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Do socio-demographic factors influence the travel behaviour of visitors to nature-based tourism products in South Africa?

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Abstract
Nature-based tourism products in Africa, especially South Africa, are playing an important role in attracting visitors. It is therefore essential to understand travel behaviour and the factors influencing the behaviour of visitors, as such knowledge can influence future park visits, park development and target marketing strategies for nature-based products. Information regarding visitors to parks is available; however, given the competitive environment of nature-based tourism products, more in-depth information regarding visitors is required. The lack of specific information poses development and marketing challenges. It is therefore the aim of this paper to determine the influence of selected socio-demographic factors on the travel behaviour of visitors to nature-based tourism products in South Africa. A survey was conducted including nine National Parks in South Africa and resulting in 1300 questionnaires being administered. A factor analysis on travel motivations revealed five factors with the highest mean value obtained for 'relaxation'. A second factor analysis on park experiences also revealed five factors with the highest mean value obtained for 'activities and facilities'. A *t*-test for Equality of Means was calculated for age, home language, presence of children, and province, revealing a few significant differences in both travel motivations and park experiences. Most differences exist in *Relaxation* and *Learning* for travel motivations and *Maintenance* for park experiences. An ANOVA was computed for qualification, travel motivations and park preferences and revealed only one significant difference. It was therefore concluded that only selected socio-demographic factors influence the travel behaviour of visitors to parks in South Africa, and necessitate recognition in marketing and product strategies.

Keywords: Nature-based tourism, travel motivations, service experiences, travel behaviour, demographic profile, tourists.

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Introduction

The growth in the demand for tourism to remote areas of unspoiled nature is a significant trend globally (Holden & Sparrowhawk, 2002), contributing to ecotourism being the fastest growing market segment within the tourism industry (Wight, 2001; Mehmetoglu, 2007), thereby presenting unique marketing and

management challenges. The increased demand is due to a global awareness and protection of the natural environment as well as an increase in leisure time, mobility and education. Consequently, nature-based destinations are like any other tourism product, competing to satisfy the growing demand (Scherl & Valentine, 1992; Newsome, More & Dowling, 2002; Wight, 2002).

Nature-based tourism products such as game farms, national parks and natural areas are viewed as the core segment of tourism in South Africa and constitute 80 % of international and national tourists (Uysal, McDonald & Martin, 1994; Saayman & Van der Merwe, 2004). South Africa has 22 national parks under the management of SANParks (South African National Parks) and over 9 000 privately owned game reserves all competing with each other and with neighbouring countries for their share of ecotourists (Saayman & Van der Merwe, 2004). However, as countries strive to increase their share of ecotourists, very little market information is available on the influence of socio-demographic factors on the travel motivation and experiences of ecotourists, especially in South Africa. Thus, the continuous development of competitive nature-based tourism products, such as SANParks, needs to explore aspects that can influence travel behaviour in order to capitalise thereon.

Travel behaviour can refer to many aspects; however, for the purpose of this study travel motivation with regard to pre-visit behaviour and park experiences in terms of on-site visit behaviour are analysed as well as the influence of demographic factors thereon. Knowledge of these aspects could assist park managers in planning for what, where and how to successfully market and develop natural areas for ecotourism (Saayman, 2003; Chan & Baum, 2007). Further insights into the demographic characteristics of tourists regarding nature-based products can benefit the marketers of tourism, specifically with regard to market segmentation, product development, service quality evaluation, image development and promotional activities (Fodness, 1994; Kozak, 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Even though the profile of the ecotourist has received research attention over the last ten years, there is a lack of information focused on factors influencing the travel behaviour of these tourists. In order to market ecotourism more effectively, it is essential to generate more specific knowledge about visitors to parks and natural areas (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chan & Baum, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to determine whether socio-demographic factors influence the travel behaviour with specific reference to the travel motivation and experiences of visitors to national parks in South Africa.

Understanding Nature-Based Tourism Products and Their Visitors

Nature-based tourism in general is one of the fastest growing sectors within the global tourism industry (Ryan, Hughes & Chirgwin, 2000; Wight, 2001; Buckley, 2003; Mehmetoglu, 2007). EBSCO Sustainability Watch (2009) reports that ecotourism accounts for approximately 20 % of international travel, generates 77 billion in revenue and makes up 5 % - 7 % of the overall travel and tourism market. Within South Africa, SANParks received 4.3 million visitors in 2009, making it one of the leading tourism attractions in the country. The extension of the so-called pleasure seeking experiences into remote and exotic areas has been driven to a significant degree by various forms of nature-based tourism, especially ecotourism (Hill & Gale, 2009). Market estimates are hard to come by, given the lack of consensus over the use of the term(s), but it was suggested in 2004 that ecotourism or nature tourism was growing three times faster globally than the tourism industry as a whole (WTO 2004, cited in Hill & Gale, 2009). Reasons for this growth include demographic changes amongst global travellers that have reached a satisfaction peak for the sun, sea and sand holidays and are becoming primarily concerned with the direct enjoyment of some relatively undisturbed phenomenon of nature and environmental issues (Weaver & Lawton, 2007).

