Profile of Ecotourists within the Capricorn District Municipality, South Africa

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Abstract

South Africa, as an emerging country, has a conducive economic environment for tourism businesses. Thus, some provincial departments such as Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET) has set objectives to make Limpopo province a preferred ecotourism destination. These objectives have been propagated by service providers who passively participate in ecotourism yet claim to be ecotourism service providers. Moreover, the attitude of passiveness by service providers is derived from insufficient knowledge of the ecotourist. Subsequently, this set the foundation for this current study, which sought to provide demographic descriptors of ecotourists in the Capricorn District Municipality (CDM). The researchers reviewed theoretical and empirical literature conducted by tourism scholars. The study was developed on a descriptive research design and employed a quantitative approach. It is envisaged that findings of the study will be of value to ecotourism service providers as they will provide a sound understanding of ecotourists and thereby help to deliver satisfactory ecotourist experiences. This will ultimately provide valuable input in LEDET's planning towards promoting the Limpopo province as a preferred ecotourism destination in South Africa.

Key Terms: Capricorn District Municipality, Demographics, Ecotourism, Ecotourist, Responsible Tourism

Introduction

South Africa as an emerging country, has a conducive economic environment for entrepreneurs to venture into tourism businesses (Mahadea & Pillay, 2008:431; Fatoki & Smit, 2011:1415; Maziriri & Chinomona, 2016:126). Tourism ventures together with other entrepreneurial initiatives within emerging economies, have been lifeline opportunities to evade social issues arising from unemployment and to improve the economic environment of the specific country (Mahadea & Pillay, 2008:431; Lekhanya & Visser, 2016:73; Maziriri & Chinomona, 2016:127). Worldwide, the tourism industry is one of the largest industries that provides reasonable opportunities to business persons, thus making it a modern-day engine of growth (Brand South Africa, 2012:1). For instance, persons can easily convert their homes into registered guest houses and thereby offer accommodation services if they meet the guest house standards (Tourism Grading Council of South Africa, 2016:1). However, certain forms of tourism such as ecotourism are optimistically perceived to make reasonable profits whereas

most businesses in the industry are assumed to operate on tight profit margins (Ashley, De Brine, Lehr and Wilde, 2007:6; Kirkby et al., 2010:1).

For this reason, Zhao, Ritchie and Echtner (2011:1572) and Sarfaraz, Maedah, Reza and Edmundas (2015:17) are of the view that a number of service providers who ventured into new forms of tourism such as ecotourism may have been motivated by the expected economic benefits arising from ecotourism. Undesirably, some service providers are found wanting regarding serving ecotourists. Considerably, Schwarts and Hornych (2010:486) and Chimucheka and Mandipaka (2015:312) suggest that service providers lack market-research skills and this could lead them to misjudge the expectations of the potential customer.

However, considering tourists of today who are becoming dynamic and resourceful, some service providers in ecotourism are found wanting regarding the knowledge needed in understanding the dynamic ecotourist, and this can lead to business failure hence liquidation if unresolved (Lindberg, Hansen & Eide, 2014:504; Chimucheka & Mandipaka, 2015:309). The ecotourism paradigm has been associated by many with green consumerism and sustainable practices (Sarfaraz et al., 2015:17). This has caused most service providers to highlight the initiation of greening practices without confirming whether the practices are being implemented or not and to overlook the important aspect of understanding the profile of the ecotourist (Viviers, 2009:31). Therefore, service providers should comprehend the attributes found in the profiles of targeted ecotourists, thus making it possible to align service providers' offerings with ecotourists' expectations. Consequently, this study seeks to undertake research on the profile of ecotourists in the CDM by exploring their demographic descriptors.

Literature Review

Globally, the tourism industry is firmly established as a system that improves the economies of countries (Akinboade & Braihmoh, 2010:149; Jones & Lalley, 2013:267). The industry creates employment, reduces poverty and boosts the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of emerging countries (Spenceley, 2006:650; Yurtseven, 2012:37; Santiago, 2013:1; Cardenas-Garcia, Sanchez-Rivero & Pulido-Fernandez, 2015:206). Africa in particular, tourism was prompted by a Western culture that observed environmental values and enjoyed the scenic views of the African landscape (Jones & Lalley, 2013:267). In emerging countries such as South Africa that still have natural resources as tourism assets, different types of tourism have emerged to exploit the benefits of tourism and to cater for the ever-changing needs of tourists such as adventure tourism with wildlife viewing (De Witt, 2011:47).

Locally, the tourism industry has been identified as having the potential to reduce unemployment and poverty hence, contributing significantly to the country's economy (Spenceley, 2006:650; Akinboade & Braihmoh, 2010:149; Anon, 2011:46; Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), 2016:1). However, before the first democratic elections in 1994, tourism was based on a discriminatory law that hampered the growth of tourism (Sebola, 2008:59). With liberation from this discriminatory law, opportunities arose that resulted in the improvement of South African domestic tourism. This brought about a steady growth in which different forms of tourism such as ecotourism began to contribute meaningfully to the country's economy (Sebola, 2008:60).

