



Exploring the potential and challenges: guesthouse based tourism and hospitality in Maun, Botswana

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Abstract

Due to increase in travel and tourism in the region, and Botswana in particular, the demand for leisure-related accommodation and hospitality has grown. Hence, the Botswana government has taken measures to reserve small tourism enterprises to empower citizens, promote these businesses and develop various tourism destinations across the country. Generally, there has been a slow development of guesthouse-based tourism in some rural settlements in the country. Therefore, the purpose of this exploratory study was to assess the potential of guesthouse-based tourism and hospitality using Maun; a tourism dominated village, as a case study. Data were collected from seventeen commercial and domestic guesthouses using a mixed methods approach. Empirical data analysis revealed that most were ungraded commercial guesthouses; there were more male than female citizen owners and there was a general poor marketing of facilities with heavy reliance on word of mouth and face book. Other findings include the impacts of tourism seasonality on the occupancy rate; stiff competition within the domestic tourism sector; water shortage, frequent power cuts and poor internet connectivity. On the positive, word of mouth was found to be the most common and effective strategy for advertising, guesthouse-based tourism provides opportunities for local job creation; provision of budget oriented lodging and family recreation and socialization places. Guesthouse based tourism also provides income generation for the local people and contributes to the increased visibility of Maun, as a tourist destination. However, guesthouse businesses that are not exposed to marketing and the location of the facility or property is unknown or somewhat inaccessible, may lose their share of the bigger tourism gain at the destination. Some policy and management changes are suggested to improve guesthouse based tourism, domestic tourism and the benefits accruing to local ownership. Guesthouse based tourism businesses should equally be integrated into the popular and lucrative ecotourism and safari based tourism of northern Botswana. Above all, the study recommends similar research for other touristic towns and major rural villages in the country and worldwide so as to enhance guesthouse potential and bolster income levels for especially rural communities.

Keywords: Residents, guesthouse, domestic tourism, hospitality, marketing, Botswana.



Introduction

Domestic tourism is a significant component of the tourism industry, and a form of travel that involves persons visiting destinations and tourist attractions within the economic territory of their country of residence (Untari & Satria, 2009: 3). Owing to the increase in travel and tourism worldwide, the demand for leisure-related lodging facilities and hospitality has increased (WTTC, 2018). The level to which domestic tourism is conducted is highly variable across countries, and this variance provides a means with which to compare and contrast the characteristics of the national market when it comes to travel, lodging and hospitality (Bhatia, 2006; Jafari, 1986; WTTC, 2018). From literature, and by examining the different levels and stages of domestic tourism and hospitality across regions, it is possible to establish an understanding of the strengths, opportunities and challenges that may face this aspect of tourism. The understanding can be brought about by awareness of the economic, social, cultural and environmental factors that underpin this development and the subsequent effects they may have in the tourism market.

This type of tourism has become an essential element of the tourism sector, and its impacts have been documented (Hoogendoorn, et al., 2015; Jafari, 1986; Saarinen, 2011). However, domestic tourism is generally and fairly new in many African countries especially those with poor economies. Several of these countries have well defined international tourism sector, such as Botswana, with no or minimal domestic tourism development (Lenao, 2016; Moswete & Mmereki, 2003). For instance, one of the strengths of domestic tourism to a country is the significant socio-economic benefits it can raise (Dickman, 1994, Moswete et al., 2009). In Australia, domestic tourism has been found to be the largest economic contributor of all forms of tourism in the country's economy (Anthanasopoulos & Hyndman, 2008). Unlike foreign travel, where much of the money may be invested outside of the country, money spent from domestic travel (e.g., lodging, transport) is well distributed within rural, national and regional economies rather than to foreign investors. For instance, an increase in the tourism market to more remote areas of a country can bring about more development (Akama & Kieti, 2007; Bhatia, 2006; Ndubano, 2000; Moswete et al., 2009; WTTC, 2018), resources, economic diversity and job opportunities to communities where it is most needed (Botswana Tourism Development Programme (BTDP) 2000; Leah, 2013; Mbaiwa, 2005; Moswete & Lacey, 2014).

According to the literature, domestic tourism can create sorely needed job opportunities, whether the tourists involved are domestic or international. Such tourism can enhance local production and thereby help to retain rural dwellers in villages (Dickman, 1994). In times of recession, international tourism may fall significantly as long distance luxury trips by less affluent and budget oriented holiday makers are likely to become too expensive. Therefore, domestic tourism can 'cushion' the impact that international tourism has on the economy during recession (Leah, 2013; Lynch, 2005; Moswete & Mmereki, 2003; Saarinen, 2011; Tourism Kenya, 2012). It has been observed that domestic tourism plays a prominent role in the success of most tourism destinations such as Maun, Botswana (Ndubano, 2000, WTTC, 2017), Mombasa, Kenya (Akama & Kieti, 2007), Western Cape, South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

