

The Dynamics of Tourist Visitation to National Parks and Game Reserves in Botswana

By Lefatshe I. Magole¹ and Ofentse Gojamang²

Abstract

Despite the existence of a model of the life cycle of tourist destinations (Butler, 1980, adapted by Prossor, 1994), non-beach tourist destinations are seldom subjected to an appraisal of their evolution and an assessment of the developmental stage or phase the particular destination may be in. In this paper we explore the dynamics of tourist visitation to national parks and game reserves in Botswana over a period of ten years (1995-2004). We have used data on tourists collected by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) staff at national park and game reserve gates, which they summarize on a monthly basis and forward to the Parks and Reserves Reservation Office (PARRO). We conclude that the development of tourism in the Chobe National Park and Moremi Game Reserve follow Butler's model and show signs of stagnation. Based on the findings of the paper, a recommendation to review the Botswana Tourism Master Plan (2000) is suggested in order to align it with realistic tourism trends of the national parks and game reserves.

Introduction

The process of development of non-beach tourist destinations in developing countries has received relatively little attention in literature, and therefore conceptualization of their development process has been limited. There are several tourist development case studies and models (Cohen, 1972; Plog, 1973; Stansfield, 1978; Doorn, 1979); however, there are three widely cited models namely Miossec's (1976, in Pearce 1989), Butler's (1980), and Gormesen's (1981, in Pearce 1989). These models were based on work that was done on European destinations (Gormsen, 1981; Butler, 1980), American destinations (Stansfield, 1978) and the Caribbean islands (Gormsen, 1981). Despite the existence of these models, tourist destinations outside the beach resorts, such as in-land national parks, game reserves and national monuments, are seldom subjected to an appraisal to examine the evolution of their development and assess the developmental stage or phase the particular destination may be in.

The life cycle of tourist destinations (Butler, 1980, adapted by Prossor, 1994), describes the main stages of a tourist destination as discovery, growth/development, stagnation and decline. In Botswana, wildlife-based tourism is the second-highest contributor to Gross Domestic Product, (Government of Botswana, 2004). The main tourist destinations in the country are the Chobe and Okavango areas (Botswana Tourism Development Programme (BTDP), 2000; Mbaiwa, 2002), which consist of Chobe National Park, Moremi Game Reserve, and adjacent Wildlife Management Areas (WMA.) An examination of the evolutionary development and assessment of the stage/phase of these tourist destinations is likely to improve understanding and enhance future viability and sustainability of these destinations, as these are the main 'crowd pullers' of the country's tourism sector.

1 Research Fellow, Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre, University of Botswana, Maun.

2. Assistant Wildlife Officer, Department of Wildlife and Game Reserves, Maun.

The Case of Botswana

The scope of this paper is restricted to the dynamics of tourist visitation to national parks and game reserves over a period of ten years (1995-2004). Though there are a few years prior to 1995 where tourist visitation data to national parks and game reserves is available, the most comprehensive tourist statistics were collected from 1995. The data has been organised by park/reserve as well as by category of tourist (private, mobile and fixed lodge). Within this limited focus, we attempt to assess the stage/phase of national parks and game reserves as tourist destinations within the framework of the Butler model. Due to time constraints, we do not address visit days or revenue generation from the tourist visits, neither do we look at the origins of the tourists, though these other factors constitute important domains in the dynamics of tourist visitations to national parks and game reserves.

The establishment of the Parks and Reserves Reservation Offices (PARRO) by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) marked the beginning of the gathering of comprehensive tourist statistics in parks and reserves. The first office was set up in Maun to cater for the northern parks and reserves (Chobe National Park, Moremi Game Reserve and Makgadikgadi/Nxai Pan National Parks – see Figure 1). The second office was set up in Gaborone to cater for the central and southern parks and reserves (Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve (CKGR), Khutse Game Reserve and Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park – see Figure 1) in 1997. Prior to 1995, a gate entry receipt, obtained upon payment at a park or reserve gate, was the only statistic available. According to Roberts *et al* (1985), gate receipts records were usually incomplete. They noted inconsistencies when correlating group size, place of residence and length of stay with the fees recorded per group. With the introduction of the PARRO offices, officers in charge of entry gates were obliged to produce monthly returns summarizing the tourist statistics (date of entry, origin of tourists, type of tourist, vehicle registration, duration of stay, day visits, number of nights spent camping, and fees paid), and to submit them to the respective PARRO office. This summary tourist data was obtained from the respective PARRO offices and analyzed for the purposes of this paper. Interviews were also conducted with tour operators and government officials to explain the trends and patterns of tourist visitations to national parks and game reserves over the study period.

Wildlife and wilderness are considered the major attraction for tourists to Botswana (BTDP, 2000; Mbaiwa, 2002). As noted above, national parks, game reserves and Wildlife Management Areas are the core areas of wildlife and wilderness that are sought after by tourists. Using the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural (IUCN) classification of protected areas (Eagles, 2002), Botswana's protected areas range from Category II (which includes the national parks and game reserves) to Category IV (see Table 1).

A majority of tourists who visit parks and reserves are foreign, originating from Europe, North America, South Africa and Australia (Mbaiwa, 2002). As wildlife is equally abundant in other African countries, such as South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania, Botswana's parks and reserves are perceived to be 'natural' (wilderness factor), with minimal intervention to natural processes operating within them compared to other protected areas in the region (BTDP, 2000).

Fowkes (1991:37) states that '...it was only in the very late 1960s and early 1970 that the first safari lodges were established in Botswana'. Prior to that, Botswana was mainly a hunting safari destination (Tinley, 1973; Bell, 1991). In 1981 there were 28 photographic safari companies operating in Botswana, increasing to 64 in 1984 (Fowkes, 1985). It is estimated that there were 40,000 tourists who visited Botswana in 1984 both as part of organised tour groups and self-drive tourists (Fowkes, 1985). Ingram *et al* (1985) estimates that 23,532 tourists visited national parks and game reserves during the 12 month period between July 1984 and June 1985.

