



# Perceptions of local communities on the benefits of tourism in the protected areas

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## Abstract

Tourism is indeed now playing a greater role than ever before in terms of job creation, empowerment and economic growth, both on the global stage and in South Africa. In 2011, the tourism sector worldwide supported 258 million direct, indirect and induced employment opportunities. The main aim of the current study was to analyse the local communities' perceptions of the benefits of tourism in the protected areas concerned. The analysis was approached on the basis of surveying the local communities. The quantitative approach adopted as the chosen research method ensured that the required descriptive statistics could be derived from the research material available. A non-probability sampling approach was used to collect the data involved. The study was conducted in two villages, Ka-Mhinga and Ka-Matiani, adjacent to the Kruger National Park. The results obtained in the present study indicate that the communities from the two villages receive minimal benefits from tourism. Some of the residents noted that they were not in receipt of what they had been promised when the Kruger National Park opened. The participants from the above-mentioned villages agreed that the locals were not employed in the protected area, and that the tourism goods which were sold at the Punda Maria information centre were not produced by the local residents, as well as that the Park's management were influenced by nepotism in their employment of workers. The study concluded that community residents of Ka-Mhinga and Ka-Matiani should form part of the tourism management so as to improve the level of benefits obtained from tourism, which would enable them to enjoy the benefits of the Kruger National Park. Despite the study revealing the benefits of tourism gleaned by the two villages, engaging in an increased number of initiatives is likely to elicit even more benefits, with all the investors participating in the operation, execution, monitoring, and management of tourism activities as a form of collaboration.

**Keywords:** tourism, protected areas, communities' benefits, Kruger National Park.

## Introduction

Tourism is one of the most effective ways of redistributing wealth. It brings income into a community that would otherwise not be earned by the community concerned thus forging sustainable livelihoods. Members of the local community may be employed directly in the protected area as tour guides, cleaners, receptionists, or managers, or in such supporting industries as retail supplies or food and beverages production. Their employment is likely to lead to increased spending within the community involved, with tourism businesses either directly or indirectly promoting the viability of the local businesses concerned (Ardahaey, 2011:206). Furthermore, some other benefits that local communities could consider are identified by the World Tourism Organisation as being the empowerment of young people, women and local ethnic



minority groups, and the provision of new markets for such local products, handicrafts and arts (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011:1344). Protected areas may generate considerable revenue from conservation of natural environment, with some of the revenue being used for the maintenance of biological diversity, and the rest being ploughed back into the communities that live in, or around, the natural or protected area (Scherr & Sthapit, 2009).

Economic benefits not only come in the form of revenue, but they also include entrepreneurial and other skills at an ecotourism destination that generate much-needed hard currency (Sentle, 2014:77). The economic benefits of tourism also contribute to foreign exchange earnings, increased balance of payments, improved economic structures, and the encouragement of entrepreneurial activities (Vanhove, 2017:36). According to Snyman (2013:658), some such revenue should be channelled towards creating employment for members of the local communities around the Kruger National Park. Dupuy (2014:200), confirms that it is not only the revenue from the protected areas that should empower the community socio-economically, but that the entrepreneurial opportunities granted to members of the local communities should, likewise, be empowering.

The economic benefits that are gained thereby usually include the contributions that are made to the local economy, as well as job creation (Mason, 2008:37). The support for tourism that is provided by the local communities is based upon perceived benefits, such as increasing the income, the employment opportunities, and the education of the local communities, which are the most important ways to enhance their abilities to access the benefits of tourism development (Sebele, 2010). However, local communities might have strongly negative views of tourism, in terms of it potentially leading to an increase in the prices of goods and services (Tkalec & Vizek, 2016:93). Recognising the importance of community in tourism management in order to benefit from protected areas, the aim of the present study is to analyse the communities' perceptions of the benefits to be gained from, the protected area concerned. The participants in this study were the local communities from Ka-Mhinga and Ka-Matiani, relating to the principal problem.

