Revisiting and Integrating Residents' Perceptions Towards Tourism Development in Urban Areas

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Abstract

This study sought to determine residents' perceptions of tourism development and the subsequent impacts of tourism in South Africa. Tourism's impacts on residents have been a topical issue in existing literature given that they can offer guidance for planners in terms of development trajectories. This is because tourism is widely associated with both negative and positive impacts on residents, depending on the destination's life cycle and other factors. Thus, Soweto, as South Africa's most visited township and a place where tourism is seen as a strategic tool for socio-economic development, was selected as an ideal case study for this research. A positivist, quantitative research approach was employed in targeting residents (n=241) using a systematic random sampling method. Data was analyzed through IBM SPSS 24, and key findings revealed that, on the whole, residents are involved directly or indirectly in tourism and generally support its development. Additionally, it was found that residents have largely positive feelings towards tourism and its development in the area although nuances were there regarding tourism recently highlighting the economic gaps between the poor and the rich. The government was also criticized for failing to increase education about tourism among residents so that they could effectively benefit from it. It was also suggested that tourism compromises the authenticity of heritage and cultural activities in the area whilst also resulting in the increased prices of goods and services for locals.

Keywords: *Tourism development, tourism impacts, residents' perceptions, sustainable development, South Africa.*

Introduction

The tourism sector is recognized as a significant participant in world trade and the global economy, making it one of the most prominent sectors globally (Ambalao et al., 2022; Halim et al., 2022; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2020; Harilal, Nyikana, 2019; Strydom et al., 2019). The growth and development of the sector are demonstrated by its socioeconomic contribution to the global market in the form of increasing foreign exchange earnings, investment

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opportunities, and increasing social cohesion between stakeholders, among others (Pham et al., 2019; Nengovhela et al., 2017; Nyikana, Sigxashe, 2017; Cardenas-García et al., 2015). As a result, many developing and underdeveloped governments, particularly in Africa, use tourism as a tool to alleviate poverty due to the sector's ability to stimulate and revitalize the economy (Nyikana et al., 2021; Nwokorie, Adeniyi, 2021; Rogerson, Rogerson, 2020; Scheyvens, Hughes, 2019; Lekgau, Tichaawa, 2019). Similarly, Rogerson and Rogerson (2020) observe that less privileged communities are encouraged to engage and participate in tourism activities as means to stimulate economic activity and growth in their communities. Halim et al. (2022) concede that tourism has proven to be a sustainable local economic development (LED) tool, thus many governments have taken active and proactive decisions to develop the sector for the benefit of their citizenry. The importance of the sector has been illustrated despite the recent effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the sector continuing to contribute positively to the global economy (León-Gómez et al., 2021).

Tourism activities take place in both rural and urban destinations where tourism has the potential to be strategically developed and thus play an important role in combating some of the prevalent societal issues observed in such spaces (Bartis, Madlwabinga, 2020). Halim et al. (2022) claim that tourism acts as a catalyst for community-based transformation and development. Over and above that, tourism development is an important aspect of tourism and society because it brings forth change for communities that participate in tourism activities. Tourism development in some countries like South Africa for instance, has led to the emergence of new niche markets such as township tourism (Rogerson, Rogerson, 2020). Although globally, the concept has been investigated and often termed "slum tourism", township tourism within South Africa has become an important component in growing the country's tourism industry as well as developing the townships themselves (Rogerson, Rogerson, 2020). The growing focus on township tourism development has thus transformed several townships into attractive tourist destinations owing to the unique experiences and activities offered by these areas (Sloan, Simons 2015). As a direct consequence of this popularity, the notable growth of tourism within townships affects the local communities where tourism is being developed both positively and negatively based on numerous factors (Leonard, Dladla, 2020) which will be presented in the literature review.

