

## **Interconnectedness of road infrastructure and tourism development: Perspectives from residents and enterprises**

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### **Abstract**

This article notes significant views articulated by several social scientists regarding the importance of road infrastructure to tourism growth and development. Tourism is undoubtedly one of the key economic sectors in Msunduzi Municipality. However, the potential for this sector to thrive and yield benefits for local tourism businesses is hindered by poor road infrastructure. Thus, resulting in limited access to tourism attractions and the city's aesthetic appeal. The study aimed to examine the extent to which poor road infrastructure affects accessibility, and aesthetics of Msunduzi Municipality as a tourism destination. A qualitative research approach was adopted in conjunction with the development theory which was guided by two models, namely the Critics of the modernisation and structural adjustment. Data was collected using primary and secondary sources, including newspaper articles, social media platforms and imaged-based analysis. The findings revealed that residents and businesses are inconvenienced by roads that are riddled with potholes and the slow pace of maintenance. Similarly, the service delivery is mounted with client dissatisfaction that emanate from the municipality's lack of response and action in repairing roads. The study concludes with recommendations on how the service delivery value chain can be implemented within the municipality to accelerate service delivery and maximize its economic potential.

**Key words:** road infrastructure, tourism, service delivery, attractions

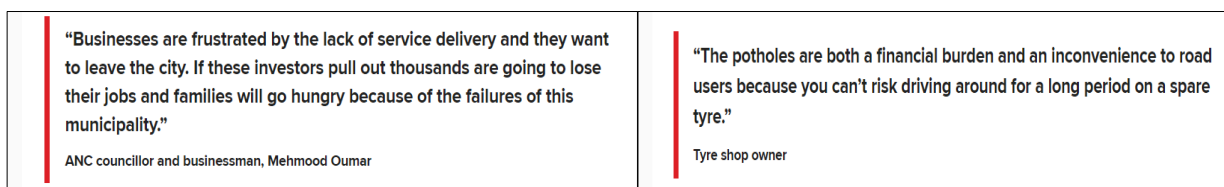
### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, many developing countries have capitalized on self-drive tourism as a catalyst for economic growth particularly in rural and regional areas (Carson and Waller, 2002; Hardy 2003; Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Huang, Beeco, Hallo & Norman, 2016). This allows for enhanced tourism activity when an area has sufficient options for flexibility and mobility. The Msunduzi Municipality (MM) is situated in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality and is home to the Capital and second largest city on KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Conveniently located, it is approximately 45 minutes' drive from Durban, the MM is straddling the N3 corridor, one of the busiest development corridors in the country, which links the Durban and Gauteng economic hubs. The MM is subject to several advantageous components, including it being a tourist destination

which drives the rise in hotels and restaurants (Socio-economic Impact Assessment Report, 2017). Fjelstul and Fyall (2015) state that commonly travelled routes encourage tourism development. There are a several factors that reinforce the establishment of a sustainable self-drive tourism market, including reliable, safe and efficient road networks, signage and information, and visitor services (Hardy, 2003).

The significance of road and transportation infrastructure in the development of tourism is irrefutable (Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2007; Masson & Petiot, 2009). Road and transport infrastructure provides ease and convenience of access to tourism attractions thereby intensifying business activities in the region that have the potential to contribute immensely to the improvement of livelihoods and the local community's standard of living. Several researchers have over the years emphasized the role of road and transport infrastructure as not only limited to heightening existing and established tourism activities, but is also pivotal in developing new tourism sites in the region (Currie & Falconer, 2014; Musa & Ndawayo, 2011; Virkar & Mallya, 2018). A recent study suggested that road and transport infrastructure in a country attracts tourists and can promote tourism destinations (Virkar & Mallya, 2018). In support of this statement, the National Development Plan recognises that public infrastructure, particularly that relating to energy, water, and transport, facilitates faster economic growth and productivity by contributing to increased competitiveness and exports and lessening the cost of doing business. Furthermore, infrastructure creates jobs for low-skilled individuals and promotes spatial inclusivity (NPC Economy Series - Background Paper, 2020). Several scholars have suggested that there exists a positive link between road infrastructure and tourism activities (Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2007; Liu & Chi, 2019) which directly impacts on the flow and pace of tourism development (Kanwal, Rasheed, Pitafi, et al., 2019; Nazneen, Xu, & Din, 2019). Equally, Virkar and Mallya (2018) emphasized several factors related to tourist satisfaction, involving transportation infrastructure and service quality, and maintained that transport infrastructure is an important predictive factor for tourism development. In particular, road and transport infrastructure facilitates the travel of tourists and simplifies movement within destinations (Lohmann & Duval, 2011).

Whilst tourism is a significant economic sector in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the Msunduzi Municipality is riddled with potholes dating back to 2017. Residents' frustrations are escalating over Msunduzi Municipality's lack of urgency in properly repairing the hundreds of potholes that riddle its roads all over the city of Pietermaritzburg. In an article written by Ntuli (2020) of The Witness newspaper, it is reported that various businesses and individuals have had to resort to financing the repairs of potholes. The article further encompassed comments from the ANC and businessman Mehmood Oumar who pointed out that he is always bombarded with complaints from his colleagues in the business sector about potholes and power outages. In the same article, one business owner who did not wish to be identified mentioned that "potholes are the first thing that greeted visitors in the province's capital city and that is not something to be proud of. The roads are the first thing that tell you that we have a poorly managed municipality, it is actually quite sad how low we have allowed our city to go". Figure 1 is a snippet of comments from the newspaper article quoting the ANC councillor and businessman, Mehmood Oumar and one business owner.



**Figure 1:** Comments from ANC Councillor and tyre shop owner quoted on The Witness newspaper, 2020.

The study therefore aims to identify the extent to which poor road infrastructure affect aesthetics of selected tourism businesses in Msunduzi Municipality and evaluate foreseeable implications associated with poor road infrastructure to local tourism businesses.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The paragraphs below provide corroborated evidence from varying sources as a wider spectrum of analysis of the conflicting views that pertains to this inquiry.

