

## **A Study to Assess the Tourist Satisfaction Towards Marine Tourism: Special Reference to Whale and Dolphin Watching at Trincomalee**

J.L.S. Dilshani<sup>1</sup>, P.I.N. Fernando<sup>2\*</sup> and R.A.A.K. Ranaweera<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Tourism Studies, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

<sup>2\*</sup>*Department of Management Sciences, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

Marine tourism is a niche tourism product and it can be identified as a sustainable alternative to tourism. During the last few decades, marine mammal-based tourism has showed a rapid growth in tourism. Significantly, watching Whales and Dolphins have enjoyed phenomenal growth and is one of the fastest-growing tourism products in the world. Utilization of the true potentials of Whale and Dolphin watching tourism has to be developed and promoted within Sri Lanka. The study focused on assessing tourist satisfaction towards marine tourism with special reference to Whale and Dolphin watching at the Trincomalee area. The objectives of this study were to identify the profile of tourists who are visiting for Whale and Dolphin watching, to identify the relationship between destination attributes and tourist satisfaction on Whale and Dolphin watching and to discover the innovative practices which will be expected by tourists from the service providers of Whale and Dolphin watching industry in marine tourism at Trincomalee area. The study mainly depended on the primary data that were collected through questionnaire and structured interviews. The purposive sampling method was used as a sampling technique to collect data from the 100 both local and foreign tourists. Quantitative and qualitative data analytical methods were employed in analysing the data deploying descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and thematic analysis. Findings reflected that there was a positive relationship between all the destination attributes (6A's) and tourist satisfaction towards marine tourism. Moreover, findings discovered certain innovative practices expected by tourists from their service providers in Whale and Dolphin watching industry. Findings suggested implementing expected innovative practices and rules and regulations to promote and sustain the Whale and Dolphin watching tourism in Sri Lanka.

*Keywords:* Marine tourism, Whale and Dolphin watching, Tourist satisfaction