

# EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KEY DETERMINANTS AND VISIT INTENTION OF INTERNATIONAL TOURIST IN SRI LANKA WELLNESS TOURISM SECTOR

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## Abstract

Wellness tourism is rising globally; it is gaining popularity in Sri Lanka emerging several opportunities to grow as an industry. This study examined the relationship between key determinants and visit intention of international tourist to Sri Lanka is to be successful in wellness tourist destination. The specific objectives were to investigate into the impact of Perceived Wellness Destination Image, Wellness Service Quality, Destination Satisfaction, Perceived Health Benefits, and Destination Safety and Security on the visit intention of international tourists. For the study, selected Ayurvedic wellness center in Sigiriya. Structured questionnaire distributes among 150 tourists who visited Ayurvedic wellness center and 100 of them responded it. Therefore, this study sample size was 100 by using purposive sampling technique. The reliability test results demonstrate good internal consistency for the measurement scales used in assessing perceptions related to wellness tourism in Sri Lanka. Employing quantitative research methods, including correlation analyses through SPSS software, the research investigates various dimensions crucial to wellness tourism. The findings of the study reveal strong, positive correlations among the key variables, emphasizing their interconnected nature within the wellness tourism. It's considered, perceived wellness destination image, perceived health benefits, and destination satisfaction emerged as significant positive predictors, alongside the contributions of wellness service quality and destination safety and security. The study concludes that participant's favorable perceptions and intentions towards wellness tourism in Sri Lanka, supported by reliable measurement instruments. These insights provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping wellness tourism, offering valuable guidance for researchers and practitioners to enhance the visitor experience and promote wellness tourism in the

region. This study serves as a valuable resource for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to optimize the wellness tourism sector in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Wellness tourism, Tourism impact, Destination satisfaction, Service quality*

## 01.Introduction

The concept of wellness evolved over the time by influenced various culture, traditions philosophical, and medical traditions. Wellness journey start from ancient practices to modern interpretations reflects changing societal values and understandings of health and various treatment methods. According to Global Wellness Institute (GWI) define, “Wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.” International wellness tourist spends their time 53% more than the average international tourist in selected wellness destination. (GWI,2022). Wellness is a status symbol of for Millennials and Generation Z now. There are 06 Dimensions of wellness tourism called as physical, relaxation, Experiential, Psychological, Spiritual, community oriented. Motivated by desire for healthy living, disease prevention, stress reduction, management of poor lifestyle habits or authentic experiences. Wellness tourism activities interrelated with sustainable tourism goals.

Sri Lankan culture and religious background highly influence of wellness tourist related activities in Sri Lanka. The balance of mind, spirit and body is a core principle of Buddhist philosophy. Over the 70% of people in population is following Buddhism. Mindfulness is one of the powerful practice in human life. That is can be experience through the Buddhist philosophy.

Sri Lanka which is a country located and accessibility is another key advantage for wellness tourism development. Sri Lanka is centrally located between the East and the West, providing a blend of culture, food, etc. Sri Lanka is closer to Middle Eastern, European or American East Coast tourists than Thailand or Bali, which are Sri Lanka’s main competitors in wellness tourism. (SL Wellness Tourism Strategic Report, 2018).

Physical, mental and spiritual related activities are the main aspects of Wellness Tourism in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's historical association with the Ayurveda treatment system, Buddhism, and meditation makes the country a coveted destination for many around the world. Traditional Ayurveda healing methods, “Helawedakama” treatment methods more popular in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka focused on treatment for weight loss, stress relief, detoxing to get away from their busy and stressful life styles in their countries and like to experience the powers of meditation and yoga to maintain a perfect mental health and a healthy lifestyle. In wellness tourism, a healthy and nutritious diet is also a key factor. wellness travel includes many combinations of healthy experiences including eating, cooking, exercise and meditation.

