



Impacts of World heritage sites on local communities in the Indian Ocean Region

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Abstract

The IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) is committed to various objectives which include fostering tourism and cultural exchanges in the region. IROA is also committed in promoting cultural heritage and involving the economic potential of heritage including World Heritage properties and sites. The United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), has declared many areas as World Heritage sites along the Indian Ocean. The study used a qualitative literature review method to unpack IORA countries and their world heritage sites. The sampling comprised the IORA countries. Purposive sampling was used for the selection of IORA countries. The results show lack of local community involvement in the management of world heritage sites, and thus no benefits accrue to them. The countries also showed that local communities participation could indeed contribute to sustainability of World Heritage Sites. The researcher recommends that IROA countries should form intense collaborations in order work together to have a common framework for managing World Heritage Sites which could benefit the communities. The researcher also proposes a benefit sharing model which can benefit IORA countries in seeking to achieve the main aim of the effective conservation of heritage and culture.

Keywords: Indian Ocean Rim Association, World Heritage sites, impacts to local communities

Introduction

A World Heritage designation means that a site belongs to what is a “globally recognised top tier of heritage sites” (Brandt and Wollesen, 2009). Thus there is a rational expectation that a World Heritage label will benefit an area by raising the profile of a World Heritage sites. This should then hopefully hearten investment and promote tourism, thus supporting local communities. The IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) was formed to promote regional cooperation for peaceful, stable and prosperous Indian Ocean. IORA is committed in different numbers of objectives which include fostering tourism and cultural exchange in the region. The association aims to increase people-to-people interactions and to thus promote regional ecotourism growth. The association also encourages the sustainable development of community-based tourism and ecotourism and promotes cultural heritage including World Heritage sites. Moreover, the IORA aims at sharing experiences for sustainable tourism and encourages investment in infrastructure.

United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO) has declared many areas as World Heritage sites along the Indian Ocean. The strong focus on research is on marine tourism, archeological and historical sites along the Indian Ocean. In South Africa, UNESCO declared iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Robben Island, the Cradle of Humankind, uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape, Cape Floral Kingdom, Vredefort Dome and Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape as World Heritage Sites. There is little literature



about the impacts of World Heritage sites on local communities in IORA countries including South Africa.

World heritage sites (WHS) as a source of tourism are one of the unique cultural and natural sites in existence and many of these sites attract people from, and to different countries to view them, experience, learn and explore them in greater detail. WHS are environments that bear a unique or at least, an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living, or which has disappeared, also contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance (Steiner 2011:556). This is supported by Farid (2015:596) indicating that, according to data of the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO there are 802 cultural WHS, and 197 WHS are categorized as natural sites, then there are 32 mixed sites that are categorized as both natural and cultural. The policy of UNESCO is to keep WHSs in a good condition for future generations and making them available to the public as much as possible (Jimura 2011:9). It is apparent that the physical environment of WHSs, especially those which are fragile and not well-managed has been severely damaged by too much visitation (Smith 2002).

There are some negative and positive tourism impacts with factors causing them that are related to our World Heritage Sites and these impacts influence the attitude and perceptions of local communities towards developments created for world heritage site. How residents perceive tourism developments and the mitigating influence of WHS recognition informs their involvement in both development and conservation programmes (Jaafar, Noor & Rasoolimanesh 2015:157).

Therefore, this study was proposed because of a lack of research conducted along the Indian Ocean periphery regarding the impacts of World Heritage sites on local communities. The researcher identified world heritage sites which exist in IORA and their impacts on local communities. IROA is committed in promoting cultural heritage and involving the economic potential of heritage including World Heritage properties and sites but what is the extent of community development?

This research is built on the collaboration theory and community tourism planning. Issues of coordination, collaboration and partnership are now at the forefront of much tourism research on finding new solutions to resource management and destination development problems (Hall, 1999:274). The inclusion of local communities at all management levels of tourism destinations could solve problems in tourism developments. A community approach to tourism planning is an attempt to formulate a bottom-up form of planning (Hall & Page, 1999:252). Tourism projects, and all their related activities and developments should attain positive outcomes and minimize adverse impacts on the heritage and lifestyles of the local community involved, while also seeking to respond to the needs and objectives of tourists.

The community approach emphasizes development in the community, rather than development of the community. Researchers have indicated that when local stakeholders have had an opportunity to participate in the planning process from the very beginning, they have more positive opinions regarding the development of their area than those who have not participated in the planning process meaningfully (see Simmons 1994, Jamal & Getz 1995, Page & Thorn 1997). Thus, involving local stakeholders to participate should be a crucial component of planning for an area (Tosun, 2000; Törn, Siikamäki, Tolvanen, Kauppila & Rämetsä, 2007; Jamal & Stonza, 2009).

