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**The potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe
iMfolozi Park.**

FACULTY OF ARTS

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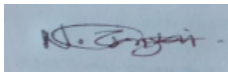
2021

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Nelisile Zanele Mgabhi, hereby declare that this dissertation titled: **Assessing the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park** is my own work, except where indicated to the opposing in the text. Theoretical sources that were used, have been cited and duly acknowledged by means of complete references. In addition, all generic internet and electronic sources have been acknowledged. This dissertation has not been submitted to any other institution for degree awarding purposes. The supervisor guided and supported the student to complete this work.

Candidate: **Ms Nelisile Zanele Mgabhi**

Signature



Date

06/09/2021

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty, my creator, my pillar of strength, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. I also dedicate this dissertation to my friends and church family who have been so encouraging throughout the process. My heartfelt thanks go to my supportive parents, MaNgwenya and Johannes Mgabhi (Njomza), whose words encouraged and propelled me to this point. The project is also dedicated to my children, Khwezi and Hlelolwenkosi, who have been affected by this journey in every way possible.

ABSTRACT

Rural development remains an important matter to developing countries, particularly those with large rural communities with little economic activity, such as South Africa. Rural tourism has the potential to be a driver of economic development in the majority of rural areas. Rural tourism benefits the rural or local communities, which otherwise normally depends either on farming or on low-quality jobs, as well as on their revenues. Rural tourism includes a number of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their areas to generate additional income. This type of tourism has a potential to maintain a balanced and healthy economy by creating tourism-related jobs, revenues, and taxes, all while protecting and improving the destination's sociocultural, historical, natural, and built resources. This study, therefore aimed at assessing the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (HiP), which is situated in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This study adopted a qualitative research method that hinges on the explorative and interpretive paradigms. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with the participants using interview and focus group guides. The total number of the participants were forty-four (44), where a total number of 20 semi-structured interviews with Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park management staff and owners/managers of tourism businesses were conducted; and three focus group discussions were made with eight (8) participants in each group (8 x 3 = 24). A method of data analysis called content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data (interviews and focus groups) collected from this study. According to the study, HiP and the surrounding communities were found with potential for rural tourism development due to their untouched natural beauty, rich wildlife species, and major cultural and historical features that attract a large number of tourists. Similarly, SWOT analysis was also performed to determine whether HiP and surrounding communities have potentials for rural tourism. The study revealed lots of strengths and opportunities, which could serve as platform for rural tourism development, however the management of weaknesses and threats is essential for success. The study recommends that there should be leadership commitment in driving the process of rural tourism development through capacity building: to train local residents, to assist in the development of business plans and the acquiring of funds to start their own businesses. The study also recommends that there should be an identification and the use of rural offerings as part of rural tourism products and services.

Keywords: *rural tourism, rural tourism resources, rural tourism capabilities, rural tourism strategies, rural tourism activities*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Ghasemi and Hamzah (2014) argue that tourism is currently the world's largest industry and the fastest growing sector of the market. It is considered as one of the top and fastest growing sectors in the world, which significantly contributes to the country's economy growth as well as contributing to the economic benefits of local communities (Osman & Sentosa, 2013). In the past few decades, tourism experienced tremendous growth as visitors are seeking for places for relaxation and stress-reduction (Lin & Yeh, 2013). Rural tourism has proved to provide such opportunities. Rural tourism has attracted increased attention from governments, non-governmental organization (NGO), and industry players because it plays a significant role in leading economy activity and it helps in increasing communities' income (Egbali & Bakhsh, 2011). Even though rural tourism can be helpful to local communities, Spencer and Nsiah (2013) suggest that it is vital to gain local communities' support for the sustainability of the rural tourism development. Supportive local communities may translate to welcoming and competitive friendly destination. Local communities are also responsible for provision of resources purposely utilised for development, and they also require to support change which may be made in their community. Essentially, the local wisdom of these communities is much needed in the whole development process, as Hadiwijoyo (2012) suggest that local wisdom reflects in community effort to conserve resources that can be used continuously to feed the community and maintain the environmental balance. A good partnership between village residents and outside developers would lead to sustainable dialogue for the growth of tourism (Hwang, Stewart, & Ko, 2012). Previous studies (such as Bhuiyan, Siwar & Ismail, 2013; Chancellor, Yu & Cole, 2011) have predicted that rural tourism development can increase the quality of life for local residents through increased job opportunities and household income. Studies on the potential socioeconomic impacts of rural tourism in South Africa have likewise received increased attention in the literature (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Rogerson, 2014; 2015).

Despite the increasing research on rural tourism, only few studies have examined rural tourism potential in the areas surrounding main tourism attractions that are located in rural areas. Cánoves, Villarino, Priestley and Blanco (2004) state that for the rural tourism sector to thrive, local inhabitants must become entrepreneurs, and develop and promote their own enterprises. However, due to the covid-19 pandemic which started in 2020 until now (2021/22), negative impacts of this pandemic have been found in this industry. Many recent studies (such as Ulak, 2020; Gursoy, & Chi, 2020; Shen, Pan, & Chen, 2020; Susilawati, Falefi, & Purwoko, 2020)

have shown that tourism industry has taken serious strain due to this pandemic. This study therefore attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge on rural tourism by assessing the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, which attracts many tourists who are drawn by nature and game viewing. It can be argued that in as much as Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park employs some local community members, local communities living around this protected area can develop alternative tourism products and services for the inbound tourists or visitors, as well as adding to the critical mass of attractions for the visitors. The scope of study will however be limited to rural tourism resources found in the rural communities and the capabilities of the community members to run rural tourism businesses.

Roberts and Hall (2001) opine that for a local community to benefit in the process of rural tourism development, they need to have natural or cultural attributes, and a critical mass of attractions and infrastructure in order to effectively harness the rural tourism market. However, Hluhluwe can be described as a destination that have numerous tourism attraction, and it seems to have a great potential for rural tourism development, yet its surrounding lacks sub-attractions that can form part of the rural tourism.

1. 2. PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

1.2.1 The concept of rural tourism

Rural tourism is an increasingly important diversification activity in the progress of rural areas (Galloway et al., 2011; Su, 2012; Wang, Huang, Zou & Yan 2012). For the rural tourism sector to thrive, local inhabitants must become entrepreneurs who develop and promote their own enterprises (Cánoves et al., 2004). Rural tourism is a type of sustainable tourism, which is generally described as tourism that takes into consideration the environmental, and socio-cultural aspects of a tourism destination, aiming at developing sustainable tourism packages (Leroux & Pupion, 2018). Rural tourism is also referred to as a good opportunity for economic development and various social results obtained from the rural environment. Ezeuduji, (2017) has also suggested that rural tourism involves tourists' visits to a rural area to experience the rural landscapes and participate in a rural way of life.

According to Oruonye (2013), rural tourism is a touristic activity, which provides accommodation, catering, and programmes from the point of view of the hosts, and which may be a cheap and active holiday for the guest. Rural tourism encompasses all tourist activities and recreational experiences that occur in non-urban populated areas. Darii (2014) reveals that the density of social dimension in rural tourism takes it a step further among other alternatives because rural tourism is not only an important element of economic development, but also a factor of the cultural and social progress. Rural tourism is one of the effective modern ways that provide rural growth and development (Dashper, 2015). Major cultural and

heritage attractions (e.g., handicrafts, cultural amenities) also play a fundamental role in rural tourism industry and enable communities to increase their income (Rahmani, Hajari, Karimian, & Hajilo, 2013).

1.2.2 Rural tourism resources

Rural tourism utilizes a wide array of publicly and privately owned resources, and it involves a broad range of stakeholders and in another way includes the potential for harming the natural, cultural and social resources that it builds upon (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008). Meanwhile, Roberts and Hall (2001) have also maintained that not all rural places are suitable for rural tourism development. This implies that the development of rural tourism should not be encouraged in environmentally fragile areas.

Ibimilua and Ibimilua (2015) argue that many barriers to rural tourism entrepreneurship are inadequate resources, insufficient facility development, other constraints are inefficient publicity, political instability, illegal harvesting of resources and deforestation. Therefore, it is very important for rural communities to have needed resources to support rural tourism developments. According to Polo and Frias (2010), rural tourism development can act as an agent for the transformation of rural areas by allowing an inflow of resources and liquidity into communities through the expenditure of tourists and the creation of new small businesses and employment. Oredgebe and Fadeyibi (2009) also assert that rural tourism constitutes non-agricultural practices on the farm, which in turn provide attractive business opportunities to augment farm income. Furthermore, the authors mention that the development of tourism in rural areas can change unusable rural resources such as archaeological works, forests and mountains and give them economic value which may eventually create employment and reduce the impact of poverty.

1.2.3 Rural tourism capabilities

According to Bakhru and Gleadle (2010), capabilities are the processes through which resources are combined and co-ordinated. Ezeuduji (2015) asserts that rural tourism development is an entrepreneurial process that requires rural communities to highlight their set of capabilities and knowledge necessary to embark on tourism development. Chambers (2014) also notes that because of the lack of human resource development in rural areas, a key challenge in promoting rural tourism is developing appropriate knowledge and skills as well as enabling local communities to participate meaningfully in tourism development. The development of entrepreneurial initiative in a rural location therefore requires re-training for those who are attempting to replace or complement traditional activities that are no longer profitable to meet demand (Cánoves et al., 2004; Hall, 2004).

1.2.4 Rural tourism strategies and activities

Ezeuduji (2015) affirms that event-based rural tourism in which locals can stage events for tourists, and that will lead to establishing unique rural tourism experience is an emergent strategy that could create a balance between implementing bottom-up values (local values and community ownership); and the need to utilise top-down resources (national governments and not for-profit organisations as partners in terms of business training and initial financing). In addition, Roberts and Hall (2003) maintain that rural tourism activities are situated in rural areas. The World Tourism Organization experts agree with the opinion that rural tourism is a complex of many activities, which include rural excursions, mountain hiking, climbing, horseback riding, sport and wellness travel, hunting and fishing among others (Roberts, & Hall, 2003).

There are two approaches to rural tourist activities. The first, traditional way comprises a passive visitors' stay in a farm-based accommodation in a rural environment, with passive watching of host activities without any significant involvement. The second approach, the contemporary concept is known as life-participating, and it represents a new or modern way in which visitors expend time on the farms, and with active involvement in most of the agricultural and other available work at the farms (Sidali et al., 2011; Petrović et al., 2015). Conceptual framework of this study is presented hereunder.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Camp (2001) asserts that a conceptual framework is a structure of what has been learned to best explain the natural progression of a phenomenon that is being studied. The conceptual framework also gives an opportunity to specify and define concepts within the problem (Luse, Mennecke, & Townsend, 2012). Grant and Osanloo (2014) further argue that conceptual framework is arranged in a logical structure to help provide a picture or visual display of how ideas in a study relate to one another. From the literature reviewed from previous studies, this study was informed by four main variables or concepts that contribute to the success of rural tourism practices in rural communities (see Figure 1.1).

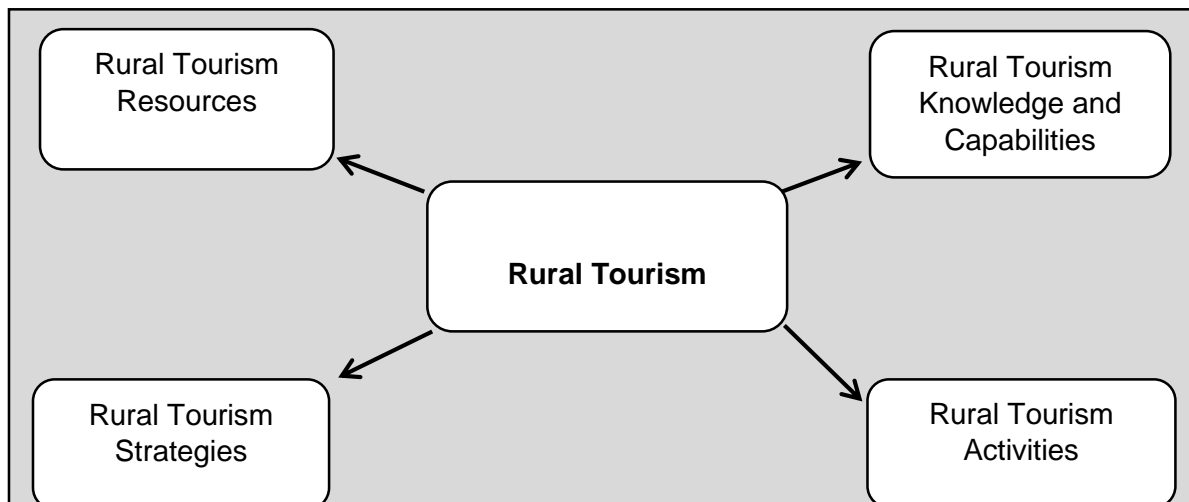


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework (Source: literature reviewed by the author).

The diagram (Figure 3) shows that rural tourism development requires rural communities to highlight their set of capabilities and knowledge necessary to embark on tourism development (Ezeuduji, 2015). Communities need to have necessary resources for rural tourism development. Additionally, a presentation of a fitting strategy for this development and rural tourism activities that can be presented to visitors or tourists is very important for a successful rural tourism development.

1.4 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Situation of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park

The Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park is situated in Northern Zululand in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. It lies to the west of the town of Mtubatuba and borders Hlabisa town in the east. These two towns are linked by a road which bisects the park through the section known as the Corridor. It can be accessed from the north via Hluhluwe town; from the south via Mtubatuba; and from the west through Ulundi (Hluhluwe Game Reserve, 2018).

1.4.2 Brief history of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and study prospect

Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park is formerly known as the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Game Reserve. The park has been proclaimed the oldest reserve in Africa. The size has been estimated to be 96000 hectares (i.e. 960 square kilometres), which is the same size as Netherlands Antilles. It was officially opened in 1895 as a Park (Hluhluwe Game Reserve, 2018). According to Adeleke and Nzama (2013), Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park is a popular tourist destination and is regarded as the foremost wildlife attraction in KwaZulu-Natal.

Dimitrovski et al., (2012) affirm that the rural areas have a unique opportunity to attract tourists by establishing a connection between their areas and their cultural, historic, ethnic, and geographical roots. Given the fact that Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park's neighbouring communities

have necessary historic and cultural aspects, the destination is in a position to be engaged in rural tourism activities. Recently, an increasing number of scholars have shown interest in rural heritage and communities (Gullino & Larcher, 2013; Jimura, 2011; Sun, Cruz, Min, Liu, & Zhang, 2013; Zuo, Huang, & Ding, 2014). Some recent studies on rural tourism have focused on the role of rural tourism development, revitalisation of rural communities through rural tourism development, as well as development strategies of rural tourism (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2012; Zhang, 2012; Vitasurya, 2016; Guzman-Parra., Quintana-García, Benavides-Velasco, & Vila-Oblitas, 2015; Gao & Wu, 2017). The researcher intended to address some notable gap in literature by assessing the potentials of rural tourism in communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (HiP).

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Shuttleworth (2008), the definition of a research problem is the fuel that drives the scientific process and is the foundation of any research method and its formulation is the first step to a scientific investigation. Poor rural areas are often characterised by tourism potential, which provides good opportunities for economic development in a long-run (Akyeampong, 2011). This study focused on Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, and this park is surrounded by rural communities.

Hall and Page (2009) assert that most of the highly demanded tourist destinations in less developed countries are located in rural or peripheral regions. These destinations range from national parks, wilderness areas, mountainous areas, cultural sites, protected areas and biosphere reserves which are rich ecosystems and biodiversity (Gretzel, 2011). Meanwhile, communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park are expected to (in)directly reap the benefits of the park. However, Knight, Driver, Cowling, Maze, Desmet, Lombard, Rouget, Botha, Boshoff and Castley (2006) argue that communities neighbouring Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park are characterised by a relatively high population density, poverty, unemployment and also by increasing degraded subsistence agricultural land around the Park. Therefore, the researcher intended to assess the potentials of rural tourism in communities living nearby Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, given the fact that Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park is one of the most visited places in Kwa-Zulu Natal, and the need for these neighbouring communities to consider rural tourism development in the area.

It has been mentioned earlier on in this study that while many recent studies have shown more interest concerning other aspects of rural tourism (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2012; Zhang, 2012; Vitasurya, 2016; Guzman-Parra., Quintana-García, Benavides-Velasco, & Vila-Oblitas, 2015; Gao & Wu, 2017); it is important to examine the key stakeholders that must be considered before embarking on the rural tourism development journey. The aim of this study was to

assess the potentials of rural tourism in communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (HiP). The researcher investigated whether the host communities possess needed or enough resources for rural tourism, the level of business knowledge and capabilities present in this area, and a fitting strategy coupled with activities on which rural tourism development may take place in this area.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question is:

Do the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park have the potentials for rural tourism?

The subsidiary research questions for this study are:

1. Do the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park have enough or needed resources for rural tourism?
2. Are the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park capable of practising rural tourism?
3. What are the strategies that can be used by host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park to support rural tourism?
4. Which rural tourism activities can the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park present to tourists and how will these be presented?

1.7 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The research aim of this study is:

To assess the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park.

Based on the above aim, the research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To find out whether the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park do have needed or enough resources for rural tourism.
2. To evaluate if the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park have the necessary knowledge and capabilities to be involved in rural tourism.
3. To find out the strategies that can be used by the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park to support rural tourism.
4. To find out the rural tourism activities that can be presented by the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, and how these can be presented.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study intended to assess the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. This study is of significant value as it guided the local communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park on how to develop rural tourism for their own socio-economic benefits; hence, the study may help in creating more employments and in turn help in poverty alleviation. The rural tourism development model that was developed by this research can also be adapted in similar rural areas across South Africa.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Henning (2004) describes methodology as coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the ability to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the researcher's purpose. Likewise, Burns and Grove (2003) believe that methodology includes the design, setting, sample, methodological limitations, and the data collection and analysis techniques in a study. Wahyuni (2012) also mentions that the research design, method and data collection methods are distinctive concepts in empirical and non-empirical research. This section provides a summary of the research approach and methods that was employed in this dissertation.

