



Awareness and education about sustainable tourism in Katse and Mohale tourism development areas in Lesotho

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the stakeholder's perceptions on community's awareness and knowledge about tourism. Education and training have emerged as crucial aspects of successful indigenous tourism operation. The strategic plan for tourism development in Lesotho (2007) a country totally enclosed within South Africa, indicates a concerted awareness/training drive to improve tourism knowledge and capacity among the various communities. The study was undertaken in villages close to Ts'ehlanyane, Liphofung and Bokong Nature Reserves in Lesotho. The area is called the Katse and Mohale tourism development area. The study found that there were no significant differences in knowledge of tourism of various community leaders. Most communities are fairly knowledgeable about tourism and its impacts. The researcher recommend that the Ministry of Tourism and Environment should provide on-going educational programmes and training, in order for rural communities to understand tourism even better going forward.

Keywords: knowledge, awareness, education, training, sustainable tourism, Lesotho

Introduction

The government of Lesotho acknowledges tourism will become one of the key economic sectors, contributing effectively to the GDP growth, biggest national employer and revenue earner by the year 2020. National Tourism Policy (2000:4) indicate that sustainable tourism development is the focus of the country's tourism development and planning contributing to growth and well-being of the people of Lesotho. It also says that through the development of a dynamic, competitive and customer-driven industry that capitalises on its rich cultural heritage and natural environment and the beauty of Lesotho, the local people will become the prime beneficiaries of tourism development.

At the forefront on sustainable tourism are the local communities. These are the custodians of cultural and other tourism resources that make Lesotho a tourism destination. Lesotho has escaped mass tourism and its negative impacts. This is because it is only recently in 2000 that the Lesotho government started putting a lot of emphasis on tourism development (NTP, 2000). This gives the country a unique opportunity to embark on a programme of sustainable and responsible tourism which is sorely needed. This is tourism that respects the culture and values of the Basotho people and a tourism that conserves the environment. It is a tourism where the Basotho, particularly those living in rural communities become partners in the processes followed and where they truly benefit from the development of the tourism industry (NTP, 2000:5).



The government vision is indeed in line with sustainable tourism principles which focus on sustainability of resources and sustainability of livelihoods of communities living with tourism resources. In spite of the contested nature and narrow focus in practice, the political argumentation and justification of sustainable tourism are often derived implicitly from the idea and rhetoric of sustainable development as a holistic, future-oriented and socially equal global-scale process (Saarinen, 2006:1125).