### **Tourism growth strategies encompassing road infrastructure**

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2008) defines tourism as a phenomenon encompassing social, cultural, and economic factors involving the movement of people from their usual environment to other places for various purposes, including leisure and business. The emergence of tourism as an official and recognised sector began in the 1950s and has since grown significantly worldwide (Meyer et al. 2017). In a global context, tourism has become one of the key components of international trade and one of the world's largest and fastest growing economic sectors (Seghir, Mostefa, Abbes and Zakarya 2015). In addition, tourism has been earmarked as a principal source of economic development and expansion in several developing countries (Velempini and Martin, 2019) The tourism industry has highly significant economic impacts in countries around the world and these are both direct and induced (WTTC, 2017) Scott and Gössling (2015) ascertained that the geographic footprint of tourism has progressed so much that it has reached an equal distribution between developed and developing economies. This resulted in tourism becoming one of the main income generators for many developing economies including South Africa (UNWTO 2016a). According to Seghir et al. (2015), the tourism sector was the fourth largest source of export revenue, behind the oil, automotive and chemical industries in 2014 and in 2015, contributing 10% to the world's GDP (UNWTO 2016b). The expansion of tourism as a vital economic sector is no different for South Africa (SALGA 2016). The country has been for many years an economic powerhouse in the African continent and a major tourist destination (BMI 2016:5). A report issued by BMI (2016) compares all countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa and found that South Africa has the most advanced and developed tourism market. The potential for tourism in South Africa is enormous due to the country's rich biodiversity, culture, history, attractive climate, and an array of tourism activities (SAGNA 2015). Along with strong projected expansion in international tourist arrivals in many emerging economies, the UNWTO, WTTC, and international development organizations position tourism as an important contributor to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2015; World Bank, 2017).

The first National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) for South Africa was published in 2011 as a ten-year Strategy, with targets from 2010 to 2020. It has recently been the subject of a review to determine what adjustments, if any, need to be made given the changing domestic and international environment and considering lessons learned from the implementation process. The review has considered the emergence of important trends in global markets, as well as South Africa's competitive strengths and weaknesses. An essential part of the exercise was an assessment of the potential and the identification of pathways for the South African tourism economy to play an enhanced role in the growth of the overall economy. The process has culminated in a second iteration of the NTSS. The NTSS focuses on inclusive growth, which must fundamentally be based on domestic and international tourist market growth and expenditure increases.

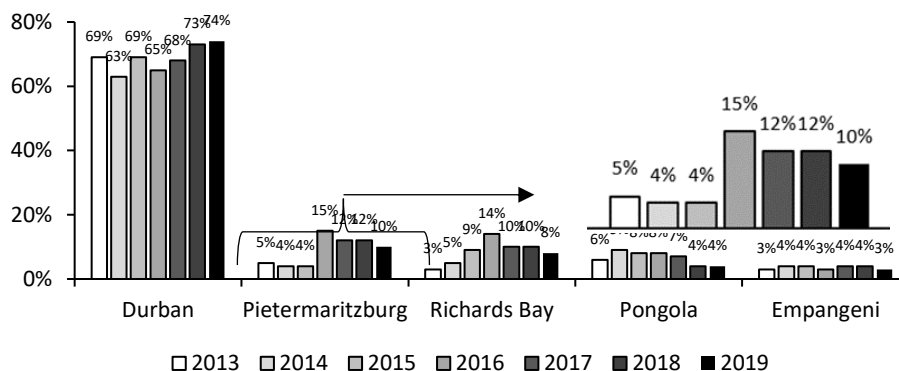
The 2001 Census indicated that the daily modal split in the Msunduzi Municipality was 62% by public transport and 38% by private vehicles. In analysing this information at a ward level, it was found that public transport is dominant in the western and southern regions of the Municipality, with greater levels of private vehicle usage in the central and north-eastern regions. Cordon counts by the uMgungundlovu District Municipality (UDM) 2007 indicate that the percentage of public transport person trips by minibus taxi had increased from 85% in 2005 to 88% in 2007, with trips per bus reducing from 15% to 12%. It must also be noted that there are no rail services that form part of the daily commuter public transport system. The high dependency on public transport and the high level of pedestrian activity places a focus on the need for high standard public transport services throughout the Municipality, with attention on non-motorised transport (NMT) integrated with the public transport system. The Roads and Transportation Sub-unit is responsible for the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of roads, public transport facilities, bridges, footbridges, and storm water and drainage systems. It

operates in consultation with the Department of Transport, and the uMgungundlovu DM, who are authorities with similar responsibilities for different levels of facilities. The sub-unit is reasonably staffed, although it lacks qualified and experienced Engineers and Technologists.

The backlog of roads that need upgrading, road safety measures (traffic lights, calming measure, signage enhancement, etc), road infrastructure rehabilitation, and maintenance continues to be a major challenge for the Municipality in the current financial year. There are still huge backlogs for construction of new roads and upgrading of gravel roads in the Greater Edendale, Vulindlela, and the North Eastern parts of Msunduzi (i.e., Thembalihle, Tamboville, Copesville, etc). These areas continue to grow, since there are new low-cost housing programme being provided with sub-standard road services (i.e. gravel and hyson cell concrete roads). In the 2009/10 financial year the construction of the N3/Chota Motala Road Interchange commenced, which was finalised in the 2012/13 financial year. This project seeks to ease the traffic congestion experienced by southbound peak-hour traffic from the Northern Areas into and out of the CBD. Inadequate funding for bulk services is increasingly becoming a retarding factor for development. The userpays principle is applied for new developments to fast-track provision of bulk services. Due to internal budgetary constraints, the Municipality continues to use externally sourced funds (i.e. COGTA, DoT, MIG, etc.) for funding its programmes and projects. Priority is currently given to the problematic Electricity and Water infrastructure due to losses and outages experienced by these services. However, asset renewal (i.e., road rehabilitation, major defects patching, surface overlays, etc) remains unattended to, due to financial constraints. Potholes have increased in number on the city’s roads over the last few years because of fatigue to road infrastructure.

