

# Community Perceptions on the Socio-economic Impacts of Wildlife Tourism from the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in Botswana: The Case of Tsabong

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## Abstract

The overall purpose of the current study was to investigate the socio-economic contributions made by wildlife tourism in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park to a community living adjacent to the Park. Following a mixed methods approach, the study used Tsabong, a community in Botswana, as the case study area. Interviews were conducted with key tourism stakeholders and semi-structured questionnaires were distributed to the residents involved. The study found that (i) wildlife tourism has contributed to employment creation and economic development in Tsabong, (ii) wildlife tourism has increased the community's sense of pride in their culture and preservation of local culture because of wildlife tourism, however, also revealed that (iii) local community participation in wildlife tourism and conservation projects of the KTP is generally low and (iv) positive economic benefits of wildlife tourism are not seen by the entire community. The main recommendations of the study centre on facilitating community participation in the collaborative management of the Park.

**Keywords:** Wildlife tourism, community perceptions, employment generation, social impacts, culture

## Introduction

Protected areas in developing countries have become major tourism attractions offering wildlife viewing and outdoor recreational activities (Mbaiwa & Hambira, 2020). The tourism industries of many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been based on their wildlife and wilderness landscapes, making wildlife tourism the largest growing form of tourism in the continent (United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2019). As such, wildlife tourism is a key export sector in many countries in the region, with notable examples including Tanzania, Botswana, Kenya and South Africa (Moswete, Thapa & Darley, 2020). In Botswana, the wilderness experiences and protected areas are internationally acclaimed and considered as key destinations to visit in Southern Africa (Mbaiwa, 2017). Following the mining sector, the

tourism industry in Botswana is second largest economic sector of the country and has grown exponentially in the past decade (Mbaiwa, 2017). While wildlife tourism is strongly centered in the northern parts of Botswana, the government's priority has been to diversify to other regions of the country to spread the socio-economic benefits of the sector (Manwa, Saarinen, Atlhopheng & Hambira, 2017; Mbaiwa, 2017; Nare, Musikavanhu & Chiutsi, 2017). Often, this form of tourism is interlinked with conservation and local development. Indeed, a burgeoning amount of literature affirms wildlife tourism, occurring in protected areas, as integrating broad socio-economic issues such as poverty reduction and community livelihoods (Black & Cobbinah, 2017; Mbaiwa, 2017; Moswete et al., 2020; Parker, Thapa & Jacob, 2015; Sebele, 2010; Stone & Nyaupane, 2018). To a large extent, this emerges from the increasing recognition that protected areas, and subsequently wildlife tourism, is dependent on the viability and health of the natural environment, resources, and wildlife, which communities depend on for their survival (Black & Cobbinah, 2017; Sene-Harper, Matarrita-Cascante & Larson, 2018). Wildlife tourism is, therefore, argued to hold significant potential in generating much needed economic relief in such communities (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2011). Mbaiwa (2017) makes note of many communities in northern Botswana that have made use of wildlife tourism to generate substantial economic returns from the industry and support community development projects. This paper departs from the assertion from Eshun and Tichaawa (2020), underscoring the importance of examining the performance of wildlife tourism in providing socio-economic returns on a case by case basis in Sub-Saharan African communities.

Several studies posit that while tourism in developing countries is praised for the contribution towards their national economies, the sector often results in adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts on host communities (Akyeampong, 2011; Black & Cobbinah, 2017; Mbaiwa & Hambira, 2020; Nare et al., 2019; Spenceley, Hambyalimana, Tusabe & Mariza, 2010). In agreement, Akyeampong (2011) opines that the expansion of the tourism sector in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa has led to tourism stakeholders, such as scholars, government, and practitioners, to narrow their examination of tourism on a macro-economic level. As such, Black and Cobbinah (2017) highlight the importance of examining the impacts of wildlife tourism on a grass root level, specifically in host communities residing near protected areas owing to that they are most vulnerable to tourism development and conservation activities. More so, these communities have had to realign their livelihood activities to support the conservation activities within these protected areas (Butcher, 2013; Harilal & Tichaawa, 2018). It is against this background that the study draws attention to Tsabong, a community in the Kgalagadi District of Botswana. Unlike many other tourism communities in Botswana, wildlife tourism in Tsabong emerged from the village being a transit site to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, where much of the wildlife tourism experiences are based on catering for tourists on route to the protected area (Tichaawa & Lekgau, 2020). The overall purpose of the present study was to examine community perceptions towards wildlife tourism, from the Transfrontier Park, by assessing their attitudes against the socio-economic impacts of the sector.

