



IMPACT OF DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES TO PROMOTE CAVE TOURISM IN UVA PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation : Impact of Destination Attributes to Promote Cave Tourism in Uva Province

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Human and environment are deeply interconnected and the environment is directly affects the nature of the society such as culture, behavioural patterns and believes. Sri Lanka is an island with a very high density of caves which have unforgettably played an important role in ancient Sri Lankan Culture. Although caves are considered as dark spaces with many legendary tales, geologically a cave can be defined as “a natural cavity in a rock which is large enough for a human to enter”. In the context of tourism development, caves fall into four groups. The first group comprises caves that have a long tradition, but show signs of aging as a tourism product. The second group include caves that were once open to the public, but were later closed for some reason. The third group consists of caves on the seaside or seabed visited by speleologists-divers. The fourth group is made up of potential cave sites that have been evaluated as being attractive, but are located in hard-to-access areas, making their valorisation in tourism purpose more difficult. All four groups can be promoted as cave tourism destinations in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is the island that the archaeologists found the earliest human remains which are old for more than 35000 years. Sri Lanka is an island with a very high density of caves which have unforgettably played an important role in ancient Sri Lankan Culture. When the ancient kings were ruling the country, they used caves to escape from invaders. There are thousands of manmade caves in and around the historical sites in the Uva province. Most of the caves were decorated with paintings called frescos and they offered the caves to the monks when they returned to their places.

Caves are open cavities on earth which are very wonderful geological Formations and now it becomes one of the wonderful niche tourism products. Times, rate of weathering and erosion, climate are the factors that are affecting formation of caves. Caves are places of mineral resources and people have harvested those resources since long time.

Caves in high grade terrains are newly introduced touristic destinations in Sri Lanka (Pathmakumara Jayasingha, Cave Tourism in Sri Lanka). Hence it is relatively a new concept for developing tourism. With the wide range of cave sites spread all around the country with some of them dating back approximately to 500 million years; this is an adventure into the prehistoric studies and for tourism purposes. The largest and adventurous caves have been recorded in Uva province in Sri Lanka and they are being studied at the moment with the aim of introducing for the field of cave tourism (Pathmakumara Jayasingha, Cave Tourism in Sri Lanka). But according to researches there areas which can be called as hidden attractions in Uva province since less number of tourists is going to those hidden destinations. However, still the cave is known as a culture and heritage site rather than a Cave Tourism destination among tourists.

With this newly introduced concept more people would be attracted to the caves for research, studies, fun, adventure, treasure hunt and also for vandalism. Hence the need of cave management and conservation will be a great issue in the present.

Key words: cave tourism, caves, promote, destination Attributes, potentials