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## Article

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## **Tourism Potential, Economic Impacts and Implications in Marginalised Areas in Ndwedwe Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

**Suveshnee Munien<sup>1</sup>, Sindiswa Phungula<sup>2</sup>, Urmilla Bob<sup>3</sup>**

**Abstract.** Rural development is a focus of development initiatives in South Africa and the role of tourism in this regard is highlighted. Ndwedwe Local Municipality, one of KwaZulu-Natal's poorest Municipalities, has a primary node (Ndwedwe Town) surrounded by rural areas that lack basic infrastructure and services. The Municipality has substantial cultural and agricultural assets and natural resources and its Integrated Development Plan recognises its tourism potential but focuses on development around Ndwedwe Town with agricultural development being the focus in peripheral areas. This study examines the tourism potential and economic impacts within marginalised rural areas outside Ndwedwe Town. Community perceptions on development opportunities and challenges in relation to tourism development are probed via a quantitative survey approach. In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with 164 randomly chosen households. The study unpacked the profile of respondents and households (relating these to how well individuals and households are positioned to benefit from tourism opportunities), current participation in tourism, skill levels and willingness to participate in tourism. Tourism potential in these areas is also discussed in the context of current infrastructure and services. The results reveal that while very few households currently participate in tourism-related activities, there was a desire to increase household participation. Limited tourism products (although potential exists in relation to natural resources available, cultural assets and agricultural activities), inadequate infrastructure and services (associated with challenging undulating topography) and limited marketing opportunities undermine the development of rural tourism in the area. Addressing these challenges and inadequacies can ensure viable and sustainable tourism development.

**Keywords:** Rural development; tourism; economic impacts; Ndwedwe; South Africa

**JEL Classification:** Z32

### **1. Introduction**

Kepe and Tessaro (2014) assert that rural development has been an issue of high priority in South Africa for close to two decades. They further argue that even though rural development has received and still receives a great deal of attention, there is still blatant evidence of rural poverty and underdevelopment within South Africa's rural areas. Although post-apartheid policies and legislation to redress the injustices of the past have been put in place for quite some time now, the service delivery protests against government institutions by those that are affected by poverty, are an indication of the challenges still faced in ameliorating poverty (Alexander, 2010; Erickson et al., 2017; Kepe & Tessaro, 2014) which are evident in rural areas as well. Brinkerhoff, Witterberg and Wibbels (2018) argue that development in rural areas may be achieved through rural services provision and rural tourism. Similarly, Caalders (2003) states that rural tourism in particular is regarded as a critical part of overall development where potential exists. Rural tourism potential in

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South Africa has been highlighted by several researchers, especially in relation to poverty alleviation, driving economic development and contributing to sustainable development. (for example, Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Ezeuduji, 2015; Moric, 2013; Munien, 2016; Rogerson, 2014; 2015; 2017; Rogerson & Visser, 2004; Viljoen & Tlabela, 2007) These researchers warn, however, that current infrastructural and service backlogs as well as the marketing of rural tourism products were undermining the sustainable development of rural tourism opportunities in South Africa.

While there is increasing recognition of the potential of rural tourism in South Africa, very few studies empirically examine tourism potential in rural areas that exhibit tourism potential but have limited or no tourism investments. An examination of community profiles and perceptions in relation to potential tourism development in particular are neglected with many studies generally focusing on existing tourism products/activities or community benefits in relation to established tourism products such as conservation areas. An important component of this research is that spatially the focus is not on the entire Municipality but on the more rural and marginalised areas. Ndwedwe Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the poorest Municipalities in the country, has a primary node (Ndwedwe Town) surrounded by marginalised rural areas which severely lack basic infrastructure and services. It is in the marginalised areas that the research was undertaken because, as Cloke and Park (2013) indicate, the location of specific areas within rural contexts may differ and have an impact on the livelihood options and opportunities available. Respondents' socio-economic profile (including age, gender, marital status, language, educational levels and employment status) and household aspects (livelihood strategies and access to services) are examined. Involvement in agricultural activities are discussed to also establish potential linkages between tourism and agricultural activities. Current levels of participation in tourism-related activities among household members as well as willingness to participate in tourism activities (including the types of tourism activities preferred) are also discussed. Additionally, tourism potential (both in relation to positive and negative aspects) within Ndwedwe and challenges faced in relation to promoting tourism in Ndwedwe are examined. Skill levels and development are also assessed.

