

Identifying Urban Tourism Development Challenges in Mahikeng

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How to cite this article: Wessels, W. & Tseane-Gumbi, L (2022). Identifying Urban Tourism Development Challenges in Mahikeng. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 11(1):14-25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.208>

Abstract

This research aimed to identify urban tourism development challenges in Mahikeng. Using a quantitative research method, a self-administered questionnaire was developed and distributed online. A database consisting of active tourism product suppliers in Mahikeng, obtained from the Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT) was used. Fifty-two completed questionnaires were returned out of 60. To reach the aim of this study, descriptive statistics and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were done, which yielded four factors: provincial-level management challenges, national-level management challenges, municipal-level management challenges, and private sector management challenges. There is a lack of coordination and planning among different departments of government, while the private sector is heavily relying on government support. Through these results, tourism product suppliers in Mahikeng can strive towards self-motivation and form tourism associations. Government can revisit their tourism strategic management objectives to overcome the identified challenges and, in turn, ensure sustainable urban tourism development in Mahikeng.

Keywords: Tourism development, urban tourism, urban tourism development, challenges, Mahikeng

Introduction

Urban tourism has become priority on the economic development agenda by governments all over the world (Rogerson & Nel, 2016). This form of tourism has proven to be a very effective strategy to increase the gross domestic product (GDP) of a specific area that was not initially developed for tourism purposes, to create job opportunities for permanent residents in a specific area, and to provide an opportunity for existing urban areas, especially cities in rural parts of a country, to re-develop themselves (Adamo et al., 2018). As South Africa has a developing economy, urban tourism and the development thereof have been identified as a very effective development strategy by all levels of government in the country due to the advantages it offers (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2014). Furthermore, although South Africa's tourism sector is mainly associated with nature tourism and cultural tourism, it should not be overlooked that a large tourism segment in South Africa is urban based (Rogerson, 2012).

With the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit the world in 2020, many tourism destinations have had to re-evaluate their current offerings to implement recovery strategies from the detrimental effects the lockdown restrictions brought (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). South Africa has recorded its highest rate of unemployment (34.4%) during this time, and due to this, every provincial government and local municipality in South Africa has had to re-assess all sectors and assets within the province in order to improve local economic development (LED) (Drummond et al., 2021).

In the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality, one of the four municipalities in the North West Province and in which Mahikeng, the provincial capital city of the North West Province is situated, tourism development has been indicated as an important strategy to create jobs and improve revenue by both the provincial government and local municipalities' mandates (Potgieter & Litheko, 2016). This, however, was stipulated as a priority even before Covid-19; yet, to date, very little economic, and more specifically, tourism development has taken place within this municipality district and even less within Mahikeng.

According to Drummond et al. (2021), tourism development in Mahikeng is mainly challenged due to the peripheral location of this city. Marumo et al. (2015) state that tourism development in Mahikeng is challenged due to a lack of supplementary facilities such as accommodation. Litheko (2021) adds that tourism development in this province cannot take place without the help of provincial government and the local municipality. However, there is little evidence to date that tourism product suppliers are getting sufficient assistance from government departments. With limited literature on Mahikeng generally, it has been very difficult to pin-point the challenges limiting urban tourism development, specifically within this city. Therefore, this study aimed to identify urban tourism development challenges in Mahikeng. The outcome of this study hoped not only to contribute toward academic literature, but also to enable provincial government and the local municipality of Mahikeng to revise their tourism development strategies in order to increase the LED of this city, while the private sector increases its visibility and intention to grow urban tourism in the area. The next section details the literature review, providing insight into Mahikeng as a tourist destination, followed by a discussion on urban tourism and the challenges impacting urban tourism development.

