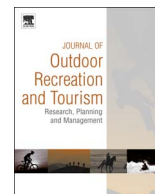




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## Travel motivation and tourist satisfaction with wildlife tourism experiences in Gonarezhou and Matusadona National Parks, Zimbabwe

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## ABSTRACT

We investigated tourist motivation for visiting two African state protected areas, tourists' wildlife tourism experiences, predictors of wildlife tourism experiences and overall satisfaction with the entire holiday or trip experience. Data were collected in Gonarezhou and Matusadona National Parks, Zimbabwe, in December 2015 using 128 questionnaire surveys. Tourists' push factors for visiting national parks were 'recreation and knowledge seeking', 'appreciating wildlife' and 'feeling close to nature'. Pull factors for the two parks were largely similar with common factors being abundance of wildlife, availability of different animal species, availability of different plant species, wilderness, beautiful landscape and peaceful/quiet environment. We established that different motivation factors had different influences on wildlife tourism experiences. Satisfaction with wildlife tourism experiences was predicted by experiences with wildlife interaction and satisfaction with prices charged in the parks, while overall satisfaction with the entire holiday/trip experiences was predicted by satisfaction with wildlife tourism experiences, enhanced by interpretation and interaction with wild animals. The study highlights that while understanding tourist motivations is important, it is also beneficial for park planning and management to understand the predictors of good wildlife tourism experiences. We recommend that marketing for the two parks need to consider the tourist heterogeneity and demographic-based needs in the development of different travel products and promotional programs.

**Management implications:** While marketing for national parks needs to emphasise more on factors that motivate tourists to visit the parks, it is important to factor in the heterogeneity that exists among park tourists. Hence, in predicting variation in tourist motivation to travel, their demographic profiles should be considered. To enhance wildlife tourism experiences, park management can provide more opportunities for tourists to learn about nature and ensure the availability of wildlife species through enforcing mechanism to reduce poaching and habitat destruction. Park management also need to enhance tourists' opportunities to learn more about nature. This is necessary to increase the level of tourist satisfaction.

### 1. Introduction

Tourism is widely considered one of the world's largest and rapidly growing industries (Jarvis, Stoeckl, & Liu, 2016; Murphy, 2013). Nature-based tourism directly depends on natural resources in a relatively undeveloped state, including scenery, water features, vegetation, and wildlife (Job & Paesler, 2013). Wildlife tourism is a form of nature-based tourism dependent on encounters with non-domesticated animals and includes both non-consumptive activities such as viewing, photography and feeding the animals (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001), and consumptive activities such as sport hunting, capturing and fishing

(Lovelock, 2008). Thus, in wildlife tourism, wild animals are important for the experience (Ballantyne, Packer, & Falk, 2011). Such experiences are increasingly becoming part of organised tourism that contributes substantially to the economies of many countries.

In economic terms, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have benefitted from strong growth in their tourism sector in recent years (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2015). Nature-based tourism and visitation of protected areas can generate positive impacts to the local, regional, and national economies (Job & Paesler, 2013). Wildlife tourism, which takes place mainly in protected areas (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001), secures sustainable economic benefits

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while supporting wildlife conservation and local communities (Manfredo, 2002; Naidoo et al., 2016). Although information on how often people visit protected areas is generally limited, a study by Balmford et al. (2015) revealed that tourist visit rates are estimated to be lowest in Africa and Latin America and greatest in North America. Some of the factors that influence tourist visitation of protected areas are remoteness and natural attractiveness (Balmford et al., 2015). Protected areas are believed to be powerful attractions for tourists, major foreign currency earners, and constitute an important part of the tourism industry, especially in Africa (Chikuta, 2015; Job & Paesler, 2013). Bateman (2011) argue that enjoyment of nature especially in protected areas is recognised as the most important cultural ecosystem service. Ethno-tourism is a value added attraction to tourists who visit protected areas most of whom are interested in witnessing or learning about a culture different from their own (Vidal, 2012). Ethno-tourism is therefore an important component of tourist experiences (Armenski, Dragičević, Pejović, Lukić, & Djurdjev, 2011).

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Tourist motivation for visiting protected areas

The framework for this study is based on the tourism system model which was first developed by Leiper in 1979 and later updated in 1990 (Leiper, 1979, 1990). The system has three elements: (i) the human element (tourist), (ii) the geographical element comprising the generating region, the destination region and the transit, and (iii) the industrial element. The tourist or human element consists of people travelling away from home in search for satisfying leisure related activities. The tourist generating region is the location of the basic market of the tourist industry and the source of potential tourism demand. The transit routes are paths that link tourist generating regions with tourist destination regions along with tourist travel. Tourist destination regions are locations which attract tourists to stay temporarily and consist of many parts of the tourist business like accommodation establishments, services, entertainment and recreational facilities. Finally, the industrial element refers to firms, organisations and facilities intended to serve the specific needs and wants of tourists and includes marketing, transport, accommodation and attractions.