Ecotourism has emerged as a link between tourism development and environmental protection (Wu, Zhang, Yang, Qin, Wang & Wang, 2015:2684). According to Mbaiwa (2015:205), ecotourism is perceived as a solution to environmental conservation problems. The nature of ecotourism is the involvement of primitive areas such as the CDM, which proves to have a wide geographical area of undisturbed, natural settings (De Witt, Van der Merwe & Saayman, 2014:181).

It is in these types of natural settings that ecotourism may be implemented, initiating sustainable development that fosters protection of natural landscapes such as wetlands and grasslands (Zhang, Zhong, Xu, Dang, & Zhou, 2015:26). Considering the potential of ecotourism to protect natural landscapes, it is, therefore, practical to replicate the ecotourism concept in developed areas such as metro zones (Kiper, 2012:776) Thus, protecting and conserving the remaining natural surrounds of the developed areas (Wu et al., 2015:2684).

The rapid development of tourism has initiated a need for the conservation of natural attractions. To some extent, natural hotspots are slowly being exposed to substantial human activity. For instance, in Botswana, biodiversity conservation in the Okavango Delta is endangered (Mbaiwa, 2015:205). Similarly, Darkoh and Mbaiwa (2014:2) emphasise the key role played by mass tourism in threatening environmental conservation in the Okavango Delta area. It is in such areas that the ecotourism concept is being implemented to address the environmental conservation problems.

Ecotourism is a type of tourism that centres on experiencing natural environments while advocating environmental conservation (Yen-Ting, Wan-I & Tsung-Hsiung, 2014:321). Francesca, Luigi & Paola (2012:89) postulate that ecotourism is a segment of nature-based tourism. Concurring, Lu and Stepchenkova (2012:702) view ecotourism as a promoter of nature-based tourism activities. Moreover, Vijay and Ravichandran (2013:149) state that ecotourism is a concept that was developed because of the need to fuse conservation and sustainable development. International organisations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), UNEP and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have identified and emphasised the necessity for the conservation of natural areas in an economic, socio-cultural and environmentally sustainable manner, and ecotourism addresses this (Francesca, Luigi and Paola, 2012:88).

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) (2015:1) defines ecotourism as the responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and upholds the welfare of the local people. Six principles that form the foundation of the definition by TIES have been identified:

- Minimising impacts
- Building environmental and cultural awareness
- Fostering respect
- Delivering satisfactory experiences for the host and the visitor
- Providing financial benefits for the local people
- Stressing the need to be sensitive to political and social environments of the host country (Honey and Krantz, 2007:30; Honey, 2008:5; Zambrano, Broadbent and Durham, 2010:62; Lu and Stepchenkova, 2012:703; Kiper, 2012:775)

These principles are embedded within the values and codes of ecotourists and govern ecotourists' behaviour (Walter, 2013:21). It is due to these principles that a difference in the characteristics of tourists can be identified, thereby helping to segment the mass tourist base (Kachel & Jennings, 2009:134; Perkins & Brown, 2012:794). Moreover, Weaver and Lawton (2007:1170) mentioned that a visit to a predominantly nature-based attraction that provides a learning and educating experience, requires strict adherence to the principles of socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability for ecotourism to prevail.

The emergence of ecotourism provides a solid platform for sustainable tourism development to be deployed effectively into the local marginalised communities (George, 2007:29; Ivanovic, Khunou, Reynish, Pawson and Tseane, 2009:271; De Witt, 2011:67; Kiper, 2012:773). In most cases, the marginalised areas offer pristine environments that have not been exposed to modernisation, and this acts as an attractive force for ecotourists (De Witt, 2011:67; De Witt, Van der Merwe and Saayman, 2014:181). However, marginalised areas need alternative sources that provide sustainable livelihood assets to the local communities such as those identified by SANParks in its community-based conservation and socio-economic

development projects (SANParks, 2013:11). In response to this need, Kiper (2012:773) alludes to ecotourism as being a suitable source that can deliver community development in a sustainable way.

In ecotourism activities, ecotourists travel responsibly to areas that exist in their natural state (Resulaj, Kadiu, Risillia, & Jaupi, 2012:69). In most cases, the travel is motivated by an interest in nature, flora and fauna and the need to reduce negative impacts on the environment. On the contrary, decades ago, mass tourists mostly travelled for personal experience with little or no concern for the protection of the natural environment (Andriotis, Agiomirigianakis & Mihiotis, 2007:54). However, more recently, mass tourists have encountered scrutiny and are prone to criticism due to their lack of responsible behaviour, which has prompted the development of a responsible tourist known as the 'new tourist' (Fennell, 2008:17).

Role of ecotourism in the South African tourism industry

South Africa has unique natural attractions such as the Kruger National Park, which draws millions of domestic and international tourists each year (South Africa Yearbook, 2015:1). Tourism exists if the destination attraction retains its value. However, some attractions have become 'obsolete' and have lost their value due to various reasons such as an unstable economy, political interference or mismanagement of the attraction (Du Cros & McKercher, 2014:181). For example, steam locomotives lost their value in past decades, but private groups in South Africa such as the Sandstone Heritage Trust have rejuvenated the value of these attractions. This has resulted in more private groups being formed to preserve other attractions from becoming obsolete (South African Tourism (SAT), 2015:2).

