



Tourist Satisfaction and Service Delivery at Nech Sar National Park of Ethiopia

Bililign Zafu¹, Molla Mekonnen Alemu²

¹Nech Sar National Park, Arba Minch, Ethiopia

²University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

Email: bilzafu@gmail.com

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Abstract

The tourism industry is contributing a lot for the economic development of many countries worldwide along with its contribution for the development of livelihoods. Tourist satisfaction on service delivery of Nech Sar National Park is examined in the present study. Primary data were collected from foreign and domestic tourist and different workers of the park. Accordingly, a total of 167 (52% men) participated for the data collection. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis. Based on the findings of the study, it was found out that landscape, environment, cost, and working hours were among the factors which satisfied visitors and the visitors were also dissatisfied by infrastructure, service offered at night time in camp sites, and deforestation.

Subject Areas

Environmental Economics, Marketing

Keywords

Tourist, Satisfaction, Nech Sar National Park

1. Introduction

Tourist satisfaction is generated by comparing the expectation of customers before and after a service. If the service or product doesn't meet the expectation, it will result dissatisfaction of tourists. Satisfaction on the other hand will be created as a result of a positive feeling between pre-travel expectations and the experience after the travel. Thus, if the experience of visitor's creates a feeling of gratification, then satisfaction will be created. Tourist's satisfaction has two major aspects: the first is in relation to the expectation of the tourists before ahead of the travel and the second dimension is validation

of the rendered services after the travels of the tourist. In simple terms, tourist satisfaction is a direct result of tourist expectation and the perceived value after the visit [1].

The World Bank [2] contends that, the amount tourists spend and their satisfaction on a site are directly related to the quality of facilities and services at touristic sites. On site information center, background history, handcraft centers, public toilets, mini and super markets, banks, restaurants and accommodation are among the facilities which will impact the level of satisfaction. Even though, one has to be mindful of not over commercializing some sites, availing a base level of facilities can help to intensify a fair level of tourism spending in an area.

In countries like Ethiopia, where there is still a challenge in terms of basic infrastructure to ease the tourism sector, paving the way to increase tourism spending through establishment of appropriate facilities in the touristic sites will have a paramount importance in increasing the revenue from the industry. This will also help to capacitate local communities through livelihoods development opportunities coupled with local economic development.

Nech Sar national park is one of the earliest national parks in Ethiopia. It was established in 1974 as a result of its natural beauty and a large number of wild animals. The park is situated on the floor of the Great Rift Valley in Southern Nations and Nationalities Regional State of Ethiopia. The National Park straddles the narrow piece of land separating Lake Chamo and Lake Abaya both of which are located in the craters of ancient volcanoes. The eastern border of the park extends to include the plains at the foothills of the spectacular Amaro Mountains. In the far eastern part of the park hot springs bubble to the surface.

The flow of both domestic and foreign tourists has shown a remarkable increase in the past 15 years. According to the park's tourist and revenue data, the number of visitors has increased from 1047 in 1994/95 to 18,730 in 2011/12 and to 37,639 in 2015/16. Correspondingly, the revenue has increased from 27,185 Birr in 1994/95 to 1,333,459 in 2009/1010 (Table 1). This information may seem very low as compared to other African park's performance, however, from domestic Park's point of view, the progress is very promising.

Even though, the park has several tourist attraction sites with high number of plant and animal species, viewpoints and camp sites, visitors' satisfaction and the service delivery have never been assessed so far. To develop the tourism potential and capacitate its contribution to reduce poverty and underdevelopment in the surrounding society of the park and to increase its contribution for national growth, assessing the satisfaction of tourists in Nech Sar National Park is of great necessity. Therefore, the present study is aimed at assessing the level of tourist satisfaction and the services delivered in their stay in Nech Sar National Park.

2. Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to assess tourist satisfaction and service delivery of Nech Sar National Park.

Table 1. Tourist or visitors flow and revenue of NNP.

