



Sustainable Ethical Tourism (SET) and Rural Community Involvement

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Abstract

Tourism is undoubtedly one of the fastest growing sectors globally and is viewed as a desirable proposed investment option. Rural tourism is one type of tourism that has numerous potential benefits for including employment growth, an extended economic base, repopulation, social development, and a revival in local crafts. The rural tourism sector in particular, is an important area to consider given the ever-mounting unemployment in South Africa. This sector could and should play a greater role in the tourism development strategy of the government. The economy of South Africa is using tourism as part of it's a development strategy and thus needs good environmental management to be in place and this must be both effective and efficient. Additionally, within this notion, the issue of mindfulness should be further promoted so that greater emphasis can be placed upon mindfulness-based tourism products leading to greater sustainability of the industry and the environment. This research provides a synopsis of rural tourism, varieties of tourism, and the benefits for rural communities and national economic development using Agenda 21. This paper is based on an extensive literature research methodology where existing literature including popular journals, websites, academic peer-reviewed journals and other related scholarly works, and any other sources relevant to the issue of rural tourism. was used to gather data and to analyse it. The epistemological basis of the study was interpretivistic. The researcher provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation in relation to the theme. The paper recommends best practices leading to ethical sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Rural tourism, unemployment, mindfulness, sustainability, environmental management

Introduction

There is a preponderance of literature and evidence which supports the notion that tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world with almost \$1.2 trillion worth of bookings having being made in 2016 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017). In this equation, it is important to consider rural community participation in tourism ventures and community growth, while the environment is sustained in a win-win scenario. The 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) set forth the notion of synergy between economic development and environmental protection. These are critical considerations for Sustainable Ethical Tourism (SET) in rural community involvement settings in the context of National Economic Development. As early as 1996, the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2007) defined sustainable tourism as that: "...which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems". It is a critical part of sustainable development and it is commonly understood to infer sustainable human development. This is due to the notion that development relates to publics and that people are in the end reliant on upon their natural environment for their survival. While tourism is beneficial to national GDPs, it is often considered to be somewhat unsustainable and in need for reduction in numbers if sustainability is desired (Aall, 2014, Hollenhorst, Houge-Mackenzie & Ostergren, 2014).



The World Bank (2011) considers the notion of community participation in tourism as crucial for sustainability due to its distinctive empowerment objectives, cultural preservation and material welfare of the local communities involved. Capra(1982) has warned about a global turning point for the worse, when it comes to climate change. He asserts:

“Systemic wisdom is based on a profound respect for the wisdom of nature, which is totally consistent with the insights of modern ecology. One natural environment consists of ecosystems inhabited by countless organisms which have co-evolved over billions of years, continuously using and recycling the same molecules of soil, water and air. The organising principles of these principles must be considered superior to those of human technologies bases on recent inventions, and, very often, on short term linear projections. The respect for nature's wisdom is further supported by the insight that the dynamics of self-organisation in ecosystems is basically the same as in human organisms, which forces us to realise that our natural environment is not only alive but also mindful. The mindfulness of ecosystems, as opposed to many human institutions, manifests itself in the pervasive tendency to establish cooperative relationships that facilitate the harmonious integration of systems components at all levels of organization” (Capra, 1982:390; Störmer & Schubert, 2007).

From the early 1960s, the issue of sustainability has been a major concern but this has not resulted in greater meaningful efforts for example, to mitigate a devastating climate change situation as emphasized by the Global Carbon Budget 2014 report (Le Quéré et al., 2014). The tourism industry needs to take appropriate action. In both urban and rural settings it is usually the private sector which is mainly accountable for delivering products and services to tourists and they should thus assume the responsibility for the protection of the environment by educating especially local communities on aspects relating to sustainability. Sustainable tourism is paradoxical and successful on one level and success given to its diffusion among industry, government, academics and a range of policy actors. However, it is at the same time a policy failure given the sustained growth in the negative environmental impacts of tourism in real terms (Hall, 2010). Literature asserts that tourism stakeholders in urban and rural communities are important, however the latter can indeed play a key role in sustaining tourism development in the context of National Economic Development (Nicolaidis, 2015a). Sustainable tourism development should be considered for all types of tourism and in all destinations - both rural and urban, and not only for eco-tourism which is the current proclivity. Rural tourism has been found to provide ideal opportunities for enhancing the likelihood of a positive effect on a tourist's life satisfaction and happiness levels (Nawijn et al., 2010, Veenhoven, 2011).

