

# NATURE AND MAGNITUDE OF TOURIST HARASSMENT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY IN SRI LANKA

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to assess the nature and magnitude of tourist harassments in Sri Lanka during the period of 2011-2016 with a view to provide information and recommendation for better tourism policy. The study is an exploratory and interpretative qualitative study with a phenomenological approach. Unstructured, open, qualitative interviews were conducted with both male and female tourists of different age groups, from different parts of the world, beach boys, both authorized and unauthorized guides, travel agencies, hoteliers, police officers, academics, government officials involved in tourism, touts and street vendors, and owners of indirectly related businesses. The interviews were conducted in English and Sinhala and most of them were tape-recorded, then transcribed and analyzed. Themes and categories that emerged from the data are augmented with literature.

The study finds that around 25% percent of tourists arriving to Sri Lanka would encounter some sort of harassment though the majority of them are minor in nature and substance.

The experience of harassment makes most of tourists cautious of visiting local markets, going out alone, and going out at night. The majority of interviewees are in the opinion that their vacation was not affected by harassment. The common type of harassment is pestering to buy goods and services. The highest number of complaints made to police was in the category of theft. Elderly tourists are more subject to harassment. Beaches are found to be the hotspots for harassment. It is found that all the harassments are not reported due to some or other reasons. Competition among service providers such as curio sellers, vendors, beach boys, guides made a big impact on tourist harassment.

**Key Words: Tourism, Harassment, Tourists, Complaints,**