

PROVIDENCE WARINDA^a, CLINTON D. VAN DER MERWE^b

Tourism and Recreation in Protected Areas: An Exploration of Community Based Tourism and Local Participation in Zimbabwe

Abstract. This paper explores the role and value of community-based tourism (CBT) for tourism and recreation in protected areas in Zimbabwe in terms of the level and nature of local community participation. The goal was to understand the management system and perceptions of different stakeholders of community conservancies in Zimbabwe. The study is based on a thematic analysis of qualitative data collected during in-depth interviews with key informants. The findings provide insights into the current management system of community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) and the challenges identified by the respondents. These include an over-dependence on private safari operators, the need for further development of CBTEs, and the fact that proceeds from tourism are not being channelled back to tourism but to the development of other projects and administration. Moreover, local communities do not have sufficient capabilities to manage and develop CBTEs. As a result, the offering of tourism products is limited, which has a negative effect on local participation and the sustainability of tourism.

Keywords: community-based tourism; protected areas; conservation; sustainable development; local community involvement

Article history. Submitted 2023-06-20. Accepted 2023-07-20. Published 2023-08-30.

1. Introduction

Protected Areas (PAs) have been the mainstay of international conservation strategies since the start of the 20th century (Adams et al., 2004). The PA system was replicated globally from the American Yellowstone model, popularly known as the ‘fortress conservation’ or the ‘fences and fines approach’. The fortress conservation paradigm is based on the premise that wild species must be preserved by reserving areas and barring people from living within and using the resources from these

^a University of Pretoria, South Africa, Warindaprov27@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6837-313X>

^b University of Pretoria, South Africa, Clinton.vandermerwe@up.ac.za, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6861-2773>

natural areas (Matseketsa et al., 2019). This philosophy was a departure from the African methods of living in harmony with nature. Over the past years, several natural resource management policies have been adopted that are exclusionary and repressive. This has affected livelihood strategies, food security, and resilience of rural communities (Matseketsa et al., 2019; Phiri et al., 2012).

Following the establishment of protected areas and conservancies in Zimbabwe, some local communities have developed negative attitudes towards conservation efforts and the enforcement of conservation-related regulations, which has resulted in conflicts (Chiutsi & Mudzengi, 2012; Phiri et al., 2012). In addition to the alienation from their land, adjacent communities tend to suffer from several human-wildlife conflicts (Matseketsa et al., 2019). To address inequalities in wildlife management, the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) project was introduced in Zimbabwe, whereby communities take part in the management of their natural resources, also known as Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) (Taylor, 2009; Ntuli & Muchapondwa, 2017). Under the CAMPFIRE project, communities have been assisted in creating community conservancies that they protect and manage collectively (Gandiwa et al., 2014).

The intended purpose of these community conservancies is to encourage communities to participate in the conservation of wildlife, natural resources, and heritage, as well as earn income from the use of natural resources (Ntuli & Muchapondwa, 2017). In order to be able to protect their conservancies continuously, communities have opened up these areas for tourism. However, studies show that the participation of local people is still minimal, and communities are not reaping the intended benefits (Chiutsi & Mudzengi, 2012; Mbaiwa, 2015). This paper explores the perceptions of different stakeholders regarding the management of wildlife-based community-based tourism enterprises (CBTE) in Zimbabwe. It also proposes ways in which CBTEs can ensure economic and environmental sustainability as well as active community participation in the tourism industry post-COVID-19. A growing number of studies on tourism and recreation in protected areas has focused on the perceptions of local communities regarding protected areas and tourism activities and the participation of local people (Gohori & van der Merwe, 2022; Nugroho, Numata & Aprilianto, 2020; Chiutsi & Saarinen, 2017; Gandiwa et al., 2014). However, there is not much research on the perceptions of other stakeholders involved in managing community conservancies, related challenges, and possible measures aimed at improving the current management system of community conservancies. This paper intends to fill this gap.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Community-based Tourism

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a growing niche in tourism across the world. CBT in Zimbabwe became popular in the 1990s when the CAMPFIRE Association set up a few pilot projects which focused on the provision of accommodation. This was to ensure that local communities generate direct income by hosting tourists (Dressler et al., 2010). In addition to ensuring social and economic justice, the programme also sought to encourage local communities to conserve and preserve their natural resources and heritage (Shereni & Saarinen, 2021). The CAMPFIRE Association, in collaboration with Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority, University Institutions, and Rural District Councils, initiated several CBT projects, which offered different kinds of products, such as accommodation, wildlife, heritage tourism, and many other natural attractions. It turned out that after donor funding was discontinued, most CAMPFIRE projects collapsed (DeGeorges & Reilly, 2009). CBTs which relied on consumptive tourism (hunting), managed to continue operating, while CBTs based on non-consumptive tourism struggled to survive. The collapse of CAMPFIRE projects also showed that besides funding, not much had been done in terms of capacity building to ensure the project was sustainable (Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry (MOTHI), 2016).

According to Runyowa (2017) and Matura (2022), CBT is a broad and complex concept. Several definitions of CBT have been put forward (Zimbabwe National Tourism Policy, 2014; ASEAN, 2016; MOTHI, 2016). According to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN, 2016), CBT is a form of sustainable tourism that is community-owned, operated and managed or coordinated at the community level, which contributes to the well-being of communities by supporting sustainable livelihoods and protecting valued socio-cultural traditions and natural and cultural heritage resources. However, most existing definitions do not quantify or indicate whether CBT is always created to benefit the whole community, part of the community or can be owned by a homogenous group in the community. According to the MOTHI (2016) definition, CBT projects can benefit all or part of the community. According to Fan, Ng & Bayrak (2023), the term 'community' is used to identify a group with a fixed or geographic boundary, which is assumed to be homogeneous, though in reality, communities can be highly heterogeneous (Taylor & Timothy, 2003).