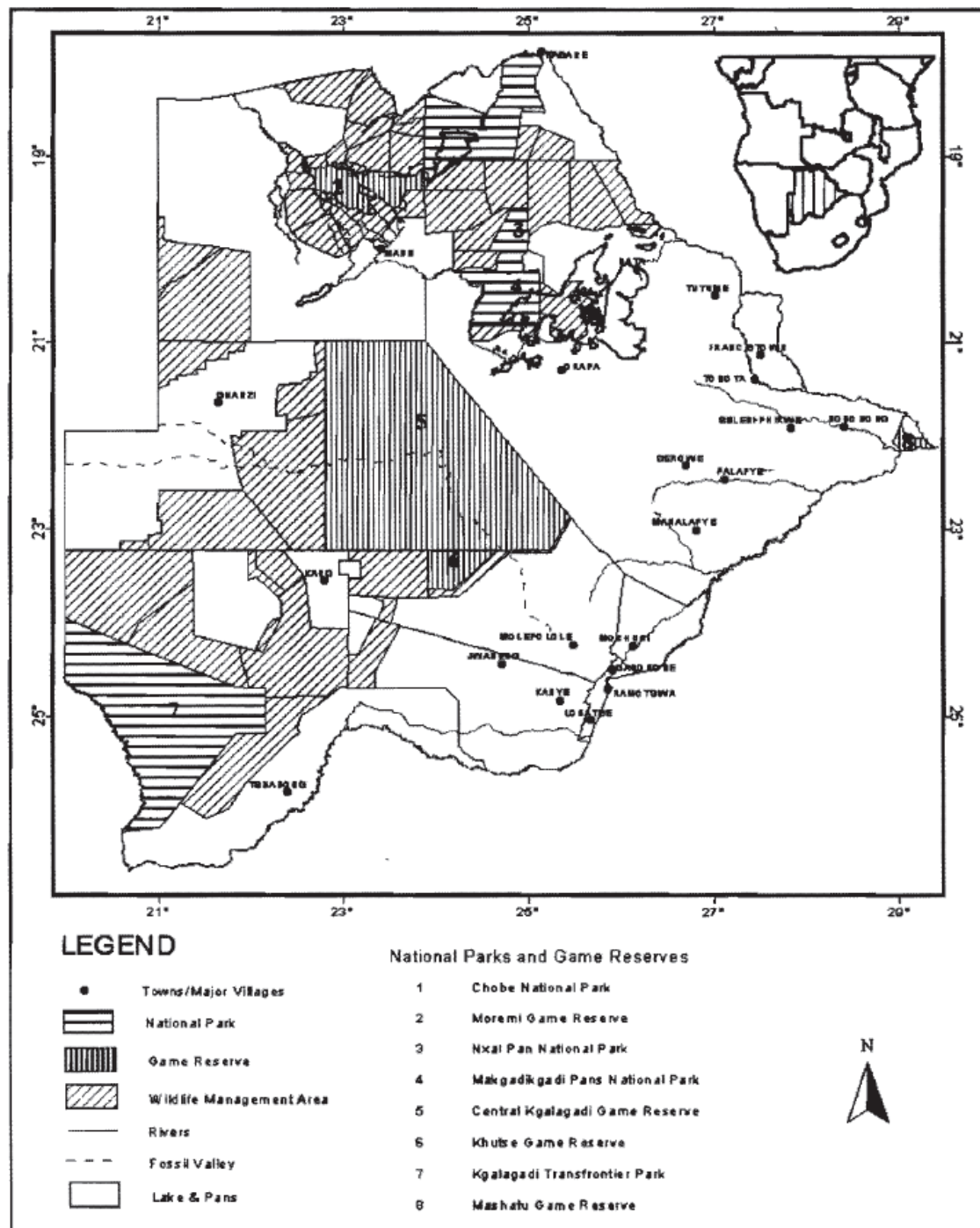


Figure 1. National Parks, Game Reserves and Wildlife Management Areas of Botswana.

In 1989, there were 691,041 foreign arrivals (Figure 2) in Botswana (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 1997). Of these arrivals 20% stated 'holiday' as their purpose of visit (Figure 3). An estimated 60-70% of foreign 'holiday makers' in Botswana visit protected areas (BTDP, 2000). Arrivals in Botswana increased steadily between 1989 and 2000, rising to over 2.1 million, and

Table 1. Botswana's Protected Areas Classified According to IUCN Management Categories of Protected Areas.

Category	Description	Protected Areas in Botswana
I	Strict Nature reserve/wilderness Area: PA managed mainly for science or wilderness protection	Nil
Ia	Strict Nature Reserve: PA managed mainly for science	Nil
Ib	Wilderness Area: PA managed mainly for wilderness protection	Nil
II	National Park: PA managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation	Chobe National Park, Kalahari Transfrontier Park, Nxai Pan National Park, Makgadikgadi Pans National Park, Moremi Game Reserve, Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve, Khutse Game Reserve, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
III	Natural Monument: PA managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features	Tsodilo hills
IV	Habitat/Species Management Area: PA managed mainly for conservation through management intervention	Khama Rhino Sanctuary, Mokolodi Nature Reserve, Mashatu Game Reserve, Sibuyu Forest Reserve, Maikaelelo Forest Reserve, Kazuma Forest Reserve, Kasane Forest Reserve Extension, Chobe Forest Reserve
V	Protected Landscape/Seascape: Protected area managed mainly for landscape/ seascape conservation and recreation	Nil
VI	Managed Resource Protected Area: PA managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems	Wildlife Management Areas (Chobe, Ngamiland, Ghanzi, Kgalagadi, Kweneng, Southern and Central)

Source: Adapted from Eagles 2002.

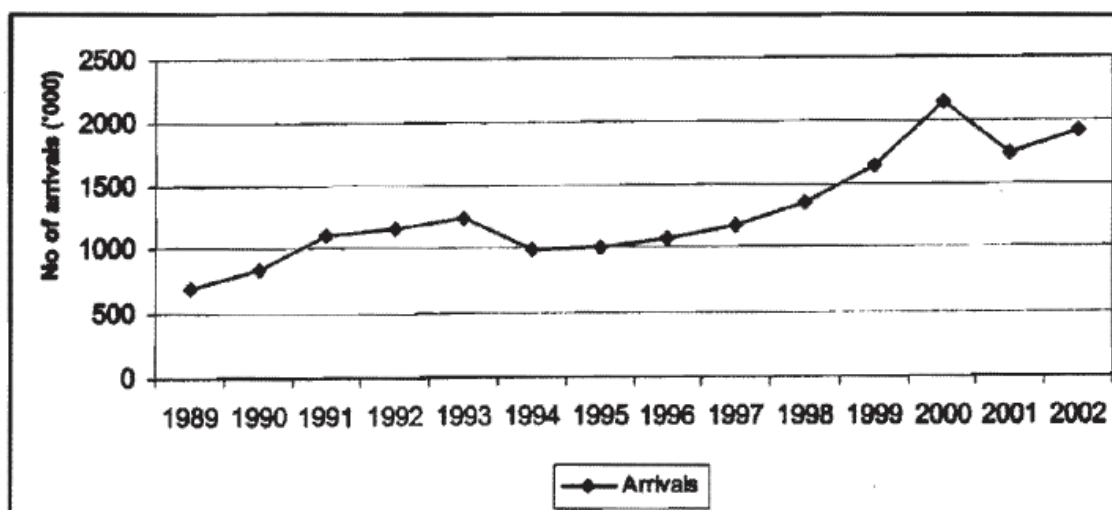
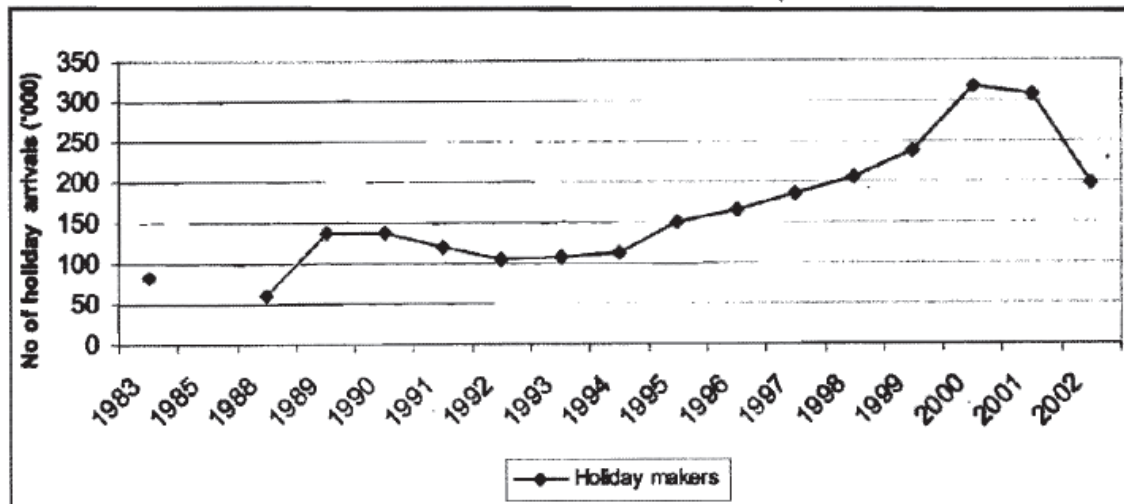


Figure 2. Arrivals to Botswana, 1989-2002. (Source: CSO 1997, 2002 & 2004)



Source: CSO 1997, 2002 & 2004 (1983 figure is from Fowkes (1991)).