Consequently, ecotourism has the role of creating a platform that addresses needs such as the conservation of natural attractions (Fennell, 2006:5; Spenceley, 2006:650; Newsome & Hassell, 2014:2). De Witt (2011:54) purposively suggests that the roles of ecotourism can be effectively carried out if the ecotourism system is unequivocally understood within its geographical context. In the view of De Witt (2011), if ecotourism is entirely expressed based on its principles, the following would be the key roles of ecotourism in the South African tourism industry:

- Sustainable development of the physical environment, economic environment and social environment in the South African tourism industry
- Provision of authentic ecotourist experiences
- Exposure of locals and visitors to environmental education
- Enhancement of the local natural environment and cultural environment

With reference to the need of emerging ecotourists to experience the pristine environments that ecotourism offers, ecotourism has created an opportunity for emerging countries to preserve their natural sites and market them as tourist attractions (Honey & Gilpin, 2009:3; Regmi & Walter, 2016:6). Most emerging countries have attractions that have not yet been exposed to the adverse effects of modernisation. Nonetheless, some governments do not have adequate funds to manage the conservation areas and, therefore, such areas are inclined to lose value (TIES, 2015:1). Ecotourism thus creates an opportunity to generate revenue and simultaneously conserve the pristine environments. In addition, most communities near conservation areas in developing countries are rural settlements. These communities anticipate the sustainable socio-economic benefits that are created by ecotourism and that will reduce the levels of impoverishment among locals (Jones & Lalley, 2013:266). In developed countries such as the European states, ecotourism has a legitimate role of preserving the existing natural attractions through environmental education of staff and tourists (Clifton and Benson, 2006:239).

In support of De Witt's (2011:54) suggestions, ecotourism conserves the natural state of destination attractions while creating economic opportunities for the host community, for example, the nine community-based, socio-economic initiatives implemented by SANParks in 2014 (Santiago, 2013:1; SANParks, 2014:10). Ecotourism fosters the management of a suitable carrying capacity, which sustains the attraction. In nature tourism, most attractions are based on natural sites. These sites, if mismanaged, could plummet into a decline phase that would impede tourism existence in the respective destination area. Ecotourism promotes nature-based tourism (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012:702) and therefore, has a role to preserve the sites visited. The tourists participating in ecotourism mostly have knowledge of how to behave in a responsible manner that is governed by ecotourism principles (De Witt et al., 2014:181). This enforces the conservation of attractions and thereby improves the level of tourism in the destination area. South Africa National Parks is a good example of organisations bearing witness to the roles played by ecotourism in boosting tourism.

In 2009, SANParks received 4.3 million visitors, which made it a top destination in South Africa. The remarkable number of tourists was achieved by observing ecotourism principles while providing authentic ecotourism experiences that conserve nature and account for the needs of the locals (Slabbert & Du Plessis, 2013:641; SANParks, 2014:7). The organisation's reputation in conserving nature, which is supported by its Environmental Education Programme, saw an annual increase in learners of 39 652 in 2014. According to SANParks (2014:10), in the same year, tourism opportunities were boosted for the locals by the organisation's support of 624 small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), its implementation of nine community-based, socio-economic initiatives and its employment of many recruits for 13 141 temporary jobs, which is supported by the Expanded Public Works Programme of SANParks. Hence, these statistics stand as evidence of the key roles that ecotourism has played in South Africa (SANParks, 2014:10). These aforementioned roles could emerge from different variables that contribute and influence the existence of ecotourism.

Ecotourism in the Capricorn District Municipality

The CDM has a vast area of natural tourism assets. It nurtures responsible tourism based on the principles of the charter for Fair Trade Tourism. Furthermore, tourism attractions that are known worldwide are found close to the district, and these include the Kruger National Park, ancient landscapes and the Mapungubwe Heritage Site (Local Economic Development (LED), 2016:1). The district offers activities for both ecotourists and adventure-seeking tourists with attractions such as the Polokwane Game Reserve, the Polokwane Bird Sanctuary, several informative art museums and Bakone Malapa Open-Air Museum, which is an on-site cultural village (CDM, 2014:1). Some of the ecotourist attractions are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Attractions in Capricorn District Municipality

CAPRICORN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY			
Nature Reserves	**Tourist Routes**	**Wildlife Experiences**	**Education, Culture and Heritage**
Friends of Blouberg	Soutpansberg –Limpopo Birding Route	Walking safaris	Museums and monuments
Blouberg Nature Reserve	Ribolla Open Africa Route	Horseback safaris	Cultural villages
Percy Fyfe Conservancy	African Ivory Route	Wildlife conservation	Rock art sites
Schuinsdraai Nature Reserve	Limpopo Valley Route	Wildlife photography	Arts and crafts
Balule Nature Reserve	Heritage Route	Birding	Heritage sites

The CDM integrated ecotourism into the tourism development plan with the aim of promoting responsible tourism within the district and making the province a preferred ecotourism destination (CDM, 2014:1). A need for the conservation of natural attractions was recognised, which resulted in zoning of game reserves and conservational parks within the Limpopo province. As a result, the CDM has become a favourable destination for ecotourists who want

to interact with nature in unspoilt environments (CDM, 2014:1). Furthermore, the district is surrounded by sacred spiritual sites and places of historical significance such as cultural villages. These lure ecotourists who want to learn more about the people who originate from the district. The CDM thus provides a suitable study setting for the compilation of ecotourist profiles. The next section hereby presents an analysis on profiling regarding this study's area of interest.

