

Rural Tourism and Inclusive Development in Port St. Johns - South Africa

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore ways of achieving an inclusive approach to tourism development in rural communities. Although tourism has generally been recommended as a means of orchestrating development in rural communities, achieving this laudable goal has often been illusive due to the fragmented approach adopted by tourism stakeholders. An exploratory quantitative research approach was adopted by using a structured survey instrument to generate 307 valid responses from community members in Port St. John in the Eastern Cape Province (ECP) of South Africa. Results obtained reveal similarities and some differences based on demographic characteristics with regards to the benefits of rural tourism to the community. Importantly, the study illuminates the fragmented way in which residents perceive tourism benefits, both from a gender perspective and personal benefit versus community dichotomy. The paper discusses policy as well as practical local economic development implications.

Keywords: Rural tourism; community; Port St. Johns; inclusive development; sustainable development

Introduction

Tourism has been identified as one of the main sectors to lead post covid-19 economic recovery globally and in South Africa, in particular (National Department of Tourism (NDT), 2021; Orîndaru, Popescu, Alexoaei, Caescu, Florescu & Orzan, 2021; Pandy & Rogerson, 2021). The strong faith in the resilience of tourism as an economic sector comes with great surprise considering the severe impact of the lockdown prompted by the covid-19 pandemic on the industry (Astina, Sumarmi & Kurniawati, 2021). Gabriel-Campos, Werner-Masters, Cordova-Buiza and Paucar-Caceres, (2021) assert that governments and development stakeholders particularly in the developing world consider tourism as a panacea to resolve many of their socio-economic challenges such as high unemployment, poverty and poor infrastructure development. There is high impetus to develop tourism in rural communities for a number of reasons, notably because of abundant natural resources that appeal to tourists but also because of the potential benefits that could accrue from tourism (Gao & Wu, 2017).

Defining rural tourism has proven to be a challenge due to the lack of consensus on what constitutes a rural area (Bosworth & Turner, 2018). Viljoen and Tlabela (2007) argue that arriving at a generally acceptable definition of rural areas is difficult because rural areas are heterogeneous. However, some common characteristics of rural areas have been identified as environments where human habitation and infrastructure occupy only isolated parts of the landscape, where the dominant economic activity is working on farms and where long distance and poor infrastructure significantly increase the cost of doing business (NDT, 2012). Despite the fluidity in defining rural areas, Petric (2003) advances the view that the distinguishing feature of rural tourism should be the determination to give tourists the opportunity to get in close proximity of the local people, have a taste of the physical and human environment of the countryside and have the opportunity to participate in the activities, traditions and lifestyle of indigenous people. In the context of Port St. John, this study considers rural tourism to consist of leisure activities that take place in sparsely populated peripheral regions.

The political economy of rural tourism makes it prone to other forms of tourism such as ecotourism, community-based tourism, cultural tourism, agri-tourism and adventure tourism (Rogerson, 2019). Giampiccoli, Jugmohan and Mtapuri (2014) observe that within the last decade, the appeal and demand for rural tourism have increased considerably due, in part, to the desire among tourists to escape from the buzz and fast pace of city life, increase attention on sustainable tourism development and the acknowledgement of the unique tourism product offering of rural communities. Moreover, a number of socio-economic benefits such as infrastructure development, Small, Medium, Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) development, employment opportunities and income generation have been noted to accrue to rural communities from tourism (Iorio & Wall, 2012; Lee, 2013; Rogerson, 2019; Laut, Sugiharti, & Panjawa, 2021). This explains why rural communities like Port St. Johns should be enthusiastic about developing tourism in their community.

However, despite the appetite and favourable case for developing tourism in rural communities, it has been argued that rural areas present peculiar challenges to tourism development, some of which are accessibility, poor infrastructure and skills shortage (Mbaiwa & Hambira, 2020). Latkova and Vogt (2012) add that irrespective of the noble agenda for tourism development such as pro-poor or community driven, basic conditions for tourism sustainability still have to be investigated and ascertained.

