

**VALUATION OF NATURE-BASED TOURISM IN MASAI-MARA  
NATIONAL RESERVE**

**THE MARGARET THATCHER LIBRARY**

**By**

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### ABSTRACT

Often the direct use values of natural resources have been emphasised at the expense of other non-use values or indirect benefits that such a natural resource may have.

Protected areas such as National parks and Reserves are examples of natural resources which tend to be undervalued because their full benefits are not appreciated as a large proportion of these benefits are indirect benefits.

The general objective of the study was to estimate the monetary value of the Masai-Mara National Reserve (MMNR) using the Contingent Valuation and the travel Cost methods. The specific objectives were:-a) to investigate the tourists' expectations as they visit the major attractions of the Reserve, b) to estimate the recreation value of the reserve using the travel cost method, c) to determine visitors willingness to pay for environmental improvements and for crowding control in the Reserve, and d) to determine the most effective measures for environmental conservation in the protected area.

The study addressed itself to these issues by carrying out extensive surveys using questionnaires administered to resident and non-resident tourists at Sekenani and Ololomitie gates and Keekorok and Olkiombo airstrips. Contingent valuation and the Travel costs methods, were used to capture both the use and the non-use values of the MMNR.

The study findings showed that visitors enjoyed a substantial consumer surplus (U.S \$ 52.93 from C.V.M and U.S \$ 54.042 from Travel Costing) which shows the high value of the Reserve as a protected area. Visitors' willingness to pay for environmental improvements and crowding control, when expressed in U.S dollars was U.S \$ 14.4 and U.S.\$ 15.4 respectively. A key finding of the study was that for the trip to Kenya, the main factor -affecting visitation was the country of origin and not the cost of the trip as is common in most other studies dealing with recreation. Other variables were age, income, total costs for the Mara trip, and household size. It was concluded that with regard to visitation in Kenya, cost is not the constraining factor. The industry can therefore raise more revenue by raising the entrance fee to protected areas without significantly affecting visitation. The current gate fee of 27 U.S dollars was found to constitute less than one percent of the total costs for international tourists, which means marginal changes in this fee are unlikely to affect visitation.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that if the Reserve quality is maintained, then the gate fee can be raised without significantly affecting the visitation. Visitors indicated that they were sensitive to the quality of the environment and this is likely to be a greater determinant of visitation rates rather than the gate fee charged.