



Community Involvement and Sustainable Tourism Development in Heritage Management: Amboni Limestone Caves, Tanzania

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Abstract

Community involvement in heritage management is not only important for the sustainability of any heritage site, but also for the development of tourism activities within an area. The objectives of the study were to examine the current state of heritage management in Amboni Limestone Caves in the Tanga Region of Tanzania, and to outline the potential of tourism development of the area. The aim of this study was thus to propose different ways in which the Amboni Limestone Caves could be utilized so as to ensure sustainable tourism development. This article adopted the theoretical constructs of collaboration to offer insight into tourism planning and community involvement in Heritage management. Data were collected through interviews, observation and focus group discussions. The sample size included twenty people who were part of a local community at Kiomoni village, as well as tour guides and tour operators in the Tanga Region. The results have shown that local communities and other stakeholders around the Amboni Limestone Caves in Tanzania have not been involved in management, conservation and tourism development of the site. However, the community has a positive opinion when it comes to tourism and shows interest when it comes to management and tourism development on the site, but their role is sidelined in the process by the authorities. The study recommends urgent collaboration should be used in order to ensure sustainable development of tourism activities and the site in general.

Keywords: Community involvement, heritage management, sustainable development, Amboni Limestone Cave, Tanzania

Introduction

This article reports on research undertaken at the Amboni Limestone Caves in Tanga region, North Eastern Tanzania. The work was carried out between the months of March-April 2017. The primary aim of the study was to propose ways to be used in Amboni Limestone Caves to ensure sustainable management and tourism development. The main objectives of the research were to examine: (i) the opinions of local community concerning the state of Amboni Limestone Caves in the Tanga region in Tanzania; (ii) the community involvement in conservation, management and tourism development activities at Amboni Limestone; and (iii) the potential and benefits accruing from cultural tourism development from the local community's viewpoint.

The need for this research was based on the notion that community involvement is very important in heritage management and in the development of sustainable tourism in any country, but especially in Tanzania, where it is seemingly neglected to an extent. Usually, this involves planning from the beginning of a project so as to benefit the local community, respect their culture, conserve the heritage site in question, and educate both tourists and other visitors as to the value of a site (Terzić et al., 2014; Steck 1999). Elkington (1998) argued that the role of community involvement needs to be accordant with a triple bottom line approach. This approach insists that



all activities and practices in the management and sustainability of tourism be directly connected to all three aspects of organizing, namely a local community, socio-cultural, and economic (see also Terzić et al., 2014). Due to this, the local community should benefit and not have its role sidelined. There is also a need to ensure a collaborative approach with all stakeholders who have an interest in the site by including the communities in the management of the heritage site and in its proposed or existing tourism activities.

In Tanzania, the Division of Antiquities, as a Government institution is responsible for protecting, preserving and developing the country's immovable cultural heritage resources by approving of matters related to restoration, rehabilitation, documentation, and revitalization of historical monuments, areas, and sites (MNRT 2014). Additionally, the Division of Antiquities has been supported by the Antiquities Act No. 10 of 1964 amended in 1979, as the principal legislation for management and conservation of immovable cultural heritage. Yet, this Act has failed to involve the local community in management and conservation of the heritage sites in Tanzania (Kamamba, 2005:262). This is the reason why managing heritage sites and tourism development in Tanzania is still centralized and local communities as important stakeholders, have not yet been recognized, fully involved and benefit very little if at all, from the activities that are undertaken pertaining to tourism. However, the non-governmental institutions such as UNESCO, ICCROM, Academic Sectors, and scholars are making efforts to start a discussion about the important role of local community involvement, which becomes a significant factor for sustainable heritage management and tourism development. Yet in Tanzania, changes are still at a very slow pace. Cole (2008) argued that since tourism services mostly depend on local institutions and participation of local citizens, support and pride in tourism development are important in the case of cultural tourism where the community is part of a product (Terzić et al., 2014).

