

Wildlife Tourism in Nepal: A Case Study of Chitwan National Park

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Abstract

This paper deals with the wildlife tourism in Nepal with the special references to the Chitwan National Park. CNP is represented by the Churia hills, ox-bow lakes and the flood plains of Rapti, Reu and Narayani rivers, lakes, hundreds of Asiatic one horned rhinoceros, Royal Bengal Tigers, plants and more than five hundred birds and species of fishes, different types and various number of reptiles, crocodile breeding centre, vulture breeding centre, elephant breeding centre as well as cultural heritage especially of Tharu community. These globally renowned properties make CNP peculiar, popular and prestigious in the world. Recognizing its unique ecosystem and heritages of global significance, UNESCO declared and enlisted it in a World Heritage List in 1984. What are the major wildlife tourism products of CNP? How far they are considered as the responsible sources of tourism in CNP? are the major research questions and gaps which have been discussed and answered in this paper. Likewise, to identify the major wildlife tourism products of CNP and to analyze and describe the promotional role of tourism and accommodations available in CNP are the main objectives of this paper. In this research primary data and secondary information have been applied.

Keywords: Chitwan National Park, Wildlife Tourism, Tourism Products, Tourism Activities, Accommodations and Facilities

INTRODUCTION

Wildlife observation tourism is a significant sector within the tourism industry that has experienced substantial growth in numerous countries over the past few decades, emerging as a prominent economic sector (Clem & Wilson, 2004, p. 145). It has grown dramatically in recent years for providing enjoyment for millions of people and a significant source of income and employment as well. It also can help raise awareness of a whole range of pressing environmental issues. Regarding it Higginbottom (2004, pp. 2-3) mentions that:

Wildlife tourism is tourism based on encounters with non-domesticated animals. This encounter can occur in either animal's natural environment or in captivity. It includes activities historically classified as non-consumptive, such as viewing, photography and feeding as well as those that involve killing or capturing animal's particularly hunting and recreational fishing. Wildlife tourism is a subset of nature-based tourism, since animals are a subset of nature, although zoos and other attractions where wildlife are kept captivity are not seen. Thus, wildlife tourism can be considered a form of eco-tourism when it occurs within the context of nature-based activities that provides environmental interpretation and adopts environmentally responsible practices.

The term "wildlife" encompasses both plants and animals, although it is commonly used to specifically describe animals in their natural habitats. Wildlife watching is an activity centered around observing wildlife, primarily focusing on animal observation. This distinguishes wildlife watching from activities like hunting and fishing that involve different forms of engagement with wildlife. Occasionally, wildlife watching may involve interactions with the observed animals, such as touching or feeding them (Tapper, 2006, p. 10).

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The tourism industry tends to use the term 'wildlife tourism' rather than wildlife watching tourism. In many cases, the two terms are identical, but wildlife tourism is sometimes also used to refer to hunting or fishing tourism and in a few cases to the viewing of captive wildlife in zoos or confined parks where the animals no longer live a wild existence (Higginbottom, 2004, pp. 1-3). In this respect, Tapper (2006, p. 10) further says:

The terms wildlife watching tourism and wildlife tourism are used interchangeably, and are defined as tourism that is undertaken to view and / or encounter wildlife in a natural setting. Wildlife watching tourism is then tourism that is organized and undertaken in order to watch wildlife. Wildlife watching tourist activities can make an important contribution to community development and conservation, especially in developing countries, but it needs to be carefully planned and managed.

Wildlife watching encompasses appropriately managed mass tourism activities and can be observed in various natural settings such as water sources, national parks, and zoos. Among these, national parks are particularly recognized as highly effective and remarkable destinations for wildlife tourism. The concept of national parks originated in the early 1900s, with the implementation of Forest Conservation Acts from 1907 to 1933. The establishment of national parks serves multiple purposes, including the conservation and preservation of natural resources, protection of flora and fauna, safeguarding wildlife habitats, contributing significantly to the development of wildlife-oriented tourism industry, and providing opportunities for research and investigation into jungle activities (Satyal, 1988, pp. 97-98).

The establishment of national parks dates back to the early days worldwide. The first national park, named Yellowstone National Park, was established in the United States in 1872. Since then, the concept of national parks has expanded beyond the American borders and has flourished globally, leading to the creation of 1024 national parks or similar reserves around the world (Satyal, 1988, pp. 97-98). As defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature nearly one hundred countries around the world have lands classified as a national park. According to the IUCN, 6,555 national parks worldwide met its criteria in 2006. IUCN is still discussing the parameters of defining a national park.

In Nepal there are ten National Parks (Chitwan, Bardiya, Langtang, Sagarmatha, Rara, Shephoksumdo, Khaptad, Makalu Barun, Shivapuri Nagarjun and Banke National Parks), three Wildlife Reserve (Shukla Phata, Koshi Tappu and Parsa), six Protected Areas (Krisnasar Conservation Area, Apinappa Conservation Area, Kanchanjunga Conservation Area, Annapurna Conservation Area, Manaslu Conservation Area and Gaurishankar Conservation Area) and only one Hunting Protected Area (Dhorpatan) (Govt. of Nepal, 2017, p. 51).