The idea of sustainability has become an important policy issue in tourism management and development (Saarinen *et al.*, 2009:77). Many tourism planning scholars agree that sustainable tourism development can best be accomplished by involving residents in decision-making and in the benefits of tourism, and by collaboration among various stakeholders in decision-making



matters (see Timothy, 2001:149). Some authors suggest that members of the host community should be involved in tourism planning because they have a historical understanding of how the region adapts to change, would be the ones most closely affected by tourism, and would be expected to become an integral part of the tourism product (Nyaupane, Morais & Dowler, 2006:1374). It is critical to involve local communities in the planning of tourism in an area while ensuring effective communication between the protected World Heritage site, and the local community and visitors. It is also important to uplift the local community and engage them and identify and try to reduce any conflicts that may arise.

Community participation should be a shared decision-making process at all levels of programmes, such as setting goals, formulating policies, planning and implementation (Butler, Hall & Jenkins, 1998) and having a high degree of control or ownership of the tourism activities and resources (Hall & Page, 1999:195; Saarinen, 2006:1130). It is very important to consider local participation as the success and failure on any rural tourism development depends to an extent on local communities. Community participation is considered necessary to obtain community support and acceptance of tourism development projects and to ensure that the benefits relate to the local community's needs, especially in peripheral and rural contexts (Tosun, 2000:613; Cole, 2006:629).

Tourism and cultural exchange are key objectives of the IORA. World Heritage properties and sites are part of IORA's tourism and cultural exchange. However, there is limited research on impacts of world heritage sites on local communities. Several studies have focused on the various changes since the introduction of WHSs all over the world, however these works mainly look at tourists, tourism development, conservation and visitor management (Hall & Piggin 2003, Leask & Fyall 2006, Rakic & Chambers 2008, Ying & Zhou 2007), but there is a lack of research on the views of local communities in/around the WHS (Jimura 2011:2). The present study aims to identify impacts of world heritage sites on local communities. The researcher also looked at impacts of the communities' participation, involvement, control and benefits from world heritage sites for sustainability purposes.

Problem statement

According to Cochrane and Tapper (2006:98) present positive impacts of WHSs are: the generation of funds for conservation; the generation of employment for the local community as tour guides, staff members in WHSs and the building and improvement of infrastructure in the areas adjacent to WHSs. In the IORA countries, there is limited employment generated through WHSs. Cochrane and Tapper (2006:98) further say foreign exchange is brought into the local economy which boosts the local economy, and thus leads to the multiplier effect; improves the livelihood of the local community; and encourage entrepreneurship amongst locals where souvenirs can be sold by locals for profit. Presently, the majority of communities from IORA countries have not yet been impacted by WHSs positively which is problematic.

Pezúa and Valencia (2006:196) stated that the positive impacts of WHSs should include: the continuous improvement, preservation and management of the WHS, government support and encouragement of environmental education or awareness for all stakeholders. Currently, there is limited environmental education or awareness to local communities regards the WHSs, which would promote community participation, involvement, benefits and control for the sustainability of conservations of heritage and culture in IORA countries.



Research objectives

The main object of this study was to examine the impacts of World heritage sites on local communities. The study was guided by the following two important questions: How do WHSs impact on the local communities? and Are local communities participating, benefiting, controlling and involved in WHSs?

Methodology

For the purpose of this study the researcher adopted a qualitative method as this was considered to be relevant as the researcher wanted to obtain in-depth knowledge about the impact of WHSs in the IORA countries. Secondary data was utilized and collected from recent literature. The study data was collected from IORA countries. The sampling frame comprised the countries from IORA countries. Convenience sampling was considered relevant to be utilized for this study. Purposive sampling was also used for IORA countries selection. The researcher used World Heritage sites literature from the selected countries. A qualitative methodology was followed in conducting this study and findings were compared from two countries to assess the validity of the results of research. This method was used as it describes variables tested and it was found suitable as the researcher could refer to the recoded data of the selected countries. The study also used Tesch's approach of qualitative data analysis of looking for common themes from collected data. The significance of differences between means was also examined by using the Mann-Whitney U test. For different, or more groups the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used. The cross-tabulations were applied to quantify the statistical differences noted among countries using Chi-squared statistics and Cramer's V. The findings were grouped by themes and used to explain the statistical relationships that manifested. The use of cross-tabulation also intended to identify any similarities or differences in the analysed data and relate the findings to the literature so as to draw relevant conclusions.

