



Voices of local communities regarding their involvement and roles in the tourism development process in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In less developed destinations, rapid commercial tourism development has gradually suppressed local communities' central participation in tourist activities. While the literature suggests a number of roles that local residents can play in tourism development, to date very little emphasis has been placed on how the locals themselves feel about the issue, despite it being explained in tourist destinations' policy configurations. Based on the case of Victoria Falls, this paper's aim was to understand the degree of community involvement in tourism development, with the intention of finding a way to advance host community stimuli in terms of policy formulation and implementation. Through the series of 270 household surveys and interviews with resource persons conducted, the findings revealed that the local community's involvement and participation was mainly linked to economic activities and employment. Furthermore, the local communities wanted to be involved, and incorporated in, the prevailing systems when tourism policies are being made to influence policymakers in preparing a policy that meets their needs and protects their interests.

Keywords: Community voices, tourism development and participation, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Local community involvement in tourism across host destinations is perhaps, an intricate part of research field spectra, primarily aimed at assimilating locals into viable economic systems so as to promote local economic growth. However, there is little evidence of such in the literature that portrays the nature of interaction between local communities and tourism development (Aref, Gill & Farshid, 2010). While the literature recognises the importance of including the host residents in tourism development, debates about their role are still recurring (Muganda, Sirima, & Ezra, 2013). According to Cooper and Morpeth (1998) and Hall (2010), contemporary commercial tourism has been created in a legitimate manner, as epitomised through universal neoliberal support defined in terms of tailor-made capitalism, accumulating as a form of sustainable economy and political reform. This is suggestive of the levels of local participation marginalisation and exclusion from tourist activities prevailing across destinations. With central government administration structures, ministries and agencies beginning to work on a sectoral basis, it became a norm for development planning and management to work on the basis of the top-bottom approach (Mohammadi, 2010). The approach has resulted in two main problems in the development planning system: sectoral system fragmentation, and the exclusion of community participation from the planning and management processes (Mohammadi, 2010).

The top-bottom approach has been an operational system evident in developing and underdeveloped contexts (Hall, 2010), with Victoria Falls, in Zimbabwe, falling into the same category. As such, the dominance of numerous stakeholders with varying interests across a



complex of tourist destinations has resulted in local participation being overshadowed in the systems involved (Sirima *et al.*, 2013). The above has stimulated the development of an environment that is riddled with resource use conflicts both within and around certain tourist destinations (Haukeland, 2011; Jamal & Stronza, 2009). The representation of local communities' interest in the tourism development agenda has, therefore, become a complex issue that requires careful addressing. The adoption of such an approach would serve to overcome unclear description of local communities' roles, and how their views are incorporated in the whole planning and development process (Aref, 2011). While the extant literature suggests a number of roles that locals could play in tourism development, little emphasis has so far been placed on how the local communities themselves feel about the imposed roles (Sirima *et al.*, 2013). Debatably, the above has resulted in the creation of a knowledge gap regarding what communities think of their role(s) in tourism development, as opposed to the roles imposed upon them.

Like many destinations in the same category, community involvement in Victoria Falls is still underachieved (Mutana & Zinyemba, 2013). Despite tourism being the largest employer in the town, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) (2009) has expressed concern over the levels and extent of local community involvement in tourism. It is difficult to establish in which activities the local people would be involved, in the bottom-top planning systems of the sector (ZTA, 2009). Yet, in most recent tourism development arenas, local communities have been unanimously recognised as forming an integral part of the tourism development agenda (Jamal & Stronza, 2009). The direct inclusion of local communities through active participation is a crucial step in developing a better and more holistic plan for sustainable tourism development than was devised in the past (Hall, 2010). Sustainable tourism at destinations depends on several factors, with local communities being one of the most decisive factors concerned. Among other factors, considering the impact that tourism has on the host community is predicted to be a sustainable practice (Cahndralal, 2010). A local population's attitudes towards tourism are important, given the argument that a happy community is more likely to support tourism development and to welcome tourists than is an unhappy one (Liu, 2013). Aref and Redzuan (2008) note that operational, structural and cultural barriers to community participation in the tourism development in local communities are what actually discourage the locals from participating fully therein. Barriers do not exist equally in every community, with the lack of community participation having been identified as an important barrier to effective tourism development (Eshliki & Kaboudi, 2012). Although largely impressionistic in approach, the present exposition seeks to offer an insight that might be capable of benefiting a relatively broad modern-day empirical investigation, as well as discourses on the levels of community involvement in tourist activities. Based on the local communities' domain context in Victoria Falls, the current paper, therefore, explores the preconceived ideas and views of the local communities regarding their involvement and roles in tourist activities.