Rural tourism is generally associated with sustainable development as it tends to give residents the opportunity to benefit from shared natural resources within their community (Rid, Ezeuduji & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). This view is supported by Laut et al. (2021) who argue that even though rural communities are endowed with significant tourists' resources, residents of local communities do not always benefit substantially from the proceeds of such resources or the tourism supply chain. This observation is equally echoed by Bosworth and Turner (2018), who lament the plight of peripheral destinations such as Port St. Johns in South Africa where there is a crisis of joblessness, inequality, illiteracy and poverty, despite the opportunities that rural tourism offers.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2020) reports that almost half of the adult population in the country (49.2%) live below the upper-bound of poverty line and are exposed to underdevelopment in areas where they live. Dickson (2010) explains that inadequate infrastructure and lack of funding are some of the reasons for extreme poverty and underdevelopment. According to Latkova and Vogt (2012), there is limited integration of local communities, inadequate tourism education, and training and awareness among rural communities. In addition, many Small, Medium and Micro-Enterprises (SMMEs) struggle to access to basic financial resources to cater for start-up costs, the required entrepreneurial expertise and business support. Xu, Jiang, Wall and Wang (2019) argue that if the involvement

of host communities in tourism is to be improved in a meaningful way then government and other development agents need to increase support to community members and provide the enabling environment that will attract investment and ensure that the sector is lucrative.

Study site

This research used a case study approach. Case study research has been described as an in-depth study that adopts a systematic approach in examining an individual, group of individuals or communities (Brink, 2018; Boeije, 2010). Yin (2018) argues that case study research investigates issues in specific settings thereby having a holistic view of all or most of the elements involved.

Port St. John municipality shares a municipal executive and legislative authority with the Oliver Reginald Tambo District Municipality in terms of Section 155(1) of the Constitution. The unique tourism offering of Port St. Johns is evidently embedded in its geography as it is bordered on the east side by the Indian Ocean, just at the point where the Umzimvubu River empties into the ocean. The town is also centrally located at 220km northeast of the city of East London, a key provincial tourism hub with a busy regional airport, and 70km east of Mthatha, a thriving business and administrative town in the Eastern Cape Province (Eastern Cape Province, 2014).

Port St. Johns has been described as the most dramatic part of the wild coast of South Africa with a unique blend the Xhosa of cultural richness, relatively unspoilt natural forest and a well preserved coastline. Arguably, the community of Port St. John is best known within the tourism fraternity for its adventure tourism prowess, from hiking trails, canoe activities, air shows and whale and dolphin watching (Eastern Cape Socio-economic consultative council (ECSECC, 2021).

The PSJ tourist offerings are at present characterized by relatively undisturbed and rich geographical assets. The development of these resources could be enhanced by maintaining the existing infrastructure linking the popular beaches that attract national and international tourists (Apleni & Henama, 2020). This includes the road network, improving the railways, increasing the availability of general transportation, water and sanitation, electrical supply, improving accommodation facilities, and the state of hospitals and supporting features necessary for sustainable development in the area. Such infrastructure development could be of benefit to tourists as well as local communities.

Literature review

Rural tourism

Mbaiwa and Hambira (2020) draw attention to the fact that rural tourism planning is often complex and dynamic as it there is the need to weigh the conservation imperative of the protecting natural resources, on the one hand and meeting the livelihood requirements and development needs of people in local communities on the other hand. Faced with such delicate choices, host communities are not always sure where to begin, what measures to take in protecting the protecting their natural resources and the type of tourism that should be promoted (Khumalo, 2014). Furthermore, a similar practice is needed to make an instrument available to assess rural settlement abilities and rural tourism capacities. Since rural areas are heterogeneous, with different strengths and challenges, there is no single formula on how to develop tourism in these areas. The potential for rural tourism to support sustainable development in rural areas has been widely acknowledged (Meyer & Meyer, 2015; Lee, Kim & Kim, 2018). The question is how to create an environment in which host communities can participate and obtain meaningful benefits from rural tourism.

