Political Tourism a missed opportunity for Local Economic Development (LED) in the Eastern Cape, South Africa: A case study of Qunu and Mvezo

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Abstract

Universally, political tourism has played a significant role in both developing and developed economies. This type of tourism has shown tremendous growth in various countries such as inter alia, Turkey, Russia, Germany, Poland, United States of America, Egypt, India and Pakistan. Such countries are utilising their political tourism opportunities to draw tourism business investment into their countries. The purpose of this study was to examine political tourism as a missed opportunity for Local Economic Development (LED) in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. The study also sought to ascertain the tourism development spin-offs. This study adopted both a qualitative and quantitative (Quasi) approach. A questionnaire was utilised to collect data. A purposive sampling technique was adopted in the data collection process. The results of the study demonstrate that the Eastern Cape is still engulfed in the triple challenges of the economy (unemployment, poverty and inequality).The study further shows there is lack of tourism awareness as a local economic driver. Moreover, the study indicates the National Development Plan is not in sync with the economic development priorities of the province. These results form a basis upon which the local authorities, who are the policy makers, can plan for economic development initiatives. This study, recommends that ongoing research is required in the largely under-researched area of political tourism and in the region in question. Furthermore, the study recommends that, the Eastern Cape 'Legends' initiative must be approached in conjunction with political tourism to unlock local economic development opportunities.

Keywords: Tourism, Economic Development, Heritage and Cultural Tourism, Political Tourism and Dark Tourism

Introduction and background

Around the globe, tourism has increasingly been recognised as a fast growing sector in all economies that does not only boost revenues, but is also seen as a potential solution to the reduction of poverty (Chok, Macbeth & Warren, 2007). Tourism contributes 9.3% to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of South Africa. One in 22 people are employed in the tourism industry which represents 4.5% of the country's total workforce (World Travel &Tourism Council, 2016).

Political tourism is an integral part of the world's economy. Consequently, there has always been a topic of international politics (Ryu, 2006) which attracts tourists. This is highlighted by the recent travel ban of the United States of America (USA) towards Muslim countries which appears to have deterred even those who are usual travelers. WTTC (2017) holds that amongst others, politics cost the country's tourism industry millions of dollars annually. A travel ban could be in favour of the safety and security of the local residents. On the other hand, it may also be potentially affecting the travel and tourism industry adversely. After the release of a recent travel ban, the United States of America lost $185m in travel bookings (WTTC, 2017). Therefore, this underscores the influence and implications of political tourism to the economy of a nation.

The council reports that the country's travel and tourism sector provided $1.5 trillion to the economy in 2016 and supported more than 14 million jobs (WTTC, 2017). This demonstrates how politics have impacted on tourism and the influence of politics on tourism in general, is growing. Ivanovic, Khunou, Reynish, Pawson, Tseane and Wassung (2009) underscore that there is a strong relationship between tourism, the economy and the community, and that they all rely on each other to survive. Particularly using the multiplier effect of tourism, for every night that a tourist stays over at a game lodge in a remote part of South Africa, people in the surrounding community benefit indirectly from the income generated by the services offered by the industry service providers. As lodge staff send their remittances back home, the money circulates within their rural communities, helping to grow the local economy (Joubert, 2016). Communities such as the EC are well poised to gain from such activities in cases where the community is well aware of political tourism and its likely benefits.

Pakistan has had challenges with its neighboring countries, China, Afghanistan, and especially with India. Even when Pakistan's domestic conditions were peaceful, friction with border nations or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had given the region a negative image to tourists, thereby affecting tourism negatively with low travel bookings (Richter, 1999). Moreover, travel overland to Pakistan from the west was deterred because of political conflicts in the region (Richter & Waugh 1991). However, since political conditions improved between India and Pakistan, significant numbers of Indian tourists out-numbering all other international tourists in most years, travel to Pakistan to visit relatives and engage in tourism activities. Specifically, during 1966 to 1970, a growth rate of 26% was experienced, followed by 95% growth between 1971 to 1974 and this was largely the result of political stability in the country (Thapa, 2003).

