



# Applying Sustainability in National Parks Management: Balancing Public and Private Interests Using a Sustainable Market Orientated Model in Zambia

Dr Sidney Kawimbe<sup>1\*</sup>, Mr Fred Chimiti<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Business, ZCAS University, PO Box 35422 Lusaka.

<sup>2</sup>African Parks Network, PO Box 35422 Lusaka.

## \*Corresponding Author

Dr Sidney Kawimbe

School of Business, ZCAS  
University, PO Box 35422  
Lusaka.

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**Abstract:** The application of sustainable development (SD) in organisational strategy has been debated for over 20 years. There is much social and political support for sustainability, especially in the management of game parks for the benefit of the public (through government agencies) and the private sector who are the providers of capital, but very little research to provide empirical evidence on how has been made in this space. This paper reports on the first empirical research into the application of Sustainable Market Oriented (SMO) game park management in Zambia, a conceptual merging of the principles of sustainable development and market orientation, to be applied in strategic management of natural resources. The research scope in the 20 Zambian national game parks dotted all around the country. The findings confirm the value of (SMO) in management of game where the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model appears to be the panacea to sustainable management of national game parks. The model takes into account the balance in managing the environmental, social, and economic orientations in game parks using privately owned resources and dilemmas inherent in reducing public sector funding for game parks. Evidence points to the fact that game parks are better managed by private entities while being owned by government for the benefit of the local communities and the general citizenry at large. The research explores how park managers are addressing some of these issues, such as incorporating the local community.

**Keywords:** *sustainable market orientation; conservation policy; strategy; game parks, national parks, and tourism.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reconciling conflicting social, economic and environmental interests has marked national park tourism management since national parks originated in nineteenth century USA. Sustainability-based policies offer more balanced management of stakeholder interests while protecting national park resources. Pinchot, the first head of the US Forest Service in 1904, was a pioneer in utilitarian conservation advocating that natural resources should be used sustainably and regulated by governments (Miller, 2001). Since the 1920s, in New Zealand, there has been continuing political pressure from different stakeholder groups to accommodate both tourism-related economic growth and long-term protection of publicly owned parklands (Booth & Simmons, 2000; Burrell, 1983).

Recent times have shown that the world has recognized the need to manage the environment effectively. Issues concerning global warming, energy source alternatives and resource management are some topics forcing policy makers to put the environment on the agenda. A number of international organizations are dedicated to the management and conservation of the environment, such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), whose mission is to stop the degradation of the natural environment globally ([www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)).

The continent of Africa has received vast attention from the environmental world concerning resource management. The continent is rich in natural resources from wildlife to exotic fauna. As this is a valuable resource, effective management is crucial especially animals in game parks. Unfortunately, there is concern that the resources are not managed well due to various factors; some parts struggle with wars, others have poor governmental regulation while some countries do not have the funds to cater for the environment. This does not apply to every country in Africa. Some countries are discovering ways to manage these natural resources.

Zambia, located in the southern part of Africa sits on a deep pocket of natural resources including one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, the Victoria Falls. The country boasts of 20 national parks dotted all over the country as shown in figure 1 below. The national parks of Zambia bring in tourists from all over the world to gaze at the beauty of nature. The Zambian government recognizes the need to manage and conserve the parks primarily because of the economic gain. The parks have various challenges such as poaching, land use versus preservation and human-animal conflict.

