

Tourists' motivations for visiting Kakum National Park, Ghana

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Abstract

Since travel motivations of tourists are becoming varied and complex, it has become necessary for tourist destinations to conduct regular investigations into this aspect of the industry to help meet the needs and desires of travellers. This study explores the travel motivations of tourists visiting Kakum National Park in Ghana. Data were collected from 342 tourists who completed their tour of the park between July and August 2015. The study reveals four main motivations of tourists who visited the park, namely adventure, education, escape and social interaction. Three distinct motivational segments were identified among the patrons, with those seeking for adventure and knowledge being the majority. It was concluded from the findings that tourists' decisions to visit Kakum National Park were influenced by varied combinations of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.

Keywords: Ghana, travel motivations, Kakum National Park

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Introduction

Natural environments and parks have attracted and continue to attract human attention and interest for a variety of reasons. Uysal and Gitelson (1994) describe natural environments and national parks simply as powerful attractions for tourists. In particular, national parks are known to have tremendous value for ecology, recreation and culture, all of which draw people to them (Kamri & Radam, 2013).

Evidence suggests that individuals' motives for travelling to natural environments have varied throughout history (Fridgen, 1996; Eagles & McCool, 2002). As indicated by Fridgen (1996), early travels to sacred locations and places were mainly for spiritual renewal. This was followed by travel for health and pleasure purposes and subsequently for appreciation of the natural world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Likewise, Eagles and McCool (2002) reveal a current shift in emphasis from the establishment and expansion of protected areas to the management of these protected areas. This shift in focus makes it relevant for park managers to gain insight into the travel motivations of visitors to natural environments. Thus, for the effective management of parks, planners and managers need to understand visitors' motivations.

Travel motivation has been described as the trigger that sets off the events associated with travel (Parrinello, 1993). In a similar fashion, Ryan (1995) and Guay et al. (2010) describe tourists' motivations as reasons that make people travel. In another vein, Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (2004) define motivation as the attribute that moves people to do or not to do something. Motivation arises when a person wants to satisfy a need and must take action to do so (Goossens, 2000). Studies by Jamrozy and Uysal (1994) and Galley and Clifton (2004) suggest that the motives for participating in tourism and visiting national parks are varied and complex, with the complexity increasing in consonance with modernity. This calls for regular and detailed studies of tourists' motivations to help make their visits more meaningful, enjoyable and fulfilling.

Unfortunately, such detailed and regular studies are lacking in most destinations in developing countries, including Ghana, due to lack of funds. Most of the institutions of tourism, such as the Ghana Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts and the Ghana Tourism Authority, which are mandated to conduct such studies, lack the necessary funds to execute their mandates effectively. As pointed out by Kamri and Radam (2013), many studies have discussed issues on travel motivations in the tourism literature, but this discussion has barely expanded to cover national parks in developing countries. The consequence is that the activities and operations of national parks in such countries are not informed by the desires, needs and expectations of visitors. As countries and destinations strive to increase their

share of the international tourism market, it has become important to understand why people travel and why they choose specific destinations (Oh et al., 1995).

The main objective of this study is to understand why tourists visit Kakum National Park. The specific objectives of the study are to identify the underlying motives of tourists visiting the park and to segment tourists into groups based on their motivations.

An understanding of travellers' motivation for travelling to parks, including the Kakum National Park, will inform park managers regarding how to plan for the use of park resources and manage the impact of tourist visits (Pan & Ryan, 2007). Such information is particularly relevant in the light of the definition of tourism proposed by Bull (1991), that tourism as a human activity uses both natural and cultural resources that need to be managed effectively to ensure the sustainability of tourism development.

Insight into travellers' motivation is at the heart of the effective provision of recreational opportunities for people. The concept of matching in tourism requires that recreational opportunities offered in parks and destinations are guided by the travel motives of potential visitors. Specifically, an understanding of travel motivations may be used to plan different services, facilities and infrastructure within the park to take care of the preferences of different groups of tourists.