Profiling

Understanding the marketing profiles of ecotourists is a key element in the tourism industry that assists service providers in becoming competitive (Kwan, Eagles & Gebhardt, 2010:4). It leads to the development of better management plans and strategies, which leads to improved customer experience (Tao, Eagles & Smith, 2004:149). Numerous studies have been conducted to comprehend tourism marketing supplies. For example, studies dating back to the 1980s revealed ecotourists to be predominantly male, wealthy and well educated (Fennell, 2008;40; Kim & Slevitch, 2010:79; Torres-Sovero, Gonzalez, Martin-Lopez & Kirkby, 2011:547; Sheena, Mariapan & Aziz, 2015:3).

However, most studies did not cater for the differences in ecotourists' preferences and motivations for other activities such as visiting pristine environments, and this prompted researchers to attempt to classify ecotourists into various categories (Weaver & Lawton, 2007:1170; Jones & Lalley, 2013:270). In addition, most profiling studies were based on Western ecotourist traits together with Asian characteristics, and these comprised the generally accepted categories used in ecotourism literature (Kim & Slevitch, 2010:78). Studies on profiling ecotourists took precedence in the early days of ecotourism, with the aim of creating a better understanding of the ecotourist and grasping the experiences sought by ecotourists as groups and individuals (Fennell, 2008:39). Nonetheless, insight from contemporary studies reveals that despite the general typologies of ecotourists, specific profiles of ecotourists are found within particular destination regions. This can be attributed to the ever-changing needs of consumers and the improvement in accessing informative material for consumers.

Profiling potential and actual customers is of paramount importance to policymakers, market analysts, managers and destination developers since it helps in developing strategies and in planning (D'Urso, De Giovanni, Disegna and Massari, 2013:4948). Profiling, therefore, consists of combining different variables into segments that result in meaningful information that can be used for competitive marketing purposes. Depending on the study undertaken, variables used could include gender, income, age, education level and area of origin or culture indicating the demographic patterns (Tao et al., 2004:149).

Demographic Segmentation

Demographic segmentation consists of using variables such as age, gender, family, income, occupation, education, religion, race and nationality to split the market (Sikarwar & Verma, 2012:2; Esu, 2016:122). Demographic changes in tourist flow have been identified as a cause for the remarkable growth of ecotourism when compared with the tourism industry (Hill & Gale, 2009:3). This illuminates the reason for the importance of profiling the market using demographics since it provides a base for identifying competitive factors (Mazurek, 2014:89). Understanding the variables identified by demographic segmentation assists with the strategising of sustainable marketing (Pesonen, 2013:30). Sustainable marketing creates a balance between the environment and tourists' needs, which compels future and repeat visits (Slabbert & Du Plessis, 2013:641).

In tourism, a clear demarcation of targeted markets based on demographic criteria is expressed by tour operators such as Saga Holidays, which targets the elderly age group. Ecotourists can be segmented based on several variables such as gender, income, age, religion, ethnicity and lifestyle. George (2014:172) indicates that age can determine the

propensity to travel similarly, income group determines the disposable income available, thus influencing the choice of holiday to undertake.

Ecotourism products are relatively expensive compared with conventional tourism products and thus, if a marketer is aware of the income groups of the potential consumers, a sound decision can be made on the type of consumers to target (Slabbert and Du Plessis, 2013:643). As potential and actual customers become more affluent, issues such as price become a sensitive matter. The higher the price bracket, the better the service quality or benefit sought. It is difficult to ignore that when an educated individual spends more, a certain level of standard is sought that may be used to reveal a desired status. Therefore, a delivered service quality may be found offensive if it fails to portray the desired status. This is supported by the number of grading stars awarded to a tourism establishment. The more grading stars that an establishment has, the better the service quality and the status recognition it grants to the consumer.

Subsequently, a high-star rated establishment intending to serve ecotourists requires a detailed demographic segment description. This assists the management of the establishment in understanding the income levels that influence consumers' wants and needs (Kamarulzaman & Abu, 2012:108). As a result of the input provided by demographic segmentation, ecotourism products and services may be designed to target the different age groups and income levels, resulting in satisfying offerings being provided. This clearly outlines the important role played by demographic segmentation in improving ecotourism services. Therefore, demographic profiling is justifiable as it is aligned to the motive of this study which is understanding the profile of ecotourists found within the boundaries of CDM. The next section clarifies the state of inquiry used in data collection, the instrument employed and the way in which data was statistically analysed.

Methodology

Limpopo Tourism Agency (2016:3) indicates that there are five local municipalities under CDM namely; Aganang and Lepelle-Nkumpi municipalities which have a reputation for environmentally friendly accommodation facilities, Blouberg municipality which is known for its nature reserves, Molemole municipality which provides a number of wildlife experiences and Polokwane municipality which has an array of attractions such as cultural villages and walking safaris. Therefore, a significant number of ecotourists are likely to be found in the Capricorn District Municipality (Limpopo Tourism Agency, 2016:3). The selection of the study setting was motivated by the need to support Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET)'s strategic objective of making the Limpopo province a preferred ecotourism destination (LEDET, 2012:7).

