

TOURISM AS A POVERTY REDUCTION TOOL: THE CASE OF MUKUNI VILLAGE IN THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA

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Abstract

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Globally, tourism is becoming one of the cornerstones of national economic growth and as a means of poverty alleviation, especially in the tourist attractions in rural areas. This article assesses the levels of utilization of tourism potentials in Zambia, in general, and the Mukuni village in the Southern province in Zambia, in particular, with reference to poverty reduction. The world famous Victoria Falls is situated in the Southern province and therefore this area is the most visited places in Zambia and attracts more tourists throughout the whole year. The main income of the local people, which includes the Tonga tribe comes from tourism. Even though tourism has brought positive results, including the realization of some local development projects and prosperity to the people, it has also brought some negative effects such as sociocultural change, pollution and waste in the tourist destination areas in Zambia.

For the Mukuni people and Zambia as a whole to fully exploit tourism potentials, stricter laws protecting the destruction of the environment and the preservation culture of the indigenous people should be enforced in the tourist destination areas. The government should use the levy from tourism to provide better infrastructure, create job opportunities and create wealth within the tourist areas for sustainable tourism development and poverty reduction.

Keywords: Community Based Tourism, Poverty Reduction, Southern Province, Zambia, Mukuni

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a developing and complex phenomenon, and it is gradually becoming one of the largest economic activities in the world (Bazina and Nedelea, 2008; Su and Lin, 2014). Globally, the research about the effects of tourism on countries' economic growth (Hall, 2010; World Tourism Organization, 2013; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2014) and poverty reduction has grown in recent decades (Brohman, 1996; Ashley and Roe, 2002; Wearing, 2008; Zapata *et al.*, 2011; Erskine and Meyer, 2012; Taylor and Banda-

Thole, 2013). Many governments across the globe and global donor agencies are presently promoting policies that are aimed at alleviating poverty through income generated from tourism (Taylor and Banda-Thole, 2013; Manwa and Manwa, 2014). For instance, the cogent priorities of the World Tourism Organization are, among others, maintaining tourism in the global agenda, improving tourism competitiveness, advancing tourism's contribution to poverty reduction and promoting sustainable tourism development (World Tourism Organization, 2013).

The importance of tourism for Zambian economy is steadily rising. In 2011, the total contribution of tourism to GDP was 5% (\$896 million). It is estimated to increase to 7.2% in 2022 which will bring in about \$1.9 billion in proceeds (Ruggles-Brise, Aimable, 2012). Tourism serves as a major source of employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and has a multiplier effect to other sectors of the economy in Zambia. Tourism is considered to be of a very high importance due to its likely impact on the whole economy and rural development in the country.

Tourism in Zambia is mostly based on safari tours, notably Kafue National park, (the second largest safari park in Africa), visits to the Victoria Falls, Lake Tanganyika, lake Kariba, (the second largest artificial lake in the world), and the river Zambezi which flows through Zambia, Angola and Mozambique, forming the northern border of Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana. Even though these places are attractive for tourism potentials, they have not been fully utilized for the purpose of the tourism industry (Kandyata, 2011). Zambia's tourism industry is performing below expectation relative to those of other countries, as well as to its potential. The number of visitors, average receipts and length of stay is lower than many countries in the region (World Bank, 2011). Arguably, tourism sector of the economy in Zambia had not been given serious attention by the government until the decline of the copper mining, which had had a long-term tremendous contribution to the growth in the country (Bystřičan *et al.*, 2012).

The percentage of people who live below the international poverty level (i.e. they have less than 1.25 USD per day) in Zambia increased from 68.5% in 2006 to 74.3% in 2010 (World Bank, 2014). It is notable that the poverty is not only the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money, but also the absence of political freedom, personal safety and participation in public decision making (Tourism and Hospitality Act, 2007; International Monetary Fund, 2007).

There are different approaches to tourism with respect to the participation of communities in poverty reduction. Tourism is not only able to enhance the building of infrastructure, but also offers income for local people (Duncan, Macmillan and Simutanyi, 2003; Ashley *et al.*, 2004; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008). Tourism and poverty reduction are intertwined and interlinked. Tourism policy encourages the poverty reduction, mostly in rural areas. The Poverty Reduction Strategy ensures tourism does not only contribute effectively to the growth of GDP and international trade development, but also to promote the participation of the private sector and individuals.

The aim of this work is to assess the levels of utilization of tourism potentials in Zambia, in general, and the Mukuni village in the Southern province in Zambia, in particular, with reference

to poverty reduction. The paper also assesses the development of community-based tourism (CBT) in the country. Finally, the paper will profile some recommendations for the state to utilize its tourism potentials for poverty reduction and national development.

