

Exploring the relationship between tourism and poverty using the capability approach

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has been regarded as a tool for development and poverty alleviation over many decades. Yet tourism research on poverty to date largely focuses on the income-based poverty analysis and does not fully consider the multidimensional nature of poverty or the views of poor people. Applying the capability approach, this paper examines the opportunities provided by tourism development and their contribution to achieving well-being from the perspectives of people living in poverty. The study was undertaken in a small coastal tourist destination in the Northeast of Brazil using a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative value chain analysis and qualitative interviews with photo-elicitation. The findings show that participants value opportunities associated with both monetary and non-monetary tourism resources and these opportunities help them achieve diverse aspects of well-being. This study demonstrates how the capability approach can help investigate the impacts of tourism development on poverty reduction and well-being of poor people in a more holistic and nuanced way by considering the plural and relative nature of poverty and well-being.

KEYWORDS

Tourism development, poverty reduction, capability approach, well-being, mixed-methods, Brazil

Introduction

During the 1960s, tourism started to gain attention as a tool for development thanks to its contribution to foreign exchange earnings and economic growth (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). Being a labour-intensive industry with low entry barriers and need for unskilled/low-skilled workers, tourism's potential for poverty reduction has been particularly highlighted. Over decades, such benefits of tourism have been reiterated and many states and international organisations pursued development through tourism (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012).

However, the positive effects of tourism development were often considerably less than expected and many critics argue that tourism development should be treated with caution given the evident structural inequalities between the global South and North in the global capitalist economy (Britton, 1982; Brohman, 1996; Mbaiwa, 2005, 2017). Over the years, there have been attempts to address these inequalities. Encouraged by the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, international development organisations carried out pro-poor tourism (PPT) programmes, which aim to “incorporate the poor into capitalist markets by increasing the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, and more collective benefits, available to them” (Harrison, 2008, p. 855). Yet, PPT research tends to focus on the economic impacts of tourism at the micro-level (Rylance & Spenceley, 2017) without considering wider political, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012).

Consequently, there have been calls for tourism scholars to take a more holistic approach to evaluate how tourism can contribute to poverty alleviation rather than solely focusing on measuring the economic impacts of tourism (Holden, 2013; Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019). This also requires development of theoretical frameworks to enhance the understanding of the relationship between tourism and poverty and examination of multidimensional perspectives of poverty (Medina-Muñoz et al., 2016; Schilcher, 2007).

This paper seeks to contribute by considering poverty from a multidimensional perspective and applying ‘the capability approach’ as a theoretical framework. The capability approach centres on the concept of capabilities, in other words, the real freedom or opportunity to achieve well-being, and avoiding or escaping poverty is regarded as basic capability to achieve well-being (Robeyns, 2005). The capability approach’s emphasis on multidimensional aspects of well-being also allows tourism studies on poverty to move away from income-focused analysis to incorporate various forms of poverty.

The importance of considering poverty in relation to well-being and quality of life is also highlighted in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) declared in 2015. The first of

the 17 SDGs is to 'End poverty in all its forms everywhere'. Here, it is noticeable that SDG 1 moves beyond extreme poverty and beyond a singular focus on developing countries to plural or multidimensional poverty in all countries. This supports the view that "development is about generating greater well-being and standards of living" (Cupples, 2013, p. 14).

Applying the capability approach, this paper examines the opportunities provided by tourism development and their contribution to achieving well-being from the perspectives of people living in poverty. The paper now critically reviews the capability approach and tourism literature on poverty and well-being and highlights the need to study multidimensional aspects of poverty and the benefits of applying the capability approach. This is followed by presenting the study location and research methods. The findings on the relationship between tourism and multidimensional poverty are discussed by using the core concepts of the capability approach – capabilities and functionings. The paper concludes by considering how and to what extent the capability approach can assist tourism and poverty studies and presents suggestions for future research.

Theoretical background

The capability approach

The capability approach has been pioneered by the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen (Alkire & Deuneulin, 2009) and applied to evaluate development and well-being in a variety of disciplines such as philosophy, law, health, education and sociology. Sen has contributed to the advancement of economics and development studies by moving away "from the exaggerated emphasis on growth and towards issues of personal well-being, agency and freedom" (Clark, 2005a, p. 1340).

The meaning of well-being varies depending on the context and the purpose of its use (Robeyns, 2017). Whereas contemporary philosophical accounts focus on "how well life is going for a person, hence on achieved wellbeing", the capability approach highlights the distinction between well-being freedom (i.e. opportunities for well-being) and achieved well-being (Robeyns, 2017, p. 119). Sen criticises both the traditional notion of development focusing on opulence (i.e. income and commodities) and the traditional welfare economic approach which views well-being in terms of utility (understood as happiness, desire fulfilment or choice). Instead he argues that well-being and development should be based on people's capability to achieve valuable functionings (Sen, 1999).

The capability approach centres around two core concepts: capabilities and functionings. Sen (1995a) argues that "if the achieved functionings constitute a person's well-being, then the capability to achieve functionings will constitute the person's freedom - the real opportunities - to have well-being" (p. 40). In other words, "capabilities are what people are able to be and to do, and functionings point to the corresponding achievements" (Robeyns, 2017, p. 38). The capability approach also highlights the plural or multiple dimensions of well-being (Robeyns, 2005). Functionings therefore

vary from such elementary physical ones as being well nourished, being adequately clothed and sheltered, avoiding preventable morbidity, and so forth, to more complex social achievements such as taking part in the life of the community, being able to appear in public without shame, and so on (Sen 1995b, p. 15).

