Rural communities' participation in the planning and management of tourism developments: a case study from Lesotho

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Abstract

This study analysed the perceptions of local communities' participation in planning and management of tourism using the mixed method design. The local rural communities and local authorities (nature reserve managers, tourism officers, environmental/conservation officers and Conservation Committee Forum members) in the Katse and Mohale Tourism Development Area of Lesotho were surveyed and interviewed. The study was conducted in three villages adjacent to the T'sehlanyane Nature Reserve - Ha 'Mali, Bokong Nature Reserve - Ha Lejone and Liphofung Nature Reserve -   Phelandaba. These villages are mostly affected by tourism developments.

Respondents from all three villages (Ha Lejone, Ha 'Mali and Phelandaba) shared the same preferences of greater communities' involvement and decision-making power in the management of tourism. Ha 'Mali and Ha Lejone respondents recognized community members' participation but the Phelandaba respondents generally disagreed that the communities were involved in management, as they indicated not being consulted in any planning about tourism. The study concludes that government should not merely construct conservation and tourism development in the rural areas but should also empower local communities to participate in all stages of planning, development and management. Involving community members in as well as formulating supporting tourism regulations, implementation, monitoring and evaluation procedures would be beneficial for sustainable rural tourism development. The researcher recommended that there should be partnerships amongst all tourism-related stakeholders in rural tourism management for promotion of rural tourism. It also recommended that local communities should form part of decision marking, planning and management of rural tourism developments in order to promote sustainability.

Keywords: rural tourism management, communities' participation, Lesotho

Introduction

Rural tourism development, like any other business, needs to be managed. One important aspect of rural tourism management is to have a specific focus on local people to participate and work in tourism developments. Local participation in tourism is usually referred to as functional management and can be seen as part of strategic management (Mason, 2008:104). Mason argues further that tourism management is also concerned with ways to manage the resources for tourism, the interaction of tourists with physical resources and the interaction of tourists with residents of tourist areas. This focus of tourism management is concerned primarily with tourism impacts in tourism destinations. This study is built on the collaboration theory. Issues of coordination, collaboration and partnership are now at the forefront of much tourism research on finding new solutions to resource management and destination development problems (Hall, 1999:274). The inclusion of local communities at all management levels of tourism destinations could solve problems in tourism developments. A community approach to tourism planning is an attempt to formulate a bottom-up form of planning (Hall and Page, 1999:252). The community approach emphasizes development in

the community rather than development of the community. Researchers have indicated that when local stakeholders have had an opportunity to participate in the management and planning process from the very beginning, they have more positive opinions regarding the development of their area than those who have not participate in the planning process (see Simmons 1994, Jamal and Getz 1995, Page and Thorn 1997).

The idea of sustainability has become an important policy issue in tourism management and development (Saarinen *et al.,* 2009:77). Many tourism-planning scholars agree that sustainable tourism development can best be accomplished by involving local residents in decision-making of tourism, and by collaboration among various stakeholders in decision-making matters (see Timothy, 2001:149). Community participation should be a shared decision-making process at all levels of the programmes, such as setting goals, formulating policies, planning and implementation (Butler, Hall and Jenkins, 1998) and having a high degree of control or ownership of the tourism activities and resources (Hall and Page, 1999:195; Saarinen, 2006:1130). It is very important to consider local participation as the success and failure on any rural tourism development depend on local communities.

Recognizing the importance of community participation as part of tourism management, the present study aims to analyse the perceptions on rural communities' participation or involvement in the planning and management of tourism development in selected areas in Lesotho, The respondents of this study are the local communities, local authorities, nature reserve managers, tourism officers, Conservation Committee Forum members and environmental/conservation officers. The sections that follow are problem statement, research objective and hypothesis, literature review, research methodology, results, managerial applications and conclusions.

Research objectives and or/hypotheses

This study is guided by the following objective:

- To examine the perceptions of local community' participation amongst local communities, local authorities, nature reserve managers, tourism officers, Conservation Committee Forum members and environmental/conservation officers;

In order to appropriately guide this research, the hypothesis formulated is based on the existing research literature and Lesotho government tourism policy and documents. The hypothesis will be further argued in the literature review and description of the study sites. The specific hypothesis for this study is:

- Communities perceive involvement in tourism management as essential in improving their participation.

