



## Stakeholder relationship management in African rural tourism development

Alpheaus Litheko<sup>\*id</sup>, North-West University, South Africa

Marius Potgieter<sup>id</sup>, North-West University, South Africa

\*Corresponding author: [litheko.litheko@nwu.ac.za](mailto:litheko.litheko@nwu.ac.za)

Stakeholders are one of the key components of rural tourism development, especially the stakeholders of the community-group. Rural tourism and its sustainable development can complement diverse economic drivers and link various economic sectors while preserving natural resources and local culture. The purpose of this paper was to ascertain a rural African community's notion of tourism development and its relationships with stakeholders in the community-group. Using a questionnaire survey methodology, our findings indicate that the community regards the stakeholders in the community-group as important, as well as the trust and commitment associated with relationship building. The implication for managers is that they should involve the local community and other stakeholders such as educational institutions and local government in the development of tourism for the benefit of the rural community.

**Keywords:** Africa, rural tourism, stakeholder relationship management, tourism development

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### Introduction

Relationship management is not a new concept and has taken on many forms to address specific organisational constituencies. Relationship management is borrowed from relationship marketing and became a formal approach to understanding, defining, and supporting a broad spectrum of inter-business activities related to providing and consuming knowledge and services via networks (Gilboa et al. 2019, Luu et al. 2018, Zou et al 2014). Good relationships are nowadays important and integral to an organisation's success, hence the expansion in the field of relationship-based management philosophy application (Cheung & Rowlison 2011, Smyth & Pryke 2008, Zineldin 2004). The relationship management of the community-group stakeholders is of paramount importance in contributing towards the development of tourism in a rural setting.

Infrastructure development, poverty alleviation and job creation remain the foremost development imperatives for the South African Government (Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), 2010; Department of Economic Development (DED) 2010). Historically, the areas where the worst levels of poverty are recorded consist of 20 percent of the population living in extreme poverty (below the food poverty line) and a further about 45 percent who live in moderate poverty (sacrificing food for non-food items) which coincide with the boundaries of the ten respective homelands set up by government pre-1994 (Rogerson

2014, Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) 2012, Millstein 2014) which were under the administrative rule of tribal authorities.

Many authors contend that having sole authority over land ownership and land distribution put tribal authorities in a powerful position in post-1994 negotiations with the new government and ultimately prevented their disbandment under the new democratic dispensation (Khunou 2011, Knoetze 2014, Oomen 2005). The institution, status and roles of traditional leadership, according to customary law (Government Communication Information System (GCIS) 2014), are recognised in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996, Chapter 12, Section 211). In achieving effective cooperative, interactive and development governance at local level, tribal chiefs are recognised as public office bearers (Maxaulane, 2014) and are expected to play a critical role in governmental strategic objectives (Knoetze, 2014). This is relevant, particularly in rural development for poverty alleviation and job creation, preservation of arts and culture, sustainable environmental management, and most importantly tourism (Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) 2003).

The purpose of the paper is to present an understanding of the community-group's perspective on tourism and the development thereof. Specifically, we aim to (1) establish the community-group's inclination to trust the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela Traditional Authority (BBKTA), (2) analyse the community-group's commitment to the BBKTA, (3) establish the community-group's involvement in rural tourism development programmes, and (4) establish the community-group's participation in rural tourism.

In the following section, we give background to the BBKTA, develop a conceptual framework, conduct analysis and present findings followed by discussion and implications for managers.

