

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

W. H. ENGELBRECHT, M. KRUGER, AND M. SAAYMAN

Tourism Research in Economic Environs and Society (TREES),
North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

Kruger National Park (KNP) attracts over 1 million tourists per annum and is one of the top five international destinations in South Africa. However, there is a lot of competition in South Africa and, together with the 22 national parks managed by SANParks, there are also local and provincial parks and more than 9,000 game farms with neighboring countries such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana competing for ecotourists. This implies the need for higher quality products and services that must be delivered to the tourist to fulfill the expectations of tourists. This can be achieved by determining the critical success factors (CSFs) in managing the tourist experience at KNP, since knowledge of these factors can lead to a satisfied tourist 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 tourist experience at KNP. To achieve this goal, a questionnaire survey was conducted at KNP from December 27, 2010 to January 4, 2011. Questionnaires were distributed at the chalets and camping areas in the following rest camps: Skukuza (152), Berg & Dal (98), Lower Sabie (85), and Satara (101). A total of 436 questionnaires were obtained from the rest camps. The results showed that nine CSFs can be identified, which KNP management can use to improve on quality service delivery, giving the tourists a memorable experience at KNP. Three of the nine CSFs that have not yet been identified in previous research are *wildlife experience*, *interpretation*, and *luxuries*.

Key words: Factor analysis; Nature-based tourism; National park management; Sustainability; Tourist experience; Tourist satisfaction; Critical success factors (CSFs)

Introduction

In managing tourist attractions or destinations, management is also creating and contributing to a tourist experience (Marais, 2009). The importance of a tourist experience is highlighted by Sheng and Chen (2011), who state that not only does management

need to understand the tourist experience, but they need to be cognizant 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 tourists are and, in this context, Cohen (1979) states

that managers need to understand that the level of satisfaction differs from tourist to tourist, which will also have an impact on the experience of each tourist concerning aspects 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 aspects that influence this experience (Andereck, Bricker, Kerstetter, & Nickerson, 2006; Hayllar & Griffin, 2005; Saayman, 2009).

Sheng and Chen (2011) define tourist experiences as the opinions and functions (transport and food), sensory stimulation (attractions), and the emotional description (bored or interesting) of the tourist. According to Saayman (2009), the tourist experience is, in general, a product of five integrated phases. In the first phase there is the planning, then the journey to the destination, the experience at the destination, the return journey, and, lastly, 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, tourist 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 tourist is fulfilled and the value that the tourist 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 tourists have a different mindset towards the product and, in some cases, are reluctant to go home. Finally, the tourist reaches the fifth phase in which they recall the actual experience and they relive it in their memories.

Shaw and Ivens (2002) add that the physical performance and emotions evoked by the destinations are a blend of tourist experiences, which are measured against tourists' expectations across all barriers, and one cannot ignore achieving tourist satisfaction (Erasmus, 2011). Based on this, Boshoff, Landman, Kerley, and Bradfield (2007) indicate that there are three main factors on which tourists and their satisfaction depend. These are: expectations, perceptions, and experience. An expectation

is what the tourists expect to see based on familiarity or previous experience (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2007). Tourists' perception is the process by which the tourist selects, organizes, and interprets different stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2007). According to Shaw (2005), the interaction between a tourist and the destination is dependent on physical performance, senses stimulated, and the emotions that are evoked where each of these aspects has an impact on the tourist's expectation (Moore, Petty, Palich, & Longenecker, 2008). From a tourism point of view, Ryan (2002) states that the tourist experience is most important, because this is essentially what tourism is all about. Moore et al. (2008) add that although this aspect contributes to tourist 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 tourist; (3) implementing systems that will react on any bad experiences that the tourists have while visiting the product or destination; and (4) delivering services that will ultimately exceed the expectations of the tourists to the park. Additionally, a memorable tourist experience can lead to a competitive advantage, increased revenue, personification of the brand (Shaw & Ivens, 2002), and sustainability of the product or destination if managed correctly (Said, Jaddil, & Ayob, 2009). It may also change the tourist's perception and expectations of service standards (Kozak, 2001) and ultimately determine the loyalty of tourists towards the destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

With the importance of creating a memorable tourist 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 (South African National Parks [SANParks], 2008; van der Merwe & Saayman, 2004). This leads to stiff competition to retain current tourists and attract potential tourists. Therefore, from a sustainability point of view, it is vital for national parks to provide and ensure a memorable and satisfactory tourist experience (Cook, Yale, & Marqua, 2010; Khan, 2003; Noe, Uysal, & Magnini, 2010). To offer a memorable tourist experience, it is necessary to identify those aspects that make a contribution.

