

Challenges of rural tourism development in Zimbabwe: A case of the Great Zimbabwe-Masvingo district.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the challenges of rural tourism development in Zimbabwe. The paper uses the qualitative research methodology, and a case study research design. A case study of Great Zimbabwe in Masvingo district of Zimbabwe was used. Face to face interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect primary data. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed to select respondents. The findings of the study show that there is lack of sustainable interventions and promotion strategies for the development of rural tourism. Most studies have approached tourism development in terms of its quantitative aspects. However, this study seeks to understand rural tourism development through a qualitative approach which brings an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic dynamics experienced by rural people. Such dynamics can be difficult to identify if a quantitative approach is employed. The study established that factors such as political instability, community conflict, lack of finance, poor communication, and limited knowledge are responsible for the absence of strategies to promote rural tourism. All the aforementioned reasons complement each other and pose a challenge to the sustainability of rural tourism development. To transform rural areas through tourism, it is imperative for the government of Zimbabwe to develop rural tourism strategies and policies.

Key Words: Rural tourism, tourism development, rural development, challenges, Zimbabwe.

1.1 Introduction

Rural Tourism has become an internationally recognised activity and has been considered by a greater portion of the world as a panacea for economic and social development of rural communities. It is also seen as real and sustainable support to the socio-economic problems in the rural areas and an important source of livelihood for the rural population (Tchetchik, Fleischer, & Fleischer, 2008; Doohyun et al., 2014; Ezeudji, 2013a, 2013b, 2014). Globally, international bodies and national governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's),

policy makers and institutions in the field of development see tourism as a viable tool for the development of rural areas. As a result, tourism has become the key word in rural development initiatives, in projects to alleviate poverty and in the conservation of cultural diversity of indigenous communities (Doohyun et al., 2014).

Traditionally, rural communities relied on agriculture as a major economic base but Roberts and Hall (2001) note that these communities are likely to be incapable of sustaining themselves without a diverse economic base. Thus tourism and

recreation have been viewed and adopted as integral components in the diversification of the rural economic base(see also Doohyun et al., 2014 and Ezeuduji, 2013a, 2013b, 2014).

Unlike agrarian change, the concept of tourism in rural areas originates from the developed countries (Hall and Page, 2002). In developed countries, rural tourism is a favoured means of regenerating the rural economy (Giampiccoli et al.,2013 and Ezeuduji, 2014) whilst in the developing countries it is seen as an option to diversify the rural economy in order to create a new perspective for rural populations and to reduce poverty and land abandonment (Sharpley, 2006).

Tchetchik *et al* (2008:553) support the concept of rural tourism as a livelihood intervention in Europe and North America by indicating statistics related to the phenomenon. Such statistics include the annual proceeds from rural tourism in England which amount to 14 billion US dollars and 380 000 jobs; the Canadian rural tourism which accounts for 3% of the rural labour force; and the fact that in the United States in the years 2002-2004 a reported 90 million adults took trips to rural destinations. Tchetchik *et al* further indicate that success for rural tourism in the European Union (EU) and in Israel has been catalysed by direct support policies such as the EU proposed budget of 17 billion for 2007-2013 in support of tourism related projects in rural areas and, in Israel, government land policies of special zoning ordinances have enriched the rural ambience and encouraged rural tourism.

At the international level, the acknowledgement of rural tourism and ecotourism as an important development intervention was initiated by the Commission for Sustainable Development which encouraged international organisations and governments to support it (Petroman, *et al.* 2010). Consequently, in response to the poverty-oriented development trend, a more poverty focused form of tourism development has been promoted in the context of Pro-Poor

Tourism (PPT) and Sustainable Tourism - Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP). PPT refers to tourism that increases the net benefits for the poor (Holland, Burian and Dixey, 2003). PPT is not a specific product or niche sector but an approach to tourism development and management (Shakya, 2009:89). The PPT can be any tourism segment, but one common ground is to improve the linkage between tourism business and the poor and to expand benefits to the poor.

ST-EP is an initiative of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and its objective is to fund, implement and promote projects and programs of sustainable tourism aimed at achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UNMDG). According to this program, sustainable tourism(Doohyun et al., 2014 and Ezeuduji, 2013a, 2013b, 2014) should be a primary tool for eliminating poverty in the world's poorest countries (UNWTO, 2002). Irrespective of the fact that the definitions of the ST-EP and PPT are different, the key theme is to unlock opportunities to the poor with the focus on poverty alleviation.