Similar to many developing countries, Botswana has identified tourism as a tool to diversify the rural economy. Guesthouse based tourism has become one of the important avenues through which citizens could venture into tourism and derive tangible benefits. The history of tourism in Botswana has revealed a high tourism cash leakage back to countries where tourists and investors originate leaving so little in the country (Mbaiwa, 2005; Moswete et al., 2009). It was because of this realisation that the government key priority for citizens is to increase citizen participation in the ownership and management of tourism enterprises. As a result, guesthouse-based tourism and hospitality have been earmarked for citizen in urban and rural areas (DOT,



2010). In Maun, only a small proportion of local population is employed within the tourism sector and the vast majority of tourism-related enterprises are foreign-owned (Mbaiwa, 2009; Moswete et al., 2009). It is therefore important to carry out this study which explores the potential for guesthouse-based tourism and hospitality in Maun in Botswana (Figure 1) where research has shown that tourism development is beginning to yield benefits (Ndubano, 2000; Government of Botswana (GoB), 1990). This study attempted to answer questions about guesthouse based tourism such as: their potential economic benefits including availability; whether the guesthouse enterprises are operational as well as examining ownership, and the type of promotional tools that are used to market and promote them in Maun.

Literature review

Guesthouse based tourism, lodging and other tourism amenities are very essential in tourism development at a destination (Middleton, 1994). When tourists visit a particular destination of choice, it is always imperative that they search for accommodation facilities and associated services that will make their holiday and stay feasible and enjoyable. A destination area without tourism amenities hampers tourism growth (Hampton & Christensen, 2007). Hence, various aspects of guesthouses have been researched on at international, continental and regional levels. Some research, for instance, has been done on the assessment of effective marketing strategies for Bed and Breakfast in Texas, United States(US) (Lee et al., 2003) and in Taiwan (Chen, et al., 2013); the assessment of financial characteristics of Bed and Breakfast, United States (Poorani & Smith, 1993; 1995) the assessment of gender of employees of Bed and Breakfast establishments and hotel and catering industry in the Great Britain, Barbados and Spain (Kinnaird & Hall, 1996), the assessment of hospitality accorded to guests in guesthouses in Jordan (Shryock, 2004) the assessment of guesthouse ownership in various provinces of South Africa (Rogerson, 2004; 2014; Visser & van Hyssteen, 1997), the greening of guesthouses in Johannesburg, South Africa (Hoogendoorn et al., 2015), and the assessment of the emergence of guesthouses in Western Cape, South Africa (Visser & Huyssten, 1999).

Research on guesthouse based tourism revealed that guesthouses were owned by multinational foreign investors in Mombasa coast in Kenya (Akama & Kieti, 2007; Sindiga, 2004) and in Zimbabwe (Chirenje et al., 2013). Most guesthouses were owned by local people in the developed world, for instance, in Britain (Kinnaird & Hall, 1996). Males dominated guesthouse ownership in India (Munshi, 2006), and Johannesburg in South Africa (Rogerson, 2004). Females, however, dominated ownership of guesthouses in the Western Cape Province in South Africa (Visser & Huyssten, 1997) and also in Nigeria (Madichie & Hinson, 2013; Visser & Huyssten, 1999). As regards the age of owners of guesthouse based tourism, the majority of owners of guesthouses or Bed and Breakfast were 40 years old or above in the United Kingdom (Lynch,2005; Hall, 1998), and 50 years or above in Johannesburg, South Africa (Rogerson, 2004). In terms of academic qualifications, most Bed and Breakfast (B&B) owners in the Western Cape Province and in Johannesburg, South Africa had university diplomas and first degrees (Rogerson, 2004; Visser & Huyssten, 1999).

With regards to jobs, guesthouses and hotels offer menial jobs which require low skills, low wages and low security such as house-keeping and front office or reception (Kinnaird & Hall, 1996; Hampton & Christensen, 2007). These jobs are basically an extension of traditional domestic activities. Generally, guesthouses recruit more women than men in Ireland, Scotland, Barbados and Spain's Bed and Breakfast (Kinnaird & Hall, 1996; Hampton & Christensen, 2007). Employment bias to women is however different from other sectors of the tourism; for instance, in Indonesian tourism sector most employees were males (Walpole & Goodwin, 2000).

The most common method of advertising in guesthouses or Bed and Breakfast was word of mouth and brochures in the United States of America (Lee et al., 2003) and in South Africa (Rogerson, 2004). Other methods included the use of newspapers, directory and business cards (Lee et al., 2003; Rogerson, 2004; Rogerson, 2014). The main challenges of guesthouse tourism include but are not limited to the following: limited funds, lack of access to credits, power and competition in the industry, lack of resources, poor infrastructure such as roads and transportation, lack of network-communication, lack of business skills which eventually lead to business failures with a high possibility that these tend to be owner managed (Leah, 2013; Nemasetoni & Rogerson, 2005; Rogerson, 2004; Visser & Huyssten, 1999).

