



# Critical Resources for the Development of Rural Tourism within the greater Bergville area of Kwa-Zulu Natal South Africa

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## Abstract

Bergville rural area, situated in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Province of South Africa faces abject poverty despite being endowed with abundant resources that could be used to develop tourism ultimately alleviating poverty. The purpose of the study was to investigate the critical resources for developing the tourism industry within the Bergville rural area. The study was motivated by increasing levels of poverty in the area. The study employed a positivist philosophy using a quantitative method with a Likert scale type of questionnaire used as the data collection instrument. Fieldworkers distributed questionnaires across a sample of 330 participants. The findings of the study revealed that Bergville rural area has abundant tourism resources that could be harnessed to develop the rural tourism industry of Bergville ultimately alleviating poverty. Thus, the study recommended that Bergville authorities and the communities should undertake an asset and needs mapping exercise to take stock of the potential tourism resources within the area and convert such resources towards tourism development. The mapping must identify available assets and existing needs, document and publish the resources for tourism development. In conclusion, the study proposes the development of a resource-focused rural tourism strategy as a mechanism to ensure constant supply of tourism resources with the overall goal to fight the poverty-stricken rural communities across South Africa and the African continent.

**Keywords:** Tourism resources, countryside, agriculture, rural area, poverty

## Introduction

The province of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa is largely rural with communities facing increasing levels of abject poverty. The challenge of poverty is not unique to the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal as large parts of South Africa are stuck in a poverty crisis with poverty so extreme that it is difficult to solve the crippling problems of hunger, diseases and lack of infrastructure. This crisis in turn hampers economic growth as well as promoting rural depopulation (Yu, Cole & Chancellor, 2018).

While on one hand rural South Africa faces abject poverty, on the other hand the country boasts it is a tourism hub for Southern Africa (Baird Hall & Castka, 2018). It is disturbing to imagine why



rural South Africa continues to struggle despite endowed with natural resources across most of the regions that includes rural areas (SA Tourism, 2010:1). The province of Kwa-Zulu Natal, in particular the Bergville rural area, offers a variety of tourist attractions that includes majestic and scenic beauty, availability of diverse fauna and flora, a kaleidoscope of cultures, traditions and many opportunities to explore the outdoors through a wide range of sporting and adventure activities (SA Tourism, 2010:1). Bergville is a minor town located in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It was established as Bergville Mountain Village in 1897 and is nowadays the commercial centre for a 2,500 km<sup>2</sup> dairy and cattle ranching area, but faces immense poverty for the local rural community. The town is now the commercial center for a district, which includes the tribal area of the Ngwaneni on the banks of the Tugela River in the shade of the spectacular Drakensberg Mountains. Bergville is the foremost town in the Northern Drakensberg area.

According to Hall and Gössling (2016), rural tourism has the potential to grow and develop communities especially in the developing world that includes South Africa. Meyer (2006) argues that rural communities have been economically excluded and yet they are the custodians of critical tourism resources. The exclusion of rural communities is a result of failure by the communities to identify the critical tourism resources in their surroundings. Tourism development planners focus on the enclave development of resorts characterized by exclusion of linkages to the local economies, especially in poor rural areas (Brown, 2000; Meyer, 2006). Where this exclusion occurs, the role of tourism in poverty alleviation is undermined, especially in rural communities like Bergville. At the time of conceptualizing the study, increasing levels of poverty is a major concern for Bergville rural area. Unfortunately efforts by government towards the alleviation of rural poverty is directed towards soil fertility improvement, land reform and advanced agricultural technology ignoring rural tourism which has readily available resources (SA Tourism, 2010:5).

It is against this background that the study investigates the critical resources for the development of rural tourism within the greater Bergville area of Kwa-Zulu Natal Province. Bergville rural area boasts of natural resources as a potential to boost the tourism industry ultimately changing the lives of communities within the area. Unfortunately, little is being done to identify and tap into the critical resources and utilize such resources to develop the tourism industry towards the creation of jobs. Until such time such resources have been tapped into sustainable rural tourism, Bergville community may remain in abject poverty up to infinity.

### **Rationale for the study**

The study was necessitated by inordinately high poverty levels in Bergville rural area within Kwa-Zulu Natal Province of South Africa despite the fact that Bergville is endowed with potential tourism resources that could be used to develop the tourism industry, ultimately creating employment to reduce poverty within the area. With such resources, Bergville community faces increasing levels of dire poverty with 73% of the population surviving from informal income (Okhahlamba Local Municipality, 2010:18). According to SA Tourism (2010:1), rural tourism has the potential to alleviate poverty in rural communities through employment creation. Poverty alleviation is at the heart of the tourism agenda to such an extent that tourism is positively benefiting the rural communities (Ashley, Dilys & Goodwin, 2001:4).

The study therefore sought to investigate the critical resources for rural tourism development in the rural Bergville in order to identify and recommend to the provincial government and community



leaders the critical resources that could be harnessed to develop rural tourism with an ultimate goal of alleviating poverty in Bergville area.

### **Literature review - The countryside as a resource for tourism**

According to Singgalen and Simange (2018), the countryside provides a resource potential for rural tourism. The countryside has tourist attractions, which are an essential pull-factor from which it derives the benefits of having a diversity of cultures, flora and fauna. These are such scenic attractions as natural and cultural landscapes with lakes, rivers, hills and mountains, supporting a diverse collection of flora and fauna (John, Sandar, Das, & Ravikrishnan, 2008:436). Since all these are found in the countryside, they give the rural communities an advantage in attracting and exploiting the growing tourism industry for the benefit of the poor (John et al., 2008:436). In the same way, rural communities must foster the conservation and preservation of the natural and cultural beauty to make the tourism business a sustainable activity with permanent benefits.

South Africa is in a good position to be competitive in tourism business because its countryside has a major contribution to the tourism resource base (SA Tourism, 2010:3). South Africa's incredible tourism attractiveness lies in its wide diversity of tourism products. The country is often described as the 'world' in one country because it is one of the greatest tourist destinations. It has an excellent climate, natural beauty, first-rate infrastructure and welcoming people. It boasts of the fastest growing ecotourism segment, which includes nature photography, bird watching et cetera (SA Tourism, 2010:4).

The countryside has become attractive to visitors with its combination of primary activities. Most tourists prefer tourism that affords them opportunities to enjoy the rural landscape and explore the local agricultural cultures (Frochot, 2005:4). They are also interested in how agricultural products are produced and processed. Literature on tourism reveals that the countryside has for many years been romanticized and commodified to some extent in order to match the customers' own perceptions. Frochot (2005: 4) claims that visitors appear to view the countryside with nostalgia as a place that has escaped the urbanization of society and where people can revert to old ways of life and authenticity.

The image of most urban destinations is negative in that they are associated with noise, congestion, pollution, overcrowding, prostitution and crime, while the countryside is associated with quietness, rich cultural heritage and natural resources, personal contact, authenticity, and individual resonance (Yasim, Alavi, Sobral & Lisboa, 2003; Gartner, 2004; Gartner, 2005). If planners intend to maintain the well-being of rural communities through tourism, they need to develop models of how to blend rural tourism planning with the available resources of the countryside, and take advantage of its image (Robinson & Mazzoni, 2004: 1). Planners must, therefore, take advantage of strong general image congruence between the tourists and the countryside and use it as a way of improving rural livelihood assets to achieve the most important livelihood outcome, which is poverty alleviation.

Tourism and the environment are intimately linked and interdependent. Tourism depends on an attractive environment to succeed and, the environment, built and natural, depends on the income generated by visitors for maintenance (Parker, 2004: 9). The countryside has an environmental advantage in that it provides natural and cultural entertainments which are the most rewarding entertainment forms for tourists. In most countries the expressions of culture in music, dance, drama, ceremonies and festivals are stronger in the countryside. This gives rural communities an advantage, as urban dwellers visit to enjoy leisure activities and learning by experience, staying



and resting in the countryside. Rural dwellers, on the other hand, can create employment opportunities and increase sales of products, thus reducing the impact of poverty (Seong-Woo & Sou-Yeon, 2005:74). Rural areas in South Africa can use tourism development for poverty alleviation. Ashley et al. (2001: 4) maintain that tourism is one of the best opportunities available for South Africa because it creates employment and livelihood for the rural poor.

