



# An analysis of tourist trends in northern Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe, 1991-2014

Chiedza N. Mutanga, Edson Gandiwa & Never Muboko |

To cite this article: Chiedza N. Mutanga, Edson Gandiwa & Never Muboko | (2017) An analysis of tourist trends in northern Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe, 1991-2014, Cogent Social Sciences, 3:1, 1392921, DOI: [10.1080/23311886.2017.1392921](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2017.1392921)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2017.1392921>



© 2017 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license



Published online: 27 Oct 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1731



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 5 View citing articles [↗](#)



## LEISURE & TOURISM | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# An analysis of tourist trends in northern Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe, 1991-2014

Chiedza N. Mutanga, Edson Gandiwa and Never Muboko

---

*Cogent Social Sciences* (2017), 3: 1392921



Received: 21 March 2017  
Accepted: 11 October 2017  
First Published: 17 October 2017

\*Corresponding author: Chiedza N. Mutanga, School of Hospitality and Tourism, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Private Bag 7724, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe  
E-mails: [cnmutanga@gmail.com](mailto:cnmutanga@gmail.com), [cmutanga@cut.ac.zw](mailto:cmutanga@cut.ac.zw)

Reviewing editor:  
John Martyn Chamberlain, Swansea University, UK

Additional information is available at the end of the article

## LEISURE & TOURISM | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# An analysis of tourist trends in northern Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe, 1991-2014

Chiedza N. Mutanga<sup>1\*</sup>, Edson Gandiwa<sup>2</sup> and Never Muboko<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** The objectives of this study were to: (1) determine trends in tourists' arrivals in northern Gonarezhou National Park for the period 1991–2014, and (2) compare trends in arrivals among local, regional and international tourists, as well as among overnight and day visitors. Tourist visitation data were collected from the park's tourist records. For each of the years, we totalled the estimated number of visits into the park for every month, and then summed these totals across the whole year. To determine tourist trends, we used descriptive analyses (frequencies), and line and column graphs. An increase in tourist arrivals was recorded between 1991 and 1998 and between 2008 and 2014, while decline was recorded between 1999 and 2007. We concluded that tourism is volatile and its success depends on the destination's ability to manage the destination's image and a number of challenges that can easily alter visitor flows.

**Subjects:** Sports and Leisure; Tourism, Hospitality and Events; Development Studies

**Keywords:** community; image; protected area; tourist arrivals; wildlife tourism

### 1. Introduction

Over the years tourism has rapidly grown and it is an important sector for many regions and countries all over the world (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2016). There has also been a growing demand for recreation and recreational facilities and activities close to home where people can spend their leisure time (Torkildsen, 2005). Baud-Bovy (2002) defines leisure as free time



Chiedza N. Mutanga

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chiedza N. Mutanga is a DPhil student and a teaching assistant in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe. Her research interests include outdoor recreation, sustainable tourism, protected area tourism, wildlife tourism experiences, tourist satisfaction and wildlife tourism management. The research reported in this paper is part of a broader study on tourism and wildlife management in Zimbabwe whose main objective is to generate information that would contribute towards the understanding of the interactions between PA-community relationships and nature-based tourism which is generally aimed at improving both wildlife conservation and tourism in developing countries such as Zimbabwe.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Wildlife resources are an important attraction for tourists especially in Africa and other developing countries. Tourist trends are required to evaluate the magnitude of tourist flows and to monitor any change to allow for projections of future flows and identification of market trends. Tourist statistics thus provide hard facts for tourism planners and developers to operate effectively and plan for the future of tourism. The study notes the importance of wildlife as an important motive for visiting protected areas which calls for stringent conservation measures to sustainably manage the wildlife resources and to ensure the sustainability of wildlife tourism. However, besides managing the sustainability of wildlife resources, the study shows that the success of wildlife tourism also depends on the destination's ability to manage a number of challenges that affect tourist visitation, for example economic crisis, civil unrests and health pandemics which affect tourists' image of the destination.

available to the individual when the disciplines of work, sleep and other basic needs have been met, while recreation covers any pursuit taken up during leisure time other than those to which people have a high commitment. Recreational activities can be home-based, for example, reading and watching television, or outdoor, for example, sports, theatre, cinema, driving for pleasure, walking, picnicking, and day excursions to parks and beaches as well as leisure tourism involving overnight stay like longer distance travel, tours, weekend breaks, holidays and vacations (Tribe, 2005).

Participation in recreational activities is associated with benefits such as enhancing one's self-image, developing/maintaining interpersonal relationships, developing a valued identity, having pleasurable experiences and enhancing quality of life and well-being (MacCosham, 2017; Stebbins, 2015). Recreation services are important assets for the prosperity of destinations considering that they often represent a significant share of the total economic activity in a destination and are recognised as essential for the attractiveness of a region (Öner & Klaesson, 2017). Tourism, where recreation is the main tourist activity and often referred to as recreational tourism, is seen as a form of leisure that takes place away from home (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). However, travel for non-leisure purposes is also often included in tourism, for example, business and conference travel, although such travellers generally mix business and pleasure (Gjorgievski, Kozuharov, & Nakovski, 2013). People's participation in recreation and leisure is a process made to satisfy their needs and this partly explains why people choose certain destinations over others. Some destinations such as protected areas in developing countries are increasingly becoming popular for wildlife tourists (Job & Paesler, 2013; Newsome, Dowling, & Moore, 2005). This is because protected areas are synonymous with wildlife, e.g. the 'Big Five' in Africa and other charismatic species which offer tourists the opportunity to see and gain an understanding of a wide variety of species (Ballantyne, Packer, & Falk, 2011). Moreover, protected areas offer the remoteness, and natural attractiveness which some environmentally conscious tourists desire in destinations (Balmford et al., 2015) and which enhance tourists' enjoyment of nature (Bateman, 2011; Job & Paesler, 2013).

