
Geotourism and Geoparks: Africa's Current Prospects for Sustainable Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation

Géotourisme et géoparcs: perspectives contemporaines pour le développement rural durable et la réduction de la pauvreté en Afrique

جيو سياحة وجيومنتزهات : وجهات نظر معاصرة
من أجل تنمية قروية مستدامة والتخفيف من الفقر بأفريقيا

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Abstract

Geotourism is a relatively new type of tourism with significant growth potential. Initially defined in Europe, USA and Australia, it is an international developing academic, economic and sustainable rural development investigation field. The term geotourism has been in use since the early 1990s, although its precursor activities can be traced back to the 17th century. Benefiting from its significant social, historical and industrial archaeological underpinnings, the concept is still undergoing redefinition and refinement. This paper explores current literature on geotourism and geoparks in relation to sustainable development in Africa. Furthermore, it explores current literature on the direct and indirect sustainable development impacts from geotourism and geoparks, and their implications on social, environmental and economic development on rural communities. The literature has shown that these concepts, relatively new in Africa, present essential credentials for poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development on the continent.

Résumé

Le géotourisme est un type de tourisme relativement nouveau avec un potentiel de croissance significatif. Initialement développé et défini en Europe, aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique et en Australie, c'est un domaine de recherche, académique, économique, et de développement rural durable, en développement. Le terme géotourisme est utilisé depuis le début des années 1990, bien que ses activités précurseurs remontent au 17^{ème} siècle. Bénéficiant de ses fondements sociaux, historiques et archéologiques industriels significatifs, ce concept est encore en cours de redéfinition. Cet article explore la littérature actuelle sur le géotourisme et les géoparcs et leurs impacts sur le développement social, environnemental et économique des communautés rurales. Il montre que ces concepts, relativement nouveaux en Afrique, présenteraient des atouts essentiels pour le développement rural durable et la réduction de la pauvreté sur le continent.

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ملخص

الجيوسياحة هي نوع من السياحة جديد نسبياً، بإمكانات نمو كبيرة. تم أولاً التعريف بها وتطويرها بأوروبا، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية و أستراليا، وهي مجال، في طور النمو، للبحث الأكاديمي، الاقتصادي والتنمية القروية المستدامة. لقد استخدمت كلمة جيوسياحة منذ مطلع سنة 1990، على الرغم من أن أنشطتها الرائدة تعود إلى القرن السابع عشر. مستفيدة من أسسها الاجتماعية، التاريخية وأثارها الصناعية الهامة، فإن هذا المفهوم لا يزال قيد إعادة التعريف. هذا المقال يستطلع المؤلفات الحالية حول الجيوسياحة والجيومنتزهات وأثارها على التنمية الاجتماعية، البيئية والاقتصادية للمجتمعات القروية. فهو يظهر بأن هذه المفاهيم، الجديدة نسبياً بإفريقيا، ستقدم مؤهلات أساسية للتنمية القروية المستدامة والتخفيف من الفقر بالقارة.

Keywords

Geotourism • Geoparks • Africa • Sustainable and rural development

Mots-clés

Géotourisme • Géoparc • Afrique • Développement rural et durables

الكلمات الرئيسية

جيوسياحة • جيومنتزهات • أفريقيا • تنمية قروية مستدامة

1 Introduction

Geotourism, or tourism related to geological sites and features, including geomorphological sites and landscapes, can be seen as a relatively new phenomenon (Dowling 2009a) and a subgroup of geology and tourism. Though still in infancy stage and emerging as tourism niche markets awaiting further development and commercialisation, geotourism and geoparks have been credited as tools for rural development, local community participation and poverty alleviation. It is noteworthy that through involving local communities in innovative strategies and geomarketing, such as creating geotours, geoproductions, geomuseums, geotourism and geoparks try to promote the local economy and public knowledge about geology (Farsani et al. 2010).

Moreover, promoters of geotourism and geoparks engage local people in conservation activities, education and tourism development. According to the European Geoparks Network (EGN) charter and Global Geopark Network regulations, all geoparks have to be established in rural areas. Therefore, geotourism and geoparks are opportunities for rural development, and they contribute to efforts in alleviating poverty, unemployment and migration to urban areas.

