

Cultural Villages as Drivers of Rural Poverty Alleviation in Namibia: The Case of Uukwaludhi Royal Homestead

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Abstract

The past decade has witnessed a proliferation of cultural villages and living museums in Namibia. The concept of a cultural village, living museum or open air museum is being promoted as the magic formula for the answer to rural development. The Joint Programme Document of the UN/Spain project on “Sustainable cultural tourism in Namibia” identifies the creation of cultural villages as a way of alleviating poverty among the rural population in Namibia (UNESCO 2008). The late former Minister of National Service, Youth, Sport and Culture, Kazenambo Kazenambo advocated cultural villages to “take a central place in Namibia’s tourism package” (Museum Matters 2010:3).

This paper is located in cultural tourism studies. It interrogates the concept of a cultural village as applied in the Namibian context. The paper investigates the viability of cultural villages using the Uukwaludhi royal homestead as a case study. Using visitors’ statistics (from Uukwaludhi royal homestead), we argue that cultural villages on their own are not viable income generation projects and therefore cannot be catalysts for rural poverty alleviation. Instead, cultural villages are useful for preserving local knowledge systems in the same way museums do. We posit further that cultural villages can stimulate other affiliate projects that can assist in alleviating poverty in rural settings if the unique socio-cultural and environmental characteristics of a given cultural village are harnessed.

Introduction

The concept of a cultural village follows a tradition whereby a set of traditional buildings is exhibited as an open air museum. Van Veuren (2001) defines cultural villages as

purpose-built complexes intended, with the help of cultural workers, as a simulation of aspects of the way of life of a cultural grouping, as it was at a specific period (or over several periods) of time.

In Namibia, this definition of a cultural village fits the Helvi Mpingana Kondombolo cultural village in Tsumeb (formerly Tsumeb cultural village), part of the Nakambale museum and the Uukwaludhi royal homestead. Since Namibia's independence in 1990, the postcolonial nation-state has placed emphasis on cultural pride in new ways of "Namibian-ness", which include a reinvention of new meanings of practices of "colonial representation" (Akuupa 2011:6). The cultural village phenomenon is prevalent in other African countries such as the Ngomongo cultural village on the outskirts of Mombasa in Kenya, the cultural homestead at the Great Zimbabwe in Zimbabwe and the Bahurutshe cultural village in Botswana (Moswete et al. 2015). What is strikingly similar about the use of the term cultural village in the examples given above, except the Namibian examples, is that they are not cultural villages in the strict sense of the term. Instead, they are living museums that present performances of traditional activities. According to (Moswete et al. 2015: 280) cultural villages "showcase the lifestyle of cultural and ethnic groups along with their history, artefacts ..." However, we view cultural villages as presenting carefully choreographed performances that aim at capturing the fancy of the visitor as they are taken back to 'long-lost' and nostalgic African traditions. The 'traditional culture' that they represent is usually informed by colonial anthropologies and hence its authenticity is problematic.

The main aim of a cultural village is to preserve the fabric and structure of traditional buildings and the intangible heritage that is associated with them. Cultural villages have an effect of functioning as subtle ways of resisting the 'modernisation hype' that is currently taking place in rural areas as more and more people opted for modern houses. While living museums are notorious for creating and imposing cultural practices on the actors, cultural villages such as the Uukwaludhi royal homestead are more authentic since they are preserved and presented *in situ*. In the Namibian case, as in other African countries mentioned above, both cultural villages and living museums are intricately connected to the development of rural cultural tourism. Cultural villages are perceived as "opportunities for the advancement of cultural and heritage tourism in developing countries" (Moswete, Saarinen and Monare 2015, 279) See also Ndhlovu and Nyakunu 2013. The discourse of a cultural village attracting visitors and being a sustainable source of income among the rural communities is the focus of this paper. We use the example of the Uukwaludhi royal homestead to argue that cultural villages per se are better off as storages of traditional practices than sustainable income generating projects. However, cultural villages can be linked

to other heritage sites in an area to complement and diversify or expand income generating opportunities as illustrated in this paper.

Methodology

This research followed a mixed methodology research design. Data was collected through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The exploratory research design was favoured in this research because it allowed the researchers to engage with a research problem that had no precedence in terms of data, literature and even theory in Namibia. In-depth interviews were conducted with staff of the Uukwaludhi royal homestead, the King of the Uukwaludhi traditional authority and teachers from Uukwaludhi Primary school that is located near to the Uukwaludhi royal homestead. While we make some arguments based on the preliminary observations from the data, we are aware that this research could lead into a much more robust and wider focus on cultural heritage institutions in Namibia.

