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# Estimating Recreational Benefits of Kakamega Forest in Kenya Using the Travel Cost Method

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**Abstract**

Forests have high use and non-use values. They act as good reservoir for both wildlife and forest biodiversity among other benefits. Kakamega Forest is a unique example of the few remaining fragments of the tropical rain forest, a rare ecosystem found in the tropics. The forest has rich diversity of fauna and flora. It is an important tourist destination which attracts both local and international tourists who visit throughout the year. With such a recreational demand, there is dire need to estimate the recreational benefits for this forest. Thus, the core objective of this study is to apply the zonal travel cost method to estimate the recreational benefits of the forest. In order to achieve this objective the study relies on past records of the tourists' numbers and their countries of origin. The data was collected from two main forest sites: Kakamega Forest Reserve which is managed by the Forest Department and Kakamega National Forest Reserve which is under the management of Kenya Wildlife Services. The collected data was appropriately analysed to estimate the recreational value of the forest. The preliminary result from this study shows that the annual recreational value of Kakamega Forest part under Kenya Wildlife Service has high magnitude than that of Forest Department. Thus, the results reveals that the areas of forest which are well conserved and protected yield high recreational benefits. The study concludes by giving appropriate policy guidelines with recommendations on how to improve the management and protection of Kakamega Forest biodiversity for both direct and indirect benefits.

**Keywords:** Forest values, recreational value, travel cost method

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