



Conserving cultural heritage and the usage of indigenous knowledge: A case study of the Zululand District Municipality, Kwazulu-Natal

Samukelisiwe M. Nkwanyana
Department of Recreation and Tourism
University of Zululand
Email: NkwanyanaS@unizulu.ac.za

Abstract

Local communities are the custodians of cultural heritage resources and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, therefore one imagines that they should be active participants in passing on their cultural heritage, particularly to the youth and subsequently use it in cultural heritage tourism development. The purpose of this article was to highlight the significance of conserving heritage and indigenous knowledge in order to provide authentic products and experiences which are part of cultural heritage tourism and its impact on the rural communities. The objectives of this study were thus to: establish (a) the level of participation of local communities in the conservation of cultural heritage resources (b) if local communities participate in cultural heritage tourism development and (c) the extent to which Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is used as an integral component of authentic cultural heritage tourism development. Findings of the study indicated that, the conservation of cultural heritage resources was perceived as significant by the majority of local communities. Interestingly a significant number of young people indicated that the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in packaging tourism products and the participation in cultural activities were important ways of passing cultural heritage from generation from generation. The community recommended that indigenous knowledge should be the primary source of information when packaging authentic tourism products that have a potential of enriching the experiences of tourists.

Keywords: Cultural heritage resources; Cultural heritage tourism; cultural resource conservation, indigenous knowledge systems

Introduction

The study was conducted at a Zululand District Municipality in South Africa's KwaZulu Natal province, which encompasses five municipalities, namely Ulundi (the Zulu Royal Seat), Nongoma, Phongola, eDumbe and Abaqulusi. The Zululand District is branded the heart of the Zulu kingdom because this is where many clans and tribes came together hundreds of years ago to form the great Zulu nation. The district is richly endowed with the wealth of natural beauty, wildlife and a rich history and thus has a huge potential of using this cultural heritage wealth to attract both domestic and international tourists. This area is arguably the backbone of the tourism experience in South Africa. The Zululand District Municipality as the heart of the Zulu Kingdom includes large communities which are impoverished and disadvantaged and living in undeveloped settlements due mainly to the apartheid policy of the past.

The focus of this article is on cultural heritage resource conservation, cultural heritage tourism and the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in the conservation of cultural heritage tourism. Cultural heritage tourism is regarded as one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry as there is a growing number of people who visit cultural and historical resources (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009:3). As such heritage tourism lands itself as one of the forms of tourism that has a potential of contributing to the local economic development of local



communities regardless of their geographic location. Cultural heritage tourism encompasses the packaging of existing cultures, heritage in its various forms, folkways, cuisine, artistic traditions, festivals, material vestiges, homes, farms, castles, cathedrals, museums, archeological ruins and relics and many more for the consumption of visitors (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009:3).

Culture and heritage are inexorably intertwined, thus it is subsequently difficult to talk about one without somehow referring to the other. Culture is about the way of life of particular societies or communities, indigenous belief systems, practices, customs, behavior even attitudes (Baker et al., 2014; Mafia and Woodley, 2010). Heritage is defined by Ivanovic (2008:81) as broad concept that includes the natural and cultural environment which encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, biodiversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. These definitions clearly unpack the concepts that are mainly used when embarking on cultural heritage tourism and the availability of such resources in the local community. Therefore, cultural heritage tourism, gives an opportunity for communities to use their Indigenous knowledge (IK) to create authentic tourism products without compromising their culture.

Problem and purpose of the study

Tourism can be used as a tool for poverty reduction and various approaches can be used to stimulate tourism development such as pro-poor tourism development (Smith, 2009). Local communities have considerable natural endowments such as rich cultures, game parks, all of which can stimulate tourism and given the right environment and cultural heritage management; could become a powerful force of bringing development to rural areas in future (Ivanovic, 2008) thus alleviating dire poverty and creating employment.

The Zululand District Municipality as the heart of the Zulu Kingdom includes large communities which are impoverished, disadvantaged and living in undeveloped settlements. Very few people benefit from the availability of cultural heritage tourism in the area.