Traditional cultures which are dominant in rural areas attract visitors. The historic agricultural buildings and traditional agricultural tools and methods are part of a cultural heritage which appeals to visitors, who would sometimes like to listen to old tales and understand the history of the village. During cultural festivals, visitors would demand a wonderful experience of participating in various activities (Arahi & Kaikan, 1998:6). The participation of visitors in cultural activities makes rural tourism more community-based and gives locals supplementary income to offset the possibility of a desire to abandon farming and migrate to cities. We need to improve the geographical spread of tourism development to rural areas to ensure that the benefits from the industry are also enjoyed by the struggling local communities (Department of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, 2007:7).

The development of rural tourism or leisure products relates to psychological attitudes to, and perceptions of, the countryside. There is a growing demand for recreation activities that help to establish spiritual relationships with landscape and nature. In particular, farm attractions now seek to establish their environmental credentials by encouraging local diversity of nature, landscape, culture and tradition (Capriello & Rotherham, 2008:63). Rural tourism development can act as an agent for the transformation of rural areas, allowing an inflow of resources and liquidity into host communities through the expenditure of tourists, and the creation of new small businesses and employment. In turn, this can assist the building of infrastructure and the conservation of the natural environment, culture and identities of each tourist destination. Through its environmental resources, the countryside can be a source of tourism in the rural areas and of the provision of both economic and social benefits to the poor rural communities (Polo & Frias, 2010: 28).

The countryside is a valuable resource for tourist attractions because rural tourism utilizes indigenous resources, which increase its importance and uniqueness in the industry (Ohe, 2008:1). Most rural areas attract tourists because of their inherent, exhibited cultural value, historical significance, and natural beauty or amusement opportunities. The rural areas have amenities and educational features in their heritage and environment, which make them more attractive. Examples of these tourist attractions include historical places, monuments, and zoos. National parks, forests, ethnic enclave communities and cultural events still form part of tourist attractions, which are in rural areas. Besides the non-human tourist attractions in rural areas, ethnic communities and their cultures may become tourist attractions. The development of tourism in rural areas can change unusable rural resources such as archaeological works, forests and mountains, and give them economic value that can create employment and reduce the impact of poverty (Gholami, Assayesh & Alipour-Nakhi, 2010:341).

Rural tourism often focuses on the use of natural resources in an untouched state, including flora and fauna, water features and general scenery. Tourism in the countryside is mostly practiced by the people who prefer isolated areas where they can connect with the natural beauty (Tane & Theirheimer, 2009:904). The past two decades have been characterised by the appearance of an entirely new generation of tourists who prefer to spend their spare time in more natural and rural environments. This is one of the reasons why rural tourism has shown a fascinating resilience in positive economic and social changes (Pardellas, Padin, Vareiro, & Ribeiro, 2003:2). The countryside has characteristics that set it apart from general tourism because it offers a relaxing environment, open spaces and traditional village charm, marked by outdoor activities, wildlife and beautiful natural scenery. It offers opportunities for direct participation, such as eating at local



outlets and picking fruit (Lee, 2006:30). The blending of the agrarian and forest-based economic activities with the natural landscape can also attract tourists, create local job opportunities that can curb rural depopulation and boost the economy in the destination (Brelík, 2005:19).

Tyran (2007:125) holds the view that tourists consume landscape, rural atmosphere and a quiet environment. This consumption of landscape, atmosphere and quiet environment has economic spinoffs for the countryside. Yesid, Juliana and Alvaro (2009: 131) share the same sentiment as they argue that tourism has become a quality indicator, an important source of income and a regional growth propeller. The countryside has a wealth of natural resources, some of which are part of the stock. In this way the countryside is able to provide such activities as golf, riding, fishing, snow skiing, snow-mobiling, water sports and nature study. Some rural areas have a wider range of these resources throughout the year, which increases their likelihood of success. These perennial resources can help to reduce the volume of seasonal employment, which creates seasonal maximization of the impact of poverty in rural areas. Kharel (2005:6) shares the same position by stating that the countryside is characterized by attractive landscapes with flora and fauna, and if these are degraded, the rural tourism destination will lose its attraction for tourism business.

The countryside provides tourist attractions within the homes of the local people. In this way they do not need large sums of money all the time to develop new products. Another important resource in the countryside is the living landscape, which is very pleasing to urban dwellers who are always surrounded by concrete and artificial landscapes. In the countryside, they enjoy woodlands and beautiful scenery, which changes from one season to another (Arahi & Kaikan, 1998:6). The White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa claims that many communities and previously neglected groups, particularly those in rural areas that have actively participated in the tourism industry possess significant tourism resources. It was foreseen that these communities would play a pivotal role in developing rural tourism (Viljoen & Tlabela, 2006:6).

Mishra and Dash (2003:2) argue that rural tourism must be located in rural areas. This has relevance since the countryside has a location advantage, derived from its position away from the busy urban environments, which make it more attractive for people who want a tranquil environment for relaxing. There are several tourism options which relate to the strengths and resources of the countryside. These options are given special terms, such as recreation and natural attractions, which include lakes, forests, parks, beaches and other outdoor places. This attracts tourists who are searching for fun activities in warm and sunny climates. The countryside has much to offer in these areas. Yesid et al., (2009: 133) postulate a link between the countryside and three elements: space, people and product. They argue that tourism in the countryside includes all activities which can be carried out in the rural spaces and which can lead to economic recovery, employment generation and creation of new markets.

Agriculture has played an effective role in the development of rural tourism up to the present time. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries contributed to the establishment of farm inns. These were a part of the private farms or were built on farms, which provide visitors with board and lodging, and give tourists the opportunity to participate in the day-to-day activities of running a farm. These inns grew in popularity and prospered in the 1950s. In the 1960s, bed-and-breakfast style inns were introduced, and in 1970s, rooms with a kitchen became popular. Finally, in the 1980s, rooms with special facilities were provided for handicapped people (Arahi & Kaikan, 1998: 3).

The second popular term in the countryside is cultural heritage tourism, which is about the marketing of cultural heritage. One of the assets for the poor is their cultural wildlife heritage, and tourism presents opportunities to capitalize on these assets. Tourists are often attracted to remote



areas because of their high cultural landscape values. Tourism development opportunities are abundant in the countryside, and they include highly diversified landscapes, and developed networks of protected areas. Tourists are eager to experience real cultural activities and to learn and enhance their awareness (Polucha, 2010:4). Therefore, the resourcefulness of the countryside lies in its ability to attract visitors. Jonsson and Devonish (2008:399) argue that the critical element of the tourism system is the destination together with its features and resources.

Finally, there is ecotourism, which focuses on wilderness adventures, local cultures and sustainable ways of living on our vulnerable planet. These are mainly found in the countryside, where land-use patterns are in harmony with the natural landscapes. This supports the argument for the importance of the countryside as a resource for tourism because it involves travelling to destinations where flora and fauna, and cultural heritage are the main attractions. Ecotourism involves the understanding of the cultural and natural history of the environment and its stewardship, while producing economic opportunities that make the natural resources financially beneficial to the local communities (Neves, 2003:14). The international definition of ecotourism goes beyond nature experience to include concepts such as planning before development, sustainability of resources, economic viability of a tourism product, no negative impacts on either the environment or local communities, environmentally friendly practices by all parties concerned and economic benefits flowing to local communities (Viljoen & Tlabela, 2006:7).