An overview of Mahikeng as a tourist destination

The Ngaka Modiri Molema District is one of four district municipalities within the North West Province (Drummond et al., 2021). Within this municipality, Mahikeng is the largest city and also the provincial capital city of the North West Province. Although this city is relatively distant from the major metropolitan and industrial areas of South Africa, the city recorded 314 394 permanent residents in 2016 (Drummond & Nel, 2021). The city is also less than 25 kilometres from the Ramatlabama border post, which is between South Africa and Botswana, and a very popular entry point especially for international tourists exploring Africa (Prinsloo & Pelsler, 2015).

Mahikeng, also known by its previous name Mafeking, has a rich history dating back to the nineteenth century. This city was once part of the Bophuthatswana homeland, which was integrated into South Africa by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 (Drummond & Drummond, 2021). Mahikeng offers various unique attractions due to its rich history, culture and geographical location. Attractions available include the old town hall, which was built in 1902, the Botsalano and Mafikeng Game Reserves, offering a variety of fauna and flora unique to this province, the Stadt School, which is believed to be the earliest school north of the Orange River, as well as the Mmabatho Sun Casino and Entertainment complex, which is another main attraction in the city (Prinsloo & Pelsler, 2015)

Due to the advantages the tourism industry offers to rural cities specifically, such as Mahikeng, tourism has become a key economic driver since 2008 for Mahikeng (Mahikeng Local Municipality, 2020; Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, 2020). According to Drummond(2021), tourist activity in Mahikeng in 2008 indicated a total of 43 300 leisure trips and 32 000 business trips that were undertaken. However, tourism in Mahikeng and surrounding areas, since 2014, has shown clear signs of distress and a visible decline in tourism revenue is evident. In 2014, tourism contributed 5.7% to the local GDP of the province; however, in 2018, it only contributed to 4.5%. Business trips declined to 39 500 in 2018 and

leisure trips to 37 800. What is even more worrying is that this decline was even before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Currently, Mahikeng offers only two international hotel brands, namely Protea Hotels, which is part of the Marriott International Hotel Group, and Mmabatho Sun Hotel and Casino, part of Peermont Hotels, Casinos and Resorts. Each one of these accommodation establishments also offers limited restaurant options to visitors. Since 2018, South African Airways, the only airline carrier to Mahikeng Airport, ceased operations, which led to the temporary closure of the airport for tourism purposes and has not been re-opened since. This also led to the closure of transport provider, Budget Car Rental, which leaves only two national car rental companies operating in Mahikeng, namely Avis Car Rental and Hertz Car Rental. Furthermore, only one short-distance public transport service, aimed at tourists and residents, namely BOLT, exists, which only operates until 17:00 on weekdays, and no passenger train services are available to or from Mahikeng. With this said, it is clear that, although tourism products exist in Mahikeng, and the city has tourist activities, urban tourism growth is not evident in Mahikeng.

Urban tourism in context

Urban tourism is defined as a set of tourism resources or activities that are located in cities and offered to both locals as well as tourists (Adamo et al., 2018). Urban tourism, although one of the first forms of tourism, has only been seen as an important area of development in the last three decades (Murillo et al., 2011). This is very evident in especially Western Europe, North America, and Australia, as these cities have re-invented themselves as consumption hubs for tourists (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2014). In order for urban tourism to develop and grow, Van Den Berg et al. (1995) developed a tourist city model, indicating that for urban tourism to exist, and to successfully compete with other tourist destinations, the city must consist of five components, namely primary products, secondary products, external and internal accessibility, and a positive image (Ben-Dalia et al., 2013). Primary products are products such as history, local cultures and attractions that are unique tourism offerings and create a competitive advantage for the city in which they are presented (Balkaran & Maharaj, 2013; Vengesayi et al., 2009). Secondary products consist of supporting infrastructure or activities that enhance primary tourism activities by creating an opportunity for tourists to stay longer than just one day (Ben-Dalia et al., 2013). Tourism product suppliers depend on secondary products because, while visiting a destination, tourists prefer to enjoy other activities such as shopping, dining out, using sport facilities, and participating in outdoor activities (Camilleri, 2019). External and internal accessibilities are also important as this enables the movement of tourists from their place of origin to the destination (Ouariti & Jebrane, 2020), and directly impacts the accessibility, attractiveness, and competitiveness of the destination (Ouariti & Jebrane, 2020). Destination image also plays a vital role in the development and success of urban tourism development (Ben-Dalia et al., 2013). According to Cibinskiene and Snieskiene (2015), a favourable image of a city's tourism destination creates a competitive advantage and only with the help of tourism suppliers, this can be ensured (Kim et al., 2019).

