Critical success factors for managing the visitor experience at the Kruger National Park

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CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR MANAGING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE AT THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

ABSTRACT

Nature-based tourism destinations have shown significant growth over the past decade and, with the ever increasing numbers of tourists travelling to national parks, the right management structures, goals and objectives need to be determined. South African National Parks (SANParks) manages all 22 national parks in South Africa with the Kruger National Park (KNP) being the biggest of them all and generating more than 80% of SANParks income. The KNP is one of the world's largest parks conserving a staggering 1 962 362 ha of land which is bigger than countries such as Israel and Holland. When taking the KNP into perspective, park management must have the right management styles and factors in place to ensure that the park is managed in a sustainable manner and exceeds the expectations of the tourist to provide a memorable experience whilst visiting the KNP. The goal of this study was therefore to determine the critical management aspects or critical success factors (CSFs) needed to create a memorable visitor experience at the park.

This goal was achieved by conducting a questionnaire survey at four rest camps within the KNP from 27 December 2010 to 4 January 2011. The rest camps used for the survey were: Skukuza (152 questionnaires), Berg and Dal (98 questionnaires), Lower Sabie (85 questionnaires) and Satara (101 questionnaires). During this time a total of 436 questionnaires were completed and included in further analysis.

In Article 1, the key management aspects that visitors regard as important for a memorable visitor experience at the KNP were identified. These CSFs assist management in providing quality services and products for the tourist, leading to a memorable experience. A factor analysis was performed on the expectations of the tourists to national parks. There were nine CSFs identified that management can implement to ensure a memorable visitor experience. The three factors that have not yet been identified in previous research were *wildlife experience*, *interpretation* and *luxuries*. Other factors that have been identified were *General management, Variety*

activities, Accommodation, *Green management, Hospitality management, and Facilities.* The results showed that park management needs to become aware of what the visitor sees as important factors for a memorable visitor experience and they can adapt certain aspects to improve the visitor's experience.

In Article 2, gaps within the park management were identified. These gaps were measured by taking the 62 variables and asking the tourist what their expectations were with regard to a memorable experience versus their actual/real experience at the park. A factor analysis on the expectations and the actual/real experiences was done and each of these factors was given a score. The scores of each factor were measured against one another indicating the differences and gaps in management. The twelve factors that were identified were *General management, Education activities. Accommodation facilities, Green management, Information provided, Layout of the park, Wildlife, Facilities in the park, Food and Beverage management, Interpretive activities, Bookings and General services, and Outdoor activities.* These twelve factors have also been grouped into three sub groups containing four factors each and either the expectations were exceeded, did not meet expectations or were neutral. The main gaps were *Education, Accommodation facilities, Interpretations facilities* and *Wildlife.* If management want to ensure a memorable visitor experience at the KNP they must not only focus on these gaps, but also strive to exceed visitors' expectations on all levels.

This research found that there are certain CSFs for managing a national park and gaps within park management that need to be addressed. These gaps or problem areas can be overcome by the implementation of a continuous evaluation process that will ensure effective and efficient management of the park. Park management can therefore improve their services and products as well as the quality thereof by knowing what the tourists see as important when visiting a national park to obtain a memorable experience that will lead to positive word of mouth, loyalty, increased revenue and sustainability of the KNP. Even though it is not a requirement of a masters' dissertation to make a contribution, this research has made a significant contribution towards the methodology as the method applied determined the gaps in visitor experience and expectations and this has not been used before. Future research can make use of this type of method determining individuals' expectations and experiences when visiting a national park or any other nature-based destination.

KRITIESE SUKSESFAKTORE VIR DIE BESTUUR VAN DIE BESOEKERSERVARING BY DIE NASIONALE KRUGER PARK

OPSOMMING

Natuurgebaseerde bestemmings na aan die natuur het oor die afgelope dekade beduidende groei getoon. Soos wat nasionale parke se besoekerstalle toeneem, raak dit al hoe belangriker om die regte bestuurstrukture, doelwitte en doelstellings te bepaal. Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Parke (SANParke) bestuur al 22 nasionale parke in Suid-Afrika, waarvan die Nasionale Kruger Park (NKP) die grootste is en ook meer as 80% van SANParke se inkomste genereer. Die NKP is een van die wêreld se grootste reservate met 'n bewaringsgebied van 1 962 362 ha – groter as lande soos Israel en Holland. Vanuit hierdie perspektief is dit duidelik dat die NKP se bestuur die regte bestuurstyle en -faktore in plek moet hê om die park op 'n lewenshoubare manier te bestuur, en toeriste se verwagtinge te oortref ten einde 'n onvergeetlike ervaring te verseker. Dus was die doel van hierdie studie om die kritiese bestuurselemente of kritiese suksesfaktore (KSF'e) te bepaal wat noodsaaklik is om 'n onvergeetlike besoekerservaring aan die park te verseker.

Hierdie doel is bereik deur 'n vraelysopname by vier ruskampe in die NKP vanaf 27 Desember, 2010 tot 4 Januarie, 2011 te onderneem. Die ruskampe wat vir die opname gebruik is, was: Skukuza (152 vraelyste), Berg en Dal (98 vraelyste), Onder-Sabie (85 vraelyste) en Satara (101 vraelyste). 'n Totaal van 436 vraelyste is in hierdie tydperk voltooi en verder ontleed.

In Artikel 1 is die belangrikste bestuurselemente, wat volgens besoekers vir 'n onvergeetlike ervaring by die NKP sorg, geïdentifiseer. Hierdie KSF'e ondersteun bestuur daarin om kwaliteitdienste en -produkte aan die toeris te lewer, om sodoende 'n onvergeetlike ervaring te bewerkstellig. 'n Faktorontleding is uitgevoer op die verwagtinge van besoekers aan nasionale parke. Nege KSF'e is uitgelig wat bestuur kan implementeer om 'n onvergeetlike besoekerservaring te verseker.

Die drie elemente wat nog nie deur vorige navorsing geïdentifiseer is nie, was *Ervaring van die Natuurlewe, Interpretasie,* en *Luukshede.* Ander faktore wat wel uitgelig is, was *Algemene bestuur, Verskeidenheid aktiwiteite, Verblyf, "Groen" bestuur, Onthaalbestuur* en *Geriewe.* Die uitslae het daarop gedui dat die bestuur van die park bewus moet raak van wat die besoeker as belangrik ag vir 'n onvergeetlike ervaring, sodat hulle aanpassings kan maak om die toeris se ondervinding te verbeter.

In Artikel 2 is leemtes in die park se bestuur geïdentifiseer. Hierdie leemtes is gemeet deur van 62 veranderlikes gebruik te maak. Toeriste is gevra wat hul verwagtinge ten opsigte van 'n onvergeetlike ervaring was, en hoe dit teen die ware ondervinding opgeweeg het. 'n Faktorontleding is van die verwagte en ware ervarings gemaak, en elke faktor het 'n factor ladings ontvang. Die punte is met mekaar vergelyk en sodoende is bestuursleemtes en -variasies aangedui. Die twaalf faktore wat sodoende aangewys is, was *Algemene bestuur, Opvoedkundige aktiwiteite, Verblyfgeriewe, "Groen" bestuur, Inligting verskaf, Parkuitleg, Natuurlewe, Parkgeriewe, Voedsel- en Drankbestuur, Interpretasie-aktiwiteite, Besprekings en Algemene dienste* en *Buitemuurse aktiwiteite.* Hierdie faktore is ook in drie onderafdelings met vier faktore elk verdeel; verwagtinge is oortref, die ervaring was benede verwagting, of die gevoel oor die ervaring was gelykstaande aan verwagtings. Die grootste gapings het voorgekom in *Opvoeding, Verblyfgeriewe, Interpretasies-aktiwiteite* en *Natuurlewe.*

Indien bestuur wil verseker dat die besoekers' n onvergeetlike ervaring het wanneer hulle die park besoek, moet daar nie net op die gapings binne bestuur gefokus word nie, maar bestuur moet ook daarna streef om die besoekers se verwagtinge op alle vlakke te oorskrei.

Hierdie navorsing het bevind dat sekere KSF'e vir die bestuur van nasionale parke en leemtes binne parkbestuur aandag moet geniet. Hierdie gapings of probleemareas kan opgelos word deur 'n volgehoue evaluasieproses toe te pas wat effektiewe en doeltreffende bestuur van die park sal verseker. Parkbestuur kan die gehalte van hul dienste en produkte verbeter deur bewus te raak van dit wat toeriste as belangrik ag ten einde 'n onvergeetlike ervaring te verseker. Hierdie ondervinding sal lei tot positiewe mondelinge bemarking, lojaliteit, verhoogde inkomste en lewenshoubaarheid vir die NKP. Hierdie navorsing het ook 'n aansienlike bydrae tot die metodologie gemaak: die metode wat toegepas is, het leemtes in die ervarings en verwagtinge van besoekers

bepaal, en dit is nog nooit voorheen op hierdie manier ingespan nie. Toekomstige navorsing kan van dieselfde tipe metode gebruik maak om individue wat 'n nasionale park of ander natuurbestemming besoek, se verwagtinge en ervarings te peil.

Sleutelwoorde: ekotoerisme. Nasionale Kruger Park, onvergeetlike besoekers ervaring, faktor analise, natuur-gebasseerde toerisme, park bestuur, nasionale parke, volhoubaarheid, Suid-Afrika, besoekers tevredenheid, kritiese sukses faktore

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INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, METHOD OF RESEARCH AND OBJECTIVES

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Nature-based tourism has shown significant growth over the past few years and the public are encouraging the development and expansion of nature-based tourism with activities that are directly dependent on the natural environment and biodiversity values, including wildlife, forests and pristine marine settings (Bushell & Eagles, 2007:332). Due to this appeal, there is a growth in the number of tourists visiting national parks worldwide (Said, Jaddil & Ayob, 2009:74; Balmford, Beresford, Green, Naidoo, Walpole & Manica, 2009:1). Walker and Walker (2011:522) and Cook, Yale and Marqua (2010:403) define a national park as a large natural place that has a wide variety of attributes, sometimes including significant historic assets. Hamin (2001:123), Tomczyk (2010:1) and Page and Connell (2009:645) add that national parks are prestige tourism destinations (since they are subject to recreation activities) that are designed to conserve natural areas. Based on these descriptions, national parks are closely associated with nature-based tourism as well as ecotourism (Weaver, 2001:73). Wearing and Neil (2009:7) explain that, similar to national parks, ecotourism involves activities that are dependent on nature and enhance nature and the natural setting, which ensures that visitors have an ultimate experience and fulfilment of their needs.

In the case of South Africa, one of the biggest ecotourism product owners is South African National Parks hereafter referred to as (SANParks), currently managing 22 of South Africa's national parks, which are situated across South Africa conserving the biodiversity, landscapes and cultural heritage of the country (SANParks, 2009:2). National parks in South Africa have three fundamental management pillars: (1) integration of conservation, (2) benefit of the local community, and (3) sustainable development (Saayman & Saayman, 2006:67). The Kruger National Park (hereafter referred to as the KNP) is one of the country's most renowned national parks and an icon in the South African ecotourism development experience (Dieke, 2001:99). The KNP was established in 1926 by the late President Paul Kruger, with the amalgamation

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of the Sabie and Shingwedzi game reserves. The reason for establishing the KNP was to stop uncontrolled hunting and the main purpose was to conserve the natural environment. The KNP is situated in the provinces of Mpumalanga and Limpopo and extends into Mozambique which makes it one of the largest parks in the world covering a staggering 1 962 362 ha of land only on the South African side (Honey, 1999:339). The KNP attracts over one million tourists per annum and is one of the top five international destinations in South Africa (Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2008:154; Bushell & Eagles, 2007:33; Aylward & Lutz, 2003:97). Sebola (2008:64) indicates that the KNP is one of the most popular sites for tourists to visit in South Africa because of the expertise of the game rangers and trackers to assist with game viewing. National parks such as the KNP therefore not only focus on the conservation and protection of the natural environment but also generate revenue for the country by attracting large numbers of tourists (Said *et al.,* 2009:75).

However, there is tremendous competition in South Africa and, besides the 22 national parks managed by SANParks, there are more than 7 000 privately owned game reserves and game farms, most of which are situated in the Limpopo province (Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2004:42; SANParks, 2008/9:19). In addition to the problem of competition, changing times force visitors to adopt different approaches to holidays and visitors tend to move towards more sophisticated, specialised and personalised service delivery, thus leading to new niche markets (Franch, Martini, Buffa & Parisi, 2008:6). According to Khan (2003:109) and Cook *et al.* (2010:67), this implies the need for higher quality products and services that need to be delivered to the visitors to fulfil their expectations. However, visitor experience can be influenced by a variety of aspects such as friendliness, clean accommodation facilities, and being able to see game, to name but a few. Park management needs to be aware of these aspects since some of them are directly controlled by management. Therefore KNP management needs to know which aspects are important to ensure that visitors' needs are fulfilled. This will lead to positive word-of-mouth, recommendations and return visits and loyalty (Noe*,* Uysal & Magnini, 2010:98).

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the background to the problem, the problem statement, which is followed by the goals and objectives of the study, the research methodology, definitions of key concepts and, lastly, the chapter classification.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

As a market leader in nature-based/ecotourism, the KNP needs to ensure that the needs of visitors are satisfied since this factor is seen as the key to earning profit (Seetharaman, Sreenivasan & Boon, 2006:692). Saayman and Saayman (2006:74) add that, from a sustainability point of view, the effective management and service quality of national parks is critical. However, management of public operations such as the KNP in South Africa have the tendency not to make efficient use of the available resources (Sebola, 2008:62). With this in mind, Hetzer (1965:1-3) identified four pillars of ecotourism as shown in Figure 1.1 namely: conservation and promotion of the natural and cultural environment; sustainable management of the environment; participation of the local community and visitor satisfaction. Blamey (2001:6) and Van Der Merwe and Saayman (2004:8) agree with the first three of the four pillars identified by Hetzer (1965:1-3). However, the satisfaction pillar plays an important role in determining the visitor experience and/or satisfaction. Said *et al.* (2009:77) emphasise that service quality and visitor satisfaction are of high importance to national parks because these critical factors can influence the competitiveness and sustainability of national parks.

Visitor satisfaction is determined by the expectations, experiences and perceptions of the visitors (Boshoff, Landman, Kerley & Bradfield, 2007:195). Wight (2001:53) and Mendoza, Marius, Perez and Griman (2007:916) add that visitor satisfaction and service delivery are strongly related to meeting the expectations of visitors. Satisfaction is determined by measuring the expected perception of quality and the actual quality experienced by the visitors (Cook *et al.,* 2010:67). In a park context, when visitors' expectations are fulfilled by a memorable experience, they will become loyal towards the product and make regular purchases. These visitors may also be known as loyalists, whose experience exceeds their expectations and provides positive word-of-mouth to others about the product, thus leading to more visitors visiting the park and a greater economic impact with ongoing purchasing of the product (Shiffman & Knauk, 2007:9).

Pillars of Ecotourism			
Conservation and promotion of the natural and cultural environment	**Sustainable management of the environment**	**Participation by the local community**	**Tourist satisfaction**
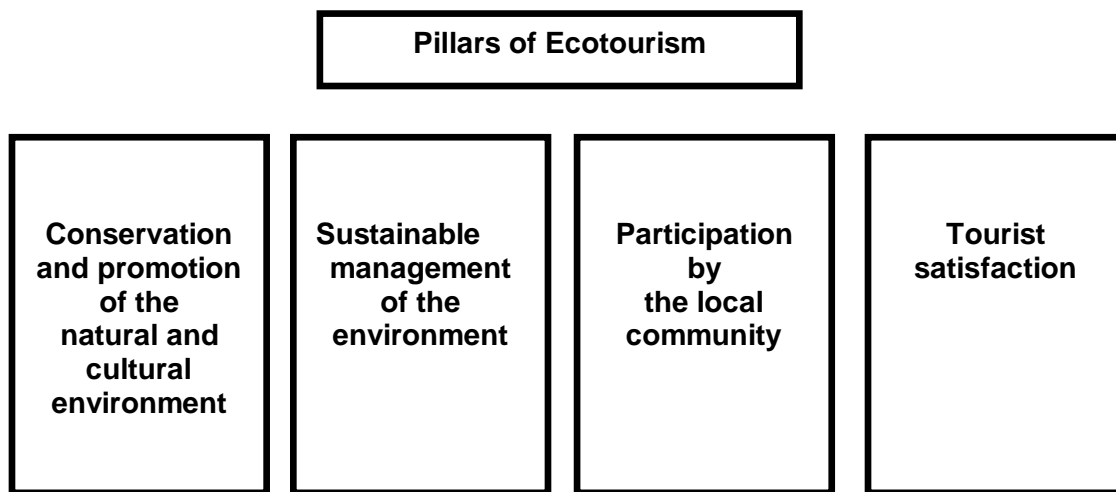
Figure 1.1: Pillars of ecotourism
Source: Geldenhuys (2009:3)

Park Management needs to monitor and respond to the expectations of visitors and identify areas where these expectations are not met (Saayman, 2009a:358). Saayman (2009a:358) identified some aspects that need to be considered by Park Management to ensure a quality visitor experience. These aspects are:

- Access to and from the site, including arrival and departure;
- General movement and site access;
- Organisation, including communal time, private time, timing of activities and meals;
- Quality of activities, including the educational and recreational value of activities;
- Character of the facility;
- Quality and level of service;
- Quality of facilities offered; and
- Breadth and depth of interpretive information, quality of printed material, videos, photos and slide shows,
- Quality of conservation management.

In addition, Moore, Petty, Palich and Longenecker (2008:352) identified four main components that will lead to visitor satisfaction. These are: (1) to provide the basic benefits of the product or service that all the competitors deliver; (2) to offer support services to the visitor such as customer assistance; (3) to implement a system that will counteract any bad experiences that visitors may experience whilst visiting the park and (4) to deliver extraordinary service that exceeds the expectations of the visitors, and

constantly develop the product to meet the changing needs of the visitors. Wali, Deshmukh and Gupta (2003:10) add that quality should be visitor-driven and employees need to ensure that visitors' needs are exceeded and the right procedures are followed when visitors provide feedback to the park. Customer-centric organisations such as the KNP therefore also need to develop programmes for their staff that will offer them the skills and knowledge to meet visitors' needs and demands and ensure a memorable visitor experience (Mendoza *et al.,* 2007:913).

With these quality aspects in mind, Boshoff *et al.* (2007:198) indicate that information and observation by visitors to national parks in South Africa can be used by park managers to evaluate the service quality and find the critical success factors needed to ensure a quality visitor experience. Effective management of critical success factors (CSFs) can lead to the improvement of service quality as well as effective quality management of the KNP (Appel, Kruger & Saayman, 2010:2). According to Brotherton and Shaw (1996:114) any factor within a company that is of great importance can be classified as a critical success factor. Hence the need to achieve the goals and objectives so that the company can provide high quality service delivery. Slabbert and Saayman (2003:8) add that elements such as resources, competitive capabilities, product attributes, competencies, and business outcomes are all strategic CSFs that play an important role in the lives of companies. Trkman (2010:1) concludes that these CSFs need to be continuously analysed so that continuous improvement can be made in areas such as marketing, communications, and other major elements within the company since this will ensure the sustainability of the company. Furthermore, Mendoza *et al.* (2007:937) add that it is necessary to determine the CSFs of an organisation as these can be used as tools for present and future evaluations that will guarantee the success of the organisation.

Previous research concerning CSFs has not yet been done in national parks or ecotourism products. However, previous research on CSFs in South Africa has focused on different tourism operations such as an arts festival (Erasmus, 2011); a wine festival (Marias, 2009); hotels (Appel, 2010); conference centres (Kruger, 2006); special events management such as weddings (De Witt, 2006); and guesthouses (Van Der Westhuizen, 2003). Collectively, these studies indicate that, the CSFs are unique to each segment, indicating that for every industry within tourism there are different CSFs that need to be identified to ensure sustainability and increase visitors' loyalty and

satisfaction. With the exception of Marias (2009) and Erasmus (2011) these studies were carried out from the supply side. However, it is important to identify the needs of visitors and to determine which aspects they consider as important for a memorable visitor experience. This will especially lead to visitors who are loyal and, the more loyal visitors, the more return visits (Wood, 2004:161; Elliott & Percy, 2007:91). The need to determine CSFs for national parks from a visitor perspective is thus of very high importance, because every industry within the greater tourism industry has certain CSFs that play an important role in the management of these industries.

1.3.   PROBLEM STATEMENT

The KNP can use the CSFs to improve the visitors' experience with regard to service delivery and overall management, which will enhance visitor loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, thus leading to more visitors visiting the KNP. By determining the CSFs of visitor experience for the KNP, KNP management will know what visitors regard as important. CSFs can also assist KNP management in improving their quality of service delivery in the Park. This will lead to a satisfied and memorable visitor experience that will keep visitors loyal to the KNP and hence ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of the KNP (Mendoza *et al.,* 2007:916). This is vital from a sustainability point of view. Other benefits of determining CSFs include:

- Identify the gaps that will assist management in satisfying the expectations of the visitor to the KNP;
- Effective allocation of available resources;
- Effective maintenance of facilities and activities;
- Effective training of staff;
- Overall quality assurance;
- A competitive advantage;
- Specific management focus on the factors and aspects that are important to visitors;
- Implementation of measures that will lead to cost-effective marketing;
- Formulation of guidelines to inform staff of what management and the visitors expect of them; and
- More efficient booking systems. (Mendoza *et al.,* 2007:917; Seetharaman *et al.,* 2006:692)

Based on these benefits, it is clear that knowledge of the management aspects that visitors regard as important for a memorable experience will be extremely beneficial to the KNP. The research question that this dissertation therefore addresses is: what are the critical success factors for a managing a the visitor experience at the KNP?

1.4.   GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1. Goal

To identify the critical success factors for managing the visitor experience at the Kruger National Park.

1.4.2. Objectives

The achievement of the goal relies on the following objectives.

Objective 1:

To identify the key areas in park management by means of a literature review.

Objective 2:

To identify the management aspects of importance in creating a memorable visitor experience by means of a literature review.

Objective 3:

To do a comparison of expectations versus experience of critical success factors at the Kruger National Park by means of an empirical survey.

Objective 4:

To draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding the critical success factors needed to manage the visitor experience at the KNP.

1.5. METHOD OF RESEARCH

This is a quantitative study, collecting data on the topic from existing sources and using a self-administered questionnaire to collect problem-specific data. This research therefore made use of both primary data.

1.5.1. Literature study

A literature study was based on specific keywords including *nature-based tourism, tourism management, ecotourism, eco management, parks management, KNP, critical success factors, visitor satisfaction and visitor experience* to get the information that is relevant to the topic. This was done by analysing books, online databases, papers, articles and reports containing information relevant to the topic. The use of search engines such as EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Sabinet online and ScienceDirect as well as websites were also used, for example www.sanparks.org.za.

1.5.2. Empirical survey literature study

The following section highlights the methods chosen to conduct the empirical analysis.

a.   Research design and method of collecting data

This study was done through quantitative research which is defined as being conclusive research and involving large numbers of groups of representative samples and fairly structured collection of data procedures. According to Struwig and Stead (2007:113); Maree and Pietersen (2007:145); and Elliott and Percy (2007:109) quantitative research is done to determine the motivation that is driving the behaviour of consumers and to determine what the competitors have and what can be improved.

For the purpose of this study, data obtained at the KNP during the period 27 December 2010 to 4 January 2011 was used. The survey was conducted by the research unit TREES (Tourism research in Economic, Environs and Society) at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. Only tourists per definition completed the questionnaire. For the purpose of this study, a tourist is defined as a person who provides economic input to any area other than that in which he or she generally lives and works or a tourist is a person who voluntarily visits places, away from his or her normal home abode, for a period longer than 24 hours (Saayman, 2007:5). Therefore, any reference to visitors or respondents in this study implies tourists. The survey was done in the KNP at different rest camps: Berg and Dal, Satara, Lower Sabie and

Skukuza to determine the views of the visitors in terms of the CSFs that contribute to a memorable visitor experience.