Tane and Theirheimer (2009:903) assert that the countryside is isolated from the urban crowds and has silence instead of the noise of tourist resorts. It is directly connected to nature. Therefore, outdoor tourism and recreation, cultural attractions, history and ecological sites in the countryside can attract nature lovers. In most cases these visitors turn into repeat events. The growing tourism benefits of the countryside are not only dedicated to the natural environment, but also to the people living there, to the know-how developed, to the buildings and to everything recalling the past. People are more nostalgic and more and more attracted by anything reminding them of the past. This is why the countryside is so fashionable for holidays in spite of it being generally perceived as less modernized (Saule, 2004:33).

The modernization of agriculture and rural tourism are two very important issues in the current stage of tourism development in many countries (Tsai, 2007:1). The countryside as a resource for tourism is one of the available alternatives that can benefit the rural communities who are no longer absorbed by the agricultural sector. The next section focuses on the relationship between the two processes and shows how they relate to each other.

### **Agriculture as tourism resource**

According to Harrison (2003:31), agriculture especially countryside agriculture serve as a critical resource for rural tourism. In many countries, the appreciation of the countryside and its physical resources grew in the nineteenth century (Jolly, 2005:1). During this period, promoters constructed a popular image of its agricultural scenery. The bulk of the new attractions were located in scenic representations of agricultural landscapes. As one promoter remarked on the view from the state of Vermont's highest mountain, there is spread out before you on the west, the level, fertile land of Western Vermont ... This view is singularly attractive. You see the farm houses clustering into villages; you can follow the courses of the winding trout-laden streams among the hills and forests; you can see the dark green of the waving grain, and can almost distinguish the farmers at their toil (Harrison, 2003:31). Most tourism in rural areas is practised by farmers on their working agricultural operations for the entertainment and education of visitors. Agriculture and nature tourism are very important in the struggle against rural poverty because



they present the potential to generate increased on-farm revenues and might increase farm profitability (Jolly, 2005:1). The potential of on-farm tourism to generate income can help farmers and rural dwellers to survive the challenges of the mechanization of agriculture. This income can contribute to poverty alleviation and the curbing of rural depopulation.

Agricultural wage earners, small and marginal farmers, and workers engaged in non-agricultural activities, constitute the bulk of the rural poor. Small land holdings and their low productivity are the cause of rural poverty among rural households dependent on land-based activities for their livelihoods. Due to their poor physical and social capital base, a large proportion of the rural poor are forced to migrate to cities, where they seek employment in vocations with extremely low wages, probably because of their poor education and lack of vocational skills. Thus, they are unable to sustain their families back home.

The creation of employment for the unskilled rural poor is still a major challenge for development planners. If we intend to maintain the well-being of rural communities, we need to develop models of how to blend rural tourism planning with agricultural sector sustainability, because they share the same infrastructure, services, and natural and human capital (Harrison, 2003:31)

Agriculture and rural tourism are tied together by destiny, facing the same challenges and with a potential for mutual benefit. From the agricultural perspective, the reasoning behind this argument is that agriculture is under heavy pressure. Farms are being closed down at a high rate per year, which results in fundamental changes in the agricultural landscape. Agriculture has been relying on extensive use of large tracts of forests and mountains for grazing and mowing. This leaves rural areas with large tracts of unused land and poverty. Recent studies have shown that the link between agriculture and tourism is generally positive (Daugstad, 2005:1). This positive relationship must be translated into tourism industries in rural areas for positive benefits to the local poor people.

The fear of abandonment of agriculturally influenced land, leading to overgrowth and decay of built structures, such as houses and fences, is increasing among farmers, the agricultural authorities and the general public. The population, according to recent studies, is concerned about the depopulation of rural areas and the consequent abandonment and overgrowth of agricultural land. The concern of the tourist industry reveals a shared destiny between agriculture and tourism.

Tourism is a growing sector internationally. The images of many rural-based tourist destinations, with their landscapes, nature, mountains, hills, narrow fjords, meanders and lakes, are becoming more and more exciting, pleasant, arousing, relaxing and accessible (Yasim et al., 2003:222). Although these attractions are pure in nature in the eyes of the visitor, the heterogeneity of the rural landscape, with traces of agricultural activity, are seen as major qualities. The rural settlement patterns and infrastructure created to serve the agricultural sector in rural communities also provide infrastructure and services that tourism relies on (Daugstad, 2005:1).

The blending of agriculture and tourism has a great potential for absorbing the rural workers who have been frustrated by the abandonment of agricultural land before they decide to migrate to cities. It is a fact that rural tourism takes place within a balanced environment with people, activities and natural resources. If agricultural activity ceases to exist, and rural areas are abandoned, the tourist industry is likely to suffer the landscape consequences. Genzong et al. (2007:405) speak of a 'cultural motivation' for travel in which participation in tourism is motivated by a desire to mix with locals and learn the new culture. Presently, on the demand side of rural tourism, there is a growing niche market of tourists who want to participate in 'real lived lives', to hear the stories of the community they visit and to taste traditional food made by local people (Daugstad, 2005:1). The creation of new opportunities through tourism can change the focus of



the rural poor from migration to involvement in tourism. Tourism, together with attractive cultural landscapes and hundreds of villages, rivers and lakes can combine with the traditional hospitality and offer pleasant experiences to the kind of tourist who is looking for relaxation and recreation in a calm setting (Genzong et al., 2007:405).

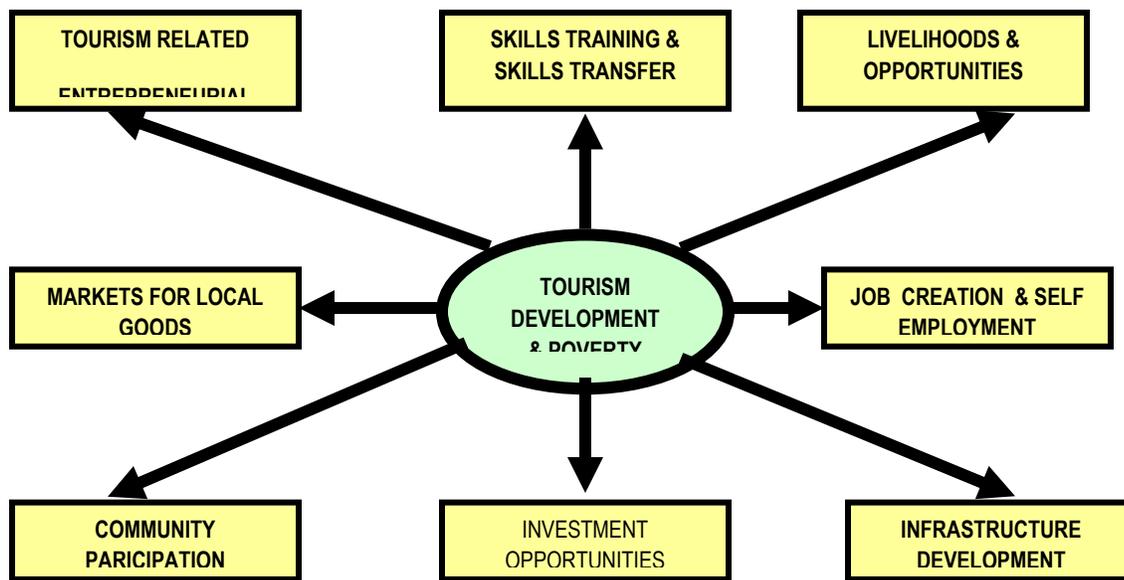
The shared destiny between agriculture and tourism leads to a focus on the multifunction of agriculture. This includes products like cultural landscapes, biodiversity, cultural heritage, living within rural communities and recreational possibilities, in addition to bulk food production. In this way the farmer becomes the provider of leisure goods and has to relate to 'consumers' as visiting tourists at the farm or as a guide through the village to give visitors a taste of everyday life there. The farmers are thus not only situated in the landscape as producers of food but have also to relate to the outside gaze.

On the other hand, the tourist wants to move away from the traditional outsider's perspective of someone just passing through a landscape and experiencing it by eye only. The tourist wants to taste, feel, and hear about the landscape and to get a glimpse of the inside perspective (Daugstad, 2005:1). The diversifications of farm activities can expand the scope of the rural economy and motivate locals to participate in the industry and move from the state of absolute poverty to at least a state of relative poverty.

