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Managing a World Heritage Site in Malawi: do residents' sentiments matter?

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ABSTRACT

Residents are an integral stakeholder in any tourism destination and understanding their sentiments on any tourism activity within their locality is very critical. Although local people are the most affected by tourism development at such places, there is a deficit of research on the local communities' perceptions on the impacts of and changes to their communities due to World Heritage Site (WHS) operations. Thus, the study sought to assess residents' sentiments towards cultural heritage tourism at Chongoni Rock Art Heritage sites. Data were collected from 35 respondents who were purposively selected from three villages surrounding the WHS. Data were thematically analysed and the main theme that emerged was a lack of community involvement in tourism activities at the sites which has destroyed heritage assets. The findings contribute to the extant literature on local communities' participation and perceptions of tourism development at WHS. The study recommends residents' participation as one way of empowering the local community and enhancing economic benefits from tourism.

Introduction

Tourism is considered by many governments and authorities as a key economic driver as it is seen as a 'goose that lays a golden egg' (Aramberri, 2001). It is also considered a creator of happiness on the planet (Pearce, 2009). For tourism attractions designated as a World Heritage Site (WHS), the WHS status attracts tourists from around the world (Timothy & Boyd, 2006) and promotes the protection of the assets. WHSs draw the attention of various stakeholders including tourists, local residents, and governments (Jimura, 2019). For culture and heritage tourism, its reliance on the local people cannot be overemphasised as it is in part or exclusively motivated by the interest in historical, artistic, artefacts, lifestyle/heritage offerings of a tourism destination (Richards, 2018). When sites are declared a WHS, demand for such sites is heightened and this can have potentially positive and negative effects on the local communities. From an economic point of view, tourism at a WHS can impact local people's living standards through job creation, sales from souvenirs, and food as well as performances (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Jimura, 2011; Su & Lin, 2014). As destinations and tourists seek to consume culture and heritage tourism, the importance of understanding residents' perception of tourism development cannot be overemphasised. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) 2017 conference on tourism and culture observed that local community participation through volunteering could be a vital tool towards preserving and promoting cultural heritage recourses (Almuhrzi & Al-Azri, 2019). For instance, local communities have a role to play in tourism by offering a hospitable environment to tourists. Furthermore,

their way of living also attracts tourists, resulting in opportunities for tourists to experience the community's tangible and intangible heritage (Jimura, 2011, 2019). Hence, the success and sustainability of such WHS could also be affected by local people's support (Bramwell & Lane, 1999; Gursoy et al., 2010; Tosun, 2000) as when residents positively perceive the impacts of tourism, they tend to support tourism growth (Látková & Vogt, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2009; Sharpley, 2014).

Although this is the case, the local communities' interests in heritage tourism are oftentimes neglected by tourism developers (Aas et al., 2005; Su & Wall, 2015). From an academic point of view, few studies cover residents' sentiments around WHS and their participation in conservation or management of the sites (Jimura, 2011; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). Besides, most studies on residents' attitudes have been done in developed countries (Jimura, 2011; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Sharpley, 2014) leading to a paucity of research on developing countries such as Malawi. To bridge this knowledge gap, this study sought to understand residents' perceptions of cultural heritage tourism development at Chongoni Rock Art World Heritage Site in Malawi. In particular, the study looked at the community's evaluation of their involvement in WHS activities as well as the perceived benefits and costs. The study sought to answer three questions: what are the residents' sentiments towards cultural heritage tourism around Chongoni Rock Art paintings? What factors influence residents' sentiments regarding cultural tourism? What are the impacts of residents' sentiments on cultural heritage tourism on the sites? Using social exchange theory, the study contributes to the understanding of factors influencing residents' perceptions towards tourism at a WHS.

The paper is structured as follows: the second section is the literature review which expounds on cultural heritage tourism, stakeholders, and resident's attitudes towards tourism, which situates this paper. The third section is the methodology, followed by findings and a discussion of the results in the fourth section. Finally, the conclusions and practical implications of the paper are presented.

Literature review

This section presents an analysis of the main issues related to the current study. It explores cultural heritage tourism, residents' attitudes towards tourism, social exchange theory, tourism stakeholders, and finally contextualises cultural heritage tourism in the study area.

Cultural heritage tourism

The cultural tourism market continues to grow worldwide with more attractions being added to the WHS list. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) WHS website, as of October 2020, there were 1121 properties worldwide from the 167 state parties broken down into 869 cultural, 213 natural, and 39 mixed WHSs (UNESCO, 2020). Although the assets can be deemed old (Dann, as cited in Jimura, 2011), the opening of new destinations redirects tourist traffic away from traditional cultural and heritage attractions (Timothy, 2011).

