Factors influencing a memorable game viewing experience

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important aspects in selling tourism products is to provide tourists with a memorable experience. In the case of South Africa, most of the tourism product offerings are nature or wildlife based, with South African National Parks as one of the biggest contributors to the wildlife tourism product offering. The two most preferred methods to engage with wildlife is self-drive game viewing and making use of operators in safari vehicles for guided game viewing. The purpose of this article is therefore to determine which factors determine a memorable game viewing experience in each of the abovementioned options, namely self-drive and guided viewing. A quantitative research method was used by means of a web-based survey.

The survey was posted on the official website of South African National Parks. A total of 387 usable questionnaires were received back during this time frame. The results indicated that wildlife ambiance and interpretation are fundamental in having a memorable game viewing experience for self-drive game viewing and guided game viewing in safari vehicles, respectively. This article makes two main contributions to the current literature: Firstly, it has found that national park management do have limited control over some factors (for example species variety, species numbers and infrastructure) which require good management in order to provide tourists with a memorable experience; and secondly, it is the first time that memorable wildlife experience has been determined concerning land-based wildlife and within South African National Parks.

Key words: national parks, protected areas, tourist experience, safari, wildlife tourism

INTRODUCTION

In an increasing competitive global market place, the necessity for destinations and tourism products (tourism activities) to create a unique identity has become a critical factor in distinguishing them from other competing product owners. It is evident that most destinations and products claim to have spectacular scenery, friendly people, and its own unique culture and heritage. Because these factors are not enough to sell a destination or tourism product, destination and product marketers turn their focus increasingly to the *tourist experience* (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009). Since the early 1960s, tourism-related literature has shown some work that has been written regarding tourist experience and tourism experience (Jennings *et al.*, 2009).

In the tourism industry, it is important to know that an experience originates from interactions between the tourists and the tourism company or product offerings (Hosany & Witham, 2010). In both the academic community and between industry practitioners, it is the belief that the essence of tourism is the visitor experience (Ritchie *et al.,* 2011). LaSalle and Britton (2003, p. 38) define experience as "a product or service that, when combined with its surrounding experiences and events, goes beyond itself to enhance or bring value to a customer's life". Pikkemaat *et al.* (2009) add to this definition by stating that these experiences are the result of encountering, undergoing or living through situations that provide

sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, relational and functional values.

When analysing the literature pertaining tourist experience, it is evident that there is a shift in recent research, which is now less focused on selling a tourism experience and more focused on having a memorable tourism experience (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Jefferies & Lepp, 2012; Kim *et al.,* 2012; Curtin, 2010; Slåtten *et al.,* 2011; Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Kruger & Saayman, 2012). Jefferies and Lepp (2012) define memorable experiences as "very special, emotionally charged, and potentially life altering in that they may contribute to personal growth or renewal of a person". Krüger and Saayman (2012) define a memorable experience as an experience that visitors not only remember, but also treasure long after the event is over; therefore it has mental, spiritual and physiological outcomes. Curtin (2010) indicates that it is important for wildlife tour operators and destinations to realise that consumers' future expectations and behaviours are often based on memories of prior experiences. Pizam (2010) states that it is not just the tangible (bed and the roof over one's head) and intangible aspects (quality of service, ambience, and atmospherics) that play a role in selling an experience, it is the quality of the experience that makes it memorable. Thus the quality of the experience is the moderating or intervening variable between the independent variables of quality and quantity of tangible and intangible products and services (Slatten *et al.,* 2011). A memorable experience is therefore the essence and the *raison d'être* of the hospitality and tourism industry.

A key product offering to tourists in South Africa is wildlife-based tourism, which takes place mostly on private game reserves or game farms, in national and provincial parks, and other types of protected areas. With more than 4.7 million visitors to the 21 national parks in South Africa, the parks management authority (SANParks) is a major role player in wildlife tourism. When visiting a national park in South Africa and Southern Africa,

one has different options of interacting with wildlife, in this case land-based wildlife. To relax whilst viewing wildlife is regarded as the most important motive of a visit to a national park (Saayman & Scholtz, 2012). Options for interaction include walking safaris, 4x4 trails, game viewing with one's own vehicle (self-drive) and guided game viewing in open safari vehicles with safari operators, horse safaris and game viewing by bus (big groups).

Game viewing by vehicle, especially self-driven vehicles and guided safaris in open vehicles are the most popular methods that are used by tourists in national parks and private game reserves. These two options of wildlife viewing have, understandably, different characteristics. With self-driven game viewing, for example, tourists use their own vehicles (hired or private) and can therefore determine their own itinerary, programme, route and, in a sense, create their own experience. They are, however, restricted to tourist routes, must stay in their vehicle (except for areas where it is indicated otherwise), have to educate and inform themselves regarding animal behaviour, make use of smaller vehicles (which sometimes have limited visibility of wildlife), and depend on their own ability to see and identify wildlife.

