

Determining Key Aspects of Ecotourism Product Development: The Case of Cross River National Park

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Abstract

This study determined the key aspects of ecotourism product development for one of Nigeria's neglected national parks and biodiversity hotspots, the Cross River National Park (CRNP). Quantitative research was conducted. The research used a non-probability sampling technique namely, convenience sampling. The findings show that accommodation, facilities, and activities are key to product development. The main type of probable accommodation identified for the CRNP is rondavels, for the self-catering market. Key activities ascertained are outdoor activities such as trails, and leisure sports such as minigolf. The key potential facilities/amenities identified are ancillary facilities/services such as electricity supply and communication facilities. These products, when developed and incorporated into the existing natural wealth of the park, will not only create comfort and convenience to tourists but can enhance tourists' experiences and contribute to increasing the quality of production as well as service delivery. The research made the following contributions: Firstly, it identified key aspects for ecotourism product development for GRNP. Secondly, this was the first time that such research was conducted in Nigeria, contributing to the literature regarding natural area tourism research in Nigeria and in third place the research gives a comprehensive summary of the literature regarding product development for tourism products.

Keywords: product development; ecotourism product development; infrastructure development; activities development

Introduction

Ecotourism is an essential tool for enhancing socio-economic development and a means for ensuring that nature is given an economic value, particularly in developing countries (Ofem et al., 2012). The importance of ecotourism can be seen in its ability to sustainably protect the environment (ecosystem) and create cultural, socio-economic and ecological value for local communities. As a result, communities enriched with natural wealth (beautiful nature, protected areas) are beginning to see the need to preserve and develop these natural resources in order for ecotourism to benefit from this inherent wealth.

Wood (2021) stated that, growing travellers' interest in the field of tropical ecology, ethnobotany, primate ecology, and the archaeology of ancient civilizations have augmented the expansion of the global ecotourism market. The increase in available eco-friendly tourist accommodation has also made way for the growth of ecotourism market. Protected areas

became even more in demand during COVID-19, as these areas are seen as spaces where people can move freely without close contact with other tourists (Van der Merwe et al., 2021).

One such country, with several nature-based and ecotourism products, is Nigeria. The Nigerian tourism industry is endowed with natural and human resources that are capable of fostering foreign exchange returns and bringing about a reduction of the over-dependence on the country's mineral resources (Matthew et al., 2018; Timothy & Boyd, 2006; Dele et al., 2018; Ijeomah, 2007; Ayeni, 2013). Nigeria's unique wildlife-based tourism attractions include national parks, archaeological sites, overland safaris, game reserves, beaches and zoos, to mention a few (Ayeni & Ebohon, 2012). However, despite its recognition as an ecotourism destination, it has not derived significant benefits from tourism for national development (Ijeomah & Eniang, 2018). Nadube and Akahome (2017) note that poor infrastructure and depleted ecotourism products are severe barriers to the growth and development of ecotourism products in Nigeria. One such ecotourism product is the Cross River National Park (CRNP). Bukola et al. (2021) study on CRNP found that Cross River National Park with its natural resources of touristic significance. In spite of the incredible resources available, ecotourism development in the park is still at its infancy stage and has the potential to host numerous wildlife activities and present numerous potentials for ecotourism product development (Nchor et al., 2017; Ngoka & Lameed, 2013; Ijeomah & Eniang, 2018; Ngoka et al., 2014; Ngoka, 2013).

It is believed that, through the development of ecotourism in the park, opportunities for capturing revenue can be actualised in CRNP (Bukola et al., 2021; Ngoka et al., 2014). Although there are numerous national parks with well-developed ecotourism products in Nigeria one cannot assume these products would be the same for other national parks like CRNP, as each park is unique and need park specific developments. Therefore, this study aims to determine the key aspects of ecotourism product development for CRNP to enable park management to revitalise the park.

Literature review

The study's literature review focuses on three key areas: firstly, defining ecotourism, secondly discusses the key aspects of tourism product development and last providing background on the study area (CRNP).

Ecotourism

It is generally believed that the term 'ecotourism' in ecotourism literature originated in 1983 by "Hector Ceballos Lascurain" a Mexican environmentalist, who is known as the father of ecotourism. Ceballos-Lascurain defined ecotourism as "Travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestation (both present and past) found in these areas" (Kiper, 2013; Saayman, 2009. TIES (The International Ecotourism Society) modified the definition of ecotourism and defines ecotourism as, "travel, which is small scale, low impact, culturally sensitive, community orientated, primarily nature-based, educational and capable of broadening people's minds and enlivening their souls but providing a unique experience, firmly grounded in sustainable principles and practices" (TIES modified version as cited by Conway & Cawley 2016). Considering the definitions of ecotourism presented above, it can be seen that the definitions revolve around travel to protected areas to admire nature, and improvement of the well-being of local people - mainly describing the benefits the local community stands to derive from this form of tourism.

