# Demographic and travel behaviour characteristics of visitors in Lake Manyara National Park, Tanzania.

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## Abstract

With constant competition from existing and upcoming tourist sites, destination managers are constantly striving to package their products differently. This brings the need to understand market structure – a pertinent factor in creating and enhancing customized tourist experiences. This proactive move is particularly important in making informed marketing efforts for a destination. This study attempted to provide some empirical and conceptual data on the travel behaviour and demographic characteristics of tourists visiting Lake Manyara National Park - LMNP, a popular destination in Tanzania. With a target population of 1001 tourists, a sample of 500 tourists was systematically recruited and issued with questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the findings presented in frequency tables and percentages. The major findings revealed that majority of the visitors were first-time visitors (69.8%, n=305), mainly attracted by wildlife (92.9%, n=406), sourced travel information from park website (58.4%, n=202), enjoyed on-site game drives (90.6%, n=395) and expressed willingness to recommend the park to others (65.9%, n=288). They also had considerably high income and were informed. The study recommends that destination managers invest in satisfaction levels of customers by focusing on diversifying and packaging products that could better respond to their preferences.

**Keywords:** Destination management, Market research, Tourists demographics, Travel behaviour, Lake Manyara National Park, Tanzania

## 1. Introduction

East Africa's *Land of Kilimanjaro, Zanzibar and the Serengeti* is among the major global destinations for *safari* and wildlife tourism, particularly due to her stunning wildlife, extensive savanna grasslands, and coastlines among others (Jani & Minde, 2017; Nkinda, 2016). There are, however, other competitors both in Africa and further afield. Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Zambia compete on *safari* and wildlife-based tourism. Others such as Rwanda and Egypt offer alternatives to these "traditional" tourism products - heritage, historical, and Nature products among others. Elsewhere, European heavyweights such as France's infrastructure and the fashion industry; Italy's art, urban life - Venice, the Colosseum, and the vatican; Greece's Santorini among others offer their own authentic products and strive to focus on the regional European Union market, which forms the major source markets for East Africa (Germany, UK, Italy, among others) (Thiong'o, Rop & Akunja, 2022).

Tourism in East Africa and Tanzania is, thus, on the edge, calling for rapid actions to maintain competitiveness – such as market research (Guimarães et al., 2015).

From the perspective of tourist consumption process, tourist travel behavior could be grouped into pre, during and post-visitation behavior. Many studies have explored factors influencing tourists' visitation or revisitation - destination image, motivation, and information source. The studies further indicate that these variables are crucial predictors of tourist intention to travel. Baloglu (1999) and Smith and Costello (2009) for instance demonstrate that travel information availability and destination image were predictors of potential tourists' visit intention in Mediterranean countries. Sparks and Pan (2009) and Cox et al. (2009) on the other hand found out that web-based information sources are important in travel decision making. Regarding market demographics, there are quite a few available literature sources that address the research question. Examples are Melnyk, Van Osselaer & Bijmolt (2009); Meng and Uysal (2008), Okazaki and Hirose (2009) and Kim, Lee, Lee and Song (2012) that looks at how gender differences influence travel planning, decision making, and consumption of tourist products; Radojevic, Stanisic, and Stanic (2015) and Meng (2010) that look at the dynamics of individual and group travel; and Vogt (1976) and Ritchie, Tkaczynski, and Faulks (2010) researching on travel behavior and characteristics among the youthful tourists and cycle tourists respectively.

While these publications look at important aspects of the travel experience, there is still limited literature relating to tourists in regards to their overall demographic and travel characteristics in East Africa and particularly in Tanzania. This paucity in literature forms the basis of this study – attempting to fill the conceptual/empirical gap.

## 2. Literature Review

While it's important to allocate resources and formulate strategies in an organization/product's marketing efforts, it's equally important (conceivably most important) to understand who you are marketing to (Callahan & Lasry, 2004). This "outside-in" marketing approach is what Tse et al. (2004) refers to as market intelligence. It helps better serve the market through a customized and tailor-made experience. From a destination management perspective, it is a proactive way to stay ahead of the customer in an attempt to always strive to meet (or even surpass) their expectations (Guimarães et al., 2015; Radojevic, Stanisic & Stanic, 2015).

Over the years, there have been studies done on the relative effectiveness of market orientation on business performance (for instance, Tse et al., 2004; Berry, 1983; Luo & Gu, 2016, and Sin et al., 2000). Numerous studies such as those by Grönroos (1991), Paul (1988), and Perrien et al. (1992) among others also highlight the importance of establishing, enhancing, and maintaining relationships with the market - sufficient evidence to support the need to understand customer behavioral characteristics. This is what this study is anchored on – an antecedent to further study on market dynamics.

