CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

This research seeks to approach the management of wildlife tourism from an integrated perspective and conceptualizes on the notion of viewing wildlife tourism as a system as suggested by Higginbottom (2004). The visitor-wildlife encounter forms the core of the wildlife tourism experience and is the result of interaction of the elements of the wildlife tourism system including the wildlife and its natural habitat, the visitor, the tourism operator, the local communities, and the setting. During the past two and half decades, several important issues emerged and persisted pertaining to wildlife tourism that require managerial responses. And there have been many studies conducted in this direction that are specific to wildlife tourism. As a matter of fact, since Shackley’s (1996) pioneering work on wildlife tourism, there has been much research conducted in this field.

Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) categorized research so far conducted in the field of wildlife tourism into those having traditional view in the area and those that go beyond the traditional confines. In the case of former, focus of research has been on impacts of tourism (including both positive and negative) on wildlife and natural environment, carrying capacity as a means of regulating visitor numbers, and effects of the tourism experience on visitors with a measurement of their satisfaction or enjoyment and change in their lifestyle. In the case of latter i.e. the researches that have gone beyond the traditional boundaries, there has been a tendency to move towards current approaches of managing visitor interaction with wildlife and fall into three broad categories. First is the identification of participants and integral segments of the wildlife tourism process. Who are the parties involved and affected by the tourism process, and what constitutes a wildlife tourism attraction as contrast to other similar forms of activity. This also takes into consideration the human use of wildlife as either consumptive or non-consumptive. Second is concerned with satisfaction
management that examines both the demand side and the supply side. The demand side entails visitors who desire interaction with wildlife, the conditions under which such interactions take place, and the outcome of such encounters i.e. what the visitors expect out of their interaction. The supply side involves social needs, managerial conditions, and information regarding resources that facilitate realizations of the desires of visitors. Third is the impact and trade-off analysis that include biological and social impacts resulting from tourism development and preservation strategies.

Thus, in the words of Tremblay (2008) with respect to researches concerned with management of wildlife tourism,

it seems fair to posit that the main perspective of much wildlife tourism research has indeed been concentrated on the structure and management of the tourist–animal encounter, sometimes emphasizing the needs, desires and perceptions of the human tourist–actor and other times that of the impacts on animals, the latter sometimes modeled as an animal, a small group or more broadly an ecosystem or species when the analysis involves different space and time scales. What has been emphasized overall are the conditions (internal–affective, cognitive and external–environmental, etc.) which ensure tourists satisfaction on one side and those which improve the prospects of the wildlife and of stakeholders responsible for their sustainable management on the other (p. 180).

However, given the diversity of stakeholders as well as business structures and activities involved in wildlife tourism, finding a single case of best management practice is quite not possible. As Higginbottom (2004) points out, “since each wildlife species and wildlife tourism situation is associated with different types of impacts and management opportunities, it is not possible to apply any fixed management formula” (p. 212). Yet, while the issues facing wildlife tourism in different regions and countries seemingly vary, certain issues apply widely. These include issues relating to the wildlife and natural environment, the visitors, the economic system, the local communities, and finally the political and institutional support. This research is essentially guided by a fundamental question: what factors are attributable towards
effectively managing wildlife tourism? As Higginbottom (2004) maintains, in the context of wildlife tourism, “… factors that determine the effectiveness of the various management actions are mostly complex and poorly understood, … [which] is an important area of rigorous research” (p. 219). It is in this context that this research makes an attempt to understand the factors contributing to effective management of wildlife tourism and for that matter considers the four elements of wildlife tourism system viz., the visitors, the local communities, the park management, and the tour operators in an integrated manner.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to appraise the stance and importance of the elements of the wildlife tourism system and to rigorously analyze the fundamental aspects and underlying facets of these elements that could result in the effective management of wildlife tourism.

In order to achieve this aim, five specific objectives were framed:

1. To understand the nature of, and define the factors contributing to, visitor experience in wildlife tourism.
2. To explore the factors influencing local community control / empowerment in wildlife tourism.
3. To conceptualize the notion of park management competence and determine the factors affecting it.
4. To interpret the meaning of, and ascertain the factors contributing to, tour operators’ commitment in wildlife tourism.
5. To propose an integrated model for effective management of wildlife tourism in national parks.