1.9.1 Research design and methods

Research design connects the research methodology with the research methods that will be used to answer the research questions (Wahyuni, 2012). The aim of the study was to assess the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. This study is complex in nature and it tends to look at what people should have in order to practice rural tourism successfully. The researcher intended to get relevant more detailed information and also to get a deep understanding of people and issues they are faced with. Hence, this study used qualitative research methods to collect data, and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with participants using interview guides. During the interview, information was recorded on audiotape and verbatim notes were taken for data analysis. Owners and managers of hotel businesses around the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park as well as the park managers were interviewed. Some focus group discussions with the community members were conducted where men, women and youth groups were interviewed differently.

The researcher chose semi-structured interviews to elicit responses from the managers because it is not easy to get them as they were busy, thus it was convenient to make an appointment with them to approach them one on one. Focus group method was chosen because the researcher intended to get people's opinions regarding their own community. According to Casey and Krueger (2000:11), focus group provides "a more natural environment

than that of individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others, just as they are in real life". The researcher's aims were to collect high quality data in a social context (Patton, 2002). Denscombe (2007:115) states that "focus group consists of a small group of people, usually between six and nine in number, who are brought together by a trained moderator (the researcher) to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a topic".

1.9.2 Target population

Burns and Grove (2010) describe population as all the elements that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study. The target population for this research was management of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park as well as members of the communities surrounding the park.

1.9.3 Research sample

A sample group can be described as a segment of the target population, which the research is based on (George & Bock, 2011). The information collected from the chosen sample group is then used as a representation of the entire population (George & Bock, 2011). This study used a non-probability sampling method, as the research target population was unknown. According to Babbie (2013), non-probability sampling gives some elements of the population a zero chance of being selected. In this research, a non-probability sampling was applied in a form of a purposive approach. Greenfield, Greene and Johanson, (2007) describe purposive sampling as a technique where subjective judgements are used to purposefully select groups that the researcher believes will represent the population.

In this research, 20 managers of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park were interviewed. Focus group of community members was conducted where men, women and youth groups were interviewed differently (Sample size = 3 focus groups with 8 participants for each).

1.9.4 Data collection tool

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with the participants using interview guides. During the interview, series of information were recorded on audiotape and verbatim notes were taken.

1.9.5 Data Analyses

Data analysis is a mechanism for reducing and organising data to produce findings that require interpretation by the researcher (Burns & Grove, 2010). A method of data analysis called content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data collected from this study. A verbatim transcript of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups was done after coding in order to develop relevant themes. The themes were linked to study objectives, and this was done based on the frequency of opinions or responses were structured as 'very commonly

recorded', 'commonly recorded', and 'not commonly recorded' information and was also presented using texts and tables.

1.9.6 Trustworthiness of Research

Because this study adopted qualitative research method, issues about trustworthiness of research instead of validity and reliability are also necessary. In order to ensure trustworthiness of this study, the researcher employed multiple data collection strategies including focus group discussions and interviews. Variables used to guide data collection for this study was taken from various previous studies.

1.9.7. Pilot study

Clement (2012) assert that pilot study is conducted on a small amount of participants and allows the researcher to become aware of any problems in the data collection methods, which may be corrected in preparation for the larger study. According to Holloway and Wheeler (2002), pilot studies are not usually used in qualitative studies but novice researchers could conduct interviews as a pre-exercise, to be familiar with the type of data collection. Pre-interviews with 3 people were conducted in order to ensure a good manner of asking questions, correct wording and to identify more suitable questions that would address the research problem. The participants for the pilot study were excluded from the main data collection. Focus group of community members was conducted where community members will be interviewed (Sample size = 1 focus group with 3 voluntary participants).

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Babbie (2013), each person that is involved in social research needs to be governed by general agreements from researchers about what is proper and what is improper when conducting research. There are ethical issues that need to be considered when conducting research. Below are the ethical considerations that were adhered to while conducting this study.

(i) Voluntary and informed consent

Mugenda, (2011) asserts that the researcher should not reveal the identity of the respondent and guarantee them anonymity and confidentiality All participants were informed about the purpose of the study as well as being told of their right not to avail themselves if they wish. Participants were not forced to participate unwillingly; this was done to ensure that all participants are free and comfortable.

(ii) Confidentiality and anonymity

Anonymity refers to keeping secret by not identifying the ethnic or cultural background of participants, and to refrain from referring to them by their names or divulging any other sensitive information about a participant (Mugenda, 2011). All participants in the study were assured of absolute confidentiality; and that the results from this study would be confidential and that there will be no mentioning of their name anywhere in the study.

(iii) Intellectual property

Academics are expected to be open-minded and share their information and ideas freely without fear or intimidation yet observing the need to protect intellectual property (Mugenda, 2011). In this research therefore, information from books, journals and other sources was cited, acknowledged and referenced in order to avoid plagiarism. All generic internet and electronic sources were also acknowledged.

1.11 RESOURCES

Resources available to the researcher are adequate to complete this study without complications, these includes UZ Space, books as well as University of Zululand's electronic database to access relevant journal articles.

1.12 INTERLLECTUAL PROPERTY

This research study is the intellectual property of the researcher, the supervisor, and University of Zululand.

1.13 KNOWLEDGE DESSEMINATION

The researcher will present the research study findings to the University of Zululand's Faculty of Arts conference. The researcher intended to present the research findings to Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (personal presentation), the management authority of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (personal presentation), and the local communities (posters and town hall presentation). Some parts of the research will be published in several accredited journals. The findings of the study will assist the communities; local, national and international policy makers to understand the link between the availability of resources and capabilities on the one hand, and rural tourism development and contingency issues around it on the other hand.

1.14 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The structure of the study normally includes introduction, a literature review, methods, the research results and then conclusion and recommendations. This study consists of five chapters, and they are outlined below.

1.14.1 Chapter 1: Orientation of the study

This chapter serves as an introduction of the study topic. The chapter is about how the researcher went about all processes of the study and the intended aims of the study as well as specification of the study objectives.

1.14.2 Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter focuses on literature review. The researcher in this chapter looks at the previously conducted studies relevant to the topic of this research study. This chapter also provides an analysis of current information relevant to the topic of this research study.

1.14.3 Chapter 3: Physical setting of the study and methodology

This chapter serves as an explanation of the methods used to gather the information and data for the study to answer research question. A detailed description of the components of the methodology is provided. The physical setting of the study area (background) is also provided in this chapter.

1.14.4 Chapter 4: Results and Discussions

This chapter provides the final results of the research, analysis of the results, and the sub-conclusion. Sub-conclusions were drawn looking at the previous findings in a similar topic of this study.

1.14.5 Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

This is the final chapter of the research whereby the researcher summarises the research findings and other notable activities and processes conducted during the course of the study. In this chapter, researcher also gives clearly formulate recommendations for future studies and conclusions regarding the research problem.

1.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the study orientation, highlighting all the aspects on how the study went about collecting and analysing data. The aims, objectives, and research questions of the study were highlighted in this chapter and in relation to the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. A brief explanation on rural tourism, aligned with this study was also conducted. Ethical issues that were considered as well as the structure of the study were outlined. Basically, the chapter has provided a detailed plan of how the research problem was solved as well as the overview of all the processes of the study from the beginning to the end. The next chapter focuses on literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Governments have long pursued tourism as a means of growth in rural regions (McComb, Boyd & Boluk, 2017). Noticeably, rural areas are undergoing significant socio-economic changes where rural livelihoods need to be transformed and diversified. Tourism is therefore increasingly being used as an instrument for local growth with the objective of facilitating community involvement and inclusion in tourism planning and activities (Lenao & Saarinen, 2015). However, rural areas have certain features that inhibit their capacity to take complete advantage of tourism (McComb, Boyd & Boluk, 2017). Rural tourism can be described as a sphere of double interests, which on the one side includes the indigenous inhabitants (hosts), and on the other, the tourists (guests) (Paresishvili, Kvaratskhelia & Mirzaeva, 2017).

The South African government voted into power in 1994 elections adopted the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) as a programmes of action to stop the problem of poverty, unemployment and inequality (Strydom, Mangope & Henama, 2018). Many recent studies (e.g. Strydom et al., 2018; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019; Bate & Taylor, 2019) have shown that tourism was later identified as an engine for growth for the country's economy and contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country. Munien, Phungula and Bob (2018, p. 65) advocate that "rural tourism is increasingly viewed as a panacea for increasing the economic viability of marginalized areas, as well as for stimulating social regeneration and improving the living conditions of rural communities. This research posits that tourism activities in rural areas are also often linked to the natural resources and cultural assets available at a particular rural area. The existing body of research on tourism suggests that rural tourism is dealing with the challenges that face rural areas (Ezeuduji, 2015; Munien et al., 2018), especially those that are related to the decline of traditional industries and increased emigration.

In developing countries such South Africa, tourism is observed as a strong tool for small-scale enterprises and job creation, and the uplifting of local communities' standard of living (Strydom et al., 2018). In other words, where rural tourism is practiced well, "there is a potential to provide some exceptional opportunities for communities by offering not only better benefits", but also enhancing their contribution in planning and management of tourism in their communities (Strydom et al., 2018, p. 7). The province of KwaZulu-Natal is on the eastern side of the South African shoreline; therefore, the province is crucial to the development of South African economy due to the amount of game parks that attract visitors to the region and to South Africa in general.

For instance, in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa, communities around the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (protected area) seem to have a considerable tourism growth potential with its untouched natural beauty and major cultural and historical features. However, research can be used to establish this potential in terms of resources and capabilities. There is high unemployment rate in communities around Hluhluwe Imfolozi Park, and most families rely on state social subsidies to bring food to their table. The growth of rural tourism in these fields may be considered as one of the most efficient approaches for poverty alleviation and job creation.

Furthermore, rural communities according to Trukhachev (2015) have to be equipped with certain tools applicable to their efforts and bids to establish and develop tourist infrastructure. Some rural regions are highly touristy with resources such as natural scenery, cultures and traditions, and with the opportunity to enjoy outdoor operations or try local cuisine (Navarro, 2015). However, recent studies have shown that the surfacing of Covid-19 pandemic has impacted tourism industry negatively (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Huynh, Truong, Duong, Nguyen, Dao & Dao, 2021; Lu, Xiao, Xu, Wang, Zhang & Zhou, 2021). This study however examines the potentials of rural tourism in communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park focusing on the resources and capabilities found in the rural communities and first of all, the notion of rural tourism is discussed in this section. The chapter further discusses rural tourism resources, the capacity of rural tourism, obstacles to rural population participation in rural tourism as well as activities that can be presented to visitor/tourists. Furthermore, it will highlight rural tourism management, rural tourism and the advantages of rural tourism to rural groups. The following section gives an overview of the rural tourism idea.

2.2. THE CONCEPT OF RURAL TOURISM

Rural tourism was built up in the late 18th Century by the Romantic Movement. In the natural world, romanticism started as an anti-industrialism development. Rural tourism was first based on the notion of holiday farming, but contemporary rural tourism started after the Second World War era (Naghiu, Vázquez and Georgiev (2005). Additionally, influences of that movement on rural tourism growth can be considered bilaterally to be tourist (demand) and organising (supply) parties. Rural tourism reflects the requirements on both sides. Rural tourism remained a small, passive activity up until the middle of the 20th century; but since then, it has experienced an integral transformation in both the nature and scale of agricultural tourism and the social and economic composition of the landscape that hosts visitors (Sharpley, 2007).

In rural regions, rural tourism should be focused on the characteristics of rural tourism, houses and small-scale settlements, linked with the locals and their relatives, based on villages and small towns, and illustrate complicated financial, environmental and historical trends (Naghiu, Vázquez & Georgiev, 2005). This study is based on rural communities around Hluhluwe

iMfolozi Park which is one of the Ezemvelo Parks in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Communities around the park are thought to be beneficiaries of tourism, but this may not be true. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) has a variety of dimensions in which rural tourism can be defined, and these dimensions include the natural and territorial resources of rural areas, the historical and cultural heritage, the activities carried out in the territory and the culture of rural populations, which are called the 'rural mode of life' of rural communities (World Tourism Organisation, 1997).

Rural tourism is a diversification activity that is progressively essential in rural development (Galloway, Sanders, Deakins, 2011; Su, 2013; Wang, Huang, Zou & Yan, 2012). In order to prosper the rural tourism industry, local people must become entrepreneurs and create and encourage their own companies (Cánoves et al., 2004). In contrast to resorts, rural tourism has not heavily focused on property growth, but was mainly developed by recycling and redeveloping current properties and heritage assets such as tourist lodging and attractions (Lane & Kastenholz 2015). According to Paresishvili, Kvaratskhelia, and Mirzaeva (2017), rural tourism is a tourism sector that utilizes natural, cultural, historical and other resources as well as rural settlements' peculiarities for the growth of complicated tourism products.

Lane and Kastenholz (2015) further explicate that rural tourism has a socio-economic element that provides jobs for the rural population in the service sector, promotes economic development of promising areas and rural settlements, and thereby keeps local residents permanently at home. Rural tourism is called a good chance for economic development and different social outcomes derived from rural areas. Ezeuduji (2015) believes that rural tourists visit rural areas in order to discover rural landscapes and participate in rural lifestyles.

According to Oruonye (2013), rural tourism is a tourist activity that offers the hosts lodging, catering and programmes and may be an inexpensive, active vacation for guests. Rural tourism includes all tourism and recreational operations in non-urban populated regions. Darii (2014) notes that the density of social dimension in rural tourism makes progress among other solutions because rural tourism is a factor in cultural and social progress, and is not only a significant component of economic development.

Major cultural and cultural attractions (e.g., arts, social activities) also play a key role in rural tourism and allow communities to boost revenue (Rahmani, Hajari, Karimian, & Hajilo, 2013). Rural tourism in the most positive sense is rounded up and depends on rural backwardness, which may be in form of history, genuineness, desire and industry attract lifestyle entrepreneurs, who are motivated to construct on these resources (Inverson & Jacobsen, 2015). MacNulty (2004) also mentions that the rural tourism idea includes a number of key components, however, the rural tourism community remains the core component on which

rural tourism lies. The landscape, its heritage, its culture, rural operations and rural life also depends on rural tourism. (See Figure 2.1).

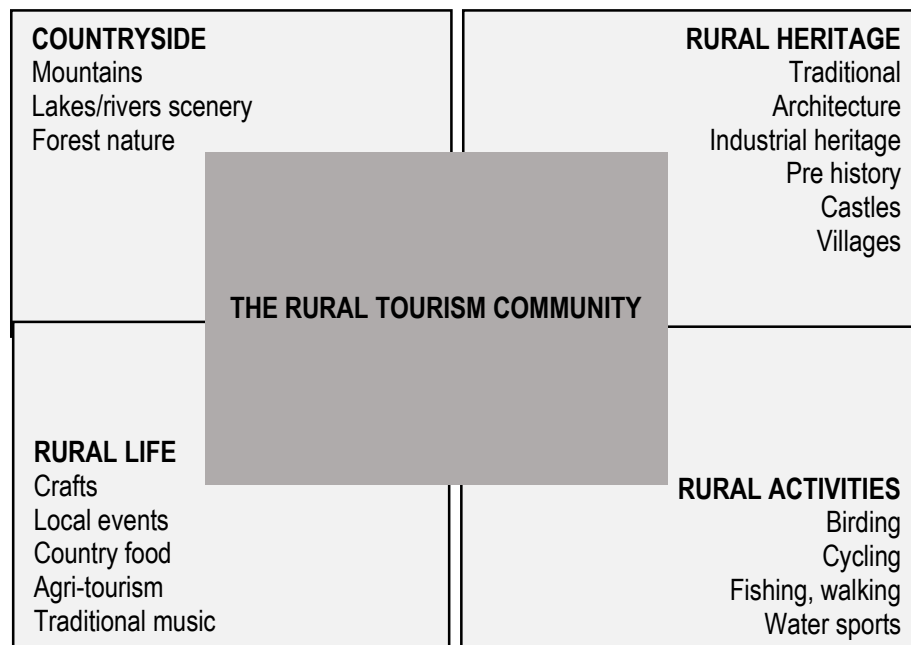


Figure 2.1: The Rural Tourism Concept Source: MacNulty (2004: 13)

The literature also discusses the complexity of rural definitions, and it identifies eight different definitions. The following Table (2.1) presents the definitions of rural tourism for selected developing countries that were extracted from the available published literature.

Table 2.1: Definition of Rural Tourism of Selected Developing Countries

| Country | Definition | Source |
|---------------------|---|--|
| <i>Hungary</i> | It refers to tourism in villages (food, accommodation and facilities) which presents life in a nation with the active involvement of tourists and traditions. | Kulcsar (2009) |
| <i>Romania</i> | As a whole phenomenon of tourism occurring in the rural countryside of Romania, the urban population has a functional system of utilities and lodging, and is mainly targeted at rural areas. | Dinu, Cioacă, Ratiu, and Pascut (2011) |
| <i>Uruguay</i> | Includes all rural operations and activities related to farming. | Mackinnon, Bentancur, and Sanchez (2009) |
| <i>The Gambia</i> | Location, purpose and visit character, and tourist visits to rural Gambia are aimed at experiencing the local population's cultural and natural environment. | Ezeuduji and Rid (2011) |
| <i>South Africa</i> | Consists of rural leisure activity, including various types of tourism activities, such as local tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, guest tourism, backpacking, riding and agri-tourism. | Viljoen and Tlabela (2007) |

Source: Nair et al. (2015: 322).

In relation to South Africa, the South African rural tourism displays the benefits of rural life, arts, culture and heritage for local societies as well as for enhanced communication among visitors and local people. It has many aspects and includes tourism in agriculture, cultural tourism, natural tourism, adventure and ecotourism (Almeida, Correia, & Pimpão, 2014). Rahmani, Hajari, Karimian and Hajil (2013) state that there are varieties of rural tourism. Table 2.2 provides five different types of rural tourism as pointed out by Rahmani, Hajari, Karimian, and Hajilo (2013).