The notion of sustainability is generally viewed as an environmental issue while the term development alludes to primarily economic issues. Sustainable ethical tourism development seeks to moderate the contradiction between the two terms (Saarinen, 2006; Hall, 2009). The literature points to three symbiotic pillars of sustainable development including economic sustainability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability. These suggest economic growth across all strata of a society in a cost effective manner, deference to basic human rights and respect for cultural diversity as well as equal opportunity provision for all people. It is also very important to conserve the biological diversity and natural heritage of an area (UNWTO, 2005). A rural location affords a tourist from an urban area a destressing experience and the prospect of re-connecting with mother nature. Environmental conservation and other 'green' issues are thus steadily increasing the need for rural community tourism that is sustainable. Sustainable development as stated in the 1987 Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development) stressed that “sustainable development is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Nicolaidis and de Witt, (2015b), state that stakeholder need must be considered at all times and that responsible behaviour by intending parties must be non-negotiable.



Sustainability principles as they relate to the natural environmental, socio-economic and cultural aspects of tourism development, require ethical consideration cognisant of the needs of rural communities. Only when ethical practices are in place, can there be long-term sustainability. Sustainable development *per se* then raises questions about rural communities and their activities, including tourism. How do rural communities deal with people in general and equally important, is the issue of how they deal with their natural environment. If the natural environmental is not effectively and efficiently managed, rural communities desiring to drive tourism initiatives will fail to attain their objective of sustainable offerings to tourist markets. Rural tourism is generally viewed as the harbinger of economic and social benefits for a rural community, through especially the income and infrastructural development it brings to marginal, impoverished and less economically developed countryside (WTO, 2002a). This is why it requires greater attention in efforts to support and enhance it (Priestly, Edwards & Coccosis, 1996). There is a need for operative policy planning for sustainable tourism development to be realised. In this regard it becomes necessary to carefully and honestly evaluate real and apparent environmental, social and economic circumstances and the requirements of local communities and tourism initiatives that are planned (Hezri, 2004). The promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full productive employment and decent work for all by the year 2030 form an important part of Goal 8 of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2016) and in this equation, rural tourism is an important player.

The sustainable development idea was initially demarcated throughout the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992. The notion of sustainable tourism was recently stated in policy statements of *inter alia*, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2010), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) (2009) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2010). For tourism to be sustainable it must utilise environmental resources at their optimal level. It thus needs to uphold indispensable ecological processes and conserve biodiversity and local heritage.

Rural Tourism

Rural tourism is essentially the familiarity with an extensive range of attractions and activities that happen in rural areas and it relates to wide-open spaces, and relatively low levels of tourism development. It affords tourists the opportunity to directly experience agrarian and eco-touristic natural environments (Roberts & Hall, 2001). The rural areas of South Africa are blessed with a large array of cultures, traditions and often, unique natural resources. Rural areas are ideal for recreational nature tourism, ecotourism which conserves the natural environment, agrotourism which allows urbanites to participate in traditional agricultural practices, rich cultural tourism, which relates to tourists experiencing the places and activities that signify both the history and heritage of local people and village tourism in which tourists experience village life. These variants are not as well developed as they should be and so rural tourism is thus, faced with numerous challenges and is not as well developed as its urban counterpart. Furthermore, it is based in rural areas and invariably influences the local community and its traditional practices. Rural tourism initiatives are generally inclined to be small in scale and the market also tends to be highly seasonal in nature. Having accommodation and other facilities available is not enough to result in a captive market. It is essential to have attractive offerings and appropriate opportunities for tourists to spend their money. The ways in which a rural area is portrayed in marketing initiatives and in the tourist literature, is enormously important to the sustainability of rural tourism (Government of Alberta, 2010).

