



# Challenges to active community involvement in tourism development at Didima Resort – a case study of Umhlwazini community in Bergville

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## Abstract

The participation of the local community is very important in the tourism industry as its members can be considered to be one of the tourism products and their inputs in the decision-making processes of tourism development should be a focal point in tourism development. Tourism is recognised as one of the largest and most lucrative industries globally in terms of employment and its contribution to gross domestic product. Increasing awareness on the idea of community participation in tourism development has been the topic of the decade in many of the developed countries. It has established that the practicality of this notion is facing challenges in many tourism destinations as is the case in Didima Resort in Bergville, South Africa. There is a lack of studies on barriers of community participation in KwaZulu-Natal tourism destinations. This leads to the question: what are the barriers that prohibit the community of Umhlwazini from participating in tourism development? The article demonstrates the challenges of community participation in tourism development at Didima Resort. The research involved a qualitative study with participants from different components of the community and the resort. The findings suggest that there are various challenges which obstruct community participation in tourism. Some of the most prominent challenges that were highlighted by the community include inter alia, a lack of information and awareness, corruption, monopolising of government resources, and a lack of dynamic leadership. Moreover, it was discovered that political affiliation was one of the external challenges that was strongly highlighted by the community as problematic. Various stakeholders need to provide fair and equal opportunities to encourage communities to actively participate in tourism development. This will simultaneously work towards eradicating the challenges that the community is facing concerning their desired involvement to tourism. This study can be replicated in other tourism destinations with similar characteristics, in order to gain a better understanding on the notion of community participation in community tourism development.

**Keywords:** Community involvement, tourism development, challenges, South Africa

## Introduction

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the challenges that hinder involvement of local community members in tourism development at Didima Resort and in the Umhlwazini community. The study sought to identify and thoroughly explain the challenges faced as stated by the respondents. There is a continuous appeal by the community for joint ventures and collaboration between all interested and affected parties, and also for a clear understanding of all stakeholder desires and expectations. Particularly, it has been acknowledged that active involvement of local communities is considered to be a central action in the success of tourism development, as it is the local community who are most affected by the development of tourism in their space and its subsequent negative impact effects



on their way of life and therefore their involvement is vitally important (Ying and Zhou, 2007).

Despite all the efforts to incorporate communities into the daily operations of the tourism industry, local communities hardly ever take part in tourism development initiatives and regularly experience a very restricted involvement in or an absolute omission from decision-making processes (Mustapha, Azman and Ibrahim, 2013). This situation is particularly characterised in developing countries which is also the case in South Africa. The reason for this is that there are myriad structural, operational and cultural challenges. According to Marzuki (2008) the highly monopolised municipal and government processes are a barrier at an operational level and this makes the involvement of the local community rarely go beyond merely informing them on possible projects that are coming and information exchange if and when the community demands such information.

A number of research studies have previously endeavoured to look at key factors that influence local community involvement in tourism development, however, this aspect still necessitates additional research on providing meaningful understanding of the challenges to the local community's involvement in tourism development procedures from the local community point of view (Cole 2006). According to previous studies, local communities are failing to play a part and even to maximize the benefits of tourism development in many tourism destinations around the world (Scheyvens, 2003). This paper thus sought to identify key challenges that impede local community citizens from actively participating in tourism development processes within the context of Didima Resort activities.

Community involvement is an imperative element of tourism development of any destination. In other words, it can be said that community involvement acts like a 'strength of character' for most tourism destinations. A number of tourism related associations worldwide encourage "citizens / locals" in the "area / region" as the "core" of tourism development. Tosun (2006) argues that there are regularly differences of opinion amongst community members with some people acknowledging the positive side of tourism, whereas other scholars such as Harrill (2004) argue that tourism normally imposes a negative impact on the lifestyle of the local community.

According to Dogra and Gupta (2012) the majority of the researchers and scholars support the notion of community involvement in tourism development of a destination and there are various instances where community involvement has played a vital role in the improvement of a destination. It is also acknowledged that various tourism destinations are not taking advantages of all tourism potential that is there, and the local community is not adopting a reactive approach in making efforts to participate in tourism activities or other processes. Dogra and Gupta further state that the issue of why local communities are not involved in tourism development courses of action in their neighbouring tourism destinations is still prevalent and very few studies have been conducted to discover the grounds for such inactive involvement by communities in tourism (Dogra and Gupta, 2012). This study sought in essence seek to discover and explain challenges that were discovered by Tosun (2000), which prohibit communities from participating in tourism development. Tosun (2000) discovered that community participation also has several limitations including power hunger, discrimination, lack of skill and lack of financial resources along with other structural challenges in many developing countries, which all generate huge difficulties and gaps in the procedure of community involvement.



