

# Social Impact of tourism: A Case study of Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat Division

R.A.W..Ranasinghe

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya.

rawpsc@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the major foreign income sources in Sri Lanka. The social impact of tourism varies. Whatever the shortcoming of it, the development of tourism has been regarded as a panacea for the economic malaise of Sri Lanka. Using robust data the study explore the changes influenced by development of tourism in terms of socio-cultural life in Hikkaduwa resort. The qualitative method meant to analyze and interpret data is given priority in the study. It has found that, tourism brings some positive as well as negative benefits to the island. The environment degradation, archaeological ruins, illegal businesses, black money frauds thefts drugs trafficking, prostitution, HIV threat, gambling, and rising crime rate are identified social cost of international tourism. The 'child sex' is one of the major issues raised by tourism in Sri Lanka. The younger generation believes that they can have valuable things or secure a chance to go abroad etc. After the boom the beach fronts were being rapidly bought up for tourist establishments, after which they were surrounded by walls to block the locals' access to these areas, which had since become private property. Tourism has direct impact on the price level and the consumption behavior of the host population. Tourism has provided a variety of employment in different capacities in restaurants, guest houses, shops and the transport sectors; some are involved in their own mini businesses, related to tourism. The international tourism has a significant impact on the socio-cultural structure of the host country. Some educated middle class personnel, who are involved in the tourism industry in various capacities such as managers and others, view that even though they are not happy with the worst aspect of European culture, they accept tourism as by and large what the country needs to earn foreign exchange.

**Key words:** Tourism, Culture, Social impact, Tourist Resorts. Island

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is a tropical island and is comprised of a total terrain of 65,610 square kilometers. Though

comparatively small, it is a land of diversity in biological, socio-cultural and environmental terms. They all are tourist attractions and demands. Sri Lanka as a tourist destination introduces 8 different tourist attracted products namely; beaches, heritage, wildlife, scenic beauty, mind and body wellness, festivals, sports and adventure and essence. Sri Lanka, therefore, is named as the best valued destination for holidays. Since the voyage of Ptolemy (150 AD) visits of Fa Hien (337-442) and Hiouen San (602-664), the island has occupied a prominent place in the world tourist attractions. From the time when Sri Lankan authorities paid attention to promote tourism in the island in the mid-1960s, tourism has become one of the major sources of foreign exchange earnings in the island.

Yet, promotion of tourism as a means of upgrading standard of living, values fostering, international understanding, preservation of cultural heritage of the host population is not always positive. For instance, though the resort gets benefit in financial terms via tourism related activities, there are some negative aspects of tourism mainly on socio-cultural domains. In order to examine the impact of international tourism on socio-cultural life of the country, this study paid attention to carry out a micro survey on socio-cultural changes in Hikkaduwa resort which is one of the main tourist attractions in the island.

## 2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to explore the impact of tourism on socio-cultural life in Hikkaduwa resort.

## 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data were gathered from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected via interview method, observation and group discussion. 40 respondents were selected for interview survey from Hikkaduwa Secretariat Division. Among them 20 were interviewed using in-depth method and the rest underwent semi-structure interviews in order to get the insights regarding the impact of tourism in Hikkaduwa resort. Open discussions were

conducted in the form of attitudinal survey for searching the impact of tourism on the rural culture.

Secondary data is also took significant component in this study. Although the study was carried out based on both qualitative and quantitative methods, qualitative method is given priority as the main objective of this survey was to assess the social impact of tourism in the division.

#### 4. RESULTS

Since Sri Lanka entering formally into the international tourism market in the mid-1960s by establishing Ceylon Tourist Board, Tourism remains the fastest growing service industry in the island. Yet the gains from tourism are far behind the expected goals. This is mainly due to the imbalance of tourism policy and its implementation. As tourism is an industry connected with several other areas of concern, without parallel development in those areas such as infrastructural, ecological, agricultural, manufacture, environmental, attitudinal, legal, peacefulness and political stability. The policy makers have not yet drawn attention to address the issues of such areas. The impact of tourism varies. It has brought some positive as well as negative benefits to the socio-cultural life of the island. Compared with what we gained from tourism, losses are higher in socio-cultural terms. Also the study found that the impact of international tourism reveals unfriendly as it causes environmental degradation, archaeological ruins, illegal businesses, and black money frauds thefts, drugs trafficking, prostitution, AIDS threat, gambling, casinos and rising crime rate, child sex abuses, drugs trafficking, family dispersion etc. are particular issues raised by tourism in Sri Lanka.