Hospitality and Guesthouse based tourism in Maun

Presently, Maun is considered the key tourism hub for northern Botswana. According to the 2011 national census, the population of Maun is approximately 60,000 people (Statistic Botswana, 2011). This village has become a popular tourism destination for both local and international tourists (BTDP, 2000). Most importantly, Maun has evolved from a small rural village to a well-rounded tourism destination in northern Botswana in the last two decades. The village has now become a gateway to the Okavango Delta (BTDP, 2000). There is a variety of accommodation establishments ranging from boarding house to up-market safari lodges in Maun. The Maun international airport has opened opportunities for unique tourism activities such as mekoro (canoe) trips on Thamalakane River (Figure 1).

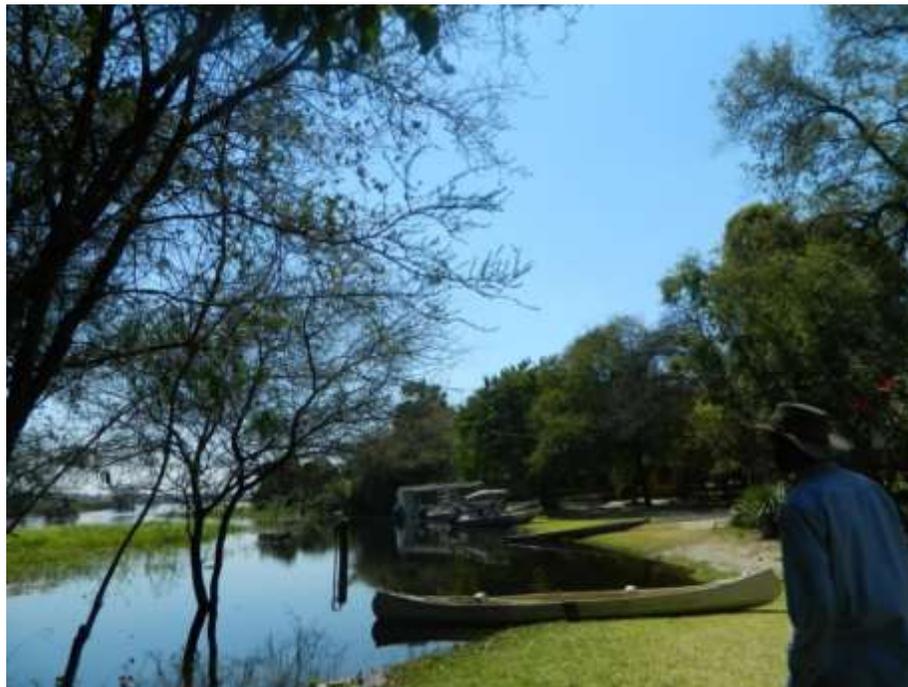


Figure 1: Part of the Thamalakane River – at the Crocodile camp in Maun in Botswana:
Picture: N. Moswete.



Overview of a Guesthouse as a tourist enterprise

In the tourism literature, a guesthouse is an inexpensive hotel-like accommodation that tends to be associated with budget oriented travellers and visitors (Middleton, 1994). The term guesthouse is synonymous with bed and breakfast (B&B). According to the Botswana guidelines for tourism accommodation a guesthouse is an accommodation establishment, operating from a private or purpose built property, that provides breakfast, that has an option to provide lunch, dinner and beverages for guest only (Department of Tourism (DOT), 2010; Middleton, 1994). The Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO) accommodation guidelines (2010), describes two types of guesthouses, the commercial guesthouse and domestic guesthouse. A domestic guesthouse has a maximum of five bedrooms and the public areas are shared with the owner. In a commercial guesthouse the numbers of guest bedrooms are more than five, but do not exceed ten. The public areas of a commercial guesthouse are normally reserved for exclusive use by guests and are not shared with the owner as in a domestic guesthouse (DOT, 2010). Table 1 shows the different types of guesthouses found in Maun village. Included are the number of rooms, date of licensing and the geographic location of each one of them.

Table 1: The number and types of guesthouses in Maun

Date of issue	Name of a facility	Location	Guesthouse Types
1/7/2006	Discovery Guesthouse	Matlapaneng	Commercial
1/1/2009	Botshelo Guesthouse	Mabudutsa	Commercial
1/1/2009	Jump Street	Kubung (Boseja)	Commercial
1/1/2013	Senthaga Guesthouse	Thito	Commercial
1/1/2013	Kessa's Chalets	Boseja (Route 9)	Commercial
1/1/2013	Queness Inn	Disaneng	Commercial
1/1/2013	Resident Delight	Boseja	Domestic
13/01/2013	Boseja Guesthouse	Boseja (Route 9)	Commercial
8/5/2013	Days Inn Guesthouse	Thito	Domestic
1/1/2014	Okavango Guesthouse	Disaneng	Commercial
1/1/2014	Matsaudi Guesthouse	Sedie	Domestic
14/08/2014	Gxwihaba	Matshwane	Commercial
1/12/2014	Resident Inn	Moeti	Commercial
31/08/2015	Route 9 Guesthouse	Boseja (Route 9)	Domestic
1/11/2016	Luxury Inn	Disaneng	Commercial
1/11/2016	D&K Guesthouse	Kubung (Boseja)	Domestic
20/12/2016	The Chiefs Guesthouse	Old Bridge)	Domestic