Research problem

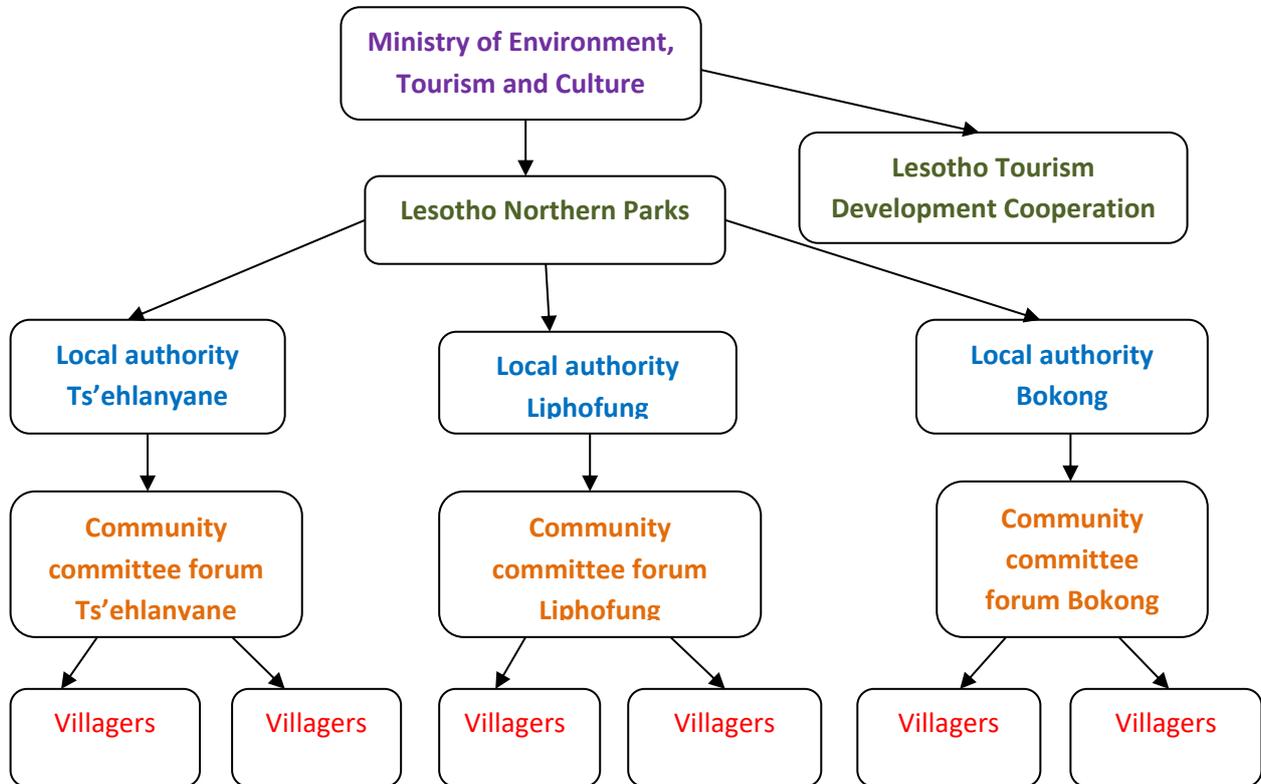
Lesotho has identified tourism development zones. The Management plan of Katse and Mochale Priority Areas (2006:88) indicate that intense community awareness programme of sustainable tourism and the environment have been undertaken to educate local communities in these areas. It is further stated that the general public would be updated about tourism growth and development in their area and that communities would also receive 10% of any money generated from park fees adjacent to communities (Bokong Nature Reserve Management Plan 1998; Ts'ehlanyane Nature Management Reserve Plan 1998; Liphofung Nature Reserve Management Plan 2002 by LHDA). Listed among the activities are explanations to the public about proposed new tourism developments, tourism contributions to the country's wellbeing. This was to solicit communities' support for the development of both domestic and international tourism (Sethi, 2005:245). It is through tourism awareness and community knowledge about tourism that the environmental sustainability objectives can be achieved.

The environmental objectives for the tourism industry in Lesotho are to develop tourism in a sustainable manner, to make the tourism industry in Lesotho a leader in responsible environmental practices, to require the conduct of environmental impact assessments for all tourism projects, to evaluate and consider the tourism impacts of proposed project development and contribute to the development of the coordinated countrywide environmental strategy (NTP, 2000:15). The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), under the Bokong Nature Reserve Conservation Development of Management Plan (BNRCDMP) (1998:82), states that the principles underlying the environmental awareness programme for neighbours are promotion of the values of and need for protection area and improvement of understanding of environmental issues and the need for conservation of natural and cultural environment.

The Government of Lesotho is committed to supporting a widely shared and sustained economic development programme. The National Tourism Policy (NTP) (2000:13), states that the objectives for tourism development in the Kingdom of Lesotho include among other things poverty alleviation, employment creation and economic growth. In addition, it emphasises that tourism activities should be conducted in harmony, to provide appropriate education, training and awareness.