Figure 3. Foreign holiday maker arrivals to Botswana 1983-2002.

then dropped to 1.7 million in 2001 (Figure 2). This drop in arrivals in 2000 was partly due to the removal of returning citizens as part of the arrival statistics.

Botswana did not have a tourism policy prior to 1990. Tsiang (1990), Fowkes (1990) and Cooke (1990), quoted in Mbaiwa (2002), state that tourism development in Botswana prior to the 1990s was partly retarded by political instability in the southern African region. Although Botswana was politically stable, there was political unrest in South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola, which reflected negatively on the entire region and projected an insecure image. Long haul (international) tourists usually visit a region as opposed to a single destination. Following the return of peace and political stability to the southern African region, there was marked growth in tourism in the region.

Through the Tourism Policy of 1990, the Government of Botswana pursues a high-value/cost low-volume tourism strategy. This strategy is implemented through several mechanisms and tools which include:

- Differentially scaled up national parks and game reserve tariffs for citizen, resident and non-resident respectively (e.g. entry fees per person per day are P10 citizen, P30 resident & P120 non-resident) (National Parks and Game Reserves Regulations, 2000);
- Limiting access to parks and reserves to 4x4 vehicles only by not upgrading the roads to and inside the parks and reserves for use by non 4x4 vehicles;
- Limiting the beds in lodges and camps to a maximum of 16 beds per lodge or camp; and
- Limiting the number of camp sites inside parks and reserve areas to designated areas only with prescribed capacity.

As a result of the above policy strategies, international tourists who visit parks and reserves irrespective of whether they are private³, mobile⁴ or fixed lodge⁵ belong to the high income socio-economic class. The parks and reserve tariffs are intended to discourage visitation by low-budget tourists. At present, the carrying capacity of all parks and reserves is estimated at 320,000 tourists per annum (BDTP, 2000). The parks and reserves cover an area of 110,000 km² which culminates into a tourist density of 3 tourists/km². The BTDP (2000) states that the northern parks and reserves (Chobe and Moremi) must continue with the high-value low volume strategy, whilst the southern parks and reserves (Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve (CKGR), Khutse Game Reserve and Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park) should shift to attracting more tourists (medium-income class) at an affordable price. This is due in part to the failure by the southern parks and reserves to attract tourists over the past three decades.

As national parks and game reserves are the major source of attraction for tourists in Botswana, it is important to understand and monitor the character and pattern of tourist visitation to these areas, the type of tourists, the number of tourist visits, and the trends over a period of time. This concept is summed up as tourist visitation dynamics. With this information, the government, tourism industry investors and operators should know what facilities to put up, where to put them up, when and for whom. In addition, the knowledge of tourist visitation dynamics in national parks and game reserves should also guide the development of tourism policy.

Product Cycle Model (Butler model)

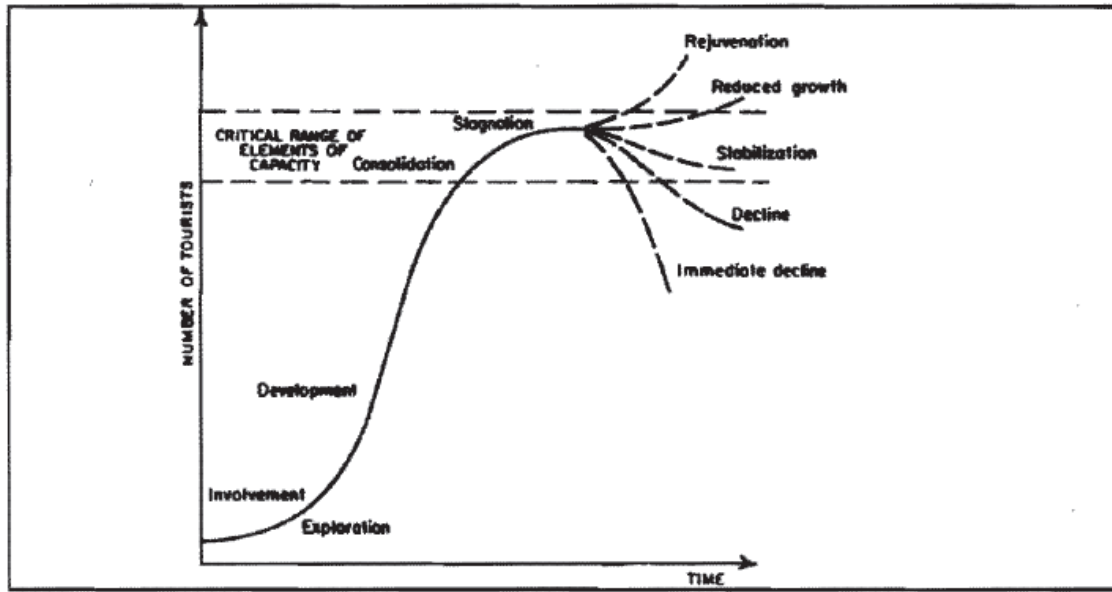
According to the Butler model (Butler, 1980; Prossor, 1994) a tourist destination evolves through seven stages (Figure 4). First a tourist destination is discovered (Exploration); its resources are perceived to be valuable/attractive (Involvement), thus made increasingly available; as the demand grows, tourists, investors and tour operators start moving into the area in large numbers (Development); the destination area booms (Consolidation); with time, the increased number of tourists and tourists facilities cause resources to become maximally exploited (Stagnation), resulting in the resource/product becoming less competitive/attractive/valuable; at this point the destination area declines or may even die as the demand disappears or the resource is exhausted (Decline), or another dimension is rejuvenated at the same destination in what Prossor (1994), quoting from Wolfe (1952), calls 'divorce from the geographic environment' (Rejuvenation) - the way that a destination area changes which obliterate the inherent features which first made it attractive (Butler, 1997).

Prosser (1994) coined the three concepts of the product cycle model, namely conspicuous consumption, successive class intervention and pleasure periphery. Conspicuous consumption assumes that all tourism involves consumption, but the element of conspicuousness begins with fashion, status and image. The seeking out of new places and experiences is part of this consumption for exhibition. Successive class intervention means that over time, a particular mode of consumption, fashion or lifestyle will spread downwards through the socio-economic class structure of society. Therefore, as the cycle evolves, not only do numbers

3. A Private tourist is defined as "one who travels independently, relying upon their own resources and not part of an organized tour group" (Roberts *et al*, 1985).

