Tourism development and social carrying capacity of Zimbabwe's victoria falls rural peripheries

Forbes Kabote

Facultad de Ciencias Económicas

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Forbes Kabote*

Abstract

Tourism development induces changes on the social character of a destination. Such changes affect the sustainable development of the destinationand the relationship between hostsnd tourists. The purpose of this study was to explore how tourism development is affecting the social carrying capacity of Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls Rural Peripheries. The study is premised on the Social Exchange Theory. Qualitative data was collected from twenty nine villagers and forty two tourists using a questionnaire in 2013. The results showed that 80% (n=30) of the villagers are of the opinion that the social carrying capacity of the area has been surpassed whilst 90% (n=42) tourists still believe that there is more room for tourism development in this area. It was therefore concluded that there is a mismatch between the perceptions of the local villagers and tourists regarding the social carrying capacity of Victoria Falls rural peripheries, indicative of the long standing debate around when sustainable development is sustainable and in whose opinion. As a policy recommendation, it is high time the relevant authorities involve local people in tourism development issues thereby helping in creating a moment of truth that is socially sustainable for both tourists and host communities.

Key Words: Tourism development, Social Carrying Capacity, Victoria Falls, Host Communities, Rural Areas, Host and tourist safety, Zimbabwe

* SimbarasheChinofamba. School of Hospitality and Tourism, Chinhoyi University of Technology, P Bag 7724, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe. Corresponding Author: fkabote@cut.ac.zw

1.0 Introduction

Tourism is a fast growing industry and a valuable sector, contributing significantly to the local economy and society making it an important economic, social and cultural activity in many societies, both in developed and developing countries (Le-Klähn& Edwards, 2014; Telfer&Sharpley, 2007). Tourism has the potential to generate employment opportunities, create regional and local investment, provide local people with trade opportunities and support other economic sectors within a destination zone (Lin & Mao, 2015; Pappas, 2014; Ryan, 2003). Tourism development affects both host communities and tourists negatively and positively (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993). The social and cultural nature of tourism leads to socio cultural change in local communities. Social carrying capacity which is the maximum visitor density in an area at which the tourists still feel comfortable and uncrowded (De Ruyck, Soares, & McLachlan, 1997) needs to be managed if a community is to continue benefiting from tourism and minimising the negative effects of tourism. In the light of climate change and increasing global population there is increasing risk of host tourist conflict in areas of interface (Korstanje, 2009; Tarlow, 2014, Page, Essex &Causevic, 2014).Analogous to Butler (2006) tourist area life cycle, when the carrying capacity of a destination is reached it ceases to be attractive for new business and repeat business leading to decline in tourist arrivals. Destination managers worry about the sustainability of the destination and its ability to satisfy the current and future hosts and tourists of a destination (Erkus-Ozturk&Eraydin, 2010).

The Social Exchange Theory which is a sociological concept that describes the economic analysis of noneconomic social situations where two or more people are involved in a mutual contingent and rewarding process involving transactions (Emerson, 1976). This theory was adopted in analysing and interpreting the results as both tourists and host communities are involved in rural tourism. Host communities are the people who live in the vicinity of the tourist attraction and are directly or indirectly involved with, and or affected by the tourism activities (Smith, 2012). As such these people may be found within the destination or in the peripheries of the destination. It is usually those on the peripheries who live their life independent of everyday tourism activities that tourism promoters turn to when they want to showcase natural local cultures. In most cases this leads to rural tourism which according to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1994) is tourism taking place in the countryside.

Extensive tourism development affects the carrying capacity bringing about deviant behaviours, undesirable social effects such as increased prostitution, gambling, drunkenness, noise pollution, congestion and other excesses (Butler, 2011). Monterrubio, Gullette, Mendoza-Ontiveros, Fernández, and Luque (2012) highlight that crime, alcoholism and prostitution could also become issues of unstable social environment. The local culture is weakened by the acculturation process. Soontayatron (2010) argues that interchanges between the hosts and guests leads to acculturation, which is a scenario whereby the host or both ends drop the negative aspects of their own cultures for the better practices of their

counterparts. According to Soontayatron (2010) referring to the Irridex model by Doxey of 1975 agreed that the attitudes of local residents towards tourism development may evolve through stages of euphoria, apathy, irritation and potentially antagonism.

