



Wild Life Tourism as the Growing Sector in the Country–A Comparative Study on the Youths

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Abstract

Tourism Industry in India is one of the most lucrative industries in the country and contributes substantially to foreign exchange earned. In the past couple of decades with good supported promotion this industry has developed as an important means of employment generation. In fact during 2010, seven million tourists visited India and spent US \$ 13.9 billion, thus making India one of the major global tourist destinations. Augmented tourism in India has created jobs in a variety of associated sectors, both directly and indirectly. Tourism is one of the success stories of the 20th century and is concerned more with the satisfaction of individual rather than with the scientific and technological achievements. Almost 20 million people are now working in India's Tourism Industry. India's tourism is thriving, owing to a huge flow in both business and leisure travel by foreign and domestic tourists and is expected to generate approximately US\$ 275.5 billion by 2018.

There has been an increase in environmental awareness and pressure of urbanization. Now, urban masses look for new get away locations, where they can get involved in active outdoor recreation. Thus, national parks and sanctuaries have emerged as the favourite destinations. The visitors to these national parks are usually the youth in 18 to 30 years of age group. Although Wild Life Tourism is an expensive affair and cost more than two times of the other tourisms. The youth is driven by the motivation to do something "adventurous".

This study was conducted in two cities with different set of respondents; since they are in the close proximity of the National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries. The prime objective of study has been to understand the reason of preference of Wild Life Tourism and the expectations of the tourists about various aspects during their course of travel and stay. The basic procedure adapted was tourist interviews through convenient sampling. The total respondents were about 326 between the age group of 20 years to 45 years. This included males and females SEC A1, A2, B1 and B2. It is assumed that the people of these SEC have the buying capacity as an influence of and reaction to word of mouth and advertisements. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected for analysis.

Key Words: Tourism, Wild Life Tourism, Tourists

Introduction

From time immemorable India has been the most exciting adventurous and most sorted after place of tourism. India's Wild Life Tourism, Aadhayatmic (Spiritual) Tourism, Medical Tourism, age long Ayurvedic Tourism, Historical Tourism and Religious tourism all have been reasons of anxiety and belief for people from across the globe. India has always been known as the land of Tigers and Snakes and Snake charmers. The wild life of the country has been a reason of happiness and delight for the people of all classes and ages. There are varied reasons why tourists prefer the Indian Parks and sanctuaries. The famous Kipling's "Moughli" was a reality of the park of Pench. The Great Bengal Tiger brings a big smile on the faces of the tourists and the White Tigers are still a very exciting experience. Further whether it is the Great Lion at Gir or Rhinosouraus of Kaziranga all are a major reason of attraction for the tourists from across the globe. Tourism is been promoted through various programmes "Hindustan ka Dil" for Madhya Pradesh; "Kuch din to Gujaraye Gujrat mein" for Gujrat; North east Tourism and so on by the department of tourism. Since India is blessed with the most suitable weather conditions round the year and most beautiful and exotic flora and fauna, it attracts tourists for its wild life tourism. Apart from this there are a few other things also which the tourists enjoy. This includes the exotic traditional Indian food being served in the vicinity of the wild life parks and sanctuaries; the traditional ayurvedic treatment for relaxation and rejuvenation of the tourists; and the huge range of handicraft and other jungle related products. These have grown as a big industry in and around the parks and sanctuaries generating a huge employment.

The growth in the wild life tourism can be supported by the fact that the footfall of the tourists have grown substantially over the last decade especially in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh etc. along with the other states. Although tourists visit is regular but there are some special times during the year when the visits higher and this varies as per the geographical locations. Wild Life tourism is a sector which is majorly availed by people of a particular class and thus this is a fast growing industry also contributing to generating substantial amount of foreign exchange. Moreover statistics have stated that the year over year since the last decade the number of tourists both Indian and foreign have gone up by more than 200%. The money spent on tourism has also gone up by almost 300%, resulting in receipt of good amount of foreign exchange. Even the Indian tourists are spending a lot which is directly or indirectly helping the associated industries flourish.

An important point to be noted is that off late a very big number of young adults are indulging into wild life tourism. This is mainly because of getting a job at an early age thanks to the BPOs and other MNC's. Youth today have substantial disposable income. In this current hectic and mechanized working life even the people of young age wish to get a relaxing holiday. But since they don't get long leaves, they prefer destinations which are near, comfortable, different, relaxing, rejuvenating and most importantly natural. They wish to breathe in a place which is pollution free and

healthy and nothing can be better than a wild life park or sanctuary which fulfill all the needs and is different from the routine holidays. It is also noticed that even the foreign tourist ensure spending a substantial time in Indian wild life parks. Reason stated have been the same as earlier discussed along with one more thing that they get to see the rare wild life which is not otherwise possible.