Tourism product development

Tourism product as defined by UNEP/UNWTO (2005) is “the combination of goods and services such as transport, accommodation, food and drinks, guiding services, provision of material and infrastructure for activities that are necessary to enable the tourists to have a complex experience which starts at them leaving their home and ends at their return”. Tourism products can also be viewed as consisting of one or different aspects, including physical properties, services, locations, organisations, or thoughts that are available to the market and are compelling in fulfilling customers’ requests (Smith, 2001: 13). Chaiboonsri and Chaitip (2008) explain that tourism products are the elements combined to enhance the satisfaction of travellers’ needs. Tourism products have become a symbol of the tourism experience for tourists which, in turn, fosters the development of a tourism destination and the realisation of its full potential.

A tourism product, as stated by Salamoura and Angelis (2009) consists of three basic components. Firstly, the core product: the essential advantage the purchaser is looking for and purchasing (unwinding or a social encounter). Secondly, the tangible/formal product: the service or good that is offered to the purchaser with explicit attributes (for example, quality, highlights, styling, brand name or bundling), leading to a fundamental rendition of the product. Thirdly, the augmented or expanded product: the extra advantages that a buyer receives in getting the conventional product, which differentiates the organisation’s product from other company’s offers.

In reality, the rivalry is at the expanded level, instead of at the core product level (Middleton & Clarke, 2001; Komppula, 2001; Salamoura & Angelis, 2009). As indicated earlier, components of both the total and specific tourism products exist to complement each other.

Bhuiyan (2013:748) considers tourism product development an essential process that ensures an increase in the variety of products, enhances tourism experience, multiplies profit, encourages customers’ loyalty, and creates a competitive advantage. Smith (2001) sees it as a responsibility necessary to meet the needs and wants of customers’ ever-changing desires and a guarantee that ensures the organisation’s long-term profitability. Acha-Anyi (2014: 1) points out that product development in any destination is necessary for a practical and appealing product. It can be considered the foundation for successful tourism product development as it ensures sustainable development in any destination or community.

According to Geremew et al. (2017: 1), tourism product development is the means through which a destination’s tourism potential are transformed to satisfy the needs and wants of domestic and international visitors alike. These include all processes relating to man-made attractions as well as activities, whether organised or otherwise, that form the central part of tourism products in a destination (Geremew et al., 2017: 1). Various components form the tourist’s destination, either mainly related or situated to tourism, which presence increments the probabilities of drawing in visitors since they contribute to the feeling of consolation in any area and can fortify the expansion of the stay (Acha-Anyi, 2014: 1). Unless the tourism product in a location meets the wants and desires of visitors, the destination cannot realise its full potential. Some destinations centre their consideration on the improvement and conveyance of the different attractions and activities capable of attracting tourists or the products that define a tourism product (UNWTO, 2011: 4).

Different authors have identified the components of a thriving tourism destination. Gupta et al. (2015) identified three basic elements (key aspects) of tourism product development – attractions at destinations, facilities at destinations and ease of accessibility. Commercii (2001) and Verma (2016), on the other hand, identified five main key aspects of

tourism products, which are attractions, accessibility, destination facilities/amenities, image, and price. Buhalis (2000) and Taneva (2009) identified the six ‘As’ of tourism product development: attraction, accessibility, accommodation, activities, available packages, ancillary services and appeal. These acknowledged key tourism product development aspects will be discussed next.

Attraction: Swarbrooke (2002: 1) affirms that tourist attractions are the core elements that constitute tourism products. According to Middleton and Clarke (2001: 125), attraction is the primary component, which is the driving force that motivates and influences the tourist’s destination choice most and hence can be seen as the pull factor in any destination. Without attraction there would be no tourism. They further believe that tourist attractions are basic elements for effective tourism destination advancement (Middleton & Clarke, 2001: 125). Lubbe (2003: 104) outlines all the categories of attractions into two primary types, namely natural attractions, and man-made attractions. Natural attractions have been created naturally without any human intervention, for example waterfalls. In contrast, man-made attractions are attractions made by humans to attract visitors, for example theme parks.

Middleton and Clarke (2001) and Verma (2016) gave somewhat different classifications, namely natural attractions (scene, seascape, shorelines, and climate), built attractions (memorable and/or unused townscape as in recently built resorts), purpose-built attractions such as theme parks and social attractions (introduction of history and fables composed as celebrations and exhibitions, historical centres and theatres), and social attractions (the host community way of life). Goeldner and Ritchie (2009: 214) also have different classifications, namely natural attractions, cultural attractions, events, recreations, and entertainment. Whatever are seen as attractions, one aspect is certain: It plays an important role in tourism product development. As outlined, CRNP does have many natural attractions but lacks in man-made attractions, such as facilities, accommodation, and activities.