Literature review

It is undeniable, that tourism has become a powerful force of change in the economies of both the developed and the least developed countries (Hall, 2010; United Nations [UN], 2013). Generally acclaimed as the world's largest industry, tourism has also been proclaimed as a means of achieving sustainable development through representing significant economic, environmental, and sociocultural opportunities for many local communities (Sharpley, 2002). However, the degree of community involvement has, since time immemorial, been subjugated in the prevailing systems. Keyser (2009) opines that host communities must be accommodated to play a large part in tourism development, as they host the resources and the environment within whose parameters



the sector exist. Theoretically, the role of local communities in tourism development, in the context of policy and decision-making, depends on the type and level of participatory approach taken within a tourist destination (Sirima *et al.*, 2013). According to Mannigel (2008), the different levels of participation range from the simple sharing of information to the full transfer of power and responsibility. Sirima *et al.* (2013) further claim that the power of the local communities to influence decision- and policy-making always depends on the level of participatory approach adopted at a particular destination. The above justifies the need to measure the local residents' participation, and to establish their levels of participation.

Tourism is also the sum of the phenomena and the links arising from the interaction of tourists, governments, and local communities in the process of attracting and hosting tourists and other visitors (Aref, 2011). The tourism industry, in general, has become a source of income generation for many communities seeking ways to improve their livelihoods. Clearly, tourism and its impacts is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses economic, social, cultural, ecological, environmental, and political forces (Singh, Timothy & Dowling, 2003). The complexity of tourism is perhaps a clear reason as to why host communities are often overlooked in the administration of the industry. Haukeland (2011) highlights that different actors are involved in tourism development, including the private sector, the government, the donor agencies, the civil societies, and the local people themselves. However, the local communities are regarded as an important asset in terms of tourism development, as it is within their premises that the related activities take place. Local communities are also regarded as being legitimate and moral stakeholders in tourism development (Haukeland, 2011; Jamal & Stronza, 2009) because their interests affect, and are affected by, the decisions of key policymakers (McCool, 2009).

The need for, and the prominence of, the sense of community and participation in the building of strong community capacity in tourism development cannot be ignored (Aref *et al.*, 2010). Community participation can be seen as a process whereby the residents of a community are given a voice and a choice as to whether they wish to partake in issues affecting their lives. Community participation is generally determined by a variety of factors, with one such factor being the reluctance to participate, because the community members do not trust each other (Aref, 2011). Community participation can, thus, be enhanced by means of addressing barriers to participation, while, simultaneously, taking the necessary steps to promote the principles of sustainable participation (Theron, 2005).

Harrill and Potts (2003) highlight that the residents with the most economic gain tend to be the most supportive of the tourism industry. Because tourism development usually involves a trade-off between economic benefits and environmental or cultural costs, residents cope by downplaying its negative impacts, and by emphasising the economic gains to be made thereby, so as to maintain a satisfactory standing in their community (Aref, 2011). Their participation cuts across all stages, from a state of passivity to one of self-mobilisation, or active participation. They play a major role in controlling, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the components and attributes of structures that can be used to promote sustainable tourism development (Samimi, Sadeghi & Sadeghi, 2011). In other terms, community participation in tourism development processes can support and uphold local culture, tradition, and knowledge and skill, while also creating a sense of pride in community heritage (Lacy, Battig, Moore & Noakes, 2002). The goal of community participation is to improve the sense of community membership, influence, and integration across shared emotional connections and communication between stakeholders, in the interest of enhancing the decision-making and sustainable development involved (Nampila, 2005).