A description of Uukwaludhi royal homestead and its history

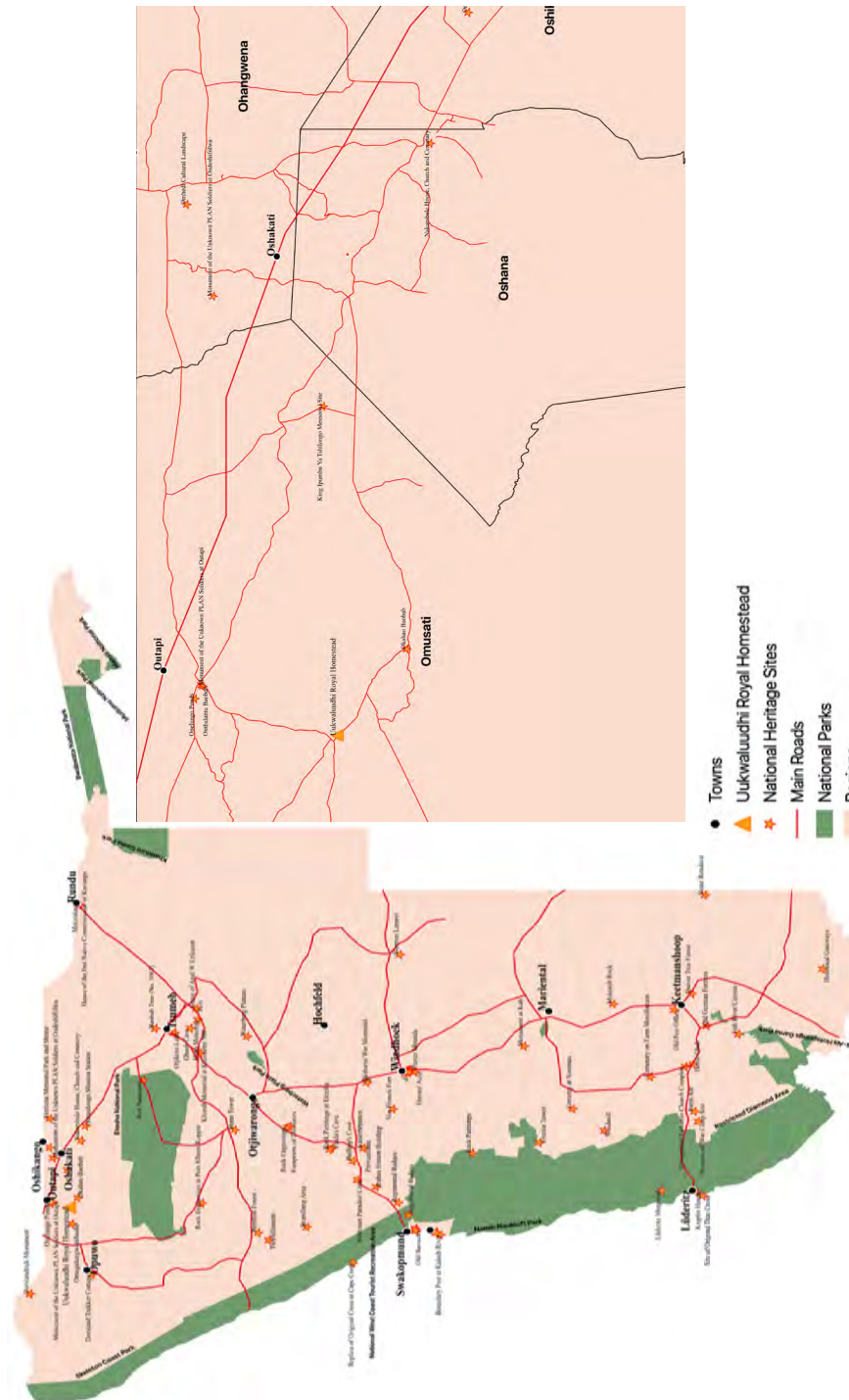
A typical example of a cultural village in Namibia is the Uukwaludhi royal homestead; which is the one of the few institutions that exhibit the architecture and plan of a royal homestead in Namibia. It is located in the Omusati Region, approximately 2 kilometres from the Tsandi Town and next to the C41 Oshakati-Okahao tarred road (*see the map on page 106*). The Royal Homestead lies on a popular tourist route¹ that links major northern tourist attractions of nature, cultural and historical significance. The tourist attractions in this area include the Etosha National Park, Ombalantu Baobab Tree, Ruacana Waterfalls, Omuguluwoombashe battle site and Nakambale Museum. The royal homestead is also the current residence of King Taapopi of the Uukwaluudhi Kingdom.