Through the perspectives of wildlife tourism promotion in Nepal, these have been playing positive and noteworthy roles since its establishment. According to the statistics altogether 508212, 555663, 514277, 387383 and 604091 tourists have paid their visit into the different national parks, wildlife reserve, protected areas and hunting protected area during the years 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively (Govt. of Nepal, 2017, p. 51). CNP is oldest and most important park where thousands of international and domestic tourists have paid their visit every year. But, this park is still remaining behind on properly utilizing of its huge potentialities which is its academic problems. There are still lacking proper studies and researches; hence to fulfill the research gaps, this paper entitled *Wildlife Tourism in Nepal: A Case Study of Chitwan National Park* has been prepared.

Research Problem

The CNP has been developed as an important tourism centre in Nepal. Here Tharu an indigenous people have also endeavored to show their different cultural programs to the tourists. However, lack of proper studies and researches, several aspects of CNP still remain unexplored. These aspects are identified as the main problems and research gaps which have not been yet highlighted properly. Thus, raising the following questions such as what are the major wild life tourism products of CNP? and what is the situation of tourism and accommodations available in CNP? this research paper has been prepared.

Objectives

The main motto of this study is to explore the different aspects associated with CNP and wildlife tourism as well. This paper also helps to provide the introduction to wildlife tourism and CNP as the general objectives. For addressing the above mentioned research questions and problems, this paper has been prepared specifically with the following objectives such as to identify the major wild life tourism products of CNP and to analyze the situation of tourism and facilities and accommodations available in CNP.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jeffries (1971) defining the tourist product and its importance in tourism marketing, Medlik & Middleton (1973) the tourist product and its marketing implications, Middleton (1988) marketing in travel and tourism, Leiper (1990) tourism systems: an interdisciplinary approach, Mrnjavac (1992) defining tourist product, Higginbottom (edi.) (2004) wildlife tourism impacts, management and planning, (2004) wildlife tourism: an introduction, Moscardo, Woods & Saltzer (2004) the role of interpretation in wildlife tourism, Koutoulas (2004) understanding the tourist product, Tapper (2006) wildlife watching and tourism a study on the benefits and risks of a fast growing tourism activity and its impacts on species, du Cros & McKercher (2015) cultural tourism have been reviewed. Likewise, the empirical study such as Satyal (1988) tourism in Nepal, a profile, (2000) Nepal an exotic tourist destination, (2001) tourism scene in Nepal, Lamsal (1996) tourism in Nepal: a case study of Sauraha, Kunwar (2002) anthropology of tourism, a case study of Chitwan, Sauraha, Chauhan (2004) eco-tourism in Nepal, Tripathi (2065) gidhdha prajananendra kendra khulyo, Dulal (2067) Sauraha of Chitwan; an important tourism destination of Nepal: a study of tourism products of the site, Kafle (2017) major tourism products of Sauraha: a study of tourist and tourism perspectives have been reviewed for generating theoretical and empirical knowledge and information about CNP and wildlife tourism products.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study descriptive cum exploratory research design has been applied. This study has been conducted on the basis of primary data as well as secondary information. Primary data has been obtained from fieldwork by using observation and interview while secondary information has also been generated through literature review. After collecting data, it has been rechecked, verified at the field manually to reduce the error. Then the result is calculated. The final data is tabulated and interpreted by using the tables, simple and descriptive statistical methods. In this study, purposive random sampling has been adopted through which 30 tourists have been selected including 20 (66.67%) from male and remaining 10 (33.33%) from female as the respondents of this study. They were from different countries; the detail information about the respondents is given in the table:

Table No. 1: Distribution of tourist respondents by country

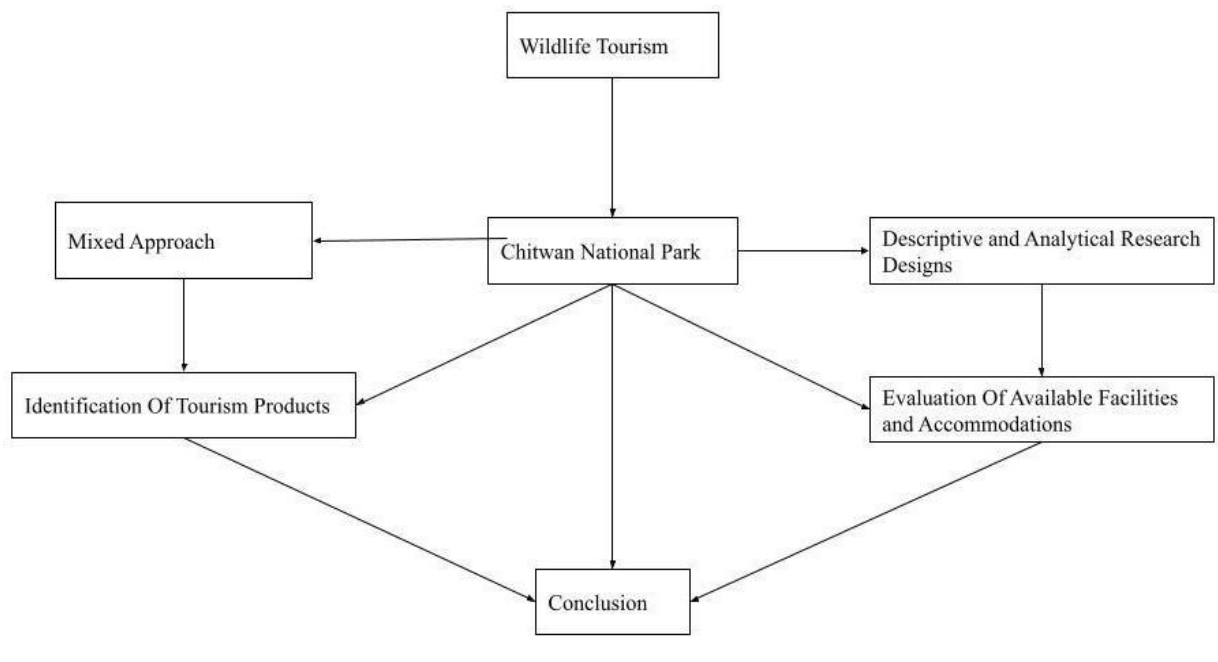
S. N.	Country	Female	Male	Total	%
1	India	3	5	8	26.67
2.	Australia	2	4	6	20.00
3.	Holland	1	3	4	13.33
4	Finland	1	3	4	13.33
5	USA	1	2	3	10.00
6	England	1	1	2	6.67
7	Norway	-	2	2	6.67
8	Belgium	1	-	1	3.33
Total		10	20	30	100.00

Source: Field Survey 2022

Tourists visited at CNP from different countries but the sample has been limited within 30 tourists only. According to the statistics among the majority, 8 or 26.67% of the tourist respondents have come from India. Similarly, the given table shows that out of the remaining other respondents 6 or 20.00% are from Australia, 4 or 13.33% each from Holland and Finland, 3 or 10.00% from USA, 2 or 6.67% each from England and Norway whereas 1 or 3.33% from Belgium.

Conceptual Framework

Especially, this paper helps to define the concept of wildlife tourism, explore its history and find and analyze the major wildlife tourism products, to examine the situation of tourism and facilities and accommodations available in CNP as well. Along with the identification and documentation of the different types of tourism products of CNP *Chitwan* it helps to explore the tourism activities, tourist accommodation and facilities and other several aspects associated with tourists and tourism in CNP. For addressing the above mentioned research gaps and problems as well as fulfilling the determine objectives this paper has been prepared by applying the following conceptual framework:



Developed by researchers

Regarding the specific study of the situation of CNP through the tourists and tourism perspectives and roles of accommodations and facilities for the promotion of tourism in CNP, researchers have frequently conducted field work. After collecting data and information this article has been prepared. Finally, in the course of analysis of data and measuring the findings, this paper has presented including with different issues mentioned above in chronological order.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chitawan National Park

CNP is situated in the sub-tropical inner Terai lowlands of South Centre of Nepal. The park has roughly been extended 100 km long and 40 km wide from east to west and north to south respectively. The covering area of the park has widely been extended from 544 sq. km. to 932 sq. km. in 1977 (2033/34 B.S.). This is the area of the park excluding 750 sq. km. buffer zone, which has been added in 1996. If the area of buffer zone gets included within the park, the total area becomes 1682 sq. km. which is the 6.24% of the total land of the National Park and Wildlife Reserves of Nepal. This Park is extended within four districts i.e. *Chitwan*, *Makawanpur*, *Parsa* and *Navalparasi* of *Narayani* and *Lumbini* zones. The name of the park has been changed to *Chitwan* National Park from *Royal Chitwan* National Park after the public movement 2006 (2062/63). Headquarter of the Park is located in *Kasara* inside the Park, which is about 165 km. far from Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal.

The park contains *Churia* hills, ox-bow lakes and the flood plains of *Rapti*, *Reu* and *Narayani* rivers. The *Churia* hills elevates on increasing order from west to east from 110 m. to 850 m. The lower but more rugged *someshwor* hills occupy most of the western portion of the park. The park boundaries are delineated by the *Narayani* and

Rapti Rivers in the north and west and *Reu* River in *someswar* hills in the south and south west. Its eastern border is joined with *Parsa* Wildlife Reserve. The Park has relatively high humidity tropical monsoon climate. Monsoon, winter and spring are the three main seasons experienced in the park. The winter season begins with the beginning of October and ends with the ending of February. Spring begins in March and ends with summer in early June. It gets the maximum temperature 40^o Celsius in May and minimum of 0-6^o Celsius in December. Maximum rainfall recorded in the park area is 216 mm. which is witnessed during September and October. During this time, most of the roads are impassable due to flood. Therefore, the period between December and February in considered being the best season having a panoramic view of the Park.