The role of host communities in sustainable tourism development has, for a long time, been hugely emphasised. Host communities are a major determinant of sustainable tourism development, both as beneficiaries and benefactors (Hall, 2010). Jamal and Stronza (2009) assert that involving the host communities in tourism development is crucial in bridging the gap between governance and the usage of the resources at tourist destinations. Jamal and Stronza (2009:177) further assert that

apart from the economic contribution that the local communities can accrue from tourism, their involvement in tourism development can as well be beneficial to tourism development because they can create an “active” environmental stewardship that builds on indigenous, local and scientific knowledge, economic development, social empowerment, the protection of cultural heritage and the creation of interpretive and nature-based experiences for tourist learning and cross-cultural appreciation.

One may justifiably argue that tourism can be meaningless if its socio-economic and environmental outputs do not benefit the local communities.

However, in the Southern African context, and Victoria Falls in particular, the involvement of the local communities in tourism development has been severely overlooked (Mkono, 2011; Okechi, 2010). This has been evident in the development stagnation that has occurred at such destinations, where the local residents do not have the opportunity to voice their concerns (Mkono, 2011). In essence, tourism is seen as creating classical inequalities within such communities, leading to subsequent enclave development, thereby not contributing to satisfying the dire need for the social well-being of the host communities involved. According to Buzinde, Kalavar and Melubo (2014), globalisation has promoted the dominion of foreign business, thus weakening the host communities’ voice in tourism development. As such, the current paper was aimed at justifying the need for the local communities’ active participation and involvement in tourism development, through means consisting of re-strategising the ways of encouraging their participation in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Accordingly, the core objective of the study was to measure the levels of community involvement, and to assess the community’s roles in tourism development, in Victoria Falls. Outcomes from the host community’s extent of involvement, and the roles that they play, in tourism development were taken as indicating their degree of involvement therein. The secondary objective was to generate useful information on the phenomenon, following studies by Moyo and Tichaawa (2017) and Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015b) that could inform the policymakers in Victoria Falls, and elsewhere, pertaining to the local community involvement in tourism, thereby promoting opportunities for advancement for the local residents.

Study site and methodology

The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat) (2014) estimated the population of Victoria Falls to stand at 33 710, consisting of 9 109 households (ZimStat, 2014). Victoria Falls is the most noticeable tourism destination town in Zimbabwe, which is earmarked as the country’s chief accolade and the prime site of the basket of Africa (Nyahunzi, 2012). The destination features such prominent activities as bungee jumping, gorge swinging, abseiling, elephant back trails, and walking with cheetahs, which sets it apart from other destinations on the continent. Indeed, it is the best tourism spot in Zimbabwe, flanked by the fascinating Zambezi River, where all sorts of adventure, both soft and hard, are provided (UN, 2013). However, the administration of tourism in the town has yet to find the appropriate balance between the sector’s goals and the needs of the host community. According to Nyahunzvi (2011), the local residents in Victoria Falls have, for



a long time, been marginalised in terms of their participation in tourism activities. Despite many being employed in the industry, Mudimba (2014) has discovered that the local community participation has been marginalised, with the participation of many local residents being merely passive. According to Butler (2000), the limiting of local community participation represents one of the underlying factors for why many communities are resistant to tourism development activities. When the local communities are limited in their involvement, tourism shrinks in significance for the general public, especially as far as those residents who do not directly benefit from the industry's operations are concerned (Collomb, 2009). The local community exclusion has been attached to the ownership of tourism in the town. Seventy-five percent of businesses are foreign-owned, meaning profit expatriation and leakages (Muchapondwa & Pimhidzai, 2011). The local residents' exclusion leads to the locals' grassroots-level demotion in terms of decision-making, with planning remaining a big challenge in the development context (Mkono, 2011). Therefore, the measuring of host community involvement in tourism might further justify how the local residents have been undermined in every aspect of the resources that they own as hosts, with the emphasis being laid on how they can be involved in future.

