



Tourism attractions: the 'goose that lays the golden egg' and resultant health hazards in the town of uMlazi, South Africa

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Abstract

According to Guttentag (2009) tourism happens when people travel to someone else's place or attraction to spend a night or more. However, every individual tourist builds up or sometimes destroys human values unintentionally while travelling. This paper argues that there are numerous possible negative impacts of tourism that deserve increased attention from researchers, government stakeholders and entrepreneurs. This assertion has been specifically revealed and proven from this paper. The findings have disclosed that the visitors of a popular attraction do harm and upset the local residents of uMlazi by littering, blocking their driveways when there is no more parking and increased levels of noise due to tourist activities. Previous studies have aimed to identify, in theory, residents' perceptions of the effects of tourism in their well-being and daily lives of local residents and others focusing on the theoretical relationship between residents and the process of tourism planning. However, an empirical link has not been established between residents' perceptions of the effects of tourism and the attitudes of tourists towards local residents in the area in question. The main research objective of this paper was to share and disclose the frustrations of the uMlazi residents who find themselves susceptible and exposed to land and noise pollution throughout the entire night on weekends, coming from two popular attractions of V section, which is the result of having two popular attractions within the locality of the residential area occupied by uMlazi V-section residents. The effects of noise pollution on these residents who are in close proximity to these attractions are infuriating as they see themselves as likely hypertension patients, with high stress levels, tinnitus, hearing loss, sleep disturbance and other harmful diseases that are associated with a contaminated environment.

Keywords: local residents, perceptions, land zone, tourism impacts, attractions

Introduction

Dyer et al., (2006) argue that tourism development does not take place in isolation; rather it occurs within specific environments, each with its own idiosyncratic features. The study focuses on the township of uMlazi which also has its own features that depict the ugly past of apartheid's morphological structure. According to Goodwin (2015), tourism happens when people travel to someone else's place or attraction to spend a night or more. However, every individual tourist builds up or sadly destroys human values while travelling. Choices that tourists make about how they travel and the way they behave and interact with local people and other travellers make travel what it is (Lepp, 2008). A disregard or neglect of local people's desires, a disrespect for locals' values and culture, and a disruption of local harmony are some things that sometimes becomes an unintended consequences of tourism.

It is the responsibility of owners of an attraction to go out of their way to guarantee and ensure smooth and harmonious relations with the surrounding neighbourhood otherwise, the visitation



of tourists may become a 'hell' for local residents. According to Goodwin (2015) responsible tourism is about taking responsibility in order to make tourism better; it is about using tourism to make better places for residents to live in and also special for visitors. McGehee and Santos (2005) argue that tourism is about tourists knowing that respecting local people is of paramount importance and also significant in strengthening relations between them and local residents. In contrast, this study has found that the local residents of V section in Umlazi Township are virtually victimised and disrespected by patrons visiting two attractions through the playing of intolerable and unbearable music which is simply noise. In addition, many visitors do things which negatively affect and disrupt their households' routines.

The traveller's aspirations to have a better experience of another culture or place through tourism is a noble one, and travellers need to be wary of purchasing experiences that may do more harm than good (McIntosh and Zara, 2008). According to Matthews (2008), unintended consequences are a major part of human conditions, so much so, that most human beings are familiar with the proverb "the road to hell is paved with good intentions". In this study, local residents find themselves affected adversely by many unintended consequences of some attractions as they invite heavy motor vehicle traffic and unethical and disrespectful behaviour which is often displayed by visitors. This study focuses on township tourism which as it becomes 'one man's meat' for owners of attractions and their visitors respectively, unfortunately becomes 'another man's poison' for local residents due to littering and land degradation and especially the unbearable noise emanating from venues frequented by tourists, that local residents are subjected to almost every Friday to Sunday.

Disrespect for local communities

The numerous studies that have researched tourists' motivations have often found that participants are not simply motivated by altruism, but largely by personal reasons (Wearing, 2001; Galley and Clifton, 2004; Brown, 2005; Coghlan, 2008; McIntosh and Zahra, 2008; Broad and Jenkins, 2008; Söderman and Snead 2008). The apparent lack of altruism from visitors whose motivation to go to a popular but noisy attraction in the Umlazi Township has been evidently stated by residents of V section who state categorically that they have now begun to hate their area, and especially on weekends. Coghlan (2008) claims that although there may be an element of altruism that motivates other tourists to visit township entertainment areas, there exists an equally, if not stronger, element of self-gratification that drives participation in these attractions. One tourist states, "I think most visitors would be lying if they didn't say there was some selfishness in why they were going. Because it was really to benefit themselves, not just the environment and community of uMlazi". Broad and Jenkins (2008) argue that as long as one assumes that tourism is beneficial, then the idea that tourists are motivated by personal factors becomes completely irrelevant. In fact, satisfying the tourists' motivations becomes desirable because it is a necessary measure for attracting a project that may ultimately benefit a community.

