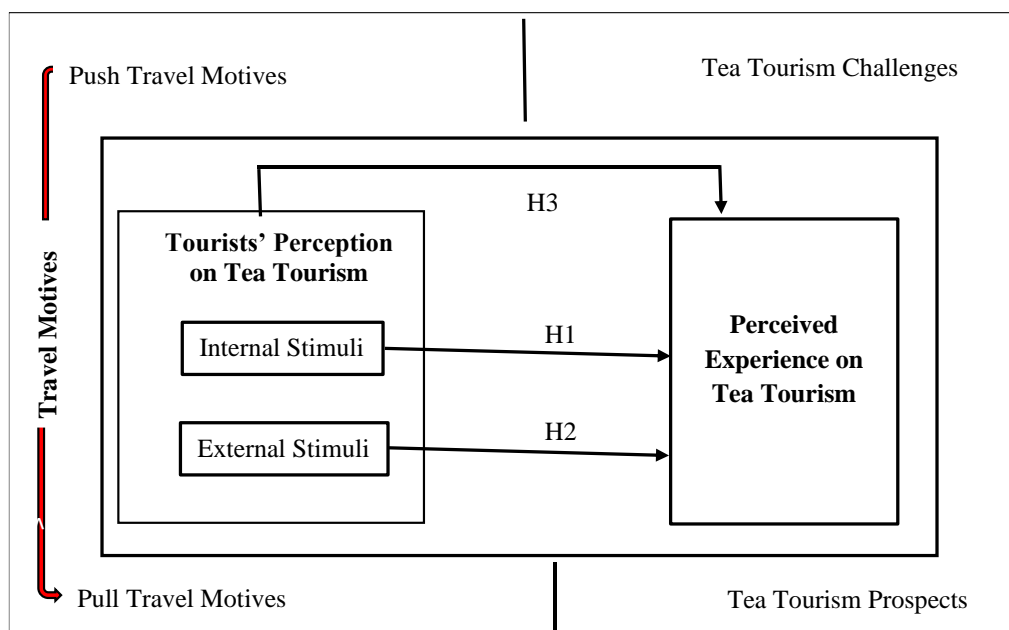


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Developed by the Researcher based on the Reviewed Literature

H1: There is a significant impact of internal stimuli on perceived experience in tea tourism

H2: There is a significant impact of external stimuli on perceived experience in tea tourism

H3: There is a significant impact of tourists' perception on perceived experience in tea tourism

3. Methodology

This study deals with the prospects and challenges of the tea tourism industry in Sri Lanka. In order to identify the prospects and challenges of the tea tourism industry in Sri Lanka, it was decided to conduct this study using a mixed research approach where the objectives are achieved through both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study area of this study is limited to Nuwara Eliya district and includes the tourists visiting the tea establishments in Nuwara Eliya district and the tea tourism service providers in selected establishments in Nuwara Eliya district. The main reason for selecting Nuwara Eliya as the study site is that according to the tea industry performance report, the majority of tea estates belong to Nuwara Eliya district. The facilities were selected considering the information provided by the Sri Lanka tourism Development Authority as these places were highlighted and recognized by them in terms of tea tourism. To achieve the objectives of the study, all tourists visiting the tea plantations were considered on the demand side and the service providers offering their services in the tea tourism facilities were considered on the supply side.

