

Destination Management & Tourism Promotion: Cultural Heritage Tourism

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Abstract

Tourism has been identified as one of the tools for creating jobs and promoting local culture and products by United Nations in its Sustainable Development Goals (Target 8.9 & 12.b). However, the poverty level in communities surrounding tourist sites like Malealea is not very different from other communities which are far away from tourist sites. Moreover, Malealea Development Trust (MDT) tends to rely much on donors rather than Cultural and Heritage tourism resources which are rich and abundant in the villages. There is limited research on how Cultural and Heritage tourism can contribute in poverty alleviation in Malealea Lodge's surrounding villages. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of Cultural and Heritage tourism in achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The study assessed the opportunities and challenges of promoting Cultural and Heritage tourism in the villages of Malealea. The study adopted a qualitative approach and conducted in-depth interviews to a snowball sample of 10 key informants from the villages and Malealea Lodge. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that while there were remarkable community initiatives to involve the communities in cultural performances, pony trekking, handicrafts, homestays, environmental protection and village tours which promote sustainable development, however, the initiatives tended to be fragmented, hence the distribution of benefits was to a certain extent not equitable. The study also revealed that there were some communities without toilets, this was one of the biggest threats to the Agenda 2030. Nonetheless, the increasing number of international tourists from Germany, Netherlands, France and Spain has potential to create an opportunity for Malealea local communities to diversify their livelihoods through cultural and heritage tourism. One of the key recommendations was therefore to create awareness and capacitate the communities to exploit the opportunities.

Keywords: Cultural, Heritage tourism, Sustainable Development Goals, Malealea, Lesotho

Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations formally endorsed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) as a critical path of the 2030 Agenda for global sustainable development. The goals comprise all global challenges such as diseases, poverty, hunger, inequality and environmental degradation which must be solved by year 2030 (Seal, Singh & Sharma, 2024). According to Ottaviani, Dehuca and Aberg (2024), sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This represents a deliberate global attempt to achieve harmony between humankind, its economic and cultural activities and the natural world. The preamble of the 2030 Agenda: "We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognise that all cultures and civilisations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of sustainable development." It is evident from the above statement that cultural heritage plays a critical role for the success of 2030 Agenda (United Cities and Local Governments [UCLG] (2018). Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today and what we pass on to future generations. Cultural heritage specifically refers to material signs either artistic or symbolic handed on by the past to each culture and therefore to whole of humankind.

Cultural expressions, services, goods and heritage sites have great potential to contribute to sustainable development (Villa & Sule, 2021; UCLG, 2018). Despite the fact that none of the 17 UNSDGs focusses exclusively on culture, there are explicit references to cultural aspects in targets like 8.9 (Devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products), 11.4 (To protect the world's cultural and natural heritage) and 12b (... monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs, promotes local culture and products). Therefore, it is strongly believed that tangible and intangible heritage is pivotal in the achievement of the goals particularly through sustainable cultural and heritage tourism (UCLG, 2018; Villa & Sule, 2021; International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS], 2021).

Cultural and heritage tourism refers to visits by people who are interested in among other things historical, artistic and cultural offerings of a community such as heritage tours, trails, theme parks, museums and galleries. The visitors' main motivation is to discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions of a destination. Cultural tourism has proven to be an invaluable aspect of sustainability and one of the fundamental pillars on which sustainable development should be based

together with the economic, environmental and social pillars (Makwindi, 2023; Ottaviani, Dehuca & Aberg, 2024). Tourism and heritage are explicitly included in the Sustainable Development Goals, and tourism based on heritage is regarded as a device to attain the goals and it has the capability to accomplish all of them directly and indirectly. The tourism industry is arguably the most apt industry to achieve these goals when compared with other industries (Villa & Sule, 2021; Marin & Bocioaca, 2023; Seal, Singh & Sharma, 2024).

Despite the scholars' acknowledgement of the pivotal role cultural and heritage tourism can play in the successful realisation of 2030 Agenda, there is little empirical research that can inform stakeholders involvement at local level in the implementation of sustainable cultural and heritage tourism and 2030. There is lack of analysis of the actual contribution heritage can make for the achievement of sustainable development (Giliberto & Labadi, 2022; Petti, Trillo & Makore, 2020; Kalilou, 2023; Mohan, 2021). The authors chose Malealea village in Lesotho as a case study to evaluate the extent cultural and heritage tourism can contribute to sustainable development.