### **Literature review**

In many rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, community livelihoods is dependent on the natural resources within their local and regional vicinity (Pour, Barati, Azadi & Scheffran, 2019; Soe & Yeo-Chang, 2019; Tichaawa & Lekgau, 2020). Eshun and Tichaawa (2020) concur wildlife tourism in protected areas as a win-win strategy for economic development, in host communities, and conservation. Indeed, the sector has been underlined to address the two competing goals of protected area management, that is, improving livelihood and protecting biodiversity (Spenceley, Snyman & Rylance, 2017; Stone & Nyaupane, 2017). It was only in



the late 1900s that the inclusion of community livelihoods in protected area management was recognized by governments in the region (Sene-Harper et al., 2018). This resulted from the failure of the previous exclusionary approaches to conservation, which had removed communities from natural asset rich areas (Thondhlana, Shackleton & Blignaut, 2015). Chiutsi and Saarinen (2019) not only contend this approach to have failed to protect biodiversity but had impoverished adjacent communities, circumstances which persist at present. As such, many governments in Sub-Saharan Africa have utilized wildlife tourism in protected areas as a means of achieving sustainable and inclusive development in adjacent host communities as well as support the conservation activities (Chilembwe, 2020; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2019; Markwell, 2018; Moswete et al., 2020; Shale & Rantso, 2019). In achieving this sustainable development, the role of the community had been reassessed. Indeed, the concept of community participation in wildlife tourism development and conservation continues to receive research attention in many countries in the region (see Bello Lovelock & Carr, 2016, 2017; Butcher, 2013; Chiutsi & Saarinen, 2017; Eshun & Tichaawa, 2019, 2020; Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017; Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). These studies have argued the value and significance of community participation in wildlife tourism and conservation as the basis for success in both sectors. In concurrence of this, Chilembwe (2020) asserts community perceptions and attitudes towards the socio-economic impacts of wildlife tourism can be instrumental in fostering community participation and managing efficient and sustainable conservation.

Decentralised wildlife tourism, which places communities in control of the planning and development of the sector, is argued to act as a poverty reduction tool (Cobbinah, Amenuvor, Black & Peprah, 2017; Markwell, 2018; Spenceley et al., 2010; Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013; Thondhlana et al., 2015). Strickland-Munro and Moore (2013) broaden on this assertion by explaining that positioning communities this manner enables them to access to the wildlife tourism sector as well as the protected area, thus taking account that poverty is further defined by from the lack of access to resources. Poverty reduction is therefore opined to stem from the tangible economic benefits of wildlife tourism, including job creation and benefit-sharing (Cobbinah, Black & Thwaites, 2015; Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). Several studies have examined the contribution of tourism towards employment generation in communities adjacent to protected areas. In particular, these studies have examined wildlife tourism in the Okavango Delta (Mbaiwa, 2017), the Chobe National Park (Black & Cobbinah, 2017), the Liwonde National Park in Malawi and Ngoma Safari Lodge in Namibia (Snyman, 2014), and the Kakum Conservation Area in Ghana (Cobbinah et al., 2017). Beyond economic benefits, wildlife tourism is further underscored to include the host communities in the management of wildlife tourism and the protected area, and in the decision making (Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). Further, for traditional communities, the benefits of wildlife tourism extend to maintaining their cultures and traditions, protecting spiritual and heritage sites, and involvement in biodiversity conservation (Tichaawa & Lekgau, 2020; Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013).

However, despite the significance placed on wildlife tourism and community development research into host communities and protected areas in developing countries have identified several constraints that have affected how these communities benefit from the sectors. Predominantly, these constraints include the institutional arrangements present, policies and legal systems, marginalization of communities from planning and development decisions, lack of tourism awareness and capacity, centralized approaches to tourism development, and a lack of communal sense of ownership over wildlife tourism and protected areas (see Bello et al., 2016; Cobbinah et al., 2017; Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2019, 2020; Manwa et al., 2017; Mbaiwa & Hambira, 2020; Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2011; Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017;