Safety and security of both hosts and tourists have become a critical issue in tourism studies since the September 11 terroristic attacks in USA (Hall, Timothy & Duval, 2003). Korstanje and Clayton (2012) concluded that tourists are willing to visit destinations with a higher security risk than their own home country giving indications that hosts and tourists perceive destination carrying capacity differently. In a study by Backer (2015), it was revealed that there are five tourism risk factors that affect tourism within a destination. These are war and political instability, healthy concerns, crime, terrorism and natural disasters. The effect of these factors can be felt at any point throughout the tourism cycle from source, to transit areas, to destination and back to source. Literature highlights that social carrying capacity of an area is not static but rather a dynamic position which can be increased or decreased depending on a host of external parameters (Jopp, DeLacy&Mair, 2010; McCool & Lime, 2001; Simón, Narangajavana&Marqués, 2004).

Victoria Falls is the first acknowledged tourist resort in Zimbabwe and was referred by McGregor (2003) as the early twentieth century resort that has been a tourist attraction since 1857. Victoria Falls region has been receiving tourists for more than a century and half. Many generations were born into tourist-community interaction. Based on this background the study therefore sought to provide answers to the question:- How has tourism development affected the social carrying capacity of Victoria Falls rural peripheries?

2.0 METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1 Study Area

The study was carried out at Victoria Fall rural periphery. Mpisi village which is the focal point of village tours in Victoria Falls was purposefully selected. It is four kilometres from Victoria Falls city centre hence conveniently located for a quick sun downer village tour. This village has managed to retain its traditional way of life despite all the tourism taking place in Victoria Falls over the past century and half. The village is characterised by traditional huts built using pole and mud whose floors are made of cow dung. People live on seasonally produced agricultural produce. They depend on herbal remedies for health problems and uphold their traditional values and customs.

Mpisi village has about one hundred (100) households legally registered who speak predominantly Ndebele language which is a local language. However, a few are fluent in Nambia and Shona which are other indigenous Zimbabwe Languages. English is also fairly spoken among the residents of Mpisi. Other than the 100 official residents, Mpisi hosts squatters who came to the city with hope of getting jobs but became destitute and these were not considered in this research.

2.2 Research Design

Following a qualitative methodological design, data were collected from residents of Mpisi village as host community in which the social carrying capacity dynamics are being assessed. Data were also collected from tourists visiting Mpisi village as these were the ones expected to directly influence and be influenced by the social dynamics taking place during tourist hosts interaction.

2.3 Data Collection

An open ended questionnaire was designed for data collection. The researchers pre-tested the questionnaire on a village close to Chinhoyi Caves (a historical tourism attraction in the town where the researchers are based) where interpreters were used. Feedback from the pilot test was used to fine tune the final instrument.

Convenience sampling was used were willing family heads found at home during the research period were asked to participate in the study. Thirty five households were targeted giving a sample size of 35%. With the aid of interpreters an open ended questionnaire was filled to collect data (Pagano, 2012). Male heads of the families were the first preference because according to African traditional value system they have a greater say on most family affairs and shape the community well-being as they take a lead on most issues affecting village life (Schwartz, 2006). However other family heads like mothers or children above the Zimbabwean legal age of majority (18) also participated in the study. The questionnaire was given to the respondents to fill in whilst the researchers waited. This resulted in a high response rate of 30 out of 35 questionnaires being returned fully completed.

The study was carried out in February 2013 over a 3 week period. This was a low tourism business period. During this period there were about two (2) village tours per week of about twenty people. Thus over the three (3) week data collection period, the average target tourist population reached one hundred and twenty (120). The researchers targeted a sample of 50 and 42 managed to successfully complete and return the questionnaire. The researchers distributed the questionnaire to willing tourists in each of the six (6) village tour groups. The tourists were asked to read through the questionnaire without answering any question on their way to the village. After their tour they were then asked to fill in the questionnaire. Thus the pre-exposure to the questionnaire was deemed essential in assisting the tourists as they experience the village tour to observe and understand issues in the questionnaire (Pink, 2013).