The next section discusses the literature in relation to rural development and tourism, with a specific focus on the South African context. This is followed by an overview of the background to the case study and the methodological approach adopted. Thereafter, research findings are discussed. The final section presents concluding comments.

## **2. Rural Development and Tourism**

Hemson et al. (2004) argue that South Africa's poor are concentrated in rural areas and it is therefore important that rural development be seen as a major part of the overall development initiatives in the country. National Treasury (2011) specifically states that more than 60% of the poorest people in South Africa reside in rural areas. Mikulcak et al. (2015) assert that rural people who reside in rural areas are characterised by the lack of formal skills, education and financial resources; especially when compared to urban residents. They also add that rural livelihoods are dependent on agriculture and the natural resource base which is the main asset they have access to despite the sustainability of the agricultural sector being questionable and declining natural resources. Vorley et al. (2016) indicate that rural communities that rely on their natural resources for farming and mining have had declining economies due to out-migration of younger working-age group resulting in a reduction in the tax base.

Issues of poverty and rural development have remained on the country's development plans (National Planning Commission - NPC, 2011). Despite this national prioritisation, as Donaldson (2018) asserts, as a result of challenges such as financial distress and skills shortage, it has been difficult for impoverished or vulnerable municipalities (such as Ndwedwe) to achieve rural development. Twala (2014) highlights that the challenge of little or no access to basic infrastructure and services further constrains rural development efforts. Ceccato (2016) also warns (which this study takes cognisance of) that there remains a tendency to treat rural communities as being homogenous in nature which has hindered the effectiveness of rural development initiatives. There are substantial socio-economic, infrastructural and environmental differences between and within rural communities. The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA, 2010) state that these vulnerable municipalities do not have enough power and resources to generate their own revenues and therefore they are dependent on municipal grants which are insufficient to carry out rural development programmes. In this context, promoting rural tourism becomes important for local economic development. (Moric, 2013; Munien, 2016; Rogerson, 2015)

Ghasemi and Hazah (2014) assert that tourism is currently the world's largest industry and the fastest growing sector of the market. Briedenhann and Wickens (2004, p. 71) state that "rural tourism is increasingly viewed as a panacea, increasing the economic viability of marginalised areas, stimulating social regeneration and improving the living conditions of rural communities". Briedenhann and Wickens (2004), Green (2013) and Viljoen and Tlabela (2007) assert that rural tourism was introduced as the catalyst for development in rural areas in order to address underdevelopment and to increase employment opportunities. Viljoen and Tlabela (2007) add that the importance of rural tourism for rural development is not only measured in terms of money, but also by the creation of new jobs which add vitality to a traditionally poor economy. Moric (2013) specifically states that rural tourism is an activity that can bring economic and social benefits. Furthermore, Rogerson (2015) indicates that rural tourism may not only generate employment for people, but it can develop social, cultural and educational values. "Community involvement in tourism has been widely supported as being essential for sustainability. The positives of this form of tourism are community ownership, livelihood security, minimal leakages and backward linkages and efficient conflict resolution". (United Nations Development Programme - UNDP, 2008, p. 1)

Rural tourism has increased in importance given, as Khander and Samad (2018) argue, that rural economies tend to depend heavily on three main assets to generate their economies: natural amenities for tourism and retirement; lowest high quality labour and land for manufacturing; and natural resources for farming, forestry and mining. Tourism activities in rural areas are also often linked to the natural resource base and cultural assets. Rural tourism is receiving growing attention as it is also seen as a means of dealing with the challenges that face rural areas, especially those that are linked with the decline of traditional industries and increased emigration. (Ezeuduji, 2015)

Promoting rural tourism, according to Moric (2013) and Visser and Hoogendoorn (2015), is associated with local economic development linked to diversifying rural livelihoods and reducing dependence on agricultural activities in particular. It is important to note, however, that Ghasemi and Hamzah (2014) and Rogerson (2014; 2015) identify one of the main benefits of rural tourism as extending the agricultural industrial chain and increasing the incomes of farmers and creating more market opportunities for farmers. Pillay and Rogerson (2013) highlight that leveraging of tourism's potential for backward linkages enhances local impacts in developing countries by promoting food supply chains among tourism accommodation providers. Their study was on the accommodation sector in the coastal region of KwaZulu-Natal, specifically focusing on strengthening pro-poor

linkages in rural areas. Thus, tourism can have a positive impact and complement agricultural activities rather than replace them.