Year	Foreign Tourists	Domestic Tourists	Total Tourists flow	Revenue obtained (Ethiopian Birr)
1994	447	600	1047	27,185
1995	713	885	1598	42,181
1996	2241	1081	3322	60,036
1997	1035	999	2034	54,029
1998	1201	1286	2487	66,712
1999	1275	1281	2556	68,811
2000	1113	1066	2179	58,362
2001	1163	1017	2180	153,255
2002	1700	1329	3029	222,610
2003	2049	2396	4445	234,813
2004	1703	1716	3419	265,477
2005	1703	1716	3419	265,477
2006	5113	2328	7441	639,714
2007	7267	8528	15,795	695,419
2008	8112	12,854	20,966	838,098
2009	8992	9607	18,599	996,593
2010	10,261	8469	18,730	1,033,459
2011	11,660	10,049	21,209	1,331,075
2012	11,227	10,540	20,417	1,169,345
2013	11,321	10,867	23,588	1,179,625
2014	11,731	13,819	24,917	1,332,170
2015	10,328	17,476	27,804	1,236,640
Total	112,355	119,909	231,181	11,971,086

3. Methodology

3.1. Background of the Study Area

The research is conducted in Arba Minch Town at Nech-Sar National Park. Arba Minch Town is one of the 22 reform town in the Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. It is the center of Arba Minch Zuria District and GamoGofa Administrative Zone. The town is situated at 505 Km and 275 Km away from Addis Ababa and Hawassa respectively. Arba Minch Town is located at 06°05'N Latitude and 37°38'E Longitudes and lies between 1200 m/1450m above sea level and have an area of 5557 hectares or 55.57 Square Km. The town is bounded in the north, northeast and east by Lake Abaya and in the South by Lake Chamo and in the west with the Gennta massive hills. The total population of the town is 78,879 [3] and the annual population Growth

rate is found to be 4.8% and its density is 13/Km Square. Arba Minch Town is embraced by Nech Sar National Park and many others tourist attraction area. The park is found right after the eastern edge of Arba Minch town, at about 510 Km south of Addis Ababa and 270 Km from Hawassa. The park lies within the floor of the Great Rift Valley and extends from 5°51'N to 6°50'N and from 37°32'E to 37°48'E with an elevation varying between 1108 and 1650 above sea level. It covers an area of 514 Km of which 85% is land and 15% is water (shores of Lake Abaya from the north and Lake Chamo in the south) [3] [4] (Figure 1).

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

To select tourists for this study the research tried to observe the trend of the flow for both domestic and foreign tourists for the last two years. Accordingly the average number of visitors coming to the park per month is around 850 for foreign tourists and 674 for domestic tourists. Therefore, 85 foreign 67 domestic tourists were selected using

