The tourism industry is the impetus of most economies in southern Africa. In order for the industry to be sustainable and attract more tourists and to continue to provide intra- and inter-generational benefits to host regions, communities and tourists, local communities must benefit from tourism both economically and socio-culturally. Hence, most Southern African development community countries, including the villages of Lesotho, emphasise community-based tourism (CBT). This paper investigates perceptions that Lesotho communities have of tourism development and its impacts on their livelihoods. The study focuses on three villages—Ha-Lejone, Ha-Theko and Ha-Soai—which were included in Phase 1A of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). The study was qualitative in nature and used both desk research and primary data. The desk research involved a review of existing literature on CBT, government reports, and any other published material on the LHWP. Primary data was collected through thematic interviews with households of the three villages around the Katse dam. Tourism has impacted the three communities differently. In Ha-Lejone, tourism has had positive impacts, such as development of small and medium-sized enterprises and development of indigenous knowledge systems. No specific impacts were recorded in Ha-Soai. In Ha-Lejone, tourism has had a negative impact, primarily in the form of noise pollution.

Key words: Community-based tourism, tourism impacts, Lesotho, tourism destination life cycle.

INTRODUCTION

Developing countries have accepted the important role tourism plays in alleviating poverty and as a meaningful economic activity that contributes to gross domestic product and foreign currency earnings critical for balance of payments (Okech, 2011). There has also been an acknowledgement that sustainability of tourism is dependent on communities benefiting directly from tourism, thereby enabling them to conserve and protect the resources upon which tourism is based (Murphy, 1983, 1988; Scheyvens, 1999). More importantly, communities not only possess the indigenous knowledge systems they have used for generations to preserve the resources—through their unique culture and heritage—they are also part and parcel of the attraction that draws tourists to the destination. Therefore, there is a growing emphasis on national governments developing community-based tourism (CBT). Hawkins (2006) outlines the key objectives of CBT as follows:

1) Empowerment of the local community, whereby they have meaningful ownership of resources and are involved in planning and management of tourism in the local area.
2) Development of tourism, which helps in the protection and conservation of natural resources.
3) Achievement of economic and sociocultural benefits from tourism.
4) Enhancement of the quality of the tourist experience so they will plan return visits to the destination.

All of these factors contribute toward natural resource and tourism sustainability (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Telfer and Sharpley, 2007).

The aim of the study was to investigate communities’ perceptions of tourism development and its impacts on their livelihoods. The study was guided by the following
objectives:

1) Explore communities’ perceptions of who is a tourist and the tourism industry in general.
2) Explore whether communities support the development of tourism.
3) Explore the impacts of tourism on people’s livelihoods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community-based tourism aims to ensure that communities are empowered to participate meaningfully in tourism development. Kauppila et al. (2009) adds an important proviso—that sustainable tourism is not only about economic contribution of tourism to local economies but also about addressing the wider community needs, including physical and sociocultural needs. Therefore, sustainability of tourism is dependent on community empowerment, participation and benefits from tourism (Scheyvens, 2002; Saarinen, 2006; Hall, 2000; Okech, 2011).

A concern with sustainable development was popularised by the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), which emphasised that “sustainable development is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The report calls for three levels of sustainability: environmental responsibility, social equity and economic sustainability. In other tourism studies, there has also been a concern with the sustainability of the resources upon which tourism is based (Saarinen, 2006). Tosun (2001) argues that in order for tourism development to be classified as sustainable, it needs to meet the following conditions:

1) Contribute to the satisfaction of basic and felt needs of those hitherto excluded in local tourist destinations.
2) Reduce inequality and absolute poverty in local tourist destinations.
3) Contribute to the emergence of necessary conditions in tourist destinations, which will lead to local people gaining self-esteem and to feel free from the evils of want, ignorance and squalor.
4) Help host communities to be free or emancipated from alienating material conditions of life and from social servitude to nature, ignorance, other people, misery, institution and dogmatic beliefs.
5) Accelerate not only national economic growth but also regional and local economic growth, which must be shared fairly across the social spectrum.
6) Achieve the afore-mentioned principles indefinitely without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Tosun, 2001: 290-291).

