



Evaluating nature conservation and tourism development effectiveness: Local communities around Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park, South Africa

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring how local community members evaluate the nature conservation and tourism development effectiveness around Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park, KwaZulu-Natal, in South Africa. A structured and respondent-completed questionnaire survey of 160 local community members informed this research. Descriptive (frequency) and bivariate (Chi-Square and Correlation tests) analyses of data were done to seek for response distributions and relationships between variables, respectively. Interesting results show that there is a future for community-based natural resource management in this area, as the young population (less than 25 years of age) have not only the knowledge of nature conservation and tourism, but also have positive attitude towards them. The local community surveyed, generally speaking, is literate enough to manage decision-making regarding the planning, developing and managing natural resources and tourism. However, capacity-building in terms of specific capabilities needed for Game Park and tourism management will always be needed in this community. Ability to build business capability is always the precursor of business success. Increased local community's tourism capabilities can be enabled through private sector stakeholders and tourism agencies supporting tourism business trainings that will enable local participation. A significant number of local community members are not satisfied with nature conservation and tourism development as they perceive that the economic rewards of tourism are not being received by the community.

Keywords: Community, local participation, natural resource management, tourism, sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction

Recent studies on community-based natural resource management in sub-Saharan Africa have called for sustainable management of natural resources and aligning such management to much accepted governance best practices related to local stakeholders involvement, capacity-building, decentralised powers to local actors, and equitable allocation of resources (such as Kamoto et al., 2013; Measham & Lumbasi, 2013; Dyer et al., 2014; Diawuo & Issifu 2015; Mueller et al., 2015; Thondhlana et al., 2015; Dell'Angelo et al., 2016; Jugmohan et al., 2016; Musavengane & Simatele, 2016). Ezeudji (2014) posit that addressing contingencies and risks associated with local communities involved in rural development in sub-Saharan Africa involves the occasional reviews of local communities' strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. The author (Ezeudji, 2014) further state that this analyses will highlight local communities' capabilities, sources of leverage and knowledge they require to embark on local development. Delgado-Serrano et al (2015, 2016) argue that many local communities collectively managing common pool resources lack the skills and context-specific knowledge that are prerequisite for such management. Capacity-building, community empowerment and participation skills are thus needed to overcome the challenges faced by communities in community-based natural resource management. Hence, Howard (2017)



recommend the development of community skills toward participatory rural governance and negotiated accountability that support natural resource management.

This study aims at exploring local community's evaluation of nature conservation and tourism development effectiveness around a protected area - Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park, in South Africa. The critical issues for sustainable management of natural resources and governance best practices related to local capacity and context-specific knowledge, local communities' involvement in policy formulation, planning and management, and equitable allocation of resources were explored. The study results are significant in finding ways of optimising nature conservation and tourism development strategies toward participatory governance and negotiated accountability that support natural resource management.

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park is situated in the north-eastern part of KwaZulu-Natal Province (at the heart of the Zulu Kingdom) in South Africa, and offering Safari holidays. Hluhluwe and iMfolozi Game Reserves were established as game reserves in 1895 and presently along with the Corridor Reserve proclaimed in 1989 are called Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park. This Game Park covers about 96 000 ha, endowed with an immense diversity of fauna and flora (KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife, 2017). Respondents for this study are local community members living close to Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park.

Literature review

Nature conservation and tourism development

According to Saayman and Ferreira (2009), the establishment of the protected areas has traditionally been focussed on conservation, although there has been a new shift to economic sustainability and the upliftment of local communities. Tourism development and conservation are considered positively as regional driver of economic development within communities around protected areas (Nzama, 2009) such as Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park. Jugmohan et al (2016) in South Africa, indicated that community-based tourism presents the opportunity for rural communities to develop to their benefit, their natural and cultural heritage into tourism activities, which mass tourism does not offer. Communities can make a decision to offer tourist guiding, arts and crafts, local cuisine, traditional performances, etc. where there is tourist demand for such.