Tourism plays a substantial role in poverty reduction but far more effort should be expended in promoting it in rural communities (2002) and in an ethical manner. It affords locals opportunities for employment and provides opportunities for partnership between a community and governmental agencies when it comes to the conservation of natural heritage sites and



variety of protected areas. Giampiccoli and Kalis (2012:174) assert that the primary notion of community participation in community-based tourism should be viewed in the light of the sustainable development paradigm which was driven by the Brundtland Report of 1987, and which linked the concepts of economic empowerment, self-sufficiency and environmental sustainability. Williams and Shaw (1997) state that the growth of personal incomes, leisure time and movement especially among the middle classes, has led to more forceful demands being made on rural areas as desirable locations for domestic and foreign tourists. However, it is also argued that the standard of living and employment prospects for rural communities are contingent on the tourism industry (Ruiz-Molina, Gil-Saura, & Moliner-Velazquez, 2010). Triegaardt (2006) conducted a study on poverty and inequality in South Africa and the theme of policy considerations in a developing democracy. He stated that failure to design pro-poor policies, a lack of obligation to implement policies, the inability to move from policy to implementation and a lack of measurement, monitoring and evaluation, are all urgent issues when it comes to dealing with poverty and disparity. Rural communities are confronted with a challenge to take full advantage of the tourism industry due to lack of adequate infrastructure to sustain visitors on an annual basis and care must be taken to keep an area authentic (Nicolaidis, 2014). Thus in efforts to exploit the cash injection that tourism often provides, and with negligible additional resources, numerous rural communities have selected to host tourism events on an annual basis. This is problematic in that the single yearly basis events have limited likely benefits for the communities involved (Rural Tourism, 2010).

While there are numerous theories which inform the basis of defining a suitable community-based tourism (CBT) model, Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (ALCP) is progressively being used to recognize the foreseeable and real participation levels of local communities when they are involved in the decision-making process of rural tourism development (Aref & Redzuan, 2009). The ALCP measures the gap and its elements, between the expected and real level of community participation of the local community. If not managed in a responsible fashion, rural tourism is likely to negatively affect its local community. This is why Murphy (1985), argues that local community leaders and other stakeholders in rural tourism should work in tandem to manage it so that it becomes somewhat of a community industry which benefits all in a win-win scenario.

It is evident that any type of development impacts the natural environment in which it occurs. Given that tourists to rural areas consume the outputs of a place that they visit, environmental impacts are unavoidable (Cooper et al., 1998: 149). This is why it is critical for a local community to participate in the process. The desire and commitment of the local community to be involved ethically in whichever manner, from inter alia hosting of tourists to planning for them and serving as guides, is vital to the success and sustainability of tourism (Allen, Long, Perdue & Kieselbach, 1988). According to the World Bank (2003), a Local Economic Development (LED) approach to economic growth is regarded as a good way to tackle local challenges since it aids the achievement of the purposes of sustainable development, which clearly includes mass poverty alleviation.

Given the nature of the rural areas, there are challenges such as the fact that the majority of rural lands in South Africa are privately owned, and this makes accessibility difficult. In addition, diverse tribal groupings might not be willing to allow external parties in to their terrain unless there is some evidence that rural tourism is indeed able to provide more jobs for the inhabitants of rural communities (Shaw & Williams, 1997), thereby decreasing unemployment levels in South Africa which are currently at 27.7 percent of the population (The Economist, January 6th, 2018). Ashley et al. (2001) are of the opinion that tourism contributes to binding sustainable tourism so as to augment poverty alleviation initiatives. Rural communities in especially impoverished areas where unemployment is rife, are of necessity generally willing participants when the envisaged tourism has a perceptibly great role to play in supporting the livelihoods of locals (Hossen, 2016). There must be recognition of the various apprehensions of the local community so as to ensure sustainability performance. It is also crucial then that

there be wide ranging concerted agreements between public and private sector role-players and the local community. Tourism is increasingly promoted as a vehicle to alleviate poverty in especially developing economies in Africa (Scheyvens, 2007; Sharpley, 2009; Zapata et al., 2011).