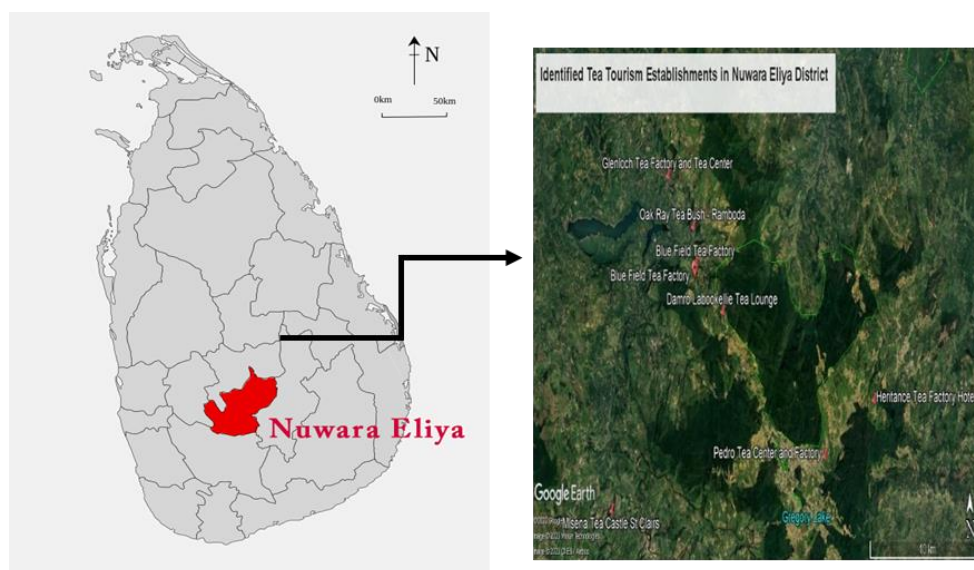


Figure 2. Identified Tea Tourism Establishments

Source: Researcher developed the image by using google earth pro software based on the information provided by the SLTDA

Convenience sampling technique was applied for this study, which is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Because it was impossible to test the entire population due to the large size of the population and the impossibility of including every single person. The information collected through questionnaires was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 for analysis. SPSS is quick for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, and it's used by a variety of researchers for complicated 26 statistical data analysis (Arkkelin, 2014). The results of the analysis were interpreted and discussed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis and content analysis.

The primary data for the quantitative data was collected through a self-completed – questionnaire from 350 tourists (local and foreign) visiting the teahouses in Nuwara Eliya district. The questionnaire consists of 30 questions with four main parts aligned to the first and second objectives of the study. Part A deals with the demographic factors of the respondents to determine their profile especially age, gender, education level, employment status etc. Part B contains the questions on the concerned travel motives and perceived travel experiences in tea tourism in Sri Lanka. Part C of the questionnaire deals with the impact of tourists' perceptions on the perceived travel experience in tea tourism in Sri Lanka. Part D contains the questions on the perceived travel experience in tea tourism in Sri Lanka. The questions in Part A are answered through closed and open-ended questions. Parts B, C and D are measured using a five-point Likert scale.

The secondary data for the quantitative data collected mainly from tea tourism related journal papers, reports, online information, SLTDA website etc.

The primary data for the qualitative research was obtained from semi-structured interviews and discussions with 10 service providers. This is because the most common approach to obtaining qualitative data is through interviews with participants. On average, the interview lasted about 10 – 20 minutes. Some of the interviewees gave permission to record the interview and these recordings are later transcribed. And some interviewees were not allowed to record the interview. For this reason, the researcher writes down the most important points of the interviews and transcribes them.

Data collection process was carried out for about three weeks in February 2023.

4. Results

The reliability of these research constructs is at an acceptable level. Cronbach's alpha in SPSS was used in this analysis and the result is presented as follows.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Value

Dimension	Cronbach Alpha Value	No of items
Push Factors	0.813	4
Pull Factors	0.817	4
Internal Stimuli	0.873	5
External Stimuli	0.869	5
Attainment	0.881	3
Learning	0.924	3
Escapism	0.782	3
Fantasy	0.878	3

Source: Survey Data (2023)

Here, all Cronbach's alpha values in each dimension are greater than 0.7. Therefore, all dimensions are reliable for the analysis.

O1: To identify the Travel Motives of Tea Tourists.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Push and Pull Motive Factors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Push Motive Factors</i>	350	0	4	2.77	.844
<i>Pull Motive Factors</i>	350	0	4	2.66	.829
<i>Valid N (listwise)</i>	350				

Source: SPSS output from field survey (2023)

A total of 350 respondents were given the questionnaire and based on their responses the motivation factors of tea tourists were analyzed. Among the push and pull motive factors that influenced tourists to visit tea tourism establishments, it is clear from the table 3 mean value of push motive factors are higher than the mean value of pull motive factors. That indicates push motive factors more influencing than pull motive factors for tourists to visit tea establishments in Sri Lanka. Therefore, Sri Lankan tea tourism industry should take measures to pull tea lovers to their establishments more than this.

O2: To identify the impact of tourists' perception on tea tourism towards the perceived experience at tea tourism establishments in Sri Lanka.

Multiple linear regression is tested to achieve the second objective of the research, which is to determine the best model and the effects of each variable on the dependent variables.

The fit of the regression is determined by the model summary. The multiple correlation (R) represents the joint relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R-squared value or coefficient of determination indicates what proportion of the dependent variable (tourists'

perceived experience) is covered or explained by the independent variables (internal stimuli, external stimuli and tourists' general perception).