The Lesotho government has also recently embarked on a tourist awareness drive to educate international and domestic tourists about the local cultures and how to behave when they interact with the local people (NTP, 2000:13). The Lesotho government has as a result set up a coordinating mechanism to facilitate the process at both national level and local levels (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Government tourism structure for awareness and education campaign



According to the Lesotho Tourism Plan (2007), a tourism awareness and training campaign was launched in 2000. However, there is no record that could be traced of a follow-up study to determine the effectiveness of the campaigns. The study was aimed at bridging this gap by soliciting the views of both government officials and communities on the communities' knowledge and awareness of tourism together with environmental education. The study was therefore guided by the following objectives:

- to measure the communities' level of knowledge and awareness about tourism;
- to identify training and education programmes in place about tourism and the environment;
- if such programmes exist, what their impacts on local communities have been.

Literature review

Information and knowledge about tourism

In most developing countries, local people need to be sufficiently aware of and knowledgeable about tourism. Even that collected information about tourism may not have been disseminated to the citizens in ways that are comprehensible to them. Most residents are not well-informed regarding tourism development; therefore, low public involvement should be expected (Tosun, 1999:620). Butler and Hinch, (2007:132) acknowledge the role of cultural pride and access to information as motivators for indigenous people in tourism.



Community learning refers to the acquisition of knowledge and its relationship to building capacity in the community. Knowledge can come from many different sources including traditional knowledge, which is passed down from generation to generation or from more formal institutional models (Butler & Hinch, 2007:222). Knowledge and values are the cornerstones for decision making in tourism development in any country. However, the issue of local tourism awareness has not been studied widely in the community-based tourism, including in southern Africa (Saarinen, 2010:714).

Community-based tourism is often promoted as one way of alleviating poverty among poor rural communities by complementing their traditional livelihoods (Hawasaki, 2006). However, for communities to benefit from community-based tourism, local people need to be sufficiently aware and knowledgeable about tourism (Tosun 2000:621). There is a big communication gap between communities and decision-makers. This lack of communication does not only increase the knowledge gap between local communities and decision-makers but also accelerates isolation of the local community from the tourism development process (Butler & Hinch, 2007:132).

The knowledge gaps between centralized authorities and local communities make it difficult for a host community to participate in the tourism development process (Tosun, 1999:620). The implication of the above argument may be that greater awareness and interest among members of local communities could be achieved if meaningful and comprehensible information contained in reports and plans is disseminated (Butler & Hinch, 2007).

In a broader sense, the term 'local tourism awareness' refers to the level of local knowledge on tourists, tourism and its impacts (Saarinen, 2010:714). Community participation in tourism planning can also build on the store of knowledge, insights and capabilities of the different stakeholders, and the sharing of ideas among these stakeholders can result in a richer understanding of issues (Richards & Hall, 2002:27). Community members should be afforded opportunities to learn about tourism, its benefits, and its consequences (Timothy, 2005:164). In this way, they will be better prepared to make decisions and to be involved in preparing a local tourism strategy. Another key factor in achieving participatory planning is community 'readiness', readiness with respect to tourism knowledge, resources and commitment (Wisansing, 2000:52).

Tourism awareness campaigns

The public awareness programme in tourism explains characteristics of tourism, benefits brought by tourism, development perspectives and new projects, information about business and job opportunities as well as staff tourism programme (Doswell, 1997:288). For any local community, a public awareness programme answers four fundamental questions:

- What is there positive to say about tourism?
- About which issues should the local community be consulted?
- What help should be offered and to whom?
- Who are the tourists and what are they like (Doswell, 1997:289)?

Tourism awareness success

Tourism awareness is very important as it can increase the participation of the communities in tourism. Awareness can also change the community's perceptions about tourism. Therefore, tourism awareness and perceptions are the cornerstones of community participation in tourism. Community participation is considered necessary to obtain community



support and acceptance of tourism development projects and to ensure that the benefits relate to the local community needs (Cole, 2006:620). Tosun and Timothy (2003), further argue that the local community is more likely to know what will work and what will not in local conditions, and that community participation can add to the democratization process and has the potential to increase awareness and interest in local and regional issues. It is believed that tourism should benefit the local residents of the places that tourists visit and are attracted to (Saarinen, 2010:713).