The Uukwaluudhi royal homestead forms part of the attractions that are found in the Uukwaluudhi Communal Conservancy, which was developed under the North Central Community Based Natural Resource Management enterprise development programme of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism². The communal conservancy (which covers an area of 1437km²) is rich in both cultural and natural heritage resources. Included among the natural resources are wild animals such as the Elephant, Black faced Impala, Giraffe and Kudu³, while the Uukwaluudhi royal homestead offers the cultural package in the

¹ The C41 road is well linked to other main routes, including the D3612 to Ombalantu Baobab Tree, the D3616 to Epupa and Rucuana (and the Waterfalls), the C35 that access you (Otjovandu gate to) the Etosha (Galton Gate) and Kamanjab, as well as the B1 from/to Nakambale Museum and Etosha National Park (Nehale Iya Mpingana and Von Lindequist gates).

² <http://www.met.gov.na/Directorates/Tourism/Pages/GovernmentFundedEnterprises.aspx> (12.08.13)

³ <http://www.met.gov.na/Directorates/Tourism/Pages/GovernmentFundedEnterprises.aspx> (12.08.13)



Map showing the distribution of national heritage sites in Namibia and the Uukwaludhi royal homestead (Credit: Ndapewa Fenny Nakanyete)

form of a traditional homestead that houses the King and a display of traditional weapons and clothes. In addition, visitors to the royal homestead may have the opportunity of meeting the King because his new house is on the same grounds as the cultural village. Visitors also have the chance of interacting with the residents of Tsandi as they go on their personal day to day chores in and around the royal homestead. The cultural village provides a curio shop where visitors can purchase handicrafts from the community. The cultural village is a community-based project and does not necessarily have to be registered as a national heritage site. It is of significance to the local community. However, there are some national sites near to the cultural village such as the Omugulugwoombashe national heritage site.

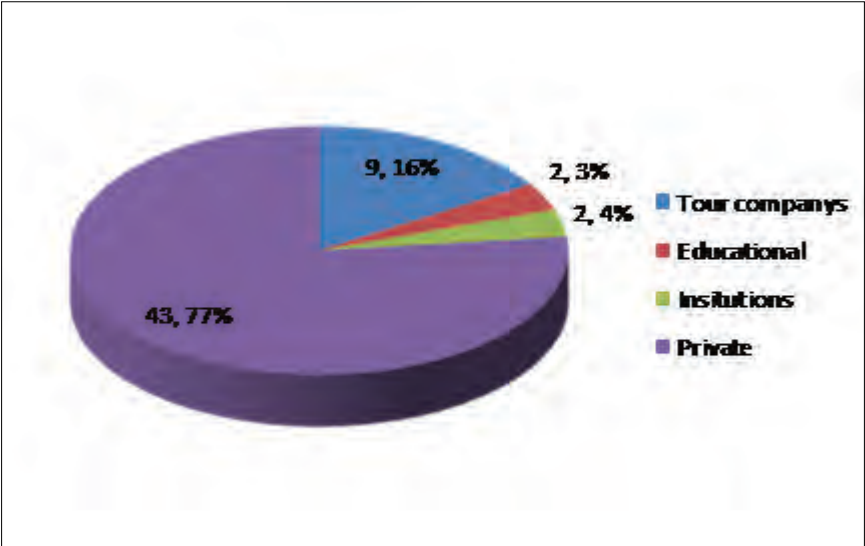
Visitor Survey

The visitor statistics of the first five years of operation of the Uukwaludhi royal homestead (2005-2010) indicate that the majority of the visitors to the homestead were private tourists who were enroute to either the Epupa falls or the Etosha National Park. The completion of the Omakange tarred road shortens the distance between Otjiwarongo and Tsandi and this located the Tsandi royal homestead strategically. The Omakange turn-off is less than five kilometres from the homestead. However, this does not mean that the homestead will automatically benefit from the tourists who pass through Tsandi enroute to Ruacana. The cultural village needs to diversify its cultural tourism package so that it can maximise on the tourist potential of its location. Currently, tourists spend at most, an hour at the site before proceeding to the next destination. The visitor profile for the first five years reveals that 44% of the tourists at the Uukwaludhi royal homestead were private tourists⁴. Such tourists are usually not bound by the schedule of the tour operators. Therefore, they can stay longer at a site provided there are enough attractions and activities for them. However, the statistics indicate that there was some relative interest in the cultural village from tour operators. The second largest number of the tourists were brought in by tour operators. The homestead needs to market its products to the tour operators so that they can increase the scheduled time for visiting the site.

Chart 1 on page 108 shows that the majority of the visitors to the Uukwaludhi royal homestead in the first five years of its existence were self-driven tourists. Such visitors varied in number from an individual to groups of five. This is a potential population that can be capitalised for the benefit of Uukwaludhi royal museum since they are usually not bound by a group programme. The second largest population came by tour companies.