Literature Reviewed

Reading material from the earlier works done on the relevant subject supported the study. This included the works done by the references mentioned; research study done by Dr. Barvekar S.G. (2012) and Dr. Mishra Y.K.(2013) for their doctorate on this subject and other study material from the University of Jabalpur, University of Amarkantak and University of Delhi.

Yadav M.L. and Tiwari S.K. (2013): “A study on developing tourism amongst the working youths”, mentions about the changes seen in the decision of the youths about their tourist destination. It also analyses about the choices and preferences of the respondents from the different socio economic classes.

Giri A.K. and Nambiar Ravindran (2013): “A study on Wild Life Tourism with special reference to generating employment and business opportunities”. The paper discusses about the potential jobs related to the tourism in India and the increase in the per capita income of the lower masses.

Jain R.K. (2014): “A critical study on safe tourism in India – focusing on female tourists”. The research paper categorically talks about the growth and changes in the jobs availability and other aspects in the various parts of the country specifically with reference to tourism industry. They also discuss about the security hazards and the problems created due to lack of awareness and the indifferent attitude people have about being cautious while travel.

Ahmed Shakeel and Verma N.K. (2011): The authors detail about the reasons and characteristics leading to the growth of this sector. They also focus on the consistent growth the sector has been showing over the decade and the growing need of improving the artisans skills related to handicrafts.

Pratabhan S.S. and Gupta J.K. (2010): The authors have worked majorly on the security aspects related to tourists. They have supported with lots of examples and data the fact that the foreign tourists safety and security in the country is of prime importance. They also discuss about the pattern and trend of their visit time, duration of stay, places of interest and purchase pattern.

Development and Growth of Indian Tourism within the Country and Incoming Foreign Tourist (2013-14) – Report of Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)

Purpose of Study

Although tourism in India is one of the fastest growing industries, precisely Wild Life Tourism is one part of it which is still comparatively expensive and is enjoyed only by a specific lot of people. The basic purpose of study has been as follows:

- 1) To understand the reason why youth prefer Wild Life Tourism.
- 2) To study the expectations of the tourists from Parks and Sanctuaries during their visits.
- 3) To study the expectations of the tourists on aspects like travel and hospitality during their visits to these places.

Sample and Methodology

The study was conducted on the youth in two cities with different set of respondents. This included Jabalpur, M.P., because the city is in the close proximity of the country's first National Park Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Pench; and Gurgaon, Haryana, which has Jim Corbett at a weekend traveling distance.

The basic procedure consisted of tourist interviews through convenient sampling. Simple percentage method has been used for analysis of the received data. The total respondents were about 326 between the age group of 20 years to 45 years. This included males and females SEC A1, A2, B1 and B2. Respondents in the form of households have been considered as one unit. It is assumed that the people of these SEC have the buying capacity and good disposable income as an influence of and reaction to word of mouth and advertisements. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected for analysis.

Understanding of the Study

Wild Life Tourism is the most expensive type of tourism which averages to about more than two times of regular tourism. In tourism, the product from a destination view point is a combination of various elements or components, some of which are tangible and some are intangible. The only open path for the organization in this case would be to let somebody know itself about the consumer needs, expectations, and attitudes of mind, likes and dislikes in order to put together and constantly build up the tourism products.

There has been an increase in environmental awareness and pressure of urbanization. Now, urban masses look for new get away locations, where they can get involved in active outdoor recreation. Thus, national parks and sanctuaries have emerged as the favourite destinations. The Government of India initiated the 'new ecotourism and wild life tourism policy'. In order to generate more revenue, the new policy deviates from its previous principle of 'for conservation only'. The policy, now, aims at increasing tourism by creating more services and facilities for the visitors to the protected areas. Thus, there has been a constant increase in the number of visitors during the 'season' particularly to the parks like Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Corbett, Ranthambore, Nagarhole, Kaziranga, etc., which have close proximity to metropolitan and / or big towns. The visitors to these national parks are usually the youth in 23 to 35 years of age group. They are driven by the motivation to do something “adventurous”.

During the course of study, the primary objective was understanding reasons for youth's preference to wild life tourism. The data gathered through discussions pointed towards a few very different and unexpected facts. The first and

the most highlighted has been that the youth today apart from being aware about fast changing permutation of the natural surroundings is moving back towards a peaceful and slow paced life. This is for the time they get out of their hectic working schedules. The adapted westernized culture is being replaced by the original Indian culture. Due to the speedy and exhaustive MNC's work culture the youth look forward to a peaceful break whenever they can afford time out. In the past decade due to better commuting options and also much improved hospitality it has become convenient and comfortable to visit places.

