

Tourism in Rural Areas: A Case Study of Opportunities in the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract *This article argues that rural areas should use their rurality as a strength and not a point of weakness on the premise that their peripherality gives them a uniqueness undergirded by their rich histories and heritage, which are pull factors for tourists eager to experience nature and life only available in serene rural areas which great towns and cities do not possess. The article argues that rural tourism is important for domestic tourism which in turn spurs international tourism. Local tour and facility operators need to create jobs, make a profit and use local support as a buffer against international travel fluctuations and seasonality. This article is conceptual in nature as no new primary data was collected during its compilation. It draws upon secondary data from published material. Rural development cannot take place without the support of Government for the provision of socio-economic infrastructure and policy to guide practice with communities at the centre. The article proposed a model which emphasises a strong collaborative framework amongst various actors with a two-pronged approach to address coastal and inland tourism. The model represents a panoply of CBT ventures, adventure tourism and other 'stand-alone' attractions to craft the image of rural development which the municipality desires.*

Keywords: *Tourism, Rural Areas, Community-Based Tourism, Government, South Africa, Community Development*

“Rural tourism is a subject which can be seriously taken into account in a bid to achieve rural development” (Azimi, 2015:1).

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a dynamic growing economic sector and has been seen as a development tool (Krajnović, Radman Peša & Bosna, 2015:79). It is further maintained that besides direct benefits, tourism enhances rural people participation in managing tourism facilities which leads to sustainable development of rural areas particularly those enduring economic difficulties (Krajnović, Radman Peša & Bosna, 2015:79). For Irshad (2010:4) the overall growth of tourism

gives hope for the growth of rural tourism as it opens up opportunities for improving the well-being of those areas. Researchers and various agencies have identified tourism as tool for spurring economic growth even in rural areas to the extent that there is corpus of literature and theories on rural tourism (Irshad, 2010:4; Streimikiene & Bilan, 2015). Rural areas are considered to be disadvantaged firstly by their rurality and secondly by being considered to be in the periphery of development. In this article, we argue that rural areas should use their rurality as strength and not a point of weakness. Their peripherality bestows upon them a uniqueness that springs from their untainted-by-modernity landscapes alongside their rich histories and heritage, which are pull factors for tourists eager to experience nature and life only available in serene rural areas.

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Rural tourism is not a new concept, already in 1994 the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) document (OECD, 1994) titled *Tourism Strategies, and Rural Development* explores various aspects of rural tourism (OECD, 1994). While agriculture has been for long time the main activity in rural areas in most of the world since mid-20th century, employment in agriculture has drastically reduced thus new alternative activities are required to maintain healthy rural communities (Baum & Gramzow, 2009:62). Thus, rural tourism can be seen as a new possible alternative to compensate for the decline in opportunities in agriculture. Krajnović, Radman Peša & Bosna (2015:79) observe that rural tourism is growing particularly in Europe where it has existed for more than a century. Whereas from a USA perspective it is new in comparison to traditional economic activities that take place there (Gartner, 2005:36). It is also posit that rural tourism has a profound domestic character which is, however, variegated across countries and continents (Wang, et al., 2013:117). It is domestic tourism that nurtures international tourism through its growth and expansion (Raghavendra, Vijayachandra Reddy & Shilpa, 2016:14). At the macro level, countries tend to promote international tourism at the expense of domestic tourism for the foreign currency it brings without realising that it creates a solid platform to spur international tourism. Local tour and facility operators need local support as a buffer against international travel fluctuations and seasonality. Local patronage is useful for them to tailor-make their offerings in line with local tastes. Given the importance of tourism to economies, Government has a critical role to play in rural tourism development. When that role is performed well, the dividends to communities are numerous and include jobs, entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation, innovation, social cohesion and the development of new local economies. Thriving communities are less violent communities.

