

Tourist Perception on Harassments in Sri Lanka (With Special Reference to Mount Lavinia)

Rathnayake RDVT and Wijesundara WGSR

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka

Abstract- Ensuring safety of tourists in the tourist destinations is not only an issue but also an important factor to retaining the higher number of tourist arrivals to the country since, it's significance to the Sri Lankan economy. Because, cases of tourists being robbed, murdered or sexually harassed are reported often in several destinations in Sri Lanka. Amidst to this background, this study aims to identify the tourist dependability on policies and regulations to ensure their safety and identify the tourist understanding on society and measure the perception on harassments in relation with society. As a popular coastal area, Mount Lavinia was selected for this study. The population for the study being tourists who visited Mount Lavinia, a sample of 80 tourists were selected using the convenience sampling technique. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study and quantitative method was employed to analyze the data. Results revealed that tourists have good understanding on society and they have agreed that Sri Lanka has harassment free environment to travel. Finding of this study will be useful to the tourism policy makers, tour operators, tourists etc.

Index Terms- Tourist perception, Harassments, destination image

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is often referred to as the world's largest industry and regarded as a means of achieving development in destination areas (Sharpley, 2002) offering benefits to the local community. Though tourism plays an important role in Sri Lankan economy being a fifth largest foreign exchange earner in Sri Lanka 2010, it became more complicated because of lack of infrastructure, low room capacity, lack of quality in accommodation and destinations. Moreover, due to many cases took place in the country, ensuring the safety of tourists during their visit has become a major concern among the problems occurred.

There is limited research on tourism and crime. Because, tourist harassments are not considered as crime in most countries and many governments do not carry out a legal standards or policies to minimize the crimes. Further, harassments are difficult to describe objectively (Jerome et al, 2007) and the complaint handling is difficult than other cases as staying short period of time in the destinations, unable to understand on deeds, taking them as humble concerns and lack of evidence on crimes. But, Arrival of tourists to a destination depends mainly on available safety measurements and tourist's perception on harassment free environment is a key factor to retain the visitors for a destination. Currently, harassing of tourist has become a common problem in the Sri Lankan context due to the

interrelation in tourism and harassments. According to the many research done recently, it has noted that more than 30% of tourists who visited to Sri Lanka were harassed by various causes. (Daily News-2001/11/02). The most popular places for harassments in Sri Lanka are Tangalle, Negambo, Galle, Mount Lavinia, Dikwella, Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna. Therefore, this study aims to identify tourists' dependability on policies and regulations to ensure their safety and to identify the tourist understanding on society and perception on harassments. This will be significant for uplifting the tourism industry to better level of standard.

II. THERORITICAL BACKGROUND

The Sri Lankan tourism industry is one of the fast emerging industries of the economy with average annual revenue of US \$ 400 million at present. It has created nearly 125,000 employment for persons and the government has targeted 2.5 million tourists by 2016 (Sri Lanka Tourism Strategy - 2010". Ensuring safety of tourists is very important to achieve the target since the interrelation between them. Ryan (1993) suggested that there are five possible types of relationship between tourism and crime; (1) the victim being a tourist is incidental; (2) the offender chooses a tourist site but not necessarily a tourist as the victim; 3) the offender chooses tourists because they are easy victims; (4) crime arises in tourist areas to fulfill a demand of the tourist (e.g. prostitution and drug markets); and (5) some crimes are organized specific attacks on tourists to make a political statement (e.g. terrorism). Crimes and violent acts occur at tourist destinations every minute of every day (Pizam, 1999). According to Jacqui Allen in 1999, in Crime against International Tourists mention that "The risk of serious crimes happening to any individual tourist is very low, but the intense media coverage of these sorts of events can have a major impact on the number of tourists visiting the affected locations". Hot spots are what Ryan and Kinder (1996) describe as "crimogenic" places where there are lots of bars, night clubs and strip joints catering to tourists and providing ancillary services such as prostitution and drugs. Tourists frequenting these areas, whether looking for such activities or not, are much more likely to be victimized. Bernasco and Luykx (2003), illustrate that attractiveness; opportunity and accessibility are key factors influencing crimes against property. Brougham and Butler (1981) found significant differences in residents' attitudes related to local and personal characteristics, with tourist contact, length of residence, age and language. Base on the literature following conceptual frame work was built.

