



# **An Assessment of the Social and Economic Impacts of Tourism Development in Dullstroom, Mpumalanga**

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## **Title of the Project**

*An Assessment of the Social and Economic Impacts of Tourism Development in Dullstroom, Mpumalanga*

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## Executive Summary

This study observed tourism development in the popular nature-tourism and recreational fishing destination of Dullstroom, Mpumalanga, and sought to highlight the significant benefits that have been triggered as a consequence. Dullstroom is synonymous with fly-fishing (particularly trout fishing) and is well-known throughout South Africa for its unique natural environment that is host to more than 150 bird species, as well as the vulnerable Grey Crowned Crane (De Jager, 2010). Moreover, approximately 15kms north of Dullstroom is the Verloren Valei Nature Reserve, which is home to diverse flora and fauna. Although the nature reserve is important to the regional tourism economy, the area is also designated as a Ramsar site<sup>1</sup>, signifying its ecological importance too (De Jager, 2010; Macfarlane & Teixeira-Leite, 2012).

Research for this report included a review of current literature on tourism development impacts, the compilation of tourism employment statistics, semi-structured interviews with local business owners or managers, and semi-structured interviews with employees that resided in the nearby township of Sakhelwe. According to Mitchell and Ashley (2010, p. 15), case studies exploring the positive impacts of tourism development – particularly on the poor – have typically remained at the micro-level by observing individual hotels, lodges or hospitality businesses. In the South African context, the impacts generated by tourism development on local communities have remained preoccupied by the economic benefits they deliver and not the important social gains that may also be initiated. Scholarly observations of destinations like Dullstroom, that have significant wildlife or nature-based features, have invariably signified the importance of achieving either environmental or economic sustainability (Cock & Fig 2000; Ferreira, 2006; Loon & Polakow, 2001; Mazibuko, 2007; Myburgh & Saayman 2002; Saayman, Saayman & Ferreira, 2009; Spenceley, 2005; Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007). However, while both themes are of course imperative to tourism economies in South Africa, the neglect of the social benefits to local communities should neither be overlooked nor underestimated.

Although it has been argued that local and national governments will primarily be concerned with economic benefits, Sherman & Dixon (1991, p. 97) noted that they also should be aware of the “larger picture”, that consisted of the social benefits associated with tourism. These benefits included long-term community stability, skills development, and enhanced opportunities for poorer employees’ families to access education and better standards of living (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010). However, despite these notable advantages, Hall and Richards (2000) warned that “disadvantaged local communities may not be able to identify with tourism development because they view it as an exogenous development with benefits that largely accrue to outsiders” (p. 298). They added that in several scenarios, the inability to identify with tourism development could eventually lead to either indifference or even resistance. In Dullstroom, a setting which may potentially be exposed to industrial encroachment in the foreseeable future, it was therefore not only deemed to be essential to identify the benefits tourism development afforded local communities, but to also ensure that they are *fully aware* of these benefits in the future. Thus, this report was additionally designed to distinguish the positive impacts of tourism development in such a way that the local community could understand the importance and value of tourism in Dullstroom.

In October, 2012, a qualitative research methodology was developed to capture the views and experiences of 16 local business owners in Dullstroom and the surrounding region and 46 local

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<sup>1</sup> The Ramsar Convention (1971) or *The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat* is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of wetlands.

employees from the neighbouring township of Sakhelwe. In the majority of studies exploring community impacts in South Africa, local voices have remained on the periphery of discussion. Subsequently, this study has engaged emerging debates by providing life stories and perspectives from social groups (predominantly black, South African females) that have rarely been provided a platform to discuss critical issues concerning tourism and the consequences of its development.

The findings reveal that tourism development in Dullstroom has had a profoundly positive impact on both black and non-black community members and that these benefits exceeded economic gains. From the perspective of local business owners, tourism development had not only provided a stable economy but a stable community. Here, it was observed that generations of families have remained in Dullstroom, as tourism employment provided them with jobs that not only paid well but included opportunities that were likely to provide skills and educational development too. Consequently, local businesses retained highly experienced and well-trained employees for long periods and many of these workers were also empowered with positions of responsibility that reduced management workloads and stresses. Indeed, many local businesses owners and managers suggested that the retention of highly trained, loyal staff was a key factor in the success of many local establishments throughout Dullstroom and the surrounding area.

From the perspective of employees from Sakhelwe, tourism development had provided them not only with stable incomes and higher standards of living, but also with the opportunity to gain extensive work experience, new skills, and even the opportunity to pursue formal qualifications that included university diplomas and degrees. Thus, tourism employment in the Dullstroom region empowered members of the local community by enabling them to become financially self-sufficient. Moreover, many of these positions permitted local community members to pursue career paths that transcended low-skilled or low-paid jobs. Indeed, a range of positive impacts were identified of which some of the key outcomes included:

- Direct employment opportunities in the tourism sector
- Indirect employment opportunities in a range of other sectors
- An increased appreciation by the community of natural assets and the environment
- The building of skills and influence amongst community members
- The building of capacity both collectively and individually
- Community empowerment (both from a gender and social perspective)

Tourism development was therefore identified to be a mutually beneficial process from the vantage point of both local business owners and members of the township of Sakhelwe. However, this study concludes with a warning that these benefits could be quickly eradicated if the significant tourism development impacts in an emerging economy like South Africa, are overlooked in the long-term. Thus, it was established that it is imperative that community members, like those residing in Dullstroom or Sakhelwe, are aware of future tourism developments and the potentially positive impacts these changes and outcomes could foster.

## . Introduction

### 1.1. Project purpose

This research seeks to identify the key economic and social impacts initiated by tourism development on a host community in rural South Africa. Although economic impacts are of course an important aspect of tourism development in rural communities, this research will also place a significant emphasis on the *social* impacts tourism has fostered. Indeed, Deery, Jago and Fredline (2012) argue that the importance of identifying social impacts caused by tourism development “is crucial for industry, government tourism departments and agencies to understand how individuals within a host community as well as the host community overall perceives the benefits and disadvantages of tourism” (p. 64). As many previous researchers have noted, the social impacts of tourism have often been neglected in a developing world context and it is therefore imperative to gain further insights into these processes. Thus, this study’s primary purpose is to develop further knowledge and understanding of tourism impacts in a neglected geographical setting.

### 1.2. Who will benefit from the project being completed?

As previously identified, studies detailing the attitudes of local community members towards tourism development have been predominantly undertaken in the developed world. This study therefore attempts to readdress this imbalance by providing viewpoints from local members of a rural South African community towards tourism development, including the facilitation of a discussion observing how tourism employment opportunities have affected their lives. Moreover, this study engages with inhabitants of not only the town of Dullstroom itself but with residents from the neighbouring township of Sakhelwe. This is perhaps a significantly important vantage point, as Nyaupane and Poudel (2011, p. 1348) have argued, “More emphasis must be given to social inclusion of various groups including women, minorities, and indigenous people.” Indeed, in the South African context, the broader black population has remained a peripheral group in debates surrounding tourism, despite their substantial number (almost 80% of South African citizens are black according to the census of 2011). Thus, it is crucial to understand their views and experiences in order to develop a more balanced picture concerning how they have been affected, directly and indirectly, by tourism development (and often in scenarios where they have had little or no say in these processes).

This research also seeks to develop additional knowledge by providing perspectives from female members of the township. As Petrzelka, Krannich, Brehm and Trentelman (2005) suggest, further research is required to “move beyond looking at men and women universally, and treating men’s and women’s perspectives on the subject in a uniform and simplistic manner” (p. 1125). This is because, say Mason and Cheyne (2000), gender differences can play an essential role “in informing the tourism planning and management process” (p. 407). Indeed, it has been previously observed that females will often identify different tourism impacts in comparison to men. Citing Puijk’s (1996) study of a Norwegian rural community’s attitudes towards tourism development, Petrzelka et al. (2005) discussed how men frequently observed tourism processes from an economic vantage point, whilst women would be more acutely aware of the social impacts. Moreover, Petrzelka et al. (2005) posit that women are more likely to rank the community benefits of tourism differently to men. Thus, this research attempts to deal with similar themes to those identified by Nyaupane and Poudel (2011), who ask, “How do the poor, particularly women and marginalized groups, participate in, contribute to, and benefit from growth?” (p. 1347). Such perspectives are all too often neglected

and this study will again attempt to build on existing knowledge and understanding by utilising this alternative perspective.

