

An Insight into Community-Based Ecotourism in Eswatini: Theory versus Practice

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Abstract. The study provides a baseline of the performance of Community-based Ecotourism (CBET) ventures in Eswatini using primary data collected from 186 participants. The data was collected through face-to-face interviews amongst across five CBET sites. Descriptive and thematic analysis were used to identify; the benefits of CBET accrued to host communities, challenges communities experience in providing goods and services to CBET ventures, and the factors preventing broad based participation. Frequencies of responses were used to determine the perceptions and attitudes of host communities towards CBET. The study finds that many of the promises of CBET have not been fully met in Eswatini. Economic benefits have not been widespread and remain minimal, with approximately 42 jobs in total. Participants receive an average monthly income of E1457.40 ± 933.80, an indication of high disparities in monetary incentives amongst participants. The study finds that CBET has been a catalyst for infrastructural development within rural landscapes and provides participants with additional intangible benefits such as a sense of empowerment and belonging. Poor infrastructural maintenance, inadequate marketing and declining tourist visitations are major threats to the sustainability of CBET ventures. Efforts to augment the performance of CBET in Eswatini should focus on investment in research and monitoring of present and potential new CBET ventures. The study recommends integrated and inclusive policies that will promote and allow for expanded local production in the tourism supply chain, partnerships between host communities and industry experts, and local capacity enhancement to reignite CBET within the tourism sector as a serious contender for economic growth.

Keywords: Community-Based Ecotourism, Community Development, Sustainability

1. Introduction

Over the six decades the tourism industry has experienced consistent growth and diversification for, making it one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world (United Nations World Tourism Organisation –UNWTO, 2017). The impact of the tourism industry on the global community is becoming increasingly apparent, culminating in an estimated 1.2 billion international tourist arrivals in 2016, a figure which is forecasted to rise to 1.8 billion by 2030 (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD, 2018).

Despite the global downward pressure on public finance, global budgets for tourism has either been maintained or increased due to the growing awareness of the potential contribution of the sector to job and wealth creation, economic growth, and poverty alleviation (OECD, 2018). Learning from other countries, Government of Eswatini (GoE) has since identified tourism as a key sector to anchor economic activity in its development policies. The Eswatini 2019-2022 Strategic Roadmap, for example, prioritises the tourism sector as a key engine for economic recovery. Furthermore, the GoE in the National Tourism

Policy of 2019 recognises tourism as a priority economic activity that has the potential to sustainably contribute to national development.

In Eswatini nature and cultural activities form the bulk of the tourism products on offer. A majority of Emaswati depend on biodiversity for a variety of practical uses including food, traditional medicine, fuelwood and cultural ceremonies (UNDP, 2012). Consequently, the natural environment, rural landscapes and livelihoods are interlinked constituting a significant part of Eswatini's tourism industry. This interlinkage could potentially be further elevated as currently numerous Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET) ventures in Eswatini have been identified as new potential protected areas (PA's). This is an outcome of poor natural resource management observed, and the country's quest to expand and strengthen its PA network (UNDP, 2012). Therefore, cumulating a tourism industry that is cognisant of the environment and, which safeguards and enhances local livelihoods is crucial if Eswatini is to become a leader in the sustainable tourism industry as envisioned in the country's National Tourism Policy (2019).

CBET provides for an attractive tourism development strategy for Eswatini, where more than half of the population (58.9%) are living below the poverty line, and a majority (70.2%) of Eswatini's disadvantaged reside in rural areas (EHIES, 2018). The country's high Gini Coefficient (51.5) indicates that economic growth in Eswatini has not been pro-poor nor inclusive over the past decade, and therefore numerous development policies such as the Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth (SSDIG) (2017) have prioritised rural development and broad-based participation in economic growth.

Realising the benefits of CBET, Eswatini through the Eswatini Tourism Authority (ETA) and external donors such as the European Union (EU), established numerous CBET ventures such as Mahamba Gorge, Ngwempisi Hiking Trails, Nsangwini Rock Art, Sibebe Rock and Shewula Mountain Camp. However, due to the lack of monitoring of CBET ventures since their inception, the performance of CBET ventures, and the benefits accrued to host communities remains unknown.

Based on the above assertions it is apparent that the country is looking up to the tourism sector to reignite economic growth. CBET, in particular, is envisaged to play a critical role in fostering inclusive and sustainable growth. However, it is not known whether CBET is yielding the expected dividends for the host communities in Eswatini. Moreover, even though community support is a critical ingredient in the success of CBET ventures, in the context of Eswatini, knowledge on community members' perceptions towards CBET remains an empirical question. In the same vein, opportunities and challenges faced by CBET ventures in Eswatini has received little to no attention from the scholarly community hence policy makers have nothing on which to base policy direction leaving such policies open to criticism. It is therefore against this backdrop that the paper seeks to provide a baseline on how CBET ventures are performing in Eswatini. Specifically, the study highlights the benefits accrued to host communities, determines the challenges faced by community members in providing goods and services to CBET ventures, highlights the factors preventing broad based participation in CBET ventures, and explores the perceptions and attitudes of host communities towards CBET development in Eswatini.

