

Review of: "Tourists' Activities and their Impacts on Chinhoyi Caves Heritage Site, Zimbabwe"

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Abstract

There is significant evidence of tourist activities impacts on heritage sites. These impacts range from being positive to being negative. Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje studies these impacts using Chinhoyi caves. Their study, however, reveal certain concerns which have necessitated this critique. The critique intends to show that while the study by Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje is somehow ground-breaking, its quality needs to be improved along academic writing lines. Among a plethora of findings, I found that the authors probably missed the point in simple things like paragraphing, contents of a background, literature review and the methods. I recommend that the authors attend to these issues to improve the quality of their study.

Introduction

The study by Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje (2023) identified an important area of study, the impact of tourism activities on heritage sites. Given the contribution and place of tourism in economic development of many nations, Zimbabwe included, this research topic is very important. One contribution of tourism to national development is through earning foreign currency for the country. The other is contribution to national employment. Despite these important contributions, tourist activities have detrimental effects on the site visited. The aim of the study by Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje (2023) was to explore the impact of tourist activities on heritage site. They used Chinhoyi caves as a case study area, which is a heritage site in Zimbabwe. The study used in-depth interviews to attain the objective. Study findings reveal that there are a number of both consumptive and non-consumptive tourist activities taking place at the study site.

Despite the significance of their study to the body of knowledge, certain concerns with the study have been observed. For the current critique study, I will concentrate mainly on academic writing issues in English, with English being the language the authors used. "Academic writing is the process of sharing original research with other scholars in accordance with certain standard rules" (Akkaya & Aydin, 2018). If the standard rules are not adhered to, the argument of the study may be missed by readers, yet effort will have been made by authors in writing the paper. This is because, the ideas of a study will be clear and understandable if the study follows the said academic writing rules. As such, the importance of adhering to academic writing standards cannot be overemphasised.

This critiques follows the following structure. First is the general structure of the critiqued study. It is followed by background section, problem statement and research questions and objectives. Next, literature review, research methods

and results and their discussion come in that order. The final section is the conclusions.

Structure

The paper follows a well-structured approach in line with the IMRAD structure; that is, introduction, methods, results and discussions. The introduction section, according to the IMRAD approach, is composed of both the background and literature review. Discussions and conclusions of the study may also be combined. Results and discussions may also be combined, a strategy which was used by the three authors.

Of concern also is the one sentence paragraph. A number of such paragraphs exist in the study, particularly in the results and discussion section. It is important to note that, academic English requires that a paragraph is a group of sentences which share the same topic. For example, for a dissertation, Joyner, Rouse and Glathorn (2013) advise that a paragraph needs to be eight to ten sentences long. Joyner, Rouse and Glathorn (2013) noted that very short paragraphs indicate immature style of writing. Hence, it is not clear if Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje (2023) have their own definition of a paragraph which is made up of only one sentence.

Background and Case study area

While the background says a lot about tourist activities globally and its contribution to development, it leaves the Zimbabwean context largely unexplored. Academic writing requires that the background needs to be approached in a funnel approach where the global perspective is given first and then narrow to local contexts.

In the local context, much has not been done. For example, the justification for the choice of Chinhoyi caves over other heritage sites in Zimbabwe is not clear. Zimbabwe has five world heritage sites; these are Great Zimbabwe monuments, Khami Ruins National Monuments, Victoria Falls and Mana Pools and Matobo Hills (Makuvaza & Makuvaza, 2014). Given the recognised five heritage sites in Zimbabwe, Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje (2023) must have spelt out what makes Chinhoyi caves unique to deserve to be a good case study over the world recognised heritage sites. This will have made their argument for choosing Chinhoyi caves valid. As it is, it is not clear why Chinhoyi caves was chosen. The probability is that Chinhoyi caves was chosen because of proximity to the authors not because of academic reasons. I have arrived at the conclusion that this was because of proximity by looking at the affiliations of the three authors. They are from Chinhoyi University of Technology, which is less than ten kilometres from the Chinhoyi caves, via the A1 road.

Problem statement

Terrell (2016) noted that failure to identify a problem is the problem. Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje (2023) tried their best to identify the problem statement. The problem statement in this study can be simplified as '[h]uman activities are damaging heritage sites of which 5% of world heritage sites are in danger of extinction because of tourist activities. If this persists, the site will lose tourism value (Kabote, Gweshe & Muchenje, *ibid*). The rationale for solving the problem seems to have been given, but the problem has not been well motivated from the background.

