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## **SOCIO-ENVIRONMENT IMPACT OF COASTAL TOURISM: A CASE OF PASIKUDAH IN EAST COAST OF SRI LANKA**

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### **Abstract**

Coastal tourism development and management is a massive complex phenomenon which throw threatening towards marine life, habitat conservation and social stability. Sri Lanka is a wealthy country which has many natural resources. Natural beauty is the major influence of its economy. Though the nation is facing social related issues along with the less per capita, it manages to improve its fundamental facilities, basic needs and well-being of the people. This paper mainly considers tourism as one of the major economic sectors in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has the capability to satisfy the needs of travelers with its natural beauty. Though there are numerous destinations for the tourism, this study focused on Pasikudah tourist place in Batticaloa. Even though the tourism of the study area is giving lots of benefits to the individuals, there are diverse impacts on environment and social well-being. Therefore, by using primary and secondary data this study involved in identifying the core issues and challenges of tourism in Pasikudah and the surrounded settlement areas. Primary data was used to identify the negative and positive impacts whilst the secondary data used to identify the parallel situation of tourism and integration of tourist places. Eventually the study concluded with the overall analysis of data. Positive impacts influenced by the native folks for their economy and negative impacts were identified in the environment degradation and land use. Migration, mangrove and coral reefs destruction occurring gradually in the Pasikudah region. There is a drastic increase in the arrival of tourist in Pasikudah area from 2009 after the civil war. Hence the sustainable tourism in Pasikudah is still a chance to be executed. Changing the tourism industry through the eco-tourism in the tourism industry in Pasikudah region will be the best solution.

**Keywords:** Tourism, environment, impact, development, sustainability

### **1. Introduction**

The term "Tourism" identified as the temporary movement of people to their preferred destination outside their normal living place for some leisure (Alister & Geoffrey, 1992). People tend to visit places to be released from their distressful lifestyle. These places are called as tourist destination since the place is having high amount of people throughout the years. The natural beauty or artificial technology attract the people towards some particular places around the world. To thank to those places most of the nation gain economic benefits via tourism. Tourism is one of the most important components of the global economy. It is considered by many communities, especially in developing countries. Tourism is one of the reasons for increasing the quality of the life. It gives many positive as well as negative impacts not only to human life but also to the physical environment (UNWTO, 2004).

Sri Lanka is very famous for its natural beauty and native products. Tourism is one of the vital sectors in Sri Lankan economy. Sri Lankan tourism is identified as a third economic sector in generating income for the nation. All the regional, foreign, national and diaspora tourists visit to the most attractive places in Sri Lanka. There are cultural heritage places, naturally attractive places, beautiful coastal regions, natural recreational centers and some

artificial technological destinations lead to Sri Lankan tourism. Pasikudah is one of the famous beaches in Sri Lanka. It has high attention among both local and international tourists. The tourism of Sri Lanka had a rapid growth after the civil war. Thus tourism industry has slowed down since the Easter attack and is now back to normal. Sri Lanka's tourism is creating a significant positive impact on the level of employment and earning foreign exchange, government revenue and also social benefits to the society. The earnings of Sri Lankan tourism represents more than 25% of the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Tourism is the third highest foreign exchange generator of Sri Lanka economy (SLTDA, 2019).

The development of the tourism industry is highly vital to upgrade the standard of living of the local people living in Batticaloa district. As well as Pasikudah tourist area is rapidly developing and getting urbanized. There are suitable areas in Batticaloa district to set up beach resorts similar to Pasikudah. Since the end of the civil war in 2009 and the completion of tsunami rehabilitation project, Pasikudah has become a popular tourist destination among the local foreigners. The development of tourism cannot be excluded from the natural environment but the actions of human create a distance between the natural environment and development. The tourism needs to encourage the natural environment and social economy of a region in a healthy way. Due to the behaviour and greedy need of the people, environment degradation and depletion highly occur in the tourist areas. Pasikudah is not an exceptional in Sri Lanka. It is also getting depleted through tourism. Alternative tourism is more suitable to reduce the disadvantages of high level environmental centers than the massive tourism industry.