### **The Context**

The Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela (BBK) occupies one of the largest communal areas in the North West Province, South Africa, spreading over more than 32 villages in the Pilanesberg region within the boundaries of the Moses Kotane Local Municipality (MKLM). Kgosi Nyalala Pilane manages the administrative and economic affairs of the BBK through the Bakgatla-Ba-Kgafela Traditional Authority (BBKTA) from the administrative centre in Moruleng (Hamilton 2012, Mnwana 2014). The BBKTA is committed to promoting the socio-economic development of the BBK community and the region. The BBKTA launched a number of initiatives to expand its involvement in three key economic drivers: mining, agriculture and tourism. The BBKTA established relationships with the local community, private sector, and government to combat poverty, create employment opportunities, support small business development, and promote equitable economic development in the best interest of the community (Maxaluane 2014). The BBKTA needs to be cognisant of all their stakeholder groups (Morrison 2013) since all substantially contribute towards the success of the BBK. Stakeholder relationship management in rural tourism development can assist an organisation in establishing and maintaining good working relations with stakeholders (Bagautdinova *et al.* 2012). A closer look is taken to comprehend the role and responsibilities of traditional authorities, a key stakeholder within a South African context.

The BBKTA must be cognisant of all their potential groups of stakeholders, since all can contribute (Morrison 2013) towards the success of the BBKTA, including the development of tourism in a rural setting. A key to the formulation and implementation of strategies and programmes directed at tourism development is stakeholder support, particularly the community-group, consisting of local residents, business associations, entrepreneurs, educational institutions, and others such as the local municipality (Kruja & Hasaj 2010, Ramachandra & Mansor 2014). Managing the community-group's relationships will enable the BBKTA to understand the needs and opinions of these stakeholders concerning the development of rural tourism, and to gain their trust and commitment. The BBKTA will place relationships at the centre of the organisation and link organisational strategies and capabilities to improving relationships with other tourism stakeholders (such as tourists, destination management organisations

(DMOs), private tourism establishments, and various others) when they understand trust and commitment as components and the importance of involving stakeholders (the community-group as in this case) in the planning process.

## **Literature Review**

### **Traditional Authorities in South Africa**

The specific roles and functions of tribal authorities in achieving national development objectives related to each of the three spheres of the South African Government (national, provincial and local) are specified in the White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance (DPLG 2003). Apart from their traditional duties (the well-being of communities, land use and land tenure, agriculture, health, wealth distribution, community development, traditions, culture and customs, and conflict resolutions) (DPLG 2003), they are assigned critical roles in assisting government in implementing rural development strategies and service delivery at the local level (GCIS 2014). The principle of community-based sustainable rural tourism development for poverty alleviation and job creation was delineated in the first National Tourism Strategy and the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT 1996). Community-based tourism development and its pro-poor focus remain the main themes of the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) (National Department of Tourism (NDT 2011). In order to maximise the impacts of tourism expansion, as explained by Rogerson (2013) for local communities, a critical role must be assumed by tribal authorities through an integrative partnership with key role players, such as the South African local government and the community-group, in the strategic management of sustainable tourism growth in a rural setting. The collaborative functioning of the BBKTA, local government (Moses Kotane Local Municipality) and the stakeholders in the community-group is critical for the development of rural tourism and should ultimately bring socio-economic benefits for all stakeholders.

### **Relationship Management**

Relationship building and managing relations with local government and the community-group are an integral part of sustainable rural tourism development, because the process will empower the community-group and motivate them to support tourism development initiatives Beeton (2006). Furthermore, this will enable the traditional authority to align its strategies and programmes with that of local government in an endeavour to develop sustainable tourism in a rural setting. Relationship management is all about developing effective relationships between organisations and groups (also referred to as stakeholders) important to them, including the media, tourists, investors, community leaders and members, activist groups and government agencies (Lattimore et al. 2009). For the purpose of this study, the focus was on the traditional authority managing its relationship with the community-group and local government. Relations management has been described by numerous scholars and following is a synthesis of the description. Table 1 presents different descriptions of relationship management over a period of time.

