The Level of Awareness and the Impact of Age Factor on the Awareness of Visitor Management

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Abstract

Visitor management is the combination of all those practices made by the destination authorities to manage or control the number and activities of visitors. Age is a commonly measured factor as far as tourism literature is concerned. This paper attempts to analyse the role of age in creating awareness of visitors on visitor management. A study on the awareness of visitors was conducted in select wildlife tourism settings in south Indian state of Kerala. A sample survey was conducted to collect primary data from visitors to wildlife tourism destinations. The researchers prepared a scale on awareness of visitor management based on literature review and visitor management techniques practiced in these destinations. The reliability of the scale has been tested through Cronbach's alpha value. The scale contained seven statements based on visitor management practices like zoning, fee collection, services provided at tourist information centres, prohibition of littering, do's and don'ts in destinations, signage and availability of tourist guides. One-way analysis of variance and factor analysis were conducted to analyse the data. The study reveals a significant difference in the awareness of visitors across different age groups. The researchers also tested the awareness model of visitor management by conducting Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results of the analysis point out that only four variables - awareness about services provided in tourist information centres, prohibition of littering, do's and don'ts in destinations and signage influences - positively impact awareness on visitor management.

Key words: *awareness, visitor management, wildlife tourism, destination*

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Introduction

Tourism in Kerala has witnessed commendable growth over the recent years. Wildlife tourism destinations in Kerala contribute a very significant share in this development. Wildlife tourism site operators receive a growing number of visitors in wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and other wildlife tourism destinations every day. In order to control the number and activities of the visitors, there is a need to implement destination management practices which include environmental conservation efforts like visitor management in these tourist destinations. In this paper, the researchers analyse whether there is any impact of age on the awareness of visitors in wildlife tourism destinations. The study developed a seven-item awareness scale with Cronbach's alpha value of 0.852 which is acceptable. ANOVA test was used to analyse the relationship between the variables 'age' and 'awareness' on visitor management. The study found that for the variable 'awareness' on visitor management practices, the age group below 25 years differs significantly from 36-45 years age group. The age group 26-35 years differs significantly from 36-45 years. The age group 36-45 years significantly differs from the age group above 55 years. The researchers also tested the awareness model of visitor management by conducting a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results of the analysis indicate that only four independent variables - awareness of services provided at tourist information centres, prohibition of littering, do's and don'ts in destinations and signage - influence positively towards awareness on visitor management; hence, they are the underlining factors deciding the awareness of visitors on visitor management in wildlife tourism destinations. The results of the present study are applicable to wildlife tourism destinations in India and other emerging economies since wildlife tourism regulations are more or less comparable in these countries. Making the visitor more aware about visitor management practices has equal importance as the introduction of these practices. These practices will be successful only if the visitors get the information before their visit to these destinations. These results are also applicable to those developed economies which practice similar visitor management techniques applied while constructing the scales; however, most developed economies implement highly sophisticated practices on visitor management in tourism which are accepted globally.

Research questions

The questions that arise from the review of literature are:

1. Which are the underlying factors associated with the level of awareness of visitors on visitor management?
2. What is the level of awareness of visitor management?
3. Is there any relationship between age and awareness of visitor management?

Objectives

1. To find the level of awareness on visitor management practices in Kerala.
2. To identify the underlying factors of awareness on visitor management.
3. To find the relationship between age and awareness of visitors on visitor management.

Literature Review

There are studies on awareness of goods category of products (Suki, 2013; Verma & Rojhe, 2018). However, very few studies have been conducted on awareness of services sector. Specifically, in case of tourism, studies are conducted in Kibale National Park to raise visitors' awareness of facilities and the conservation programme (Obua & Harding, 1996). In order to collect information, the researchers asked a series of questions such as Who are the visitors? Where do they come from? How do they learn about Kibale National Park and decide to come? Is the idea of protected areas/parks important in their decision to visit? What do they think about the site and facilities? What improvements would they like to see at the park? etc. The results of the study suggest that in order to achieve the strategy of maintenance of facilities and management of visitors, sufficient management

