

Tourism and Local Economic Development in King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality, South Africa: Stakeholder Perspectives

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Abstract

Over the past two decades a major burst of scholarship has occurred around tourism and local economic development futures in South Africa. This study addressed the question of key stakeholder perceptions of local economic development through tourism as the economic driver. In addition, it examines the challenges for enhancing the local development role of the tourism sector. Arguably, stakeholders at the coalface of tourism and local development issues, such as tourism business owners and local government officials, can offer useful insights into the everyday problems of maximizing the impact of tourism in local municipalities. The focus is on the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality (KSDM) in Eastern Cape province. The results are presented and dissected from 33 interviews conducted with private sector stakeholders as well as 20 government stakeholders. Stakeholder perceptions were investigated concerning three major themes: (1) the role and prospects for tourism and local economic development, (2) the use of municipal assets for tourism development; and, (3) the challenges facing tourism businesses for local economic development. The research findings underscore several factors that explain the decline of the tourism economy of KSDM since 2006 and reduced its contribution to local economic development. Central issues surround crime and safety, infrastructural deficiencies, and shortcomings of the local government itself, including its failure to maintain critical municipal assets essential for tourism development.

Keywords: Local economic development; municipal assets; tourism; King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality

Introduction

Local economic development practice and research debates in South Africa are highly relevant in the context of the global South in general and sub-Saharan Africa in particular (Nel & Rogerson, 2005, 2016; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2010a, 2012). Within Africa South Africa is viewed as a leader and innovator in terms of its policies and practices regarding LED with several of the country's policy innovations exported and adapted in other countries (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2010a). As pointed out by Hart, Booyens and Sinyolo (2020: 23) South Africa's National Development Plan for 2030 "entrenches the importance of a capable developmental state for the country's social and economic development" including at the third tier of local government. In terms of the Constitution, local governments in South Africa are given responsibility for local economic and social development (Venter, 2020). Some observers go so far as to assert that local economic development is at "the epicentre" of South Africa's growth (Majola, 2020: 511).

In view of the high level policy significance of the promotion and practices of LED in South Africa, in recent years the topic has continued to attract substantial research attention (Rogerson, 2014, 2019a; Venter, 2019, 2020). The essential challenges of designing ‘place-based’ planning policies, creating the appropriate business environment, and incorporating an innovation focus in LED have come under scrutiny (Ndabeni, Rogerson & Booyens, 2016; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2010b, 2011, 2012; Rogerson, 2014). The vital role of LED in poverty alleviation (Mlambo, Ndebele & Zubane, 2019) and the associated importance of the informal economy both in urban (Jokia, Swanepoel & Venter, 2021; Kanayo & Duncan, 2019; Masola, Rashied, van Rensburg & Venter, 2019) and rural areas of South Africa (Khumalo, Mthuli & Singh, 2019) have garnered a number of contributions. Likewise, a focus on support for small businesses in LED has attracted research attention (Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017; Baloyi, Swanepoel & Venter, 2019; Venter, 2020) including of issues around community-based township enterprises (Venter, Steynberg, Grundling & Feng, 2019). The activities and operations of Local Economic Development Agencies (LEDAs) are a significant matter in South Africa with lessons for other African countries (Khambule, 2018a, 2018b; Khambule & Gerwel-Proches, 2019; Lawrence, 2016; Lawrence & Rogerson, 2018, 2019; Venter, 2014). Other recent themes in LED research in South Africa include youth participation (Nxumalo & Matsiliza, 2020), the role of science, technology and innovation (Ndabeni, Tholo & Ndabeni, 2019), management information systems (Majola, 2020), and the need for the professionalization of LED (Pooe, 2019). Questions relating to appropriate institutional arrangements for LED (Matlala & Matsepe, 2020), evaluating policy implementation (Vhumbunu, Hlomuka & Rudigi, 2020) and the imperative for good governance are critical for successful LED futures (Munzhedzi & Makwembere, 2019; Venter, 2020). This said, in an important critical study the sustainability of the current local government system is questioned because of the existence of widespread state corruption and of rent seeking behaviour by local government officials (Lincoln, 2019). With the disarticulation of institutions and processes in South Africa, successful place based planning for LED is challenged by the technical skills deficit and poor development capabilities for implementing socio-economic development across the majority of local governments and most especially in small town and rural areas (Rogerson & Nel, 2016; Lincoln, 2019).

Tourism emerged as a critical focus for LED research agendas in South Africa (Kontsiwe & Visser, 2019; Rogerson, 2002, 2006; Visser, 2019). It has been recorded that since 2000 amidst worsening levels of unemployment across South Africa the majority of the country’s local governments have turned to tourism as a focus for local economic growth, job creation and small enterprise development. (Nel & Rogerson, 2016; Rogerson, 2020b; Visser, 2019). This raises the issue of municipalities appreciating the critical importance of maximizing their local municipal assets for tourism and local economic development (Dlomo & Tseane-Gumbi, 2017; Rogerson, 2020a; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020a, 2020b). The challenges of planning tourism destinations in South Africa have been well-documented by the national Department of Tourism (2018). As is shown by Koko & Hattingh (2019) the South African practice and experience around local economic development and tourism has been influential beyond the country’s borders with many planning concepts and frameworks watched closely for policy learning by other countries in the region of Southern Africa.

