

ANIMAL WELFARE PRACTICES – TOURIST PURVIEW OF ACTIVITIES - A CASE STUDY ON RAJASTHAN

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Abstract

Purpose: The connection between Tourism and Wildlife and their uses in terms of show and attractions are an age-old practice. In India it is one of the important components during visits to Historical places like Rajasthan. But today the Animal welfare is a significant issue and a matter of high concern. We could see and read many incidents of animal exploitation and hence this study makes a modest attempt to study the tourist's mindset towards the various practices & activities which may fall under the category of tourist responsibility to Animal's wellbeing. We strongly believe that the Tourist will play a very important and vital role in ensuring that these animals are not exploited in the name of Tourism Attraction.

Design & Methodology: We surveyed 120 participants who experienced the role of Elephants in the Forts and palaces of Rajasthan using the contacts from pre-visited data collected from 3 well known Travel Agencies.

Approach: Statistical tools like One-Way ANOVA (Welch's), is being used to measure and compare significant relationship amongst different variables.

Findings: Result suggests that Gender and Age may play an important role while educating the tourist and use of animals in a more humanly nature and some activities may not be required as part of Tourist attraction.

Originality of the Research: The Research is an original article with a list of recommended measures, drawn for more sustainable use of the animals in Tourism Promotion and attractions.

Keywords: *Wildlife, Tourism, Animal Welfare, Perception, Attraction, Rajasthan, Forts, Elephants, Perception*

Introduction

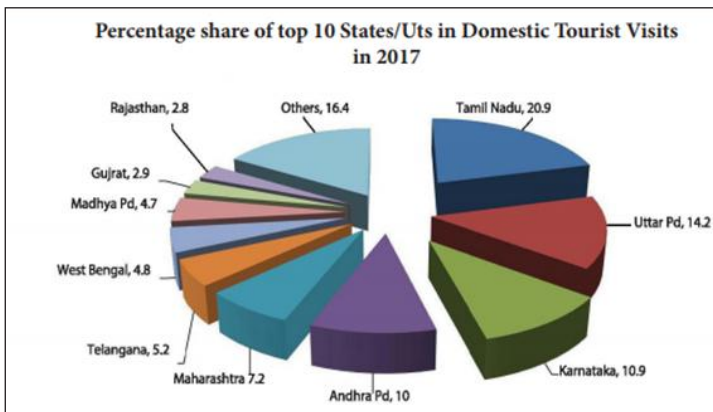
Seizing and controlling wild Asian elephants - *Elephas Maximus*, to be sent for different purposes going from draft work to wars and later in sanctuaries as idol conveyors, goes back a few centuries. In contrast to their African partners, Asian elephants have had close social relationship with people since days of yore, this relationship extraordinarily profiting by an embodiment of the animal groups as the generous elephant-headed god, Ganesha. Elephants are maybe the solitary undomesticated wild creatures that have had such close relationship with people anyplace on the planet. These have gone from front lines to patios, where elephants have remained as living images of sovereignty, pride and ceremony and as symbols of knowledge, positive feelings and individual mannerisms. Elephants have verifiably faced conflicts as the best of the four conflict divisions, the other three being infantry, rangers and chariots. Broad utilization of elephants in wars started in India and all things considered, the Persians and Greeks found out about their utilization on the war zone from Indians.

The misuse of animals for private and public amusement has been a generally unchallenged and conceded practice for quite a long time. The advanced tourism industry has heightened and worked with vicinity and admittance to animals to empower tourist encounters with a tremendous scope of animal varieties across the globe. In accordance with numerous other animal-utilizing enterprises, the ethics of animal use for amusement, including tourism is being addressed. Animal ethics is worried about the ethical situation of individual animals, and that their consciousness and interests ought to be mulled over by people in their interactions with them. Until as of late, animal ethics in tourism research has been overlooked, even though significant work has been led in different disciplines.

Tourism presents interesting employments of animals, and admittance to species that are altogether different to those with whom a great many people are connected with their day to day lives. Tourists embark on journeys as tourists to view and have interactive experiences (like petting, swimming, riding, taking selfies) with dolphins, tigers and other appealing, imperilled and intriguing animals. They may likewise eat portions of similar kind of animals they have come to see, in a real sense devouring the objective. Animals pay a weighty cost for engaging general society and giving the business monetary advantage: animals are pursued and caught in the wild, forever bound, utilized as transport, eaten, cold-bloodedly prepared, mishandled and deliberately slaughtered. Along these lines, a concise survey of animals, particularly elephants, is needed to place a light on human-animal relationship in tourism, significantly in Southeast Asian area.