Literature review

Community participation in tourism
Community participation in tourism is a major issue facing governments. Community participation refers to a form of voluntary action in which individuals confront the opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship (Tosun, 1999:217). The opportunities for such participation include joining in the process of self-governance, responding to authoritative decisions that impact on one's life, and working co-operatively with others on issues of mutual concern (Tosun, 1999). Literature shows that being a community member and being invited to participate do not automatically give a resident/participant easy access to getting his/her issues addressed. Indeed, the right to participate does not always equal the capacity to participate (Bramwell and Lane, 2000:172).

Rural tourism and community-based tourism share community resources in destinations and both need to promote community participation. Community participation is considered necessary to obtain community support and acceptance of tourism development projects (Tosun and Timothy, 2003:5). Nevertheless, citizens tend to participate only when strongly motivated to do so, which requires their ideas to be considered, otherwise community participation may be demotivated (Tosun, 2000:625).

Issues of participation, collaboration and partnership are at the forefront of tourism research trying to find new solutions to the problems of resource management and destination development (Hall, 1999:274; Hall, 2008). Community participation should be also combined with and related to sustainable tourism. It is clear that community participation has become an indispensable part of sustainable tourism development (Tosun and Timothy, 2003:6). However, planners rush to involve various publics in their work, but some do so without full consideration of the progress of public participation techniques employed in other aspects (Tosun, 2000:613). Moreover, many authors support greater public participation while few have tested or evaluated the appropriateness of methods to secure local residents' interest (Gunn, 1988:116; Simmons, 1994:98). The rationale for community participation in tourism is that it can reduce potential conflict between tourists and members of the host community (Mason, 2008:120; Aramberri and Butler, 2005:13). When communities are participating, the constraints that confuse befuddle their involvement are identified and the difficulties facing public participation are discussed, as well as some provisional action steps (Haywood, 1988:105).

In consideration of the importance of community participation or involvement, negative issues regarding participation are also researched. Researchers indicate that there are some difficulties associated with participation of community members in the planning process in developing countries. Community participation has some challenges, as local communities that have to participate in tourism may lack information on the operational and necessary equipment for tourism. Related to this, Nyaupane *et al.,* (2006:1374) have identified some limitations of community participation in tourism management which are (i) local communities may not have the investment capital, know-how or infrastructure necessary to take the initiative in developing tourism, (ii) local communities may have cultural limitations to involvement in the planning and management of tourism, (iii) tourism may be a concept difficult to grasp by people living in isolated rural communities, and (iv) members of the host community may feel that it is the government's duty to plan economic development opportunities for their region and that it would not be appropriate for them to take the initiative. In addition, Hall and Page (1999:252) have identified seven impediments to incorporating public participation in tourism planning, but this study focused only on the following: the public are not always aware of or do not understand the decision-making process; there may be difficulty in attaining and maintaining representatives in the decision-making process; the decision-making process would be prolonged and there may be adverse effects on the efficiency of decision-making.

Tourism planning

Proper tourism planning is a core of success in any rural tourism development. Sound planning is widely viewed as a way of maximizing the benefits of tourism in an area while mitigating problems that might occur because of development (Timothy, 1999:371, 2001:149; Myburgh and Saayman, 2002:215). Members of the community should be involved in any tourism planning aimed at promoting sustainable tourism. According to Simmons (1994:98), the public has a right to participate in the planning activities that affect their daily life.

Involving local communities in tourism planning is now a widely accepted principle in democratic countries. Tourism planning is a decision-making process aimed at guiding future tourism development actions and solving future problems, and a process of selecting objectives and deciding what should be done to achieve them (Williams, 1998:126; Myburgh

and Saayman, 2002:215). Planning is regarded as a very important part of the process by which tourism is managed by governments at the national, local and organizational levels (Elliot, 1997:116). Planning for tourism deals with a variety of forms, structures and scales, thus the term "tourism planning" does not merely refer specifically to the development and promotion of tourism, although these are certainly important in tourism planning (Cooper *et al.*, 1998:208; Hall and Page, 1999:249).