1.3 Scope of the Research
There are four key issues related to the scope of this research. First, it is confined to non-consumptive form of wildlife tourism. Wildlife tourism is classified as consumptive and non-consumptive. Non-consumptive wildlife tourism involves recreational activities that neither catch nor kill wild animals; rather it is characterized as wildlife watching. Consumptive wildlife tourism on the other hand involves capture or killing of target animals in the form of recreational hunting / fishing or trophy hunting / fishing. 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 as noted earlier is sometimes also used to refer to hunting or fishing tourism which are in fact belong to the consumptive form of wildlife tourism. The present study is confined to the non-consumptive form viz., ‘wildlife watching tourism’ and the term ‘wildlife tourism’ will be used to mean it.

Second, this research is based on the eco-centric view on wildlife. In certain cases, wildlife tourism also refers to the viewing of wildlife in captive or semi-captive settings such as in zoos or confined parks where the animals no longer live a wild existence. This is explicitly offered by Orams (1996) in the model viz., “Spectrum of Tourist-Wildlife Interaction Opportunities” that classifies human interaction with wildlife on a captive, semi-captive and wild scale. While clearly recognizing and accepting the fact that wildlife viewing in captive and semi-captive settings does form one end of the spectrum of wildlife tourism, this study is based on the eco-centric views in which the human-wildlife interaction occurs in the wild i.e. in the natural environment of the wild species under view. In simple words, this study is based on viewing animals in the wild. As Newsome et al. (2005) maintain, “The eco-centric worldview believes that nature exists for all of earth’s species and that people are not apart from or in charge of the rest of nature” (p. 2).

Third, the units of analysis are categorized into four segments. In a survey research, the unit of analysis often is an individual. Same is the case here, however the individuals are chosen from each of the four segments of visitors, local communities, park management officials, and tour operators. This is because, this research seeks to deal with the management of wildlife tourism from an integrated approach that
considers (i) understanding the nature of visitor experience, (ii) local community control / empowerment, (iii) park management competence, and (iv) tour operators’ commitment, in wildlife tourism, and therefore, the units of analysis are segmented into visitors, local communities, park management officials, and tour operators. As de Vaus (2003) puts it, the advantage of having a number of units of analysis in one study is that “we can be more confident in the general thrust of the results ... it provides a tougher test of a theory and enables us to approach the same question from a variety of angles” (p. 30).

Fourth, this research is focused on tourism in national parks and protected areas. However, it neither deals with nor does it discuss the complete spectrum of issues confronting national parks. Although it considers certain issues facing park management agencies such as efficacy in their management practices as well as park financing, it does so from the perspective of tourism.

1.4 Research Approach

This research commenced with an extensive review of literature to help provide an in-depth understanding of the issues confronting management of wildlife tourism. The review of existing and relevant literature on wildlife tourism guided the development of the initial conceptual framework. However, further exploration into certain themes was considered essential to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts linked to the phenomenon of wildlife tourism. This was achieved by means of an exploratory case study which helped in identifying underlying themes on some of the issues where the available literature was scarce and subsequently aided in the refinement of the theory-driven conceptual framework and development of specific research hypotheses. The case study was followed by a large-scale survey research and was chosen to be most appropriate to address the purpose of the present study for four main reasons. First, the data required on the dimensions identified in the literature review and the qualitative phase of the study could be collected by means of large-scale survey. Second, the method provided access to large samples in a most cost-effective manner. Third, the collection of quantitative data allowed for
hypotheses testing by means of statistical analysis. Fourth, the generalizability extended by a large-scale survey was required for validating the results of the study.

Thus, this research pursues a multi-paradigm attitude in addressing its research objectives. In that respect, it shuns the two conflicting paradigms of positivism and interpretivism, and adopts a pragmatic approach that contains the elements of both the paradigms resulting in a mixed epistemological position addressing the issues of both objectivism and constructivism. The pragmatic stance taken in this study rendered it necessary to employ a mixed methodology combining the elements of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Although this research acknowledges the central role of certain prior theory in its design and follows a dominant hypothetico-deductive theory testing approach, some amount of inductive investigation was required in the initial stage of the qualitative phase of the study since previous research on some aspects or dimensions was scarce. As such, the process of induction (case study) helped in identifying some of the underlying themes which by means of interpretation gave a complete shape to the concepts which have not received significant attention in wildlife tourism literature. Thus the inductive approach at the initial stage led to the refinement of the conceptual framework and generating some more hypotheses that were later tested using the hypothetico-deductive approach in the quantitative phase of the study. The deductive approach (survey) associated with the quantitative methodology was considered essential for addressing the research objectives so as to come out with the integrated model for effective management of wildlife tourism in national parks.