Nature and/or wildlife tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the industry (Jones & Ohsawa, 2016; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2014). Wildlife tourism is a niche for the tourism business, concentrating on visitor interaction with wildlife resources (Higginbottom, 2004). Wildlife watching and photography is a part of wildlife tourism that comprises watching, observing, listening to and photographing wild animals in their natural environment. Gogoi (2014) defines photographic tourism as that form of special interest tourism in which tourists visit a particular place with the primary aim of photographing subjects that are unique to them. Wildlife tourism has the potential to generate sustainable local benefits that can also act as incentives for local people to support wildlife conservation and increase national revenue (Walpole & Goodwin, 2001). The success of wildlife conservation is important for tourism considering that wild animal abundance and diversity are among the common motives for visiting protected areas (Gandiwa, 2011). Thus, protected areas need to ensure that biodiversity is effectively conserved, that there are harmonious relationships with the neighbouring communities (Buscher & Whande, 2007; Holmes, 2013; Mutanga, Vengesayi, Muboko, & Gandiwa, 2015), and good marketing strategies among other factors as a way of promoting both tourist arrivals and receipts (Knowles, Diamantis, & El-Mourhabi, 2001; Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012; Tsiotsou & Vlachopoulou, 2011).

There has been a steady growth in tourism in recent years (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2016). The main causes of the development of tourism include peaceful relations among nations, income growth in developed countries that allows them to spend money on travel, dissemination of culture and education, advances in the development of transport and developing media (Bader, 2010; Honey & Gilpin, 2010; Kanjilal, 2008). However, tourism is a very volatile industry and a number of challenges are encountered in this industry which can easily alter visitor flows. Considerable research efforts have thus been devoted to factors that affect tourism (Honey & Gilpin, 2010; Karambakuwa et al., 2011; Saha & Yap, 2015). Some of these common factors include terrorism, civil unrests, disease pandemics, global financial crisis (Saha & Yap, 2015), depletion of natural resources, limited accommodation, poor transport infrastructure and communication technologies

development, and natural hazards (Bader, 2010; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Kanjilal, 2008). Knowledge of these factors is important especially in protected area management so that budgets can be effectively directed towards mitigation of high priority impacts which have the potential of reducing both wild animal populations and tourist numbers.

Tourist visitation monitoring is an important part of the management policy of protected areas in many countries (Bell, Tyrväinen, Sievänen, Pröbstl, & Simpson, 2007). Understanding of tourists' arrival trends is essential for protected area planning in terms of infrastructure, carrying capacities and impacts on ecosystems. The most common visitation information measured by protected areas includes number of visits, duration of visit and socio-economic factors such as sex, age, income and region or country of residence, length and means of travel and amount of money spent, the level and type of participation in recreation activities, visitor satisfaction, motives and the expectations of visit and experiences. However, much is less publicised on the trends in tourists visits to the world's protected areas in general (Balmford et al., 2015; Jones & Ohsawa, 2016) and in Zimbabwe in particular. In most countries there is no long term monitoring or statistics of tourist visitation which makes it less easy to determine the trends (Bell et al., 2007). In working towards addressing this problem, Gonarezhou National Park (hereafter, GNP), Zimbabwe was chosen as a case study given that some dynamics have occurred between 1991 and 2014 which may have affected wildlife conservation and photographic tourism, e.g. drought and economic crisis, land reforms and political instability (Gandiwa et al., 2014). This study sought to: (1) determine trends in tourists' arrivals in northern GNP for the period 1991–2014, (2) compare trends in arrivals (1) among local, regional and international tourists, and (2) between overnight and day visitors to northern GNP for the period 1991–2014.

## 2. Methods and materials

### 2.1. Study area

GNP, whose coordinates are 21°00'–22°15' S and 30°15'–32°30' E (Figure 1) was purposively selected as a case study because of its rich wildlife conservation history. GNP, which is the second largest national park in Zimbabwe after Hwange National Park is widely known for the wilderness experience and its exceptional landscapes which include Chilojo Cliffs and Red Hills. The park and its surrounding areas have been part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area since 2002 together with Limpopo National Park in Mozambique and Kruger National Park in South Africa. GNP is composed of two distinct units, i.e. Chipinda Pools, referred to as northern GNP (3,000 km<sup>2</sup>) in the northern section and Mabalauta, southern GNP (2,000 km<sup>2</sup>) in the southern section of the park. Since its creation in the 1930s as a game reserve and its later proclamation as a national park in 1975, it was solely managed by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM) now Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA) up to 2003. As from 2004, the ZPWMA was operating as a parastatal following its transformation from the then Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management after the amendment of Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Act (Chapter 20:14) of 1996 which resulted in direct increase in funds available for park management (Gandiwa, Heitkönig, Lokhorst, Prins, & Leeuwis, 2013). From 2007, GNP has been managed under a public-private partnership arrangement between the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and Frankfurt Zoological Society.