Tourism planning is conducted with consideration of other aspects related to tourism such as the country's economy and land-use planning. Tourism is affected extensively by many aspects of planning, such as the national government's economic planning; sectorial planning and land-use planning, which are often applied to tourist venues or national parks, and rural development (Elliot, 1997:116). Planning can also been seen as on-going process that complies with a country's policies. In many ways, planning may be regarded as going hand-in-hand with tourism policy (Hall, 1994:35). The important role of policy-making and implementation in private and public agencies from regional to local areas is for the involvement in preparing and taking action on tourism (Gunn, 2002:1). There are a number of reasons why policy-making in tourism should involve local communities in drafting policies for their region. Community participation is premised upon shared decision-making at all levels of the preparation of programmes: setting goals, formulating policies, planning and implementation (Wisansing, 2000:47; Nyaupane, Morais and Dowler, 2006:1374). Public participation in both the planning process and the implementation of the policy is important, considering the fact that tourism development occurs in existing places with socio-cultural and political environments.

Planning has a number of objectives, which involve the inclusion of local communities in decision-making and coordination. Tourism planning has a number of key objectives: for example, the creation of a mechanism for the structured provision of tourist facilities over quite large geographic areas, and the coordination of the fragmented nature of tourism (Williams, 1998). There has recently been a shift in traditional tourism planning patterns and research. Planning has moved from narrow concerns with physical planning and tourism promotion aimed at the masses, and planning research now aims at a more balanced approach that supports the development and promotion of more sustainable or alternative forms of tourism (Timothy, 2001:149). The literature shows that this new direction of planning which protects developments and promotes sustainability can only be achieved through community involvement in planning.

Rural tourism management

Tourism management is defined as "strategies and action programmes using and coordinating available techniques to control and influence tourism supply and visitor demand in order to achieve defined policy goals" (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998:84). Tourism management term is also used to denote the processes through which a small and medium tourism enterprise tries to maintain and improve its ability to create and distribute value by co-ordinating the interaction of participants in the activities of the business as a system (Sanchez and Heene, 2004:114). Like any other business, rural tourism businesses need a formalized strategy or approach to be used during implementation and operation.

Literature indicates that rural tourism management clarifies the need to consider the host or resident population in management. The residents should be regarded as active participants in the process of tourism development. If locals participate they are most probably will benefit financially from the tourism industry. Tourism is supposed to raise incomes of locals. Local communities as part of stakeholders should form part of destination management, and management has many responsibilities at local level (Elliott, 1997:137; Choi and Sirakaya, 2005:1275). Management at local level include coordination or direction taken by different stakeholders in managing tourism. The lack of coordination within the highly fragmented

tourism industry is a problem well known to destination planners and managers (Jamal & Getz, 1995:186). It is important for a coordination strategy to be drafted to guide tourism businesses.

Research methodology

A survey questionnaire and interview methods of data collection were used to conduct this study. The study was conducted in three villages around the parks: Ha-'Mali (Ts'ehlanyane nature reserve), Phelendaba (Liphofung nature reserve) and Ha-Lejone (Bokong nature reserve). The sampling frame comprised the community members and local authorities of villages, which are closest to the park, employees of Northern Parks of Lesotho and Conservation Committee Forum (CCF) members from the three villages, as they are well informed about the parks' operations. Convenience sampling whereby respondents that were willing to participate in the study were used amongst community members by self-selection of 278 respondents who were willing to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was used for 23 parks employees. CCF members were interviewed. The study population was 1163, which was justified by Census Lesotho 2008; and the information on the population was received from Census Lesotho after the fieldwork had been conducted.