information is required. Another study on awareness of the environment was conducted by Tuohino, (2001) among tourists (non-rowers) and participants (rowers) in the major rowing event in the world, Sulkavan Suursoudut, in July 2001. The research examined the attitudes of tourists towards environmental sustainability and how these attitudes reflect their consumer behaviour. The results of the survey showed that environmental awareness of the above groups, i.e. non-rowers and rowers, was somewhat similar. However, the balance between environmental awareness and environmentally friendly behaviour is far and difficult to attain. Both groups were aware of environmental aspects, but they were not ready to transfer their environmental beliefs into their consumer behaviour. The hard visitor management strategies should be balanced through various soft visitor management practices like interpretation, providing do's & don'ts messages, and proper signage (Kuo, 2003). A research study to assess tourists' awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of wildlife souvenirs by exploring their purchase behaviour, general awareness, attitudes and perceptions, perception of environmental impact, and awareness of importation laws revealed that tourists were found to be largely unaware of the concept of wildlife souvenirs and their implications, and unpredictable in terms of their attitudes and behaviours (Woronuk, 2008). The findings revealed that there were significant differences in the way tourists identify with wildlife souvenirs and that these differences were occasionally attributed to gender and age, but frequently attributed to geographic region (or place of origin). The researchers suggest educating visitors about trade in wildlife; wildlife souvenirs would be a valuable strategy in enhancing overall awareness, promoting sustainable consumer practices, and conserving wildlife resources of the world. Another study on the awareness of negative or positive consequences of each type of behaviour (i.e. climbing, collecting fossils from the cliffs and picking up beach litter) found that visitors who had been exposed to the visitor centre had a higher level of awareness of, concern about, and support for management policies toward the negative outcomes of specific problem behaviours compared to those who had not been to the centre. This indicates that the current interpretive messages targeting general attitudes may be poor determinants of these types of behaviours. For example, the focus of the visitor centre is on raising visitors' awareness about the coastal and geological environment, and protection of these resources (Kim, Airey, & Szivas, 2011). Tourists with a low affinity had more negative attitudes towards nature conservation, natural processes, visitor management and the regional economic impact of the Gesaeuse National Park. The study results support national park management in the development of tourism marketing strategies and public awareness campaigns targeted at visitor segments (Arnberger, Eder, Allex, Sterl, & Burns, 2012). Foreign tourists have higher awareness of the importance of Protected Areas. They revealed greater appreciation for these areas and were willing to pay higher entrance fees to support conservation efforts when compared to local residents. The study also found that even though considerable differences do exist between local residents and tourists, a more successful functioning and management of Protected Areas can be achieved by understanding both tourists' and local residents' attitudes and perceptions of conservation of nature and by integrating them into future conservation policies (Szell, 2012). A high standard of awareness of risk is required in adventure tourism operations (Callander & Page, 2003).

From the review of literature of studies on visitor management and tourism destinations (Assante, Wen, & Lottig, 2010; Brown, Koth, Kreag, & Weber, 2006; Candrea & Ispas, 2009; Frost & McCool, 1988; Heberlein, 1981; Hill, Courtney, Burton, & Potts, 2003; Knotek, Watson, Borrie, Whitmore, & Turner, 2018; Kuo, 2003; Qiuyin & Jie, n.d.; Scherrer, Smith, & Dowling, 2011; Sievänen, Tuija, Erkkonen, Joel, Jokimäki, Jukka, Saarinen, Jarkko, Tuulentie, Seija & Virtanen & (eds.), 2004) and discussions with the authorities of wildlife tourism destinations, the researchers developed a conceptual model of

underlying factors in the awareness on visitor management. The scale contained seven statements based on awareness on visitor management practices like zoning, fee collection, services provided in tourist information centres, prohibition of littering, do's and don'ts in destinations, signages and availability of tourist guides.

