Economic Claims for Transboundary Conservation: Reality or Rhetoric? A Case Study of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

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Abstract

The inherently transnational nature of biological diversity provides the primary impetus for transboundary protected areas (TPAs), however its enthusiastic support further stems from expectations of political, social or economic benefits. The socio-political climate of Southern Africa makes conservation initiatives that incorporate economic development and poverty alleviation particularly appealing. Not surprisingly, supporters of TPAs often advance visions of enhanced tourism potential. To date, however, this assertion has not been objectively assessed. Established in 1999, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP), straddling South Africa and Botswana, is Africa’s oldest formally recognized transfrontier park and widely viewed as the prototype for regional transboundary conservation. This paper examines park data on visitation combined with results from a visitor survey conducted on the South African side of the KTP to indicate the tourism performance of the park. Results suggest that the KTP is still far from meeting its tourism objectives. Visitation has not increased on either side of the KTP and the survey reveals only modest utilization of the transfrontier park’s new features; respondents indicate that new facilities and access to previously inaccessible areas were not significant factors in their decisions to visit the KTP. Furthermore, survey data and South African Police Service data suggest that fewer than 10% of guests use the park to visit the adjacent country. Reasons for the KTP’s underperformance may include problematic physical characteristics of the park, such as its size, location and road network as well as disincentives to joint marketing that potentially stems from the park’s legal framework. Lessons from the Kgalagadi combined with insights into tourist behaviour can inform the management and modify the expectations for envisioned or incipient TPAs to increase the probability of their long-term viability.
Introduction

The recent worldwide proliferation of transboundary protected areas (TPAs) represents one of the most exciting developments in environmental conservation, confirmed by the growing number of TPAs worldwide, currently numbering 188 complexes in 112 countries (Besançon and Savy 2005). Although the need for transnational biodiversity conservation provides the impetus for TPAs, the explosion of interest in transboundary conservation also reflects promised benefits in other realms. The TPA paradigm attempts to reconcile regional socioeconomic and political realities with environmental preservation; TPA supporters cite a range of objectives beyond environmental protection including economic gain, social harmony and the promotion of peace (e.g. de Villiers 1999; Hanks 2003; Mittermeier et al. 2005). Marketing this inclusive package appears successful, evidenced by the resulting, often enthusiastic, involvement of governments, NGOs and international donor agencies that are diverse in size and motive (Mittermeier et al. 2005).

Not surprisingly, sceptics question the ability of TPAs to accomplish such a variety of objectives. Duffy (2001; 2005) argues that the superficially neutral language of TPA endorsements masks the underlying expansion of “global governance” and its corresponding influence on power relations. Accordingly, the involvement of such a diversity of actors could result in competing interests and incompatible goals (e.g. Wolmer 2003; Katerere 2001; Duffy 2001; Murphree 2004). Of similar concern is that the TPA philosophy potentially neglects the economic and political realities present within a bioregion (Duffy 2001; Ramutsindela 2004). Nevertheless, the theoretical appeal of the trans-national approach has clearly provided sufficient motivation for widespread experimentation with this model.
According to Ramutsindela (2004), the socioeconomic context of Southern Africa epitomizes a “fertile” region for TPAs because of its combination of threatened wilderness areas, ecotourism opportunities, and recent political and social change. Furthermore, the institutionalized cooperation facilitated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and consistent with goals of the Pan-Africanist movement is inherently conducive to development initiatives that transcend arbitrary political boundaries.

The extent that the various objectives are articulated when building support for a TPA depends on the areas to be protected and on the needs and attitudes of the stakeholders (Hanks 2003). In Southern Africa, development schemes often emphasize some degree of poverty alleviation. Consequently, in creating or considering TPAs in the region, a high priority is often placed on generating economic revenue that can subsequently foster the upward socioeconomic mobility of communities adjacent to the TPAs and help reduce the huge budget shortfalls of the region’s protected area network (James et al. 1999; Hanks and Atwell 2003). Although Africa’s protected areas can accrue a wide variety of economic benefits (Hanks and Attwell 2003), the TPA paradigm envisions tourism as the primary vehicle; TPA supporters assume TPA status will heighten the international profile of the protected area and facilitate tourist movement across borders.