In South Africa, urban tourism is a much newer form of niche tourism compared to other parts of the world (Rogerson, 2011). Tourism development and growth in South Africa were restricted until 1994 and after the first democratic election, South Africa was re-integrated into the international tourism economy and more international travellers could access the country (Rogerson, 2012). According to Rogerson and Visser (2007), cities were among the first to really benefit from this change of government, as the volumes of international tourists visiting the country sharply increased. Government on all levels has also realised that in a country with a developing economy and uneven economic distribution of the population, urban

tourism provides a new alternative for economic revenue creation, and therefore the priority on the development agendas of all levels of government (Nel & Rogerson, 2016). A study by Rogerson and Rogerson (2014) indicates that there has been tremendous growth in urban tourism in South Africa, where bed nights in urban areas increased between 2001 and 2012 from 4.6 million bed nights to 25.3 million bed nights.

Urban tourism is however complex, and various obstacles influence urban tourism development (Ye et al., 2019). This is even more so for cities that are either not international entry points into a country or cities situated in rural areas of a country, which is the case with Mahikeng (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Romero-Garcia et al., 2019).

Challenges impacting urban tourism development

Through a literature review, various challenges impacting urban tourism development have been identified, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Challenges impacting urban tourism development

Challenge	Authors
Competitiveness of city as a tourism destination	Al-Saad & Ababneh (2017); Andrades & Dimanche (2017); Adamo et al. (2018); Maxim (2019); Rogerson & Rogerson (2019); Wang et al. (2011)
Lack of different levels of government support, initiatives and adaptability to change in the external environment	Burton et al. (2020); Novy & Colomb (2019); Postma et al. (2017); Rogerson (2018); Romero-Padilla et al. (2016); Siakwah et al. (2020); Wang et al. (2011)
Legal registration policies and ‘red tape’ for new business development	Andrades & Dimanche (2017); Bonakdar & Audirac (2020); Burton et al. (2020); Novy & Colomb (2019)
Skilled workforce restrictions due to government policies such as BBBEE requirements	Andrades & Dimanche (2017); Burton et al. (2020)
Conservation requirements of natural resources	Dube et al. (2020); Grilli et al. (2021); Maxim (2019); Pandey & Rogerson (2019)
Various different and changing tourist needs and inability to adapt to ensure tourist satisfaction	Maxim (2019); Novy (2019); Postma et al. (2017)
Financial constraints to fund new projects by both private and public sectors	Stephenson (2014); Wang et al. (2011)
Lack of relationships between private and public sectors	Al-Saad & Ababneh (2017); Postma et al. (2017); Rogerson & Visser (2011); Wang et al. (2011)
Under-developed infrastructure and supporting services, including transport systems, electricity provision, medical facilities, shopping facilities and hi-speed internet	Al-Saad & Ababneh (2017); Boivin & Tanguay (2019); Cave & Jolliffe (2012); Khusnutdinova et al. (2019); Kidane-Mariam (2015); Poon & Ho (2021); Romero-Padilla et al. (2016); Nengovhela (2020); Novy & Colomb (2019)

Source: Authors own compilation

From Table 1, it is evident that various challenges impacting tourism development exist. Andrades and Dimanche (2017) identified that the image of a destination influences the willingness of tourists to visit. This supports the study done by Ritchie and Crouch (2003), indicating that an urban area that already has a negative public image struggles to be competitive without any reference to any other offering within the same city. Without tourist activity, the existing tourism offerings will not grow and new development will not take place (Maxim, 2019). Infrastructure available within a city also directly impacts tourism development (Novy & Colomb, 2019). Primary tourism infrastructures such as attractions and accommodation are not enough; instead, supporting infrastructure, such as shopping centres, medical facilities and public transport enhances tourism development opportunities in urban areas (Cave & Jolliffe, 2012). Also important, as noted by Rogerson and Visser (2011), is that government, on all levels, needs to work with private tourism product suppliers in order to encourage tourism growth. Without building a relationship with private tourism suppliers and providing public-private business opportunities, urban tourism development will be limited (Postma et al., 2017).

