Exploring Sri Lanka's Tourist Image Perceptions through Travel Blog Narratives: A Netnographic Study

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the post-visit destination image perceptions of international tourists concerning Sri Lanka, as articulated in travel blog narratives. The data were sourced from 85 comprehensive blog entries, all related to visits to Sri Lanka before the Easter attack and the onset of the Covid outbreak in 2019. The three-dimensional framework suggested by Etchner and Ritchie in 1991 provided the theoretical lens for the study. The study successfully identified robust images associated with both the functional and psychological attributes of the country. The overarching holistic images of Sri Lanka predominantly revolved around aspects such as its captivating scenic beauty, lush and green landscapes, compact yet diverse offerings, tranquil and peaceful atmosphere, and its tropical character. Interestingly, the findings revealed that unique images of Sri Lanka hold a relatively less prominent position in the minds of travellers when compared to other image dimensions. Additionally, there appeared to be inconsistencies between the post-visit images discovered in this study and the images projected by the official Sri Lanka Tourism website and other promotional materials.

Keywords: Destination, Destination Image, Sri Lanka, Travel blogs, Netnography