Table 2.2: Varieties of rural tourism

| Varieties | Considerations |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Eco tourism</i> | Generally, it is in equilibrium with ecological attractions. |
| <i>Cultural tourism</i> | It is in relationship with culture, history, archaeological and cultural heritages of rural people. |
| <i>Indigenous tourism</i> | It is a variety of tourism which in addition to interaction with natural attractions (e.g. rivers, mountains etc.) is related to lives and social norms of people which are themselves in interaction with above attractions. |
| <i>Village tourism</i> | In this variety, tourists live with village families and participate in social and economic activities of the rural area. |
| <i>Agricultural tourism</i> | Tourists interact without negative effects on host ecosystems or participate in traditional agricultural activities. |

Source: Rahmani, Hajari, Karimian & Hajilo, (2013: 396).

This study attempts to contribute to the body of knowledge on rural tourism by assessing the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, which attracts a large number of tourists who are attracted to or in love with nature and game viewing. It can be argued that for a territory to embark on the journey of rural tourism development, there is a need for adequate resources for successful outcomes. The next section discusses rural tourism resources that can contribute to rural population participation in rural tourism activities.

2.3. RURAL TOURISM RESOURCES

It is necessary to identify the resources of an area that attract tourists and lead them to spend money on experiencing the rural lifestyle or on the activities that are offered. According to Zhou (2018), rural tourism can cover numerous activities (which are often cultural and natural), that focus on different resources. Additionally, rural tourism relies on the natural and cultural assets in a distinctive region, where individuals are the primary drivers, (Sanagustin-Fons, Lafita-Cortés, & Moseñe, 2018). Inverson and Jacobsen (2015) also affirm that rural tourism development should not threaten natural, cultural and social assets in a specific region but

should encourage economic development and improve living space quality for the local population.

A wide variety of public and private resources is used in rural tourism, and numerous stakeholders are included; and such situation may potentially harm the natural, cultural and social resources on which it is built, because tourism sector employs natural, cultural-historical, and other resources for the growth of tourism goods (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008). Whilst respecting client demands for the highest quality resources and offered services, destinations that aspire for well-recognised and well-sought tourism markets at national or global level should be guided according to the fundamental values of sustainable development (Stetic, 2012). Roberts and Hall (2001) state that it is not possible to develop all rural sites for rural tourism, and in environmentally fragile regions, rural tourism should not be promoted. It is very important for rural communities to have needed and appropriate resources to support rural tourism developments.

Major resources like the flora and fauna have been identified as attracting visitors to a tourist destination (Chin, Lo, Songan, & Nair, 2014). According to Polo and Frias (2010), the growth of rural tourism can function as an agent for rural conversion and the creation of new tiny companies and new jobs, thus creating an inflow of funds and liquidity into societies. Oredegbe and Fadeyibi (2009) assert that rural tourism represents non-agricultural farming methods that offer appealing company possibilities for increasing agricultural revenues. In addition, the development of rural tourism could change unusable rural resources such as works of archaeology, forests and the mountains, and provide them with economic value that can create jobs and reduce the impact of poverty. Meanwhile, due to bad tourist planners and lack of sophisticated techniques and facilities in many rural regions, many tourism resources have been demolished (Zhou, 2018).

Previous scholars have agreed on the primary aspects that must be included in local growth, such as finances, technology, build-up ability, trade, policy coherence, partnerships, information, tracking and accountability (Stafford-Smith, Griggs, Gaffney, Ullah, Reyers, Kanie, & O'Connell, 2017). The next section provides an overview of capabilities that need to be presented by locals in order for them to participate successfully in rural tourism developments/activities.

2.4. RURAL TOURISM CAPABILITIES

According to Bakhru, Sanghi, Seema and Medury (2013), capabilities are methods of combining and coordinating resources. Ezeuduji (2015) asserts that developing rural tourism is a business process that requires rural communities to highlight their skills and knowledge necessary for the development of tourism. According to Sanagustin-Fons, Lafita-Corté and

Moseñe (2018), the capacity of community members to participate in conservation programme and tourist activities depends on enabling factors that include the knowledge and expertise required, awareness, information accessibility and financial support. The creation of a rural entrepreneurial initiative needs retraining for those who try to substitute or supplement non-profitable traditional operations with something better in order to satisfy demand (Cánoves et al., 2004; Hall, 2004). Recommended training in client services, operational excellence, and product excellence for the local tourism community, which can be made possible via the network of stakeholders and cooperation (Ezeuduji & Rid, 2011) is another initiative.

Importantly, local or rural development is considered one of the main strategies for endogenous socioeconomic growth (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008), as it focuses on improving people's socioeconomic circumstances and providing them with the greatest quality of life to enhance individual and social abilities (Sanagustin-Fons, Lafita-Corté & Moseñe, 2018). Current leakage rates are linked to local ability for providing the required abilities, food and other supplies required by tourism companies (Butler & Rogerson, 2016). The quality of life of inhabitants and educational procedures should be emphasized more, while the feeling of hospitality, awareness campaigns, and skill development initiatives should be enhanced to guarantee capacity building amongst local groups. Rogerson (2013) explicates that local governments need to develop broad-based capacity for tourism planning which must include both those local governments that are the leading tourism destinations and the localities that have local communities that rely on tourism.

2.4.1. Tourism development knowledge, awareness and skills

Previous studies have shown that residents' lack of awareness and information prevents community involvement in tourism development (Marzuki et al., 2012; Tosun & Timothy, 2003). Chambers (2014) also notes that due to the absence of human resource development in rural regions, developing suitable understanding and abilities as well as allowing local communities to engage significantly in tourism growth is a major challenge about the promotion of rural tourism. Absence of community consciousness, lack of understanding and information about tourism are the fundamental restrictions that restrict local people's capacity to engage actively in the growth and growth of tourism (Razzaq, Mohamad, Kader, & Mustafad, 2013). Meanwhile, Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Ahmad and Barghi (2017) refer to awareness as to keeping up-to-date on news and information about tourism development; whereas, knowledge refers to residents having a deep understanding of tourism management, their community, and how they can become involved and participate in the tourism development process. People living and working in destination communities are essential, but they are often neglected. A destination must be known to its locals to ensure that tourist

attractions and amenities that create a sustainable tourism atmosphere are supported (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019).

Moreover, local individuals need the required funds, especially in terms of the expertise and abilities required to undertake a journey of tourism development. However, the findings of the study conducted by Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar and Tangit (2018) indicate that the absence of understanding and skill is a major constraint on community participation in tourism. The study further suggests that local residents lack knowledge and skills in identifying opportunities associated with tourism, marketing, and how to run a business. Other earlier studies report that local knowledge and skills deficits as obstacles to the growth of rural tourism (Ateljevic, 2009, Irvine & Anderson, 2004).

Furthermore, education and training have been considered to be essential for the effective development of tourist operations. This means that locals must be adequately conscious and knowledgeable on tourism in most developing countries. Razzaq, Mohamad and Mustafad (2013) propose that development of human resources is an important element to be resolved in the early development phase. They also indicate that the main challenge in rural tourism for human resource development is to give local communities the necessary understanding, abilities and consciousness to make them engage meaningfully in the growth of tourism. While Ahmeti (2013) also reveals that the primary obstacle to the efficient involvement of the community in rural tourism growth is absence of understanding; Razzaq, Mohamad and Mustafad (2013) believe that the primary difficulties preventing the rural population from participating actively and benefiting from tourism growth are due to the human resource development (. In addition, most rural individuals have less possibilities for studying and thereby get less exposure about tourism when compared to urban dwellers. The people in rural areas thereby have restricted understanding, abilities, and resources for the growth and management of tourism (Razzaq, Mohamad & Mustafad, 2013).

According to Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Ahmad, and Barghi (2017), effective involvement in the society requires the members of such society to have the abilities and expertise to change, and so members of the society must be ready to enhance their abilities as a sign of involvement. A lack of skilled workers can be a direct result of the failure in many start-ups tourism businesses. Bauer, Kablan, Kasüske, Klauditz, Nordhorn, and Zilker (2012) suggest that prior to any participation in tourism, the local community should be notified and ready; local communities should be supplied with adequate data on the tourist sector purposely for creating informed choices about how their future will be affected. Local individuals should be prepared to take part in tourism and know about the possible effects and how to handle effects at the inception (Bauer, Kablan, Kasüske, Klauditz, Nordhorn & Zilker, 2012).

While Tosun and Timothy (2003) propose the use of government media to train, educate, and raise awareness and readiness for tourism development; Nygaard (2016) underlines that education is a significant component of community involvement and development. Tourism businesses are argued to support education at all levels and help to improve the quality of and access to local knowledge. Furthermore, rural enterprise development programmes must be accompanied by a capacity building and company training plan in order to encourage the development of rural regions (López & Pastor, 2015). The next sub-section briefly explores the barriers that may hinder rural residents to participate in rural tourism.

2.4.2. Barriers to rural tourism participation

Barriers are described as variables, circumstances or obstacles that decrease adaptation strategies' efficiency (Moser & Ekstrom, 2010). There are several constraints to community participation in rural tourism development. These constraints include a lack of basic knowledge concerning business management and the tourism industry, financial difficulties, and the seasonal nature of tourism (Ateljevic, 2009). Inadequate resources, insufficient growth of facilities, inadequate advertising, political instability, illegal harvesting of resources, and deforestation are other entrepreneurial obstacles to rural tourism (Ibimilua & Ibimilua 2015). In many instances, the recurring constraints are insufficient financial resource support, lack of trained human resource as well as lack of knowledge and awareness.

2.4.2.1. Insufficient financial resource support

Finance is at the heart of the development process. National Tourism Sector Strategy (2017) states that in an effort to meaningfully increase local benefits, particularly within host communities living in areas where tourism potential exists, effective business and enterprise development is required. This means that a proper financial support system can stimulate development and simultaneously decrease poverty in the community. According to Castro and Ferreira (2019), small businesses in rural areas face several obstacles. Rural communities have fewer opportunities for education in trade, advertising and tourism. They also lack the resources to finance their activities and are more seasonally affected (Castro & Ferreira, 2019). Importantly, the pursuit of business strategies requires substantial financial capital (Kallmuenzer, Kraus, Peters, Steiner & Cheng, 2019), just like access to financial services but this has remained a challenge for small businesses in particular.

Based on Tourism White paper (1996), most of the rural citizens come from the poor family background and they are usually not receiving financial support such as loan facilities from local banks or local government bodies. Although, these individuals can have reasonable and feasible plans about establishment of a company or business, they fail to start owing to a lack

of funding and inadequate technical expertise and skills. The reason for such experience is also connected to their poor family background as they lack required collaterals, guarantors or assurances for obtaining loans from financial institutions.

National Tourism Strategy (2012) has alluded that although significant tourist attractions, including locations of world heritage sites exist in rural regions, the population's level of financial stabilization continues to be lower than in urban regions and this has an impact on rural tourism. National Tourism Strategy (2012) believe that "South Africa has both potential factors of subsistence agriculture, culture, and scenic beauty, particularly in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces, but these features have not been explored and the comparative economies that can support the inequalities in these areas have not been fully funded". National Tourism Strategy (2012) further notes that inadequate and unreliable economic data plays a key role in under developing rural tourism and in addressing such financial difficulties; rural tourism nodes are therefore unable to trigger the financial reactions needed. It has been noted again that rural tourism lacks ability of job creation, poverty alleviation, and sustainable living. In the context of a designed ambitious rural tourism programmes, the shortcomings in the financial input of the nodal plans and the execution of those plans play an important part in reducing the likelihood of achievement.

2.4.2.2. Lack of trained human resource

Poor planning of human resources will bring about so many negative results including labor shortages, discouraged, and unsatisfied customers in many industries. The lack of education presents a major challenge to the tourism and hospitality industry in terms of human capital function in such industry (Vallabh & Mhlanga, 2015). For tourism's long-term development, the issue of human capital is crucial as the tourism sector provides staff of all ages with varying levels of skills. The development and delivery of a competitive tourist product and service is also based on the quality of available personnel, and their capability to respond to any changing requirements of consumers and reducing social problems such as poverty (Kimbu, Ngoasong, Adeola, & Afenyo-Agbe, 2019). It is therefore necessary to invest more in human capital for any tourism enterprise to succeed.

Okoye and Ezejiofor (2013) argue that effective personnel management allows staff to efficiently contribute to general leadership of the business and to achieve the objectives and goals of the organisation. According to Singh (2016), rural tourism's success relies on the quality of its services and the reception of tourists, based on the understanding that the first impression always last. In rural areas, the absence of skilled personnel is a common concern directly affecting the tourism and hospitality industry badly. Trained urban workers usually do

not want to go and work in rural regions due to the absence of fundamental infrastructure (Singh, 2016). Jackson and Seo (2010) also mention that many scholars and practitioners believe that the primary objective to be achieved through Human Resource Management activities is improvement of firm performance. People are the key asset in the organisation, and they need continuous training and the necessary knowledge to improve their performance. This naturally translates into happy tourist and customer satisfaction, which leads to repeat business.

2.4.2.3. Lack of knowledge and awareness

One of the problems faced by rural communities is the lack of adequate education, training, and awareness opportunities. Singh (2016) argue that one of the key things necessary to make locals aware of tourism is by providing proper education and training. The author further suggests that by so doing, communities will be equipped with the necessary knowledge on how they can be part of rural tourism developments. Xue and Kerstetter (2019) assert that the continued high growth in the demand for new skills in the workforce will prioritise education and training. Okech and Nedelea (2008) also affirm that the primary objective of promoting rural tourism is to improve the net benefits to rural people and to enhance their involvement in tourism product management. If more tourism in rural areas can be developed in particular by means of local decision-making and business participation, as well as by practical work on the company's operations, the impacts of poverty can probably be decreased.

It can be argued that although most rural areas have excellent potential for rural tourism owing to their human, natural and patrimonial resources, the resources remain highly potentially unapproved owing to absence of training in tourism as well as absence of establishment of partnerships and the reluctance of stakeholders to collaborate completely (Sanagustin-Fons, Lafita-Cortés & Moseñe, 2018). Butler and Hinch (2007) assert that community empowerment has to do with governance, the level of control the community has over projects, and community-based authority. This makes the indigenous or local community to feel part of a rural tourism project and to administer the day-to-day running of it. Some relevant strategies coupled with activities on which rural tourism development may take place in a rural tourism community are discussed in the next section.

2.5. RURAL TOURISM STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Tourism activities have been commonly considered as one of the key tools for rural development (Naghiu, Vázquez & Georgiev, 2005). Tourism has the ability to create direct and indirect jobs for local individuals where conflicts are connected to absence of jobs and livelihoods, and it has the potential to provide capacity-building instruction and act as an

instrument for the stabilisation of regions. If local people are not incorporated into the tourism planning and strategy development (especially if they cannot reap the advantages of tourism), they may become spoilers of the development. Rural tourism is a very significant local activity and the majority of operations arise from its natural and cultural heritage (Sanagustin-Fons, Lafita-Cortés & Moseñe, 2018). Rural activity is taking place in non-urban (rural) regions with: i) small demographic densities, (ii) agriculture-dominated landscapes and land-use regions, and (iii) traditional structures and lifestyles of the social society (World Tourism Organisation: 1997). Ezeuduji (2015) reiterates that the evolving approach that could balance the application of basic principles (local values and community ownership) in rural tourism is for locals to organize tourism activities leading to an exceptional rural tourism experience. This can happen through utilizing top-down funds or resources (national governments and not-for-profit organisations as partners in terms of business training and initial financing) to finance bottom-up rural tourism initiatives.

Evidently, rural tourism can be a catalyst for a wide spectrum of fresh business operations, alliances and networks that merely compliment traditional operations such as agriculture (Zhou, 2018). The idea of rural tourism however involves all other operations in rural regions and not just vacations in the village. A study conducted by Ezeuduji and Rid (2011) in the rural Gambia has established that the cultural offerings of rural tourism consist of traditional dances, local food, music, rural lifestyles, local crafts, local languages, and festivals and rituals. It can be argued that rural tourism operations and facilities vary from nation to another because each nation adapts its rural tourism development policy to its particular circumstances (Temelkov & Gulev 2019). There are numerous activities that can be presented by locals that can form part of their rural tourism. The classification of rural tourism activities by Nair et al. (2015) is presented in Figure 2.2. Cultural and natural characteristics appear most when compared to historical ones.