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	Sig. F Change	Durbin Watson
1	.582 ^a	.739	.737	.739	.000	2.240

Source: SPSS output from field survey (2023)

Table 4 presents, the multiple correlation (R) is 0.582. As the coefficient is greater than the 0.5, there is a strong association jointly with independent variables and the dependent variable. It implies that there is a strong association between the tourists' perceived experience and their perception in tea tourism.

Coefficient of determination (R square) is 0.739. Therefore, the regression model is nicely fitted. This suggested that 73.9% of tourists' perceived experience has been explained by the regression model. When unnecessary independent variables are used, R square will be increased. Therefore, it should be adjusted using another coefficient called as Adjusted R square (Adjusted R²). According to the results, 73.9% is covered by the regression model.

To measure the overall significance of the model, the significance value statistic can be used. If the result of the ANOVA regression is significant, the model is considered appropriate. This ensures that the model is significant overall. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) table was presented as follows to ensure the overall significance of the model.

Table 5. ANOVA Table

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.067	.121		8.842	.000
	Internal_Stimuli	.088	.063	.099	1.398	.163
	External_Stimuli	.510	.070	.518	7.285	.000
	Perception	.572	.043	.582	13.368	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Perceived Experience

Source: SPSS output from field survey (2023)

The above table has revealed 210.234 from total sum of squares, 75.695 can be explained by the regression and 134.539 is explained by the residual value. Hence, the model is statistically significant because relatively large proportion of model is explained by regression. As per the above information p value is 0.000. The F-ratio in the ANOVA table (Table 5) tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table shows that the independent variables (internal stimuli, external stimuli and perception) statistically significantly predict the dependent variable (perceived experience), $F(2,347) = 97.616, P < .0005$.

Considering the above table 5, the unstandardized coefficient, B1 for internal stimuli is equal to 0.088. This means that for each one-unit increase in internal stimuli, there is an increase in perceived experience of 0.088 times units. The unstandardized coefficient, B2 for external stimuli is equal to 0.510. This means that for each one-unit increase in external stimuli, there is an increase in perceived experience of 0.510 times units. The unstandardized coefficient, B2 for perception is equal to 0.572. This means that for each one-unit increase in perception, there is an increase in perceived experience of 0.572 times units. Regression analysis is concerned with the study of dependence of one variable (dependent variable) on one or more other variable (independent variable) and also tries to measure the relationship level quantitatively. According to this research dependent variable is tea tourists' perceived experience and the independent variable is tea tourists' internal stimuli, external stimuli and the overall perception on tea tourism. Based on the results the below multiple regression equation was developed.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (X_1) + \beta_2 (X_2) + \sum$$

$$Y = (1.067) + 0.088 X_1 + 0.510X_2 + 0.572X_3 + \sum$$

In Accordance to analyzed output table 5, constant (β_0) was 1.067 which implies that while perception remain zero, perceived experience of tourists is 1.067. P value of constant term was 0.000 and which stated it was statistically significant at 0.05 level of significant ($0.000 < 0.05$).

When considering the internal stimuli, the β coefficient of 0.088 indicates that when internal stimuli is increased by one unit while other variables remain constant, perceived experience on tea tourism is increased by 0.088 units. But it can be seen that Internal stimuli not contributed significantly to the model since p-value is 0.163. It is greater than 0.05 level of significant ($0.163 > 0.05$). It implies that internal stimuli do not individually impact on the tourists' perceived experience about tea tourism. But it is jointly influence on the tea tourism with other variables. Hence, there is no any significant impact of internal stimuli towards the perceived experience on tea tourism. Therefore, H1 rejected and H0 accepted.

In regards to external stimuli, the β coefficient of 0.510 indicates that when external stimuli are increased by one unit while other variables remain constant, tea tourists' perceived experience is increased by 0.510 units. In addition, probability of the external stimuli is 0.000. As the P-value is less than the 0.05 level of significant, external stimuli is significantly contributed to the model. This implies that the external stimuli are individually impact on the tea tourists' perceived experience. Hence, external stimuli of tea tourists' perception have a significant positive impact on their perceived experience about tea tourism. Therefore, null hypothesis (H0) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H2) is accepted.