Research site

The case study, Malealea village is a rural place in Mafeteng district of Lesotho. The district is located some 76 km south of the capital Maseru. But the total distance to reach Malealea lodge is 80.7 kilometres. Malealea is an interesting case study in cultural and heritage tourism because of its rich blend of Basotho traditions, scenic landscapes and historical significance. The village is popular for its authentic cultural heritage, local community engagement in tourism, and the surrounding unspoilt natural attractions that make it an appealing sustainable tourism destination. The village is indeed a prime and typical case study for cultural and heritage tourism within the context of sustainable development. Its nature of tourism incorporates economic, environmental, socio-cultural sustainability, making it a typical example of how rural communities can harness cultural and natural assets for sustainable development. For economic sustainability, the villagers participate as guides, musicians, artisans and lodge employees.

This ensures that tourism revenues remain in the village. Additionally, the village supports small-scale businesses among them handicraft production, traditional cuisine and cultural performances. Through MDT, tourism revenue supports vital social infrastructure such as education, healthcare and environmental conservation projects which serves to promote inclusive and sustainable local economies and reinforce sustainable development. With regard to cultural sustainability, the village promotes Basotho heritage while cautious about tourism negative impact on culture. Tourists immerse themselves in home-stays, performances, traditional farming practices and storytelling sessions. Malealea's initiatives to conserve the environment again makes it an excellent example for promotion of sustainable tourism development. Popular

activities such as pony trekking and hiking are done with minimal environmental impact. The Lodge, the chief and some community-based tourism businesses put in place measures to minimize waste and encourage water conservation so as to reduce the environmental footprint of tourism activities. However, despite the rich blend of traditions, scenic unspoilt natural attractions and fascinating history and some economic empowerment initiatives, the high poverty level in Malealea remains a cause for concern. It is against this background that the researchers seek to explore the role of cultural and heritage tourism in Malealea in promoting sustainable development.

The specific objectives were; To explore how cultural and heritage tourism can promote local economic growth and preservation of cultural heritage; To analyse the challenges faced by Malealea local community in implementing sustainable cultural and heritage tourism; To identify opportunities for integrating sustainable development principles into cultural and heritage tourism operations. This study serves to contribute empirical research which is insufficient in literature on how cultural and heritage tourism can be utilised at local level to alleviate poverty (SDG1) and contribute to sustainable development. The structure of this paper comprises, introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

Literature Review

Economic impact

Heritage tourism is a powerful force in leveraging local community development particularly in areas with cumulative legacy. It creates jobs, efficiently promotes inclusive growth, strengthens rural communities and benefits women. It creates jobs for rural youth, ethnic minorities, women and marginalised people, alleviates poverty and preserves heritage and culture (Makwindi, 2023). Heritage is an evolving, fragile, non-renewable resource that supports identity and sense of a place. It fosters social cohesion, social wellbeing and enhances long-term benefits, appeal and creativity of regions. Intangible heritage such as local skills and indigenous knowledge can help decrease exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other disasters (ICOMOS, 2021).

Tourism creates employment opportunities for semi-skilled, skilled and unskilled labour force and the poor residing in different regions of the world. It generates multiple avenues of entrepreneurial opportunities to support local and international trade and livelihood diversification. For example, Agrotourism and rural tourism have proved to generate numerous employment opportunities and entrepreneurial prospects for the indigenous community eliminating poverty and hunger. Another example, is gastronomy tourism which has become increasingly popular as it continues to offer tourists valuable

opportunities to experience culture through local cuisine which can lead to not only cultural appreciation but economic benefits across the value chain. Another aspect of culture that has positive and significant impact on local communities 'quality of life is cultural festival; it is the best bet for most developing countries like Lesotho to achieve sustainable development. The labour intensity nature of tourism creates a great amount of career prospects for human resources particularly for women, hence it creates a safer working environment for females where they can enjoy gender equality and women empowerment [SDG5] (Seal, Singh & Sharma, 2024; Dwyer, 2022; World Tourism Organisation, 2023; Ekeke & Uboegbulam, 2021).

