

## **A Study of the Visitor Management Plan for the Heritage Site of the Sigiriya Top of the Rock**

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### **Introduction**

Sigiriya is a World Heritage Site located in the Matale district in the Central Province. Sigiriya has archaeological value as well as tourism value. Therefore, a large number of local and foreign tourists visit Sigiriya every day. Proper management of tourists visiting Sigiriya will increase the quality of the tourism and the quality of the Sigiriya archaeological site. A proper visitor management plan can be built for a sustainable tourism development in the Sigiriya archaeological site. Therefore, the objective of this research is to prepare a visitor management plan for tourists who come to the Sigiriya top of the rock. The research problem is how a visitor management plan is important to the well-being of tourists to Sigiriya and the archaeological site of Sigiriya. Several excavations and conservations have been conducted in the Sigiriya summit. The related reports were reviewed. There is a special relationship between tourist activities and the conservation of the top of the rock. Therefore, several conservation reports were studied. In addition, the book “Visitor Management Case Studies from World Heritage Sites,” edited by Myra Shackley, was studied.

### **Methodology**

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this research. First, the Sigiriya Central Cultural Fund library was used to study the archaeological field of the Sigiriya summit. After that, the amount of tourists coming to the summit was investigated, and then the field study was conducted. The behavior of tourists coming to the Sigiriya summit was studied using visitor management theories. In the field of visitor management, there are three main types of tourists.

They are hard-core tourists, dedicated tourists, and casual tourists. Under these three types the visitors who come to the Sigiriya summit were identified. Conducted interviews with tourists and finally analyzed the data found and prepared the visitor management plan. Solutions were proposed according to the visitor management plan. Visitor management measures were used for solutions.

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## Results and Discussion

A large number of tourists visit Sigiriya every day. Among them, the majority of tourists come to see the top of the rock. Many of them visit the summit during Vesak and Christmas festivals. Tourists come in abundance to the top of the rock between 7 am and 11 am. A large group of tourists entering the archeological site of the summit at the same time has an impact on the field. This situation has been affected the archaeological monuments on top of the rock. The ancient buildings on top of the Sigiriya are built of bricks. Brick monuments are damaged due to the large number of people walking on bricks. Because of this brick walls often have to be conserved. In visitor management, this condition is known as “carrying capacity.” There are three main types of tourists in the visitor management field. They are hard-core tourists, dedicated tourists, and casual tourists. All three types of tourists come to the top of the rock. The impact of the hard-core tourists and dedicated tourists is minimum. But the impact of the casual tourists is maximum. It is important to manage these conditions correctly. By correctly identifying the types of tourists, it becomes easier to manage them. Sigiriya is an archaeological site that is frequently attacked by wasps. The top of the rock is heavily impacted by wasps. A wasp attack is difficult to control due to the presence of a large group of people on top of the rock. Therefore, a solution to wasp attacks can be found through a visitor management plan. And also, it has been mentioned above that Sigiriya is visited by a large number of people during Vesak and Christmas festivals. Among them, the majority of people will definitely come to the summit. On those days, a large number of tourists are walking among the ancient brick monuments on the top of the rock. After those festivals, the brick walls have been damaged and have to be conserved again soon.



“Figure 01: Archaeological Site of the Sigiriya summit” (Pushpa Kumara, 2024)



“Figure 02: Tourist’s activities” (Tourists are walking on the brick wall.)

(Pushpa Kumara, 2024)



“Figure 03: Deterioration of brick walls due to visitor’s foot. (Pushpa Kumara, 2024)

## **Conclusion**

Several conclusions can be presented in this research, which prepared a visitor management plan for the archaeological site of the Sigiriya summit. The main conclusion is that a visitor management plan is important to the well-being of tourists to Sigiriya and the archaeological site of Sigiriya. The other conclusion is that by properly managing the tourists coming to Sigiriya, sustainable tourism

development can be done in Sigiriya. Sustainable tourism development is often discussed in heritage management. And solutions should also be provided in a visitor management plan. Accordingly, the main four strategies can be used. Those are managing the supply, managing the demand, managing the resource, and managing the impact. Carrying capacity can be controlled using these strategies. Also, the following measures can be implemented to control the carrying capacity. Those are extending opening times, increasing staff levels, and opening additional areas for facilities. And some measures can be used for visitor management. Those are hard measures and soft measures. Among these, soft measures are easier than hard measures. Several methods can be used under the measures. Those are directional signage, codes of ethics, and information. Thus, the quality of the tourism industry and the quality of the Sigiriya increase through proper management of visitors. And visitor satisfaction is also created.

**Keywords:** Sigiriya, Sustainable Tourism Development, Top of the Rock, Visitor Management Plan

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