Over the past two decades a major burst of academic research has occurred around tourism and local economic development futures in South Africa. This has been stimulated partly by compelling evidence from the international experience that increases in local tourism have “positive effects on municipality total employment, population, local GDP and wages relative to less touristic regions” (Faber & Gaubert, 2018: 3). Route tourism and its impacts

was a popular early research focus in South Africa (Rogerson, 2004, 2009), a theme that has continued its policy relevance (Myles, 2013). The local development implications of tourism has been one of the most vibrant research foci in recent years for South African tourism geographers (Burton, Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Harmer & Rogerson, 2017; Rogerson & Visser, 2020). The topic has also been a crucial issue for vibrant debate in scholarship around sustainable tourism (Rogerson, 2020b). Among recent examples of work are those investigating the significance of private sector ecotourism stakeholders on local community development (Snyman, 2017), the growth in agritourism (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2014), local government's role in stimulating community-based tourism enterprises (Mnguni, Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2020), and, the impact of climate change for LED futures (Pandy & Rogerson, 2020; Rogerson, 2016). Local case studies of the challenges of tourism development to support inclusive local economies and especially job creation and poverty alleviation have been part of a burgeoning literature for the past two decades (see eg. Butler & Rogerson, 2016; Giddy, Idahosa & Rogerson, 2020; Goliath, Mxunyelwa, & Timla, 2018; Kontsiwe & Visser, 2019; Leonard, 2016; Meyer & Meyer, 2015, 2016; Mxunyelwa & Henama, 2019; Rogerson, 2002, 2019b; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019; Scholtz, 2019).

It is against this backdrop of scholarly concern for the role of tourism in local development in South Africa and of its relevance also for planning in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa that this research is situated. The study addresses the question of key stakeholder perceptions of local economic development through tourism as the economic driver. In addition, it examines the challenges for enhancing the local development role of the tourism sector. Arguably, stakeholders at the coalface of tourism and local development issues, such as tourism business owners and local government officials, can offer useful insights into the everyday problems of maximizing the impact of tourism in local municipalities. The value of conducting such stakeholder perception studies in South Africa is well exemplified by the recent work of Stoffelen, Adiya, Vanneste and Kotze (2020) concerning responsible tourism around Pilanesberg National Park.

At the outset it should be noted that the research discussed in this paper on stakeholder perceptions in the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality (KSDM) in Eastern Cape was conducted in the pre-COVID-19 era when greater opportunities existed for tourism to be a lead sector for local development than currently is the situation in the continuing COVID-19 crisis period for South African tourism (Department of Tourism, 2020; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020c, 2020d). The remainder of this paper is organized into four sections of material and is followed by a conclusion. The next section introduces the case study municipality, the research method and the stakeholders. The subsequent sections interrogate the findings in respect of three sets of issues, namely the role and prospects for tourism and local economic development in KSDM; the use of municipal assets for tourism development; and, the challenges facing tourism businesses for local economic development in KSDM. Throughout the discussion an attempt is made (wherever relevant) to differentiate issues for tourism development between the towns of Mthatha and Mqanduli (with Coffee Bay) as the nature of the tourism economies of these areas is markedly different. Mthatha is primarily a business tourism hub and Coffee Bay almost exclusively focused around leisure tourism (Nyikana & Sigxashe, 2017; Rogerson, 2019b).

Context and research approach

The research case study is King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality (KSDM) part of the O.R. Tambo District Municipality (DM) in Eastern Cape. The KSD municipality comprises a major section of what was the former Transkei from the apartheid period (Fig. 1). The municipality was formed in 2000 before the local government elections as a result of the merger

of the Mqanduli and Mthatha Transitional and Rural Councils. As of 2016 the municipality had a total population estimated as 490 000 of which 310 000 are classed as living in rural traditional settlements. The largest urban settlements are Mthatha, which was formerly named Umtata until March 2004, and Mqanduli (de Witt & Ndzamela, 2018). The KSD Municipality incorporates a small section of the Wild Coast and includes the coastal tourist hub of Coffee Bay and the nearby tourism attraction of the Hole in the Wall. The KSDM municipal economy is heavily weighted towards government services, finance and trade and in the context of high levels of unemployment there is an extensive informal economy (de Witt & Ndzamela, 2018). Overall, the municipality ranks as one of South Africa's most economically marginalized and disadvantaged in terms of critical indicators of poverty and unemployment. Accordingly, it falls within the classification of South Africa's distressed areas (see Rogerson & Nel, 2016). In light of the weak condition of the local economy there is an urgent need for successful local economic development programming. The municipality's institutional capacity is weak such that as in many parts of South Africa the practice of LED in KSDM has not been promising in its outcomes (de Witt & Ndzamela, 2018).

