An Analysis of the Effect of Tourist Harassment on the Destination Image of Sri Lanka: Foreign Tourists' Perspective

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Abstract— **Tourism generates benefits and costs in terms of economic, social and environmental as a multi-faceted industry in any country. Tourist harassment has become a considerable issue in any destination and it will bring more detriments and also discourage the tourist arrivals. Sri Lanka is known as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, however, there are evidences to prove that the tourists have been facing different kinds of harassments while staying at the destination and it is not healthy for the future sustainability of the industry is concerned. Therefore, the study aims to identify the prevailing nature of tourist harassment occur in Sri Lanka and analyze the effect of tourist harassment on the destination image of the country. The research was carried out in Southern coastal belt of Sri Lanka where occurred a significant number of harassments. A self-prepared, pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect primary data from 530 foreign tourists. The collected data was analyzed by employing Descriptive Statistics and Multiple Regression Analysis. The results revealed that six forms of tourist harassment consist in Sri Lanka based on Consumption, Expression, Community, Vocal, Sexuality and Drugs. Among the six, only the vocal based harassment has significantly impact on destination image of Sri Lanka. Further, the tourist harassment occurred vary due to the several factors like adoption of local culture by the tourists at the destination, imitating the foreign culture by local community, availability of strong resistances on tourist harassment etc. Moreover, the tourists make efforts to tolerate the tourist harassments except vocal based harassments.**

Keywords— destination image, foreign tourists, tourist harassments

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism being a major competitor for the oil, food and automobile industries has experienced continued growth as a vast and significant industry in world economy over many decades. Wen and Tisdell (2001) discussed the rising of global income, increasing leisure time, a rising world population, fall in real transport costs, reduced travel time and globalization as the reason for the tourism growth. The tourist arrivals is one of the key indicators to identify the tourism growth in any destination. Sri Lanka as Asia's leading destination, plays an important role in country's economy, in 2016, the tourism sector continued to perform

well and was able to retain its rank in the third level as one of the main sources of foreign exchange earners of the national economy (SLTDA, 2016). While surging 2 million tourist arrivals in 2016, Sri Lanka was able to increase its accommodation capacity, develop the infrastructure, generate direct and indirect employments etc. as the positive impact of tourism. In opposed, as Mason (2008) discussed, in the real world, tourism negative impacts are generally multi-faceted, problematic and often having combination of economic, social and environmental dimensions. Harassment of tourists has been identified as one of the six challenges faced by Sri Lanka Tourism (Jayawardhana, 2013). 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 (Rathnayake and Wijesundara, 2015). And also, they further explained that the most popular places for harassments in Sri Lanka are Tangalle, Negambo, Galle, Mount Lavinia, Dikwella, Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna. Even though, many records found on tourist harassments and hotspots, the foreign guests are highly preferred to visit and stay in South Coast region throughout the past five years as they are showing the highest guest nights in the same region (SLTDA, 2013-2016). Moreover, the airport survey (2011) highlights that beaches were the most outstanding attraction of tourist visiting Sri Lanka and on the other hand, beaches are identified as hot spots for tourist harassments. Amidst to this background, this study aims to identify the prevailing nature of tourist harassments and to analyze the effect of tourist harassment on the destination image of Sri Lanka.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. *Tourism Industry and Sri Lanka)*

Sri Lanka faced enumerable challenges due to war and the war ended in 2009. The end of the 26 year war has created an opportunity for Sri Lanka to become a peaceful and one of the fastest growing tourism destinations in the world. Even though, Sri Lanka is comprised with many different tourist attractions to pull tourists and gain benefits, it faces many issues and challenges along with tourism development. As mentioned in the airport survey (2013), tourists who departed from the country had given several

suggestions such as the need of better roads, better transport service for them, minimizing environmental pollution etc. while making the negative comments on variation of food available and the standard of the hotels (SLTDA, 2013). Lai (2002) discussed the common challenges faced by Sri Lanka such as the replacement of traditional economic activities, inflation of property prices, increased cost of living, deculturation, congested traffic, environmental pollution, and unsightly development etc.

B. Tourist Harassment and Destination Image

Albuquerque and McElroy (2001) provide a definition of harassment based on viewpoints of two parties, which was first from the viewpoint of the tourist victim as " any annoying behavior taken to the extreme" and the second being " harassment is simply refusing to take "no" for an answer from the viewpoint of the host perpetrator. On the other hand, University of Birmingham Harassment and Bullying Policy (2013), explains harassments as "unwanted conduct that has either the purpose or the effect of: violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Although harassment is difficult to define, they can be clearly identified considering the nature of the harassment.