This study argues that it is of utmost importance that owners of small tourism related business in townships should always obligate themselves to strengthen their relations with local communities so that benefits will always be reciprocal, particularly when tensions and fears from locals need to be allayed. This includes tackling and resolving the concerns of locals satisfactorily. Harmony between owners and residents needs to be crafted as a priority especially because a sense of 'good spirit', mutual understanding and respect among all the stakeholders yields trust and an altruistic mindset.

Lyons and Wearing (2008b) argue that the government at local level is better equipped to avoid the problems associated with commercial enterprises, tourists and local residents, postulating that in many ways the government demonstrates best practice in alternative tourism. However, the authors are correct to subsequently note that government and business stakeholders should not simply be viewed as being all good, so one should not assume that stakeholders themselves will always consult closely with host communities. For example, Scheyvens (2002) criticises some organisations and government officials and states that they



do not do much in collaboration with a host country, educational organisations and the involvement of the local residents. Thus key stakeholders are simply not dealt with at all with resultant adverse effects and non-sustainability.

Quality-of-life must be at the core of decisions about tourism planning and development for residents of host communities. Stakeholders are always affected in diverse ways by tourism development. In this study some stakeholders see a marked decrease in their quality-of-life, and others may experience somewhat mixed impacts. Understanding various perspectives of stakeholders and how they are affected by tourism development is essential for constructively engaging stakeholders in planning, and especially designing an effective strategy which is not always straightforward when powerful entities manipulate locals.

Negative effects of loud music

There are many negative effects on the human body when loud music is played. The cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems of a human body have a certain resonance and they function optimally inside an explicit range of sounds. Vibrations in the human body create a normal pattern of sounds that is essential to human health and even balance: physically, mentally, and also, most importantly, spiritually. The sound in one's environment plays a vital role in the ability of the brain to regulate the nervous system, to send and receive billions of nerve impulses, convert signals into mental images, and to process information. Sounds can thus overwhelmingly influence the mental images created by the brain and can change one's perceptions and understanding of reality (Fitaihi, 2015). Loud music also leads to an increase in the secretion of the hormone cortisol which has a negative impact on the body and can lead to memory loss.

Noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) is a steady decline in auditory function following long term, repeated exposure to very loud noise such as music. Hearing impairment is sensorineural and usually in both ears. The impairment may be temporary or permanent and may range from mild to intense in degree which can be come across during recreational activities (Brookhouser et al., 1992).

"A study in Germany showed that memory recall among heavy metal music lovers is reduced by 15 percent to 60 percent. In another study of 600 people who rarely listen to loud music, only 4 percent of them demonstrated memory loss in comparison with a group in a similar age range who frequently listen to loud music, of whom around 21 percent of them experienced memory loss" (Fitaihi, 2015). When there is either voluntary or involuntary exposure to external environmental sounds that do not align with the rhythmic sounds of the human's internal environment, this causes stress, tension, and fatigue. Negative impacts of disturbing sounds also include low energy levels, poor performance at work, occupational errors, and an inability to make clear cut decisions. "Long term exposure to excessive levels of high intensity, low frequency sound, such as that produced by highly amplified bass music or heavy metal, airplanes, racing cars, battle field noise, and others can not only be physically harmful, but can cause complications that can lead to death" (Fitaihi, 2015).

Empirical evidence

There is empirical evidence that tourism does not always translate into altruism all the time and make local residents beneficiaries and recipients of benefits. Rather, it often has the possibility and the likelihood of angering and frustrating local residents especially if it interferes with their quality of life and emasculates their cultural values and societal norms encouraged by the promotion of alcoholism and prostitution. Large volumes of tourists can also lead to the enhanced possibility of traffic accidents as there is always congestion, which has adverse effects as it disrupts and inconveniences local residents to such an extent that they find themselves unable to move to and from their houses. This is the case with part of V section



in uMlazi which is the focus of this simple study. The attraction has become distasteful and is labelled as 'hell' by some residents through the persistent and intolerably loud noise and heavy traffic congestion that have become typical aspects of almost every weekend starting in Friday nights.