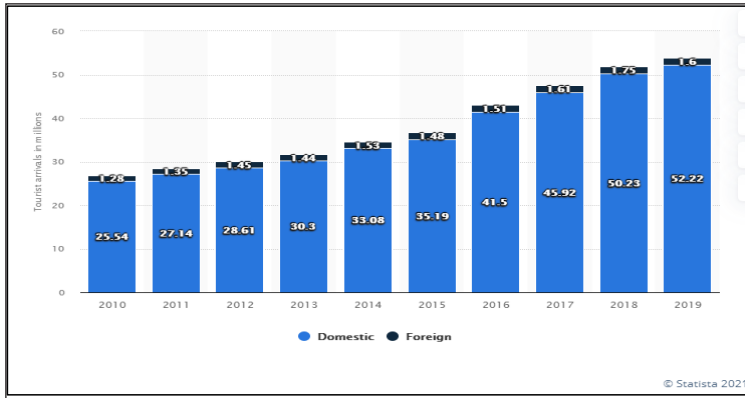
Rajasthan – Tourism & Elephants

We cannot expect each tourist to act and behave in similar fashion, and many research has already proved it. (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000; Pizam & Sussmann, 1995) suggested in their study that differences in preferences and attitudes were observed among tourist from different cultures and nationality. Rajasthan is located in the Northwestern part of India, primarily having a very hot weather, and is mostly covered by the Thar Desert. It holds a very important place in the overall Indian Tourism because of its extraordinary history and vibrant culture (Fig. 1 & 2).



Source: <https://nriol.com/india-statistics/indian-tourism-statistics.asp>

Fig. 1



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1026993/india-tourist-arrivals-in-rajasthan>

Fig. 2

Jaipur, the heritage pink city emerged as the top destination for tourist throughout the world and the credit goes to the colourful fairs and festivals topped with friendly people and good food. Many tourists come to the city of Jaipur for the richness off its cultural heritage. The city is famous for its Forts, museums, and monuments. Elephants were considered as a matter of pride and symbol of prosperity for the Royal families even though they are not native to the land of Rajasthan. One such monument is the Amer fort which is famous for its captive elephants. Most of the elephants are housed in Hatigaon and leads a life which seems to be very difficult for the Jumbo's. Each elephants gets a least place to stay and made to rest on concrete floors of the houses. The number of elephants used in Amer Fort will be around 80 Elephants, all housed in this village and the distance between Amer Fort and the village is roughly 6.2 km, which is covered everyday by the elephants. At the Fort, captive elephants are used to ferry tourists to the fort itself because of its height. These elephants are decorated with lot of garments and ornaments to attract the tourist. They are even painted with shades from Head to the tail. This study is guided by the following questions:

- Is animal welfare considered as an important area of sustainable Tourism Activity and what strategies should be adopted so that the Tourist enjoy the aura of animals like Elephant as an attraction and the animals remain healthy and happy.
- Is there any meaningful relationship in the perception of Male and Female tourist with relation to their attitude towards animal welfare.
- Is there any key difference in animal welfare concern between the age groups of the tourist.

The present survey study is limited to tourist who had visited Rajasthan and used the facilities at Amer Fort (Fig. 3) during the year 2019, pre COVID period.



Source: Jaipur Travel guide.com

Fig. 3

The above questions are addressed based on the response from those tourists. There could be various facts and figures on different concepts of animal welfare practices and this study is limited to the data collected from the state of Rajasthan and the Welfare practices observed within the state which may add and contribute to the literature study for further research on the topic. The questionnaire model is taken from the study made by Soraya Worwag, Peter Varga, Laura Zizka (2019), on various concerns relating to animal welfare and comparing the feedback from Asian and Western visitors. In this paper we have tried to compare the views of visitors from within the state of Rajasthan and visitors from outside Rajasthan. The idea was to explore the perception that people from the local place may be more concerned with the various welfare practices limited to their state while it may not be that important for the outside visitors.