In order to fulfil the objectives of the study, a questionnaire technique was adopted to collect the required data. Because positivist and interpretivist paradigms were both deemed necessary, quantitative data were used to generate objective results, and a qualitative method strategy was employed to generate interpretive data from in-depth focus group interviews held with selected community resource persons. Interviews were specifically adopted as "they enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001). A semi-structured interview schedule was used to probe the participants in two separate focus group discussions. The participants included community representatives, the local tourism authorities, and tourism entrepreneurs, managers and operators.

A questionnaire survey was used to target the adult representative of 270 households in Victoria Falls, in the summer of 2016, by trained fieldworkers, who used a simple random sampling technique. Pretesting of the research instrument (i.e. the questionnaire) was carried out to examine the appropriateness and reliability of the instrument used. The results were sufficiently comprehensive and served to verify the value of the instrument – an attribute which Creswell (2008) claims to characterise a reliable instrument. Based on the results from the pretesting, the instrument was deemed reliable, and therefore used. Triangulation of the qualitative data was used to measure the validity of the data obtained, in such a way as to bring together perspectives from the grassroots level, based on in-depth interviews with focus groups consisting of some members of the local community. To ensure content and face validity, as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2008), the questionnaires employed were designed with due regard to the previous works of various academic experts (Mugenda, 2009; Mugenda et al., 2013; Tuson, 2006), who had done similar, or almost similar, studies elsewhere, on respondents with closely comparable profiles. The key variables in the survey focused on the respondents' socio-demographic profile, and their awareness of, as well as their involvement and roles in, the tourism development process. The qualitative data were thematically presented, while the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to draw the frequencies, and to make inferences, from the household survey.



Results and discussions

Profile of household respondents

The questionnaire survey that was used to obtain the primary data from the 270 adult household representatives revealed that there were more male respondents (60%) than female (40.0%), with an average age of 35 years. Of the respondents, many (72.5%) had completed some form of a certificate/diploma, with a further 13.0% having an undergraduate degree. Most of them described their economic status as being below average. Approximately 75% of the households had at least one family member who was (in)directly working in a job linked to tourism, for purposes of economic survival.

The degree of awareness levels of tourism development, as noted by the respondents

Examining the degree of the respondents' levels of awareness of tourism development was a priority for the current study, as Aref (2011) entrusted it to have a functional output in terms of measuring the levels of local community involvement in tourist activities. The reactions of the respondents unfolded in the following patterns. Most of the respondents (60.0%) indicated having very good levels of awareness of tourism development in their area, followed by those who indicated having a good level of awareness (20.0%). In addition, 18.6% expressed average awareness, and a few (1.4%) stated very poor levels of awareness.

The above-mentioned research findings can be tied to many post-theoretical prerogatives. For example, in destinations where tourism has a high employment absorption capacity, the local residents always seem to have high degree of awareness levels regarding tourism development in the area. Finding a generally high level of awareness was not surprising, given that tourism is a dominant economic activity in Victoria Falls (Mkono, 2011). However, being aware does not necessarily mean being involved, with involvement being the thrust of the current study. Such thinking is in line with Ryan and Gu (2009), who proclaim that, apart from issues of administrative structures, the locals' lack of experience in relation to political administration and entrepreneurship, as well as their low literacy levels, has handicapped many societies to varying degrees as far as participating in tourist activities goes. In other words, having information, or general awareness, is not knowledge, as knowledge comes from participatory experience, which allies with much-needed contextual awareness. Local communities might be aware of, and know about, the existence of tourist activities, but Hall (2010) expressed the belief that having participatory experience is the form of awareness and involvement that gives the local residents the power to influence tourism development in their community. In spite of the majority of the respondents expressing their awareness, the government, tourism developers, institutional systems, and other direct stakeholders still have a mandate to increase such levels of awareness, and to enrol the residents' perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the sector's sustainable development and community receptivity. Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015) suggest education awareness and working in partnerships as part of the means that could be used to increase the prevailing levels of participatory awareness.