### 1.3. Research objectives

This study seeks to address the following four research objectives:

- 1) To identify the significant social impacts tourism development in the Dullstroom area has fostered.
- 2) To identify the significant economic impacts tourism development in the Dullstroom area has fostered.
- 3) To critically analyse the perceptions and experiences of local community members towards tourism development in the Dullstroom area.
- 4) To identify the supply chains that have been formed in the Dullstroom area due to tourism development.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Sustainable tourism and community development

The importance of developing tourism sustainably has gained increasing attention in recent years. Sustainable tourism is defined by Badan & Bhatt (2007) as tourism “that is developed and maintained in a manner, and at such a scale, that it remains economically viable over an indefinite period and does not undermine the physical and human environment that sustains and nurtures it” (p. 43). Tourism development has frequently been identified as an important vehicle for regions or countries to grow economically (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2012). However, although it has been established that economic gains should be an essential outcome of successful tourism implementation, the state of the environment and the social well-being of the local communities must also be enhanced, or at the very least, maintained. After all, poorly implemented tourism development can have severe implications for natural environments, particularly if it takes place in “ecologically fragile areas” (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011, p. 1349).

In many scenarios globally, the mismanagement of natural environments during the development processes of tourism has not only led to ecological issues but to economic and social ones too. Tourism development must be carefully considered as haphazard planning without adequate social or environmental consideration may “erode the very qualities of the natural and human environment that attract visitors in the first place” (Inskeep, 1991, p. 460). Indeed, Badan & Bhatt (2007, p. 42-43) argue that “the idea of sustainable development is that economic growth and environmental conservation are not only compatible, they are necessary partners.” Similarly, Lee (2013) posits that whilst sustainable development may simultaneously protect physical environments and provide economic growth, it can also provide local communities with opportunities to improve their quality of life. Thus, sustainable tourism practices should therefore ensure that environments are protected in order to support local or regional economies and the social wellbeing of communities.

More recently, the demands of local or host communities have emerged to become central figures in the debates surrounding tourism development, particularly in poorer regions. However, despite a proliferation of studies observing the views and attitudes of communities towards tourism development, the majority have been conducted in the developed world (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Research has emerged in recent years seeking to readdress this imbalance, particularly from the perspective of community-based tourism (CBT). Both Lee (2013) and Sebele (2010) argue that in the contemporary era of sustainable management, CBT has established itself as an important component in several academic discussions relating to tourism development. CBT seeks to engage with communities by including them in the decision-making stages of tourism growth and by fostering a greater awareness of the importance of local environments and cultures so that they remain protected. Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011) echoes these views, adding that community-based tourism should seek to achieve sustainable development in order to improve living conditions by ensuring locals are aware of the need to protect the environment.

The enhancement of living conditions and community well-being can be achieved in myriad ways. According to Fennell (1999) and Okazaki (2008), CBD can improve the quality of life for local residents by providing them with employment, the possibility of ownership of their own businesses, social capital creation, and stronger cultural awareness. Roseland (2005) supports these views by stating that community participation should enable locals “to shape their local economies by influencing the type of business, industry, and employment opportunities in their own backyards” (p. 168). Indeed, Sebele (2010) and Tosun (2006) have argued that community participation will often ensure sustainability, as locals develop positive attitudes to the very environments that provide them with jobs and financial resources.

The degree to which communities should be involved in tourism development planning has remained a fixture of debate, however. Simpson (2008), citing a number of case studies from around the world, has argued that community participation does not need to play a central role for the benefits of tourism to reach communities. Yet this contradicts the views of several scholars who have argued that communities should be involved from the outset. Indeed, Murphy (1985) and Zeng and Ryan (2012) have posited that for sustainable tourism to work in poverty-stricken areas, community engagement is a crucial aspect of the development process. This is because, says Lee (2013), “if the host residents perceive that they are likely to benefit from such exchanges without incurring intolerable costs, then these residents are likely to support and participate in exchanges with visitors and to support additional community-based tourism development” (p. 38). Sebele (2010) suggests that local knowledge, which can be of significant value to tourism development in the long run, should be identified as a central component and that the absence of it may be of particular detriment to progress. Similarly, a range of other studies have implied that without the support and participation of local communities, the successful implementation of sustainable tourism development will be difficult to achieve (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Lee, 2013; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011, 2012; Nunkoo & Smith, 2012). Indeed, as Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger (2009) argue, “educating and informing the local community about tourism and its impacts will strengthen the tourism industry by allowing all stakeholders to make informed decisions about the types of tourism development and activities that take place in their community” (p. 697).

According to Nyaupane and Poudel (2011), local communities that have been overlooked or marginalised during the planning stage of tourism development will frequently withdraw their support of the protection of natural environments. Sebele (2010) argues that this scenario is often fostered by a community's assumption that tourism development without their input "will not reflect their values" (p. 137). Hall and Richards (2000) also concur, stating "disadvantaged local communities may not be able to identify with tourism development because they view it as an exogenous development with benefits that largely accrue to outsiders...[an] inability to identify with tourism development in turn may lead either to resistance or indifference" (p. 298). Thus, based on the majority of outcomes observed in other studies, local community involvement during the planning stage is of significant importance to successful implementation. As Hall and Richards (2000) and McGeehee and Andereck (2004) all suggest, a local community's perception and understanding of tourism development is crucial and it is also imperative that they understand the consequences as well as the benefits.

In the South African context, tourism has emerged to become a highly important aspect of the national economy. However, it is not just the propensity of tourism to generate income revenues that signify its importance, but its ability to generate substantial levels of employment also. Briedenhahn and Wickens (2004) underline this importance:

*"In a country of expanding population, increasing unemployment, a declining currency, and a steady drop in the value of its mineral wealth, until now its most profitable commodity, tourism presents one opportunity to turn the tide of unemployment through the generation of jobs and the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities" (p. 73).*

Moreover, Briedenhahn and Wickens (2004) add:

*"Whilst many of South Africa's rural communities are lacking in education and financial resources, both of which have proved insurmountable barriers to participation in the tourism industry of the past, they are rich in an abundance of flair, creativity, warm hospitality and entrepreneurial skills, which have enabled them to eke out a living in highly adverse circumstances" (p. 77).*

Tourism development in South Africa therefore presents a range of possible solutions to the myriad economic and social problems that continue to persist. Indeed, as Frey and George (2010) have argued, almost two decades ago, the 1996 White Paper, *Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa*, underlined that for South Africa, "responsible tourism was not a luxury but a necessity" (p. 621). Moreover, tourism may be identified as an important vehicle to help reverse the social and economic legacies of the apartheid era that have continued to affect the majority black population. Buultjens et al.'s (2010) study, which observed indigenous tourism development in Australia, reveals a number of parallels between indigenous Australians and non-white South Africans. This research noted that "Indigenous Australians are, in general, more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to be unemployed, to be living below the poverty line, to experience lower levels of education and to suffer greater health problems" (p. 597). Similar observations can be witnessed when one observes the demographic profiles of black citizens via the South African census of 2011. Naturally, employment generation is frequently identified as a solution to this highly problematic issue. Yet, Buultjens et al. (2010) highlight the additional obstacles that frequently prevent such actions to take place with ease:

*“One important way to address the disadvantage is for Indigenous people to access meaningful employment. However factors such as lack of education, vocational training and business skills have made this difficult. In addition, the fact that a relatively large proportion of Indigenous people live in regional and remote places with few opportunities for employment has exacerbated the problem of gaining employment” (p. 597).*

If one observes the current situation in many rural locations in South Africa, like Dullstroom, a similar narrative emerges. It is therefore essential that the importance of tourism development and the many positive impacts it can foster are outlined and analysed through this research study. However, before this step is taken, the prominent impacts tourism development may produce are discussed in the following section.

## **2.2. The impacts of tourism development**

The impacts resulting from tourism development have been discussed in numerous contemporary studies. Broadly speaking, these impacts are typically categorised as being either positive or negative, in one of three particular groups: 1) economic impacts; 2) environmental impacts; or 3) socio-cultural (or social) impacts. As one would perhaps expect, both the economic and environmental impacts caused by tourism development can be identified using a range of relatively standard criteria. Economic impacts can of course be measured through the financial flows that either enter or leave a national, regional or local tourism economy; through tax revenues, or via the number of direct and indirect forms of employment tourism may initiate. Environmental impacts on the other hand, can be observed by measuring criteria such as wildlife species decline, erosion rates, or by physical changes to protected areas. However, social impacts remain a more contested issue due to the many intangible benefits and costs tourism development may induce.