CNP has occupied important position in South Asia for the conservation of rare animals and plants. The particular region which is famous as the CNP today, was protected as hunting reserve area by the then Prime Minister Janga Bd. Rana in 1962 B.S. and which is continuously extended till the Rana regime. Once, in a Rana oligarchy this area had been used for big game shooting and hunting reserve for the ruling Rana family for 104 years (Satyal, 2000, pp. 119-120). In 2015/16 BS (1958) an American scientist named EPG of Fauna Preservation Society of America had recommended the north part of the Rapti River as the best territory for establishment of National Park, whereas, the South Part for the Rhinoceros Protection Area as well. At the same time, the then King Mahendra had established a Deer's Protection Area in the site in 1959. Keeping it in mind, the then king Mahendra had suggested to his government and then the government had established Rhinoceros Protected Area in 1963 (2017/18), which is extended about 8 hundred sq. km (Dulal, 2067, p. 154).

During the period, when Deer's and Rhinoceros Protected Area had been established, the site was densely inhabitant by the people. Thus, at the first, HMG of Nepal needed the replacement of the people from the site. Meanwhile, HMG of Nepal had launched rehabilitation program and had rehabilitated about 22,000 households including 4000 households from the particular site of Chitwan to the other parts of the country in 1964 (2020/21 BS). In this process, King Mahendra had approved the Rhinoceros Protected Area as the first National Park of the country in 1970 (2026/27 BS). After the resolution of the then king, department of forestry of Nepal and WWF (World Wildlife Fund), FAO/UNDP had jointly provided the financial and technical support for the preliminary development activities of the purposed National Park in 1971 (2027/28 BS). It was the first declared national park in 1973, enlarged to the present size in 1977 (Satyal, 2001, p. 139).

Finally, the Rhinoceros and Deer's Protected Area had been transformed as the Royal Chitwan National Park in 1973 covering with 932 sq km (Chauhan, 2004, p. 56). After establishment as the National Park, HMG of Nepal had formulated an act named Royal Chitwan National Park Act 2030 in 1973 (Dulal, 2067, p. 154). It is the first National Park of Nepal that has been established for natural conservation by the government. CNP is famous for Asiatic one horned Rhinoceros and Royal Bengal Tigers where 500 Asiatic one horned rhinoceros, 100 Royal Bengal Tigers, 600 plants and 526 birds species, different types and various number of reptiles and 120 species of fishes inhabited from the days past.

Tourism Products of CNP

The notion of a tourism product is intricate, encompassing various components such as service, hospitality, freedom of choice, consumer engagement, and the consumption of experiences that need to be realized or implemented in some manner (Hsu et al. 2008; in du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 153). In this respect Koutoulas (2004, pp. 9-10) mentions that:

The tourist product is the total bundle of functionally interdependent tangible and intangible elements that are found in different geographical location and in different time periods (before, during and after the trip). These elements are considered as the recipe that enables the tourist on the one hand to engage in a specific activity at one or at several consecutive destinations and on the other hand to facilitate the transition to the destination(s) and the social reproduction during the trip.

The concept of a tourism product should be viewed from the perspective of the consumer rather than solely from the standpoint of the individual producer. This means that the tourist product should be understood as encompassing the entire travel experience of the tourist. It should include all the elements that are part of the trip, including the destinations visited, the routes taken during travel, and the accommodations used (Koutoulas,

2004, p. 6). These elements can be categorized as natural, built, fixed, mobile, ongoing, or temporary. However, at its core, a tourism product is defined as anything that can be offered to the market and has the potential to satisfy a consumer's need or desire. It could be a service, an experience, or a tangible item that can be acquired, used, or consumed by the tourist (Kotler & Turner, 1989, p. 435; in du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 153). Regarding wildlife tourism products in the world Tapper (2006, p. 15) listed out the following sites and heritages:

Butterflies: Monarch butterflies in Mexico, USA and Canada; Crabs Red: Christmas Island, Indian Ocean; Corals and fish: Bunaken, Indonesia; Sian Ka'an, Mexico; Soufriere Marine Management Area, St. Lucia; Bonaire, Caribbean; Red Sea, Egypt; Sharks: Seychelles; Ningaloo Reef, Australia; Turtles :Tamar Ibama Brazil; Akumal, Mexico; Cape Verde; Maputaland, South Africa; Sri Lanka; Indonesia; Snakes: Bharatpur, India; Komodo dragons (large reptiles):Komodo Island, Indonesia; Crocodiles: Black River Jamaica; Kakadu National Park Australia; Birds: Bempton Cliffs, UK; Keoladeo, India; Pantanal, Brazil; Cranes: Müritz National Park, Germany; Platte River, USA; Penguins: Antarctica; Península Valdés , Argentina; Phillip Island, Australia; Large African mammals: Serengeti National Park, Tanzania; Masai Mara, Kenya; Tigers: Chitwan National Park, Nepal; Polar bears: Churchill, Canada; Bats: Texas, United States; Dolphins: Red Sea, Egypt; Mon Repos, Australia; Gorillas: Bwindi National Park, Uganda; Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo; Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda; Orangutans: Sepilok Orangutan Centre, & Danum Valley, Sabah Semenggok Wildlife Centre, Sarawak, Borneo; Whales: Península Valdés, Argentina; Kaikoura, New Zealand; El Vizcaino, Baja California, Mexico; Plettenberg Bay, South Africa; Canary Islands.

