

AFRICANS AND PROTECTED AREAS: NORTH-SOUTH PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

The paper critically explores why most black Africans do not visit protected areas. More specifically, the study examines non-Western tourists' perceptions of nature and nature-based tourism in comparison to Western tourists, using Botswana as a case study. The differences in perceptions are explored by adopting an interpretive paradigm to collect and analyze the data and using the North-South conceptualization of nature and tourism. Results indicate that for Western tourists visiting Botswana, nature symbolizes recreation, rejuvenation, and an opportunity "to get away from it all," whereas for the Batswana, it is perceived as a part of everyday life, not an exclusive leisure space. Furthermore, Batswana's conceptualization, relation to nature, and historical, cultural, and political backgrounds help explain their non-participation in nature-based tourism.

Keywords: non-Western; domestic tourism; nature-based tourism; Botswana; Africa; developing countries; non-participation; disengagement.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, protected areas receive about 8 billion visits annually (Center for Responsible Travel, 2015). With an increasing number of people living in urban areas and adopting modern facilities and technologies, a clear disconnect with nature has occurred, thereby making “getting back in touch with nature” the ultimate holiday experience for urbanites (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008). For many developing regions, nature-based tourism plays an important role in the economy. In southern Africa, it generates approximately the same revenue as farming, forestry, and fisheries combined (Balmford, Beresford, Green, Naidoo & Walpole, 2009). Tourism is synonymous with wildlife safaris in numerous countries in the region (Ferreira, 2004), and many have designated large proportions of their land as protected areas. For example, 39% of land in Botswana has been allocated to wildlife and nature-based tourism management (Department of Tourism, 2012).

Despite this, locals’ visitation to protected areas remains very low in Botswana. In 2011, domestic tourists comprised only 13% of non-guided visitors and eight percent of mobile tour operator clients (DWNP, 2014). This may be a reflection of the perception that international tourists are guests and locals can only be hosts (Alneng, 2002). The absence of locals in their protected areas and lack of appreciation of their own natural heritage could be a major impediment to the long-term sustainability of these spaces in post-colonial Africa. It is therefore important to gain insight into people’s views and perceptions of protected areas (Karanth & Nepal, 2012).

This paper aims to identify Botswana’s perceptions of nature-based tourism by comparing to those of international tourists visiting the two most popular protected areas

in Botswana: Chobe National Park (CNP) and Moremi Game Reserve (MGR). For this study, domestic tourists and local residents will be defined as citizens of Botswana (also known as Batswana¹) and international tourists will be defined as Westerners visiting Botswana, as most of them are from Europe, North America or Australia. Given the low numbers of Batswana visiting national parks and game reserves, this study was guided by the following research questions: (i) what do nature-based destinations mean to locals? (ii) what meanings do locals attach to travel and tourism? (iii) is tourism important to them? and (iv) what hinders travel to protected areas?

This study aims to bring a better understanding of a phenomenon that is yet to be fully addressed in the tourism literature. As developing countries such as Botswana look to diversify their economies and tourism industries, understanding their domestic markets is essential. By studying the national market, interventions based on local information can be implemented, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the industry. Furthermore, the past decade has seen growths in Batswana's per capita income, hence the domestic market offers prospects for tourism growth (Leechor and Fabricius, 2004). Moreover, commentators such as Berno (1999) suggest that tourism should be understood from an emic point, thereby developing native definitions of tourist and tourism.

This study provides a starting point for understanding and giving African tourists voices in tourism research. By examining locals' thoughts, this study not only addresses a gap in the tourism literature in which the voice of Africans has been absent, but also contributes to an increased overall understanding of what tourism means to Africans as

¹ Botswana = country, Motswana = citizen of Botswana (singular), Batswana = citizen of Botswana (plural).

tourists. To lay out the foundation and help contextualize this study, we provide a synopsis of tourism in Botswana, followed by the theoretical groundwork, and a review of the literature on non-Western views of tourism and tourists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism in Botswana

Botswana's economy depends on its natural resources: diamonds and tourism contribute 35% and 10.5% to the country's GDP, respectively (Throup, 2011). The country's tourism industry is heavily dependent on wildlife and wilderness, so tourism is promoted for economic reasons and to protect the environment (Department of Tourism, 2012). Protected areas, the main tourist attractions, are popular among international tourists (DWNP, 2014). The dependence on international markets and the alienation of locals from their own national parks call for a deeper understanding of the domestic tourism market.

Domestic tourism accounts for approximately 83% of global tourism (Pierret, 2011). Domestic tourists have the advantage of being familiar with their destination, its language and cultural context, so during their visits, they promote cohesion, goodwill, and cultural understanding (Pierret, 2011). They tend to use locally-owned products and services, including food, accommodation and transport, which does not require extensive investments (Seckelmann, 2002), and consequently interact more with the local economy (Shah, 2000). Domestic tourism helps mitigate seasonality bringing locals in slower and off season. Domestic tourism can also play a vital role in the conservation of cultural and natural resources (Sindinga, 1996). For these reasons, several countries promote

domestic travel for multiple economic, social and environmental purposes. For example, South Africa uses domestic travel to stimulate other sectors of the economy, while Thailand supports it to reduce foreign exchange leakages caused by outbound tourists. Turkey encourages domestic travel to diversify the tourism industry and to contribute to a more balanced regional development (Ghimire, 2001; Tosun, 1998), and the government of China promotes it to build a “New Socialists Countryside” to reverse the trend of rural-to-urban migration (Chio, 2014).