Appointments with representative bodies were made telephonically and personally through the Parks Manager at Northern Parks' head office in Butha-Buthe in order to arrange interviews. The Parks Manager encouraged the researcher to contact CCF members for interviews on the day they would be having their monthly meeting in the parks, as all would be at one place. Questionnaires were designed to collect data from various parks employees and community members, while interviews were designed to collect data from CCF members.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were followed in conducting this study in order to compare the findings from the two methods and assess the validity of the results of research. The study utilised a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to seek views from respondents. The analysis of coded data was conducted with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Hypotheses (H0 and H1) were used to state whether there was a statistically significant or no significant differences on opinions between the respondents. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also used for the statistical calculated variance ratio *(F)* and probability *(P)*. The t-test was used as well to determine if the respondents from different villages had statistically significantly different perceptions of tourism. The cross-tabulations were applied to quantify the statistical differences noted among respondents using Chi-squared statistics and Cramer's V. The open-ended questions and interview responses were grouped by themes and used to explain the statistical relationships. The use of cross-tabulation was also intended to identify any similarities or differences in the analysed data and relate the findings to the literature in order to draw conclusions.

Results

The questionnaire contained six items in management of tourism. All six items were characterised by having high standard deviations indicating disagreement among the respondents. All six items had their scales inverted and then each one of Q1, Q3 and Q5 were removed as their MSA values were still below 0.6. This left only three items in the factor with a KMO value of 0.677 and Bartlett's sphericity of $p<0.005$. Hence, the resulting PCA with varimax rotation resulted in one factor only, which explained 63.98% of the variance present. It had a Cronbach alpha of 0.718. The mean score of 3.96 and median of 4.00 should be interpreted against the inversion of the scales. Respondents thus disagreed with the items in the management of tourism factor. Items Q1 (the community is involved in planning), Q3 (community representatives participate in the formulation supporting tourism regulations) and Q5 (assessment and evaluation are done by the community) were all answered unreliably and had mean scores indicating neutral opinions, which are often found in items which may have

political connotations and as such are viewed with suspicion. They were, however, removed from the factor analytic procedure.

Testing the direct income from tourism groups regarding the management of tourism

The data distribution in indicates a negatively skew distribution of data and hence non-parametric procedures were utilized in the analysis of the independent groups. The relevant data is given in Figure 1.1.

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Management of tourism is the same across categories of F40A. Income 2010.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.				

Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test

F40A. Income 2010
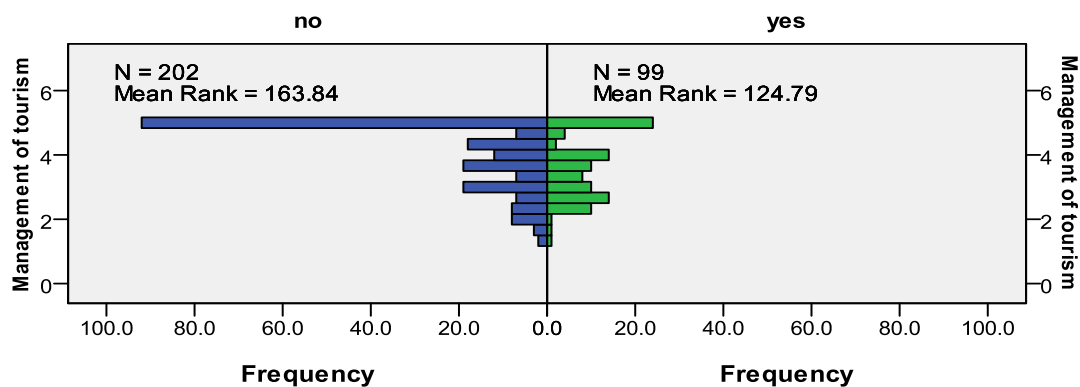
Total N	301
Mann-Whitney U	12,593.500
Wilcoxon W	33,096.500
Test Statistic	12,593.500
Standard Error	687.553
Standardized Test Statistic	3.774
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.000

Figure 1.1: The data for the two received income groups with respect to the management of tourism

The relevant values are U= 12593.00; Z=3.774; p<0.0005; r = 0.22. Bearing the scale inversion in mind, the respondents who indicated that they had received some income from tourism agreed more strongly $(\overline{X}_{Yes} = 3.66)$ than the group who indicated that they had not received any income from tourism $(\overline{X}_{No} = 4.11)$ with respect to the management of tourism. It thus appears as if the management of tourism and income received are positively associated with one another.

