



Challenges and Opportunities for 'little brothers' in the Tourism Sector Matrix: The Case of Local Communities around Great Zimbabwe National Monument

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Abstract

Pro-poor tourism seeks to improve opportunities and earnings of the socio-economically disadvantaged communities. This research explored ways in which poor and often marginalized local communities around the Great Zimbabwe National Monument can benefit through pro-poor tourism. The study adopted a mixed methods research framework. Research methods included key informant interviews, a questionnaire survey, participant observations and desktop research. The research findings indicate that local communities are deriving economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits from the tourism economic sub-sector. The benefits accruing to these local communities are derived from selling artefacts, handicrafts, agricultural produce and fruits to tourists as well as often lowly paid wage employment in hotels and lodges. There are also spill-over benefits as improved transport and communication services as the area is linked by an all-weather tarred road from Masvingo City and partial cellular network provision respectively. Moreover, some of the villagers are also involved in fishing in Lake Mutirikwi and its feeder rivers. However, accrual of the stated benefits remains unsatisfactory due to a plethora of factors including poor participation by the local villagers in community-based tourism projects as a result of lack of entrepreneurial skills, technical knowhow, capital and linkages to the mainstream tourism market. The study recommends a multi-stakeholder approach in building the capacity of local communities in terms of tourism product development and linkages with the mainstream tourism market. This maximization of benefits will enable the local villagers to play a stewardship role towards cultural and biophysical resources found in their area thereby contributing to employment and sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: pro-poor tourism, community-based tourism, heritage management, local communities, Great Zimbabwe

Introduction

Pro-poor tourism seeks to improve opportunities and earnings of resource challenged socio-economically disadvantaged communities. This paper aims to explore ways in which poor and often marginalized local communities around the Great Zimbabwe National Monument can accrue socio-economic benefits through tourism. Local communities as custodians of tourist attractions receive few benefits from tourism development (Goodwin, 2009). They play a peripheral role in the tourism sector. In the past, tourism has been promoted as an industry with potential to expand national economies by including marginalized people as beneficiaries in this expansion though



working in the sector as sources of cheap labour for the large multi-national tourism corporates (Ashley & Roe, 2002; Clancy, 1998). Against this background pro-poor tourism can be the panacea for local communities' development and environmental sustainability (Chiutsi & Mudzengi, 2012; Scheyvens, 2007; Snyman, 2017). It can therefore be argued that local communities should be at the centre of tourism management so as to derive socio-economic benefits from tourism ventures.

Through pro-poor tourism, local communities can benefit through economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities that the industry creates (Ashley & Roe, 2002). Thus, the tourism industry has great potential to reduce socio-economic disparities within society and contribute towards achieving sustainable development (Scheyvens, 2007; Kapil & Pierre, 2017; Snyman, 2017). The Zimbabwean government also view sustainable tourism as a tool for socio-economic development and poverty reduction.

Zimbabwe was also the pioneer in Southern Africa with its Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) which have been emulated by other countries in the region as a means of enabling the sustainable conservation of natural resources through ensuring that local communities benefit from resources found in their area (Swatuk, 2005). However, most CAMPFIRE projects in the country are now facing viability problems due to the socio-political crisis and unstable macro-economic environment in the period after the year 2000 (Chiutsi et al, 2011; Mudzengi & Chiutsi, 2014; Balint & Mashinya, 2006).

Local communities in Zimbabwe are not accruing real and effective benefits from the tourism economic sub-sector. As a result, disparities in terms of how different sections of society benefit from the tourism sector matrix still remain pronounced in the country. There is therefore need to find the effective beneficiaries from the tourism industry by class, gender and ethnicity (Chiutsi & Mudzengi, 2012). It is evident that local communities' participation in tourism entrepreneurship remains a big challenge and there is need to capacitate these communities so that they improve their tourism business acumen.

