
POTENTIALS OF PROMOTING BEACH TOURISM IN KALPITIYA, SRI LANKA

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Abstract

This research is aimed at tracing focused on the observation of the present tourism industry within the region regarding the attractions, activities, accommodations, and hospitality industry of the Kalpitiya area. Sri Lanka is an island country with a rich cultural heritage, diverse landscape, and a significant number of wildlife reserves. Sri Lanka's diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage present a wide range of tourism opportunities, ranging from sun and beach holidays, wildlife excursions, and cultural tours, generally Sri Lankan tourism resources are relatively under-exploited. Kalpitiya beach is located on a peninsula about 150 kilometers north from Colombo on the west coast of Sri Lanka, facing the Indian Ocean to the west and the Puttalam lagoon to the east. It is a gem on the west coast for both the eco-traveler and water sports enthusiasts due to its strategic location nestled between the lagoon and the sea. The peninsula is 48 kilometers long and about 7 kilometers wide and is studded on both sides with stunning beaches. In the waters around Kalpitiya, there are a total of 14 islands both in the sea and in the lagoon. Unparalleled in other areas in Sri Lanka, Kalpitiya is principally a vast marine sanctuary offering many habitats for marine creatures including mangrove swamps, bar reefs and salt marshes. Large pods of Spinner Dolphins live in the waters near Kalpitiya and there are boat tours available to see these charming creatures in their natural habitat. The rare Sperm Whale also calls these waters home. The best season for seeing Sperm Whales and Spinner Dolphins in Kalpitiya is between December and April which is the dry season on the west coast. This research based on beach tourism in Kalpitiya beach. Finally, this research expects to identify potentials for promotion of beach tourism in Kalipitiya.

Keywords: Tourism; Beach Tourism; Puttalam District

1. Introduction

Tourism is a typical activity where the public participates widely and the evidence of travel and tourism can be identified even since the pre-historic era. Inheriting the sense of traveling from the ancestors, people used to travel place to place, especially from their usual habitats in search of foods, shelter, security, even for experiencing novel, exotic environments, and landscapes. Traveling has been acquired different aspects with the appearance of human civilization. Since then civilized people recognized as traveling as a way of leisure and pleasure where the mental and physical wellness could be absorbed with being nature. Ancient travelers visited destinations with the purposes of exploring new grounds, sunbathing for healing purposes, participating in sports events such as Olympic, observing new cultures and new countries, etc. Hence, with the passage of time, there were different forms of traveling that

emerged as beach tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, and adventure tourism, etc. By present tourism has been shaped its appearance according to the various patterns of human life, according to the diversified natural settings and according to the development of science and technology. Advanced forms of tourism such as adventure tourism, eco-tourism, green tourism, sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, indigenous tourism, agro-tourism, etc. are only a few examples to indicate the variety of tourism concepts in the modern world.

In the increasing global tourism market, most of the developing countries have exposed their economies to the tourism industry (Mubarak, 2019). Earning foreign exchange, revenue for the government, direct and indirect job opportunities, foreign investments, development of infrastructure facilities, rural development, and economic stimulation are only a few benefits reaped by the governments of the developing countries via travel and tourism. Hence, there is no exception for Sri Lanka to deny the emerging tourism industry. With the dawn of peace, the Sri Lankan government is driving away from a rival economic development recognizing the vast potential for the tourism industry. To achieve the above-mentioned targets, the government has identified several regions within the country as tourism development zones. Bentota, Dedduwa, Kuchchaweli, Nilaweli, Arugam-Bay, Pasikudah, Jaffna, Yala and Kalpitiya are among those newly established tourism development zones.

Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority has identified all the potentials in the Kalpitiya region which is located in Puttalam District, North-Western province, and 150 km away from Colombo. Kalpitiya Tourism Zone (KTZ) is regarded as the biggest tourism development project veiled in the Indian Ocean and this development project would be a great opportunity to cater to the future tourism related requirements based on accommodation, activities, attractions and amenities because the expected tourist arrival by 2016 is 2.5 million. There are huge and unlimited potentials spread out along these sandy beaches and separated islets. Kalpitiya is peninsular that separates the Puttalam lagoon from the Indian Ocean and is a marine sanctuary with a diversity of habitats ranging from bar reefs, flat coastal plains, salt pans, mangroves swamps, salt marshes, and vast and sandy beaches. 4000 acres in 14 islands have been identified as the centers of the proposed tourism zone, by the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority since 2008, giving opportunities for tourism development schemes in that area.

Up to this point, Kalpitiya has been identified as an appropriate area for the agricultural and fishery industry due to the climatic and geographical conditions of that region. But with the dawn of the proposed tourism zone, there would be an immense boom in the region with the targets of 17 number of star class hotels, proposed 5000 rooms and 37,500 of employment generation. Regarding all of the above factors, my intention is to observe the research are with a peculiar sense to identify the sustainability of the proposed tourism zone. Preliminary the proposed tourism site is explored to identify the demographic and geographic settings of the region. Then the available natural resources and man-made properties of this region are identified. After identifying the huge potentials within the Kalpitiya region, the next attention is to observe the current undergoing development project which has been spread over 14 islets. Each islet being put into consideration to illustrate all accommodation facilities, tourism services and activities established for tourism. In addition to that, the government's role for the sustainability of Kalpitiya Tourism Zone (KTZ) is vividly discussed with the attachment of goals and objectives of the project. Meanwhile environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts based on this development project will be discussed very deeply hence any kind of development project influences the environment setting, life of the communities and the economy of that region in both aspects of negative and positive.

2. Objective

Beyond doubt, this research would be a critical analysis at Kalpitiya Tourism Zone where several social, cultural and environmental issues have been arisen due to the development process. Both pros and coins are analyzed to get a clear image of the development project to understand whether the concept of sustainability could be achieved in the future as it is predicted and estimated in the development plans. Therefore, this research aims to identify both benefits and negative impacts on each and every aspect of socio-cultural, economic and environmental and finally to obtain a clear image on whether this proposed tourism zone may benefit the community of the region as it is estimated and predicted by the government. And also the research objectives focused on the observation of the present tourism industry within the region regarding the attractions, activities, accommodations, and hospitality industry of the Kalpitiya area.

3. Review of Literature

Gnanapala (2015) was investigated on identifying the international tourist's perceptions and satisfaction on their holiday stay and its implication for destination management with reference to Sri Lanka. A regression model is utilized to identify the tourists' perception and satisfaction by using and measuring nine destination related independent variables. According to the regression analysis, it is clear to see that when each factor is considered individually, each one is significant, which implies that those factors are influencing the positive perception and satisfaction of the tourists. Sarfaraz et, al. (2015) were investigated, the travel and tourism industry are placed among the largest industries in the world. However, the degrading effects of tourism have become a big concern and need to be addressed quickly. With this in mind, the concept of sustainable tourism has emerged with the aim of reducing the negative effects of tourism activities, which has become almost universally accepted as a desirable and politically appropriate approach to tourism development Rajesh, R (2013) was investigated, to develop holistic theoretical model of destination loyalty by using tourist perception, destination image, tourist satisfaction, and its attributes. Its effects and antecedents may serve as a theoretical background designing measurement instrument for destination managers. Analyzing the antecedents of tourist perception, destination image, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty may provide insight into the process of creating destination loyalty at both construct and indicator levels. Erick T. Byrd (2007) was investigated, the community planners and destination management organizations need to be concerned with all stakeholders in the community. From their perspective, tourism marketing and product development do not include stakeholder involvement. The limited resource argument would support the idea that sustainable development is a utopian concept that will never be realized.