The extent of local resident involvement in tourism development in their area

The household respondents were further probed as to what extent they were involved in tourism in their area. The majority (73.5%) of the respondents showed that they were not involved, whereas the minority (26.5%) indicated that they were involved. According to Bianchi (2001), tourism is owned by foreign investors, hence its administration conceives only of limited local involvement. Okechi (2010) reiterates that, in global tourism, Southern Africa has been



stigmatised as being at the periphery of the global economy, which has further handicapped the potential of Southern African communities to participate in tourism development. Moscardo (2005) ties the exclusion of involvement to the high illiteracy levels that tend to characterise African societies as fostering preconceived beliefs and perceptions of the inability of illiterate residents to manage tourism.

Contrary to the illiteracy claims highlighted by Moscardo (2005), ZimStats (2014) established that Zimbabwe is often reported to have the highest adult literacy rate on the continent (90%). Therefore, prejudiced perceptions are expressed in terms of an exclusionary management, resulting from assumptions of illiteracy, incompetence and incapacity, which remain a justification that tourism developers and management have to wipe out if they are to make the grade in terms of sustainable tourism development.

To deal with potential community resistance scenarios, all local people and other valid stakeholders must participate in the formation of programmes or policies that should assist in creating a perpetually positive approach in terms of communities' attitudes and perceptions (Phiri, 2009). In addition, Croke, Grossman, Larreguy and Marshall (2014) explain that participation is important, as it encourages the governments concerned to be accountable, and it also enables the locals to be involved in the planning and implementation of projects in their respective areas. Rogoff (2011) is of the view that participation in communities should take the form of social interaction that benefits the whole community, rather than just a few individuals. Royo and Ruiz (2009) warn that the increased lack of consideration of the local communities leads to local residents becoming resistant to, and unsupportive of, tourist activities. The best way to win the local residents' favour and support is the creation of a 'feel-good effect', through directly involving them in tourist activities at all possible levels (Keyser, 2009). Local residents always wish to be recognised and appreciated for being part of the resources used in tourism development (Miranda, 2007).

The reasons for non-involvement in tourism development

With the majority (73.5%) of the respondents specifying their non-involvement in tourism, a follow-up question was designed to find out the reason therefor. In response to a question that allowed for multiple responses, the respondents were required to indicate their reasons(s) for non-involvement. Almost half of the sample (48.6%) indicated a lack of financial resources to become involved in the industry. Other respondents (25.7%) held the view that tourism developmental opportunities did not exist, or were not being leveraged. A few of the respondents expressed the view that they lacked the necessary knowledge about the tourism industry (4.3%), while some (2.9%) saw no reason to be involved in the sector. The scarcity of much-needed resources and opportunities goes a long way to explain why sub-Saharan societies have major structural problems and largely weak economies, in terms of partaking in local economic development (Okech, 2010). The lack of awareness of, and the reluctance to partake in, tourism could be the result of the unavailability of tourism education structures in Victoria Falls (Nyaruwata *et al.*, 2013). The dearth of such structures is also linked to Moscardo's (2005) belief that African communities neither recognise the essential nature of tourism, nor do they view themselves as tourists, hence they generally tend to have negative perceptions towards the sector. Such African societies arguably act as barriers to the host community's involvement and to advancement in tourism. Beyond the above, the non-involvement of residents in tourist activities can further be explained in the context of the governing policy of a destination.

A policy that is centred on the host community provides a framework that ensures that the local communities gain access to opportunities in tourism, as well as encouraging the development of



community-run tourism activities and enterprises at a destination (McCool, 2009). With the majority of the respondents claiming to lack the required resources, the above could be tied to the Victoria Falls local government and national government's unforthcoming role in encouraging local members to start their own small and medium enterprises, or to act as investors, or even as joint venture partners, with the public or private sector in tourist businesses. According to Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015), the core principles affecting the development of community involvement in tourism are subject to the public sector and destination governing policy, which sometimes fails to establish the guidelines of tourism involvement at a destination. Debatably, the deficiency can spill over to reduced opportunities and awareness of the industry, with, consequently, the residents end up not seeing the need to be involved therein. As a result, having the majority of people not involved in tourism is a testament of the industry's bleak future (Okechi, 2010).