### **The benefits of rural tourism**

Tourism development can play both a direct and indirect role in poverty alleviation. The relationship between tourism and poverty alleviation is not confined to urban areas but it can also work in rural areas where agricultural employment has declined. If tourism can facilitate the alleviation of rural poverty, it can discourage the transfer of poverty from rural areas to urban areas. Tourism can alleviate poverty by contributing to employment generation, skills transfer, entrepreneurship development, infrastructure development, community empowerment and the general improvement of rural livelihoods. Entrepreneurial development can create jobs, which in turn transfer skills to employees who are able to have alternative livelihoods. Tourism development can create access to markets in the area which can, in turn, increase the demand for locally produced goods.

Demand can create more jobs and thus contribute to poverty alleviation (Agupusi, 2007:2). This is shown in figure 1 on the next page.

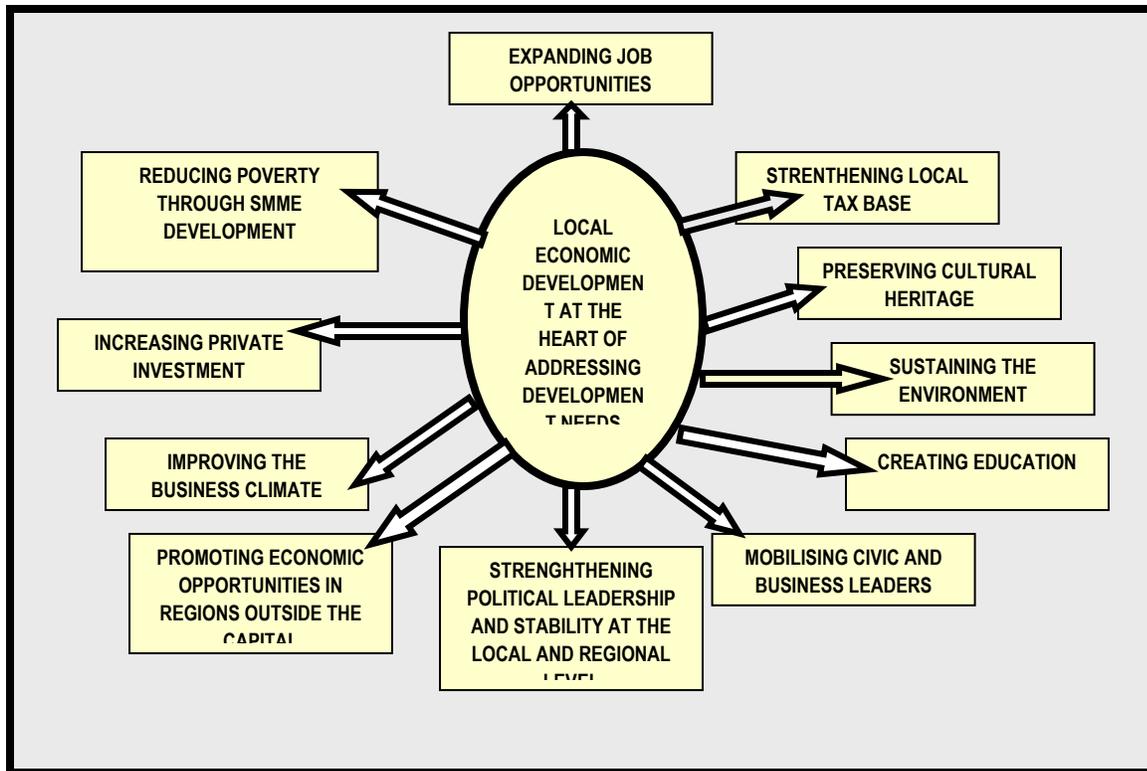


**Figure 1:** Tourism as a resource **Source:** Agupusi (2007).

For communities to be successful and economically vibrant in the present global environment, they must adapt to the fast changing national and international trends in development. Local governments like Okhahlamba require a planning model that incorporates the municipalities and local communities in finding the best solutions to achieve sustainable development outcomes. Municipalities must respond to the needs of local communities by doing away with complex webs of business regulations, permitting procedures, land management practices and outdated infrastructure which stand on the way of economic development and to respond to new market opportunities (Agency for International Development, 2010:1).

In terms of the Systems Theory of Development, a system must receive input from within and outside if it wants to respond to the ever-changing world (Jimu, 2008:23). Roads and communication networks links are necessary to facilitate the exchange of goods, services and ideas across the local village boundaries in Bergville and the rest of the world (Tamas, 2003:3). Bergville as a rural community needs local development economic programmes that bring together resources from within and outside the community to address the livelihood challenges and to promote economic growth in a systematic and organised manner at the local level (Agency for International Development, 2010:1).

Figure 2 on the next page shows that local economic development is at the heart of addressing the livelihood needs of communities.



**Figure 2:** Local development and livelihoods

**Source:** Agency for international development (2002)

The philosophy of community development relates to the concept of ‘locality’ and people. It underscores the indispensability of local needs, aspirations and local resource mobilization within geographically and socially defined spheres (Jimu, 2008:23). A prerequisite for sustainable growth is the involvement of local stakeholders in the process of planning their own development. Bringing local stakeholders together through a local forum helps to build trust, encourage innovation and promote the creation of social networks and activities. The involvement of stakeholders during planning fosters social cohesion, thereby decreasing the risk of conflict (Agency for International Development, 2010:2).

Municipality Systems Act of 2000 use the term ‘integrated development planning’ to mean a method to plan future development. Integrated development planning is an approach that is supposed to involve the entire Bergville community. It must be an inclusive plan that drives the development of tourism in Bergville. The main aim of this integrated development plan is to coordinate the work of local and other spheres of the Bergville government in a coherent plan to improve the quality of livelihoods in the area. It must take into account the existing conditions, problems and resources available for development. The plan must consider the economic and social development in Bergville in its totality. It must set a practical framework of how the land should be used, what infrastructure and services are needed and how the environment should be protected. Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world which has the potential to help deal with the key challenges facing rural areas. Although it has its costs and benefits, an integrated tourism driven rural development plan can be used to minimize the impact of costs and maximize the opportunities from the benefits. The following is a summary of some of the possible economic benefits of a poverty targeting integrated development plan that includes tourism.



## Research Methodology

The study employed a survey strategy using several approaches to data collection referred by (Gray, 2013) as methodological triangulation. Triangulation was applied on the administration and the collection of the questionnaires. The fieldworkers used two methods for administering the questionnaires. For the public and the business sector, the field workers went to the residential areas, local public centers, business centres and educational institutions to administer the questionnaires. After questionnaire completion, the fieldworkers collected the questionnaires on the spot. The questionnaire for the local municipality employees was delivered to the respondents who then faxed the completed questionnaire to the researcher. The study used more than one group of respondents for collecting data which Hales (2010:8) refers to as data triangulation. Data triangulation method was applied by identifying more than one group of the respondents. Although the data was largely collected from the respondents of Bergville, respondents were categorised into three groups, which includes the general public, the local business owners and the local municipality employees. The identification of the groups resulted in the construction of three questionnaires, that is, the questionnaire for the public, for the local business owners and for the local municipality employees.

Data was gathered from a sample of 330 participants. According to Finn and Elliot - White (2000), it is impracticable to survey the whole population of the organisation under study due to budget and time constraints. Thus, researchers ought to select a representative sample to ensure validity of findings. The sample selection was a decision-making process in which the researchers had to choose a sampling method that allowed the selection of an appropriate sample size (Sontakki, 2006:13). The choice of the sample size was informed by two facts, which include the confidence level on the findings and minimisation of the margin of error. The study used the following formula by Long (2007:37) to arrive at the sample size.

$$N_a = n \times 100$$

$$re\%$$

Where  $N_a$  is actual sample size required,  $n$  is the minimum sample size and  $re\%$  is estimated response rate expressed as %

Following the above as sample of 330 was selected. However, 400 questionnaires were distributed which included 200 (in the English language) for the local business people and 200 (in iSizulu Language) for the local municipality employees. Finn & Elliot - White (2000) argue that the validity of a research instrument depends on the sampling methods used. There are two sampling methods, namely, probability and non-probability sampling (Gray, 2013:87). In probability sampling, every element of the population has a known, non-zero probability of selection. In non-probability sampling, elements from a population are selected non-randomly. This non-random nature of selection is done where the population elements are selected based on convenience (Saunders et al., 2016:295).