Xhiliola Agaraj (2009) was investigated, all efforts for an attractive touristic environment based on the incoming secured from tourism and in growth of employment in this sector, sorting out after the agricultural and trade sectors. Construction sector with clear characteristics for being the first within 2- 3 future years. Felicity Picken (2007) was investigated, new tourist practices and trends are now pushing the limits of beach tourism in the opposite direction, developing complementary hinterland attractions, including rural, culinary, and wine tourism as well as increasingly developing attractions "out to sea." This expanded horizon of pleasure beyond the literal zone exploits the increasing willingness of tourists to immerse in undersea environments and encounter new innovative leisure attractions, including underwater museums, art galleries, restaurants, and hotels. Gavin & Costa (1996) was investigated, during the seven years, 1989-1995 inclusive, many aspects of the tourism industry have changed as political, economic and social changes have occurred in both the receiving and generating countries. Politically, it was only seven years ago that Europe witnessed the interaction of East and West. In the period of this review, both Prague (Czech

Republic) and Budapest (Hungary) became the fastest growing short-break holiday destinations

4. Data Analysis and Methodology

Data Collection

The targeted Population of this study was people of the Kalpitipa beach area in puththalam district. In this study, the researcher was got only the Kalpitipa beach area tourists. Random sample technique will be used to select the sample, the sample of 100 tourists selected from the Kalpitipa beach area in puththalam district. In this sample will consisted with follows, at the data collection, both primary and secondary data will be gathered. The study is based mainly on primary data. The primary data was collected using questionnaires. Questionnaires give respondents freedom to express their views or opinion and also to make suggestions. The questionnaires had both open and closed ended questions that sought to find the relationship between potential promotion and beach tourism .Secondary data is been obtain by literature study and the article from the internet, text books and publications. Secondary sources of information have also been used and where necessary. Secondary data were mainly collected through the web sites, Published Reports and Journals, informal discussions and interviews with the tourists. The Researcher uses descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to provide a detail description of the data collection.

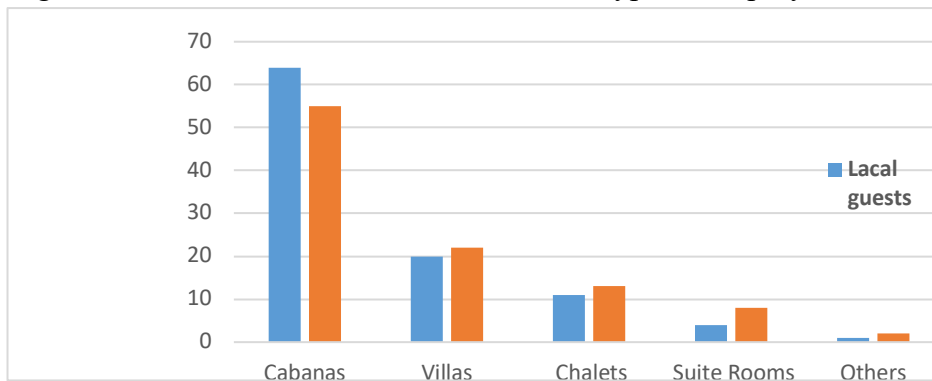
5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Accommodation Sector

Due to the lack of infrastructure facilities, there are none of star class hotels located in Kalpitiya area. But recognizing the huge potential in tourism industry both local and foreign investors have commenced new hotels within the region. Especially there is no sky-scraping buildings in this tourist destination because the area has consisted of huge land extent for establishment of hotels and resorts. Though there are even 7-star hotels have been proposed to commence in the 14 islands in the Kalpitiya Peninsular, here only unclassified hotels were selected as the sample to collect the data regarding the accommodation sector of the region.

Due to the geographical features and climatic condition of Kalpitiya, cabana type accommodation is the most ideal way for the guests. Most of the tourists from the European region, are not aware of this eco-friendly, thatched house, clay applied and simple kind of accommodation facilities. Instead of that they have experienced the super luxurious, extravagant and star classified accommodation services at the other high-end destinations the worldwide. But offering a unique hospitality and accommodation experience at the guests, Kalpitiya bears more significances regarding the eco typed cabanas and villas. Using natural ingredients and indigenous materials mixed with the local construction methods, Kalpitiya tourist destination highlights the high quality and uniqueness of local, traditional and ecofriendly accommodation service in Sri Lanka.