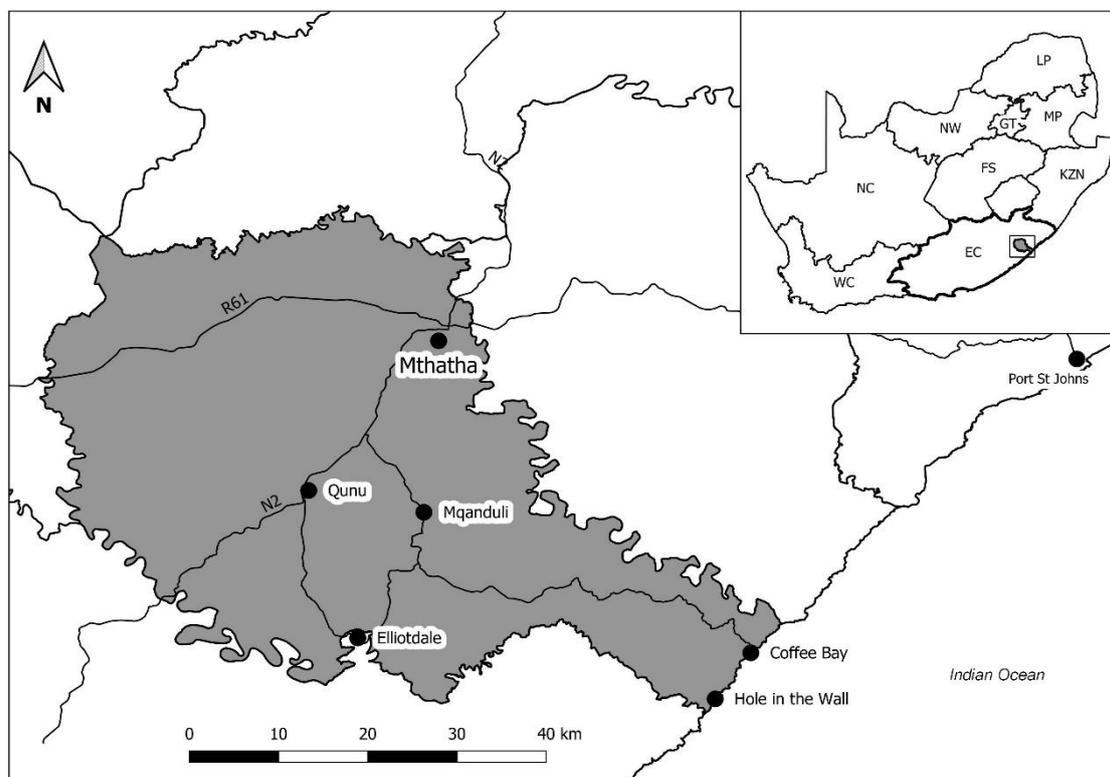


Fig. 1 King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, Eastern Cape (Source: Authors)

In common with the majority of South African local municipalities considerable optimism has been attached to the potential of the tourism sector for boosting local economic development in KSDM. This said, it is revealed that since 2006 the role of tourism in the local economy has been in decline (Rogerson, 2019b). This decline is manifested both in terms of a downturn in the numbers of recorded tourism trips to the municipality and estimated contribution of tourism to local Gross Domestic Product. In 2006 IHS Global Insight data recorded 332 000 tourist trips to the KSD; by 2018 this had fallen to 152 000 trips. Major downturns were recorded in domestic tourism across all major categories of travel; the largest falls were shown for visiting friends and relatives. In terms of local economic development impacts the most concerning declines, however, are those which were recorded for business

trips and - most important of all - for the category of leisure trips. It was shown that between 2006 and 2016 the numbers of leisure trips recorded for KSDM declined by 63% from 38 400 trips in 2006 to an estimated 14 000 trips a decade later. The net impact of these downturns in the KSD tourism economy is to temper the local development impacts in the municipal economy. The overall impact is evidenced in tourism’s declining contribution to local GDP since 2006 when it represented almost 4% to the local economy. By 2018 this share was reduced to just over 2% of GDP for KSDM. Despite this absolute erosion of the tourism economy of KSDM during the (pre-COVID-19) period 2006-2018 the potential and role for growing the tourism sector and its opportunities for furthering development in the KSD municipality is stressed in strategic municipal planning documents (King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, 2019, 2020).

A qualitative research approach was adopted applying semi-structured interviews which were conducted with both tourism businesses and local and provincial government officials. In total 53 stakeholders were interviewed; 62% of the interviewed stakeholders were tourism businesses (15 from Coffee Bay and 18 from Mthatha) and 38% were from the public sector (20 interviews in total). The government officials were from King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality (KSDM), O.R. Tambo District Municipality (ORTDM), Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA) and the Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT). Interviews were conducted in the two major towns of King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality during the periods July-November 2019 and February-April 2020. All the public sector interviews were conducted in Mthatha. Tourism businesses included in the research were accommodation establishments, attractions and tour guides. As the survey sought to capture the stakeholder perceptions about the prospects concerning the important leisure segment of tourism the decision was taken to purposely select for interview a cohort of leisure-oriented businesses which concentrated in Coffee Bay. As a consequence, in terms of the geographical division of private sector stakeholders 18 tourism businesses were interviewed in Mthatha and 15 in the Coffee Bay area.

During the data collection process it was confirmed that there are substantially more accommodation establishments in Mthatha as opposed to Mqanduli. At a period when tourism trips to KSDM were in actual decline it is observed that the total numbers of establishments which offer accommodation services had increased from a total of 104 establishments as recorded in 2009 (see Kyle Business Projects, 2010) to almost 200 by 2019 when the research was conducted. The study audit counted (at least) 166 operational establishments in Mthatha and 22 in Mqanduli (Coffee Bay). This near doubling of establishment numbers within a decade suggests that many of the ‘operational’ establishments – particularly in Mthatha - are ‘survivalist’ enterprises rather than full-time tourism businesses. The disconnect of many of these accommodation enterprises from the tourism economy was evidenced in the striking response offered by one Mthatha bed and breakfast operator to a request for an interview: “My child my business is about accommodating visitors and it does not have anything to do with tourism”. At Coffee Bay the hospitality service providers were exposed to leisure tourism and thus were more aware of tourism benefits as compared to Mthatha where much of the local tourism economy centres upon business tourism (see Nyikana & Sigxashe, 2017; Rogerson, 2019b).

