

Tourism's Contribution to Local Community Livelihoods: A Mixed-Methods Study of Tsumeb Constituency, Namibia

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Abstract

This study investigates the contribution of tourism to the livelihoods of community members in Tsumeb constituency, Oshikoto region, Namibia, using a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design. Quantitative data were collected from 300 respondents via questionnaire surveys using cluster sampling, while qualitative data were gathered through 30 in-depth face-to-face interviews using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis in SPSS and thematic analysis in NVivo. Findings demonstrate that tourism is essential for local livelihoods, directly creating job opportunities, increasing marketing opportunities, and enhancing educational prospects. The study reveals that 72% of respondents are employed in the tourism industry, with regression analysis showing a statistically significant positive relationship between tourism and livelihoods ($R^2 = 0.78$, $p < 0.001$). Indirect benefits emerge through employment multipliers, where tourism employees support non-employed community members. While most individuals report improved livelihoods, benefits are unevenly distributed, with business owners gaining disproportionately more than service staff. The study recommends that the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism actively involve local small and medium enterprises through public-private partnerships and enhance marketing through international business expos and local media to increase inclusive participation.

Keywords

Tourism, livelihoods, local communities, spillover effects, , Namibia.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism represents the movement of individuals outside their usual environment for periods not exceeding one year and constitutes a significant economic development driver for emerging economies (Meyer & Meyer, 2015). In Namibia, tourism contributes substantially to GDP, accounting for NAD 11.1 million (5.6% of total domestic earnings) in 2022, with projections indicating growth to NAD 16.8 million by 2033 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). The sector created 83,056 direct jobs in 2022, representing 4.5% of national employment, with expectations of reaching 153,815 jobs by 2033. Despite this national-level growth, rural areas like Oshikoto region experience persistent poverty, with 42.6% of its population living below the lower-bound poverty line of NAD 3,330.48 annually (National Planning Commission, 2015, 2023). Tsumeb constituency, despite being a former regional capital with high tourist inflows to

attractions such as Etosha National Park, Ojikoto Lake, and Guinas Lake, maintains a poverty rate of 19% (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2023). This disparity between tourism activity and local living standards necessitates investigation into how tourism specifically contributes to micro-level livelihood improvements.

Community livelihoods are measured by income levels and access to capital assets, including natural, physical, financial, human, and social resources (Ahebwa *et al.*, 2015). While tourism demonstrates potential for poverty alleviation through direct employment and market creation, research gaps persist regarding its micro-level impacts and benefit distribution patterns. This study addresses three specific objectives: (1) to identify tourism's impacts on economic livelihoods in Tsumeb constituency; (2) to determine which demographic clusters benefit from tourism and how; and (3) to examine

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positive spillover effects beyond direct tourism employment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism generates multifaceted economic benefits for rural communities. Direct benefits include employment in hospitality, tour operations, and sales of local products, while indirect benefits encompass infrastructure development, skill acquisition, and enhanced public service delivery (Matiku *et al.*, 2020; Shariff & Tahir, 2020). Tourism creates market opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) selling crafts, food, and services, thereby increasing household incomes (Asa *et al.*, 2022). However, employment quality remains contentious, with many positions classified as unskilled or semi-skilled with low remuneration (Gnanapala & Sandaruwani, 2016).

Indirect contributions include value-added services, tax revenues, and improved infrastructure such as roads, sanitation, and electricity (Chen *et al.*, 2020; Stone & Nyaupane, 2015). Tourism stimulates learning opportunities through cultural exchange, enabling residents to acquire language skills and exposure to diverse practices (Jehan, 2022). Spillover effects extend to farmers supplying produce to tourism establishments and ancillary businesses emerging to support tourist activities (Gariseb & Mosimane, 2016). However, negative impacts including income inequality, cultural degradation, and environmental harm necessitate careful management (Gumbo, 2022; Thomsen *et al.*, 2022).

This study employs two theoretical frameworks. Livability theory explains how tourism-driven economic benefits enhance quality of life and community well-being by improving access to education, healthcare, and social services (Michalos, 2014; Mouratidis, 2019). Social exchange theory frames tourism interactions as reciprocal transactions generating mutual benefits for tourists and residents (Crapanzano *et al.*, 2017). The integrated framework illuminates how economic gains combined with social-

cultural exchanges produce sustained livelihood improvements.