### 2.1    Theory of Planned Behavior/Reasoned Action – A Conceptual and theoretical framework

Applied in different thematic areas and supported by various studies, this study adopted the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as proposed by Ajzen (1999) to explain and predict tourists' behavior. In meta-analytic review, Armitage and Conner (2001) argue that TPB can account for 27-39% of the variance in customer behavior and intentions. Elsewhere, Sheeran et al. (2001) uphold that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are reliable predictors of TPB and can account for 40-50% of variance in health behaviors. There is evidence that TPB has also received good empirical support in its applications to a diversity of areas such as leisure studies (Norman & Conner, 2005; Wang & Walker, 2011; Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007); tourism studies (Lam & Hus, 2006; Quintal, Lee & Soutar, 2010; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010; Tsai, 2011), consumer behavior studies (Parlou & Fygenson, 2006), among others.

TPB is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action and they both explain informal and motivational influences in behavior (Armitage & Couner, 2001). Like the Theory of Reasoned Action, the concept of intentions to depict a specific behaviour is central to the TPB. Here, people's intention can predict their behavioral performance. Intentions are assumed to capture motivation factors that influence a behavior; they are indicators of how hard people are willing to try and the efforts they are planning to exert in order to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to the provisions of the theory, an individual's intention is determined by three conceptually independent predictors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control toward a specific behavior (figure 1.0).

**Figure 1.0      The theory of planned behavior**
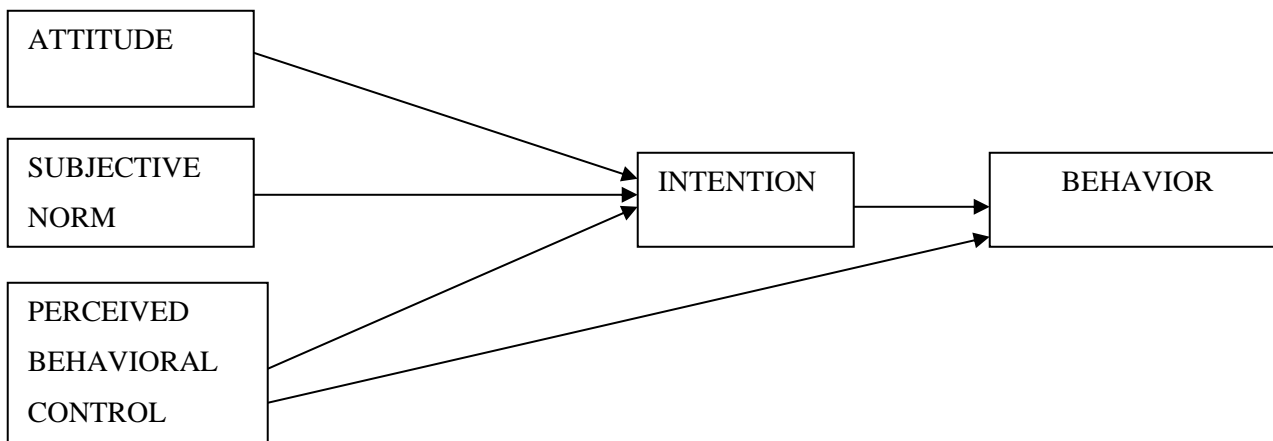


(Adapted from Ajzen, 1991)

Ajzen (2006) points out that the combination of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control towards specific behavior leads to the establishment of an intention. Latimer & Ginis (2005) posits that an attitude is a person's behavioral belief and a positive or negative evaluation of the behavior in question. On the hand, Rhodes et al., (2006) assert that attitude has an effect on predictability of exercising intentions and behavior. Subjective norm is a function of normative beliefs which means that the perceived social pressure to depict a behavior or not and is influenced by pressure groups (Ajzen, 1991, 2002). Ajzen (1991) states that perceived behavioral control means the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior is assumed to reflect past experiences as well as anticipated impediments. In the TPB, perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention can be used directly to predict behavioral achievement. According to this theory, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to behavior, and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger should be an individual's intention to perform the behavior under consideration (Ajzen, 1992).