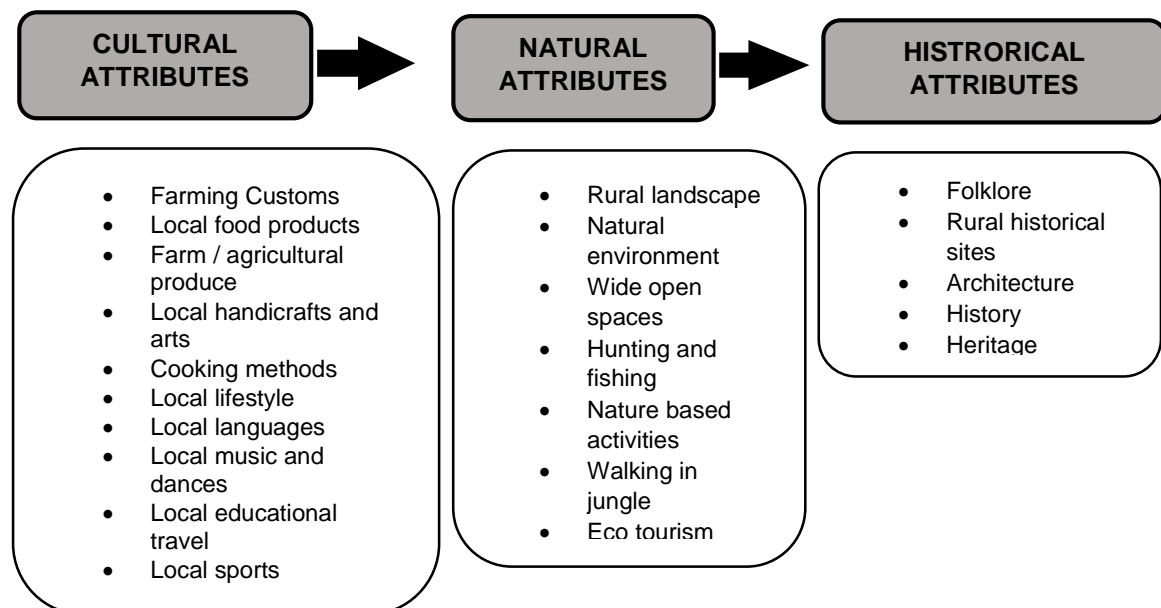


Figure 2.2: Classification of Rural Tourism Activities

Source: Nair et al. (2015: 330)

The word rural tourism can also be used as a geographical term to describe the cultural operations of rural groups (Dimitrovski, Todorović & Valjarević, 2012). According to Roberts and Hall (2003), rural tourism operations are located in rural regions. The World Tourism Organisation experts agree with the opinion that rural tourism is complex with many activities, which includes rural excursions, mountain biking, climbing, horseback riding, sport and wellness travel, hunting and fishing (Roberts & Hall, 2003).

Two methods are available to rural tourism. The first traditional route involves a passive visitor's stay on a farm in a rural setting with passive monitoring without any important participation of hosts. The second strategy involves the notion of contemporary life participation, and it is a fresh and modern way whereby tourists spend time on farms, and involving actively in the majority of the agricultural activities and other available work on the farms (Petrović et al., 2015).

Nagy, Káposzta and Meta (2017) assert that the rural tourism development would assist rural people diversify their operations and receive additional revenue and encourage the inhabitants to remain in their own regions. According to Zhou (2018), the natural ecological environment in rural regions can be influenced by rural tourism operations. Rural tourism can boost expenditure and workloads to protect the natural and ecological environment and cause irreparable harm to the natural environment. Unplanned tourism activities cause the depletion of natural resources over time; hence rural tourism activities should be carefully planned.

2.5.1. Managing rural tourism

The tourist's needs can only be met by a well-managed destination. Rural tourism stakeholders, however play a major role in the growth of rural tourism. In order for rural tourism to be successfully managed, partnership and support among stakeholders is also crucial. Rural tourism involves a wide range of community-owned resources and different stakeholders with different interests and it remains a complex and tricky issue (Ertuna & Kirbas, 2012). Rangus, Brumen and Topler (2018) argue that the frequency of meetings between local residents and visitors and readiness of local residents to be friendly hosts are the key to the effective tourism development. Tourism monitoring is finally recognized as a process driven by stakeholders and destinations are seen as networks of interdependent stakeholders (Waligo, Clarke & Hawkins, 2015). It has been argued that understanding the characteristics and points of view of stakeholders can help to predict opposition or support to the development of tourism, which may therefore be incorporated into the tourism strategy (Phi, Dredge & Whitford, 2014).

Not all stakeholders have the same amount of concern and requirements in the growth of rural tourism and they may be less involved or more active in the process. In determining the achievement of operations, some stakeholders are more crucial than others. According to Masutha and Rogerson (2014), it can be said that positive involvement of stakeholders in the development process depends on their knowledge of the role they are supposed to play. Ezeuduji (2015) attests that local stakeholders can manage rural tourism development. Table 2.3 illustrates stakeholders' demands and roles in the process of rural tourism development.

Table 2.3: Stakeholders, their demands and roles in rural tourism development

| <i>Major stakeholder group</i> | <i>Demands</i> | <i>Roles</i> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Local communities</i> | Income from tourism | Staging events |
| <i>Tourists</i> | What they pay for | Service consumers |
| <i>State governments</i> | Compliance to policy | Policy formulation |
| <i>Local governments</i> | Rural development | Monitoring and evaluation |
| <i>National environment agencies</i> | Environmental standards | Environment impact assessment |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>Tourism authorities</i> | Popularity of destination | Marketing communications |
| <i>Not-for-profit organisations</i> | Equity, local empowerment | Initial funding, research and capacity building |
| <i>Tour operators</i> | Returns on their investment | Tourists' acquisition |

Source: Ezeuduji, (2015:220).

Traditionally, the management of rural destinations should represent the interests of local communities. If all stakeholders have the same vision when determining what they really want from tourism and how they want to sell, they will all be better off (Stetic, 2012). The promotion of involvement of the local populations is one of the primary focuses of rural tourism development (Sihombing, Gunawijaya & Akbar, 2017). In the workplace, companies are currently seeking to develop new and successful ideas for enterprises for people with social skills, computer abilities, speakers of foreign languages and people who show initiative. This cannot be done without the support of stakeholders (locals, officials, businessmen, workers, teachers, etc.) who also need to learn their duties and responsibilities (Xue & Kerstetter, 2019).

The literature on community participation in tourism management and tourism impact studies on destinations shows that the participation of destination groups in tourism management is a main component of any tourism development (Rangus, Brumen, & Topler, 2018). Therefore, communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park should however reap directly the benefits of the park and tourism as a whole by participating in rural tourism development.

2.6. RURAL TOURISM ATTRIBUTES

With ongoing studies on the notion of rural tourism by professionals and scientists at home and overseas, individuals perceive "rurality" as the features of rural tourism (Rangus, Brumen, & Topler, 2018). In terms of cultural, natural and historical attributions, rural tourism sights/activities are divided into three distinct characteristics as illustrated earlier (Nair, Munikrishnan, Rajaratnam & King, 2015). A well-developed infrastructure is the required prerequisite for rural tourism growth (Paresishvili, Kvaratskhelia & Mirzaeva, 2017). Rural tourism can be broadly defined as tourism which takes place in rural areas. Ghaderi and Henderson (2012) assert that certain common attributes of a rural place include low population densities and where only a small proportion of land is given over to the built environment, creating an impression of space.

Agriculture is likely to be practiced but not necessarily, and rural tourism and farm tourism are not always synonymous (Ghaderi, & Henderson, 2012). Rural tourism is defined by the

development of tiny areas with a broad range of diverse non-concentrated and small-scale housing and recreational operations in their own identity (Sanagustin-Fons, Lafita-Cortés & Moseñe, 2018). Given the fact that surrounding communities of Hluhluwe imfolozi Park abound in =diverse natural attractions, rich cultural and historical heritage, original architecture and preserved ecological nature, there is huge potential for developing rural tourism in these areas (Daniloska, & Hadzi naumova-mihajlovska, 2015), there is huge potential for developing rural tourism in these areas. Wei, Ting and Deyan (2007) point out that adequate use of cultural characteristics or products could bring enormous earnings to tourism.

Table 2.4: Differences between classic/standard tourism and rural tourism

| <i>Classification criteria</i> | Classic/standard tourism | Rural tourism |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Main activities characteristics</i> | Activities developed at national or international level | Family activities developed locally |
| <i>Location of space built</i> | High density commercial space built in, faced with an acute shortage of space | Low density in commercial space, has built itself into an open space |
| <i>Resident population</i> | Urban settlements involved in tourism activity has over 10,000 inhabitants | Rural settlements in practice rural tourism have under 10,000 inhabitants |
| <i>Infrastructure</i> | Infrastructure well shaped | The least developed infrastructure |
| <i>Architecture</i> | Building with modern architecture, and in general new | Constructions with local architecture, being generally old |
| <i>Structure of tourist activities</i> | Towns people activity is in its own right (the employment is full-time) | Complementary tourist activity of farming activities (jobs are mostly part-time) |
| <i>The distance to the place of work</i> | Considerable distances between residence and work | Approximation of the place of |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | | residence and activities of daily living |
| <i>Tourist movement</i> | Intense movement by attracting tourism by various segments of tourists | Low tourist movement by attracting certain segments of tourists |
| <i>Seasonality</i> | Classic tourism, being less affected by it | Sharp, rural tourism is influenced by departures and agricultural works |
| <i>Relationship between host and Tourists</i> | Formal, impersonal relationships with tourists | Individualized, personal relationships with tourists |
| <i>Tourist activities management</i> | Professional management | Rig Management |

Source: Nistoreanu and Ghereș, (2010:50).

Table (2.4) above presents the main differences between classic/standard tourism and rural tourism as adapted from Nistoreanu and Ghereș (2010:50). The table illustrates that while the tourism industry has a classical, declining industrial development trends and maintains tight hospitality and a stressful urban environment, rural tourism offers a relaxing, quiet and positive tourists experience (Nistoreanu & Ghereș, 2010).

2.7. RURAL TOURISM BENEFITS

Nair, Munikrishnan, Rajaratnam and King (2015) argue that rural tourism is commonly recognized as being able to shape rural society through financial and social benefits. Tourism development can assist in addressing several issues faced by rural populations. In terms of economic growth, socio-cultural development, service delivery and standard of living, rural tourism benefits local communities (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). These advantages lead to beneficial attitudes and behaviors in the development of tourism in local societies (Jaafar, Noor & Rasoolimanesh, 2015).

Singh (2016) also mentions that the development of rural tourism has a huge effect on a bid to sustain the rural population's livelihoods, promote local culture and heritage, promote local female empowerment, relieve poverty, preserve natural assets, improve fundamental rural facilities, adopt a fresh working culture and develop a stronger sense of locality and its people in tourists' mind. The following sub-sections highlight these benefits.

2.7.1 Socio-Economic Development

Rural tourism needs to go beyond super final and practical approaches to promote socio-economic growth, using political, financial and social policies that position the village and its operations on a worldwide tourism stage, depending on its future trends. In order for this to take place, the instruments to promote this field of activities in rural areas must be created (Bogan, Radulescu, Varvaruc & Costache, 2014). Komppula (2014) opines that the development of rural tourism is the region's development and the local community's wellbeing. The host gets tourists revenue while enjoying the natural environment and learning about nature, rural culture, traditions and heritages, farm work, and living skillss (Singh, 2016).

2.7.2. Alternative Way of Earning

New jobs can be created if local rural tourism development is successfully carried out. Bogan, Radulescu, Varvaruc and Costache (2014) state that in the countryside, the rural tourism success gives the local people the opportunity to accommodate tourists who are increasingly involved in food trade, crafts, transport, use of local heritage among others. Okech et al. (2015) point out three main benefits of rural tourism for rural areas, and they are namely (1) Rural tourism participation offers more business and enterprise opportunities; (2) Rural tourism is capable of helping economic growth, creating jobs, reducing immigration, the development of public services, infrastructure, social contact and environmental protection; and (3) Rural tourism facilitates access to remote and non-urban areas. Naulty (2004) further reveales other three main benefits of rural tourism as stated in Table 2.5 below.

Table 5: The Benefits of Rural Tourism

| Economic | Social | Environmental |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Opportunity for job creation</i> - <i>Opportunity to sustain existing business</i> - <i>Benefits to local government through taxes and rates</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for local services - New facilities to local community development and for tourists such as museums, restaurants - Culture exchange - Revitalisation of traditions, customs and crafts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of both the built and nature environment. |

Source: Naulty (2004: 15).

The economy and society, the environment, local individuals and visitors generally benefit from rural tourism. Such opportunity (rural tourism development) can be very beneficial to rural communities bordering Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park as well. Okech et al. (2015) assert that poverty in rural areas can diminish with rural tourism. This is because rural tourism contributes

significantly to rural economies and society through job retention, creation of new business opportunities, creation of opportunities for youth, retention of services, diversification of the communities, community pride, the preservation of rural culture and heritage, increasing sale of arts and crafts, conservation of the landscape, and improvement of environment (Nair, Munikrishnan, Rajaratnam & King, 2015).

Similarly, Ghaderi and Henderson (2012) argue that rural tourism benefits local communities by increasing revenue and jobs, establishing a local product market, and improving the traditionally bad economies. The advantages eventually mean that local inhabitants have a better quality of life (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). The prospects of rural tourism are created by decreasing investment in public infrastructure such as poor public transport, absence of higher education and fundamental social facilities to decrease the growing disparities between metropolitan and peripheral regions (Pröbstl-Haider, Melzer & Jiricka, 2014).

2.8. CONCLUSION

The primary aim of the literature review is to determine what is known about the subject (rural tourism development), how well this knowledge is developed and where future study could be best targeted (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013). Reviewing literature includes choosing sources, reading critically, extracting texts and synthesizing sources into writing by quotes (Badenhorst, 2018). This chapter included information from various academic literature in the field of rural tourism. Rural tourism, although is still a smaller market for tourism, the market however makes a valuable contribution to rural economies. From the explications made in this chapter, it can be asserted that the potential advantages of rural tourism may include, socio-economic growth, alternative methods of earning, social benefits, and environmental advantages. To welcome this type of growth, rural communities need to possess the required abilities as well as an appropriate environment. Moreover, the social sector in rural areas has to deal with current issues related to living standards and performance, and the need to ensure a favourable social environment, especially in education and health care systems, vocational training and the potential for participation in society as a workforce (Bokenchina, Almagul & Diana, 2019). This chapter unearthed the sensitive balance that must be created if rural tourism development will be sustainable in terms of availability of natural resources and human capability development. The next chapter describes research design and methodology chosen for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Tuckman and Harper (2012) state that research is a careful and systematic means of solving problems and gaining new knowledge. Research methodology deals with the specification of methods and procedures for acquiring the relevant information needed for a study (Chawla & Sondh, 2011). According to Tummons and Duckworth (2013), the methodology section is of most importance in research as it demonstrates the plan to address research objectives. This chapter gives an outline of research methods that were followed in this study. It also describes the instrument that was used for data collection and includes the procedures that were followed to conduct this study. In more detail, the researcher outlines the the purpose of this study, research study area, research methods and design, target population and sample size, research sampling technique, ethical considerations as well as limitations of this study.

3.2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to assess the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. The aim, objectives and research questions of this study were constructed and formulated in line with the existing scientific literature on African rural tourism.

3.3. RESEARCH STUDY AREA

This study advocates that Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park attracts many tourists who are drawn by nature and game viewing. It can be argued that in as much as Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park employs some local community members, local communities living around this protected area can on their own, develop alternative tourism products and services for the inbound tourists or visitors, and adding to the critical mass of attractions for the visitors. The surroundings seem to have a great potential for rural tourism development, yet lacks sub attractions that can form part of rural tourism.

3.3.1. The Location of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park

The Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park is situated in Northern Zululand in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. It lies to the west of the town of Mtubatuba and east of Hlabisa town (Hluhluwe Game Reserve, 2018). These two towns are linked by a road, which bisects the park through the section known as the Corridor. It can be accessed from the north via Hluhluwe town, from the south via Mtubatuba and from the west through Ulundi (Hluhluwe Game Reserve, 2018). Figure 3.1 is a map showing where the park is situated including the communities neighbouring the park. The map shows/indicates the communities or areas the researcher covered when collecting the data. These communities include, Gunjaneni, Machibini as well as eMadwaleni where focus groups discussions and few semi-structured interviews were held.

Dimitrovski et al. (2012) state that rural areas have a unique opportunity to attract tourists by means of establishing a connection between rural areas and their cultural, historic, ethnic and geographical roots. Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and its neighboring communities have natural, historical and cultural phenomena such as beautiful natural environment, architecture, traditional dances, local handicrafts and arts which draw both domestic and international tourists. The destination can be argued to be in a better position to be engaged in rural tourism activities.

An increasing number of scholars have become interested in rural heritage and communities (such as Jimura, 2011; Gullino & Larcher, 2013; Sun, Cruz, Min, Liu, & Zhang, 2013; Zou, Huang, & Ding, 2014). Previous studies on rural tourism have therefore shown interest in the role of rural tourism development, revitalisation of rural communities through rural tourism development, as well as development strategies of rural tourism (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2012; Zhang, 2012; Guzman-Parra., Quintana-García, Benavides-Velasco, & Vila-Oblitas, 2015; Vitasurya, 2016; Gao & Wu, 2017).

3.4. RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett (2013) affirm that methodology refers to ways of obtaining, organising and analysing data. Despite the existence of much research method classification, quantitative and qualitative methods are the most dominating methods (Zachariadis, Scott & Barrett, 2013). Both methods are explained in the next section.

3.4.1. Qualitative Methods

Qualitative analysis does not rely on numerical representations, but on a deeper understanding of a specific issue. In qualitative research, the researcher is both the subject and the object of the research. The aim of the qualitative approach is to produce in-depth and illustrative knowledge in order to explain the different aspects of the issue under study (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). According to Maxwell (2013), qualitative research deals with the universe of meanings, motivations, ambitions, convictions, principles and behaviours that lead to a broader space of relationships, processes and phenomena that cannot be reduced to variable operationalisation. In addition, qualitative research produces descriptive data as manifested in people's written or spoken words and observable behaviors (Watts, Todd, Mulhearn, Medeiros, Mumford & Connelly, 2017). The primary goal of collecting descriptive data is to gain a view into the unique perspectives of individuals or groups.