UNWTO expects global wellness tourism market is expecting to increase from valuation of US\$ 880 billion in 2023 to US\$ 2.3 trillion by end of 2033. According to the Global Wellness Institute Sri Lanka has been ranked number four as the world top five wellness destination in year of 2021. The institute ranked Sri Lanka as per leading destination for spiritual healing.

According to the annual report of Sri Lanka tourism published by Sri Lanka tourism development authority, in 2023 Sri Lanka welcomed around 1.4 million of international tourist. According to the purposes of visit Sri Lanka, it was indicated 0.54% visit country under the purpose of Ayurveda and wellness treatment. Overall it was limited number comparing by total number of tourist arrival.

In developing a destination, it is primarily required to explore the behavioral patterns of the wellness market segment participants. One of the key behavioral activity is the visit intention. The visit intention is the critical behavioral action that guide to select a destination. Main research question of the study is, examining the relationship between key determinants and visit intention of international tourist in Sri Lanka wellness tourism. Primary objective of the research is, explore the relationship between key determinants and visit intention of international tourist in Sri Lanka wellness tourism.

## 02. Literature Review

Emerging trends in wellness and lifestyle services are set to significantly influence the market landscape. The following developments and consumer preferences are expected to shape the offerings in wellness products and services:

**Leading Offerings:** Wellness destinations and hotel spas will remain the foremost products in the wellness industry, especially in regions like Southern Europe, Central and South America, and Africa. These venues will focus on providing luxurious and holistic experiences aimed at relaxation and rejuvenation.

**Recreational Programs:** Following hotel spas, leisure and recreational services will be the second most favored category. This includes a variety of activities and facilities designed to promote physical fitness and social interaction.

**Growth of Wellness Services:** Wellness and lifestyle-based services are projected to experience dynamic growth, positioning themselves as the third most popular offering. These services will encompass a wide range of options, from fitness classes to wellness coaching, appealing to a diverse range of consumers.

**Regional Preferences:** Southern Europe and Africa - In these areas, wellness hotels and spas will be especially prominent, attracting tourists seeking health-focused retreats and relaxation. Northern Europe and North America-Consumers in these markets will show a greater demand for wellness and lifestyle-based services, reflecting a cultural shift towards a more integrated approach to health and well-being.

**Consumer Demographics:**

**Singles:** This group is expected to prefer wellness and lifestyle services, as well as leisure and recreational facilities, gravitating towards experiences that foster personal growth and relaxation.

**Families:** Families will continue to show interest in leisure and recreational services, with wellness hotels and spas also appealing to them for their family-friendly wellness options.

**Generation Y (Young Adults):** Younger consumers are increasingly seeking adventure and eco-friendly facilities. They are more likely to pursue unique experiences that combine wellness with adventure.

**Men:** There will be a growing interest in wellness and lifestyle services, along with adventure facilities, among male consumers, indicating a broader acceptance of wellness practices across genders.

Table 1: Key finding Related about Wellness Tourism and International Tourist Visit Intention from Previous Research.

Previous Research Areas	Authors	Key Findings
Marketing strategies affecting Chinese tourists' decision making and loyalty toward medical and wellness tourism in Thailand.	Pathomsirikul, Y. (2019).	Western tourists are interested in Eastern philosophies and the therapies offered in various Asian countries. Research on marketing strategies affects the decision making of tourists and Loyalty of Tourists, this research indicates that marketing strategies; promotions, product elements, concerning the quality and availability to a customer influenced the decision to use tourist services and behavioural intention
Wellness Tourism in China: Resources, Development and Marketing.	Vincent C. S. Heung and Deniz Kucukusta, (2012)	Western tourists are seeking a return to nature and natural elements, and Asian spas are able to offer authentic treatments and remedies. Location is an important factor in developing a wellness product. Low cost of health and wellness treatments in Asian countries is the main motivation for wellness tourists to travel to Asia, especially people who are seeking medical treatment.
Determinants of Medical Tourists' Revisit and Recommend Intention.	Fard,M.H. Sanayei, A., & Ansari, A., (2019).,	Rapidly growing wellness sector focuses on strengthening resources to be able to cope with daily demands and protecting against illness and maintenance of health and caters to healthy people of all age groups.

