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## Has Community-Based Tourism Been a Useful Tool for Poverty Eradication in Southern African Rural Destinations?

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### Abstract

The goal of this study is to assess the progress made so far in the eradication of poverty through the growth of tourism in the rural communities of three Southern African tourist destinations. In doing so, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) to what extent have the countries in Southern Africa improved the livelihoods of the poor through community-based tourism? (2) Are the poor the beneficiaries of the sustainable, inclusive community-based tourism drive in Southern Africa? (3) Is community-based tourism a panacea for the eradication of poverty in rural areas of Southern African? The study uses meta-synthesis to evaluate the extent to which pro-poor tourism approaches are achieving the intended goals using Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe as case studies. Findings shows that empirical studies investigating poverty alleviation and CBT are growing, especially in Botswana and Namibia, and the level of poverty seems to be declined in areas where community-based tourism thrives.

**Keywords:** Community based tourism; poverty; sustainable development goals; rural destinations; Southern Africa

### Introduction

The results of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) are a mixed bag. On the one hand, some scholars described the outcomes of MDGs as largely ineffective (Aleyomi, 2013; Ki-moon, 2015; Moschen et al., 2019), specifically in the socio-economic contexts. On the other hand, MDGs have been considered relatively effective, especially in developing economies in Africa (Durokifa & Ijeoma, 2018; Durokifa & Moshood, 2016). It can be argued that these mixed results contributed to the reflections of the MDGs, which resulted in the launch of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the 195 member states of the United Nations in 2015 (Raub & Martin-Rios, 2019). SDGs are a follow-up to the "unfinished" business that was left following the end of the MDGs (Tham & Sigala, 2020; Woyo, 2020). Thus, SDGs were conceived to build sustainable future solutions for 17 goals including no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions, and partnerships for the goals (United Nations, 2019).

Despite the weak developmental outcomes of the MDGs, sustainability metrics are becoming increasingly important (Bebbington & Unerman, 2018), and many countries are becoming increasingly concerned (Moschen et al., 2019), as the achievement of sustainability

targets is gaining traction. Thus, the 17 SDGs are intended to promote action in areas of vital significance to humanity and the world for 15 years, beginning in 2015 (United Nations, 2015). Tham and Sigala (2020) argue that SDGs are a call for global action, and one of the global steps needed by all UN member states is to ensure that extreme poverty is eradicated by 2030. The 17 SDGs tend to concentrate on various aspects of sustainable futures. On this basis, it can be argued that the role of tourism in addressing each SDG effectively is unlikely. However, it is crucial that research, especially in the empirical context of rural African tourist destinations, reflect on the role of tourism in addressing poverty eradication, as this could help formulate sustainable development strategies that could help African countries achieve SDG 1 by 2030 (Durokifa & Ijeoma, 2018) to meet the SDGs by 2030.

Despite rising pro-poor tourism research worldwide and in Africa (Musavengane et al., 2019), poverty levels in Africa, particularly among the rural communities of Southern Africa remain relatively higher (Cheteni et al., 2019; Woyo, 2021). This implies that there is a general lack of a nuanced understanding, particularly of the impacts, causes and contexts of poverty in the African context. This general lack of understanding could delay progress towards achieving zero poverty by 2030. Research must, therefore provide a better understanding of the current situation regarding Africa's development outlook, especially to understand what could be done to ensure the target of zero poverty is achieved. Accountability is critical to establish the extent to which community-based tourism has been beneficial to local people. Musavengane & Siakwah (2020:1573) argued that accountability should “extend beyond reports and opinions of the technocrats, bureaucrats, experts and political elites”.

The goal of this study is to assess the progress made so far in the eradication of poverty through the growth of tourism in the rural communities of three Southern African tourist destinations: Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. In doing so, the study will address the following research questions: (1) to what extent have the countries in Southern Africa improved the livelihoods of the poor through community-based tourism? (2) Are the poor the beneficiaries of the sustainable, inclusive community-based tourism drive in Southern Africa? (3) Is community-based tourism a panacea for the eradication of poverty in rural areas of Southern African? Responding to these questions would make it easier to recognise factors that encourage or hinder pro-poor economic policies in community-based tourism initiatives (CBT). The results of the study are crucial in the formulation of sustainable development plans that could help African destinations to deal with SDG 1, which focuses on zero poverty (Durokifa & Ijeoma, 2018). The findings are also critical because they enable destinations to strengthen their pro-poor tourism policies and make them more focused and strengthened in terms of their decision-making processes.