While trying to discuss how to ensure community involvement and sustainable tourism development in heritage management in Tanzania in the case of Amboni Limestone caves, many studies in Tanzania have concentrated more on the management and conservation of urban monumental heritage, for tourism satisfaction (Juma et al., 2005; Kamamba, 2005; Kayombo, 2005; Chami & Lyaya, 2015; Ichumbaki & Mapunda, 2017) and for archaeological excavations (Chami, 2009; Chami et al., 2004). The emphasis has unfortunately affected how the community can be involved in sustainable tourism development in heritage management in Tanzania which focuses on tourism development for the country's economic growth (Chami & Lyaya, 2015). One could argue that over-concentration on tourism development for the country's economic growth alone is, perhaps, a less comprehensive approach. A more comprehensive approach would be giving much greater attention to community involvement in sustainable tourism development in heritage management for the present and future generations.

Finally, the structure of this study is divided into several parts. The study area which provides an overview of the heritage site is followed by a literature review and theoretical framework which will provide an overview of the previous studies on this topic and theory adopted in this study. Lastly, the study presents a methodological issue, results, discussion and outlines possible proposed ways to solve the various related problems.

Historical Information: Amboni Cave

Amboni Caves are located between the Mkulumuzi and Sigi rivers in the Tanga District. The estimated geographical coordinates are 5° 04' S 39° 03' E. Amboni is the name of the village in which the Caves are located, but Kiomoni village is the one which is the nearest to Caves. The



junction to the Amboni Caves (left) is 5 kilometers from Tanga Municipality by the Tanga-Mombasa Road (Peter, 2013). The Caves were formed about 150 million years ago during the Jurassic age.

The site covers an area of 234 km². The research area is characterized by deep gorges with rock walls, extensive limestone pavements that are cut by deep fissures and dongas, fields of eroded limestone pillars, and extensive systems of caves and rock shelters opening to the surface within the gorges (Marean & Shea, 1996; Peter, 2013:9; Matthews, 1995:7).

The site attracts tourists as well as students who come as part of their geography lessons. The Amboni Caves has a religious significance amongst the locals. In this cave, one finds a number of local people praying and making offerings, which they deem as shrines. Amboni Limited, a company which was then operating sisal plantations in Tanga Region acquired the area in 1892. The company notified the British colonial government about the caves, which in turn declared the caves a conservation area in 1922 (Matthews, 1995: 6).

It is not known when the caves were discovered, but reports indicate that ethnic groups such as the Segeju, Sambiaa, Bondei, and Digo who lived near the caves used them for ritual practices. The caves were declared a protected monument in 1937 under the Monuments Preservation Ordinance, and in 1964, the government of Tanzania handed over the Caves to the Department of Antiquities. They are thus currently protected under the Antiquities Act of 1964 amended 1979 (Matthews, 1995: 6).