Table 1: Details of the Interviewed Stakeholders

Respondents	Business/Institution and Location
Tourism Businesses	Eagles Nest Self-Catering Accommodation (15) {CB} Gogo’s Guest House Accommodation (3) {CB} Coffee Shack Backpackers (4) {CB} Nenga River Lodge (6) {CB} Le Pearl Boutique Hotel (17) {M} Green Park Lodge (19) {M}

	Nelson Mandela Museum (16) {M} Wamkelekile Self-Catering Accommodation (1) {CB} Coffee Bay Kayaking Tour Guide (7) {CB} Wild Coast .Com (8) {CB} Shoes Guest House (24) {M} Lat Grand Lodge (31){M} Our Home Bed and Breakfast (32) {M} Blue`s Elly Bed and Breakfast (18) {M} Nua Khoboka Bed and Breakfast (22) {M} Hill Side View Guest House (2) {CB} Sugar Loaf Beach House (13) {CB} Coffee Shack Tour Guide (11) {CB} Nwaz Bed and Breakfast (27) {M} White Clay Guest House (9) {CB} Real Vision Guest House (20) {M} Elizabeth Guest House (25) {M} Idwala Lam Guest House (23) {M} Ocean View Hotel (5) {CB} Geckos Bed and Breakfast (14) {CB} 2 On Timber Guest House (21) {M} Ayahluma Guest House (26) {M} Hole in the Wall Hotel (10) {CB} Kamnandi Cottages (12) {CB} Mayfair Hotel (28) {M} La Maison Guest House (29) {M} Lucolo Palace (30) {M} Savoy Hotel (33) {M}
Public Sector Officials	Director- DEDEAT (34) {M} Assistant Manager – DEDEAT (35) {M} Manager – ECPTA (36) {M} Tourism Development Officer –ECPTA (39) {M} Tourism Manager - O.R Tambo District Municipality (38) {M} Tourism Policy Officer- O.R Tambo District Municipality (41) {M} Tourism Development Officer - O.R Tambo District Municipality (37) {M} Tourism Intern- O.R.Tambo District Municipality (40) {M} Tourism Development Manager- KSDM (42) {M} Tourism Data Collector-KSDM (43) {M} Tourism Intern- KSDM (45) {M} LED Officer-KSDM (44) {M} LED Manager –KSDM (46) {M} LTO Member- KSD (50) {M} Asset Manager-KSDM (48) {M} Asset Senior Official-KSDM (49) {M} IDP Manager-KSDM (47) {M} Parks and Amenity Officer- KSDM (53) {M} Manager from Sport and Facilities-KSDM (52) {M} Officer from Sport and Facilities-KSDM (51) {M}

Source: Authors

Note: M indicates Mthatha and CB Coffee Bay

Table 1 provides the details of the stakeholders that participated in this study and differentiates them between private sector and public sector respondents. The names of the participants are not disclosed for purposes of confidentiality. In the presentation of findings the interviewed stakeholders are allocated identity numbers (ID) based on the order of the schedule of completed interviews. The discussion of the results of the interviews as presented below used content thematic analysis in order to identify and highlight common themes that emerged in interviews. As is standard practice with qualitative research and analysis, the findings are presented with the deliberate inclusion of many direct quotations from respondents.

Stakeholder perceptions: tourism as potential tool for boosting economic development of KSDM

The interviews with public sector officials and tourism business owners offered differing emphases about the importance of the tourism industry to the economy of KSDM. This section explores stakeholder perceptions about the role of tourism in the local economy of King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality and using tourism as a vehicle for local economic development. The

public sector stakeholder perceptions were clear that the tourism industry is significant for the economy of King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality as it improves livelihoods through the creation of employment opportunities. Much focus was given to the importance of the tourism industry as a vehicle for addressing poverty. Likewise, the majority of private sector respondents expressed similar sentiments. One self-catering accommodation owner opined that “tourism is significant as it allows local people to make money for themselves without depending on government” (1). Likewise, a tour guiding owner agreed that tourism is critical as it “is the main source of income in Coffee Bay. So a lot of families depend on tourism” (7). Arguably, the community of Coffee Bay is tourism-dependent and this status was acknowledged by one respondent that “tourism is important because it is the only industry that helps people to get food at home besides bottle stores and social grants” (8). Further, another interviewee reflected that:

tourism assists in changing the lives of people... when tourists visit a place they spend money buying souvenirs from local people and booking a place to sleep so it is important for the local economy (19).

Overall, the emphasis of private sector stakeholders was directed at tourism’s roles for job creation, poverty reduction, improving livelihoods and offer of entrepreneurial opportunities. Typical responses were as follows: “tourism is significant because it creates jobs... yes they might be small (in number) but do make a change in their lives” (31) and “tourism encourages entrepreneurs to open businesses and employ people to fight poverty” (32). As a whole, in considering the significant degree of tourism industry in the economy of KSD an unequal spread of benefits of tourism was understood. This said, the research disclosed that accommodation establishment owners from Mthatha did not always understand the relationship between tourism and the hospitality sector (except for the hotels). By contrast, at the tourism-dependent hub of Coffee Bay, business owners are well aware of the link between tourism and accommodation showing that the benefits of tourism are understood by private sector stakeholders at Coffee Bay.

Stakeholders were probed to determine their perspectives on tourism as a potential contributor for economic improvement in KSDM. The broad consensus across all interviewees – public and private sector – was that, based on the development history of the tourism industry in South Africa and its worldwide contribution, tourism could be utilised as a tool for local economic development. The majority of interviewees affirmed that tourism could boost economic development in the municipality. One example is the response given by a self-catering accommodation establishment owner who asserted:

Yes tourism can boost the economic development of KSD if people from communities can be well-educated about the benefit of the tourism sector and explain to them why it is important to welcome tourists (1).

A guesthouse owner observed:

tourism brings money and it creates jobs for the local people. If tourists can come in numbers, many people can be employed (3).

A tour guide owner explained that “there are people who are benefiting and making a living out of tourism” (7). The contribution of tourism to employment creation was noted also by public sector respondents:

most definitely tourism can help improve economic development, tourism is already contributing to job creation and that is helping in improving the economy (50).

Indeed, from the overall responses it was evident that the tourism industry is recognised widely for its role in employment creation although certain challenges were identified that constrain the progress of the industry in achieving its full potential. It was observed by stakeholders that Coffee Bay was perceived to be “the” (leisure) tourist destination as opposed to Mthatha. It was argued that “tourism can be used to improve economic development but KSD needs to plan and market tourism well and stop focusing on one place” (35). Another stakeholder from ECPTA expressed concern with regards to balancing tourist numbers in both towns maintaining that, “yes, if tourism products in both Mthatha and Coffee Bay can be properly packaged to balance visits in both towns” (39).