The subsequent sections of this paper are organised as follows. Section two provides the review of literature, which provides a summary of CBET implementation around the world (including the benefits accrued, the emerging challenges and perceptions of host communities towards CBET). The conceptual framework is also presented in this section. In section three, the paper presents the methodology employed to achieve the objectives of the study. In

section four, the paper presents the results and discussions, which is followed by the last section, section five, the conclusions and policy recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 CBET for sustainable tourism development

The concept of ‘alternative’ forms of tourism became popular following observed negative social and environmental impacts associated with mass conventional tourism (Saarinen and Rogerson, 2015; and Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018). Cobbinah (2015) explains that conventional tourism (i.e. privately or state owned) tends to be exploitative and solely focused on profit maximisation often for external and large multinational corporations such as international airlines; world tour operators and agents; and a small proportion of local elites. High economic leakages (i.e. the majority of revenue generated is lost to external economies, for example when most goods or services are imported) within the tourism industry have been attributed to the lack of; local ownership, local employment and linkages within the economy (Cobbinah, 2015). Therefore, causing enclaves of tourist sites that exclude most of the local population, by limiting opportunities for local entrepreneurs and small medium enterprises (SMEs) to participate and benefit from providing goods and services to tourist ventures and tourists (Kaplan, 2013; and Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018).

In recent years, community-based niche tourism strategies, such as Community-based Ecotourism (CBET) have been considered as sustainable alternative forms of tourism when compared to mass/conventional tourism (Kaplan, 2013). CBET is defined as “responsible travel to protected areas, that promotes conservation and enables socio-economic benefits to local populations through giving them active involvement opportunity” (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996). The fundamental principle of CBET is that host communities manage and share the benefits derived from CBET ventures (Saarinen and Rogerson, 2015; and Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018). The promise of CBET is that it fosters inclusive economic growth, contributes to local capacity building and ultimately leads to local development that is pioneered by the local community (Afenyo and Amuquandoh, 2014; and Lapeyre, 2010). In theory, CBET also protects and minimises the dependence of local communities on natural resources by providing alternative non-extractive sources of income and therefore has since been recognised as a key strategy for sustainable natural resource management of communal natural resources (Cundill *et al.*, 2013).

CBET emphasises local participation of locals through the devolution of rights and responsibilities over tourism sites to host communities (Cobbinah, 2015; and Mufune, 2015). Local participation creates opportunity for enterprise development and income generation within and for the host community (Cobbinah, 2015; and Mufune, 2015). Furthermore, the natural environment ‘pays for itself’, in the sense that the economic benefits received act as an incentive for local communities to protect the very resources which they generate an income from. Resulting in a ‘win-win’ scenario where the natural environment is protected and host communities are able to sustain their livelihoods through non-extractive methods (George and Nedelea, 2007 and Mufune, 2015).

2.2 CBET implementation around the world

CBET has gained momentum particularly in many developing countries (Afenyo and Amuquandoh, 2014; and Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2016). The next section will present case studies of CBET, not only highlighting the benefits of CBET when managed and implemented correctly but also the challenges and costs experienced by host communities.

2.2.1 Benefits of CBET

The extensive body of literature on the benefits of CBET highlights that a variety of benefits accrue to communities who host CBET projects. For example, a CBET project in Namibia gave local farmers the opportunity to increase their sources of income through providing an additional platform for farmers to sell their produce (Lapeyre, 2010 and Mufune, 2015). CBET in this region has also minimised rural-urban migration by creating new economic activities and employment opportunities (Lapeyre, 2010 and Mufune, 2015). Therefore, CBET has the potential to contribute towards addressing rural-urban divide and promoting rural development as envisioned in Eswatini's PRSAP.

In addition to job creation, infrastructural development takes place along CBET ventures and often includes road construction, building of schools and clinics and, the provision of water and electricity (Afenyo and Amuquandoh, 2014; Eshliki and Kaboudi, 2011 and Garraway, 2008). Other benefits observed include, opportunity for social interaction between communities and tourists which have shown to impact positively in terms of; bringing societal peace and, integrating different cultures (Eshliki and Kaboudi, 2011). Using locally sourced employment has its own benefits as highlighted by Salazar (2012) who found that well-trained local tour guides have an insider's positionality which gives them the advantage of knowing and understanding cultural sensibilities that exist within communities. Local guides are most likely to identify disjunctures that exist between local conceptions of the 'community' versus the ways in which visiting tourists imagine those communities (Salazar, 2012). CBET also increases the number of attractions, recreational opportunities, and services to cater for a wider tourist market and thus adds to the global competitiveness of host countries (Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018).

From an environmental perspective, CBET has been recognised as a tool for supporting and promoting biodiversity conservation; particularly in less developed countries (Naidoo *et al.*, 2011 and Wali *et al.*, 2017). CBET provides an economic incentive through income generation for host communities to actively protect their resources as this is what their income is dependent on. A popular and successful example of the community based natural resource management is the case of Namibia where CBET has provided indigenous communities within Namibia a source of steady income. This has been an important development as Namibia is mostly desert and therefore communities are unable to meaningfully partake in and depend on agriculture sources of income (Naidoo *et al.*, 2011). Participants should appreciate its endeavours in contribution to ecosystem benefit, because it is also through man kind that ecosystem could have all its chains undistracted.