GNP opened for tourism in 1968, but was closed between 1976 and 1982 due to Zimbabwe's war of national liberation (Goodwin, Kent, Parker, & Walpole, 1997). The park was re-opened in 1982, but in 1984 civil conflicts in the neighbouring Mozambique led to the park being closed again to tourists for the period 1988 to 1989. The park was re-opened to tourists in 1990 (Goodwin et al., 1997). Chipinda Pools, in northern GNP, is the main entry point with 80% of the total visitors to GNP and is the focus of this study on the tourist visitation component. Tourists are classified into three categories: (1) local/domestic tourists, who travel from their normal places of residence but within the same country; (2) regional tourists, who visit within a defined geographic region, for example in this case, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region; and (3) international tourists,

**Figure 1. Location of Gonarezhou National Park and its two management sites, Chipinda Pools and Mabalauta in southeast Zimbabwe.**



who travel outside their countries of residence and their regions usually to another continent or any other defined geographical region (Tureac & Turtureanu, 2010). In this present study, the term 'tourist' is used to refer to both overnight and day visitors.

Tourism facilities and attractions in northern GNP include tented camps, camp sites, waterfalls, cliffs and natural water pans. The park is endowed with a wide variety of large carnivores, e.g. leopard (*Panthera pardus*) with a population estimated at 388, lion (*Panthera leo*) with population estimates of 125, spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*) whose population was estimated at 642 (Groom, Watermeyer, & Boté, 2015), and large herbivores, e.g. Cape buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) with a population estimated at 6,691; African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) with population estimates of 11,120; and Plains zebra (*Equus quagga*) whose population was estimated at 1,368 (Dunham & Van Der Westhuizen, 2015).

## 2.2. Data collection and analysis

This paper is part of a bigger study generally aimed at improving both wildlife conservation and tourism in developing countries. Secondary data were used in this study. We collected historical data of visitor inflows to northern GNP between 1991 and 2014 from the Chipinda Pools Administration Offices in December 2015. For each of the years, we estimated total tourists visits per year by totalling the estimated number of visits into the park for every month from January to December, and then summing these totals across the whole year. We compiled counts of visits to the park which we categorised into day visitors and overnight visitors. Following Wood, Guerry, Silver, and Lacayo (2013)

and Balmford et al. (2015) we counted a day visit (when a person spends at least a portion of a day in the park) as a visit and overnight(s) stay as a single visit. Each of these visitor categories was further divided into local, regional, and international visitors. In some cases (though very few) data were unavailable for some days within the months or for the whole months. There may also be some biases in visit data, for example, probably leading to systematic under-reporting of tourists visits (Cochrane, 2003). Such errors could not be addressed but could mean that our aggregate estimates of tourists visits are probably conservative (Balmford et al., 2015). Permission to collect the secondary data was obtained from the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority in December 2015.

Data were tested for normality using the Shapiro–Wilk test (Razali & Wah, 2011; Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) and tourist data were found to be not normal (even after  $\log(x + 1)$ ). We therefore used descriptive statistics (frequencies) to determine trends in tourists' arrivals. We averaged tourists visits across the years for which we had data, and the statistics were used to plot line and column graphs for local, regional and international tourists, and for overnight and day visitors using Microsoft Excel Version 2007.

### 3. Results

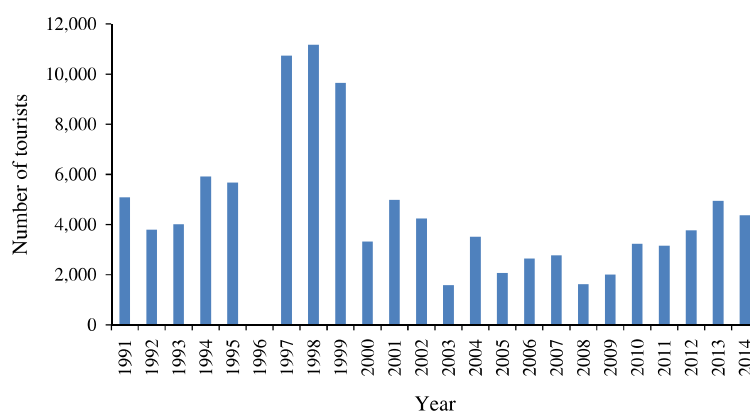
An increase in tourist arrivals was recorded in northern GNP between 1991 and 1998 whereas a decline in tourist arrivals was recorded between 1999 and 2007 with an increase in tourist arrival being recorded thereafter, i.e. between 2008 and 2014. Tourist arrivals in 2014 were lower than those of the 1990s (Figure 2). The average tourist visitation per year was  $3,636 \pm 557$  (mean  $\pm$  standard error), the highest year being 1998 with 11,181 tourists while 2003 was the lowest with 1,581 tourists.

More local tourists (81%) were recorded between 1991 and 2014 as compared to regional (11%) and international tourists (8%, Figure 3). About 84,206 local tourists, with an average visitation of  $3,661 \pm 464$  visited northern GNP, with the highest recorded number of local tourists at 9,115 in 1997 and the lowest 1,359 in 2008. Regional tourists who visited northern GNP were about 11,540 with an average visitation of  $502 \pm 82$  with the highest number of tourists (1,292) recorded in 1998 and the lowest (97) was recorded in 2000. The total number of international tourists was 8,573 and the average visitation per year was  $371 \pm 70$ , the highest year being 1998 with 1,312 tourists while 2003 was the lowest with 35 tourists.