### Tourism in Pietermaritzburg

KwaZulu Natal is endowed with natural and cultural attractions. This province also hosts major events that attracts both local and international participants. Between the year 2013 to 2019, KwaZulu Natal had an average of 753 000 international tourists who also spent on average R6.9 million per year within the same period (South African Tourism, 2021). The most visited cities of KwaZulu Natal are Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Richard Bay, Pongola and Empangeni (see Figure 2) (South African Tourism, 2021).

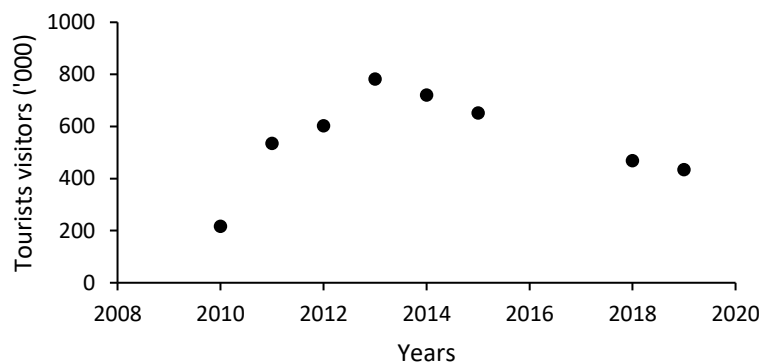


**Figure 2:** the most visited cities of KwaZulu Natal. (source: South African Tourism, 2021)

After Durban, Pietermaritzburg is the second largest city, both in size and the economy (Msunduzi IDP, 2017/2021). It is situated along the N3 corridor, which links South Africa’s economic hubs, that is Johannesburg and Durban (Msunduzi IDP, 2017/2021). Pietermaritzburg being located along this corridor also provides an easy access for tourists who wants to visit this city and its surroundings. For tourism planning and development, the KwaZulu Natal Tourism grouped this city with the Natal Midland region into a singular tourist region called, Pietermaritzburg and Midlands tourist region (South African Tourism, 2021). Pietermaritzburg is not only endowed with natural and cultural tourism resources, but it also boasts by hosting major international events such as the Midmar Mile, Comrades Marathon, Duzi Canoe Marathon, and Amashova cycling competition (South

African Tourism, 2021). These events attracts both international and domestic travellers. Such major annual events generate huge income for tourism businesses of this city. For example, a cancellation of the Comrades Marathon due to COVID-19 has resulted a loss of about R700 million in tourism revenue (TimeLive.co.za, 23/02/2021: 12:22).

The city itself has many cultural attractions such as old colonial buildings which are still in use such as the City Hall, Tatham Art Gallery, the Comrades House and the Master of High Court Building just to name the few. Other attractions include parks such as the Natal Botanical Gardens, Zoological Gardens, and monuments such as that of Mahatma Gandhi, Queen Victoria, and the Imbali Statue of Remembrance (SA-Venues, 2021). This city also has a rich political history, especially in the surrounding townships (Boqo, 2001). Pietermaritzburg major townships includes Imbali, Edendale, Dambuza, Georgetown, Ashdown and Sobantu. All these townships were shaped by political activities of the then Apartheid government and conflicts between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the African National Congress. However, township tourism in this city has not been tapped to its full potential (Speirs, 2000). Tourism performance within the city of Pietermaritzburg has been fluctuating over the years, especially between the year 2010 to 2019, supposedly reached its lowest in 2020 due to COVID-19. From 2010 to 2013, the domestic tourism was booming (see Figure 3). However, from 2013 to 2019, there has been a notable decrease in domestic tourism, in 2013 this city had 782 000 visitors and in 2019 there were 434 000.



**Figure 3:** Domestic tourism trends in the City of Pietermaritzburg (\*2016 and 2017 domestic tourism statistics are missing).

### The role of road infrastructure in accessibility and destination development

The tourism industry is multifaceted it involves many components and participants which contribute to the final tourism experience. The complexity of the industry necessitates the need for a multi-sectoral approach to developing and managing a tourist destination (Currie. Falconer, 2014). Notably, transport is one of the critical sectors in the development of a tourism in a destination, it is a key element that links tourists to destinations to be accessed (Dickinson, Robbins, & KFletcher, 2009). It has been established that access and a fluidity of movement in a destination are intrinsic to its sustainable growth furthermore, mobility has a significant effect on a region's competitiveness and prosperity Currie, C., Falconer, P. (2014).

Road and transport infrastructure play an immense role in enhancing current tourism activities in a destination, and f it further encourages the development of new tourism attractions and amenities (Kanwal 2020). Virkar & Mallya, (2018) and Liu & Shi, (2017) stipulate that road and transport infrastructure in a destination can attracts tourists and further promote tourism in that destination. The authors further highlight the positive relationship between road infrastructure and tourist activities which is said to increase the flow of tourism development. Similarly, Mandić, Mrnjavac, and Kordić, (2018) highlight number of parameters related to tourist satisfaction, these include transportation infrastructure and service quality. The scholars argue that transport infrastructure is a significant catalyst for the development of tourism. Specifically, road and transport infrastructure ease the travel of tourists and facilitates movement within destinations (Lohmann & Duval, 2011). Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2007; Liu & Chi,2019) concur that infrastructure and facilities highly influence destination competitiveness; increases

the efficiency of privately producing and distributing tourism services, and in certain cases makes possible the supply of tourism services.

Moreover, upgraded transport infrastructure, particularly road and land transport infrastructure, likely leads to reduced cost of transportation. Improved Road capacity (such as more lanes, better reliability, excellent quality road surfacing, better safety through more and wider lanes and improved signage) can potentially reduce fuel consumption, transit time, and wear and tear (Musa & Ndawayo. 2010). Such hard transport infrastructure investments do impact on the cost and quality of tourism experience. Several scholars have asserted that the general infrastructure of a destinations ought to be properly developed and user friendly as failure to do so may impede on the image and competitiveness of that destination (Mandić, Mrnjavac, and Kordić, 2018). The authors caution that forms of infrastructure such as; local roads and airports should permit unimpeded movement of visitors, while tourism facilities should be able to provide comprehensive travel experience and influence visitors return (Virkar & Mallya, 2018; Mandić, Mrnjavac, and Kordić, 2018).

