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MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS OF FREE STATE SECTION OF MALOTI DRAKENSBERG ROUTE

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has a positive impact on economic growth and development, especially for small towns and rural areas. This is especially applicable to the Free State Province that has numerous economic challenges, including the highest unemployment rate in South Africa. One way of attracting tourists to areas they might not normally visit, is through the development of tourism routes. In South African, the Maloti Drakensberg Route (MDR) is one of the longest tourism routes and a substantial section of the route runs through the Free State Province (Harrismith to Zastron). Tourism routes are usually managed by forums that need to oversee the effective management of routes. In this regard, the MDR is managed by the Maloti Drakensberg Route Forum (MDRF). Due to the importance of attracting tourists, the aim of this investigation was to assess the marketing and management effectiveness of the Free State section of the MDR. The research approach was both qualitative and quantitative and product owners and tourists were included in the data collection. The findings indicate that the route is not effectively managed, with serious ramifications for economic development and sustainability.

Key words: Route tourism; Managing and marketing effectiveness; Maloti Drakensberg Route (MDR); Maloti Drakensberg Route Forum (MDRF).

INTRODUCTION

The beginnings of travel can be traced far back in human history. Even before the Common Era (the era after the birth of Jesus Christ) (Macmillan Dictionary, 2015), people began travelling for matters, such as commerce and trade, religious pilgrimages, leisure activities and for government administration purposes (Ivanovic *et al.*, 2009). In contemporary times, the tourism industry is one of the world's largest employers. It is directly and indirectly responsible for 8.8% of the world's jobs, generating around 266 million jobs – one out of every 11 jobs on the planet (UNWTO, 2014).

Tourism further contributes up to 40% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) (UN, 2010). This constitutes massive opportunities not only for larger urban areas, but also for rural and underdeveloped areas (notably small towns). Although many small towns in South Africa have much to offer tourists, they often do not attract many tourists. According to Toerien and Seaman (2014), there were almost 500 small towns in South

Africa towards the end of the 20th Century. They also report increased interest in and research projects on the development of small towns. In this regard, route tourism can stimulate tourist flows to small towns and rural areas, as it enables tourists to visit these areas as part of a route. Route tourism could further be explained as an initiative that links a group of tourism activities and attractions under a unified theme to promote local tourism by encouraging visitors to travel from one location to the next (Rogerson, 2007).

Some of the major tourism routes in South Africa include the Magaliesberg Route Initiative, the Midlands Meander, Route 62, the Friendly N6 Route and the Garden Route (South African Tourism, 2015). The two most well-researched routes in the South African context are the Midlands Meander in KwaZulu-Natal and the Highlands Meander in Mpumalanga (Rogerson, 2002). Research on route tourism is not prolific. Some research studies on route tourism in the South African context includes that of Meyer (2004), who identified the key issues that should be considered in the development of tourism routes. Also Lourens (2007) investigated the underpinnings of successful route tourism development in South Africa. Research in the international context includes the study of Hayes and MacLeod (2008) on the significant economic contribution of trails. These studies show that well-developed and well-managed routes enhance the economic viability of local regions.

The Maloti Drakensberg Route (MDR) spans the mountainous border between South Africa and the Kingdom of Lesotho, which rubs shoulders with some of the most scenic parts of the eastern Free State, the Eastern Cape and the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg (MDR, 2015). A substantial section of the MDR runs through the Free State Province and the route is managed by the MDRF. The Free State Province has large rural areas and the highest unemployment rate in South Africa that is estimated at 33.9% (Khalane, 2016). Route tourism can thus contribute significantly to the economic growth and sustainability of the province. With this in mind, this investigation aims to ascertain how well the MDRF manages and markets the Free State section of the MDR.

Importance of route tourism development

Evolving tourism trends since the 1990s have led to a shift from standardised mass tourism to more individualistic patterns, where tourists demand greater flexibility and memorable experiences as part of their travels (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2012). The developed world has realised the potential of tourism routes long ago. The Council of Europe established a working group as far back as 1964, with the idea of establishing a series of cultural routes in Europe. The main objective was to raise awareness of European culture through travel (Lourens, 2007; Council of Europe, 2014).

