

Framework for managing International student tourism: A case study of the City of Tshwane

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Abstract

The plethora of tourism research expounding the benefits of the tourism sector to local economic development has largely ignored the contribution of international student flows to the host communities. This gap in tourism literature is quite prominent in Africa in general and South Africa in particular. This is quite surprising considering that international students stay longer at the destination region and spend substantial amounts of money on tuition and living costs. It is from this premise that this paper explores the potential economic gains from international flows to the City of Tshwane. The study adopts a quantitative approach in collecting data on the expenditure patterns and destination-choice determinants of 107 international students in the City of Tshwane. The study reveals that most of the respondents (37%) spend between R75, 001 and R150, 000 on tuition fees and subsistence annually, with an average study duration of 3.4 years. A framework is proposed for the sustainable management of international student tourism in general and the City of Tshwane in particular.

Key words: International students, Sustainable tourism, Local economic development, City of Tshwane.

Introduction

The City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (henceforth referred to as the City of Tshwane, abbreviated as COT) has committed in its vision 2055 to become the African Capital City of Excellence, which delivers among other goals tangible socio-economic benefits for all residents of the city (COT, 2015). However, the major impediment to the attainment of this laudable goal is the high unemployment rate of 26.3% among the city's residents (COT, 2013). It is in this context that this study explores the potential of using international student tourism growth as a strategy for fast-tracking economic development in the city.

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest growing economic sectors of the 21st century. It is therefore not surprising that many communities, regardless of size or stage of development have invested substantially in the tourism sector in an effort to benefit from the opportunities that the industry offers (Kumar & Hussain, 2014, Kauppila & Karjalainen, 2012, Roger, 2003). Potential economic gains from tourism include foreign exchange earnings, job creation, income generation, tax revenue for government and the stimulation of subsidiary economic sectors and small, micro and medium sized enterprises (Acha-Anyi, 2014, Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2013). However, poorly planned tourism could derail the desired outcomes and trigger negative impacts such as harmful environmental practices, poor visitor management, economic leakages, resource misallocation and dis-proportionate opportunity costs (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Matarrita-Cascante, 2010). Hence, this study investigates the perceptions of international students regarding the City of Tshwane as a study destination and proposes a framework for the sustainable management of this tourism niche.

Study background and context

The City of Tshwane is home to the administrative capital of South Africa (Pretoria) and houses over 130 international diplomatic missions, making it the second geographical concentration of embassies in the world after Washington DC. (Stats SA, 2014). On the outskirts of the Pretoria Central Business District (CBD) lie more than ten vibrant communities (Townships), notably: Atteridgeville, Mamelodi, Soshanguve, Mabopane, Ga-Rankuwa, Centurion, Akasia, Winterveldt and Hammanskraal.

Development planning in the City of Tshwane (COT) takes due consideration of the City's unique status as the administrative and diplomatic capital of South Africa as evidenced in the Tshwane Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework (COT, 2012), the Growth and Development Strategy for Tshwane (COT, 2006a), the Tshwane Integrated Development Plan (COT, 2011) and the City of Tshwane tourism master plan (2005). This unique status offers the city an opportunity to maximise its tourism potential, the international student niche. This would assist in addressing the socio-economic challenges facing the City of Tshwane. The 2015 "state of the capital address" subtitled, "Building the people's capital" alluded to this by specifying four economic sectors ear-marked to drive development within the next fifteen years towards the attainment of its vision 2055. These four sectors are identified as:

- Education and the knowledge economy;
- Agriculture and agro-processing;
- Business and diplomatic tourism; and
- The green economy.

Peculiar among the many challenges facing the City of Tshwane are the considerable decline in economic growth and the high level of unemployment among the 2.9 million inhabitants of the city (COT, 2015; COT, 2013).

The absence of initiatives to explore economic benefits among the international student community can also be seen as a missed opportunity considering that studies elsewhere in the world have alluded to the lucrative economic gains from international student spending in particular (Bohm et al, 2004; Kunin & Associates, 2009; Chellaraj, Maskus, & Mattoo, 2008; NAFSA, 2014; Open doors, 2014). Considering that 71 533 students enrolled in South African institutions in 2013 (Stats SA, 2013:16), this study explores the potential benefits that could accrue to the City of Tshwane as a result of international students spending in the City.

Theoretical basis for using tourism as a means to economic development.

