

An Analysis of Economic, Cultural and Environmental Outcomes of the Hospitality Industry in Zambian Kafue River Catchment

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ABSTRACT

The study conducted in middle and lower Kafue River area in the Southern Province established the economic, cultural and environmental outcomes of hospitality industry in Zambians Kafue river catchment.

The objective was to analyze the economic, cultural and environmental outcome of the hospitality industry in the Kafue River Catchment.

A hermeneutic phenomenology qualitative research design was used to conduct this study, and a 66 participants sample drawn from ten focus groups engaged from both middle and lower Kafue. A purposive sampling technique was used, and the data was generated using focus group guide and was thematically analyzed.

Results showed that hospitality industry provided limited economic outcomes, and few locals were employed in hospitality industry with low-salary jobs. It was further established that purchases of produce is made from supermarkets instead of local communities. The study revealed that related activities within the area have contributed significantly to cultural preservation and revitalization. Many communities engage in traditional dances, storytelling, and craft production as part of tourism and hospitality experiences, providing platforms for expressing and sustaining local heritage. However, participants also expressed concern about the commercialization of culture, noting that cultural performances and artifacts are sometimes exploited for profit without fair compensation to the creators or performers.

Findings from this study will be necessary for informing policy makers on how the hospitality industry can support local communities economically, culturally and environmentally directly as they operate their businesses. The outcomes should be equally shared among the stakeholders. Hospitality industry should implement what is stipulated in the policy to achieve a winning situation for both hospitality industry and the communities. It will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on local engagement in hospitality industry.

Keywords: Economic, Cultural, Environmental, Hospitality, Industry, Kafue River, Catchment, Analysis, outcomes

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry plays a pivotal role in shaping the economic, cultural and environmental landscape of countries around the world. Zambia is endowed with abundant natural resources and a rich cultural heritage, the hospitality industry has emerged as a significant contributor to economic development, social dynamics, and environmental sustainability. As Zambia continues to grow as a tourist destination and a regional hub for business, the industry's influence extends beyond mere economic impacts, influencing local communities, cultural preservation, and the broader environmental framework. Therefore, this study analyzes the economic, cultural and environmental outcomes of hospitality industry in Kafue River catchment, which includes the middle and lower Kafue. Historically, the area has seen increased tourism activities (Ministry of Tourism and Arts, 2015). Despite this, however, there have been reports of limited community benefits in economic, cultural

and environmental outcomes. This research will address the gap that has been viewed on the outcomes of Hospitality industry in the Kafue River catchment.

Existing literature highlights the economical outcomes of the hospitality industry in Zambia. The industry generates vital income, which contributes to Gross Domestic Production (GDP) growth, employment, and the creation of business opportunities for the local people. The industry's role in attracting both international tourists and regional visitors positions Zambia as a key player in the Southern African tourism market. This was confirmed by the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2025, which highlighted that hospitality industry has become central to economic development, providing employment, fostering local businesses and generating significant tax revenues. The industry also improves the local infrastructure such as roads, healthcare, and public utilities, which benefits both tourists and local populations. Hotels and resorts often create demand for better connectivity and services, which indirectly benefits residents through infrastructure improvement. (WEFs Future of Jobs Report 2025).

Culturally, the growth of the hospitality industry presents both opportunities for industry and the local people. A nuanced understanding of these cultural dynamics is necessary to ensure that the hospitality industry fosters cultural appreciation rather than cultural erosion. In an increasingly globalized world, travelers are becoming more diverse. A hospitality business that can accommodate the cultural expectations of international guests is more likely to attract a wider customer base. This includes offering multilingual services, culturally appropriate amenities, and understanding different customs. Kautharak, (2024) revealed the activities which hospitality entrepreneurs should adhere to support the local community in the area where the business is being conducted which included promoting cultural and heritage sites, supporting local crafts and cultural events and sites. Cristobal, (2023) confirmed that Cultural preservation and heritage which is achieved through showcasing of cultural assets can develop the local communities' areas which are located near hospitality establishments. Zhang et al 2015; Ruhlandt, (2020)

Environmentally, including preservation of natural resources for the local people particularly where the business is being conducted. This was confirmed by Alexandra et al, (2015), who pointed out the importance of considering environmental issues which included environmental management and engagement of environmental related community events of the communities. This was also agreed by Thullah, (2021), that hospitality benefits the residents where it is being practiced, economically, culturally and environmentally. Yinyoung et al, (2020) highlighted that hospitality industry should consider environmental issues particularly managing of waste and pollution. Correa et al, (2015); Chan and Hsu, (2016); jones et al, (2016).