Understanding ecotourist behaviour in terms of the motivation to visit nature destinations and protected areas could assist in the development of appropriate ecotourism planning strategies for sustainable marketing and management (Chan & Baum, 2007). The aim of most park managers is to create a sustainable park environment by establishing a balance between the needs of ecotourists and that of the environment. A suitable balance will encourage repeat visits and generate revenue for the national parks (Buultjens, Ratnayake, Gnanapala & Aslam, 2005). To overcome these concerns, it is essential to identify and satisfy the needs, motives and expectations of ecotourists and to be able to develop and offer products and services to ensure that satisfaction levels are met.

Sustaining a competitive advantage, managing visitors, monitoring trends and predicting recreation demands all require adequate information about visitors. Although socio-demographics and behavioural characteristics can provide an understanding of various types of tourists, they still fall short of explaining why people travel or select specific destinations (Mehmetoglu, 2011) such as nature-based products due to their descriptive nature. One of the most important aspects of travel behaviour is travel motivation and Holden and Sparrowhawk (2002) indicate a lack of empirical research in this regard. Tourist motivation is regarded as the combination of needs and desires that affect the propensity to travel in a general sense which can also differ between age, gender and nationality of tourists (Meng, Tepanon & Uysal, 2006). Motivation is still

considered a crucial indicator and force in explaining why tourists behave in certain ways.

The concept of tourist motivation was defined by various researchers (Pearce, Alastair & Rutledge, 1998; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004; Myers, 2004; Beerli & Martin, 2004) "as the global integrating network of biological and cultural forces which gives value and direction to travel choices, behaviour and experiences". In other words, motivation is a driving force within a tourist that leads him or her to action so as to satisfy his or her needs. It was found that the motivation of the ecotourist differs (motive to experience the environment, motive to rest and relax in pleasant settings, motive to pursue special interests and skills and the motive to be healthy and fit (Pearce et al., 1998) from other kinds of tourists. Travel motivation is regarded as a significant subject of tourism research that can improve the understanding of tourist behaviour. Recent studies conducted by Weaver and Lawton (2002), Weaver (2002), Van der Merwe and Saayman (2008), Kwan, Eagles and Gebhardt (2008), Saayman, Slabbert and Van der Merwe (2009), Saayman and Saayman (2009), Kruger and Saayman (2010), Van der Merwe, Slabbert and Saayman (2011) and Bashar and Abdelnaser (2011) on motivational factors specific to the nature-based tourist, correlates with the findings of older studies of Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987), Pearce et al., (1998), and Wight (2001), who point out that ecotourists seek to be free, to be physically active, to escape from routine, to be nostalgic, to be novel, to enjoy undisturbed nature settings, to explore new learning experiences and spend quality time with family and friends. More recent studies (Galloway, 2002; Awaritefe, 2004; Bogari, Crowther & Marr, 2004; Correia & Crouch, 2004) on travel motivation to nature-based destinations reveal a tendency to utilise the push and pull framework.

Yoon and Uysal (2005) indicated that travel patterns can be distinguished by certain pull and push factors, which influence travel decisions and destination choices. These two forces describe how the individual is pushed by motivational variables into making travel decisions and how they are pulled by destination attributes (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Push factors include cognitive processes and travel motivation, including socialisation, novelty seeking, adventure seeking, dream fulfilment, relaxation and rest, fitness and health, self-esteem, prestige and the need for escape (Dann, 1977; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Uysal et al., 1994; Ahn & Kim, 1996; Kim, Lee & Klenosky, 2003; Wang, 2004; Jang & Wu, 2006).

On the other hand, pull factors consist of those tangible cues of a specific destination that drive travellers to realise their need for a particular travel experience. Witt and Mountinho (1989) suggest that there are three important components of destinations that attract tourists, that is, static factors – these include climate, distance to the travel facilities, historic or cultural features, natural landscapes; dynamic factors – including accommodation and catering, services, entertainment, personal attention, trends in tourism, and political atmosphere; and current decision factors – which

include marketing strategies, prices and value for money. Tourists are proven to be more likely to choose destinations which are believed to best fulfil their internal needs or push factors (Meng et al., 2006).