A number of challenges have been associated with increasing the participation of community members in the tourism planning process. Kuuder, Sulemana and Yirbekyaa (2020) identify operational challenges such as operating basic equipment and lack of information as some inhibiting factors to community participation in tourism. Furthermore, Mariani, Buhalis, Longhi and Vitouladiti (2014) emphasis the need to raise tourism awareness in communities as a means of encouraging community members to participate in tourism. Awareness can also transform the community's perceptions of tourism in general. For that reason, tourism responsiveness and awareness are the foundations of community involvement. Khan, Bibi, Lyu and Babar (2020) argue that community beneficiation from tourism is necessary in order to gain community support and acceptance of tourism development projects. In the same vein, Lee et al. (2018) add that the host community should be empowered to make a determination on local tolerance levels and adjust to domestic circumstances considering that what works elsewhere might not immediately be useful to their community. This might necessitate consultation and the practice of democratic values in order to gain a consensus on community preferences. This may explain why Murungi and Mbugua (2020) suggest that if the benefits of tourism development are to last into the distant future then general community interests should outweigh individual benefits could vary over time.

On the other hand, Gao and Wu (2017) caution against prioritising tourism benefits without giving due diligence to education, training and employee development that are prerequisites in the delivery of quality tourism, hospitality and recreation services that ensure tourism competitiveness. Getz (1994) agrees with this view by stating that residents should be accorded the opportunity to acquaint themselves quality service delivery in tourism, its sustenance opportunities and tourism impacts as well. This exposure will ensure that host communities are adequately equipped to participate and make informed choices when engaging in tourism development. Giampiccoli et al. (2014) emphasize that knowledge and values choices constitute the cornerstones of sustainable tourism development.

Rural tourism, like any other business, needs to be managed efficiently to ensure sustainability (Gursoy, Chi & Dyer, 2010). Safarov and Janzakov (2021) distinguish between policy, forecasting, expansion and administration of tourism in rural areas, depending on the precedent as an intellectual and evaluation process aimed at creating a vision at the macro level. Rural tourism management is defined as a macro-level activity in which all stakeholders carry out their individual and organisational responsibilities daily to realise the macro-level vision (Waitt, 2003).

Additionally, rural tourism management is a continuum of strategic and operational processes, with operational actions inter-connecting with and flowing from destination policy making, planning and strategy making (Ap, 1992; Andereck, Valentine, Knopf & Vogt, 2005; Canh & Thanh, 2020). Curcic, Mirkovic, Brankov, Bjeljic, Pavlovic and Jandžikovic, (2021) insist that literature specifies that rural tourism management simplifies the necessity to reflect the host community in management. Management at the local level includes harmonisation or direction taken by different stakeholders in managing rural tourism. Furthermore, it is critical for the harmonisation strategy to be drafted to guide tourism businesses.

Mariani et al. (2014) further argue that private business ought to assist access to the markets and in no way be involved as partners in the projects; the emphasis should be on conservation and common welfare. Genuine community-based entities (CBEs) must be under the full control of community members. Mukwada and Sekhele (2017) express the view that the community, rather than the private sector or government, must own, manage and govern CBEs.

However, Bosworth and Turner (2018) explain that tourist communities are physical entities defined by political boundaries. Swart et al. (2018) emphasise that if tourism is to serve

as an effective instrument in the development of host communities then local people should play a central role in its management and ownership structures. They equally cater for tourists needs by providing lodging, meals, statistics, transportation amenities and other services. Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2018) add that the host community is described as a set of individuals who reside in a particular habitation, share the government and sometimes have shared traditions and a past culture. Host community refers to groups of people with a common interest, but not necessarily in the same geographical area. Safarov and Janzakov (2021) caution that these simple terms discussed above, which in essence suggest homogeneity, include a different subject matter. The proposition gives the impression that the host community is all those people who live in a tourist destination. The author further highlights several critical complexities involved in any discourse of the host community.