Economically, culturally and environmentally sustainability is the critical aspect of the hospitality industry's impact in Zambia. The country's diverse ecosystems, ranging from the Zambezi River to the lush forests of the Luangwa Valley, attract tourists who seek eco-friendly and nature-based experiences. However, the development of hotels, resorts, and other infrastructure in ecologically sensitive areas raises questions about the environmental consequences of such growth. Balancing economic benefits with the preservation of Zambia's natural resources requires innovative strategies to ensure that hospitality development does not come at the expense of the country's ecological integrity.

These trends underscore the hospitality industry's multifaceted role in local economies, particularly through job creation, sustainable development, and infrastructure enhancement. Studies also indicate that while the sector faces challenges like post-pandemic recovery and environmental sustainability, its economic benefits remain significant, especially for rural or developing regions.

Accordingly, more scholars agree that the hospitality industry outcomes can benefit the country, economically, culturally and environmentally. Based on past research, evidence is clear on how the hospitality industry conducts its business and generate positive impacts to the country where business is being practiced, Willya et al, (2022). However, literature does not show clearly if the local communities really benefit from hospitality entrepreneurship establishments directly. Therefore, the study aims to explore the complex interplay between economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes within Zambia's hospitality industry. By analyzing the impacts on local communities, sustainable practices, and the broader economic environment, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the hospitality industry's role in Zambia's development. In doing so, it will

contribute to the ongoing discourse on how hospitality industry can be managed in a way that supports long-term sustainability to the local communities in the Kafue river catchment while promoting inclusive growth.

Problem Statement

The hospitality industry in Zambia has shown significant growth over the past few decades, with the sector contributing notably to the national economy through hospitality, job creation, and infrastructural development (World Tourism Organization, 2020). However, the rapid expansion of this industry raises important questions regarding its sustainability, particularly in relation to its economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes. While the industry has provided tangible benefits, such as increased foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunities Ampofo, (2020), it has also brought challenges related to cultural dilution, environmental degradation, and uneven economic development, especially in rural areas.

There is a lack of comprehensive research that holistically analyzes the intertwined outcomes of the hospitality industry in Zambia, particularly from the perspectives of local communities, policymakers, and environmental stakeholders. The existing literature primarily focuses on isolated aspects of hospitality, but there is limited empirical evidence on how these outcomes intersect and what the long-term implications are for the country's socio-economic and environmental sustainability for the local communities.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes of Zambia's hospitality industry in the Kafue river catchment from middle to lower Kafue and investigating how the industry can contribute to sustainable development of the local people particularly those who are near the hospitality establishments. It will analyze the role of hospitality in economic diversification, its outcome on local culture and community well-being, and the environmental pressures associated with the development of hospitality infrastructure. The central research question is Analysis of economical, cultural and environmental outcomes of the hospitality industry in Zambian Kafue River catchment.

Objectives Of The Study

The study seeks to achieve its general objective by analyzing the economic, cultural and environmental outcomes of hospitality industry in Zambia's Kafue River catchment by using the following specific objective: To analyze the economic, cultural and environmental outcomes of the hospitality industry in Zambian Kafue River catchment.

It is believed that the hospitality industry contributes directly and indirectly in the country where it is practiced but how it helps the local communities economically, culturally and environmentally is crucial, Uslu et al (2020). Nappo, (2020) noted that the hospitality industry contributes greatly to the issues of the economic, cultural and environment which benefit both the industry and the wellbeing of the local community.

Therefore, the study may help identify the concepts on how the outcomes of the hospitality industry benefit the local community and not just the government and the entrepreneurs at large. It may also look at what activities can be done by hospitality industry, which can improve the livelihood of the local communities directly and not make them feel like they are misplaced or inconvenienced by the development of the hospitality establishment but to be part of the business as it develops.

The study was underpinned by Community-Based Tourism (CBT). The theory will inform the cultural and social aspects of the study. CBT focuses on involving local communities in hospitality development, ensuring that they have a direct stake in the hospitality process, both economically and culturally. This theory will be applied to explore how community-driven approaches in Zambia's hospitality industry could lead to more sustainable and culturally sensitive hospitality practices.