In the case of safari operators or guided game viewing in vehicles, there is a qualified guide who is experienced and knowledgeable about wildlife, knows the area (park), may venture off designated roads that is not accessible to general tourists, tourists have a chance to see wildlife close up, are allowed to leave the vehicle at certain times, are a small group of people (personal and reserved interaction with wildlife) and have a guide that can show and tell them interesting facts and stories about nature. On the other hand, tourists must follow the guide's programme, time frames and itinerary; therefore they have little control over the outcome of the programme.

The fact that the two options differ considerably implies that different aspects are at play concerning a memorable

experience. The purpose of this article is therefore to determine which factors determine a memorable game viewing experience in each of the abovementioned options, namely self-drive viewing and guided viewing in safari vehicles, respectively.

The research has been carried out in order to be able to understand the following: Firstly, what is important from a visitor's perspective; secondly, how to improve services; and lastly, how to have satisfied customers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visiting wildlife areas or being on a wildlife holiday is different from other tourism or holiday activities insofar as the main motivation to visit a wildlife destination is to see and gain an understanding of the local fauna and flora, for example within a national park or game reserve (Curtin, 2010). Today, most people live in urban areas and are somewhat isolated from wildlife, but tourist interaction with wildlife and the natural environment is an integral part of many people's experiences.

This is promoted by television programmes such as National Geographic and Discovery, which frequently show photographic evidence of people and wildlife interactions, situations where people reconnect with nature and the experiences that are encompassed in these encounters. Marketing of wildlife destinations therefore often focus on appealing wildlife icons, supporting socially constructed ideas of what constitutes an appealing wildlife interaction, most of the time based on animals' appearance, charisma and behaviour (Curtin, 2010).

The literature study has revealed a few studies concerning tourists' memorable experiences and the importance thereof for wildlife tourism (see Table 1).

Table 1: Key research regarding wildlife tourism experiences

Ballantyne, Packer and Sutherland (2011)	Visitors' memories of wildlife tourism: implications for the design of powerful interpretive experiences
Curtin (2010)	What makes for memorable wildlife encounters? Revelations from 'serious' wildlife tourists
Montag, Patterson and Freimund (2005)	The wolf viewing experience in the Lamar Valley of Yellowstone National Park
Moscardo and Saltzer (2004)	Understanding wildlife tourism markets
Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001)	Towards a conceptual framework for wildlife tourism
Tremblay (2002)	Tourism wildlife icons: attractions of marketing symbols?
Vespestad and Lindberg (2010)	Understanding nature-based tourist experiences: an ontological analysis

(Authors' own compilation)

The studies that have been listed above differ significantly from one another, but are still relevant for this research. These are summarised as follows: Curtin's research (2010) has been based on wildlife tourists' perceptions of their most memorable wildlife encounters. The author embarked on an ethnographic study in which she joined two tour groups within the dedicated wildlife tourism market: the first was a bird-watching tour to Andalucía to watch the autumn migration and the

second was a whale- and bird-watching tour on the Sea of Cortez, Baja California. Ballantyne *et al.* (2011) have investigated the impact of wildlife tourism experiences on visitors' learning for sustainability.

Data were collected at four marine-based wildlife tourism venues, two venues where marine animals were held in captivity and two venues where animals were free (non-captive). Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) have developed a conceptual framework for wildlife tourism in which they have identified several aspects that impact on having a memorable tourism experience. This research, however, has focused on wildlife tourism in general and not on a specific area or wildlife setting.. The research of Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) formed part of a larger programme of wildlife research within the sustainable context of wildlife tourism and have determined tourists' participation in wildlife tourism and wildlife experiences.

Their research focused mostly on marine wildlife in Australia and New Zealand. Vespestad and Lindberg (2011) have done contemporary research on nature-based tourism experiences. They analysed recent studies (within an ontological framework) on nature-based tourism and experiences with a focus on the view of tourists and their experiences, the nature phenomena, role of the presenter and consequences of tourist presentations.

The study of Montag *et al.* (2005) has focused on opportunities for viewing wildlife (wolves) from the roadside. Tremblay's research (2002) has examined the use of wildlife icons as marketing devices and attempts to determinewhether the choice and effectiveness of appropriate icons are mainly dependent on the attractiveness of specific species or on their relevance to the environment that they represent. Tremblay's study relates

results of the expectations, knowledge and experience of wildlife tourists visiting the Northern Territory in Australia.

Two studies (see Table 1) are specifically of relevance, as they pose specific frameworks to the current research, namely those of Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) and Curtin (2010). The study by Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) has focused on tourists participating in wildlife tourism experiences in Australia and New Zealand. From the research of these authors, three aspects have been identified (see Figure 1) that impact on a memorable wildlife experience, namely *setting conditions*, *visitor characteristics* and *wildlife characteristics.*

The first aspect, *setting conditions,* includes elements such as the variety of animals, large numbers of animals, natural setting, quality of interpretation, knowledgeable staff (game ranger or field guide), clear orientations, pleasant physical setting (game hide or open safari vehicle) and absence of crowded places.

The second aspect, *visitor characteristics,* includes elements such as the culture of the tourist (which will impact on wildlife experiences), previous experiences (first time seeing an elephant or leopard) and social group.

