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Sustainable heritage tourism: the Inanda Heritage Route and the 2010 FIFA World Cup

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This paper discusses the Inanda Heritage Route (IHR) in Durban on the east coast of South Africa, which was developed in preparation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The IHR comprises five important cultural heritage sites of the black majority, including the Phoenix Settlement established by Mahatma Gandhi in 1904. Forty-one tourists, mostly international soccer fans, were interviewed about their experiences of visiting the route in June/July 2010. The findings are analyzed in relation to issues of sustainability, focusing on a demand-side approach and the challenges of increasing tourist flow and community benefits. A brief literature review illustrates priority issues in the South African understanding of sustainable and “responsible” tourism development, and the question of incorporating neglected black heritage. It is argued that the IHR could become a successful model of sustainable “alternative” tourism, but more community participation is needed both in tourism and in cultural heritage site management to increase the sense of ownership and opportunities for material gains and poverty alleviation. The last section focuses on heritage interpretation at each of the interview sites. It is argued that the interpretation should not primarily be targeted at foreign tourists, but must more strongly be geared towards enticing local people to visit.

Keywords: Inanda Heritage Route; sustainable tourism; heritage; interpretation; community development

Introduction

In preparation for the 2010 Soccer World Cup, the South African government made extraordinary investments not only in the construction of stadiums and the general upgrading of infrastructure, but also in the wider tourism sector. Thus, in the eThekwini Municipality, a major metropolitan local government unit which includes the city of Durban, approximately US$450 million was spent on the construction of the Moses Mabhida Stadium, a multi-use stadium named after a former General Secretary of the South African Communist Party. In addition, other smaller investments were made, intended to provide additional attractions for the anticipated large influx of tourists and create long-lasting economic benefits and general infrastructure improvements for the residents of disadvantaged areas. A prominent example of a smaller investment is the municipality’s development of the Inanda Heritage Route (IHR). This paper examines the issues surrounding the operational sustainability of this route and its potential to become a model example of sustainable “alternative” tourism focused on the heritage and culture of the black majority.

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The IHR is a driving route of about 50 km (including extensions), the beginning of which lies about 15 km northeast of the Durban city centre, in an area rich in diverse cultural and natural resources (Figure 1). The route is structured around several highly significant cultural heritage nodes, including the Phoenix Settlement, established by Mahatma Gandhi in 1904. It is currently serviced mostly by guided tours in buses and large passenger vehicles. Although not really encouraged by tourism authorities (due to security concerns), self-drive tourism is also possible, as the route is fairly well signposted and a fold-out brochure-type map provides direction and information. Some route information is also available online, but no specific website has thus far been produced and the route does not yet feature prominently in standard travel guides. In theory, the IHR had been in existence for a few years, but no tourism worth mentioning occurred there. It was only in preparation for the FIFA World Cup that the eThekwini Municipality decided to operationalize the route as a new tourist attraction by investing in a major upgrade of access infrastructure, restoration of historical sites, improvement of environmental conditions and security, as well as the production of marketing material. A subsequent development phase with further upgrading and the creation of five museum exhibitions is currently underway.¹

This paper also investigates what the much-debated concept of sustainable tourism really means with respect to a specific local case study. While there are certain characteristics and principles that are generally agreed upon to define sustainable tourism, ultimately, the application of the concept is context-bound and differs from one site to another. Much of the sustainability debate in tourism is supply-side oriented, concerning itself essentially with the protection of the host society and the destination’s natural and cultural resources from the potentially damaging effects of the tourists. In contrast, this paper is demand-side
oriented, agreeing with Prentice that tourism can only be sustainable “if it is simultaneously in harmony with hosts, environment, policy objectives and tourists’ demands” (1997, p. 229).

The World Cup has come and gone and indeed many tourists visited the IHR, 41 of whom were personally interviewed about their experiences. Although this represents only a small sample, these interviews provide a snapshot of tourists’ impressions of their visit to Inanda and hence complement the quantitative research conducted by the local authority. After providing brief background information on the IHR, this paper presents the findings of the tourist interviews and analyses their significance with respect to various issues of sustainability. Along with recommendations for improvement, suggestions will be made about what lessons can be learnt from this case study for similar heritage tourism ventures in South Africa and perhaps for other developing countries.

Heritage and tourism in South Africa

The national context

After 1994, South Africa experienced considerable growth in both domestic and foreign tourism. For instance, over 9.5 million foreigners visited South Africa in 2008, a year without extraordinary mega-events (SAT, 2008). However, approximately seven million of these visitors were classified as African land arrivals, including large numbers of temporary migrants from neighbouring countries, especially Zimbabwe. Among the air arrivals, Europe was the largest source market with 1.4 million tourists, followed by the Americas (407,000) and Australasia (323,000). During the same period, 32.9 million domestic tourist trips were recorded, conducted by 14 million people, one million more than the previous year, representing 46% of the nation’s adult population.