According to the tourism development authority of Sri Lanka, 211,6407 and 2333,796 tourist arrivals have been recorded in 2017 and 2018 respectively. And also the arrival of tourists after the Easter attacks can be seen. Based on that tourist arrivals for May is 37,802, June is 63,072, July is 115,701 (SLTDA, 2019). The number of tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka is dropped to 46.9% year-on-year to 115,701 in July, 2019, following a 57% plunge in the previous month. This was the fourth straight month decline in tourist arrivals. The average tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka is 51736.89 from 1977 until 2019, Reaching to the highest at 253,169 in December, 2018 and a record low of 5536 in June of 1977.

Therefore, it is our responsibility to keep this area ecologically protected because it is a growing industry. Since the tourism in Pasikudah depended on the natural beauty of the environment, it should be highly considerate. Although the trend of protecting the environment to increase the quality and quantity of the outcome is different, the environmental tourism industry generally increases the quality of the resources through the diversity of the organisms. Especially marine and coastal tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors around the world. The world's largest industry get despite increased awareness of the economic and environmental

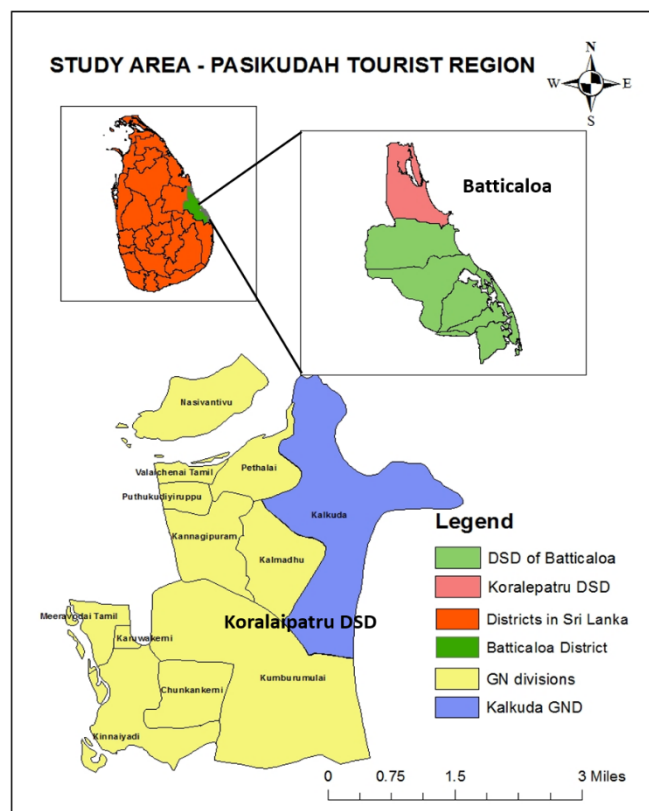


Fig 1: The Spatial location of the Study Area

significance of tourism, it is only in current years scientific researchers have emerged (HALL, 2001).

Pasikudah “Green Algae- bay” is located in the east latitude of 70° 55’ 42” N and North Longitude of 81° 33’ 42” E in the eastern coastal part of Batticaloa district, Koraleipatru DS division and Kalkuda Grama Niladhari division (Fig.1). Pasikudah destination is one of the coastal tourist areas in Sri Lanka which is located 35 kilometers north west of Batticaloa. Alongside to the bay there is a historical small Tamil village. Pasikudah is being a popular tourist destination from the beginning, however suffered huge devastation during 2004 Indian ocean Tsunami and the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009.

