



Assessing Community Engagement and Tourism Development: A case study of Nqileni, Bulungula Lodge in the Eastern Cape Province

Dinesh Vallabh* Amanda Ndzimeni & Lwazi Apleni
Walter Sisulu University
East London, South Africa
Email: dvallabh@wsu.ac.za

Corresponding author*

Abstract

This research was designed to assist the local community and tourism entrepreneurs to enhance their knowledge of needed engagement so as to bolster tourism to the area in question as a favoured attraction. The fundamental aim of this paper was thus to assess the level of community engagement in tourism development processes through the case of Elliotdale, Bulungula Lodge in the Eastern Cape Province. Tourism is considered to be a viable tool for economic development, specifically in the developing world. It was envisaged and deemed necessary to develop tourism in the local communities as it would generate community development, thus supporting its overall development. Apart from this, tourist sites enhance community cohesion and promote peace within the host community. The researchers argue that there is a sizeable gap between tourism stakeholders such as the local municipalities, small business enterprise and tourists with the communities in relation to tourism. Moreover, the findings revealed that only a few members of the community were engaged in decision-making processes, problem identification and problem solving processes. In the same vein, tourists were satisfied with the processes which were taking place at a destination but complained about some activities in the village such as the poor use of English as a means of communication. The negative aspects raised by the communities and tourists in the tourism development processes include the lack of official government assistance, a lack of sponsors together with the very poor infrastructure which is not conducive to tourism. The article recommends that the government should endeavour to provide a sustainable and conducive environment in which tourism can thrive in Nqileni village. Finance also emerged as a very crucial factor to support the development of projects. Finance should be provided either by government or the private sector, or both, so as to ensure an on-going process of tourism development in the relevant communities.

Keywords: Tourism development, community, engagement, Eastern Cape.

Introduction and background of the study

Tourism is a rapidly growing sector and a valuable industry globally, contributing significantly to the local economies of all nations. Society has made it a significant economic, social and cultural activity in both developing and developed countries (Telfer & Sharpely, 2007; Le-Klahn & Edward, 2004). However, Goeldner and Richie (2006) explain tourism as activities, processes and outcomes arising from relations and interactions among tourists, tourism suppliers, host communities and surrounding environments involved in attracting and hosting of both local and foreign visitors.



Tourism is also considered to be a growing industry, offering communities of all types and sizes a unique tourism development opportunity (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). Tourism has the ability to generate employment opportunities, create local and regional investment opportunities, and provide local residents with trade opportunities and support, and it also sustains other economic sectors within a destination zone (Lin & Mao, 2015; Pappas, 2014; Rayn, 2003). Moreover, Richie and Crouch (1993) highlight that tourism development may affect both communities and tourists negatively and positively. Therefore, the community must engage in tourism development processes because they likely understand best how the region adapts to change (Nyaupane, Morains & Dowler, 2006). Such changes could be either positive or negative, for example: tourists are assumed to be wealthier than locals; some local retailers will increase prices in response to tourist visits not considering that locals will also have to pay more. Hence, Murphy (1985) emphasises the significance of community engagement in tourism development.

The researchers further elaborate that the success of tourism development relies on the goodwill and cooperation of local people because they are part of the tourism product as such. In addition, if tourism development and planning processes do not coincide with local desires and aptitudes, then the potential of the industry could be vulnerable and unsustainable. Mowfort and Munt (1998) assert that there are different ways in which local communities can be engaged in tourism development. The engagement of the communities is regarded as a contributing factor in the success of tourism development projects or in tourism related business such as lodges, restaurants and cultural villages. Local economic development (LED) is a process in which partnerships are established between local governments, the private sectors and community-based groups in order to manage existing resource for job creation as well as the stimulation of local economies (Helmsing, 2001). The engagement of communities is also regarded as a contributing factor in the success of LED. Communities will reap what they sow, by participating in the local tourism activities. For example, by promoting tourism development in the decision-making processes, the local economy will benefit through the creation of job opportunities.