However, the experience provided to ecotourists as a result of pull factors play a role in their behaviour and therefore a complete analysis of motivational drivers must specify the pull factors (experience and product) associated with push factors (socio-demographic characteristics) (Galloway, 2002; Chan & Baum, 2007). Therefore, understanding the reasons for travelling from a marketing and managerial perspective is essential in determining tourist behaviour because the outcome can add to the long term competitiveness of the destination (Severt, Wang, Chen & Breiter, 2007). Consequently, Mo, Howard and Havitz (1993) also posit that psychographic and socio-demographic variables, when combined with trip characteristics and experiences while visiting a park, are able to yield invaluable information on different types of tourists and consequently assist in the management task.

According to Cai (1998), socio-demographic variables can thus be used to explain tourist behaviour; a significant relationship exists between these variables. Literature focusing on ecotourists indicates (Table 1) the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics, motivation and travel behaviour. A study conducted by Weaver and Lawton (2002) on the Gold Coast of Australia identified a correlation between younger, highly educated, high income earners and those with a strong desire to learn and those wanting to enjoy visiting wild and remote destinations. On the other hand, those tourists, who are highly educated and high income earners, travelling with a family, were less committed to nature and focused more on good service in accommodation establishments. The older, high income visitors were motivated by a mix of various motivations.

Weaver (2002) also conducted a study in Lamington National Park (Australia) and found that hard core ecotourists with high levels of commitment and demanding physically challenging experiences but fewer services prefer to travel in small groups. Kwan, Eagles and Gebhardt (2008) found a relationship between budget travellers who prefer travelling to meet people with similar interests or visit family and friends and want value for money. Mid-price visitors ranging from 36 to 55 years of age, who are fairly educated and employed full time, prefer travelling to warmer climates or nature destinations, seek family togetherness and enjoy being physically active. Upscale-price visitors between the ages of 36 and 55, who are educated and employed full time prefer to travel for family togetherness and a quality environment.

It is thus evident from Table 1 that ecotourists who are employed, middle aged, highly educated and highly paid are motivated to experience undisturbed nature

while also enjoying a learning experience with family and friends. Goodall and Ashworth (1988) and Baloglu (1997) state that socio-demographic variables such as age, occupation, past experiences and income are important factors which influence the formation of a tourist's image and perceptions of the travel experience.

Table 1: Tourism studies using socio-demographic and travel motives as variables

Author/Title	Travel Motives	Demographic Aspects
Weaver & Lawton (2002) *Overnight ecotourist market segmentation in the Gold Coast winter land of Australia.*	Harder • Strong desire to learn • Enjoy visiting wild & remote destination challenges • Backpacker accommodation	• Younger • Highly educated • High income
	Softer • Less committed to the environment • Nature settings • Accommodation with good service	• Travel with family • Highly educated • High income
	Structured (blend of hard & soft) • Committed to environment • High level of service and facilities	• Older travellers • High income
Weaver (2002) *Hard-core ecotourist in Lamington National Park, Australia.*	• High levels of environment commitment • Supported sustainability wanted • Physically active and challenging experiences • Demand fewer services • Active in search for information	• Travel in small groups • Take longer trips
Kwan, Eagles & Gebhardt (2008) *A Comparison of Ecolodge patrons' characteristics and motivations based on price level: A case study of Belize.*	Budget • Meet people with similar interest • Visiting friends and relatives • Value for money	• Least educated • Long trips • 16-35 age group
	Mid price • Warm climate • Nature settings • Family togetherness • Visiting friends and relatives • Seeing as much as possible • Being physically active • Value for money	• 36-55 age group • Middle educated • Employed full-time
	Upscale • Being together as family • Quality of environment	• 36-55 age group • Educated • Employed full-time • Short trips
van der Merwe, Slabbert & Saayman (2011) *Travel motivations of tourists to selected marine destinations.*	• Family experience • Destination attractiveness • Escape and relaxation • Time utilisation • Personal attachment	• Average age is 38 • Married • Well educated
Saayman, Slabbert & van der Merwe (2009) *Travel motivation: A tale of two marine destinations in South Africa.*	• Relaxation • Destination attractiveness • Socialisation • Personal attachment • Site attributes • Trip features	• Age between 37-42 • Married • Well educated • 8 night stay

Baloglu (1997) further highlights that motives and socio-demographics differ for different segments of travellers; for instance, ecotourists in comparison to urban tourists.

Empirical research has revealed that those tourists who participate in some kind of nature-based tourism product tend to be slightly older, better educated and more affluent (Obua & Harding, 1996; Holden & Sparrowhawk, 2002; Wilson & Garrod, 2003; Drumm & Moore, 2005). They are likely to stay longer and be more tolerant of basic conditions than general travellers. Motivations can and do vary by market, thus emphasising the need to determine these motivations and demographic profiles so as to provide satisfaction to tourists. However, satisfaction is also dependent on their experiences while visiting a destination (Chhetri, Arrowsmith & Jackson, 2004). Chhetri et al. (2004) considers tourism experiences to be a means to satisfy a wide range of personal needs. From a managerial point of view, such knowledge can assist nature-based tourism businesses to develop products that better satisfy customer needs, wants and goals in selected segments in order to develop integrated market communication strategies (Belch & Belch, 2004; Ronningen, 2010; Tangeland, 2011).