⁴ The category of private in this paper refers to self-driven and self-guided visitors. They do not make use of tour operators.

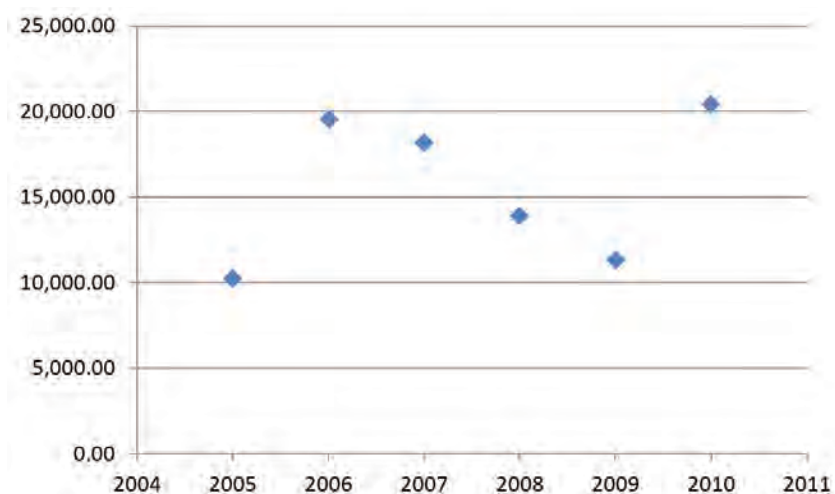
Chart 1: Type of tour operation



Educational tours were not significantly reflected in the statistics. This could partly be attributed to a lack of educational programmes at the site. For cultural villages to attract schools, like other museums, they need to develop educational programmes that link to some aspects of the school syllabus. Educational institutions need to be convinced that by visiting a cultural village, they can augment teaching materials by providing tangible and intangible examples of what is learned in class.

The Uukwaludhi royal homestead made a total income of N\$93,532.00 for the first 5 years. The yearly average for the first 5 years is N\$18,706.00 and monthly average is N\$1,558.87. It is evident from the average monthly income that the site needs to generate more income to become self-sufficient. Cultural villages of this nature are prone to negotiating entrance fees with visitors since they do not receive a consistent and significant number of tourists throughout the year. The visitors' book shows that on many occasions, visitors, mainly self-driven, negotiated the entrance fee and some paid as less as ten Namibian dollars instead of the stipulated forty Namibian dollars. When questioned about this, the staff stated that it was better to earn less than nothing at all. During the low tourism season, there appears to be cases where the centre accepts lower entrance fees.

Chart 2: Yearly Income for the first six years



Need for diversification: An account for Omusati Region

Northern Namibia has had only 3 formal museums (Nakambale museum, Onandjokwe medical museum and Outapi War Museum) and yet, the area is rich in both pre-colonial and liberation history. It is an area where traditional lifestyles have been maintained and survive; parallel to 'modern' lifestyles.

The former Owamboland was a war zone and, therefore, it carries a very rich history of the liberation struggle that is encoded in mass graves of combatants such as those found at Ondeshifilwa, Oshikuku and Ohauwanga battle fields. The area is rich in individual and collective memories about the liberation struggle. In addition, the liberation struggle period significantly transformed local traditional customs while the intensification evangelism brought along European commodities with new fashions, which challenged the preservation traditional practices and lifestyle (Shigwedha:2004). All these aspects can be preserved, conserved and disseminated through a formal museum at the Uukwaludhi Cultural village that can also link sites of memory and artefacts. Our analysis of visitor statistics from the Uukwaludhi royal homestead demonstrated that for cultural villages to be viable and sustainable ventures, they need to diversify their activities. Some visitors prefer to see the history and culture of a given area in a mainstream museum setting, while others prefer a combination of museum collections and in-situ living traditions. The concept of a museum in the Namibian case is complex and needs to be interrogated with rigour since the museum was used to validate colonial conquest and apartheid ideology. An example of the politicisation of the concept of the museum in Namibia was described in the work of

Schildkrout (1995), which demonstrates that exhibitions were divided according to race. At the then State Museum, the European culture was displayed in the Alte Feste display centre while the African heritage was displayed side by side with animals in the *Owela* display centre. The dioramas in the *Owela* museum were aptly named “man in his environment” which was precisely the aim of the displays; to support and accentuate the Odendaal commission’s proposal for the development of separate Bantu homelands. The museum was a tool for political expression and for repression. Thus, generally, diversification in the museum industry in an independent Namibia requires a complete re-engagement with the concept of the museum itself. Such colonial undertones require to be confronted, especially, when museums are planned for rural areas where memories of colonial brutality and the effects of a protracted liberation war are still fresh in the collective memory of the residents.