Motivation is defined by many researchers as referring to the psychological needs and wants, that provoke, direct, and integrate a person's behaviour and activity (Pearce, 2013; Uysal & Hagan, 1993). Tourism motivation refers to the set of needs which influence a person to partake in a tourism activity (Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008). Tourism motivation can be classified into push and pull factors (Park & Yoon, 2009; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Push factors influence tourists to travel, whereas pull factors attract them to a given destination once the decision to travel has been made (Mehmetoglu, 2012). Push motivations are thus related to the tourists' desire, while pull motivations are associated with the attributes of the destination (Hsu, Tsai, & Wu, 2009). Dann (1977) argues that the tourist generating region has the basic geographical setting, together with the necessary behavioural factors pertaining to motivation called the push factors. Push factors thus encourage individuals to move away from their home settings through tourism, for example, the need to escape, self discovery, relaxation, prestige, challenge, income and adventure. Contrastingly, the destination region, which is the attraction, can be regarded as the anticipation by the tourists of some qualitative characteristics lacking in the tourist generating region, which the tourist wishes to experience personally known as the pull factors. Examples of pull factors include scenic beauty, climate, history, culture and sports. Leiper (1979) defines tourist attractions as sights, events and facilities orientated to experiential opportunities for tourists. A tourist attraction is a system that comprises three elements: a tourist or human element, a nucleus or central element and a marker or informative element (Leiper, 1990).

Eagles (2001) point out that the name national park is closely associated with nature-based tourism and has a stronger effect on tourists than other protected area labels (Reinius & Fredman, 2007). Area protection status has been found to matter to tourists, and it affects the decision to visit the area. While different protected area labels function as touristic markers, the name national park has a stronger effect on tourists than other protected area labels (Reinius & Fredman, 2007). A number of authors argue that the name national park has a significant brand identity and thus is more attractive than less-known names like conservation area (e.g., Eagles, 2001; Nolte, 2004). This study takes national parks as the nucleus or central elements that tourists consider visiting or actually visit and where tourist experiences are created, experienced and consumed (Leiper, 1990).

As countries and destinations strive to increase their share of the international and national tourism market, it becomes important to understand why people travel and why they choose a specific destination (Kamri & Radam, 2013). Motivation functions as a trigger for travel behaviour and determines the reasons for travelling, specific tourism destinations, as well as tourists' overall satisfaction with the trip (Scholtz, Kruger, & Saayman, 2013). In order to adequately provide a tourism experience for visitors, it is important to identify their motivations for travel (Beh & Bruyere, 2007). Tourists have different motives for visiting different attractions and/or destinations, e.g., nature and activities (Chikuta, Du Plessis, & Saayman, 2017), culture (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006), relaxation (Yoon & Uysal, 2005), nostalgia (Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2008), novelty (Mehmetoglu, 2012), escape from routine (Kim & Ritchie, 2012), education (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004), and family togetherness (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). A person can be motivated to travel by more than one motive at a time (Yuill, 2004).

Motivations that are met or fulfilled tend to lead to good wildlife tourism experiences while those that are not met usually lead to bad wildlife tourism experiences. Examples of motivations that lead to good experiences includes being in a natural environment or beautiful scenery, seeing animals closely, seeing a variety of animals, and learning more about wildlife. Contrastingly, motivations that are not fulfilled, for example, seeing no or few animals, and not learning or learning few new things, often lead to bad or worst experiences (Fredline & Faulkner, 2001). Good wildlife tourism experiences are memorable experiences which will shape the tourist's subsequent attitudinal evaluations of the destination in a positive manner, e.g., recommendation to others who are potential tourists, whereas bad wildlife tourism experiences are disappointing tourist experiences which will shape the tourist's subsequent attitudinal evaluations of the destination in a negative manner, e.g., discouragement to others who are potential tourists.

### 2.2. Wildlife tourism experience

Wildlife experience is considered an extremely important reason to visit the national parks (Kruger & Saayman, 2010; Saayman & Saayman, 2009; Scholtz et al., 2013) and is mainly enhanced through activities like wildlife interpretation and interaction with wild animals in their natural habitats (Oh & Hammitt, 2010). National parks, which are synonymous with wildlife, supply an important part of wildlife tourism experience through learning about and interacting with different kinds of animals which may include charismatic species like the big five in Africa (Kamri & Radam, 2013). Visitors are also attracted to visit national parks because of the natural surrounding and the environmental benefits that they can offer. The most common recreation facilities provided in parks range from easy strolls to hiking in parks on trails. Natural or built up trails provide an opportunity for visitors to explore the natural areas hence improving their tourism experiences (Oh & Hammitt, 2010).

#### 2.2.1. Wildlife interpretation

Tourists, who have become more sophisticated in their demands are

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