2.2. Community-based Tourism and the Community

It is believed that CBT is a worthwhile option for stimulating the development of rural economies through economic benefits to local communities (van der Merwe, 2016), better promotion of the destination, and a higher quality of tourist experience thanks to environmental awareness. CBT projects should empower local people (Fan, Ng & Bayrak, 2023), contribute to the preservation of the environment, encourage interaction between locals and tourists, contribute to the social welfare of locals and ensure a quality tourism experience (Wardani et al., 2023; Febrrian-dhika et al., 2019). CBT projects, if managed properly, have the potential to increase household income and alleviate poverty (Wardani et al., 2023; Kusworo, 2015). However, as noted by Chiutsi & Saarinen (2017), communities living in areas that are rich in wildlife and natural resources are still living in poverty. According to the World Tourism Organization (2018), local communities are deprived of most economic benefits from tourism. Revenue generated from the commercialisation of natural resources through tourism (consumptive and non-consumptive) tends to flow into the central treasury, and local people who bear the costs of living with wildlife are not discernibly rewarded for their conservation efforts (Shereni & Saarinen, 2021). People who benefit the most from conservation are not those who bear the cost or the negative consequences of living with wildlife. Failure to address the issue can prolong human-wildlife conflicts, poaching, and non-compliance. When benefits are few, and there is no incentive for local communities to be good stewards of natural resources, to conserve or at least use these natural resources sustainably (Mtapuri, 2022).

The tourism sector was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected conservation efforts in community conservancies (United Nations, 2020; Fletcher et al., 2020a). The pandemic also had a negative effect on the livelihoods of people depending on tourism. This led to poaching to make up for decreased food availability and the loss of jobs, including those responsible for protecting wildlife (Greenfield & Muiruri, 2020; Fletcher et al., 2020b). Conservation became highly dependent on local people's intrinsic sense of care for biodiversity. This situation requires more emphasis on community involvement, empowerment, and participation in CBT projects to ensure their sustainability in case of future pandemics. Local community members need to have a sense of project ownership so that they are motivated to conserve biodiversity even when there is no financial motivation (Serhadli, 2020) since people tend to maximise their wealth and choose social outcomes with the highest economic or social reward (Hechter, 2017).

2.3. Community-based Tourism Management and Local Participation

Community-based tourism is about community management, involvement participation and decision-making. Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2015) argue that the level of participation is determined by the CBT management model. The National Department of Tourism (2016) identified four types of CBT ventures, which are community-owned partnerships with the state, lease agreements between communities and the private sector, and joint ventures between communities and the private sector. The last two models have the potential to promote the active participation of locals and maximise returns. Partnerships between the state and communities can result in passive participation owing to unequal, top-down power relations and, in some cases, leave no room for community participation (Zapata et al., 2011; Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2015). Gohori & van der Merwe (2022) found that management models involving the state and communities tend to exclude communities in decision-making. Communities are usually silenced and side-lined in tourism development matters and excluded from associated benefits (Chiutsi & Saarinen, 2017).

Participation is a challenging aspect of CBT. People can “either possess the power to influence decisions or are just spectators of the process” (Yanes et al., 2019, p. 2). “Participation can augment or impair a community’s contribution” (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2015 p. 39). Hung, Sirakaya-Turk & Ingram (2011) note that the lack of the necessary knowledge and skills on the part of community stakeholders hinders spontaneous participation. The community’s ability to participate in conservation programs and tourism development depends on factors such as knowledge, skills, coordination among stakeholders, policy framework, homogeneity of participating groups and financial resources (Gohori & van der Merwe, 2022; Jaafar et al., 2014; Marzuki, Hay & James, 2012; Timothy & Tosun, 2003). Results of a study by Rasoolimanesh and Jaafar (2016), who studied factors influencing community participation, indicate the importance of the ability and motivation to encourage rural residents to get involved in economic activities that are comparable to participating in executive-level decision-making (Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2016). It is, therefore, necessary for the government to come up with strong frameworks that could facilitate community participation and develop people-centric governance models that empower and motivate local people (Chiutsi & Saarinen, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Area