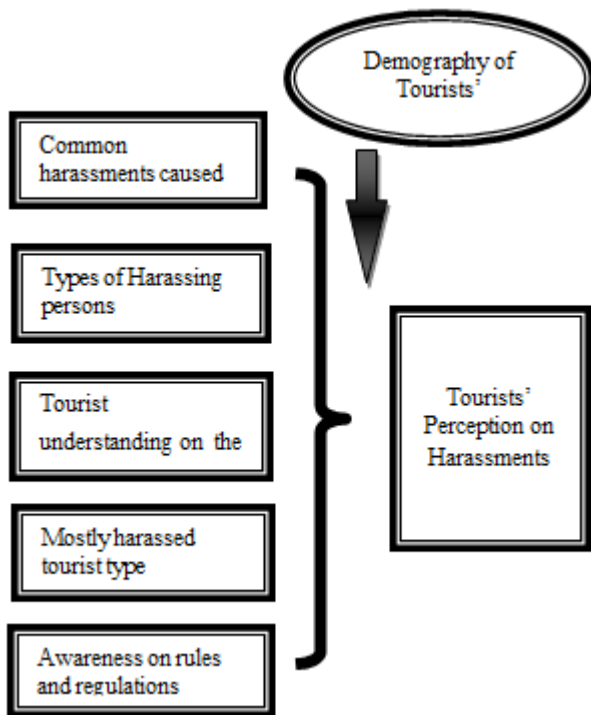


Figure 01: Conceptual Framework

Research objectives of the study, Primary objective is to identify the tourists' dependability on policies and regulations to ensure their safety. Secondary objectives are,

- Identify the tourist understanding on society and perception on harassments in relation with society
- Identify mostly harassing persons
- Identify the most frequent harassments undergone by the tourists
- Identify the commonly harassed tourist type.
- Identify how the demographic factors contribute to the tourists perception of harassments

III. METHODOLOGY

The research area for the study was Mount- Lavinia beach where majority of tourists visit every year. The population for the study being all the tourists who visited Mount Lavinia, a sample of 80 respondents were selected using convenience sampling, due to the lack of arrival records on destination. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Self-prepared questionnaire consisting with three parts was used to gather data from respondents. Sources for the secondary data were magazines, tourist police, reports from Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority etc., Primary data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, regression and Pearson Co- relation Coefficient with SPSS software. Cronbach's alpha Reliability Test was used to measure internal consistency and the alpha coefficient for the 10 items is .825, suggesting that the items have excellent internal consistency.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis A

H0: Tourists understanding on rules and regulations does not affect harassments

H1: Tourists understanding on rules and regulations affects harassments

Hypothesis B

H0: Tourist understanding on the social life does not affect Tourists' Perception on harassments

H1: Tourist understanding on the social life affects Tourists' Perception on harassments

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the tourists

Sample of 80 tourists consisted 46 percent males and 54 percent females. Majority of the tourists (47 percent) were in the age category of 21-30. When considered the marital status, 57 percent of tourists were represented by single category while the married category was included 39 percent. The rest of the sample represented the category of other, such as, people who were divorced, widow and travelling with partner. Further, 59 percent of tourists in the sample were first time visitors to Sri Lanka while the rest of the sample represents re-visitors. Majority 74 percent was graduates. Moreover, 51 percent of tourists were from Europe while 31 percent of tourist arrivals were recorded from Asia and Pacific region.

Descriptive analysis

The researcher has used descriptive analysis to give a general idea about existing level of each determinants of harassments affect tourist perception.

1. Awareness on Rules and Regulations

Recorded mean values through descriptive analysis were fallen under moderate and highly moderate categories. Awareness on rules AW (3.75) which was between the range of $2 < X < 4$, tends to indicate that tourists have agreed that they are on aware of rules and regulations. Education on rules and regulation ER (3.58) which was between the range of $2 < X < 4$, indicates that tourists have agreed that they are educated on rules and regulation. Taking help from regulatory authorities (4.04) which was between the range of $4 < X < 5$, it proves that tourists will take help from regulatory bodies in an emergency. Finally, Sri Lanka environment SLE (3.54) which was between the range of $2 < X < 4$, proved that Sri Lanka has a harassment free environment. Moreover, the overall mean value of Awareness on Rules and Regulation (4.054) falls under the ranges of $4 < X < 5$ and it tends to indicate that the almost all the tourists have agreed that they have a higher level of awareness on rules and regulation.