To gain a better understanding of domestic tourism dynamics in Botswana, literature on non-Western views on tourism and tourists is explored. In addition, Western and non-Western views on nature provide the theoretical foundation to understand local and international tourists’ perceptions of nature-based tourism and tourists.

Non-Western views of tourism and tourists

Literature on non-Westerner tourism is very scant, but previous research may help us to understand non-Westerners’ travel patterns, behaviors, and perceptions. To diversify from the Western-centric nature of tourism literature, Chan (2006) and Alneng (2002) call for more emphasis to be placed on non-Western tourism because existing Western-centric theories might not help explain non-Western tourists, despite the fact that about one-third international tourists are non-Westerners. For instance, in 2014, of the 1,133 million international tourists reported globally, 513 million were from emerging economies (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2015). Emphasis, therefore, should be placed on understanding how non-Westerners view tourism and tourists, how

they construct their views, and the impact these views may have on travel behaviors and perceptions.

In a study in Nepal, Hepburn (2002) found that, among Nepalis, being a tourist is related to one's class, culture, ethnicity, race, and caste. For most, a tourist is associated with whiteness, spending behavior, and wealth (Hepburn, 2002; Nyaupane, Timothy & Poudel, 2015). In Lhasa, Tibet, Wu and Pearce (2013) also found that local urban youth classified tourists on race (White) and nationality connotations. Lepp (2004) found that Ugandans associate tourism and tourists with whiteness, the conservation of natural resources, and development. This view is attributed to economic, political, and historical forces that shape Uganda (Lepp, 2004). It can also be ascribed to international aid and development discourse where dependency on outside forces is said to kill the spirit of self-reliance among citizens of the Global South and promotes dependency on the West (Bondarenko, Nkyabonaki & Mkunde, 2013).

Among Vietnamese tourists, Alneng (2002) found that the ideals of "the more, the merrier" and the "the louder, the better" are cherished. Likewise, Chan (2006) found that Chinese tourists did not display a concern for authenticity and preferred the "touristic" and "searching for signs and representations of development and underdevelopment" (p. 201). Further, Chio (2014) contends that, unlike Western tourists, Chinese domestic tourists do not seek the exotic and undeveloped, but rather well-developed "un-modern, un-urban and un-Han" experiences through "the bucolic rhythms of simpler time" (p. 12). In Hong Kong, Cheung (1999) found that domestic tourists consider tourism a social activity resembling the social structure of society. This is evidenced through their preference for travel with companions compared to international tourists who travelled

with strangers. To understand Batswana's disengagement and non-participation in nature-based tourism, it is important to understand their relationships and views of nature and parks from historical and cultural perspectives.

Non-Westerners relationships with nature and parks

Contemporary Western approaches relating to the management of natural resources, the natural world, and the treatment of other animals assume humans are independent from and in control of the natural world (Pierotti & Wildcat, 2000). This idea of separating mankind and nature is deeply rooted in Western civilization (Colchester, 2000). In ancient Greece, forests and wilderness were feared because they were seen as dangerous places inhabited by barbarians (DiSilvestro, 1993). In the late 19th century, when wilderness became a scarce commodity, views changed, and wilderness came to be regarded as a place where man and civilization are absent (Nash, 2001). Yellowstone National Park, the world's first national park, was set up with this approach of separating nature and humankind (Colchester, 2000).

These Western views of wilderness, humans and national parks have been adopted world-wide and have come to justify contemporary conservation policies and practices in developing countries, even for landscapes that are culturally constructed (Di et al., 2010; Murombedzi, 2003). Despite this worldwide acceptance, Mackenzie (1991) argues this wilderness-humankind separation provided a means through which British colonizers took over their African colonies' land and created enclaves that served their interests.

Before the setting up of these enclaves, in pre-colonial southern Africa, environmental conservation was usually built into daily social, economic, and religious

activities. Evidence indicates that, even with hunting pressure from indigenous hunter-gatherers and wildlife commodity trading, wildlife populations remained high. This has been attributed to indigenous conservation systems, including the use of totems, local myths, cultural prohibitions, and religions to regulate resource use (Burnett, Joulié-Küttner & Kang'ethe, 1996; Hviding, 2003). These traditional strategies promoted the conservation of nature while at the same time ensuring access to it (Murombedzi, 2003). In the West, Native Americans, the Dené, and the Inuit, like other indigenous groups, believe that humans cannot exist independently of the natural world (Bielawski, 2003; Pierotti & Wildcat, 2000). This is in direct contrast to the colonial Western model that led to the establishment of conservation areas as spaces where all human influence and settlement had to be curtailed and access restricted.

Ramutsindela (2004) therefore argues that national parks are associated with racial exclusions, the exertion of power by some humans over others along class and racial lines, and that they are emblems of power over nature and other people, especially non-Whites. Consequently the benefits and costs of national parks are divided along racial lines (Ramutsindela, 2004). In the Congo, for instance, Noubale Ndoki National Park has become a haven for Western tourists and researchers while African scholars are excluded from research groups and the inhabitants of neighboring villages never enjoy its recreational and aesthetic values (Schmidt-Soltau, 2003). In the USA, national parks and other natural resource areas are frequented by mainly Whites of European descent (Roberts, 2009). Underrepresentation of African Americans in outdoor recreation activities and disengagement with nature have been attributed to the marginalization of the group due to socio-economic factors (income, education), discrimination, history of

slavery, and the quest to lead a better life (Finney, 2014; Floyd, 1999). It has also been argued that for African Americans and Native Americans, national parks may signify symbols of White domination (Meeker, 1991).