Community Based Tourism in Zambia

What is a Community based tourism? A Community based tourism (CBT) can be referred as tourism, which is either owned and/or managed by communities and generates a wider range of benefits for the communities (Dixey, 2005). Since the development of community-based tourism (CBT), development agencies, national governments and NGOs have placed considerable importance on the development this model. Critics opined that CBT has not triggered the expected impact on the economies in terms of income and jobs, income and poverty alleviation (Zapata *et al.*, 2011). Nevertheless, CBT may in effect serves as a financial source of funds for the realization of development projects, especially the provision of social infrastructure to improve the livelihoods of the rural population in these areas. The term “*pro-poor tourism*” (i. e. the tourism supporting poor, PPT) is sometimes used in this context. Pro-poor tourism is not a specific product or a separate sector, but only a particular approach to tourism that involves the poor in the development and community management (Dixey, 2005, p. 29).

Owing to the relative novelty of the term in Zambia, the community-based tourism is often wrongly referred to “cultural tourism”. The museums present different Zambian indigenous cultures, but in fact they are not usually owned and managed by the local communities. The situation is the same in the *Songwe Point Village* in Livingstone owned by a foreign investor. Of course, there are some exceptions, like *Kawaza Village Tourism Project* linking up the community-based and cultural tourism (Aref *et al.*, 2010, p. 155–161).

Tourist agencies sometimes misunderstand community based tourism. If some of them take visitors to a nearby village to show them to a local school, which is subsidized and there is no fee for the tour (the school only obtains donation from the tourist agency), in this case we do not speak about community based tourism, but about philanthropy/corporate social responsibility (International Monetary Fund, 2007).

Naturally, the communities can be the owners of the facilities such as lodgings and devolve the management to the tourist agency. On the contrary, they do not have to be the owners of properties (like land, camps in national parks), but be responsible for the management and have income from its operation. In some cases, the community-based tourism can be tied up to ecotourism or sustainable tourism. These sectors are usually more focused on the protection of the environment than poverty reduction. Community based tourism is considered

I: *Tourism Sector's Performance (in thousands and %), in Zambia 2005–2012*

INDICATOR	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total number of Arrivals ('000)	669	757	789	812	710	815	920	859
Growth Rate (%)	-	13.15	4.23	2.92	-12.56	14.79	12.88	-6.63

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Arts, Zambia in Zambia Development Agency, 2013

II: *Visitor origin and purpose of visit in Zambia in 2012 (VFR is the visiting friends and relatives)*

Visitor origin in 2012			Purpose of visit 2012		
Indicator	No. of visitors	% of visitors	Indicator	No. of visitors	% of visitors
Africa	654,114	76.14	VFR	57,875	6.74
Asia	96,775	11.26	Study	815	0.09
Europe	65,826	7.66	Conference	7,598	0.88
USA	31,559	3.67	Business	465,145	54.14
Australia	10,814	1.26	Holiday	223,342	26.00
Total no. of visitors	859,088	100.00	Other	104,313	12.14
			Total	859,088	100.00

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Arts, Zambia in Zambia Development Agency, 2013

as “responsible”, but it is not true. It can also have a negative sociocultural impact on the community.

Tab. I presents the performance of tourism of tourism in Zambia in terms of the number of annual arrivals between 2005 and 2012. The number of arrivals increased from 669 thousand in 2005 to 859 thousand of arrivals to the country in 2012. The number of tourists decreased in 2012, the situation, however increased again to 914,576 visitors in 2013 (Zambia Development Agency, 2014). The growth rate within the time under scrutiny has not been linear as it has fluctuated. The country first recorded negative growth rates (-12.6%) in 2009 and 2012, which could be attributed to the recent economic downturn that forced to reduced travelling within that time. Nevertheless, the significant increase of the number of foreign visitors to Zambia is partially attributed to the political stability in the country. Tab. II shows that the majority of tourists come from Africa (76%) and trailing second and third with a wide distance were Asia (11%) and Europe (8%) respectively. Over half of the people who visited Zambia in 2012 were for business (54%) and followed by holidays (26%).

Tourism is a sector that not only provides jobs in distant areas, but also develops food and craft markets. Tourism has the potential to make use of the remoteness and inaccessibility of many places in Zambia. There is a question of which type of tourism would be the most suitable for the Zambian conditions, but it is certain that the growth of mass tourism is not only undesirable, but also very improbable.

Two key documents direct the development of tourism in Zambia: the Tourism policy from 1999 and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper from 2002 (Cypher and Dietz, 2010). The Tourism policy encourages the poverty reduction, mostly in rural areas. The Poverty Reduction Strategy ensures tourism does not only contribute effectively

to the growth of GDP and international trade development, but also promote the participation of the private sector and good governance. It also distinguishes the multiplication effect of tourism and emphasizes its importance in the building of and creating wealth in the local areas.

