



Tourists revisit intentions based on purpose of visit and preference of the destination. A case study of Tsitsikamma National Park

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Abstract

Destination managers of tourist attractions need to understand the benefits of tourism and, thus, the importance of studying visitors' intentions. Revisit intention have often been highlighted in the literature as an important research topic in competitive market of tourism destinations. Revisit intention and positive word of mouth recommendations have also recently been regarded as indicators of destination loyalty. This study investigated revisit intentions based on tourists' purpose of visit and preference of the Tsitsikamma National Park in South Africa, as a tourist destination. The study further investigated the overall satisfaction of the tourists by the experience in the national park and further analysed if there were any statistical differences in responses regarding future visit, recommending the national park to others and making the national park first choice preference in future based on the purpose of visit and preference of the national park. The results of the study established that there were more leisure tourists than business tourists at the time of the survey and this further revealed that there were no significant statistical differences between responses to future visit, recommending the national park to others and making the national park a first choice in future visits when seen between leisure and business tourists based on purpose of visits and preference of the park. The results further indicated that tourists were satisfied overall with their experiences in the Tsitsikamma National Park.

Key words: Revisit intentions, repeat visit, Tsitsikamma National Park.

Introduction

In contemporary marketing, repeat purchasing is viewed and accepted as a key subject. Research studies have noted the following benefits of the notion of repeat purchase: (a) attracting previous customers is more cost-effective than gaining new ones; (b) 5% increase in customer retention could increase profit by 25–85%; and (c) customer retention tends to yield positive word-of-mouth referral (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). In tourism, the promotional costs of attracting repeat visitors are less than first time visitors (Weaver & Lawton, 2002; Lau & Mckercher, 2004). Moreover, preserving loyal customers is a crucial contributor to the profitability of business (Hsu et al., 2008). The tourism industry has also noted and accepted repeat visits as a key phenomenon at the level of the economy as a whole and for the individual destination/attraction (Darnell & Johnson, 2001). To understand why travellers make repeat visits, many studies have focused on the antecedents of destination revisit intention in recent years. The studies have also identified major antecedents of revisit intention, including satisfaction (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kozak, 2001; Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001; Yuksel, 2001), quality related constructs (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Gursoy, 2001; Frochot & Hughes, 2000; Yuksel, 2001), perceived value (Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001), past vacation experience (Chen & Gursoy, 2001; Kozak, 2001; Petrick et al., 2001), safety (Chen & Gursoy, 2001), image (Milman & Pizam, 1995; Ross,



1993), attachment (Petrick, 2004), and cultural difference (Chen & Gursoy, 2001; Reisinger & Turner, 1998). Whilst many studies done regarding repeat visit focused mainly been on antecedent of destination loyalty, this study opted to focus on the purpose of visit and preference of the destination in determining future repeat visit, first choice destination in future and recommending the destination to friends and relatives. In the same line with previous studies, this study also analysed the satisfaction levels of the tourists experience in the destination. First, this paper presents a brief review of literature regarding revisit intention from relationship marketing perspective and satisfaction and revisit intention. Second, it outlines the research methodology, and finally the findings of the research are presented.

Relationship Marketing

According to Flambard-Ruaud (2005: 55) the globalisation of markets, competitive pressure, and brand multiplication and, above all, the ever-changing lifestyles and consumer behaviour have forced companies to develop strategies to keep their clients, and create consumer loyalty programmes and thus carry out relationship marketing. Based on the view above, it is safe to say that how marketing has been defined in the past has changed from purely transaction driven to being process driven. The views of Nwakanma et al. (2007: 57) indicate that the traditional definition of marketing has come under scrutiny because short-term focus of many marketing activities have failed to serve customers best interests and that corporate self-interest has not been served because attraction is more expensive than retention. Given the above views, it may thus be concluded that marketing is no longer simply about developing, selling, and delivering the product but it is now more concerned with the development and maintenance of mutually satisfying long-term relationships with customers. In this regard, the new definition of marketing realises the value of lifetime customer and the importance of preventing customer defection. In this new perspective, both transactional and relational qualities are combined and strive to establish, maintain, and enhance mutually beneficial relationship with customers so as to satisfy the objectives of all parties (Nwakanma et al. 2007: 57).

