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NATURE BASED TOURISM AND PROTECTED AREA (PA) MANAGEMENT**U.N. SHUKLA****READER****INSTITUTE OF TOURISM & HOTEL MANAGEMENT****DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY****AGRA****ALTAH AHMAD LONE****ASST. PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM STUDIES****CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR****KASHMIR****ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the keen behind the involvement of visitors in nature-based tourism and identifies the associated protected area (PA) management regimes, including the social and cultural consequences of it on local communities. Nature-based tourism (NBT), also known as ecotourism, is a faster growing area in the tourism sector. It can prove as a complementary factor of development for both rural and well established urban-based tourism industries as well. The protected area network in India has grown steadily. As of May, 2008, India has 97 NPs covering 38199.47km² and 508 WLSs covering 118,236.94 km² representing 1.16% and 3.60% respectively of the country's geographical area (National Wildlife Database Cell, 2008). The areas are adopted in-situ and ex-situ conservation strategies for conservation of populations of many endangered species, especially rhino, birds, bears, elephant and tigers etc. and also ecology of the area being maintained, despite high biotic pressures and random disturbances at the sites by mass tourism. However, in spite of being hubs of population conservation and ecological integrity, they also bring about several management challenges. The most difficult assessed challenge facing by PA managers was the anger among locals against the bans on their access for biomass and required revenue from the PA for biodiversity conservation.

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KEYWORDS

Management, Nature Based Tourism, Protected area.

INTRODUCTION

Protected areas bring tremendous cultural, ecological, spiritual, and scientific benefits to society. They are critical to preserving global biodiversity and stemming the extinction crisis. Today there are more than 100,000 protected areas worldwide comprising about 12 percent of the Earth's surface (Lopoukhine, 2008; Chape, et al. 2003). A protected area is "an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means" (IUCN, 1994). Protected areas are hubs of diversity conservation and species habitat protection. They provide the natural environment for healthy outdoor recreational activities and safeguarding of living for the tourists. Visit to such areas not only provide the opportunity to access the nature but also the sense of love and education about the wild species. Protected areas such as national parks and reserves form the front line in the campaign to conserve biodiversity (Chape, et al. 2003). India is unique in richness of bio diversity due to diversity of physiographic and climatic conditions. India ranks as the sixth among the 12-mega bio diversity countries of the world. Moreover, out of 18 unique 'biodiversity hot-spots' two are located in India-North-Eastern Himalayas and Western Ghats. (Mandal, 2003). The protected area network in India has grown steadily. As of May 2008, India has 97 NPs covering 38199.47km² and 508 WLSs covering 118,236.94 km² representing 1.16% and 3.60% respectively of the country's geographical area (NWDC, 2008).

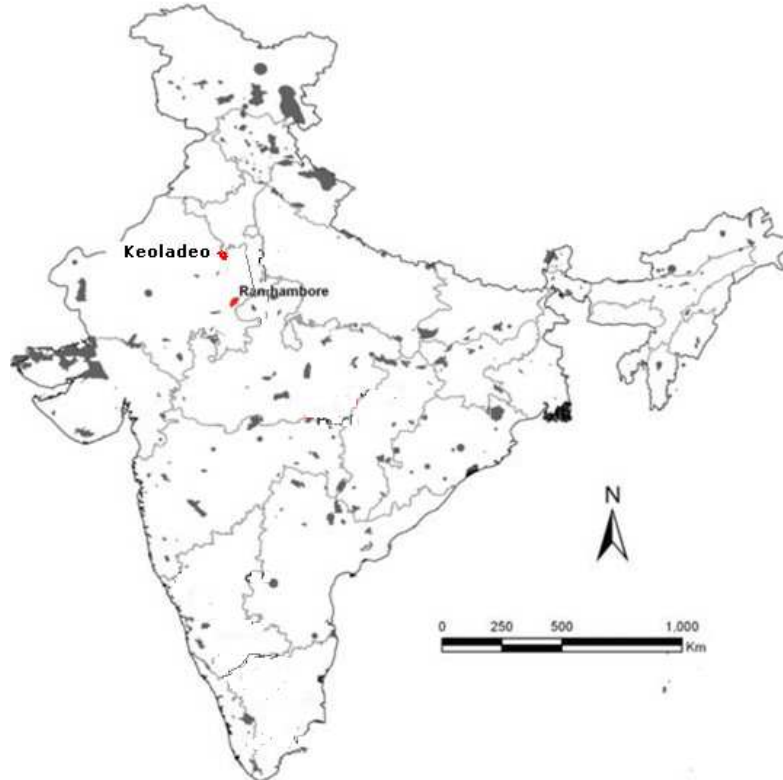
Balmford, et al. (2009) find increasing visitors to protected areas (PAs) in 15 of 20 countries, with rapid increases in less-wealthy countries tied to international tourist visitation. India, being an emerging economy with increasing mobility and disposable income also witnesses a great number of nature based tourists. The 28 tiger reserves alone receive >1 million visitors a year (Tiger Task Force, 2005). Yet, India's 590 PAs cover <5% of total land area, are small (average size <300 km²), highly fragmented, and surrounded by high densities of people (Rodgers et al. 2003; Karanth & DeFries, 2010). Several research findings suggests that nature-based tourism is beneficial for local promotion and protected area management, and provides participation of locals in management and promotes conservation (Mansourian, 2008; Scherl & Emerton, 2008). Other communities in the vicinity of parks have been economically and socially promoted (Shukla & Lone, 2012; Kumar Vijay, 2009; Spiteri & Nepal 2008). Further, some researchers observed no benefits and involvement of locals in PA management strategies (Glasson, 1992 cited by Glasson et al, 1995; Fennell, 1999; Bandyopadhyay & Tembo, 2010) and also leakage of tourist benefits occurs outside the local community (Boora, 2005).

