Chapter 19

Perceived Tourist Harassment in Tourist Destinations: A Study of Southern Coastal Belt of Sri Lanka

Shamila Rasanjani Wijesundara
Uva Wellassa University, Sri Lanka

Athula Gnanapala
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

Tourism is a fast-growing industry in the world. Many developing countries have recognized the economic contribution of the tourism industry towards to country; therefore, it has been included as an integral part of their development strategies. Sri Lanka continues to use tourism as one of the incomes earning strategy of its nation. At present, a huge tourism development is continued while accepting severe issues occurs itself like tourist harassment. The nature of the harassment is different from destination to destination, and this study mainly aims to identify the harassment in Sri Lanka. The study carried out in Southern Coastal Belt, considering foreign tourists as the sample to the study. A pretested questionnaire was distributed among 600 foreigners to collect primary data for the study, and 530 questionnaires were valid for the analysis. The collected data was analyzed through exploratory factor analysis, which revealed six major types of harassment in Sri Lanka as a result of tourist consumption process throughout the vacation.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4787-8.ch019
INTRODUCTION

Tourism was an activity in which relatively few participated regularly, and was primarily confined to Europe, North America and a small number of locations in other parts of the world. Because, travel was difficult, uncomfortable, expensive and frequently dangerous (Stephan, 1998) as perceived by the travelers. With the time passes, people used to travel despite of perceived complications as diversified motives appeared in the travel destinations. These motives are varied in world-wide travel destinations according to the potential resources they have to attract travelers. Availability of resources for tourism in a destination may decides the capacity of its economy to generate income via tourism. Sri Lanka is one of the best destination to travel in the world because of its unique collection of features like, landscape, misty hills, rare and unique wild life, rich culture and tradition, tropical weather, sandy beaches, manmade attractions, warm hospitality and friendly people etc. Hence, Sri Lanka Tourism has been playing an important role in its economy being remained as the third foreign exchange earner in 2017. However, tourism is not a source to generate only the benefits to any economy. Jayawardena (2013) explained six key challenges faced by Sri Lanka tourism; infrastructure development, attracting investors, finding adequate numbers of trained staff, conservation of fauna and flora, clear destination positioning and harassment of tourists. Among them, the present study focuses to identify the types of tourist harassment occurring in tourist destination in Sri Lanka while finding major reasons to overcome the tourist harassment.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Harassment is a legal term and has different meanings in different jurisdictions (Otoo et al., 2019). As they explained in same study, tourist harassment is pervasive and may occur at any time or place within the tourism experience. Paying of deep attention will be needed on tourism experience gained by the tourists, because, as Kozak (2007) discussed “hospitality” and harassment” are words identifying two different aspects of a national culture and of a tourist’s experience. Purely, negative tourist experience. Meanwhile, positive experience make the tourists satisfied. Now, it is clear that one of the negative consequences arising from tourist-host interactions is the conflict of tourist harassments (Chepkwony & Kangogo, 2013). Meanwhile, Chepkwony and Kangogo (2013) and Barnett (2001) considered that tourists expect to be accorded with warm welcome any time they interact with the host community in the course of their holiday. These expectations of tourists and the warm welcome in terms of food, a place to rest and nice conversation by the host community should be interacted together to keep a well balance between two parties in order to achieve tourism development in the destination. However, the increase of tourist harassment than the feeling of hospitality will cause to leak of economic benefits from destinations. On oppose, it adds more costs to the tourism industry in an economy to implement a proper mechanism in order to overcome the harassment issues. Further, the situation will cause to downfall of global tourism.

According to Sri Lanka Tourist Police, 48 cases in 2010, 82 cases in 2011 and 90 cases in 2012 were recorded as tourism related crimes which included sexual harassment, harassment, frauds, selling illegal gems, charging extra money, not confirming the service before the arrival, providing bad service, robbery, breaking trust, stealing money and property etc., in island wide. Even though, the cases have been divided in to two broader groups like, Case Against Tourist (CAT) and Cases From Tourists (CFT) in order to handle them effectively, the number of cases happened in each year have been increased.