It is not the ambition of this article to insinuate that tourism in rural areas does not present its own challenges. Its aim is to advance a possible rural development model and explore the opportunities that tourism in these areas can present. Within this context, the article focuses on firstly, opportunities and success factors of tourism development in rural areas. Secondly, it proposes some possible roles of government and sketches a possible model of tourism development in rural areas. The article is mostly concerned with rural areas in disadvantaged contexts where large sections of the local population live in difficult socio-economic conditions. A case study derived from South Africa was used in this instance to support this article's propositions. The article is organised as follows: after this introductory section, a literature review is presented covering various matters of tourism in rural areas as well as the roles of government in tourism in general and rural tourism in particular. Umzumbe Local Municipality (ULM) as the case study is then presented

to illustrate the proposed rural development model, which is largely based on the role of government institutions. Thus, rural tourism opportunities in ULM are used as exemplars of the opportunities that rural tourism affords. Therefore, this article intends to contribute knowledge to the rural tourism literature specifically in relation to disadvantaged contexts highlighting the possible roles that government institutions can play.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Baum and Gramzow (2009:63) "tourism in rural areas started in Europe in the 18th and 19th century particularly at the seaside and in high mountains that is in areas with a unique selling proposition." Most recently around the world, rural communities view the tourism sector as part of the cog in sustainable development which is undergirded by the support of various stakeholders for its success (McGehee, Knollenberg & Komorowski, 2015:1277). The definition of rural tourism is contested such that there has not been strong consensus yet (Krajnović, Radman Peša & Bosna, 2015:79). As such, rural tourism can have a variety of meaning such as "all tourist activities in rural areas" and "holidays on a farm" to include "contact with nature, experience of heritage and participation in rural traditions –offered by small, local enterprises" (Baum & Gramzow, 2009:62). In China, for example, there are many terms used to describe rural tourism (see Wang, et al., 2013:118). For a comprehensive but not exhaustive description of rural tourism, Irshad (2010:2) posits that rural tourism goes beyond the 'simple' holiday on the farm to include "special interest nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and, in some areas, ethnic tourism." It is evident that rural tourism is rich in heritage, education, art, fun, activity and nature.

There are many driving forces behind the emergence and new prominence of rural tourism such as "a desire for escape from the monoculture of city living" and increase in education and environmental awareness of people (Irshad, 2010:7). Important drivers that make rural tourism attractive include their sceneries, geography and culture which in themselves are constitutive of a tourism asset (Okech, Haghiri & George, 2012:40). The monotoni city of great cities of the world lends them to some level of regularity. As such, rural economies can capitalize on this regularity of cities to craft fresh trajectories of development steeped in their natural and physical endowments. In this case regularity insinuates sameness, routineness, commonplace, everyday and uniformity,

Rural tourism development is important because it increases participation of the people in its development; it brings

wider benefits to rural areas; and a new option because of the lack of other viable options (Okech, Haghiri & George, 2012:40). From a Chinese perspective, there is a number of principles upon which rural tourism should be based, these are: a focusing on the theme of agriculture; government-led multi-stakeholder involvement; prioritizing the interests of farmers; the principle of protective development; and the principle of being adapted to local conditions.

From a host/local context perspective, rural tourism has a variety of meanings and *raison d'être*. It can be undertaken as a development tool, for re-generation in the wake of the collapse of agro-industries; for purposes of diversification and so on with differences in thrust based on history and legacy such as prevailing in the case of say Africa and Eastern Europe (Holland, Burian & Dixey, 2003:3). Rural tourism offers opportunities to vary livelihood outcomes as a form of diversification and as a mainstream specialization in a specific locality given its endowments.

Rural tourism should be understood in relation to development issues as most of rural population, especially in developing countries, live in disadvantaged socio-economic conditions. From an American perspective "rural development is now more than ever dependent on tourism as other sectors diminish in importance over time or require taxpayer support to continue functioning" (Gartner, 2005:39). The opportunities that are present in rural tourism include job creation and retention, new business opportunities, opportunities for youth, service retention, community diversification, enhancement and revitalisation of rural communities, pride, preservation of rural culture and heritage, enhancing the arts and crafts sale, conservation as well as benefits to the historic built environment (Irshad, 2010:8). Rural tourism is important for localized inclusive growth – which is growth that considers the individual as well as the community by enlisting participation in the local economy guided by principles of sustainability.