Figure 1: Preferences for the Accommodation type in Kalpitiya

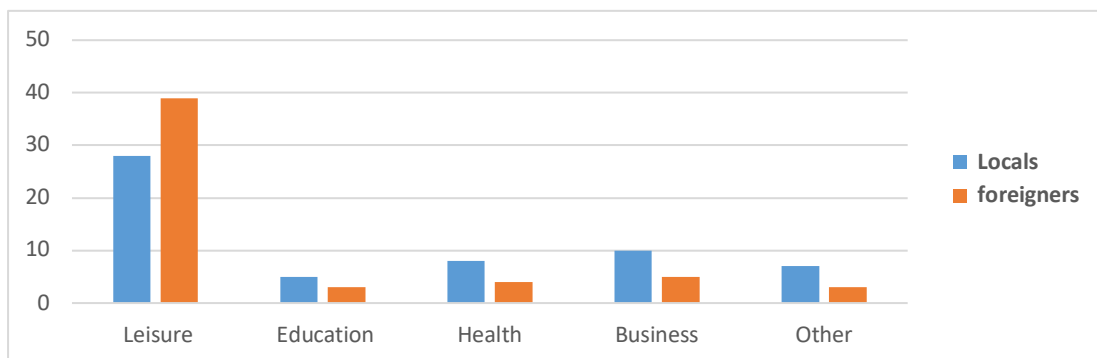


According to figure 1, data gathered by both local and foreign tourists, their preference for the accommodation types can be identified analyzing the above figure. 64% of the local guests have selected cabanas as their accommodation type while 55% of the foreigners have chosen that type of cabanas. Meanwhile villas have been selected by the locals and foreigners by 20% and 22% respectively. There is a demand for chalets from both locals and foreigners for some extent and that is 20% of the locals and 22% from the foreigners. Suite rooms or higher room categories are the least attracted or selected accommodation type for both locals and foreigners.

5.2 Purpose of Visiting Kalpitiya

Kalpitiya is not only a tourist destination for leisure and pleasure, and it has consisted of some educational knowledge in all aspects of religious, historical, socio-culturally and ecologically. Also some tourists visit their health, business, and other purposes. But according to figure 2, it is highlighted that both local and foreign tourists visit this area with the major purpose of pleasure.

Figure 2: Purpose of Visit Kalpitiya

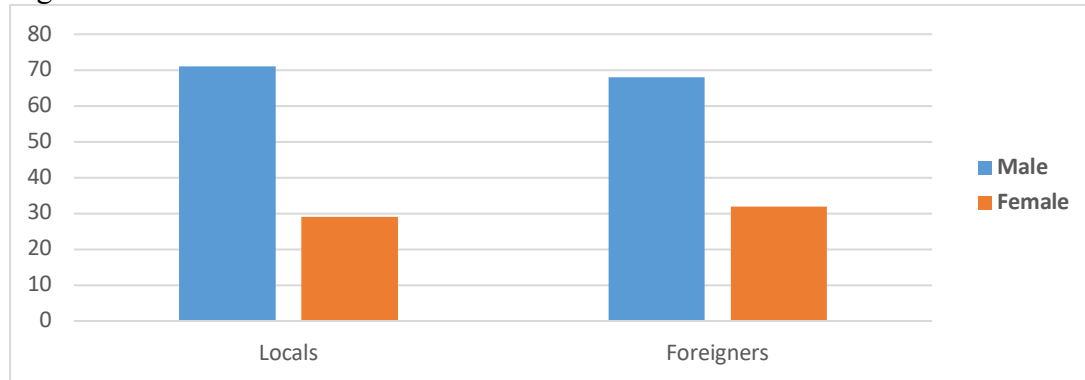


According to that figure 2, 39% of foreign tourists and 28% of local tourists have visited Kalpitiya on the purpose of leisure. They have arrived at this beach destination to join the water-based activities, to have relaxation on the beach and to enjoy the coastal environment in the vicinity of Puttalam Lagoon. 10% of locals and 5% of foreigners have arrived at Kalpitiya due to the purpose of business. 5% of locals and 3% of foreigners have visited Kalpitiya with the purpose of education. 8% of local and 4% of foreigners have visited their health purpose. 7% of locals have visited Kalpitiya to their other purpose but, they feel the variety in this area especially, after the introduction of the new tourism development projects within the region. Meanwhile 3% of foreigners have visited this area after having information about the area via internet and other Mass Medias.