### **Revisiting the tourism, MDGs and SDGs nexus**

Following the expiry of the MDGs implemented in September 2000, 17 SDGs were introduced in 2015. The implementation of the SDGs was criticised as a reshuffling of the ineffective MDGs (Woyo, 2020). Out the 17 priorities, two seem to have a global emphasis: SDG 1, which focuses on the eradication of poverty in all its forms, and SDG 2, which focuses on zero hunger. A systemic review of the 17 SDGs reveals that these goals are intrinsically connected (Zhou et al., 2017), showing the symbiotic and inseparable elements that characterise sustainability (Dhahri & Omri, 2020). Dhahri and Omri, (2020) claim that "poverty reduction is linked to other goals" including health, water and sanitation, energy, and climate. Consequently, the achievement of the two goals –zero poverty and zero hunger, has multiplier effects on the achievement of the remaining 15 other SDGs (Woyo, 2020).

While extreme poverty may be decreasing globally (UN, 2019), many people in developing countries are currently living in extreme poverty (Ouyang et al., 2019; Woyo,

2020). Recent studies show that at least two billion people worldwide live below US\$3 (Ouyang et al., 2019) and are a victim of policies adopted by nations (Musavengane et al., 2019). This picture shows that poverty eradication is one of the problems that countries need to resolve effectively (de Janvry & Sadoulet, 2016; Woyo, 2020; Woyo & Woyo, 2016), specifically countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). SSA is one of the world's regions, with most residents living in server poverty (Azzarri & Signorelli, 2020). This grim picture is believed to be likely to stay due to challenges of climate change (Winsemius et al., 2018) and bad policies that are pursued by countries in the SSA region (Musavengane et al., 2019) as well the recent outbreak of the novel coronavirus that left many without income (Musavengane et al., 2021; Woyo, 2021; Woyo & Nyamandi, 2022). These findings underline the importance of reflecting the role of the tourism industry in Namibia (Woyo & Amadhila, 2018), South Africa and Zimbabwe has been playing in eradicating extreme poverty.

Tourism, especially in the last 20 years, has been promoted as a useful diversification tool, particularly for developing countries (Forlarin & Adeniyi, 2019; Musavengane et al., 2019; Woyo & Woyo, 2019). Support for the use of tourism as a policy for development in developing economies stems from its capacity to generate jobs, foreign currency revenues, and other multiplier benefits (Musavengane et al., 2020; Woyo & Slabbert, 2019; Musavengane et al., 2020). Due to these positive aspects, many of the studies have been dominated by the need to recognise the influence of tourism on economic growth (Forlarin & Adeniyi, 2019; Winters et al., 2013; Woyo & Woyo, 2016). Growth is the primary means through which poverty reduction is pursued. There is, therefore, a need to understand the connection between tourism growth and poverty reduction in rural Southern Africa. This understanding is missing, given the limited evidence that explains whether these tourism benefits are cascading down to the poor, specifically and community level (Chok et al., 2007; Forlarin & Adeniyi, 2019; Musavengane & Siakwah, 2020).

The use of tourism as an integral route to poverty reduction is widely reported in the literature (Lo et al., 2018; Saarinen & Rogerson, 2014; Scheyvenes & Russel, 2012; Musavengane et al., 2019). However, this pathway has not universally been agreed by scholars. On the one hand, some scholars claim that pro-poor tourism is a panacea to poverty among residents (Musavengane et al., 2019, 2020; Siakwah et al., 2020). On the other hand, some scholars argue that tourism growth and development is more exploitative (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008), and does not seem to benefit the poor (Woyo, 2020), especially in rural communities (Cheteni et al., 2019). However, these extreme views regarding the role of tourism on poverty reduction have been identified as not useful (Lor et al., 2019). This implies a need for a much more nuanced assessment of the role tourism might play in reducing poverty in developing countries, more so in the African context.