South African small towns “are, by and large, champions of the transition from agricultural service centres to bustling rural tourism destinations”. (Visser & Hoogendoorn, 2015, p. 116) It is for this reason that rural tourism activities and projects tend to be located in close proximity to these economic centres (such as Ndwedwe Town). It is assumed that the benefits of these tourism developments (as well as the infrastructural and services investments) will also improve outlying areas. This study that focuses on the more marginalised rural areas in Ndwedwe Municipality is therefore a departure from focusing on these economic centres (small rural towns) to highlight perceptions and aspirations of households in marginalised rural areas.

There are concerns and disadvantages in relation to rural tourism that have been highlighted in the literature. Fairer-Wessels (2016) identify socio-cultural, economic and environmental negative impacts associated with rural tourism for local communities. Sharpely and Telfer (2014) state that there is weak market consciousness as most rural tourism operators do not have strong market awareness. Furthermore, they note that the quality of rural tourism products are generally low which makes it difficult to market rural tourism products and destinations. They also indicate that more established tour operators are not aware of rural tourism products. Farahani and Mirani (2015) indicate that the seasonal nature of most rural tourism activities can create vulnerability and undermine sustainability. The lack of tourism skills has also been highlighted. Zhang (2011), for example, notes that there is lack of planning, mismanagement and a shortage of professionals in rural tourism planning, packaging design and in other associated fields. This limits the ability of rural communities to develop competitive and marketable tourism products. Chambers (2014) argues that a key human resources development challenge in rural tourism is equipping local communities with knowledge and skills to participate meaningfully in tourism development. The level of knowledge and skills also influences who benefits and can seize opportunities from rural tourism development within the community. The lack of community involvement in rural tourism has also been identified by Fairer-Wessels (2016) who argues that in South Africa, rural communities have not been active stakeholders in tourism development. Additionally, Fairer-Wessels (2016) indicates that sustainable rural tourism has been a challenge with limited benefits to local communities.

### **3. Methodological Approach**

#### **3.1. Background to Case Study**

Ndwedwe is bordered on the east by KwaDukuza Municipality and on the north by Maphumulo Municipality. In the south, Ndwedwe borders the eThekweni Municipality, and in the west, the uMshwathi Municipality. The Municipality is situated approximately 20 km inland from the KwaZulu-Natal coast and is located close to major urban and economic developments areas including the Dube Trade Port and King Shaka International Airport. The Municipality covers an area of 1 153 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of approximately 140 820 people. (Statistics South Africa, 2011) Ndwedwe has varying topographical features which range from 27 km above sea level to 107 km above sea level with the more extreme topographical features situated in the northern parts of the Municipality (Ndwedwe Municipality, 2014a), the focus area of this research.

Ndwedwe Municipality (2014a) indicates that most people in the Municipality are between the ages of 15-34 years, females are the dominant group and the population is predominantly black (99%). In

terms of the working population, more people fall within the working age group category of 15-64 years (56%), while the dependency ratio remains at 56%. (Ndwedwe Municipality, 2014b) Sixty eight percent of Ndwedwe consists of traditional authority land, most of which is part of the former KwaZulu homeland consisting of traditional settlements while the remainder of the land is made up of commercial farmlands located in the north-east of the Municipality. (Ndwedwe Municipality, 2014a)

Ndwedwe is home to many poor African families. Ndwedwe Municipality is regarded as one of the poorest Municipalities in the province and consists of poor black communities whose livelihoods depend on subsistence farming. Ndwedwe Municipality (2014a) indicates that the Municipality has remained substantially underdeveloped, disadvantaged and poor. It has typical characteristics of a poor rural community described in the previous section. It has a primary core/node which is Ndwedwe Town. The town has several services and improved infrastructure present. The Northern parts of Ndwedwe, however, lack basic infrastructure and services and are on the periphery of development in the Municipality. The study focuses on this part of the Municipality.