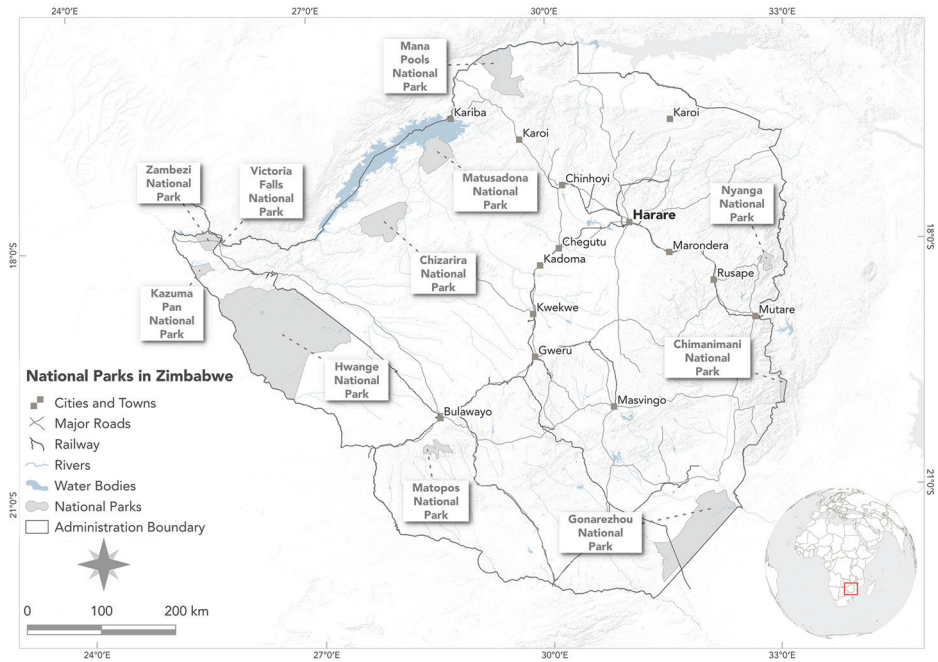


Figure 1. A map of Zimbabwe showing National Parks

Source: Author's Map

The following study was conducted in Zimbabwe, a country that boasts eleven national parks, ten recreational parks, six trans-frontier conservation areas (TFCA), and several community conservancies. Figure 1 shows a map of Zimbabwe with the location of eleven national parks. Community conservancies have been established around these National Parks. Wildlife is one of the major attractions of Zimbabwe, attracting several thousands of tourists each year, and wildlife tourism generates a significant contribution to the country's GDP. As such, it has the potential to enhance the lives of people who live next to protected areas (Zvikonyaukwa, Musengi & Mudzengi, 2023).

3.2. Methods

The purpose of the study was to understand the management system and the perceptions of different stakeholders on community conservancies in Zimbabwe. Consequently, a qualitative methodology involving the case study approach was used.

Relevant data were collected during in-depth interviews with key informants from three different groups: 1) key organisations involved in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and tourism, 2) the Rural District Council (RDC), and 3) tourism educators. Key organisations included the CAMPFIRE Association, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZIMPARKS), and Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA). They were selected because of their involvement in the management, marketing, and capacity-building of wildlife-based conservancies. Each organisation chose one expert in the area of CBT to participate in the interview. The study focused on RDCs with functional CBT projects in their districts. RDCs were included in the study to understand their perceptions of CBT since they are involved in the management of CBTEs. The group of tourism educators included lecturers from state universities in Zimbabwe offering tourism and hospitality-related degrees in Tourism and Hospitality departments, teaching courses related to tourism and the environment, conservation and sustainability.

Data were collected between November 2022 to February 2023. First, open-ended questionnaires were prepared with a different set of questions for each group of respondents. These questionnaires were used during semi-structured interviews conducted with ten representatives from different Rural District Councils (RDC) with functional CBT projects and five representatives from Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority, CAMPFIRE Association, and university lecturers.

Thematic analysis was applied to recorded and transcribed interview data to identify the main themes. Interview fragments were coded to repeat themes briefly. The final set of themes was established on the basis of the data and the literature. To ensure respondents' anonymity, each interviewee was given a generic name of its group with a numeral (e.g. Lecturer 1; RDC 2), while organisation names identified respondents from key organisations, e.g. ZIMPARKS.

4. Results

4.1. CBT Management

Key informants said that the CAMPFIRE initiative was launched to benefit local communities. Respondents from Rural District Councils (RDC) indicated that they were given the mandate to manage the projects on behalf of communities. All respondents confirmed that when CAMPFIRE started, it was a donor-funded initiative. Thanks to the availability of donor funding, RDCs decided to take part in

the CAMPFIRE programme. ZIMPARKS said that out of 59 districts that exist in the country, the CAMPFIRE status was granted to all but two: Bikita and Zvishavane. In other words, nearly all districts in Zimbabwe were found to have the potential for CBT. However, when the funding stopped, some districts that did not have viable wildlife projects failed to maintain CAMPFIRE projects, which 'died a natural death'.

The interviews revealed that most wildlife CBTEs are managed through private-public partnerships. RDCs facilitate the signing of lease agreements between private operators and communities. RDCs work with villages and ward committees elected by communities, which are replaced after two or five years. In other words, after every election, new people come in and need to be trained. RDC 1 gave a detailed account of how the RDC and communities interact with key organisations:

The CAMPFIRE is very active in the district; all 17 wards are in the CAMPFIRE project. Out of the 17, we have 9 wards which benefits nearly every year out of those 9 wards, 5 are very active. They receive taxes and social funds. The roles of the community members are anti-poaching problems, animal control, or human-wildlife conflict mitigation. We have 3 hunting concessions, and we also have a non-hunting concession which is mainly for photographing and game viewing. These wards are managed by what we call environmental sub-committees at the ward level. At the District level, we have the environment committee. At the concession level, we have what we call the community trust, which consists of individuals selected from the wards within than concession. The RDC manages all the committees at the concession or ward level. We have a Safari operator in each of the concessions who is engaged by the RDC in consultation with the respective communities in that concession area. The Safari operator is in partnership with the RDC and communities. ZIMPARKS monitors the issues to do with best practices in terms of hunting in the district. The marketing of the concessions is done by ZTA and the Safari operator. CAMPFIRE Association offer technical support and training to the committees.

The RDC respondents said that given the limited resources, training and re-training committee members is always a challenge. Community conservancies are manned by trained scouts or rangers who patrol the park to protect wildlife. However, due to low financial benefits, there is a high turnover of these rangers. As a result, more scout training needs to be organised.

RDCs, as the administrators of community land, are involved in the running of community reserves. However, the interviews pointed out that there is no uniformity in RDC structures. In some districts, the area of natural resources management is a standalone department, but in some RDCs, it falls under administration and social amenities. As a result, the management and development of CBT usually depend on the interests of the district head. The natural resource officer may be

reporting to the engineer, who has different interests, and they also report to different ministries. Consequently, some districts fail to get the necessary support from RDCs because there are no standalone departments that are concerned about the issues of tourism. The lack of uniform structures and appropriate departments to house the CBT poses a great challenge to the development and management of CBT.