Sustainable tourism development can be attained when an objective policy is designed that incorporates consideration of the overall needs of the host communities and other defining stakeholders, which can define the longevity of the sector in operation. According to Hall (2010), an objective policy is a policy with guidelines formulated with the needs of determinant stakeholders, like the local communities, in mind. An important theme, embedded in the community tourism policy's goals and strategies, is the prerequisite for the receptivity of tourism development, guiding the communities towards attainment of the overall goals of the sector in a partnership approach.

Extent of community involvement

The involvement, and the roles that the Victoria Falls community played, in tourism development was found to be significantly linked to such tourism economic activity as employment or the ownership of small to medium-sized businesses. Regrettably, the degree of involvement and participation in the decision-making processes relating to tourism development was rather poor, with it signifying a major concern for the long-term sustainability of the sector. Although most of the Victoria Falls inhabitants were employed in the tourism industry (Mutana & Zinyemba, 2013; ZTA, 2009), Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015) established that the type of local community involvement (employment) in Victoria Falls did not give the locals the necessary power to determine strategic decisions that could promote local development, therefore the general participants had their roles limited to service delivery only. The local communities only benefited from tourist encounters, which did not promote their use of decision-making platforms (Mkono, 2011). Consequently, the low levels of involvement in tourism through community-based organisations, tourism forum committees, and other means could be a result of the top-down approach which has been operative since the dawn of tourism in less-developed destinations (Aref, 2011). A top-down approach arguably promotes a centralised system of tourism management, which is a system that has been criticised for local community dehumanisation, in terms of marginalising the local people's influence on decision-making, planning and tourism development (Hall, 2010).

Sustainable tourism development is encapsulated within the degree to which local communities are involved in tourist activities in their area. The literature has overemphasised the fact that a core element of sustainable tourism is that the tourism industry must take into account the views and aspirations of the host community. Rogerson and Visser (2011) argue that local community support for tourism development and promotion is essential, and that genuine community involvement can enrich the visitor's experience. One may claim that tourism has the opportunity to bring communities together by instilling in them a sense of community pride and knowledge of



their history. When a community is involved in tourism development, it is more likely to become an active partner, and to take a particular stake, in the development of the destination without resistance (Rogerson & Visser, 2011). Without local community involvement, sustainable tourism development is subject to failure.

Such results as were obtained in the case of Victoria Falls suggest that limited community involvement in tourism development goes towards supporting the general belief that host communities in less developed destinations are not given opportunities to participate in, to control, or to lead tourism development (Hall, 2010). According to Rogerson and Visser (2011), tourism, as a sector, would be deemed beneficial if the host community platforms of engagement were to increase to an above-average extent. Building local community support establishes a practical two-way form of communication between industry drivers and residents, so as to establish a platform to listen, cooperate and compromise in terms of relationships with the residents, thereby creating a positive image that drives tourism success (Hall, 2010; Keyser, 2009).

Involving host communities in tourism is the departure point towards sustainable tourism development. According to Keyser (2009), developing tourism in isolation from the host community is a detrimental act, as the local residents are likely to resist such development. According to Lacy *et al.* (2002), the building of local support for tourism requires patience and persistence, as the whole exercise involves changing the culture of a community, which can be done through obtaining direct community involvement. A plethora of scholars (Harrill & Potts, 2003; Haukeland, 2011; Mannigel, 2008) have suggested that an effective way of increasing community involvement is through designing, and implementing, a tourism policy that aims to enforce local community involvement, social sustainability, and sustainable tourism development, as well as to emphasise the mutual benefits for tourism and the local communities.

Furthermore, the interviews that were conducted in the course of the present study indicated that many local residents were happy with the roles that they played in the industry, given the current poor state of the Zimbabwean economy, as exemplified in the following response provided by a key informant who manages a tourism-related business:

With a high pedigree of unemployment in Africa, as local residents, we derive comfort and happiness from minor roles that we play in tourist activities just to keep our jobs and hopes for survival. Yes, we are happy, just because even if you are not happy, it will not change anything...