Literature review

This section discusses the relationship between tourism development and communities as key stakeholders in tourism. It also addresses the impacts that are as the result of tourism development in the host communities. There is a paucity of evidence in the literature that portrays the nature of the relations between local communities and tourism development which is one of the core fundamentals for developing a viable tourism industry in a destination (Aref, Gill & Farshid, 2010). Many authors, for example (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006; Telfer and Sharpley, 2007; Le-Klahn and Edward, 2014) agree that tourism is a multifarious activity that cuts across the economic activity, and also the traditional and environmental sectors of any economy (Acheampong, 2015). Worldwide tourism has been prioritized as one of the key contributing sectors in local economic development. In the developing countries of the SADC region, such as Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, the primary ambitions to encourage their regions as tourism destination is the projected economic benefits that could accrue, such as the employment opportunities that will be created as results of tourism activities (Acheampong, 2015; 2011; Wall & Mathieson, 2006).

Flint (2003) asserts that every 2.4 seconds a new job is created by the global tourism sector in SMEs as well as in work for the freelancer, jobs for the poor, women, indigenous communities and unskilled and highly skilled workers. Therefore, tourism has been recognized as being at the upper level of priority for its significant effect on a local economy (World Travel & Tourism Council 2014).



Development of Tourism overview in South Africa

According to the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS, 2011), The South African government has documented the Tourism sector's potential to bring about economic growth and employment creation. The Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP2) has identified the sector as one of the areas expected to contribute to the development of rural areas and the culture industries, among others (NTSS, 2011). South Africa represents an emerging tourist region in the international tourism economy (Saarinen, 2009). The potential role of Tourism in South Africa's economy increases the contributions of the sector to the growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Van Schalkwyk, 2007). Van Schalkwyk further articulated that the contribution of Tourism to the GDP has improved from 4.6% in 1993 to 8.3% in 2006 bringing in over ZAR66 billion per annum to the economy and contributing over half million jobs (Van Schalkwyk, 2007).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2015), the total contribution of travel and tourism to South Africa's GDP was ZAR357.0bn (9.4%) in 2014 and has raised by 3.4% in 2015, and is forecasted to rise by 4.3% per annum to ZAR561.4bn (10.4% GDP) in 2025 (WTTC, 2015). Apart from that, the National Department of Tourism (NDT) further articulates that a highlighting has been made on urban resources for Tourism Development at the expense of the rural areas which constitute over 80 per cent of the total land surface area (NDT, 2012).

The Eastern Cape Province, which has been measured as one of the South Africa's poorest and the least developed out of the nine provinces, leaves much to be desired from a tourism perspective. According to Acheampomg (2015) the Eastern Cape Province has the potential to become the "Mecca" of global tourism due to its culture, traditions and historical sites, its rich and unique natural splendors including the flora and fauna and the rapidly growing tourism infrastructure like accommodation, transportation and better-trained staff to deliver the tourism products (Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council [ECSECC], 2009). However, the greatest benefits could not be achieved during apartheid period because black people were not given a chance to invest in the tourism sector. The Tourism White Paper on the Promotion and Development of Tourism (1996) supports this statement. The Department Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT) estimates that tourism in the Eastern Cape Province accounts for nine percent of the provincial economy and is the fifth and third most popular tourism destination in South Africa for international and domestic tourists (DEDEAT, 2008). The Eastern Cape Province attracts 14% of all South African international tourist arrivals with foreign tourism arrivals increasing by 155% since 1995 (Center for Investment & Marketing in the Eastern Cape (CIMEC), 2000).

However, although the province shows such great potential, the NTSS (2011) argues that the Tourism industry cannot exist without partnerships and collaboration from a range of stakeholders. Visitors are looking for a great experience, which can only be attained if the various Tourism partners work together. Sound partnerships form the basis of any successful Tourism industry venture. These partnerships include the public sector, the private sector and communities. Moreover, NTSS (2011) states that despite some examples of strong partnerships, there is often a lack of communication and collaboration among different sub-sectors of the private sector. Among the different spheres of government responsible for tourism, and between enthusiastic government tourism entities and the various government entities that have an impact on the Tourism industry, there is sadly far greater scope for collaboration and support.



