

Article

Poverty Alleviation through Pro-Poor Tourism: The Role of Botswana Forest Reserves

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Abstract: Both government and international donor agencies now promote the use of tourism to alleviate poverty. The Botswana government has embraced tourism as a meaningful and sustainable economic activity and diversification opportunity, which now ranks second after mining in its contribution to the country's gross domestic product. The study reported in this paper investigates perceptions of stakeholders on the opportunities that would be created for the poor by opening up Botswana's forest reserves for ecotourism. Data was collected through mixed methods involving in-depth interviews with government departments, traditional leaders, quasi-government organisations and the Hospitality and Tourism Association of Botswana. Focus group discussions were also held with village development committees, Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust (CECT) and Kasane, Lesoma and Pandematenga Trust (KALEPA) members, and a consultative national workshop of stakeholders was also held. The findings indicate that opening up forest reserves for ecotourism has the potential to alleviate poverty among the disadvantaged groups living adjacent to forest reserves through direct (employment, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)), secondary (linkages/partnerships) and dynamic effects (sustainable livelihoods). The study concludes by cautioning that whilst pro-poor tourism may yield short- and medium-term benefits, in keeping with sustainability objectives, participants in the programme need to be mindful of forestry encroachment and come up with strategies to ensure the sustainability of the Botswana forest reserves.

Keywords: pro-poor tourism; forest reserves; sustainable tourism; institutional capacity building; Botswana

1. Introduction

Botswana has achieved the status of a middle-income country as a result of its mineral wealth, mainly through the exploitation of its diamond reserves. Despite this economic leap, not everybody has benefitted. It has been reported that, countrywide, 20.7% of the population live below the poverty datum line [1], and poverty has been particularly persistent in the most remote areas of northern and western Botswana [2]. The volatility of mineral resources and their non-renewability has prompted Botswana to look for alternative and sustainable economic activities. Tourism has been perceived as a meaningful diversification of the economy. More importantly, tourism is professed as being able to alleviate poverty among the poor, the majority of whom live in tourism resource-rich areas [3–5]. Therefore, tourism becomes an ideal candidate for poverty alleviation in Botswana, due to its labour-intensive nature, which enables it to employ disadvantaged members of the community with very little formal training, e.g., women and youth. In addition, tourism utilizes natural and cultural resources of the poor, whereby they can utilize these resources for their benefit [6].

However, tourism is a private sector business and, therefore, is controlled by market forces. By its very nature, tourism is geared to serve the interests of the tourists and investors and, therefore, does not automatically improve the welfare of the poorer members of the community [7]. In addition, tourism can be viewed as a form of development strategy whose agenda is driven by multinational corporations promoting neo-colonial states in the least developed countries [8], and thus, caution should be exercised when advocating for tourism as a one-size fits all strategy for poverty alleviation.

This study aims to build on the extant literature on pro-poor tourism development. This is achieved through an investigation of how the Botswana Forest Reserves can be instrumental in alleviating poverty among local communities through the use of pro-poor tourism strategies. The study uses Mitchell and Ashley's [9] framework, to analyse the potential opportunities that would be created for the poor through the opening of Botswana's forest reserves for ecotourism. The paper draws its data from the views of the Botswana Forest Reserves' stakeholders. In particular, the paper is guided by the following research questions:

- What attractions prevalent in the forest reserves could be used for ecotourism development?
- What are the likely costs and benefits to the communities from ecotourism development in the Botswana Forest Reserves?
- Are there differences in the roles that can be played by the private sector vis-à-vis the roles of the local communities in ecotourism development in the reserves?

The Botswana Forest Reserves were chosen due to the bulk of tourism research in Botswana having been concentrated in the Okavango Delta [10–12] with little effort directed towards other tourism facets, such as cultural tourism [13] and forest-based tourism [14]. The paper provides a brief survey on the literature on pro-poor tourism, followed by background information on the case study area. The next section outlines the main methodological approaches and then presents the results and

discussion section. The study concludes by cautioning that, whilst pro-poor tourism may yield short- and medium-term benefits, in keeping with sustainability objectives, participants in the programme need to be mindful of forestry encroachment and come up with strategies to ensure the sustainability of the Botswana Forest Reserves.

