

Evaluating the Role of Small Private Tourism Businesses in Poverty Alleviation: A Corporate Social Responsibility Approach in Namibia

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KEYWORDS Tourism. Pro-poor. Livelihoods. Poverty. Sustainable Tourism

ABSTRACT Private tourism businesses in Namibia are faced with the challenge of establishing a business environment where their positive impacts on local communities and employees are maximized. The main objective of the paper was to assess the impact of corporate social responsibility in reducing poverty and its role in uplifting rural livelihoods. A sample of 75 middle managers and employees and 10 representatives of the Hai/kom San of the Ombika community were selected purposively. Coding and thematic analysis were used to analyse data from both primary and secondary sources. The results show that pro-poor needs are complex and meaningful contribution of corporate social responsibility to poverty reduction can be linked to the size of the organisation. Although poverty alleviation through corporate social responsibility remains a contested issue, the findings suggest that tourism businesses should adopt preferential procurement of tourism related products and services to enhance their economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts.

INTRODUCTION

Namibia is a relatively new destination in Southern Africa that has received a steady increase of tourists/visitors/receipts in the past 22 years after independence due to its favourable macro-micro economic environment and political stability. Based on its natural and cultural resources, Namibia is in a unique position to further develop and promote its tourism industry. For instance, the World Bank Group (2015) says tourism clearly has the potential to significantly reduce poverty and increase shared prosperity within its host countries, many of which are in the developing world. Like several other countries in Africa, the link between tourism and economic growth is obvious here (Caballero 2014). However, in the last five years; the country has faced several social problems such as unemployment, crime and unprecedented poverty especially in the rural areas.

However, the success of any tourism business continues to depend on its sustainability (Ashley and Jones 2001; Ashley and Roe 2002; Mbaiwa 2005). For this reason, research into the

impacts of private tourism businesses on the rural community is crucial. The environmental concerns are the most researched areas of sustainable tourism since the 1990s (Page and Connell 2009; Barrow and Murphree 2001), however, the CSR in tourism has not enjoyed as much attention in academic literature as in other business sectors. Sustainable tourism 'seeks to sustain the quantity, quality and productivity of both human and natural resource systems over time, while respecting and accommodating the dynamics of such systems. Failure to achieve this paradigm may lead to the very thing which was meant to be a blessing (tourism) to become an undesirable curse, rejected by the rural community, to whom it was supposed to bless. Hence Prietto-Carron et al. (2006) called for the development of a critical research agenda which examines the relationship between business and poverty reduction and the wider impacts of corporate engagement in host-country governance by creating new ways of systematically assessing impact.

Given the important role of tourism in the Namibian economy, it is important to examine

the role of CSR on improving the rural livelihoods of the people in Namibia. Whilst CSR is a contested concept which is widely and loosely used, there is no universal agreement about its definition (Freeman and Hasnaoui 2011; Weber 2008). In tourism, CSR lacks a systematic scholarly analysis to build a cohesive body of knowledge to build on the discourse. In 2003, the World Bank was reportedly 'convinced' that the private sector has a role to play in the fight against poverty (Wolfensohn 2003: 19). Hence, the past decade has seen growing pressure on corporations from individual consumers, consumer groups, NGOs and governments to take stock of their non-commercial impact on society (Font et al. 2012) yet CSR as both an academic discipline and business practice has failed to adequately address critical underlying questions on poverty alleviation and how businesses can respond to such issues remain unanswered (Prieto-Carron et al. 2006; Wood 2010). The available literature on CSR tends to focus on developed contexts rather than developing countries (Sucheran 2016) such as Namibia.

Objectives of the Research

The purpose of the research was to achieve the following objectives:

- To analyse the socio-economic impacts of tourism businesses and their role in influencing decision makers on tackling the challenges of establishing a tourism business environment with minimum negative impacts on the rural population.
- To determine the extent to which private tourism businesses can balance their interests in generating profits to justify their investment, and addressing the broader public good debate that pits organisations against the competitive market environment.
- To examine the role of CSR on improving the rural livelihoods of the people in Namibia.
- To discuss corporate social responsibility as a contested concept in reducing poverty and show how it is widely and loosely used by private tourism businesses.

Considering the paucity of literature on environmental practices of tourism businesses and corporate social responsibility in particular, the research sought to address theoretical questions about the businesses' responsibility towards the poor of the poorest (Steidlmeier 1993; Bruton

2010) and answer questions on whether corporate social responsibility is in its self a public relations stunt with little stakeholder engagement or a panacea to poverty. "Looking as far back as the early Quaker businesses, which considered the welfare of their workers and communities to be of critical importance to the success of their enterprises, the ideal of CSR has been a recurring dream for many generations" (Doane 2005: 216). Therefore, this research sought to examine the strategies used by private tourism businesses in supporting and engaging local communities to fight poverty.