With a significant amount of studies based on poverty and tourism, the understanding of the role that tourism plays in reducing poverty remains unclear. Lor et al. (2019) suggest that research on the causal relationship between tourism and poverty reduction is still in its infancy. The lack of verifiable causal relationship between tourism and poverty reduction is primarily due to the absence of evaluative research that can give policymakers a detailed understanding of tourism as a poverty reduction tool (Phi et al., 2018). The current study seeks to make a critical assessment of the role of tourism in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Filling this theoretical gap is vital for tourist destinations if they are to substantial progress towards achieving SDG 1, in particular by creating opportunities to increase the involvement of the poor in the tourism value chain. The paper points out critical elements that promote SDG through CBT in Southern Africa.

## Methodology

### *Study contexts: Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe*

Namibia is a mostly desert ranch land with a long coastline on the South Atlantic, bordering South Africa, Botswana, and Angola. The economy of Namibia is primarily supported by mining, agriculture, and tourism. Due to its tiny population of 2.5 million (NSA, 2019), Namibia is regarded as an upper-middle-income country with a 0.645 Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2019). Tourism is the third main contributor to the country's GDP (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2016; Woyo & Amadhila, 2018). It contributed 3.2% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 5.3% employment in 2019 (WTTC, 2020). For the 2019 season, the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2020a) ranked Namibia 81<sup>st</sup> out of 140 in terms of destination competitiveness. However, despite the stable political environment and sound economic management (World Bank, 2019), Namibia is still regarded as one of the countries in Southern Africa with high poverty rates and inequalities (Woyo, 2020). The role of tourism in poverty reduction in the last 30 years since the country's independence remains unexplored.

South Africa is the economic hub of Southern Africa and has a comprehensive tourism system. South Africa tourism offerings range from marine to land including the big 5 and rich biodiversity. South Africa has an HDI value of 0.705 and ranked 113 (UNDP, 2019). In 2019 its tourism industry contributed 2.8% to the national GDP and 4.2% to national employment (WTTC, 2020). South Africa is ranked 61<sup>st</sup> out of 140 countries by WEF (2020) in terms of destination competitiveness. Regardless of these strides, the country is not immune from lack of inclusiveness (Musavengane, 2019) and inequalities (Musavengane & Leonard, 2019).

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country, bordering South Africa and Zambia, Mozambique. The country boasts of its vast natural resources including wildlife and mega-geographical features such as the Victoria Falls which attracts many tourists globally. In 2019 the tourism industry contributed 2.4% to the national GDP and 1.4% to national employment (WTTC, 2020). In terms of global competitiveness, as a destination, Zimbabwe is ranked 114 out of 140 in 2019 (World Economic Forum, 2020b). Zimbabwe has an HDI value of 0.563 and ranked 150 (UNDP, 2019). However, the destination has been distressed since the year 2000 due to the controversial fast track land reform and continual electoral disputes (Musavengane & Zhou, 2020; Woyo & Slabbert, 2021).

### *Study methods*

The methodological framework of this paper is interpretive and qualitative in operational form. It uses meta-synthesis to evaluate the extent to which pro-poor tourism approaches are achieving the intended goals. Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe will be used as case studies. A meta-synthesis is an inductive, exploratory research design that aims to synthesise primary qualitative case studies to draw facts and make contributions beyond those made in the primary qualitative studies (Hoon, 2013). It constitutes an interpretive approach and has a base of qualitative research as its operational framework, aiming to synthesise case studies that have not been primarily intended to achieve a unified goal. Case study research is regarded as an ideal approach to understanding contemporary community phenomena in a real-life setting with the ability to gain in-depth data (Yin, 2009). First case studies are understood to make the meta-synthesis a complete study itself that aims at extracting, analysing, and synthesising qualitative evidence to build theory.

A representation of various articles on community-based tourism in Southern African rural areas was used to draw data. Inclusionary criteria included articles with a focus on community-based tourism, cost-benefit sharing, inclusion and case study. Articles were drawn from SCOPUS database, albeit not that these are the only recognised articles on community-



based tourism (CBT) and poverty alleviation, but conveniently located. Although the articles that were sampled seem to be few compared to the total number of published materials on CBT in Southern Africa, they share sentiments in most of the articles. Thus, the articles used are valid, and the data is reliable. Table 1 shows the articles that were sampled. Botswana is the leading destination in terms of research conducted on CBT and poverty.