The concept of sustainability has become an essential issue in tourism administration and growth and most tourism development scholars agree that tourism development is realised through the participation of residents in the decision-making process (Kauppila, Saarinen, & Leinonen, 2009; Mbaiwa & Hambira, 2020; Acha-Anyi, 2020). Khumalo (2014) is convinced that community involvement must be integrated by way of and linked to tourism sustainability in general. Rogerson (2019) cautions that involvement in community tourism is a key challenge facing the government.

Linking responsible tourism and sustainable tourism

Responsible tourism has been described as tourism that is economically viable and protect the local environment and social structure on which the future growth of tourism depends (Richards, 2018). According to Pandy and Rogerson (2021), responsible tourism is relevant to both the tourism industry and tourists. Additionally, the tourist industry can behave responsibly by ensuring that tourism activities benefit rather than damage the natural environment and local cultures and that local communities benefit economically (Gao & Wu, 2017). The meaning of responsible tourism, both in theory and practice, has been the subject of considerable debate.

Gabriel-Campos, Werner-Masters, Cordova-Buiza and Paucar-Caceres (2021) express the view that despite the heightened attention that responsible tourism has received in recent decades, there is still inconsistency and lack of consensus on what actually constitutes responsible tourism. Murungi and Mbugua (2020) agree with the attention that the concept of responsible tourism has received, but point out that most of the literature appears to align responsible tourism with concepts such as sustainable tourism, ecotourism, ethical tourism' and other related forms of socially conscious tourism practices. Acha-Anyi (2020) points out that both responsible tourism and sustainable tourism converge around the three pillars of environmental integrity, social justice and economic benefit. However, differences between the two concepts emerge where individuals, organisations and businesses are requested to take responsibility for the consequences for their actions whereas in sustainable tourism businesses and other stakeholders are morally concerned about the host community while upholding the triple bottom-line.

The definition of sustainable development widely used for tourist communities is the so-called 'tourism cornerstone', in which policies and actions aim to balance costs and benefits from social, economic and environmental levels (Mukwada & Sekhele, 2017; Kuuder et al. 2020). Laut et al. (2021) assert that the concept of sustainable tourism development provides an important theoretical framework on which to gain the trust of local communities because it usually includes a long-term perspective on resource use.

In conclusion, extant literature (Mukwada & Sekhele, 2017; Mbaiwa & Hambira, 2020, Acha-Anyi, 2020; Pandy & Rogerson, 2021) suggests that a sustainable rural tourism strategy for a community like Port St. Johns should be underpinned by certain principles. First, the host

community should form the nucleus of its planning, ownership and management. Secondly, public sector leadership and private sector business expertise should inform decision-making. Thirdly, extensive tourism education should be undertaken prior to getting fully engaged on the tourism initiative. This will ensure that each stakeholder is aware of the role they have to play, the responsibilities involved and the potential impacts of tourism. Finally, that an inclusive and coordinated approach is adopted as the life wire of the rural tourism initiative.

Materials and methods

The design of this study was cross-sectional as community members who consented to participate in the study were asked to express their views on the state of tourism in Port St. Johns at the time of the study. This was complimented by the researcher's observation of the geography, tourism facilities, and infrastructure in the community. Neuman (2014) describes a study population as a representative view of a large number of complex situations from which the researcher takes a sample and where the sample results are generalised. Sarantakos (2013) add that the population is a cluster of prospective respondents from which the researcher wishes to take a broad view. According to the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of PSJ, the population of the area is 178000 inhabitants (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA, 2020). Therefore, this number constituted the population of the study. Sample scope comprises a carefully chosen set of the components or entities of investigation from a distinct general public. Settling for the number of 383 identified individuals was informed by a method developed by Sarantakos (2013:173), which calculates sample sizes when the population number is known by the formula:

$$s = \frac{2(1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1)} + 2(1 - P)$$

An appropriate sample size would be 383 people using this formula because 383 falls between 382 and 384, which are sample sizes of known populations of 75 000 and 1000 000 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). From a population of 178 000 a sample of 400 participants was selected, with 307 valid responses returned.