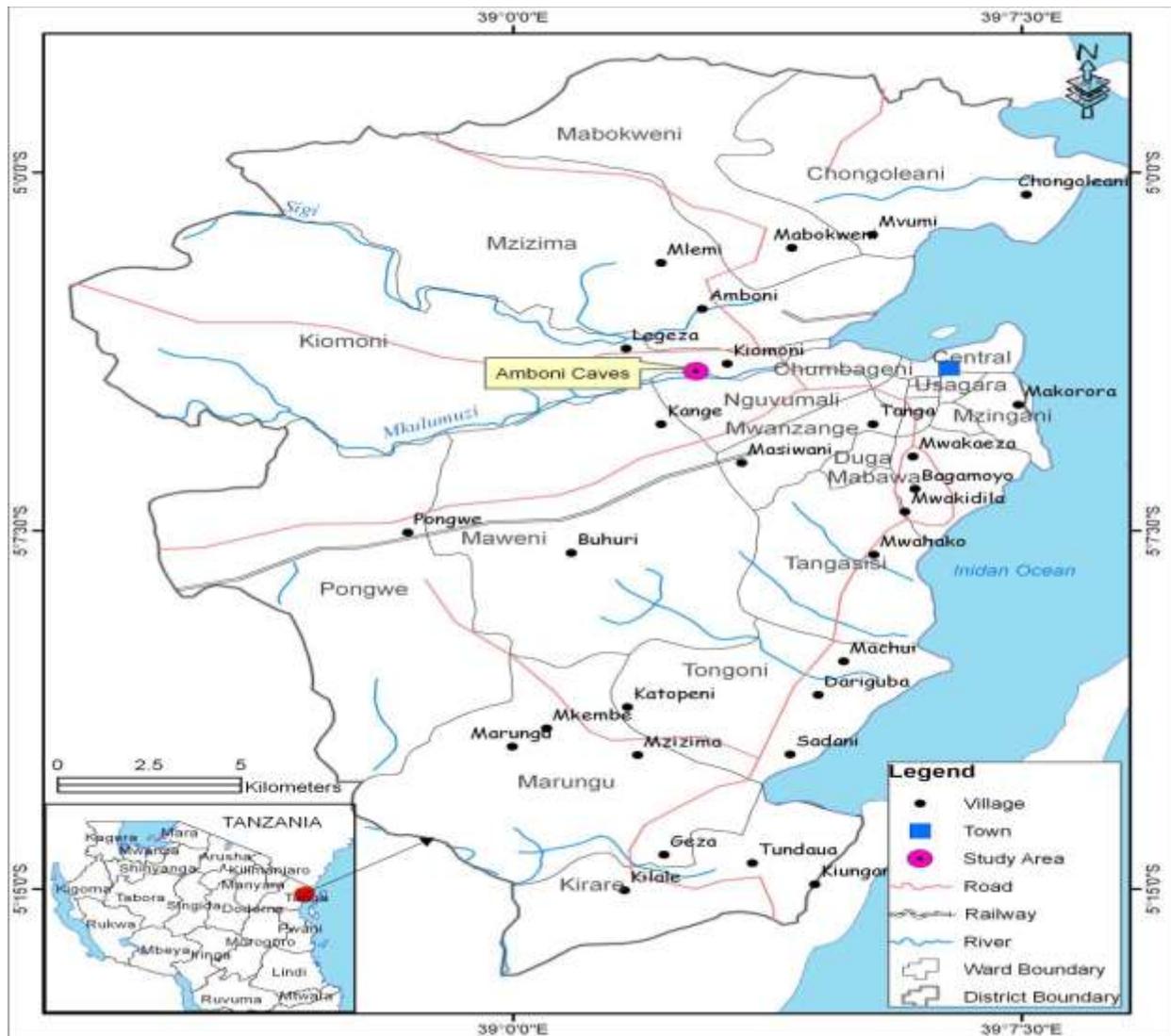


Figure 1: Map of Tanga District showing the location of Amboni Limestone Caves
Source: Peter (2013:8)

Previous Studies and Theoretical Framework

According to Ismail (2013), the term community involvement and community participation in sociology and thinking are used interchangeably, as there are no significant differences in the meaning of the words in the English language. Therefore, the word 'involvement' is the action or process of involving something, someone or the fact of being involved concerning something (Ismail, 2013). Camp and Cros (2011) developed a framework for the implementation on of community involvement and empowerment in World Heritage Cultural Sites after they discovered that the community at Macau did not feel involved or responsible for conserving and management of the heritage site (Chan, 2016). In Malaysia, Ismail (2013) revealed that a participation and involvement approach was highly controlled by the central government in the Melaka Heritage Trail, World Heritage Site. This has been the same finding of Li and Hunter (2014) who discovered many challenges on how to involve the community to achieve sustainability in heritage tourism operations and they also recommended inter-stakeholder group collaboration, participative



decision making, and benefits sharing, by involving hosting communities. Meanwhile, Azizan (2008) revealed that the Malaysian government legislation concerning planning and management of heritage tourism activities are too concentrated on sharing the economic benefits, rather than in trying to involve the community in decision-making, and are consequently ignoring the opinions of local communities (Lim et al., 2008).

