Tourism and Hospitality Curriculum for Rural Communities Neighbouring National Parks in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe today, is the third largest foreign currency earner after agricultural exports and mining products. The industry is grounded on the country's unique cultural and natural heritage which is made up of sensitive ecosystems encompassing national parks and wildlife. The growth of tourism stimulating increasing investments in the industry may trigger adverse long term effects of developments in biodiversity and loss of wildlife. It is therefore vital that communities living next to tourist attractions be educated so that they practise eco-tourism or sustainable tourism as a matter of priority. The focus of this article is to identify a curriculum for the education of communities living in and around tourist attractions in Zimbabwe. Such a curriculum should equip the communities with the requisite understanding to preserve and protect their environment effectively applying contemporary and traditional knowledge systems. In a bid to come up with an education curriculum and training programmes incorporating tourism and hospitality education, some 145 out of a population of 300 respondents were interviewed in and around the tourist resort areas of Nyanga, Harare, Bulawayo and Victoria Falls. The article extends a realistic and practical framework for the development of a curriculum and training-programme-guideline for communities incorporating "Tourism and Hospitality" as a subject.

Keywords: *Tourism, Management, Communities, Sustainability, Education*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Up until the end of the Second World War, there was virtually no tourism in Zimbabwe with the Victoria Falls hotel built in 1904 being the only available accommodation unit. Significant tourism developments started emerging in the 1950's, initiating some improvements in facilities, and coinciding with the growth of world tourism in the 1960's, Zimbabwe's tourism took off, especially after the promulgation of the Hotels Act in 1968 when many small hotels countrywide were refurbished in anticipation of grading. A new momentous attraction Lake Kariba was built in 1958. Zimbabwe has a high biological diversity which forms the heart of its tourist attractions.

1.1 Background to study

The increasing investments in tourism may cause adverse effects of developments in biodiversity and loss of wildlife. It is therefore imperative that communities living next to tourist attractions be educated so that they practise eco-tourism or sustainable tourism as a matter of priority. With regard to tourism growth figures the country recorded 1 794 230 arrivals in 2012 with receipts totalling $746 million (ZTA, 2012).

1.2 Research problem

This article is borne out of the need to implement a tourism curriculum for communities staying in and around national parks incorporating tourism and hospitality which has become unavoidable. Although eco- and cultural tourism are being generally paraded as a panacea for the economic, social, environmental and cultural problems found in rural communities, there are few or no existing guidelines to foster sustainable tourism development.

1.3 How the research problem is to be addressed

It is therefore within this paradigm that this article seeks to develop a way to introduce tourism education as well as training for local communities. This should govern the implementation of eco- and cultural tourism to the maximum economic benefits of rural communities at the same time, minimising the negative social and cultural impacts. The focus of the article is therefore to identify a curriculum for the education and training of rural communities that enables them to benefit from tourism developments in their areas and to take the lead in protecting and preserving their tourism environments.

1.4 Significance of the study

Results from this research can be used to:

- o design the education curriculum for primary school learners as well as the training curriculum for local community learners in Zimbabwe;
- o form a basis for the creation of a secondary school education curriculum in tourism;
- o empower schools and local communities to appreciate, promote and reap maximum benefits from best practices in sustainable tourism; and
- o create an educational product that appreciates and promotes sustainable tourism in the community and for school children

