THE PROFILE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF GAME FARMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2023

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Tourism Research in Economics Environs and Society

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VISIT US

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About TREES

This innovative tourism research unit, Tourism Research in Economics, Environs and Society, has existed for over 20 years. The Unit forms part of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at North-West University. Our team of researchers is well known on both a national and international level. In the team of 21 researchers, we are proud to have 9 NRF-rated team members, 7 full professors and 7 extraordinary researchers.

Never before has research been as vital as it is today. With tourism growing in importance in the country, we are relevant with the type of studies we conduct and the quality thereof. Our research focus aligns with the goals and objectives of the National and Provincial departments by analysing economic, environmental and community (society) issues. Specific topics related to marketing and management. Globally, the tourism industry has changed over the last few years, and South Africa's situation is no different. Research is needed to ensure that the tourism industry will return to its former position (even be in a better position) and continue to be one of the economic drivers in this country.

Our contribution to the private sector is of note since it guides decisions and gives strategic direction to tourism products. We also adapt themes and focuses where necessary to address the specific needs of the industry and or scholarly communities. Our post-graduate programme (Magister and PhD-students) directly contributes to skill development and educating students that can develop the industry with a positive outlook. I am excited about the current research projects and the difference they can make in the industry and scholarly environment.

We publish in both national and international accredited journals. In 2019 our highest number of articles in the history of TREES was published, an exceptional achievement. Several of our staff serve on editorial boards or act as reviewers for reputable journals. The TREES team members have also received many accolades, such as Women in Science Awards, Most Productive Senior Researcher at NWU, Most Productive Junior Researcher at NWU, one staff member served on the Research Forum of the Minister of Tourism and three of our Master students received the Vice-Chancellors award for best Magister students.

Striving towards excellence

Our research outputs: 2012-2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

Natural area tourism is Africa's leading source of tourist revenue (also accounts for South Africa) through photographic safaris and hunting (Van der Merwe, Saayman & Krugell, 2007). According to Newsome *et al*. (2013:14), natural area tourism consists of four different tourism sectors: ecotourism, wildlife tourism, geotourism and adventure tourism. Each of these tourism sectors offers a unique experience to the tourists who engage in it, with one similarity being that all the tourism activities happen in the natural environment (Fennell, 2008:20). This research focuses on the wildlife pillar of natural area tourism.

Higginbottom (2004:2) states that "wildlife tourism is tourism based on encounters with non-domesticated (non-human) animals such as springbok, elephants and lions." The occurrence can occur in the animals' natural environment, such as reserves, game farms and national parks, or in captivity, such as zoos. These activities can be classified into two main groups, namely non-consumptive (photographic safaris) or consumptive (hunting and fishing) (Higginbottom, 2004:3). The private wildlife industry in South Africa mainly consists of four pillars, namely hunting, game breading, game sales and by-products.

2. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the research project that consisted of four reports was to assess the socio-economic impact of hunting tourism in South Africa. The project are the following:

- Objective 1: To determine the socio-economic impact of national hunters in South Africa (Report 1).
- Objective 2: To determine the socio-economic impact of international hunters to South Africa (Report 2).
- Objective 3: To determine the profile of game farm owners and their socio-economic impact on South Africa (Report 3).
- Objective 4: To determine the socio-economic impact of the taxidermy industry in South Africa (Report 4).

These results will be presented in four separate reports, based on these objectives, the following four reports will feature the profile and socio-economic impact of national hunters of South Africa (Report 1), the profile and socio-economic impact of international hunters to South Africa (Report 2), the profile and socio-economic impact of game farms in South Africa (Report 3), and the profile and socio-economic impact of the taxidermy industry of South Africa (Report 4). This report focuses on the profile and socio-economic impact of game farms in South Africa.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative research approach was followed using a web-based survey. The target populations for this research were South African game farm owners. Non-probability sampling, namely convenience sampling was used. One hundred thirty-six (136) usable questionnaires were received and included in the analysis.

3.1 Development of the measuring instrument

The questionnaire for game farm owners consisted of the following sections:

- Section A: Demographic information of landowners and land. Here it was important to determine where the farms are mainly located, the size of the farms and ownership type.
- Section B: Employment information. Here the research wanted to determine permanent versus part-time employment, skills of employees and family size.
- Section C: Economic impact information. This section determines average spending by a hunter at the farm, average length of stay of hunters and total capital investment.
- Section D: Social/cultural impact information. Here the research determines social and community impact and social-cultural impacts of hunting.

3.2 Ethical considerations

All research projects need to adhere to ethics clarence from the university (North-West University). The ethics clearance number of this research project is NWU-00652-22-A4.

4. RESULTS

4.1 SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This section focusses on game farm owners' ownership type, location of the farm and number of years in existence to name a few.