With regard to development plans, the future development of Ndwedwe Municipality is heavily dependent on the implementation of its nodal, high-impact development projects aimed at unlocking the growth potential of the area with nodal development, Dube Trade Port as well as five tourism and five agricultural projects are the main priority areas in terms of resource allocation. (Ndwedwe Municipality, 2014b) The Municipality has expansive natural areas, substantial agricultural potential and a rich cultural heritage with Ndwedwe Municipality (2014a) asserting that the Municipality can boast of its agriculture and tourism potential which is not as yet realised. In terms of tourism, Ndwedwe Municipality (2014a) indicates that there is a range of opportunities including investments in the following projects for future implementation: Johnny Makhathini Museum, Nsuze battlefield (Bhambatha Rebellion Route), Nhlankazi Game Reserve and KwaLoshe ecotourism. The major and minor river valleys, escarpments, mountains, vegetation types, biomes and terrestrial as well as freshwater ecosystems are of environmental significance and suggest relevant environmental protection areas with ecotourism potential. (Ndwedwe Municipality, 2014a) The fauna and flora range from vulnerable to critically endangered, highlighting the need for conservation which adds to Ndwedwe's tourism potential. (Ndwedwe Municipality, 2014a) It is important to note, however that although there is evidence of ecotourism potential given the vast and varied natural resources within the Municipality, there are no existing protected areas and therefore no current ecotourism products.

### **3.2. Methodology: Survey Approach**

The research adopted a quantitative approach for data collection. A structured household questionnaire/ survey was used to establish the demographic profile of the respondents and households, levels of service and infrastructure available at the household level, current skills and willingness to improve specific skills, knowledge and perceptions of tourism potential, extent of participation in tourism and agricultural activities, and aspiration to engage in tourism-related activities in Ndwedwe. Both closed-ended (made up the majority of the questions) and open-ended questions were included in the survey. A total of 164 surveys were completed with adult household members using the face-to-face interviews. A spatially-based random sampling approach was used to select the 164 households from households identified as points on a map of the area under study (that is, rural areas outside Ndwedwe Town). This ensured that households within the more remote households were chosen. The data was inputted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Thereafter, frequency tables were generated and the results were analysed thematically. The findings from the primary research undertaken are presented next.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Demographic and Household Profile

- The survey was undertaken with respondents who were 21 years and above. The ages of most of the respondents ranged between the ages of 41 to 50 years (23%). The second largest group of respondents fell under the age category of 61 to 70 years (22%). The lowest number of respondents (3%) fell between the ages of 81 and 90 years. One of the possible reasons for this is that the younger household members may have not been present during the time of the interviews and so these results are an indication of those who were available to respond to the questionnaires. The average age of the respondents was 53.4 years and ranged from 21 to 90 years.
- In terms of the gender of the respondents, the majority were female (61.5%) while 38.5% were males. This is in keeping with national trends as indicated by Statistics South Africa (2011) that women form a greater percentage of people than men in rural areas. Gender is important to consider since women are more prone to poverty, have lower educational levels and lack opportunities to own assets such as land. (Anyanwu, 2013) This is likely to place them at a disadvantage to participate from tourism-related activities.
- In terms of marital status, the largest share of respondents were married (46.3%). Less than half of the respondents (38.4%) were single. Of those who responded, only 3.7% were in some sort of separation with their partners. Another 3.6% respondents stated that they were widowed. The rest of the respondents (8%) were cohabiting. Most respondents who were single were women which could be an indication of the existence of female-headed households which is one of the common characteristics of rural areas. (Flato, Mutterak & Pelser, 2017) This is also indicative of the vulnerability of women compared to men in Ndwedwe.
- According to the Ndwedwe Municipality (2014a), ensuring the creation of educational opportunities is one of the main challenges as there is a lack thereof. Of the 164 respondents, 29.3% of the respondents did not have any formal education. Most of those who had some form of education (20.7%) had studied until Grade 10. A few of the respondents (13.4%) had attended some part of primary education but had not completed their studies and 10.4% of the respondents had gone to primary school and completed Grade 7. Close to 8% indicated that they had studied until secondary level but had not reached Grade 10. Only 11% of the respondents had completed secondary school, 4.3% possessed a certificate or diploma and 0.6% had an undergraduate degree. The results indicate that educational levels are low in Ndwedwe. The educational challenges are also highlighted by Ndwedwe Municipality (2014a) which states that this could be a setback for development, especially considering the nature of projects that are being proposed in this Municipality such as tourism.
- High unemployment is clearly a huge development challenge in the area. (Ndwedwe Municipality, 2014a) In this study, the majority of the respondents (45.7%) indicated that none of the household members had any form of employment, while 22% indicated that there were members who were employed. Among the rest of the respondents, 7.9% indicate that household members were employed on a part-time basis, 4.3% stated household members were self-employed and ventured into business, and 3.7% were housewives even though they did not refer to themselves as unemployed. Some of the respondents (6.1%) indicated that certain members used to work but had retired, while a small proportion (4.3%) of the respondents indicated that some household members were not economically active due to having been medically boarded. Economically active members were employed mainly in Ndwedwe Town, in Durban or other urban centres which reflect the urban dominance of available

