

The Opportunities and Challenges of Harnessing Digital Technologies in Wildlife Tourism Resources Conservation in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Grounded within a protectionist wildlife conservation paradigm, and technology acceptance model, the study examines opportunities and challenges of harnessing digital technologies in wildlife tourism resources conservation in Zimbabwe national parks. Conservation of wildlife tourism resources in Zimbabwe is under tremendous pressure attributed to surges in poaching, veld fires, and climate change effects. The extent to which digital technologies ameliorate the situation is the central question addressed by the study. A qualitative research approach was adopted. A key informant interview technique was employed whereby 15 wildlife tourism resource conservation experts were selected through purposive and snowball sampling procedures. Thematically analysed findings identified drones, mobile gadgets, surveillance cameras, collar tags, and remote sensing as digital tools harnessed in wildlife resource conservation across Zimbabwean national parks. Furthermore, the study unveiled vast opportunities in wildlife species population counting, data recording, storage, and sharing where digital technologies can be applied. The challenges faced in the deployment of digital technologies encompass inadequate financial resources, lack of technical expertise, and vandalism of infrastructure. More funding is recommended to enable full-scale adoption of digital technologies.