2.2.1.1 The relationship between benefits accrued to host communities and their perceptions towards CBET development

Host communities are essential for the sustainability of CBET ventures and therefore, fostering positive attitudes towards CBET is critical for ensuring local support for CBET (Meimand *et al.*, 2013; and Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2015). CBET development has also shown to foster positive attitudes towards tourism development, which has been found to encourage participation amongst community members (Kayat, 2002; Eshliki and Kaboudi, 2011; Lin *et al.*, 2016). The Social Exchange Theory (SET) is one of the most widely used theories by researchers studying community attitudes (Jurowski *et al.*, 1997; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011). SET postulates that individuals engage in exchanges if the exchange is likely to produce rewards that are perceived to be greater than the costs (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011). As stated by Ap (1992), "actors will engage in an exchange if the rewards are of value to them and the perceived costs do not exceed the perceived

benefits”. Literature shows that benefits improve community support for tourism development whilst perceived costs negatively influence community support for tourism development (Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2015). According to the SET, in determining the perceptions towards and level of support for tourism development, one can discern whether or not benefits accrued to the host community have met their expectations.

2.2.2 Costs of CBET and emerging challenges

Despite the enormous support for CBET development, concerns within academia revolves around the nature of the distribution of benefits especially amongst host community members (Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018). Some of these concerns and observed negative impacts on host communities include; increased pollution, social conflicts, congestion, and increased income inequalities amongst community members (Afenyo and Amuquandoh, 2014; Eshliki and Kaboudi, 2011). Evidence presented by Akama (1996) and, Sandbrook and Adams (2012), reveal that power holders including local elites, men, business owners, and traditional leaders often influence the distribution of CBET benefits to the detriment of others.

The inclusion of local people as producers in and for the tourism market is a long-term task for the Global South (Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018). As observed by Torres (2002) and Telfer and Wall (2000) small farmers have not seen the benefits despite their importance and significant interest in utilising local produce in tourist restaurants. De Beer (2012) found that local communities lacked the skills and knowledge to successfully manage the projects. Therefore, professional training and mentorship have been identified as critical to ensuring improved guiding and hospitality skills which influence the tourists overall experience (De Beer, 2012). Although benefits have been observed, studies such as Eshliki and Kaboudi (2011), Kayat (2002), Lapeyre (2010) and Mufune (2015) found that CBET benefitted only a small proportion of community members, whilst economic benefits remained small. Musavengane and Simatele (2016) in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa found that the absence of strong community structures prior to the establishment of the CBET project resulted in its failure.

In addition to the challenges experienced in CBET implementation, negative impacts have also been observed and include commercialisation of cultural activities, social conflicts due to economic welfare, increased crime and congestion, increased costs of living; that is cost of housing and property often increase, and a culture of dependency on the tourism venture as a source of income is created (Lin *et al.*, 2016 and Oviedo-Garcia *et al.*, 2007).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Research that actively listens to and considers community voices is conducted to counter industry-centric perspectives and inform inclusive approaches to tourism development. CBET is based on the principle that ‘the community’ plays a significant role in ensuring the sustainability and success of CBET ventures. Recognising the role of ‘the community’, and how the community participates and benefits from CBET is crucial for assessing the performance of CBET.

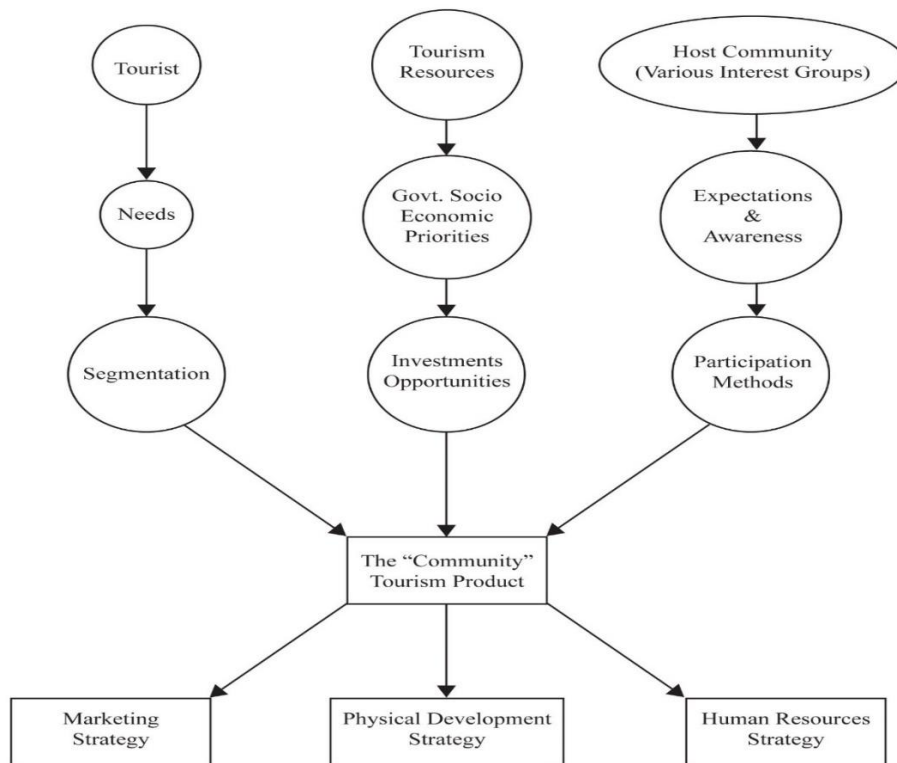
Simmons (2000) developed a conceptual framework which stipulates that there are three factors (i.e. the tourist, tourism resources available and the various interest groups within host communities) which need to be considered when developing the ‘community tourism product’. The needs of the tourist which the ‘community tourism product’ attracts must be determined and segmented in order to develop a tourism product that serves the needs of tourists. The framework explains that tourism resources available are dependent on the socio-economic priorities of the government under which projects are located (Figure 2.3.1.).