The disempowering of indigenous and local communities living close to heritage sites such as Great Zimbabwe National Monument, Matobo National Park and Domboshava National Monument in Zimbabwe as well as Thulamela in South Africa started during the colonial period (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008; Ranger, 1999; Miller, 1996; Nemaheni, 2002). Through colonialism the local communities lost rights to their heritage. In the European colonial conquest of various parts of the world, the newcomers evicted local and indigenous communities from their lands (Ranger, 1999; Watkins, 2000; Rowley, 2002), sometimes excluding them from benefiting from their heritage using property rights (Shepherd, 2003).

In Zimbabwe with the demise of colonialism in 1980 the new independent majority government did not immediately include local communities in managing and protecting their heritage (Chirikure, 2005; Manyanga, 2000; Chipunza, 2005). However, this exclusion led to increasing anger and resentment among local communities precipitating a policy change by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) which began a programme of using heritage sites to empower and give voice to previously disadvantaged groups (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). In South Africa with the fall of apartheid in 1994 there were calls for the empowerment and fair treatment of local communities and indigenous peoples in cultural heritage management. It is therefore against a background of earlier exclusion that the South African National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 was promulgated, partly to empower previously marginalized local communities (Delmont, 2004; Hall, 2005).

At Domboshava National Monument this attempt to empower previously disadvantaged groups led to local communities being allowed to conduct rainmaking ceremonies in a geological tunnel



at the rock art site under the watchful eyes of NMMZ officials (Pwiti & Mvenge, 1996). Further, local people were employed as tour guides and allowed to economically benefit from the site by selling curios to visitors (Pwiti & Mvenge, 1996; Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). At Great Zimbabwe National Monument the descendants of the Mugabe clan that occupied the site in the nineteenth century are being employed as stonemasons using their traditional knowledge of stonemasonry to restore the collapsed walls (Fontein, 2006). Also, traditional ceremonies are being performed at the site. Further, local communities also exhibit Shona traditions and perform traditional dances to visiting tourists at the Shona Village, which was created to add an extra attraction to the monument (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008; Ngoro and Pwiti, 1997). Elsewhere in Southern Africa, the Zimbabwe-culture site of Thulamela in South Africa, located in the Kruger National Park, now part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area, provides another example of attempts to empower local communities previously marginalized by colonial and apartheid laws using heritage sites as economic, cultural and educational resources (Miller, 1996; Nemaheni, 2002). In the 1990s when a decision was made to rebuild the stone walls at Thulamela, local communities were involved from the beginning and schoolchildren were often brought to the site to learn more about its cultural significance (Nemaheni, 2002).

These attempts at community involvement in archaeology and cultural heritage management have not been significantly effective as heritage managers have been unwilling to give up some of their powers and have continued to view local communities only as passive partners. In other cases, local communities have considered their views and concerns as more important than those of heritage managers. This has resulted in uneasy relationships and conflicts between heritage managers and local communities in Zimbabwe and South Africa (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008; Nemaheni, 2002).

Further, the utility of community involvement in archaeology and cultural heritage management has been diminished by the problems associated with defining what a community is, coupled with the existence of multiple communities with multiple interests. The existence of so many communities surrounding a single heritage site makes it difficult to satisfy everyone (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008).

Due to the value of heritage to all humanity, there are no legitimate and illegitimate communities in heritage management (Appiah, 2006). However, the concept of the universal value of heritage has been criticized as a form of neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism whereby the elites and cultural resources managers exploit host communities in the name of advancing science and the frontiers of knowledge (Watkins, 2003).

It is therefore imperative that community involvement in cultural heritage management at Great Zimbabwe National Monument be enhanced as local communities that own and have an interest in the heritage, should be playing an important role in the management of the site and be able to benefit more. This research therefore seeks to find ways in which marginalized local communities around the Great Zimbabwe National Monument can accrue effective economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits from the heritage and tourist resource. The research explores opportunities which can be opened up for marginalized local communities around the national monument in the tourism value chain.