2. Theoretical Framework

The impact of tourism in poverty alleviation is now a growing area of research. This is demonstrated through case studies from many different parts of the world [6,15–21]. Its roots are embedded in the sustainable tourism framework, which, in turn, is derived from the overarching field of sustainable development. According to Tribe [22] (p. 298), sustainability can be defined as growth that does not encourage resource depletion or social unrest. In the tourism context, this means a level of development that is in equilibrium with the carrying capacity of the destination and that does not alter the current ecosystem, whilst not disadvantaging future generations through resource depletion [23].

Sustainability has tended to focus on broad ecological maintainable principles, policy objectives and management techniques employed in destination management. There has been significantly less academic literature on the equitable distribution of natural resources and the accrual of externalities from the resources in question [24] (p. 864). Pro-poor tourism has been put forward as a means of addressing this gap through fostering development that is inclusive of under-privileged members of society, with the proceeds from its activities going towards improving the welfare of the community members [25] (p. 208).

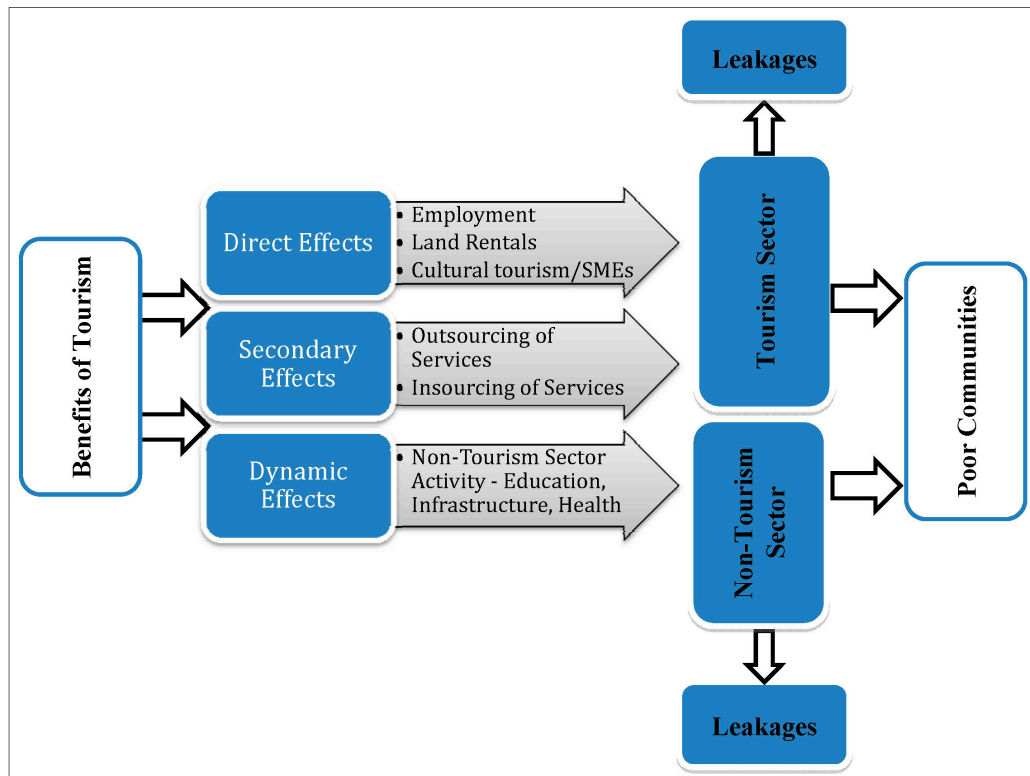
Pro-poor tourism is now advocated as a means of alleviating poverty in developing economies [26–31]. The pro-poor framework has generated a lot of interest and promotion, not only among researchers, but also amongst international and donor organisations. For example, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation has come up with the Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty Initiative (STEP), which began in 2002. The focus of STEP is to encourage the promotion of activities that promote sustainable tourism (social, economic, ecological) with a focus on alleviating poverty through the development and creation of jobs for people living on less than a dollar a day [32].

The Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom [33] (p. 1) has defined pro-poor tourism as “tourism that generates net benefits for the poor” (*i.e.*, benefits are greater than costs). DFID further clarifies that benefits should be viewed as holistic and should not be restricted to economic benefits, but should also include social, environmental and cultural benefits. In addition, pro-poor tourism should not be viewed as a tourism product, but rather as an approach to tourism development and management through which linkages are developed between tourism businesses and poor people as a way of leveraging and increasing the tourism benefits to the poor [34] (p. 2001).

Mitchell and Ashley [9] have extended the understanding of how to determine the impacts of tourism on poor communities through the development of a framework that uses three pathways through which the benefits of tourism can be transferred to the poor. They categorise these into direct effects, secondary effects and dynamic effects [35] (p. 3) (see Figure 1). Direct effects are realised through direct employment in the tourism industry. Examples of this include community employment by corporations [36], leasing of communal land to tourism operators, the establishment of business enterprises, such as curio shops or craft markets by community members, and cultural tourism [6,37,38].

Whilst many authors note that direct effects can increase economic benefit to the community in a variety of ways [39–44], Mitchell and Ashley [9] caution that externalities are not always positive, with losses of livelihood to the community occurring in some instances.

Figure 1. Pathways of benefits to the poor adapted from Mitchell and Ashley, 2010. SMEs, small- and medium-sized enterprises.



For secondary effects to occur, there needs to be a shift in the private sector mind-set and a willingness to collaborate with local communities through the establishment of linkages [45–50]. Examples of such linkages include tourism operators sourcing food and beverage supplies from local communities [20,46]. Other possible areas include “in-sourcing”, which refers to a corporation hiving off an operation; for example, the provision of opportunity for staff employed in housekeeping to run their unit as a business, eventually leading to the removal of these employees from the company’s payroll [47,48].

In the third pathway, the dynamic effects are structural changes, which are indirectly attributed to tourism development. For example, tourism development can result in self-sufficiency, where communities have in-house facilities developed, such as grinding mills, tap water, schools and clinics [12,49,50].

On the other hand, pro-poor tourism has received a fair amount of criticism [51]. It has been argued, for example, that pro-poor tourism perpetuates inequalities prevailing in society, since both rich and poor benefit from pro-poor tourism [7]. Holden *et al.* [18] (p. 331) argue that there are inherent structural barriers militating against the poor involved and benefitting from tourism. They highlight such barriers as low-level education attainment, lack of micro-finance targeted at tourism development and marginalisation from decision-making. Another interesting point raised by Scheyvens [7] (p. 91) is the misconception that “tourism industry operators should have some ethical commitment to ensuring

that their businesses contribute to local poverty-alleviation”. Schilcher [8] as a result argues for protectionist measures to ensure that big multinational players do not set the agenda and monopolise decision-making in the global arena.

