



RESEARCH ARTICLE

POTENTIALITY OF WILD LIFE TOURISM OF KANHA FOREST AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF KHATIA VILLAGE, MANDLA DISTRICT, MADHYA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Tourism involving travel to areas of natural or ecological interest typically under the guidance of a naturalist for the purpose of observing wildlife and learning about the environment and at the same time focus on wildlife and promotion of understanding and conservation of the environment is called wildlife tourism. The Kanha National Park was included amongst fine nine conservation schemes in the world. The policy of wildlife tourism management in Kanha National Park is based on a delicate balance between conservation on the one hand and education and entertainment that is ecologically and socio-culturally sustainable, on the other. The active participation of local people is crucial to the success of this strategy. Khatia village comes inside the buffer area. There is a sharp change is observed in the socio economic condition of the village which is almost entirely controlled by Kanha National Park. Present author has discussed specially the related aspects of the impact of wild life tourism with particular reference to the recent prospects in the context of the socio-economic condition of khatia village in details.

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INTRODUCTION

Kanha is known as Mowgli's Land which inspired great author Rudyard Kipling to write world famous "Jungle Book" and awarded Noble Prize for literature in 1907 and portrayed in Disney's animation of the Jungle Book, the real "Sher Khan" is true blue-blooded royalty. The Kanha National Park is located in Maikal range, the eastern part of Satpura hills of the central Indian highlands. Prides itself on being the finest sanctuary of India in 1935 and upgraded as national park in 1955. In 1973, Kanha was included amongst fine nine conservation schemes in the world. In central India Kanha provides the first wild trees, greenery all around, thick grass covering a vast area of about 1945 sq. kms. It comprises 1005 sq. kms. as buffer zone and about 940 sq. kms. as core zone which is further divided in 5 ranges. It is one of the finest and best administered Tiger Reserve National Parks in the world and irresistible attraction for wild life lovers.

Objectives of The Study

The main objectives of this paper are to made distinction between conventional form of tourism and eco-tourism. Here an attempt has been made to evaluate the polices adopted for promotion of wildlife tourism of Kanha and assess the impact of wild life tourism of Kanha on socioeconomic condition of khatia village.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in this presentation is based mainly on empirical observation of Kanha forest & interviews of the local people of khatia village and consultation of various books & journals & various sites of internet.

Kanha as a Centre of Wildlifer tourism

Kanha National Park won the 1999-2000 best tourism friendly National Park award of the department of Tourism, Govt. of India. Tourism in Kanha had its modest beginnings in the early seventies. Subsequently, it received an impetus with the improved facilities under Project Tiger. In tune with the objectives of Project Tiger and wildlife conservation, tourism is allowed on a regulated basis in the national park. Wildlife tourism activities are restricted to a very small zone that amounts to only 25% (227 sq. km.) of the park area. The average annual tourist influx is about 55,000, of which 4.5% are foreigners. At times, five to six thousand tourists visit the park in a month (November / December), and on holidays the number sometimes goes up to almost four hundred per day. Kanha has the unique distinction of being the first tiger reserve in the country, where a full-fledged park interpretation programme was launched in 1992, which was upgraded in 2005. This programme aims at the visitors developing a sense of awareness, appreciation and an understanding of conservation of wildlife in particular and of biodiversity in general.

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Main Objectives of Wildlife Tourism of Kanha

- The policy of wildlife tourism management in Kanha National Park is based on a delicate balance between conservation on the one hand and education and entertainment that is ecologically and socio-culturally sustainable,
- The policy also emphasizes the maintenance of a viable population of the tiger, endangered barasingha, biodiversity and tourist resources in Kanha.
- This programme aims at the visitors developing a sense of awareness, appreciation and an understanding of conservation of wildlife in particular and of biodiversity in general.
- To carry on and strengthen protection measures against poaching, illegal collection of forest produce, forest fires and cattle diseases.
- To conduct research and monitor all aspects of the park
- To judiciously control and regulate ecotourism in the park and the buffer & to involve people in strengthening conservation measures by providing inputs for participatory ecodevelopment activities in the villages around the park;