These factors, according to Brotherton (2004), are referred to as critical success factors (CSFs). CSFs are also known as key success factors (KSFs) or key result areas (KRAs) and consist of a number of factors (which is greater than three and less than 10). CSFs are the areas within the organization that are essential for management to accomplish its mission. Management must identify the areas that they consider as important to achieve the ultimate tourist experience and direct the operational activities to accomplish the organization's goals (Caralli, 2004). Management needs to clarify the CSFs for the entire organization so that all the employees have a reference to work by. All of the organization's activities or initiatives that take place within these key areas must ensure high performance that consistently enables the organization to achieve its goal of creating a memorable tourist experience (Caralli, 2004). These characteristics or conditions, referred to by many, have a direct and significant impact on the effectiveness, efficiency, and viability of an organization's program. Activities associated with CSFs must be performed at the highest possible level of excellence to achieve the overall objectives (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/critical-success-factors-CSF.html>). This will ultimately lead to the ability to achieve higher success levels and, as a result, time saving, cost savings, quality, and efficiency in their systems (Finney & Corbett, 2007).

The purpose of this research is to determine CSFs that influence tourists' experience at one of the oldest and most renowned national parks in South Africa: Kruger National Park (KNP). 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 (Braack, 2006; Honey, 1999; Loon, Harper, & Shorten, 2007; SANParks, 2010). KNP is also one of the top five tourist destinations in South Africa, attracting more than 1 million tourists per annum (Aylward & Lutz, 2003; Bushell & Eagles, 2007; van der Merwe & Saayman, 2008). In addition, SANParks currently generates 80% of its revenue from accommodation and admission fees in KNP (Mabunda & Wilson, 2009). For this reason, it is important to ensure that tourist experiences are memorable. The article is structured as follows: the literature is reviewed, the research method is

outlined, the results are discussed, the implications of the study are considered, and, finally, conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

Literature Review

Saayman (2009) 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 organization, which involves strategic planning, organizing, leading the business in a direction, and controlling people and resources (Page & Connell, 2009; Reh, 2011). In other words, it entails aspects such as staff, finances, and infrastructure. Tourism management entails tourist-related activities and services such as game drives, accommodation, restaurants, children activities, and educational activities, among others. Conservation management is the protection, preservation, and careful management of natural resources and the environment (www.thefreedictionary.com/conservation). 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 tourists' experiences are memorable while at the same time conserving the environment. These three forms of park management furthermore 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 forms 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 tourists have their own expectations and perceptions. Page, Brunt, Busby, and Connell (2001) explain that, from the demand side, tourist satisfaction differs from tourist to tourist, as each individual has certain expectations and motivations for traveling to a destination. Therefore, park management needs to be knowledgeable about the CSFs 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 KNP is larger than a country (e.g., Israel or Holland) and has the largest variety of animal and plant species in South Africa (Braack, 2006). Figure 1 illustrates the aspects that influence a tourist experience at a nature-based destination such as KNP (Erasmus, 2011). Tourists have certain needs that are determined by their sociodemographic behavioral characteristics, travel motives, and preferences (Marais, 2009). According to Zhou, Bonham, and Gangnes (2007), tourist demand depends on the level of income, which, in turn, determines the price of goods or related goods such as substitute products that tourists can purchase to fulfill their needs. According to Ozturk and Qu (2008), dimensions such as food and beverages, facilities, cost, hospitality and customer care, and overall

accessibility have a significant impact on the tourist's perceived value and expectations concerning the destination. Management needs to be aware of these needs because, if tourists' needs are not fulfilled by the services or products on offer, it may have negative influences on tourist behavior (e.g., negative word-of-mouth recommendations as well as less frequent visits to the park) (Appel, 2010). Therefore, the success of the park depends largely on tourist satisfaction and hence tourist experience (Song & Guo, 2008).