1.5 Narrative hook of study

Indisputably, natural resources and biodiversity must be well-looked-after for posterity. Tourism development will accrue benefits for communities today. The need to balance sustainability of natural resources and growth of tourism is therefore unquestionable. There exists a gap in the development of tourism and the economic imperatives that are derived out of this development that leaves the local communities and the surrounding environment otherwise at a loss. As the emphasis is on sustainable development, this gap can only be bridged through education and training of tourism and hospitality in schools and communities adjoining tourism resorts. This education and training will be enhanced through the development of a tourism curriculum for primary school learners and significant tourism training for local communities.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism based on wildlife, demands large tracts of land to be set aside as animal habitats, thereby forcing land planners to forego other activities giving rise to conflicts over land use options. Moreover national fraught with tourist traffic are extremely fragile ecosystems. Following extensive spatial developments, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Estates in Zimbabwe was formed in 1964. Before the advent of the Europeans, the locals had arguably managed their wildlife in a sustainable fashion, killing only those animals that were necessary for their own habitually subsistence needs. They would not hunt down pregnant animals as an example. To make way for National Parks, land was taken away from the people, resulting in the villagers losing their food supplements, wild fruits, fish, and meat. They could no longer enter the National Parks to hunt for meat or harvest firewood. Grazing was poor and animals died or consequently gave very little milk and labour. Straying animals into National Parks were shot or confiscated. Honey could no longer be collected from 'state land'. Traditional healers could no longer collect their herbs for medicinal purposes. Frequent migration of animals into neighbouring communities in search for food caused widespread destruction of crops and to compound the problem, communal farmers were routinely killed as they were trying to protect their crops or property from wild animals. Only National Parks had the right to kill problem animals. Following these developments, National Parks suddenly became the bone of contention for the local communities living around the parks increasing hostility between the National Parks rangers, tourists and the local communities (MacIvor, 1994).

Literature reveals that Zimbabwe launched the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) projects in 1989 (Murphree, 1991; Petersen, 1991; McIvor, 1994) This programme was introduced at the beginning to curb poaching which was rampant in those National Parks neighbouring Communal areas, and later developed as a means to include local communities for a share in the requisite financial benefits, while encouraging them to conserve the environment.

If an economy consumes natural capital in producing current income, it must of necessity find a means of replacing this capital for posterity (Gillis *et al.*, 1992). Zimbabwe's tourism and hospitality developments need to merge short-term consumption patterns and economic goals with the long-term goals of sustainable development to ensure that future generations enjoy the fruits materialising out of the same environment.

3.0 HYPOTHESES

A holistic approach to tourism education at primary school level coupled with tourism training for communities would empower learners with the necessary skills and zeal to formulate and implement an economically sustainable tourism development in the school communities and later on as adults in their own local communities in Zimbabwe.

In addition, education and training in sustainable tourism will be imparted to rural communities through public-private-sector partnerships with NGOs, entrepreneurs and the business community in tourism.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to facilitate an investigation and data collection to develop this curriculum, a population of 300 was drawn up encompassing education officials, tourism stakeholders and workers within tourism resort areas and tourist attractions. The data were collected from 145 interviewees altogether, whereby 44 of those responses were from Harare and 33 from the Eastern Highlands in Nyanga, Mutare and Vumba, 30 from Bulawayo and Matopos and 38 from Hwange and Victoria Falls.

The investigation encompassed observations, in-depth and semi-structured face-to-face interviews which included asking open-ended questions, listening to and recording the answers and then following up with additional relevant questions. In-depth interviewing helps to probe beneath the surface, provides a means for soliciting feedback and ensures a more holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view. In addition the researcher being close to the respondent can probe to get wider responses out of the respondents. Harare, Eastern Highlands, Bulawayo, Hwange and Victoria Falls were chosen because they embrace major tourist resort areas in Zimbabwe.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Socio economic and socio cultural benefits to be reaped out of tourism

