

Impact of Experiential Marketing on Tourist Revisit Intention: A Study of Ella in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Experiential marketing has emerged as a powerful tool in modern tourism, focusing on creating memorable and emotionally engaging tourist experiences that influence tourist behaviours. Despite Ella's rapid growth as an eco-cultural destination in Sri Lanka, limited research has examined how experiential marketing affects tourists' revisit intentions in this context. This study investigates this research gap by applying Schmitt's (1999) Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs) Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate as the theoretical framework. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted. The target population included tourists who had visited Ella. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to collect 150 responses via a structured online questionnaire, comprising items measured on a five-point Likert scale. Data were analysed using SPSS version 25, including descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The sample was split by gender, with a majority of participants being young and well-educated. All five experiential marketing dimensions showed strong positive correlations with revisit intention ($r = 0.719\text{--}0.820$, $p < 0.01$). Regression results revealed that Sense ($\beta = 0.370$, $p < 0.001$) and Think ($\beta = 0.193$, $p = 0.027$) had significant positive effects on revisit intention, while Feel, Act, and Relate were not statistically significant predictors. The model explained 73.9% of the variance in revisit intention ($R^2 = 0.739$). The findings suggest that enhancing sensory and cognitive experiences can significantly boost tourist loyalty to Ella. Destination marketers are encouraged to invest in immersive, intellectually stimulating experiences to support sustainable tourism growth.

Keywords: eco-cultural destination, experiential marketing, revisit intention, SEMs Model, tourist experience