

Sustainable development through the tourism sector: to what extent can sustainable tourism contribute to social justice for the local communities? A case study of the Grootbos Private Nature Reserve in South Africa

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ABSTRACT: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals promote global sustainable development. One significant part of the socially focused goals for sustainable development is social justice. Regarding this, the tourism sector has been heavily criticised for not adequately contributing to sustainable development, especially social justice, and is blamed for primarily focusing on profit maximisation and benefitting external stakeholders and businesses, but not the local community. Respectively, this research article explores to what extent sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice for local communities. "Socialising tourism" is a novel concept specifically focusing on social justice for local communities. Thus, this concept has been taken into account when exploring the role of sustainable tourism for social justice. In fulfilment of this aim, this study is based on qualitative research with interviewees from the tourism case study of Grootbos Private Nature Reserve. The qualitative research is used to explore how Grootbos, as a private business, contributes to sustainable development with forms of social justice for the local communities. Respectively, the personal understanding of the participants of social justice has been investigated. Grootbos' impact on the local community has been looked at through the lens of socialising tourism. The research shows that sustainable tourism and socialising tourism can contribute to sustainable development in local communities and their perception of social justice. Nevertheless, there is a discrepancy between social justice according to the literature and the aspects mentioned by the participants, which have probably been elicited due to listening to the local community.

KEYWORDS: sustainable tourism, sustainability agenda, socialising tourism

Introduction

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN), together with other organisations and researchers, have drawn attention to the existence of inequalities in the world (United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2015). With the introduction of the SDGs, the UN stresses the urgency of reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable development instead (UNWTO, 2015). Research has highlighted that inequalities are partly a result of neoliberalism-driven and neo-colonialist economic systems (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). With tourism being one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, some scholars criticise its role in enforcing neoliberal and neo-colonial structures and call for a change in the tourism industry towards sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2015; Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021). According to these academics, tourism is mainly focused on the profit maximisation of private businesses or external organisations, often disregarding the well-being of the stakeholders of the tourism destination (Regmi & Walter, 2017; Hall, 2019). The local community has frequently been exploited and disregarded by tourism management and

has often not been at the receiving end of benefits from tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021).

With the United Nations World Tourism Organisation recognising its responsibility for constituting change towards sustainable development (UNWTO, 2022), this research article investigates the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda. A specific focus is put on reaching social justice for local communities. In accordance, this research explores the research question: "To what extent can sustainable tourism contribute to social justice in the local communities?". A literature review and interviews were conducted to answer the question. The literature review explores the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda and the role of tourism in fostering social justice, with a specific focus on the concept of "socialising tourism". Socialising tourism is a new, sustainable tourism approach devoted to promoting social justice for the local community (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Based on the literature review, qualitative research in the form of interviews of participants involved in the case study of Grootbos Private Nature Reserve, an ecotourism business in South Africa, was used to find an answer to the research question. The discussion

will give insight into how sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice for the local communities. By looking at the specific relationship between sustainable tourism and social justice, this research aims to contribute to the debate on sustainable tourism approaches for social justice.

Literature review

To explore the extent to which sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice in local communities, this section reviews existing literature on the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda, as well as the discussion of reaching social justice through tourism, specifically looking at the new theoretical lens of socialising tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

The role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda

To achieve sustainable development, the UN has developed 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that should be achieved by all nations by 2030. These goals aim to create a framework for improving the lives of the population on our planet while mitigating the effects of climate change (UN, 2022). The SDGs goals are based on promoting the values of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Following the sustainable development agenda, the tourism industry has accepted its responsibility and potential to contribute to achieving the SDGs (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Scholars largely agree that tourism has the opportunity to be a tool for stimulating education, social justice, business productivity, human rights, peace-building and citizenship (Boluk et al., 2019). Similarly, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) declared that they want to make tourism a catalyst for positive change, and use the industry to achieve the SDGs (Boluk et al., 2019). The UNWTO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) both state that tourism has the opportunity to "provide income through job creation at local and community levels". Furthermore, it is stated that tourism "can be linked with national poverty reduction strategies and entrepreneurship. Low skills requirements and local recruitment can empower less-favoured groups, particularly youth and women" (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017, p. 16).

The UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017, p. 17). Consequently, sustainable tourism must maintain ecological processes and conserve natural heritage and biodiversity. Furthermore, sustainable tourism should respect host communities' authenticity, traditional values and culture, and contribute to cross-cultural understanding. Sustainable tourism should ensure a viable business environment and distribute economic benefits to all stakeholders equitably (Regmi & Walter, 2017). At the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development Goals 2030 held in 2015, world leaders agreed on policies for promoting sustainable tourism that will create jobs and promote local culture and products (Regmi & Walter, 2017).