### **Integrated Development Planning (IDP) of Msunduzi Municipality in relation to infrastructural and economic development**

Local government is in the realm of the public sector and sphere of government which is closest to the people (Nuevo & Muller, 2017). Given this reality, local government has an imperative social function of delivering basic services to the community and developing the local area. Thornhill (2008) expresses this perspective by stating that local government is usually the initial contact point between a person and a government institution. The local sphere is frequently referred to as grass-roots government because of its direct connection with the communities at a local level. The White Paper on Local Government provides characteristics of developmental local governments, a series of categories outlining development outcomes, and proposes multiple instruments to aid municipalities achieve development (The White Paper on Local Government, 1998). Moreover, the White Paper addresses two major and interconnected components that are crucial for developmental local governments. The first component deals with Integrated Development Planning (IDP), which “provides a powerful instrument for municipalities to facilitate integrated and co-ordinated service delivery within their locality” (The White Paper on Local Government, 1998). The second component is Performance Management which ensures that IDP is implemented and that local municipalities achieve their stipulated development targets. These components are essential traits of developmental local government. The concept of ‘developmental local government’ was first pronounced in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. In accordance with Section 153 (a) of the Constitution, the structuring, management, administration, budgeting, and planning within municipalities must prioritise the basic needs of the community and promote social and economic development of the community (RSA, 1996). In line with the Constitution, Msunduzi Municipality developed the Integrated Development Plan (2017-2022) which is an inner-city development strategy that has been documented to provide for longer term planning within the Municipality and all its strategies, programmes, and projects.

The development strategy identifies eight city-wide key areas which include, (i) building a capable and developmental Municipality, (ii) back to basics: cleaning, restoring, enforcing and responding, (iii) upgraded infrastructure efficiency in terms of planning, budgeting, expenditure, implementing, preserving (iv) financial sustainability, (v) expanding the regional economy, (vi) functioning as a provincial capital, (vii) creating a learning city and city of learning, (viii) spatial usefulness and expanding densities to advance mobility. The IDP (2017-2022) further includes Strategic Priority 2, which is aimed at creating an accessible and connected city as summarized in Table 1 below.

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: AN ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED CITY**

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>VALUE STATEMENT</b>	<b>TARGET</b>
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<p>By 2030, Msunduzi is a city with sufficient and well-maintained. Road, rail, and other physical infrastructure serving all residents, whether they use public or private transport modes.</p> <p>It has layers of diverse transport networks interconnecting at centres and internal urban hubs.</p>	<p>2.1 A diversity of private and public transport options, using a range of adequate physical infrastructure (roads, rail, and bikeways/walkways) is readily available to all residents.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Road and rail infrastructure backlogs are reduced such that 90% of communities have access to road and rail services.</p> <p>2.1.2 100% compliant with roads infrastructure management plan.</p> <p>2.1.3 90% of Msunduzi residents can get to work within 45 minutes.</p>
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**Table 1:** Msunduzi Municipality Integrated Development Plan 2017-2022: Summary of Strategic Priority 2

The IDP (2017- 2022) includes Strategic Priority 5 which is focused on economic prosperity through entrepreneurship and promoting investment in businesses as shown in Table 2.

**STRATEGIC PRIRORITY 5: AN ECONOMICALL PROSPEROUS CITY**

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>VALUE STATEMENT</b>	<b>TARGET</b>
<p>By 2030, Msunduzi is a city with a flourishing business environment, with people exercising their entrepreneurship across the full spectrum of commercial, public, scientific, educational, and charitable enterprises.</p>	<p>5.1 The city absorbs young people into a job creation social compact between the council, private businesses, and the nonprofit sector with the support of institutions of learning.</p> <p>5.2 By 2030, Msunduzi will have a strong, diversified, and resilient economy, using its competitive advantages to deliver prosperity, high employment, and quality jobs for all the city’s residents.</p>	<p>5.1.1 Unemployment in the city is reduced to 15%.</p> <p>5.2.1 The Municipality has competitive business incentive packages to attract new businesses and drive expansion.</p> <p>5.2.2 The Municipality attracts annual investment more than R 1 billion per annum, reducing unemployment by 5% per annum.</p>

**Table 2:** Summary of Draft Development Plan 2017- 2022 IDP Strategic Priority 5 on achieving economic prosperity within Msunduzi Municipality.

In addition, the Municipality has catalytic projects in place which are targeted at accelerating economic growth. The Municipality has recognized a few projects that seek to promote development in the municipal area. The subsequent catalytic projects are directed towards reviving the economy and the growth path of the Municipality. Nonetheless, some of these projects are being carried out by delivery agents other than the Municipality. It stands to reason that the Municipality is the enabler and facilitator of these projects. Table 3 provides a summary of these catalyst projects.