The third aspect, *wildlife characteristics*, refers to elements such as the size of the animals (elephants and giraffes), their colour (for example some bird species), rareness (pandas), whether they are dangerous (buffalos and lions), presence of small or baby animals (lion cubs or baby elephants) and endangered species (African wild dogs or cheetahs) (Moscardo & Saltzer, 2004).
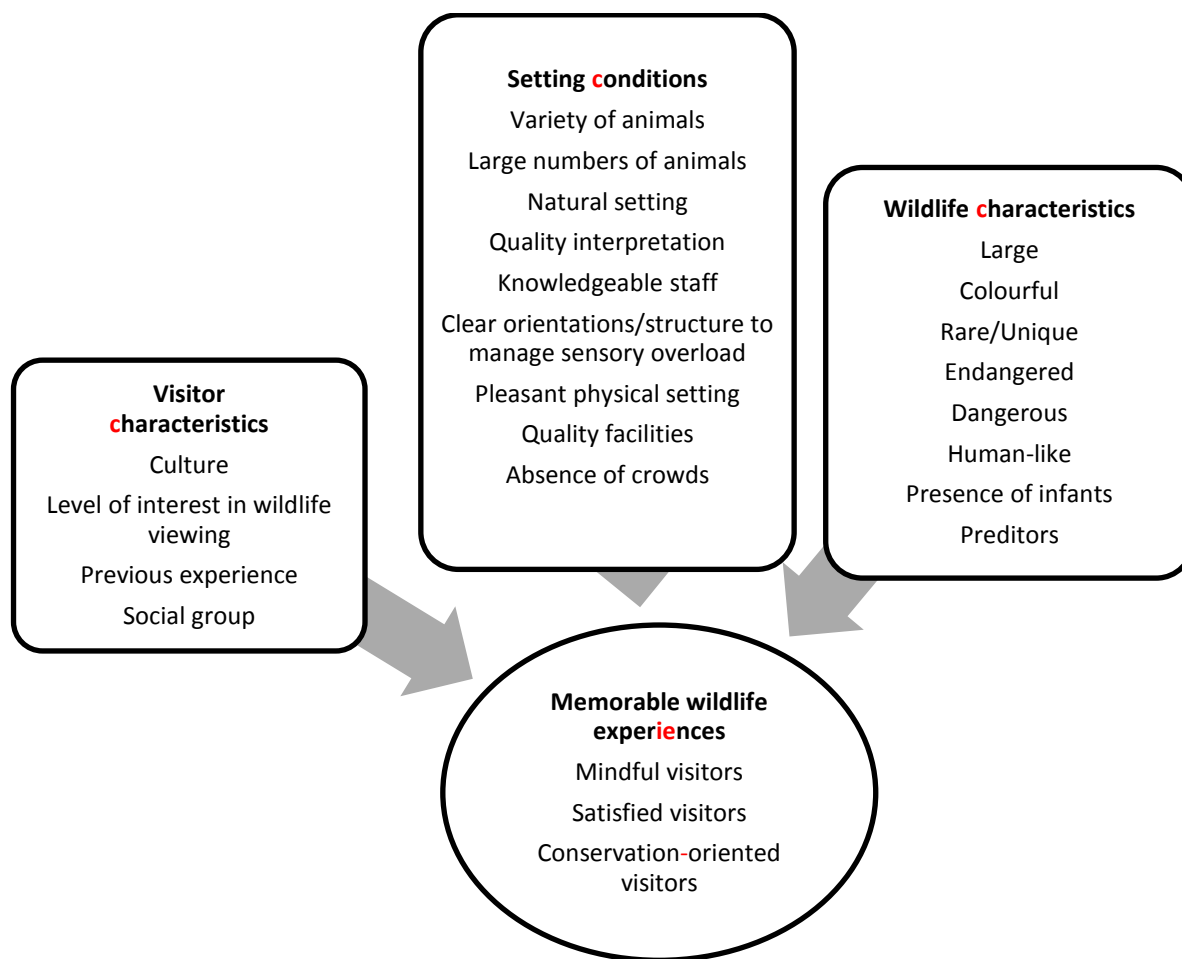
Setting conditions
Variety of animals
Large numbers of animals
Natural setting
Quality interpretation
Knowledgeable staff
Clear orientations/structure to
manage sensory overload
Pleasant physical setting
Quality facilities
Absence of crowds

Wildlife characteristics
Large
Colourful
Rare/Unique
Endangered
Dangerous
Human-like
Presence of infants
Preditors

Visitor characteristics
Culture
Level of interest in wildlife
viewing
Previous experience
Social group

Memorable wildlife experiences
Mindful visitors
Satisfied visitors
Conservation-oriented
visitors

Figure 1: Aspects influencing a memorable wildlife experience
(Source: adapted from Moscardo & Saltzer, 2004:14)

The second study that is relevant to the current research is that of Curtin (2010) and presents the results of a qualitative research that is based on the stories and experiences of 'serious' wildlife tourists. Serious involvement is evidenced by tourists' development of skills and knowledge, the high investment in time and expensive equipment such as telescopes, binoculars, cameras and field guides, and the feelings of accomplishment when species are spotted and correctly identified. The following have been identified by Curtin (2010) as aspects that impact on having a memorable wildlife experience:

Memories in the making
Memories are the ability to recall/trace part or sections of past experiences or having

access to these experiences. The sighting or viewing of wildlife can vary in duration from only a few seconds, in the form of a fleeting glimpse, to long, undisturbed viewings or sightings. During the happening (moment of seeing or witnessing wildlife), people tend to miss some of the action due to the excitement of the event; it is only later that the actual meaning of what has been witnessed becomes a reality and is turned into an opportunity for stories (Curtin, 2010).

