



**Uva Wellassa
University**

**NATURE AND FACTORS INFLUENCING TOURIST
HARASSMENTS IN SRI LANKAN COASTAL BELT
(With Special Reference to Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna)**

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Madurangi S.P.

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ABSTRACT

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The essence of the tourism industry is the Tourists. In accordance to that the study made an attempt to identify tourists' harassment at coastal belt in Sri Lanka. Nature of tourists' harassment and factors leading to this menace are some of the issues with not only negative but also significant effect on the growth of tourism. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to identify the nature and factors leading to this problem along the Sri Lankan Coastal belt and to investigate whether the harassment situation has affected to the International tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka with special reference to Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna. Convenience sampling technique was used to sample a total 100 international tourists from Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna. Close ended and open ended questionnaires was used to collect data on nature of harassment: types/forms of harassment, most problematic harassers, hot-spots for harassment; and factors leading to harassment: Gender, Age, Travel companion, Purpose of visit, Travel experience of tourists. The study has conducted using the mixed methodology.

The most prevalent type of tourist harassment was pestering to buy goods and services. Local vendors were identified as the most problematic tourist harassers. Shopping centers were identified as the frequent hotspot of harassment in Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna. According to the factors influencing tourist harassment, results revealed that, majority of the male tourists were slightly more harassed than female tourists who visit Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna. 20-29 years age group tourists experienced slightly more harassment than the other age groups of tourists. On Travel companion, the highest occurrence of harassment was reported among the group representing the single tourists. Tourists travel for surfing & adventure purpose were slightly

more harassed than other purpose of visit tourists. The study demonstrated that tourists on first visit to Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna were more experienced harassment than those on repeat visit. According to the tourist perspective, revisit intention, recommendation, comments and suggestions, study has revealed that, "Harassment situation affected to the International tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka".

Therefore harassments affect for the future wellbeing of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. The study fills a gap in the literature on a growing concern and concludes with future tourism development to deepen understanding of the issue, take the possible reactions and make the tourists satisfaction and create memorable travel experience within Sri Lanka. It will be very useful if research can be conducted in island wide for the Sri Lankan tourism industry.

Keywords: *Tourists, Harassments, Nature, Factors, Coastal belt, International tourist arrivals*