The implications of the electronic word-of-mouth communication in choosing a wellness offer.	Milan Kocic and Katarina Radakovicin 2019	Tourists' loyalty towards a destination is reciprocated by his or her intention to revisit the destination apart from his or her willingness to recommend it to others.  Past travel experience appears to be a powerful influence on behavioural intentions and individuals with past travel experiences to various destinations may become more confident as a result of their experience.
International Tourists Revisit Intention: A Case of the United Arab Emirates.	Talib, S.A., Suhaimi, M.Z., (2016).	The high levels of travellers' behavioural intention represent their preference for health and wellness tourism attractions as destinations, higher satisfaction with the tourism products or services, and willingness to recommend the tour to friends and family.
Health and Wellness Tourists' Motivation and Behavior Intention: The Role of Perceived Value.	ZhengT.G.J., , Li W., Jiaxin L. Shen,L.J., (2016)	Findings showed that the acceptable sacrifice is also one of the key reasons for travelers to consider choosing health and wellness tourism. Health and wellness tourism enterprises can pay special attention to the cost expenditure of tourists, and moderate concessions of benefits to them, so that they really feel value for money in tourism.
Towards a better understanding of memorable wellness tourism experience.	Sthapit,E., Björk,P & Coudounaris,D.N., (2022 )	Tourists who perceive high value in a destination are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction, which can lead to intentions to revisit or recommend the destination to others.

Visiting Intention: A Perspective of Destination Attractiveness and Image in Indonesia Rural Tourism	Yacob,S., Johannes and Qomariyah, N., (2019)	Consumer perceived value can be one of the important predictors of the pre-decision and post-decision processes in purchasing intention.
The determinants of intention to visit wellness tourism destination of young tourists.	Anannukul,N. Yoopetch,C. 2022	Travel intention is a combination of tourists' personal preferences, expectations, motivations, and satisfaction, as well as destination marketing and other factors.
How Tourist perception affects Travel Intention: Mechanisms Pathways and Boundary Condition.	Jiang,X., Jianxiong, Q., Gao and Gossage,M.G., 2022	Past travel experience refers to individuals' prior instances of personal participation in tourism activities. Such experience can increase willingness to revisit.

Source: Adapted from Literature Review of the Study.

Table 2: Models Related to the Study

Selected Models	Reasons Related to the Study
Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour Model (K-A-B Model)	According to this theory, attitude is the best predictor of behaviour, knowledge is the basis of changes in attitude, and the degree of knowledge affects the consistency of attitude and behaviour (Xiufang Jiang, Jianxiong Qin, Jianguo Gao and Mollie G. Gossage 2022).
Leisure Motivation Scale Model	This is explaining four motivation factors that determine the guest satisfaction. ( Intellectual, Social, Competency Mastery and Avoidance ) (Ryan & Glendon 1998)
Vacation Tourist Behavioral Model.	This model explains general motivation and specific motivation who are individually select vacation.

Table 03: Theories Related to the Study

Selected Theories	Reasons Related to the Study
Theory of Plan Behavior	This theory explained behavioural attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are the three key factors that affect behavioural intentions.