Pathirana and Gnanapala (2015) explains the persistence of vendors without uniforms, drug peddling, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and physical abuse as the harassment types and meanwhile Wen and Li (2015) recognized vendor pestering, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, body attack and crime oriented matter of dealings in relation to drugs. Further, Chepkwony and Kangogo (2013) exposed that the most prevalent type of tourist harassment was pestering to buy goods and services followed by begging and sexual harassment respectively. Moreover, they discussed about six major forms of harassment at the coastal beaches of Mombasa, which were pestering, begging, sexual harassment, interference with privacy, drug peddling and verbal abuse. Another somewhat confounding problem is that there are various types of harassment but no over-arching framework for clearly discriminating between them. Moreover, McElroy (2007) discussed two broader types of harassments; at the macro level which occurred as institutional harassment; at the hands of government officials and other authorities, and at the micro level with hands of vendors and other service providers.

Since harassment takes a variety of forms in different destinations, it is wise worthy to examine the hotspots to happen harassment. According to the study done by Ajagunna (2006) in Jamaica, beaches and streets are the hotspots for harassment. And also, the majority of incidents were experienced on the beach, the least at hotels (Kozak, 2007). Further, Chepkwony and Kangogo (2013) discussed the hotspots of tourist harassment at the coastal beaches of Mombasa in Kenya and they revealed that 71 percent of harassment cases occur on the beach followed by streets, restaurants and pubs, shopping centers, airport and hotels respectively. Moreover, SLCSR (2015) reports that shopping areas, tourist sites, night clubs, public streets, tourist beaches and smaller hotels in Southern province, economy seating

areas of the sports events are the places which reported most incidents in Sri Lankan context. Not only that, but also, Pathirana and Gnanapala (2015) found that beach sites, cultural sites, hotels, natural attractions, transportation, streets and restaurants as major harassment places in Sri Lanka. However, tourist arrival to a destination mainly depends on available safety measurements and tourist's perception on harassment free environment (Rathnayake and Wijesundara, 2015). Tourist harassment has been shown to discourage tourists from visiting certain destinations (Malsow, 1954). As Chepkwony and Kangogo (2013) mentioned, the customs, beliefs, behaviors are at variance with that of the host community visited by tourists. But, cultural differences exist in the way of communicating guests and locals, exchanging greetings and establish relationship (Ryan, 2001). Despite these polarizing cultural distances and frequent commercial misunderstandings, harassment can damage vacation quality, reduce the propensity to return, and even tarnish the destination's image and economic future (McElory, 2007).
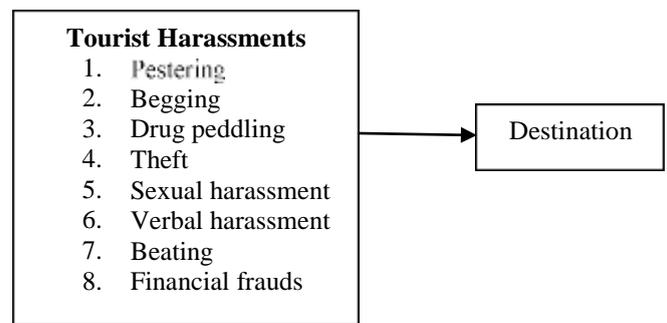

Figure 01: Proposed Conceptual Framework by the Researcher based on the literature

Source: Survey in 2018

Therefore, the primary objective of the study is to identify the effect of tourist harassment on the destination image of Sri Lanka and the secondary objectives were to identify the prevailing nature of tourist harassment in Sri Lanka and to explore the resistances of tourist harassment in the destination.

III. METHODOLOGY

As a new questionnaire developed by the researcher to collect primary data, it should be pre tested. Therefore, a pilot survey was carried out in Galle with 70 foreign tourists after revising the questionnaire based on content validity and face validity. Sixty two (62) questionnaires out of 70 were useful and 8 questionnaires were rejected due to the missing data. The rest was entered to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 version. As a new questionnaire which consist of a lot of questions, the study can be rather complicated and besides, it could be that some of the variables measure different aspects of a same underlying variable. Therefore, the 36 items of the independent variable which is tourist harassment and the 9 items of the dependent variable which is destination image were subjected for the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Principal Component

Analysis was employed for exploratory factor analysis with KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity in order to ensure that the data matrix has sufficient correlations to justify the application of factor analysis. The output of the SPSS showed, independent variable which was tourist harassment, KMO value of 0.610 is in accepted level and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity recorded a value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Further, related to dependent variable namely Destination image, KMO value which was 0.846 is in accepted level and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity recorded a value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it was concluded that satisfactory factor analysis can be employed with the available data set. With EFA, three methods were applied for the reduction of data related to both variables on the basis of anti-image correlation value (1st method); next on the basis of communalities value (2nd method) and finally items were dropped on the basis of rotated component matrix (3rd method) with Varimax rotation. During the three methods, totally twelve (12) items were dropped and twenty four (24) items were remained loading with six variables from the independent variable. And also, among nine (9) items two (2) items were dropped from the destination image. All the variables were renamed and modify the proposed conceptual framework.