From the above challenges identified, many of the studies focused mainly on the development challenges of urban tourism in metropolitan cities and large cities, neglecting the cities situated in the rural areas of a country, such as Mahikeng. Therefore, the necessity exists to determine the challenges limiting urban tourism development in cities such as Mahikeng in order to adapt current urban tourism development strategies and encourage tourism growth (Litheko & Potgieter, 2016; Pandey & Rogerson, 2019; Prinsloo & Pelsler, 2015; Rogerson, 2008; Rogerson, 2012; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2014; Rogerson & Visser, 2011).

Research methodology

For this study, a quantitative research method was used. According to Welman et al. (2010:8), a quantitative research method “quantifies the results through statistical methods and allows for the identification of variables”. Due to this study also being exploratory in nature, this research method is deemed appropriate for the aim of this study. A database from the Provincial Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT) was obtained. The database included the contact information of managers and supervisors of 60(N) active tourism product suppliers operating within Mahikeng. A non-probability sample method, and more specifically a total population sampling technique (TPS), was used for this study. The total population sample technique (TPS) is a type of purposive sampling and is used when the total population is small in size and shares the same characteristics (Etikan et al., 2016).

A new questionnaire was developed from existing literature sources, including Khusnutdinova et al. (2019), Maxim (2019), Postma et al. (2017), Rogerson (2012), Rogerson and Rogerson (2019), and Rogerson and Visser (2011). The questionnaire, using a five-point Likert scale[♦], presented 25 challenges impacting urban tourism development. The self-administered questionnaire was developed using QuestionPro software. The questionnaire was submitted and approved by an internal ethics committee prior to the research period to ensure that all required ethical guidelines were taken into account [NWU-00898-21-A4].

The research was conducted online from 5 August 2021 to 31 September 2021. The data collection method was chosen due to Covid-19 restrictions limiting face-to-face interaction. A link to the online questionnaire was emailed to all 60 members on the database. A follow-up email was sent every for 10 days to respondents who had not completed the questionnaires. A total of 52 usable questionnaires were returned. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), this sample size is sufficient for the population. The authors acknowledge the limitations of a small sample size for quantitative research; however, considering the population size, the specific applicability of the results to Mahikeng and this being exploratory research, the method and results are sufficiently relevant and significant to consider.

To reach the goal of the study, a descriptive statistics analysis and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 27.0). The results are presented in the next section.

Results

Descriptive results

Table 2: Descriptive results of challenges impacting urban tourism development in Mahikeng