A list of success factor from various localities has been individuated based on variegated European contexts (see Irshad, 2010:17). For example, Lungau, Austria key success factors has been proposed to be (from Irshad, 2010:17): a new central tourism organization covering 15 municipalities; the creation of strong links between tourism offerings and local produce; the formulation of quality criteria and labels for local produce; and niche markets such as families and activity tourism; the establishment of strong links to the overall Salzburg region for quality and marketing initiatives; and the adoption of a comprehensive approach to promoting public transport. This article argues that besides the general standardization of key requirements for rural tourism development, key success factors need to be locally contextualized and related to each locality's specific objectives in relation to rural tourism development

and local people resources and needs. Contexts matter and so does rurality. In line with this understanding, other novel requirements (based on a European experiences) for successful rural tourism development have been suggested which include: community involvement; proximity to a growing market or gateway; product development (tourism planning, infrastructure, and activities); a visitor center; partnership collaboration/cultural heritage and welcome centres; a quality brand and regional label; as well as funding (see Irshad, 2010:24). Rural tourism requires leadership that works for the community and not themselves to bring community aspirations to fruition. This implies that sustainability also hinges upon the quality of the available leadership in communities.

In an Indian context, Raghavendra, Vijayachandra Reddy, and Shilpa (2016:18) maintain that Government at various levels can be the initiators of rural tourism development, for example, through special beautification campaigns and sponsoring events linked to local tourist attractions which involve local businesses. Success factors are multiple and should be undergirded by good community leadership support and participation of local government; sufficient funding for tourism development; strategic planning and planning for tourism development that integrates with a community's overall economic strategy; coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs; strategic planning and tactical decisions; information and technical backing for tourism development and promotion (Raghavendra, Vijayachandra Reddy, & Shilpa, 2016:18). In addition, to market a community you need to involve the community as a whole because it is not about a single attraction (Raghavendra, Vijayachandra Reddy, & Shilpa, 2016:18). This means that the need is to go beyond the concept of single (or various) attractions to include the whole community. By implication, *understanding* of a culture and heritage of a place are more important than the mere cultural and heritage attractions because 'A "feel" of a place may be just as, or more, important than a new museum' (Gartner, 2005:40). Attractions in their multiplicity matter. As such, single attractions act as silos with little impact on the community no matter how successful they can be as single entities. The multiplier effects of community assemblages/conglomeration and collaboration are many and include the wider circulation of money and its retention in the community, expansion of job opportunities and a varied and diverse visitor experience.

Rural tourism development models are important to unpack because, as happened in USA, they have informed rural development stimulated by tourism (Gartner, 2005:39). Various models have been formulated around the world and within countries. For instance in China, five models for rural development have been identified, namely: pastoral

agriculture tourism; folk custom tourism; village and township tourism; agricultural knowledge tourism; and leisure and vacation tourism (Wang et al., 2013:122). Based on literature and in the case of the USA, it is observed that a rural development model should include: transportation between market and destination or between a gateway community and its attractions, rural tourism development should be a national issue; local tourism development organizations should go beyond marketing and product development to a holistic approach that looks at how their destination is developing; as such rural tourism interests must go beyond the insular and single industry approach; it should be seen as an important economic activity that is less about fun and games but about rural livelihoods; in which rural communities develop culture/heritage or agri-tourism attractions which provide attractions that appeal across consumer segments (Gartner, 2005:40). Critical for rural development is holistic destination management. Destination management can make or break a destination. Holistic destination management involves collaboration with all stakeholders and includes building a brand and marketing it as an appealing proposition for an enriching travel experience. Building up a destination image requires a lot of effort and is harder to do than destroying it.

Rural tourism development is complex and has challenges of its own. Rural tourism could be a strategy for sustainable development in rural areas and can be a tool for product differentiation for areas that are stagnating. There are gaps between the usual requirements of tourism development against those found in rural areas, such as investment in facilities versus limited access to financial capital, affordable credit and private investment; access versus distance from cities, poor roads, few trains/buses/planes; and skills in service, hospitality versus low skills (skills migrate) (for more examples see Holland, Burian & Dixey, 2003:7). Capacity is certainly a well-documented constraint for rural tourism development. In 1994 a OECD document observed that education and training are important aspects for rural development because tourism is complex and requires expertise and as such rural tourism requires special skills (OECD, 1994:47). Liu (2006:878) argues that more emphasis in rural development has been placed on economic gains than what the communities want for their future however; communities need to be capacitated to understand the tourism culture for tourism development.