Charisma and appeal
There are several species in the wild, specifically animals that are found in Africa and South Africa, with some sort of charisma for humans (tourists), similar to the qualities of pets, for example lion cubs, leopard cubs, warthogs, hippos and some antelope species, which are all considered 'cute' by people (Curtin, 2010). Charisma

is therefore seen as the connection that people have with an animal's approachability, its tendency to relate to humans and its playfulness (Tremblay, 2002).

Large numbers of wildlife (diversity and volume)
Numerous wildlife tourists will refer to a memorable experience if they have seen a considerable number of a specific species, such as in the big migration of wildebeest and zebra in Tanzania (Curtin, 2010). There are also elements of drama, theatre and performance that contribute to the experience during the interaction between tourists and large numbers of wildlife (Cloke & Perkins, 2005). Curtin (2010) adds that the magnitude of biodiversity is also a contributor in having a memorable wildlife experience and refers to tourists having seen and enjoy many new species in a short space of time, for example elephant, kudu, impala, gemsbok and warthog.

First-time sightings
When engaging in wildlife viewing, there is always an element of thrill when seeing an animal for the first time. It is also true that some animals can be more special than others, for example lions compared to impala. First-time sightings of wildlife are most of the times memorable as a result of the novelty of the experience and the fact that the wildlife or animal was previously only been seen in books or on television, while the tourists are experiencing the real thing now. These first-time sightings are enhanced if there is a sense of achievement, for example if a person is the first to see a special animal such as a leopard (Curtin, 2010).

Spontaneity
What makes spontaneity so important is the fact that a person never knows what will happen next, for example the possibility and appreciation of surprise when a lion suddenly decides to inspect a vehicle from a closer proximity. Coe (1985) also contemplates wildlife viewing from this experiential perspective and notes the importance of drama and surprise, as it can create the most exciting

and memorable moments. Wildlife tourist satisfaction is not entirely dependent on actual sightings, but the anticipation of what might be (Montag *et al.,* 2005).

Mesmerised by the kill' (drama of nature)
Linked to the concept of "what might be" and the theatre of nature are the anticipation and excitement of witnessing the drama of wildlife's survival in the wild. This can be explained by the example of a person viewing a leopard that hunts down a young blue wildebeest. In the same instance, one can be saddened by the killing of the young wildebeest, but also excited and thrilled by the kill; this translates to an interesting and memorable experience (Montag *et al.,* 2005; Cloke & Perkins, 2005; Curtin, 2010).

Close proximity
Proximity refers to 'one-to-one' and 'eye-to-eye' contact with wildlife and has been identified as a key feature of wildlife viewing (Curtin, 2010). If wildlife tourists are asked what aspect has led to an unsatisfied wildlife experience, they indicate mostly the aspect of not being able to get close enough (Curtin, 2010; Bulbeck, 2005, p. 101). There are two possible reasons why tourists rate proximity as important: The first one is the proliferation of wildlife documentaries that depict close-up views of wildlife, which instil a potential desire in tourists to experience the same. The second reason is the innate human fascination with the animal 'other', which renders close proximity a desired and highly memorable occurrence (Curtin, 2010).

Embodiment
The Reader's Digest Reverse Dictionary (1989, p. 166) defines "embodied" as "having bodily or human form" and "embodiment or incarnation of an idea or model" (for example the movie AVATAR). Therefore embodiment refers to an intensified awareness of the connection between the body and its environment. Undoubtedly, one can say that in a close encounter with wildlife or in close proximity to wildlife, tourists become remarkably aware of their own bodies in relation to that of the wildlife spectacle, particularly its spatial presence, quietness and stillness.

In some instances, one tends to find that tourist/wildlife viewers have a strong desire to control breathing and movement to make their body merge into nature, to be invisible and unthreatening in order to maintain any close proximity and avoid disturbance of wildlife (Curtin, 2010).

All literature-based aspects that influence wildlife tourists' experience are summarised in Table 2 (see Table 1). This list (see Table 2) has also been revised and used to develop the questionnaire for this study.

In Table 2, (Sources: Compiled by authors, based on research by Ballantyne *et al.,* 2011; Curtin, 2010; Montag *et al.,* 2005; Moscardo & Saltzer, 2004; Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001; Tremblay, 2002; Vespestad & Lindberg, 2011.) the following six categories are identifiable: *Species,* which includes constructs such as large number of wildlife, variety of animals, predators, and rare and unique species; *Education and Interpretation,* for example the quality of interpretation and knowledge of guides; *Surroundings and setting*, which includes the natural setting and quality of facilities; *Social and cultural,* which includes culture and religion, previous experiences, social background and group identity; *Actual encounter,* which refers to touching the animals, authenticity, surprise and unforeseeable events; and *Emotions,* which includes feelings of excitement, pleasure and monetary value.