2.4 Data Analysis

Upon successfully collecting the questionnaires, they were screened for errors and completeness. The total usable questionnaires (72) were captured into NVIVO (10) for Windows for further analysis. In order to support arguments, selected quotes from the

questionnaires are used in presenting the results of the study. The quotes will also show the sex of the participant, their age and whether they are villagers or tourists. However their source shall remain anonymous for confidentiality purposes.

3.0 STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study findings showed two diverging views. One view was completely against further tourism development in the rural peripheries of Victoria Falls as they perceive it has brought many negatives than positives in the area. This view is dominated by respondents from the host community and mostly the older generation. That is 83.3% (n=18) of local residents interviewed that are more than 40 years old. On the other hand there is the view that tourism development was good for the village. 88.09% (n=42) of the tourists and 75% (n=12) host members who are less than 40 years dominated this view. The following table shows the summary of major themes that emerged from the study.

Main Theme 1

Tourism Development not good for rural peripheries

Sub Theme	Number of Responses	Frequency %
Crime	30	70
Alcoholism and drug Abuse	30	80
Prostitution	30	67
Early marriages and high divorce rates	30	60
Cost of Living	30	70
Children Promiscuity	30	80
Improper language	30	70
Disruption of traditional cultural Behaviour	30	50
Demonstration effects	30	66.67
Changes in the way of life	30	60

Main Theme 2

Pro further tourism development in Rural Peripheries

Interconnectedness of hosts and tourists	30	80
Community pride	30	70
Learning other cultures	72	76.38
Recreation	72	69.44
Employment	72	80.55
Standard of Living	72	62.5

Table 1:Summary of themes

3.1 Tourism development not good for rural peripheries

The introduction of tourism to the local community brought a number of undesirable activities within the village. Community members registered their unhappiness over activities now taking place within their village whose origin they attribute to tourism development.

Increase in crime rates

It was reported that as the village tours increased, so did the crime rate in the area. 70% of the hosts share this opinion. Participant 19 (Male, 45, Villager) had this to say "It is risk to walk during late hours due to the thieves looking for money. It is tough for us to visit the village at late hours if you are coming from town to the village". These are random muggings on other residents of the village who might be coming home after spending the day working in the city centre or even from visiting other areas. This creates an unsafe environment for villagers who were used to living in harmony as a community where members would look out for each other than mug each other.

The crimes are also targeted at tourists who are believed to have lots of money to spend and carry valuables such as cameras and jewellery. Participant 7 (Male, 36, Villager) indicate that "crime against tourists has increased; tourists are losing valuables to local thieves". This is not ideal for a developing community that hopes to gain more from tourism in the future.

These findings are consistent with Oppermann and Chon (1997)'s observations that tourists may be accidental or specific victims of crime violence because they are easier victims. The criminals consider tourists easy targets as they are not familiar with the destination and usually behave more carelessly (Williams, 1998).

Alcoholism and drug abuse

Alcoholism and drug abuse are on the rise in the village and 80% of the locals have attributed such to tourism development. Respondent 14 (Female, 50, Villager) indicate that "The youths are into alcoholism as they abuse the money they get from selling crafts". Though disturbing, this finding is not new in tourist destinations but rather confirms early findings in tourism research. In the Dominican Republic, the amount of alcohol consumed per adult per year increased from 1.18 L in 1961 to 6.11 L in 2001, reaching a peak of 7.71 L per person in 2000 (World Health Organization, 2004). Much of this increase was attributed to the growth of transnational alcohol companies that have marketed and invested heavily in major Caribbean tourist destinations (Parry, 2000). However, no detailed data on actual volume was availed in Victoria Falls, the anger exhibited in the statement by the participant highlights that the magnitude has gone beyond acceptability and redemption. Other associated costs of alcohol abuse include increase in Human Immune Virus (HIV) infections and other sexually transmitted diseases (Fritz et al., 2002). The healthy risks, both hosts and tourists are exposed to are not good for a tourism destination.