Accessibility: Accessibility is seen as an attractive feature in a destination. According to Medlik (2011: 4) accessibility is “a function of distance from centres of population, which constitutes tourist markets, and of external transport, which enables a destination to be reached and is measured in terms of distance travelled, time taken, or the cost involved”. The elements of accessibility, according to Anuar et al. (2012), determine whether or not a destination can be easily reached, and it also connects the tourist to the destination of interest either by air, land, sea or any other transport modes. Based on this, Gupta et al. (2015) articulate that accessibility, as one of the elements that determine a successful tourist destination, plays a vital role as it influences tourists’ destination choice, especially in terms of costs and ease of access of the location. Haarhoff (2018) reckons that a tourist presented with the choice of choosing among similar destinations will choose a more convenient and accessible one. When a tourist destination is inaccessible, such a destination cannot realise its full potential, and tourists will look for alternative destinations that are accessible.

Ngoka (2007) indicates that CRNP is accessible by road but lack a good transport system, for example a good public transportation system, but accessibility within the park is problematic. Crouch and Ritchie (2010: 1058) signify that tourism products should be made accessible to the tourist by tourism providers and those responsible for providing tourism products.

Accommodation: Accommodation is the biggest sub-sector in the tourism industry. With few exceptions, visitors require accommodation where they can relax within a destination visited during their travel (Cooper et al., 2008). Bennett (2000) postulates that the accommodation product is a diverse phenomenon as the product experience is broad. It includes physical components (food and drink), sensual benefits (sight, scent, sound, touch and taste) and, additionally, mental benefits encountered as mental states of well-being, status,

consolation and fulfilment. Since accommodation is an essential need in the travel industry, Poudel (2013) posits that the development of accommodation facilities should be made a fundamental component of a destination's overall planning procedure to achieve the development of tourism products. Although CRNP does have some accommodation for low-budget travellers, it lacks facilities that are adequate, developed to meet international as well as local tourist standards (Africa Travel Information, 2019). This has radically constrained the opportunities the reserve can offer to the host community, adjoining communities and tourists (Owem, 2004; Eneji, 2006).

Activities: This element is so important that without them (activities) in a destination, the destination will attract little or no tourists, which is also the case with CRNP. Bunghez (2016: 8) says that the sum of tourism commitment to a destination's economy depends to a large extent on various components of which the level of activities displayed at the destination is key. According to Ritchie and Crouch (2003: 110), a destination established within the concept of nature would have activities based on expected conditions and the encompassing environment in which it is situated. For instance, activities packaged for nature-based products such as national parks should be surrounded by nature since these activities will be expected by ecotourists. As indicated previously CRNP does have attractions but might lack activities.

Ancillary services: Ancillary services are all those facilities that tourists use when they leave their home, reach their destination and return home (Lenoir, 2011). Lenoir (2011) sees it as the main source describing the 'additional' services other than main products associated with travel and tourism services. They are secondary to tourists' needs in a destination, although not associated with tourism. Smith (2012: 12) defines ancillary services as "Any additional service offered by travel and tourism providers beyond the main product or service." The elements of such facilities include banks, telecommunications, medical services and hygiene, restaurant, water, security, sewerage and wastewater (Camilleri, 2017). Imbruglia (2012) affirms that all these services can improve the customer experience and have the potential not only to boost the revenue of a destination but also to present a more competitive and tailor-made offer to consumers. Ancillary service may be an aspect that needs attention in the case of CRNP, as it is remotely situated.

Appeal: Appeal is the image, perception and preferences of a destination. Tourist perception and preference of a destination or the products available in a destination determine their destination choice (Bennett, 2000; Bennett et al., 2005; Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009). The destination image, according to Haarhoff (2018: 1) is "the sum of perceptual beliefs, knowledge, affective feeling, and the total impression that a visitor holds about a destination, and it plays a critical role in ensuring customers' decision regarding a purchase in the destination choice process and the attractiveness of a destination". An image perceived, as observed by Beerli and Martin (2004), is shaped through the image anticipated by the destination and the individual's personal desire, inspirations, earlier information, preferences, and other individual attributes. An image is said to be external when created by the properties or attributes offered by the destination and information received regarding the destination. When one's desires, state of mind and past encounters impact the image arrangement, it is known as the 'internal component'. Perception, on the other hand, describes a situation when a person chooses, arranges, and translates stimuli into a reasonable and consistent image of the place visited (Haarhoff, 2018; Rajesh, 2013; George, 2008). Currently as seen from the literature discussed in this research, one tends to feel that the perceptions of CRNP might not be that well due to bad infrastructure and few activities and facilities.

Available packages: Tourism packages are an integral component of the tourism and travel industry, and their rise in popularity in recent times demonstrates that they are still an attractive option for many clients in meeting their travel needs (Association of Southeast Asian

Nations (ASEAN, 2015). Destination packages can be seen as the coming together of various services and products designed by tour organisers, including products and services such as transfer and transport services, guided safari tours, lodging services, food, entertainment (theatre performance and stage show), shopping, events/festivals, car hire, tourist guiding services and tours, venue and equipment hire (ASEAN, 2015). Currently CRNP has little packages available to ecotourists.