**CATALYTIC PROJECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF TOURISM**

<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ESTIMATED BUDGET</b>
<i>Pietermaritzburg Airport Upgrade</i>	<p>This is a short- term project that will see the extension of the existing runway, together with the terminal buildings.</p> <p>This will allow for larger airplanes to make use of the airport, thereby attracting additional operators and increasing the amount of feet through the airport</p>	R0.5 Billion
<i>Harry Gwala Stadium Upgrade Phase 2</i>	<p>This is a medium to long-term project which will see the development of further stands at the stadium.</p> <p>Associated with this project, in the short to medium term, is the further development and upgrading of the Alexander Park Sports Precinct with additional parking.</p>	R0.5 Billion
<i>International Convention Centre and 5-star Hotel</i>	<p>This is a medium to long-term project that will see the development of an international caliber conference center which will allow the city to host international-standard conferences. In the short to medium-term, a5-star hotel associated with this will be developed.</p>	Private Investment
<i>Hero's Acre</i>	<p>This project was mentioned by the KZN Premier in the 2013 State of the Province address and will be a museum commemorating the Heroes of the Struggle. It will include a wall of the "Seven Days War" on the site where the remains of Moses Mabhida and Jonny Makhathini are buried.</p>	R1 Billion
<i>Freeway Node Development</i>	<p>This is a medium-term project that involves the upgrade of key freeway interchanges within the Municipality to ensure more efficient movement of traffic, as well as unlocking strategically located adjacent land for the development of commercial, residential, and associated activities.</p>	R1 Bill

**Table 3:** Summary of Catalytic projects in the Draft 2017-2022 IDP of the Msunduzi Municipality



The Pietermaritzburg Airport upgrade, Harry Gwala stadium upgrade (Phase 2), International Convention Centre and Hero's Acre projects, based on their description, are focused on stimulating demand and growth in tourism activity within Msunduzi Municipality. The economy of the Municipality is reliant on several notable sporting and cultural events, such as, Comrades Marathon, Midmar Mile, Duzi Canoe Marathon, and the Mountain Bike World Cup, among others. These events result in direct economic spinoffs and have a positive impact on local tourism businesses. The rate of growth, survival, and number of SMMEs in an area has generally been recognized as a positive indicator for growth. Hence, many spheres of government put significant effort in assisting new and existing businesses, through start-up and the provision of infrastructure thereby creating an enabling environment for the businesses to flourish. The importance of creating an enabling environment for businesses to thrive through infrastructural development in Msunduzi Municipality cannot be overstated. In furtherance, power and energy supply, electronic communications, water, and roads remain the basics of economic infrastructure (Msunduzi Municipality, Municipal Vision 2030). The study analyzes the state of road infrastructure to understand its interconnectedness with tourism aesthetics and implications on local tourism businesses. Lastly, the findings justify the comparison of the status quo regarding road infrastructure with the targets outlined in the IDP (2017-2022), aimed at accelerating economic growth through improved roads and access to tourism attractions and amenities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative research paradigm was utilised to assemble and analyse data for this probe. To give a voice to and create a sound meaning on the understanding of impact surrounding tourism aesthetics and poor road infrastructure in a real-life situation, this study categorically used the qualitative approach as a primary instrument to deliver on a detailed account of non-arithmetic evidence, as suggested by (Philips, 2006: 13). As advised by Bryman (2016: 43), it was imperative for this inquiry to use the qualitative research paradigm in that the approach enabled the researchers to pursue understanding of real-world situations in their own viewpoints, and thereby provided solutions for the sustainability of heterogeneous societies, and hereditary settings such as the city of Pietermaritzburg. Nevertheless, this probe extracted data from both primary and secondary sources using mediums such as the desktop research, observations, journal articles, the annual reports that are within a five-year term period and so on.

The main aim of this probe was to respond to a question of 'how can the Msunduzi Municipality maintain its integrity when it comes to tourism aesthetics and road infrastructure that are observed to be under an inefficiency vetting institution'. Writers of this scientific paper utilised the discourse evaluates to interpret the content and data. Using the qualitative data scrutiny remained an essential part of this inquiry. This is by, the premise of the real-world situations ought to be better clarified through considering the varying opinions that are generally provided by participants following the suggestion of (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont, 2011, p.309). To a certain degree, the social scientists of this paper used the development theory as a requirement to understand the existing phenomenon that was being studied, which was associated with an extent to which the poor road infrastructure and underdeveloped aesthetics of tourism contributes to urban decay of the city of Pietermaritzburg. The frame of reference for proper tourism aesthetics and developed road infrastructure is a blend of the legitimate pieces of legislations that are pronounced in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This inquiry utilised suitable interconnected theoretical and legislative frameworks as a point of reference, which also comprised with the 'Critics of the modernisation theoretical model and the structural adjustment model'.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This section reports on the findings of the study using the different themes to interpret the phenomenon.



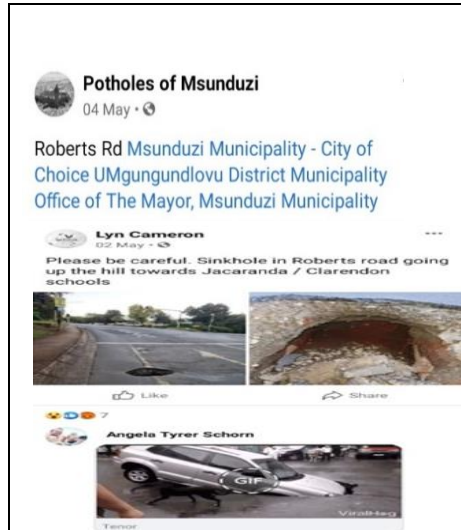
**Figure 4:** Potholes of Msunduzi Facebook Page Cover Photo. Source: Msunduzi (2020)

Figure 4 demonstrates the Msunduzi Municipality's recently created Facebook page named (Potholes of Msunduzi), which is a platform used to expose the neglect of any municipal infrastructure maintenance (Msunduzi, 2020). As can be observed in Figure 5, the City Hall, which is an iconic landmark is depicted sinking in a pothole symbolizing the current state of the city's roads. Presently, the page is liked by 397 people with 434 followers. It is worth mentioning that the scourge of poor road infrastructure places Msunduzi Municipality as an institution that is pervaded with infrastructural chaos and inefficiency. The Municipality is riddled by the dilapidated state of poor road infrastructure that is mounted with notorious potholes which inevitably endangers the lives of the day-to-day road users (Magubane, 2020).