3. Methods

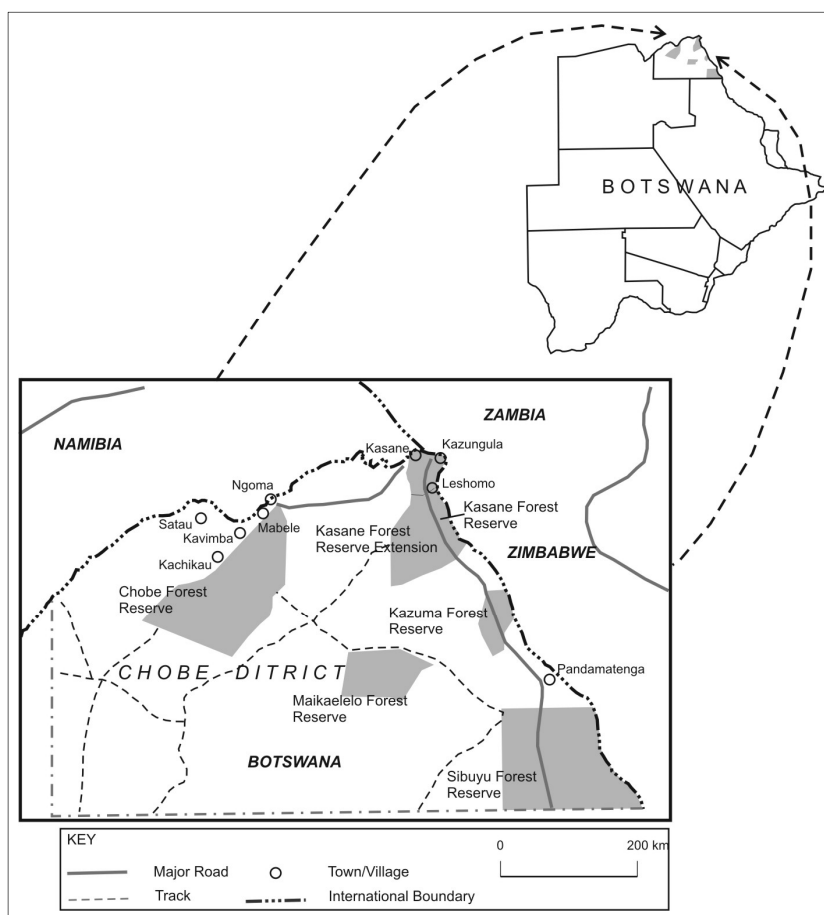
3.1. Study Area

This paper is based on a study that was carried out in the Chobe District, which is one of Botswana’s leading tourism destinations in addition to the Okavango Delta. The Chobe District is a small region covering an area of 22,052 km² and a total population of 23,449 people [2]. About 50% of the district is taken up by the Chobe National Park, and a further 4096 km² is taken up by forest reserves. The bulk of the land is reserved for conservation, and about 31% is left for communal use (residential, arable, livestock, grazing and settlement expansion) [52]. The shortage of land in the Chobe District is an impediment to the growth of the agricultural sector, with the bulk of arable land reserved mainly for conservation [52].

Wildlife viewing and safari hunting dominate the tourism activities that are undertaken in the Chobe District [53]. Consequently, this activity has resulted in congested development in the form of lodges and hotels, all competing for the river and wildlife resources. Using forest reserves for ecotourism would open up alternative tourism development areas, which would alleviate the pressure on the Chobe riverfront. The study therefore explored tourism in forest reserves as a sustainable tourism option for communities to benefit from using the Mitchell and Ashley Framework as the analytical tool. The study focused on four villages located in Chobe West (Mabele, Kachikau, Kavimba and Satau) and three villages in Chobe East (Kasane, Lesoma and Pandamatenga), which were all adjacent to the forest reserves (see Figure 2).

The Botswana Forest Reserves comprise six gazetted protected areas: Chobe Forest Reserve, Kasane Extension Forest Reserve, Kasane Forest Reserve, Kazuma Forest Reserve, Maikaelele Forest Reserve and Sibuyu Forest Reserve (Table 1). Forest reserves occupy around 0.8% of the country [54]; however, this translates into 22% of the Chobe District land (Chobe District Settlement Strategy 2005). The forest reserves (FRs) constitute an area of high biological diversity in terms of both flora and fauna. They are important areas for wildlife migration within the region and form part of the Miombo Woodlands, which extend to parts of other Southern African Development Community countries, such as Angola, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They are also part of the Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) Transfrontier conservation area in the Kavango and Zambezi river basins (stretching into Angola, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

The forest reserves were gazetted with the purpose of conserving and regulating the use of the unique forests of northern Botswana. Initially, forest reserves were protected to safeguard and control commercial logging of hardwoods *Baikiaea plurijuga* and *Pterocarpus angolensis* for the export market [54]. Failure to supervise operations and resource wastage of timber resources led to the cessation of commercial logging in 1992 [14].

Figure 2. Map of the location of the Botswana Forest Reserves.**Table 1.** Forest reserves in Botswana.