When considering the overall perception, the β coefficient of 0.572 indicates that when overall perception is increased by one unit while other variables remain constant, tea tourists' perceived experience is increased by 0.572 units. In addition, probability of the perception is 0.000. As the P-value is less than the 0.05 level of significant, tourists' perception is significantly contributed to the model. This implies that the tourists' perception is individually impact on the tea tourists' perceived experience. Hence, tea tourists' overall perception has a significant positive impact on their perceived experience about tea tourism. Therefore, null hypothesis (H0) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H3) is accepted.

O3: To identify the prospects and challenges to develop tea tourism as a high-yielding emerging market sector.

Table 6. Respondents for Qualitative Data Gathering

Respondent Code	Gender	Job status	Experience
Respondent 01	Male	Senior Operations Manager	13 years
Respondent 02	Male	Factory Manager	07 years
Respondent 03	Female	Sales Executive Officer	03 years
Respondent 04	Male	Factory Manager	04 years
Respondent 05	Male	Tea Centre Manager	08 years
Respondent 06	Female	Guide in the Tea Factory	03 years
Respondent 07	Male	Tea Factory Manager	09 years
Respondent 08	Male	Hotel Manager	06 years
Respondent 09	Male	Hotel Manager	07 years
Respondent 10	Female	Guide in the Tea Factory	04 years

Source: Developed by the Researcher

Based on the research question structured interview guidelines were prepared and qualitative data were collected through 10 structured interviews in order to gather data. Interviews were held for 10-20 minutes in order to collect the relevant data. The findings contain direct quotes from the participants that illustrate how the results were generated. In this structured interview first part about respondents' employment details. The details of the respondents are presented in table 6.

Prospects of Sri Lanka tea tourism industry

Data gathered from those interviewees were analyzed using Content Analysis method. According to the Content Analysis method, the researcher identified several categories in line with questions asked and

answers given to those questions. Those categories were further divided into sub categories. Those categories and sub categories are mentioned in table 7.

Table 7. Categorized Table for Prospects of Tea Tourism

Objective	Code	Category	Sub Category
To identify prospects of Tea Tourism industry in Sri Lanka	Prospects of Tea Tourism in Sri Lanka	Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness about the tourism • Awareness about the tea tourism concept
		Attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Attractions • Manmade Attractions • Climate as a tourists’ attraction tool • Accommodation facilities in tea estate bungalows
		Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for Sri Lanka • Demand for Ceylon tea brand
		Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing activities of Sri Lankan Tea Tourism establishments • Future plans of public and private sectors
		Available Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea capacity in Sri Lanka • Favorable environmental factors for tea cultivation in Sri Lanka
		Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Plans of private-public organizations about Tea Tourism Industry

Source: Developed by the Researcher after Data Analysis

Challenges of Sri Lanka tea tourism industry

The information collected from the interviewees underwent analysis via the Content Analysis approach. Following this method, the researcher identified various categories aligned with the posed questions and corresponding responses. These categories were subsequently subdivided for deeper examination. The table below outlines both the categories and their respective subcategories.

Table 8. Categorized Table for Tea Tourism Challenges

Objective	Code	Category	Sub Category
To identify the challenges of Tea Tourism industry in Sri Lanka	Challenges of Tea Tourism in Sri Lanka	Political Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Decisions and restrictive rules and Regulations for business operations • Lack of government support for tea tourism sector
		Economic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Economic Crisis • Fuel price hike • Inflation • High material costing • Lack of infrastructure facilities in the area
		Environmental Challenges Operational challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable weather fluctuation • Engagement level of tea estate community in the tea tourism activities very low • Managerial restrictions • Lack of knowledge about tea tourism concept • Due to the current situation in the country, cut down the number of employees and their wages • Lack of tea tourism expertise • Fluctuation of tourists’ arrival

Objective	Code	Category	Sub Category
		Technological Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No established business line for tea tourism • Due to Sri Lankan economic condition, the utilize of technology instruments is not feasible • Lack of promotional activities and limited contacting • with travel companies • Due to the sloping nature of the land in Sri Lanka, some equipment is not suitable • Unavailability of tourist information center in Nuwara Eliya district

Source: Developed by the Researcher after Data Analysis

5. Discussion

The main objective of the empirical study was to understand the prospects and challenges of tea tourism industry in Sri Lanka. To achieve that objective, the researcher has identified travel motives of tea tourists and the impact of tourists' perception on their perceived travel experience. To identify travel motives of tea tourists' the researcher analyzed descriptive statistics and identified that their push motive factors higher than the pull motive factors. That indicates push motive factors more influencing than pull motive factors for tourists to visit tea establishments in Sri Lanka. Therefore, Sri Lankan tea tourism industry should take measures to pull tea lovers to their establishments more than this.