Moreover, many scholars in the heritage tourism field have been able to focus on local communities' feelings and concern in the process of tourism development. Their investigations have examined communities' views, opinions and feelings toward tourism and the impacts tourism can have on a community (Andereck & Vogt 2000; Andereck et al., 2005; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Anderleck & Nyaupane, 2011). They suggest that it is very important not only to involve the community in supporting tourism development processes, but also to ensure its sustainability. It should be understood that a community which perceives greater levels of benefit from tourism activities are more likely to be supportive of tourism development and heritage site management than those which do not feel they receive any benefits (Anderleck & Nyaupane, 2011). This suggests that the community should be the pillar in the tourism development process and heritage site management at large, since they are directly affected and associated with them (Choi & Sirakaya., 2005). Also, in Serbia, Terzić et al. (2014), examined the current state of heritage management and tourism development in the Danube region and found that the local population had a positive opinion and great initial enthusiasm when it comes to tourism development, but their role is marginalized in the process by authoritarian motives and practices.

In Zimbabwe, Taruvinga (2007), reported different potential strategies were used in the management of rock art site by employing local people as site custodians, promoting sustainable tourism, tapping traditional conservation knowledge, recognizing the value placed on sites by local communities and the 'adopt-a-site' programme. Furthermore, Felipe (2009), states that the involvement of local communities in the management of heritage sites would help in creating potential employment in tourism activities for the communities which are living around the site. This could be by guiding and selling tourism products such as handicrafts, replicas, and other related tourism business. In Ethiopia, Abuhay (2015), discusses the level and role of participation and involvement of local communities in tourism development in heritage sites of Wukro town, Degum, and Megab. He revealed that local communities want to take part in and be consulted with, in the decision-making processes of tourism in their local area.

Chirikure and Pwiti (2008) assessed community involvement in archaeology and cultural heritage management in Southern Africa and elsewhere. They suggested that community participation and involvement was one of the most important means of including owners and stakeholders in the protection of heritage sites in Africa. However, Chirikure et al. (2010), suggested that local situations should determine the nature of participation and involvement levels of engagement needed in heritage management. In Tanzania, Bwasiri (2008), investigated the management of indigenous living heritage at Kolo rock painting site. The researcher tried to consider how to integrate living heritage with the management of the Mongoni wa Kolo rock painting site which is important for rituals and tourism purposes. The literature reviews thus indicate that investigation on the Limestone Cave areas along the Swahili Coast of the Indian Ocean in Tanzania have not been explored especially in community involvement and sustainable tourism development initiatives. Following on previous studies from the other areas, this study is the first attempt to discover the level of community involvement in heritage management in the area in question, and how to ensure sustainable tourism development in heritage sites along the Swahili Coast of the Indian Ocean in Tanzania.



Lastly, the study adopted a Collaboration Theory to examine theoretical constructs of collaboration and demonstrate their relevance to community involvement, management, and community-based tourism planning. This theory helped to support the study by providing the picture on how the community can be involved in the management of heritage sites and tourism planning sustainable management and tourism development. This theory was adopted in the management of heritage resources and protected areas in the tourism industry (Jamal & Getz 1995; Aas et al., 2005; Jamal & Stronza, 2009). Collaboration usually provides a flexible and dynamic process that enables many stakeholders, including the community, to jointly address problems or issues concerning the management and the tourism planning of the heritage sites (Gray, 1989; Jamal & Stronza, 2009:169). Therefore, the need to recognize community involvement in the management of heritage resources and tourism planning will increase important aspects in the sustainability of the sites and culture of the people (Mitchell & Reid, 2001).