4. A Mobile Tour Operator tourist is defined as "one who having bought a predetermined tour package, travels as part of an organized tour group, utilizing the services of a Tour Operator".

5. A Fixed Lodge Tourist is defined as "one who undertakes a tailor-made tour which includes residing in an exclusive fixed lodge and participates in excursions organized by the lodge".



Source: Butler, 1980.

Figure 4. The Cycle of evolution of a tourism area (Butler Model).

arriving at a destination grow larger, but the socio-economic status of the tourist changes downward. The concept of pleasure periphery assumes that as tourism at the destination develops, the destination area becomes overcrowded and environmentally degraded by tourism activities and facilities. Henceforth the desire for novelty, uniqueness and exclusivity of experience cause the elite (high socio-economic group) to seek out fresh destinations and move on, potentially triggering the product cycle all over again.

During the development stage of the Butler model, local involvement and control of development will decline rapidly as large foreign investors and operators move into the destination area. Major franchises and chain stores reflect the consolidation stage. These changes are usually not always welcome and accepted by the local people, and safety, security, perceptions and relations may be strained (Butler, 1997). There is an upper limit beyond which safety and security at the destination is compromised and crime increases, perceptions change to crowding and alienation, and the local culture is commercialized in an unsustainable way. Doxey (1975) quoted in Prossor (1994) has also constructed an 'index of tourist irritation' to mirror this progressive change of perception, attitude and response by the destination population. Beyond the stagnation stage, local involvement will increase again in the decline stage as foreign investors move elsewhere and are forced to sell their businesses at cheap prices, affordable to locals.

The Butler model is credited for being the most comprehensive model (Pearce, 1989) for the hypothetical evolution of a tourist destination, largely because it draws from previous work by Cohen (1972), Plog (1973), Stansfield (1978) and Doorn (1979). However, Pearce (1989) argues that the Butler model is not time and place specific, a factor that is captured (though at a fairly general scale) in Gormsen's (1981) model of the spatio-temporal development of international seaside tourism. The Butler model is also not applicable in all its phases to all destinations (Prossor, 1994). The time scale varies widely, whilst in other instances some

destinations do not go through some stages such as 'instant resorts'. In the case of new instant resorts, where tourist facilities are established in an area in which there has been little or no previous settlement, the first two stages (Exploration & Involvement) may be of minimal significance or be absent. A major problem in testing the Butler model for specific areas is that of obtaining data on tourists to a destination over a long period. These are rarely available, and it is particularly unlikely that they will date back to the onset of the tourist visits. However, Butler (1980) argues that those data which are available for periods in excess of 30 to 40 years substantiate the general arguments put forward by his model.

While a firm base for work in destinations of coastal, alpine and rural areas of Europe and the Americas (including Caribbean islands) has been established, more attention needs to be directed to other types of destinations in developing countries, particularly national parks and game reserves, as most were established to serve a dual purpose of conservation and also contribute to the national economy through tourism (Christ *et al*, 2003). More often than not in developing countries, the latter reason is not fully realised, leading to inadequate tourism planning (Page & Dowling, 2002).

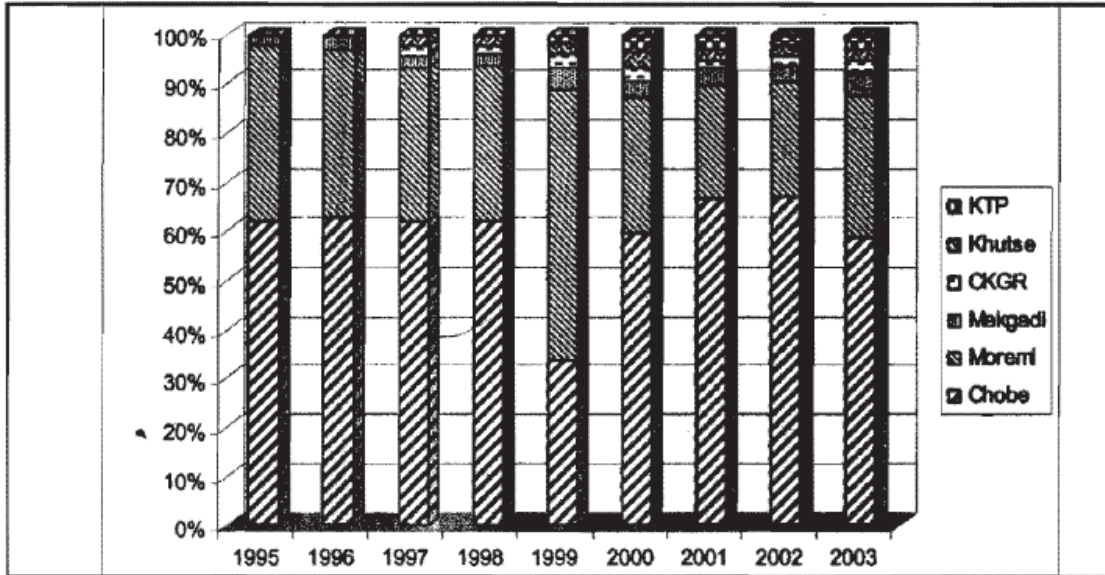
Stages of Tourist Destination Development for Botswana's National Parks and Game Reserves

As stated by Fowkes (1985) and Bell (1991), Botswana was a hunting safari destination prior to the 1960s. National parks and game reserves, which were established in the 1960s, offered the first non-hunting safari destinations. Photographic safaris then started in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although there is no tourist visitation data for national parks and game reserves from the 1960s until the 1980s, it is reasonable to assume that the late 1960s and early 1970s were the discovery stage (combined Exploration & Involvement) of these destinations by tourists in Botswana.

There was a rapid growth of tourists to Botswana from the mid 1970s, rising to 82,193 in 1983 (Fowkes, 1985). Though this figure is a composite estimate for all holiday makers who came to Botswana that year, it is reasonable to assume that visitors to national parks and game reserves were also growing at a similar rate. This period, from the mid 1970s through the 1980s and 1990s, registered considerable growth in holiday makers to Botswana. There were periods of 'dips' such as 1988, 1992 and 1993, however the trend was generally upwards and was sustained over three decades (Figure 3).

In order to assess the period of 1995 to 2004 effectively, we have analysed the trends by park or reserve and by category of tourist. On average, 90% of all tourists who visit national parks and game reserves in Botswana go to the northern parks and reserves (Figure 5). Within these tourists who visit northern parks and reserves, 98% visit Chobe National Park and Moremi Game Reserve alone. The Chobe and Moremi cater for all the three categories of tourists (private, mobile and lodge), whilst the other parks and reserves receive mainly private tourists. On average, Chobe alone accounts for 60% of all tourists who visit national parks and game reserves, whilst Moremi accounts for 30% (Figure 5). Ingram *et al* (1985) found the same proportions of tourist visitations to Chobe and Moremi by protected area. There was an exception in 1999 when 55% of the tourists visited Moremi and 30% visited Chobe (Figure 5).