Despite extensive macro-level research, empirical evidence on micro-level livelihood impacts remains limited, with most studies employing mono-method approaches that lack methodological triangulation. This study addresses these gaps through mixed-methods investigation of tourism's localized economic effects.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study (Dawadi *et al.*, 2021). Quantitative data provided broad overview of tourism-livelihood relationships, while qualitative data offered nuanced insights into community perceptions and experiences (Polit & Beck, 2018).

Population and Sample

The target population comprised 38,134 residents of Tsumeb constituency and 74 tourism establishments registered with the Namibia Tourism Board (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2023). For quantitative data, 415 community members were selected using cluster sampling based on geographic areas, ensuring representation across the constituency (Wilson, 2010). A total of 300 completed questionnaires were returned (72% response rate). For qualitative data, 30 respondents were purposively selected: 20 from tourism establishments and 10 independent tour guides and craft shop owners (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Research Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using a three-section questionnaire: Section A gathered demographic data, Section B measured direct benefits (employment status, income changes), and Section C captured perceptions of indirect benefits. The instrument was pre-tested with 30 respondents to ensure clarity and reliability (Polit & Beck, 2018).

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face interviews using three tailored guides for resort owners, craft shop owners/tour guides, and service staff. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded thematically using NVivo software.

Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaires were distributed face-to-face to adults (18+) with a five-day return period. Interviews lasted 25-40 minutes. Quantitative data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis in SPSS version 25 to assess relationships between tourism (independent variable) and livelihoods (dependent variable). Assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity were checked, with significance set at $p < 0.05$. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, with transcripts read multiple times to identify recurring codes and patterns.

Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

Validity was ensured through instrument pre-testing and data triangulation across respondent groups. Reliability was enhanced through peer review of transcribed notes and maintenance of an audit trail documenting all analytical decisions (Polit & Beck, 2018). Ethical clearance was

obtained from the University of Namibia Ethics Council and Namibia Tourism Board. Informed consent was secured, participation remained voluntary and anonymous, and data were stored on encrypted devices with plans for destruction after five years.

RESULTS

Response Rate and Demographics

The survey achieved a 72% response rate, yielding 300 completed questionnaires from 415 distributed instruments (Table 1; Figure 1). Analysis of non-response patterns (28%) indicated no statistically significant demographic bias, thereby affirming the representativeness of the sample. The participant cohort exhibited distinct demographic characteristics. The majority (27.1%) fell within the 41-45 age bracket, suggesting that middle-aged adults constitute the most active demographic segment in tourism-related activities (Table 2). Younger cohorts (18-25 years: 16.1%; 31-35 years: 14.8%) also demonstrated considerable participation, whereas individuals aged 51 and above represented only 7.7% of respondents, indicating diminished engagement among older populations.

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Questionnaires taken	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Questionnaires returned	300	72%
Questionnaires not returned	115	28%
Total questionnaires taken	415	100%

Source: Survey data (2025)

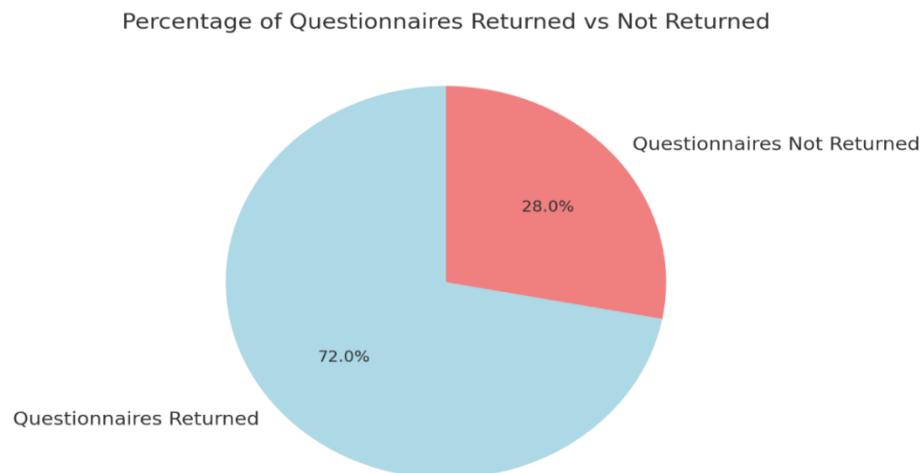


Figure 1. Questionnaire Response Rate

Source: Survey data (2025)