The South African government strongly promotes tourism as a vehicle for employment creation, economic development and poverty alleviation. Over the past 15 years, the public sector has made major strides in expanding tourism infrastructure, investing in marketing and assisting the private sector in the development of new products and services. The niche area of cultural and heritage tourism, comprising township tours, cultural villages, battlefield tours and the like, is believed to hold particular promise for the racial transformation of the tourism sector and the empowerment of previously marginalized communities, as this type of tourism is structured around existing, often community-based resources. Moreover, both the country’s cultural and natural heritage legislation emphasize that heritage conservation must be allied with tangible benefits and economic development of marginalized communities. Tourism is perceived (not always realistically so) as the most likely mechanism through which such benefits can accrue. Since the end of apartheid, the identification and preservation of cultural heritage sites has prioritized so-called “neglected heritage” or sites associated with the history and contribution of the black majority, as opposed to the country’s long tradition of focusing the conservation effort primarily on the monuments of the white minority (Hall, 2006; NHRA, 1999). The heritage sites in Inanda are a prime example of such neglected heritage.

Inanda Heritage Route

Inanda, now an African township on the north-eastern periphery of the eThekwini Municipality, was once a rural area with a culturally mixed population, where some of South Africa’s most extraordinary leaders found fertile ground and left lasting legacies. During
the middle of the nineteenth century, the Qadi clan moved to the area from the Thukela valley. Shortly afterwards, the arrival of American missionaries, Rev. Daniel Lindley and his wife Lucy, injected new impulses with the establishment of a mission station and the Inanda Seminary in 1869, the first secondary school for African girls in Southern Africa (Hughes, 1990). Through contact with the Inanda Seminary, John Langalibalele Dube, son of the Qadi chief, was sent to study in the United States. Upon his return, he established the Ohlange Institute (1901), the country’s first industrial school for African boys (Marable, 1980). Apart from being a religious leader, Dube became increasingly politically active, culminating in his co-founding of the African National Congress (ANC). It was for this reason that Nelson Mandela chose to cast his vote at Ohlange in the first democratic elections on 27 April 1994.

Almost at the same time, in 1904, Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) established his first ashram, the Phoenix Settlement, on a farm close to the grounds of the Ohlange Institute. An ashram is an Indian centre for spiritual instruction and meditation. Following his legal training in London, Gandhi spent his formative period in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, and it was at Phoenix, today preserved in truncated form, that he developed his philosophy of satyagraha or non-violent resistance (Marschall, 2008; Tichmann, 1998).

Six years later, in 1910, Prophet Isaiah Shembe, founder of the Nazareth Baptist Church, one of the most important African Initiated Churches in South Africa, settled on the land in between Phoenix and Ohlange. “Ekuphakameni” became the religious centre of the “Shembe” Church, attracting thousands of pilgrims from all over the country for their annual festivals. When the church split over a succession battle in the late 1970s, Ebuhleni, a flat hilltop area near the Mzinyathi waterfall, was established by Amos Shembe as headquarters for what is now the church’s majority faction (Papini, 1992). The two Shembe sites, the Inanda Seminary, the Ohlange Institute and the Phoenix Settlement now constitute the five principle nodes of the IHR.

From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, Inanda was exposed to intense political violence, in the course of which the Phoenix Settlement was largely destroyed and plundered and most Indians were expelled from the area. Informal settlements sprang up as a result of migration and population growth. Although the general infrastructure and access to basic services have improved during the post-apartheid period, the population of Inanda today still suffers from high levels of poverty and unemployment, a high HIV/AIDS infection rate and other public health problems, crime, shortage of housing, lack of transport options and a host of other socio-economic problems. The challenge today lies in how to integrate this peripheral, historically disadvantaged area into the larger eThekwini Municipality.

The first serious attempt at promoting tourism in Inanda was marked by the reconstruction of the principle buildings on the apex of the Phoenix Settlement in 1999, officially unveiled by President Thabo Mbeki on 27 February 2000. Restoration efforts have also been made at Ohlange and the Inanda Seminary and a new access road was built at Ebuhleni, but tourism to the area remained negligible as there were no tourist amenities, proper interpretation, or safe parking and signage; the real and perceived danger of violence and crime moreover functioned as major deterrents. The municipality’s investment in the professional upgrading and development of the IHR ahead of the FIFA World Cup was intended not only to create new attractions for the anticipated large influx of tourists, but also to provide a range of tangible material benefits to the local community. The IHR development was seen as a crucial mechanism for diversifying the local economy, while simultaneously enhancing social coherence and community pride. The route was officially launched under the branding “Woza eNanda” on 9 May 2010 at the Ohlange Institute (Hennig, 2010; Situation Analysis Report, 2009).
The IHR is part of the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Freedom Route, which was initiated by various local tourism stakeholders and launched in 2008. It combines various “freedom nodes”, i.e. museums and heritage sites associated with the heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle and key events in local resistance history around Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Howick and other places. Although some sites, e.g. the Albert Luthuli Museum in Groutville and the KwaMuhle Museum in Durban, attract a lot of visitors, the Freedom Route is not a signposted cohesive route development, but rather a thematic linking of sites over a larger area, accompanied by a brochure.