For destinations rich in cultural heritage, this type of tourism provides an economic backbone (Aas et al., 2005) as the uniqueness of heritage tourism makes it a significant type of tourism with a wide array of attractions. These attractions draw millions of visitors every year (du Cros & McKercher, 2020; Timothy & Boyd, 2006) who are interested to learn about new cultures, meet indigenous people, explore ruins and visit art galleries and festivals among others. For places designated as a WHS, it represents priceless and irreplaceable national as well as world asset which can be used for education and tourism purposes (Wang et al., 2015). A WHS status can also be used as a vehicle for the protection and promotion of the inscribed asset (Wang et al., 2015). The WHS status plays a crucial role in strengthening the identification, preservation, and sustainability of the heritage assets for the next generations. This is because, the inclusion of a heritage asset on the UNESCO WHS list because of its exceptional universal value, allows an understanding that the property is owned by all humankind in the world (Santa-Cruz & López-Guzmán, 2017).

Although the main aim of WHS designation is to protect and preserve the heritage asset, destinations capitalise on the WHS status for their tourism development. WHSs are considered the most popular and heavily promoted destinations in many countries and the inclusion of heritage sites on the WHS list has a significant and positive effect on the number of international tourist arrivals (Su & Lin, 2014; Tucker & Emge, 2010) although other studies have found to the contrary (Poria et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015). Su and Lin's (2014) analysis of the relationship between the WHS and international visitors claimed that the inscription of an unknown WHS could lead to an increase in the number of international visitors in the countries which have a lower number of WHSs than in the countries which are rich in WHSs. Furthermore, WHS designation has been associated with place branding (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2020; Timothy, 2011), cultural image (Ung & Vong, 2010) as well as pride for surrounding residents (Jimura, 2011). The designation of a place as a WHS might translate into more tourist arrivals and would at the same time provide a boost to the place's destination image due to the quality of the heritage asset (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2020). Consequently, if a WHS received more tourists, it would be expected that more local people would get employment or business opportunities (Jimura, 2011, 2019). At the same time, as heritage tourism is expanding as a niche tourism market (du Cros & McKercher, 2020) conflicts of use arise with locals regarding conservation and usage of the same, hence the critical need for stakeholders' collaboration. Cultural heritage tourism can also disrupt the quality of life of the local inhabitants if mismanaged by both residents and tourists (Telfer & Sharpley, 2002). Santa Cruz et al. (2019) observed that globalisation can also disrupt local communities' way of life as it forces standardisation of local culture due to dominant foreign societies and cultures. Due to this effect, UNESCO in 2003 drafted a framework aimed at safeguarding intangible cultural assets such as celebrations, local knowledge, communities, tools, representations, customs, and practices among others (Santa Cruz et al., 2019). Consequently, there is a need to strike a balance between tourism use of heritage assets, sustainability, and community wellbeing (du Cros & McKercher, 2020; Jimura, 2019). Furthermore, the safeguarding of heritage and cultural identity of various communities from various threats cannot be achieved if different stakeholders are not engaged (du Cros & McKercher, 2020).

In Sub-Saharan African countries, cultural heritage tourism offers untapped potential for generating opportunities for tourism expansion and inclusive growth (Novelli, 2015). Recently, the World Bank report stated that in light of the rich traditions of music, art, historical sites, and dance in Africa, cultural and heritage tourism presents a substantial opportunity for tourism growth (Christie et al., 2013). Rogerson (2012) states that for various Sub Sub-Saharan countries such as Botswana, Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania, cultural tourism is a niche product being used to develop their tourism economies.

Malawi has two WHS sites; Lake Malawi National Park which is a natural heritage asset and Chongoni Rock Art Painting, a cultural heritage asset. Although, tourism in Malawi is marketed as an undifferentiated product, culture and heritage tourism play a crucial role in tourist generation as most tourist attractions are mostly natural heritage with national parks, Lake Malawi, and wildlife reserves taking the centre stage. In 2019, tourism contributed US$523.1 million representing 6.7% of Malawi's gross domestic product (GDP) (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020). Currently, Malawi is projected to be on position number 66 of the 185 countries in long-term relation to growth between 2018 and 2028 (WTTC, 2020). With the foregoing data, residents surrounding tourist attractions such as the Chongoni Rock Art Paintings would be expected to hold positive attitudes towards tourism if the economic benefits trickle down to them (Jimura, 2019; Ward & Berno, 2011).

Residents' attitudes towards tourism

Tourism impacts, whether positive or negative, bring mixed sentiments for residents (Andereck et al., 2005; Nunkoo & So, 2016). In most cases, communities are directly affected by tourism through interactions with tourists which could result in changes in community values, patterns

of behaviours, lifestyles, and community members' quality of life (Andereck et al., 2005; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Santa Cruz et al., 2019). Local people's support for tourism development is influenced more by their perceived benefits than costs from tourism activities (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). These benefits could be through employment, businesses, public development, and improving the local economy (Gursoy et al., 2010; Jimura, 2019; Látková & Vogt, 2012). In some areas, tourism could be the only viable economic enterprise or an alternative industry for the locals due to declining traditional industries (Jimura, 2011, 2019).

Literature shows that when tourism and heritage managers underappreciate the local communities' contribution to tourism, negative sentiments arise as locals count the loss of their cultural land, and other livelihoods such as fishing hunting, and farming (Oviedo & Puschkarsky, 2012). To avoid these occurrences, community participation in decision making or benefit acquisition is critical for the successful and sustainable development of tourism (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Su & Wall, 2015).