In the existing literature on township tourism in the South African context, much of the research focus has oftentimes been skewed towards supply-side considerations of township tourism (Letuka, Lebambo, 2022; Rogerson, Rogerson, 2020). Others sought to explore the perceptions and attitudes of residents regarding township tourism generally, relating to their support or non-support of township tourism (see for example Bartis, Madlwabinga, 2020; Ncube, Kruger, 2018; Nkemngu, 2015; George, Booyens, 2014). A summary of such studies shows that there is a need to constantly keep track of the perceptions and attitudes of residents towards township tourism, as such perceptions are constantly changing and evolving. Moreover, given the volatility and uncertainty of tourism, consistently eliciting perceptions around tourism, particularly from residents is an important exercise. Canavan (2013) argues that residents' perceptions are not static, rather they tend to change over time and can be triggered by different circumstances such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic in this case. More importantly, there is a unique relationship between tourism and residents of communities that develops over time (Gursoy et al., 2019; Nunkoo, Ramkisoon, 2007). The objective of this study is to get a better understanding of the s relationship dynamics between tourism and residents, especially in the context of Soweto - the current research study area and one of South Africa's largest and most visited townships.

Literature review

Overview of township tourism in South Africa

Township tourism in South Africa has grown to be one of the most popular forms of niche tourism in the country (Rogerson, Rogerson, 2020; Auala et al., 2019; Ncube, Kruger, 2018; George, Booyens, 2014; Butler, 2010). It has become a major source of revenue for some South African townships which positively contributes to the local economic development (LED) in those townships (Rogerson, Rogerson, 2020). Existing studies have outlined various definitions for township tourism which highlight the different reasons that tourists have when interested in this form of special interest tourism. For example, Auala et al. (2019) define township tourism as a type of tourism that encourages tourists to visit underdeveloped areas in order to observe the different lifestyles that exist in the townships such as run-down homes. In contrast, Rogerson (2013) suggests that it is a type of urban tourism linked to tourism activities within a township that provides leisure to tourists and visitors. On the other hand, Ramchander (2007, p.7) as well as referred to township tourism in the context of South Africa as tourism that "involves traveling for the purpose of observing the cultural expressions and lifestyles of black South Africans". For the purpose of this study, a summary of the above definitions is adopted, wherein township tourism is considered, an all-inclusive industry characterised by the travelling to, staying in, and engaging with tourist activities within townships. Leonard and Dladla (2020) posit that most South African townships represent political freedom and tell stories of political struggles, and visits to such destinations are therefore part of the new trend of special interest tourism linked to heritage and political history. This is evident in the increase of international tourists that South African townships such as Soweto, Langa, and Khayelitsha among others receive each year (Ndzumo et al., 2021; Booyens, 2021; Hoogendoorn et al., 2020; Ncube, Kruger, 2018; Koens, Thomas, 2015).

The strategic policies and frameworks implemented by the South African government have also contributed to the growth and development of township tourism. For instance, the government formulated the 1996 White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa which focused on the promotion and inclusion of previously disadvantaged communities in the tourism development agenda (South Africa, 1996). More than two decades later, township tourism is still being used as a strategic development tool that allows previously disadvantaged communities to directly benefit from the tourism industry. Despite the growth and development of the niche sector, there are still ongoing debates in existing literature regarding the ethicality of this type of tourism (Pereira et al., 2022; Ndzumo et al., 2021; Huysamen et al., 2020; Cardoso et al., 2019; Auala et al., 2019; Lekaota, 2018; Frenzel, 2014). These studies have argued that township tourism operates on a thin ethical line and if it is not developed sustainably as well as responsibly, it may create negative socio-cultural impacts and unintended negative long-term implications for host communities. Koens and Thomas (2015) argue that these negative impacts may cause conflicts between residents and tourists and that, more importantly, the impacts could alter the perceptions of residents regarding township tourism altogether.

Impacts of tourism on host communities

The global growth and development of the tourism industry generates positive impacts that can be perceived as a contribution to the growth of host destinations and negative impacts that may potentially harm host communities (Giampiccoli, Saayman, 2018; Halim et al., 2022).