According to Sherman and Dixon (1991), positive social impacts can be described as “broadly as any gains in social welfare, either direct or indirect...such gains may be either financial in nature or nonmonetary” (p. 97). One must therefore assume that negative social impacts must entail a range of opposite processes. Examples of positive social impacts are provided by Meyer (2006), who observed that the benefits could include the development of new capacity (i.e. employees completing studies or qualifications specific to tourism), improved local infrastructure, and supplier support that entails the training of those employed in supporting businesses. Kim, Uysal and Sirgy (2012) have specifically noted the positives of infrastructural change which, they argue, produces distinctive social benefits:

*“Evidence exists that support the notion that tourism has positive social impact. For example, studies have shown that tourism brings more opportunities to upgrade facilities such as outdoor recreation facilities, parks, and roads...” (p. xx)*

Thus, the social benefits initiated by tourism can therefore be extensive in scope and present a range of outcomes that exceed economic gain. Although Sherman and Dixon (1991) acknowledge that tourism, if implemented correctly, may stimulate the economy by providing jobs and markets for local goods, they argue that regional or national governments must take heed of these additional benefits, stating “while government officials may be primarily interested in the amount of expenditures and employment opportunities generated, they also should be aware of the larger picture – that is, the social benefits associated with nature tourism” (p. 97).

Murray (2009, p. 3) has compiled a range of common positive impacts relating to the local economy, the environment, and the social well-being of the community. These are listed as follows:

#### **Economic**

- Direct employment opportunities (including, administration, guiding, tours and transport, construction, hospitality, management, accommodation shopping, food and beverage outlets)
- Indirect employment opportunities (including, environmental management, entrepreneurs, other secondary industries)
- The support of the development of multi-sector or mono-sector non-profit enterprises (benefiting/controlled or strongly influenced by communities)
- The provision of invigoration and development to local economies
- The provision of alternatives to changing or fading traditional industries
- An increase of land values, and thus rates payable to council for community services

#### **Environmental**

- The improvement of the environment (including changes in subsistence leading to less degradation of natural resources)
- The encouragement of awareness and appreciation by the community of natural assets and the environment and other resources on which tourism relies
- The enhancement of management and stewardship of natural resources

#### **Socio-cultural**

- The stimulation of infrastructure development (roads, communications, healthcare, education, public transport, access to drinking water and food supplies)
- An increase in local or regional safety and security
- The facilitation of workforce development (e.g. rights and conditions)
- The promotion of civic pride (in community, culture, heritage, natural resources and infrastructure)
- An increased awareness that it may be mutually beneficial to all stakeholders in the community
- The potential creation of new opportunities and the broadening of idea horizons
- The promotion of cultural understanding
- The preservation of cultural and social heritage and local languages or dialects
- The support and preservation of local and unique crafts and skills
- The creation of a sense of well-being
- The promotion of greater cross-institutional understanding
- The further appreciation of cross-stakeholder goals and agendas
- The building of skills and influence
- The stronger enforcement of government policy (national, regional and local)
- Further skills enhancement (training; such as administrative, service industry, maintenance, guiding, etc.)
- The building of capacity both collectively and individually
- The development of empowerment (gender and community; social, financial, etc.)

Although it has been established that tourism development has the potential to produce many benefits, a series of negative impacts may also emerge however. Citing numerous studies that have been undertaken to observe negative tourism impacts, Simpson (2008) argues that “communities may become subject to external pressures, issues of governance and structure, conflicting stakeholder agendas, jealousies and internal power struggles, and the growth of artificial hierarchies and elites may occur, diminishing or undermining potential benefits to the community” (p. 3). Deller (2010) cites the observations of Frederick (1993) and Lewis, Hunt and Plantinga, (2003), who have all posited that most tourism-related jobs are “low-skilled, low-paying, and seasonal which results in the promotion of a class of workers referred to as the working poor” (p. 181). Others have suggested that tourism may also induce higher living costs (Latkova & Vogt, 2012; Nunkoo & Smith, 2013), or promote the development of an economy that is overly dependent on tourism (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Zeng and Ryan (2012) and Jim and Xu (2002) note that one of the key issues with tourism development in poor communities is the unrealistic expectations locals place on tourism, and that the failure to meet these high expectations will lead to apathy or even a withdrawal of support. Thus, tourism should not necessarily be identified as a tool to economic salvation without considerable thought and the development of a distinct awareness of the implications it may pose to communities and environments.

### **2.3. Tourism development, poverty relief and empowerment**

As discussed earlier in this study, tourism has been identified as a vehicle to reduce poverty in developing nations. Indeed, the notion of “pro-poor” tourism (Hall & Page, 2009; Meyer, 2007; Rogerson & Pillay, 2013; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2010) has garnered increasing attention in a plethora of recent studies. However, although tourism has been identified as a solution to poverty alleviation, numerous examples reveal that high leakages (caused by high numbers of foreign business developments) will often result in little to no improvement in the reduction of poverty amongst communities (Blake, Arbache, Sinclair, & Teles, 2008). As Sandbrook posits (2010), leakages are caused “when revenue leaves the destination as profit to non-local businesses or for the purchase of external goods and services” (p. 21). Therefore, economic growth does not necessarily result in enhanced social benefits. Park and Stokowski (2009, p. 905) noted that even in scenarios whereby tourism development resulted in the creation of new jobs, many were filled with foreign nationals or non-local residents, as opposed to members of the immediate community. Moreover, the notion of pro-poor tourism presents other contentious issues as “local people may not want to be labelled in a way that portrays them as helpless, miserable, and primitive” (Nyaupane & Poudel, p. 2011, 1348). Similarly, citing the observations of Pfohl (1994), Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011, (p. 1348) argue that such terms may portray the poor as “abnormal losers”, and instead terms such as, “livelihood improvement” should be preferred over “poverty reduction.”

Nonetheless, Hall and Page (2009) suggest that poverty reduction and pro-poor tourism have emerged to become “key considerations for the future of international tourism management” (p. 1). According to McCulloch (2001) poverty is a term that is attributed to those who earn low incomes or are unemployed, have limited or no education, and frequently reside in areas or environments of poor quality. Scoones (1998) argues that poverty is not simply a case of lacking financial resources but social resources too, including access to clean and pleasant environments.

In order for poverty reduction to be achieved, Nyaupane & Poudel, (2011) argue that community “empowerment” is an intrinsic theme that not only includes economic factors but social factors too.

Citing the views of Friedmann (1992) and Scheyvens (1999), Nyaupane & Poudel (2011) suggest that the notion of empowerment “is a multi-dimensional concept including economic, social, political, and psychological empowerment” (p. 1346). Members of a community may be economically empowered through formal or informal sector employment and via the development of new businesses. Economic empowerment may also enable communities to improve their own livelihoods by developing better infrastructure and by increasing access to education or health care (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011). However, other modes of empowerment may entail a plethora of additional advantages. This may include “social empowerment”, whereby communities become more cohesive as they pull together, and “psychological empowerment” which includes the development of self-esteem amongst community members (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011; Scheyvens, 1999). Of course, these forms of empowerment overlap and interact with each other. Citing the observations of Friedmann (1992), Nyaupane & Poudel (2011) offer one such example from a gender perspective:

*“If women are socially empowered, it releases their non-economic yet challenging household work, which will free their time that can be used to earn income, which gives them economic empowerment. In turn, it may contribute to self-confidence (psychological empowerment) and political empowerment.”* (p. 1346-47)

Empowerment may be achieved in other ways, particularly via the notion of “capacity building” which was mentioned briefly earlier in this study. The notion of capacity building typically involves developing community access to information, greater social inclusion and increased participation - particularly for those that live in socio-economically challenged areas (Beeton, 2006; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011). Through empowering poor communities it is additionally argued that self-reliance is enhanced as they develop skills and knowledge that enable them to become self-sufficient and, on occasion, small-scale entrepreneurs (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011; Victurine, 2000; Weiler & Ham, 2002). Moreover, Nyaupane & Poudel (2011) argue that these developments may also benefit low-income groups through increased skills development in a variety of employment sectors including fisheries, fruit and vegetable production, nature guiding, and hotel operations.

