

# **CULINARY TOURISM AS A POST DISASTER RECOVERY MARKETING TOOL FOR SRI LANKA TOURISM PROMOTION: A STUDY OF SOUTH COAST OF SRI LANKA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Culinary Tourism has been grown exponentially every year as it attracts thousands of tourists by arousing their taste buds towards food. Hence, Culinary Tourism has been already considered as a motive for the choice of travel destinations. The tourism industry is highly susceptible to disasters collapsing entire industry in one second. This brings a challenge for replenishing the tourism industry after a disaster. However, Food or culinary makes a destination unique and therefore, gastronomic tourism is perceived nowadays as one of the significant commitments for strengthening or consolidating specific tourist destinations. Thus, gastronomy is a strategic element as a post-disaster marketing tool for promoting tourists' destinations. Therefore, current research aims to delineate whether culinary tourism can be used as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for promoting tourism in Sri Lanka and identifying the most influential variable as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for the promotion of tourism in Sri Lanka. A self-administered questionnaire-based survey was conducted around South Coast of Sri Lanka with 100 tourists by using a purposive sampling technique. A comprehensive literature review was done and Multiple Regression Analysis was used to analyze the data to achieve the study's objectives. SPSS 20 software was used as the analytical tool for the study. The results revealed that culinary tourism as a post-disaster marketing tool has a significant and direct impact on tourism promotion in Sri Lanka. To recover Sri Lankan Tourism industry using culinary tourism as a post-disaster recovery marketing

tool to a satisfactory level, food consumption patterns of culinary tourists should be properly diagnosed and the destination environments should be restructured surprisingly and destination foods needs its signature. The results of this study suggest strongly that advertisements and publicity campaigns that use celebrity endorsements may have the best chance of persuading visitors to return to a destination following a disastrous event. Further, studies related to culinary tourism with the mediation effect of integrated destination management can be consummated.

**Keywords:** *culinary tourism, gastronomy, integrated destination management and post-disaster recovery marketing tool,*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Crises and disasters have always impacted tourism, and no tourism destination is exempt(Hermida et al., n.d.). The tourism industry is particularly susceptible to natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, bushfire and tsunami, pandemics (Fanggidae and Nyoko, 2019) and indeed as (On, Caused and Earthquake, n.d.) Point out; the sector appears to be under an almost permanent threat of yet another crisis looming as well as immediate damage and destruction to life can negatively impact visitor arrivals, employment opportunities, profits and revenues(Heritage and Risks, 2020). This research was written on a number of different disaster contexts, including weather-related events (floods and hurricanes), natural disasters (earthquakes and tsunami) and other events (such as pandemics and terrorist attacks).

At the same time, tourism is acknowledged to be one of the world's largest income generators(Chang and Mak, 2018), and the UNWTO note that the recovery of the tourism sector is a significant driver of funds and economic activity needed to support the general recovery of the entire affected economy (United Nations World Tourism Organisation

[UNWTO] 2005) . Therefore, it is clear that post-disaster recovery is vital for the tourism industry and post disaster recovery marketing is generally perceived as an essential part of any recovery strategy (Hermida et al., n.d.).

Sri Lanka has been impacted by several disasters such as LTTE terrorism (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) acts from the period around 1983-2009, Easter Attack by Muslim extremism in 2019 and COVID 19, the global pandemic. The tourism sector has been severely affected and damaged by those disasters and is still experiencing its negative consequences. Regaining tourism prosperity is very difficult after these disasters. Several post disaster recovery marketing tools should be employed to reappraise the tourism industry. Culinary tourism can be used as one of the post disaster recovery marketing tools since the culinary role receives an unavoidable interest from the tourists. A successful collaboration can be formed when the food and tourism actors care about the community's best interests, want to support it, and create a brand image for it. Following that, culinary tourism also can be utilized as a post disaster recovery marketing tool.

