

ABILITY TO DO FOR SELF. A RURAL COMMUNITY'S VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Tshepiso Jonathan SETOKOE*

Walter Sisulu University, Department of Tourism and Hospitality
Management, Butterworth, South Africa, e-mail: tsetokoe@wsu.ac.za

Takalani RAMUKUMBA

Walter Sisulu University, Department of Tourism and Hospitality
Management, Butterworth, South Africa, e-mail: tramukumba@wsu.ac.za

Citation: Setokoe, T.J., & Ramukumba, T. (2022). ABILITY TO DO FOR SELF. A RURAL COMMUNITY'S VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 41(2), 583–588. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.41232-866>

Abstract: This article investigates the importance of capacity building aimed at enhancing community participation in the development of tourism in rural areas. The article was undertaken through the employment of a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interview, which were then analysed using NVivo system, version 11, thereby producing a comprehensive observation report that allowed for presentation and discussion of the findings. The article found a common narrative indicating a chronic lack of capacity within the village to develop tourism that can sustainably support the livelihood of members of the community.

Key words: community-based tourism; development; capacity building; poverty alleviation; community development

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INTRODUCTION

Rural economies have in recent times seen a drastic decline in economic activities, resulting in high levels of unemployment and poverty in rural areas, especially in the developing world (Binns and Nel, 2002). The circumstances indicated above have often been attributed to a variety of factors that include, but not limited to poor governance, unstable development, climate change and vulnerability of the natural environment to disasters (Ribot, 2013). Given all the above challenges, Nyaupane et al. (2006) indicate the credence of decisions often made by authorities to look to tourism as a possible solution for such problems. This is not without detraction as the appropriateness and effectiveness of tourism to deliver on what has been taken away by the challenges stated above is dependent on a range of economic, political and socio-cultural considerations (Rosalina et al., 2021). Such factors bring to the fore a common narrative amongst scholars (Aref, 2011; Goodman et al., 1998; Moscardo, 2008) acknowledging community capacity building to be a key component of tourism planning and development in rural settings, as it allows for endogenous participation in decisions relating to the management of tourism resources for the benefit of the local community. This approach is said to assume the building of capacity within the local community will enable the community's sense of ownership of development, thereby allowing for a self-mobilisation kind of participation which is often aimed at the empowerment of the citizenry to organise themselves and resolve their priorities aligned with daily life, which ultimately leads to greater sustainability (Rosalina et al., 2021).

Conceptualizing community capacity for tourism development

Defining capacity building has been a toil that has borne little fruit in literary circles. This has seen many tools being employed in an attempt to explore the role of community capacity building in the development process. The toils undertaken to evaluate the concept of community capacity has seen many scholars suggest various requisites that include the acquisition of knowledge and information, skills, education and training (Moscardo, 2008; Cole, 2006; Mabudafhasi, 2002). This further extends to the community's ability to access requisite resources that enable civic engagement, participation and involvement and local support (Monypenny, 2008; Moscardo, 2008; Hough, 2006; Skinner, 2006; Malik and Wagle, 2002). In addition to the attempts made above in relation to community capacity, the concept of capacity within the tourism development sphere goes far beyond skills and knowledge of individuals and the collective, but include elements external to the immediate community such as infrastructure and facilities, positive partnerships and collaborative arrangements between NGOs, the private sector (e.g., travel trade organizations), government agencies and local people and local awareness of tourism (Koster, 2008; Williams and O'Neil, 2007).

Capacity building for community participation in the implementation of tourism development initiatives

The main objective of tourism development in remote and rural areas has been to create modernity that will allow for

* Corresponding author

the creation of opportunity and facilities for income generations for the local communities (Reza-Maleki et al., 2014). Evidence of declining rural economies have seen considerable decline in income levels and employment leading to authorities placing emphasis on the development and promotion of tourism aimed at the revival of the socio-economic health of rural areas (Sharpley, 2002). However, efforts placed in such endeavours have seen other authors raise a voice of concern about the slow realisation benefits often produced by tourism, most of which are often accruable to certain groups within the community (Moscardo, 2014; Sharpley, 2002). This is further compounded by the dependence of tourism on exogenous support over considerable periods together with limitations of the local community in terms of knowledge, skills and resources require for meaningful participation in tourism development, thereby robbing them of empowerment and even constrains the earning potential of the local citizenry from tourism ventures (Moscardo, 2014).