Tensions between local communities and protected areas' managers

Brousse-James (2009) who conducted a research at uMlalazi Nature Reserve in South Africa, indicate that there are unresolved problems and poor relationships between the communities living adjacent to protected areas and conservation agencies. There is a prevailing history of conflict between the locals and the protected areas in the South African wildlife landscape (Sebola, 2006). Specific tensions arose from unresolved traditional ownership and difficulties associated with cross-cultural communication (Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). These unresolved problems can result in hostile attitudes toward conservation agencies (Hamilton et al., 2000; Jim & Xu, 2002; Fu et al., 2004), jeopardizing protection policies through conflicts between park managers and local communities, and reducing the effectiveness of protected areas for biodiversity conservation (Lane, 2001). There is some evidence suggesting that local communities are more likely to commit themselves to long-term conservation strategies when their knowledge and opinions are incorporated into protected areas decision-making processes (Mascia, 2003; Fu et al., 2004; Pretty & Smith, 2004; Gelcich, et al., 2005). According to Ormsby and Mannie (2006), many conflicts stem from the fact that local people are excluded from decision-making and/or management, as well as that different groups have different perspectives on the use and management of natural resources. Therefore,



Thondhlana et al (2015), whose study was conducted in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and its surrounds in South Africa, argue that collaborative governance in natural resource management should reflect and be understood within the wider background of complex local realities, such as the issues of indigenous community heterogeneity. Their findings show that collaborative governance, though has a practical appeal, is limited by 'lack of participation in decision-making, information dissemination, transparency, trust and accountability, power relations, divergent interests and unequal access to natural resources' (Thondhlana et al., 2015: 121). Some researchers have indicated that when local communities are excluded from the management of protected areas, enforcing conservation policies becomes difficult (Fu et al., 2004; Chape et al., 2008; Ramutsindela, 2007).

Tosun (2001) posit that the involvement of communities around national parks can be achieved by changing the locals' attitude through active participation, developing positive attitudes towards nature conservation, and creating the desire to become both partners of conservation management and players in economies through the tourism practice of these parks. Conservation agency seeks to ensure that members of the local communities have a high degree of control or even ownership over the activities taking place and resources used in tourism (Brooks 2005). In addition, they should receive a significant share of the economic benefits of tourism in the form of direct revenues and employment, upgraded infrastructures, environment and housing standards (Stronza, 2007; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Baquiano (2016) in Philippines, discussed how social representations theory can be used to effect social change. Knowing how local community members understand natural resource management may provide notions on how interventions and policies can be designed and implemented to ensure sustainable natural resource management. Inter-group discussions in the local communities will likely help to address issues and concerns with regard to natural resource management.

Mogende and Kolawole (2016) in Botswana, found that policies and regulations deny rural communities adequate access to and utilization of natural resources available in their immediate environment, and governance systems continue to prevent the inclusion of communities in the decision-making process, as legitimate stakeholders. However, Vuola and Pyhälä (2016) in Madagascar, reported that some attempts were made by conservation authorities to involve local communities in conservation and development processes, but these were met with local scepticism serving only to reinforce existing power-play and inequalities within local communities. Also, Tang and Zhao (2011) and Fischer (2003) found that in natural resource management, local communities tend to focus much more on their immediate interests and mostly neglect more strategic environmental issues.

Good practices in community-based natural resource management

Dell'Angelo et al (2016) called for sustainable management of natural resources and aligning such management to much accepted governance best practices related to local stakeholders' involvement, capacity-building, decentralised powers to local actors, and equitable allocation of resources. Dyer et al (2014: 144), whose study was conducted in Southern Africa state that good practices in the design and implementation of future community-based natural resources management should include: defining 'community' at an early stage and delineating target participants; choosing methods for representative community engagement; employing a trustworthy project manager among the participants; clearly stating aims and objectives of the project with communities at the beginning; two-way communications and community access to all locally-based project staff at all times; and being flexible and adaptable in project design. Musavengane and Simatele (2016) in South Africa, mentioned that the necessary key in building strong social capital towards successful collaborative resource management projects, hinges on participation, transparency, reciprocity and effective communication. Howard (2017)



in Australia, recommended the development of community skills toward participatory rural governance and negotiated accountability that support natural resource management.

Herasa and Tàbara (2016) in Mexico, posit that the knowledge of how to enhance collective imagination and creativity is an important component in transformative processes such as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). There seems to be an emerging strategy towards community-based natural resource management. Lin and Liu (2016) in Taiwan, highlighted the importance of merging indigenous knowledge of the local community and scientific knowledge in fostering sustainability of the natural resources and local livelihoods. Diawuo and Issifu (2015) in Ghana, suggest that local communities have successfully managed their traditional natural resource through adopting the scientific methods and the usage of totems and taboos as traditional belief systems. They asserted that the usage of these traditional belief systems was not tailored toward individual interests but to protecting and promoting communal wellbeing. Danielsen et al (2014) in Nicaragua, also report that biodiversity and ecosystem management requires the integration of 'western scientific' and 'indigenous and local' knowledge systems.