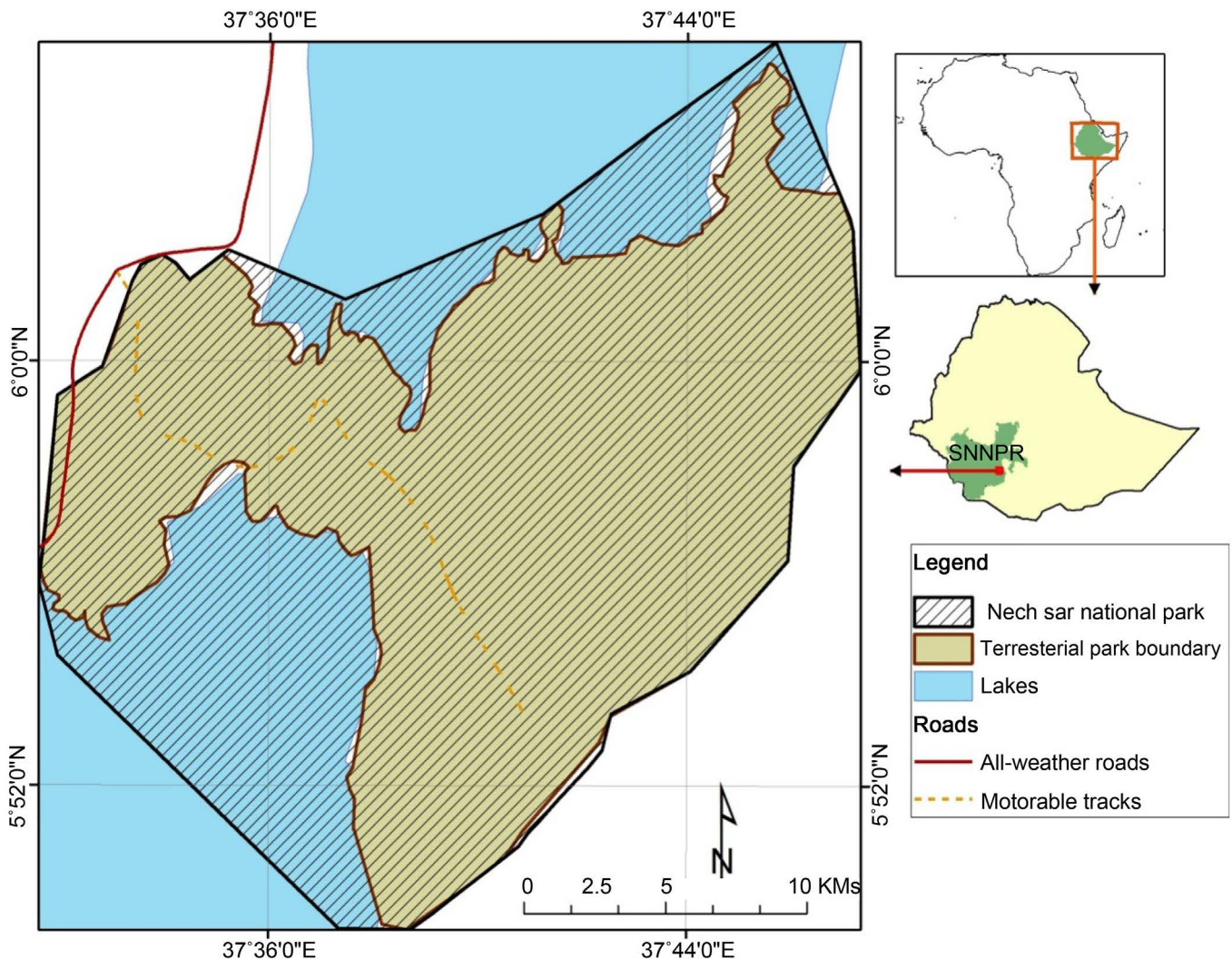


Figure 1. Location map of Nech Sar national park [5].

quota sampling to be participants in this study. 15 participants were also selected from the employees of the park so as to solicit information. The total number of participants in this research was 167 (52% male).

Information was obtained directly from participants using three data gathering tools. These were questionnaire, interview and observation. The questionnaire primarily was used to obtain information from domestic and foreign tourists regarding the satisfaction with the service rendered by the park. Interviews were employed to obtain information from the workers of the park regarding the quality of service in the park and their ideas regarding customer satisfaction. Observation was conducted by the researcher regarding the overall conditions in the park.

Secondary information was also obtained as a supplementary tool to support the primary sources. Document analysis of current reports, program of the organization, different types of publications were used in this regard. Furthermore, customers' feedback from suggestion boxes was also reviewed.

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques of data analysis were used. Quantitative analysis was employed to analyze the data obtained through questionnaires. In this regard the obtained information was tabulated and analyzed through frequencies and percentages. Qualitative techniques were used to analyze the data obtained through interviews, semi-structured observation and document analysis. Statements and narrations were used to analyze the obtained information through words and from documents. Necessary interpretations made in line with the objectives of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is considerably linked to customer loyalty, continual visits and a positive social communication on the visited site [6]. Dorfman [7] endeavored to solidify the definition of satisfaction from recreational camping perspectives. He states that "satisfaction level are maximized when aspiration (desirability) equals perception but only when the desirability is high for that condition. Desirability for conditions could directly relate back to the social identity theory and the need for the personal distinctiveness".