### **Problem statement**

The host communities need to form part of tourism management in the tourism development with them being able to identify the tangible benefits that can be gleaned from the arrival of tourists in their community (Rumbles, 2018). Benefits to be gained from the conservation measures employed within the protected area should still be delivered to the local people, so as to enable them to effectively support tourism. Currently, the communities of Ka-Matiani and Ka-Mhinga have received limited benefits from the presence of the Kruger National Park in their midst. There is minimal beneficiation from, the protected area, in terms of employment, access to operation and management of the Park. The prevailing levels of unemployment and poverty are high, and the local communities are neither allowed to collect firewood, nor medical herbs, from within the Park (Mabunda, 2004). Mabunda (2004), argues further that, until now, the Park-related concerns of the adjacent communities have revolved around economic and employment benefits, poverty, and natural resources utilisation.

### **Research objectives**

The main aim of the current study is to analyse the local communities' perceptions of the benefits of tourism in the protected areas concerned, among the community members of the Ka-Mhinga



and Ka-Matiani villages. To achieve the main objective, the following secondary objectives required attention:

- To analyse the perceptions of the benefit of tourism in the protected areas by means of an in-depth literature review.
- To assess the benefits of tourism in relation to the Kruger National Park;
- To draw conclusions about, and to make recommendations regarding, the communities' the benefits to be gained from the protected areas

## Methodology

Quantitative approach is an approach for testing different variables and the relationships between them while qualitative approach is an approach that involves collecting information that is more detailed from a smaller number of people (Creswell, 2014:4). For this study, quantitative approach was used. The researcher used descriptive research design. Descriptive research aims to provide the causes of an event. The study was based on an in-depth literature review using academic journals and other relevant publications and websites, on perceptions on the benefits of tourism in the protected areas a followed by empirical study. So as to determine the perceptions of Ka-Mhinga and Ka-Matiani villagers regarding the benefits to be gained from, tourism conducted in protected areas, the researcher used descriptive research to analyse their perceptions, and to summarise and organise the data obtained collectively, so as to achieve an insightful outcome for the study (Amuquandoh, 2010:229).

The research study was conducted under the auspices of the Vaal University of Technology, so the researcher had to apply for ethical clearance for the research from the University's Ethical Committee. The researcher had to conform to the Kruger National Park's ethical procedures, by submitting a letter to the management of the park, requesting to conduct research using the name 'Kruger National Park'. The permission to undertake the study in the area of concern was obtained from the relevant chiefs, and from the conservation committee forum (consisting of community representatives) in February 2017. The survey was conducted in the two villages of Ka-Mhinga and Ka-Matiani, which are situated adjacent to the Kruger National Park. The participants who took part in the current study comprised of local community members from the two villages mentioned above. Convenience sampling was used in the case of the community members from Ka-Mhinga and Ka-Matiani, thus any individual who was willing to participate in this study. For the purpose of the current study, five hundred (500) questionnaires were distributed to community members of the two villages and 463 questionnaires were completed and collected. This represents response rate of 93%. A sample of five hundred (500) was deemed to be sufficient for this study.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21.0) was used to capture multiple variables simultaneously. The empirical evidence collected was analysed so as either to accept, or to refute, the theory regarding the perceptions of the benefits to be gained from, the conducting of tourism in protected areas. The questionnaire used in this study was developed based on the literature review on the perceptions of communities regarding the benefits to be gained from protected areas. The local communities' perceptions of the role and benefits of tourism in protected areas was analysed by means of the use of descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and the analysis of variance (ANOVA). Factor analysis is a procedure that is primarily used for data reduction and summarisation (Hair, Black, Basin, Anderson & Tatham, 1998:134). A one- way ANOVA was



applied to investigate the local communities' perceptions of the role and benefits of tourism in the protected areas (Malhotra, 2010:531).

## Research results

### Factor analysis of community benefits from the protected areas

The questionnaire contained 20 items that probed the perceptions of community members about certain aspects of the protected areas of the Kruger National Park. The analysis of the items should address the fulfilment of objective two, which rests upon the determination of residents' perceptions regarding such protected areas as the Kruger National Park. To see whether the items could be grouped together into a smaller number of factors, a factor analytic procedure was followed. Before the factor analysis proceeded, the data were first scrutinised for any possible outliers, and the data of six participants were removed prior to the procedure. The initial factor analysis using principal component analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation showed that item B12 had a measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) of less than 0.50, so it was removed from the procedure. Item B14 also had its scale inverted. The parameters used, namely the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) formula and Bartlett's sphericity, were  $KMO=0.826$  and  $\rho=0.000$ , which both indicated that it would be possible to obtain a more parsimonious solution than 20 items. Four first-order factors resulted, which explained 47.1% of the variance present.