A number of shortcomings within the field of wildlife tourism experience have been identified during the literature review which promoted this research. Firstly, most of the research has been conducted on marine wildlife. Secondly, particularly limited research has been done in Africa and none in South Africa, where wildlife tourism plays an important role in the tourism product on offer (Saayman, 2009). Thirdly, no previous research has investigated the different approaches and how it influences wildlife experiences, for example self-drive and guided game viewing experiences.

Table 2: Summary of aspects contributing to a memorable wildlife experience

Areas	Constructs
Species	Variety of animals Large number of wildlife Rare and unique species Species' status: endangered species Presence of infants Predators Great value and significance Species' popularity Charisma and appeal
Education and interpretation	Quality of interpretation Knowledge of guides Quality of service provided by wildlife product or operator Control of encounter
Surroundings and setting	Natural setting Quality facilities Pleasant physical setting Absence of crowds
Social and cultural	Culture/religion Level of interest in wildlife Previous experiences Social background Group identity/travelling partners Interaction with local people
Actual encounter	First-time sightings Human-like Perceived interaction with wildlife Touching/handling wildlife/physical involvement Authenticity of encounter Surprise and novelty Unforeseeable events Spontaneity Intensity of the encounter Uniqueness of the encounter Duration of the encounter Independent or guided wildlife viewing Emotional reward (awesomeness) Mesmerised by animal action Close proximity Embodiment
Emotions	Feelings of excitement Feeling of pleasure Monitory value of trip Memories in the making

Jefferies and Lepp (2012) have found that understanding memorable experiences is certainly relevant to park and recreation management, where the primary product is experiential. Research that has been done by Ritchie *et al.* (2011), Ritchie and Hudson (2009), and Tung and Ritchie (2011) has indicated that despite its fundamental importance for the tourism industry, experience-related research remains under-represented in the tourism literature and more must be done to uncover the essences of what makes certain experiences more special, spectacular and memorable. For the wildlife tourism industry, it is an important consideration to understand what constitutes a memorable wildlife experience in order for operators and destinations to provide a memorable experience. This understanding can assist in underpinning marketing, product development and management strategies. One must also bear in mind that tourist's future expectations and behaviours are often based on memories of prior experiences. It also goes some way towards highlighting the importance of the natural environment (fauna and flora) for a memorable wildlife experience that leads to quality of life/happiness (Curtin, 2010). As 80% of the tourism offering in South Africa is based on nature and wildlife, it is important to continue providing tourists with a memorable experience, which should result in more sustainable wildlife tourism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research method was used by means of a web-based survey. The advantages of web-based surveys are that they allow the researcher access to a unique population, and save time and money (Wright, 2005). The questionnaire was developed in collaboration with both SANParks (the management authority of national parks in South Africa) and selected owners of privately owned lodges neighbouring national parks, and based on the work of authors (as captured in Table 2). The survey was posted on the official website of South African National Parks from 1 to 24 August 2012. The questionnaire consists of the following three sections: Section A: socio-demographic details (age, province of residence and gender); Section B: economic impact (travel and accommodation costs, group sizes and length of stay); and Section C: determining the experiences of tourists. A total of 387 usable questionnaires were received back during this time frame.

The data that had been obtained from the survey were captured in Microsoft Excel and then statistically analysed by using SPSS 16 (Field, 2006). Two factor analyses were conducted: The first analysis was on the self-drive game viewing experience and the second one on the guided game view experience. The rotation method that was used for the principal axis factoring analysis was oblimin with Kaiser normalisation. Factor analysis is used to establish latent variables or factors among observed variables (Tustin, 2005); in other words, the technique is used to reduce the data (Malhotra, 2010).

The interpretation of a factor analysis is facilitated by identifying the items that have sufficient loadings on the same factor (Mulder, 2011). The data regarding the self-drive game viewing experience revealed seven factors, with 53% of the total variance explained, while the data regarding the guided game viewing experience revealed three factors, with 57% of the total variance explained. Cronbach's alpha was then used to measure the internal consistency of the travel motives.

Different constructs were used, since different requirements are needed for the different methods in viewing wildlife. Flucker and Turner (2000) confirm that Cronbach's alpha is the preferred measure of internal reliability, measuring the correlations between the items that describe the same concept. The Cronbach's alphas of this analysis were all above 0.70 with the exception of one, which is acceptable (Flucker & Turner, 2000).