Literature Review

The philanthropists of the nineteenth century are often quoted in business management literature (Blowfield and Murray 2008) as pioneers of contemporary corporate social responsibility (CSR). Very often 'corporate sustainability management', 'social responsibility' (SR), 'corporate social environmental responsibility' (CSER), 'corporate responsibility' (CR), 'company stakeholder responsibility', 'corporate citizenship', and 'corporate sustainability and responsibility' form the core concepts of CSR (Carroll and Shabana 2010; Blowfield and Murray 2008; Salzmann et al. 2005; Brammer and Pavelin 2004; Mirvis and Googins 2006). Corporate social responsibility is broadly associated with a range of organisational activities including but not restricted to employee welfare schemes, stakeholder engagement, community action, charitable giving, responsible supply chain management, ethical leadership and environmental stewardship (Coles et al. 2013: 122). "Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life" (Tsai et al. 2010). The 1987 Brundtland Report on Environment and Development forms the foundation and has been influential in recent works on sustainable development. While sustainable development remains the predominant paradigm, since the Cape Town Declaration of 2002, a great many commentators have pointed to the need for (even more) responsible modes of production and consumption (Coles et al. 2013). "Sustainable development was coined to demonstrate the idea that development can meet the needs of the cur-

rent generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Hunter 2001). Therefore, “a sustainable development approach has been adopted by development agencies and governments, with the purpose of promoting a more sensitive kind of economic growth and tourism development” (Medina-Muñoz et al. 2016).

Corporate Social Responsibility is a term used to describe “a company’s obligations to be accountable to all of its stakeholders in all its operations and activities. Socially responsible companies consider the full scope of their impact on communities and the environment when making decisions, balancing the needs of stakeholders with their need to make a profit” (Doane 2005). “CSR refers to a company’s voluntary activities” (Inoue et al. 2011), “that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law” (McWilliams and Siegel 2001). The concept is based on a business organization’s configuration of principles of social responsibility, processes of social responsiveness, and policies, programs and observable outcomes as they relate to the firm’s societal relationships (Wood 1991: 693). Several scholars (Clarkson 1995; Godfrey and Hatch 2007; Waddock and Graves 1997; Inoue and Lee 2011; Deigh et al. 2016) “suggest that CSR consists of multiple dimensions, each of which is represented by a group of different voluntary activities” such as donations, employee voluntarism, projects and partnerships. Even though there is agreement on the inherent compatibility between public good and probability, there is no single acceptable definition of CSR. However, it has been advocated as a compelling organisational response in a neo-liberal world (Harvey 2005) and it is likely to appear prominently in the near future.

Notably, CSR has not taken full responsibility of social and environmental concerns, in most cases, the responsibility is deflated to host governments. Most businesses tend to consider solutions in areas where there is reasonable financial gain. Specifically, CSR ignores issues such as transfer pricing, tax avoidance, the abuse of market power, and the poverty impacts of business (Jenkins 2005). However, a lot of companies have shown interest in CSR reporting although there is little documented evidence in tourism with the hotel industry still lagging far behind other travel sectors on how to respond

to the growing pressure from stakeholders to behave in a more sustainable way (Font et al. 2012; Tsai et al. 2010). Based on four components of CSR, namely, legal, ethical, philanthropic and economic, managers identify the organisation’s actions that have the potential to affect stakeholders both socially and environmentally. The original aim of CSR was to find global solutions for global problems and deliver solutions on climate change, poverty and inequality. As such, business ‘doing well’ by ‘doing good’ has been proposed as one of the catalyst for such an outcome (Doane 2005). However, concerning “CSR selection decisions, Porter and Kramer (2006), have indicated that each company should identify the particular set of societal problems that it is best equipped to help resolve and from which it can gain the greatest competitive advantage” (Tsai et al. 2010) while Yuen et al. (2017) explored the fit between competitive strategies and corporate social responsibility. Others like Goyala and Chanda (2017) and Parka et al. (2017) have looked at CSR from a service quality, customer satisfaction point of view and Jeon and Gleiberman (2017) focussed on ‘green’ issues and how they affect the firm’s profitability.