A negative outlook provided above relating tourism's ability to aid development in rural areas can have ominous ramifications for communities. However, this less than impressive outlook can be ratified through considerable endeavours to build capacity among members of the local communities. This will ensure effective, efficient and meaningful participation of local community members in tourism development that will be sustainable. Edwards (2015) denotes the building of capacity within a community to be a critical mechanism for the promoting and supporting development at community level. Such views are further echoed by Aref et al., (2010) who indicate the process to be the undertaking of initiatives that intend to provide members of the community with knowledge and skills that will empower them in making participation in decision making that will see the development of tourism not only bear fruits of an economic, but social and environmental nature, with minimal negative effects to the host destination and its people. The capacity of a community within the development sphere can be described as a resource often needed for effective implementation of community development initiative which should enable seamless functioning of the said community (Edwards, 2015). Such a functionality can only be attained through the community's acquisition of requisite skills and know-how that will enable them to act together, provide indigenous resources and ultimately advance the process of development (Labonte and Laverack, 2001; Edwards, 2015). The above mentioned requisites are noted in line with the study done by Sithole et al. (2018) who found that "community participation is an essential condition for tourism development, which can lead to the creation of social capital, which in turn can result in effective community development".

The proper implementation of community capacity development interventions requires an eloquent understanding of what constitutes a community. Aref et al. (2010) define a community as "a group of people sharing a geographic location, common interests, concerns, culture, values and working together to achieve a common goal". The authors further describe a community to be a critical component of development aimed at preparing the area for the development of tourism. In addition, Sithole et al. (2018) note the term 'community' to be very elusive without downplaying the role played by local communities in the development of tourism by crediting them with the ability to create an environment conducive for tourism activity and more so the community also being part of the tourism product itself. Zamani-Farahani and Musa (2012); Spencer and Nsiah (2013) further echo Sithole et al. (2018) sentiments in emphasising the dependence of tourist satisfaction, expenditure levels, and repeat visits on the hospitality of the local community. This makes it pivotal for communities to co-operate in order to ensure a successful endeavour in the development of sustainable tourism in rural areas, thereby ensuring that tourism benefits are accrued by the citizenry (Stylidis et al., 2014).

Nonga and Haruna (2015) highlight the importance of ensuring that the development of tourism in rural areas is resident-responsive by placing local communities at the core of the decision-making process of any proposed tourism development in the area. This will ensure active participation of community members in tourism development initiatives undertaken within the area, thereby safeguarding the endogenous management and control of the development as well as ensuring maximum benefit and profit generation from tourism. Community involvement undertakings of this nature more often than not require the building of capacity that encompass areas of strengthening of human resources, organisational and individual capacity, the development of appropriate facilities and training in tourism, and the assessment of tourism impacts (Aref, 2011). This requires a proper interrogation of capacity building intended at reaching an understanding of the concept at different levels [the individual level, the organisational level and the community level] (Aref et al., 2010; Sithole et al., 2018). Such an understanding is emphasised through a focus on (1) enhancing individuals' abilities to set and achieve objectives through skills augmentation; (2) influencing an organisation's performance through leadership, structure, resource mobilisation, physical and intellectual resources, organisational strategy, management, business approaches, and organisational linkages such as networks and partnerships and organisational systems; and (3) encouraging, promoting and developing informal and formal linkages between organisations and individuals and organisations within the community, infrastructure within the community, networks and resources from external support to the community and social capital developments which include networks, relationships between people in a community, and levels of trust and co-operation existing within a community (Aref et al., 2010; Pat-Mbano and Ezirim (2015). The abovementioned levels of capacity building within communities are noted to be important as they enable meaningful participation of community members in tourism development initiatives, which is something that has the ability to prevent strain that can be created by developmental undertakings that are contrary to aspirations, values, needs and capabilities of the host community (Nonga and Haruna, 2015). Participation by local communities that is both active and meaningful allows for true involvement in the decision-making process and enhances resource (human, organisational and infrastructural) with the sole intention of affording the citizenry an opportunity to improve their own lives (Khosvari et al., 2015; Sithole et al., 2018). It is therefore safe to suggest that the possession of essential skills and requisite resources within a locality can translate to positive impacts on the local community (Sithole et al., 2018). The building of capacity within communities, endeavouring to enable the active and meaningful participation in the development of tourism, then becomes a noble undertaking.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was undertaken in a tourism-dependent village of Nqileni in the Xhora Administrative Area of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Nqileni village houses Bulungula Lodge, a tourism enterprise wholly owned and managed by the community, which makes it pivotal to investigate the importance of capacity building within the tourism sphere for the purpose of sustainable development within the area. Given the dynamics associated with the chosen study area in relation to its low levels of high school completions (10.2%) in adults over 20 years and only 5.1% success in higher education (Bulungula Incubator, 2014), the study found it necessary to employ a qualitative research approach as it allows for respondents to answer questions in an interview setting, thereby enabling them to articulate their view on the matter under investigation. This allowed for an in-depth exploratory examination of the importance of capacity building in the development of rural areas through tourism. This saw the study employ a non-probability purposive sampling technique with the use of a semi-structured interview schedule to solicit the requisite empirical data needed. The employment of a non-probability purposive sampling allowed for the researchers to target respondents that will bring value to objective of the study. This was evident in the selections of respondents that ensured a balance that included voices ranging from community leaders to active part-takers in tourism and general members of the community. As indicated in the paragraph above, the area has a low level of educational attainment among its adult population. This made it necessary for the data to be collected in the language of the local community (isiXhosa). The data then underwent transcription and translation into English for purposes of analysis. This was followed by an in-depth analysis using NVivo software version 11 that produced a comprehensive observation report that enabled the study to presents findings that aided in a discussion that will contribute to the body of knowledge within the community capacity building arena.