Name	Since	Size in km ²
Kasane Forest Reserve	1968	109.9
Kasane ext. Forest Reserve	1981	641.1
Chobe Forest Reserve	1981	1485
Kazuma Forest Reserve	1981	156
Maikaelelo Forest Reserve	1981	543
Sibuyu Forest Reserve	1981	1161
Totals		4096

Source: Norwegian Forestry Society, 1993.

3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through triangulation or mixed methods [55] using a combination of secondary and primary data sources. Secondary data constituted existing literature, government reports and official documents, book chapters and other relevant documentation. Primary data was derived by means of thematic interviews targeted at senior officers in central government in Gaborone and district offices, as well as focus group discussions with community groups.

A total of 18 people were interviewed. The interviewees represented 6 government departments, 4 quasi-government organisations, 3 chiefs, 3 tourism private sector organisations and 2 non-governmental

organisations that deal with conservation and human rights. The interviews, whose duration ranged between 30 and 40 min, were held between February and March, 2009. The interview guidelines addressed the study questions as follows:

Theme 1: What attractions prevalent in the forest reserves could be used for ecotourism development? The questions covered tourism activities taking place in the reserves, natural and cultural resources in the forest reserves and what tourism activities and facilities should be developed in the forest reserves. Also included were the perceptions on the forest reserves' potential for ecotourism development.

Theme 2: What are the likely costs and benefits to the communities of opening the forest reserves for ecotourism development? Among the areas covered were potential conflict, possible costs and benefits to local communities of opening up the reserves for ecotourism. Opinions were sought on how conflicts and the cost of conflicts could be minimized? Other areas of interest included community empowerment through ecotourism development and community attitudes towards forest reserves and their use.

Theme 3: Are there differences in the roles that can be played by the private sector vis-à-vis the roles of the local communities in ecotourism development in the Botswana Forest Reserves? The interviews assessed perceptions on the types of ecotourism projects that could be developed by communities and the private sector. Questions relating to location were posed, as well as questions relating to the diversification and improvement of local livelihoods.

Focus group discussions were also held in May, 2009, with the Local Enterprise Authority (LEA), which is an organization that is responsible for the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Botswana. LEA pursues this mandate by offering financial and human resources training and internships to SMEs, community leaders, women's groups, village development committees and trust members of the four villages in Chobe West (Mabele, Kachikau, Kavimba and Satau) and the three villages in Chobe East (Kasane, Lesoma and Pandamatenga). We opted for village development committees instead of households, because we believed that such committees would be able to more appropriately articulate the concerns of their members than normal households. Moreover, village development committees play a pivotal role in catering for local needs. The focus groups pursued similar issues to those covered under the individual interviews.

The final results from both of the interviews and focus group discussions were presented to representatives of the stakeholders at a national workshop held in May, 2009, aimed at validating the findings. Emerging themes analysis was adopted as the primary analysis tool with which to draw out data from the responses. The responses were analysed in relation to the themes presented and their implications to the development of pro-poor tourism in Botswana's forest reserves.

4. Results

The aim of the study was to investigate stakeholder perceptions on how the Botswana Forest Reserves can be instrumental in alleviating poverty among local communities through the use of pro-poor tourism strategies. The perceptions of the respondents of the study were presented according to the research questions, which guided the study as reflected in Table 2. The results were then further refined, as shown in Table 3, in terms of the perceived effects using the Mitchell and Ashley framework.

Table 2. Pro-poor tourism themes.

Resources	Potential ecotourism products
1. Wildlife	Photographic safaris, game drives, walking safaris, bird watching, night drives, walking trails, night drives
2. Infrastructure	Old boreholes, watering holes, wells, camps, lodges, temporary structures
3. Cultural and Heritage Tourism	Graves, artefacts and tools used by the ancestors, historical sites (remnants of Basarwa settlements), dance groups, food, way of life of surrounding villages
4. Agriculture	Crop farming, availability of wild fruits and thatched grass
5. Costs	Loss of traditional livelihoods, depletion of forest resources (e.g., medicinal plants, wild fruits), desecration of graves, exploitation and leakages of wealth
6. Benefits	Development of facilities, improved livelihoods, employment opportunities, development of community-based tourism businesses, development of small- and medium-sized enterprises, partnerships with the private sector to run tourism businesses
7. Community Involvement	Contribute as part of the workforce, formation of community-based tourism companies (CBT), formation of partnerships with the private sector
8. Private Sector Involvement	Provision of tour companies (safari companies), marketing of destination (including community-based), training and empowerment (Human capital), development of packages including CBTs

Table 3. Forest reserve activity classification. KALEPA, Kasane, Lesoma and Pandematenga Trust.