The need for local participation is paramount for rural tourism development. In support of this, Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier and Van Es (2012:133) believe that this is important for broad-based participation and an enabler for success. At the same time, rural tourism should go beyond participation to be fully embedded in the local context, as Cawley and Gilmlor (2008:330) argue that rural tourism is often steeped in indigenous local resources and ownership

thereof but acknowledge the vulnerability of rural businesses to foreign investments as well as when conflicts emerge between residents, resources and tourism. The local embeddedness should however be kept in concomitance with, as above mentioned, the regular and continuous exchange of experiences with actors in the sector at both local and global level which are all seen as relevant success factors (Jordan, Havadi-Nagy & Maroši, 2016:213). These factors highlight the importance of cross pollination of ideas and know-how as well as participation and collaboration.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Around the world, governments are aware of the benefits of a robust tourism sector so much, so that public investments have shifted interest to acknowledging the economic benefits of tourism as a tool for the regeneration of rural areas in decline (Briedenhann, 2007:584). The historical and political context has a bearing on the roles of government in rural tourism development, for example in Europe the role of Government is diminished because decision-making is left to private enterprises whereas in China, the government plays a huge role (Keyim, 2012:113). Even in the West, some authors have found merit in involving the Government with funds for marketing being provided by the European Union (Komppula, 2014:365). In various countries such as UK, USA, Australian (Irshad, 2010:2), and India (Rami & Kshatriya, 2016) the role of government in rural tourism development is evident and reflects a deliberate trajectory towards its promotion. From a USA angle, Garner (2005:40) observes that old development models steeped in the extraction of natural resources are no longer able to sustain rural economies without the help of government.

Rural tourism development needs public support because it is small scale, specialist and needs more capital investment relative to the returns as these areas will require long-term support of government (Sharpley, 2002:243) beyond subsidies. There are various reasons for government involvement in rural tourism which are: job creation and diversification of economic activities, protection of attractive areas, the protection of environment and pollution control, development of tourism services, public economic, social, and political goals such as: better life quality for rural people, sanitation, education and equality to get recreation resources (Azimi, 2015:2). The role of Government in rural development involves providing and maintaining the infrastructures, providing education as well as creating protected areas (Azimi, 2015:4). An Iranian case suggests that government should: provide infrastructure (roads, tourists need places such as restaurants, staying places, camping places, shops); educate local people and nongovernmental organizations about tourism; provide security to both locals and tourists; tourism supervision;

providing the hygiene of tourist places; providing finance for rural tourism; providing the facilities to local people; and ensuring security (Azimi, 2015:4). The role of government cuts across many spheres of Government which are critical for rural tourism to develop and thrive. Rural development cannot take place without the support of Government for the provision of socio-economic infrastructure. As such, Government must deliberately promulgate appropriate policies as well as introduce interventions directed at rural development.

Private sector support is also necessary but may not be sufficient for rural tourism development and therefore government subsidies are also required (Komppula, 2014:364). Small business and entrepreneurs are the foundation of tourism in rural areas, but rural tourism development usually starts as part of an initiative by local government in the face of the erosion of traditional rural activities or the quest for diversification of tourism products (Komppula, 2014:364). While government can implement regulations – which tourism business could perceive as a hindrance, government's role can go beyond regulation to be supportive as opposed to being merely regulatory through entering into public-private partnerships, providing funds and for marketing (Briedenhann, 2007:586). The Government can also provide marketing facilities, exhibition centres and information services in rural areas necessary for advertising the available tourism facilities and offerings in the area. The Government should regulate matters related to health, hygiene, safety, sanitation and security of all people within its dominion including rural areas. Other forms of interventions by Government are necessary. For instance, the support must be long term especially regarding marketing and training (Sharpley, 2002:242). Universities can be useful in this regard (regarding university involvement in tourism/community-based tourism see, for example, Giampiccoli, Saayman & Jugmohan, 2014). Beyond Government, communities are also a very important cog in the tourism ecosystem and cogwheel as they can ensure the sustainability of both the environment and their ventures. This implies that rural development is not the responsibility of a single entity (such as Government) but all stakeholders with communities at the centre.