The challenge facing the district was to identify cultural heritage tourism resources available in the area, manage the existing ones properly, and then come up with a strategy for promoting cultural heritage tourism to make the Zululand District one of the important destinations for KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. The main research question is, how can cultural heritage tourism assist in improving the quality of life of the community?

The objectives of this study were threefold, namely:

- (a) To establish the level of participation of local communities in the conservation of cultural heritage resources
- (b) To evaluate if local communities participate in cultural heritage activities and
- (c) To assess the extent to which Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is used as an integral component of authentic cultural heritage tourism development.

Literature Review

This section focuses on the theoretical framework which forms the basis for this study. Cultural heritage tourism appears to be growing much faster than all forms of tourism and is viewed as an important potential tool for poverty alleviation and economic development (UNWTO, 2005). This



study gives attention to the conservation of cultural heritage, the participation of local community in cultural activities and the usage of indigenous knowledge in rural communities.

Participation of local people in the conservation of cultural heritage resources

A tourism resource is any factor either natural or man-made, available within a country, region or area which makes a contribution to tourism (Ivanovic, 2008:111). Flowing from this definition, a cultural heritage resource is any cultural heritage feature, tangible or intangible available in the area which forms the bases or springboard for heritage tourism development. Cultural heritage resources differentiate one place from the other and “exemplify a sense of place” since each place is a product of different cultural processes (Ivanovic, 2008: 111). Together, these cultural heritage resources form a pool of potential tourist attractions.

Conservation and preservation of cultural heritage resources present many opportunities for local economic development. Conservation is a process of maintaining the authenticity of cultural heritage verified value. Ivanovic (2008: 127) describes conservation and authenticity as interrelated concepts and says understanding of authenticity plays a fundamental role in all scientific studies of the cultural heritage, in conservation and restoration planning, as well as within the inscription procedures used for world heritage sites convention and other cultural heritage inventions.

Local communities should be aware and take advantage of the existence of these heritage resources in their localities and create authentic products that would form part of the cultural heritage experience. The awareness should be followed by the responsibility of conserving these cultural resources to ensure sure that they exist through to the following generations. Timothy and Nyaupane (2009:34) argue that heritage conservation contributes to sustainable tourism development at the heritage sites. Heritage conservation rejuvenates space through renovation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings. There are a number of techniques that can be used to conserve heritage such as zoning and carrying capacities to protect fragile ruins, archeological remains, monuments and buildings. Munasinghe (2005) brings in a dimension of historic preservation which is believed to have a potential of making a contribution to economic growth. Maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage can help create awareness of and pride in, history and civilization (Prentice, 2005:177).

Ayala (2005:195) argues that national and regional conservation strategies can be used to ensure culture and heritage become a resource for development particularly in remote and economically peripheral regions with the backing of the tourism industry (Ayala, 2005:195; Timothy & Nyaupane 2009:33). Most historic sites are located in isolated areas which limits the overnight stays by tourists and subsequently reduces the money spent at the destination Engelhardt (2005:181). In an attempt to deal with challenge, Ayala (2005) suggests a three-step value-adding process to heritage artifacts which may be beneficial to the long term success and sustainability of cultural heritage tourism. These steps are (1) identification of the heritage product and where it fits within the natural and cultural theme of the destination at the scale of the country or region (2) equipping the heritage with conservation guarantees and (3) diversification and upgrading of the heritage experience which can be enhanced by interpretation. This being the case, tourism development at heritage sites can bring improved income and living standards to many local communities.

Culture is a significant component of the heritage product which also needs to be conserved so as to provide tourists with authentic experiences. According to Spencer-Oatey (2012) culture is learned, not inherited. It is about the way of life; of particular societies or communities, indigenous



belief, practices, customs, behavior even attitudes (Baker et al. 2014; Maffi and Woodley, 2010). Culture is derived from one's social environment, not from one's genes. Culture is about ideas, values and certain expected patterns of behavior (Thomas, 2013). Understanding how culture affects people's lives can help us to develop a 'socio- imagination'. When one meets someone from a different culture, it becomes easier to perceive the enormous influence of culture on other people's lives. Hence, there is a great need to appreciate and embrace diversity, understand how other people's views about the world have been influenced by the different cultures they are exposed to.