This commodification of nature indicates a shift in contemporary conservation from a nature-based approach to a more anthropocentric attitude. As Child (2004) argues, if protected areas are collective goods and therefore accountable to society, their appropriate use in Southern Africa may be for the short-term creation of direct economic opportunities rather than for survival under intrinsic or aesthetic rationale. Magome and Murombedzi (2003) see this state of mind reflected in sectors of the
South African public by observing that unlike other areas of the world, protected areas in Southern Africa are not necessarily perceived as “sacred,” but are increasingly challenged for livelihood purposes through demands for the redistribution of protected land.

The assumption that TPAs can enhance tourism seemingly arose without an empirical origin, and despite appeals for assessing the performance of TPAs (Sandwith and Besancon 2005; Swatuk 2005, Murphree 2004), the hypothesis has remained untested. This paper begins to analyze the data by assessing the visitation performance of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP), a 3.6 million hectare park straddling the South Africa-Botswana border. Inaugurated in May 2000, the KTP is the oldest transfrontier park in Africa, but more importantly, is widely seen as the “prototype” (Hanks 2003) or “reference point” (Ramutsindela 2003) for other TPAs in the region. Specifically, this paper assesses two objectives outlined in the ‘Management Objectives’ of the Bilateral Agreement Between The Government of Botswana and The Government of The Republic of South Africa on the Recognition of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park:

1. “to encourage the full realisation of the economic potential of the Parks and surrounding areas which will bring economic benefits to the Republic of Botswana and the Republic of South Africa especially to the local communities adjacent to the park”
2. “to develop joint promotional campaigns that will stimulate the two-way flow of tourists, thereby increasing the tourism potential for the Republic of Botswana and the Republic of South Africa and taking steps to facilitate the freedom of movement within the KTP”

To quantify tourism performance, this paper examines park data on visitation before and after the creation of the KTP. In order to understand the possible causes of tourism trends, the visitation data was supplemented by a visitor survey conducted on
the South African side of the KTP to determine who visits the park and why, as well as to reveal their activities in the park. The information obtained will be used to help explain the factors influencing the tourism performance of the KTP, to detect measures that may help ensure economic viability of envisioned and incipient TPAs, and to confirm or modify the expectations placed on the TPA paradigm.

Study Area

The KTP straddles northern South Africa and south-western Botswana with the Namibian border constituting the park’s western edge (Figure 1). The park came into official existence on April 7, 1999 with the ratification of a treaty unifying South Africa’s 9,591 km² Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and Botswana’s 28,400 km² Gemsbok Park, marking the realization of Africa’s first formally recognized transfrontier park. For over five decades prior to 1999, the conservation authorities of the adjacent parks had informally cooperated in the management of the area and therefore, the logistical transformation of the park from *de facto* to official integration required relatively little effort; unlike other TPAs, all land incorporated into the KTP was already under protected area status and few fences separated the areas. Consequently, there were no significant costs involved with the actual conversion (van Rooyen, pers. comm. 2005) and the park has only incurred marginal, if any, additional operating costs since its inauguration (Daphne, pers. comm. 2006).
The KTP is dominated by two vegetation types, Kalahari duneveld and Kalahari Plains thornveld, and sustains a number of species with considerable tourism appeal including lion, leopard, cheetah and meerkat as well as impressive opportunities to see a variety of raptors and large herds of ungulates. The climate in the KTP is extreme, ranging from over 40°C to -10°C, with sand temperatures in summer recorded in excess of 70°C (SANParks 2004). Rainfall varies considerably by location and year, but averages approximately 200-350mm annually (Mills and Haagner 1989).

The KTP is accessible through four entrance gates, three in Botswana and one in South Africa. Once inside, visitors may travel freely without a passport or visa, unless they wish to enter from one country and exit through the other. In terms of infrastructure however, the two sides of the park remain quite different. The South African side is accessible with a 2x4 vehicle and has numerous accommodation options, including three main rest camps equipped with shops and petrol stations. All roads into and throughout Botswana require a 4x4 and the only facilities are basic, unfenced campsites. Although negotiations to include Namibia in the initial formation of the park ultimately failed, a border post allowing access to and from Namibia is expected to open in the near future (van Donder, pers comm. 2005).
The management objectives and legal framework for the park ratified by South Africa and Botswana prior to the inauguration of the KTP continue to dictate the direction of the park today. With regard to tourism, the agreements stipulate that entrance fees be split evenly, but all other revenues remain in the country of origin. Accordingly, all bookings and other arrangements must be made independently with the appropriate national agency.

