



African village-based tourism in the North West Province, South Africa

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Abstract

The domestic tourism survey shows that the North West Province is ranked third for one-day special events, and fifth for more than one-day special events. Although the province supports village tourism through its villages, townships and small dorpi economic programme, village tourism is not well understood by many communities. Many studies have looked at the socio-economic impacts of events within the scope of what could be classified as events by the Western, failing to acknowledge the socio-economic impacts of events that are rooted from the African communities. As a result, numerous villages host events with social emphasis rather than economic advancements. Eighty-two community members attending the North West Provincial House of Traditional Leaders' launch at Tshidilamolomo Village were surveyed. Respondents were randomly selected and results were analysed through participatory theory and theory of margin. Communities prefer to share their cultural dances with tourists while strongly believing that village events tourism promotes cultural heritage preservation. Traditional marketing still dominates, while few communities are involved in economic activities. Government synergy and promotion of entrepreneurship during village events are essential. Domestic market analysis should be considered while organising village-based events.

Keywords: Village tourism, events, communities, participation, entrepreneurship

Introduction

In the South African National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, tourism has been identified as one of the sectors that is essential and has a potential to drive the country's economic growth and creation of jobs (Domestic Tourism Survey, 2016). Furthermore, since the democratic government in 1994, there has been a significant growth particularly in the event sector in South Africa (Tassiopoulous, 2010). Although there has been a phenomenal growth in the sector, more events development, promotion and research have been directed at big events, these events have a lot



of western influence and they are often hosted by well-known provinces such as the Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Indeed, there is a significant lack of research and interest in African big or small events, especially those that take place in rural areas of the country (Van Zyl, 2011; Rogerson, 2015). Some of the reasons for this predicament include poor infrastructure development in the rural areas of South Africa, which reduces travelling interest to remote places (Rogerson & Harmer, 2015). While there has been reports on growth in domestic tourism in South Africa, the current chief executive officer (CEO) of South African Tourism (SAT), Mr Sisa Ntshona, in an interview with eNCA, agreed that generally there has been little interest in domestic tourism in South Africa due to increases in petrol and diesel prices and poor infrastructure in most places in the country. Also mentioned was the rate of crime, which causes people to not want to travel; people are not only afraid of crime targeting them, but also crime that might occur at their homes during their vacations (Ntshona, 2018). The country at large and the North West Province particularly have not capitalised on African events to boost domestic tourism. The current study assessed the significance of village-based events in the promotion of South African rural economy and domestic tourism.

Literature Review

South African's Domestic Tourism Outlook

The Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy 2012-2020 (2012) indicates a lack of participation in domestic tourism among South Africans, especially previously disadvantaged communities. Currently, the most visited provinces by locals are Limpopo (37%), KwaZulu-Natal (18%) and Gauteng (14%) (Tourism Quarterly Factsheet, 2017). According to the Domestic Tourism Survey (2016), there has been a decrease in domestic tourism exclusively in number of day trips between 2015 and 2016. In 2015, there were 44.3 million domestic tourists who took day trips; this number dropped to 39.4 million in 2016 (Domestic Tourism Survey, 2016). There are also some variations in the travelling expenditures as well as the main purposes for taking domestic day trips. In 2015, day visitors spent most of their money on domestic transport, while in 2016, the highest spending was on shopping. Conversely, in both years, approximately R8 billion (USD 604853200.00) was spent on shopping during day trips. South Africans are found to spend the least on recreation and culture for both overnight and day trips during both years.

In 2016, Gauteng had the highest (23%), number of day trips, followed by Limpopo (17.3%), and the Western Cape (13.2%), and the Eastern Cape (10.1%). The North West Province was fourth, with 9.8%. It was also found that most day trips taken were within the province in which respondents reside. Shopping was the main reason why people travelled to provinces such as the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Kwa-Zulu-Natal – results are shown in Table 1. However, travellers primarily visited Gauteng, the Free State and the North West Provinces to visit friends and relatives (VFR) (Domestic Tourism Survey, 2016).