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

- repeat visits and positive word of mouth;
- loyalty towards the park;

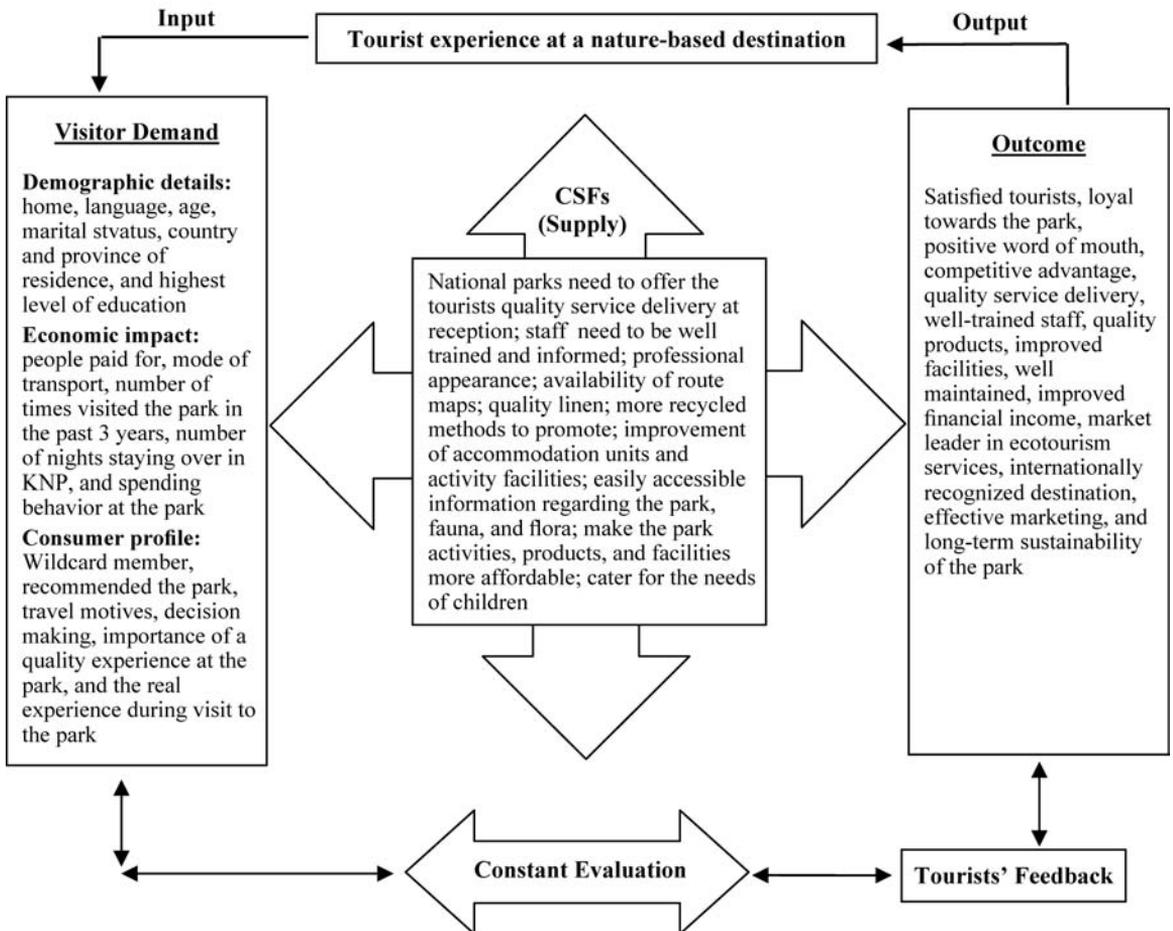


Figure 1. Tourist experience at a nature-based destination. Source: Adapted from Marais (2009) and Erasmus (2011).