4.1.1 Ownership type

The respondents were asked to indicate the type of ownership related to their land. Thirty-nine percent (39%) indicated they own the land, 31% stated that the land is in a company, and 30% stated it is in a trust. Therefore, ownership is evenly distributed between the different categories (Figure 1.1).

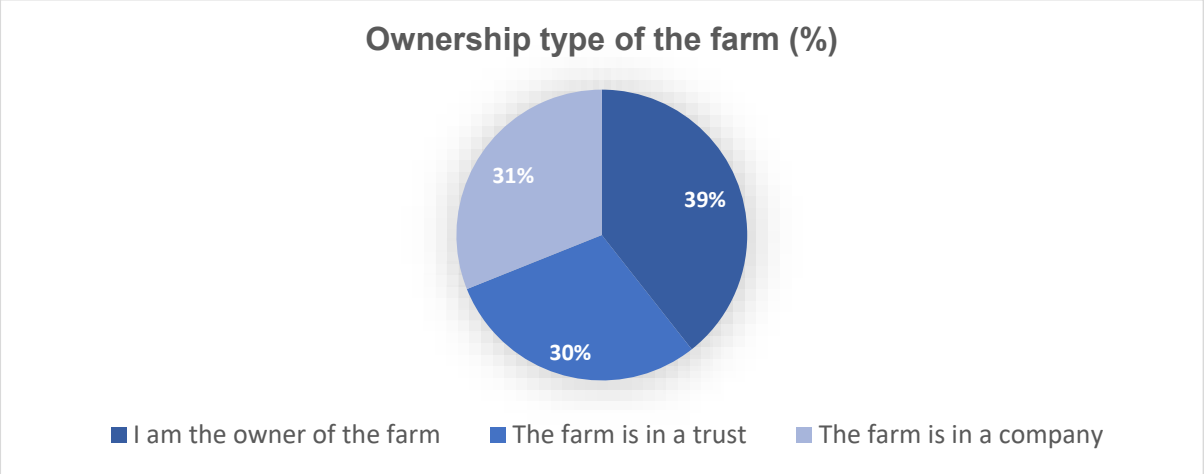

Figure 1.1: Ownership type of the farm

4.1.2 Location of the farm

It was important to determine the location of the farms. From Table 1.1, it is clear that most of the land is located in the Limpopo Province (52%), followed by the Free State and the Eastern Cape Provinces with 11%, respectively. Nine percent (9%) of the land is in the Northern Cape. Mpumalanga had no representation, since no landowners from this province participated in the survey. There are however several game farms in this province (Figure 1.2).

Table 1.1: Location of the farm – Province

Province	Respondents	Percentage (5	Province	Respondents	Percentage
Gauteng	4	3%	Northern Cape	12	9%
North West	6	5%	Eastern Cape	14	11%
Limpopo	65	52%	Western Cape	4	3%
KwaZulu-Natal	8	6%	Free State	14	11%
			Total	**127**	**100**

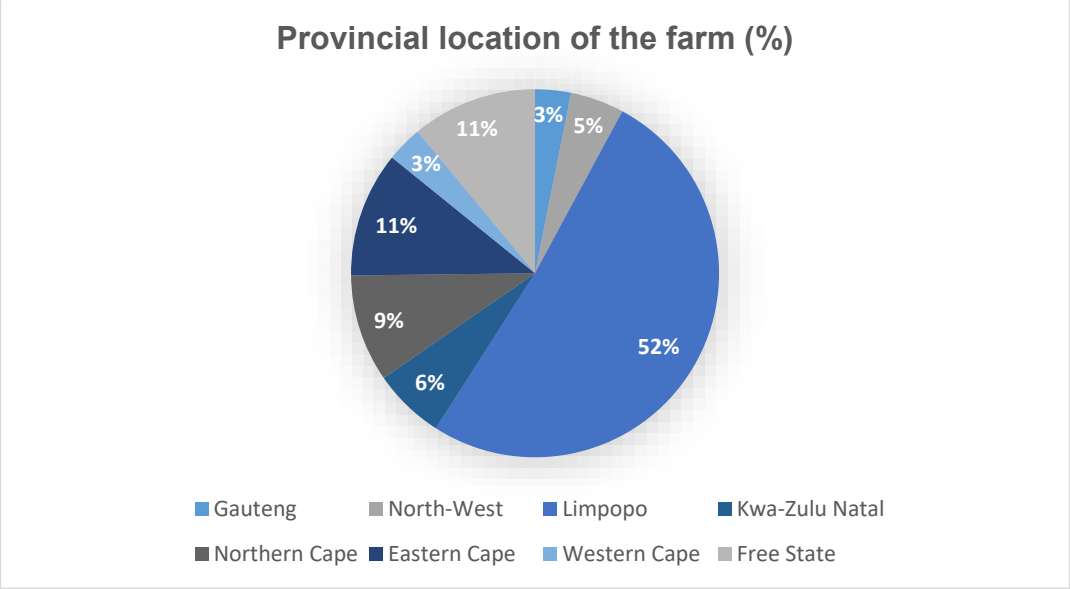

Figure 1.2: Provincial location of the farm

A follow-up question was asked to determine the region of the province in which the game farms were located. These regions are listed in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Location of the farm: Region