1.5 Wildlife Tourism: An Overview

Throughout history, human beings have had been sharing close relationship with animals. Over many centuries and in different cultures, people used to place certain values on wildlife species that determine their interaction with wildlife either for spiritual and cultural reasons or for food. Although these pre-tourism values has been existing for thousands of years, “the idea of visiting and observing wild animals for recreational purposes, as a tourist attraction, has been a more recent phenomenon” (Orams, 2002, p. 282). An increase in interest developed among the upper class
societies of Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries to explore the ‘new world’ of wildlife inhabiting destinations resulted in the growth in popularity of wildlife safaris to view and hunt wildlife especially in the eastern and southern African countries (Adler, 1989). Further, as these tourists started bringing certain specimens back to their countries, zoological gardens began to appear. Eventually, the growth of facilities that keep wild animals in captive settings and the creation and designation of specific locations that protect and conserve wildlife such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, has become widespread (Yale, 1991, cited in Orams, 2002). Consequent to the substantial increase in parks and protected areas over time, their significance for recreation and tourism has been recognized worldwide. Thus, the range of opportunities for the wildlife enthusiasts to interact with wildlife continues to increase.

1.5.1 Defining Wildlife Tourism

Wildlife tourism is in essence a hedonistic activity; “the purchase of which is shrouded in imagery, myth, kudos and intangibility, especially given that in many cases, there are no guarantees that the focal species will even be seen” (Curtin, 2005, p. 2). The major purchasing decisions are based on a notion, a mere promise, and an image of an appealing experience such as glimpsing tiger in Indian jungle or tracking jaguar in Brazilian rainforest. Tremblay (2001) considers that the term wildlife tourism is relatively broad and ill-defined as it comprises a wide array of wildlife species, habitats, activities, and methods of observation. Although there are a good number of studies wherein the researchers have made attempts to define the term in a manner that set wildlife tourism apart and distinct from other types of nature-based tourism, difficulties in precisely defining wildlife tourism “arise due to the overlapping, or blurring, of other recreational / holiday activities or categories” (Curtin & Wilkes, 2005, p. 456). For example, Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) defined wildlife tourism “as an area of overlap between nature based tourism, ecotourism, consumptive use of wildlife, rural tourism, and human relations with animals” (p. 32). In other studies, wildlife tourism is apparently perceived as a subset of adventure tourism (Swarbrooke et al., 2003) or marine tourism (Garrod and Wilson, 2003). As observed by Newsome et al. (2005), “wildlife tourism is partly
nature-based, may involve an element of adventure [tourism] … when travel occurs to relatively remote regions to view animals, some of which may be perceived as being dangerous … [and] also shares some of the characteristics of ecotourism when it takes place in natural areas, is educative and/ or interpretive, and fosters conservation supporting practices” (p. 19-20).

Secondly, there is a propensity to assume that wildlife is the focal interest of all those who participate in wildlife tourism. However, those who participate in wildlife tourism activity may not necessarily be motivated by the wildlife alone (Fredline & Faulkner, 2001; Fulton et al., 2002). As Higginbottom (2004) notes, visitors may either belong to wildlife-dependent wildlife tourism or wildlife-independent wildlife tourism. When visitors have deliberate intention to view wildlife, they fit into wildlife-dependent wildlife tourism; whilst wildlife-independent wildlife tourism occurs when visitors don’t have any specific intention to experience wildlife, but deem wildlife encounter augments value to their recreational experience. Likewise, Fredline and Faulkner (2001) put forward a ‘strict’ definition for those participating in wildlife tourism as “only those visitors who identify themselves as being influenced” to visit a destination “to see native wildlife”, and a ‘loose’ definition as “all visitors who had planned encounters with animals, that is, wanted to and did see animals during their visit” (p. i)

In fact, there are many factors that result in participation in a wildlife tourism activity. For example, some participants may accompany those who are interested in wildlife; whilst in other instances, it is possible that a wildlife tourism activity is a segment of a larger tour package and therefore some participants are there because they were interested in some other part of the tour program. It is here where the problems in precisely defining a wildlife tourist arise. As Curtin and Wilkes (2005) argue, “ whilst distinctions can be drawn between wildlife tourists marked by their choice of specialist holidays (e.g. whale-watching, bird-watching, and safaris) it is more difficult to distinguish, or measure, those who partake in wildlife tourism whilst on a more general adventure or relaxation holiday” (p. 456). Actually, the motivations among tourists visiting wildlife tourism destinations vary in terms of intensity from the expert / specialist or a dedicated wildlife enthusiast to the novice / generalist who
has relatively lower level of involvement and is satisfied with comparatively superficial interaction with wildlife species. In this context, Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) conclude that the domain of wildlife tourism should comprise a wide range of activities that cater to the wide ranging needs of various tourists in a variety of ways. These include: “nature-based tourism with wildlife component”; “locations with good wildlife opportunities”; “artificial attractions based on wildlife”; “specialist animal watching”; “habitat specific tours”; “thrill-offering tours”; and “hunting/ fishing tours” (p. 33-34).