Education and training about tourism

The education, training and development of employees at all levels within tourism, hospitality and leisure are vital in maintaining the industry's competitiveness in the international arena (Baum, 2006:202). The processes of learning to get the most effect must include the native population. Community members should be afforded opportunities to learn about tourism, its benefits, and its consequences. In this way, they will be better prepared to make decisions and to be involved in preparing a local tourism strategy (Timothy, 2005:164).

Education simply to improve the satisfaction gained from recreational experiences has ceased to be the only or even the dominant role of interpretation in protected areas and equivalent reserves (Wearing & Neil, 2009:107). The education offered comes in several forms, for example, guided tours with a local guide, native family visits, environmental programmes on how the area is working towards maintaining and preserving its natural resources and booklets sent out to the visitors prior to a visit, containing information on the area, its history, the culture of the area and codes of practice (Diamantis, 20004:302). By providing education about tourism that addresses critically the broader context of tourism as a social phenomenon; indigenous people are further empowered through the skills to promote self-determination in the context of tourism (Butler & Hinch, 2007:36).

Timothy (1999:374) has identified an additional aspect of resident education in destination areas, namely building general community awareness of tourism. Educating residents of developing countries is one way of building awareness, so that they will be better qualified to make informed decisions in their own communities. Education and training have emerged as crucial aspects of successful indigenous tourism operations. Unfortunately, most tourism studies and training programmes include little information that is specific to indigenous groups, their beliefs, their culture and ways of operation (Butler & Hinch, 2007:325).

Importance of tourism awareness

Mathieson and Wall (1982:52) state that economic benefits of tourism which have been documented in the literature includes the contribution of tourism to foreign exchange earnings and the balance of payment, the generation of income, the generation of employment, the improvement of economic structures and the encouragement of entrepreneurial activity. Mason (2008:37) confirms that positive economic benefits usually include contributions to the local economy and job creation. Positive social impacts of tourism can include the revival of traditional art or handicraft activity as a result of tourist demand.

Positive environmental effects of tourism may include revenue generated from visits to sites of natural attraction being used to restore and maintain the attraction, as well as enhance interest from visitors on the importance of the natural environment and therefore a greater willingness to support measures to protect the environment. Studies indicate that tourism-related activities can provide local communities with a source of income (Butler & Hinch, 2007:154). In many southern African countries, tourism provides new development opportunities, jobs and economic benefits for local people (Saarinen et al., 2009).



The literature confirms that most studies have emphasized the economic benefits which accrue to destination area and the development of tourist facilities and recreational opportunities has frequently been viewed as a major positive contribution to the national balance of payment, and as a means of redressing regional disparities in incomes and employment (Mathieson and Wall (1982:35). Sharpley (2002:234), noted that increasing dependence on and support for rural tourism is based upon a number of perceived benefits and more specifically, the development of rural tourism offer potential solutions to many of the problems facing rural areas, including economic growth, socio-cultural development and protection and improvement of both the natural and built environment and infrastructure.