Stakeholder's role in Tourism Development

Anon (2008), describe stakeholders as those people with an interest in the decision being made in a venture or project, and they should be involved in all stages of Tourism Development in a given destination. The authors further contend that stakeholders include local community members, government, NGO's, as well as the tourism industry and of course, the tourists. Active engagement and participation in tourism development appears to be the tool for attaining the goal of sustainability and improving the overall welfare of the community (Kruja & Hasaj, 2010). Kruja and Hasaj further emphasise that the government should develop strategies and policies for tourism while communities are fully engaged in making sure that tourism is developed in a sustainable fashion (Kruja & Hasaj, 2010).

The cultural tourism and cultural and creative industries potential of the area should be strong drawcards for tourists. However, it is critical to engage the local communities in an area in tourism development since this builds stronger and more resilient communities. It also assists local communities preserve their culture and develop new and important skills which serve to lift people from poverty, promote gender empowerment and which boost youth participation and most importantly help protect the pristine environment. To realize the needed objectives requires appropriate planning as well as a carefully developed management framework to ensure and enable efficient sustainable development and effective community engagement.

Research methodology

Kumar (2008) points out that there are three typologies of research design: qualitative; quantitative and mixed method. The study has adopted the mixed method which is the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research design is the collection, analysis and the clarification of data, by witnessing what people do (Gibbs, 2007). Creswell (2010) portrays a qualitative research design as an approach in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims that are primarily based on a constructive perspective. Furthermore, qualitative research is all about analysing the multiple meanings of individual experiences, with the intent of developing theory, a pattern, or advocacy perspectives. In terms of achieving a quantitative research method, for the study, the closed and open ended questionnaires were administered to the respondents in person (Creswell, 2009) after they had given their consent.

Primary data

Two main methods, namely primary and secondary, are used for collecting data in research (Silverman, 2010). Boone and Kurtz (2011) contend that primary data is the information collected for the first time specifically for a marketing research study, through observation and questionnaires. As a research instrument, Veal (2006) underscores that primary research involves collecting original data, which did not previously exist, about the phenomenon studied. Such research is designed to answer specific questions of interest posed by researcher. Primary sources are utilised. The primary data for this study was collected by means of questionnaires to willing respondents in Bulungula which is situated in the former Transkei region (Eastern Cape). The questionnaires were designed for and then administered to, the survey population, in addition to face-to-face interviews.



Data analysis

The qualitative data that was collected was analysed by means of the application of a constant comparative methodology that involves categorizing, teaming the terms and concepts used (Fowler, 2013). In contrast, the quantitative data that was collected was analysed through the use of SPSS that allowed for statistical tests to be described by means of graphs, pie charts and tables (Burns & Burns, 2011).

Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a research instrument that contains a list of written questions to which the respondents are expected to provide answers, and which acts as an inductive- method of study, with a view to formulate new theory (Beiske, 2007; Kumar, 2008; Grafton and Jones, 2010; Freeman, 2013). Brace (2008) contends that the structure, or layout, of a questionnaire is critical to its success as an instrument for ensuring accurate data capture. There are three types of questionnaires, closed ended, open ended questionnaires and the combination of both (Dawson, 2002). In this study the questionnaires contained the combination of both. In closed ended questions the respondents were provided options to choose the answer of their choice with a tick X, while in the open-ended questions the respondents were given a chance to explain their own views. In this study, the questionnaires were structured into three core sections that are briefly described below:

Section A: The section was concerned with the respondent's profile, their age, race, educational level attained, employment status, monthly income and the period of visiting or living in the community.

Section B: Assessed the awareness and the engagement of tourism stakeholders in Nqileni village through a case study of Bulungula lodge in tourism development processes.

Section C: Examined the impacts of tourism development by the lodge in the community

Validity and reliability

According to Joppe, (2000) validity determines how truthful the research results are. Veal (2006) argues that validity is the extent to which the collected information of study reflect the phenomenon that is studied. The researchers' determined validity by asking a series of key questions, and also sought answers in the research of others. As cited by Ngxiya (2015), Weiner (2007) portrays the intimate relationship between validity and the reliability. This is because they are interdependent, as there cannot be validity without reliability or reliability without validity.