Increase in prostitution in the area

Respondents viewed that tourism has paved way for the increase in prostitution activities. 66,67% of the community respondents shared this view. Respondent 15 (Male, 40, Villager) state that, "Prostitution is now high in the area as members of the community try to look for money from tourists as well as those who get money from tourism related activities".

The need to protect the girl child and develop as a nation cannot be attained if such behaviours continue spreading in rural peripheries around major attractions. The extent of increase in prostitution attributed to tourism has been contentious without any agreement (Oppermann& Chon, 1997).

As a social phenomenon, prostitution deserves special attention as it is seen as a social evil or disease (Kempadoo, 2001). Prostitution remains relevant in contemporary societies as a key economic, socio-cultural and health issue. Orphans are being left in the village in the custody of old grandparents due to the HIV and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) pandemic. Participant 28 (Female, 65, Villager) says "Most women are venturing into prostitution and they end up being infected by the deadly disease. I am taking care of my grand children whose parents died of HIV/AIDS. My Son was very promiscuous and he ended up being infected and also infected his wife. They died at a younger age leaving me in disharmony". Words of wisdom and anguish in the community with all the blame pointed at tourism development. Although the numbers of researches on the impacts of tourism on prostitution are scarce, scholars argue that there indeed is a link between these phenomena. Wall and Mathieson (2006) argue that the tourism process creates locations and environments that attracts prostitutes and their clients. Given that tourism has become a conduit for fast spread of diseases, the healthy risk experienced by the people visiting and resident in this village can be felt throughout the world in a space of days if not controlled (Baker, 2015).

Early marriages and high divorce rates

Respondent 8 (Male, 48, Villager) indicates that, "Early marriages amongst the youth who see themselves as self-sustainable due to the tourism income they acquire are increasing. My son got married at 18 years as soon as he got a job at a Tour operator company. When his contract was terminated he could not sustain his marriage and he divorced his wife soon after the job loss". This Hollywood lifestyle is not ideal for a poor community that does not have resources to support the children, hence creating a poverty circle that will take generations to break. 60% of the respondents were in agreement on the effects of tourism on early marriages and high divorce rates.

Most working women were divorced in this area. Respondent 27 (Female, 35, Working Villager) indicates that "At work place most of the women employees were once married or have divorced their husbands, I think the men were not comfortable having their wives working in hotels with the nature of the working shifts which are not flexible for a women to be working at the same time to be house wife".

High Cost of living

The price of many goods and services in the community has increased significantly because of tourism. 70% of the respondents agreed that the cost of living in the community has increased because of tourism. Respondent 26 (Male, 28, Villager) aver that, "Everything is very expensive and we cannot afford what we desire in our social life and we are always stressed." The high costs of living are not limited to the peripheries. They are also being felt in the town as Respondent 6 (Male, 30, Villager) alluded to "there is crowding in houses as rentals are very expensive, I saw it when I visited my brother who stays in Chinotimba (a suburb in Victoria Falls town) who share a small room which they partition using curtains." Thus the local residents do not have anywhere to turn to for cheaper items as both the village and town economies are expensive leaving the residents poorer. According to Neto (2003), tourism development increases pressure on the availability and prices of the resources consumed by the local community such as food, energy and raw materials. As such the findings of this study are consistent with these earlier findings confirming that despite its location and the socio-cultural environment of Victoria Falls it is equally affected by tourism just like any other destination throughout the world.

Promiscuity in Children

Residents indicated that their children have lost interest in education because of tourism activities in the village (80%). They argue that these children skip school to go after tourists and expose themselves to tourism related activities. Respondent 13 (Male, 40, Villager) says that "School children no longer value formal education and there are a number of school dropouts in the village". Residents are worried about the level of promiscuity of their children.

Denying children pocket money as a deterrent measure against children promiscuity is no longer effective as children now earn money from tourism. However as most of them do not

have the necessary skills to make enough money they end up peddling drugs and themselves abusing drugs. As a result they start harassing tourists who visit the village exposing the tourists to crime risk which if not managed can be fatal as is the case in Jamaica (Korstange and Clayton, 2012).