When tourists are satisfied on the services rendered to them, the service providers will be recognized for their efficient service delivery. The satisfaction of tourists is usually dependent on the extent and level of individual efforts and expectations. Cardoza [8] mentioned as "customer effort is any physical, mental or monetary resource expended by the costumer in the acquisition of a service or product". Visitors will have their own perception and image before they ever travel to the site.

Among others expectations of the tourists is the motivational force to ignite the interest to visit particular touristic locations. Therefore, if the customer effort is on the high side and high expectations are achieved then customer satisfaction is likely to be materialized. On the other hand, high levels of expectation that end up in getting a low value experience will result in low levels of customer satisfaction, irrespective of the

level of customer's effort. This kind of situation where high value expectations met low level experience, it is known as the dissonance levels in tourists. Therefore, service providers should be able to offer the actual information of touristic destinations so that unnecessary expectations can be avoided by the visitors. It is also crucial to be mindful of the fact that, sound tourist experiences can be achieved as a result of a business that knows the products, services, their customers and their own employees at hand [9].

4.2. Service Quality

Service quality is not a function of how much something costs but, rather, how well it meets the expectations of those who purchase it. Lewis and Booms [10] also mentioned that "in the service industry, definitions of service quality focus on meeting customers' needs and requirements, and how well the service delivered meets the customer expectations".

Service quality can thus be defined as "the difference between customer expectation of service and perceived service)". If the customer expectations are higher than performance, then the customer may experience lesser satisfaction that will result for the dissatisfaction of the customer [11] [12].

Parasurman *et al.* [13] also defined service quality as "the degree and direction of discrepancy between costumers' perception and costumer, and perceived service quality as the gap between costumer's expectations and perceptions, as the measurement of service quality. Thus, the smaller the gap, the better the service quality provided, and the greatest the customer satisfaction".

Gronoos [14] also mentioned that, the apparent quality service is directly linked with the contrast between expected services with the actual perceived services and there for it is the result of a comparative valuation. For this kind of cases Sweeney and Armstrong [15], utilized the conjoint analysis technique so as to assess the tradeoff functions in the perspectives of different services, and found that low prices have contributed negatively to expectations on the quality of the service but positively to service selection.

4.3. Attributes or Factors and Their Dimension on Customer (Tourist) Satisfaction with Service Performance of the Nech Sar National Park

In order to identify and examine tourist (customer) satisfaction attributes and their dimension related with service performance of Nech Sar National Park different question were administered which focuses on the major factor (attributes) and their level of degree that affect tourist or customer satisfaction. The summary of the responses is put forward in **Table 2**.

Based on the analysis on satisfaction of the tourists with service performance of NNP, the results of **Table 2** indicates that the tourists were good and highly satisfied on provision of service right at the first time (55.2% respondent); empathy; contact with nature best reaction of the landscape, environment, lakes and the wild life which 100% of the respondent agree and 100% of the respondent were very much satisfied on the working hours which are flexible and convenient and the price or cost that they considered not expensive.

Table 2. Attributes and their dimension on tourist satisfaction.