The negative impacts of tourism had been identified by many past researchers, either in the form of sensitive ecological or wild species disturbance or the physical environment of the PAs (Croall, 1995; Keefe, 1995; Frederico Neto, 2003). Others find tourism-generated revenues may be insufficient to sustain PA conservation and management efforts (Karanth & DeFries, 2010). Perceptions of management practices also affect people's attitudes (Ormsby and Kaplin, 2005; Allendorf, 2007). For example, conflicts with managers due to resource extraction, strict rules on forest resources use, and access (Heinen and Shrivastava, 2009; Shibia, 2010), rude behavior (Ormsby and Kaplin, 2005), or harassment by park rangers (Infield and Namara, 2001) generate negative attitudes toward protected areas (Macura, et al, 2011).

MATERIAL AND METHODS**STUDY SITES**

We opted the 02 Protected Areas (Keoladeo & Ranthambore National Parks) of Rajasthan state, in India to observe the nature-based tourism and management activities of them (Figure 1). The PAs were chosen as research sites because of their rich wildlife attractions and great rush of tourists, as both of them fall in the India's famous tourist 'Golden Triangle'. Also the ease of accessibility to these areas was taken into concern. The data of visitor arrivals were collected from the forest departments of the study sites. The average tourist numbers for both sites during 2007-08, was 1, 26, 697 (ranging from 94,284 in Keoladeo to 159,110 in Ranthambore). Both PAs fall within the range of great tourism influence from the nearby core tourism centres and distance from these centres is given in (Table 1). The selected PAs differ in history of establishment, size, types of attractions, management practices and wild ecosystem and habitats (Table 1). The collected data depended on the co-operation showed by the authorities to access the maintained records and the permissions to the PAs.

FIGURE I: LOCATION OF TWO SELECTED PROTECTED AREAS IN INDIA INDICATED BY RED MARK AND OTHER PAS ARE IN MARKED GREY



SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

An interview instrument (questionnaire) was designed to collect the relevant information about the tourism activities and management regimes governing nature-based tourism in both PAs. The instrument was designed using a semi-structured format with both open- and closed-ended questions. Further, the instrument was modified into two different designs (one for management and other for private service providers) by altered queries according to need of achievement.

Field visits were made to various locations in the PAs to get a first hand impression of the field situation and requirements and to draw the views of the staff posted at various camps/chowkies and also collect official records on visitors (numbers, domestic vs. foreign, seasonality) and gate fees. Also, semi structured interviews of managers or owners of 103/115 (89%) tourist facilities around 02 PAs were taken from May 2009 to February 2010 period on regular intervals. We visited all facilities within 10 km of the PAs. Questions to facilities covered transportation, relationship with park management, employment, and other opportunities provided to locals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

NATURE BASED TOURISM TRENDS

Nature-based tourism in India is comparatively cheaper than European destinations, e.g., tiger watching in the Kanha National Park and in Bandhavgah National Park (both in Madhya Pradesh) either government or private facilities can provide a 10 day visit with ground costs between Aus. \$20 to \$ 100 per day (Valentine, 1983). The comparison of tourist arrivals for (Ranthambore & Keoladeo) were made after collected the official records of them from the respective forest departments for 2002 to 2008 period (Table 1). On comparison of total tourists' arrivals during 2007-08, Keoladeo comparatively witnessed the lesser number (94284) of tourists than Ranthambore (159,110) respectively (Table 1). Furthermore, during (2002-08) period, Keoladeo witnessed the least number of tourists for 2002-03 year (when Siberian cranes went locally extinct in this year, annual growth rate falls -35% against the previous year). The average tourists (67%) for Keoladeo during (2002-08 yrs) are largely domestic. Although, for 2007-08 year, domestic tourists for Keoladeo comprised more than 64% of them and surprisingly Ranthambore witnessed only about 42% domestic visitors for the same period (Table 1).