Table 1.1 Questionnaires completed by visitors at the KNP during Decemer2010/ January 2011

Rest Camps	December 2010 & January 2011		
	Chalets	Campers	Total
Berg and Dal	47	51	98
Satara	53	48	101
Lower Sabie	63	22	85
Skukuza	84	68	152
Grand Total	247	199	436

Source: Du Plessis, Saayman & Engelbrecht (2011:4)

As shown in Table 1.1, a total of 436 questionnaires were completed between 27 December 2010 and 4 January 2011 by the visitors in the chosen rest camps. The total included Berg and Dal with 98 questionnaires, Satara with 101 questionnaires, Lower Sabie with 85 questionnaires and Skukuza with 152 questionnaires. The fieldworkers moved around between the chalets and campsites asking whether the visitors were willing to take part in the research by completing the questionnaire. The fieldworkers were briefed before the survey ensuring that they were aware of the purpose of the research. According to SANPark's statistics, the total number of overnight tourists to the KNP for the year 2009 was 384 249 (N) with the average travelling group being 3.4 persons in December 2009 (Stevens, 2010; Du Plessis, Saayman & Erasmus, 2010:9).

Since the questionnaires were only handed out to one person per travelling group, the total population was divided by 3.4 and resulted in 112 132 tourists (N). Making use of Israel's (2009:3) sample size formula where (n) was the sample size, N is the population size and e is the level of precision (5%). The required number of questionnaires needed for this study to be sufficient is 399. During the December 2010 and January 2011 survey, a total of 436 questionnaires were completed which makes this number of questionnaires sufficient.

b.   Sample Method

The survey followed a probability sampling method and a simple random sample was used to conduct the survey. All the overnight visitors that were available and willing to complete the questionnaires at the chalets and camping sites were included in the

survey. Fieldworkers conducted the survey and were briefed before the survey to ensure that they understood the aim of the research and the questionnaire (Struwig & Stead, 2007:120). The fieldworkers distributed the questionnaires in the evenings and collected them the following morning. The data obtained was used to establish a basic profile of visitors to the KNP. The level of quality of services and facilities was also determined as perceived by visitors together with the critical success factors necessary for managing the visitor experience at the KNP to maintain excellent visitor satisfaction.

c.   Development of the questionnaire

A structured questionnaire served as the instrument for collecting the data (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire used in the survey was developed by the TREES at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus and based on the work of Khan (2003), Appel (2010) and Erasmus (2011). The questionnaire consisted of three sections: Socio-demographic Detail, Economic Impact, Consumer Expectations and real Experiences at the Park.

Section A captured socio-demographic information such as home language, age, date of birth, age of accompanying children, marital status, country of residence, province of residence and level of education. These questions determined the profile of visitors that visited the park.

Section B focused on the economic impact of the visitors on the park and included questions relating to the number of people paid for, type of transport, the number of times the park has been visited, length of stay, alternative destinations of choice and overall expenditure at the KNP.

Section C included questions such as whether the visitors are Wild Card members, would the visitors recommend the Park to others and when the decision was made to visit the park. Furthermore, Section C measured the visitors' motivations to travel to the KNP. This section consisted of 22 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all important, 2 = less important, 3 = neither important nor less important, 4 = very important, 5 = extremely important). Expectations and real experiences of visitors at the KNP were also measured (62 items). These items were taken from previous research done by Appel (2010); Erasmus (2011); Khan (2003); De Witt (2006); Van der Westhuizen (2003); Kruger (2006) and Marais (2009) and was adapted for this study as

well as other park specific factors were identified. The statements with regard to visitors' expectations concerning service delivery were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = extremely important, 2 = very important, 3 = neither important nor less important, 4 = less important, and 5 = not at all important). The question concerning the real experience at the park was measured on a 6-point Likert scale where 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = fair, 4 = good, 5 = excellent and 6 = not applicable. All these questions were based on the quality of services at the KNP referring to various service components ranging from accommodation, reception, activities, maintenance and overall services.

d.   Data analysis

All the data obtained in the surveys were captured on Microsoft© Excel© for basic data analysis. Further statistical analysis was done with the help of the statistical services of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus and SPSS software was used to process the information. A factor analysis was performed to determine the CSFs that visitors feel are important for a memorable visitor experience as well as the real experience of the visitors to the KNP. A factor analysis is done to group variables with similar characteristics so that the number of variables can be reduced (Tustin, 2005:668). According to Pietersen and Maree (2007:219), a factor analysis determines which variables belong together and groups those factors together. A factor analysis was also conducted to group the variables of the visitors' motivations. Furthermore a factor analysis was conducted on the expectations and real experiences of the visitors and each factor was labelled and given a weight. The experiences and expectations factors were then compared and this indicated the gaps that management need to address. To determine the scores of each factor, the scores were placed into various measures of equations and this is known as a weighted score. The averages were determined by making **n** the number of items in each factor, and **x** the item score **1≤ x ≥ 5** (Field, 2005:625).

1.6.   DEFINING THE CONCEPTS

The following concepts are used throughout this study and are defined as follows:

1.6.1. Kruger National Park (KNP)

The KNP is the biggest national park in South Africa and the flagship of South African National Parks (SANParks). The KNP was founded in 1926 by the late President Paul Kruger who had seen the need for conservation of the natural environment. The KNP is

situated in the provinces of Mpumalanga and Limpopo (see Map 1), and borders with Mozambique to the East and Zimbabwe to the North. The KNP is home to an impressive number of species: 336 trees, 49 fish, 34 amphibians, 114 reptiles, 507 birds and 147 mammals. The KNP covers a land area of 1 962 362 ha, which is the size of Israel and hosts a variety of biomes such as savanna, woodlands, riverine forest and craggy mountains (Loon, Harper & Shorten, 2007:264; Braack, 2006:5; SANPARKS, 2011).

Map1.1: Location of the KNP
Source: http://www.google.co.za/imgres

1.6.2. Tourist satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is becoming more and more a critical factor, for the simple reason that quality service delivery leads to satisfaction and this leads to tourist loyalty (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998:26). Tourists are just like other consumers and have expectations towards quality service delivery and products that are offered to them by destinations. Tourist satisfaction is determined when the expectations of the tourists are met (Akama & Kieti, 2003:75). Weiermair (2000:398) add that tourists tend to judge the quality of satisfaction with the experience of the different components of the product or services delivered.

1.6.3. Critical success factors (CSFs)

Critical success factors are seen as points, areas and goals that management needs to consider when making decisions, for these factors will support management in achieving service quality delivery and high performance. These factors need to be identified and measured before the organisation starts implementing any project (Alazmi & Zairi, 2003:200). Brotherton and Shaw (1996:114) add that critical success factors are not the objectives or goals of an organisation, but a combination of activities and processes that management needs to follow to achieve the desired outcomes that were set by the organisation's goals and objectives.

1.6.4. Visitor experience

Visitor experience can be defined as the overall impression, understanding, rating and meaning a visitor attaches to their encounter with a specific place, event, holiday or activity (Page & Connell, 2009:648). The visitors' experience enables management to understand the overall process of travel from the visitors' perspective, while identifying other tourism organisations that influence and regulate tourism (Page & Connell, 2009:11). Furthermore Noe *et al.* (2010:19) state that there are four factors affecting visitors' expectations, and thus determining visitor experience. These are: (1) word-of-mouth communication plays an important role in visitors' expectations and thus visitors are easily influenced by relatives and friends; (2) personal needs are controlled by visitors to the extent to which they place limits on their expectations; (3) past experience plays a vital role in the experience as it will lead to return visits; and (4) good marketing is an important indicator of what the service provider offers and external communication determines the expectations of visitors.

1.6.5. Memorable experience

A memorable experience is when an individual experiences an emotional, intellectual, physical and/or spiritual stimulation that engages them to become closer and more attracted to that atmosphere or setting, for example activities within a national park (Tung & Ritchie, 2011:5). Experiences are complex processes because they are visual images that the visitor obtained from the environment and that can be retained, and which are not part of the routine life that one lives, indicating that they have value for long into the future (Andereck, Bricker, Kerstetter & Nickerson, 2006:8).

1.7. CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION

This chapter one discusses the problem statement; the literature review and empirical study that arises from the research design and method of collecting data; the sampling method; the development of the questionnaire and data analysis. This is followed by the definition of the concepts involved. The importance of determining CSFs for a quality visitor experience is also discussed as well as management. The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the problem under investigation.

Chapter two comprises a literature review that analyses the management of the CSFs in an ecotourism product as perceived by the visitors. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of different aspects pertaining to park management and the aspects that need to be considered to ensure a memorable visitor experience.

Chapter three contains Article 1, which determines the CSFs that visitors regard as important for a memorable visitor experience. These CSFs were identified by making use of a Factor analysis. KNP management can use the CSFs identified in the research to improve their management of the park. This, in turn, should ensure satisfaction and a memorable visitor experience at the KNP.

Chapter four contains Article 2, which compares visitors' expectations and experiences during their visit to the KNP. This comparison shows specific gaps in visitor experience and management is able to see where they need to improve on overall service delivery.

Chapter five consists of conclusions and recommendations with regard to the CSFs identified by the visitors for a memorable visitor experience at the KNP.

C h a p t e r 2   AN OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT ASPECTS PERTAINING TO NATIONAL PARKS

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has grown into one of the biggest industries in the world, which generates approximately 10% of the worldwide gross domestic product and economies benefit from this positive impact (Balmford *et al.,* 2009:1; Saayman, Saayman & Rhodes, 2001:443; SANParks, 2008a:1). According to Eagles (2002:132); Leung, Marion and Farrell (2001:21); Honey (2008:6); Hall and Boyd (2005:3) and Saarinen (2005:42) nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in the world, and partially dependent on the environmental attributes which are mostly found in national parks. South Africa is a well-known nature-based tourism destination offering tourists a wide choice of more than 7 000 game farms and 22 national parks. Each of these have their own individual setting, services and products and competitive advantages (Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2004:42; Mendoza *et al.,* 2007:913). Nature-based tourism is capable of generating substantial resources for sustainable development and local economic development (Goodwin, 1996:281; Grössling, 1999:304). Nature-based tourism is also dependent on two components, which are appropriate levels of environmental quality, and suitable levels of visitor services. Furthermore, nature-based tourism is dependent on the different types of environments that provide the necessary resources for activities within these environments. However, tourism activities may have positive impacts if tourists are educated about conservation efforts (Leung *et al.,* 2001:22; Said *et al.,* 2009:74).

Over the past years, national parks have come under immense pressure due to the development of urban areas and the natural habitat becoming threatened. Therefore the need to establish national parks came into effect (Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010:163; Honey, 2008:391). According to Walker and Walker (2011:522) national parks are natural areas where there are a variety of attributes sometimes including historic assets. National parks are furthermore seen as prestige tourism destinations

conserving the natural environment (Hamin, 2001:123; Page & Connell, 2009:645; Tomczyk, 2010:1). Aspects such as hunting, mining and consumptive activities are therefore not allowed. National parks have become powerful magnets attracting large numbers of tourists for income and community upliftment (Uysal, McDonald & Martin, 1994:20; Fredman, Friberg & Emmelin, 2007:87).

According to Said *et al.* (2009:75) national parks are not only a contributor towards the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of a country, but also generate money for the state. However, it is important that national parks meet the needs of their visitors, hence the importance of additional services and facilities, manpower, and larger operational and development budgets (Said *et al.,* 2009:76). If national parks want to provide a unique and memorable experience for tourists, they need to maintain high levels of tourist satisfaction (Manning, 2001:93). Through maintaining high satisfaction levels, management must determine the expectations of the tourist through critical success factors (CSFs) that determine the key areas management should focus on and gaps that management needs to improve on and, in so doing, create a memorable visitor experience (Hayllar & Griffin, 2005:517). Park management is very complex and the integration of the three management aspects, conservation management, ecotourism management and general management is very important in achieving high satisfaction levels that will ensure a memorable visitor experience (Saayman, 2009a:385). If park managers have certain plans of action they must be evaluated to determine whether the goals and objectives were achieved (Eagles, 2002:144; Tung & Ritchie, 2011:3; Smith, 2008:237; Botha, 2008b:203; Anon, 2011a). Therefore it is a necessity for park managers to constantly evaluate the expectations of the tourist and to adapt to their needs. This will offer the tourist a memorable experience thereby increasing the loyalty of visitors towards the park (Botha, 2008b:205; Saayman, 2007:222). Park management must therefore be aware of the gaps between the expectations and experience of visitors to national parks since the level of satisfaction determines whether the visitors have had a memorable experience (George, 2001:277; Sehajja, 2006:36).

To be able to draft a questionnaire, that specifically measures what visitors regard as important management aspects for a memorable experience, there are aspects within a national park that managers must be aware of to satisfy the visitors' needs and deliver a memorable experience whilst conserving the environment. Therefore the aim of this

chapter is to determine which aspects are paramount for management of a national park to exceed the expectations of visitors and offer a memorable experience as well as the influence these aspects have on the memorable experience of the visitors to the national park.

2.2 NATURE-BASED TOURISM

With the interest that tourists have for the natural environment, there is a greater appeal to visit nature-based destinations such as national parks as it is seen as the best way to experience nature-based tourism (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006:292). National parks are relatively untouchable landscapes with the potential to develop into accessible tourism destinations with the main aim of conserving the environment through the development of tourism that has an economic impact (Johnston & Payne, 2005:21). Nature-based tourism destinations are becoming a unique commodity, thus emphasising the importance of managing these natural areas accordingly. Management must therefore implement the right measures so that tourism development can take place while still protecting the environment (Geldenhuys, 2009:13).

With the great differences in geographical regions, different nature-based activities can be offered that have a minimal impact on the environment and still provide great income for sustainable management programmes within national parks as well as promoting nature-based tourism activities, such as hiking, climbing and mountaineering (Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010:163). Nature-based tourism activities are very attractive and park management needs to understand that the expectations of visitors to nature-based destinations are changing constantly. National parks and protected areas are used as tools in regional development that will assist in the economic, social and natural development of a successful nature-based tourism destination and this can only be achieved through delivering quality products and services for all visitors to the national park (Johnston & Payne, 2005:33; Heath, 1995b:377).

National parks are areas that protect the ecosystems for present and future generations by ensuring that there is no exploitation of the natural resources within the parks borders. The park provides a spiritual, scientific, educational and recreational haven and experience for visitors whilst all of the aspects mentioned still need to comply with the environment and culture (Hall & Frost, 2009:8; Van der Merwe, 2009:221). Therefore closing the gap between tourism and conservation is very important for the

sustainability of national parks or protected areas. Park management can be defined as the promotion of biodiversity within conservation areas to ensure sustainability of the natural resources indicating the importance of exceptional park management structures (Saayman, 2009a:347).

National parks around the world tend to become more human-centred rather than setting their goals and objectives on the conservation and sustainability of the natural environment (Carruthers, 2009:238). Park management must determine which aspects are of importance to manage the visitor experience and still be sustainable while protecting the natural environment. Figure 2.1 is a conceptual framework that park managers can use to deliver a memorable visitor experience. This frame work is also the outline of this chapter.
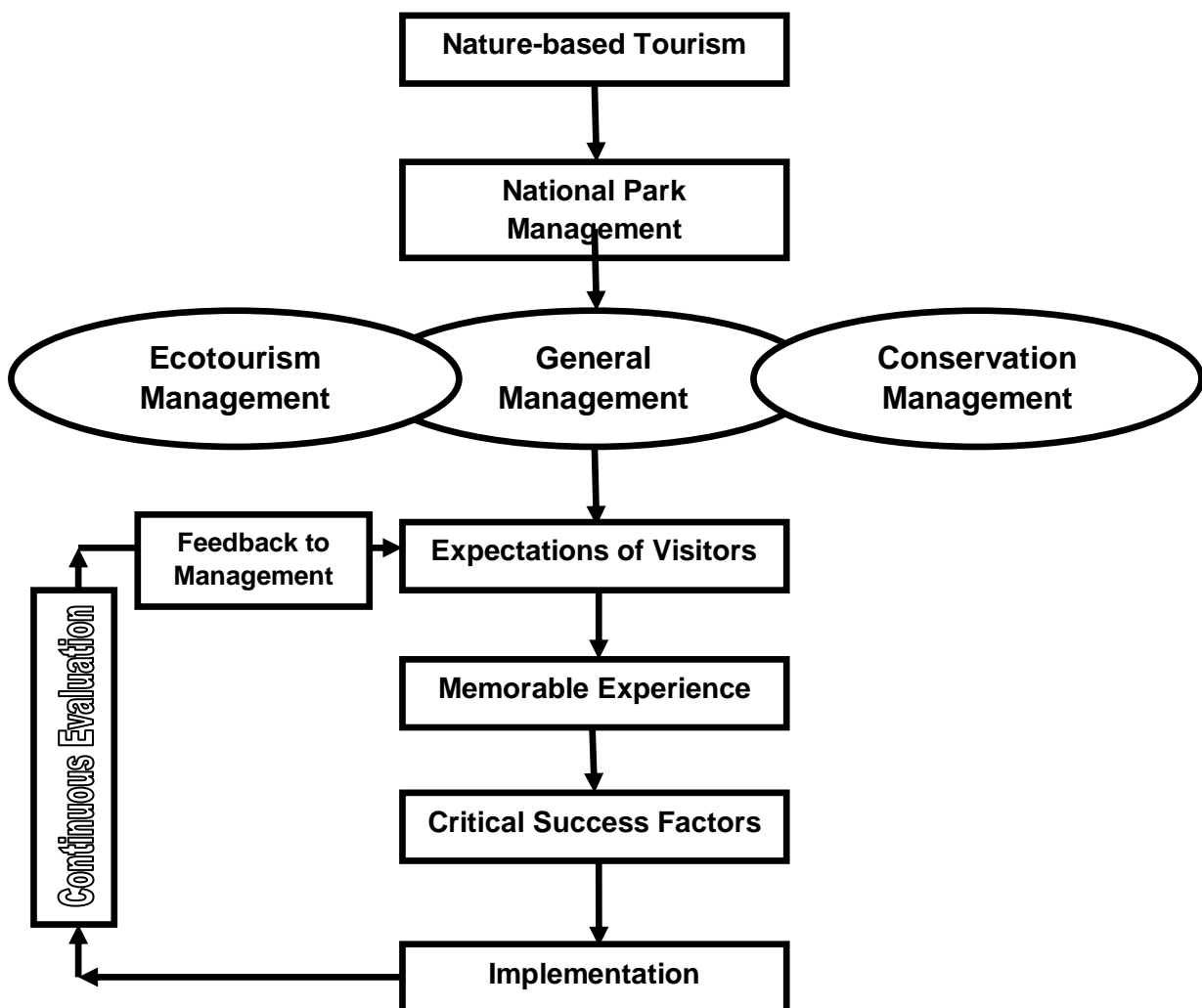
Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework for park managers to deliver a memorable visitor experience
Source: Authors own figure based on the literature review

As shown in Figure 2.1 the three categories of park management need to be integrated so that the park can be sustainable, conserve the natural environment and offer the visitor a memorable experience (Saayman, 2009a:381). Page and Dowling (2002:23) and Van der Merwe (2009:221) state that ecotourism falls under nature-based tourism with national parks being nature-based tourism destinations offering ecotourism products and services within their boundaries such as adventure activities, camping and hiking to name but a few. Figure 2.1 indicates that there are certain aspects in determining the expectations of visitors and the way park management can make use of this figure to manage these expectations to deliver a memorable visitor experience. Park management must determine the expectations of visitors to the park, because these can be used as vital concepts in the development of products and services to satisfy the visitors' needs (Higgs, Polonsky & Hollick, 2005:50). If park management is aware of visitors expectations, they can develop or create an environment that will increase the probability of visitors creating their own experiences at national parks (Tung & Ritchie, 2011: 3). Critical success factors (CSF's) can assist management in creating an environment that will offer visitors a memorable experience. These CSFs are the internal features that visitors can identify and that need to be improved to deliver a memorable visitor experience. These aspects being products, processes, personnel, core competencies and capabilities that will give the national park a competitive advantage (Brotherton, 2004:20; Mendoza *et al.,* 2007:916). After management has identified the CSFs and implemented plans to improve on these factors, there must be a constant evaluation and feedback to the respective departments to determine whether or not there was an improvement (Botha, 2008b:203; Anon, 2011a). It is therefore vital that continuous evaluation takes place to determine the future expectations of visitors and offer them products and services that are environmentally friendly and still ensure that a memorable experience is delivered (Botha, 2008b:205; Saayman, 2009b:222).

This framework indicates the aspects influencing the visitors' memorable experience at a national park and how each management structure has certain aspects pertaining to offering a memorable visitor experience if integrated. The next section will discuss these aspects in detail.

2.3 MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS

According to Page and Dowling (2002:23) the terms sustainable tourism, nature-based tourism and ecotourism all have the same meaning. Nature-based tourism includes

ecotourism, wilderness travel, adventure travel and car camping, with all of these offered within a national park. These aspects are all conducted within natural areas or destinations that emphasise the importance of minimal impact on the natural environment and having an understanding of the natural environment, cultural systems and visitors' expectations of national parks (Leung *et al.,* 2001:23; Van der Merwe, 2009:221). Ecotourism forms part of nature-based tourism and can be differentiated by aspects such as sustainable operations and management, offering nature-based products and markets, form of education for the park personnel and visitors, the local community benefiting from tourism activities, interaction between the visitor and the destination and the intention to enjoy wildlife or undisturbed natural areas creating visitor satisfaction (Page & Dowling, 2002:23; Geldenhuys, 2009:15; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006:464).

According to Geldenhuys (2009:3); Hetzer (1965:1-3); Blamey (2001:6); and Van Der Merwe and Saayman (2004:8) ecotourism is built on four pillars. These are (1) conservation of the natural environment and local culture, (2) sustainable management of the natural and cultural environment, (3) participation by the local community and, (4) tourists' satisfaction as shown in Figure 2.2. Management must ensure that if they deliver nature-based tourism products such as an ecotourism product, they follow the criteria of sustainability, give the tourist a unique and memorable experience and maintain high standards of quality towards the environment (Shackley, 1996:13).
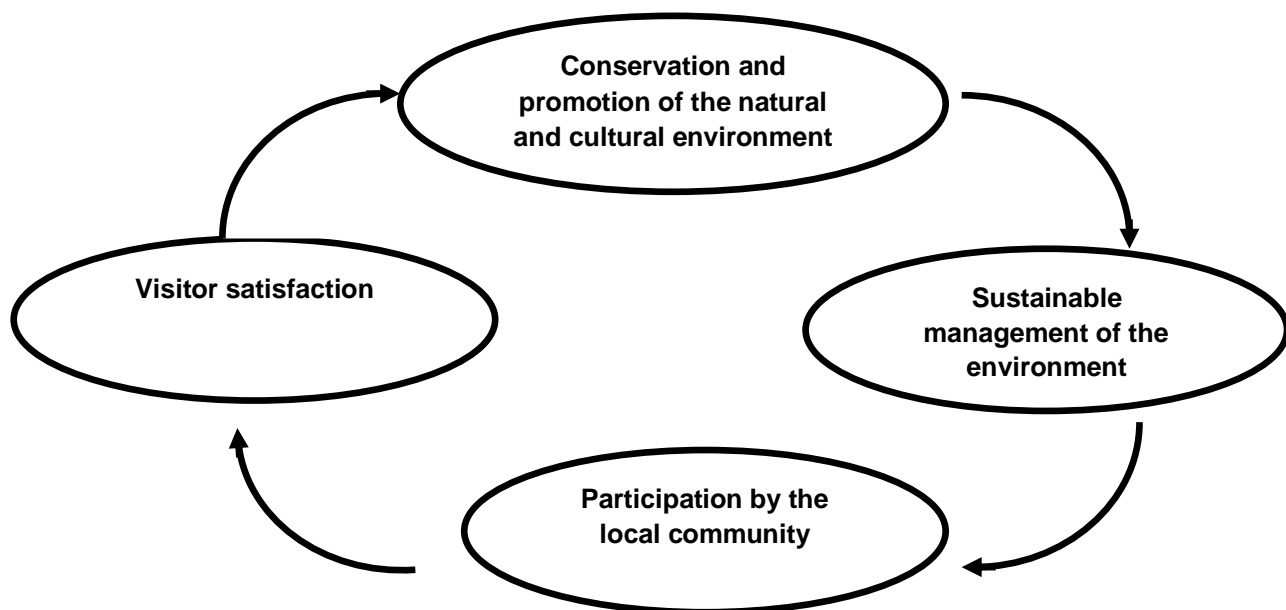
Figure 2.2: Key components of ecotourism
Source: Adapted from Geldenhuys (2009:3)

Managers at nature-based tourism destinations must have an understanding of visitors' expectations to provide stimulating, high-quality experiences which is critical for the destinations and the satisfaction of the visitors' expectations (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009:14). According to Shiffman and Kanuk (2007:35) management must know whether the visitor is satisfied with the services and products received and then only can a memorable experience occur. Visitor satisfaction is when the visitor thinks back on the experience that he or she had and develops an emotional feeling of positivity. However, this can only be determined once the service or product has been delivered to the tourist. Because most tourism products are intangible, it is difficult to determine the satisfaction levels of the visitor (Geldenhuys, 2009:3). Leung *et al*. (2001:23) state that managers of protected areas in developing countries have a lack of funding and expertise to perform ecological, educational, maintenance and development programmes within a national park to create a memorable experience for the visitor through satisfying the needs of the visitor.