Tourism can generate positive impacts as it serves as a supportive force for peace, foster pride in cultural traditions and help avoid urban relocation by creating local jobs (Mbaiwa 2003; Ashley and Jones 2001). As has been noted by Falck and Heblich (2007) and Weber (2008) tourism organisations extend these opportunities within the organisation itself as well as externally within society at large to maintain long-term success. Studies have shown that changes often occur in community structure, family relationships, collective traditional life styles, ceremonies and morality because of tourism development. The merits of CSR have been endorsed by many tourism businesses, intermediaries, trade associations, lobby groups and non-governmental organisations (Coles et al. 2013: 123). This being the case, the presence of social benefits include social cohesion as the conservancy is formed, pride among the rural community about tourism developments in their area and their exposure to international and national traditions (Murphy and Roe 2004; Ndlovu et al. 2010). Furthermore, Ashley and Jones (2001) exhibit “three different types of income that can be generated by a Lodge for instance, collective income earned by the community from lease fees,

wage earned by workers, casual earnings from those supplying the Lodge and its tourists with local products or labour.” “Some examples of these activities include community involvement, environmental management, customer relations, and employee relations” (Holcomb et al. 2007). The “premise is that the roles and impacts of corporate actors go beyond providing revenue and employment and maximising profits and hence increasing shareholder’s value, that they have power and influence (actual and potential) beyond their formal location within legal and political structures, particularly those of developing countries and that they should be recognised as conscious and influential participants in activities with a broad range of consequences” (Campbell 2012).

Other benefits include empowerment of rural communities to decide the extent of interaction with tourists and control over tourism development (Bandyopadhyay et al. 2004; Jamal and Stronza 2009). However, for a variety of reasons, host communities are often the weaker party in interactions with their guests and service providers. Therefore, briefly put, the discussion has shifted from whether CSR is necessary to how to implement it to deliver the optimum benefits and hence justify the decision to act. Arguably, the motive forces behind the two shifts have been increasing societal concern for sustainable development allied with the desire among both managers (and academics) for evidence-based, rational decisions in support of CSR implementation (Coles et al. 2013: 123). But do companies engaging in CSR really outperform those without CSR programmes in place? Critics of CSR have argued that managers are pursuing their own endeavours by engaging in activities that are outside their own domain instead of maximising on shareholding earnings. Engaging in social community development is viewed as superficial, short lived and may not necessarily lead to poverty alleviation nor sustainable development.

Negative Impacts of Tourism on Rural livelihoods in Namibia

CSR is associated with voluntary actions taken by business to act their actions regarding profitability, the environment and social issues using the so-called ‘triple bottom line’ approach (Coles et al. 2013: 123). Despite local private tour-

ism businesses’ promise of employment creation and poverty alleviation, rural communities have livelihood concerns and they have not been exempt from negative impacts from tourism businesses (Ashley and Roe 2002; Barrow and Murphree 2001; Mbaiwa 2005; Steenkamp and Uhr 2000) such as “low trade off in terms of loss of land for other current uses that is, keeping people and livestock out of a much larger area”, competition for grazing land between livestock and elephants, aggressive elephants that threaten lives and equipment due to an increase in wildlife numbers as part of tourism plans (Ashley and La Franchi 1997). After all, behaviour change does not happen within organisations unless humans implement it and, moreover, humans-either individually or collectively are major beneficiaries of a more sustainable future (Coles et al. 2013: 123). The result can be an overexploitation of the social carrying capacity. According to Mbaiwa (2003) tourism has a minimal economic impact on local community development in the Okavango region as a result of foreign domination and ownership of tourism facilities. He further laments that domination of management positions by expatriates and lower salaries for employees has led to a general failure by tourism to significantly contribute to rural poverty alleviation in the Okavango region. He suggests that, to achieve sustainable socio-economic tourism development, there is need to develop policies and strategies that ensure that substantial amounts of revenues are retained in Botswana particularly in the Okavango Region. However, socio-cultural impacts are expressly vague since these impacts are seen as beneficial by some groups and as being negative by others (Felix 2006) within the same community setting.

Some negative impacts were noticed by Tao and Wall (2009) in their argument about rural community members living a subsistence lifestyle resulting in those who are employed being heavily relied upon for support by many people. Whilst selling a destination as a tourism product can result in creating tourism demand for arts, souvenirs, entertainment and other related activities, it can also exert influence on the lifestyles of the community, resulting in basic changes in their values and beliefs (Ndlovu et al. 2011). It is further argued that there are several challenges in rural areas such as few income generating activities that can create employment opportunities (Bordreaux and Nelson 2011; Spen-

celey and Goodwin 2007) forcing communities to rely heavily on tourism but the industry can only employ a limited number of people. Very often, orphans and vulnerable children depend on the few that are employed in this sector (Drimie 2002). Other studies have shown that tourism can turn local cultures into commodities when religious rituals, traditional ethnic rites and festivals are reduced and sanitized to conform to tourist expectations, resulting in what has been called “reconstructed ethnicity” (Ashley and Jones 2001; Mbaiwa 2005). Some academics (Doxy 1975: 76 in Mowforth and Munt 2003; Sharpley and Telfer 2002) have described the attitude of local residents towards tourism development as unfolding through the stages of euphoria, apathy, irritation and antagonism which is the last stage when anti-tourist attitudes begin to grow among local people making the industry very complex.

