

The Role of Political Ideology in Influencing Tourism Development: The Case of the Wild Coast Region of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The tourism sector has for decades played a significant role in the development of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The province has a rich combination of beautiful landscapes, flora and fauna, traditional industries and historical and cultural sites. The tourism sector has however experienced patterns of tourism development which could better be understood within the framework of political economy. This paper applies a political economy model based on the critical realist method.

In using this method, the paper draws extensively from a 3-tiered ontology of social stratification based on the ideas of Roy Bhaskar. The real level in this model represents the realm of ideologies, policies and guidelines upon which actors take their concrete decisions. The processes taking place in this realm do undergo changes to reflect the power and views of those operating within this sphere. In this paper, the roles of the politicians and the public administrators in formulating policy frameworks for guiding the concrete actions of those in the tourism industry are presented as the key factors that we need to understand in order to grasp the nature of the processes at work in the transformation of the tourism sector.

The paper argues that the political changes of 1994 have opened a new chapter in the development trajectory of the province. It is recommended that the current provincial administration therefore need to use the instrument of development planning to restructure the tourism sector to enable it to accelerate the rate of growth of the Eastern Cape economy. The paper maintains that this can be achieved, inter alia, by widening the opportunities for all sections of the provincial population to make their maximum contributions to the growth of the tourism sector. The thrust of this paper, therefore, is to demonstrate that the development of the

tourism sector (as is the case with the other sectors of the provincial economy), is inseparable from the nature of the provincial tourism development policies and plans which are always ideology-informed.

Key words:

Tourism development, Political ideology, Tourism development policies and plans, the Apartheid system, Critical Realist Theory, Transkei homeland, the Wild Coast.

Introduction

South Africa has become a prime African tourist destination since the demise of Apartheid in April 1994. Tourism has become the most vibrant industry in the economy, experiencing phenomenal growth, with the number of tourists doubling every four years. It is anticipated that the number will increase to 6 million overseas and 9.5 million African tourists by the year 2010 (Pleumarom, 1994; Forbes, 1999, quoted from WTTC Research Report, 1996; CIMEC, 2000:74). The potential role of tourism in South Africa's economy calls for a development strategy, designed to increase the contributions of the sector to the growth rate of the GDP.

Tourism in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa accounts for some 9% of the provincial economy and it is the fifth and third most popular tourism destination in South Africa for international and domestic tourists respectively. The Province attracts 14% of all South African international tourist arrivals (CIMEC, 2000) with foreign tourism arrivals increasing by 155% since 1995 (CIMEC, 2000). The Eastern Cape's Wild Coast region has the potential to become the destination for international tourists because of its rich combination of beautiful landscapes, relatively unspoiled beaches, natural resources and protected flora and fauna. With effective planning, the growth of tourism would have a multiplier effect on the growth of the provincial economy.

The development of the tourism industry cannot be separated from the actions of the national, provincial and local governments. The influence of the governments is expressed in terms of the policies which they may formulate to guide investors and consumers in the industry (Hunter & Green, 1995; Buckinghamshire, 1999:69). Governments can provide the necessary infrastructure support to investors in the tourism industry. They can provide financial assistance, the

institutions to train the manpower needed to operate the tourism businesses and the marketing facilities (Morrison & Christie-Mill, 1992; McIntyre, 1993). Governments can also provide the necessary security services to ensure the safety of tourists in designated areas. At the same time, the government may also use its power to create tourism enclaves, prevent sections of the population from investing in certain sectors of the tourism industry, and develop only certain sectors of the tourism industry to satisfy certain interests (Morrison & Christie-Mill, 1992; Lickorish & Jenkins, 1997).

The concept of the developmental state indicates that the state can and ought to use its powers to promote the sustained and integrated development of societies (Nelson, 1993). This paper indicates that tourism development is inseparable from political decisions. The tourism sector is currently one area in which government political ideologies are making their influence felt in South Africa (Acheampong, 1992; 2001; ANC, 1994). The objective of this paper is to demonstrate the extent to which political ideologies have influenced and have to influence the development of the tourism industry in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. It is to demonstrate how the instruments of government power could be used to transform the industry in a sustainable way (ANC, 1994; Buckinghamshire, 1999: 69).