Research Results

The essence of this study is the issue of sustainability which takes place when local communities are benefiting from WHSs. Studies have shown that a minority (7%) of existing studies reflect that there are positive impacts from WHSs, and thus local communities benefit. Studies also show that there are less economic impacts in terms of locals benefits from WHSs. The majority of researchers indicated that impacts are in the form of social-cultural and environmental impacts (93%) than economic impacts. Figure 1.1 shows how sustainability could be reached in by WHSs. The local communities' participation, involvement, control and benefit is minimal in WHSs, which contributes to limited socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts of WHSs which affect sustainability. The study conducted in St. Lucia, Pitons Management Areas World Heritage Site by Nicholas (2009) about World Heritage Sites, indicated that community attachment positively influences their support behaviour, and environmental attitudes indirectly influence the support behaviors. Nicholas (2009) further says lack of involvement of residents presented critical implications for the sustainability of the sites.



Figure 1.1 Criteria perspectives often used for sustainability in WHSs

Source: (Researcher's findings from existing literature)

Moreover, research was conducted by Jimura (2011) about the impacts of world heritage sites in Shirakawamura Japan, which state that positive and negative changes for local communities in and around world heritage site was after world heritage sites listing. Jimura (2011) further says three main factors behind these changes are extensive and rapid tourism development, high levels of appeal of a world heritage site status for domestic tourists, and local communities' attitudes towards conservation of the cultural environment. Jimura (2009) goes on to say, conservation plan should have a comprehensive tourism management plan for its successful future for world heritage sites and tourist destination. Supported by Bianchi (2002) saying WHSs need to keep improving their management and conservation plan, and also encouraging participation of local people in the preservation of their heritage is part of the mission of WHSs (Smith 2002).

Thus monitoring the impact on flora and fauna is important as is controlling tourism in sensitive locations and encouraging tourism uses which lead to the sustenance the maintenance of historic heritage, culture and traditions. Air quality as well as water usage and use non-renewable energy, need to be carefully considered. There needs to be engagement in shared responsibility to sustain World Heritage properties as valuable tourism resources. "...tourism threats to World Heritage sites, arising from poorly planned tourist development schemes or poorly managed tourism activity, can become matters of concern to the World Heritage Committee and the advisory bodies (IUCN or ICOMOS)."

In China, Yang, Lin and Han (2009), analysed the role of world heritage sites with international tourists' arrivals. Yang et al. (2009) indicate that world heritage sites have been found to be significant in explaining the numbers of international tourists and have a greater tourist-enhancing effect. Yang et al. (2009) further state that cultural, rather than natural sites, attract more interest among foreign tourists. Kim, Wong and Cho (2007) revealed that economic value of the world heritage sites to users or tourists are in levels exceeding its monetary benefits.

In Kenya, Okech (2010) says that world heritage sites are usually used as marketing tool in image creation. Locals thus expect increased tourist flows bringing employment and income and site



managers attempt to preserve the quality of the given world heritage sites by avoiding negative impacts of visitation by restricting visitor numbers and educating visitors about appropriate behaviour. Okaech (2010) further says the focus should be on the degree of involvement in tourism planning, management and ownership of the world heritage sites as well as the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. In support of the above, Irandu (2007) in Kenya, says in the case of the Maasai, the relation between world heritage sites and the tourists has been rather harmonious, this could be so because the local community is actively involved in tourism development and derives benefits from the industry.

Irandu (2007) concludes by emphasizing the need for proper visitor management through planning to minimize negative cultural impacts on local communities. Breen (2007) in sub-Saharan Africa, says world heritage sites inscription has become an all-consuming process, draining resources and diverting attention away from broader heritage provision. Breen further states, that an integral part of archaeology needs to become embedded within the international development framework where it can become an advocacy voice for community and for poverty alleviation.

In South Africa, Rogerson and van der Merwe (2015) analysed the local impacts of one major new heritage development project namely the Cradle of Humankind. According to Rogerson and van der Merwe (2015), in the international context this heritage project is a state-led, infrastructure-led initiative introduced into an economically marginal area in search of pro-poor growth, but the analysis suggests that currently this anchor project has not reached its anticipated potential for energizing local development. According to Yaniv, Arie and Raviv (2013:1), WHS designation has several effects relevant to the understanding of the concept of world heritage, and visitors' experiences at such sites.

It is asserted that three per cent of South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) is dependent on tourism and the Cape region, including Cape Town, with its world Heritage site of table Mountain is the country's chief tourist draw. It is estimated that one in every ten jobs in the Western Cape are related to tourism and this is more than twice the national average (SSA, 2015). Table Mountain, which is within the World Heritage property, with its aerial cableway and special views is a foremost destination, The celebrated Garden Route, in which unique plants such as fynbos live, is visited by more than a third of all tourists to South Africa (Benfield, 2013) but the impact on fauna and flora is not researched enough.