The first-order factors were then again subjected to a second-order procedure, which resulted in two factors. The first factor was a combination of first-order factors 1 and 2, whilst the second factor formed a combination of first-order factors 3 and 4. The two second-order factors explained 71.99% of the variance present. The first second-order factor (FB2.1) was named "Community perceptions enhancing tourism in protected areas", and contained 11 items, with a Cronbach reliability of 0.810. A reliability analysis on this factor indicated that if item B14 (scale inverted) were removed, then the reliability coefficient would increase to 0.837. Hence, item B14 inverted, was removed.

The second factor, FB2.2, contained 8 items and was named "Community perceptions impeding tourism in the protected areas", and had a reliability coefficient of 0.534. The factor thus could be deemed as being unreliable if one accepts the assumption that reliability coefficients should have a value of 0.70 or higher. However, (Cole & Preacher, 2014:300) indicates that, if one is using psychological constructs, values below 0.70 can realistically be expected, due to the diversity of the constructs involved being measured. The construct, thus, did not have the expected internal consistency but all the items were related to aspects seemed to be linked to community perceptions that impeded tourism in the protected areas.

The items seemed to be controversial among the participants, with the items in FB1.3 being negatively correlated with the others. Nevertheless, as other attempted solutions did not resolve the problem, the factor was retained. The items present in FB2.1 are given in Table 1.1, together with the mean scores and factor loadings.

**Table 1.1: The mean scores and factor loadings of the items in relation to the community perceptions enhancing tourism (FB1.1)**

FB2.1 – Community perceptions of the enhancing of tourism in the protected areas ( $\alpha=0.837$ )			
Item	Description	Mean	Loading



B10	The protected areas provide opportunities to community members to perform cultural activities for the entertainment of tourists.	3.36	0.790
B9	The protected areas promote a variety of cultural activities that are performed by community members for payment.	3.29	0.762
B20	The environmental centres sell products made by community members.	3.17	0.639
B11	The protected areas management and the community members work together in promoting skills transfer by means of the latter training to become tour guides.	3.30	0.609
B17	The protected areas have changed community members' behaviour (such as by promoting prostitution).	3.36	0.564
B8	Local communities benefit from tourism development, as well as from the upgrading of infrastructure, such as roads.	2.85	0.380
B1	Community members earn an income from tourism.	3.44	0.693
B6	Community members benefit from being able to provide services and products to tourists visiting the protected areas.	2.97	0.677
B20	The protected areas provide support for community projects in this village.	3.40	0.640
B4	The community members benefit from the interaction between themselves and the tourists visiting the protected areas.	3.27	0.588
Average		3.24	0.634

The factor mean of 3.24 shows a neutral perception among the participants with respect to the items in the factor. The item with the highest mean score was B1 (Community members earn an income from tourism), indicating partial agreement with the concept. The item with the highest factor loading was B10 (The protected areas provide opportunities to community members to perform cultural activities for the entertainment of tourists). As such, it makes the largest relative contribution to the factor (Field, 2009:631). The data distribution in the factor is shown in Figure 1.1.

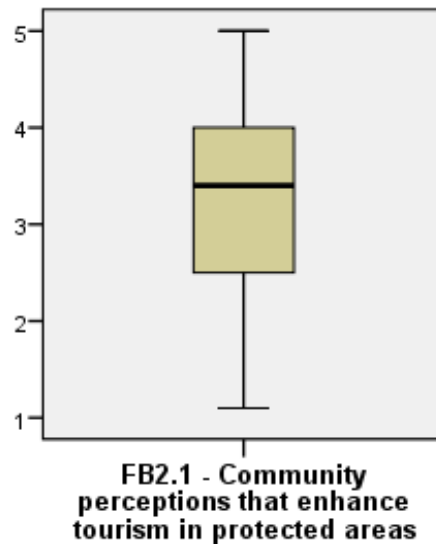
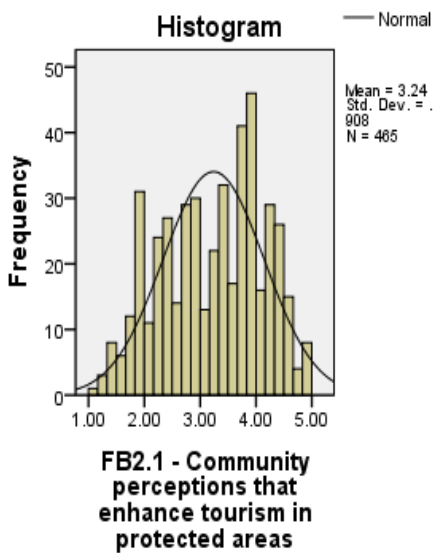