Thus far the concepts of geotourism and geoparks play an important role in local economic development and sustainable rural development, by increasing the number of tourists. They have to support the establishment of local crafts and replicas, as well as support local products. Consequently, visitors to geoparks can actually take with them, together with emotions and knowledge, locally manufactured goods (Frey et al. 2006). This paper focuses on a review of the contemporary prospects of geotourism and geoparks for sustainable rural and economic development.

Key findings show that the concepts of Geotourism and Geoparks are relatively new but, since they are both opportunities for rural community development, they present essential credentials for poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Africa. The other key finding is that geotourism and geoparks are new phenomena with limited data—further research is needed to improve the understanding of their capabilities, especially in Africa.

2 Geotourism and Geoparks—A Review

2.1 Geotourism and Sustainability

The roots of geotourism can be traced as far back as 1956 when one pioneer of Italian geology, Michele Gortani, stated that; “to the geologist’s mind, the landscape comes alive and talks. Every stone, every form of coast or mountain or valley tells its story, evoking the vicissitudes of its history and it’s becoming” (Neto de Carvalho and Rodrigues 2009). Hose (1995) documents that the geotourism concept was developed and promoted from the early 1990s onwards. Joyce (2006) argues that geotourism is a relatively neoteric term not yet appearing in dictionaries. It can be seen as an augmentation of tourism generally and parallel to ecotourism in particular. Perhaps geotourism is looking back to the 18th century Grand Tour, the aims of which were learning, education and self-improvement. Joyce (2006) adds that “Geotourism, or tourism related to geological sites and features, can be seen as an innovative phenomenon”. National Geographical Centre for Sustainable Development defines geotourism as “Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical characters of a place, its environment, heritage,

aesthetic, culture, and the well-being of its residents". In presenting this definition, National Geographic sparks a debate on whether "geo" means geographical or geological. Joyce (2006) contends that the definition of geotourism needs to be explored further; as a contemporary concept, geotourism draws on both geology and tourism. He provides a working definition for geotourism in his paper as "Geotourism could be people going to a place to look at and learn about one or more aspects of geology and geomorphology". Coenraads and Koivula (2007) view geotourism as having the same objectives as ecotourism, but particularly seeks to explain the beauty and origins of the Earth, all landscapes, landforms, plants and animals.

According to Dowling (2010), geotourism is a form of natural area tourism that specifically focuses on geology and landscape. It promotes tourism to geosites and the conservation of geodiversity and an understanding of the Earth Sciences through appreciation and learning. Dowling outlines geotourism characteristics which are, that while geotourism is geologically based, it can occur in natural, rural or urban environments; it fosters geoheritage conservation through appropriate sustainability measures, it promotes sound geological understanding through interpretation and education, and it generates tourist or visitor satisfaction. Like ecotourism, geotourism promotes a virtual circle whereby tourism revenues provide a local incentive to protect what tourists are coming to see, but extends the principle beyond nature and ecology to incorporate all characteristics that contribute to a "sense of place". It incorporates sustainability principles, but in addition to the do-no-harm ethic, geotourism focuses on the place as a whole.

"Geotourism" has emerged as a much talked about topic that is frequently linked to the term "sustainable tourism" (Farsani et al. 2009). It is a developing segment of tourism based on geodiversity. People have always travelled to appreciate the geological wonders of this world, but it is only now that many people are giving it much more attention. Geotourism is creating a fresh niche in the tourism sector with fresh specificities and different contingencies that follow the general trends of tourism, but also has its own trends (Rodrigues and Carvalho 2009). Dowling (2009a) states that geotourism, as an emerging global phenomenon, is sustainable with initial focus on experiencing the Earth's geological features in ways that encourages environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation, and is locally beneficial. It promotes tourism to geosites and the conservation of geodiversity, and an understanding of Earth Sciences through appreciation and learning. This is achieved through independent visits to geological features, use of geotrails and viewpoints, guided tours, geo-activities and patronage of geosite visitor centres.