Province	City/Town/Village			Region(s)
Gauteng	*Heidelberg	*Culinan	*Dinokeng	
North West	*Vryburg *Koster	*Mareetsane *Mahikeng	*Groot-Marico	
Limpopo	*Marble Hall *Stockpoort *Thabazimbi *Marken *Lephalale (Ellisras) *Alldays *Maasstroom	*Vaalwater *Ga Shongwane *Modimolle (Nylstroom) *Mookgphong *Legkraal *Swartwater *Bela-Bela (Warmbaths)	*Groblersdal *Steenbokpan *Cumberland *Musina *Rooiberg	Waterberg Capricorn Vhembe Mopani Dwaalboom
KwaZulu-Natal	*Bergville *Dargle	*Winterton	*Pongola	Zululand
Northern Cape	*Kathu *Griekwastad	*Kuruman *Douglas	*Danielskuil *Philipstown	Bo Karoo Green Kalahari
Eastern Cape	*Graaf Reinet *Humansdorp	*Makhanda (Grahamstown) *East London	*Adelaide *KwaNojoli (Somerset East)	Albany Amathole
Western Cape	*Prince Albert	*Albertinia		Karoo Hessequa
Free State	*Wepener *Excelsior	*Bultfontein *Ficksburg	*Paul Roux	Eastern FS Ngwathe

4.1.3 Number of years in existence as a hunting farm/wildlife tourism destination

This question asked the number of years that the farm has been in existence as a hunting farm (Table 1.3 and Figure 1.3). Most of these hunting farms have been in existence between 20 and 29 years (31%), followed by 10 to 19 years (26%). Sixteen percent (16%) have been

in existence between zero and nine years and 30 to 39 years, respectively. Only 3% indicated more than 50 years. With an average of 22 years, one can conclude that this is a relatively young industry.

Table 1.3: Years the farm has been a hunting farm/wildlife tourism destination

Number of years in existence as a hunting farm/wildlife tourism destination	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
0-9 years	21	16%
10-19 years	34	26%
20-29 years	41	31%
30-39 years	21	16%
40-49 years	11	8%
50+ years	4	3%
Average: 22 years	**132**	**100%**

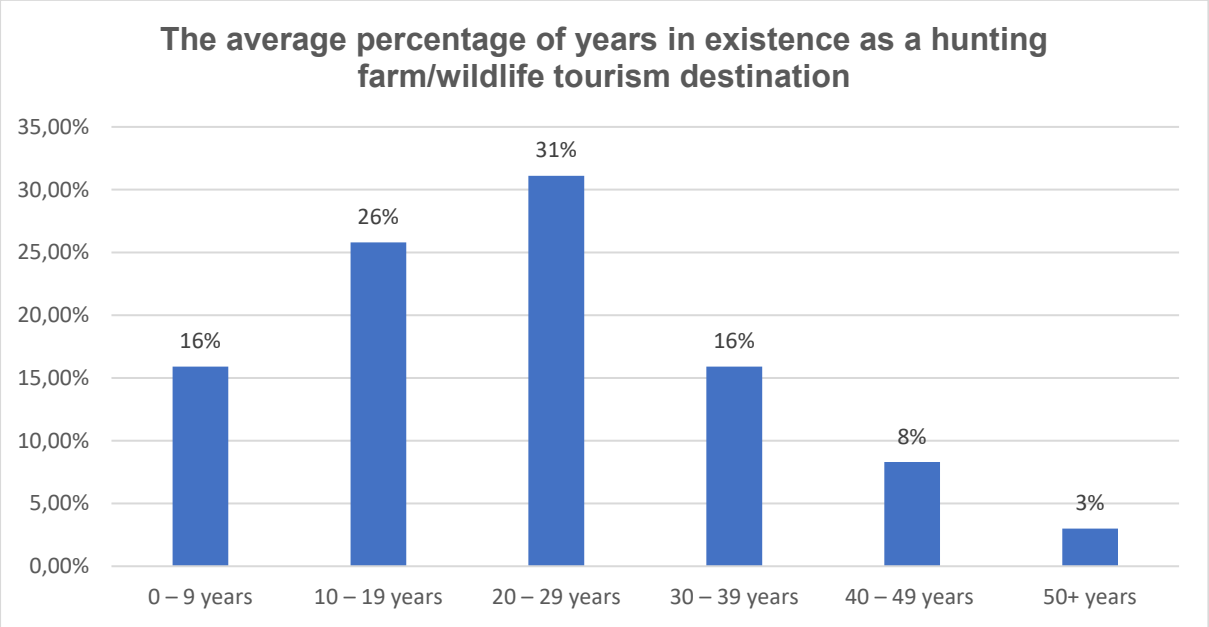

Figure 1.3: Average percentage of years in existence as a hunting farm/wildlife tourism destination

4.1.4 The size of the farm

Thirty-one percent indicated that their farm size varies between 2001 – 5000 ha, followed by 22% with 1001-2000 ha and 20% with 501-1000 ha. 11% indicated that their farms are 5001-10 000 ha in size, and 11% indicated less than 500 ha (Table 1.4 and Figure 1.4). The average farm size was 3220 ha in size.