The study area and context of the study

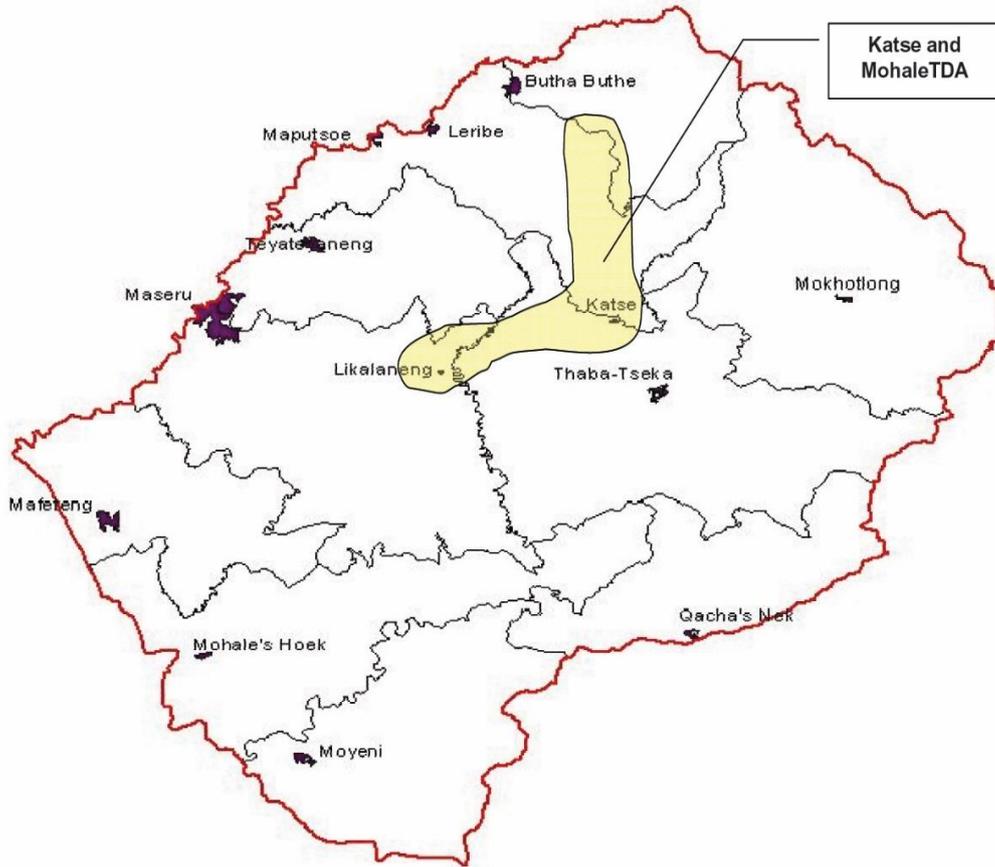
Lesotho is a small mountainous country completely surrounded by South Africa. It has unique tourism attractions which has the potential to attract different types of tourists as indicated in the study areas discussed next. The research was undertaken in what the Lesotho government refers to as tourism development areas TDA). The site chosen was the Katse and Mohale Tourism Development (KMTDA) which covers the northern and central part of Lesotho. The TDA is made up of three parks; Ts'ehlanyane nature reserve, Bokong Nature Park; and the Liphofung Nature Reserve. The tourism development area crosses through four districts of Lesotho which are Butha-Buthe, Leribe, Thaba-Tseka and Maseru and is located in the Highlands of Lesotho (See Figure 2).KMTDA was chosen because it was the first to initiate tourism awareness campaigns (LHWP, 1997).



Image 1. Katse Dam

Source:http://www.travellesotho.com/images/package/1359364168_1!!-!!Mohale%20s%205837.jpg

Figure 2: Katse and Mohale Tourism Development Area Map



Source: (UNDP/UN WTOP LESOTHO 2006)

Research design and methodology

Research design is a sequence way or procedures followed by the research when conducting the research. Supported by Mouton (2008:55) by stating that a research design is a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research. The research design of this study consisted of quantitative research methods. The study used a survey methodology. The respondents for the study were communities from three villages adjacent to the KMTDA. These were Ha-Mali (Ts'ehlanyane nature reserve), Ha-Lejone (Bokong Nature reserve) and Phelandaba (Liphofung). Park officials and local authorities were also surveyed. A questionnaire was developed which included both close and open-ended questions. The sampling was convenience sampling for the community. Purposive sampling was used to government officials working in the parks which fall under KMTDA, local authorities (chiefs and sub-chiefs). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) used to analyse close-end questions, means, frequencies and ANOVA were derived for the sample.