Geotourism complements scenic beauty with the revelation of how these geological features were formed (Robinson

and Roots 2008). It has become a unique market segment in tourism centred on sustaining and enhancing the geological and geographical character of a place (Stokes et al. 2003). Dowling (2009a) views geotourism as having a number of interrelated components, all of which should be present for authentic geotourism to occur. There are five fundamental principles: 1. geotourism is geologically-based (that is, based on the Earth's heritage); 2. It is sustainable (i.e., economically viable, community enhancing and fosters geoconservation); 3. It is educational (achieved through geo-interpretation); 4. It is locally beneficial; and 5. It generates tourist satisfaction. The first three characteristics are considered to be essential for a product to be considered 'geotourism' while the last two characteristics are viewed as being desirable for all forms of tourism.

In relation to the concept of geotourism; sustainable (tourism) development is the main reason for the stimulation of geotourism. Mitchell (1989) documents that, from a geographical point of view, sustainable development can be traced to the time of Marsh when geographers started influencing the course of natural resource management in several ways. Hall and Lew (1998) supports Mitchell stating that geographers have been interested in the appropriate use of the physical environment by human-kind since the middle 19th century, and have also served to chart the history of environmental attitudes in Western and other societies. Mitchell (1989) identified some major contributions of geographers to the study of tourism with respect to environmentally, regionally, spatially, and evolutionarily. Indisputably, these four areas are of considerable importance to geographers and geologists. Uncertainties about the relationship between tourism and the physical and social environment, particularly with respect to such notions as carrying capacity, have been at the forefront of much geographical and geological study.

As Johnston (1991) recognised, academic life 'is not a closed system, but rather is open to the influences and commands of the wider society which encompasses it'; therefore the attention of geographers and geologists to the issues of sustainable tourism development through geotourism should come as no surprise. Geotourism is a holistic approach to sustainable tourism focusing on all definable points that create an authentic travel experience (Stokes et al. 2003). Pforr and Megerle (2006) have cited work by Buckley (2003) and Lang (2003) that defines geotourism as the intersection of nature-based tourism focusing on geo-objects and sustainable development. They see geotourism in the context not only of a new market segment but also as a 'normative direction contributing to geo-conservation and sustainable development'. Megerle and Megerle (2002) suggest that geotourism should be viewed as part of a holistic management approach to the broad field of geological and landscape history, including its interconnectedness

with flora and fauna, the cultivated landscape, and present land use. They view sustainability and environmental education as integral parts.

Boley (2009) states that geotourism's mission is to preserve the geographical character of the destination which differentiates it from other forms of sustainable tourism. Instead of focusing on one specific dimension of the travel experience such as the environment, community or culture, geotourism encompasses various types of travel experiences into one distinctness that focuses on sustaining the geographical character of the destination. It is beneficial for both the tourist and local population because it provides tourists with an authentic experience while the destination's unique virtues are preserved. By accentuating the unique features of the travel destination, geotourism ideally should provide a tourism industry that protects the region's identity while providing an authentic travel experience.

It is best to view geotourism as a holistic form of sustainable tourism that incorporates themes from various types of sustainable tourism segments such as integrated rural tourism, cultural and heritage tourism and community-based tourism. The desire to experience pristine natural areas without negatively impacting on them is borrowed from ecotourism. The desire to experience unique cultural heritage is adapted from culture (Boley 2009). Robinson (2009) points out that geotourism is an ecologically sustainable tourism that explains the scenery in terms of how geological processes formed the patterns that can be observed in landforms in a plethora of landscapes such as mountains, deserts and islands, and in the rock outcrops that can be observed in coastal cliffs, creeks, road cuttings, lookouts, quarries, mine sites, and through walks in national parks. As most of these are erosional sites, none need to be ecologically challenged. It should be added here that the potential impact of increasing world tourism is immense, and this should preclude, or at least severely restrict, its involvement with wilderness areas.

Global tourism must be ecologically sustainable, and shifting the emphasis from other forms of sustainable tourism like ecotourism to geotourism represents a positive step towards more sustainable global tourism. National Geographical Centre for Sustainable Destinations documents that geotourism is sustainable tourism energised. It sustains, but it can also enhance by means of restorative and constructive forms of tourism that fit the nature of the destination. Tourist revenue can help to restore historic districts, for instance, and support local crafts. It can help to preserve and develop local cuisines, based on distinctively local ingredients supplied by local farmers. It can help to retain traditional cultural celebrations and performing arts that would otherwise disappear. It can help to beautify unattractive places and enrich poor places. It does those things best when

focused on the distinctiveness of a place, avoiding the destructive pitfalls of undifferentiated global mass tourism.