Marginalization and impoverishment have particularly been reported in developing countries. Guha (1998) argues that in India, like in most African countries, national parks were set up to serve local elites and rich tourists. Protected areas have also been associated with forced relocations and loss of access to resources. For instance, in South Africa and Tanzania, cases of forceful eviction of pastoral peoples from game reserves are becoming gradually more common (BBC, 2013). In Tanzania, park advocates excluded locals and overlooked “the importance of encouraging humans, particularly the local residents, to visit and enjoy the parks” (Neumann, 1998, p. 139). Some studies indicate that displacements from protected areas lead to deprivation and social injustice (see Brockington, 2002) through the removal of the main foundation upon which people’s livelihoods, productive systems and commercial activities are constructed (Machava, 2008).

In addition to issues of class, race and exclusions, perhaps park visitations can also be explained by the way locals and tourists relate to destinations and tourism. In the Swiss Alpines, Kianicka, Buchecker, Hunziker, and Müller-Böker (2006) found that locals considered culture and leisure activities a part of their ‘lifeworld’ and their daily lives whereas for tourists culture was mainly related to the built cultural heritage and local construction styles. Components of everyday local lifestyles have become very central in tourism studies and have become part of the tourist gaze (Larsen, 2008).

METHODS

Study sites

Six study sites were selected for this study: Chobe National Park (CNP), Moremi Game Reserve (MGR), Maun, Palapye, Francistown, and Gaborone (the capital city) (Figure 1).

The two protected areas of CNP and MGR were selected because they are the most popular attractions in the country for both domestic and international tourists.

Francistown and Gaborone are the only two cities in the country where most middle income earners live in urban areas (Deloitte & Touche, 2012), so they were deemed suitable for this study. Maun and Palapye are some of the biggest villages in the country, with more than 75% of their population engaging in non-agricultural activities (Central Statistics Office, 2012; Department of Town & Regional Planning, 1998). Maun, known as the gateway to the famous Okavango Delta, is the closest large village to both MGR and CNP. Palapye was chosen due to its central location in the country.

Figure 1: Map showing the study sites

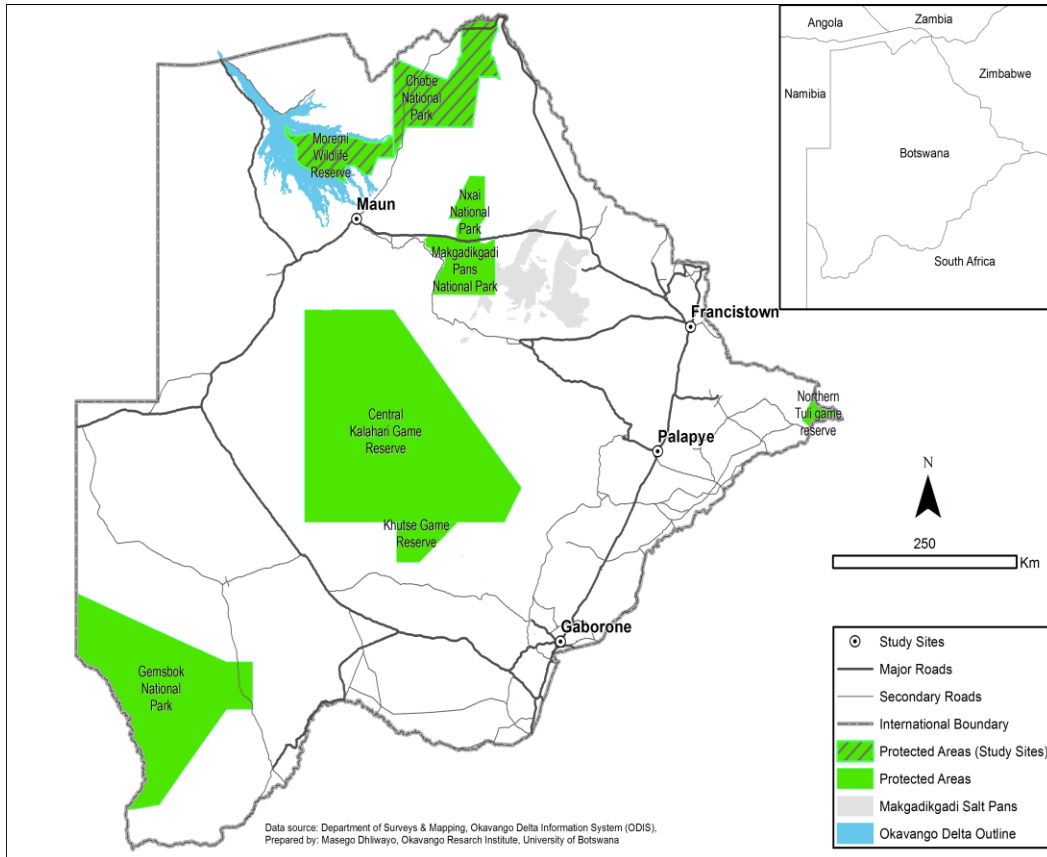


Figure 1: Map showing the study sites

Data collection strategies

To assess local perceptions of tourism, we used qualitative data collection methods because they promote insider perspectives and place more emphasis on subjective meanings (Padgett, 2008). We used an interpretive paradigm that is based on the ontological belief that there are multiple, intangible constructions, that are socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, and are dependent on individual persons or groups holding the constructions (Bailey, 2007). This is because “we are all

influenced by our history and cultural context, which, in turn, shape our view of the world, the forces of creation, and the meaning of truth” (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p. 26).