Bakri et al. (2014) state that tourism impacts manifest in different ways and across different dimensions including the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental. This section outlines some of these impacts and contextualizes them within the current research study.

Economic impacts of tourism

The tourism industry has contributed significantly to the expansion of several economies across the globe (Nyikana et al., 2021; Danish, Wang, 2018). According to Mishra et al. (2018), the tourism industry can positively impact the per capita income of a country, as it tends to enhance the export of goods and stimulate foreign currency exchange. More crucially, tourism encourages entrepreneurship ventures in local communities (Mishra et al., 2018). The tourism industry creates direct and indirect employment opportunities for local communities which contributes to the overall economic impact of tourism to local areas. The growth of the tourism industry encourages governments to further develop infrastructure and transportation systems thus bettering conditions in local areas and creating further growth opportunities inherently linked to tourism (Nyikana, Sigxashe, 2017; Geethika, Gnanapala, 2015). George and Booyens (2014) reported for example, that the City of Cape Town receives roughly 1.35 million tourists annually and approximately 25% of the international tourists participate in township tourism. Despite the positive economic implications of tourism, the sector can also have negative impacts if not managed responsibly. As an example of the negative implications of tourism, and township tourism in this context, the tourism sector can contribute to an increase in inflation due to the excessive taxes imposed on local citizens (Chang, 2021). Resultantly, these high inflation rates cause an increase in the cost of living which makes it difficult to alleviate poverty, especially in low-income communities (Tussyadiah, Sigala, 2018) such as those in South African townships. Since it has been argued that tourism creates employment opportunities, some scholars have also argued that the tourism job market is unsustainable (see for example Dogru et al., 2020; Danish, Wang, 2018). The authors argue that the seasonality patterns of the tourism industry cause job insecurity, especially for the local workforce who depend on tourism during peak seasons. Consequently, the negative economic impacts of tourism have an adverse effect on the social livelihoods of residents.

Socio-cultural impacts of tourism

According to Bello et al. (2017), globally, the tourism industry is considered a development driver. Therefore, the growth and development of the industry encourage infrastructure development, improves transportation systems, and promotes service delivery. These impacts have a positive effect on society as they promote stability in society. Bartis and Madlwabinga (2020) posit that destinations tend to attract tourists from different social and cultural backgrounds. As a result, socio-cultural impacts are more likely to occur in both a positive and negative manner. According to Zhuang et al. (2019), socio-cultural impacts are tourism impacts that affect human lives and cause a change in the quality of life or the traditional values of residents at the tourist destination. Bartis and Madlwabinga (2020) as well as Choiriyah (2017) argue that the tourism industry provides benefits such as increased social cohesion, and the betterment of residents' standard of living as a result of increased employment opportunities which improves the overall well-being of residents. More significantly, in recent times, many destinations are using tourism as a strategic tool for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020). One of the SDGs (SDG 5) that tourism

helps to achieve, particularly in the context of Soweto, is gender equality by providing employment opportunities to both men and women thus promoting equality within the community (Letuka, Lebambo, 2021). In this regard, township tourism is an important focus area for government and researchers. In particular, it is critical to understand the views about the sector's contributions to strategic objectives in this context.

The tourism industry encourages cultural diversification and in return, stimulates cross-cultural interactions between tourists, visitors and community members (Bartis, Madlwabinga, 2020; Choiriyah, 2017; Shahzalal, 2016; George, 2015). The authors further highlight that community-based tourism contributes to the preservation of local cultures and traditions and is more likely to attract attention to the destination's unique heritage as well as cultural practices. Tichaawa and Moyo (2019) posit that the promotion of cultural and heritage values increases the pride of locals. Despite the positive socio-cultural impacts of tourists, there are also negative impacts generated by the sector as well. These impacts include an increase in criminal activities in host destinations where tourists become targets of petty crimes such as pickpocketing (Fletcher et al., 2013). Thus, this study considers that in a context such as Soweto, such impacts of tourism should be constantly measured as a proactive management activity that seeks to ensure a steady tourism industry from which locals and tourists alike enjoy the benefits. Despite the importance of regular monitoring of residents' perceptions about tourism in their local areas, and the need to integrate such perceptions into the planning and management activities, there has arguably been a neglect of this exercise. This research addresses this neglect.