Geotourism development at the local and regional levels must be developed within the context of sustainable local, national and international tourism development. At the local, regional and national levels, development policies, plans and programs, laws and regulations, and marketing, all influence sustainable tourism development. The three main principles of sustainable development which can also be applied to regional geotourism development planning are its concentration on ecological, social and economic issues (Dowling 2009a). Dowling goes on to stress that geotourism will only be sustainable where there are benefits for the host community, and these may be social and/or cultural, and environmental and will not necessarily be confined to economic benefits.

2.2 The Geotourism Charter

The National Geographical Society has developed a geotourism charter based on 11 principles (National Geographic 2010).

Integrity of place: Enhance geographical character by developing and improving it in ways distinctive to the locale, reflective of its natural and cultural heritage, so as to encourage market differentiation and cultural pride.

International codes: Adhere to the principles embodied in the World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Principles of the Cultural Tourism Charter established by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

Market selectivity: Encourage growth in tourism market segments most likely to appreciate, respect, and disseminate information about the distinctive assets of the locale.

Tourist satisfaction: Ensure that satisfied, excited geotourists bring new vacation stories home and send friends off to experience the same thing, thus providing continuing demand for the destination.

Community involvement: Base tourism on community resources to the extent possible, encouraging local small businesses and civic groups to build partnerships to promote and provide a distinctive, honest visitor experience and market their locales effectively. Help businesses develop approaches to tourism that build on the area's nature, history and culture, including food and drink, artisanry, performance arts, etc.

Community benefit: Encourage micro- to medium-size enterprises and tourism business strategies that emphasize economic and social benefits to involved communities, especially poverty alleviation, with clear communication of the destination stewardship policies required to maintain those benefits.

Protection and enhancement of destination appeal: Encourage businesses to sustain natural habitats, heritage sites, aesthetic appeal, and local culture. Prevent degradation by keeping volumes of tourists within maximum acceptable limits. Seek business models that can operate profitably within those limits. Use persuasion, incentives, and legal enforcement as needed.

Land use: Anticipate development pressures and apply techniques to prevent undesired overdevelopment and degradation. Contain resort and vacation-home sprawl, especially on coasts and islands, so as to retain a diversity of natural and scenic environments and ensure continued resident access to waterfronts. Encourage major self-contained tourism attractions, such as large-scale theme parks and convention centres unrelated to character of place, to be sited in needier locations with no significant ecological, scenic, or cultural assets.

Planning: Recognize and respect immediate economic needs without sacrificing long-term character and the geotourism potential of the destination. Where tourism attracts immigration of workers, develop new communities that themselves constitute a destination enhancement. Strive to diversify the economy and limit population influx to sustainable levels. Adopt public strategies for mitigating practices that are incompatible with geotourism and damaging to the image of the destination.

Interactive interpretation: Engage both visitors and hosts in learning about the place. Encourage residents to show off the natural and cultural heritage of their communities, so that tourists gain a richer experience, and residents develop pride in their locales.

Evaluation: Establish an evaluation process to be conducted on a regular basis by an independent panel representing all stakeholder interests, and publicize evaluation results.

2.3 Geoparks Concept and Sustainable Development

Allied to the growth of geotourism is the development of geoparks. A geopark is an area with a geological heritage of significance, with a coherent and strong management structure and where a sustainable economic development strategy is in place. The philosophy behind the concept of geoparks' was first introduced at the Digne Convention in 1991 as a means to protect and promote geological heritage and sustainable local development through a global network of territories containing geology of outstanding value (Jones 2008a, b). In 2000, representatives from four European territories met together to address regional economic development through the protection of geological heritage and the promotion of geotourism. The result of this meeting was the