Some public sector stakeholders offered explanations for their opinion that tourism could be a vehicle for local economic development. For example, it was reasoned that:

tourism as a sector has foundation in the rich natural environment, the coastal environment and rich cultural and political heritage (political stalwarts such Dr Nelson Mandela, Winnie Madikizela Mandela have homes here). KSDM links to the rest of the Wild Coast region (34).

In addition, others stressed the availability and uniqueness of attractions in the KSDM: “yes, tourism can be used to improve local economy, the beautiful natural scenery, history and event opportunities that can attract tourists” (45). Respondents were requested to state their views on the role of tourism in poverty reduction. Two respondents from DEDEAT expressed their views as follows: “It depends how you structure it as transformation strategy, so it can play a role but you need to develop strategies to bring in the poor to mainstream of the sector” (34) and that “Yes, tourism creates employment opportunities so when people are employed poverty can be reduced” (35). The potential contribution of tourism to the poverty-reducing objectives of KSDM local economic development programmes was understood by the municipal LED officer who stated that “all of the LED programmes are implemented to fight unemployment, poverty and inequality among community members” (44). Despite the low numbers of tourism jobs in KSDM it was maintained by public sector stakeholders that tourism could help reduce poverty. The municipal asset manager for KSDM reflected that “employment creation can help reduce poverty which is what the tourism industry has been doing” (48). The essential need for tourism planning was flagged by one public sector stakeholder: “If tourism plans can be well implemented, at this moment tourism is helping to reduce poverty but it has a chance to contribute more” (50). The LED officer for KSDM pointed out the institutional relationship of tourism for planning and argued that “tourism is part of the LED programmes that have been identified to enhance economic development” (44).

Stakeholder perceptions concerning tourism and municipal assets

The leveraging of municipal assets is viewed as essential in order to promote tourism and local economic development in South Africa (Dlomo & Tseane-Gumbi, 2017; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020a, 2020b). The findings from the interviews with KSDM stakeholders showed awareness of the range of municipal assets that could be leveraged for the growth of tourism and support for the objectives of local economic development. Many of the listed municipal assets represent some of the major tourism attractions for leisure visits to either Mthatha or Coffee Bay. The following specific municipal assets were identified by various stakeholders

as vital for tourism development in the municipality, *inter alia*, Nelson Mandela Museum, Mthatha Museum, art centres, beaches, sport fields (Rotary and Mthatha 2010 stadium), Mqanduli park, Savoy park and gardens, Mthatha town hall buildings, Hole in the Wall, Mthatha dam, Luchaba and Nduli nature reserves, local camping sites, tourism information centre, Mapuzi cliff and caves, swimming pools (Mthatha town and Ngangelizwe township), and Mthatha airport.

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) (2015) argues that South African municipalities are faced with countless challenges with regards to the management of various municipal assets, including for tourism. Previous research on the utilization of municipal assets for local economic development revealed that South African municipalities face multiple challenges with regards to the management of available resources and issues of service delivery to support local economic development. In the context of East London it was established that the main challenges with regards to the utilisation of municipal assets for tourism development were lack of promotion and marketing, lack of safety and security around municipal assets, lack of asset maintenance as well as lack of communication between departments within a municipality (Dlomo & Tseane-Gumbi, 2017). In the case of King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality several similar issues were disclosed through the stakeholder interviews as well as supported by field observations concerning the generally poor state of municipal assets. Many (if not most) municipal assets in KSDM are left dilapidated and have become a safe house for criminal activities.

The array of problems surrounding municipal assets in KSDM were highlighted by several respondents:

- “Lack of safety and security, road access, facilities such as toilets, lack of information, no signage and lack of maintenance” (4).
- “KSD lacks functionality, lack of monitoring and lack of funds” (6).
- “Lack of safety and there are no working ablution facilities” (9).
- “Some of these facilities are dirty. For example, the park near the beach and in Hole in the wall park entrance is damaged so the challenge is taking care of these facilities” (11).
- “Maintenance is an issue, safety and there is no proper marketing to show or educate locals about the importance of these places for tourism” (19).
- “Corruption which leads to high crime rate. All we care about is who is going to own it so they end up if ignoring these assets, lack of maintenance” (20).
- “Ignorance and lack of capacity to make use of these assets” (25).
- “Safety and security is an issue. For example, lifeguards at beaches are employed only in December” (1).
- “There is a Tourism Information centre that is not fully utilized as sponsored by National Tourism Department” (34).

The above views as expressed by stakeholders about the poor condition of municipal assets in support of tourism were confirmed by field observations undertaken during the research which revealed the deteriorated condition of municipal assets. Field observation from Coffee Bay confirms lack of maintenance of important KSDM municipal assets such as municipal parks and beaches. A local guesthouse owner identified the impact of municipal neglect of local assets. It was maintained there is “lack of safety and there are no working ablution facilities” (9). At Hole in the Wall once again there is evidence of lack of proper maintenance of the available municipal assets that are important and utilised for tourism activities. From the perspective of private sector tourism operators it was argued that:

KSDM should assist to improve the quality of service, Hole in the Wall is not well utilised but it is one of South Africa's attractions that is well known. We do hikes and safari drives but there are no ablution facilities to enhance this attraction (7).