From a management perspective, as suggested by Skinner et al. (2011), the BBKTA have to be sensitive towards and come into contact with both internal and external stakeholders, whose collective views constitute stakeholder opinion. Hendrix and Hayes (2007) mentioned that relationship management, as a management function, encompasses the following and it has been supplemented with additional sources where applicable: (1) Anticipating, analysing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes, and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of an organisation. (2) In a modern democracy, every organisation survives ultimately only by public consent. (3) Counselling management at all levels in an organisation with regard to policy decisions, courses of action, and communication, taking into account their stakeholder ramifications and the organisation's social or citizenship responsibilities (Gregory 2012). (4) Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programmes of action and communication to achieve informed stakeholder understanding necessary for the success of an

organisation's aims (Hendrix & Hayes 2007, Lattimore et al. 2009). (5) Planning and implementing organisational efforts to influence or change public policy (Gregory 2012).

**Table 1. Relationship Management**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Brody (1988)	Relationship management refers to the process through which organisations seek to achieve an accommodation with stakeholder groups over issues of mutual concern.
Gummerson (2005)	Life is a network of relationships, and so is a business. No individual or businesses exist in isolation, especially in the modern world of interconnected information and communication technologies.
Hendrix & Hayes (2007)	Helps the complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and functions more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions.
Lattimore et al. (2009)	Is a leadership and management function that helps achieve organisational objectives, defines philosophy, and facilitates organisational change.
Gordon (2011)	Is developing relationships to help to communicate about an organisation, an issue, a person, or a product. It means identifying anticipated outcomes in order to know how to communicate effectively with groups of people, at varying times, often through the media but also through events, individuals, and groups.
Skinner et al. (2011)	Is an art and social science that analyses trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisations' leaders, and implementing a planned program of action which will serve both the organisation and the stakeholders' interests.
Gregory (2012)	It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders.
Skinner et al. (2013)	Relationship management helps an organisation and its stakeholders to adapt mutually to each other.
Shao et al. (2020)	Relationship management described as the marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges.

One of the most important audiences an organisation has is its community, the home of its offices and its operations (Beeton 2006). Maintaining good relations with the community usually entails management and employees becoming involved in and contributing towards local organisations and activities. In addition, an organisation may communicate with the community in other ways, such as the distribution of memorandums and/or written letters or meeting with community leaders. Often, community relations activities involve face-to-face interaction between an organisation and its public, and this is in most cases one of the most powerful forms of influencing attitudes (Beeton 2006, Hendrix & Hayes 2007). Interaction between the community-group and an organisation increases the learning relationship between parties and this should be continued to be improved over the long-term, as mentioned by Berndt and Tait (2014). Relationship outcomes are the consequences that alter the environment and secure, maintain, and/or adjust goals within and outside an organization (Gallicano 2013). Furthermore, Johnston et al. (2012) contend that as part of the strategic relationship is working closely together on a long-term relationship with mutual benefits in mind, such as between the BBKTA and the Moses Kotane Local Municipality for the development of rural tourism in the BBK community in order to culminate into economic and social benefits.

Many relationship studies, such as that of Ki and Hon (2002), Chia (2005), Phillips (2006), Waters (2008), Kang and Yang (2010), Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2011), Leppelt et al. (2013), Pechlaner and Volgger (2015) and Berndt and Tait (2014), outlined the essential ingredients of a relationship: trust, commitment, satisfaction, control mutuality, scope and power, as shown in Table 2. Trust and commitment are noted as the most common denominators for relationship building and management, and relationships can be successfully developed by the BKKTA with the community-group if there is trust and commitment. To

build trust and commitment, the BBKTA needs to know and understand itself and the community-group thoroughly.

**Table 2. Concept Analysis**

Authors	Essential Ingredients						
	Trust	Commitment	Satisfaction	Control mutuality	Communication	Scope	Power
Shao et al. (2020)	✓	✓			✓		
Vohra & Bhardwaj (2019)	✓	✓					
Pechlaner & Volgger (2015)	✓	✓					
Berndt & Tait (2014)	✓	✓					
Leppelt et al. (2013)	✓					✓	✓
Rossouw & van Vuuren (2011)	✓	✓					
Kang & Yong (2010)	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Waters (2008)	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Phillips (2006)	✓			✓			
Chia (2005)	✓	✓					
Ki & Hon (2002)	✓	✓	✓	✓			
<b>This research</b>	✓	✓					