No	Attributes (factors) related to service performance of NNP	Percentage of Satisfaction from the total Respondents (152 tourist)									
		Very low		Low		Undecided		Good		Very good	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	They have modern looking equipment and new technology	52	34.2	65	42.7	0	0	35	23.1	0	0
2	Appealing office décor	-	-	101	66.4	10	6.6	41	27	-	-
3	Employees look clean & tidy	-	-	44	30	13	8.5	95	62.5	-	-
4	The material elements and the documents that have to do with service (destination, lodgings, visualizing) are visually appealing	93	61.2	39	25.6	10	6.6	10	6.6	-	-
5	All the promised tasks and explained by the office well performed and perfect	53	35	46	30.2	-	-	53	34.8	-	-
6	When the customer (tourist) has a problem they show a sincere interest to solve it	-	-	-	-	27	17.6	102	67.2	23	15.2
7	Provision of service right the first time (first impression)	-	-	25	16.5	8	5.3	35	23	84	55.2
8	They habitually perform good service	33	21.7	40	26.3	-	-	79	51.9	-	-
9	They insist on making no mistakes in their document	-	-	12.7	7.9	25	16.4	100	65.7	15	10
10	Telling when service to be completed	-	-	-	-	-	-	152	100	-	-
11	Prompt service	-	-	152	100	-	-	-	-	8	-
12	Employees are always willing to help	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	When there is a problem, there is always a quick response	-	-	68	44.7	-	-	84	55.3	-	-
14	The behavior of employees installs confidence in their customer (Tourist)	-	-	33	21.7	17	11.2	66	43.4	36	23.7
15	You feel safe in your transaction with the NNP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	152	-
16	Employees are consistently courteous with customer	-	-	-	-	-	-	80	52.6	72	47.4
17	Employees have sufficient knowledge, and capacity on their job service and about NNP detail explanation	66	43.4	80	52.6	-	-	6	4	-	-
18	The working hours are flexible and convenient	-	-	-	-	-	-	65	42.7	87	57.3
19	Personal attention by employees	-	-	-	-	-	-	152	100	-	-
20	The employees understand the specific needs of their customer	80	52.6	42	27.6	10	6.6	20	13.2	-	-
21	Sufficient resources to offer good service	25	16.4	127	83.6	-	-	-	-	-	-

Continued

22	Adequate capacity to satisfy customer's needs	75	49.3	40	26.3	-	-	37	24.4	-	-
23	Promotion strategies and implementation about NNP	75	49.3	32	21.1	-	-	45	29.6	-	-
24	Responsiveness	-	-	64	42.1	-	-	88	57.9	-	-
25	Reliability	-	-	38	25	20	13.1	94	61.9	-	-
26	Empathy	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	39.5	92	60.5
27	Tangibility	30	19.7	30	19.7	30	19.7	62	40.9	-	-
28	Easy to access	-	-	69	45.4	-	-	83	54.6	-	-
29	Expensive	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	65.8	52	34.2
30	Peace and quiet too much traffic, too many people and noise	-	-	-	-	-	-	152	100	-	-
31	Contact with nature, landscape, environment, & tourist attraction to see (historic site)	-	-	-	-	-	-	102	67.1	50	32.9
32	Infrastructure-road, bridge (Inside the park)	97	63.8	55	36.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
33	Night life-arrangement for destination-service offer on 2 camping sites	111	73	41	27	-	-	-	-	-	-
34	Easy to get information and available need by the customer	-	-	69	45.4	-	-	83	54.6	-	-
35	Facilities to children and elders	122	80.3	30	19.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
36	Unwillingness to hear advice and comment	-	-	41	26.9	-	-	111	73.1	-	-
37	Adequate communication skills (language & others)	-	-	42	27.6	-	-	100	65.7	10	6.7
	Average		15.4		24.1		2.87		40.3		9.7

The level of satisfaction that has found low and very low were in the following aspects: 100% of the respondent got very low and low satisfaction on the road facilities inside the park; nightlife on 2 camp site service offer, employees knowledge, capacity on service, and communication skill, and sufficient resource to offer good services. An average and in general as **Table 2** shows, from 37 attributes or factors that are related to service performance of NNP identified by the respondents, 39.9% of the respondent's satisfaction were low and very low and 40.3% were satisfied well.

4.4. The Most Important Variables That Affect Tourist Overall Satisfaction in the Study Area

Studies on identifying and measuring the most determinant attributes that affect consumer satisfaction which emanates and related directly from service performance ren-

dered by Nech Sar National Park indicates only the single dimension of tourists satisfaction. Therefore, the study also considered other variables on the services provided by other parties of the tourism chain. Accordingly, information on accommodation, getting money with a credit card, food and drinks, services of travel agents, climate, expensiveness of services, sport facilities, pollution, services at the airport, and other major and important factors which are not related with the service performance of Nech Sar National Park was obtained from selected respondents and the result was analyzed in **Table 3**.