Given the view of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 2011) that meaningful economic transformation remains a major development challenge in Africa, sustainable rural tourism development strategies can contribute to rural development because they are economically feasible (Ezeuduji, 2013a, 2013b, 2014 and Giampiccoli et al.,2013). International case studies show that efforts to conserve and restore rural areas have created a better environment and opportunities for rural tourism (Keyser 2002 and (Doohyun et al., 2014).

In Zimbabwe, the tourism industry in general, contributes about 6,5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is expected to contribute 15% by 2014 (Mwaruta, 2011:1). Most tourism attractions in Zimbabwe are located in rural areas, thus creating an opportunity for the rural communities to identify tourism opportunities and utilise them in a

sustainable manner. "Tourists have visited Zimbabwe rural areas for many years although the local communities were rarely involved (or benefited) from tourism until a few pilot projects were set up by the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in the early 1990s" (Munyeza, 2009:19).

CAMPFIRE programs have been identified through the selling of hunting licenses within certain quotas, keeping wildlife numbers at sustainable limits and selling meat and skins of animals. The proceeds from the sales would be ploughed back into the local communities to build new schools, wells and health clinics (Metcalf, 1993).

The Great Zimbabwe Area has immense growth potential if only there could be a proper rural tourism development strategy. Rural Tourism has the potential of bringing the concomitants of economic development such as health and economic infrastructure, including communication services to underdeveloped areas. Its promotion can fill the gap of the phenomenal downturn in tourism which the country has been experiencing since 2000 due to negative publicity after the Land Reform Program. It can also contribute to the economic development of the country. Conversely, it needs to be noted that these tourism strategies are not the only instruments of rural development and rural tourism does not survive in isolation but relies on other economic sectors such as agriculture which are important drivers of development.

However the challenge remains whether rural tourism development initiatives can effect meaningful socio-economic transformation in Zimbabwe. This study seeks to contribute to knowledge on the development of rural tourism for socio economic transformation that is sustainable ecologically, institutionally, socially, economically and capable of producing genuinely positive livelihoods outcomes as advocated by Cleary (2003).

1.2 Problem

The major problem in Zimbabwe in general, and Masvingo, Great Zimbabwe Area in particular, is the lack of sustainable interventions in the development of rural tourism. The reason is the absence of a rural tourism promotion strategy to support the sustenance of livelihoods in the area through socio- economic transformation. Tourism for sustainable livelihood has been largely neglected by tourism and development policy makers in Zimbabwe.

2. Literature Review

The literature review section focuses on conceptualisation of rural tourism and discussions on rural tourism as a sustainable rural development alternative.

2.1 Conceptualising Rural Tourism

The lack of a concise definition of what 'rural' or 'rurality' is has contributed to the intriguing debates about the definition of the term rural tourism today without reaching a consensus (Holland, Burian and Dixey, 2003, Viljoen and Tlabela, 2007, Doohyun et al., 2014). This argument is explained by Gopal, Varma and Gopinathan (2008:513) who state that:

Rural areas where rural tourism occurs are difficult to define since criteria used by different nations vary enormously; secondly not all tourism which takes place in rural areas is strictly 'rural', it can be urban in form and merely be located in a rural area; thirdly different forms of rural tourism have developed in different regions and hence it is hard to find characteristics that are common to all the countries; fourthly rural areas are in a complex process of change due to the impact of global markets communications and telecommunications that have changed market conditions and orientations for traditional products. Besides, though some rural areas have experienced

depopulation there are many of them that are experiencing an inflow of people to retire or to develop new non-traditional businesses.

Lane (1994), in his article '*What is Rural Tourism?*', suggests that rural tourism exists as a diverse concept and is largely a domestic phenomenon with a disparate nature across countries and continents. Lane further iterates that pure rural tourism is tourism that is located in rural areas, rural in scale, character and function, reflecting the different and complex patterns of rural environment, economy, history and location (see also Doohyun et al., 2014).

A study in India depicts that any tourism that will involve rural people, benefit them economically and socially, showcase the rural life and allow the rural people to interact with tourists for a more enriching experience would be regarded as rural or village tourism (Subhash, *et al.* 2010). Similarly, in South Africa any activity such as community based tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, guest farms, backpacking riding and Agro tourism can be regarded as rural tourism if carried out in rural areas (Viljoen and Tabela, 2007). This is a notion that regards rural tourism as a manifold phenomenon and is supported by Pender and Sharpley (2005) who contend that an idea of single rural tourism does not exist and that is the reason why it is a complex concept and difficult to generate a concise definition.

