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Creative Cultural Tourism for Namibia: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

This study examined the development of creative cultural tourism in Namibia. It also analyzed various opportunities and possible challenges that may exist for the development of this niche tourism product for Namibia. Today, many juvenile destinations such as Namibia are seeking to distinguish themselves from major competitors and have tapped onto culture and heritage as a means of uniqueness and distinction. Culture has been linked to tourism as a means of generating income and jobs. Destinations are therefore beginning to supplement culture-led strategies with creative development. Primary data were collected through interviews with key stakeholders in the tourism industry and tourists who are on holiday in Namibia. Secondary data were collected through policy and document analysis pertaining to the tourism development and cultural aspects. The concept of creativity could be applied to tourism through the development of new products or experiences; new forms of consumption and/or new tourism spaces. Findings revealed that Namibia has a high potential for developing creative cultural tourism due to its rich and less exposed cultural practices. Lack of policy implementation, low literacy level among community members and the fear of cultural exploitation were identified as some of the challenges. Thus the study concluded that although creative cultural tourism has more economic and social benefits, more attention is needed in terms of policy development and implementation as well as creativity and innovation to maximize cultural and heritage preservation.

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Introduction and Research Problem

Tourism is often called one of the world's fastest growing industries and there is no indication that its growth or spread to new places is likely to end in the near future (Saarinen, 2011). In Southern Africa, the tourism industry is a growing and important element in the regional economies. Many Southern African countries presently see the promotion of tourism as a good strategy that can be used to attract foreign capital and investors through showing local indigenous cultures (Kavita & Saarinen 2016). The role and importance of sustaining the growth of tourism for national development is highlighted by the Namibian government through various national documents such as: National Sustainable Tourism Growth and Development Strategy (2016); National Development Plan 5 (2017) and Vision 2030 (2004). The Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5) is the 5th National Development Plan in the series of a total of seven (7) Namibian National Development Plans that are to be implemented to achieve the objectives and aspirations of the Namibia's long-term vision (Vision 2030). In sequence, NDP5 will be the third five year implementation vehicle towards Vision 2030 (Republic of Namibia , 2017).

Tourism will create every fourth job in Namibia, which makes it a significant and important sector of the Namibian economy and as the unemployment rate in Namibia is 27.4 percent. (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2017) and other industries do not show significant growing rates, it's pivotal to sustain the current growth of the tourism industry thus investment in extending the current tourism products potential is essential (World Travel and Tourism Council , 2015).

The growth of the industry is essential and needs to diversify its current product offerings to meet the targets set in the National Development Plan 5 (NDP 5) to have visitor number exceed 1.8 million by 2022 (Republic of Namibia , 2017). Namibia is heavily dependent on its top ten tourists markets and thus there is need to expand the tourism market to ensure sustainability of the sector (Republic of Namibia , 2017). To achieve this the NDP5 has highlighted three strategies with projected outcomes that will be implemented during the period of NDP5 to achieve this growth within the tourism industry. These strategies include awareness, marketing and promotion of tourism with a desired outcome of retention and expansion to new markets, promote local tourism, ensure conservation as a key policy priority for tourism, and promote communal conservancies and cultural tourism. Another strategy is to facilitate investment in infrastructure and superstructures and the last strategy looks at diversifying the current tourism products with a desired outcome to develop new tourism products by incorporating culture and creative sectors into tourism (Republic of Namibia , 2017). Thus by looking at the priorities of the Namibian government in terms of tourism it is important that efforts are directed to achieve these strategies that are put in place and one such effort can be the development of a new creative cultural heritage tourism segment for the Namibian tourism industry.

Namibia wants to diversify its current cultural tourism products and research is needed on the distinctive niche market forms of cultural tourism to aid with the diversification of the cultural tourism product. "Creative tourism, ethical tourism and life-seeing tourism" are distinctive niche-market forms of cultural tourism (Ivanovic, 2008, p. 91) that destinations can diversify into to expand their current tourism product offerings. All the above distinctive niche-market forms of cultural tourism place emphasis on the involvement of the local community as key participant to the creation of the tourist experience.