jobs. Other key sources of income were pensions and grants (45.7%) and remittances (25%). The results indicate the lack of income generating employment opportunities in rural Ndwedwe and the reliance on external sources of income. This suggests that viable and sustainable locally-based tourism opportunities in the area will play a critical role to create much needed jobs and promote economic development.

- Infrastructural and service delivery inadequacies greatly curtail the development of rural tourism as highlighted in the literature. (Ezeuduji, 2015; Moric, 2013; Munien, 2016; Rogerson, 2014; 2015; Viljoen & Tlabela, 2007) The results in this study also indicate that poverty in Ndwedwe is also reflected in relation to services and infrastructure available. More than half of the respondents (57.3%) indicated that electricity was available, while 42.7% stated that electricity was not available. A greater number of households (69%) had access to water. Interestingly enough, the service which most people had access to was high schools (76.8%). One would think that with such a low number of educated people in Ndwedwe, there would be insufficient schools in the area. Instead, schools are available to the majority of the households which is related to recent developments in the area. Slightly over half of the respondents indicated that the household had access to a main road (57.3%) and health care facilities (55.5%) while the rest did not. It is important to note that respondents were asked to rate the services they had access to and the majority were dissatisfied with the quality of the services in the area. Tourism as a demand-driven economic activity is associated with high expectations. Thus, not only is the presence of infrastructure and services important but also the quality thereof. Ndwedwe therefore has to not only invest in tourism infrastructure and services but also focus on improving the quality of those that are already in the area.

#### **4.2. Tourism Activities and Potential**

Involvement in the tourism industry proved to be minimal, with only 4% of the respondents indicating that household members were involved. The rest of the respondents (96%) stated that no one in the household had any involvement within this sector. The types of activities persons were involved in included selling crafts to tourists, making traditional clothes for vendors who sell to tourists, running a taxi business that included transporting tourists and working in tourism government departments. As indicated earlier, tourism projects are yet to be developed in Ndwedwe. It is, therefore, not surprising that only a few of the respondents said they were involved in tourism-related activities. This is interesting knowing that Ndwedwe is situated close to areas of tourist attractions. It also means that people's capabilities need to be developed in relation to appropriate skills in order to be integrated into the tourism sector and benefit from opportunities generated.

The respondents were asked if any members of the household would be interested in participating in tourism-related activities. Those who wanted to be involved indicated the type of engagement and 12.2% of the respondents reflected an interest in the industry. Among the respondents who indicated that they would be interested in participating in tourism-related activities, 60% of the respondents stated that they would be interested in becoming tour guides. A reason for the interest in becoming tour guides could be that the respondents are residents in Ndwedwe and have knowledge of the area's background and history. This activity would not be very demanding on them in terms of skills and experience. Only 5% wanted to be involved in building tourism infrastructure, while a further 5% had an interest in hospitality, another 5% reflected an interest in the selling of traditional crafts and 10% were keen to do any other work within this sector.