According to the capability approach, poverty is considered as the deprivation of basic capabilities to function i.e. deprivation of real opportunities a person can choose from to achieve a minimum level of well-being (Sen, 1995a). Thus, there is an absolute requirement to avoid or escape poverty although how individuals do this can vary depending on the relative circumstances and/or social contexts (Sen, 1983).

The capability approach acknowledges that achieving well-being differs for different individuals, in other words, the diversity of human beings and their agency. Sen (2002) explains that freedom does not only relate to capabilities or, the "ability of a person to achieve those things that she has reason to value", but also to the "freedom involved in the process itself" (p. 10). This concerns people's freedom to make their own decisions – thus, actively shape their lives instead of being "passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs" (Sen, 1999, p. 53). This reflects the notion of agency, that is the ability to commit and pursue the things that a person has reason to value (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009). Robeyns (2005) summarises "What is ultimately important is that people have the freedoms or valuable opportunities (capabilities) to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be" (p. 95). While the capability approach is a people-centred approach, it does not view individuals or their opportunities in isolation. It acknowledges that "the options that a person has depend greatly on relations with others ... strongly influenced by social circumstances and public policy" (Dreze & Sen, 2002, p. 6).

Although the capability approach traditionally focused exclusively on individual well-being, several authors (Ibrahim, 2006, 2017; Murphy, 2014) have proposed the concept of collective capabilities. Robeyns (2017) clarifies that "collective capabilities are a subset of personal capabilities, namely those personal capabilities that require for their realisation action by a

group or a collectivity" (p. 117). Ibrahim (2006) adds that collective capabilities do not only depend on collective action, but also benefit the group at large.

The concepts of capabilities and functionings are both multidimensional and thus assessing these concepts and their linkages is a complex process, particularly given the diversity of human-beings (Chiappero-Martinetti, 2010). Sen (2003) himself acknowledges that the conceptual framework of the capability approach has many ambiguities which are difficult to depict. Sen has also been criticised for failing to provide a list of capabilities and functionings (Hick, 2012; Nussbaum, 2003). Due to such complexity and ambiguity, the practical application of the capability approach is considered to be challenging (Alkire, 2002; Chiappero-Martinetti, 2010; Clark, 2005b).

Sen and the supporters of the capability approach argue that such ambiguities are in fact potential strengths of the approach as they reflect the diversity of capabilities and functionings of individuals (Clark, 2005b; Chiappero-Martinetti, 2010). Chiappero-Martinetti (2010) points out that "the rich and unrestricted nature ... its usefulness in addressing a plurality of issues within a multiplicity of contexts, its interpretative richness regarding what a good life is, and the attention ... on human diversity" make the approach so appealing (p. 269).

Drawing on these strengths, this paper adopts the capability approach as a theoretical framework to study the impacts of tourism on poverty reduction. In doing so, we move away from income-focused poverty analysis to encompass multiple dimensions of poverty.

Whereas "lack of income can be a principle reason for a person's capability deprivation" (Sen 1999, p. 87) and generally income is an important means to well-being and freedom, "it can only serve as a rough proxy for what intrinsically matters, namely people's capabilities" (Robeyns, 2005, p. 97). This study therefore focuses on how poor people consume their resources (both monetary and non-monetary) provided by tourism to gain capabilities and achieve functionings that they value. We also assume that

poor people can articulate and analyse their poverty and their valued freedoms in multiple dimensions, and further that if they do so the resulting analysis will be different from a sophisticated but narrower analysis that uses income as a proxy for poverty and freedom (Alkire, 2002, p. 199).

Tourism, poverty and well-being

Poverty manifests itself in various forms in different parts of the world and includes different dimensions of material conditions/needs, economic circumstances and social conditions (UN, 1995). Although social dimensions of poverty have gained more attention in policy debates in recent years (Jo, 2012; Spicker, 2020), poverty is often analysed using quantitative,

monetary measures, such as poverty lines. More recently, a set of indicators was compiled to generate a composite measure of multidimensional poverty, for example, the Multidimensional Poverty index (MPI). Although these composite measures reflect the multidimensionality of poverty better, the quantitative analysis is still insufficient in capturing the full, complex picture of poverty (Ranis et al., 2006; Spicker, 2007).

Several related limitations exist in tourism research on poverty. Empirical studies on tourism impacts and poverty alleviation rarely refer to a definition of poverty or provide theoretical underpinning to study poverty (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). Existing literature also largely focuses on assessing the economic impacts of tourism and does not fully consider the multidimensionality of poverty (Medina-Muñoz et al., 2016; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). Critics also argue that there is neither a consensus on poverty dimensions to measure (Medina-Muñoz et al., 2016) nor a methodological agreement on how to measure the impacts of tourism on poverty reduction (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010). The need for more qualitative research that involves poor people is also highlighted (Holden et al., 2011; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012; Truong et al., 2014). This is because "poor people's interpretation of poverty may be substantially different from that of academics and policy-makers" and "it is only by valuing the perspectives of those, who are experiencing poverty that meaningful approaches to alleviating poverty through tourism become clearer and more likely to succeed" (Truong et al., 2014, pp. 1071, 1087).

Recently several papers responded to this request by representing the voice of poor people working in the tourism sector (Knight et al., 2017; Saayman et al., 2020; Truong, 2018; Truong et al., 2020). Knight et al.'s (2017) study in rural areas of Peru shows that although local people's perceptions of poverty and well-being predominantly relates poverty to income or employment through tourism, they are also associated with non-economic aspects such as working hard, feeling respected, contributing to the community and caring for others. Saayman et al. (2020) find that informal craft sellers in South Africa not only earn income from tourism, but also develop their capabilities and skills for running a business, and therefore craft selling offers "control over their own well-being" as entrepreneurs (p. 2001). Truong's (2018) study on street vendors and Truong et al.'s (2020) research on rickshaw drivers in Hanoi show that income from tourism improves the lives of these workers and their families economically and some workers also enjoy emotional benefits from being informally self-employed and having flexibility.