The lack of safety at beaches was an issue not just for tourists but also for the local community. The coastal area belongs to the community and local people use the beach. The availability of lifeguards by KSDM only at busy seasons – often only in December – was a matter of concern. Another issue was municipal neglect of the plight of informal traders who sell hand-made art work or beads next to the beach at Coffee Bay. Unlike the situation in Mthatha where informal traders in the central business district have been provided with shelters no such municipal provision has occurred at the municipal beach asset. As a consequence of the lack of protective shading Coffee Bay informal traders are forced to stay under the trees when it is hot and during rainy days thus reducing their business opportunities. A local guest house owner pointed out the problems faced by these informal tourism entrepreneurs: “Lack of cleanliness in these facilities and lack of shades or big umbrellas for beads sellers” (2).

The stakeholder interviews with public sector officials disclosed several underpinnings for the underperformance of municipal assets for tourism development in King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality. According to the Director of DEDEAT: “there is no plan and these assets have not been prioritized in budget allocations for services and security” (34). In addressing the shortcomings of using municipal assets it was argued by the Director of DEDEAT that “KSDM can develop a simple plan work with DEDEAT and ECPTA... The District Municipality can provide support, develop tourism enterprises and link them to KSDM plan, project development and budgeting for such”(34). Common themes in the interviews especially those conducted with public sector respondents related to issues of limited funding allocations for tourism and minimal funding for asset maintenance:

- “The challenge is the limited budget to maintain these assets. Some of these assets are not clean or even safe” (40).
- “Lack of planning, monitoring, lack of safety and security and limited funds” (45) and
- “Limited budget to maintain the assets” (44).

Contested views emerged among the group of public sector stakeholders concerning the critical issue of finance and its availability. From the perspective of the Director of DEDEAT:

resources can never be enough but prioritizing with what you have is key here. The province has resources. ECPTA is one of the institutions that supports KSDM and funding programmes for tourism enterprises are there (34).

Another DEDEAT stakeholder affirmed resources are available albeit that “one of the challenges is the issue of budget allocation and these assets are not well marketed” (35). There is a (mis-) perception that if a town such as Mthatha has the offices for the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA) that the agency is responsible for the promotion of the town. This mis-perception was clarified when an official from ECPTA stated that “our role is to market the province not local municipalities” (36). It was made clear also by the Tourism Development Officer of ECPTA that each local municipality is responsible for marketing its own assets: “KSD is responsible for marketing their own products because ECPTA is responsible for the province as a whole” (39). From the perspective of municipal stakeholders engaged with tourism the typical responses were as follows:

- “Resources are available but limited” (40).
- “We do not have enough resources” (45).
- “No, we do not have enough resources and the tourism unit is always complaining about limited budget” (51).

Overall, therefore, it is evident that KSD municipal assets – including several which are potentially valuable for tourism – are in a state of the neglect or disrepair with minimal attention accorded to the upkeep and maintenance of these vital assets. This situation results in the deterioration of useful assets and further can cause threats to tourist safety in certain areas. Structural issues behind this situation include lack of planning, absence of or incapacity to implement plans as a result (in part) of limited budgetary commitments to tourism as well as to the maintenance of municipal assets in KSDM as a whole.

Stakeholder perceptions concerning the challenges of developing tourism for LED

This section analyses the critical challenges that were raised by the stakeholders concerning tourism as a driver for local economic development in King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality. Overall, the stakeholder perceptions survey confirms the existence of a set of major challenges for growing tourism as a basis for promoting local economic development. In addition, it shows certain different constraints were identified as problems in the coastal Coffee Bay tourism node as compared to Mthatha. Across the interviews with both public sector and private sector stakeholders several common themes were evidenced as the overriding constraints upon tourism development in the municipality as a whole. The highlighted issues from private sector stakeholders emphasized (a) crime and safety; (b) infrastructural shortcomings, including basic service delivery; (c) poor relationship between the municipality and local communities; and, (d) specific issues about weak or limited marketing of the tourism assets of the municipality. These themes will be demonstrated in the presentation of stakeholder viewpoints.

Arguably, issues of crime and safety and of infrastructural shortcomings were overwhelmingly the leading issues that were observed. These themes are demonstrated for example in the following statements by tourism business owners in response to questions about the major constraints on tourism development in the municipality as a whole:

- “High crime level and lack of proper infrastructure- potholes” (16)
- “Water being turned off without informing us and the bad conditions of road, worse when it is heavy rainfall” (14)
- “KSD has an issue of many unemployed youths, who now survive by robbing people. You could see a big truck from Boxer store coming to deliver stock but when it stops on the road, the guys will come and use their knives to open the plastic covering the truck to remove items such as rice, or milk so that they can make a quick buck. So safety is lacking in Mthatha” (22)
- “Service delivery, water and infrastructure, roads and network” (1)
- “Lack of safety in beaches and infrastructure road access” (2)

The high levels of crime experienced in Mthatha were pinpointed both by accommodation providers and managers of its major attractions (most notably the Nelson Mandela Museum) as negatively impacting leisure tourism. Typically, a bed and breakfast owner stated that “the crime rate inhibits people to come to Mthatha because they are scared of being hijacked or robbed” (18). Similar sentiments were expressed by a lodge owner: “The problem with tourism growth in Mthatha is that there are not many tourists’ attractions and the crime rate is too high so tourists are scared to explore products that we have here so when they do visit they go to

Nelson Mandela Museum... so we get day tourists rather than tourists that sleep over” (19). Representatives of the Nelson Mandela Museum, the most iconic tourism attraction in Mthatha, stated as follows in terms of major constraints: “crime level, lack of proper infrastructure and limited budget for tourism” (16). The bad reputation of Mthatha for safety and crime was evidenced by an incident which occurred during the field research. On the 12th February 2020 a group of Russian adventure sport tourists had their expensive kayaks and trailer stolen from the major shopping mall in Mthatha (Loewe, 2020).