Although there is no real origin of route tourism in the world, many countries make use of it to ensure economic development and growth. The idea of themed routes as tourist attractions has gained prominence in recent years (Kovacs & Martyin, 2013). The terminology used to describe route tourism varies in different parts of the world and terms like 'themed routes' and/or 'trails' are frequently used. A themed route is a route where everything (accommodation, catering services and shopping) is built around a certain theme (wine, food or arts and crafts). Trails refer to a route that is geographically smaller, meaning visitors can engage with the attraction on foot, bicycle or horseback (Rogerson, 2007). Routes can easily be communicated

by means of printed and/or online maps. 'Drive tourism', another permutation, is where tourists drive the route using their own or a rented vehicle. This encourages visitation, especially if attractions are dispersed over larger distances (Hashim *et al.*, 2013; Zakiah *et al.*, 2013).

Route tourism can include a pro-poor element, which means that business is promoted to benefit the poor. Small rural tourism businesses can also benefit if they are incorporated as part of an established tourism route (Meyer, 2004). This is likely to ensure more visibility and expose small establishments to greater numbers of tourists. Routes vary in terms of attracting tourists, depending on the length of the route, the scale of the offerings and the theme(s) offered. Many themed routes are more focused on the domestic market as opposed to the international market. Routes thus have a variety of functions and attract different customers based on their needs (Meyer, 2004).

According to Meyer (2004), routes are, in general, initiated with one or more of the following objectives in mind:

- (a) To diffuse visitors and disperse income from tourism;
- (b) To bring lesser-known attractions and features into the tourism business/products;
- (c) To increase the overall appeal of a destination;
- (d) To increase the length of stay and spending by tourists;
- (e) To attract new tourists or repeat visitors; and
- (f) To increase the sustainability of the tourism product.

If these objectives are met, the overall appeal of a destination is likely to increase, as well as the length of stay and the amount of money tourists spend while travelling on the route. The main aim of a tourism route is to generate income and thus ensure sustainable development for local communities (Meyer, 2004).

Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Project

The Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Project (MDTP) was launched in 2003. South Africa and the Kingdom of Lesotho entered into a collaborative effort, including both the governments of South Africa and the Kingdom of Lesotho, to ensure job creation and sustainable tourism on the MDR (MDTP, n.d.; Cornhill *et al.*, 2007). The aims of the MDTP Conservation and Development Project are, firstly, to conserve the global biodiversity of this distinct area, which covers 14 740km² of the Drakensberg Mountains straddling the north-eastern border between Lesotho and South Africa (Peace Parks Foundation, 2015) and, secondly, to contribute to community development by generating income from nature-based tourism (MDTP, n.d.).

As early as the 1980s, relevant authorities from South Africa and Lesotho have communicated on common concerns pertaining to the MDR. These included biodiversity conservation, stock theft issues and the trade of dagga. The communication between the two countries continued until mid-1990, after which they decided that a formal agreement was needed in the context of the new democratic South Africa. This agreement needed to state how the two countries could work together with regard to the mountain resource that is shared by both.

The Giant's Castle Declaration, signed in 1997, committed the two countries to more effective cooperation. A cooperative transfrontier conservation and development programme was established to address the main threats to the mountain environment (Hattingh, 2007). Because of the agreement between the two countries, the World Bank and the Japanese government funded a project preparation phase during 1999. The outcome was a series of preliminary task reports. Based on the insights gained, the implementation of the first phase of the MDTP was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Bank.

The preparation phase increased the effectiveness of cooperation between the two countries. To ensure that the relevant project effectiveness requirements was adhered to, a continuous process between the two countries needed to be in place before project financing from the GEF could be disbursed. In 2001, the Ministers of Environment (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in South Africa and Ministry of Environment, Gender and Youth Affairs in Lesotho – now the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture) signed the Bilateral Memorandum of Understanding, committing the two countries to the joint implementation of the project (Hattingh, 2007).

The first phase of the MDTP was initiated in 2003 with the express purpose of conserving the mountain heritage of the Maloti Drakensberg, while benefiting the local people (Hattingh, 2007). Phase one involved several conservation surveys and sector-specific studies, with the aim of filling in some of the information gaps that exist for the MDT Conservation Area (Hattingh, 2007). To have any chance of actually achieving the project development objectives, the transfrontier collaboration for the Maloti Drakensberg needs to be continued in the long term.