Asked about the local communities' possibilities for reaping maximum benefits out of their natural resources without damaging or depleting the resources themselves, respondents emphasised as presented in **figure 5-1** below the need for strengthening tourism education and awareness 25%, reinforcing the use of renewable energies in tourism investments 20%, underpinning the need to earn
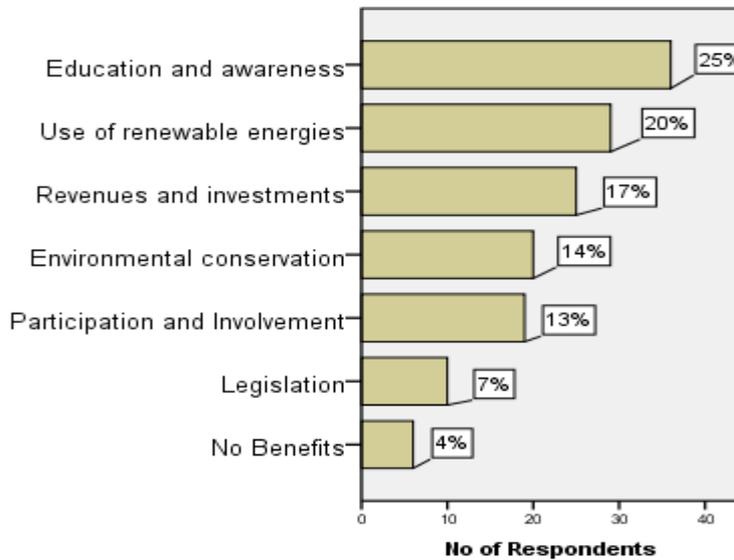

Figure 5-1 Possible community benefits to be reaped out using natural resources for tourism

revenues through tourism operations 17%, laying emphasis on appropriate legislation 17% and highlighting issues related to environmental conservation, protection and preservation 14% as well as participation and involvement 13%. However some 4% of the respondents were contended that there were no benefits to be reaped out of tourism by local communities because they felt that 'communities are never meaningfully involved in tourism while tourism itself is not an industry and earnings from sporting activities, business meetings or conventions should not be credited to tourism developments'.

5.2 Traditional ways of management and preservation of biodiversity

Asked to cite any traditional forms of wildlife management and biodiversity protection that can be incorporated into a primary school curriculum to enhance the development of eco-tourism, 35 of the respondents chose the use of totems as an effective tool for wildlife protection and preservation as shown in **figure 5-2** below. Some 24 respondents cited the traditionally recommended ways of protecting wildlife areas and preservation of virgin land as an effective tool.
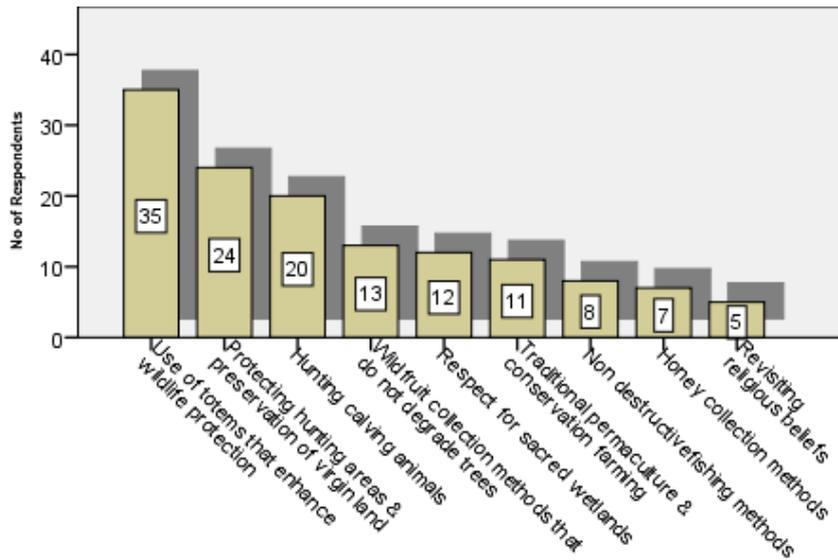
Figure 5-2 Traditional norms that enhance protection and preservation of
fauna and flora

The idea of forbidding the hunting of calving animals was cited by 20 of the respondents. Methods of collecting wild fruit were another tool used to protect plant life as highlighted by 13 of the respondents. Some 12 members of the respondents argued in favour of respecting and preserving wetlands which are traditionally considered to be sacred. Eleven respondents quoted traditionalpermaculture and conservation farming while eight respondents stated non-destructive fishing methods traditionally practised by communities. Seven respondents appraised traditional honey collection methods at the same time as five who recommended revisiting religious beliefs mentioning in particular, that snakes suffered human attacks or being killed as a result of the biblical ruling that Adam was advised to crush the snake's head at every encounter as punishment for coning Eve into devouring the forbidden fruit.