The study population consisted of tourists and visitors found within the Capricorn District Municipality. Establishments and attractions were selected from each of the local municipalities within the Capricorn District Municipality in an attempt to cover a wider area and thus obtain a fair representation of the population. RaoSoft formula was used to determine the minimum sample size of this study however, the realised sample size was 295. Non-probability sampling category was considered due to the absence of a sampling fame. The realistic sampling technique applicable to this study was purposive sampling technique, of which according to Ilker, Sulaiman and Rukayya (2015:2), does not require supporting theories to determine the number of participants and is a measured choice when certain qualities or characteristics are possessed by the subjects or the elements of the study. This sampling technique was appropriate for the current study since it allowed the researcher to focus on establishments and attractions and subsequently to identify through the convenience sampling technique, the ecotourists who would complete the questionnaires. The convenience sampling technique makes use of the first available source with regard to ease of access, geographical proximity, willingness and availability of respondents (Kumar, 2014:244; Ilker et al., 2015:2).

The relevant instrument for this study was a self-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire was hand delivered to the respondents. The researcher integrated certain attributes used in past research instruments into the development of this study's instrument such as those indicated by Deng and Li (2015:259), Leonidou, Coudounaris, Kvasova and Christodoulides (2015:643), Walters and Ruhanen (2015:526) and Youn and Ryu (2016:4). The instrument consisted of three sections; Section A: Preferences, Section B: Responsible behavioural descriptors and Section C: Demographical information. As for data collection, two fieldworkers and the researcher were responsible for ethically collecting data for this study. Data analysis included descriptive statistics with chi-square tests being conducted to compare the goodness of fit of theoretical and observed frequency distributions and identify any significant differences (Hamilton, 2013:151).

Results
Respondents' Description

This study attained a response rate of 84% with 295 usable questionnaires from a total of 350 questionnaires distributed. The respondents comprised 63% female while the dominant age group was that of 35 years and above. The black ethnic group dominated in this study comprising 76% of the respondents. Regarding education status, a postgraduate qualification was obtained by 47% of the respondents while the employed status was indicated by 53% of the respondents. The marital status category comprised 51% married and 40% single. As for household types, married with children type had a representation of 31% while a single person type comprised 25%. Of the participants, South Africans constituted 97% with the most respondents of 55% originating from Limpopo province. The next sections examines the assumptions arising from the respondents' descriptions to address the objective of identifying the demographic descriptors applicable to ecotourists in the Capricorn District Municipality. Cross-tabulation tests were used to identify elements that an ecotourist may possess and to identify the elements that determine and influence a person to become an ecotourist regarding CDM as the destination.

Cross-comparison analysis

Table 1: Cross comparison between gender and being an ecotourist

Variable			Ecotourist		
			Yes	No	Total
Gender	Female	Count	101	69	170
		% of Total	37.4%	25.6%	63.0%
	Male	Count	67	33	100
		% of Total	24.8%	12.2%	37.0%
Total		Count	168	102	270
		% of Total	62.2%	37.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests			Value	df	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square			1.542[a]	1	.214
Likelihood Ratio			1.555	1	.212
Linear-by-Linear Association			1.537	1	.215
No. of Valid Cases			270		

0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 37.78.

From Table 1, female ecotourists were represented by 37.4% while in the male category 24.8% indicated as being ecotourists. The higher percentage of female participation in ecotourism activities may be influenced by the improvement of women's rights and the recognition of women as a potential market within the local context.

The chi-square test for this analysis in Table 1 indicated an insignificant relationship between gender and being an ecotourist (X^2=1.542: p>.214). It can, therefore, be accepted that there is no association when ecotourists are selected based on gender. Therefore, only the representation of gender distribution is outlined in the discussions.

Table 2: Cross comparison between age and being an ecotourist

Variable			Ecotourist		
			Yes	No	Total
Age	18–24	Count	42	27	69
		% of Total	15.3%	9.8%	25.1%
	25–34	Count	58	40	98
		% of Total	21.1%	14.5%	35.6%
	35+	Count	71	37	108
		% of Total	25.8%	13.5%	39.3%
Total		Count	171	104	275
		% of Total	62.2%	37.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests			Value	df	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square			1.007[a]	2	.604
Likelihood Ratio			1.011	2	.603
Linear-by-Linear Association			.557	1	.455
No. of Valid Cases			275		

0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 26.09.

The attribute age was analysed to determine if it influenced one to become an ecotourist. This would assist in understanding the profiles of ecotourists visiting eco-friendly attractions and the establishments in the Capricorn District Municipality. As depicted in Table 2, the number of ecotourists in the age group of 18–24 years was approximately 6% higher than normal tourists. Likewise, the age group of 25–34 years showed the representation of ecotourists to be higher than normal tourists by approximately 7%. As for the age group of 35+ years, it also indicated a positive representation of ecotourists that exceeded normal tourists by approximately 12%.

The chi-square test results for this attribute proved an insignificant association between age and becoming an ecotourist ($X^2=1.007$: $p>.604$). Interestingly, in this case, the 35+ year age group constituted most of the ecotourists who participated in this study (25.8%). However, the distribution of ecotourists among the age groups is of interest to this study and is outlined in the discussions.