The only province in which leisure was the most stated reason for travel was the Western Cape. In addition to this, Table 1 also shows that the North West Province was third for one-day special events (see Table 1), after the Western Cape and Gauteng, and fifth for more than one-day special events (Domestic Tourism Survey, 2016). Table 1 shows the main purpose for day trips in South Africa, while Table 2 provides statistics on the main purposes for day trips per population group in South Africa.



Table 1. Province of destination by main purpose of most recent day trips, JAN-DEC 2016
 Source: Domestic Tourism Survey (2016)

	Main purpose												Total
	Leisure	Shopping	Sporting	VFR	Business	Religion	Funeral	Medical health	Study / educational	Special events	Other	Unspecified	
Western Cape	960	249	159	270	85	66	140	16	16	153	18	-	2132
Eastern Cape	62	780	72	198	107	45	148	112	23	13	80	-	1640
Northern Cape	11	289	58	87	55	10	61	47	10	-	59	3	694
Free State	22	130	50	202	42	23	84	49	17	11	62	-	692
KwaZulu-Natal	203	331	45	283	40	62	178	100	-	17	87	-	1356
North West	226	352	63	416	90	87	113	38	-	93	111	-	1591
Gauteng	393	714	37	1353	207	196	261	60	47	148	304	-	3722
Mpumalanga	107	345	25	264	97	61	136	25	23	36	115	8	1242
Limpopo	152	1137	148	477	110	265	199	55	44	74	122	10	2795
Unspecified	34	49	-	84	-	-	-	25	-	-	29	73	131
South Africa	2170	4369	662	3634	837	818	1329	527	188	555	987	101	16178

Table 2 shows that in South Africa, black Africans take mostly day trips for shopping, VFR, funerals and religion, and for special events. The white population group is the highest in leisure travelling. However, in general, black Africans take day trips more than any of the population groups (see Table 2), followed by whites and coloureds, while Indians/Asians are the least. The next section looked at village-based events within the context of domestic tourism.

Table 2. Population group by main purpose of most recent day trips, JAN-DEC 2016
 Source: Source: Domestic Tourism Survey (2016)

	Main purpose												Total
	Leisure	Shopping	Sporting	VFR	Business	Religion	Funeral	Medical health	Study / educational	Special events	Other	Unspecified	
Black African	719	3647	365	2439	597	722	1052	378	149	352	788	94	11301
Coloured	421	283	98	236	63	66	198	43	21	107	32	7	1577
Indian/Asian	64	15	-	213	*	*	*	*	-	*	40	-	388
White	966	424	200	746	171	8	72	87	*	93	127	-	2911
South Africa	2170	4369	662	3634	837	818	1329	527	188	555	987	101	16178

Source: Source: Domestic Tourism Survey (2016)

Village-Based Events

According to Alves, Cerro and Martins (2010), villages also use festivals and events to reap the same benefits that large communities do in the urban areas. Events, generally, and especially those that attract tourists, have the ability to bring investment into the local communities (Sacha, 2003). Alves *et al.* (2010) conclude that festivals and events taking place on small scale, such as in the villages, do yield economic impacts, yet the social impacts become more than the economic impacts. Events tourism that takes place in villages specifically where the preservation and sharing of local culture could be seen as a conflicting goal can bring either positive or negative



impacts (Besculides, Lee & McCormick, 2002), while socio-economic factors such as length of stay, community attachment and economic dependency on tourism and proximity to tourist attractions have an influence on local community perceptions towards village-based events in these areas (Besculides, *et al.*, 2002), the current study argues that African rooted events are usually undermined for their socio-economic impacts by marketers and policy makers. The researchers in this study strongly believe that, village-based tourism has the ability to stimulate domestic tourism and promote entrepreneurship in the rural areas. Events in the villages are able to act as catalyst for community partnerships and provide a model for cooperation (Sacha, 2003) through knowledge exchange, as well as the sharing and transfer of knowledge among community members who organise the event. Most of the community events taking place in the villages range from funerals, ordinations and weddings, of which Foster and Seidman (1984) reason that at these ceremonial events, the exchange of money and gifts takes place, upholding entrepreneurship philosophy.