Tourism literature affirms the contribution of the tourism sector to local economic development to flow through three broad streams: directly through purchases made on tourism products and services, indirectly through subsidiary industries supplying goods and services to tourism businesses and through induced benefits that stimulate the local economy (Bojanic & Lo, 2016; Farid, 2015; Bashi, 2015). Furthermore, tourism's potential to re-distribute wealth, diversify the economy and exert a favourable effect on the balance of payments has enticed many governments to invest in the industry (Saayman, 2013; Fletcher *et al.*, 2013).

Kwaramba *et al.* (2012) point to the strategic role that small, micro and medium-sized Enterprises (SMMEs) offering tourism related services have played in recent years in poverty alleviation in many communities. In recognition of this positive impact, and as a response to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015, the UNWTO initiated the "Sustainable Tourism as a Tool for the Elimination of Poverty" (ST-EP) programme. After its launch at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, the UNWTO recruited a representative group of government, industry, UN specialised agencies and civil society to

adopt the declaration “Harnessing Tourism for the Millennium Development Goals” in New York on 13 September 2005 (UNWTO, 2005). This declaration urged the United Nations General Assembly, governments, international and bilateral development assistance agencies, financial institutions, private corporations, NGOs and other interested parties to recognize the potential for sustainable tourism to act as an effective tool in the realization of the MDGs. The ST-EP programme outlines seven mechanisms through which tourism can and should help alleviate poverty among people living in disadvantaged communities. These include:

- ❑ Employment of the poor in tourism enterprises;
- ❑ Supply of goods and services to tourism businesses by the poor or by enterprises employing the poor;
- ❑ Direct sales of goods and services to visitors by the poor (informal economy);
- ❑ Establishment and running of small, micro or community-based tourism enterprises or joint ventures by the poor (informal economy);
- ❑ Redistribution of proceeds from tax or charges on tourists or tourism enterprises;
- ❑ Voluntary giving and support by tourists or tourism enterprises; and
- ❑ Investment in infrastructure stimulated by tourism also benefiting the poor in the locality, directly or through support to other sectors (UNWTO, 2005).

Despite the foregoing benefits, communities considering tourism as a development tool have been urged to undertake rigorous planning processes in order to avoid pitfalls that could result in accentuate negative impacts such as leakages, inflation and sacrifices that are made (opportunity costs) when developing tourism (Inskeep, 1991; Angeleska-Najdeska & Rakicevik, 2012; Coccossis, 2008). Hence figure 1 summarises the potential positive and negative impacts of tourism development.

The cost of developing tourism infrastructure is usually exorbitant, especially considering the challenges facing many developing countries.