Arahi (1994:1) states that Western Europe's concept of rural tourism is strongly ecological. In Europe, tourism has long been considered as a tool of regeneration of rural areas, especially in areas where traditional agrarian industries are in decline, whilst in developing countries such as South Africa, policy makers focus more on diversifying the rural economy for it to be sustainable (Holland, Burian and Dixey, 2003). The reason for diversifying the rural economy is enshrined in the insufficiency of agricultural livelihoods, hence the need to

search for new sources of growth and economic opportunity. It is for this reason that this study would like to explore whether rural tourism can be a socio-economic diversity intervention in Zimbabwe that can bring significant transformation.

Likewise, this study conceptualises rural tourism as any form of tourism showcased in rural areas (Ezeuduji, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Giampiccoli et al., 2013; Sharpley and Roberts, 2004; Page and Conwell, 2009; Lane, 1994; OECD, 1994). The reason for subscribing to this generic concept for this study is because tourism is termed rural when the rural life, norms and values are the key components of the tourism product on offer. In this view, it is of paramount importance to recognise the diverse needs of locals and to provide the appropriate form of tourism or tourism development sustainable in the rural context. For example, the notion of 'farm tourism' is evident across Europe, New Zealand and North America, and the establishing of 'rural inns' is being developed in Japan (Hall, Kirkpatrick and Morag, 2005).

Rural areas special features and unique folk traditions can lead to different policies and guidelines, as well as differences in stakeholder participation and business models. However, rural tourism is marginalized as a somewhat secondary adjunct to rural development and its pursuit is dependent upon agrarian activity and a great deal of community involvement and participation (Hall, Kirkpatrick and Morag, 2005). Therefore different societies would have different types of rural tourism models.

According to Shen, Hughey and Simmons (2008) rural tourism is a convergence of rural development and tourism development, likewise sustainable rural livelihoods is a convergence of rural development and sustainable development (Shen, Hughey and Simmons 2008). Research shows that for rural tourism development to be able to sustain livelihoods, it should not be an externally tailored development plan and

process whilst the local community rendered as passive recipients. As observed in Slovenia by Verbole(2000), rural tourism development should be a negotiated process, as different actors involved interact in the on-going development process which is planning, implementing and controlling rural tourism.

It needs to be noted that local people or rural communities are not passive recipients of the consequences of rural tourism development projects, interventions or policies, but they are capable of making the most out of a given situation to transform plans and policies through interactions and negotiation (Verbole, 2000). The organising practises, strategies, power relations and decision making of communities are different because of the fact that communities are not homogenous entities. It is often argued that successful sustainable rural tourism development is that which is supported by the local community, therefore, development should not take a trickle down approach but a bottom up approach.

The uniqueness and speciality of rural tourism such as living in ethnic minority homes, sharing the family life and discovering the peculiarities of the territory, environment and landscape make rural tourism difficult to be circumscribed within the concept of accommodation only (Keyim, Yang and Zhang, 2005). Thus, golf courses, big hotels and large holiday developments are also difficult to integrate into the concept of rural tourism because they lack that speciality (Gopal, Varma and Gopinathan, 2008).

A study in Turpan, China, by Keyim, Yang and Zhang (2005) indicates that long term government support is an essential element of rural tourism development. They further indicate that it is unlikely that rural tourism can be sustained without government support and relatively high levels of investment relative to its returns. The study asserts that rural tourism can be an effective vehicle for socio-economic development in rural areas in China. Much

success in tourism development in the rural areas has been accredited to national planning and policy but there has always been a gap between policy and the reality of what happens at the local community level. Thus there is need for government policy on rural tourism development that speaks to the livelihoods and transformation of the rural areas (see for example Doohyun et al., 2014).

2.2 Rural Tourism as a Sustainable Alternative

It is often argued that sustainable rural tourism development cannot be achieved without the full support of the rural community it will affect (Doohyun et al., 2014). This argument relies on the fact that communities are not homogenous entities, neither are local people just passive recipients of externally tailored development plans and their impacts. Hence, rural tourism becomes a negotiated process as different actors involved in the ongoing development process see it from genuinely different perspectives.

A widely accepted and adopted definition of 'sustainable development' was proposed by the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Roberts and Hall, 2001). The ideology of sustainable development in rural areas through tourism has become a strong one. The reason emanates from the fact that rural environments are fragile and are likely to be "changed or damaged (or both) by rapid changes of any sort" (Lane, 2005:13).

