

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREA OF TSATSANE LESOTHO

**Palesa Edith PHASUMANE¹, Darlington ONOJAEFE²,
 Phelokazi STUMA³, Wilfred Isioma UKPERE⁴**

*¹Master of Technology in Tourism and Hospitality
 Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
mamakabobo32@gmail.com*

*²Graduate Center for Management
 Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
onojaefed@cput.ac.za*

*³Department of Tourism and Events Management
 Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Western Cape, South Africa
stumap@cput.as.za*

*⁴Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, College
 of Business & Economics, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
 Email: wiukpere@uj.ac.za*

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Abstract :

This paper investigated community perceptions of tourism development and identified their relationship between tourism development projects and business opportunities in Tsatsane community, Lesotho. This investigation was done using a qualitative research method to understand the relationship between respondents perceptions of tourism development projects and associated business opportunities. Using purposive random sampling techniques, 30 respondents—19 community members, 2 community leaders, and 9 stakeholders—were chosen and interrogated. After the choice, both

qualitative and quantitative data were gathered using a semi-structured questionnaire that was constructed. While collecting quantitative data by email, the qualitative data used a self-administered questionnaire conducted in-person. Thematic analysis was used to organize the themes that emerged from the replies after they were received. Using Atlas Ti.8, similar themes were gathered and transferred. The study finds a statistically significant relationship between tourism development projects and recurrent themes like new knowledge of tourism-related business opportunities like job creation, increased trade, and education. About 5% of respondents have different opinions.

Keywords *Rural tourism development, business development, eco-tourism, event management, Tsatsane.*

JEL Classification: *Z32*

Introduction

This paper investigated tourism development project and associated business opportunity through the examination of respondent's perception of projects in Tsatsane community, Lesotho. The understanding is necessary both for contribution to knowledge and tool for practitioners to ensure tourism development project and business opportunity become the pillar of future projects. Here attention is placed on the role of tourism in contribution to improve life and livelihood of community members. The term livelihood is used to conote mean by which community produce and render service in return for improved quality of life of rural communities. Only when the host community understands and supports tourism development projects and their effects on community members can tourism development in a destination be effective (Adong et al., 2017:1). A major factor in keeping rural towns in their original locations and preventing the migration of rural people to metropolitan areas is rural tourism, which serves as an alternative source of revenue for rural communities. The potential effects of tourism growth on host communities have been identified, and direct interactions between tourists and host communities have been shown to support tourism growth and the promotion of tourist destinations and historic sites.

Community leaders need to think about fostering a sustainable tourist environment that will benefit various tourism stakeholders, claims (Campo-Cerro, 2017:4). Additionally, Campo-Cerro suggests that the success and durability of the

initiative will depend on the degree of community support. The local community's quality of life must therefore be preserved if we want to increase their support for the growth of tourism. Additionally, it is crucial to comprehend how locals feel about the effects of tourist growth because this information is useful to both developers and the tourism sector. According to Sajad and Mahdi (2012:334), communities are the ones most impacted by the growth of the tourism industry; as a result, community involvement and perceptions are crucial to the industry's development since they help inform current knowledge and decision-making. This publication responds to the following objectives:

- To assess the community's perceptions of tourism impacts in Tsatsane area.
- To identify perceived tourism impacts and benefits for Tsatsane community.
- To determine ways to develop a tourism management plan that will regulate tourism in Tsatsane.

Literature Review

Community perception of tourism the impacts of tourism

Knowledge of residents' attitudes towards tourism development is important for tourism developers and governments because tourism development sustainability relies on community participation and involvement. According to Koot (2013:318), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the government, funders, consultants, and the business sector do not consider host views because they frequently adopt an objectified, detached stance. According to Turker (2013:115) perpetually residents have positive perceptions towards tourism because they believe that tourism creates employment, bring business opportunities, promotes community development and socio-cultural activities such as entertainment. The people of Tsatsane could also develop positive perception towards tourism development if they gain benefits that accrue from tourism.