Studies have looked at various attributes that affect communities' support for tourism, for example, education (Iroegbu & Chen, 2001; Nunkoo & So, 2016), locals distance from the tourism area (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004), local communities' economic activity (Perdue et al., 1990), a comparison of residents, local entrepreneurs, and public servants' attitudes (Murphy, 1983), locals' length of stay in the area/community attachment (Lankford & Howard, 1994), and residents' knowledge about tourism (Nunkoo & So, 2016), among others. These studies have produced varying results. For example, some studies show that residents who economically benefit from tourism are more likely to positively perceive tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2010; Perdue et al., 1990; Sirakaya et al., 2002) while others contend that residents who are more dependent on tourism will support more tourism-dependence than those who are not (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Jimura, 2019). Nunkoo and So (2016) found that residents' satisfaction with their quality of life did not influence their support for tourism development, a contrast to Kaplanidou et al.'s (2013) findings.

Common in all these studies, is the agreement that residents' attitudes toward tourism are an important ingredient for successful tourism development in an area or at a WHS. Residents' participation or endorsement for tourism can also affect tourism policies (Yu et al., 2011). This study goes a step further to investigate the impacts of residents' attitudes on tourism development. Furthermore, this study adds to our understanding of residents' sentiments towards tourism development at a WHS.

Social exchange theory

Although other theories have been used to explain local peoples involvement in tourism like stakeholder theory (Nicholas et al., 2009), social exchange theory is the commonly used theory (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Sharpley, 2014) despite some criticisms on its ability to explain residents' perceptions (Andereck et al., 2005). Social exchange theory (SET) postulates that people's behaviour and interaction with others is based on the sought benefits from the interaction (Ap, 1992). Thus, people weigh the costs and benefits of interaction and will only commit when benefits outweigh the costs (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Perdue et al., 1990; Ward & Berno, 2011). In tourism, it has been established that residents' attitudes and indeed benefits sought influences their acceptance and participation in tourism development (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015).

The basic principle of the SET is the assumption that individuals go for exchanges that give them more benefits than costs (Andereck et al., 2005). Accordingly, residents who view tourism as a valuable industry will support its development and further development efforts as compared to those who view it as having negative impacts on the community (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004). In general, residents' support for tourism is influenced by impacts such as socio-cultural, economic, environmental, traffic congestion in the area, and government taxes (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Perdue et al., 1990). SET has been applied in various tourism contexts globally. For example, McGehee

and Andereck (2004) used SET to predict residents' attitudes towards tourism and they discovered that personal characteristics did not predict their attitudes towards tourism but community dependence. They also found that personal benefits from tourism were equally a predictor for positive and negative effects of tourism among the local communities. For Perdue et al. (1990) and Nunkoo and So (2016), local people's perceived positive impacts of tourism were related to their benefits as compared to negative impacts. Contrary to this finding, Látková and Vogt's (2012) study found that residents who benefitted less from tourism negatively evaluated tourism impacts. Furthermore, they found that the older generation was more lenient on the negative tourism impacts than the younger residents, despite both benefiting more from tourism.

Tourism stakeholders

With anyone with an interest in the object identifying as a stakeholder, recognising, and managing stakeholders has become more complicated than before (Su & Wall, 2015). In cultural heritage tourism where conflicts of use already exist between tourism and heritage managers over the preservation and the tourism use of the same heritage (du Cros & McKercher, 2020), the addition of community stakeholders further complicates the matter due to their unequivocal interests in economic, sociocultural, environmental and attitudinal impacts of cultural tourism development. Local communities also have a stake in the WHS as they overlap with their traditional lands (Oviedo & Puschkarsky, 2012).

Aas et al. (2005) observe that despite an array of stakeholders, the local communities are important stakeholders in heritage tourism and could influence the success or failure of tourism development (Ap, 1992; McGehee & Andereck, 2004). In most places, tourism depends on residents' goodwill for resources and sustainability. Local communities that provide good tourism environments can lead to an increase in the number of tourist arrivals, and satisfaction as well as improve their quality of life (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). For example, local people provide resources such as culture, scenery, hospitality as well as their participation at various stages and levels of tourism planning (Ap, 1992; Bramwell & Lane, 1999; Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004). When a community doesn't welcome tourism activities, tourism infrastructures and other resources might be deserted. When stakeholders do not see some issues as a priority or meaningful part of their mandate, they may not be willing to take part in addressing the problem, thus it is critical to specify the stakeholders for any given project, especially in developing destinations (Reid & Sindiga, 1999; Tosun, 2000). For Chongoni Rock Art paintings, stakeholders might include UNESCO, Department of Culture, Department of Tourism, Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, local communities, the faith community, and conservation trusts, among others.