All Batswana were considered to be potential domestic tourists for this study and their participation was sought to assess the broad social, cultural, economic, and political contexts associated with nature-based tourism. Since the views from those who already engage in tourism activities may not capture the views of all locals, locals in rural and urban settings were also interviewed. To prevent any bias, we selected respondents in diverse groups in terms of age, gender, socio-economics, occupation and place of residence (rural or urban).

In total, 60 interviews (28 males and 32 females) were conducted with local residents: nine in the protected areas (CNP=3, MGR=6) and 51 in the other four locations (Gaborone = 17, Francistown = 10, Maun = 14, Palapye = 10). Data were collected between June - September 2013. Local respondents’ ages ranged from 18 – 85 years and their educational levels from “no formal education” to a “master’s degree”. In addition, 30 international tourists (n = 18 females, n = 12 males) were interviewed at CNP and MGR. Their ages ranged from 18-73 years and their education was from “high school” to a “master’s degree”.

At MGR and CNP, convenient sampling was used to recruit respondents. This strategy was suitable for domestic tourists because there were so few of them that it was important for the researchers to interview any they could find. Due to the nature of safari activities, and time and movement restrictions in protected areas, the same strategy was

adopted for international tourists. Both domestic and international tourists were interviewed at the parks' entrance/exit gates, campsites, and lodges.

In the recruitment of respondents in cities and rural areas, purposeful sampling was used in the initial selection of respondents to enable the selection of "information rich cases" (Patton, 2002). In rural areas, permission to conduct the study was sought from village chiefs and/or elders. In accordance with local protocol, and due to their knowledge of their villages and people, a list of initial respondents was made with the assistance of village elders, after the researcher explained the aims of the study and its intention to get views from the wider society. The list included farmers, students and the elderly. To get views from a wide range of groups, snowballing was employed in the selection of subsequent respondents. Any Batswana 18 years and above qualified to participate in the study.

In cities, initial respondents were identified by going to places where targeted individuals might be located. More respondents were identified through these primary informants using snowball sampling (Patton, 1987; 2002). When no new information was gained from additional respondents, no more were recruited to participate in the study. We used face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, which enabled respondents to talk about any aspect related to the broad interests of the researcher (Bailey, 2007). Interviews were conducted in Setswana for most local residents. For international tourists, interviews were conducted in English. Interviews lasted 30 minutes on average. With consent from respondents, most interviews were audiotaped. For those respondents who did not want to be audiotaped, the researchers took notes during the interviews. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated to English. Secondary sources, such

as government policy documents, websites, and journal articles were also used to get information on tourism in Botswana, national parks and game reserves statistics and for the literature review and discussions. This paper is not meant to represent all Botswana across the country. The study is exploratory in nature and presents a small-scale study using qualitative methods.

Data analysis

To analyze the data, we initially read through the transcripts, then examined them more closely to enable coding. Coding involved “organizing and grouping similarly coded data into categories or families” (Saldana, 2013, p. 9) to determine “which data ‘look alike’ and ‘feel alike’ when grouping them together” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 347). Comparisons were then made across themes for domestic and international tourists. We followed the six-step coding procedure advanced by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003, p.43). The six steps are:

1. Explicitly stating research concerns and theoretical framework,
2. Selecting the relevant text for further analysis,
3. Recording repeating ideas by grouping together related passages of relevant text,
4. Organizing themes by grouping repeated ideas into coherent categories,
5. Developing theoretical constructs by grouping together themes into more abstract concepts consistent with the theoretical framework, and
6. Creating a theoretical narrative by retelling the participant’s story in terms of the theoretical constructs.

The first two steps involved using research objectives to select relevant text. Steps three and four involved grouping together repeated ideas from the transcripts and

organizing them into larger groups that expressed a common theme. The last two steps involved organizing themes into theoretical constructs and developing a theoretical narrative relating a “personal story that describes the subjective experiences of research participants in their own language” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 74). Analytic memos, which were written from the fieldwork stage, were also used to ensure that we gained a thorough understanding of the data.

FINDINGS

Results indicate a difference in the conceptualization of tourism and nature-based tourism between local residents and Western tourists visiting Botswana. There were similar perceptions among locals, irrespective of place of residence (rural vs. urban) and distance from national parks and game reserves. The themes “tourism and tourist as a foreign concept,” “national parks reinforcing exclusions and resentments,” “national parks reinforcing Western ideals about travel and leisure,” “culture and its influence on park visits: collectivism vs. individualism,” and “views on nature and nature-based tourism” emerged from the data.

Tourism and tourist as a foreign concept

Fifty (83%) local respondents indicated that tourists are people from other countries, especially developed countries, including North American and European countries. Race was a dominant aspect local respondents brought up when discussing tourism and tourists, even among those who indicated they engage in tourism activities. As such, local respondents highlighted that they never consider themselves tourists, even when on holiday. This observation is reflected in one respondent’s view that,

My family goes on vacation to Kasane every year ... when in Kasane we see White people...we see them as tourists, not ourselves (respondent 43, female, 36 years, education, occupation, Gaborone).

This view was also related to the impression that the government and tourism promoters give to locals. For instance, the Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO) CEO stated that “*tourists love to be able to keep in touch through social media when outside their countries*” This statement is in line with respondents’ views that tourists are outsiders. A local respondent who has worked at a national park further iterated this point and indicated that, during his time there, only Whites and top government officials who owned tourism establishments visited (respondent 35, male, 41 years, education, Francistown).

