

The relationship between value for money, motives and experience of tourists to the Kruger National Park

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Abstract

National parks play an important role in countries' quest to attract tourists to generate revenue, to uplift the community and to sustain a competitive advantage. Providing value for money for tourists could confirm this advantage. The perceptions towards value for money may be influenced by a number of factors, people and products.

Therefore, the aim of this research was to determine the factors that influence value for money as well as the relationship between travel motives, experience and value for money at a nature-based product. Regarded as one of the most visited national parks in the world, Kruger National Park is one of South Africa's biggest drawing cards for international tourists.

To achieve the goal of the study, a survey was conducted during June 2012 and December 2012. 849 usable questionnaires were obtained. The data analysis consisted of three stages, namely factor analyses, correlation tests and, finally, the effect of motives and experience on value for money was determined using structural equation modelling (SEM).

The findings suggest strong correlations between these constructs. This article makes a valuable contribution to the industry in terms of literature and knowledge and would assist managers of nature-based products in establishing a competitive advantage.

Key phrases

motives; nature-based products; price; quality; tourism, value for money

1. INTRODUCTION

Nature-based tourism, including wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation, represents globally one of the fastest growing sectors within the tourism industry. Statistics show that across Southern Africa, this form of tourism generates the same income as farming, forestry, and fisheries combined (Balmford, Beresford, Green, Naidoo & Walpole 2009:1). This sector of tourism can be recognised as an important ecosystem service that provides significant resources for conservation as well as for the local economic and social development of countries and destinations (Balmford *et al.* 2009:1; Van der Merwe & Saayman 2014:1).

The growth in demand for tourism in unspoiled nature areas (Engelbrecht, Kruger & Saayman 2014:248; Slabbert & Du Plessis 2013:639; Wight 2001:31) presents marketing and management challenges to compete in satisfying these tourists; this fact urges the need for research to serve this unique market segment (Chaminuka, Groeneveld, Selomane & Van Ierland 2012:168; Engelbrecht, Kruger & Saayman 2014:248; Newsome, More & Dowling 2002:22; Scherl & Valentine 1992:3; Wight 2002:231).

Nature-based products such as national parks, natural areas and game farms are seen by tourists and tour operators (Du Plessis, Van der Merwe & Saayman 2014:11; Saayman & Du Plessis 2003:61) as one of the primary tourism products of South Africa. South African National Parks (SANParks), established in 1926, represents all national parks in South Africa and is responsible for approximately four million hectares of protected land, captured in 22 national parks (SANParks 2013:Internet). SANParks is also one of the main role players in the South African tourism industry by attracting in excess of 4.7 million tourists per annum (SANParks 2015:Internet; Van der Merwe & Saayman 2008:155).

The largest South African National Park (and probably the best known) is the Kruger National Park (KNP), which generates more than 80% of SANParks' income. The KNP is considered to be one of the world's largest parks with a conservation area of approximately two million hectares, which is larger than the surface area of countries such as the Netherlands or the state of Israel (Engelbrecht 2011:4). Regarded as one of the most visited national parks in the world, the KNP attracts more than four million tourists every year (SANParks 2015: Internet; Saayman & Saayman 2009:493).

The continuous development of competitive nature-based products needs to explore aspects that can influence travel behaviour in order to benefit from it financially. A well-managed and sustained park is crucial, since this is a precondition to customer loyalty. This in turn implies attracting repeat visitors and more money that can be used for conservation purposes

(Balmford *et al.* 2009:1). Although the Kruger National Park can be seen as a benchmark for other parks in Southern Africa, management of all parks face a number of challenges, namely economic recessions, increased competition and changing tourist (travel) behaviour, to name but a few.

Even though travel behaviour of eco-tourists has received attention over the last ten years, there is a lack of studies that focus on the relationship between the constructs influencing travel behaviour (Kim, Lee & Klenosky 2003:350; Yoon & Uysal 2005:45) and the way in which it differs from product to product.

In order to guarantee a quality tourist experience, it is important to realise that a synergy between management actions must exist, which in practise is not always evident. It is therefore essential to generate more specific knowledge about visitors' motives, value-for-money perceptions and experiences, how strong the relationship between these constructs are and how it could influence visitors' loyalty and tendency to return to the park (Slabbert & Du Plessis 2013:1).

By indicating a relationship, this synergy could be highlighted and the management actions that influence the relationship constructs could be better integrated. In practise, this could mean that marketing strategies should be revised to have an influence on motives. Value for money is often described as the benefit received for the price paid (Alcañiz, García, & Blas 2005; Weaver, Weber & McCleary 2007; Zeithalm 1988) and if a strong relationship exists, it could have an impact on price strategies, new product development and would ultimately require an integrated management plan.