The plastic and concrete life has changed the view point of the youth, who now prefer places like wild life parks and sanctuaries, meditation centers or natural resorts, for their weekends and holidays. They call these places detoxifying centers. The respondents of this research preferred wild life tourism for a few basic reasons as mentioned below:

- 1) Wild life parks and sanctuaries now-a-days have developed in such a way that, they do not just provide a peaceful place to the visitors but also give them information and experiences of various ancient skills and culture.
- 2) Wild life is very fast getting extinct and if they do not see it now they would probably will never be able to see it ever.
- 3) Youth at a weekend travelling distance travel to these places with a motive to spend their personal small time in the natural surroundings, which is out of question in their small apartments and flats.
- 4) They also look forward to these holidays as time spent on getting to see and know something they never knew. For eg: in most of the wild life park resorts they provide with authentic regional food, regional cultural programmes, information on the place specific flora and fauna.
- 5) The respondents also mentioned about wild life areas where they could see and feel the wild life.

The summary of the feedback mentions that, the youth preferred the wild life tourism for the basic reason that it takes them back to nature and also provides an opportunity to rejuvenate and experience life which is full of mental peace and physical relaxation.

On categorizing the respondents it is seen that, of the total respondents 34% were people – both males and females, in the age group of 31 yrs to 35 yrs are people who are fairly stable in their jobs with very high working hours and thus need a natural relaxing break to rejuvenate. The respondents of this age mentioned a few noticeable points. Firstly they are people with substantial disposable income. Another important point is that they do not yet have kids or have kids who are small and thus educational responsibility is less leading to comfortable mobility.

The further information reveals that, the respondents on having visited these places are impressed by what they receive. When they plan to visit such place they have some images regarding the place. They wish to see a place neat, clean, serene, natural and most importantly GREEN AND FULL OF FLORA, FAUNA AND WILD LIFE. There are parks and sanctuaries where these expectations are fulfilled very well since the management supports with tourist visits either through vehicles or on elephants or some other way for eg: in Bandhavgarh the wish to see the great Indian Tiger is fulfilled most of the times since the population of the animal is sufficient and the visits are planned in such a way that they can be seen from a distance of two feet without harming or irritating them. There are parks and sanctuaries where good quality plants, natural products, herbal products and local handicrafts are available at very reasonable and appealing prices.

The places of natural surrounding are perceived to be full of insects and reptiles like snakes, scorpion etc. People prefer visiting parks and sanctuaries which are comfortable and convenient to travel and have hotels, rest houses and resorts which are safe and comfortable for their stay. Kanha and Bandhavgarh in Madhya Pradesh and Jim Corbett in Rajasthan are both places where there are hotels and resorts of all price ranges. Tourists also enjoy tree houses and bamboo houses which are also available in the close vicinity of various parks and sanctuaries. There are also good places to enjoy local food. These two parks have ensured good internal visit plans and thus the tourist get a very good opportunity to see and feel the natural and fresh flora and fauna. In and around these parks and sanctuaries there is a fair market of natural products like Honey, Scrubber, Latex, Quality Seeds, herbal plants and herbal products etc. Market even caters with the locally manufactured goods like wood and bamboo products, potteries, pickles, masalas etc. Even the local transport in these areas is in abundance which helps the tourists to commute safely and at very reasonable prices. Tourists as per their interests chose from any of the options of traveling for eg: jeeps, buses, tongas, carts, cabs etc.

Limitations of the Study

The biggest limitation of the study has been that, only two places could be covered which was purely due to travelling constraint. But the author proposes to continue the study in the other parks and sanctuaries also.

Key Findings

- 1) The youth prefer WLT primarily because of the thrill and adventure related to the fact of being close to an atmosphere which is not present in the ambience of their existence.
- 2) They take WLT as stress buster, because of the natural and different setup, which is natural and soft toned as against the hustle of their routine life.
- 3) Major tourism in the country including WLT happens in the month of November and December followed by August and September. This is probably because of the working seasons applicable in the major organizations.
- 4) March, April and May are the low season probably because of the weather, exams, and year ending for all the working lot.
- 5) The facilities in and around the parks have developed to the level of tourist convenience and requirements.
- 6) A great travel and stay convenience has been built up in and around these places by the government and the private businesses.
- 7) Not just tourism money is being earned through this, but a lot of money is being diverted to travel and hospitality industry.

- 8) Small scale industries and artisans are also gaining a better livelihood.
- 9) Tourism in the country is helping increase the economy of the common man related directly or indirectly to this sector.