## **Spatial Setting of the Study**

The spatial setting of the study is Didima Resort and Umhlwazini Community in KwaZulu-Natal province. The spatial setting is situated in the Cathedral Peak valley of the Okhahlamba Drakensberg Park, World Heritage Site (WHS). Didima Resort rests on an amazing peak covered with natural beauty and splendour, with streams and rocky cliffs and outcrops. Didima celebrates the traditions of the San community and maintains a little of their identity and their historical background. The Cathedral Peak area is a hiker's delight, offering routes ranging from a day, to week long mountain trails including many days of tenting and exploration. The nearest town to Didima Resort is Bergville (Didima Rock Art, 2013).

The Umhlwazini Village is a rural community located right next to Didima Resort, falling within the jurisdiction of the Okhahlamba local municipality and the larger UThukela District Municipality. The main village is located approximately 6.2 kilometres (12 to 13 minutes) from the southern section of the Didima Resort. The local community of Umhlwazini is part and parcel of the physical environment and tourism facilities and activities to be found in the area. Umhlwazini community is a village predominantly occupied by a rural community directly linked with the people who were removed from parts of Didima Resort (Okhahlamba Integrated Development Plan, 2011). Currently the financial system of the area is predominantly based on household incomes where the main source is rural subsistence livelihood and activities, derived from remittance incomes, pension and welfare grants and subsistence agriculture (Okhahlamba Local Municipality, 2001).

## **Literature Review**

### **Community Tourism**

Community tourism is tourism in which local members of the community are active participants and property managers/users, entrepreneurs, workers, decision-makers and conservators. In this type of tourism, the host community has an opinion in decisions made in regard to the development of tourism in their area and collaborates with other potential stakeholders to develop opportunities for employment, business, skill development and other improvements in local livelihoods. Some aspects such as participation in development may be accomplished by communities acting cooperatively, and some, such as business development, is conducted by local individuals and small families (World Tourism Organisation [WTO], 2002).

### **Local Community**

There are various explanations related to community and these terms are sometimes confusing. A common definition of community comes into mind as a group of citizens with different characteristics who are linked by communal ties, share common viewpoints, and engage in common acts in a particular geographical locality or setting. The participants differ in the emphasis they place on particular elements of the definition. Community is defined similarly, but experienced differently by people with diverse backgrounds. Based on the physical viewpoints, this paper identifies 'local community' as the people who are living in Umhlwazini community.



Local communities have an important responsibility in the development of tourism as they are critical in availing first-class environmental conditions for tourists. Local communities are essential constituents of present tourism development. The community is the central point for the continuous supply of lodgings areas, food preparation, knowledge, transport, amenities and services for tourism development (Godfrey and Clarke, 2000). There are thus numerous definitions of community and the word community can have a specific geographic implication with a plainly defined spatial boundary, and also refer to groups of people with a familiar and comparable interest (Chapman and Kirk, 2001).

### **Challenges to Community Participation in Tourism Development**

Even though community participation is one factor of tourism development, it regularly faces barriers in tourism development. Supposedly, based on literature reviewed and knowledge of the subject, tourism can generate improved opportunities for realising community participation, but there are still many obstacles to successfully use tourism development for community progress. Barriers to community participation in tourism development are barely deliberated by scholars of tourism (Moscardo, 2008). In the underdeveloped countries, a lack of community participation is a pervasive obstruction to tourism development (Aref and Ma'rof, 2008).

According to Tosun (2000), there are operational, structural and cultural barriers to tourism development in many developing countries. Structural obstacles include monopolisation of public administration of tourism development, lack of harmonisation between involved parties and lack of information being made available to the local community of the tourist destination as attributed to, but not limited to, inadequate data and poor distribution of information (Tosun, 2000). Under these circumstances minimal community participation in tourism development processes is expected as people are not well informed or at all.