Nevertheless, scholars have voiced their criticism about the sustainable development implications for the tourism industry (Regmi & Walter, 2017; Hall, 2019). The actions taken of the tourism industry still appear to be based on neoliberalism and economic growth, with less focus on social and ecological sustainability (Regmi & Walter, 2017; Hall, 2019). Academics

argue that the tourism industry is strongly associated with Western capitalist entities, promoting development through industrialisation and modernistic approaches that do not consider the local perspective (Regmi & Walter, 2017). The UNWTO sustainable tourism agenda has been criticised for being set in the context of political and economic capitalist resource extraction. Scholars express concerns that such an agenda can further increase inequalities (Hall, 2019).

Consequently, researchers, organisations and governments have established more specific requirements for successful sustainable tourism. These requirements have been translated into how the tourism industry has to be reshaped to reach the goal of sustainable tourism as stated by the UNWTO and regarding the values promoted by the SDGs (Regmi & Walter, 2017; Coghlan, 2019; Hall, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). In the current debate, sustainable tourism should identify the immediate and long-term effects of tourism and should minimise its negative economic, social and environmental impacts, while maximising its positive ones on people, planet and profit (Coghlan, 2019). Before any tourism development takes place, it is essential to identify the communities, their boundaries, memberships, roles, attitudes and socio-economic needs so that they are appropriately considered and involved in the development (Snyman, 2017). Planners and policymakers must ensure that social, cultural and environmental resources are protected and that the benefits from tourism are distributed equally among all stakeholders and specifically the people whose lives are most directly affected by tourism (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Scholars acknowledge that tourism has the opportunity to employ low-skilled labour and predominantly women, so that people formerly excluded from the job market have a chance of employment, especially in remote areas (McMillan et al., 2011; Snyman, 2017). It has also been identified that by working in the tourism industry, people have a chance to further develop their skills to expand their employment opportunities (Snyman, 2017). This opportunity in tourism ties in with the broader understanding of social justice.

Social justice via tourism

Social justice is often related to employment and is thus also the approach to social justice used for this research. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Social Work* (Davis & Mizrahi, 2008), social justice is based on fairness in the fundamental rights and duties, economic opportunities and social conditions of people. The ILO (International Labour Organisation), in their "Declaration on Social Justice for Fair Globalisation" of 2008, proposed that policies must be based on fair employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work to promote social justice (ILO, 2008). Specifically, this should include full employment and rising standards of living, a minimum wage and social security measures that would provide a basic income to all in need. Furthermore, the fundamental values of freedom, human dignity, security and non-discrimination should be guaranteed (ibid.).

Promoting social and environmental justice is a central part of the sustainable development agenda and the SDGs. It is also part of the discussion about sustainability and sustainable tourism (Jamal, 2019; Hall, 2019). When relating the importance of social justice to the tourism industry, through the definition of sustainable tourism, it becomes clear that the industry should promote social justice for all stakeholders to be sustainable (UNWTO, 2015). Specifically, justice in tourism concerns

“people’s lives, their well-being, homes, communities, and work; the place they travel to, and the journeys they undertake” (Jamal, 2019, p. 28). However, so far, most tourism practices have asymmetric power relations between the external and local stakeholders. Hence, specific attention needs to be directed toward restoring social justice for local communities (Regmi & Walter, 2017; Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021).

Sustainable tourism scholar, Higgins-Desbiolles takes that criticism and introduces the approach of *socialising tourism*, i.e. tourism that is entirely for the local communities and their social justice (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the tourism sector having been put on hold, Higgins-Desbiolles states that this would be a unique time to reshape the tourism industry and decouple it from neoliberal practices, and proposes the new theoretical lens of socialising tourism as an urgent new approach to the tourism industry. Socialising tourism is an approach to sustainable tourism that recognises that tourism and tourism businesses must be socialised into supporting the needs and interests of the local communities of the tourism destination. Mainly, socialising tourism is to place tourism in the context of the society in which it occurs so that it can be used for the empowerment and well-being of the local communities (ibid.). This should be done by putting the rights and needs of the local community above those of tourists and tourism operators. By doing this, socialising tourism is directing tourism towards the local community (Regmi & Walter, 2017; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Socialising tourism sees tourism as a service to the public and the community with the aim of stimulating their well-being (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby (2021) stress the importance of socialising tourism and making it local so that non-human stakeholders, like the local flora and fauna, also have agency in tourism for sustainable development and justice (Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021). The scholars highlight what was acknowledged by the Quebec Declaration in 2002, namely that it is essential for ecological and social justice — and thus sustainable development — that tourism takes indigenous and local knowledge and diverse perspectives into account (ibid.). By localising and socialising tourism, sustainable tourism is separated from external, Western, capitalist systems, and used to provide social and ecological justice for the local community and destination, actively stimulating sustainable development (Hall, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles & Bigby, 2021).