Using focus groups to validate indigenous and local knowledge on natural resources management can enrich available information for measuring status and trends in natural resources, and empower indigenous and local communities at the same time.

Research method and design

This study aims at exploring local community's evaluation of nature conservation and tourism development effectiveness around a protected area - Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park, in South Africa. It required individual responses from the local community members, to eliminate influenced responses that group pressure may bring about. The research is more exploratory than conclusive, being more descriptive than explanatory. Quantified responses from the respondents were then preferred to qualitative answers. Questionnaire survey therefore became the ideal method to gather such information (Veal, 2011). Structured questionnaire that was respondent-completed was used to obtain information from local community members who live adjacent to Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park.

The survey targeted 180 local community respondents, resident in the dispersed local communities around the Game Park, using simple random sampling. To facilitate data collection, randomly selected households and public spaces were visited by the researchers, and individuals were in turn requested randomly to take part in the study. 160 questionnaires were completed and returned, but 144 (actual sample size) of them were usable for data analysis. Questionnaire variables were categorical and ordinal in nature, where the variables measured come from previous studies cited in literature review.

The data collected were subjected firstly to descriptive analysis, where frequencies of responses were determined, and secondly, to some explanatory data analyses, using Chi-Square (Pearson Chi-Square) and Correlation tests (Spearman's Correlation, 2-tailed). IBM's SPSS software (IBM Corporation, 2016), was used for data analysis. Pearson Chi-Square test was used to identify relationships between respondents' profile and other categorical variables (questionnaire statements). Spearman's Correlation test was used to evaluate relationships among ordinal variables in the questionnaire (Cessford, 2003; Ezeuduji et al., 2016 a, b; Veal, 2011; Zondo & Ezeuduji, 2015). All statistical tests were performed at 95% confidence interval, meaning that the researchers are at least 95% confident that the statistical results presented here reflect the perceptions of the actual population (local communities living around Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park, in South Africa).



Results and discussions

Data analysis show that the sample size (Table 1) has slightly more females than males' population, is relatively young (about 76% are below the age of 35 years). Because they are young, much of them are not yet married (about 60% of them are below the age of 25 years). About 86% of them have achieved either or both secondary and tertiary education level, depicting that the population is mostly literate. The unemployment level of the area is estimated at 38%, which is quite high, and about 82% of the individuals have an income of not more than R10, 000 per month (at the time of writing this paper, 1US\$ = R13).

Table 1: Profile of the respondents (N = 144)

Profile of respondents		
Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Female	52.8
	Male	47.2
Age group	15 – 24 years old	59.7
	25 – 34 years old	16.0
	35 – 44 years old	12.5
	45 – 54 years old	7.6
	55 – 64 years old	2.8
	65 + years old	1.4
Cultural group	Black	93.0
	White	3.5
	Indian	0.7
	Coloured	2.8
Marital status	Married	13.2
	Single	78.4
	Widowed	4.2
	Divorced	4.2
Highest level of education attained	No formal education	2.8
	Primary level	6.9
	Secondary level	51.4
	Tertiary level	34.7
	Other	4.2
Employment	Employed	62.2
	Unemployed	37.8
Income level per month	Less than R1000 per month	54.5
	R1001 - R5000	13.4
	R5001 - R10000	14.3
	R10001 - R15000	9.8
	R15001 +	8.0

Results presented in Table 2 show that most of the respondents understand the meaning of nature conservation and its importance. This result is not surprising as this study found that majority of the population is literate. Young respondents, those below the age of 25 agree more that they understand the meaning of conservation than the older age groups. Nature conservation and tourism studies have found their ways in South African secondary schools' curriculum. Local community members who have no formal education did acknowledge that they have no understanding of what nature conservation is all about.

Generally speaking, these results agree with the findings of Khoalenyane and Ezeuduji (2016), who conducted their study in Lesotho, that the literacy level of many local community members is sufficient for management decision-making regarding the planning, development and managing natural resources. However, capacity-building in terms of specific capabilities needed for Game Park and tourism management will always be needed in these communities. Good news is that there is a future for community-based natural resource management in this



area, as the young population have not only the knowledge of nature conservation and tourism, but also have positive attitude towards them.