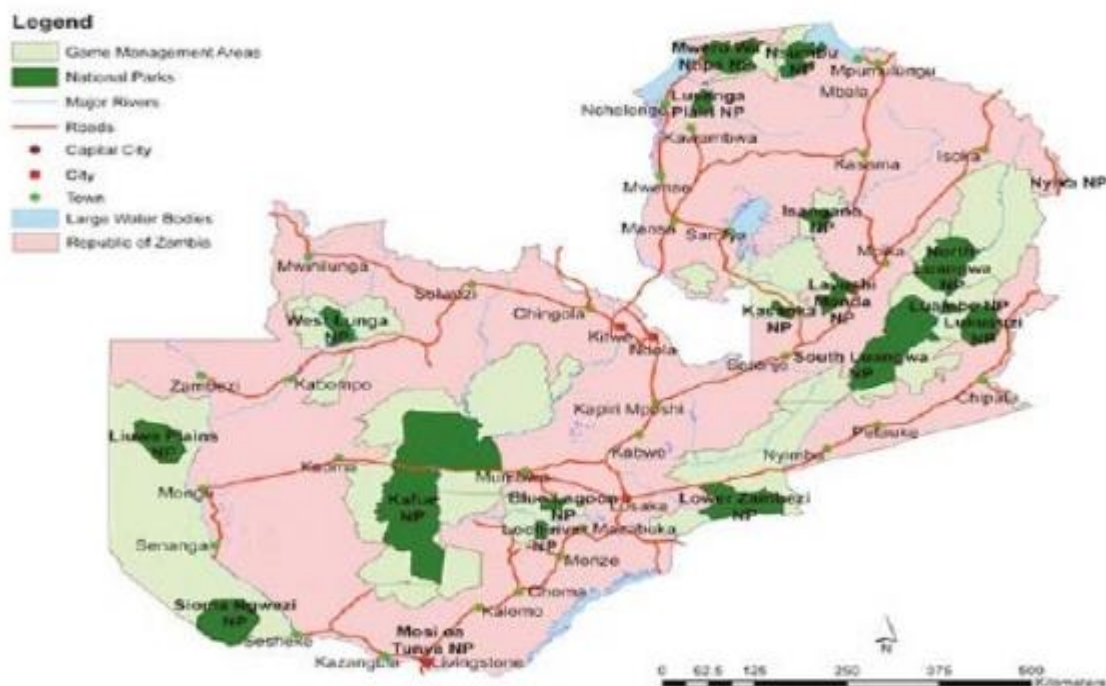


Figure No 1, national parks in Zambia.

## 2. Literature Review

National parks play a crucial role in conserving biodiversity, promoting ecological balance, and providing recreational opportunities for local communities and tourists. However, the management of national parks faces numerous challenges, particularly in balancing public and private interests while maintaining sustainability. This literature review aims to explore relevant studies and frameworks to better understand the dynamics of sustainability in national parks management, with a focus on Zambia. At the global level, several initiatives and frameworks guide the application of sustainability principles in national park management. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework that encourages the integration of social, economic, and environmental aspects. Additionally, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has developed guidelines, such as the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Principles for Sustainability, to promote effective management and governance practices.

In the African context, continental-level initiatives and strategies have been developed to address sustainability in national parks. For instance, the African Union's African Parks Program focuses on strengthening protected area management and enhancing conservation outcomes.

The African Wildlife Foundation promotes community-based conservation efforts, emphasizing the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes. Such initiatives recognize the importance of sustainable market-oriented approaches that link conservation and economic development. At the regional level, there are various organizations and frameworks that facilitate cooperation and knowledge sharing on national park management. For example, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has developed guidelines for sustainable tourism development in protected areas, emphasizing the need to

balance conservation goals with economic benefits. Regional collaborations also enable the exchange of best practices, capacity building, and joint conservation efforts, which contribute to sustainable management.

In the context of Zambia, national-level policies and strategies have been formulated to address sustainability in national parks management. For instance, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) outlines the country's commitment to biodiversity conservation and emphasizes the integration of sustainable development principles. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) plays a pivotal role in regulating and managing national parks, while promoting community participation and sustainable utilization of natural resources. Most of the tourism is concentrated in the national parks. Currently Zambia has 20 national parks, 8 of which attract the most tourists, namely; Nsumbu, Kafue, Lochinvar, South Luangwa, Lower Zambezi, North Luangwa, Kasanka, and Mosi-oatunya. The national parks offer a wide range of activities for the tourists, the most popular being safaris, bird watching and village tours. This paper focuses on the management challenges and strategies that could be adopted in national parks in Zambia to make them sustainable.

To balance public and private interests in national parks management, a sustainable market orientation model can be adopted. This model integrates conservation goals with market principles, emphasizing the sustainable use of resources, community involvement, and economic benefits. Through sustainable tourism development, revenue generation, and stakeholder engagement, this model seeks to achieve a mutually beneficial relationship between conservation and economic interests. Due to reduced funding to the wild life conservation in national parks in Zambia, the number of animals have steadily reduced. For instance, due to poaching induced by the demand for

ivory globally, between 1970 and 1975 the estimated number of elephants in the park was 35, 000 (Clarida, 2003). In 1987 the population went down to 15,000 and reduced even more to 1500 in 1988.

Increase in poaching was due to a number of factors, including increased price of ivory and poor government enforcement due to lack of funds. In the early 1990's funding became available to support improved protection with in the park (Clarida, 2003).the number This literature review highlighted the importance of applying sustainability in national parks management, particularly in balancing public and private interests. The global, continental, regional, and national-level initiatives and frameworks discussed provide a wealth of knowledge and guidance to promote sustainable practices. In Zambia, the adoption of a sustainable market orientation model holds tremendous potential in achieving conservation goals while addressing socio-economic needs. However, further research is needed to assess the effectiveness and implementation of such models in the specific context of Zambia's national parks management.