Location of Kanha National Park

Kanha is located in the central Indian highlands which are a part of the extensive tableland that forms the main peninsula of India. The highlands comprise extensive undulating plains with many peaks, hill ranges and flat-topped hills. Kanha Tiger Reserve nestles in the Maikal range of the Satpuras with typical physiographical features. Latitudinal and Longitudinal Extension of Kanha National Park is 22°15'N. to 22°27'48"N. & 80°26'10" E. to 81°4'40"E. Total Area of Kanha Tiger Reserve is 1949 Sq.Km. Of which Buffer Zone is 1009 sq.km & Core Zone is 940 sq.km which is further divided in 5 ranges. Besides, there is also the Phen Wildlife Sanctuary which serves as a satellite micro core.

Potentiality of Wildlife Tourism of Kanha

Excellent Landscape

Kanha is one of the most beautiful nature reserves, and the landscape harbor amazing flat-topped hills, valleys and slopes and the most splendid grasslands. The evergreen majestic sal with its equally grand associates and the dense growth of bamboo ensure a mesmerizing effect on one throughout the year. The distant hazy Maikal hills in the background only add to this breathtaking panorama.

Pleasant Weather

Kanha is beautiful place to visit all round the year. The jungle speaks differently during different seasons. Park opens from October to June. November to January is pleasant during the day while nights tend to go a little chilly. Spring last from February till end of March and Indian summer soars from April to June, when it is hot but not very harsh. The

rising temperature gives wild life lovers, specially photographer some of the best sightings as the animal activity tends to concentrate around the remaining water bodies. The park is closed for tourist during monsoon from 1st July to 30th September.

Attractive Flora

The lowland forest is a mixture of sal (shorea robusta) and other mixed forest trees, interspersed with meadows. The highland forests are tropical moist dry deciduous type and of a completely different nature with bamboo on slopes (dendrocalamus strictus). A very good looking Indian ghost tree (kullu) can also be seen in the dense. Kanha Tiger Reserve abounds in meadows or maidans which are basically open grasslands helps to make way for the animals. Kanha meadow is one such example dense grassland.

Major Wildlife Attractions of Kanha

There is no precise and universally accepted definition of the term. Its meaning varies from country to country, depending upon the legal framework that exists in each country for nature conservation in any given period of time. Generally, however, the term implies all living beings outside direct human control; in other words, all those plants and animals that are usually not cultivated or domesticated. In its widest connotation wildlife includes insects, fungi, frogs and wild flowers, as well as wild shrubs and trees, reptiles, birds and mammals. Forested zones with good crown cover have abundant species of climbers, shrubs and herbs flourishing in the understory. Aquatic plants in numerous "tal" (lakes) are life line for migratory and wetland species of birds.

Tiger

Despite these aesthetic attributes and a wide range of wildlife species, including a rich bird life, every visitor here yearns to catch a glimpse of the most regal and majestic animal, the spirit of the Indian jungle – the tiger. The national park is renowned for a very high probability of sighting tigers almost every day, attracting tourists from all over the world regarded as the "star attraction" of wildlife tourism in Kanha. The management understands visitors' longing and excitement to see a tiger in the wild. Besides, it also knows that the sighting of a moving tiger also inculcates tremendous awareness of wildlife conservation in the public. To achieve the twin objectives of entertaining and inspiring visitors, the management arranges well regulated tiger viewing from elephant back in the tourism zone. Kanha is a beautiful place to visit all round the year.

Barasingha

However, if one animal species were to represent Kanha, it would probably be the barasingha, or the swamp deer. The barasinghas at Kanha are unique, being the hard ground variety, which populate the large open tracts of grass amidst the forests of teak and bamboo.

Twenty years ago, the barasingha was faced with extinction but some desperate measures including the fencing-off of

some animals helped save them and again the air in Kanha bugle with their rutting calls.