The term creative tourism was coined by Richards and Raymond (2000, p. 18) as "tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken". In 2008 Ivanovic also defined creative tourism as; "learning indigenous skills distinctive of the destination visited and developing individual creativity while on holiday" (Ivanovic, 2008, p.91). Central to both these definitions are hands-on experiences that are culturally authentic. These defining principles are the primary variables that distinguish creative tourism from other forms of tourism, e.g. cultural and eco-tourism.

The newest trend for the "cultural creatives" (Richards & Wilson, 2006) has necessitated destinations to complement and advance their tourism product offerings to encompass the needs for the cultural creatives. This is a market which prefers to be responsible for the creation of their own tourist experience and immerse themselves within local communities. The "experience economy" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) which is growing since the 1990s encourages unprecedented development of the creative industries in the tourists generating markets and an increasing interest for individuals to learn new skills and participate in the creation of new cultural experiences (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, Creative Tourism Business Model and its Application in Bulgaria, 2010). Creative cultural tourism is a form of "Special Interest Tourism (SIT)" (Ivanovic, 2008, p. 89) and thus it is aimed at the "Cultural Creatives" (Richards & Wilson, 2006). The Cultural Creatives are extremely sensitive to the authenticity of cultural attractions and very selective in their consumption choices. What they expect is not a continuous supply of new authentic attractions but rather constant production of new authentic tourist experience (Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013, p. 173). Namibia has seen the need to revisit their current tourism offerings by incorporating culture and creativity into its tourism offerings (Republic of Namibia , 2017). Namibia being diverse in cultural practices has a high chance of embracing creative cultural heritage. Despite the unique and multi-cultural practices in local communities, creative cultural heritage is not widely explored as part of tourist activities.   Thus, this has prompted this study to dig deeper into the potential of creative cultural tourism as a distinctive niche product for the Namibian tourism industry. The aim of the study was to examine the challenges and opportunities that exist for the development of a creative cultural tourism product and will be achieved through two objectives. Objectives include to discuss the possible challenges and opportunities in developing a creative cultural tourism product and suggest recommendations on the suitability of the creative cultural tourism product for the Namibian tourism market.

Methodology

As a Namibian case study, the researchers used a pragmatic mixed methods design. The pragmatic parallel mixed methods design enable the researchers to collect and analyze data using both qualitative and quantitative to answer the study's research objectives (Mertens, 2015). These methods enabled the researchers to administer questionnaires with tourists who visited Namibia, review some policies related to tourism practices as well as conducting interviews with relevant stakeholders in the industry. The population comprised of stakeholders in the tourism industry such as Namibia Tourism Board as the key marketing agency for Namibia, Ministry of Environment and Tourism; tourists who are the potential targets of creative cultural tourism products and Destinations Management Companies who are responsible for bringing tourists to Namibia, for example, Sense of Africa, Pack Safaris, Wilderness Safaris.

A sample is a selection of participants from the population (Newby, 2010). A total of six participants from participating organizations were purposefully selected. According to Mertens (2010), purposeful sampling strategy can be used to choose participants to be included in a very small sample because of the depth of information sought from individuals. The sample comprised of one director from the Ministry of environment and Tourism, two managers from selected Destinations Management companies and three tour guides from selected tour operator companies. Their experiences and involvement in tourism activities made them rich sources of information. In addition, a total of 50 tourists were randomly selected to complete the questionnaires.

Smith and Osborn (2007) affirm that semi-structured interviews create an opportunity to probe for more clarity. Semi-structured interviews with interview schedules, which guided the researchers were used and the interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders in the industry to determine the perceived opportunities offered by creative cultural tourism and challenges thereof to the local communities. All participants were interviewed individually and permitted the researchers to audio-record their responses. In addition, National policies and documents pertaining to tourism practices were analyzed to provide some theoretical discussions from secondary data which are valuable in examining the concepts of tourism, creativity, and the consumption of cultural tourism in the tourism industry. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to tourists at strategic locations in and around Windhoek, which serves as the hub of the entry and departure point for tourists coming into and departing Namibia. After transcribing and coding qualitative data, the researchers used thematic analysis, to make sense of interview data. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that thematic analysis is flexible and useful in providing rich, detailed and yet complex account of data. The data collected was analyzed manually. Furthermore, content and document analysis were used for policies and relevant documents. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data.