4.2. Participation of Local Communities

According to the RDC representatives, CBT enterprises are being run by Safari operators who have been contracted by the RDC and report to the RDC. A respondent from ZIMPARKS indicated that RDCs are running CBT enterprises on their own without the involvement of communities. This is because RDCs have personnel capable of negotiating and entering into partnerships with private operators. There is not much evidence of active community participation in the management and running of these CBTES. As a result, in some districts, decisions are made by RDCs. The same respondent also mentioned one conservancy which was started by the community. Its members agreed to relocate to another area that had wildlife and decided to establish a wildlife conservancy. As the community did not have the capacity and the know-how to register the conservancy, they sought help from the RDC, which managed to register the conservancy and then partnered with a private operator. However, there is now a conflict between the community and the RDC, which has taken over control and is now managing the conservancy without the community's involvement and is not remitting any proceeds to the community.

By contrast, respondents from the RDCs and CAMPFIRE association indicated that community members were participating in CBT projects. According to them, community members scout the conservancy areas, conserve natural resources, guide tours as well as have a say in how the proceeds from tourism can be utilised in their respective wards. A representative from ZTA had a different view on community participation and pointed out challenges associated with local participation in community projects. He said that community-based projects are not sustainable because there is a lack of unity in communities. He said:

A business is sustainable when it is managed by the initiator; if one initiates, they can sustain it. But where you have communities, there are problems of cohesion and leadership, the constitution is opaque, they may have challenges in raising funds, and if they get a funding partner, they may feel they are being short-changed, and sometimes this leads to disagreements and conflicts. This then sometimes leads to mismanagement, vandalism and sabotage by communities. If it is community-led, everyone feels that they have a share and that I have to be heard, but it is very difficult to reach a consensus.

Another challenge is the lack of business-to-business linkages, customer-to-business linkages, and positioning in the whole tourism value chain, so there is a need for experts to run CBT projects.

Interviews with the RDCs and CAMPFIRE association suggest that communities do not have the necessary skills to run these enterprises. As a result, they rely on private-public partnerships with safari operators. It is these operators that are responsible for the day-to-day management of the business and marketing. Consequently, partnerships between the RDCs and private operators have limited the participation of local communities in the management of CBT.

One of the problems with a negative effect on community participation was the lack of transparency. A respondent from ZIMPARKS said:

We had a situation whereby a Safari operator was only paying licenses to the RDC and not remitting to the community, claiming that there is no business. When the Safari operator started operating in the area, he fired all locals who were working on the conservancy and replaced them with his staff and disturbed some of the projects that the community was doing. The previous management had embarked on a project of growing buffalo grass so that it would make hay bales to supplement the shortage of grazing grass; however, when the new operator took over, all projects were put on hold. Progress reports from the operator indicated nothing was happening on the ground, but when a representative from ZIMPARKS visited the establishment on the ground, they discovered that it was functioning very well, but communities were not benefiting anything and were being short-changed. This resulted in conflict between the operator and the community as the locals felt that they were being side-lined and short-changed. Locals then resorted to poaching and illegal mining within the park because they were not seeing any benefits from tourism.

Poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and the destruction of livestock and crops are common challenges that community conservancies across all districts are faced with. When the locals feel side-lined and are not deriving any benefits, they lack the motivation to preserve natural resources. According to RDC 3:

The challenge is poaching which is done by people who come with cattle for grazing, they poach game, and fish, they also bring dogs into the concession area because dogs are for security reasons. Because of the high levels of poaching, we have little species to see, so we can only see big game like lions, buffalos and elephants. It is now difficult to come across small games like Kudus, Impala, and Eland because of poaching.

4.3. Benefits Sharing

Under the initial agreement, revenues were to be divided as follows: 50% to the community, 20% to the RDC for administration, 26% to RDC for management, and 4% to the CAMPFIRE association. The respondents from the RDCs, ZIMPARKS, and CAMPFIRE confirmed that this arrangement is still the same. RDC 2 said that because of the large number of households in the participating wards, revenues are not shared among households but among wards. According to RDC representatives, several development projects have been completed using proceeds from tourism. These included the construction of clinics, schools, roads, boreholes, and shops and the payment of school fees. Elected members work with other members of the community to decide how the proceeds are to be utilised. Each ward is given its allocated share, and they decide how to utilise it. Communities have also invested in several income-generating projects within their respective wards. However, in some districts, this was not working very well; the communities claimed that they were not receiving anything and tried to come up with a direct payment system where the operators would pay directly to the community account. A respondent from ZIMPARKS indicated that in some areas, most of the proceeds were going to the RDC to cover management costs, leaving nothing for the community. RDC respondents pointed out that where the system was working well, there was evidence of community development within the district. However, there was no evidence of re-investment in tourism. Instead, proceeds were used to finance other projects. Failure to re-invest some of the funds back into tourism and the conservation of natural resources is a threat to the sustainability of CBTES.

Commenting on the use of proceeds from CBTE, Lecturer 1 said:

The major challenge is policy formulation; the current legislation gives power to the local authority and not the host community. So, at the end of the day, you find out that the council channel proceeds from CBT to infrastructure development. It is the responsibility of the council to construct roads, clinics etc. and not use proceeds from CBT for that. Proceeds from CBT should benefit communities directly or for tourism development.

He suggested that these proceeds should be used to develop tourism or livelihood diversification projects that benefit individual households. In cases where proceeds are distributed to each household, they do not get many benefits from the enterprises. Lecturer 2 said:

When you look at some community-based tourism initiatives in Zimbabwe, there is little income that is coming for example, community members are receiving 1 bag of fertiliser and 10kg mealie meal yearly from a certain CBTE.

4.4. Capacity

According to some interviewees, the lack of capacity within communities has affected their participation. Lecturer 2 said that communities are not benefitting more because they are not managing CBT enterprises on their own. Instead, it is the operator that gets the bigger chunk because of its involvement in the day-to-day running of CBTEs and their marketing. In the process of negotiating the lease agreement, the RDC negotiates on behalf of the community. As a result, communities are not aware of some contract details. Elected committee members have been trained in accounting, project planning, financial management, communication skills, and record-keeping, and how they should keep the resources they have. They also have leadership skills. In contrast, community members only have basic skills enabling them to manage livelihoods project but not CBTEs, which require expert knowledge. As a result, communities have to rely on private operators. A respondent from CAMPFIRE Association said that the training received by communities is not adequate to enable them to run their enterprises.