Consequently, it is evident that the combination of knowledge concerning travel motives, park experiences and socio-demographic characteristics can provide a clear picture of the South African ecotourist. Therefore, the question remains: Do socio-demographic characteristics influence the travel behaviour of visitors to South African National Parks?

Methodology

A quantitative study was conducted by means of a structured questionnaire to collate socio-demographic data and data concerning travel motivations and park experiences. Surveys were conducted at nine of the national parks which included the following: Tsitsikamma National Park (N=225), Addo Elephant National Park (N=131), Augrabies National Park (N=53), Bontebok National Park (N=45), Karoo National Park (N=80), Kgalagadi National Park (N=149), Kruger National Park (N=436), Zebra Mountain National Park (N=50) and Wilderness National Park (N=131) for 2010, resulting in 1 300 questionnaires. The questionnaire utilised to survey visitors was similar for all the parks and consisted of three sections: Section A included demographic details (home language, marital status, age and province of origin) while Section B focused on tourist behaviour (number of persons paid for, frequency of visits and length of stay as well as travel motivational factors. The travel motivations were based on the work of Crompton (1979), but were adapted for national parks. Section C of the questionnaire consisted of more detailed information about the visitors' experiences at the different parks (assessment of facilities and activities). All three sections were utilised in this analysis. All overnight visitors to the parks

during the time of this survey formed part of the sample and were offered a choice to participate or not. Fieldworkers distributed questionnaires in the evenings and collected them again later the same evenings or during the early mornings. The statistical analysis consisted of two stages. Firstly, descriptive statistics were used to analyse the socio-demographic profile of respondents. Secondly, two factor analyses were conducted; one focusing on travel motivations and the other on park experiences. Thirdly, *t*-tests and ANOVAs were conducted to determine the differences between the demographic details and the identified factors.

Results

The results are divided into three sections. Firstly, an overview of the profile of visitors to the parks is presented (Table 2). Secondly, the results of the factor analyses and finally, the correlations between socio-demographic factors and travel motivations and park experiences are furnished.

Profile of visitors to the parks

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents

Attribute	Category	Percentage: Park visitors *N* = 1300	Attribute	Category	Percentage: Park visitors *N* = 1300
Home language	English	39%	Children in the	Yes	52%
	Afrikaans	52%	family	No	48%
Age	<26	5%	Marital status	Married	81%
	26-35	13%		Not married	10%
	36-45	29%		Divorced	3%
	46-55	26%		Widow/er	2%
	56-65	17%		Living together	4%
	>65	10%			
Province	Gauteng	33%	Qualification	No school	1%
	Kwa-Zulu Natal	3%		Matric	18%
	Eastern Cape	10%		Diploma, degree	40%
	Western Cape	28%		Post-graduate	
	Northern Cape	2%		Professional	20%
	Limpopo	3%			
	Mpumalanga	5%			21%
	Free State	3%			
	North West	2%			
	International residence	11%			
Number of times	Less than 3	36%			
visited the Parks	3-5	39%			
over the past 3	6-10	18%			
years	11-20	5%			
	More than 20	2%			

Most visitors (52 %) to the parks in 2010 were Afrikaans speaking, hold a diploma or a degree and are mostly between the ages of 36 and 45 (29 %) and 46 and 55 (26 %). These visitors were married (81 %), have children (52 %) and mostly reside in Gauteng (33 %) and the Western Cape (28 %). The visitors were fairly loyal to the parks with 39 % having visited the parks between 3 and 5 times and 36 % visiting the parks less than three times over the past three years.

Analysing travel motivations and park experiences

Factor analyses for travel motivations and park experiences were conducted in order to identify smaller sets of explanatory composite factors that define the fundamental constructs assumed to emphasise the original variables. Only those factors with an eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1.0 were considered. Factor loadings of <2 were repressed to assist with the interpretability of the pattern matrix; however, a factor loading of 0.50 was considered to be very significant (Field, 2005).