Cross River National Park (CRNP)

CRNP is one of seven national parks in Nigeria (National Park Service, 2000) and is located between latitude 6° 05' N and longitude 9° 02' E in Cross River State, Nigeria (Oshuntokin, 2001). The park has two divisions: the Oban and Okwangwo. The Oban division is approximately 3 000 km² south-east of Nigeria and lies south and east of a loop of the Cross River and extending along the Cameroon border (Obong et al., 2013). The Okwangwo division is located in the northern part of the reserve and covers 1 000 km² making it a total land area of about 4 000 km² with central coordinates of 5° 25' N and 8° 35' E, aerial coverage of 280 000 ha. This study will focus on the Oban division, with limited tourism products.

Oban area is a tropical rainforest with unique experiences and one of the United Nation's acclaimed biodiversity hotspots (Adamu, 2008). CRNP harbours the following nature-based products: a number of waterfalls, beautiful mountains, a botanical garden and herbarium, numerous wildlife (bird species, gorillas and some antelope), a zoological garden and fishing opportunities to name but a few (Ngoka, 2013). A visitor to the Oban division can access the park through the Yala-Wukarri-Katsina-Ala-Ikom highway or the Abuja-Makurdi-Ikom highway by car, making the park accessible.

Current facilities include a guest house and hostel for students and low-budget travellers (Africa Travel Information, 2019). Ngoka (2013: 6) states that only 3,5 % of the reserve is used for tourism, and the few tourists that visit the park mainly consist of domestic tourists. Besides the lack of accommodation that has been identified as affecting tourist numbers to the park, other factors are accessibility of the park's tourism products, as the park has little infrastructure such as roads within the park and distance from major cities. A positive aspect is that a significant part of the park has remained untouched and unattainable, which adds to the park's authenticity and beauty.

Method of research

This research made use of quantitative research approach. The sampling technique followed in this study, was non-probability sampling by means of convenience sampling. The target population for the study is derived from tourists to Obudu Mountain Resort (survey site). Since the CRNP receives almost no tourists (Ngoka & Lameed, 2013), there was a need to survey a tourist destination with similar ecotourism features. Obudu Mountain Resort was selected for the survey, since firstly it is one of the significant ecotourism sites in the same state and the country at large with beautiful nature and is mainly visited by Nigerians. Secondly it is situated not too far from CRNP (Amalu et al., 2017) and thirdly, it receives a large volume of tourists per year, especially during the festive season.

The questionnaire used in this research was developed from work conducted by Saayman and Saayman (2006), Van der Merwe and Saayman (2008), Geldenhuys et al. (2016), Saayman et al. (2009), Oberholzer et al. (2010) and Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001). The questions were divided in four sections. Section A contained respondents' demographic information; section B determined tourists' accommodation preferences, section C obtained tourists' travel motives and elements of tourism products for consideration when choosing

tourism destinations and section D determined ecotourists' product preferences and potential ecotourism products.

The questionnaires were administered to the tourists at Obudu Mountain Resort (survey site) and were completed between December 2019 and February 2020. Verbal permission was obtained from each respondent before handing them the questionnaire. In the end, a total of 293 usable questionnaires were completed. Data analysis consists of two phases. The first phase is a descriptive analysis of the respondent's demographic profile involving frequency analysis and percentages. The second phase was a factor analysis. The factor analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA), principal component analysis (PCA) and a pattern matrix (PM) were applied for the investigation. The study received ethical clearance and the ethics number is NWU-01439-19-A4.

Results

The results of this study are divided into three sections: firstly, the demographic profile of respondents, secondly their preferred accommodation type, and thirdly a factor analysis regarding travel motives, activities, and facilities/amenities.

Demographic profile

The result disclosed that 62 % of the respondents were male, and 38 % were female. The average age of respondents was 32 years. Sixty-one percent cent of respondents were single while 33 % were married. Ninety-eight percent of respondents were Nigerians with just 2 % foreigners. With respect to participants' level of education, 47 % of respondents had a degree, 18 % had a diploma, 16 % a secondary school qualification and 1 % had a primary school qualification. Respondents employed by an employee were 41 % while self-employed respondents represented 24 %. This is followed by 20 % who were students and 13 % who were unemployed. The monthly income of respondents indicates that the largest percentage of respondents (24 %) falls within the monthly income bracket of N 200 000 to N 300 000 (USD 521,60 to USD 782,40) which was followed by N 50 000 to N 100 000 (USD 119,80 to USD 240,52) at 20 %, and N 20 000 to N 50 000 (USD 47,92 to USD 119,80) representing 17 %.

Forty-four percent of tourists who took part in the study went on vacation only once a year, 36 % travelled twice a year while 17 % represent those who travelled three times per year. The majority of participants (49 %) travelled in a group comprising 3 to 5 people and 36 % represents a travel group of 1 or 2 people. With regards to preferred holiday destination, most of the respondents (40 %) indicated that nature-based areas/national parks are their holiday destination of choice, while 32 % preferred to visit resorts. The majority of respondents (55 %) made use of a private vehicle to travel to the destination, while 33 % used public transport and only 7 % made use of 4-wheel drive vehicles.