The study further surveyed occupational status with results depicted in Table 3. The results indicate the self-employed group having the most respondents as ecotourists. This was marked by 19.6% of ecotourists compared with 4.7% of non-ecotourists. The second-highest group was in the employed category. The results indicated 14.5% of ecotourists compared with 15.3% of non-ecotourists.

Regarding the retired group, 8.7% of respondents within the retired group indicated being ecotourists compared with 5.1% who indicated being non-ecotourists. However, respondents in the student category demonstrated 12.4% as ecotourists and 10.2% as non-ecotourists, while the not-employed group indicated 6.9% as ecotourists and 2.5% as non-ecotourists.

A positive association between occupational status and becoming an ecotourist was identified ($X^2=18.674$: $p<.001$). From these results in Table 3, more time and more disposable income may improve the possibility of becoming an ecotourist. Hence, ecotourists are inclined to emerge from the self-employed, retired and employed occupational groups.

Table 3: Cross comparison between occupational status and being an ecotourist

| Variable | | | Ecotourist | | |
			Yes	No	Total
Occupation	Employed	Count	40	42	82
		% of Total	14.5%	15.3%	29.8%
	Student	Count	34	28	62
		% of Total	12.4%	10.2%	22.5%
	Self employed	Count	54	13	67
		% of Total	19.6%	4.7%	24.4%
	Not employed	Count	19	7	26
		% of Total	6.9%	2.5%	9.5%
	Retired	Count	24	14	38
		% of Total	8.7%	5.1%	13.8%
Total		Count	171	104	275
		% of Total	62.2%	37.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests			Value	df	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square			18.674[a]	4	.001
Likelihood Ratio			19.510	4	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association			7.499	1	.006
No. of Valid Cases			275		

0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.83.

As for cross comparison between household type and being an ecotourist, Table 4 results showed that the household type of married with children is dominated by ecotourists, with 35.1% of ecotourists and 23.5% of non-ecotourists. This percentage of 35.1% ecotourists within the household type of married with children also accounted for 22% of the ecotourists who participated in the study. The single-person household type was equally distributed between ecotourists and non-ecotourists. However, 15.4% of the ecotourists who participated in the study belonged to the single-person household. Additionally, the grandparents household type had a significant 9.9% of ecotourists compared with 4.9% of non-ecotourists. This could explain the retired occupational group being reflective of ecotourists.

Table 4: Cross comparison between household type and being an ecotourist

| Variable | | | Ecotourist | | |
			Yes	No	Total
Household	Single person	Count	42	25	67
		% of Total	15.4%	9.2%	24.5%
	Couple without children	Count	10	2	12
		% of Total	3.7%	0.7%	4.4%
	Same-sex parents	Count	5	1	6
		% of Total	1.8%	0.4%	2.2%
	Single parent	Count	24	18	42
		% of Total	8.8%	6.6%	15.4%
	Married with children	Count	60	24	84
		% of Total	22.0%	8.8%	30.8%
	Grandparents	Count	17	5	22
		% of Total	6.2%	1.8%	8.1%
	Couple with children	Count	9	15	24
		% of Total	3.3%	5.5%	8.8%
	Married without children	Count	4	12	16
		% of Total	1.5%	4.4%	5.9%
Total		Count	171	102	273
		% of Total	62.6%	37.4%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests			Value	df	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square			24.789[a]	7	.001
Likelihood Ratio			24.882	7	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association			3.946	1	.047
No. of Valid Cases			273		

3 cells (18.8%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.24.

Table 5: Cross comparison between marital status and being an ecotourist

| Variable | | | Ecotourist | | |
			Yes	No	Total
Status	Single	Count	78	56	134
		% of Total	28.4%	20.4%	48.7%
	Married	Count	73	35	108
		% of Total	26.5%	12.7%	39.3%
	Other	Count	20	13	33
		% of Total	7.3%	4.7%	12.0%
Total		Count	165	101	266
		% of Total	62.2%	37.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests			Value	df	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square			2.279[a]	2	.320
Likelihood Ratio			2.296	2	.317
Linear-by-Linear Association			.753	1	.386
No. of Valid Cases			275		

0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.48.

A test was conducted to determine if marital status had a significant association with being an ecotourist. For analysis purposes, the responses were grouped into three categories; single, married and other due to the minimal data available in the 'other' response options.

The results in shown in Table 5 indicated ecotourists dominating in the single status group, which had 28.4% ecotourists and 20.4% non-ecotourists. Similarly, married status had a response of 26.5% ecotourists and 12.7% non-ecotourists. The 'other' category consisted of widows and divorced respondents. Despite the low representation in count, a notable difference was observed with 7.3% ecotourists and 4.7% non-ecotourists.

However, the chi-square test indicated an insignificant relationship between marital status and being an ecotourist. The result of $X^2=2.279$: $p>.320$ clearly signifies the non-related association between marital status and being an ecotourist. However, the counts in the single and married marital status groups are lucrative for business when compared with the 'other' category.