Non-probability sampling method also referred to as convenience or availability sampling was the most applicable methods for the study. Convenience sampling is sampling which involves selecting sample elements that are most readily available to participate in the study and that can provide the required information (Gray, 2013:91). The study identified the research participants based on the convenience sampling. The fieldworkers used two approaches to reach the respondents for data collection. The first one was the door-to-door approach whereby they visited households and administered the questionnaires. The second method was the use of different schools whereby learners were briefed on the questionnaire after which it was given to them



(learners) to take home to their family members to complete and return it the following day. For business owners the field workers personally delivered and administered the questionnaires.

The statistical package of social science (SPSS) was used to analyse data. The analysis entailed the systematic application of statistical tools to describe, illustrate and evaluate data (Saunders et al., 2016:296). Upon completion of the questionnaire, data was first coded and analysed. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data. In this study, all data were reduced to numerical values, presented in graphs with percentages used as a measure of expression.

## **Results and discussions**

The main objective of the study was to identify critical resources towards the development of rural tourism within Bergville area. The respondents were provided with statements to state their levels of agreement. The statements included tangible and intangible statements as potential tourism resources. According to Tikkane (2004:6), tourism resources can be classified into tangible and intangible. Tangible resources in rural tourism are necessary elements in service production process whilst intangible resources include capabilities and competencies linked with tourism resources.

The results of the study revealed that the respondents believed that Bergville rural area has tourism resources that can be used as a starting point for tourism development in the area. The respondents agreed that Bergville has tangible tourism resources such as infrastructure, as well as natural landscape and attractions. In the sections that follow, a discussion of the results is presented.

### **(a) Infrastructure**

Most of the respondents (78.3%) agreed that Bergville has good infrastructure for the development of the tourism industry. The minority (8.7%) of the respondents disagreed and 13% were neutral. The respondents were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed that Bergville has enough accommodation facilities for tourism development. An overwhelming majority (69.7%) agreed with the statement while those who disagreed formed only 17.3% of the total number of respondents. When asked to respond to the statement, which says that Bergville has enough recreation facilities to support tourism, a higher proportion of the respondents (63.3%) agreed, 22.3% disagreed whilst 14.3% remained neutral. The respondents were positive about the linkage of Bergville with the rest of the world. When asked to respond to the statement that there is a good linkage of highways leading to Bergville, a majority of 62.3% agreed and only 17% disagreed.

Figure 3 on the next page, illustrates the responses of the participants on the issue of the availability of infrastructure in Bergville. It shows that more than 60% of respondents agreed that Bergville has infrastructure in the form of highways, recreation and accommodation facilities.

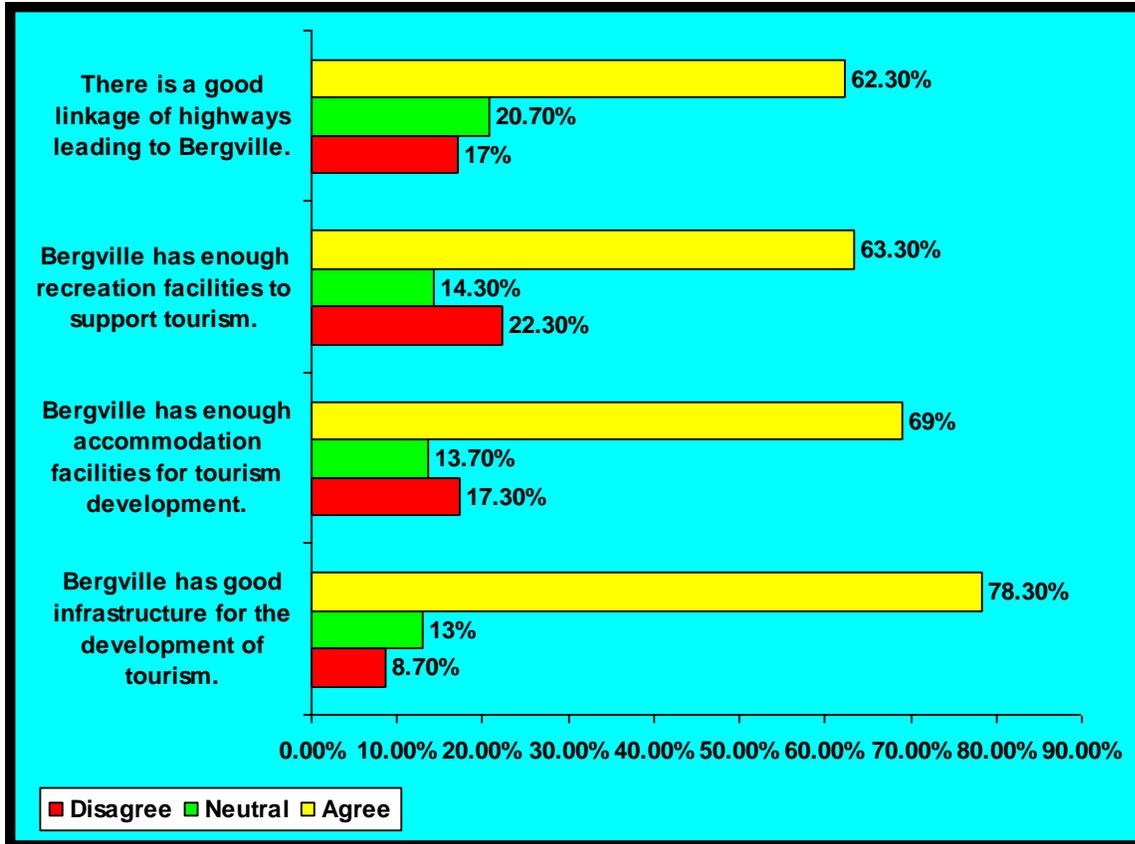


Figure 3. Infrastructure

Rural tourism depends on infrastructure, connectivity and sanitation (Sarkar, 2009: 8). Figure 3 above indicate that Bergville could use tourism as a mechanism for poverty alleviation as it has the basic infrastructure that can be used as a starting point for tourism development. Lack of basic infrastructure can frustrate tourism development programmes accelerating poverty within the area. Infrastructure attracts tourists to a destination. The role of infrastructure does not end when the tourists reach the destination but it continues depending on their needs such as accommodation, communication and other requirements. The availability of basic infrastructure in Bergville means that Bergville is ready to supply tourism as Davis (2003:20) argues that remoteness and accessibility are factors that determine the supply of tourism.

### (i) Accommodation

In terms of accommodation, the findings as shown in figure 3 link up with the issue of accessibility because once the visitors reach the destination, they need accommodation. The majority of the respondents agreed that Bergville has enough accommodation for tourism development. This is an advantage because the availability of accommodation means that the destination has potential for hosting local people as well as people from far away. The accessibility of Bergville can facilitate the arrival of visitors who want to stay longer. The arrival of visitors in a destination becomes meaningless if there is no place to accommodate them. Accommodation is the basic need for the tourism business (Davis, 2003:20). Even the best destinations cannot survive without accommodation.



The availability of accommodation can attract the overseas tourism market for Bergville thus creating jobs in the sector. These are jobs in hotel management, marketing, tour guiding, transportation, entertainment and cleaning services. Accommodation facilities are very important nowadays because the way in which people spend holidays has changed. People no longer spend good times as individuals but they take along their families. This tendency creates more demand for accommodation. The results of the survey show that Bergville is in a position to supply accommodation for visitors. This ability can create more jobs and help Bergville to take advantage of using tourism as a mechanism for poverty alleviation.

