

**“A STUDY OF PROSPECTS OF WILD LIFE TOURISM  
IN MADHYA PRADESH” WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO HOSPITALITY FACILITIES**

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**Abstract**

*Tourism Industry in India is one of the fastest growing industries in the country leading to a very high contribution in foreign exchange earnings along with a lot of internal movement also. In the past couple of decades it has been noticed that along with development of core tourism, the support system and complimentary system has also developed leading to means of employment generation. Increase in wildlife tourism in India has created jobs in a variety of associated sectors, both directly and indirectly. World Travel and Tourism Council states that India generated INR 19.1 trillion in 2019 which is equivalent to 11.6% of country's GDP. India ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in world in terms of its total contribution to the country's GDP. Tourism is an industry which is related purely to individual satisfaction and comfort more than anything else. UNWTO states that India stands 40<sup>th</sup> in the world by receiving 9 million international footfall in 2019. Almost 20 million all category 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\$ 300 billion by 2023. With an increase environmental awareness and pressure of urbanization people look forward to places which involve active outdoor recreation. Thus, national parks and sanctuaries have emerged as the favourite destinations nomenclature wild life tourism. The visitors to these national parks are people of all age groups. They are driven by the motivation to do something "adventurous". They look forward to a place of comfort which is relaxing and rejuvenating. The prime objective of study has been to understand the tourists expectations on various aspects of hospitality. The data was collected through interviews by convenient sampling. The study was conducted in the three leading wild life parks of central India i.e. Madhya Pradesh and they are Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Pench. The number of respondents including all reserves worked in as sample for the research is as follows: Tourists – 300 respondents; Hotels and Resorts – 90 respondents; Eateries – 75 respondents; Drivers – 60 respondents; Guides – 60 respondents; and Local Vendors – 60 respondents. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected for analysis.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Wild Life Tourism, Tourism Hospitality*

Celebrated Scottish novelist, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote, “It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanates from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirits.”

A vacation in forest should not only be filled with adventure and excitement but should also be without preconceived ideas or thoughts and open mind to receive natural surprises great memories from the nature to be cherished all the life to come. Every forest has something unique to offer and for everyone there is something sure to be of interest. A day's trip in wild would only give one preview of the treasures hiding in the forests. To soak up the sights and sounds of nature the stay should be for a minimum of two to three days.

From time immemorable India has been known for its hospitality and thus is tgemost sorted after place of tourism. India is known for tags like "AtithiDevoBhava"; "Padharo Sa"; and "DevAaye". A very famous dialogue quoted about Indian hospitality is, "Aapaaye to apnimarji se hai, par jayengehamarimarji se". Indian courtesy, warmth for the guests and grand hospitality has been known across the globe. Apart from these India's Wild Life Tourism, Aadhayatmic (Spiritual) Tourism, Medical Tourism, age long Ayurvedic Tourism, Historical Tourism or Religious tourism all have been reasons of anxiety and belief for people from across the globe leading them to visit India. These visits can be for varied interest like historic, religious, yoga, meditation, medical or even just like that to see a country with great unity in diversity of religion, beliefs, faith, culture, language, food, history of grandeur and mush more. But one reason which most of the visitors do have in their mind is to opportunity to get to see the Royal stripped tiger and king lion in flesh and blood. India has always been known as the land of Tigers and Snakes and Snake charmers. The wild life of the country brings happiness and delight for the people of all classes and ages. Thereasons why tourists prefer the Indian Parks and sanctuaries are varied like, the famous Kipling's "Moughli" who was a reality of the park of Pench;to hear the roar of Great Bengal Tiger; the White Tigers which are still matter of anxiety as to why are they white and so on 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. The Government promotes tourism through various programmes "Hindustan kaDil" for Madhya Pradesh; "Kuch din to GujariyeGujratmein" for Gujrat; North east Tourism and so on by the department of tourism. Pench at Madhya Pradesh every year organizes the "Moughli Week" celebration where children from various parts of the country come to participate in the various activities.

Because of the geographic location of the country India is blessed with the most suitable weather conditions round the year and most beautiful and exotic flora and fauna. The tourists apart from the natural aspect also enjoy the exotic traditional Indian food being served in the vicinity of the wild life parks and sanctuaries; the traditional ayurvedic therapies and messages for relaxation and rejuvenation; and the huge range of

handicraft and other products from the jungle or their replica. This has given opportunity to a huge numbers of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled artisans and craftsmen and resultant a big industry in and around the parks and sanctuaries generating huge employment for the inhabitants.