Factor analysis for travel motivations

A list of 19 travel motivation statements was provided to respondents and they were requested to indicate the importance of each (on a Likert-scale ranging from not important [1] to very important [4]) when making travel decisions (Table 3). The 19 items include a number of items from previous travel motivation studies (Witt & Mountinho, 1989; Galloway, 2002; Weaver, 2002; Weaver & Lawton, 2002; Kwan, Eagles & Gebhardt, 2008) for comparison purposes. Exploratory factor analysis was performed on the 19 items to reveal the underlying patterns of responses. With the use of a Principal Axis factoring method for extraction and Oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalisation, 5 factors were identified of which 4 were reliable. Logical groupings of motivations were formed as illustrated in Table 3. The total variance of 66 % was explained and factors were labelled according to specific names, explaining the content of each factor. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.883 which is based on a comparison between the sum of squared correlation coefficients and the sum of partial correlation coefficients. The KMO statistic varies between 0 and 1 and a value close to 1 indicates distinct and reliable factors (Field, 2005) .The Bartlett test was found to be significant ($p < .0001$); therefore, indicating sufficient correlations between items signifying that data reduction by principal components would be legitimate as well. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients were examined to verify the reliability of the data and all of these values, besides Factor 5, were above 0.65. Factor 5 is reported separately as the reliability of its items is questionable. The mean of the average inter-item correlations among the items contributing to specific factors also indicated data reliability, ranging from 0.36 to 0.66.

Table 3: Factor analysis for travel motivations

Factor label	Factor 1: Learning	Factor 2: Relaxation	Factor 3: Interpersonal motivators	Factor 4: Site attributes	Factor 5:
To learn about endangered species	.922				
To learn about animals	.919				
To learn about specific animals	.842				
To learn about plants	.709				
For educational reasons	.696				
To photograph animals and plants	.496				
Spiritual experience	.305				
To relax		.906			
To get away from routine		.698			
To learn about nature			.667		
For the benefit of my children			591		
To develop an appreciation for endangered species			.584		
To spend time with family of someone special			.336		
The park has great accommodation facilities				-.776	
It is value for money				-.774	
It is the ideal holiday destination				-.611	
To do hiking trails				-.202	
To explore a new destination					.665
To spend time with my friend					.374
Cronbach Alpha	.88	.79	.79	.67	.42
Inter-correlations	.52	.66	.49	.36	.27
Mean value (Standard deviation)	3.24(1.02)	4.32(0.90)	3.55(1.10)	3.51(0.85)	_

The component correlation matrix indicates medium correlations between factors and therefore the factors can be viewed relatively as being independent from one another (Table 4).

Table 4: Component correlation matrix for travel motivations

Correlation matrix	Factor 1: Learning	Factor 2: Relaxation	Factor 3: Interpersonal motivators	Factor 4: Site attributes
Learning	1.000	.189	.308	-.344
Relaxation	.189	1.000	.294	-.515
Interpersonal motivators	.308	.294	1.000	-.325
Site attributes	-.344	-.515	-.325	1.000

Factors were labelled according to collective names. Factor 1, with a mean value of 3.24, was labelled *Learning* and its 7 items mainly focused on learning about animals and plants. One of the most important objectives of nature-based tourism products is to provide a learning experience and it is evident that visitors also regard learning as an important motivator. Factor 2, called *Relaxation*, includes items related to “get away from routine” and “to relax” and this factor also

yielded the highest mean. These respondents clearly visit the parks to unwind. Factor 3, was named *Interpersonal motivators* and involves actions and activities with other people such as "visiting for the benefit of the children" and "spend time with family and friends". The mean value for Factor 3 was 3.55, which is the second highest mean for all of the factors. Factor 4, was labelled *Site attributes* which constitutes accommodation facilities, value for money, the ideal holiday destination and hiking trails, and indicated a mean value of 3.51. Site attributes play an important role in motivation. The mean value for "to spend time with my friend" was 3.14 (±1.43) and for "to explore a new destination" was 3.44 (±1.13).

Factor analysis for park experiences

A list of 25 aspects related to visitors' experiences at parks was provided to respondents and they were requested to indicate the importance of each (on a Likert-scale ranging from very poor [1] to not applicable [6]) during their visit to the park. The 25 items include a number of items from previous studies conducted in the parks. Exploratory factor analysis was performed on the 25 items. Using a Principal Axis factoring method for extraction and Oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalisation, 5 factors were identified. Logical groupings of experiences were formed as illustrated in Table 5. The total variance explained was 60 %. Factors were labelled according to specific groups to explain the content of the factor. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.883 and the Bartlett test was found to be significant ($p<.00001$). The Cronbach Alpha coefficients were examined to verify the reliability of the data and all of these values were above 0.70 with the exception of Factor 5. The mean of the average inter-item correlations among the items contributing to specific factors also indicated data reliability, ranging from 0.33 to 0.71.