Duval and Smith (2012) analysed rock art tourism in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg World Heritage Site. Duval and Smith (2012) further say despite rock art needing tourism to valorize its conservation and being recognized by commentators and states as a viable route to tourism development, heritage conservation, socio-economic regeneration and cultural empowerment, the failure to reform ineffective tourism/conservation governance and management system is clearly exposed.

World Heritage Sites and their adjacent communities are also affected by climate issues as evidenced in a UNEP 2016 report:

"The tourism sector itself is vulnerable to climate change. Threats include more extreme weather events, increasing insurance costs and safety concerns, water shortages, and loss and damage to assets and attractions at destinations. Continued climate-driven degradation and disruption to cultural and natural heritage at World Heritage sites will negatively affect the tourism sector, reduce the attractiveness of destinations and lessen economic opportunities for local communities."(UNEP, 2016).

Highly inadequate resourcing is a leading source of poor performance in protected area management (Watson et al., 2014). A huge lack of resources, such as funds, employees who are well trained, and also capacity building, represent a challenging barrier stopping effective management of World Heritage sites. This implies that their vulnerability to climate change, development and implementing climate adaptation and resilience strategies, and planning and managing tourism development are stifled (UNEP, 2016).

Conclusions and Recommendations

IROA Countries should form collaborations in order work together to have a common framework for world heritage sites which could benefit all their communities. Local communities should be involved in the management of world heritage sites in order for them to gain benefits. Locals should be participating from the inception of the projects for the success and sustainability of world heritage sites. Locals should also be trained on how to conserve and preserve their heritage and historical places which are world heritage sites. The IROA countries governments should involve local communities far more in management, operation and decision marking of world heritage sites. The governments should also link tourism and cultural heritage with trade and investment as this would create opportunities for employment and community upliftment.

The proposed model was developed and formulated after reviewing the literature on how WHS has impacted the IORA countries. The model in Figure 1.1 was formulated with the purpose of bridging a gap between what is currently happening in the operation of WHS and what is supposed to happen in regard to the legislations and tourism guidelines, as well as the UNESCO principles with regard to WHSs. UNESCO through WHSs is also committed to apply and comply with the sustainability guidelines of United Nations and World Tourism Organization.

The main aim of this section is to present the elements influencing benefit-sharing in community perspective to eliminate the impacts of WHSs to local communities. This model forms part of the recommendation of the researcher.

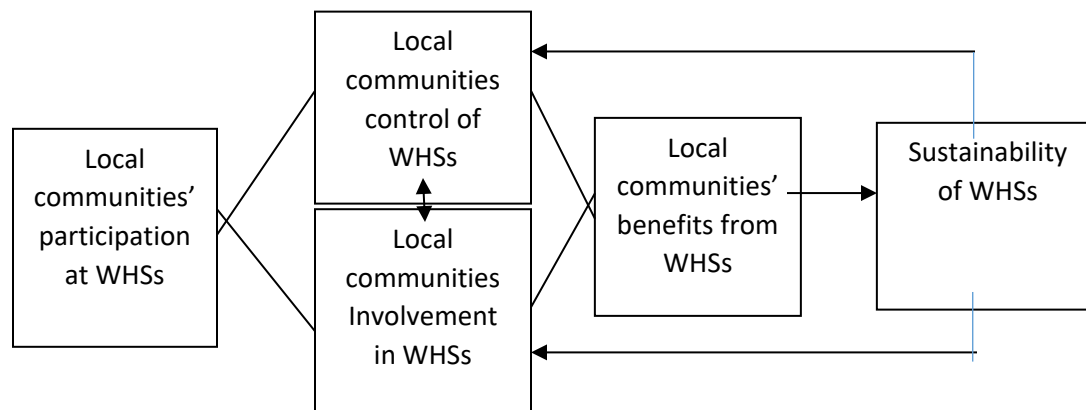


Figure 1.2 Proposed local benefit-sharing model for communities from WHSs

The model in Figure 1.2 presents a visible applicability that could be used by the government of IORA countries. The model provides a clear indication of the components and elements to be included in local benefit-sharing to eliminate impacts. The model specifies that the way communities participate in the operation of WHSs should be considered first. The communities



should be involved in the operation of WHSs by having control over certain aspects. When communities are participating, controlling and feel involved, they will experience or realize the benefits from WHSs, which will promote sustainability of WHSs. The proposed model developed could be used for both new and existing WHSs. Holden and Novelli (2011:234) say that approaches or models of good practice need to be developed and tested in various cultural settings. The development of sustainable tourism to World Heritage Sites is an important environmental and also economic objective which requires constant monitoring and action.

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