In South Africa, in addition to ceremonial events that take place in the villages, government departments at various spheres organise various events in the villages, such as awareness campaigns, Imbizo (public dialogue), Lekgotla (village consensus), political rallies, special launches and many more, either to educate communities or gain political support from communities. These types of events usually are organised by government. While the idea of governments to organise such events is not necessarily a bad idea, the challenge is that there is no emphasis so whatever on the communities to capitalise on the economic impact of such events. Eversole and Martin (2005) are of the view that village-based events are of importance, yet they have been overlooked by policymakers. According to Eversole and Martin (2005), an assessment of village-based events should not only be on overall socio-economic impacts, but also on how much of the expenditure is actually captured in the local area. This paper consequently aimed to assess the socio-economic impacts of village-based events within the North West provincial economic development strategies and plans.

The North West Province's Economic Development Philosophy

The North West Province is one of the provinces situated in the rural areas (former homeland of the then Republic of South Africa, during the apartheid era) of South Africa. The province consists of a total of 627 villages, 72 townships, and 23 small dorpias (towns) (North West Provincial Government: year unknown). With this geographical background, the province established a strategy that hopes to address the province's status quo, while also meeting the country's objectives set in the national development plan (NDP) for 2030. Rebranding, repositioning and renewal are the current economic development strategies that the province adopted (North West Provincial Government: year unknown). This strategy is aimed at being achieved through the five concretes that the province identified, namely (1) agriculture, culture and tourism (ACT), (2) villages, townships and small dorpias (VTSD), (3) reconciliation, healing and renewal (RHR), (4) Setsokotsane (whirlwind), the concept which explains that people are moved together at once, and on the same direction and (5) Saamtrek (moving together)-Saamwerk (working together) philosophy.

These were adopted in order to achieve the country's objectives for 2030, which focused on addressing the country's triple challenges, namely unemployment, inequality and poverty (Newell & Frynas, 2007; North West Provincial Government: year unknown). ACT was then recognised as a key priority sector for the growth and development of the province's economy. The province promised to improve rural and social tourism in the province through the VTSD strategy (North West Provincial Government: year unknown), perhaps with the hope that there will be economic spill over as a result of social tourism. The VTSD is an economic development programme that is



aimed at ensuring that previously disadvantaged communities living in the province's villages, townships and small dorpias are vibrant economically and their areas are well developed. The province's economic development philosophy has been applied in this study to assess its relevancy and applicability to the events that are taking place in the villages of the province, while also being discussed within the social theories space.

Theoretical Background of the Study

The literature has alluded that there is less interest to participate in domestic tourism by South Africans, while there is also a reluctance to consider small events' economic value especially those that are embraced by Africans in the rural areas as an economic activity (Eversole & Martin, 2005; Van Zyl, 2011; Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy 2012-2020, 2012; Rogerson, 2015; Domestic Tourism Survey, 2016; Ntshona, 2018). The theory of participation was then found suitable to assess the perception of communities living in the rural areas of South Africa, especially the villagers, about the socio-economic of African rooted based events. Participatory epistemology is a theory based on the fact that the world should move away from the top-bottom approach, which dominated most of development programmes and initiatives in the past, rather to the local sensitive approach (Storey, 1999). McClusky (1970) argues that an individual's level of participation depends on the individual's load and power. The argument in the theory of margin, as explained by McClusky (1970), is that self and social demands such as social and economic ability, finances, alliance and possessions, education, family support, personality and coping skills should be present and exceed individual loads. Individual loads refer to family stress, overwork, social responsibilities, desire and expectations, in order for individuals to participate in the development, project or event economically so. In developing countries, particularly the rural areas, communities are often overloaded, yet have little power, which then affects their meaningful participation in any projects, events or developments (Lupanga, 1988).

Overloading in this incidence refers to individual 's day-to-day demands of life such, food, medicine, school fees, transport fees which often become more than an individual resources (power). According to Oslon (1971), participatory collective action theory further explains why some people participate in the developments and some do not. Some communities will participate in action when organised in small groups, when the expected benefits exceed the expected costs and when there is an assurance that the expected benefits will increase for the participants (Oslon, 1971).