Therefore park management needs to understand and have knowledge of the current and future trends of visitors' expectations and make use of an integrated management structure. When making use of an integrated park management structure, products, activities, programmes and other park-specific attributes can be developed and implemented to deliver a memorable and satisfactory visitor experience (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009:15). Delivery of products and services that satisfy the visitors' needs is fundamental for a memorable visitor experience (Tsuang, Tsun-Jin, Kuei-Chung & Ming-Yuan, 2009:1325; Obua & Harding, 1996:505).

2.3.1 Park management

Saayman (2009a:358) identified three categories of park management. These categories are (1) conservation management, (2) general management and (3) ecotourism management as shown in Figure 2.3. These three categories all make use of planning, leading, organising and control to achieve their specific goals and objectives (Page & Connell, 2009:645; Reh, 2004; Kroon, 2005:54). Therefore these categories need to be integrated to ensure that the visitor has a memorable experience. However, general management can only be determined through the evaluation of these goals and objectives and whether they have been met which is crucial for both the organisation and the sustainability of the environment (Botha, 2008b:208). According to Farlex Inc (2011) protecting, preserving, and careful management of the natural

resources with the environment are part of the conservation management categories. Furthermore, Heath (1995a:351) adds that the natural and cultural heritage and lifestyles, values and traditions of the local community are part of the conservation of the natural environment. Ecotourism management focuses on the services, products and attributes that contribute to a memorable visitor experience and takes control on aspects such as tourists, finances, technology and the organisation (Page, 2007:305). These three management categories need to be integrated, ensuring that a common goal and objective is set to achieve a memorable visitor experience. These three categories will be discussed in detail in the sections to follow.
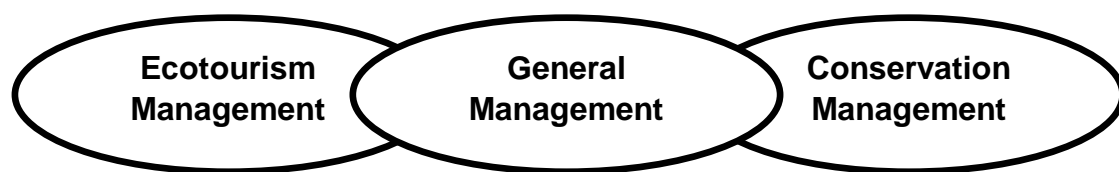
Figure 2.3: Categories of park management
Source: Saayman (2009a:358)

2.3.1.1   General management

If park management is efficient and effective they already have a competitive advantage because, within any business, there needs to be some degree of order or structure that assists in thinking ahead (Barros, 2005:456; Page & Dowling, 2002:250). Factors that management needs to be aware of when managing a national park are the tourist, the business environment, tourists' expectations and needs, growth within national parks (for example activities), and the effect of local government (Page, 2007:25). Therefore general management plays an important role and has the responsibility of ensuring that the following aspects: finances, human resources, programmes, marketing, and facilities are well managed to deliver a memorable visitor experience (Saayman, 2009a:369). These aspects will be discussed separately next.

- **Finances:** According to Saayman (2002:249); Wood (2004:129) and Botha and Banhegyi (2008:12), one of the most important factors within an organisation is to generate income. This can only be done by proper financial management. Therefore park management needs to ensure that income is generated in order to manage the park and its resources (Eagles & McCool, 2002:183). Furthermore, the financial manager must ensure that the financial affairs and assets are safeguarded and be

aware of the expenses and income generated so that management can maintain the levels of solvency and liquidity of the organisation (Lovemore & Brümmer, 2008:3; Saayman, 2002:249). By generating income, the park can be made more accessible, proper layout of routes and rest camps can be done, signage of picnic areas and rest camps can be improved, quality and variety accommodation such as camping, chalets, guesthouses and hotels can be developed or upgraded and quality services and products at restaurants can all assist in offering the visitor a memorable experience if implemented and well managed by the park manager (Saayman, 2002:6; Page, 2007:203 & 169; Saayman, 2009a:365; Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2004:4).

- **Human resources:** Determining the level of education needed to handle the work, the number of personnel needed to achieve the goals and objectives, the organising of personnel and continuous training to improve their skills and abilities are very important for effectively managing the visitor experience at a national park (De Bruyn, 1995:173; Steyn, 2005:43). Park personnel play a vital role in achieving the goals and objectives set, and human capital is needed within the tourism industry (Saayman, 2002:187; Botha, 2008a:63). It is more cost effective to train and offer short courses to current personnel than it is to hire new personnel. Human resources needs to include the park personnel on decisions that will affect them and their work (Van Rensburg, 2005:14) and therefore, being responsible for the training of personnel, this will lead to high standards of quality and services offered, motivation of personnel, retention of personnel, work satisfaction and evaluation of the personnel to create a memorable experience (Bennett, 1995c:298; Botha, 2008a:73; Booysen & Botha, 2008:151; Buultjens, Ratnayake, Gnanapala & Aslam, 2005:741; Page, 2007:315). Tourism is mostly based on services and is human orientated thus emphasising the fact that human resources is very important for recruiting personnel that have an understanding of visitors and who will ensure high levels of visitor satisfaction (Page, 2007:227; Saayman, 2002:187).

- **Programmes:** A memorable visitor experience can be provided by park management if they have sufficient information and educational materials with regard to the park's fauna and flora. The information can be best provided for the tourist with the implementation of interpretive centres, interactive field guides, well-trained and informed personnel, slideshows and information boards at the rest

camps that will have an influence on the visitors' physical and spiritual experience at the park (Dimmock, 2007:138; Jennings & Weiler, 2006:73; Bricker & Kerstetter, 2006:101). Page and Dowling (2002:236) and Ballantyne, Packer and Sutherland (2011:771) add that the interpretation of information and educational information or activities regarding wildlife or the environment is vital for high levels of visitor satisfaction that will ensure a quality memorable visitor experience.

- **Marketing:** Good marketing needs to be visitor or consumer orientated (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006:520). Marketing within the tourism industry plays an important role and national parks can make use of low cost or inexpensive marketing techniques such as word-of-mouth marketing, internet, family and friends' trips, press releases and good public relations (Honey, 2008:61). Other forms of marketing that can be used by national parks are websites that can be translated into foreign languages, loyalty membership such as wildcards and then brochures at other national parks, and nature-based tourism destinations or travel agents (Carmichael, 2006:116). Marketing that is successful will attract large and broad numbers of visitors whose behaviours provide them with enjoyment that leads up to a memorable and satisfied visitor (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006: 21).

- **Facilities:** Park management must ensure that high quality products and services are offered at the restaurants, reception and interpretation or information centres. Building of interpretive or information centres may lead to greater awareness, appreciation and understanding of environmental processes in the park (Eagles & McCool, 2002:183).

If the park has a solid management structure with goals and objectives to achieve tourist satisfaction, Park Management will be more than capable of delivering a memorable visitor experience whilst conserving the natural environment (Buultjens *et al.,* 2005:739). It is important that park management make use of the four aspects mentioned above with regard to general park management to ensure a memorable visitor experience. However, conservation management and ecotourism management are part of the integrated management structure that plays a role in offering a memorable visitor experience. These two forms of management will also be discussed.

2.3.1.2   Conservation management

Conserving the natural resources is very important as for it is essential to the planning and management of a national park (Page & Dowling, 2002:66). Visitors to nature-based destinations travel for reasons such as sightseeing, recreation purposes or relaxation. However, they simultaneously provide income for the park to maintain and conserve the natural environment through entrance fees, tour operators, hotels, airlines and voluntary contributions. This ensures the protection and conservation of the environment as well as extending research opportunities and the implementation of educational programmes (Bennett, 1995a:26; Honey, 2008:30). The quality of the natural environment plays a fundamental role in the existence of nature-based tourism destinations such as national parks (Mihalic, 2000:65). National parks throughout the world are under immense pressure to conserve the valuable resources and attributes with the ever-changing environment, the expectations of tourists and the expansion of local communities (Venter, Naiman, Biggs & Pienaar, 2008:173).

Conservation is a very important factor for national parks as it encompasses aspects such as wildlife management, facilities required for the release of wildlife, educational facilities and activities, water supply, carrying capacity and waste management, water quality management, plant management and recycling (Saayman, 2009a:375; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006:409). Supporting the fact that education is important to the conservation of national areas, Jennings (2007:56) adds that education forms part of a memorable experience and ensures sustainability of the natural environment. To keep a park such as the Kruger National Park (KNP) a green park is very difficult with the more than one million tourists that visit the park each year. One can only imagine the materials used to accommodate these tourists (Aylward & Lutz, 2003:97; Bushell & Eagles, 2007:33; Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2008:154). Conservation management therefore needs to ensure that there will be an impact on the tourist when offering informative or interpretive sessions as this may evoke awareness and increase the knowledge of tourists when travelling to nature-based destinations such as the KNP (Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2004:7).

Tourism can be seen as an important factor in ensuring that the natural environment is conserved through implementing ecotourism guidelines that will have a minimal impact on the environment while still generating income (Bennett, 1995a:26; Bricker, Daniels & Carmichael, 2006:176; Heath, 1995a:351). However, it is important that national parks

ensure the long-term protection of natural and cultural resources as well as the continuous enjoyment of visitors to the park, in other words creating a memorable visitor experience (Page & Dowling, 2002:228).

2.3.1.3 Ecotourism management

Ecotourism is travelling to an undisturbed natural environment to enjoy nature, and promoting the conservation of the natural environment. Such tourists travel responsibly, thus ensuring that there is a minimal impact on the environment and that it is an enlightening experience that also uplifts the local community, provides economic opportunities, ensures that there is a balance between community, conservation, tourism and culture. Probably the most important factor is that ecotourism tries to balance the economy and the ecology (Walker & Walker, 2011:376; Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2004:6; Geldenhuys, 2009:2; Honey, 2008:11 & 31; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006:473). Tourists are moving away from mass tourism, indicating that the tourist is striving to enhance his or her own individual experiences (Diamantis, 1998:515).

Ecotourism managers must ensure that the impacts of the visitors to the national park are minimal but still exceed the expectations by making use of zoning. This can assist in conserving the natural environment whilst, at the same time, offering tourists a memorable experience (Page & Dowling, 2002:229). There are five zoning forms that can be implemented. These are: sanctuary zones, wilderness nature conservation zones, outdoor recreation zones, tourism development zones and a restricted communal zone. The wilderness nature conservation zone is set aside for the conservation of natural ecosystems with limited outside interference. The outdoor recreation zone is there for tourist to interact with the natural environment and this is mostly self-guided. The tourism development zone includes rest camps, chalets, concessions and recreation activities within the park. There is also a restricted zone which is set aside for the community and concessionaires on an equal basis. Implementing these zones within in a park will ensure that, while impacts on areas are minimal, income can still be generated. The local community also receives benefits from the park through empowerment or making use of the natural resources and there is respect for the undisturbed natural wilderness areas (Saayman, 2009a:375; Page & Dowling, 2002:214; Honey, 2008:28 & 30). This same type of zoning was used in Australia at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority ensuring that the natural environment is conserved and protected (White & King, 2009:121).

National parks and game parks form part of purpose-built attractions and offer products and experiences for the tourist (Saayman, 2002:7; Page, 2007:283). The right facilities, equipment and people are necessary for implementing entertainment at a national park. These facilities often provide educational aspects for the tourist and need to be accessible and of good quality (Saayman, 2002:6). Furthermore, Saayman (2009a:364) adds that entertainment at national parks consists of recreational facilities, wildlife viewing, day-visitor facilities, children's activities, educational activities interpretation facilities and bomas. Tourist destinations such as the KNP are considered as an entity that provides a wide range of attributes to satisfy the needs of every tourist. Therefore activities and entertainment in a park can range from adventure activities to viewing wildlife and birdlife, geological displays, taking part in slideshows and specialist talks, learning more about the park history at interpretive centres and gaining knowledge about the activities in the different rest camps. This all involves education and interpretation. It also provides a form of entertainment for the tourist and these activities are critical to the success of the national park and the wider tourism industry (Morgan, Moore & Mansell, 2005:73; Chehetri, Arrowsmith & Jackson, 2004:32; Ballantyne *et al.,* 2011:770). This emphasises the fact that park management must be aware of the expectations of visitors to the national park if they wish to create and ensure a memorable visitor experience.

2.3.2 Visitor expectations

As indicated in Figure 2.1, expectations need to be identified to determine the management aspects that visitors regard as important for a memorable experience and, though continuous evaluation, these expectations can be exceeded. Thus, an expectation is defined by Teas (1994:134) as the ideal or desired performance that the visitor expects of destinations, products and services. As the visitor has initial expectations of a product or services, certain estimations are made towards the products or services before consumption, that will eventually lead to the level of satisfaction which may be high or low depending on the consumption and the experience whilst making use of the products and services (Akama & Kieti, 2003:75; Oliver, 1981:27). The expectations of visitors to national parks are about the facilities, activities and the wildlife. Examples include reception, friendliness and helpfulness of the personnel, and the delivery of products and services to fulfil the expectations of the tourist, as well as assisting the visitor with the right information concerning the park's attributes, activities, and fauna and flora.

The tourists, in this case the visitors, have different levels of tolerance towards a product or service. Some visitors have a narrow level of tolerance towards the service and products within a national park, whereas other visitors have a greater tolerance level (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1993:6; Khan, 2003:117). Visitors expectations, with regard to a memorable experience, are determined by the performance of the services or products delivered at the destinations and whether the needs and acquired values of the visitors are met, as well as whether the visitor is aware of the destination and has done research before visiting (Gnoth, 1997:283; Hsu, Cai & Li, 2009:284 & 291; Moore *et al.*, 2008:526; Huh, Uysal & McClearly, 2006:83; Korzay & Alvarez, 2005:179; Yoon & Uysal, 2005:55). Visitors make use of five dimensions when evaluating their satisfaction levels and the quality of a product or service. These are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles that are all determined beforehand by their initial expectations (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993:6).

Visitor behaviour differs from visitor to visitor and, with the growing demand, managers need to manage the expectations in the beginning stages when it is still easy. However, as it progresses, managing the expectations becomes more difficult and, for the organisation, it is vital to effectively manage the expectations of visitors for a memorable experience (Faulkner, 2003:121). According to Stevens (1992:46) it is important for managers of national parks to understand the expectations of the visitors, because this will determine the utilisation of the services and products in the park as well as the levels of satisfaction that will lead to a stronger relationship between the visitor and management of the park, ensuring loyal visitors (Stuart, 2006:149; Pullman & Gross, 2004:570; Spreng, MacKenzie & Olshavsky, 1996:15; Shiffman & Kanuk, 2007:G-3; Shackley, 1996:53).

However Bennett (1995b:41) adds that satisfaction is the expected experience of the visitors when purchasing the product or service. Therefore products and services within national parks need to exceed the expectations of the visitors so as to offer a memorable experience and high levels of satisfaction (Lee, Joen & Kim, 2010:6; Hsu *et al.,* 2010:282). Management must ensure that they provide the most basic products and services, a system for managing problems with regard to negative experiences at the park, and deliver services and products that may exceed the expectations of the tourist leading to a memorable experience and satisfaction (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2007:352). Implementation of a continuous evaluation programme may secure a long term

relationship with the visitor. This may garner knowledge about the visitors' determination of their expectations towards a nature-based tourism destination, in this case a national park (Ahoy, 2009:144; Seetharaman *et al.,* 2006:678; Mendoza *et al.,* 2007:914). Visitors to nature-based destinations are living in a world with endless alternatives to choose from. The difference is that, when visitors have a memorable experience, they tend to return. This is important for a national park to keep it sustainable (Faulkner, 2003:17).

2.3.3 Memorable experience

As discussed in the previous sections, there are certain aspects that can influence the visitor experience at national parks. Park managers need to be aware of these aspects since some of them are directly controlled by management. Park managers can therefore directly influence visitor experience at the park. Gössling (2006:91) agrees and indicates that self-fulfilment and experience are important to tourists travelling to national parks or protected areas. An experience is defined by Andereck *et al.* (2006:82) as a complex process involving multiple parties over an extended time and retains loyalty in the long term. Visitors with previous experiences on certain products or services are not so easily influenced by other stakeholders when arguing or making statements about the product or service, whereas visitors experiencing products or services for the first time can more easily be influenced (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2007:314). A tourism organisation needs tourists to make it a successful organisation. Management of the KNP may use the following aspect that was identified by Shaw (2005:151) to ensure that managers are aware of the visitors' experiences:

- The tourism manager and park personnel must understand the expectations of visitors travelling to a national park;
- With the implementation of integrated park management, a memorable visitor experience can be delivered;
- The park personnel need to work in a well-organised environment which pursues the goals and objectives that will deliver a memorable visitor experience;
- Focus on in-depth emotion when working with the visitors;
- Recruiting personnel that are good at what they do; and
- Make use of an integrated approach towards the visitors.

The atmosphere that is created by the local community, businesses and government and the way in which the visitor understands it determines whether the visitor has a memorable experience. Guides and personnel are thought of by tourists as experts in their field such as guided tours in national parks and educating tourists about the park and different plant and animal species. This must be done so that the tourist expectations are fulfilled and that they have a memorable experience. Some of the personnel are not always well trained or do not have the correct qualification and this may turn a memorable experience into a bad experience, which is unnecessary (Nickerson, 2006:230). The influence of government on the quality of tourism products and services occurs on all three levels of government, national, provincial and local. Government must determine whether tourism can be used as an economic tool for development. If yes, the development of tourism will ensure job creation, leading to more products and services needed by tourism employees and thus have an economic impact ensuring development and sustainability of the environment and the local community. The primary aspects of tourism, accommodation, transport, catering, attractions and entertainment determine the level of satisfaction and whether the visitor has a memorable experience (Nickerson, 2006:231; Saayman, 2000:11; Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2004:4; Slabbert & Saayman, 2003:3).

A memorable experience takes place when the national park offers products and services to the visitors, whereafter the visitors must evaluate their experiences against their initial expectations and this feedback should be used to improve products and services in the Park. Figure 2.1 indicates that the identification of critical success factors within a national park is very important for achieving high levels of visitor satisfaction and offering a memorable visitor experience that can be evaluated at all times.

2.3.4 Critical success factors for a memorable visitor experience

Critical success factors are the aspects as indicated by the tourist that they feel are important for a memorable experience at a national park. Management should make use of these factors as a guideline as to where they need to improve on the services and products of the KNP, ensuring that they exceed the expectations of the tourist. The next section will discuss the use and advantages of critical success factors for national parks such as the KNP.

Critical success factors, otherwise known as key success factors, are considered as the identification of aspects within the park that can assist park management in offering a memorable tourist experience. Critical success factors are defined as the essential areas within an organisation that determines whether the goals will be achieved and to be able to attain the organisation's vision. Critical success factors assist management in identifying the problem areas that management need to focus on to improve the visitor experience at the park (Caralli, 2004:2; Wali *et al.,* 2003:3; Finney & Corbett, 2007:330).

Management must make the organisation's critical success factors clear so that all employees know the goals that need to be achieved. Employees should also be made aware of the advantages flowing from these critical success factors such as employee satisfaction, qualified personnel, increased service and product delivery as well as more efficient and effective personnel. Critical success factors can only be derived from the product, processes, people and possibly structures within an organisation. Activities and initiatives taking place in these critical areas need to have a high consistency rate, which ensures that the organisation's goals will be achieved leading to the memorable experience of the tourist (Caralli, 2004:2; Brotherton, 2004:20). If critical success factors are implemented efficiently and effectively, it may lead to the following advantages for the organisation:profitability and the achievement of high success levels, timesaving, cost saving, quality and efficiency, sustainability, return visits, and positive word-of-mouth (Finney & Corbett, 2007:330).

Previous research found that critical success factors are very important. However, each tourism sector has its own set of factors with some factors being important in all sectors. General management and effective marketing (Kruger, 2006) are important factors when managing a hotel (Appel, 2010), for the Wacky Wine festival in the Western Cape (Marais, 2009), for special events such as a wedding (De Witt, 2006) and finally for a guesthouse (Van Der Westhuizen, 2003). It is clear that general management is at the core of any organisation. Each industry also has its own unique factors that make it different and, in the case of a nature-based destination such as the KNP, wildlife, education and interpretation may be seen as unique as there is no other industry that has these factors. Green management is also a very important factor in the management of hotels (Appel, 2010). Because of nature conservation, national parks must also be wise and make use of greener management strategies in the future.

Other aspects that were identified in the previously mentioned studies as important CSFs were safety, accessibility, route maps, parking, human resources management, variety of activities for children, good financial control, providing services and products the visitors need, variety of facilities, product-specific attributes, and entertainment (Erasmus, 2011; Appel, 2010; Marais, 2009; Kruger, 2006; De Witt, 2006; Van Der Westhuizen, 2003).

Research with regard to experience and expectations has been done before. However, the methodology and approach has been somewhat different to this study. Previous research made use of VERP (visitor experience and resource protection) (Meng, Tepanon & Uysal, 2008; Tsuar, Lin & Lin, 2008), SERVQUAL (service quality) (Said *et al.,* 2009; Akama & Kieti, 2003; Gonzalez, Comesana & Brea, 2007), and ECOSERVE (Khan, 2003; Said *et al.,* 2009), to determine the expectations or experiences of the tourist. This study has developed a unique new way of determining the individuals' expectations and what they see as important for a memorable experience. This is also the first time that factors for determining a memorable experience at a national park has been researched. Advantages of critical success factors in managing the visitor experience to a national park are as follows:

- Positive word-of-mouth;
- Tourists are loyal towards the park and return more often;
- Increased income and economic impact;
- Responsible tourists resulting from educational activities;
- Improved management structures;
- Well-trained and educated personnel;
- Higher levels of service and product delivery; and
- Sustainability of national parks due to great management.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to identify the different aspects of which management of a national park in South Africa needs to be aware of satisfy tourist expectations and deliver a memorable experience. These aspects are important especially when developing a measuring instrument or questionnaire to determine the management aspects that visitors regard as important for a memorable experience at a national park. This chapter discussed the importance of critical success factors and the way in which

they can be used to improve on services. Management of national parks also need to have a clear understanding of the tourist expectations and what tourists feel is important for a memorable experience at the park.