Following the research questions, a five-point likert scale questionnaire was developed and structured in three sections labelled A, B, and C. While section A focused on the respondents' involvement with tourism in general, section B dealt with their perceptions of the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism in PSJ and section C collected data on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The theoretical underpinning of the questionnaire was the triple bottom-line of sustainable tourism development (Khan et al., 2020). In this research, the information-gathering technique adopted a structured survey, which was the main method for the collection of data. The survey was conducted with the managers of wildlife reserves, LED officials, tourism officials, managers of conservation and environmental affairs, residents of PSJ, traditional leaders, SMTE managers and owners. The fieldworkers (19) were former students of Walter Sisulu University in the study fields of tourism, hospitality and sport management.

According to Neuman (2014), the pilot study helps to remove confusing, unreliable and ambiguous questions. In the present study, a pilot survey was undertaken with residents of Kamga village which shares boundaries with PSJ. The purpose of the pilot study was to eliminate all three weaknesses mentioned in Neuman (2014) but also to assess the reliability and validity of the survey instrument. Following the pilot study some questions were redesigned to ensure clarity. Prior to data collection, nineteen fieldworkers were trained on general protocols of data collection, especially ethical conduct. All the fieldworkers were originally from PSJ, which encouraged the residents to be more readily forthcoming with

regards to participating in the study. The fieldworkers were former students of Walter Sisulu University in the study fields of tourism, hospitality and sport management. Hence, it was simple to inform and explain the tourism terms in the instrument. After that, the fieldworkers themselves completed the questionnaire as a dummy so that they could clarify areas that they did not understand before venturing into the field. The responses from the fieldworkers were not included in the analysis of the study. During fieldwork, the questionnaires were completed by the participants in the presence of the researcher or one of the fieldworkers. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed and 307 were returned duly completed and deemed acceptable. The response rate was therefore admitted at 76.75%. Data from the properly completed questionnaires was coded, captured on an excel spread sheet, and cleaned before being exported onto the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 for analysis. First, results of the data reliability and validity were obtained (table 2), followed by descriptive statistics and the exploratory statistics. As indicated in Table 2, Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for the community socio-economic perception measure was 0.928, which is a highly acceptable level above the minimum 0.5 (Hair, Gabriel & Patel, 2014).

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha reliability statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.928	37

Results and discussions

The following sections detail results from this study. It begins with a discussion of the demographic statistics, followed by an analysis of the respondents’ perception of the potential benefits of tourism development and the general impacts of tourism development in the community of PSJ.

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The demographic results presented in table 2 below indicate that most of the respondents in this study were females (58%), mostly within the age group of 21 – 30 years (36%) and lived on a monthly household income of between R1001 – R5000 (33%).

Table 2: Demographic characteristics

Variable	Attribute	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	128	42%
	Female	179	58%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>N= 307</i>	<i>100</i>
Age range	18-20	24	8%
	21-30	111	36%
	31-40	84	27%
	41-50	39	13%
	51-60	43	14%
	61+	6	2%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>N=307</i>	<i>100</i>
Monthly Income	None	64	21%
	≤ 1000	40	13%
	1001-5000	101	33%
	5001-10000	28	9%
	10001-15000	20	6%
	15001-20000	21	7%
	20001-25000	28	9%
	25001+	5	2%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>N=307</i>	<i>100</i>

Distribution of employment status and level of education by gender

Gender inclusive development has been described as indispensable in the attainment of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), (UN, 2021). There is no gainsaying that education is an important gateway to economic participation and employment (Asongu, Nnanna & Acha-Anyi, 2020).