Tourist Harassments
- Consumption based harassment
- Expression based harassment
- Community based harassment
- Vocal based harassment
- Sexuality based harassment
- Drugs based harassment
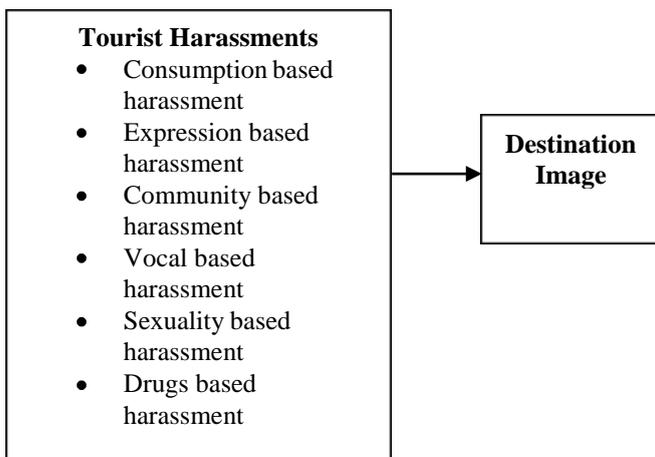
→ **Destination Image**

Figure 02: Conceptual framework used for the main survey

Source: Survey in 2018

After renaming the factors in both independent and dependent variables in the study, dimensionality and validity of the scale should be established for further processing of the questionnaire. Therefore, convergent validity through AVE (Average Variance Extracted), discriminant validity, composite validity and Cronbach Alpha were assessed through SPSS and Excel.

The modified questionnaire was used for the main survey conducted in the Southern Coastal belt of Sri Lanka selecting as research area. The population for the study being the foreign tourists visited Southern Coastal belt, 570 tourists were selected as the sample by using convenience sampling technique. 40 questionnaire were removed due to the missing data. The valid questionnaires (530) were coded,

computed, and analyzed though the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Excel employing descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Demography of the Respondents

There were nine closed ended questions to identify the demographic factors of the respondents namely, age, gender, marital status, nationality, country of origin, education level, occupation, monthly income and number of visits to the country. Considering to the age, the majority of the respondents which was 43.40 percent belong to the age category of 21-30 meanwhile the least, 5.09 percent recorded for the under 21 category. In gender vise, 53.4 percent of the sample was female and the rest were 46.42 percent male and 0.19 other group. There was no significant difference between male and female tourists to the country. The majority of the sample was married, 37.74 percent and 36.42 percent represented the status of single. Further, 22.08 percent represented the category of living together. Anyhow, it can be concluded that majority of the sample accompanying with someone while travelling to Sri Lanka. In related to the nationality and country of origin, many of them which was 76.5 percent were from nationalities of Euro like, Netherland, Germany, England, Italy, Poland etc. The few respondents found from China and India. Out of 530 respondents, 47.36 percent was graduates and 32.64 percent was post graduates. Further, 12.83 percent was the respondents having secondary education. The conclusion on education level is that the majority of the respondents has obtained at least secondary education. Considering to the occupation of the respondents, 28.68 percent which was highest represented by the professionals. The second highest, 14.62 percent being other category, Educationalist was the third representing 12.08 percent of the sample. The least percentage was recorded from retired people. In terms of monthly income, 66.42 percent was represented by the income category of "below 6000 dollars". The second highest recorded from the category of "6001-8000 dollars" having 10.38 percent. And also, 8.68 percent of the sample earns more than 14000 dollars per month. Moreover, the majority of the respondents which was 87.92 percent were 1st time visitors to the country.

B. The Prevailing Nature of the Tourist Harassment in Sri Lanka

The few open ended questions were inserted to identify the prevailing nature of the tourist harassments in Sri Lanka. They were analyzed by using content analysis. According to that, the mostly occurring tourist harassment type was vocal based harassments where explains the cat calls, leers, blaming, encouragement for purchasing goods, looking at the local people etc. and done by three wheel drivers, vendors and beggars. Anyhow, they were few comments received against the beach staff even though they are labeled as perpetrators in the literature. Many respondents have stated that beach boys are the fastest reliable helpers at the any

emergencies occurring in the beaches. Further, the respondents elaborated that since tourism is only one way of living of beach staff, they may take efforts to sustain the industry as far as possible. Furthermore, it is revealed that the sexual harassments are happened in high rate in the beach parties and with the involvement of government, service providers have been taken initiatives to control the beach parties at the beach or beach restaurants. Anyhow, according to the reliable sources and the respondents, it is revealed that Sri Lanka is hotspots for tourist harassments. But, it seems that tourists tolerate them while they are on the vacation in Sri Lanka due to several reason; the adoption of local culture by the tourists at the destination, type of harassment occur, imitating the foreign culture by local community, availability of strong resistances on tourist harassment etc. For instances, adoption of street food culture by the tourists is a resistance for the harassments done by vendors as they receive money from tourist.