Tourism as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy

The linkages between tourism and poverty reduction have also been explored (Spenceley and Snyman 2016). Poverty is a multi-faceted concept with strands in both development and economic theory. “Due to the complexity of describing poverty, understanding the impacts of tourism enterprises on poverty is a challenge” (Medina-Muñoz et al. 2016). The approach to the pursuit of poverty calls upon multiple actors that have a role in addressing this issue. In tackling poverty, the United Nations (2001) look at it as “a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.” As a result, Collier (2008) and Easterly (2006), cite the need for bottom up market based strategies that incorporate feedback from the poor about what does and does not work. Due to globalisation, debates that link business and poverty are difficult to conclude due to a number of issues at macro level. Evidence suggests that firms primarily engage in social investment for reasons related to obtaining competitive advantage, and such corporate driven objectives are often incompatible with development objectives (Frynas 2005).

Because European interest in CSR is a relatively recent phenomenon, there are not in exist-

ence many continental European studies on the subject (Falck and Heblich 2007).

Tourism is increasingly being recognised as a valuable source of long-term growth for developing countries. Not only is tourism a robust growth sector in global terms (41% absolute growth in tourism receipts for 2000-05), but also less developed countries have seen the highest growth in tourism on twelve percent average per year from 2000 to 2005 (World Tourism Organization and Global Tourism Economy Research Centre 2016). “Tourists and tourism providers have a moral responsibility for their actions” (Frey 2010). It is concerned with the social impacts of business behaviour regardless of the motivations or processes by which they occur, or the outcomes of actions a firm takes to manage its social impacts (Wood 2010). In addition, there is a growing body of literature which affirms that tourism can be pro-poor and can generate “strong backward linkages to the rest of the economy” (Medina-Muñoz et al. 2016). Tourism’s socio-economic benefits are touted by the industry for a variety of reasons (Stynes 1997), which lends the industry an air of increased respectability in the eyes of the business community, public officials, and the general public. As a result, this often translates into decisions or public policies favourable to tourism. In addition, this has led to the promotion of tourism as a panacea to unemployment and poverty alleviation (Ashley and Jones 2001). Nevertheless, for sustainable tourism to be realised in the rural areas, it is important to take the rural community aboard so that they can participate in tourism development.

In Namibia, one area of concern is high unemployment and the rate of poverty especially in the rural areas. Unchecked unemployment in rural areas may threaten the stability of the destination and lead to uncertainty of the future of tourism businesses. From a resource based view, CSR is more likely to address poverty when issues such as malnourishment, lack of education or lack of access to capital may reduce efficiency in business value chains, or isolate a business from consumers and labour markets. To overcome this problem, Ashley et al. (2001) propose the establishment of a reciprocal relationship between tourism businesses and the rural communities. In the past, local private tourism businesses used a Permit to Occupy issued by the Traditional Authority or Chief which had

limited benefits to the community. In the current policy, the Traditional Authority is still part of the negotiations but through the conservancy and does not have power over the conservancy rights and the local private tourism businesses unlike in the Permit to Occupy system. The promulgation of the Nature Conservation Act in 1996, led to the growth of conservancies from four communal conservancies gazetted in 1998 to 82 in 2015. According to NACSO (2010) a conservancy is a legally protected area of a group of bon fide land occupiers practicing co-operative management based on: A sustainable utilization strategy; promoting conservation of natural resources and wildlife; and striving to reinstate the original bio-diversity with the basic goal of sharing resources amongst members.

This has diversified the rural communities' livelihoods through sustainable utilisation of their natural resources for tourism. "Pro-poor tourism may improve the livelihoods of poor people in three main ways: 1. Economic gain through employment and micro-enterprise development; 2. Infrastructure gains: roads, water, electricity, telecommunications, waste treatment; 3. Empowerment through engagement in decision-making" (Goodwin and Francis 2003). Consequently, the growth of registered conservancies has resulted in an increase in the number of local private tourism businesses investment in those rural communities, which has led to an increase in employment opportunities (FENATA and ComMark Trust 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a social science paradigm where a meta-analysis is preferred than the statistical analysis of the literature review. This approach overcomes the challenges of synthesising research which has used different methodologies, and is based on the differing underlying purposes, assumptions and definitions contained within individual disciplines (Cooper 2010). The study was conducted on middle managers and employees from Gondwana Collection and the Hai//kom San of the Ombika Community. Out of 12 Gondwana Collection accommodation establishments, 7 lodges were randomly selected. To ensure a high response rate, structured questionnaires were administered to 75 middle management and employees who were selected purposively. A key informant technique