Table 1.4: The size of the farm

Category for the size of the farm (hectares)	Number of respondents in the category	Percentage (%)
0-500 ha	14	11%
501-1000 ha	25	20%
1001-2000 ha	27	22%
2001-5000 ha	38	31%
5001-10000 ha	14	11%
10000 + ha	6	5%
Average: 3220 ha	**124**	**100%**

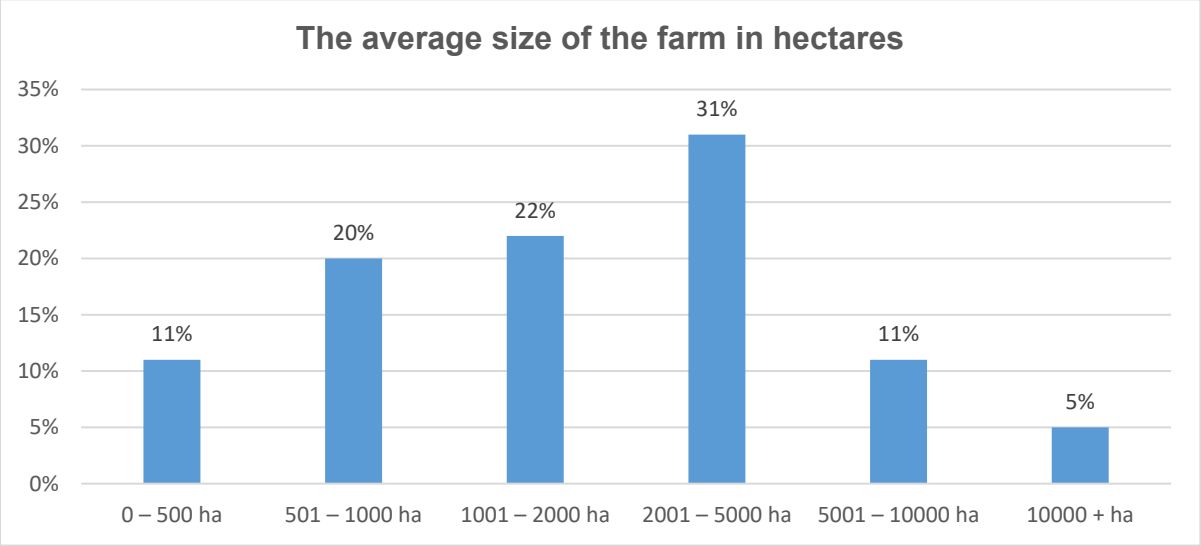

Figure 1.4: The average size of the farm in hectares

4.1.5 Number of species hosted on the farm

Fifty-two percent (52%) of the respondents have 10-19 species on their land, followed by 27% with 20-29 species and 13% with less than ten species. The average number of species hosted was 17 species (Figure 1.5).