Fundamentally, the question raised in the paper is: Why is there a lack of participation in village-based tourism in South Africa? Why authorities, marketers even communities themselves undermines the socio-economic value of village-based tourism events. In order to answer this question, the researcher engaged in collecting relevant data, and the detailed methodology is outlined.

Methodology

The study took place at Tshidilamolomo Village in the North West Province of South Africa. Tshidilamolomo is a village situated close to an immigration border between South Africa and Botswana. It is one of the most populated villages and falls under the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality. In November 2017, the Department of Culture, Arts and Traditional Affairs (CATA) launched the North West Provincial House of Traditional Leaders that took place at Tshidilamolomo Village. The event was aimed at providing villagers, including the local traditional leaders, a platform to celebrate and showcase their culture and also to witness the inauguration of the newly elected North West House of Traditional Leaders (NWHTL). The event's theme was



'*Re di neela Jaana*', which translates to 'this is our way of life', in our village, through dances, songs, clothing, practices and values. A total of 54 traditional leaders were invited.

The event was found appropriate for the study as it attracted all communities from the 54 chieftaincies, who all travelled to Tshidilamolomo Village. The launch was a one-day special event and organised by CATA. The researchers requested permission from CATA to conduct a survey during the launch, which was granted. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the study. Ritchie (2003) explains that both methods provide an understanding and knowledge of a subject. The survey population was derived from the attendees and participants. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed and 85 community members were surveyed. A simple random approach was used to select respondents.

The respondents were surveyed based on their willingness and showing interest to participate in the study. Semi-structured questionnaires were distributed to respondents by five fieldworkers, including the researchers. The unstructured qualitative observation technique was also used to determine the level of economic activities taking place at the event and community's level of socialising during the event. Moreover, informal discussions were applied to cover some of the areas that might have been omitted in the questionnaire, yet found important during the survey. SPSS version 25 was used to capture data and analyse the results, as encouraged by Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi and Wright (2010), while participation theory, the theory of margin, and the North West Province's economic development strategy were used in the interpretation and analysis of data.

Results

Table 3 indicates the results of the study, where SA=strongly agree, A=agree, N=neutral, D=disagree and SD=strongly disagree. For better interpretation, strongly agree and agree were grouped together and interpreted as agree, and strongly disagree and disagree were also grouped and referred to as disagree. Therefore, 81.3% agreed that the launch provides an opportunity for cultural exchange, 79.5% agreed that it provides them with a chance for ideas exchange, while the majority, 95%, agreed on the preservation of heritage as a result of the event. An enhancement of nation building was recorded by 87.2%. A total of 72.2% mentioned the promotion of social cohesion, 71.2% stated encouragement of patriotism, and 82.3% agreed on the promotion of cultural diversity.

Table 3. Village community perception on village based events

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
This event provides an opportunity for cultural exchange	42.5	38.8	7.5	6.3	5.0
This event provides an opportunity for idea exchange	32.1	47.4	5.1	12.8	2.6
This event assists in the preservation of our heritage	49.4	45.6	3.8	1.3	-
The event enhances nation building	34.6	52.6	5.1	5.1	2.6
This event promotes social cohesion	33.3	38.9	15.3	9.7	2.8
The event encourages patriotism	35.6	35.6	15.1	8.2	5.5
This event promote cultural diversity	41.8	40.5	5.1	7.6	5.1

Table 4 shows that many communities were willing to share their cultural dance and lifestyle, 13% respectively, followed by music, 9.7%, and history, by 9.6%. Food came fifth with 7.3%, while tradition, wildlife and clothes were rated by 1.2%, respectively?



Table 4. Cultural aspects communities

Cultural aspects	% (multiple responses permitted)
Cultural dance	13.2
Lifestyle	13.2
Music	9.7
History	9.6
Food	7.3
Languages	6
Nothing	6
Attractions	2.4
Tradition	1.2
Wildlife	1.2
Clothes	1.2

Table 5. Marketing techniques used for villages

Type of media	%
Local traditional leaders	67.1
Radio	20.7
Facebook	6.1
WhatsApp	3.7
None	1.2
Public platforms	1.2

Respondents were also asked to report which communication media were applied to be informed about the event. As seen in Table 5, respondents mentioned mostly radio (20.7%), Facebook (6.1%), WhatsApp (3.7%), while some (1.2%) mentioned nothing and public platforms, respectively.