Residents' perceptions towards township tourism development

As previously discussed, tourism activities have an impact on the host communities, and these impacts, whether positive or negative, affect residents' perceptions of tourism development generally. Residents' perceptions of tourism have been reported to be influenced by factors such as economic improvement, community involvement and engagement, as well as the environmental consciousness of tourism activities (Obradović et al., 2021; Roosilamanesh et al., 2017). In line with the social exchange theory (SET), residents are more likely to be involved in tourism activities if they believe that the benefits of tourism far outweigh the costs of tourism development (Sharpley, 2014; Fredline, Faulkner, 2000). This further suggests that the level of tourism impacts experienced by locals will influence the perceptions and decisions of locals to support tourism and thus play a key role in sustainable tourism development. Some scholars (see for example Baker, Ramaprasad, 2021, Kusherdyana, 2021; Obradović et al., 2021), posit that residents' perceptions of tourism have a direct impact on the sustainable growth and development of the sector in local communities. Local community members have been identified to be one of the most important stakeholders directly involved in the growth and development of community-based tourism such as township tourism (Bartis, Madlwabinga, 2020; Acha-Anyi, 2016 Acha-Anyi, 2016). Chan et al. (2021) concur that residents are an important part of tourism development as they are primary stakeholders who should be actively involved in the tourism development process, although in reality they are often neglected or ignored. Hence, it is important to have the support and buy-in of residents for tourism, particularly township tourism, in order to be successful (Halim et al., 2022).

Scholtz and Slabbert (2018) note that residents in developing countries, like South Africa for instance, generally have different views on tourism, owing to the belief that the socioeconomic benefits of tourism do not exist if they do not directly benefit from it. As a result, most residents do not participate in tourism if they are unable to actively receive the benefits of tour-

ism (Scholtz, Slabbert, 2018). According to Bartis and Madlwabinga (2020), residents will also have negative perceptions and attitudes towards tourism if they are excluded from development plans or decision-making processes. Similarly, Aref (2011) notes that when residents do not benefit from tourism development, they tend to be resentful towards tourists and anything tourism related. One of the main reasons for such perceptions is that tourism development in local communities, particularly South African townships, has historically excluded locals from participating in tourism decision-making processes. As a result, most South Africans residing in townships do not fully comprehend the promotion of tourism development since they cannot see the tangible effects of tourism. Bartis and Madlwabinga (2020) suggest that the negative impacts of tourism are a contributing factor to residents' perceptions of tourism development. Thus, the argument in this paper is that the existing views of tourism amongst the residents should be evaluated and, where possible, made critical components of future development plans and the overall sustainable management of tourism in Soweto.

Methodology

This empirical study was conducted in Soweto (see Figure 1 below) - a township area located in the City of Johannesburg in South Africa. Formally known as the South Western Townships, Soweto is one of South Africa's largest and busiest townships. Within Soweto, the tourism industry has experienced immense growth in the last two decades, largely due to the unique historical and cultural attractions found in the township (Letuka, Lebambo, 2021). As an example, the Vilakazi Street Precinct is located in Orlando West in a renowned area in Soweto where the majority of the City of Johannesburg's tourism takes place. The precinct houses some of the most popular cultural and heritage sites such as the Nelson Mandela Residence, the Hector Petersen Memorial Museum, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu's house. The prominence of these attractions and their popularity amongst tourists coupled with their proximity to residential areas where tourism impacts could be observed, all made the precinct an ideal study area for the current research.