3.4.2. Quantitative Methods

Park and Park (2016) explain that a quantitative research method is used in social sciences to predict social phenomena. Quantitative research may also be used to determine relationships between variables and outcomes (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Quantitative research involves the development of a hypothesis - a description of the anticipated result, relationship, or expected outcome from the question being researched. Furthermore, quantitative research adopts structured procedures and formal instruments for data collection (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Table 3.1 presents the differences between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

Table 3.1: Differences between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies

| <i>Dimension</i> | Quantitative research | Qualitative research |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Focus on understanding the context of the problem</i> | Smaller | Bigger |
| <i>Dimension of group studies</i> | Smaller | Bigger |
| <i>Proximity of the researcher to the problem being studied</i> | Smaller | Bigger |
| <i>Scope of the study in time</i> | Immediate | Longer range |
| <i>Researcher's point of view</i> | External | Internal |
| <i>Theoretical framework and hypotheses</i> | Well structured | Less structured |
| <i>Flexibility and exploratory analysis</i> | Lower | Higher |

Source: Queirós, Faria, and Almeida, (2017:371)

3.4.3. Design

According to Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert and Wanhill (2008), a research design is a full description or a plan that guides the implementation of the research. Research design connects the research methodology with the research methods that will be used to answer the research questions (Wahyuni, 2012). The aim of the study is to assess the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. This study is complex in nature and it examines what people should have in order to practice rural tourism successfully. The researcher intended to obtain detailed information on whether the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park do have needed or enough resources for rural tourism, the level of business knowledge and capabilities present in this area, and a fitting strategy coupled with activities on which rural tourism development may take place in this area. This study therefore

adopted a qualitative research method that hinges on the explorative and interpretive paradigms.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Data collection is “a systemic way of gathering information, which is relevant to the research purpose or questions” (Burns & Grove 1997:383). Researchers are required to put into practice, appropriate data collection procedures for collecting the data (Kumar, 2005). This study adopted qualitative research methods to collect data. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were conducted with the participants using interview guides. During the interviews, information was recorded on audiotape (after getting necessary permission from the participants), and verbatim transcripts were prepared for data analysis.

3.5.1. Semi-structured Interview

According to Longhurst (2003), semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange where one person (the interviewer) attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Although, the interviewer made a list of questions, semi-structured interviews are conversational, thus allowing participants an opportunity to discuss topics they think are relevant. The researcher chose semi-structured interviews with the managers (park managers and managers of tourism businesses) because it was difficult to get them as a group. but it was convenient to make an appointment with them and approach them individually. Moreover, the choice for semi-structured interviews rather than structured interviews was employed because it offers sufficient flexibility, and as this study is qualitative in nature, it helps to approach different participants differently while still covering same areas of data collection (Noor, 2008).

3.5.2. Focus group discussion

Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee (2018) assert that focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely-selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population. Similarly, Casey and Krueger (2000:11) affirm that focus group provides “a more natural environment than that of individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others, just as they are in real life”. Relatedly, Denscombe (2007:115), reiterates that “focus group consists of a small group of people, usually between six and nine in number, who are brought together by a trained moderator (the researcher) to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a topic”. In this study, the researcher also aims at collecting high quality data in a social context (Patton, 2002), and doing so can be achieved with the adoption of focus group discussion.

The method was also chosen because the researcher intended to get the people’s opinions regarding their own community. Engaging in a group discussion may reveal social dynamics and thereby lead to obtaining deeper information. In this study, focus group discussions were conducted with communities (men, women and youth) neighbouring Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. During focus group discussions, the information was recorded on audiotape and verbatim notes were taken for data analysis purpose. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park management staff and owners/managers of tourism businesses neighbouring the park, the participants were interviewed using different methods of collecting data, see Table: 3.2.

Table:3.2 Participants and method of data collection.

| Category - Participants | Data collection tool | Number of participants |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Park managers</i> | Semi-structured interviews | 8 |
| <i>Owners/managers of tourism businesses</i> | Semi-structured interviews | 12 |
| <i>Men</i> | Focus group discussion | (8participants) |
| <i>Women</i> | Focus group discussion | (8participants) |
| <i>Youth</i> | Focus group discussion | (8participants) |

An interview guide was prepared, it included a list of questions and topics that need to be covered during the interview (see Appendix A). The interviews were tape-recorded to ensure an accurate storage and access to the conversation and for capturing all the given information as only few notes can be made during the interview. Variables that were used to guide data collection for this study were taken from various information sources and previous studies, see Table:3.3.

Table 3.3: Themes, construct variables and previous authors

| Variable | Construct variables | Authors |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Rural tourism resources</i> | Rural tourism is a tourism sector which uses natural, cultural-historical and other resources for the growth of tourism goods (Kheiri & Nasihatkon, (2016). | Roberts and Hall (2001); Oliver and Jenkins (2005); Cawley and Gillmor, (2008); Stetic, (2012); Kheiri and Nasihatkon, (2016). |
| <i>Rural tourism capabilities</i> | Developing rural tourism is a business process that requires rural communities to highlight their skills and knowledge necessary for the development of tourism (Ezeuduji, 2015). | Bakhru (2004); Ezeuduji (2015). |
| <i>Rural tourism strategies</i> | Understanding the characteristics and points of view of stakeholders can help to predict opposition or support to the development of tourism, which may therefore be incorporated into the tourism strategy (Phi, Dredge & Whitford, 2014). Rural tourism strategy can be built upon a theme – sense of direction, such as event-based rural tourism (Ezeuduji, 2015) | Phi, Dredge and Whitford, (2014); Rangus, Brumen, and Topler, (2018); Ezeuduji (2015). |
| <i>Rural tourism activities</i> | Cultural offerings of rural tourism consist of traditional dances, local food, music, rural lifestyles, local crafts, local languages, festivals and rituals (Ezeuduji and Rid, 2011). | World Tourism Organization (1997); Ezeuduji and Rid (2011) Naghiu, Vázquez and Georgiev, (2005). |

3.6. TARGET POPULATION

According to Babbie (2017), research population in general is a theoretically specified aggregation of the elements in a study. Meyers, Gamust and Guarino (2017) similarly state that research population consists of all individuals fitting the boundary conditions of which or

what the researcher aims to include in his or her study. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) posit that it is mostly impossible to use the entire population in research. The target population for this research was the management of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, owners/managers of the tourism businesses neighbouring the park as well as members of the communities surrounding the park. The researcher could not easily establish the exact size of the research population, as their numbers (park managers, owners/managers of tourism businesses, local communities) are not easily accessible. This implies that the researcher had no access to the exact numbers of the manager, and the census of the local communities around the park does not exist at the time of study. Also, one cannot easily delineate which local communities consider themselves neighbouring the park, as no clear border exists for this purpose, hence researcher's own judgement was employed.

3.7. RESEARCH SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SAMPLE SIZE

A sample group can be described as a segment of the target population, which the research is based on (George & Bock, 2011). The information collected from the chosen sample group is then used as a representation of the entire population (George & Bock, 2011). Sampling methods may be classified into probability sampling methods and non-probability sampling methods (Alvi, 2016), and probability sampling affords the entire research population an equal chance of being selected for the study to make up the sample size.

Babbie (2013) mentions that non-probability sampling gives some elements of the population a zero chance of being selected. Kumar (2014) also assert that non-probability sampling is mostly used when the population under study cannot be easily identified or specified, or is unknown. Purposive sampling also known as accidental sampling, is regarded to be a type of non-probability sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time (Kothari, 2004), or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the research (Chawla & Sondh, 2011). In this research, a non-probability sampling was applied in the form of a purposive approach. According to Greenfield, Greene and Johanson (2007), purposive sampling is a technique where subjective judgments are used to purposefully select groups that the researcher believes will represent the population.

The sample size of this research as discussed earlier is forty-four (44), where a total number of 20 semi-structured interviews with Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park management staff and owners/managers of tourism businesses were conducted; and three focus group discussions were made with eight (8) participants in each group. For the focus groups, men, women and the youths were separated in three different groups because in African culture, youths do not usually become very vocal when mixed up with more elderly people, and the same goes for

women who in most cases prefer men to lead discussions as men are perceived heads of families (see also Ezeuduji & Rid, 2011). Sub-dividing them into distinct age and gender groups paved a way to harness as much information from them as possible, as these participants felt free to answer questions asked and discussed without barrier in their groups. For the youth group, four (4) young men and four (4) young women were recruited, thus achieving gender balance. The participating youths were between the ages of eighteen (18) and thirty-five (35) years old, and the men and women participants were all above thirty-five years of age (35+). The participants were all recruited from the neighbouring communities as explained earlier in this chapter.

The participants were chosen based on the opinion of the researcher that the participants could provide appropriate information required for the subject matter of this study. These participants were found to possess good communication skills, and were of sound mind when they were approached or recommended by other local community members. Appointments with Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park management staff, managers, and owners of tourism businesses surrounding the park were earlier made in order for researcher to ensure their availability. To further ensure that local business owners/managers and participants from the communities have deeper knowledge of the topic, a screening question was asked to get those who may have more information about Hluhluwe iMfolozi park and surroundings. The screening question was: “how long have you been doing business / living in this area?”. The participants who have been doing business or living in the area for more than five (5) years were selected. Babbie (2017) argues that it is appropriate to select a sample based on knowledge of a population, its elements, and the purpose of the study.

3.8. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH

Because this study adopted qualitative research method, it discusses issues of trustworthiness of the research instead of ‘validity and reliability’. Researchers should establish the protocols and procedures necessary for a study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers (Amankwaa, 2016). In order to ensure trustworthiness in this study, the researcher employed multiple qualitative data collection strategies including focus group discussions and interviews. The study also segregated participants according to their age groups (youths versus elderly people’s focus groups), and gender (women versus men focus groups). In this research, that the participation of eight (8) park managers and twelve (12) local business owners/managers for individual interviews; and 24 participants in three local communities for focus group discussions will yield trustworthiness or reliable data to address research objectives.

3.9. DATA ANALYSIS

A method of data analysis called content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data (interviews and focus groups) collected from this study. Krippendorff (2013:24) defines content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use”. Verbatim transcripts of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were made by the researcher immediately after the data collection stage. Data analyses was performed through content analysis method, where coding was done using themes and sub-themes that were developed from research, and ultimately linked to study objectives.

The researcher had no access to software for analysing qualitative data (such as NVivo and ATLAS.ti), however the number of interviews and focus groups were manually organised. After the verbatim transcripts have been generated, the codes of the themes and sub-themes were generated manually based on study objectives and topics of discussion. The main themes and sub-themes were thereby developed based on data collected and with the aim and objectives of the study in mind, as not all the information provided during data collection are relevant. The objectives of the study also provided an overall structure for the themes. In order to capture the specifics of the data, sub-themes were derived from the main-themes. The four main themes and their respective sub-themes were coded and presented below. See Table 3.4 for more details.

Frequency of opinions was structured as *very commonly recorded (opinions mentioned up to 5 times and above)*; *commonly recorded (opinions mentioned between 3 to 4 times)*; and *not commonly recorded (opinions recorded 1 to 2 times)*. These frequencies of opinions are used in the next chapter under presentation of the study results.

Table 3.4 Main themes and sub-themes based on study objectives

| Main themes | Sub-theme 1 | Sub-theme 2 | Sub-theme 3 | Sub-theme 4 |
|--|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Main Theme 1 Reflects Objective 1 - rural tourism resources | Financial resources | Human resources /development | Physical resources/ infrastructure | Intangible resources (sanitation) |
| Main Themes 2 Reflects Objective 2 – rural tourism | Lack of business education | Lack of trust to cooperate with themselves | Lack of experience/ know-how, e.g. people who have | |

| | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| knowledge and capabilities | | | operated tourism businesses |
| Main Theme 3 Reflects Objective 3 – rural tourism strategies | training and development | rural tourism cooperatives | Securing funding to start business |
| Main Theme 4 Reflects Objective 4 – rural tourism activities | Cultural activities (dances, hunting, etc.) | arts and craft | tour guiding |

In the next chapter, results are presented using tables and texts; SWOT analysis are done based on the conceptual framework taken from the literature. The main themes are presented as headings, while the sub-themes are described in researcher's o words within the headings, according to her interpretation of the data.

3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics consideration in research is essential and scholars like Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) believe ethics is a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or a group, and it is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and participants, employers, sponsors and other researchers. Ethical issues are also applicable to qualitative research like any other research and must inform various research processes including data collection. In this study, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and they were informed of their right not to avail themselves if they wish. The participants were not forced to participate unwillingly; this was done to ensure that all participants were free and comfortable. They were informed and made to understand the purpose of the research, what will happen during research, what will happen to the data they provide after the research is completed.

The participants in the study were assured of absolute confidentiality; that there is no mentioning of their name anywhere in the study. In this research, information from books, journals and other sources of information are cited and acknowledged through referencing in order to avoid plagiarism. All generic internet and electronic sources were also acknowledged.

3.11. STUDY LIMITATIONS

There are some limitations in this study based on what the researcher experienced in the course of this study. First, the study focused on getting access to people and organisations, and not enough access to recruit a large number of people. Many of those who were sampled decline participating in the research eventually and thereby limited the sample size. Probably a larger sample size could yield results that are more detailed. In addition, financial problems were another constraint faced in this study and that made it very difficult for the researcher to visit all the areas adjacent Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. This may have limited the quantity and quality of information collected, however from the data collected, it can be argued that the study reached data saturation, as there were not much differences between the type of information given by different participants or focus groups within the study area. This study was done only in Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and its immediate surroundings; hence the results of this study are true for this study area and at the particular period when this research was conducted.

3.12. CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the research methods used in conducting this study. The qualitative research method was employed with the use of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The participants were identified by using non-probability sampling, in a form of purposive sampling technique. Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park management staff, manager/owners of tourism businesses surrounding the park and local communities adjacent the park were interviewed after their consent had been obtained. The method of data analysis adopted for the study was content analysis procedure. Furthermore, this chapter presented ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 presents the results from the data analysis and provides discussions in relation to the information obtained from the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism development can contribute to the improvement of rural population's life quality in Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and surroundings if it is carefully planned. Webster and Ivanov (2014) state that tourism is perceived as an engine that stimulates economic growth based on its ability to increase economic gains for local communities. Tourism is increasingly seen as a relevant tool for addressing rural problems in developing countries and tourism is actively being used for economic diversification and opening up new ways to generate income and employment (Saarinen & Lenao, 2014). Rural tourism today is not the only means of revitalization of the abandoned rural areas, but it is one of the major factors of the development of rural areas, which ensures their future sustainability through preservation, and opening of new job opportunities, increasing the diversity of occupations, preservation of landscape and nature as well as giving support to the rural crafts and tourist attractions (Puška, Šadić, Maksimović, & Stojanović, 2020).

This chapter provides the results of the research, analysis of the results, and the sub-conclusion. Sub-conclusions are drawn after comparing the results of this study with previous findings in similar topics. In more details, the results of the study are presented and discussed with reference to the aim of the study, which was to assess the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. The results are discussed and presented using texts and tables. The management staff of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, owners/managers of tourism businesses around the park and local communities adjacent Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Interview transcripts, audio records, field notes and observations provide a descriptive account of the study, but they do not provide explanations. It is the researcher who has to make sense of the data that have been collected by exploring and interpreting them (Sotiriadou, Brouwers & Le, 2014). This chapter therefore gives a detailed interpretation of the data collected from participants in the study area. The next section presents the demographic characteristics of this study sample as detailed in Table 4.1, Table 4.2 and Table 4.3.

4.2. DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The participants that participated in this study were recruited from Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park management staff, tourism business owners/managers around the park, and from three communities adjacent the park (men, women and youth groups). This section presents the demographic characteristics of the forty-four (44) participants as indicated in Table 4.1, Table 4.2 and Table 4.3.

Table 4.1: Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park management staff

| Participant Number | Gender | Age range | Occupation |
|--------------------|--------|-----------|----------------|
| 01 | Female | 25-30 | HiP Management |
| 02 | Female | 40-45 | HiP Management |
| 03 | Male | 30-35 | HiP Management |
| 04 | Male | 25-30 | HiP Management |
| 05 | Female | 40-45 | HiP Management |
| 06 | Male | 45-50 | HiP Management |
| 07 | Male | 35-40 | HiP Management |

Source: Author's compilation

Table 4.1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of seven (7) Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park management staff who partook in this study on the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. The participants were park managers and supervisors from different departments inside the park. These departments were ecotourism, housekeeping, front desk, community conservation, and food and beverage.

Table 4.2: Tourism business owners and managers

| Participant Number | Gender | Age range | Occupation |
|--------------------|--------|-----------|--------------------------|
| 08 | Female | 45-50 | Tourism Business Manager |
| 09 | Female | 35-40 | Tourism Business Manager |
| 10 | Female | 45-50 | Tourism Business Manager |

| | | | |
|----|--------|-------|--------------------------|
| 11 | Female | 50-55 | Tourism Business owner |
| 12 | Female | 40-45 | Tourism Business owner |
| 13 | Female | 35-40 | Tourism Business Manager |
| 14 | Male | 50-55 | Tourism Business owner |
| 15 | Male | 35-40 | Tourism Business manager |
| 16 | Male | 35-40 | Tourism Business manager |
| 17 | Male | 45-50 | Tourism Business owner |
| 18 | Male | 35-40 | Tourism Business Manager |
| 19 | Male | 30-35 | Tourism Business Manager |
| 20 | Male | 30-35 | Tourism Business Manager |

Source: Author's compilation

Table 4.2 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the thirteen (13) tourism business owners and managers adjacent the park. The table shows that more business managers than business owners participated in this study because business owners were not always on their business premises, when they have managers.

Table 4.3: Focus groups discussions

| Group Number | Category | Age groups |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 01 | Men (8) | 36-55 |
| 02 | Women (8) | 36-55 |
| 03 | Youth (8) | 18-35 |

Source: Author's compilation

Table 4.3 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the twenty-four (24) community members who participated in this study. Three focus groups comprised eight (8) men, eight (8) women, and eight (8) youths ages between 18 and 55. The next section presents results of this study based on the themes and sub-themes developed from the research with regard to this study's objectives.

4.3. THEME ONE: RURAL TOURISM RESOURCES

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers and business managers/owners

This section presents the results on the rural tourism resources generally found and those they lack, in this study area. The participants were asked about the attributes of this study area (HiP), and what they think may attract tourists to visit. In this regard, both managers of Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and owners/managers of tourism businesses around the park perceived this area as one of the resource-richest areas in the world, in terms of natural resources as well as cultural resources (*commonly recorded*). Some of their statements are hereunder presented.