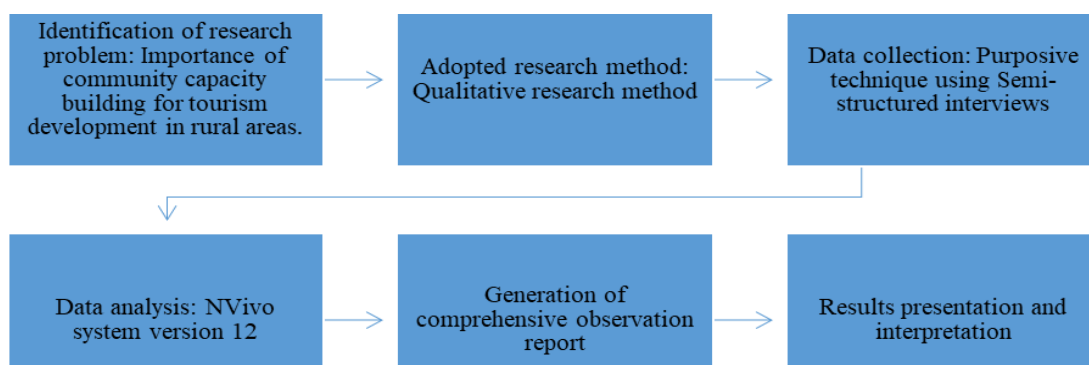


Figure 1. Research method flowchart

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collection and analysis of empirical data brings the study to a point of discussing the findings. The analysis of the data then produced themes that are indicative of the views of the Nqileni village community in relation to the importance of capacity building in sustainable tourism development. The themes generated from the narratives accrued from interviews conducted include the views of the community on the importance of capacity building, the role of the community leadership in capacity building, skills development and empowerment of residents, and shortcomings in building capacity aimed at developing the community.

Importance of capacity building

The importance of capacity building is acknowledged by residents to be central to the development, promotion and sustainability of tourism in the area. This is evident in the extensive narrative that indicate the need for initiatives that enable skills development, which include training and knowledge creation. The building of such capacity is seen to be a driving force that can lead to the development of a sustainable tourism and other development initiatives within the locale. In addition, the respondents further emphasised the importance of making available information that relate to development projects and initiatives undertaken within the area as this empowers members of the community, demystifies developments happening in their backyard, and ultimately enhance the community standard of living. This is given credence by proclamations of respondents that follow:

“It is important for people to be equipped with the right skills so that they can have a better life.”

“The community must be informed with each and everything concerning the village.”

“I think it is important because most of the community members do not have enough knowledge about development.”

“One thing I think is important is that someone has expertise in tourism and development projects should come and teach us more about them, so that we may be able to follow the trend.”

The findings presented above are congruent with scholarly literature on the importance of capacity building in relation to development. The survival, continuation and sustainability of a society is highly dependent on its ability to adapt, which requires the re-examination of core values together with their expression through mechanisms including social institutions, processes and individual actions (Budeanu et al., 2016). This requires that community members procure skills and knowledge to help them think and act in ways that will enable them to harness opportunities brought by development initiatives in the area (Aref et al., 2010). This has seen authorities in rural areas put emphasis on the development of skills in sectors such as tourism, with the aim of reviving the socio-economic health of rural areas, and in the process escalate

prosperity within the community (Sharples, 2002; Nygaard, 2009: 163; Sango, 2014). Such endeavours can be exemplified by efforts made by the South African government's development of a human resource development strategy aimed at building and improving the skills base for the tourism sector (South Africa. NTSS, 2011: 29-30).