TPB has been applied in various studies to predict and understand peoples' intentions to engage in various leisure and tourism activities with significant success - for instance, choice of travel (Bamberg, et al., 2003) and outdoor adventure activities (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Blanding, 1994) among others. In another study, Han et al. (2011) added "expectations" onto the TPB framework to predict Chinese travelers' intention to visit Korea with the findings showing that the extended model advanced the understanding of Chinese tourists' decision-making process in selecting Korea as a destination. With the aforementioned in mind, this study was anchored on the hypothesis that the target respondents' demographics may affect their behavior, intent, and attitude towards undertaking particular touristic activities and consuming specific products in Lake Manyara National Park.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Study Area

Gazetted as a category (II) protected landscape in 1959, Lake Manyara National Park (hereinafter abbreviated as LMNP) covers an area of 330 sq km (127 sq miles), of which up to 200 sq km (77 sq miles) is a lake (particularly during the rainy season) (TANAPA, 2020). Located 755km from Dares Salaam and 130 km from Arusha towns, LMNP is part of the larger Tanzania's Northern Circuit (Greenway & Vesey-Fitzgerald, 1969; Nkinda, 2016). The park offers various tourism products and activities including day and night game drives, cultural tours, bird watching, mountain bike tours, and picnic/forest trails/walks (Nkinda, 2016; TANAPA, 2020). The park is accessible by air and road.

### 3.2 Subject scope, data collection tools and analysis method

The study targeted a population comprising tourists visiting/revisiting LMNP in July and August, 2016. From the available records in TANAPA offices at LMNP in July 2015, about 500 tourists visited the park. This was used as the sample size (survey sampling) for the respondents and comprised tourists over 18 years.

Data collection was conducted using questionnaires which were handed directly to tourists at the exit gate of LMNP. Questionnaires were administered at the park's exit gate through an on-the-spot filling method. Research participants were also selected on the basis of their willingness to not only participate in the study but also provide fairly personal information. For confidentiality, though, names were not required. The survey questionnaire consisted of five sections, including all factors in the study model designed to gather tourists demographics and travel characteristics while at the park. Questions used multiple choices in every variable construct being measured. Observation was also used to generally complement the questionnaire – for instance, the activities tourists were involved in while LMNP.

Items to measure the study constructs (demographics and travel behavior) were adopted from previous studies including the proposed conceptual model and revised appropriately to fit the study question. Collected data was analyzed using a combination of SPSS 16.0 and excel spreadsheets and presented in frequency tables and percentages.

## 4. Results

### 4.1    Response Rate

From the total sample size of 500 respondents, 452 questionnaires were collected. This was equivalent to a response rate of 90.4% which according to Babbie (2007), it was deemed as significant for analysis. A total of 15 questionnaires were unusable (presence of gaps and/or incompleteness) and were, therefore, discarded. The rest (437 questionnaires) were coded and used for data analysis.

**Table 1.0:** Response Rate

| Respondents | Questionnaires administered | Valid for analysis (n) | Response rate (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tourists** | 500 | 437 | 87.4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** | **500** | **437** | **87.4** |

### 4.2 Demographic characteristics of respondents

A shown in table 2.0, more than half of the tourists were married, earned more than $60,000 annually, had college education, were aged below 45 years, and were working outside the public service. This has a general implication that majority of the tourists visiting LMNP had more disposable income, were middle aged, and quite informed.

**Table 2.0:** Demographic Characteristics of Samples (n=437)

| Variables | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 230 | 52.6 |
| Female | 207 | 47.4 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Age Bracket** | | |
| Below 25 years | 27 | 6.2 |
| 25-30 years | 73 | 16.7 |
| 30-35 years | 61 | 14 |
| 35-40 years | 44 | 10.1 |
| 40-45 years | 98 | 22.4 |
| 45-50 years | 38 | 8.7 |
| Above 50 years | 96 | 22 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Marital Status** | | |
| Married | 258 | 59 |
| Single | 171 | 39.1 |
| Divorced | 5 | 1.1 |
| Widowed | 3 | 0.8 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Education Level** | | |
| Primary/Elementary | 11 | 2.6 |
| Secondary | 46 | 10.5 |
| Baccalaureate | 208 | 47.6 |
| Master | 129 | 29.5 |
| PhD | 43 | 9.8 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Occupation** | | |
| Public Service | 105 | 24 |
| Self Employed | 119 | 27.3 |
| NGO | 33 | 7.6 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Private sector | 98 | 22.4 | |
| Housewife | 4 | 0.9 | |
| Student | 71 | 16.2 | |
| Retired/Veteran | 7 | 1.6 | |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** | |
| | | | |
| **Income Levels** | | | |
| Below $40000 | 11 | 2.9 | |
| $40001-$50000 | 77 | 18.8 | |
| $50001-$60000 | 97 | 23.7 | |
| $60001-$70000 | 119 | 29.1 | |
| $70001-$80000 | 65 | 15.8 | |
| Above $800001 | 40 | 9.7 | |
| **Total** | **409** | **100** | |
| None | 28 | | |
| **Total** | **437** | | |

### 4.3 Travel Behavior Characteristics

From the profiling, more than half of the tourists (51.9%) were accompanied by family member(s), sort accommodation within the park (64.8%), sourced travel information from park website (58.4%), were first time visitors (69.8%), had visited other parks in the Tanzania's Northern circuit (67.7%), spent time watching wildlife/birds and game driving (59%), and expressed willingness to recommend the park to others (65.9%) (Table 3.0).