It is therefore the aim of this article to determine whether there is a relationship between the travel motives, value for money and the experience of tourists to the Kruger National Park.

2. OPPORTUNITY INVESTIGATED

The literature study was based on the following subtitles to provide a background to the study and literature framework to support the problem investigated

2.1 Understanding the travel experience

The relationship between travel needs, motives and the decision to visit a nature-based destination is quite complex due to the fact that these factors occur at different stages during the travel experience (Kruger & Saayman 2009:94).

This process is further hindered by tourists who have to spend money on a holiday that has not yet been experienced, since the production and consumptions take place simultaneously.

The first step of a tourist's motivation to travel is the awareness of the need to visit a nature-based destination. This is followed by the final decision in which different motives come into play in order to satisfy the needs. The difficulty for the park managers to fulfil visitors' needs is that different tourists, who participate in the same tourism activity or engage in the same park element, obtain different benefits from the experience (Kruger & Saayman 2009:94).

As could be deduced from Figure 1, a travel experience is initially influenced by motives and if these have been satisfied, the tourist will experience a sense of receiving value for money, which could be interpreted as receiving quality for a price paid (Barnett, Barr, Christie, Duff, & Hext 2010:6; Du Plessis & Saayman 2013:133).

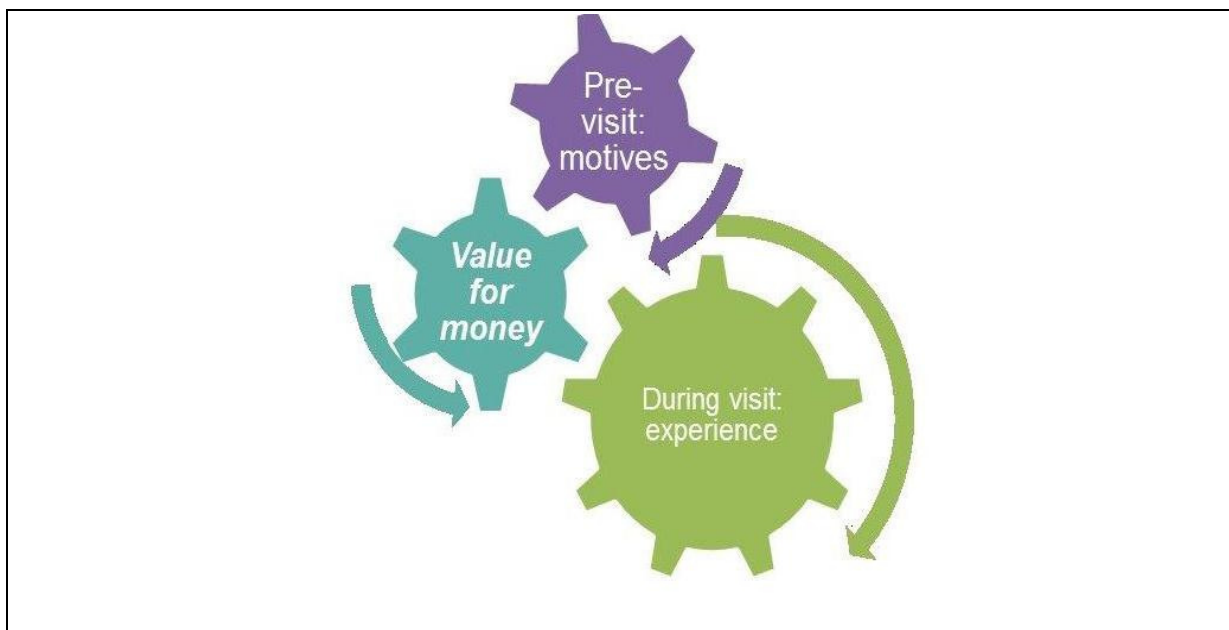


FIGURE 1: Conceptual theoretical stages of a travel experience

Source: Adapted from Kruger & Saayman 2009:94

2.2 Travel motives to nature based products

Answering to this competitive pressure, park managers should focus on and identify motives of tourists who are visiting the KNP. Tourist motivation can be seen as a consequence of internal driving needs to get away from mundane routine, the 'push factors' which are combined with the 'pull factors', the external factors that attract people to certain places (Meng, Tepanon & Uysal 2008:43).

Various researchers, such as Scholz, Kruger and Saayman (2013); Tao, Eagles and Smith (2004); Uysal, Mc Donald and Martin (1994) and Van der Merwe and Saayman (2008), have found that eco-tourists' motives differ from traditional tourist motives when visiting different parks (nature-based products). These motives were identified as escaping from routine (which was identified as the most common motive), experiencing wildlife, novelty, knowledge and learning experiences, family benefits and self-actualisation (Mehmetoglu 2007:111; Scholtz *et al.* 2013:3; Van der Merwe & Saayman 2008:156). Scholtz *et al.* (2013:2) explain that travel motivation is regarded as one of the most important variables in the decision-making process when it comes to participating in a tourism activity within a recession.