These obstacles jointly make it hard for the local community to participate in the tourism development procedures. Moscardo (2008) argues that lack of familiarity with tourism markets has been used in many tourism destinations to defend the barring of local communities and other community stakeholders from participation in decisions. According to Hall (2005), partial skills and awareness can lead to incorrect expectations regarding the benefits of tourism and lack of readiness for changes related to tourism, limiting opportunities for local communities to take advantage of tourism benefits. However, one method to warrant that local communities can conquer those obstacles and eventually participate actively in tourism development is to empower them (Tosun, 2000). Arguably, power relations seem to be the key component in community participation. Consequently, it is beneficial to begin discussion with the most noteworthy issues which may lead to other impediments to community participation.

### **Political Barriers to Tourism Development**

Tosun (2000) proclaims that the lack of organisation may be partially due to a traditional controlling bureaucracy that governs legislative and operational processes. Botes and Rensburg (2000) state that community committees, which are not legitimately elected, often represent the voice of a group of self-appointed persons and may not truthfully replicate the opinions of the broader community. It is a test to tourism developers to identify the correct community agent to participate in tourism decision making, and who are competent to act on behalf of the entire



community. A further concern is the control of public administration for tourism planning. Tosun (2000) suggests that public participation appears to be centralized only at the higher levels of government at present thus making it rather difficult for the local communities to participate in tourism.

### **Socio-economic Barriers to Tourism Development**

It is generally acknowledged that the inadequate capacity (expertise, understanding and awareness) of the local community is the ultimate barrier to community participation (Cole, 2006; Tosun, 2000). Cole's (2006) study regarding sustainable tourism of a community in Indonesia found that the local people did not have the understanding to participate. Not only the information about how to participate but also knowledge about development matters that is required for meaningful participation is needed.

In developing countries, such as South Africa, most local people in the tourism sector are unqualified. Therefore, the skilled jobs are occupied by individuals from other parts of the country and continent. Low status occupations linked with low wages have restricted local people in participating in tourism development as they may have partial self-worth, no confidence and little influence to participate (Tosun, 2000). These obstacles were all evident in the current research study as well, as the respondents indicated that lack of information, skills and funding are the main barriers that prevent the Umhlwazini community from participating in tourism development initiatives.

### **Philosophy of Silence as an Obstacle to Community Participation in Tourism**

One impediment which may limit community participation in tourism development is the culture of silence (Kumar, 2002). This culture is found in many developing countries, where local community members do not feel at ease to express their opinion or share ideas in public spaces due to range of factors beyond the scope of this article.

Exclusive authority is another important limitation to community participation (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). Elites are influential individuals who play an important role in decision-making in many community development projects, including tourism. This may result in their individual benefits being prioritised over community benefits. Broad elite dominance may and does lead to fraud problems in development projects in communities. The findings of this study can relate to this obstacle as some of the respondents expressed their reluctance in voicing out their grievances because of a lack of interest and widespread corruption.

### **Challenges to community participation in tourism development in rural areas in developing countries**

Various scholars and researchers have deliberated on community participation and recognise a number of inter-related obstructions that preclude the local community from participation in tourism development (Manyara and Jones, 2007). The general conclusion regarding such barriers is that communities lack interest in tourism thus resulting in few benefits filtering down to the local community level.

Indifference and a low level of awareness about tourism matters in the local communities is generally acknowledged. Tosun (2000) describes a wide range of difficulties regarding community participation in tourism development in the context of developing countries. One of the main issues is that many communities in



developing countries struggle to meet their basic needs and ordinary existence occupies all their time and consumes all their energy. For this reason, getting thoroughly involved in matters of community concern, such as community participation in tourism development progression which frequently requires a lot of time and dynamism, may not be a priority that they cannot afford (Tosun, 2006). A low level of interest in taking part in matters beyond their immediate family domain can also be partly attributed to many years or centuries of exclusion from socio-cultural, economic and political affairs that impact their dignity. Whatever the reason, a low level of awareness of such issues stops the poor from demanding that their needs be accommodated by the institutions which serve them. Cole (2006) points out that the apparent lack of ownership, funds, expertise, information and resources all limit the ability of communities to entirely control their participation in tourism development.