According to Ali (2017) the motives, attitudes, and perception of the tourists have a significant impact on the choice of place or tourism segment (Ali, 2017). Tourists form opinions about their happiness or dissatisfaction with their holiday expenditures based on their attitudes and perceptions of what they have seen, consumed, and experienced. Meanwhile, as mentioned in the case study of Cheng, Xu and Zhang (2010), it has given a quantitative exploration of Chinese tea tourist's attitudes and perceptions towards tea and tea tourism and had identified profiles of the potential tea tourists. Findings revealed that Tea tourists are mainly tea lovers driven by their high interest in tea and tea culture. However, those studies have not detailed both demand and supply sides of the tea tourism contexts. In order to identify tourists' perception on perceived experience researcher selected the two main dimensions of the perception as tea tourists' perception in internal stimuli and external stimuli and finally overall perception's impact on perceived travel experience. To measure the perception on tea tourists' perceived experience giving a questionnaire by using convenience sampling method and researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to prove the third objective of the study to understand the service supplier's perspective regarding the prospects and challenges of tea tourism sector in Sri Lanka. Several statistical tests were used, mainly as regression analysis was applied to test the hypothetical statements. The researcher has distributed a questionnaire among sample and analyzed the data based on 350 responses.

According to the analyzed data, the correlation between the perception and the perceived experience was statistically significance at the 0.01 level with a Pearson correlation coefficient of +0.582. It shows that there is a positive relationship between the perception and perceived experience.

Then multiple linear regression had run to measure the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. According to the received results, the p-value for each main dimension were 0.163 for internal stimuli, 0.000 for external stimuli and 0.000 for the overall perception. It implies that internal stimuli do not individually impact on the tourists' perceived experience about tea tourism. But it is jointly influence on the tea tourism with other variables. Hence, there is no any significant impact of internal stimuli towards the perceived experience on tea tourism. And external stimuli are individually impact on the tea tourists' perceived experience. Therefore, external stimuli of tea tourists' perception have a significant positive impact on their perceived experience about tea tourism. And finally, the tourists' perception is individually impact on the tea tourists' perceived experience. Hence, tea tourists' overall perception has a significant positive impact on their perceived experience about tea tourism. And according to the results there is a positive strong relationship can be identified among the

independent variables (internal stimuli, external stimuli and perception) and dependent variable (perceived experience).

As part of the qualitative analysis, the researcher identified the service providers' perspective on the prospects and challenges of tea tourism. The researcher interviewed 10 service providers. Most of the service providers who participated in the interview stated that tea tourism in Sri Lanka has many challenges and prospects that the researcher identified in relation to this industry. In terms of prospects, the researcher found that 80% of the service providers have extensive knowledge about the concept of tea tourism. This is a positive sign about the well-being of the tea tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the researcher has identified the attraction of the tea industry, the demand for Ceylon tea, the available activities and resources and the future plans of the service providers as prospects for the tea tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the researcher has categorized the challenges for the tea tourism industry into five categories based on the responses. These are political, economic, environmental, operational and technological challenges. Considering the current situation in the country, the economic and operational challenges are very high.

6. Conclusions

According to the analyzed data obtained from the sample of 350 tea tourists, it can be identified that tea tourists typically visit tea establishments were above the age of 20. It implies that when people young they move more towards the tea and tea related activities when compared with old ages. The majority were female tourists (59.7%) and single which implies that the female tourists are more towards the tea than the male tourists. They were educated and employed with considerable income level. The highest number of tea tourists has been arrived from the Asia, Sri Lanka and Europe. among the push and pull motive factors that influenced tourists to visit tea tourism establishments, it is clear from the mean value of push motive factors are higher than the mean value of pull motive factors. That indicates push motive factors more influencing than pull motive factors for tourists to visit tea establishments in Sri Lanka. Therefore, Sri Lankan tea tourism industry should take measures to pull tea lovers to their establishments more than this. When considering the overall perception, it implies that the tourists' perception is individually impact on the tea tourists' perceived experience. Hence, tea tourists' overall perception has a significant positive impact on their perceived experience about tea tourism. To identify the prospects and challenges to develop tea tourism as a high-yielding emerging market sector the researcher conducted in depth interviews with ten (10) service providers of tea tourism. The researcher analyzed the collected data using Content analysis method. According to the gathered data the researcher has identified as prospects of tea tourism awareness about Tea tourism concept, attraction of Sri Lankan tea tourism, demand for Ceylon tea, activities in the Sri Lankan tea establishments, available resources and future plans can be identified. According to the analysis the researcher has identified few challenges with relevant to the tea tourism industry in Sri Lanka. They are political challenges economic challenges, environmental challenges, operational challenges and technological challenges. Since Sri Lanka is an under developing country and the current political, economic instability has been caused its' tea tourism sector also.