### **(ii) Recreation facilities**

The results indicate that Bergville has an opportunity for tourism development because recreation and tourism are interrelated activities that involve the movement of people between destinations (Tikkane, 2004:6). The advantage that Bergville can derive from the availability of recreational facilities extend beyond the inflow of visitors. It increases the demand for local goods and services, creates opportunities for entrepreneurship because the demand for a destination goes beyond the realm of product consumption. Beshiri (2005:3) holds the view that there is a relationship between the demand for a destination and the creation of jobs in other sectors.

Bergville can derive other potential advantages from the availability of recreation facilities. One of the advantages is that recreation and tourism can enhance business growth and profitability at local level. Business growth can bring in more advantages into Bergville such as the creation of employment for the unemployed people thus raising them out of the poverty trap. This can reduce the possibility of migration to cities to a minimal scale. With the inflow of visitors attracted by recreation and tourism activity, Bergville residents can gain access to an array of goods and services such as entertainment, medical care and shopping facilities. Visitors attracted by recreation facilities can create demand for local goods and services and Bergville can take advantage of this demand and sell more goods and services. Taking this advantage can help to alleviate poverty and to improve local services such as transportation, entertainment, medical facilities and banking.

### **(iii) Highway linkages**

Transportation is one of the most important resources that drives tourism supply since the interaction between the tourist and the destination begins when the visitor reaches the destination. The findings of the survey indicate that Bergville has good highway linkages with the rest of the country. This linkage means that it has access to an array of resources and destinations. This is another advantage for tourism development in Bergville because highway linkages can help connect Bergville to the outside world and the outside world to Bergville. This connection can facilitate the inflow of visitors to Bergville thus creating a good market for local businesses such as accommodation, shopping centres, craft shops and other related businesses.

Transport linkages render Bergville an open system rather than a closed system. Tamas (2000:3) argues that the openness of the systems has many advantages such as communication. According to Tamas (2000), the openness of the system permits free exchange of goods and ideas across the boundaries between the destination and the rest of the world. This can facilitate successful tourism development in a destination like Bergville. By its nature and scope tourism, development requires an open system that allows the movement of people, goods, services and ideas in and out of the destination. As all these things move between the destination and the outside world, economic growth can occur and jobs can be created.

### (b) Tourist attractions

The findings show that the respondents believe that Bergville has tourists' attractions that can make tourism a viable solution for poverty alleviation. The majority of respondents agreed that Bergville has tourists' attractions such as natural landscape and attractions, historical attractions and cultural attractions. The respondents were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed that Bergville has good natural attractions that can make tourism development a successful undertaking. More than two thirds of the respondents (83.3%) agreed and a slim minority of 5.8% disagreed with only (15.3%) providing a neutral response. The respondents were also asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed to the statement that Bergville has good historic attractions that can make tourism development a success. Overall, 79% of the respondents agreed. The rest, that is, (5.7%), disagreed with the statement. The majority, (83%) of the respondents, agreed that Bergville has good cultural attractions to make tourism development to be a success. Less than one third of the respondents (6%) disagreed. When asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed that Bergville has a unique landscape, an overwhelming majority of 86.7% agreed, less than half (6.3%) disagreed while the remaining 6.7% were neutral.

Figure 4 below shows that the respondents were optimistic about the potential of Bergville towards the development of a tourist destination because of its tourist's attractions.

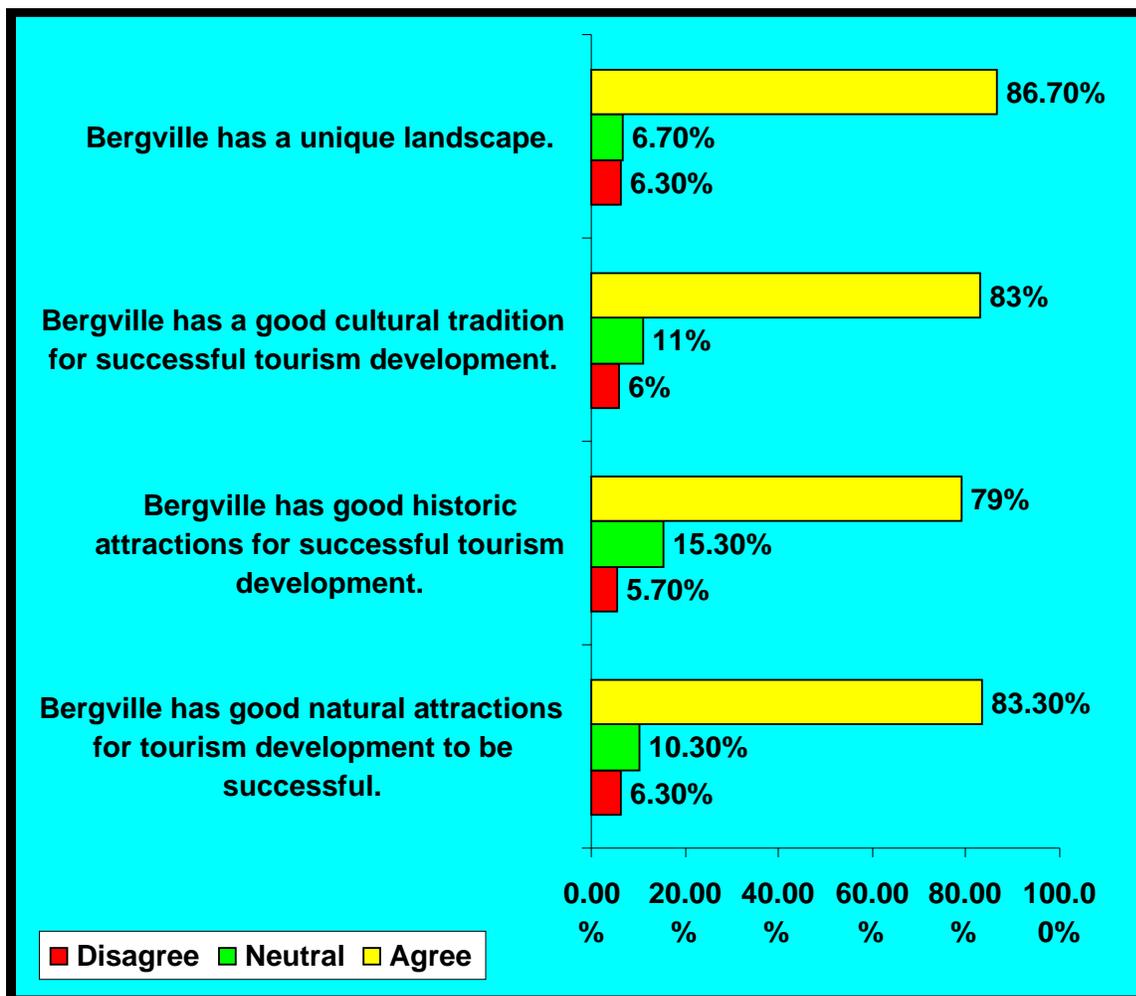


Figure 4. Tourists attractions



### **(i) Natural attractions**

There is an intimate relationship between tourism and the natural attractions. The availability of good natural attractions in Bergville can support tourism development because tourism depends on attractive natural phenomena (Parker, 2004:9). Like other rural destinations, Bergville has an advantage in that it has natural attractions, which are the most rewarding type of entertainment for the tourists. The fact that Bergville has good natural attractions means that it has a valuable resource for tourism development. The availability of natural attractions can help Bergville to provide ecotourism or nature-based tourism products to visitors. This kind of tourism involves the visiting of natural attractions for enjoying various natural sceneries.

The introduction of nature-based tourism in Bergville can create more jobs in the transport sector, the catering sector and the accommodation sector. The creation of jobs can contribute to poverty alleviation in Bergville.