Responses from the respondents around their community involvement in nature conservation did not yield very positive answers. In as much as they mostly agreed that conservation practices should be implemented for the benefit of all (about 68%), that nature reserve has impacted positively on community (about 65%), and that nature reserves contribute adequately to community tourism (about 63%); there were some negative responses regarding community involvement in conservation. About 33% of the community members responded that community is not satisfied with tourism development; about 30% said that economic rewards are not being received by the community; about 28% are not even aware of any community involvement; and about 27% responded negatively that nature reserve does not adequately contribute to community tourism. Interestingly, results show that mostly young community members (less than 25 years old) and those with very low income (less than R1000 per month) have positive attitude toward nature conservation and tourism development.

Unemployed local community members tend to have negative attitude towards nature conservation and tourism development. Jugmohan et al (2016) in South Africa, indicated that community-based tourism presents the opportunity for rural communities to develop to their benefit, their natural and cultural heritage into tourism activities, which mass tourism does not offer. This can lead to job creation and employment opportunities. Communities can make a decision to offer tourist guiding, arts and crafts, local cuisine, traditional performances, etc. where there is tourist demand for such.

Regarding community views of tourism activities, about 67% of them acknowledge that tourism contributes to job creation and employment, and about 87% of them positing that employment opportunities will support poverty reduction. Negative results were found with the 54% of local community members who either declared that community members are not consulted regarding tourism development or are not sure if they are consulted. Also, disappointingly, about 47% of the local community members are clearly not aware of potential negative impacts of tourism on natural environment. Again, results show that mostly young community members (less than 25 years old) and those with very low income (less than R1000 per month) have positive attitude toward positive tourism impacts.

Nature conservation and tourism development need to be effectively promoted amongst the local population and the tourists, with both sides being enlightened on the positive and negative impacts of tourism. Also, if local community members are aware of tourism opportunities and tourists do come to their destination, these can support the promotion of domestic and international investments in tourism (Weaver & Lawton, 2006).

To enable increased local community's tourism capabilities, private sector stakeholders and tourism agencies can support the initiation of tourism trainings (tourism workshops and courses) that will enable local participation (Saufi et al., 2014). Tukamushaba and Okech (2011) posit that when local communities residing close to protected tourism resources are empowered to make investment decisions for tourism ventures' development, this will probably motivate them to avail themselves in tourism planning and development. Most of the community members (about 74%) responded that more intervention strategies are needed for conservation, tourism planning and development in the area, as about 48% of them are clearly not aware of successful tourism practices in their area; about 39% are clearly not aware of successful conservation practices in their area; and about 33% are clearly not aware of successful conservation practices outside their area.



Table 2: Conservation statements compared with respondents' profile (N = 144)

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)	Compared with respondents' profile ^a
Meaning of conservation				
Do you understand the meaning of conservation?	88.9	6.3	4.8	***Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups ***Locals with no formal education disagree more
Is conservation important for your local area?	83.3	13.9	2.8	NS
Community involvement in conservation				
Are you aware of any community involvement?	52.8	27.8	19.4	*Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups **Income level of less than R1000 per month agree more than other groups
Is your community participating?	55.2	21.0	23.8	***Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups **Locals with no formal education disagree more *Income level of less than R1000 per month agree more than other groups
Community is satisfied with tourism development	41.5	32.4	26.1	*Income level of less than R1000 per month agree more than other groups
Qualities of infrastructure and services have improved	59.0	23.6	17.4	**Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups *Unemployed locals disagree more than employed ones. **Income level of less than R1000 per month agree more than other groups
Nature reserve has impacted positively on community	64.6	18.8	16.6	*Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups
Economic rewards received by the community	51.7	30.1	18.2	NS
Conservation practices be implemented for the benefit of all	68.1	16.7	15.2	*Unemployed locals disagree more than employed ones.
I perceive visitors' experiences satisfactory	47.4	23.1	29.5	*Employed locals agree more than unemployed ones.
Nature reserves contribute adequately to community tourism	63.2	27.1	9.7	**Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups *Unemployed locals disagree more than employed ones. *Income level of less than R1000 per month agree more than other groups
Community views of tourism activities				
Employment opportunities will support poverty reduction	86.7	4.2	9.1	NS
Community is consulted regarding tourism development	45.8	21.6	32.6	*Locals with no formal education agree more
Community is aware of economic benefits of tourism	47.9	18.1	34.0	NS
Tourism contributes to job creation and employment	66.7	22.9	10.4	*Black locals agree more than other groups *Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups
Community is aware of potential negative impacts of tourism on environment	31.3	46.5	22.2	NS
Tourism development contribute to infrastructural development	56.9	24.3	18.8	*Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups ***Income level of less than R1000 per month agree more than other groups
Implementation of conservation and tourism practices				
I am aware of successful tourism practices in my area	34.7	47.9	17.4	*Income level of less than R1000 per month agree more than other groups
I am aware of successful conservation practices in my area	52.4	39.2	8.4	NS
I am aware of successful conservation practices outside my area	34.5	33.1	32.4	*Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups *Locals with no formal education disagree more
Do you think more intervention strategies are needed for conservation, tourism planning and development in your area?	73.8	19.7	6.5	***Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups *Income level of less than R1000 per month agree more than other groups
^a Pearson Chi-Square test significance. NS, no significant results. *, p < 0.05; **, p < 0.01; ***, p < 0.000.				

