

Practice of Using Asian Elephants in Labour in Modern Tourism

Industry

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ABSTRACT

From the past, the practice of using animals in labour is a common tradition all over the world. According to the sources; chronicles and inscriptions usage of elephants in labour has been rooted into a long history in Sri Lanka. Royal people's transportation, battles, draught for building and construction, participation for cultural and religious performances are some purposes that needed elephant labour in Sri Lanka from the past. The travelers, both in the past and in modern tourism industry have continuously been attracted to *Elephas maximus maximus*, the Sri Lankan or Ceylon elephant as a result of their common usage in tourism industry. Elephant riding or travelling on an elephant is one of the popular tourist activities in modern tourism segments like wedding and honeymoon tourism, cultural heritage tourism and adventure tourism. This research focused on identifying the essential facts of elephant usage for elephant riding as a tourist activity available in Sri Lanka. Then identifying the versions of elephant ridings and identifying the purpose of including elephant rides by service providers for their tourism activities are also focused on in the research. The primary data collection was done by the library review to identify the historical background of elephant usage in labour and tourism related activities from the past. A survey was done around three sites where elephant riding is available. Sigiriya is a world heritage site with elephant riding as a sub activity of cultural heritage tourism. Kaluthara – North beach area is popular for elephant riding for wedding and honeymoon tourism. The buffer zone of Udawalawa national park is the third site where elephant riding is available as an activity of wild life tourism. According to the survey service providers include elephant rides in their tour packages with several price ranges to earn maximum profit by elephant usage in labour.

Key words: *Animal rights, Cultural heritage tourism, Elephant in labour, Elephant riding, Tourist activities with elephants.*

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