The demographic profile of the research assists in contextualising this research in the following manner, first enable the reader to compare this finding with similar research in Nigeria and other countries, second the profile of tourists can assist in the development of products as one now knows composition of the possible visitor and last this supply valuable information for marketing at after product development.

Preferred accommodation categories and types

Tourists' accommodation needs and preferences, especially on aspects such as accommodation type, are important since it plays a critical role in product development (Saayman & Van der Merwe, 2017). The result of the analysis of respondents' accommodation type displays that the most preferred accommodation type was self-catering accommodation units (39 %). This is

followed by full-board accommodation with 35 %, while 26 % of the respondents indicated that they prefer Bed & Breakfasts. These results are in agreement with the study done by Saayman and Van der Merwe (2017) who identified ecotourists' accommodation needs and preferences, where self-catering were identified as a sought-after accommodation type for nature-based tourists.

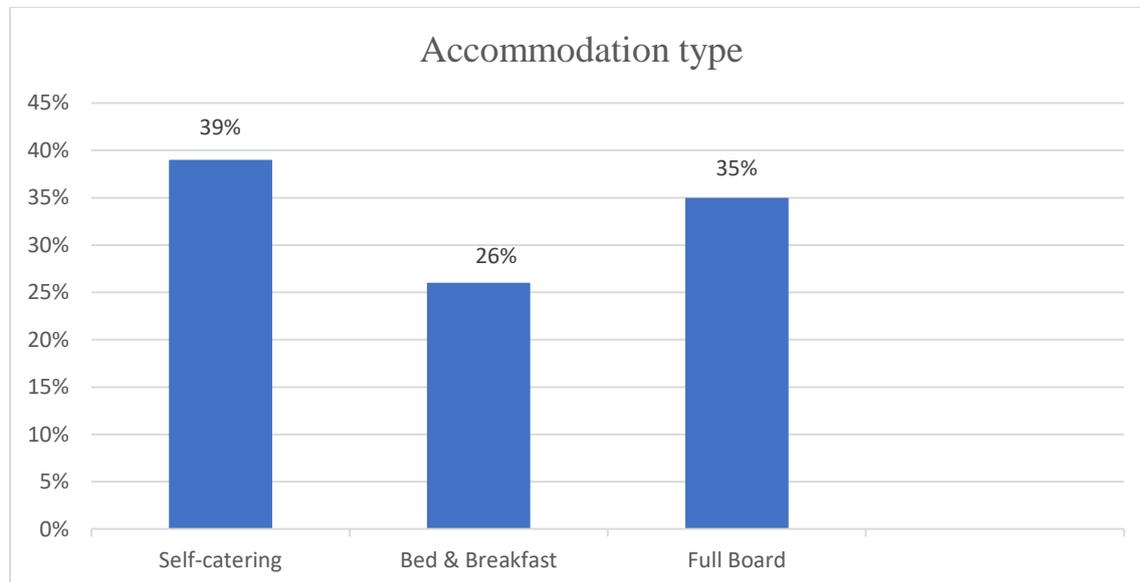


Figure 1: Accommodation categories

Accommodation is one of the most common demands, as it enhances tourist experience in a destination (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000). The results in Figure 2 indicate that the majority of the respondents (27 %) preferred a rondavel (round type of sleeping unit), followed by a log cabin with 20 %. Seventeen per cent preferred chalets and 12 % went for huts (a small house with only one or two rooms, made of wood, mud, grass, or stones). Nine per cent of the respondents chose guesthouses, some respondents (8 %) preferred camping, while those who preferred glamping and hotel consisted of 4 % and 3 % respectively. This result agrees with Kruger et al. (2017: 3), who is of the opinion that today's tourist prefers an accommodation type that is nature based. It is also similar to the findings of Van der Merwe and Slabbert (2018: 4) regarding tourists' preference for accommodation such as rondavels, chalets, camping and log cabins. Therefore, possible accommodation developments for CRNP will be rondavels, log cabins or chalets. There is a need for a self-catering as most respondents prefer self-catering. There is also a relatively larger percentage that prefer Bed & Breakfast as well as full-board accommodation. Therefore hotels/lodges and guesthouses as accommodation type can also be considered to cater for the more upmarket tourist.