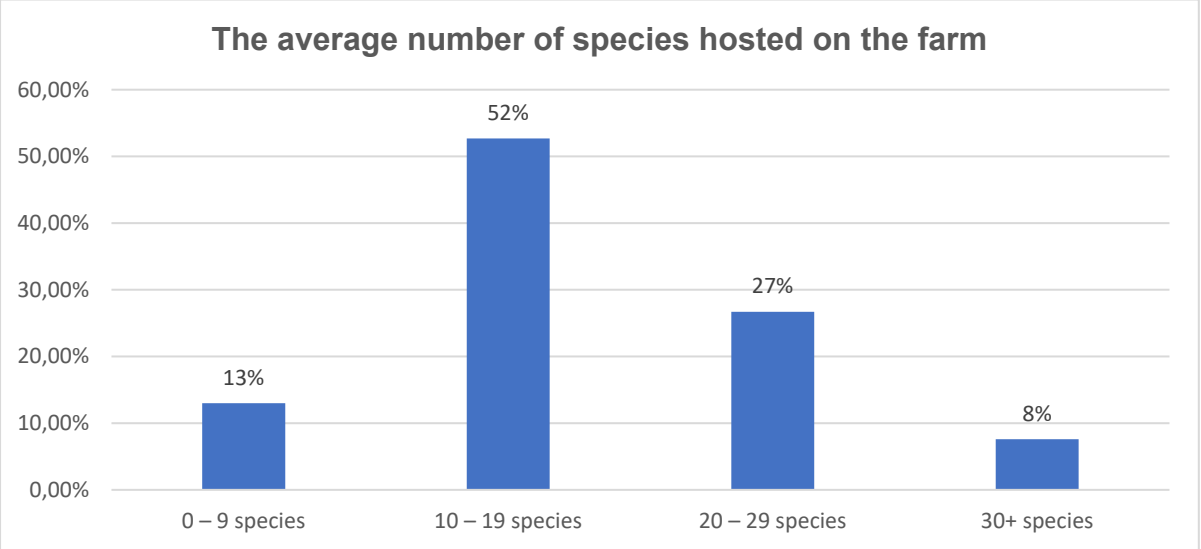

Figure 1.5: The average number of species hosted on the farm

4.1.6 Land-use practices

Most landowners practice international hunting (36%), followed by 26% with national hunting. Fourteen percent indicated that they breed with game, 10% also incorporate livestock farming, and 6% mainly focus on ecotourism (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5: Land-use practices

Land-use options	Percentage (%)	Land-use options	Percentage (%)
Hunting (international)	36%	Ecotourists (international)	3%
Hunting (local)	26%	Ecotourists (local)	6%
Breeding of game	14%	Livestock farming (cattle, sheep)	10%
Meat processing	4%	Crop farming	1%

4.2 SECTION B: EMPLOYMENT

This section gives a lay out of the number of people employed by this sector.

4.2.1 Number of employees employed

The total number of people employed by the sample population is 2414 employees, which includes part- and full-time employees. The average number of people employed per respondent is (2414 / 136 respondents) 17.75 employees. If multiplied by the number of estimated game farms, which is 10,000 (African News, 2019), it translates to 177 500 part-time and full-time employees combined.

Full-time male and female employees account for 1946 employees, and part-time male and female employees account for 468 employees. Full-time male employees account for 1296 employees, and full-time female employees account for 650 employees. Part-time male employees account for 259 employees, and part-time female employees account for 209. The most significant number of people are trackers (806 employees), followed by general employees (566) and skinners (255 employees). The average family size of the people employed is four members per family. Employees' average salary is R5158.90 per month (Table 1.6).

Table 1.6: Number of full-time and part-time

Department	Employment Type by Gender	Number of Employees	Sub-Total
Tracker	Full-time male	489	806
	Full-time female	119	
	Part-time male	124	
	Part-time female	74	
Skinner	Full-time male	184	255
	Full-time female	16	
	Part-time male	46	
	Part-time female	9	
Catering	Full-time male	43	237
	Full-time female	125	
	Part-time male	10	
	Part-time female	59	
Marketing	Full-time male	61	108
	Full-time female	31	
	Part-time male	11	
	Part-time female	5	
Management	Full-time male	138	201
	Full-time female	50	
	Part-time male	6	
	Part-time female	7	
General	Full-time male	291	566
	Full-time female	182	
	Part-time male	54	
	Part-time female	39	
Financial	Full-time male	26	77
	Full-time female	38	
	Part-time male	5	
	Part-time female	8	
Services	Full-time male	64	164
	Full-time female	89	
	Part-time male	3	
	Part-time female	8	
Total			**2414**

4.2.2 Training and skills development of employees

Most of the respondents attended the following courses: skinning, butchering and meat processing (18%), followed by hospitality and catering (10%), Professional Hunting training (9%), tracking (8%), and hunting guide and safety training with 8%, respectively. Twelve percent (12%) indicated that no training was done (Table 1.7).

Table 1.7: Training and skills development of employees

Category	Number of respondents in the category	Percentage (%)
Hospitality (front of house, servers, housekeeping, etc.) and catering (restaurant, chef)	25	10%
Tracking	20	8%
Hunting & Guiding (e.g. field or hunting guide)	18	8%
Skinning, butchering & meat processing	42	18%
Taxidermy & Trophies	7	3%
Ranger (e.g. park ranger, game ranger or anti-poaching)	2	0.8%
Game Farming	9	4%
Management (e.g. lodge or game farm management)	7	3%
Marketing	1	0.4%
Human resources & people skills	4	2%
Safety (e.g. firefighting, first aid) and security	17	7%
Hygiene & health	4	2%
Mechanical, equipment & maintenance	5	2%
Computer & technology	2	0.8%
Driving, vehicle operating, vehicle licences	12	5%
PH training	21	9%
General training	13	5%
None	30	12%

4.2.3 Benefits received by the employees

Five employee benefit categories were listed (Figure 1.6). Thirty-four percent (34%) indicated that their employees receive meat, 31% stated accommodation, 18% indicated other benefits (listed in Table 1.8), and 10% indicated medical aid. Seven percent (7%) indicated that their employees form part of a pension fund.