Other animals

The park also has a significant population of leopards, the sloth bear and Indian wild dog (*Cuon alpinus dukhunensis*). Rare Indian wolf (*Canis (lupus) indica*) can be found in the far east part of the park. The most abundant prey species for the large predators is the spotted deer or chital. The second largest population of deer is that of Sambar (*Cervus Unicolor*) which constitutes an important prey base of the tiger. Other commonly observed mammals include the common grey

Birds

The birds species in the park include storks, teals, pintails, pond herons, egrets, peacock, pea fowl, jungle fowl, spur fowl, partridges, quails, ring doves, spotted parakeets, green pigeons, rock pigeons, cuckoos, papihas, rollers, bee-eater, hoopoes, drongos, warblers, kingfishers, woodpeckers, finches, orioles, owls, and fly catchers.

Tourism Facilities

The park management provides route guides and interpretation facilities at a nominal charge. Entry on foot and night driving are prohibited inside the park. Only light vehicles are allowed. There are two entry points at Khatia and Mukki. Through Interpretation Centre, Light and Sound Show, Nature Trail, literature, touch screens, sounds of the jungles, photographs, models, souvenirs, wildlife film shows, etc., an attempt is made there to help the visitors to understand the amazing beauty and complexity of the web of life in the tiger reserve.

Park Safari

There are two ways to explore the park either in an open safari vehicle or on an elephant. Elephant safari is provided by the forest department for a nominal charge, while resort provides safari vehicle on hire. Best time for a safari is from dawn till about 10 am and from 4 pm till dusk, as the animals are most active during these times. Department trained guides are compulsory on all tours. They guide in moving around and spot animals in the park.

Recommended Stay and accessories

A stay of at least 3 nights is recommended for good wild life sighting, although a brief visit will also be interesting. Camera, Binoculars, Hats and Neutral colored clothes (which blend with the forest) is necessary for safari.

Interpretation Centre

Located at Kanha, the interpretation Centre adds to the visitor's understanding of the intricacies of jungle life, and also of the conservation history of Kanha with the help of dioramas, display of skeletons of larger mammals, interesting illustrated notes, models and specimens of flora and fauna.

Light and Sound Show

A light and sound show has been developed in the Interpretation Centre to dramatise the sequence of a tiger hunting a chital – an event rarely witnessed by anybody.

Amphitheatre

There are two amphitheatres located at Khatia and Mukki entry points, where amazing spectacles of wildlife can be viewed through the many national and international films on nature and wild animals.

Nature Trail

Two nature trails, one each at Khatia and Mukki, have been laid with waysides to explain various spots along the route. There is also a watch tower on each trail, which offers a panoramic view of the forest.

Eco-centre

An eco-centre with modest audio-visual facilities has been set up near Khatia. This is used for trainings, seminars and many other HRD purposes.

Publications

These range from highly technical research papers and bulletins to entertaining information on the history, flora and fauna, and local tribes. For the visitors who want to carry home these publications for references, the following are available: Kanha brochure, handbook, posters, picture post cards, wild animal folder, roadside guide, stickers, and tourist information leaflet. There is also a wide range of magazines and periodicals in Kanha Library for visitors who want to stay in touch with the world outside the tiger reserve.

Vehicular Excursion

Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC) vehicles as well as privately owned vehicles are available for hire at the entry points. There is a well-planned network of forest roads, which ensures that vehicular excursions of tourists pass through almost all the major types of habitat, facilitating a good view of grassy expanses and lush green forests as well as wild animals.

Route Guide Service

Under this service, route guides have been handpicked from local communities with a well-developed jungle sense. The wildlife staff trains these guides in identifying the various wild animals, birds and plant species and in learning their basic characteristics. Such interpretative skills are of great help to tourists.