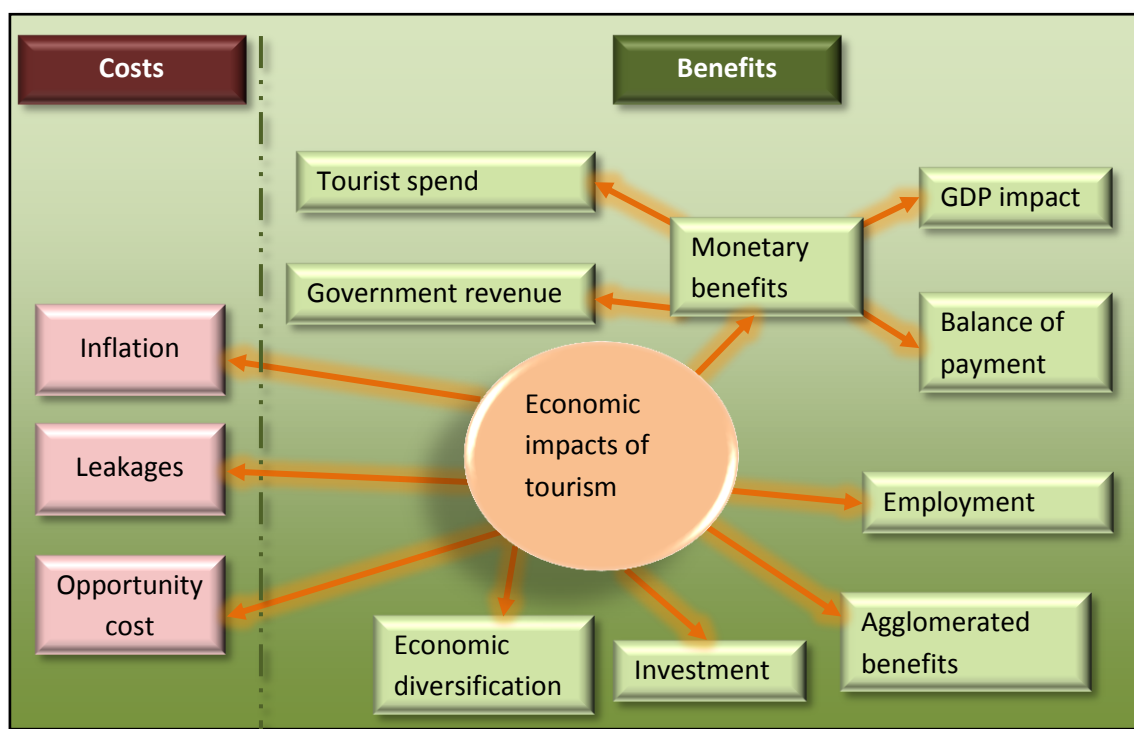


Figure 1: Economic impacts of tourism
 Adapted from: Keyser (2009:307)

Inflationary commodity prices are also among some of the unintended economic consequences of tourism development. The fact that many tourists come from more affluent countries and the perception that tourists are wealthy generally prompts the temptation to charge higher prices for commodities sold to tourists. However, this tendency soon spreads across the entire economy leading to higher prices being charged to locals as well.

It is in consideration of the foregoing that the framework proposed in this study for the sustainable management of international student tourism in the City of Tshwane provides a mechanism for monitoring, evaluation and feedback.

Sustainable tourism development

Cognisant of the rapid growth of tourism and the subsequent impacts (economic, environmental, and socio-cultural), its strong association with issues of sustainability is hardly surprising. Hall (2008:19) points to the highly intricate relationship between tourism and sustainable development as confirmed by the large volume of literature since the late 1980s dealing with the subject of sustainable forms of development and mitigating or managing tourism's undesired effects. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as tourism development that:

meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity, and life support systems (UNWTO, 2005).

Three types of impacts are identified as originating from tourism development, namely:

- ✚ Impacts on the environment (both natural and man-made);
- ✚ Socio-cultural impacts (effects on host communities through direct and indirect relations with tourists, and interaction with the tourism industry); and
- ✚ Economic impacts.

Briedenhann and Wickens (2004:71) assert that due to the pressure of rural poverty many governments in developing countries have fallen prey to *ad hoc* and unplanned methods of development, without giving due consideration to the environmental, socio-cultural, economic and conservation well-being of the rural communities. In the same vein Matarrita-Cascante (2010:1142) emphasizes the need to distinguish between economic growth whose primary focus is to attract as much foreign exchange and capital, and increase employment maximally; and development which goes beyond these economic gains to ensure poverty alleviation, responsible environmental practices, promote equity and a better quality of life for as many community members as possible. Holden (2008:111) further states that using tourism as a means of community development would seek to achieve an increase in tourist numbers and the subsequent expenditure, thereby making it possible for tourism benefits to trickle down to community members.

Demand and supply context of international student tourism

The United Nations Educational Scientific and cultural Organisation (UNESCO) puts the number of international students worldwide at over 4 million (UNESCO, 2014). This number continues to grow as destinations and higher education institutions market themselves across the globe in a quest for high-performant students. At the same time, the pull factors influencing the choice of institutions/destinations among international students have been

identified as: quality education, employment prospects, affordability, personal security, lifestyle and education accessibility (Bohm, Follari, Hewett, Jones, Kemp, Meares, Pearce & Cauter, 2004). Hence, Bohm et al (2004) forecasts the demand for tertiary education by international students to increase by 6% by the year 2020. The top ten global destinations supplying and demanding international students are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Top ten supply and demand destinations of international students

Top 10 origin (supply) countries of international students		Top 10 destination (demand) countries by international students	
China	694 400	United States	18%
India	189 500	United Kingdom	11%
Republic of Korea	123 700	France	7%
Germany	117 600	Australia	6%
Saudi Arabia	62 500	Germany	5%
France	62 400	Russian Federation	4%
United States	58 100	Japan	4%
Malaysia	55 600	Canada	3%
Viet Nam	53 800	China	2%
Iran	51 600	Italy	2%