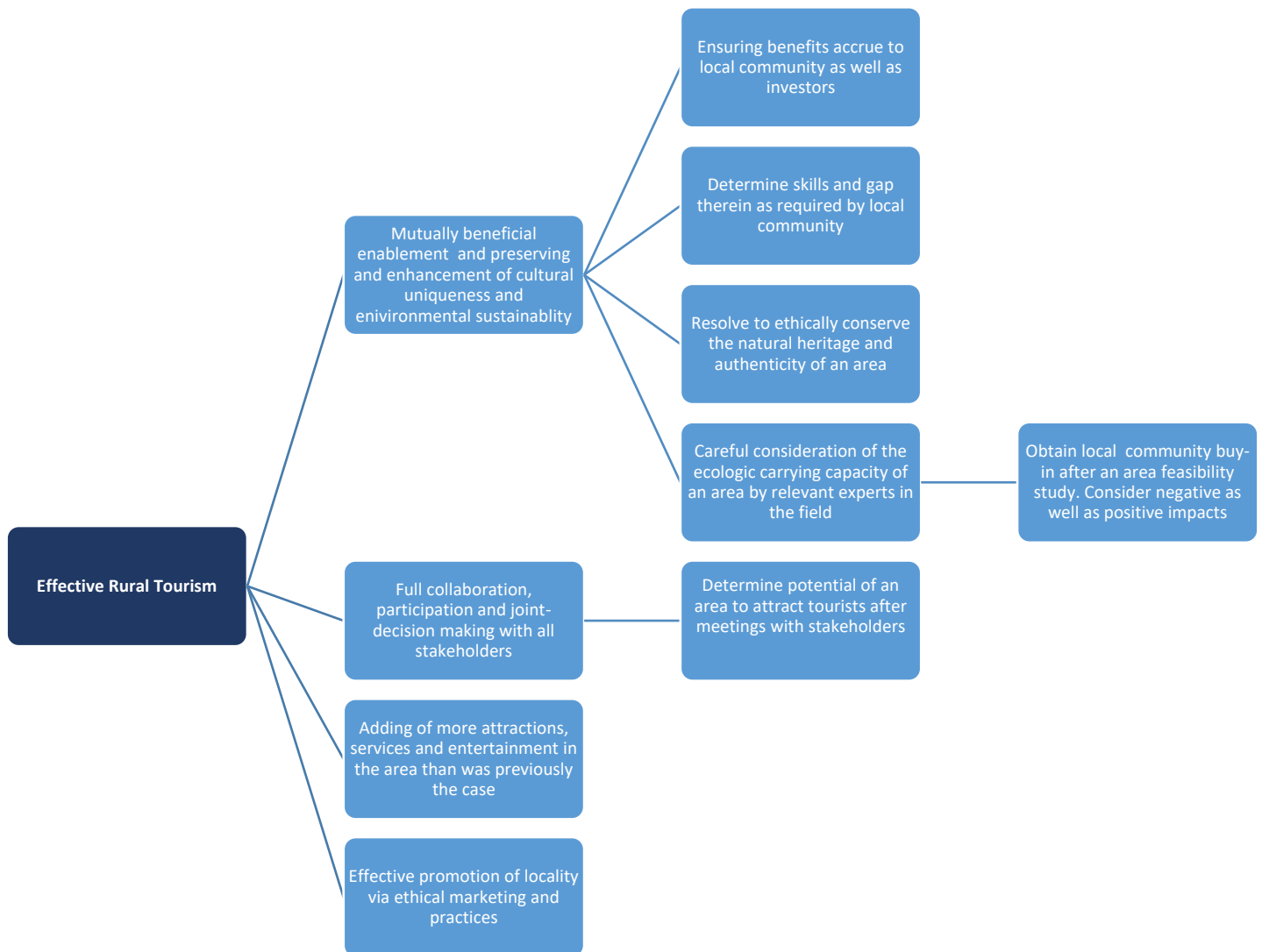


Figure 1. Effective rural tourism requirements (Author's own)

Requirements for effective Rural Tourism

Obtaining rural community participation in the development and decision-making processes of what eventually emerges in their area is crucial, and in any event, it also serves to inspire the community and motivate its stakeholders to become fully committed to future planned and actual initiatives (Inskeep, 1994). It is imperative to make certain that the rural community involved benefits from any tourism venture but this is increasingly a challenge since wealthy tourism developers tend to maintain control of tourism developments in the poor communities (Musavengane & Simatele, 2016) and the local stakeholders benefit the least from a financial perspective. Marzuki et al (2012: 201) assert that locals will back tourism development in their respective communities once they assume they will obtain benefits from any tourism activities due to increased cognizance of what is transpiring in their particular environment.