Role of the community leadership in capacity building

The findings of the study present divergent views relating to the contribution of the community leadership regarding the building of capacity that will enable meaningful participation in development initiative undertaken within the village. Sections of the community held a view that the leadership did not do enough in this regard, due to factors such as resources available to the leaders, capacity of the leaders themselves, and leaders overextending themselves to provide for the community members - simply due to the multitude of needs that the community has. In addition, respondents narrated further issues relating to community leaders being selective (unfairly so) on the type of matters that warrant attention, which often leaves community members frustrated and development initiatives that are not seen to be primary left hanging without any prospect of fulfilment. These concerns are accentuated by the narratives that follow:

"I would say the leaders are not doing enough to develop this place. For example, in some places, the leaders have brought about developments but just not in our community. There are services we are unfortunately not have access to, yet every time when there are elections, we vote but still do not see any changes. We are not able to access some things, yet there are leaders that represent us."

"Leaders do not have enough resources to equip community members, so that they can do things for themselves."

"So, I don't think there's capacitating in terms of training. So that is not happening from the community leadership side because they themselves are not equipped with the requisite skills."

"I would say they don't, our leaders are involved in many things and come short when it comes to tourism related matters. The leaders are mostly involved in services from the government, i.e. water and electricity."

However, another section of the respondents felt that the community leadership is doing enough to empower and capacitate the community to meaningfully participate in development initiatives. This is made palpable through training and workshops organised for community member to attain skills in areas such as hospitality, bookkeeping and other managerial functions needed in running businesses, especially in tourism. These are further complemented with the placing of community member in committees tasked with the planning, implementation and management of development initiatives, which allows them to engage skilled individuals (mainly external), while gaining skills and experience in the process. This is given credence by the following proclamations:

"Workshops are running where skills are taught, especially in tourism and hospitality and entrepreneurship."

"Some of the ladies in the village were trained to do massages, while other people were taught business skills."

"Uh...so certainly there is space for communities to participate on health committees, educational committees, high school committee. We've got parent committees at all the ECD centres, the large committee. So those are opportunities to develop skills and capacity and get exposure to what it takes to make things run."

The above discussion highlights both the shortcomings and capabilities of the community leadership in terms of capacity building for participation in development that is aimed to be sustainable. The building of capacity in a community for sustainable development requires a leadership that will ensure that community participants procure skills and knowledge to help them think and act in new ways (Aref et al., 2010). In addition, this allows for the development of skills and abilities that empower the local community to engage in decision-making processes and take actions appropriate for themselves as far as tourism development is concerned (Aref et al., 2010). This is further seen to be an important source in assisting tourism and community development (Aref et al., 2010), thereby increasing local leadership capabilities and entrepreneurship (Moscardo, 2008).

Skills development and empowerment of residents

Development of any nature requires that the local community be capacitated with requisite skills and knowledge that will enable them to meaningfully participate in development initiatives. The findings of the study revealed a common chronicle indication the vision on ways in which the community intend to overcome challenges faced by the citizenry in relation to the capacity to meaningfully participate in development initiatives within the locale. Such a vision includes the training and skilling of community members in areas such as marketing, finance, administration, information sharing, and other facets of business and entrepreneurship. In addition, it has been indicated by respondents that a skilled community can be able to maintain the appeal and attractiveness of the area, which can translate in tourism being sustainable for future generations. This was further elucidated by the following respondents' narrations:

"Community member needed to be trained in areas which they lacked or were weak in."

"Keeping the areas clean and tidy would be appealing to any tourist and they would then feel the need to stay and indulge more into what the area has to offer."

"Community members need to be encouraged to participate in development. They need to know what the rewards would be to the community for the developments as this would keep them motivated and empowered."

"There must be mutual understanding between leadership and community members on all aspects of the tourism and development projects as this will empower the community, thus allowing for meaningful participation."

"Community members are encouraged to work together during any tourism and development projects. This also ensures the protection of the entire community as well as the tourists that visit the village."

"Empowerment is key to meaningful community participation. This entails trainings, skills, education and information about the development."