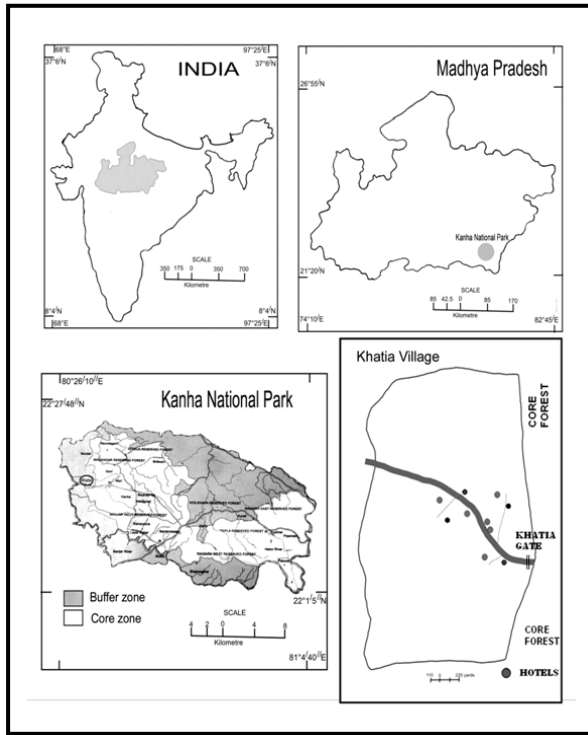
Forest Canteen

There is a forest canteen, run by the Kanha Workers' Society, located in the heart of the tiger reserve, providing snacks and beverages to tourists.

Medical Dispensary

Considering all the eventualities in a tiger reserve, a forest dispensary has also been set up at Mukki to provide first aid during emergencies.

LOCATION MAP



Impact of wildlife tourism of kanha ntional park on khatia

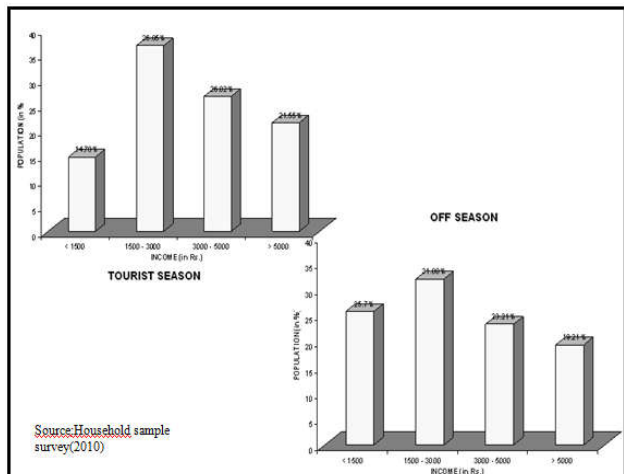
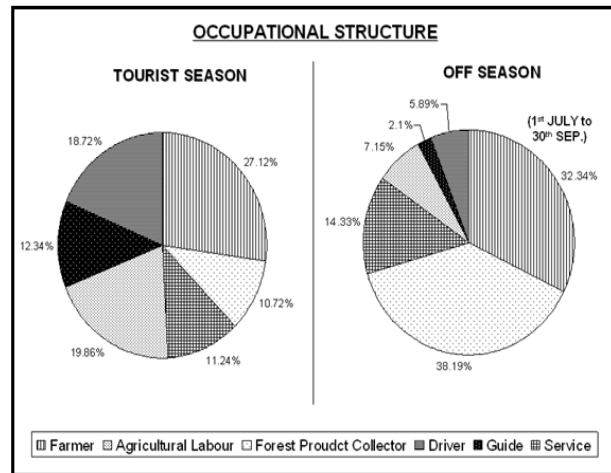
There are two gates for entrance into the forest. The Kisli gate is best accessible from Jabalpur. The Kisli gate stops at village Khatia, Mandla district, Madhyapradesh which comes inside the buffer area of Kanha Ntional Park.