An early conceptual framework for wildlife tourism is offered by Duffus and Dearden (1990) that focuses on three dimension of human-wildlife interaction which include consumptive uses (hunting and fishing), low consumptive uses (zoos and acquaria) and non-consumptive uses (wildlife viewing, bird watching, and photography). Orams (1996) provides a model called the “Spectrum of Tourist-Wildlife Interaction Opportunities” that categorizes human-wildlife interaction falling into captive setting (zoos, aviaries, and aquariums), semi-captive setting (wildlife parks, rehabilitation centres) and the wild setting (national parks and protected areas). Morrison (1995) claims that wildlife tourism “principally involves people visiting areas in order to see and gain an understanding a wide variety of species and doing so in a manner which is environmentally responsible” (p. 3). Likewise, Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) declare that wildlife tourism “is about increasing the probability of positive encounters with wildlife for visitors whilst protecting the wildlife resource” (p. 31). Although these two claims don’t make any distinction between seeing animals in the captive and wild setting, they do take into consideration the environmental sensitiveness on the part of visitors to make their visits a success. Of late, Newsome et al. (2005) define wildlife tourism as “tourism undertaken to view and/ or encounter wildlife … [that] can take place in a range of settings from captive, semi-captive, to in the wild, and it encompasses a variety of interactions from passive observation to feeding and/ or touching the species viewed” (p. ix). Although this definition advocates wildlife tourism as a sustainable tourism activity that is undertaken to view and / or interact with wildlife in a range of settings, it excludes the consumptive form of wildlife tourism which consists of hunting / fishing tourism.
An advanced and a more matured definition is offered by Higginbottom (2004) who defines wildlife tourism as “tourism based on encounters with non-domesticated animals [that] occur either in the animals’ natural environment or in captivity [and] includes activities … such as viewing, photography and feeding, as well those that involve killing or capturing animals, particularly hunting (in the terrestrial environment) and recreational fishing (in the aquatic environment)” (p. 2). This definition embodies the two important dimensions: first, it considers viewing animals in both captive and wild settings; and second, it takes into account that wildlife tourism involves activities which are both non-consumptive and consumptive in nature. However, the two aspects of viewing animals in the captive or semi-captive settings and activities that are consumptive in nature such as hunting/fishing tourism are excluded in this research. And, therefore, for the purpose of this study, wildlife tourism is defined as tourism based on interaction with wild animals in their natural environment and includes activities such as wildlife viewing, bird watching, photography, and feeding. Thus, this definition excludes both viewing animals in captive settings such as zoos or aquariums or semi-captive settings such as rehabilitation centres, and activities that involves the capture or killing of wild animals.

1.5.2 Growth and Diversification

Wildlife tourism has shown tremendous growth over the last few decades worldwide. This could be seen in the number of various types of wildlife based activities that have been expanded and linked to commercial tourism, the number of tourism operators, businesses and enterprises that offer these activities, and the number of tourists who participate in those kinds of activities. Higginbottom and Scott (2004) summarized the key identifiable trends in international wildlife tourism that have evolved over the recent decades. These include: “increased involvement of the commercial tourism industry”, “increased levels of participation in (at least some forms of) wildlife watching tourism”, “diversification of wildlife watching opportunities – wider range of environments, target species and types of activity/product”, “increased consideration of animal welfare issues”, “increased environmental awareness”, “increased sophistication in product design”, “increased
use of interpretation, especially in captive settings”, and “increased use of technology to facilitate wildlife viewing” (p. 255).