Chongoni Rock Art paintings

Chongoni Rock Art Area is located in Dedza district in the central province of Malawi and covers an area of 126.4km^2 within the Chongoni Forest Reserve. It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006 having satisfied two outstanding universal values 3 and 6 under the cultural heritage selection criteria. The 127 sites of this property feature the richest concentration of rock art in Central Africa (Smith, 2014) reflecting the comparatively scarce tradition of farmer rock art, as well as paintings by Batwa (pigmies) hunter-gatherers who inhabited the area from the late Iron Age into the twentieth century (Malijani, 2019; Smith, 2014). The symbols on the rock art, which are strongly associated with women, still have cultural relevance amongst the Chewa people, who are matrilineal, and the sites are actively associated with traditional ceremonies and rituals such as rainmaking.

Chongoni Rock Art Site prides itself in cultural history and the traditions of the Chewa tribe of Malawi. The paintings depict ancient settlers' food-gathering ways and the transition to food production through agriculture, the Ngoni (Zulu tribe) invasion of the Chewa people as well as the
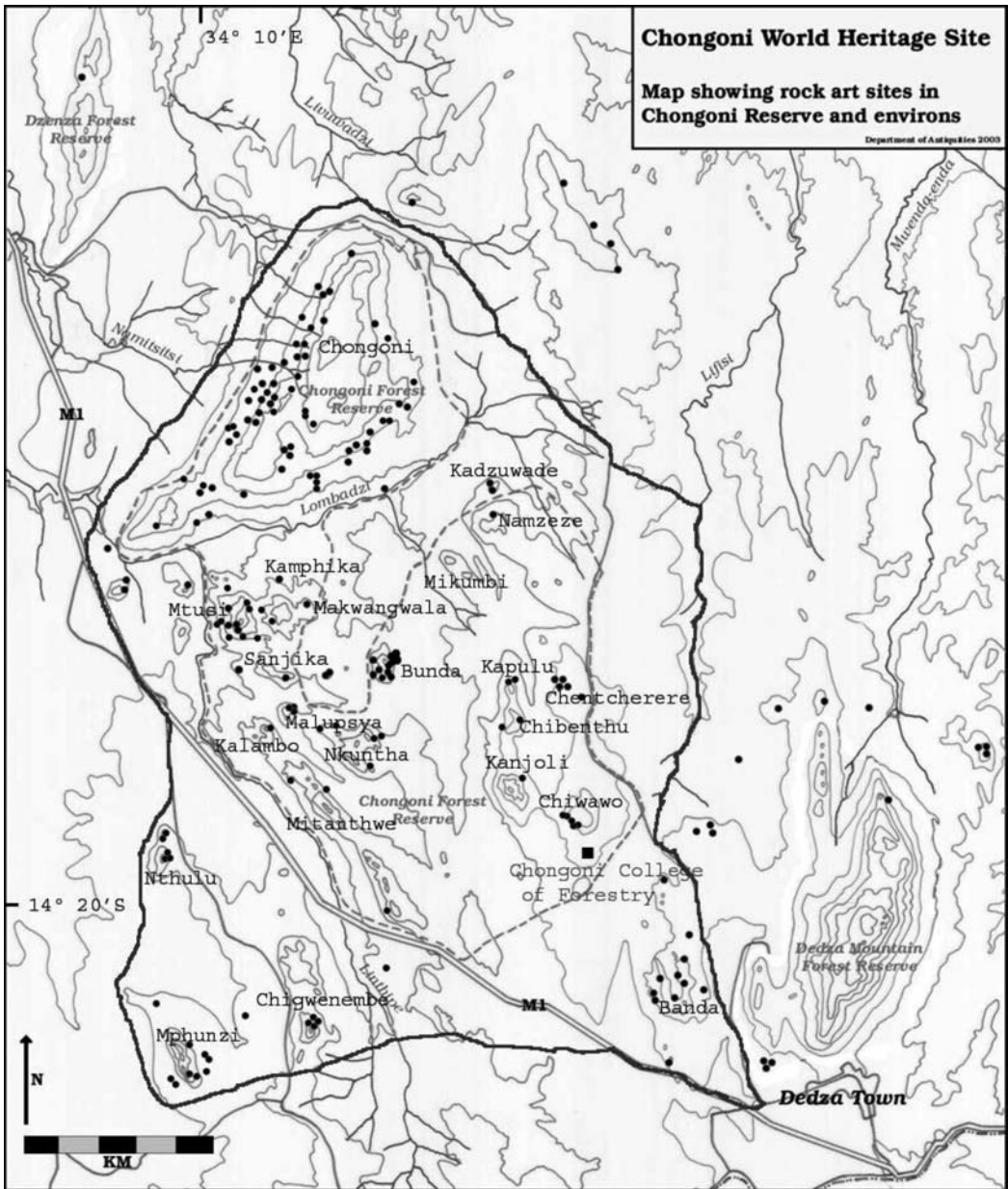
Figure 1. Map of Chongoni Rock Art Paintings. Source: Department of Antiquities, Malawi.

colonisation by British settlers (Juwayeyi & Phiri, 1992). The initial settlers of the place, the Bathwa (pigmies), painted in red whereas the Chewa painted with white clay. Figure 1 above presents the location of the study site.

