A Study on finding the feasibility of promoting palaeo bio-diversity Tourism in Sri Lanka (Special reference with Bundala National Park - Hambantota District)

Sachintha Deshan Rajapaksha^{1*}, Gamini Adikari², Suranga C. Silva³, Kelum Nalinda Manamendra-Arachchi²

¹ Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, Colombo.

Keywords: Palaeobiodiversity, Value-added Special interest tourist, Niche market

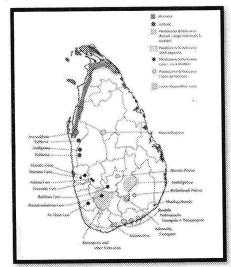
Introduction

Sri Lanka is an island of 65,610 Sq.km in the area and possesses a high level of biodiversity. Sri Lanka considers as one of the biodiversity hotspots out of 34 in the world. Not only now Sri Lanka had a rich biodiversity, but in the past as well. There are wide range of rich palaeobiodiversity sites in Sri Lanka that has spread from coastal areas to highland areas.

According to Palaeobiodiversity action plan it defines'palaeobiodiversity as "the biodiversity of ancient times up to the historic period man and his

interactions with the palaeo environment."

Pathirajawela is one of the oldest prehistoric open air settlement site



² Postgraduate Instituteof Archaeology, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo.

³Department of Economics, University of Colombo, Colombo

*Sachintha80@gmail.com

which situated near the coastal area of Bundala National Park in District. This Hambantota settlement site has been dated to 125,000 - 80,000 BP. Department of Archaeology has been revealed the artifacts which are belong to the middle Palaeolithic period. These stone tools were made by quarts cherts. Therefore, and Bundala National Park has a rich palaeo biodiversity value.

Introducing paleotourism concept to the Bundala National Park is one of the effective ways to protect and manage this heritage site. The location and surroundings of the Bundala National Park an ideal for promoting a sustainable paleotourism. This study is attempting to find out the possibilities of promoting paleotourism at Bundala National Park.

Objectives

- 1. Understand the level of willingness to visit palaeotourism sites in Sri Lanka.
- 2. Understand prospects and challenges promote paleotourism in Sri Lanka.

- Understand the factors of promoting paleotourism in Sri Lanka
- 4. Finding feasibility of promoting palaeotourismat Bundala National Park.

Problem of the Study

is wide There range of palaeobiodiversity heritage sites in Sri Lanka which has not stilluse for promoting the tourism industry. Tourism planners should be paid more attention of using palaeo biodiversity heritage, promoting the tourism industry. Thisattempt is tofind out that there is a huge possibility of developing and the paleotourism promoting concept. As well as, what is the visitor's point of view about this concept?

Methodology

Limitation of this research is randomly selected 100 foreign travellers who have attended to this surveyonline. This open-air settlement site selected as the palaeobiodiversity model site of this research.

Both primary and secondary data were used for theresearch. Pathirajawela Field observations and online survey used as the primary data collecting method. A questioner was created with open ended and close ended questions. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used for this research.

Unpublished research papers, palaeobiodiversity books, leaflets, andmagazines have used for collecting secondary information.

Finally, survey data analysed by using SPSS software system. It reveals the traveller's ideas and comments about paleotourism concept.

Results and Discussion

Sri Lanka anticipates achieving four millions of visitors in 2020.Tourism marketershavea huge responsibility of promoting Sri Lanka as a best destination in the world. Therefore, new tourism concepts need to be introduced, instead of traditional tourism New promotional heritage. programs haveto be launch to increase the number of tourist arrivals.That is one of sustainable wayof facing tourism competition and developing the tourism industry in the global tourism context. Palaeobiodiversity heritage is a good potential to promote Sri Lankan tourism industry to the world tourism market.

Research findings could be arranged, according to the objectives mentioned erlier.

1. Understand the level of willingness to visit palaeotourism sites in Sri Lanka.

According those 76.6% responders has cleary mention that, they are certainly like to visit palaeobiodiversity sites. 22% of responders have been mentioned, as maybe. If Sri Lanka has an of effective way promotingpalaeotourism, it has a possibility of attracting this group to Sri Lanka. Therefore, researcher identified 93.6% of responder's willingness to visit Sri Lanka's palaeobiodiversity heritage.

2. Understand the prospects and challenges promote the paleo tourism in Sri Lanka.

Palaeobiodiversity heritage sites are still in developinglevel and need to be developedas palaeotourismsites. There is lack of Palaeotourism sites interpreters in Sri Lanka.In addition valuing and pricing of this heritage is very

important to develop this concept. Site development, Facilities development, Interpreters training and development, Marketing and promotion campaigns should has be done for the promoting this concept.

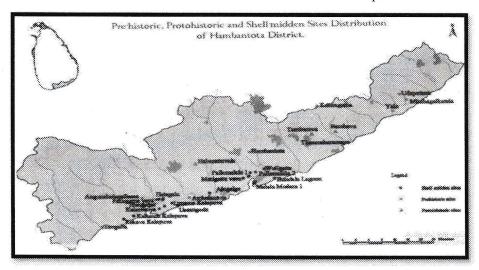
3. Understand the factors of promoting paleotourism in Sri Lanka.

According to the research, 37.3% responders have mentioned, they are familiar with this subject.62.7% have mentioned that, this subject is not well-known. Therefore, the researcher identified, tourism planners have a huge responsibility to promote palaeobiodiversity heritage to the world tourism market.

But, Palaeotourism has possibility to promote for special interest tourists. Because Modern travellers have not only for leisure purposes, they would select destination seeking new experience to widen their knowledge and broaden their experiences. Palaeotourism is new a concept for Sri Lankan Tourism. It has a possibility todevelop as aniche market of Eco tourism.

4. Finding feasibility of promoting palaeotourism in Bundala National Park

This is a well-developed wildlife safari park in Sri Lanka.Bundala National Park visitor's percentage is increasing annually. There is a possibility to offer Palaeotourism as a value added product for Eco



tourism.

Paleotourism concept possibility to promote paleotourism sites attraction cluster with Southern Province tourism. Bundala Pathirajawela has the possibility to promote as main focal point of this project.Below items should be established for promoting paleo tourism concept in Bundala.

Proposals for developing Palaeotourism in Bundala National Park

- 1. Training interpreters team
- Develop Visitor Centre,(Information Desk)
- 3. Create a theme, for the site.
- 4. Establish Palaeobiodiversity Park, Mini museum and a souvenir shop,
- 5. Develop trekking path and camping facilities.
- 6. Display Oil paintings about palaeobiodiversityEnvironment
- 7. Display artifacts andboards

Promotion activities

- Make TVDocumentariesabout Sri Lanka Palaeo Biodiversity.
- Coffee table leaflets.
- Publish travel blog and travel magazine articles about palaeo heritage in Sri Lanka.

References

- Action plan for conservation and sustainable use of palaeobiodiversity in Sri Lanka. (2014)Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment .ISBN-978-955-0033-57-7
- Cleere, H.F. (1998) Archaeological Heritage Management in the Modern World.Unwinlymaman Ltd. London.
- Wicramasingha U (2007) A Report on development of limestone cave and it's surrounding as a tourism destination, Sabaragamuwa provincial Council.
- Tourism Development Strategy (TDS) (2011-2016) A Report ON Tourism Development Strategy, Ministry of Economic Development.