Results in Table 3 depict how respondents evaluated the conservation practices and tourism development effectiveness around Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park. These results are not very different to previous results discussed in this paper, where it is clear that some segments of the local community members do not have positive attitude towards conservation practices and tourism development. It is important to note that about 39% of the local community members declared that harvesting of natural resources is not well managed in their area; 30% of them responded that local participation in planning and management is not satisfactory; 28% of them insist that related tourism benefits are not available in their area; about 26%



declared that strategies have not been successfully implemented; and about 24% of them posit that tourism development has not improved their area. Consistently, mostly young community members adjudged the conservation practices and tourism development to be effective, and unemployed and low income groups evaluated these more negatively. Employment therefore seem to be an important factor in deciding how members of the community perceive conservation and tourism development. Khoalenyane and Ezeudji (2016) recommended the explanation of economic benefits obtainable from active participation in a national park's management as the primary means of encouraging local communities in sub-Saharan Africa to participate in their natural resource management, while keeping the nature conservation issues as secondary means.

Table 3: Respondents' evaluation of conservation practices and tourism development effectiveness ^a (N = 144)

Statements	Strongly agree or Agree	Neutral	Disagree or Strongly disagree	Compared with respondents' profile ^b
Local communities are involved in policies' formulation	49.3	25.4	25.3	**Unemployed locals disagree more than employed ones. **Locals with income level less than R15001 per month disagree more.
The conservation of natural resources is well understood	72.1	11.9	16.0	***Employed locals disagree more.
Tourism growth has brought business opportunities	73.9	12.7	13.4	*Single locals agree more than other groups
Local communities benefit from nature reserves	75.6	16.8	7.6	**Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups
Local people participate adequately in tourism activities	47.6	27.3	25.1	NS
Community conservation has improved recently	65.5	16.9	17.6	NS
Related tourism benefits are available in my area	54.6	17.4	28.0	**Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups **Income level of less than R1000 per month disagree more than other groups
Local participation in planning and management is satisfactory	56.7	13.3	30.0	**Age group 15-24 agree more than other groups
Tourism development has improved my area	59.5	16.7	23.8	NS
Strategies have been successfully implemented	38.6	35.7	25.7	NS
The harvesting of natural resources is well managed in my area	37.8	23.7	38.5	NS
Conservation is beneficial to tourism	73.5	10.5	16.0	NS

^aQuestionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, strongly agree; 2, tend to agree; 3, neutral; 4, tend to disagree; 5, strongly disagree
^bPearson Chi-Square test significance. NS, no significant results. *, p < 0.05; **, p < 0.01; ***, p < 0.000.

Delgado-Serrano et al (2015, 2016) however argue that many local communities collectively managing common pool resources lack the skills and context-specific knowledge that are prerequisite for such management. Capacity-building, community empowerment and participation skills are thus needed to overcome the challenges faced by these communities



in community-based natural resource management. According to Musavengane and Simatele (2016), the necessary key in building strong social capital towards successful collaborative resource management projects, hinges on participation, transparency, reciprocity and effective communication. Thus, the development of community skills toward participatory rural governance and negotiated accountability that support natural resource management is necessary (Howard, 2017). Weaver (2006) cautioned that community participation does not entail community being instructed by agencies and authorities to act accordingly to policies and practices, or about asking rather than involving local communities. Shaw and Williams (2004) therefore recommended that tourism development should be done with the full consent and involvement of local communities, sharing profits fairly with them, and involving the whole local community rather than individuals. They also called for the integration of local needs and lifestyle within tourism development. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) suggested that ways of attracting community participation and support in tourism planning and development include local job creation, as tourism offers labour intensive and small-scale business opportunities. They asserted that tourism is one of the best sources of employment opportunities for local communities, which is inclusive of the informal sector.

