

Promoting Mihintale as a higher tourist attraction

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Introduction

Sri Lanka is an ideal destination to observe disciplinary of history since the island inherits an abundance of evidence of geological landscapes, ruins and monumental. Mihintale is one place that found much archeological evidence. Eight miles east of Anuradhapura, close to the Anuradhapura-Trincomalee road is situated the 'Missaka Pabbatha' which is height above mean sea level of 1,014 feet, covers 450 acres of land area (Lagamuwa,2016). This place is the most important site for tourism industry because it consists of many archeological heritage sites in Sri Lanka; The ancient hospital, Kantaka Cetiya, The Refectory, Ambasthala Dagaba, The Cave of Arahant Mahinda, Maha Stupa, Aradhana Gala, Kaludiya Pokuna, Naga Pokuna, Singha Pokuna and Katu Seya. There is higher tourist arrival in June every year because of the Poson festival which is as important day for Sri Lankan Buddhist people; it is believed that the origin place of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. But, the problem is that

there is a lack of domestic and foreign tourist arrival in Mihintale in other months except for June. There should be higher tourism attraction to Mihintale because it is centered on many tourism sites; Anuradhapura ancient city, Dambulla, Sigiriya and Trincomalee. Therefore, it is more important to find out the causes for lack of tourist attraction in Mihintale because the tourism industry is impacted on Sri Lankan GDP; the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP in 2014 was LKR462.1bn and 4.8% of GDP (Travel & Tourism Economic Impact, 2015). This study mainly focuses on promoting Mihintale as a higher tourist attraction.

Objectives

The General objective of this study is to promote Mihintale as a higher tourist attraction. Specific objectives are; to find out the reasons for the lack of tourist attraction compared to other closest tourism site; Anuradhapura Sacred City and to suggest mitigation measures for lack of tourist attraction.

Methodology

The research area consisted with 2 areas; Mihintale and Anuradhapura ancient city which both are situated in North central province, Sri Lanka. Both primary and secondary data were used for this study. Primary data were collected under stratified sampling method by field observation and interviewing 60 people; 20 of foreign, domestic tourists and travel agents in Anuradhapura ancient city, 20 of foreign and domestic tourists in Mihintale and 20 of people which consisted businessmen, taxi drivers, security officers and workers of Mihintale temple. As secondary data journals, central bank reports, books and internet websites were used. Descriptive statistical methods; graphs, charts, tables and percentages in SPSS and Ms Excel were used to analyze data.

Results and discussion

According to the field survey done in Anuradhapura ancient city, it was revealed the causes for lack of tourist arrivals to Mihintale. 78% of domestic travelers visit as one day journey. Therefore they cover only Anuradhapura ancient city in one day and they have no time to cover Mihintale in the same day, especially domestic travelers visit under low budget journey plan as one day trip. 67% of foreign travelers visit Anuradhapura for one day and then they travel to other destinations;

Jaffna, Batticaloa or Trincomalee in next day. They do not cover Mihintale because their traveling package does not include Mihintale site. But, under the field survey, 33% of foreign travelers have an idea to travel Mihintale in next day. 59% of them have not idea on the importance of Mihintale and they are not known about Mihintale.

According to the interview done in Mihintale site for foreign and domestic travelers, following issues related to the tourism industry in Mihintale are shown up. 72% of travelers reasoned that the lack of quality of food and beverage because there is a lack of restaurant which provided healthy foods for foreigners; less spicy food. Under perception of foreign travelers, 66% of them indicated as inadequate facilities in hotel and restaurant. 54% of them revealed as beggars are serious problem, especially small children, prophesy tellers and disabled people. 84% of them said that there is a weakness of sanitation facilities in Mihintale archeological site; lack of healthy filtered drinking water, unsystematic water supply, lack of clean toilets and washrooms.

Due to the perception of businessman, taxi drivers, security officers and workers of the temple, 74% of them revealed a reason as not enough reconstruction facilities in Mihintale town; especially in Bulankulama lake

of Mihintale which can be the very potential attraction of foreigners. The last reconstruction of the lake was done in 2006(Keerthisena, 2017). Also, 59% of them indicated the lack of attentions of the government and Ministry of tourism development to promote tourism in Mihintale.

Conclusion

According to this field study, the researcher identified the reasons for the occurring gap between tourist arrivals among Anuradhapura and Mihintale as follows. Most of the foreign and domestic travelers visit Anuradhapura per day and it is caused to do not cover Mihintale archeological site. Most of the traveling packages do not include traveling in Mihintale.

There are some common issues to demotivate tourism in Mihintale; Lack of quality food and beverage, inadequate facilities in Hotel and restaurant, Problem arises by beggars and weakness of sanitation facilities. Otherwise, there are not enough reconstruction activities in Mihintale town and lack of attention of the government and ministry of tourism development.

There are some recommendations to promote tourism in Mihintale;

introduce new traveling packages, which covered Mihintale archeological site by travel agencies. Increase the number of tourist hotel and restaurant with better facilities and enhance the facilities of existing hotels and restaurants. Focus on increasing sanitation facilities and reconstruction activities in Mihintale area. The site is being promoted via an official website of www.explorelanka.com. The website should be further upgraded with new technological strategies such as virtual tours etc. Increase the attention of government and ministry of tourism development to promote tourism industry in Mihintale area.

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