UNESCO, 2014

Economic impacts of international students' spending

Several studies have been conducted to determine the impacts of international students spending on the local economy, notably in the United Kingdom (Bohm et al, 2004), Canada (Kunin & Associates, 2009) and the United States of America (NAFSA, 2014, Open doors, 2014). There are currently over 270 000 international students in the United Kingdom generating about 1.5 billion pounds through tuition fee payments and generating a total spending of about 3 billion pounds into the economy. Furthermore, over 200 000 international students follow academic programmes in the United Kingdom from their home countries (Bohm et al, 2004). Similar studies in Canada revealed that 178 227 international students spent over \$6.5 billion on tuition, accommodation and discretionary spending. In addition, \$291 million was generated in government revenue and 83,000 jobs were created (Kunin & Associates, 2009).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 270, 128 international students enrolled at United States' institutions during the academic year 2013/2014 representing an increase of 7.5% from the previous year (NCES, cited in Open doors, 2014:1). Table 2 shows the top ten countries demanding education in the United States:

Table 2: Top ten countries supplying international students to the US

Country	Enrolment figure	% of total
China	274 439	31%
India	102 673	11.6%

South Korea	68 047	7.7%
Saudi Arabia	53 919	6.1%
Canada	28 304	3.2%
Taiwan	21 266	2.4%
Japan	19 334	2.2%
Vietnam	16 579	1.9%
Mexico	14 779	1.7%
Brazil	13 286	1.5%

(Open doors, 2014.1)

From the economic impact perspective, the Association of International Educators (NAFSA, 2015) indicates that international students contributed US\$26, 8 billion and created or supported 340,000 jobs to the US economy during the academic year 2013/2014. The most impacted sectors of the economy from international student spending are higher education, accommodation, catering, retail, transportation, telecommunications and health insurance.

It is evident from the foregoing statistics that international student spending has the potential to impact significantly on the economy of a destination and therefore warrants investigation. Hence, the motivation of this study to explore ways of maximising on the benefits of international students spending in the city of Tshwane.

Methodology

As previously indicated, the goal of this study is to assess the economic impact of international students in the City of Tshwane and explore ways of sustaining and improving on the benefits availed by this opportunity. The study adopts a quantitative approach in collecting data from international students registered with two public Universities (Pretoria University and Tshwane University of Technology) in the City of Tshwane.

Research instrument

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire made up of three sections, with the first based on the demographics of the respondents, the second focusing on expenditure patterns and study environment and the third part delving into the respondents' experience of South Africa as a study destination. The questionnaire varied from close-ended, open-ended to likert scale formatted questions. The purpose was to give the respondents an opportunity to expand the scope of data beyond the limits of the questionnaire. Questions on gender, age, home language and expenditure patterns were close-ended, while those requesting information on country of origin, duration of study programme and experiences in the City of Tshwane were open-ended. Likert scale questions ranging from 1= not important; 2= less important, 3 = not sure, 4 = important and 5= very important were used in gathering data on the respondents' holiday destination-choice determinants.

Population and sample size

Data from the Higher Education Management Information Systems (HEMIS) indicates that the total number of international students at Pretoria University (UP) and Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) in 2013 was 6412, with 4584 at the former and 1828 at the latter (HEMIS, 2015). Therefore the population of this study is 6412. The sample size for the study was generated following Israel (1992:3) at $\pm 7\%$ error margin (Israel, 1992), yielding a sample size of 107 international students.

Sampling method

A convenience non-probability sampling method was used in the selection of the 107 (N) respondents, as every international student registered with Tshwane University of

Technology or the University of Pretoria during the study period had a “nonzero” chance of being selected for the study.

International students identified by the research team were randomly approached and invited to take part in the study.

Data collection

Data for this study was collected between the months of March and June 2015. Two international students from the University of Pretoria and Tshwane University of Technology were employed as field workers to assist in the identification of international students from their respective institutions. Once willing participants were identified, further verification was done using their student identification documents. The participants then completed the questionnaire and returned it to the researcher.

The data collected was captured on an excel spreadsheet and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 provided by Tshwane University of Technology. Descriptive statistics was used to portray the general pattern of the respondents’ perceptions on the issues under study, while exploratory factor analysis was employed to arrive at the key patterns underlying the respondents’ perceptions.

Findings and discussion

The first section of the questionnaire sort to establish the demographic profile of the respondents based on gender, age, home language and country of origin. Most of the respondents (57%) were male, while 88% were between the ages of 20 to 29 years. The home language of most of the respondents (52%) was French explained by the fact that many originated from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The source region of most of the respondents (69%) was predictably the Southern African Development Community (SADC), followed by the rest of Africa (26%). Worthy of note here was the prominence of international students from French-speaking countries considering that English is the main language of tuition in South Africa.