Literature Review

Winter (2020) conducted a review of animal ethics in tourism on a sample of 74 articles in 10 major tourism journals including *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel Research and Tourism Management*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* and *Journal of Ecotourism*. Vijay Krishnan and Sinha (2019) studies the history and evolution of Asian Elephants from deification to commodification in Kerala. Several historical documents are

studied to identify the transformation of Asian Elephants. One key difference between African and Asian elephants is found to be more cultural associations with humans in Asian elephants. Govindan et al. (2019) in their case study of chronic abscess wound caused by an Ankus in a captive Asian elephant provides the major problem faced by elephants in captivity and its impact on animal ethics. The authors record that elephant have been in captivity for over 4,000 years and became the largest living terrestrial craniates. Miller et al. (2015), The significance of this article in the review is the health perspective of captive animals in the study of elephant welfare practices and ethics. The importance of catering to the wounds caused by human captivity and the need of advancement of veterinary institutions is recognized.

To understand elephant-mahout relationship and the treatment and working techniques even further, Practical Elephant Management: A Handbook for Mahouts by Nibha Namboodiri (Elephant Welfare Association) is referred. This handbook covers every nook and corner of elephant's health, management, and handling techniques. It begins with various facts about elephants ranging from height, weight, biological characteristics, reproductive characteristics, eating habits, significance of various organs and many more. Duffy (2013) studies the dynamics between neoliberalism, tourism and nature in Botswana, Southern Africa. The base of this paper is shaped upon the study of natural modifications to conform to the evolving needs of growing tourism in Botswana. This paper identifies the impact of neoliberalism in the commodification of nature such as in safari tourism of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Taylor et al. (2020) further researched upon the situation of elephant camps in Thailand and moral growth between captive elephant volunteers & tourists. After the logging ban, as mentioned above numerous elephants and mahouts were hired by Thai tourism industry. The theory ecofeminism is used to know the moralistic views of volunteer tourism and whether it ascribes to the 'good life' of elephants. Carlstead, Paris, and Brown (2019) have examined the relationship of attendant and elephants present within the North American zoos to consider the advancement of welfare practices. North America not being the beginning of elephants have about 117 African and 96 Asian elephants in 60 zoos accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association. All these elephants are overviewed by the researchers by gathering blood samples double a month for longer than a year. In previous research, ethics in tourism had been given significant weight, as nature and wildlife were often one of the key triggers of tourist interest, and, thus, had special significance (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Payne & Dimanche, 1996).

Review on Studies Made on Animal Welfare and Attitude of Tourist

Fennell (2013) in his paper examined the various concepts on Animal Welfare including the means they were demarcated and measured specially with context to pain and misery and the way the different methods enhanced animal welfare. Von Essen, Lindsjö and Berg (2020), in their study reflected the different aspects of animal-based tourism starting from zoo to hunting based tourism product and then collated the various concern in animal-based tourism and their welfare issues. Ohl and Van der Staay (2012), in their study claimed that a country’s morals and ethics may be directly linked to the practices being followed in terms of animal welfare. Moorhouse, D’Cruze and Macdonald (2017), recommended that the tourists lack the specialized knowledge on animal well-being and upkeep impacts of Wildlife Tourism Attractions and therefore should be empowered by providing unequivocal assessments of animal welfare impacts. Shani (2012) in their study stated that the tourist agreed to the roles of attractions in conservation, in family type experience and as a choice to nature. The result also focused on the fact that animal well-being activities were given the greatest importance. Their always existed an ethical debate over pro’s and con’s of animal-based attractions. (Table 1) shows a review of some of these arguments.

Table 1: Opinions in Favor of and Against Animal-Based Attractions

In Favor of Animal-Based Attractions	Against Animal-Based Attractions
For families with children, animal attractions provide valuable entertainment and recreation.	In captive conditions, the dignity of and welfare of animals exhibited in attractions are severely compromised.
It is possible to observe rare and diverse animals, which would otherwise remain hidden from view.	Nature films, television programs, and magazines offer an adequate substitute for animal attractions.
Visitors can gain a better understanding of wildlife and witness animal behavior by themselves.	Visitors are only exposed to twisted and false notions of wildlife and the way animals behave.
Through research conducted in animal-based attractions, humans can gain a deeper understanding of different species, which is beneficial to both wild and domestic animals.	Animal life would not need improving without the presence of animal-based attractions. Regarding wildlife, the best policy is to let them be as they are.