According to Mitchell and Ashley (2010, p. 21-22) 'three key pathways' can influence poor communities via tourism development:

**1) Direct effects of tourism on the poor:** these include both labour income and other forms of earnings from the tourism sector (i.e. jobs in hotels and restaurants, taxi rides). It also includes direct effects from tourism on the poor even if they are non-financial livelihood changes (improved infrastructure or reduced access to the beach for local residents).

**2) Secondary effects of tourism on the poor:** this includes indirect earnings (and non-financial livelihood impacts) from non-tourism sectors that arise from tourism activity (crafters, construction workers, farmers, etc.). Also included are induced effects from tourism workers who re-spend their earnings in the local economy.

**3) Dynamic effects:** this broad category covers long-term changes in the economy and patterns of growth whether experienced, in the macro economy, or limited to the local economy at the destination.

Tourism development then, does not just affect those that are employed directly within the industry but those indirectly, in other employment sectors, too. To illustrate this point further, the secondary effects of tourism development, which includes the construction of a series of 'supply chains', will now be discussed in further detail.

#### 2.4. Tourism and the development of supply chains

Tourism development can generate a number of jobs that are specific to the industry. However, it may also develop a series of additional positions in supporting industries that are frequently termed as 'secondary effects' or 'secondary impacts'. Nyaupane and Poudel's (2011) research of tourism development and livelihood benefits in a Nepalese national park revealed that tourism could provide opportunities for self-employment, as locals elected to open souvenir shops, poultry farms and small guest houses. Moreover, others were empowered with opportunities to earn higher incomes, as some opted to sell timber to tourists instead of making wooden souvenirs. Thus, new forms of labour emerge that are instigated by the development of tourism. Indeed, it has been argued that tourism supply chains may support more households than those directly benefiting through tourism (Kirsten & Rogerson, 2002; Ashley & Haysom, 2008; Pillay & Rogerson, 2013; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2010; Timothy & Teye, 2009). As Nyaupane & Poudel (2011) argue, tourism does not just involve the creation of jobs in hotels, guest houses, restaurants or souvenir shops; it may also instigate a demand for new food and beverage or handicraft suppliers to emerge. This concept is illustrated by Pillay & Rogerson (2013) who suggest that:

*“procurement by the accommodation sector is considered to offer high potential for engaging with groups of smaller, local and disadvantaged entrepreneurs as suppliers. For tourism accommodation providers the expansion of linkages with local food producers represents the foundation for building economic opportunities and correspondingly to catalyse local economic development”* (p. 50).

Moreover, as Sherman and Dixon (1991) note, secondary employment opportunities are not just restricted to supplying food or souvenirs but to developing infrastructure, including the construction of roads, rail networks and their long-term maintenance. Thus, as Nyaupane and Poudel (2011) and Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) argue, if supply chains are fostered through the development of markets that supply local goods, leakages can be reduced. Pillay & Rogerson, (2013) concur, stating, “Tourism planners acknowledge that in the context of the developing world inter-sectoral linkages between tourism and other economic sectors often are weak and should be improved through integrating tourism more closely into local economies thereby to catalyse other local activities” (p. 50). As Scheyvens (2011) and Pillay and Rogerson (2013) suggest, magnifying the benefits of the multiplier effect should therefore be central goals for the governments of developing nations that have high tourism potential.

Nyaupane & Poudel (2011, p. 1354) outline some of the key benefits supply chains may foster:

##### **Empowerment**

- Increased access to information
- Increased access to conservation education programs
- Increased access to forests and traditional use rights
- A greater Influence in planning and decision making process

### **Capacity Building**

- Greater opportunities to participate in skill development training
- Increased opportunities to participate in income generating activities
- A wider availability of small loans

### **Economic Benefits**

- Increased employment opportunities in tourism businesses
- A larger market for local farm produce
- A larger market for non-farm produce
- Further opportunities for microenterprises
- Wider collective economic benefits

### **Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Services**

- Increased participation in biodiversity conservation programs
- Greater conservation awareness
- More activities to reduce pressure on natural resources

### **Amenities Development**

- Improvement of local Infrastructure
- A better conservation infrastructure (trails, forest roads, fences, etc.)
- A stronger tourism superstructure
- The further development of new tourism products

This literature review has revealed that the economic and social benefits afforded to members of the local community are considerable in number and wide in scope. These benefits do not just extend to those directly in tourism however, but to those indirectly employed too. In the context of South Africa, where unemployment figures remain high and population education or skill levels remain low (particularly when one observes those residing in rural townships like Sakhelwe), the importance of highlighting the impacts of tourism development is therefore imperative. This study continues with an explanation of the methodology that was constructed to illustrate these key themes.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Overview**

Primary research materials were acquired in three particular ways. The first, involved a number of semi-structured interviews that were conducted by the lead researcher with local business owners and managers. The second, involved a series of semi-structured interviews with employees who resided in the township of Sakhelwe. These interviews were conducted by two research assistants that were fluent in a number of official South African languages. The third, involved the compilation of total employment figures of those working in the Dullstroom region's tourism industry or those

heavily influenced by it. These were compiled through telephone conversations and via face-to-face meetings with managers or owners.

Semi-structured interviews were selected because of their ability to source additional material at the interviewee's own discretion. As Palmer (2005) has argued, conversational interviews, if structured to encourage open dialogue, have the potential to put people at ease and will permit the interviewee to reveal underlying feelings, assumptions and beliefs without fear of criticism. The practice used in this study attempted to trigger individuals to "talk freely" and enabled them to "express detailed beliefs and feelings on a topic" (Kinnear, Taylor, Johnson, & Armstrong, 1993, p. 240). The compilation of local tourism employment statistics served two particular purposes. First, it enabled the researchers to establish the size and demographic scope of employment levels in Dullstroom's tourism and hospitality sector. Second, it provided the research team with a comprehensive breakdown of the largest employers in Dullstroom. This then permitted the lead researcher to identify which businesses would be identified to take part in the study (it was deemed that the larger number of people they employed, the more influential they would be in terms of generating social and economic impacts). Interviews were then arranged with a total of 20 tourism businesses that typically included hotels, country estates, cafes or restaurants. These interviews were constructed to take place with managers or senior personnel (or if the business was small enough, the owner themselves). However, 2 pre-arranged interviews were cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, while a further 2 interviewees requested that the information they provided not be used in this study. Consequently, these two interviews were removed from this study.

Two research assistants were employed to collect research materials through pre-arranged interview sessions with employees that worked in Dullstroom but were residents of the township of Sakhelwe. A total of 10 local tourism businesses were selected to participate, with 8 agreeing to provide access to their employees. Both research assistants had the ability to converse in at least two of the following languages: English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiSotho or Tswana. This ensured that respondents fully understood the nature of the questions being asked - even if their English proficiency was relatively weak (the researchers could translate any problematic questions). A total of 46 interviews were successfully acquired in October, 2012.

All interviews were initially transcribed into text by the lead researcher or by a research assistant if the interview was conducted in a language other than English. This was then followed by in-depth analysis of the data (after translation), in which the lead researcher read the transcripts again and divided the whole empirical material into particular units and categories (Jennings, 2010). Inductive codes were developed and emergent themes identified (Creswell, 2007). Using Gubrium and Holstein's (1997) narrative practice approach, the material was examined in terms of how the stories were told by the respondents, in terms of emphasis, as well as what they actually said. As Marvasti (2004, p.97) argues: "[n]arrative practice... aims to simultaneously study *what* people say or do and *how* they make it meaningful." In the interests of confidentiality, all respondents that participated in the semi-structured interviews were assigned a unique number so that names remain unknown. The managers and owners are represented by the number range SP1 – 16 (SP = senior personnel), while employees were assigned the range E1-46 (E = employee). The 16 senior personnel and 46

employees will be addressed as such in the discussion section of this paper; however the genders of the employees will also be included.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Quantitative findings overview

Over 150 tourism-related businesses were contacted throughout Dullstroom and the surrounding area. A total of 133 of these businesses provided employment figures and their basic demographic profiles (gender and race only). The selected businesses were either directly involved in the tourism and hospitality sector (such as hotels, lodges, restaurants and cafes, etc.) or, by their own admission, relied heavily on tourist visitor revenues (gift shops, activity providers, fishing supply shops, etc.). It was reported that 1097 full time positions (see table 1) and 208 part time positions (see table 2) were attached to these businesses. In terms of gender (see table 3), 602 full time positions were held by female employees (54.9%), in comparison to 495 being held by men (45.1%). Breaking down these figures from a racial perspective (see table 4), 925 of these positions were held by black employees (84.3%), in comparison to 172 positions held by non-black employees (15.7%).

