

Impacts of Climate Change on Recreational Value of Nature Reserves; Exploring the Perceptions of National Tourists Towards Hikkaduwa Marine Reserve in Southern Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Understanding the phenomenon of climate change and its consequences on eco systems would help in resource management and policy development securing a sustainable future. A considerable amount of literature can be found on global climate change but there is a dearth of information on changes in visitation behaviour of tourists under the context of climate change scenarios, especially in the developing nations. Therefore, a pretested structured questionnaire survey was conducted with 68 national tourists to examine their concern and knowledge on climate change in Hikkaduwa Marine Reserve and examined the possible impacts of climate change on the visitation behaviour and tourist's willingness to support for management actions to mitigate climate change consequences. Results indicated that water pollution, resource damage from visitor use, and climate change were the major threats to the Hikkaduwa Marine Reserve. Almost all the respondents agreed that climate change is taking place and the majority of the visitors believed that the climate change occurs due to the anthropogenic activities such as deforestation, fossil fuel burning for electricity, and agriculture activities. Moreover, results revealed that sea level rise is the most significant impact of climate change on Hikkaduwa marine reserve, which would reduce the beach area creating a negative externality on respondent's visitation behaviour to the marine reserve.

Keywords: Anthropogenic impacts, Climate Change scenarios, Implications, Visitation behavior

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