This is why there must be clear cut roles and greater efforts made to fund rural tourism infrastructure development by providing not only practical support to a locality, but also mutually beneficial enablement and promotion, and economic growth. Rural tourism should certainly not be encouraged if it leads to amplified social and economic inequality in rural communities. It would be unethical to say the least, and highly unfitting to propagate rural tourism enterprises if most of the advantage accrues to urban communities. Far more community consultation events than is currently the case should be implemented, such as public discussion forums, where advantages and disadvantages of tourism are thrashed out. but there are of course in any case various limitations to tourism development processes in especially developing countries (Liu & Cheung, 2016).

From a rural cultural perspective, it must be a core objective to ethically conserve the natural heritage of an area. This then means that the host community's socio-cultural authenticity and history must not be tampered with and diversity and cultural heritage and traditional values must be upheld. If rural tourism is not strategically planned it will not be sustainable and ultimately detrimental to a destination, and invariably tend to damage the natural environment and wildlife, while also most likely polluting rivers. Where tourists observe impairment to the natural environment this has been found to be huge diminisher from the tourists' experience and so it becomes the ethically correct thing to do and it is absolutely necessary, to have in place a suitable environmental protection strategy to avoid such a possibility (Greaves, 2010). There is literature which suggests that the costs of preserving local heritage and wild life areas and the natural landscape is excessive (Tatoğlu, Erdal, Özgür & Azakli, 2000).

Nonetheless, the entire environment of a rural destination driving tourism initiatives requires careful consideration. The environment should be improved by rural tourism progression and this can be achieved by safeguarding that and current and future development is in accord with the general plan envisaged for the destination. This could for example include increasing the amount of natural and man-made attractions envisaged to be utilised by tourists as well as service offering considerations (Eshliki & Kabousi, 2012). This means that inter alia, culture heritage, natural resources and environmental management practices must be at the forefront of rural community thought and long-term operations must be viable and deliver socio-economic benefits to all relevant stakeholders. Given that land and other natural resources are limited it is imperative to manage them efficiently and this should be done by obtaining rural community buy-in and by forging ethical partnerships. Consequently, suitable ethically driven strategies must be created to sustain the development of tourism. The literature on sustainable rural community tourism states that the integration of a local community's opinions in tourism planning and also in its development, is an important element to consider (GDRC, 2013).

The notion of ethical community-based tourism delivers considerable benefits of resources consumption at community level. It also serves to promote greater sustainable use of rural resources. Once suitable rural community projects are identified and the buy-in of locals is obtained, there must be comprehensive tourism development planning, and considerable investment in tourism-related infrastructure by private and public entities working in tandem (Nicolaidis, 2017). The often negative impacts of eco-tourists require mitigation and it would be wise to craft an environmental protection strategy for a rural community's tourism ventures, so as to assess the cause-and-effect of their activities on the natural environment (Greaves, 2010). There is a need for moral tourism management and this will require a careful assessment of the physical and social carrying costs and thus economic, physical and social impacts of any planned tourism development enterprise (Mathieson & Wall, 1995). It is often the case that a local community has only a very minor role to play in any participation in public consultation activities because it has not been well informed about such activities and usually because of the poor timing of activities, which may be either intentional or unintentional on the part of urban tourism developers, consultants or other stakeholders.



Local participants need to offer input from the start and skilled in suitable roles as guides, hosting families and so forth. There then needs to an exciting and novel array of tourist activities to satisfy the miscellaneous tastes of tourists both domestic and foreign. Tourism activities such as wildlife safari tours should be developed after very careful consideration of the ecologic carrying capacity of an area by relevant experts in the field. There must be greater mindfulness of the biological integrity of rural areas, the areas bio-geochemical flows, and any land-system variations, which should not be breached (Amel, Manning & Scott, 2009). Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2010) have ascertained that the impairment of the natural environment has a devastating effect on visitors experiences and return intentions and certainly makes them unwilling to recommend a destination to either their family or friends.

Tourism in any form, should contribute positively to environmental and heritage preservation as the quality of the tourism environment is important to tourists. The quality of life of local communities must not only be upheld, but noticeably improved and this equally applies to the visiting tourists who have expectations and needs and wants, that must be met and where possible exceeded. Where there is construction and infrastructural development such as roads and tourism facilities in rural areas, the quality of the environment in general terms must be at optimal levels.

