

Exploring tourists' perceptions in Ecotourism settings: A case study of Waterberg Plateau Park-Namibia.

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism plays a pivotal role in responsible and sustainable tourism development, emphasizing the preservation of natural environments and the empowerment of local communities (Junus, Susilo, Cahyono & Wardana, 2020). This study delves into tourists' perceptions within the context of ecotourism, focusing on the unique setting of Waterberg Plateau Park in Namibia. Waterberg Plateau Park stands out for its rich biodiversity, cultural heritage, and commitment to conservation practices (Kasiringua, Proches & Kopij, 2020). Despite its growing popularity, there exists a research gap concerning tourist perceptions in this specific context (Baporikar, 2022). Understanding these perceptions is imperative for effective park management, conservation efforts, and the overall success of ecotourism destinations (Harianto, Walid Masruri, Winarno, Tsani & Santoso, 2020). Thus, this study aims to explore tourist perceptions in ecotourism settings, with Waterberg Plateau Park as a case study. A mixed-method approach will be employed, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, observation, and content analysis. Surveys will capture overall participant satisfaction and preferences, while interviews, focus groups, and observations will provide in-depth insights into specific tourist perceptions and behaviors. Additionally, content analysis will be conducted to examine public opinion through online articles and social media posts. Population sampling will utilize purposive sampling for key informants within the park and stratified random sampling for tourists with diverse demographic characteristics. Data analysis will involve Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for quantitative analysis and Atlas ti for qualitative analysis. This study holds significance for enhancing the ecotourism experience at Waterberg Plateau Park, contributing to sustainable tourism development, and informing management strategies.

Keywords: Educational tourism, strategy, sustainability, tourism development, universities in Windhoek.