Visitation Data

All visitation data for the South African side of the KTP, and for other South African national parks included for comparative purposes, were compiled from South African National Parks (SANParks) annual reports. Missing values were supplied by park managers. Immigration and emigration data for the South African side of the KTP were supplied by the South African Police Service (SAPS). Visitation data for the Botswana side of the KTP, and for other Botswana parks included for comparative purposes, were compiled from Botswana’s Department of Wildlife and National Parks. All visitation time-series presented are the most long-term and up-to-date available.

Additional Park Data

Specific information on marketing expenditure and budget allocation were sought to examine proportional changes in investment before and after the opening of the KTP, but unfortunately, data could not be obtained. Information on contributions received from external sources was also sought to investigate whether or not the transfrontier status was enhancing donor interest, but again, this information was not made
available. Lastly, it was not possible to analyze the impact of the exchange rate on visitation because a long-term time-series of the fee structure in the KTP was not available.

**KTP Visitor Survey**

The visitor survey conducted on the South African side of the KTP focused on four primary characteristics: mode of travel, visitor demographics, reasons for visitation and overall trip itineraries within and outside of the park. The majority of the questions were straightforward, asking the respondent to record the number of people in his or her party, the type of vehicle used, the kind of accommodation they stayed in and for what duration, the gate used to enter and exit the park, whether or not the ability to cross the border in the park encouraged them to visit the neighbouring country beyond the park, as well as what other destinations were on the trip itinerary. Furthermore, one question asked respondents to indicate the degree that visiting the KTP influenced their decision to take the entire trip (reported as a percentage). Another question was designed to determine the characteristics of the KTP that were the primary reasons they chose to visit the park; nine options were listed and the respondent was asked to rate each from 1 to 5 in terms of its importance (an “other” category was also included). Lastly, two open-ended questions were presented: one asked if any aspects of the transfrontier park did not live up to expectations and the other asked for suggestions for improving the park (see Appendix I for complete questionnaire).

A KTP gate attendant distributed one questionnaire to the driver of every vehicle entering the South African side of the park between October 15 and
November 10 2005. If exiting through South Africa, the driver was asked to return the survey either at the reception desk of one of the three rest camps or to give it to the gate attendant before exiting the park. If exiting through the Botswana side of the park, the driver was specifically asked to leave the questionnaire at a reception desk. Additional copies of the questionnaire were available at the reception of all three rest camps for visitors already in the park on October 15, for visitors coming from the Botswana side, or for visitors who misplaced their original questionnaires. If visitors arrived at the exit gate without a completed questionnaire, they were asked, without obligation, to fill one out before leaving.

A research moratorium in Botswana prohibited the direct surveying of visitors on the Botswana side of the park. Undoubtedly, this prevented obtaining a fully representative sample population of visitors to the KTP. Visitors never entering South Africa are clearly absent from the sample and it is also likely that visitors travelling in one side and out the other are under-sampled. Although visitors entering the park from South Africa and exiting into Botswana received a survey and were asked to complete it before leaving, the absence of a gate attendant to collect the surveys likely produced an under-representation when compared to visitors exiting via South Africa. Additionally, visitors who entered from Botswana and exited from South Africa were not directly administered a survey and may have been more likely to arrive at the gate without one, and therefore more inclined to leave without completing one.
Results

Visitation

Visitors to the South African side of the KTP have not notably increased since the inauguration of the transfrontier park in 2000 (Figure 2). Only in 1997-1998 did visitation surpass the numbers seen in 1990-1991, prior to the decline experienced across all parks in the mid-1990s. Since this peak in 1997-1998, visitation rates have remained relatively stable, undergoing only a slight decline; visitor numbers over the past two years (2003-2004 and 2004-2005) are the lowest since 1996-1997. A breakdown of international versus domestic visitation from 1997-1998 to 2003-2004 demonstrates a very gradual decline over the first four years, but stabilizes over the following two (Figure 3). Visitation to the South African side of the KTP as a proportion of visitation to all of South Africa’s “Arid Parks” - comprised of the KTP and nearby Augrabies Falls National Park and the Ais Ais Richtersveld National Park - shows an increase from 1997-1998 until 2001-2002, but erratic growth since then (Figure 4). A downward trend is evident in KTP visitors plotted as a percent of visitation to all SANParks since 1997-1998 (Figure 5).