The most vulnerable group of tourism is found the younger generation. Survey reveals that youngsters believed and elders were also confirmed that going behind a foreigner is the gateway to success. This hypothesis has proved that those who started as beach boys or some other form of sex-workers have reached upper middle class in their assets. They believe that they can have valuable things or secure a chance to go abroad by keeping close contact with foreigners. Also the "**Demonstration Effect**" of tourism in the area caused increasing of leakages. The crucial issue of such relationship with tourists is the negligence of the social cost of tourism either by the victims or their parents.

As a previous study done by Asoka Jayasena (1995) on social impact on tourism in Dupathgama' a traditional village in Aluthgama reveals a rapid transition from the traditional way of thinking which ridicules the earnings through unethical ways to profit making commercial culture. After the tourism boom, even in Hikkaduwa resort

the beach fronts were being rapidly bought up for tourist establishments, after which they were surrounded by walls to block the locals' access to these areas, which had since become private property. Tourism has also direct impact on the price level and the consumption behavior of the host population. Before Hikkaduwa became a tourist resort the area was self-sufficient in food. The main occupation was fishing, paddy cultivation and cottage industries based on coconut products. After the end of 1970s everything including physical surroundings, values and attitudes of this simple folk had changed. The youngsters follow the style of foreign tourists. Some dimensions of social status such as caste or creed have been replaced by money, irrespective of its derivatives.

Tourism has provided a variety of employment in different capacities in restaurants, guest houses, shops and the transport sectors; some are involved in their own mini businesses, related to tourism. Thus it has become obvious that the international tourism has a significant impact on the socio-cultural structure of the host country. Some educated middle class personnel who are involved in the tourism industry in various capacities such as managers and others, view that even though they are not happy with the worst aspect of European culture, they accept tourism as by and large what the country needs to earn foreign exchange. It is worth noting that, the governments of host country has not yet been realized that the illusion of international tourism. Education which was given higher priority by the villages is now undervalued

#### 5. DISCUSSION

Tourism is one of the major foreign exchange earners and one of the main growth sector in this island. Sri Lanka entered the international tourism market in the mid-1960s. Since then tourism remains the fastest growing service industry in the island. It is accepted that the impact of tourism on sociocultural life in host societies like Sri Lanka is obvious and as Dhar (2006), argued, to the host, impact of tourism is not always positive, although tourism is promoted as a major force in upgrading standard of living, the values fostering international understanding, preservation of cultural heritage among the host population. It is true that governments of host countries have not yet been realized that the illusion of international tourism. The burning issue of the widening gap of Balance of Payment of the country has misled the governments of developing countries. International tourism is explicitly a business of foreigners, for foreigners and by foreigners. Though it is possible to calculate earnings from tourism as its output, it is impossible to calculate the social cost numerically as its outcome

Tourism is a fast growing industry and a valuable sector, contributing significantly to the Sri Lankan

economy. In the Hikkaduwa area tourism creates income for people who work in hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and transport enterprises, places of sport, recreation, and entertainment. Community attitudes are crucial for successful and sustainable tourism development. Some educated middle class personnel who are involved in the tourism industry in various capacities such as managers and others view that even though they are not happy with the worst aspect of western culture, they accept tourism as by and large what the country needs to earn foreign exchange.

Many tourists come to Hikkaduwa with different consumption patterns and lifestyles than what is current at the destination, seeking pleasure, spending large amounts of money and sometimes behaving in ways that even they would not accept at home. It is obvious that international tourism creates a negative as well as positive impact on social life in Hikkaduwa. Impacts arise when tourism brings changes in value systems, behaviour, threatening indigenous identity. Changes often occur in community structure, family relationships, collective traditional life styles, ceremonies and morality. Tourism development must be carefully managed to avoid or minimize the negative impact of tourism in socio-cultural life of any given tourist resort like Hikkaduwa.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Since there is an influence of international tourism on socio-cultural life of the host society, it determines the level of openness and hospitality of the indigenous. Thus Sri Lanka maintains an open, friendly and hospitable society which is fostered, especially by the non-violence Sinhalese Buddhist and Hindu cultures. Though it is possible to calculate earnings from tourism, but it is impossible to calculate the social cost numerically as its outcome. It is obvious that international tourism brings good and bad to the Island. Whatever the shortcoming of it, the development of tourism has been regarded as a panacea for the economic malaise of Sri Lanka. It stimulates employment and investment; modifies land use and the economic structure and it changes whole social life. At the conclusion, what is clear is that the a study on social impact of tourism alone would not be perfect unless it pays attention to examine the economic impact of tourism as these two phenomena are interrelated.

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