creation of the European Geoparks Network (EGN). In 2004, at the first international conference on geoparks held in Beijing China, the 17 existing European geoparks joined with eight new Chinese national geoparks to form a Global Network of National Geoparks under the auspices of UNESCO. But it is important to note that geoparks are neither a UNESCO program nor a UNESCO initiative. Today, the idea of geoparks is spreading rapidly around the world in all continents, with Africa launching its Geoparks Network (AGN) in 2009 (Errami 2009; Errami et al. 2012). Progress has not always been easy, however, and finding funding to develop the initiative and secure the future of individual geoparks remains a significant challenge. The geoparks concept highlights the potential for interaction between socio economic development, cultural development, and conservation of the natural environment (Zouros and McKeever 2009). A geopark must have a management plan to foster sustainable socio-economic development predominantly based on geotourism. It must also demonstrate methods for preservation and promotion of geological heritage and provide opportunities for studying geology and other natural sciences. In order to be established as a geopark, it should be initiated together by local authorities, communities, and private enterprises. It has the potential to be part of a global network which demonstrates and shares good practices for preservation of Earth heritage and its involvement in strategies for sustainable development, (Geopark Iskar-Panega 2010). Geoparks address the need for the effective management of important geological sites and for the sustainable economic development of rural areas through the development of geotourism, thus enhancing the value of their Earth heritage, landscapes and geological formations.

A geopark must contain geologically or geomorphologically important locations of interest to a wider community. These locations can be important for their scientific value, rarity, aesthetic, or educational attributes. Geoparks not only benefit from being geologically interesting locations, but also from their various ecological, archaeological, historical and cultural qualities or attributes. Geoparks are run by local communities who can recognise and wish to confirm their geological, historical and cultural heritage, mostly through the activities of geotourism. According to Lochaber Geopark (2011), geoparks are not just about rocks—they are also about people, and helping communities to understand their Earth heritage, and to benefit from it. The significant aspect of geoparks is that they are driven by local communities who want to celebrate their Earth heritage and thereby achieve sustainable development of their area through “geotourism”.

Geoparks have been established to enhance employment opportunities for the local population and to foster economic benefits for them, usually through the development of a sustainable tourism. These Earth heritage sites are part of an

integrated concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

3 Geotourism and Geoparks as Africa's Contemporary Prospects for Sustainable Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation

3.1 Africa's Natural History Richness for Tourism

Africa is one of the fortunate continents blessed with abundant, undisturbed natural resources useful for tourism. Africa is an unusual tourist destination in the world as its attractions and its indigenous people are quite different from those of the rest of the world. Africa is the parallel universe, a continent where—according to popular perception and the tourist brochures—history has halted, and people live as in time immemorial, following their age-old traditions. Their thatched villages are set in a borderless expanse of bush where wild animals, normally only seen elsewhere in zoos, roam in the wild—it is a land of pristine wilderness.

Africa is a 'wild and unspoilt' landscape and, therefore, there is no doubt that the continent has much unexploited geotourism potential that can contribute to sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation. From the White Desert in Egypt, to the Blue Niles Falls in Ethiopia and over to the Victoria Falls (the Smoke that Thunders) in Zambia to the table mountains in South Africa, the list of geotourism potential in Africa is endless.

In the wake of sustainable development and globalisation, many nations, especially in Africa, are in a hurry to formulate, redefine and implement policies that are sustainable. To reduce environmental, social and economic costs and increase benefits, many international aid agencies and donor governments have recognised the positive impact tourism can bring to a country by creating economic opportunities and contributing to the general quality of life of local communities (Ngwira and Musinguzi 2011).

Thus, tourism has become one of the fastest developing industries in Africa and currently one of the continent's major economic development opportunities, as evidenced by its 6 % growth rate for the last decade. Africa receives 4.8 % of all tourist arrivals in the world, and 3.3 % of the receipts and, although it is not at the heart of the global tourist market, this modest proportion of the world's number one industry is still important for the continent. Global tourist dynamics depend on the situation in the developed world, but less on the situation in financial markets. Despite the fact that tourists' choice of international destination is often inconsistent and fleeting, a clear pattern has emerged for Africa: just one third of tourists go to the Maghreb countries,

over a third to Southern Africa, almost a quarter to East Africa, and the remainder are spread over the rest of the continent, but mainly West Africa.