Again, an understanding of travel motivations can benefit tourism marketers with regard to market segmentation, product development, service quality evaluation, image development and promotional activities (Fodness, 1994; Kozak, 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Saayman, 2006). Fodness (1994) argued that effective tourism marketing is impossible without an understanding of tourists' travel motivations.

Tourism in national parks and protected areas

At the global level, national parks have become popular places for nature tourism and ecotourism (Deng et al., 2003; Nyaupane et al., 2004). As a result, providing for ecotourism and quality recreation activities has become an important facet of forestry departments and agencies around the world, including those in Ghana (Honey, 1999; Shackley, 2001; Zeppel, 2006). Ecotourism is being promoted by governments of both developed and developing nations, as well as by the tourism industry and conservation organizations as a sustainable alternative to mass tourism (Beaumont, 2001; Hvenegaard, 1994).

Ghana is among the African countries currently promoting ecotourism. Since the mid-1990s, the Ghana Tourist Board, in collaboration with local Non-Governmental Organisations such as the Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC) and the Ghana Wildlife Society, has supported numerous community-based ecotourism initiatives including the conservation of community forests and wildlife reserves (Zeppel, 2006). Amongst the recognised sites for ecotourism are the Amansuri Wetlands and Ankasa Conservation Park in the Western Region, the Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary and Afadjato Nature Reserve in the Volta Region, and the Weichau Community Hippo Sanctuary and Paga Crocodile Pond in the Upper West and Upper East Regions of Ghana respectively. Other ecotourism sites include the Mole National Park in the Northern Region, the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary near Nkoranza in the Brong-Ahafo Region, the Owabi Wildlife Sanctuary near Kumasi in the Ashanti Region and the Kakum National Park in the Central Region of Ghana.

The present study was carried out in the Kakum National Park, located in the Central Region of Ghana (Figure 1). The park, which covers an area of 375 km² of tropical moist forest, was established in 1932 as a forest reserve and gazetted as a national park in 1992 under the Wildlife Reserves Regulation (LI 1525).

The area has a wet semi-equatorial climate with an average temperature of 26°C and rainfall between 1500mm and 1700mm, which supports important trees like the Odum, Mahogany, and Silk Cotton trees, among others. It also serves as a habitat for many animal species, including some of Africa's fast disappearing and endangered species such as the leopard, the African grey parrot, the giant bongo antelope, the diana monkey, the yellow-backed duiker and the African elephant (Larsen, 1995). The park also has Africa's highest and longest canopy walkway, which suspends from the forest's second layer, allowing scenic views of the forest. The walkway, which is 333m in length and approximately 27m from the ground, provides better viewing of wildlife for students, tourists, researchers and policy makers (Eagles & McCool, 2002).

Apart from being a national attraction, the park also provides resources for a number of tourism activities, such as hiking, camping and research. In particular, the park has guided hiking trails and interpretive walks about medicinal plants and their uses. Facilities in the park include a car park, an interpretive centre, a reception, a canopy walk way, a restaurant, public toilets and many ecolodges. However, the park is poorly serviced by public transportation, with the main access route being the road from Cape Coast through Abrafo to Twifo Praso. Consequently, the majority of tourists reach the park by car along this route.