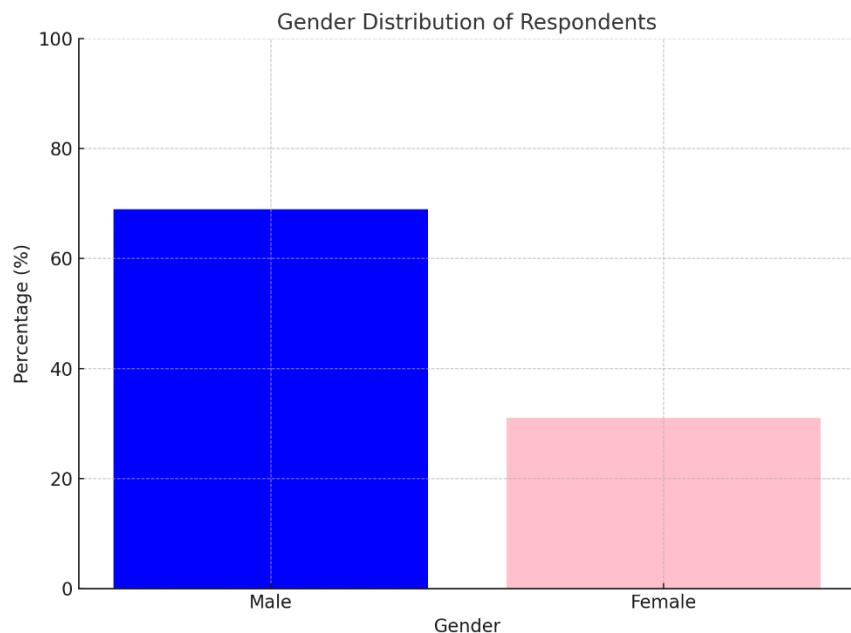
Gender distribution revealed male predominance (69%) compared to female participation (31%) (Figure 2). This disparity reflects broader labor market dynamics in the Namibian tourism sector, where men occupy the majority of managerial, tour guide, and driver positions, while women are concentrated in lower-tier service roles. Educational attainment among respondents was

predominantly at secondary level or below, with 28.4% holding Grade 12 certificates and 41.2% possessing qualifications lower than Grade 12 (Table 3). Only 3.9% held master's degrees, and no doctoral qualifications were represented, indicating that tourism employment in Tsumeb constituency primarily accommodates semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Response	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
18-25	48	16.1%
26-30 years	33	11%
31-35 years	45	14.8%
36-40 years	29	9.7%
41-45 years	81	27.1%
46-50 years	41	13.5%
51 years and above	23	7.7%
Total	300	100%

Source: Survey data, 2025

**Figure 2. Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 3: Educational Qualifications of Respondents

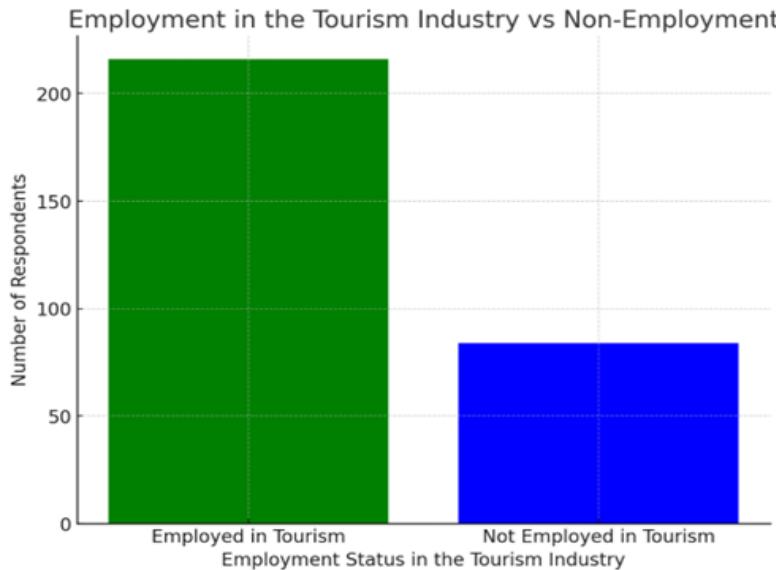
Qualification	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
PhD	0	0%
Masters	13	3.9%
Honours degree	60	20%
Degree	14	4.5%
Diploma	6	2%
Grades 12	85	28.4%
Grade 10	35	11.6%
Others	89	29.6%
Total	300	100%

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Employment Patterns in the Tourism Sector

Direct engagement with the tourism industry was reported by 72% of respondents, who occupied positions predominantly as service staff in hotels, lodges, and restaurants, or as tour guides (Figure 3). The remaining 28% comprised individuals

indirectly associated with tourism (street vendors, agricultural producers) or employed in unrelated sectors. This distribution underscores tourism's dominance as the primary economic engine within Tsumeb constituency, absorbing a substantial proportion of the local workforce.