There is a large body of tourism literature on well-being and quality of life and these topics are often studied from perspectives of either tourists or residents (Uysal et al., 2016). Yet there is a relatively small number of studies which explicitly address well-being in relation to

tourism's impacts on poverty reduction or human development. A few studies (Croes, 2012; Dorjsuren, 2014; Knight, 2018; Kubickova et al., 2017; St John-Ives & Naidu, 2007) stand out with their application of the capability approach. For instance, Croes' (2012) study in Nicaragua and Costa Rica finds that tourism development and human development have only a tenuous relationship and highlights that more attention should be given to how the benefits of tourism development and tourism receipts are distributed to support human development. Kubickova et al.'s (2017) analysis of seven Central American countries shows that tourism competitiveness and quality of life have dynamic relationships, but quality of life only influences tourism competitiveness when economic freedom acts as a moderator.

St John-Ives and Naidu (2007) examine well-being of the workers in foreign-owned resorts in Fiji through a qualitative application of the capability approach. Work-related functionings they identify include having agency, working in good conditions, being knowledgeable or skilled, being secure in employment, being free from discrimination at work. They (2007) point out that the political and economic environment and institutional structures "both assist and retard the achievement of work-related functionings and capabilities" (p. 189). Knight's (2018) study in Peru is unique in that he investigates locally defined institutional deprivation and shows how local people's agency and strategies for institutional change can contribute to poverty reduction by enhancing individual and collective functioning.

Yet these existing studies have drawbacks in their application of the capability approach. Quantitative studies use pre-defined, quantitative indices, such as the Human Development Index (Croes, 2012; Kubickova et al., 2017), the Tourism Competitiveness Index and the Economic Freedom Index (Kubickova et al., 2017). Even in qualitative studies (Dorjsuren, 2014; St John-Ives & Naidu, 2007) researchers use a pre-defined list of what constitutes well-being or quality of life. The existing studies therefore cannot fully represent the perspectives of poor people and examine what they value in their lives, what opportunities tourism development brings, and how they achieve their well-being.

This study addresses these limitations by directly involving people living in poverty as research participants and not adopting a pre-defined list of capabilities or functionings in our application of the capability approach. A comprehensive evaluation of capabilities requires "a strong role for participation of those being investigated" (Comim, 2010, p. 198). The selection of capabilities should be a democratic process and public discussion with the research participants can lead to a better understanding of the role and value of specific capabilities (Sen, 2004). Poor people participated in this research were encouraged to articulate what they value in their lives rather than being given a list created by the researchers.

In short, this study seeks to explore how tourism affects multidimensional poverty and evaluate the opportunities provided by tourism and their contribution to achieving well-being from the perspectives of poor people. By adopting the capability approach, this study strengthens the theoretical underpinning of poverty and may serve to "not only to understand poverty and deprivation but also to combat them" (Hick, 2012, p. 306) through tourism development.

Research location

This research was conducted in Imbassaí, a small coastal destination in the state of Bahia, Northeast Brazil. Brazil has dramatically reduced extreme poverty by lifting more than 20 million people out of poverty since the 1990s. Yet, there is still a large population living in poverty with almost 10 million people living below the international poverty line (USD1.90 per day per person) (World Bank, 2017). With the persistent north-south division in wealth, poverty is concentrated in the North and Northeastern regions (Pereira, 2016).

Brazil's national government has encouraged tourism development to achieve economic growth and poverty alleviation since the early 1990s. Particularly in the Northeast, tourism has been employed as a tool to draw the region out of economic backwardness and promote social and equitable development (Pegas et al., 2015). This government's direction was evident in an extensive tourism-related investment programme called PRODETUR-NE, which established the Northeast as a sun, sea and sand destination (Fennel, 2008). The tourist region 'Costa dos Coqueiros', where Imbassaí is located, benefitted from USD 3.2 billion investment in infrastructure development (Silva et al., 2009, cited in Pegas, 2016). The state of Bahia received approximately 14.5 million tourists in 2014, which increased by 5.5 million from 2008, and 95% of its tourists are domestic travellers (Observatorio do Turismo da Bahia, 2017).

Tourism has become the most important economic sector in the Northeast and a major source of income for coastal communities in the Northeast, many of whom live in poverty (Lohman & Dredge, 2012). The Northeast of Brazil provides an interesting context to research sustainability and poverty alleviation with its huge potential for tourism and comparatively high inequality and poverty (Neri & Soares, 2012). Imbassaí is a small coastal community in the municipality of Mata de São João, where 24% of the population are considered to live below Brazil's poverty line (UNDP, 2020) and where more than 50% of the municipality's population work in tourism (IBGE, 2011, cited in Pegas, 2016). Being a small community, Imbassaí is an apt location to study the views of "residents at the case study

level" on how tourism affects poverty and "patterns on quality of life" (Pegas et al., 2015, p. 763).

The next section presents the mixed-method approach adopted in this study, the details of data collection and analysis, including a commentary on researcher positionality.

Methods

To capture a more comprehensive and holistic picture of the relationship between tourism and poverty, this study utilised a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative value chain analysis (VCA) and qualitative interviews with photo-elicitation in a sequential manner. The data collection took place in 2017. It is worthwhile noting that the paper is based on data collected for a larger research project (Author, 201), which examined the relationship between tourism, poverty and inequality in the Northeast of Brazil.