The model of sustainable tourism aims to reconcile the tensions between the three partners namely, social, environmental and economic factors in the model and keep the equilibrium in the long term (Lane, 2005). Lane further suggests that the concept of sustainability in rural areas must be a multi-purpose one if it is to succeed. Thus it should aim to sustain the culture and character of host communities;

the landscape and habitats; rural economy; and a tourism industry which will be viable in the long term; this in turn will mean the promotion of successful and satisfying holiday experiences.

Rural areas in Zimbabwe and in many nations play as repositories of both natural and historical heritage with special intrinsic qualities hence the concept of rural tourism has “achieved almost universal acceptance as a desirable and (politically) appropriate approach to, and goal of tourism development” (Sharpley, 2006). Despite the wide-spread support for the principles and objectives of sustainable rural tourism development, it remains a contested concept because it does not represent a universally applicable framework for developing tourism. The principles of sustainable tourism are increasingly viewed as a development ‘blueprint’ that is unable to accommodate the almost infinite diversity of tourism development contexts (Southgate and Sharpley, 2002).

The notion that “sustainable rural tourism development cannot be achieved without the full support of the rural community that it will affect” (Verbole, 2000:280) is also supported by the golden rule in India that rural tourism development should be “of the rural people, by the rural people, and for the rural people” (Subhash, *et al.* 2010:3). This form of tourism development should sustain livelihoods of rural communities and bring about socio-economic transformation.

Rural diversification through tourism can be a sustainable livelihood approach if it is well integrated. Rural tourism development strategies can contribute to rural development because they are economically feasible even though they are not the only instruments of rural development. The Foot and Mouth disease outbreak in 2001 in UK which led to an instant collapse of the rural tourism industry, both in the areas worst affected by the disease more generally around the countryside, was evidence of not only the interdependence between tourism and the wider rural economy and society but also

the inherent lack of sustainability of rural tourism. In short the industry was brought to its knees by events beyond its control (Hall, Roberts and Morag, 2003).

Egbali, Nosrat and Ali pour (2010) identify three critical issues in the development of rural tourism that have been recognized in Europe. Firstly, the socio and cultural heritage quality that is threatened by tourism activity. Secondly, training for rural tourism provision is often not available to improve the quality and appropriateness of rural tourism products. Thirdly, the benefits of rural tourism products, from collaboration and networking in promotion and marketing.

In Namibia, Ashley (2000:6) studied the impacts that tourism had on the livelihood of rural residents and indicated that “a focus on livelihoods offers a useful perspective on tourism for enhancing local benefits and tourism contribution to livelihood can be enhanced by adjusting decisions on what is developed and how, in a way that reflects people’s livelihood priorities”. This has serious implications on all stakeholders involved in the development of tourism in rural areas. These stakeholders are government, Non-Governmental organisations, tourism planners, and policy makers and communities.

It is argued that livelihood sustainability may sometimes conflict with tourism sustainability, for example, in allocating water rights, tourism may seek to preserve water as a tourist attraction while livelihood sustainability may advocate the allocation of water for crop irrigation purposes (Shen, Hughey and Simmons, 2008). Hence the relationship between tourism and other livelihood strategies in an area such as agriculture should be managed effectively so that there is limited competition for resources.

Shen, Hughey and Simmons (2008) are of the opinion that the sustainable livelihoods approach is neither possible nor appropriate but that what is important is the context in which it is applied. An examination on the use of the SLA in India points out that there is need for the SLA to

incorporate politics as an endogenous asset within the livelihoods framework (Cleary, 2003). This lack of political capital has been regarded as the Sustainable Livelihoods weakness. The inclusion of politics within the framework would allow a clearer distinction between operational and technical factors (resolved through institutional innovations within the current political system), those that are legislative, and those that are political (where political induced constraints are preventing the successful working of projects). This is seen as of central importance in terms of ensuring local participation and empowerment.

The sustainable livelihoods framework has been adopted in this study as an analytical tool for rural tourism development programmes. The framework is a structure that can assist in building an understanding of livelihoods and it is necessary to ensure that external support is congruent with people's livelihoods strategies and priorities (Ashley and Carney, 1999). The objective of adopting the SLA by the researcher in this study is to explore rural tourism development programmes in the Masvingo Great Zimbabwe area in terms of their effectiveness in strengthening or improving the rural livelihoods, and their contribution towards assisting vulnerable populations and ensuring that there is equitable access to resources.