The theory is applicable to the study since in the hospitality industry, community-based approaches are increasingly important, as the industry seeks to be more sustainable, equitable, and culturally sensitive. These approaches focus on ensuring that local communities play an active role in tourism development and that they benefit economically, socially, and culturally. The coverage of the study was the Kafue River catchment, which

included the middle area up to the confluence in the Southern province. The focus of the study is to investigate the economic, cultural and environmental outcomes of the hospitality industry in the Kafue River catchment, especially the surrounding areas near the hospitality establishments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the past research on the hospitality industry and its outcome emphasized how important it is for the hospitality industry to work together with the local communities in hospitality outcomes. With tourism being a major driver of national revenue. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism contributes significantly to Zambia's GDP, with projections suggesting continued growth in the coming years.

The hospitality sector supports a wide range of related industries, from agriculture to transportation, providing a direct and indirect employment base for thousands of Zambians. However, the economic benefits are often concentrated in major tourist hubs, such as Livingstone and Lusaka, while rural areas may not fully capitalize on the opportunities provided by tourism. The issue of income inequality within industry is an ongoing concern, as many local entrepreneurs and communities may not experience the full economic advantages of hospitality development. Additionally, the effects of seasonality, global economic trends, and infrastructure challenges can make the industry's economic impact unstable and unpredictable.

Cultural preservation and tourism are often seen as interlinked, with the potential for tourism to promote cultural exchange, foster national pride, and provide revenue for cultural heritage projects. However, there is a growing concern about cultural commodification, where local traditions and cultural practices are altered or presented for tourist consumption. This can lead to the dilution of local cultures and values, as communities may feel pressure to conform to tourist expectations rather than preserving authentic cultural expressions. Research has highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity in tourism development. In Zambia, the increasing presence of international hotel chains and resort developments can overshadow indigenous cultural practices and lead to the erosion of cultural identities.

At the same time, the rise of cultural tourism in Zambia, particularly around traditional ceremonies and festivals, can help revitalize cultural pride and encourage the preservation of intangible heritage.

The environmental impact of the hospitality industry is one of the most pressing concerns globally, and Zambia is no exception. The country's rich natural heritage, including the Victoria Falls and national parks like South Luangwa, is a primary draw for tourists, yet the infrastructure required to accommodate visitors can strain local ecosystems. Uncontrolled development of tourism infrastructure often leads to habitat destruction, pollution, and overuse of water resources. This was confirmed by Alexandra et al (2015) by stating environmental issues as one of the important aspects in hospitality business. This can be achieved by environmental management and engagement of environmentally related community events. Yinyoung et al (2020) agreed that hospitality operations should consider environmental issues and particularly managing waste and pollution ;(Jones et al, 2016).

Sustainable tourism practices have been advocated as a solution to balance economic growth with environmental preservation. However, the implementation of such practices is inconsistent across Zambia. While some operators adopt eco-friendly practices, such as waste reduction, water conservation, and wildlife protection, others fail to adhere to basic environmental standards, putting Zambia's natural beauty at risk.

Gaps in the Literature showed that while numerous studies have examined individual aspects of Zambia's hospitality industry, such as its economic contributions or environmental impacts, few have looked at the holistic relationship between these factors. There is a need for research that integrates the economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions of hospitality industry to develop a more nuanced understanding of the hospitality industry long-term impact on Zambia. Additionally, much of the existing literature focuses on specific case studies, leaving broader questions of national policy and sustainable development of the communities underexplored. Therefore, this study focused on the economic, cultural and environmental outcomes of the hospitality industry, especially the surrounding areas and how it benefits them directly along the Kafue River catchment.

The study employed a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology design to investigate and describe the lived realities of the local people. The research was informed by constructivism paradigm which is anchored on relativism which highlights understanding phenomena from the viewpoint of those who experience and interact (Adom et al., 2016; Lincoln, 2016). This approach allowed the researchers to obtain multiple perspectives of participants' real-world experiences and interactions. The study was conducted along the Kafue River catchment and the researcher's position was ethic.

The population of the study consisted of local communities, inclusive of both the individuals and community leaders within the Kafue river catchment. Sixty-six participants were selected through purposive sampling, based on an inclusion criteria determined beforehand. Purposively, this study used a purposive sampling, in which participants met predefined criteria and had shared experience with the phenomenon under the study, but varied in characteristics and in their individual experiences and interactions.