The interviews also paint a picture of poor participation in the tourism decision-making process in Victoria Falls, as many of the resource persons interviewed were vocal about the issue. Some respondents felt that such a tendency limited their opportunities to be heard, and the possibility of their initiatives for development being considered. A local community leader states:

While, to some extent, we may be happy with the role that we play in tourism generally, in terms of decision-making, we do not have the podium to express our views. We simply, in some cases, receive orders and notification from the tourism authorities. This actually cripples our initiatives and creativity abilities in decision-making.

Despite the economic benefits of tourism being highly appreciated by the local communities, involving the residents, to whatever degree, is important for the development of the 'feel-good' effect among the host communities (Mutana & Zinyemba, 2013). However, if the residents begin



to feel the less respected and valued partner in terms of the tourism economy, they are likely to develop a negative attitude towards the industry (Hal, 2010).

According to Liu (2013), happiness tourism is a phenomenal attribute contributing to sustainability. With the questionnaire yielding 61% of the respondents expressing happiness in the roles that they played, with their degree of happiness being compromised, the result can be regarded as intimidating potential community resistance. In collaboration with the focus group declarations, one might argue that the already unhappy residents could increase in number, as the kind of happiness that the residents tend to enjoy in the sectoral operations does not guarantee community support, because it is compromised. In terms of tourism development, tourism drivers must recognise that community happiness is the key to cultivating community interest in tourist activities (Liu, 2013). Beyond the roles that they could play, Okech (2010) provides the narrative that African societies have often, in the past, been subjected to the abuse perpetrated by tourist developers. Okech (2010) insists that equity tourism development must attain certain goals without compromise. In short, such development must:

- contribute to community development and improve relations with the local communities, so as to minimise the risk of future conflict;
- support community development, so as to generate positive publicity and improve reputation;
- contribute to community development and enhance local community welfare;
- provide benefits for the local people that can support conservation goals, by means of offering alternative, relatively non-destructive sources of livelihood; and
- improve economic linkages with the local communities and businesses support, so as to promote the sustainability of tourism at the destinations concerned.

Suggestions from the respondents on what should be done to increase community involvement levels

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of the local residents, as well as strong political leadership, so as to ensure wide participation and consensus-building (Hall, 2010). Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process that requires a community approach type of involvement (Rogerson & Visser, 2011). When asked about ways in which the local residents could be involved in tourism, one community leader was quick to propose:

Local people must be granted ... the opportunity to be part of the top management. Sometimes we feel that we are subjected, just because we manage inferior levels in the sectoral levels. At least having one representative in the highest rank to represent our concern would be a relief to the community's interest.

Furthermore, a tourism official acknowledged the need for involvement, proposing:

Involvement of local community must be at the top of businesses operating tourist activities. Local involvement must be systemised so that at each and every level, there are representatives who would listen to [the] ordinary residents' point of view regarding tourism development and the future of the industry in general.

In another proposal, a manager in hospitality sector responded:



Organisations are always willing to incorporate local residents' representatives or promote them to higher ranks. The only problem is that involvement needs some expertise. Some local residents are less or under-educated, yet, they are not patient enough to spare their time to acquire on-the-job training. Community members must either improve their education, or agree to be educated at [their] workplaces.

Local community involvement is an ideal that the tourism world as a whole has, as yet, failed to achieve in full. In destinations where communities are advanced to play fundamental roles, their roles have tended always to be short-lived, or minor (Lacy *et al.*, 2002; Pongponrat, 2011). It has become normal practice that destination managers, and overall tourism leadership, has continued to deprive host communities of involvement in tourism, with the local residents being perceived as having only a limited education, knowledge and competency. Eshliki and Kaboudi (2012) proclaim that tourism businesses form an economic sector that is failing to meet the call for the practice of corporate social responsibility. Okech (2010) believes that, unless bound by a policy that safeguards the local residents' interests, the host communities will continue to be subject to the abuse of tourism development. A strong policy, designed by tourism experts in collaboration with community leadership from the host community, is the ideal standpoint from which to involve local residents effectively (Rogerson & Visser, 2011). The planning and development of tourism should not take place in isolation from the local residents, but, instead, the host communities must be considered as a core element for sustainable tourism development. Using a holistic public policy approach to serving the communities', and other stakeholders', interests, tourism is almost guaranteed a sustainable existence (Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017).