Source: Author Survey (2018)

According to Department of Tourism data base in Maun, there are 17 registered guesthouses altogether, comprising of 6 ungraded domestic guesthouses and 11 ungraded commercial guesthouses. In 2009, just prior to the FIFA World Cup that was held in South Africa, the Botswana government, through the newly introduced tourism regulations (Tourism Regulations of 2010), presented 'domestic guesthouses' as other types of tourism accommodation. The step to change was undertaken in order to encourage active participation of citizens in hospitality and domestic tourism development (Government of Botswana (GoB), 2009). As well, the Botswana Tourism Policy of 1990 and the Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM)

policy of 2007 call all Batswana (citizens) to actively participate in the tourism industry so as to promote citizen empowerment (GoB, 2009).

Tourism has become important to both rural and urban economies of Botswana as it brings developments that include roads infrastructure and open opportunities for employment especially in less developed regions of the country. However, tourism and hospitality have been overly studied in other countries; it appears to be less researched in Botswana especially in popular tourist destinations including Maun. Thus, this study examined the potential and effects of guesthouse based tourism and hospitality on people and the economy in Maun (Figure 2). The research objectives were: 1) to undertake an inventory of guesthouses for tourism in the study area; 2) to investigate ownership of guesthouses for tourism; 3) to examine the demographic characteristics of ownership; 4) to assess the socio-economic impacts of guesthouse based tourism; 5) to examine guesthouse owners marketing strategies; and 6) to examine the challenges associated with the business of guesthouses in tourism development in Maun.



Figure 2: Map of Botswana showing the study site: Source: Created by Koorutwe, 2009



Methodology

Empirical research was undertaken in Maun. Data were collected in June 2017. Additional data was collected in August in the same year. A semi-structured questionnaire with close and open-ended questions was used to collect data about guesthouses. In addition, a face - to - face interview using an interview guide was employed to elicit information from the respondents as it created a platform for the researcher to probe and thereby seek clarity whenever the need arose. In some cases of difficulty to access a guesthouse, a telephone interview was performed.

For purposes of sampling, all the 17 guesthouses in Maun were located and visited and the owners and managers were approached, briefed about the project and requested to participate in the study. Once ethical issues were discussed, they consented; appointments were sought for an interview. Some guesthouses were identified by use of tourist maps, a visit to the Botswana tourism office in Maun where leaflets and other information were obtained while others were identified and located via the internet. In addition to these, word of mouth was used to collect further information about availability, location and names of guesthouses in the area.

Since the study is exploratory in nature, descriptive statistics were generated. Qualitative content analysis (see May, 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) was used in the analysis of information and conversation gathered during face to face interview. The interview data was transcribed verbatim, field notes were typed. For the analysis of transcribed interview, colour-coding to identify similar phrases, repeated words, meaning and then pairing them together to create a summary (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Results and Discussion

In order to locate the participants for this study, an inventory of the existing guesthouses in Maun was carried out through word of mouth, tourism office, use of brochures and leaflet and the internet. In all, results discovered 17 comprising of 11 commercial and 6 domestic guesthouses all of which were not graded according to the BTO accommodation grading scheme (BTO, 2010). The sampled guesthouses year of establishment and operation ranged from 11 months to 12 years. All the guesthouse representatives were surveyed and interviewed after ethical aspects were duly considered.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

A total of 17 surveys were completed and useable for analysis. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were males and 23% were females. A total of 70% of the guesthouse representatives indicated that they were between the age of 41 and more, while 24% were 31- 40 years. About 41% had college diplomas, while about 29% had University first degree in various fields of study (Table 2)

Ownership of Guesthouse

The majority of the respondents (88%) owned the guesthouse that they represented in this study, and almost all were citizens. As regards the origin of owners, that is, whether the guesthouse owners were from Maun or elsewhere, the results show that almost half of the guesthouse owners came from Maun village (study area), while the other half came from outside of Maun. The fact that half of the guesthouse owners originated from outside Maun implies that there is a high possibility of tourist economic leakage. A study in Maun by Manwa et al. (2017) revealed a high tourism cash leakage from tourism businesses, and that this was due to the fact that many tourism enterprises were owned by foreign companies such as Riley's hotel, Discovery B&B, and some