Table 6: Cross comparison between income and being an ecotourist

| Variable | | | Ecotourist | | |
			Yes	No	Total
Income	<R10 000	Count	57	39	96
		% of Total	23.1%	15.8%	38.9%
	R10 001–R20 000	Count	48	19	67
		% of Total	19.4%	7.7%	27.1%
	R20 001–R30 000	Count	28	9	37
		% of Total	11.3%	3.6%	15.0%
	R30 001–R40 000	Count	15	11	26
		% of Total	6.1%	4.5%	10.5%
	>R40 000	Count	17	4	21
		% of Total	6.9%	1.6%	8.5%
Total		Count	165	82	247
		% of Total	66.8%	33.2%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests			Value	df	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square			7.278[a]	4	.122
Likelihood Ratio			7.449	4	.114
Linear-by-Linear Association			2.313	1	.128
No. of Valid Cases			247		

0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.97.

The results in Table 6 specify that in the income bracket of <R 10 000, the number of ecotourists was 23.1% as opposed to 15.8% non-ecotourists. The bracket of R10 001 to R20 000 demonstrated 19.4% ecotourists as opposed to 7.7% non-ecotourists. The bracket of R20 001 to R30 000 likewise, had more ecotourists than non-ecotourists. Likewise, the

bracket of R30 000 to R40 000, had more ecotourists (6.1%) than non-ecotourists (4.5%). Lastly, the bracket of >R40 000 had 6.9% ecotourists and 1.6% non-ecotourists.

As suggested by the differences in the totals of each category, it can be observed that most ecotourists are found in the first three income brackets (<R10 000–R30 000). With reference to the chi-square results of X^2=7.278: p>.122, the two variables are independent of each other, suggesting a non-significant association between income and being an ecotourist.

Table 7: Cross comparison between education and being an ecotourist

| Variable | | | Ecotourist | | |
			Yes	No	Total
Education	Elementary school	Count	1	4	5
		% of Total	0.4%	1.6%	1.9%
	Secondary school	Count	21	25	46
		% of Total	8.1%	9.7%	17.8%
	Degree level	Count	57	21	78
		% of Total	22.1%	8.1%	30.2%
	Postgraduate level	Count	79	50	129
		% of Total	30.6%	19.4%	50.0%
Total		Count	158	100	258
		% of Total	61.2%	38.8%	100.0%
Chi-Square Tests			Value	df	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square			12.896[a]	3	.005
Likelihood Ratio			12.962	3	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association			3.071	1	.080
No. of Valid Cases			258		

2 cells (25.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.94.

The education attribute of ecotourists and non-ecotourists was explored to determine if education level influences one to become an ecotourist. Table 7 indicates that the number of ecotourists increases with the level of education acquired. A total of 30.6% of ecotourists surpassed or are currently at the postgraduate level, while 19.4% of non-ecotourists demonstrated the same level of education. A similarity to certain other ecotourism studies is observed within this study since the group at the postgraduate level of education has the highest number of respondents who are ecotourists. In contrast, the lowest level, elementary school, shows the least number of ecotourists. However, the chi-square test results indicate X^2=12.896: p=.005 and thus, the relationship between education and being an ecotourist is statistically significant.

Additionally, a cross-tabulation test was conducted with the variable 'ecotourist' being the control variable. This was done to determine if the age of the ecotourist significantly influences the choice of attraction. A count of 167 ecotourists intended to visit the listed attractions compared with 101 non-ecotourists. However, the age group of 35+ years significantly emerged as the group with the most ecotourists (41.3%). The ecotourists within the 35+ year age group intended: (1) to visit the Kruger National Park; (2) to visit the Polokwane Bird Sanctuary; and (3) to participate in 4x4 trail challenges. The other attractions received minimal preference. The age group of 35+ years demonstrated 33.7% non-ecotourists.

Relatively, the 25–34 year age group indicated 33.5% ecotourists and 39.6% non-ecotourists. The Kruger National Park and the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site were indicated as the most-preferred attractions, with an average of 27.7%. Langjan Nature Reserve, Polokwane Bird Sanctuary and Bakone Malapa Cultural Village were moderately preferred with an average of 14.3%. The adventurous activity (4x4 trail challenge) received minimal attention from this age group.

The age group of 18–24 years comprised the least number of ecotourists: 25.1%, with 26.7% non-ecotourists. For the ecotourists within this age group, the Kruger National Park was preferred by most (64.3%) of the ecotourists, while the responses for Polokwane Bird Sanctuary and Langjan Nature Reserve indicated 21.4% and 11.9% respectively. It is

noticeable that within the age group of 18–24 years, natural attractions are the most preferred. These results indicate that a relationship between age and preferred attraction exists but depends on whether one is an ecotourist or not. The ecotourists exhibited a high level of preference for the mentioned attractions which is confirmed by the chi-square test in Table 8.

There is a statistically significant relationship between the age of an ecotourist and preferred attraction that depends on whether one is an ecotourist or not. The results of X^2=47.168: p<.000 for ecotourists and X^2=32.424: p<.001 for non-ecotourists were observed. The symmetric measure values were all greater than 0.3, thereby confirming a strong relationship for this aspect. The following section presents the discussions on a variety of aspects that may be identified as demographic descriptors.