In Chobe, visitation by mobile and lodge tourists hit their lowest in 1999, despite having experienced a sharp increase up to 1998 (Figure 6). However, there was an immediate recovery in 2000. Although there are several reasons that could be attributed to the sharp declines in 1999, the most likely one was the civil unrest in neighbouring Caprivi (Namibia). During the

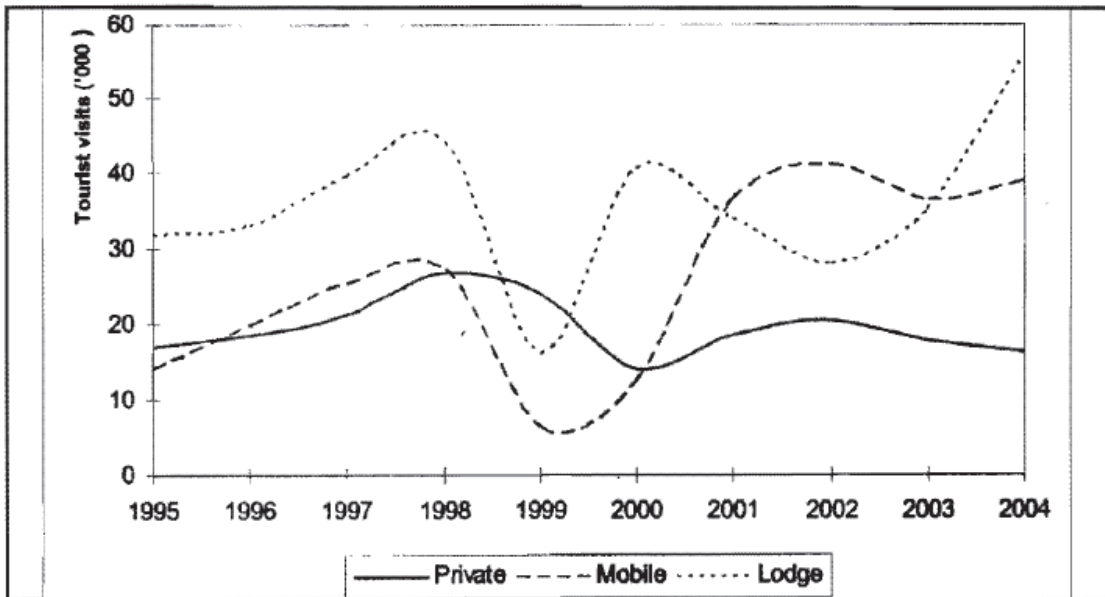


Source: DWNP monthly tourist return data.

Figure 5. Proportion of visitation by park/reserve.

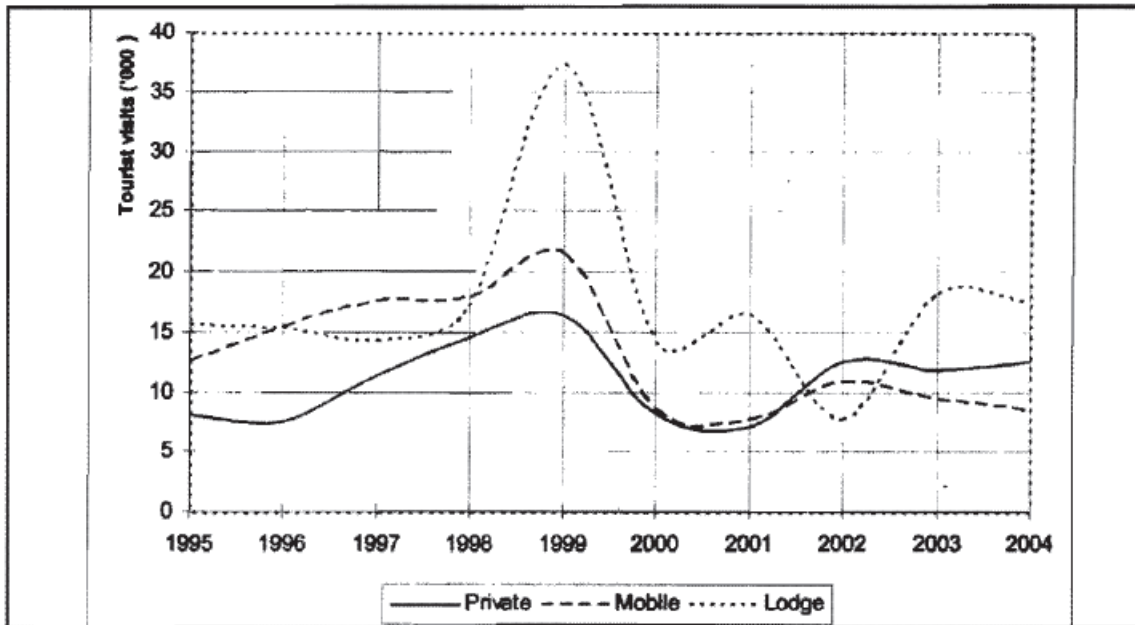
time of the unrest, many countries, including USA and Great Britain issued warnings to their citizens not to travel to the troubled area.

On the other hand, tourist visitation to Moremi was highest in 1999 (Figure 7) for the three categories of tourists. The inverse relationship (Figure 8) between the two giant destinations for 1999 is intriguing, suggesting that for that year, Chobe and Moremi may have shared fewer tourists. Roberts *et al* (1985) had found that many tourists visiting Moremi will



Source: DWNP monthly tourist return data.

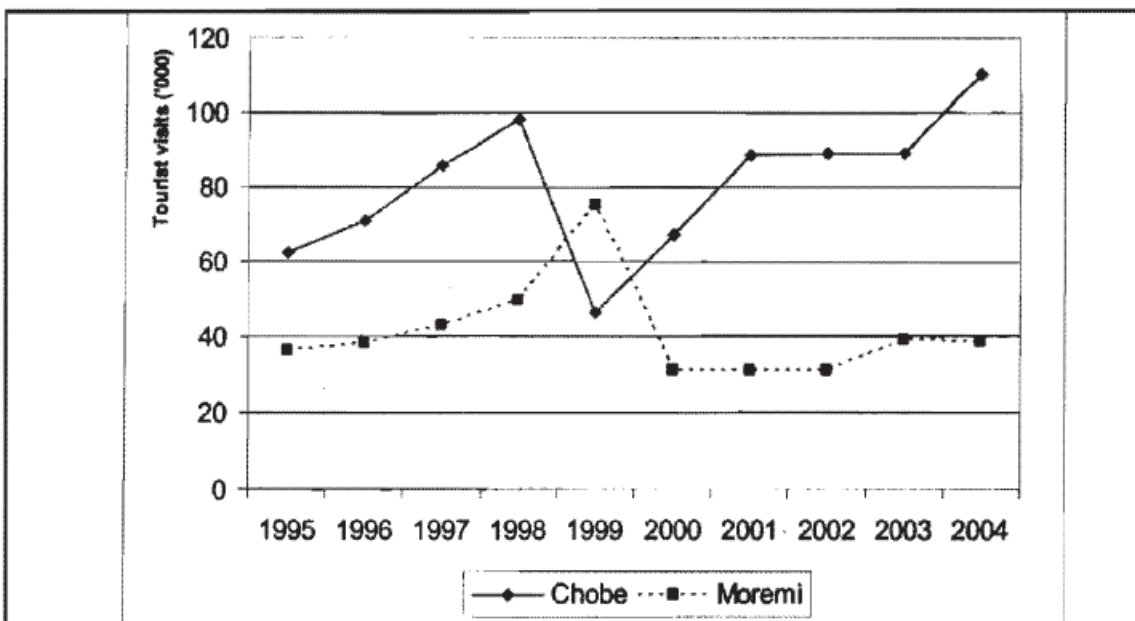
Figure 6. Total tourist visits by category, Chobe National Park (1995-2004).