In regards to the contribution of sustainable tourism to social justice for the local communities, literature proposes that sustainable tourism should contribute to meeting the needs of visitors, the tourism industry, the environment and the host communities, and that all of them should be benefitting from tourism equally (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017). Even though social justice has not explicitly been promoted by the sustainable development agenda of the tourism industry, in their private and professional lives, academics are advocating for sustainable tourism that promotes social justice in terms of livelihoods. In the literature, social justice is referred to as fairness regarding rights, economic and social opportunities and protection and human dignity (Davis & Mizrahi, 2008; ILO, 2008). In sustainable tourism approaches for social justice, socialising tourism comes from the literature as a new concept explicitly focused on promoting social justice for local communities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). These key findings from the literature review will be used as a framework for this research.

Methodology

Research design

This project aims to look at to what extent sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice in the local community. Conducting qualitative research in the form of interviews and the literature review findings can provide new information on how social justice is perceived by the participants and how interviewees link social justice to sustainable tourism (Hennink et al., 2020). According to Hennink et al. (2020), qualitative research allows for a more explorative approach to people’s experiences. Applying qualitative research to the case study approach offers several perspectives on the topic from different groups of people and in-depth insights into personal experiences and perceptions. Qualitative research allows one to look into the topic more personally and to gather more diverse and detailed information than surveys (ibid.).

Case study and sample

For convenience and the scope of this research, all interviewees were stakeholders of the sustainable tourism business of Grootbos Private Nature Reserve in South Africa. The private nature reserve is a privately owned, ecotourism, small/medium enterprise and five-star luxury lodge that has a non-profit foundation to launch projects that contribute to sustainable development for the local community and environmental conservation and education (Grootbos Foundation, 2022). The lodge and the foundation are situated in the unique landscape of the Cape Floral Kingdom and next to Gaansbai, a village not too far from Cape Town in South Africa (ibid.). As the lodge is focused on creating ecotourism and income for the local community, the lodge-side of Grootbos is the contact point between tourists and the Grootbos business entity (ibid.).

In contrast, the foundation-side of Grootbos is specifically designed to be the contact point between Grootbos and the local communities of the Overstrand and Overberg regions (Bek, 2020; Grootbos Foundation, 2022). Consequently, this research explores the foundation-side of Grootbos. For the scope of this research, all participants are directly or indirectly involved with the Grootbos Foundation. Thus, to explore the different perspectives on social justice and sustainable tourism, the study participants are from different hierarchies and levels of involvement with the foundation. Specifically, they range from a board member of the foundation to a project manager, an employee, to two participants in their sustainable development projects and someone from the local community who is not directly involved in projects organised by the Grootbos Foundation. Additionally, to increase the diversity of the personal perspectives on sustainable development and social justice, the study focused on recruiting participants of different ages and genders from different communities. An overview of the sample is given in Table 1.

It is essential to mention that even though the Grootbos Foundation operates in a more extensive area with several local communities, the local community referred to in this study is called Masakhane, thus representing only one of the communities Grootbos works in (Grootbos Foundation, 2022). This is because most of the participants working at Grootbos that are part of the local communities live in this particular community (Bek, 2020).

The recruitment of suitable people for the interviews was conducted through a gatekeeper. The function of a gatekeeper

TABLE 1. Demographics of the participants (N = 6)

Participant	Age group (years)	Sex	Local community?
1	51–65	Female	No
2	36–50	Female	Yes
3	20–35	Female	Yes
4	20–35	Female	Yes
5	20–35	Male	Yes
6	36–50	Female	No

is to establish contact between the researcher and the participant and can help reach out and find suitable candidates (Hennink et al., 2020). In this research setting, the gatekeeper is a person from the board of the foundation and helped propose suitable participants. The recruitment was done based on prior information exchange on the research project and its purpose to assure diversity and that the participants fit into the target group. Nevertheless, due to the selection of the interviewees by the gatekeeper, there might be a possibility of biased answers in the interviews. To limit this as much as possible, it was stressed several times that the research is about understanding people's personal opinions and not a review of Grootbos itself.