### 3. Discussions

This section examines the key findings and implications of applying a sustainable market orientation model in national parks management, with a specific focus on Zambia. It will analyze the balance between public and private interests, as well as highlight the contributions and challenges of incorporating sustainability principles in this context.

#### *Management of state protected areas.*

There is a long history of natural area protection in both Sweden and Norway. Norway in 2009 enacted The Norwegian Nature Conservation ACT which provides the legal framework for nature conservation and biodiversity management (Lovdata, 2009). The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency oversees state protected areas in Sweden, while the Norwegian Environment Agency is primarily in charge of managing state protected areas in Norway. The integration of sustainable resource use and conservation is emphasized in both nations. In decision-making processes, pertinent parties actively cooperate with one another. Strict rules, public involvement, research-based decision-making, and the development of ecotourism are examples of management strategies.

In Kenya, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is usually in charge of overseeing protected areas (WCMA, 2013). Protection and conservation of wildlife are the main concerns, with a special emphasis on flagship species like rhinos and elephants. Kenya's management strategy, which includes programs like community conservancies, places a strong emphasis on community involvement and participation (Ojwang et al, 2020). One important way that money is raised for conservation efforts is through ecotourism.

The illicit wildlife trade, conflicts between people and wildlife, and a lack of resources for efficient management are among the difficulties.

Protected areas in Zambia are overseen by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) (Lilungu & Tshipamba, 2018). Protection of wildlife is given top priority in conservation efforts, especially in national parks and game management zones. Communal Conservancies, or community resource management

areas, promote community involvement. Because it boosts regional economies and provides cash for conservation, tourism is a crucial component of Zambia's protected area administration. Poaching, habitat destruction, and the requirement for more law enforcement and anti-poaching initiatives are among the difficulties encountered.

Even though every nation has its own unique management techniques, it's important to remember that these methods are influenced by a variety of elements, including socioeconomic conditions, ecological diversity, laws, and community involvement. These nations differ in terms of capacity and resource availability, which affects how well management techniques work.

#### *Financing of state protected areas*

State protected areas in Norway/Sweden, Kenya, and Zambia are financed through various means, and there are both similarities and differences in their funding mechanisms. Here is a comparison and contrast of how these countries finance their state protected areas:

In Norway and Sweden, state protected areas are primarily financed through government budgets (Sandstrom & Widmark, 2019). These budgets allocate funds for the management and maintenance of protected areas, including covering costs such as salaries for park rangers, infrastructure development, research, and conservation efforts. Additionally, these countries also receive funding from international organizations and grants for specific projects and collaborations related to conservation. State protected areas in Kenya are financed through a combination of government funding, tourism revenue, and external support (Smith & Johnson, 2018). The government contributes funds from the national budget for park management and infrastructure development. Tourism plays a significant role in financing protected areas in Kenya, as entrance fees and revenue generated from safari activities contribute to the conservation efforts. Furthermore, Kenya also receives financial aid from international donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and partnerships for conservation initiatives.

In Zambia, state protected areas are financed through a mix of government funding, tourism revenue, and partnerships (Thompson & Smith, 2018). The government provides funding for conservation activities, park management, and infrastructure development. Similar to Kenya, tourism is a vital source of revenue for protected areas in Zambia. Entrance fees, safari activities, and accommodation charges contribute to conservation financing. Additionally, partnerships with NGOs, private sector organizations, and international donors also play a role in financing conservation efforts.

In summary, while all three countries rely on government funding, tourism revenue, and support from external sources to finance their state protected areas, the specific funding mechanisms and levels of contribution may vary. It is essential to recognize that funding for protected areas is dynamic and subject to changes based on policies, economic conditions, and conservation priorities in each country.

#### *Community involvement in state protected areas*

Community involvement in state-protected areas varies across different countries. Here, we compare and contrast the approaches taken in Norway/Sweden, Kenya, and Zambia: Both Norway and Sweden have robust community involvement practices in state-



protected areas (Beery & Luczaj, 2019). Community-based management systems are commonly employed, where local communities have a say in decision-making processes. These countries actively engage with local indigenous communities, empowering them to manage and protect their traditional lands. Local communities in Norway/Sweden often have direct control over tourism operations, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and sustainable resource utilization.

In Kenya, community involvement in state-protected areas is gaining importance. The government has shifted from a top-down conservation approach to community-based conservation strategies (Kibicho & Mburu, 2015). Local communities now have legal rights to manage and benefit from protected areas through conservancies and community wildlife sanctuaries. Revenue from tourism activities is shared with these communities, which creates incentives for conservation. However, challenges such as human-wildlife conflicts and limited capacity remain. Zambia also demonstrates community involvement in state-protected areas. The country has established community resource boards that grant local communities the authority to manage and utilize natural resources within protected areas (Simukonda et al, 2014). These boards facilitate community participation in decision-making processes, benefit sharing, and resource management.