was employed to 10 representatives of the Hai//kom San of the Ombika community and community representatives from Spokies Dorp and the Western Camp locations in Karasburg of the Karas region. The "purpose of the interviews was to establish, verify and update some of the information from secondary data sources, such as the distribution of tourism benefits" (Ashley and Jones 2001), sustainable tourism practices and general opinions of these practitioners on CSR and the impacts of private tourism business towards improving rural livelihoods in Namibia (Mbaiwa 2005; Spenceley and Goodwin 2007). To fully understand the needs and expectations of the community, a non-participant observation method was used. The aim was to gain close familiarity with the community and their practices. To achieve the research strategy, the primary data was collected using an interview guide with structured and semi-structured questions for middle management and employees as well as for the community members to ensure a free discussion with the individuals concerned. "Secondary data sources included the existing literature on tourism development in developing countries" focusing "on published materials in journals, books and working papers" from both the private sector and government (Mbaiwa 2005). The focus of the study was not to determine quantitatively the level of poverty alleviation as such but to understand in depth the general socio-economic impacts of CSR as perceived by the employees and community members.

OBSERVATIONS

Empirical Results of the Survey

A cursory look at Gondwana Collection's business philosophy shows that the vision of the company is based on three pillars, namely; nature, tourism and people. Based on its quote as a business philosophy they state that, "without nature there would be no tourists, without tourists there would be no nature conservation and no jobs, and without staff and the support of communities, no hospitality business and game keeping." To understand the nature of Gondwana Collection's business, it is important to start by looking at their staff educational background. Table 1 shows that thirty-eight percent of staff have at least grade 12 which is a second-

ary school leaving certificate. Even though these employees did not have enough points for admission into tertiary education, they have basic numerical and comprehension abilities. A sizeable number (21%) have gone up to grade 10 and (30%) grade 9 respectively. It was interesting to note that seven percent have gone up to tertiary level which means that they have a college degree/diploma or certificate. Considering that Gondwana Collection is located in remote rural areas, only a small number come from rural areas. Therefore, most of the employees at middle management level and above do not necessarily come from surrounding communities. Only four percent have no formal schooling. In most cases, those who had no formal schooling are employed as casual workers but later employed permanently after training.

Table 1: Educational history

<i>Level of education</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
No schooling	4
Below grade 9	29
Grade 10	21
Tertiary education	7
In-house training	39

Table 2 shows the number of years of service in the company. The results show that forty-three percent of the employees have been with the company for the past three years. Interestingly, thirty-one percent have been with the company since its inception. Only nineteen percent were with the company for only one year whilst seven percent had less than a year.

Table 2: Years of service with Gondwana collection

<i>Years of service</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Less than 1 year	7
1 year but less than 2 years	19
2 years and above	43
Since establishment	31

Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction

The results have shown that sixty-three percent of the employees were satisfied with training and capacity building offered by Gondwana Collection compared to thirty-seven percent who felt that some departments were favoured due to their importance to the business when it

comes to training opportunities. A total of twenty-five percent respondents were of the opinion that career development opportunities were minimal since some of the employees remained in the same position and under the same job description longer than they expected which tends to affect promotion possibilities. However, seventy-five percent of the respondents were impressed by career development and promotion opportunities available in the company. Provision for schooling and accommodation facilities for employees' children was deemed unsatisfactory (25%). Respondents suggested that they would have wanted to stay with their children longer and closer to them while working. Most of the respondents (75%) appreciated efforts made by some middle managers who have allowed employees to stay with their children younger than two years in the camp. Furthermore, their older children can visit them during school holidays.

Perceived Benefits to Employees

There are significant benefits associated with the existence of the company. Several benefits which were repeatedly mentioned by the employees included a monthly salary, off days (short vacation) where employees are required to work for one month continuously, and take a week vacation. Similarly, Maertens and Swinnen (2009) found significant positive welfare impacts through employment creation and labour market participation within the horticulture industry in Senegal. The fact that these vacations are negotiable, the arrangement was acceptable to staff members. In this way they could accumulate their monthly salaries and reserve them for something substantial whilst on vacation. Some of the benefits include accident insurance which covers employees in the event of an accident whilst on duty. Respondents expressed contentment regarding the permission to receive visitors whether family members or friends. Visitors can be accommodated and have meals at a reduced price. Employees have staff meals, accommodation, electricity and water provided at a reduced amount and deducted from their salaries at the end of the month. Some of the staff benefits include, an annual salary increment determined by the workers's committee, fifty percent discount in all souvenirs and other items bought from the tourist shop, trans-

port, safety gear, and experiential learning in other organisations.

Sources of Dissatisfaction Associated with Gondwana Collection

Gondwana Collection Lodges and Campsites are situated in rural areas far from main public services and retail shops. Consequently, employees, raised a number of concerns ranging from low salaries, lack of housing allowances, being separated from their children for a long period of time to accommodation fees for their visitors. Respondents were concerned about mandatory financial contributions of N\$ 4 for transport, for hospital visits whenever required, which they felt to be unaffordable since their salaries can only cover basic costs. Most employees were worried about medical aid cover (95%). Since the lodge is located in the remote areas, they were concerned that they feel isolated, lonely, and as a result they sometimes miss their loved ones, family and friends, homesickness, separation between husbands and wives and the general lack of social life, due to long distances.

