

Cultural Heritage Tourism in South Africa: Perceived a Panacea for Rural Development?

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Abstract: Cultural heritage tourism is perceived as one of the major development opportunities for Africa. This study conducted in South Africa, enquired the perceptions of the local communities towards their cultural heritage tourism development, and their level of participation in such development. Quantitative data were collected from simple randomly selected respondents using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive data analysis provided information required to address research objective. Local community members surveyed are sceptic towards cultural heritage tourism development invariably becoming a panacea for their rural development. Cultural heritage tourism development in South Africa should align with the sustainable rural tourism critical success factors recommended by this paper. This study conducted in a district of South Africa has implications for cultural heritage tourism development in developing economies.

Keywords: cultural tourism; heritage tourism; rural development; local perceptions; sub-Saharan Africa

JEL Classification: O55; R11; Z32

1. Introduction

Recent research in cultural heritage tourism development in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond have stressed on the importance of cultural heritage tourism development as one of the portfolios of sustainable development, highlighting the challenges such development may pose within local communities (such as Boswell & O’Kane, 2011; Gupta & Dada, 2014; Hüncke & Koot, 2012; Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013a; Ivanovic and Saayman, 2013b; Jugmohan, Spencer & Steyn,

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2016; Loulanski & Loulanski, 2011; Saarinen & Rogerson, 2015; Spencer & Jessa, 2014; Titus & Spencer, 2015; Van der Merwe & Rogerson, 2013). Much of these studies assumed that local communities will embrace such development as a tool to spur on their socio-economic development. This study will therefore enquire the perceptions of the local communities towards cultural heritage tourism development, and their level of participation in such development. Local perceptions towards this development may be positive, sceptic or negative, suggesting inferences that can be drawn about this development, based on literature.

Diverse forms of tourism are promoted in destinations, however incorporating local products and cultural attributes into tourism are desirable (Liu, 2006). Cultural tourism denoting the type of tourism that attracts tourists to visit a destination to experience local culture has an acclaimed potential to benefit local communities and to motivate them to maintain their cultural heritage (Ezeuduji & Rid, 2011, p. 189). Local communities' participation and cooperation with other tourism stakeholders are however said to be critical for successful cultural tourism development (Sdrali & Chazapi, 2007). Jugmohan, Spencer and Steyn (2016) posit heritage as a broad concept that includes the natural and the cultural environment. It includes landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, biodiversity, collections, cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences.

Tourism does not always bring benefits expected by the local communities. Motivation to be involved in tourism and other factors that support locals' active involvement are critical to successfully integrate local communities into their tourism development (Ezeuduji & Rid, 2011). The study by Akama and Kieti (2007, pp. 746 – 747) highlighted some of the ways in which tourism can significantly contribute to the much popularised sustainable rural development in developing countries to include: (1) creation of clear opportunities for local and self-employment; (2) supporting collaboration amongst local actors, namely private and public sectors, not for profit organisations, and local population; (3) improving socio-cultural impacts of tourism; (4) allowing local access to services and infrastructure being provided for tourists; (5) enabling local population participation; and (6) fostering continuous institutional capacity-building to support locals' active participation. Ezeuduji and Rid (2011, p. 190) referred to Akama and Kieti's (2007) first, third and fourth critical success factors as "desired outcomes", and the second, fifth and sixth factors as the "enablers" to achieve "the desired outcomes". It is expected that when these aforementioned factors are in place, local communities will perceive tourism development positively and be motivated to participate in this development, with positive "attitude".