Cultural heritage preservation

Cultural tourists' main motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions of a destination. Culture is viewed as an invaluable aspect of sustainability. Recent literature has revealed that it is one of the fundamental pillars on which sustainable development should be hinged on together with the economic, environmental and social pillars (Ottaviani, Dehuca & Aberg, 2024). Cultural tourism which is part of cultural and heritage tourism supports environmental protection, cultural conservation and sustains the livelihoods of local communities. The revenue generated by tourism services is reinvested in the conservation and management of heritage resources. In line with the principles of sustainable development, great progress has been made in protecting fragile environments, more generally in reducing poverty in many least developed countries. Specifically, cultural tourism contributes to SDGs by encouraging responsible consumption and production in the process of showcasing local traditions and craftsmanship. Although there is no standalone SDG on culture, it is evident that the architects of the goals recognise the intrinsic importance of heritage protection and safeguarding for sustainable development (Ottaviani, Dehuca & Aberg, 2024; Kalilou, 2023; Villa & Sule, 2021; Jones, Hillier & Comfort, 2017; Giliberto & Labadi, 2022).

Challenges

Although tourism has been highly praised for being pivotal in the realisation of Agenda 2030, it has proven to be largely responsible for the strain on local resources, pollution, disruption of traditional life style and environmental degradation in the pursuit of sustainability objectives. In developing countries, the poor often bear the brunt of various negative impacts associated with tourism while most of the economic benefits are grabbed by the elite. Energy demands in the tourism industry which are usually met through non-renewables pose huge threat if adequate pollution control is not in place. Recent literature has revealed that tourism has huge potential to negatively impact the quality of the environment by degrading both renewable and non-renewable resources (Seal, Singh & Sharma,

2024; Marin & Bocioaca, 2023). For businesses to engage with SDGs, it entails a paradigm shift that will make unfamiliar and potentially unwelcome demands on businesses. Therefore, it is argued that it is rather naïve for United Nations to expect businesses to be the new agents of development that will provide panacea for poverty, inequality and environmental natural resource degradation. The challenge is exacerbated by the fact that sustainability reporting is currently a voluntary process and assurance statement is not subject to any statutory regulation. The dominant business discourse is still on business efficiency and cost saving rather than any fundamental concern for sustainability.

The current business economic calculations in many organisations do not include to a certain extent social and environmental costs (Jones et al, 2017; Ndhlovu, Dube & Kifworo, 2024). Another big challenge of implementing the 2030 Agenda is that all of them are so interdependent to the extent that progress toward one SDG may be at the expense of another. For example, while tourism is a large employer of females and youth but is notorious for low wages, persistent gender pay differences, poor working conditions, irregular hours, casualisation and seasonal unemployment. This implies that there are challenges in balancing economic, social, and environmental concerns without making any compromises. Therefore, the three pillars of sustainability remain complex and rather contradictory (Dwyer, 2022; Eriksson & Lidstrom, 2013). One big challenge which is inherent in the 2030 Agenda is that the potential of cultural heritage for tackling broader development challenges beyond its narrow conservation has remained marginalised by being viewed as an object to be protected rather than an essential, active driver and an enabler for sustainable development. Despite the power of heritage for poverty reduction, many local communities especially in least developed countries, suffer from social and economic exclusion because of their culture and heritage and lack of awareness (Giliberto & Labadi, 2022; ICOMOS, 2021; Mohan, 2021).

Opportunities

The appeal of intact and traditional cultural elements in very remote rural areas offers great opportunities for sustainable tourism development. The active participation of rural communities in making decisions in development initiatives leads to more sustainable and effective outcomes in remote areas. Involvement of local communities in remote areas is regarded as an opportunity to empower them and address the unique challenges they face and ensure equitable distribution of benefits. Involvement of coherent segments of local communities and stakeholders in the planning of sustainable tourism has become crucial for the advancement of Agenda 2030 (Ottaviani, Dehuca & Aberg, 2024). What is pleasing to note is that tourism sector has displayed remarkable resilience and adaptability in the face of unprecedented challenges (World Tourism Organisation, 2023). Therefore, it has become the panacea for poverty alleviation especially for rural

communities who were relying on communal farming which has become increasingly risky because of climate change (Jones, 2017). Tourism has availed an opportunity for communities to diversify their livelihoods, promote local trade economic growth, environmental sustainability and social wellbeing (Seal, Singh & Sharma, 2024). The abundance of unique and authentic culture presents an opportunity to foster an alternative, culturally sensitive, inclusive and cross-sectorial approach to development (Giliberto & Labadi, 2022). Culture plays a transformative role in the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development (Villa & Sule, 2021; Petti, Trillo & Makore, 2020).