Therefore, aligning the tourism product with these priorities is crucial for accessing investment opportunities because the availability of investment opportunities is dependent on socio-economic priorities. Investment opportunities in relation to community tourism projects often come in the form of human capital and/or infrastructural development, particularly when projects are located in disenfranchised communities.

Various stakeholders from local communities are attracted to and involved in community tourism projects. The expectations and awareness of host communities influences the participation methods which community members use as illustrated in Figure 2.3.1. For example, where a community expects benefits to be derived from employment, they will focus on participating as an employee, rather than as an entrepreneur. The conceptual framework stipulates that the 'community tourism product' dictates what marketing, physical development and human resources strategies are used (Figure 2.3.1). For example, a project that offers accommodation requires a human resource strategy that will recruit people with hospitality skills. Simmons (2000) stipulates that all the above mentioned factors contribute to the characteristics of the tourism product and the way in which the product is 'packaged', and how individuals can participate and benefit from the product.

Host communities play a crucial role in sustaining CBET ventures, as their actions or inactions determine the success of ventures. For example, where communities do not receive benefits and feel excluded from ventures, they may hold negative attitudes and feel a low incentive to protect and may partake in threatening acts such as poaching or exploiting natural resources surrounding CBET ventures. Despite the crucial role host communities play in sustaining the CBET product, the experience of the 'host community' remains unknown in Eswatini. This implies that the performance and ability of CBET ventures to provide the expected benefits to beneficiaries in Eswatini remains unknown. Therefore, using the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2.3.1 below, the study explores the experience, determines the expectations and awareness of host community members in order to understand CBET in Eswatini.

Fig 2.3.1: Conceptual Framework for understanding Community-Based Ecotourism



Source: Simmons (2000)

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Area

Despite its small size (17 364km²), Eswatini has a great variation in geology, climatic conditions, natural resource endowment, population densities and socio-economic development across its four geographic regions (Harrison, 1995). Eswatini is home to numerous CBET ventures in rural landscapes in all four regions of the country. The CBET sites include; Mahamba Gorge, Ngwempisi Hiking Trails (inclusive of Khelekhele Trails), Nsangwini Rock Art, Sibebe Rock, and Shewula Mountain Camp which forms part of the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany stretch (which is characterised as one of the World’s hotspots of fauna and flora species) (UNDP, 2012). All these sights offer nature and cultural based activities such as hiking and bird viewing.

CBET ventures are located on Swazi Nation Land (SNL) and were started with the aid of external funding to cover initial infrastructural, marketing and training costs. Communities have to apply with a business plan for funding and registration through the ETA. Upon approval by the ETA, a Board of trustees are elected and are given the task of ensuring the interests of the community are met and always considered. In addition, the Board is mandated to handle project funds, keep constant communication with the community to ensure they are updated about activities concerning the CBET project, and where conflicts or challenges arise the Board of trustees often consult traditional leaders of that community and the ETA to assist in resolving these issues.

3.2 Data Collection

The study uses both primary and secondary sources that are qualitative and quantitative in nature. The triangulation (mixed methods) approach was employed in order to gain an in depth understanding of CBET implementation and performance in Eswatini. The study focused on various interest groups within the host community including the community

Board of Trustees, participating (those employed at CBET sites and those providing supporting goods and services to CBET sites) and non-participating (community members who reside around the CBET site and are not directly participating) community members. Due to the personal nature of the questions and the pursuit for consistent and comparable data, face-to-face interviews were conducted using structured questionnaires. Furthermore, both participating and non-participating community members were interviewed in order to eliminate biasness regarding the impacts of CBET projects in communities, and also to gain an in-depth understanding of how benefits are shared and, the roles that the different sub-groups play. In total, 144 interviews were administered across five CBET sites to randomly selected non-participating community members as per the recommended qualitative sample size of 20-30 interviews per site (Creswell, 1998). In total 42 participating community members were interviewed on site during working hours. Secondary data sources included establishing documents, minutes from meetings by the ETA board members discussing issues around CBET and, online reports.

A focus group discussion with 8 women from the Handicraft Centre at Shewula Mountain Camp was facilitated. The sample size was based on Hancock et al. (2009) recommended focus group size of 6 -10 individuals. In addition to the focus group, three individuals were interviewed separately to counter any potential risks of focus group discussions, for example dominant individuals controlling the opinions of the group during discussions. The interviews were conducted to understand the benefit-sharing scheme of the group; the average income and costs incurred; the challenges the women face as well as the benefits the women receive from making and selling their goods to tourists. Using semi-structured questionnaires, a total of six key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with Chairpersons of Board of trustees and the ETA's projects manager to gain insight into how CBET ventures are funded, formed and managed, as well as the challenges experienced in managing CBET ventures in Eswatini.

3.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis such as means, proportions (%) and standard deviation were conducted using Microsoft Excel 2007 to determine the socio-economic characteristics of the host communities and average income received by participating community members. Furthermore, the open-ended questions concerning the benefits received, challenges experienced, reasons for not participating and suggestions for increasing community involvement were analysed using thematic analysis, where emerging themes were identified and counts of the frequencies of responses were determined.