Table 6 reports the income ranges and highest level of education attained by respondents. Currently, 1 USD = R13.2609. Many of the respondents earn between R100 and R1 000 a month, while many completed secondary educations.

Table 6. Income range and highest level of education completed

Income	%	Education level	%
R100-R1 000	34	No formal education	1.3
R1000-R2 000	19.1	Partial primary	1.3
R2000-R3 000	12.8	Primary completed	12.5
R3000-R4 000	2.1	Secondary completed	56.3
R4000-R5 000	2,1	Diploma	16.3
R5000-R6 000	8.5	Post-graduate degree	5.0
R6000-R7 000	8.5	Other	7.5
R10 000	12.8		

Observation and Informal Discussions

It should be noted though that besides the fact that this event was organised by government, its approach was more of the normal African rooted events, where usually communities perform their traditional dances, showcase their African attire and eat traditional food. As each of chief went up to the stage to receive their presents, which were 4x4 white Nissan vehicles, communities would say African praises, poems and ululating as a sign of acknowledgement on behalf of their chiefs. The majority of community members enjoyed traditional music that was performed by various villages.

There was an enjoyment, excitement and pride, singing and praises as mentioned during the launch. Apart from music and dance, community members used the launch as a platform to socialise. There were very few venders available at the event and snacks were the only items sold at the area. Furthermore, the venders were located at the entrance area far away from the main activities. Communities raised some concerns that while government plays the role of event



organiser, often community members feel like they are guests in their own areas; they feel excluded and fail to show any ownership in the event. Communities were not clear whether the event will be hosted annually or not; however, they hope that it becomes an annual event.

Discussions

Participation theory, theory of margin and the provincial economic development strategy (rebranding, repositioning and renewal) were used to interpret the findings. The question asked in this paper was whether there is meaningful community participation in village-based events in South Africa, specifically in the North West Province's rural areas. Secondly, do communities, marketers and policy makers realise the socio-economic impact of African rooted events? has the North West Province rebranded, repositioned and renewed its villages using arts, culture and tourism (ACT), in order to brace its VTSD economic programme? What has been done by the destination marketing organisation to promote small African events that take place in the villages in order to strengthen domestic tourism?

Taking participatory theory into consideration, a strong argument is built in this study that as long as a top-bottom approach is used in organising events communities-government events, the socio-economic benefits of African rooted events will always be less tangible, understood and acknowledged by communities, which means that communities may not understand these events in terms of the exchange of goods, money and tourism activities.

The NWHTL inauguration event was organised by CATA, which is a provincial department. The mere fact that CATA invited different villages should be used to promote domestic tourism, as some of these villages are 45 KM away from the event venue. In South Africa, domestic tourists are people that travel away from their usual homes for 45KM or more for other activities rather than work. It should be noted also that during some discussions, researchers became aware that some of the locals intended to overnight at some of their friends and families' places. VFR is a very popular form of domestic tourism in South Africa. Nether less say, as alluded to by McClusy (1970) and Lupanga (1988), communities might have a desire to participate, but have limited power and skills, which might limit their participation. They might have a desire and ability, but lack financial support and skills, which is the case in this study, as seen in Table 6.

The results show that communities lack skills as the highest number indicated that they attained secondary level of education, and the highest percentage also showed a very low income range per month. Tourism awareness is very important in the realisation of tourism benefits, rural communities often fail to realise their potential and the potential of their day-to-day activities as a form of socio-economic injectors. CATA aimed that the communities would enhance their nation building, social cohesion as well as patriotism, which were greatly achieved. Furthermore, there was a generational mix among the attendees and participants, which assisted the department to achieve its objective to preserve cultural heritage. Nonetheless, communities' support towards the protection and preservation of their heritage is common, as Alves *et al.* (2010) argued that in small events such as this, communities value social impacts over economic impacts. It is not surprising also that the launch attracted many villagers as indeed the province is ranking third for one-day special events, as clearly pointed out by Domestic Tourism Survey (2016). This validates the significance of this study for the province.