RESULTS

For this study, two factor analyses were conducted: in the first place on the self-drive game viewing experience and in the second place on the guided game viewing experience. Two different questions with different constructs were developed for the two options of game viewing. This was done because the offerings differ considerably, as discussed in the introduction of this article. One specific aspect is that guided safaris need to provide an interpretation service to the tourists (requiring education and knowledge), which is not the case with a self-drive safari. The factor analysis of the self-drive safari revealed seven factors, whereas the analysis of the guided safari (with operators in an open vehicle) revealed three factors (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 3: Results of the factor analysis of a self-drive game viewing experience

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Factor 1: Expectations met							
To always be able to see what you expect to see	.598						
Expectations that you are going to see specific species	.510						
To follow animals that are tagged	.301						
Factor 2: Species							
To see specific birds		-.550					
Being able to see a specific animal that I have never seen before		-.544					
To spot scarce species		-.507					
To be able to spot animals without them being aware of your presence		-.294					
Factor 3: Diversity and quantity							
Large numbers of a species			-.814				
Large numbers of wildlife			-.807				
Variety of species			-.683				
First-time sightings			-.310				
Factor 4: Authenticity							
Seeing things that you least expected				-.820			
Surprises or things out of the ordinary				-.724			
The drama unfolding in wildlife, e.g. a kill				-.428			
Factor 5: Wildlife ambience							
The quietness and stillness that nature offers					.573		

To be able to spend enough time at a sighting to take it all in					.466		
The ambience					.397		
Factor 6: Proximity							
Getting close to dangerous animals, e.g. buffalo						-.890	
To have an eye-to-eye experience with animals						-.852	
The close proximity to an animal – the closer the better						-.787	
Being able to see the animal clearly						-.424	
To spot the Big 5 where applicable						-.385	
To have enough time to photograph wildlife						-.332	
Factor 7: Park attributes							
The mystery surroundings and animals contribute to a memorable experience							-.761
It is a combination of what a park has to offer							-.605
Interaction between animals							-.455
To be able to share the experience with someone special							-.315
Type of species							-.275
Reliability coefficient/Cronbach's alpha	**.791**	**.727**	**.827**	**.796**	**.490**	**.866**	**.714**
Average inter-item correlation	**.489**	**.352**	**.617**	**.613**	**.257**	**.557**	**.338**
Item means	**2.40**	**3.80**	**3.69**	**4.07**	**4.48**	**3.21**	**3.84**

The following seven factors (see Table 1) were identified:

Factor 1) Expectations met: The constructs that are included in Factor 1 are the following: to see what you expected to see, expectations of seeing specific species and following tagged animals. This factor had the lowest item mean value (2.40) and can therefore be regarded as the least important aspect in having a memorable experience. The factor was identified for the first time in this research.

Factor 2) Species (fourth most important factor): This factor includes the following constructs: to see specific birds, to see

specific animals that the tourist has never seen before, to spot scares species and to spot animals without them being aware of the tourist's presence. These findings support those of Curtin (2010), as well as Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001), who have indicated that specific species and species' popularity do impact on a memorable experience for tourists.

Factor 3) Diversity and quantity: This factor includes constructs such as large numbers of a species, large numbers of wildlife, variety of species and first-time sightings. The finding confirms the work of Moscardo and Saltzer (2004), Kim *et al.* (2012) and Curtin (2010), who have found that diversity and quantity of species are

important for tourists to enjoy a memorable experience.

Factor 4) Authenticity: This factor includes the following constructs: seeing things that you least expected to see, things out of the ordinary and drama unfolding in wildlife (seeing a kill). Factor 4 had the second highest item mean value (4.07) and can therefore be regarded as the second most important factor that contributes to a memorable self-drive game viewing experience. Authenticity has also been identified by Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001), Moscardo and Saltzer (2004), Curtin (2010) and Kim *et al.* (2012).

Factor 5) Wildlife ambience: This factor includes constructs such as quietness and stillness of nature, to spend enough time at a sighting, and ambience. Factor 5 had the highest item mean value (4.48) and is therefore the most important factor that contributes to a memorable self-drive game viewing experience. It is the first time that this factor has been identified.

Factor 6) Proximity: Proximity includes constructs such as getting close to dangerous animals, eye-to-eye experiences with animals, close proximity to an animal – the closer the better, seeing animals clearly and having enough time to photograph wildlife. Proximity was also identified previously by Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001), Moscardo and Saltzer (2004), Curtin (2010), and Vespestad and Lindberg (2011).

Factor 7) Park attributes: This factor includes constructs such as mysterious surroundings, a combination of park offerings, interaction between animals and type of species. The factor of park attributes was identified for the first time in this research.

Factor analysis of a guided game viewing experience with safari operators

Three factors (see Table 4) were identified:

Factor 1) Knowledgeable guides: This factor consists of the following constructs: facts about birds, insects, trees and animals, as well as interesting cultural stories. Research that has been done by Moscardo and Saltzer (2004), as well as Kim *et al.* (2012), has confirmed that giving interesting facts about wildlife contributes to a memorable wildlife experience.

Factor 2) Special conditions: This factor entails constructs such as the sun downer experience, driving on roads that are not accessible to others and game viewing in a vehicle that makes it easier to spot animals. The factor correlates research that has been conducted by Moscardo and Saltzer (2004).