Direct Effects			
Tourism Activity	Tourism Sector	Leakage	Perception
1. Game drives, photographic safari	Wildlife Viewing	Yes	Employment with multiplier effect on the community; transfer of business skills, but not in all circumstances; community-run; direct impacts on livelihoods; human capital development
2. Privately-run lodge development and tented camps	Accommodation/Heritage Tourism	Yes	Supply labour and outsource some functions of the lodge (e.g., agricultural produce)
3. Campsites to be run by Ngoma, Mabele, Kavimba and Kachikau communities	Accommodation	No	Job creation and empowerment
4. Community-run accommodation facilities (camps, lodges)	Accommodation	No	Use of local materials, capacity building and empowerment
5. Mobile safaris/campsite through public private partnership with Lesoma community	Accommodation/Wildlife Viewing	Yes	Job creation and empowerment

Table 3. Cont.

Direct Effects				
	Tourism Activity	Tourism Sector	Leakage	Perception
6.	Campsites, private public partnership with community-run accommodation with a heritage site to provide interpretation, community-run campsite (KALEPA)	Accommodation/Heritage Tourism	No	Job creation through outsourcing to the community employment opportunities in heritage tourism activities; use of resources from the community, with the possibility of exploitation
7.	SMEs (crafts, artefacts, souvenirs)	SMEs	No	Quality issues; lack of business skills, e.g., bookkeeping and marketing
Secondary Effects				
	Tourism Activity	Tourism Sector	Leakage	Perception
1.	Sourcing of food supply from local community	Hotels/Restaurants	No	Promote self-sufficiency and an increase in food production; sustainable livelihoods
2.	Village tours, selling of artefacts, souvenirs, local cuisine, dance troupes/groups	Cultural and Heritage Tourism	Yes	Promote cultural awareness and job creation; fair trade; lacking in administrative skills and access to tourists
Dynamic Effects				
	Community Related Activity	Sector	Leakage	Perception
1.	Schools	Educational Support	No	Empowerment of the community
2.	Clinics	Medical Support	Yes	Improved livelihoods and productivity
3.	Infrastructure development in tourism region	Roads and Infrastructure	Yes	Additional employment

4.1. Perceptions on Tourism Attractions and Ecotourism Development

The perceptions from the study were that the Botswana Forest Reserves are rich in wildlife (including birds). Ecotourism activities that could be undertaken in the forest reserves included photographic safaris, bird watching, game drives, walking safaris and walking trails. Cultural and heritage tourism was another ecotourism attraction emphasised by the stakeholders. The forest reserves are rich in cultural resources, notably graves, artefacts, old tools used by Basarwa (Bushmen) and the remnants of old settlements. In addition, the respondents highlighted that the local communities have a unique culture in terms of food, dance and arts, which could be incorporated into the cultural experience of tourists to the forest reserves. This would ensure that tourists stayed longer and, as a result, spend more money at the destination.

Another perceived attraction in the forest reserves was the natural tranquil environment populated by natural grasses, including thatching grass, natural trees, wild fruits, abundant sand, unused boreholes and wells. This would not only be an attraction in its own right for tourists looking for

tranquillity in a natural setting, but would also be an ideal location for the construction of environmentally-friendly accommodations, such as campsites, lodges and mobile safaris. Watering holes and boreholes would also attract wildlife.

4.2. Perceptions of Impacts of Development of Ecotourism: Costs and Benefits

The Botswana Forest Reserves are located within an area that has shortages of arable land. As was discussed earlier under the Study Area, the local community has only around 31% available for communal use. This has resulted in a dire need for more land, since most land (69%) is reserved for conservation [56]. There was a strong feeling, especially among the local communities, that parts of the forest reserves should be designated for communal resettlement to avail more land for construction, agriculture and cattle grazing.