In terms of full time employment, black females represented the largest group (506, 46.1%), followed by black males (419, 38.2%), non-black females (96, 8.8%) and finally by non-black males (76, 6.9%). From the perspective of those engaged in part-time employment, black males represented the largest group (101, 48.6%), followed by black females (66, 31.7%), non-black males (21, 10.1%) and non-black females (20, 9.6%). In contrast to full time employment figures, a greater number of men (122, 58.7%) were employed in part-time positions (see table 5) in contrast to women (86, 41.3%). However, from a racial perspective, black people were the dominant group once again (167, 80.3%), in comparison to non-black people (41, 19.7%).

Table 1. Demographic profiles of full time employees

Group	Full time employed	% total
Black male	419	38.2
Black female	506	46.1
Non-black male	76	6.9
Non-black female	96	8.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1097</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2. Demographic profiles of part time employees

Group	Part time employed	% total
Black male	101	48.6
Black female	66	31.7
Non-black male	21	10.1
Non-black female	20	9.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3. Full time employment by gender

Group	Full time employed	% total
Male	495	45.1
Female	602	54.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1097</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4. Full time employment by racial group

Group	Full time employed	% total
Black	925	84.3
Non-black	172	15.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1097</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5. Part time employment by gender

Group	Part time employed	% total
Male	122	58.7
Female	86	41.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6. Part time employment by racial group

Group	Part time employed	% total
Black	167	80.3
Non-black	41	19.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.2. Qualitative findings overview

The qualitative materials acquired during this research study revealed that tourism development in Dullstroom had provided a range of positive economic and social benefits, particularly for residents living in Sakhelwe. Economically, many respondents had gained long-term positions that offered reliable salaries and provided notable improvements in living standards. It was additionally observed that these salaries were frequently increased due to internal promotion opportunities or the acquisition of new skills and qualifications. However, there were also significant economic benefits for Dullstroom's non-black population, including those that had developed successful establishments that were supported by a strong foundation of loyal, highly skilled and experienced staff members. In many scenarios, it was argued that these successful businesses would have struggled or even failed if it were not for the quality of staff Sakhelwe provided.

Social benefits initiated by tourism development included capacity building, empowerment (including the specific empowerment of black females), and long-term career development opportunities. Dullstroom aside, the secondary effects of tourism development were felt in nearby locations such as Belfast, Lydenburg and Machadodorp. Here, a number of businesses in a range of different sectors directly provided goods and services to the tourism industry in Dullstroom. A range of local supply chains were also identified that had created a number of formal and informal positions. These themes will now be observed in further detail.

### 4.3. Capacity building

The notion of capacity building has been identified as the development of community access to information, further social inclusion and increased participation, particularly for those that reside in socio-economically challenged areas (Beeton, 2006; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011). Capacity building may also entail the development of new skills (both tangible and intangible) and leadership capabilities. Interviews conducted with both senior personnel and employees throughout this study demonstrated that capacity building was one of the key benefits instigated by tourism development in Dullstroom and the surrounding region. Indeed, a number of narratives relating to evidence of capacity building amongst local community residents emerged. These narratives included the development of new skills that were either tourism-specific (customer interaction and communication, food preparation, and serving) or more broader in nature that were relevant to a number of industries (computer literacy skills, supervisory training, health and safety awareness, and first aid). The skills and qualifications that had been developed through employment in tourism were also wide in scope. Many employee interviewees suggested that they had acquired practical skills through in-house training. Indeed, all of the businesses interviewed in this study implied that, at the very least, they provided some form of in-house training to their employees upon the commencement of their positions. However, formal qualifications were additionally acquired by some interviewees, including the completion of matric-level subjects (particularly amongst those that left school early), university diplomas and degrees, guiding certificates, driving licences, first aid certificates, and computer literacy courses. Moreover, many of the senior personnel interviewed in this study pointed out that they had provided financial assistance towards their employees acquiring new skills or qualifications.

In most scenarios, it was revealed that employees frequently started in positions without any formal training or industry-specific skills. It was also noted that many respondents from Sakhelwe had left school without matric-level qualifications. As a consequence, many of the employees from Sakhelwe reported that were highly vulnerable in terms of employability and that the tourism industry had not only provided them with stable jobs, but with jobs that developed both tangible and intangible skill sets. Although the overwhelming majority of interviewees were born and raised in Sakhelwe, a small minority revealed that they had arrived from nearby towns or villages and had sought employment in Dullstroom because they perceived it to be a location that would provide jobs that were both sustainable and economically rewarding. Indeed, many of these respondents suggested that they had been previously employed in a number of short-term positions in other sectors, such as security guards or factory workers; however, these jobs were often poorly paid and susceptible to being withdrawn at short notice. Tourism employment then, provided local residents with a spectrum of economic and social benefits. Although many acknowledged that their positions rarely included high salaries or fringe benefits, the stability they were provided with ensured that social conditions could be significantly improved. The potential for capacity building was identified as a central theme in

many conversations. From the perspective of managers and owners, it was evident that many had invested a great deal of time and money into their employees' development so that they could become more effective staff members. Examples of these processes may be observed in the following statements supplied by senior personnel interviewees:

*We train our staff in-house and they are trained to do exactly what we can do...they don't have any qualifications but we can give them skills. The girl that bakes for me can prepare anything from my recipe book. She is so well trained that I don't even have to be here anymore...When I come to work in the mornings everything is ready for distribution and she is now training another member of staff. So, they can teach others what we have taught them in the first place. They arrived here with nothing...we actually can't call them chefs because they have no training or papers but they can cook incredibly well. (SP2)*

*Soon we'll need far more people, including managers to take care of our business...I've already earmarked local black ladies that I will employ to be managers...this is a real career path for them...they won't be cleaners forever. There are huge opportunities for development. In fact I'm already putting one lady through university because I need people to have the skills to manage...for others I'm trying to get them onto courses so that they can use computers and use spreadsheets...it's a huge investment on our part. (SP5)*

*We are very focused on staff development...we offer in-house training and we even offer bursaries for education....we have one guy currently working for us as a maintenance worker but he studying a BComm [Bachelor of Commerce] in accounting...and the company is paying everything for him and is trying to take care of him. (SP11)*

As the statements of SP5 and SP11 show, capacity building for local employees did not just relate to the development of intangible skills, but to formal qualifications that enabled staff members to potentially undertake senior positions in the long-term. However, the rapid capacity building of local employees presented a distinctive paradox. Indeed, it was clear that, although rare, some senior personnel respondents had trained employees to such a level that they became highly sought after – particularly if they had developed skill sets that were rare or to an exceptionally high standard. The following statements reveal some of issues:

*I've got a guy at university who is learning how to deal with my treatment plant because it's a huge responsibility...it's completely computerised but it needs one guy to manage it...he's a young guy who we've had since school....he has also been pushed to get correct licenses through the municipalities too. So he has the practical side already but I need him to know the theory too. The point is, he will be highly skilled and he'll eventually be able to get a job anywhere in the country for any municipality. Hopefully he doesn't run away from me! (SP5)*

*We teach our front of house staff computer skills by putting them through courses...they've learned things like [Microsoft] Word and Excel...in fact we've tended to lose people to bigger lodges because we train them so well and they can then negotiate salaries with bigger lodges in the area...but we accept that, we understand, it's more money for them. (SP10)*

Although this issue was cited as being an uncommon occurrence, it nonetheless indicates that many local employees were provided with skills that permitted them to not only develop within particular businesses but also within the wider industry as a whole. Indeed, SP1, a local café manager, argued that her kitchen staff were now highly proficient and that she believed most could work in a top hotel without issue. To illustrate this, she noted that on occasion, local (and more prestigious) businesses had endeavoured to head hunt her strongest employees. However, most senior personnel indicated that they believed their staff to be highly loyal and that a strong sense of trust had been developed over a number of years.