This research focuses on finding whether culinary tourism can be used as a post disaster recovery marketing tool to promote tourism in Sri Lanka.

### **Problem Statement**

Tourism is acknowledged as one of the world's largest income generators with rich tourism concepts like eco-tourism, regional tourism, adventure tourism, wellness tourism, etc. Among those, Special Interest Tourism

(SIT) covers wide range of different novel concepts for value addition for the tourism industry. Culinary Tourism is one of the new concepts in it.

Culinary tourism has many aspects and roles in the tourism industry and previous researchers also agreed that food has a significant role in tourism.(Lee and Scott, n.d.). However, this role has not been fully characterized and specified the role of cuisine as a post-disaster recovery marketing tool. Since tourism is highly subjected to the uncertainties and risks, it is needed to have satisfactory evidence to support the industry's rehabilitation. Post disaster recovery plan is a must element in any kind of natural or man- made calamities. There are neither limited nor any researches conducted in the Sri Lankan context considering culinary tourism as a tool for post disaster recovery marketing.

Food is an integral part of tourism; It is one of the basic human need. Previous studies have examined numerous culinary related philosophies in the arena of tourism research, but not as a tool for post disaster recovery marketing. There is a critical argument by Shahrim et al., n.d. stating that very few studies have been written about the food and the qualities associated with the food, that might affect traveller's experience and how culinary tourism might influence as a post disaster recovery marketing tool. Therefore an empirical gap has been discovered for this study.

Considering that, the study sets to identify whether culinary tourism can be used as a post disaster recovery tool to promote Sri Lanka tourism

while identifying the most influential factor to use as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for the tourism promotion.

### **Research Question**

#### **Primary Research question**

01. Whether culinary tourism can be used as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for promoting tourism in Sri Lanka?

#### **Secondary Research Question**

02. What is the most influential variable as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for promoting tourism in Sri Lanka?

### **Research Objective**

#### **Primary Research Objective**

01. To identify culinary tourism as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for the promotion of tourism in Sri Lanka

#### **Secondary Research Objective**

02. To identify the most influential variable as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for the promotion of tourism in Sri Lanka

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Relationship between Tourism and Culinary Tourism**

The relationship between food and tourism seems paradoxical. Karim, Chi and Chi, (2017) suggested a synergy created between food and tourism in many ways including cuisines as an attraction in its own right

that the destination can then use to promote itself and as a component of the tourism product. Karim, Chi and Chi, (2017), emphasized that “promoting the food in their way which one can experience and accept different culture without reluctance”. Many researchers have shown that cuisines have a more significant impact on traveler’s decision when choosing their vacation. Thus, the vital connection between food and tourism cannot be ignored.

According to Lai, Khoo-lattimore and Wang, (2017) , “food is an integral part of the travel experience that its significance has often been lost”. It is mere fuel, but for others, arguably a growing minority, it is the prime motivation to travel. Crofts argued that cuisines that are highly known for their taste and quality could be developed into tourist products. Meanwhile, Quan and Wang (2004) noted that food could convey a unique experience and enjoyment to travelers. Especially, food may enhance tourists experience while being the most memorable part of their trip. Thus, the food of a destination can be used to represent the image distinctiveness of the destination. Hence, tourism cannot be explained without the help of culinary tourism and destinations.

When tourists consume different food at a particular location, they make their way to the promotion and marketing of destinations. Thus, it becomes a culinary destination specified for the dishes, and tourists will experience that food in their visits to that destination. Through that tourism industry will boom further with those culinary dishes. Then, it is proved that there is an unbreakable relationship between food and tourism.