The narrative disseminated by the respondents is consistent with promulgations of the National Tourism Sector Strategy [NTSS] (2011) indicating limitations in relation rural communities' levels of awareness of the tourism industry and capacity devoid communities of accruable benefits due to them, which often leads to external players taking advantage the natural and cultural resource without the host community receiving any reaping the fruits of their land. Such negative sentiments are often a result of poor and negligible involvement of local communities and previously neglected groups in the tourism and other economic activities, coupled with the absence of adequate education, training and awareness opportunities (South Africa, DEAT, 1996: 11-14). Enhancing the skills and knowledge of the community can result in building the capacity that will enable meaningful participation in tourism development, thereby minimising constraints that can limit the community's ability to control their participation in projects aimed for their development (Cole, 2006: 39; Moscardo, 2008: 67; Aref et al., 2010).

Shortcomings in capacity and skills status of the community aimed at developing the community

Assertions were made of chronic shortcomings in relation to the local capacity to meaningfully participate in development initiatives. This has been primarily attributed to the low levels of literacy and lack of skills development. Additionally, this is not limited to literary and physical skills, but further extends to awareness, exposure and understanding of the prerequisite abilities needed for sustainable development. This is made evident in a survey previously undertaken to establish the needs of the community, with most people indicating that they wanted television sets, irrespective of a spate of deaths suffered due to a lack of access to clean water, showing the level of awareness of members of the community in relation to needs, which can hinder the success of a sustainably developed Nqileni village. This has resulted in the village being reliant on external skills for the development of the area to be realized. These are further elucidated by the following respondents' narrations:

"No, because of the lack of exposure to...I mean I can give you one example. When the Bulungula incubator first opened and they did a survey in the community about community needs, most community members said they wanted a TV. And this was in a time where one in nine women had lost three or more children; and one in three women had lost one child. So, from a development perspective one thinks water is your most important need that needs to be addressed. But the community was unaware of the fact that they were entitled to free, clean water. The government was supposed to provide free clean water. And that the child deaths were related to the fact that they were not accessing free clean water. So sometimes it does connect with the education and what you're entitled to leads to communities not always making the best decisions for themselves or how to spend money or allocating what their needs are so that they can make more prosperous decisions later."

"As I have mentioned earlier that some of them are illiterate and as such are not able to speak English, however, they show their talents to the tourists. Such talents include traditional dance."

"Like I said: skills and tourism, if you've never experienced tourism how do you give the tourism service that people are looking for? How do you...if your business is going so well, how do you evaluate what to invest in to make it go well? Like what are the gaps? What would make it successful? What are tourists looking for? What is necessary to support them to come? I think that kind of savviness comes with experiencing tourism and sometimes having the money to experience tourism."

The shortcomings highlighted above agree with a key constraint of the development of tourism identified in the White Paper on Development and Promotion of Tourism, indicating the greatest deficiency of tourism development in South Africa as being the absence of adequate education, training and awareness opportunities (South Africa, DEAT, 1996: 13). Such deficiencies amongst locals often lead to an inability to fully exploit opportunities and benefits that can be brought by development initiatives such as tourism to an area (Moscardo, 2008; Saufi et al., 2014), which gives credence to rhetoric of the importance of education and training as fundamental pillars of development (South Africa, DEAT, 1996: 13).

CONCLUSION

This article noted that tourism development in remote and rural areas is ideal for the enablement of modernity that allows for the creation of opportunity and facilities that will bring positive economic, social and environmental impacts to the area and its communities. However, the creation and exploitation of opportunities alluded to above require that members of the community be capacitated to take advantage of prospects that development initiatives such as tourism present. This further presents the community with an ability to make real the adage of 'teaching a man to fish', which places ability and skills in the hands of members of the community. This is seen in a narrative presented by respondents indicating the importance of capacity building for purposes of development initiatives that have the potential to accrue benefits for the area. The narrative further postulated the importance of leadership in the building of capacity, empowerment of residents and shortcoming in the building of capacity aimed at ensuring the community's ability to meaningfully participate in development initiatives intended to bring advancement to the area.

Finally, the study makes no claim to be authoritative on the building of capacity for the development of tourism in rural areas. The study concludes to recommend that a community's ability to meaningfully participate in their own development requires a concerted effort on the part of all stakeholders to the build capacity to ensure the sustainable development of tourism in the area. This is deduced from the empirical evidence solicited through the collection of data that suggest that the sustainability of tourism development hinges greatly on the community's ability to do for themselves as opposed to being reliant on exogenous forces to do for them.

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