The level of understanding community perceptions of tourism has been reformed but still uncertain Sharpley (2014:37). However, Chandralal (2010:41) consider local community support as crucial for sustainable tourism development particularly in regional destinations. It is therefore important for Lesotho government, policy makers and other stakeholders to understand and consider community perceptions of tourism development for proper implementation, development, and sustainability. Further, Wang et al. (2017:1–15) assert that it is crucial to understand the attitudes of hosts toward the growth of tourism as well as the elements that affect those attitudes.

Kosic et al (2014:151) allude that it is important to identify the relationship between resident's socio-economic and demographic attributes and attitudes in the development stage. Furthermore, Kosic et al (2014:151) observe that people who participate in tourism, those who benefits economically, younger and educated population have positive perceptions towards tourism development while older people, those who do not communicate with tourists, people with lower education and those who do not benefit from tourism development have negative perceptions of tourism development and its prosperity of local community.

Rural tourism development

Rural tourism development has been recognized for it's potential to be an engine of economic growth in communities and adaptive tourism strategy would become helpful in this regard Lesley et al, (2004:3) indicated that rural tourism has moved into its second face of development, it has grown rapidly in production, participation, progressed in business and partnership. In this context rural tourism is a viable business in some developing countries including Lesotho because most of tourism resources and activities are discovered in rural areas. Novelli (2016:1) examines some of the most debated current issues that hinders sustainable tourism development in SSA including lack of skills, political issues, and power relations. Novelli further agree that tourism has potential in economic development, employment opportunities and poverty alleviation and it creates opportunities in developing countries and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in particular. Lesotho is one of the developing countries in SSA, therefore if Lesotho tourism could be revealed, it will contribute by improving the economy of the entire country and empower the livelihoods of the people particularly in rural areas and gain massive benefits from tourism development. Anita et al (2014:88) highlight that rural tourism enable tourists to interact and be involved in the daily life of the host community. It means that through rural tourism development tourists will interact with the community in Tsatsane and learn Basotho culture.

The Rural Tourism concept is also closely linked to “Sustainable Tourism” approaches, where tourism should take “full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities”.

Tourism impacts

The impact of tourism development initiatives on communities varies according to productive capacity and entrepreneurial commitments. Turker (2013:115) argues that though perception matters in understanding tourism impact, though perception

do not undermine actual impact of tourism development projects. Chandralal (2010:41-49) argue that community members are more interested in tourism development project that is aligned with community perception of tourism activities. .

Sharpley (2001:1) highlight the changes associated tourism activities and their association with destination image and understand the impact they have on developmental cost of tourism activities, development projects and general cost of living in rural community. Viljoen and Tlabela (2007:29) note that while the change in cost is relevant for adaptive tourism strategy, the impact it has on rural community varied widely: social, cultural, political, economic and environmental.

Furthermore, Viljoen and Tlabela (2007:1) agree that tourism project in rural community can lead to increased tourism activities and community participation in tourism business Irshad (2010:30) while rural tourism maybe perceived to have varied impact, the impact of improved emphasis on tourism development project in rural community would certainly lead to improved economy, and social cohesion and protection of historic values and artifact. Bogan (2014:122) argue that perception should be closely connected with interest and desire for community development through tourism projects, activities and strategies.

Research Methodology

This section presents an overview of the method used to investigate, study population, data collection, the sample and data analysis. A qualitative method was adopted to investigate the perceptions of community leaders, members, and tourism stakeholders of impacts of tourism development in Tsatsane area. Furthermore, the suitability of this method resides in the basis that the opinions, experiences, and choices of participants were disclosed to satisfy the study objectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather primary data on community perceptions of tourism impacts.

Population of the study

The targeted population consists of community members, community leaders and tourism stakeholders. Tourism stakeholders include service providers such as tour guides, homestay owners and handcrafters. The population was selected from Tsatsane community members.

Sample and sampling technique

This study utilised a purposive sampling technique and participant were selected using appropriate selection criteria suitable for the nature, context and objective of the study. with relevant characteristics for this study. The objective of the study is

to understand community perception of tourism development in rural community and how those perception aligned with and/ or stimulate interest in tourism activities, development project and economic growth. As argued by Robison (2014), purposive sampling aims to select participants for the precise reason that they have knowledge of the subject matter, and that they are in the best position to answer the research questions. To this end, the following participant were selected: nineteen community members, two community leaders and nine tourism stakeholders.