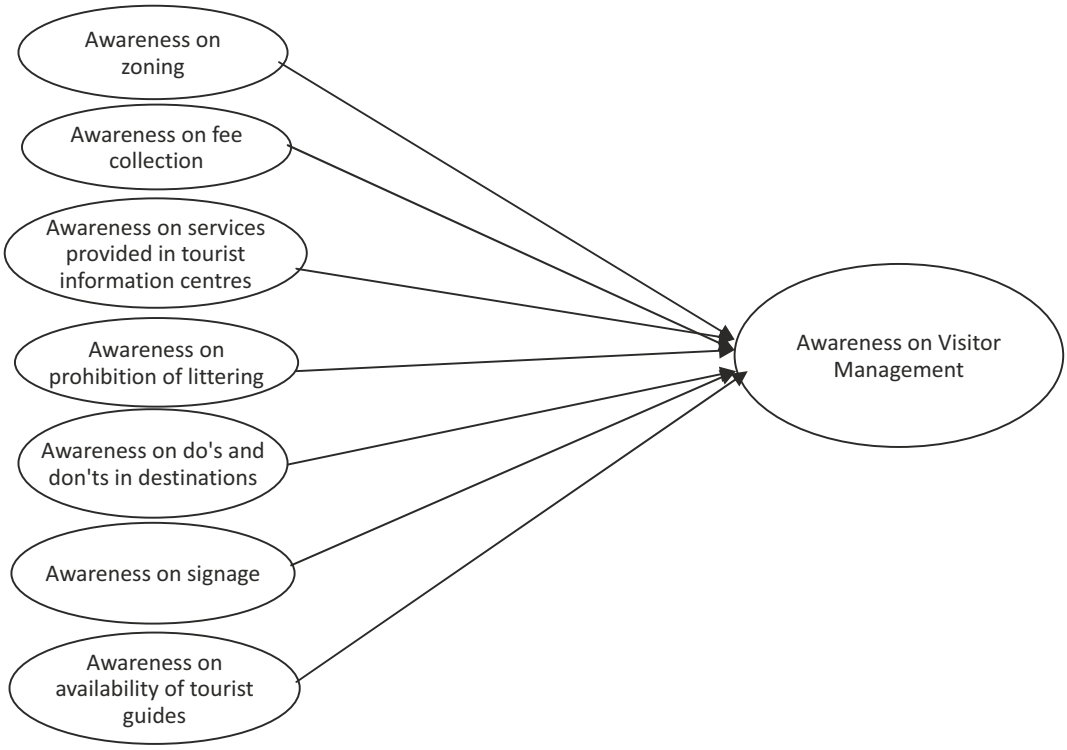

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Research Methodology

An exploratory research was conducted by collecting data from visitors of three wildlife tourism destinations in Kerala, South India, namely, Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Shenduruney Wildlife Sanctuary and Parambikkulam Wildlife Sanctuary. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The questionnaire was divided into two parts - the demographic characteristics and the scale on awareness on visitor management. The researcher prepared a scale for measuring awareness on visitor management based on the literature review and visitor management techniques practiced in these destinations. The reliability of the scale was tested through Cronbach's alpha value. Data was collected from both domestic and foreign visitors between April and September 2018. Random sampling method was used to collect data from the visitors. The size of the sample was 384. Respondents were asked to rate each statement of awareness on visitor management on a five-point scale, with extremes being 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Results

It is very essential to test the normality of the data before conducting any statistical analysis as the

statistical procedures and tests differ for normal data and non-normal data. In other words, parametric test procedure for normal and distribution-free methods for non-normal data can be used. To test normality, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. If p value is less than 0.05, the normality assumption is to be rejected and if p value is greater than 0.05, the data is normal. Accordingly, the K-S test was conducted, and the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: K S Test for Normality

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	p value
Awareness on visitor management practices	384	15.29	3.34	0.709	0.239

The result of the K-S test shows that the p value of the variables is greater than 0.05. Hence, it can be inferred that the data is normal.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a type of structural equation modelling (SEM), which deals specifically with measurement models. It deals with the relationship between observed measures or indicators (e.g. test items, test scores etc.) and the latent variables or factors. A basic feature of CFA is its hypothesis-driven nature. In CFA, the researcher specifies the number of factors and the pattern of indicator factor loading in advance. Hence, the researcher must have a firm prior sense, based on past evidence and theory of the factors that exist in the data. CFA is used for four major purposes: psychometric evaluation of measures (questionnaires), construct validation, testing method effects and testing measurement in variance (across groups or population).The following hypotheses were formulated.