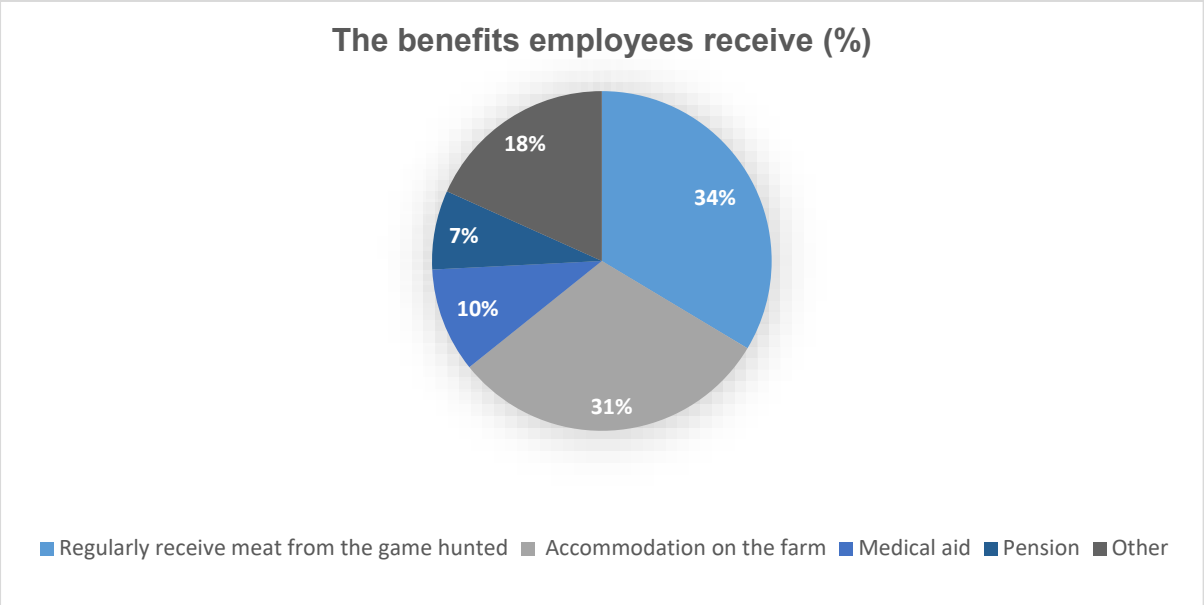

Figure 1.6: The benefits employees receive

Table 1.8: Other benefits

Other benefits employees receive	Number of respondents
Food (daily food, meat, vegetables, flour, *afval* etc.) and beverages	91
Clothing	29
Gifts	12
Accommodation	19
Transport	18
Education & training	2
Monetary benefits (bonuses, overtime, extra pay, school fees, pension etc.)	34
Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF)	5
Tips	104
Insurance & policies	2
Medical aid	3
Electricity	15
Water	9
Rations	3
Incentives	1
Equipment	1
Pasture for cattle	2
Employment / part-time jobs	3
Wood	4
Wi-Fi	1
Television (TVs & DStv)	2
None	1

4.3 SECTION C: ECONOMIC IMPACT

This section focusses on the economic impact of game farms, referring to capital investment, hunters spending and length of stay.

4.3.1 Average spending by a hunter at the farm

Respondents were asked to indicate the spending of hunters, on average. It was reported that national hunters (South Africans) spend on average R19 759.27 and international hunters on average R119 638.76. The higher spending of international hunters is noted.

4.3.2 Average length of stay of hunters

The South African hunter stay on average of three nights (Figure 1.7) at the hunting farm, with 79% staying between three and five nights and 16% two nights or less. 3% stay six to nine nights, and 2% longer than ten nights. The international hunter, however (Figure 1.7), stay on average eight nights, with 75% staying between six and 10 days, followed by five days or less with 21%.