- 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 (Table 1) the important role played by staff in offering a memorable experience. In addition, Saayman (2009) and Shaw and Ivens (2002) state that protected areas of 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 tourists 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 tourists 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: 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;
- interpretation of information, quality of printed material, videos, photos, and slide shows, and well-informed staff to assist with any inquiry.

Slabbert and Saayman (2003) add that resources, competitive capabilities, product attributes, competencies, and business outcomes all form part of the CSFs that influence the life span of destinations such as KNP. The importance of a memorable experience that leads to tourist satisfaction is that the nature and quality at KNP are related to the destination and environment that will ensure the future decision-making process on destination selection (Page et al., 2001).

KNP should thus embrace these CSFs as doing so will enhance its competitiveness. However, park

management needs to ensure that the CSFs are carefully aligned within the park's environment and assure that the CSFs are flexible, as they must be continuously adapted to stay within the market trends (Trkman, 2010). Management furthermore needs to be aware of the gaps that may occur between tourists' expectations and management perceptions of tourist experience and what park management perceives as important. According to Marais and Saayman (2010), continuous research and evaluation is a prerequisite. If tourists' needs are continuously monitored, management can respond to these needs, which should lead to improved products and services, leading to satisfied tourists (Noe et al., 2010).

With the importance of CSFs in managing the tourist experience at KNP in mind, previous research concerning the CSFs, as shown in Table 1, has not yet been carried out at national parks or ecotourism destinations. 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 centers (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 1.

Research by Appel (2010), Marais (2009), and De Witt (2006) has indicated that organizational management is an important factor and came out as the most important CSF overall. Furthermore, effective marketing of the product or destinations was identified in the research by Erasmus (2011), Appel (2010), Marais (2009), Kruger (2006), and De Witt (2006). According to Erasmus (2011) and van der Westhuizen (2003), quality and variety facilities such as accommodation, entertainment, activities, and services need to be provided at tourist products or destinations. Collectively, the studies (Table 1) indicate that, by identifying the CSFs, tourism operations can be managed in a sustainable manner as well as bringing tourists' 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 tourists' 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

Table 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. Organizational 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-organized route and a route map; 5. Festival attractiveness consisting of whether the festival is family friendly, well-managed inquiries, 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 center 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 license, providing secure parking, providing a variety of menus, and the accessibility of the venue; 3. Human resource management, and creating a positive organizational behavior; 4. Financial management including control of finances through financial operating systems, an operating budget, and a breakeven analysis; 5. Marketing aspects such as marketing segmentation, market positioning as well as promotion, which include 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.

is important to identify the needs of tourists and to determine which aspects they consider as important for a memorable tourist experience. This will lead to tourists who are loyal, and the more loyal the tourists, the more repeat visits (Elliot & Percy, 2007; Wood, 2004). The improvement of management at KNP with the identification of CSFs will lead to greater tourist satisfaction and exceeding tourist expectations, positive word of mouth, increased tourists numbers, and, ultimately, the sustainability of one of the world's most renowned parks.

Methodology

The questionnaire used in the survey was based on researched by Shaw and Ivens (2002), Saayman (2009), 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 tourists have 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 KNP). Section C was designed to determine tourist behavior at KNP and included questions such as whether the tourists are Wild Card members, would the tourists 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 tourist 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*, and 5 = *not at all important*. For the purpose of this research, information from all three sections was mainly used.

Sampling Method and Survey

A destination-based survey was undertaken and the questionnaires were distributed at various rest camps in KNP. These were Berg en Dal, Lower Sabie, Satara, and Skukuza, thus ensuring that all

overnight tourists in the rest camps had an equal opportunity to participate. Fieldworkers moved around the chalets and camp areas to minimize bias. They approached the visitors 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 tourists to the different rest camps was approached and 450 questionnaires were distributed over 8 days (December 27, 2010 to January 4, 2011). According to statistics provided by SANParks, there were 384,249 overnight tourists to KNP in the year 2009 (personal email communication with J. Stevens, 2010). The average traveling group in December 2009 was 3.4 persons (Du Plessis, Saayman, & Erasmus, 2010). Because the questionnaires were handed out to only one person per traveling group, the total population was divided by 3.4 and this resulted in 112,132 tourists. By making use of the sample size formula as indicated by Israel (2009), 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 is 399. The total number of questionnaires completed in December 2010 and January 2011 was 436 questionnaires, which makes this number of questionnaires sufficient.