The views of Casielles et al (2005: 83) are that relationship marketing is more of a competitive strategy aimed at the creation, maintenance and development of successful relationship with customers, and it is currently considered a management approach to cover all marketing activities and generate important advantages in its implementation, both in firms and for customers. Shiazi & Som (2010: 48) are of the opinion that in tourism, relationship marketing is regarded as an apt strategy and coherent approach to building a continuous relationship among all key elements (e.g. stakeholders, host community, tourists) in tourism destination to gain competitive advantages. In support of the above mentioned authors, Sherrel & Beju (2007: 4) further stressed that building a stronger customer relationship will offer a significant competitive advantage due to direct imitation from competitors. The increasing global competition due to newly-emerging destinations has forced tourist to be more exacting in their choice and desire for variety of options and therefore relationship marketing offers considerable potential to achieve advantage (Fally et al, 2003: 645).

Boonajesevee (2005) noted that the primary goal of relationship marketing is loyalty and sometimes even equated with relationship marketing concept itself. Significantly, the benefits of relationship marketing in competitive market are recognized as: gaining strategic competitive advantages, preparing long-term profitability, reducing market research, and creating loyal customers (Lovelock et al., 1996). Shirazi & Som (2011) noted that it is important that relationship marketing should be considered as a competitive strategy aimed at creating long-term relationships and improving corporate performance through customer loyalty. In the competitive market of tourism destination, the focal point of relationship marketing should be to create loyal visitors for future action intention.



Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

Oliver (1981) claims that tourist satisfaction can be seen as a tourist's post-purchase evaluation of the destination. In many studies, satisfaction is distinguished as an antecedent of loyalty (Kozak, 2001; Jang & Feng, 2006). Although Oppermann (2000) states that studies on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty have not been thoroughly investigated, Chi and Qu (2008: 624) claim that "customer satisfaction has always been considered an essential business goal because it was assumed that satisfied customer would buy more." Although measuring tourist satisfaction is not simple, several studies have been conducted to examine the influence of customer satisfaction on loyalty (Gummesson, 1993; Anderson and Fornell, 1994; Um et al., 2006; Hui et al., 2007). Gotlieb et al. (1994) assert that positive satisfaction has positive influence on tourists' repurchase intention.

Similarly, Baker & Crompton (2000); Petrick et al. (2001), and Jang & Feng (2006) have highlighted that satisfaction is the primary antecedent of revisit intention. Importantly, there is an agreement among several scholars that satisfaction provide a ground for revisit and positive word of mouth recommendations which are the indicators of loyalty (e.g. Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yoon & Uysal 2005; Chi & Qu, 2008). In another view, Um et al. (2006: 1141) state that "revisit intention has been regarded as an extension of satisfaction rather than an initiator of revisit decision making process." Kozak (2001) pointed that level of satisfaction as one of the most dominant variables in explaining revisit intention.

Accordingly, in tourism destination's researches, it has been widely underlined that tourist satisfaction, loyalty and revisit intention have strong relationship (e.g. Yoon & Usal, 2005; Awadzi & Panda, 2007), while a few studies disapproved the positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention (e.g. Um et al., 2006). In tourist destination researches (e.g. Oliver, 1997; Yoon & Uysal 2005), tourist satisfaction has been measured by different items such as overall satisfaction, performance, expectation, and positive recommendation.

Notably, Chi & Qu (2008: 624) maintain that "satisfaction measurement has recently been displaced by the concept of customer loyalty, primarily because loyalty is seen as better predictor of actual behaviour. In this respect, Chen & Tsai (2007) conclude that a key effect of tourist satisfaction that influences tourism intentions for revisit both in short and long-term is loyalty to the destination.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research methodology using convenience sampling technique with the use of questionnaires as a data collection instrument. The questionnaires were distributed during the months of September to January 2016 only to the tourists who stayed overnight at the Storms River rest camp. The questionnaires were distributed to tourists as they checked inn for their stay in the national park. The tourists were informed of the study at reception and asked for their willingness to participate and only those who agreed to participate in the study were given the questionnaires. The tourists dropped off their completed questionnaires upon check-out from the national park.

A total of 120 questionnaires were returned and it is important to note that in some sections, some of the tourists did not complete all the questions. In such a case, this will be reflected on the total number of respondents in those sections.



Research Findings

This section provides the results of the study starting with demographics characteristics of the tourists, their geographic profile, psychographic profile, overall satisfaction and results regarding future intent, recommending the national park to friends and relatives as well as making the national park preferred choice in future visits.

Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

The results of the study found that there were more males (56.5%) than females (43.5%), respondents who were married (52.1%) were slightly higher than those who were not married (30.3%) and those divorced, living together and widowed (17.6%). English speaking tourists were 40%, Afrikaans were 30.8% and respondents who spoke other languages were 29.2%. Majority of the tourists were not accompanied by children (75.2%) and they are mostly between the ages of 26 and 35 years (25%). Whilst not tested in this study, the findings above may imply that these tourists are young married couples who still want to enjoy each other's company before they start to have children.