The tourism product is both complex and fragmented, and from the moment that the tourists arrive in the destination until they leave, the quality of their experience is affected by multiple factors that contribute to the services and experiences (Fyall & Garrod 2005:890).

Although various researchers have published work on tourist behaviour (Bowen & Clarke 2002; Bowman & Ambrosini 2000; Hennessey, Yun, MacEachen & MacDonald 2007; Keller & Bieger 2006; Sadeh, Asgari, Mousavi & Sadeh 2012; Seaton 2002;), it is clear from these studies that factors contributing to tourists' satisfaction, experience and perceptions differ from situation to situation and from tourism product to product. Adding to this dilemma is the fact that the modern eco-tourist differs from the traditional tourist (Slabbert & Du Plessis 2013:643) and that motivational factors vary in the case of a nature destination. Seaton (2002:315) emphasises that if customer expectations are to be met, the current purchasing motivations of tourists have to be considered and behaviour patterns must be established, highlighting the need for research of specific products in present times.

In this sense, the creation of nature-based tourism products is difficult, since it is not a product of one supplier, but can rather be described as a bundle of services and experiences, which are very intangible. This intangible component of the tourism product entails a high risk as well as uncertainty about customer value (quality-price-ratio) (Albayrak *et.al.* 2010:1; Weiermair 2004:3). In other words, customers who have booked a specific tourism product cannot be entirely sure what to expect and how they are going to judge the experienced quality during their visit. As a consequence, it is essential for nature-based products to reduce risks for the customer by creating confidence, determining quality criteria and introducing measures to accomplish this purpose (Weiermair 2004:3).

Bowman and Ambrosini (2000:2) add to this by stating that tourists will spend their money on products or services that they believe will maximise the satisfaction that they will experience

during their stay. Keller and Bieger (2006:20) summarise these sentiments by stating the following: “Destinations which have managed to maintain a high level of attractiveness over a long period, in other words, being sustainable, are generally those which offer a highly satisfactory and often unique experience, a quality which is maintained, albeit often at a high price, but which to the market they serve, represents value for money.”

2.3 The concept of receiving value for money

One of the key issues of satisfying visitors and ensuring their return is the perception of receiving value for money. Barnett *et al.* (2010:4) define “value for money” as a term that is used to describe “an explicit commitment to ensuring the best results possible are obtained from the money spent”. Diverse studies have shown that the term “value” seems to be highly personal and idiosyncratic, which can be referred back to the intangibility of tourism products.

After an exploratory study, Zeithaml (1988:13) grouped his respondents’ answers into four different consumer definitions of value: 1) value is low price; 2) value is whatever I want in a product; 3) value is the quality I get for the price I pay; and 4) value is what I get for what I give. Summarising these different expressions of value, Du Plessis and Saayman (2013:133) explain that value for money is based on a relationship between quality and price; it is the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product, based on perceptions of what is received and what is given (Alcaniz *et al.* 2005; Haarhoff 2007; Weaver *et al.* 2007; Zeithalm 1988).

Although most authors agree that price and quality are components contributing to the perception of value for money, some of them suggest that this view is too simplistic (Bolton & Drew 1991). Porter (1990:37) mentions that “superior value to the buyer in terms of product quality, special features, or after-sale service” should also be taken into consideration. In turn, Ulaga (2003) and Smith and Colgate (2007:9), identified eight categories as important within the value concept, namely product quality, suitability, delivery, time to market, direct product costs (price), process costs, personal interaction, supplier know-how (skills), and service support. The mix of these and other factors and the relevant importance of each will vary on a case-by-case basis (Haarhoff 2007:411).

It can be said that value perceptions depend not only on received service quality, but also on the reference frame in which the tourist is making the evaluation and how high his/her level of satisfaction is (Green & Boshoff 2002:6).

2.4 Developing customer satisfaction

According to Yang and Peterson (2004:799), many attempts have been made to discover the most prominent precursor for customer loyalty and satisfaction. Accordingly, many studies have found two effective means of generating customer loyalty; these include delighting the customers (customer satisfaction) (Fornell 1992; Lee, Lee & Feick 2001; Oliver 1999) and delivering exceptional value, which result from providing excellent services and quality products (Parasuraman & Grewal 2000:169; Yang & Peterson 2004:800).

In order to sustain a competitive advantage, the providers of nature-based products in South Africa, especially the Kruger National Park, must realise that tourist satisfaction is recognised as an indicator of success in the tourism industry, which is determined by value for money (Kozak 2004:24). Fuchs and Weiermair (2004:212) state that tourist satisfaction is “one of the main competitive edges for a destination”.