The success of a business relationship lies in the development and growth of trust and commitment among stakeholders (Berndt & Tait 2014). Applicable to this study is establishing trust and commitment between the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela Traditional Authority and the community-group it serves. In addition to trust and commitment, stakeholders also need to have shared goals and mutual benefits to be able to build a successful relationship. In order to build successful community-group relationships, relationship trust and commitment are essential. Interactions between stakeholders lacking these elements do not develop into relationships. The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing explains that relationships exist through the retention of trust and commitment. Therefore, when both trust and commitment are present – not just one or the other – then only are outcomes produced that promote efficiency, productivity and effectiveness (Wu et al. 2010). It is consequently necessary to devote more attention to trust and commitment, which also form the basis of this specific study.

### Trust

Trust is generally regarded as an expression of confidence between parties in an exchange where neither party will be harmed or put at risk by either party's actions (Won-Moo et al. 2011). Therefore, trust is the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence, according to Johnston and Grayston (2005). In addition, Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2011) describe trust as an optimistic disposition displayed by a person pursuing a goal and taking the risk of relying on another person or party for attaining that goal. Trust is therefore the cornerstone in terms of constructing a long-term business

relationship and partnership. Trust refers to the depth and assurance of feelings based on inconclusive evidence (Akrouit & Diallo, 2017, Tabrani et al. 2018, Wang et al. 2020).

Uncertainty and risk are necessary conditions to reveal the value of trust (Moorman *et al.* 1993). Moreover, trust is also demonstrated by the confidence of the benevolence of trustees, ability, integrity, and predictability in uncertain circumstances (Gefen 2000). These factors have a significant impact on how trustworthy an organisation is perceived to be by its stakeholders and are explained as follows: (1) Benevolence – this refers to a trustor's perceptions of a trustee's efforts, as well as the willingness to achieve some value that is desirable in a relationship without rewards (McKnight & Chervany 2002, Rossouw & Van Vuuren 2011). (2) Ability – this refers to the perceived competence level of individuals and/or organisations to perform some intended behaviour (McKnight & Chervany 2002). (3) Integrity – referring to righteous behaviour. Within a virtual environment, integrity implies the compliance with commonly accepted values, principles and rules (Chia 2005). (4) Predictability – referring to a trustor's belief that a trustee will adhere to a promised transaction, as well as interaction policies and guidelines (McKnight & Chervany 2002).

According to Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2011), there are a number of compelling reasons for addressing trust and these are: distrust is expensive for an organisation; trust facilitates co-operation between stakeholders; trust promotes loyalty amongst stakeholders; trust is a foundation for an ethical organisation; and lastly, commitment is built on trust. Building trust needs to be on the agenda of any organisation so that every partner involved anticipate that it is important to build a sustainable relationship between stakeholders, as advocated by Chia (2005). This is the premier of sound relationship management where agreement and disagreement are accepted as part of a normal relationship and where transparency of communication exchange allows for the development of trusting relationships (Johnston & Grayston 2005).