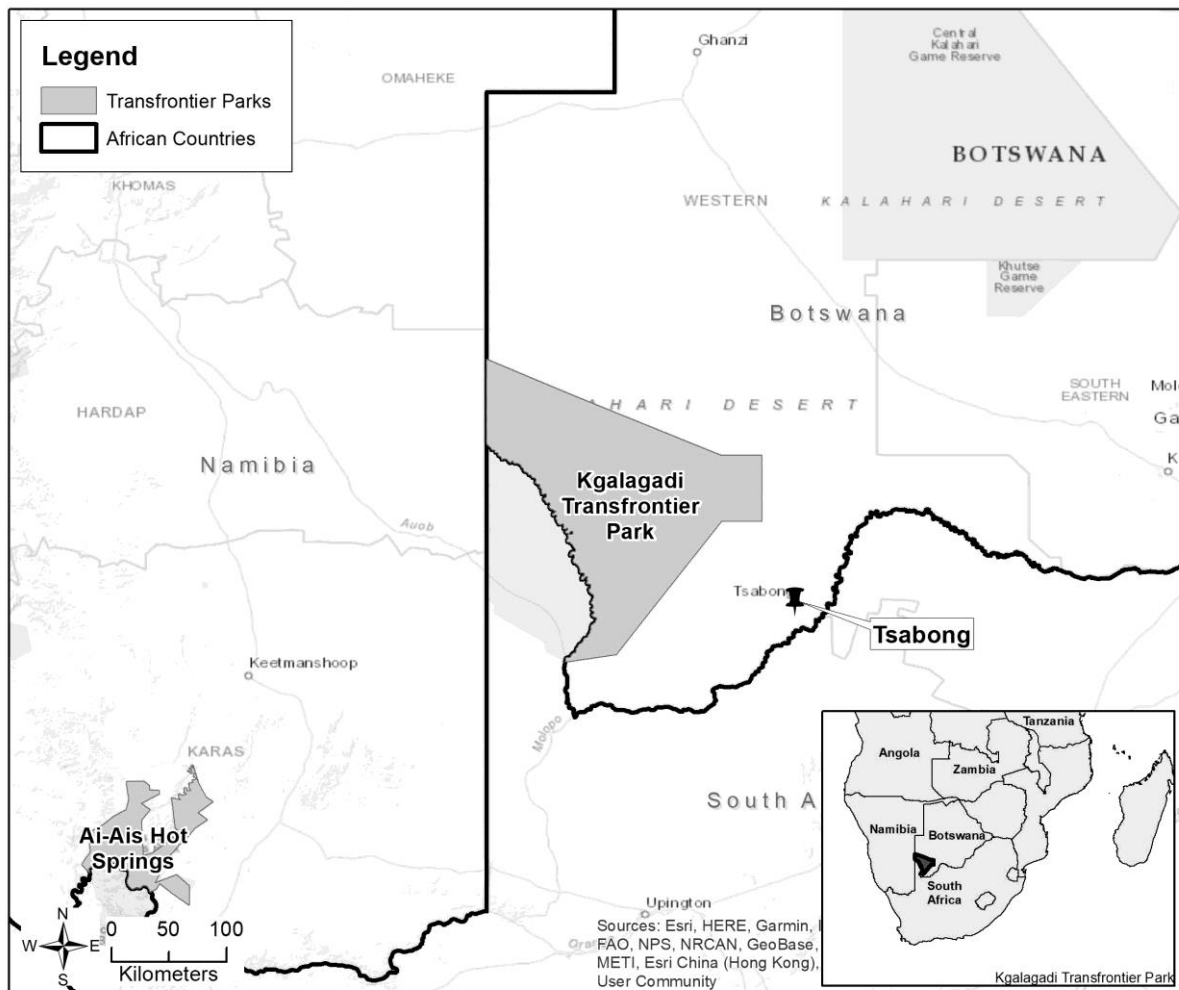
Stone & Stone, 2011; Thondhlana et al., 2015). Taking account of the above challenges, several countries have adopted the use of Community Based National Resources Management (CBNRM) programs (see Markwell, 2018; Tichawa & Mhlanga, 2015). In the case of Botswana, the policies position communities and CBNRMs program as being crucial to protected area management (Manwa et al., 2017). These policies include the 2000 Tourism Master Plan, the 2003 National Ecotourism Strategy, the 2007 CBNRM Policy, and the Tourism Policy (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2019). A review of the policies indicates that community trusts and community based organisations (CBOs) are legal prerequisites for communities to collectively participate in wildlife tourism through their allocated Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and protected areas (Moswete et al., 2020; Shale & Rantso, 2019). CBNRM programmes are positioned as alternative livelihood diversification options for communities to introduce new revenue streams into the community and obtain the promised benefits of tourism (Shale & Rantso, 2019). It is important to note that while these CBNRM programmes are beneficial in positioning communities as a core component of wildlife tourism, they are still plagued by some challenges (Mbaiwa, 2015).