Table 5: Factor analysis for park experiences

Factor label	Factor 1: Park services	Factor 2: Staff encounters	Factor 3: Activities and facilities	Factor 4: Maintenance	Factor 5: Information provision
Free pamphlets	.698				
Directions	.695				
Purchased pamphlets	.591				
Layout of the park	.546				
Shops	.448				
View points	.428				
Hiking trails	.383				
Picnic sites	.331				
Reception in general		-.945			
Friendliness at reception		-.943			
Check-in process		-.773			
Friendliness of staff		-.492			
Game walks			-.996		
Game drives			-.709		
Laundry services			-.245		
Maintenance of facilities				.898	
Maintenance of accommodation units				.665	
Adequate activities in the park				.297	
Braai facilities				.280	
Restaurants				.270	
Information regarding attractions and activities					.766
Information regarding emergency situations					.748
Cronbach Alpha's	.79	.91	.71	.70	.79
Inter-correlations	.33	.71	.46	.34	.65
Mean value (Standard deviation)	4.36(0.81)	4.40(0.89)	4.95(1.16)	4.19(0.85)	3.68(1.24)

The component correlation matrix indicates medium correlations between factors and therefore the factors can relatively be viewed as independent from one another (Table 6).

Table 6: Component correlation matrix for park experiences

Correlation matrix	Factor 1: Park services	Factor 2: Staff encounters	Factor 3: Activities and facilities	Factor 4: Maintenance	Factor 5: Information provision
Factor 1 Park services	1.000	-.442	-.504	.519	.467
Factor 2 Staff encounters	-.442	1.000	.143	-.484	-.460
Factor 3 Activities and facilities	-.504	.143	1.000	-.248	-.133
Factor 4 Maintenance	.519	-.484	-.248	1.000	.346
Factor 5 Information provision	.467	-.460	-.133	.346	1.000

Again the factors were labelled according to similar themes with Factor 1 being labelled *Park Services*. These included services delivered by the park such as free pamphlets, purchased pamphlets and directions indicated in the park. The mean value of Factor 1 was 4.36, indicating that respondents regard the delivery of service as very important. Factor 2, labelled *Staff Encounters,* included aspects pertaining to staff such as the evaluation of reception experience in general, the friendliness of the staff and the effectiveness of the check-in process. The mean value for Factor 2 was 4.40, indicating the importance of encounters with park staff members. Factor 3 included aspects pertaining to *Activities and facilities* with the highest mean value of 4.95. Respondents regarded activities such as game walks and game drives as very important. *Maintenance* is the label for Factor 4, comprising aspects such as the maintenance of facilities and accommodation units and the provision of adequate leisure activities and braai facilities in the park. Factor 5 was named *Information Provision,* indicating the lowest mean value of 3.68. Information refers to emergency information and information related to attractions and activities.

The influence of socio-demographic variables on travel behaviour with reference to travel motivations and park experiences

The influence of socio-demographic characteristics was tested for the identified five variables. A *t*-test for Equality of Means was calculated for age, home language, presence of children, and province and an ANOVA was completed for qualification.

Comparison by age

Even with a fairly even representation of different age groups, an independent samples *t*-test revealed no significant statistical differences regarding age (Table 7).

Table 7: Influence of age on travel motivations and park experiences

Identified factors	Less than 30 (N =125) Mean±SD	Older than 40 years (N =865) Mean±SD	F-value	p-value
Travel motivations				
Learning	3.14 ±0.95	3.29 ±1.03	1.87	.171
Relaxation	4.24 ±0.89	4.34 ±0.93	.090	.765
Interpersonal motivators	3.18 ±1.10	3.58 ±1.11	.007	.933
Site attributes	3.40 ±0.83	3.52 ±0.89	.663	.416
Park experiences				
Park services	4.54 ±0.66	4.34 ±0.83	1.811	.179
Staff experiences	4.40 ±0.93	4.42 ±0.90	.025	.875
Activities and facilities	5.00 (±1.06)	4.91 ±1.17	.424	.515
Maintenance	4.40 ±0.69	4.18 ±0.87	3.58	.059
Information provision	3.83 ±1.16	3.69 ±1.25	.082	.775

However, visitors older than 40 years rated the travel motivations slightly higher than the younger visitors and are therefore more motivated to visit a park to *Learn*, *Relax*, to satisfy *Interpersonal Motivators* and due to the *Site Attributes* offered by the parks. On the other hand, in most categories for park experiences, the younger visitors rated the park experience factor slightly higher, which indicates that the younger visitors are more focused on quality service and experiences.

Comparison by home language

In analysing the influence of home language on travel behaviour two main groups emerged from the data, namely English and Afrikaans speaking people. The analyses revealed only one statistically significant difference, namely *Relaxation* (Table 8). Afrikaans speaking people are more motivated to visit a park for relaxation purposes (M=4.46) than English speaking visitors (M=4.28). Although not significant, Afrikaans speaking people accorded higher ratings to travel motivations while English speaking people indicated higher ratings for the park services and experiences.