Data collection

Six semi-structured interviews were conducted to get insights into the personal perceptions and understandings of social justice. All interviews were held in English as it was the only language everyone had in common. However, not all participants were fluent in English. Interviewing people in a foreign language can limit and alter their way of expressing themselves, and should thus be considered as a possible limitation of the study. The semi-structured framework was used for all the interviews and assured that the same questions were covered, and that follow-up questions could be asked, bringing the research to a more personal level (Hennink et al., 2020). The interview questions were based on the theoretical concepts identified before to ensure that the research worked along with the concepts of social justice and sustainable tourism. To do so, key questions were asked and divided into three subjects with different investigation purposes. An overview of the interview questions can be found in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Overview of interview-scheme

Question type	Topic	Key question	Follow-up question
Introductory	Personal background	"Could you introduce yourself, please?"	"What is your role at Grootbos?" "Are you part of Masakhane?" "What are the reasons for you to be involved with Grootbos?"
Key question	The impact of Grootbos on people's lives	"Do you experience a difference in your well-being before and after having been involved with the Grootbos Foundation?"	"Do you think that Grootbos and their projects have changed your life somehow?" "How do you feel about it?" "How involved do you feel in that change?"
Key question	The role and understanding of social justice in people's lives	"What does social justice mean for you?"	"What does fairness or improved well-being mean to you?" "When do you experience social justice or fairness?"
Key question	The associated responsibilities of sustainable tourism for sustainable development in the local community	"How do you think Grootbos can help increase the well-being of the community in Masakhane?"	"How would you wish the community/life in Masakhane to look in the future?" "How do you think Grootbos could contribute to that?" "What do you think is necessary to achieve this?"

To tackle possible ethical issues, an email containing general information about the research before conducting the interviews was sent to the participants with a consent form which they were invited to sign. Participants were only recruited if they gave consent.

Data analysis

After having conducted the interviews, the recordings of each of them were transcribed, afterwards anonymised and analysed according to the "thematic analysis" approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to find out about possible emerging codes and common perceptions of social justice and the impact of sustainable tourism on people's lives (Hennink et al., 2020).

Results and discussion

To find an answer to the research question "To what extent can sustainable tourism contribute to social justice in the local community?", the literature findings are directly discussed with the interview results in this section. The main codes, as shown in Table 3, are based on key aspects from the literature review that identify the relationship between sustainable tourism and social justice for the local communities. Thus, this section is divided according to the literature topics, namely the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda and social justice through tourism. The literature review found that socialising tourism is a sustainable tourism approach devoted to promoting social justice for the local communities. Hence, parallels between the tourism approach of socialising tourism and the perceived role and impact of the case study on social justice, as expressed by the interviewees, are also analysed. This will foster a better understanding of what particular aspects of sustainable tourism contribute to social justice for the local community. Table 3 presents the final coding scheme connected to the literature topics and findings.

Sustainable development through sustainable tourism

Regarding the role of sustainable tourism in the development agenda, the code *Impact of sustainable tourism on people's lives* emerged. This code included the sub-codes *personal well-being, education, jobs* and *safety* as important aspects of

TABLE 3. Overview of final coding scheme and literature review

Topic	Code	Sub-code	Example quote	Literature references
Sustainable development through sustainable tourism	Impact of sustainable tourism on people's lives	Personal well-being	<i>Through the business and the support from the Grootbos Foundation, I have regained the strength I lost and my confidence. And I see now that things are changing in my life because of the support...</i> (Participant 5)	Boluk et al., 2019
		Education	<i>So I got most of my skills here at Grootbos...I came to Gaansbaai so that I can study, but I wouldn't be able [sic] to study further before I came to Grootbos.</i> (Participant 2)	Boluk et al., 2019
		Jobs	<i>My business is making a change in the community, and I'm not saying it's me, but this is through the support of Grootbos Foundation that my business could employ other people.</i> (Participant 5)	Snyman, 2017
		Safety	<i>...but because of Grootbos that is providing everything for them, their food, the sport, you see when you're doing sport, your mind, it is safe.</i> (Participant 2)	Boluk et al., 2019
Social justice via tourism	Understanding of social justice	Equality & access to basic human needs	<i>And then justice is that we are all equal and that we all need the same...So that everyone can live in an almost equal way.</i> (Participant 1)	Davis & Mizrahi, 2008
		Feeling of self-worth	<i>Social justice is that you also make people trust themselves, to have trust in themselves</i> (Participant 2).	ILO, 2008
	Drivers of social justice	Education	<i>And for children to go to school and to become something in life.</i> (Participant 3)	Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020
		Jobs	<i>I think the main biggest thing is to making sure that there are economic opportunities or that there's employment opportunities.</i> (Participant 6)	Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020
		Safety	<i>If they can all have a job, then we wouldn't have those boys that are smoking and all those things...but to have a peaceful Masakhane.</i> (Participant 3)	Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020

the impact the Grootbos Foundation has on the participants' lives and the community.

