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Eco-Parcel As a Semi-Qualitative Approach to Support Environmental Impacts Assessments in Nature-Based Tourism Destinations

Authors : Halima Kilungu, Pantaleo, K. T. Munishi

Abstract : Climate and land-cover change affect nature-based tourism (NBT) due to its attractions' close connection to natural environments and climate. Thus, knowledge of how each attraction reacts to the changing environments and devising simple yet science based approaches to respond to these changes from a tourism perspective in space and time is timely. Nevertheless, no specific approaches exist to address the knowledge gap. The eco-parcel approach is devised to address the gap and operationalized in Serengeti and Kilimanjaro National Parks: the most climate-sensitive NBT destinations in Africa. The approach is partly descriptive and has three simple steps: (1) to identify and define tourist attractions (i.e. biotic and abiotic attractions). This creates an important database of the most poorly kept information on attractions' types in NBT destinations. (2) To create a spatial and temporal link of each attraction and describe its characteristic environments (e.g. vegetation, soil, water and rock outcrops). This is the most limited attractions' information yet important as a proxy of changes in attractions. (3) To assess the importance of individual attractions for tourism based on tourists' preferences. This information enables an accurate assessment of the value of individual attractions for tourism. The importance of the eco-parcel approach is that it describes how each attraction emerges from and is connected to specific environments, which define its attractiveness in space and time. This information allows accurate assessment of the likely losses or gains of individual attractions when climate or environment changes in specific destinations and equips tourism stakeholders with informed responses.

Keywords : climate change, environmental change, nature-based tourism, Serengeti National Park, Kilimanjaro National Park
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