Data was generated using focus group discussion. The focus group guide was composed of open-ended questions crafted to draw out thorough depictions of participants' experiences and interactions. The guide was pretested to heighten clarity and reduce anticipated deviations in data construction.

Data was analyzed by inductive thematic analysis, this approach involves analyzing raw data, such as focus transcripts, to identify patterns and codes organically, allowing for flexibility and data-driven insights without preconceived categories or theories. This flexibility allows the data to guide the research analysis to identify emerging patterns, themes and concepts, Derve, (2023). The mapping of relationships between codes and understanding patterns across participants' response's themes were developed. This process enabled a structured but flexible approach to analyzing layered qualitative data.

The study employed strategies which included using participant's feedback to validate interpretive precision, structured peer feedback sessions, and comprehensive documentation of the analytical process. These measures heightened the confirmability, credibility and dependability of the findings.

Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Generally, this methodological approach allowed the study to extract layered insights of local people participation, offering evidence-informed guidance for hospitality establishment and policymakers in search of strategies to sustain the livelihood of the local people and the hospitality establishments.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A total of sixty-six (66) participants, identified as P1 to P66, were drawn from ten key communities located within the Kafue River Catchment area. These included Chita Lodge, Kandende, Ilazi, Mafugautsi, Royal Park, Namwala Ferry, Kafue Road Bridge, Chunga Camp, Gotagota, and Kambale, as well as surrounding areas within the Kafue National Park. The selection of participants from diverse settings provided a balanced representation of both rural and semi-urban communities directly linked to the hospitality and tourism landscape of the region.

Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 60 years, reflecting a wide generational spectrum of experiences and insights. Approximately 60% of the respondents were male and 40% female, indicating a relatively balanced gender participation, though men were slightly more represented, particularly in fishing and boat transport activities. The participants were primarily involved in small-scale economic undertakings such as fishing, farming, vending, and informal hospitality services, including catering, housekeeping, guiding, and security. These activities positioned them as both direct and indirect contributors to the hospitality sector.

Each focus group comprised between four (4) and six (6) participants, a manageable size that allowed for rich, interactive discussions and the sharing of detailed lived experiences. The group dynamics promoted openness and collective reflection, enabling participants to express common challenges, aspirations, and perceptions regarding their involvement in hospitality enterprises. The diversity within the focus groups helped to capture varying perspectives across gender, age, and occupational lines, thereby enhancing the credibility and depth of the qualitative data collected.

Table 1: Summary of Focus Groups and Participant Profiles

| Focus Group | Community Coverage | No. of Participants | Gender (M/F) | Age Range | Dominant Occupations | Key Characteristics |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| FG1 | Chita Lodge | 6 | 4/2 | 20–55 | Business, vending | Semi-urban; near lodges |
| FG2 | Kandende | 6 | 1/5 | 20–35 | Fruit & vegetable sellers | Female-dominated trade |
| FG3 | Ilazi | 5 | 3/2 | 20–50 | Fishermen, traders | Riverbank livelihoods |
| FG4 | Mafugautsi | 6 | 5/1 | 20–45 | Boat operators, fishermen | Water-based tourism |
| FG5 | Royal Park | 6 | 4/2 | 20–50 | Gardeners, security | Linked to safari lodges |
| FG6 | Namwala Ferry | 6 | 5/1 | 20–40 | Boat operators, traders | Cross-river hub |
| FG7 | Kafue Road Bridge | 5 | 4/1 | 20–45 | Fishermen, carpenters | Roadside trade |
| FG8 | Chunga Camp | 6 | 4/2 | 20–40 | Fishermen, lodge workers | Inside tourism belt |
| FG9 | Gotagota | 6 | 5/1 | 20–55 | Farmers, fishermen | Mixed livelihood base |
| FG10 | Kambale & Park Communities | 6 | 5/1 | 20–60 | Farmers, fish sellers | Conservation zone |

Table 2: Summary of responses on the analysis of the economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes of hospitality industry on the local community.