Generally, museums are places that are constructed for the conservation, preservation and representation of various aspects of cultural and natural histories of specific places. Themes in Namibian museums have generally tended to showcase the cultural and natural heritage for the entertainment of the elite. The result of this focus on the elite is expressed in the imbalanced distribution of museums in Namibia, whereby regions such as the former Owamboland did not have a single museum open to the public before independence. In cases where the indigenous peoples’ heritage was accommodated in a museum display, it was separated from that of the colonial settlers as was the case in the then State Museum (Schildkrout, *ibid*). The presentation of local heritages in a cultural village-cum-museum setting can address this imbalance by establishing institutions that will challenge the traditional concept of a museum as a sacred place where visitors view the displays without interacting with them. It has been acknowledged by Silvester (2011, 25) that Namibian museum exhibitions “... are predominantly object-oriented and [...] largely reflect the colonial legacy”.

The Omugulugwombashe interpretive centre can complement the aims and objectives of the Uukwaludhi royal homestead. While the Omugulugwombashe interpretive centre focuses on a specific battle field, event and specific heritage (liberation), the Uukwaludhi royal homestead showcases and preserves the history and cultural traditions of the region. The cultural and natural heritage of the Omusati Region can be linked to sites and memory-scapes of beyond the region. The cultural village can be a centre for restoration, conservation, storage and display of artefacts that are unique to the area. It can also create a forum for the collection and repository of oral histories. In addition, it can diversify to provide a centre for skills and traditional knowledge transfer. Furthermore, cultural villages such as the Uukwaludhi royal homestead can play a pivotal role in community advocacy for social justice. Communities in the Omusati region were affected psychologically, physically and even through the loss of livelihood during the protracted war of liberation. Spaces such as cultural villages can offer psychological counselling services and community discussions about the liberation struggle and how to rehumanise societies that were dehumanised by the colonial war (see Rassool, 2015 for an in-depth discourse rehumanisation of societies).

Omugulugwombashe (variously spelt as Ongulumbashe) is a site that is synonymous with war of liberation in Namibia. It is officially recognised as the site of the first battle of the Namibian war of liberation that took place on 26 August 1966. The site is located in the dense Mopane Forest of the Omusati region, 21.5km from Tsandi Town and 24.4km from Uukwaludhi homestead. The Omugulugwoombashe memorial shrine was unveiled on 26 August 2004 by the Founding Father of the Namibian nation, President Sam Nujoma. It is a prominent and important national monument that honours the heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle. Omugulugwoombashe was established in June 1966 by the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA) commander John Ya Otto Nankudhu as a base for receiving and training new recruits (Nujoma 2001). SWALA was the military wing of SWAPO and forerunner of the Peoples Liberation Arms of Namibia (PLAN). The site was also intended to be used as a reconnaissance base. Today, Omugulugwoombashe consists of a relic landscape which once was composed of "... a parade ground, office and kitchen, and a variety of trenches ... for defensive purposes" (Namakalu, 2004:7). In addition, the site is a utilised regional 'Heroes Acre', where heroes (and yet to be buried-heroines) of the liberation struggle from Omusati Region are buried.

An Interpretive Centre was developed at the site under the UNDP/ Spain MDGF Joint Programme on "Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Namibia". A link between the Uukwaludhi royal homestead and Omugulugwoombashe national monument can be complimentary. The Omugulugwoombashe national monument has a national appeal, however, the scope of presentation is restricted to a specific history-liberation history while the Uukwaludhi royal homestead can expand the scope by presenting the history and culture of the region and thus making visitors to the national monument appreciate the wider history of the region better. The Uukwaludhi royal homestead can benefit from the people who come to the heroes' day commemorations at Omugulugwombashe each year on 26 August since it will be able to offer camping accommodation and restaurant facilities. Besides the annual heroes' day commemorations, the Omugulugwoombashe is used as a burial site that attracts huge numbers of mourners coming from different parts of the country. Thus, Uukwaludhi royal homestead can provide accommodation and hospitality facilities for the mourners. In addition, the Uukwaludhi royal homestead can add value to the Omugulugwoombashe national monument by taking up the role of an interpretive centre to contextualise the regional liberation struggle heritage. This can be realised through the development of the Omusati liberation heritage trail. The trail can link Tsandi to Ondeshifilwa and Outapi, which is the next site and point of discussion that can form part of the Omusati trail.

The Ombalantu Baobab Tree Heritage Centre and Camping is situated at the town of Outapi, which is the capital of the Omusati region. The site is located approximately 30km north east of the town of Tsandi. The main attraction is centred on the huge historic and mythical baobab tree that is hollowed. The baobab tree is known by the local people as *Omukwa wa Nakafingo* or *Omukwa wa Ambalantu*. The tree stands at approximately 20 metres high and is believed to be about 800 years old (see also Ndalikokule et al 2010).