“Most people come here to experience nature (nature reserves), big five and beautiful accommodation establishments (our chalets which are built in African style makes our tourists feel culturally involved)”. **(Male, HiP Manager).**

“There is a variety of wild animals here which other countries or places do not have. This is a place to be or a place to know if you are not a South African or even if you are from South Africa but from other provinces”. **(Female, Tourism Business owner).**

These statements are in line with the findings of Lane and Kastenholz (2015) who noted that rural tourism is a tourism sector that utilizes natural, cultural, historical and other resources as well as rural settlements' characteristic for the growth of complicated tourism products. Rich natural resources may open up new business opportunities in rural communities. KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa is known to have rich natural, cultural, and historical resources on which tourism development is based. Results from focus groups are presented hereunder.

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community men, women and youths

With regard to rural tourism resources, local residents mentioned some of the unavailable resources as barriers to rural tourism. They named financial resources as well as physical resources which are further discussed in sub-theme 4.3.1 **financial resources** and sub-theme 4.3.3 **physical resources (infrastructure)** (*very commonly recorded*). This is in line with the statement made by Komppula (2014) that understanding rural tourism barriers is critical when a community organizes itself for tourism activity. This awareness may contribute more efficiently to the processes of tourism policy making for individuals, communities and organizations (Komppula, 2014).

4.3.1. Financial resources

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers and business managers/owners

The first sub-theme or factor concerns finances, a financial management, and financial challenges that rural tourism faced. HiP managers stated that as a park, they had ways of raising funds to assist in supporting local communities to start their businesses like cooperatives and other community-based projects (*commonly recorded*). It was found that the two lodges inside the park were owned by tribal leaders (Amakhosi) to support and have partnership with local communities. Money from the lodges went to the community, and the employees were from surrounding communities. This shows that even though it is not so much, somehow access is made to financial services. Certain statements made by park managers are outlined here.

"We have two craft market inside the park which are owned by the members of the communities surrounding the park, they come and exhibit their craft works to the tourists". **(Male, HiP Manager).**

"We have something we call a community levy, a certain percentage of the money generated from entrance fees goes to local communities to start their own businesses or whatever projects they want to be engaged in". **(Female, HiP Manager).**

"Governments do not provide financial assistance, particularly to start-up businesses; I raised capital on my own and applied for bank loans several times without success.". **(Male, business owner)**

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community men, women and youths

In terms of financial resources, discussions with the community members were conducted where the researcher interviewed men, women and youth groups differently. They attested difficulty in accessing financial resources meant for starting, growing or sustaining their own businesses. They stated that there was a high rate of unemployment in the area, and suggested that if they could get financial support they could create their own employment instead of looking for an employment elsewhere (*very commonly recorded*). This contradicts the information given by the managers, which implies that the locals are being supported financially by the park, which the local community members did not acknowledge. They did not mention any financial support from the park or elsewhere to commence their own

businesses and earn their living. Some statements made by the local community members are highlighted below.

“Most of our children do not work, maybe if there can be some sort of financial support presented to us they can be able to create their own employment and be able to put food on the table”. **(Men, community member).**

“Even if we want to start tourism businesses, it is not easy because we do not have money to start, and the level of unemployment in this community is too high, more especially unemployed youth”. **(Youth, community member).**

“Even though we make some money out of selling our craft works, as women we still feel the need to achieve greater financial independence. If maybe, we can be assisted with the construction of a craft market where we can exhibit and sell our craft works. Also financial support would be much appreciated”. **(Women, community member).**

The results indicated that financial resources can go a long way towards supporting rural tourism development in Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and surroundings. This implies that funding could assist local residents in establishing community-owned businesses that will be managed by members of the community. This confirms the statement by Radović, Petrović, Demirović Bajrami, Radovanović and Vuković (2020) that financial resources are a significant limitation to the development of sustainable rural tourism. Their results have suggested that rural tourism entities are not making sufficient investments due to lack of financial resources. It was also recognised by another study that long-term financial and technical support is essential if tourism is to play an effective rural development role (Khodadadi, 2016).

The study conducted by Radović, Košić and Demirović (2018) in Serbia has also pointed out that the important reason for the lack of rural tourism development in most rural areas in Serbia is undefined strategic development directions and the lack of financial investment. However, mismanagement of business funds by the owners or members of the management could be a big problem that may cause stagnancy or retarded growth. As a result, this study proposes that if the business begins to make profit, part of it should be reserved for the future plans and continuous existence of the businesses.

Local communities around HiP need to be equipped with various means to build their entrepreneurial potential. For example, local populations need access to training, and both semi- and low-business skilled members need to have relevant information, communication, and market access to exhibit their products and services.

4.3.2. Human resources development

This sub-theme includes aspects relating to local community's education and training, knowledge, and awareness. It was observed from the focus group discussions that educational training is very important, looking at the low level of knowledge the community members of Gunjaneni, Machibini as well as eMadwaleni have about tourism. This might limit them from understanding the practical details of rural tourism development and other offerings in relation to what the industry demands. Questions were asked if the local community members do have any knowledge about tourism; and if education and training can improve local community's level of interest in tourism-related activities. The study conducted by Pimonratanakan and Pooripakdee (2017) found that training is an important activity that can create learning, and can improve knowledge and skill for job operation.

Results from semi structured-interviews indicating information given by park managers and business managers/owners

Both local tourism businesses owners/ managers and HiP management staff agreed that a lot of education and training in tourism-related matters would be needed in order for the locals to gain required knowledge, which could translate into gaining interest about tourism (*very commonly recorded*). Some of their responses are presented here.

“Education and training can improve local's level of interest in tourism but to some of them because it all start with passion first; people need to be passionate about engaging in businesses. You can't just force education to them” (Female, HiP Manager).

“Education and training can actually assist them to be the ones that are creating employment instead of them looking for an employment from the park, they should be able to create their own facilities that will be sort of direct competition to the park itself.” (Female, Business owner).

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community men, women and youths

Local community members have pointed out that they were not provided with adequate educational training on tourism and that they would take advantage of this opportunity if they were given a chance (*very commonly recorded*). The results generally indicate that people from these communities do not have enough knowledge on tourism. Some of the responses generated from the study are presented hereunder.

“We see those big cars coming in and out of the park, they say ‘abavakashi’ I think that all tourism is about, people coming from other places to watch wild animals inside the park.”
(Men, Community member).

“I studied Tourism in High School, I have a little background on what it is all about, it is basically about visiting places for different purposes” **(Youth, community member).**

“Eeeh! my child I do not know what is it except that I sometimes hear children at home talking about but I have no idea of what is it all about”. **(Women, Community member).**

These findings confirm Razzaq, Mohamad and Mustafad (2013) position that the primary difficulties preventing the rural population from participating actively and benefiting from tourism growth are due to the human resource development. Community members seem to have inadequate knowledge and understanding about tourism, this study therefore, suggests that the development of people through education and training is the most important capital formation in any rural tourism development. Training programmes allow people to strengthen their skills and develop their knowledge so that they can be able to welcome new trends in the tourism industry. This is in line with Mulu and Pineteh (2016) assertion that empowerment is about providing people with the information required for them to make wise decisions.

The sub-section that follows presents summarised results from the HiP managers, tourism businesses owners and local communities with regard to physical resources.

4.3.3. Physical resources (Infrastructure)

This sub-theme includes aspects relating to physical resources which includes roads (accessibility), as well as accommodation facilities. Tourism infrastructure can be regarded as the physical elements that are designed and erected to cater for visitors (Adebayo & Iweka, 2014). According to Jovanović and Ivana (2016) tourism infrastructure includes a large number of services, necessary to meet the needs of tourists and increase satisfaction during their stay at the destination.

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers and business managers/owners

This section provides information obtained from park managers and business managers/owners. These participants mentioned that in terms of physical resources, this study area lacked access to basic infrastructure that includes roads and recreational facilities

that could have formed the bases for rural tourism offerings (*commonly recorded*). Some of the responses received from the participants are presented below.

“In terms of physical resources I can say that our area is not easily accessible due to poor quality of roads, most of our guests used to complain about it” (Female, business manager).

“This area is very beautiful in terms of natural and cultural resources, but it still lacks sub-attractions that will attract more tourists to visit the area, these can include centres for recreational activities and more accommodation establishments”. (Male, HiP manager).

The above responses indicate that that this destination has a number of natural beauties but lack of accommodation facilities and quality of road infrastructure can be an obstacle for successful tourism development (Jovanović & Ivana, 2016). Tourism infrastructure is the basis of tourism development, as well as a base for utilization of destination resources. The importance of tourism infrastructure is reflected in the fact that it can contribute to increasing the efficiency of production and distribution of tourism services, and, in some cases, such as remote destinations, even increase the supply of tourism services (Jovanović & Ivana, 2016). In this regard, the growth of tourism relies on infrastructure modernisation and points to the need to step up investment in infrastructure as an important catalyst for improving the tourism sector.

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community men, women and youths

This section provides information obtained from community members (through focus groups). Local residents of the communities surrounding Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park complained about poor accessibility and bad condition of the roads (*Very commonly recorded*). From the information given, it is deducible that this study area needs more attention on infrastructural development in order for rural tourism development to be operated successfully. Some of the participants said:

“We lack access to basic infrastructure, for instance, our roads consist predominantly of gravel, they often deteriorate rapidly, especially in the wet season, disrupting transport services and access to health centres, towns, schools and markets when it is most needed”. (Women, community member).

“Our roads are very bad, even the one that goes inside the park is not well maintained and most of the roads are not tared”. (Youth, community member).

These statements support what Więckowski, Michniak, Bednarek-Szczepańska, Chrenka, Ira, Komornicki and Wiśniewski (2014) reported that an essential requirement for the development, not only of tourism but also of most sectors of the economy, is the development of transport infrastructure and adequate accessibility of areas. Accessibility is an important element for any tourism development. Road infrastructure enhances accessibility of tourists to a particular destination. Dalimunthe, Valeriani, Hartini and Wardhani, (2020) have also noted that development of the tourism sector is much related and depends on the development of available infrastructure. The development of infrastructure and infrastructure systems that are available may encourage the development of the tourism sector. In this regard, infrastructural development may play a fundamental role in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, communities may provide other alternative rural tourism activities like rural tours to the tourists visiting the park. Trukhachev (2015) also notes that rural communities have to be equipped with certain tools applicable in their efforts to establish and develop tourism infrastructure. Summarised findings on intangible resources are presented hereunder.

4.3.4. Intangible resources (water and sanitation)

According to Elysia and Wihadanto (2020), poor sanitation has been shown to have huge negative impacts on public health and the economy. The authors further assert that the lack of access to improved sanitation causes economic losses related to the direct costs of treating sanitation-related diseases and the indirect cost of lost income through reduced productivity.

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers and business managers/owners

Water and sanitation in Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park remains a very big problem (*very commonly recorded*). Park managers unanimously raised their concerns about the shortage of clean water in the area. Some managers pointed out that:

“Our waste water treatment infrastructure remains inadequate, water that we have is only for bathing, toilets and cleaning consumption, for clean drinking water one need to go to the shops to buy”. **(Female, business manager).**

“We pump water from the river (imfolozi river) using a generator, during dry seasons we find it very difficult to supply the whole park” **(Male, HiP manager).**

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community

Local residents in the local community also pointed out to the problem of poor water supply and sanitation faced by residents of the communities adjacent Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park.

A female resident stated;

“We do not have water taps or tanks in the community, only rely on water from the dams and river, our local municipality does nothing about this issue, only once in a while (3 months’ time) they get to send water tanks to deliver water to the community”. **(Women, community member).**

The above view confirms that access to basic sanitation facilities is regarded as one of the aspects that should be considered to support the tourism industry, particularly in developing countries (Elysia & Wihadanto, 2020). This also confirms the position made by Winters, Karim and Martawardaya (2014) that the lack of appropriate waste water sanitation is one of the leading killers in the developing world. Therefore, this study suggests that providing sanitation may be the best investment for promoting tourism in Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and surroundings. The next section presents the summarised results on rural tourism knowledge and capabilities from this study participants.

4.4. THEME TWO: RURAL TOURISM KNOWLEDGE AND CAPABILITIES

Ezeuduji (2015) asserts that developing rural tourism is a business process that requires rural communities to highlight their skills and knowledge necessary for the development of tourism. Moreover, Nieves, Quintana and Osorio’s (2016) study has shown that knowledge and knowledge-based processes play an outstanding role to foster innovation in the tourism industry. Communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park need to be equipped with necessary knowledge and skills so that they can be more prepared because the industry constantly needs up-to-date knowledge and new skills to meet changing tourism trends. Nevertheless, people from these communities have shown that they lack business education; and this are discussed further in the following subsection.

4.4.1. Lack of business education

The tourism sector is routinely offered as an option to grow employment in South Africa. Yet, questions need to be asked about the nature of employment in tourism, the state of education, and skills training in the sector (Booyens, 2020). According to Ilban and Kaşlı (2015), education contributes significantly to economic growth by developing qualified workforce that

industry and service sector need and by making employees more productive. The results obtained from study participants regarding business education are presented hereunder.

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers, and business managers/owners

With regard to business education, the study participants pointed out that there was a lack of business education in the communities around the park. The following comments reflect on this argument:

“What I can say is that, most locals lack knowledge on how to operate businesses successfully which is a result of not having proper education. This make it difficult for a community member to start a business and to be able to manage it on their own successfully”. **(Male, Business manager).**

“People from those communities are not well educated on tourism and other business operations, although there is youth that is now starting to pop up. We are forced to employ people coming from faraway places, mostly in management positions”. **(Male, HiP Manager).**

Findings from the information given by park managers and business managers imply that there is a lot that need to be done in terms of educating locals about business operations (*very commonly recorded*). This is supported by Ejiofor and Elechi’s (2012) view that education has a very important part to play in tourism development of any destination.

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community men, women, and youths

Marais, du Plessis and Saayman (2017) state that development of skills is crucial for the South African tourism industry for two key reasons. First, skills development ensures that the previously marginalised groups of the society are involved and are able to participate in the industry, thereby, ensuring that they also get to enjoy the benefits from the industry. Second, the uniqueness of the tourism industry where both production and consumption of service occur simultaneously demands that those providing the service need to be well educated and equipped in order to make lasting first impressions (Marais, du Plessis & Saayman, 2017). Surprisingly, members of the community agreed unanimously that they had the required features to run and manage businesses successfully on their own (*very commonly recorded*). Some of the statements they made are highlighted as follows:

“Although there are no formal business qualifications that we hold, but generally I think we can be able to run and manage a business successfully”. (Men, community member).

“I would say that we as black people are not into tourism because if you look at the tourism businesses found here are dominantly owned by whites”. (Youth, community member).

These statements are in line with the report from Razzaq, Mohamad, Kader, and Mustafad (2013) that community consciousness, lack of understanding and information about tourism are the fundamental restrictions that restrict local people's capacity to engage actively in the development and growth of tourism. Therefore, this study suggests that governments should educate the community where information on starting and managing businesses can be obtained. Bursaries should also be granted to young people so that they can continue their studies, because most participants pointed out that they have no formal business qualifications. This study further proposes that current employers of the tourism industry should be encouraged to take active part in the process of education and training of personnel and modernisation of educational programmes for tourism.

Hereunder, perceptions of this study's participants are reported with regard to lack of trust to cooperate with themselves.

4.4.2. Lack of trust to cooperate with themselves

According to Lane and Kastenholz (2015), rural tourism has involved numerous entrepreneurs across the world, working in relative isolation. This could be induced by the absence of trust among members of the society to collaborate (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). In this regard, the results from semi-structured interviews indicated absence of trust between and cooperation among community members; and which had led to failure of many cooperatives in the community (*commonly recorded*).

Some results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers

A female HiP manager stated;

“There is some sort of a backpacker business by the gate that was funded by government, it was cooperatively owned by local residents, but it is no longer operating and now no one wants to be blamed for its failure” (Female, HiP manager).

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community

The local residents showed that some of them had lost their trust in cooperative businesses, while some were still interested to get involved in cooperative businesses. (*commonly recorded*). Some of the opinions they pointed out are presented as follows;

“We once tried a cooperative group whereby we were constructing bricks, the group failed, finances disappeared into thin air, I do not know if I can be able to be involved in any cooperatives programme”. **(Youth, community member).**

“I have heard of some cooperative businesses that went wrong, but that does not mean we are no longer interested in it, if the opportunity can present itself I will certainly jump to it”. **(Men, community member).**

Qurniati, Febryano and Zulfiani (2017) argue that trust, teamwork and cooperation is an important factor for strengthening social capital and increasing productivity. This study's findings indicate that local residents lack trust in each other and, as a result, prefer working alone. However, they are open to opportunities that can help them regain that trust they have lost. Moreover, much work is needed to turn this negative culture around. The next sub-theme discusses the lack of tourism business experience among the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park.

4.4.3. Lack of tourism business experience

Lack of experience can give rise to poor rural tourism business operations. It was observed that people from the communities around the park did not have operations' experience/know-how in tourism development. Below are some of responses from the participants.

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers, and business managers/owners

Results for semi-structured interviews indicated that local residents lacked relevant tourism experience that can help them support rural tourism development (*very commonly recorded*).

“Local communities do not have people who have operated tourism businesses or maybe who have experienced working in any tourism venture. The park provide training for them because we have lodges here in the park where by we strictly employ local residents” **(Female, HiP manager).**

“We do have locals working here but mostly in maintenance department because I find it hard to hire them reason being, they do not have required job experience and qualifications”. **(Male, business manager).**

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community men, women, and youths.

It was observed from all focus groups conducted that most of the participants, if not all, did not have necessary tourism related business/work experience. It was also noted that local residents were desperate for any kind of development that could take place in the area. They pointed out that even though they did not have much work experience, they could work in departments like housekeeping, waitressing and even operate businesses if guided (*Very commonly recorded*).

