

Recreational Value of the Pigeon Island National Park, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The coastal ecosystem is essential to life on our planet. Pigeon Island National Park has one of the best remaining coral reefs with high live coral cover in Sri Lanka and is an ideal location for scuba diving and snorkeling. The objective of this research was to explore the recreational value of the Pigeon Island. Contingent valuation method was used in the study. The result indicated the use of Pigeon Island for diving was ranked by 74% of local visitors as the most preferred activity. Foreign visitors' mean willingness to pay for boating, swimming, scenic visit and whale watching were Rs.1454, Rs.375, Rs.365 and Rs.1510, respectively. But for local visitors' for diving and whale watching were Rs.1240 and Rs.919.00, respectively. Average willingness to pay of the foreign visitors for entrance fee was Rs.1560 and the average willingness to pay of the local visitors for the entrance fee was Rs. 644.00. Results of the T test showed that significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between foreign visitors and local visitors for entrance fee willing to pay, hours of spending, costs for boating, diving and whale watching. Chi square analysis showed that there was a high significant association between the total willingness to pay of the local visitors and their education level ($X^2=76.75$, $p < 0.01$). A significant association was observed between the total willingness to pay of the local visitors and the cost for boating in the Pigeon Island ($X^2=36.52$, $p < 0.01$). Also total willingness to pay was significantly ($p < 0.01$) affected by age, hours of spending, number of the group members and expenses for meals. The current entrance fees do not capture the economic value of the Pigeon Island. Hence it is recommended to increase the entrance fees and prices for different activities to improve the income of the Pigeon Island National Park and to place suitable management plan to maintain the quality of the services provided by Pigeon Island which are associated with the community that could result in increased revenue generation.

Keywords: Contingent valuation method, Pigeon Island, Recreational value, Willingness to pay

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