by non- Maun residents for example, Adansonia hotel, Centre lodge (see Mbaiwa, 2005; Moswete et al. 2009). In another instance, Chirenje et al., (2013) argues that there was some tourism revenue leakage caused by local Zimbabweans who worked in the lodging establishments in the Nyanga District but originated from big towns and cities far away from Nyanga district. In terms of the gender of guesthouse owners, there were more males (76%) than females (24%). These results are consistent with the gender of guesthouse owners in Johannesburg, South Africa (Rogerson, 2004) and in India (Munshi, 2006) where men owned the majority of bed and breakfast establishments. In some areas, however, contrary observations have been made such as in the Western Cape Province in South Africa (Visser & Huyssten, 1999) and in Nigeria (Madichie & Hinson, 2013) where the majority of women owned Bed and Breakfast establishments. It is therefore suggested that women in Maun be encouraged to participate in the guesthouse industry through the Gender Affairs and Youth Development Fund. As regards the age of the respondents (70.5%) guesthouse owners were 41 years old and above. Compared to other studies in the region, most guesthouse owners in Maun are younger than those in the Western Cape Province who were 51-60 years old (Visser & Huyssten, 1999) and 50 years in Johannesburg where most of the B&B entrepreneurs had actually started their Bed and Breakfast accommodation business from retirement packages (Rogerson, 2004). In terms of educational attainment of guesthouses' owners (65%) had college Diploma and First Degrees in their academic training. Similarly, in the Johannesburg study, many B&B owners had nursing or teaching diplomas followed by those who had degrees (Rogerson, 2004). Most of the owners of guesthouses in the Western Cape Province, however, were in possession of university degrees (43%) followed by diploma (37%) (Visser & Huyssten, 1999).

Table 2: Shows Maun guesthouse owners' socio-economic characteristics (N=17)

Nationality		Citizen		Foreigner							
15		0		2							
Origin of owner		owner originating from Maun		owner originating from outside Maun							
		8		9							
Gender		males		Females							
13		4									
Age		21-30 years		31-40 years		41 and above					
1		4		12							
Education level		Phd		Masters		Degree		Diploma		Certificate	
0		1		5		7		1		1	
										1	
											1
											1
Establishing the guest house		By self funding		Through government financial assistance		Citezin Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) assistance		National Development Bank (NDB)		Commercial bank	
9				2		5		1			0
Financial benefit/ importance of guest house to owner		Benefit		does not benefit							
16		1									

Source: Authors



A sizeable number of the guesthouses in Maun (53%) were self-funded. The results are similar to findings in a study in Johannesburg where the prime source of Bed & Breakfast owners' start-up capital was from their own savings or was part of their retirement packages (Rogerson, 2004). When the respondents were asked whether they benefited financially from their guesthouse, nearly all of them (94%) said that they derived benefits from their lodging businesses. Similar results were obtained in Johannesburg (Rogerson, 2004), Western Cape Province in South Africa (Visser & Huyssten, 1999) and in Britain (Kinnaird & Hall, 1996) where the majority of owners of Bed and Breakfast acknowledged that they benefited from their B&B business and to some it was their major source of household income.

The economic impact of Guesthouse establishments

In total, there were 133 guest rooms (Table 3) available from all the guesthouse establishments in Maun. On average there are 7.8 rooms per guesthouse. The rooms are a potential source of economic activity in terms of generating income through room rates and in payments of salaries to employees servicing the rooms and other job at these businesses.

With reference to job creation, there were a total of 103 employees, with an average of 6 workers per guesthouse. In other similar studies, the average workers employed in guesthouses was 3.8 workers per an establishment in Johannesburg (Rogerson, 2004), 3 workers per Bed and Breakfast establishment in Western Cape Province in South Africa (Visser & Huyssten 1999), and 3 workers per Bed and Breakfast in New Jersey (Hampton & Christensen, 2007). The findings in this study may mean that Maun guesthouses are much better in terms of creating local employment than in some countries. Although guesthouses and tourism in general provide low status jobs with low remuneration (researcher personal communication (2017), this study therefore has revealed that local tourism, through guesthouse businesses, contributes to the general economy of the Maun community or tourism township as people derived remunerations and other cash payments from the businesses and their related activities.

The study found out the places of origin of the employees at the 17 guesthouses in Maun. The results in Table 4 show that more than half of the employees came from Maun (66%) as opposed to those who came from outside the community or village. This observation is similar to the observations made in New Jersey (USA) where tourism generated job opportunities to the majority of local people (Hampton & Christensen, 2007). Local community participation in tourism helps to retain tourism revenue in the area and thereby reducing both internal and external economic leakage (Kinnaird & Hall, 1996).

The average number of years for guesthouse business operation was 4 years (Table 4). The longest guesthouse in operation had 11 years. The average of four years in operation implies that most guesthouse businesses in Maun are fairly new in their operations in the tourism and hospitality sector. Bed and Breakfast had an average of 2.5 years in operation in South Africa (Rogerson, 2004) and four years in Texas's (Lee et al. 2003).