**Table 3.0:** Travel Behavior Characteristics (n=437)

| Variables | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|---|---|---|
| **Spent in accommodation within or around the park?** | | |
| Yes | 283 | 64.8 |
| No | 154 | 35.2 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Who accompanied you?** | | |
| Noone | 27 | 6.2 |
| Friends | 126 | 28.8 |
| Family | 227 | 51.9 |
| Mates – College/University related | 21 | 4.8 |
| Business group | 36 | 8.3 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Source of information about LMNP** | | |
| Newspaper/magazine/Poster | 52 | 15 |
| TV/Advertisement | 61 | 17.6 |
| Website | 202 | 58.4 |
| Exhibition | 31 | 9.0 |
| Family member(s) | 15 | 3.3 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Friend(s) | 41 | 4.4 |
| Tour agent | 29 | 6.7 |
| Tour guide/operating company | 7 | 1.6 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| **First visit in the park?** | | |
| Yes | 305 | 69.8 |
| No | 132 | 30.2 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Number of times visited?** | | |
| First time visit | 305 | 69.8 |
| Once | 51 | 11.7 |
| Twice | 44 | 10.0 |
| More than twice | 37 | 8.5 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Visited other national parks in the region?** | | |
| Yes | 296 | 67.7 |
| No | 141 | 32.3 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Which other parks that did you visit?** | | |
| None | 141 | 32.3 |
| Serengeti National Park | 91 | 20.8 |
| Arusha National Park | 41 | 9.4 |
| Tarangire National Park | 29 | 6.6 |
| Kilimanjaro National Park | 47 | 10.8 |
| Rubondo National Park | 23 | 5.4 |
| Saanane National Park | 26 | 5.9 |
| Ngorongoro Crater Conservation Area | 39 | 8.8 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| **How many times have you visited LMNP?** | | |
| None | 141 | 32.3 |
| Once | 190 | 43.5 |
| Twice | 63 | 14.4 |
| More than twice | 43 | 9.8 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |
| | | |
| **Would you recommend Lake Manyara National Park to anyone?** | | |
| Yes | 288 | 65.9 |
| No | 149 | 34.1 |
| **Total** | **437** | **100** |

### 4.3.1 Visitation Pull Factors

In identifying travel behavior characteristics of the respondents, the study also identified what factors led to the travel. Evidently, tourists were mainly attracted by wildlife (92.9%), followed by culture (51.5%), accessibility of the park (48.3%), and finally, service quality and accommodation facilities (45.1%) (table 4.0).

**Table 4.0:** Main Attraction Attributes at Lake Manyara National Park

| Attraction | | Response | None | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wild animals/Nature | Freq | 406 | 31 | **437** |
| | % | 92.9 | 7.1 | **100** |
| Service quality and accommodation facilities | Freq | 197 | 240 | **437** |
| | % | 45.1 | 54.9 | **100** |
| The culture of the surrounding communities | Freq | 225 | 212 | **437** |
| | % | 51.5 | 48.5 | **100** |
| Accessibility of the park | Freq | 211 | 226 | **437** |
| | % | 48.3 | 51.7 | **100** |

### 4.3.2 Activities Tourists were Engaged in

As revealed in table 5.0 below, tourists engaged in various activities but the most popular was game drives (90.6%), followed by bird watching (51.7%), watching tree climbing lions (46.7%), and excursions (26.1%). In the long run, though, these activities may require diversification to give tourists more choices.

**Table 5.0**: Tourists Activities Within the Park

| Activities engaged | | Response | None | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Game Drives | Freq | 395 | 42 | **437** |
| | % | 90.6 | 9.4 | **100** |
| Bird-watching | Freq | 226 | 211 | **437** |
| | % | 51.7 | 48.3 | **100** |
| Watching tree climbing lions | Freq | 204 | 233 | **437** |
| | % | 46.7 | 53.3 | **100** |
| Excursions in and around *Mto wa Mbu* | Freq | 114 | 323 | **437** |
| | % | 26.1 | 73.9 | **100** |

## 5. Discussions

This study investigated travel behaviour and demographic characteristics of tourists visiting LMNP between July and August 2016. It was an attempt to fill in the literature paucity in travel behavior and demographic profiling of tourists visiting the study area, and by extension the East African region.