2. Literature Review

Saarinen and Rogerson (2015) posit that cultural tourism is perceived as one of the major development opportunities for Africa. Boswell and O’Kane (2011) communicated the significance of heritage in constructing African states’ identity and as a source of knowledge in Africa and highlighted the complexities of heritage management on the continent. Ivanovic and Saayman (2013a) claimed that cultural tourism is the most popular type of tourism in the world based on the universality of cultural motivation and consumption. They (Ivanovic and Saayman) further suggested that the African destination’s unique cultural tourism products must be packaged and promoted. Loulanski and Loulanski (2011) explored the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage. Their results revealed a representative set of synthesis factors aimed at achieving sustainability. These include among others, sustainability-centered tourism management and practice, local involvement, integrated planning and management, site management, integrated governance and stakeholder participation or destination management. Gupta and Dada (2014) communicated cultural tourism’s position as an agent of sustainable development, illustrated in the core values of public education, respect for diversity, authenticity of programmes or projects, and preservation of heritage. They (Gupta & Dada) observed that cultures are mobilised for tourists and read by tourists within particular settings and focused on the learning and transmission of meanings using symbols and objects. Titus & Spencer (2015) who connected cultural tourism to slow tourism in their research referred slow tourism as the practice of quality time spent by visitors, mostly in areas with natural resources such as protected parks, heritage sites, and gardens. They asserted that engaging in slow tourism activities do allow visitors to experience the destination at a much deeper level.

Cultural tourism is highlighted as one of the fastest expanding sectors of the global tourism economy with some researchers estimating that as much as 40% of international leisure tourism involves a cultural component (Novelli 2015). Within sub-Saharan Africa, cultural tourism is identified by Christie, Fernandes, Messerli, and Twining-Ward (2013) and Novelli (2015) as providing untapped potential for providing opportunities for tourism expansion and inclusive growth. According to a World Bank report, rich traditions of music, art and dance in sub-Saharan Africa form unique cultural tourism believed to provide substantial opportunity for tourism growth (Christie et al., 2013). Many African countries (including Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana, and Mali) have used cultural tourism niche product to diversify their tourism economies (Rogerson 2012). Currently in Africa, cultural World Heritage Sites are being continually developed as “key anchor projects” for tourism destinations (Rivett-Carnac, 2011, p. 6). These include South Africa’s Cradle of Humankind and Mapungubwe National Park, Kilwa Kiswani in Tanzania, and Great Zimbabwe in Zimbabwe. However, cultural

heritage products are posited by Twining-Ward (2009) as some of the most underdeveloped Africa's tourism products.

Recent focus on experience economy and the unique experiential value proposition of cultural heritage products is becoming a pivot of cultural tourism development for emerging destinations, including South Africa (Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013b). Hüncke and Koot (2012) posit that cultural tourists have a dual nature – tourists searching for authentic cultures (reflected in the expectations of a pristine and exotic lifestyle), and their accompanied search for local communities and their process of development. Spencer and Jessa (2014) called for the development of a creative tourism strategy, forming part of a wider cultural heritage tourism plan in South Africa, to be implemented for cultural regeneration. They (Spencer & Jessa) argued that this will provide an avenue for economic and skills development and raise the overall creative profile of the destination. Local communities can develop their natural and cultural assets for tourism activities to their own benefit. Jugmohan et al. (2016) posit that rural communities can benefit from tourism skills development and be involved in tourist guiding, arts and crafts' production, selling local dishes, and at the same time organising, using and maintaining the natural and cultural resources. Local communities should control their own facilities, and guard against the illegal exploitation of their physical, natural and cultural resources. Van der Merwe and Rogerson (2013) however pointed to the challenges faced by local communities in under-performing heritage tourism destinations to include local tourism marketing, poor budgeting, lack of leadership and strategic direction for tourism development.

3. Research Method and Design

This research was conducted in the Zululand District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Zululand District Municipality has many cultural heritage sites that are developed for tourism. This district has five local municipalities namely Ulundi, Nongoma, Abaqulusi, uPhongolo, and eDumbe. This study was specifically done in the rural areas of Ulundi, Nongoma, and Abaqulusi. As this study is mostly exploratory, requiring much quantified responses from the respondents and involving more descriptive than explanatory analysis, questionnaire survey is therefore the best method to garner such information (Veal, 2011). A survey of local communities in these local municipalities used simple random sampling technique to select respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data, where questionnaires were either respondent-completed or researcher-completed. Respondent-completion was required from local population who have adequate level of Western education to support questionnaire completion in English Language, and researcher-completion was done with local population with no adequate Western education. For the latter

case, the content of the questionnaire and the respective responses were communicated using the local language, as the questionnaire was translated. 160 questionnaires were administered and returned, but 143 were usable for analysis. Descriptive analysis of the questionnaire variables was done using IBM's SPSS software (IBM Corporation, 2013). Variables in the questionnaire emanate from previous studies (such as Ezeuduji & Rid, 2011; Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013a; Ivanovic and Saayman, 2013b; Jugmohan et al., 2016; Loulanski & Loulanski, 2011; Saarinen & Rogerson, 2015; Spencer & Jessa, 2014; Van der Merwe & Rogerson, 2013).