Tourist satisfaction is a forerunner of positive word of mouth and loyalty. It is therefore essential to understand tourist satisfaction in order to position tourism destination; influence the likelihood of repeat visitation, extended length of stay in future trips, and increased expenditure; and be competitive (Buhalis 2000:97; Ritchie, Mules & Uzabeaga 2008:2).

Visitor satisfaction is determined and affected by a set of different factors and a combination of perceived value, quality, consumer expectations, and actual experience. It has been shown over and over again that reselling to an existing customer costs far less than gaining a new one. Subsequently, customer satisfaction strategies are looking for long-term as well as immediate results.

The satisfaction concept is based on how well the expectations of a destination (resulting from tourists' motives, which were preliminary the reason why they visited the destination) and the perceived value of the experience in the destination fit together (Meng *et al.* 2008:44; Schoeman 2010:5). Concerning the gaps between performance and expectation, Saleh and Ryan (1992 in Ryan 1995:89) state that the latter might be partly based on a marketing message, which is itself only a representation of an ideal. The actual experience, on the other hand, is rather based on degrees of tolerance of service that is perceived as satisfactory, but which does not quite meet the expectations.

As Beerli and Martin (2004:626) point out, motivation determines the overall satisfaction regarding the fact that motives are referring to needs that drive individuals to act in a particular manner in order to satisfy their desired needs.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

From the latter, it is clear that a large number of researchers agree that there are relationships between value, motivation and satisfaction. However, the following question remains: How strong is this relationship and to what extent is it true for a nature-based product? (Du Plessis 2009; Haarhoff 2007; Petrick 2002; Sheth, Newman & Gross 1991; Sweeney & Soutar 2001).

Keller and Bieger (2006:1) explain that the demand for tourism destinations, as well as the consumers' requirements for tourism products and services, is unstable. The competition within the world market is also growing, making it essential for tourism destinations and products to gain competitive advantage by using effective management and marketing strategies (Keller & Bieger 2006:1). Effective marketing and management of a tourist destination is less likely to be successful if tourist behaviour is not understood and the travelling motives and expectations of the tourists are not known (Fodness 1994, as cited by Kruger & Saayman 2009:93).

4. RESEARCH METHOD

The method of research that has been used is discussed under the following headings: (i) the questionnaire and sample; and (ii) the statistical analysis.

4.1 The questionnaire and sample

A quantitative study was conducted by means of a structured questionnaire to collate data concerning socio-demographic data, travel motivations, value for money and how visitors experience the park. The data that have been used in this research were gathered over two periods, namely June 2012 and December 2012.

The questionnaire that was used to survey the visitors in the Kruger National Park was based on the questionnaire that had been used by Kruger and Saayman (2009); Saayman and Saayman (2009) and Van der Merwe and Saayman (2008) as well as on other studies that had been done by Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & Van Wyk (2005:408).

The questionnaire captured the demographic details of the visitors (language, gender, age, race, marital status, country of residence, province, highest qualification and occupation) and the respondents' travel motivations for visiting the KNP were measured by providing 21 items; respondents were asked to rate the importance of each item on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all important; 2 = Less important; 3 = Important; 4 = Very important; 5 = Extremely important). The respondent's experience of the park and the 18 factors that

contributed to the tourist's perception of value for money in the park were also captured by using a Likert scale.

Fieldworkers were trained beforehand to ensure that they understood the aim of the questionnaire and to guarantee that the maximum number of questionnaires was completed. Overnight visitors completed the questionnaires at the most popular camps in the Kruger National Park; this method was suggested by SANParks for the purpose of the surveys (see Figure 2).