In Favor of Animal-Based Attractions	Against Animal-Based Attractions
Animal-based attractions have contributed to the conservation of many endangered species.	Captive animals lose much of their natural characteristics and the damage caused to them is not justified by conservation efforts. Additionally, confined animals become sick or die, making preservation efforts no longer worth it.
Animal-themed attractions, which are supervised and controlled environments, provide tourists with an opportunity to view animals rather than risk their lives or disturb the wildlife in their natural habitat.	As a result of living in such unnatural and confined environments, exhibited animals suffer a significant physiological and psychological toll.

Source: Shani & Pizam (2008, 2009, 2010).

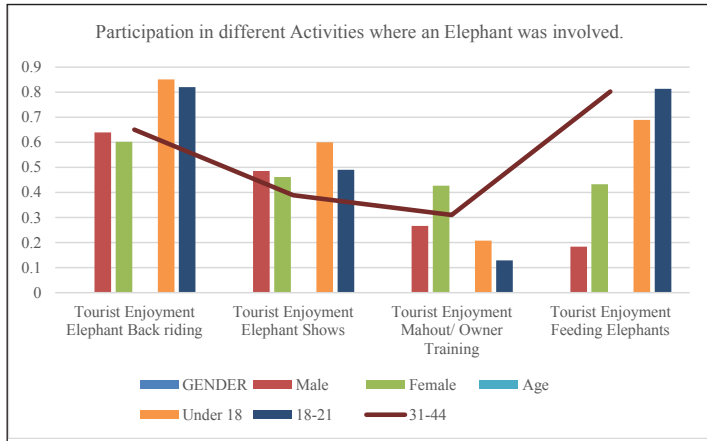
Analysis

In Rajasthan and its Forts, there are various tourism activities where elephants are being used for various tourism activities related to animal welfare. A questionnaire was shared with 120 participants related to elephant welfare. Out of the 120 participants, 97 respondents were considered based on the experience of either using the Elephants as ride in the forts or viewing Elephant related shows or engaging with activities where elephants were used as a part of Tourism attraction. 23 participants were rejected since they did not have personal experience of Elephants as a Tourism Product. The findings were coded in numerical forms- Gender, Age, Education, and Region- from Rajasthan / Outside Rajasthan. Each statement was designed keeping in mind both tourist welfare as well as animal welfare. The importance were attributed through use of 5-point Likert scale.

Results

Out of 97 participants considered for the survey analysis, 65 were Male (67%) and 32 were Female (33%). Most respondents were between the ages of 18-21 years (45.4%), and 31-44 years (25.8%). 37% of the participants have studied High School and 35% were of a bachelor's degree holder. Almost 44% of the respondents agreed to have done some kind of study on

availability of Elephants in these tourist destinations specially in forts. The results for participation in four elephant activities (elephant back riding, shows with elephants, mahout/owner training, and feeding elephants) were summarized in (Fig. 4).

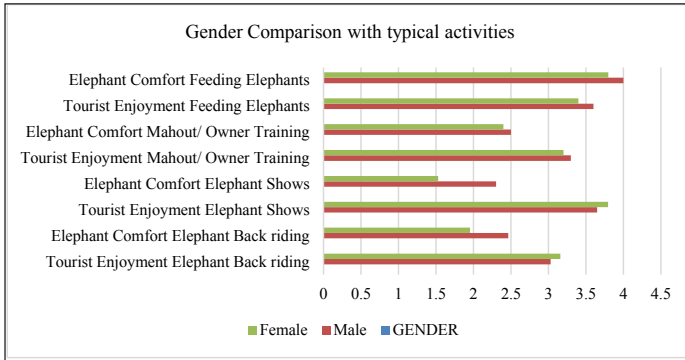


Source: Author.

Fig. 4: Participation in Different Activities where an Elephant was Involved

The most popular activity among both the genders was Elephant Back Riding as was anticipated. The least popular activity as per Gender was Feeding Elephants for Male and Mahout Training for Female. This fact again reassures the female emotion which normally lacks in female. In general, the Tourists between the ages of 18 and 21 were the most notable users of all the activities combined (58.7%). The probable reason could be enthusiasm among the youngsters to enjoy every form of Wildlife activity.