The major international destinations for wildlife tourism comprise Eastern and Southern African countries (especially Botswana, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, and South Africa), North America (Canada and USA), Central and South America (especially Belize and Costa Rica), South-east and South Asia (especially India), Pacific Islands (especially New Zealand, Fiji, and Galapagos Islands), and Australia and Papua New Guinea. In some places such as the Galapagos Islands and Seychelles, wildlife has been the foundation upon which tourism has been developed. In others, wildlife based attractions help diversify tourism and encourage community development in remote areas. Within wildlife tourism, there exists safari destinations, bird-watching destinations, whale-watching destinations and so on. Obviously, “there is variation in the extent to which wildlife is a factor in the choice of a tourist destination” (Higginbottom & Scott, 2004, p. 259). As Valentine and Birtles (2004) puts it, “In some cases the wildlife forms the basis and entirety of the tour package, as in dedicated bird-watching or whale-watching trips. In some, while wildlife may provide a focus and incentive, there are other attributes of significance within the trip” (p. 15) such as in the case of certain wildlife safaris in Africa that include cultural elements too. Valentine and Birtles (2004) categorized the context of wildlife experience into “unguided encounters with wildlife in natural areas”, “specialized wildlife tours”, “managed locational attractions featuring a natural aggregation of wildlife”, “nature-based tours that include wildlife”, “research, conservation or education tours involving wildlife”, “sightseeing tours that include some element of incidental wildlife-watching”, and “accommodation or other tourism facilities that feature surrounding wildlife” (p. 16).

Tourism based on human interaction with wildlife is increasing in popularity throughout the world (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001) and has grown in actual terms of number of tourists and / or tourism operators and by its repercussion in economic value, and continues to do so (Shackley, 1996). Fillion et al. (1992), cited in Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001), identified the scale of this market, estimating that 40 to 60 percent of all international tourists were nature tourists and of these 20 to 40 percent
were wildlife-related tourists. In 1994, wildlife tourism accounted for 10 percent of all international tourism (Pleumarom, 1994 cited in Rodger & Moore, 2004). Although wildlife tourism attracts a very large number of tourists globally, there are no over-all reliable estimates for this sector as a whole (Yuan et al., 2004). In the face of it, certain scattered statistics are available. For example, in UK 90 percent of people prioritize enjoyment of wildlife in their holiday making (Roe et al., 1997). In USA, 75 million people go for wildlife watching each year and it has become the country’s leading outdoor recreational activity (Newsome et al., 2006). In Australia, 67.5 percent of international visitors prefer to experience native animals during their visit (Fredline and Faulkner, 2001). In Galapagos Islands, tourism based on wildlife watching draws 60 thousand visitors each year contributing more than 100 million US dollar to the Ecuadorian economy (TIES 2000 cited in Higginbottom, 2004). In Kenya, wildlife is a major attraction for 80 percent of international tourists (Roe et al., 1997) and tourism based on wildlife watching contributes 400 million US dollar to the national economy (WTO and UNEP, 1992 cited in Higginbottom, 2004). In Rwanda, mountain gorillas alone provide an estimated annual revenue of 4 million US dollar (Groom et al., 1991 cited in Higginbottom, 2004). Likewise, commercial whale watching is now estimated to be a US dollar one billion industry worldwide that attracts more than nine million visitors each year (Hoyt, 2000) and bird-watching is estimated to involve around 60 million people worldwide (CRC for Sustainable Tourism, 2002 cited in Rodger & Moore, 2004).

Factors contributing to the growth of wildlife tourism include increased demand for opportunities to interact with wildlife in its natural habitat (Jenner & Smith, 1992), increased disposable income and leisure time (Flather & Cordell, 1995), increased social concerns about wildlife and the quality of natural environment coinciding with higher levels of education of people (Eagles et al., 2002), and increased ‘green awareness’ and interest among visitors to participate in conservation holidays (Shackley, 1996). Other contributing factors include: “ease of transport”, “infrastructure and access”, “political stability”, “existence of wide species range or flagship endangered species”, “government and public sector policies” (Shackley, 1996, p. 3). Further, studies suggest that people who visit wildlife tourism destinations are predominantly Western, well-educated and with a high level of disposable income.
(Ballantine & Eagles, 1994; Page & Dowling, 2002). Thus, residents of western countries constitute the majority of the international wildlife tourism market. Since these people live in relative isolation from nature and wild animals, the demand to watch and observe them has grown significantly over the past two and half decades and continues to grow steadily (Barnes et al., 1992; Roe et al., 1997; Newsome et al., 2006). In fact, wildlife viewing in their natural habitat has increasingly becoming an activity for tourists who are primarily European, urbanized, middle class and affluent (Pearce & Wilson, 1995; Jones & Buckley, 2000).