Figure 1.1: Histogram and boxplot showing the data distribution with respect to the factor FB2.1



B16	The protected areas do not promote cultural exchange between the community members and the tourists.	2.46	0.542
B15	Community members own NO business connected to the protected areas.	2.42	0.548
B3	Community members are not permitted to use natural resources from (e.g. to collect firewood, or to hunt in) the protected areas.	2.05	0.502
B13	The protected areas improve the quality of life of community members.	2.46	0.708
B18	The protected areas promote the local communities' participation in tourism.	2.67	0.615
B19	The protected areas around the villages contain protected natural plants and wildlife.	2.41	0.528
Average		2.43	0.577

The mean of 3.24 and median of 3.40 indicates a slight negative skewness. However, inferential statistical procedures could be used in testing the factor. The second factor found seemed to revolve around aspects that could impede perceptions about tourism and the items, with their mean scores and factor loadings being given in Table 1.2.

<b>FB2.2 – Community perceptions that impede tourism in protected areas (<math>\alpha=0.534</math>)</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Loading</b>
B5	Community members do not benefit from the protected areas, which leads to the lack of environmental responsibility among them.	2.48	0.602
B7	Community members are not offered employment opportunities in the protected areas.	2.50	0.573

**Table 1.3: The mean scores and factor loadings of the items in terms of community perceptions impeding tourism (FB2.2)**

The data in Table 1.3 shows that the participants tended to agree with the items present in the factor community perceptions in relation to the impeding of tourism in the protected areas of the Kruger National Park. Item B3 had the lowest factor mean (2.05) and, hence, the participants can be seen to have agreed most strongly with it, while the highest mean, of 2.67, indicated their

partial agreement with item B18. Item B13 had the highest factor loading (0.708), showing that the perception of the “protected areas improve the quality of life of community members” was the item that was most representative of the factor concerned. The data distribution of the factors in the factor are shown in Figure 1.2.



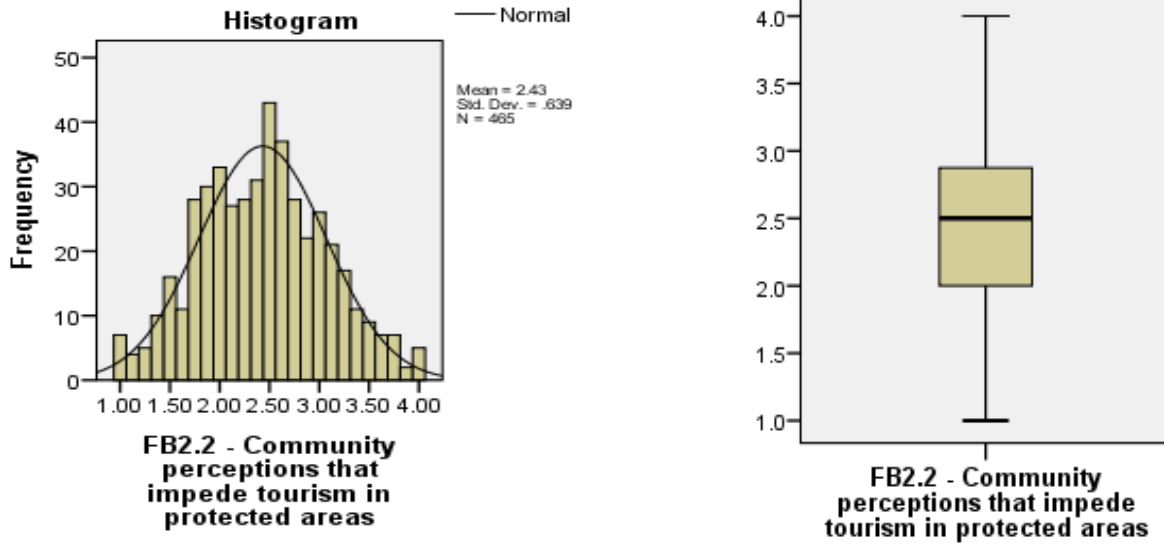


Figure 1.2: Histogram and boxplot showing the data distribution with respect to the factor FB2.2

The mean of 2.43 and the median of 2.50 indicate that the distribution of data is close to the normal, and, hence, inferential statistical tests could be utilised to analyse the factor.