In the context of Nepal, as mentioned above, there are ten national parks, three wildlife reserved centers, six conservation areas and one hunting reserve. Hence, Nepal has huge potentiality for wildlife watching tourism due to its natural and ecological diversity. Tourists get opportunities to observe Himalayan Leopards in Annapurna, Kanchanjunga, Langtang, Manaslu, Sagarmatha and Sefoksundo region; Danfe in Annapurna, Dhorpatan, Kanchanjunga, Langtang, Manaslu, Sagarmatha and Sefoksundo, Rara region; Tiger and Rhino in Bardiya, Chitawan, Suklafanta; Elephant in Bardiya, Chitawan, Suklafanta, Parsa, Koshi Tappu; crocodiles in Bardiya, Chitawan; vulture in CNP; leopards in Dhorpatan, Khaptad, Shivapuri, Bardiya, Banke, Chitwan, Suklafanta, Parsa; Ghoral in Dhorpatan, Manaslu; musk deer in Kanchanjunga, Khaptad, Langtang, Makalu Barun, Rara, Manaslu, Sagarmatha region, Red Panda in Kanchanjunga, Langtang, Makalu Barun; wild boar in Khaptad, Bardiya, Banke, Chitwan, Suklafanta, Parsa, Koshi Tappu; wild dog in Khaptad, Bardiya, Banke, Chitawan, Suklafanta, Parsa; dolphin in Koshi Tappu; black bear in Langtang region, Makalu Barun, Shivapuri; bulbul in Parsa; Habre in Rara NP, Sagarmatha NP; Nil sheep in Manaslu, Sefoksundo; Barha Singe in Suklafanta NP and different types of birds in different parts of the country.



A Bengal Tiger, Source: <https://www.alphaadventuretreks.com/>

In order to protect the flora and fauna Nepal had decided to establish National Park and wildlife Reserves in many parts of the country. After the declaration of the HMG policies, the various numbers of National Parks and Wildlife Reserves have come into establishment in different part of the country. Among them, CNP is one. In 1983/84 this park had been enlisted as a world Heritage Site of UNESCO. Similarly IUCN had classified this park in second category. The following are the major attractions or tourism products inside and outside of the park:



Source: <https://snowpaltreks.com>

Ghadiyal Breeding Centre



Source: <https://aasraecotreks.com.np>

With the help of Frankfurt Zoological Society the *Ghadiyal* Conservation Project has started and which established *Ghadiyal* breeding centre in *Kasara* in 1978 inside the park. The centre has begun functioning from 1981 (Dulal, 2067, p. 155). In this centre *Ghadiyal* crocodile an endangered species is being reared since its inception. Breeding centre offers to the tourists to observe the *Ghadiyal* crocodile and their breeding process very closely.

Elephant Breeding Centre



Source: <https://unsplash.com/s/photos>

Elephant breeding centre is one of the important tourism products of the destination which has established in 1987 (Dulal, 2007, p. 155). It is located at *Khorasora* inside the park. Generally, in every day there are more than fifteen mother elephants including their babies found in stable.

Vulture Breeding Centre: Vulture breeding centre is also a tourism product of CNP. It has established here at *Kasara* inside the park very recently in 2008 (Tripathi, 2008, p. 1). For the purpose of vulture protection this centre has been established that can provide the opportunities of observing the vultures and their chicks very closely to the tourists.

Elephant Bathing and Swimming



Source: <https://www.peacenepaltraveltreks.com>

Elephant bathing and swimming activities is being conducted in accordance with the interest of the visitors. Very recently, the hoteliers and elephant owners began elephant bathing activity in *Sauraha* especially on the *Rapti* River, near the office of CNP.

Canoeing Service



Source: <https://www.travelseewrite.com>

Canoe ride is operated by Hotel Association under the contract system of National Park. In the fiscal year 1992/093 the Hotel Association was supported to pay NRs 220,000 to the National Park, although the total earning from canoe activity amounted to NRs 600,000 for the same period. In a day, in an average of nine canoes are found carrying tourists to see the crocodiles and the elephant breeding centers (Kunwar, 2006, p. 100). In 2014, there were 21 canoes operating their services to the tourists. They can provide their service only ten tourists in a trip (Kafle, 2017, p. 169).

Bishhajari Taal: *Narayani* River, *Rapti*, *Reu* River and the *Bishhajari taal* is known as the significant wetlands of the destination (Kafle, 2017, p. 169). *Bishhajari Taal* means twenty thousand lakes within a limited area. It is located on the way to *Kasara* from east west highway near the irrigation canal. At present, there cannot observe the same numbers of lakes. Only twenty very small ponds can be seen. These ponds are the sources of water for wild animals.

Tharu Culture: Tharus are the main indigenous ethnic groups having own unique culture and festivals such as *Fagu* (festival of Colors), *Jitiya* (fasting ceremony) and *Sobarai*. From 1998 onwards, after the translocation of the Tharus of *Bhakatha*, two groups from *Patra* and *Dorangi* villages had started giving cultural programs in *Sauraha*. Since the program was introduced at cultural house in 1998, majority of the guides and hotel managers feel it convenient to take their individual guests at the centre. they perform different items of dances, the first is '*bhajeti*' in which they play with large sticks, the second '*dhampu*' which is played on the occasion of '*fagui*' festival, the third '*thekara*' is played on same occasion, the forth item '*thili*'.