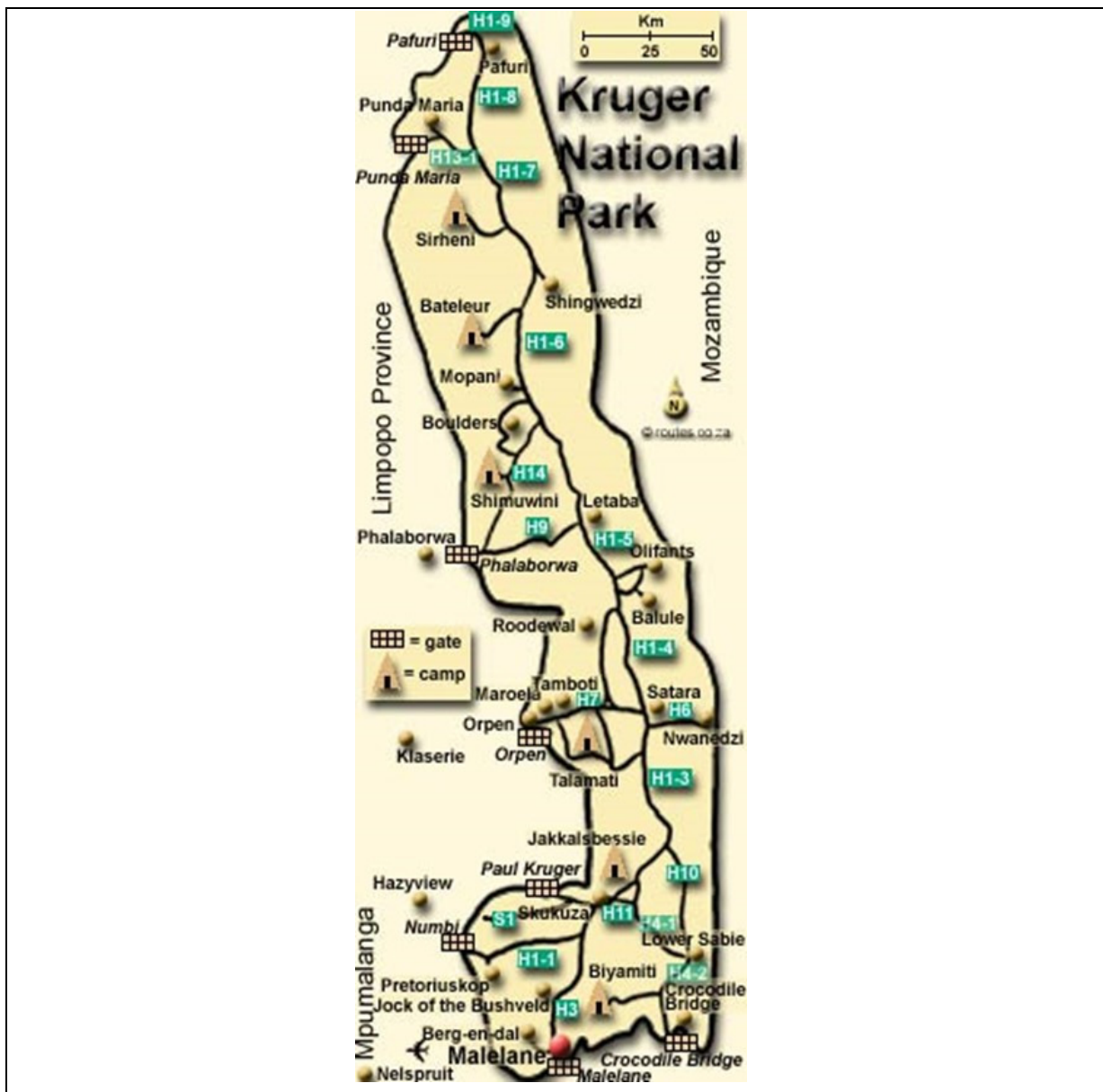


FIGURE 2: Map of the Kruger National Park camps

Source: SANParks 2014:Internet

Just before sunset, the fieldworkers distributed the questionnaires per travel group and collected them later in the evening. A total of 849 questionnaires were completed in the two surveys. In a population of one million (N), 384 respondents (n) would be seen as representative, as indicated by Krejchic and Morgan (1970:2), and would therefore prove to be sufficient for this research.

The research was conducted at the Northern Camps of the Kruger National Park from 24 June until 3 July 2012. The questionnaires were distributed in the Olifants, Letaba, Mopani, Shingwedzi and Punda Maria camps and 392 usable questionnaires were received.

The second survey was conducted from 27 December 2012 to 4 January 2013 at the Satara, Skukuza, Lower Sabie and Berg-en-Dal camps. Again, the random sampling method was used to distribute the questionnaires between the abovementioned rest camps and a total of 457 usable questionnaires were received during this period. These camps are also considered to be the busiest in the high season of the park.

4.2 Statistical analysis

The data analyses were performed in two stages:

During the first stage of the data analysis, a principal component factor analysis, with Oblimin rotation was performed by using SPSS. The factor analysis was performed on the 18 value-for-money items, the 15 experience and the 12 motivation statements. The above was done in order to explain the variance-covariance structure of a set of variables through a few linear combinations of these variables.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was used to determine whether the covariance matrix was suitable for factor analysis. Kaiser's criteria for the extraction of all factors with eigenvalues larger than one were used, because they were considered to explain a significant amount of variation in the data (Field 2009:647).

All items with a factor loading of higher than 0.25 were considered as contributing to a factor, and all factors with loadings smaller than 0.25 were regarded as not correlating significantly with this factor. Any item that cross-loaded on two factors, with factor loadings both greater than 0.25, was categorised into the factor where interpretability was deemed best.

A reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was computed for each factor in order to estimate the internal consistency of each. According to Field (2009:675), a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 and above is considered reliable. The average inter-item correlations were also

calculated as another measure of reliability. According to Clark and Watson (1995:310), all inter-item correlations between 0.15 and 0.55 are considered as indications of reliability.