5.3 Challenges facing local communities in implementing tourism

Respondents were asked to highlight the challenges facing local communities when they manage their environment vis. a vis. tourism development and the preservation of their culture. In response, a large percentage of the respondents (23%) as revealed in **figure 5-3** below, showed concern about the imminent commoditisation of the host communities' culture triggered by the advent of tourism. They feared that the social fabric faced the danger of being destroyed by tourists and operators in their quest to make money out of observing and staging cultural activities.
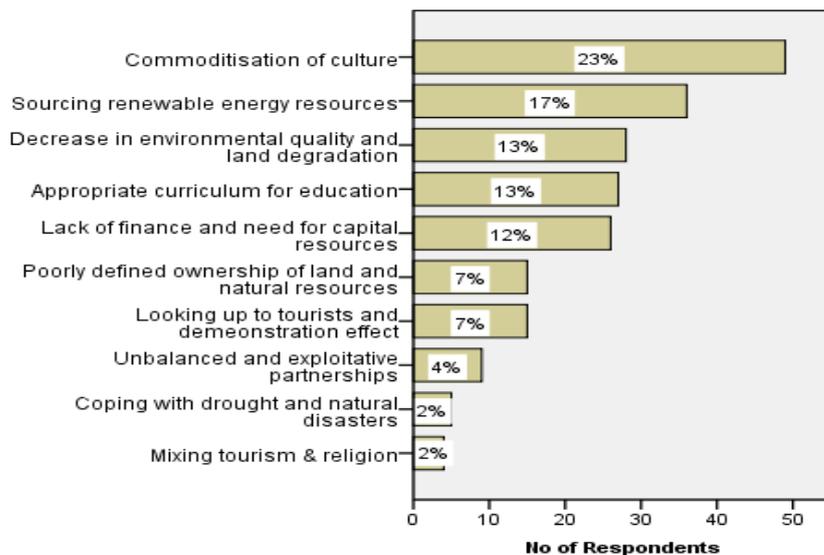

Figure 5-3 Local communities challenges in implementing tourism and
hospitality operations in their vicinities

Over 17% were more worried about the lack of renewable energy resources and how this could adversely affect the development of tourism when communities cut down trees to provide wood energy for cooking. In addition wood carvings for sale to tourists encouraged the cutting down of trees, a practice which calls for the immediate implementation of tree planting programmes to avert a catastrophic degradation of the environment.

A decrease in environmental quality and land degradation was also a major apprehension for 13% of the respondents even though the same percentage worried more about the development of an appropriate curriculum which addressed tourism and environmental issues whilst 12% cited the intermittent lack of finance and capital resources as serious challenges. Poorly defined titles to ownership of land and other resources of fauna and flora was cited by 7% of the respondents as a major challenge although the same percentage feared the demonstration effect which would be the leading factor causing moral decay of the social fabric within the communities. The demonstration effect would set in when the youth copy consumption patterns of visitors and emulate the tourists as role models. The rest of the respondents brought up the issue of unbalanced and exploitative partnerships (4%) and coping with natural disasters (2%) or mixing tourism and religion (2%) as further challenges facing communities in tourism prone regions.