Resident's frustrations and anger towards tourists

The objective of this research was to disclose and share the unintended consequences of the uMlazi business or attraction that was built unplanned and spontaneously on land that was only zoned to be used as a residential area. Its current usage has made the surrounding community very frustrated and livid. The study is therefore investigating underlying factors and reasons that make local communities upset and irritated by tourism activities, which is contrary to the notion that tourism is often associated with the promotion of good relations among all the stakeholders through the creation of jobs and the much needed socio-economic development of local residents.

Empirical study

The attraction in question, is anonymous and termed 'the venue', and it is located at V section in uMlazi township and is in direct competition with another one called Max's life style, which is also very popular to flamboyant entertainment seekers and ironically both of these small businesses are approximately 5km apart and both were also erected unplanned. The attraction under study was magnetically drawing a lot of male visitors when the study was conducted through the usage of a half-naked lady as a trump-card and marketing strategy. The lady was so famous for the dance popularly called Ivosho which she herself decided to perform pantie-less with knees bent to partly show-off her private parts. This area consists of a homogenous group in an area which once hosted the famous political Mxenge family strugglers who were both powerful attorneys who were slain by the apartheid regime in the early 80's. Kwa V section is a small section and the area under investigation has a population of about 150 inhabitants. Visitors from all over South Africa come to this attraction as it is frequented by famous DJ's and this explicitly makes it an attraction that plays a pivotal role in the promotion of domestic tourism.

Research design, sample and data collection

The researcher selected households according to their proximity and closeness to the attraction. Similarly, the study selection meant a purposive sampling of 30 participants to be interviewed from 30 households. The researcher used unstructured interviews with open-ended questions and a focus group, as it was found and deemed appropriate for eliciting detailed information from group participants who all considered themselves to be victims of the venue. A qualitative study using unstructured Interviews with open-ended questions has the advantage to afford the researcher an opportunity to stop the interviewee and seek clarity, or set forth what needs to be explained to a participant as a circumstance arises. Data collection was performed directly by the researcher without the assistance of trained field workers or interviewers. Interviews lasted no more than 30 minutes with each participant so as to avoid loss of interest while respecting the interviewees rights and private time. Interaction between an interviewer and the 30 participants took two days to be completed and the data-collection process was carried out in September 2017.

Results and discussion

The perspective of neighbourhood on noise pollution



Overall, all the respondents were totally devastated and livid about the frequency of events which take place at a venue almost every weekend, public holidays and holiday seasons. These events include, product launches, which are mostly alcohol and motor brand marketing, after-and pre parties of prominent events such as the Vodacom Durban July and the Metro FM Awards as well as birthday celebrations hosted by celebrities and politicians. Furthermore, there has been architectural development at the venue that has led to one of the neighbouring houses being demolished to expand the attraction. Residents from two neighbouring houses revealed that they have been offered a large sum of money to abandon their homes to move to other locations at the expense of the owners. One of these residents is a single mother who divulged that she felt pressured to let go of the house she worked hard to build, let alone having fond memories about it. The other respondent was a taxi owner who revealed that he was also offered a house in another section in the township with a compensation of another taxi to be added onto his fleet, also at the expense of the owner of the venue. The intent was to demolish his house to make way for the expansion of the venue.

All residents consulted spoke of the negative effects of the electromagnetic sounds coming from the attraction from Fridays to Sundays. Frequency of noise is regarded as a huge nuisance as some participants are claiming to have developed a sleeping disorder pattern which they believe is a consequence of amplified sound waves or electromagnetic music waves coming from the attraction. One learner who was also a participant claimed that “the noise levels are extremely high to an extent that they affect concentration on daily activities such as studying, doing school assessments, working from home and even watching your favourite TV programme. One participant said “It is now very difficult to get a proper and peaceful nap when one is unwell or on medication”.

Noise pollution affecting the neighbourhood as a result of music coming from the attraction does not affect school children only, but also the working class. Night-duty workers are usually affected adversely and are hugely inconvenienced by the on-goings, since they hardly sleep sufficiently during the day and such disturbances invariably also affect day shift workers as well. Both learners and workers respectively become so embattled by the effects of noise pollution which make them susceptible to lack of concentration due to fatigue which invariably impacts humans adversely both physically and psychologically. Studies conducted on sleeping disorders show that there are other additional effects that are associated with noise pollution once a night's sleep is disrupted and disturbed, and these effects include a swing in moods, decrease in reaction times and perceptions of poor sleep quality. Fredline (2004) postulates that people may be able to partially adapt to noise related sleep disturbances, but changes in heart rate do not adapt to night time noise, regardless of the frequency of exposures. Their studies also claim that being exposed to noise may lead to an increase in blood pressure as hypertension.

The perspective of the neighbourhood on traffic congestion.