**Figure 3: Employment Status in Tourism Industry**

Source: Survey data (2025)

Regression Analysis: Quantifying Tourism's Impact on Livelihoods

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between tourism-related variables and livelihood outcomes. The model

demonstrated robust explanatory power, accounting for 78% of variance in livelihood indicators ($R^2 = 0.78$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.76$) (Table 4). All predictor variables achieved statistical significance at the $p < 0.002$ level.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Results for Tourism Impact on Livelihoods

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Number of Tourists	0.45	0.08	5.63	0.000
Employment (service staff)	0.30	0.07	4.29	0.001
Income for Business Owners	0.25	0.05	5.00	0.002
R-Squared	0.78	-	-	-
Adjusted R-Squared	0.76	-	-	-

Source: Survey Data (2025)

The number of tourists emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), with each additional tourist associated with a 0.45-unit improvement in livelihood metrics. Tourism employment demonstrated a significant positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.30$, $p = 0.001$), confirming that job creation directly enhances community well-being. Business owner income also exhibited a

significant relationship ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.002$), indicating that entrepreneurial success contributes to broader livelihood improvements. The t-statistics for all variables substantially exceeded the conventional significance threshold ($t > 2$), affirming the reliability of these relationships (Figures 4 and 5).

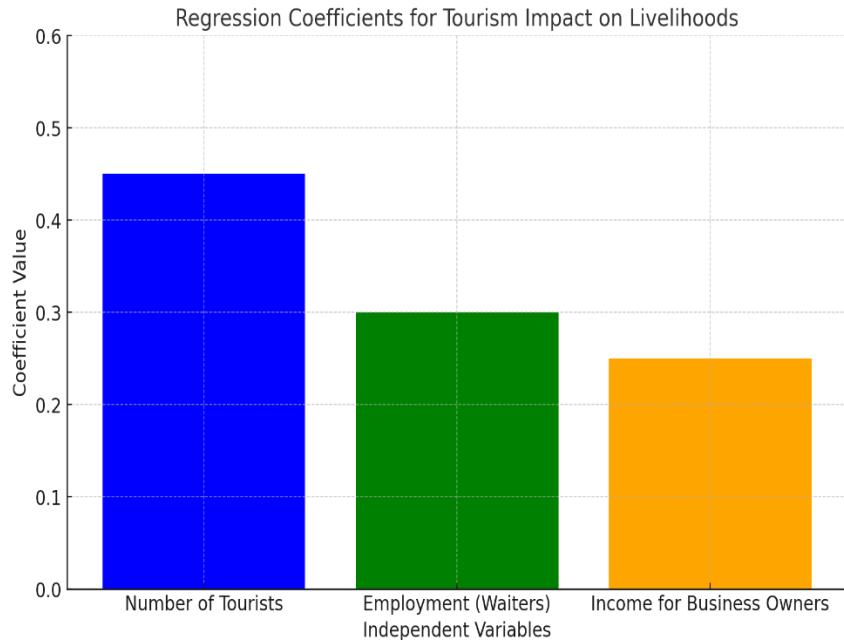


Figure 4. Regression Coefficients for Tourism Impact on Livelihoods
Source: Survey Data (2025)