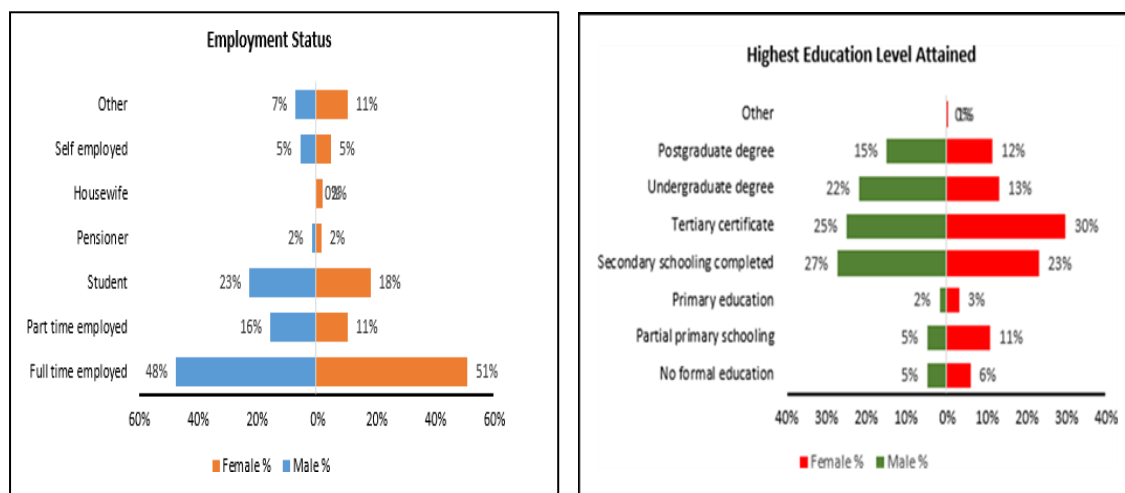


Figure 1: Distribution of employment status & Highest Education Level by gender
 Source: Authors

Information from figure 1 reveals some surprising insight in the sense that although majority of the respondents in full time employment (51%) are females as opposed to 48% males, ironically, there are more females with primary school education or less (20%) compared with only 12% males.

Tourism stakeholder status of the respondents

From a stakeholder perspective, this study considered it necessary to assess the interests of the respondents. The diversity of the stakeholder representation in the study is worthnoting as the community members, special interest groups (conservation and environmental organisations), public sector, development officials, among others took part in the study. It is evident from table 3 that most of the respondents were community members (74%), while 12% owned or managed tourism businesses and 6% were local LED authorities in PSJ.

Table 3: Respondents’ response rate in the study

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Manager of wildlife reserve	4	1
Local Economic Development officials	16	6
Tourism officials	6	2
Managers of conservation and environmental organisations	9	3
Residents of PSJ	228	74
Traditional leaders	6	2
Owners and managers of Small and Medium-size Tourism Enterprises	38	12
	307	100

Table 4. Community perceptions on the benefits of tourism development in Port St. Johns

Impact of tourism development	Gender of respondent	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
Tourism leads to infrastructure development	Male	7	10	17	34	32
	Female	9	10	10	39	32
Tourism makes it easier to start a small business	Male	5	12	17	37	29
	Female	8	10	17	34	31
Tourism makes it easier to get a job	Male	10	7	10	34	39
	Female	8	12	7	37	36
Tourism leads to the development of new products	Male	2	5	15	39	39
	Female	3	5	12	37	43
PSJ is a unique tourists destination	Male	0	2	10	29	59
	Female	7	3	2	32	56
Tourism represents a unique opportunity to market PSJ	Male	2	2	17	33	46
	Female	3	3	8	37	49
Tourism is a good driver of development in PSJ	Male	2	2	13	38	45
	Female	3	2	7	42	46
Average	Male				76%	
Average	Female				79%	

Source: Authors

Table 4 presents a gender perspective on the respondents' views on the benefits of tourism to the town of Port St. Johns. When positive perceptions are considered (agree and strongly agree), the results reveal that female respondents have a higher general positive score (79%) than male respondents (76%). A close examination of the variables reveals that females attribute the greatest benefit of tourism to be in its ability to drive development in PSJ (88%) and the consideration of PSJ as a unique tourist destination (88%), followed by tourism offering a unique opportunity to market PSJ (86%). Male respondents on the other were most positive about PSJ as a unique tourists' destination (88%), followed by tourism as a driver of development in PSJ (83%) and tourism as an opportunity to market PSJ (79%).

