

# **Local Economic Impact of Marine Tourism in Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Mirissa area**

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Marine tourism is a niche tourism concept and it can be identified as a sustainable alternative to mass tourism and as a means of providing benefits to local communities. Marine tourism is a kind of Ecotourism. According to those studies and statistical data reports, there is positive tourism impact on Sri Lankan economy mainly through the increased employment, revenue generations and rural facilitation. But there are an empirical gaps and knowledge gaps regarding the local economic impact of Marine tourism in Sri Lanka. So this study is attempted to fill those empirical gap and knowledge gap by examining the local economic impact of marine tourism in rural area of Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Mirissa. Hence the objectives of this study are to identify the economic impact of marine tourism on local communities around the coastal area and to identify the level of distribution of economic impact among the local communities in Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Mirissa area. This study used small-scale survey methods to examine the local economic impacts of marine tourism and distribution of impacts among local communities arising as employment, rural facilitation and revenue generation within those three areas where 100 tourists, 100 employees and 100 owners of the marine tourism related business entities were surveyed. Descriptive statistics and regression techniques were employed as the major analytical techniques of this study. Results suggest that marine tourism industry in those areas has positive impact on local economy and those economic impacts are retained within local areas rather leak aging from the rural economies. Hence marine tourism in Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna and Mirissa area has the significance contribution to the surrounding local economy, through employment, revenue generation and local development by removing the barriers to the Ecotourism of Distributional inequality and External dependency.

*Keywords:* Distributional inequality, Ecotourism, External dependency, Local economy, Marine tourism