

SAFARI LODGES AND RURAL INCOMES: SOME KEY SOUTHERN AFRICAN TRENDS

Peter John Massyn 14 October 2004

5 minute critique by Anna Spenceley

Peter John has clearly had an opportunity that many researchers...including myself...would relish the chance to analyse 98 lodges across southern Africa!

However, I have some concerns with the paper in this form. **Firstly**, the absence of information about the methodology, **secondly**, a lack of evidence and examples presented to justify the findings, **thirdly**, where my own experience has revealed different information at specific enterprises, and **fourthly**, that implications for the private sector and other agencies working to catalyse poverty alleviation through tourism have not been drawn out.

So firstly . . . with regard to the **methodology**, I would be very interested to discover how the 98 enterprises were evaluated . . . especially when I hear that only Hilltop Camp in Hluhluwe was *comprehensively* surveyed. . . so how was it assessed in comparison to the others? It is vitally important for us to appreciate the techniques and approaches that are used to gather data if we are to understand the value and the importance of the results.

Secondly . . .with regard to **evidence presented**, I would have been interested to have seen a detailed comparative analysis of how different lodges had performed on the economic indicators selected, such as local wages. For example, Peter-John indicates that at all of the lodges . . . women captured a significantly lower proportion of the wage bill than other employees. But how much lower? Was this because of different roles and responsibilities filled by women . . .or were there inequitable wage allocations for men and women in the same jobs? Quantification and comparative analyses are valuable tools for researchers and consultants . . .and help us to clarify our experiences.

I am **familiar with a couple of the South African lodges** that were mentioned within the paper – Ndumo and Rocktail Bay. Now Peter-John stated that equity participation in **Ndumo and Rocktail** . . . did not translate into increased local benefits from employment. However, my understanding of the equity arrangements is that they address ownership of the enterprises and resultant dividends . . . rather than employment issues. So does this translate into low levels of local employment? Well when Clive Poultney and I looked at Ndumo and Rocktail for the Pro-Poor Tourism case studies in 2001 . . .around the same time as Peter-John's work . . . we found that 90% of employees at both

Rocktail and Ndumo were from the local community. I would suggest that this is already a high proportion of local employees . . . and perhaps the real issue should be the proportion of the local wage bill going to these employees relative to skilled outsiders . . . an issue that he mentions in the paper.

The commercialisation of South African National Parks was reviewed . . . and I think that the use of planning gain by the state to catalyse local equity in tourism, local employment and opportunities for local businesses provides an innovative platform for the empowerment of poor and marginalized people. However, I understand that enterprises in the first phase of the commercialisation were over-optimistic about the level of empowerment equity they could actually achieve, and reports regarding training, employment and local operational spend have yet to be compiled. It will, as Peter-John states, be very useful to review comparative data from this process when it becomes available.

Finally, it would be helpful if Peter-John could use his experience to draw out some lessons and implications for the private sector and agencies working on local economic development through tourism. Although he clearly indicates that the objectives of the work were to examine how the lodge industry contributes to rural incomes . . . a few more steps in analysis and interpretation would reap dividends. For example, what were the costs and management implications for enterprises that were delivering the best local economic benefits? Were local wages having a tangible impact on poverty among employees and their families? Complementary research themes focusing on pro-poor tourism and sustainable livelihoods are attempting to answer these questions and Peter-John's work could provide a very valuable contribution to the literature.

I would urge Peter-John to disseminate supplemental findings from his survey. Publication of very basic information would increase the value of this paper immeasurably. I hope that we will see a more detailed review of this survey in the near future, so that we can truly capitalise on this work.