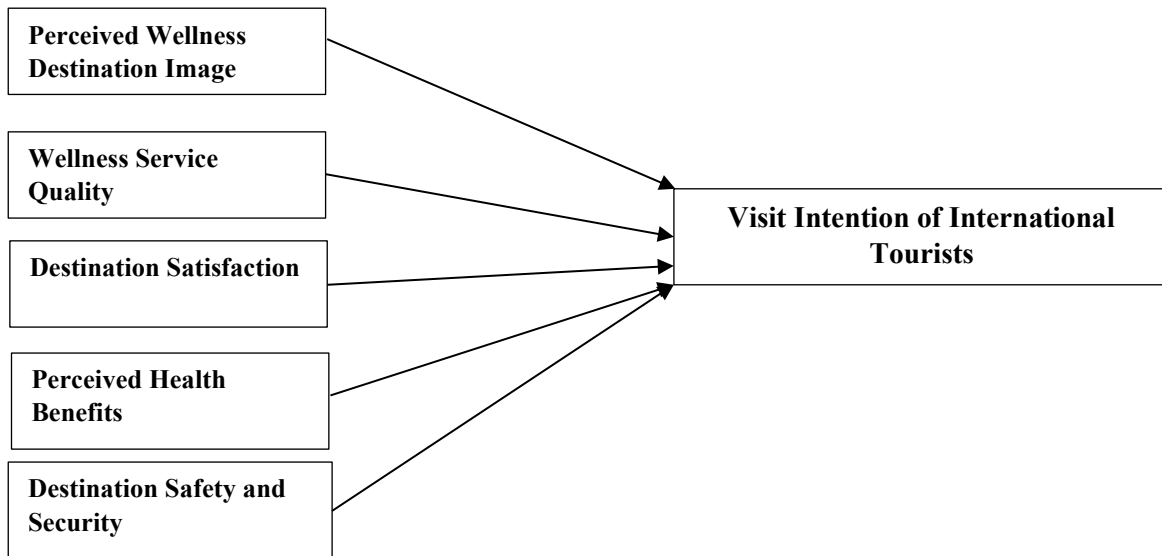
Social Identity Theory	This theory focus about social identity is an individual's awareness of belonging to a specific social group. (Tajfel, 1982)
Theory of Perceived Risk	According to theory of perceived risk, it is one's expectation that he or she may suffer losses & this subjective take is important because if a tourist does not perceive risk, it may not affect his or her travel decisions. (Khan et al., 2019).
Theory of Consumer Behaviour	Consumer behaviour is the process of selecting, purchasing and using a product or service in order to satisfy one's needs and desires. (Moutinho ,1993)
Push & Pull Theory	theory to explain the reason why the tourists decide to visit the destination rather than other destination.
Maslow's Hierarchy Theory	This is widely mention theories of motivation.

### 03. Methodology

The study research philosophy is positivism. It is assuming an objective reality in wellness tourism and aims to identify measurable patterns and relationships among variables. Deductive reasoning starts with a general theory and derives specific hypotheses for testing. A structured questionnaire will be designed and administered to a sample of international tourists to collect quantitative data on their perceptions of wellness destination image, wellness service quality, destination satisfaction, perceived health benefits, destination safety, and security. Structured questionnaire distributes among 150 tourists who visited Ayurvie wellness center and 100 of them responded it. Therefore, this study sample size was 100 by using purposive sampling technique. Statistical methods will be employed to analyze the collected data, allowing for the identification of patterns and relationships among the variables, ultimately addressing the research questions and hypotheses. The target population of the study was tourist who visited Ayurvi Wellness tourism center in Sigiriya. Ayurvie Sigiriya, nature is fundamental to the retreat's journey of healing and wellness.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Literature Studies.

### Hypothesis

H1: There is relationship between Perceived Wellness Destination Image on Visit Intention of International Tourists

H2: There is relationship between Wellness Service Quality on Visit Intention of International Tourists

H3: There is relationship between Destination Satisfaction on Visit Intention of International Tourists