Figure 2. Visitation to the South African side of the KTP. *Data are not available for 1995-1996.
Figure 3. International versus domestic visitation to the South African side of the KTP.

Figure 4. Visitation to the South African side of the KTP as a proportion of visitation to South Africa’s “Arid Parks” - comprised of the KTP, Augrabies Falls National Park and the Ais Ais Richtersveldt Transfrontier Park.

Figure 5. Visitation to the South African side of the KTP as a proportion of visitation to all of South Africa’s national parks. *Over this period complete time-series data were available for 14 parks.
Visitor numbers to the Botswana side of the park climbed every year from 1991 until 2000, but declined each successive year (Figure 6). Visitation to the Botswana side of the KTP as a percent of visitation to Botswana’s “Arid Parks” - comprised of the KTP and nearby Khutse and Central Kalahari Game Reserve - illustrates an obvious and prolonged increasing trend from 1991-2001, followed by a subsequent drop-off (Figure 7). The same is true when plotted as a percent of visitation to all of Botswana’s parks, although the decline begins one year earlier, and is initially more prominent (Figure 8).

![Figure 6. Visitation to the Botswana side of the KTP.](image1)

![Figure 7. Visitation to the Botswana side of the KTP as a proportion of visitation to Botswana’s “Arid Park” - comprised of the KTP, Khutse and the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Data for 1996 are not available.](image2)
Figure 8. Visitation to the Botswana side of the KTP as a proportion of visitation to all of Botswana’s national parks. *Over this period complete time-series data were available for 7 parks.

KTP Survey

Participation rate

The principal investigator was present to supervise the survey during the period of October 15 to November 5 2005. During this time, 206 surveys were collected from 334 vehicles that exited through the South African gate, giving a participation rate of approximately 61.6%. The participation rate from November 6 to November 15 could not be calculated, although it is likely to be similar. There were no records available on the number of vehicles entering from South Africa and exiting Botswana, which would also be necessary to determine a precise rate.

Respondent demographics

A total of 296 representing 767 individuals completed part, or all of the survey. Just over half the groups (51.4%) were comprised entirely of SADC residents (95.1% of those groups were entirely South African), 42.8% were entirely international residents, and 5.8% were mixed groups. When compared to the nationalities of
individual guests over the first three quarters of 2005, the survey likely over-represented international groups (Figure 9), although seasonal differences in visitation may account for some of the disparity.

![Figure 9. Comparison of the composition of groups surveyed (N=278), at left, with individual visitor nationalities over the first three quarters of 2005 (N=17,545), at right.](image)

**Vehicles**

The majority of groups (52.4%) drove 2x4 vehicles, and there is a significant difference (chi-square = 32.45, p<.001) between SADC groups and international groups (Figure 10).

![Figure 10: Vehicle type usage separated into SADC groups (N=144) and international groups (N=118). Overall usage (N=296) is 52.4% 2x4, 45.3% 4x4 and 2.4% tour vehicles.](image)
Intra-Park movements

Fourteen groups (n=292), or 4.8%, indicated that they spent any time on the Botswana side of the park. Twelve of the 14 groups were entirely comprised of SADC residents, one group was entirely international and the other was a mixed group. Nine of the 14 groups specified that the ability to cross the border in the park encouraged them to extend their visit to the neighbouring country beyond the park. Therefore, in total, only 3.1% of the groups surveyed were inspired by the transfrontier park to extend their trip to visit the adjoining country.

Despite the survey’s sampling bias, a coarse analysis of South African Police Service data confirms a low rate of border crossing in the park. Based on first and second quarter data from 2005, a total of 14,071 guests visited the park, with only 1044 registered as departing to Botswana. SAPS officials in the park (Jacobs pers. comm. 2005) estimate that roughly 30% of those individuals are non-tourist, local residents. Therefore, approximately 7.4% of visitors entering from South Africa exit into Botswana.