Critical realism is one method which is increasingly becoming an important approach for demonstrating this intimate relationship between state development policies/ideologies and their concrete manifestations. This paper could be seen as a contribution to the use of the realist method in this important area of social and developmental research.

Critical Realism as a Conceptual Framework

One of the hallmarks of the critical realist method relates to its division of social reality into three – the real, actual and empirical levels. Realists ascribe causal powers to the *real* level that are interpreted by agents in the *actual* level to produce outcomes at the *empirical* level. In realist research, it is in the real level where the mechanisms that provide contexts for decision making are located. As illustrated in figure 1 below, government policies can be conceptualized as being located in the real level constituting the key framework or guidelines for influencing the changing nature of the tourism sector in our study region. Guidelines do change however to reflect the ideas of those with political power to make a difference to the social world. It is

common knowledge that changes in political regimes are often accompanied by changes in developmental policies, guidelines and programs (Massey & Wield, 1992; Sayer, 2000). This has been the case in South Africa since 1994.

To understand the changes in the impacts of the tourism industry in the study region, the realist approach is an important approach which can be used to identify the historical and policy contexts within which the tourist guidelines and practices have been operating. These contexts can be understood by studying the nature of the government laws, policies and development plans for tourism development (Brundtland, 1987:43-44; Hunter & Green, 1995; WTTC, 1996; Tourism Concern, 1992). Such an approach will make it possible to relate the real (government laws), to the day-to-day activities of the tourism sector within the actual level (Bhaskar, 1979; Sayer, 2000; Sarre, 1987; Yirenkyi-Boateng, 1995; 2001; Danermark et al 2005).

In the context of the above, this paper on tourism development transformations along the Wild Coast Region of South Africa needs to be seen in terms of the government policies/ideologies (conceptualized as the *real* level or framework) for analyzing the tourist sector of this region. The concrete activities of the tourism operators are positioned in the actual level whose manifestations then appear at the empirical level as shown figure 1 below:

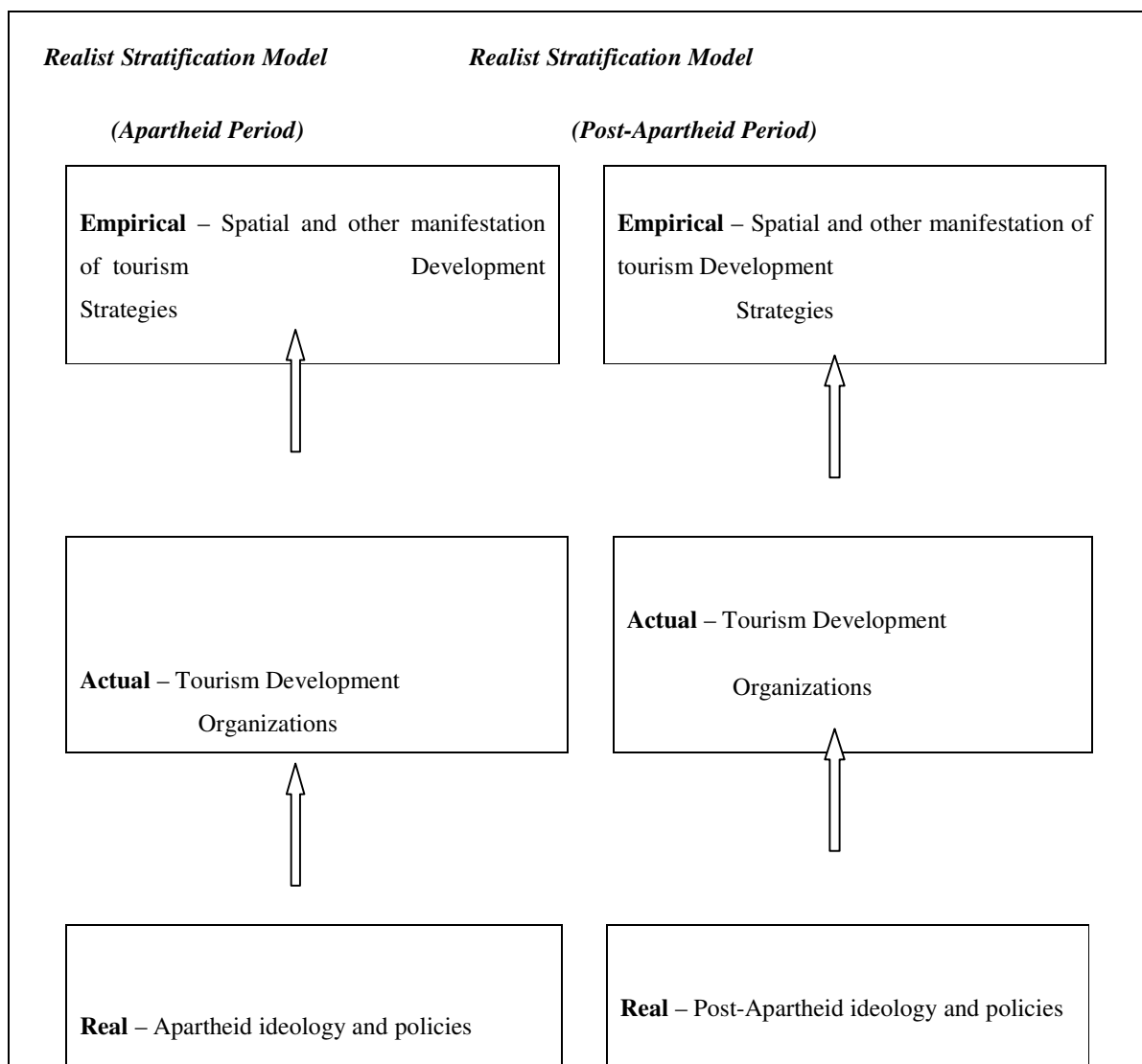


Figure 1: A Model of the Realist Approach used to evaluate the changes in the impacts of the tourism sector in the development of the Eastern Cape Wild Coast region (Source: Adapted from Yirenkyi-Boateng, 1995; 2001).

The importance of the realist approach in addressing the objectives of this paper is as follows:

- The approach highlights those important historical/political factors without which one cannot grasp the concrete changes that have taken place in the tourism sector of the region over the period under review (Carew-Reid, et al., 1996; Fleetwood & Ackroyd, 2004).

- The approach brings out the causal powers of particular policies and the underlying ideologies. That is the approach helps to identify the impacts that one can associate with particular policies by virtue of their nature (McIntyre, 1993; Junor, 2001).
- From such an understanding, the approach can then assist to identify the appropriate sets of policies that could be used to address any contradictions and problems associated with the issues under consideration. In this case, the method can assist tourism businesses in the study region to draw up integrated government-driven programs of sustainable tourist development which will be a key factor in promoting integrated regional development (Nelson, et al., 1993; Layder 1990, 1993).

Research Methodology

The operational taxonomic units used in this study were the Wild Coast's 8 district municipalities which currently serve as the administrative and political regions in the province.

Interviews were conducted in 2008 using the qualitative research methods to obtain first-hand information from the local residents and tourism operators (Sayer, 2000). The information from the respondents provided rich information about the tourist attractions, the holiday experiences, the transformations in the industry and problems currently facing the industry.

The following issues were covered in the interviews focusing on an analysis of changes in the tourism sector over the decades:

- The extent of involvement of local communities in the tourism industry
- The number and origin of tourism service providers;
- The number of tourists visiting the Wild Coast
- The nature of policies which government officials involved in the tourism sector have used to influence concrete activities in the tourism sector
- The impacts of tourism activities on the economic, social, political and on the local natural environmental systems
- The current problems facing the tourism operators and the coping mechanisms used by them to address the problems.