During the high tourist seasons the workload increases and employees are required to work long hours with no overtime payments. These sentiments were felt mostly by those working in the bar area, where one cannot leave until the last customer has left. Employees were concerned about lack of pension fund. Due to the remoteness of the place where the lodges are situated, it is difficult to receive cellphone signal thereby hindering possible communication linkages with family members and possible business linkages. Studies by Urbach (2007) and Sofowora (2009) found that the expansion of mobile telephone companies improved income generation and overall economic efficiency amongst the poor. Some respondents expressed concern over the lack of newspaper deliveries to keep in touch with the world and above all there is no church especially for christians. Some employees who did not attend school were concerned about access to educational opportunities, since the lodges are located in the rural areas, some respondents were concerned about their livestock, they felt that they did not have adequate time to attend to their livestock, while those who have fields felt that the time was inadequate to pursue other livelihoods options to supplement their meagre income.

Costs of Tourism Development to the Community

The results show that thirty-two percent of employees could not identify any negative impacts brought about by tourism development in the community whereas twenty-three percent could identify positive impacts from tourism development. However, the increase in crime against tourists was pointed out as a negative result of tourism development in the area (20%). Some other negative concerns raised include, unfair treatment at work, litter from tourists, high food prices, off road driving, loss of indigenous land due to lodge construction and path erosion due to increased tourist activities.

Poverty Alleviation through CSR in Tourism Businesses

One of the core elements of sustainable tourism development is community development, which is a process that involves decisions which consider long-term carrying capacity, economy, ecology and equity for all communities. Tourism development transforms destinations sometimes with negative outcomes. The study notes that tourism has diversified and upgraded the underlying tourism product (attractions) base via public investments in infrastructure and resource management initiatives. Thus, there has been an increase in infrastructural development at a local level. Small tourism businesses continue to invest in education and training for the locals to ensure a sufficient supply of high quality human capital to the industry thereby complementing government efforts. This is evidenced by the employees and community members who indicated that Gondwana Collection has contributed significantly to poverty alleviation, development of infrastructure and the general upliftment of standards of living in the area. Figure 1 summarises community benefits.

Even though some studies on micro-credit based operations have found that poorer clients were more likely to be excluded from benefits due to infrastructure, financial, geographic and socio-cultural constraints (Shaw 2004; Ssendi and Anderson 2009), the failure to pay a minimum wage, could all lead to a negative impact on the poor (Booth and Whetstone 2007; Blowfield and Dolan 2010). Thus, these benefits may

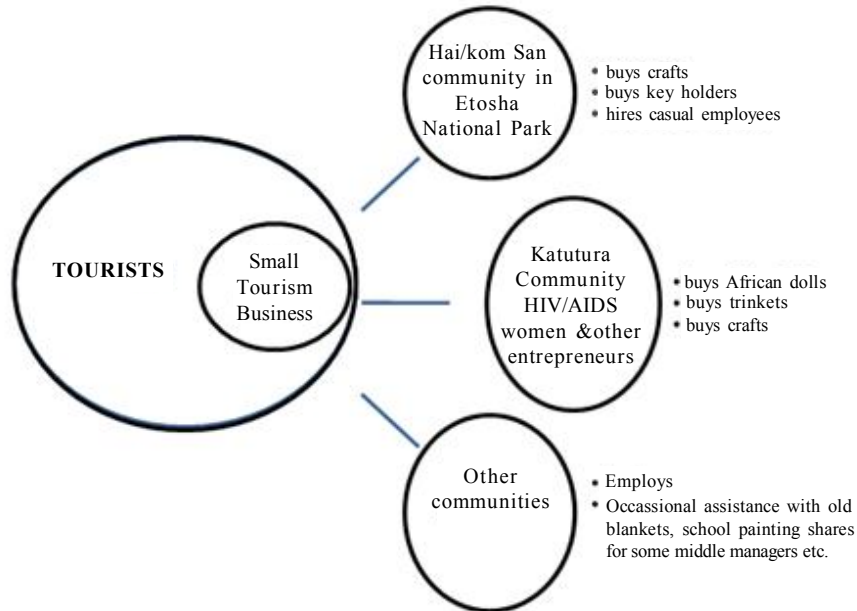


Fig. 1. Community benefits from Gondwana collection

Source: Author

not be adequate to contribute positively to socio-economic and environmental outcomes. Therefore, a significant profit must be realised from some of the tourism benefits. To enable businesses to contribute more to sustainable development, the government could provide tax incentives for small tourism that use renewable energy or ethical sourcing.