Study methods

The study took a qualitative case study design to gain more insights into the matter and involved residents around the Chongoni Rock Paintings in Dedza (Creswell, 2013; Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004). Dedza district is a 1 h and 12 min' drive away from the country's capital city of Lilongwe.

The inhabitants of the place are of the Chewa tribe and are subsistent agriculturalists. The district has a population of 830,512 according to the Government of Malawi [GoM] (2019) census. The district has more females than males. The sample population was purposively selected due to the limited data on the number of residents surrounding the WHS. Adults who had been in the communities for over five years were sampled as they were deemed knowledgeable about the WHS and the tourism activities happening in that locality. Being a non-probability sampling method, not all residents in the surrounding villages had an equal chance of being included (Bryman, 2016). The 35 respondents were from the three villages of Chiphanzi, Mphalale, and Chakachadza that are close to Chongoni Rock Art Sites of Chentherere, Nazeze, and Mphunzi. The study engaged a total number of 19 men and 16 women aged above 18 years. Data collection were done through in-depth interviews. The interviews focused on respondents' perception of the impact of the WHS on their community wellbeing, their period of stay, their involvement in tourism, their role in conserving and protecting the sites, and their sentiments on tourism activities. In-depth questions were used to delve into comprehensive answers from the respondents regarding their perceptions of tourism development in the area for a deeper understanding. Given the nature of the time when data were collected, other methods such as focus group designs were not feasible as villagers spend almost the entire day at their farms. Each interview lasted for about 30 min and was recorded for transcribing.

The researchers read through the data several times for familiarisation and initial code generation. After this exercise, data were then coded following the research questions and emerging themes were isolated from the responses (Patton, 2002). Codes were also generated based on the literature review. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns or themes within the data following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework which involves: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up the paper. To ensure that respondents remain anonymous, numbers have been ascribed to each interviewee.

Research findings and discussion

This section presents the findings of the study. They are presented following the study questions as outlined in the introduction. This is immediately followed by a discussion which links the findings to literature and the social exchange theory used for the study. After this, emerging themes on the factors that influence residents' sentiments on cultural heritage tourism at Chongoni sites are discussed. Lastly, the impacts of residents' attitudes towards the WHS are discussed.

Research question 1: what are residents' sentiments towards cultural heritage tourism around Chongoni Rock Art paintings?

Respondents were asked to state their views on the contribution of tourism towards community development and economic benefits to the local communities around Chongoni. Results suggest that there is a lack of local community initiatives in tourism development, as well as a lack of government willingness to actively engage the local community in tourism activities. Respondents indicated that they are not involved in tourism activities at Chongoni heritage site as the government does everything on its own, side-lining the local people in decision making. Although people were not against the idea of tourism development, they were dissatisfied with the organisation level and the current results of tourism operations and management at Chongoni WHS. Interviewee 1 said:

> As visitors come here, it is The Department of Antiquities officers employed to run the sites that take them to the sites. They also take care of the paintings alone. In the early days when tourism was just starting, we were working hand in hand with them but unfortunately, the committee that was established from Chimphanzi and Mphalale villages is not active as it was then.

This is contrary to McCloskey et al. (2013), that community participation involves collaboration between community members and government to achieve common goals, improve the local community, and pursue individual benefits. From this study, it is evident that as a result of this seclusion, local people at Chongoni do not get full benefits from tourism. Chen and Raab (2012) stated that establishing connections and sustaining interactions between community members is important for creating strong bonds and relationships, hence the ability to change their negative sentiments towards tourism.

Furthermore, on the socioeconomic impacts of tourism, respondents indicated that there has been limited infrastructural development in the area. To date, only one building has been constructed in the area because of tourism, which is the Chongoni Information Centre. However, the project was abandoned at the roofing level in 2008. Lamenting on infrastructural development, interviewee 12, in line with other respondents like interviewees number 27 and 33, said:

> The government told us that tourism would bring offices and, good roads meaning that as the local community we would benefit. However, we have seen none of that kind. Only this unfinished building is what we see. Government is good at making promises without implementing them.

The study reveals that the positive perceptions of development were offset by negativity as few respondents believed there were no tangible tourism impacts to warrant support for future tourism development in the area. These findings are in contrast to the assertion by Jimura (2019) and Sirakaya et al. (2002) that tourism development at WHS is a catalyst for local community development. For residents around Chongoni WHS, although tourism was seen as an alternative industry to offset the dry season when smallholder farmers have no other means of earning an income (Jimura, 2011), the reality has been very different from their expectations. As alluded to by Gursoy et al. (2010), residents' attitudes tend to change with the tourism development stage in a destination. In the case of this site under study, residents" attitudes have changed despite tourism activities still being at the beginning of the destination lifecycle. Concurring with Wang et al. (2015), insights into the data reveal that the site does not attract many tourists and the WHS brand is yet to guarantee tourism development. Currently, there is no bitumen (tarmac) road in the area, which renders the place inaccessible to tourists and locals alike during the rainy season. Interviewee 6 had this to say:

> First, I wish these sites were well protected by the government by other things fencing them to avoid encroachment because they attract people. Second, it is about the transportation system in our area. We don't have good roads and during the rainy season, the roads are impassable. We need good roads so that those who want to drive their small cars can manage to do so without difficulties.