Significance of differences between the positions occupied groups with respect to the management of tourism.

The respondents concerned with managing tourism had a mean score of 3.39 whilst the community respondents had a mean score of 4.00. Respondents occupying management positions agreed more strongly with the management of tourism than did community members. As these members in management positions are concerned with the daily management of tourism and are acquainted with both advantages and disadvantages of tourism. A positive response was predicted although a value of 3.39 can be interpreted as partial agreement. The non-parametric values were U= 4216.50; Z= 2.622; p= 0.009; r = 0.15.

Significant differences between three or more independent groups regarding the management of tourism

Reponses were from three categories namely Ha Mali (101), Phelandaba (82) and Ha Lejone (118). These are their groupings are likely to see the management of resources differently and the results of the Kruskal-Wallis (H) test are provided below:

| Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Management of tourism is the same across categories of F42.Village stay.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.				
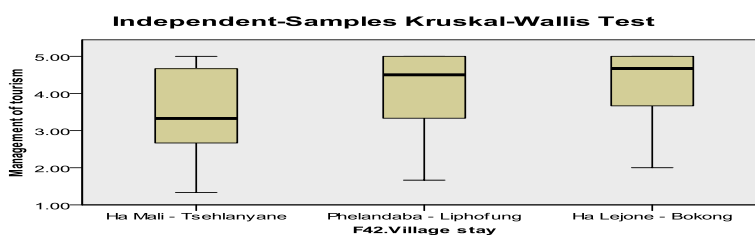
Total N	301
Test Statistic	29.908
Degrees of Freedom	2
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.000

1. The test statistic is adjusted for ties.

Figure 1.2: The hypothesis for the three village groups with respect to the management of resources

The data in Figure 1.2 indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be accepted because the three groups differ statistically significantly regarding their mean scores when considered together, The Kruskal-Wallis H value of 29.91 has a significant p-value (p<0.0005). Thus, the three village groups do differ but one would need to do a pair-wise comparison to see which groups differ from which. However, if one observes the graph in Figure 5.3 it seems as if the difference lies between the median value of Ha Mali and Phelandaba and Ha Mali and Ha Lejone. The pair-wise comparisons are given in Figure 1.3.

Pairwise Comparisons of F42.Village stay
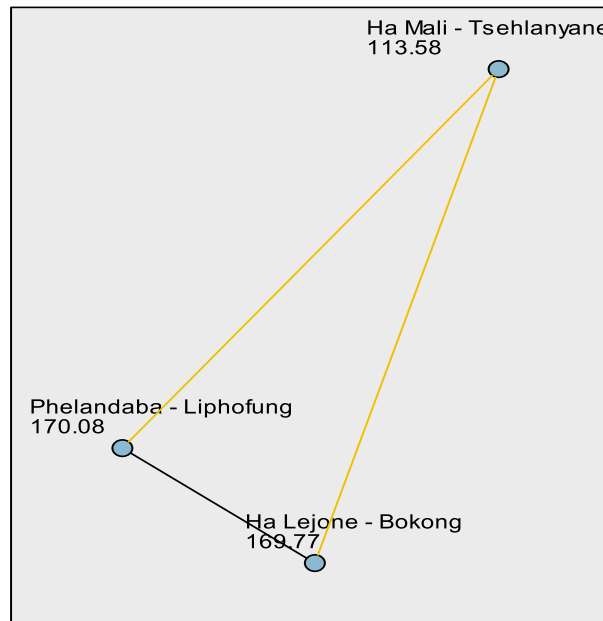
Each node shows the sample average rank of F42.Village stay.

Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
Ha Mali - Tsehlanyane-Ha Lejone - Bokong	-56.183	11.434	-4.913	.000	.000
Ha Mali - Tsehlanyane-Phelandaba - Liphofung	-56.495	12.539	-4.506	.000	.000
Ha Lejone - Bokong-Phelandaba - Liphofung	.312	12.127	.026	.979	1.000

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same.
Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Figure 1.3:The pair-wise comparison of the three village groups regarding the management of tourism.