Tharu Cultural Museum: There is a *Tharu* Cultural Museum which is located in *Bachhauri* village. Through the financial and technical support of National Trust for Natural Conservation, Bio- diversity Conservation Center (NTNC/BCC) under the Tiger Rhino Conservation Project, founded by UNDP/GEF this museum was established in 2005.

Packages and Programms for Tourists

There are so many places and activities such as jungle safari, elephant safari, jungle drive, bird watching, machan night, sunset view, observation to elephant breeding, crocodile breeding, vulture breeding centers, cycling into *bishhajari* lake, river activities including canoeing, boating, fishing, sweeping into *Narayani*, *Rapti* and *Reu* River,

village tour, Tharu cultural program, Tharu cultural museum, bullock cart ride and so on in CNP which are quietly concerned to tourism. Thus, CNP is definitely one of the very important and exotic tourist destinations of Nepal.

Tourism Activities

There were 6,197 visitors in 1962 which increased to 254,885 in 1990. The tourists figure on 1981 was 161,669 as compared to the total for the year 1980 was 162,897, a decrease of about 0.8%. This is the first time there has been a negative growth since 1950. In 1980 there was 4% growth. During the period between 1979 to 1981, the world in general and region in particular suffered as low-down in tourism mainly due to wide economic difficulties, shortage and disruption in the energy sector, continued inflation, growing unemployment rate etc. (Satyal, 2000, pp. 5-7).

By the end of 2014 the numbers of tourists have reached 790118 with the negative growth rate 0.9% than the previous year. In 2015 the numbers of tourists arriving statistics still reduced in 538970, which is a negative growth of 32% than the year 2014 (Govt. of Nepal, 2017, p. 10). This happened due to the great earthquake 2015. After 2015, the arriving statistics of tourists have gradually been increasing in 153002, 940218, 1173072, and 1197191 during the years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively. Again, Covid Pandemic brought the huge negative impact on tourism since 2020, which is still remaining today.

Through the tourist and tourism point of view, CNP is recognized as one of the popular, prosperous and potential destinations in Nepal. Therefore, tourism activities had started in Chitwan since 1964 with a few hundred tourists per year. Now days, CNP became more popular tourism destination in the world. Still, since a decade every year thousands of tourists arrived here in CNP. According to the statistics the numbers of 153749 tourists visited in 2069\070, 173425 in 2070\071, 178257 in 2071\072, 87391 in 2072\073 and 139125 in the fiscal year 2073\074 (Govt. of Nepal, 2017, p. 51).

If we look at the tourists arriving statistics of 2016 all together 604091 tourists have visited different National Parks, Wildlife Reserve, Protected Areas and Hunting Reserve Area, among it CNP only welcomed 139125 tourists during the same year (Govt. of Nepal, 2017, p. 51). Overall it is 23.03% contribution in the wildlife tourism field, which indicates CNP is renowned and famous tourist destination of Nepal.

Frequency of visit to Sauraha: Is this your first or repeated visit in Sauraha? this is a question asked to the tourists in this study . The detail information about the issue is in table:

Table No. 2: Frequency of visit in CNP

S. N.	Statements	Respondents No.	%
1.	Repeated Visit	4	13.33
2.	Single Visit	26	86.67
	Total	30	100.00

Source: field survey 2022

The table provides the information about the repeated visit in CNP. According to the statistics, out of 30, the majority i.e. 26 or 86.67% have replied that this is their first visit whereas, remaining 4 or 13.33% have answered that this is their more than a single trip in CNP.

Length of stay in CNP: In this respect, researcher asked a question concerning to the length of the stay in CNP to the international visitors. The response of the respondents is given below in table.

Table No. 3: Length of stay in CNP

S. N.	Duration	Respondents No.	%
1.	One night	4	13.33
2.	Two night	14	46.67
3.	Three night	7	23.33
4.	Four night than more	5	16.67
	Total	30	100.00

Source : Field Survey 2022

According to the statistics mentioned in the table out of the 30, the majority i.e. 14 or 46.67% tourists' respondents have replied that the length of stay in CNP is two nights whereas, the lowest number i.e. 4 or 13.33% replied the length of stay is one night only. Likewise, 7 or 23.33% lived three night and remaining 5 or 16.67% respondents stayed four than more night in CNP.

Perception of CNP referred to other Visitor: Every year more than thousands of international tourists have taken their journey in this destination. The tourist respondents those who have consulted in CNP by the researchers majority of them said CNP is an important tourism destination. Therefore, everybody should pay their visit in CNP. The detail information of this issue is given in table.

Table No. 4: Perception of CNP refer to other visitors

S. N.	Statements	Respondent No.	%
1.	Yes	26	86.67
2.	No	-	-
3.	Don't know	4	13.33
Total		30	100.00

Source : Field Survey 2022

The figures show that among the 30, the majorities i.e. 26 or 86.67% respondents have viewed toward referred to the other visitor to visit of Nepal and CNP whereas, remaining 6 or 13.33% respondent have not any idea about the issue.