Some of the enterprises that have been operating have failed, most probably because there were not enough experts to sustain the operations. Remember, when community members are engaged, we can capacity-build a manager for a week but remember, and there is more to that. Communities just learn the basics. I think currently, the way to go would be the Private-Public Partnerships. If you go to any community project which they are implementing in partnership with a private player, they are thriving because most of the private players are bringing in expertise to run these enterprises.

A representative of the CAMPFIRE Association added that RDCs, as the lowest arm of the government at the district level, do not have enough capacity to develop CBT enterprises and assist communities in running them. He said that more needs to be done in terms of tourism product development and marketing to derive maximum benefits from tourism. RDC respondents pointed out that the main tourism product offered by CBT enterprises is hunting and game viewing. Hunting brings in more income than any other tourism activity. However, there is not enough marketing expertise and capacity within the districts, which is why they continue to rely on safari operators for marketing and enterprise management. RDC 3 said:

Our biggest challenge in Southern Africa is that it is very difficult to get black people to successfully do international marketing for hunting. It is like a closed market, and the whites have their links and clients. We have tried to engage black professional hunters to do marketing, but you find out that at the end of the day, they have to be behind their white counterparts. It is a challenge in Southern Africa. For example, our elephant is currently going for \$12 000, but when the safari operator sells the elephants, they might sell it for 18 000 or more, and they get more money.

Discussions with interviewees revealed that tourism marketing in Zimbabwe is done by Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) since all tourism establishments are associated with ZTA. ZTA has the general mandate to conduct marketing activities for the whole country. However, for wildlife-based CBTES, marketing is done by safari operators who are in partnership with communities. The challenge with centralised marketing is its generality and scope of coverage. ZTA can market Zimbabwe as a whole but is not in a position to do justice to specific sites, which are expected to market their tourism products on their own.

4.5. Devolution

A representative from ZIMPARKS talked about efforts to ensure the devolution of power to communities. Following a review of the management of CAMPFIRE projects, ZIMPARKS now has a CAMPFIRE office that works with communities. The office is advocating for a statutory instrument that ensures the devolution of power from RDCs to the grassroots level. Wildlife CBTs have proved to be profitable and beneficial to host communities. So far, however, a greater chunk of the proceeds has been going to RDCs and used to cover administration costs. ZIMPARKS also added that:

The challenge we are facing is that the elite people get a large share, and there is an issue of transparency. We are supporting devolution of power so that everyone in the community takes ownership; some community members feel that they are being short-changed and sidelined. Therefore, devolution of power to the local level is what is needed. There is also a need to help communities to establish community-based organisations or community trust. Locals also need to be capacitated so that they may be able to participate in the running of CBT.

Two different viewpoints concerning devolution were brought up by the respondents. Some of them believe that if RDCs give up some of the control, communities can reap more benefits. Another group of respondents are convinced that communities cannot work alone without the help of RDCs; they need their support

and expertise. A representative of ZTA indicated that complete devolution of power causes problems if communities lack the necessary capacity. Therefore, a lot needs to be done in terms of capacity building to ensure that community members can manage their conservancies on their own.

5. Discussion

The interviews revealed that the most common model used in wildlife-based conservancies in Zimbabwe is a lease agreement between the community (represented by the RDC) and private investors. The current management model is characterised by a high dependence of local communities on private operators for resources and markets, which increases their vulnerability. Our results are consistent with Bello, Lovelock & Carr (2017), who argue that private operators tend to be opportunistic to maximise their returns while marginalising the economic participation of local communities. This dependence on private operators threatens sustainability and undermines the active participation of locals, and reduces the share of proceeds that go to communities. If communities were better organised and had more expertise, community-owned ventures would be ideal because they would guarantee community participation and maximum returns. Interviews indicate that locals do not have economic and social capital and lack the skills necessary to run CBT enterprises. However, community members could employ managers who report directly to them and help them manage and develop CBTs. Giampiccoli & Glassom (2020) also highlighted the importance of external support from financing institutions, other organisations, and universities. External support could help communities to come up with conservation models blended with a business approach to ensure CBT enterprises are sustainable. The government should establish active tourism departments within districts since tourism has proven to be a great vehicle for community development. To ensure CBTES are sustainable and competitive, RDC structures need to include tourism departments responsible for product innovation, development, and management (Bello, Carr & Lovelock, 2016).

Village and ward committees are selected periodically; the problem with the election system is that committee members are selected based on their personalities rather than their expertise. It is, therefore, necessary to introduce procedures that will help to select committee members that meet certain criteria or have certain traits, such as individual interests, talents, expertise, and abilities, which will enable them to push the tourism agenda within their committees.

The interviews have shown that there is low or no local community participation in CBT, which has been reported by previous studies by Bhatasara, Nyamwanza & Kujinga (2013); Chiutsi & Saarinen (2017). Siakwah, Musavengane & Leonard (2020) pointed out that unequal power relations within communities inhibited greater participation. In the same vein, Giampiccoli & Saayman (2018) noted that top-down relationships between communities and other stakeholders leave no room for community participation. According to some interviewees, while local people are participating in other livelihood projects that are being funded by proceeds from tourism, they are not involved in the actual management, day-to-day running and development of CBT enterprises.

Community participation is also affected by the narrow range of tourism products. Most CBTEs only offer accommodation, hunting, and game viewing. What is needed are experts who would work with locals on developing more tourism products in arts, crafts, agro-tourism, heritage and culture. Community members have much they can offer in the tourism value chain, which can be attractive to both international and local tourists. A wider range of tourism products could also help to create more jobs in CBTEs for community members and thus reduce negative phenomena such as poaching, high employee turnover, and community resistance (Bello, Lovelock & Carr, 2017). Ginting et al. (2023) highlighted the need for more creativity in CBT to ensure its competitiveness and offer distinctive tourism experiences.