Importance of the KTP to total itinerary

There was a significant difference in the degree that visiting the KTP was the reason for the SADC and international visitors’ decision to take their entire trip. SADC groups indicated that, on average, visiting the KTP was 87.4% of the reason, while international groups only 40.2% (p < 0.01 Mann-Whitney U-test). Correspondingly, as an alternate measure, there is also a significant difference between SADC and international groups in the proportion of days spent in the park versus the length of their entire trip (p<0.01 Mann-Whitney U-test). The same is true when a rough
estimate of travelling time is factored in (p<0.01 Mann-Whitney U-test), although the
difference is not as substantial (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Self-Report Data</th>
<th>Days in KTP/Length of Entire Trip</th>
<th>(Days in KTP + Travel Time)/Length of Entire Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Differences between SADC and international groups in the importance of visiting the KTP to their entire trip based on self-report data, the percent of their trip spent in the park, and the percent of their trip spent in the park including travel time (two days). All differences are significant at p < .01 (Mann-Whitney U-test).*

**Reasons for Visitation**

Respondents (n=275) rated nine factors influencing their decision to visit the KTP from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). Any survey that rated each choice equally was omitted from analysis. For surveys that had certain choices rated but other choices left blank, the blank was replaced with a score of one. Additionally, to avoid redundancy, the three factors listed on the original questionnaire of opportunities to see a specific type of game (“opportunity to see big cats,” “opportunity to see birds of prey” and “opportunity to see small desert mammals”) were also omitted from analysis; only the option of “overall game viewing opportunities” was included. Figure 11 illustrates a conspicuous disparity between the mean ratings of the top three and bottom three factors. Differences are significant (ANOVA F_{5,1466} = 201.78 p < .001).
Figure 11. Differences in the mean ratings of reasons for visitation were significant (ANOVA $F_{5,1466} = 201.78 \ p < .001$). $N=276$. Bars denote standard error.

Itineraries

Of the 215 respondents identifying other destinations on trip itineraries, 145 indicated that their trips were entirely within South Africa. Of the remaining 70, Namibia was clearly the most popular additional country, followed by Botswana and a number of other African countries (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Countries listed by respondents as additional destinations on their trip itineraries.
Expectations and Suggestions

The two open-ended questions that queried visitor satisfaction were intended to separate the degree to which expectations of the transfrontier park were met from general ideas on how to improve the park. However, due to the likeness of the questions, respondents often answered both questions similarly. Therefore, in order to eliminate redundancy (and because the failure of a certain aspects of the park to meet an expectation is essentially a suggestion for improvement), the two questions were analyzed together.

Not surprisingly, there was a remarkable range of comments. Table 2a shows the 5 most common comments, broadly categorized, while Table 2b shows the comments explicitly referring to the transfrontier aspect of the park. The latter comments were quite stereotyped, falling into only three categories: the desire for access to Namibia, the inability to enter Botswana because of the need for a 4x4, and frustration with the distribution of information about the transfrontier features of the Park. For instance, one respondent asked if there was “a possibility to access the neighbouring Namibian areas?” while an additional group declared that they “expected to cross into Namibia” and to “Open the Border!” Another group revealed that it was necessary to “supply more information on how to cross into the Botswana side.” A European visitor complained that he “didn’t go into Botswana because 4x4 vehicles are expensive” while an SADC resident echoed the sentiment, mentioning that the transfrontier question was “not applicable because our transport doesn’t allow us to go,” a comment that may also explain the rather low number of transfrontier-specific comments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent of Total (N=296)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road quality</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abundance of game (including complaints about the state of the waterholes)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation (complaints and suggestions)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities (availability and type)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns of over-commercialization</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2a: The number and category of comments mentioned by respondents indicating expectations not met or suggestions of how to improve the KTP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent of Total (N=296)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access into Namibia (expected or desired)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t go into Botswana (no 4x4)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor information on how to cross</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2b: The number and category of comments, specifically referring to the transfrontier aspect of the park, mentioned by respondents referring to expectations not met or suggestions of how to improve the KTP.