Factor 3) Interpretation: This factor encapsulates constructs such as the way in which the guide communicates, the general knowledge of the guide, professionalism and friendliness of the guide, and value added by the guide. This factor had the highest item mean value, namely 4.53, which makes it the most important factor in having a memorable guided safari experience. Two of the factors are based on knowledge/interpretation, which enforces the fact that safari-operated viewing depends heavily on these two factors.
The current research confirms therefore that interpretation is a component in having a memorable game viewing experience, as found by Moscardo and Saltzer (2004), Kim *et al.* (2012), and Vespestad and Saltzer (2011).

Table 4: Results of the factor analysis of a guided game viewing experience with safari operators

Factor analysis: Safari operators-guided game viewing experience	1	2	3
Factor 1: Knowledgeable guides			
Giving interesting facts about birds	.895		
Giving interesting facts about insects	.889		
Giving interesting facts about trees	.873		
Giving interesting facts about other animal species	.772		
Telling of interesting cultural stories	.521		
Factor 2: Special conditions			
The sun downer experience		.643	
The ability to drive on roads not accessible to others		.594	
Game viewing vehicle should make it easier to spot animals		.492	
Meet-and-greet session should introduce guide and fellow visitors		.432	
Factor 3: Interpretation			
The way in which the guide communicates			-.876
General knowledge of the guide			-.852
Professionalism and friendliness of the guide			-.637
The value that is added by the guide, over and above general knowledge			-.506
Reliability coefficient/Cronbach's alpha	**.887**	**.645**	**.853**
Average inter-item correlation	**.643**	**.313**	**.612**
Item means	**3.86**	**3.14**	**4.53**

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The first finding of this research has confirmed existing factors, but has also identified new factors that contribute to a memorable game viewing experience. The research further stresses that different game viewing options (self-drive and open vehicle safari) differ in terms of what is important concerning a memorable experience. In the case of self-drive safaris, this research confirms previous research where *species* (Curtin, 2010; Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001), *authenticity* (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001; Moscardo & Saltzer, 2004)*, diversity and quantity of species* and *proximity* were previously found to be important

(Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001; Moscardo & Saltzer, 2004). New factors that came to light regarding self-drive game viewing include *expectations met*, *wildlife ambience* and *park attributes*. Once again, this aspect of the research differs significantly from the results that have been obtained in Table 2, which proves that these tourists rate the importance of the aspects differently.

For guided safaris, this research confirms that *interpretation, knowledgeable guides* and *special conditions* (Moscardo & Saltzer, 2004; Kim *et al.,* 2012; Curtin, 2010) are factors that were previously found to be important. The reason for the findings is that most of the research that has been done in the literature review (see Table 4) was conducted at guided

activities in a marine environment. Although the environments differ (marine versus land), it seems that there is not a significant difference whether the research is done on land or at sea. In both cases, the guide plays a critical role.

Interpretation was identified as the most important factor in providing a memorable game viewing experience, which explains the importance of the guide in the case of guided safaris.
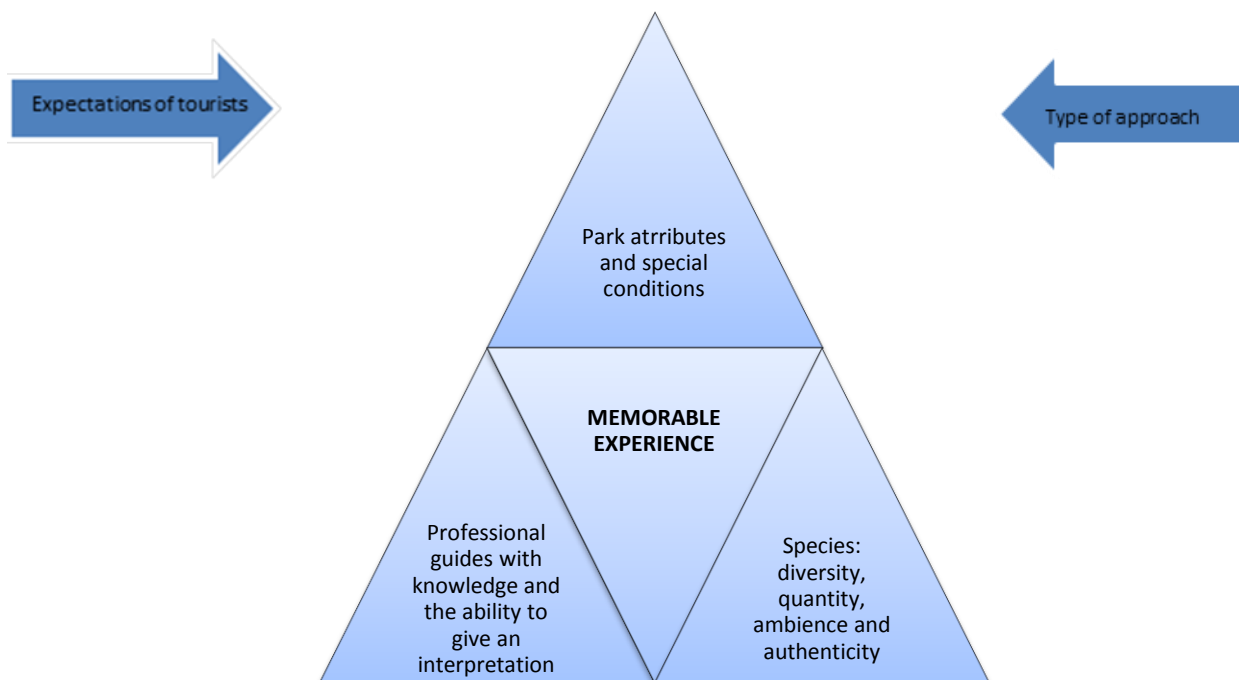