Agreeing with Malijani (2019), findings reveal that a majority of the respondents felt that income-generating projects for local people have not increased in number and felt that tourism has not developed entrepreneurial training in their area either. Working on factors that increase spending at a WHS, Mudarra-Fernández et al. (2019) observed that transport, food, and visits, and leisure were determinant factors for tourist expenditure at a WHS. In the absence of a reliable transport network, it would be difficult for tourists to come as well as spend more time at the WHS as it lacks supporting infrastructure such as accommodation and restaurants.

However, few respondents felt employment opportunities had benefited only those who have been employed as local guides in the Chongoni sites. From sentiments expressed by interviewees 7, 19, and 31, some people have benefited from casual jobs due to tourism activities at the heritage site. The following is an excerpt from an interview with interviewee number 7:

> Oftentimes tourists on organised tours from the major cities come with their tour escort. For locals, only a few who have established personal relationships with the tour operating companies get commissions when they accompany them to explore the caves. Most of us have nothing to do nor to benefit from the tourists.

Furthermore, interviewee 2 had this to say:

> Most visitors like the masked dance and they give performers money for the good performance as they dance. This money is the direct benefit that locals get from the visitors who come here to Chongoni. For the sustainability of the dance and more direct financial benefits, young boys are being initiated into the cult.

In line with the SET, residents had negative sentiments towards tourism as they are yet to see the benefits from tourism, on which they had high expectations. This finding resonates with Nunkoo and So (2016) who established that local people's perceived positive impacts of tourism were related to their benefits from tourism development. In general, results show that local people have negative perceptions towards tourism as they do not benefit from tourism activities taking place at the sites, contrary to Ward and Berno's (2011) proposition that people from developing countries are more likely to hold positive perceptions of tourism because of economic benefits from the same. Most respondents feel that they were still poor despite the site being a WHS for 13 years. Agreeing with other researchers (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Jimura, 2011, 2019; Stylidis et al., 2014; Su & Wall, 2015), the local communities' perception of positive benefits from a WHS is vital for their continued support for tourism development in their area. Furthermore, for local communities to accept changes or further development of the tourism industry, they needed to see tangible positive changes in their locality which could trigger satisfaction and acts as a catalyst for them to act in certain ways or not. If satisfaction is not achieved, they feel cheated by the tourism development (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Jimura, 2011; Látková & Vogt, 2012).

Factors influencing residents' sentiments on cultural heritage tourism at Chongoni sites

Several factors were identified as major factors influencing residents' sentiment towards cultural and heritage tourism sites around Chongoni rock art. These factors are both internal to the local community as well as external (emanating from the tourism managers' side). They include lack of education, lack of local community participation in the tourism planning process, lack of entry fees, lack of economic benefits, lack of government commitment, and lack of proper and effective communication between government and residents.

Lack of education

In agreement with Andriotis and Vaughan (2003), Iroegbu and Chen (2001), and Snyman (2014), education plays an important role in residents' participation and acceptance of tourism. The study shows that most people around the Chongoni WHS are illiterate and lack knowledge of tourism which, in turn, affects their evaluation of tourism impacts in the area. The literacy rate in Dedza is at 49% (National Statistics Office [NSO], 2012). When asked what the paintings mean to them, some pointed out that they didn't know the meaning but they believed that God created those rocks as they are. Interviewee 23 said:

> We don't have significant meanings of these paintings because we are told stories and sometimes we do not believe those stories. We think that God created those stones as they are now but because of time, that's why today we don't see clearly what is inscribed on them. However, white people are the ones who have a good understanding because they read books about history as compared to us.

From the interviews, it could be deduced that local communities do not perceive positive tourism impacts because they do not understand what tourism is and they are not well versed with their heritage assets due to lack of education. As such, they have contributed to the destruction of heritage sites. This agrees with Olya and Gavilyan (2017) who posit that local communities with greater knowledge of tourism tend to have a positive perception of tourism. The study has shown that locals have vandalised signposts and wire fences within the sites of Chentcherere and Nazeze. Reminiscing the cause of high illiteracy levels in the area, interviewee 5 said;

> In those days Nyau (masked dancers) was more powerful than today and this made a lot of Chewa children drop out of school in early classes. This was so because when a Chewa child joined Nyau society he praised the

Nyau cult too much and he was dedicated to that and eventually dropped out of school. That is why until today, education among the Chewa people is a problem. For example here in Dedza, the area of Traditional Authority (Chief) Kasumbu is one place with the highest illiteracy rate.

Lack of local involvement in tourism planning process

The results of the interviews show that locals are not involved in tourism planning and the government is doing everything alone in policy formulation and management of the sites through the Department of Museum and Monuments and in conjunction with the Department of Forestry. This is in sharp contrast to Bello et al. (2017) who reported resident's apathy in tourism planning in protected areas. This study finds that locals are willing to participate in tourism planning but there is a lack of willingness from the government side. This is echoed by interviewees 2, 7, 19 and 34. The following excerpt captures views from interviewee number 34:

> I remember years ago the government telling us the need to conserve these paintings in the forest because they would attract tourists to visit us. Since then, nothing has happened. The government has never consulted us, not told us about the progress of the tourism project. We are just spectators.