Over the last two decades the footfall in all the wild life sanctuaries and parks of the country have grown many folds especially in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh etc. Although tourists visit these areas regularly but there are pocket periods when this footfall is very high since during this period the parks and sanctuaries are open for tourists. Wild Life tourism is a sector which is majorly availed by people of a particular class and thus it contributes generating substantial foreign exchange. Data and statistics have shown that over the years the number of tourists both Indian and foreign have gone up by more than 200% and money spent has also gone up by almost 300%. This is directly or indirectly supporting the associated industries to 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 / KPO's 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. Suhaas Kumar (2013), 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 Indore, University of Bhopal, University of Gwalior, University of Amarkantak and University of Delhi. Annual Reports and their analysis, Project Reports, facts and figures, brief printed material from Madhya Pradesh Paryatan Office at Bhopal and other wild life locations has been very informative and useful. Apart from this, material from the national parks, surrounding hotels and resorts both M.P Tourism and private both have been very useful. Yadav M.L. and Tiwari S.K. (2014): "A study on working youths with special reference to tourism", 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. Aswale T.K.and Mire M.G. (2015): “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. Singh R.K. (2016): “A critical study on safe tourism in India – focusing on female tourists”. The paper discusses the opportunities generated for people of various categories in 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. (2015): 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. (2014): 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 (2016-17) – Report of Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)

### **Purpose of Study**

India has a huge opportunity for development as tourism hub and although Wild Life Tourism is comparatively expensive but it is relished by people of specific taste. The basic purpose of study has been as follows: To understand practical problems of hospitality industry rather than on theoretical aspects; To obtain actual feedback of the end users so that the investigation is found useful for society and state agencies like NTCA, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department etc; To identify means of improvement of the various hospitality facilities being extended for the growth of the wild life tourism in Madhya Pradesh; To study the working of hospitality providers and the assessment of success in the special context of Madhya Pradesh, so that other states are also benefited by the information and findings.

### **Sample and Methodology**

The study was conducted in the three leading wild life parks of central India i.e. Madhya Pradesh i.e. Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Pench. In these areas there are facilities of lodging and boarding both provided by the MPITDC and other private business groups along with some local enterprises. In this study, “Primary data” will include the information collected through personal interviews from the Wild Life Tourism Office people, General Managers, Maintenance Officers and Operating

Personnels of the National Parks and the employees of the MP Tourism hotels, other private resorts and hotels around the national parks; local vehicle providers, various souvenir shops, local market vendors, guides of the parks, drivers of the forest department authorized vehicles, tourism department personnel, local tourism centers, shop keepers, eateries and employees at other places of holidays; and both Indian and Foreign tourists through convenient sampling. We will also have to consider “Secondary data” received from the various official and unofficial sources – published or unpublished viz.: universities, annual reports and their analysis, project reports, facts and figures, brief printed material from Madhya Pradesh Paryatan Office at Bhopal and other wild life locations which would be very informative and useful. Apart from this, material from the national parks, surrounding hotels and resorts both M.P Tourism and private both would be useful. The number of respondents including all reserves worked in as sample for the research is as follows: Tourists – 300 respondents; Hotels and Resorts – 90 respondents; Eateries – 75 respondents; Drivers – 60 respondents; Guides – 60 respondents; and Local Vendors – 60 respondents. These respondents were identified on convenient sampling basis.

**Understanding of the Study**

The study deals with the hospitality aspect of wild life tourism and the respondent category is divided into different kinds. Since all of them form a part of the hospitality they would be treated one by one for analysis before an interdependent analysis is made finally. The first most sought after respondents were the tourists Indians who were from various parts of the country and the foreign tourists who were from the various parts of the globe. These tourists were asked for information related as to how many days visit was planned by them; who were accompanying them; how did they travel to the place and how was the travel; how did they get to know about the booked place and variety. Apart from this there were questions related to how was there experience of safari; did they sight the most wished Tiger and how important was it for them to see him; how was the driver in terms of his ability to drive and know routes and network to sight the tiger; and the guide in terms of his knowledge about the flora, fauna and most importantly about the various animals and birds of the forest.