Figure 2: Memorable experience

The implications of this finding for the South African National Parks management are to recognise the fact that there are different factors that contribute to a memorable tourist experience, depending on the type of game viewing. This implies a two-pronged approach or strategy that needs to be followed, one dealing with self-drive and one with guided, open vehicle safaris.

Figure 2 summarises the key aspects that should be taken into consideration and that could also be used as a conceptual framework for future research. Based on this research, *Memorable experience* is impacted by three aspects: The first aspect is *species*, which includes diversity, quantity, ambience and authenticity; the second aspect is *professional guides* with knowledge and the ability to communicate effectively (are able to give an interpretation); and the third aspect is *park*

attributes and special conditions, which include taking sun downers and travelling on specially allocated roads (only for safari vehicles with guides). The tourist experience is impacted on by expectations of tourists and the type of approach which is represented by the arrows on the right and light hand side. *Expectations* comprise the expectation to see a kill or a predator, or the facilities offered, and products and services.

Type of approach comprises the different game viewing options, namely self-drive and guided safaris. These differences should be incorporated in the product development and marketing of game viewing experiences. It also implies that more research on the various methods or approaches should be conducted and that the results of these studies should be used as guidelines for the improvement of services. It furthermore implies that the role of guides is extremely important when

it comes to safari game viewing. Therefore guides are not only supposed to be knowledgeable about all the facts and figures of species, but also need to be able to communicate and interpret the information effectively. They also need to be professional and add value to the experience. It therefore seems that interpretation is one of the most important qualities of a good guide.

The second finding highlights the fact that, compared to other tourism offerings (cultural, adventure or beach tourism), park management cannot guarantee sightings when it comes to wildlife viewing; they have limited control over the experience that they offer. It is important to remember that the species that tourists want to see is never guaranteed. The aspects that national parks do have control over are more tangible, such as the species' variety, number of a specific species, management of the park, management of facilities, infrastructure and the products that are provided (activities). Added to this is the fact that tourists who are conducting a self-drive game viewing have some control over their wildlife experience, since they can determine which roads to drive, at what time, where to stop, for what time they would like to stop and at what time of the day they want to go for a drive, although this still does not guarantee specific sightings. However, all these aspects contribute to the total experience that they will have. In contrast with this, tourists partaking in guided safaris have limited control over the programme which is determined by the safari operator or guide. However, the advantage that they have is that guided safaris are most of the time in two-way radio contact with other operators; they inform each other of interesting sightings and are allowed to use restricted roads that are inaccessible to self-drive tourists. If little wildlife is seen, the knowledge and interpretation skills of guides become important, as they need to find alternative methods to keep the tourists' attention to make them enjoy the safari. In this instance, they can use their knowledge and interpretation skills of, for

instance, medicinal plants, insects and birds.

The implication is that managers of national parks or protected areas must manage those aspects that they do have control over effectively. For self-drive safaris, they must make sure that the roads are in good condition, whilst providing tourists with opportunities to encounter wildlife (for example well-placed hides, viewpoints and strategically situated roads next to waterholes) and supplying them with good signage, tourist maps of the park, information boards and a variety of species. In the case of guided safaris, management must make use of safari operators who are well organised, educated and professional guides, vehicles that are properly equipped and personnel who will go the extra mile for their clients. It is also important that field guide training needs to focus on teaching guides facts about nature, as well as how to interpret interesting facts and aspects about the culture, and the general way of living of the local community. They must also be knowledgeable about the host country.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research has been to determine the factors that are contributing to a memorable game viewing experience for two different game viewing options, namely self-drive and guided safaris. Two factor analyses self-drive and guided safaris) were conducted and can be summarised as follows: For self-drive safaris, seven factors were identified, namely *expectations that were met*, s*pecies, diversity and quantity of species, authenticity, wildlife ambience, proximity* and *park attributes*. In the case of guided safaris, three factors were identified, namely *knowledgeable guides, special conditions* and *interpretation*. This article makes two contributions to the current literature: In the first place, it is the first time that a memorable wildlife experience has been determined concerning the two methods of game viewing, to the authors' knowledge. The second contribution is the finding that there are certain aspects or

factors that national parks and game reserves do have control over (for example number of species, knowledgeable guides, facilities and variety of species) and others that they do not have control over (for example how animals will behave, the weather and the visibility of animals).

The implication of the research is that wildlife products, such as parks and protected areas, need to incorporate these findings in their management of wildlife products to ensure that tourists have a memorable game viewing experience, which should result in a satisfied visitor and could also lead to a loyal visitor.

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