Value chain analysis (VCA)

VCA is a tool to map a destination's tourism industry and its actors, track revenue flows and income, and identify nodes of intervention along the value chain to increase the pro-poor impact (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010). Although VCA is frequently applied by practitioners, many academics have criticised it for its focus on quantitative indicators, weak methodology and lack of reliability (Author et al., 2021; Holden, 2013; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). Hence, it has been argued that there is a need for creating "rigorous and robust quantitative indicators" and "for interpretive research to produce richer and more complex understandings of the experiences of the poor" (Holden, 2013, p. 128). In this study, VCA was carried out to measure tourism revenue and income flows in the destination, and to identify where poor people participate in the tourism value chain. Hence, VCA provided useful contextual understanding of the economic scale of tourism in Imbassaí and guided sampling for the qualitative stage of this study, which aimed to explore the views of people living in poverty.

Table 1 inserted here

This study followed the International Trade Centre's (ITC) Opportunity Study Guidelines (Ashley et al., 2009) for VCA data collection and analysis (see Table 1). Activities a-d were carried out during the preparation stage. The scope of destination (a) was defined by the local borders, using a tourist map for guidance. To define the target group (b), the poor, VCA studies often use poverty lines. However, both international and Brazil's national poverty lines were inappropriate for this study. The international poverty line for upper middle-income countries, USD 5.50 per day per person (= GBP 128.00 per month per person) does not

reflect the unique circumstances in the Northeast, where poverty is more widespread than in the rest of the country. Brazil's poverty line of BRL140.00 (= GBP 34.00) per person per month was outdated as it had not been updated since 2011 (World Bank, 2017). To better reflect the regional and local context, this study applied the minimum salary for the tourist region Costa dos Coqueiros, where Imbassaí is located. The region's minimum salary defined in the 'Convenção coletiva de trabalho 2016-2017' (collective agreement on employment conditions in hotels and pousadas) was BRL 931.20 (= GBP 226.00) per person per month. Secondary sources, such as national and regional tourism statistics and policies, were used to collect contextual information about the destination and prepare for data collection (c-d).

After the preparation was completed, the first author travelled to Imbassi and collected the required data for VCA through a tourism value chain survey and a tourist survey. Firstly, actors along the tourism value chain were mapped (e) and participation of poor people in the value chain (f) was identified through the use of available secondary material (e.g. tourism map) and informal conversations. This led to the creation of a high-level stakeholder map (see Figure 1).

*****Figure 1 inserted here*****

From a detailed list of tourism businesses in each sector (e.g. business name, address, contact, size), a sample of tourism businesses representing the different sectors of the local tourism industry was selected and approached. The tourism value chain survey (g) collected financial information from the businesses using an interviewer-administered questionnaire and in total 57 tourism businesses (representing almost 50% of the total population) participated. A tourist survey (h) was also conducted to understand tourist characteristics and spending. A combination of self- and interviewer- administered questionnaires was carried out and 75 valid questionnaires were collected.

Using the data from the two surveys, tourist spending along the tourism value chain was estimated and the total revenue/turnover for the local tourism industry and for the different sectors were calculated (i). Income that reached people living in poverty was then calculated against the defined minimum salary to estimate how much tourism contributes to reducing poverty (j).

Interviews with photo-elicitation

To explore the perspectives of people living in poverty on tourism development through qualitative interviews with photo-elicitation, purposive sampling was applied to approach participants earning the minimum salary (or less) from working in tourism. Overall, 17

interviews were conducted with participants representing different job roles (e.g. micro-entrepreneur, waiter), age groups and gender.

Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with disposable cameras and asked to take photos to show how tourism influenced their lives. Engaging participants in interviews with photo-elicitation was considered useful as it enabled participants to provide insights into their everyday lives (Rose, 2016), whilst retaining control over interviews (Frith & Harcourt, 2007). In interviews, participants' photos were used as a starting point to discuss tourism opportunities and their contribution to achieving well-being, which was informed by Sen's capability approach (see details Author, 2020).

The first author conducted and transcribed the interviews in Portuguese. The average length of an interview was 50 minutes, and each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder. Interview transcripts and photos were treated as one set of data and analysed using holistic and descriptive coding and theming in Nvivo. Afterwards the interview data was translated to English using parallel translation to ensure accuracy. As this paper set out to examine how tourism development affected capabilities and functionings of poor people, it unavoidably centred on the benefits of tourism development. Although it was out of this paper's scope, it is necessary to note that tourism also had individual and societal costs in Imbassaí (see Author, 2019 for more detail).

The research was conducted from an interpretive stance considering that the relationship between tourism and poverty was socially constructed and could only be accessed through the diverse perspectives and interpretations of participants. During data collection and analysis, the first author critically reflected on her own positionality as a researcher. Although she was perceived as an outsider by both tourism business owners/ managers and poor people, being an outsider did not seem to limit data collection. Having an existing local contact and sharing similar demographic characteristics with businesses participants (e.g. European background) facilitated access to this group. Spending time in the destination and having regular informal conversations with locals enabled the researcher to develop trust and help approach interview participants. As locals frequently expressed distrust towards Brazilian nationals, particularly those employed in public institutions, and emphasised that they enjoyed interactions with foreign tourists, being a European may have helped to develop trust and positive relationships with participants.

The following results section presents the views of people living in poverty on opportunities provided by tourism development and their contribution to achieving well-being. The section examines the contribution of tourism income followed by that of non-monetary tourism

resources by using the core concepts of the capability approach, capabilities and functionings.