The second stage of the data analysis comprised the transferring of the data to Amos 20.0.0 (Amos Development Company 2011) in order to examine the relationship between the experience, motive elements and value-for-money perceptions of tourists to the Kruger National Park by means of structural equation modelling (SEM).

According to Foster, Barkus and Yavorsky (2006:14) and Hancock and Mueller (2010:371) structural equation modelling is a theory-driven data analytical approach which assesses specified hypotheses in order to reveal casual relations among measured as well as latent variables and to select a model that best accounts for the data. Structural equation modelling has become increasingly popular amongst researchers, especially in the social sciences (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen 2008:54).

Some view the chi-square test to be an overly strict indicator of model fit, given its power to detect even trivial deviations from the proposed model. However, it is good practice to report multiple-fit indices and, typically, from three broad classes (Hancock & Mueller 2010:109).

Ballentyne, Packer and Falk (2011:1249) and Blunch (2012:269) suggest that comparative fit index $CFI > 0.90$ and $RMSEA < 0.10$ (root mean square error of approximation). Furthermore, Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin and Summers (1977:86) suggest that a $CMIN/DF$ value of 2 to 5 (chi-square divided by its degrees of freedom) should be considered as acceptable.

5. RESULTS

The following section presents the results that were obtained from the i) factor analyses and ii) structural equation modelling.

5.1 Results of the factor analyses

The factor analyses for Value for money revealed three factors that accounted for 51.31% of the total variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy yielded a measure of 0.848, which indicates that the patterns of correlation are relatively compact and presented distinct and reliable factors (Field 2009:647). The factor analyses for motives revealed four factors and accounted for 60.96% of the total variance.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy yielded a measure of 0.751 and experience factors (three) accounted for 57.05%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of

sampling adequacy yielded a measure of 0.877. The Bartlett's test of sphericity also reached statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix (Field 2009:660; Pallant 2010:197).

The factors were labelled according to corresponding characteristics. The order in which these factors are presented, is based on the output that emerged from the pattern matrix. The factor scores were calculated as the average of all items contributing to a specific factor so that they could be interpreted on the original Likert scale. Table 1 shows the results of the three-factor analysis.

TABLE 1: Exploratory factor analysis

FACTOR ANALYSIS: VALUE FOR MONEY					
Factors	KMO	% of variance	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	Inter-item correlations
Factor 1: Price & quality	0.848	51.31%	0.844	3.196	0.447
Factor 2: Amenities			0.771	2.067	0.407
Factor 3: Experience			0.713	3.396	0.302
FACTOR ANALYSIS: MOTIVES					
Factors	KMO	% of variance	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	Inter-item correlations
Factor 1: Experience	0.754	60.96%	0.498	3.234	0.249
Factor 2: Escape			0.776	4.302	0.644
Factor 3: Value			0.795	3.429	0.660
Factor 4: Benefits			0.692	3.296	0.317
FACTOR ANALYSIS: EXPERIENCE					
Factors	KMO	% of variance	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	Inter-item correlations
Factor 1: Facilities	0.877	57.05%	0.786	3.411	0.420
Factor 2: Activities			0.803	3.366	0.405
Factor 3: Service			0.819	3.624	0.533

Source: Authors' compilation from survey results

Between all the constructs factors, the reliability coefficient proved to be relatively high, ranging respectively from 0.498 (the lowest) to 0.844 (the highest). The average inter-item correlation coefficients varied between 0.249 and 0.660, which implies internal consistency for all factors. The Kaizer-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy of 0.848 for value for

money, 0.754 for motives and 0.877 for experience also indicated that patterns of correlation are relatively compact and thus yield distinct and relative factors (Field 2009:647).

5.2 Results of the structural equation modelling

The measurement model has already been tested and reported on in the factor analysis (Table 1); this section will just report the results of the SEM. Wheaton *et al.* (1977:86) state that one example of a statistic that minimises the impacts of sample size on the model chi-square is the relative/normed chi-square (χ^2/df).

An acceptable ratio for the chi-square divided by its degrees of freedom is between 2.0 and 5.0 (Tabacknick & Fidell 2007:542). Values for the comparative fit index (CFI) should vary between 0.0 and 1.0, with values closer to 1.0 indicating a good fit (Hooper *et al.* 2008:54). According to Blunch (2012:115), models with RMSEA values of $0.10 >$ should not be accepted.