H_1 : Awareness about zoning (construct A1) has a positive impact on awareness

H_2 : Awareness about fees (construct A2) has a positive impact on awareness

H_3 : Awareness about services provided by Tourist information Centres (construct A3) has a positive impact on awareness

H_4 : Awareness about prohibition of littering (construct A4) has a positive impact on awareness

H_5 : Awareness about the do's and don'ts to be followed (construct A5) has a positive impact on awareness

H_6 : Awareness about signage provided at the destination (constructA6) has a positive impact on awareness

H_7 : Awareness about availability of tourist guides (construct A7) has a positive impact on awareness

Table 2: Model fit Indices for CFA

	χ^2	DF	P	Normed χ^2	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
Awareness	19.535	6	.003	3.256	.986	.935	.981	.954	.987	.039	.077

All the attributes loaded significantly on the latent constructs. The value of the fit indices indicates a reasonable fit of the measurement model with data. In Table 3, we present the regression coefficients.

Table 3: The Regression Coefficients

Factors/ Latent Variables (Dependent Variable)	Construct (Independent Variable)	Regression Coefficient	T	P	Variance explained (%)
Awareness on visitor management practices	A1 (Awareness about zoning)	0.275	5.510	0.001	7.6
	A2 (Awareness about fees)	0.374	7.672	0.001	14.0
	A3 (Awareness about services provided by Tourist Information Centres	0.556	12.239	0.001	30.9
	A4 (Awareness about prohibition of littering)	0.701	16.967	0.001	49.2
	A5 (Awareness about the do's and don'ts to be followed)	0.857	25.022	0.001	73.4
	A6 (Awareness about signages provided at the destination)	0.814	22.228	0.001	66.3
	A7 (Awareness about availability of tourist guides)	0.365	7.469	0.001	13.3

H_0: A1 has no positive impact on awareness
H_1: A1 has a positive impact on awareness

The results exhibited in Table 3 reveal that the construct A1 has no significant influence on Awareness on visitor management practices as the standardised direct effect of this construct on Awareness is 0.275, which is less than the recommended value of 0.4. So, the hypothesis H_1 is rejected and concludes that Awareness about zoning does not contribute to Awareness on visitor management practices.

H_0: A2 has no positive impact on awareness
H_2: A2 has a positive impact on awareness

The results exhibited in Table 3 reveal that the construct A2 has no significant influence on Awareness on visitor management practices as the standardised direct effect of this construct on Awareness is 0.374, which is less than the recommended value of 0.4. So, the hypothesis H_2 is rejected and concludes that Awareness about fees does not contribute to Awareness on visitor management practices.

H_0: A3 has no positive impact on awareness
H_3: A3 has a positive impact on awareness

The results exhibited in Table 3 reveal that the construct A3 has significant influence on Awareness on visitor management practices as the standardised direct effect of this construct on Awareness is 0.556, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value significant). So, the hypothesis H_3 is accepted and concludes that Awareness about services provided by tourist information centres contributes positively to Awareness on visitor management practices.

H_0: A4 has no positive impact on awareness
H_4: A4 has a positive impact on awareness

The results exhibited in Table 3 reveal that the construct A4 has significant influence on Awareness on visitor management practices as the standardised

direct effect of this construct on Awareness is 0.701, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value significant). So, the hypothesis H_4 is accepted and concludes that awareness about prohibition of littering contributes positively to Awareness on visitor management practices.

H_0: A5 has no positive impact on awareness

H_5: A5 has a positive impact on awareness

The results exhibited in Table 3 reveal that the construct A5 has significant influence on Awareness on visitor management practices as the standardised direct effect of this construct on Awareness is 0.857, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value significant). So, the hypothesis H_5 is accepted and concludes that the awareness on do's and don'ts in destinations contributes positively to Awareness on visitor management practices.

H_0: A6 has no positive impact on awareness

H_6: A6 has a positive impact on awareness

The results exhibited in Table 3 reveal that the construct A6 has significant influence on Awareness on visitor management practices as the standardised direct effect of this construct on Awareness is 0.814, which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value significant). So, the hypothesis H_6 is accepted and concludes that awareness on signages contributes positively to Awareness on visitor management practices.

H_0: A7 has no positive impact on awareness

H_7: A7 has a positive impact on awareness

The results exhibited in Table 3 reveal that the construct A7 has no significant influence on Awareness on visitor management practices as the standardised direct effect of this construct on Awareness is 0.365, which is less than the recommended value of 0.4. So, the hypothesis H_7 is rejected and concludes that the awareness on availability of tourist guides does not contribute to Awareness on visitor management practices.