### **(ii) Historical (heritage) attractions**

Historical sites are an advantage to tourism development in Bergville. The availability of historic attractions means that Bergville has a potential to attract people who wish to experience places and activities of the past. Heritage tourism can offer the people of Bergville an opportunity to be directly involved in the tourism industry because they know more about their own heritage. Mbaiwa (2003:6) argues that heritage tourism favors local involvement. The involvement of local people means the creation of job opportunities and therefore poverty alleviation. Besides the involvement of local people in the industry, heritage tourism development comes with an array of benefits. These are economic benefits such as the establishment of new businesses, creation of new jobs and improvement of property values near heritage sites. If well managed, heritage sites can improve the livelihoods of local people as they take advantage of the services required by tourists. Heritage tourism development in Bergville can also come with emotional benefits by promoting community pride. Heritage tourism comes with preservation of the historical sites because well-interpreted sites teach tourists their importance, which translates into the importance of their preservation.

### **(iii) Cultural attractions**

Since rural tourism and indigenous cultures go hand in hand, Bergville can use aspects of culture to attract tourists. The only thing that Bergville should avoid is to make cultural traditions a commodity and selling it for consumption (Flaux, 2010:1). The use of culture to attract visitors can have economic and psychological benefits to Bergville. The former relates to the generation of additional income by those involved and the latter relates to the pride and self-esteem that local people may derive from the demand of their culture. This can strengthen the support of local culture by the community. Ohe (2008:1) argues convincingly that most of the tourist destinations use their cultural values to attract tourists. In this way, cultural traditions are one of the economic assets of a destination. Bergville has a good potential for tourism development because it can take advantage of traditional skills and cultural traditions and use them to create small business operations. These operations can produce artwork and crafts and run cultural villages. Although cultural traditions and tourism do not originate from the same processes, they are interrelated in the sense that the tourism industry can use the cultural tradition to attract the visitors. The cultural tradition can use the tourism industry to market and display its offerings to the tourist. Once the visitors get interested in good quality crafts, they buy them. Each purchase helps the seller to



export the goods without getting into expensive processes. If Bergville can succeed in tourism development, the number of visitors can grow and the demand for local crafts may escalate.

#### **(iv) Unique landscape**

The uniqueness of the landscape of Bergville can present another opportunity for tourism development. It can offer Bergville an opportunity to include geotourism, that is, the tourism of geology and landscapes (Dowling & Newsome, 2011:1). This is a growing area of tourism, which owes its growth and popularity to the existence of natural landscapes and geographical phenomena found in certain places. Dowling and Newsome (2011:1) notes that people are getting lesser and lesser interested in overcrowded beaches and are now uncovering those remote destinations with unique landscapes.

With its unique landscape, Bergville can attract tourists who want to enjoy unfamiliar sites and appreciate nature. These are tourists who want to experience such scenic attractions as the natural and cultural landscapes with lakes, rivers, hills and mountains, which support a diverse collection of flora and fauna (John, Sandar et al., 2008). If such scenic attractions are found in Bergville, they can give it a competitive advantage, create jobs, generate supplementary income and benefit the poor.

#### **(c) Accessibility, environmental awareness and tranquility**

Besides the availability of tangible resources, the respondents agreed that Bergville also has capabilities and competencies that can link with the tangible resources in order to make tourism development a successful undertaking. An overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that Bergville has intangible resources such as accessibility, environmental awareness, conservation and tranquility. When the respondents were asked whether they agreed that Bergville is accessible from urban centres, the majority, 69.7% of the respondents agreed.

A small percentage of 13.7% disagreed and 6.7% were neutral about the accessibility of Bergville. The respondents were also asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed, that tourism could encourage greater awareness of the environment and cultural heritage in Bergville. The results showed that a significant majority (78.3%) agreed. The minority of 9.3% disagreed whilst 12.3% remained neutral. Similarly, the respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed, that tourism could help to encourage the conservation of the natural environment. An overwhelming majority of 78.7% of the participants, agreed.

A slim minority (9%) disagreed and the rest (12.3%) gave a neutral response. A related question was asked on whether respondents agreed or disagreed that tourism has a direct and powerful incentive to protect the heritage and environment of Bergville. Only 7.7% disagreed. A minority total of 13% gave a neutral response. The rest of the respondents (78.7%) agreed with the statement. Finally when asked whether they agreed or disagreed that Bergville has a tranquil environment appreciated by most of the holidaymakers, an overwhelming majority (85.7%) of the participants agreed. A slim minority (5%) disagreed and the rest (9.3%) gave a neutral response.

Figure 5. below illustrates the positive thinking of the respondents.

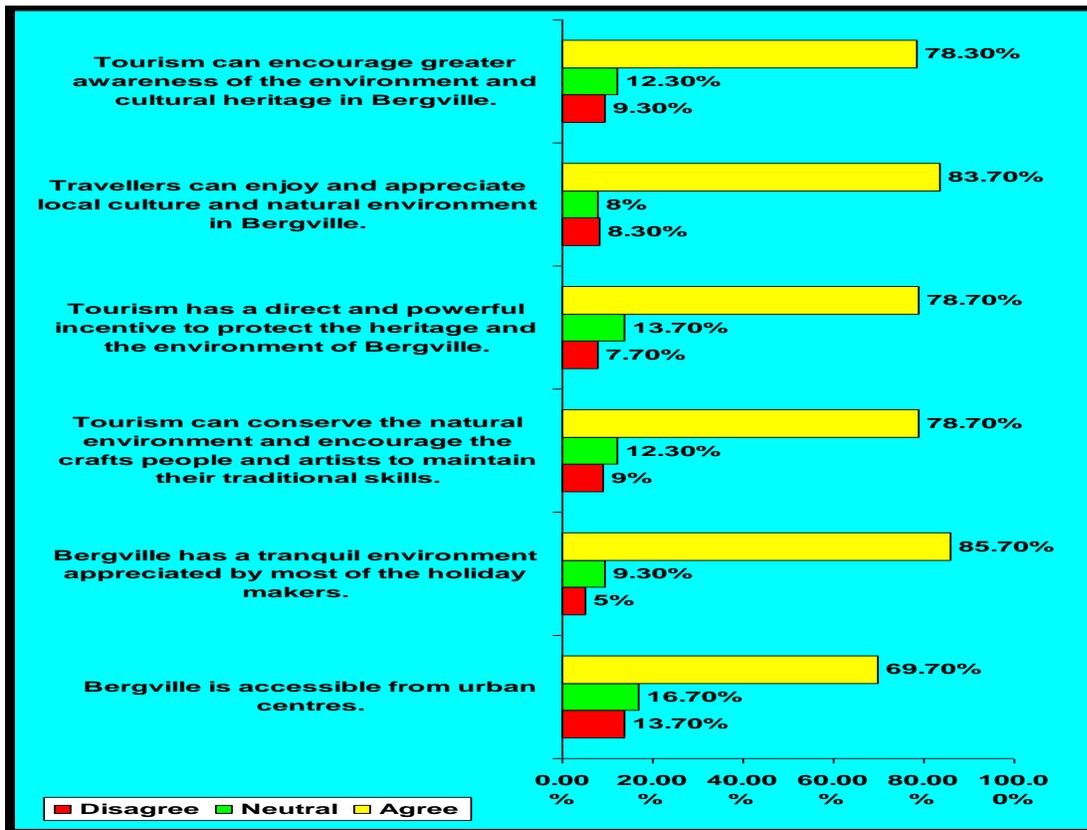


Figure 5: Intangible tourism resources

### (i) Accessibility

The findings of the study as shown in figure 5 indicate that Bergville is accessible from the urban centres. This means that Bergville can develop into a good tourist destination because the accessibility of a destination determines the extent to which the visitors can reach its products for consumption. Since Bergville is equidistant from Durban and Johannesburg, its accessibility is important because it can maximise the possibility of drawing visitors from these two metropolitan areas (Sorupia, 2005:1769). The fact that Bergville is accessible from the urban centres is an advantage for tourism development because accessibility is one of the factors, which can make tourism a profitable economic activity that can benefit the poor.