Area of Study

The study area (see Figure 1) is situated about 30 kilometres south-east of Masvingo City. The Great Zimbabwe monuments are a unique testimony to the civilization of the Shona between the 11th and 15th centuries. The ancient city which was an important trading centre was the largest



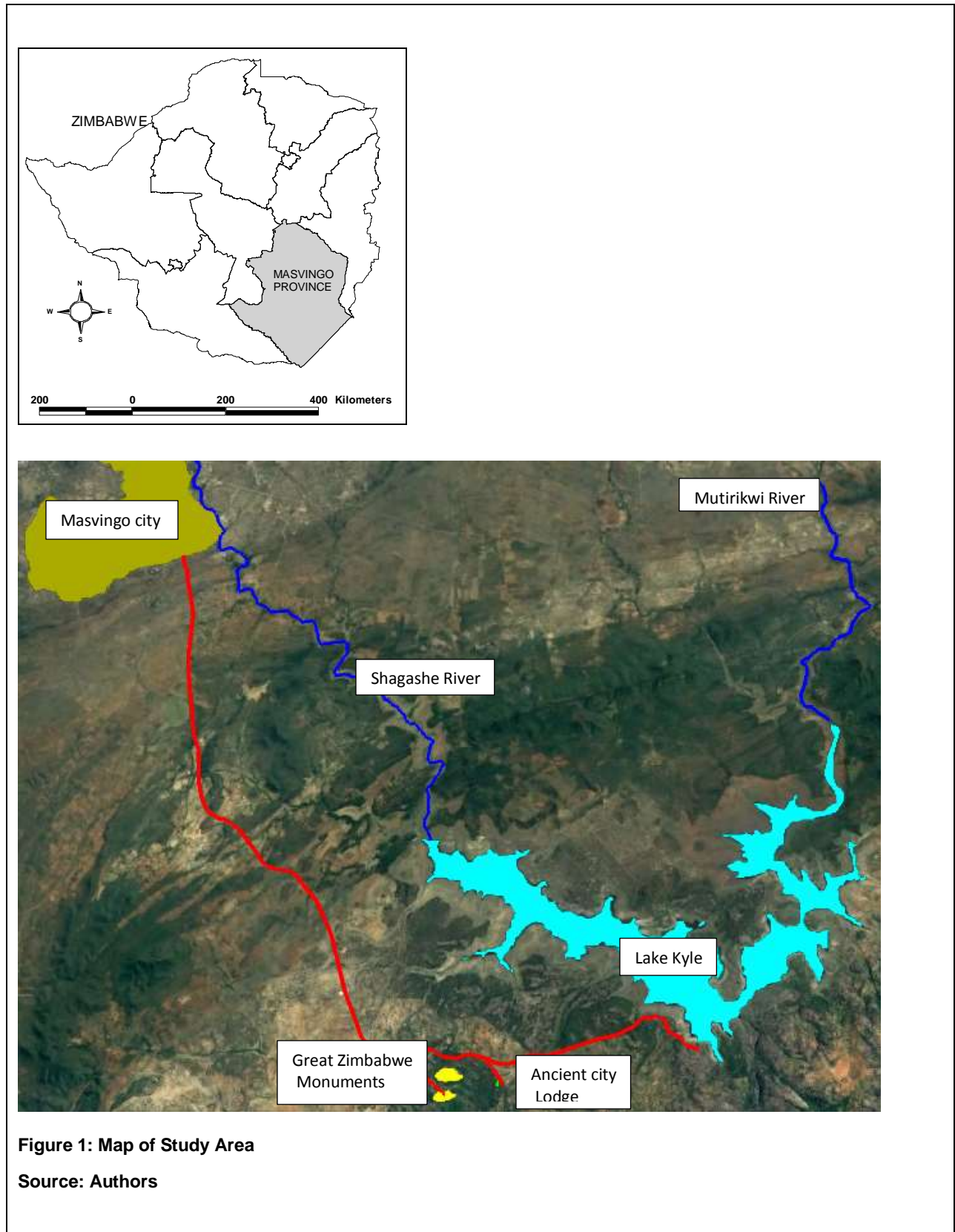
city in Southern and Central Africa during its peak during the Late Iron Age (Chirikure & Pikirayi, 2008; Garlake, 2002; Ucko, 1995). Its method of construction is unique in African architecture and, although there are examples of similar work elsewhere, none are as distinguished and imposing as Great Zimbabwe. The stone city which bear unique testimony to the civilization of the Shona span an area of 722 hectares and could have accommodated a population of up to 18 000 at its peak (Garlake, 1982; Pwiti & Ndoro, 1997). However, this population figure is refuted by recent studies that argue that the number of people at the site is unlikely to have exceeded 10 000 (Chirikure, et al, 2017). It is recognized as a World Heritage Site since 1986 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). There is also a site museum which is found at the Great Zimbabwe National Monument. The Great Zimbabwe Site Museum displays some of the artefacts unearthed by archaeologists including the soapstone Zimbabwe birds which serve as the national emblem of Zimbabwe. The museum also deals with issues of community engagement and empowerment (Ndoro, 1994; Pwiti & Ndoro, 1997).