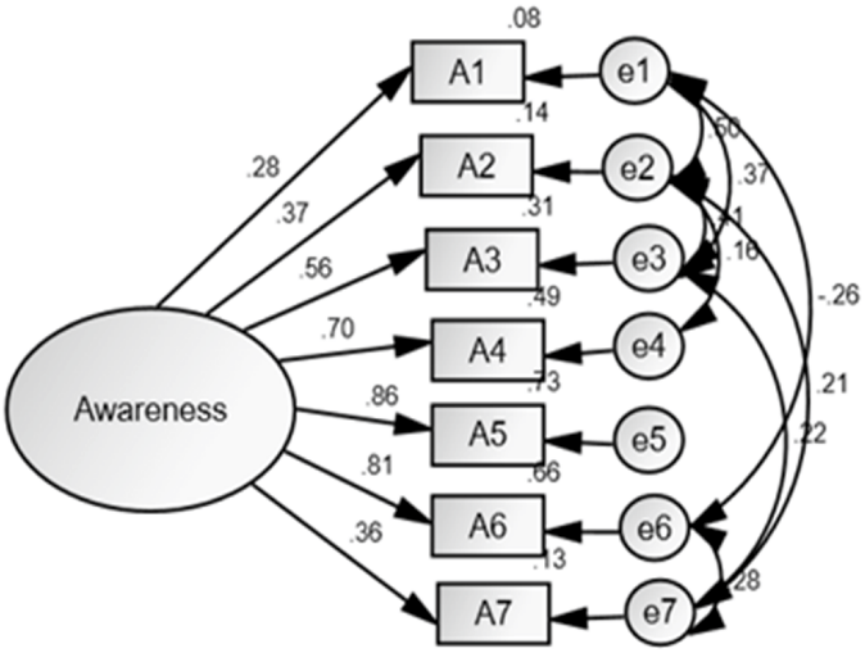

Figure 2: CFA Diagram for Awareness on Visitor Management

Before doing further analysis, the factors which do not influence the dependent variable were removed.

One of the objectives is to find the level of Awareness on visitor management practices in Kerala. For this, the respondents were asked 7 questions on five-point Likert scale. The responses were scored as 1 for 'Strongly Disagree', 2 for 'Disagree', 3 for 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', 4 for 'Agree', and 5 for 'Strongly agree'. Out of 7 questions, 4 were retained after convergent validity test. The total score of the 4 questions for all 384 respondents were found out, based on which the mean % score of level of Awareness on visitor management practices was calculated $\left[MPS = \frac{MeanScore \times 100}{Maximumpossiblescore}\right]$ $\left[MPS = \frac{MeanScore \times 100}{Maximumpossiblescore}\right]$

This score is classified into one of the four groups as poor or low if the mean % score is less than 35%, average if the mean % score is between 35 to 50 per cent, good or medium if the mean % score lies in the interval 50 to 75% and excellent or high if the mean % score is above 75%. A one-sample Z test was carried out to test the significance. Table 4 gives the Mean, SD, Mean % Score and Z value of the variable considered (Loyd & Abidin, 1985).

Table 4: Mean, Standard deviation and z value for level of Awareness on visitor management practices

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	Z	p value
Awareness on visitor management practices	384	15.29	3.34	76.47	21.87	1.724	0.085

The mean percentage score level of Awareness on visitor management practices is 76.47% which indicates that level of Awareness on visitor management practices is excellent.

The CV= $\frac{\text{Standard deviation}}{\text{Mean}} * 100$

Which indicates that this score is not stable as the value is more than 20%. To test whether the sample information that we observed exists in the population, or to verify the level of Awareness on visitor management practices in Kerala, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H_0: The level of Awareness on visitor management practices in Kerala is poor

H_1: The level of Awareness on visitor management practices in Kerala is excellent

To test the above hypotheses, we use one-sample Z test and the result is exhibited in Table 4. As seen in the table, the p value is more than 0.05 which indicates that the test is not significant. So, we conclude that the level of Awareness on visitor management practices in Kerala is poor.

Results of ANOVA Test

Table 5: Mean, Standard deviation and F value for Age

Variable	Age	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	p value
Awareness on visitor management practices	Below 25 years	74	15.76	3.42	3.213	0.013
	26-35 years	128	15.69	3.05		
	36-45 years	53	13.96	4.33		
	46-55 years	33	14.73	3.00		
	Above 55 years	96	15.34	2.98		

The results of the ANOVA test shown in Table 5 reveals that statistical value of p is less than 0.05 for Awareness on visitor management practices.