Methodology

The study seeks to explore the role of cultural and heritage tourism in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and analyse challenges and opportunities that arise. The research adopted a qualitative approach which involved in-depth interviews with a snowball sample of 10 key informants from Malealea villages, Malealea Lodge and Malealea Development Trust. Permission letters were acquired from all key stakeholders including the village chief. The key strengths of the qualitative approach were its flexibility in rephrasing questions which resulted in in-depth information and cost-effectiveness. However, its limitations with regard to subjectivity, generalizability and anonymity were felt. For example, all informants were asked to complete informed consent forms which unintentionally compromised anonymity (Mwita, 2022). Data was analysed using the thematic method. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze and report patterns or themes within data. It is relatively straightforward and does not require extensive theoretical or technical knowledge. This simplicity makes it accessible and easy to understand to researchers with less experience in qualitative studies. The key limitation was the challenge of ensuring that personal inferences or preconceptions were not interfering with interpretations of the data (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Snowball sampling is a technique in which one participant refers the interviewer to at least one more potential participant and that participant in turn gives the name of another and it goes on until the required number is achieved. Therefore, representativity is the central limitation of snowball sampling, otherwise, it has been hailed as a good method for exploring perceptions (Makwindi, 2022).

Results and Discussion

Local Economic Growth and Cultural Preservation

The study sought to explore how cultural and heritage tourism can contribute to the 2030 Agenda and investigate the challenges and opportunities in a rural set up. First, the respondents were asked about their understanding of cultural and heritage tourism and the contribution it makes

in promoting local economic growth and cultural heritage preservation thereby alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable development. The respondents were fully aware of the presence of cultural and natural attractions in their villages. They acknowledged the presence of waterfalls, San paintings, village tours, handicrafts, homestays, village museum and beautiful geographical formations which formed the basis of cultural and heritage tourism. It was reported that some villagers got employment from the local Malealea Lodge as chefs, cleaners and tour guides. The lodge which is situated in the centre of Malealea villages is a popular pony trekking destination for international tourists mostly from Germany, Netherlands, France and Spain. Apart from that, some villages get livelihoods by selling traditional food especially traditional beer to tourists. Others lease their horses for pony trekking to tourists since the lodge does not have its own horses. At times some villagers are hired to come to the lodge in the evening and showcase their cultural music and dance to the international tourists. Village tour is another revenue generating activity for the villages. As tourists tour the villages, they buy souvenirs and also donate money to the poor such as the orphans, old age and the disabled. In this way, cultural and heritage tourism contributes to the local economic growth of Malealea. This concurs with Makwindi (2023), who revealed that cultural and heritage tourism creates jobs for rural women and marginalised people, alleviates poverty and preserves heritage and culture. This also promotes UNSDG 1 (eradicate extreme poverty). Respondent 5 had this to say;

“Tourists go for a 3-hour village walk including the museum where they learn how Basotho live and some of the households in the village will be selling beer (Basotho beer). This tour includes the tour to the chief’s place where tourists are briefed about the role of the chief in the village.”

It was evident that the villagers were fully aware of the importance of preserving their Basotho and the role played by cultural and heritage tourism. Tourism promotes cultural valorisation which is one of the key drivers of sustainable development and the revenue generated by tourism services is reinvested in the conservation and management of heritage resources (Kalilou, 2023). This promotes the achievement of UNSDG target 12.b (... tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products). Respondent 7 said,

“The money from tourists helps us to acquire some cultural items like hats, blankets, sheep and this enables us to perform the dances and rituals and by so doing tourism helps us to preserve our Basotho culture”

They were measures in place designed to protect the culture from tourism activities. For example, the tourists are not allowed to watch the whole process of the initiation of the youth into manhood. They are only allowed to see the celebration part of the initiation. Moreover, some cultural performances are more of simulations than real ones. Tourists are also expected to observe the Basotho cultural ethics especially when visiting homesteads and

the grave yards. When tourists visit grave yards, they only do so either in the morning or afternoon as outlined by Respondent 2;

“Touring the graveyards during the village tour is a challenge as we know that as Basotho we are not supposed to visit this place during the day. The visitation is done in the morning hours and in the afternoon as this is believed to affect the crops in the fields”

Another initiative being undertaken by both the tour guides and the chiefs is to educate the youth especially the herd boys and tourists about the preservation of Basotho cultural and heritage resources. The tour guides educate the tourists during tours while chiefs sensitize the local communities during village meetings.