From a sustainable tourism perspective, this study was interested in understanding the views of the respondents on the potential economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism in their community (PSJ). The results in figure 2 below reveal that most of the respondents (52%) perceived the greatest benefits to result from economic impacts, with 40% of the benefits resulting from social impacts and about 37% attributed to environmental benefits.

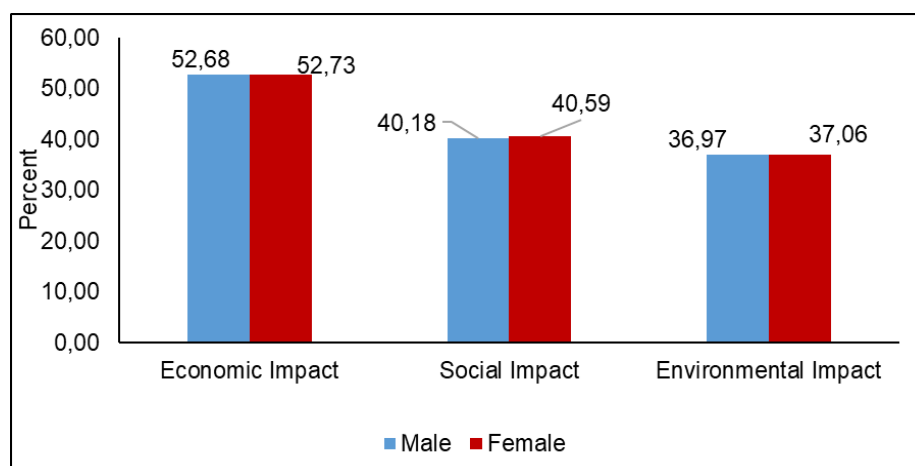


Figure 2. General impacts of tourism development in PSJ

Discussion

This study set out to explore the subject of rural tourism and inclusive development in Port St. John municipal community. Evidence from the demographic data reveals a slide dominance of female participation of 58% in the study. This finding is in conformity with information from the PSJ IDP which indicates that the population of females in PSJ is greater (53.58%) than males (46.42%) (PSJ Municipality, 2021; ECP, 2014). With regards to population distribution by age group and education, this study is also aligned with the PSJ integrated development plan that the youth (21-30 years old) constitute the greatest population cohort (36% in this study but just 22.8% in the PSJ IDP 2021/2022). Surprisingly, there are more women in full time employment (51%), even though 20% of them have just primary school education or less. The findings of this study are in contrast with the sustainable development goals report (United Nations, 2021) which states that men have greater access to full time employment than women. Secondly, the findings of this study reveal that stakeholder participation in the tourism sector in PSJ is broad-based as managers of wildlife reserves, development officials, conservation and environmental managers, owners of tourism SMMEs, among others took part in this study. This inclusive involvement in tourism development is a positive indication for tourism sustainability (Canh & Thanh, 2020; Dickson, 2010; Acha-Anyi, 2020).

Thirdly, even though there appears to be a general positive inclination between female and male respondents regarding the impacts of tourism on local economic development, females however display more positive tendencies towards the relationship between tourism and infrastructure development, the development of new products, tourism as a unique opportunity to market PSJ and tourism as a driver of development in general. This positive measure towards tourism development, especially among female respondents is in line with the findings of previous studies by Asongu, NNanna and Acha-Anyi, (2020); Bosworth and Turner, (2018) and Arintoko, Ahmad, Gunawan and Supadi, (2020).