Geographic Profile

The results as shown above indicate that tourists to this park are mainly South Africans (52.5%) who reside in the Western Cape Province (50%). These results maybe because Tsitsikamma National Park is located in the Eastern Cape Province on the border with the Western Cape Province and hence it is easier for tourists from the Western Cape Province to access the park as well as closer (distance reasons). The other notion could be that generally most people prefer to have their holidays outside of their own provinces and hence the tourists from the Eastern Cape Province where the park is located are less than those of the Western Cape Province. However, from an international perspective, the highest recorded number of international tourists (13.3%) were from Germany, followed by United Kingdom and Netherlands (6.7%) and they were slightly by United States of America with 5%.

Psychographic Profile

The results of the study showed that during the time of the survey, the national park was mostly visited by first time visitors (31%) with 13% of the tourists visiting the park the fourth and fifth time respectively. 22% of the tourists during the time of the survey were visiting the park for the third time whilst 4% of these tourists had visited the park for more than five times. This is an indication that most of the respondents are loyal to the park and are satisfied with both the quality of service and experience offered by the park. From a parks management perspective, it is necessary to maintain a high quality of service to persuade these tourists to return annually. The results further indicate that 42.5% of the tourists stayed inside the national park between 1 and 3 days, followed by those who stayed between 4 and 6 days (24.1%) and those who stayed for 7 days and more were 33.3%.

Overall satisfaction with the experience in the National Park

In this section, because tourists were from South Africa (52.5%) just above half compared to tourists from other countries (47.5%), it was decided to present the results by comparing the two groups of tourists.

Table 1: T-tests for overall satisfaction

T-tests; Grouping: Countries	Mean South Africa	Mean Other countries	t-value	df	P	Std.Dev SA	Std.Dev Other countries
Overall satisfaction	4.54	4.40	1.05	116	0.2978	0.70	0.82



Results from Table 1 above showed no statistically significant differences between respondents from South Africa and other countries since the p-value is greater than 0.05 at 0.2978. The results further show no significant difference because of the mean values which are very close to each other, South Africa (4.54) whilst the mean value for other countries was 4.40. Therefore, the results of the study infer that both South African and other countries tourists rated their experience in the national park more or less in a similar way.

Table 2: Purpose of visit and preference of the national park

Purpose of visit	
	Percentages
Leisure	85,3
Business	14,7
Total	100%
Preference of the national park	
Beautiful nature	64,9
Wilderness experience	14,4
Variety of plant, bird and wildlife	10,8
National park combination with marine environment	9,9
Total	100%

The results above indicate that the majority (85.3%) of tourist were leisure tourists whilst 14.7% were tourists who were in the area for business purposes. The results further indicate that the majority of these leisure and business tourist were attracted or preferred the national park because of its beautiful nature whereas there was not much support of them being attracted to the national park because if its combination with marine environment (9.9%), variety of plant, bird and wildlife (10.8%) as well as wilderness experience (14.4%). Indeed these results infer that Tsitsikamma National Park is popular for its beautiful nature.

Table 3: Future intentions of the tourists

Likelihood to visit the national park again	
	Percentages
Unlikely	3,5
Indifferent	3,5
Likely	93
Total	100%
Likelihood to recommend the national park to others	
Unlikely	2,6
Indifferent	1,7
Likely	95,7
Total	100%
Likelihood that the national park will be first choice for future visits	
Unlikely	4,3
Indifferent	6,1
Likely	89,6
Total	100%



With regards to tourists future intentions regarding the national park, the results showed a favourable and high percentages which are good for repeat and good word of mouth recommendations. An overwhelming majority (93%) of the tourists indicated that they will visit the national park again in future. These results are in line with and will result in the accrue of benefits of repeat purchase as stated by Reichheld & Sasser (1990); Shoemaker & Lewis (1999) which are attracting previous customers is more cost-effective than gaining new ones; 5% increase in customer retention could increase profit by 25–85%.

The results of the study further indicated that an overwhelming majority of the tourists (95.7%) said that they would recommend the national park to others and these findings support that customer retention tends to yield positive word-of-mouth referral as stated by Reichheld & Sasser (1990); Shoemaker & Lewis (1999). These results are also in line with the views of Shanka et al. (2002) who confirmed the positive effect of word of mouth information for destination selection where they indicated that recommendation to other people is one of the most often sought types of information for people interested in traveling. This was further supported by Chi & Qu (2008: 625) and Yoon & Uysal (2005) who indicated that word of mouth recommendations are especially critical in tourism marketing because they are considered to be the most reliable, and thus are one of the most sought-after information sources for potential tourists. Similarly, Wong & Kwong (2004) mentioned that repeated visitors increase word-of-mouth and such recommendation effects on potential visitors. Notably, Hui et al. (2007) argue that tourists who were satisfied from the whole trip were likely to recommend the destination to others rather than to revisit it in the future.