Accommodations and Facilities available in CNP

Accommodation is one of the important components of tourism. Without accommodations like hotel and resort, food catering, road and transport in particular destination the development of tourism does not seem possible. Holiday accommodation may be conveniently classified into four main categories service accommodation, including comparing, caravans, rented flats and houses, house of friends and relatives, where no payment is made for the use of accommodation; other accommodation, including for examples boats, youth hostels and similar (Bukart & Medlik, 1980, p. 140).

Hotel Accommodation: In *Chitwan*, the tourist landed on the small landing strip near *Meghauli*, which has been constructed in 1961 on the occasion of the visiting of British Queen Elizabeth. The first non- commercial lodge was built a *Kasara* in 1939 for the visit of King George VI of England. The lodge was the first building in the *Terai* to be made of concrete. The first safari hotel opened in 1965 even before the national park has been created (Kunwar, 2002, p. 83). In CNP, there was only one simple lodge in 1977. In 1993 there were 48 hotels, whereas, till to 1999, the numbers of hotels/lodge registered already increased into 52 in Hotel Association of CNP. The average accommodation capacity of the hotels was of 16 beds or eight huts (Kunwar, 2002, p. 84). Recently, there are 54 hotels / lodge having 585 rooms and 1055 beds in CNP and adjoining areas. In this study researcher asked some questions concerning with hotel accommodation, cost of the lodging and feeding etc. to the tourists. The following responses have been provided which is in table given below.

Table No. 5: Opinion about the satisfaction

S. N.	Evaluation	Respondent no	%
1.	Excellent	7	23.33
2.	Good	14	46.67
3.	Moderate	4	13.33
4.	Don't Know	5	16.67
Total		30	100.00

Source : Field Survey 2022

The table shows the perceptions of the tourists about the hotel accommodation. As per the statistics, out of 30 tourists, maximum number i.e. 14 or 46.67 % have replied that the hotel accommodation provided by hoteliers is good while the lowest 4 or 13.33 % respondents have responded that the hotel facilities provided by the hoteliers is moderate. Similarly, among the 7 or 23.33 % have said excellent and remaining 5 or 16.67 % respondents did not have any ideas about the issues.

Road and Transportation Facilities: CNP is connected with *Sauraha, Bachauli VDC, Tandi Padampur* and *Chitrasari* Villages. *Tandi* is an entry point of CNP situated east west Mahendra Highway 5 K.M. from the main city of *Bharatpur*. One can fly to *Bharatpur* from Kathmandu and then to *Chitrasari* by bus or a car. It is also possible to get to CNP via, *Tandi* and *Chitrasari* by bus from Kathmandu along the Prithvi Highway through *Mugling*. It is also possible to visit CNP from India through *Birjung* and *Bhairahawa* in Nepal on roadways. The local transportation like taxi, private jeep, car, auto-rickshaw, tempos, city curt, horse cart (*Tanga*) etc. have been operated as the transportation services from *Tandi* to CNP. In this respect the research team asked to the tourist respondents various questions concerning road and transport facilities in the destination. All the respondents responded in different ways, the discussion about the concerning matter is given below.

Table No. 6: Means of transport used by the tourists

S. N.	Means of transport	Respondent no	%
1.	Tourist Bus	15	50.00
2.	Local Bus	3	10.00
3.	Private Vehicle	4	13.33
4.	Airway to Bharatpur	8	26.67
	Total	30	100.00

Source : Field Survey 2022

The above table shows that among the total 30 tourists, majorities i.e. 15 or 50.00 % reached the destination by using tourist buses, whereas lowest i.e. 3 or 10.00 % have used the local buses. Similarly 8 or 26.67% tourists reached the destination by using private planes to Bharatpur from Kathmandu and remaining 4 or 13.33% reached CNP by using private vehicles. In this study researcher asked to the tourist about the feelings of transportation facilities and road structure. The detail information is given below:

Table No. 7: Evaluation of road and transportation facilities

S. N	Evaluation	Respondent no	%
1	Excellent	5	16.67
2	Good	8	26.67
3	Moderate	10	33.33
4	Not favorable	3	10.00
5	Don't Know	4	13.33
	Total	30	100.00

Source: Field Survey 2022

The figures, out of 30 respondents the maximum 10 or 33.33% have responded that the road and transportation facility of the destination is only moderate while 3 or 10.00% mentioned not favorable. Similarly, 8 or 26.67% responded toward good, 5 or 16.67%, indicated toward excellent and remaining 4 or 1 or 13.33% respondents did not have any ideas regarding the road and transportation facility of CNP. The above table indicates the road and transportation system of the destination is still not looking excellent.

Guide Service Facilities: Interpretation aims to stimulate interest, promote learning, guide visitors in appropriate behaviour for sustainable tourism and encourage enjoyment and satisfaction. Interpretation broadly refers to educational activities used in places like zoos, museums, heritage sites and national parks, to tell visitors about the significance or meaning of what they are experiencing (Moscardo, Woods & Saltzer, 2004, p. 231). Tourist guide is a person who keeps full responsibility of tourists during the field trips. Therefore, it is said that tourist guide is a responsible person who easily provides the adequate information about the destination to the visitors according to their interest and requirement (Dulal, 2073, p. 53).