2. Awareness on Society and society's perception on harassments

Considering the mean values of descriptive analysis, Awareness on society of tourists ($X=4.20$) tends to show that tourists have a good understanding on society. Awareness of culture ($X=3.91$) represents that moderate number of tourists have awareness on culture of Sri Lanka. Awareness on Life style ($X=3.76$) indicates that Moderate numbers of tourist have awareness on life style of Sri Lanka. The tourists' awareness on

attitudes of the residents ($X= 3.86$) represents that tourists have an awareness on attitudes of residents. The engaging with people in case of any emergency ($X=4.04$) says that all most all the tourists are ready to engage with residents in case of any emergency. The Total average mean value of the Tourists perception on society is 3.955 interprets that tourists are highly aware on society and society's perception on harassments due to the considered variables. 0.6340 (which is less than 1) of the overall standard deviation of awareness on society concept suggests that there is no higher disperse from mean value mentioned above the awareness on society of Sri Lanka. Therefore it can be concluded that there were no higher disperse from mean value with respect to awareness on society of Sri Lanka elements. The average of country affects harassment ($X=2.96$) says that country affects to harassments.

Regression and Co- relation analysis

According to the regression analysis, a positive linear relationship shows between the Awareness on Rules and Regulation (AR) and Tourists' Perception on Harassments (TP). Co-relation analysis gives a high positive relationship since the Pearson co-relation range falls within $+0.5 < r < +1$. Pearson co-relation results show 0.807. Considering the overall results it can be demonstrated that there is high significance and positive association between awareness on rules and regulations and tourists' perception on harassments. The researcher rejects the H_0 (null hypothesis) and accepts the H_1 (alternative hypothesis). $TP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CAR + E$ was the first model to measure the coefficient of Awareness on Rules and Regulation (AR) versus Tourist's Perception on Harassments TP.

Table 01: Coefficient of AR Vs TP

Predictor	B	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Constant	.173	.326	.533	
Rules	1.042	.086	12.090	

The value 1.042 suggested that when CAR were increased by one unit the TP growth is expected to be increased by 1.042 .By using the information in table no 01, simple linear regression equation can be articulated as $TP = .173+ 1.042 CAR + E$.

Regression has been done between the variables of CAR and TP to evaluate the overall level of influence according to the following hypothesis.

H_0 : Tourists understanding on rules and regulations do not affect perception on harassments

H_1 : Tourists understanding on rules and regulations affects perception on harassments

The value of 1.042 represents the average changes in perception on harassments due to one change in total awareness of rules. The coefficient of awareness on rules and regulation is having P value of 0.000. Thus the P value is less than the 0.01 ($\alpha > P$) high level of significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it implies that the independent variable is significant and appropriate to explain the dependent variable of the

regression model. In order to ensure the fitness of above mentioned overall model summary of simple linear regression has been illustrated below in table no 02.

Table 02: Model summary of AR versus TP

Figure	Value
R-Square	0.652
Adjusted R Square	0.648
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.48516

In the case of R-square of 0.652, it implies that the model is appropriate to show the relationship between AR and TP, its mean that 65% of variance of the tourist perception on harassments is explained by awareness on rules of the regression model. Further R-square of 0.65 implies the independent variable is unable to explain 35% of the variance of the tourist perception on harassments. It gives the sense that model was fitted with data because explained variation has been highly significant than unexpected variation. Adjusted R-square has been represented modification of R square that adjusted for the number of explanatory term in a model. According to the above table, adjusted R-square value has been 0.648. When consider about the standard error of the estimate, it represented that standard error of sampling distribution. The value 0.48 of standard error suggested that model has been fitted well.

Table 03: Correlation between awareness on Social Life (SL) and Tourist Perception on harassments (TP)

Variable	Pearson co-relation	P value
SL and TP	0.791	0.000

According to the co-relation results there is a high positive relationship, because the Pearson co-relation range falls within $+0.5 < r < +1$. The Pearson co-relation results of SL and TP is 0.807.