Results

The community leaders (i.e. nature reserve manager, local authorities, tourism officers, conservation/environment officers) generally agreed with the statement that “community members are knowledgeable about tourism”. With respect to the villages, the average values for the leader responses were 1.5, 2.0 and 2.1 for Ha Mali, Phelandaba and Ha Lejone, which were leaning towards agreeing (2) with the statement that community members of their village are knowledgeable about tourism. The tourism officers tended to lean more towards neither agree nor disagree (3), with an average value of 2.67, while the rest of the leaders tended towards agree (2) with average values ranging from 1.5 – 1.67.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that the views of the community leader category of the respondents were not significantly different ($F = 1.00$, $P = 0.455$) and not significantly different with respect to the different villages ($F = 0.51$, $P = 0.623$). The leaders tend to concentrate on the existing participating community members in tourism and ignore other members to the community especially, new members of the community, as awareness and trainings about tourism were active until 2007.

The community members also tended to agree with the statement that they were knowledgeable about tourism, the mean values range between 1.31 and 2.21 (i.e. nearly strongly agree (1) to agree (2)). ANOVA revealed that the views of the members were significantly different ($F = 20.47$, $P < 0.001$). This indicated that the level of knowledge about tourism was significantly different between at least in two villages. A t-test was used to determine which villages had significantly different views. T-test indicated that there were significant differences in the level of knowledge about tourism among the villagers. Ha Lejone community members were significantly more knowledgeable than those in Ha Mali ($t = 3.379$, $P = 0.0009$) and Phelandaba ($t = 5.570$, $P < 0.001$), with the community members in Ha Mali were significantly more knowledgeable than those in Phelandaba ($t = -2.778$, $P = 0.006$). Therefore, Ha Lejone community was the most knowledgeable (mean = 1.3095 compared to Ha Mali mean of 1.663, Phelandaba mean of 2.107) followed by Ha Mali. Phelandaba community was the least knowledgeable. Open-ended questions were used to explain why there were differences among the villages in community’s knowledge about tourism. These are discussed next. It is the area where large number of tourists visit as of the unique landscapes that attract tourist.

Ha-Lejone community

Ha-Lejone village was more knowledgeable about tourism than other villages because they have a much more developed tourism industry. They are in close proximity to Katse dam which attracts a lot of tourists who visit the area to view the dam and its channels and reservoirs (Manwa, 2012). We were also told that tourism development was original run by the Lesotho Highlands Water project which embarked on community education and involvement in tourism development. All but one tourist accommodation facilities are owned and run by local people. Community based products have also been developed which benefit the whole community. The trout fishing is a good example of a project that has developed out of tourism which benefits the community through employment creation and supply of fish to the community. Tourism has also been instrumental in creating jobs for the community at the botanical garden and visitors’ centre. We were also informed of the community hiring out their ponies to be used by tourists for pony trekking. Other job creation measures include fire protection belts burners which are employed after every three months. The respondents also indicated that they are



benefiting from the handcrafts, as the Park sells their products on their behalf at the visitors centre.

Ha-Mali village

Similar to Ha-Lejone village, Ha-Mali village is located in an area with a relatively developed tourism industry in Ts'ehlanyane National Park. They have wildlife in the park such as camels, monkeys, impala and snakes. Both the traditional leaders and the community were aware of tourism development in the area. What has happened though is that there is resentment towards the tourism. The hostility resulted from lack of employment in the Ts'ehlanyane national park and Madiba lodge, a privately owned by an investor from South Africa. They complained that tourists who visit the park made noise and polluted their area. In addition, young girls from the village were engaged in prostitution and the lodge was used for such illicit activities. Interestingly, the communities expressed the view that their livestock should be allowed to graze in the park atleast once a week. They also felt deprived of the medicinal plants in the park. For them to harvest medicinal plants they were required to get a letter from the traditional leader stating that the medicinal plants were for exclusive personal use and not for sale. Additionally, they do not receive community's share of the park's entrance fees.

Phelandaba Village (Liphofung National park)

Similar to Ha-Mali community, Phelandaba community was aware of tourism. However, they had developed extreme hatred of the industry. A number of issues were explained to us that led to the dislike of tourism. They threatened to burn down the park. They alleged corruption among the park officials where only friends and relative's crafts were sold in the park. Sometimes even people who were not from the area were allowed to sell and display their crafts in the park. They alleged discrimination in employment in the park. Most employees were not from the local villages. Horses which were rented by tourists for pony rides were also from friends further marginalising the majority of the community members. They told us of an incidence whereby some tourists who had visited the village before, threw a coke bottle through their car window and this smashed on one of the children. Subsequent tourists had their windscreens smashed as a revenge for the deeds of previous tourists who had visited the area. The resentment of tourism is very strong in Phelandaba village.