Overnight visitors were generally fewer (43%) than day visitors (57%) between 1991 and 2014 (Figure 4). The total number of overnight tourists was 41,014 with an average visitation per year of  $1,783 \pm 177$  and the highest year being 1999 with 3,493 tourists while 2005 was the lowest with 730 tourists. There were about 63,269 day visitors who visited northern GNP, with an average visitation of  $2,751 \pm 418$  and the highest recorded number of day visitors was 8,021 in 1998 while the lowest was 632 in 2008.

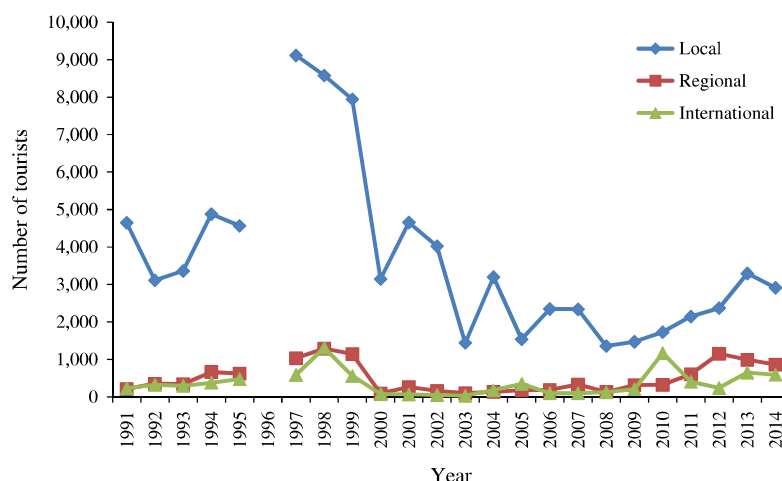
**Figure 2. Trends in total number of visitor arrivals in northern GNP, Zimbabwe from 1991 to 2014.**

Notes: Data were unavailable for the year 1996. Source: Chipinda Pools' tourist records.



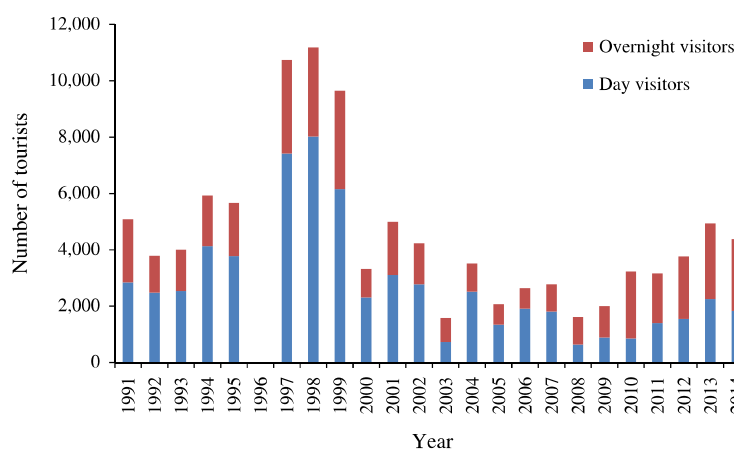
**Figure 3. Trends in local, regional and international tourist arrivals in northern GNP, Zimbabwe, 1991–2014.**

Notes: Data were unavailable for the year 1996.  
 Source: Chipinda Pools' tourist records.



**Figure 4. Trends in day and overnight visitor arrivals in northern GNP, Zimbabwe, 1991–2014.**

Notes: Data were unavailable for the year 1996.  
 Source: Chipinda Pools' tourist records.



#### 4. Discussion

Our results showed that there were some variation in the temporal tourist visitation to northern GNP characterised by an increase in tourist arrivals recorded between 1991 and 1998, whereas a decline was recorded between 1999 and 2007, whilst an increase was recorded between 2008 and 2014. Factors that could have affected the trends in visitation to northern GNP and Zimbabwe in general include the peace and positive image of the country after the national unity of 1987 (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2014) which contributed to the general increase in visitor inflows in the period between 1990 and 1999. Moreover, in the period between 1997 and 1999, tourist arrivals were very high in northern GNP as compared to the other years which can be attributed to the 1997 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Conference which was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, which likely resulted in a spill-over effect of tourist visitation to nature-based tourist destinations in the country. The decline in tourist numbers between 2000 and 2008 in northern GNP could be attributed to the unstable political situation and economic depression in the country associated with the fast track land reform (Scoones et al., 2011), especially the negative media publicity. Tourism industry is highly sensitive to insecurity and so politically unstable countries tend to be considered unsafe destinations to visit (Issa & Altinay, 2006; Saha & Yap, 2015). Finally, the increase in visitor numbers between 2009 and 2014 in northern GNP could be attributed to a number of factors which included aggressive tourism marketing, countering negative media publicity, the adoption of a multi-currency regime, and the wildlife-based land reform which started in 2004 resulting in a peaceful environment between protected area staff and local communities and an improved economic and political environment in Zimbabwe.



The increase in visitor inflows to northern GNP as from 2009 could also be attributed to changes in management regimes following the establishment of the conservation partnership arrangement. In 2007, the Government of Zimbabwe signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) which led to technical and financial support to park management and infrastructural development in GNP. Thus, the partnership led to improved infrastructure which facilitated enhanced access into the park and increased accommodation facilities, i.e. tented camps. Moreover, law enforcement was improved and a boundary or veterinary control fence was established in the northern part of park (Gandiwa, Gandiwa, & Muboko, 2012; Mutanga, Muboko, Gandiwa, & Vengesayi, 2016). Although the establishment of the boundary fence might have negatively affected the relationship between park staff and local communities, it managed to help minimise illegal activities inside the park such as encroachments by livestock and people and illegal resource harvesting thus providing secure habitats for wildlife and better quality wildlife tourism experiences.