Further to the above, this study also examined the expenditure patterns and tourism demand proficiency of the respondents. As the frequency table (Table 3) below reveals, most of the respondents (37%) spend between R75, 001 and R150, 000 on tuition and subsistence per annum in the City of Tshwane. To get a better perspective on the impact of this financial contribution to the City’s economy, this study interrogated the study duration of the respondents. With a minimum study period of one year and a maximum of seven years, the mean was found to be 3.4, the median 3 and the mode 3, indicating a positive skewedness with high congruence as the standard deviation was .972.

Table 3: Expenditure pattern of international students in the City of Tshwane

	Annual expenditure	Frequency (N)	Percentage
Annual expenditure	R≤ 25 000	25	23%
	R25 001 - R75 000	33	31%
	R75 001 - R150 000	40	37%
	R150 001 - R250 000	9	9%
Total		107	100%
STUDY DURATION (Min. 1 year, Max. 7 years)			
Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
3.4	3	3	.972

The tourism demand propensity of the respondents also reveals that most of them (39%) take day trips once a month, while 45% go on holiday two or three times a year. Most of the respondents (56%) travel in groups of between two and four, 82% go on social group tours organised by the church or school, and most of them (52%) use guest house accommodation.

Considering the large amount of data generated regarding the respondents' holiday motivation, preferred holiday activities and determinants of choosing a study destination, factor analysis was regarded as the most effective means of reducing the data to a few salient structured patterns. Hence, the first factor analysis examining the influences on holiday motivation of the respondents yielded a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy (KMO) value of .768 and a Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value of .000, both confirming the data's suitability for factor analysis. The results retained three components with an eigenvalue of ≥ 1 explaining a total variance of 58.89%. The pattern matrix of the three components is summarised and labelled in table 4.

Table 4 Pattern Matrix

Motivations for taking a holiday	Component Impact loadings		
Factor label	Develop interpersonal Relationships	Refresh body and soul	Explore cultural identity
1. Develop interpersonal relationships			
Explore new destinations	.905		
Share a familiar/unfamiliar place with someone	.878		
Meet people with similar interests	.605		
Do exciting things and have fun	.543		
2. Refresh body and soul			
Escape from a busy environment		.805	
Learn new things		.758	
3. Explore cultural identity			
To relax			.792
Experience different lifestyles			.615
Be together as a family			.424
Be together as a group of friends			.386

It can be inferred from the factor analysis (Table 4) that the push to take a holiday among the respondents is determined in general by either the motivation to develop inter-personal relationships, refresh body and soul or explore cultural identity. The factor correlation matrix for holiday motivation among the respondents is summarised in table 5.

Table 5: Factor correlation matrix for holiday motivation among respondents

FACTOR	1	2	3
1. Develop interpersonal relationships	1.000	.340	.216
2. Refresh body and soul	.340	1.000	.207
3. Explore cultural identity	.216	.207	1.000

Note: ≤ 0.5 indicates significant correlations, 0.3 indicates visible correlations and 0.1 indicates small correlations.

There is visible correlation (.340) between the motivation to develop interpersonal relationships, and to refresh body and soul among the respondents. This is not the case with

the motivation to explore cultural identity (.216). The inference from the foregoing is that if the City of Tshwane develops tourism products to meet the demands of developing interpersonal relationships and the need to refresh body and soul, they are likely to find some respondents shifting between the two.

In order to further understand the tourism demand requirements of the respondents (international students in the City of Tshwane), another factor analysis was conducted on the activities that provide a quality holiday experience among the respondents. Table 6 summarises the results and presents the inter-item correlation analysis.

Table 6: Preferred holiday activities of international students in the City of Tshwane.

Activities influencing holiday experience	Impact loadings			
Factor label	Outdoor recreation	Man-made attractions	Leisure activities	Social activities
Fishing	.857			
Hiking	.799			
Horse riding	.779			
Cycling	.759			
Hunting	.612			
Swimming	.576			
Visiting cultural attractions		.827		
Mountain climbing		.734		
Visiting historical places		.715		
Appreciate nature		.711		
Appreciate architecture		.701		
Sunbathing			.813	
Sightseeing			.707	
Visiting museums and art galleries			.602	
Dining			.588	
Drinking				.772
Dancing				.612
Inter-item correlations				
Outdoor recreation	1.000	.194	.258	.096
Man-made attractions	.194	1.000	.173	.072
Leisure activities	.258	.173	1.000	.164
Social activities	.096	.072	.164	1.000

While the factor analysis reveals that the activities that constitute a quality holiday experience for the respondents revolve around the pillars of outdoor recreation, man-made attractions, leisure activities and social activities, the inter-item correlation between the activities is quite weak as there is no significant correlation ($\geq .3$) between any of the components. This is a positive indicator to the fact that the City of Tshwane can actually develop products around the four themes without the fear of losing clients from the one sector.

