



A Study on Identifying the Potentials and Barriers for the Tourism Development in Sinharaja Rain Forest

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka Tourism has achieved to a new milestone with the increased number of arrivals in 2015 compared to past years and tourism was able to upgrade its rank to the third level as the largest source of Foreign Exchange Earner of the national economy in 2015. Sri Lanka is rich with eight World Heritage Sites, Sinharaja is a one of them. Sinharaja is a major nature based tourism attraction. Also Nature based tourism has gained an important position in contributing to the dual goals of generating an income from the natural environment and nature conservation. Sinharaja rainforest can be accessed through three main entrances and "*Kudawa*" entrance being the mostly used entrance. Therefore, Kudawa entrance and Kudawa Grama Niladhari division are selected as the study area in this research. Sinharaja rain forest has favorable condition to nature based tourism. But visitor arrivals remain low. Visitor records of the Yala National Park and Horton Plains National Park evidenced a considerably high visitor records relative to Sinharaja rain forest. Also as a world heritage site if it comparing with another world heritage site Sigiriya, Sigiriya had more visitors than Sinharaja forest. Also number of researches carried out in these areas is negligible. Hence this study investigate potentials and barriers for tourism development in Sinharaja rain forest. This study mainly focus on developing visitor profiles who visit Sinharaja rain forest using Kudawa entrance, identify community perception towards tourism, challenges for tourism development and identify strategies for tourism development in Kudawa-Sinharaja area. A judgmental sampling technique was used. Data were collected by distributing two separate questionnaires among travelers who visit Sinharaja rain forest and community members who lived in Kudawa Grama Niladhari Division. Also interviews were used. According to the findings of the research there were challenges for tourism development such as assessing funds for tourism development, environment pollution due to domestic travellers' behavior, lack of facilities, social problems etc. Also research finds that attraction of Sinharaja rain forest favorable to tourism development.