4. Results and Discussion

Results from Table 1 indicate that local communities generally perceive that cultural heritage tourism products should be conserved, however a significant number (more than one-third) of these local communities' members do not participate at all in cultural heritage tourism activities.

Table 1. Participation and general perception towards cultural heritage tourism (N=143)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Participation level of the local community in cultural heritage tourism activities	Not at all	35
	Once	21
	Twice	21
	Continuously	23
Perception towards conserving cultural heritage tourism products	Yes	90
	No	4
	Not sure	6

It is previously stated in the introductory part of this paper that tourism does not always bring benefits expected by the local communities. Motivation to participate in tourism and other factors that support locals' active involvement are critical to successfully integrate local communities into their tourism development (Ezeuduji & Rid, 2011).

Variables in Table 2 explored the reactions of local communities' members towards some specific cultural heritage tourism development outcomes. In as much as the majority of the local community members perceive these cultural heritage tourism outcomes as positive (especially offering wide range of opportunities, attracting tourists' visitation, and enabling sustainability of cultural heritage sites), however the significant number of the respondents who are sceptical towards the cultural heritage tourism development and how it affects them should be addressed. A significant number of the respondent (one-third or more) are not sure that cultural heritage tourism development raises individuals' cultural awareness;

enables income generation; supports infrastructure development; and uplifts living standards in the communities. It follows therefore that these sceptic responses to the cultural heritage tourism development may be the reason why local community members are reluctant to participate in the cultural heritage tourism activities. Research by Akama and Kieti (2007, pp. 746 – 747) communicated some of the ways in which tourism can significantly contribute to sustainable rural development in developing countries to include: creation of clear opportunities for local and self-employment; supporting collaboration amongst local actors, namely private and public sectors, not for profit organisations, and local population; improving socio-cultural impacts of tourism; allowing local access to services and infrastructure being provided for tourists; enabling local population participation; and fostering continuous institutional capacity-building to support locals’ active participation.

Table 2. Specific perceptions towards cultural heritage tourism development outcomes (N=143)

Brand essence	Strongly agree or agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree or strongly disagree (%)
Cultural Heritage Tourism (CHT) creates a wide range of opportunities	81	16	3
CHT raises individual cultural awareness	64	32	4
CHT enables income generation	64	30	6
CHT supports infrastructure development	60	32	8
CHT enables restoration of historical sites	61	27	12
CHT attracts tourists visitation	77	18	5
CHT enables usable skills development e.g. Business skills	69	26	5
CHT supports upliftment of living standards	58	33	9
CHT enables sustainability of cultural heritage sites	71	22	7

As Jugmohan et al. (2016) communicated, rural communities can benefit from tourism skills development and be involved in tourism activities in different areas such as tourist guiding, arts and crafts’ production, selling local dishes, and at the same time organising, using and maintaining the natural and cultural resources. As Ezeuduji (2015) pointed out, not-for-profit organisations as rural tourism stakeholders who demand local empowerment and equity in local communities can be tasked by local municipalities to facilitate capability building of the local community members for rural tourism services.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found that local communities generally perceive that cultural heritage tourism products should be conserved, however a significant number do not participate at all in cultural heritage tourism activities. Majority of the local community members perceive cultural heritage tourism development outcome as positive, however a significant number of them are sceptical towards the cultural heritage tourism development and how it affects them. A significant number of the respondents are not sure that cultural heritage tourism development does raise individuals' cultural awareness; enable income generation; support infrastructure development; and uplift living standards in the communities. It can be induced therefore that these sceptic responses to the cultural heritage tourism development may be the reason why local community members are reluctant to participate in the cultural heritage tourism activities. It is therefore recommended that these local municipalities tread with care in the development of their cultural heritage tourism. Supporting collaboration amongst local actors, creating opportunities for local employment, allowing local access to services and infrastructure used by the tourists, supporting local participation and enabling institutional capacity-building that supports active local participation, are ways to foster inclusive cultural heritage tourism development.

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