### ***Wildlife tourism in the Kgalagadi District of Botswana***

The Kgalagadi District of Botswana is endowed with rich wilderness features that encompass low vegetation, woodlands, and white pans surrounding the sand dunes and grasslands (Saarinen, Hambira, Athlapheng & Manwa, 2012). The wildlife of the region includes the springbok, wildebeest, gemsbok, and red hartebeest (Saarinen et al., 2012). Further, the tourism assets in this region extend to the cultural heritage to the host communities, including their dance, tradition, music, history, food, handicrafts, folklore, and local food (Moswete et al., 2020). The Kgalagadi is the home to the San/Basarwa, the BaHerero, BaKgalagadi, and many other diverse cultural groups (Saarinen et al., 2012; Moswete et al., 2020). Above all, this district is most known for, and associated with, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park which is jointly owned and managed with South Africa (Moswete et al., 2020). The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is a major attraction of the Kalahari region of both countries, drawing thousands of domestic, regional, and international tourists annually to view both the large and small mammals housed in this transboundary protected area. Moswete et al. (2020) opine the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park an important conservation agency as well as a source of livelihood for surrounding communities. Indeed, the Government of Botswana has set to leverage the natural and cultural capitals of the Kgalagadi District to develop a viable wildlife tourism sector (Manwa et al., 2017; Moswete et al., 2020).

Tsabong is the largest community in the Kgalagadi District and acts as the administrative capital (Moswete & Thapa, 2018). As illustrated in Figure 1 below, Tsabong acts as a transit site for visitors entering the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park at the Botswana entry (Mabuasehube gate). While some studies were of the view that this transit nature of Tsabong can overshadow the village's individual tourism development, it can also provide a unique opportunity to harness the tourism pull of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park to diversify the tourism product of the village (see Manwa et al., 2017; Moswete, Thapa & Child, 2012; Saarinen et al., 2012). Indeed, from as early as 2003, the Government of Botswana have planned to leverage the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park to tap into the immense wildlife tourism potential of the Kgalagadi District, specifically through community based ventures and activities (Moswete et al., 2020). Inasmuch as the development of wildlife tourism in Tsabong is a consequence of the natural appeal of the region, it is also led by the need to alleviate the dire socio-economic condition of this community, including high levels of unemployment and limited income generating activities (Moswete et al., 2020). Therefore, the emphasis is on utilizing wildlife tourism for community development.

The past two decades have illustrated impressive efforts on developing tourism in the Kgalagadi District. The Government of Botswana has made some infrastructural improvements to facilitate tourism in the region, including road improvements, telecommunications, and electricity. The transit nature of the community has largely influenced the development of tourism establishments and activities. Presently, wildlife tourism is in its early stages of development, with tourism supply largely dominated by the accommodation sector, comprising of mostly guesthouses.



**Figure 1.** Map of Tsabong  
 Source: Authors

Further wildlife tourism experiences offered include the safari drives, 4x4 drives, and camel safaris. In 2012, the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO) began partnering with the Tsamama community trust and established the Tsabong Camel Park. The introduction of the camel park was to argue the significance, and potential, of wildlife tourism to the Tsabong community as well as to benefit from resources inherent in the region (Seifu, Angassa & Boitumelo, 2018). At the time of the study, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, the Tsabong Camel Park, and the accommodation sector within the community were the largest wildlife tourism employers. The above discussion highlights the importance of understanding community perceptions towards wildlife tourism owing to that it may influence community participation in the sector, as well as that it highlights what has been achieved (and what may still need to be) from developing wildlife tourism.





## Methodology

The current study adopted a mixed methods research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The use of a mixed methods research design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon as it entailed the collection of diverse views on the impacts of wildlife tourism. The quantitative portion of the study had consisted of the residents of Tsabong as the study population, as this group is the foci of several policies and strategies in leveraging wildlife tourism from the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park for the socio-economic development of the community. As such, their views on the impacts of tourism appeared crucial to explore. A simple random sampling procedure was employed to distribute a structured questionnaire. The total population of Tsabong is 9471 people (Statistics Botswana, 2012), the study has then targeted 100 households, where the head of household or adult representative were asked to complete the survey. The questionnaire was developed from the review of relevant wildlife tourism, protected area and host community literature. Accordingly, the questionnaire measured key demographic variables and posed 10 statements relating to the socio-economic impacts of wildlife tourism. To gauge community attitudes to the statements posed, the questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

For the qualitative portion of the study, interviews were held with key informants. This second population group included tourism stakeholders responsible for promoting and developing wildlife tourism in the region. Further, community representatives were included in the study population. Using purposive sampling, 7 interviews were held with these stakeholders, which are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Key informants interviewed**

| Key informant                     | <i>n</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Tourism department                | 1        |
| Business owners                   | 2        |
| Conservation representatives      | 1        |
| Tourism marketing representatives | 1        |
| Community (CBOs) representatives  | 2        |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>7</b> |

The questions posed to these key informants sought to explore their views on the contribution of wildlife tourism on the community, particularly in terms of jobs and local development, the growth prospects of the sector, and the nature of involvement of the community with the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Interviews took approximately an hour each. Data collection took place in May 2019. The questionnaires collected were analysed through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. Descriptive analysis was employed to generate the socio-demographic data of the study respondents. In analyzing the impact statements, the mean and standard deviation is used to the specific statements. The interviews were recorded (with prior permission obtained), transcribed, and analysed thematically, which is discussed below.