It is also noteworthy that there is almost parity among the female and male participants on the general perceptions regarding the impacts of tourism on economic, social and environment spheres of community life in PSJ. However, perceptions of economic benefits are higher than those of social benefits and environmental impacts. This appears to be a common trend in previous studies (Curcic et al., 2021; Gabriel-Campos et al., 2021; Gao & Wu, 2017; Giampiccoli et al., 2014) where community members generally perceive greater economic benefits from tourism than social and environmental benefits. It is also surprising that perceptions on the general benefits (economic, social and environmental) of tourism are significantly lower than those on specific aspects of community life.

Implications

The discussion on the findings of this study point to significant implications on tourism sustainability in PSJ, policy directives and management recommendations. Sustainable development prescripts (UN, 2021) and sustainable tourism directives necessitate a balance between economic, social and environmental impacts of development initiatives. However, the findings of this study reveal a significant misalignment between the three tiers of sustainability. This implies that a purposeful realignment of tourism towards the sustainability drive is required from both tourism and development leaders in PSJ. This realignment should focus on ensuring a balance between economic, social and environmental benefits of tourism.

It is also apparent from this study that there is a policy gap between tourism development and local economic development as obtained in the local Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of PSJ (PSJ, 2021). The fact that the respondents perceive the general economic benefits from tourism to be significantly lower than specific benefits demonstrates that the daily benefits they see from tourism cannot be linked to the overall development plan or

objective for their community. This requires that tourism planning in PSJ be done in conjunction with the general IDP so as to harmonise tourism and general development planning.

In a community like PSJ with diverse and unique tourism resources such as healing springs, unspoilt flora, shark sightings, sardine migration, estuaries among others, the low levels of community involvement and enthusiasm for tourism come as a surprise. This is especially so when the unacceptably high levels of poverty and unemployment are considered (ECP, 2014; ECSECC, 2021). Hence, development leaders and government officials need to play a leading role in educating local people of development opportunities within the tourism space. This might entail organizing community development meetings from the grassroots where community members have input on planning and receive information on development options available.

Finally, a major implication of this study is that it exposes the weaknesses of adopting a silo approach to rural tourism development as seems to be the case in PSJ at the moment. While there are currently many stakeholders involved in tourism development in the community, there is hardly any evidence to suggest effect communication between them. Hence, the benefits from tourism can hardly be quantified and appreciated from a collective perspective. A good place to build from would be for the government and development partners to play a leadership role by encouraging an inclusive approach where tourism stakeholders work as a collective, sharing benefits and mitigating negative impacts.

Conclusion

This study recommends an inclusive approach in developing tourism in the rural community of Port St. Johns. The positive sentiment expressed by female respondents towards tourism development reveals that women have an important role to play alongside their male counterparts. It is also evident from the broad base of stakeholders involved in tourism in the community that a strategy to tourism development should be inclusive of all stakeholders.

This approach recommends that all government departments such as (Home Affairs, tourism, security, development, etc.) work together in playing a leadership role in tourism development. The imperative of this approach is dictated by the composite nature of the tourism product where the customers experience is impacted by aspects of the trip, the destination and the attraction. Hence, seamless co-ordination is important. From the tourism industry perspective, this study concludes that it is equally important to ensure quality product and service delivery across all sectors such as transport, tour operations, accommodation, entertainment and other services. This will standardise service excellence across the tourism sector. This study further highlights the important role that the community plays in sustaining tourism development in communities such as Port St. Johns. There should therefore be a conscious effort to involve all sectors of the community such as males, females, physically challenged people and youth groups in tourism development. Finally, a holistic approach to tourism development should be adopted to ensure an inclusive teamwork strategy in which there is regular consultation among all stakeholders. This will not only keep all parties informed of the costs and benefits of tourism development, but also ensure all stakeholders uphold their responsibilities.

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