**Figure 5:** Curry's Post on rate payers. Source: Msunduzi (2021)

Figure 5 is a picture of a rate payer lamenting about Msunduzi poor road infrastructure displaying a placard written: "*Slow please-rate payers are repairing the roads because the municipality is bloody useless*". Clearly, the incidents of this nature are in violation of the provisions pronounced in the Infrastructure Development Act 23 of 2014 entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which is aimed at providing for the facilitation and co-ordination of public infrastructure development. It stands to reason that this piece of legislation is of high significance when it comes to the economic and social importance of the Republic of South Africa. Besides, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in (Act No. 108 of 1986) posits the local governments are largely understood in the context of the service delivery they provide. This role requires municipalities to mobilise economic resources which are geared towards the improvement of the lives of all citizens. Therefore, the local municipalities as institutions charged with the afore-mentioned responsibility should not be granted choice when it comes to accounting for prompt infrastructural service delivery.



**Figure 6:** Notorious potholes of Msunduzi Source: Msunduzi (2020)

As shown in Figure 6, the local community members are alerting fellow road users on the life endangering potholes that are noticed in Roberts Road towards Jacaranda/Clarendon schools. It is of particular importance to reinforce that; sustainable development is supposed to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and should be a pro-growth (not anti-growth) policy that require to tackle the environmental challenges. What is more is, the local municipalities are also charged with a responsibility of promoting road safety, as per the pronouncements made in the National Road Safety Act 9 of 1972. Until the Msunduzi Municipality infrastructure policy introduce emendatory strategies, the poor road state will remain as one of the road crisis.



**Figure 7:** Ridiculed Road state of Msunduzi. Source: Msunduzi (2020)

As shown in Figure 7, the municipal roads are riddled by the wide-open potholes. Such poor service delivery is in agreement with the assertions made by Derek Alberts on the article entitled 'Daily Maverick' dated 31 March 2021, which reported on the infuriated battle that existed between the Municipality and Midlands Chamber of Business over urban decay of the 'city of choice'. Apparently, this Business Chamber took on the Municipality on the service delivery pervasive malaise that was regarded as a symptom that will later become a '*worsened catastrophe of service delivery failure*', thereby causing the magnitude of system plunder as the Municipality already faced an uphill battle of limited resources, which was alleged to have left particular business civics gobsmacked. In addition, the study conducted content analysis of news articles as part of the assessment of the implications of poor road infrastructure on tourism businesses in Msunduzi Municipality. A total of 10 recent news articles was analysed to get a reflection on residents and local business views on the issue under study. The study focused on local newspapers, these are particularly essential for their proximity to the local context and

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often serve as a forum for public perception. The analysis further identified articles relating to road infrastructure, potholes, and poor service delivery.

Nota	Newspaper date	Headline	Theme/Angle
<b>New Frame</b>	18-Jul-19	Pietermaritzburg, no longer the City of Choice	Turnaround strategy to keep the city from complete collapse
<b>The Mercury</b>	14-Feb-20	Potholes, rubbish, and broken streetlights mar Msunduzi	Poor service Delivery, Residents demand better roads
<b>The Witness</b>	5-Mar-20	Focus on urban decay	An Administrator brought to oversee the city and focus on regeneration
<b>The Witness</b>	9-Oct-20	Local businessmen use their own money to fix Pietermaritzburg roads	Businesses working on a long-term plan to rehabilitate roads
<b>Maritzburg Fever</b>	9-Nov-20	Potholes - a never-ending story	The 1-million-rand pothole repair project futile
<b>The Witness</b>	25-Nov-20	Msunduzi accused of turning a blind eye as city slides deeper into decay	Municipality funds expensive branding (Tourism Hub) but fails to do basic maintenance
<b>The Witness</b>	8-Dec-20	Deathtrap potholes multiply in Pietermaritzburg	Business and resident views on poor service delivery
<b>The Witness</b>	2-Mar-21	Ultimatum for Msunduzi: Fix our city or see us in court, says business body	Businesses frustrated over poor service delivery
<b>Daily Maverick</b>	13-Mar-21	Pietermaritzburg: The bad municipality malaise	Mismanagement of municipal resources results in poor maintenance of infrastructure
<b>New Frame</b>	18-May-21	Pietermaritzburg, no longer the City of Choice	A turnaround strategy required to keep the city from collapsing

**Table 4:** Newspaper articles reporting on poor road infrastructure in Msunduzi Municipality.

The corroborated evidence from the news articles summarised in Table 4, dating back from 2019, two main themes emerged, and these are discussed in detail below:

### **Theme 1: Current State of Road infrastructure in Msunduzi Municipality- perceptions from residents and businesses**

Road infrastructure is one of the critical elements in the development of a tourism in a destination, it is a key element to accessibility and attractiveness of a destination (Dickinson, Robbins, & KFletcher, 2009). When various newspaper content was analysed to establish the state of road infrastructure, ‘discontent’ from both residents and businesses was one recurring feeling that was expressed across most articles. In an article titled “*Ultimatum for Msunduzi: Fix our city or see us in court*” the dissatisfaction is potent as the Pietermaritzburg and Midlands Chamber of Business threatens to take the Municipality to court over poor service delivery including poorly maintained roads. This discontent is also noted in two other publications; the first case being of business owners resort to using their funds to maintain roads, these businesses further came up with a sustainable plan to rehabilitate the roads in the future to not have to deal with the municipality. The dissatisfaction is further witnessed in an article titled ‘*Potholes, rubbish, and broken streetlights mar Msunduzi*’, residents embarked on a

protest to express their dissatisfaction with poor services and demanded better roads. In this article the residence raises a very important issue of a disfigured city, this directly impacts on the aesthetics of the Municipality which is key its attractiveness and subsequently its competitiveness as a tourist destination.