The results were aggregated across different CBET ventures and, in some cases, disaggregated by individual locations to show specific nuances between ventures. The study used the SET which stipulates that residents level of personal benefits obtained from tourism influences their perceptions regarding tourism impacts, and in consequence, their support for tourism development and planning (Oviedo-Garcia *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, positive perceptions and attitudes imply a successful/ healthy CBET venture, whilst negative perceptions indicate the opposite. IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to determine the frequencies of the responses to statements from the five point Likert scale to determine the perceptions and attitudes of host communities towards tourism development. Point 1 on the Likert scale was 'Strongly Agree' and point 5 was 'Strongly Disagree'.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Host Community Respondents

Table 4.1.1. provides a summary of the socio-economic characteristics of the entire community sample (186). The majority of the respondents interviewed were female (55%).

Most of the respondents were between 36 years-41years age range followed by 24 years-29 years (17%). High unemployment rates existed across all communities surrounding the CBET ventures, with 58% of the community members reported to be unemployed and only 24% reported to be employed on a full-time or part-time basis. The high levels of unemployment reflect National level statistics which indicate that a majority (70.2%) of disenfranchised

Socio-economic characteristics	Respondents (n=186)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Household size	7.5	4.7
No. of dependents	3.3	2.8

Emaswati live in rural areas. A majority of the respondents completed secondary education (51%), followed by 28% attaining primary education. Table 4.1.1 below illustrates socio-demographic characteristics of both the participating and non-participating community members.

Table 4.1.1 Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Socio-economic characteristics (n=186)	Percentage (%)	
Sex	Female	55
	Male	45
Age	18 years - 23 years	13
	24 years - 29 years	17
	30 years - 35 years	11
	36 years - 41 years	18
	42 years - 47 years	10
	48 years - 53 years	12
	54 years - 59 years	7
	60+ years	12
Employment Status	Not working	58
	Employed (full or part time)	24
	Self-employed	18
Education Level Completed	Secondary	51
	Primary	28
	Non-formal	10
	Tertiary	9
	Other	2

Source: Author's own depiction using survey data (2019)

Table 4.1.1.1 provides further socio-economic characteristics of host communities including household size, number of employed individuals and dependents in the household. Despite the relatively large household size (7.5), only 1.3 persons on average in the household were employed. This is an indication that there is a high dependency rate within these communities, which may be a direct result of the low employment rates illustrated in Table 4.1.1.

Table 4.1.1.1 Socio-economic characteristics of host communities

Source: Author’s own depiction using survey data (2019)

4.2 Benefits of CBET in Eswatini

The benefits accrued to host communities is a fundamental factor in ensuring the successful operation and sustainability of CBET ventures (Mufune, 2015 and Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018). As illustrated in Table 4.2., CBET ventures foster infrastructural developments which benefit both participating and non-participating community members. Communities across all CBET ventures mentioned infrastructural development as benefits, which took the form of road construction, and the provision of water and electricity. All the CBET ventures used revenues to support vulnerable community members, including the elderly and orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC), in the form of paying school fees, buying uniform and building homes for the elderly. Social interaction was a prominent intangible benefit which both participating and non-participating community members mentioned.

Table 4.2.1: Benefits accrued to host communities in CBET Ventures in Eswatini

CBET Venture	Benefits for participants (n=42)	Benefits for non-participants (n=144)
Mahamba Gorge	-Employment -Social interaction with tourists	-Building homes for the elderly and vulnerable in the community -Social interaction with tourists
Ngwempisi Hiking Trail	-Employment	-Fencing to control livestock grazing
Nsangwini Rock Art	-Employment -Improved language skills	-Supporting OVCs (school fees and uniform)
Shewula Mountain Camp	-Employment -Business opportunities -Infrastructural development (roads) -Building of Handicraft centre -Learning new skills -Sense of belonging	-Car hire -Supporting OVCs (school fees and uniform) -Infrastructural development
Sibebe Rock	-Employment -Infrastructural development -Social interaction -Scenic views -Sense of belonging	-Infrastructure development: water and electricity schemes. -Supporting OVCs (school uniform and fees). -Provision of musical instruments for the church.

Source: Author’s own depiction using survey data (2019)