Data collection

Data collection employed the use of data collection instrument designed in the format of semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended question were used for the interview. This method was found to be relevant because it deals with words and meanings as opposed to quantitative research which deals with numbers and statistics. In addition, scholarly articles were collected as secondary data. The interviews were conducted following pre-arranged meeting with participant. Cohen (2006:1) asserts that the utilisation of both pre-arranged interview and semi-structured questionnaire is appropriate when dealing with perception and useful for comparability purpose. Gill et al. (2008:291-295) contend that the most important issues is to ask the right question to the right respondents to achieve the right result. Hyman (2016) indicates that researcher to ask follow-up questions where there are misunderstandings. Using the interview guide, the questions were administered to all nineteen study participants.

Data analysis

This section presents a discussion of how qualitative data analysis was conducted to answer the research objectives. A thematic analysis of the findings was conducted, and similar themes were identified, grouped together into categories, and analysed. Word cloud was also used to export words from Atlas ti.8 to provide the reader with an overall sense of the text. Madelyn (2019:2) define coding as the method of give meaning to text and classifying qualitative data into categories of different categories and themes.

Demographics of participants

Demographic information of participant are presented as gender, age, and historical racial classification, length of stay and status of residency in Tsatsane and level of education level. In Tsatsane, most of the community members who take part in tourism are females. The homestay project in Tsatsane is operated by

women. It is important to engage the right policy to empower women in the tourism sector.

The finding reveals that out of nineteen respondents who participated in the study, eleven (57.9%) of them were women and only eight (42.1%) of them were males. The ages of the respondents ranged between 27 and 65 years. Out of nineteen respondents, eight (42.1%) of them were aged between 27-40 years, followed by six (32%) who were aged between 41-50 years, and 26% aged 51 and 69 years. The results also shows that all 19 (100%) respondents were Africans, there were no Whites, Indians, or Coloureds. The findings show that most of the respondents thirteen (68%) stayed in Tsatsane for more than 10 years while six respondents (32%) have been in Tsatsane for less than ten years.

According to the results, twelve respondents (63%) were born and reside in Tsatsane and seven (37%) respondents do not reside in Tsatsane village. The results also reveal that seven (36.8 of the nineteen respondents had secondary level education, four (21.0%) respondents had a certificate after secondary level and only four (21.0%) had tertiary education, three (15.8%) of the nineteen respondents had primary education and only one (5.3%) respondent had no education. Figure 1 below illustrates demographics of participants.

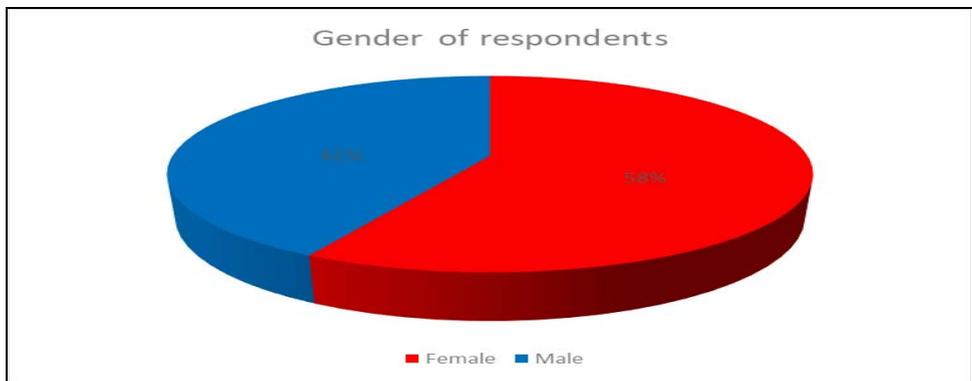


Figure 1: Gender of respondents

Age of Respondents

The ages of the respondents ranged between 27 and 65 years. Out of 19 respondents, 8 (42.1%) of them were aged between 27-40 years, followed by 6 (32%) who were aged between 41-50 years, and 26% were aged between 51 and 69

years. Robinson et al. (2019:4) agree that sociodemographic variables also appear to influence residents’ perceptions of tourism development.