3. Research Methodology

A qualitative approach was used in this study because the topic under study appears to defy simple quantification. By applying qualitative research methods the researcher can recognise nuances of attitude and behaviour that might escape researchers using other methods such as surveys and experiments. Rubin and Babbie (2011:270) state that "qualitative researchers attempt always to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves". A case study design was used in this research, with Great Zimbabwe Area as the case. Great Zimbabwe is an ancient city which has given the modern nation (Zimbabwe) its

name and it is a repository of the nations' cultural and historical resources. It was chosen because it is a major tourist attraction in Zimbabwe located in the rural areas. A sample of 4 government officials, 16 business owners and 33 household respondents were interviewed. Government officials and business owners were regarded as expert informants and purposive sampling technique was used. Convenience sampling technique used to select household informants and the researcher took advantage of village meetings and/or gatherings because of the socio-economic and political dynamics of rural life that was prevailing at the time of data collection. A total of 53 interviews were conducted.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Challenges of sustainable rural tourism

4.1.1 Community Conflict

Our findings clearly show that there is no good relationship among stakeholders in relation to tourism promotion. Firstly, the researcher realised that Great Zimbabwe is a contested landscape. Village leaders of heads are in constant battle about who owns the landscape and this prevents progress in relation to formulating strategies that can make tourism a livelihood intervention. Networks and relationships form part of the social capital of the livelihoods framework which people require in pursuit of their livelihood (Ashley, 2000). Thus, it is very important for the community leaders to mend and settle their contentions for the success of tourism promotion. One government respondent said "owning the landscape may not bring food at the table" and thus the leaders should know that.

Literature supports the idea of assessing and understanding the socio-political dynamics in a community as tourism develops because it determines the sustainability, and allows participation by the community members (Verbole, 2000). Transformation mostly starts with individuals within an organisation or society and then moves through the

individual to impact the organisations and broader social institutions they are in (Sydenham, 2009).

Regardless of the conflict within community leaders, there is a management committee that has representatives of the four Great Zimbabwe leaders called the museum committee. This committee is responsible for and consulted on issues related to respect and religious significance of the monument as well as disseminating information back to the community. Analysis of the findings proves that the museum committee is not very effective or significantly influential. This is evidenced by some respondents who said they had no idea what tourists come for and others who knew did not know the organisations responsible for and involved in the promotion of tourism in the area. Thus they lacked knowledge and were less informed.

Another reason for the poor relationships among stakeholders is lack of opportunities for negotiation. The business owners who pay taxes, rentals and rates, believe that the fees are hefty and are just imposed without assessing the business environment in which the entrepreneurs operate. At the same time, the entrepreneurs are concerned about the purpose for which these funds are used. Some believe that problems are caused by the inclusive government which is riddled with conflict. However, the truth is there is need for negotiation among stakeholders. In comparison with a study conducted in Slovenia by Verbole and Cottrell (2002), rural tourism development is a negotiated process by social actors who are struggling to gain the most benefits out of the development projects. Thus, there is need for engagement among all stakeholders in relation to all issues of their interest as well as having a shared vision in the development process.

4.1.2 Marketing

Marketing is one of the major challenges of rural tourism in Great Zimbabwe. Respondents strongly believe that the tourists pass by their market because they

do not know about it hence they indicated that there is need for serious intervention in marketing and advertising. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) is the one responsible for marketing destinations. Respondents also pointed out some strategies of marketing they thought would be appropriate for the viability of their business for example placing clear sign posts that show location of things and places as well as use of internet and television advertising. Thus creating, a website for all surrounding tourism places is regarded as crucial.

However, the major challenge for this form of marketing strategy is individualism. Most projects are run and operated by individuals and this is supported by Brown (2008) who points out the lack of name recognition as a marketing challenge. Thus there is need for cooperation between the private and public sector so as to build up an image of their products. One strategy that can be helpful is networking and creating relationships.

4.1.3 Microfinance

Both the literature and the in-depth interviews suggest that the issue of micro finance to assist small and medium scale entrepreneurs is salient. From the findings, it is evident that programs such as Community Based Tourism (CBT) in the area failed because of insufficient financial support. Microfinance is the least available livelihood asset of the rural poor (Serrat, 2008). Respondents pointed out some challenges they have with micro finance in their projects. Projects such as crafts, poultry, irrigation, cooking, carpentry and more are run by individuals who struggle financially to the extent that they can hardly pay operating fees for their projects. Limited financial resources hinder the development of proper strategies to transform rural tourism.