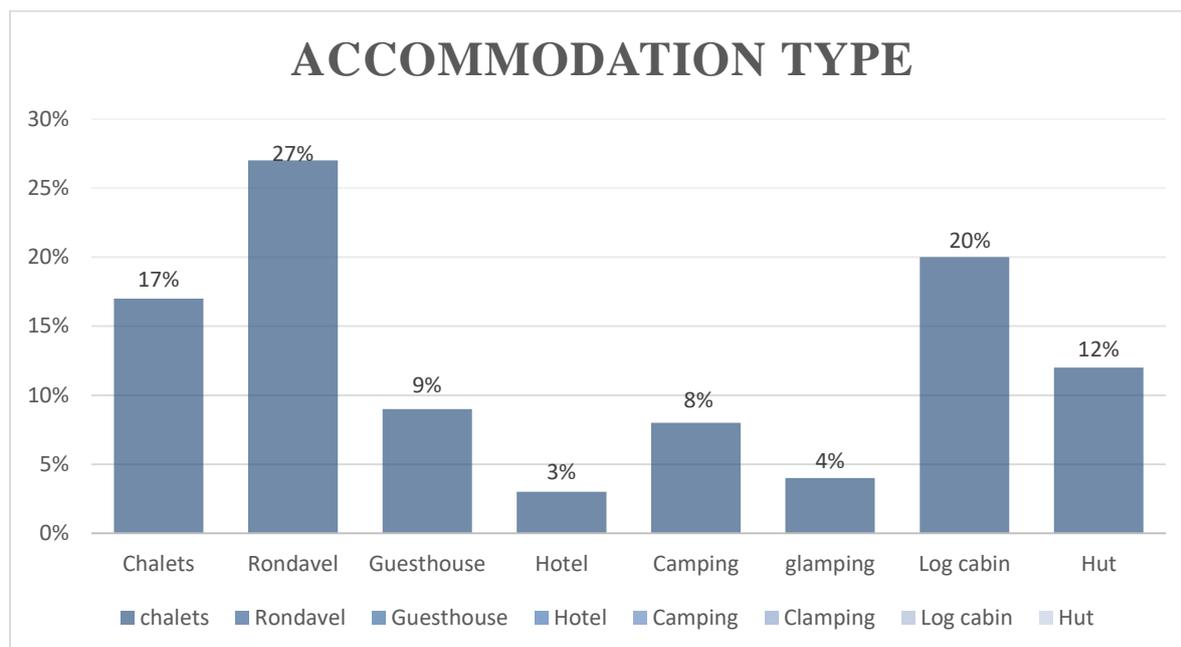


Figure 2: Accommodation type

Factor analysis

To further assist in reaching the aim of the research, three different factor analysis were conducted. Firstly the travel motives of the respondents were analysed. This was done to determine why ecotourists travel to natural areas, which will guide CRNP in what is needed to address ecotourists' needs. Secondly respondents' preferred activities were analysed. This will guide CRNP in what activities are needed to attract ecotourists to the park. Lastly ecotourists' preferred facilities were analysed to establish what facilities are needed in CRNP to be successful as ecotourism product.

Factor analysis: Travel motives

For the purpose of this study, a principal component exploratory factor analysis was used. This basically involves extracting the factor, retaining the factor and factor rotation as demonstrated by Patil et al. (2008). By using the principal component exploratory factor analysis, five factors were identified explaining 62 % of the variation data. The higher this value the better the factor loadings. The levels of agreement with the importance of the identified potential motives of ecotourists were accessed using a 5-point Likert scale. For each of the factors, the mean value (is the integral of a continuous function of one or more variables over a given range divided by the measure of the range), Cronbach's Alpha (A low Cronbach alpha can be due to a low number of questions, poor inter-relatedness between items or heterogeneous constructs. If too high, it may suggest that some items are redundant as they are testing the same question but in a different guise) and inter-item correlation (Inter-item correlations examine the extent to which scores on one item are related to scores on all other items in a scale) were examined (Piedmond, 2014; Tavakol & Dennick, 2014). The identified factors are shown in Table 1. The factor components for tourists' travel motives were labelled as Fauna and flora (Factor 1), Socialisation (Factor 2), Relaxation (Factor 3), Experiences (Factor 4) and Events and conferences (Factor 5) (Table 1). Factor 1 (Fauna and flora): Five items were loaded, namely, to see plants, for bird-watching opportunities, to see endangered species, for the scenic beauty, and to take photos of plants and animals.

Table 1: Factor analysis: Travel motives

Factor Components					
62 % variance explained	Factor 1: Fauna and flora	Factor 2: Socialisation	Factor 3: Relaxation and escape	Factor 4: Experiences	Factor 5: Events and conferences
Cronbach's Alpha	0,815	0,723	0,546	0,668	0,471
Inter-item correlations	0,466	0,371	0,236	0,394	0,346
Mean value	4,04	4,20	4,35	4,26	3,78
Constructs					
To see plants	0,815				
For bird watching opportunities	0,716				
To see endangered species	0,702				
For the scenic beauty	0,701				
To take photos of plants and animals	0,685				
To meet new people		-0,643			
For wildlife experience		-0,643			
To socialise with friends		-0,470			
For my personal wellbeing		-0,346			
For relaxation			0,756		
To get away from a regular routine			0,741		
To explore new destinations			0,723		
To explore new areas			0,672		
To spend time with family			0,401		
For new experiences				0,807	
To see the Big Five				0,780	
To attend events					0,802
To attend conferences					0,591