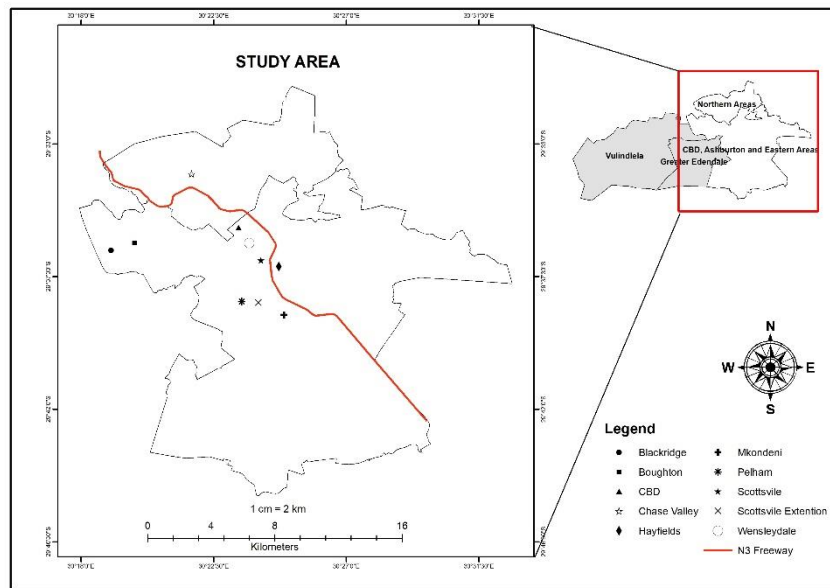
## **Theme 2: Service delivery in road infrastructure and tourism aesthetics**

In terms of 'Public Service Act of 1999' municipal governments are required to implement delivery strategies that promote standardised, effective, efficient, and customer-driven services, and this include safeguarding the road infrastructure and the tourist attractions amenities. Ntuli, (2019) warns that debilitated attractions and tourist facilities, as well as underdeveloped roads undermines the potential benefits that are normally derived from these two critical socio-economic aspects, and it further goes onto disregarding the social well-being of the community. It was therefore imperative to explore service delivery standards in relation to road infrastructure in the Municipality. In this exploration a number of issues emerged, including strained resources, poor administration and use of resources, poor service delivery and neglect resulting in deterioration of road infrastructure.

The data shows that the municipality is in failing to provide services to its residents and businesses. Some of the shortfalls are acknowledged even by the municipality in an article titled *'Pietermaritzburg, no longer the City of Choice'* by (Khoza, 2019). In this article the municipality addresses poor service delivery and mismanagement of resources. It further confirms to be working on a turnaround strategy to remedy these conditions. Similarly, businesses allude to neglect, poor administration and mismanagement of resources as the possible causes to the poor road infrastructure in the municipality. There is further a certainty that it is the misuse of resources by the municipality that results in poor road maintenance and subsequently in potholes, broken pavements, broken traffic lights and broken streetlights. The Witness newspaper article dated December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 goes as far as attributing the crumbling road infrastructure to indifference by the municipality. Accordingly, businesses and residents hoped for a more urgent approach in dealing with all the issues raised, such as declaring a state of disaster for the provincial government to intervene. This is resultant from the belief that the municipality does not have the capacity to deal with these issues as they date back nearly three years.

## **Road condition analysis**

To better understand the extent of road condition of the study area, an image-based method was employed. An image-based method is defined as a qualitative research method that make use of a visuals such as films, videos, photographs, and cartoons (Glaw *et al.*, 2017). The use of this method is aimed at enhancing the studied subject matter and it should be used to support the text (Prosser, 1996). Criteria used for site selection was based on the number of tourism and hospitality facilities in and around the Central Business District (CBD), and areas close to the national road (N3). These areas include Scottsville, Scottsville Extension, Hayfields, Pelham, Mkondeni, Chase Valley, Boughton and Blackridge as shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8:** Map of Msunduzi and the study area

Image-based method results indicate that the road infrastructure is in a poor condition. Most of the roads (major and minor) have potholes as shown in Figure 9 (a - f). Those that were repaired, the quality of work was poor as the tarmac material used was coming off after heavy rainfall or exposed to burst water pipes shown in Figure 9 (g - i). It was observed that the tarmac thickness used to repair on some roads was thin thus the constant damaging even after repairs. In some areas where repairs were done, the tarmac was installed but not compacted properly thus making roads to be uneven.





**Figure 9:** Road riddled with potholes (a - f) and the good to poorly repaired roads (g - i)

## **IMPLICATIONS**

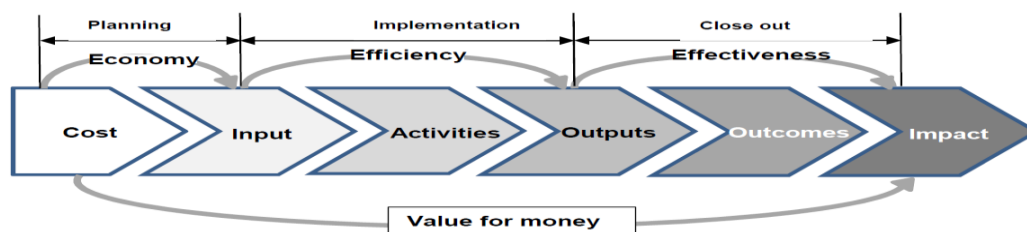
The paragraphs hereinafter unfold implications associated with poor road infrastructure and tourism aesthetics.

### **Service Delivery Value Chain as a Strategy for Evading Urban Decay Caused by Poor Road Infrastructure and Impoverished Aesthetics of Tourist Attractions**