**Table 1: Articles sampled**

Article No.	Author(s)	Country of focus	Nature of study
1	Black and Cobbinah (2018)	Botswana	Case study on community and tourism lodge staff's attitudes towards conservation of, and tourism in, protected areas.
2	Lepper and Goebel (2010)	Botswana	Case study from Ngamiland, northern Botswana.
3	Mbaiwa (2018)	Botswana	Both primary and secondary data sources were used to examine the impact of the safari hunting ban of 2014 on rural livelihoods and wildlife conservation.
4	Lenao (2017)	Botswana	Case study investigating power relations between the local community and the state in the rural tourism development process.
5	Mbaiwa (2017)	Botswana	Primary and secondary data were used to analyse the control of tourism development, sharing of benefits and the role of citizens in tourism benefits.
6	Bandyopadhyay et al. (2009)	Namibia	A case study that seeks to determine the extent to which community conservancies contribute to household welfare. Also to establish whether the programmes pro-poor.
7	Lapeyre (2010)	Namibia	In-depth analysis on the potential contribution of community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) to poverty alleviation and empowerment.
8	Gargallo (2015)	Namibia	Case study approach on how communal conservancies facilitate rural communities to gain or secure access to and control of communal land.
9	Erling and Saarinen, (2016)	Namibia	A review paper on tourism policies influencing community-based tourism.
10	Scanlon and Kull (2009)	Namibia	A case study on whether wildlife management programmes enhance community welfare.
11	Rylance and Spenceley (2016).	Namibia and South Africa	A review paper on the value of businesses (including tourism) to local communities.
12	Giampiccoli et al. (2016)	South Africa	A theoretical paper on the role of community-based tourism and Albergo Diffuso (AD).
13	Spenceley and Goodwin (2007)	South Africa	A review on the the impact of nature-based tourism on the poor, and socio-economic assessments.
14	Stoffelen et al. (2020)	South Africa	Theoretical paper on economic growth strategies in local communities.
15	Snyman (2012)	Botswana, Malawi and Namibia	Theoretical review on benefits accruing to communities from protected areas.
16	Chirozva (2015)	South Africa	An empirical study on how communities are engaging in ecotourism entrepreneurship.
17	Chiutsi and Saarinen (2017)	Zimbabwe	Empirical data is obtained and analysed to determine community awareness and participation in tourism (CBT/ecotourism)
18	Shereni and Saarinen (2020)	Zimbabwe	A case study on locally perceived benefits and challenges of community-based natural resources management.
19.	Giampiccoli, A., & Saayman, M. (2018).	South Africa	Community-based tourism development model and community participation.

Data is analysed using critical thinking and content analysis. This study will contribute and advance the literature on sustainable development in Africa.

## Results

As highlighted earlier, the paper is set to establish the extent to which community-based tourism (CBT) is alleviating poverty in rural communities with natural resources that supports tourism in Southern Africa. The following are the critical strands surrounding poverty alleviation through CBT in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. These strands are categorised into themes (Table 2) and form the basis for discussion and analysis on the impact of CBT on poverty alleviation in Southern African rural communities.

**Table 2: Emerging themes**

Strand	Article
Employment (rewarding or miniel)	1,2,3,4,6,7,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17, 18
Distribution of benefits (effective or ineffective)	1,2
Attitudes due to economic benefits (positive or negative)	3
Conservation benefits/need	1,2,3,10,15,17,18
Provision of game meat and other commodities	3,6,10
Power dynamics	4,17
Internal colonisation – non-citizen benefits	5
Multiplier effect	6, 1, 11
Policy and land access/tenure	10,7
Social benefits	6,10,11,18
Training, education, and skills	11, 13, 15
Entrepreneurship and empowerment	11, 13
Capacity building	13
Local business support (little or more)	13
Shareholding or ownership	13
Involvement or exclusion	17,18

### ***Economic benefits***

The data shows that community-based tourism has had economic impacts in the Southern African rural communities for the past decades, though at varying degrees. Notably, CBT has created employment opportunities for the rural populace who never thought they would never get employed at any formal organisation. Almost all studies on CBT have shown a positive impact on employment. Some have noted that the money earned through direct employment enables them to buy assets and meet essential household obligations. Much of the investment is done in crop and cattle or goat farming and providing children school necessities. Some of the money is channelled to secondary income sources such as baking and sewing. Direct employment tends to benefit individual households, and the impact is widely insignificant in most of the rural communities at large, but particularly significant. Further analysis shows that community-based tourism has been influential in terms of GDP contribution in South Africa (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; Saayman et al., 2012). These findings occur at national, regional, and local levels of analysis within the four destinations where data were collected.