Apart from the five historical nodes, Inanda contains a rich body of intangible and “living” heritage, much of it rooted in traditional Zulu culture, including traditional healing, music, dancing and craft-making, notably beadwork. Conservation authorities often struggle to find workable solutions to the problematic processes of identification, conservation, preservation and presentation of community beliefs, oral traditions and indigenous knowledge systems. This author has argued elsewhere that the rich body of intangible heritage extant in Inanda could more effectively be linked to the tourist experience of the IHR, hence simultaneously creating opportunities for the local community to benefit (Marschall, 2009, 2011). Although the interviews for this project did not explore this aspect, market research among tour operators confirms that there is a tourist demand for more interaction with local people and experiences of the “real life” of the community (Situation Analysis Report, 2009). This is an important point in terms of sustainability as will be discussed next.

**Sustainable tourism and “other tourisms” in the South African context**

Since the 1987 landmark Brundtland report defined the concept of “sustainable development”, much subsequent policy development has occurred and a global action plan, Agenda 21, was adopted in 1992. Yet, the implementation of sustainable development objectives has remained challenging throughout the world. While developed countries are reluctant to compromise on accustomed patterns of consumption and lifestyle, developing countries tend to be preoccupied with meeting basic development needs and pushing economic growth, often at the expense of the environment. Acknowledging these pressures, in South Africa, sustainable development is usually understood to refer to the “triple bottom line” (Elkington, 1998), the simultaneous pursuit of economic development, environmental protection and social equity. This is particularly significant for the tourism sector, as the country battles to address high levels of poverty and underdevelopment through tourism development, largely perceived as a panacea, while simultaneously pushing for the transformation of a historically white-dominated industry and the more equitable sharing of its benefits (Goudie, Khan, & Kilian, 1996; Hughes, 2007; Keyser, 2009; Spenceley, 2008, pp. 1–3).

Being one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world, tourism can contribute substantially to the attainment of sustainable development. Sustainable tourism was defined by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 1998 as a form of tourism “that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future... leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems” (cited in Keyser, 2009, p. 32). For this paper, it is important to note that sustainable tourism is not only about the conservation of the environment, but it also contains cultural, economic and political dimensions (Holden, 2005, p. 122; see also Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Keyser, 2009; Knowles, Diamantis, & El-Mourahbi, 2004; Mowforth & Munt, 2008; Murphy, 1998; Wahab & Pigram, 1997).
In South Africa, the term “responsible tourism” is frequently used in conjunction with—or even in lieu of—sustainable tourism, based on the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1996), which promotes the development of “responsible and sustainable” tourism growth. Apart from a sustainable use of resources and protection of the environment, the concept of responsible tourism stresses more specifically the responsibility of individuals and tourism enterprises for the impacts of their actions and details the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in implementing the principles of sustainability. Moreover, responsible tourism strongly emphasizes the participation of local communities in the planning, decision-making and benefits generated through tourism (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1996; Keyser, 2009; Spenceley, 2008).

The latter point has encouraged the expansion of community-based tourism (CBT) development, a sector of the local tourism industry that attracts much attention. CBT often involves tourists visiting local, impoverished communities and staying overnight in rural villages, but by definition, it refers to any tourism enterprise that is substantially owned and managed by members of previously disadvantaged communities, both in rural and township areas. Due to the low capital base and limited investment and human resource capacity, many CBT enterprises are small-scale operations that draw substantially on existing resources. CBT can be considered a form of “alternative tourism”. Like sustainable tourism, alternative tourism remains a somewhat elusive concept, but some defining characteristics include small-scale, community-driven, locally owned tourism products with low levels of negative impacts and low leakage. Alternative tourism is widely associated with community empowerment and includes, in some definitions, also the empowerment of women and the fostering of democracy (Holden, 2005; Knowles et al., 2004; Macleod, 1998; Murphy, 1998; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

Ironically, as much as alternative tourism tends to be associated with sustainable tourism, in the South African context, community-based alternative forms of tourism experience many challenges and have a poor record of survival, i.e. their economic sustainability is often tenuous (e.g. Brennan & Allan, 2001; Hottola, 2009).

Sometimes associated with alternative tourism is another important concept in the South African context, namely that of “pro-poor tourism”. The latter has gained much attention since the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, when it was established that sustainable development can only be achieved in the developing world when coupled with addressing issues of basic survival. Pro-poor tourism is based on the premise that tourism should specifically benefit impoverished sectors of the host society, not only economically, but also by generating environmental, cultural and social benefits. This means primarily giving poor communities access to tourism markets and providing them with the resources to participate in tourism (Holden, 2005, p. 132; Macleod, 1998; Rogerson 2002). However, pro-poor tourism is not always considered sustainable, because its strong prioritizing of development and poverty alleviation may compromise environmental conservation issues.