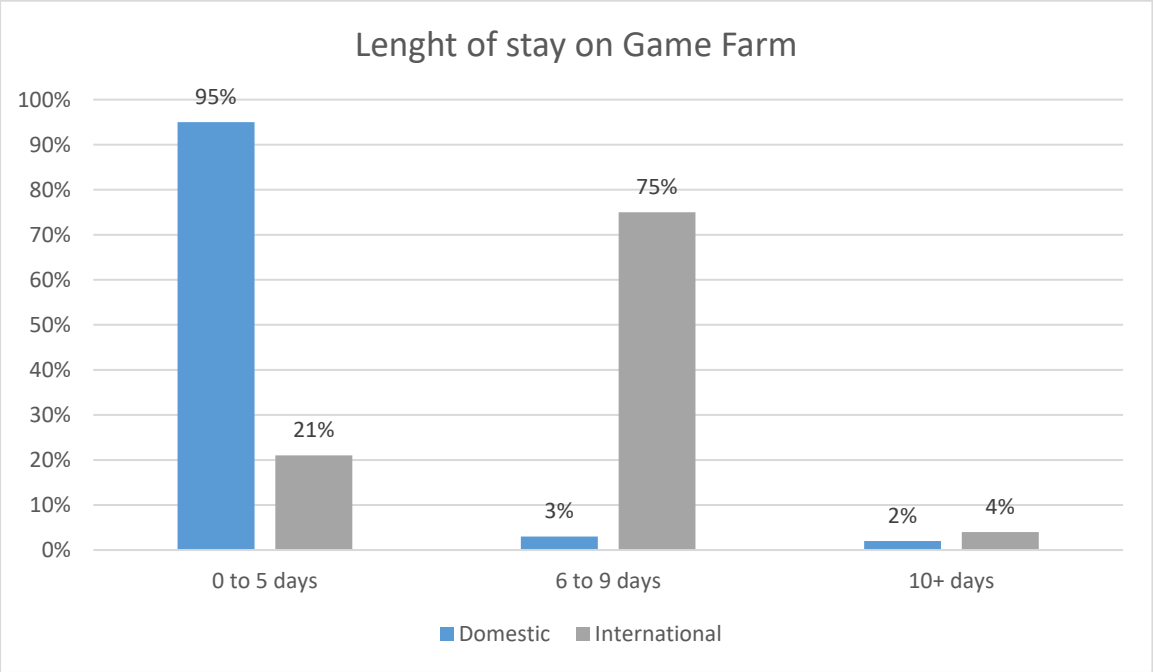

Figure 1.7: Length of stay – domestic vs international hunters

4.3.3 The total capital investment on the farm to date

Table 1.9 is a summary of the total capital investment regarding land, wildlife and infrastructure. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the respondents indicated that their capital investment to date on the land is between R5 and R10 million, followed by 16% who invested between R10 and R20 million, 11.5% more than R30 million and 11% between R3 and R5 million. Reviewing the total capital investment to date in wildlife, 15% indicated between R1 and R2 million, R2 and R3 million, and R5 and R10 million, respectively. 13% indicate less than R500 000 and 13% between R3 and R5 million. Regarding capital investment to date on the farm for infrastructure, 26% indicated between R3 and R5 million, 14% between R5 and R10 million and 12% between R1 and R2 million.

Table 1.9: The total capital investments: Land, Wildlife and Infrastructure

Capital Investment	**Land**		**Wildlife**		**Infrastructure**	
	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
R1 to R500,000	9	8%	15	13%	10	9%
R500,001 to R1,000,000	4	3.5%	9	8%	10	9%
R1,000,001 to R2,000,000	7	6%	17	15%	13	12%
R2,000,001 to R3,000,000	6	5%	18	15%	12	11%
R3,000,001 to R5,000,000	12	11%	15	13%	28	26%
R5,000,001 to R10,000,000	33	29%	17	15%	15	14%
R10,000,00 to R20,000,000	18	16%	14	12%	11	10%
R20,000,001 to R30,000,000	11	10%	3	3%	6	6%
R30,000,001 +	13	11.5%	7	6%	3	3%
Total	**113**	**100%**	**115**	**100%**	**108**	**100%**

4.4 SECTION D: SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACTS

This section focusses on game farm owners' perception of the social and community impact of hunting.

4.4.1 Social and community impact statements

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements related to the social impacts of hunting and hunting tourism. This was measured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = fully agree.

Landowners agreed to strongly agreed that due to hunting (Table 1.10):

- new infrastructure has been developed (3.91),
- the community earns more money (3.89),
- there are opportunities for hunters to learn more about the local community (3.87),
- the area has become more known. (3.85), and
- the area has a positive image (3.84).

Landowners disagreed that hunting contributed to:

- the upkeep of local areas, services, and infrastructure is maintained (2.21),
- vandalism has increased (2.24),
- cultural traditions are fading (2.38), and
- there is an increase in crime (2.42).