Traffic congestion and parking problems can seriously affect the quality of life of local residents (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002). The study is in support of the above finding since it shows that the local residents of the area under investigation are livid due to severe littering and blockages of their driveways by visitors who tend to visit the attraction. As aforementioned, the attraction in question was built in the wrong land usage zone, where land was planned for a residential area. As a result, there is insufficient area for parking. Consequently, the cars of patrons often block entire sidewalks and the driveways of neighbouring houses. So due to limited parking space, patrons have a tendency of forcibly parking their cars in front of residents' driveways and they more often than not, become defiant and irritable when requested to move their vehicles which are obstructing normal daily life. Some residents have reportedly experienced damage to their property, fences and gates in particular. Other patrons will frequently park their cars right next to a fence or gate of a home with their cars blasting out loud music upon, which is usually in the early hours of the morning. One participant said “just imagine being subjected to noise every weekends from the amplified sound from the



venue and from the many cars of our uninvited guests”. Many altercations and cases of assault between patrons and residents due to disregard and lack of respect for residents’ property and privacy have been reported. According to Fredline (2004) Increased crime may occur as a result of an influx of people and tourists. Furthermore, the pressure associated with the influx of people leads to traffic congestion and security concerns which place a strain on law enforcement officials. Tosun (2002) argues that conflicts between locals and tourists may also occur due to purchasing power gaps where locals cannot afford to buy goods in their own areas, but which tourists purchase with relative ease.

The perspective of neighbourhood on littering

The study has revealed that not only is noise pollution coming from the venue but in addition, the local residents of uMlazi are subjected to patrons leaving behind tons of litter. This includes plastic and glass bottles, broken glasses, food waste and even used condoms. Unfortunately cleaning up the mess on the streets becomes the sole responsibility of local residents. Land pollution becomes significantly worse and unbearable during peak holiday seasons, where residents have to be over-tolerant as they have to endure and withstand a recurring situation of harsh environmental degradation. The December holiday period which is supposed to be a holy month for most people due to the existence of numerous festivities, and as a month that should be invigorating, sadly destroys residents’ morale for the forthcoming new-year and invariably becomes a nightmare for the residents of V section in uMlazi Township.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated the disruption and inconvenience of the community residents of Kwa V section that is perpetually caused by visitors who frequent an attraction which was built in the land zone earmarked for residences. The effects of the attraction and its unconcerned and seemingly disrespectful patrons are dire and calamitous to the extent that the quality of life of the residents is threatened through especially high volumes of noise pollution resonating from sound systems playing music for patrons. The residents are frustrated and devastated by a situation which they believe cannot be resolved anytime soon, as they perceive the owner to be more powerful politically and financially than they are. The attraction is very popular and draws visitors and tourists from Durban, KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa in general. Kuvan and Perran (2005) argue that the effects of tourism activities on local residents are not inevitable, and can likely be mitigated when small businesses are properly planned and managed. The findings of the study have shown that lack of adequate planning is disastrous. The euphoria displayed by patrons before and after visiting the attraction that also sells liquor, blinds them to such an extent that respect as a basic principle or an emblematic norm for the space of residents surrounding the attraction, becomes overshadowed or forgotten particularly when the patrons are highly intoxicated.

The entrepreneur of the attraction, which has become a nuisance to the surrounding residents, needs to understand that local residents are an important support system that protects and grows one’s business. So considering the concerns of the local communities helps entrepreneurs to effectively develop their enterprises. The results of the study also provide implications for visitors who unintentionally adversely interfere with the well-being of the local residents of kwa V section in uMlazi township. The positive residents’ perceptions of the tourism benefits are relevant and necessary for entrepreneurs in order to garner their support and make business sustainable. Similarly, owners of attractions should therefore take note of the attitudes, concerns, issues and the opinions of the local residents (Williams & Lawson, 2000).

Many residents state that even when their homes windows and doors are shut, the noise is enough to have them feeling a thumping in their chests as they lay on their beds at night.



Some residents move away rather than put up with the noise any longer. It is clear that residents should meet with the venue owners and that bylaw officials be present. There must be several changes made to the business to ensure the noise was controlled, including checking volume levels and ensuring bylaw requirements are fully met.

This explicitly implies that entrepreneurs should be aware of the negative outcomes of their businesses caused by the patrons especially if the attraction is in the epicentre of the residences. The consequences of the uncontrolled tourism business needs minimisation of the negative effects by respecting the local residents' interests (Ritchie, 2005). Unfortunately, according to the findings of the study, this is not the case, with the local residents of the kwa V section ultimately finding themselves 'squashed and squeezed' between a rock and a hard place. It is time for 'the goose' to lay the real 'golden egg' as far as residents are concerned.

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