Rural communities have various challenges including leadership; “rural leaders are hard to find, hard to cultivate, hard to support, and hard to keep” (McGehee, Knollenberg & Komorowski, 2015:1278). This implies that leadership challenges are a plausible reason for local government involvement in rural tourism. Therefore, local government itself needs to have reliable, active and capable leaders. Government, especially at local level, can also suffer a dearth of capacity in relation to tourism (see for example Giampiccoli, Saayman & Jugmohan, 2014:1143). Beyond

capacity, Government's involvement is fundamental in relation to advancing a holistic approach to tourism development, but this is usually hampered by a lack of co-ordination between different ministries/departments (World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), 2015:8). Coordination and cooperation are important as evidence shows that in cases where tourism resources are housed in more than one government entity, inter-departmental conflict may ensue there by jeopardising the tourism agenda (Briedenhann, 2007:585). The public sector is encumbered to fulfill its mandate related to Governance (rules, policies and regulations) and facilitation (training, funding, research, marketing) due to inter-Government conflicts exacerbated by a lack of tourism knowledge at the local government level (Briedenhann, 2007:586). The next section looks at rural tourism in a typical locality in South Africa.

RURAL TOURISM MODEL AND OPPORTUNITIES IN UMZUMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa, just like many other countries around the World is also using tourism for regional development in the country (Rogerson, 2015:282). Consequently, rural tourism is a key topic in contemporary discourses and literature (see Rogerson, 2015). In this context, the South African National Department of Tourism (NDT) developed a National Rural Tourism Strategy which packages rural tourism products in the country (NDT, 2012:7). South Africa's development is not even as its “space economy manifests a distorted core-periphery structure with massive unevenness in patterns of geographical development” (Rogerson, 2015:277; see also McLaren & Heat, 2012:94). Rural tourism development could come as an option to correct regional disparities in countries (Krajnović, Radman Peša & Bosna, 2015:81). Ugu District Municipality is one of the “areas in South Africa which was identified as high Poverty Rural Nodes by the Presidency Office” (NDT, 2012:26) and it is one of 23 priority district municipalities or distressed areas in the country (Rogerson, 2015:284).

The NDT (2012:8) identifies a number of issues in hampering rural tourism development, including: inadequate resources in the rural areas; a number of key tourist attractions in rural areas were not benefiting from the tourism industry with limited involvement of local communities in rural tourism. The NDT (2012:56) identifies specific themes which are important for tourism development, namely: product development; tourism marketing; tourism skills and development; tourism support infrastructure; and tourism research and information. It is important that the National

Rural Tourism Strategy (NDT, 2012:16) has a people centred perspective which promotes rural people to ‘take control of their destiny’ through a participatory process. A study in South Africa on distressed rural areas suggests that it is necessary to encourage greater interaction and networking between the industry and other sectors in any region (Rogerson, 2015:288). From a South African perspective, government’s roles should be an enabler and facilitator instead of implementer of rural tourism projects while “the private sector and communities should be the drivers of rural tourism development” (Briedenhann, 2007:601). In South Africa, the role of local government and the cooperation amongst stakeholders are fundamentally important for rural tourism development (Briedenhann, 2007:601). Based on some experience in KwaZulu-Natal Province (the province upon which this case study is located) it is noted that the public sector should be an enabler of tourism marketing and its overall development (McLaren & Heat, 2012:102). However, this article argues that if the objective is to facilitate socio-economic improvement and empowerment of disadvantaged communities, the government should also be the direct implementer of tourism projects as it cannot rely solely on the private sector (which is not necessarily the private sector’s aim and responsibility) to promote holistic community development. Further, in government a change in ways of thinking is necessary in terms of acknowledging the importance of tourism and working across departments as well as working alongside the private in Public-Private Partnerships (McLaren & Heat, 2012:102). There is room for the public sector to work with communities and the private sector to ensure rural development which comes with mutual benefits deriving from co-operation and collaboration than from confrontation. This implies that the various sectors must find common ground upon which to leverage their capacities and capabilities for the benefit of all.