These encounters clearly show that many employees in Dullstroom's tourism industry were equipped with skills and capabilities that would enable them to obtain work elsewhere – even if this posed a risk to their current employers who had invested a great deal of time and money into their development. It was additionally argued that selecting and training local staff was a far better alternative to employing 'outsiders' – even if they possessed higher qualifications or greater experience. The views of one restaurant owner, SP6, perfectly illustrate this:

*I have two black ladies who run the kitchen and are heads of each shift...and I've done the whole 'white chef thing'...and it doesn't work...they demand the Earth...I prefer my staff, they're much more trustworthy. (SP6)*

Many local employees also relayed stories of both tangible and intangible skill development that had been initiated through employment in tourism. Again, it was evident that capacity building was a key benefit instigated by tourism development in Dullstroom. Examples of skills that were frequently developed can be witnessed via the following statements:

*I have developed computer skills and how to use the cash till...I have also learned communication skills, how to take orders, how to listen carefully; how to deal with difficult customers without causing a scene...welcoming guests, serving drinks and knowing the different beverages and how they are served...so many things. (E1, female)*

*I have improved my computer skills, particularly [Microsoft] Excel programs and my communication and problem solving skills. I have also learned to be patient as I work with suppliers as well as the health and safety committee...sometimes it is not that easy to work with them but I have learned to separate personal issues from my professional life. (E11, female)*

*Yes...[I have learned lots of new things], like how to do proper housekeeping, health and safety precaution measures, using the computer, report writing and communication skills...I am currently appointed as the head of housekeeping so I have also gained management and leadership skills.. (E14, female)*

Tourism employment additionally provided a distinctive range of benefits that included new linguistic capabilities and even literacy skills. SP12 suggested that many of the staff they employed could not adequately read or write when they first started. However, over the course of a number of years, these staff could now read to a capable level and could also write to some degree. Other senior personnel interviewees argued that many staff had originally arrived with few language capabilities but had developed a proficient understanding of English, Afrikaans and even Sepedi.

Thus, a whole host of skills were developed that clearly ventured beyond simply cleaning or serving. Indeed, many respondents frequently spoke of their fortune to be employed in positions that not only provided long-term, stable incomes but important skills that they believed few other employment sectors could provide. The importance of the skills and what they meant to local employees is clearly shown in the following statements:

*I have learned so many things [employed in the tourism sector], I can't begin to tell you how much...I arrived here just as a builder...but now I have a permanent position and I have learned how to deal with tourists and even how to deal with horses as I now help with the horse riding school. (E35, male)*

*It has changed my life in a very big way [gaining employment in Dullstroom's tourism sector]...I have developed management skills, how to work with people...also how to manage a business financially and how to work with budgets. (E38, female)*

The importance of tourism employment in Dullstroom and the surrounding region is evidentially demonstrated in many of the passages of conversation that have been used so far in this study. Senior personnel frequently argued that they provided platforms that not only included the acquisition of intangible skills for local people but tangible ones too – and indeed, tangible skills that could potentially enable their staff outgrow them and leave. However, despite the potential risk of staff departures, the general consensus amongst senior personnel interviewed in this study revealed that they would continue to invest their time and money to ensure that their staff received the best possible training. After all, this was also imperative to their businesses and was deemed to be a mutually beneficial process.

Moreover, by showing loyalty to their own staff via opportunities for promotion and skill development, many employees had chosen to remain with their employers for a considerable number of years. Senior personnel were often observed in discussions taking great pride from seeing their own staff grow and develop. Consequently, several had developed strong relationships with their staff that were built on a number of years of loyalty and trust (which also fostered greater interracial community cooperation and understanding). Indeed, in many scenarios, staff had been employed by some tourism and hospitality sector businesses for more than 20 years. As one senior personnel (SP6) remarked, “we have watched them grow and we have watched their kids grow.” Thus, tourism employment opportunities were seen to be imperative vehicles not only to economic gain but as conduits to career development and long-term stability that provided myriad social benefits.

#### **4.4. Long-term job security**

As one can observe in table 1, the tourism and hospitality sector has provided at the very minimum 1097 full time positions and 208 part time positions in Dullstroom and the surrounding area. Surprisingly, unlike tourism employment patterns in other parts of the world, staff turnover was reported to be exceptionally low. Indeed, even in instances where businesses were sold or came under new management, staff would frequently be inherited *with* the physical property. The statement of SP6, perfectly illustrates this common theme:

*I think my staff figures may appear as a little blood sample for Dullstroom as a whole. When we started [our business] here we had six staff...all black females...in fact we inherited these*

*staff with the business from the previous owner...3 of the 6 staff members are still with us 16 years later. (SP6)*

As a consequence of low turnover, many of the employees interviewed in this study reported that they had been working for their respective employer since their businesses opened. Indeed, several had seen managers and owners come and go while they remained fixed to the property. As SP1 recalled, some staff had been employed in her own establishment for so long, that even irregular customers would refer to staff by their first names. Other interviewees also revealed that staff had been retained for considerable periods of time:

*We have around 20 [members of staff]...of which 17 are full time and they are employed all year around. The staff are predominantly local...and around 60% have been here since the place first opened [in 1995], which is quite high...our staff turnover is very low. (SP11)*

*I started off with 2 employees and now I employ 22 members of staff full time...some of my staff have been here for 20 years. Staff turnover is very low. I've never had to let anyone go since we set up business all those years ago. (SP12)*

As a result of low staff turnover, many tourism and hospitality businesses provided locals, particularly those residing Sakhelwe, with a sense of security other employment sectors could not. Moreover, it was noted that many businesses employed multiple family members that included mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, and on one occasion, 3 sisters and a mother. Indeed, it appeared that it was common practice for the vast majority of employers to acquire new staff through the process of 'word-of-mouth' via current employees.

*For us, it's easier to use word of mouth. We try to get our people to get somebody in that they know...and also they have been here so long that we trust them....I think most of my new staff have come through contacts from my employees that have been here many years...we would never advertise. In fact other businesses have contacted me in the past and have asked if I know anybody...that's the way we work in Dullstroom. (SP1)*

*We ask our staff...it's normally word of mouth and we normally end up employing family members...we trust them. They know the job and they know if people will be able to do the job...that's what exactly happened last month...it's an employee's brother's daughter. We also have three sisters working here too...we actually took the staff from the previous owner of the restaurant. We never recruit in newspapers or anything... (SP2)*

*What we've found works best for us is when our employees know each other...so where possible we employ family members...in some cases we have a mother and two daughters working for us...we trust our staff to find the right people (SP10)*

The advantages of using an informal word-of-mouth strategy were numerous. First, employed staff members had gained the trust of managers and owners and thus their opinions on the suitability of new employees were highly respected. Second, if employees' family members or friends were taken on, owners and managers believed that this created an even deeper sense of loyalty and a reduced likelihood of them leaving for rival businesses. Last, it was acknowledged that the employment of 'outsiders' (i.e. those from other towns or further afield) could lead to internal conflicts and a subsequent loss of productivity. As a result of these policies, it was therefore found that businesses

were built on the employment of numerous family members and friends. It was also observed through several interviews that large proportions of families based in Sakhelwe were employed in the tourism sector. However, this does not necessarily imply that they were all employed by one particular business but instead, in several different establishments throughout the town. Moreover, it was observed that some families' only source of employment was supplied through the tourism sector. Indeed, the narratives offered by E26 and E36 were not uncommon in the context of Sakhelwe residents:

*I am a cook here for one of the local restaurants...my wife is a housekeeper at one of the local estates...two of my siblings are without work...but my father still works on a farm, looking after the fish for the tourists [for the purpose of recreational fishing]...and my other sister also works as a cleaner [at a local guest house]. My mother stays at home. (E26, male)*

*My wife works at XXXX as a beauty therapist after she'd gained those skills at another hotel in Dullstroom...I have one brother and three sisters. My brother works as a waiter in a local hotel... all three sisters work as housekeepers, two at one hotel and one at XXXX. (E36, male)*

The importance of the tourism industry in Dullstroom to provide almost entire families with jobs is perfectly outlined in the above statements. However, through these modes of employment it was additionally established that the *empowerment* of local residents was a considerable benefit, particularly from the perspective of Sakhelwe's black female population.

#### 4.5. Local community empowerment

At the beginning of this report the arguments of Nyaupane and Poudel (2011) were highlighted, who asked the question, "How do the poor, particularly women and marginalized groups, participate in, contribute to, and benefit from growth?" This study certainly provides a number of perspectives from marginalised groups, particularly those of black females. It was observed that black females from Sakhelwe made up the bulk of employees in Dullstroom's tourism sector and this was evident in the statistics provided at the start of the discussion section (see table 1). In terms of benefits, many had acquired stable positions that paid reasonable wages and provided opportunities for growth. A large proportion had also developed excellent relationships with their employers and could eventually provide entrance opportunities to husbands, siblings, friends and even children. Thus, it was evident that many of these women (and men, for that matter) had been empowered in a number of ways. This report will now examine some of these particular forms of empowerment.