5.3 Gender of the Tourists

The tourism industry is an open industry for all kinds of tourists without regarding the gender of the person. Being a popular destination for water based tourist activities, male is the mostly arriving gender at Kalpitiya because males are interested in water based activities and adventure activities more than the females.

Figure 3: Genders of the Tourists

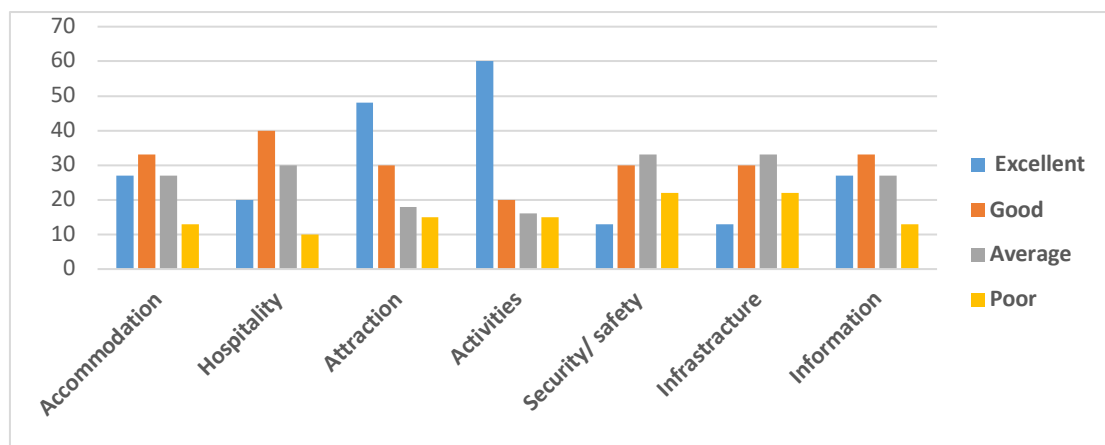


According to figure 3, the difference between the arrivals of males and females is presented. (See Figure 5.10) 71% out of the local's tourists are male and the rest of 29% are females who have visited the area during this year. When the foreign tourists' arrivals are considered, it is 68% of arrivals are reported as males and the rest of 32% of the foreign arrivals are recorded as females. As it is mentioned earlier, the basic motivation for the higher arrivals of the males can be identified as the tourist activities including kite surfing, diving, and 4WD adventure.

5.4 Tourists' Perception Regarding Kalpitiya Tourism

It is more important to observe the perception of the tourists regarding the tourism industry within the Kalpitiya region. Both local and foreign tourists were requested to fill the questioners to gather regarding the perceptions or personal attitudes regarding the accommodation, food and beverages, hospitality, Information, and safety at Kalpitiya region. Both locals and foreigners have given their view on Kalpitiya tourism