Research on rural tourism routes from the KwaZulu-Natal Province shows that while District Municipalities are absent and unappreciative of rural tourism development in the local municipality (district municipalities include various local municipalities) various problems have been observed such as: lack of appreciation of tourism’s contribution to economic welfare; tourism is not prioritized in the local municipality; tourism development and planning are insufficient; politics and corruption permeate tourism decisions; there is a lack of a business orientation in local municipalities; lack of co-operation across political boundaries is hampering routes; inadequate destination marketing by local municipalities; and emphasis is placed on promoting the route versus promoting the destination (McLaren & Heat, 2012:100). This behoves upon local municipalities to introspect and address these anomalies in order to induce the type of development that is holistic and people- centred through tourism. The problems are known and therefore the solutions need only political will and funding to be executed. Government’s will

and capacity do matter in such matters of rural development highlighting the primacy of Government’s policy.

Umzumbe Local Municipality (ULM) falls in the Ugu District Municipality. It extends along the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal Province (South Africa) and it covers about 1260 square km and comprises 20 wards. With a population of about 160 975 (Umzumbe Municipality, 2016:5) ULM “is completely rural in nature and due to past segregation laws passed under the apartheid era, the legacy is still visible today” (Umzumbe Municipality, 2016:32). Poverty, a backlog of basic services and stunted economic base are the main characteristics of ULM (Umzumbe Municipality, 2016:5). In disadvantaged rural areas with available natural and cultural/heritage features, the development of rural tourism is a possible option as part of a broader economic diversification strategy. From a community-based tourism (CBT) perspective, this can involve establishing a specific local CBT organisation dedicated to disadvantaged community and follows the principles and characteristics of CBT (for a similar approach see Giampiccoli, Saayman & Jugmohan, 2014). The development of community-based tourism trails in the area has recently been proposed (see Mnguni & Giampiccoli, 2017).

The potential in ULM is recognised, for instance, “Umzumbe has great economic potential. Like most rural municipalities, it has extensive natural, human and economic potential which is utilized unevenly and imperfectly. This presents an opportunity to develop economic activities that are balanced and sustainable” (Umzumbe Municipality, 2016:97). Despite the challenges, its tourism potential is also recognised in various documents. A 2004 document (Umzumbe Municipality, 2004:91) notes “There are no tourism infrastructure and services beyond the coastal corridor despite a diverse range of attractions within the rural hinterland.” Again, in 2015 and 2016 documents, it is proposed that the ULM has a rich history and magnificent natural features (Umzumbe Municipality, 2015:81) with vast opportunities in agriculture, cultural and heritage tourism (Umzumbe Municipality, 2016:100).

The district level Integrated Development Plan 2012/13 - 2016/17 (Ugu District Municipality, 2016:15) observes that the existing coastal tourism attractions include rural hinterland which is underdeveloped for purposes of eco, adventure and cultural tourism. One of the Strategic Objectives has a Key Performance Indicator whose outcomes are to extend tourism to the rural areas (Ugu District Municipality, 2016:20). The same document (Ugu District Municipality, 2016:124) indicates that the key challenge is the schism between “the developed/tourist coastal strip and the underdeveloped/rural hinterland” as well as few tourism products besides the one along the beach, lack of skills in rural areas, and poor accessibility of rural areas. The bountiful hinterland with vast potential for tourism development is