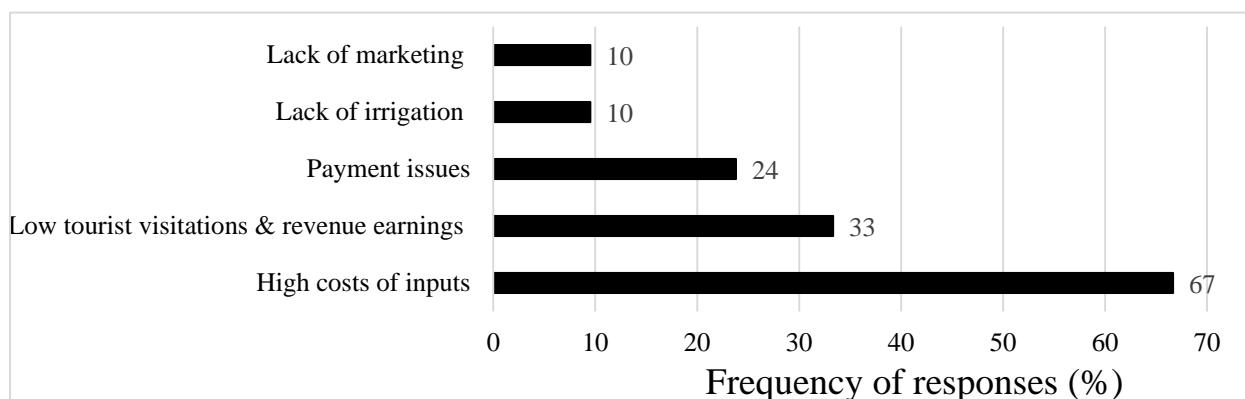
Sense of belonging and learning new skills were apparent benefits for the Handicraft women, who mentioned that when they meet to work they are able to share knowledge and interact, which creates a sense of social support, belonging, and empowerment. Similar benefits have been observed in other CBET ventures in Thailand and Sri Lanka where sense of belonging, knowledge sharing and interactions contributed to social cohesion and unity within host communities (Kontogeorgopoulos *et al.*, 2014; Li *et al.*, 2016). CBET ventures provide employment opportunities and create markets for those supplying goods and services, for example farmers provide fresh produce to the Shewula Mountain Camp. The CBET ventures

across the country also provided employment opportunities for community members. However, this number is low with 42 people in total who earn an average of E1457.40 ± 933.80 per month. The large standard deviation is an indication of the disparities in income which exist amongst participants. The relatively low monthly earnings reflect trends in other developing countries, where minimal economic benefits were accrued to a small proportion of host communities (Eshliki and Kaboudi, 2011; Nayomi and Gnanapala, 2015). Unsurprisingly, 16% of non-participating community respondents felt that there were insufficient incentives to participate.

4.3 Challenges community participants experience in providing goods and services to CBET ventures

The study explored the challenges that participating community members experience in trying to provide a good or service to the CBET site. Figure 4.3.1 illustrates the challenges mentioned by the respondents who supply CBET sites with fresh produce and by women who make handicrafts to be sold to visiting tourists. The dominant challenge mentioned was the issue of high input costs (67%). High input costs are linked to the observed declining tourist visitation numbers leading to an inefficient business to venture on. For example, all the farmers who supply Shewula Mountain Camp with produce have observed a decline in business (33%) and as a result CBET has become an unreliable source of income. Consequently, the lack of income has proven to be a major threat to local farmers as they mentioned that they are unable to afford inputs such as pesticides and medication for livestock. For the women who make handicraft, the long distance needed to travel to purchase raw materials proved to be very costly, with some stating they often did not make enough to cover for transportation costs, particularly during the off season. For community members providing services such as building of infrastructure, experienced issues of delayed payments and no payment for extra hours (24%). The unreliability of income from CBET sites has resulted in the decline in community participation over the past few years as people tend to leave in search of greener pastures. For the non-viability of small business ventures on CBET sites, it shows CBET more a relevant on the short run than the long run since it fails to sustain their endeavours.

Fig 4.3.1: Challenges participating community members experience in providing goods and services

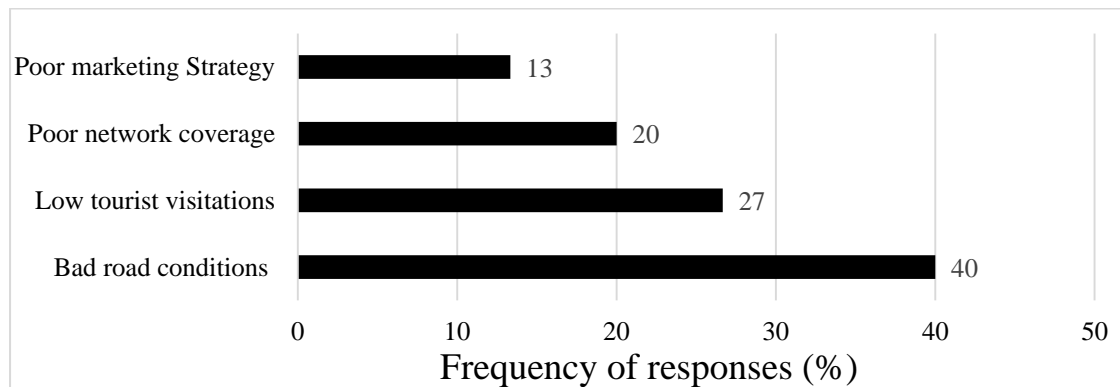


Source: Author’s own depiction using survey data (2019)

The study also investigated challenges experienced at the main CBET sites. Community members who worked full or part time at the CBET sites gave insight into some of the challenges they experience in running CBET sites as illustrated in Figure 4.3.2. Poor road conditions was the most mentioned challenge mentioned by respondents (40%). The road

conditions were directly linked to tourists ability to access CBET sites, for example often during the wet season tourists without the appropriate vehicles were unable to access sites. Based on that Eswatini is a developing country, most of the roads dominating CBET sites are narrow which is one of tourists concern. In addition, livestock are found lying on the roads which is a detraction on vehicles and other road users. Respondents have observed a decline in tourist visitations over the past years and this has had a negative impact on the revenues earned by CBET sites (27%). Issues regarding poor network coverage make it difficult for the sites such as Shewula Mountain Camp which use online booking systems. Furthermore, all the sites which use telephonic methods of booking reported that it was often difficult to communicate with tourists over the phone and yet this is the most common form of bookings.