Community-owned lodges and campsites provide employment opportunities and income for local residents. However, proper capacity building, sustainable livelihoods, and balanced conservation measures remain important challenges.

In summary, all three countries recognize the importance of involving local communities in the management of state-protected areas. Norway/Sweden have a long-standing tradition of community involvement, Kenya is transitioning towards community-based conservation, and Zambia has established community resource boards. While challenges persist, these approaches highlight the significance of empowering local communities for successful conservation outcomes. Other important aspects to take note of include:

**(a) Balancing Public and Private Interests:** The successful management of national parks requires striking a delicate balance between public and private interests. Implementing a sustainable market orientation model facilitates this balance by recognizing the importance of both conservation and economic sustainability. The model emphasizes the need to generate revenue through sustainable tourism activities while ensuring the long-term preservation of natural resources.

**(b) Contributions of the Sustainable Market Orientation Model:** The sustainable market orientation model offers several contributions to national park management. Firstly, it promotes the diversification of revenue sources, reducing the parks' dependence on public funding and enhancing financial sustainability. Secondly, it encourages the active involvement of local communities and private enterprises in park management, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. Finally, it supports the development of sustainable tourism practices that minimize negative environmental impacts and deliver positive socio-economic benefits to local communities.

**(c) Challenges in Implementing a Sustainable Market Orientation Model:** Despite its numerous benefits, implementing a

sustainable market orientation model in national parks management faces several challenges. Lack of funding and resources can hinder the adoption of sustainable practices and infrastructure. Additionally, striking a balance between economic growth and conservation goals requires careful planning and effective coordination between various stakeholders. Ensuring that private enterprises adhere to sustainable principles and practices may also pose challenges due to differing priorities and motivations.

**(d) Implications for National Parks Management in Zambia:** The sustainable market orientation model presents significant implications for national parks management in Zambia. By adopting this model, the country can enhance its conservation efforts while simultaneously promoting economic growth and community development. Encouraging private sector involvement, investing in sustainable infrastructure, and establishing clear guidelines and partnerships with businesses are crucial steps towards achieving a sustainable and balanced national park management approach in Zambia.

**Further Research and Considerations:** To strengthen the application of sustainability in national parks management, further research is necessary. Future studies may focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the sustainable market orientation model in different types and sizes of national parks. Additionally, exploring the specific challenges faced by stakeholders and identifying strategies to address them would contribute to the successful implementation of sustainable practices in park management.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the application of sustainability principles in national parks management, specifically in Zambia, is crucial for balancing public and private interests. By adopting a sustainable market orientation model, national parks can not only protect and conserve the natural environment but also generate economic benefits for both the public and private stakeholders. This article has outlined the key factors that contribute to effective sustainability implementation in national parks management, including the involvement of local communities, the establishment of partnerships with private enterprises, and the integration of sustainable practices in governance structures.

## 5. Recommendations:

Based on the findings discussed in this article, the following recommendations can be made to further enhance the application of sustainability in national parks management in Zambia:

**5.1 Strengthen collaboration and partnerships:** National park authorities should actively engage with local communities, private enterprises, and non-governmental organizations to foster collaborative efforts in sustainable management practices. This can be achieved through joint initiatives, shared decision-making processes, and the transfer of knowledge and resources.

**5.2 Enhance community involvement and empowerment:** Recognizing the role of local communities as key stakeholders, it is important to involve them in the decision-making processes, ensuring their opinions and concerns are heard and considered. Empowering local communities by providing opportunities for education, training, and capacity building can also help foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the sustainable management of national parks.

**5.3 Promote sustainable tourism practices:** National parks can leverage tourism as a means to generate revenue while minimizing negative environmental impacts. This can be achieved by implementing eco-friendly policies, supporting sustainable tourism operators, and promoting responsible visitor behaviour through awareness campaigns and educational programs.

**5.4 Strengthen monitoring and enforcement:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of sustainable practices are essential to ensure compliance and effectiveness. National park authorities should establish robust monitoring systems and enforce regulations to prevent illegal activities such as poaching, deforestation, and habitat destruction.

**5.5 Invest in research and innovation:** Allocating resources for research and innovation can lead to the development of new sustainable practices and technologies in national parks management. This includes studying the impacts of climate change, implementing renewable energy solutions, and exploring alternative funding mechanisms to support conservation efforts.

By following these recommendations, national parks in Zambia can further advance their sustainable management practices, striking a balance between public interest and private interests. This will not only preserve the natural heritage of Zambia but also contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the country, benefiting both present and future generations.

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