It has multiple layers of history that were acquired from its various uses during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. It was used as a hide out during pre-colonial wars, as a post office (in 1940) and chapel during the colonial period. It was also part of a South African military base during the liberation struggle and now, it is a heritage and camping site.

Some remnants of the military base can still be seen around the famous baobab tree; such as bunkers that have been converted into a privately owned war museum. The Ombalantu baobab tree heritage centre and camping site offers camping facilities and picnic spots for day visitors. While the site has a rich history of the liberation struggle, the main attraction is the huge baobab tree.

The Uukwaludhi royal homestead can house more information and objects and can have more activities than those currently offered at Ombalantu Baobab Tree Heritage Centre and camping site. The Uukwaludhi royal homestead can potentially present the general history of the AaKwaludhi while the Ombalantu baobab tree heritage centre can present a rich and interesting history of AaMbalantu and therefore, will not be in direct competition, rather, both sites can complement each other in recording, preserving and presenting the rich histories of their respective communities.



Picture one shows the Ombalantu Baobab tree (credit Godman Gwasira)

North-central Namibia (former Owamboland) has many baobab trees whose stories can be knit together to produce fascinating cultural traditions. These mythical trees have either been used or have some oral traditions associated with them (Museums Association of Namibia 2016). The Sir Howard's baobab tree is one such example. It is located on the grounds of the Tsandi mission station which is approximately 1 km north-west from the Uukwaludhi royal homestead. Many intriguing myths surround this baobab which was named after Sir Howard Gorges; the first South West Africa Administrator who visited Tsandi in 1916 (Wickens 2008).

Another famous baobab in Tsandi is the King Nashilongo's baobab, which has a direct link to the Uukwaludhi Royal household. It was used as the office of the former King Nashilongo whose rule spanned from 1909 to 1959. King Mwaala gwa Nashilongo was succeeded by the reigning King of the AaKwaludhi, King Shikongo sha Taapopi ya Shitaatala (Mashuna 2012). A trail that links Tsandi, Outapi and Omugulugwombashe can enhance the Uukwaludhi royal homestead and complement the Ombalantu baobab tree heritage centre. Some other cultural and historic areas in the Okahao constituency that can be integrated into the Uukwaludhi cultural village and royal museum heritage route include the Ombupupu magic ponds and the Okahao Baobab. The Okahao baobab tree was declared a national heritage site in 2011 by the National Heritage Council of Namibia. This site was used by the South African Defence Forces during the colonial period as a site for torture, killing and hanging of local communities in a bid to scare them into divulging the whereabouts of the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia. The Baobab trees have assumed a cultural heritage significance through their uses over time, while, the Outapi war museum provides historical heritage that can also be capitalised on to diversify the tourist attraction of the Uukwaludhi royal homestead.

The Outapi War Museum is housed in a former bunker that was part of the South African Defence Force military base at Outapi. It is situated a few hundred metres away from the famous Ombalantu baobab tree which is the mantel piece of the Ombalantu Baobab Tree Heritage Centre. The reason for converting the bunker into a museum was to preserve the relic as a reminder of the war of liberation that ravaged the region. The Outapi war Museum is a specialised institution that focuses on the relics of war. In addition, it offers a wide range of facilities such as accommodation, a conference hall and a display of war photographs, posters, memorabilia and insignia. This makes it a unique institution in the region.

The socio-economic potential of Uukwaludhi Royal homestead

The existing and planned heritage sites in the Omusati Region mostly have a specific focus (mainly related to the war of liberation). The Uukwaludhi royal homestead on the other hand can fill the thematic vacuum that is created by specialisation. It can provide a platform for a broader presentation of the history and culture of the region. It also

has the potential to offer a good mix of performances, heritage trails and static/ mobile displays.

The King and Queen of Uukwaluudhi reside in the same compound where the current cultural village is located. Visitors can make appointments to meet the King and the Queen when visiting the Uukwaludhii royal homestead. The availability of the King to meet visitors and to explain some royal traditions will be an added heritage attraction. Their residency at the cultural village ensures the royal custodianship of the heritage resources, which can be interpreted as adding a degree of authenticity to the heritage trail.