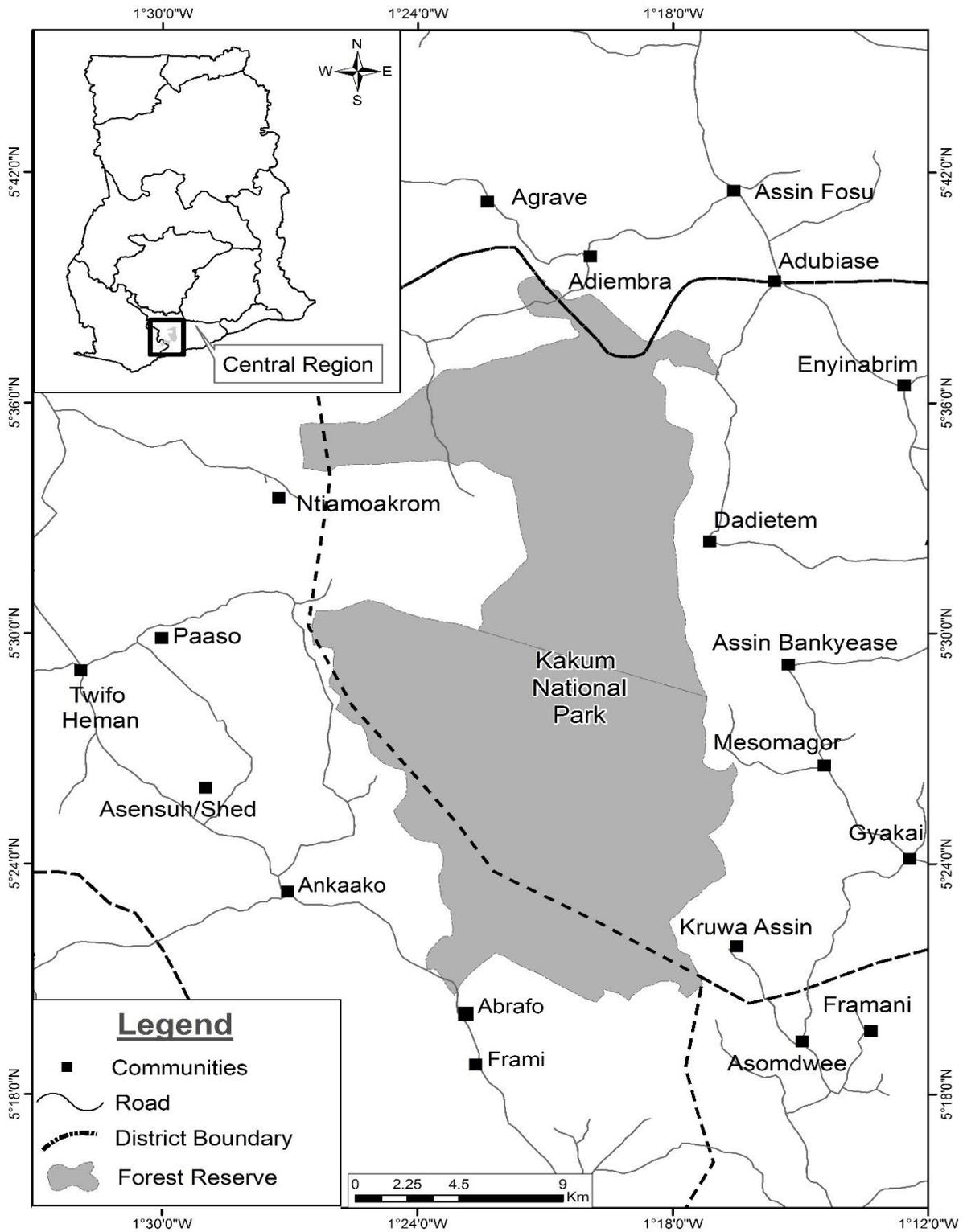


Figure 1. A map showing Kakum National Park

Though the number of arrivals is not quite high (about 200 persons per day), the park enjoys high patronage during public holidays and peak tourist seasons. Many of the visitors, particularly domestic visitors, are day trippers whilst their international counterparts are mostly researchers who often stay over-night and patronize the existing ecology. As a field laboratory, the park attracts researchers of different backgrounds and interests.

Tourists' motivations for visiting National Parks

Though motivation is not the exclusive factor in explaining human behaviour, it is a major one and driving force for tourists' visits to a particular place (Fodness, 1994). It is suggested from nature-based tourism literature (Crompton, 1979; Pittman, 1980; Raghed & Beard, 1982) that motivations to visit the wilderness can be summarized into five general categories, namely relaxation, sociability, skill mastery, intellectuality and a sense of belonging.

In the New Zealand wilderness, Devlin (1976) categorised six motivations for summer visits to Tongariro National Park: exist civilization, aesthetic-religious, physical challenge, sociability, simple lifestyle and individual intellectuality. Additionally, Pittman (1980) explored the motivations of patrons to Wellington's District Walkways, identifying nine motivations including physical, psychological, aesthetic, environmental, social, curiosity, related activity, habitual and challenge.