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Unclear national government policies on tourism development	1%	8%	26%	40%	25%	3.83	0.901
Limited incentives for international investors in tourism development	2%	10%	18%	41%	29%	4.02*	0.852
A lack of financial incentives from government for tourism development	2%	1%	17%	51%	29%	3.86	1.020
The South African economy impacts tourists' travel decisions	4%	14%	20%	45%	17%	3.59	1.062
Limited public-private partnership opportunities available	4%	2%	19%	39%	36%	4.00*	1.000
Poor provincial government leadership	2%	6%	15%	40%	37%	4.04*	0.969
Limited number of events hosted in/near Mahikeng limits tourism growth	3%	1%	18%	49%	29%	4.00*	0.917
The current state of road infrastructure to and in Mahikeng	2%	6%	15%	42%	35%	4.02*	0.960
The closure of the Mahikeng Airport	6%	7%	15%	44%	28%	3.85	1.092
The lack of passenger train infrastructure available	4%	6%	23%	38%	29%	3.83	1.043
The shortage of international tourism product brands available	1%	4%	26%	44%	25%	3.90	0.823
North West Province is perceived as a nature-only destination instead of an urban tourism destination	1%	6%	24%	55%	14%	3.77	0.757
North West Province does not have a positive tourism destination image	4%	10%	19%	44%	23%	3.73	1.050
A shortage of drinking water available in the North West Province	6%	15%	21%	28%	30%	3.60	1.225
A lack of electricity supply impacts urban tourism development in Mahikeng	8%	12%	10%	36%	34%	3.79	1.258
Cultural restrictions of the local workforce	8%	14%	23%	41%	14%	3.40	1.125
There are too many restrictions and 'red tape' from local government for new tourism product entrepreneurs	6%	19%	27%	34%	14%	3.31**	1.112
Tourists do not feel safe when visiting Mahikeng	14%	15%	25%	29%	17%	3.21**	1.289
A lack of fibre internet infrastructure available	6%	7%	14%	35%	38%	3.92	1.169
A lack of quality supporting services such as shopping and medical facilities available in Mahikeng	2%	12%	23%	31%	33%	3.81	1.085
Mahikeng does not offer any unique natural attractions	4%	15%	19%	35%	27%	3.65	1.153
Mahikeng does not offer any unique cultural experiences	8%	17%	27%	29%	19%	3.35**	1.203
Surrounding cities and their offerings are direct competitors for Mahikeng tourism offerings	6%	19%	18%	40%	17%	3.42	1.161
There is a lack of skilled labour available in Mahikeng	12%	25%	14%	26%	23%	3.25**	1.370
There is a lack of tourism industry skill development institutions in Mahikeng	8%	19%	21%	33%	19%	3.37	1.221

❖ Five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.

* Biggest challenge
 ** Smallest challenge

From the results in Table 2, the biggest challenge impacting urban tourism development in Mahikeng is poor provincial government leadership (mean=4.04). This is followed by limited incentives for international investors in tourism development (mean=4.02), current state of road infrastructure (mean=4.02) and limited public-private partnership opportunities available. Results indicated that the smallest challenges limiting urban tourism development in Mahikeng

include tourist safety (mean=3.21), lack of skilled labour available (mean=3.25) and too many restrictions from local government regarding new tourism development (mean=3.31).

Results from the exploratory factor analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done, using the individual aspects from Table 1.

Table 3: EFA of challenges impacting urban tourism development

	FACTOR 1: National- level management challenges	FACTOR 2: Provincial- level management challenges	FACTOR 3: Municipal- level management challenges	FACTOR 4: Private sector management challenges
Unclear national government policies on tourism development	0.302			
Limited incentives for international investors in tourism development	0.788			
A lack of financial incentives from government for tourism development	0.774			
The South African economy impacts tourists' travel decisions	0.785			
Limited public-private partnership opportunities available		0.933		
Poor provincial government leadership		0.863		
Limited number of events hosted in/near Mahikeng limits tourism growth		0.860		
The current state of road infrastructure to and in Mahikeng		0.774		
The closure of the Mahikeng Airport		0.701		
The lack of passenger train infrastructure available		0.636		
The shortage of international tourism product brands available		0.611		
North West Province is perceived as a nature-only destination instead of an urban tourism destination		0.503		
North West Province does not have a positive tourism destination image		0.463		
A shortage of drinking water available in the North West Province		0.456		
A lack of electricity supply impacts urban tourism development in Mahikeng			0.384	
Cultural restrictions of the local workforce			0.794	
There are too many restrictions and 'red tape' from local government for new tourism product entrepreneurs			0.640	
Tourists do not feel safe when visiting Mahikeng			0.605	
A lack of fibre internet infrastructure available			0.533	
A lack of quality supporting services such as shopping and medical facilities available in Mahikeng				0.408
Mahikeng does not offer any unique natural attractions				0.768
Mahikeng does not offer any unique cultural experiences				0.665
Surrounding cities and their offerings are direct competitors for Mahikeng tourism offerings				0.708
There is a lack of skilled labour available in Mahikeng				0.453
There is a lack of tourism industry skill development institutions in Mahikeng				0.456
Cronbach's alphas	0.744	0.894	0.792	0.781
Mean value and standard deviation	3.83 (0.724)	3.87 (0.704)	3.52 (0.881)	3.47 (0.829)
Inter-item correlation	0.417	0.468	0.430	0.378