A positivist research design, through quantitative data collection techniques, was employed in order to achieve the primary aim of the research. Firstly, a comprehensive literature review was conducted (see Table 1 below for a summary of the studies consulted), from which research questions for the development of the research instrument were established. Through the literature search, similar studies were identified, and their research instruments were used as a guide for the current study's instrument. Consequently, the data was collected using a survey distributed to residents who live in and around the Vilakazi Street Precinct, given its prominence in terms of tourism activity. A systematic simple-random technique was adopted. Where the first resident was approached, thereafter, an interval was adopted where every fifth resident was approached by the fieldworker. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions that were developed with the assistance of a statistician. The surveys were designed to acquire data such as respondents' place of residence, level of involvement and interest in tourism, and residents' perceptions of tourism impacts. A sample of n=387 was identified, using a sample size calculator in order to reach a confidence level of 95%. However, when the data collection period ended, a total of 241 surveys were collected in the Vilakazi Street Precinct between the period of August and September 2022. The data collected was analysed using the software IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences [SPSS] 24. Simple descriptive statistics and frequencies were conducted in analysing the data collected. The findings of this study are presented in tables in the subsections below.

Table 1. *Summary of studies consulted for the methodology*

| Overview of studies	Reviewed literature
Residents' perceptions of tourism development	(Acha-Anyi, 2016; Ambalao et al., 2022; George, Booyens, 2014; Halim et al., 2022; Mgiba, Chiliya, 2020; Nwokorie, Adeniyi, 2021; Shen et al., 2022)
Residents' involvement in tourism development	(Aleshinloye et al., 2021; Bakri et al., 2021; Slabbert et al., 2021)
Impacts of tourism development on local communities	(Bartis, Madlwabinga, 2020; Bello et al., 2017; Shahzalal, 2016; Slabbert et al., 202; Tichaawa, Moyo, 2019; Zhuang et al., 2019)
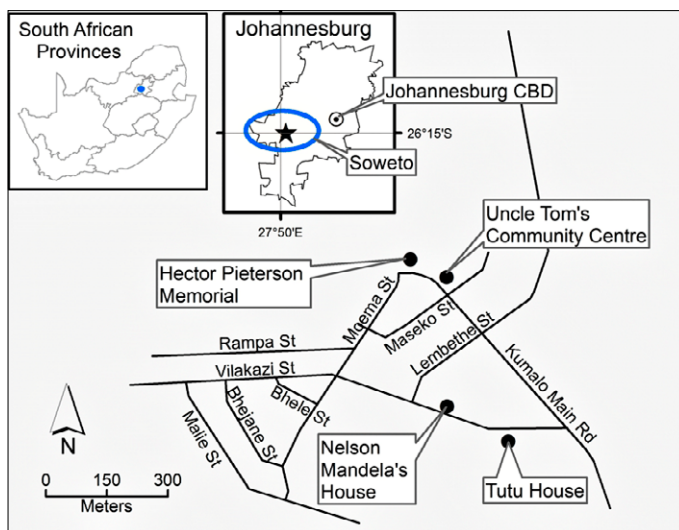
Figure 1: Map of Soweto
Source: Hoogendoorn et al. (2020)

Results and Discussion

Respondent's place of residence

The first section of the questionnaire sought to investigate the place of residence of the respondents who were participating in the survey. The study was conducted within a 5 km radius of the Vilakazi Street Precinct. According to Ncube and Kruger (2018), residents are an important stakeholder group in township tourism development, and tourism activities that take place in their communities directly affect them. Thus, it was important to ascertain the place of residence of the respondents to determine their perceptions of township tourism activities. The findings (Table 2) revealed that a vast majority of the respondents (80.6%) who participated in the survey were from the immediate precinct in the different subsections of Soweto such as Orlando West, Orlando East, Diepkloof, Pimville, Jabulani, Orlando, Dobsonville, and Jabavu. While other respondents (19.4%) were from other areas of Soweto, beyond the Vilakazi Street Precinct area, but found themselves at the precinct at the time the surveys were administered.