Table 8: Cross comparison between age of ecotourists and preferred attraction

Chi-Square Tests

Ecotourist		Value	Df	P-value
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	47.168[b]	12	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	52.934	12	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	7.429	1	.006
	No. of Valid Cases	167		
No	Pearson Chi-Square	32.424[c]	12	.001
	Likelihood Ratio	37.500	12	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	7.292	1	.007
	No. of Valid Cases	101		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	29.417[a]	12	.003
	Likelihood Ratio	35.088	12	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	14.789	1	.000
	No. of Valid Cases	268		

a. 3 cells (18.1%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.54.
b. 2 cells (17.6%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.75.
c. 3 cells (11.4%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.80.

Discussion

Several descriptors were identified to determine if one can become an ecotourist or if being an ecotourist is based on the applicability of the descriptor to the individual, resultantly meeting the aim of the study. The results of the study indicated a higher number of female participants than male participants regarding gender distribution. From the findings in Chapter 5, ecotourists were highly represented in the female category, with 56.7% of the total female participants indicated as ecotourists compared with 63.2% in the male category. This study, therefore, discovered that ecotourists in the Capricorn District Municipality are mostly females. Similarities are identified in the findings of Zografos and Allcroft (2007:54) that indicate females are dominating the ecotourism market. Relatedly, other ecotourism studies such as the self-identification of ecotourists by Deng and Li (2015:260) show similarities with respect to females outnumbering males, which could lead to the assumption that ecotourists are mostly females.

Regarding the age descriptor, the study identified the 35+ year age group as dominating. Other ecotourism studies such as the studies conducted by Yen-Ting et al., (2014:325) and Sheena et al., (2015:13) identified the young age group of 21–30 years and the age group of 21–40 years respectively as being significantly active in ecotourism activities. Therefore, the results of this study are in line with the findings of previous studies with regard to age. Weaver and Lawton (2002:277) suggest that the identification of such a relatively young age group could mean the presence of softer ecotourists in the study area, which could denote that ecotourists in the Capricorn District Municipality are inclusive of softer ecotourists.

Referring to the occupational attribute results, the self-employed occupational group is highly significant in influencing one to become an ecotourist. Additionally, results in the study revealed a statistically significant relationship between education and being an ecotourist. Strong relationships were identified between both occupation and level of education and being recognised as an ecotourist or being influenced to become an ecotourist. Consistently, Fennell (2008:40), Kim and Slevitch (2010:79) and Torres-Sovero et al. (2011:547) identified highly educated individuals as dominating the ecotourism market. This leads to the suggestion that educated individuals in the Capricorn District Municipality with good occupations that provide more free time are likely to become ecotourists or understand ecotourism.

The results for household type indicated a statistically significant association with being an ecotourist. According to the study findings, ecotourists in the Capricorn District Municipality are mainly from the married-with-children, grandparents and single-person household types. Regarding marital status, a statistically insignificant relationship was indicated, representing an independent relationship between being an ecotourist and marital status. The absence of literature on the attribute 'household type' made it impossible to make comparisons with previous studies.

An attribute that is key in most tourism activities is the availability of disposable income. The more income earned, the more one is inclined to travel. However, the results of this study indicated a statistically insignificant relationship between being an ecotourist and income group. Deng and Li (2015:267) and Sheena et al., (2015:12) found similar results for income levels. This signifies that being an ecotourist is not dependent on one's income. Being an ecotourist is not influenced by disposable income increasing or remaining constant. However, the activities that the ecotourist undertakes are certainly dependent on disposable income and available time as well as the ecotourist's physical and mental ability to participate in the activity.

Possible reasons for the variations in demographics are:

- A possible cause of the representation of gender is outlined by Dinolia and Allen (1992) and cited in Lu and Stepchenkova (2012:711) as the tendency of women to disclose willingly more information to a stranger compared with men.
- The high number of females at eco-friendly establishments could be a matter of choice or simply women having more time to travel compared with men.
- Regarding occupational type, the study considers that from the two groups (retired and self-employed), a common factor influencing the respondents to participate in ecotourism activities exists, and this may be the availability of more free time. Due to the nature of these occupations in which it is admissible for persons to manage their time freely, the inclination to travel and to participate in ecotourism activities is increased.
- The indicated household types show that when one falls under the single-person household, the married-with-children household or the grand-parents household, there is a positive chance of becoming an ecotourist. The reasons behind such assumptions could be related to the family life cycle, which influences the type of trips taken and the attractions visited at a given point within the cycle.
- A common ground may thus be established in most family life cycles; visiting natural and cultural attractions that involve learning experiences is applicable to the identified households. This either intentionally or by chance aligns the individuals from these households to the principles of ecotourism, thereby influencing the individuals to become ecotourists or to participate in ecotourism activities.

Conclusion

From an academic viewpoint, this study has directly responded to needed market intelligence. Literature indicated the inadequate understanding of service providers regarding the ecotourist. The following are conclusions derived from the demographic descriptors:

- The study identified demographic descriptors for ecotourists in the Capricorn District Municipality that should provide service providers with a platform to understand reasonably the characteristics of the potential customer.
- The results of the study may, therefore, be used as a focal point for marketing strategies such as the segmentation processes based on customer characteristics.
- With the availability of knowledge regarding the ecotourist, ecotourism product and service management can improve their marketing strategies by ideally conducting an introspection of the services offered to ecotourists.
- Inherently, the demographic descriptors could provide new avenues to exploit, which could lead to promotional material effectively reaching the targeted ecotourists visiting the Capricorn District Municipality.

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