Maloti Drakensberg Route Forum

As indicated above, the MDR initiative concentrates on nature-based tourism while aiming to increase awareness of the unique appeal of the region. Spectacular attractions on the MDR include the world's oldest clutch of dinosaur eggs, some of the world's finest conservation areas, over 3 000 species of flora, birding hotspots, significant engineering achievements, such as the Katse Dam, as well as Southern Africa's best adventure, sporting, cultural and artistic destinations. The MDR brings together South Africa and Lesotho's best sites in a concerted effort to develop and protect the region and its inhabitants (MDR, 2015). Members of the MDRF can advertise in the brochures and the official website of the route, which should lead to greater awareness of their product offerings (Booyesen, 2007). The Free State section of the MDR which formed part of this investigation includes the following towns, Harrismith, Bethlehem, Clarens, Fouriesburg, Ficksburg, Clocolan, Ladybrand, Hobhouse, Wepener and Zastron.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation adheres to the interpretivist paradigm, as it considers the human elements in the interpretation of the research results. Interpretivism assumes that reality is socially constructed through the language, shared meanings and consciousness of individuals. This study incorporated a combination of qualitative and quantitative designs (Salkind, 2009). Although the aim of the study was to ascertain how effectively the MDRF markets and manages

the Free State section of the MDR (thus gathering data from product owners), tourists' experiences on the route were also captured in a separate questionnaire. Two questionnaires were thus administered, namely one to product owners and one to tourists on the MDR.

Population and sampling

The population of this investigation was the product owners and tourists on the Free State section of the MDR. The Free State section of the MDR consists of 27 product owners (including restaurants, accommodation establishments and adventure companies) who form part of the MDRF. They were all included in the investigation. As there were no statistics available on the number of tourists visiting the route, convenience sampling applied to the tourists. Convenience sampling (also known as accidental sampling) makes no pretence of identifying a representative subset of a population. People or other units that are readily available, for instance those who arrive on the scene by mere happenstance, are approached (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Tourists visiting the various establishments during the time of data collection were requested to complete a questionnaire. The tourists completed 51 questionnaires.

Questionnaire construction

Two questionnaires were used to collect the data for this investigation with one being administered to product owners and one to tourists. The research of Meyer (2004) and Lourens (2007) served as conceptual guide for the development of the questionnaires. The questionnaires contained both structured and open-ended questions and both questionnaires captured the demographic profile of respondents (aspects like age, race, gender and language). There was no subject-related terminology included in either of the questionnaires and questions were clear and simple.

For the tourists' questionnaire, respondents had to indicate the reason for visiting the route. They also had to rate the facilities along the route and make some recommendations on how the route can be improved. Product owners had to indicate their level of interaction with the MDRF, rate the management and marketing effectiveness of the route, the facilities on the route and make some recommendations on how the route could be improved. The reliability of the product owner's questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. A cover letter accompanying each questionnaire explained the aim and scope of the investigation. Both questionnaires were piloted using 5 product owners and 5 tourists visiting the Eastern Cape section of the Maloti Drakensberg Route (notably the Lady Grey area). Both were deemed to be clear and understandable by respondents.

Data collection procedure

The data collection process involved everything from contacting possible sources to arranging data collection trips to the actual place where the data for the research study will be recorded (Salkind, 2009). In this study, data collection was performed by the researcher who travelled to all the product owners on the Free State section of the MDR. Appointments were made with product owners beforehand. Permission was obtained from product owners on the day of the visit to administer the tourist questionnaire to tourists visiting the establishment of the product owner.

A research assistant assisted the researcher with gathering data from tourists. The research assistant was trained and briefed beforehand to administer the questionnaire. Tourists were approached and their consent was requested to complete the questionnaires. The data collection took place over the long weekend in the beginning of May 2015 and lasted 6 days. As too few tourists' questionnaires were gathered, a second data collection session was scheduled for the weekend of 22 and 23 May 2015. Finally, 27 product owners' questionnaires and 51 tourists' questionnaires were completed.

Data analysis

Data was captured using Microsoft Excel and analysed using the latest version of Statistica. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in interpreting the findings (Welman *et al.*, 2005; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Because the sample of product owners was so small ($n < 30$), it did not allow for the application of parametric statistical tests. Parametric statistics rely mostly on data that meet the conditions of the normal distribution or t-distribution. Non-parametric statistics, on the other hand, make fewer assumptions regarding the shape of the distribution of the data and are often appropriate when frequencies across a limited Likert scale are considered, as in this case. Examples of non-parametric statistics include the Kruskal-Wallis test and Spearman's rank-order correlation (Hoskins, n.d.). The latter was applied to this investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile of sample

This section presents the demographic profile of the product owners and the tourists, the rating of signage, information and facilities along the route and product owners' experiences with the management and marketing endeavours of the MDRF. Table 1 captures the demographic profile of the product owners and the tourists. It is clear that most of the product owners were white and Afrikaans-speaking. More than 50% of product owners managed their own establishments. Most tourists were white, male and from the Free State province. Most of the tourists visited the route as part of a weekend break-away and the majority made use of self-catering accommodation.