Results

Tourism income – a key resource for capabilities and functionings

In Imbassaí, tourism was the main economic sector and represented almost the only opportunity for participants to generate income. Prior to tourism development “there was nothing” as many participants explained. There was the strong perception that without tourism, development would not have occurred as a participant stated “[without tourism] it would be dreary here, I would say. It would probably be the same as it was 30 years ago”.

The VCA data indicated that Imbassaí has a relatively high percentage of international tourists (from Germany, Switzerland and Argentina) in comparison to the rest of Bahia. The annual turnover of the tourism industry in Imbassaí was estimated to be GBP 54 million generated in the accommodation, food and drinks, shopping and entertainment/activities sectors (see Figure 2).

*****Figure 2 inserted here*****

Approximately GBP 1.53 million p.a. was generated by people living in poverty through micro-entrepreneurialism and employment in semi- and unskilled positions (e.g. cleaners, waiters, cooks), mainly in the accommodation and food and drinks sector. Secondary supply (e.g. agricultural products) was mainly sourced from outside the destination.

Although the pro-poor impact was relatively small, participants strongly emphasised the importance of tourism income for their livelihood. A craft seller, for example, explained:

This is my source of income. We depend on tourism. We are directly dependent on the movement of tourists here in Imbassaí. We are craftsmen and 100% of our sales go to people who visit Imbassaí – not to people who live here. Tourism is indispensable for our survival.

All participants strongly expressed how through tourism income they could achieve basic functionings, such as being nourished and being sheltered. One participant, for example, stated that “It is much better now, because people did not have anything to eat, to drink. Now it is better because people can earn money to sustain their lives – buy water, food and small things like this”. Another participant explained how her family could build a house (see Figure 3) with income from tourism:

We have a house. We managed to build it. But I don't have anything else. I do not have a sofa. I don't have a table. I don't have chairs. If you come to my house, I can't offer you anything. My room is empty. I don't have anything.

Once these basic functionings were achieved, participants tended to buy further commodities (e.g. bike, TV, car), on the one hand, to ensure future income generation and on the other, to improve their social status. A craft seller, for example, bought a bike which he used every day to ride from his home to work (instead of walking). He explained that a bike saved time and he could spend more time making money or with his family. A participant who ran a small bar explained that she had bought a TV as an investment for her business: “[I bought a TV] for the World Cup, so people came in to watch games. It helped my business. I couldn't buy it on my own, but a friend helped me”. Another participant shared his observation on status-oriented consumption, saying

Status matters. For example, I know people who live where I live. And when they go shopping for bread, they use their car. That's 500 meters. And yet they drive by car. ... Because in the past, before tourism was developed, they had a very, very simple life. And, of course, these days, they want to show what they own.

By increasing material wealth and owning commodities associated with better-situated individuals, people seemed to feel that they can achieve a higher status and earn wider acceptance and respect in the society. In this way, tourism income provided people with opportunities to buy commodities they value and enabled them to achieve the functioning of being respected, which enhances their social conditions and contributes to individual well-being.

Non-monetary tourism resources and their contribution to capabilities and functionings

Contact with tourists

Alongside providing employment and income, tourism offered non-monetary resources that support expanding capabilities and achieving functionings. One resource that was strongly valued by participants was contact with tourists. One participant stated that “I like working in tourism, working with people. For me, this is very important. The cultural exchange. Because you have access to people from various cultures. From various nationalities”. Another participant explained why she enjoyed working in tourism:

When I had contact with tourists for the first time, in the past, it has always been a good feeling, because for us as natives having contact with tourists represented “the

exotic". Every person likes to get in touch with "the exotic" and afterwards gets more interested to learn more about it... through contact and exchange.

One participant indicated that working in tourism also provided an opportunity to advance knowledge:

It's funny because we do not know how to speak English or German, but we communicate a lot with gesticulation. ... We are delighted when we learn of cities like Venice. We were delighted to hear about Paris and about other traditions and other things, we love it a lot.

This was stressed by others too. A participant stated: "tourism is important for me because I can learn other languages. It is not very much, but I can have little conversations, I have learned a few words" and another commented that "Tourism brought knowledge. I learned a little in exchange with them [tourists]. I can understand various European people and their languages. I know how to communicate, and I know how to treat people. This is important to learn". In addition, the notion of establishing friendships was also highlighted as a participant explained:

Today, I have many 'very cool' friends. I have access to the world, because of my work in tourism. I know different people. I know people from other countries. I know different cultures. I think tourism brought me much quality and many personal benefits.

Since participants had limited opportunities to travel, having the real opportunity of communicating and engaging with tourists enabled them to learn about other cultures, become more culturally aware and educated, and establish friendships. These functionings, provided by tourism-contribute to reducing poverty in terms of its social dimension. Again, people living in poverty appeared to compare themselves with better-situated individuals who can afford to travel and gain cultural awareness and education through travelling.

Infrastructure development

As mentioned earlier, many participants explained that, before tourism development took place, there was 'nothing' in Imbassaí, which they particularly related to a lack in infrastructure. Infrastructure development was considered a result of tourism development by many participants. One participant, for example, stated that "tourism made it possible for us to have infrastructure in our city, in our village. If tourism was not here, I don't think it [infrastructure] would have been done". Another participant commented that "infrastructure has become much better. For me, everything is much better".

Many participants pointed out the value of a new road, which connected Imbassaí with a neighbourhood where many people who work in Imbassaí live. The new road provided easier, quicker and more comfortable access to Imbassaí and therefore improved their work life and quality of life. This allowed more time for people to do what they valued e.g. spending time with family and friends, relaxing or exercising (see Figure 3). In fact, participants often mentioned that having time for leisure activities supported greater well-being through achieving the functionings of being more active and social. One participant working for a hotel, for example, stated that “[on my day off], I was relaxing at a place on the beach here in Imbassaí. It is important for me to have moments to relax, because my work can be challenging and tough”.