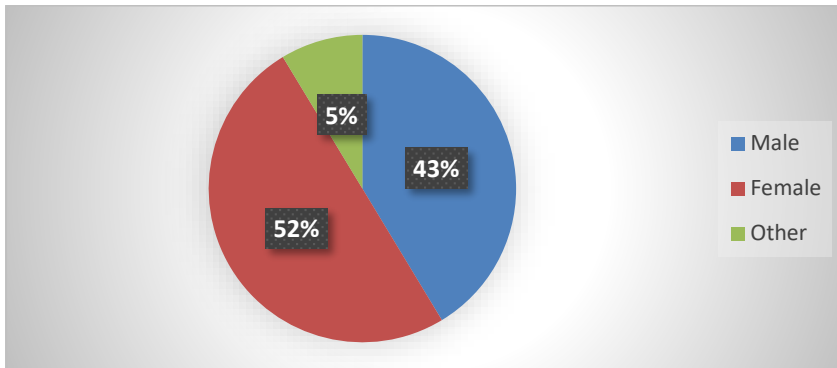
H4: There is relationship between Perceived Health Benefits on Visit Intention of International Tourists

H5: There is relationship between Destination Safety and Security on Visit Intention of International Tourists

## 04.Findings

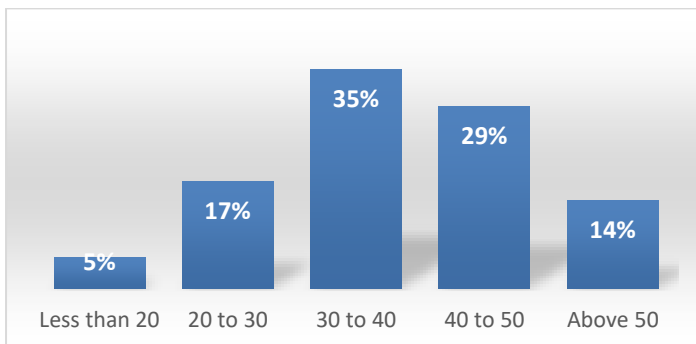
Demographical Factor Analysis provided data presents the gender distribution of wellness tourists, indicating the percentage of tourists falling into different gender categories.

Figure 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents



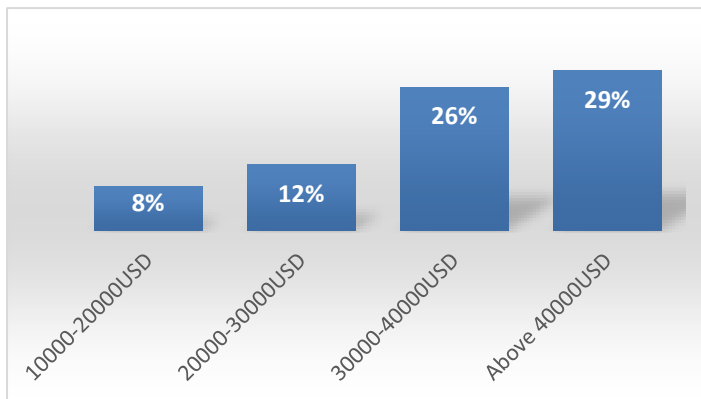
The dataset exhibits a gender distribution where females are the majority in Ayurveda wellness center, Sigiriya.

Figure 3: Age Distribution of the Respondents



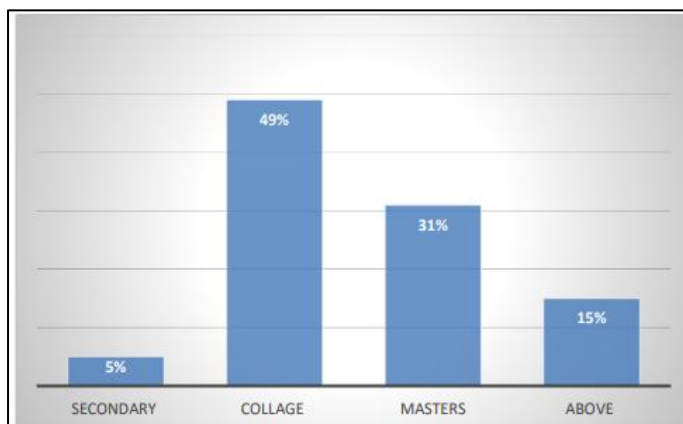
The data highlights a concentration of wellness tourists within the age range of 30 to 40, comprising the majority at 35%, in Ayurveda wellness center, Sigiriya.