Source: DWNP monthly tourist return data.

Figure 7. Total tourist visits by category, Moremi Game Reserve (1995-2004).

continue their journey and visit Chobe or vice versa. Because the Chobe shares a border with the Caprivi, the threat of the civil unrest in 1999 might have been perceived greater in the Chobe by the tourists and they might have opted to go to Moremi instead, perceiving the threat to be less there than at Chobe. The reverse to 'normality' in 2000, where there was a sharp increase in tourist visits to Chobe (Figure 8), supports the explanation that the civil unrest in Caprivi may have been responsible for the 1999 decline.



Source: DWNP monthly tourist return data.

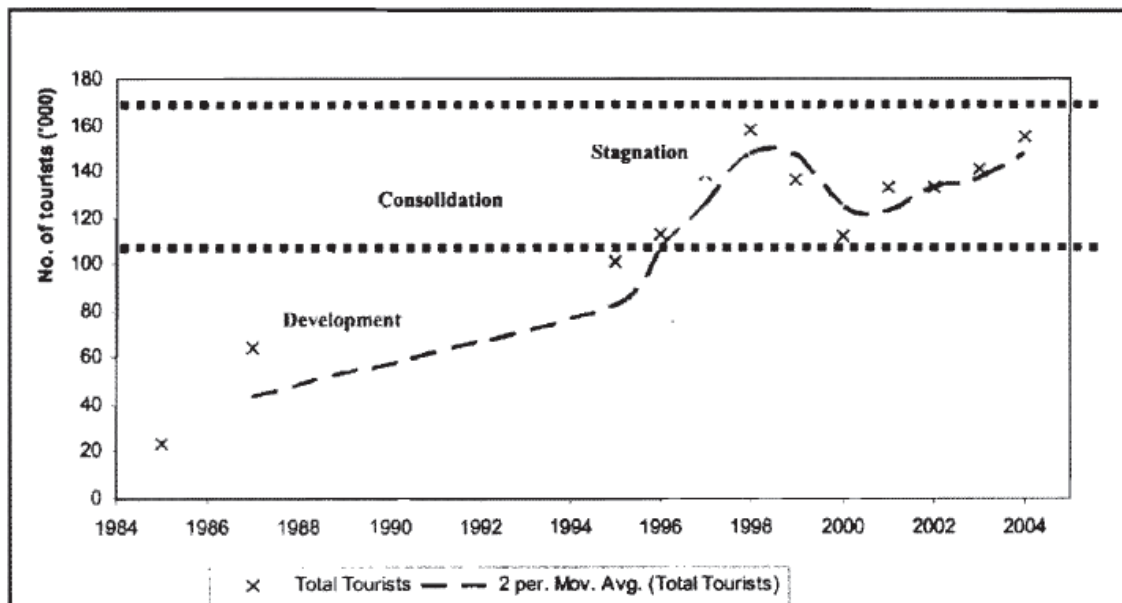
Figure 8. Total number of tourist visits to Moremi and Chobe (1995-2004).

In the middle of 2000, the parks and reserves tariffs were hiked by as much as 140%. This hike might have contributed to the decline in all categories of tourists to Moremi and the decline in private tourist visits to Chobe. This may be due in part to Chobe's close proximity to Kasane township, which allows the park to be easily accessible to day visitors. On the other hand, Moremi is located 100 km from Maun, the closest town, and hence is less accessible to day visitors. It costs more to stay overnight in a park or reserve than being a day visitor. It is not immediately evident what the impact of the September 11th 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center twin towers was on the tourist visitation to Botswana's parks and reserves, other than that there were declines in fixed lodge tourists for both Chobe and Moremi in 2002. The bombings happened towards the end of the tourism season in Botswana in 2001, perhaps when most of the tourists had already visited them and the impact was only felt the following year.

For both Chobe and Moremi, fixed lodge tourists account for most of the visitations (see Figures 6 & 7). The exception to the pattern was in 2002, when mobile tourists accounted for the most visitations in Chobe and private tourist visits dominated in Moremi.

The number of tourists who visited parks and reserves in Botswana during the ten-year period from 1995 to 2004 show a similar pattern as foreign holiday makers (Figure 3). The tourist visitations to parks and reserves ranged between 100,000 to 160,000 annually (Figure 9) during this period, with the highest peak in 1998.

The upward trend in the 1990s is reflective of the growth in the global economy at the same time. The last half of the 1990s was a period of growth in tourist visitations to national parks and game reserves in the southern Africa region generally. Between 1986 and 1998 the number of visitors to game and nature reserves in South Africa grew by 108% annually (South African Tourist Board, 1998). In 1986 the number of visitors to the parks and reserves in RSA was 454,428, whilst in 1998 this number had grown to 5,898,000. Game and nature reserves were the number one activity for visitors to South Africa in 1997 (60%), rising by 2% over the previous year (South African Tourist Board, 1998).



Source: DWNP monthly tourist return data.

Figure 9. Total number of tourist visits to all national parks and game reserves in Botswana (1984-2004).

There was a decline in the total number of tourist visits to Botswana's parks and reserves in 1999, followed by another in 2000, bringing down the tourist numbers from the 1998 peak of 160,000 to 100,000 (Figure 9). During these two years, tourist visits to parks and reserves declined by 14% and 18% respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Annual increase/decline of tourist visits by category.

Year	Private Tourists	Mobile Tourists	Lodge Tourists	Total Tourists
	Increase/Decline (%)	Increase/Decline (%)	Increase/Decline (%)	Increase/Decline (%)
1996*	7	32	3	12
1997*	40	25	11	23
1998	25	4	14	14
1999	7	-36	-13	-14
2000	-34	-25	3	-18
2001	7	105	-8	19
2002	16	18	-29	0
2003	-8	-11	49	6
2004	-20	3	37	10
Average	4	13	7	5

Source: DWNP monthly tourist return data.

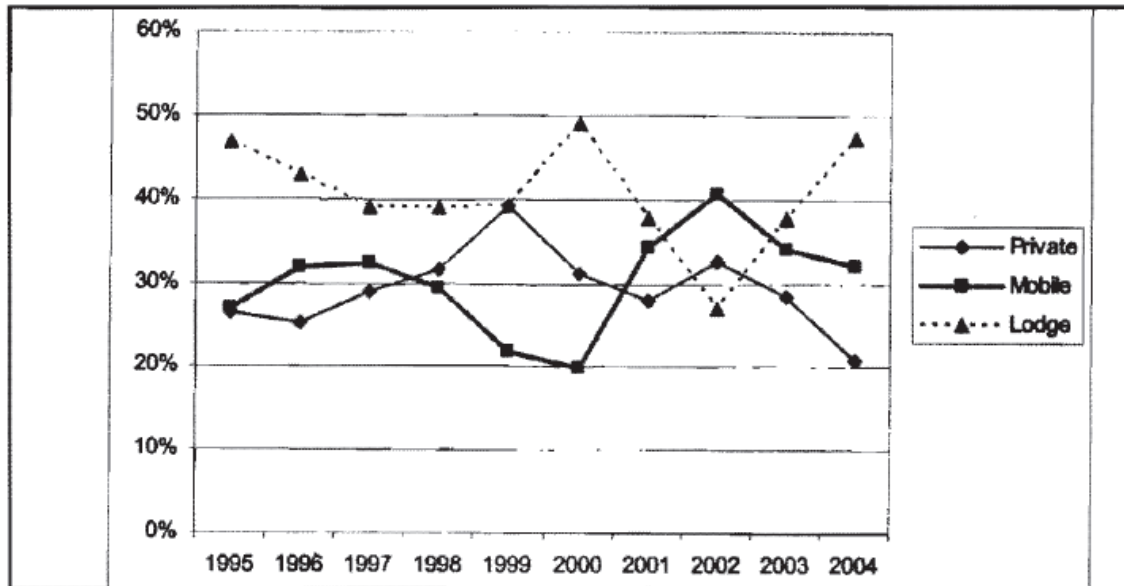
Considering that the build-up to the 1998 peak took several years, it may not be easy to surpass the 1998 figures again in the future. This leads us to conclude that the period from the mid-1970s to 1996 was a growth/development phase of the parks and game reserve destinations (Figure 9) in Botswana.