### **Culinary Tourism**

The word culinary has several synonyms such as gastronomic/ food/ culinary/cuisine or food tourism and those terms were defined by different scholars in their studies differently. However, Shahrim et al.,(2002)defined gastronomy as, “reflective eating, which, however, it expands to reflective cooking and food preparation as well, maintaining the association with excellence and/or fancy food and drink”. Sormaz et al. (2016) defined food tourism as, “visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food and tasting and/ or experiencing the attributes of a specialist food production region are the primary motivating factors for travel”. As Crotts, (2015), defined Gastronomy or culinary tourism as a visit or travel that is motivated by an interest in food and drinks. Thus, people's main motivations to travel are to experience and taste the food and drinks that can provide a lasting memory in their lifetime.

### **Tourism and Disasters**

Tourism has a reciprocal relationship between disasters, especially with uncontrollable disasters. Disasters cause considerable damages to the tourism industry, basically to the tourism demand. Thus, more the disasters over the world, more the tourism decline can be accelerated. The “United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction” defines a disaster as a “serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts”.

### **Post Disaster Recovery Management**

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) defines post-disaster recovery as: “decisions and actions taken after a disaster to restore or improve the pre-disaster living conditions of the stricken community while encouraging and facilitating necessary adjustments to reduce disaster risk.” Identifying relevant lines and actions that make it possible to put into place post-disaster recovery planning and preparation processes is not only a novel experience compared to traditional approaches geared toward preventing and preparing for emergencies, but it also opens up various paths, many of them yet to be explored.

### **The Role of Food in Post Disaster Recovery**

The sale of food and beverages provides revenue for an area’s producers, but its value does not end there. Regional leaders can exploit the uniqueness of the area’s typical food and beverages in defining the distinctive attractiveness of their area and developing its “brand,” not only to improve marketing of food-related products abroad but also to promote food tourism area. Thus, the branding and promotion of culinary products and destinations can serve to position local economies in a global world and support place development in a sustainable way (Hermida et al., n.d.). A clearly defined gastronomic identity can be exploited in crucial processes of differentiation and rejuvenation, helping to convey a unique sense of place (Heritage and Risks, 2020). The benefits accrue not only on the regional but also on the local level, as the promotion or “valorization” of culinary heritage can boost independent and collective initiatives in a process through which local action enhances rural tourism (Lin et al., 2010).



### **Food in the Destination and Destination Environment**

According to Shahrin et al., n.d., class of food, the role of food, the character of food, the value of food, features of food-related subjects attributes of food service, availability of food and foodservice type, style of food together called Food in the Destination. Destination Environment suggests a food-related establishment, food-related activities, symbol of culture, reflection of natural environment, social and cultural experience, sensory quality and promised quality forms Destination Environment. All the variables and indicators are mandatory to form a destination as a culinary destination as a whole.

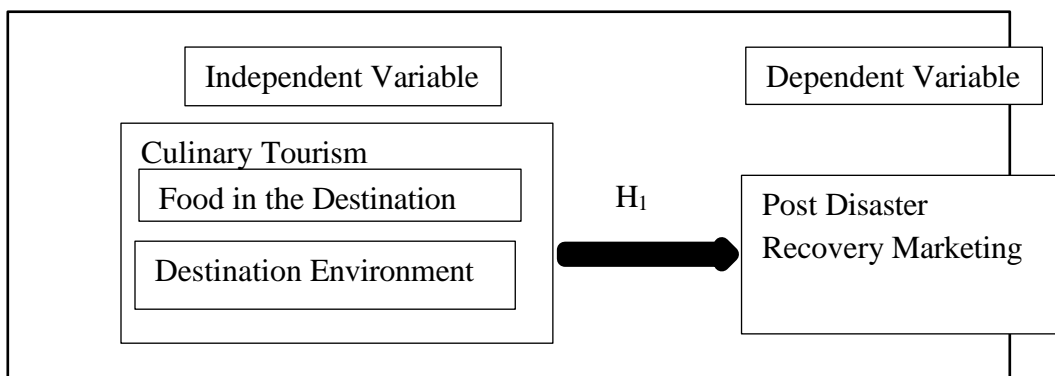
### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A deductive approach is mostly used in the quantitative studies while an inductive method is used mainly in the qualitative studies. View of Mourougan and Sethuraman, (2017) deductive approach is concerned with developing a hypothesis (or hypotheses) based on existing theory, and then designing a research strategy to test the hypothesis while Journal, (2017) explores that “Deduction begins with an expected pattern that is tested against observations, whereas induction begins with observations and seeks to find a pattern within them”.