It is worth noting that many Zimbabweans do not have a travelling culture, but if tourism products are well marketed, they might increase domestic tourism. It is important to note that the tourism business is highly dependent on customer satisfaction (Ginting et al., 2023). The challenge of community-based models is the lack of business orientation. It is, therefore, necessary to focus on business development, innovation, and marketing expertise. Unfortunately, the absence of a tourism department within RDCs limits tourism development. As a result, decisions made by RDCs may not be beneficial to tourism but rather to other departments.

According to some interviewees, communities are benefiting at the ward level. Income from CBTEs is used to finance community development and other livelihood projects. Other respondents, however, questioned the viability of CBTEs, which, in their opinion, provide no or few benefits to local communities (Shereni & Saarinen, 2021). The reason why individual households do not benefit directly but rather indirectly through their wards is that wards are highly populated populations. It is, however, important to note that benefits from CBTEs could be derived more directly through other economic activities such as employment within CBT enterprises and establishing cultural centres where communities showcase their talents and lifestyles in the form of art, dance, culinary, traditional medicine, and herbs.

RDCs should also consider re-investing some of the proceeds from hunting back into tourism development to ensure their projects are sustainable and profitable in the long run, for example, by allocating a fixed percentage to this end. Currently, as much as 46% of the proceeds go to cover the cost of RDC administration. RDCs should consider revising their sharing ratio to ensure that the ones who live with wildlife benefit more. The models that include communities, RDCs and the private sector tend to be less beneficial to communities at large, with the elite getting a larger piece of the cake. However, eliminating RDCs from the management of community conservancies might not be the best solution.

CBT, if well governed, has the potential to alleviate poverty (Siakwah, Musavengane & Leonard, 2020; Mtapuri, 2022). It is important, however, to reflect on the number of members that take part in the projects. Using the MOTHU (2016) definition of CBT, it is acceptable that only some community members participate in CBT projects. Interview data collected in the study have shown that a business is more sustainable when it is managed by its initiator rather than the whole community. For CBT to be more sustainable, communities need to organise themselves based on their interests and abilities and decide who can participate in a particular CBT project. In every tourism value chain, some people benefit directly while others do so indirectly. According to information provided by the interviewees, in some CBT projects, community members receive 1 bag of fertilizer and 10 kg of mealie meal yearly. This is not insufficient to alleviate poverty and ensure sustainable development. CBT should also be supported and financed by proceeds from consumptive tourism to support non-consumptive tourism, such as accommodation, events, cultural tourism, and culinary.

The study has revealed that tourism activities in community reserves are undertaken according to the CAMPFIRE management model. In as much as CBT projects were introduced under the CAMPFIRE programme, there should be a clear distinction between community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) and CBT. CBNRM supports several natural resources-based livelihood options, such as non-timber forest products, craft work, basketry, weaving, fishing, and consumptive and non-consumptive tourism (Paudel, Filipinski & Minten, 2022). Not everyone should be involved in all available and potential livelihood options, but they should be able to choose the best option that suits them. If CBT is to be treated as any other livelihood diversification project, one can expect groups of interested community members (not all community members) will want to take part in CBT development, planning and management. Besides consumptive tourism, there are several non-consumptive tourism activities that communities could take part in to reap more direct benefits. These include cultural tourism, accommodation, art and crafts, and culinary.

Respondents also said that skills training offered within communities is not adequate to enable them to run CBT enterprises on their own. Capacity building takes two weeks or less, and this is not enough to prepare staff capable of running CBT enterprises. Community members are just given basic training. As a result, they continue to rely on expert knowledge from private operators. If devolution is to be successful, communities will need to employ experts who report directly to them.

Poaching has been highlighted as one of the challenges that community conservancies are facing. People tend to protect what they benefit from; if communities start receiving more benefits from the conservation of wildlife, they will be less inclined to poach. While poaching cannot be eradicated completely, it can be reduced if the root cause is addressed. Mataruse, Nyikahadzoi & Fallo (2022) indicated that conservation is very difficult when locals are in need, and therefore the natural and contextual drivers of such behaviours should be addressed. Poaching could be an indication of genuine food insecurity, given that livestock and crops are often destroyed by wildlife. RDCs and ward committees should try to implement livelihood projects that also address food security needs of communities rather than focusing on development projects.

6. Conclusion

This article provides insights into the current management system of CBTEs and the challenges of the management system perceived by its stakeholders. Interview data indicate the existence of over-dependence on private safari operators, which is affecting the growth and further development of CBTEs. It is important to remember that CBT initiatives are supposed to help communities and, therefore, should be managed and run by them. The level of community participation was found to depend on the type of CBT venture largely. To ensure the participation of locals in CBT, communities should organise themselves and develop tourism products and services based on their strengths, knowledge and abilities with the help of experts. As suggested by Ginting et al. (2023), there is a need for more creative approaches to CBT that go beyond wildlife tourism, e.g. cultural, craftwork, agro-tourism, accommodation and culinary tourism.

Another conclusion is that the current benefit-sharing ratio needs to be adjusted so that a greater part of the proceeds is used to finance community livelihood projects. Also, more benefits should be shared at the household level rather than just at the ward level. To maximise benefits, members need to organise themselves into smaller homogeneous groups and get involved in CBT based on their strengths,

talents and skills. We recommend that policymakers create a framework for CBT management that ensures the maximum participation of locals in the tourism value chain. To ensure tourism innovation and development at district levels, the government should consider establishing a tourism office in all districts with the task of monitoring tourism development activities and policy implementation. Further studies are needed on CBT education and how educational institutions may be involved in the development and success of CBT.