Following recommendations are suggested based on the conclusion of this study to achieve socio-economic development in the sector;

Developing a proper information base should be implemented for tea tourism destinations. This should contain the directions and accessible modes, and tea related activities/experiences for the tourists, nearby attractions, etc. Meanwhile, an international marketing plan should be formulated to popularize tea tourism destinations and packages. Stakeholders should focus on key areas to enhance the appeal of Ceylon tea in the European market, utilizing the brand name as a potent marketing tool. Embracing eco-friendly and sustainable tourism practices can significantly boost marketability, integrating the tea tourism concept as an environmentally conscious and sustainable endeavor. Leveraging social media marketing tools is also crucial for attracting a wider audience of tourists.

Initiating a program dedicated to building the destination image of Sri Lanka is essential, positioning it as a tranquil and all-encompassing leisure destination. Emphasis should be on promoting nature-based niche tourism sectors over conventional mass tourism, and designing tourism experience packages that go beyond the traditional Sun, Sand, and Sea market.

Despite several Sri Lankan tea brands available locally, the international success of "Dilmah" underscores the need for a collaborative effort to promote Ceylon tea tourism destinations and packages. A collective approach is vital to attract more tea tourists by leveraging the prestige associated with the leading tea brand.

In the current local context, diversifying offerings in tea tourism destinations is crucial. Introducing additional leisure activities, such as tea leaf plucking experiences, guided visits to tea plantations with insights from local tea pickers, and providing tourists with tea powder made from leaves they've plucked themselves, can invigorate the Sri Lankan tea tourism industry.

These activities are mostly using in other competitive countries such as India, China, Japan, Taiwan many others. The tea manufacturers in Sri Lanka tends to focus more on tea, rather than tourism, since tea manufacturing is their core business. Thus, a comprehensive awareness program series is thoroughly required to attract more and more tea manufacturers to be connected with tourism.

Nowadays, travelers are more aligned with the online platforms. Before they travel, they get information from different online platforms. But when considering about tea tourism in Sri Lanka less involvement of usage online marketing. Sri Lankan tea sector is lagging behind sharing knowledge of the other tea industries across the world, which have already used innovative technologies to deliver information before and throughout the journey. So, the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority and the Tea board should implement an effective mechanism for online data gathering for the tourists and an online feedback system.

References

- Antón, C., Camarero, C. and Laguna-García, M. (2018). Experience Value or Satiety? The Effects of the Amount and Variety of Tourists' Activities on Perceived Experience, *Journal of Travel Research*, 57(7), pp. 920-935. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287517727366>.
- Arkkelin, D. (2014). Using SPSS to Understand Research and Data Analysis. *Psychology Curricular Materials*, 1, pp. 1-196, https://scholar.valpo.edu/psych_oer/1.
- Arnould E. J., Price L. L. (1993). River Magic: Extraordinary Experience and the Extended Service Encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (1), pp. 24=45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209331>.
- Bennike, R. (2017). Frontier Commodification: Governing Land, Labour and Leisure in Darjeeling, India, *South Asia: Journal of South Asia Studies*, 40(2), pp. 256-271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2017.1289618>.
- Breakey, N.M. and Breakey, H.E. (2015). Tourism and Aldo Leopold's "cultural harvest": creating virtuous tourists as agents of sustainability, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 23(1), pp. 85-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2014.924954>.
- Chen, L.-H., Wang, M.-J.(S.), Morrison, A.M., Ting, H. and Yeap, J.A.L. (2021). "Guest editorial", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 15(3), pp. 285-289. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCTHR-08-2021-298>.
- Cheng, S., Hu, J., Fox, D. and Zhang, Y. (2012). Tea tourism development in Xinyang, China: Stakeholders' view', *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 2-3(2010), pp. 28-34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2011.12.001>.
- Cheng, S., Xu, F., Zhang, J. and Zhang, Y. (2010). Tourists' attitudes toward tea tourism: A case study in Xinyang, China, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 27(2), pp. 211-220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548401003590526>.
- Fernando, P.I.N., Rajapaksha, R.M.P.D.K. and Kumari, K.W.S.N. (2017). Tea tourism as a marketing tool: a strategy to develop the image of Sri Lanka as an attractive tourism destination', *Kelaniya Journal of Management*, 5(2), p. 64. <https://doi.org/10.4038/kjm.v5i2.7518>.
- Gabbott, M. (2007). Consumer behaviour, in Baker, M. and Heart, S. (eds.). *The Marketing Book*, Sixth Edition., London: Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080942544>.
- Franklin, A.W. (2012). 'Management of the problem', in Smith, S.M. (ed.) *The maltreatment of children*. Lancaster: MTP, pp. 83-95.