These barriers might originate from low levels of education and uneven influence circulation. Manyara and Jones (2007) identify exclusivity, the degree of participation, outflow of profits, conglomerates, access to tourists, an uncluttered approach to benefit-sharing, and lack of a suitable strategy for backing the growth of community initiatives as all having substantial bearings on community participation in the tourism industry.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this research study using a single data collection method of an interview guide. The qualitative research approach is a fitting research method for researchers who are concerned with insight, discovery and understanding rather than making assumptions (Noor, 2008). Purposive sampling was used in this study as it is suitable for this study due to its cost effectiveness; the researcher could identify participants who were likely to provide data that is detailed and relevant to the research question.

An interview guide was developed with the aim of covering all the variables of the study, but also sought to link the questions to barriers that were mentioned by Tosun (2000). Sixteen questions were formulated in the questionnaire, to cover all the challenges and to obtain accurate and relevant information from the respondents. The interviews were conducted by the researcher in the isiZulu and also in the English language, so as to accommodate all languages that are spoken in the study area. All the local community sections and structures were covered during the interviews including community leaders, community members, traditional larders, resort management and local tourism authorities. A total of twenty-five (25) interviews with the respondents were conducted so as to solicit all the necessary information that was required to get the appropriate answers. Two (2) focus groups were also interviewed as they are useful to obtain detailed information about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions, they save time and money compared to individual interviews and they provide a broader range of information.

## **Results and findings**



## **Barriers to Community Participation in Tourism**

Although tourism is one of the fastest developing industries in the world-wide economy, the industry is regularly facing various challenges. Notable challenges include inadequate tourism education, training, information and awareness, insufficient funds, limited participation of the local community, political interference, and crime. These challenges limit the participation of communities in the tourism industry around the world. However, community participation in tourism industry can play an important role in fostering community development and family earnings and therefore enhancing the standard of living of the local community in the study area.

Community participation proved to be a successful model for tourism development in developed countries, but there are certain barriers in developing countries. The three kinds of barriers which exist in community participation are Operational Barriers, Structural Barriers and Cultural Barriers (Tosun, 2000). To encourage community participation in tourism development planning at any destination, it is important to identify and minimize these barriers. Tosun (2000), in his study of limits to community participation in the tourism development process in developing countries pointed out that it is important to involve the local community in the tourism development process.

The aim of this question was to uncover obstacles that prevent the community from participating in tourism development, in decision-making process and owning tourism related businesses in the study area. When respondents were questioned on the matter of barriers that exclude the local community from participating in different levels of tourism development, relatively obvious and interesting viewpoints were provided.

Specifically, on the question of barriers that prevent the community from participating in tourism development, all 25 (100%) of the respondents identified two definite problems that were primarily preventing the community from participating in tourism. The two barriers identified were the shortage of information along with lack of education.

The study revealed that 11 (44%) of the participants indicated that lack of resources including capital and human was the major problem that was preventing the community from participating in tourism, while 4 (16%) of the respondents identified corruption and lack of accountability as an additional major constraint that impedes the local community of Umhlwazini from participating in tourism. Seven (28%) of the respondents indicated lack of skill and expertise from the resort management as the main problem that obstructs community participation, and 3 (12%) remained neutral on this issue.

***When the respondents were questioned on the barriers of community participation in tourism development, they had the following analysis to share:***

*“The lack of information is the main problem that prevents locals from participating in tourism, and as long as people are still not equipped with relevant and necessary information, they will remain isolated and not participating in any of the tourism initiatives. Tourism information in this community is exceptionally not enough, even the slight information that is*



*available is not disseminated to the community members in ways that is comprehensible to them. Providing us with information does not necessarily mean that we are going to participate in tourism but it will definitely spark interest in some members of the community.” [Respondent 1 from the community]*

*“The scarcity of coordination and accountability is another major problem that is limiting the local community from participating in tourism activities. The role and responsibilities of the community has not been clearly defined hence this is creating a commotion where every person is found idling. The self-proclaimed leaders of the community are greedy and corrupt and when it’s time to provide answers to the community; no one is willing to give answers, no one knows anything.” [Respondent 2 from the community]*

**A respondent from the ATC shared the same sentiments as the previous respondents and stated:**

*“There are lots of issues that are compromising the possibilities of our people to participate in tourism. The major notable problem however is the lack of education which is the reason why the majority of community members are unable to identify tourism opportunities and benefits.*

*We walk on our bread and butter on daily basis but we fail to realize that the soil we step on everyday can be our daily bread if we just change our mentality and take opportunities presented to us. This is deep rural area and our people here do not believe greatly in education added to the fact that education is pretty expensive since we have no college here in Bergville.”*

### **Barriers to Tourism Decision-Making Processes**

The respondents were investigated regarding obstructions that prevent the community from participating in tourism development decision-making processes. Based on the information that was collected during data collection 17 (68%) of the respondents indicated a lack of education as being the major obstacle that limits and hinders the community from participating in tourism activities, whereas 4 (16%) of the respondents indicated that corruption is the main obstacle that prohibits the local community from participating in the tourism decision making processes, while 2 (8%) of the respondents indicated that they are honestly unaware of any valid reason that could prevent the community from participating in tourism decision making process.