Halloway (1997) contends that validity is the extent to which the findings of the study are true and accurate. The reliability in contrast, has to do with accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure (Kothari, 2004). Validity and reliability demonstrate the way the research was carried out, in case somebody else would like to try the same way (Miller & Kirk, 1986). The questionnaires were designed based on the research questions for the research, with the intention of ensuring the reliability and validity.

Findings of the study

The findings of the study elucidated that (55%) of tourists visited the destination for sightseeing, while (45%) indicated that they visited the destination for leisure purposes. Thus, sightseeing and



leisure might be the prime reasons which attract people to visit the destination. Respondents were also given a choice to choose from various impacts that could negatively impact the lodge. The respondents (20%) indicated the issue of poor marketing, while (15%) reflected the critical issue of poor infrastructure. Another impediment concerned the limited use of English as a means of communication which was indicated by (15%) of the respondents. Interestingly, 15% of respondents mentioned the use of poor signage and the fact that there were insufficient cultural activities in the village which considerably handicapped the operations of Bulungula Lodge.

Lack of government support was reflected by 62,5% of the respondents, while the 10% percent of respondents indicated that the lack of finance could be a serious challenge faced by the Lodge. Approximately 36% of the respondents indicated that the mission of the Lodge was to uplift the standard of the community. Furthermore, the results indicated that the majority (50%) of the local communities worked as entertainers, while 25% worked as tour guides and small business owners. Lastly, respondents were asked questions on how to sustain tourism development in the community. The majority (50%) of the respondents suggested that governmental institutions must work together to develop tourism, while an 25% stated that there must be an improvement in infrastructure and funding needed to support local communities. Visitation to area is low arguably due to the inherent lack of needed tourism culture. There is also a lack of publicity and inadequate marketing coupled with low levels of infrastructural development of the destination.

Significance and contribution of the study

The importance and the need of community engagement in tourism development cannot be ignored (Aref, Gill & Farshid, 2010). Residents of the communities are key stakeholders in any places undergoing redevelopment (Ijasa, 2011). Community engagement is deemed to develop positive attitudes towards tourism development, to ensure benefit-sharing and to facilitate implementation of the principles of sustainable tourism development (Josun, 2006). The lack of engagement of poor people to handle development effectively, apathy and low level of awareness are other factors that affect local communities adversely (Tonsun, 1999). In other words, the ignorance, lack of interest and knowledge of the communities about tourism may hinder the success of tourism development. Participation in decision-making means that residents have opportunities to voice their own hopes, desire and fears for the desired development as well as to contribute to the planning processes (Timothy, 2002). This would encourage the communities to invest in the tourism industry as they would be viewed as partners.

The significance of the study was to determine and to assess the community engagement on developing tourism in the case study of Elliotdale Bulungu Lodge in the Eastern Cape Province. It also addressed the social development that has occurred since the inception of the Lodge, together with the overall effects on the local communities. The research findings can thus help towards broadening and filling the gap in the existing knowledge base. It is envisaged that the research findings will further assist with ways of how local people should be engaged, to ensure that they benefit from tourism related ventures and projects. This study also contributes towards underscoring methods or techniques that will ensure on-going processes of community engagement in the processes of developing tourism. The study can assist local governments to develop more effective principles and policies for sustaining tourism in the community in question and beyond. For the communities to take part in tourism activities, they need to be knowledgeable, as knowledge is a key way to empower people. This study will also increase the level of awareness and knowledge concerning the importance of community engagement in the processes of developing tourism.