Cochran (2013) adds that culture refers to a set of ways that emerge when a group uses the basic tools inherent in its members to address the problems presented by the larger ecological context in which the group exists in order to meet biological needs and social motives. Culture presents a solution to the problem of how to survive, adapt and fulfill the physical and social needs of individuals within a society or community (Thomas, 2001; Voicu, 2013 Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Culture is essential for our individual survival and for our communication with other people. We learn about culture through interaction, observation and imitation in order to participate as members of the group. In order to survive, societies need rules about civility and tolerance towards others. Lustig and Koester (1999) have alluded that, culture is also taught by the explanations people receive for the natural and human events happening around them.

Participation of local communities in cultural heritage tourism activities.

Cultural heritage tourism is seen as a way in which local communities can benefit from tourism on the basis of their cultural heritage resources. Local communities are the custodians of the cultural heritage resources and therefore their participation is critical for successful cultural heritage tourism (Nkwanyana et al., 2016:2). Active participation and the integration of local communities into tourism development are often driven by their motivation to be involved in tourism and the availability of support systems which include the establishment of partnerships between government, private sector and local communities (Timothy, 2007; Ezeudji & Rid, 2011). Ultimately, the government needs to establish a safe and stable political environment and provide a range of infrastructure support which support cultural heritage tourism development (Timothy, 2007). The infrastructure does not only benefit the tourists but the local communities also benefit in a sense that they make use of the facilities provided.

Ideally local communities should participate and benefit from cultural heritage tourism development. The extent of benefits is determined by the extent to which local communities are able to identify the tourism potential of the resource. This means that local people should be able to turn cultural and heritage resources into marketable products of profitable value. Culture and heritage have proved to have a potential of attracting tourists in many parts of the world through showcasing the values, life styles and traditions of indigenous cultural communities by staging activities such as traditional dances, festivals, fairs, rituals etc. In the process of planning and developing tourism products, selecting the most interesting sites and assigning particular presentation and interpretation is crucial. Making history and cultural heritage accessible, transparent and attractive, requires careful consideration and thinking about the authenticity of a product. Cultural heritage tourism development includes forces of social change that drive sustainability, aiming at promoting a tourism industry that satisfies the needs of future generations without compromising the ability of future generations from benefiting using the same resources (Saarinen, 2009).



The inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) Systems in cultural heritage tourism conservation.

Indigenous knowledge is local knowledge which holds cultural practices and tradition to a specific community or society. It is that kind of unique information or knowledge gained from past events or human experiences (Thomas, 2001). These are often kept in people's memories and largely transferred orally. IK is acquired through experience and is transmitted to the young people through storytelling, and sharing experiences (Masango, 2010). This is a form of education where the older generation transmits knowledge as a way and role of surviving, therefore such knowledge needs to be safeguarded and must be recorded in the form of collections of heritage resources at various tourism destinations.

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is unique to every culture and society; it is used at local level by communities as a basis of education. The managing and conserving of culture using indigenous knowledge in communities should be an effort or key element of educating the young people as an awareness creator of social capital. Indigenous people have had their own ways of looking at and relating to the world and to each other. Currently indigenous knowledge is at risk of becoming totally extinct, because of the recent technological and environmental changes (Adam, 2012; Ngulube, 2002) which threaten it.

Indigenous knowledge should be managed or conserved as an adaptation to the contemporary world since contact with others began and thus shall forever continue to change. It is important for the young people and for every African community to protect indigenous information and it should be in a position to disseminate it to others for their knowledge and interest. A study by Voicu, for example, recommended that indigenous knowledge should be the primary source of information on the value of the cultural heritage resources and active participation of the local communities, especially the young people in identification, assessment and documentation, should be fostered (Voicu, 2013).