In a study with a focus on policies, there was a need to obtain much of the data from a comprehensive review of government tourism policy documents and tourism development plans over the years including published research works done by public and private institutions and organizations, individual research projects many others. Other sources from which data was obtained included books, local and international journals, newspaper reports, the Internet and other reports specifically on Eastern Cape policies and plans for tourism development.

The data collection exercise was conducted in all the 8 district municipalities of the province which have, significantly enough, experienced major tourism transformations with significant socio-economic impacts. These district municipalities have several accommodation units, which made it possible for the author to interview numerous operators and tourists visiting the areas. Through the use of mailed questionnaires and interviews, data was compiled on the transformations in the development of tourism and the impacts in the development of the areas concerned (Neuman & Krueger, 2003).

A total of 30 villages were visited and some 200 local residents were interviewed. Thirty tourism services providers in the following categories: art and craft vendors, transport, accommodation, recreation, fishermen, lifeguards and tour guides, were interviewed. Out of about 18 hotels in the Wild Coast, 10 hotels were visited where hotel owners, staff and tourists provided vital information on the transformations in the tourism industry. Finally, officials of seven public and private institutions, including the Eastern Cape Tourism Board and its subsidiary were also interviewed

The information obtained from these various sources covered levels of investment, employment, incomes, environmental and other changes in the areas concerned as well as the problems and the current plans in place to address them.

The advantage of this methodology is that information was sourced from a wide spectrum of role players of the tourism industry in an open survey. This approach ensured that the information which was gathered, took into consideration the divergent views from all the relevant stakeholders who have made and continue to make contributions to the development of the tourism industry.

Data analysis took the form of realist periodization. This approach was used to look into the history of the development of the tourist industry in the area in terms of specific periods. The

phases or periods that were identified in the tourism growth reflected changes in government policies on tourism development at the Wild Coast. Attention was thus paid to the underlying goals, interests and intentions behind the tourism policies (Bhaskar, 1979; Habermas, 1998, Sarre, 1987; Harre & Madden, 1975).

Research Findings

The findings indicate clearly that the changing tourism activities in the Wild Coast Region cannot be understood without reference to the various government policies. Such policies, as explained above were found to coincide with the prevailing ideologies and interests of the ruling political classes (Yirenkyi-Boateng, 1975; 2001). On the basis of the realist periodization method, the following phases or periods were identified:

Tourism Development – Pre-1976

Before 1976, it was observed by the author that the Apartheid policies on tourism in the study area favored white businesses and white tourists, marginalizing the indigenous communities and ignoring non-economic issues such as environmental conservation and local cultural tourism practices and customs. Although these “non-white” sectors are intimately related to tourism development, they were sacrificed to promote the sectional interests of the white businesses, (the capital intensive formal sector) that were largely free-market driven. Within the constraints set by these policies however it was observed that there were different responses from the districts in the province to produce different outcomes.

In the **Northern Region** districts of Bizana, Lusikisiki and Port St. John’s, for example, archival records indicate that few communities were aware of the full tourism potentials in their localities during the pre-1976 period. Tourism was seen in those days as basically a “white man’s business”. There were few tourism centres such as swimming facilities at what used to be known as the First and Second Beaches, enjoying natural sceneries at Mt. Thesiger, fishing around the estuary of the Umzimvubu River, relaxation in the sun, mountaineering, bird watching, butterfly watching, canoeing, surfing, horse riding and other leisure activities for the white population.

The tourism activities in the **Central Region** districts of Ngqeleni, Mqanduli and Elliotdale on the other hand, were limited to aquatic activities such as fish cultures, aquatic sport, whale-watching and hiking. Other locations with the first economy tourism activities included relaxation activities at holiday spots at the Hole-in-the-Wall, the Hluleka Game Reserve, Coffee Bay, the Ocean-View and Anchorage hotels, relaxing on those beaches and sheltered lagoons which were ideal for fishing, surfing and other water sport. All these activities were exclusively for whites' taste, thus, emphasizing the policy of the then government to promote white tourism development.