The IHR is arguably an example of alternative tourism with pro-poor tourism potential, but important lessons must first be learnt from the current experience. As mentioned earlier, the debate about sustainability in tourism is often supply-side oriented, and much of the praxis-oriented literature in the field, often produced in the developed world and informed by tourism trends in the world’s most popular destinations, is focused on visitor management, including, in some cases, the management of visitor numbers (Bramwell & Lane, 1993). But in developing-world contexts, and especially in the case of alternative tourism products, the continuous flow of tourists cannot be taken for granted. Consumer
satisfaction, i.e. the provision of quality experiences and the meeting of tourist demands, is hence a crucial criterion in achieving sustainability and realizing the objectives that drove the erstwhile investment. In the case of the IHR, where tourist flow patterns barely developed from a trickle into a modest current during the World Cup, no amount of environmental protection, heritage conservation and community participation will lead to sustainable tourism development if the destination does not meet the expectations of tourists and members of the tourism industry lose interest in servicing the route.

Methodology

Strengths and weaknesses of the small-scale sample

Durban Tourism, the municipality’s official tourism authority, monitors tourism in Inanda and regularly records visitor numbers at two of the principle heritage nodes, Ohlange and the Phoenix Settlement. From April to September 2009, a total of 1194 visitors were recorded for Phoenix and 1134 for Ohlange, of which approximately 73% were international tourists. For the same period in 2010, i.e. capturing the time of the World Cup, a total of 3187 and 4270 visitors were recorded for Phoenix and Ohlange respectively, of which approximately 66% were international tourists. However, the figure for Ohlange is distorted by an organized tour with 1000 visitors on 14 June. Remarkably, for the same period in 2011, visitor figures have even exceeded the 2010 levels, testifying to the success of the route, although domestic tourism figures are boosted by large school groups on field trips.2

This qualitative study involved face-to-face interviews with 41 tourists, 16 of whom were soccer fans from Australia and 10 were exchange students from the United States; the remaining visitors were individuals from Brazil, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom and Sweden. There were two South Africans. Although a very small sample, it constitutes a random and telling glimpse at the visitation pattern of the IHR.

Interviews were conducted by three research assistants during spot checks on one or two days per week between 14 June and 16 July 2010, in most cases after having made an arrangement with a tour operator. Tourists were individually approached and asked a standard set of semi-structured questions, including highlights, complaints and suggestions for improvement.3 As opposed to the “survey fatigue” frequently encountered by interviewers in the field, the research assistants in this study remarked on the cooperative attitude of many interviewees, who were often highly supportive of the research and glad to share their experiences. Although essentially following a semi-structured questionnaire, the interview process allowed for personal responses and the contribution of constructive suggestions or criticism. In fact, some tourists might have wanted to engage in a lengthier discussion if it was not for the constant time pressure under which the interviews had to be conducted. This time pressure, due to the tour operators’ wish to move on in accordance with their itinerary, constituted the main limitation of the study apart from the sample size.

In the process of developing the IHR, consultants had interviewed tour operators to determine tourist demand for the new product, but the feedback of actual tourists as captured in this study is more telling when determining whether the route might be sustainable from a demand perspective. What is particularly significant about the tourists interviewed during the World Cup is the fact that they were primarily soccer fans; they are not part of the principal target group for heritage tourism products, but rather constitute members of a potentially new, previously untapped market. As Bramwell and Lane (1993, p. 78) point out, it is very easy to interpret heritage sites for the educated and motivated, but far more
challenging to make them attractive for mass audiences or tourists with potentially little time or interest.

*Interview responses*

With the exception of the American students, almost all visitors reported the World Cup as being their primary reason for coming to Durban and for most this was their first visit. All the Australian respondents and some of the others had found out about the IHR through tour operators on the Internet, notably the newly established local operator Street Scene Tours, which offers “alternative tours” of the city as seen “through the eyes of the locals” (www.streetscenetours.co.za), or national and international agencies (Ilios Travel, Fox Sport Travel and Fanatics). The American exchange students visited Inanda as part of their study itinerary; a few persons were made aware of the tour through a personal or business contact and a few more through brochures picked up at the airport or on another city tour.