Currently, visitors to the Uukwaludhi royal homestead can visit the King's former residence and view the traditional architecture and homestead plan. In addition, some objects such as weapons and clothes can be seen on display. The King can meet visitors at the homestead upon appointment and depending on his availability. The envisaged heritage trail will expand the scope of the homestead to include additional structures that showcase the homesteads of ordinary residents. This can be achieved by expanding the tour package to include visits to the different traditional huts where various aspects of local ways of life will be exhibited. Visitors will also be able to book tours to identified neighbouring villages where they can interact with people in situ. The cultural trail will be extended to neighbouring villages to allow the visitors to interact with the current ways of life and appreciate the local traditions. The idea of a cultural trail will be to explain the link between the natural landscape and the livelihoods of the community, for example, extraction of herbs for traditional medicine, local wild food such as omagungu, fruits and other agricultural activities. All tours on the cultural trail will be done with a local tour guide. Local youth groups can offer tour guiding services but they have to be accredited by the traditional heritage management committee. The exhibitions will also include live demonstrations by crafts people whereby visitors can learn how the crafts are fashioned traditionally.

Some objects will demand specialised storage space due to either their fragility or importance. Some permanent displays will be constructed that showcase the history of the region. Such a display hall will be used to introduce the various components of the heritage trail to visitors. It will also serve the purposes of an information centre where visitors who may not have enough time to visit the whole trail can learn about the Uukwaludhi culture. The permanent display can include a map of the region that indicates the sites that can be visited. In addition to the permanent display hall, there can be space for temporary displays. These can be in the form of thematic exhibitions that will be mounted for a short period, for instance in August each year in preparation of the Heroes' Day commemorations, a specific exhibition on a theme about the liberation struggle can be installed. This could be augmented by discussions or demonstrations by people who 'lived the liberation struggle'. The temporary display area could also be used for hosting other displays and awareness material; for example, during the immunisation period, some display on Polio can be hosted and children can be immunised at the museum. Such that a museum will not only serve the interests of the tourists but will also be a useful centre for the community. It could also be a mobile centre for vaccination for instance.

Cultural performances can enhance museum experiences. Some performances such as traditional song and dance can be performed for the visitors in the Uukwaludhi royal homestead. Currently, visitors can pre-book such performances but with more planning, product development and marketing, performances can become part and parcel of a heritage trail programme. Visitors are more prone to booking activities that they know exist as part of a package. Groups comprising of unemployed local youths can be afforded the opportunity of forming cultural groups that are linked to the museum. The dances, songs and instruments used should be traditionally authentic and unique to the region.

Traditional cuisine can be served at the existing royal homestead but meals have to be pre-booked. There is a need for traditional food to be on display and for such food to be prepared on short time request. The traditional performances can also include traditional food that visitors can taste. In such performances, the way traditional food and beverages are prepared can be explained to the visitor. In addition to traditional cuisine, it will be an added advantage that the museum operates a coffee bar. Currently, one cannot even buy a cup of tea or coffee at the royal homestead. The Uukwaludhi royal homestead will be strategically located such that visitors can make use of a restaurant after visiting the displays and this would increase dwell time at the museum, and increase income. The royal homestead has the potential of becoming a cultural hub of the Omusati Region.

Comparative advantage

We carried out a SWOT analysis to determine whether Uukwaludhi royal homestead will be a feasible project that can diversify the cultural tourism package of the Omusati region. A SWOT analysis highlights the internal environmental factors for strengths (positive attributes within the organisation) and weaknesses (negative attributes within the organisation) and these could be management as well as mission or resources that could face the museum. External environmental factors were identified and analysed for opportunities (positive attributes outside the organisation) and threats (negative attributes outside the organisation) and these could be customers, competitors, suppliers, labour force, the economy or shareholders. The SWOT analysis identified and defined clear objectives and ensured that all factors related to the objectives (positive and negative) can be considered and addressed. In essence, the results of the SWOT analysis provide information that is helpful in matching the royal homestead's resources and capabilities to the competitive environment in which it operates.

The results of the of SWOT analysis for Uukwaludhi Cultural Village and Royal Museum are discussed below:

The Museum

Establishing a museum at the Uukwaludhi royal homestead will increase the potential of the cultural village and tourist attraction. The museum will provide space for exhibitions

and can be used as a site for community engagement. The museum will be unique in the sense that it will be the only museum to be situated in an occupied royal homestead in Namibia.

Partners

An analysis of the visitor statistics reveals that the Uukwaludhi royal homestead is already part of the route/package of some tour operators, as it is observed that they frequently bring their clients to the homestead. However, it is reasoned that with strategic partnership and aggressive marketing, the homestead possesses great potential to attract more visitors and tour operators. To achieve this, the royal homestead would need to form partnerships with the tour operators so as to stimulate a constant supply of visitors. The museum can team up with other establishments in the country as well as the region to market and promote each other's programmes and products. The royal homestead can join the national heritage and museum associations, for example, the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN) where it can benefit by sharing experiences, knowledge and attending workshops that cater for various needs. The royal homestead can also join international organisations such as the International Committee of African Museums (AFRICOM) and the International Committee of Museums (ICOM) where it can enjoy and access benefits by being a member.