## Findings and discussions

As the study intends on unpacking this community's perception on the socio-economic impacts of wildlife tourism, the discussion below details findings from the questionnaire, which are discussed alongside the findings revealed from the interviews. To interpret the findings, the socio-demographic profiles of the respondents are outlined below.

### *Overview of residents' socio-demographic profile*

As shown in Table 2, there was an even split between the males and females included in the study. The table further shows that majority of the respondents were between the ages 25-40 years old, resided in Tsabong for more than 15 years (54%), completed their high school qualification (87%), and less than half of the respondents were employed (46%). From the socio-demographic of the respondents being skewed in this regard, data collected and analysed inclined towards individuals who have lived in the community for most of their lives, meaning they are well aware of the progression of the impacts of wildlife tourism in their locale and have an understanding on the change an economic sector, such as the impact that wildlife tourism can have on their community.

**Table 2. Overview of the socio-demographic profile of the respondents**

| Socio-demographic variable | Key findings  |
|----------------------------|---|
| Gender                     | 50% male, 50% female  |
| Age                        | 18–24 years old (19%); 25–40 years old (60%); 41 years old or older (21%)   |
| Length of residence        | 0–10 years (35%); 11–15 years (11%); 15 or more years (54%)   |
| Education                  | No matric (13%); matriculation (52%); post-matriculation certificate/diploma/degree (24%); postgraduate qualification (11%) |
| Employment                 | Unemployed (23%); employed full-time (46%); employed part-time (7%); self-employed (11%); retired (3%); student (10%)       |

### *Wildlife tourism impacts*

Table 3 below shows the means and standard deviations obtained from the key statements posed to the study respondents.

**Table 3. Residents' perception of wildlife tourism impacts**

| Socio-economic wildlife tourism impacts   | Mean | Std deviation |
|---|------|---------------|
| Wildlife tourism has generated jobs for residents in the community.   | 3.72 | 1.038         |
| Wildlife tourism has created entrepreneurial opportunities in the community.  | 3.19 | 1.096         |
| The economic benefits are equally shared among members of the community.  | 2.92 | 1.297         |
| Wildlife tourism only benefits a few individuals within the community.  | 3.20 | 1.142         |
| Wildlife tourism encourages the preservation of the local culture.  | 3.90 | 1.082         |
| Wildlife tourism has encouraged the transfer of local knowledge and practices from one generation to the next in the community. | 3.75 | 1.017         |
| Due to wildlife tourism, we are proud of our culture and heritage.  | 3.99 | 0.949         |
| We are not included in the decisions regarding wildlife tourism and conservation in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.           | 3.53 | 1.244         |
| We are not informed of wildlife tourism and conservation projects and initiatives involving the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.   | 3.43 | 1.265         |
| The benefits of wildlife tourism are not seen in the community.   | 2.86 | 1.346         |

At a glance, the respondents view the social impacts to be of higher value, compared to the economic impacts of wildlife tourism. As reflected in Table 3 above, the Tsabong community is of the view that wildlife tourism has led to an increase in jobs in the community (mean=3.72). Employment generation is often one of the most highly acclaimed economic impacts of wildlife tourism in communities such as Tsabong, with notably limited economic opportunities available in the region (Moswete et al., 2020). This finding is in line with several other studies in Botswana, where wildlife tourism has created employment opportunities for communities residing near protected areas (see Black & Cobbinah, 2016, 2017; Mbaiwa, 2015, 2017; Snyman, 2017). More often than not, this employment is a result of the lodges, guesthouses and other types of accommodations built, augmenting the village as a transit site to the

Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Such views were articulated in the interviews where some respondents pointed to the accommodation sector as that which largely contributes to employment generation in Tsabong. For instance, one respondent stated:

Yeah, most of the people here found work because of wildlife tourism. In Tsabong, the [number of] hotels is increasing. It is not like long ago when they were only [a] few. Today, this [growth] means [that] the community we [as the community] see a lot of jobs.