Remarkably, all respondents were overwhelmingly positive about their visit to the IHR. Many pointed out the warm and welcoming attitude of the local people, who they encountered around the heritage sites and at Inanda’s JL Dube stadium, where the Australian soccer fans went to watch a local football match before visiting the Ohlange Institute. One described his visit to Inanda as an “eye opener”, while another said the area is “important to the nation’s history”, suggesting that this should be a regular stop on the city’s Heritage Bus route. One Brazilian visitor drew parallels with “favela tours” in Rio de Janeiro, which he said, are working well, “but one has to have a good consultation and agreement with the community for them not to feel like animals in a zoo. Likewise consultation with the Inanda community is very important for the development of this site”. Several people said more marketing is needed for the route and signage should be improved further. The odd person voiced concern over crime (despite there being a higher than normal police presence in Inanda during the World Cup period). Virtually all tourists who commented generally about Inanda seemed rather shocked at the poor living conditions of the local community. One middle-aged woman from Australia said: “People are very friendly, even though they have limited means and their lifestyles seem restricted. It would be nice to pour money into this community to help it improve.” Others echoed her suggestion that much more needs to be done to improve infrastructure and economic development.

Most of the site-specific responses referred to Ohlange, which was generally very well received, with some even saying there is “nothing to improve”. Many were impressed with the rich history of the place; some emphasized that this is an important site for the history of the country; one described it as a unique site, “something different”. Several considered the site “powerful in its simplicity” and having a “powerful emotional aspect which many other tours lacked”. A young male tourist from Denmark felt the site was important mainly because it reflected the values of the ANC and what it stands for: “After my visit to Ohlange, I feel motivated to read up in more detail [Nelson Mandela’s] book *A Long Walk to Freedom*. I like the site because it has strong links with Nelson Mandela, who inspires me.”

The only negative comments referred to the brevity of the visit and one mentioned the under-resourced state of the school. One visitor complained that the heritage site has no phone line installed. This point is significant for individual travellers, especially because the specially produced map-like brochure of the IHR did not contain mobile phone details for the site guide (Mandla Nxumalo). Only very few visitors took the time to make constructive suggestions for improvement, all of which referred to the need for more displays about Dube and the school. One participant suggested a multi-media presentation about the school and John Dube; another suggested a display of newspaper articles about important events in the
country’s history, in which stories in the African newspaper *Ilanga*, founded by John Dube, would be contrasted with coverage of the same events in “European” newspapers.

Visitors to the Phoenix Settlement were also generally impressed with the historical significance of the site: “The site is fantastic; it has provided me with a different understanding from what I knew about Gandhi before”, said a middle-aged female visitor from the United Kingdom. Others admitted that they had not known about Gandhi’s time in Durban. Some individuals did obviously not understand the chronology of the built environment and its history of destruction and reconstruction, as they reportedly liked the fact that these were the “original” buildings constructed during Gandhi’s time. Some said the site should remain “as original as it currently is”. Most tourists were disappointed over the lack of displays inside Gandhi’s house and some suggested a need for a complete museum with pictures, a “video hall” and much more information on Gandhi’s life generally, his time at the Phoenix Settlement, his philosophy and history.

Compared with Ohlange and Phoenix, relatively few tourists were encountered at the religious sites of Ekhupakameni and Ebuhleni during the sporadic spot checks of this research. Ekhupakameni cannot be visited without prior arrangement and some tour operators might be deterred from taking groups there due to the dress code requirements (e.g. women must wear skirts) and the need to remove shoes. However, the few who did visit expressed great appreciation, describing the place as “original” and “authentic”, a great cultural experience. Likewise, few tourists were encountered at the Inanda Seminary, which did not seem to have been included in most of the organized tours, apart from that for the American exchange students. The latter respondents described the site as “impressive”, “encouraging” and a success story. Nothing was missed in terms of visitor facilities and the only negative comment referred to the fact that most people from the community would not be able to afford studying at Inanda Seminary.

**Analysis of results and discussion**

**Sustainability**

Both the site guides (especially at Ohlange) and some of the interviewed tourists themselves commented that visits often occurred in a rush, leaving very little time to really appreciate the sites or even see all the key areas. At Ohlange, for instance, some tourists were not shown the hall where Mandela voted – one of the most important aspects of the site. But the short dwell time at the sites is very significant in another way too: visitors have little time to purchase craft, souvenirs or refreshments from local vendors even if given the chance. Time also prevented most tourists from visiting all the four key nodes of the route. Although tourists were not specifically asked this question in the interviews, there is little indication that any of them had a meal in Inanda or visited community structures outside the heritage nodes. The time question is a common issue in many sites around the world: according to Zhang, Xu, Su, and Ryan (2009), for example, the way tour operators organize the tour can be the root cause of the problem.

One of the key problems with respect to sustainability from a pro-poor perspective is that local people who are keen to participate in tourism are denied access to tourists (Holden, 2005, p. 132). This is particularly crucial in a case such as the IHR, where the movement of tourists is highly controlled by tour operators and itineraries are developed without specific consideration of pro-poor issues. This is entirely understandable from a business perspective, as tour operators focus on generating profits from a newly developed product surrounded by completely inadequate tourism infrastructure, low consumer awareness and
a host of further obstacles. It must be acknowledged that it takes time and effort to motivate and capacitate the private sector to establish sustainable and responsible management practices (Spenceley, 2008, p. 365).