6.0 FINDINGS

6.1 Education and awareness campaigns

There is need to educate and train communities so that they can perform efficiently and effectively. Respondents emphasised the need for strengthening tourism education and awareness. Through tourism education and conservation awareness campaigns, communities can be encouraged to employ best practices which include use of renewable energies, judiciously investing into tourism ventures, cautiously participating in the drafting of tourism legislation and protecting, preserving and conserving the environment. Even those respondents who argued that communities were never meaningfully involved in the running of tourism ventures were in a subtle way admitting that there is need to educate the local communities. Measures identified through respondents include:

- community education on tree planting ventures to enable regeneration of forests and vegetation;
- the use of totems within communities as an effective tool for wildlife protection and preservation;
- the employment of traditionally recommended ways of protecting wildlife areas and preserving of virgin land;
- forbidding the hunting and killing of calving animals;
- encouraging non-destructive methods of collecting wild fruit;
- raising awareness towards respecting and preserving wetlands traditionally considered to be sacred;
- practising permaculture and conservation farming throughout communal lands;
- employing non-destructive fishing methods in lakes, dams and rivers;
- bee-keeping while engaging sustainable honey-collection methods;
- revisiting some controversial religious teachings that might lead to adverse effects on biodiversity like the killing of snakes; and
- exploiting upcoming events and new forms of tourism such as religious tourism to invest in accommodation and conference facilities.

All the above are issues that should be incorporated into the communities curriculum or training programme in the syllabus for the subject (Tourism and Hospitality) to ensure that maximum socio-economic benefits are reaped out of engaging tourism developments.

6.2 Ownership of natural resources

Besides the issue of education and awareness, reviewed literature also brought up the challenge of ownership of resources and distribution of benefits out of tourism ventures. Respondents on the other hand came out strongly advocating for measures that mitigate on environmental degradation raised through education as well as through economic incentives such as local employment sponsorship of projects that empower communities and public, private and community partnerships. The respondents argued that considering locals for lucrative positions of employment could instil a sense of responsibility towards tourism ventures and ultimately translate into responsible behaviour towards the environment. The strong emerging feeling was that the communities themselves ought to encourage acclaimed ways of handling trees and forests that do not cause harm or degrade the trees, for instance fruit collection methods that leave the trees intact. Some people cut fruit trees when collecting fruits or others use stones to fell the wild fruits.

It emerged from the interviews that respondents also believed that ownership of resources by communities could be enhanced through the setting up of breeding conservatories for wild animals that are consumed by human beings. A given percentage of those animals would then be released into the wild once established to be able to survive on their own. Some of the animals could be kept in sanctuaries close to schools for education purposes.

Respondents advanced that instead of attracting high volumes of low spending tourists through the implementation of the "Look East Policy" on tourism, it would help to boost domestic tourism by making it a policy that companies sanction a given number of days to be taken as holidays by their employees and schools encourage that school fees include an allowance for taking out a compulsory number of days of holidaying for learners at places of tourist interest in Zimbabwe. There were propositions encouraging schools and communities to plant trees in general and to adopt environmental slogans such as '*for every tree cut, one needs to plant two trees and water them until they can survive on their own*'. Others even went further to propose that at every home, school, church and workplace learners and communities ought to assume a culture of planting both wild fruit trees and contemporary fruit trees, ordinarily grown in orchards to boost the environment and routine nutritional needs. Projects could be invigorated that encourage multiple wildlife conservation by schools and communities, encompassing chicken raring combining guinea fowls and ostrich, fish and crocodile breeding, bee-keeping, rabbit raring among others.

6.3 Curriculum review

Respondents were of the view that the current curriculum review should give the education fraternity, an opportunity to realise that sectors of the economy contributing strongly to the GDP like agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism should all be introduced from primary school level curricula through the teaching of related subjects. In this way, communities attending school at this level would be geared to tackle any empowerment issues related to socio economic development.