The main livelihood activities that household members engaged in were mainly crop production (75% indicated for subsistence purpose and 14.1% for sale) and livestock rearing (42.7% indicated for



subsistence purpose and 4.8% for sale) which reinforces the dominance of agricultural activities in many rural communities. The main crop grown was maize (82%) in home gardens (90.9%). Agricultural production is key for food security in rural areas but also has links to tourism. Munien (2016) states that for rural tourism to thrive locally, there is a need to link with existing skills and potential such as agricultural production in the case of Ndwedwe. Similar sentiments are expressed by Ghasemi and Hamzah (2014) who indicate that for rural tourism to be sustainable and have widespread impacts it needs to extend agricultural activities and increase the income of farmers. Pillay and Rogerson (2013, p. 50) reveal that the accommodation sector in particular “is considered to offer high potential for engaging with groups of smaller, local and disadvantaged entrepreneurs as suppliers” from local rural communities, especially in relation to the provision of agricultural products. They, however, identify barriers to achieving pro-poor linkages between tourism and agriculture which include the lack of skills and investment capital, inability to provide consistent supplies, lack of markets and transport infrastructure, and unreliability and mistrust of suppliers as well as the lack of awareness of potential suppliers. Thus, the integration of agricultural production into the tourism value chain that can benefit rural communities is not easy to achieve since “there is no simple formula for increasing the use of local agricultural products in the tourism industry”. (Berno, 2011, p. 90)

The respondents were asked if they thought Ndwedwe Municipality had tourism potential. The majority of the respondents (60.4%) believed that the Municipality had potential, while the rest of the respondents (39.6%) said that there was no potential. The main reasons forwarded for Ndwedwe having tourism potential were the scenery (31.3%), historical sites (13%) and cultural activities (10%). The responses reinforce Khandor and Samad (2018), Munien (2016) and Vorley et al.’s (2016) assertions that in relation to tourism potential in rural areas, key assets are generally associated with natural resources and cultural aspects.

For development to be achieved, both the private and public sectors need to increase investment flow in the rural economy. (Dashper, 2014) The majority of the respondents identified factors that they thought prevented Ndwedwe Municipality from attracting investment and tourism into the area. The main factors that were identified were poor services and infrastructure that placed the Municipality at a disadvantage in terms of investment and tourism (6%), insufficient marketing of the area (29.9%) and so people were not aware of what Ndwedwe had to offer and some might not even know about its existence, and poor transport infrastructure (14.6%) which was also linked to the area not being easily accessible. Other factors identified by some of the respondents were limited or no tourist attractions, insufficient hotels/ accommodation and inadequate shopping facilities. These results are evident of some of the rural tourism development challenges raised earlier.

#### **4.3. Skills at the Household Level and Future Aspirations**

Skills of rural people play an important role when it comes to finding and maintaining employment as well as creating livelihood activities. The analysis of household skills will be of utmost importance in determining and identifying development challenges in Ndwedwe. Skills of the Ndwedwe community are critical in that they may determine whether or not a household can make use of any opportunities that may be opened up in line with those skills. Fairer-Wessels (2016), Hall and Page (2002) and Zhang (2011) state that human resource development, especially the development of key tourism skills, is a key component in relation to tourist development. Furthermore, skills are an important indicator of the type of opportunities that can be provided to people and which opportunities they may seize as a result of possessing those skills. (Chambers, 2014)

Table 1 illustrates the various skills that exists among the households interviewed (both those that are used as well as those that exist but are unused). Generally, it is noticeable that there is a relatively low level of skills for most of the types shown in the Table. Given the dominance of agricultural activities, expectedly the skill that most households identified that is mostly used is agriculture (40.2%) with a further 7.9% indicating that the household has the skill but does not use it. Other skills that were discernible at the household level were construction (21.3% used and 8.5% unused), transport (13.4% used and 7.9% unused), arts and culture (10.4% used and 6.1% unused), education (8.5% used and 3% unused), caregiving (6.1% used and 1.8% unused), administration (4.3% used and 4.2% unused), artisan (3.7% used and 1.8% unused) and sales and marketing (3.7% used and 1.8% unused). The responses about the tourism-related skills within the households reflect that there is a lack of tourism-related skills and this was the least identified skill among the households interviewed: 93.3% of the respondents stated that no member possessed these skills, 3.7% stated that these skills were there and only 3% possessed these skills and used them. Two aspects are worth noting in relation to the results. The first is that arts and culture and tourism skills were not viewed as being related yet, as Ezeuduji (2015) indicates, in relation to rural tourism cultural aspects have high potential. Secondly, in relation to tourism-related skills, more respondents stated that they had the skills but it was unused. This highlights that there exists untapped tourism skills in the area, albeit among very few households. The results indicate that in order for tourism to flourish, people still need to be empowered and trained so that they may partake in tourism-related activities.

