

Human-wildlife interactions for tourism: a systematic review

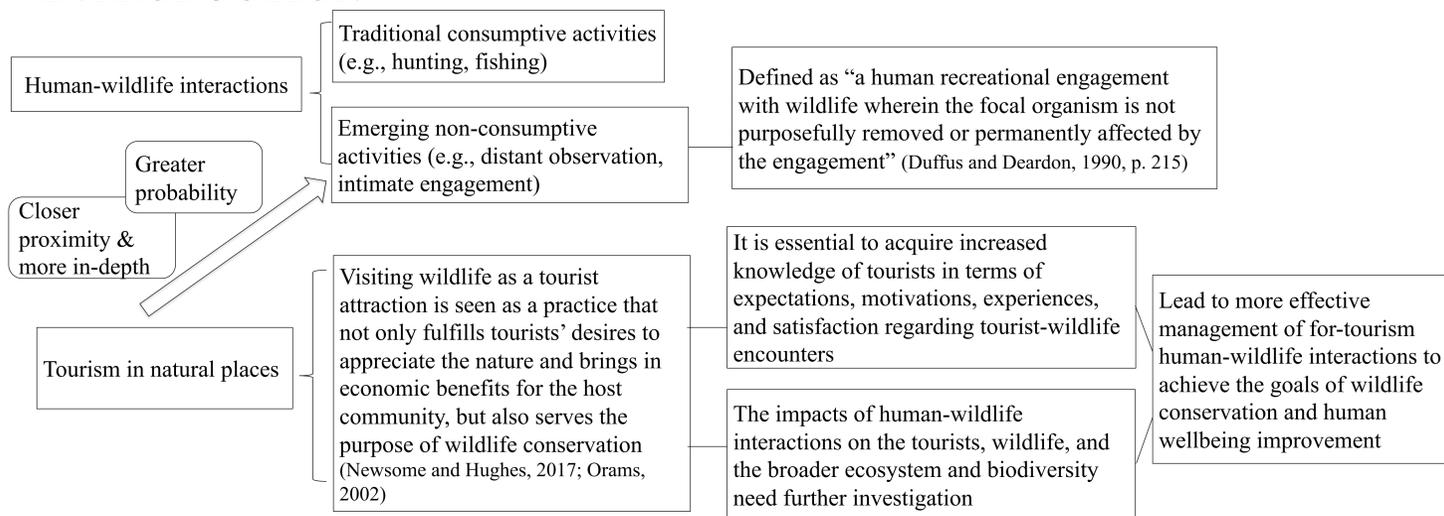
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PURPOSE

Due to the complexity of wildlife encounters for tourist purposes, the extant literature indicates a diverse and fragmented view from which integrated implications are difficult to obtain. This paper aims to provide a big picture understanding of what has been and what is needed to be done in terms of both wildlife tourism research and practices. The purpose of the review is twofold: (1) to acquire a holistic understanding of previously investigated subjects pertaining to for-tourism, non-consumptive human-wildlife interactions in the natural setting and provide a readily accessible source of information to researchers and practitioners and (2) to identify emerging trends and research gaps and present recommendations to advance the field of wildlife tourism research.

INTRODUCTION



METHODOLOGY

Systematic review is a method to systematically search for, appraise, and synthesize research evidence in a comprehensive, transparent, and rigorous manner (Grant and Booth, 2009; Victor, 2008). We employed a three-step approach to identify the final study sample (Figure 1). A synthesis of the data was then conducted using thematic analysis. We tested the intercoder reliability using percent agreement and kappa index with a subset of articles in the full sample. The results indicate a fair to good agreement among the coders (Gisev et al., 2013).