The national monument has been legally protected starting from the colonial period in 1891 and is currently protected under the NMMZ Act Chapter 25: 11 of 1972 which provides for the protection of the resources within the property. The NMMZ, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, is the entity directly responsible for the management of the property. Financing for the management and conservation of the tourist property comes mainly from income generated by entrance and accommodation fees and sale of publications as well as funding from central government.

The national monuments are also in close proximity to other tourist resources such as Lake Mutirikwi (formerly Lake Kyle) which provides water-based tourism and sport fishing and Lake Mutirikwi (formerly Lake Kyle) Recreational Park which provides game viewing. The lake and the park also provide some scenic views. Furthermore, the Pokoteke Gorge located within the park offers a spectacular view. The gorge site adjoins a special conservation area; an estuarine refuge rich in spawning fish. The lake and the park are operated by the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) and Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority respectively. Other tourism services in the study area such as hotels and lodges are owned and operated by private companies. Further, Chamavara Cave and Rock Paintings are other tourist resources in the study area.

The Great Zimbabwe National Monument is also in the proximity of poor and marginalized villagers of Mutirikwi Communal Lands. The marginalization of these villagers started during the colonial period with the creation of socio-economic dualities and a race-space economy which resulted in the development of European areas at the expense of African areas. After Zimbabwean independence the socio-economic condition of these villagers has not been meaningfully improved due to the nature of the post-colonial African state (Mehretu, 1989).

The plight of these villagers can be ameliorated by the vast potential of heritage management in addressing past wrongs and generating revenue through tourism (Marshall, 2002). These villagers mainly practice peasant farming based on rainfed crop growing. The crops grown by these villagers include maize, sweet potatoes groundnuts and roundnuts. Average rainfall in the area does not viably support dryland crop cultivation making tourism an important non-agricultural source of revenue.





Materials and Methods

The mixed methods research design was used as the strategy of inquiry. Research techniques included key informant interviews, a questionnaire survey, participant observations and desktop research. Key informant interviews were carried out with tourism entrepreneurs and policy makers to obtain data about the perceptions and experiences concerning the tourism value chain and pro-poor tourism strategies. Furthermore, key informant interviews were used to obtain qualitative data about the knowledge of local communities living near the Great Zimbabwe National Monument of tourism opportunities in their locality, tourism product development and tourism marketing and pricing options. Key informant interviews were carried out with the Market Research and Product Development Officer of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, Regional Manager and Education Officer for the Southern Region of the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. Other key informants were the Managers of Great Zimbabwe Hotel owned by African Sun Limited and Lodge at the Ancient City.