### Testing factors as dependent variables against the independent variables

As one of the objectives of the study was to assess the association of the dependent factors as dependent variables against the independent groups, including age, gender, income from tourism, and the highest qualification, it was necessary to test the associations involved. Firstly, as the participants for the two factors with respect to Section B were the same, a paired t-test could be used to see whether the mean scores of the two factors differed statistically significantly from one another. The results of the test could be seen in terms of the following:

$$[\bar{X}_{FB2.1} = 3.24; \bar{X}_{FB2.2} = 2.43; t(464) = 16.75; p < 0.0005; r = 0.61]$$

If the null hypothesis is true, then no significant difference exists between the means. However, in this case the two samples came from different populations ( $p < 0.05$ ) but were typical of their parent population (Field, 2009:325). Thus, the participants agreed that the statistic was significantly stronger (lower mean) in the case of the impeding factor than in that of the enhancing factor. The above seems strange, but one needs to remember that the lower the mean, the greater is the amount of agreement with the factor.

The above could possibly be due to the way in which the items were stated, using the word ‘not’ as in “[c]ommunity members are not offered employment opportunities in the protected areas”. If the participants disagreed with the statement, they expressed a double negative, because they disagreed with not believing something. Using items with double negatives should, therefore, be avoided. Items B3, B5, B7, B15, and B16 were all examples of items with double negatives. Thus, as the scales were inverted (in the sense that they were opposite of what the scale intended), they should be interpreted as expressing disagreement, and not agreement, with the items concerned. The participants, thus, disagreed with the items, which was favourable for the perceptions regarding tourism.



In addition, the effect of size was large ( $r=0.61$ ), indicating the substantive effect of comparing the means in this way. Thus, the effect is important, and more attention needs to be given to the aspects referred to in the enhancing factor (FB2.1), so that the participants had a more positive perception of the items involved. The mean score of the inverted items was 3.52, showing partial disagreement that is supportive of efforts to enhance the benefits of tourism.

### Association between the dependent factors and the two independent groups

When two independent groups are tested for differences between mean scores with respect to the dependent variables, then the t-test can be used. Significant differences were found to be present with respect to FB2.2 only. The results are given in Table 1.4.

**Table 1.4: The significance of the differences between the two gender groups, with respect to the impeding factor (FB2.2)**

Factor	Group	Mean	t-test (p-value)	Effect size (r)
Community perceptions that impede tourism (FB2.2)	Male	2.50	0.031*	0.11
	Female	2.37		

\* = Statistically significant at the 5% level ( $p>0.01$ , but  $p<0.05$ ).

The data in Table 1.4 show that the female participants agreed statistically significantly more strongly with the factor (FB2.2) than did the male participants.

Hence, there was a significant association between gender and the impeding factor, in that the female interviewees agreed more strongly with the impeding factor than did the male interviewees. The female participants were probably more strongly influenced by such factors, as the employment opportunities were probably fewer for them than they were for the male participants in the rural areas.

### Receipt of direct income from tourism

Question A5 had only two categories of response, namely 'yes' or 'no'. The appropriate data are shown in Table 1.5

**Table 1.4: Significance of differences between the two income groups, with respect to the two factors involved**

Factors	A5. Income from tourism	N	Mean	t-test (p-value)	Effect Size
FB2.1 – Community perceptions that enhance tourism in the protected areas	Yes	22	2.86	0.04*	0.10
	No	443	3.26		
FB2.2 – Community perceptions that impede tourism in the protected areas	Yes	22	2.40	0.84	-
	No	443	2.43		

\* = Statistically significant at the 5% level ( $p>0.01$  but  $p<0.05$ ).