The **Southern Region**, made up of Centane and Willowvale, had a prime advantage of traditional African technology due to the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous Xhosas. The tourism potential was in places such as Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve; Kobonqaba-Thompson's Point ship wreck; Mbashee and Qolora and Kei River Mouths; Mazeppa, Wavecrest, Trennerys and Seagull hotels. These activities did not grow to their maximum however because of lack of support from the political establishment.

Tourism Development – 1976-1994

This phase was the period when Transkei governments began to take local tourism development issues seriously. The government of the day made it imperative for the tourism service providers to include environmental, cultural and local community development issues in the broader tourism development process. The Matanzima regime introduced an indigenization policy that made it compulsory for tourism service providers to employ local manpower and natural resources to incorporate local cultural elements in the running of the tourism activities along the Wild Coast. Local Africans who had the means were provided with funding and other necessary resources to take over the white businesses which wanted to relocate elsewhere in South Africa after the nominal independence of 1976. Some locals went into partnerships with some of the big white-owned tourism businesses such as Sun International that was given monopoly over certain services in the hospitality and the casino trade along sections of the coastline.

New developments that emerged during this period included tourism development projects at Mkambati, Isilaka, Isinuka, and Mpande Camp Sites, the Magwa Falls, the Majola and Magwa Tea Estates with activities such as gaming, bathing in the hot springs, ferrying across the Umzimvubu River, and selling tropical fruits and vegetables to tourists. The local communities

however got involved in the industry at the lower end of the scale as bar attendants, chamber maids, sentries and clerks in the hospitality industry with less than one per cent of them in middle management positions as trainee-managers. New activities, like horse-riding, hiking, collecting marine resources for sale to the hotels, making and selling of traditional arts and craft, traditional ceremonies and rituals, were later incorporated into the industry. Training programs in business and skills development, conferences and workshops, environmental awareness campaigns, after care and loan financing were also organized for the local communities during this phase of the tourism transformation process.

Despite the indigenization policy, successive Transkei governments could still not integrate the local community into the mainstream tourism because opportunities were given largely to people who somehow had close political and other relationships with the political establishment (Acheampong, 1992; 2001).

Tourism Development – Post-1994

This current phase is witnessing a number of major structural changes. The indigenization policy is now being pursued more vigorously by the current ANC government through the Wild Coast “Spatial Development Initiative” (SDI). This is a program committed to encouraging investments in those underdeveloped areas of the province with high tourism development potential. The SDI is expected to offer new and exciting opportunities in tourism, agriculture and forestry and to create jobs and ensure sustainability in the long term. It is to ensure viable tourism investments to create spin-off opportunities for Small, Medium & Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) for the empowerment of local communities through self-reliant, participatory development (KPMG, 1998).

Since 1994, the South African government has also been embarking on aggressive marketing for investment opportunities in all sectors of the economy with the tourism sector enjoying a favored position.. By 1996, there was a marked increase of over 60 per cent in the number of tourists over the 1994 figures. This exercise is yielding dividends, with the Wild Coast gradually becoming the tourism “Mecca” of the Eastern Cape. The year 2000 saw about 90 per cent improvement in tourist figures over the 1996 figure in the Eastern Cape. Since then, the growth in tourism has been phenomenal creating job opportunities with potentials to alleviate the

endemic poverty problems and out-migration in a region where over 60 per cent of the population live below the “bread line” (Acheampong, 2001).

The influx of tourists to remote regions in the Eastern Cape is fast opening up opportunities for former subsistence producers to supply tea, fruits, vegetables and other agricultural produce to the tourism market. Income generated from this trend is providing investment capital to the local communities to improve standards of living and eradicate poverty and crime. Thus, the tourism sector is gradually putting the Eastern Cape on the tourism map of South Africa. More and more opportunities are now opening up for ordinary rural subsistence producers to enter the monetized sector. In all this, the hidden hand of the post-1994 politicians, public administrators and managers in formulating policies to guide concrete actions cannot be ignored. These developments illustrate the power of the political factor in making major transformations in society.

The table below provides a summary of the form taken by the Eastern Cape tourism sector in relation to the changing political dispensation.