**Two (8%) of the respondents provided responses that were very interesting and quite different to those of the rest of the respondents**

*“We are being undermined as the community; they don’t think that we have the capacity to add any valuable in whatever they are discussing. In fact, there is no visible limitation as to why we cannot be part of a decision-making body. The officials of EKZNW are selfish; they do not have the interest of*





*the community at heart. The moment you involve people in decision making is the moment you empower people with information hence that is not good for their corruption since they will be exposed. The only way to exercise corruption without any hassle is to make sure that locals are side-lined and out the picture.” [Respondent 1 from the community].*

*“The major reason is the issue of politics, remember that all this is politically connected and the fact that in our community we have lot of IFP supporters plays a role in them (EKZNW) trying to isolate the community. The reason could be that the EKZNW does not know who to trust since they represent ANC. That is not what is going on but it’s possible. There is great tension between the supporters of different political parties and you can’t be part of them unless you share a table with them.” [Respondent 2 from the community].*

The results from the interviews indicate that the majority of the members of Umhlwazini community share the same concerns regarding obstacles that preclude the community from partaking in the decision-making processes. The majority of the problems mentioned are common and they are fixable. All interested and affected parties must of necessity put in some extra efforts to make sure that all the above mentioned obstacles are fixed. The findings of this research can conclude that the level of participation of the Umhlwazini community in decision-making is nominal. Virtually all the respondents agreed that the community is not involved in decision-making, so they do not participate actively in decision-making concerning tourism.

As stated earlier, the community members of Umhlwazini possess very partial information regarding tourism and its benefits, thus their contribution to decision-making can be expected to be minimal. Some respondents agreed that they had attended meetings where tourism issues were discussed. During such meetings, the respondents maintained observer status, while the future of their land was being decided by EKZNW and other stakeholders who are beneficiaries of the resort.

### **Barriers to Tourism Business**

According to the information supplied by the study respondents, not even a single community member of Umhlwazini community owns or operates a professional tourism business. Business engagement and development is another form of strategy that tourism authorities can adopt to encourage local community participation and enjoy financial benefits from tourism. The information provided by the respondents clearly illustrates business potential and opportunities that could be exploited by community members of Umhlwazini. On the issue of community participation in the tourism business, the majority of the respondents stated clearly that they are actively not participating in the tourism business. On this fragment of the data analysis, the question was to discover and identify possible obstacles that prevented the community of Umhlwazini from participating and owning tourism businesses.

Data analysis indicates that the majority of the respondents 14, (56%) identified lack of information as the key obstacle that prevents locals from participating in tourism business, 8 (32%) indicated the lack of capital and financial assistance, 2 (8%) indicated lack of business acumen and necessary expertise, and 1 (4%)



remained neutral and indicated that he does not know of any compelling grounds. The obstacles that were mentioned by respondents are relatively the same as other obstacles that were previously stated.

***When the respondents were asked about obstacles that obstruct the community in participating in tourism businesses, one of the respondents offered an interesting but rather unusual perspective that was unforeseen by the researcher. He stated:***

*“The major limitation to all of this is the fact that the community does not have enough information on the business spectrum in general. Even though lots of community members are doing informal businesses, people are still short on information about certified businesses. We have recently selected a business committee that will seek to address business issues within the community”.*

*“This is a traditional rural area; lots of people here are still stuck in the past that you have to work in order to provide for your family. Transformation is something we only see on TV, and we still have a long way to go before we get to that stage of life. I think no matter how many opportunities are presented to the community, because of the slave mentality; black people are always going to be job seekers rather than being job initiators, we fail to take advantage of simplest opportunities presented to us.”*

The ongoing reality is simply that none of the community members are able to establish a professional tourism business and this is appalling and most revealing of a poor situation. Recently a business committee was elected by the community to deal with business affairs of the community. The local economic development office from Okhahlamba municipality has been exceedingly sluggish in relation to providing financial and other essential support to the local community.