Furthermore, perhaps due to the type of tourism promoted in the country, all local respondents associate tourism with foreigners’ leisure, and visits to national parks. As one local respondent asserted, “*tourists are white people who go to places such as CNP where they can view wildlife*” (respondent 44, female, 18 years, education, occupation, Gaborone). The view of tourism as foreign was also perceived to be a consequence of white ownership of tourism establishments.

National parks reinforcing exclusions and resentments

Locals expressed that protected areas are places that reinforce exclusions. The perceptions were related to the ownership of tourism enterprises, undeveloped infrastructure leading to and inside protected areas, language, and costs. Respondents indicated that some practices used by lodge and private game farm owners perpetuate the exclusion of locals. A respondent in Gaborone stated:

Most lodge owners and game farmers are white South Africans, with some of these operators you have to book in South Africa ...; it is quite clear who their market is (respondent 31, male, 31 years, education, occupation, Gaborone).

Along the same lines, the language used in national park promotions was identified as a strategy to exclude the local market. As one respondent stated,

Most brochures and the information in them are in English ... only someone from outside can easily understand the language used (respondent 51, female, 45 years, librarian, undergraduate degree, Gaborone).

All local respondents identified pricing and the undeveloped infrastructure as major obstacles. Forty-two respondents indicated that although local park fees may seem low at P10.00 per day (1 US\$ = 8.47 BWP as at 5/26/2014), this does not really capture the cost of the trip nor does it equate to access to national parks for locals. In light of the above, interviewees indicated that to give locals more access, developing roads, especially those leading to some national parks and game reserves, the creation of more game parks and zoos close to towns and cities and the provision of public transport to protected areas could make it easier for Batswana.

Another perception among local respondents was the view that facilities are overpriced. As highlighted by one local respondent:

National parks are expensive for Batswana... I earn a very good salary but the prices are still out of my reach (respondent 50, male, 29 years, bachelor's degree, risk manager, Gaborone).

Local respondents also highlighted that accommodation and most other tourism services are designed for individuals, but not for families with children. Forty-nine (82%) respondents indicated that they love travelling with family and friends, and that the facilities available do not take that into consideration.

In direct contrast, international tourists found the lack of infrastructural development and the limited access attractive. All international respondents expressed this perspective, with one stating:

I know it's really expensive to come here ... with less people the place can be preserved (international respondent 29, 64 years, female, CNP, master's degree, head teacher, from USA).

Although an attraction for one group, for the other, this limited access represents the continued exclusion that has been characteristic of national parks since the colonial period. The implication is that post-independent African states have adopted the same strategies and approaches that previous colonial rulers imposed on their subjects. Furthermore, although Westerners expect a high level of comfort at home, they expect a totally different atmosphere on holidays: an isolated, backward, undeveloped environment that they associate with the Global South. This is shown in the statement by an Australian respondent and expressed by most international respondents:

... Kasane, it's not so overdeveloped. We don't want to see high rises, even if the sidewalks are not maintained; it adds more character to our trip. These things are not so important to people here as they are to people in first world countries ... (international respondent 23, male, 26 years, master's degree, civil engineer, from USA).

However, this needs to be carefully interpreted because, as Fletcher (2014) argues, this may apply to a segment of Western adventurous tourists who represent white, upper-middle-class Westerners.

The issue of pricing, however, was not a major concern among international tourists. The majority of the respondents felt that the experience was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and they got value for their money. Fifteen respondents (50%) were

professionals and could easily afford the high prices charged by lodges and high-end mobile tour operators. As one stated, *“I am an ENT specialist so I have enough money to travel”* (international respondent 17, 55 years, male, master’s degree, CNP, from Australia). One can argue that the high-price-low-volume policy adopted by the country has led to the exclusion of a majority of locals and has also discouraged local business owners from investing in the tourist sector because accommodation facilities designed to meet Western standards are costly to construct (Mbaiwa, 2005).

Although camping is a cheaper alternative, local respondents acknowledged that when on holiday, they expect a certain level of comfort. Respondents shared the view articulated by one lady *“... I prefer to sleep in a house ... I need a roof over my head”* (respondent 15, undergraduate degree, teacher, 36 years, Maun). For international tourists, camping was seen as an adventure. Eleven international respondents (37%) indicated they often camp in national parks in their own countries; it is something they do to get away from the noise and bustle of the city.

Due to the alleged overpriced accommodation and transportation, local respondents perceived national parks as being out of reach for them. Furthermore, results indicate that even with efforts from the government to promote school visits, the expensive nature of national parks and game reserves visits means that these do not translate into adult visits.

Consequently, 25 local respondents (42%), mostly farmers, expressed resentment towards national parks and game reserves. Resentment was related to damage caused by wildlife, slow responses by government officials in assessing damage and compensating

farmers, and low compensation levels. Farmers' expressions were conveyed in the declaration by one respondent that,

... I don't see myself going to a national park, why would I go and see something that impoverishes me (respondent 41, male, 31 years, associate degree, library assistant, Gaborone).

In addition to this, resentment was caused by what farmers considered to be the government's misplaced focus on wildlife rather than people. Due to this perceived unbalanced focus, some local respondents did not feel any sense of pride in national parks and game reserves. As indicated in one account,

I cannot really say I am proud of national parks and game reserves ... what is found there has a negative impact on my livelihood (respondent 35, male, 58 years, associate degree, primary school head teacher, Francistown).

However, it should be noted that for local respondents who did not identify as farmers, national parks and game reserves were seen as being very educational and important to the country's economy.