South African National Parks is considered as one of the best organisations in the world when it comes to conservation and protection of areas through regulating tourist numbers. Poaching is minimal and accommodation is well distributed with the layout and décor reflecting the local influence of the community and landscape (Honey, 2008:349). Therefore national park management needs to make use of an evaluation model to ensure that the objectives agreed on by management for the delivery of a memorable tourist experience are achieved. This can be done in conjunction with the local community, national-, provincial-, and local government agencies, tourist organisations, and the private sector (Fennell, 2008:134). However, when determining the expectations of tourists to a national park, management must ensure that they adhere to the two main focus areas of the park, conservation of the fauna and flora and promoting tourism (Honey, 2008:349).

KNP management needs to ensure that the right tangible and intangible services and products are available and delivered in accordance with the expectations of the tourist which ultimately influences the memorable experience (Fennell, 2008:154; Moore *et al.,* 2006:531). According to Appel *et al.* (2010:5), identifying the critical success factors of a tourism organisation can lead to the improvement of skills, capabilities and factors that park management need to attend to for delivering a memorable visitor experience. Therefore it is important to determine the factors management of the KNP need to know about the tourist to ensure that the tourist has a memorable visitor experience and returns in the future.

In light of the information discussed in this chapter, the next two chapters will specifically identify the key management aspects or CSF's, that visitors at one of South Africa's most popular National Parks, the Kruger National Park, regard as important for a memorable visitor experience. The gaps between visitors expectations versus their real experiences at the park will also be investigated.

Chapter 3

AN ANALYSIS OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN MANAGING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE AT THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

ABSTRACT

The Kruger National Park (KNP) attracts over one million visitors each year and is one of the top five international destinations in South Africa. However, there is strong competition in South Africa which implies the need for higher quality products and services that need to be delivered to visitors to fulfil their expectations. This can be achieved by determining the critical success factors (CSFs) in managing the visitor experience at the KNP, since knowledge of these factors can lead to a satisfied visitor experience that will keep visitors loyal to the park and thus ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of the KNP. The purpose of this research is therefore to determine the CSFs of managing the visitor experience at the KNP. To achieve this goal, quantitative research (questionnaire survey) was conducted at the KNP from 27 December 2010 to 4 January 2011. Questionnaires were distributed at the chalets and camping areas in the following rest camps: Skukuza (152), Berg and Dal (98), Lower Sabie (85) and Satara (101). A total of 436 questionnaires were obtained from the rest camps. A factor analysis identified nine CSFs which the KNP management can use to improve on quality service delivery, giving the visitors a memorable experience at the KNP.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In managing attractions or destinations for visitors, management is creating and contributing to a visitor experience (Marais, 2009:4). The importance of a visitor experience is highlighted by Sheng and Chen (2011:1) who state that not only does management need to understand visitor experience, but they need to take cognisance that both the tangible and intangible attributes of a destination or attraction play a role in creating a memorable experience. A memorable experience depends on how satisfied visitors are and, in this context, Cohen (1979:181) states that managers need to understand that the level of satisfaction differs from visitor to visitor, which will also have an impact on the experience of each visitor concerning factors such as landscape, natural beauty, services provided and quality products - to name but a few. It is therefore not enough just to know why people visit a national park, but park managers need to have a clear understanding of the factors that influence this experience (Saayman, 2009a:358; Andereck, Bricker, Kerstetter & Nickerson, 2006:81; Hayllar & Griffin, 2005:518).

Sheng and Chen (2011:1) define visitor experiences as the opinions and functions (transport and food), sensory stimulation (attractions), and the emotional description (bored or interesting) of the visitor. According to Saayman (2007:9), the visitor experience is, in general, a product of five integrated phases. In the first phase there is the planning, (2) then the journey to the destination, (3) the experience at the destination, (4) the return journey and, lastly, (5) the recovery phase. The first phase includes all the planning aspects such as accessing accurate information, making the bookings and the mode of transport that should be used. The second phase is en route to the destination of choice and will impact the experience as to how expensive it was, whether the transport was on time, visitor service and length of travel. Thirdly, certain aspects will have an impact on the experience at a nature-based destination if the main travel motivation of the visitor is fulfilled and the value that the visitor adds to the experience is exceeded. Examples include attractions in and around the destination, game drives and entertainment. The fourth phase is the journey home when the visitors have a different mindset towards the product and, in some cases, are reluctant to go home. Finally, the visitor reaches the fifth phase in which they recall the actual experience and they relive it in their memories.

Shaw and Ivens (2002:21) add that the physical performance and emotions evoked by the destinations are a blend of visitor experience, which is measured against visitors' expectations across all barriers and one cannot ignore achieving visitor satisfaction (Erasmus, 2011:65). Based on this, Boshoff, Landman, Kerley & Bradfield (2007:195) indicate that there are three main factors on which visitors and their satisfaction depend. These are: expectations, perceptions and experience. An expectation is what visitors expect to see based on familiarity or previous experience (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2007:G-4). Visitors' perception is the process by which the visitor selects, organises and interprets different stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2007:G-8). According to Shaw (2005:51) the interaction between a visitor and the destination, which is dependent on physical performance, senses stimulated, and the emotions that are evoked where each of these aspects has an impact on the visitor's expectation (Moore, Petty, Palich & Longenecker, 2008:723). From a tourism point of view, Ryan (2002:62) states that visitor experience is the most important, since this is essentially what tourism is all about. Moore *et al.* (2008:352) add that although this aspect contributes to visitor satisfaction, it consists of four main components. These are (1) providing the basic benefits of products and services that competitors offer; (2) offering support services to the visitor; (3) implementing systems that will react on any bad experiences that the visitors have whilst visiting the product or destination; and (4) delivering services that will ultimately exceed the expectations of the visitors to the park. Additionally, a memorable visitor experience can lead to a competitive advantage, increased revenue, personification of the brand (Shaw & Ivens, 2002:9), and sustainability of the product or destination if managed correctly (Said, Jaddil & Ayob, 2009.77). It may also change the visitor's perception and expectations of service standards (Kozak, 2001:398) and, ultimately, determine the loyalty of visitors towards the destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005:48).

With the importance of creating a memorable visitor experience in mind, one of the problems facing national parks in South Africa is that the different parks are competing against many other nature-based tourism products in Southern Africa (Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2004:42; SANParks, 2008/9:19). This leads to stiff competition to retain current and potential visitors. Therefore, from a sustainability point of view, it is vital for national parks to provide and ensure a memorable and satisfactory visitor experience to prevent loosing visitors to South African National Parks. (Khan, 2003:109; Cook, Yale & Marqua, 2010:67; Noe, Uysal & Magnini, 2010:98). To offer a memorable visitor

experience, it is necessary to identify those factors that contribute towards such an experience. These factors, according to Brotherton (2004:20), are referred to as Critical Success Factors (CSFs). CSFs are also known as Key Success Factors (KSFs) or as Key Result Areas (KRAs) and consist of a number of factors which is greater than three and less than ten which makes it easier for management to focus on those specific areas identified that cluster the variables within an organisation. CSFs are the areas within the organisation that are essential for management to accomplish its mission. Management must identify the areas that they consider as important to achieve the ultimate visitor experience and direct the operational activities to accomplish the organisation's goals (Caralli, 2004:2). Management needs to clarify the CSFs for the entire organisation so that all the employees have benchmark criteria to work from. All of the organisation's activities or initiatives that take place within these key areas must ensure high performance that consistently enables the organisation to achieve its goal of creating a memorable visitor experience (Caralli, 2004:2). These characteristics or conditions, referred to by many, have a direct and significant impact on the effectiveness, efficiency, and viability of an organisation's programme. Activities associated with CSFs must be performed at the highest possible level of excellence to achieve the overall objectives (Anon, 2011b). This will ultimately lead to the ability to achieve higher success levels and, as a result, timesaving, cost savings, quality and efficiency in their systems (Finney & Corbett, 2007:330).

The purpose of this research is to determine the critical success factors (CSFs) that influence visitors' experience at one of the oldest and most renowned national parks in South Africa, the Kruger National Park (KNP). The KNP is one of the largest national parks in the world and the biggest in South Africa, conserving an area of 1 962 362 ha of land (Honey, 1999:339; Loon, Harper & Shorten, 2007:264; Braack, 2006:5; SANParks, 2010). The KNP is also one of the top five visitor destinations in South Africa, attracting more than one million visitors per annum (Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2008:154; Bushell & Eagles, 2007:33; Aylward & Lutz, 2003:97). In addition, South African National Parks (SANParks) currently generates 80% of its revenue from accommodation and admission fees in the KNP (Mabunda & Wilson, 2009:118). For this reason, it is important to ensure that visitor experiences are memorable when in KNP.

3.2   LITERATURE REVIEW

Saayman (2009a:381) indicates that there are three forms of management in parks. These are tourism management, general management and conservation management. General management is defined as a process of getting things done within a business or organisation, which involves strategic planning, organising, leading the business in a direction and controlling people and resources (Page & Connell, 2009:645; Reh, 2011). In other words it entails aspects such as staff, finances, and infrastructure. Tourism management entails visitor-related activities and services such as game drives, accommodation, restaurants, children's activities and educational activities, among others. Conservation management is the protection, preservation, and careful management of natural resources and of the environment (Farlex Inc., 2011).

These three forms of management are interrelated and it is the responsibility of the park manager to ensure that they are managed in such a way that visitors' experiences are memorable while, at the same time, conserving the environment. These three categories of park management contain all the management aspects required to manage a park, such as amenities, administration, activities, conservation, development, community upliftment and involvement. However, from the supply side, it is important to note that the three categories or types of management are generally carried out by different managers with different qualifications, backgrounds and functions. For example, conservation is primarily concerned with fauna and flora. The tourism managers are concerned about quality of service and products. But, regardless of the differences, the visitors have their own expectations and perceptions. Page, Brunt, Busby and Connell (2001:407) explain that, from the demand side, visitor satisfaction differs from visitor to visitor as each individual has certain expectations and motivations for travelling to a destination. Therefore park management needs to be knowledgeable about the critical success factors (CSFs) so as to be able to focus on scarce resources that will ensure a memorable experience.

Adding to the complexity of the above is the fact that the KNP is larger than a country such as Israel or Holland and has the largest variety of animal and plant species in South Africa, resulting in the need for efficient management of the KNP (Braack, 2006:5). Figure 3.1 illustrates the aspects that influence a visitor's experience at a nature-based destination such as the KNP. Visitors have certain needs that are determined by their socio-demographic behavioural characteristics, travel motives and

preferences (Marais, 2009:1). According to Zhou, Bonham and Gangnes (2007:3) the visitor demand depends on the level of income which, in turn, determines the price of goods or related goods such as substitute products that visitors can purchase to fulfil their needs. According to Ozturk and Qu (2008:292), dimensions such as food and beverages, facilities, cost, hospitality and customer care, and overall accessibility have a significant impact on the visitor's perceived value and expectations concerning the destination. Management must to be aware of these needs since, if the visitors' needs are not fulfilled by the services or products on offer, this may have negative influences on visitor behaviour (for example negative word-of-mouth recommendations as well as less frequent visits to the park (Appel, 2010:11). Therefore the success of the park depends largely on visitor satisfaction and hence visitor experience (Song & Guo, 2008:113).
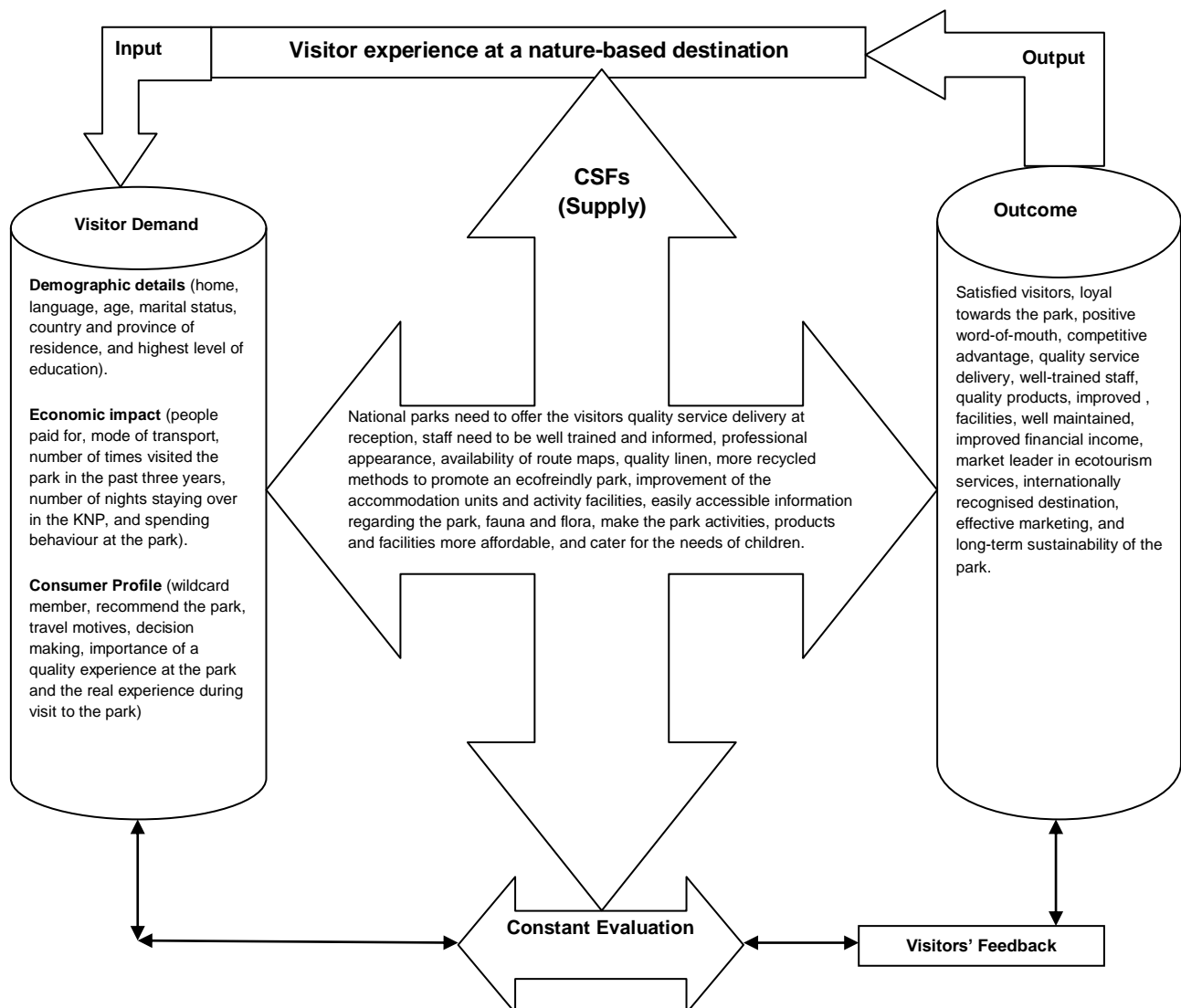
Figure 3.1: Visitor experience at a nature-based destination
Source: Adapted from Marais (2009) and Erasmus (2011)

Shiffman and Kanuk (2007:9) state that satisfied visitors offer the destination several advantages such as:

- Repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth;
- Loyalty towards the park; and
- Increased length of stay, and hence a greater economic impact and an increase in income for the park.

To achieve this, Erasmus (2011); Appel (2010); Marais (2009); De Witt (2006); and Van Der Westhuizen (2003) highlight in Table 3.1 the important role played by staff in offering a memorable experience. In addition, Saayman (2009a:358) and Shaw and Ivens (2002:16) state that protected areas or parks need to ensure the following aspects to create a memorable experience:

- Easy access to and from the rest camps and picnic areas, lookout points and game drives;
- Movement of visitors in the park and access to sites, such as lookout points, picnic areas, and restaurants;
- Quality of activities, including the educational and recreational value of activities;
- Character of the facility, including the decor and entertainment for the visitors in the park;
- Quality and level of services and products offered in the park need to be in a fair price range;
- Quality of facilities offered for example: are the facilities in a good and clean condition and safe to stay, is there entertainment for children such as a swimming pool?;
- Protection and management of the environment in a sustainable manner;
- Location of accommodation facilities, activities, picnic areas and lookout points is very important;
- Availability of accommodation and products in the park need to be monitored; and
- Interpretation of information, quality of printed material, videos, photos and slide shows and well-informed staff to assist with any enquiry.

Slabbert and Saayman (2003:8) add that resources, competitive capabilities, product attributes, competencies, and business outcomes all form part of the CSFs that

influence the lifespan of destinations such as the KNP. The importance of a memorable experience that leads to visitor satisfaction is that nature and quality at the KNP are related to the destination and environment that will ensure the future decision-making process on destination selection (Page, Brunt, Busby & Connell, 2001:337).

The KNP should thus embrace these CSFs, since doing so will enhance its competitiveness. However, park management needs to ensure that the CSFs are carefully aligned to the park's environment and ensure that the CSFs are flexible because they must be continuously adapted to stay within the market trends (Trkman, 2010:131). Management furthermore needs to be aware of the gaps that may occur between visitors' expectations and management perceptions of visitor experience and what park management perceives as important. According to Marais and Saayman (2010:159), continuous research and evaluation is a prerequisite. If visitors' needs are continuously monitored, management can respond to these needs which should lead to improved products and services leading to satisfied visitors (Noe *et al.,* 2010:82).

With the importance of CSFs in managing the visitor experience at the KNP in mind, previous research concerning CSFs, as shown in Table 3.1, has not yet been carried out at national parks or ecotourism destinations in South Africa. However, previous research on CSFs in South Africa has focused on different tourism operations such as an arts festival (Erasmus, 2011); a wine festival (Marais, 2009); hotels (Appel, 2010); conference centres (Kruger, 2006); special events management such as weddings (De Witt, 2006); and guesthouses (Van Der Westhuizen, 2003). The results from these studies are displayed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Previous studies on critical success factors

Authors	Study title	Identified critical success factors
Erasmus (2011)	Key success factors in managing the tourist experience at the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival.	1. Safety and personnel; 2. Marketing and accessibility; 3. Venues; 4. Accommodation and ablutions; 5. General aspects and social impact; 6. Parking and restaurants; 7. Shows and stalls.
Appel (2010)	Critical success factors in managing hotels in South Africa	1. Organisational management; 2. Quality and customer satisfaction management; 3. Marketing and experience management; 4. Human resource management; 5. Logistics management; 6. Risk and policy management; 7. Green management.

Marais (2009)	Critical success factors in managing the Wacky Wine festival.	1. Quality and good management, including factors such as adequate activities for children; 2. Wine farm attributes that include adequate numbers of staff and affordable wine; 3. Effective marketing; 4. Route development that included aspects such as information available about the wine route, a well organised route and a route map; 5. Festival attractiveness consisting of whether the festival is family-friendly, well managed enquiries, adequate security and value for money; 6. Entertainment activities including variety entertainment, adequate variety and friendly staff; 7. Accessibility consisting of comfortable wine farm facilities, clear directions to farms and well managed farms.
Kruger (2006)	Critical success factors in managing a conference centre in South Africa.	1. Functional layout and providing the right variety of facilities; 2. Performing of good marketing management; 3. Having the proper operational aspects in place; 4. Conducting proper planning before any conference; 5. Providing an attractive venue; 6. Perform human resource management.
De Witt (2006)	Critical success factors for managing special events: The case of wedding tourism.	1. Strategic planning and performing a SWOT analysis; 2. Operational services that include high levels of hygiene, having a liquor licence, providing secure parking providing a variety of menus and the accessibility of the venue; 3. Human resource management, and creating a positive organisational behaviour; 4. Financial management including control of finances through financial operating systems, an operating budget and a breakeven analysis; 5. Marketing aspects such as market segmentation, market positioning as well as promotion, which includes personal selling, developing of efficient public relations and advertising the venue, to ensure the success of the special event.
Van Der Westhuizen (2003)	Critical success factors for developing and managing a guesthouse.	1. Owner-manager establishes and upholds a high standard of quality; 2. Human resource management should show courtesy to guests; 3. Owner-manager must inspire, motivate and praise employees; 4. Self-sufficient owner-manager; 5.

		Good leadership qualities; 6. Ability to share positive information freely; 7. Providing services and facilities guests need; 8. High levels of hygiene; 9. Guests welcomed in a personal manner; 10. Well trained employees; 11. Attractive natural surrounding landscapes.

Research by Appel (2010); Marais (2009) and De Witt (2006) has indicated that organisational management is an important factor and this came out as the most important CSF overall. Furthermore, effective marketing of the product or destination was identified in the research by Erasmus (2011); Appel (2010); Marais (2009); Kruger (2006); and De Witt (2006). According to Erasmus (2011); Marais (2009); Kruger (2006); and Van Der Westhuizen (2003), quality and variety of facilities such as accommodation, entertainment, activities and services need to be provided at visitor products or destinations. Collectively, the studies (Table 3.1) indicate that, by identifying the CSFs, tourism operations can be managed in a sustainable manner as well as bringing visitors' satisfaction levels to mind when applying these factors. The CSFs are furthermore unique to each segment, thus indicating that for every industry within tourism, there are different CSFs that need to be identified to ensure sustainability and increase visitors' loyalty and satisfaction. With the exception of Marais (2009) and Erasmus (2011), these studies were also carried out from the supply side. However, these authors found that it is important to identify the needs of visitors and to determine which aspects they consider as important for a memorable visitor experience. This will lead to visitors who are loyal and the more loyal visitors, the more repeat visits The improvement of management at the KNP with the identification of CSFs will lead to greater visitor satisfaction and exceeding visitor expectations, positive word-of-mouth, increased visitors numbers and, ultimately, the sustainability of one of the world's most renowned parks (Wood, 2004:161; Elliot & Percy, 2007:91).

3.3   METHOD OF RESEARCH

The method of research used will be discussed under the following headings: (i) the questionnaire, (ii) sampling method and survey, and the (iii) statistical analysis.

3.3.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the survey was based on research by Appel (2010) and Erasmus (2011) and was divided into three sections. Section A captured the

demographic details (home language, date of birth, age of accompanying children, marital status, country of residence, province of residence and level of education). Section B measured the economic impact of visitors in the park. (number of people paid for, type of transport, number of times the park has been visited, length of stay, alternative destinations of choice and overall expenditure at the KNP). Section C was designed to determine the visitor behaviour at the KNP and included questions such as whether the visitors are wild card members; would the visitors recommend the park to others and when the decision was made to visit the park. Section C also captured the motivational factors measuring 22 items on a 5-point Likert scale of importance with 1 = not at all important, 2 = less important, 3 = neither important nor less important, 4 = very important, and 5 = extremely important. Furthermore, Section C measured the visitor expectations, measuring 62 items on a 5-point Likert Scale of importance where 1 = extremely important, 2 = very important, 3 = neither important nor less important, 4 = less important, 5 = not at all important.

3.3.2 Sampling method and survey

A destination-based survey was undertaken and the questionnaires were distributed at various rest camps in the KNP. These were Berg and Dal, Lower Sabie, Satara and Skukuza thus ensuring that all overnight visitors in the rest camps had an equal opportunity to participate. Fieldworkers moved around the chalets and camp areas to minimise bias. They approached the respondents and explained the goal of the survey and the questionnaire to ensure that the visitors participated willingly and responded openly and honestly. The total population of overnight visitors to the different rest camps was approached and 450 questionnaires were distributed over eight days (27 December 2010 to 4 January 2011) and only 436 questionnaires were usable. According to statistics provided by SANParks, there were 384 249 (N) overnight visitors to the KNP in the year 2009 (Stevens, 2010). The average travelling group in December 2009 was 3.4 persons (Du Plessis, Saayman & Erasmus, 2010:9). Since the questionnaires were handed out to only one person per travelling group, the total population (N) was divided by 3.4 and this resulted in 112 132 visitors (N). By making use of the sample size formula as indicated by Israel (2009:3), where (n) is the sample size, (N) is the population size, and (e) is the level of precision (5%), the required number of completed questionnaires needed for this study to be sufficient was 399. The total number of questionnaires completed in December 2010 and January 2011 was 436 questionnaires which makes this number of questionnaires sufficient.