### **Barriers to Traditional and Cultural Entertainment**

An alternative form of involving the local community in tourism development is through the provision of a platform for local people to display entertainment, i.e. traditional dancing and cultural plays to visitors. The respondents were probed on the obstacles that prevent the community from entertaining tourists that visit the resort. The greater part of the study respondents indicated that they are not mindful of any basis that prevents them from rendering entertainment to resort visitors.

The majority of the respondents 17 (68%) indicated that they cannot state any solid obstacle that prevents the local community from entertaining visitors at Didima, and 5 (20%) of the respondents indicated that the major reason is the there is no appropriate blueprint for this type of activity, there is also no allocated budget and the EKZNW is not showing any form of interest I supporting them. Two (8%) of the respondents stated that corruption is the main reason why locals are not providing any entertainment to visitors while 1 (4%) respondent did not answer the question. The following excerpts illustrate the responses:

*“We are not aware of any reason that is preventing us from showcasing our talent, the tourist are always willing to make donation. I think there is too much corruption going on there, those people are selfish and they don't care*



*about our community. They always have big events every year but not even once have they invited the community, not even once have they requested any form of entertainment from us. They prefer to spend thousands and thousands of rand to artists from Durban and Gauteng, disregarding our entire traditional artist in our area.” [Respondent from the community]*

Based on the expression from the respondents, it can be strongly concluded that the community of Umhlwazini is minimally active in tourism. The outcomes of the all-inclusive question on obstacles that prevents the community from participating in different levels of tourism indicate that there are common opinions and observations from the respondents. Issues like a lack of education, poor skills, corruption and the political influence were all obstructions that were pointed out by the respondents.

In order to address the concern of non-participation of local people, it is recommended that both EKZNW and the Umhlwazini Community Committee make use of the participation of the community in tourism. This suggests that community gatherings must be held more often with community members. The people of Umhlwazini should feel that the developments that are happening in their area will contribute towards their advancement. Such a condition can only be conceivable when decisions that are taken tend to reflect the will and the views of the local people. Failure to encompass the community in tourism development is resulting in a lot of community members feeling isolated from their own affairs.

The tourism industry at Umhlwazini is too far from achieving positive results due to limited community participation in tourism issues. It appears that, the local community at Umhlwazini is not actively participating in tourism, not well informed and ultimately the misery of inequality and poverty is on the rise, regardless of the plentiful tourism resources in their study area. Insufficient community participation is a major obstruction limiting the community from gaining especially economic benefits from tourism. Potentially, the end result of non-participation leads to likely growing conflict and disagreement between the EKZNW, the municipality and the community members of Umhlwazini.

## **Discussion of findings**

The purpose of discussing the findings of the article is to interpret and describe the significance of the findings in the light of what is already known about the research problem being investigated, and to explain any new understanding about the research problem after taking all the findings into consideration. The discussion section of this study will also explain how the study has broadened the reader's understanding of the impediments that are preventing community involvement in tourism.

## **Barriers to Community Participation**

Participation of the local community is very important in the tourism industry as members can be considered to be one of the tourism products and their inputs in the decision-making processes of tourism development should be a focal point (Choi and Sirikaya, 2005). However, according to the outcomes of this study, the local community of Umhlwazini has failed to participate in and to maximize the benefits of tourism development.



There is a lack of studies on barriers of community participation at a particular tourism destination. This leads to the question: what are the barriers that prohibit the community of Umhlwazini from participating in tourism development? Tosun (2000) acknowledged that limitations to community participation in tourism may be due to political, social and economic structures which impede investors and participants from achieving higher levels of development. This is all evident in this research as the respondents pointed out that political affiliation is a factor that prevents some of the community members from participating in tourism; political affiliation is a key to access better tourism opportunities at Umhlwazini. Aref and Ma'rof (2008) pointed out that in Iran, the lack of powerful leadership is the main barrier to community participation. Similar to this research, the lack of influential and progressive community headship was also noted as one of the major barriers that prevent the community from participating in tourism activities.