Rating of signage, information and facilities along the route

Of the tourists, 58.82% were satisfied with the information services provided along the route. This is in contrast to the product owners, where 51.85% indicated that information services on the route were poor. Over half of the tourists (60.78%) indicated that they were satisfied with the road signage on the MDR. A total of 43.14% of tourists indicated that the quality of the roads was poor. Just over half (54.90%) of the tourists were satisfied with the cleanliness of the toilets, restrooms and rest stops on the MDR. A total of 50.98% of tourists indicated that the cleanliness of the other public facilities was satisfactory, while 45.10% were of the opinion that the cleanliness of the restaurant and dining areas along the MDR were satisfactory. The results showed that 49.02% were satisfied with the cleanliness of the filling stations along the MDR.

Table 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PRODUCT OWNERS AND TOURISTS

| Product owners | Tourists |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Experience:</i> Product owners have 4 to 30 years of experience in the industry.</p> <p><i>Racial composition:</i> 7% of product owners were black and 93% were white.</p> <p><i>Gender composition:</i> 48% were male and 52% were female.</p> <p><i>Language:</i> 63% were Afrikaans, 26% were English, 4% spoke other languages and 7% missing values.</p> <p><i>Management:</i> 56% were owners/managers of establishment, 41% were managers only and 3% missing values.</p> | <p><i>Age distribution:</i> Respondents were between 14 and 68 years of age.</p> <p><i>Racial composition:</i> 77% white, 20% black, 2% Indian and 1% other.</p> <p><i>Gender composition:</i> 35% were female and 65% were male.</p> <p><i>Country of origin:</i> 90% were from South Africa, 4% from other African countries and 6% from other countries.</p> <p><i>Province of origin:</i> 49% were from the Free State, 33% from Gauteng, 10% from KwaZulu-Natal, 8% missing values.</p> <p>45% of respondents earned R300 000 p.a.</p> <p><i>Reason for visit:</i> 49% as a holiday, 29% visited family and friends, 12% for business reasons, 8% other reasons and 2% missing values.</p> <p><i>Types of accommodation used:</i> 39% used self-catering accommodation, 14% backpackers, 14% lodges, 10% hotels, 12% guesthouses, 4% other and 7% missing values</p> |

Product owners' experiences with management and marketing endeavours of MDRF

Only 51.85% of the product owners were aware of the marketing strategy of the MDRF, while 48.15% were of the opinion that they were not able to implement the marketing strategy suggested by the MDRF. Table 2 indicates the satisfaction levels of the product owners with the marketing and management of the route.

It is clear from Table 2 that 48.25% of the respondents were not satisfied with the communication of the marketing strategy of the MDRF. A total of 40.74% did not know whether the marketing strategy was applicable to their business, while 40.74% were not satisfied that the marketing strategy was applicable to their business. Almost half (48.15%) of the respondents did not know whether the MDRF marketing strategy was effective. A total of 48.15% indicated that they were not aware of cooperation between the MDRF and their business. A total 40.74% of the respondents were not satisfied with how information was being disseminated, while 55.56% of the respondents did not know whether the suggestions by the MDRF to improve their business were applicable. Furthermore, 66.67% of the respondents indicated that they did not know how well the MDRF was being managed.

Table 2. SATISFACTION LEVELS: MARKETING/MANAGEMENT OF MDR

| Marketing/management of MDRF | Don't know | Not satisfied | Satisfied | Missing values |
|--|------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| 2.1 Communication of marketing strategy | 40.74% | 48.25% | 7.40% | 3.70% |
| 2.2 Applicability of the marketing strategy to my business | 40.74% | 40.74% | 14.82% | 3.70% |
| 2.3 Effectiveness of the marketing strategy | 48.15% | 37.04% | 7.41% | 7.40% |
| 2.4 Cooperation between my business and MDRF | 48.15% | 37.04% | 11.11% | 3.70% |
| 2.5 Frequency of visits from members | 44.44% | 44.44% | 7.41% | 3.71% |
| 2.6 Applicability of information disseminated (brochures, website, etc.) | 37.04% | 40.74% | 18.52% | 3.70% |
| 2.7 Applicability of the suggestions made by MDRF to my business | 55.56% | 37.04% | 3.70% | 3.70% |
| 2.8 Overall management of the MDRF | 66.67% | 25.93% | 7.40% | 0.00% |