In relation to political instability or terrorism, there is a connection that runs much deeper, which is the political history that differs in every destination. This is evident in a city of India called Agra which is well known and internationally recognised for housing one of the seven wonders in the world, the Taj Mahal that is endowed with a captivating historical value (Parasher & Indolia, 2013). It houses the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, the wife of the Mughal Emperor (of Muslim ancestry) Shah Jahan. The Taj Mahal receives 7 to 8 million annual visitors (Media Online, 2017). Therefore, a destination's political history has the ability to attract innumerable tourists. Conversely, it can be argued that tourists are not interested in political legends or their statues but their history is also of interest and importance when they visit a particular destination.

The manner in which a community such as the Eastern Cape views its political relevance for tourism is probably an opportunity that can be explored to the benefit of the province (Grobler, 2008). The Eastern Cape Tourism Master Plan (2009/2014) reports that the Eastern Cape province has yet to make use of its competitive advantage, in particular the Eastern Cape is the only province with three harbours: East London, Port Elizabeth and Ngqura, and in terms of its historical, and political heritage more importantly, of being the birthplace of many political legends. It should thus be creating more events and attractions directly related to the history of the

province. The marketing of the province focuses on its natural heritage, with no iconic products being available based on its vast cultural heritage (Eastern Cape Tourism Master Plan, 2009/2014). In this context, political tourism must be integral to tourism development in the province, particularly as an economic driver.

In contrast, the Western Cape province, and the KwaZulu-Natal province, have continuously made use of their iconic products, such as Robben Island, the Zulu King Shaka and the Zulu nation as a historical adversary of the British Empire, to attract tourists to the provinces concerned, so as to enjoy a flourishing international, and domestic, market (ECTMP, 2009/2014).The Eastern Cape on the other hand boasts of huge cultural and historical significance and has many stories of Xhosa kings, early settlers, cultural conflicts and frontier battles which abounded. The towns of Bathurst, Grahamstown and Cradock have documented and preserved much of this cultural heritage (South African Tourism, 2017). The province is also noted for its role in driving the fight for African democracy, which can furthermore be marketed to attract tourists to the province.

Problem statement

In recent times, the heritage of political tourism is celebrated in many countries. This type of tourism is often underpinned by the political history of a destination. However, there seem to be limited studies that focus on understanding political tourism in the context of the Eastern Cape and South Africa in general. Consequently, there is paucity of research that relates to political tourism in the Eastern Cape. Some political legends do receive attention around the world. Particularly, on the 18th of July people around the world celebrate Nelson Mandela International day. Different organisations devote 67 minutes of their time to doing good, which equates to one minute for every year of Mr Mandela's public service, people can thus make a small gesture of solidarity with humanity and this is a step towards a global movement for doing good.

The Eastern Cape Province however, does not only have one but numerous other legends of such great calibre who are celebrated and honoured by other destinations. For example, Zambia recently opened an OR Tambo Heritage Site in honour and celebration of the life of the late Oliver Tambo who was also born in the Eastern Cape. Moreover, the political history of Eastern Cape Province is still a history untold by the Eastern Cape to both its residents and tourists. Therefore, this study sought to ascertain whether political tourism is a missed opportunity for local economic development in the Eastern Cape.

Purpose of the study

The cartography of tourism in South Africa is beneath the surface, 'political and religious' territory. The paper seeks contribute to the creation of awareness of the potential of political legends in terms of tourism growth among the inhabitants of the Eastern Cape Province and South Africa. There is dearth of research that deals with evaluating the potential of the tourism products that are associated with political legends in the Eastern Cape Province. Therefore, the study aimed to address the void within the Eastern Cape tourism sector and also in the economy, respectively.

The researcher's aim was to use the study to increase the depth of knowledge available among tourism stakeholders, regarding the role that such political legends could play in making developmental impacts on society today. Such actions can benefit the area with an influx of tourists, if they are well-promoted and carefully designed. Interested stakeholders should be encouraged to consult the study in order to identify the existing gaps that require intervention. The study also intended to assist the national and provincial tourism agencies, as well as the policymakers in foundations, trusts, and visitor centers, who manage the royalties of the legends.