When embarking on rural community tourism ventures, an effort must be made to improve the environment and this is achievable by safeguarding that all developments are in accord with the general strategy for the destination in question. There should be more attractions, services and entertainment in the area than was previously the case (Batra & Kaur, 1996). Siakwah (2018) has noted that the majority of African economies have not completely explored their tourism possibilities due to the insufficient progress in developing suitable sites. The challenge is then for local tourism developers, administrators and the state and a host of other stakeholders, to discover equilibrium between the different stakeholder needs as they outline approaches for rural tourism development. Sustainable ethical tourism in rural communities and adequate economic growth, can only be realised if all the relevant stakeholders are involved in planning and decision-making.

Threats posed by rural tourism

There are a myriad of possible threats posed by rural tourism if it is not crafted effectively by all stakeholders involved. Destruction of the natural environment and especially the exhaustion of limited natural resources. Where there are eventually for example, water shortages, this exerts excessive pressure on other needed local resources such as energy. Local communities must participate in seeking to understand and evaluate tourism impacts in their destinations (Diedrich & Garcí'a-Buades, 2008). It is often the case that tourists pollute the natural environment and this has a negative impact on the perceptions of local communities, as to the worth of tourism. In addition, there is often a loss of wildlife habitats and severe soil erosion resulting from the clearing of land for the erection of tourism amenities and other required infrastructure.

Locals are severely affected by price inflation, which occurs once relatively wealth tourists visit an area and so for many locals life becomes harder. Economic return to rural communities is generally very low while urban operators absorb most of the profits. The level and type of rural tourism development must be in keeping with the capacity of a rural community to engage tourists (Getz, 1983). It is usually the case that facilities in rural areas, such as hotels and resorts, hotels and tour companies are generally owned by wealthy investors. Whatever is ultimately consumed by visitors, such as food and beverage and other needs are also imported from urban areas. Whatever taxes are collected accrue to the state and not the local community. Local goods such as crafts are important for generating income but do not offer adequate opportunity for development.



The nature of the tourism industry is such that seasonality affects employment, with the result that there is a migration of a needed labour force. The number of suitable employees with specific tourism skills is inadequate (Wight, 1994). Even some local authorities do not have experienced employees in tourism management and development issues. Women and the youth are appointed into part time work and often obtain low-incomes. This is usually attributed to gender biases as well as a lack of formal education and skills and it opens the way for exploitation to occur. Community participation is further understood as involving power shift from elitist decision-making group of government representatives and wealthy developers to the poor landowners. Bonadonna, Giachino and Truant (2017) describe a transformation existing in tourism development, in which community members become highly active role-players in tourism development in their rural local communities. Locals often find they need to revise their local culture and conform or appear to, the tourist's culture. When it is poorly-planned, tourism results in villages being occupied by foreigners who have dissimilar values, and this tends to disrupt rural culture. Rural tourism generally requires additional infrastructure, modes of transportation and additional facilities which can cause environmental alteration. While rural tourism is able to bring benefits to a community, for instance foreign exchange and some measure of employment, it also has the potential to harm a community. Generally, in all the changes that may result, rural tourism helps to develop and invigorate a community's pride and creates a sense of worth and cohesion within the collective local ambience when people are able to work synergistically towards common objectives (Mormont, 1987).

Community Based Tourism - CBT

CBT arose in the 1990s on a very small scale and encompasses interfaces between visitors and host communities in rural areas. The notion of CBT is generally supported by a local community, local government agencies and non-government organisations (Engström & Leffler, 2012). CBT is important in augmenting biodiversity conservation via the idea of responsible tourism. Ånstrand (2006), state that CBT involves itself with the impact of tourism on a community and often limited environmental resources. Thus, communities must be judiciously selected and sufficiently equipped before applying CBT if they are to derive any benefits. This approach to tourism required that local businesses be afforded opportunities to develop within their cultural and environmental settings. CBT projects involve innovative and entrepreneurial local community members and their activities need to align with sustainable development initiatives.