- Gamage, D. and Samarathunga, M. (2020). Alternative Tourism as an Alternate to Mass Tourism during the Post-COVID-19 Recovery Phase, *Sunday Times* (Sri Lanka), 2(July), pp. 1-8. [online] Available at: <https://www.timesonline.lk/opinion/alternative-tourism-as-an-alternate-to-mass-tourism-during-the-post-covid-19-recovery-phase/158-1120006>.
- Gupta, V., Sajnani, M., Kumar Dixit, S. and Khanna, K. (2022) 'Foreign tourist's tea preferences and relevance to destination attraction in India', *Tourism Recreation Research*, 47(4), pp. 428-442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2020.1841376>.
- Gupta, V., Khanna, K. and Gupta, R.K. (2018). A study on the street food dimensions and its effects on consumer attitude and behavioural intentions, *Tourism Review*, 73(3), pp. 374-388. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-03-2018-0033>.
- Gupta, V. and Sajnani, M. (2020). Risk and benefit perceptions related to wine consumption and how it influences consumers' attitude and behavioural intentions in India', *British Food Journal*, 122(8), pp. 2569-2585. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-06-2019-0464>.
- Ha, H.-Y. and Perks, H. (2005). Effects of consumer perceptions of brand experience on the web: brand familiarity, satisfaction and brand trust, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 4(6), pp. 438-452. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.29>.
- Hansen, T. (2005). Rethinking consumer perception of food quality, *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, 11(2), pp. 75-93. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/J038v11n02_05
- Hosany, S., and M. Witham. (2010). Dimensions of Cruisers' Experiences, Satisfaction and Intention to Recommend. *Journal of Travel Research*, 49 (3), pp. 351-64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287509346859>.
- Holbrook, M. B., and E. C. Hirschman. (1982). The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9 (2), pp. 132-140. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208906>.
- Jang, S. (Shawn), Bai, B., Hu, C., and Wu, C.-M. E. (2009). Affect, Travel Motivation, and Travel Intention: a Senior Market. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 33(1), pp. 51-73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348008329666>.
- Jolliffe, L. (2007). *Tea and tourism: Tourists, traditions and transformations*. [online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292244905_Tea_and_tourism_Tourists_traditions_and_transformations.
- Jolliffe, L. and Aslam, M.S.M. (2009). Tea heritage tourism: evidence from Sri Lanka, *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 4(4), pp. 331-344, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17438730903186607>.
- Jolliffe, L., Aslam, M.S.M., Khaokhrueamuang, A. and Chen, L-H. (2023). *Routledge Handbook of Tea Tourism*, Routledge, Abingdon.
- Kim, A.K. and Brown, G. (2012). Understanding the relationships between perceived travel experiences, overall satisfaction, and destination loyalty, *Anatolia*, 23(3), pp. 328-347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2012.696272>.
- Kim, J.H. and Ritchie, B.W. (2012). Motivation-Based Typology: An Empirical Study of Golf Tourists, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 36(2), pp. 251-280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348010388661>.
- Kumara, W.G.N.P. and Kulathunga, K.M.M.C.B. (2013). Tourists' Attitudes towards Tea Tourism in Sri Lanka: A Case in Badulla District', pp. 16-18.
- Luo, J. (2019). *An exploratory study on tea tourism and tourists' perception on tea tourism products of Yunnan Province, China*. MBA Thesis. Bangkok: Assumption University.
- Magar, C.K. and Kar, B.K. (2016). Tea plantations and socio-cultural transformation: The case of Assam, India, *Space and Culture, India*, 4(1), pp. 25-39. <https://doi.org/10.20896/saci.v4i1.188>.
- Prebensen, N. K., Vitterson, J. and Dahl, T. (2013). Value Co-creation Significance of Tourist Resources. *Annals of Tourism Research* 42, pp. 240-26, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2013.01.012>.
- Ranasinghe, W.T., Thaichon, P. and Ranasinghe, M. (2017). An analysis of product-place co-branding: the case of Ceylon Tea, *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 29(1), pp. 200-214. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-10-2015-0156>.