In a number of cases, CBT has achieved its main objectives of conserving natural resources, improving the livelihoods of communities, and bringing community development. Communities therefore typically support CBT (Kibicho, 2008; Mbaia, 2004; Lepp, 2007).

Community-based tourism (CBT) has also come under heavy criticisms. It is argued that there is an assumption that communities are homogenous, whilst in fact communities are heterogeneous, with varying and opposing interests (Gursoy et al., 2010; Mason and Cheyne, 2000). Secondly, there is often a conflict between wildlife and domestic animals. For example, communities argue that compensation for the killing of domestic animals and destruction of crops by wildlife is not adequately compensated (Dzingirai, 2003; Bar-on, 2005).

Other issues addressed in the literature include power relations and a community’s capacity to run tourism projects. Power relations have had a greater impact on meaningful participation by communities (Saarinen, 2010; Sebele, 2010). Whilst it has been argued that communities should be equal participants in CBT, the opposite is often the case (Okazaki, 2008). Government officials and international donor agencies dominate decision making and usually set the agenda for development in rural areas (Tywman, 2000; Manyara and Jones, 2007). Because of the dominance of international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in running CBT, local communities are ill prepared to take over when the NGOs eventually leave and do not have basic business skills critical for running CBT (Fabricius, 2009; Lepp, 2007).

What can be concluded from this brief review of the literature is that to effectively create community capacity to run CBT, it is important to understand “definitions that people and communities assign to objects, situations and phenomena” (Moscardo, 2008: 35). This calls for a thorough understanding of local peoples’ awareness and knowledge of tourism (Saarinen, 2010: 714). This is important because the meaning of tourism differs from culture to culture, sometimes with no equivalent terminology adopted in Western cultures (Sammy, 2008; Cohen, 1974).

The study therefore aimed to contribute to the literature on peripheral tourism by investigating perceptions and understanding of tourism by villagers associated with the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP).

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Doxey’s (1976) Irridex model. The model explains host community’s response to tourism development. The model suggests that communities’ attitude towards tourism development passes through four stages; euphoria, apathy, annoyance/irritation, and antagonism (Zhang et al., 2006). Community’s experience with tourism development affects how they view tourism. In the euphoria stage, communities welcome and support the new tourism development in their locality. During the apathy stage the number of tourists increases. Some
community members start developing commercial relationships with the tourism industry whilst others are skeptical about the industry. In the irritation/annoyance stage, large numbers of tourists put pressure on local facilities, leading to the local community's annoyance and resentment of tourists. In the antagonism stage, the tourist destination has exceeded social, cultural and environmental carrying capacity. As Nunkooa and Ramkissoon (2010: 530) postulate "the place is considered a mass tourist destination where residents no longer support tourism". It is at the antagonistic stage that the local community develops outright antagonism towards tourists (Choi and Murray, 2010).

Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) have added a new dimension to the understanding of the Irridex model. They have highlighted the importance of other variables which influence the attitudes of residents towards tourists such as the racial composition of tourists, cultural background and socio-cultural differences between tourists and residents (Ryan et al., 2011; Huimin and Ryan, 2012).

The Irridex model has been criticised for being too simplistic assumes homogeneity among communities and that factors influencing communities’ reaction to tourism are more complex than espoused in the model (Mason and Cheyne, 2000). Despite these criticisms Irridex model continues to influence theory development in the understanding of communities’ attitude towards tourism development (Zhong et al., 2008; Ryan et al., 2011).

The study sites and Malot project frame

Lesotho is a small country that is completely surrounded by South Africa. It has a total area of 30,335 sq km, with a total population of 2,131,000 and an average population density of 70.2 per sq km (Lesotho Tourism Master Plan, 2006). It is estimated that three-quarters of Lesotho consists of rugged mountainous terrain. Most of the land surface of Lesotho lies between 1500 and 3,500 m above sea level (Fabricius, 2007). It is located on the western slopes of the Maloti/Drakensberg Mountains. This makes Lesotho a source of many large rivers that drain into both the Indian and the Atlantic oceans. The highlands areas are important in terms of water production, livestock grazing, biodiversity conservation and tourism potential. This region is where the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) the focus of this study, is located.