Conclusion

This study has lead to an insight in to the preference reasons, travelling patterns, aspirations and wishes of the people regarding their tourism requirements and plans. The study has been in the vicinity of just two national parks and thus the details found have been focused majorily on the respondents specifically from a particular life style and geographical area; whereas the study might lead to different and / or added findings and details if conducted in other park areas. This is because the life style and work culture both differ with the change in the class of town and the SEC residing there.

The author of this paper has conducted the entire study and for any further data or details, the readers can revert to the author. It is expected that the study would be of utility to many more researchers.

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Table- I General Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Males	Females			
	54%	46%			
Age	20-25	26 – 30	31 - 35	36 – 40	41 - 45
	15%	22%	34%	20%	9%
Occupation	Govt. Service	Private Orgns.	Public	Business	Students
	13%	42%	11%	26%	8%
Group / Family size	Single	Group / Family of 2	Group / Family of 3	Group / Family of 4	Group / Family of 5
	36%	37%	12%	8%	7%
House hold income	< 5 lacs	5 - 8 lacs	8 - 10 lacs	10 - 15 lacs	> 15 lacs
	83	77	107	46	13
Tourism Frequency	Monthly	Quarterly	Half Yearly	Yearly	
	22%	27%	19%	32%	

Table II: Footfall in the Wild Life Parks and Sanctuaries - State wise

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Kerala	1.71	1.61	1.43	1.29	1.16	1.04	1.27	2.83
Goa	0.61	0.53	0.48	0.44	0.40	0.36	0.32	0.29
Delhi	0.54	0.56	0.51	0.47	0.44	0.40	0.37	0.34
Rajasthan	4.66	5.09	5.35	5.70	6.06	6.42	6.76	9.18
Tamil Nadu	12.28	11.71	13.30	13.14	12.95	12.71	12.43	14.78
Andhra Pradesh	15.97	15.35	17.46	16.04	16.55	15.98	13.29	13.56
Gujarat	2.25	2.56	2.72	2.95	3.18	3.42	3.67	3.91
Himachal Pradesh	1.84	1.88	1.75	1.65	1.56	1.46	1.37	4.89
J & K	2.00	1.96	1.74	1.59	1.44	1.30	1.18	1.05
Uttar Pradesh	15.66	15.87	14.05	15.75	15.44	16.13	16.83	17.53
Uttarakhand	3.40	3.85	3.80	3.82	3.83	3.82	3.80	3.77
Orissa	1.20	1.26	1.19	1.16	1.12	1.08	1.04	1.00
Karnataka	7.90	8.26	8.25	8.37	8.46	8.52	8.55	8.54
West Bengal	3.60	3.68	3.60	3.59	3.57	3.54	3.49	3.42
Madhya Pradesh	16.50	17.92	17.52	18.16	18.96	19.93	20.12	27.57
Maharastra	3.89	3.88	3.85	3.87	3.88	3.87	3.85	3.82

Figs in percentages.

Source: Annual reports on Wild Life Survey, Pench Wild Life Park.

Table III: Tourism in the Wild Life Parks and Sanctuaries - Month wise

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
January	6.05	5.44	4.81	4.18	3.57	3.00	2.49	2.04	2.08	2.12	2.13
February	7.72	6.56	5.48	4.50	3.63	2.89	2.26	1.75	1.32	1.10	0.99
March	7.44	6.42	5.46	4.56	3.74	3.02	2.41	1.89	1.42	1.07	0.79
April	6.08	5.43	4.76	4.10	3.48	2.90	2.39	1.94	1.51	1.17	0.89
May	7.48	6.73	5.95	5.17	4.42	3.72	3.08	2.52	2.05	1.41	1.39
June	8.03	7.73	7.32	6.81	6.23	5.62	4.99	4.37	4.36	4.33	4.25
July	6.91	6.95	6.87	6.68	6.38	6.00	5.56	5.09	5.26	5.42	5.53
August	8.45	9.15	9.75	10.21	10.51	10.65	10.64	10.48	10.84	11.17	11.38
September	9.85	10.67	11.37	11.90	12.26	12.42	12.41	12.22	11.74	11.24	10.64
October	10.26	8.87	7.53	6.29	5.16	4.17	3.32	2.61	2.70	2.78	2.83
November	11.50	13.60	15.81	18.07	20.31	22.47	24.49	26.34	26.27	26.10	25.66
December	10.22	12.44	14.90	17.54	20.30	23.13	25.97	28.76	30.45	32.11	33.50

Figs in percentages.

Source: Annual reports on Wild Life Survey, Pench Wild Life Park.