The Local Economic Development (LED), sports, arts and culture, and tourism departments in the government should utilise the celebrity power of such legends to recoup, and to grow tourism, while fostering awareness of the socio-economic benefits that can be associated with such legends.

Ethical clearance

A permission was granted by the chiefs of the two villages to undertake the research project. Furthermore, these leaders were assured about of confidentiality of the data collected from the respective villages. An offer was made to make the research findings available to the village leaders. No incentives were given for respondent participation in the study. All needed ethical clearances were obtained and human worth was valued.

Literature review

Tourism has come to occupy a central position in the policy agenda of the post- apartheid government. It has firstly been identified as a key catalyst for the economic growth that the government envisages to attain to meet the country's developmental imperatives (Chellan, Mtshali & Khan, 2013).Given the country's historical wealth and well known political stalwarts , tourism is also seen as effective means through which South Africa could successfully compete in the international economic system (Cornelissen, 2005). Political tourism has surfaced as an essential part of tourism growth in South Africa but is not developed sufficiently. It extensively adds substantially in revealing the various cultural offerings that the country has to offer. Moreover, struggle heritage is one of the elements that attract tourists to visit South African museums (Masilo, 2016). Thus economic injection is realized, particularly in the context of developing economies, where political tourism exists and is well managed.

The way in which a community views the relevance of its political history in tourism is probably a niche that can be explored to the benefit of a developing country. Novelli (2005) suggests that a niche for a destination can be explored through a product related approach, where the presence of activities, attractions, settlements, food and other amenities are emphasized. These have to constitute the key parts of the destination's uniqueness, which is shaped in accordance with tourist's specific needs, wants and expectations from the destination. This will also be true of the way in which heritage and cultural sites are interpreted, amongst others to tourists who visit or read about them in popular or academic journals or the media in general (Grobler, 2010). South African heritage and cultural tourism is an industry closely concurrent to the country's past (Grobler, 2010).

Hall (2001) argues that political stability is one of the essential prerequisites for attracting international tourists to a destination. Violent protests, civil war, terrorist actions, the perceived violations of human rights, or even the mere threat of these activities, will serve to cause tourists to cancel their vacations. Kempa and Strange (2003) on the other hand argue that tourism literature focuses on the marketing and consumption of pleasant diversions in pleasant places. Tourists have begun to explore the phenomenon of 'dark tourism,' which is a starting point for a tourist's sudden interest in political history or even related 'prison tourism'.

Stone and Sharpley (2008) accentuate that dark tourism is the act of travel and visitation to sites, attractions and exhibitions which have real or recreated death, and suffering. In particular, the death sites of famous individuals such as Mother Theresa and President John F Kennedy have also become religious or secular tourism shrines (Kempa & Strange, 2003). In South Africa, the

successful fight against the ravages of apartheid gave Robben Island a sacred mission and more efforts are made to stretch interpretation of the country's political legends (apartheid opponents) so that more tourists visit this World Heritage Site (South African Government Online, 2017). Cape Town Tourism (2016) reports that 46,793 tickets were sold for Robben Island in December 2015 that is 15% more than the amount sold during the 2010 Soccer World Cup in South Africa. As such, 20 more people of the Western Cape Province were employed in Robben Island, including tour guides (Cape Town Tourism, 2016). The Eastern Cape is well resourced, however, there seem to be challenges in this regard.

The influence of Nelson Mandela can be largely viewed as responsible for the enticing attraction of South Africa throughout the world as his life story was linked to the Robben Island World Heritage Site. This instantly elevated the profile of Cape Town and intensified the amount of interest shown in South Africa's political heritage (Ferhan & Ebru, 2010). Inevitably, a whole assemblage of new post-apartheid attractions sprang up all over the country, but substantially in Gauteng and especially at the Hector Peterson Memorial in Soweto, the Apartheid Museum, and the Constitution Hill prison site which all "serve as a beacon of hope additionally intending to improve greater perception of the tragic events" that cultivates part of South Africa's history of apartheid (Ivanovic, 2011 & Ramutsindela, 2007).