Responding to questions related to the quality of primary education in Zimbabwe insofar as tourism developments were concerned, the respondents were agreed that Zimbabwe does not have a viable long term policy framework on education and training which addresses the current socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental concerns of the country. This position supports the idea expressed elsewhere by respondents that they would like to see more locals within the vicinity of the tourism resorts favourably employed in tourism operations. The position also further echoes the notion that the Zimbabwe school curriculum laid far too much emphasis on academic education. Consequently, respondents were backing up a school or local communities' curriculum with more emphasis on manual and practical subjects which have a greater bearing on eco- and cultural tourism's impacts on schools and local communities. They raised the concern that the primary level curriculum does not provide for in-depth coverage of tourism and hospitality issues except for skeletal content on historical sites. Practical oriented subjects such as Environmental Science, Geography, Social Studies, Art and Culture, Wildlife Management, Home Economics and Physical Education integrating Sport also found favour with the respondents who contended that the content on the subjects could be refined to show their practical relevance to jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector. Moreover in the current setup, there is very little by way of practical skills included in the existing curricula that are tested at Grade 7 level and respondents believe that such a stance shows a general disregard for industrial training and job creation.

According to the current primary school curriculum, learners are examined in the core subjects, (English, Shona, Mathematics and Content) at Grade 7. The practical subjects (Environmental Science, Geography, Social Studies, Art and Culture, Wildlife Management, Home Economics and Physical Education) could be examined under Tourism and Hospitality. Incidentally, respondents suggested that areas with a potential for investment opportunities within the tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe included the management of conservancies in the country, tour operations, prospects in the accommodation sector and investments catering for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE).   Other sectors albeit receiving less support were sport, music, art and drama.

Although some respondents did not recognise sport tourism as part of the tourism and hospitality industry, reviewed literature identified three domains of sport tourism and these are:
- active sport tourism, which refers to people who travel to take part in sport (Hall, 1992);
- event sport tourism, which refers to travel to watch sporting events; and
- nostalgia sport tourism, which includes visits to sports museums, famous sports venues and sports themed tours (Weed and Bull, 2004).

Physical education and sports in primary schools would render the following twofold advantages to the learners and communities:

- − health benefits for those who take part; and
- − research and development for various forms of sports especially the indigenous varieties.

Making reference to the introduction of subjects with a practical orientation, examples of the National Foundation Courses written at "O" Level were cited with a recommendation to emphasise the importance of sport, music, dance, arts and culture in the primary school. It was further mentioned alongside this reference that the current National Foundation Courses should be given an "O" level status in order to enable one to use them to eventually pursue a higher qualification: diploma; higher national diploma; or degree in technical vocational, business / commercial studies.

Further comments on curriculum review dwelt on recommendations encouraging developing e-learning software to cater for education using computers on music, dance, home economics, sport, arts and culture. Respondents expressed the need to resuscitate the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau to rope in local publishers to write and print education materials locally. The Literature Bureau is credited with promoting indigenous languages development which constitute the pillars of basic learning and positive cultural development. Once revived, the Bureaux could also spearhead the development of drama, visual and performing arts. Emphasis was also given to the grooming of budding artists in practical areas with special emphasis on tourism teaching and learning materials. What the authors would need to do would be to collaborate with the Curriculum Development Unit to enable them to use the CDU syllabuses to guide them in their writing and publications.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The objective of this article was to identify a tourism and hospitality management curriculum to teach community learners in Zimbabweto enable them to develop skills to promote sustainable tourism in their regions. This goal was realised because the article proffered a realistic and practical framework for the development of a schools or community learners' curriculum in Zimbabwe. *Tourism and Hospitality* as a subject can be moulded to encompass largely practical learning areas comprising music, dance, drama, home economics, physical education, computers, history, geography, environmental science, languages, art and crafts. All these disciplines can be offered under the banner of tourism and hospitality management. Learners can be given the freedom to choose areas of specialisation according to their preferences and needs. The recommended curriculum can be used as a basis for a primary school tourism and hospitality education curriculum or for rural communities' adult-education-programmes and non-formal education provision for school leavers unable to attend normal day classes. Communities can also use the curriculum as part of their in-service training programmes when they venture into tourism and hospitality employment.

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