Table 3: Employment generation and the total number of guesthouse rooms servicing Maun

	Date of issue	No of years in operation	Name of facility	Location in Maun	Commercial/Domestic	No of rooms	Employment generation
1	1/7/2006	11	Discovery Guest House	Matlapaneng	Commercial	9	6
2	1/1/2009	8	Botshelo Guest House	Mabudutsa	Commercial	13	13
3	1/1/2009	8	Jump Street	Kubung (Boseja)	Commercial	10	8
4	1/1/2013	4	Senthaga Guest House	Thito	Commercial	10	15
5	1/1/2013	4	Kessa's Chalets	Boseja (Route 9)	Commercial	10	4
6	1/1/2013	4	Queens Inn	Disaneng	Commercial	8	8
7	1/1/2013	4	Resident Delight	Boseja	Domestic	3	5
8	13/01/2013	4	Boseja Guest House	Boseja (Route 9)	Commercial	9	2
9	8/5/2013	4	Days Inn Guest House	Thito	Domestic	5	3
10	1/1/2014	3	Okavango Guest House	Disaneng	Commercial	10	10
11	1/1/2014	3	Matsaudi Guest House	Sedie	Domestic	5	3
12	14/08/2014	3	Gxwihaba	Matshwane	Commercial	10	6
13	1/12/2014	3	Resident Inn	Moeti	Commercial	10	3
14	31/08/2015	2	Route 9 Guest House	Boseja (Route 9)	Domestic	5	2
15	1/11/2016	1	Luxury Inn	Disaneng	Commercial	7	5
16	1/11/2016	1	D&K Guest House	Kubung (Boseja)	Domestic	5	5
17	20/12/2016	1	The Chiefs Guest House	Old Bridge (Maun Second)	Domestic	4	5
		Total =68			Total Commercial =11	Total rooms = 133	Total = 103
		Average = 4			Total Domestic= 6	Average = 7.82	Average = 6.06
		STDev= 2.69				STDev = 2.83	ST Dev = 3.72
		Min = 1				Min =3	Min = 2
		Max = 11				Max =13	Max =15

Table 4: Shows the statistical profile of guesthouse operation in Maun

Economic activity in guest house	Total	Average	STDev	Min	Max
Employment generation	103	6	3.72	2	15
Workers from Maun	68	4			
Workers from outside Maun	35	2.06			
Guest room	133	8	2.83	3	13
Years in operation of guest house		4		1	11

Source: Authors

Marketing strategies for guesthouse business

The respondents were asked about the marketing strategies used for advertising their businesses, and if the methods effective. In all, equally, about 35% of them stated Word of Mouth



and social media such as Facebook. Examples of the responses obtained through open-ended questions and interview are stated below:

Interviewee 16, aged 36, Manager of a guesthouse R said
“Word of mouth, you get a chance to interact with people and sell your product ...”.

Interviewee 6, aged 37, Manager of guesthouse K stated:
“. . . word of mouth, because we are able to visit other lodges and sell our business with them, when they are full or all together booked they send us their customers”.

Information sought via telephone interviews and discussions with the various respondents revealed a general trend of lack of clear-cut advertising or marketing of guesthouse businesses. The study discovered that reliance on word of mouth (WOM) and Facebook (FB) for marketing and promotion of their businesses. This is evident from a sizeable number (35%) of the respondents who observed WOM and FB as an effective means of reaching out to their clientele respectively. During field work, the researchers’ experienced difficulty in locating some of the facilities as there was lack of or poor use of signage especially those facilities which were not found online. Thus, this could be hindering regular occupancy and use of the business. Others hardly go beyond the signage for the guesthouse. Some feel it is an expensive endeavour not worth its salt as you can input more on advertising and still get less in visitor numbers and economic benefits (Personal communication, 2017). Others indicated that word of mouth as well as business agreement with other guesthouses and lodges in the area works for them as they often receive spill over guests from other lodges and guesthouses within their network. Hence, word of mouth is still being used as an effective tool for advertising by guesthouse and B&B operators both in the developing and developed world.

In similar fashion, in Johannesburg, South Africa and Texas, USA, word-of-mouth marketing was considered as the most commonly marketing strategy (Lee et al. 2003; Rogerson 2004). In the Western Cape Province, South Africa owners felt that advertising small properties such as B&B’s is too expensive especially that the cost of advertising the business may not necessarily match the profits. Similarly, some of the respondents echoed the same sentiments about marketing and the fact that promotional material and advertising is costly. According to Lee et al. (2003) and Huang (2008), there is a dire need for effective and consistent advertising of lodging facilities given the seasonal nature of tourism and fluctuating guesthouse market such that they are made visible. The following basic practices that could keep a guesthouse occupied during low season, weekends or weekdays have been recommended by Cheng et al. (2013); Huang (2008); Lee et al., (2003).

- The guesthouse operators could offer a special theme, for example, “Mother and daughter weekend” and that could offer a great opportunity for special family time.
- Guesthouse operators could keep the habit of getting in contact with previous guests through popular social media such as whatsapp, face book, email messages or quarterly newsletters (see Lee et al., 2003). Leaving the property’s advertising material such as brochures and pamphlets in public spaces can generate good marketing opportunity for guesthouse offering Bed & Breakfast.

- During off-season, guesthouse could offer package deals where guests and visitors could interact e.g., during a cultural night of music and dance or local cuisine to encourage staying at the facility (see Huang, 2008 and Lee et al., 2003).