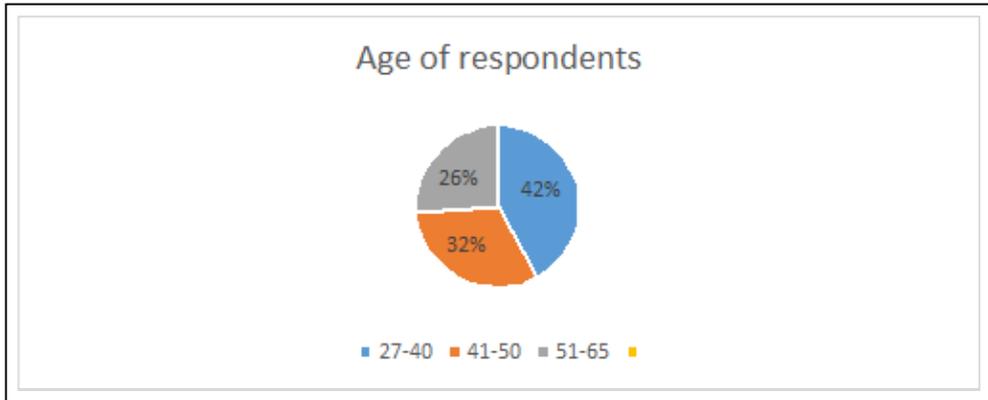


Figure 2: Age of respondents

Historical racial classification

The result shows that all 19 (100%) respondents were Africans, and there were no Whites, Indians or Coloureds. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty and is also unique because it accommodates three distinct ethnic groups—Xhosas, Basotho and Baphuthi.

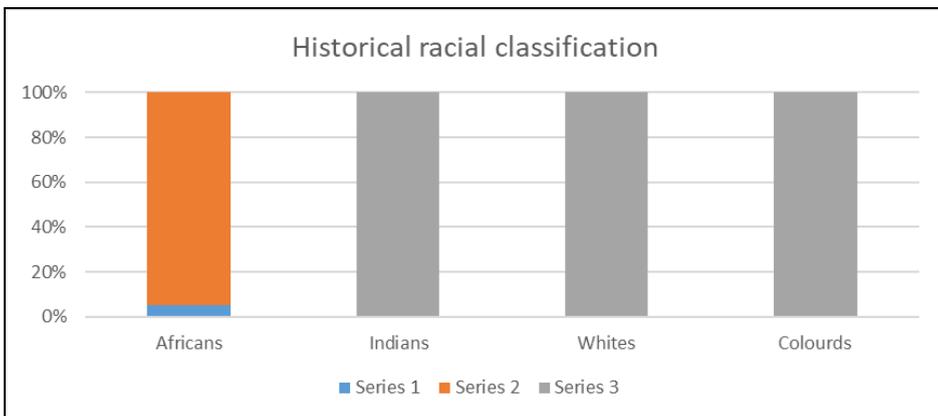


Figure 3: Historical racial classification

Length of stay in Tsatsane

The findings show that most of the respondents (13; 68%) stayed in Tsatsane for more than 10 years while 6 respondents (32%) have been in Tsatsane for less than 10 years. Ganoon et al. (2020:151) state that community attachment to the area influences the length of stay.