Impact of sustainable tourism on people's lives

To investigate the impact of sustainable tourism on the local community and its role in sustainable development and social justice, several interview questions were directed toward identifying Grootbos' impact on the local community. As derived from the interviews, all participants expressed that the foundation indeed does impact the local community, mainly through its influence on personal well-being, education, job creation and safety.

Personal well-being

All participants indicated in their interviews that the Grootbos Foundation impacts their personal development. It appears that all interviewees experienced personal growth due to their jobs. Even though only five of the six participants are employed by Grootbos, the sixth participant also stated that due to their business being funded by Grootbos, they experienced personal growth.

Grootbos has given me a chance to do what I love. And apart from the fact that I've got a salary and so on, it gives you a chance to also grow. (Participant 1)

Notably, all interviewees from the local community experienced increased confidence due to their jobs.

Through the business and the support from the Grootbos Foundation, I have regained the strength I lost and my confidence. And I see now that things are changing in my life because of the support. (Participant 5)

Despite not all interviewees from the local community having participated in Grootbos' educational programme, they all emphasised that they had gained several skills due to the foundation. The participants from the local community expressed that developing these skills increased their self-esteem: *"Being in Grootbos exposed me to so many things that I can do, so, I have realised that I can go far. But before Grootbos, I did not know about all those things"* (Participant 3); and their education and job opportunities:

So I got most of the skills here at Grootbos...I came to Gaansbai so that I can study, but I wouldn't have been able to study further before I came to Grootbos. So I had my chance to study further at Grootbos. Also... to provide me with some income, so that I can study further (Participant 2)

When linking these findings to the literature review, it appears that according to the interviewees, Grootbos has managed to live up to the responsibilities of sustainable tourism and socialising tourism in terms of the promotion of the well-being of the local community. Scholars state that sustainable tourism should contribute to human rights, business productivity and stimulating education (Boluk et al., 2019). As can be seen from the results, Grootbos contributes to those aspects of sustainable development. Nevertheless, what is lacking in the literature about the role of sustainable tourism for sustainable development is the promotion of well-being, the feeling of self-worth, growth and self-esteem. In contrast, specifically the aspect of the well-being of the local community, according to their understanding, is promoted by the socialising tourism approach (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). In that sense, the participants expressed that Grootbos has not only contributed

to sustainable development in terms of jobs and education, but assures that, in addition to income, the jobs contribute to an increase in well-being. This aspect of sustainable tourism is only considered when directly linking it to promoting social justice and not purely to sustainable development (Jamal, 2019).

Education

The interviews highlighted that by working with individual community members, Grootbos also impacts the wider community. This development was mainly explained in relation to education provision, job and business creation and an increased feeling of safety due to Grootbos. The interviewees expressed that Grootbos actively listens to the community to structure their projects based on the community's needs:

So, there are people who go to Masakhane and see what is going on here and give out something like a survey...So that is why they open up those projects because they first look at the needs of the community. (Participant 2)

For the educational impact of the foundation, the interviewees stated that Grootbos directly offers education to people from the community: "Grootbos is helping a lot. But Grootbos was advertising the courses each year, so most of the students are starting here from Masakhane" (Participant 2). All participants highlighted that they feel responsible for sharing the skills that they have acquired through their jobs with the community to help others: "The skills I've got is also the skills I can use for the community so that the community can get better" (Participant 2). The participants elaborated that, additionally to educational programmes, Grootbos supports the community with projects focused on promoting a self-sustaining lifestyle:

And it's a lasting solution that Grootbos Foundation is doing. They're teaching our children because they're going to schools, to preschools in the community, telling people that they must grow their own food, not buy their own food. (Participant 5)

Overall, the educational side of Grootbos was mentioned by all the interviewees as an important tool for further improving life in the local community:

Grootbos can have an impact on that [social justice] because they've got a good track record of training people to start their own businesses, of training people to create jobs in their own businesses. (Participant 5)

As mentioned above, promoting education is also identified as one of the aspects of sustainable development through tourism (Snyman, 2017; Boluk et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the importance of providing education is not as strongly stressed in the literature as by the interviewees — particularly when compared to the emphasis placed on job creation and economic development. Education was only indirectly mentioned in the literature concerning sustainable development through tourism, whereas economic development and jobs were mentioned in every aspect or reference to sustainable development (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017; Boluk et al., 2019; Coghlan, 2019; Hall, 2019).