Figure 4: Income Level of the Respondents



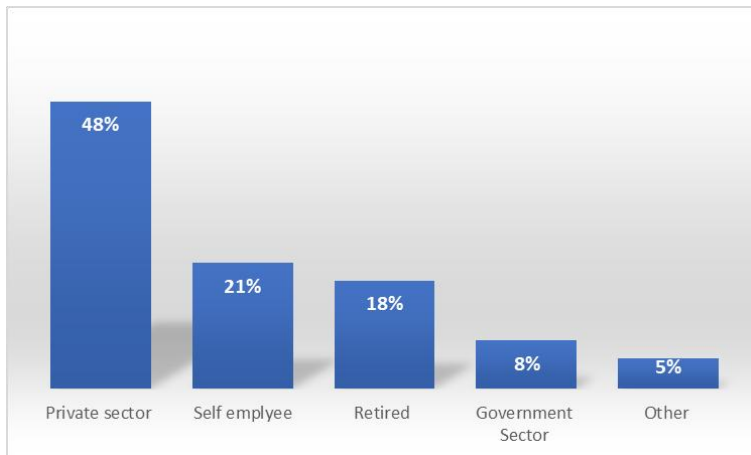
29% respondents earn above \$40,000, wellness tourist visit in Ayurvi wellness center. This group likely has a high disposable income, indicating a strong potential for engagement in premium wellness services.

Figure 5: Education Level of the Respondents



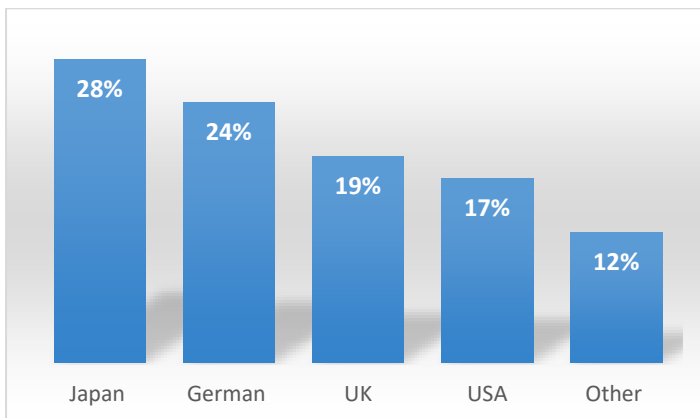
49% of participants holding at least a college degree, wellness tourist visit in Ayurvi wellness center.

Figure 6: Occupation of the Respondents



Based on a distribution of respondents categorized as private sector employees (48%), self-employed individuals (21%), retirees (18%), government sector employees (8%), and others (5%), the study explores the diversity in motivations, expectations, and barriers among these groups.

Figure 7: Geographical Location of the Respondents



The data indicates that 28% of respondents are from Japan, followed by 24% from Germany, 19% from the UK, and 17% from the USA.

## Correlations Test Results

Table 4: Relationship between Perceived Wellness Destination Image and Visit Intention of International Tourist.

		PWDI	WSQ	DS	PHB	DSS	VIIT
PWDI	Pearson Correlation	1	0.753**	0.877**	0.871**	0.889**	0.923**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100

Perceived Wellness Destination Image (PWDI) exhibits strong positive correlations with all other independent variables: Wellness Service Quality (WSQ), Destination Satisfaction (DS), Perceived Health Benefits (PHB), Destination Safety and Security (DSS), and Visit Intention of International Tourists (VIIT).

Table 5: Relationship between Wellness Service Quality and Visit Intention of International Tourist.