3.3.3 Statistical analysis

Microsoft© Excel© was used to capture data and SPSS (SPSS Inc, 2010) to analyse it. The analysis was done in two stages. First, a general profile of the respondents was compiled. Second, a principal axis factor analysis, using Oblimin rotation with Kaiser Normalisation, was performed on the 62 variables to determine the critical success factors of a memorable visitor experience at the KNP and to explain the variance-covariance structure of a set of variables through a few linear combinations of these variables. These items were taken from previous research done by Appel (2010); Erasmus (2011); Khan (2003); De Witt (2006); Van der Westhuizen (2003); Kruger (2006) and Marais (2009) and was adapted for this study as well as other park specific factors were identified. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was also used to determine whether the covariance matrix was suitable for factor analysis. Kaiser's criteria for extraction of all factors with eigenvalues larger than unity were used because they were considered to explain a significant amount of variation in the data. In addition, all items with a factor loading above 0.3 were considered as contributing to a factor, and all with loadings lower than 0.3 as not correlating significantly with this factor (Steyn, 2000). In addition, any item that cross-loaded on two factors with factor loadings greater than 0.3 was categorised in the factor where interpretability was best. A reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was computed for each factor to estimate the internal consistency of each factor. All factors with a reliability coefficient above 0.6 were considered as acceptable in this study. The average inter-item correlation was also computed as another measure of reliability – these, according to Clark and Watson (1995), should lie between 0.15 and 0.55.

3.4   RESULTS

This section provides an overview of the profile of the respondents and discusses the results of the factor analysis with regard to CSFs for a memorable visitor experience at the KNP.

3.4.1 Profile of respondents surveyed at KNP

Table 3.2 shows that the respondents were predominantly Afrikaans-speaking, on average 45 years old, and originated from Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces. Most of the respondents had a diploma or degree and paid for an average of three people during their stay at the KNP. The respondents had visited national parks on average of three times in the last three years and their main reasons for visiting the KNP are to

relax and to enjoy nature. The respondents travelled to the Park mainly by means of 4x4 vehicles and sedans, stayed for three nights and are Wild Card members indicating that they are loyal towards SANParks. The respondents spent an average of R7 728.63 per group to the KNP.

Table 3.2: Profile of overnight visitors to the KNP (December 2010/January 2011)

Category	Overnight visitors summer 2010/11
Home language	Afrikaans (53%); English (38%)
Age	35 – 49 years of age (40%) **(Average: 45.4)**
Province of residence	Gauteng (57%) and Mpumalanga (14%)
Level of education	Diploma/Degree (39%)
Number of people paid for	2 - 4 people **(Average: 3.2)**
Mode of transport	4x4 (34%) and Sedan (25%)
Number of visits to a national park over the last three years	Average of 3.4 times
Length of stay	Three nights
Reasons for visiting the KNP	Relax and enjoy nature, get away
Expenditure	R 7 728.63
Wild Card owner	Yes (78%)

3.4.2 Results from the factor analysis

The pattern matrix of the principal axis factor analysis using an Oblimin rotation with Kaiser Normalisation identified nine factors, which were then labelled according to similar characteristics (Table 3.3). These factors accounted for 70.5% of the total variance. All had relatively high reliability coefficients, ranging from 0.72 (the lowest) to 0.98 (the highest). The average inter-item correlation coefficients with values between 0.25 and 0.71 also imply internal consistency for all factors. Moreover, all items loaded on a factor with a loading greater than 0.3 and the relatively high factor loadings indicate a reasonably high correlation between the factors and their component items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy of 0.95 also indicates that patterns of correlation are relatively compact and yield distinct and reliable factors (Field, 2005:640). Bartlett's test of sphericity also reached statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2007:197).

Table 3.3: Factor analysis results of the Critical Success Factors for managing the visitor experience at KNP

Critical success factors	Factor loading	Mean value	Reliability coefficient	Average inter-item correlation
Factor 1: General Management		**1.61**	**0.98**	**0.71**
High quality service at reception	0.78			
Proper layout of the park	0.78			
Proper layout of rest camps and routes	0.78			
Fast and efficient service delivery at reception	0.76			
Friendly and helpful staff	0.72			
Effective bookings on the website for accommodation and/or other activities	0.72			
Well-trained and informed staff who can handle any queries concerning the rest camp or park	0.71			
Professional appearance of staff	0.70			
User-friendly park website	0.66			
Adequate information available about the park	0.65			
Availability of route maps	0.63			
Accessibility of the park	0.62			
Adequate number of staff members available	0.57			
Clear directions to rest camps and picnic areas	0.57			
Information regarding services provided in the rest camps, for example laundry services, information centres, game drives, etc.	0.54			
Effective marketing of Wild Card benefits	0.42			
Quality and variety in accommodation	0.40			
Enough trees at the chalets and/or camping area	0.35			
Factor 2: Wildlife Experience		**1.67**	**0.92**	**0.66**
Affordable game drives	0.67			
Visibility of wildlife and birdlife in the park	0.66			
Interactive field guides on game drives and guided walks	0.64			
Maintenance of roads/gravel roads	0.52			
Variety of wildlife and birdlife	0.52			
Enforcing park rules and regulations, for example speed limits	0.34			
Factor 3: Facilities		**1.83**	**0.82**	**0.61**
Sufficient and safe lookout points in the park	0.42			

Strategically placed bird hides in the park	0.42			
High standards of maintenance of facilities	0.36			
Factor 4: Green Management		**1.97**	**0.93**	**0.65**
Use of recycled material	0.79			
Energy-saving light bulbs in accommodation units	0.73			
The use of non-toxic cleaners and sanitizers throughout the park	0.71			
Solar panels to save energy	0.69			
Low-flow showerheads and toilets	0.59			
Implementing effective recycling methods	0.56			
A linen (both towels and sheets) reuse programme in accommodation units	0.50			
Factor 5: Leisure Hospitality Facilities		**2.00**	**0.86**	**0.52**
Variety of restaurants in the park	0.65			
Affordable prices at restaurants	0.61			
Quality of food at eating areas or restaurants	0.53			
Play areas for children	0.46			
Adequate picnic areas in the park	0.37			
Swimming pools at rest camps	0.36			
Factor 6: Interpretation		**2.54**	**0.92**	**0.55**
Slideshows, informative sessions and specialist talks	0.77			
Geological displays	0.76			
Auditorium with nature videos	0.69			
Information regarding the park history	0.56			
Educational talks and games for children	0.48			
Information regarding the fauna/flora in the park	0.46			
Interpretive centres	0.42			
Information centre in specific rest camps, for example Skukuza and Satara	0.35			
Identification of trees, e.g. name plates or information boards	0.38			
Factor 7: Variety Activities		**2.86**	**0.85**	**0.66**
Variety activities	0.84			
Offering a variety of products	0.77			

Adequate and variety of activities for children	0.59			
Factor 8: Accommodation Facilities		**3.38**	**0.73**	**0.25**
Adequate cutlery and cooking utensils supplied in chalets	0.57			
Accessible facilities for disabled people	0.47			
The provision of only showers in chalets and in ablution facilities	0.45			
Quality linen in the chalets	0.44			
Adequate and hygienic ablution facilities at the camping area	0.37			
The provision of both bath and a shower	0.34			
That the outdoor and indoor décor reflect local influence	0.22			
Laundry services at the rest camps	0.21			
Factor 9: Luxuries		**3.87**	**0.72**	**0.56**
Television and radio in chalets	0.70			
Internet access	0.62			

Factor scores were calculated as the average of all items contributing to a specific factor so that they could be interpreted on the original 5-point Likert scale of measurement. As shown in Table 3.3, the following critical success factors were identified with 1 = extremely important, 2 = very important, 3 = neither important nor less important, 4 = less important, 5 = not at all important.

Factor 1: General management

Factor 1 was labelled *General management* and comprises aspects such as: well-trained and informed staff who can handle any queries concerning the rest camp or park; high quality service at reception; user-friendly park websites; adequate information available about the park; proper layout of the park; and quality and variety in accommodation among others. *General management* was regarded as the most important CSF for a quality visitor experience at the KNP with a mean value of 1.61, a reliability coefficient of 0.98 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.71. This factor has also previously been identified by Appel (2010); De Witt (2006); and Van Der Westhuizen (2003) in their respective research from the supply side, where they found that, *General Management* came out as an important factor. Marais (2009), who did research from the demand side, also rated *General management* as an important

factor. Therefore, from either the supply side or the demand side, G*eneral management* plays a vital role in the delivery of a quality tourism product and visitor experience.

Factor 2: Wildlife experience

Maintenance of roads/gravel roads; variety of wildlife and birdlife; visibility of wildlife and birdlife in the park; and interactive field guides on game drives are all categorised under Factor 2, as *Wildlife experience*. *Wildlife experience* was considered as the second most important CSF and obtained a mean value of 1.67, a reliability coefficient of 0.92, and an average inter-item correlation of 0.66. *Wildlife experience,* however, has not yet been identified in the literature and is especially important when managing the visitor experience at a nature-based destination, and is therefore a park-specific factor to the visitor experience at nature-based products.

Factor 3: Facilities

Factor 3, *Facilities* includes high standards of maintenance of facilities; sufficient and safe lookout points in the park; and strategically placed bird hides in the park. *Facilities* were the third most important CSF with a mean value of 1.83, a reliability coefficient of 0.82, and an average inter-item correlation of 0.61. Kruger (2006) also identified facilities as an important factor in the management of conference venues. *Facilities* are also product-specific although the principle demonstrated above remains.

Factor 4: Green management

Green management (Factor 4) is formulated from the implementation of effective recycling methods; a linen (both towels and sheets) reuse programme in accommodation units; low-flow showerheads and toilets; use of recycled materials; solar panels to save energy; energy-saving light bulbs in accommodation units and the use of non-toxic cleaners and sanitizers throughout the park. *Green management* was considered as the fourth most important CSF with a mean value of 1.97, a reliability coefficient of 0.93 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.65. The research conducted by Appel (2010) was the only other that identified *Green management* from a supply perspective as an important CSF in managing a hotel. The fact that this factor is regarded as more important for visitors at a national parks can be explained by the fact that one would expect nature tourists to be more environmentally friendly and conscious.

Factor 5: Leisure hospitality facilities

Factor 5, *Leisure hospitality facilities* consists of the variety of restaurants in the park; adequate picnic areas in the park; and play areas for children, to name but a few. *Leisure hospitality facilities* received a mean value of 2.00, a reliability coefficient of 0.86 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.52. The study by Marais (2009) is the only other study that identified this factor. It therefore seems that this aspect is more relevant to destinations that are supposed to offer visitors a variety of *Leisure hospitality facilities*.

Factor 6: Interpretation

Interpretation (Factor 6) consists of the information centres in specific rest camps, for example Skukuza and Satara; information boards; slideshows; geological displays; information on the park history; educational talks and games for children; information regarding the fauna and flora in the park; and interpretive centres. This factor received a mean value of 2.54, a reliability coefficient of 0.92 and an average inter-item correlation 0.55. This factor has not yet been identified by any other author discussed in the literature review as a CSF, thus implying that *Interpretation* is a park-specific product and that management of the park must ensure that there are more activities implemented for a learning experience in the Park. Considering that nature-based visitors are inclined to have a higher level of education and therefore value education, this factor is important for a memorable park experience.

Factor 7: Variety activities

Variety activities (Factor 7) entails the offering of a variety of products, a variety of activities, and an adequate variety of activities for children. *Variety activities* received the third lowest mean value of 2.86, a reliability coefficient of 0.85 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.66. This factor was identified by Marais (2009) as an important critical success factor when managing the visitor experience at a wine festival. This indicates that the park needs to also cater to the needs of children and thus offer activities and products for them.

Factor 8: Accommodation facilities

Accommodation facilities (Factor 8) includes adequate cutlery and cooking utensils supplied in chalets; accessible facilities for disabled people; the provision of only showers in chalets and, in ablution facilities, the provision of both bath and shower; the

outdoor and indoor décor reflect local influence; quality linen in the chalets; laundry services at the rest camps; and adequate and hygienic ablution facilities at the camping area. *Accommodation facilities* were regarded as the second least important CSF with a mean value of 3.38, a reliability coefficient of 0.73 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.25. Erasmus (2011) identified the combined factor *Accommodation and Ablutions* as a critical success factor when managing the visitor experience at a national arts festival in South Africa.

Factor 9: Luxuries

Luxuries (Factor 8), such as Internet access and the provision of televisions and radios in accommodation units was considered as the least important CSF and obtained a mean value of 3.87, a reliability coefficient of 0.92 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.55. Factor 9 has not yet been identified by any other author. This shows that visitors travelling to the KNP do not rate these *Luxuries* as important factors contributing to their experience.

3.5   FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The research has the following findings and implications: Firstly, this study identified nine CSFs in managing the visitor experience at a national park in South Africa. These were *General management, Wildlife experience, Facilities, Green management, Leisure hospitality facilities, Interpretation, Variety activities, Accommodation facilities,* and *Luxuries.* The most important CSFs that have been identified for a memorable visitor experience at the KNP are *General management, Wildlife experience, Facilities* and *Green management.* The research also supports the notion that CSFs differ from one tourism product to the next, and that CSFs are unique to each tourism offering. In this case, *Wildlife experience, Interpretation* and *Luxuries* were park-specific factors of an ecotourism product or nature-based product. CSFs identified in other sectors or tourism products can therefore not be used for a destination such as the KNP.

Secondly, considering the analysis of the different CSFs, it supports the park management model by Saayman (2009a:381), who identified three categories of management. These were general management, tourism management and conservation management. The CSFs identified can all be placed under each of the three management forms, indicating the need of national parks to adopt an integrated approach. If the management of the KNP adopts or develops a management plan, the

emphasis must be on the integration of the different departments so that staff know what is happening. An integrated management approach should lead to improved service delivery and, eventually, memorable visitor experiences.

Thirdly, *General management* is the most important CSF. General management deals with the core aspects of an organisation and it also spells out the aims and objectives of the organisation (Noe *et al.,* 2010:82). One of these includes ensuring visitor satisfaction. According to Page *et al.* (2001:407) visitor satisfaction differs from visitor to visitor and therefore management will need to continuously evaluate the situation. CSFs can then be adapted as and when this may be necessary. These findings support research by Trkman (2010:131) and Van Der Westhuizen (2003) who added that management needs to ensure that the staff are well trained and have sufficient knowledge and skills to do the work. The reason being that visitors want to experience quality services when arriving at reception and staff must attend to their needs and enquiries. Furthermore, a sufficient number of staff must be available and must have a professional appearance at all times. Swarbrooke (2002:106) is supportive of the fact that *General management* needs to improve so that there can be an increased economic impact that will assist with conservation activities as well as ensuring a memorable visitor experience.

Fourthly, *Wildlife experience* and *Interpretation* were identified as product-specific factors that the park can integrate to improve the visitor experience at the KNP**.** Ballantyne, Packer and Sutherland (2011:770) and Du Plessis (2010:11) add that wildlife tourism aims to educate visitors about the threats faced by wildlife and actions that need to be taken to protect the environment and maintain the biodiversity. In fact, the very existence of ecotourism rests on education and interpretation. The *Wildlife experience* factor is unique to the CSFs that were developed for the KNP as this is the main reason why visitors visit the park. This factor needs to be incorporated into the KNPs main objective, to conserve and protect the natural environment and biodiversity for future generations. According to Kruger and Saayman (2010:100); Kerstetter, Hou and Lin (2004:495); Beh and Bruyere (2007:1470); and Saayman and Saayman (2009:5); visitors make use of nature-based tourism destinations to escape from their daily routines and spend time with family and friends. The KNP can implement programmes to train their game rangers, ensuring that the visitor receives the right information regarding the wildlife and environment. *Interpretation* regarding the wildlife

and birdlife at the KNP can be improved, for example, by tour guides being more interactive on game drives or guided walks, placing information boards at certain strategic points or historical places, or information centres in the rest camps where the visitors can read and experience more about specific fauna and flora in the park.

Fifthly, *Green management* was rated as the fourth most important CSF and corresponds with the findings of Appel (2010); however, it got the lowest ranking in this research regarding hotel management in South Africa. By implementing green policies such as reuse programs for linen and bath towels, replacing toilets with the double flush mechanism so that water can be saved and making use of more reneuable energy sources such as sun and wind (Du Plessis, 2010:14). Posters can also be used to indicate the need for greener management and conservation and to educate visitors in this regard. The KNP is a world renowned national park and, for an ecotourism destination, management must strive to set an example.

Lastly, *Luxury* was rated as the least important CSF in this research. This emphasises that visitors visiting the park are there for the wildlife experience and to escape from any technology aspects. This factor must, however, not be ignored and management must keep in mind that they must provide the services and product wanted and desired by their target market. There are nature-based tourism destinations that offer *Luxury* but, as the data indicates, the current market visiting the KNP does not want luxuries in the park, they would prefer the natural and scenic beauty.

3.6   CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to determine the critical success factors (CSFs) that influence visitors' experience at one of the oldest and most renowned national parks in South Africa, the Kruger National Park (KNP). Based on the results of this study, it is clear that nature based tourism destinations such as the KNP have specific CSFs that must be implemented by management and integrated so that the KNP can offer their visitors a memorable experience. The nine CSFs that the KNP must implement in their management plan are the improvement of *General management, Wildlife experience, Interpretation, Facilities, Green management, Leisure hospitality facilities, Variety activities, Accommodation facilities and Luxuries.* These CSFs can be better understood in the literature and can assist national parks by integrating their management of an ecotourism product or destination to the extent that visitors have a

memorable experience that will ultimately lead to repeat visits. It is clear that each tourism destination has its own set of unique product-specific attributes and that the CSFs for a hotel, festival or conference centre will not be necessarily applicable in the case of a nature-based tourism destination such as the KNP.

This research provides the following valuable contributions: (i) this was the first time that CSFs for nature-based tourism destinations such as national parks has been researched; (ii) this research provides valuable insights into the management of national parks and is specific to the KNP management, and (iii) park management can see what the visitor sees as important for a memorable visitor experience at a national park. Tourism products or destinations differ from each other and thus need to identify the CSFs for each tourism destination or product. Based on the results of this research, it is recommended that research be carried out regarding the expectations of visitors visiting nature-based destinations such as the KNP and the comparison of these expectations versus the real experience. This study may assist management in identifying the gaps and addressing certain critical aspects to ensure a memorable experience that will keep visitors loyal towards the park.

C h a p t e r 4

A COMPARISON BETWEEN VISITORS EXPECTATIONS AND REAL EXPERIENCES AT THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

ABSTRACT

Management of nature-based tourism destinations such as national parks are not aware of visitors' expectations of their experiences at a national park. Tourists, being just like other consumers, have expectations of certain products and services and these expectations change over time. Therefore park management needs to determine the expectations of visitors that can be continuously evaluated to improve on services and products. Management can identify the gaps between the expectations of visitors and their real experiences by making use of an factor analysis whereafter each factor is given a loading and these are then deducted from each other, thus indicating the gaps within management. This was also the goal of this study. To achieve this goal, a survey was conducted at the KNP from 27 December 2010 to 4 January 2011. Questionnaires were distributed at the chalets and camping areas in the following rest camps: Skukuza (152), Berg and Dal (98), Lower Sabie (85) and Satara (101). A total of 436 questionnaires were obtained from the rest camps. The results showed that there were twelve factors with three groups of four factors. These factors either exceeded, disappointed or were equal to visitors' expectations. The biggest gaps were educational activities, accommodation facilities, interpretation activities and wildlife.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

National parks are associated with nature-based tourism products and services, representing a symbol of a high quality natural environment with a well developed and implemented tourist infrastructure (Eagles, 2011:133; Akama, 1996:568; Fredman, Friberg & Emmelin, 2007:88). Visiting national parks and protected areas is one of the fastest growing sectors within the tourism industry and continues to grow because the attributes and natural environment attracts tourists (Eagles, 2011:132; Kim, Lee & Klenosky, 2003:169; Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010:163; Fredman *et al.*, 2007:87). For a nature-based product to be sufficient in economic and social development, park management, together with government, must understand that the training of personnel, good infrastructure and effective usage of park resources in a sustainable manner will lead to a well managed park satisfying the expectations of tourists and finally leading to a memorable experience (Eagles, 2011:136; Chhetri, Arrowsmith & Jackson, 2004:31).

A memorable experience implies that visitor expectations are met and this leads to visitor satisfaction (Ahoy, 2009:136; Geldenhuys, 2009:3). Having a satisfied visitor shows that managers apply the golden rule that the customer is king. Producing memorable experiences is the result of effective and efficient management of all aspects related to the park. These aspects are, however, not all equally important from a visitor's perspective (Marais & Saayman, 2011:161). Research done by Marais and Saayman (2011:161) has shown that most of these aspects are in the internal environment of an organisation, or park in this case. Therefore park managers have the ability and means to influence and manage a memorable experience. The easiest way to achieve this is to evaluate what a visitor expected versus what they have experienced. If a gap exists, then managers need to address those aspects. Management theory shows that whatever a manager plans should be evaluated (Eagles, 2011:144; Tung & Ritchie, 2011:3; Smith, 2008:237). Evaluation can determine whether goals and objectives are reached or achieved (Botha, 2008b:203; Anon, 2011a). Organisations such as national parks need to adapt continuously to the ever-changing environment and, with the service and products offered in a volatile environment, managers need to detect any deviations and react to ensure that memorable experiences are delivered (Botha, 2008b:205; Saayman, 2009b:222).

According to Akama and Kieti (2003:75), nature-based tourists are just like other consumers in the sense that they also have initial expectations regarding the experience at particular destinations. However, when the destination exceeds these expectations one has a satisfied tourist that often results in repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Moore, Petty, Palich & Longenecker, 2008:527). Tourist satisfaction levels are furthermore affected by their former experiences visiting national parks or protected areas; their knowledge about the park or protected area; and their capacity to learn and understand these experiences and how they are linked (Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010:164; Shackley, 1996:53). Aspects of tourism that influence a memorable experience at a national park include accommodation and catering, attractions and transport accessibility, children's activities, education activities, game viewing, and information interpretation (Saayman, 2002:3; Page, 2007:102; Saayman, 2000:10). According to Spreng, MacKenzie and Olshavsky (1996:16), the occurrence and an evaluation of the occurrence are both necessary because not all the attributes are desired by all the tourists and these two components determine expectations. Lee, Jeol and Kim (2010:2); Akama and Kieti (2003:75) as well as Yoon and Uysal (2005:48) add that the expectations of service are fixed and tourists compare their actual experience with their expectation of service, emphasising that tourist expectations are crucial to ensure an ultimate and memorable tourist experience. Therefore management needs to know and understand the difference between what the tourist wants as opposed to what management thinks tourists want (Laws, 1998:547).

Hence the purpose of this research is to determine the tourists' expectations in order to create a memorable experience and to determine to what extent these expectations were met at one of South Africa's most popular national parks, the Kruger National Park (KNP).

4.2   LITERATURE REVIEW

With the overwhelming 3 386 national parks in the world, the KNP is one of the most recognised national parks covering a staggering 1 962 362 ha of conservation land attracting more than one million tourists each year (Honey, 1999:339; Loon, Harper & Shorten 2007:264; Braack, 2006:5; SANParks, 2010; Eagles, 2011:133; Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2008:154; Bushell & Eagles, 2007:33; Aylward & Lutz, 2003:97; Mabunda & Wilson, 2009:118). Although the KNP attracts a large number of tourists, management still needs to retain the tourists to the KNP especially amidst stiff

competition from the other 22 national parks, 171 provincial and local parks and the more than 7 000 privately owned game reserves within South African borders (Saayman & Van Der Merwe, 2004:42; KZN Wildlife, 2011; Tourism North-West, 2011; Limpopo Tourism and Parks, 2011; Eastern Cape Parks, 2011; Northern Cape Tourism Authority, 2011; Anon, 2011c). All of them are competing to give tourists a memorable experience. This emphasises the need for KNP management to understand and know the expectations of the tourists to be able to create a memorable tourist experience (Khan, 2003:109; Cook, Yale & Marqua, 2010:67; Noe, Uysal & Magnini, 2010:98). This has to be done seeing that tourists' needs change, new products are offered on an ongoing basis, and competition is fierce (Jenkins, 1999:13).