From a community point of view, the picture looks rather different. In many developing countries, where local communities struggle to meet basic needs, community support for the conservation of cultural and natural heritage resources appears to be contingent on the materialization of benefits generated from these resources. Although government agencies correctly point out that “benefiting” must be understood in more than solely economic terms, there is no denial that most impoverished communities expect job opportunities, income generation and infrastructure improvements from the heritage tourism development in their midst. Moreover, the interviews suggest that the friendly attitude of the local population clearly contributed to the tourists’ positive experience of the IHR. Although local tourism marketing makes us believe that South African communities are exceptionally hospitable by nature, one must, more realistically, assume that many locals are welcoming towards tourists because they associate them with money and economic benefits. It cannot be taken for granted that this attitude will be sustained if no material benefits result in the medium term.

For the IHR and similar such cases, three solutions can be proposed to increase the chances of sustainability through community benefits: Firstly, it is essential to alert tour operators to pro-poor issues and show them how they can include community-based “complementary products” with tourist spending opportunities in their itineraries, ideally in ways that are mutually beneficial. The fact that many interviewees were appalled at the community’s poor living conditions suggests that tourists would be pleased to see evidence of how the quality of people’s lives have improved through tourism, i.e. indirectly through their contribution. In this context, selected community development projects could be featured as attractions in their own right. Local government should consult with tour operators before making decisions about the further expansion of the tourism amenities infrastructure in Inanda.

Secondly, the government might need to provide support to foster entrepreneurial activity within the Inanda community, support small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) that can provide tourism-related services and especially encourage the emergence of more tour operators and tourist guides from within the area. The need for such intervention has long been recognized by both academics and the government, but so far, there is still too little evidence of implementation. It is hoped that the country’s newly developed Draft National Tourism Sector Strategy (Department of Tourism, 2010) will contribute to rectifying this situation. The document specifically speaks of developing programmes that attract more black entrepreneurs to enter the tourism industry and providing national mentorship programmes to support such entrepreneurs and operators of SMMEs (2010, p. 74). There has been extensive research into local capacity-building systems in tourism, especially in developing countries: Okazaki (2008), Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan, and Luloff (2010) and Salazar (in press) all provide contrasting examples of issues and possibilities.

Thirdly, more marketing and support material is needed to encourage self-drive tourists. Although driving around in private vehicles (as opposed to the currently prevailing mode of transport in buses) is environmentally unfriendly and hence compromises the IHR’s overall sustainability score, self-drive tourists provide potentially more benefits for locals, as they have more freedom to vary their routes, spend time in the area and interact with the community. At present, the conditions of the IHR are not conducive, but self-drive tourists represent the majority of visitors on other routes, including the highly successful Midlands Meander. The presence of self-drive tourists can serve as an indication of tourist
awareness and perceptions of security of the route. The marketing issue links partly to the need for more community capacity-building and partly to a long-recognised observation that heritage professionals lack both marketing skills and motivation (Chhabra, 2009).

Rázt & Michalkó’s (2008) concept of the “tourist milieu” refers to the ambience or general atmosphere of the destination as it is subjectively perceived by each visitor, based on personal experiences, emotions and impressions, personality, and interests. The milieu is influenced by many factors apart from the primary attractions, including the destination’s climate, environment, food, socio-cultural characteristics of the local community and the attitude of the local population. In contrast to the destination image, which is heavily shaped by marketing material and other media and which is often formed in the tourist’s mind on the basis of preconceptions, milieu is predominantly based on actual observation and participation; it develops as a result of the visitor’s actual sensual experiences of a destination’s attributes (Rázt & Michalkó’s, 2008, p. 5). While destination image attracts first-time visitors, the tourist milieu entices return visitors, because the milieu may become an attraction in itself. This is particularly important with respect to the IHR visitors during the World Cup, as these were first-time visitors outside the normal target market. Given that key issues in the sustainability of the IHR are an overall increase of visitors and an increase in community benefits from the tourism in the area, more research could be done on milieu factors that attract tourists to Inanda, and a more holistic marketing of the destination, subtly focused on linking community-based spending opportunities to the visit of the primary sites.

Much of the literature on sustainable tourism around cultural heritage, produced in developed countries and based on case studies of some of the world’s most popular heritage attractions, is focused on managing excessive volumes of visitors. Key issues include the safeguarding of the heritage resource from the potentially damaging impacts of the tourists and ensuring the quality of the visitor experience in view of the constant effect of crowding. The concept of perceptual carrying capacity, i.e. the relationship between tourist volume and experience (Prentice, 1997), implies that low visitors numbers guarantee a higher-quality visitor experience in certain types of attractions, notably those involving guided tours in small-scale environments. In the case of the IHR, this observation provides an opportunity for turning a weakness into a strength and competitive advantage. In a context where cultural heritage sites throughout the world suffer from massive congestion, the IHR with its low volume of visitors can provide quality experiences on the basis of in-depth, close-up exposure to the sites, individual attention, ideally customized heritage interpretation narratives and possibly one-on-one contact with members of the community. Once again, the marketing could highlight this point and some individuals might even find it worthwhile paying a higher price for such quality experience.