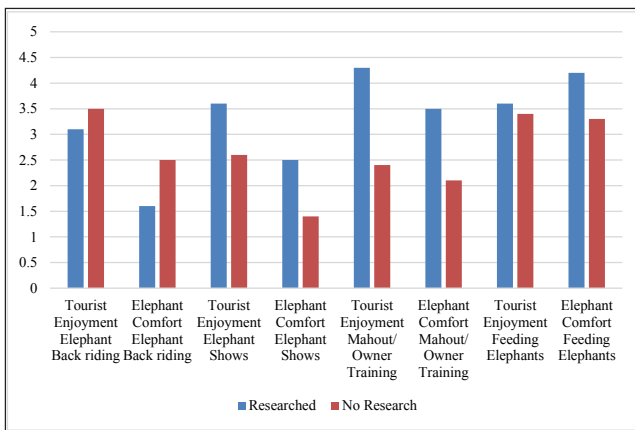
The tourist’s enjoyment on the various activities and their perception on the comfort level of the animals were measured by using the above parameters in a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 denotes extreme enjoyment and 5 least. If we see in every activity the Tourist rating of enjoyment always overshoot the animal comfort level except for the fact that Feeding Elephants, the comfort level of the animals was higher than the participants. The result also shows that tourist enjoyment level on Feeding the animals is highest in all parameters starting form Gender to Age to Qualification (Fig. 5).



Source: Author.

Fig. 5: Average Rating Score of Tourist Enjoyment and Elephant Comfort for the above Activities as per Gender

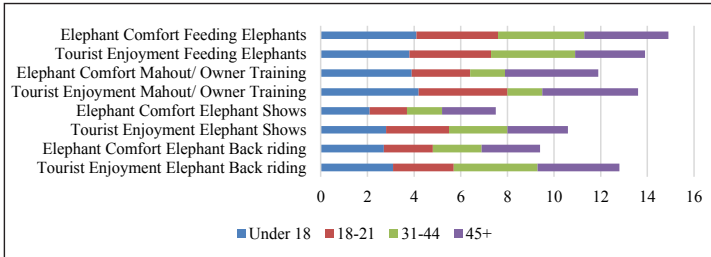
The participants who had probably done some prior research before participating in these activities shows that they enjoyed the Mahout/ Owner Training activities more than the participants who did not have any perceived expectation from such activities (Fig. 6). This might suggest that “Prior knowledge on various Animal welfare practices if made compulsory for the tourist before they come for any Wildlife activities may help us in proper care and comfort of the wild life’s and their use in more sustainable way”. Here we also draw a conclusion that Tourist places where animals are used as an attraction, should release a prior do’s and don’ts for the Tourist as well so that they understand the animals better which may result is more sustainable use of the jambo’s.



Source: Author.

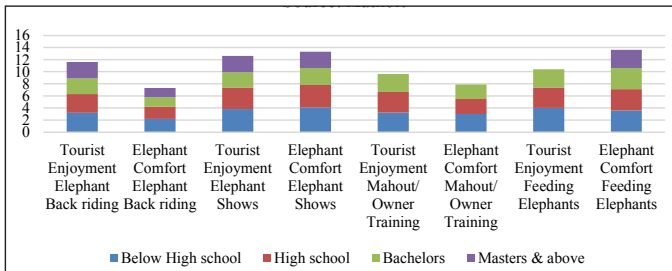
Fig. 6: Effect of having a Prior Knowledge of Animal Welfare

All groups have rated Elephant comforts on Elephant shows (Fig. 7 & 8), as the least perceived comfort level irrespective of their Age, Education, Research and more so specially from Rajasthan since they may be well aware of the uncomfortable methods the animals may go through during the process of training for these kind of shows. Therefore, the findings do point us to the fact that the Mahout Training for elephant shows should not be entertained and must be kept in minimum.



Source: Author.

Fig. 7: Age Comparison of Comfort Level with Typical Activities



Source: Author.

Fig. 8: Education & Relationship with Typical Activities

Statistical Findings

A One Way Anova was conducted for each of the Variables (Table 2) and it was found that even though there is no Significant relationship between Male and Female as per the first two activities, but their exist a difference in the perception of Male and Female with relation to their attitude towards animal welfare when Shows and Training of the animals are concerned.