Key public stakeholders acknowledged also the limitations on tourism development that arise from crime and safety considerations. The Manager of ECPTA highlighted the following constraints upon maximizing the potential of key tourism assets in the municipality area: “crime, poor infrastructure affect tourism but opportunities like Nelson Mandela Museum, rich in biodiversity, Mandela footprints are here” (36). Likewise, the LED officer for KSDM stressed the opportunities for tourism expansion as “the town is the gateway to most attractions in the Wild Coast region and the fact that Nelson Mandela was born in Mthatha is a huge opportunity” but at the same time cautioned about serious “safety concerns” in Mthatha (44). As a whole, public sector stakeholders stressed missed opportunities for tourism development in Mthatha as a result of crime and safety issues which often were associated with infrastructural failures. The Director of DEDEAT stated: “the town needs attention in terms of ambience and services; deal with crime in the town and develop the Nelson Mandela museum as product” (34). An Assistant Manager at DEDEAT similarly argued the “crime rate is too high, the town is not clean but the town hosts a national museum which is well recognised by international tourists and there is an airport” (35). The Manager of ECPTA expressed the view “no tourist facility or activity, crime even though the town is a gateway to Coffee Bay” (36). A tourism intern in the O.R. District Municipality echoed these statements as follows: “lack of tourism package, poor infrastructure, crime and lack of marketing but the advantage is that Mthatha is the gateway to places like Port St Johns, Coffee Bay, Hluleka and Mdumbi” (40). The lost opportunity from Mthatha’s role as gateway to other destinations was a theme that emerged in several interviews. For example, the Tourism Development Officer of ECPTA stated the challenges for Mthatha were that the town was “overcrowded, crime and lack of proper marketing although the town is a gateway to most destinations of the Wild coast region” (39). Arguably, as a result of the unacceptably high crime levels tourists choose safer destinations to travel to with the result that there are more day visitors in Mthatha (mostly on a stop-over at the Nelson Mandela Museum) than recorded tourists who spend a night in the town.

Infrastructural issues were identified as another core challenge that impacts tourism development across the King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality albeit these concerns were most strongly a focus for stakeholders in the Coffee Bay area. The lack of proper road infrastructure has been of concern for tourism businesses in Coffee Bay for more than a decade. Mbontsi (2008) drew attention to its negative effects upon tourism businesses in Coffee Bay noting that when tourists experience infrastructural problems they get upset to an extent that they cancel their bookings and cut short their visits. The situation is little changed as tourism business owners in Coffee Bay are still identifying as a constraint for tourism development the issues about infrastructure. Typically it was stated by one local accommodation provider that “road infrastructure is a problem as it is hard for people to travel and KSD is not well promoted” (1). The nature of the town or destination has an impact on the development of infrastructure that is available to support tourism development. In this regard, the Director of DEDEAT argued that, “this is a rural town and has never seen upgrade of services and infrastructure... the opportunity lies on the fact that it is a route to the coast but the municipality must deal with traffic congestion” (34). Government officials acknowledged the limitations placed by

inadequate infrastructure on tourism development in the coastal area: “lack of proper road infrastructure to support tourism but the town has potential to grow tourism due to its popularity” (35). The LED officer for KSDM confirmed also the challenge from “limited infrastructure to encourage tourism development and the opportunity is that the town is rural in character and has natural attractions” (44). In the KSDM the existing road infrastructure is deteriorating and in urgent need of maintenance with the consequence that visitors cut short or cancel trips due to poor road conditions. This said, the improvement of road infrastructure has begun at least from Coffee Bay to the Hole in the Wall. The construction of this road potentially will assist tourism business owners to retain their guests. Accommodation service providers in the area stressed that “during rainy days travellers cancel their tours to the Hole in the Wall due to the slippery road and too much mud which prevents vehicles from moving smoothly” (4).

Poor working relationships and levels of trust were often highlighted as a problem between businesses and the local municipality. These issues were raised both by respondents in Mthatha and Coffee Bay with interviewees stating the officials lack of willingness to address key issues that impact negatively upon their businesses. These concerns are evidenced by the following views as expressed by accommodation owners:

- “Lack of communication between municipality and the people” (5)
- “Lack of communication between KSD and community people” (21)
- “Lack of good working relationship between officials and community, corruption and lazy officials in the KSD tourism office” (26)
- “Municipality is 100% uninterested in helping us with any sort of problems such as rubbish collection, water is mismanaged, lack of planning, lack of information about water schedule. KSD has spent zero money on infrastructure, no assistance to SMMEs” (13)

Representative stakeholders at the Nelson Mandela Museum reinforced this point concerning the limited assistance provided by the local municipality to tourism businesses pointing to “crime and annoyed KSD officials when consulted about issues that affect tourism businesses” (18). Indeed, widespread dissatisfaction was expressed about lack of support from local government towards the tourism industry and its problems. Of the 33 interviewed businesses asked whether local government provided any support for their businesses 70 % responded negatively. Among those businesses that did acknowledge support it was mainly in terms of marketing. One guesthouse owner pointed to “the lack of support from the local government, water and infrastructure” (2). In particular, tourism business owners in Coffee Bay area expressed feelings of neglect by local government because they consider that they are treated differently as compared to Mthatha tourism business owners. It was made clear, for example, that Coffee Bay tourism business owners do not have a municipal truck to collect dust bins as compared to Mthatha so they must pay for a private contractor to collect the dustbins to keep the area clean. Business owners were told by KSD that the reason for not having a truck to collect dustbins is because “we do not have title deeds so we do not pay rates as compared to business owners in Mthatha” (8). The issue of corruption in the KSDM municipality was another matter of concern. An accommodation provider at Coffee Bay observed the need for officials to “to show an interest and help this town, follow up on implementation, stop corruption - officials now want incentives for them to do their jobs” (13). In terms of further challenges for tourism development several interviewees identified the limited or poor quality of tourism marketing, an issue common to many South African small town municipalities (Kontsiwe & Visser, 2019). Accommodation service providers expressed their dissatisfaction with “the lack of proper packaging of products” (31). Overall, across the municipality whilst there were common concerns expressed by stakeholders certain differences were discerned between the Mthatha and Coffee Bay areas. When comparing challenges of