Figure 4: Tourists' Perception Regarding Kalpitiya Tourism



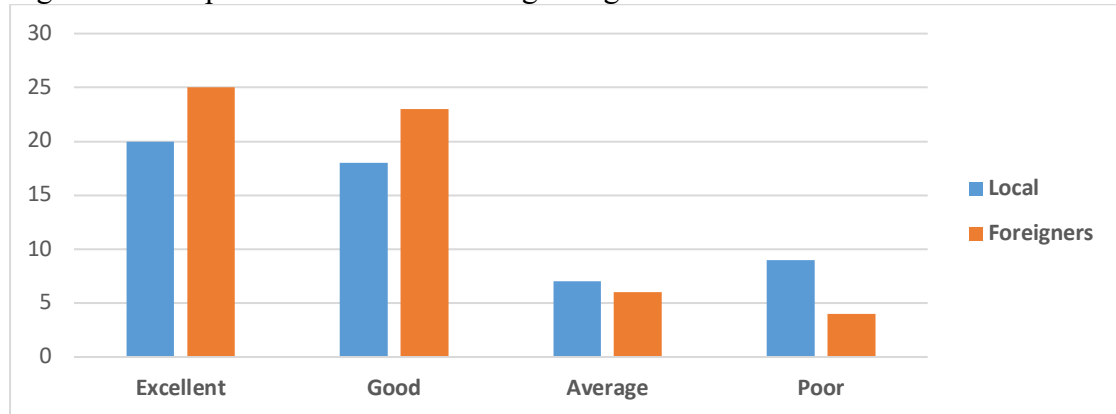
5.5 Accommodation

The 4 figure depicts the perceptions of the visitors regarding the quality of the accommodation facilities in the destination. 27% of visitor's regards accommodation sector is

in excellent condition while 33% of visitors regard the accommodation services in good condition. 27% of visitors consider that accommodation facility in an average condition. 13% of visitors consider that accommodations are in poor condition.

Figure 5, shows what locals and foreigners' perceptions of the tourists regarding the accommodation sector

Figure 5: Perceptions of the Tourists Regarding Accommodation Sector

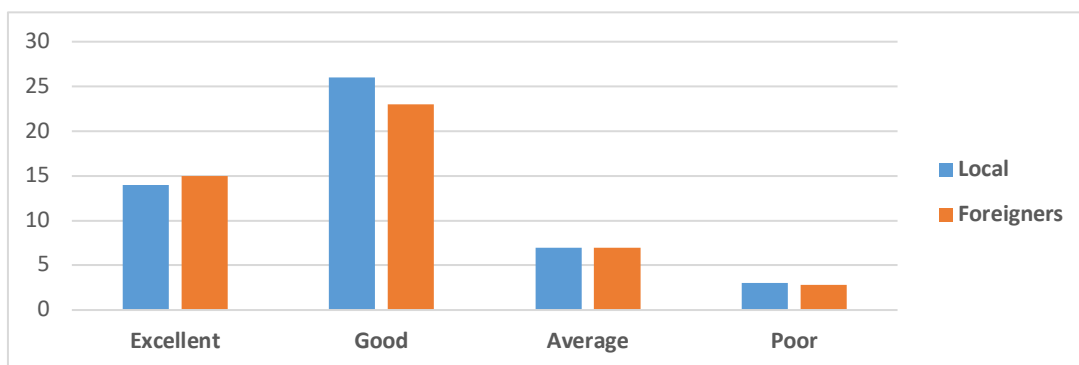


5.6 Hospitality Services

After the experience of having a friendly and warm hospitality service by the hoteliers from the beginning to the end of the tour within the destination. Figure 4.4 shows, 20% of visitors have accepted that the hospitality service received at Kalpitiya destination, during the staying at the hotels and resorts was at an excellent level while 40% of visitors have admitted that the hospitality service is in a good level. Only 10% of visitors have mentioned that the hospitality service that they received was in poor condition.

Figure 6, shows what locals and foreigners' perceptions of the tourists regarding hospitality