The study revealed that community members had limited access to the forest resources, with a permit, which could only be purchased in the capital city of Gaborone, required for entry. Further concerns arose from the permits being available to people from other parts of Botswana, as this had resulted in people from outside the area camping in the forest reserves for extended periods. They blamed the outsiders for alcohol abuse and crowding during the grass harvesting periods. More importantly, they alluded to the fact that outsiders benefited from their resources. A further issue mentioned by the respondents of the study was the leakage of money being generated by tour operators.

For the development of tourism to take place, facilities, such as roads, electricity, water and shopping facilities, must be in place. The respondents noted that ecotourism development would bring about positive infrastructure developments, such as schools, clinics, roads, electricity and water, to their area.

4.3. Perceptions on Roles of the Private Sector vis-à-vis Local Communities

The perceptions of the respondents of the study were that both the private sector and the local communities should play a role in ecotourism in the Botswana Forest Reserves. In the Sibuyu Forest Reserve heritage sites, the suggestions were that there should be private-public partnerships with the involvement of the community in the interpretation and preservation activities. The Chobe Forest Reserve had three potential sites (Ghoba Pan, Nonotshaa Pool and Kashiba Pool) that could be developed into tented campsites, wildlife viewing and photographic sites, with KALEPA and CECT managing accommodation and ecotourism activities on these sites.

Respondents also perceived cultural tourism to be the preserve of the community in terms of ownership and management, whilst the private sector's role would be in the packaging and marketing of the product. Further perceptions by community members were that the opening up of ecotourism companies would offer employment to local communities within the accommodation and tour guide sectors. Communities acknowledged the importance of the private sector in running successful tourism establishments in Botswana. At different forums, the participants saw the private sector having a role to play in empowering communities to be successful participants in ecotourism businesses. The respondents suggested a partnership between the community and the private sector, where the private sector would go into a joint venture with the community, so as to train and develop the

community in business management skills. Other benefits mentioned were the linkages between local farmers and the tourism industry, where local communities would provide food to the ecotourism operators from their farm produce.

5. Discussions

Based on the perceptions of study respondents, the opening up of the Botswana Forest Reserves for ecotourism would create opportunities for the poor (see Table 3). Using Mitchell and Ashley's framework [9], the benefits were classified according to three categories; direct effects, secondary effects and dynamic effects.

5.1. Direct Effects

One of the main drivers of pro-poor tourism is the private sector [7]. This was confirmed by the perceptions of the respondents of the study, who supported the existence of a private sector to run tour operation businesses, as well as accommodation facilities in the form of lodges and campsites. This would allow for low-skilled workers to be employed by lodges and campsites as drivers, cleaners and general hands, with the local economy benefitting through the multiplier effect generated by the circulation of their earnings through the community [40]. Whilst the private sector is a huge driver of pro-poor tourism, studies undertaken in the Okavango Delta in Botswana have shown that the private sector imports labour from outside Botswana, and their lodges import a large percentage of building materials from outside Botswana, resulting in leakages from the local economy [57].

There was also a recognition that public-private partnerships could contribute towards the generation of physical and human capital. However, legislation would need to be revised to ensure that capacity building and the development of human capital actually occur, as previous such partnerships have not yielded much success in building human capital. Instead, communities have acted as silent partners who only receive rent from land leased to the private sector [58].

The stakeholders expressed the view that some areas of the forest reserves can have direct benefits to communities. They pointed to the fact that the Chobe Enclave Community Trust (CECT) and the Kasane, Lesoma and Pandamatenga (KALEPA) Trust have already shown an interest in building lodges and camps in some of the forest reserves. Chobe Forest Reserve has three potential sites (Ghoba Pan, Nonotshaa Pool and Kashiba Pool) for ecotourism development focusing on game drives and photographic safaris. In addition, communities have the capacity to develop campsites in the Kasane Forest Reserve, which could be run by the Ngoma, Mabele, Kavimba and Kachikau communities. These developments would increase human capital, with communities taking control of business operations and, in the process, increasing their skill sets.