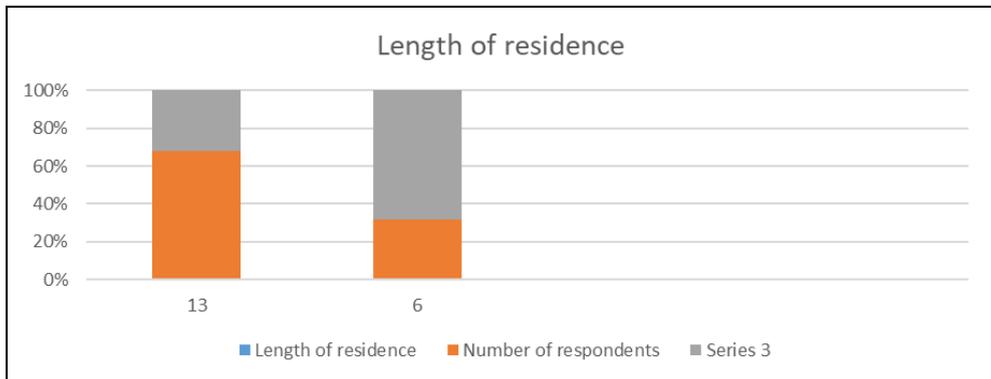


Figure 4: Length of residence

Type of residency in Tsatsane

According to the results, 12 respondents (63%) were born in and reside in Tsatsane while 7 (37%) respondents were born but do not reside in Tsatsane village. However, the 7 respondents who do not reside in Tsatsane were still interviewed because the researcher believed that they are also affected by the impacts of tourism development in their area. Ganoon et al. (2020:151) assert that community attachment to the host destination can influence the type of residency.

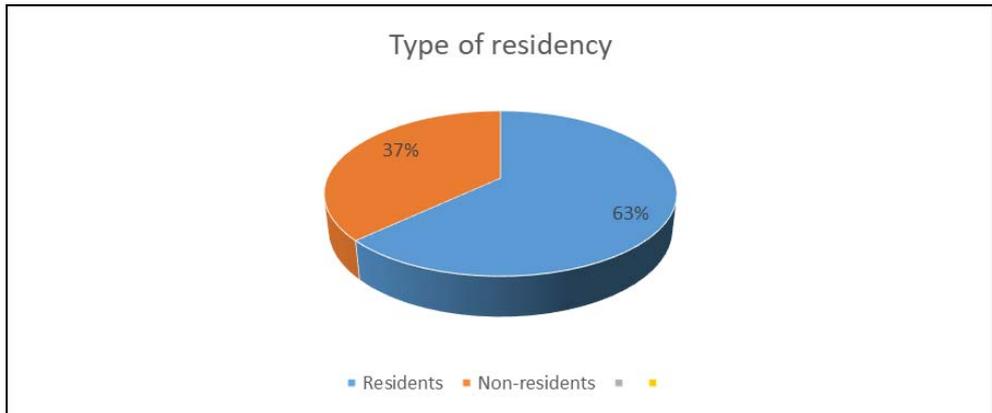


Figure 5: Type of residency

Education level of respondents

The results reveal that 7 (36.8%) of the 19 respondents had secondary level education, 4 (21.0%) respondents had a certificate after secondary level and only 4 (21.0%) had tertiary education. Of the 19 respondents, 3 (15.8%) had primary education and only 1 (5.3%) respondent had no education. Programmes on tourism implementation depend on the community's support for tourism which also depends on a certain level of education (Ejiofor et al., 2012:34).

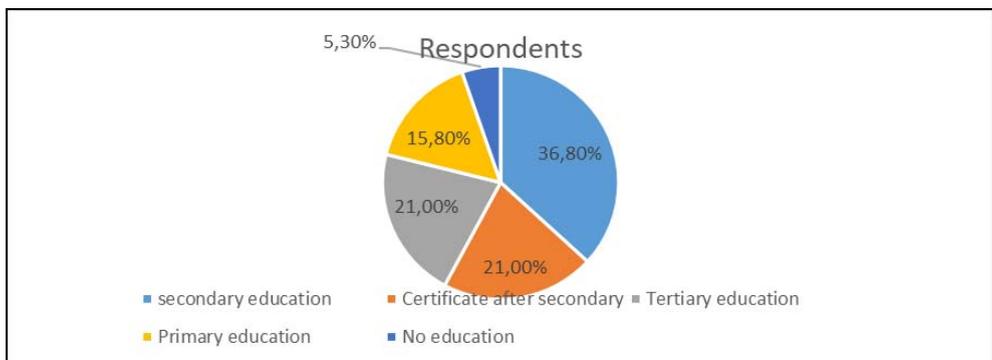


Figure 6: Education level of respondents

The participants' profiles above show that younger people are more interested in tourism development projects than older people and people with education are also more involved in tourism development than those who are without education. This aligns with Robinson et al. (2019:4) who state that socio-demographic variables also appear to influence residents' perceptions of tourism development.

