

Repercussions of Tourism on the Tangible Cultural Heritage in Mihintale

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Abstract

In the present day, many travellers are traveling across the world beyond their geographical boundaries to experience and visit many places with cultural heritage values and identities. Sri Lanka is also a country where there are thousands of attractions with tangible and intangible cultural heritage values. However, the negative impacts of tourism on cultural heritage attractions also are reported frequently. Therefore, a systematic investigation is much needed to identify how the tourism negatively effects on cultural heritage sites in Sri Lanka. The main objective of this study was to identify the impacts of tourism and related activities on the heritage sites. By adopting a qualitative research approach, this study focuses on the effects of tourism on the tangible cultural heritage values in Mihintale, which is one of the main heritage sites in Sri Lanka. Data were gathered from multiple sources like face-to-face interviews with government officers at the Mihintale archaeological site and the police station, participant observations, and photographs taken by the researcher using convenient and purposive sampling techniques. Data were analysed manually by using thematic, content, image, and descriptive analyses techniques where applicable. Results indicate that tourism causes physical damages to the properties, deteriorates the heritage, distorts the cultural heritage, misplaces the heritage properties, and encourages unfavourable tourist behaviours at sacred sites. The results give a proper understanding of the context of repercussions of tourism at cultural heritage sites. It should also be stressed that recognizing the requirement for the conservation and preservation of significant cultural heritage resources is of vital importance in the effort of the development of sustainable heritage tourism.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, heritage tourism, negative impact, tourism impacts