



Impact of Development and Conservation Practices on the Tourism in Pench Tiger Reserve

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1.0 Abstract

The Government of India's initiative for conserving the tiger through the 'Project Tiger' has showed good results in terms of increases number of tiger in the wild as well as the good development of the wildlife tourism sector. There are numerous Tiger Reserves in India, however, this study has been conducted in the Pench National Park or Tiger Reserve are, which is situated in Maharashtra as well as Madhya Pradesh stated. The study was specifically carried out to assess the impact of various development and tiger conservation policies of the Government on the tourism in the buffer area of Pench National Park. For this study the data was collected from the managers (working in the resorts situated in the buffer zone of the park) using survey method. All the data collected in this study was analyzed using SPSS 18.0 software. The study results showed that most of the resort managers are not formally educated to undertake specific tourism related jobs. Moreover, the study results also show that Government's Tiger Conservation Policies had a positive impact on tourism and thereby improved their profitability also.

Keywords: *Project Tiger, wildlife tourism, Pench Tiger Reserve, Conservation Policies*

2.0 Introduction

In the year 1973, the Government of India has taken a pioneering initiative for conserving its national animal, the tiger, by launching the 'Project Tiger'. From 9 tiger reserves since its formative years, the Project Tiger coverage has increased to 50 at present, spread out in 18 of our tiger range states. The tiger reserves are constituted on a core/buffer strategy. The core areas have the legal status of a national park or a sanctuary, whereas the buffer or peripheral areas are a mix of forest and non-forest land, managed as a multiple use area.

Amongst all Pench National Park or Tiger Reserve is one of the premier tiger reserves of India and the only one to straddle across two states - Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Pench Tiger Reserve comprises the Indira Priyadarshini Pench National Park, the Pench Mowgli Sanctuary and a buffer. It derives its name from its life line - the River Pench. Much like the system of wildlife tourism in most of India, the tourism activity in Pench Tiger Reserve is restricted to 20% of the core area and is carried out through safari drives done each day in the early morning and evening. The number of jeeps that are allowed entry into the reserve is restricted by the Forest Department.

While nature conservation often appears the obvious responsibility of the Government, the local economy is also very important for the overall development of the area. Hence, ideally, the developmental policies of the Government and the actual operations in the forest area by the resorts as well as the local people determine the sustainability of the expected growth. Moreover, many researchers have pointed out that there is an urgent need for a national ecotourism policy that would ensure sustainable growth of the protected areas. Owing to the unique quality of spreading across two states with its vast geographic boundary, and the extent of conservation activities that have been carried out in Pench, this study has been carried out specifically to study the impact of Government's development and conservation policies on the tourism in the buffer area, which is a revenue land.

3.0 Research Methodology

In this study, a careful collection of facts was undertaken to ensure the validity of the data and for this the data for each variable was recorded from more than one respondent. Broadly the study was carried out in three steps involving reconnaissance, data collection and analysis, followed by interpretation of statistics.

3.1 Study Area – Pench Tiger Reserve

Pench Tiger Reserve gets its name from the river Pench that flows through the Reserve from north to south. Pench Tiger Reserve is situated in the Indian State of Madhya Pradesh in the Seoni and Chhindwara district. The Total Reserve region at the Pench national park is 273 kms. and wildlife conservation in the park is carried out through vast areas of Reserve Forests, protected forest areas and buffer zones as well. In the Pench Tiger Reserve the tourist activity is restricted to 20% of the core area much like the system of wildlife tourism in most of India. A tourist activity in the core area means safari drives, which is generally done twice each day, once in the morning and once in the evening.

With great influx of tourists for recreation in this area, many resorts have been set up to meet the demand of lodging and boarding. Moreover, resorts in this area hugely contributes to the local economy supporting local industries like transport, grocery stores, shops of all types, and especially local markets. Revenue generation for the government, contributed by these resorts has given rise to a lot of direct and indirect employment opportunities for the locals. Resorts are playing a vital role in rehabilitation and recuperation of the local villagers. The increase in tourism in the region is directly proportional to the presence of resorts. There are about 30 resorts in Pench MP that employ more than 1000 local youth.

3.2 Design of Study and Sample Selection

The study was carried out by using a descriptive research design, where the data was collected from resort owners, local villagers and forest officials to fulfill the various objectives. Hence, all the resort owners, local villagers and forest officials were considered as the population for this study. The information collected in the preliminary survey showed that there are 25 resorts operational in the study area and approximately 120 people are working in the management of these resorts. It was decided that the sample size should be at least 50% i.e. 60, however, during the survey, data was obtained from 64 resort managers.

3.3 Collection of Data

In the present study, all the data generation was done by using standard procedures, wherein structured questionnaires (research instruments) and by following survey method. For the collection of primary data, a structured research instrument i.e. a questionnaire was prepared.

3.4 Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using the test-retest method, while three types of validity were assessed, which included content validity, criterion related validity and construct validity.

3.5 Statistical Analysis of Data

Statistical analysis of data was carried out with the help of various statistical tests. The descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, etc. was determined from the collected data. The inferential statistics such as Chi-Square test was used as an inferential statistical test. All the data analysis was done by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 18.0 Software.