This research is mainly based on the quantitative approach. This study's population would be the tourists who visited South Coast of Sri Lanka mainly covering Galle, Matara and Hambanthota. Journal, (2017), mentioned the purpose of taking a sample is “to obtain a result that is representative of the whole population being sampled without going to the trouble of asking everyone. Judgmental/purposive sampling

technique was used to collect data from the sample since all the tourists coming to Sri Lanka are not especially perceiving culinary tourism and the researcher has to select the sampling unit subjectively. Thus, 100 individuals out of the population were considered as the sample for the study.

### Conceptual Framework for the Study



Source: Developed by the researcher based on previous research.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

According to the conceptual framework, a hypothesis was created as follows.

H<sub>1</sub>: Culinary Tourism has a significant and positive impact on post disaster recovery as a marketing tool for promoting tourism.

### DATA ANALYSIS

To measure the validity and reliability commonly used the value of Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha is an index of the reliability and is generally used as a measure of the reliability of a set of questions in a survey instrument. Alpha coefficient ranges in value from 0-1 and it may

be used to describe the reliability of the factors. Higher score of the value indicates the higher reliability. The level of alpha indicates an acceptable level of reliability has usually been 0.6 or higher. The Cronbach's alpha value was used to measure the validity and reliability of the study.

**Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test**

Dimension	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Food in the destination	4	0.895
Destination environment	4	0.774
Post Disaster Recovery	3	0.698
Marketing		
Overall	11	0.709

Source: Survey Data (2020)

The overall Alpha value for the three sections, including 11 items shows as 0.709 indicates that there is an excellent internal consistency among the items used in the questionnaire. Therefore, these items were combined to create corresponding variables and the questionnaire can be considered a reliable tool.

The primary objective of the research was measured using multiple regression analysis. The statistical tool of regression analysis was used to test the variables and objective designed in the study. The data was analyzed by using SPSS 20. Regression analysis is concerned with the study of dependence of one variable (dependent variable) on one or more other variables (independent variable) and tries to measure the relationship level quantitatively.

## Testing the Assumptions of the Regression Model

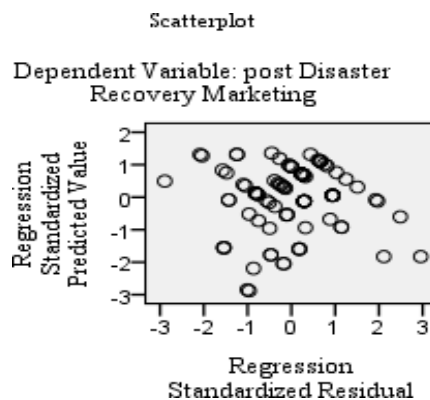
There are mainly four assumptions regarding the regression analysis and they are stated as follows.

### Test of Normality

If the positive and negative residuals are set off each other mean of the residual will be zero. If the residuals are normally distributed with zero mean regression results are highly valid. Accordingly, residuals are close to the linear line. Therefore residuals are normally distributed. Therefore regression results are more valid and the assumption of normality is satisfied to run the multiple regression analysis.

### Assumption of Homoscedasticity

Homoscedasticity or the constancy of the dependent variable's variance (error variable) can be illustrated through the plots of residuals against any of the independent variables or against the predicted value.



Source: Survey Data (2020)

Figure 2: Scatterplot of Residuals of Regression Analysis

The data points in the following figure have been spread without any specific pattern. Therefore, the multiple regression model is not influenced by any problem of heteroscedasticity.