Documenting of Indigenous Knowledge can prevent it from getting lost and also prevents unfair exploitation. According to Khala (2014) it is important to document Indigenous Knowledge since it:

- provides problem solving strategies for local communities;
- is at risk of becoming extinct;
- is an under-utilized resource in the development process;
- is relevant for the development process and
- contribute to the global development knowledge.

To prevent loss of this knowledge, most of the indigenous knowledge is collected by members of the community. People who collect such information should be known and must belong to the community. Furthermore, they should be familiar with their traditional culture, structural influences and observe all protocols within that particular community (Janke, 2005; Thomas, 2001). Khala (2014) discovered that IK is collected through recording devices such as video cameras, audio recorders, questionnaires and interviews. The bridging together of indigenous knowledge and the management of heritage information as a managing strategy is meant to achieve a better state of economic and social well-being for young people of the communities and achieving sustainable heritage value.

The conservation of indigenous knowledge can be used as a strategy that draws the local community, young people in particular, to participate actively in cultural activities. Indigenous



knowledge should be the primary source of information. In a nutshell the intention of this review is to emphasise the importance of conserving culture and the usage of IK in rural communities so as to sustain culture.

Methodology

A mixed methodological approach was utilized. The study largely used the descriptive survey method. Data was collected from three of the five local municipalities within the Zululand district municipalities. Three municipalities that were targeted for this study were Nongoma, Ulundi and Abaqulusi because, they are at the heart of the Zulu culture and this is where most of the cultural sites are identified. Focused interviews were mainly conducted with four traditional leaders and three tourism officers employed by each of the three local municipalities. Questionnaires were distributed to 137 local community members. Purposive sampling was used by the researcher and the sample size for the survey consisted of 160 respondents distributed as follows, 23 students from FET doing tourism, 50 learners doing tourism in schools, and to 70 local community authorities and members. Ethical clearance was obtained after which the research began. Of the 160 questionnaires that were distributed 143(97 %) were returned. To facilitate the understanding of the questions, questionnaires were translated into IsiZulu which is the local language. For analysis of the data collected, SPSS (IBM) was used to analyze the information gathered from the questionnaire respondents, and during interviews, responses were recorded and used in the analysis. The respondents profile is represented in table 1.

Table 1. Distribution by local municipalities

Local municipality	Frequency	Percentage %
Nongoma	57	40%
Ulundi	76	53%
Abaqulusi	10	07%
N=	143	100%

The reason for this distribution of respondents is that most of the cultural heritage sites are located in this municipality. Ulundi municipality, is also centrally located compared to Nongoma and Vryheid municipalities and therefore, it has become the first stop for tourists who are traveling out of the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Game Reserve which is one of the superb globally famous local tourist attractions.

Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents were females and forty (40%) were males. The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 65. The reason for this distribution is that more females are active members of various community projects and it was realized that females are more eager to learn more tourism development and other issues that relate to general development in their communities. Males were more passive and most of them were reported to have gone to urban areas to seek employment. Table 2 represents the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table2 . Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	57	40
Female	86	60
Age		
18 – 25	14	10
26 - 33	17	13



34 – 41	42	29
42 – 49	36	25
50 – 57	22	15
58 - 65	12	8
Level of Education		
No formal education	10	7
Primary School	13	9
Secondary school	34	24
High school	39	28
FET College	42	29
University qualifications	5	3
Length of residency in the area		
Born and grew up in the area	98	
Been a resident for over 15years	12	
Arrived between 10 and 15yrs ago	12	
Arrived between 5 and 10years ago	6	
Arrived less that 5years ago	4	

Unemployment was still a challenge in rural areas and semi-rural areas of Kwa-Zulu Natal such as in the Zululand District Municipality. The development of cultural heritage tourism and the sustaining of the available resources can assist in reducing the unemployment rate which is currently indicated as the highest percentage in the country. Cultural heritage tourism has the potential of creating employment opportunities and can be the driver of rural development.