Foreign travellers could easily reach the destination since there is a nearby airport which has scheduled flights operating from Colombo Bandaranaike International Airport. During the summer season Pasikudah is such a fabulous coastal tourist place. The sea is calm, the weather is fine and sea-surf are possible in May - October. The region attracts many tourists due to its natural and varnished beauty. Through tourism employment opportunities for many people have also increased in the region. Development of this place highly depending on Pasikudah.

Even though the tourist destination providing much more economic benefits, social well-being and standard of living through the socialization, there are constant negative impacts have been identified in the area. The native people and the study area often face social problem, cultural issues, loss of biodiversity and environment degradation, etc. Therefore this study has been conducted to identify the core issues and find suitable solutions for the identified problems. As well as, to fulfill the research gap that has been opened until now. There is a main objective and sub objectives lead the research:

The main objective of this study is to identify the Environmental and Social Challenges of Coastal Tourism in Pasikudah and the surrounded settlement areas.

Sub objectives are;

- To examine causes for the environmental changes and alteration of the study area.
- To analysis the ecological benefits of this tourism industry as well as to find the negative and diverse effects on the native folks
- To use the resources in this area to be balanced as to improve the living standards of the people and reducing the environmental issues.

## 2. Literature Review

Although many researches have been done regarding the tourism and tourist destination of Sri Lanka, this study concerns about Pasikudah tourist place in Batticaloa and mainly focused to duly fill the gap of contemporary need of the study of environmental impact and social challenges of coastal tourism in the selected region. USAID (2012), summarized a book titled “Tourism income generating and business opportunity mapping in Batticaloa district”. It mainly focused on the national tourism in Sri Lanka and the approach of international tourists in Batticaloa and the overview of the Sri Lanka’s tourism sector. Main objective is to identify the rate of people’s desire for tourism in Batticaloa and the benefits of tourism. And they concluded as that Batticaloa district has plenty of tourist destinations to attract both domestic and foreign tourism.

Managing the tourism leads to economic growth and environmental protection. Both the aspects could help for the sustainable tourist management. Under the topic of “The Management of Tourism” Lestey and Richard in the year of 2005 pointed out the system of tourism, impacts of travel and the structure of the tourism. Their objectives are to understand and recognize tourism business and then to scale the impacts of tourism. They have been identified systematic way of managing the tourism and define the term tourism in a unique way. Therefore this study is mainly focusing on the environmental socio impact.

Though several studies have been conducted for the identification of the benefits of tourism, some studies indicated the negative consequences of it. Alister and Geoffrey (1992) researched about socio economic and physical impacts of tourism in their book titled “Tourism: economic, physical and social impacts” yet they concerned about the importance and the wealth in tourism. Their main aspect was to identify the impacts they concluded with that planning for the proper tourism can be made for the long term consequences.

### **3. Methodology**

This research relied on both quantitative and quantitative data. This research paper is fundamentally based on primary research methods such as field survey, direct observation, questionnaire survey and interview with local people to obtain data. Through this research and innovative ideas, it would be easier to provide appropriate information for sustainable tourism in the coastal tourist region in Pasikudah. By promoting various forms of tourism with different strategies researcher concluded successful ideas. Therefore, secondary data such as books, reports, journals, publications, articles and internet sources have been used for tourism related study. Further, the data have been tabulated and analyzed by Arc GIS 10.3 and Excel software. Google earth images have been used for the location identification, spatial information and integration of map and for the identification of spatial information for the study.

The study area is situated in Kalkuda Grama Niladhari Division (GND). The native people from Kalkuda is highly affected through the tourism. Based on the stratified random sampling method 100 questionnaires were issued among them. The systematic survey strictly made with one person per household. The total population of the GN division is 23,730 (families - 7204). Through the field observation and survey ten people who were running micro business have been identified. Identifying one person is a chance to find another one through snowball sampling method. Few of them do same types of small business whilst some run different shops.