Despite community participation ranging from high-level involvement in decision making to the bottom end economic involvement and the promotion of the destination (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015), locals around Chongoni WHS are excluded from any tourism management activity taking place within their locality. If locals were allowed to participate in tourism activities, they would have accrued benefits because cultural tourism is aimed at poverty alleviation through businesses and jobs (Aas et al., 2005; Gursoy et al., 2010; Telfer & Sharpley, 2002). Concurring with Tosun (2000), local communities have been challenged with structural, operational, and cultural limits in their participation in tourism.

Lack of entry fees and economic benefits

Findings revealed that visitors to the Chongoni Rock Paintings sites do not pay any park fees to the government. Travel agents and tour operators are the ones who reap the benefits of tourism at Chongoni through tour package charges. These study results agree with Garrod and Fyall's (2000) proposition that some heritage managers do not want anyone to be excluded from experiencing heritage based on an entry fee. However, given that conservation of heritage is costly and local communities have a bigger role to play in its sustainability, it is recommended that government erect a fence around the sites and post a tourism officer as well as a revenue officer to collect fees from tourists or travel brokers. If there could be an agreement for some amount to go towards a local area development agenda, residents could positively perceive tourism as they would see proceeds from tourism which uses their local resources (Jimura, 2019), unlike the present state where only government and tour brokers are benefiting (Tosun, 2000). As posited by Fyall and Garrod (1998), when visitors are required to pay entrance fees, they are likely to be less destructive and will appreciate the site more. As observed by Interviewee 12:

> We just see tourists coming and going without paying anything for the use of the assets to us or the government. At least if they paid something, there could have been a village fund which could be used to meet the developmental needs of the surrounding communities.

Lack of economic benefits has choked residents' expectations and interest in tourism to the extent that they perceive tourism as a tool to enrich government officials and not the local communities. The study shows that only local guides and those in Nyau Secret Society (masked dance cult) are the ones economically benefiting from tourism activities. Hence, there is a need for government to engage all stakeholders on the management of Chongoni Rock Art Sites and agree on decentralised management of the WHS for the benefit of the local communities (Jimura, 2011; Tosun, 2000).

To harness more economic benefits from tourism development at the WHS, government and other stakeholders need to deliberately empower local communities with handcraft and other art skills which they can in return sell to tourists. Currently, there is a church-run museum (Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art) in the area about 10 km away from the WHS which among other things, promotes local dances and culture as well as trains local people in sculpturing. The government could strike a deal with the church to ensure that more local people acquire sculpturing skills and later form a cooperative under which they can sell their produce. As observed for the people of Petra (Haddad et al., 2019), selling souvenirs to tourists could be an initial way of involving locals in tourism activities before they could get employed in tourism-related jobs such as in restaurants, accommodation, and museums, which are yet to open up.

Lack of government commitment to tourism development and lack of proper communication

Research findings reveal a lack of the government's commitment to fulfilling its promises made about the Chongoni Rock project such as the construction of a tarmac road to ease transportation problems in the area. Residents' expectations of better roads and a Tourism Information Centre are yet to be fulfilled despite the issues being communicated to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Furthermore, the findings of this study reveal that there is no clear and proper communication between the residents and government concerning Chongoni Rock Art, which is a critical element in creating harmonious relationships between key players in the area (Aas et al., 2005; Curtis, 1998). This finding concurs with Bello et al.'s (2017) results where residents expressed ignorance about tourism activities in their areas apart from being told to conserve the park. Communication is an important element for effective management and attainment of sustainability goals at the heritage sites, assuring equality of opportunity and the recognition of needs among stakeholders (Tosun, 2006). Research shows that community involvement and proper flow of information between and among various stakeholders is a recipe for understanding and good participation in tourism development in an area (Bello et al., 2017; Jimura, 2019; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). As observed by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2015), local communities need to have access to information about the WHS as well as the right to be consulted in decision making.

Impacts of residents' perceptions on Chongoni rock sites

Several issues were raised from the study regarding the impacts of residents' perception of tourism at Chongoni WHS.

Poor host-visitor relationship

The study has shown that more interviewees decried the poor relationship between them and visitors that come to the sites. This is because locals are not actively involved in tourism and they are most wanted when these visitors request to see Nyau (masked dance) in their area. As hinted by one respondent, tourists are not interested in the people but rather in the paintings and as such the locals feel left out. Interviewee 3 lamented:

> We only interact with tourists when they want us to perform the Gule wa Mkulu dance for them. Otherwise, they just come and visit the painting with no interactions whatsoever with the local people.

