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## **Behavioral Characteristics of Backpackers to Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

Backpacker tourism has been rapidly expanding and diversifying as a tourism submarket globally. Sri Lanka is also a popular destination among foreign backpackers. However, there are few research conducted in Sri Lanka that look at the behavioral aspects of the backpackers. The current study focuses on the behavioral characteristics of backpackers visiting Sri Lanka. With a qualitative research approach, face-to-face in-depth interviews with backpackers were conducted at Sigiriya and Minneriya national parks to collect data. Data generated from eleven interviews was analyzed applying a thematic analysis technique manually. The findings generated the themes such as cultural and historical uniqueness, glamorous nature and climate, dream realization, and physical and mental relaxation as the motives to visit Sri Lanka as a backpacker destination. In addition to that, themes such as to be educated, explore new things, enjoy food and drinks, and unique transportation and accommodation facilities in Sri Lanka were emerged as the things admired by the foreign backpackers to Sri Lanka. These findings have strong implications in both theoretical and managerial perspectives. On one hand, the travel motives and the activities of backpackers to Sri Lanka adds existing body of knowledge of backpacker travel motivation and activities. On the other hand, the tourism practitioners and professions interested in the field of backpacker tourism can also use the findings in their strategy formulation and implementation process in tourism business. The research also suggests to promote new destinations favorable to backpackers, promote Tuk Tuk service, and to develop the facilities for adventure activities to uplift the backpacker tourism in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Backpackers, Historical uniqueness, Sigiriya, Tourism, Travel motives*

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