However, to say tourism can "eliminate" poverty from the rural communities through employment may be an over-exaggeration as it can eradicate poverty to a certain extent. As the adage saying, 'half bread is better than ' nothing', CBT has brought a sense of hope to the hopeless rural people in Southern Africa. There is a vast amount of evidence across the studies reviewed in this paper that points to the minimal impact of CBT in employment creation. For example, a study done in Botswana by Lepper & Goebel (2010) revealed that less than 5% of the total population benefits directly through CBT. Furthermore, as the case across the tourism industry, jobs at CBTs appear to be not rewarding much to catapult the rural populace from poverty. Nevertheless, employment in CBTs continues to be of the essence to the rural people given that income from employment is critical for poverty reduction compared to collective income (Dwyer & Thomas, 2012). However, the main challenge facing most CBTs in Southern Africa to enable them to employ more people is lack of growth. Community capacity constraints, for example, unmet basic needs and expatriate ownership, are cited as the greatest challenge to CBT growth and elimination of poverty (see Lepper & Goel, 2010).

### ***Entrepreneurship and ownership***

It is unarguable that most rural people in Africa lack financial resources to own viable organisations. The data obtained reveal that to attract investors to invest in rural communities, some of the governments in the region have developed liberal tourism policies that seem more favourable to foreign investors only. As a result, enclave tourism (internal colonisation) is

created in rural communities. Enclave tourism is exclusionary as it tends to favour the seemingly privileged and exclude the lowers of society (Mbaiwa, 2017). For example, in Botswana, the 1990 Tourism Policy, coupled with the liberal foreign investment policies, led to the creation of uneven conditions that disempowered local small businesses. Only well capacitated foreign organisations tend to win tenders to operate in prime areas where tourism flourishes. The only option for local businesses will be to operate at the peripherals, a similar situation that informed apartheid and colonisation eras (see Musavengane & Leonard, 2019).

On the other hand, CBT has provided opportunities for local communities to start small ventures. Those involved in entrepreneurial activities, mostly sell souvenirs at curio shops within or adjacent to the conservation territory. Due to limited finances, as noted above, local people find it easier to sell these less capital-intensive souvenirs to earn a living. The data shows that most of the income obtained is to sustain livelihoods on a day-to-day basis which makes it difficult to make long term savings. In crisis times, such as the current coronavirus pandemic, these businesses are highly vulnerable and suffers the shock most. As noted by some researchers like Rylance and Spenceley (2016), the locals with a bit of income or skills can be subcontracted by conservation organisations to provide services to tourists. To hedge against missing such opportunities, communities often collaborate to provide services to customers. As a result, social entrepreneurship in Southern Africa has led to the economic emancipation of several people within the groups. Like many researchers in the region, Chirozva (2015), therefore, noted that trust between community members, leaders and conservation organisations or Non-Profit Organisations (NPO) is built through strong social capital that exists in social entrepreneurship. Through these cooperative entrepreneurship, as Giampiccoli et al. (2016) put it across, economic and social outcomes are achieved better compared to conventional enterprises and public institutions. Most of the successful cooperatives adopted either external, service or partial association collaborative models. In sum, these models enable actors to combine their skills and finances to offer services and products to tourists. These models appear to have reduced conflicts between local people and CBT establishments by encouraging the local purchase of products from informal farmers and producers.

