

IMPACT OF TSUNAMI DEVASTATION ON SOUTHERN COASTAL TOURIST INDUSTRY.

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INTRODUCTION

The contribution to the national income by the tourism was increased year by year in Sri Lanka due to cease-fire and the peace dividend and it was highest (\$ 324 million) in 2003. The targeted income from tourism in 2004 was 350 million US dollars. The majority of tourists visit the country on vacation especially in December to April. Therefore, room occupancy rates begin to increase from December. Unfortunately tsunami disaster was struck in December. So the arrival of the tourists to the country was completely ceased and the tourists who were there at that time returned. The income generated by the hotel industry was declined and it was nearly zero. Other than that hoteliers in coastal area lost their buildings and property, even the lives. As a result, the tourist industry was in a critical condition today. This survey provides an overview of the devastation to the tourist industry in coastal zone due to tsunami and estimates the status of the tourism at present.

To face any future tsunami or other disaster government is expecting to introduce an act, to ban the new constructions within 100m from high tidal zone. This study also concerns whether there is a correlation between the quantity of damage and the distance from the sea.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna coastal area of the Galle district was selected as the study area. Coastal hotels and motels (n =70) within 200m zone from sea were selected. A questioner was prepared and pre-tested. The survey was conducted to obtain primary data. Direct observation of coastal areas in many places was done to get an idea about how that coastal area was affected or survived. Direct observation of damage hotels and motels were done to get an estimation of property damages. Secondary data were obtained from other sources. Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel package.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the total hotels in these two areas, 61% are in Hikkaduwa and 39% in Unawatuna, of which 34% are star hotels, 13.6% are guesthouses with restaurants and 15.9% are restaurants only. Out of them 57% are approved by the Sri Lanka tourist board (SLTB). 36.4% are members of Ruhunu Hoteliers Association and Unawatuna Development Society.