A questionnaire survey was carried out with villagers in the Mutirikwi Communal Lands who live near the national monument to obtain data about their awareness of the economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities that can be exploited due to their proximity to the tourist resort. A total of thirty questionnaires were answered by the local villagers who included nineteen male and eleven female household heads. Participant observations and interviews were also carried out with local villagers who market sculptures, curios, artworks, artefacts and souvenirs near the national monument and at Lake Mutirikwi Dam Wall to obtain qualitative data about the extent of benefits accruing to them. Desktop research was used to review literature on pro-poor tourism, community tourism entrepreneurship and community involvement in cultural heritage management.

Results and Discussions

This study showed that the local communities around Great Zimbabwe National Monument are deriving few economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits from the tourism industry. There is also poor participation by the local residents in community-based tourism (CBT) and this is worsened by the fact that the Mutirikwi Communal Lands are not part of CAMPFIRE. The few benefits that are accruing to the local communities include income from selling traditionally produced artefacts and handicrafts. However, handicraft production is not lucrative due to poor organization and marketing acumen on the part of the local communal villagers. The villagers who market sculptures, curios, artworks, artefacts and souvenirs noted that their sales are subdued due to reduced tourist arrivals since the year 2000 especially by high-spending visitors from Western Europe and North America. The handicrafts also fetch very low prices as tourists, especially the local ones, are unwilling to spend highly on buying them and keep negotiating for the lowering of the prices. This observation confirms Chiutsi & Mudzengi (2012)'s findings that Community Based Tourism Enterprises in the Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe lack capacity in terms of tourism product development and marketing as well as linkages with the tourism market.

The other fringe benefit accruing to local communities around Great Zimbabwe National Monument is improved transport and communication services as their area is linked by an all-weather tarred road from Masvingo City and partial cellular network provision. However, 60% of the questionnaire respondents noted that some of the villagers still have to walk considerable distances after disembarking from public transport plying the Masvingo- Nemanwa Growth Point, Masvingo- Renco Mine and Masvingo- Zano- Chamavara- Murinye routes. This provides challenges in cases where the villagers will be carrying heavy goods like fertilizers, building



materials and furniture. Furthermore, some parts of the communal lands have a poor cellular network coverage as distance from the monument, lake and park increases.

The other benefit trickling down to the local communities is through employment as tour guides, stonemasons, hotel workers and guards. Some of the villagers are also involved in illegal fishing. The Managers at Great Zimbabwe Hotel and Lodge at the Ancient City noted that some of the local hotel workers have been able to send their children to school, tertiary colleges and universities, by using proceeds from their wage employment. However, these jobs tend to be menial, lowly paid and sometimes seasonal. 66.7% of the questionnaire respondents also argue that tourism services owned and operated by private corporations and some government agencies recruit permanent workers from other districts of the country at the expense of the locals.

Further, 76.6% of the questionnaire respondents highlighted that the engagement of descendants of the Mugabe clan as stonemasons to restore collapsed walls at the monument has not meaningfully transformed their socio-economic condition for the better. 36.7% of the questionnaire respondents noted that one of their sources of income is fish poaching from Lake Mutirikwi and its feeder rivers such as Pokoteke, Mutirikwi and Shagashe but this results in running battles with government law enforcing agencies such as the ZINWA, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and police. In some cases the fish poachers are arrested and their illegal fishing gear is confiscated. The villagers argue that they are involved in illegal fishing due to the fact that they cannot afford to raise the money which is required by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to obtain licences.

The local communities also benefit through selling agricultural produce and fruits to mainly local tourists from Masvingo City and other parts of Zimbabwe. Some of the fruits that are sold are from indigenous trees such as *Uapaca kirkiana* (wild loquat), *Ziziphus mauritiana* (buffalo thorn) and *Azanza garckeana* (snot-apple). The agricultural produce and fruits are sold at undesignated points along the tarred road from Masvingo City to Lake Mutirikwi Dam Wall. 70% of the villagers who participated in the questionnaire survey acknowledge having someone from their household selling agricultural produce and fruits along the road at some time during the year. However, the local villagers can receive more income if they become better organized and market the agricultural produce and fruits in bulky and as a community based tourism enterprise. By doing this the locals can be able to sell their products to hotels and lodges such as Great Zimbabwe Hotel, Lodge at the Ancient City and Norma Jeane's Lakeview Resort. The agricultural produce should also be well-packaged using environmentally friendly materials which can be recycled so as to attract more customers.