Section B: Perceptions of community development projects

Community understanding of tourism development projects

One of the objectives of this study was to assess the community's understanding of tourism development in Tsatsane. Toerien (2020:1) shares the same view that the understanding of tourism development relative to community perception is necessary for monitoring government programmes, implementation, and the extent to which development programmes, respond to the national strategic development plan of improved economic growth as a vehicle to improve rural the economy, create jobs, reduce poverty, and address the concern of social cohesion. The study finds that tourism is indeed an engine of economy and poverty reduction for the livelihoods of rural communities. This was also highlighted by Makochekwana (2013:1).

Most respondents indicated that they understand that tourism development is an answer to poverty reduction, and it brings economic empowerment to their community. According to one of the respondents, tourism development projects are initiatives that are designed to improve the livelihoods of communities: these could be done in many ways, through establishments of homestay facilities for tourists to stay during their visit, horse riding whereby tourists pay a certain fee, tour guiding and other services that can generate their income.

The respondents also mentioned that tourism development projects also play a vital role in the provision of employment. According to the findings of the study, tourism is one of the sectors that has a high employment rate. Tourism was identified as an important sector in the country that can meet the government objectives relating to poverty alleviation and generating substantial employment for low and semi-skilled labour (NSDP, 2019). Respondent 1 and respondent 4 affirm that

Tourism is a business that empowers communities, reduces poverty, and creates employment. Tourism will reduce poverty and creates employment in our community.

Respondents 1 and 14 added:

Tourism development projects improve the economy of communities by providing employment". Respondent 8 also agree that tourism development is a business that intends to answer the needs of the community by creation of employment.

Respondents 19 and 5 agree that tourism development projects bring benefits in many ways, communities are exposed to new things that they didn't even know they existed, and it creates job opportunities and through tourism development projects communities get exposed to new things that come with employment opportunities.

We can benefit from tourism development in many ways, tourism exposes us to new things that we didn't even know that they exist. Tourism also creates employment (Respondents 19 and 5)

Moreover, respondent 7 who resides in a nearby village to Tsatsane, called Thupeng, stated that he lacks knowledge of tourism development because tourists only visit the nearest villages but with the little information he has, tourism projects benefit the community through employment generation.

I don't know much about tourism because every time when tourists visit Tsatsane they just lodge at Ha Liphaphang and not the other areas of Tsatsane. Little that I know about tourism development is that it is good and beneficial and can create employment for the community (Respondent 7)

Respondent 1 emphasized that tourism is a business and communities need to take part in tourism development projects. It was also mentioned by respondent 10 that for tourism to flourish, there should be joint community efforts. Respondent 13 also stated that:

Tourism development projects are for the communities where attractions are available, and they become consumable, and these initiatives will be driven by the community.

Respondent 15 elaborated on this, "Tourism development projects are initiatives designed to improve the livelihoods of communities (economic and social) through tourism". Respondent 17 affirmed that:

Tourism development projects are initiatives intended to bring economic benefits to the local communities through tourism.

Community development projects empower communities in many ways, through establishment of tourism facilities such as homestays, vulture restaurants and activities such as horse riding, waterfalls, and visits to historical caves.

Protection of natural resources which is also part of tourism products is one of the vital roles played by the tourism sector. According to Polukhina et al. (2021:7), tourism development has increased in rural areas because of the high demand for natural scenery and peaceful countryside to escape from industrialization and urbanization. Manwa (2015:6667-6668) also acknowledged that for tourism to sustain, local communities must benefit directly from tourism by enabling them to conserve and protect tourism resources. Since Tsatsane is one of the areas that are rich with natural resources such as rock/bushmen paintings and historical caves, some respondents pointed out the importance of the protection of natural resources. Respondent 16 mentioned that

Tourism development can assist us in protecting the natural resources in our area: those natural resources are wetlands and our lives as the community of Tsatsane can change if we ensure protection of natural resources in Tsatsane for a better growth of tourism in Tsatsane.