The creation of public spaces (see Figure 3) for the community was also considered thanks to tourism development. These public spaces provided physical space for the community to gather and share and engage in community life. Participants frequently drew attention to traditional events and festivals that were celebrated in these public spaces and how they brought people, both locals and foreigners, together. One participant, for example, described that the festivals were for

locals and also for tourists to mix and to interact. It [São João] is a very traditional party in the Northeast. You can speak with people, integrate yourself in the community and communicate with tourists. São João is much about this: typical food, dance and celebration. So, it is great to really integrate.

Having public spaces to celebrate festivals and traditional events offered opportunities for people to interact, which contributed to the functioning of being socially engaged/ being together. Several participants commented that through meeting and talking with each other at festivals awareness, knowledge and mutual understanding increased. Participants referred to mutual understanding between local people and tourists, and also, interestingly, between different social classes in the community.

Many participants argued that fast Internet access in Imbassaí was only available due to tourism development. Having access to the Internet supported people in gaining information and developing greater awareness and knowledge. One participant, for example, argued that the Internet enabled her to have greater awareness of current issues affecting the Brazilian population, such as on-going social protests against inequalities in the education system or a nationwide scandal of corruption. Another participant added that having Internet access also provided people with opportunities to “make their voice heard”. For example, through the use of social media, a local environmental group informed people about environmental issues and put pressure on public authorities to intervene. In this way, having Internet access

provided people with the opportunity of influencing public debates and holding public authorities accountable, which were important for achieving the functioning of being empowered and having a voice.

Education and health services

Having access to education and health services were also described as valuable opportunities, which led to the functionings of being educated and being healthy. In terms of education, several participants emphasised the importance of the 'Instituto Imbassaí' in providing general education (e.g. Portuguese, maths, sexual education) and vocational training for the hospitality industry. The institute was founded in 2005 with the aim of providing professional education for the population to allow them to generate benefits from tourism development. Participants stressed that without tourism there would not be any form of capacitating the local population, particularly the young people. One participant, for example, pointed out that

The institute exists because of tourism. It enables people to work in hotels; it's very interesting for people to work in hotels, because they can have contact with people who often speak another language and this encourages them to learn English or another language as well. So, people get empowered through encouragement. All the courses are to encourage people. And, in fact, it is good for us to improve.

Another participant explained how tourism development improved health services in Imbassaí:

We did not have any health care services. If you were sick, you had to call an ambulance from another city. No idea how long that would take! This is all because of tourism! If tourism was not here, but only locals, there wouldn't be any provision of services, because Imbassaí has only a very, very small population.

In this section we showed how poor people in Imbassaí viewed the opportunities tourism development brought and how they affected their lives. In the following discussion section, we examine the key findings in relation to the existing literature highlighting this paper's contribution and discuss the challenges associated with the application of the capability approach.

Discussion

This study applied the capability approach to examine the opportunities provided by tourism development and their contribution to achieving diverse aspects of well-being from the perspectives of people living in poverty in Imbassaí, a small coastal destination in Brazil's

Northeast. Table 2 summarises how tourism provides both monetary and non-monetary resources for poor people and how they facilitate capabilities and achieved functionings.

*****Table 2 inserted here*****

In this study, participants frequently expressed the importance of monetary resources i.e. tourism income for improving their livelihoods. The positive impacts of tourism on employment, income and poverty reduction were evident in Imbassaí as other studies in Brazil suggest (Blake et al., 2008; Haddad et al., 2013; Ribeiro et al., 2017). Poor people in Imbassaí often described tourism as the only source to generate income with no alternatives and this was similar to what others have found too (Knight et al., 2017; Saayman et al., 2020; Truong, 2018; Truong et al., 2020).

Tourism employment and income enabled participants to achieve basic functionings, such as being nourished and being sheltered. It reflects the absolute need to escape poverty by having food and shelter (Sen, 1983). Once basic capabilities were achieved, participants used their tourism income to buy commodities (e.g. bike, TV, car) to improve economic and/or social conditions. For example, a car enables more convenient and faster transport, allowing participants to use time more efficiently to earn money and feel economically secure. At the same time, participants commented that having a car would enhance their status and support them in gaining respect in the community. In one sense, this shows that lack of income can be regarded as the “principle reason for a person's capability deprivation” (Sen, 1999, p. 87), and tourism income supports economic and social well-being of poor people. In another sense, the finding also underlines the importance of social dimensions of poverty and well-being (Jo, 2012; Spicker, 2020). Participants frequently compared themselves with socio-economically better situated individuals and it was evident that how people use their income was influenced by social factors as the capability approach suggests (Dreze & Sen, 2002; Robeyns, 2005). Hence, we need to understand poverty and well-being from a relative perspective “by comparing the position of people who are poor to those who are not poor” (Spicker, 2007, p. 15).

Yet it also highlights the complexity and ambiguities involved in the application of the capability approach. In fact, the relationships exemplified in Table 2 are not as clear or linear as suggested by the table. We found that the categories of commodities, capabilities and functionings often overlap and one commodity can support the achievement of more than one functioning i.e. economic security and social status (Clark, 2005a). Conversely, achieving a particular functioning can depend on different commodities, in other words, how people consume their income from tourism. While participants shared the achieved functioning of being economically secure, they used different commodities to achieve this

depending on their individual context. For example, one participant bought a TV to attract more customers to her bar whereas another participant bought a bike to have faster access to work and use time more efficiently to generate income. In the latter example, time was not only used to facilitate economic security, but also to spend time with family and be part of family life. However, to achieve functionings that bring greater value (i.e. being part of family life), the participant needed a bike (to save time), and to buy a bike, he needed a job and income. Yet, this also needed to be supported by road development. Therefore, to achieve a particular functioning a combination of commodities might be required (Clark, 2005a). This results in difficulties in classifying commodities, capabilities and functionings.