Mthatha to those of Mqanduli, violent crime is high in Mthatha whereas Mqanduli mostly has petty crimes. Other challenges are similar such as the issue of packaging tourism products and limited marketing: “Lack of facilities such as toilet near the beach but Coffee Bay is home to Hole in the Wall which is a well-known attraction” (39). Finally, as the interviews with accommodation providers were still continuing into March-April 2020 the impact of COVID-19 inevitably was of major concern. At Coffee Bay the owner of The Beach House stated that the establishment had sixteen employees; when the COVID-19 pandemic hit traveler numbers dropped drastically and the owners had to retrench employees in order to cope with the shrinking industry.

The group of identified challenges set the context for a final group of questions to interviewees concerning opportunities and potential interventions to support tourism development in the KSDM. Stakeholders put forward a number of views. The Director of DEDEAT considered that: “just need to develop the existing local and traditional events; upgrade the tourism products that occur in this KSDM e.g. Hole in the Wall and Coffee Bay and work closely with the ECPTA to facilitate marketing” (34). Different options were mentioned for the domestic market. The Manager of ECPTA argued the need to promote “business tourism, heritage tourism, and marine and coastal tourism” (36). Similar views were given by the ECPTA Tourism Development Officer: “heritage and marine tourism because oceans economy has been introduced as another industry that can employ local people” (39). Several stakeholders indicated that the policy focus should be on promoting domestic business tourism: “business tourism, because most people travel to Mthatha for meetings or trainings” (50) and that “KSD should focus on business and event tourism to attract a larger market” (35).

In terms of seeking to grow international tourism in KSDM different suggestions and recommendations were given. The relationship of Mthatha to the legacy of Nelson Mandela was emphasized. For example, the Tourism Development Officer of ECPTA suggested:

making use of the Qunu village to promote rural tourism by using the home stays so that tourists can get the real experience and not stay in luxury hotels” (39). The LED officer considered that “international tourists are interested in natural attractions and rural tourism- learning more about culture (44).

The Assistant Manager of DEDEAT recommended as follows: “packaging the iconic name of Nelson Mandela by using Qunu, the footprint and using King Sabata Dalindyebo as great place to sell culture and heritage” (35). The Director of DEDEAT pointed to another potential unrealised opportunity in KSD that “Township tourism has not been explored” (34).

From the perspective of private sector stakeholders the suggestions for improving the local tourism economy often were centered on basic infrastructural improvements, strengthening the local business environment and better marketing:

- “Support us by sponsoring us with rubbish bins, collect rubbish bins and inform us when the water will be off”. (3).
- “KSD has supported our business with exposure and marketing. But in future we would like them to assist us with training such as business management” (6).
- “KSD should assist by doing proper marketing of Coffee Bay to showcase all the products that are available”. (10).
- “The municipality can support my business by marketing or promoting it on their websites and brochure for us to get exposure. It would be nice to be given black plastic bags and have the truck to pick up dustbins more often. We get busy worse when we have an event, so Friday becomes far for dustbin pick up and we end up picking it ourselves to make our streets clean”. (17)

Overall, the interventions proposed from the group of private sector tourism businesses largely focused on the municipality improving its basic services and addressing the pressing issues of crime and infrastructural deficiencies. Indeed, most recommendations voiced by stakeholders related to elements of basic service delivery such as “collection of rubbish bins, providing basic services such as street lights, the electricity goes off too many times, when there is a storm, it goes off” (4). These recommendations are of concern because all these suggestions are issues that affect the daily operation of tourism businesses. One stakeholder mentioned that “support us by taking care of the dustbins on time, clean the streets and have a clean place to attract people and make them feel safe” (25). Finally, a hotel manager in Mthatha pointed out that the municipality could assist tourism development most of all simply “by ensuring that the town is clean and safe and putting measures for reducing crime” (28).

Conclusion

In the pre-COVID-19 period the tourism sector was of rising significance for catalysing local economic development (LED) opportunities in South Africa (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). The nexus of tourism and LED thus consolidated as a vibrant focus for both scholars of local economic development and of tourism studies (Rogerson & Visser, 2020). One aspect of that nexus, namely the issue of key stakeholder perceptions, was the focus of this investigation in the peripheral destination of King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality, Eastern Cape. The results were presented and dissected from a total of 53 interviews which were undertaken with private sector and government stakeholders. Stakeholder perceptions were investigated concerning three major themes namely: (1) the role and prospects for tourism and local economic development in KSDM; (2) the use of municipal assets for tourism development; and, (3) the challenges facing tourism businesses for local economic development.

Arguably, the research findings from stakeholders point to several factors that have underpinned the decline of the tourism economy of KSDM since 2006 and reduced its contribution to local economic development. The case of KSDM supports the view of South Africa’s national Department of Tourism (2018) that there is frequently a lack of awareness and understanding of tourism as a sector among top management in local government and an associated lack of resources dedicated to tourism, both financial and human resources. Central factors have been the persistent problems surrounding crime and safety, infrastructural deficiencies, and shortcomings of the local government itself, including its failure to maintain critical municipal assets essential for tourism development in the municipality. The relative importance of these factors was observed as uneven between tourism development taking place in the Mthatha area as compared to Coffee Bay. This study demonstrates that stakeholder research studies can offer useful local insights into policy debates around tourism and local development. Indeed, the changing perspectives of tourism stakeholders in a post-COVID-19 environment merits a place on the future research agenda of South African scholars who are interested in the nexus of tourism and LED.

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