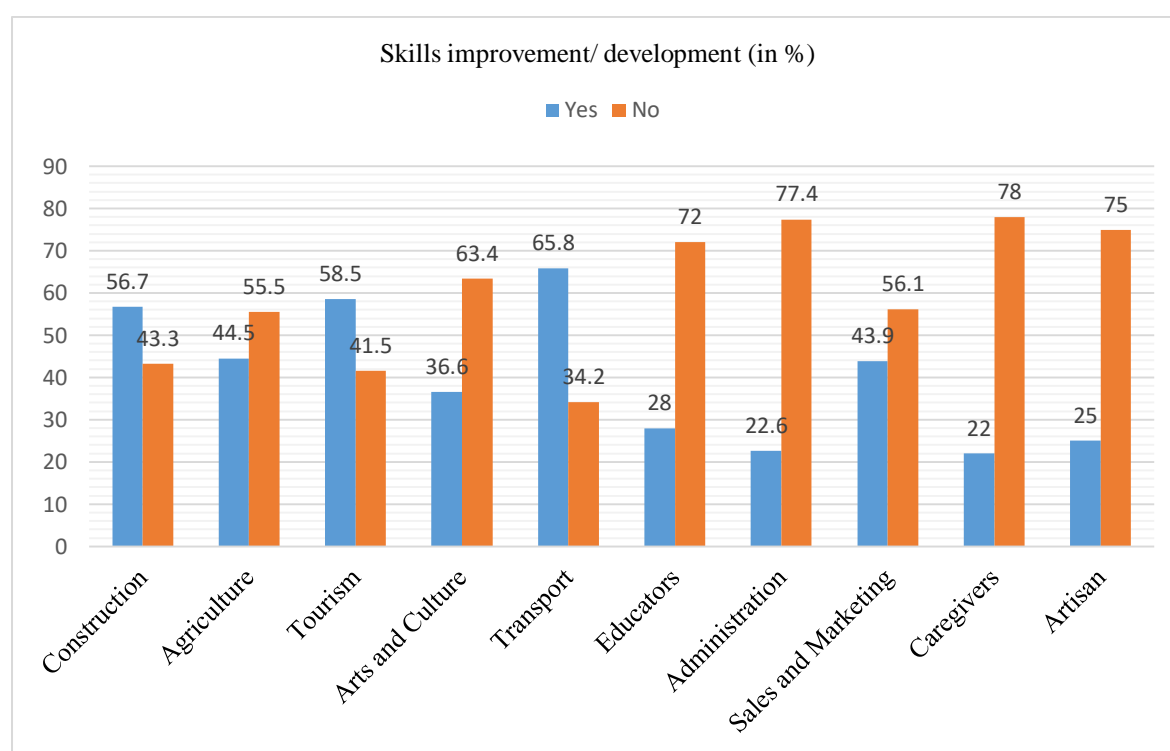
**Table 1. Skills among economically active household members: Multiple responses [Author survey; n=164]**

Skills	Yes - used (%)	Yes - unused (%)	No (%)
Construction (plumbing, tiling, electrical, painting, etc.)	21.3	8.5	70.2
Agriculture	40.2	7.9	51.9
Tourism-related (for example, guides)	3	3.7	93.3
Arts and culture (beading, crafting, painting, pottery, etc.)	10.4	6.1	83.5
Transport	13.4	7.9	78.7
Education	8.5	3.0	88.5
Administration (typing, recordkeeping, finance, etc.)	4.3	4.2	91.5
Sales and marketing	3.7	1.8	94.5
Caregivers (aged, children, sick, etc.)	6.1	1.8	92.1
Artisan (mechanic, panel beater, welder, etc.)	3.7	1.8	94.5