Empowerment, of course, may be realised through the notion of capacity building and this study has already highlighted a series of processes relating to the acquisition of new skills and qualifications. However, empowerment may be achieved in other ways too. Indeed, as earlier posited, "Empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept including economic, social, political, and psychological empowerment" (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011, p. 1346). Thus, it is argued that empowerment may include the increased access to education, health care and broadly speaking, better living standards. Moreover, as discussed earlier, this notion may additionally include "social empowerment", whereby communities become more cohesive, and "psychological empowerment" through the development of self-esteem amongst community members (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011; Scheyvens, 1999). It is also suggested that by empowering poor communities, a greater sense of self-reliance is constructed as they develop skills and capabilities that enable them to become self-

sufficient and even small-scale entrepreneurs (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011; Victurine, 2000; Weiler & Ham, 2002).

The findings from this study posit that empowerment was evident in several distinctive ways. First, local respondents argued that their stable incomes provided them opportunities to purchase their own homes or land plots in Sakhelwe, as well as cars and various other possessions. This economic empowerment also enabled them to provide access for their children to local schools as they could comfortably afford school fees and the costs of supplying uniforms and equipment. As a consequence, many respondents suggested that they had ‘peace of mind’ that they could provide for their families (including extended families on occasion) and ‘live without debt’ (E12, male). The following statements reveal the economic empowerment achieved by many in Dullstroom:

*My life has improved so much more [since gaining a job in the tourism sector]...I can afford to furnish my house, take my children to school and even save....It would really hurt my family if I lost my job because I earn more money at home than my husband. (E4, female)*

*I am a single parent and the sole provider...but now I can pay for my children’s tuition fees, buy groceries, clothes and furniture and also pay for electricity because we live in an RDP [Reconstruction and Development Programme] house. (E13, female)*

*The money has increased [since gaining employment in tourism] and we can afford to do more...I sleep in a comfortable house knowing that I can take care of my kids and help my husband with some of the financial responsibilities. I can even supervise my children with homework when I am off duty and can take them out for ice cream...we can manage to pay for our children’s education, pay rent, buy electricity, groceries and other basic needs in the household. (E9, female)*

*I stay with my husband, I have four children. I pay rent and my two kids they are now at school in Lydenburg...I pay for their school fees and for their transport. The other two are still here at the local school here...when I started to work here my life changed...because I can buy my own bed and wardrobe, my own furniture...my own! And I also help my mum and my grandmother...I buy them groceries and I give my grandmother money and my mum money too (E29, female)*

Second, locals were also empowered through the trust and support provided to them through their employers. As previously noted, several employees were sponsored to undertake qualifications or gain new skills that were financially supported by their respective employers. A sense of trust on the other hand, was provided via the distribution of decision-making powers to employees that included supervisory roles and the freedom to appoint new members of staff without the input of supervisors or managers.

Evidently, both senses of “social empowerment” and “psychological empowerment” were achieved to some extent in Dullstroom because of the economic and social benefits employment afforded local residents. Indeed, tourism positions had provided many respondents with a great deal of self-esteem, as they could provide for families and had gained positions that held a degree of respect (particularly amongst those that had been given supervisory roles). Moreover, a number of respondents had used the skills and personal finances that they had developed to set up small

informal businesses. E29, for example, had used some of the money that she had saved to create an informal firewood business at the side of the main road with her husband. Although the business itself did not make a great deal of money it still contributed to their monthly income and also helped her husband generate a steady income (he was employed in odd-jobs and had no fixed position). Similarly, E5 worked as a security guard at a local country estate but had managed to generate enough savings to set up her own hair salon, which she worked in when she was off duty. Other interviewees also revealed ambitions to own their own businesses and argued that the skills they had acquired through regular employment in the tourism sector would stand them in good stead for the future:

*I think now with my experience and my educational background...as well as my ambition...it will really help me to establish my own business in tourism...one day I would like to have my own restaurant here (E1, female)*

However, employment in the tourism sector did not just generate ambitions for employees to develop their own businesses in the same sector, but as a platform for other careers to be developed. Indeed, E14 and E29 both disclosed that because of their stable financial positions, they could save money to pursue qualifications in different sectors:

*I can now save money so that I can further my studies in a different area...I know that I am secure with my monthly salary and I never have to worry about food like I used to when I was still unemployed. (E14, female)*

*This job is not the job that I want for the rest of my life [the respondent was an assistant cook], next year I am planning to go to school to study...I want to do a medical degree...this is not my dream but I can save money to get there. (E30, male)*

As one can observe through the numerous statements used in this study, many of the respondents were female, reflecting the overall gender breakdown of tourism sector employees in Dullstroom. To refer back to Nyaupane and Poudel (2011) suggestion that further research is required to examine the views of women and minority groups towards tourism development, this research reveals that the impacts were significantly *positive*. Indeed, black females in Dullstroom were empowered by stable positions that supplied constant salaries, provided skills, and enabled many to become the highest or sole income earners in their respective families. Interviews with senior personnel at tourism and hospitality establishments in Dullstroom additionally revealed that women frequently undertook traditionally male employment roles such as security guards and even bricklayers. These women could therefore support themselves and it was reported that several single mothers could now support their children without the need for financial support from other family members. Indeed, in one instance it was reported that one female employee in Dullstroom was supporting her entire family in the Free State province.

#### 4.6. Supply chains

This study sought not only to establish the nature and scale of the tourism sector in Dullstroom and the surrounding region but to identify the additional supply chains that had been developed both locally and regionally. Of course, tourism development does not simply create jobs in hotels, lodges and restaurants, but employment positions in a plethora of other sectors including construction, food supplies and repair services. Indeed, a number of senior personnel indicated that strong links

had been developed with local fish suppliers either from a food sourcing perspective or, more importantly, for the supply of fly-fishing stock for recreational purposes. To a lesser extent, supply links had been forged with meat and dairy producers additionally. Other local supply chains included timber supplies (primarily for firewood) and on occasion, fruit and vegetables. However, it was established that most businesses in Dullstroom acquired the bulk of their goods through large distribution companies based in either Nelspruit or Johannesburg. In most scenarios, it was argued that although many would like to support local businesses, few in reality existed. Moreover, it was posited that local suppliers could not reach the quality levels or scale of their demands (particularly hotels or country estate that had a high star rating).

Although food supply chains in Dullstroom were fragmented, it was evident however, that significant *human* supply chains had been fostered. Indeed, the majority of senior personnel in this study suggested that they used a number of locals that were employed in non-direct employment sectors, such as electricians, handymen, plumbers, painters, tilers and compost suppliers. Most also revealed that these were local tradespeople based in Sakhelwe or in nearby towns such as Belfast or Lydenburg. It was frequently posited that due to the scale of the tourism industry, many now had 'too much work', as demand for their skills had grown considerably since the mid-1990s. Other respondents reported that renovations and the construction of new extensions or buildings involved a predominantly local labour force. Thus, it was evident that tourism development in Dullstroom had not only generated a number of direct jobs but a reasonable number of indirect jobs too. Moreover, it was also noted that some tourism businesses had gone as far as to appoint their own permanent tradespeople as their businesses had expanded over the years:

*We have our own plumbers and electricians...these guys have been sourced locally and have trained by ourselves over the years. The supervisor has been here for 22 years. Our electrician has probably been with us for around 14 years...a lot of our staff have been here for long periods of time. (SP4)*

Like those employed directly in the tourism sector, these tradespeople were provided with training opportunities to gain appropriate qualifications and certificates, so that they could perform their duties to the required standards. This outcome once again reiterates that the benefits of tourism are not only related to those directly employed in the sector but to those that are employed in secondary sectors.