The Managers at Great Zimbabwe Hotel and Lodge at the Ancient City also noted that the local villagers lack the capacity and organization to effectively satisfy the demand for agricultural produce and fruits by the hotels on a permanent basis. To this end the establishment of irrigation schemes using water resources in the study area can go a long way in enhancing agricultural production by the local community and enable the villagers to supply food to the hotels on a permanent basis.

In terms of cultural opportunities for the local communities around Great Zimbabwe National Monument provisions are made to accommodate rituals and practices that substantiate the associative values of the property. Particular attention is also put on the conservation techniques and materials employed as well as on the application of conservation standards that meet international standards but are balanced with traditional uses at the property. The Education Officer for the Southern Region of the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe noted that the local villagers provide traditional song and dance and market their artefacts at the Shona Village at Great Zimbabwe National Monument. However, 83.3% of the questionnaire



respondents alleged that there is favoritism in the way how some villagers are selected to market their artefacts at the Shona Village.

The questionnaire survey also showed that local communities feel that they can be empowered to benefit more from the national monument if they were given more power in the management of the site. 90% of the questionnaire respondents felt that if the local communities were given more power in managing the monuments they would benefit more from the site as a cultural, educational and tourist resource. However, 6.7% of the questionnaire respondents felt that the local communities do not have the requisite technical knowhow to effectively manage the site. One questionnaire respondent did not know whether the local communities should be given more power in managing the site. This need for more power in managing the site by local communities conflicts with evidence from Chirikure & Pwiti (2008) which shows that heritage managers are reluctant to give up their powers.

Community engagement and empowerment in the management of the national monument can be further enhanced by making legal provisions in the NMMZ Act for community involvement (Chiwaura & Thondhlana, 2016). The current NMMZ Act of 1972 is silent on how local communities can and should be engaged, thus creating a gap. In practice, staff at the NMMZ have just been approaching the community in a manner it deems fit and there is no systematic approach (Schmidt & Pikirayi, 2016). This research also noted that UNESCO has developed Conventions that guide State parties on how to empower and engage communities in cultural resources and heritage management. Zimbabwe is a signatory to some of these conventions that include the World Heritage Convention of 1972. The Constitution of Zimbabwe also has provisions for the involvement and empowerment of local communities in heritage issues (Chiwaura & Thondhlana, 2016). Thus the NMMZ Act should be aligned with the national constitution and international framework for heritage management so as to maximize benefits that accrue to local communities.

The national monument also presents environmental management opportunities to the local communities. However, these opportunities have not been fully exploited for the benefit of the local villagers. The local villagers can be involved in the environmental and mechanical control of the invasive vegetation which is encroaching the heritage property. The villagers can also be engaged in setting fireguards so as to ensure that biophysical, socio-economic and cultural resources in the area are not damaged by fire. Further locals can also participate in environmental waste management through picking litter which is becoming an environmental challenge in the study area due to tourism pressure. Litter is also seen along roads as people throw litter from vehicles. Locals can also be engaged in the control of *eichornia crassipes* (water hyacinth) which is infesting parts of Lake Mutirikwi as well as Shagashe River.

Locals can harvest the invasive water weed and use it in handicraft production and as a source of energy. Further, some selected local villagers can be trained as environmental educators so that they teach the community on how to preserve the tourist resources in the study area. The environmental educators can also be instrumental in increasing local community awareness on the importance of conserving biophysical and cultural resources. The community can be educated on preventing deforestation and soil erosion as this will result in the siltation of Lake Mutirikwi and its tributaries. The siltation will lead to the degradation of the lake thereby negatively affecting it as a tourist and recreational resource.