Literature Review

Creative Cultural Tourism in Context

Pearce and Butler (1993) initially discussed creative tourism as a potential form of tourism (Ali, et al., 2016). It was only when Richards and Raymond (2000:18) defined creative tourism as a form of "tourism which offers the visitor the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristics of the holiday destination where they are undertaken" (Binkhorst, 2007) that numerous scholars (See Tan, et al., 2013; Ali, et al., 2016; Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010; Richards & Wilson, 2006; Raymond, 2007) have taken note of creative tourism as a potential extension of, or a reaction to cultural tourism (Richards & Raymond, 2000). Creative tourism goes beyond the general tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) and involves deeply the tourists in the culture landscape of the destination, where they take part in different activities – crafts, arts, culinary and other creative activities, thus creating a close link between the tourists, the local population and its cultural heritage (Richards & Wilson, Tourism, Creativity and Development , 2007).

The concept of creative tourism has developed over a number of years in a number of countries including New Zealand, Austria, Spain, Canada, the United States and Taiwan (Tan, Kung & Luh, 2013). These countries use different definitions of creative tourism, yet most have some similarities: they encourage creative potential and active tourist participation (Jamal, Othman & Mohammad, 2011; Richards, 2011). Various destinations used the creative tourism concept for numerous versatile reasons and application to their cultural products to diversify or regenerate the destination. "Homestay Malaysia: A Cultural Experience" a Malaysian creative tourism product which is an activity where tourists can buy, see, taste or learn about close knit family relationships, home-cooked Malay food and the simple lifestyles of the villages (Ali, et al., 2016, p.88) The New Zealand initiative started in May 2002 and they have used the application of creative tourism as a "more sustainable form of tourism that provides an authentic feel for the local culture through informal, hands-on workshops and "creative experiences". Workshops take place in small groups at tutors' homes and places of work; they allow visitors to explore their creativity while getting closer to local people" (Creative Tourism New Zealand CTNZ, 2007). These experiences usually involve tourist direct engagement with communities through various activities in learning traditional crafts/handicrafts, gastronomy, perfume making, porcelain painting and dancing (Richards & Wilson, 2006). Creative tourism has the potential to draw on local skills, expertise and traditions from many areas and a major advantage of creative tourism for the destination is that it provides a new means of distinguishing its cultural products from that of its competitors (Richards & Raymond, 2000, p. 18).

Demand for Creative Tourism

The "experience economy" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) which is growing since the 1990s encourages unprecedented development of the "creative industries" (Smith, 1998) in the tourist generating markets and an increasing interest for individuals to learn new skills and participate in the

creation of new cultural experiences (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, Creative tourism business model and its application in Bulgaria., 2010). Creativity is increasingly recognized as essential for success in many aspects of life: personal development, life-long learning, management and even politics. As leisure time in the developed world becomes scarcer, holidays can provide important opportunities for people to develop their creative capacities (Richards & Raymond, 2000). Creative tourism counts on cultural resources to attract travelers to a destination. It is also a form of creative community development – by stimulating the "creative industries" (Smith, C, 1998) from outside, the local economy improves beyond the profits from tourism.

Benefits of Creative Tourism

Creative tourism offers both tangible and intangible benefits to the host destination. Ohridska-Olson and Ivanov (2010) argue that the tangible benefits of creative tourism can be cultural capital, which leads to the increase of creative and cultural assets for the host destination. The tourism market of the host destination can expand which leads to the growth of the geographical reach for cultural and creative industries through creative tourism. Another benefit is the preservation of cultural heritage as it serves as a renewable resource for creative tourism. Creative tourism helps brands visibility of local communities and hence increase the brand equity for small communities. More benefits include job creation which can create employment for artists and craftsmen.