**General Profile of the Respondents Indian Tourists:- Total 184**

|                     |               |                      |                     |                   |                    |         |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Gender              | Males         | Females              |                     |                   |                    |         |
|                     | 55%           | 45%                  |                     |                   |                    |         |
| Age                 | 20-25         | 26 – 30              | 31 – 35             | 36 – 40           | 41 - 45            | 46 - 55 |
|                     | 12%           | 19%                  | 28%                 | 24%               | 11%                | 6%      |
| Occupation          | Govt. Service | Private Orgns.       | Public              | Business          | Students           | Retired |
|                     | 12%           | 29%                  | 11%                 | 26%               | 8%                 | 14%     |
| Group / Family size | Single        | Group / Family of 2- | Group / Family of 4 | Group / Family of | Group/Family of >8 |         |

|                   |          |            |             |              |           |  |
|-------------------|----------|------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|--|
|                   |          | 3          |             | >4           |           |  |
|                   | 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%          |           |  |

**General Profile of the Respondents Foreign Tourists:- Total 146**

|                     |               |                       |                     |                      |                    |         |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Gender              | Males         | Females               |                     |                      |                    |         |
|                     | 52%           | 48%                   |                     |                      |                    |         |
| Age                 | 20-25         | 26 – 30               | 31 – 35             | 36 – 40              | 41 - 45            | 46 - 55 |
|                     | 9%            | 13%                   | 21%                 | 27%                  | 17%                | 13%     |
| Occupation          | Govt. Service | Private Orgns.        | Public              | Business             | Students           | Retired |
|                     | 8%            | 31%                   | 17%                 | 19%                  | 7%                 | 18%     |
| Group / Family size | Single        | Group / Family of 2-3 | Group / Family of 4 | Group / Family of >4 | Group/Family of >8 |         |
|                     | 11%           | 23%                   | 21%                 | 18%                  | 27%                |         |
| House hold income   | < 5 lacs      | 5 - 8 lacs            | 8 - 10 lacs         | 10 - 15 lacs         | > 15 lacs          |         |
|                     | 23            | 22                    | 19                  | 21                   | 15                 |         |
| Tourism Frequency   | Monthly       | Quarterly             | Half Yearly         | Yearly               |                    |         |
|                     | 8%            | 26%                   | 29%                 | 37%                  |                    |         |

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 recreation and an ambience which is thoroughly relaxing. Thus, national parks and sanctuaries have emerged as the favorite destinations for people of all classes, who wish to have a serene, memorable, peaceful and rejuvenating holiday. The Government of India initiated the 'new ecotourism and wild life tourism policy' which promotes tourism more as against the 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 and ensuring that the stay of the tourists becomes an experience for life time. Thus, there has been a constant increase in the number of visitors during the 'season' and also off season. The plastic and concrete life has changed the view point of the people, 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. During the course of study it was found that there were a substantial number of visitors who were there inspite of not having received a booking for safari. These were people who were there just to enjoy nature and the natural surroundings. Although for tourists who were booked for safari for them sighting the tiger was critical, a big enthusiasm and reason to be there. They just wanted to see the king in flesh and blood. There were quite a few foreign tourists who were wild life photographers or where scholars

conducting research on various aspects of flora, fauna and animals in the forest. The photographers were reportedly perching up in the deep forest for days together for million dollar shots of the rare species which surprise with acts which are unpredictable and unique.

The respondents of this research also preferred wild life tourism for a few basic reasons as mentioned below: 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; 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; People prefer a weekend travelling distance destination with a motive to spend their personal small quality time with family, friends or even alone in the natural surroundings, which is out of question in their small apartments and flats; 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 local food, regional dance, music and other cultural programmes, information on the place specific flora and fauna and other places of tourist or historical importance in the vicinity; The respondents also mentioned about wild life areas where they could see and feel the wild life. The flora, fauna, animals permitted to be close to and so on.