It has been argued that the tourism industry does not consider the local perspective when it comes to promoting development (Regmi & Walter, 2017), though, as expressed by the participants, this does not apply to Grootbos. The participants emphasised the engagement of Grootbos with the local community and their efforts in listening to people's needs and adapting their projects accordingly. It appears that Grootbos is overcoming the

criticism of the general understanding of sustainable tourism and has employed aspects of socialising tourism instead. Tourism businesses should aim to support the needs and interests of the local communities in socialising tourism. In addition, socialising tourism can empower and increase the well-being of the local communities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). By showing that Grootbos is actively contributing to skills development and education, fostering a self-sustaining lifestyle and increasing people's education and job opportunities, Grootbos proactively works in a socialised way.

Jobs

Besides noticing educational improvement in the local community, all participants perceived an increase in the employment rate and business and job offers. All interviewees linked this development to the Grootbos Foundation and its projects:

My business is making a change in the community, and I'm not saying it's me, but this is through the support of Grootbos Foundation that my business could employ people. (Participant 5)

So, I can say Grootbos is employing more people from Masakhane than the shops and the other places in town...I can say 90% is [sic] working at Grootbos. (Participant 2)

Specifically, all interviewees agreed that continuing with Grootbos' projects and initiatives is pivotal: "They can continue doing whatever they're doing because they're helping us a lot" (Participant 4). Specifically, their input in job and business creation came across as the most significant in promoting social justice:

So, if, for Masakhane, we from the entrepreneurship can be able [sic] to manage and grow our own business so that we can add to what Grootbos has done, and can employ those who have nothing or are not working...I think the rate of unemployment in Masakhane can slow down. (Participant 3)

From the literature review, job creation appears to be one of the main goals associated with sustainable development. All participants agreed that Grootbos plays a significant role in increasing the employment rate in the local community. Sustainable tourism should ensure viable businesses and distribute economic benefits to all stakeholders equitably (Regmi & Walter, 2017). Regarding Grootbos, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions on the equitable distribution of economic benefits. While the Grootbos Ecolodge is the tourism pillar of Grootbos, it only indirectly distributes its profits to the foundation and its projects (Bek, 2020). Nevertheless, the lodge strongly supports the foundation, which has proven to contribute to employment, income and sustainable development in the community (Bek, 2020). In connection to socialising tourism, where the rights and needs of the local community should be put above those of the tourists, it remains an open question whether Grootbos fulfils that criteria. Nevertheless, it appears that the importance of the lodge and the foundation are balanced and parallel pillars (Grootbos Foundation, 2020). All participants explained that due to their long-term and sustainable projects, they are not only employing people, but also creating business opportunities. Hence, according to the interviewees, the sustainable tourism business indirectly impacts many more people. By committing to supporting the local community with long-term projects, the Grootbos Foundation is

actively functioning as a service to the local community. This is also in line with the ethos of socialising tourism as the approach promotes using tourism as a service for improving the well-being of the local community and restoring social justice for them and according to them (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Safety

Additional to the increased job opportunities and access to education, three interviewees also explained how the community became more peaceful and safer due to Grootbos' projects. According to the participants working at the foundation, Grootbos *offer[s] safe spaces for children to go to...And keeping the children off the streets so that they don't have to go and turn to drugs and alcohol and teenage pregnancy and things like that.* (Participant 6)

The participants from the community explained how the projects had made a positive impact:

And then those people see themselves as people after that, because if they roam around, and they can't do anything, then they see themselves as nothing. But because of Grootbos that is providing everything for them, their food, the sport, you see if you're doing sport, your mind, it is safe. (Participant 2)

Grootbos' fostering safety and peace in the local community is in line with the responsibilities associated with sustainable tourism for sustainable development. The SDGs and scholars emphasise the importance of peace building for sustainable development. Nevertheless, tourism is criticised for disregarding the peace dimension and only focusing on prosperity and the planet (Hall, 2019). However, as expressed by the participants, the example of Grootbos as a sustainable tourism business shows that businesses can contribute to sustainable development's peace dimension.

Social justice through tourism

In connection to the topic of social justice through tourism, as discussed in the literature, this subsection lays out what social justice means for the participants and how sustainable tourism can contribute to it. Thus, the two codes that emerged were *understanding of social justice* and *drivers of social justice*.

Understanding of social justice

The interviews revealed that most of the participants did not know what "social justice" is per se, but were more familiar with the terms "fairness" and "well-being". The sub-codes *equality and access to basic human needs* and *feelings of self-worth* showed the most important aspect of social justice, as explained by the participants.