| Economic outcomes | Cultural outcomes | Environmental outcomes | Social outcomes |
|--|---|---|---|
| Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20% of the local community are provided with jobs - Low economic benefits, because some establishments do not have any activities for the communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural preservation - Showcasing of traditional activities | Environmental sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waste management. - Clearing the River by removing unwanted objects. Conservation of natural resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of wildlife | Stakeholder relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are not allowed to go near the hospitality establishment - We cannot go and buy items from the establishments because we cannot afford to buy, the |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Local economic growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some establishment purchase fish and vegetables from the community - some establishments don't trust local foods hence they purchase from the supermarkets - some they only purchase crayfish from the local people - establishments cannot even build a clinic for the community - roads are in bad state. | Environmental degradation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of water and land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noise pollution for the community by playing loud music for so many hours. - Habitat destruction by guests or tourists who through empty bottles on the river after consuming the beverages. - Construction of the hospitality establishment just next to the river. - The lighting which is set on those establishments which are near the river disturbs the fish and you cannot catch fish near those areas. - Roads are not maintained | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prices are too high for the community. - Establishment normally interacts with the chiefs, during celebrations, some establishment invite the chiefs to their establishment. - Most of the establishments work in isolation. - Some investors come with their own instructions |
|--|---|--|---|

This study explored the economic, cultural and environmental outcomes of the hospitality industry along the Kafue river catchment from middle and lower in Zambia. The middle and lower Kafue were purposively selected because of their significance in hospitality businesses, which are directly located in community areas.

Economic outcomes

The study found that economic outcomes of local participation in the hospitality industry within the Kafue River Catchment are modest and unevenly distributed. Approximately 20% of residents are employed in hospitality establishments, mainly in casual or low-skilled positions such as cleaning, cooking, or maintenance. While these jobs provide some income, they rarely offer long-term financial stability or career advancement.

The overall economic benefits to the local population remain minimal because many hospitality enterprises prefer to source both goods and skilled labor from outside the communities, often citing concerns about quality, consistency, and reliability. Consequently, much of the revenue generated by the industry flows out of the local economy, limiting the potential multiplier effect on household incomes. Additionally, poor road networks and inadequate rural infrastructure including unreliable electricity and limited access to markets further restrict local participation and business opportunities. These structural barriers hinder the integration of local producers and service providers into the hospitality supply chain, thereby constraining the sector's potential to drive inclusive and sustainable economic development in the Kafue River Catchment.

Cultural Outcomes

The study revealed that hospitality activities within the Kafue River Catchment have contributed significantly to cultural preservation and revitalization. Many communities engage in traditional dances, storytelling, and craft production as part of tourism and hospitality experiences, providing platforms for expressing and sustaining local heritage. These interactions have fostered a renewed sense of cultural pride and identity, as residents increasingly recognize the value of their traditions in attracting visitors and generating income. However, participants also expressed concern about the commercialization of culture, noting that cultural performances and artifacts are sometimes exploited for profit without fair compensation to the creators or performers. This tension between preservation and commercialization underscores the need for mechanisms that ensure equitable benefit-sharing and ethical cultural representation. Overall, while the hospitality industry has strengthened cultural visibility and pride among local people, it also raises important questions about ownership, authenticity, and the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

Environmental Outcomes

The findings revealed a mix of positive and negative environmental outcomes associated with hospitality activities in the Kafue River Catchment. On the positive side, some hospitality establishments have taken proactive measures to promote environmental stewardship. These include regular waste collection, awareness campaigns, and river clean-up exercises organized in collaboration with local communities. Such initiatives have enhanced public understanding of environmental protection and encouraged responsible behavior among residents and visitors alike. However, several negative environmental impacts were also observed.

These include noise pollution from loud music played at lodges and recreational sites, light pollution that disrupts fish breeding patterns along the river, and unregulated construction too close to the riverbanks, leading to soil erosion and loss of natural vegetation. Additionally, poor waste disposal practices by some facilities and visitors have contributed to habitat degradation, posing threats to both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. These contrasting outcomes highlight the urgent need for stronger environmental management frameworks, regular monitoring, and community-based conservation initiatives to ensure that hospitality development within the catchment remains sustainable and ecologically responsible.

Hospitality entrepreneurship has generated both positive and negative impacts. It contributes modestly to employment and cultural revitalization but simultaneously causes ecological pressure and social inequality. Sustainable community involvement requires improved infrastructure, fair labor practices, and environmental accountability.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Economical Outcomes

Economic outcomes of local participation in the hospitality industry within the Kafue River Catchment are modest and unevenly distributed. Approximately 20% of residents are employed in hospitality establishments, mainly in casual or low-skilled positions such as cleaning, cooking, or maintenance. While these jobs provide some income, they rarely offer long-term financial stability or career advancement. These findings concur with earlier research by Ramesh. (2022), which documented employment as one of dimensions hospitality entrepreneurs should adhere to for them to have successful business in the area where business is being conducted.