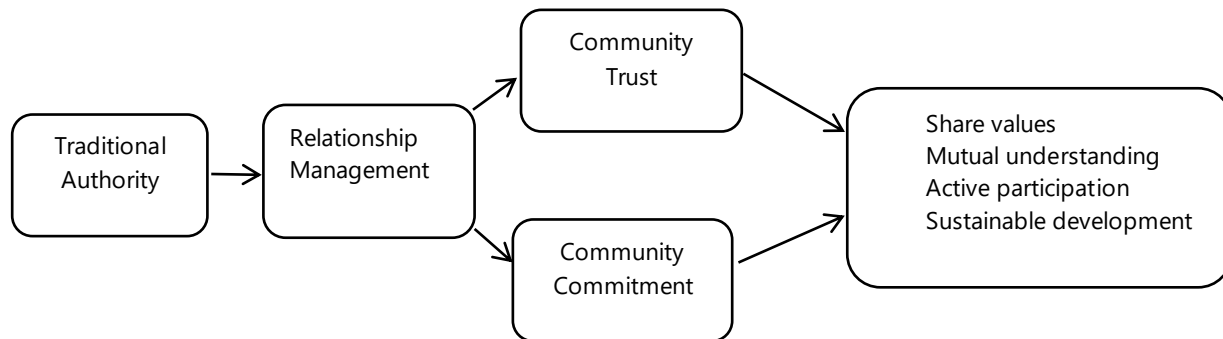
### **Commitment**

Trust manifests the confidence a trustworthy party is associated with and contains valuable qualities such as ability, integrity, predictability and benevolence (McKnight & Chervany 2002). Relationship commitment is built on trust, and commitment is described by Lin (2008) as an exchange where partners believe that an ongoing relationship with one another is important as to warrant maximum effort at maintaining the relationship. Relationship commitment exists, as indicated by Jian and Jeffers (2006), only when relationship parties consider the relationship as important, beneficial, and valuable. When a committed partner wants to retain a relationship, the important behaviour attributes, including high motivation and loyalty, will be needed (Lin 2008, Phillips 2006). The shared values regarding appropriate behaviours, goals, and policies are important antecedents to both trust and commitment, because it increase the perceived ability of partners to predict the other's intention and behaviour (Jian & Jeffers 2006). Some time ago, Moorman et al. (1993) proposed that when parties exchange common values, they are more likely to maintain a social relationship, and this is still valid today. Satisfaction is a positive affective state resulting from the appraisal of all aspects of community services and interaction (Chia 2005, Chiu et al. 2005, Doney & Cannon 1997). Satisfaction with interaction that begins at the outset of a relationship tends to lead to the development of trust and a continuous relationship (Lambert 2010). Trust and commitment are both integral elements within the context of relationship management with stakeholders, in particular the community-group. Managing relationships enables an organisation to reduce uncertainty and furthermore to motivate stakeholder participation and commitment to programmes and projects initiated.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The BBKTA to build and manage a its relationship with its stakeholders in the community-group lies in the

development of trust, as trust will facilitate cooperation between BBKTA and the community-group, promotes loyalty, and more importantly enhance the commitment levels of the community-group to the programmes and project initiated by the traditional authority, as depicted in Figure 1. Trust and commitment are both integral elements within the context of relationship management.



**Figure 1. Relationship Management Variables – Trust and Commitment**

*Source: Adapted from Vohra and Bhardwaj (2019)*

## Research Method

A survey was undertaken to obtain quantitative data needed and the data extracted was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the purpose of this paper, each providing different insights into the nature of the data obtained. A pilot study was a strategy used to test the questionnaire using a smaller sample compared to the planned sample size, as advised by Devlin (2018) and Salem and Lakhal (2018) and enabled manipulating one or more variables with the aim of finalising the questionnaire to produce the desired outcome. The non-probability convenient sampling for the quantitative method was used. It is a method that relies on data collection from a population who is conveniently available to participate in a study (Thomas 2003, Watkins et al. 2011, Zijlstra et al. 2011). This method involved accessing participants wherever in the chosen villages and typically wherever convenient (Collis & Hussey 2009). The BBKTA was approached requesting permission to collect data from the four villages and authorisation was granted by the BBKTA council. An ethics clearance letter was issued by the NWU and provided to external organisations. The survey was conducted in four villages nearby the BBKTA administration offices in Moruleng and the villages selected were: Lerome, Lesetlheng, Matangwaneng and Manamakgotheng. A total of 800 questionnaires were distributed and the recommended sample size, according to Matthews (2010), with a 95 percent level of confidence and a five percent margin of error for a population of 350000 is 384. However, 480 questionnaires were returned and only 359 could be used after data editing and cleaning, although there were some missing values causing n to vary. The paper was limited to the community-group and does not include stakeholders from any other groups due to the scope of the research project, as well as due to time and financial constraints. In addition, this paper could for all practical purposes not include all the residents in 32 villages and the paper included four villages.