The intangible benefits from creative tourism can be that the focus of the unique local arts, crafts and authenticity contribute to the emphasis on the local identity. Local communities are in the position to preserve their cultural values, instead of destroying these cultural values to please the visitor, creative tourism can aid with preservation of it (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, Creative tourism business model and its application in Bulgaria., 2010). In order to compete successfully on the creative tourism marketplace, which is sensitive to uniqueness of the tourism offerings, communities are forced to emphasize and preserve their local cultural identity, pride of the place and thus provide a clear diversification of the creative tourism resources (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, Creative tourism business model and its application in Bulgaria., 2010).

The Challenges of Creative Tourism

Raymond (2007) in his study of Creative Tourism New Zealand discussed some of the initial disappointments that the Network faced when starting up. Disappointments such as the workshops that was proposed by the tutors were over complicated on the website and not enough visitors were staying long in the area where the study was piloted to do some of the longer workshops offered. There was little consistency on the workshop dates as tutors had other responsibilities as well and the end product was not easily understood by the prospective participants.

However as much as destinations can benefit from the business of creative tourism, one of the major issues of tourist consumptions which include creative tourism is the authenticity of the experience (Healy & Sills, 2003; Prentice, 2001; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Creative tourism is

based on the authentic experience it delivers to the tourist (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, Creative tourism business model and its application in Bulgaria., 2010). Richards and Wilson have also pointed out that creative strategies also run the risk of generating "serial reproduction" (Harvey, 1989; Richards and Wilson, 2006) in which the search for uniqueness and distinctiveness is pursued via a similar set of policy strategies, which ultimately lead to less distinctiveness between places (Richards & Marques, Exploring Creative Tourism: Editors Introduction , 2012).

Creative Cultural Tourism in Namibia

The aim of the study was to examine the challenges and opportunities that exist for developing a creative cultural tourism product for Namibia. Semi –structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders within the tourism industry and self-administered questionnaires were distributed to tourists who are either on holiday in Namibia or who is departing Namibia to obtain their views on creative cultural tourism as a possible new tourism product for Namibia. The interviews were analyzed, and themes were established to understand the challenges and benefits that a creative cultural tourism product can have for Namibia. Descriptive statistics were used for the analyses of the questionnaires.
The self-administered questionnaires enabled to investigate two types of data. It was essential to collect information on the visitor's profile and reason for coming to Namibia to identify the main target market of visitors to Namibia. Secondly their view and understanding of creative cultural tourism was assessed.
The first information that emerges from the questionnaire regards the various nationalities of visitors to Namibia. Data reveals that the visitors who formed part of the study is mainly German origin followed by Austrians. Namibia as a former German colony main tourist markets are Germany, South Africa, Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe with 90 729 German Tourists that visited Namibia in 2015 (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2015).

Figure 1: Visitors as per Nationalities
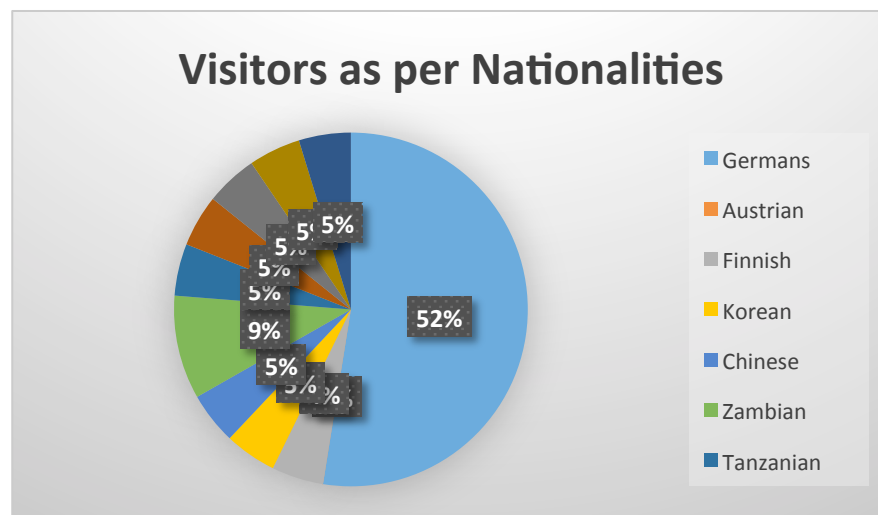
Source: Data elaborated by authors