		PWDI	WSQ	DS	PHB	DSS	VIIT
WSQ	Pearson Correlation	0.753**	1	0.768**	0.782**	0.747*	0.791**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100

Wellness Service Quality (WSQ) demonstrates significant positive correlations with PWDI, DS, PHB, DSS, and VIIT.

Table 6: Relationship between Destination Satisfaction and Visit Intention of International Tourist.

		PWDI	WSQ	DS	PHB	DSS	VIIT
DS	Pearson Correlation	0.877**	0.768**	1	0.871**	0.885**	0.893**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100

Destination Satisfaction (DS) exhibits strong positive correlations with PWDI, WSQ, PHB, DSS, and VIIT. These findings suggest that tourists' satisfaction with the wellness destination is closely tied to perceptions of destination image, service quality, health benefits, safety, security, and overall visit intention.

Table 7: Relationship between Perceived Health Benefits and Visit Intention of International Tourist.

		PWDI	WSQ	DS	PHB	DSS	VIIT
PHB	Pearson Correlation	0.871**	0.782**	0.871**	1	0.919**	0.907**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100

Perceived Health Benefits (PHB) is positively correlated with PWDI, WSQ, DS, DSS, and VIIT. The strong correlations emphasize the importance of perceived health benefits in shaping tourists' perceptions of wellness destinations and influencing their intention to visit.

Table 8: Relationship between Destination Safety and Security and Visit Intention of International Tourist.

		PWDI	WSQ	DS	PHB	DSS	VIIT
DSS	Pearson Correlation	0.889**	0.747**	0.885**	0.919**	1	0.909**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100

Destination Safety and Security (DSS) shows significant positive correlations with PWDI, WSQ, DS, PHB, and VIIT. This indicates that tourists perceive safety and security as essential components influencing their satisfaction and visit intention in wellness tourism.

Table 9: Finalized Correlation Test Results of dependent variable and independent variable.

		PWDI	WSQ	DS	PHB	DSS	VIIT
VII T	Pearson Correlation	0.923**	0.791**	0.893**	0.907*	0.909**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							

The Visit Intention of International Tourists (VIIT) exhibits very high positive correlations with PWDI, WSQ, DS, PHB, and DSS. These results underscore the interdependence of these factors in shaping tourists' intention to visit wellness destinations.

Findings revealed a significant positive impact, suggesting destinations with a strong image, cultural uniqueness for promoting wellness tourism. Excellent customer service and quality allows destinations to attract and retain valuable wellness tourists. Destination satisfaction through enjoyable experiences enhance the desire to revisit & destinations can ensure satisfied tourists translate as per repeat visitors. Perceived

health benefits was found to be a powerful driver of visit intention by showcasing health-promoting aspects and effectively communicating their benefits. Safe & security allows tourists to enhancing overall wellness experience.

## **05.Conclusions & Recommendations**

Invest in marketing and promotional activities to enhance the perceived wellness destination image, emphasizing the unique wellness offerings and experiences in Sri Lanka. Improve the service quality, it is also recommended in facilitating training programs and certifications for wellness service providers, ensuring a consistent and high standard of service delivery. Development and implementation of destination management strategies that prioritize overall visitor satisfaction by engagement with tourists through continuous feedback mechanisms, and use insights to make improvements in infrastructure & services. Tourist satisfaction is one of the strong determinant that predict revisit intention of wellness tourist.

Recommended follow-up programs or online consultations for returning guests can encourage them to continue their wellness journey even after leaving Sri Lanka. Support initiatives that promote health and wellness benefits associated with visiting Sri Lanka, including partnerships with health and wellness organizations should be on the focus of tourism policy makers. Invest in measures to enhance safety and security in wellness tourism areas, including increased surveillance, well-lit spaces, and visible security personnel are recommended. Encouraging local businesses to adopt eco-friendly initiatives, support community-based tourism, could contribute to the long-term sustainability of wellness tourism in Sri Lanka. Recommended to highlight unique about traditional “Helawedakama” treatment for wellness promotion activities in Sri Lanka.

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