As **Table 3** indicates 85% of the respondents got good to high satisfaction regarding cost delivered to food and accommodation. Most of the tourists are satisfied on the access and opportunity to shopping, taking pictures, peace and quietness of the destination. The services rendered by souvenir shoppers got low and very low level of satisfaction which might be related to the language barriers.

Many empirical studies have showed that the tour leader is a crucial factor in achieving customer satisfaction. Chang & Bawie, [16] also stated that it is the tour guide (tour leader) who sells the next tour (**Figure 2** and **Figure 3**).

4.5. Tourist Dissatisfaction Factors and Causes at the Study Area

Understanding the level of dissatisfaction, displeasure or negative impressions on a given service can help to generate effective and necessary tools in finding out how a company or tourism destination is performing. This will also help to improve the service that is being offered by the different actors. Moreover, there is no one to one correspondence between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, suggesting that the attributed or sources that generate satisfaction are not the same as those that generate dissatisfaction. For this reason, the study of dissatisfaction is believed to be complementary to the study of satisfaction. Based on the above fact the reaction of the respondents is summarized as follows.

On prominent factors that causes the dissatisfaction of tourists in NNP as **Table 4** indicates are, the poor road facilities and deforestation. Cattle grazing with wildlife, poor service provided during nightlife in camp site, lack of facility for children and elders are also among the factors that caused dissatisfaction of the tourists.

The finding seems to relate with that of Middleton and Clarke [17] which hold that accommodation unit: hotels, campsites, caravan parks, hostels, guesthouses, etc. will have a direct impact on the level of tourists' satisfaction (**Figure 4**).

5. Conclusions

This study was undertaken to explore tourist satisfaction and service delivery by taking Nech Sar national park as focus of study. The results of the study showed that the attributes which satisfied most tourists are the services provided by NNP right the first time and contact with nature where best reaction was felt by the tourists as a result of the landscape, environment, working hours and the inexpensive costs for the service. On the other hand, the tourist found poor satisfaction as a result of the poor road facilities

Table 3. Important variables that affect tourist overall satisfaction.

No	Variables that affect overall tourist satisfaction which are not related directly with NNP service performance	Percentage of satisfaction from selected respondent (152)									
		Very low		Low		Undecided		Good		Very good	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Accommodation hotel selection, quality service (bed, food, drinks) & facility condition	111	73	41	27	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Cost required and expense that delivered outside of the park	-	-	-	-	23	15.1	29	19.1	100	65.8
3	Service performance by tour agent in itinerary arrangements, auxiliary support and service delivery (fee paid for the tour)	-	-	89	58.5	11	7.2	52.1	34.2	-	-
4	Access and opportunity to explore local area& contact local culture through memorable incidents	33	21.7	54	35.5	3	2	52	34.2	10	6.6
5	Access and to opportunity to shopping, taking photos, purchasing souvenirs and gifts	-	-	19	12.5	-	-	51	33.5	82	53.8
6	Opportunity for night life activities & attractiveness	8	5.3	30	19.7	-	-	78	51.3	36	23.7
7	Tour leaders and drivers professional &social skills, character, personal experience, cleanness and knowledge for achieving the tour objectives	13	8.5	55	36.2	10	6.6	74	48.7	-	-
8	The peace and quiet of the destination	-	-	20	13.1	-	-	80	52.6	52	34.3
9	The climate and the landscapes of the destination (natural attractions)	-	-	-	-	-	-	52	34.2	100	65.8
10	Historic sites or places	-	-	152	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	The presence of recreational attachment in the context of devoted sport fan behavior at each destination	22	14.4	59	38.8	-	-	71	46.8	-	-
12	Opportunity to learn and see something	20	13.1	13	8.5	31	20.4	88	57.8	-	-
13	Availability of space on each destination point	-	-	100	65.8	-	-	52	34.2	-	-
14	Tourism service provider (souvenir shopper and etc.) on their responsive, reliability, empathy and prompt service delivered	83	54.6	60	39.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Average result		12.7		30.3		3.42		29.7		16.7

inside the park, service offered on the night life at comp site of NNP, and employees' capacity on foreign language communication skill.