National parks reinforcing western ideals of leisure

Local respondents indicated that the way they define tourism and holidays is different from the way Westerners do. They highlighted that for Batswana, there is no clear-cut line between work, relaxation, and leisure. This was explained in terms of Tswana culture and important social activities within Botswana. For instance, as one respondent indicated;

... When Batswana go on holiday, they go to the cattle post where they work, relax, and engage in leisure activities. For international travelers, a holiday is for complete relaxation (respondent 40, male, 69 years, retired civil engineer, farmer, Francistown).

Results from international tourists in this study indicated that, for them, there is a clear distinction between work and recreation. All respondents specified that tourism provides opportunities such as “a break from work”, and to “refresh and forget all the problems.”

For local respondents, leisure activities should be tied to improving one’s livelihood and lifestyle, and to help finance future travels. For these respondents, leisure and work are intertwined, just like humans and nature. Statements highlighting this included:

We are more interested in activities and places where we can derive a livelihood rather than what would bring us fun. For us survival is more important than travel for fun (Respondent 10, female, 30 years, associate degree, computer technician, Maun).

Furthermore, respondents specified that national parks and game reserves promote elements important to Westerners: quietness, sparseness, and the quest for isolated, wild spaces with no human habitation. For 33 local residents (55%), these spaces do not provide the kind of environment they want when engaging in tourism activities. Local respondents who expressed this sentiment highlighted that national parks limit one’s ability to engage in activities they want due to noise and time restrictions. Respondents emphasized that tourism travels are about making memories and interacting with families and friends, so these restrictions are said to alter the overall enjoyment of the trip. Accordingly, 29 local respondents (48%) stated that they would not prioritize visiting such areas other than for those reasons alone.

In contrast, international tourists claimed that their interest in national parks is mainly due to the quietness, open spaces, and the sparse populations in the area. Supporting this notion, respondents stated that their main interest in national parks in

Botswana was due to “*the quietness and lack of modern comforts*” (international respondent 18, female, 41 years, master’s degree, finance manager, MGR, from France) and “*you can drive for over 300 kilometers without seeing any people or settlements...*” (respondent 21, female, 45 years, master’s degree, architect, from Germany).

This is in direct contrast to experiences sought by locals. Hence, local respondents indicated that the tourism industry of Botswana does not provide activities that are of interest to Batswana. In addition, respondents related national park experiences to traditional *Tswana* life. The experiences one gains from a national park were said to be very close to those one gets from a cattle post. Such experiences include nature walks, watching birds, and fishing on a *mokoro* (a traditional wooden boat used for fishing and as a form of transport to cross rivers). Furthermore, a number of nature-based games such as *mmele* (mancala), *diketo*, and *dibeke* were mentioned; these games make use of available natural resources such as stones and the land. However, these are traditional games that may not be appealing to a modern *Motswana* in a white-collar job. Hence, there is a need to identify tourist preferences for middle and upper income earners in Botswana.

It can be deduced from results in this study that local respondents recreate differently from Western tourists interviewed for this study. Although both groups engage in activities that rely on nature, the nature-based activities of local respondents are linked to their everyday lives, whereas for international respondents, protected areas in Botswana provide a means to “get in touch with nature.”

For 48 local respondents (80%), an enjoyable trip should encompass a variety of activities, and 28 respondents (47%) highlighted that their attraction to foreign

destinations is influenced by the packages they offer. Forty-two local respondents (70%) also highlighted the importance of the “people” side of tourism in gratifying travel experience, something that they feel is lacking in the country’s tourism industry. Fifty-four local respondents (90%) also mentioned a love for high-class shopping, modern buildings, arts and culture shows, the nightlife, sports events, and agricultural shows. Twenty-five (42%) highlighted they mostly go to South Africa and Namibia for these activities.

For local respondents, national parks reinforce Western tourists’ leisure needs and ideals and are therefore not worth visiting. Furthermore, since local life is so intertwined with nature, travel to national parks does not provide the “extraordinary” factor experienced by those from outside. As indicated by Urry (1990), tourists gaze at sites that do not form part of their everyday life and are considered out of the ordinary. Results from this study, however, indicate that since nature is a part of the everyday experience for locals, national parks are not as extraordinary for locals as they are for international tourists.

Culture and its influence on park visits: collectivism vs. individualism

Local respondents’ views indicate that cultural beliefs have an impact on travel and tourism. For instance, elderly respondents related their non-visitation to culture. An elderly female in Palapye indicated that women’s movements were restricted and that permission to travel had to be sought from their husbands. Additionally, unlike international tourists who had increased availability of time and money to travel because they no longer had to solely take care of young children, the opposite was true for local

elderly respondents. The existence of extended families and the sharing of material and non-material resources make it difficult to engage in travel and tourism. According to one respondent:

We have our grandchildren living with us ...if we just get up and leave who will take care of all these responsibilities? (respondent 12, female, 54 years, elementary school level, street hawker, Maun).

Extending this theme is the idea that society has a role to play in one's decisions because there is always a need to conform to societal norms. This is shown by society's attachment of labels to certain activities, with tourism being labeled as something that promotes the wastage of money. Tangible benefits are encouraged as opposed to intangible ones associated with the travel industry. This was revealed in statements such as:

We instilled in our children the mentality that by travelling and engaging in tourism activities they will be wasting their money (respondent 30, male, 66 years, middle school level, farmer, Palapye).

Another mentioned:

Once you go to a national park, people will ask, what did you gain there? ... (respondent 27, female, 64 years, elementary school level, farmer, Palapye).

On the other hand, for international tourists in this study, travel and tourism has always been a part of life. All specified that they travel within and outside their countries to get to know other parts of the world and to make them appreciative of what they have back home. On the other hand, 54 local respondents (90%) indicated that due to their upbringing, travelling to places such as national parks and game reserves is something new for them.