Unstructured interviews have been done with some local people and the authorized people from the study area. Native people are being appointed for tourism related jobs in tourist field, site showing, hotels, restaurants, transports and daily wages jobs. In this study the data were collected through primary and secondary data collection methods and presented in a tabular format. According to the main and sub objectives of the study, descriptive statistic methods and simple statistic methods have been used for the representation. Also the data obtained by a few officers who are responsible for the development of this area is absorbed in some cases. The mode may be used for reducing vulnerability and promoting people for sustainable development of coastal tourism in Pasikudah region.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

Pasikudah is one of the fastest developing and investors’ hub of foreign and local people. The Sri Lankan government have been promoted environmental policies strictly which is help to develop and protect the tourism environment. Current state of Pasikudah tourist region seems so much developed and visited by numerous local and foreign tourists. Since the study is based on the impact of tourism, the coastal tourism can have two types of impact such as positive and negative impacts.

#### **4.1. Positive impact of Coastal Tourism in Pasikudah**

Attracting the attention of tourist is all about the impact of particular area. Tourism increases the awareness of environmental impact in the context of human activity (The International Ecotourism Society, 2008). Particularly, the industrial areas are focusing more on protecting the environment as per the guide of Central Environmental Authority. These

changes act as an environmental protection project in Pasikudah tourism. And this is a positive impact for the area as well as for the people. This is an important step for tourism development. Economic development with environmental protection is an important matter through the tourism industry. The tourism development makes some positive impact on the particular society and the area. Pasikudah tourist attraction is the only area where people use a particular location and other areas are preserved by some security guards. In that case people can access freely due to the tourism. Coastal buffer zoning, tree planting and conservation of mangroves are the productions of the coastal environment from the area. There is a small marshy landscape in Pasikudah which is providing economic benefits to the native folk of the area. Therefore Preservation of it is important. Many trees in that area are attracting tourist with its natural beauty. There are loads of attractive places in Pasikudah. Therefore, that needs to be preserved and protected for further development and growth of the area. As well as these areas are identified for the degradation due to the high accessibility of people.

Quality water resources:

The development of coastal tourism in Pasikudah provides quality water for the purpose of drinking and other usages. Therefore, the arrival of tourists from various regions are essential for clean drinking water availability here and it is a very positive impact in this region due to the coastal tourism.

Scenic beauties and attraction inventories:

Strategies of local and provincial authorities to preserve and develop natural resource and attraction inventories. To enhance the tourism, the protection and preservation of scenic beauty is much more essential.

Using Green concept:

Lower rated emissions, pollutions and waste management system and practices found locally. National level programs underway to preserving coastal resource.

The area is covered with pleasant air to breathe with beautiful coconut trees. Ecological protection is being carried out by the local government for the tourism. Even though there are positive environmental impacts in Pasikudah due to the tourism development, there are even negative consequences exist. Each development process should consider the eco-friendly and sustainable process. Therefore, indicating the negative vibe of a precious area is an essential task.

#### **4.2. Negative impact of coastal tourism in Pasikudah**

Whatever the positive impact on economy and conservation of environment, tourism will have the same amount of negative impact. Coastal tourism has socio environment related negative impact in the study area. Foreign and the domestic tourists both visit to the Pasikudah tourism site. Tourism is in conflict due to the congested tourists. Tourism related physical changes and environment alterations are very common for a wide range of tourism infrastructure.

The physical environment is being collapsed due to the massive number of tourists' arrival. Minor physical alteration impacts including sand removal, destruction of mangroves and ponds, damages the coral reefs and sea grass beds which help fish breeding. Environment and the surrounding area get changed because of the rapid development. Therefore, the habitat of wild living beings is lost and there will be a biodiversity degradation. This region is rich in mangroves and aquatic environment. Over usage and frequent visit to the ecosystem is critical for its healthy existence. Inappropriate disposal of solid waste from the surrounding areas causes the environment degradation. It leads to the unattractive atmosphere in the tourist area. Most of the trashes and garbage are released from hotels, restaurants and nearby villages. This

problem seems to be a common issue in most of the tourist destinations in Sri Lanka. Not only in the terrestrial ecosystem but also the virgin aquatic ecosystem is experiencing solid waste problem. Due to the construction for the development, multi threatening occur in the study area. Loss of biodiversity and loss of migrated species are the major ecological problems. Hence, removal of native people from the site, altering their way of life and changing them for different jobs and life seem to be a huge social issue in the area. People aren't tend to adopt to the new environment and culture. Therefore many conflicts rose to the native people.