4.4 Illustrations of Key Features of the 3 phases of the tourism development processes

	Before 1976	1976-1994	Post-Apartheid
Government Policy on Tourism Development	Characterized by Apartheid’s separate development along racial lines. Urban tourism	Nationalization of industry through the Indigenization Policy by homeland governments. More urban/little rural	Democracy and a new paradigm based on mobilization and involvement of local communities. Mixture of both urban/rural
	Products symbolized White culture: artifacts & symbols, museums, monuments, folklore,	Minimal involvement of Black culture More emphasis on Blacks trying to manage White	Greater involvement of all cultures represented in South Africa. Resources made available to all

Tourism Products and Ownership	architectural sites. Ownership: “White thing” no black/local participation	products. Ownership: upper-middle class Black fronting for govt.	South Africans who have something to offer. Ownership: South Africans, BEE bodies
Managing Tourism Industry	Predominantly White Management. Black support only in menial jobs	Upper/Middle class Blacks with connection to the Homeland governments. But little or no expertise	Opened to all citizens supposedly with expertise, but affirmative action bias.
Development of Tourism Infrastructure	Infrastructure developed in areas that offered products of White interests only. Rural areas neglected	Existing infrastructure poorly managed with no new development. Infrastructure falling into disrepair.	Infrastructure being developed in all areas that have something to offer to the tourism industry.
South Africa’s Relations with the rest of the World	Isolation and boycott of anything South African by the international community & its numerous institutions	No recognition from international community of Apartheid created Bantustans	South Africa re-admission into the international community and open to international relations
Tourism Data: - No. of Tourists - Employment - Revenue	No data available in any of these variables	Scanty and inconclusive data available	Concerted efforts being made to build statistical base and to provide information to continue upward growth of tourism

- Safety & Security - etc.			
Awareness	Only the White race	Some awareness to the few Black upper/middle class	Much greater awareness to all South Africans. Tourism now integral part of school curriculum up to tertiary level.

Figure 4: Illustrations to highlight the key features of the 3-phases of tourism development.

The above table shows that the pre-1994 government policies contributed in shaping the tourism landscape into an exclusive industry for the benefit of a few. The post-1994 era shows a complete departure from the past due to the current government ideology of inclusivity (ANC, 1994; Lewis, 2000).

Current Challenges Facing Tourism in Wild Coast

Although the post-1994 period has seen a remarkable increase in the number of black entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, with major implications for the provincial economy, there are still however major challenges that need to be addressed. These include the following:

Empowerment

The tourism industry is still in the hands of few white businesses and other foreigners principally because of the high capital requirement for its infrastructure development. As a result, there continues to be leakages or flight of resources and income that could have been re-invested for the benefit of the province. Most of the service providers still prefer to purchase supplies from outside the localities, further impoverishing the tourist regions. Lack of job opportunities in the capital intensive businesses leads to the flight of able-bodied young people to the neighboring urban centers in search of non-existent jobs, leaving the local economies in the hands of the old,

the infirm, young and women. Concerted efforts thus need to be made to change the 'complexion' of tourism and to de-stigmatize it as a "white man's business" (White Paper, 1996; WTTC, 1996).

Evidence of Sectional Interests

Evidence of sectional interest in policies on tourism development continues to cause conflicts between the public institutions and some local communities. One problem relates to the conflict on conservation and the use of local natural resources. Prior to their establishment, the nature reserves were regarded by local communities as open-access communal lands for grazing, hunting and snaring game, felling indigenous trees and harvesting medicinal plants. The communities therefore vehemently continue to oppose any measures to bar them from using these assets which they consider as ancestral heritage sites. Tied to this problem is the question of land tenure system, that is, with questions of ownership and control of the land, when it comes to embarking on development projects. The proposed mining of titanium in one of the pristine spots of the province for example, has become a source of conflict between the local communities, the government and conservationists.