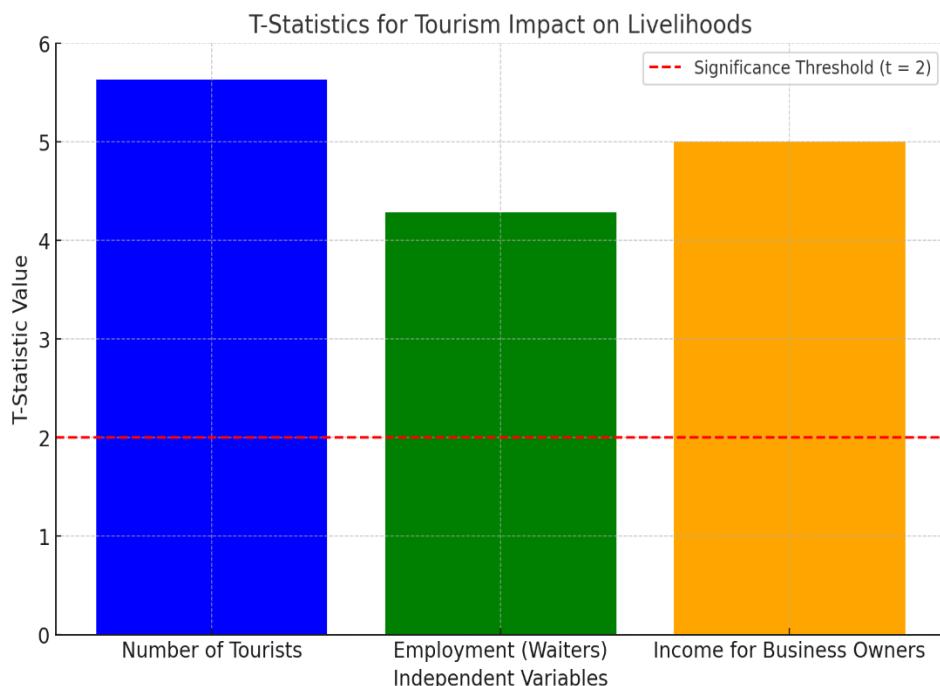


Figure 5. T-Statistics for Tourism Impact on Livelihoods
Source: Survey data (2025)

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data

The qualitative component revealed five interconnected themes that illuminate the

mechanisms through which tourism influences local livelihoods.

Employment Accessibility and Poverty Alleviation

Tourism functioned as the primary pathway out of poverty, particularly for individuals lacking formal educational credentials. Participants emphasized that the sector prioritizes practical communication abilities and local knowledge over advanced qualifications. As one respondent observed, "To be a tour guide does not require one to have a university degree... it only requires the ability to communicate with tourists and a good knowledge of the area." The sector's high labor demand enables rapid absorption of unemployed individuals: "Eight or ten of us can be employed in one day" when tourist flows are substantial. This inclusivity provides critical income security for households otherwise excluded from formal employment sectors.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Market Expansion

Tourism created viable markets for locally produced goods, including crafts, agricultural products, and traditional artifacts. Entrepreneurs reported seasonal revenue fluctuations aligned with tourist arrivals, enabling them to fund education and essential household expenditures. However, small-scale operators encountered significant competitive disadvantages relative to established businesses. A craft vendor explained: "A customer comes to me by chance... my hard work and communication skills must get me customers every day." Limited access to refrigeration and marketing infrastructure constrained their capacity to compete effectively with larger retailers.

Infrastructure Development and Service Enhancement

Road networks constructed to facilitate tourist access generated substantial spillover benefits for residents. Improved connectivity reduced travel times to markets, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. A community member noted: "Cars come as close as our field's entrances. These roads were built for tourists.... we can also make use of them." Tourism-related investment also established a local clinic and ambulance services, reducing emergency response times from hours to under thirty minutes a development

that critically enhanced community welfare beyond tourism's direct economic contributions.

Differential Benefit Distribution

Analysis revealed marked disparities in benefit allocation across stakeholder categories. Business owners, particularly hotel and restaurant operators, emerged as primary beneficiaries with substantial profit margins and decision-making autonomy. Conversely, service staff received comparatively low remuneration with minimal benefits. One employee stated: "We bring in about ten thousand Namibia dollars in one day but end up getting paid peanuts." Small entrepreneurs occupied an intermediate position, achieving modest income stability while facing competitive pressures from larger enterprises.

Indirect Socio-Cultural Impacts

Beyond economic benefits, tourism catalyzed improvements in literacy, language acquisition, and nutritional knowledge. Residents enhanced their English proficiency and learned foreign languages to engage effectively with visitors, thereby increasing employability and educational prospects. Exposure to tourists' dietary practices promoted healthier nutritional habits within the community. These human capital improvements exemplify tourism's capacity to generate broad-based quality-of-life enhancements that extend beyond immediate financial gains.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that tourism significantly improves livelihoods in Tsumeb constituency through multifaceted pathways. The regression model's explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.78$) demonstrates that tourism intensity, employment, and business income collectively account for substantial variation in community well-being. These results align with Matiku *et al.* (2020) and Jehan (2022), who established tourism's role in generating employment and alleviating poverty.

