

The Roles of Beach Boys and Their Influences on Sustainable Tourism Operations: A Study of Hikkaduwa Sri Lanka

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Tourism is a multidisciplinary industry that involves many different stakeholders in its operational activities. One of the primary criteria of sustainable tourism development in any tourist destination is the active participation and collaboration of stakeholders. The beach boys are one of the major stakeholders in the coastal tourism and depend upon tourists, who generate both positive and negative impacts to the tourism industry as well as to the local community and society. Therefore, the study investigates the roles of the beach boys and their effect on the sustainable tourism operations in Hikkaduwa beach area. The study also identifies the problems and difficulties faced by the beach boys while participating in the tourism. The study was conducted using the mixed methodology. A survey was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire and the data gathered from 113 tourists who visited Hikkaduwa beach area. In addition, 10 unstructured interviews and discussions were conducted to gather information from the beach boys and all the other stakeholders such as hotel managers, shop owners and three wheel drivers. The study revealed that most of the tourists like to obtain the beach boys' service as it is cheap and widely available. Further, the tourists perceived the beach boys as friends and believed that they play positive roles in tourism. There were few segments of foreign tourists who were highly afraid of the beach boys and their appearance and behaviours and further believe that they play negative roles. On the other hand, the local community including hoteliers refuse the role and the behaviour of the beach boys from tourism operations. The study found that there is a positive relationship between the beach boys and sustainable beach tourism in Hikkaduwa according to the tourists' point of view. The prevailing conflicting situation has negatively affected on the sustainable beach tourism in Hikkaduwa.

Keywords: Beach Boys; Beach Tourism; Sustainable Tourism Operations; Tourists' Perception