According to the results from the questionnaires, the most frequent visitors are in the age group of 40 -55 and 18 – 25 age bracket and predominately females who visited Namibia during the study period. See figure 2 and 3 for breakdown of visitor's age and gender.
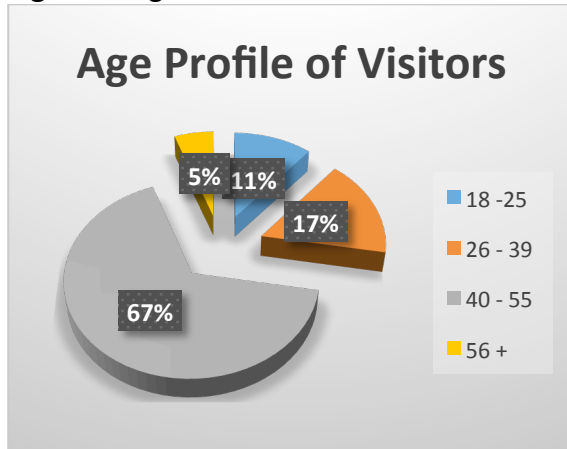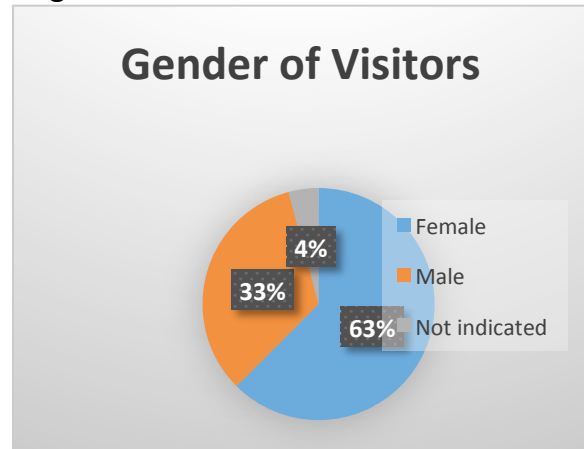
Figure 2: Age Profile of Visitors

**Figure 3:** Gender of Visitors

Source: Data elaborated by authors

The results of the survey highlighted that the main reason for travelling is for holiday purpose and while on holiday the main activity is the sun, sand and sea which Namibia is known for, followed by viewing of wildlife and visiting local communities. See figure 4 and 5 respectively for the breakdown of the results.

Figure 4: Reason for Travel
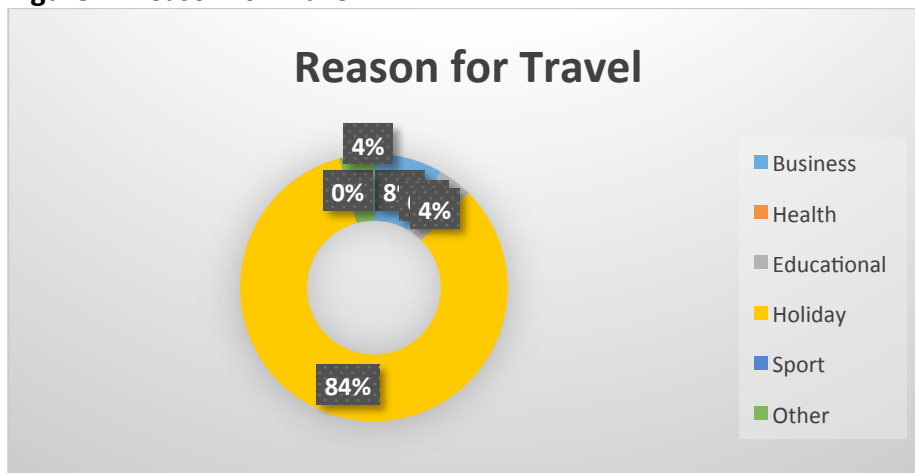
Source: Data elaborated by authors