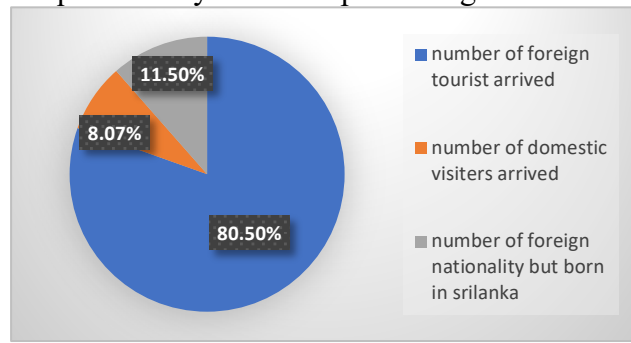


Fig 2: Distribution of tourist arrivals to Batticaloa district, Source: The Tourism Development Authority. (2011).

### 4.3 Tourist arrival to destination and accommodation in Pasikudah

According to the current state of tourist arrival, foreign tourists are paying much attention to Pasikudah tourist region rather than the Sri Lankan nationalities. Domestic people represent only 8% of the total. More remarkably diaspora is contributing around 11.5% of arrivals. Therefore, more than 80% foreign tourist arrived to batticaloa district (fig.2). Another important matter is the facilities that have been provided by the tourist region. Therefore, Pasikudah tourism region include many constructions of infrastructure, building and other facilities such as many hotels, spa, restaurants and recreational centers and resort.

Table 1. Hotels and guest houses in Pasikudah region

Hotel & Guest house	
I	Anantaya resort and spa
II	The calm resort & spa
III	Maalu maalu resort & spa
IV	Uga bay by uga escapes
V	Sunrise by jet wing
VI	Marina beach Pasikudah
VII	Amethyst resort
VIII	Inn on the bay guesthouse
IX	Paasi bay hotel
X	Delight guest house & restaurant
XI	Ashram accommodation
XII	Amanda beach resort
XIII	Kayjay beach resort
XIV	Passikuda eco village hotel
XV	Laya waves
XVI	Aqua marine beach house
XVII	Yaswi guest house
XVIII	Vista bub yaswi guest house
XIX	John guest inn
XX	Hotel vasuhi
XXI	Nandawanam guest house
XXII	The new land hotel
XXIII	Simla guest house
XXIV	Victoriya guest house
XXV	Anilana passikudah
XXVI	Treatoo eco cottage
XXVII	Vista room Victoria guest

#### 4.4 Environmental impact and social challenges of coastal tourism

##### I. Loss of marine resource destruction:

The damage doesn't end with the construction of tourist infrastructure. Some tourist resorts release their sewage and other wastages directly into water bodies. The surrounding coral reefs and other sensitive marine habitats recreational activities also have huge impact due to the unsafe disposal. For example, careless boating, diving snorkeling and fishing have seriously damaged coral reefs. Through people touching reefs stirring up sediment, marine animals and birds are also disturbed by increased numbers of boats. Tourism can also add to the consumption of sea food in this area. Putting pressure on local fish production and sometimes over fishing causes the most marine resource depletion. The local people collecting the reefs and other shells from the shallow sea shore region for the selling purpose. These types of continuous acts will cause harm for the fish breeding. Also it effects the surrounding natural environment.