Table 3. Distribution by employment

Category variable	Frequency	Frequency %
Self-Employment	13	9%
Unemployment	87	61%
Public Sector (Government employed)	30	21%
Private sector	13	9%
N=	143	100%

The majority of the respondents were adults who mainly had interest in cultural conservation and in restoring the usage of indigenous knowledge (IK) in rural communities. The local community even went to the extent of giving their own opinions of how things were and done during their times (traditionally), which should be revived so that the younger generation participates actively in cultural activities. The following analysis is based on the objectives of the study as stated.

Results and Discussions

The participation level in the conserving of cultural resources.

It was important to assess the level of participation because it was showing how involved is the community in the conserving of cultural resources. The local community was asked in a form of a Likert scale what their expectations were about the conserving of culture.



Table 4. The expectation of the community with cultural heritage tourism conserving(N=143)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural heritage tourism can reduce poverty in rural communities	07	11	49	25	08
Cultural heritage tourism can boost the local economy	40	31	26	01	02
There are no tangible benefits of cultural heritage tourism in reducing poverty	07	11	49	25	08
Cultural heritage tourism has the potential to uplift the standard of living	32	37	24	04	03
Jobs have become available in the Zululand District municipality because of cultural heritage tourism	24	27	33	10	06
Can cultural heritage tourism be the driver of rural development	30	32	30	04	04

When being questioned on the issue as to whose responsibility it should be to make this information available or teach the younger generation, and how this will benefit the community, the results in this table mainly indicate what the local community perceives should be conserved of the culture. Most of the elders who responded expressed the opinion that IK should be fostered and documented for the younger generation to access. It was evident that the Zululand District Municipality should articulate its priorities of enriching the community and it should be well known in the community whom they should deal with regarding cultural heritage developmental matters. Table 5 represents responses regarding the participation of the community in cultural heritage conservation.

Table 5. Participation of local communities in cultural heritage conservation (N= 143)

Variable	Category	Frequency in %
Participation level of the local community in cultural heritage activities.	Not at all	35
	Once	21
	Twice	21
	Continuously	23
Participation level of the local community in the conserving of cultural heritage	Yes	90
	No	4
	Not Sure	6

Involving the community breeds success as pointed out by Ezeuduji (2011), and equity in local communities can be tasked by local municipalities to facilitate capability building of the local community members. Local communities' participation and cooperation with relevant tourism stakeholders is critically important and leads to successful culture conservation. The local communities can be developed by their natural and cultural assets and this can benefit the community as highlighted by Rogerson (2013).

Perception of respondents towards the conserving of cultural heritage tourism

Timothy (2007) states that cultural heritage places need to be preserved because they are nonrenewable. Ivanovic (2008) observes that cultural heritage tourism can encourage and results in sustainable economies especially in rural communities, if the cultural historic and natural resources are managed, protected, preserved authentically and the needs of the communities are balanced with those of tourists. It was therefore important for this study to include a question on preserving and conserving of cultural heritage resources.

Respondents were asked to give their perceptions towards the importance of conserving the available cultural heritage tourism resources and sites within their areas. The majority (140 or 97%) of the respondents displayed a positive perception towards the importance of preserving of the cultural heritage tourism resources in the area under study. That indicated an understanding of the potential that cultural heritage tourism has on sustaining and benefiting of rural communities. The respondents had a positive perception with regards to conserving of cultural heritage tourism. The notion conserving, aims at meeting the community's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs entailed in cultural heritage



tourism. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the 140 community members that responded, agreed that cultural heritage tourism should be conserved. Only three respondents said no to conserving which was quite minimal. It is widely known that tourists seek authentic cultural heritage products. Conserving them would restore the sense of pride amongst the community. The community would also likely feel a particular attachment to the heritage which would be more meaningful and maintained.

More than half of the respondents agreed that there could be benefits such as infrastructure development and socio-economic improvement which can be acquired from cultural heritage tourism in the study area, should it be well managed, conserved and protected.