Findings reported that a majority of the visitors were first-timers who were mainly attracted by wildlife as the main reason for travel. This is not surprising as East Africa is the *safari* destination of the world given the many natural attractions ranging from stunning landscapes to a variety of floral and faunal resources (Okello, D'Amour

& Manka, 2008; Kagoda-Batuwa, 2012; Alexander & Njenga, 2012; Hando et al., 2022). Additionally, it was noted many of the travellers sought park information regarding their travel from LMNP website (https://www.lakemanyara.net/); an indication of the critical position of the internet in contemporary travel decision making. The findings are not surprising as there was an indication that the larger majority of the respondents were informed (had a college education) and were, thus, expected to have some level of appreciation of technology. Of consequence, many studies corroborate these findings by reporting that the internet is not only a readily available source of information but also a major factor in informing travel related behavior (see Li et al., 2009; Lian & Yu, 2019; Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002; Fodness & Murray, 1998; Dellaert, 1999; Bieger & Laesser, 2004; Arsal, Backman & Baldwin, 2008; and Hernández-Méndez, Muñoz-Leiva, & Sánchez-Fernández, 2015 among others). In fact, Hernández-Méndez, Muñoz-Leiva, and Sánchez-Fernández (2015) in their study investigating travel decision making behavior report that official sites (in this case, park websites) are the main source of information for tourists. This could be accredited to the fact that information and representations by official Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) are deemed quite authentic, well-founded, reliable, forthright, and objective (Molinillo, Liébana-Cabanillas & Anaya-Sánchez, 2017; Jeong et al., 2012; Choi, Hickerson & Kerstetter, 2018).

In regards to the activities indulged in, majority of tourists enjoyed on-site game drives within the park and expressed willingness to recommend the park. This is an important indicator of not only their satisfaction but also a predictor of their willingness to revisit (Khairi & Darmawan, 2021; Chen, Cheng, & Kim, 2020; Liu & Lee, 2016; Som and Badarneh, 2011; Um, Chon, and Ro, 2006). Other important attributes such as the possession of considerably high disposable income were noted.

Against the foregoing, it could be argued that the study presents opportune variables to consider while managing the quality of park offerings with the aim of enhancing experiences and creating value-added products for positive future behavioral intentions (Patino, Pitta & Quinones, 2012; Shiftan, Outwater & Zhou, 2008; Smith & Costello, 2009). Importantly, and according to the provisions of the choice theory (McFadden, 1986), managers of the park's products seem to have their work cut out.

## 5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study adds to the existing research (conceptual and empirical) devoted to the understanding of tourist behaviour in wildlife destinations. Indeed, the results could corroborate studies on tourists' visitation behavior and consumption behavior. It also provides a basis for further studies on other parks in Tanzania (and the general East African wildlife destinations). Specifically, the findings on travellers' demographics provide some insights on the understanding of market dynamics for LMNP and by extension, destination Tanzania.

## 5.2 Practical Implications

Albeit in a fairy limited matter, the study presents aspects that destination managers in LMNP could look into in regards to the improvement of quality of product/services. Further, the demographic profiling could form a basis for decision making in regards to policy strategies, financial allocation, and marketing efforts by DMOs. Importantly, the study provides areas of further improvement for destination managers in Tanzania particularly on tourists' preferences for products and tourist activities.

## 5.3 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This study has several limitations; first, it was conducted in LMNP, 1 out of 22 registered park areas in Tanzania. This means that, although the results are useful in the overall understanding of the tourists visiting the study site,

the results may not be generalized or deemed representative of the other destination areas. This has the implication that a further study utilizing more parks (representative samples) would be necessary.

Secondly, the study did not exactly capture such demographic details such as countries of origin; important in understanding of source markets from a universal perspective. Lastly, a longitudinal study to observe/analyze travel behaviour and demographics over time would be helpful in providing more significant results and even more compelling/applicable insights.

## 6. Conclusions

From the study, it could generally be concluded that word-of-mouth and technology (social media and the internet) are critical tools in fostering repeat visitation. Additionally, based on the study results, destination managers could pay attention to the certain tourists' demographics. For instance, a focus on the middle-class, the college educated, and those aged below 45 could perhaps inform the development of packages that responds to their needs and wants in view to cultivate repeat consumption.

Other than providing some conceptual information, the study could be insightful for DMOs and forms an important basis for further research considerations.

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