Unacceptable vulgar language

Language abuse is becoming common in the village where 70% of the villagers are now worried. Prentice (1993) states, language present a particular sensitive issue especially when a new language is introduced in the host region. The growth of tourism in the Victoria Falls rural peripheries is also associated with the introduction of what is locally considered an unacceptable vulgar language. Respondent 1 (Male, 50, Villager) note "The youths are using some vulgar language when you are talking to them such as fuck you, damn you". In a conservative society like Victoria Falls rural periphery the use of such language is totally unacceptable.

Linking such to tourism, Mbaiwa (2003) state that the bad foreign language or words and many other insulting expressions are commonly derived from the English mostly spoken in United States. The continued interaction between tourists and the community exposes the children to such language. Character modelling and imitation results in the children thinking that these behaviours are normal bringing conflict within the community.

Disruption of traditional cultural behaviour patterns

Traditionally knit villages around major attractions are crumbling under the influence of tourism development agreed 50% of the respondents. Fear is now high on where exactly the tourism development is taking the community. Participant 4 (Male, 56, Villager) indicate that "People are no longer mourning at funerals as they are always busy searching for money, selling craft work. When a person passes away in the village it is a mandatory requirement and responsibility of locals to attend funerals especially the men who do the digging of the grave but very few people are attending the funeral. People are more concerned about searching for money from tourists". Funerals are community problems and members are socially expected to participate knowing that on another day, they too will need community sympathy and empathy. These behavioural changes unearthed in this study are consistent with tourism impacts. Ghaderi (2004) highlight that tourism impacts brings changes in value systems/behaviour threatening indigenous identity and these changes often altar community structure, family relationships, collective traditional life styles, ceremonies and morality.

Demonstration effects

Gössling (2002) state, the demonstration effect is merely shown through local populations mimicking visible aspects of tourists' culture such as apparel, haircuts, and dressing. They are attracted by the tourists' clothing and eating habits and their spending patterns. This is called the demonstration effect. The problem is that the local population often cannot afford the tourists' way of life, which may lead to feelings of frustration.

Many respondents (66.67%) highlighted that the local people are copying the way the foreigners dress. For example respondent 17 (Female, 55, Villager) felt "Many young ladies are wearing miniskirts and trousers as a way to imitate what the female tourists do wear as well as the male counterparts wear safari type of dressing the khaki shirts and shorts just to look like the male tourist." Whilst it gives the locals confidence, it also makes them lose their identity falling into an identity crises. It also makes it difficult for tourists to identify the local people when they need help leaving them susceptible to abuse by conmen and thieves who pretend to be genuine tourists yet have bad intentions.

Locals also felt that there is now a new trend in hairstyles sported by locals especially males. Respondent 18 (Male, 35, Villager) indicate that "There are many dreadlocked men in the village because of the perceived belief that white females think that being dark complexioned, muscular and savage looking means one is sexually potent." Their hope is to attract female white tourists for various favours such as sex, purchases of their artefacts, long term friendships and even marriages.

The spending pattern of locals has been greatly influenced by the presents of tourists. Locals now want to buy expensive cameras and cellular phones similar to those they see with tourists. Some are even buying mineral water instead of drinking their usual well water as they thought mineral water is safe to drink because tourists are always drinking it.

Host communities do not realise that each day a new tourist arrives in their area showcasing the same characteristics consistent with tourists. Amelung (1999) aver that tourists are not as rich and successful as they seem. Some tourists use their lifelong savings for that dream holiday and locals simply cannot match that dream and live it daily. Gössling (2002) found that imitating tourists in everyday life among locals is a problem common in host communities.

Change in the way of life

In Mpisi the community structure has changed greatly and 60% of the respondents agree on this view. Respondent 22 (Male, 38, Villager) were of the view that "More people came from other towns for employment and our wives no longer want to stay in the village as they believe that man will take other women in the town centre". Seasonal demand for labour in the tourist town has attracted people from other areas. However, when the demand goes down, these seasonal workers become destitute and settle in the nearby village where they are not harassed by local council authorities as is the case when they settle in the town itself. This is distorting the community structure of the local village and feelings of resentment towards both the settlers and tourists (believed to have brought them) are on the high in the village.