The LHWP originated from a treaty signed between the Lesotho and South African government in 1986 to supply water to the Gauteng province of South Africa. The project was undertaken in a number of phases. Phase 1A and B resulted in the construction of Katse dam and Mohale dam, respectively. Phase 1A, which includes the area where this research was undertaken, was completed in 1998. Phase 1A has unique tourism attractions, as outlined in Table 1. The main tourism resources are the Katse dam, the Bokong Nature Reserve, the landscapes, the villages and people, and the caves and passes. The Katse dam wall is 185 m across the Malibamatso River. It has a 45 km, 4 m-diameter tunnel, and reservoirs that are amongst the highest and the deepest manmade lakes in Southern Africa. The Katse dam is acclaimed to be the highest in Africa. With a surface area of 1970 ha and at more than 3,000 m above sea level, it is one of the highest nature reserves in Africa (Lesotho Tourism Master Plan, 2006). The Bokong Nature Reserve protects the indigenous Leucosideasericaria woodland, one of the few forest areas still left in Lesotho, and other wildlife and plant species, as outlined in Table 1. The area also has heritage and archaeological sites of historical importance to the Basotho nation. There is therefore great potential for tourism development in the study area.

The Lesotho government has put tourism at the top of its development agenda. It has come up with a number of policy documents, including the Lesotho Tourism Policy (2000) and the Lesotho Tourism Master Plan (2006). Both policy frameworks emphasise the economic benefits that culture, heritage and the natural environment can bring to the poor, through the development of sustainable tourism and CBT. Next four CBT initiatives currently in operation in Lesotho are reviewed.

The highlands natural resources and rural income enhancement project

The highlands natural resources and rural income enhancement project (HNRRIEP) is a community project that was set up to benefit communities that lost their land and livelihoods as a result of the construction of the LHWP. In addition to supplying water to South Africa, LHWP was also intended to generate income from the creation of jobs, fisheries and tourism in affected mountain communities. Ecotourism was also planned as a niche tourism product. The project is still in its infancy stage and, hence, a detailed assessment of the project is not yet available.

The Malot Drakensberg transfrontier project’s community-based initiatives

The Malot Drakensberg transfrontier project’s community-based initiatives (MDTPCBI) project is located within the Malot Drakensberg transfrontier conservation and development programme (MDTCDP). In response to the recognition of the need for Lesotho and South Africa to collaborate on the management of the shared resources on the Malot-Drakensberg Mountains, a memorandum of understanding was signed by the two countries on June 11, 2001 (Zunckel, 2007).
Table 1. Tourism attractions in Phase 1A of the LHWP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Type of potential tourism attractions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katse dam/lake</td>
<td>185 m dam across Malibamatso River, among highest and deepest manmade lakes in Southern Africa, 45 km, 4 m diameter tunnel, reservoirs</td>
<td>Water-based sporting activities, including water skating, boat sailing, white water rafting, angling (trout fishing), boat rides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokong Nature Reserve</td>
<td>1970 ha and 3000 m above sea level, Afro-alpine environment, indigenous Leucosidea Sericea woodland, the montane bamboo, endangered spiral aloe, wildlife (duikers, baboons, wild cats, ice rat, endangered Metisella syrinx butterfly, the bearded vulture, ground woodpecker, Cape Griffin vultures)</td>
<td>39 km hiking trail, horseriding trails, wildlife viewing and scientific expeditions for biologists, nature walks, rest and relaxation, bird watching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Valleys, landscapes, and mountain passes</td>
<td>Malibamatso River, Senqu and Senqunyane rivers, Matsoku rivers and valleys, MafikaLisiu pass (3090 m), the Blue Mountain Pass (2, 620 m)</td>
<td>Natural spas and healing tourism, nature lovers, serenity and unpolluted environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages and people</td>
<td>Village setup and cultures still engrained in the traditional way of life; traditions still observed</td>
<td>Cultural tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock paintings</td>
<td>Liphofung caves (King Moshoeshoe I the founder of the Basotho nation used the caves as a shelter for his troops) and other small caves, banks of Khohlontso River</td>
<td>Cultural and heritage tourists, archaeology expeditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands Natural and Rural Income Enhancement Project (HNRIIEP)</td>
<td>Community-based project to develop ecotourism as part of community income-generating activities</td>
<td>Ecotourism, community-based tourism development to create business opportunities to local communities by being local guides for mountaineers and pony trekkers and selling local crafts at the reserve’s visitors centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fabricius (2007); Lesotho Tourism Master Plan (2006); observations and interpretations by the researcher.