Job Creation and Income Enhancement

Tourism's capacity to create direct employment for 72% of respondents underscores its role as an economic buffer in contexts of high unemployment. The sector's inclusive nature,

requiring minimal formal qualifications, enables participation by individuals with limited education. This finding corroborates Asa *et al.* (2022), who documented increased local income through tourism-driven demand. However, the qualitative data reveal concerning disparities: business owners capture disproportionate profits while service staff receive low wages lacking medical aid or bonuses. This uneven distribution aligns with Thomsen *et al.*'s (2022) findings of inequality and economic disempowerment in Namibian tourism contexts.

Marketing Opportunities and Local Enterprise Growth

The study demonstrates that tourism expands market access for local products, with 55% of business owners identifying tourists as primary customers. This supports Stone and Nyaupane (2015) and Matiku *et al.* (2021), who highlighted tourism's role in creating new marketing avenues. However, small entrepreneurs face significant challenges competing against well-established businesses with superior marketing infrastructure. The lack of refrigeration and promotional resources limits their capacity, suggesting need for targeted SME support mechanisms.

Infrastructure Development and Community Services

Tourism-driven infrastructure improvements yielded dual benefits: 82% of respondents acknowledged enhanced road accessibility, while 74% reported improved healthcare services. Gariseb and Mosimane (2016) similarly identified tourism's contributions to service delivery. The establishment of clinics and ambulance services exemplifies how tourism investments address critical community needs beyond economic metrics, reducing travel burdens and improving emergency response capabilities.

Indirect Benefits and Quality of Life

The study reveals significant non-economic benefits: 58% of respondents reported improved literacy and language skills, while 64% adopted healthier nutritional practices through tourist interactions. These findings support Ahebwa *et al.* (2015) and Jehan (2022), who noted tourism's

contributions to education and health awareness. Such improvements enhance human capital and contribute to sustained livelihood quality, consistent with livability theory's emphasis on need-environment fit.

Spillover Effects and Community Development

Tourism stimulated entrepreneurial activity among 69% of respondents, fostering small businesses in crafts, hospitality, and support services. Zvikonyaukwa *et al.* (2022) identified similar patterns of tourism-driven business proliferation. However, increased competition strains resources and contributes to environmental degradation, highlighting the need for regulatory frameworks that balance growth with sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This mixed-methods study demonstrates that tourism significantly contributes to livelihood improvement in Tsumeb constituency through direct employment, income generation, infrastructure development, and enhanced human capital. The strong statistical relationship ($R^2 = 0.78$) between tourism and livelihood indicators, combined with rich qualitative evidence, confirms the sector's pivotal role in poverty alleviation. While positive impacts predominate, benefit distribution remains uneven, with business owners gaining more than employees and small entrepreneurs facing competitive disadvantages.

The study makes an original contribution by providing micro-level empirical evidence using methodological triangulation in an under-researched constituency. Findings validate the applicability of livability and social exchange theories in explaining tourism's socio-economic impacts. Tourism emerges as a double-edged sword capable of transforming lives while simultaneously perpetuating local inequalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, three key recommendations are proposed:

1. Enhanced Marketing and Promotion:

The government should invest in targeted domestic and international marketing

campaigns to increase tourist inflows, as current efforts prove inadequate for maximizing economic potential.

2. **Inclusive Planning Through Public-Private Partnerships:** The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism must deliberately involve local SMEs and communities in tourism management through structured PPP frameworks. This approach would provide hands-on experience and decision-making authority over tourist attraction sites, ensuring more equitable benefit distribution.
3. **Further Research:** The National Research Council should commission comparative studies across Namibian regions to validate these findings and investigate potential negative impacts including over-tourism, environmental degradation, and cultural commodification.

LIMITATIONS

Language barriers required translation of instruments into Oshiwambo, Khoekhoeogobab, and Afrikaans, potentially affecting response consistency. The 28% non-response rate, though non-biased, limits generalizability. Geographic and resource constraints prevented inclusion of more remote communities. Future research should address these limitations through longitudinal designs and expanded geographic coverage.

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