While participants frequently emphasised the importance of tourism income for achieving well-being, they also strongly referred to non-monetary resources provided by tourism such as contact with tourists, access to public services and provision of infrastructure. Participants highly valued contacts with tourist as it enabled them to communicate with tourists, to advance knowledge and to establish relationships and friendships, which supported them to be more culturally aware and educated, and to have international friends. This was similar to Truong et al.'s (2020) finding that poor people working in tourism value communicating with and learning from tourists, which broadens their knowledge and experiences. This again highlights the importance of social dimensions of poverty and well-being and thus suggests developing more holistic understanding of poverty from the perspective and experience of people living in poverty.

Additionally, the functionings of being culturally aware, being educated and having international friends, had a strong relative dimension as participants compared themselves with better-situated individuals in the community. As participants did not have the opportunity to travel and learn about different cultures and therefore advance their knowledge through travelling, contact with foreign tourists in their job gave them access to other parts of the world and learn about 'the other'. Thus, ultimately, through achieving these functionings of being culturally aware and educated, and having international friends, they were aiming for social status and respect in the community. In that regard, it is important to highlight that combination of functionings might be needed to achieve another functioning.

Other studies point out that providing education for children is a key concern for poor people (Knight et al., 2017; Truong et al., 2020). In this study many participants considered that tourism development encouraged improvements in education and provided access to schools. Similarly, participants observed that tourism development improved access to general health care facilities. However, participants reported that they could not afford to send their children to private schools or use private health care services as they were very

expensive and thus out of their reach. Nonetheless, having access to both education and health care locally, were important capabilities for participants and translated into the functionings of being educated and healthy.

Participants considered that improvements in public services and infrastructure development were only possible due to tourism development and the consequent population growth. Manwa and Manwa (2014) similarly suggest that tourism development attracts more people to live and work in tourist areas and consequently puts pressure on the government to build facilities including schools and health care facilities as well as infrastructure, which support individual well-being. Improvements in infrastructure related to road infrastructure, public spaces and Internet access are frequently identified in other studies (Manwa & Manwa, 2014; Muganda et al., 2010) as key positive impacts of tourism development that advance socio-economic development and contribute to poverty reduction. However, existing tourism research rarely explains how these impacts actually contribute to expanding capabilities and achieving functionings. In this study we attempted to fill this gap in the literature by focusing on what people living in poverty value in their lives and how tourism development can contribute to achieving these values.

We found that development of a new road allowed participants to access work more comfortably and time efficiently, which allowed them to spend more time on activities with greater value. The development of public spaces through tourism development also contributed to both individual and collective capabilities. Public spaces offer “a context of sociability, spontaneity, and community bonding” and “instrumental in securing local democracy as well as vitality within the community” (Tonon, 2018, p. 122). Having celebrations and festivals in these public spaces helped participants to achieve the functioning of being socially engaged and being together.

Participants also highlighted how their collective action as an environmental group on social media helped them achieve the functionings of having a voice and feeling empowered. This was enabled by having Internet access, which participants attributed to tourism development. Given that poor people face limitations in their individual capabilities and agency, engaging in collective actions to generate collective capabilities presents a means to empowerment (Ibrahim, 2017). The creation of their own participatory spaces where “like-minded people join together in common pursuits” (Cornwall, 2002, p. 24) can promote real empowerment and participation and social media platforms can be such a participatory space, albeit virtual. In that regard though, it needs to be acknowledged that the achievement of a particular functioning requires a combination of capabilities and hence, is not easily done.

Conclusion

This paper adopted the capability approach as a theoretical framework to examine the impacts of tourism on poverty reduction. In doing so, we moved away from an income-focused to more holistic, multidimensional poverty analysis. The use of a mixed-method approach combining quantitative VCA and qualitative interviews with photo-elicitation allowed us to investigate how both monetary and non-monetary tourism resources contributed to achieving functionings from the perspective of people living in poverty. Monetary tourism resources (i.e. income from tourism) provided poor people with wider opportunities than simply satisfying their economic needs. Many participants bought commodities to enhance their social status demonstrating the importance of social dimensions of poverty and individual well-being. Non-monetary tourism resources facilitated both individual and collective capabilities and functionings. The provision of public spaces appeared to be vital for the well-being of the community as they fostered social bonding and empowerment.

Being a small-scale study deriving from one specific location, this study may not allow a comparative study or development of large-scale PPT strategies. However, our findings on what poor people in Imbassaí actually valued in their lives and how tourism contributed to achieving their well-being can assist policymakers to create more effective local strategies. For example, future strategies can more directly address what matters to poor people and improve their multidimensional well-being by considering the development of participatory spaces for local people as well as tourism job creation.

Although the capability approach offered a framework for more holistic and nuanced understanding of poverty and well-being dimensions, the application of the approach was not without challenges in this study. In our efforts to identify capabilities and functionings, the complexity and ambiguity of these concepts became evident. The relation between a particular capability and functioning was more complex than the capability approach suggests, and our findings showed that multiple interrelations between capabilities and functionings exist. To address these challenges, future research may need to adopt more innovative research methodologies. For example, in addition to using photos to support participants to articulate their perspectives and experiences, researchers may consider incorporating drawings and/or mapping to show multiple interrelations and combinations of capabilities and functionings. The utilisation of these methods in a participatory research process will encourage poor people to act as “agents of change who can—given the opportunity—think, assess, evaluate, resolve, inspire, agitate, and, through these means, reshape the world” (Sen, 2013, p. 7).

