

Water bodies as catalysts for tourism development. A case study of Tokwe Mukosi Dam in Masvingo, Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

Availability of water bodies can cause significant socio-economic impacts on the surrounding communities. The impacts can be both positive and negative. The current study sought to examine water bodies as catalysts for tourism development. Research methods included key informant interviews and a questionnaire survey. The results from the study showed that Tokwe-Mukosi Dam has both positive and negative impacts on communities around the dam. Among the positive impacts, chiefly is the contribution of the water body to tourism development. It emerged from the study that the positive socio-economic impacts of the construction of Tokwe-Mukosi Dam included: increased availability of fish; water provision for livestock production, irrigation and domestic purposes; and tourism development and associated income enhancement. On the other end, there were also negative impacts of dam construction revealed by the current study including: drowning of people; attack of people and livestock by crocodiles; displacement of people; and increased incidences of water-borne and vector-borne diseases. Various recommendations are suggested to improve development of tourist facilities by locals in partnership with other entities to enhance benefits from tourism; training of locals in aquaculture so as to increase benefits from fish resources; and the setting up of an Integrated Environmental Management Plan to enhance the long term conservation and sustainable utilisation of the dam and its resources.

Keywords: water body, socio-economic growth, tourism development, environmental management.