Fig 3: The tourists and fishers in Pasikudah

Marine resource and ocean resources which attract more foreign travellers are replenished in order to make them more secure. That is the great marine resources like the Valampuri charm and Sea Pearl are purchased by tourists who visit Pasikudah. There are some most important environment issues that have been encountered with the help of village people. They argue those consequences are the results of all types of tourist visits.

##### II. Bio diversity Concerns:

Tourism can cause loss of biodiversity in many ways. More specifically negative impact on biodiversity can be seen by various factors. Coastal area is environmentally sensitive which lays between the land and sea characterized by a very huge amount of biodiversity. They include some of the richest and most fragile ecosystems on earth, like mangroves and coral reef.

- Very beneficial mangrove forests and sea grass meadows have been removed to create open beaches.
- Tourist development based recreational figures and other structures have been built directly on top of coral reef
- Nesting sites for endangered marine turtles have been destroyed and disturbed by large numbers of tourist on the beaches.



Fig 4: Coastal shore pollution in Pasikudah

It is also said that these types of environmental changes and livelihood of the people of the region was not present at the earliest time. There were more wildlife species were endangered such as Peacock, Deer and sparrow. This made the clear idea that the most significant environmental impact occur. The natural ecosystem have been altered by the tourism developers and the tourists. Tourists wade out from the beach on to the reef flats at low tide. They are walking on living organisms, a mass of broken coral skeletons on the reef floor are covered with a brown –grey coating of algae. Due to the green algae and coral reefs this Pasikudah beach has been identified as one of the most attractive beaches in Sri Lanka. But, today there is seemingly beautiful natural ecosystem that has changed this area due to the improper tourism activities.

### III. Displacement of native people

The native people from the study area had been removed due to the development of tourism long ago. Still the same incident but not forcefully but voluntarily. Migrated people from the study area are not satisfied with the facilities and benefits they gain through tourism. Most of the native people rely on the tourism related jobs. Some have benefits and profits whilst others gain nothing but poverty. Some people gather the sea shells and coral reefs for the production of fancy items and sell them for the tourists. Most of the native folks claim to have lost their places due to the building construction and establishments of hotels and resorts. Though they have been migrated to other places they cannot spend a normal lifestyle due to the economic problems.

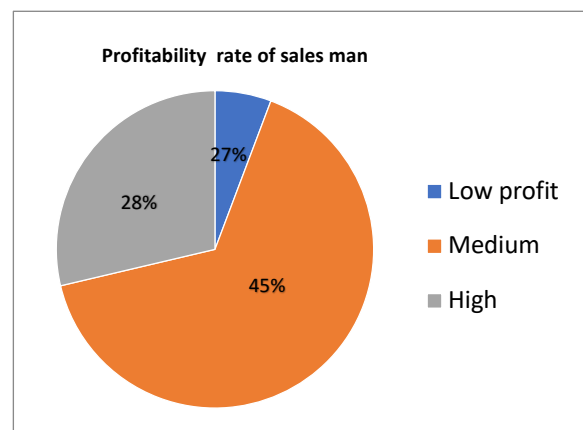


Fig 5: Salesmen's profit rate

### VI. Benefits for native people via tourism

Some native people who does business for the living, gain more economic benefits through the tourism. As well as fishermen and hotel owners are also having economic benefits through the coastal tourism in Pasikudah. Therefore, Pasikudah tourism not only causes problems to the environment and people but also provides much more benefits to the entire village. According to the questionnaire survey and field visit, some salesmen have agreed that they are getting more benefits whilst some are not having much profit. According to the given Fig 5 salesmen's profitability has been indicated. In that case, it is visible that medium profit gaining people are higher than the low and high profitable salesmen. They insist that the tourist