Skills development and improvement increases the chances for employment and higher income, and as Adams (2011) asserts, can help overcome the challenge of social disadvantage. Skill improvement is particularly important to ensure that enterprises remain marketable and competitive. Adams (2011, p. 2) states that “improving skills allows people to keep up with structural changes in the economy which may be as a result of urbanisation, technological change and shifting patterns in consumer demand”. Figure 1 presents the skills that respondents would like to develop and/or improve. Transport (65.8%), tourism (58.5%) and construction (57.7%) were the top three skills that more than 50% of the respondents wanted to improve or develop. More than 40% of the respondents wanted to develop and/ or improve agriculture (44.5%) and sales and marketing (43.9%) skills. Other skills identified were arts and culture (36.6%), education (28%), artisan (25%), administration (22.6%) and caregiving (22%). The interest in tourism skills also reflects the potential to take advantage of tourism opportunities should they materialise. The lack of interest in professional work training such as education and administration is indicative of the pattern which will continue to exist in Ndwedwe as many voiced that they cannot afford to study further and so they opt to improve skills which are more accessible. Most of those who wished to improve transport-related skills stated that they needed

assistance with getting their drivers licenses in order to take advantage of opportunities which required this skill.

Most of the skill areas are linked to tourism development. For example, agricultural skills are important since, as discussed earlier, tourism requires agricultural products. Farm tourism can also be a product that could be developed that targets urbanites who wish to experience farm life. This type of tourism is also associated with leisure educational activities. (Petroman et al., 2016) However, it is important to note that establishing and running a hospitality and tourism business requires different sets of skills than farming. Construction and artisan skills are necessary for tourism infrastructural development and maintenance. Transport is essential in relation to tourism which is essentially a sector that moves people and services. Tour operators in particular are required to provide transport and other services. Administration and sales and marketing skills are critical to successfully run tourism businesses and ventures.



**Figure 1. Skills that the respondent would like to improve/develop: Multiple responses [Author survey; n=164]**

In terms of tourism-related skills, it is interesting to note that substantially more respondents (58.5%) indicated that they would like to develop or improve tourism skills compared to responses in relation to whether they would be interested in participating in tourism-related activities (12.2%). This discrepancy could be linked to current opportunities available to participate in tourism activities (which is almost non-existent locally and opportunities outside the area is not accessible for the majority of community members). The development of skills could refer to future aspirations to benefit from tourism projects that the Municipality is planning as discussed earlier.

## 5. Conclusion

Tourism development continues to be promoted as an economic vehicle for rural development. This study that focuses on poor communities in Ndwedwe Municipality, reveals that given current socio-economic disadvantages and skill levels, it is unlikely that these communities can develop or benefit from tourism development. Substantial investments will be required in relation to human resource development, infrastructural and service provision, and the development of tourism products and destinations. Furthermore, the high levels of poverty and unemployment rates together with low levels of income generating activities indicate that the development of tourism businesses in the area under study will require massive external investments since it is unlikely that households will be able to generate start-up capital.

The lack of services and infrastructure is more prevalent in the rural area away from Ndwedwe Town. If there are no investments in improving infrastructure and services in these areas than economic opportunities associated with the tourism development within Ndwedwe and tourism route development linkages with tourism destinations and products in neighbouring municipalities are unlikely to have positive impacts for residents in the more remote parts of Ndwedwe. Of concern also is that many of the natural and cultural assets that are likely to have tourism potential are located in these areas as well. If services and infrastructure (especially transport connectivity) are not improved, then there will be challenges to market these destinations should tourism products be developed.

There is evidently a significant challenge with the lack of skills in Ndwedwe, which means that the people will remain at a social and economic disadvantage. Therefore, there is a need for skills development which the Municipality needs to invest in. This may imply that many households are failing to diversify in terms income-generating activities and that, with the lack of skills, household members may not be able to take advantage of opportunities that may be presented through rural development strategies, including tourism development. At the same time, having skills and not using them is an important reflection of the households' potential to engage in the various livelihood activities. It may also be an indication of the lack in demand of the skills possessed.

Though the majority of the respondents indicated that they did not possess skills for the tourism industry, many indicated that they were interested in being a part of the industry. This suggests that respondents see the potential of economic opportunities associated with tourism development. The amount of interest in the tourism sector may be an indication of buy-in when the tourism projects envisioned by the Municipality roll out. This offers opportunities for development, especially since the Municipality has such high tourism potential. Tourist attractions and products need to be the starting point for Ndwedwe's tourism sector development with specific focus on areas outside Ndwedwe Town. Appropriate feasibility studies need to be conducted to ensure the sustainability of chosen projects in the area as well as linkages with existing tourism products and initiatives in Ndwedwe and surrounding areas to maximise benefits for poor rural residents who are often marginalised.

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