C. The Effect of Tourist Harassment on Destination Image of Sri Lanka

To reveal the effect of tourist harassment on destination image, the multiple regression analysis was employed after testing four assumptions namely, Normality test (P value-0.000), Auto correlation (Durbin-Watson statistic value – 1.738), Homoscedasticity (data has been spread without any specific pattern) and Multi-collinearity (VIF- 1.919, 1.356, 1.935, 1.544, 1.435, 1.346 which are lower than the standard level of 7.0).

TABLE I.   MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.286[a]	.082	.071	3.99847

a. Predictors: (Constant), Drugs_Based, Vocal_Based, Expression_Based, Sexuality_Based, Consumption_Based, Community_Based

Source: SPSS output of the survey 2018

Figure 1. Example of a figure caption. *(figure caption)*

According to the table 01, the "R" value in the R column explains the multiple correlation coefficient, which is 0.286. A value of 0.286 indicates the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable. Further, "R Square" column represents the R^2 value of 0.082 which is called the coefficient of determination. The 8.2 percent, is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable which is destination image that can be explained by the independent variable; tourist harassments. On the other hand, 91.8 percent of total variance in the Destination image is unexplained by the regression model. Therefore, it appears that the model was fitted in unfairly manner. Because of, the unexplained variation is higher than the explained variation.

TABLE II: OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MODEL

ANOVAa

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	746.222	6	124.370	7.779	.000[b]
Residual	8361.598	523	15.988		
Total	9107.820	529			

a. Dependent Variable: Destination_Image Predictors: (Constant), Drugs_Based, Vocal_Based, Expression_Based, Sexuality_Based, Consumption_Based, Community_Based

Source: SPSS output of the survey 2018

The F-ratio in the ANOVA table (table 02) tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table shows that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, $F_{(6, 523)} = 7.779$, $p < .0005$ (i.e., the regression model is a good fit of the data).

According to the table no 03, the regression equation is,

$$DI = 28.499 + 0.074ConB + 0.0103ExB + 0.055ComB + 0.382VocB + 0.254SexB + 0.071DrB$$

TABLE III: THE EFFECT OF TOURIST HARASSMENTS ON THE DESTINATION IMAGE

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	28.499	.625		45.604	.000
Consumption_Based	-.074	.043	-.100	-1.731	.084
Expression_Based	-.103	.097	-.052	-1.063	.288
1 Community_Based	.055	.081	.040	.688	.492
Vocal_Based	-.382	.100	-.199	-3.825	.000
Sexuality_Based	-.254	.250	-.051	-1.014	.311
Drugs_Based	-.071	.226	-.015	-.315	.753

a. Dependent Variable: Destination_Image

Source: SPSS output of Survey 2018

In accordance with the unstandardized coefficient between types of tourist harassments and destination image, it can be clearly identified that there is a significant relationship between vocal based harassments on destination image. Because of it implied value is 0.382 and the p value denotes 0.000. Therefore, it is significance at 0.05 level. Further, other remaining types of harassments; consumption based, expression based, community based, sexuality based and drugs based have no relationships on destination image.

TABLE NO IV: HYPOTHESIS ANALYSIS

	P–Value<Significance Level	(H0)	(Ha)
Consumption based harassments and Detination Image	0.000 < 0.084	Accepted	Rejected
Expression based harassments and Destination Image	0.000 < 0.288	Accepted	Rejected
Community based harassments and Destination Image	0.000 < 0.492	Accepted	Rejected
Vocal based harsssments and Destination Image	0.000 <0.000	Rejected	Accepted
Sexuality based harassments and Destination Image	0.000 < 0311	Accepted	Rejected
Drugs based harassments and Destination Image	0.000 < 0.753	Accepted	Rejected

As table no 04 shows, that there is an effect of vocal based harassments on the destination image. Further, if the vocal based harassment increases/decreases, the image of the destination will be changed. Moreover, it can be concluded that, even though, the other types of harassments excluding vocal based harassments happen in the destination, foreign tourists tolerate them while they are on the vacation in Sri Lanka.

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