Push and pull factors of travel motivations

A review of past studies indicates that the analysis of tourists' motivations has generally been based on two dimensions: push and pull factors (Yuan & McDonald, 1990; Uysal & Hagan, 1993). Consequently, the push and pull model conceptualized by Crompton (1979) was favoured over others like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, McClelland's achievement motivation theory and Handy's motivation calculus.

Push factors, otherwise referred to as intrinsic motivations, refer to the needs, wants and desires that push individuals to travel (Lundberg, 1999). Such motivations include the desire for rest, adventure, relaxation, health, social and family relationship (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). These factors force individuals to travel in order to escape their stressful routine and gain a new experience.

Pull factors, on the other hand, are related to the attractiveness of a destination as perceived by travellers. They include tangible resources and travellers' perceptions and expectations, such as novelty, benefit expectation and marketed image of the destination (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996). Chan and Baum (2007) relate pull factors to the tangible characteristics of the trip as well as the image, or degree

of attractiveness, of the chosen destination. Pull factors are closely related to the destination and are those factors inferred by the traveller from the destination's brand image and perceived experience.

Research Methodology

The target population consisted of visitors above 18 years of age who accessed the park through the Abrafo car park. The park has two main entry points (Abrafo and Mesomagor), but the Abrafo entry point was selected for the following reasons: (1) around 80% of all park visitors pass through this entrance point and (2) it provides access to the canopy walkway which is the key attraction. Additionally, the information centre and restaurant are located near the Abrafo entrance and there are chairs and benches available for visitors to sit and complete the questionnaires.

A structured questionnaire was employed to collect data from 360 conveniently sampled out-going tourists between July and August 2015. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: tourists' travel motives, perceived benefits from the visit and respondents' socio-demographic details. The first section used a five-point Likert scale to ask respondents to indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement with 18 travel motivation items. The second portion asked respondents to indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement with perceived benefit items using the same five-point Likert scale. The last section sought information on respondents' socio-demographic data, including their place of origin, age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, occupation and religion.

Using an on-site intercept methodological procedure, the questionnaires were administered to selected visitors. On average, respondents spent 10 to 15 minutes filling out the questionnaire. Out of 360 questionnaires given out within the 30 days of data collection, 342 were found to be suitable for analysis.

Three statistical tools, namely cluster analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the chi-square (χ^2) statistical test were used for the analysis. First, the cluster analysis technique was used to segment respondents' motivations. This statistical technique is popular among researchers in the field of tourism research, as it provides a useful strategy for identifying different groupings within a market. Thus, it provides insight into the structure of tourist travel motives. For example, Pan and Ryan (2007) applied this technique to segment tourists to the mountain areas in the Pirongia Forest Park in New Zealand based on their travel motivations.

Second, the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test whether significant differences existed among the three segments generated by the cluster analysis. Traditionally, each market group is expected to represent people with unique characteristics, including particular needs, wants and

perspectives. The ANOVA technique was used because of its proven ability to identify accurate differences between two or more groups.

Finally, the chi-square (χ^2) statistical test was employed to examine the relationship between travel motivation clusters and their socio-demographic characteristics. This helped to validate the cluster result. The chi-square statistical test was considered appropriate because of the non-parametric nature of the data relating to the two variables.

Results of the Study

Profile of respondents

A detailed description of the profile of respondents was crucial for the interpretation and understanding of the tourists' travel motivations for visiting Kakum National Park. A greater number of respondents were single (66%), female (58%), in their late adolescence (60%) and had finished either a first degree (56%) or postgraduate education (21%). Their places of origin were Europe (59%), North America (20%), Africa (9%), Asia (7%), Scandinavia (6%) and Oceania (0.3%). With respect to religious affiliation, over half of the respondents described themselves as Christians (58%), followed by the non-religious group (38%).