The growth in the wildlife tourism industry has led to an increase in the job opportunities available in the community. It is important to note that this growth has been facilitated by government initiatives that have aimed to encourage community members to take part in wildlife tourism. Interestingly, while the interviews pointed to the increase of the accommodations in Tsabong, the survey illustrated residents to believe wildlife tourism has not created many entrepreneurial opportunities (mean=3.19). Such findings can be a result of that wildlife tourism in Tsabong is largely low scale (Saarinen et al., 2012), which may suggest that the community may not be aware of the opportunities to still be capitalised in wildlife tourism. The lack of awareness on wildlife tourism and conservation opportunities has been noted by numerous scholars (Bello et al., 2016; Cobbinah et al., 2015; Manwa et al., 2017; Mbaiwa, 2017; Moswete et al., 2012). On this aspect, some of the interview respondents had this to say:

In Tsabong you have the Camel Park, where tourists go quad biking and sand dunes. That's the only thing. There is not much you can do here.

But here in the Kgalagadi [District] there is nothing. The area is very big. It's a large area compared to other areas [in the country], but I can still count the number of facilities.

I think there are still opportunities. For example, accommodation, transportation, camping sites, maybe one can think of a restaurant, spas. It is only that people are unaware of these things.

The last quote had been by a community member already involved in wildlife tourism illustrating that those in the sector are more aware and open to wildlife tourism development than other community members. Additionally, as the focus of the tourism and conservation policies is on CBNRM programs or community trust, it can be postulated that much of the focus, for governing authorities, may be on mobilizing the community, on a collective level, on wildlife tourism opportunities, particularly through the use of community owned WMAs. It is only a few programs geared towards individual members of the community, particularly from the tourism department through their workshops and awareness campaigns. Moreover, it is important to consider that the central goal of wildlife tourism and conservation in Botswana is environmental protection and that most tourists visit the country seeking wilderness experiences, which may result in there not being many tourism establishments. This largely influences the extent to which this sector contributes to job creation and poverty reduction in the community. Therefore, the findings on job creation and entrepreneurial development should be considered in the context of the small scale nature of tourism development in the region.

Regarding the widespread of benefits accrued in wildlife tourism, the quantitative findings show many respondents were neutral in this regard (mean=2.92). This was affirmed by the responses to the next statement, where respondents were more inclined to the opinion



that wildlife tourism only benefits a few individuals in the community (mean=3.20). These views are consistent with much literature on wildlife tourism and conservation in Sub-Saharan Africa (see Moswete et al., 2012; Sinha, Qureshi, Uniyal & Sen, 2012; Stone & Nyaupane, 2017; Cobbinah et al., 2015; Tichaawa & Lekgau, 2020), in which many communities residing near protected areas only receive nominal benefits from wildlife tourism and conservation. Further, regarding the unequal distribution of economic benefits, some studies postulate the different levels of affluence in the community to play a role in the ability of members of the community participating in wildlife tourism and conservation. Such views were affirmed in some of the interviews, in which respondents pointed to that wildlife tourism only benefits those with wildlife tourism establishments, which comprise a minority of the community. For example:

In Tsabong, it is the ‘businessmen’ that really benefit from wildlife tourism because it is actually them that can build these lodges. But as for us individuals, it [seems] that we don’t really benefit as much as the businessmen.

In the case of Tsabong, the unequal distribution of positive economic returns from wildlife tourism may further be a result of capacity and resources in participating in wildlife tourism. From the above quote, the revenues generated from wildlife tourism in Tsabong are largely from the accommodation sector, which is privately owned by individuals with the capital to invest in wildlife tourism. Such findings were found by Bello et al. (2016), in that the elite few in the community, who are wealthier, educate and more vocal dominate tourism development. In the case of Tsabong, where the poverty and unemployment levels in this community are high (Manwa et al., 2017; Saarinen et al., 2012), it is reasonable to find that benefits are only felt by a few individuals as the majority of the community cannot afford to establish their own tourism developments. Such findings are particularly worrisome as wildlife tourism and conservation in Botswana are planned and implemented in a manner that seeks to provide economic returns for host communities near protected areas to offset the livelihood loss as a result of the non-consumptive status of protected areas. Wildlife tourism and conservation, therefore, have been positioned as an alternative means for the community to receive an income from the natural resources. Conversely, the present study’s findings illustrate that wildlife tourism in Tsabong is dominated by an elite few and, coupled with the scale of this development, suggests that wildlife tourism has not made a huge impact. In such cases, Saarinen (2007) cautions against building high expectations on the impact of wildlife tourism. Indeed, it is important to take into account that the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, similar to other protected areas in Botswana, practices low volume high value (LVHV) tourism.