Figure 4.1 illustrates the continuous process that management at national parks have to follow to ensure that they achieve a high rate of memorable tourist experiences. In this process there are six steps that management needs to repeat.
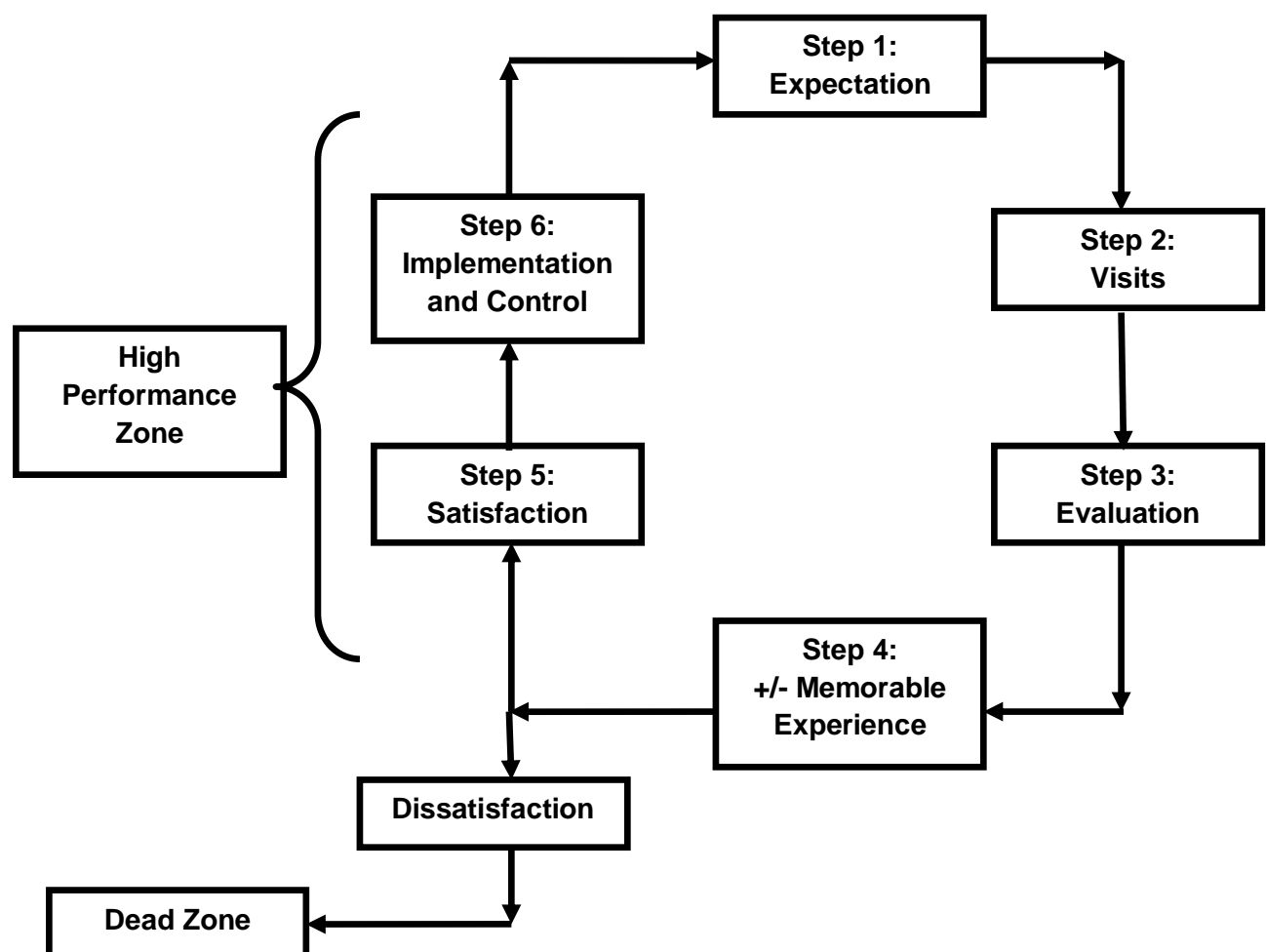
Figure 4.1: Process of achieving a memorable experience
Adapted from: Shaw and Ivens (2002:40 &206); Sprenger, MacKenzi and Olshavsky (1996:17); Quan and Wang (2003:300)

As shown in Figure 4.1, tourists have certain expectations of various aspects concerning a destination that are important for visitors, which include the products and services offered (step 1) (Vitterso, Vorkinn, Vistad & Vaagland, 2000:435; Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001:37; Akama & Kieti, 2003:75). Tourist expectations depend on various aspects such as the attractiveness, product attributes, sources of the destination and publicity such as word-of-mouth, media, park management service levels, weather and marketing (Fredman *et al.*, 2007:94). These aspects are measured by the tourist as to how important they are for a memorable experience (Chhetri *et al.,* 2004:31). According to Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001:31) there is also a need for managers to know the needs of the tourist travelling to the destination, since the expectations of the tourist concerning the destination affects the satisfaction levels (Aksu, İçigen & Ehtiyar, 2010:67). If management understands the tourists' expectations, the development of good management, planning and marketing approaches will ensure that the intangible and tangible products and services offer a memorable experience (Hayllar & Griffin, 2005:518).

While visiting the destination, the tourist will have positive and negative experiences (step 2) which are constantly evaluated (step 3). In the second step, the visit may evoke an emotional feeling towards the natural environment and culture leading to return visits, ensuring that the environment is conserved and protected (Bricker, Daniels & Carmichael, 2006:172). Repeat visits reflect that the expectations of the tourist are being fulfilled or even exceeded and tend to generate a great sense of loyalty. Many tourism destinations rely on repeat visits (Alegre & Cladera, 2006:288; Oppermann, 2000:80). Tourists are seeking tourism experiences that diminish their loyalty towards other destinations and offer improved benefits. This ensures return visits, which indicates that the success of a memorable tourist experience is determined by management (Alegre & Cladera, 2006:288; Pennington-Gray & Carmichael, 2006:214). The effectiveness of managers at nature-based tourism destinations such as a national park is evaluated by the tourist. This can only be done through the implementation of an evaluation model (step 3 in Figure 4.1) where the tourist is stating whether or not they have had a memorable experience and providing recommendations that will assist management in exceeding the expectations of the tourists (Deng, King & Bauer, 2002:425).

Evaluation is defined by Phillips (2002:119) as the judgement of the criteria of the goals and objectives identified by management. Evaluation is important as it can be used as a rating system for managers of national parks as tourists often travel to more than one destination and experience a vast variety of cultural and environmental elements. Furthermore, the World Tourism Organization, as cited by Deng, King and Bauer (2002:425), noted that only a few tourists travel exclusively to experience the natural or cultural environments. Furthermore, Maxwell, MacRae, Adam and MacVicar (2001:738) add that, when implementing an evaluation plan, the organisation's improvements can be seen as increased profitability, increased turnover, increased efficiency, improved tourist services, improved image of the organisation, increased motivation amongst employees, willingness to be trained, awareness of the organisation's goals and objectives, improved working relationships, improved communication within the organisation and among its employees, improved skills and competence, employee commitment, lower employee turnover and reduced absenteeism.

Steps 4 and 5 determine whether the tourist had a satisfying or a disappointing experience based on their evaluation. To determine whether an experience was memorable or not depends on the level of satisfaction which is controlled by management, such as being under the direct control of a guide or field ranger, rules and regulations, number of tourists in the campsite (carrying capacity), degree of exposure to fauna and flora, degree of potential danger from the animals, rareness of fauna and flora, and whether the guides have the right qualification and knowledge about the environment (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001:37). These aspects can be referred to as critical factors influencing a memorable experience at a national park or nature-based tourism destination. Step 5 is satisfaction, which occurs mainly when the expectations of the tourists are fulfilled or exceeded while a disappointing experience negatively influences the experience at a national park (Vitterso *et al.*, 2000:433; Yoon & Uysal, 2005:47). Tourist satisfaction derives from pre-existing circumstances that influence the tourist's personality and is dependent on the expectations of the tourist and the reality (Shackley, 1996:53). Shiffman and Kanuk (2007:G-8) add that consumers, in this case tourists, judge the quality of a product or service on the basis of a variety of informational cues that are associated with the product or service. Some of these cues are fundamental to the product or service, whilst others are extrinsic, such as price, image, service environment, brand image and promotional messages. Lee *et al.* (2010:6) state that when the performance of service delivery exceeds the tourists'

expectations, the result leads to emotional satisfaction, while emotional dissatisfaction is seen when the expectations exceed the performance. Tourist satisfaction differs and tourists have their own expectations with regard to certain products and services at tourism destinations (Page & Connell, 2009:407).

If national parks move into the danger zone, it means that the park can only rely on those tourists with whom they have a relationship, together with the park's reputation; therefore management needs to avoid this zone (Shaw & Ivens, 2002:40). Shaw and Ivens (2002:40) indicate that the only sustainable zone is the high performance zone in which the park continually satisfies or exceeds the expectations of visitors. Therefore management must try to satisfy the tourist expectations (step 5) through implementing control measures (step 6) that will enhance the memorable experience at the KNP. After step 6, management needs to start all over again to determine whether the expectations of visitors are positive, indicating that there is a continuous evaluation of the expectations versus experiences. Management must control the implementation of these alterations to the products and services of destinations such as national parks, so that a memorable experience can be delivered. Managers must implement their plans so that the goals and objectives can be achieved. Therefore the implementation process is one of the most important processes that managers need to work on, ensuring that a memorable experience is delivered (Booysen & Botha, 2008:105).

Management of tourists' expectations is very difficult (Hsu, Cai & Li, 2010:282) because the products and services offered to the tourist are difficult to measure (Du Plessis & Saayman, 2011:132). Previous research on expectations or experiences of tourists at nature-based destinations was that of Chhetri *et al.* (2004); Du Plessis (2010:11); Higgs, Polonsky and Hollick (2005); Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline and Wang (2011); Manning (2001); Morgan, Moore and Mansell (2005); Ozturk and Qu (2008); Sheng and Chen (2011); Tung and Ritchie (2011); and Van Riper and White (2007). If the KNP management adopts an evaluation model to determine the visitors' real experience, this may lead to increased visitor satisfaction, visitor loyalty, return visits, a greater competitive advantage and increased revenue (Faulkner, 2003:17; Stuart, 2006:149; Pullman & Gross, 2004:570; Shaw & Ivens, 2002:9). A variety of research has been done concerning visitors' expectations and experiences and the methods applied were ECOSERVE (Khan, 2003; Said *et al.,* 2009), VERP (visitor experience and resource protection) (Meng, Tepanon & Uysal, 2008; Tsuar, Lin & Lin, 2008), and SERVQUAL

(service quality) (Said, Jaddil & Ayob, 2009; Akama & Kieti, 2003; Gonzalez, Comesana & Brea, 2007). However, research with the intention of determining the expectations of individual tourists at national parks and aspects leading to a memorable experience has not yet been done; for example friendly services at reception, quality food and service at restaurants and shops, educational and interpretation activities for visitors, improved leisure and hospitality facilities to name but a few. These aspects all have a direct influence on the memorable experience of visitors to national parks. The method of obtaining data directly from the tourist, indicating their individual needs, has also not yet been applied.

4.3   METHOD OF RESEARCH

A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. This section discusses the (i) questionnaire, (ii) the sampling method and survey, and (iii) the statistical analysis.

4.3.1 The Questionnaire

Based on researched done by Marais (2009), Appel (2010), and Erasmus (2011) a questionnaire was developed and divided into three main sections. Section A captured the demographic details of the tourist (home language, date of birth, age of accompanying children, marital status, country of residence, province of residence and level of education). Section B comprised all the data related to the economic impact tourists had on the park (number of people paid for, type of transport, number of times the park has been visited, length of stay, alternative destinations of choice and the overall expenditure at the KNP). The travel motives consisted of 22 items on a 5-point Likert scale measuring the importance of each item, 1 = not at all important, 2 = less important, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = very important and 5 = extremely important, with questions such as whether the tourists are wildcard members, if the tourist would recommend the park to others, and the initiation of their decision to visit the KNP. Furthermore, the expectations of the tourist and real experience were captured and are determined by measuring the importance of 62 variables on a 6-point Likert scale with 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = fair, 4 = good, 5 = excellent, and 6 = not applicable. However, the same variables were used to determine what the tourist considers as important critical success factors (CSFs) for a memorable experience with 1 = extremely important, 2 = very important, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = very important and 5 = extremely important.

4.3.2 Sampling method and survey

A destination-based survey was undertaken and the questionnaires were distributed at Berg and Dal, Satara, Skukuza and Lower Sabie rest camps in the KNP. The questionnaire was distributed to all overnight tourists in the various rest camps and only one questionnaire per chalet or tent was handed out. The fieldworkers moved around the camp and chalet (family) areas approaching the respondents and explained the aim and goal of the questionnaire. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed between 27 December 2010 and 4 January 2011 among the total population of the various rest camps at the time of the survey and only 436 questionnaires were usable in the survey. According to statistics provided by SANParks, there were 384 249 (N) overnight tourists to the KNP in the year 2009 (Stevens, 2010). Furthermore, Du Plessis, Saayman and Erasmus (2010:9) stated that the average travelling group of tourists to the KNP was 3.4 persons. The total population (N) was divided by 3.4 and this result in 112 132 groups of tourists (N). The total number of completed questionnaires sufficient for this study was 399 (Israel, 2009:3). The total number of questionnaires completed during the survey was 436, which makes this number of questionnaires sufficient.

4.3.3 Statistical analysis

The data was captured in Microsoft© Excel© and analysed in SPSS (SPSS, 2007). Firstly, a principal axis factor analysis was performed to determine visitors' real experience at the park with regard to certain aspects in the park - in other words, the way that visitors evaluated the service and experienced aspects at the park. By making use of Oblimin rotation with Kaiser Normalisation on 62 variables, 12 factors relating to the tourists' real experience were determined. These variables were taken from previous research done by Appel (2010); Erasmus (2011); Khan (2003); De Witt (2006); Van der Westhuizen (2003); Kruger (2006) and Marais (2009) and was adapted for this study as well as other park specific factors were identified. This technique explains the variance-covariance structure of a set of variables through a few linear combinations of these variables. Determining whether the covariance matrix was suitable for a factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was used. In addition, all variables with a factor loading above 0.3 were considered as contributing to a factor, and all loading lower than 0.3 as not correlating significantly with this factor (Steyn, 2000). Factors that were cross-loaded and with a factor loading greater than 0.3 was categorised where mostly applicable. Determining the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of each factor estimated the internal consistency. All factors with a reliability

coefficient greater than 0.6 were considered acceptable. The average inter-item correlation was also computed as another measure of reliability. These, according to Clark and Watson (1995) should be between 0.15 and 0.55. Secondly, the 62 variables were measured twice in the survey to determine which of the factors tourists rate as critical for a memorable experience and how they experienced each aspect during their stay at the park. The factor loadings were used to determine whether the expectations of tourists at the KNP were met by their real experiences. A factor is comprised of variables with more or less the same attributes which can be improved on if put together and considered as a group. This makes it easier for management of the KNP to determine the aspects that tourists rate as important for a memorable visitor experience. To determine the scores of each factor, the scores are placed into various measures of equations and this is known as a weighted score. If, however, different measurement scores were used, the factor scores cannot be compared. The averages were determined by making n the number of items in each factor, and x the item score $1 \leq x \geq 5$ (Field, 2005:625). The statements with regard to tourists' expectations concerning service delivery were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = extremely important, 2 = very important, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = less important, and 5 = not at all important). The question concerning the real experience at the park was measured on a 6-point Likert scale where 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = fair, 4 = good, 5 = excellent and 6 = not applicable. For the purpose of this study, the real experience Likert-scale was converted to a five-point scale so that it is the same as the tourist expectations, by eliminating the sixth scale that is not applicable.

4.4   RESULTS

This section provides an overview and discusses the results of the twelve most important factors that assist park management in fulfilling the expectations of the tourist and thus offering a memorable experience.

4.4.1 Results from the Factor Analysis: Visitors' real experience at the KNP

Twelve factors were identified and labelled according to similar characteristics with the use of the pattern matrix principal axis factor analysis and Oblimin rotation with the Kaiser Normalisation. These factors accounted for 65% of the total variance. The reliability coefficients ranged from 0.92 the highest to 0.61 as the lowest. The inter-item correlation coefficients were between the values of 0.69 and 0.28 indicating that there was internal consistency. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy of

0.91 also indicated that patterns of correlation are relatively compact and yield distinct and reliable factors (Field, 2005:649). Bartlett's test of sphericity also reached statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2007:197).

Twelve factors were identified as shown in Table 4.1. The factors are: *General management, Education activities. Accommodation facilities, Green management, Information provided, Layout of the park, Wildlife, Facilities in the park, Food and Beverage management, Interpretive activities, Bookings and General services, and Outdoor activities.* The factor with the highest mean factor value was *Wildlife* (4.44) followed by *Accommodation facilities* (4.20) and the lowest mean factor value was *Food and Beverage management* (3.52)*.*

Table 4.1: Expectations versus experience at the KNP

	Real tourist experience		Tourist expectations				
Factor 1: General Management	**Factor Loading**	**Variable Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Variable Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
High quality service at reception	0.88	4	0.78	1	**0.92**	**0.6**	**3.67**
Friendly and helpful staff	0.82	4	0.72	1			
Fast and efficient service delivery at reception	0.79	4	0.76	1			
Well-trained and informed staff	0.73	4	0.71	1			
Adequate number of staff available	0.61	4	0.57	2			
Professional appearance of staff	0.53	4	0.70	2			
Information regarding services provided in the rest camps, for example laundry services, information centres, game drives, etc.	0.44	3	0.54	2			
Quality and variety of accommodation	0.30	4	0.40	2			
Total percentage experience	**35%**						
Total percentage expectations			**24%**				

Factor 2:Educational Activities	Factor Loading	Mean value	Factor Loading	Mean value	Reliability Coefficient	Average Inter-item correlation	Factor mean value
Slideshows, informative sessions and specialist talks	0.89	4	0.77	3	**0.88**	**0.64**	**3.87**
Geological displays	0.80	4	0.76	3			
Auditorium with nature videos	0.72	4	0.69	3			
Information on the park history	0.42	4	0.56	2			
Total percentage experience		33%					
Total percentage expectations				65%			
Factor 3: Accommodation Facilities	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
Adequate cutlery and cooking utensils supplied in chalets	0.81	4	0.57	2	**0.8**	**0.37**	**4.19**
Quality linen in the chalets	0.76	4	0.44	2			
Television and radio in chalets	0.53	5	0.7	4			
Accessible facilities for disabled people	0.44	4	0.47	2			
The provision of showers only in chalets and in ablution facilities	0.42	4	0.45	3			
That the outdoor and indoor décor reflect local influences	0.32	4	0.22	3			
Internet access	0.29	4	0.62	4			

Total percentage experience	31%						

Total percentage expectations				59%			

Factor 4: Green Management	Factor Loading	Mean value	Factor Loading	Mean value	Reliability Coefficient	Average Inter-item correlation	Factor mean value
Use of recycled material	0.86	4	0.79	2	**0.88**	**0.52**	**3.82**
Solar panels to save energy	0.83	4	0.69	2			
Low-flow showerheads and toilets	0.66	4	0.59	2			
Energy-saving light bulbs in accommodation units	0.62	4	0.73	2			
The use of non-toxic cleaners and sanitizers throughout the park	0.44	4	0.71	2			
A linen (both towels and sheets) reuse programme in accommodation facilities	0.43	4	0.50	2			
Implementing effective recycling methods	0.40	4	0.56	2			
Total percentage experience		33%					
Total percentage expectations				33%			

Factor 5:Information Provided	Factor Loading	Mean value	Factor Loading	Mean value	Reliability Coefficient	Average Inter-item correlation	Factor mean value
Availability of route maps	0.84	4	0.63	2	**0.89**	**0.58**	**4.17**
Proper layout of rest camps and routes	0.75	4	0.78	2			

	Factor Loading	Mean value	Factor Loading	Mean value	Reliability Coefficient	Average Inter-item correlation	Factor mean value
Proper layout of the park	0.74	4	0.78	2			
Accessibility of the park	0.68	4	0.62	2			
Clear signage to rest camps and picnic areas	0.61	4	0.57	2			
Enough trees at the chalets and/or camping area	0.28	4	0.35	2			
Total percentage experience	33%						
Total percentage expectations			33%				
Factor 6: Layout of the Park	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
Sufficient and safe lookout points in the park	0.66	4	0.42	2	**0.81**	**0.35**	**3.68**
Strategically placed bird hides in the park	0.50	4	0.42	2			
Identification of trees, e.g. name plates or information boards	0.49	4	0.38	2			
Information regarding the fauna/flora in the park	0.41	4	0.46	2			
Adequate picnic areas in the park	0.31	4	0.37	2			
Enforcing park rules and regulations, for example speed limits	0.29	4	0.34	2			

Maintenance of roads/gravel roads	0.29	4	0.52	2			
Total percentage experience		**33%**					
Total percentage expectations				**33%**			
Factor 7: Wildlife	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
Variety of wildlife and birdlife	0.90	5	0.52	2	**0.82**	**0.69**	**4.44**
Visibility of wildlife and birdlife in the park	0.77	4	0.66	2			
Total percentage experience		**24%**					
Total percentage expectations				**33%**			
Factor 8: Facilities at the Park	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
Adequate and hygienic ablution facilities at the camping area	0.44	4	0.37	2	**0.61**	**0.28**	**3.85**
The provision of both bath and a shower	0.40	4	0.34	3			
High standards of maintenance of facilities	0.36	3	0.36	2			
Laundry services at the rest camps	0.29	4		3			
Total percentage experience	**37%**						

Total percentage expectations				23%			

Factor 9: Food and Beverage Management	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
Variety of restaurants in the park	0.66	4	0.65	2	**0.77**	**0.52**	**3.52**
Quality food at eating areas or restaurants	0.61	4	0.53	2			
Affordable prices at restaurants	0.54	3	0.61	2			

Total percentage experience		38%					
Total percentage expectations				33%			

Factor 10: Interpretive Activities	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
Adequate and variety of activities for children	0.78	4	0.59	3	**0.83**	**0.42**	**4.08**
Variety of activities	0.68	4	0.84	3			
Play areas for children	0.60	4	0.46	3			
Educational talks and games for children	0.46	4	0.48	3			
Offering a variety of products	0.41	4	0.77	3			
Interpretive centres	0.31	4	0.42	3			
Information centres in specific rest camps, for example Skukuza and Satara	0.31	4	0.35	2			

Total percentage experience		33%					
Total percentage expectations				49%			
Factor 11: Bookings and General Services	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
Effective bookings on the website for accommodation and/or other activities	0.80	4	0.72	2	**0.88**	**0.65**	**3.95**
User-friendly park website	0.68	4	0.66	2			
Adequate information available about the park	0.56	4	0.65	2			
Effective marketing of Wild Card benefits	0.27	3	0.42	2			
Total percentage experience		35%					
Total percentage expectations				33%			
Factor 12: Outdoor Activities	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Factor Loading**	**Mean value**	**Reliability Coefficient**	**Average Inter-item correlation**	**Factor mean value**
Affordable game drives	0.44	4	0.52	2	**0.62**	**0.36**	**3.91**
Interactive field guides on game drives and guided walks	0.37	4	0.64	2			
Swimming pools at rest camps	0.37	4	0.36	2			
Total percentage experience		33%					
Total percentage expectations				33%			

4.4.2 Differences between visitor expectations and experiences at the KNP

To determine whether there are gaps between visitors' real experience and their expectations, the factor values were deducted from each other and calculated with n being the number of items to each factor, and x the item score $1 \leq x \geq 5$. As shown in Table 4.1, certain factors exceeded visitors expectations while others were either not exceeded or were equal to visitors' expectations.