Most activities Gondwana Collection engages in can be considered as *Cooperation based on a spin off operation*, such as the support provided by HIV/AIDS women found in Katutura, Windhoek. The African handmade dolls are produced by the community, and are ordered for resell at curio shops in different lodges. Other trinkets are made by various entrepreneurs from waste material such as “candle holders” made from bottle tops, as a form of *recycling*. Over and above these products, the most popular items with tourists are the handmade dolls. Although these items are displayed in curio shops at different lodges, almost fifty percent of the employees indicated that they were not aware of these crafts or of other benefit sharing arrangements. Therefore, the impacts of business on poverty are restricted by factors such as a

lack of business skills (Okech 2005) and difficulties employing the local poor (Rijkers et al. 2010).

The Hai//kom San Ombika community members agreed that their livelihoods have positively improved because of relatives/family members who were employed by Gondwana Collection. Similarly, research on the payment of a living wage in the United States showed how low wages could maintain poverty (Bane and Ellwood 1992). Consequently, the elderly was of the opinion that they benefited from their children’s employment at the lodges and campsites. The craft makers benefited whenever the lodge purchased their craft products in bulk, although not regularly. For the benefits to have a wider positive impact to community members, additional policy support is required (Adams and Neumark 2005; Mueller and Schwartz 1998). Tourism has also helped to raise awareness of the financial value of natural and cultural sites which has stimulated a feeling of pride in local and national heritage and its conservation. Similarly, Maertens and Swinnen (2009) found that increased trading standards on the vegetable export chain in Senegal, lead to a growth in exports, contributing to poverty reduction through increased rural incomes.

DISCUSSION

More broadly, the results show that CSR in tourism appears to be an important condition for biodiversity conservation. The results are in line with Butler's assertion that sustainable tourism development involves the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs are fulfilled while maintaining ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems. Contrary to some studies that local communities are being exploited (Mowforth and Munt 2003) the study shows that the tourism industry in Namibia is contributing positively to socio-economic outcomes particularly to the emerging tourism entrepreneurs. Even though most communities are earning incomes very close and/or lower than what is considered a living wage, poverty has been alleviated. So, the greatest pro-poor impact lay within the mainstream operations and the supply chain (Clay 2005). Therefore, the targeted trade support between production at the destination and overseas buyers can lead to a rise in the standard of living through improved access to education, earnings, savings, and trade capacity (Leclerc 2009). As a Government strategy, tourism is helping to respond to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment. The income earned is helping entrepreneurs to respond to the basic necessities. However, there is little evidence of sourcing intermediate supplies/raw materials from the locality. Thus, benefits tend to flow out of the region, as well as to the capital city, fuelling a high multiplier effect which is not healthy for the community. Therefore, involving the local population in planning and implementation of tourism project is essential.

The Etosha Safari Camp and Etosha Safari Lodge in the North are near the Etosha National Park (approximately 9km from the gate where the displaced Hai//kom San of the Ombika Community reside) and are adjacent to the National Park's gate. Although the community members appreciated that some of their family members are employed by Gondwana Collection Lodges and Campsites they believe unemployment rate is still high and were concerned about some of the social problems that can result. Thus, factors related to employment, external project support, product development, government failure, and harmful business practices were all shown to be factors that could potentially influence the

extent to which small tourism businesses may or may not contribute to poverty alleviation. The study has shown that tourism has an educational element; it fosters understanding between people and cultures and provides cultural exchange between hosts and guests. Thus, the chances for people to develop mutual sympathy and understanding and reduce their prejudices are high. Although CSR has failed to address the broader public good debate that pits organisations against the competitive market environment implementing education "programmes to build human capital assets amongst the poor and minorities, including basic and social skills education, as well as training in tourism industry operations" (Medina-Muñoz et al. 2016) and management and entrepreneurship could maximise benefits to the poor communities. As a result, tourism can reflect on the community's artistic output as a cultural identifier giving the community a kind of confidence and pride in their art, and making them truly believe that their culture is glorious and it is worthy of praise and therefore justly admired (Mbaiwa 2003). It can boost the preservation and transmission of cultural and historical traditions, which often contributes to the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, the protection of local heritage, and a renaissance of indigenous cultures, cultural arts and crafts. Tourism gives opportunities to move from farm to non-farm work increases income generating opportunities for the rural poor. Hence a more positive attitude that is more supportive to communities can result in profit maximisation for tourism organisations and add vitality to communities in many ways. For instance, Mbaiwa (2017) claims that, in Botswana, tourism have failed to significantly contribute to rural development due to its weak linkages with the domestic economy. Other research showed how the integration of pro-poor strategies within the tourism industry in Southern Africa increased opportunities for those previously denied access to the industry (Ashley and Haysom 2006), thereby increasing local people influence on tourism development, as well as improving their prospects in career advancement and increased earnings from tourism. As noted by Doane (2005), "beyond responding to immediate concerns for poverty reduction, people need to earn a higher living wage in the developing world, if only" they are "to

provide markets for economic growth and the sale of new products in future.”