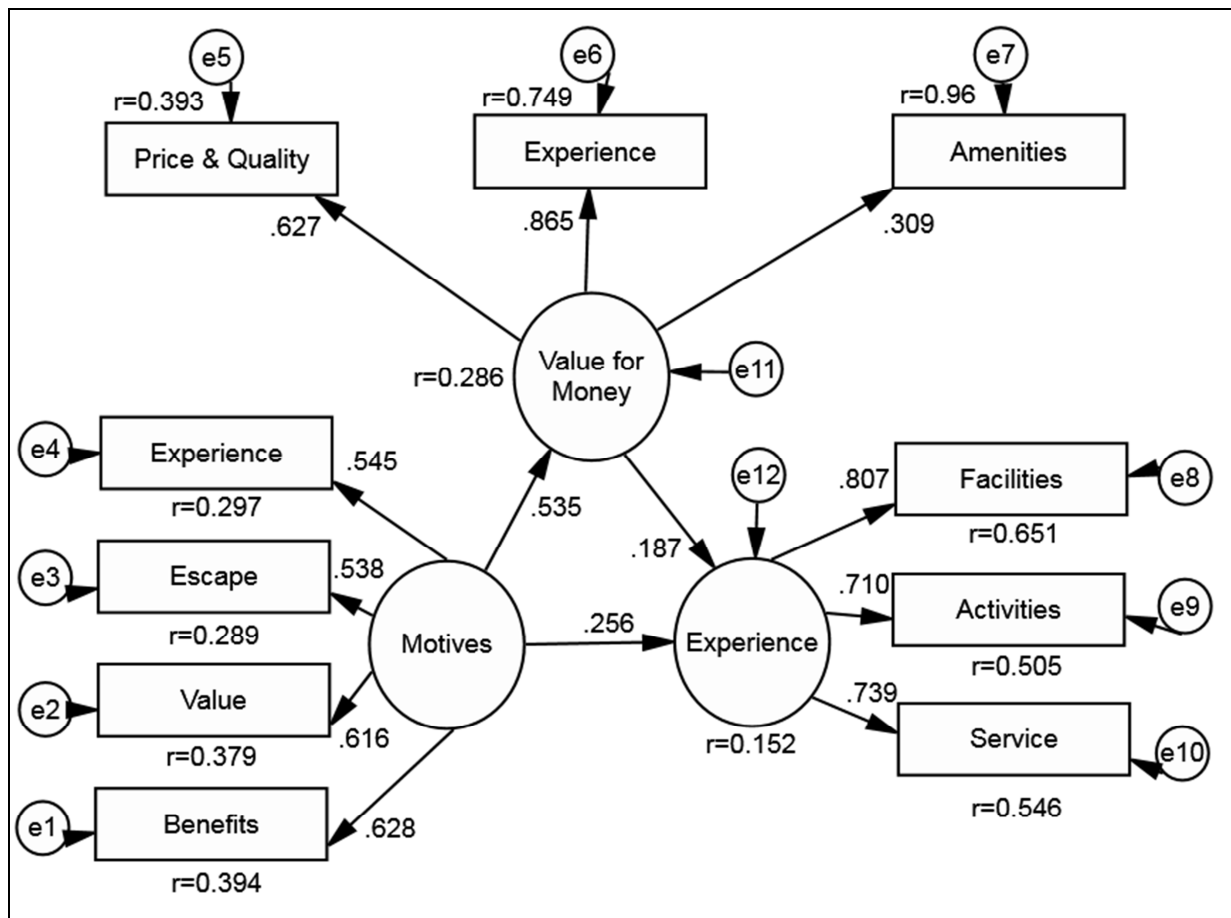


FIGURE 3: Structural equation model for Value for Money

Source: Authors' compilation from survey results

Firstly, the standardised regression weights (β -value), which should be $p \leq 0.05$ (Table 2), indicated that Motives ($\beta = 0.535$) had a statistical significant influence on Value for Money, while Value for Money ($\beta = 0.187$) had a statistical significant influence on Experience, and Motives ($\beta = 0.256$) had a statistical significant influence on Experience.

It is important to note that the p-values of the standardised beta regression weights were smaller than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$) in all three hypotheses, which indicated a confirmed relationship. H0 is then discarded in all three cases and between all three constructs, a statistically significant relationship is evident.

TABLE 2: Standardised beta regression weights

	Hypothesis	B-value	p-value
H01	There is no relationship between the motives of a tourist and the experience of a tourist to the Kruger National Park.	.256	***
H02	There is no relationship between the motives of a tourist and the value for money of a tourist to the Kruger National Park.	.535	***
H03	There is no relationship between the value for money of a tourist and the experience of a tourist to the Kruger National Park.	.187	***

Source: Authors' compilation from survey results

Secondly, the results further indicated that the effect of motive on experience has a mediate effect through value for money (Table 3).

TABLE 3: Summary of direct, indirect and total effects for the structural model estimation

Parameter	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects	Mediate effect %
Motives \longrightarrow Experience	.256	.100	.350	29%

Source: Authors' compilation from survey results

The mediate effect is calculated by using the indirect effect/total effect; $*100 =$ percentage of the total effect that mediates through value for money.