**Heritage interpretation**

The government acknowledges that many areas within South Africa have the potential to be developed into tourism destinations, but often the visitor experience is diminished by “the poor quality, poor management and lack of maintenance of cultural and heritage attractions” (Department of Tourism, 2010, p. 45). To this one might add the poor quality or complete lack of heritage interpretation, defined as the “process of communicating or explaining to visitors the significance of the place they are visiting” (Timothy & Boyd, 2003, p. 195). In the case of the IHR, many improvements have been made to the heritage interpretation in time for the World Cup, notably the creation of new displays, the production of explanatory material and the employment of a permanent site guide at Ohlange. Other initiatives are
still underway or planned, especially the creation of the above-mentioned exhibitions and a new interpretation centre at Ekuphakameni, which will hopefully address the desire for more displays and interpretive media highlighted by some of the more observant tourists.

Heritage interpretation is sometimes criticized for its interference with the visitor’s own experience of a heritage place. In the case of political or religious sites such as those in Inanda, there is an inherent danger that an overzealous guide or an unbalanced exhibition may turn the heritage interpretation into propaganda. Nevertheless, there is broad consensus that interpretation is very important for heritage tourism, that it considerably enhances the visitor experience and that it can play an important role in conservation and sustainable development. Much of the debate on interpretation at heritage sites centres on the relationship between education, long considered the core value in heritage interpretation, and entertainment or enjoyment, now widely regarded equally important to hold the visitor’s attention (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Timothy & Boyd, 2003). A symbiotic relationship between the two is particularly important in a case like the IHR, which is still trying to expand its appeal and attract more visitors, including those outside traditional target markets, as occurred during the World Cup.

The broad sense of satisfaction and generally uncritical attitude expressed by the interviewees in this study might in part be attributed to the fact that the majority of them likely sought merely a brief, superficial experience of local history and culture. Quite different results might emerge when interviewing “serious” heritage tourists with much prior knowledge, a deep need for information and learning, and a wide range of comparative experiences gathered on previous journeys. In fact, anecdotal evidence and personal observations at other heritage sites in South Africa suggest that some visitors, including foreign tourists, feel that they know more about the history of the leader figures and significance of the heritage sites than the local guides. This illustrates the dilemma between providing quality heritage interpretation and meeting social justice demands in a context marked by a long legacy of underdevelopment. Many tourist guides, especially site guides, possess low levels of formal education, little historical knowledge and little travel experience of their own. In an attempt to involve local communities and provide jobs, they are superficially trained to present a pre-designed narrative and respond to basic questions.

Many scholars highlight the need for different approaches to heritage interpretation for different audiences, because no standard tour guide narrative, display or text panel will be equally meaningful to all visitors, as they originate from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds and arrive with different motivations. One such type of heritage interpretation, which has gained increasing prominence in recent years, focuses specifically on members of the resident community and their understanding of the heritage site. In developing countries such as South Africa, where many heritage structures are surrounded by living communities, it is particularly important to recognize the interdependencies that exist between the community and the heritage resources in their area (Nuryanti, 1996, p. 256; Timothy & Boyd, 2003). This presents another opportunity to turn a weakness into a strength as the local guide is ideally equipped to address members of the local community at a level they can understand and relate to.

Throughout South Africa, museums and heritage sites struggle to attract visitors from previously disadvantaged communities, despite the frequent absence of an entrance fee. Low levels of formal education contribute to this avoidance behaviour, but more important is the fact that in such communities, the visiting of museums and heritage sites has never traditionally formed part of their collective behaviour, or “habitus”. To ensure sustainability, heritage interpretation must not exclusively focus on tourists, but be geared towards enticing local communities to visit and develop a stronger sense of ownership and identification.
with them. It is encouraging that one tourist in the sample was a local resident of Inanda, but the site guides can confirm that this is highly exceptional (apart from school groups on organized field trips). Communities need to understand the significance of preserving and visiting heritage sites beyond the mere prospect of economic gains. From a visitor’s perspective, local people are an integral part of the “heritage locus”; they can contribute vitality to an area and assist in the maintenance of an atmosphere that is conducive to tourism (Nuryanti, 1996, p. 256).

Moreover, a visit to the local heritage site is the start of developing a culture of engaging in domestic heritage tourism that will in due course benefit other heritage sites in the country, because an interest in visiting heritage sites is often kindled during childhood through museum visits with parents. In South Africa, it might have to be the other way around: children who are now being introduced to heritage sites through school field trips should be encouraged to take their parents on such visits. If heritage sites offer interpretation programmes aimed at building local residents’ knowledge, the latter can use that knowledge and share it with visitors, infusing it with their own perceptions, perspectives and experiences. Educating locals to become conduits of knowledge about local heritage can provide fascinating, potentially provocative or humorous insights for tourists and substantially enrich the quality of their visitor experience, while empowering locals by allowing them direct access to and interaction with tourists. This opens up a variety of opportunities and promotes sustainability on multiple levels.