The overall economic benefits to the local population remain minimal because many hospitality enterprises prefer to source both goods and skilled labor from outside the communities, often citing concerns about quality, consistency, and reliability. Consequently, much of the revenue generated by the industry flows out of the local economy, limiting the potential multiplier effect on household incomes. Additionally, poor road networks and inadequate rural infrastructure including unreliable electricity and limited access to markets further restrict local participation and business opportunities. These structural barriers hinder the integration of local producers and service providers into the hospitality supply chain, thereby constraining the sector's potential to drive inclusive

and sustainable economic development in the Kafue River Catchment. This finding concurs with Brooker et al. (2014), who stated the outcome of economic of hospitality industry on the local people.

Cultural Outcomes

Cultural outcomes of hospitality entrepreneurship in the Kafue River Catchment are dual in nature they involve both cultural preservation and cultural commodification. The study found that the hospitality industry has played a role in reviving traditional arts, dances, and cuisines, as these cultural expressions are showcased to tourists during festivals and at hospitality facilities. Communities have rediscovered pride in their cultural heritage, recognizing it as both an identity marker and an economic asset. This aligns with Abas et al. (2023), who observe that community-based tourism often acts as a catalyst for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in developing regions.

However, the study also revealed that cultural practices are increasingly being commercialized and standardized to suit tourist expectations. Cultural performances and rituals that once held spiritual or communal significance are sometimes staged primarily for entertainment and profit. This phenomenon often referred to as cultural commodification poses a risk of eroding authenticity and transforming culture into a market product. Mlambo and Dube (2021) and Rahman and Hassan (2022) highlight similar concerns, arguing that tourism-driven commodification can weaken the intrinsic meanings of cultural expressions if not managed with sensitivity and local consent.

Moreover, not all cultural groups within the catchment benefit equally from tourism exposure. Certain communities closer to lodges and access roads have more opportunities to perform and sell crafts, while those in remote areas remain excluded. This spatial imbalance contributes to internal inequalities and tensions. Kangombe and Phiri (2021) emphasize that equitable cultural participation requires deliberate inclusion of all community subgroups, including women and youth, through cultural cooperatives and rotational performance schemes.

From the theoretical lens of CPT, these dynamics highlight that authentic cultural preservation can only occur when communities exercise agency and control over how their culture is represented and marketed. Participation in cultural tourism should therefore be negotiated, community-led, and rooted in local consent. As Chen and Xie (2025) argue, participatory governance in cultural tourism enhances authenticity, ensures equitable benefit-sharing, and prevents exploitation of cultural identities.

Despite these challenges, cultural tourism remains a valuable opportunity for community empowerment. When properly managed, it fosters intergenerational knowledge transfer, strengthens local pride, and promotes cross-cultural understanding. To achieve this, policies must encourage community-led cultural programming and the establishment of cultural interpretation centers that are run by locals rather than external investors.

Environmental Outcomes

The environmental outcomes of hospitality entrepreneurship in the Kafue River Catchment are mixed, reflecting both progress and persistent challenges. On one hand, several lodges and eco-resorts have adopted sustainable environmental practices, such as the use of solar energy, waste separation, water recycling, and reforestation. These initiatives demonstrate a growing awareness of environmental stewardship among some industry players. Chen and Xie, (2025) describe such practices as examples of “dynamic governance,” where innovation and ecological responsibility intersect to enhance destination sustainability.

On the other hand, evidence from the study indicates ongoing environmental degradation linked to unregulated tourism activities. Issues such as deforestation of firewood, waste pollution in the river, and habitat disturbance from boat traffic threaten the ecological integrity of the catchment. Local respondents expressed concern that certain operators prioritize profit over environmental protection, citing poor waste disposal and encroachment on sensitive wetlands. These findings align with Rahman and Hassan, (2022), who observed that inconsistent enforcement of environmental policies undermines sustainability efforts in African tourism destinations.