Following, the study sought to examine community perceptions towards the social impacts of wildlife tourism. The inclusion of culture and tradition in wildlife tourism has been advocated for by several studies (see Aswani, Albert & Love, 2017; Moswete et al., 2020; Soe & Yeo-Change, 2019; Thondhlana et al., 2015; Tichaawa & Lekgau, 2020). This results from the recognition that the natural resources that are the attractions in wildlife tourism share a symbolic and cultural tie with the host community. Further, wildlife tourism in Botswana is adopted as a means to engender positive attitudes and support to conservation, in which Manwa et al. (2017) affirm the inclusion of indigenous knowledge into conservation practices as being an integral component. The present study shows the Tsabong wildlife tourism in Tsabong to have a positive impact on the cultural preservation of the host community (mean=3.90). The interviews with the members of the community broaden on this impact, highlighting the interest and curiosity of tourism on the community’s culture:

With wildlife tourism here in Tsabong, we see a lot of different people and [inasmuch as] we learn their culture and they also learn our culture.

Further, the interviews with conservation authorities revealed the inclusion of culture in their interactions with the community:

When introducing, or training conservation practices [in host communities] it is very important that we always cover cultural and traditional issues. Because conservation is not a new practice to them.

Moreover, one informal business owner explained:

The tourists passing by here [Tsabong] see me standing here [in my stall]. And when they pass by, they [often] buy our traditional stuff [crafts], but [more] especially the African attire.

Stone and Stone (2011) are of the view that the cultural aspects of the communities can support wildlife tourism in host communities near protected areas, as they ensure sustainable income and add to the commercial activity in the community. Beyond the addition to the economic value, the interest of tourists on host culture has provided a powerful incentive to preserve and continue to practice traditions. Thondhlana et al. (2015) provide the example of the San community on the South African of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, highlighting the community's strategic use of their history and stature (complementary to the Park) to augment their tourism activity and continue living traditionally while gaining some income.

The present study, therefore, finds the Tsabong community to generally be of the view that wildlife tourism has a positive contribution to their culture, in that it the residents were of the view that wildlife tourism has increased their cultural pride (mean=3.99). As seen from the quotes above, culture and the appreciation of local culture by tourists of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is a prominent feature of wildlife tourism from the perspective of the host community. Indeed, this can positively shape the residents' perception of wildlife tourism and how to engage in wildlife tourism. However, it is important to note that this community, as with many others in the region, still largely exercises their traditional practices, and has some cultural events, such as the Khawa festival and the Polka dance. The study findings, therefore, suggest wildlife tourism to augment the already existing cultural pride in the community and is not the basis of this pride.

Following, the questionnaire sought to examine whether wildlife tourism has led to the transfer of traditional knowledge and practices from one generation to the other. The study found the respondents generally agree to the statement (mean=3.75). At the time of the study, the development of wildlife tourism was to be in conjunction with conservation, in that wildlife tourism had been positioned to be a vehicle onto which communities can participate in natural resource management within their locale (Atanga, 2019; Tichaawa & Lekgau, 2020). As such, the inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge was a large part of the conceptualization of wildlife tourism and conservation in these communities. This, in particular, can strongly influence community participation in wildlife tourism in Tsabong, which directly correlates to the sustainability of tourism in the community. Sustainability in wildlife tourism is, in part, measured by the extent of community involvement and ownership of tourism development in their locale (Akyeampong, 2011), the inclusion of their local culture and tradition in wildlife conservation and tourism is an important aspect that can still be maintained with future generations, according to the present study findings. This finding further supports the affirmation that wildlife tourism preserves local culture.

Keeping in line with the inclusion of this host community in wildlife tourism, the study additionally uncovered the residents' perception of collaborative management of wildlife tourism and conservation in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The current study found residents playing a passive role in the decision taken in the two sectors regarding the protected area (mean=3.53). Additionally, the respondents agreed that they were not informed about developments and projects (mean=3.43). Unfortunately, such findings characterize many host communities around protected areas in Southern Africa (see Cobbinah et al., 2015; Moswete & Thapa, 2018; Moswete et al., 2020; Sebele, 2010), where communities are marginalized in wildlife conservation and tourism planning and developments. Many studies have espoused the role of the community in the collaborative management of the protected areas, particularly as to tackle social issues such as poverty, people-park relationships, job creation, and sustaining community livelihoods (Cobbinah et al., 2017; Harilal, Tichaawa & Saarinen, 2018; Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2019; Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2011; Moswete et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2015; Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017). However, the present study argues more to be done in this regard.