Ramutsindela (2009: 170) explains that the Transfrontier parks “are premised on the creation of conservation areas for the benefit of nature and the citizens of participating states.” Recent assessment of the MDTCDP shows that communities have, so far, benefitted very little from the project. On the South African part of the programme, there is minimal tourism development, which is directly benefitting the poor rural communities. Instead, this project has seen the proliferation of housing estates with opportunities for second-home development, fly fishing, golf and other activities, all of which offer very few opportunities for poor communities’ sustainable livelihood (Zunckel, 2007). Zunckel (2007) further notes that on the Lesotho side, communities continue to live their traditional livelihoods, which includes dry land ploughing and selling of mohair.

**The Malealea community trust**

The Malealea community trust is a well-established community–private sector partnership with a trust registered with eight trustees (Lesotho Tourism Master Plan, 2006: 12). The Malealea Lodge has outsourced some tourism services to local communities. These include pony trekking, using local people as guides, home stays where tourists experience the rural village life, and a local children’s choir, which provides nightly entertainment to tourists. Schools have also been built through tourism donations. In addition, the lodge buys crafts from the community and sells them to tourists, and a museum has been built at
the lodge, which displays local herbs and crafts.

Community initiatives at Semonkong

The Semonkong Lodge works along the same lines as the Malealea lodge. It uses community ponies for pony trekking, which are hired out to guests on a rotational basis; local children act as tourist guides for hikers; and they source-produce from local farmers for food and beverages, such as fresh bread baked by the community. They also run a shop that sells handicrafts acquired from the local community. All employees of the lodge are from the community.

METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative in nature and adopted a descriptive stance to highlight people's understanding of the tourism phenomenon and its impacts on their communities. The study used both desk research and primary data. The desk research involved a review of existing literature on CBT, government reports, and any other published material on LHWP. Primary data was collected through thematic interviews with households of the three villages around Katse dam—Ha-Lejone, Ha-Theko and Ha-Soai. The interviews, whose duration ranged from 30 to 45 min, covered demographic data, knowledge about tourists and the tourism industry, tourism motivation and tourism impacts, and whether they would support tourism development in their area and justification for the support. The responses were analysed in relation to the themes presented.

Respondents of the study were households from three villages. Ha-Soai (N=56) is located about 30 km downstream from the Katse dam. It is the village located at the confluence of Matsoku and Malibamatso rivers. Ha-Lejone (N=60) is the first village affected by the initial development of the Katse dam. It is located 50 km from the dam. The third village is Ha-Theko (N=38), which is the village opposite the Katse dam wall, roughly 10 km from the LHWP's head office. The three villages were chosen because they are part of Phase 1A of the LHWP, which culminated in the construction of Katse dam.

Two research assistants were employed for the research and had to be competent in both Sesotho (local language) and English. In addition, they either came from one of the research villages or have relatives in the village. This was important in fostering trust between the interviewer and the interviewee. In each village, we did a rough count of the number of households and divided the village into three sections. Each researcher was instructed to interview every second household that was available and willing to be interviewed. At each homestead, we asked for the most senior member or wait for the husband, we did not encounter such resistance. Both men and women were willing to be interviewed.

In terms of the ages of respondents, the majority was over 45 years (69%), consisting of people who would have observed changes taking place in the country over a long period. The smallest percentage was of those aged 31 to 45 years (14%). The majority of the interviewees had primary education (58%) and the second highest percentage (33%) consisted of those with no formal education (Table 2). Ninety-eight percent of the interviewees stated that their livelihoods were dependent on land resources, through ploughing, cattle and sheep farming. Only 2% were dependent on the sale of crafts or worked in Maseru. We could not establish the average family earnings per annum since the interviewees could not translate agricultural produce into monetary earnings.