Statistical Analysis

Microsoft Excel was used to capture data and SPSS (2010) was used to analyze it. The analysis was done in two stages. First, a general profile of KNP tourists was compiled. Second, a principal axis factor analysis, using Oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalization, was performed on the 62 variables to determine the critical success factors of a memorable tourist experience at KNP and to explain the variance-covariance structure of a set of variables through a few linear combinations of these variables. 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 categorized 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 interitem correlation was also computed as another measure of reliability—these, according to Clark and Watson (1995), should lie between 0.15 and 0.55.

Results

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

Profile of Respondents Surveyed at KNP

Table 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 KNP. The respondents had visited national parks an average of three times in the last 3 years and their main reasons for visiting KNP are to relax and to enjoy nature. The respondents traveled to the park by means of 4 × 4 vehicles

and sedans, stayed for 3 nights, and are Wild Card members, indicating that they are loyal to KNP. The respondents spent an average of R7,728.63 per visit to KNP.

Results From the Factor Analysis

The pattern matrix of the principal axis factor analysis using an Oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalization identified nine factors, which were then labeled according to similar characteristics (Table 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 interitem 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). Bartlett's test of sphericity also reached statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2007).

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, the following critical success factors were identified.

Table 2
Profile of Overnight Tourists to KNP (December 2010/January 2011)

Category	Overnight Tourist Summer 2010/2011
Home language	Afrikaans (53%)
Age	35–49 years of age (average: 45.4)
Province of residence	Gauteng and Mpumalanga
Level of education	Diploma/degree
Number of people paid for	2–4 people (average: 3.2)
Mode of transport	4×4 and sedan
Number of visits to a national park over the last 3years	Average of 3.4 times
Length of stay	3 nights
Reasons for visiting KNP	Relax and enjoy nature, get away
Expenditure	R7,728.63
Wild Card owner	Yes

Table 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 Interitem 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	0.7			
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 (e.g., laundry services, information centers, game drives, etc.)	0.54			
Effective marketing of Wild Card benefits	0.42			
Quality and variety in accommodation	0.4			
Enough trees at the chalets and/or camping area	0.35			
Factor 2: Wildlife experience		1.67	0.92	0.66
Maintenance of roads/gravel roads	0.52			
Variety wildlife and birdlife	0.52			
Enforcing park rules and regulations (e.g., speed limits)	0.34			
Visibility of wildlife and birdlife in the park	0.66			
Affordable game drives	0.67			
Interactive field guides on game drives and guided walks	0.64			
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 nontoxic 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 program in accommodation units	0.5			
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			

(continued)

Table 3

Factor Analysis Results of the Critical Success Factors for Managing the Visitor Experience at KNP (*Continued*)

Critical Success Factors	Factor Loading	Mean value	Reliability Coefficient	Average Interitem Correlation
Factor 6: Interpretation		2.54	0.92	0.55
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 centers	0.42			
Identification of trees (e.g. name plates or information boards)	0.38			
Information center in specific rest camps (e.g., Skukuza and Satara)	0.35			
Auditorium with nature videos	0.69			
Slideshows, informative sessions, and specialist talks	0.77			
Geological displays	0.76			
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				
Factor 9: Luxuries		3.87	0.72	0.56
Television and radio in chalets	0.7			
Internet access	0.62			

Factor 1: General Management

Factor 1 was labeled *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 tourist experience at KNP with a mean value of 1.61, a reliability coefficient of 0.98, and an average interitem 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. Appel (2010), De Witt (2006), and van der Westhuizen (2003) also rated

general management as an important factor. However, 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, general management plays a vital role in the delivery of a quality tourism product and tourist 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 categorized 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 interitem correlation of 0.66. Wildlife experience, however, has not yet been

identified in the literature research 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 interitem 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 program 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 nontoxic 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 interitem 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. It therefore seems that more people are becoming conscious of the green movement.