### ***Benefit and power-sharing***

Community-based tourism anchors on sharing. Recent developments in the field of CBT have led to a renewed interest in sharing of collective benefits and power. The essence of the CBTs is to emancipate the local people through sharing resources and benefits. The obtained data revealed that communities that tend to be involved in CBT decision-making processes. As highlighted in several studies on CBT in the region, non-involvement of communities signal and serves as an agent for unequal distribution of benefits. This, therefore, derails attainment of poverty alleviation initiatives. Some of the communities within the region are benefiting from local CBTs (Chili & Ngxongo, 2017; Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2021; Mearns & Lukhele, 2015; Strydom et al., 2018; Subadra, 2019). This is common in areas where their policies are pro-poor focused (see Bandyopadhyay, 2009). As echoed by in most studies on CBTs in Southern Africa (Chili & Ngxongo, 2017; Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2021; Mearns & Lukhele, 2015; Strydom et al., 2018), Saarinen (2006) noted that well-defined benefit distribution policies ensure the trickling down of benefits to local communities. Clear policies promote acceptable governance practices in communities by eliminating unnecessary speculations. However, having mastered the need to account, some CBTs appear to report false information on benefit-sharing, thereby, depriving local communities of receiving the actual benefits. Hence some researchers suggest for negotiated accountability processes to be initiated in CBT communities. Negotiated accountability is inclusive, participatory, and promotes trust and social justices (Musavengane & Siakwah, 2019). However, the data obtained also revealed that



there are rural communities where the elites own the conservancies, and benefits are unfairly distributed, thus impoverishing the lowers of the society further. Power-play issues resulted in cronyism and corruption in some of the CBTs (see Chiutsi & Saarinen, 2017; Lenao, 2017). Furthermore, some studies reveal that the slowness or lack of land tenure or land ownership has had adverse growth effects on CBTs in the region. In the same vein, some studies have revealed that some local communities have been denied access to "'their' resources and fences were erected to demarcate boundaries (see Gargallo, 2015). Combined, these prolong the time communities remain in poverty. Addressing these will help to find the areas of agreement between the concerned stakeholders, such as the government, community members and conservationists.

### ***Social and education benefits***

One of the tenets of community-based tourism is to improve the social well-being of local people. Provision of social services within communities eases hardships which are rampant in Southern African rural areas. Lack of social services is a sure sign of the existence of poverty in the community, nation, or region. Thus, the provision of social services will directly alleviate poverty to a certain extent. From the data obtained, it is evident that CBT ventures have led to community emancipation through the provision of social services. The most common across the region include sustainable water supply through drilling boreholes, the building of schools, grinding mills, provision of medical services (Scalen & Kull, 2009, Shereni & Saarinen, 2020). Furthermore, most rural people tend to lack good education background, and this makes it difficult for them to get employed in formal workplaces. Instead of excluding locals, CBTs in the region have been training their employees and local people in conservation-related areas (Lapeyre, 2010; Rylance & Spenceley, 2016). Most recent research shows that poorly educated people often experience a low level of skills, thus, upskilling is vital as education is an indicator of development (Al-Jundi et al., 2020). Therefore, if destinations are to deal with poverty using CBTs, there is need for a deliberate approach in ensuring that poor people are educated.

### **Discussions and conclusions**

By analysing the use of community-based tourism as the means of achieving SDG 1 in rural areas of Southern African countries, the current study (1) examined the extend Southern African countries have improved the livelihoods of the rural poor communities through CBT, (2) analysed if the poor are the beneficiaries of CBT drive in Southern Africa and (3) assessed if CBT is a panacea to poverty eradication in rural Southern Africa. The following key findings are worth noting. Firstly, empirical studies investigating poverty alleviation and CBT are growing, especially in Botswana and Namibia (Table 1). Zimbabwe is yet to attract meaningful research on the matter, as very few studies have been published in the last decade (Table 1). Despite an increase in pro-poor tourism literature in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, the connection between CBT growth and poverty alleviation remains a "terra incognita" (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Cheteni et al. (2019) argue that poverty, especially among blacks and coloureds is a significant issue in South Africa. In the context of Zimbabwe, it is acknowledged that poverty is predominantly rural (ZIMSTAT, 2019). The same levels of poverty have also been argued in studies that were conducted in Namibia (Woyo, 2020) and Botswana (Magombeyi & Odhiambo, 2017).

Secondly, this research analysed the impacts of CBT on rural communities as recorded in previous studies done in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. This study acknowledges that while poverty in rural areas remains relatively high, CBT has been beneficial in assisting the poor with income, employment, food, entrepreneurship, capacity building and other social benefits (see Table 2). Thus, the data analysed from the sampled