This study also indicated that, the most important factors that positively affected the



Figure 2. Traditional cloth shopping center in Arba-Minch not far from the park.



Figure 3. Some of wild animals and attractive landscapes in the park.

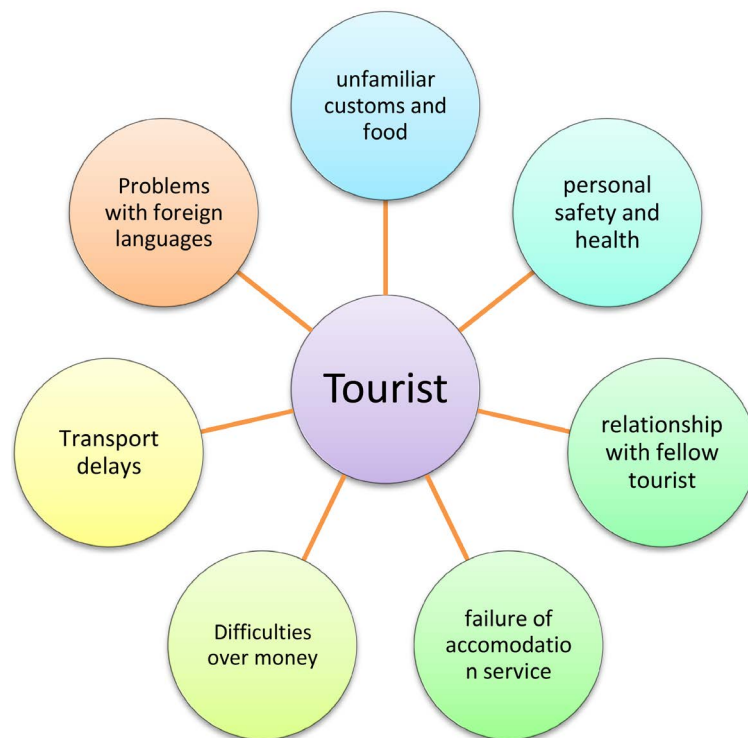


Figure 4. Negative factors which affect tourist satisfaction [16].

Table 4. Causes of dissatisfaction.

No	Dissatisfaction attributes	Percentage of satisfaction and dissatisfaction from the total respondent (152)							
		Not at all		To some extent		Very much			
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Poor road construction (badly damaged) in the park during rainy season (March-June) where Tourist (foreign) flow is high	-	-	23	15.13	129	84.87		
2	Environmental deterioration, settlement, cattle graze together with wild animals of the NNP, illegal wood product collector and encroachment	-	-	40	26.3	112	83.7		
3	Poor service provided to tourist who enjoy the Night life in the park	-	-	49	32.24	103	67.76		
4	Unavailability of electric power and failures	22	14.47	95	62.5	35	23.02		
5	Lines and waits for service	50	32.89	70	46.05	32	21.06		
6	No public toilets	-	-	99	65.13	53	34.87		
7	Trouble changing money	44	28.94	108	71.06				

tourist overall satisfaction which are not directly related to service performance of NNP were the peaceful and quite environment to wonder nature. The tourists also got very low satisfaction by the service delivered by hotels, tour agents and access to explore local area and contact local culture through memorable incidence.

The trend of tourist flow to the park is very promising as it shows a steady increase across years and the park is playing its role for the local economic development efforts alongside with environmental development and protection. It is also advisable for policy and decision makers to work on factors which are causing tourist dissatisfaction in the park under study and other similar parks of the country.

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