Environmental challenges

There are a host of ecological problems emanating from the tourism industry. Pollution and environmental despoliation arising from garbage littering, trampling of environmentally sensitive areas, such as beaches and camping sites, with four-wheeled drive vehicles and graffiti by locals and tourists, are a great cause for concern. In some areas, waste is disposed into rivers and the sea creating health hazard to both the local community and tourists (Coastal Policy Green Paper, 1998). There is also the problem of soil erosion due to overgrazing, poor farming practices and the topography around the rural tourism havens. The plundering of resources by both local people and tourists and the danger of bush fires are threatening the extinction of certain marine and natural resources (Punttenney, 1990; Tourism Concern, 1992; Nelson, 1993; Place, 1995).

Lack of political support

Politically, there are not enough support systems for local initiatives to integrate into the mainstream tourism development. Lustrous ideas and policies on training and financial support systems to empower the local community are mooted regularly, but they mostly end up in the boardrooms and the corridors of power. Programs such as the Wild Coast Spatial Development Initiative can only succeed with the full involvement of the local communities. There is currently little support of government on research into tourism and, therefore, institutions cannot help to build the statistical base to provide the information needed by provincial government to deliver on its mandate. Many tourism service providers continue to complain of bureaucracy and control of access to certain tourism resources in the province.

Accessibility to the tourism sites

There has been little or no development in infrastructure for tourism development. Many roads leading to important tourist spots have fallen into disrepair. Accessibility to most of the tourism products, especially in summer when nature is at its best, is a great concern. The condition of some of the hotels in the Wild Coast is poor.

Safety and Security

Political conflicts, chieftaincy litigations, crime and violence also pose a serious threat to the industry. Port St. John's has one of the best tourism resources in the Wild Coast. Unfortunately it is one of the flash points tourist would want to avoid because of safety considerations.

Social-cultural challenges

The language barrier and ignorance of the potential of tourism in the region have made the local community passive passengers instead of active drivers in the industry. There is lack of education and training to empower the local people. As a result unemployment and poverty has reduced the maximum benefits that could accrue to the local communities. Social and cultural behaviors related to drug and alcohol consumption, crime, prostitution, and health problems all need to be addressed. .

Recommendations

The potential of tourism in the Wild Coast is so enormous that certain plans and programs should be put in place to ensure the sustainability of the tourism industry. The region is located in a malaria-free zone and a number of tourists wanting to experience Africa would prefer this region. The local communities must be encouraged to invest in the tourism industry through their indigenous cultural practices, arts and crafts. The communities should be given proper skills training in financial and business management for the benefit of their businesses. Small-scale tourism businesses should be encouraged through the formation of cooperative societies in order to access financial assistance when it is necessary.

There should also be tourism education in all sectors of the local rural communities for them to know the potential which tourism has for their economic empowerment and sustenance. In the light of this, it is recommended that tourism studies could be made a school curriculum in selected areas so that its awareness could begin right at the grassroots level. Some local communities must be made aware of the importance of eco-tourism and the need to protect the environment. In order not to destroy the environment by exceeding the carrying capacity, it is imperative that environmental impact assessment data be made compulsory requirement in the submissions of business plans for financial assistance in particular areas. Brochures and publicity materials must also contain a code of conduct spelling out the 'dos' and 'don'ts' for tourists and host communities.

There can be no sustainable tourism development if tourists feel insecure and unsafe. Therefore, any signs of crime and violence in the tourism areas must be dealt with decisively. The government and all role players must embark on aggressive marketing and promotion within and outside the province using all available resources to position the tourism sector as a leading growth activity.

Conclusion

The potential of the Wild Coast as a tourist destination cannot be over-emphasized. This paper has shown that the role of South Africa's tourism policies in influencing the development of the industry cannot be ignored. South Africa is known all over the world as a classical example of

how political transformation can lead to major positive economic and social transformations. This is the reason why the role of the state is very crucial if the full potential of the Wild Coast, as a tourist destination, is to be realized. Of the three components of every society: state, business and civil society, the state is undoubtedly the most fundamental and the most formidable for creating opportunities through the concrete activities which it stimulate. The provincial and local state structures must therefore continuously provide the enabling environment for all actors to make their maximum contributions to the development of the tourism industry in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. No meaningful transformation in the business sector can be accomplished without the leadership of the developmental state.

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