Travel motivations

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of responses to each of the motivation statements, including the means and standard mean errors. As evident from Table 1, the major reasons of tourists' visits to Kakum National Park can be summarized into four general categories: adventure, education, escape and relaxation or sociability. Overall, it emerged from the study that adventure was the main motive for visiting the park. About 91 percent of respondents related their visit in one way or another to the canopy walkway. The majority of respondents indicated that they were in the park to see the canopy walkway (94%, mean = 1.37), see and have a feel of the canopy walkway (94%, mean = 1.37) and challenge themselves by going over the canopy walkway (92%, mean = 1.49) (Table 1). This finding is an indication that the canopy walkway is the primary park attraction.

Table 1 Travel Motivations of tourists to the Kakum National Park

Statement	Number	Percentage in Agreement (%)	Mean Response	Std Mean Error
I am taking this tour:				
Adventure				
To see the walkway	338	94.1	1.37	0.03
To experience the walkway	337	94.1	1.37	0.03
To go over the walkway	330	92.1	1.48	0.04
Overall Score	335	90.5	1.42	0.04
Education				
To learn about plants and animals	319	65.5	2.23	0.05
To learn about the biodiversity of the park	317	54.9	2.45	0.05
To learn about conservation in Africa	318	64.8	2.25	0.05
To increase my knowledge of conservation in Ghana	324	66.4	2.13	0.05
Overall Score	332	65.5	2.21	0.05
Social interaction				
To interact with others	321	55.5	2.50	0.06
To have a sense of belonging	314	33.4	2.93	0.06
To interact with people with similar interest	319	42.9	2.70	0.06
To spend time with my family	320	59.7	2.40	0.07
To meet local people	314	54.9	2.44	0.05
Overall score	318	49.3	2.64	0.05
Escape/ Relaxation				
To forget the troubles and worries of my life	319	52.0	2.48	0.06
To get away from daily routine	322	70.5	2.04	0.06
To be emotionally refreshed	323	64.4	2.22	0.05
To enjoy good weather	329	66.9	2.16	0.05
To be physically refreshed	324	63.0	2.23	0.05
Overall score	323	61.6	2.28	0.05

The second most reported motive was the desire for knowledge about the environment (65% of respondents). Among the specific issues mentioned by the respondents were the desire to learn about plants and animals found in the park (66%, mean = 2.23), increase their knowledge on conservation in Ghana (65%, mean = 2.13) and learn about the biodiversity of the park (55%, mean = 2.45). These findings attest to the growing interest in and concern for the environment. This observation indicates that the park is delivering on its core mandate. Apart from its conservation role, the park was gazetted in 1992 to inform, educate and entertain the public about the natural history and ecosystem of the park.

The next important travel motive identified among respondents was their need for relaxation and fresh air. On the whole, 62 percent of respondents indicated that they were in the park to relieve tension. In specific terms, respondents were in the park to get away from their stressful daily routine (71%, mean = 2.04), enjoy good weather and fresh air (67%, mean = 2.16), be emotionally refreshed (64%, mean = 2.22) and be physically refreshed (63%, mean = 2.23). Additionally, slightly over half of respondents were in the park to search for rest (52%, mean = 2.47) and a means to forget their troubles and worries in life (52%, mean = 2.47).

Social interaction emerged as the least strong motive for visiting the park. Generally, less than half (49%) of respondents indicated they were in the park to interact with other visitors to the park. The most popular response within this motive was to spend time with their family (59%, mean = 2.40).

Segmentation of respondents by motivation

Cluster analysis was performed on the 18 travel motivations in order to identify groups of respondents with similar response patterns. The K-mean clustering method, which is based on nearest centroid sorting (Anderberg, 1973), was used to select three cluster solutions. Table 2 presents details of the three groups (adventure and knowledge seekers, all encompassing seekers and adventure seekers) and how each group differs in terms of travel motives.

The adventure/knowledge seekers (60% of the population): Adventure and knowledge seekers are tourists whose visit to the park was driven largely by intrinsic motives. This segment comprises visitors whose purposes of travel to the park include the search for adventure and acquisition of knowledge about the park and the environment. As evident in Table 2, the majority of the respondents in this segment were females (55%) within the 18-29 age group (60%) and originate from Europe (54%) and North America (26%). They were mostly post graduates (23%) or degree holders (16%) and professed to be either Christian (58%) or Atheist (32%).