“I do not have enough work experience but I am very good with people and I know that being in tourism requires one to be friendly to customers”. **(Youth, community member).**

“Cleaning is part of our everyday chores that way I can be able to work in housekeeping department only if I can secure an employment.” **(Women, community member).**

“We can be able to do a great work; experience is not a problem only if such opportunities can be presented to us”. **(Men, community member).**

In relation to these comments, the findings of the study conducted by Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar and Tangit (2018) have also indicated that the absence of understanding and skill is a major constraint on community participation in tourism. The study further noted that local residents lack knowledge and skills in identifying opportunities associated with tourism, marketing, and business running. Appropriate skills and attributes have always been an important part of effective and successful participation in tourism workplaces. In this study, the participants highlighted that they lacked proper job skills that were in demand in tourism industry. This study therefore proposes that people from these local communities should be provided with learning experience on the field where they can acquire skills and knowledge, and have more opportunities for career advancement. Among these work-learning experiences, communities may be engaged in internships and volunteering.

This study has therefore found that for rural tourism development to emerge successfully, strategies to welcome such developments in the region should be developed carefully. This is discussed further in the following section.

4.5. THEME THREE: RURAL TOURISM STRATEGIES

Lane (2005) notes that almost all successful businesses and many successful regions develop according to carefully worked out business plans and strategies. The author further adds that the development of the strategy should be used to encourage an ongoing dialogue between

government, tourism businesses, communities and other interests about the future of an area and tourism's role in that future. Theme three of this study provides strategic means to develop rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, based on the study results. The following sub-theme discusses training and development as one of the strategies that may play a key role in developing rural tourism in this study area.

4.5.1. Training and development

Tourism industry is considered as one of the major sectors in which human resources are seen as significant and highly dependent on professional education (Tuna, Kanten, Yeşiltaş, Kanten, & Alparslan, 2014). The growth of tourism as an industry is strongly restricted by the lack of properly qualified staff and untrained residents in many countries. This implies that effective training and development is an investment in the human resource of an organisation with both immediate and long-range returns (Hamid, 2011). There is a growing realisation in industry, government circles that training, and development holds the key to unlocking potential economic growth opportunities to achieve a competitive advantage in the tourism industry (Hamid, 2011).

The results showed that emphasis should be placed on the importance of training and development as one of the strategies to welcome rural tourism development (*most commonly recorded*). Few of the participant's statements are presented hereunder:

"I think that series of training and educational courses should be offered to encourage new entrants to tourism and to help existing businesses". (Female, business owner).

"Training can go a long way on helping us to improve the little knowledge that we have about tourism and in assisting us to welcome tourism development in a positive manner". (Youth, community member).

The above statements confirm what Bauer, Kablan, Kasüske, Klauditz, Nordhorn and Zilker, (2012) have mentioned that local individuals should be prepared to take part in tourism and know from the beginning the possible effects and how to handle effects in the tourism sphere. This study suggests that education and training for local residents should be done on a regular basis in order to broaden their knowledge, awareness, and capabilities.

4.5.2. Rural tourism cooperatives

Aref and Gill's (2009) study suggests the development of rural cooperatives for rural tourism development. It was observed that the launching of rural cooperatives could be a great way of bringing local residents together and getting them involved in rural tourism activities that may take place in their area (*very commonly recorded*). Some of the statements by this study's

participants are presented hereunder.

A female business owner stated:

“Cooperatives can play a major self-help role in the areas surrounding Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, particularly because they could provide opportunities for employment, education, potable water, improved sanitation, roads, and market access to the local residents. It is easy to voice out opinions and grievances if you are in groups that when the one is standing alone”.
(Female, business owner).

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community

Local communities also agreed unanimously that if they were given a chance to be engaged in rural tourism cooperatives, they would grab the opportunity with both hands. A male community member said;

“Rural tourism cooperatives can help us eradicate hunger and reduce the level of unemployment we are faced with in this community”. **(Men, community member).**

Aref and Gill (2009) conducted a study in Iran and noted that rural cooperatives are considered most effective organisations in the field of rural agriculture. Furthermore, it was indicated that the vast network and reach of the rural cooperatives were considered best promoters for agriculture in Iran. Cooperatives may be seen here as one of the strategies for participating actively in rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park.

Cooperatives are dependent on people who work together to achieve a common objective. Some people take part in cooperative businesses because they enjoy some benefit, not because they are willing. As a result, the cooperatives might fail because of their poor management, their lack of attention to the business itself, and their lack of trust. This study therefore proposes capacity development for members who may include ways of building trust among themselves and which may help to ensure that cooperatives have access to the human and leadership skills necessary to pursue their business over the long term. The next section presents business plan as one of the aspects that local residents can take into account so that potential investors can be able to recognise them.

4.5.3. Business plan in place

One of the Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park managers emphasised the importance of putting a business plan together for local residents to gain attention from financial institutions and big companies *(not commonly recorded)*.

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by one of the park managers

The view of a male HiP manager is presented below.

“I think if local residents can put together a detailed business plan to submit to potential funding structures, an effort could be made because really, no one would just throw their money away without any assurance of profitability and long-term investment in black and white”. **(Male, HiP manager).**

In line with the above statement, Karlsson and Honig (2009) posit that business plans are widely used by new enterprises and are supported by different universities, governmental aid agencies, management advisers, and many more. They also claim that business plans are often regarded as very useful instruments, which should be updated and utilised more frequently. According to the findings of this study, local residents should therefore create business plans to help guide them, plan ahead, make important decisions, improve their chances of securing funding, and improve their overall chances of success. The section that follows presents the findings of this study concerning rural tourism activities.

4.6. THEME FOUR: RURAL TOURISM ACTIVITIES

According to Oruonye (2013), rural tourism is a tourist activity that offers the hosts lodging, catering, and programmes and may be an inexpensive, active vacation for guests. This section provides an overview of activities that can be presented by the local communities to visitor/tourists.

4.6.1. Cultural activities

In terms of cultural activities, the majority of the participants mentioned cultural dance as the most dominant cultural activities in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. *(Most commonly recorded)*. This implies that destinations such as Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and neighboring communities may capitalise effectively on cultural activities by broadening the range of cultural heritage experiences available to tourists because some tourists want to experience the host community's 'local' and 'everyday culture'. Some of the opinions mentioned by participants are presented below.

One of the participants stated; *“Local residents perform cultural dance (ingoma) for guests, to entertain them and teach them how Zulu’s dance, after performing they get tips/ money from guest as a sign of appreciation”* **(Female, HiP manager).**

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community member

“We have cultural dance groups here in this community but they only used to perform in traditional gatherings for free, there is nothing they get out of it”. **(Youth, community member).**

The results above align with Banio and Malchrowicz-Moško’s (2019) position that dance plays an important role in the modern tourism industry, dancing creates great opportunities for cultural tourism. This study proposes that cultural dances reflect traditions and lifestyle of local people and they may be used as one of the rural tourism activities to increase number of tourist visits. The next section presents art and craft as one of the activities that may be presented to the tourists.

4.6.2. Arts and craft

The results of the study conducted by Nyawo and Mubangizi (2015) have shown that the art and craft sector is vital for rural communities as it addresses some of the socioeconomic challenges that communities face and invaluable contributes to tourism. Communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park are richly blessed with their own indigenous arts and crafts, which could help them to progressively enhance their living. The production and sale of traditional arts and crafts is an important source of cash income for many people in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (*very commonly recorded*). It can be argued that arts and crafts are especially important to women because they are the ones that produce most of the items. Hereunder, the presentation of participant’s opinions with regards to arts and crafts.

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers, and business managers/owners

A female HiP manager stated: *“Most of the people from these communities are very talented in handicrafts products, and most of them depends on it to put food on the table”* **(Female, HiP manager).**

A male business manager also mentioned that: *“This community is very rich when it comes to the production of arts and crafts products. You will find men selling wood trays by the roads and women selling grass mats and other handicraft products to earn their living”* **(Male, business manager).**

Results from focus groups indicating the information given by local community men, women, and youths

Traditional arts and crafts like wood works, bead works, and grass works are important factors for rural tourism development. Communities adjacent Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park has varied arts and crafts products that are produced by local residents (*Very commonly recorded*).

The views of some community members are as follows.

“I specialises in making ethnic costumes (amabheshu), I also make wood products that includes trays and spoons. I also use those ethnic costumes to hire it to people” (Men, community member).

“As women in this community we make grass mats and sell them to people who are coming from Durban, they take them on low prices and make big money out of it there” (Women, community member”).

“I normally help my mother when she is making grass mats, sometimes you will find that customers want a certain number of mats in a short period of time then she will definitely use some extra hand”. (Youth, community member).

Notably, rural tourism may create new markets for local arts. For instance, the park hires local performers, dancers and singers to entertain their guests and buy local art to decorate their rooms and lobbies. A number of tourists visiting the park also buy local art and crafts, and this may be another opportunity that the locals may benefit immensely from if taken seriously.

4.6.3. Tour guiding

According to Sezgin and Duz (2018) guided tours are popular for tourism markets and represent a significant portion of tourism activities. There was a mentioning of a tour guiding businesses, which is not much dominant in this study area. One of the managers of HiP explained that tour guiding was one of the activities that were found in the area (*not commonly recorded*).

Results from semi-structured interviews indicating information given by park managers, and business managers/owners

“We have guided tours here inside the park where tour guides show tourist wild animals around the park, but also there is a tour guiding business outside the park that is owned by a black guy who used to bring tourist here from St Lucia and other tourist destinations for day visits”. (Male, HiP manager).

This statement confirms the position of Chan, Hsu and Baum (2015) that tour guides are one of the reasons why people choose to join tours rather than travel by themselves, since guided

tours are one of the best ways to take a look at the particular attractions of a destination, if short on time (Zerva & Nijkamp, 2016). This study suggests that local people may be engaged in the art of rural tour guiding and that may lead to taking tourists to specific souvenir shops, in order to receive commissions. They may also consider representing and explaining their natural and cultural heritage to the tourists.

4.7. RURAL TOURISM: SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT Model is a kind of research methodology used for conducting a comprehensive assessment for development. Internal factors are related to weaknesses (W) and strengths (S) of a set or a region or subject; and external factors are related to opportunities (O) and threats (T) of a region or system (Mondal & Haque, 2017). SWOT analysis is a situational analysis to address what is lacking, to minimise risks, and to take the greatest possible advantage of chances for success. In this study, a SWOT analysis is performed to determine whether HiP and surrounding communities have potentials for rural tourism. Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats together with the study's findings, may assist the researcher in determining whether this study area has adequate potential rural tourism development. This stage aims to evaluate the internal environment of the communities surrounding HiP for the identification of the strengths and weaknesses. It is also aimed at looking for the effects of external environment on the host communities for the identification of opportunities and threats as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

| Strengths (S) | Weaknesses (W) |
|---|---|
| <p>S1. The presence of artistic dance as a tourist attraction, such as welcome dance in welcoming the tourist and entertaining guest during their stay in the park performed by locals</p> | <p>W1. Lack of skilled and trained human capital in the area</p> <p>W2. Local residents' unfamiliarity with and lack of training about tourism</p> |
| <p>S2. The presence of various art and craft activities in the area such as bead works, wood works, grass works and ethnic costumes (amabheshu) made from animal skin which is normally worn in traditional events and ceremonies, cultural dance groups also use these costumes</p> | <p>W3. Lack of local government's support in funding local communities to make their own living through tourism</p> <p>W4. Lack of trust between community members</p> <p>W5. Lack of tourism infrastructure (such</p> |

S3. Untouched natural beauty, rich wildlife species and major cultural and historical features which attract a large number of tourists

S4. Many young populations with knowledge of tourism and positive attitude towards rural tourism development, and elderly population with indigenous knowledge about the area

S5. Peaceful and stable political climate in South Africa

S6. Friendliness of rural population, having English as official language

as roads and sewage disposal system)

W6. No existing clear functional framework for rural tourism development

W7. Not enough investment in high quality tourism products and services

W8. No adequate interpretation of all aspects of the region's natural, cultural and historical heritage

Opportunities (O)

Threats (T)

O1. Likelihood for funding from local government to help local communities start their own businesses

O2. Sunny climate in the region is suitable for all year round tourism

O3. Emerging niche market focusing on individual travel

O4. The Western perception that Africa has the most authentic rural areas

O5. Region is not sensitive to dangerous natural disasters

O6. Close proximity to HiP

O7. Better linkage between tourism and agriculture

T1. Economic, commercial and logistical issues such as accessibility and infrastructure to the area, availability of skills and interest of investors

T2. Growing competition within the global tourism industry, especially with the emergence of virtual travel and new information and communication technology

O8. No recorded significant negative socio-cultural and environmental impact from tourism

According to the result of the SWOT analysis and the details given in Table 4.4, the study area has high potentials for tourism in terms of strengths and opportunities. These findings are similar to Ezeuduji and Rid's (2011) SWOT analysis of The Gambia's rural tourism. Tourism can be mainly built through infrastructural development, access to financial resources and the provision of adequate business management knowledge (represented as weaknesses) to local residents. If the above-mentioned areas of improvements can be addressed; the area may become one of the most important rural tourism centres in the world. In addition, a lots of strengths and opportunities are identified which could serve as platform for rural tourism development, however the management of weaknesses and threats are essential for success (see Chapter 5).

4.8. RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL MODEL

This research began with a conceptual framework that the study focuses on. The proposed conceptual framework shows the combination of the selected dimensions on the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (see Figure 4.1). The first selected dimension is rural tourism resources. Zhou (2018) posits that rural tourism can cover numerous activities, often cultural and natural; and that these activities focus on different resources. Based on the findings of this study, the communities surrounding Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park have a high potential for rural tourism in terms of natural and cultural resources. However, financial, human, physical (infrastructure), and intangible (water and sanitation) resources continue to be a major issue in this study area.

Secondly, rural tourism knowledge and capabilities were chosen as one of the dimensions for rural tourism potentials. The findings of this study indicate that in terms of knowledge and capabilities, communities surrounding HiP must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and awareness in order to welcome rural tourism developments. According to the findings, the communities lack business education, trust to cooperate within themselves, and the majority of the people have no tourism business experience. This is a 'red-flag' area that needs to be properly addressed or managed with regard to rural tourism development.

Rural tourism strategies were chosen as the third dimension. Based on the study's findings, education and training could be very useful as one of the strategies for encouraging rural

tourism development in this area. Furthermore, rural cooperatives are proposed as a more significant means of encouraging people to collaborate and getting them involved in rural tourism activities. The study also emphasises the significance of developing business plans in order to increase the likelihood of attracting potential investors.

Finally, rural tourism activities formed part of the conceptual framework for this study. This study proposes that cultural activities, arts and crafts as well as guided rural tours are among the rural tourism activities that can be presented to the tourist by local people in order to enhance. As regards these four dimensions, this study concludes that with the positive attitudes of the locals toward rural tourism, there is a great potential for rural tourism development in this study area. The challenges and difficulties unearthed by this study can be carefully addressed or managed, and this study has provided some guidelines. Therefore, this study validates the original conceptual framework that guided this research, and it concludes that after successful development of rural tourism, efforts could be made to reduce poverty in the study area by supporting economic activities in the area (leading to employment and wealth generation).

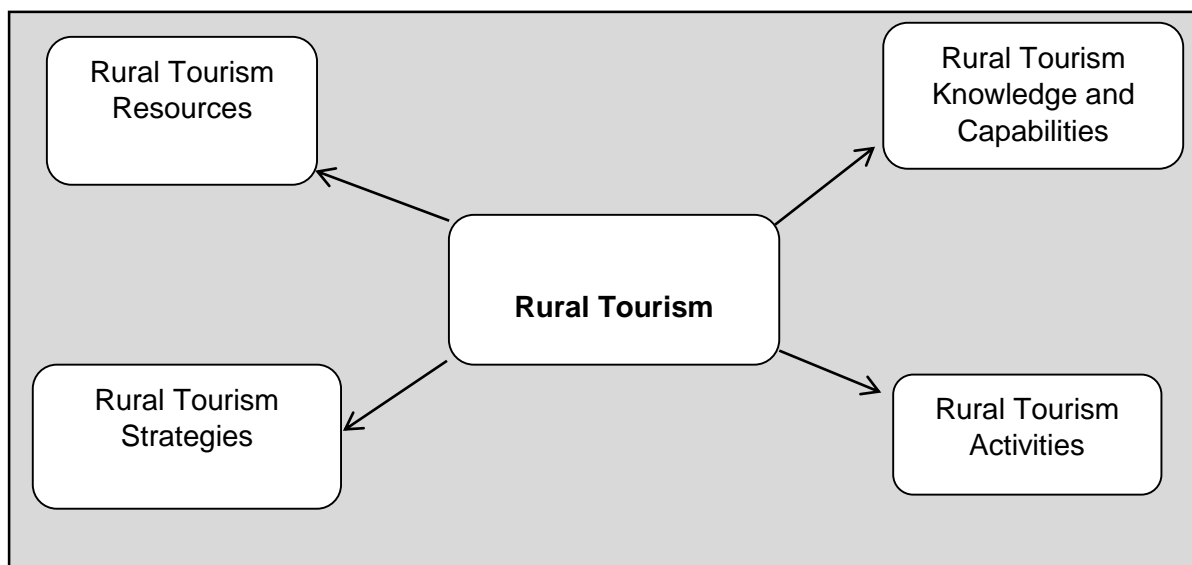


Figure 4.1: Final conceptual model showing the combination of the selected dimensions on the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park.

Source: (Researcher's own work)

4.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented and discussed results based on qualitative data collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park managers and focus group discussions with members of the three communities adjacent to HiP. The chapter also explained how themes derived from relevant views expressed by all participants were linked to the objectives of this study. The participants discussed issues in relation to rural tourism resources, rural tourism knowledge and capabilities, rural tourism strategies as well as rural tourism activities. The results have revealed that the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park have latent rural tourism. The last chapter (next chapter) of this dissertation presents the study's conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Establishing rural tourism in communities serves as an alternative means of economic development. The challenge lies in the capability of rural communities to develop critical mass of tourism products and services, implement and manage rural tourism development. This study chapter concludes this dissertation based on the research objectives, which guided it. This study, in an attempt to add to existing body of knowledge, assessed the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, which attracts many tourists who are drawn by nature and game viewing. The researcher investigated whether the host communities possess the needed or enough resources for rural tourism development, the level of business knowledge, and the capabilities needed for this development, and a fitting strategy coupled with activities on which rural tourism development may take place in this study area. This study was guided by four objectives drawn from the literature reviewed which will be further addressed later in this chapter. An overview of this research findings and conclusions are presented in the next section.