Audience

The visitor statistics show that most visitors are adult foreign tourists and most of them are taken there by tour operators. Few Namibians visit the homestead and at the bottom of the list are the local people from Uukwaludhi itself. Few schools in the Omusati region have visited the homestead and the record shows that not even one school from Tsandi circuit has visited the royal homestead. This aspect needs serious investigation and effort needs to be put into marketing the site to the local schools. Tourists and visitors learn about the site using various ways including through their tour operator, a guide book, word of mouth and local friends. There is no indication that much of this information is obtained online. Local tour guides at the royal homestead indicated that there is no frequent updating of the website, since the now defunct NACOBTA used to market the site in the past. The size and growth of the number of visitors varies. The statistics have shown that there was a slight growth in the number of visitors from 2008 to 2011. However, the visitors' comments in the visitor's book indicate that they enjoyed the experience and activities, and would recommend the site to others.

The curio shop at the site provides income generating opportunities for the locals and a chance for the visitors to take with them the 'have-been-to' souvenirs. However, the royal homestead can, in addition to the curio shop, have a restaurant that sells good coffee as this is a service that tourists expressed as a need for the site.

Competitors and competitive environment

The royal homestead will be unique because it will be a 'living museum' in the sense that the King and his family dwell at the site. It will be a distinct concept of a royal palace-cum heritage site and that will add to its authenticity as a custodian of the Uukwaludhi history and heritage. Thus, the royal homestead might not have direct competitors in that regard. However, the statistics of the establishments in the area, such as the Nakambale Museum and rest camp and the Ombalantu Baobab Tree, indicate that they receive more visitors than the royal homestead. Given this case, the royal homestead will have to re-invent itself creatively in order to capture the needs of the market/audience whose needs are not being met and overlooked by other establishments. This can be addressed for instance by identifying the products offered/not offered by others. Despite the fact that the homestead claims to offer accommodation, its visitor records have no indication that this product is frequently used. The products in the curio shop are sporadically purchased but there is a pressing need to study the spending habits and buying patterns of the customers and to develop strategies for acquiring curios that the tourists desire. The royal homestead will have to customise and tailor make the products and activities it will offer in order to attract more visitors.

Under the powers, duties and functions of the traditional authorities and members enshrined in Traditional Authorities Act 25 of 2000, the Traditional Authorities must "uphold, promote, protect and preserve the culture, language, tradition and traditional value of that traditional community." This is a clear indication that the various communities, including the Uukwaludhi community, have the highest support of the government in their quest to promote, protect and preserve their culture.

The other advantage that the Uukwaludhi royal Homestead has is the fact that the people themselves are keen and are putting energy in trying to make sure that the idea of a museum materialises. However, the negative aspect that might affect the flow of visitors is the current global economic recession and the possibility of a prolonged pandemic of the coronavirus which might prevent people from travelling and spending their limited income. Therefore, the site will have to be marketed vigorously so that it can compete with other prime sites in Namibia. There will be a need for a robust marketing strategy to attract local visitors instead of relying on international tourists.

Conclusion

For the Uukwaludhi royal homestead to be a successful cultural village, it should provide more than just static displays of architectural designs. It should provide spaces for capacity building through skills transfer from the elderly members of the society to the young generations. This will in turn ensure continuity. In addition, cultural villages should be sites for robust discourse about the heritage of a given region. Such sites should be platforms

where local communities can negotiate the future of their heritage. They should let locations for “knowledge transactions” take place as Witz and Rassool have argued elsewhere (Witz and Rassool 2008:12). Heritage is negotiated knowledge that is developed and preserved within a given time and locality. It changes continuously as the communities negotiate new aspects of life that are meaningful to them, and discard others that cease to have value. Ultimately, cultural villages are sites for community advocacy which provide scope for formal and informal employment. As indicated in this paper, cultural villages are not viable in generating income enough to reduce poverty. There is a need to link the cultural villages with other heritage sites in a given area in order to complement, create and diversify revenue generation opportunities.

The Uukwaludhi royal homestead has the potential to develop into a tourist hub in the Omusati region by complementing existing tourist/heritage resources and rebranding itself as a site for postcolonial societal engagement. In some cases, some new heritage resources will have to be developed and marketed at the Uukwaludhi royal homestead. The values and tourism packages of the sites will offer a comparative advantage of the royal museum and assist in diversifying its attraction. However, the success of the cultural village will depend on its ability to confront and challenge the orthodox understanding of a museum or heritage site as a place of satisfying the curiosities of tourists. The new form of a cultural village is one that has relevance to its community; a centre that addresses or provides a site for addressing the daily struggles of the community that surrounds it.

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