Table 5: Marketing strategies used by guesthouse operators in Maun (n = 17)

Marketing strategy	n	Percent
Word of mouth	6	35.3
Facebook	6	35.3
Networking with other guest houses and lodges	3	17.6
Pricing	2	11.8
Quality	2	11.8
Booking.com	2	11.8

** based on multiple responses

The challenges affecting guesthouse initiatives in Maun

With respect to the main challenges facing guesthouse and hospitality businesses since they started operating, about 59% respondents said that intermittent water shortages were the greatest challenge, followed by regular electricity power cuts (53%). Other challenges observed included late cancellations and failure to show up by clients (35%); competition from similar accommodation establishments such as boarding houses, hotels and safari lodges (24%), poor internet network and Wifi (12%).

Water scarcity was indeed a serious challenge as seen in figures 3a and b as guesthouses with reservoir water tanks next to them was a common sight showing the serious and often harsh reality of water problems in venturing into lodging and boarding house businesses in Maun. The study discovered that guesthouse clients would not feel happy after paying for accommodation and realizing there is no water for bathing thus forcing lodge managers to buy potable water most of the time.



Figure 3a: Gcwihaba Guesthouse has a Jojo water tank to address water shortages (Picture: K. Nkape).



Figure 3b: Matsaudi Guesthouse with Jojo water tank reservoirs to avert water cuts and shortages in Maun
(Picture: K. Nkape).

The respondents were also asked about how they perceive guesthouse lodging businesses in general and their observation since they ventured into the tourism sector in Maun. Overall, they perceived water issues to be worrisome, and that intermittent cuts have translated into limited to no water at all. In general water cuts and inadequate supply negatively affected their business and thereby unsatisfactory use of facilities by some tourists and the general clientele who choose their businesses. Below are some of the perceptions as said by some respondents about guesthouse business challenges in Maun?

Guesthouse S said: "Water scarcity is a problem because sometimes we live for some days without water".

Guesthouse Q: "Water scarcity . . . sometimes we spend days without water and when is available it does not look very clean (looks murky)".

Guesthouse F: Water shortages in Maun affect our businesses. . . . we buy portable water for drinking and for our clients

When asked to state how the stated challenges could be overcome, some respondents stated the following reasons skewed towards water scarcity:

Guesthouse A said: ". . . water shortage is a national issue, so Water Utilities [Department] should provide consistent supply of water or resign and the Botswana Water Affairs Unit of government come back . . ."

Guesthouse B; Water Utilities must provide steady supply of water and should timely identify and maintain burst pipes".

Guesthouse E; "Water Utilities must drill more boreholes, as the water we have in Maun is not adequate and if they don't, water shortage problem won't be rectified. It is the responsibility of WUC and they must do this or small business like guesthouses will not meet the demand of our customers [tourists]".

Some of the respondents opined that competition amongst and between guesthouses including well established and financially stable lodges and hotels as an eminent threat. Some of the issues expressed by the respondents in Maun have been observed elsewhere (see Hampton &



Christensen, 2007). In the Western Cape, South Africa for instance, many new guesthouses and B&Bs lodges were noted to be developing resulting in greater competition within the accommodation sector (Visser & Huyssten, 1999). Guesthouse business operation challenges in the Johannesburg region of South Africa (Rogerson, 2004) and B & B's in most parts of the United States (Poorani & Smith 1993; 1995) included lack of finance for both upgrading facilities and marketing. Lack of knowledge about tourism as a service industry (see Sungkhamanee, 2019); lack of support from the local community including problems with neighbours' objection to their business, the need for improved infrastructure (roads, signage), need for training and improved networking with other operators (see Rogerson, 2014 and Sungkhamanee, 2019). Women owned and run guesthouse businesses tend to be slow to pick up if not fail altogether due to the challenges they face that include socio-cultural, traditional beliefs (i., women stay in the kitchen) (Madichie, 2009; 2011), limited technological know-how and access to funding (see Amine & Staub, 2009;).

Competition dominance enjoyed by large tourism accommodation enterprises was also observed as a problem to the smaller lodging facilities. Although most guesthouses owners in Maun financed their businesses especially for start-up capital, surprisingly, they did not mention lack of funding as a problem when asked to mention their challenges. Yet, in South Africa, Nemasetoni and Rogerson (2005) found the main challenge in operating a small scale tourism accommodation business was associated with access to funding as start-up capital. Lack of or no marketing and advertising of the guesthouse businesses to the suitable clientele was noted as a problem (Madichie & Hinson, 2013; Untari & Satria, 2019).

Conclusion

The study discovered that the types of guesthouses found in Maun were mainly commercial, with only a small number of them being domestic (see DOT, 2010). An interesting finding was also that a large proportion of them were self-funded and what surfaced was that the owners had retired from formal employment especially government with mission to venture into a business which could keep them busy and earning a kind of monthly salary or income. Overall, ownership of businesses was adult males of 45 years of age and above with a high likelihood of having retired from formal employment. The owners were literate and had some form of formal education such as diploma and first degrees from tertiary or a university. Almost all of the respondents (or owners) were citizens and only two respondents were foreigners. The finding of citizen ownership did not come as a surprise as the government of Botswana has since reserved guesthouse lodging businesses for citizens only (DOT, 2010). These small scale facilities tend to be family owned and are more affordable. For example, an individual could turn their own dwellings into a domestic guesthouse where they can have rooms for visitors and at the same time live in another dwelling within the same homestead.