Table 2. *Respondents' place of residence (n=241)*

Place of residence	Percentage (%)
Orlando West	36.8
Other	19.4
Orlando East	10.9
Diepkloof	10.3
Pimville	7.6
Dobsonville	4.6
Jabulani	5.3
Orlando	3.0
Jabavu	2.1

Level of interest and involvement in tourism

According to Slabbert et al. (2021), residents choose whether to be actively involved in tourism; passively involved or they can choose not to participate in tourism altogether. Their involvement would be determined by their level of interest in tourism and its development in their local area. To establish the residents' level of interest in township tourism within Soweto, the respondents were asked to indicate it on a Likert scale of 5 levels that ranged from 'extremely interested' to 'not interested at all'. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (92.1%) expressed an interest in tourism and its activities, albeit at different levels of the scale as is illustrated by Table 3 below.

Table 3. *Residents' level of interest and involvement in tourism (n=241)*

Level of interest	Percentage (%)
Extremely interested	29.5
Very interested	33.5
Moderately interested	16.8
Slightly interested	12.3
Not at all interested	7.9
Level of involvement	
Actively (directly) involved	29.1
Passively (indirectly) involved	32.1
Unsure	7.2
Not involved	31.6

After establishing the respondents' level of interest in tourism, this study sought to ascertain the respondents' level of involvement in tourism. Given that this study was conducted within a 5km radius of a popular tourist area, the expectation was that there would be some involvement noted in tourism among participants. Accordingly, a Likert Scale with the following options; 'actively involved', 'passively involved', 'not involved', and 'unsure', was used to investigate this phenomenon. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the majority of respondents (61.2%) indicated that they were either actively (29.1%) or passively (32.1%) involved in tourism in the area. It is worth noting, however, that a notable number of respond-

ents (31.6%) were not involved in tourism indicating that they did not participate or engage in any tourism activities. Bakri et al. (2014) argue that tourism is usually an unanticipated element that encourages locals to participate unknowingly in tourism development activities and initiatives. This implies that the residents who are unsure about their involvement in tourism may possibly be involved indirectly or may have previously participated in tourism without being aware.

In the follow-up questions, the respondents were asked to respond "yes" or "no" to two sets of questions regarding tourism development. The first question was related to whether tourism could be used to improve the image of the township. The second question was related to whether the money invested in township tourism can be used to address social issues. It was interesting to note that many respondents (84.9%) felt that tourism could be used as a tool to improve the image of the township. Despite this important observation, there were many others (63.4%) who argued that the money which is invested in tourism could be redirected to address other pressing social services and issues. Nonetheless, it is evident from the results that the majority of respondents are both interested and involved in the tourism industry, which could be as a result of them benefiting from tourism in one way or another in the area. The results mirror the findings of other literature (see for example Aleshinloye et al., 2021) in that local participation is important in tourist locations. In that regard, local participation ensures that the benefits of tourism are equally distributed, and it meets the needs of the community.

Perceptions of tourism impacts on the host community

To understand how residents perceive tourism and how it may affect their daily lives, the respondents were provided with a series of impact statements regarding tourism in Soweto. Respondents were asked to respond to the statements on a five-point Likert scale where '1' was strongly agree, '2' was agree, '3' was neutral, '4' was disagree, and '5' was strongly disagree. For ease of interpretation, the presentation of the findings consists of merged percentages for those who strongly agreed and those who agreed. The same approach was also applied to those who indicated that they disagreed and strongly disagreed. The findings are presented in Table 4 below. Some of the key findings indicate that a vast majority of respondents (79.1%) concur with the statement that tourism contributes to the economy of Vilakazi Street, which may be a result of the thriving tourism sector in the precinct. According to Mgiba and Chiliya (2020), the Vilakazi Street Precinct receives a large number of tourists yearly, especially international visitors and as such, in this study, it was important to gauge respondents' perceptions on whether tourism supports the local economy.