The following factors exceeded (+) the expectations of the tourists at the KNP:

- **General management:** The expectations that tourists had towards *general management* were exceeded by 11%.
- **Facilities in the park:** The expectations were exceeded by 14%.
- **Food and Beverage management:** The expectations of the tourists were exceeded by 5%.
- **Bookings and General services:** The expectations of tourists were exceeded by 2%.

The following factors did not fulfil (-) the expectations of the tourists at the KNP:

- **Educational activities:** The expectations that tourist had towards learning something exceeded the actual experience with 32%.
- **Accommodation facilities:** Tourists expectations towards accommodation facilities were also exceeded by their experience with 28%.
- **Interpretation activities:** The expectations that tourist had towards interpretation activities exceeded their real experiences with 16%.
- **Wildlife:** Only a small difference of 9% was shown in expectations that were not met.

The following factors did not exceed or disappoint visitors (=):

- **Green management**
- **Information provided**
- **Layout of the park**
- **Outdoor activities**

4.5   FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The research has the following findings and implications: Firstly, this study identified twelve factors of which park management needs to be aware that determine the real experience of the tourist relative to the tourists' expectations. These factors were G*eneral management, Educational activities, Accommodation facilities, Green management, Information provided, Layout of the park, Wildlife, Facilities in the park, Food and Beverage management, Interpretation activities, Bookings and General services,* and *Outdoor activities*. Most of these aspects are internal, which implies that management has control over them. The results therefore support research by Marais and Saayman (2011:161) and Van Riper and White (2007:295) that proves that management can create a memorable experience.

Secondly, there have been even distributions towards the twelve factors determining the expectations of tourists to national parks. Of the twelve factors, three groups of four factors each have either been exceeded, not fulfilled or equal. The four factors exceeding visitors' expectations were *General management* (11%), *Facilities in the park* (14%), *Food and Beverage management* (5%) and *Bookings and General services* (2%). Factors that were loaded as equal to one another were *Green management, Information provided, Layout of the park and Outdoor activities.* Factors that need to be improved, which did not exceed the expectations of the tourist were *Educational activities* (32%), *Accommodation facilities* (28%), *Interpretation activities* (16%) and *Wildlife* (9%). These factors show management where the gaps are for expectations to be exceeded and where these can be improved on.

Thirdly, *Education activities* had the biggest difference between expectations and experiences indicating that wildlife education at national parks is far more necessary than management seems to believe. However, interpretation goes hand in hand with education and, through interactive activities in rest camps, hiking trails, or game drives, tourists will be part of the learning experience that forms one of the key components of nature-based tourism. Management will be able to provide information for the tourists resulting in tourists being more responsible towards the natural environment. Education also forms part of the internal aspects which can be managed in such a way as to increase the memorable tourist experience. However, for park personnel to educate the tourist, management must ensure that the personnel are also well educated and aware of the components that will lead to a memorable experience (Reynolds & Braithwaite,

2001:37; Du Plessis, 2010:11). Activities such as photography, animal spotting, making products out of recyclable materials within the park, theatre works that adults and children can watch in the evening and interactive games can also be implemented to exceed visitors' expectations of educational activities in the park.

Fourthly, *Accommodation facilities* appear as the second highest difference. According to Page (2007:227) high levels of tourist satisfaction derive from the tourist to staff interaction and this may have an effect on the image and experience of the tourist whilst staying over at the park. Furthermore, the hospitality manager must have a clear understanding of what the tourist expects of the accommodation and facilities to ensure a memorable experience (Page, 2007:228). Accommodation needs to be developed in accordance with the environment and should provide a unique experience that other competitors do not offer (Bowen & Santos, 2006:48). Therefore the KNP management needs to upgrade and revamp the accommodation facilities so that they reflect the local culture and environment. Park management must ensure that the facilities are equipped with the right utensils and gear that will satisfy the expectations of the tourist offering a unique experience.

Fifthly, *Wildlife* is a factor that management cannot control. However, educating the tourist will lead to the improvement of the expectations of *Wildlife.* Management cannot control the movement of the animals in the park. However, they can educate the tourist about habitats, how to spot animals, why certain animals are in certain areas within the park, and why the animals move around within the park. Although this is a difficult aspect to control, park management can also make use of a park radio station which assists in the spotting of animals in the park as well as games and interesting facts about animals in the park. Rest camps can also develop spotting boards that are managed and controlled by the duty officer. These boards indicates where tourist or park personnel have last seen certain animals and assist the visitor in easily spotting these animals when going on a game drive.

Lastly, the additional park amenities such as *Green Management, Information provided, Layout of the park* and *Outdoor activities* are equal to the expectations of the tourist, however the expectations are very low and management may improve on these amenities so that the expectations can be exceeded. With the general management aspects that have exceeded the expectations of the tourist, it is clear that management

is managing the park correctly. However, if management can improve on the level by which the expectations are exceeded, it may lead to higher levels of exceeded expectations within the education and interpretation services at the park as well as the additional amenities. An educated tourist is more likely to be a responsible tourist. The results also indicate that management has improved with regard to the expectations of tourists. However, as they improve on their service and product delivery, the tourist experience will intensify, and there is always room for improvement. Park management may implement an evaluation plan that constantly determines the expectations and real experiences of tourists to the KNP, and therefore stay up to date with the trends of what tourists expect from a national park. Figure 4.1 shows clearly the six steps that KNP management can implement to maximise the memorable experience of tourists.

4.6   CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to determine the expectations of tourists and whether or not their expectations were met and whether they had a memorable experience at the KNP. Based on the results, it is clear that KNP management needs to know and understand the expectations of tourists visiting the KNP and so ensure that they have a memorable experience. The twelve factors that have been identified indicated that only four factors have not met the expectations of tourists. These were *Educational activities, Accommodation facilities, Interpretation activities* and *Wildlife.* KNP management must not only focus on these factors that have low ratings, they must try to exceed expectations in the factors that have an even score. It is important that management must not lose its focus on the factors that have exceeded the expectations of tourists. With the ever-changing environment, management must keep up with the latest trends and try to take a step higher in exceeding the expectations of the last mentioned factors.

This research provides the following valuable contributions: (i) this research has been done for the first time in a national park in South Africa and, from a methodology point of view, this innovative approach of determining tourists' expectations for a national park was a first to be applied to visitors at a national park or nature-based destination. Furthermore, this research has been done from a demand side and has determined the important aspects for the individual visiting the park to satisfy their needs. Previous research has mostly been done from a supply side, and management does not have an understanding of the expectations of tourists. What makes this research significant for

the tourist is giving management the factors that tourists feel will lead to a memorable experience; (ii) this research provides valuable insights into the management of national parks with the knowledge of the tourists' expectations, and (iii) park management can see what and where they need to improve and keep improving on the factors that are fulfilling the expectations. Based on the results of this research, it is recommended that future research focuses on the expectations of managers regarding the expectations of the tourist (a supply side analysis). Gaps between what management think is important for a memorable visitor experience compared to that of the visitor expectations can be then identified. This study may assist management to better streamline their goals and objectives to meet the needs of the visitors.

C h a p t e r

5

CONCLUSIONS AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains the recommendations and future references Kruger National Park (KNP) management can make use to increase the visitors' experience at the park, and to understand what needs to be done to fulfil their expectations.

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to determine the critical success factors (CSFs) in managing the visitor experience at the KNP. The following objectives were identified in Chapter 1.

- The first objective was to determine the key areas in park management by means of a literature review. This objective was achieved in Chapters 1 and 2. In Chapter 1 the need for management to improve the critical success factors at the Kruger National Park was determined so that a memorable visitor experience can be achieved. Chapter 2 discussed the management aspects pertaining to national parks. Evaluation is an important aspect when managing the visitors' experience at a national park and, through implementation management can achieve great success in offering a memorable visitor experience.

- The second objective was to determine the important management aspects that park management should use to create a memorable visitor experience. This objective was achieved by means of a literature review in Chapter 2 and 3.

- The third objective was to draw a comparison between the expectations and experiences of the critical success factors at the Kruger National Park, by making use of an empirical survey at the Kruger National Park. Objective 3 was achieved in Chapter 3 and 4. The nine critical success factors that visitors to the Kruger National Park regard as important for a memorable experience were identified in Chapter 3. The results of Chapter 4 indicated the gaps that have been identified between the expectations and experiences of visitors to the Kruger National Park. The results can assist management to improve on the services and products offered in the park.

- The fourth and final objective was to draw conclusions and make recommendations for the management of national parks with regard to the real visitor experiences at a national park and the expectations of visitors to a national park in terms of a memorable visitor experience.

The aim of this chapter is to draw conclusions and make recommendations with regard to managing the visitor experience at the KNP as well as to identify future research opportunities.

5.2   CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions will be discussed with regard to the literature review and the survey as reported in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

5.2.1 Conclusions from the Literature Study

- There is a growth in the number of visitors visiting national parks worldwide which are prestige tourism attractions and play host to a variety of activities, attributes and sometimes historical assets (c.f. 1.1. & 2.1).

- Established in 1926, the KNP is one of the most renowned national parks in the world and is managed by SANParks together with 22 other national parks in South Africa (c.f. 3.1. & 4.1).

- However, there is stiff competition in South Africa with regards to national parks (22 parks), provincial parks (171 parks and game reserves) and privately owned game farms (7 000) which all offer the same products and services (c.f. 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, & 4.2).

- Therefore, to be competitive, management of the KNP must adapt to the expectations of visitors and provide a memorable experience through the fulfilment of expectations that will ensure positive word-of-mouth recommendations, competitive advantage, increased revenue, personification of the brand, return visits, loyalty by the visitor and, most important of all, sustainability of the park (c.f.1.1., 3.1., 4.1. & 4.2).

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	Aspects of park management:	
Ecotourism Management	Accommodation facilities Well-trained and informed staff User friendly website Quality and variety rest camps Restaurants	Conservation Management

Aspects of ecotourism management:
Educational activities
Interpretive facilities
Recreational facilities and activities

Aspects of conservation management:
Green management
Wildlife and birdlife
Geological displays

Critical Success Factors

Constant Evaluation of Expectations ◀── **Memorable Experience**

Figure 5.1: Managing a memorable experience at national parks
Source: Author's own figure based on the literature review

- Figure 5.1 is a conceptual framework of how national parks, especially the KNP, can manage the visitor experience. All of these aspects have been thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2.

- The first step that park management needs to take is to determine the expectations of visitors to the KNP (c.f. 2.3.1).

- However, it is difficult to determine the expectations of visitors and how often and when these expectations change. There are certain aspects that are important

for a memorable visitor experience and can only be identified through the implementation of an evaluation process (c.f. 1.2., 2.5.1. & 4.2).

- It is therefore crucial that park management understands the difference between the visitor expectations and what management thinks the visitor expectations are because it has great influence on the visitor experience (c.f.3.1. & 4.1).

- A national park consists of different aspects that influence the visitor experience. These aspects need to be well managed and include accommodation, facilities, children activities, catering, transport, educational and interpretation activities and facilities, and wildlife viewing (c.f. 2.2. & 4.1).

- The three management categories, park management, conservation management and ecotourism management that need to be integrated for park management to manage the KNP effectively so that the visitor has a memorable experience.

- Park management forms the core of the organisation and is responsible for pointing the organisation in the right direction which is sustainability, profitability and loyal visitors. However, park management must work together with the other two categories, ecotourism management and conservation management.

- Park management can determine whether management have reached high or low levels of visitor satisfaction. Through the measuring of the expectations and the real experiences, management can compare the expectations with the real experiences. To achieve visitors' satisfaction, management needs to know the visitors' expectations, perceptions and experiences of the national park or destination (c.f.1.2 & 2.5.1).

- The above-mentioned aspects are all internal aspects that management of the KNP can influence that can lead to a memorable experience (c.f. 3.1., 4.1. & 4.2).

- Ecotourism management is responsible for educating the visitor on ecotourism and the impact that visitors have on the environment. However, national parks can supply activities that will ensure an economic contribution for the park to conserve the environment and this needs to be managed in a sustainable manner (c.f.2.3.2).

- Conservation management focuses on educating visitors about the importance of conserving the natural environment and the measures that can be taken to

improve conservation such as green management, conservation of geological displays and protection of wildlife and birdlife (c.f. 2.3.2).

- Aspects leading to a memorable experience (which can be grouped under each of the three park management categories) include easy access, management of the visitor in the park, quality of the activities, facilities, services and products offered, conservation of the environment, monitoring of accommodation facilities, and interpretation and education of the visitor and personnel (c.f. 2.3 & 3.2). These factors or aspects can also be referred to as key management areas or critical success factors (CSF's).

- CSFs are identified to assist management to achieve the organisation's ultimate goals and objectives through managing the factors that are seen by visitors as important for a memorable visitor experience (c.f. 1.2, 1.6.3, & 3.1).

- By identifying the CSFs, the KNP can be managed in a more sustainable, effective and efficient manner, bringing high levels of visitor satisfaction and loyalty supporting the fact that each tourism industry is different and unique. CSFs may have an immense impact on the effectiveness, efficiency, and viability of the KNP and its programmes and activities that are available to the visitors (c.f.3.1., 3.2 & 2.4).

- However management also needs to ensure that the employees of the KNP are aware of the CSFs and must strive to exceed the needs of the visitor and, to do that, they need to provide services and products that will satisfy the expectations of visitors and offer a memorable experience for visitor to the KNP (c.f.1.2., 2.4. & 2.5.1).

- Therefore management must understand the expectations of the visitor and that can only be done through the implementation of a constant evaluation process. There are six steps that management needs to follow when implementing the evaluation model. The visitors have initial expectations towards a certain destination (step 1) and this leads to visit (step 2). The visitor evaluates (step 3) the destination services and products which determines whether he/she has had a memorable experience, (Step 4). Satisfaction (Step 5) occurs if the visitor had a positive memorable experience and management needs then to implement and control (Step 6) these factors that satisfy the expectations of the visitor. This is a continuous process that management needs to carry out ensuring that visitors receive memorable experiences (c.f.4.2).

- Implementing an evaluation process and by identifying the CSFs, management may ensure that the number of visitors visiting the KNP is sustained and visitor loyalty is enhanced, leading to high competitive advantage and increased revenue (c.f.4.2).

5.2.2 Conclusions with regard to the surveys

In Article 1, chapter 3 a factor analysis was performed to determine the nine CSFs that are important for offering a unique memorable experience for the visitor. The results revealed the following nine factors:

- *General management*
- *Wildlife experience*
- *Facilities*
- *Green management*
- *Leisure and hospitality management*
- *Interpretations*
- *Variety activities*
- *Accommodation facilities*
- *Luxuries*

The factors identified are unique CSFs for managing the visitor experience at nature-based destinations such as national parks and are very important for a memorable visitor experience. *General management* was the most important factor (1.61) followed by *Wildlife experience* (1.67) which is a unique factor to national parks. *Facilities* within the KNP are third highest (1.83) followed by *Green management* (1.97) which indicate that national parks need to focus on environmentally friendly methods. Furthermore the factors that were rated lower by the visitor were *Leisure and hospitality management* (2.00), *Interpretation* (2.54), *Variety activities* (2.86), *Accommodation facilities* (3.38), and *Luxuries* (3.87). These factors are all critical to the management of a national park such as the KNP and if implemented by management and correctly managed, will improve the experiences of visitors to the KNP. Based on these results, KNP management can implement these factors as part of their management plan, ensuring that the aspects important to the visitors are improved for future visits. This will increase the future levels of visitor satisfaction and their experiences at the KNP. Furthermore,

park management needs to be more active in the enforcement of park rules and regulations as well as improving on the strategies for a greener park.

In Article 2, the level of visitors' expectations were investigated versus the visitors' real experiences at the KNP. A factor analysis was performed and each of the factors was given a loading that was used to deduct the experiences for the expectations which indicated the gaps that there are within management. Visitors at the park evaluated the services and products that they have experienced and whether park management has fulfilled their expectations. As shown in Table 5.1, the results indicate that there were twelve factors that management must attend to.

Table 5.1: Factors influencing the visitor expectations

Factors	Expectations percentage	Experience percentage	Difference between expectations and experience
General Management	24%	35%	+11%
Facilities in the park	23%	37%	+14%
Food and beverage management	33%	38%	+5%
Bookings and general services	33%	35%	+2%
Green management	33%	33%	=
Information provided	33%	33%	=
Layout of the park	33%	33%	=
Outdoor activities	33%	33%	=
Educational activities	65%	33%	-32%
Accommodation facilities	59%	31%	-28%
Interpretation activities	49%	33%	-16%
Wildlife	33%	24%	-9%

These twelve factors were equally divided into three groups of expectations that have been exceeded, not exceeded and equal towards experiences (see Table 5.1).

- Factors exceeding the visitor expectations were: *General management, Facilities in the park, Food and beverage management, and Bookings and general services.*

- Factors that were below the expectations of the visitor and need the most attention from management were: *Educational activities, Accommodation facilities, Interpretation activates, and Wildlife.*

- Factors that have neither exceeded nor disappointed the expectations of the visitor were: *Green management, Information provided, Layout of the park, and Outdoor activities.*

All the management aspects were grouped together and exceeded the expectations of the visitor visiting the KNP. However the educational and interpretative activities were below the expectations of the visitor and indicate the gaps that management needs to focus on in the future. The last four factors grouped together were all listed as additional park amenities and were rated as equal with expectations and experiences; however there is still room for improvement.

Although it is not a requirement for a masters' dissertation, the conceptual framework designed in Chapter 2 can be implemented by the management of the KNP to create a satisfactory and memorable visitor experience. Figure 5.2 indicates that the KNP needs to make use of the three park management structures and integrate these structures to determine the expectations of the visitors to the park. These structures have their own unique set of variables and management aspects that influence the visitors' experience at the KNP and these are the variables that were measured in the questionnaire. It is therefore important to determine what aspect influences the visitors' memorable experience when visiting the Kruger National Park. This study identified nine CSFs that management can make use of and implement to ensure a memorable visitor experience is delivered. However, it is crucial for management to understand that implementation of CSFs can only be successful if there is a constant process of evaluation taking place. The results also show that, through the process of evaluation, there are certain aspects that may exceed, not exceed, or be equal towards the expectations of the visitors to the KNP. Through continuous evaluation of the expectations versus the real experiences of visitors to the KNP, management can determine where the gaps are in providing a memorable visitor experience therefore exceeding the expectations of the visitors.

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Ecotourism Management **General Management** **Conservation Management**

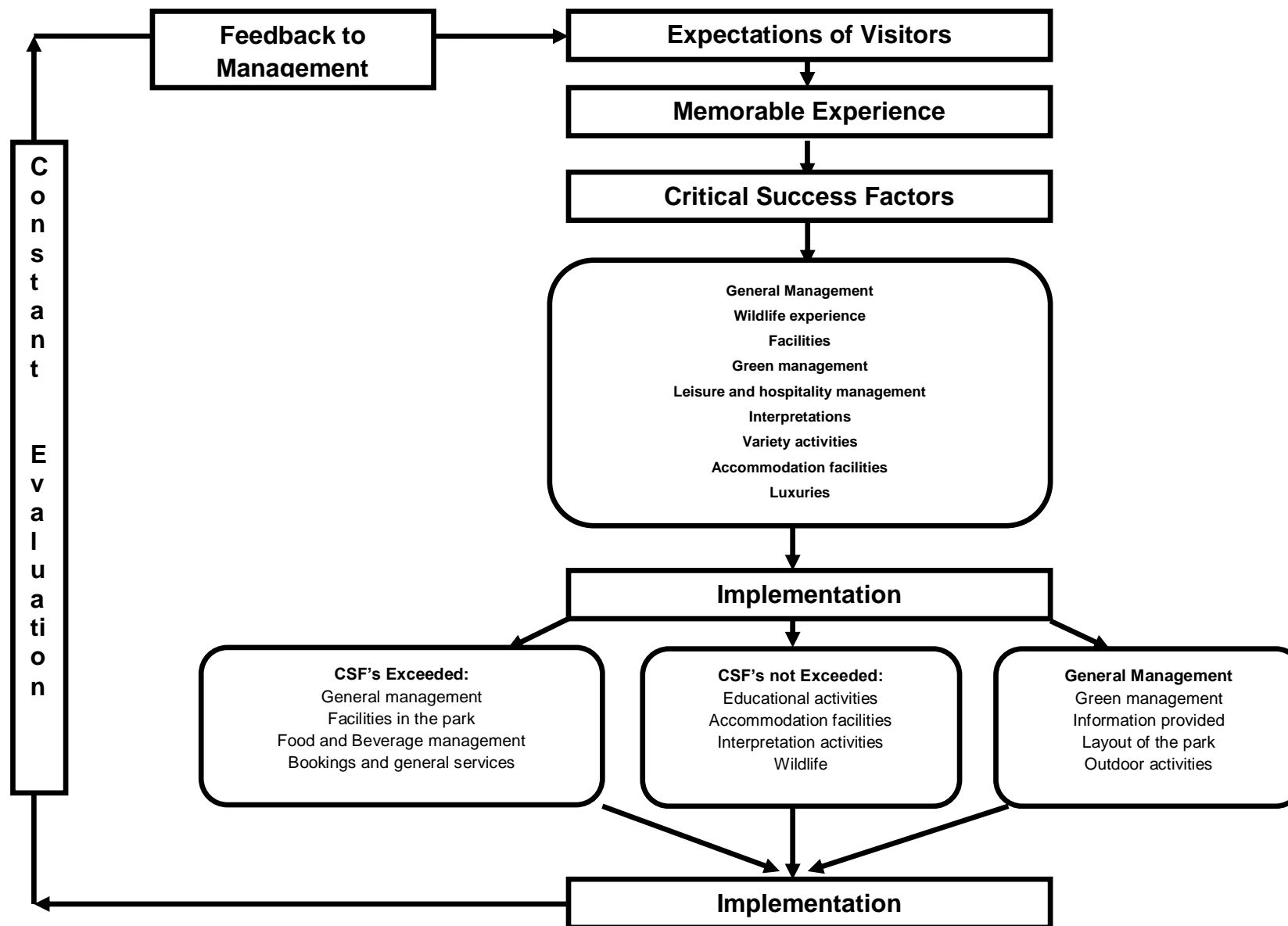| Ecotourism Management	General Management	Conservation Management
Sufficient and safe lookout points in the park	High quality service at reception	Maintenance of roads/gravel roads
Strategically placed bird hides in the park	Proper layout of the park	Variety wildlife and birdlife
High standards of maintenance of facilities	Proper layout of rest camps and routes	Enforcing park rules and regulations, for example speed limits
Play areas for children	Fast and efficient service delivery at reception	Visibility of wildlife and birdlife in the park
Adequate picnic areas in the park	Friendly and helpful staff	Affordable game drives
Swimming pools at rest camps	Effective bookings on the website for accommodation and/or other activities	Interactive field guides on game drives and guided walks
Information regarding the park history	Well-trained and informed staff who can handle any queries concerning the rest camp or park	Use of recycled material
Educational talks and games for children	Professional appearance of staff	Energy-saving light bulbs in accommodation units
Information regarding the fauna/flora in the park	User-friendly park website	The use of non-toxic cleaners and sanitizers throughout the park
Interpretive centres	Adequate information available about the park	Solar panels to save energy
Identification of trees, e.g. name plates or information boards	Availability of route maps	Low-flow showerheads and toilets
Information centre in specific rest camps, for example Skukuza and Satara	Accessibility of the park	Implementing effective recycling methods
Auditorium with nature videos	Adequate number of staff members available	A linen (both towels and sheets) reuse programme in accommodation units
Slideshows, informative sessions and specialist talks	Clear directions to rest camps and picnic areas	
Geological displays	Information regarding services provided in the rest camps, for example laundry services, information centres, game drives, etc.	
Variety activities	Variety of restaurants in the park	
Offering a variety of products	Affordable prices at restaurants	
Adequate and variety of activities for children	Quality of food at eating areas or restaurants	
	Adequate cutlery and cooking utensils supplied in chalets	
	Accessible facilities for disabled people	
	The provision of only showers in chalets and in ablution facilities	
	Quality linen in the chalets	
	Adequate and hygienic ablution facilities at the camping area	
	The provision of both bath and a shower	
	That the outdoor and indoor décor reflect local influence	
	Laundry services at the rest camps	
	Television and radio in chalets	
	Internet access	
	Effective marketing of Wild Card benefits	
	Quality and variety in accommodation	

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Figure 5.2: Conceptual framework for managers at the Kruger National Park
Source: Authors own figure based on the results

5.2.3 Conclusions with regard to the survey

From a methodology point of view, the survey is the first to determine the individuals' expectations and experiences in this context. With regard to the questionnaire there were 62 variables that were measured to determine the factors that are critical for delivering a memorable visitor experience and how the visitors' expectations were met during their stay at the park. The mean values of each factor were taken from both analyses and weighed up against one another determining the gaps between expectations and experiences. The percentages of the expectations and the real experiences were deducted from one another so that management of the park can see where the gaps are and what factors are in need of more attention to exceed the expectations of the visitor thus leading to a memorable experience. The survey and measuring instrument was therefore very successful and can be used for future research at national parks.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PARK MANAGEMENT

Based on the conclusions discussed above and the results of the two articles, recommendations can be made under three categories of park management, general management, ecotourism management and conservation management. Integration of these management structures can assist park management in supplying a memorable experience and satisfying the needs of visitors to a national park.