Challenges

The study also sought to analyse the challenges faced by Malealea local community in implementing sustainable culture and heritage tourism. Indeed, there are challenges faced by Malealea local community in implementing sustainable culture and heritage tourism. Although there are efforts to create awareness about tourism and sustainable development, a significant number of people including some community leaders are not aware of the potential of tourism to alleviate poverty and contribute to sustainable development. Lack of awareness is a serious handicap as emphasized by Mohan (2021). Although there are some initiatives to promote equitable distribution of tourism benefits such as taking one person per village, advertising posts to local chiefs and local shops, there were no community-wide initiatives to tap the potential of cultural and heritage tourism.

Malealea Development Trust which is an entity of the Malealea Lodge tended to focus more on donations than the economic empowerment of the local communities through cultural and heritage tourism. However, it was pleasing to learn that it provides 50% start-up capital to group projects not necessarily tourism projects. With Lesotho rural areas deeply entrenched in poverty (over 60%), the 50% may not be easy to raise. The much-talked about tourism revenue sources tended to trickle down to a few well-placed individuals not the whole village. Recent literature has revealed that the poor are the ones who often suffer from the various negative impacts associated with tourism while most of the economic benefits are grabbed by the elite (Seal, Singh & Sharma, 2024; Marin & Bocioaca, 2023). This undermines UNSDG 1 (eradication of poverty) and 10 (reducing inequality) Respondent 3 had this to say;

“Horses hired for tourists are not coming from every individual but from only those that are in the Pony trekking Association and those who are not in the society rarely get the opportunity”

Although, there are measures in place to protect cultural values, it is a big challenge to balance satisfaction of curious international tourists with cultural preservation. The fact that international tourists are searching for authentic immersion of culture, the tour guides are often tempted

to reveal the forbidden aspects of the culture to maximize profit as implied by Respondent 1 below; “The graveyard is a respected place so women are supposed to wear hats and no trousers allowed, and men are not allowed to wear hats. These practices are hardly understood by the tourists yet we should satisfy their needs.”

In the process of compromising the cultural values for the love of money, the cultural and heritage tourism destroys itself and consequently loses its capability to promote sustainable development. The formation of women support group by Malealea Development Trust was a noble initiative which was a response to protect vulnerable women and children from abuse by tourists as stated by Respondent 9 below;

“Woman support group teaches girls to protect themselves from abusive tourists who do not respect the Basotho culture and law of the country. They meet once a month and are taught sewing and nutrition to keep them busy”

This is a challenge that is generated by tourism and unfortunately undermines the achievement of UNSDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). It is also pleasing to note that there were efforts by both the charity organization and the village chiefs to protect the environment. Each village has got a drum to put garbage, trees and grass are planted in dongas. People are trained to make furrows to drain water to reduce erosion. Garbage is collected and burnt and there are community pit toilets in some villages. The chief assigns people to clean the environment as a punishment if they misbehaved or broke the law. The charity organization (MDT) hires people to clean up the environment. However, what is disturbing is that some villages do not have toilets as stated by Respondent 10 below;

“Some villages don’t have toilets, they use the bush or donga, there is no plan currently to help them with toilets...”

This is a serious threat to UNSDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) and 3 (Ensure healthy lives...). Bush toilets, apart from spreading diseases, they pollute streams and rivers whose water may be used downstream by animals and communities.

Opportunities

One of the objectives of the study was to identify opportunities for integrating sustainable development principles into cultural and heritage tourism operations in Malealea. There is great potential in integrating sustainable development principles in the cultural and heritage tourism in Malealea. There is stakeholder participation which is one of the key principles although the participation is rather fragmented. There are community groups that are engaged at Malealea lodge such as the cultural dance group, the women support group and the Pony trekking association. The community leaders like the Councilor and the Chief are board members of the Malealea Development Trust which is an entity of Malealea

lodge. Such an involvement of villagers in remote areas is considered as an opportunity to empower them and ensure equitable distribution of benefits (Ottaviani, Dehuca & Aberg, 2024; World Tourism Organisation, 2023). Respondent 1 had this to say regarding participation;

“Engaging local community is very vital as they will have a sense of pride and feel that their participation is appreciated. If they feel part of the sustainable tourism development, they will take care of the environment”

Malealea lodge which is situated right in center of villages has become a popular destination for international tourists and this ever-increasing demand has created job and small business opportunities for people in the villages in so many ways. This has gone a long way in reducing rural poverty in Malealea. Such an impact contributes to the achievement of UNSDG 8(Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all) and 1(eradicate poverty). The environmental protection awareness campaign launched by the chief and charity organization Malealea Development Trust is a golden opportunity to advance UNSDG 15(Life on Land) which stresses the importance of mitigating environmental degradation, conserving biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources. Respondent 5 had this to say;

“It’s the responsibility of the entire community to keep the environment clean. Dustbins are put in all villages to manage waste.”