Studies undertaken in other parts of Botswana have shown that some community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and SME projects have not resulted in the improvement of the livelihoods of communities. The reasons for failure have been attributed to the insufficient capacity to run such projects, since communities do not have the capital, management and business skills to run a successful safari operation [57–59].

5.2. Secondary Effects

The results show two mechanisms of private sector companies sourcing food from local farmers and the use of cultural tourism to alleviate poverty among the local communities. The Chobe District has a total area of 25,000 ha, comprising 245 traditional farms and 21 large-scale commercial farms, which all have the potential to produce a steady supply of food to the tourism establishments in the FRs. The end product would be the sustainable livelihood of communities adjacent to FRs [60].

The informants suggested the development of partnerships and linkages between local communities and commercial tour companies to develop cultural tourism in the villages adjacent to the forest reserves. Some of the suggestions included guided tours of the villages, where tourists would sample local cuisine and partner with local dance groups as part of the tour package. Communities could also be availed opportunities to sell cultural artefacts/souvenirs to tourists. For cultural tourism to succeed, the private sector would need to be more deeply engaged, providing access to their marketing resources, as well as their established international networks. Van Der Duim and Caalders [43] emphasise that, for these linkages to qualify as pro-poor, the private sector must be able to impart basic business skills to the community [61].

5.3. Dynamic Effects

Communities were positive that the development of ecotourism in the Botswana Forest Reserves would result in the improved livelihoods of the communities. Some of the externalities would be the construction of roads to facilitate access to the tourism facilities and hospitals that would support the region. Population growth would then result in increased pressure for the government to build schools, health centres and other supporting facilities.

6. Implications for NGOs and Government

Communities do not have the resources to run successful business operations and would therefore require the support of NGOs, who have in the past also played a pivotal role of providing funding and technical support to pro-poor initiatives. In Namibia, for example, NGOs have provided support for community organisations, like the Namibia Community-Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA), which is a capacity building organisation for community-based tourism organisations [62]. Other examples in South Africa are where the key promoters of the Mehlooding Hiking and Adventure Trail project were local NGOs. The role of the NGOs was to identify the project as a possible means of alleviating poverty. They were also responsible for sourcing funding for the project and advertising and marketing the project [37]. The sustainability of the project will, however, depend on the extent to which communities are capacitated to drive the process by deciding what activities they are mostly comfortable with and the market they can confidently serve [61,62].

The government would be required to complement the activities of NGOs and the private sector by developing the legislative framework to guarantee the participation of the poor. It would also be vital that the implementation of pro-poor strategies is monitored to ensure fair play, so that communities were not unnecessarily disadvantaged.

7. Conclusions

The aim of the study was to investigate the potential for pro-poor tourism development in Botswana's forest reserves as a means for poverty alleviation. The study has shown that Botswana's forest reserves hold great potential for the development of pro-poor tourism and other pro-poor activities. The study agrees with the suggestions of Mitchell and Ashley [9] that the Botswana Forest Reserves can contribute to the alleviation of poverty through ecotourism via three pathways of direct, secondary and dynamic effects. Direct effects that have been discussed in the study include employment creation and the provision of accommodations to tourists. Accommodation would fall under private sector owned and operated, community owned or a partnership between the private sector and communities. The third direct effect would be through the operation of community-owned SMEs specialising in selling crafts and curios/souvenirs. Secondary benefits would arise from the multiplier effect of tourism, whereby villagers would supply agricultural produce to tourism businesses operating in the forest reserves and partnerships in cultural tourism. Lastly, the dynamic effects would be an improved standard of living and sustainable livelihoods.

In conclusion, experiences from elsewhere show that local benefits from protected areas need to exceed the local costs of maintaining the forest in order to reduce the threat of forestry encroachment [11,63,64].

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Author Contributions

Both authors designed the project. Haretsebe Manwa performed the research and analysed the data; Both researchers wrote the paper on a round robin. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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