Respondents from hotels and resorts included employees from the MP Tourism hotel, hotels and resorts of private owners, cottages and traditional hotels. All were places with different amenities and facilities which also were related to the charges that asked for. The MP Tourism hotels were the most wanted hotels which have to be booked through either MP Tourism site or through the MP Tourism kiosks available at various points. Tourists also enjoy tree houses, bamboo houses and tents which are also available in the close vicinity of various parks and sanctuaries. These hotels along with some other resorts were most liked because they provided a very good place to stay which was neat and clean, lush green, and hygienic. There package included breakfast, lunch, evening tea and dinner. The food as reported by the tourists was awesome and had great variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian varieties. Rooms were well equipped and very comfortable. The staff was very accommodating and supporting; extending help to their best capacities. Similarly, the other hotels also extended good facilities and the reason mentioned by them was that there business thrived on tourists and since the competition was cut throat and others were providing the mentioned facilities they had to do the same or better to ensure good revenue generation.

Most of the eateries of the wild life localities can be divided into two major kinds; firstly the joints which are like traditional food joints serving food and breakfast and others which serve only quick food like kachories, omelets, bhajiyas etc. The owners of these formal eateries state that

people during the evening or night like to eat standard food but during the morning hours or day times they end up eating all kinds of junk food. Since they are on holiday they do not mind experimenting with food of any kind as simple as fresh bhajiya to bread omelets etc. The eateries which provide only fresh miscellaneous junk food mention that tourists end up eating anything that is served hot or cold depending upon the season and weather. Even the foreign tourists like and enjoy eating the oily food like samosa, kachoris, bhajiya, poha, jalebi etc. Some eateries mentioned on special request that per day margin is almost hundred percent, which goes up during the season times. Almost all the eateries mentioned that their business is dependent on the tourist not of very high profile since they are rare visitors. Their business thrives on the tourists who stay in the middle class hotels and also through the hotels which do not have their own catering service but outsource their food from them.

As about the drivers and guides are concerned, in the core areas of safari the private vehicles are not permitted. A tourist has to hire a jungle jeep with an experienced driver since the drive is dangerous as well as the roads have to be known very carefully so that the tourists do not get deviated from the defined roads or get lost. These drivers have a very good internal network amongst themselves also. If an experienced driver is hired he coordinates amongst his fellow driver and can reach us at destinations where a tiger is sighted. Similarly, a well-informed guide is an asset in these tours since he can extend information of all kinds of flora, fauna and the visible birds, animals and reptiles. This not just increases the knowledge and information of the tourists but also promotes their interest in the trip.

Local vendors included all those shops which were vending memoir, goods related to jungle needs or goods from jungle or there replica. Like mugs with tigers printed on them, key chains, t-shirts, umbrellas, boots, hats, honey, wood designs, carved wooden pieces etc. There sale completely depends on the quality and quantity of tourist footfalls in the season on otherwise. There are vendors where good quality plants, natural products, herbal products and local handicrafts are available at very reasonable and appealing prices. In the close vicinity there is a fair market of natural products like Honey, Scrubber, Latex, Quality Seeds, herbal plants and herbal products etc.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

The point which can be considered as a limitation of the study here is that only the three major parks of the Madhya Pradesh have been covered which is purely due to travelling constraint. But it is proposed to continue the study in the other parks and sanctuaries also.

#### **Key Findings**

The people prefer wild life tourism 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; People also consider it to be a serene place to holiday, close to nature and also a means to gather information knowledge and information of the unknown; People take wild life tourism as stress buster, because of the natural and different setup, which is natural and soft toned as against the hustle of their routine life; Major tourism in the country including wild life tourism 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; March and April are the low season probably because of the weather and exams; The facilities in and around the parks have developed to the level of tourist convenience and requirements whether it is lodging, boarding, shopping or commuting; A great travel and stay convenience has been built up in and around these places by the government and the private businesses; Not just tourism money is being earned through this, but a lot of money is being diverted to travel and hospitality industry; Small scale industries and artisans are also gaining a better livelihood; Tourism in the country is helping increase the economy of the common man related directly or indirectly to this sector.

### **Conclusion**

This study has led to an insight in to the preferences, reasons, travelling patterns, aspirations and wishes of the people regarding their tourism requirements and plans. The study has been in the vicinity of just three national parks and thus the details found have been focused majorly on the respondents specifically from travelling here. Although the author is fortunate since these parks being of international repute a lot of respondents from various geographic regions could be met. Although a lot of different and / or added information would be received if the other wild life parks and sanctuaries across the country are covered. This can also be because of the various categories of respondents available in various park areas i.e. respondents in all categories would differ depending upon the working pattern and rules and laws of the land. 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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