Figure 5: Activities while on Holiday
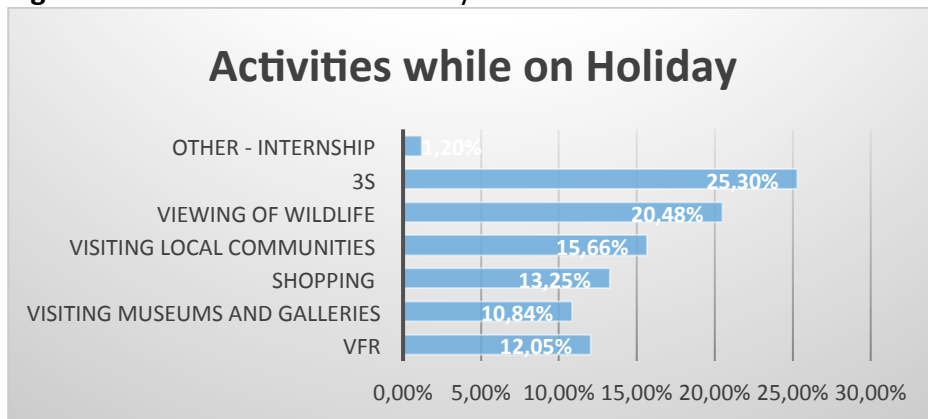
Source: Data elaborated by authors

The study investigated the potential of creative cultural tourism within Namibia and one of the key activities of creative tourism is to immerse and visit local communities, which is the third most popular activities that visitors engage in while on holiday.

The second type of findings is represented by the activities of creative cultural tourism that visitors would like to engage in if offered the opportunity, and also their view on the perceived challenge and benefits that they assume creative cultural tourism can have on local communities and for Namibia. The findings indicate that visitors to Namibia would like to engage in learning to cook with the Ovahimba women within their local homesteads, followed by traditional dancing with the San people and making traditional jewelry with all indigenous groups of women in Namibia. Figure 6 gives a breakdown of the activities of creative tourism that visitors would like to engage in should the opportunity present itself.

Figure 6: Activities of Creative Cultural Tourism
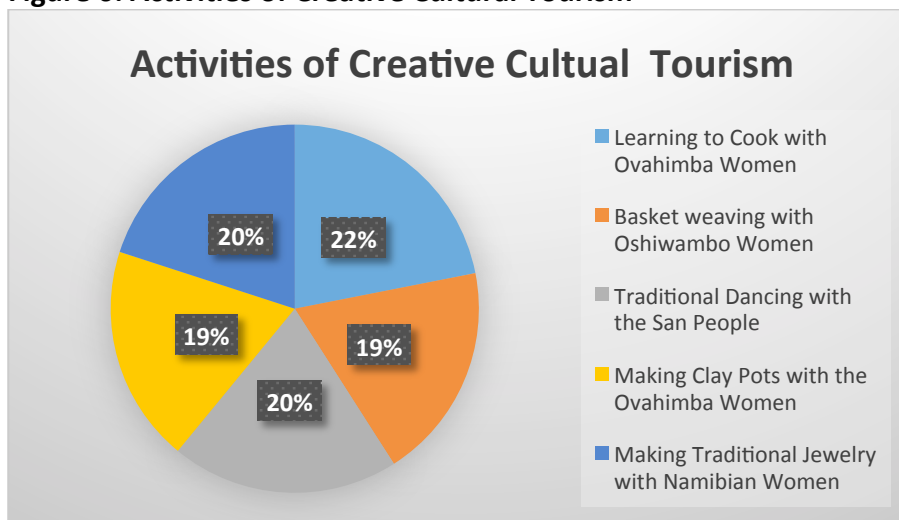
Source: Data elaborated by authors

On the benefits and challenges that creative cultural tourism can have for the local communities open-ended questions were posed to allow the respondents/visitors the opportunity to answer what they perceive as the likely benefits and challenges.

Responding to the question on what they think are the likely benefits the local community can get by engaging with tourists in their natural environment?
47.05% of the responses has indicated that monetary benefits are likely to be received by local communities should they engage with visitors in the natural environment. 29.4% of the responses have indicated that cultural exchange takes place, which allows both the visitor and the local to learn from each other on their distinctive cultures. 17.6% indicated that job creation for the local community is a likely benefit that the locals can receive when engaging in creative cultural tourism within their natural environment.