3.6 Significance level

The significance level was chosen to be 0.05 (or equivalently, 5%) by keeping in view the consequences of such an error.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Age of the resort managers

Table 4.1: Age-wise distribution of the resort managers

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
< 40 yrs	8	12.5
40 to 60 yrs	24	37.5
> 60 yrs	32	50.0
Total	64	100.0

Calculated χ^2 : 13.897; df: 2; χ^2 critical value: 5.99; $p < 0.05$

Above **Table 4.1** presents data of respondents with respect to their age. It was observed that majority of the respondents i.e. 50.0% are above 60 years of age, while 12.5% respondents belong to the age-group below 40 years and further 37.5% respondents belong to the age-group 40 to 60 years.

4.2 Educational Qualification of respondents

Table 4.2: Educational Qualification of respondents (Hotel Management Related)

Qualification	No. of Respondent	Percentage
No formal education	13	20.3
Diploma	10	15.6
Graduate	33	51.6
Post Graduate	8	12.5
Any other (please specify)	-	0.0
Total	64	100.0

Calculated χ^2 : 47.094; df: 4; χ^2 critical value: 9.49; $p < 0.05$

Above **Table 4.2** presents information of hotel management related educational qualification of managers of various resorts operational in Pench Tiger Reserve. It was observed that 51.6% respondents are graduates, while 20.3% respondents have not taken any formal education of this field i.e. hospitality industry related education, while 15.6% are diploma-holders. Furthermore, 12.5% respondents are educated up to post-graduate level.

4.3 Impact of Government's Tiger Conservation Policies on tourism

4.3.1 Significant Impact on Tourism due to Tiger Conservation Policies

Table 4.3.1: Impact of Government's Tiger Conservation Policies on tourism

	No. of Respondent	Percentage
No Impact	8	12.5
Negative Impact	4	6.3
Positive Impact	52	81.3
Total	64	100.0

Above **Table 4.3.1** presents opinion of managers of various resorts operational in Pench Tiger Reserve with respect to impact of government's Tiger conservation policies on tourism. It was observed that according to 12.5% respondents there is no impact of government's tiger conservation policies on tourism, while 6.3% respondents feel that it has negative impact on tourism. Furthermore, according to 81.3% respondents government's Tiger conservation policies had positive impact on tourism.

4.3.2 Number of tourists as well as profitability

Table 4.3.2: Impact of Government's Tiger Conservation Policies on number of tourists as well as profitability

	No. of Respondent	Percentage
No Impact	6	9.4
Negative Impact	4	6.3
Positive Impact	54	84.4
Total	64	100.0

Above **Table 4.3.2** presents opinion of managers of various resorts operational in Pench Tiger Reserve with respect to impact of government's Tiger conservation policies on number of tourists as well as profitability. It was observed that according to 9.4% respondents there is no impact of government's tiger conservation policies on no. of tourists and profitability, while 6.3% respondents feel that it has negative impact. Furthermore, according to 84.4% respondents government's Tiger conservation policies had positive impact on no. of tourists and profitability.

4.3.3 Competitive Tariffs due to high demand

Table 4.3.3: Competitive Tariffs due to high demand

	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	47	73.4
No	17	26.6
Total	64	100.0

Above **Table 4.3.3** presents opinion of managers of various resorts operational in Pench Tiger Reserve with respect to competitive tariffs due to high demand. It was observed that according to 73.4% respondents high demand has lead to increase in competitive tariffs. Furthermore according to 26.6% respondents high demand has not increased the competitive tariffs.

4.3.4 Impact of conservation

Table 4.3.4: Impact of conservation

	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Profitability affected due to strict policies	10	15.6
Management of resort activities became more complex	6	9.4
No Major Negative Impact	48	75.0
Total	64	100.0

Above **Table 4.3.4** presents opinion of managers of various resorts operational in Pench Tiger Reserve with respect to impact of conservation. It was observed that according to 15.6% respondents profitability of resorts is affected due to strict conservation policies, while according to 9.4% respondents management of resort activities have become more complex. Furthermore according to 75.0% respondents there is no major negative impact of conservation policies on resorts.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Age of the resort managers

- From the study results it is evident that significantly high percentage ($p < 0.05$) of the resort owners/managers of Pench Tiger Reserve area are above 60 years of age.

5.2 Educational Qualification of respondents

- In view of the study results it is evident that significantly ($p < 0.05$) high percentage of resort managers of Pench Tiger Reserve area are not highly educated vis-à-vis hospitality industry related degree.

5.3 Impact of Government's Tiger Conservation Policies on tourism

5.3.1 Significant Impact on Tourism due to Tiger Conservation Policies

- From the study results it is evident that government's Tiger conservation policies had positive impact on tourism.

5.3.2 Number of tourists as well as profitability

- From the study results it is evident that government's Tiger conservation policies had positive impact on no. of tourists and profitability.

5.3.3 Competitive Tariffs due to high demand

- From the study results it is evident that high demand has lead to competitive tariffs in most of the resorts of the study area i.e. Pench Tiger Reserve.

5.3.4 Impact of conservation

- On the basis of study results it is evident that there is no major negative impact of conservation policies on resorts operational in Pench Tiger Reserve.

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