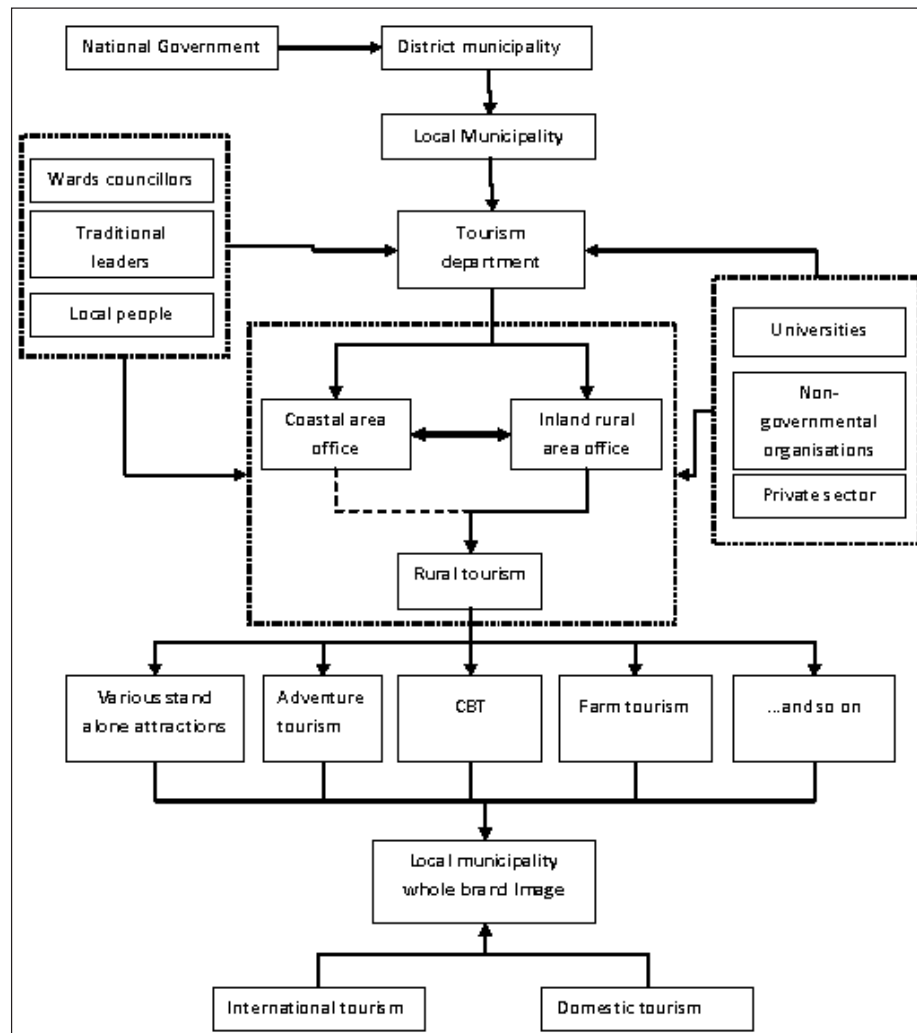
beckoning for entrepreneurs, Government and the private sector to develop it using available local resources for the common good and the sustainability and profitability of new and old ventures in the local municipality in pursuit of local economic development. Jobs are needed in the area to alleviate poverty.

It is important to note that rural forms of tourism such as nature-based tourism can be practiced in ULM as “Nature tourism is an important part of the world tourism industry – and importantly – one which is gaining in prominence “because it has the potential to attract foreign tourists (Graja-Zwolińska & Spychała, 2013:37). Therefore, specific policies, legislation, and implementation and management of nature-based tourism is important to be carried out in a way that optimizes its positive impacts while reducing its (see Fig. 1).

negative outcomes. The ULM (Umzumbe Municipality, 2015:101) recognises this potential of tourism by identifying specific projects and assets with an undertaking to improve the marketing and management of the resources, products and services in Umzumbe. The next section presents a model for rural tourism development informed by the profile of Umzumbe in South Africa.

TOWARDS A MODEL FOR RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Based on the above, this article proposed a model for rural tourism development in which the Government and public institutions form the backbone upon which rural tourism should be planned, implemented, controlled and managed