The extent to which indigenous Knowledge is used as an integral component of cultural heritage development

The Zululand District Municipality is believed to possess good potential for cultural heritage tourism due to the availability of cultural heritage resources. In general, when talking to the respondents, they believed that cultural heritage tourism is a tool of economic development. Varieties of expectations were indicated by the community and such responses were showing willingness to engage in cultural heritage development for the sake of their economic upliftment. Amongst the expectations, the mentioning of the usage of the available indigenous knowledge in the community can be of great assistance to the community and this will integrate the usage of culture with the protection and conservation of the culture especially amongst the youth.

The respondents showed a positive attitude and believed that indigenous knowledge teaching can enhance cultural heritage tourism resources development in their local areas and therefore bring in needed changes in their living conditions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found that the community generally perceived the idea of culture conservation and supported the intervention of cultural tourism stakeholders in bringing awareness that will uplift the community.

The study revealed the potential of cultural heritage tourism in local communities, although this kind of tourism is not that popular and well promoted in the Zululand District Municipality. The sampled participants still expect to experience greater improvement, and employment expectations are high amongst the residents. Although there was lack of participation by the participants in cultural heritage activities, the main outcry was against a lack of involvement in needed decision making. This was viewed with serious concerns as far more could be done to create awareness to the Zululand District Municipality.

The study therefore recommends that:

Firstly: in each local municipality a local community tourism organization should be formed. These organizations or committees should include community members, counselors, and traditional authorities. If these members are part of committee, they would know exactly what is anticipated by the local community with regards to tourism development in the area. It was felt that establishment of such an organization will help the community to be part of the decision making and be involved in planning of activities in which respondents as members can participate.

Secondly: The Zululand District Municipality works closely with the community in conserving the available and identified resource being cultural heritage resources; bringing the community on



board would ensure that vandalizing of these resources is avoided at all costs, and the participants will see the need of conserving and have them well managed. Tourism officers in local municipalities should not work full time in offices, but ideally also have field sessions whereby they work closely with schools including FET, so that learners and students get greater exposure earlier on relating to field trips and tourism attractions. Such activities should be encouraged especially for local tourism attractions.

Thirdly, Employment in local tourism sections be given to local people who happen to have the interest of the community at heart. This will be saving on rent and sometimes transport issues for locals who will simply walk to the sites as guides and return home for their accommodation, This would thus create employment in the community. Thus, the Zululand District Municipality should review the availability of tourism offices in the community. Respondents indicated that they were not aware of the tourism offices. The study therefore recommends that tourism offices be constructed centrally in CDBs' so that they can be easily accessed by the community and tourists. Legible letters or signage should be created to draw attention to the offices.

Fourthly: The Zululand District Municipality reviews their promotion of cultural heritage tourism strategies because the current strategies are not promoting tourism as they are supposed to be, the respondents revealed that promotion is not sufficiently conducted. This may be because of a lack of funds or proper strategies not being applied, but it remains a recommendation that the Zululand District Municipality works on promotion strategies. The study also recommends that the Tourism officers work closely with tourism related business where entrepreneurs can become part of the local municipality tourism committees. This would imply exposure to *inter alia* tourism attractions, and businesses. Such a move would assist in identifying shortages which are skills related and should a need arise, training centers can be developed in which teaching of the community becomes priority.

Fifthly, The Zululand District Municipality should take note of tourism events which are celebrated annually and then start engaging the community giving them first preference when it comes to preparations of such events. This was a concern again from the community that they are left out during such annual activities. The study further recommended that local talents in communities be exposed, Such talents could include traditional dancers and handcrafts makers. This would happen if the previously given recommendations of having community members in tourism committees and tourism officers working in communities rather than in offices is absorbed and effectively implemented. The study recommends that funding for such talents be made available for such groups, and that assistance should be given in any possible way when approaching the Municipal offices.

Lastly, the study recommended that, the Zululand District Municipality works harder on the infrastructural developments. It was stated that the standard of roads leading to the Zululand area are poor. This is why tourists from the Golela border gate and other entrances to the district are always avoiding these routes and alternative routes are then taken, totally missing the cultural heritage tourism destination which is the heart of the Zulu culture.

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