❖ Five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.

The results from the exploratory factor analyses (Table 3) presented four factors. From the four factors, the factor with the highest mean value is *provincial government-level challenges* (m=3.87). This is followed by *national-level management challenges* (m=3.83), *municipality-level management challenges* (m=3.52) and *private sector management-level challenges* (m=3.47).

Discussion

Urban tourism development is high on the priority list of the North West provincial government's development agenda, and yet, in Mahikeng, tourism development and growth are still very limited. Therefore, the primary goal of this study was to identify the challenges limiting tourism development in this city.

From the results, it has become evident that urban tourism development challenges in Mahikeng are mainly experienced on provincial government level. According to Bongomin et al. (2018), tourism product suppliers are dependent on government support, especially on provincial level, to promote and develop tourism activity. The results highlighted that there are limited public-private partnerships available between tourism product suppliers and local government; infrastructure that is needed for tourism development is lacking; and Mahikeng should be more aggressively promoted as a unique destination within the North West Province. A focus should be placed on all the unique attractions within Mahikeng, which will encourage tourism development within this city.

The Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT) is the provincial government department directly responsible for economic planning and development as well as enterprise development, including the tourism sector in the North West Province. With Mahikeng being the provincial capital city of this province, the provincial government department has a significant role to play in creating more opportunities for tourism product suppliers in Mahikeng regarding future projects. Attention needs to be placed on infrastructure development and maintenance, as this is an important contributor to urban tourism development (Nguyen, 2021). More specifically, attention should be on infrastructure allowing access to Mahikeng. Road infrastructure is one infrastructural aspect contributing to urban tourism development (Imikan & Ekpo, 2012), and from the results presented, road infrastructure in Mahikeng is one of the biggest challenges faced by tourism product suppliers. However, not only road infrastructure is limiting access to Mahikeng, but the closure of Mahikeng airport is also challenging urban tourism development in this city. Although DEDECT is not responsible for the development and maintenance of infrastructure themselves, this provincial government department needs to mandate that access to and within Mahikeng must be attended to efficiently to support infrastructural agendas from other provincial government departments, including the Department of Public Works, and the re-opening of the airport is also recommended as a priority by provincial government to ensure better accessibility to and from Mahikeng.

It is, however, noted that provincial government cannot do this alone and that more effective and efficient management strategies on municipality level should also be encouraged as local government is mainly responsible for the implementation of provincial tourism development strategies. Additionally, tourism providers' initiatives, such as the development of associations, may assist to improve independence among tourism providers in Mahikeng to promote urban tourism in the city.

Conclusion

With very little research focusing on urban tourism development, especially in South Africa and even more specifically in Mahikeng, the results of this study greatly contribute to the South African urban tourism development literature. The results identified various challenges limiting urban tourism development in Mahikeng, and these results aimed to assist provincial government and the local municipality to review their current tourism development and management strategies, which, in turn, will promote urban tourism development in Mahikeng. Although the study had limitations, the results obtained through this study can form the foundation for future research opportunities. Future research can include a more in-depth

investigation, using a qualitative research method, investigating how each identified challenge affects the different sectors in the tourism industry in Mahikeng. Furthermore, due to the results from this study indicating that challenges experienced by tourism product suppliers mostly related to provincial government level, further investigation into the role and contribution of national government should not be overlooked. This will offer insight into resources and management support available to provincial government from a national level.

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