Household and business owner respondents believe that the government has a lot of finances because they see many tourists coming into the area. They equate large number of tourists with profits. However, a government official shed light on this matter by indicating that

locals had no knowledge of how money is used and thus there is a misunderstanding where locals feel that government is not doing enough. Government has limited funds and relies on foreign investors who are not confident to invest apparently because of the political and economic crisis in the country. It is also costly to manage tourism. Management of vehicles, payment of wages, and maintenance of the monument and museum with a limited budget or finances is difficult. Moreover, the government is using a centralised system of managing finances that come from tourism proceeds throughout the country. If these funds were to be managed by locals, it would assist them in formulating a strategy that works for them in shaping their livelihood strategies and priorities through tourism.

4.1.4 Knowledge and Communication

It is clear from the accounts of the respondents that knowledge and communication is a major challenge for tourism development in Great Zimbabwe. Twelve percent (12%) of the household respondents do not comprehend why their livestock were confiscated and fined if found stray in the monument area yet the area is not fenced. Respondents feel it's a cruel money making scheme. Those that cannot pay the fine will have their livestock auctioned. Respondents are not aware that the tourist area should be kept in a natural state in order to remain a standard world heritage site. Knowledge of what tourism is all about and its benefits is limited thus making it difficult for communities to make it a livelihood priority.

Communication is the glue to sustainable networks and relationships in rural tourism promotion strategies. Thus some respondents suggested introducing feedback forums, workshops and awareness road shows in order to impart knowledge as well as create a proper two way channel of communication and discuss issues related to reducing poverty, enhancing livelihoods and involving locals in the development process. Evidence also shows that some respondents are not aware of what they stand to gain by

getting into the museum and monument at a given time, namely, the 18th of May every year. This opportunity enables them to appreciate the heritage and history and will incite them preserve and maintain it.

The government of Zimbabwe through tourism organisations is the sole driver of tourism related projects or programs. Government is responsible for infrastructure development such as building roads, registration of facilities or organisations in the tourism industry, enforcing local and international standards through the grading system in hotels, lodges and other accommodation services, training practitioners on how to maintain standards and that is, customer care, housekeeping, food and beverage service, and policy making. Research shows that rural tourism is likely to be unsuccessful without government support (Keyim, Yang and Zhang 2005).

At the time of writing, Zimbabwe has an inclusive government which is run by two conflicting parties. This has made management of tourism difficult since supporting either side of the political dices can be problematic. Thus even tourist visits have dropped in areas with political instability. The community is not actively involved in the development rural tourism except as the main source of labour. However, the community also showcases traditional dances and, sells farm produce and crafts work to tourists.

5. Conclusion.

The foregoing discussion has established that there is no strategy of developing and promoting tourism activities in order to sustain livelihoods and transform society economically and socially. There is no significant drive by government to guide and promote transformation. The study identified a number of challenges that face sustainable rural tourism in Zimbabwe, namely, political instability, community conflict, absence of marketing strategies, limited micro finance as well as knowledge and communication networks. The challenges have been analysed within the framework of transformative and sustainable livelihoods theories.

The study also found some challenges in the management of rural tourism in Great Zimbabwe. These challenges include conflict around ownership of Great Zimbabwe, lack of finance for the promotion of rural tourism and strained stakeholders relationship. Firstly, Great Zimbabwe area was found to be a contested landscape which makes it difficult to manage or develop. The village leaders fight among themselves in relation to who owns the monument. Secondly, the government has limited funds to support promote and develop of rural tourism. Thus it relies on foreign investors who are not keen to invest because of the economic and political environment. Thirdly, stakeholders such as local government and business owners do not have a good relationship. The local government is accused of charging hefty fees for rates, rentals and taxes without negotiating with the local people. Thus business owners believe that the local council is against tourism.

In light of the discussion of this paper, the government of Zimbabwe may need to consider developing a comprehensive rural tourism development strategy that places people at the centre with the objective of sustaining livelihoods. This strategy should include a communication plan, marketing plan, financial plan and management plan. This strategy should be a shared value strategy which means that rural tourism promotion will create benefits throughout the community and empower the poor and vulnerable groups in order to participate in the development of tourism. This can be achieved through cooperative development, business incubation and promotion of private and public partnerships.

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