Tourists often, out of ignorance or carelessness, fail to respect local customs and moral values. Residents are more worried about the way tourists behave. More than 90% of the local residents hate the way tourists behave. Respondent 28 (Female, 65, Villager) indicate that "tourists do not value and respect our societal values; they are much very relaxed in foreign land and behave wildly to the extent of kissing in public which is against our culture". The continued perceived disrespect for local values will trigger resentment towards tourists.

If not managed well tourism development in the area will not be welcome as it will be seen as detrimental to societal growth.

With tourism taking place throughout the year some residents of the area are completely ignoring their traditional way of life hoping to solely survive on earnings from the tourism industry. However, as expectations exceeds reality villagers become desperate and end up harassing tourists for tips and tokens of appreciation for any hand or assistance they offer to a tourist. Tourists are not happy with this behaviour as it threatens long-term sustainability of tourism in the area. Locals were equally unhappy with such aggressive tactics to get money as people are now becoming more concerned about money than relations whenever they assist someone, a social characteristic not welcome in conservative communities like most African rural areas were oneness is highly valued.

Tourism development the future of attractions' rural peripheries

The tourists and those community members under the age of 40 years dominated the view that there is room for further tourism development in rural peripheries around Victoria Falls particularly Mpisi village. Their arguments are based on what the village is benefiting at the moment and what it is to benefit in the long term if tourism is well developed and managed in this small village which is strategically located next to one of the World's natural wonders.

Interconnectedness between hosts and tourists

It was interesting to note that 80% of the residents did not have a once off relationship with tourists just when they were in the village instead they developed personal relationships to the extent of identifying each other as friends. For example respondent 1 (Male, 50, Village) had this to say:-

"There are people that I see very regularly and they become almost like friends. 'Oh, you are back again!' And they say, 'Yes we are here and we brought family this time'. People ask all sorts of questions about everything and you get into some pretty involved conversations and I feel pretty close to some of them."

This closeness allows the hosts to interact with their clients sharing vital information instrumental in acculturation and evolvement of the local community. New concepts are borrowed from tourists and implemented in the village improving the quality of life of the villagers. The feelings of friendship were also noted among the tourists with most of them saying that they felt welcomed in the village and are proud of the positive feelings they got from the villagers. The ability of the villagers to identify them and associate with them made them feel part and parcel of the community.

These findings are consistent with findings of Pizam, Uriely, and Reichel (2000) that focused on working tourists in Israel and concluded that positive interactions with the host community led to a change from typical negative attitudes and feelings toward their host to more positive attitudes and feelings. Positive interaction presents a better platform to share developmental ideas which can make the village better off in the long run.

Pride in own community identity

Residents perceive that the community's identity and pride have improved through tourism so felt 70% of the respondents. Respondents were surprised at how much their little village could be so visible on the international tourism map. Respondent 10 (Male, 27, Villager) indicate that "The community is now on the social interaction network and KoMpisi Village is the name of the face book page." The page currently has 84 likes. Interestingly the people who liked the page and those commenting on various postings on the page are spread throughout the world covering USA, Asia, South America, Europe and Africa. The residents therefore feel part and parcel of the global community and being able to influence global trends as much as they are influenced by them.

Learning of other cultures and languages

76.38% of the respondents believed that tourism development provides them with an opportunity to learn about and experience different cultures, obtain new skills and knowledge, and reflect on one's own cultural circumstances. They believed that tourism exposes the locals to other cultures and can result in tolerance and understanding of tourists. Respondent 17 (Female, 55, Villager) thought "through interaction there are high chances for the community to venture into education for them to be able to communicate well with tourists and learn foreign languages". Respondent 27 (Female, 35, Working Villager) agreed with this view and had this to say "People in the community will appreciate other cultures or see the other side of the world from the tourists that visit you".

