

## **Identifying the Potential to Promote Wildlife Photography Tourism in Sri Lanka (Empirical Evidence from Yala National Park in Sri Lanka)**

M.L.C. Sayuranga<sup>1\*</sup> and C.J.P. Kulathilake<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Tourism Studies, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Management Sciences, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka*

*\*Corresponding Author E-mail: chamalsayuranga100@gmail.com, TP: +94713416945*

Wildlife Photography Tourism is an untapped market for study, it caters tourists who are interested in Wildlife photography to travel from one destination to another. The ability to influence travel affects different industries including the tourism market. Therefore, within destinations promoting the wildlife photography market as a niche tourism market may be a better opportunity for the tourism industry. However, Sri Lanka is highly ranked in terms of species and endemic species per unit area, for the key groups of species that wildlife travellers are interested in. Wildlife photography tourism stands as a special interest tourism apart from the traditional wildlife tourism, which has still not clearly identified the potential of the Wildlife photography tourism market in Sri Lanka. This study aims to identify potentials to promote wildlife photography tourism in Yala national park. Primary data was collected from 15 respondents by using structured interviews and the sample was selected by using the purposive sampling method. The content analysis method was used to analyze qualitative data. Abundant potentials, issues and challenges, and market opportunities have been identified to promote wildlife photography tourism within Sri Lanka. The study's findings indicated attractions, accommodations, and accessibility as the key attributes of a destination in promoting wildlife photography tourism in Yala National Park. Besides, the lack of government's contribution was identified as a major issue to promote wildlife photography as a niche tourism market segment. Prominent findings highlighted the market opportunity to attract wildlife photographers and this study was able to identify various types of market opportunities to promote wildlife photography tourism. Furthermore, based on the salient findings, study advocates to promote wildlife photography tourism by implementing a proper destination marketing program, innovating wildlife photography tours by the tour operators, integrating with other niche tourism markets, and gaining a competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** Wildlife Photography Tourism; Niche tourism