

The issues faced in promoting Ritigala as an eco-tourist destination in Sri Lanka

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Ritigala is a nature reserve in Anuradhapura having various significant values and it boasts of archaeological and ecological uniqueness. It is also a very popular destination for unbelievable climate patterns. The research problem was how to attract responsible domestic and foreign travelers to Ritigala. Moreover, the major objective was to identify more and more nature based activities to create a well-attracted eco-product to satisfy the tourist. And the other objectives were to recognize the deficits and issues encountered by the visitors at the site. Research was based on both primary sources including field observations, interviews and structured questionnaires and secondary sources such as reports, magazines and websites. The site and its periphery were explored and also the visitor related facilities were observed to identify the current situation of the site. The sample consisted of 30 domestic visitors and 20 foreign visitors who were randomly selected at the site during weekends. Visitors were interviewed with structured questionnaires to identify their perception, knowledge and comments regarding the site. Domestic visitors are attracted to the site more than foreign visitors. Most of the foreigners are from China and the other major markets are German, Thailand and UK. Most of the nature related activities cannot be seen at the site and it should be improved furthermore. Bird watching, photography, trekking, hiking, nature trails, carting, camping and tree home can be introduced to visitors to enjoy its nature based values. Most of the domestic visitors are not entirely aware of the archaeological values of the site and they are still not provided proper guidance within the site. Visitor related services and infrastructure facilities also are not at a satisfactory level. Information knowledge on the site and its values are not being updated accurately. There should be a proper site management plan, as this is a place which encompasses both archaeological and ecological values. Visitors should be given an opportunity to examine the site with accurate and updated information which should be provided at the site by the Department of Archaeology, travel and tourism related companies, and the community in the area.

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