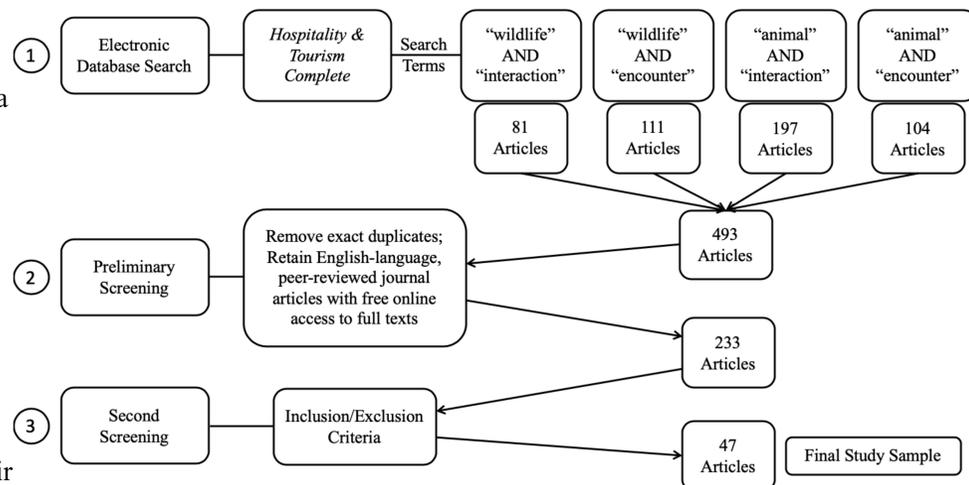


Figure 1. Three-step approach to identify final study sample for systematic review.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Human-wildlife interactions for tourism have received considerable attention from the academics. This paper provides a systematic review of 47 journal articles published between 2003 and 2018. The findings suggest a diverse and fragmented landscape of wildlife tourism research based on a wide geographical spread of destinations, varied wildlife species and types of interactions, and different research focuses and utilized methodologies. As abundant as the current literature is, the complex interactions between wildlife and humans in non-consumptive tourism settings have just begun to be explored.

This study proposed a conceptual framework that supports a systems approach to human-wildlife interactions (Figure 2). The four themes identified from the reviewed articles are interconnected in the complicated social-ecological system. Specifically, ecological impacts (i.e. tourists' impacts on wildlife) and human dimensions (i.e. wildlife's impacts on tourists) always coexist, representing the cores of this subject; the management of wildlife tourism is essentially the management of these two dimensions of impacts, aiming to minimize or eliminate the negative ones and maximize the positive ones. Implications for future research are rooted in previous findings on the impacts and management dimensions and propose more research directions to, in turn, guide the tourism practices toward the goal of wildlife conservation and human well-being. The four themes demonstrate the complexity of the wildlife tourism industry and point out potential paths for constructing mutually beneficial interactions between the natural systems and the human system.

Researchers are recommended to be mindful of the interdependent nature of the systems involved in wildlife tourism and undertake more studies in an integrated approach to examine the broader ecosystem impacts and address the global issues of conservation and biodiversity protection. Meanwhile, continued research within the realm of ecological impacts or human dimensions is encouraged to help develop better-fitting management schemes and harness the potential of tourism as a savior for wildlife and contributor to tourist psychological well-being.

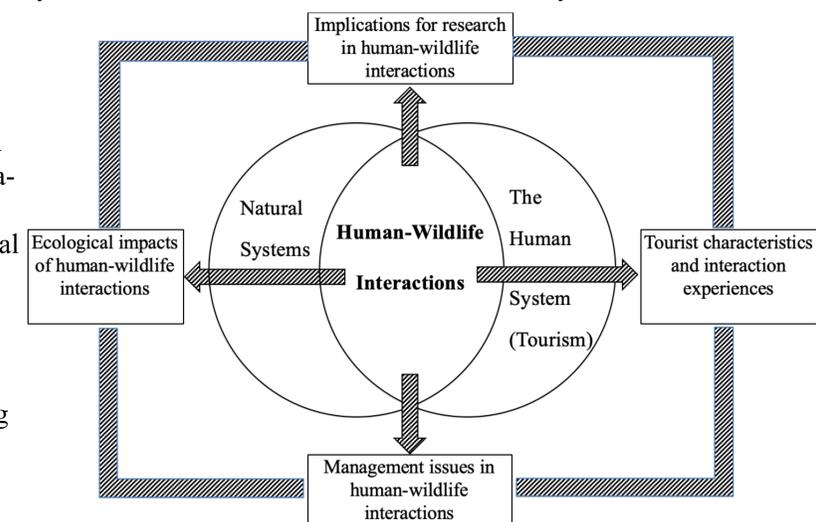


Figure 2. The conceptual framework.

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