Total tourist visits to Botswana's parks and reserves experienced an increase between 1995 and 1998 in the order of 12%, 23% and 14% respectively (Table 3). In 1999 there was a decline of 14% in total visits to parks and reserves which was due to declines in mobile tourist visits (36%) and Fixed lodge tourists (13%). In 2000, the decline in total visits continued, registering another 18% decline. This decline was due to a decline in private tourist visits by 34% and mobile tourist visits by 25%, whilst the fixed lodge tourists recorded a 3% increase. The fixed lodge tourists have, however, recorded two consecutive declines of 8% and 27% in 2001 and 2002 respectively.

The fixed lodge tourist visitation, though highest during the period 1995-2000, declined sharply thereafter (Figure 10), reaching the lowest proportions amongst the three categories of tourists by 2002. Though the proportion of this tourist category increased in 2003 and 2004, the overall average increase over the 10 year period (1995-2004) is 7% (Table 2). On the other hand, visitation by mobile tourists registered the largest average increase (13%) over the same period. In other words, mobile tourist visitation accounts for the largest average increase, which translates into an increased proportion of this category whilst the other categories were decreasing.

Fixed lodge tourist visits constitute the most tourist visits (35-45%) to Botswana's national parks and game reserves (Figure 10). This trend is in line with the high-value low

* The figures for private and mobile tourists do not include figures for 1995-96 for southern parks and reserves.



Source: DWNP monthly tourist return data.

Figure 10. Proportion of tourist visits by category to all national parks and game reserves in Botswana (1995-2004).

volume strategy, as the fixed lodge tourist pays the most money to visit Botswana's national parks and game reserves. In addition to paying park and reserve tariffs, fixed lodge tourists also pay handsomely for the luxurious lodges and camps that they reside in when on safari, a cost which the other categories of tourists do not incur. The proportion of fixed lodge tourists' visitation to parks and reserves has declined over the period in review in favour of the mobile tourist visits. If this trend is to continue, some adjustments in policy may have to be made. The Botswana Tourism Master Plan (2000) states that the high-cost low-volume strategy be continued for the northern parks and reserves whilst the southern parks and reserves adopt a higher-volume lower-cost strategy. In the business sector, the market forces will dictate what adjustments have to be made to adapt to the transition in visitations to Chobe and Moremi. Mobile tourist visits accounted for 27% of all the tourist visits to parks and reserves in 1995, whilst the fixed lodge tourist accounted for 47%. Over the 10 year period (1995-2004) the two categories registered an average increase of 13% and 7% respectively. Therefore, mobile tourist visits have increased twice as much as the fixed lodge tourist visits in the period under review. This is a transition in the pattern of visitation within the socio-economic classes of tourists from highest-income class to a high-medium income class. In addition to the income class transition, the actual number of tourist visits appears to be hovering between the 100,000 and 160,000 range, suggesting that the parks and reserves have reached stagnation (Figure 9). Prosser (1984) describes this transition as class intervention, whereby an admired elite inspires or propagates a destination which is then aspired to by progressively broader sections of society. The broader sections of society, as they become able, attempt to emulate the behaviour and style of the perceived elites by travelling to the same destinations. It is possible that the highest-income class tourists may have shifted to another destination within Botswana, in particular concession areas, which are run more or less like private game reserves. These are attractive because the rules are less stringent than the rules inside national parks and game reserves. For example,

though night game drives inside parks and reserves were introduced in principle through the Parks and Reserves Regulations of 2000, they have not officially started because of the absence of supporting administrative structures (e.g. no fees set, no designated areas). In concession areas, night game drives are amongst the main tourist activities. Fixed lodge tourists are the most sensitive of the three categories of tourists, and such issues as waste management (which has continued to be a challenge for the parks and reserve managers) can easily turn away this group of tourists. BTDP (2000) also found that a comparison of visits to Botswana's national parks and reserves by South Africans with the number of holiday/tourist arrivals from that country would appear to suggest that most of the South African visitors visit other parts of the country outside the national parks and reserves. Some may also be in transit through Botswana. However, as international holiday makers to Botswana have declined since 2001 (Figure 3), the fixed lodge tourists may be choosing other destinations outside Botswana.

According to Butler (1980), other indicators of a destination that is in a stage of stagnation include international chain stores and franchises flooding the destination, disparity between the rich foreign tourists, rich foreign tour operators and poor local host community become clearly defined, tensions between the tourism industry and locals heighten, and crime increases. The main tourist towns of Maun and Kasane have become globalised as they now have major retail chain stores (Spar, Shoprite, Choppies, Score) and international franchises such as Nandos, Sport café, Bull & Bush, etc. Maun has almost all the commercial banks (Barclays, Standard Chartered, First National and Stanbic) that operate in Botswana. In addition the crime rate in Ngamiland District, where Maun is found, is amongst the highest in the country.

Conclusion

The Chobe National Park is the most popular destination amongst all national parks and game reserves in Botswana, accounting for 60% of all tourist visits. Moremi Game Reserve accounts for 30% of all tourist visits, whilst the remaining 10% is shared by all the other five national parks and game reserves. Chobe and Moremi, which receive 90% of all tourists to national parks and game reserves, relate to the product cycle model more clearly than the other national parks and game reserves. The other national parks and game reserves seem to have not gone beyond the discovery stage.

The pattern of tourist visitation to Chobe and Moremi suggests that these tourist destinations have reached the stagnation stage in the product cycle model. There is a transition in proportion of tourist visits by category from fixed lodge tourist visits to mobile tourist visits as evidenced by the average increase of 7% and 13% respectively. Between 1995 and 2000, the fixed lodge tourists constituted between 40-50% of tourist visitations. This figure dropped rapidly over the following two years to reach 27% in 2002, a drop of more than double. Though this decline was compensated for by a similar increase in 2003 and 2004, the trend over the ten year period (1995-2004) is downward. Mobile tourist visits have since 2001 constituted proportions of between 30-40% of tourist visitations to national parks and game reserves. Fixed lodge tourists belong to the highest income economic class, while mobile operator tourists belong to the high-medium economic class. As per the product cycle model, a transition in the socio-economic class of tourists at a destination is indicative of a particular mode of consumption, fashion or lifestyle spreading downwards through the socio-economic class structure of society (Prossor, 1994). The desire for novelty, uniqueness and exclusivity of uniqueness may have caused the elite tourists to seek out fresh destinations elsewhere outside national parks and game reserves.