The data shows that there is a need to enhance host-tourist relationships at the sites. This would ensure the sustainability of tourism at Chongoni and avoid residents' apathy as 'residents possess rich knowledge of local environments, social and cultural traditions, and have the experience and ability to deal with local issues' (Su & Wall, 2010, p. 38). Creating good relationships between these groups can increase visitors' satisfaction at the sites (Su & Wall, 2010). The cooperation can be

enhanced in tourism when local communities play multiple roles like service providers, sellers, and craftspeople because through these there will be an interaction between residents and visitors. As observed by Su and Wall (2010), the interactions between local residents and tourists influence tourists' experience, their on-site behaviours, and satisfaction.

Destruction of heritage assets

The study reveals that local people are using the WHS as grazing sites for their animals. Women also fetch firewood from the forest as the communities do not have alternative sources of cooking energy. Although picking of deadwood from the forest could be part of the agreement between the government and the local communities, these acts can be attributed to intolerance to tourism (Tosun, 2000) although they could be driven by poverty. As the WHS occupies the local people's heritage land on which they depend for subsistence farming such as grazing animals (Oviedo & Puschkarsky, 2012), such actions are expected as they do not perceive the benefits of maintaining the sanctity of the place. Furthermore, as a community that believes in rituals such as rainmaking and praying to ancestors in the forest, use of the forest is part and parcel of their livelihoods such that limiting their access to the forest could be met with resistance if no alternative solution is given. The more tourists perceive the WHS as only serving tourists and government officials, the more disagreements over the use of the land will be encountered (Stone & Nyaupane, 2016). The local community's actions pose a danger to the integrity of rock paintings as herd boys deface the paintings with charcoal. Concurring with Zubieta (2006), the most dangerous act to the paintings is from human activities rather than natural factors. The rock paintings are also damaged by graffiti of charcoal, chalk, and other rubbings by the local communities around which Smith (2014) attributed to a lack of on-site management.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study used the Social Exchange Theory (SET) to unveil local people's perception of heritage tourism. Findings have revealed a lack of local community involvement in tourism activities is the main problem that induced the local community's negative sentiments towards tourism. This has destroyed some heritage assets and contributed to a poor host-visitor relationship. Residents' perception of being side-lined in tourism activities has led to negative sentiments on tourism. With the background of low community participation, economic development at the Chongoni sites has not yielded the needed benefits to uplift the lives of the local community and hence residents have resorted to behaviours that pose a risk to the sustainability of the heritage site (Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Tosun, 2000).

Research findings have also exposed that lack of education, lack of local involvement in the tourism planning process, lack of entry fees and economic benefits, lack of government commitment, and lack of proper and effective communication as confounding factors that propel residents' negative sentiments around Chongoni sites. These deficiencies have also led to land use conflict between the residents and the Tourism Department, especially those who graze animals within the Chongoni forest. Lack of a policy on local community participation in tourism activities is also one of the influencing factors of the malpractice.

These findings herald the problems of community involvement in heritage tourism planning and management which have also been found elsewhere (Bello et al., 2017; Tosun, 2000, 2006). Thus, findings suggest the need for civic education to enlighten local people on tourism activities, which could help them recognise and make good use of the heritage assets in their area. As key stakeholders in tourism development, the government should consider involving local people to ensure that their pressing needs, priorities, and interests are considered, consistent with Burby's (2003) stakeholder involvement proposition. Residents' participation would encourage collaborative management between residents and the Department of Monuments and Antiquities,

Department of Forestry, and the Department of Tourism for the sustainability of tourism. This can only be achieved by coming up with deliberate and specific community participation and communication strategies between local people and the government authorities. Furthermore, locals could be supported with income-generating activities such as craft making, which could later be sold to tourists. Thus, the study recommends that government should come up with deliberate measures to promote a bottom-up approach to tourism planning, like establishing community-based organisations or village groups where locals could be allowed to participate in tourism (Mitchell & Reid, 2001). This could help locals realise gains from tourism activities as well as give them a voice on tourism matters that affect them. There is also a need for various stakeholders to come together and develop a tourism management plan that could take into account all desired milestones of tourism development in the area. Moreover, there is a need for local community-focused tourism growth strategies (Melubo, 2020; Stone & Nyaupane, 2016) where locals do not feel that the protected areas cater for the privileged or foreigners only, as these sentiments could lead to vandalism of tourism property.

Furthermore, findings have revealed that local peoples' sentiments have created a poor host–guest relationship at the sites. This is so because there is little interaction between the local people and the visitors coming to the sites as locals have little involvement in tourism activities as well as service delivery. Accordingly, there is need for a meaningful and democratic residents' involvement in tourism activities which could satisfy local people's needs (Bello et al., 2017; Tosun, 1998), tourists as well as the conservationists' needs.

This study is not without limitations. First, only three villages were sampled out of the many villages surrounding Chongoni Rock WHS. Henceforward, future studies should consider sampling more villages and respondents for more generalisable results. Second, the study used a qualitative approach to assessing residents' attitudes with the use of in-depth interviews. Future studies should consider quantifying residents' attitudes by using quantitative methods and scales. Last, a comparative study between two or more similar WHSs in a region (e.g. in Africa) or different regions is highly recommended for a deeper understanding of residents' attitudes at a WHS (Jimura, 2019).

Disclosure statement

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