Fig 4.3.2: Challenges participating community members experience in providing goods and services



Source: Author’s own depiction using survey data (2019)

4.4 Factors preventing broad based participation in CBET Ventures in Eswatini

Literature shows that single activity enterprises restricts the chances of ventures to succeed as this limits opportunity for community members to participate and thus reap benefits (Eshliki and Kaboudi, 2011; Ven, 2016). This is evident in the case of Eswatini, where most CBET ventures are based on a singular activity, giving limited opportunity for employment as well as for the establishment of supporting activities. As a result, 40% of the non-participating respondents mentioned that there was no opportunity available to participate. In the case of Shewula Mountain Camp and Sibebe, multiple activities were offered, allowing for higher participation and revenue generation. Consequently, these two sites formed 58% of the proportion of respondents participating. These sites drew in skill sets such as cooking, housekeeping, tour guides, drivers, waitresses, managers, bar tenders, craftsman, and farmers.

Open and efficient communication between different stakeholders appeared to be lacking as mentioned by community members and Key Informants. Many members stated that they did not participate as they were unaware of how the project operates or how they could participate (16%). Generally, the non-participating community members illustrated a lack of ownership for the project and therefore were reluctant to participate and contribute to the activities surrounding the project (17%). Many either pointing to the Board members or particular individuals/families within the community as the owners.

Seasonality and low tourist visitations have proven to be a major challenge, resulting in declining community participation over time, similar findings were observed by Holladay and Ormsby (2011). Focus group discussions with women from the Handicraft Centre at Shewula revealed that due to lower visitations to the main Mountain Camp, business has become unprofitable and as a result many women have left and/or sought additional income streams.

For that reason, the successful operation of the main CBET project is paramount to ensuring an environment that is conducive to multiple income generating activities which host communities can participate in. Despite efforts from the ETA to train guides and managers, the incentive for long term employment are insufficient, resulting in trained individuals leaving to seek other forms of employment, unfortunately this has proven to be a costly exercise for the ETA.

Another weakness observed is the risk of alienation of some community members due to the operation of CBET ventures. For example, community members were denied access to grazing land surrounding Sibebe Rock as a strategy to protect this natural monument. What may have been a decision with good intentions, resulted in some members feeling excluded and therefore resentment towards the CBET project as they had to use other grazing lands. Recognising that many of Emaswati, particularly those on SNL, use communal grazing land, it is crucial that when CBET or any rural development projects are initiated, that the surrounding land use activities are identified and appropriate measures are taken to ensure livelihoods of host communities are not compromised. Another example of alienation is that of Mahamba Gorge, where community members are expected to pay for the annual “Mahamba Walk”. Unsurprisingly, some community members refuse to pay and thus do not participate as they feel like the Gorge belongs to them and they had free access prior to the establishment of the CBET project. This is an indication that there was little attention paid to strategies to ensure broad participation of community.

4.5 Perceptions and Attitudes of Host Communities Towards Tourism Development

Due to the nature and purpose of CBET ventures, it is extremely crucial that host communities are the main drivers of CBET ventures as their full active support is necessary to ensure sustainability of ventures (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011; Nunkoo, 2016; Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2017). Overall, a majority of the respondents felt that CBET has contributed positively to the community, with 61.4 % responding ‘strongly agree’ and 31.8 % responding ‘agree’ to the statement (Table 4.5.1). The participants also felt that CBET has contributed to job creation, with half (50%) of the respondents responding ‘strongly agree’ and 40.9 % responding “agree” to the statement.

Unsurprisingly, a majority of the participants agreed that CBET has increased their income (70.5%). There is a consensus that there is a need for external support and interventions as only 2.3% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. Consequently, one can discern that participants have identified weaknesses within CBET ventures and are willing to collaborate with external stakeholders. Furthermore, 97.7% of respondents agreed that support to improve business management skills are necessary. All of the respondents agreed that they would like to see the tourism project continue to run and that tourism should be actively encouraged in other communities (Table 4.5.1). Overall, the results reflect that participating community members hold positive attitudes towards CBET and believe it has contributed positively to their community. These positive attitudes may be as a direct result of their participation and direct benefit from the CBET ventures. Using the social exchange theory, the positive attitudes may reflect a level of satisfaction and health of the CBET venture.

Table 4.5.1: Perceptions and attitudes of participating community members towards CBET

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
CBET has contributed positively to the	61.4	31.8	0	6.8	0

community					
CBET has contributed to job creation and business opportunities in my community	50	40.9	4.5	4.5	0
CBET has increased my income	34.1	36.4	18.2	9.1	1.23
The quality of services and infrastructure has improved since the inception of this venture	13.6	50	22.7	13.6	0
The community is consulted about any activities or issues relating to the CBET venture	18.2	59.1	11.4	11.4	0
Community participation in planning and management of tourism activities is satisfactory	15.9	45.5	25	13.6	0
The harvesting of natural resources is well managed in my area	50	22.7	13.6	6.8	6.8
More external interventions and support are needed such as increased funding, marketing infrastructure etc.	75	22.7	0	2.3	0
More support is needed to improve business management skills such as entrepreneurship training and book keeping	79.5	18.2	2.3	0	0
I want to see the tourism project continue to run	93.2	6.8	0	0	0
I believe tourism should be actively encouraged in other communities	75	25	0	0	0
The positive benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts in my community	52.3	36.4	11.4	0	0
This tourism project will be successfully running in the next 5 years	61.4	31.8	6.8	0	0