Although tourism is considered important in driving the country's economic growth and creation of jobs as indicated in the NDP 2030, its relevance to the economic development strategy (rebranding, repositioning and renewal) of the province is not clear, especially in the village-based events sector. The aim of the launch was solemnly on social activities and none on the economic



activities. Tourism activities were not considered even though the statistics clearly indicate that the majority of South Africans travel locally for shopping, of which, during the observation, it was noted that a very small number of vendors were present, while also exclusively operating outside the venue and selling mainly snacks. Rogerson (1996) and Nel and Binns (2002) dispute that local economic development (LED) programmes need to be encouraged in South Africa. Sacha (2003), and Alves *et al.* (2010) insist that, whether they are small or big events, they both commonly promote investment. Very few community members used NWHTL inauguration event to create temporary jobs or make money.

Another important factor mentioned by Besculides *et al.* (2002) is that the behaviour of communities towards village-based events is affected by factors such as length of stay, community attachment, economic dependency on tourism, and proximity to tourist attractions. While considering these factors, arguably so, in the North West Province, out of the five districts, the only district that has vibrant tourism activities is the Bojanala District Municipality, where the popular Sun City Resort is situated. Although the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality is rich in culture and heritage products, the district is not popular among tourists generally; as a result, local government and/or communities have limited chances to capitalise on or integrate tourism in their programmes, events or activities.

Tshidilamolo Village is situated in close proximity to an immigration border between South Africa and Botswana, which makes it one of the prime areas for tourism. Small events like this have the ability to attract neighbouring countries such as Botswana. To achieve this, marketing approaches to village-based events should move beyond traditional media to digital advancements such as Facebook. The results in Table 5 indicate local radio as being the most used medium to promote the event.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Communities saw the NWHTL inauguration event as a tool for nation building, social cohesion and preserving their heritage. However, unless this event becomes an annual event, the impact of the event on the aforementioned social impacts will remain minimum. Therefore, a once-off event of this nature might be found as a waste of time and useless by community members. Besides this, a thorough market analysis on domestic markets should be done and understood by event organisers. As indicated in the literature, South Africans mainly travel within their own country for shopping and least on activities such as recreation and culture. This is supposed to be taken into consideration when hosting events in villages. Village events should be accompanied by a range of businesses, such as restaurants and B&Bs, stall holders, vendors, and sponsors in order to attract visitors and improve the standard of living of communities. The shopping provincial hubs in South Africa currently are the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal. The North West Province should aim to be part of these provinces. Gauteng, the Free State and North West Provinces are travelled to in order to visit friends and relatives. The Western Cape is the only province to which South Africans travel for leisure purposes (Domestic Tourism Survey, 2016).

In 2012, the Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy 2012-2020 reported a lack of interest by previously disadvantaged population groups; this, however, has changed, and four years later, as Table 2 shows, black Africans are the population group taking day trips and especially travelling for special events. Village-based events' organisers should target this market. Tourism government departments, especially at local and provincial levels, need to consider road shows to their sister departments to encourage synergy, integration and cooperation. Entrepreneurship should be embedded in village-based tourism, whether the events are ceremonials, funerals,



birthdays or government launches. Through this approach, poverty levels in the rural areas could be addressed and unemployment be tackled. An emphasis should be on job creation rather than the job-seeking approach. Hopefully, by doing so, the gap between the rich and the poor that is currently broadening could be reduced. Means of transportation should be improved to advance domestic tourism generally.

Presently, mostly in the former homelands, infrastructure such as railways that were running prior to 1994 is dilapidated and continues dilapidating, as trains are no longer in operation in most of former homelands. Meanwhile, the road infrastructure is unbearable, and there is also lack of public transport linking villages to villages, townships to townships and small dorpies to small dorpies, and a linkage of communities largely to main economic and tourism hubs of the country. While interacting with the communities, none whatsoever knew whether the event would be an annual event or not, as community members were not part of the planning and organising of the event. With the new changes in the political administration in the North West Province, there is a high possibility of project inconsistencies or changes; if this happens, such an event might not take place again.

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