Lastly, the results also infer that the highest number of tourists (89.6%) indicated that they would make the national park their first choice destination for future visits. The results augers well for the future sustainability of the national park from an economic point of view since the future visit will result in spending in the national park and further positive word of mouth recommendations.

Table 4: T-tests for differences for purpose of visit and future intentions

Group statistics				T-test		
		Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	df	p
Likelihood to visit the national park again	Leisure	4,49	0,94	-1,23	102	0,2210
	Business	4,80	0,41			
Likelihood to recommend the national park to others	Leisure	4,63	0,78	-1,50	104	0,1371
	Business	4,93	0,26			
Likelihood that the national park will be first choice for future visits	Leisure	4,43	0,95	0,10	102	0,9171
	Business	4,40	0,74			

The study went further to test whether there were any significant differences with reference to future intentions based on purpose of visit. In all the three future intentions factors, the results found no statistically significant differences since all p-values > 0.05 for both leisure and business tourists. These findings were further supported by the mean values that were close to each other for all the factors ranging between 4.40, smallest and 4.93, the highest as well as the t-values close to each other across ranging between 0.10 and -1.23. The only slightly difference was recognised for business tourists with reference to likelihood to recommend the national park to other which resulted in 0.26 standard deviation which was the smallest across the board but this however, did not make any statistical difference overall.



Table 5: Anova for differences for preference of the national park and future intentions

Descriptive statistics		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Anova	
					F	p
Likelihood to visit the national park again	Beautiful nature	69	4,61	0,88	0,99	0,4016
	Wilderness experience	16	4,50	1,10		
	Variety of plant, bird and wildlife	12	4,58	0,67		
	National park combination with marine environment	10	4,10	0,74		
	Total	107	4,54	0,88		
Likelihood to recommend the national park to others	Beautiful nature	71	4,76	0,60	1,79	0,1530
	Wilderness experience	16	4,63	1,09		
	Variety of plant, bird and wildlife	12	4,67	0,65		
	National park combination with marine environment	10	4,20	0,92		
	Total	109	4,68	0,73		
Likelihood that the national park will be first choice for future visits	Beautiful nature	69	4,49	0,90	0,34	0,7955
	Wilderness experience	16	4,38	1,26		
	Variety of plant, bird and wildlife	12	4,50	0,67		
	National park combination with marine environment	10	4,20	0,63		
	Total	107	4,45	0,91		

The study went further to test whether there were any significant differences with reference to future intentions based on preference of the national park. In all the three future intentions factors, the results found no statistically significant differences since all p-values > 0.05 for both tourists who preferred the national park because of its beautiful nature, wilderness experience, variety of plant, bird and wildlife as well as national park combination with marine environment. These findings were further supported by the average mean values for the three future intention factors, namely: likelihood to visit the national park again (4.54), likelihood to recommend the national park to others (4.68) and likelihood that the national park will be first choice for future visits (4.45) as these mean values are very close to each other as well as the F-values close to each other across ranging between 0.34 and 1.79. The average Standard deviation values were also very close to each other ranging from 0.73, the smallest and 0.91, the highest.

Practical managerial implications and recommendations

The results of the study showed that the leisure and business tourists are generally satisfied by their experiences in the national park. They are mainly attracted to the national park by its beautiful nature and have positive intentions regarding visiting again, recommending the national park to others as well as making the national park their first choice destination in future holidays plans. The implication for the managers of the national park is to ensure consistency in service rendered and strive to improve on them to ensure further satisfaction levels of the holiday experience in the national park. In this way, they will continuously ensure that the tourists are satisfied and this may lead to repeat visits as well as positive word of mouth recommendations. The results showed that positive future intentions imply that management must value repeat visits and ensure such is achieved through good relationship marketing.



Conclusions

It is evident from the findings of this research that tourists who visited the Tsitsikamma National Park during the time of the survey were generally very satisfied with their experiences in the park. The national park should focus its marketing and promotional efforts on using the beautiful nature of the national park as its unique selling point. This should be done also to ensure a positive word of mouth recommendation of the park by those who visit to their family, friends and relatives.

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