The dominance of males in the guesthouse business in Maun was not expected as many women tend to be in the food and beverage catering and wedding events in Botswana. This discovery of male dominance in ownership is similar to other studies (Madichie, 2011) other case studies include India by Munshi (2006) and Johannesburg, South Africa by Rogerson (2004) and Nigeria (Madichie, 2009). Hence, a similar study could be conducted in other towns to explore and track this trend and note the reasons why it is that men are in the guesthouse lodging businesses in Maun.

Overall, we found that most effective marketing tools employed by the respondents were mainly word of mouth and Facebook. Interestingly social media especially FB and whatsapp have become the most used as they are inexpensive and accessible. However, WOM works wonders



for small tourism related business with limited funding. An interesting find with respects to the socio-economic impacts of guesthouse based tourism was that almost all of the businesses observed that they are self-employed; derive financial benefits and recognition by the community of Maun as entrepreneurs. They all indicated that they derive significant benefits ranging from income and employment creation. Guesthouse businesses add value to the whole attractiveness and tourism image of Maun village. They contribute to the advancement of the northern Botswana's tourism by way of providing places for budget oriented accommodation to international and local tourists.

The guesthouses also benefit the Maun residents by providing places for local people to socialize and recreate. This in many ways contributes to the growth of domestic tourism in Botswana generally and in the Maun region in particular. In Botswana, the government has identified tourism as a new platform through which to diversify the rural economy especially in settlements and country towns. It is important to note the government's initiative to promote small scale lodging industry such as in Bed and Breakfast; Guesthouses, Inns and campsites. Thus, study uncovers 17 guesthouses of which were all open for business adding to a diversity of lodging accommodations in the study area and Botswana (BTO website & list of accommodation booklets). The small scale businesses contribute to the overall lodging industry especially in rural areas where without tourism there will be no employment opportunities (Moswete et al., 2009; Ndubano, 2000).

However, a significant number of the respondents echoed major challenges that interfere with the daily operations of the business which include acute water shortages, power cuts, poor marketing, and internet connectivity which affects visitor length of stay at their facilities. There is also a sign of tourist economic leakage on the horizon as almost more than half of the jobs are held by persons from outside of Maun. This warrants a further study to investigate the reasons why non-Maun dwellers tend to hold most jobs, and yet unemployment has become problematic in the rural areas.

For sustainability issues, there is need for the guesthouse lodging sector in Maun to consider employing marketing strategies and methods of reaching out to its market. If for example the facility is not marketed and also not located in a strategic geographical area such as near main roads then its visibility becomes obstructed making it less visited. If competition with other accommodation sectors is contributing to low use of guesthouse, then signage boards should be erected strategically and maintenance be undertaken regularly (see Rogerson, 2014). Front office staff should be trained (including on-Job training) to improve customer care as well trained staff could lead to better custom loyalty towards business.

Other than all the guesthouses relying heavily on WOM and FB for marketing and promotion, other social media platforms and outlets could be used to penetrate the market and increase business profitability and above all visibility of small scale accommodation facilities in Maun. In their study Dewnarain and others (2019) recommend the use of Trip Advisor which is one of the greatest if not the best tool used to connect holiday makers and hotels. Thus, guesthouses in Maun could consider this marketing method to improve their visibility especially those facilities that have been operating for more than five years as they are now somewhat established as they would understand the international and local market. There is need to educate small scale accommodation and tourist outlets owners and operators about the importance to create a website (see Untari & Satria, 2019) in communicating information and news about their lodging businesses. It is also essential to encourage the guesthouse business community in Maun and elsewhere to establish a forum through which they could all advertise and share ideas about how to run an accommodation and hospitality businesses.



Recommendations

- 1) The Gender Affairs and Youth Department together with the Department of Tourism should encourage women and youth to participate in the guesthouse industry in Maun by tooling them with information and funding.
- 2) Water Utilities Corporation should provide a steady water supply to guesthouses, and the owners who are able should obtain their own water tanks and harvest rainwater for use during dry season when water is in high demand.
3. Recycled water – used water could be utilized for watering gardens and green grass and for the general washing of floors to reduce demand for fresh water.
- 4) The Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) should give guesthouses special attention and ensure that they provide guesthouses with steady electricity so guesthouses can serve their clientele effectively and efficiently and thereby contribute to the growth of domestic tourism in Maun as per the government forward planning in using tourism as a tool for diversifying the rural economy. This will enable small scale tourism businesses such as B & B and guesthouses to compete with bigger facilities which are financially stable
- 5) Social marketing is recommended with a goal to empower and capacitate women to venture into the business of tourism (lodging, conferencing) so that they too can initiate businesses, manage and benefit from it (see Amine & Staub, 2009; Moswete & Lacey, 2014).

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