Satisfaction levels regarding marketing and management

As indicated before, Spearman's rank-order correlation was used in this study. This is mainly because it relies on ranking the frequencies of each variable (question, in this case) against those of a second variable (other question) and measuring the parity of their ranks for all three levels per question. Satisfaction levels regarding marketing and management of the MDR) was correlated with years of experience in the industry. Cronbach's alpha score across questions 2.1 to 2.10 was 0.862, thus showing the reliability of the question. In order to ascertain whether there is a significant correlation between the satisfaction levels of the years of experience in the tourism industry and the product owners' satisfaction levels with the marketing and management strategy of the MDR, Spearman's rank-order correlation test was applied.

Table 3 displays the results of correlation analysis for all pairwise correlations between the 11 variables (years, 2.1 to 2.10). Figures in bold indicate significant linear relationships at a significance level of 0.05%. There was a significant correlation between: communicating the marketing strategy and implementing the marketing strategy; the effectiveness and applicability of the marketing strategy; and the cooperation between the MDRF and the product owners. The frequency of visits from the MDRF to its members shows a significant influence on the communication, applicability, effectiveness, cooperation, suggestions and the management of the MDRF. A significant correlation was also present between the marketing strategy and the implementation of the marketing strategy of the MDRF.

Table 3. SPEARMAN RANK-ORDER CORRELATIONS

| Variables | Years | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.10 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------|
| Years | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 Marketing | -0.22 | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.2 Implemen- tation | -0.28 | 0.55 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 2.3 Communi- cation | 0.36 | -0.47 | -0.33 | — | | | | | | | |
| 2.4 Applicabi- lity | 0.25 | -0.58 | -0.38 | 0.78 | — | | | | | | |
| 2.5 Effective- ness | 0.30 | -0.32 | -0.21 | 0.88 | 0.67 | — | | | | | |
| 2.6 Coopera- tion | 0.34 | -0.42 | -0.26 | 0.87 | 0.71 | 0.93 | — | | | | |
| 2.7 Frequency | 0.30 | -0.33 | -0.33 | 0.70 | 0.55 | 0.76 | 0.81 | — | | | |
| 2.8 Applicabi- lity | 0.21 | -0.58 | -0.28 | 0.77 | 0.54 | 0.62 | 0.54 | 0.37 | — | | |
| 2.9 Sugges- tions | 0.32 | -0.23 | -0.16 | 0.81 | 0.66 | 0.84 | 0.92 | 0.86 | 0.54 | — | |
| 2.10 Manage- ment | 0.03 | -0.07 | -0.03 | 0.59 | 0.47 | 0.73 | 0.70 | 0.51 | 0.37 | 0.65 | — |

Based on product owner questionnaire

Bold correlations=Significant at $p < 0.05$

CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this investigation was to assess the marketing and management effectiveness of the Free State section of the MDR. An alarming finding was that most of the product owners (56%) indicated that they have had no interaction with the MDRF in the past two years. Only 37% of product owners have had some interaction with the MDRF in the last two years and 52% of the product owners indicated that they were aware of the marketing strategy of the MDRF. Product owners also indicated that communication on the part of the MDRF was poor. This consistently poor communication affected all the other interactions the MDRF has had with product owners, as well as the managerial assistance expected from the forum.

These conclusions are supported by the correlation analysis presented in Table 3. It indicates that the frequency of visits from the MDRF to its members showed a significant influence on the communication, applicability, effectiveness, cooperation, suggestions and the management of the MDRF. Product owners further indicated that information services provided on the route were poor, as were the quality of the roads. The complaints included out-of-date signage along the route. The general feeling among the product owners was that the signage along the route was inadequate and even misleading.

The product owners reiterated that they received little for the fees they pay to the MDRF. They also identified a need for a more robust marketing strategy that could benefit the entire route, which would include making more books and brochures available and updating them regularly. This conclusion supports the views of Meyer (2004) that a successful route benefits the product owners by exposing tourists to lesser known attractions and rural areas, which would ultimately benefit from route tourism development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that address the marketing and management issues are based on the findings.