Conclusion

By celebrating the heritage of the black majority, the IHR plays an important part in the transformation of the South African heritage sector from its long legacy of focusing on the history and achievements of the white minority. Hughes observes the tendency “to treat all heritage initiatives as somehow designed for tourists” and points out that post-apartheid heritage is far more than “an industry” to attract tourists (2007, p. 267). Yet she acknowledges that heritage sites are nothing if they are not visited: “The very notions of display and exhibition imply an audience” (2007, p. 267). Indeed, many people in Inanda surely appreciate the government’s efforts in preserving and upgrading the heritage sites in their midst and honouring their heroes, but ultimately, two facts remain: firstly, by and large, Inanda residents do not visit these sites, and secondly, they expect economic benefits and community development.

As much as the government (even at national level) is aware of the significance of the Inanda heritage sites and acknowledges the need for conserving them, the primary purpose of the eThekwini Municipality’s upgrading of the IHR was to attract tourists and improve the livelihoods of Inanda as one of the municipality’s most marginalized areas. The challenge is how the route can become a sustainable and responsible tourism operation beyond the momentum generated by the World Cup. Cultural heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development around heritage face unique problems and constraints in South Africa, where the majority has very little understanding of the tourism phenomenon and the value of preserving and visiting old heritage structures. This paper suggested that in the case of the IHR, and similar cases in the developing world, where the issue of sustainability essentially revolves around tourism flow and community benefits, it is essential to encourage local residents to visit the heritage sites in their midst. This represents the first step towards creating an understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the heritage tourist phenomenon, which may ultimately lead to connecting local people to the tourism value chain.
Other steps may be considered. Heritage routes, or trails, need to be holistically linked to tourism development and the tourism industry to improve their economic performance, whether they are in developed or developing countries (Lane, 1999). It will probably always be difficult for smaller heritage sites and routes, such as the IHR, to attract large visitor numbers (McKercher & Ho, 2006) for a range of behavioural and technical reasons. But much depends on the marketing stance adopted. Finally, if poverty alleviation is to be a key feature of any sustainability assessment, a much more holistic capacity-building programme to tourism in the local area would help. Scheyvens and Russell sum up that requirement in one sentence:

Pro-poor outcomes do not automatically arise from rapid growth of the tourism sector: the success of such initiatives is heavily dependent on a government’s willingness to provide a facilitating policy environment specifically targeting the poor, and establishing policy frameworks and institutions that ensure ongoing support. (in press, p. 27)

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Notes
1. According to Peter Gilmore, Senior Project Manager of the IHR in the Municipality’s Economic Development Unit, a total of approximately R12.5 million were invested prior to the World Cup in the upgrading of the heritage sites and tourism infrastructure. Another R8 million have been added in 2011 for signage, five exhibitions and the upgrade of the (Shembe) Ekuphakameni site. Another R10 million are budgeted for next year (2012) to build a new interpretation centre for the Shembe site (P. Gilmore, personal communication, October 25, 2011).
2. The figures for this period are: Ohlange, 5826 (48% international); Phoenix, 4231 (55% international). Apart from compiling visitor statistics, Durban Tourism and the Municipality are not currently engaged in conducting further research, as the upgrading process is still underway and it is considered too early to measure the impacts of the IHR investment (Gilmore, personal communication, October 25, 2011; Mshengu, personal communication, October 25, 2011).
3. The semi-structured interview schedule captured broad demographic information about the respondents and then asked the following questions: primary reason for visiting Durban, how did the tourist find out about the IHR, which sites have been visited and which will still be visited as part of the itinerary, what did the tourist like and dislike about the site, and further comments (where interviewees were encouraged to elaborate).
4. The Midlands Meander is an arts and craft self-drive route that begins in Pietermaritzburg and extends in various scenic loops across the KZN midlands region. Originally established in 1985, the route has expanded significantly over the years and now also includes many country hotels, guest houses, cafes and a variety of tourist amenities. Attracting a constant flow of visitors, the Midlands Meander is considered one of the most successful route developments and the “oldest African example of using routes as the basis for tourism-led L[ocal] E[conomic] D[evelopment]” (Rogerson, 2009, p. 37).
5. Davis and Prentice’ research into motivations and constraints for visiting heritage attractions found that lack of “museum socialization” is an important reason for non-visitors. People who do visit museums reported having been “socialized as children into the museum environment” (1995, p. 492).
6. After the World Cup, the author initiated a community outreach project based at Ohlange High School, where Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners in the elective subject of Travel & Tourism are enticed to bring their parents, friends and neighbours to visit the Ohlange Heritage site.
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