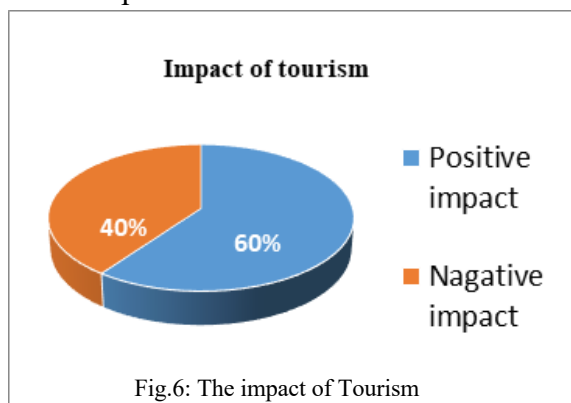


arrival needs to be much more in numbers since they can earn more through business. The people tend to like and support the tourism development in Pasikudah. These comments were noticed while interviewing them.

Similarly, the study area, Pasikudah coastal region is one of Sri Lanka's leading tourism spots that is enhancing the positive impacts and preventing and decreasing the negative impacts and it shows the clear path to the tourism development in the study area. This research claims to show a way for the sustainable development and potential growth in the study area. While sustainable development is a very brief concept, it is easier to apply if the stakeholders involve in it. The below triangle makes a clear explanation how sustainable demonstrates and how the economy maintains balance between the environmental and the community. Though each area in this triangle is unique, they rely on one another for long-term sustainable development. Setting up a three-dimensional facility in a stand along hotel where the ecological tourism has three components and benefits to modern and future generation.

Sustainable development meets the need of the present tourism in Pasikudah region. Tourism development can be fulfill while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and live support system. Sustainable tourism development meets the need of present tourism and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. "Fulfilling the needs of the present generation without thinking the ability of future generation will always leads to unsuccessful development".

While questioning the native people regarding the impacts of tourism, most of them agreed that they get more positive impacts rather than negative consequences (Fig.6). Environmentally there are some bottlenecks identified by the researchers and the villagers. Socially, the native folks got higher level economic benefits rather than the losses. Therefore, the tourism may cause harm and give beneficiaries to the surrounding villages since the destination and the located area is famous for the tourism.



## 5. Conclusion

Tourism and the tourist industry have a huge fame for the relaxation and recreational activities. Tourism is a collection of activities, services and industries that delivers a travel experience, including transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishment, retail shops, entertainment business activity facilities and other hospitality. According to this tourism sector development and its success is concerned each and every developing country will gain more economic benefits. These tourism sectors include some of the important fields such as environment, socio and economic fields. This Pasikudah coastal tourism has positive and negative consequences through tourism. Some of the native people are suffering due to the migration and displacements while others are having economic benefits. The location also got changed and urbanized due to the tourism development. At the same time the major role for the destruction of environment. Therefore, the study identified that the existence of some environment and social related positive and negative impacts is inevitable in the study area. As a solution for the problem the "Sustainable development" can be processed.

## 6. Recommendations to prevent negative environment impact of costal tourism in Pasikudah

Improved environmental management and planning environmental management of tourism facilities and especially hotels can increase benefits to natural environment. But this requires careful planning for controlled development based on analysis of the environmental resources of this area. Planning helps to make choices of use of environment resource or to find ways to make them compatible. By planning earlier tourism development damages and expensive mistakes can be prevented, avoiding the gradual deterioration of environmental assets significance for tourism. “Green Tourism” and “Smart Growth” can be applicable in the coastal tourist region all around the island. The Green Tourism entails a type of use that minimizes negative impacts on the environment and on local people. Hence, conservation and preservation of natural resources and environmentally sensible area will lead to a proper tourism management.

Strict environmental standards for solid, liquid and gaseous waste emissions. Re plantation, Re-forest activities should be promoted in the Pasikudah region. Proper maintenance and proper waste disposal would be better in the accommodate areas in the study region. Training the villagers regarding hospitality services is required besides promoting awareness about keep coastal tourism sector in Pasikudah. Rural tourism region has become one of the famous tourist destinations in Sri Lanka.

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