Furthermore, the increase in tourists from 2009 could be attributed to positive perceptions of the destination by the tourists. According to Muboko, Gandiwa, Muposhi, and Tarakini (2016), the framing of tourist perceptions is influenced by events occurring or perceived to be present at a given protected area, hence the positive perception about Zimbabwe during this period might have led to an increase in tourist numbers. For example, the policy of reconciliation adopted by the Government in 1987 produced positive results by creating an image of Zimbabwe as a peaceful destination (Ndlovu, 2009). From this period up to around 1999, Zimbabwe's popularity as a tourist destination increased as a result of the country's positive image in source markets which saw the tourism industry grow rapidly (Ndlovu, 2009). This growth was reflected in the increase in the number of tourist arrivals and receipts from Western markets, the construction of many hotels, lodges and restaurants, and the availability of a considerable number of tour operators and travel agents operating in the country (The National Consultative Forum, 2001). In addition, in 1995, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) ranked Zimbabwe as the fourth most-favoured destination in Africa (World Tourism Organisation, 2005).

An increase in local tourists in northern GNP was recorded during the period between 1991 and 2014 as compared to regional and international tourists. This finding is not surprising considering that at national level, even though tourism was improving, local visitors still formed a greater percentage of all the visitors to Zimbabwe's tourism attraction sites, e.g. in 2012 and 2013, hotel bed occupancy accounted for 37% of the total hotel capacity, and local visitors constituted 87% of that while foreign visitors constituted the remaining 13% (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2014). This suggests that regional and international visitors are still lower than locals in Zimbabwe and northern GNP is no exception. More local than foreign tourists were also found to visit the Kruger National Park, South Africa which is part of the GLTP (Kruger & Saayman, 2010; Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2008).

Most day visitors than overnight visitors visited northern GNP between 1991 and 2014. This could be attributed to the fact that the park mainly offers game and scenic viewing opportunities, and recreational fishing, and does not have many tourist night activities on offer for visitors. Moreover, the quality of wildlife viewing offered by national parks is important to tourists (Ham & Weiler, 2012) who seek both the quality of wildlife, especially the "Big Five" and the opportunity to see wildlife in their natural habitats. Although GNP has most of these animals, i.e. elephant and buffalo, the lack of some big game, e.g. rhino, can put pressure on tour operators who are determined to satisfy their clients. The rhino is missing from the "Big Five" in northern GNP as it went locally extinct in the early 1990s largely due to illegal hunting (Dunham, 2005). According to Lindsey, Alexander, Mills, Romañach, and Woodroffe (2007), large and charismatic mammals have been known to be responsible for attracting most tourists to protected areas although tourist preferences are not limited to such species. This could explain the reliance on day visitors by the park most of whom come from the neighbouring town of Chiredzi especially over the national public holidays.

While the importance of wildlife as a tourist attraction and an important motive for visiting protected areas is widely acknowledged (Eagles & Mccool, 2002; Saayman & Saayman, 2006; Van Der

Merwe & Saayman, 2008), it is important to note that successful conservation alone is not enough to attract tourists especially after natural and social disasters, e.g. political instability and economic crises. Even when these problems are finally resolved, re-creating positive perceptions of the destination in the minds of the tourists may take time. For instance, after the widely publicised Zimbabwe's fast track land reform of 2000, it was reported that conservation relationships became bad to the extent that many cases of poaching, deforestation and disease outbreak were brought to the attention of the world's media (Gratwicke & Stapelkamp, 2006; Wolmer, Chaumba, & Scoones, 2003). This led to the negative image of Zimbabwe as a destination which was portrayed as an unsafe destination and a sharp decline in tourists across the whole country. Although in reality, animal populations did not significantly decline (Dunham & Van Der Westhuizen, 2015; Gandiwa, Heitkönig, Eilers, & Prins, 2016), it takes time to create a positive perception of the country in people's minds and for tourist arrivals to increase to the levels before the economic and political instability.

Furthermore, while the increase in tourist arrivals is desired, it should also be noted that if tourist numbers are not controlled they often add to the degradation of the parks and the adjacent communities. As such, while the economic benefits of wildlife tourism to both the protected areas and the communities can be enormous, tourists can also have some economic and socio-cultural negative impacts on the communities especially where their numbers are not monitored (Strickland-Munro, Moore, & Freitag-Ronaldson, 2010). For example, too many tourists in a park may lead to land degradation, air and noise pollution, littering, trampling and the alternation of ecosystems, e.g. through disturbances in the breeding cycles of animals and their natural behaviours (Finnessey, 2012). Similarly, uncontrolled tourist numbers in a community may cause changes in the community's value systems, individual behaviour, moral conduct, traditional ceremonies, cultural practices and even community organisations (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Analysis of the social and ecological impacts of visitors to protected areas as well as the management of tourist numbers in the protected areas is therefore important to reduce the pressure on the physical and social environment by the visitors. A case in point that illustrates this can be found in the Cinque Terre area in Liguria, Italy, a region that is largely dependent on tourism (Cavazza et al., 2000), where, on realising that day visitors were creating great pressure on the environment, access to the coastal area had to be controlled in order to preserve the local culture.