This research concurs with previous work done by Saayman and Van der Merwe (2007) and Kruger and Saayman (2010) on the travel motives of tourists to national parks in South Africa, who found that seeing certain animal species and scenic beauty as important travel motives for wildlife tourists. Factor 2 (Socialisation) included items such as meeting new people, a wildlife experience, socialising with friends, and for personal wellbeing. This research is in accordance with research by Toa et al. (2004), who looked into motivations of Asian tourists travelling to Taiwan's Taroko National Park, and Yoon and Uysal (2005), who observed travel motivations of Australian tourists to US national parks and nature areas. These studies all seem to find socialisations as a key motive for ecotourists visiting nature-based tourism attractions. Factor 3 (Relaxation and escape) with a mean value of 4,35 was identified. This is also the highest mean value of the five factors, making this one of the most important factors. This factor includes constructs such as relaxation, getting away from a regular routine, exploring new destinations, exploring new areas and spending time with family. This research is in accordance with research by Toa et al. (2004), who looked into motivations of Asian tourists travelling to Taiwan's Taroko National Park, who observed travel motivations of Australian tourists to US national parks and nature areas and identified relaxation and escape as a key motive for ecotourists visiting nature-based tourism attractions. Factor 4 (Experience) included constructs such as new experiences and seeing the Big Five. The factor loading portrays participants' great interest in products and activities that provide experiences. Factor 5 (Events and conferences) was labelled with constructs such as attending events and attending conferences. Events and conferences are not traditionally an associated travel motive for nature-based tourism products; therefore, something out of the ordinary and more associated with events tourism (Park et al., 2008).

Therefore, to attract ecotourists to CRNP, park management need to make sure the products they develop give tourists the opportunity to relax, socialise and experience nature.

Factor analysis: Preferred ecotourism activities

This factor analysis determined the preferred activities of the respondents (ecotourists) for nature-based products (Table 2). The principal component exploratory factor analysis was employed to confirm the validity of the construct contained in the questionnaire for the ecotourism products and it resulted in three factors explaining 60,5 % of the variables from which the test was calculated. The levels of agreement with the importance of the identified potential ecotourism products were accessed using a 5-point Likert scale. The constructs tested for ecotourism activities produced three factors, which include trail activities (Factor 1), wildlife viewing (Factor 2) and outdoor stays (Factor 3).

Table 2: Factor analysis of ecotourism products and activities

Factor components			
60,5 % variance explained	Factor 1: Trail activities	Factor 2: Wildlife viewing	Factor 3: Outdoor stays
Cronbach's Alpha	0,626	0,822	0,298
Inter-item correlations	0,354	0,481	0,179
Mean value	3,90	4,14	4,15
Activity factors			
Minigolf course	0,881		
Cycling	0,802		
Self-drive opportunities	0,722		
Hunting and fishing	0,721		
Guided safari tour	0,701		
Boating/canoeing	0,650		
Hiking trail	0,573		
Horse riding	0,564		
Gorilla tracking		0,880	
Chimpanzee encounter		0,862	
Observing the drill monkeys		0,843	
Bird watching		0,570	
Game viewing		0,542	
Picnicking and barbecuing			0,624
Camping			-0,496

Factor 1 (trail activities) contained constructs such as a minigolf course, cycling, self-drive opportunities, hunting and fishing, guided safari tour, boating/canoeing, hiking trail and horse riding. Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) work on memorable wildlife experience identified the type of activities as key factors, with trails as some of the most sought after type of activities. This research are therefore aligned with previous work. Factor 2 (wildlife viewing) consisted of constructs such as gorilla tracking, chimpanzee encounters, observing the drill monkeys, bird watching and game viewing. Constructs such as picnics and barbecues were representative of outdoor stays which form Factor 3. Factor 2 and 3 had the highest mean values, and therefore are seen as the most important factors and types of activities that need to be provided for ecotourists in CRNP. This shows that gorilla tracking would be a sought-after activity, as wildlife viewing were rated amongst the most important activities. Once more this is in accordance with research by Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) and van der Merwe and Saayman (2014). They found that viewing wildlife is vital in having a memorable experience and contributes to the travel motives of wildlife/ecotourists.

Factor analysis: Ecotourism facilities/amenities

A factor analysis was used to identify the important factors that reveal the preference for particular ecotourism facilities by making use of a principal component exploratory factor analysis. The analysis resulted in three factors for ecotourism facilities, namely supporting facilities (Factor 1), security (Factor 2) and amenities (Factor 3). Similarly, a 5-point Likert scale was used to ascertain the level of agreement with the importance of the identified potential ecotourism products. Table 3 below presents the results.