Post Hoc Tests

There are statistically significant differences among the groups as a whole. Multiple comparisons show which group differs from each other. The Tukey post hoc test is normally the preferred test for conducting post hoc tests on a one-way ANOVA. Since the ANOVA test indicates that significant difference exists among the age groups with regard to Awareness on visitor management practices, a post hoc test or multiple comparison test was conducted to identify which among the age groups differs significantly and the result is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Multiple comparison tests

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Awareness on visitor management practices	Below 25 years	26-35 years	0.069	0.483	0.886
		36-45 years	1.79449*	0.595	0.003
		46-55 years	1.029	0.692	0.138
		Above 55 years	0.413	0.511	0.420
	26-35 years	Below 25 years	-0.069	0.483	0.886
		36-45 years	1.72524*	0.540	0.002
		46-55 years	0.960	0.646	0.138
		Above 55 years	0.344	0.446	0.442
	36-45 years	Below 25 years	-1.79449*	0.595	0.003
		26-35 years	-1.72524*	0.540	0.002
		46-55 years	-0.765	0.733	0.297
		Above 55 years	-1.38149*	0.566	0.015
	46-55 years	Below 25 years	-1.029	0.692	0.138
		26-35 years	-0.960	0.646	0.138
		36-45 years	0.765	0.733	0.297
		Above 55 years	-0.616	0.667	0.356
	Above 55 years	Below 25 years	-0.413	0.511	0.420
		26-35 years	-0.344	0.446	0.442
		36-45 years	1.38149*	0.566	0.015
		46-55 years	0.616	0.667	0.356

The result of the multiple comparison analysis indicates that for the variable 'Awareness on visitor management practices', the age group below 25 years differs significantly from 36-45 years age group. The age group 26-35 years differs significantly from the age group 36-45 years. The age group 36-45 years significantly differs from the age group above 55 years.

Hypotheses

H0: There is no significant difference in level of awareness of visitors on visitor management across different age groups.

H1: There is a significant difference in level of awareness of visitors on visitor management across different age groups.

The results of the ANOVA test reveal that statistical value of p is less than 0.05 for awareness on visitor management practices. So, H0 is rejected; hence, there is a significant difference in level of awareness on visitor management across different age groups.

Discussion and Conclusions

The scale on awareness contained seven statements based on visitor management practices like zoning, fee collection, services provided in tourist information centres, prohibition of littering, do's and don'ts in destinations, signages and availability of tourist guides. The results from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis reveal that only four independent variables - awareness of services provided in tourist information centres, prohibition of littering, do's and don'ts in destinations and signages influence positively towards awareness on visitor management. The results of the study indicate that there exists a significant difference among age groups with regard to awareness on visitor management practices. The results of the analysis of data collected from three wildlife tourism destinations in Kerala showed that young people are more aware about visitor management. This may be because they are more informed about the present conditions in the tourism industry, they might have visited the destination earlier, etc. In order to make the middle aged more informed and aware about visitor management practices, the destination management authority may take sufficient measures like transmitting interpretation messages to them through both print and electronic media for the need to conserve environmental resources through optimal use.

Theoretical implications

There is a modest amount of research on the awareness of visitor management practices as far as wildlife tourism literature is concerned. This paper can be a guide to future researchers in visitor management. Further research may be carried out on how to make visitors aware about visitor management practices.

Managerial implications

The management of protected areas can use the findings of this study for future implementation of visitor management practices. They may take necessary steps to make middle aged people more aware about environmental conservation which may also lead to awareness on visitor management practices through awareness campaigns, interpretation programmes on wildlife tourism destinations, etc.

Applicability and Generalizability

The results of the present study are applicable to wildlife tourism destinations in India and other emerging economies since the wildlife tourism regulations are almost similar in these countries. Making the visitor more aware about visitor management practices has equal importance to the introduction of these practices. These practices will be fruitful only if the visitors get information prior to their visit to these destinations. These results are applicable to developed economies provided the visitor management techniques practiced there are similar to that practiced in developing economies. However, most developed economies implement highly sophisticated practices on visitor management in tourism.

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