Research in leisure studies shows that culture plays a role in how certain groups in

society recreate (Sasidharan, Willits & Godbey, 2005). For instance, Mexican Americans add their cultural traits to their leisure behaviors (Gramann, Floyd & Saenz, 1993).

Characteristics exhibited by Central Americans are visitations in large groups, playing and relaxing with family members, especially children, and picnicking (Carr and Chavez, 1993). Taylor and Winter's (1995) study indicates that Asian visits to parks and forests are characterized by get-togethers with family and friends. What emerges from these studies is the dominance of social activities, linked to the cultural importance placed on celebrations and social events (Sasidharan et al., 2005). This study shows that culture has had an impact on visitations over time. The attachment of certain labels to tourism has had an impact on people's perceptions of leisure, travel, and tourism.

Views on nature and nature-based tourism

Fifty-seven (95%) local respondents view nature as "a part of life." For these respondents, nature was related to people's lives, livelihoods, and survival. The most dominant view was that humans and nature are intertwined. Nature was also viewed as being significant to people's religions, spirituality, and health. Nine respondents (15%) highlighted that they believe in African traditional religions and the use of herbs and water as agents of healing. Furthermore, nature was viewed as being closely related to people's culture and identity. Respondents related the role of nature in culture, especially through the use of totems. The land was also related to people's identity, both in terms of sustaining them with food and as a place for them to live. This was captured in one interviewee's statement:

Wildlife are a part of us and our culture, look at our totems ... land is the most important part of nature, it is where our life is and where we go when we leave

the Earth ... (respondent 26, 65 years, male, middle school level, farmer, Palapye).

Perhaps due to this view of nature, when asked how they relate to nature, especially national parks and wildlife, 54 local respondents (90%) indicated that nature-based tourism and national parks, in particular, are not important recreational spaces, hence they do not play a significant role in their lives. Fifty local respondents (83%) mentioned that national parks have an indirect impact in their lives. The following was revealed in accounts such as;

... nature, especially national parks and wildlife, bring people into our country and help our country financially ... but directly it doesn't play an important role in my life (respondent 55, male, 34 years, middle school level, police officer, Gaborone).

As such, locals indicated that they live harmoniously with nature and their lives are inseparable from it. Moreover, it is apparent from the statement above that locals regard national parks as recreational spaces for foreigners and revenue generators for locals and government. Hence, they remain a part of life and not spaces to be conquered and dominated for human enjoyment and leisure.

The view of Western tourists in this study, on the other hand, is that nature is something that one can travel to and has to be conquered through adventurous activities. Unlike local respondents, 28 international tourists (93%) reported that they have no personal relationship with nature other than the benefits they derive from it through research, recreation, solitude, and aesthetics. Due to the above, Western tourists consider nature-based tourism an important aspect of their lives because “... *it [nature-based tourism] makes us support and fund nature awareness campaigns*” (international

respondent 2, female, 24 years, undergraduate degree, primary school counselor, CNP, from Australia).

International tourists therefore believe that, without nature-based tourism, there would be no political will to protect these spaces. With this view, protected areas have been converted to commercial entities meant to meet the needs and demands of tourists. There is a perception within this group that nature exists out there and is not a part of everyday life. For instance, one respondent indicated this disconnect with nature by stating, “*where I come from we are far away from nature*” (international respondent 8, 64 years, male, master’s degree, consultant, MGR, from Denmark). Unlike local respondents, for international tourists, the less man interferes with nature, the better.

Despite the different views between locals and international tourists, among the young generation of locals, the Western view of nature-based tourism is fast gaining momentum. In line with this, a respondent in Francistown argued:

My views about nature and nature-based tourism are somehow influenced by what I was taught in school. I would say our teachers and the media have indoctrinated us (respondent 37, female, 24 years, associate degree, self-employed,).

Another commented:

We now live in a society where people want to live comfortable lives and depending less on nature is the way to go (respondent 52, female, 27 years, AAT, accountant, Gaborone).

For this group of locals, nature and nature-based tourism is said to be important due to its relaxing, therapeutic, and stress-relieving qualities. Furthermore, there is also a view of them separating themselves from nature because of the harshness it is associated with.

DISCUSSION

Tourism in many developing countries, especially those in Africa, is equated to

safaris in protected areas. Results from our study indicate that deep cultural, historical, and policy issues influence Botswana's travel patterns to protected areas. For international tourists, nature denotes tranquility, wild spaces, and recreation, but for Botswana, nature and human life are intertwined and cannot be separated. Similar to respondents in this study, Crang (2015) found that the Chinese locals also believe in the interconnectedness between humans and nature, unlike the untouched and pristine nature as advanced by the "Yellowstone model." The findings of this study support the notion that nature is culturally defined (Weller, 2006) and its values, meanings and relationships can be understood by analyzing culture and history.

The intertwining of normal everyday life, work, and leisure are at odds with the commonly perceived notion that "*tourism is ... an exception or special time, a period when the normal everyday constraints are suspended ... free from the bounds of home and work*" (Edensor, 2007, p. 199). Although Urry's (1992) "tourist gaze" holds for international tourists in this study, for locals the everyday life, work, and leisure cannot be separated (Timothy, 1999). By seeking the wild, untamed, and untouched nature, international tourists seek authenticity in their national park experiences (MacCannell, 1999) and a gaze different to their everyday life (Urry, 1992), whereas the same does not seem to apply for locals in the study. In accordance with Taylor's (1989) study, locals in this study indicated they preferred travel and tourism to be tied to improving their livelihoods. As a country known for its cattle farming, respondents highlighted the importance of farm visits and attending agricultural shows, not only as a means for them to recreate, but also to learn, and hopefully implement what they learned to improve their livelihoods.