Source: Author's own depiction using survey data (2019)

Notes: *Figures in percentages

The common agreement in literature is that the attitudes of host communities could potentially influence tourists' overall experiences, and therefore may influence tourist's decision on whether to return or not (Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, negative attitudes towards CBET ventures may induce community members to partake in negative actions such as poaching or exploiting natural resources surrounding CBET sites. From this perspective, it is clear that community members are part of the overall tourism product on offer, and therefore full support from community members is critical for the sustainability of tourism (Choi and Murray, 2010). Consequently, this study explored the perceptions and attitudes of non-participating host community members towards CBET and the impacts it's had (Table 4.5.2). Overall, non-participating members had more negative attitudes towards CBET and the impact it has had. As illustrated in the table below, 27.8% responded 'disagree' and 10.4% responded 'strongly disagree' to the statement that tourism has contributed positively to their community. A small proportion of respondents agreed that tourism has resulted in job creation and business opportunities, whilst 24.3% responded 'neutral' to the statement. This may be as a result of the small number of jobs created by CBET ventures across the country. These findings support the SET, as non-participating

community members receive less direct benefits from the ventures and therefore hold more negative attitudes towards CBET and the impact it has had on the community.

Table 4.5.2. Perceptions and attitudes of non-participating community members towards

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This tourism venture has contributed positively to the community	11.1	34.7	16	27.8	10.4
This tourism venture has contributed to job creation and business opportunities in my community	7.6	20.1	24.3	34	13.9
The quality of services and infrastructure has improved since the inception of this tourism project	5.6	14.6	20.8	41	17.4
The community is consulted about any activities or issues relating to the tourism project	9	25.7	15.3	32.6	17.4
Community participation in planning and management of tourism activities is satisfactory	6.3	13.2	25.7	41	12.5
The harvesting of natural resources is well managed in my area	13.2	31.3	27.1	21.5	4.9
Efforts to encourage and allow additional community participation in the tourism venture are needed	62.5	22.2	6.9	4.2	1.4
I want to see the tourism venture continue to run	68.1	25.7	4.2	1.4	0.7
I believe community tourism should be actively encouraged in other communities	68.8	24.3	4.9	0.7	0.7
The positive benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts	22.9	22.9	20.8	20.8	11.8

Source: Author's own depiction using survey data (2019)

Notes: *Figures in percentages

Community members are aware that the promise of widespread participation has not been met in Eswatini. A majority of the respondents (84.7%) agreed that efforts to encourage and allow for increased community participation are necessary. Furthermore, only 6.3% of responded 'strongly agree' to the statement that community participation in planning and management of tourism activities is satisfactory. Despite the dissatisfaction with the benefits and running of CBET ventures, the results display that there is still community buy-in for tourism development. With 93.8% of respondents affirming that they want to see the tourism

venture continue to run and 93.1% thought that tourism should be actively encouraged in other communities.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to provide a baseline on how CBET ventures are operating in Eswatini. The study interviewed host communities to; (i) determine the benefits that accrue to host communities; (ii) establish the challenges experienced amongst stakeholders in the implementation of CBET ventures; (iii) identify the factors preventing broad based participation in CBET, and (iv) determine the perceptions and attitudes of host communities towards tourism development and the impact that CBET has had.

From the results, the study finds that the promised benefits of CBET have been largely unmet in Eswatini. Low economic incentives and limited opportunities for host communities to participate in and share in the benefits of CBET ventures are major threats to the sustainability of CBET ventures. Despite the low individual economic benefits, CBET ventures have promoted infrastructural development within rural landscapes. Additional benefits accrued to host communities include; feeling a sense of empowerment, social interactions and feeling a sense of belonging.

The study finds that sites offering multiple activities are able to accrue more benefits to community members. The study observes a strong relationship between the success of the main CBET ventures and supporting economic activities. Communities are faced with an array of challenges which include; declining tourist visitations, poor network coverage and road conditions, lack of diverse marketing strategies, and high input costs. Therefore, the study exhorts that whilst the community is at the centre stage, there are important roles that governmental and non-governmental organisations can play in relation to CBET. Based on the results, the study recommends the following:

- Investment in further monitoring and evaluation of CBET venture in Eswatini, in order to identify weaknesses, impacts and benefits. This data should inform plans to compensate for weaknesses, correct problems and adjust systems in order to improve implementation.
- Ensuring comprehensive feasibility studies that will establish the suitability of site location, market readiness and, capacity building necessary for successful long term running of projects.
- Tourism policymakers must strengthen their dialogue with other ministries, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to take advantage of the interlinkages that exist between different sectors.
- Consideration of introducing public-private partnerships of policy that encourages financiers and investors by devising supportive policy frameworks and providing smart subsidies and incentives that are conducive to competitiveness, inclusiveness and sustainability.
- Formulation of a strategy that is strictly focused on CBET and management of communal natural resources. This policy should define clear targets, provide smart incentives that support additional inclusion of local SMEs, encourage and expand local production in the tourism supply chain and which reinforces local capacities.

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