The Botswana Tourism Master Plan (2000) should be reviewed in light of the findings of this paper. The plan was based on data that showed that tourist numbers were increasing. For instance, BTMP (2000:74) assumed that 'the number of holiday tourists is projected to increase from 184,475 in 1997 to 338,000 in 2010'. This projection is clearly off target as the number of holiday tourists in 2002, halfway through the targeted projection period, was nearly the same (197,219) as the 1997 figure (Figure 3), after a drop in 2001. The high-cost low-volume strategy for Chobe and Moremi needs to be revisited in the light of the transition from fixed lodge tourist visits to mobile tourist visits as well as the apparent stagnation that the destinations seem to have entered. Furthermore, the southern parks and reserves require significant intervention up and above the transition from low-volume high-price to medium-volume low-price recommended by the Tourism Master Plan. Factors such as access by 4x4 vehicles only to these destinations will hamper the attempts to attract middle income tourists.

These findings also suggest that a change of attitude is required on the part of those who are responsible for planning, developing and managing national parks and game reserves. These areas are not infinite and timeless tourist attractions, but should be viewed and treated as finite and possible non-renewable products passing through an experience spectrum of a heterogeneous tourist clientele. Such areas as waste management in parks and reserves requires more vigorous attention than they are currently being given by park and reserve managers. In this way, the potential competitiveness of the areas could be maintained and sustained over a longer period.

Safari tourism inside national parks and game reserves has been encouraged, and continues to be promoted by the government, through favourable policy (high-value low-volume, differential park and reserve tariffs, etc.), as it is the backbone of the country's wildlife based tourism industry. However, over the past ten years, tourist numbers to the parks and reserves have stagnated over a 100,000-160,000 range, well below the carrying capacity of these areas. It is perhaps unwise for the government to rely on the tourism sector as a dependable engine of economic growth. The southern parks and game reserves, which continue to record low tourist numbers, may begin to be a burden to the tax payer while continuing to impose opportunity costs to the local communities adjacent to these areas: as Rajotte (1987:84) notes: 'For the peasant farmer or herder the costs of wildlife conservation are high and are experienced directly in terms of loss of potential forage and damage to crops, livestock, property and life.' This means that tourism will be only one element of the local economy, possibly not even a dominant element. Perhaps income gained from it should be invested to improve other sectors to diversify the economy.

Tourism is extremely dynamic, as are all the elements which comprise it, and few destinations are able or should remain unchanged. In addition, destination areas carry with them the potential seeds of their own demise (Myburgh & Saayman, 1999). By adapting to accommodate changing preferences and types of tourists, Botswana's national parks and game reserves may remain viable and sustainable tourism destinations into the future.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) for allowing us to use the tourist data that they collected.

References

- Bell, C. (1991) An Overview of the Photographic Safari Industry. In *Tourism in Botswana*. Gaborone: The Botswana Society.
- Botswana Tourism Development Programme (2000) Botswana Tourism Master Plan. Department of Tourism, Commission of the European Union, ARCA Consulting.
- Butler, R. (1980) The concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution: implications for management of resources, *The Canadian Geographer*, 24(1); 5-12.
- Butler, R. (1997) Modeling Tourism Development; Evolution, Growth and Decline. In Wahab, S. & Pigram, J.J. (Eds) *Tourism, Development and Growth; The challenge of sustainability*. London: Routledge.
- Ceballos-Lascurain, H. (1996) *Tourism, Ecotourism and Protected Areas*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.
- Central Statistics Office (2003) *Tourism Statistics 2002*. Gaborone: Printing and Publishing Services.
- Central Statistics Office (2004) *Statistical Bulletin: Quarter 4, 2001 & Quarters 1-4, 2002*, Vol. 26 No. 4 & Vol. 27 No. 1-4. Gaborone: Government Printer.
- Central Statistics Office (1997) *Statistical Bulletin*, Vol. 22 No. 3 Gaborone: Government Printer.
- Christ, C., Hillel, O., Matus, S., Sweeting, J. (2003) *Tourism and Biodiversity: Mapping Tourism's Global Footprint*. Washington D.C.: Conservation International.
- Cohen, E. (1972) Toward a sociology of international tourism, *Social Research*, 39, pp. 164-82.
- Van Doorn, J.W.M. (1979) *The Developing Countries: Are they really affected by tourism? Some notes on Socio-Cultural Impact Studies*, Tourism, 7-8 December 1974, Warsaw.
- Eagles, P.F.J., McCool, S.F., Haynes, C.D. (2002) *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas; Guidelines for Planning and Management*. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 8, Phillips, A Series Editor. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN and Cambridge UK: UNEP and World Tourism Organization.
- Government of Botswana (2004) *National Development Plan 9*. Gaborone: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Government Printer.
- Government of Botswana (2000) *National Parks and Game Reserve Regulations*. Gaborone: Government Printer.
- Government of Botswana (1990) *Tourism Policy*. Gaborone: Government Printer.
- Fowkes, J.D. (1985) *The Contribution of the Tourist Industry to the Economy of the Republic of Botswana*. Gaborone: Kalahari Conservation Society.
- Ingram, B., Roberts, M., Fowkes, J. & Fowkes, S. (1985) *An evaluation of the Gate Entry Records of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Botswana, January 1984-June 1985*.
- Myburgh, E., & Saayman, M. (1999) *Ecotourism in Action: Practical Guidelines and Principles*. RSA: Leisure Consultants and Publications.
- Mbaiwa, J.E. (2002) Environmental Impacts of Tourism Development in the Okavango Delta, Northwestern Botswana. *Botswana Notes and Records*. 34: 67-78.
- Mbaiwa, J.E. (2002) *Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts of Tourism Development in the Okavango Delta, Botswana*. Maun: Harry Openhiemer Okavango Research Centre.
- Page, S.J & Dowling, R.K. (2002) *Ecotourism*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Pearce, D. (1989). *Tourist Development*, 2nd Ed. Longman Scientific & Technical, Essex: England.

- Plog, S.C. (1973) Why destination areas rise and fall in popularity, *Cornell H.R.A. Quarterly*, November, 13-16.
- Prossor, R. (1994) Societal Change and the Growth in Alternative Tourism. In Cater, E. & Lowmen, G. (Eds), *Ecotourism: a sustainable option?* UK: Royal Geographical Society.
- Rajotte, S. (1987) Safari and beach-resort tourism: the costs to Kenya. In Britton, S. and Clarke, W.C. (Eds), *Ambiguous Alternative: Tourism in Small, Developing Countries*, pp. 78-90. Suva: University of the South Pacific.
- Roberts, M., Ingram, B., Fowkes, J. & Fowkes, S. (1985) A profile of the Independent Tourist Visiting Botswana in 1985. University of Cape Town.
- South African Tourist Board, (1998) Annual Tourism Statistics. RSA.
- Stansfield, C. (1978) Atlantic City and the resort cycle: Background to the legalization of gambling, *Annals of Tourism Research* 2(4), 213-25.
- Tinley, K.L. (1973) *An Ecological Reconnaissance of the Moremi Wildlife Reserve, Botswana*. Johannesburg: Okovango Wildlife Society.