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 interitem 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 tourists a variety of leisure hospitality facilities.

Factor 6: Interpretation

Interpretation, Factor 6, consists of the information centers in specific rest camps (e.g., Skukuza and Satara); information boards; slide shows; geological displays; information on the park history; educational talks and games for children; information regarding the fauna/flora in the park; and interpretive centers. This factor received a mean value of 2.54, a reliability coefficient of 0.92, and an average interitem correlation 0.55. This factor has not yet been identified by any other author 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.

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 interitem correlation of 0.66. This factor was identified by Marais (2009) as an important critical success factor when managing the tourist experience at a wine festival. This indicates that the park needs to be friendly to 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 interitem correlation of 0.25. Erasmus (2011) identified accommodation and ablutions as a critical success factor when managing the tourist experience at a national arts festival in South Africa.

Factor 9: Luxuries

Luxuries, Factor 9, 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 interitem correlation of 0.55. Factor 9 has not yet been identified by any other author. This shows that tourists traveling to KNP do not rate these luxuries as important factors contributing to their experience.

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 tourist experience at KNP are general management, wildlife experience, facilities, and green management. This 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 KNP.

Secondly, considering the analysis of the different CSFs, it supports the park management model by Saayman (2009), who identified three forms 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 parks to adopt an integrated approach. If the management of KNP adopts or develops a management plan, the emphasis must be on the integration

of the different departments so that staff knows what is happening. An integrated management approach should lead to improved service delivery and, eventually, memorable tourist experiences.

Thirdly, general management is the most important CSF. General management deals with the core aspects of an organization and it also spells out the aims and objectives of the organization (Noe et al., 2010). One of these includes ensuring tourist satisfaction. According to Page et al. (2001), tourist satisfaction differs from tourist to tourist and therefore management will need to evaluate continuously. CSFs can then be adapted as and when this may be necessary. These findings support research by Trkman (2010) 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 tourists 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) 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 tourist experience.

Fourthly, wildlife experience and interpretation were identified as product-specific factors that the park can integrate to improve the tourist experience at KNP. Ballantyne, Packer, and Sutherland (2011) add that wildlife tourism aims to educate tourists 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 KNP as this is the main reason why tourists visit the park. This factor needs to be incorporated into KNP's main objective, to conserve and protect the natural environment and biodiversity for future generations. According to Kruger and Saayman (2010), Kerstetter, Hou, and Lin (2004), Beh and Bruyere (2007), and Saayman and Saayman (2009), tourists make use of nature-based tourism destinations to escape from their daily routines and spend time with family and friends. KNP can implement programs to train their

game rangers, ensuring that the tourist receives the right information regarding wildlife and the environment. Interpretation regarding the wildlife and birdlife at KNP can be improved by, for example, tour guides being more interactive on game drives or guided walks, placing information boards at certain strategic points or historical places, or information centers in the rest camps where the tourists 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. Implementing green policies such as reuse programs for linen and bath towels and replacing toilets with the double flush mechanism so that water can be saved are examples of green management. Posters can also be used to indicate the need for greener management and conservation and to educate tourists in this regard. 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 emphasizes that tourists visiting the park are there for the wildlife experience and to escape from any technology aspects. However, this factor must not be ignored, and management must keep in mind that they should 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 indicate, the current market visiting KNP does not want luxuries in the park; they prefer the natural and scenic beauty.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine the CSFs that management needs to be aware of in offering tourists a memorable experience at a nature-based specific product. Based on the results of this study, it is clear that nature-based tourism destinations such as KNP have specific CSFs that must be implemented by management and integrated so that KNP can offer their tourists a memorable experience. The nine CSFs that KNP should 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 tourists 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 management will not be necessarily applicable in the case of a nature-based tourism destination such as 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 have been researched; (ii) this research provides valuable insights into the management of national parks and is specific to KNP management, and (iii) park management can see what the tourist sees as important for a memorable tourist 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 tourists visiting nature-based destinations such as KNP and the comparison of these expectations versus the real experience. This study may assist management in identifying the gaps and address certain critical aspects to ensure a memorable experience that will keep tourists loyal towards the park.

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