articles do confirm that with a well-designed CBT poverty alleviation policy, the challenges of the rural poor communities can be dealt with. Though the economic impacts of CBT on poverty alleviation are consistent with those in literature, the contribution of CBT projects in the literature that was analysed in this study shows that employment generation is minimal for rural poor communities. Past studies conducted in China (Bowden, 2005) and Fiji (Scheyvens & Russel, 2012) argued that this minimal contribution is as a result of meagre profit margins that accrues from the primary tourism activities as well as the inclusion of the rural poor in the informal economy. Based on this, there is a need to reconsider and rebuild the entire pro-poor tourism ecosystem in a manner that ensures that the CBT does not only serve as a source of complementary income but as the primary source of income for rural poor communities. Barriers to low income among CBT rural workers, such as low qualifications, have been listed in previous studies (see Chili & Ngxongo, 2017; Dwyer & Thomas, 2012; Mbaiwa, 2005). However, extraordinarily little has been done to address the challenge of low wages by tourism stakeholders and policymakers, suggesting that the drive towards poverty alleviation by 2030 could be disingenuous.

Thirdly, while CBT is beneficial to rural communities, this study found that it is generally constrained with lack of creative, sustainable entrepreneurship and lack of ownership. The reasons advanced in past studies have been that Africa lacks financial capital to win viable tourism projects. These projects, at the time of writing, are still failing because of the impacts of the coronavirus. Therefore, if CBT projects are to succeed, there is need for a deliberate change in government policy, especially in terms of promoting local people to be owners of the CBT ventures which are currently owned by foreign multinationals and citizens. Pro-poor tourism is generally an approach that should provide net benefits for poor people from tourism resources (especially the mainstream tourism industry) (Zeng & Ryan, 2012). However, the findings of the study reveal that in South Africa, CBT is primarily promoted and developed under the guise of PPT, but does little to ensure ownership of the CBT ecosystem, and more importantly, resolve the poverty of the rural communities. Therefore, a net reduction in poverty using CBT can only be accomplished if stakeholders and policymakers truly connect CBT and PPT to the mainstream tourism industry (Zeng & Ryan, 2012). The current model is not sustainable in ensuring poverty alleviation by 2030, and much more is needed if CBT is to make a significant contribution to poverty alleviation.

The current study contributes to the literature by examining the contribution of CBT to poverty alleviation in rural communities of tourist destinations in Southern Africa. This research responds to the need for continuous research on tourism poverty alleviation among the poor (Qin et al., 2019), especially in developing country contexts (Chili & Ngxongo, 2017; Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2021; Mearns & Lukhele, 2015; Strydom et al., 2018; Subadra, 2019). Consequently, this study offers relevant insights into research on CBT as a means of poverty alleviation in emerging tourist destinations. The findings of the study could be helpful in the formulation of sustainable development strategies that could aid Southern African countries (Duforika & Ijeoma, 2018) to meet the SDGs by 2030. Additionally, the study is crucial because it will allow destinations to improve their pro-poor tourism policies and make them more focused and improved decision making. Policymakers of other emerging economies can also refer to the CBT experiences in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe to avoid similar challenges in using CBT as a poverty alleviation tool (Chili & Ngxongo, 2017; Mearns & Lukhele, 2015).

Though the amount of research that has gone into CBT and PPT is increasing in Southern Africa (Chili & Ngxongo, 2017; Makwindi & Ndlovu, 2021; Mearns & Lukhele, 2015; Strydom et al., 2018), there is a need for more nuanced research focusing on the effect of CBT on poverty alleviation, maybe at a micro-CBT level in the rural communities. Current

research does not seem to indicate that the rural poor and their realities have been studied in the countries in Southern Africa, such as Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Future studies must therefore interrogate these aspects, including the attitudes of the rural communities in emerging destinations about the benefits they gain from CBT. Furthermore, these studies must also quantitatively measure the social costs and economic leakages that comes because of using CBT as a poverty reduction strategy. Based on existing research, it is not yet clear whether the contribution of CBT projects to poverty alleviation is being correctly measured, and future studies must address this. This will ensure that the rural poor communities are at the heart of CBT projects. Lastly, a concern that also arises from this analysis is that governments of tourist destinations in Southern Africa have traditionally advocated for CBT projects in rural areas. However, these efforts have not been complemented with successful marketing campaigns by the private sector organisations as a commitment towards the alleviation of poverty through tourism. The notion of making poverty alleviation a government obligation makes the efforts weak because the private tourism sector has not been forthcoming in terms of aggressively marketing these projects. Therefore, proper stakeholder involvement is required to ensure the desired goals of CBTs are met.

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