

## **Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Camping Organizers in Sri Lanka**

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Camping is a form of popular entertainment activity and an inexpensive form of alternative accommodation closely associated with nature. Although this sector is far neglected by academic researchers, the segment has been extensively popular and holds a strong interest from travellers around the globe during the last decade. However, subject to the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic over the world, the camping organizers had to completely suspend the operations and struggled to re-start ensuring the health and safety of visitors. Hence, the purpose of this research is to identify the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic situation on camping organizers in Sri Lanka and the strategic initiatives taken in order to re-start the operations in new-normal conditions. The qualitative research approach has been occupied in order to achieve the objectives of the study. Sample units were selected using snowballing sampling techniques and structured interviews were conducted for 12 camping organizers in Sri Lanka until reaching the saturation point. Data collection was carried out from October to December 2020. The data analysis was done using content analysis and transcribed data were coded and interpreted manually. Results of the study revealed the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic situation on camping organizers in Sri Lanka under a few specific areas. Sri Lanka's camping organizers face an uncertain future and the hardest hit by economic fallout due to the global COVID 19 outbreak while occurring unprecedented challenges. Moreover, the results reflected that camping organizers perceive a negative attitude towards COVID 19, and the impacts, challenges, and strategies are concluded at the level of their perception. As short term strategies and long term opportunities, the concept of Virtual Reality (VR) camping could be adhered to under the new corona conditions. However, an integrated approach, such as awareness programs that progress to improve risk reduction measures, financial arrangements, and the issuance of a specific license from the government with more cohesion and assistance, would be supportive and adequate for camping operators to fast retrieve in future pandemics.

**Keywords:** COVID 19; Camping; Camping Organizers; Impacts; challenges; Sri Lanka