1.5.3 The Relevance of National Parks

Since their establishment, national parks have played an important role as tourist attractions in many countries. As Butler and Boyd (2000) note, “tourism has been strongly associated with national parks from the earliest days of their establishment and is often placed firmly in legislation and park policies as a major function of parks systems” (p. 3). The development of national parks dates back to a century and a quarter. By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were concerns over the impact of human settlement and its expansion on the natural landscape as well as on its inhabitants. There was a growing interest in the design and preservation of landscape. Subsequently, a need was felt and realized to have open natural areas for the purpose of relaxation for people. These factors were influential in the establishment of the forerunner of the national parks, the Yosemite Park in 1864 (Huth, 1972 cited in Butler & Boyd, 2000) and subsequently the first national park, the Yellowstone was established in 1872 (Butler & Boyd, 2000). A few years later, Banff National Park was established in Canada. There were a number of other factors that were involved in the establishment of these early parks, and “two of the major influences were directly related to tourism and recreation” (Butler & Boyd, 2000, p. 16). First, the growing need for space to be set aside for relaxation. Second, the perceived economic benefits that could accrue to these newly established parks from the development of tourism.

Thus, the first national park systems were developed in USA followed by Canada and after that in Australia and New Zealand. All these park systems have
several things in common in terms of their establishment, the type of lands set aside for parks, the values upon which the parks have been established, the functions the parks are expected to fulfill, and the role tourism is expected to play. In fact, the nature of the national park systems are very similar the world over and in many respects and in most cases, they are very close to the first model, that of USA. National parks today symbolize only one type from a range of protected areas that include Biosphere Sites, World Heritage Sites, Marine Reserves, and RAMSAR sites. A global definition of national parks was finalized and approved in 1969 at a General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, held at New Delhi, India. The Assembly identified three essential characteristics of a national park and defined it as:

a relatively large area where
(a) one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation, where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educative and recreative interest or which contains a natural landscape of great beauty;
(b) the highest component authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area and to enforce effectively the respect of ecological, geomorphological, or aesthetic features which have led to its establishment; and
(c) visitors are allowed to enter, under special conditions, for inspirational, educative, cultural and recreative purposes (quoted in Butler & Boyd, 2000, p. 4-5).

However, there are a few exceptions to this definition. For example, some of the parks in Australia are relatively small and the national parks in England and Wales don’t fit this definition in terms of a number of elements. Despite, all are termed national parks by the respective governments involved.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis
This Thesis consists of six chapters that are structured as follows:
Chapter One briefly explains the background of the research. By offering the context in which this research is situated, it narrows down to the specific aim and objectives. It introduces relevant literature in the field of wildlife tourism and provides the scope of this research. It also provides a brief account of the methodological approach taken in this research.

Chapter Two provides an extensive review of literature on wildlife tourism. It commences with a critical evaluation of the existing management frameworks and evolving approaches to management of wildlife tourism. This closely links with the need of this research signaling a gap in previous work. The Chapter offers an argument as to why an integrated approach seems to be an effective way of managing wildlife tourism, and makes an assertion that this integrated approach centers on the visitor experience, rests on local community control / empowerment, explicitly employs the park management agency’s competence, and ensures tour operators’ commitment. Finally, it provides a coherent argument for conceptualizing the major concepts and subsequently developing the conceptual framework and research hypotheses for this research.

Chapter Three provides a contextual background on the relevant characteristics of the case study area viz., Kaziranga National Park by looking at its natural features such as geomorphology, forest types, and flora and fauna, its historical background, the way the Park is administered and managed, the demography and socio-economic characteristics, and finally an overview of the development of tourism in and around the Park area.

Chapter Four presents a detailed description of the methodology adopted in this research and justifying it in terms of the philosophical stance and epistemological position chosen for this study. It also elaborates on the case study method applied in the qualitative phase of the study and the survey method employed in the quantitative phase of the study. Further, it gives a complete explanation of the steps followed in the quantitative phase (survey) of the study that include the sampling issues involved, measurement procedures (including scale development, questionnaire design, and the
reliability and validity issues), data collection procedure, and an outline of the data analysis process.

**Chapter Five** presents the results of the analyses performed with the aim of describing the samples and testing the hypotheses formulated in Chapter Two and Chapter Four. It introduces a description of the samples using frequencies, descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations. Further, it presents the results of the quantitative analyses conducted in order to find an appropriate structure among the set of variables and subsequently to test the hypotheses. In particular, two distinct multivariate techniques were employed viz., exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis.

**Chapter Six** discusses the findings of this research in relation to the defined research objectives. It also provides a synopsis of the major implications and key contributions of the research findings. Finally, it acknowledges certain limitations of this research and proposes relevant directions for further research.