Table 4: Correlations among conservation practices & tourism development effectiveness' variables ^a (N = 144)

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Local communities are involved in policies' formulation	SV	*	***	***	***	***	*	***	NS	NS	*	NS
2. The conservation of natural resources is well understood	*	SV	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	—	NS
3. Tourism growth has brought business opportunities	***	***	SV	***	***	***	*	NS	***	***	NS	***
4. Local communities benefit from nature reserves	***	***	***	SV	***	***	***	NS	***	***	NS	NS
5. Local people participate adequately in tourism activities	***	***	***	***	SV	***	*	***	***	NS	NS	NS
6. Community conservation has improved recently	***	***	***	***	***	SV	***	***	***	***	NS	*
7. Related tourism benefits are available in my area	*	***	*	***	*	***	SV	***	***	***	NS	*
8. Local participation in planning and management is satisfactory	***	***	NS	NS	***	***	***	SV	***	**	NS	**
9. Tourism development has improved my area	NS	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	SV	***	NS	***
10. Strategies have been successfully implemented	NS	***	***	***	NS	***	***	**	***	SV	***	NS
11. The harvesting of natural resources is well managed in my area	*	—	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	***	SV	NS
12. Conservation is beneficial to tourism	NS	NS	***	NS	NS	*	*	**	***	NS	NS	SV

^aSpearman's Correlation test significance (2-tailed). *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$; ***, $p < 0.000$. NS, no significant results. SV, same variable.

Table 4 results show that there are high levels of relationships among variables used to evaluate conservation practices and tourism development effectiveness within the local community, however two variables 'the harvesting of natural resources is well managed' and 'conservation is beneficial to tourism' seem more out of place compared to the other variables. It seems therefore that these variables are not good enough to be used in this evaluation, as they seem to weaken the interrelatedness of the variables used to evaluate conservation practices and tourism development effectiveness among the local community members. Future research should therefore discard these variables for this type of evaluation.



Conclusion and recommendations

This study's purpose was to explore how local community members evaluate their nature conservation and tourism development effectiveness around a protected area. This protected area is Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Park, in South Africa. The critical issues for sustainable management of natural resources and governance best practices related to local capacity and context-specific knowledge, local communities' involvement in policy formulation, planning and management, and equitable allocation of resources were explored. The study results indicate that the literacy level of many local community members is sufficient for management decision-making regarding the planning, development and managing natural resources. However, capacity-building in terms of specific capabilities needed for Game Park and tourism management will always be needed in these communities. Another interesting finding shows that there is a future for community-based natural resource management in this area, as the young population have not only the knowledge of nature conservation and tourism, but also have positive attitude towards them. However, a significant number of local community members indicated that local participation in policy formulation, planning and management is not satisfactory, and that related tourism benefits are not available in their area. Hence they perceived that tourism development has not improved their area. About one-third of the local population are not satisfied with tourism development as they perceive that nature reserve does not adequately contribute to community tourism and the economic rewards of tourism are not being received by the community. Unemployed local community members tend to have negative attitude towards nature conservation and tourism development, mostly because they are unemployed and have no sense of belonging.

As pointed out in this paper already, community-based natural resource management and tourism present the opportunity for rural communities to develop their natural and cultural heritage into tourism activities, to their benefit. This can lead to job creation and employment opportunities. However, many local communities' members lack the capability for such management. Capacity-building, community empowerment and participation skills are thus needed to overcome the challenges faced by local communities in community-based natural resource management and tourism. Ability to build business capability is always the precursor of business success. If local community members are aware of tourism opportunities, have the necessary capability, and tourists do come to their destination; they can make investment decisions in tourism. To enable increased local community's tourism capabilities, private sector stakeholders and tourism agencies can support tourism business trainings that will enable local participation. This will probably motivate local communities to avail themselves in nature conservation, tourism planning, development and management.

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