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES AND PERFORMANCE

We interviewed 89% (103/115) hotel, resort and paying guest owners within 10 km range of both selected PAs in India. We found most of the representatives to be co-operative (since only 11% of owners or managers could not be located and 3% declined interviews). Most facilities are privately owned, and often run by individuals (ranging from 95% in Keoladeo to 93% in Ranthambore respectively).

TABLE I: CHARACTERISTICS OF 02 SELECTED PROTECTED AREAS IN INDIA

Protected area	PA size km ²	Year established as National park	Habitat	Closest tourist centres/cities	Tourist numbers 2007-2008	Annual growth rate for 2002-2008 ^a	Average growth rate for 2002-2008 ^b	Indian tourists 2007-2008
Ranthambore	392	1980	Tropical dry forest, open scrub	Jaipur (145 km)	159,110	14.2%	17.0%	42%
Keoladeo	28.73	1981	dry grassland, woodlands, swamps and wetlands	Agra (50 km) Jaipur (180 km)	94284	2.41%	8.5%	64%

Sources: Tourist arrivals were collected from the forest Departments of selected PAs.

^aAnnual growth rate is calculated as $\{ \ln (2007-2008) - \ln (2002-2003) \} / \text{Number of years} \times 100$.

^bAverage growth rate is averaged for every year from 2002-2008. For Keoladeo the data was available from 2000-2008. Data for both PAs were available from 2002-2008.

Many of the facilities in both PAs are established after 2000 (Ranthambore 40% and Keoladeo 44%) and almost 96% of resorts and guest houses are located outside the Keoladeo on the northern urban side of the park within 5 km range of park boundaries and large about (98%) facilities in Ranthambore are outside the PA as well. In addition the inside facilities in both PAs are run by the respective forest departments. At both sites, the facilities vary in class of amenities and charges accordingly (i.e; Rs. 60 in Dharamshalas to 40,500 in luxurious Oberio hotel) with an average beds capacity of '33%' ranging from (6-130) beds in Ranthambore (Table 2). Also, large number of facilities has recently grown around both PAs. Both PAs are located in urban areas and therefore, facilities around them have developed very fast for past 10 years and consequently the average tourists' arrivals.

The facilities offer employment between 1 to 150 people, along with the guest house stays, which comparatively provide employment to fewer people. Percentage local of total employees in and around these PAs varied from 86% in Keoladeo to 81% in Ranthambore (Table 2). Most of employees were hesitant to discuss wages and salaries offered, therefore, collected salary range for both PAs was not available. Majority of the locals were posted on low graded jobs (gardening, sweeping, security etc.) and most of the high class posts were occupied by outsiders. The availability of jobs in both PAs is highly seasonal and therefore, the depended income of locals get affected due to seasonal impacts (October to April, peak tourist season in both PAs). The charges of rooms also varied in PAs according to the offered facilities. The price/person/day ranged from Rs 60 in (Dharamshalas) to Rs 40,500 in (Oberio hotel) for Ranthambore and Rs 100 (Guest houses) to Rs 7,500 in (Bagh Palace, Achnera Road) for Keoladeo (Table 2). However, the majority of the accommodation units in and around both areas fall under the range of Rs 500-1500 charges. Many of the hotels/resorts purchase food produces directly from the local markets, but for some expensive hotels the food and drink items are supplied by contractors. In Keoladeo food produces for hotels like "Hotel Ashok- ITDC" and "Hotel Saras RTDC" is supplied by contractors, who in turn make purchases from the city market. Other hotels generally make purchases direct from the city.