References

- Adams, W.M., Aveling, R., Brockington, D., Dickson, B., Elliott, J., Hutton, J., & Wolmer, W. (2004). Biodiversity conservation and the eradication of poverty. *Science*, 306(5699), 1146–1149.
- ASEAN (Southeast Asian Nations). (2016). Community-Based Tourism Standard. <http://www.asean.org/asean/about-asean>
- Bello, F.G., Carr, N., & Lovelock, B. (2016). Community participation framework for protected area-based tourism planning. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 13(4), 469–485.
- Bello, F.G., Lovelock, B., & Carr, N. (2017). Constraints of community participation in protected area-based tourism planning: The case of Malawi. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 16(2), 131–151.
- Bhatasara, S., Nyamwanza, A.M., & Kujinga, K. (2013). Transfrontier parks and development in Southern Africa: The case of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. *Development Southern Africa*, 30(4–5), 629–639.
- Chiutsi, S., & Saarinen, J. (2017). Local participation in transfrontier tourism: Case of Sengwe community in great Limpopo transfrontier conservation area, Zimbabwe. *Development Southern Africa*, 34(3), 260–275.
- Chiutsi, S., & Saarinen, J. (2019). The limits of inclusivity and sustainability in Transfrontier peace parks: a case of Sengwe community in Great Limpopo Transfrontier conservation area, Zimbabwe. *Critical African Studies*, 11(3), 348–360.
- Chiutsi, S., & Mudzengi, B.K. (2012). Community tourism entrepreneurship for sustainable tourism management in Southern Africa: Lessons from Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2(8), 127–134.
- DeGeorges, P.A., & Reilly, B.K. (2009). The realities of community-based natural resource management and biodiversity conservation in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Sustainability*, 1(3), 734–788.
- Dressler, W., Büscher, B., Schoon, M., Brockington, D.A.N., Hayes, T., Kull, C.A., ... & Shrestha, K. (2010). From hope to crisis and back again? A critical history of the global CBNRM narrative. *Environmental conservation*, 37(1), 5–15.
- Fan, K.H.F., Ng, S.L., & Bayrak, M.M. (2023). Appraising the community in community-based tourism. *Tourism Geographies*, 25(2–3), 594–614.
- Fletcher, R., Büscher, B. E., Koot, S. P., & Massarella, K. (2020a). Ecotourism and conservation under COVID-19 and beyond. *ATLAS Tourism and Leisure Review*, 2020(2), 42–50.
- Fletcher, R., Büscher, B., Massarella, K., & Koot, S. (2020b). ‘Close the tap!’: COVID-19 and the need for convivial conservation. *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, 85, 200–211.
- Gandiwa, E., Zisadza-Gandiwa, P., Mashapa, C., Libombo, E., & Muboko, N. (2014). An assessment of local people’s participation in natural resources conservation in southern Zimbabwe. *Journal of Environmental Research and Management*, 5, 42–46.
- Giampiccoli, A., & Glassom, D. (2020). Community-based tourism in protected areas benefits communities and conservation: a model. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 9100, 1–26.

- Giampiccoli, A., & Mtapuri, O. (2015). Between theory and practice: A conceptualization of community based tourism and community participation. *Loyola Journal of Social Sciences*.
- Giampiccoli, A., & Saayman, M. (2018). Community-based tourism development model and community participation. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 7(4), 1–27.
- Ginting, G., Dewi, I.J., Maesaroh, I., & Maria, M. (2023). Development Concept and Strategy for Creative Tourism of Community-Based Tourism Destinations in Yogyakarta. *Ilomata International Journal of Management*, 4(1), 58–72.
- Gohori, O., & van der Merwe, P. (2022). Limitations to community participation in tourism from local people's perspectives: Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe. *Development Southern Africa*, 39(6), 841–855.
- Greenfield, P., & Muiruri, P. (2020). Conservation in crisis: ecotourism collapse threatens communities and wildlife. *The Guardian*, 5.
- Hechter, M. (2017). Towards a sociological rational choice theory. In *The Social Sciences and Rationality* (pp. 23–39). Routledge.
- Hung, K., Sirakaya-Turk, E., & Ingram, L.J. (2011). Testing the efficacy of an integrative model for community participation. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(3), 276–288.
- Kusworo, H.A. (2015). *Framing poverty: an institutional entrepreneurship approach to poverty alleviation through tourism*. University of Groningen
- Marzuki, A., Hay, I., & James, J. (2012). Public participation shortcomings in tourism planning: The case of the Langkawi Islands, Malaysia. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 20(4), 585–602.
- Mataruse, P.T., Nyikahadzo, K., & Fallot, A. (2022). Smallholder farmers' perceptions of the natural and anthropogenic drivers of deforestation and forest degradation: A case study of Murehwa, Zimbabwe. *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa*, 1–10.
- Matseketsa, G., Mukamuri, B. B., Muboko, N., & Gandiwa, E. (2019). An Assessment of Local People's Support to Private Wildlife Conservation: A Case of Save Valley Conservancy and Fringe Communities, Zimbabwe. *Scientifica*, 2019.
- Matura, P. (2022). *Community-Based Tourism in Zimbabwe: The Case of Chesvingo Cultural Village in Masvingo* [Master's Dissertation], Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe.
- Mbaiwa, J.E. (2015). Community-based natural resource management in Botswana. In *Institutional arrangements for conservation, development and tourism in Eastern and Southern Africa: A dynamic perspective* (pp. 59–80). Springer.
- Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry (MOTH). (2016). Community Based Tourism Master Plan Targeting Poverty Alleviation in the Republic of Zimbabwe, Interim Report (2016), MOTH and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe.
- Mtapuri, O. (2022). The adoption of community-based tourism in the proximity of Protected Areas: Implications for policy and practice. In L.S. Stone, M.T. Stone, P.K. Mogomotsi, G.E.J. Mogomotsi (Eds.), *Protected Areas and Tourism in Southern Africa*. Routledge.
- National Department of Tourism. (2016). Operational guidelines for community-based tourism in South Africa. National Department of Tourism Pretoria.
- National Tourism Policy. (2014). Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry (MOTH). Government of Zimbabwe.
- Ntuli, H., & Muchapondwa, E. (2017). Effects of wildlife resources on community welfare in Southern Africa. *Ecological Economics*, 131, 572–583.
- Nugroho, P., Numata, S., & Aprilianto, N.A. (2020). Perceived forest-based ecosystem services and attitudes toward forest rehabilitation: A case study in the Upstream of Central Java, Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Kehutanan*, 14(2), 185–197.
- Paudel, S., Filipiski, M.J., & Minten, B. (2022). Income diversification and the rural non-farm economy. *Myanmar SSP Working Paper*, 27. International Food Policy Research Institute.