Table 2 Segmentation of respondents by travel motivations

Statement	Cluster			ANOVA	
	Knowledge/ Relaxation Seekers (60%)	Adventure Seekers (9%)	All Encompassing Seeker (31%)	F- Value	P-Value
To see the canopy walkway	1.35	1.79	1.26	7.122	.001
To experience something daring	1.85	3.08	1.33	46.601	.000
To challenge my abilities	1.51	1.75	1.27	6.630	.002
To learn about plant and animals	2.38	3.13	1.72	30.454	.000
To learn about the history of biodiversity	2.61	3.46	1.83	39.790	.000
To learn about conservation in Africa	2.40	3.29	1.67	43.502	.000
To increase my knowledge on conservation in Ghana	2.30	3.04	1.44	53.072	.000
To be with others	2.78	4.04	1.69	59.482	.000
To have a sense of belonging	3.30	4.25	1.86	113.426	.000
To interact with people with similar interests	3.07	4.04	1.72	110.078	.000
To spend time with my family	2.80	2.58	1.76	18.857	.000
To associate myself with conservation in Africa	3.10	3.88	1.83	89.822	.000
To meet local people	2.65	3.92	1.72	76.581	.000
To forget the troubles and worries of my life	2.74	4.33	1.56	105.015	.000
To get away from daily routine	2.27	3.50	1.31	68.786	.000
To have a rest	2.74	3.88	1.55	88.458	.000
To be emotionally refreshed	2.45	4.17	1.40	129.457	.000
To be physically refreshed	2.49	3.58	1.49	79.046	.000
To enjoy the good weather	2.43	2.75	1.49	38.961	.000

The all-encompassing group (31% of the population): This group consists of individuals whose travel motives can be described as diverse and complex. Their travel motivations consisted of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Responses provided by this group indicate that they were moved by multiple motives ranging from adventure to escape, social interactions and knowledge acquisition. Table 3 shows that this group consisted of mainly single (68%), young (59%) females (55%) who were largely degree holders (36%). They were mostly from Europe (64%) and were either Atheist (51%) or Christian (44%).

Table 3 Travel motivation segments by respondents socio-demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Segments			χ^2 P-Value
	Knowledge/ Relaxation Seekers	Adventure Seekers	All Encompassing Seekers	
Place of origin				
Europe	63.5	52.2	53.5	11.003 (0.357)
Asia	4.4	8.7	7.7	
North America	15.7	13.0	25.6	
Oceania	0.6	0.0	0.0	
Scandinavia	11.9	21.7	6.4	
Africa	3.8	4.3	6.4	
Sex				
Male	40.6	52.2	45.0	
Female	59.4	47.8	55.0	
Age				
<30	58.6	78.3	58.6	4.544 (0.337)
30-59	38.2	21.7	34.3	
60 and above	3.3	0.0	5.7	
Marital Status				
Single	71.1	65.2	66.2	3.322 (0.913)
Married	28.8	34.8	32.9	
Educational attainment				
Senior High School	10.4	17.6	12.5	7.950 (0.438)
Diploma	9.7	23.5	6.3	
Degree	36.0	4.0	16.4	
Post graduate	23.6	5.9	23.4	
Religion				
Christian	44.4	40.0	57.9	19.206 (0.084)
Atheist	51.3	50.0	31.6	
Muslim	1.3	0.0	3.9	
Hindu	1.3	10.0	5.3	
Others (Buddhist, Jewish etc)	1.9	0.0	1.2	

The adventure seekers (9% of the population): This group was attracted to the park largely because of the canopy walkway. Thus, their visit was driven solely by an extrinsic factor. They constituted the smallest group of the study population. The results indicate that the greater proportion of this group were young (78%) single (65%) males (52%) who originated from Europe (52%) and Scandinavia (22%). They were also largely diploma holders (24%) or high school leavers (18%) and professed to be Atheist (50%) or Christian (40%).