They also complained about effectiveness of their representation in community committee forums. They described it as "*limembara tsa poleiti ea lijo*" literarily meaning that the committees are just social gatherings where they receive free plate of food. They have no role in making decisions on tourism planning and development in the area.

Discussions and conclusions

The results show that although communities indicated that they were not fully aware of tourism, some had an idea. Open ended questions shows that they were indeed aware of tourism to a limited extent though. What has happened is that only communities who had benefitted from tourism, Ha-Lejone communities were more positive towards tourism. The results agree with the literature where it suggested that communities who derive benefits from tourism are generally more positive towards tourism (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010). There is also increasing evidence that costs and benefits from tourism do not accrue equally to residents of destinations areas (Brougham & Butler, 1981:569).



Another interesting finding from the study was the negative social impacts of tourism on communities. Phelandaba community had a negative encounter with the community. Since communities cannot differentiate between different types of tourists, bad experiences with tourists have often resulted in communities holding an implacable attitude towards all tourists who visit their area (Ross, 1992).

Corruption is another problem which influenced people's perceptions of tourism. Corrupt government officials had negative lasting impacts on people's perceptions of tourism *per se*.

It can therefore be concluded that the government has been effective in creating awareness of tourism among communities in KMTDA. What is worrying though, is that among certain communities, especially the Ha-mali community in Ts'ehlanyane nature Reserve, environmental education seems to have failed totally. Communities still insist on being allowed to graze their livestock once a week in the park and be allowed to harvest medicinal plants even though some of the wild plants found in the park are endangered plants for example, the spiral aloe (NPD, 2007). Communities are not benefiting from tourism as stipulated in the National Tourism Policy (2000). There is also a huge lack of community involvement and unsustainable practices of rural tourism in Lesotho which lead to less or no benefits and participation in tourism in the rural areas.

National Tourism Policy of Lesotho (2000:27) states that government recognizes that there are constraints facing the Lesotho tourism industry: the environment, the very foundation of the tourism industry is being degraded; most Basotho people lack the knowledge to effectively and successfully manage the environment. The results of this study have indeed confirmed lack of training, education and awareness programmes at the community levels in environmental sustainability.

Managerial implications/recommendations

Communities have to be knowledgeable and aware of tourism activities taking place in their own surroundings. Supply of educational programs helps to address the issues of sufficient capacity, the issue of how the current tourism and hospitality education curriculum can meet the deeper needs of the indigenous people of the region for sustainability, empowerment and self-determination still need to be considered (Butler & Hinch, 2007:33).

Developers should provide information on the following crucial aspects: how the project will protect the environment; how to build in ecological education programmes; how to actively involve environmentalists in the development; and how to inspire community members to develop education programmes for tourists (Mason, 2008:174). There is clearly a major role for most public sector agencies in particular, to play in making information and advice available, and if a when a positive decision is made to engage in tourism, making training, advice and capital available (Butler & Hinch, 2007:324).

According the present structure for education and awareness campaign, the Lesotho Development Tourism Cooperation is not involved and it shows that it does not deal with management of parks. The action plan states that initiatives were taken by LDTC for development and implement a community tourism awareness/involvement drive which can be rolled out throughout Lesotho, but unfortunately the national parks are not part identified area. Education and awareness campaigns should involve all institutional structures for successful results. According to a strategic plan for tourism development in Lesotho (ASPTDL) (2007), there should be relationship between the various institutional structures including the Lesotho



Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC). LTDC has already taken initiatives to develop and implement a community involvement drive. However, such a drive does not cover the national parks (ASPTDL, 2007).

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