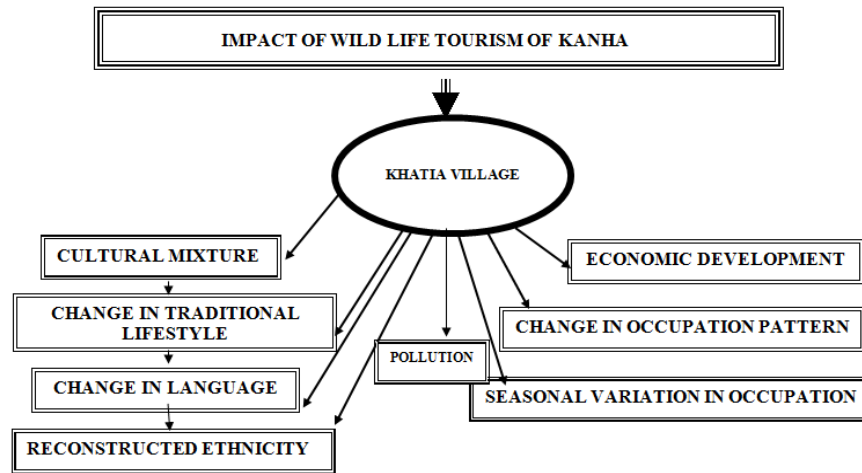
Economic Impacts

Before the establishment of Kanha National Park rural communities of Khatia raised rain-fed crops on marginal lands, which meet only a part of their needs. These communities, therefore, had no option but to depend on the forests for their sustenance – raising cattle by grazing them in the forests, gathering minor forest products. There is a sharp change is observed in the socio economic condition of the village which. is almost entirely controlled by Kanha National Park. The Routine conservation activities, along with eco-development-related works and tourism activities have added significantly to the income of the local people of Khatia. Route guides have been handpicked from local communities with a well-developed jungle sense. The wildlife staff trains these villagers in identifying the various wild animals, birds and plant species and in learning their basic characteristics. Such interpretative skills are of great help to tourists. The locals are also employed as drivers. Some of the villagers buy gypsy with the help of bank loan. They use it as a source of income either by self driving

during jungle safari or to let out it for hire. A number of hotels & resorts have been developed in this village. Among them Shri Meheswar Resort, Mogli Resorts, Tuli Tiger Resort, Pugmark Resort, Baisan Lodge, Motel Chandan, Dyna Resorts, are important. The hoteliers and tour operators employ the villagers as attendants & other support services. Management authorities of Hotels & Resorts arrange tribal dance programme for the entertainment of the tourist. It becomes another source of income for the villagers. A large portion of working population is engaged in day-to-day conservation or development works of the tiger reserve. It improves economic condition of the village. They also earn money by selling local crafts & forest based souvenirs made by local tribal community. As the economy of the local people largely depend upon the wildlife tourism, thus a marked variation is observed in the occupational pattern as well as income structure during the tourist season and in off season. Park is closed for tourist during monsoon from 1st July to 30th September. This is the off season. At this time agriculture is the main occupation because the villagers mainly raise rainfed crops while the winter the peak season for tourism so the occupation related to tourism become the main source of earning.

Seasonal variation in occupational and income structure Of khatia village





Socio cultural impact

Khatia village is very rich anthropologically. About 80% of the total population belongs to two principal tribal groups-Baigas and Gonds. They are heavily dependent upon the forest resources with a touch of aboriginality, they show a strong bearing on natural ecosystem. But after the establishment of tiger reserve tourism play a vital role in changing the socio cultural nature of these communities. Baigas and Gonds used to speak their own indigenous language but at present most of them have lost their original language and speak Hindi. As tourism involves movement of people to different geographical location and establishment of social relation between people, cultural clashes can take place as a result of differences in culture, ethnic groups values and life styles, languages and levels of prosperity. In this village tourism brings about changes in value system and behavior of the local people and there by threatened indigenous identity. Furthermore, changes occurring community structure, family relationship, collective traditional lifestyle ceremonies. Tourism has changed local culture of this village, religious rituals, traditional ethnic rights and festivals which are reduced and sanitized to conform tourist expectation thus occurring reconstructed ethnicity. Heaps of garbage, solid waste, specially plastic packets & bags left by tourist create a negative environmental impact in Khatia mainly during peak season. Aesthetic pollution also occurs by hoardings & banners which are used mainly for commercial purposes for promoting tourism.

Conclusion

At present tourism is the fastest growing industry of the world. To get maximum benefit from this industry it must be

plan fully installed in any region. Kanha national park is a potential tourist destination for wild life lovers. It has immense impact upon the livelihood pattern of the people of the surrounding areas. In case of Khatia it helps to improve the economic condition of the local community at the cost of their own traditional socio cultural environment. To bring economic as well as environmental prosperity through wildlife tourism in Kanha national Park and the surrounding areas plan wise eco-friendly sustainable tourism is necessary.

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