The local villagers can also be made aware of the dangers of practicing stream bank cultivation such as increased sediment supply to the lake, thereby influencing its eutrophication and sedimentation. Water pollution can also result in fish deaths in the lake. In addition, the locals can be made aware of the importance of preserving the aesthetic quality of cultural and biophysical resources so as to keep tourists attracted to the Great Zimbabwe National Monument and its



surrounding environs. 87.7% of villagers who participated in the questionnaire survey were willing to exploit these environmental management opportunities provided that they were capacitated to ensure that they derive meaningful benefits.

This research also revealed that the local residents can derive far more benefits through participating in a number of other community-based tourism projects such as village tours, offering traditional song and dance, arts and crafts production and sales. Community-based tourism projects are a means of promoting conservation efforts, as well as an important income generator for rural residents. These projects are gaining increasing popularity in other Southern African countries such as Botswana and South Africa (Botswana Tourism Board, 2009; Hill, Nel & Trotter, 2006). According to the Market Research and Product Development Officer of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority there is a good deal of potential in local communities to develop attractions ranging from the collection and exportation of veld products, to the development of cultural activities, to the use of heritage sites such as caves, hills, mountains and forests as tourist attractions, all of which would provide financial gain.

Community-based tourism projects that can be undertaken by the local villagers include inter-alia, conducting guided walks into the nearby caves such as Chamavara, hills, mountains such as Ruvure, Nyuni and Droguru and forests. Local residents can also operate as tour guides to tourists visiting Chamavara Rock Paintings. The local community can also procure a joint venture partner to develop an up-market lodge where apart from providing tourist accommodation they may be able sell locally grown crops and indigenous fruits. Further, the local villagers can develop a cultural village offering a number of tourist activities such as traditional song and dance, arts and crafts production and sales. The local community can also offer village tours, which give tourists the opportunity to experience first-hand the country's cultures. 93.3% of the questionnaire respondents were willing to participate in these community-based tourism projects provided they were capacitated with capital and technical knowhow. The villagers also noted that these projects will provide employment and help reduce rural-urban migration to major cities.

The poor participation of local villagers in community tourism can be linked to lack of entrepreneurial skills, technical knowhow and capital. Further lack of linkages to the mainstream tourism market is another hindrance to the development of community tourism in the study area. These challenges to the development of community tourism were also noted by Chiutsi & Mudzengi (2012) in their research of Community Based Tourism Enterprises in the Zimbabwean province of Mashonaland West. There is therefore need to capacitate and thus empower the local communities so that they meaningfully participate in community-based tourism ventures.

There is also need to ensure that local villagers develop partnerships with the mainstream tourism industry. These partnerships allow capacity enhancement on the part of the local villagers. However, the challenge is that the Great Zimbabwe National Monument and its environs are not well marketed as compared to Victoria Falls thereby attract less tourists making tourism ventures less viable. Thus there is need for a more robust marketing strategy of tourist attractions in the study area in combination with other sites in the south-east Lowveld of Zimbabwe such as Gonarezhou National Park which is part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area.

Conclusion

The study concludes that local communities are deriving few economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits despite their close proximity to the UNESCO recognized World Heritage Site of Great Zimbabwe National Monument. Local communities around the heritage site are playing a peripheral role in the mainstream tourism sector. There is therefore need to build local



communities capacity in terms of tourism product development and linkages with the mainstream tourism market using the multi-stakeholder approach. There is also need to enhance community collective awareness of tourism opportunities that can be exploited in their locality. To this end, it is critical that the Environmental Management Plan for the study area produced in 2012 be updated to enable local communities to maximize benefits accruing to them due to their proximity to tourist resources thereby ensuring the long term conservation of the heritage property and its surrounding environments. The maximization of benefits to local villagers will enable them to play a stewardship role towards cultural and biophysical resources thereby contributing to sustainable tourism development. A more robust marketing strategy of tourist resources in the study area will attract more visitors making tourism ventures more viable. This is important because if tourism ventures become more viable the opportunities for local communities to accrue benefits from the industry will also increase. Increased visitation will also enable income-generating projects to be more diversified.

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