5.2. OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was based on three sets of data collected from park management staff, managers of selected tourism businesses surrounding the park and local communities that include Gunjaneni, Machibini as well as eMadwaleni. This section highlights key research findings from all the three groups. It starts with presenting the summary of findings from Hluhluwe iMfolozi park managers.

5.2.1. Findings from park managers

The interviews with the park managers were based on the availability of required resources for rural tourism, and it was revealed that a little access to financial resources was available to local residents. It was noted that the development of human resources would be required for the successful development of rural tourism in the area. Emphasis was also made on the area's infrastructural development, which is an important physical resource for any tourism development. In terms of knowledge and capabilities, the results indicated that local residents lacked specific qualifications and professional requirements needed to start a business. It was therefore highlighted that local communities' education and training programmes would be extremely important for the successful planning of rural tourism development in the study area.

HiP managers also noted that the main cause of failure for rural tourism cooperatives was due to absence of trust among the community members, and they further mentioned that if the problem could be addressed, rural cooperatives may play a major role in rural tourism development. Strategies were suggested for the development of rural tourism in the communities adjacent the park. In this regard, training and development to equip local residents with necessary skills and knowledge, the launching of cooperatives and the crafting and presentation of detailed business plans were noted as strategies that can be used for the successful operation of rural tourism development. Moreover, it was noted that the area has activities that can be presented to tourists to form part of rural tourism offerings, these include cultural dances, arts and crafts as well as tour guiding. The next subsection presents the summarised findings from tourism business managers/owners interviewed by the researcher.

5.2.2. Findings from tourism businesses managers/owners

Findings from the interviews with tourism business managers/owners revealed that even though the area was rich in terms of cultural and natural resource, more effort should be made on the improvement of the study area's physical resources more especially roads as well as potable water provision and sanitation. It was noted that the area was not in a good condition to support many activities of rural tourism. It was discovered that the number of tourist's arrivals to their establishments was limited by the poor accessibility of the area. The results also revealed that tourism business managers find it difficult to hire local people because they lack required skills, qualifications and experience for the job; hence they emphasised the importance of education and training of members of the local communities for tourism development to be successful. The summary of findings from local communities surrounding the park are presented hereunder.

5.2.3. Findings from local communities surrounding the park

From the focus group discussions conducted in the area, it was discovered that the study area lacked access to basic infrastructure like good road networks as well as access to clean water and sanitation. It was further discovered that people within the study area lacked basic knowledge of the essence of running tourism businesses and keeping them running successfully. Meanwhile the few number of participants with formal education were also without basic knowledge of tourism. It was observed that the lower the level of awareness, education and training, the lower the residents' level of interest in tourism. The results further showed that local residents had interest in engaging in rural tourism, but they also required support in terms of financial resources and necessary knowledge to start engaging in rural tourism activities.

The results also indicated that local residents were in agreement over their weaknesses in terms of lack of knowledge and skills of running business. However, they revealed their willingness to learn, and displayed strong self-confidence characteristics. It was further shown that local residents lack trust to cooperate among themselves, but promised their readiness for improvement on that in order to support rural tourism development in the area. The next section addresses the study area's rural tourism development weaknesses and threats based on the SWOT analysis results presented in the previous chapter.

5.3. ADDRESSING WEAKNESSES AND THREATS IN THIS STUDY

Table 5: Addressing weaknesses and threats of rural tourism development.

| Weaknesses | Recommendations and possible solutions | Responsible Stakeholder |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Lack of skilled and trained human capital in the area.</i> | To fully address labour and skill shortages, as well as to keep up with changing lifestyles and consumer demands, workforce development/training is required. | Not-for-profit organisations |
| <i>Local residents' unfamiliarity with and lack of training about tourism.</i> | The collaboration with local or national educational institutions would result in a new supply of skilled potential workers. Apprenticeships, co-op work placements, and internships can all help to develop the next generation of skilled workers. | Local governments; Not-for-profit organisations |
| <i>Lack of local government's support in funding local communities to make their own living through tourism.</i> | This study recommends effective financial management by local governments, and they need to consider the transformation of local areas into better places to live; local residents could also take advantage of this opportunity to earn a living through tourism. | State/Provincial/Local governments |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Lack of trust between community members.</i> | The study recommends that local residents establish cooperatives with a legally binding approach, in order for each member to commit to business legally. | Local communities; Local governments; Not-for-profit organisations |
| <i>Lack of tourism infrastructure (such as roads and sewage disposal system).</i> | This study suggests that government has a role to play in the development of infrastructure through the provision of infrastructure capital for such projects. | Provincial/ Local governments |
| <i>No existing clear functional framework for rural tourism development.</i> | This study recommends the creation of a clear functional framework for the development of rural tourism. This framework can harness guidelines suggested by this study. | Provincial/ Local governments |
| <i>Not enough investment in high quality tourism products and services.</i> | Investment in high quality rural tourism products and services is recommended, in the study area. | Local communities; Local governments; Not-for-profit organisations |
| <i>No adequate interpretation of all aspects of the region's natural, cultural and historical heritage.</i> | This study suggests interpreting the value of heritage assets (both tangible and intangible) that would help local residents develop rural tourism with a strong sense of identity, pride, and belonging. | Local communities (Communities around HiP); Local governments; Not-for-profit organisations |
| Threats | Recommendations and possible solutions | Responsible Stakeholder |
| <i>Economic, commercial and logistical issues such as accessibility and infrastructure to the area, availability of skills and interest of investors.</i> | This study suggests an improved accessibility, the development of resource-efficient rural tourism infrastructure, as well as initiatives to foster stakeholder networks, innovation and the | Provincial/ Local governments; Not-for-profit organisations |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | adoption of rural tourism business practices, in the study area. | |
| <i>Growing competition within the global tourism industry, especially with the emergence of virtual travel and new information and communication technology.</i> | Creating the right framework conditions for the digital transformation of tourism businesses, the adoption of virtual reality for rural tourism, and the opening of new opportunities for tourism businesses to compete in global markets. | Tourism authorities; Provincial/ Local governments; Not-for-profit organisations |

Source: Author's compilation

5.4. ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study sets out four (4) research objectives in Chapter one (1). The researcher concludes this section by addressing these study objectives:

Objective 1: To find out whether the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park do have needed or enough resources for rural tourism.

The results of this study showed that local communities did not have enough resource to support rural tourism development. Findings showed that although the region was found to be rich in natural and cultural resources, there was still insufficient access to funding which has made it difficult for local residents to participate in rural tourism development. The participants have shown that the human capital in the study area needs education and training in tourism, tourists' needs and expectations, and how to fulfil these expectations. The results also indicated that infrastructural development (in particular road networks and potable water) also remained important in this region to increase accessibility and foster tourism businesses.

Objective 2: To evaluate if the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park have the necessary knowledge and capabilities to be involved in rural tourism

It was discovered that in terms of knowledge, there were still needs to develop the local human capital regarding running and maintaining tourism businesses. People from these communities lacked knowledge about the complex nature of tourism, and thereby remained less capable to be involved in any tourism developments.

Objective 3: To find out the strategies that can be used by the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park to support rural tourism

Even though results showed that local residents lacked cooperation among themselves, and cooperative structures were indicated as what might help them pull together their resources to solve problems and also identify common goals instead of working in isolation pockets. This means that cooperative programme is an efficient strategy that can help local residents to be successfully engaged in rural tourism development. Planned networking with other rural tourism stakeholders is also necessary. This will help the local communities to identify and be able to harness capabilities that they do not possess, for the successful running of rural tourism venture.

Objective 4: To find out the rural tourism activities that can be presented by the host communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park, and how these can be presented.

As regards the above objective, it was revealed that local residents were found to be more talented in traditional arts and crafts like traditional dances, handicrafts in a form of bead works, grass and wood products. This implies that handicrafts can be exhibited and sold in a local craft market to make it easily accessible to targeted customers (tourists). Traditional dances can also be organised and presented to tourists as part of rural tourism services.

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are therefore made for possible considerations.

1. There is a need to identify and use of the other attractions of the region such as handicrafts in the communities, as part of rural tourism products. There are special handicrafts in these communities such as thatching, the making of brooms, baskets, mats, wooden spoons and trays as well as African wood-carved animals.
2. Holding small local markets on regular basis to sell handicrafts and other products made by the residents is recommended because women has indicated that they usually struggle to sell craft works to the customers individually.
3. There should be leadership commitment in driving the process of rural tourism development through capacity building: to train local residents, to assist in the development of business plans and the acquiring of funds to start their own businesses.
4. Tourism industry requires specific skills or experience for specific jobs. Some solutions that may be considered by the industry include on-the-job training, industry sponsored apprenticeship programmes, internships, and other various forms of education and training programmes.

In addition, many other positive impulses can be observed in the areas of construction of rural housing, launching cooperatives, launching training centers, establishing partnerships with educational institutions and other rural tourism stakeholders. Organising local events and rural exhibitions where the local residents will show their talents to tourists and launching new types of rural tourism products may also help in achieving viable rural tourism.

5.6 STUDY LIMITATIONS

There are limitations in this study that could be addressed in future research. First, the study focused on getting access to people and organisations, access was restricted and only few persons were interviewed and many of them were not interested in participating further in the research even though they were sampled. This limited the sample size. Probably a larger sample size could yield more results that are detailed. Second, the study was constrained by financial problems that made it very difficult for the researcher to visit all the areas adjacent Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. This might have limited the quantity and quality of information collected, however from the data collected, it can be argued that the study reached data saturation, as there were not much differences between the type of information given by different participants or focus groups within the study area. This study was done only in Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park and its immediate surroundings; hence, the results of this study are true for this study area and at the particular period when this research was conducted, therefore, generalization may not be made. The next section presents possible areas for further studies.

5.7 AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study assessed the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park. Other potential areas for future research could be the assessment of the available resources (their conditions), and where they need improvement for the successful development of rural tourism in the area. Further studies may also be conducted to explore the motivations for rural tourism and segments its market based on the push and pull motivational forces. This could help in developing rural tourism activities based on tourist's needs. Similar studies may also be conducted in other rural areas of South Africa to identify similarities and differences (comparability) in results.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the findings, addressed weaknesses and threats of this study, study objectives, put forward recommendations, limitations of this study and areas for future study. It can be concluded that the objectives of this study (related to the research questions) were addressed, and the research questions were answered. It can be argued that rural tourism development could be a viable solution for renewing this study area's features and activities (village renewal), thereby making it more appealing to tourists, and incorporating rural tourism into the social, cultural, and economic aspects of HiP's surrounding communities. This can help in job creation, fostering of small business creation, and innovation among the local residents. The researcher argues that, if the above-mentioned recommendations are fully implemented, rural tourism can be re-planned, well-implemented and sustained in this study area

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APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide, communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park) *to be tape-recorded.*

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group. You have been asked to participate as your point of view is important. I realize you are busy and I appreciate your time.

- Who I am and what I am trying to do
- What will be done with this information
- The discussion may take between 45 minutes and 1 hour.

Before starting the FGD, I will remind the group of:

- The purpose of the FGD
- Ground rules for FGD, including importance of confidentiality and use of pseudonyms
- That tape recording will now begin

Questions:

1. Rural tourism capabilities

- How long have you been staying in this community?
- Do you have any knowledge about tourism? (**Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**).
- Is there any education/training about tourism provided to you? (**Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**).
- Do you have any interest about tourism? (**Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**).
- Are there any tourism services you can render well? (example housekeeping, tour guiding, handicraft production, etc.) **Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**
- Which of the following can you do or have interest in doing? – camp management skills (planning, organizing, leading, controlling), waiter/waitresses, bookkeeping, etc. **Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**
- Do you find it difficult to cooperate among yourselves? Are there examples of cooperative development or businesses that you have successfully done as a community? **Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**

2. Rural tourism resources

- What attributes of this community do you think may attract tourists to visit? (**Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**).
- If given a chance to start a tourism business, what would you say can hinder you from starting a business, or running a business? (**Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**).

3. Rural tourism activities and strategies

- Are there any activities you know of that can attract tourists to this community? (**Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**).
- In which way will you go about presenting these activities to the tourists? (**Why, how, where, what, who, when...?**).

That concludes our focus group discussion. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with me.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE (an interview scheduled for HiP management and managers of the tourism businesses around HiP).

Duration: 1 hour.

Introduction:

- I will give a brief introduction of the study and explain as to why the questions will be asked.
- Confirm that the interview will be used for the study and that the information given will be treated confidential.
- Request permission to record the interview.

Questions:

1. How long have you been staying in this area?
2. How long have you been running your business in this area?
3. Which attributes of this destination that made you decide to start a business? **(in terms of cultural factors and natural resources).**
 - Can these attributes support rural tourism development? **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
 - What are the barriers to rural tourism development in the communities around HiP? **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
4. Do you think people in this community are knowledgeable or aware of tourism? **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
5. Do you think community members are interested in participating in any tourism activities? **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
6. Do you think educating and training people can improve the level of interest in tourism activities? **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
7. Do you think people in this community are capable of rural tourism development? **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
8. Suggest ways which people of this community can use to develop rural tourism. **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
9. Suggest any improvements that can be made to encourage rural tourism. **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
10. Are you aware of any rural tourism activities that can draw tourists to this community? **(Why, how, where, what, who, when...?).**
11. Is there anything you wish to add?

Thank you so much for your valuable time it is truly appreciated. I do hope you will assist me again if further questions concerning my study arise.

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**
(Reg No: UZREC 171110-030)



RESEARCH & INNOVATION
Website: <http://www.unizulu.ac.za>
Private Bag X1001
KwaDlangezwa 3886
Tel: 035 902 6273
Email: ViljoenD@unizulu.ac.za

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|----------|-------------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Certificate Number | UZREC 171110-030 PGM 2018/562 | | | | |
| Project Title | The potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe Imfolozi Park | | | | |
| Principal Researcher/ Investigator | N Mgabhi | | | | |
| Supervisor and Co-supervisor | Dr I.O Ezeuduji | | | | |
| Department | Recreation and Tourism | | | | |
| Faculty | Arts | | | | |
| Type of Risk | Medium Risk – Data collect'ion from people | | | | |
| Nature of Project | Honours/4 th Year | Master's | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Doctoral | Departmental |

The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above mentioned project. The Researcher may therefore commence with data collection as from the date of this Certificate, using the certificate number indicated above.

- Special conditions:
- (1) This certificate is valid for 1 year from the date of issue.
 - (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format [due date-26 January 2022]
 - (3) Principal researcher must submit a report at the end of project in respect of ethical compliance.
 - (4) The UZREC must be informed immediately of any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the meeting.

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting research.


Professor Mashupye R. Kgaphola
University Research Ethics Committee
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation

26 January 2021





ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Certificate Number | UZREC 171110-030 PGM 2018/562 | | |
| Project Title | THE POTENTIALS OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE COMMUNITIES AROUND HLUBULUWF IMFOLOZI PARK | | |
| Principal Researcher/ Investigator | N Mgabhe | | |
| Supervisor and Co-supervisor | Dr JO Ezeudje | | |
| Department | Recreation and Tourism | | |
| Faculty | ARTS | | |
| Type of Risk | Med Risk- Data collection from students and teachers | | |
| Nature of Project | Honours/4 th Year | Master's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Doctoral <input type="checkbox"/> Departmental <input type="checkbox"/> |

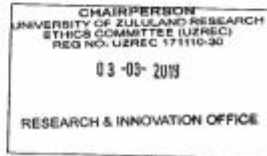
The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project. The Researcher may therefore commence with data collection as from the date of this Certificate, using the certificate number indicated above.

- Special conditions:
- (1) This certificate is valid for 1 year from the date of issue.
 - (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format (due date-11 December 2019)
 - (3) Principal researcher must submit a report at the end of project in respect of ethical compliance.
 - (4) The UZREC must be informed immediately of any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the meeting.

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting research.


Professor Gideon De Wet

Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation
11 December 2018



APPENDIX D: LETTER OF AFFIRMATION FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

Writing Splendour Services & Consultancy
(A Subsidiary of Oaks- Executive Consult)
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writingsplendour247@gmail.com
Website: www.writingsplendour.simplesite.com
Income Tax Number: 1064112236



August 30th, 2021

To Whom It May Concern

EDITING AND PROOFREADING OF A DISSERTATION

This is to certify that I, (Olumuyiwa A. Kehinde) edited and proofread **Ms Nelisile Mgabhi's** dissertation titled: **Assessing the potentials of rural tourism in the communities around Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park.**

Specifically, I commented on the grammatical anomalies in MS Word Track Changes and review mode by the insertion of comment balloons prior to returning the document to her. Corrections were made in respect of grammar, punctuation, spelling, syntax, tense and language usage, sense and flow, syntactic and semantic cohesion, clarity of expressions, appropriate use of reference style, typing format and layout.

Currently, I just completed a PhD programme, and I have earned a Master's degree in English, Bachelor of Arts in English Studies, Diploma in Communication Science, and Teachers' Grade II Certificate. I have been teaching Advanced English Courses for the past 8 years. I also teach English for IELTS and TOEFL examinations. Furthermore, I have been regularly editing and proofreading academic, research dissertations, theses, articles, and other documents for the past 6 years in different disciplines for publishing /editing firms, schools, and individuals.

I trust that the document will prove acceptable in terms of editing, formatting and proofreading criteria.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Mr O.A. Kehinde

APPENDIX D: TURNITIN REPORT

9/6/2021

Turnitin

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