Against this background, the Zambian government discovers that a “successful domestic tourism sector is a prerequisite for success in attracting foreign tourists. Zambia has abundant tourism products. The peaceful nature of the Zambian people and their hospitality has made the country remain a preferential tourist destination” (Zambia Development Agency, 2013, p. 2). Nevertheless, poverty is worse in the rural areas relative to some cities in Zambia. The socioeconomic group most affected by extreme poverty is the subsistence or the small scale farmers who often struggle with the availability and supply of basic needs like food, safe drinking water and basic health care and struggle with life in a hostile terrain. Statistical data showed that, in 2006, the Southern province in Zambia ranked fourth place in terms of poverty in the country (Zambia Statistics, 2009; Zambia Data Profile, 2010).

The Case of Mukuni Village

Mukuni (originally Gundu) is a Tonga village situated in the Kazungula district in the Southern province, approximately 10 km from the Livingstone City Centre, not far from the border with Zimbabwe. It lies on a hill in the dry, sandy land close to the Victoria Falls.

The Eastern Province in this area spreads along the borders of South and North Luangwa National Parks, has the second highest concentration of visitors (24%). The Northern Province, situated on the route between Kasanka National Park and Bangweulu wetlands, has 16%. Among marginal tourist destinations are North-Western,

Copperbelt and Luapula Provinces (Dixey, 2005, p. 30). The presence of this worldwide known tourist attraction gives a clear indication why the Southern province annually attracts the most visitors (28%) in Zambia (Dixey, 2005, p. 30).

Mukuni is the main village of the Mukuni chiefdom which contains more than one hundred of villages with twelve schools and tree health centres (in Mukuni, Songwe and Katapazi). It has more than 7000 inhabitants belonging to one sub-tribe of Tonga called Leya (Lewis, 2009). The tours around the village offer an insight into the cultural heritage of these indigenous people who shifted from traditional agriculture to tourism and under the name of the *The Mukuni Environmental, Cultural and Economic Development Trust* (MDT) with a well organised craft markets. The income from these activities is then used for the improvement of livelihood of local people and particular development projects (Namugala, 2010, p. 12–16).

Mukuni has also signed a contract with Volunteer Zambia; an organization founded in 2006 by Richard Sheppard, director of tourist agency *African Horizons* and has been given two hectares of land on the outskirts of the village to develop the area into a cultural and tourism centre to manufacture local printed fabric to be sold to tourists as

souvenirs. This infertile land which could not be used for agriculture is now used in a more profitable way to earn extra income for the community.

However, community-based tourism in Mukuni has both positive and negative sides. Unregulated tourism also contributes to progressive erosion of shared values (tradition, lifestyle) which subsequently has an impact on high unemployment. Studies in 2011 revealed that, the number of jobs is increasing, but the labour force remains unskilled. With the exception of arts and craft production, the local participation in tourism is low (Tourism and Poverty Reduction in Zambia, 2011).

Owing to the seasonal tourism, the Mukuni community falls into the so-called “tourist trap.” Tourism has the intrinsic ability to devalue the capital of the business subject by its activities. This is due to the relative number of visitors, seasonality, and vulnerability of ecosystems and high level of economic dependence of local people on tourism. On the other hand, the area has seen some positive prospects, thanks to the income from tourism in Mukuni, the boreholes, local high school and health centre have been built, although their capacity is still insufficient, and more needs to be done.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Global attention has recently focused on the development of the tourism industry and how it could positively impact host communities. The assesses the levels of utilization of tourism potentials in Zambia, in general, and the Mukuni village in the Southern province in Zambia, in particular, with reference to poverty reduction. The development of tourism potentials as a tool poverty reduction and economic growth in Mukuni in the Southern province in Zambia just like in other parts of the country has been overlooked for several years.

It is now a living fact that a fully developed tourism sector in Zambia would contribute to the growth of the national economy, poverty reduction and employment generation, especially in the rural areas. Despite this visible potential, very little is known about the real value of community-based tourism in the Mukuni village. There are no sufficient data to show the real contribution of the tourism sector from the area to the Zambia's GDP and poverty reduction. Information about the categories of tourists, where they come from, their expectations, how long they stay, how much they spend during their stay, the type of accommodation, visited sites and other facilities and activities available to visitors in this region is scanty.

Nevertheless, the tourism sector of the economy in Zambia is steadily increasing. The number of visitors to the country has increased over the years. Zambia is still behind other countries like South Africa, Kenya and Egypt, which appeared to have a more developed in the tourism industry. The potentials of tourism to contribute to poverty reduction has not yet been fully recognized by the national government, but instead it rather exploits the indigenous people than bringing benefits to them. With a few exceptions, tourism in Zambia remains unorganized and brings some disadvantages like increase in prices of goods and services to the local people who are not directly or indirectly engaged tourist activities.

For the Mukuni people and Zambia as a whole to fully exploit tourism potentials, stricter laws protecting the destruction of the environment and the preservation culture of the indigenous people should be enforced in the tourist destination areas. The government should use the levy from tourism to provide better infrastructure within the tourist areas already mentioned in this paper and across the country. There should be a well-planned marketing strategy and established domestic tourism with cross cutting partners in various industries that would lead to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of tourism for sustainable tourism development and poverty alleviation in the country.

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