Recreational opportunities

Tourism is a major reason for the variety of entertainment in the community. 69.44% of the respondents were in agreement that tourism provides more recreational opportunities for local residents and tourists. Most tourists are grateful of wider range of recreational facilities offered in Victoria Falls. Smith (2012) posit that there is no anyway tourism facilities can be isolated from the hosts. In that respect host communities will also have access to more recreational activities which if not of tourism would not have been in existence. Respondent 6 (Male, 44, Tourist) who is an Australian resident commented that "through participating in recreational activities, locals can be able to manage stress". Stress management is critical for a healthy society thus tourism development is proving critical in making the community healthier.

Employment and qualification impacts

Tourism development creates employment opportunities for residents in the community agree 80.55% of the respondents. Respondent 25 (Female, 48, Villager) indicated that, "One of my children was not bright in school but had talent in making souvenirs and other crafts". She also went on to affirm that her son now own a craft shop in Victoria Falls town.

Neto (2003) and Beeton (2006) stipulated that tourism development provides jobs especially for the rural communities since it attracts a remarkable pool of semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Respondent 4 (Male, 56, Villager) aired out that, "We get money from tourism and we are staying in our community and no longer migrate to other areas in search for survival". However residents are encouraging their children to go to school for better future prospects in the tourism industry as echoed by Respondent 19 (Male, 45, Villager). These views support earlier findings by Riley, Ladkin, and Szivas (2002) who predetermined that tourism may encourage people to study a new profession, languages or to learn old skills and old traditions. This is essential if the villagers are to be able to wade of competition from migrants coming to the destination looking for survival than serving the tourism industry who end staging and selling fake items for the sake of money.

Standard of living

62.5% of respondents were in agreement of uplifting of standard of living due to tourists spending in the community. Respondent 13 (Male, 40, Villager) who indicated that the quality of life of the community is raised as all those who manufacture artefacts and souvenirs have had their social standards raised. This view is consistent with Cooper (2003)'s sentiments that development can cause local people's interests to be part of tourism and also improve the local community's mood and quality of life.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to explore how tourism development has affected the social carrying capacity of Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls Rural Peripheries. The following conclusions were made from the research findings:

Despite not having specific questions on defining tourism development and social carrying capacity being asked, the responses given to various questions indicated that both hosts and tourists agree that tourism is developing and host's social life is changing. The two groups are also in agreement that tourism development is influential in the changes taking place to the hosts' social life.

Villagers especially those of the older generation above 40 years were of the belief that continued tourism development is not good for their village. They perceived that the social carrying capacity of the village has been exceeded as such they have lost control of their way of life with tourism to blame for bringing foreign cultures, behaviours and opportunists who are commercialising their traditional way of life for minimal benefits if any at all.

The younger generation of residents below 40 years, those that has benefited from tourism development and tourists who have been to other areas were in agreement that the maximum social carrying capacity of Mpisi village has not yet been reached. They believe that more tourism development will give them more benefits as long as they are well prepared for and managed.

The hosts and tourists do not agree on the status of Victoria Falls Rural Periphery developmental implications to the host community. As such the following insights were made.

There is need for stakeholder involvement especially the rural community through their local representatives such as Chiefs, Councillors and members of Parliament in tourism planning and development. This would encourage total understanding of the tradeoffs between tourism development and community costs such as changes in the social life of the host community. Community active participation is critical if developmental goals are to be achieved in any host community (Mansuri&Rao, 2004).

There is need to invest tourism proceeds in educating the local community both formally and informally. The education will prepare hosts for developmental changes in tourism demands, what is expected of them as hosts and knowledge about real tourists' behaviour. As such they would be able to accommodate them or at least know where to draw the line when it comes to what is and is not acceptable in a tourism active community. It has been observed that conflicts between tourism development and host community can best be ameliorated through educating the community (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005). Education was seen as essential in shaping community perceptions towards development hence minimising both passive and active conflicts (O'Riordan& Stoll-Kleemann, 2002).

Tourism promoters to rural tours should invest in educating their clients on local expectations that will enable them to maximise value for their money when they visit the rural peripheries and minimise the impacts of the risk factors they will be exposed to whilst at the destination.

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