In fact, a person who is well disciple and follows code of conduct, has an attractive and clear expression capacity, commanding language, complete knowledge of the subject matter and destination, has enough courage and maintains simplicity can be recognized as a tourist guide who occupationally provides guidance service to tourists to their respective destinations. In wildlife tourism, the role of tourist guides seems quite important because she/ he not only play the role of intermediary in between host and guest but also they interpret the

culture of the host population. Therefore, the role of tourist guides as an interpreter considers very responsible for the development of destination image and revitalization of local culture.

As per the perceptions of the tourists, communication services and facilities available in CNP seem excellent. Due to this reason, large numbers of international and domestic tourists have been taking travel in this destination since last twenty years. Guide service is one of the important components for the promotion of tourism. In this respect, researcher asked a question about the guide service facilities available in CNP. The detail information of this issue is given in table below:

Table No. 8: Perceptions of tourists regarding on guide service

S. N.	Evaluation	Respondent no	%
1.	Excellent	9	30.00
2.	Good	13	43.33
3.	Moderate	5	16.67
4.	Don't know	3	10.00
	Total	30	100.00

Source : Field Survey 2022

The figures show that out of 30 respondents the majorities 13 or 43.33% have responded that the guide service available is good whereas, lowest 3 or 10.00% have do not idea about the issue. Likewise, 9 or 30.00% respondents viewed toward excellent and remaining 5 or 16.67% have responded guide service available in CNP and adjoining areas is moderate.

Hospitality of Local People: Hospitality is an important element of tourism. Hospitable relationship between guests and hosts is a prerequisite for a sustainable tourism industry (Kunwar, 2006, p. 275). In this respect, researcher asked a question to the tourists about the hospitality of local people, the following answered is found:

Table No. 9: Perceptions of tourists about hospitality

S. N.	Evaluation	Respondent no	%
1	Excellent	18	60.00
2	Good	7	23.33
3	Moderate	3	10.00
4	Not response	2	6.67
	Total	23	100.00

Source : Field Survey 2022

As per the figures out of 30 respondents the majorities 18 or 60.00 % have responded that the hospitality and behavior of local people is excellent while 2 or 6.67 not response. Similarly, 7 or 23.33 % responded toward good and remaining 3 or 10.00 %, responded the hospitality and behavior of local people is moderate.

More Satisfactory Facilities available in CNP: As a whole, all tourists viewed that they are satisfied through services available in the destination. Among them the accommodation and facilities create more satisfaction. The detail information about the facilities is given in table:

Table No. 10: Facilities of more satisfaction

S. N.	Facilities descriptions	Respondents No.	%
1.	Hospitality and behavior of local people	6	20.00
2.	Hotel Accommodation	7	23.33
3.	Travel facilities and Guide service	4	13.33
4.	All of the above facilities	13	43.34
	Total	30	100.00

Source: Field Survey- 2022

The above table shows the satisfaction situation of the tourists through the accommodations and facilities available in CNP. Among the 30 maximum i.e. 13 or 43.34% has replied that all accommodations and facilities which mentioned above in the table make them full satisfied. Likewise, 7 or 23.33% satisfied with the available hotel accommodation, 6 or 20.00% satisfied with the hospitality and behavior of local people and remaining 4 or 13.33% respondents have responded that travel facilities and guide service the make them more satisfaction.

As mentioned above CNP and adjoining Tharu community have been facing same threats and challenges over wildlife, ecosystem and indigenous culture because of the tourists and tourism activities. Today the protection of natural and cultural heritage in and around the CNP has become extremely challenging effort to the concerned stakeholders. It is not a good sign for the nature and culture lovers. Therefore, keeping it in mind all the concerned authorities and stakeholders should concentrate their efforts in time towards minimizing and controlling the overhanging challenges and threats.

CONCLUSION

Wildlife tourism also known as ecotourism, an important segment of tourism has grown dramatically in recent years. National parks, zoos, water sources and other different natural settings are its major centers where wildlife activities can be observed. Out of them, comparatively national park is known as the quite effective and impressive centers for wildlife tourism. In Nepal there are ten National Parks, three Wildlife Reserve, six Protected Areas and only one Hunting Protected Area which has been providing special opportunities to the tourists to observe the wildlife activities very closely. Among them, CNP is oldest and most important one through the wildlife tourism perspectives. Recognizing its unique ecosystem of global significance, UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site in 1984.

There are many prospects associated with wildlife tourism development in this destination. The opportunities of scenic attraction, trekking, elephant safari, jungle safari, community forestry, bird watching, elephant breeding centre, crocodile breeding centre, vulture breeding centre, participating in different water activities and observing the *Tharu* cultural heritage are the major tourism products of CNP and its adjoining villages. The facilities and accommodations available here, inside and outside of the CNP seems to be good. Hence, by minimizing and controlling the challenges and threats over wildlife, ecosystem and indigenous culture, all the concerned authorities and stakeholders should concentrate their effort towards the further development of tourism in this destination.

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