Considering the fact the respondents are international students, the objective of the last part of this study was to find out the motivators behind their choice of Tshwane as a study destination and establish the extent to which their experiences have matched their expectations. An analysis of the respondents motivations for choosing to study in the City of Tshwane are presented in table 7.

Table 7: Factors influencing the choice of the City of Tshwane as a study destination

Factors influencing the choice of Tshwane as a study destination	Impact loadings	
Factor label	Personal development	Physical and emotional wellbeing
1. Personal development		
Cultural diversity	.834	
Friendly people	.813	
Quality of academic institution	.787	
Quality of hospitality industry	.516	
Quality of transport infrastructure	.623	
2. Physical and emotional wellbeing		
Respect of Human rights		.750
Natural attractions and wild life		.627
Food and cuisine		.464
Inter-item correlations	.267	

With a KMO value of .688 and a Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity significant score of .000 this data was validated for factor analysis. The result yielded two components labelled as personal development and physical and emotional wellbeing. In other words, the principal motivators behind the respondents’ choice of Tshwane as a study destination are personal development and physical and emotional wellbeing.

To test the extent to which these expectations have been met since the arrival of the respondents in the City of Tshwane, two open-ended questions were put to the respondents to indicate their best and worst experiences. The results are summarised and presented in table 8.

Table 8: Summary of the best and worst experiences of the City of Tshwane

Category of experience	Field of experience	FREQUENCY (N)	PERCENTAGE
Best	Entertainment	11	10%
	Education opportunities	23	22%
	Career opportunities	39	36%
	Friendly people	34	32%
Worst	Xenophobia	35	33%
	Cost of living	30	28%
	Crime	9	8%
	Nostalgia	10	9%
	Weather	8	8%
	Unfriendly people	15	14%

The results of this survey (Table 8) further confirm the key motivators for the respondents opting to study in the City of Tshwane (Table 7), considering that most of the students (58%) appreciate the career and educational opportunities offered by the City. Furthermore, 32% of the respondents experience the inhabitants of the City to be friendly, thereby strengthening their second motivation for physical and emotional wellbeing.

Conclusions

The goal of this study has been to develop a strategy for sustaining international student flows as a means of supporting local economic development. The scene was set through the demographic profiling of the respondents which highlighted the source markets for international students to the City and their direct expenditure patterns on tuition fees and living expenses. Given the large amount of data gathered, it is evident that several conclusions and recommendations could emanate from this study. However, in view of meeting the limitations imposed by a research paper of this nature, suffice to mention the following:

- ❖ International students' management as a business sector remains largely untapped in the City of Tshwane, in particular and South Africa in general. There is a conspicuous absence of the international student theme in tourism literature.
- ❖ The contribution of international students to local economic development goes far beyond the financial expenditure on tuition fees and living expenses. As this study has illustrated, the students also engage in secondary spend on day trips, holidays and other entertainment.
- ❖ The study has also revealed that international students appreciate the career opportunities available in the South African economy in general and the City of Tshwane in particular. This can be seen as an opportunity to narrow the skills gap prevalent in the South African economy.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Considering the potential economic benefits of international student spending on tuition, sustenance and leisure, and the indirect and induced effects of this financial contribution to the local economy, this study proposes the following framework (Figure 2) for implementation to ensure the sustainable management of international students to the host economy