## Results

Table 3 reports sample characteristics of the study. Cross tabulations were performed and the following facts emerged: it is mainly the 21-40 age group whom are unemployed; there is a large group of community members with school and post-school papers who are unemployed; respondents are mostly

of the opinion that tourists do not visit their community and that they do not benefit from tourism; 47 percent indicated that employment is the biggest benefit they would gain by tourism and 51 percent indicated that local businesses do not employ people from the local community.

**Table 3. Sample Characteristics**

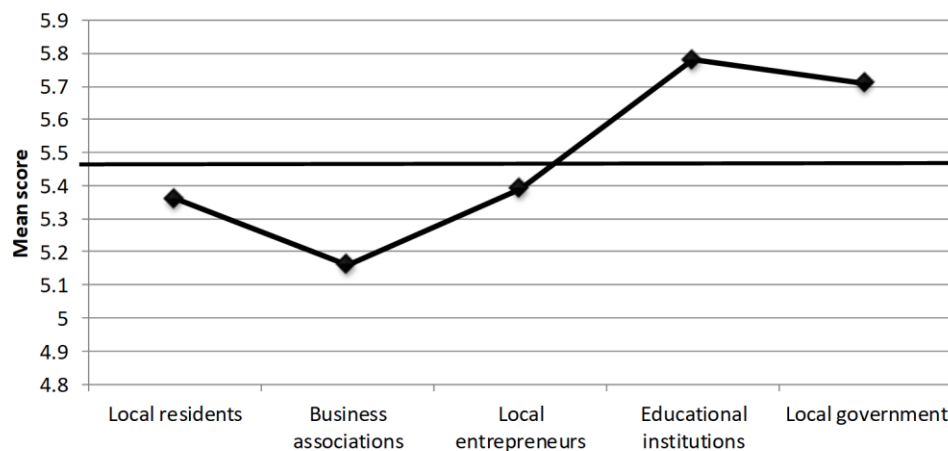
Descriptor	Frequency (%)	Observations
Gender: Male Female	49.0 51.0	
Age: ≤20 21-40 41-60 61+	36.2 30.9 24.4 8.4	Sixty-seven percent (20-40) is economically active group with mean age of 31 years
Marital status: Single Married Widow/Widower Divorced	67.0 25.0 4.0 4.0	Single-parent households are common in South Africa and concurs with the mean age of 31.
Education: No schooling Primary school High school Post-school	2.5 5.3 61.2 30.9	High school and post-school (92%) indicating a literate community who can be economically active.
Occupation: Student Employed Own business Unemployed Retired	37.1 15.9 13.6 27.5 5.9	Employed and own business (30%) who are economically active and in contradiction to the 556% students and unemployed – immense burden on community; 27% unemployed is South African trend.
Length of stay: ≤5 years 6-10 years 11+ years	17.0 20.0 63.0	Well established community who should have had a well-established tourism industry.

The research instrument contained eight items under the sub-heading of measurement of stakeholders. The focus was on the importance respondents place on members of the community-group as stakeholders in tourism development. The semantic differential scale consisted of a seven-point scale of which two end points are two opposites that range from *Not important* to *very important*. The construct measured all stakeholders in the community-group's level of importance with regard to contributing to tourism development in a rural setting. This was followed by measuring the community-group's level of trust and commitment towards the BBKTA as an LDMO, and the seven-point scale semantic differential scale consisted of two end points ranging from 'Not at all' to 'Totally'.