As this paper set out to examine capabilities, in other words valuable opportunities, provided by tourism development, and their contribution to achieving well-being of poor people, we inevitably focused on the benefits of tourism development. However, this is not to say that tourism development only had positive effects on local people's well-being in Imbassaí. The broader research project (Author, 2019) also identified several societal and individual costs of tourism development. The capability approach can assist in conceptualising these negative impacts of tourism development by examining how structural constraints limit each person's capability set and inhibit the achievement of functionings. As Kubickova et al. (2017, p. 129) argue, "while tourism has the potential to improve quality of life, there might be multiple distractions that prevent an active human agency to exercise its ability to positively impact quality of life". Hence, for tourism to reach its full potential as a development tool, research needs to evaluate these constraints, and enlarge people's opportunities, so that it is in their agency to generate greater well-being and better standards of living.

We demonstrated that the capability approach and the notion of multidimensional well-being are highly relevant to tourism research. They are particularly relevant to achieving the global goal of sustainable development and inclusive growth through tourism development (e.g. SDG 1 No poverty, SDG 3 Quality education, and SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth). The potential of tourism to achieve these goals however now depends on how the world recovers from the current COVID-19 pandemic. Brazil's already fragile economy is severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular poorer regions in the North and Northeast (World Bank, 2020). Many argue that the COVID-19 crisis is a wake-up call and an opportunity "to reshape tourism into a model that is more sustainable, inclusive and caring of the many stakeholders that rely on it" (Cheer, 2020, p. 514). Caring about poor people relying on tourism should be a priority in tourism recovery interventions and policies so that poor people are given the opportunity to advance their well-being, agency and freedom.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1

VCA steps and activities

Step	Activity
I) Prepare the study	(a) Define the scope of the 'destination' (b) Define the target group(s)
II) Map the big picture i.e. enterprise and other actors in the tourism sector, links between them, demand and supply data, and the pertinent context	(c) Get on top of existing information (d) Identify relevant policies and plans (e) Map actors along the tourism value chain
III) Map where the target groups do and do not participate	(f) Annotate map to show where the specific target groups participate
IV) Conduct fieldwork with representatives from each node of the tourism value chain and with tourists	(g) Tourism value chain survey - gathering information for each node of the value chain (h) Tourist survey - gathering information from tourists
V) Track revenue flows and income and estimate how expenditure flows through the chain and how much accrues to the target groups	(i) Analyse the data and interpret the results (j) Estimate how much tourism expenditure reaches the target groups via different nodes in the chain

Source: Author

Table 2*Capabilities and functionings*

Resources	Capabilities i.e. the opportunity/ability to ...	Achieved Functionings
A. Monetary		
Tourism income	buy food	being nourished
	build/ rent a house	being sheltered
	buy commodities (e.g. bike, TV, phone, car)	being more comfortable and time efficient
		spending more time with family
		being more economically secure
		achieving status and being respected
B. Non-monetary		
(1) Contact with tourists	communicate with tourists	being culturally aware
	learn new things	advancing knowledge and being educated
	build relationships and friendships	having international friends
(2) Infrastructure		
New road	commute easier and faster	being more comfortable and time efficient
		spending more time with family & friends, relaxing and/or exercising
Public space	interact/ bond with each other	being socially engaged/ being together
Internet	engage in public debates	being empowered and having a voice
(3) Services		
Education	access (nearby) schools and the institute	being educated
Health care	access health care locally	being healthy

Source: Author

Figure 1

High-level stakeholder map and sample size

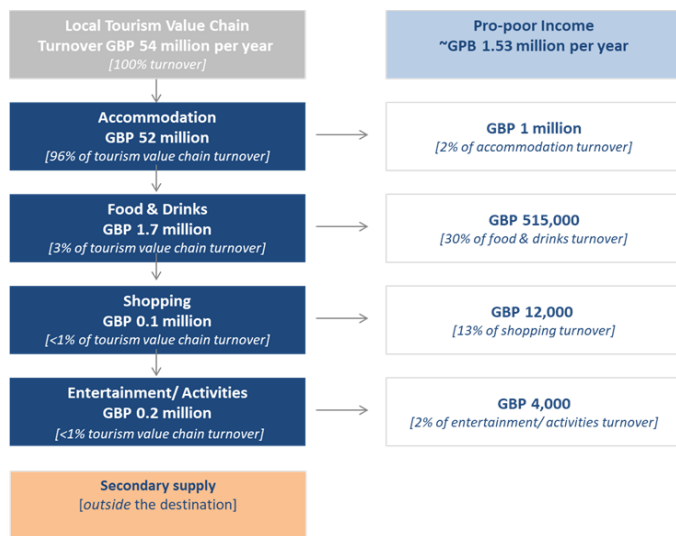
	Accommodation	Food & Drinks	Shopping	Entertainment/ Activities
Direct service provider	Hotel 2/2*	Bar [Just drinks] 2/3	Craft stall 2/3	Beach
	Pousada 16/27	Barraca [Beach bar] 4/18	Individual seller [Craft] 2/10	Sport [Surfing, etc.] 3/6
		Individual seller [Food/ drinks] 8/17	Shops 4/6	Massage 1/2
		Restaurant [Lunch/ dinner] 8/16		Waterfall 1/1
		Restaurant [Dinner] 4/6		Jangada [Boat trip] 1/3

*sample/population size

Source: Author

Figure 2

Tourism revenue and pro-poor income



Source: Author

Figure 3

Photos of tourism opportunities



Source: Participants (permission to reproduce image granted)