The hypothesis for secondary objective is,

H_0 : Tourist understanding on the social life do not affect Tourists' Perception on harassments

H_1 : Tourist understanding on the social life affects Tourists' Perception on harassments

When examining the overall results it is identifiable that there is a high significance and positive association between Awareness in social life and tourists' perception on harassments. Therefore the researcher rejects the H_0 (null hypothesis) and accepts the H_1 (alternative hypothesis). There is a high positive relationship between awareness in social life and tourists' perception on harassments. At the end it is highlighted that there is a high positive relationship between SL and TP. Therefore the Tourist understanding on the social life affects Tourists' Perception on harassments. Further, it is identified that beggars are the most frequently harassing person to tourists which recorded the mean value of 2.53 according to the Friedman test.

On the other hand, frequently caused harassment was begging which recorded the mean value of 2.18. Moreover, it is essential to explain that most frequently harassed tourist type was single women which recorded the mean value of 1.30.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Mount Lavinia beach is main sea bathing spot in Sri Lanka. It is filled with not only the beach boys from the areas nearby but also tour guides from other countries. It is hard to find professional tour guides. Foreigners from Africa and other countries are working illegally as guides staying in small houses in Sri Lanka. Hence, different conflicts are made between those two parties to work for visitors. Some tourists depend on the support of beach boys rather than professional tour guides for obtaining illegal things, like drugs, sex workers, prostitutes etc. Most of the beach boys are using drugs having the full support of even police officers who are in charge of Mount Lavinia beach area. Not only that some of the beach boys are acting as sex workers and ready to entertain any kind of tourist who will pay the highest price. Moreover, it is not a curiosity to identify beach boys as one of the main harassing people to the tourists looking at their service type. Observing the results of the study, it is emphasized that majority of the tourists who visit Mount-Lavinia were male and it shows that most of the tourists who visit Mount –Lavinia are in young age. Considering the marital status, it is clear that majority of them are single and first time visitors to Sri Lanka. Because of that, numerous harassments can be happened to them with the knowing or not. Further, it can be identified that most of the tourists who visit Sri Lanka are educated travelers since 74 percent of the sample is graduates. Even though they are graduates, it is essential to have proper understanding on the social life in Sri Lanka. Because, different patterns of social life can be seen all around the world, such as, food cultures, hospitality, tour guiding, assistance to tourists, communication, type of people etc. Moreover, understanding on rules and regulation of a country is another important factor for tourist harassments. If a particular country having suitable rules and regulation for tourism, it is required to be practiced in a well manner. Depending on the level that rules and regulations are practiced, the tourist's perception on harassments can be changed. Finally, in terms of perception of harassments, it is identifiable that awareness on rules and regulations and awareness on social life affects the tourists' perception of

harassments. Therefore, perception of harassments is a vital factor to decide whether to visit that destination or not.

In the Sri Lankan context, new policies and regulations has to be made to ensure the visitors travelling to Sri Lanka since they highly agree on that rules and regulations are important for their perception of harassments. There must be a procedure to avoid tourists been harassed in a destination area from beggars, sellers, hotel owners, guides and etc. Moreover, the tourists should be given more education regarding safety precautions to follow in Sri Lanka. The guides, tour operators must be well educated to avoid the harassments happened in tourists while they are in a destination. Further, it can be concluded that the well-established and functioned system for tourism will help to achieve the set goals by the government in 2016. It will be very useful if research can be conducted in island wide for the Sri Lankan tourism industry.

REFERENCES

- [1] Daily news Paper, 2001/11/02, Sri Lanka
- [2] Jacqui Allen 1999, "Crime against International Tourists", Crime and Justice Bulletin. Contemporary issues in Crime and Justice, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistic and research, Number 43
- [3] Jerome L. et.al, 2007, "Tourist harassment: review of the literature and destination responses" International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research Vol.1No.4, 2007 pp.305-314
- [4] Pizam. 1999, "Perceived impacts of tourism: The case of samos" Annals of Tourism Research, Volume 23, Issue 03, pp 503-526
- [5] Ryan, 1993 "Crimes and harassment in Jamaica: Consequences for sustainability of the tourism industry". International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Volume 18, Issue 03, pp 174
- [6] Sharply, 2002. "Bullying, Victimization, and Sexual Harassment during the Transition to Middle School", Tylor Francis, , Volume 37, Issue 03, pp 151-163
- [7] Sri Lanka Tourism Development Strategy 2010

AUTHORS

First Author: RDVT Rathnayake, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka

Second Author: WGSR Wijesundara, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, shamila.wijesundara@yahoo.com