Another obstruction to tourism participation in the study area was associated with centralization of municipal government whereby nearly all of the tourism development in the community of Umhlwazini is being executed by EKZMW alone without any contribution from the local community. This means that the public administration system is too slow and exclusive, to act in response to local community needs successfully and resourcefully (Tosun, 2000) as the EKZMW as well as the local municipality are unwilling to share resources with the Umhlwazini community. The reluctance of EKZMW to share power with the community is another barrier expressed by the respondents. Community participation at Umhlwazini is held back because there is a lack of harmonisation among the people involved in tourism development.

As stated by Cole (2006) many tourism development projects do not bring benefit due to a lack of full coordination between local and tourism planners. However, what is evident from this research study is that the local tourism authority, which in this case is EKZMW, believes that they are unable to coordinate their business with community members as their understanding of tourism is imperfect together with their lack of experience in articulating business ideas. An underlying reason for barriers to community participation as indicated by respondents is the apparent lack of information on tourism possibilities. The participants stated that they feel that the Didima authorities engage in tourism development surreptitiously with no community consultation, therefore low participation from the community should be anticipated (Tosun, 2000).

The findings indicate that the local community of Umhlwazini is facing similar types of barriers as most other communities in South Africa: lack of skills, lack of information, political interference, feeble leadership and corruption as well as unaccountability. Surprisingly, the community leadership is not doing anything to resolve these issues meaning that the community will continue to be excluded from tourism activities even though these issues could and should be effortlessly resolved. Evidently, the community members of Umhlwazini are also not making a vigorous effort to eradicate or confront the barriers mentioned above. Instead the community is shifting all the blame to EKZMW and the local leadership. At the same time, EKZMW is shifting blame for inactivity back to the community. This clearly proves a gap exists between the two sides which obviously is not good for tourism development.



## Conclusion

This study has identified and discussed the challenges of community involvement in tourism development at Didima resort in Bergville. The study has discovered that the challenges proposed by Tosun (2000), do indeed exist at Umhlwazini community, for instance the high costs associated with community involvement, shortage of expertise and the negative attitude of both the community and the authorities are all prevalent issues. The outcome suggest that the challenges mentioned by respondents are also congruent with those posited by Tosun (2000) and they play a huge role in preventing the participation of the locals as well as the community willingness to partake in any tourism activities in the near future. The findings further reveal that the community believe that their leadership must be involved in decision-making processes and that this will increase the footprint of the community in tourism since they believe it is easier to participate in something that you clearly understand.

The lack of knowledge and awareness about tourism among community members was found to be the central limitation in the Umhlwazini community. Lack of knowledge and skills on how locals can participate in tourism business appears to discourage the community enthusiasm to participate in tourism ventures. Consequently, the community is failing to recognise the benefits of tourism as they only view tourism as an activity for the rich and the elites in society. Tourism authorities should provide necessary opportunities for economic empowerment through businesses education, locals should be afforded proper training in order to acquire necessary skills, and the awareness campaigns should spread across all ages and genders of the community.

Empowering locals with information will also help when decisions regarding tourism are made, the community will also be more willing and effective participate in decision-making processes as they will be more informed and motivated. Moreover, the community should be able to decide on how benefits derived from tourism activities should be shared by all the interested and affected parties.

Another critical point that was raised by the community is the issue of a cash 'injection' as it appeared that there is a shortage of financial resources which largely prohibits the community from participating in tourism. The general view from the community is that they are deliberately being excluded due to greedy and self-seeking desires from the management of the resort in question. According to some respondents the main reason why the people are side-lined, is due to the fact that the resort leadership is more obsessed about making profits rather than by creating a platform that will promote active involvement of the community in tourism activities. A number of requests to EKZNW were put forward by the community requesting the construction of an information centre that will serve as a drawcard to the more active involvement of the locals. Unfortunately, these request were not responded to by concerned tourism authorities. There is no connection between the resort and the community hence the limited involvement of locals in tourism activities is expected and is not unsurprising.

Until the Umhlwazini community have a comprehensive understanding of tourism and become part and parcel of the decision-making processes, uncertainty and unrealistic expectations will trouble the community of Umhlwazini and not allow them to participate. The high level of idleness and lack of support from EKZNW and the continuous exclusion of the local community means that many community



members just go for any form of subsistence skill, which often results in the escalation of crime. Tourism appears to be one of the few rays of hope for the people of Umhlwazini. Future research can be done in the classification of challenges other than the ones mentioned by Tosun (2000) and future research can also measure the impact of such challenges to tourism and the local communities.

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