Table 3: Factor analysis of ecotourism facilities/amenities

Factor components			
Variance explained 60,5 %	Factor 1: Ancillary service	Factor 2: Adequacy	Factor 3: Food amenities
Cronbach's Alpha	0,723	0,642	0,581
Inter-item correlations	0,396	0,381	0,329
Mean value	4,46	4,35	4,56
Facilities/amenities factors			
Excellent road infrastructure in the park	8,819		
Provision of adequate power (electricity)	0,683		
Swimming pool	0,659		
Provision of communication facilities	0,542		
Basic security facilities		-0,781	
Provision of adequate water supply		-0,729	
Provision of adequate nature trails for park viewing		-0,462	
Braai facilities			0,743
Parking space			0,730
Restaurant services			0,348

Factor 1 (ancillary services) had the second highest mean value (4,46), making this an important aspect for ecotourism facilities. This factor includes constructs such as: excellent road infrastructure in the park, provision of adequate power, swimming pool and provision of communication facilities. Factor 2 (adequacy) had the lowest mean value of 4,35 with three constructs, namely basic security facilities, provision of adequate water supply and provision of adequate nature trails for park viewing. Factor 3 (food amenities) consisted of three constructs, namely braai facilities, parking space and restaurant services. This factor had the highest mean (4,56) of the three factors, confirming yet again the importance of food and related facilities at tourism products (Camilleri, 2017: 16). This importance can be reflected in the fact that these facilities can enhance tourists' experience and contribute to increasing the quality of production, service delivery and also increase remote destinations' supply of tourism products and services (Imbruglia, 2012). This information shows that park management need to develop supplementary services such as a swimming pool and braai/picnic area. A restaurant would be a good option as well as good communication facilities (cell phone reception etc.).

Discussion and implications

The first finding of this research is that for the first time CRNP management has knowledge of the profile and travel motives of potential ecotourists to the park. The results revealed that possible ecotourists to CRNP will be mainly Nigerians with a small percentage of international visitors, looking to relax. Matched to research by Kruger and Saayman (2010) and Hermann et al. (2016), conducted at South African National Parks, domestic visitors were the largest market. This product development must predominantly be focussed on the domestic market. However, due to CRNP having gorilla tracking, which is a sought-after ecotourism activity for Europeans and American tourists (MacKay & Campbell, 2012), park management must also

cater for international visitors. This can be the cream of crop activity for this park, pricing at higher pricing bringing in high-end revenue.

The second finding of the research is that it determined the accommodation preferences of potential ecotourists to the park. It is clear that park management must develop self-catering units, accommodating two to four people. There is also need for full-board accommodation, in other words, more upmarket lodging. The most preferred type of accommodation indicated by the respondents was rondavels (round shaped accommodation structure) log cabins (accommodation built from wood locks) and chalets. Therefore, these types of accommodation units are recommended for CRNP. Although these types of accommodation are not new to naturae based tourism, and identified in previous research, and commonly used all over Africa in protected areas, it confirms again their popularity. Although these types of accommodation are not new to ecotourism products (Kruger et al., 2019), and identified in previous research, and are commonly used all over Africa in protected areas, it confirms again their popularity. However, the authors are of the opinion that the accommodation preferences for the international market might be slightly diverse, and more luxury accommodation could be required (Kruger et al., 2019). This is also an area of research for future research projects.

The third, and maybe one of the most important findings of this research, was to establish possible activities for tourists to partake in at CRNP. Trails as well as wildlife viewing were activities that strongly stood out. Therefore, besides the current gorilla tracking, park management can develop hiking trails, self-guided walking trails to the waterfall and guided walking safaris. One of the main problems in the park is infrastructure such as roads to drive on, but these trails will not be as difficult to develop. The development of trails will have a smaller environmental impact (Wolf et al., 2019) than the development of roads. A second type of activity that can be developed is leisure activities, such as minigolf and cycle routes. These developments can be developed at the accommodation section in the park and will contribute to relaxation and socialisation of tourists visiting the park.

The fourth and last finding of the research was the identification of facilities/amenities that need to be developed. Ancillary facilities/services came out strongly, which were also identified in the literature study as important (Lenoir, 2011). In the case of this research electricity supply and communication facilities to name a few were identified. Therefore, it will be key in product development in the park to have reliable electricity supplies or renewable solar energy and good communication networks. Communication is vital in any tourism product; if potential tourists are not able to communicate with the product owners, make bookings etc., it will result in low booking numbers. Again today, this is relatively easy to install with various new technology on the market.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of this research was to determine the key aspects for ecotourism product development at CRNP. The results of this research are in agreement with previous literature (Kruger et al., 2017: 3; Bunghez, 2016: 8; Van der Merwe & Slabbert, 2018: 4; Haarhoff, 2018: 4–6; Verma, 2016: 1; Imbruglia, 2012: 94; ASEAN, 2015: 9) and found that accommodation, facilities and activities are key to product development. The research made the following contributions to the field of research: Firstly it identified key aspects for ecotourism product development for GRNP and potentially for other protected areas in Nigeria as well. Secondly, this was the first time that such research was conducted in Nigeria, making a contribution to literature regarding natural area tourism research in Nigeria. A third contribution of the research is a comprehensive summary of literature regarding product development for tourism products. The authors would like to make the following recommendations. Ecotourism product owners cannot just accept product development in protected areas, and markets would be the

same for different protected areas and countries. However, much of the findings of this research are in line with previous work. Most respondents were from Nigeria; therefore, it is recommended that future research must investigate international visitors to Nigeria's product preferences as this may differ from the local market.

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