The study has shown that tourism supports the creation of community facilities and services that otherwise might not have been developed, it can bring higher living standards to a destination. Doane (2005) notes that the “understanding consumer motivations, beyond price, too (and indeed how to change these) is a critical piece of the puzzle” necessary in the fight against poverty. In the midst of the rural areas, state of the art infrastructure, transport, restaurants, and public spaces as well as an influx of better-quality commodities and food have become a pull factor in tourism. To promote a more balanced economic structure for the tourism sector, Gondwana Collection, has ensured that lodges and restaurants constitute only one part of a more comprehensive and rigorous value chain by focussing on increasing the total value (spend) per visitor; and supporting an increase in the local ‘capture’ of tourism spending at the destination level, thereby pushing a sustainable tourism development agenda. Although there is ample evidence of CSR’s contribution towards poverty alleviation, there is no direct link to quantify the contribution of CSR to poverty alleviation. Promoting more inclusive and beneficial policies and strategies would allow tourism to become more sustainable, making a significant contribution to local development, and allowing citizens to finally see real benefits from an industry which is sustained by their local environment (Mbaiwa 2017). Small tourism businesses are unable to address non-CSR poverty impacts of business on local communities particularly the failure to accurately measure corporate irresponsibility acts.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that socio-economic impacts of private tourism businesses are substantial in the rural areas. The application of Wood’s framework on the role of business in poverty alleviation has helped to shade critical insights into the development of CSR research in tourism. Private tourism businesses in Namibia are faced with the challenge of establishing a business environment where their positive impacts on employees are realised. Whilst the private tourism businesses play a major role in poverty alleviation, poverty is multi-dimensional in

nature; multi-factorial approaches to poverty alleviation are required. Since most of the tourism activities take place in the rural setting where these businesses are located, significant benefits accrue to locals such as, employment, income distribution, improved service delivery, training, capacity building and empowerment. Small tourism organisations are business driven which makes it difficult to find links between poverty alleviation and the business. Policies that govern tourism businesses vary from country to country making it difficult to delimit the business’s responsibilities and response options to poverty issues. However, there is need for improvement in communication between employees, middle management, senior management and owners in order to address the company philosophy and strengthen working conditions through systematic practical training and capacity building programs in all areas. Increased understanding on managerial and organisational response processes is also vital when managers and organisations are faced with such complex and conflicting internal and external factors, although this has not been given attention within this paper. Whilst private owned businesses are profit driven the study concludes that overall, there is no defined measure on the extent and applicability of CSR in tourism. Due to the complex relationship of tourism and society, the pro-poor needs are unlikely to be met through CSR alone. Therefore, the adoption of preferential procurement of community services and products can assist tourism businesses to identify and respond to its responsibilities in relation to poverty alleviation. Furthermore, a deliberate programme of assisting the community to establish small enterprises, develop and promote projects that can increase employees’ and community members’ livelihoods should be introduced. However, the results do not provide a conclusive guide on addressing poverty alleviation through CSR but the role of business in social development remains a contested issue with a pattern of vastly different factors affecting tourism business operations emerging.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of evaluating the engagement of private tourism business enterprises in poverty alleviation presents emerging research insights on tourism literature in general and CSR in par-

ticular. Considering that the tourism industry in Namibia is made up of small private tourism businesses which, on one hand must earn profits to justify their investments and on the other hand business realities do not always coincide with environmental and social objectives. By analysing different approaches to CSR and linking them to tourism, this study recognises the challenge of establishing a tourism business environment with minimum negative impacts on the environment while maximising the benefits to local communities. Moreover, the concept CSR needs to be promoted to tourists and amongst tourism organisations to raise environmental consciousness. Despite the assumption that the two go hand in hand with holding the conception that businesses can do well and do good at the same time, tourism businesses need to balance their interests in generating profits to justify their investment with programmes that could improve the rural livelihoods of the people in Namibia. Another suggestion would be to create viable business opportunities for local communities while empowering and involving them in making decision regarding their physical assets. In supporting and engaging local communities through CSR to fight poverty. A more specific suggestion would be to diversify the economic activities to avoid over dependency on tourism. Whilst the research addresses the theoretical questions about the businesses' responsibility to the environment, it is recommended that the development tourists' infrastructure should be responsive to socio-cultural needs, economic well-being of locals, and maintain environmental integrity of a place to avoid any possible biodiversity loss in the remote areas.

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