There are also great opportunities to diversify livelihoods through agrotourism and gastronomy. Malealea is a remote rural area that is endowed with rich indigenous knowledge in traditional farming although some of the farming techniques are now threatened by climate change. The resilient traditional farming techniques are tourist

attractions. The herd boys’ indigenous knowledge in communicating with cattle have become a draw card to tourists. Apart from that, the Basotho traditional cuisine which is predominantly organic and unprocessed has continued to attract international tourists. Traditional Basotho beer alone has created a livelihood for some families in Malealea. Agrotourism and gastronomy are instrumental in generating employment opportunities and entrepreneurial prospects for the indigenous community thereby eliminating poverty and hunger (Seal, Singh & Sharma, 2024; Dwyer, 2022). This therefore contributes to the achievement of SDG1(Eradicate poverty) and 2(Zero hunger). Respondent 1 confirmed that;

“There is also Basotho beer tasting and food tasting so that the tourists could indulge in Basotho culinary”

Malealea village also boasts of indigenous knowledge in indigenous plants like the spiral aloe which are used for lotion and medicine. The promotion of indigenous knowledge systems is aligned with UNSDG target 2.5 which seeks to safeguard indigenous knowledge in biodiversity and agriculture, and 13.b which regards indigenous knowledge as a pivotal tool in climate resilience and adaptation. This is further supported by ICOMOS (2021) which argued that indigenous knowledge can help decrease exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other disasters. Malealea lodge with its ever-increasing demand by international tourists remains a beacon of hope for the sustainable development of Malealea village through cultural and heritage tourism. The bushman paintings alone have potential to generate a lot of revenue that can be equitably distributed among the villagers to alleviate poverty and help to achieve UNSDG1(eradicate poverty). Below is a SWOT Analysis of Cultural and Heritage Tourism as a Tool for Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals in Malealea.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Rich cultural and heritage resources	Limited infrastructure and tourism facilities	Sustainable and eco-tourism growth	Environmental and climate change risks
Community-based tourism model	Fragmented approach	Partnerships and funding opportunities	Cultural erosion
Sustainable tourism practices	Low marketing and global visibility	Digital transformation and marketing	Lack of Government enforcement
Employment and skills development	Limited local capacity and training	Diversification of tourism products	Competition from other destinations

Conclusions and Recommendations

Malealea village is endowed with rich cultural and natural heritage which has great potential to promote cultural and heritage tourism and make a contribution to sustainable development, Agenda 2030. However, cultural and heritage tourism has also potential to undermine the sustainable development principles by impoverishing the local communities, disrupting cultural values and promoting environmental degradation. Malealea lodge together with its Malealea Development Trust (MDT) are making a

positive impact in the village through employment, business opportunities creation, formation of clubs and associations, sourcing donations from tourists to build classrooms for schools (SDG4: Quality education) and assist the poor (SDG1: Eradicate poverty) in the communities. In the context of the above, below are the recommendations;

- The MDT should take advantage of the chief and councillor who are Board members of the Trust to reach all villages in creating awareness and capacitation in tourism opportunities.

- The community leaders should create a Community Tourism and Environmental Forum in which all issues concerning distribution of benefits and challenges are discussed. This will help address the fragmented nature of the current community initiatives.
- The MDT should focus more on economic empowerment through tourism than giving donations. The donations should be invested more in funding tourism projects. The 50% start-up capital currently provided to any project may not be enough given the level of poverty in the village.
- All villagers who own horses should be assisted to qualify to be members of Pony trekking Association for equitable distribution of benefits.
- The village Museum should be developed into a bigger cultural hub of Malealea to take advantage of the increasing number of international tourists coming to Malealea lodge and boost the local economic development through cultural and heritage tourism.

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