Recommendations of the study

Based on the empirical data in this research and after a very careful descriptive analysis of the collected data, some important recommendations are made. Community engagement in tourism development processes is a crucial element in terms of bringing revenue, employment opportunities and gaining the improvement of infrastructure in a community. This means that working in collaboration with the related tourism stakeholders in developing tourism will hopefully assist all to reach common objectives, and that the community will benefit. Furthermore, increased volumes of tourists will be more likely to visit the destination and spend money, thus bolstering the standing of the community. Developing tourism and tourism related products by using different techniques is one of the ways to alleviate poverty at the destination. The statements of residents in the community have shown that there is a need for concerted efforts to be made on the part of tourism planners and local development officials who all need to engage with the local communities in order to encourage tourism at the community level.

This paper was intended to assess the community engagement in tourism development processes, in Nqileni village, the case of Bulungula lodge in the Eastern Cape Province. Specifically, the study surveyed four related stakeholders; (such as tourists, government, Bulungula lodge and the community). Recommendations are made and the future directions are suggested. Limitations that were encountered during the study are also highlighted. There is a serious need for the infrastructural development such as road transport construction and telecommunication to support not only, the movement of tourists to the destination but also to ease movement and link up with the rest of the country, thereby, benefitting the community. The maintenance of water and power supply, health, funding to support community based developed projects and educational facilities are considered to be important priorities. Government should strive to reduce illiteracy in the community. Additional educational opportunities like tourism related schools, should be considered, as this may increase awareness creation about the global importance of conservation and maintenance of the environment. Community involvement in decision making and empowerment of the community, must also be driven with purpose thereby, installing a sense of ownership and responsibility in the local population.

There should be increased collaboration between the different stakeholders (communities and SMTEs). The government should capacitate people, instead of exacerbating community dislike of government officials. The community should be given a clear indication as to which communication channel to follow when they wish to be involved in tourism related business, and be taught on how to market the destination effectively. Similarly, government must market the destination as much as possible. In addition, the local radio stations, along with other marketing initiatives, including such promotional activities such as posters, television shows (short-left), radio shows, signs and billboards should be used to create awareness about Nqileni village and the Bulungula lodge.

Conclusion

Tourism development and needed financial investment are invariably seen as a viable means of economic development for any nation. Apart from generating needed wealth for the economy, tourism has the ability to augment community cohesion and it promotes employment creation and revenue gains within the host community. Tourism however, needs a high level of planning and this has to include the local community. When they have a sense of attachment to the tourism ventures, there is greater likelihood for success. There is greater a need for tourism promotion and awareness of its value. Community interest and social capital can be leveraged via



synchronized attempts and greater efforts by the state, developers and planners, and all stakeholders, by crafting a sustainable means of engaging with the local community.

The must be state and private investor funding for the community in support of the development of tourism that is taking place. Encouragement in a form of incentives, workshops, and community meetings must be provided in order to give support to those community members who want to start tourism related businesses. Since tourists complained about the lack of activities in the village, the interested community members must be encouraged to develop a Xhosa Cultural Village as a project that has the ability to involve quite a number of people. This will bring more meaning to the local people with regard to tourism as well as enable them to identify themselves with tourism developments in their area. Traditional craft work and local traditional dancers can be invited to be part of attractions so as to reflect the tone of the area, as they do in Swaziland. In Swaziland it is known that a primary reason for tourists visiting the destination is the rich culture of Swazis which is interesting to experience. In conclusion, the development of tourism requires all stakeholders to work together and requires careful and effective long-term planning towards a sustainable tourism in the Eastern Cape Province in general.

References

Acheampong, K.O. (2011). *Tourism sector, Development policies and inequalities in the development of Eastern Cape*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis in Geography, Unisa: Pretoria.

Acheampong, K.O. (2015). Tourism policies and the space economy of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa: A critical realist perspective. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 21(3: 1), 744-754.

Annon,(2008). Xinhua China News Digest at 16:00 GMT, July 8. *Xinhua News Agency*: July. 8, 2008.

Aref, F., Gill, S.S., Farshid, A. (2010). Tourism development in local communities: As a community development approach. *Journal of American Science*, Vol. (6):155 - 161.

Burns, R.B. & Burns, R.A. (2011). *Business research methods and statistics using SPSS*. SAGE: London.

Boone, L.E. & Kurtz, L.D. (2011). *Contemporary marketing*. Mason, OH: South Western Cengage Learning.