The following recommendations are made:

General management

- Park managers need to make use of the identification of CSFs within the park and integrate these CSFs into the main management plan and develop strategic goals and objectives to improve these CSFs. This will increase the level of visitor experience at the KNP.

- General management can influence the way in which park personnel attend to the needs and wants of the visitors. General management must set an example as to how personnel should deliver quality services and products to the visitors.

- General management also needs to ensure that the park personnel are well trained and educated with the right qualifications and skills that will assist the park in improving on the CSFs and managing them in such a way that the visitor has a memorable experience.

- General management must also attend to the gaps within the park management structures that influence the experiences of the visitors. If management improves on these gaps, the memorable experiences of visitors to national parks may increase.

- From a marketing point of view, park management must ensure that their website is user-friendly for the national and international visitor by supplying adequate information about the park and its amenities. Improvement on the marketing of activities and facilities within the park is also very important.

- Management must take note of the visitor expectations by implementing an evaluation process. This will ensure that management is aware of the expectations of visitors and can fulfil their expectations. This will then lead to satisfaction, memorable experiences, return visits, loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, increased income, and sustainability of the natural environment.

- Gaps that park managers need to improve on are education, accommodation facilities, interpretation and wildlife.

- Park management needs to ensure that continuous research is undertaken that will keep park management up to date with the trends of visitors to the KNP and their expectations when visiting a national park.

- Park management also needs to ensure that quality accommodation facilities are offered with a variety to choose from. Through constant evaluation of the park accommodation facilities and needs of visitors, park management will be able to upgrade the facilities accordingly.

- New linen, decor, utensils and cutlery in the chalets reflecting the local culture and environment may increase the visitors' experiences and exceed the expectations at the park.

- Park managers or front of house managers need to ensure that reception provides fast and efficient services and this can only be done through constant training of personnel.

- Park management needs to enforce stricter rules with regard to speeding, littering and noise pollution in the park for an improved visitor experience.

- Park management needs to develop more affordable activities for the visitor inside and outside the rest camps that educate the visitor.

- Educational activities can include the way to track animals, spotting of animals in dense habitat, habitat where species are to be found, identification of the

different species, dangerous animals, behaviour of animals in certain situations and overall, what to do when being attacked by an animal, photography, and making products from recycled materials. All these aspects will enrich the minds of the children and adults giving them a better perspective on wildlife and how to experience the best memories.

- Another form of education is to provide entertainment in the evenings such as star gazing, videos interpretive sessions and local community dancing and assisting in the making of arts or crafts with recyclable materials

- When educating visitors to national parks, the information needs to be easily interpreted and interpretation centres can assist in providing the correct information to the visitors.

- Day care centres can be opened during the holidays were parents can leave their children if going on a game drive or if they just want to rest. These centres can provide education activities for the children.

Conservation and Ecotourism Management

- Wildlife is a nature-based specific factor that influences the experience of visitors to national parks. However, the movement and behaviour of the animals within the park is difficult to manage because of the natural environment and the huge space in which they roam. Management should therefore train the field guides to be more interactive on game drives and hiking trails educating the visitors about the park, its animals and their behaviour.

- Park management must be more environmentally friendly and implement green management aspects in the park. The implementation of recycling bins at all the rest camps, picnic sites, bird hides and park entrances may improve the awareness of recycling and being more responsible towards the environment. With more products being recycled, national parks will be sustainable and be conserved for future generations.

- Visitors to the KNP must be educated before entering the park about recycling in the park and how it would affect the wildlife if recycling is not properly implemented. Recycling forms another part of conservation of the fauna and flora in the park.

- Education of the visitor with regards to wildlife, the park, plant species, local culture and the environment is a big gap that needs to be filled. An educated

visitor is a responsible visitor and that ensures the conservation and sustainability of the natural environment. A responsible visitor will try to make use of only recyclable materials, learn more about the park and its attributes, and support the local economy by purchasing only goods made locally. Park management needs to be more interactive with the local communities to provide the park with materials or products that can be used in the park.

- Park management can implement programmes at the local schools that will teach the children about conservation of the natural resources and protecting the wildlife of the country as well as about the economic benefits that arise from tourism. During school holidays, park management can develop programmes where the children clean up parts of the park and become part of the change in national parks that will offer the visitor a memorable experience.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- A supply analysis can be conducted determining what management thinks the expectations of visitor to the KNP are. This research can then be compared to the study done from the visitors' point of view, and a better understanding can be created as to why park management do not always supply the visitor with the products or services they want.

- Research needs to be done by taking the factors most important to the visitor and determining whether management thinks the same as the visitor with regard to the importance of these factors and, if not, why not, and the reasons for the difference.

- Research can also be done in conducting the same survey at other national parks, provincial parks, local parks and game farms in South Africa. This will show whether there is a difference in the aspects for managing the visitor experience at national parks. The factors can also be used in a comparative analysis indicating the difference between national parks and the influence of the park amenities as well as the layout, accommodation, products and services, wildlife and birdlife and educational and interpretational activities.

- The identification of CSFs within the tour operator sector can also be done. With the focus on over-landing tour operators travelling up into Africa for weeks and months with the same tourists. National and local tour operators can also be used to determine what the tourist feels is important for a memorable experience when making use of a tour operator.

5.5   LIMITATIONS TOWARDS THE STUDY

- The only limitation to the survey was the Liker-scale had two different measuring scales. Think it would be best to have both scales the same, to avoid confusion when completing the questionnaire.

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APPENDIX A: Structured Questionnaire used to obtain data

AFDELING A: SOSIO-DEMOGRAFIESE BESONDERHEDE
SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DETAIL

1. Huistaal? / *Home language?*

English	1
Afrikaans	2
Ander/*Other*(Spesifiseer/*Specify)*	3

2. In watter jaar is u gebore? / *In what year were you born?*　　　　**19**

3.1. Vergesel u kinders u na die Park? /
Are you children accompanying you to the Park?

	Ja / *Yes*		1
	Nee / *No*		2

3.2. Indien ja (3.1) dui asb die ouderdom(me) aan./ *If yes (3.1), please indicate the age(s).*

1ste kind / *1st child*	
2de kind /*2nd child*	
3de kind / *3rd child*	
4de kind *l 4th child*	

4. Huwelikstatus? / *Marital status*?

Getroud / *Married*	1
Ongetroud / *Not married*	2
Geskei / *Divorced*	3
Wewenaar, weduwee / *Widow/er*	4
Woon saam / *Living together*	5

5. Land van herkoms (Indien buite RSA)?/

Country of residence (If outside RSA)?

6. In watter provinsie is u woonagtig?/
In which province do you live?

Gauteng	1
KwaZulu-Natal	2
Oos-Kaap / *Eastern Cape*	3
Wes-Kaap / *Western Cape*	4
Noord-Kaap / *Northern Cape*	5
Limpopo	6
Mpumalanga	7
Vrystaat / *Free State*	8
Noordwes / *North West*	9

7. Dui asseblief u hoogste kwalifikasie aan./
Please indicate your highest level of education.

Geen skool / *No school*	1
Matriek / *Matric*	2
Diploma, graad / *Diploma, degree*	3
Nagraads / *Post-graduate*	4
Professioneel / *Professional*	5
Ander, spesifiseer / *Other, specify*	6

AFDELING B: EKONOMIESE IMPAK
SECTION B: ECONOMIC IMPACT

1. **Insluitend u self,** vir hoeveel persone **betaal** u in u toergroep?/
Including yourself, how many people are you paying for in your travelling group?

2. Met watter tipe vervoer reis u na die Park?/   **4x4** | 1 |

Which mode of transport do you use to travel to the Park?

Kombi	2
Rekreasie voertuig / *Leisure vehicle*	3
Sedan	4
2x4/Bakkie	5
Ander (spesifiseer) / *Other (specify)*	6

3. **Insluitende hierdie keer,** hoeveel keer het u Nasionale Parke oor die afgelope jaar besoek? /
How many times have you visited National Parks over the past year (including this one)?

Aantal / *Number*

4. Hoeveel **nagte** bly u in dié Park? / *How many nights are you staying at thís Park?*

Aantal / *Number*

5. Indien u nie die Park sou kon besoek nie, watter ander alternatiewe bestemmings en attraksies sou u oorweeg het?/ *If you could not visit the Park, which other alternative destinations and attractions would you have considered?*

_____

_____

6. Hoeveel het u tydens u besoek aan die volgende bestee? / *How much did you spend during your visit to the Park on the following?*

1. Ingangs- en bewaringsfooi / *Entrance and conservation fee*	R
2. Akkommodasie / *Accommodation*	R
3. Restourante / *Restaurants*	R

4. Kos / **Food**	R
5. Drinkgoed / **Beverages**	R
6. Klere en skoene / **Clothes and footwear**	R
7. Vervoer na en by die Park / **Transport to and at the Park**	R
8. Aktiwiteite (Wildritte) / **Activities (Game drives)**	R
9. Aandenkings en juwele / **Souvenirs and jewellery**	R

10. Ander uitgawes nie hierbo vervat nie (Spesifiseer) / ***Other expenses not listed above (Specify)***	10.1 _____	R _____
	10.2 _____	R _____

AFDELING C: VERBRUIKERSPROFIEL
SECTION C: CONSUMER PROFILE

7. Besit u 'n "Wild Card"? / **Are you a Wild Card holder?**

Ja/Yes	1
Nee/No	2

8. Sou u hierdie spesifieke Park vir u familie en vriende aanbeveel? / **Would you recommend this specific Park to your friends and relatives?**

Ja/Yes	1
Nee/No	2

9. Beoordeel volgens die skaal waarom u die Park besoek het (beantwoord asseblief al die moont-likhede) / *Rate on a scale of importance why you visited the Park (please answer all possibili-ties)*

Uiters belangrik / *Extremely important*					
Baie belangrik / *Very important*					
Nie belangrik of minder belangrik nie / *Neither important nor less important*					
Minder belangrik / *Less important*					
Glad nie belangrik / *Not at all important*					
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
a.Om weg te breek uit my roetine / *To get away from my routine*	1	2	3	4	5
b.Om te ontspan / *To relax*	1	2	3	4	5
c.Om 'n nuwe bestemming te verken / *To explore a new destination*	1	2	3	4	5
d.Om tyd saam met my vriende te spandeer /*To spend time with my friends*	1	2	3	4	5
e.Tot voordeel van my kinders / *For the benefit of my children*	1	2	3	4	5
f.Vir gesinsrekreasie of om tyd saam met iemand spesiaal deur te bring / *To be with family or to spend time with someone special*	1	2	3	4	5
g.Sodat ander lede van my geselskap kan leer van die natuur / *So that other members in my party could learn about nature*	1	2	3	4	5
h.Sodat ander lede van my geselskap waardering vir bedreigde spesies en wildlewe kan ontwikkel /*So that other members in my party could develop an appreciation for endangered species and wildlife*	1	2	3	4	5
i.Hoofsaaklik om opvoedkundige redes (om dinge te leer, my kennis te verbreed)/ *Primarily for educational reasons (to learn things, increase my knowledge)*	1	2	3	4	5
j.Om van diere in die algemeen te leer / *To learn about animals in general*	1	2	3	4	5
k.Om van bedreigde spesies te leer / *To learn about endangered species*	1	2	3	4	5
l.Om van plante te leer / *To learn about plants*	1	2	3	4	5
m.Om van spesifieke diere te leer / *To learn about specific animals*	1	2	3	4	5

	1	2	3	4	5
n.Om diere en plante te fotografeer / *To photograph animals and plants*	1	2	3	4	5
o.Dit is 'n geestelike ervaring / *It is a spiritual experience*	1	2	3	4	5
p.Ek is lojaal teenoor die Park / *I am loyal to the Park*	1	2	3	4	5
q.Die Park het goeie akkommodasie en fasiliteite / *The Park has great accommodation and facilities*	1	2	3	4	5
r.Dit is waarde vir geld / *It is value for money*	1	2	3	4	5
s.Vir die staproetes / *To do hiking trails*	1	2	3	4	5
t.Dit is 'n ideale vakansiebestemming / *It is an ideal holiday destination*	1	2	3	4	5
u. Ek verkies die Park vir sy geografiese eienskappe / *I prefer the Park for its geographical features*	1	2	3	4	5
v. Om die Groot 5 te sien. / *To see the Big 5.*	1	2	3	4	5

10. Wanneer is u besluit om die Park te besoek, geneem? / *When did you make your decision to visit the Park?*

Spontante besluit / *Spontaneous decision*	1
Minder as 'n maand gelede / *Less than a month ago*	2
Meer as 'n maand gelede / *More than a month ago*	3
Ander, spesifiseer / *Other, specify*	4

11.Dui asb aan die linkerkant aan hoe belangrik die volgende aspekte is vir 'n kwaliteitervaring in the Park deur gebruik te maak van die gepaste skaal. Dui dan aan die regterkant aan hoe u die aspekte in the Park ervaar het tydens u besoek. / *Please indicate on the left how important the following aspects are for a quality experience in the Park by making use of the scale. Then indicate on the right how you experienced the aspects in the Park during your visit.*

						6. Nie van toepassing / *Not applicable*						
1. Uiters belangrik / *Extremely important*						5. Uitstekend / *Excellent*						
2. Baie belangrik / *Very important*						4. Goed / *Good*						
3. Nie belangrik of minder belangrik nie / *Neither important nor less important*						3. Redelik / *Fair*						
4. Minder belangrik / *Less important*						2. Swak / *Poor*						

1	2	3	4	5	5. Glad nie belangrik nie / *Not at all important*	1. Baie swak / *Very poor*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Voorsiening van eetgerei en bybehore in die chalets. / *Adequate cutlery and cooking utensils supplied in chalets.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Toeganklike fasiliteite vir gestremdes. / *Accesible facilities for disabled people.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Die voorsiening van slegs storte in chalets en ablusiefasiliteite. / *The provision of only showers in chalets and in ablution facilities.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Die voorsiening van 'n bad en stort . / *The provision of both a bath and a shower.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Internet toegang. / *Internet access.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Dat buitelug- en binnenshuise-dekor die plaaslike invloed weerspieël. / *That the outdoor and indoor décor eflect local influence.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	'n Hoë standaard onderhoud van fasiliteite. / *High standard of maintenance of facilities.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Genoegsame en higiëniese ablusiegeriewe in die kampeerareas. / *Adequate and hygenic ablution facilities at the camping areas.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Televisie en radio in die chalets. / *Television and radio in chalets.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Kwaliteit linne in die chaltes. / *Quality linen in the chalets.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Wasserye by die ruskampe. / *Laundry services at the rest camps.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Die bied van 'n verskeidenheid produkte (bv. Konferensiefasiliteite, akkommodasie, avontuur, ens.). / *Offering a variety of products (e.g.conferencing, accommodation, adventure etc.).*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Verskeidenheid aktiwiteite in die ruskampe. / *Variety of activities in the rest camps.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Genoegsame en verskeidenheid aktiwiteite vir kinders. / *Adequate and variety of activities for children.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Inligtingsentrum in spesifieke kampe, bv. Skukuza en Satara. / *Information centre in specific rest kamps, for example Skukuza and Satara.*		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Uitkenbaarheid van bome, bv. naamplaatjies of inligtingsborde. / *Identification of trees, e.g. name plates or information boards.*		1	2	3	4	5	6

1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Genoegsame en veilige uitkykpunte in die Park. / *Sufficient and safe lookout points in the Park.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Strategies geplaasde voëlkykpunte in die Park. / *Strategically placed bird hides in the Park.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Ouditorium met natuurvideo's. / *Auditorium with nature videos.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Skyfievertonings, inligtingssessies en spesialispraatjies. / *Slideshows, informative sessions and spesialist talks.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Geologiese uitstallings. / *Geological displays.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Inligting rakende die geskiedenis van die Park. / *Information regarding the history of the Park.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Opvoedkundige praatjies en speletjies vir kinders. / *Educational talks and games for children.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Inligtingsborde rakende fauna/flora in die Park. / *Information boards regarding the fauna/flora in the Park.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Genoegsame personeel aan diens. / *Adequate number of staff members available.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Vriendelike en hulpvaardige personeel. / *Friendly and helpful staff.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Ingeligde en opgeleide personeel wat navrae kan hanteer rakende die Park en ruskampe. / *Well-trained and informed staff who can handle any queries concerning the rest camp or Park.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Netjiese voorkoms van personeel. / *Professional appearance of staff.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Hoë gehalte diens by ontvangs. / *High quality service at reception.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Vinnige en flink dienslewering by ontvangs. / *Fast and effcient service delivery at reception.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Inligting oor die dienste wat gelewer word in die ruskampe, bv. wassery, inligtingsentrum, wildritte, ens. / *Information regarding services provided in the restcamps, for example landry services, information centres, game drives, ect.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Gebruikersvriendelike webtuiste van Park. / *User-friendly Park website.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Effektiewe besprekings op webtuiste vir akkommodasie en/of aktiwiteite. / *Effective bookings on the website for accommodation and/or activities.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Genoegsame inligting beskikbaar oor die Park. / *Adequate information available about the Park.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Effektiewe bemarking van voordele van die Wild Card. / *Effective marketing of Wild Card benefits.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Goeie uitleg van die Park. / *Proper layout of the Park.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Goeie uitleg van die ruskampe en roetes. / *Proper layout of rest camps and routes.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Toeganklikheid van die Park. / *Accessbility of the Park.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Beskikbaarheid van volledige roetekaart. / *Availability of route map.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Duidelike aanwysings na ruskampe en piekniekareas. / *Clear indications to rest camps and picnic areas.*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Genoegsame bome by die chaltes en/of kampeerareas. / *Enough trees at the chalets and/or camping areas.*	1	2	3	4	5	6

1	2	3	4	5	Verskeidenheid van restourante in die Park. / Variety of restaurants in the Park.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Bekostigbare pryse by restourante. / Affordable prices at restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Genoegsame piekniekareas in die Park. / Adequate picnic areas in the Park.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Kwaliteit voedsel aangebied by eetplekke of restourante. / Quality food at eating areas or restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Kwaliteit en verskeidenheid in akkommodasie. / Quality and variety in accommodation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Die implementering van effektiewe herwinningsmetodes. / Implementing effective recycling methods.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	'n Linne (beide handdoeke en lakens) -hergebruikprogram in akkommodasie-eenhede. / A linen (both towels and sheets) reuse programme in accommodation units.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Lae-vloei stortkoppe en toilette. / Low-flow showerheads and toilets.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Gebruik van herwinde materiale. / Use of recycled material.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Sonkragpanele om energie te bespaar. / Solar panels to save energy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Energie-besparende gloeilampe in akkommodasie-eenhede. / Energy-saving light bulbs in accommodation units.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Die gebruik van nietoksiese skoonmaakmiddels en ontsmetmiddels, deur die Park. / The use of nontoxic cleaners and sanitizers throughout the Park.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Onderhoud van paaie/grondpaaie. / Maintenance of roads/gravel roads.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Toepassing van Parkreëls en -regulasies, byvoorbeeld spoedgrense. / Enforcing Park rules and regulations, for example speed limits.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Verskeidenheid wildlewe en voëllewe. / Variety of wildlife and birdlife.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Sigbaarheid van wildlewe en voëllewe in die Park. / Visibilty of wildlife and birdlife in the Park.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Bekostigbare wildritte. / Affordable game drives.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Interaktiewe veldgidse op wildritte en begeleide uitstappies. / Interactive field guides on game drives and guided walks.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Swembaddens by ruskampe. / Swimming pools at rest camps.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Speelparke vir kinders. / Play areas for children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	Interpretasie sentrums. / Interpretation centres.	1	2	3	4	5	6

12. Enige aanbevelings of voorstelle? / *Any recommendations or suggestions?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Baie dankie vir u samewerking! / Thank you for your co-operation!

APPENDIX B: Proof of English language editor

36 Finch Street
Ontdekkerspark 1709

Telephone: 084 716 6588

e-mail: dtraining@iafrica.com

16 November 2011

To whom it may concern

Language Editing – M.A. Tourism proposal – W. Engelbrecht

I have reviewed the dissertation entitled *Critical success factors for managing the visitor experience at the Kruger National Park* in terms of spelling, language, and grammar and have made recommendations to the author concerning the changes necessary

R. Taylor

CEO

APPENDIX C: Proof of translation from English abstract to Afrikaans

Hiermee gee ek, Ina-Lize Venter, kennis dat ek die opsomming vir die verhandeling met die titel **Kritiese suksesfaktore vir die bestuur van die besoekerservaring by die Kruger Nasionale Park,** op versoek van die student, mnr.Willy Engelbrecht, van Engels na Afrikaans vertaal het. Die vertaalde dokument is aan die student gestuur, waarna hy dit kon verander of aanvaar na sy goeddunke.

*I, Ina-Lize Venter, hereby declare that I translated the abstract for the thesis entitled **Critical success factors for managing the visitor experience at the Kruger National Park** from English into Afrikaans, upon the request of the student, Mr Willy Engelbrecht. The abstract was sent to the studen, upon which he was at liberty to accept or reject it at his discretion.*

Ina-Lize Venter

Ina.hulk.venter@gmail.com

APPENDIX D: Proof that references have been checked

Gerrit Dekkerstraat 1

POTCHEFSTROOM

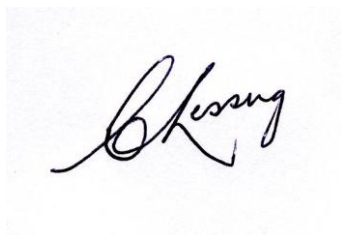2531

16 November 2011

Mnr Willy Engelbrecht

NWU (Potchefstroom Kampus)

POTCHEFSTROOM

VERKLARING: NASIEN VAN BRONNELYS

Hiermee verklaar die ondergetekende dat hy die Bronnelys vir die M-studie van mnr Willy Engelbrecht volgens die voorskrifte van die Senaat van die Noordwes-Universiteit tegnies nagesien en versorg het.

Die uwe

Prof CJH LESSING