#### **4.7. Employment growth potential in Dullstroom**

A number of senior personnel interviewed in this study indicated there was considerable scope for the further development of the tourism sector in Dullstroom. Although many suggested that the recent global recession had restricted growth, no senior personnel interviewed in this study revealed that they had to reduce staff numbers. However, many of these businesses had experienced strong growth in the years leading up to the recession and it was hoped that similar growth could be replicated in the near future. Typical examples provided by senior personnel interviews are cited below:

*When we started we had one waitress and 6 kitchen staff...now we have 28 people that we employ...in the kitchen we have 9 full time black females, plus we hire a maid and temporary member of staff during the weekend...I think that's a snap shot of how things have grown in Dullstroom and I'm not employing people for the sake of it...all these people are required. (SP6)*

*We've employed considerably more staff over the past 12 years...from 2 to 14...we all employ extra people from time to time....most of my staff have been here for more than 10 years. (SP10)*

*There will be another 50 or 60 jobs created which will push us towards 200 in total. Even the builders employed at the moment are employed by us, they're not outsiders...all are locals...Only 7 of our current staff are not local...and over 100 of our staff are black...mainly women because of the housekeeping but in the gardens and the restaurant we have more men. (SP7)*

Although the businesses interviewed in this research shall remain confidential, it was evident that a number of establishments had planned some form of growth, whilst the larger estates were planning more substantial developments. In both scenarios, it was anticipated that new jobs would be created and that these once again would predominantly benefit local people from Sakhelwe and the surrounding Dullstroom area. One particular developer proposed that he could potentially employ “every female in Sakhelwe” if his tourism business grew as anticipated over the next few years. Indeed, it was also posited that these jobs would not just be low-level or low-paid jobs but would include a number of senior positions of which experienced locals had already been earmarked for. In many cases, like others interviewed in this study, these people had started off as cleaners, waiters and kitchen helpers, but were now equipped with qualifications or experience levels that now permitted them to undertake positions that included greater responsibility.

To some extent, the observations from Dullstroom contradict the arguments posited by Frederick (1993), and Lewis, Hunt and Plantinga, (2003), who suggest many tourism-related jobs are “low-skilled, low-paying, and seasonal which results in the promotion of a class of workers referred to as the working poor.” Although it is undeniable that tourism sector salaries are not particularly high, in the context of the South African economy whereby millions remain unemployed, these jobs were held in high regard by locals. Moreover, these jobs permitted locals to develop and empowered them with a range of skills and experiences to either gain promotion within the tourism sector, or to save funds that enabled further education and different career paths to be eventually pursued.

## **5. Conclusions**

### **5.1. Summary of key themes**

Tourism development in Dullstroom and the surrounding area has undoubtedly had a profound effect on regional communities, particularly those residing in the nearby township of Sakhelwe. In the literature review section of this study, a number of potential benefits initiated through tourism development were identified (see Murray, 2009) and many of these outcomes were observed throughout Dullstroom. From economic, environmental and socio-cultural perspectives, these positive impacts included, but were not limited to:

- Direct employment opportunities (including, administration, guiding, tours and transport, construction, hospitality, management, accommodation shopping, food and beverage outlets)
- Indirect employment opportunities (including, entrepreneurs, fishing supplies, other secondary industries)
- The provision of invigoration and development to local economies
- The encouragement of awareness and appreciation by the community of natural assets and the environment and other resources on which tourism relies
- The stimulation of infrastructure development (roads, communications, healthcare, education, public transport, access to drinking water and food supplies)
- The facilitation of workforce development (e.g. rights and conditions)
- The promotion of civic pride (in community, culture, heritage, natural resources and infrastructure)
- An understanding that tourism is mutually beneficial to all stakeholders in the community
- The potential creation of new opportunities and the broadening of idea horizons
- The promotion of cultural understanding
- The support and preservation of local and unique crafts and skills
- The creation of a sense of well-being
- The promotion of greater cross-institutional understanding
- The building of skills and influence
- Further skills enhancement (training; such as administrative, service industry, maintenance, guiding, etc.)
- The building of capacity both collectively and individually
- The development of empowerment (gender and community; social, financial, etc.)

It has been posited that the demands of local communities need to become more pronounced when one observes tourism development. Sustainable development of course, should not just ensure that environments remain untouched or that local or regional economies are stable, but that the social needs of the people tourism development affects are also enriched in order to produce a collective higher quality of life. The views of Fennell (1999) and Okazaki (2008) implied that community based development (CBD) could be a key vehicle to enhancing the social living conditions of people who are predominantly poor through the development of locally-run businesses, new entrepreneurships and capacity building. Although tourism development in Dullstroom has not followed a CBD model, it has shown that many of the same benefits can be realised if community members are empowered and are given key responsibilities. Indeed, Sebele (2010) and Tosun (2006) have both argued that if locals are empowered via the processes of tourism development, this will trigger positive attitudes towards further development and the need to protect local environments.

It has also been posited in earlier studies that one of the most productive ways to help poor communities is by providing meaningful employment (Buultjens et al., 2010). However, others (see Deller, 2010, Lewis et al., 2003) have argued that tourism sector jobs are typically low-skilled, low-paying and seasonal which foster a collective 'working poor'. In the context of Dullstroom, this study reveals that many jobs were indeed low-skilled and low-paying, yet observations derived from

employees and senior personnel, as well as the employment statistics generated, reveal that the significant majority of jobs were permanent full time positions that in several scenarios had been held for more than a decade. Moreover, this research highlights the growth potential several local residents were afforded in their places of work. Although many employees had started at low levels, some had progressed to become supervisors or were in possession of skills sets that meant that they could undertake more demanding positions. As a consequence, a number of these employees now earned good salaries that provided long-term stability and a distinctive rise in quality of life. From a different perspective, it was additionally argued that the regular incomes fostered through employment in tourism could provide financial platforms to the pursuit of qualifications that were completely unrelated to the tourism sector.

Finally, this research revealed that many women were empowered through tourism development in Dullstroom. Indeed, the majority of employees in Dullstroom were black females that had often started with either basic qualifications or with none at all. However, these women had been empowered through the distribution of new skills and qualifications that enabled them to develop both in a working sense but also in a social sense. Most argued that they had now become self-sufficient and that they no longer relied upon family hand outs or money supplied to them by their husbands. Some additionally suggested that they were now the main breadwinners in their families, as they provided a more regular household income in comparison to their husbands. As Nyaupane and Poudel (2011) posited, if women are released from their non-economic positions in households, it will provide them with both economic and social empowerment. Indeed, many women interviewed in this study were confident and ambitious and on occasion, it was noted that they had set up side line jobs to develop further economic strength. Others argued that tourism employment was a stepping stone towards new ventures including the hope of owning their own businesses. Here, skills and qualifications that had been acquired through tourism equipped them with the competencies and business acumen to operate their own enterprises. Thus, one could posit that tourism development in Dullstroom has benefited and improved the lives of the significant majority of community members residing both in the town itself and the neighbouring township of Sakhelwe.

## 5.2. Recommendations

As Byrd et al. (2009) have argued, if local communities are informed and educated about the impacts tourism development entail or proposed new developments, the tourism sector will be strengthened through increasing support. Indeed, Nyaupane and Poudel (2011) suggest that if local communities are marginalised or left uninformed, they will quickly withdraw their support for future tourism development, which may in turn also include their loss of support for the protection of local environments. This is because, say Hall and Richards (2000), local communities will assume that the benefits of tourism development will be lost to external parties or foreign investors. Thus, in order to reduce the risk of community support being withdrawn for tourism development in Dullstroom, it is imperative that the local community, especially those located in poorer areas like Sakhelwe; remain constantly informed of developments and how these developments will potentially influence their economic and social wellbeing. If these relationships are not formed, Hall and Richards (2000) posit that locals will be either indifferent to tourism development or may even provide resistance to further growth.

In the context of Dullstroom and the surrounding region, tourism has been shown to provide a valuable solution to unemployment. Tourism sector jobs provided numerous opportunities for both social and economic growth and ensured that many residents from Sakhelwe were afforded standards of living that were perhaps far greater than those in similar townships throughout Mpumalanga or even the country itself. Moreover, these livelihoods included the strengthening of community ties and empowered black females with the skills and confidence levels to develop and grow beyond traditional male spheres of influence. It is therefore essential that business owners in Dullstroom ensure that the local community is fully aware of these benefits and that they are also kept abreast of future developments relating to tourism. The inclusion of local black business owners, particularly those that have developed through the opportunities afforded by tourism, in communication strategies should also be seen as an imperative step. As previously discussed, if local communities are informed and aware of the strengths of tourism development, it is far more likely that they will not only support developments but also the environments that provide these benefits. For a location like Dullstroom, that is ecologically sensitive and unique, the protection and safeguarding of the natural environment is also of critical importance.

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