Political tourism in the Eastern Cape underpins the actuality of being the birthplace of apartheid resistance movement leaders, the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC), and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) (Acheampong, 2011). Furthermore, the province has a prosperous and diverse culture and history (Republic of South Africa, 2002). Duncan (2008) observes that the Eastern Cape has an extensive radius of tremendous attractions and sites to visit. In spite of these many tourists have not yet had an opportunity to experience these sites. The inadequacy of organised tourism, the poor infrastructure, and the prevailing poverty in the region poses a challenge for tourism development. Heyns, Boekstein and Spencer (2000) assert that an exceptional distribution of development is still an opportunity to exploit in the region. Against this background, this paper seeks to contribute towards the needed political tourism phenomenon particularly in the province of the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape boasts a significant political history that cannot simply go unused for tourism development and community sustainability.

Methodology

In order to examine the phenomenon of political tourism in the Eastern Cape a mixed approach was used in which both qualitative and quantitative research was deemed appropriate for this study. A purposive sampling technique was employed to collect data from Qunu and Mvezo residents. Dichotomous, multiple-choice and five-point semantic differential questions and statements constituted the main body of the questionnaire.

The instrument was piloted for internal validity and reliability. To ensure the validity of data acquired in the study, a pilot study was conducted. Similarly, reliability was achieved by having the questionnaire critically reviewed, pre-testing the questionnaire, training and supervising the fieldworkers.
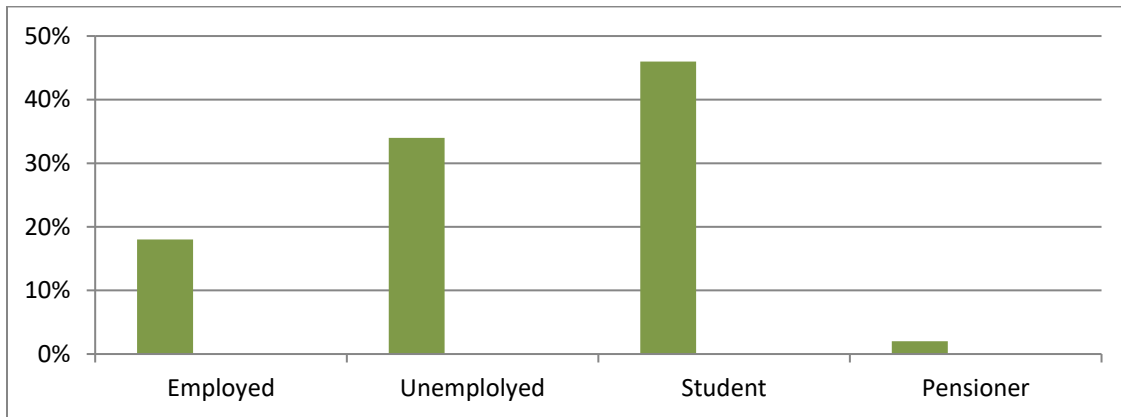
Results and discussion

The findings of the study elucidate that political tourism is a missed opportunity for local economic development in the Eastern Cape. The study reveals that as the birth place of a world renown icon, Nelson Mandela, Qunu and Mvezo have not yet utilised their full potential in attracting

tourists. Respondents were requested to state what they deemed lacking in their community, the following challenges were mentioned:

Occupational status of the respondents

Figure 1 Occupational status of respondents (n=100, in %)

The respondents' employment status is indicated in figure 1 above. The findings reveal that (46%) of the respondents were students. 34% of the respondents were unemployed. Respondents that are employed consisted of 18%, whereas 2% consisted of pensioners. Such results resonate with the 27.7% national crisis of high unemployment while the Eastern Cape province holds the rate of 32.2%, substantially higher than the national figure of 27.7%. (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

Monthly income

Table 1 Monthly income of respondents (n=100, in %)	
Monthly income (Rand)	**Total (n=100)**
≤ 1 000	26
1 000-5 000	45
6 000-10 000	14
11 000-15 000	10
16 000-20 000	5

The findings presented in table 1 indicate that 45% of the respondents earn in the bracket of 1000 to 5000 followed by 26% earn from 0 to 1000. 14% of the respondents earn from 6 000 to 10 000 whilst 10% receive a monthly income of 11 000 to 15 000. A total of 5% earned from 16 000 to 20 000. These findings demonstrate that the respondents of the study are not in the high income bracket. The economy of Eastern Cape, South Africa is struggling to grow, hence we are experiencing high unemployment rate.

