

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS RELATED TO THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THE HISTORICAL DIMBULAGALA MOUNTAIN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

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Dimbulagala Hill, situated just 18 kilometers from Polonnaruwa Kaduruwela town, is a hidden gem of ancient history yet to be fully appreciated by tourists, both local and international. Dating back to the 1st century BC, this Buddhist sanctuary holds a trove of historical and cultural treasures, including Oushada Pokuna, Nildiya Pokuna, Buddhist Piriwena, and captivating ruins. It also features Pulligoda paintings, inscriptions from the early and late Anuradhapura periods, and striking stone Buddha statues. But the problem is that the number of local and foreign tourists visiting Dimbulagala is much lower compared to the nearby old town of Polonnaruwa. The purpose of this research is to identify the reasons for the decrease in tourist attraction and suggest some solutions. Field study and map study methods are used here. As a result, various reasons have been identified such as lack of infrastructure, lack of trained guides, lack of well-informed publications about the field, and difficulty in traveling on the roads through the forest. To address these issues, a comprehensive tourism promotion plan centered on Dimbulagala is proposed, necessitating cooperation from the government and local communities. Key steps to boost Dimbulagala Hill's appeal include creating accessible materials like books, pamphlets, travel guides, and informative reports highlighting its historical and environmental significance. These materials should be strategically placed alongside popular tourist destinations in Polonnaruwa. Training Dimbulagala's residents in hospitality management is vital to ensure a warm welcome for tourists. To enhance the visitor experience, we recommend introducing activities like water sports near Dimbulagala Lake. Crucial infrastructure improvements, such as safe and accessible roads to the reserve's attractions, and the recruitment and training of capable tourist guides, are essential components of this revitalization effort. In conclusion, by carefully implementing these strategies, Dimbulagala has the potential to emerge as an enticing destination for both domestic and international tourists eager to explore its rich history and cultural diversity.

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