**Discussion**

Although visitation data is not a perfect surrogate for tourism performance, its value as an indicator is compelling. The recent decline in visitation to both the South African and Botswana sides of the KTP strongly suggests that, to date, expectations of enhanced tourism have not materialized. While the tourism industry is notoriously fickle, it is of particular concern that the proportion of both South Africa’s and Botswana’s national park visitors who specifically visit the KTP is also exhibiting a slight downward trend. Therefore, the transfrontier paradigm has apparently neither acted as a boon to visitation nor a hedge against negative external influences on visitation.

Importantly, the number of international guests to the South African side of the KTP seems to be gradually declining and remains a much smaller proportion of total visitation than domestic guests. While attracting South African tourists to the
KTP is a successful mechanism for redistributing currency internally, the national economy depends on the injection of foreign exchange for overall growth. Two factors that potentially impacted international visitation to the KTP are the widespread effects of September 11th and the erratic strength of the South African Rand. In terms of the South African side of the KTP however, neither factor appears noticeably influential; the wane in visitation began prior to the events of 2001 and the strengthening of the Rand in 2002 after years of weakening. However, precise data on entrance and accommodation fees in the park would be necessary to definitively uncouple visitation from exchange rate. Conversely, Botswana may have been adversely impacted by 9/11, evident by the marked drop in numbers in 2002 and an additional, but smaller decline in 2003. Regardless, the decline of total visitors seen on both sides of the park in proportion to total visitation to all parks inherently incorporates, at least to some degree, external factors, and therefore remains the most significant indicator of visitation performance.

Clearly, the complexity of the tourism industry prevents identifying exactly which factors are stagnating the growth of the KTP; however, a potential limiting factor is that marketing remains independent from Botswana, and that the South African side of the KTP has apparently not enjoyed additional marketing support since its opening (van Rooyen pers. comm. 2005). Although this lack of marketing investment insinuates under-commitment, the neglect may actually be a response to limiting features of the park itself. Despite its size and number of flagship species, visitation to the KTP makes up only a small proportion (under 2%) of visitation to all of South Africa’s national parks. Furthermore, the limited road network, fragile desert ecosystem and restricted supply of potable water are formidable barriers to expansion. As a result, it is possible that the KTP cannot expand its capacity to
capitalize on a situation of appreciably increased demand, and therefore may not warrant substantially increased marketing investment.

Attracting more visitors is only one aspect of enhancing tourism potential. An additional objective of the Management Plan for the KTP is to “stimulate the two-way flow of tourists” and “facilitate the freedom of movement within the KTP.” Nevertheless, SAPS and survey data corroborate a very low rate of transnational movement within the park, and suggest that the possibility to cross into the adjacent country has encouraged very few groups to extend their visit to the neighbouring country beyond the park.

Explanations for the tendency of visitors not to cross into the adjoining country likely include both systemic obstacles to fluid bilateral cooperation as well as the park’s inhibiting physical characteristics. The decision to structure the legal framework in a way that shares entrance fees equally but maintains other tourism-related revenues in the country of origin may act as a disincentive to information sharing and joint marketing, particularly in a park with such asymmetrical visitation. With the vast majority of visitors entering South Africa, the allocation of half the entrance fees to Botswana injects added revenue to Botswana without requiring it to invest in the park. Conversely, the heavily visited South African side of the park and its greater capacity to extract revenues may discourage it from promoting its guests to also visit Botswana, where any expenditure would be lost. Accordingly, the survey data revealed some evidence for poor dissemination of information through visitor comments. In a situation where the transboundary aspect of a park was specifically stimulating increased visitation, the structure of the legal agreements might not act as disincentives, but at the moment, this is not evident.
Physical characteristics including the size of the park, the road network and the homogeneity of the flora and fauna may also discourage tourists from visiting both sides of the KTP. In a park larger than many countries, exploring more than one small corner of the park takes a substantial amount of time. Additionally, the requirement of a 4x4 to visit Botswana seems to considerably hinder visitation. Not only are SADC residents who do not own a 4x4 excluded, but the prohibitive price of renting one may effectively eliminate the possibility for many international tourists as well.

Furthermore, because the park’s biota is relatively homogenous, sufficient and widespread incentive for visitors to overcome these obstacles may not exist. The survey revealed that the three most important factors attracting tourists to the KTP were the desert landscapes, the game viewing opportunities and to “get away from it all.” Notably, only the latter factor is likely to be appreciably different from one side of the KTP to the other, as the Botswana side is certainly more remote. Interestingly, the increased size of the park did not seem to dramatically influence the guests’ decision to visit. Because an increase in area is possibly the only invariable characteristic in the creation of a TPA, and the major driving force behind the TPA paradigm, its deficient ability to autonomously attract tourists de-legitimizes any model that promotes a TPA as an automatic tourist attraction.