In order to further assess this contribution, respondents were asked whether tourism influences locals to start new business ventures in and around the Vilakazi Street precinct. To this assertion, 79.1% of the surveyed population agreed. There are several informal businesses in and around the precinct that offer products and services to tourists who visit the Vilakazi Street precinct, which supports the notion of economic contributions made by tourism, particularly through informal tourism business activity. The above results appear to indicate that tourism inspires locals to open new businesses as a way of capitalizing on the opportunities presented by tourism. The result is also linked to the notable view (69.4%) of tourism contributing to employment opportunities in the area. On a more contrasting note, the results also reveal that despite township tourism creating employment opportunities and inspiring locals to start new ventures, over half of the respondents (59.9%) felt that township tourism only ben-

efits bigger businesses. Similarly, over half (54%) of the residents surveyed suggested that tourism resulted in increased prices of goods and services in their area. In this way, the overall feeling was that the locals were struggling to keep up with the increases in goods and services in their area as tourism resulted in inflated prices from service providers.

Table 4. *Residents' perceptions of tourism impacts (n=241)*

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Economic impacts					
Tourism contributes positively to the economy of Vilakazi Street	50.6	28.5	10.0	8.4	2.5
Township tourism drives economic development in Vilakazi Street	43.9	36.0	12.1	5.0	2.9
Township tourism encourages people to start new businesses (entrepreneurship) in Vilakazi Street	42.7	36.4	10.0	44.2	6.7
Tourism creates job opportunities	36.8	32.6	14.6	9.2	6.8
Township tourism only benefits bigger businesses	28.8	23.9	19.7	15.9	11.7
Prices of goods and services increase because of tourism in the local area	27.6	26.4	21.8	13.8	10.4
Socio-cultural impacts					
Township tourism causes overcrowding in the local area	10.3	24.4	16.8	18.1	30.4
Township tourism encourages cross-cultural interactions between visitors and residents	25.1	29.3	20.5	8.4	16.7
Township tourism increases the level of inequality in the local area	18.0	18.8	25.1	13.8	24.3
Township tourism causes excessive noise levels, which annoys residents	8.8	14.2	22.2	19.7	35.1
Township tourism increases resident's community pride	43.1	32.2	14.6	3.3	6.8
Township tourism promotes women's empowerment in my local area	10.0	12.1	23.0	26.8	28.1
Township tourism is an important tool for youth empowerment and development in my local area	6.7	5.9	18.8	32.6	36.0

The study also sought to determine the perceptions linked to the socio-cultural implications of tourism in Soweto. Subsequently, the respondents were required to respond to a statement on whether township tourism fosters cross-cultural interactions between locals and tourists who visit the precinct. The results revealed that just more than half of the respondents (54.4%) indicated that as a matter of fact, they do develop relationships with visitors that visit their communities. This result supports the assertion by Slabbert et al. (2021) that suggests that tourism encourages interactions between locals and visitors from different social and cultural backgrounds. Surprisingly, the findings relating to tourism contributing to women's empowerment in the area reveal that over half of the respondents (54.9%) dispute the assertion that township tourism drives women's empowerment. Equally, similar nuances surfaced relating to whether township tourism contributes to youth empowerment where 68.6% of the respondents disagreed with the notion that it acts as a tool for youth empowerment. These results suggest that there is a lack of participation and involvement of women and young people in township tourism development in the area - a worrying finding when considering the potency of tourism in addressing these critical issues when developed and managed effectively and strategically. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2019) emphasise that it is crucial that women and young people are empowered since they contribute to the growth and success of nations. The results from this study indicate that township tourism in Soweto does not achieve SDG 5 which seeks to ensure that there are equal opportunities for both genders. Shen et al. (2022) suggest that governments, specifically local governments, should

increase residents' participation in decision-making processes, especially for marginalized groups. Another concern that was raised in follow up questions amongst the residents was the issue of inauthentic experiences. In this regard, a majority of the surveyed residents (68.5%) felt that township tourism currently compromises the authenticity of heritage and cultural products and offerings. The suggestion is that in recent times, due to the high demand for unique cultural experiences, there has been an increase in the commodification and staging of cultural experiences. Finally, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (93.2%) stressed the need for the government to do more in terms of educating local people about tourism and the opportunities that it presents for economic development. In this regard, they felt that many of them do have a keen interest in capitalizing on tourism opportunities, but lack the necessary "know-how" and skills to engage in the sector.