Creswell, J. (2010). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council. (2009). *Human Development index (HDI) of District Municipalities*. An ECSECC Publication, Vincent, East London: ECSECC.

Flint, R.W. (2003). *Ecotourism as a Global Force*. Retrieved 04 June 2016, from: www.eeeee.net/sd03107.html.

Fowler, F.J. (2013). *Survey research methods- Applied social research methods*. London: SAGE.



- Freeman, M. (2013). *A practical Guide-Management of Risk in Small and Medium-Size Enterprises*. Xlibris Corporation.
- Godfrey, K. & Clarke, J. (2000). *The Tourism Development Handbook: A Practical Approach to Planning & Marketing*. London: Thomson.
- Goeldner, C. R. & Ritchie, J.R.B. (2006). *Tourism principles, practice, philosophies*. 10th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Grafton, C. & Jones, I. (2010). *Research methods for sports studies*. 2nd ed. New York: Ashage Publishing.
- Halloway, I. (1997). *Basic concept for qualitative research*. London: Blackwell Science Ltd.
- Helmsing, B. (2001). *Externalities, learning and governance: new perspective on local economic development*. International Institute of Social Studies: The Hague.
- Joppe, M. (2000). *The Research Process*. (Online) Accessed at: <http://www.ryerson.ca/~mjoppe/rp.htm>. [Accessed 25 June 2016].
- Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: APH Publishing.
- Kruja, D., & Hasaj, A. (2010). Comparisons of stakeholders' perception towards the sustainable tourism development and its impacts in Shkodra Region (Albania). *Turizam*, 14 (1).
- Kumar, C.R. (2008). *Research Methodology*. APH Publishing.
- Le – Klahn, D.T. & Edwards, D. (2004). *Conference report: the Best Education Network Think Thank XIII: Engaging communities in sustainable Tourism development*, Taylors University.
- Mowfort, M. & Munt, I. (1998). *Tourism and sustainability: Development and new tourism in the Third World*. New York: Routledge.
- Murphy, P.E. (1985). *Tourism: A community approach*. London: Routledge.
- National Department of Tourism. (2012). *Rural Tourism Strategy*. NDT, Pretoria.
- National Tourism Sector Strategy. (2011). National Department of Tourism, Republic of South Africa: Pretoria.
- Nyaupane, G.P., Morains, D.B. & Dowler, L. (2006). The role of community involvement and number/type of visitors on tourism impacts: controlled comparison of Annapurna, Nepal and Northwest Yunnan in Tourism.
- Pappas, N. (2014). Achieving competitiveness in Greek Accommodation Establishments during recession. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 7 (4).



Ritchie, B.W. & Crouch, G.I. (1993). *Competitiveness in international tourism: A framework for understanding and analysis*. World Tourism Education and Research Centre: University of Calgary.

Silverman, D. (2010). *Qualitative research*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE.

Telfer, D. J. & Sharpley, R. (2007). *Tourism development in the developing world*. Routledge. Oxon.

Timothy, D. (2002). *Tourism and community and development issues* in Sharpley, R., and Telfer, D., (eds) *Aspects of tourism 5: Tourism and development concepts and issues*, 149-164.

Tonsun, C. (1999). *Limits to community participation in the Tourism development process in developing countries*, School of Tourism Management, 613-633.

Van Schalkwyk, M. (2007). *Celebrating tourism's golden opportunities*. Retrieved June 04,2016:<http://www.indabasouthafrica.co.za/media/pressrelease.asp?id=c335a317-9196-4f25-800e-acea90e7c8ea>.

Veal, A.J. (2006). *Research Methods for leisure and tourism: a practical guide*. 3rd ed. London: Pearson Education/ financial Times prentice Hall.

Wall, G. & Mathieson, A. 2006. *Tourism: change, impacts and opportunities*. Pearson Prentice Hall.

World Travel & Tourism Council. (2014). *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2014 South Africa*. WTTC, London.

World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). (2015). *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015 South Africa*. WTTC, London.