TABLE II: CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURIST RESORTS AND GUEST HOUSES IN 02 SELECTED PROTECTED AREAS

Protected area (Queries) [#]	Ranthambore	Keoladeo
Total tourist facilities	61	54
Interviewed (% age)	88%	90%
Private ownership	93%	95%
Distance to PA (range in km)	0-10	0-5
Year established	1930-2009	1976-2008
Resorts built post 2000	40%	44%
Resorts outside PAs	98%	96%
Local employees (range)	81%	86%
Bed capacity (range)	10-130	6-100
Price in Rs (range)	60-40500	100-7500
Bore well use	≈ 95%	≈ 92%
Waste disposal	Burn, recycle	Burn, bury, Recycle
Conflicts with FD (yes)	12%	18%
FD rules fair (yes)	82%	76%
Seen wildlife offences (yes)	37%	8%
FD takes action (yes)	56%	88%
Support FD for emergency (yes)	22%	32%

[#] According to Karant & DeFries, 2010

FD = Forest Department

The facilities rely on local resources, particularly water. Water resources were often underground bore wells; approx. 95% facilities in Ranthambore and approx. 92% in Keoladeo use this form of water source and municipal water supply was found another alternative source of water supply (Table 2). Further, both these PAs are located in areas of acute water shortage and high temperatures zone (40–50°C) in summer months. Also, the ground water of these areas is not pure enough for drinking; therefore, almost all facilities in PAs supplied the distilled water bottles to visitors. In Keoladeo, the severe water scarcity during recent years due to lesser monsoon and lack of any sufficient alternative water resource made the most of migratory birds away of it and proportionally the shortage in tourist arrivals.

Ecotourism can provide resources for environmental conservation and management and an incentive for the conservation and sustainable use of public and private land (Allcock *et al.*, 1994; Eagles, 2002). The changing pattern of land use is one of the common impacts of tourism on destinations. The proper maintenance of land use around the PAs is an important job for nature conservation, with precious habitats and rare species whose long term existence depends on the forms of land use around the existing areas.

Tourism development in the study areas have resulted the change in land use along with the sharp increase in prices around them. The outside industrialists/traders purchase the land from local people and bring outsiders for key posts, which fallout the decline in employment opportunities for the locals (Jabar-Din-Khan (RTD employee), pers. comm., 2012). Few other facilities in both PAs are located inside the highly ecologically sensitive wildlife habitats (personal observations, 2012). Proper planning and management to mitigate these rapid land use changes in areas surrounding these PAs is needed to maintain ecological connectivity and functionality of these landscapes.

Opinions of tourists and private facility owners on the main reasons which are leading the development of tourism in both PAs were collected by asking an appropriate question during the interviews. The found reasons have mentioned below as per the recorded number of frequencies, (1) sightings of tigers in Ranthambore, and migratory birds and pythons in Keoladeo, (2) motivation from nature and desire for change in routine life, (3) opportunities for adventure, stay with wild species, safaris, boating, etc., (4) location/accessibility in urban centers, (5) improvement in accommodations units, (6) increase in income and economic growth of middle class population.

TOURISM AND PARK MANAGEMENT

We examined the attitudes of tourist facilities towards the forest department in both PAs to understand their interrelationship. We find minimal conflict between locals and authorities in Keoladeo as comparison to the initial years of its creation as National Park, (ban on entries of surrounding people, cattle and buffalo, which lead to the death of 9 people in police firing, Earle, 1987). Forest department rules were considered fair (ranging between 76% in Keoladeo and 82% of responses in Ranthambore (Table 2). Wildlife offences of lesser impacts such as grazing, fuel wood, and non timber forest product collection, were observed in both PAs. Forest departments in both PAs were found taking action against such reported offences. Locals in both areas are supporting the forest department during emergencies such as fires and trekking out the wildlife culprits by providing the secret information about them (Table 2). In Keoladeo the locals have been made active in eradication of an invasive plant species *Prosopis juliflora* for 2007-2010 to protect the park during the dried seasons. The rules governing entry of people and vehicles vary across the PAs. For example, in Keoladeo private vehicles are allowed to enter the park till the barrier point (1km from main gate). During 2009-10, more than 350 vehicles have entered the park on a typical high season day (December 25, 2009; Forest Deptt. KNP, 2010) and in Ranthambore, routine entered vehicles are regulated by the forest department. The department had divided the park into 8 zones and in each zone 8 vehicles (4 six seater gypsies, 4 twenty or sixteen seater canter) are allowed to enter during each (morning & afternoon) shifts. The tourist road network and zone system in the Ranthambore is meant for the vehicular traffic control, while in Keoladeo the park is divided into the sections/blocks to do the same activity. In Keoladeo, tourists viewed wildlife from cycles/rickshaws / electra-van and boats (08 boats, capacity 50 people), however during the recent water shortage in park, boat journeys have been stopped for all years from 2002-2009 except 2004-2005 when the wetland got sufficient amount of water due to good monsoon (Keoladeo Forest Department, 2009). In Ranthambore the main reason of tourists was to get the glimpse of tigers from the vehicles and therefore, nearly all tourists were participating in "tiger shows". One such incident was noticed during a visit to the park, when a tigress passed through middle of the vehicles on the main road, a great number of visitors were watching her and a considerable amount of flash photography took place (Shukla & Lone, pers. Obs., 2012).