## 5. Conclusion

Tourist visitation to northern GNP was characterised first by an increase in tourist arrivals recorded between 1991 and 1998, followed by a decline recorded between 1999 and 2007 and then an increase recorded between 2008 and 2014. During the period between 1991 and 2014, more local tourists were recorded as compared to regional and international tourists and more day visitors were recorded than overnight visitors. We conclude that while tourist arrivals were fluctuating, many tourists who visit the park are local and are day visitors. This leads to the fact that tourism is volatile and its success depends on the destination's ability to manage a number of challenges that can easily alter visitor flows at any given time, for example economic crisis, civil unrests and health pandemics.

To promote tourism, especially with regards to increasing regional and international visitors and increasing their length of stay, we recommend that the park management should consider: (1) putting more effort in conserving wildlife resources as well as developing unique and innovative products that are always attractive to tourists, (2) developing clear marketing objectives, promotional plans and mitigating strategies that could contribute to enhancing the image of the park and increase its tourist market share, (3) allocation of adequate resources for the marketing of park, (4) conduct market research to investigate the level of visitor satisfaction, and endeavouring to increase levels of tourist satisfaction, and (5) focusing on the positive aspects of the park, in order to change the way that people think about the park and always creating a better and more positive destination image. This may be achieved through countering negative publicity and always striving to improve the situation.

In this paper we focused on the situation in Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe, but we drew insights from trends and issues arising elsewhere. Knowing about these trends enables park management both in Gonarezhou National Park and other parks especially in the SADC region which may experience similar environmental pressures, to position their planning and marketing of the parks in the context of changing pressures and sensitivities of the external environment in which recreation and wildlife tourism activities are located.

#### Funding

This study was funded by Chinhoyi University of Technology.

#### Acknowledgements

We thank the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority staff in northern GNP for the permission, and support to conduct this study. We are grateful to Abel Chemura for inputs in manuscript preparation and anonymous reviewers for comments and suggestions.

#### Author details

Chiedza N. Mutanga<sup>1</sup>

E-mails: [cnmutanga@gmail.com](mailto:cnmutanga@gmail.com), [cmutanga@cut.ac.zw](mailto:cmutanga@cut.ac.zw)

Edson Gandiwa<sup>2</sup>

E-mails: [egandiwa@gmail.com](mailto:egandiwa@gmail.com), [egandiwa@cut.ac.zw](mailto:egandiwa@cut.ac.zw)

Never Muboko<sup>2</sup>

E-mail: [nmbok@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nmbok@yahoo.co.uk)

<sup>1</sup> School of Hospitality and Tourism, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Private Bag 7724, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> School of Wildlife, Ecology and Conservation, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Private Bag 7724, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe.

#### Citation information

Cite this article as: An analysis of tourist trends in northern Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe, 1991-2014, Chiedza N. Mutanga, Edson Gandiwa & Never Muboko, *Cogent Social Sciences* (2017), 3: 1392921.

#### Cover image

Source: Gonarezhou Conservation Project (2009).

#### References

- Bader, A. (2010). *Tourism business environment analysis conducted for Kerala/India*.
- Ballantyne, R., Packer, J., & Falk, J. (2011). Visitors' learning for environmental sustainability: Testing short-and long-term impacts of wildlife tourism experiences using structural equation modelling. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1243–1252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.11.003>
- Balmford, A., Green, J. M. H., Anderson, M., Beresford, J., Huang, C., Naidoo, R., ... Manica, A. (2015). Walk on the wild side: Estimating the global magnitude of visits to protected areas. *PLoS Biology*, 13(2), e1002074. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1002074
- Bateman, I. J. (2011). *The UK national ecosystem assessment technical report* (pp. 1067–1152). Cambridge: UK NEA and UNEP-WCMC.
- Baud-Bovy, M. (2002). *Tourism and recreation handbook of planning and design*. Oxford: Architectural Press.
- Bell, S., Tyrväinen, L., Sievänen, T., Pröbstl, U., & Simpson, M. (2007). Outdoor recreation and nature tourism: A European perspective. *Living Reviews in Landscape Research*, 1, 1–46.
- Buscher, B., & Whande, W. (2007). Whims in the winds of time: Emerging trends in biodiversity conservation and protected area management. *Conservation and Society*, 5, 22–43.
- Cavazza, W., Immordino, F., Moretti, L., Peirano, A., Pironi, A., & Ruggiero, F. (2000). Sedimentological parameters and seagrasses distributions as indicators of anthropogenic coastal degradation at Monterosso Bay (Ligurian Sea, NW Italy). *Journal of Coastal Research*, 16(2), 295–305.
- Cochrane, J. (2003). *Ecotourism, conservation and sustainability: A case study of BromuTenggerSemeru National Park, Indonesia* (PhD Thesis). University of Hull.
- Dunham, K. (2005). *The re-introduction of rhinos to Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe: A feasibility study—biological aspects and IUCN reintroduction guidelines* (SADC Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation Report Task 3.1-12.1).
- Dunham, K. M., & Van Der Westhuizen, H. F. (2015). *Aerial survey of elephants and other large herbivores in Gonarezhou National Park and save valley conservancy (Zimbabwe): 2014*. Chiredzi: Frankfurt Zoological Society Gonarezhou Conservation Project, Gonarezhou National Park.
- Eagles, P. F. J., & Mccool, S. F. (2002). *Tourism in national parks and protected areas: Planning and management*. New York, NY: CAB International. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9780851995892.0000>
- Finnessey, L. (2012). *The negative effects of tourism on national parks in the United States*. Providence, RI: Bachelor of Science, Johnson & Wales University.
- Gandiwa, E. (2011). Wildlife tourism in Gonarezhou National Park, southeast Zimbabwe: Opportunities for wildlife viewing. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 13, 304–315.
- Gandiwa, E., Gandiwa, P., & Muboko, N. (2012). Living with wildlife and associated conflicts in a contested area within the Northern Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 14, 252–260.
- Gandiwa, E., Heitkönig, I. M., Eilers, P. H., & Prins, H. H. (2016). Rainfall variability and its impact on large mammal populations in a complex of semi-arid African savanna protected areas. *Tropical Ecology*, 57, 163–180.
- Gandiwa, E., Heitkönig, I. M. A., Lokhorst, A. M., Prins, H. H. T., & Leeuwis, C. (2013). Illegal hunting and law enforcement during a period of economic decline in Zimbabwe: A case study of northern Gonarezhou National Park and adjacent areas. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 21(3), 133–142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2012.11.009>
- Gandiwa, E., Sprangers, S., van Bommel, S., Heitkönig, I. M. A., Leeuwis, C., & Prins, H. H. T. (2014). Spill-over effect in media framing: Representations of wildlife conservation in Zimbabwean and international media, 1989–2010. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 22(5), 413–423. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2014.03.009>
- Gjorgievski, M., Kozuharov, S., & Nakovski, D. (2013). Typology of recreational-tourism resources as an important element of the tourist offer. *UTMS Journal of Economics*, 4, 53–60.
- Goeldner, C. R., & Ritchie, J. B. (2012). *Tourism: Principles, practices, philosophies*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- Goeldner, C. R., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2006). *Tourism: Principles practices philosophies*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- Gogoi, D. (2014). A conceptual framework of photographic tourism. *IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Applied, Natural and Social Sciences (IMPACT: IJRANSS)*, 2, 109–114.