As a collectivist society, “we-ness” is central to people’s travel preferences. This element has been found in a number of Asian countries, also collectivist in nature and with the same outlook on nature (Alneng, 2002; Chan, 2006; Carroll, 2009). For instance, as observed in Chan’s study for Chinese tourists, family plays a dominant role in social and cultural life. Despite Botswana’s high urban population, the majority of Botswana have a rural background (Botswana Tourism Masterplan, 2001) and the country’s three - tier settlement system (home or village, lands and cattleposts) where urban areas are considered places for economic activities and spaces where livelihoods can be enhanced may help explain the movements between urban areas, home and cattleposts. Similar results have been found in China, where urbanites with mostly rural backgrounds visit farm guesthouses to experience ‘homey comfort’, ‘familial intimacy’ and feelings of returning home (Park, 2014). Leisure researchers indicate that reasons for visiting parks also differ by race/ethnicity, which is clearly reflected in this study. For instance, Whites may seek seclusion, Latinos prefer socializing with extended family groups and enjoying ‘fresh air’, African-Americans favor organized recreation, and Asians desire park visits with extended family/organized groups, to exercise and to escape social responsibilities (Byrne & Wolch, 2009).

In most African states, national parks were set up by colonial governments as recreational spaces for Whites, with the exclusion of locals. The same approach to national parks has been adopted by independent African states, thereby perpetuating exclusions and further promoting Western ideals of tourism, where man and wildlife are separated, but also where man is separated from other man. As some scholars highlight, nature and wilderness have historically been White-upper-middle class domains

(Fletcher, 2014; Roberts, 2009). The low visitations by locals in this study are testimony to the ideology that national parks were created for Whites, are exclusionary in nature and are not neutral spaces (Byrne & Wolch, 2009; Roberts, 2009).

The historical setting up of national parks, characterized by white visitors (Child, 1970), and the continued visitations by them makes locals associate tourism and tourists with Whiteness. In this study, government policies have been shown to further perpetuate the marginalization of locals by denying them access while enhancing access for privileged Whites. As indicated by local respondents, access to national parks is restricted for them due to the undeveloped infrastructure that requires a four-wheel drive vehicle to navigate the area. Furthermore, charging in US dollars clearly denies access and marginalizes one group at the expense of the other. Political and historical events (MacKenzie, 1988; Lepp, 2004) can thus explain Batswana's view that tourists are Whites and since they (Batswana) are not, they cannot be considered as such, even when touring in other countries. This finding warrants further investigation to establish whether a generalization can be made among local people in the developing world as far as visiting protected areas is concerned. A closer look at these dynamics will help protected areas and tourism researchers, managers, and planners gain a much better understanding of the non-Western tourist and his/her needs and constraints in travel. It will also guide their understanding and development of marketing strategies, infrastructure, and facilities geared toward non-Western tourists. Furthermore, for a society where travel was for a long time a culturally sanctioned activity, more education and inclusionary measures have to be put in place to encourage visitations to national parks.

Despite local perceptions of nature-based tourism, protected areas in Botswana promote Western ideals that go against local beliefs, potentially contributing to the low visitation rates by locals. The non-Westerners' voice is different from the Westerners, hence alluding to the need for researchers, policy makers, and planners to have different lenses through which to understand non-Westerners' and Westerners' views in their repertoire to develop nature-based tourism.

CONCLUSION

The study is important in its contribution to the limited knowledge on domestic tourism in the non-Western world, especially in Africa. It also highlights the differences between Western tourists and locals' perceptions of nature and nature-based tourism, as well as their respective gazes. With results indicating an intertwinement of humans and nature in the Botswana context, this finding is significant in explaining the low visitation, since, for some, national parks are just mundane environments that do not warrant visitation. For the international market, where respondents indicate that national parks help them connect with nature, they warrant the Western gaze.

Results of the study also support the view that current Western tourism theories cannot fully explain tourism dynamics in developing countries, mainly due to deep cultural, political and historical differences between the two groups. As shown in this study, forced relocations and loss of access to land and its resources characterized the setting up of protected areas. Thus, for local respondents, tourism in national parks is synonymous with local exclusions, hence the association of such spaces with whiteness. Consequently the adoption of Western ideals in the running of protected areas by independent states such as Botswana has further alienated locals from such spaces and

hindered visitations. The role culture plays in hindering travel and tourism among Batswana indicates the importance of developing culturally embedded products such as agro-tourism and packages that take into account the “close-knit social structure” favored by the society.

Based on our results, there is a clear need to, first, involve locals in all aspects of the tourism industry not only as hosts and beneficiaries, but also as tourists. Second, although exclusivity, as adopted by Botswana can limit park visits, the long-term consequences of such a policy have to be studied, especially to determine the impacts perceived exclusions may have on the long-term survival of such contested landscapes and the resources they depend on. Thirdly, despite our study’s significant contributions to the tourism literature by including the voices of Africans to understand their nonparticipation in parks and protected areas, we present a clear need for more research in this topic. Although the current study does not lump locals voices together and provides information on respondent’s ages, occupations, and sex, it did not focus on differentiating between locals. Future research, therefore, is needed to compare the views of the various groups of locals. Similarly, since the study represents only a small segment of Westerners visiting Botswana, further studies should focus on the wider profile of international tourists visiting protected areas in Botswana.

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