Equality and access to basic human needs

Based on the interviews, the results show that the interviewees agreed on the same aspects when it came to understanding social justice or fairness. For all participants, social justice means access to basic human needs such as "*access to education, access to medicals [sic] and access to uniforms and access to food and access to jobs*" (Participant 6). In addition, everyone should have equal opportunities to lead their own lives, according to the interviewees:

And then justice is that we are all equal and that we all need the same...So that everyone can live in an almost equal way. (Participant 1)

In the definitions of social justice found in the literature, social justice includes the fundamental rights, duties, economic opportunities and social conditions of people (Davis & Mizrahi, 2008) and non-discrimination and fair employment (ILO, 2008). In this sense, the participants also mentioned most aspects of social justice presented in the literature. Nevertheless, their personal needs, like access to medication and uniforms, that seem to apply to all participants, are disregarded in the literature. Again, many job- and economic-related opportunities are mentioned in the literature, except education, uniforms, or access to medical attention or food. It is debatable what exactly is included under the term "social conditions", as proposed by Davis and Mizrahi (2008) for social justice, which could theoretically include access to education, food, or uniforms. This, however, shows that social justice is framed in very broad and abstract ways. This can potentially be significant in terms of taking action for social justice and to succeed in providing it in concrete forms.

Feelings of self-worth

All participants mentioned that the feelings of respect, dignity, self-esteem and self-trust should be a result or outcome of social justice: "*Social justice is that you also make people trust themselves, to have trust in themselves*" (Participant 2). Not all participants were familiar with the concept of social justice, but some participants related their experiences of social justice to well-being and fairness. All interviewees emphasised how much the foundation has contributed to their experiences of social justice, fairness and well-being. Specifically, feeling understood, heard, respected and valued as a person plays a crucial part in participants' association with well-being:

And that I only see when I see people respecting my ideas. And that makes me feel so good. (Participant 5)

For the participants not from the local community, their relation to experiencing social justice was connected to helping other people experience it:

Yeah, well personally, I feel that is part of my job...that I can live it, and help people to also get to a place where they can feel good about themselves, where they can have self-esteem. (Participant 1)

Similar to the above, dignity, respect and the feeling of self-worth are only mentioned and linked to social justice in the literature as "human dignity" (ILO, 2008). However, human dignity seems rather abstract and does not go as deep as creating opportunities for people to experience the feelings of dignity, respect and self-worth and see themselves in that way. Also, regarding social justice through the lens of tourism, "well-being" is the only concern mentioned when discussing social justice through tourism (Jamal, 2019).

Drivers of social justice

To identify how sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice, as emphasised by Higgins-Desbiolles (2020), the code *Drivers of social justice* presents what the interviewees identify as contributing to social justice. The code includes the sub-codes *education, job* and *safety* and highlights the perceived drivers for social justice.

Education

For all of the interviewees from the local community, well-being has increased because of improved access to education and job opportunities:

I have experienced it [fairness]. Because I did get it [the experience of fairness] from, for instance, as I've said, got much more education because I had only limited [possibilities for education], but I did get chances to study my studies to be educated. (Participant 2)

So, my well-being has improved, because of the business that I've started, because of the support I got from Grootbos Foundation. (Participant 5)

Concerning education, the interviewees agree that education would enable people to lead their own lives:

And for children to go to school and to become something in life. So, that will be great. (Participant 3)

So that each and every one of us maybe will have a degree or diploma so that we can all sustain ourselves, get paying jobs, or even better, open our own business. (Participant 4)

With the concept of socialising tourism, Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) stresses that tourism should be used for the empowerment and well-being of the local community. In connection to the role of sustainable tourism for social justice, the interviewees expressed that Grootbos successfully contributed to empowering the local community, listening to their needs for access to education.

Jobs

All participants stated that they experience fairness related to their jobs:

I have a business with which I can put food on the table for my kids. So fairness, to me, I have it and I don't lack anything. (Participant 3)

So, my well-being has improved because of the business that I've started, because of the support I got from Grootbos Foundation. (Participant 5)

Thus, the interviewees put an even stronger emphasis on the importance of work as a stimulator for social justice:

It's got to be opportunities to get employed to earn your money...and for people to help themselves, people need to take the responsibility and to be able to help themselves. (Participant 6)

All interviewees expressed that especially the creation of businesses can help in stimulating social justice:

So, if we can start businesses, thinking about our own families and also our problems, then that's a big solution to our problems. (Participant 5)

While the participants expressed that jobs and business opportunities could foster social justice, they also pointed out that Grootbos has played a significant role in creating long-lasting job opportunities. In socialising tourism, the concept does not explicitly argue for job creation as a means for social justice, but advocates workers' rights and prioritises local workers' safety (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). In general, socialising tourism appears to directly stress operations for the well-being and needs of the local community, but does not concretely state what it would entail (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). On the one hand, this can give freedom to the adaptability of the approach to any situation. However, on the other hand, this can lead to disregarding specific yet important aspects, like basic human rights, if not voiced by the community. In comparison, the goals established for sustainable tourism are more specific in covering

several realms like employment, peace building and education, among others (Boluk et al., 2019).