- Phiri, M., Chirwa, P.W., Watts, S., & Syampungani, S. (2012). Local community perception of joint forest management and its implications for forest condition: the case of Dambwa Forest Reserve in southern Zambia. *Southern Forests: a Journal of Forest Science*, 74(1), 51–59.
- Rasoolimanesh, S.M., & Jaafar, M. (2016). Community participation toward tourism development and conservation program in rural world heritage sites. In *Tourism-from empirical research towards practical application*. IntechOpen.
- Runyowa, D. (2017). Community-based tourism development in Victoria Falls, Kompisi Cultural Village: an entrepreneur's model. *African journal of hospitality, tourism and leisure*, 6(2), 1–7.
- Serhadli, S. (2020, 11 May). 'Market-based solutions cannot solely fund community-level conservation'. Mongabay. <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/market-basedsolutions-cannot-solely-fund-community-level-conservation-commentary/>
- Shereni, N.C., & Saarinen, J. (2021). Community perceptions on the benefits and challenges of community-based natural resources management in Zimbabwe. *Development Southern Africa*, 38(6), 879–895.
- Siakwah, P., Musavengane, R., & Leonard, L. (2020). Tourism governance and attainment of the sustainable development goals in Africa. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 17(4), 355–383.
- Taylor, R. (2009). Community based natural resource management in Zimbabwe: the experience of CAMPFIRE. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 18(10), 2563–2583.
- Timothy, D. J., & Tosun, C. (2003). Arguments for community participation in the tourism development process. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 14(2), 2–15.
- United Nations. (2020). Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism AUGUST 2020.
- van der Merwe, C.D. (2016). Tourist guides' perceptions of cultural heritage tourism in South Africa. *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 34, 117–130. <https://doi.org/10.1515/bog-2016-0039>
- Wardani, P., Farhan, M., Destarianto, P., Imam, S., Pertamina, R., Brilliantina, A., ... & Samsudin, A. (2023, January). Analysis on the Implementation of Community-Based Tourism in Sidomulyo Tourism Village, Jember Regency. In *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Social Science, Humanity and Public Health, ICoSHIP 2022, 05-06 November 2022, Jember, East Java, Indonesia*.
- World Tourism Organization. (2018). *UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2018 Edition*, UNWTO. <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284419876>
- Yanes, A., Zielinski, S., Diaz Cano, M., & Kim, S.I. (2019). Community-based tourism in developing countries: A framework for policy evaluation. *Sustainability*, 11(9), 2506.
- Zapata, M.J., Hall, C.M., Lindo, P., & Vanderschaeghe, M. (2011). Can community-based tourism contribute to development and poverty alleviation? Lessons from Nicaragua. *Tourism*, 14(8), 725–749. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2011.559200>
- Zvikonyaukwa, J., Gwazani, R., & Kugedera, T.A. (2022). Contribution of the wildlife tourism industry to livelihoods and economy. *Amity Journal of Management Research*, 5(1), 706–712.
- Zvikonyaukwa, J., Musengi, K., & Mudzengi, C. (2023). Exploring challenges for the sustainable management of wildlife resources in Matusadonha National Park and its hinterlands. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 25(1).

Turystyka i rekreacja na obszarach chronionych: badanie działalności turystycznej opartej na udziale społeczności lokalnych w Zimbabwie

Streszczenie. Tematem artykułu jest rola i wartość działalności turystycznej opartej na udziale społeczności lokalnych na obszarach chronionych w Zimbabwie oraz określenie poziomu i charakteru tego zaangażowania. Celem badania było zrozumienie systemu zarządzania i poznanie opinii różnych interesariuszy zaangażowanych w prowadzenie rezerwatów przyrody na terenach społeczności lokalnych w Zimbabwie. Badanie opiera się na analizie tematycznej danych jakościowych zebranych podczas wywiadów pogłębionych z przedstawicielami interesariuszy. Wyniki dają wgląd w obecny system zarządzania przedsiębiorstwami turystycznymi funkcjonującymi z udziałem społeczności lokalnych (CBTE) oraz wyzwania związane z ich funkcjonowaniem. Należą do nich przede wszystkim nadmierna zależność od prywatnych organizatorów safari, potrzeba dalszego rozwoju przedsiębiorstw turystycznych oraz fakt, że wpływy z turystyki nie są inwestowane w dalszy rozwój turystyki, ale na finansowanie innych projektów i utrzymanie administracji. Ponadto społeczności lokalne nie posiadają wystarczających umiejętności zarządzania i rozwijania przedsiębiorstw turystycznych. W rezultacie oferta produktów turystycznych jest ograniczona, co ma negatywny wpływ na udział lokalnych społeczności i zrównoważony rozwój turystyki.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka oparta na udziale społeczności lokalnych, obszary chronione, ochrona przyrody, zrównoważony rozwój, zaangażowanie społeczności lokalnych



Copyright and license. This article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution — NoDerivates 4.0 International (CC BY-ND 4.0) License, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>