Thirdly, the chi-square divided by its degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) indicated a 6.075, which is considered acceptable (Table 4).

TABLE 4: SEM fit statistics

x ² /df	6.075
CFI	0.91
RMSEA at 90% confidence	0.08 [0.067; 0.088]

Source: Authors' compilation from survey results

The CFI value for the model was good, as its value was 0.91, indicating an acceptable fit. Finally, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) with a value of 0.08 is acceptable, especially with a 90% confidence interval of 0.067; 0.088 being reported. In other words, two out of the three values indicated a good model.

6. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The definition of "value for money" as stated by Zeithalm (1988), Alcaniz *et al.* (2005), Weaver *et al.* (2007) and Du Plessis and Saayman (2013) is confirmed by the first finding, namely that price and quality equals value for money.

This finding also reveals that the three factors of value for money, namely *price and quality*, *amenities* and *experience*, differ from other tourism products, as was indicated in studies by Du Plessis and Saayman (2015:14); Gardial *et al.* (1994:549); Hallowell (1996:29); Petrick (2002:333); Sweeney and Soutar (2001:205) and Weaver *et al.* (2007:334).

It is clear that value-for-money factors are closely related to the product where it is presented and are influenced by the different experiences that each product offers. For instance, at a music event, the value-for-money factors were identified as souvenirs and the performance quality, which are different from those that were identified at nature-based products.

This implies the following:

- i) Provision of quality is paramount and entails that training should remain a high priority in developing a service culture. In addition, service excellence awards can also be used to encourage quality service.
- ii) In providing competitive prices, further research must be conducted to analyse competitor prices in order to develop price strategies that are in line with the anticipated service delivery.
- iii) Amenities that were identified as an important factor should receive attention in the management plan by providing quality accommodation, roads (accessibility), shops and souvenirs.

- iv) An integrated management approach is therefore a pre-requisite and requires all divisions of park management to work together.
- v) Marketers should emphasise a value-for-money experience.

The second finding illustrates that motives to make use of nature-based products change and differ between specific parks. Even though two of the factors (*escape* and *having a memorable experience*) are similar to the motives that were identified by Scholz *et al.* (2013); Slabbert and Du Plessis (2013); Tao *et al.* (2004); Uysal, Mc Donald and Martin (1994) and Van der Merwe and Saayman (2008), *value and benefits* differ from these studies.

However, it is evident from all the motives that were identified from this research and previous findings that nature-based tourists are motivated by intrinsic needs when deciding to visit national parks. The implication of this finding suggests that managers need to understand these motives, which requires continual research. The reason for this is that tourism and tourists' needs are constantly changing.

The third finding highlights the complexity of the tourism product that incorporates *service, facilities* and *activities* in one. This unique feature of tourism products is developed the moment that the service is being delivered (Saayman 2009). Literature suggests (and it is confirmed by this research) that to have a memorable experience, these various factors should come into play simultaneously to ensure a satisfied and loyal tourist and support research by Fyall and Garrod (2005).

The implication of this finding is that management should focus on all these factors to provide a satisfactory experience. For instance, when a tourist has received excellent service during activities that were provided in the park, poor maintenance or insufficient accommodation facilities that are provided could influence the tourist's overall experience.

The last finding of the study is the confirmation of the relationship between motives, value for money and experience, and provides an answer to the research question, namely whether a relationship between these three constructs exists. This finding thereby confirms literature (Meng *et al.* 2008; Parasuraman & Grewal 2000; Schoeman 2010; Yang & Peterson 2004) that states that tourists will feel satisfied when the initial motive for travelling is fulfilled and that they perceive it as value for money.

The finding therefore adds value for money as a construct in the travelling process. This implies that it is important for managers to understand the travel process first of all, as

indicated by Kruger and Saayman (2009). Secondly, managers should be cognisant of the motives and needs of tourists visiting the park. Specific research towards motives is therefore required. Thirdly, in offering value for money, managers should focus on quality, price, amenities and the overall experience.

7. CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

The aim of this research was to determine the relationship between value for money, motives and experience of tourists to the Kruger National Park. Based on the unique factors of these constructs at a nature-based product, the research has confirmed a significant relationship. This highlights the fact that tourism products differ and require continuous research, thus emphasising the need for continuous research.

Therefore, this research makes a valuable contribution towards the literature on nature-based tourism, thus benefitting academics and practitioners alike, especially in South Africa where national parks are considered to be one of the primary products. This research furthermore contributes by confirming the importance of an integrated management approach. Based on the findings of this research, future research concerning the travel behaviour of tourists to nature-based products should provide managers with the necessary knowledge to influence visitors' loyalty and the tendency to return.

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