The idea is that CBT ultimately allows local communities to partly alleviate poverty and become self-sustaining – thus they may own some ventures and in others', their members may be afforded ongoing job opportunities. The key issues here would be skills development on the part of the state as well as the private sector, limited private sector involvement and an effort to mitigate benefits accruing to foreign companies or a group of local community elites. There would need to be a drive to provide jobs for locals that do not merely relate to menial tasks, but which also involve skilled tasks requiring training for men as well as women who are usually marginalized in local communities. There is a clear link between sustainable development and CBT. Burns and Novelli (2008) argue that the definition of CBT is relatively unclear but it strives to integrate the goals of sustainable development. Thus CBT must be viable economically, socially, culturally and also ecologically compatible with the communities in which it manifests.

Agenda 21

In South Africa, the government has implemented environmental management action plans including Agenda 21 which have to an extent mitigated the usual problems. In addition, the private sector has also stepped into the breach somewhat by generating and maintaining a sufficient consumption of resources, and by driving conservation initiatives.



'Agenda 21', is a global plan of action for sustainable development established by most of the United Nations member nations at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. The nations agreed to aim for a more balanced development in order to minimize any adverse environmental impacts on the earth. (Enviropaedia, nd.). The South African overseer for Agenda 21 is the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT). Agenda 21 places emphasis on partnerships concerning the public and all relevant stakeholders so as to seek to effectively resolve developmental problems. It thus addresses the feasibility of applying sustainable development principles in human activity and development (Enviropaedia, nd.) It guides local authorities as to how best to undertake a consultative process with their populations and achieve a consensus on a local Agenda 21. It offers practical assistance to local communities to help them in their efforts to cultivate sustainable tourism. Agenda 21 guides on local government training on sustainable tourism and the development of auxiliary aspects such as hotels, tourist guides and how to involve relevant stakeholders. In addition it offers guidance and support on conservation and preservation of fauna and flora and relevant infrastructure provision which encourages the application of environmentally responsive technology. Local communities thus receive a good measure of support if requested.

Essential considerations for Sustainable Ethical Rural Tourism

There is indeed evidence that tourism often has a negative impact on the environment, both the natural and man-made. It is important to then ensure that rural tourism has minimal adverse impacts on the natural and man-made environments. The conservation of cultural heritage assists a community to protect its physical resources, and simultaneously preserves its often ancient practices, history, and unique identity. Respect is enhanced within locals for their authentic culture, traditions and history. The environment in a rural community often becomes degraded due to for example, unrestrained construction, pollution and threats to the survival of indigenous fauna and flora. When it comes to facilities required for tourism to be operative, it is usually the case that local communities have very little possibility of managing them due to a lack of skills and financial resources (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012). This means that rural tourism is often not a viable sector in the drive to alleviate poverty and uplift a rural community. Ashley, Goodwin and Roe (2001) propose that in order to make tourism viable for rural communities, there must be a concerted drive to amplify the access of locals to any economic benefits which accrue as well as intensive efforts to mitigate negative environmental impacts which may result. Basic human rights and fair labour practices must be observed (Nicolaidis, 2008). When it comes to possible roles, it is suggested that locals can be involved in the selling of regional craft products, guiding and in operating existing rural experience accommodation establishments. In addition indirect benefit may accrue when there is induced income received by third-parties after local tourism employees spend their income in the local community (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012; Goodwin & Roe, 2001).

The amount of jobs offered to locals through tourism should outweigh those offered to outsiders and the quality of employment should be good in terms of remunerations and service conditions. If there is a desire to get the most out of rural tourism marketing efforts there must be solid collaboration with relevant tour companies, the local community, regional tourism departments and cultural and heritage sectors. The literature asserts that locals that stand to benefit the most economically will invariably be supportive of rural tourism and it is therefore important to make benefits accrue to as many in a community as possible (Harrill, 2004). The findings of past studies have exposed that strategies for promoting local community participation in rural tourism have been to a large extent ineffective and should be enhanced so as to extend value to a diverse range of stakeholders (Tosun, 2000; Dimanche, 1994; Nunkoo, 2015).