Methodology

Primary data for this study was obtained through interviews, observation and focus group discussions, while secondary data was collected through a literature/ documentary review, published and unpublished documents and other secondary sources. A total of Twenty (20) participants who were interviewed included community elders from Kiomoni village, tour guides and tour operators in Tanga Region. Moreover, purposive sampling was used to choose the participants who were considered to be knowledgeable enough about the site so as to generate reliable data. Lastly, the data from interviews and group discussion were analyzed by using a thematic analysis approach.

Findings

Opinions of Community Regarding the State of Amboni Limestone Cave in the Tanga Region

In this section, the researcher aimed at determining the current situation of the Amboni Limestone Cave sites and tourist resources within the Tanga region. After interviews and group discussions with some stakeholders in Kiomoni village and Tanga Region, several problems were identified. The research participants revealed the low quality of infrastructure, the low quality of accommodation and tourist services, and disrepair on-site interpretation and animation. Other research participants went further and identified the construction of the site office, and the use of dynamite in mining the Limestone which makes tourists fearful of terrorist attacks, poor marketing strategies and a lack of cultural events as just some of the problems facing the Amboni Limestone Caves. In one of the discussions, some respondents said that the shortage of capital, the lack of governmental support, the absence of management planning and a clear failure to raise local community awareness, were some of the key factors Causing problems. Finally, in the last question in this section, the research participants were given a chance to provide their views and feelings on what should be done to improve the state of Amboni Limestone Caves. Many of the research participants suggested that some site interpretation and animation should be repaired, a good and standard site office should be built, hygienic toilets be erected, the creation of parking space for vehicles, curio shop availability and organizing cultural events were all needed measures. Furthermore, in one of the interviews, a community elder went further and said that due to Amboni Limestone Cave site being regarded as the Sacred or Ritual site, there is need to develop tourism activities which will be associated with traditional rites and cultural beliefs which for now are not conducted in Tanzania. This is evidenced in the Far East in countries such as Japan, China, and Nepal which have developed and benefitted from tourism related to



gods/goddess and religion tourism. These findings suggested that the stakeholders had positive opinions, interests, and passion when it comes to tourism development in Amboni Limestone Caves in Tanga region.

Community involvement in conservation, management and tourism development of Amboni Limestone Caves

In this section, the researcher intended to explore how the community had been involved in conservation, management, and tourism development activities on the site. With this objective, in mind, the researcher intended to investigate community involvement in Amboni Caves in terms of (i) community relationship with the Antiquities Authority at the site (ii) community involvement levels if any in decision making and in all activities such as tourism, research, and management which affect the site in one way or another.

In the first part, the research participants said the relationship between them and Antiquities Authority is not good because the Antiquities Authority at the site has failed to involve the community and their elders in different activities conducted at the site including the use and management, conservation and tourism activities of the site. The community has been associated with this site for a long time, even pre-dating colonialism. These Caves have been their Church or Mosque because usually, people visit them go for rituals and worship. The failure of the Antiquities Authority to involve them in the tourism management, and use of this site has caused conflicts between the community and the site managers. During one of the interviews a community elder said:

“The community and the Antiquities Authority have got bad relationships. We are in conflict with them. They do not involve us in anything not management even tourism activities which are taking place at the site. They are forgetting that the community has been associated with the site for a long time even during the colonial period. Then, if it is tourism, we haven't seen any profit of that tourism to our community”.

Such responses suggested that there was a no good relationship between the community and the Antiquities Authority at Amboni Limestone Caves.