Interestingly, the interviews with conservation and tourism governing authorities reveal a contrasting view. For instance, these interview respondents explain their process of engaging with this community and the influence they have towards decision making:

Before I even write the proposal for any development conservation activity, they first have to buy into the idea, because at the end of the day I'm going to implement it with them, I'm going to training them. So if they say they don't want that kind of training they won't come to the training. For example, if they don't want a tuck-shop that I want to build there, in their area, they won't give me land to do that. So that, they have that control.

So we conduct demonstrations. Which is just going there and to saying [to this community] come up with smaller initiatives that you can do and benefit something from that [in terms of] income or anyhow, and at the end of the day they know that this is continuing to save one elephant at a time.

Further, a representative from the tourism governing authority stated:

After the government gives them leases [to the WMAs], whatever [developments] they do, they have to submit what you call a management plan. So management plan is obviously just taking stock of what is there, and see what is feasible to do there. So in supporting whatever idea [they have] we want to implement in a way that normal consumption has changed. They are now using wildlife to get an income and not getting it as food. So they are still in total control, except that governments have to put in the regulations.

Interestingly, a community member, part of the Tsamama Trust highlighted:

The community has a say in wildlife tourism because the Tsabong Camel is run by the Tsabong Trust in partnership with the BTO, so we have a trust board. So they [community] meet with us [trust board] so that we can contribute. The meetings are every month.

The above quotes by the governing authorities contend the inclusion of the communities' view into the development and management of wildlife tourism within the region. However, to understand this disjuncture between the two parties, it is important to refer back to how communities participate in wildlife tourism and conservation in Botswana, in that CBOs and community Trusts are the main vehicles driving this participation (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2011; Moswete et al., 2020). Further, an earlier study by Lekgau and Tichaawa (2019) found these entities to be perceived as separate entities in the communities. This may explain the differences in opinions regarding community involvement in wildlife tourism and conservation. However, such findings may also question the extent to which wildlife tourism has enabled communities to diversify their livelihood as communities are only able to do so when they are involved in the development, and decision therein, of wildlife tourism in their locale, in which the survey suggests otherwise.

Lastly, the study examined the overall benefit of wildlife tourism in this community. Interestingly, the study found the community to be divided on whether wildlife tourism benefits are seen in the community (mean=2.86). Studies argue residents' perception of tourism development to be dependent on the nature of the socio-economic impacts of tourism (see Black & Cobbinah, 2018; Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Kock & Ramayah, 2015; Stone & Nyaupane, 2018). This present study found that although wildlife tourism does indeed contribute to job creation and entrepreneurial development, this is largely occurring at a low scale. Such views can be understood by considering Mbaiwa (2017) underlining tourism in Botswana to be of LVHV and Saarinen et al. (2012) underscored tourism development in the Kgalagadi District to be in its developing stages, and therefore, low scale. Communities are then of the view that wildlife tourism does not contribute much, as evident by one community member who stated that 'I think it [wildlife tourism] is helping but not that much.'

## Conclusion

The present study examined the Tsabong community perceptions on the socio-economic impacts of wildlife tourism from the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that wildlife tourism has become a crucial economic sector that can provide much needed job opportunities in communities such as Tsabong. Further, the study found the social impacts of wildlife tourism as having a significant influence in shaping community attitudes, which suggests the value of linking wildlife tourism to the cultural aspects within the community. However, while the study underscores the significance of these social impacts (particularly related to cultural appreciation, preservation, and pride), community ownership, and involvement remains a barrier to realizing the full potential of this form of tourism owing to that this community is still largely marginalized from the management of wildlife tourism and conservation in the region.

This present study presents some valuable theoretical contributions as it adopts an impact based assessment to evaluate the contribution of wildlife tourism on the Tsabong community. Owing to the shift in attention to southwestern Botswana, there has been some studies that have focused on unpacking the people/park relationship between the Tsabong and wider Kgalagadi District communities and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (see Manwa et al., 2017; Moswete et al., 2012; Moswete & Thapa, 2018; Moswete et al., 2020). Such studies have evaluated the factors influencing community support for wildlife conservation and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and have postulated community based wildlife tourism to be an important livelihood option for the adjacent communities. The current study furthers the understanding of community attitudes and perceptions towards wildlife tourism and conservation in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park by providing new empirical evidence on the benefits and costs of wildlife tourism in this region, particularly highlighting the importance of

social impacts of wildlife tourism. Lastly, it is important to note the limitation of the present study, particularly the small popular sampling size. The researchers suggest future research in this community to incorporate a larger sample size, in exploring community attitudes towards wildlife tourism in Tsabong. Further, new research in wildlife tourism based communities in Botswana should consider evaluating the establishment, management and monitoring of CBNRMs, particularly in southern Botswana.

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