The data in Table 1.5 indicate that the participants who received an income from tourism agreed statistically significantly more strongly with the items in the enhancing factor than did the participants who received no income from tourism. For the rural communities, the ability to earn an income is extremely important, as most of them are unemployed and do not earn a salary. This finding is supported by several authors. For instance, Su, Wall, Wang and Jin (2019:272), undertaking a study in the context of a rural tourism in china, discovered that rural tourism is critical for livelihood sustainability. Furthermore, Xue and Kerstetter (2019:416), also emphasise that rural tourism results in livelihood change by impacting on rural development and poverty reduction.

### Association between the dependent factors and three or more independent groups

When three or more independent groups are involved, one can utilise ANOVA to see whether the groups differ at the multivariate level. Should they differ, then, pairwise, differences can be handled at the univariate level.

### Nature of the participants' occupation (A3)

The 15 possible categories given were recoded as three, namely students, the employed and the unemployed. As the unemployment status was high (55.5%) in the community, it was difficult to form groups of any equitable size. Statistically, significant differences were only present regarding the community perceptions of the aspects that impeded tourism. The results obtained are given in Table 1.6.

**Table 1.6: The significant differences between the three occupation groups with respect to the two tourism factors**

Factor	Group	Mean	MANOVA (p-value)	ANOVA (p-value)	Hochberg GT2			
					1	2	3	
Perceptions that enhance tourism (FB2.1)	Students	3.25	0.007**	0.36	1	/	-	-
	Employed	3.15			2	-	/	-
	Unemployed	3.28			3	-	-	/
Perceptions that impede tourism (FB2.2)	Students	2.63		0.003**	1	/	-	**
	Employed	2.46			2	-	/	-
	Unemployed	2.36			3	**	-	/

\*\* = Statistically significantly different at the 1% level ( $p < 0.005$ ).

The data in Table 1.6 shows that the unemployed participants agreed most strongly in respect of the aspects impeding tourism. Of the three occupational groups, the unemployed, who had no means of obtaining an income and could be seen to be the most deprived economically, agreed most strongly with the items in the impediment factor (FB2.2), compared to the level of agreement shown by the students and the employed groups.

### Highest qualification of the participants (A6Rec)

Many participants were found to have a secondary school qualification, which meant any level from Grade 8 to Grade 12 (58.9%). The details of those participants with no qualification, and those with primary school qualifications, were added together to form a second group, while the participants with a diploma or a certificate formed a third group. The fourth group consisted of participants with a bachelor's degree, or with a higher qualification.



**Table 1.7: The significant differences between the four qualification groups with respect to the two tourism factors**

Factor	Qualification groups	Mean	MANOVA (p-value)	ANOVA (p-value)	Hochberg GT2					
					1	2	3	4		
FB2.1	None/prim	3.14	0.025*	0.64	1	/	-	-	-	
	Secondary	3.27			2	-	/	-	-	
	Dip/cert	3.27			3	-	-	/	-	
	B. degree+	3.17			4	-	-	-	/	
FB2.2	None/prim	2.33		0.025*	0.025*	1	/	-	-	*
	Secondary	2.44				2	-	/	-	-
	Dip/cert	2.44				3	-	-	/	-
	B. degree+	2.79				4	*	-	-	/

\* = Statistically significant at the 5% level ( $p > 0.01$ , but  $p < 0.05$ ).

The data in Table 1.7 shows that significant differences were present with respect to the second impeding factor only. The well-qualified participants agreed least strongly with the items, while the lowest qualification group agreed most strongly with the factor. The participants' educational qualifications were associated with the community's perceptions of the aspects impeding tourism, with the best qualified participants agreeing less strongly regarding the aspects impeding tourism, and the lowest qualified participants agreeing more strongly with them. The higher the qualification, the less strong was the agreement with the impediment factor.

## Recommendations and Conclusions

### Research objective: to assess the communities' perceived benefits gained from tourism

The purpose of collecting information regarding the communities' role and participation in tourism considered the benefits gained from tourism, such as how the community residents perceived them. Considering the returns that the community could experience when participating in tourism is essential, so as to be able to foster a positive approach towards tourism. Concentrating on the two villages concerned, namely Ka-Mhingana and Ka-Matiani, the literature assisted in identifying the difficulties caused by the low level of participation, which might have been due to the lack of information regarding the benefits of tourism. The two communities concerned should have been made cognizant of the latent possibilities about the rewards of being involved in tourism for them to become involved therein. The encouraging perceptions held by the participants concerning the benefits of tourism could, perhaps, amount to their recognition of such benefits in practice. Instances of such benefits would have been increased job opportunities in the Kruger National Park and the provision of additional visitor accommodation in the villages. Some of the participants from the two villages were satisfied with the income and employment opportunities in the Park, even if they were seen to be of relatively short duration.