Though still crippled with persistent poverty, disease, war and political instability, in terms of tourism, Africa has witnessed tremendous growth. Ashley and Mitchell (2005) note that whilst Africa contributes little to global tourism figures, tourism contributes significantly to African economies. By 2003, tourism accounted for over 11 % of total African exports and 20–30 % of exports for most countries that exceeded the modest threshold of half a million foreign visitors a year. In fact, tourism is disproportionately important to Africa compared to other continents. Africa accounts for just 1.6 % of World GNP but 4.1 % of all international arrivals.

While this growth and development of tourism in Africa may seem insignificant compared to other parts of the world (e.g., Europe and North America), it has been rapid in the last decade. According to the World Tourism Organisation, tourism growth in developing countries, mainly in Asia and Africa, has been very strong. Asia (+13 %) was the first region to recover and was the strongest growing region in 2010. International tourist arrivals into Asia reached a new record at 204 million last year, up from 181 million in 2009. Africa (+6 %, 49 million arrivals), the only region to show positive figures in 2009, maintained growth during 2010, benefiting from increasing economic dynamism and the hosting of events such as the FIFA World Cup in South Africa. Results returned to double digits in the Middle East (+14 %, 60 million arrivals) where tourist arrivals to almost all destinations grew by 10 % or more.

3.2 Sustainable Tourism Development and Poverty Alleviation

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has defined sustainable tourism as "Sustainable tourism development that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future". It is envisaged as 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 (World Tourism Organisation 1998a).

According to Inskeep (1991), the goals of sustainable tourism are: to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the significant contributions that tourism can make to the environment, people, and the economy; to promote equity in development; to improve the quality of life of the host community; to provide a high quality of experience for the visitor; and to maintain the quality of the

environment on which the foregoing goals depend. Butler (1993) states that the element of change in tourism is a crucial factor since sustainable development “implies some measure of stability and performance, at least in the very long-term view, and this does not blend with a highly dynamic and consistently changing phenomenon such as tourism”. According to McIntyre et al. (1993), achieving sustainable tourism development “requires a vision which encompasses a larger time and space context than that traditionally used in community planning and decision making”. The demands for sustainable tourism development to be developed irrespective of whether other, interrelated, segments are to be sustainable or is inappropriate and contradictory (Hall and Lew 1998). Notwithstanding this apparent discrepancy, various authors have recognized different forms of sustainability in the context of tourism. Hall and Lew (1998) suggests that there are at least four ways in which to elucidate tourism in relation to sustainable development. Coccossis describes these as linking to economic sustainability, ecological sustainability, long-term viability of tourism and the acknowledgment of tourism as a part of the overall strategy for sustainable development.

In terms of poverty alleviation; traditionally, the impact of tourism has been measured in relation to its contribution to Gross National Product (GNP) and employment created. Every so often, tourism's overall impact on the economy is estimated by looking at the effect of tourism expenditures through direct, indirect and induced spending using a multiplier effect approach. Tourism growth is most often measured through increases in international arrivals, length of stay, bed occupancy, tourism expenditures, and the value of tourism spending. However, none of these measures provide any means of determining the scale of the impact on the poor or even the trends which result from overall growth or decline on the poor. While in the literature there are references to the importance of tourism in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), developing countries, and rural and marginalized areas, there is very little consideration of the impact of tourism on the poor (Walter et al. 2004).

The reasoning behind tourism development as a means of alleviating poverty in developing countries has been contended in general terms with a focus on economic modernization and economic growth. The supposition has been that any tourism development will eventually benefit the poor through the “trickle down” effect. There can be no doubt that tourism development does employ those who are economically disadvantaged, but there is a growing body of evidence that indicates that tourism development enriches others also. Walter et al. (2004) state that tourism development enriches international companies, expatriate workers and the local elite, while generating low-paying and low-status employment for the poor local communities. Additionally, poorly planned and managed tourism can destroy ecological

systems, raise the cost of living for local people and damage social and cultural traditions and lifestyles. Those engaged in tourism development have generally not sought to demonstrate the impacts of tourism on poverty reduction—the focus has been on macro-economic impact and its potential to bring economic growth to poor and marginalized individuals and communities, rather than on measuring and demonstrating specific impacts on poverty.