Table 8: Influence of home language on travel motivations and park experiences

	English speaking (N= 479)	Afrikaans (N = 644)		
Identified factors	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	F-value	p-value
Travel motivations				
Learning	3.19 ±1.06	3.25 ±0.99	3.317	.069
Relaxation	4.28 ±0.93	4.46 ±0.82	17.434	.000*
Interpersonal motivators	3.60 ±1.10	3.61 ±1.06	.572	.450
Site attributes	3.47 ±0.85	3.58 ±0.84	.001	.971
Park experiences				
Park services	4.39 ±0.80	4.34 ±0.81	.000	.992
Staff experiences	4.41 ±0.84	4.39 ±0.93	2.457	.117
Activities and facilities	4.94 ±1.19	4.98 ±1.12	1.426	.233
Maintenance	4.29 ±0.82	4.11(±0.89	1.584	.209
Information provision	3.67 ±1.25	3.67 ±1.22	.443	.506

The influence of accompanied children on travel motivations and park experiences

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine the influence of accompanied children on travel motivations and park experiences. Table 9 illustrates significant statistical differences in scores for two travel motivations and one park experience. Respondents accompanied by children considered *Relaxation* (*M*=4.48) and *Interpersonal Motivators* (*M*=3.99) to be more important than visitors that are not accompanied by children.

Table 9: Influence of accompanied children or not on travel motivations and park experiences

Identified factors	Have children (N=641) Mean±SD	Do not have children(N=576) Mean±SD	F-value	p-value
Travel motivations				
Learning	3.25 ±0.97	3.22 ±1.07	6.54	.011
Relaxation	4.48 ±0.79	4.19 ±0.99	37.92	.000*
Interpersonal motivators	3.99 ±0.85	3.06±1.15	81.45	.000*
Site attributes	3.56 ±0.80	3.46 ±0.90	4.87	.028
Park experiences				
Park services	4.35 ±0.77	4.37 ±0.85	5.26	.022
Staff experiences	4.33 ±0.89	4.47 ±0.88	.192	.661
Activities and facilities	4.96 ±1.07	4.93 ±1.26	10.08	.002*
Maintenance	4.12 ±0.86	4.26 ±0.85	.197	.657
Information provision	3.63 ±1.17	3.76 ±1.29	5.97	0.15

p<0.001 *

It is thus important for parks to provide experiences for both families with and without children. Families with children (M=4.96) considered *Activities and Facilities* to be more important than families without children (M=4.93).

Comparison by province of residence

The independent-samples *t*-test revealed no significant differences regarding province of residence based on the two main markets visiting the parks (Table 10).

Table 10: The influence of province of residence on travel motivations and park experiences

Identified factors	Gauteng (N = 421) Mean±SD	Western Cape (N = 350) Mean±SD	F-value	p-value
Travel motivations				
Learning	3.33 ±0.99	3.13 ±0.99	.118	.732
Relaxation	4.49(±0.77	4.37 ±0.89	5.11	.024
Interpersonal motivators	3.67 ±1.05	3.68 ±0.99	.921	.338
Site attributes	3.56 ±0.82	3.64±0.82	.164	.686
Park experiences				
Park services	4.37 ±0.78	4.39 ±0.79	.442	.506
Staff experiences	4.48 ±0.81	4.40 ±0.85	.877	.349
Activities and facilities	4.95 ±1.16	4.96 ±1.15	.086	.769
Maintenance	4.13 ±0.94	4.22 ±0.86	2.78	.096
Information provision	3.81 ±1.20	3.63 ±1.24	.362	.548

Comparison by qualification

The ANOVA for qualification revealed one significant difference regarding *Learning* (Table 11). Visitors with a matric qualification (*M*=3.48) regarded

Learning as a travel motivation to be more important than people with a postgraduate qualification (*M*=2.98).

Table 11: The influence of qualification on travel motivations and park experiences

Identified factors	Matric (N = 222) Mean±SD	Diploma/Degree (N = 503) Mean±SD	Post-graduate (N = 250) Mean±SD	Professional (N = 248) Mean±SD	F-value	p-value
Travel motivations						
Learning	3.48 ±1.02	3.26 ±0.99	2.98 ±0.97	3.28 ±1.06	9.673	.000*
Relaxation	4.40 ±0.87	4.35 ±0.88	4.35 ±0.93	4.29 ±0.94	.599	.616
Interpersonal motivators	3.64 ±1.07	3.57 ±1.09	3.45 ±1.11	3.63 ±1.13	1.609	.186
Site attributes	3.57 ±0.89	3.51 ±0.85	3.47 ±0.81	3.52 ±0.89	.501	.681
Park experiences						
Park services	4.36 ±0.92	4.35 ±0.80	4.29 ±0.80	4.40 ±0.75	.547	.650
Staff experiences	4.50 ±0.94	4.39 ±0.87	4.28 ±0.89	4.45 ±0.88	1.749	.155
Activities and facilities	4.78 ±1.31	4.98 ±1.14	5.00 ±1.10	4.90 ±1.14	1.469	.222
Maintenance	4.25 ±0.90	4.19±0.87	4.13 ±.81	4.21 ±0.78	.513	.673
Information provision	3.82 ±1.34	3.70 ±1.18	3.54 ±1.20	3.70 ±1.26	1.382	.247

$p<0.001$ *

It might be that visitors with a matric qualification have not visited parks as much as people with a postgraduate qualification and are therefore more eager to learn.