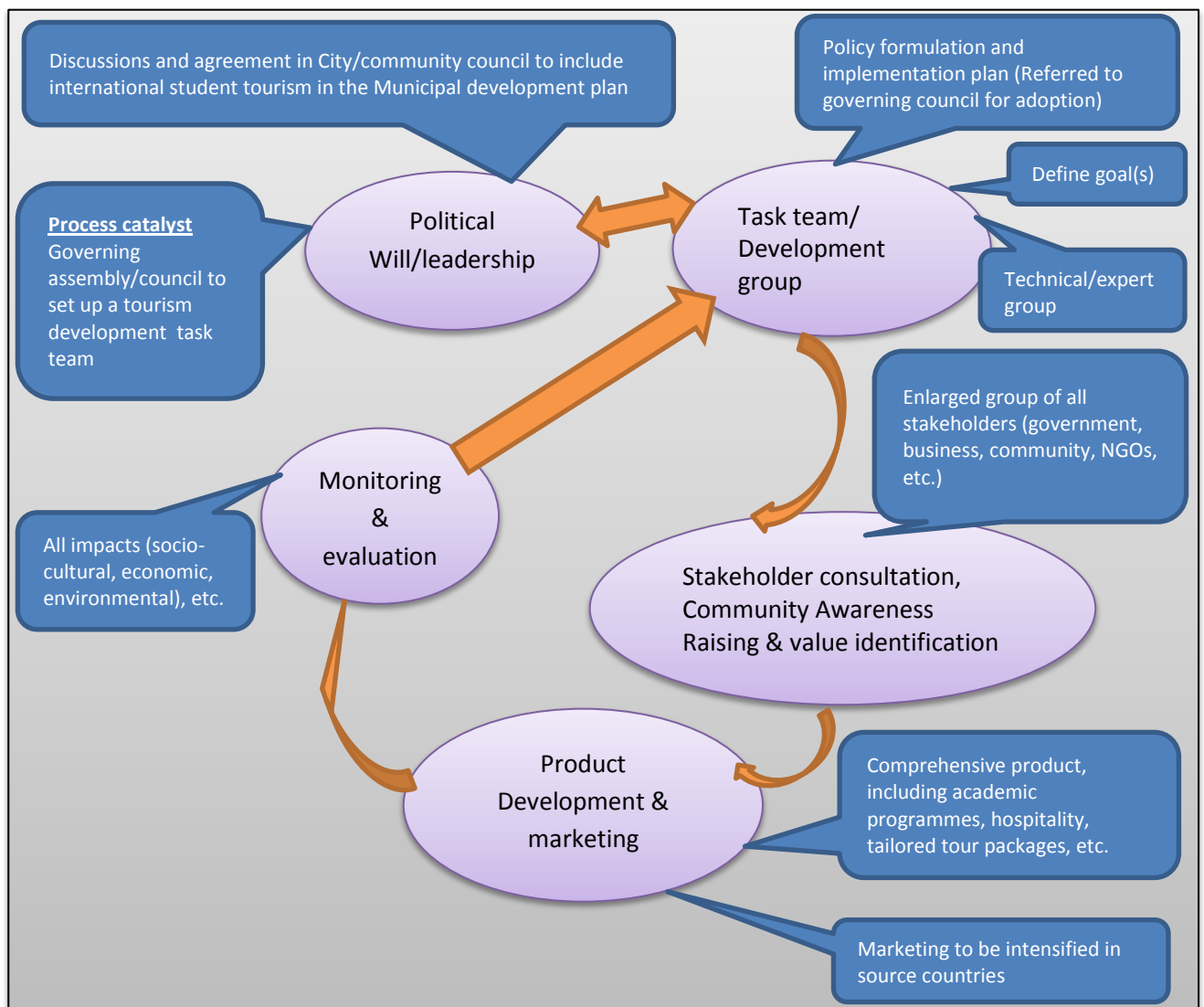


Figure 2 Framework for the effective management of international student flows

- ❖ In line with the framework (Figure 2), it is recommended that the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Council set up a tourism development task team to formulate policy and design an implementation plan for the effective management and development of international students as a lucrative business sector.
- ❖ The tourism development task team should be made up of experts with a good understanding of the needs of all relevant stakeholders such as government, business leaders, community leaders, and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs).
- ❖ It is recommended that the outcome or working document produced by the technical committee or task team be tabled for discussion in an enlarged assembly of all relevant tourism development stakeholders.
- ❖ It is further recommended that active marketing campaigns be organised in existing and potential source markets for international students.

- ❖ The City of Tshwane should take maximum advantage of its status as the political seat of government and market its specially designed international student product to foreign governments and members of the diplomatic missions.
- ❖ Furthermore, community awareness should constitute an important part of this initiative in order to curb incidences of xenophobia and crime.
- ❖ Finally, effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms be put in place so as to measure all impacts (economic, socio-cultural, environmental) of international student flows.

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