- Robbins, S.P. and Coulter, M. (2002). Management (activebook), *Total Quality Management*, p. 656, [online] Available at: [http://www.uop.edu.pk/ocontents/\[Stephen_P._Robbins,_Mary_K._Coulter\]_Management_-\(BookZZ.org\)%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.uop.edu.pk/ocontents/[Stephen_P._Robbins,_Mary_K._Coulter]_Management_-(BookZZ.org)%20(1).pdf)
- Scorrano, P., Fait, M., Iaia, L. and Rosato, P. (2018). The image attributes of a destination: an analysis of the wine tourists' perception, *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 13(3), pp. 335-350. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/EMJB-11-2017-0045>.
- Song, H.J., Lee, C-K., Park, J-A. Hwang, Y-H. and Reisinger, Y. (2015). The Influence of Tourist Experience on Perceived Value and Satisfaction with Temple Stays: The Experience Economy Theory, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 32(4), pp. 401-415. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2014.898606>.
- Su, M.M., Wall, G. and Wang, Y. (2019). Integrating tea and tourism: a sustainable livelihoods approach, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(10), pp. 1591-1608. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1648482>.
- Wang, Q.J.; Mielby, L.A.; Junge, J.Y.; Bertelsen, A.S.; Kidmose, U.; Spence, C.; Byrne, D.V. (2019). The role of intrinsic and extrinsic sensory factors in sweetness perception of food and beverages: A review, *Foods*, 8(6), 211. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods8060211>.
- Wu, J., and C. Holsapple. (2014). Imaginal and Emotional Experiences in Pleasure-Oriented IT Usage. A Hedonic Consumption Perspective. *Information and Management*, 51(1), pp. 80-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2013.09.003>.
- Yeap, J.A.L., Ooi, S.K., Ara, H. and Said, M.F. (2021). Have coffee/tea, will travel: assessing the inclination towards sustainable coffee and tea tourism among the green generations, *International Journal of Culture, Tourism, and Hospitality Research*, 15(3), pp. 384-398. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCTHR-08-2020-0191>.
- Yoon, Y. and Uysal, M. (2016). An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty: A structural model', *Tourism Management*, 26(1), pp. 45-56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.08.016>.

Annexes

Push Motive Factors:

They are based on "socio-psychological needs that predisposition a person to travel".

Pull Motive Factors:

Pull factors are those that draw a person to a certain location after push motivation has been established.

Internal Stimuli:

Depending on how the person wishes to perceive that destination

External Stimuli:

resulting from the evaluation of destination qualities

Attainment, which is closely related to the value visitors place on their time spent traveling to the location, is viewed as the notion that the investment made has been repaid and capitalized on. It is primarily a cognitive and rational assessment of the experience's efficacy, based on the conviction that the activity has proven to be both fruitful and advantageous (Prebensen, Vittersø and Dahl, 2013).

Learning is the tourist's view of the experience as having been educational and enlightening in the sense that the journey has given them something new to learn or given them. In the context of tourism, it is crucial because one of the primary goals of travel is to educate oneself about the place visited (Hosany and Witham, 2010; Yoon and Uysal, 2016).

Escapism refers to the visitor's perception of having temporarily gotten away from everything. This emotionally charged component also reflects one of the motives for travel, namely relaxation and getting away from the grind of everyday life (Yoon and Uysal, 2016).

Fantasy is the mind's imaginative response to stimulus. It also has an emotional component, indicating the ability of the location to evoke particular feelings and emotions in the traveler. Although Gabott (2007) claims that it is an important experience of hedonic consumption and Wu and Holsapple (2014) consider it a determinant factor of consumption in online gaming, it was not included as a separate dimension of experience in the earlier tourism literature.