Regarding what respondents think are the likely challenges of creative cultural tourism to the local community?
38.4% of the responses has indicated that the language barrier between the visitor and the host can be perceived as a challenge as creative cultural tourism is of such a nature that verbal interaction is needed and many a times either the visitor or host might not be able to communicate effectively to be able to engage in creative cultural tourism activities. 23% of the responses has indicated that lack of support and funding to local communities can hinder the establishment of creative cultural tourism ventures. Other perceived challenges include poor customer service provision within the tourism sector and local communities being exhibitions and exotic to visitors to the areas.

The semi-structured interviews allowed building on the potential of creative cultural tourism and likely challenges and benefits and what can be done to mitigate these challenges and ensure successful distribution of benefits to the local communities. The data was analyzed by deriving key themes and elaborating on the key themes.

The potential of creative cultural tourism was a key theme that was extracted from the interviews conducted. One of the participants mentioned that a "growing number of inbound tour operators are now looking for dynamic cultural offerings to diversify their current cultural offering". This potential of creative cultural tourism is in line with the Namibian government who now wants to actively promote culture and creativity in tourism to be able to diversify the current Namibian cultural tourism product. Participants also highlighted high potential of economic benefits, social benefits as well as heritage and cultural conservation to the locals through creative cultural tourism activities. "More job opportunities for local communities, cultural and heritage conservation, reduction in social evils." This concurs with findings by Ohridska-Olson and Ivanov (2010) who affirmed that creative cultural tourism contributes to heritage preservation and employment creation. However, development and implementation of policies to safeguard such activities remain the challenge.

One of the key challenges that participants are foreseeing is the issue of intellectual property and the protection of indigenous knowledge of the local communities. One way to mitigate this challenge is the implementation of a national policy that protect the creative process and traditional knowledge of the local communities. This will ensure that the local communities' heritage and knowledge are protected and not exploited which might occur if the creative process is not protected. Another challenge is the benefit sharing that the local communities is likely to receive from engaging in creative activities within the local communities. One of the participants mentioned that "heritage and culture is a shared commodity and thus how will it be shared within these communities"? Once again policy formulation and implementation from the Government side need to address the benefit sharing mechanism in local communities into consideration in policies addressing the creative industry.

The benefits that can be derived from a creative cultural tourism product is the "preservation of culture and heritage", locals are educated to understand the value of preserving their culture and heritage for future generations. Also if local communities engaged in these activities, it can allow for more job opportunities for the local communities and thus mitigate social evils which stem from unemployment.

Although only 5% (Namibia Tourist Exit Survey, 2013) of the total visitors to Namibia has indicated that they have come to Namibia for cultural tourism should not discourage the tourism industry from not marketing and selling the cultural tourism product in Namibia as southern Africa is "rich in culture and not adequately exposed" and thus more marketing efforts are needed for the cultural tourism sector.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the challenges and benefits that might exist for Namibia through venturing into creative cultural tourism as a niche product for the Namibian tourism industry. The study concluded that there are more benefits such as high potential of economic and social benefits as well as heritage and cultural conservation to the locals through creative cultural tourism activities. Namibia has an abundance of rich, unique and diverse cultures that are not exploited; therefore, the study recommends that such unique cultures should be made known to the rest of the world. Marketing efforts locally and internationally must be directed to market these diverse cultures and highlight the potential of the creative elements and creative industry of such cultures.

In addition, the study concluded that a lot still need to be done regarding policies development and implementation. Therefore, the study recommends that more policies need to be put in place to ensure maximum protection of the intellectual property and traditional/indigenous knowledge as well as heritage conservation of the local communities to ensure that exploitation and dilution of culture does not take place.

The study further recommends for sensitization and awareness creation to the local communities regarding creative cultural tourism practices. There is a need to educate the locals on all policies pertaining to creative cultural tourism practices as well as finding strategies to enhance creativity and innovations regarding the new venture. Namibia as a tourists' destination has a great potential to develop this new venture and empower the local communities to benefit both socially and economically. Such empowerments will indeed contribute to the betterment of living conditions of local communities and contributes to poverty eradication.

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