Knowledge about tourists and the tourism industry

The majority of interviewees were not aware of tourism and tourists. Only 35% (N=13) in Ha-Theko and 30% (N=17) in Ha-Soai were aware of what a tourist is and had seen one before. It was surprising, though, that Ha-Theko villagers were less knowledgeable about tourism, despite the fact that they are in close proximity to the Katse dam wall and LHWP head office in Katse. We observed busloads of South African registered buses touring the dam wall and the tunnels. The results should therefore be interpreted with caution, as they represent a small minority of respondents in the two villages. Ha-Lejone had higher numbers of respondents who were aware of tourists and had come into contact with one (55%; N=35). Table 3 is a summary of perceptions of the three villages on their understanding of the person they would describe as a tourist as well as his/her characteristics. According to the communities, tourists travel in groups as a convoy. In Ha-Soai and Ha-Theko, tourists were also mistaken for Peace Corps and other donor agencies that had worked in the villages as community development workers (Ferguson, 1990).

Communities’ tourist motivation

Communities’ perceptions of tourist motivation to visit each area are outlined in Table 3. The results show Lesotho has unique topography and natural attractions. Communities observed that tourists visit their area to admire the natural scenery of the snow-capped mountain
Table 2. Ages and educational attainment of respondents (N=154).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>16-30 years</th>
<th>31-45 years</th>
<th>46-60 years</th>
<th>Over 60 years</th>
<th>No formal education</th>
<th>Primary education</th>
<th>Secondary education</th>
<th>Tertiary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ha-Lejone (N=60)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha-Soai (N=56)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha-Theko (N=38)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62 (40%)</td>
<td>92 (60%)</td>
<td>26 (17%)</td>
<td>23 (14%)</td>
<td>50 (33%)</td>
<td>55 (36%)</td>
<td>50 (33%)</td>
<td>90 (58%)</td>
<td>9 (6%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Who is a tourist, motivation to visit, impacts and support for tourism development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Characteristics of a tourist</th>
<th>Tourist motivation</th>
<th>Tourism impacts</th>
<th>Support for tourism development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ha-Lejone (N=35)</td>
<td>Makhoa (white people) Take pictures of people and landscape Carry a lot of luggage Stay at the local lodges</td>
<td>Pony trekking/mountain climbing Visit Bokong Nature Reserve Admire traditional dances</td>
<td>Hire horses Pay for accommodation, Contributes to local charities, Buy traditional artefacts, Family level development</td>
<td>Potential development of tourism businesses, Development of a cooperative, which specialises in crafts e.g. hats, mats, beads and other jewellery items, grass booms, Transfer of indigenous knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha-Soai (N=17)</td>
<td>Makhoa Travel in a convoy of cars Carry heavy luggage Distributes sweets to children in the village Take photographs of everything Aid agencies who bring development to the village</td>
<td>Pony trekking Camping in the village Take photographs of everything around them Live with the villagers and learn about their way of life Climb the mountains Lazing around and do nothing, eat and drink a lot</td>
<td>Buy traditional mohair products from the local cooperative</td>
<td>Good word on return for charity to bring about community developments to the village, Donate food and clothing to the villagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha-Theko (N=13)</td>
<td>Makhoa passing on the main road Travel in a convoy of cars Carry heavy luggage Foreigners who do not speak the local language Take photographs Peace corps Cars with foreign number plates</td>
<td>Camp in the village and chief asks people to supply them with firewood. They eat and drink a lot all the time Want to learn how Basotho live They pitch tents at Katse village They tour the Katse dam Watch traditional dances</td>
<td>Ride their big bikes and make noise. No impact, &quot;may be with time will know how to make money from tourists&quot;</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ranges, which have clear and interesting valleys; they also admire the natural scenery, go mountain climbing using ponies, and just camp in the village, relax and admire the natural environment.