The main difference in mean ranks and in median scores is between Ha 'Mali and Ha Lejone (Z=-4.913; p<0.0005; r = 0.28). The second largest difference is between Ha 'Mali and Phelandaba (Z=-4.506; p<0.0005; r = 0.26). There is statistically no significant difference in factor mean scores between Ha Lejone and Phelandaba. As the scale was inverted, respondents from Ha Mali $(\overline{X} = 3.48)$ agreed more strongly with the management of tourism than did respondents from Ha Lejone $(\overline{X} = 4.20)$ and respondents from Phelandaba $(\overline{X} = 4.21)$ both of whom could be said to disagree with the management of tourism factor.

The negative view of the Phelandaba residents is also corroborated by the findings in Section below where the semi-structured interviews with the CCF members were analysed.

In the case of qualitative data, the respondents were from three different villages. There were 42 CCF members and the researcher divided them randomly into six groups, 2 groups per village. Answers indicate a lack of effective human resource management on the side of Government employees. Expand further on this. The participants believed that cooperative planning was lacking and that unfair selection and recruitment activities occurred.is there suspected nepotism, expand further on this. It seems as if the community believe that the Government is responsible for managing tourism activities and hence it is appropriate to apportion blame to someone else. This leads to "the enemy is out there syndrome" (Senge, 1997: 19). The enemy is out there is a consequence of finding someone or something to blame when things go wrong, and is typically associated with a hierarchical mechanistic management style. The theory of collaboration came about partially because of the disadvantages associated with this bureaucratic management style and it emphasises the advantages of including all persons in decisions, which could influence them. Thus, tourism is associated with contradictory consequences and for each potential benefit; there is a potential detriment as is clearly reflected in both the qualitative and quantitative data analyses. This dialectical view of change thus involves effective management of both dimensions; maximising the potential benefits whilst attempting to remove or minimise the contradictory elements.

Conclusion

Tourism management should closely involve the government, the private sector and the host community at the destination. Leaving any of these parties out could give rise to problems with sustainability. The communities should be included in the planning of rural tourism development. The researcher's recommendation is to involve communities in KMTDA management. Community members of Ha 'Mali know the areas which could be dangerous to tourists; those could not be known to park workers as they are not originally from that area. Involvement in management promotes interest and participation among communities because they feel that they are becoming part of the tourism development. In the KMTDA, not all stakeholders are involved in management and planning. This creates a problem because it leads to a misunderstanding of how the parks should operate. Involving communities in the management would reduce the present negative attitude view of tourism and help communities to understand that rural tourism developments cannot employ each one in the villages, although in some jobs they could rotate.

Communities should be involved in management, ensuring that all issues concerning communities are taken into account during tourism development. Active public participation in decision-making benefits local communities and public participation is an important tool for successful tourism (Azizan *et al.,* 2012: 585). Partly because of the problems that may arise from contact between tourists and communities in developing countries, and in an attempt to ensure greater benefit to host communities, there has been a focus recently on community participation in tourism management, planning and development (Mason, 2008:167). Public involvement in tourism is currently an essential element of tourism planning and design. The engaging of all stakeholders is crucial to every tourism development effort; as it promotes sustainability of rural tourism developments. Tourism developers have an obligation to let the local public know about their plans and become involved, because this could promote their interest. Local people have the right to participate in management of tourism projects, which affect them, and experience in tourism has shown that the role of dialogue across a wide spectrum of direct and indirect stakeholders is especially important (Messerli, 2011:335).

The researcher's recommendation is that the local communities should be involved in both the decision-making and the operation of the nature reserves. Studies in both developing and developed countries indicate that the success of a destination would largely depend on the support and engagement of the local community in management (Dredge & Jenkins,

2007:317). The researcher recommended that there should be partnerships amongst all tourism-related stakeholders in rural tourism management for promotion of rural tourism. It also recommended that local communities should form part of decision marking in planning and management of rural tourism developments in order to promote sustainability.

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