Discussions

The observation that multiple motivations influence tourists' visits to Kakum National Park was expected. Generally, it had been found that travel motives and behaviour stem from a plurality of

influences and multiple motivations (Chang-Hung et al., 2004). The four travel motivations identified in the study are quite similar to what other researchers found in studies on motivation for visiting national parks and wilderness areas (Ryan & Glendon, 1999; Beard & Ragheb, 1980).

It was noted that a large number of tourists associated their travel to the park with the canopy walkway. This finding may be attributed to the fact that this particular tourism product is rare in the sub-region. The Kakum canopy walkway is described as the highest and longest canopy walkway in Africa. Traditionally, rare and scarce products are known to attract human attention, and as a result a large number of people like to associate with these products.

In consistence with the literature, the desire of tourists to acquire knowledge about nature and the environment emerged as the second most popular motivation. This observation was expected, as evidence suggests that there is a current shift in the way tourists relate with the environment (Galley & Clifton, 2004; Palacio & McCool, 1997). Instead of directly interacting with the environment through activities such as hiking and camping, tourists now treat the environment as an object of appreciation and as something they can learn from. In the words of Chang (2006), “a higher level of knowledge function helps to motivate people to travel.”

The next important travel motive identified among respondents was the need for escape, relaxation and fresh air. As pointed out by Eagles and McCool (2002), there is a popular view that national parks are unique areas for restoration of the physical and emotional health of visitors. To these researchers parks assist individuals to renew their health and relieve stress associated with urban living. Generally, access to fresh air, sunshine and nature is considered as healthy.

The low emphasis on social interaction as a travel motive to the park may be linked to the popular view that parks and wilderness areas are for solitary, isolated and personal reflection. Thus, a park is a place to be alone or at the most with a small group, which can be an essential ingredient for reflection on important issues. On the other hand, Pan and Ryan (2007) indicate that the low interest in social interaction in natural parks may be due to the fact that participants want to avoid the hustle of daily life and not necessarily to avoid other people.

Conclusions

Different motivations influence tourists to visit Kakum National Park. This is based on the fact that four motivation categories, namely adventure, education and learning, escape and relaxation and sociability incited tourists to visit the park. This finding corroborates the findings of earlier studies (Jang & Caj, 2002; Awaritefe, 2004). These previous tourism studies show that different motivational

factors, including curiosity, autonomy, relaxation, social interactions, self-fulfilment and self-actualization underpin tourists' travel and behaviour.

The reasons tourists visited the park are an interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as indicated in the push and pull model that informed the present study. As evident from the results, the canopy walkway, sunny weather and biodiversity of the park are integral to tourist motivations to visit the park. At the same time, this study reveals that the strong desire to learn from/about and appreciate the natural environment, biodiversity and conservation practices of the park, as well as the desire to rest from busy routines

However, there are significant differences in the desires that different groups of tourists sought to fulfill. This is based on cluster analysis, which delineated the study sample into three distinct segments: knowledge and relaxation seekers, adventure seekers and all-encompassing seekers. This finding is consistent with the Katz's (1960) assertion that not all travellers have the same travel motivations. Such a finding is important for the park management as regards product development, distribution of visitors and design of marketing programmes.

The canopy walkway continues to serve the purpose for which it was established. Specifically, it was created to help draw more people to the park. In an increasingly competitive tourism market, each destination must develop distinct tourism attractions to entice more tourists. Evidence from the study suggests that the canopy walkway is currently the main attraction of the park. On the whole, 95 percent of respondents linked their travel to the park with either seeing or going over the canopy walkway.

It can be concluded that the motivations of individuals for travelling to national parks serves as a useful variable for segmenting travellers for marketing and promotional purposes. This is based on the cluster analysis, which categorised respondents into three distinct groups according to their travel motivations. This outcome reinforces the earlier observation made by Sirakaya et al. (2003) and Pan and Ryan (2007) that travel motivations are useful in segmenting tourists for product design and marketing purposes.

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