Figure 6: Perceptions of the Tourists Regarding Hospitality

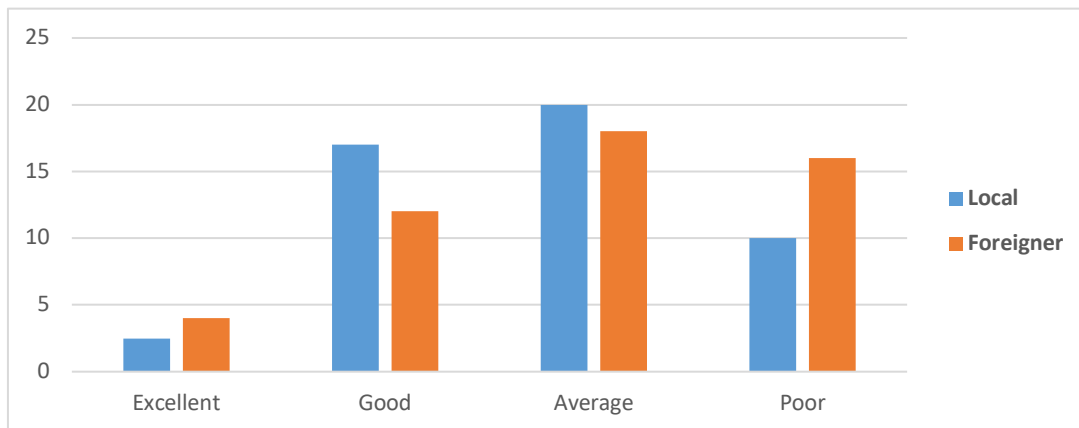


5.7 Infrastructure Facilities

According to figure 6 the perceptions and views of the tourists regarding the infrastructure facilities within the region can be identified. 13% of visitors have mentioned that the infrastructure facilities are at an excellent level while 30% visitors have accepted that infrastructure facilities are in good condition. 34% of visitors have experienced that the infrastructure facilities are in an average condition while 23% of visitors have declared as infrastructure facilities are at a poor level.

Figure 7, shows what locals and foreigners' perceptions of the tourists regarding infrastructure and safety.

Figure 7: Perceptions of the Tourists Regarding the Infrastructure & Safety



Here the tourists were not happy about transportation methods and modes, water, accommodation, sanitary, safety, security, privacy, information facilities and accessibility within the destination. The government should pay attention to expand the road network and to reconstruct the damaged roads in the area. The road constructions have not completed and they are still in ongoing process. Sometimes, travelers encounter inconvenient issues during the traveling periods, due to the lack of infrastructure facilities including sanitary, safety, information and transportation.

6. Recommendation

Recreational areas near urban areas represent one of the most important opportunities to meet the increasing demand for recreational activities. So, increasing public access to both public and private properties useful for visitors spent more time in the area.

Designed more rest areas within the various tourists site it will attract more tourists because most visitors that had a memorable time at the area, they will invite their friends next time. Most of the time water based activities are done by the foreign tourists while the local tourists visit the area in some lower extent. The government should give more importance to increase domestic tourist flow.

Kalpitiya beach is endowed with natural beauty. Tourists remain busy during day time to travel to different places. But when it is night they get bored to stay at hotels or to walk around. They need some refreshments and entertainment at night. So entertainment facilities for night time should be available. It can be theatre, some exhibition or beach party.

The local and foreign tourists are very much keen to visit Hikkaduwa beach, Nilaweli beach. But the public sector should work such a way which creates a different impression about the Kalpitiya in their mind and feel free to visit there so often.

Fishing tours can be arranged on a daily basis or as a part of a longer itinerary. Most of the tourists are interests to get sailing experiences. Nowadays this facility has southern and eastern coastal areas. Kalpitiya area can be introduced sailing experiences with offering special events such as private rental sailing tours.

Kalpitiya beach can be introduced jet skiing sports activities and Banana boat (also called water sled) experience. Jet skiing is high speed water sport activity that speeds attracts thousands of visitors to the Kalpitiya beach.

Keeping water quality in the Kalpitiya beach it increases the population of tourists at the beach. Kalpitiya beach has good environment conditions for kite surfing. Most of tourists can be attracted to this area by organizing the kite trips, kite surfing completion.

There are more enough boat facilities for whales and dolphins visitors, informed to the whales' watchers should not be approached closer than 100 m to any whales. Also provide an educational experience and so on.

Safety equipment and provisions, including good quality lifejackets for the boat tours and also experienced staff need for boat tours. The crew who are well trained in first aid and rescue skills.

The state parties should pay high attention to the environmental issues can be arisen in the area due to the tourism industry. If only the environment is preserved, the tourism industry also can be survived for a long time. Due to the fragility and the rich biodiversity within the ecosystem of this region, the institutes and agencies in both government and private sector should focus on the environmental matters which are encountered by the local communities, tourists and the living species of the ecosystem.

The potentiality of natural resources should not be misused by either investors or local community because all most all the tourists arrive at this area due to the rich bio-diversity, natural landscapes, and unique geographical feat

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