Political history of the Eastern Cape Province is the unique aspect that can draw international tourists to visit.

Table 2 Political history of the Eastern Cape Province is the unique aspect that can draw international tourists to visit. (n=100, in %)	
Level of agreement with the statement	Total (n=100%)
Strongly Agree	45
Agree	49
Undecided	2
Disagree	3
Strongly disagree	1

Table 2 above depicts the level of agreement of the respondents as to whether political history of the Eastern Cape Province is the unique aspect that can draw international tourists to visit. The findings reveal that 94% agree with the statement, this could be attributed by the strong potential international influence that political legends have. While 4% of the respondents disagree with the statement, 2% was undecided.

Tourism can be used as a tool to boost economic growth of a destination

Table 3 Tourism can be used as a tool to boost economic growth of a destination (n=100, in %).	
Level of agreement with the statement	Total (n=100%)
Strongly Agree	61
Agree	24

Undecided	11
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	2

The results demonstrate that 85% agreed that tourism can be used as a tool to boost economic growth of a destination. 11% of the respondents are undecided about the statement, whereas 4% disagree. This could be attributed by the fact that tourism development in the Eastern Cape has been neglected because there is poor road infrastructure and there is no access to tourism products.

Limitations

This article was limited to Mvezo and Qunu which are just two villages amongst many others with political legends in the Eastern Cape. Time and finance limitations also posed as additional constraints to the study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The current study could play a pivotal role in assisting the Eastern Cape to capitalize on the rich political heritage and culture of the province that has been bestowed by local icons, so that the community can reap much needed socio-economic benefits. The following recommendations are thus presented.

The Eastern Cape has the potential to create opportunities for previously underdeveloped tourism

products, such as iconic attractions and other struggle hero sites. The province requires greater investment in the promoting of its political heritage and culture, as well as its nature, as its culture and natural tourism are expected to remain in high demand. The involvement of previously disadvantaged communities and individuals should be further increased to reduce unemployment. There should be a brand awareness communication plan developed. This will hopefully ensure that Eastern Cape projects a common, desired, and unified visual message, with the consistency of the message being maintained. The communication plan should also promote cooperation between the various tourism stakeholders. Marketing tourism in the Eastern Cape should target specific markets, through coming to an understanding of what their demands are, and through developing a package of experiences to suit the target markets needs and wants. This will encourage the expansion, and the broadening, of the range of tourism product offerings, and it will elevate the status of those products that have not, as yet, received much publicity, particularly in terms of culture and heritage, which are predominantly situated in the under-marketed rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province.

The Eastern Cape Province should reconfigure the 'home of legends campaign' into a service delivery investment and tourism-attracting development. Moreover, building up the infrastructure

connecting the area's heritage routes, amenities, national roads, and tourist destinations would enable the locals, tourists, and investors to all benefit from the fruits of the struggles of the local legends. Tourism officers should be visible in the local communities. Their office-based work, which should be minimal, should be supplemented by fieldwork, during which they should interact, and engage, with such stakeholders as schools, FET colleges, and universities, so as to enable exposure among learners and students of material relating to tourism and its huge value. Furthermore, employment opportunities should be provided in the fields of LED and tourism, with the local people, who have the interest of the community at heart, being assigned jobs in the community, thereby minimizing the loss of income from the area.

It is hoped that the study will provide insight about political tourism in the Eastern Cape as an economic development opportunity that local municipality decision makers and other stakeholders involved will utilise in the planning, promotion and presentation of the province's political icons to attract more tourists to the province. This study also forms a basic foundation for further similar studies to be conducted in the Eastern Cape Province which will hopefully drive the growth of local political tourism.

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