In both PAs tourists visited the religious temples and shrines located inside. On religious days roads inside Ranthambore are clogged with vehicles, people walking on foot and large amounts of garbage (Karanth & DeFries, 2010). Earlier, in Keoladeo a considerable number of devotees were visited the three temples daily. Now, the management reduced the practice for Tuesdays and Saturdays in a week, when the number of devotees touches a maximum. Apart from this,

devotees use the Aghapur road while going for their *parikrama* and some devotees visit the Syed Baba Majaar inside the park. In addition to these, around 300 people come to the park for daily morning walk.

For 2002-2008 periods, the annual average tourism revenue for Keoladeo was Rs 85, 16,577.14, ranges from Rs 44, 16,070 for (2002) to Rs 1, 01, 00,735 for (2005) years (Directorate of KNP, 2009). Major source of revenue collection in Keoladeo (about 95%) is in the form of entrance fees and rest comes from the vehicular charges. However, in Ranthambore the case is completely reverse, where vehicles are found the major of revenue collection. Out of Rs 524/person/trip for a domestic tourist, Rs 330 are the vehicular charges. In both PAs, the tourism revenue can potentially support the conservation and management of parks after implementing it with caution. Entry fees vary in these PAs, for example; Rs 25 for Indian (adult) nationals, Rs 5 (student) and Rs 200 for international visitors in Keoladeo. In Ranthambore the entry charges for all tourists categories were just double than Keoladeo. In both PAs, during interactions the officials, suggested that the entry fee be enhanced for the foreign tourists, while private stakeholders (guides, drivers, hoteliers, travel agents etc.) suggested that the trend should be reverse for the domestic visitors, as they hesitate to pay the high entry and vehicle fees (Rickshaws in Keoladeo), which forced them to stay away. The forest departments in both PAs are managing the revenue generated from the tourism.

CONCLUSION

Most studies of nature-based tourism conclude that countries fail to collect the full potential income from such visitors (e.g. Brockelman, 1988). The other side of this issue is the tendency for societies to undervalue the worth of national parks and other protected areas (Valentine, 1989). However, less-wealthy countries are experiencing growth in international tourism (Balmford *et al.* 2009). India, being an emerging economy and an increase in income and economic growth of middle class population along with a vast diversity in opportunities of natural protected areas (national parks, biosphere reserves, wetlands, coral reefs and mangroves etc.) support nature based tourism in protected areas.

The annually analysed tourist data for 02 PAs suggests that both the PAs are witnessed the greater sum of (both domestic & international) tourists. The majorities (avg. 67%) of the tourists in Keoladeo national park were domestic, that proves the increasing interest of Indian tourists and great future for the natural tourism in India. Also the management planning and practices in these areas are good enough to control the mass tourism. However, the concept of carrying capacities in both areas has not yet been scientifically determined and all types of managerial functions are controlling by basic management, sometimes with the help of local people.

However, the large amount of revenue made from the all tourism activities is quite enough to direct for the support of conservation and park management, however, the extra efforts in these PAs are required to implement it with caution. The most of the tourism offering facilities are privately owned and newly developed and approx. 97% of them are within 10 km range of the PA boundaries. The very less portion of the total population around the destinations is engaged with the tourism related activities. Even the National Ecotourism Plan has acknowledged the participation of the local community for the development and sustainability of ecotourism (Macura, *et al.*, 2011). The availability of jobs in both PAs is highly seasonal and therefore, the depended income of locals get affected due to seasonal impacts (October to April, peak tourist season in both PAs). Sustainable tourism development in these areas is unlikely to occur unless the management local communities work together to make it happen. Like other PAs, the sustainability of these areas are well depended on the issue of local people involvement in management projects. Therefore, in both areas the extra efforts from management are required to take the support of locals for long run sustainability of these areas.

Wildlife habitat and species around the world are facing a crisis. It is estimated that global warming may cause the extinction of 15–37% of species by 2050 (Hundal, 2004). The corresponding natural area management, increase in tourism development, land use changes and local people interest in study PAs require the attention of government authorities, private stakeholders along with the participation of local communities for the welfare of existing wild species and surrounding inhabitants.

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