Ashley and Mitchell (2005) show that recent analysis suggests tourism has reasonable credentials in favour of the poor. Tourism is labour-intensive compared to other non-agricultural sectors, has high female employment ratios, and is not necessarily import-intensive. The sector has low barriers to entry, encompassing a range of enterprises from the micro- to the multi-national and providing opportunities for downstream economic linkages in the local economy. Those who suffer from competition for water, land, and coast are likely to be the poor, but the poor also gain from opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled employment and infrastructure development. But this good news does not justify complacency. There is increasing evidence (Ashley and Mitchell 2005) that actions at the level of the corporate and government can sharpen the benefits for the poor from tourism. A growing body of microeconomic evidence suggests that companies themselves can boost their local impact by doing business differently. They can develop stronger economic linkages, either by adapting their supply chain, or by stimulus to local tourism service-providers and cultural products. There is a range of partnership models for local people to engage with tourism businesses, often utilising their land or resource rights.

Garraway (2007) argued that there are a number of issues that must be considered in addressing poverty alleviation through tourism. Key amongst these are: partnership development between government, non-government, private and international bodies; empowering the poor and creating access to opportunities in the industry; reducing leakages and improving linkages with other sectors and monitoring the economic impact of the industry.

3.3 Opportunities Presented by Geotourism and Geoparks

Geotourism has emerged as an opportunity for sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation. It has immense potential to help in the global fight against poverty. Studies carried out so far on geotourism and the geopark concepts concluded that there is a great opportunity for geotourism to contribute to the alleviation of poverty (Dowling 2009b; Farsani et al. 2009; Piranha et al. 2009). Farsani et al. (2010) state that one of the main strategic objectives of a geopark is to stimulate economic activity and sustainable development.

A geopark serves to foster socio-economic development that is culturally and environmentally sustainable. This has a direct impact on the area involved by improving living conditions and the rural environment. Geotourism development also represents a partnership between government, local people and private sectors, local businesses, outdoor companies, tour agencies, restaurants, and accommodation facilities, among others. This partnership is welcomed because it makes good economic sense and can benefit all partners (Dowling 2009a).

Through the creation of Kanawinka Geopark, the first geopark in Australia, a number of local enterprise and small business have been established, as well as training programmes and new jobs by generating new sources of revenue, and at the same time, protecting the geo-resources (Dowling 2009a). The geopark has also fostered an education regime which includes a number of tools and activities which communicate geoscientific knowledge and environmental concepts to the public and the local community.

The Lesvos Petrified Forest European Geopark, is another example that is attracting 90,000 visitors annually and employing 35 local people directly, and with hundreds of new jobs having been created indirectly. The geopark is now the island's main visitor attraction and is an excellent example of how the holistic approach to conservation used in geoparks can be successful from the perspective of the local community.

Since geoparks and geotourism are opportunities for rural development, they reduce the rate of unemployment and migration through engaging local communities in geopark activities. Regarding this, geopark authorities have adopted some positive policies toward stimulating locals' participation for local economic prosperity and preservation of natural resources (Farsani et al. 2010).

Debatably, whilst there is a growing amount of research and understanding on the supply side of geotourism and geoparks, there is relatively little known about the demand for these products.

4 Conclusion

The literature review has shown that the concepts of geotourism and geoparks are relatively new, but presents essential credentials for poverty alleviation and sustainable development in developing countries. However, without in-depth understanding of role that each type of tourism such as geotourism can play in poverty alleviation and sustainable tourism development, the efforts of developing 'pro-poor' tourism in developing countries will be fruitless. Therefore,

there is a need for further research and investigation into the role of geotourism and geoparks in sustainable development in Africa.

Since geotourism and geoparks are opportunities for rural development, they offer prospects for reducing poverty through engaging local communities in geopark activities. In line with this, geotourism practitioners and geopark authorities have to adopt some positive policies toward stimulating participation of the local population for local economic prosperity, poverty alleviation and sustainable development. This new vision of geotourism and geoparks presents an opportunity for developing nations, especially in Africa, by creating, new products related to the geoheritage called geo-products and geo-menus in local restaurant, new recreational activities (geo-tours, museums, etc.) and new jobs for local communities. It is worth mentioning that these recreational activities that are related to topography and geology, in some ways, are educational too.

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