- Goodwin, H., Kent, I., Parker, K., & Walpole, M. (1997). *Tourism, conservation & sustainable development* (Vol. IV). Zimbabwe: The South-East Lowveld.
- Gratwicke, B., & Stapelkamp, B. (2006). *Wildlife conservation and environmental management in an 'Outpost of Tyranny'*. *ZimConservation Opinion Special Report*. Washington, DC: ZimConservation.
- Groom, R., Watermeyer, J., & Boté, R. (2015). *Gonarezhou predator project annual report*. Chiredzi: Frankfurt Zoological Society, Gonarezhou Conservation Project, Gonarezhou National Park.
- Ham, S. H., & Weiler, B. (2012). Interpretation as the centerpiece of sustainable wildlife tourism. In R. Harris, T. Griffin, & P. Williams (Eds.), *Sustainable tourism* (pp. 35–44). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Higginbottom, K. (Ed.). (2004). *Wildlife Tourism: Impacts, management and planning*. Altona: Common Ground Publishing.
- Holmes, G. (2013). Exploring the relationship between local support and the success of protected areas. *Conservation and Society*, 11(1), 72–82.  
<https://doi.org/10.4103/0972-4923.110940>
- Honey, M., & Gilpin, R. (2010). *Tourism in the developing world: Promoting peace and reducing poverty* (Special Report). Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Issa, I. A., & Altinay, L. (2006). Impacts of political instability on tourism planning and development: The case of Lebanon. *Tourism Economics*, 12(3), 361–381.  
<https://doi.org/10.5367/00000006778493664>
- Job, H., & Paesler, F. (2013). Links between nature-based tourism, protected areas, poverty alleviation and crises—The example of Wasini Island (Kenya). *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 1–2, 18–28.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2013.04.004>
- Jones, T., & Ohsawa, T. (2016). Monitoring nature-based tourism trends in Japan's national parks: Mixed messages from domestic and inbound visitors. *PARKS*, 22(1), 25–36.  
<https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2014.PARKS>
- Kanjilal G. (2008). *Tourism S.W.O.T. Analysis India, Hotel Industry*. Retrieved October 18, 2015, from <http://www.gourkanjilal.com/tourism-s-w-o-t-analysis-india/hotelindustry-in-india.htm>
- Karambakuwa, R. T., Shonhiwa, T., Murombo, L., Mauchi, F. N., Gopo, N. R., Denhere, W., ... Mudavahu, V. (2011). The impact of Zimbabwe Tourism authority initiatives on tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe (2008–2009). *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 13, 68–77.
- Knowles, T., Diamantis, D., & El-Mourhabi, J. (2001). *The globalization of tourism and hospitality: A strategic perspective, continuum*. London.
- Kruger, M., & Saayman, M. (2010). Travel motivation of tourists to Kruger and Tsitsikamma National Parks: A comparative study. *South African Journal of Wildlife Research*, 40(1), 93–102. doi:10.3957/056.040.0106
- Lindsey, P. A., Alexander, R., Mills, M. G. L., Romañach, S., & Woodroffe, R. (2007). Wildlife viewing preferences of visitors to protected areas in south Africa: Implications for the role of ecotourism in conservation. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 6(1), 19–33. <https://doi.org/10.2167/joe133.0>
- MacCosham, B. (2017). Negotiating leisure constraints: The case of an amateur musician with epilepsy. *Leisure Studies*, 31(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2017.1285955>
- Muboko, N., Gandiwa, E., Muposhi, V., & Tarakini, T. (2016). Illegal hunting and protected areas: Tourist perceptions on wild animal poisoning in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe. *Tourism Management*, 52, 170–172.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.06.023>
- Mutanga, C. N., Muboko, N., Gandiwa, E., & Vengesayi, S. (2016). Beyond a single perspective to conservation relationships: Exploring factors influencing protected area staff and local community relationships in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management*, 12(3), 212–226.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21513732.2016.1183712>
- Mutanga, C. N., Vengesayi, S., Muboko, N., & Gandiwa, E. (2015). Towards harmonious conservation relationships: A framework for understanding protected area staff-local community relationships in developing countries. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 25, 8–16. doi:10.1016/j.jnc.2015.02.006
- Ndlovu, J. (2009). *Branding as a strategic tool to reposition a destination: A survey of key tourism stakeholders in Zimbabwe*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Newsome, D., Dowling, R. K., & Moore, S. A. (2005). *Wildlife tourism* (1st ed.). Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Öner, Ö., & Klaesson, J. (2017). Location of leisure: The new economic geography of leisure services. *Leisure Studies*, 36(2), 1–17. doi:10.1080/02614367.2016.1246588
- Razali, N. M., & Wah, Y. B. (2011). Power comparisons of Shapiro–Wilk, Kolmogorov–Smirnov, Lilliefors and Anderson–Darling tests. *Journal of Statistical Modeling and Analytics*, 2, 21–33.
- Saayman, M., & Saayman, A. (2006). Estimating the economic contribution of visitor spending in the Kruger National Park to the regional economy. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 14(1), 67–81.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669580608668592>
- Saha, S., & Yap, G. (2015). How does political instability influence the effect of tourism demand on economic growth? In *New Zealand Association of Economists Conference*, 1–3 July 2015. Wellington.
- Scoones, I., Marongwe, N., Mavedzenge, B., Murimbarimba, F., Mahenehene, J., & Sukume, C. (2011). Zimbabwe's land reform: Challenging the myths. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(5), 967–993.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2011.622042>
- Shapiro, S. S., & Wilk, M. B. (1965). An analysis of variance test for normality (complete samples). *Biometrika*, 52(3–4), 591–611.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/biomet/52.3-4.591>
- Stebbins, R. A. (2015). *Leisure and positive psychology: Linking activities with positiveness*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-56994-3>
- Strickland-Munro, J. K., Moore, S. A., & Freitag-Ronaldson, S. (2010). The impacts of tourism on two communities adjacent to the Kruger National Park, South Africa. *Development Southern Africa*, 27(5), 663–678.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2010.522829>
- Telfer, D. J. & Sharpley, R. (Eds.). (2008). *Tourism and development in the developing world*. London: Routledge.
- The National Consultative Forum. (2001). *Zimbabwe economic recovery* (Vol. 2, Issue 1). Harare.
- Torkildsen, G. (2005). *Leisure and recreation management*. Hove: Psychology Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203401651>
- Tribe, J. (2005). *The economics of recreation, leisure and tourism*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Tsiotsou, R. H., & Goldsmith, R. E. (2012). *Strategic marketing in tourism services*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Tsiotsou, R. H., & Vlachopoulou, M. (2011). Understanding the effects of market orientation and e-marketing on service performance. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 29(2), 141–155.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/02634501111117593>
- Tureac, C. E., & Turtureanu, A. (2010). Types and forms of tourism. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. (Economica)*, 4.
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2014). *Towards measuring the economic value of wildlife watching tourism in Africa – Briefing Paper*. Madrid: Author.
- United Nations World Tourism Organisation. (2016, May). *World tourism barometer* (Vol. 14). Madrid: Author.