### **Assumption of the Auto Collinearity**

This assumption was satisfied by testing the Durbin Watson value used to identify the assumption of independence and the residuals' autocorrelation. This value should be equal to 2 or closer to 2, which means that there is no autocorrelation in the sample and the Durbin Watson value in the current study was equal to 1.695. Since the value was closer to 2; the data can be assumed to be suitable to run the regression.

**Table 2: Durbin Watson Value**

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Durbin Watson Value	1.695
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Source: Survey Data (2020)

### **Assumption of Multicollinearity or the Collinearity**

This can be measured through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and it should be less than the standard value of 7.0. The VIF values are less than 7.0. This confirms that the regression model does not have any multicollinearity problem.

**Table 3: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)**

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<b>Food in the destination</b>	<b>1.840</b>
<b>Destination Environment</b>	2.318

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Source: Survey Data (2020)

### Multiple Regression Analysis

The dependent variable is Post Disaster Recovery Marketing (PDRM) and the independent variable is culinary tourism while Food in the Destination, Destination Environment act as the dimensions of culinary tourism. Based on the research objective, the multiple linear regression model is derived as follows.

$$PDRM = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (A1) + \beta_2 (A2) + \epsilon$$

Where,

PDRM = Post Disaster Recovery Marketing  
destination

A1= food in the

$\beta_0$  = intercept of the equation  
Environment

A2=destination

$\epsilon$  = error term

**Table 4: Regression analysis coefficients**

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.248	.295		4.224	.000
food destination	.404	.080	.472	5.037	.000
destination environment	.338	.098	.363	3.447	.001
R Square	0.541				
Adjusted R Square	0.526				
Std. Error of	0.39622				

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the estimate

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**a. Dependent Variable: Post Disaster Recovery Marketing**

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Source: Survey Data (2020)

Based on the regression analysis results obtained, the regression equation can be articulated as below.

$$\text{PDRM} = 1.248 + 0.404A1 + 0.338A2 + \epsilon$$

Under regression equation, the constant value is +1.248. It implies that the value of Post Disaster Recovery Marketing when all the independent variables equal to zero. Furthermore, the coefficient of Food in the Destination is 0.404, Coefficient of Destination Environment is +0.338 and it is the average change in Post Disaster Recovery Marketing due to one unit change in independent variables. It suggested that when Food in the destination increases by one unit, Post Disaster Recovery Marketing increases by the 0.404 times approximately, 0.4 times. When destination environment increases by one unit, Post Disaster Recovery Marketing increases the 0.338 times approximately, 0.4 times. It implies that the Food in the Destination and Destination Environment of the culinary tourism has a significant and positive impact as Post Disaster Recovery Marketing tools for promoting tourism in Sri Lanka.

According to Table 4, the linear regression model summary the R square value was 0.541. Following that, it can be concluded the Independent variables explain 54.1 percent of total variation of Dependent variable. Further adjusted R square value was 0.526 and standard error of the estimate was 0.39622. It implies that how data were deviated from the fitted line of regression. Following that it can be concluded that the independent variables explain 54.1% of total variation of Dependent

variable. In other terms, 54.1% of the Post Disaster Recovery Marketing variance is explained by the Destination Environment and Food in the Destination. Analysis of variance is presented in the following table and includes the sum of the square, degree of freedom, F value and P-value and is presented to ensure the overall significance of the model.

**Table 5: ANOVA table for Dependent and independent variables**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17.750	2	5.917	37.689	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	15.071	97	.157		
	Total	32.821	99			

**a. Dependent Variable: Post Disaster Recovery Marketing**

**b. Predictors: (Constant), food destination, destination environment**

Source: Survey Data (2020)

If the regression ANOVA result is significant, the model is appropriate. It indicates that independent variable influences on the dependent variable. According to the above table, the P-value is less than 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ). Hence the model is appropriate. Also, f value is 37.689. Following the F value condition, it was greater than the F table value. It implies that the overall model is significant.