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)**P < 0.05 is Significant**

	F	df1	df2	P
Tourist Enjoyment Elephant Back riding	0.0251	1	59.1	0.875
Elephant Comfort Elephant Back riding	0.7684	1	66.2	0.384
Tourist Enjoyment Elephant Shows	67.4457	1	72.5	<.001
Tourist Enjoyment Mahout/ Owner Training	47.4380	1	68.0	<.001
Elephant Comfort Elephant Shows	19.9575	1	54.9	<.001
Elephant Comfort Mahout/ Owner Training	18.9661	1	60.2	<.001
Tourist Enjoyment Feeding Elephants	2.5080	1	59.6	0.119
Elephant Comfort Feeding Elephants	9.23e-5	1	53.2	0.992

Source: Author.

We also examined age as a demographic data point. Groups of varying ages were determined divided into three groups (1 represents 18-24 years old, 2 represents 25-44 years old, and 3 represents 45 years old or older). Based on the results of an ANOVA test, (Table 3) a significant difference between the age groups exists on the activity Owner Training when examined at p-levels of < 0.001. The other two parameters of Attitude towards Animal Welfare shows that no significant difference exist between Education, Researched or State from which the Tourist belong.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)

	F	df1	df2	P
Tourist Enjoyment Elephant Back riding	6.617	3	30.4	0.001
Elephant Comfort Elephant Back riding	1.835	3	32.3	0.160
Tourist Enjoyment Elephant Shows	0.920	3	35.5	0.441
Tourist Enjoyment Mahout/ Owner Training	17.768	3	36.7	<.001
Elephant Comfort Elephant Shows	1.540	3	39.0	0.219
Elephant Comfort Mahout/ Owner Training	3.334	3	34.1	0.031
Tourist Enjoyment Feeding Elephants	2.093	3	30.9	0.121
Elephant Comfort Feeding Elephants	0.539	3	30.6	0.659

Source: Author.

Discussions

The objective of this study was to find out and explore tourists' concern for animal welfare while participating in animal-based attractions. Based on gender, age, education, prior knowledge, and state of origin, we explored whether tourists have different concerns about animal welfare. The findings in the survey confirms that there may be a difference in the attitude of Male & Female specially with relation to attitude in terms of Training being provided and comfort level of the animals. It shows that gender does influence concerns for animal welfare. Even the average Rating on Tourist Enjoyment towards Mahout owner training shows (3.3) for Male and (1.5) for Female, which strengthens the point. A considerable difference in welfare concern exists across the different age groups, which is in agreement with the research conducted by (Kang & Moscardo, 2006). If we see the Average rating score it is (4.1) for the age group of 45+ & 18, while only (1.5 to 3.8) for other age groups. It was also noticed that the comfort level of the elephants while performing different activities was one area where both the Genders were concerned about.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is a modest effort to find out the attitude of Tourist towards an animal being used in our Tourism Industry, in this case the Elephants. Though it may not give a clear-cut picture of how the concerns could be raised but one point becomes very clear that Gender and Age may play an important role while educating the tourist and use of animals in a more humanly nature and removing some activities which may not be required as part of Tourist attraction. Prior knowledge about the animals for the Tourist may ensure proper and humanly use of the animals without being exploited. The more knowledgeable the Tourist becomes, the less will be the exploitation on these animals. Some recommendations.

With Special Mention and context to Jaipur City in Rajasthan, we would like to suggest that the elephant rides at Fort Amer should be stopped immediately since it is really affecting the health of elephants. Instead of using the animals a ropeway would be a more sustainable option which may take the tourist on the Top and they can walk down the streets which is much more comfortable.

The so-called village “Hatigaon” could provide a special care center instead of elephant rides at the Forts, where the elephants could be sheltered at that place to be kept as an added attraction for Tourist visiting Fort Amer. Here we would like to cite the example of “Elephant Nature Park”, in Thailand’s Chiang Mai Province. The Elephants could live in a natural set-up where the tourist can be allowed to mingle with them under professional supervision.

We would also suggest to have the concept of “ Adopt an Elephant”.. where-in any person who has a fondness to wildlife can adopt any Elephant from the Centre and give his/her choice of name. The Fund thus generated could be used for care and upkeep of the animals. A small museum or education center should be attached to the Center for educating the younger generation on life cycle of an elephant.

These few proposals could go a long way in preserving the Elephants and be a good keeper for sustainable use of these animals in Tourism Related activities.

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