- Van Der Merwe, P., & Saayman, M. (2008). Travel motivations of tourists visiting Kruger National Park. *Koedoe*, 50, 154–159.
- Walpole, M. J., & Goodwin, H. J. (2001). Local attitudes towards conservation and tourism around Komodo National Park, Indonesia. *Environmental Conservation*, 28, 160–166.
- Wolmer, W., Chaumba, J., & Scoones, I. (2003). *Wildlife management and land reform in southeastern Zimbabwe: A compatible pairing or a contradiction in terms? Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa Research Paper 1*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- Wood, S. A., Guerry, A. D., Silver, J. M., & Lacayo, M. (2013). Using social media to quantify nature-based tourism and recreation. *Scientific Reports*, 3(1), 17.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/srep02976>
- World Tourism Organisation. (2005). *World tourism highlights 2004*. Retrieved from <http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/menu.html>
- Zimbabwe Tourism Authority. (2014). *Tourism trends and statistics report*. Harare: Author.



© 2017 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.

You are free to:

Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format  
Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.  
The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.  
You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.  
No additional restrictions

You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.



**Cogent Social Sciences (ISSN: 2331-1886) is published by Cogent OA, part of Taylor & Francis Group.**

**Publishing with Cogent OA ensures:**

- Immediate, universal access to your article on publication
- High visibility and discoverability via the Cogent OA website as well as Taylor & Francis Online
- Download and citation statistics for your article
- Rapid online publication
- Input from, and dialog with, expert editors and editorial boards
- Retention of full copyright of your article
- Guaranteed legacy preservation of your article
- Discounts and waivers for authors in developing regions

**Submit your manuscript to a Cogent OA journal at [www.CogentOA.com](http://www.CogentOA.com)**