The participants from the two villages indicated that the communities benefited from tourism. Community-based goods had been developed, which benefited the whole community. Selling cultural products is an example of a project that had been developed to benefit the community, through job creation and the supply of cultural products to the community. Tourism has also been recognised as a tool of development, as it has created job opportunities for the local communities at the Punda Maria Gate visitors centre. Both Ka-Mhingana and Ka-Matiani community members



sold their cultural products to the tourists there. The objective mission of the protected areas was to contribute to the continuance of the conservation of the biodiversity of the nature reserves, in such a way that South African residents would benefit from their stake in the diverse opportunities available to them. According to the participants from the two villages, tourism has created job opportunities in the Kruger National Park. In terms of the local community residents, tourism should be perceived as having an impact on changing the community make-up and standard of living. Economic benefits come not only in the form of revenue, though, for the existence of an ecotourism destination can also lead to increased employment and to the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities that generate much-needed hard currency (Cook, Hsu & Taylor, 2018). The economic benefits of tourism include the contribution of tourism to foreign exchange earnings, the balance of payments, the improvement of economic structures, and the encouragement of entrepreneurial activities and thus needed job-creation in a country with a 29% unemployment rate of which 60% are youth (Mtapuri *et al.*, 2015).

Tourism is perceived as being a potential economic action that can make a positive impact on the local economy, and which can create employment opportunities and help to maintain the infrastructure of the rural communities. The present study identified that tourism benefits are perceived as not being consistently spread throughout the two villages. Strickland-Munro and Moore (2014), state that there is collective evidence that the benefits of tourism do not accrue equally to the local residents of protected areas. Some of the participants from the two villages seemed to feel that they did not benefit from the tourism activities undertaken in their villages. The residents noted that they were not in receipt of what they had been assured they would receive when the Kruger National Park opened. The protected area employees do not come from the local villages and the tourism goods being sold at the Punda Maria information centre are not produced by the local residents. In addition, the Park management employs workers along nepotistic lines. Park (2014), states that, by developing an awareness of conservation, the host communities can experience all the benefits that have been discussed thus far. Sadly, despite the fact that the protected areas can benefit the host communities, the opposite is also true, with such areas also possibly having a negative impact on the host communities concerned.

In conclusion of the current research, the results show that carefully crafted information contributes to the fostering of interest in tourism between communities, which is revealed when the communities that have become involved in tourism benefit economically therefrom. Such aspects came to be recognised by the present researcher through the administration of a questionnaire, and through the review of related literature from diverse sources.

### **Limitations**

Some participants (from both of the villages) were reluctant to provide information, fearing victimisation by their community leaders, even though the researcher and the fieldworkers assured them that the information they gave would be treated as confidential. In some cases, the information provided was not clear, as the participants and fieldworkers did not understand each other well, due to the language barriers involved. Some of the participants knew too little to be able to give the type of response that was expected by the researcher. Related to the results of the study, since non-probability convenient sampling was used when distributing the questionnaires, the outcome of the study cannot be generalised, unlike in random sampling, where all members of a population have an equal chance of inclusion in the sample (Fricker 2008:216). A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to the participants; however, 37



participants were not available during collection and some were not all completed by the participants.

### Recommendations for future study

Although the current study is recognised as contributing findings to the body of literature on the set topic, some geographical areas still require further research. South Africa has rural tourism areas that require research into the perceptions of the benefits from tourism that could add value to the formulation of policies. The following areas are recognised for further study into tourism:

- Kruger National Park (Mpumalanga province);
- Mapungubwe National Park; and
- Makuya private game reserve.

Grounded in the researchers' study and experience, the researchers recommend that, for the next study, the questionnaire for the park management should be designed to be different from that designed for the community members. The population size of the two villages should be obtained first. The participants responded well to being interviewed, due to their knowledge that the information with which they supplied the researchers would be taken to the Vhembe District Municipality offices in Thohoyandou, and that they would actually benefit from the changes made in the operation of the protected area.

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