Research questions and objectives

Hulley, et al (2007, 17) defined a research question as "... the uncertainty about something in the population that the investigator wants to resolve by making measurements on her study subjects ...". In line with the definition by Hulley et al (2007), it seems the main research question explored in the study is '[t]o what extent are the local heritage sites being protected from human activities as tourist numbers to these sites continue to increase?'. One of the purposes of a research question is to address gaps in literature. The research question seems to be in good shape, though. However, failure to clearly review the literature may lead to a poor research question being answered. Therefore, it is not clear whether the research question has not been investigated before because the literature presented as a review seems to be a literature summary, which again is one sided.

Linked to the research question are the objectives. The study aimed to explore the impact of tourist activities on heritage sites. Given the research question, it seems plausible that the authors must have phrased their aim as 'to explore the extent of the impact ...'. This would make more sense since it will be in line with research question being investigated. The word 'extent' is very important here because it shows the size of the impact, not just the impact. Nevertheless, the usage of the verb 'assess' in objective number two is commendable because it is a higher order verb according to Bloom's taxonomy.

Research objectives need to be extracted from the aim of the study. It seems, there is a small link between these two in the study under review. Objective two seems to be the one that was extracted from the aim. However, it needs some rephrasing to show the direct link with the aim of the study.

Literature review

In line with this structure, the introduction section includes literature review. The literature reviewed in the study by Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje (2023) seems biased in that it concentrates on the tourist activities, largely missing the impacts yet the study is mainly on impacts. While literature review on tourist activities is important, a review of literature on the impact is more important because, from the title, that is the variable being studied. More detail on impacts of tourist activities on heritage sites could have improved the quality of the study.

Additionally, the study seems to lack the synthesis expected of an academic paper. It seems the authors concentrated on literature summary not review. As advised by Graff and Birkenstein (2017), in their book, 'They Say/I Say', there is need for the authors to state their argument thereby responding to what previous authors are saying in the context of the particular study.

Research Methods

The methods section states that an interview guide was administered to randomly and conveniently selected tourists who composed the study participants. Convenience sampling was used to select staff from the caves who were to participate in the interviews.

The usage of the word 'guide' in the first and second sentences in the methods section is not clear. The word guide has been used twice in these two consecutive sentences. Consider the following sentence as extracted from the paper: "[t]he

same interview guide was administered to five (5) members of staff that work at the heritage site. The staff members were purposefully selected with guides making the majority as they are in constant touch with the tourists” Kabote, Gweshe & Muchenje, 2023, 5). In the first sentence, the word guide refers to a data collection instrument. In the second sentence it refers to a person guiding tourists; a tour guide. To reduce problems of interpretation and understanding by readers, it is important that authors be as specific as possible. In this case, there is likelihood of misinterpretation, especially given that the word, guide, was used in two consecutive sentences, but having different meanings.

Results and discussions

The study found four themes in which tourist activities could be placed. In the results and discussion section, the authors concentrated much on defining terms which could have been defined well in the literature review, had literature review been done properly. The authors found that three activities are the most consumptive land-based activities: graffiti, painting and drawing. Efforts were made to compare findings with existing literature but findings on drawings were not compared with existing literature.

The study was done by three authors. However, the usage of the word ‘researcher’ in the third sentence in the second paragraph from below on page 7 is questionable. The same word usage appears in section 5.2 in the second sentence of paragraph two. Therefore, it is not clear if the three supposed authors really participated in writing the study. The usage of the word researcher, makes it seem the study was done by one person, who then included colleagues’ names to increase these colleagues’ research output. If that is what happened, it is academically unethical to include someone, as an author, on a piece of work he or she did not participate in.

Results reported in section 5.3 seem not to be backed by empirical data. While being reported as findings, it seems they were known already before the study since there seem to be no evidence to show that they actually came from the research. The section also employs a skeleton approach of reporting results which, in this case, is inappropriate to then have them reported in a standalone section.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study by Kabote, Gweshe and Muchenje (2023) seems significant. Attending to the concerns raised in this critique will be of importance to improve the quality of the study. Particular attention, by the three authors, needs to be paid to academic writing skills.

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