Moreover, local communities are often excluded from environmental decision-making processes, even though they bear the brunt of ecological degradation. Liu and Wall, (2020) argue that sustainable environmental outcomes depend on community involvement in monitoring, conservation, and benefit-sharing. From a CPT perspective, environmental participation should not be limited to compliance but should empower communities to co-manage resources and derive benefits from conservation initiatives, such as eco-tourism or carbon credit programs.

Environmental sustainability is further undermined by the absence of formal environmental education and awareness campaigns among residents. As noted by Pretty et al, (2021), participation in environmental management requires knowledge and motivation; communities must understand both the ecological and economic value of preserving natural assets. In the Kafue River Catchment, the lack of structured environmental awareness programs limits locals' capacity to advocate for sustainable practices.

Nevertheless, the study found promising examples of community-led environmental initiatives. Some youth groups and women's cooperatives have begun tree planting and waste collection projects, often in collaboration with non-governmental organizations. These grassroots efforts, though small in scale, reflect the growing environmental consciousness among the population. According to Krittayaruangroj et al, (2023), such bottom-up initiatives, when supported by local authorities and investors, can evolve into effective community-based environmental management systems.

Synthesis of Economic, Cultural, and Environmental Outcomes

The economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes of hospitality entrepreneurship in the Kafue River Catchment are deeply intertwined. Economic marginalization reduces community capacity to invest in sustainable practices, while cultural commodification and environmental degradation reflect limited local agency in tourism governance. These interrelations demonstrate that sustainability cannot be achieved through economic growth alone; it requires inclusive participation, equitable benefit-sharing, and empowerment-oriented policy frameworks.

From the standpoint of Community Based Theory, these findings reaffirm the principle that meaningful participation is both a process and an outcome. When communities have influence over hospitality development, they are more likely to protect their environment, preserve their culture, and reinvest economic benefits locally. Conversely, exclusion breeds dependency, inequality, and environmental neglect.

To achieve balanced and sustainable outcomes, policy interventions must therefore prioritize participatory planning, capacity building, and financial inclusion. Hospitality operators should be encouraged through policy incentives to form partnerships with local cooperatives, support cultural authenticity, and implement robust environmental safeguards. Only through such an integrated, community-driven approach can the hospitality industry in the Kafue River Catchment contribute to long-term sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the economic, cultural and environmental outcomes of the hospitality industry in Zambian Kafue River catchment. The findings reveal that hospitality establishments economically were limited in the catchment has it only provided to 20% local people were employed by the industry and the majority were associated with lower salary which cannot sustain the wellbeing of the community. It was discovered that the high salary jobs were given to people who come outside the catchment. This displeases the local people demanding that they can also occupy those highly salary jobs only if the government and the establishment train them in hospitality and tourism programs. Establishments also did not support the local people fully in terms of income generation for the community because most of them purchased garden products items from supermarkets instead of local community markets.

The study further demonstrates that the hospitality industry has played a role in reviving traditional arts, dances, and cuisines, as these cultural expressions are showcased to tourists during festivals and at hospitality facilities. Communities have rediscovered pride in their cultural heritage, recognizing it as both an identity marker and an

economic asset. However, not all cultural groups within the catchment benefited equally from hospitality exposure.

Furthermore, the study finds environmental outcomes of hospitality industry in the Kafue River Catchment are mixed, reflecting both progress and persistent challenges. On one hand, several lodges and eco-resorts have adopted sustainable environmental practices, such as the use of solar energy, waste separation, water recycling, and reforestation

On the other hand, evidence from the study indicates ongoing environmental degradation linked to unregulated hospitality activities. Issues such as deforestation of firewood, waste pollution in the river, and habitat disturbance from boat traffic threaten the ecological integrity of the catchment. The government, as the primary guardian of land, should see to it that investors adhere to the policy on how to develop the local communities as they conduct business by supporting their businesses, training to their standard so as they obtain high salary jobs, this will improve their livelihood.

A major constraint of this study is its geographic area of application, which was limited to middle and lower Kafue River. As a result, the findings may not comprehensively describe the experiences of hospitality industry in other parts of Zambia. Further research could explore increasing the sample size and coverage area, integrating various hospitality settings and implementing mixed methods approaches to enhance comprehension of energy coping measures throughout the industry.

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Conflicts of interest

There were no conflicts of interest in all stages of the study.

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Author contribution

80% of the work was done by the principal author and 20% was done by the core authors

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