The second motivation is cultural tourism. Tourists visit the areas to learn about the way Basotho live. In two villages, Ha-Lejone and Ha-Soai, they also purchase locally made products, mainly mohair and grass products. In addition, Ha-Soai and Ha-Theko respondents noted that tourists coming to their village also watch and admire traditional dances. As one respondent put it, “tourists are curious about our culture; they want to learn about our way of life” (comments expressed by the interviewees). Another motivation expressed by Ha-Lejone and Ha-Theko respondents was that tourists visit to tour the dam and its reservoirs.

Tourism impacts and support for tourism

Tourism has had more impact in Ha-Lejone than in other villages. In addition to hiring horses for pony rides, they have developed small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) to cater for tourist needs—accommodations and food and beverage outlets have been developed, and many sell cultural artefacts. Communities in Ha-Lejone were in support of the development of tourism. Tourism was perceived as a driver in the revitalising of traditional knowledge. The older generation is able to teach the younger generation the skills of making traditional crafts that they sell to tourists.

Tourism seems to have had a minimal impact on the other two villages, Ha-Soai and Ha-Theko. In Ha-Soai, besides the cooperative, which makes mohair, the rest of the community had benefitted very little from tourism. They do, however, support the development of tourism. International charity organisations had played a role in making donations toward community development projects, so tourism was often confused with aid agencies and charity organisations were seen as tourists contributing to sustainable livelihoods. From this developed a belief that whites who had been to their village were potential “good will ambassadors who upon return to their home country would spread good word about their community which would result in aid for community development.” In addition, charity organisations would also be able to raise money to buy food and clothing.

While the village of Ha-Theko is in close proximity to Katse dam, tourism has had virtually no impact on the village. We were told that, some years back, the chief of the village asked the men of the village to lend their horses to white people who had camped in the village. They also supplied them with firewood. All this was done without a charge, as they felt it was part of Basotho hospitality to offer these services free of charge to visitors. Unlike in other villages, Ha-Theko respondents saw tourists as having negative impacts. It was highlighted that “tourists make noise with their big bikes.” There was also optimism among some respondents (N=2), who said that maybe, with time, “we will learn how to make money from tourists.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Similar to Amuquandoh’s (2010) study in Ghana, the results of this study confirmed that people in the early stages of tourism development tend to be more positive toward tourism development, whereby local communities are euphoric about the prospects of benefits to be brought by tourism development (Doxey, 1976) and underplay negative impacts of tourism.

The study has made contribution to further understanding of Doxey’s (1976) Irridex Theory from a developing economy perspective. Based on this research, it is apparent that Lesotho tourism development is at the euphoria stage characterised by cordial interaction between tourists and communities. Tourism facilities are undeveloped (Fabricius, 2007). The few that are operational are in the hands of the local community. There is therefore optimism of the potential benefits that tourism can bring to the community.

Secondly, communities who have had benefits from tourism, that is, Ha-Lejone respondents, expressed high support for tourism because of the benefits they derive from tourism (Sirakaya et al., 2002). Similar to the literature, the proximity to the tourist attraction influences support for tourism development (Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004). Ha-Lejone residents live in close proximity to the Bokong Nature Reserve, which is a major tourist attraction. They have therefore had knowledge of people who are employed in the nature reserve and those employed in the tourist information centre. This gives them added knowledge of expected benefits from tourism.

The aim of the study was to investigate communities’ perceptions of tourism development and its impacts on their livelihoods. The results show that the majority of respondents of the study were not aware of tourism and its impacts on their livelihoods. Only one village (Ha-Lejone) has experienced positive tourism impacts, including the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. The other two villages (Ha-Soai and Ha-Theko) have not benefitted from tourism. Instead, Ha-Theko village in particular has experienced negative impacts of tourism in the form of noise pollution.

Another conclusion from the study is the potential of the LHWP as a tourist attraction. The area as outlined in Table 1 has unique products to offer both leisure and adventure tourists. LHWP has the potential to develop pro-poor tourism. However, for pro poor tourism to be a reality, the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) which is Lesotho’s destination development and
marketing organisation, can help LHWP communities derive maximum benefits from tourism through the use of local resources. Since a small percentage of the respondents were aware of tourism and its impacts, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

This research was an exploratory study and should be followed by longitudinal studies in order to establish whether communities' perceptions of tourism development will change as Lesotho's tourism matures and passes through other stages of tourism development.

REFERENCES