In the second part of this objective, the researcher wanted to investigate whether or not the community at Kiomoni village was involved in the decision making or on any activities which were conducted on their site. The research participants explained that they were not sure if there were a lot of activities conducted on the site but if there were any activities or projects then they have not been involved. They went further to reveal that in even the tourism activities which are conducted at the site, the authorities have failed to involve the local communities. This also included any of the decision making. The participants said because they were not involved in the site, it is difficult for them to have any decision making on the use and management of the site with which they have been associated with for a long time. Moreover, during one of the discussions, the research participants were able to identify one of the Archaeological excavation which was conducted in 2012 in one of the cave's chambers where the community was not informed of the work. During the group discussion, one of the community elders said:

“In past few years, different research and other activities have been conducted at the site. But the Antiquities Authority at the site has failed to inform them. Like in 2012 we thought that people were mining in the Caves. If the not clear information received later that it was a research, communities wanted also to go and start to dig all the Caves chambers to find mines”.



Consequently, this response suggested that the community had not been involved either in any activity conducted nor decision making concerning the use and management of the site. There was a dire need for proper collaboration between Antiquities Authority at the site and communities surrounding the Amboni Caves as they are clearly associated with the site.

Potential of Cultural Tourism Development from the Local Community's Viewpoint

In this objective, the researcher aimed at identifying potential activities which will help to develop cultural tourism in Amboni Limestone Caves and the areas surrounding the nearby site. The research participants of Kiomoni Village, tourist guides, and operators, in general, revealed that in order to consider the possibilities for the development of tourism within Amboni Limestone Caves and the nearby areas, some of the issues should be taken into account. Generally, the research participants thought that manufacturing of the cultural tourism products by the Kiomoni Villagers was a proper way in which to promote cultural heritage and in the creation of a major tourist attraction in Amboni Limestone Cave in Tanga Region. Moreover, other research respondents went further and said that due to Amboni Caves being regarded as the sacred site there is need to develop a kind of religious tourism associated with traditional rites and cultural beliefs which are not practiced in Tanzania. This will help the country to develop this form of tourism as has been the case in numerous Far East countries.

Furthermore, other research participants especially the community elders, pointed out the presence of gorges of Mkulumuzi, Sigi River which are believed to house crocodiles and a hot spring pool believed to host a big white Snake nearby the Amboni Limestone Caves areas, can also be utilized properly and be one of the new areas for potential tourism development in this area and in the Tanga region at large. The vegetation of Amboni Cave and Tanga Limestone includes dry forest, riverine forests, and thickets. These forests are the habitat of 55 species of birds of which 18 are forest species. The wildlife of Amboni Caves is diverse with 16 species of mammals which include 8 bat species, 3 rodent species, monkey species including baboons and colobus and also wild pigs which are very common in the Amboni forests. All these were revealed by the respondents as some of the potential motivators for tourism development in Amboni Caves and Tanga Region. Lastly, the respondents revealed that the presence of many ethnic groups around this Limestone Caves such as Segeju, Sambiaa, and Bondei makes it plausible that cultural events can be developed which also will help to promote the development of cultural heritage tourism in this area. Based on the given responses, it suggested that Amboni Limestone Caves in Tanga Region are generally considered to be very attractive for tourism development for the community and the country respectively.

Discussion

This study aimed at examining three specific objectives (i) the opinions of local community concerning the state of Amboni Limestone Caves in the Tanga region in Tanzania; (ii) the community involvement in conservation, management and tourism development activities at Amboni Limestone; and (iii) the potential of cultural tourism development from the local community's viewpoint. On the aspect of opinions of the local community concerning the current state of Amboni Caves in Tanga Region, the findings revealed the site and the Region at large are facing many challenges which hinder the development of tourism activities. Some of the problems identified were low quality of infrastructure and accommodation, poor marketing and the lack of a management plan for the site. These results are consistent with previous studies such as Terzić et al. (2014), Li and Hunter (2014), Anderleck and Nyaupane, (2011) who also found



that there were a lot of challenges and problems facing different tourist destinations elsewhere which all hinder the development of tourism activities in those regions respectively. However, these results further suggest that the current situation and the future of Amboni Limestone Caves in Tanga Region at large are not encouraging if changes do not happen fast. This is because the stakeholders are aware of the problems and the potential of cultural tourism development in this site and how they have been marginalized in the development and management process thereof. Whatever reasons one could provide, it is sufficient to note that, some of these problems can be solved by the government itself by supporting tourism development in Tanga Region and Amboni Caves respectively.

