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CASE STUDY – COMMUNICATION

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Sardar Patel Zoological Park: Managing the Visitor Mayhem

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Abstract (150 words):

The Sardar Patel Zoological Park (SPZP) in Kevadiya, Gujarat, is confronting an operational crisis triggered by intense visitor surges, with daily footfalls exceeding 26,000 and projections of 30,000 in the upcoming winter season. Additional Director Soham Mukherjee has ninety days to design a sustainable visitor-flow system to ease the mid-day congestion that threatens animal welfare, visitor safety, and the park's reputation. The stakes are amplified by SPZP's status as India's first operational Public-Private Partnership (PPP) zoo, positioned as a strategic model for modernising the nation's zoo ecosystem. Its performance is being closely observed to assess whether private efficiency can align with public accountability, conservation, and educational commitments. Soham must address arrival variability while upholding two non-negotiables: protecting animal welfare—"Don't cook the lions"—and preserving visitor experience, all within PPP constraints that limit pricing and infrastructure changes. He is considering timed entry, dynamic pricing, or a hybrid model, supported by the park's Docent Program to promote structured, learning-oriented visits.

Keywords:

Visitor Management, Zoological Park, Public Private Partnership, Logistics, Operations Strategy, Operations Management, General Management

Author Biographies

1. Dr Tana Trivedi: Faculty of Communication at the Amrut Mody School of Management, Ahmedabad University since 2015, Dr. Trivedi has over eighteen years of experience in teaching Literature, Diaspora Studies and Business History. Her areas of research include Business history and archives, and General Management.

2. Manil Agarwal: PhD student in Management at the Amrut Mody School of Management, Ahmedabad University since 2025, Manil has over 20 years of industry work experience of which years have been in the education industry. He has a services industry experience through his undergraduate degree in hotel management and working for almost 2 years with the hotel industry.

Sardar Patel Zoological Park: Managing the Visitor Mayhem

Study Level/Applicability: This case is designed for use in undergraduate or graduate level courses on strategy, operations and logistics management, and even for courses in general management. This case can also be used for designing a simulation on strategy and general management.

Case Overview

The Sardar Patel Zoological Park (SPZP) in Kevadiya, Gujarat, is facing a severe operational crisis driven by intense visitor surges, which peaked at over 26,000 daily during the summer rush and are projected to reach 30,000 during the upcoming winter season. Additional Director Soham Mukherjee has a ninety-day deadline to design a sustainable visitor flow system to mitigate this crisis. The core issue is extreme arrival variability: though the park operates for nine hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.), the majority of visitors arrive around 12 noon, collapsing the operating day into a chaotic "two-hour pressure cooker". This "mid-day crush" severely compromises animal welfare—with some animals withdrawing or having to be moved to shaded zones—and degrades visitor experience, leading to temper flares, long golf cart queues, and incidents of stone pelting or objects thrown into enclosures. Soham's core directive is defined by two absolute constraints: protecting the dignity and welfare of the animals (the rule being, "*Don't cook the lions*") and ensuring visitors feel guided, not herded. SPZP's situation is highly consequential because it operates under India's first operational Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework for zoo management. This arrangement makes the park a "strategic experiment" carrying the expectations of the entire sector, aiming to prove that private agility can coexist with public accountability and conservation values. The PPP structure limits Soham's autonomy; implementing system-level changes like new ticket pricing requires approval from the SOU Tourism Board and oversight committees. Soham is evaluating three primary strategies to manage visitor flow by redesigning behavior: a structured timed-entry system, dynamic pricing incentives (drawing knowledge from global zoos like the Bronx and Sydney), or a flexible hybrid model that combines group pre-booking with differential pricing for individuals. Internally, the park relies on its Docent Program, a "human intelligence system" that diffuses crowds, reduces noise, and transforms casual visits into focused learning experiences, acting as a "hidden ace" that anchors the system. The ultimate goal is to generate a replicable framework that balances mass tourism with the ethical responsibilities of a modern zoo by achieving order through the "art of designing freedom".

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Understanding and mitigating arrival variability
2. Operational capacity and resource allocation
3. Applying analytical tools for capacity planning
4. Navigating regulatory constraints on logistical change