By being accessible from urban centres, Bergville has other advantages related to the tourism industry. Urban centres are big suppliers of goods that increase the capacity of destinations to meet the expectations of the tourists. One of the barriers to the development of rural tourism is the lack of support from other sectors. Sorupia (2005:1769) argues that accessibility can make or break the destination. The accessibility of Bergville from the urban centres can make it possible for the private sector to support tourism development in the area. According to Dimsoka (2008:177), the private sector is an essential player as a partner, facilitator, marketing channel and advisor for tourism development. The accessibility of Bergville means that the private sector, in the form of banking firms, transportation firms, training institutions, conferencing specialists and planners from big urban centres can access it easily to provide support for the tourism



development. These institutions can create more jobs for local people making tourism an effective mechanism for the alleviation of poverty in Bergville.

### **(ii) Environmental awareness**

From the responses, one can deduce that Bergville has an opportunity for sustainable tourism. Tourism development in Bergville can encourage people to know more about the importance of the natural environment. In this way, environmental awareness can become an advantage for tourism development. Zhang et al. (2009:32) hold the view that the development of rural tourism can strengthen the resource consciousness of people and make them more receptive to the protection of environmental resources. When unused environmental objects change into useful tourism products and resources, residents can be encouraged to conserve them. This benefits both the natural environment and the local communities. The conservation of the natural environment exposes its natural beauty, which in turn, attracts visitors and gives them greater satisfaction. Greater satisfaction with the destination can create more job opportunities, which may contribute to poverty alleviation.

Through tourism development, local people can discover that they earn a living from the natural environment. In this way, they can begin to exercise environmental stewardship and facilitate a paradigm shift that can change the local community's thinking from looking at the natural environment from a purely economic and social well-being perspective to a perception that takes nature conservation as a priority. It can foster the conservation of and preservation of natural resources because local communities can treat the natural environment as the tourist's product, which generates revenue rather than useless objects. The main advantage of environmental awareness is that it can promote sustainable tourism development, which in turn, can create more sustainable jobs for poverty alleviation.

The environment is a resource for traditional skills such as basket weaving, woodwork, traditional healing et cetera. The preservation of the environment is as good as the maintenance of traditional skills. Tourism development in Bergville can help to encourage environmental conservation. Environmental conservation has the potential for protecting the resources that support rural industries and traditional skills. Some of the resources that support traditional skills are in sensitive and fragile natural habitats and tourism development can contribute to the preservation thereof. Tourism has the potential for increasing public awareness of the value of the biodiversity and its conservation of human survival (Basak, 2009:75). This, in turn, can lead to environmentally conscious behavior and attitudes. Bergville can use tourism development not only to create new jobs but also as a means to maintain the existing jobs and livelihoods of the local people.

### **(iii) Protection of the heritage**

Cody (2008:4) defines heritage as all what people want to preserve for the next generations. Heritage is important for tourism development in Bergville because it tells the outside world about the traditions, beliefs and achievements of Bergville and its people. It is the responsibility of the people of Bergville to protect the heritage. It is a fact that tourism is an economic activity that can help Bergville to alleviate its poverty. It must also be appreciated that tourism is a fast growing highly sophisticated industry, which presents its unique challenges, one of which is the deterioration of important heritage sites.

The increase in the number of travelers put pressure on heritage sites. The protection of the heritage is one of the key factors for sustainable tourism development. One of the objectives of



tourism development in Bergville can be the preservation and protection of natural, historic and cultural resources. Tourism development planners should include the protection of the heritage in their plans. This can be done by checking the flow of visitors, designing notes and materials of presenting the heritage sites to visitors, providing facilities like toilets, car parks, shops and restaurants without debasing the aesthetic value of the sites. The protection of the heritage sites can create jobs in car parks, restaurants and shops. The protection of cultural heritage can have other economic payoffs for rural communities like those of Bergville. It can improve the image of the destination and create new demands from the tourists. The increase in demand comes with more opportunities for local people to participate in the industry and create more opportunities for entrepreneurship and economic growth. Heritage protection may require certain competencies thus providing local people with training opportunities and better jobs for poverty alleviation.

#### **(iv) Tranquility**

The prevalence of tranquility can boost tourism development in Bergville because it is one of the pull factors for many people to visit the countryside destinations. Cody (2008:1) maintains that tranquility is a natural resource. Tranquility makes rural areas like Bergville different from bustling cities. It can give Bergville an advantage in the development of tourism by providing the opportunity for visitors to see, feel and hear the spectacular beauty and freshness of the natural environment. The tranquility of the environment in Bergville can support tourism development as Tyran (2007:125) argues that tourists do not only consume landscape but they also consume the rural quiet atmosphere. This consumption of the tranquil rural environment can have important and lucrative economic spinoffs for Bergville.

#### **(v) Appreciation of the local culture**

Appreciation is one of the most valuable emotional resources for tourism because it is the starting point for participation. When people appreciate the local culture and natural environment of Bergville, they want to be part of it. In this way, appreciation becomes a motivating force for visiting Bergville. Today tourism and culture are inextricably linked and some tourists visit places to appreciate local culture. The appreciation of local culture has become an advantage for rural tourism to an extent that environmental and cultural have tourism has become one of the most desirable development options for certain areas (Richards, 2009:1).

Nowadays culture and tourism are two related concepts and culture can account more for both local and international tourism trips. Traditional cultures that are dominant in rural areas like Bergville attract visitors whose desire is to appreciate historic agricultural buildings, traditional agricultural tools and methods. Tourists can also listen to old orally transmitted tales and get to appreciate and better understand the history of Bergville. Arahi and Kaikan (1998:6) noted that during cultural festivals visitors would demand a wonderful experience of taking part in various cultural activities.

The participation of tourists in the cultural activities of Bergville can make rural tourism a more community based economic activity. It can provide local people with supplementary income and discourage them from abandoning farming in favor of migration to cities and reduce the impact of poverty. Cultural tourism can help farming communities in Bergville to diversify their businesses by developing cultural villages and package cultural activities for visitors to find them in one location. Cultural villages can create jobs for the unemployed youth and women thus contributing to poverty alleviation.



## Recommendations

It is recommended that the local authorities and the communities undertake an asset and needs mapping to take stock of opportunities that they have and challenges that they may face in tourism development. The map must identify available assets and existing needs, map them, document them and publish them as resources for, and challenges against, tourism development. Bergville must develop its needs and asset map to share needs and discover resources to harness assets and create opportunities for tourism development and sustainability.

## Conclusion

The study arrived at four conclusions on the availability of tourism resources in Bergville.

Firstly, Bergville has things and factors that can attract visitors. These are the things and factors which the potential Bergville tourism industry can exploit and derive social, economic and environmental benefits from.

Secondly, Bergville has tangible and intangible tourism resources that can be used for tourism development. Tangible resources include infrastructure, accessibility, accommodation facilities, recreation facilities, linkages with other places, historic sites, natural attractions and cultural attractions. Intangible resources include environmental awareness, tranquility, existing environmental conservation and protection of the heritage.

Thirdly, authorities can plan for inclusive rural tourism development, which emphasizes the role of the infrastructure in ensuring that the benefits of the tourism industry are accessible to the wider rural community. In this way, the tourism resources mentioned above can contribute to job creation and poverty alleviation, increased participation of the local people in economic activities, entrepreneurship as well as economic growth and diversification.

Fourthly, Bergville has the opportunity to use a combination of two approaches in order to develop into a sustainable rural tourism destination. These are the 'tourist centered' and 'community centered' approaches to tourism development. The former can help Bergville to prioritize on the immediate needs of the tourists such as transportation and accommodation and the latter can help the planners to prioritize on the benefits that local communities must derive from the provisions and utilization of the resources for tourism promotion. These are benefits such as employment opportunities in hotels, transport industry, casinos, construction, petrol stations, tourism offices et cetera.

In the fifth instance, Bergville has one of the most significant advantages on the future of tourism because there is a very close relationship between tourism resources and its development.

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