The KTP, however, is still in its infancy. South Africa and Botswana are in the process of designing an integrated tourism plan focusing on more sophisticated cooperation and the assimilation of conservation and economic objectives. Therefore, as the park becomes more well-known, as planned infrastructure improvements (particularly the roads) are completed and when the much-anticipated gate to Namibia opens, visitation patterns may change. Still, Duffy (2001) notes that in Southern
Africa, local communities may be unwilling to wait for benefits to accrue, and therefore, even if tourism expectations in the KTP are ultimately met, the results might take too long to satisfy the local communities that the TPA paradigm intends to empower. This is of particular concern in the KTP where the capacity to expand is limited; the success of many supply industries, such as retail and accommodation, is directly related to visitor numbers.

**Conclusions**

This study is the first to assess the tourism performance of a TPA. Based on the evidence collected here, it appears that the creation of the KTP did not trigger an increase in tourism to either side of the park, nor did it instigate a significant amount of cross-border visits. Although the assumption of increased tourism potential was understandable when the TPA model was new, it appears unsubstantiated in this case. Every protected area complex is unique and therefore the discouraging start to the KTP does not necessarily jeopardize the strength of the TPA paradigm. However, findings from the KTP justify a greater degree of caution when outlining promises of early economic gains. TPA initiatives often involve diverse stakeholders, incorporate the chronically under-privileged and hinge on delicate relationships in volatile locations; therefore it should not be further complicated by unrealistic expectations.
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References


Appendix I
*Note: Only questions used in the analysis are included.

**Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park: Visitor Survey**

1) How many people are in your group?  Adults ____  Children (<18) ____

2) Where do the members of your group live (please only fill town/province if SA residents)?
   Town: ___________  Province: ___________  Country: ___________  No. of members: ___
   Town: ___________  Province: ___________  Country: ___________  No. of members: ___
   Town: ___________  Province: ___________  Country: ___________  No. of members: ___

3) How did you get to the park?
   - □ Self-drive 4x4
   - □ Self-drive car
   - □ On tour

4) Please list how many days and nights you spent on the South African side of the park.
   Days in South Africa: ____  Nights in South Africa: ____

5) Please list how many days and nights you spent on the Botswana side of the park.
   Days in Botswana ___  Nights in Botswana ___

6) Where else will you be visiting on your trip? __________________________________________________________

7) How much of the reason for your group’s entire trip was coming to this park (e.g. 100% = entire reason, 50% = half reason etc.)? _____%

8) When deciding to visit this park, how did the following factors influence your decision?
   1 = not important  5 = very important
   Desert landscapes (natural beauty)………………………………………………………… 1 2 3 4 5
   Overall game viewing opportunities………………………………………………………… 1 2 3 4 5
   Opportunity to see big cats ……………………………………………………………………… 1 2 3 4 5
   Opportunity to see small desert mammals (e.g. meerkats)…………………………………… 1 2 3 4 5
   Opportunity to see birds of prey ………………………………………………………………… 1 2 3 4 5
   Opportunity for off-road driving……………………………………………………………… 1 2 3 4 5
   Recently increased size of the park/access to previously inaccessible areas …………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 1 2 3 4 5
   New and improved facilities…………………………………………………………………….. 1 2 3 4 5
   Sense of place (wilderness, vast open space)/to “get away from it all”….. 1 2 3 4 5

9) Through which gate did you enter the park?
   - □ Twee Rivieren
   - □ Kaa
   - □ Mabuasehube
   - □ Two Rivers (Botswana)

10) Through which gate are you exiting park?
    - □ Twee Rivieren
    - □ Kaa
    - □ Mabuasehube
    - □ Two Rivers (Botswana)

11) Did the ability to cross the border in the park encourage you to extend your visit to the neighbouring country beyond the park?
    - □ Yes
    - □ No

12) Did any aspects of the transfrontier park not live up to your expectations? ________________________________________________________________

13) Do you have any suggestions for improving the park? ________________________________________________________________