The reliability results for the following construct are: (1) Stakeholder importance – seven items measuring the importance respondents place on members of the community-group as stakeholders in contribution towards tourism development ( $\alpha=.92$ ) (2) Trust and commitment – two items measuring the level of trust and commitment respondents place on the BBKTA in managing tourism development on behalf of the community ( $\alpha=.92$ ). Both the constructs had excellent reliability coefficients and the research instrument is consequently regarded as reliable to measure the importance respondents placed on the community-group as stakeholders in tourism development, and subsequently, measuring respondents' level of trust and commitment towards the BBKTA as an LDMO. The mean score of 5.48, as illustrated in



Figure 2 indicates the level of importance respondents placed on all the members of the community-group as stakeholders in tourism development.



**Figure 2. Measurement of Stakeholder Importance in Tourism Development: Mean Score**

*Source: the authors*

The results reveal the significance of the community-group in the development of tourism. The community is the official beneficiaries of the benefits aligned with tourism development and will bear the detrimental effects of insufficient planning and management of tourism. Their involvement and participation in tourism development through the decision-making process will lead them to determining their own goals for development and having a meaningful input in the administration and management of tourism development in their region.

The item measurement of local residents has a mean score of 5.36 which reflects that on average, respondents do regard themselves as stakeholders in the development of tourism in their community. The findings reveal that informed local residents with a positive attitude will undoubtedly contribute towards the development of tourism. The tourism sector depends on the goodwill and cooperation of local residents, especially when tourists visit a destination. The means scores of educational institutions and local government suggest that educational institutions ought to create tourism awareness and assist in changing the attitude and perception of the local community concerning tourism development. The findings highlight the importance of local government in the development of a destination, in particular in a rural setting. The Moses Kotane Local Municipality has a crucial role to play in providing leadership and strategic planning to ensure that all members of the community-group benefit from by the development of tourism, and by minimizing the risks associated with tourism. Local government should encourage the involvement of all the members of the community-group in the formulation of tourism policy as this will facilitate the uninterrupted implementation of programmes and projects. The BBKTA, as an LDMO, working in partnership with the Moses Kotane Local Municipality, can only gain and succeed in their endeavours to develop the community.

A mean score of 4.13 was obtained for both the level of trust in and commitment to the BBKTA as an organisation tasked with managing the community's tourism development and the findings clearly reflect that respondents were indifferent in their responses. The results propose that the BBKTA as an organisation created on the basis of managing the economic affairs for the BBK community, should instigate programmes that will assist in restoring the trust of the community. As part of restoring trust, the BBKTA should engage with and involve the community in the form of advisory boards and planning

committees to establish a sense of mutual ownership. This will increase the community's level of commitment to tourism programmes and activities initiated by the BBKTA.

The BBKTA's tourism plans, policies and development objectives are core elements of the development of the region and ought to be aligned and integrated with that of the local government to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of developing tourism in the BBK community. Local government in South Africa has traditionally played an important role in supporting the development of tourism in local areas, in particular rural areas. This includes the provision of infrastructure, the development of tourist attractions, support for events and the implementation of tourism plans.

Respondents were given the opportunity to freely express their preferences and needs in terms of tourism development by means of an open-ended question, to which only 35 responded. The highest number of mentionings concern employment opportunities (31), and this was followed by product development/diversification, while the lowest was infrastructure development.

### Discussion

The research findings revealed that 43 percent of respondents do not trust the BBKTA as an organisation that manages the tourism activities on behalf of the members of the community-group, while 41 percent of the respondents indicated that they do trust the BBKTA as a local destination management organisation (LDMO). The findings indicate that the involvement and the gathering of inputs from different stakeholders, specifically the community-group, in the decision-making phase of tourism development would assist in establishing synergy and trust among stakeholders, and subsequently, assist in the effectual and uninterrupted implementation of different projects. Literature recommended that in order to build successful community-group relationships, relationship trust and commitment are essential. Interaction between stakeholders lacking these elements does not develop into enviously relationships (Berndt & Tait 2014). The findings suggest that the BBKTA established a structured process that will allow the stakeholders of the community-group to express matters that might be adversely impacting on the trust they place in the organisation, and similarly allow the organisation to communicate its policies, strategies, and programmes for achieving the sustainable development of this tourism destination.