Source: Authors' elaboration

Fig. 1: Local Municipality and Rural Tourism Development

The proposed model is based on a strong collaborative framework amongst various actors and on the need to establish specific offices related to coastal and inland tourism. While this may be configured as separate entities, they must collaboratively work and in unison towards rural tourism development. Under the circumstances, rural tourism will comprise of the various rural tourism segments such as CBT, adventure tourism and so on with other 'stand-alone' attractions. All together, these rural tourism segments and attractions (including coastal tourism) should work to create and establish the image of rural development which the municipality desires. Other entities such as universities, private sector and NGOs can play their collaborative and implementing roles while working together with municipal tourism offices and agencies. As such, universities should be seen as important collaborators in initiating appropriate education and skills development programmes for local communities including for government personnel where some tourism knowledge needs to be nurtured. This is a critical aspect because the officials are the implementers of policy and are at the coalface of service delivery – the foot soldiers of Government. The role to educate and train officials and communities can also be carried out with the assistance of NGOs. This assumes that the NGO itself is sufficiently equipped with the proper expertise and know-how. Universities and NGOs can also collaborate with government in the practical planning, implementation and management of rural tourism development projects. The private sector remains the sector upon which tourism is currently based and hence its responsibility is to excogitate new projects and strategies. Government can still work alone as necessary or in partnership with the private sector, NGOs or community entities to plan, establish and manage new tourism attractions or projects. Wards councillors, traditional leaders and local people who intend to participate in various forms of tourism development should be equipped and capacitated through education and skill development programmes in order for them to have proper tourism knowledge and skills. These actors should be part of collaborative teams working together with the municipality. The municipality's brand image should be built and promoted in order to attract both domestic and international visitors. All market segments are relevant as each can contribute in its own way to ULM. For example, domestic visitors could represent the frequent visitors while international visitors could represent the high spender and sources of foreign currency.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE RURAL TOURISM IN ULM

ULM should develop a single brand image to market the whole territory and community not just 'stand-alone' single attractions. This section proposes various tourism attractions

and products that can contribute to build and promote the ULM as a tourism destination, specifically in its rural areas. This section is based on the experience of one of the authors born and bred in ULM.

The Umzumbe area, specifically the rural part is full of tourism opportunities. There are aspects of tourism that have not been touched extensively such as gastronomy tourism, agri-tourism, sports tourism and so on just to mention but a few. However, the focus now is heritage tourism which is a trajectory that Umzumbe can pursue.

The municipality boasts of the following heritage sites:

- Isivivane sika Shaka
- Ntelezi Msani memorial site
- The Shembe Church

The first two are at the developmental stage and currently heritage celebrations are held on these sites annually during the heritage month. The attendance in these events is remarkable and this gives hope that these sites can be developed into fully operational tourists attractions. Isivivane sika Shaka "heap of stones", for instance, is about Shaka, the Zulu warrior, who took a rest in this area when he was on his way to attack the Pondos (or AmaMpondo) in the Eastern Cape. The ritual ceremony that takes place there annually draws people from all walks of life, especially, visiting friends and relatives as a special category of domestic tourism.

The Ntelezi Msani memorial site, on the other, will have on site, a museum, library and ethnic cuisine restaurant but the development is still at its infancy stage.

Ugu South Tourism, which is a business entity of the Ugu Municipality, is seriously driving the issue of tourism development in the area. It has set up tourism development committees in various local municipalities with the aim of advancing tourism development. Presently, Dr Mnguni, who was born and bred in this area, is the chairperson of the Umzumbe Tourism Committee. Part of the discussion in this committee is the possibility of establishing tourism and gastronomy trails in the area. Currently, the big project is the Umzumbe river trails. This is expected to attract tourists into the hinterland thus providing an opportunity for other tourists businesses such as home stays, traditional ritual ceremonies and so on.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is a well establish and growing sector. Rural tourism is also growing and it becomes a relevant possibility to facilitate improvement in rural areas affected by economic depression or those that need socio-economic development. International experiences show positive roles of rural

tourism development in improving conditions in the rural areas. However, this matter is still under debate as rural tourism development remains a complex process which often requires a collaborative approach among stakeholders. In this context, this paper has reviewed various matters of tourism in rural areas and highlighted the possible roles that government can play in tourism in general and rural tourism in particular. A South Africa case study hinted at a model of rural tourism development based on collaborative approaches driven by various actors. South African ULM presents a disadvantaged rural area but, at the same time, there are vast opportunities for rural tourism such as nature, culture and heritage tourism in the area.

The model shows the need for collaboration between various actors and its explication underlines the need for education and skill development in tourism as a *sine qua non*. While the model is an attempt to give a structure to rural tourism development efforts, it is open for improvement through further research. Any changes to the model are welcome in order to establish a robust framework for rural tourism development in areas such as ULM. The article contributes to the rural tourism literature specifically in relation to disadvantaged contexts and the possible roles of the government institutions as well as of other stakeholders. We end with an insightful quote:

Tourism is not the panacea for all rural problems but it has number of positive attractions. It is one of the many opportunities that rural communities might consider to improve productivity and incomes (Irshad, 2010:2).

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