Safety

Besides creating an income, the creation of businesses and the increase in job opportunities can also contribute to safety and peace in the local community:

If they can all have a job, then we wouldn't have those boys that are smoking and all those things...but to have a peaceful Masakhane. (Participant 3)

Four participants said how safety and peace in the local community contributes to people recognising their dignity, respect and self-esteem:

And then those people see themselves as people after that, because if they roam around, and they can't do anything, then they see themselves as nothing. (Participant 2)

The aspect of safety specifically has not been taken into account in the approach of socialising tourism. However, it could be included in the needs and well-being of the local community, especially as the participants have voiced the importance of safety for them experiencing social justice. Again, this aspect has been included in the general aims of sustainable tourism (Boluk et al., 2019). In connection with the contribution of sustainable tourism to social justice, the research has shown that, according to the interviewees, Grootbos has managed to improve the safety of the local community. As the participants mentioned that Grootbos hands out surveys and listens to people's needs, this development can be linked to the concept of socialising tourism.

Conclusion

This research article explored to what extent sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice in the local communities. The research highlighted that sustainable tourism can contribute to social justice for the local communities, as perceived by the interviewees when looking at the case of Grootbos. Participants voiced that, for them, social justice and well-being were achieved when Grootbos created jobs, improved safety and access to education and basic human needs and increased self-esteem, dignity and respect. When contrasting the interview results with the literature review, it is remarkable that sustainable development, as promoted by the UNWTO, is predominantly directed towards equal economic prosperity for all tourism stakeholders. In comparison, only following that approach would have disregarded other needs like access to education, safety, respect and dignity as expressed by the local community. Similarly, the aspect of social justice presented in the literature differed from the participants' elements of social justice. The literature presented social justice in more abstract terms, and is primarily concerned with economic and social well-being. The participants' understanding, however, also includes safety and feeling respected, dignified and confident. It became clear from the research that, most often, social justice is not specifically addressed in sustainable tourism approaches, except for the novel lens of socialising tourism.

In relation to these findings, it appears that Grootbos' approach to tourism, as expressed by the interviewees, relates closely to the approach of socialising tourism. By handing out surveys, talking and listening to the local community, the other needs of the community have been worked towards. This is

in line with the core approach of socialising tourism. Thus, it appears that when applying the approach of socialising tourism to sustainable tourism, a tourism business can contribute to social justice as understood by the people.

Thus, for tourism to be sustainable over the long term and to contribute to the well-being and social justice for the local community, it is essential to listen to people's needs as they may vary for each tourism destination. As derived from this research, when focusing on the needs of the local community, sustainable development and social justice, in particular, will be achieved. This implies that looking at tourism from a socialised perspective is effective for tourism to contribute to social justice for local communities. Nevertheless, socialising tourism is a very broad and adaptive approach based on the needs of the local community. Thus, depending on the needs and opinions from the local communities, it is not a given that all economic, ecological and social sustainability aspects will be promoted.

This research points out the relevance of socialising tourism for social justice through tourism. To better identify the effect of socialising tourism on social justice for the local communities, more research should be conducted on the parallels between the sustainable tourism strategies of the Grootbos Foundation and the approach of socialising tourism. Additionally, follow-up research with the case study could be conducted to identify the drivers for Grootbos to operate socially. This could give additional insights into how sustainable approaches like socialised tourism can and are promoted. Attention could be paid to the business implications of socialising tourism. The findings can be used for policy implications for sustainable development and translating the approach from a private to a public level. Once these insights have been collected, those implications may be incorporated into a roadmap for sustainable tourism and development.

Several limitations to this study exist due to the research methodology adopted. As I come from a very different background and experience than the study sample, future research could explore this topic in a setting where the researcher and the participants have the same situational background. This could probably contribute to more detailed insights into people's perceptions of the contribution of sustainable tourism to social justice. Such a research setting would also probably avoid using a gatekeeper for recruitment. This could overcome the possibility of biased answers in the interviews. Moreover, as the study was based on a case study in a specific environment and concerning tourism and the local community, the research findings are not generalisable, but particular to this case. Thus, conducting this research in several different settings and countries with variations in sample sizes could contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between sustainable tourism and social justice. Also, the impact of different forms of sustainable tourism, like community-based tourism, can be investigated. Given the different research settings, possible core aspects and contextual conditions of the contribution of sustainable tourism to social justice will most likely be highlighted.

This research sheds light on the possibilities of sustainable tourism for promoting social justice for local communities and finds that applying a socialising tourism approach seems to be successful in increasing the well-being of the local community.

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