It is also mandatory that a rural community desirous of pursuing tourism initiatives be in relatively close immediacy to a willing market and have ease of access. Tourism development



planning, and investments in a tourism-related infrastructure are critical for success. There is also a need to fund and support rural tourism infrastructure changes that are required by making available technical assistance in the areas in question, and by enabling and advancing impact analysis (Hall & Lew, 2009). It is also important to develop an effective brand which is ethically sound so as to allow potential visitors to see the inherent value of a destination as it is in reality. Local people should be encouraged to start up innovative enterprises and supported in their endeavours. Any envisaged tourism projects in rural communities must offer a fair measure of prosperity to locals and be viable in the long-term. They should also be able to compete with existing nearby offerings so as to be sustainable. Anything less would make the creation of a rural community tourism offering unethical. Local residents should manage the offerings by highlighting the economic expansion required in order to maintain community fulfilment (Dyer *et al.*, 2007; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012).

When it comes to the destination expectations of visitors, they should have their needs and wants met and exceeded where possible. A need exists for an emphasis on visitor orientation and useful information delivery to them. Their trip to a rural community should be fulfilling and in a safe setting. Rural communities need to have a greeting centre where visitors can obtain useful information on the available local attractions and activities in which they may partake. They can also be advised on available accommodation, and they should be encouraged to support community wellbeing and use resources sparingly (UNEP, 2005). They should be advised not to degrade or exploit the environment and be cognisant of the need for conservation. They should strive to minimise pollution of natural or man-made resources (UNEP, 2005). It is thus crucial to endorse ethical standards regarding the use of both natural and cultural resources. The tourist industry should then make efforts not to detract from the special feel of a place and what makes it exclusive. There must be a careful balance sustained in endeavours to avoid loss of the authentic appeal of a destination to travellers.

Williams and Shaw (1997) suggest that the industry ought to work together with the local community to develop workable guidelines for any resort development. There should also be careful destination planning and development in which public and private entities share the tasks leading to ethical ecotourism development. Misra and Sadual (2008) state that the features of sustainable tourism include preserving the importance of local culture and traditions. They assert that it boosts cross-cultural considerations in authentic settings and is intended to conserve resources at various destinations. It is also concerned with achieving the buy-in of the local community and afford them a chance to make a decent living with fair wages. Sustainable Tourism attempts to preserve the standing of local cultures and traditions. It educates tourists about destinations but also helps locals to learn about the diverse cultures of foreign tourists. Its primary concern is to conserve the resources of destinations and to obtain full involvement by locals and then provide them with an opportunity to make a sustainable living. Sustainable Tourism stresses the integrity of a destination. In rural settings it is thus even more crucial as there are far less employment opportunities (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012).

Conclusions

Rural tourism is viewed as having substantial economic and social benefits for a rural community through mainly income generation and needed infrastructural development. Sustainable ethical tourism (SET) development is a type of tourism that is equitable and transformative in nature in that it is focused on the notion of local community empowerment. It seeks to augment the tourism development possibilities in an area for all role-players and stakeholders and not only for urban tour operators and related companies. It is a key consideration to comprehend the numerous apprehensions of the local communities to ensure SET. It must be a primary concern of SET to seek to empower community members to promote the sustainability of all resources and it is considered a good means of income generation for



rural communities and for their upliftment in general. SET must be viewed as a significant value-added sector in South Africa's economic development strategy and if it is to be at all sustainable, must be a constructive influence in the lives of rural people. Importantly it allows revenue to stay within the local community instead of it being controlled by external agents and foreign investors. It additionally inspires local entrepreneurship and community reinvestment in order to sustain the economic impetus and keep it within the local geographic areas in which it exists.

The government has been toying with the notion of assisting local agencies to develop income generation via local community participation in tourism initiatives. This goes hand in hand with needed conservation activities and sustainability. All the Infrastructure that is developed towards rural tourism resolutions contributes to local development. Action needs to be taken to conserve the cultural heritage including crafts, biodiversity preservation, indigenous languages, architecture and even gastronomy. Given that natural resources play a substantial role in environmental management of the rural tourism industry it would also be prudent to assimilate the protected natural areas such as wildlife parks in all regional plans and projects.

Rural tourism is potentially sustainable but requires careful thought and integrity on the part of all stakeholders. While there are many challenges, it is nonetheless likely to succeed when there are sound environmental management and conservation measures in place. Sustainable tourism necessitates economic, social and environmental sustainability which is based on local community involvement, ethically-driven stakeholders, all-encompassing legislation, workable marketing, and careful planning and design. Rural tourism is not the solution for all rural problems but it has number of constructive attractions. It offers opportunities for rural communities to improve their productivity levels and incomes in a sustainable way.

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