On the community involvement in conservation, management, and tourism development activities at Amboni Limestone Caves, the findings in this section revealed that the local community has not been at all involved in any activities concerning the management, conservation and tourism development of the site. This also included the bad relationship between the Antiquities Authorities and the community surrounding the site. These results accord with previous studies (Ismail, 2013; Azizan, 2008; Lim et al., 2008) who found similar results in different tourism destination areas. These results further suggest that community interests in the management and tourism development process in Amboni Limestone Caves in Tanga Region have often been overlooked and up to now there are no any initiatives to resolve this problem. Lack of community involvement in management and tourism development processes cannot bring about any form of sustainability of any site. This can also be seen in legislation and practices in the management and protection of immovable cultural heritage in Tanzania, whereby the community involvement and participation has been largely overlooked. This leads to the degree of frustration of the local community because their role and interests have been marginalized. This strongly suggests that there is a need to ensure collaboration in the management, conservation, and tourism development activities in the sites. The meeting and negotiating with local communities and other stakeholders by the Antiquities Authorities about the management and to promote tourism development is vital, and should be encouraged at a higher levels so as to avoid imminent conflict and unsustainability of tourism.

Lastly, on the potential of cultural tourism development from the local community's viewpoint, the findings revealed that Amboni Limestone Caves have different attributes with the potential for tourism development activities in this region. These findings support some previous studies (Tarunga, 2007; Felipe, 2009), which have found comparable results. For example, Taruvinga (2007) reported different potential strategies were used in the management of rock art site in Zimbabwe by employing local people as site custodians, promoting sustainable tourism, tapping traditional conservation knowledge, recognizing value placed on sites by local communities and the 'adopt-a-site' programme. Amboni Limestone Cave has got different attractions as tourist products with great development potential. However, in terms of how to ensure the sustainability of the site, in general, this aspect has not been achieved. Though the results further show that local community and other stakeholders in the Tanga region in Tanzania have a positive opinion about and passion for tourism development, still, local community involvement and participation is negligible but remains very important for the effective management and development of tourism activities of the site..

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the researcher concludes that there is a need to ensure collaboration between all stakeholders in Tanga Region in the management, conservation, and tourism development activities of the site. Regular meetings and negotiating with local



communities and other stakeholders by the Antiquities Authorities on the management and promotion of tourism development should be encouraged at a higher level so as to avoid conflicts on the use of the site, as it is used for worship and ritual practices. Moreover, policies and legislation should harmonize with the community involvement and allow the local people to have decision making on the planning and development of the site. Communication is crucial for effective tourism development and ultimately its promotion.

Lastly, it should be noted that for any proper management and sustainable tourism development of any heritage site, community involvement and participation is the first step to be taken into account. Therefore, the last part of this paper presents the recommendations which should be taken into account for sustainable tourism development in Amboni Limestone Cave in Tanga Region to be successful.

Recommendations

This study recommends the proposed suggestions below which should be taken into account by the Antiquities Authority in Tanzania and at the Amboni Limestone Caves in Tanga Region, in order to ensure sustainable management and tourism development at the site:

1. Participation and involvement of local communities in conservation, management and decision making of the site.
2. Laws, policies, and institutional support should guarantee and harmonize with community involvement and participation.
3. The sharing of tourism revenue and profits with the local community surrounding the heritage site.
4. Improvement in the quality of guides, interpretation and site facilities in general e.g. toilets, curio shops and parking availability.
5. Provision of educational opportunities for the local people on how they can engage in tourism activities through the preparation of cultural events and other related aspects.
6. Development of a management plan of the site and incorporation of community involvement and participation in the management and tourism development of the site.
7. Lastly, supporting local communities' tourism businesses and employment of local at the site.

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