- (a) The MDRF must create a robust marketing strategy and include the following aspects:
 - More marketing material needs to be made available and updated regularly.
 - The map of the Free State section of the MDR needs to be updated regularly.
 - The MDRF should have stalls at trade shows, such as the Tourism Indaba in Durban.
 - The MDRF needs to be marketed more effectively internationally. This can be done by means of Internet marketing and using social media, which are already in operation, but needs to be updated more regularly.
- (b) Communication with product owners needs to be better coordinated. This can be done through monthly newsletters, creating WhatsApp groups and the like.
- (c) An annual meeting or conference can also assist members in knowing each other's challenges and in opening up communication channels with the MDRF.
- (d) Product owners need to be assisted in implementing the marketing strategy of the MDRF effectively. Training sessions can be scheduled for product owners.
- (e) The MDRF needs to create links and networks with both public and private businesses in the area. This will lead to better cooperation between stakeholders which, in turn, can result in better services provided to tourists (corresponds with views of Lourens, 2007).
- (f) Inputs from the Free State Tourism Authority need to be secured.
- (g) The MDRF needs to engage with authorities on maintaining roads and other infrastructure, such as signage (corresponds with views of Lourens, 2007).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Tourism White Paper on the development and promotion of South Africa was published in 1996. It highlighted the problems South Africa faced with regard to tourism until 1994. The aim of the document was to provide the path to follow for ultimate future tourism growth in

South Africa. Firstly, the Tourism White Paper highlights the crucial role of national government in tourism development. Of particular importance to this study is the responsibility of national government to assist with and promote tourism projects that have trans-border initiatives (NDT, 1996).

Secondly, provincial governments should also play an active role in tourism development. This includes the involvement of local communities and tourism development projects, like route tourism. Local government should also provide infrastructure and support local tourism development initiatives by making funding available (NDT, 1996). In February 2011, the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) was launched. This strategy was a follow up on the Tourism White Paper of 1996 and identified tourism as one of the six core pillars of growth for South Africa (NDT, 2011). Strategic objective four of the tourism growth cluster in the NTSS indicates that regional tourism programmes should be implemented and supported by government. The document also speaks to increasing the number of tourists that visit rural areas and unlocking economic developmental at local and provincial level (NDT, 2011).

In 2010, the national government initiated the South Africa Tourism Planning Toolkit for Local Government (NDT, 2010). This document was launched to assist local government in expanding tourism. The document underlines the importance of partnerships with tourism stakeholders. These partnerships are usually between government and industry representatives, such as community tourism organisations and route tourism representatives. The golden thread running through these policy documents emphasises that government and the private sector should work together and that government should assist initiatives for tourism development.

Although the MDR is a government and private sector driven project, it needs support from government on a local, provincial and national level. In the case of the MDTP, government has initiated the project and supported it for a limited time. The same can be said for the support from local and provincial government, albeit in a lacklustre and haphazard way. The fact remains that the MDR is not fulfilling its full tourism developmental potential. There are mainly two reasons for this, namely (a) lack of leadership at the MDRF and (b) lack of support from local, provincial and national government.

The tourism developmental documents referred to earlier clearly underline the importance of cooperation between the public and private sector. Furthermore, the policies state that support from government should be made available for tourism developmental projects to succeed. The results from this study underline the fact that support from government was lacking. Participation from local and provincial tourism authorities were absent or minimal, resulting in the MDR relying mainly on private sector involvement. The absence of public sector participation put strain on the management of the route. It is thus recommended that the public sector be made aware of their roles and responsibilities relating to the tourism policies and that these roles and responsibilities be implemented.

The findings of this study highlighted the important role the public sector is playing in tourism development. The findings further show that support from local and provincial authorities were lacking, especially related to aspects, such as assistance with marketing, providing adequate signage and communication between the members of the route and provincial tourism authorities. A shortcoming of the policies mentioned above is that it does not specify what

needs to be done to make tourism development projects successful. A lack of on-going support, failure to evaluate the project on a regular basis, incompetent tourism officials and ineffective monitoring further contribute to the failure rate of tourism projects. This is mainly the result of public sector officials not being able to implement the policies that are available. This study proposes that the gap that exists in tourism policies regarding follow-through and ensuring the success of those projects needs to be addressed. In addition, competent tourism officials should be appointed to assist in the implementation of policies that exist.

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