Table 1.10: Social and Community Impacts

Statement: Because of Hunting Tourism…	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree Somewhat**	**Agree**	**Agree Somewhat**	**Strongly Agree**	**Mean Value**
a. there are opportunities for hunters to learn more about the local community.	3.79%	5.30%	33.33%	15.15%	42.42%	**3.87**
b. there are increases in land prices.	9.16%	16.79%	26.72%	21.37%	25.95%	**3.38**
c. the community earns more money.	4.65%	3.88%	34.11%	12.40%	44.96%	**3.89**
d. there is an increase in crime.	33.59%	29.77%	13.74%	6.87%	16.03%	**2.42**
e. cultural traditions are fading.	30.00%	29.23%	21.54%	11.54%	7.69%	**2.38**
f. tourism vandalism has increased.	37.69%	30.00%	14.62%	6.15%	11.54%	**2.24**
g. the area has a positive image.	3.08%	3.85%	36.15%	20.00%	36.92%	**3.84**
h. I learned more about other cultures.	4.62%	6.92%	40.00%	20.77%	27.69%	**3.60**
i. new infrastructure has been developed.	6.25%	7.03%	25.00%	12.50%	49.22%	**3.91**
j. the area has become more known.	2.31%	4.62%	36.15%	19.23%	37.69%	**3.85**
k. upkeep of local areas, services and infrastructure (such as roads) is maintained.	46.15%	17.69%	16.92%	7.69%	11.54%	**2.21**
l. more jobs are created in the area.	9.30%	6.20%	28.68%	17.05%	38.76%	**3.70**
m. there are more opportunities for local businesses.	6.15%	9.23%	32.31%	19.23%	33.08%	**3.64**
n. there are more tourism developments in the area.	8.46%	12.31%	30.00%	16.15%	33.08%	**3.53**

4.4.2 Social-cultural impacts of hunting

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following social-cultural impacts of hunting (Table 1.11). This was measured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 was fully agree. Landowners agree to fully agree with the following statements:

- Hunting activities improved the conservation of the farm where hunted (4.68),
- Hunting activities improved the lifestyle of employees of the farm (4.65),
- Hunting activities improved the conservation of the region where hunted (4.59),
- Hunting activities improved the lifestyle of the farm owner (4.21), and
- Hunting activities improved the lifestyle of residents in the area (4.15).

Table 1.11: Social-cultural impacts

Statement: Hunting activities…	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Mean Value**
improved the conservation of the farm.	0%	0%	3.08%	25.38%	71.54%	**4.68**
improved the conservation of the region.	0%	1.55%	3.88%	28.68%	65.89%	**4.59**
improved the lifestyle of the farm owner.	1.55%	0.78%	12.40%	45.74%	39.53%	**4.21**
improved the lifestyle of employees of the farm.	0%	0.79%	2.36%	28.35%	68.50%	**4.65**
improved the lifestyle of residents in the area.	0.78%	0.78%	17.97%	43.75%	36.72%	**4.15**

5. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the research emphasises the following important aspects:

- Most farms are located in the Limpopo Province, which correlates with the data on where most hunters hunt, for both international and local hunters, which is also the Limpopo province.
- Most respondents indicated their farms as game farms have been in existence for 22 years on average. This aligns with the fact that the game farm industry experienced a growth period from early 2000 to mid-2010 (Cloete, 2015) as this growth period is between 15 and 20 years ago.
- Farms contribute significantly to the employment of people in rural areas, with an estimated 177 500 people employed.
- Game farms are benefiting communities directly since they are employed in this sector and due to the hunting activities, their lifestyles are improving.

- This is proof that game farms do contribute to wildlife conservation in South Africa when looking at the number of species hosted on game farms.
- The most important pillar of game farms is hunting, with the international market as the key market.
- That game farms contribute to skills development in rural areas.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section list some recommendations made by the respondents and researchers.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS MADE BY RESPONDENTS

Respondents made the following recommendations or suggestions. Twenty percent (20.3%) feel the current legislation and laws faced by game farm owners need to be addressed as this makes it difficult to operate in the current environment. Eleven percent (11.4%) made some comments regarding government involvement in support and assistance, while 13.6% indicated that hunting and conservation needs to be promoted (Table 1.12).

Table 1.12: Recommendations or suggestions

Category for recommendations or suggestions	**Number of respondents**	**%**
Government maintenance (roads, infrastructure, electricity, etc.) and provision of services (electricity, water, community services etc.)	4	9%
Government involvement, support, assistance	5	11.4%
Political instability is a problem (crime, strikes, etc.)	2	4.6%
Laws & Legislation	9	20.3%
Gun laws legislation	1	2.3%
International trade laws legislation	2	4.6%
Land expropriation laws	3	6.8%
Privatisation of wildlife resources farms (Landowners make their own decisions, and there should be less access to farms)	3	6.8%
Landowners' compensation	2	4.6%
Promote hunting & conservation	6	13.6%
Ethics	2	4.6%
Certified workers training	2	4.6%
Questionnaire feedback	3	6.8%
Total	**44**	**100%**

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE RESEARCH

Based on the research the following recommendations are made:

- The hunting industry is benefiting the communities and the women in these communities can increase their benefits by developing curios for the hunters and offering cultural experiences on the farms.
- More benefits can be provided to employees such as schools for children and study bursaries for farm workers children. As outside pressure to close hunting as an industry is mounting, this can contribute to the role that these game farms play in rural areas.
- Feedback from respondents indicated that laws and legislation need to be addressed to assist the industry better.
- The hunting industry needs to be better promoted by government and tourism marketing role players.
- The positive aspects of hunting and game farms need to be promoted to the general public to educate and inform the general public about the industry.

Reference list

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