Recommendations

The research findings discussed above have portrayed very limited local community involvement in tourism. The basis for sustainable tourism rests upon the degree, and the extent, of influence that the local residents have on tourist activities. Enabling community participation in decision-making at grassroots level increases the residents' trust in management, and imbues them with the confidence to be able to perform functional managerial roles (Pongponrat, 2011). The local government and influential stakeholders, including the local community leaders, must enact a policy that would increase the levels of host community involvement, especially in terms of the planning aspects related to Victoria Falls. Among other aims, a policy must aim to empower the local people through creating a conducive entrepreneurial environment in the town, by promoting small local businesses (arts and crafts, flea markets, etc.) in almost every tourist hot spot in the town. With the literature claiming that the hindering of local people from gaining managerial posts is grounded in their perceived incompetency, incapability and illiteracy (Hall, 2010; Keyser, 2009), giving them access to further independent business opportunities would facilitate their involvement to a great extent.

Moreover, with 48.6% of the respondents showing that they lack the resources to venture into the industry, the public sector could still be required to become directly involved. After the creation of realistic opportunities, a local community project could be advocated for and created, with added incentives and tax exemptions being made available for the local risk-takers, so as to encourage entrepreneurship among the local residents. All the above should be entrenched in the frameworks of an inclusively generated policy.

Furthermore, a policy must enlighten the sense of visible community participation in community structural operations, in terms of a vision for community tourism that could also act as a motivational paradigm. Having a vision for community tourism is proactive in encouraging viable and sustainable tourism products, while remaining grounded in, and respectful of, national values



for socio-economic development, natural, as well as for the development of heritage and cultural resources, and sustainable communities (Miranda, 2007). In the above sense, the community tourism vision would drive towards creating an invigorated tourism sector in communities that would enrich the community quality of life through the granting of social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits, the exemplifying of sustainable livelihoods, and the strengthening of Victoria Falls' policy values and interests. Alternatively, community participation must be highly regarded as the mechanism for active community involvement in partnership working, decision-making, and representation in community structures (Cahndralal, 2010).

Community participation often means the involvement of the community with the government. The findings clearly show that the people were against the prevailing top-down approach in decision-making, when it came to tourism development in their locality. The results further portray the nature of the centralised systems that determine the forms of decision-making, extent and methodology that are required for effective policy development and formulation. To effectively involve the communities concerned, the key stakeholders, like the tourism management personnel in the area, must create a sense of community membership, by means of influencing the integration and shared emotional connections devolving down into community participation. Community participation can lead to community development (Aref, 2010), which is a prerequisite for sustainable tourism development, an arguably preferred state of tourism at any destination.

Last, the local government must create a direct policy framework that advocates supporting the key stakeholders' interests, in terms of the private sector, the civil society, the local community, and many others. The establishment of a sound framework could aid in ensuring the making of consensual decisions, and in the generating of economic benefits across a broad spectrum of the population in Victoria Falls. A policy must advocate for:

- employing the local people;
- developing training programmes covering both basic skills and those necessary for promotion, so that the local people can be phased into management positions over time;
- encouraging volunteering in the local communities, and the following of environmental practices at home;
- purchasing locally produced products; and
- working with the local partners to support projects that increase the general sense of community well-being.

Conclusion

With the aim of providing policymakers with policy formulation guidelines, the current study was centred on coming to an understanding of tourism development and of local community involvement, and the roles of the local community in tourism in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Specifically, the study was designed to understand how the local communities could participate in improving their livelihoods by scrutinising the factors influencing local community participation in tourism. The aforesaid factors were believed to help contribute towards the enhancing of the local communities' livelihoods, through finding a balance between preserving the tradition and making the necessary adjustments to providing the needs of the place as a tourist destination without exploiting the local community. However, the present study emphasised the participation of the community as the involvement of local people in tourism development processes, for, without participation, there is arguably no partnership, no development, and no progress. The lack of community participation in decision-making to implement tourism development can lead to failure in terms of community development (Miranda, 2007; Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017).



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