Discussion

The study aimed at determining whether socio-demographic factors influence travel behaviour with specific reference to travel motivation and the experiences of visitors to national parks in South Africa. Firstly, most visitors to the parks were Afrikaans speaking, hold a diploma or a degree and are mostly between the ages of 36 and 45 and 46 and 55. These visitors are married, have children, are fairly loyal to the parks and mostly reside in Gauteng and the Western Cape. This confirms findings by Weaver (2002), Kwan et al. (2008), Saayman et al. (2009) and van der Merwe et al. (2011).

Secondly, visitors to the selected national parks in South Africa were motivated to visit the parks to *Learn* (Weaver & Lawton, 2002), *Relax* (Saayman et al., 2009), satisfy *Internal Motivators* (Jang & Wu, 2006) and because of *Site Attributes* (van der Merwe et al., 2011). *Relaxation* remains the most important motivator for visiting parks; respondents view this as a break from their normal routine, which confirms the findings of Saayman et al. (2009).

Thirdly, in the analysis of park experiences, respondents indicated that the existence of *Park Services, Staff Encounters, Activities and Facilities, Maintenance* of the parks and *Information Provision* were important.

Respondents considered *Activities and Facilities* to constitute the most important of the park experiences (Chhetri et al., 2004) and attention should therefore be accorded to the maintenance of facilities as well as the variety and awareness of activities.

Fourthly, in the case of socio-demographic characteristics, the results revealed a few significant differences for travel motivations and park experiences. This is an indication of a fairly homogeneous market that is similarly motivated to visit a park so as to acquire the same types of experiences. This finding thus suggests an undifferentiated marketing strategy for national parks in South Africa. Moreover, no significant differences for travel motivations and park experiences were found based on age and province of residence.

Fifthly, significant differences, however, were found for home language where Afrikaans speaking visitors considered *Relaxation* to be more important than English speaking visitors. National parks have traditionally been viewed as the holiday destination of choice for Afrikaans speaking people; this group still considers a visit to the parks to be a relaxing experience. The level of qualification also revealed a significant difference where visitors with a matric qualification considered *Learning* to be more important than visitors with a postgraduate qualification (Saayman et al., 2009; van der Merwe et al., 2011).

Finally, three significant differences were found for those respondents who were accompanied by children and those who were not. Respondents with children considered *Relaxation, Interpersonal Motivators and Activities and Facilities* to be more important than the respondents without children. These findings clearly indicate the needs of families for whom national parks are a main market and therefore opportunities should be created for families to fulfil these needs.

Implications

Firstly, the ecotourism market to South African National Parks is fairly homogeneous in terms of its selected socio-demographic characteristics and visitors therefore require the same types of experiences when visiting the parks. An undifferentiated marketing strategy can be implemented with spot advertisements and promotions focusing on specific services and experiences offered in the parks.

Secondly, the values of *Relaxation* as well as *Activities and Facilities* should not be underestimated and creative marketing material exhibiting these attributes should be improved and varied. These qualities should, however, not only be visible in the marketing efforts, but should also be present at the parks in order for them to be considered reliable.

Thirdly, it is evident that the presence of families with children influences the behaviour of visitors. Park management should ensure that sufficient activities for children are offered such as the provision of activity books, sessions on recycling, educational treasure hunting, more educational game drives, day care facilities, traditional wildlife storytelling, increased interaction with game rangers and survival programmes. Facilities and services should therefore make provision for both these groups and provide experiences that will suit both young and old.

Lastly, the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on travel motivation and park experiences is limited. This should, however, be investigated in other nature-based products in South Africa and Africa as well so as to determine similarities with or differences in these findings.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to determine the influence of socio-demographic factors on travel behaviour with specific reference to travel motivation and experiences of visitors to national parks in South Africa. The results revealed some interesting findings, in particular that *Relaxation,* and not *Learning*, is the most important travel motivator to parks, which is in keeping with the findings of various other similar tourism studies. It was also found that socio-demographic characteristics exerted a minor influence on travel motivations and park experiences and that the market is very similar in this regard. This research reveals that the current visitors to national parks have specific preferences and motivations for visiting a particular park; however, continuous market research is required to keep abreast of trends and changes in the market.

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