Conclusion and Implications

This study sought to determine residents' perceptions towards tourism development and impacts in the Vilakazi Street Precinct with a view to suggest ways in which these perceptions can be integrated into the tourism development agenda. The study's findings reveal that most of the local residents are generally interested in tourism, and to a large extent involved and participating in tourism activities around the Vilakazi Street Precinct. Similarly, the study found that township tourism in the area is largely associated with positive impacts on the community which is consistent with similar studies on tourism impacts in local communities (see for example Bakri et al., 2014; Bartis, Madlwabinga, 2020; Geethika, Gnanapala, 2015; Halim et al., 2022). Particularly, the findings suggest positive socio-economic contributions from township tourism. However, nuanced views were observed in that it was noted that not all residents benefit from tourism growth and development. This can be an expected result as it is not possible to effectively involve everyone in the tourism process. In fact, some of the residents felt that tourism benefits were skewed towards established formal businesses, particularly the big ones as opposed to the smaller businesses. In this respect, they suggested that tourism is fuelling inequalities within the community. This is further supported by the general sense felt by residents, that township tourism is arguably failing to address the key issues of women empowerment and youth empowerment. Such findings highlight Harilal and Nyikana's (2019) argument on the need for socio-economic transformation for tourism small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in host communities. In doing so, it will create opportunities for residents, and this increases the chances of residents participating in tourism development. The implication therefore is that there is an uneven distribution of tourism benefits in the Vilakazi Street Precinct. A previous study by Xue and Kerstetter (2018) argues that residents are the rightful owners of tourism resources at destinations, and therefore should benefit even more from tourism activities. This study, therefore, suggests that the local government that oversees tourism development in Soweto should develop strategies that seek to ensure equal distribution of tourism benefits in the precinct, if not an approach that is inclusive as a way of achieving representativeness. A further recommendation is made for the more purposeful inclusion of women and young people in tourism. This can include equipping them with the necessary skills and opportunities to participate in tourism development since it was found that there was an overwhelming desire for more education and training for local residents, especially women and youth. Similarly, Harilal and Nyikana (2019) echo the same sentiments on the importance of ensuring that there are equal opportunities for small tourism enterprises. The implementa-

tion of such programmes would also assist in the pursuit of achieving the equal distribution of tourism benefits. Given that effective implementation of any programme largely rests on a collaborative effort, fuelled by trust amongst stakeholders in tourism, the local government and community members working together would ensure mutual benefits, and cooperation in realizing common goals for township tourism development.

From a theoretical point of view, the study makes a modest contribution to scholarship through providing fresh perspectives on tourism impacts and local community involvement in tourism. This is on the basis that, given the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating impact it had on the tourism industry, empirical research is needed in order to revisit residents' perceptions of tourism development and its subsequent impacts, particularly for historically neglected areas with great tourism potential. Thus, this paper adds to the body of knowledge on sustainable tourism development, through the integration of residents' views on this process. From a policy perspective, the study also makes a contribution towards local economic development strategies that inform national policies linked to tourism development. In this regard, this study argues that local municipalities should adopt a more active approach in their strategies for tourism development in townships. Arguably, local municipalities should incorporate the views of locals and their experiences of township tourism in their packaging and subsequent management of the sector such that it has the desired impact on the local economy. To achieve this, a constant dialogue between government authorities from the local municipality and the residents should be established and sustained. Through such dialogue, education, training and awareness raising about the potential of tourism to contribute to the socio-economic well-being of residents will be achieved. As such, optimal benefits for all parties involved may be achieved and the positive impacts of tourism optimized, while collectively reducing the negative implications.

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