Furthermore, it was identified that P-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05 level .It illustrates that the overall regression model is the meaningful and overall model applied can statistically predict the dependent variable.



This illustrates that Culinary Tourism can promote tourism in Sri Lanka as a Post Disaster Recovery Marketing tool. In the relationship between destination food and destination environment, a similar connection is not surprising. Gastronomic tourism has grown significantly, so destination food is a significant motivator and promoter for tourists.

**Table 6: Summary of the Hypothesis**

Hypothesis	Accepted/Rejected	P Value
H <sub>1</sub>	Accepted	0.000

Source: Survey Data (2020)

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study results identified two independent variables of culinary tourism: Food in the Destination, Destination environment. The unit average increase in Food in the Destination causes an increase of Post Disaster Recovery Marketing by approximately 0.4 times and unit average increase in Destination Environment causes an increase of Post Disaster Recovery Marketing by approximately 0.4 times. Therefore, both of the independent variables have a significant and positive impact on Post Disaster Recovery Marketing. On the other hand, it can be concluded that both independent variables of culinary tourism have the same influential power on Post Disaster Recovery Marketing. Improving the policy making patterns regarding the post disaster recovery destination marketing with Culinary attributes will enhance the Country's culinary image and the tourist's arrival to the country. The use of 'celebrity promotion' for gastronomy after a disaster is an effective

recovery method and travel destinations attract an increasing number of tourists each year (World Tourism Organization, 2012).

The findings of Lee and Scott, n.d. suggests that advertisements and culinary-related publicity campaigns such as food festivals that use celebrity endorsements may have the best chance of persuading visitors to return to a destination following a disastrous event, which called Celebrity massage. Self-promotion of entrepreneurship could increase the speed of recovery of Sri Lankan tourism. This concept is also known as “open and ready for the business”. This concept can be utilized among the culinary producers to regain the tourism prosperous in Sri Lanka. In this regard, Haven-Tang and Jones indicated that tourist destinations should consider the importance of gastronomy as a tool that contributes to a unique experience. Thus, culinary tourism can be definitely used as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for promoting tourism in Sri Lanka. Finally, a more detailed understanding of the tourist’s choice behavior is also a warranted research area as this would provide us with a better understanding of the motivations behind the decision to visit or not visit a disaster struck destination.

According to the regression analysis results, the coefficient of Food in the Destination is 0.404, Coefficient of Destination Environment is +0.338 and is the average change in Post Disaster Recovery Marketing due to one unit change in independent variables. Thus, Food in the Destination is the highest influential factor while Destination Environment is the least influential variable as a post disaster recovery marketing tool for promoting tourism in Sri Lanka. Destination

Environment can be reinstall and restructured with creative ideas and novel culinary product development. The gastronomy plays a direct role as a tourist attraction, being a relevant objective when visiting a tourist destination. In this regard, this research concludes that tourists show different attitudes toward the gastronomy as a variable of tourist development.

Suggestions can be proposed to uplift the Destination Environment and Food in the Destination strongly that advertisements and publicity campaigns that use celebrity endorsements may have the best chance of motivating visitors to return to a destination following a disastrous event. This underlines the findings of Heritage and Risks, (2020) who suggest that celebrity endorsements may be effective and lends weight to Cordova and Medina-viruel's (2017) suggestion that a celebrity-product association can capture attention, increase awareness and cause consumers to purchase the product endorsed. This had not previously been tested in the tourist context, yet appears relevant based on these findings. The advert communicating community readiness proved to be the most effective condition in evoking an emotional response (the pathos dimension), which according to previous research can often lead to a travel decision (Lai, Khoo-lattimore and Wang, 2017). This suggests that as proposed by Sormaz et al., (2016), it is important for messages to demonstrate to potential visitors that they would be welcome and would not be intruding as tourists.

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