In addition, the findings revealed a mean score of 4.13 for the level of commitment respondents place on the BBKTA as an organisation that manages tourism development on their behalf. This finding clearly reveals that respondents are almost neutral when it comes to being committed to the BBKTA as LDMO. It was highlighted in the literature review that trust and commitment are both integral elements within the context of relationship management with stakeholders, in particular the community-group and local government. Managing relationships enables an organisation to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity among its stakeholders, and furthermore motivates stakeholder participation and commitment to programmes and projects initiated by the organisation. It increases the goodwill of the organisation among its stakeholders and goodwill is an intangible asset of an organisation that contributes significantly to its value and reputation. Stakeholder relationship management should seriously be considered by the BBKTA as a strategic management objective.

Subsequently, the success of relationship building and management is placed on the development and growth of trust and commitment among stakeholders – in terms of this study, establishing trust and commitment between the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela Traditional Authority and the community-group it serves, as well as the Moses Kotane Local Municipality. In addition to trust and commitment, stakeholders also need to have shared goals and mutual benefits to be able to build a successful and sustainable relationship, and in this case all three role-players have a stake in the development prospects of rural tourism.

## Conclusion

Trust and commitment are critical components in the process of relationship building and management. Trust is the foundation upon which relationships are built and constructed, more so in an organization tasked with managing the resources on behalf of a community. Being open and honest, disseminating information, and transferring ownership to the community-group are essential in building and managing the relationship. This in turn will encourage stakeholders in the community-group to become involved in and committed to the tourism programs and activities initiated by the BBKTA. The support and commitment of the community-group in tourism are critical for the sustainable development of rural tourism. The BBKTA and role players should formulate development strategies that contribute towards creating employment opportunities and to develop a vibrant, equitable and sustainable economy that will enable the local community to benefit from tourism, in particular through job creation. Tourism brings entrepreneurship opportunities, creates employment and has the potential to alleviate poverty in a community, in particular in a rural region. Furthermore, the responses obtained clearly indicate that there is a need for tourism product development and diversification in the BBK community to enhance the experience of tourists.

The community-group's involvement and participation in tourism development are dependent on the BBKTA being transparent with their operations and management of programs and giving acknowledgement to the views, ideas, and abilities of not only the community-group, but also all other stakeholder groups. Overall, the active engagement and interaction with the community-group will allow for good transparent strategy formulation in pursuit of the achievement of sustainable rural tourism development that not only create socio-economic prospects but fulfil expectations. There are many research prospects that could be considered: (1) To investigate the partnership and collaboration between all role players in the development of sustainable tourism in the BBK community. (2) To investigate the role of a traditional authority in the management of rural tourism development in South Africa. (3) The collaborative and partnership framework can play a prominent role in harnessing the enormous potential of tourism in the BBK community. The paper concludes that the stakeholder relationship management can contribute to the development of sustainable rural tourism that will not only contribute towards the economic prosperity of the BBK area but also towards the prosperity of the community and its attractiveness to tourists.

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### Authors



Dr. Alpheaus Litheko (OrcID 0000-0003-0841-8885) is a lecturer in the School of Management Sciences with research focused on management, marketing and tourism. Of specific interest is the small business development and management in the tourism sector. In addition to this is research-focus on rural development that contributes towards the socio-economic prospects for local communities. Dr. Litheko can be contacted at [litheko.litheko@nwu.ac.za](mailto:litheko.litheko@nwu.ac.za)



Dr. Marius Potgieter (OrcID 0000-0003-0854-2165) is a professor in the School of Management Sciences with research focused on management, marketing and tourism. The challenge is to explore and comprehend consumer behaviour from a marketing management perspective. In addition to this is developing knowledge, deep-thinking, and comprehending the dynamic environment of the consumer. Dr. Potgieter can be contacted at [marius.potgieter@nwu.ac.za](mailto:marius.potgieter@nwu.ac.za)