Respondent 11 added that:

Through tourism development we can benefit from natural resources such as medicinal plants in our area if we as a community protect them.

Respondent 3 expressed that:

There is a need for training on tourism development to communities for a better understanding of tourism because I believe that we the communities of Tsatsane can benefit from tourism development project.

This study guided by the following Research objective:

- To assess community perceptions of impacts of tourism development in Tsatsane.

Discussion of finding

One of the objectives of this study was to assess community perceptions of impacts of tourism development in Tsatsane. (Toerien, 2020:1) allude that the understanding of tourism development relative to community perception is necessary for monitoring government programmes, implementation, and the extent to which development programmes, respond to the national strategic development plan of improved economic growth as a vehicle to improve rural the economy, create jobs, reduce poverty, and address the concern of social cohesion. The study finds that tourism is indeed an engine of economy and poverty reduction for the livelihoods of rural communities. This was also highlighted in the study of Makochekwana (2013:1).

Most respondents indicated that they understand that tourism development is an answer to poverty reduction, and it brings economic empowerment to their community. According to one of the respondents, tourism development projects are initiatives that are designed to improve the livelihoods of communities: these could be done in many ways, through establishments of home-stay facilities for tourists to stay during their visit, horse riding whereby tourists pay a certain fee, tour guiding and other services that can generate their income.

The respondents also mentioned that tourism development projects also play a vital role in the provision of employment. According to the findings of the study, tourism is one of the sectors that has a high employment rate. Tourism was identified as an important sector in the country that can meet the government objectives relating to poverty alleviation and generating substantial employment for low and semi-skilled labour (NSDP, 2019).

Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of the study is to investigate community perceptions of tourism development impacts in rural areas in Tsatsane. This section provides the final and overall conclusion, based on the aim of the study.

Conclusions on objective 1

The objective to assess community perceptions of tourism impacts was achieved, the results show positive impacts because majority of respondents indicated that tourism development projects reduce poverty, bring economic empowerment, create employment opportunities, and promote the protection of tourism and natural resources as well as environmental conservation. This indicates that the Tsatsane community supports tourism development projects. To support the achievement of this objective, information under the following aspects was considered.

Community participation

Community participation is one of the keys to community support for tourism development, the results show that the community of Tsatsane is participating in different tourism projects but mostly they participate in tour guiding and homestay establishments. The conclusion is that community of Tsatsane is more focused on operating homestay facilities and tour guiding than other projects.

Information dissemination

The results indicate that the spread of information about tourism development has contributed positively to the community of Tsatsane, the findings of the study have shown that there are platforms that the chief, Ministry of Tourism and tourism associations use to gather and share information. This concludes that the community of Tsatsane is well-informed, understands, and is knowledgeable about tourism development projects. Information dissemination is vital for communities to get updates on what is happening in the industry so that they can identify opportunities.

Recommendations

Tourism development project creates business opportunity with potential for negative environmental and social consequences. However, the trade-off for rural community is the business opportunity creates job and increase potential of livelihood for members of the community. This paper recommend that the need to identify and prioritise tourism development project that empower community members economically so that social cohesion of community is achieved. Other important aspects of tourism development project that requires immediate attention is the need for accommodation facilities that should be extended to include the homestay facilities, other types of accommodation establishments such as hotels, guesthouse, bed and breakfast are also in limited supply. While demand for all category of accommodation has grown, supply has not. The need develop and deploy development policy framework become imperative and it is recommended.

Other recommendation includes medical tourism facility like hospital to attract and accommodate medical tourism locally, from the region and beyond. Tsatsane is not well marketed which makes it difficult for people to know about it, therefore there is a need for marketing. Another recommendation is for the government, through relevant ministries, to take part in the development and growth of the tourism sector in Tsatsane.

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