The local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 intends to establish a criterion for determining the category of municipality to be established in an area where there is lack. This paper determined the lack of prompt service delivery in tourism aesthetics and road infrastructure as an area for improvement. The provisions enshrined in the 'Road Management Act of 2004' was brought into force by the South African government in order to allow the local government to establish a coordinated management system for public roads that will promote safe and efficient state and local public road networks; and the responsible use of roads. However, this is riddled by the amount of evidence in the media which presents the city of Pietermaritzburg road infrastructure as thrown into a state of underdevelopment. Inter-alia, the article by the Witness authored by Nokuthula Khanyile dated 17 September 2019 referred to the thousands of potholes that have to be filled by this local municipality government through contractors in Pietermaritzburg as a pandemic. In the same vein of infrastructural city development, the terms of the 'Tourism Act of 2014', mandates the local government municipalities to provide for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism for the benefit of Republic, its residence and its visitors. Surprisingly, an article from the News24 dated 1 March 2019 by Tan still laments on the historic Pietermaritzburg of South Africa which face struggles towards attracting tourists i.e. the city's chairperson for the sustainable development and city entities portfolio committee Eunice Majola blamed the limited accommodation options and the lack of conference facilities as a serious setback for local tourism. The interconnectedness of road infrastructure and aesthetics of tourist attractions can be understood through a value chain strategy that can be implemented in the municipal service sector context. This is also supported in the pronouncements made by the 'Public Service Act of 1999', which obligates the municipal governments to implement delivery strategies which appreciates standardised, effective, efficient and customer-driven services, and this include safeguarding the road infrastructure and the tourist attraction site services. Clearly, the provisions of this piece of legislation stretches charge to the local municipality governments such as UMsunduzi municipality to ensure that their administrations prohibit any form of activity that grant choice to tourist attraction landmark neglect and vandalism, which does not exclude any other practice that permeates to poor road infrastructures. Despite this law which is implemented as some form of government constitutional dispensation measure, there is sufficient illustrious physical evidence that is offered by this research (as shown in figure 0.0), which concurs with the findings of (Meyiwa, 2019), indicating that the poor tourism attraction sites, and the underdeveloped road infrastructural conditions that are observed in the local central business district (CBD) of the Pietermaritzburg does hinder on the local tourism. The discoveries made by Meyiwa further reveals that such poor attractions and underdeveloped roads come as a result of the city's prompt service neglect, an important role that should pervade the administration of the UMsunduzi local municipality. Needless to state that this municipality's discharge of responsibility contributes to the city of Pietermaritzburg's urban decay, thereby also affecting the local tourism growth and road infrastructural developments. It was of high importance to understand that developed roads and well maintained tourist attraction sites are some of the major socio-economic aspects, which contributes to the 'Gross Domestic Product' of the KwaZulu-Natal province – another developmental strategy that looks at the final value of the goods and services that are produced within the geographic boundaries of a country during a specified period of time, normally a year. In consideration of the observed poor road infrastructure, and the dilapidated state of the city of Pietermaritzburg tourist attraction sites, this article deemed it important to first understand the municipal plans, and the tourist attraction processes of the Pietermaritzburg UMsunduzi local municipality. In this way, the inquiry was able to view all connected processes within the lens of this municipality's service delivery value chain strategy in terms of road infrastructure, and tourist attraction site long term plans. This considerate approach was done in contemplation with the provisions of the 'Public Service Act,' which is a piece of legislation that informs all the South African local municipalities regarding the control they should take towards implementing their municipal directorial service delivery laws. Hence, using the 'Public Service Act' discourse was necessary to



consider when critiquing the UMSunduzi local municipality governments’ road and tourist attraction strategies that are used to address the road worthiness issues, and tourist attraction developmental initiatives, which this municipality uses as their service distributing policy. Inter-alia, some of these strategies includes the infrastructural service delivery life cycle phases, and the municipal tourism turn-around strategies, among others. What is more is that, Phillips (2018) discovered that the Pietermaritzburg local municipality face a chaos straddle that is caused by the lack of properly monitoring the existing local tourism strategies, and this city’s undeveloped conditions by UMSunduzi municipality. In furtherance, this article noticed that these drawbacks are what leads to the decline in local tourism, thereby leaving this local municipality in a riddled state for it to be called a capital city, which is what has led to this city’s urban decay that is lamented by the media. Poor tourist attraction sites, and the underdeveloped roads does not only undermine the positive impact that is normally brought by these two critical socio-economic aspects, but it also goes onto disregarding the social well-being of the Pietermaritzburg surrounding communities (Ntuli, 2019). Hence, the author further accentuated to the importance of UMSunduzi local municipality government taking a responsibility of reconstructing and strengthening the monitoring instruments in terms of their user-ability in developing city tourism, whilst the municipality must also look into enhancing their observing methods that are geared towards the road developmental infrastructures. This approach is critical for UMSunduzi municipality to consider in that the approach ensures that the in-use mechanisms are competent enough to impact positively on the type of road worthiness services that this municipality will have. Similarly, this very same approach also tags at the heartstrings of ensuring that the nature of tourist attraction sites, which the same municipality offers to local tourists is not undervalued because of disgruntled services caused by under maintenance of the local tourism sites. Nevertheless, this article deemed it important for UMSunduzi municipality to consider in their future plans the aforementioned factors amicably, as these in turn will ensure that the positive efforts made by this local government does not turn into drawbacks that will condone to this city’s urban decay. However, the essential components of the municipal service delivery value chain for the road infrastructure and aesthetics of tourist attractions are redefined in the service delivery value chain model below:



Cost	Budget required to fund the <b>intervention of road infrastructure and tourist attraction sites</b> .
Input	Inputs cover all the substantially important financial, tourist attraction sites and road development strategies used for the <b>roll-out of city infrastructural developments</b> .
Activities	<b>Activities</b> are used to deliver outputs (they include road infrastructural developments, remodifying tourist attraction sites and encouraging city good landmark maintenance).
Output	<b>Outputs</b> (service of road worthiness and tourist attraction sites) relate to products, capital assets and services which result from the Road Infrastructure and Aesthetics of Tourist Attractions.
Outcomes	<b>Outcomes</b> are the likely or realised through short-term/medium-term effects of the outputs of the development of tourist attraction sites and road developments. They contribute to improved local tourism and/or minimised road accidents.
Impact	<b>Longer-term effects</b> of the tourist attraction sites and road worthy CBDs are produced, directly or indirectly, by the development intervention.

**Figure 10:** Road Improvement and Tourist Attraction Considerations. Source: Own

## Conclusion

Evidence shows that the roads in Msunduzi are in a poor condition. This is due to most of the roads are old and poorly maintained. Tourists in small cities like Pietermaritzburg relies mostly on road transportation infrastructure to move around. Thus, poorly maintained roads infrastructure makes it difficult for tourists to gets to tourists' attractions and amenities (La-Klaehn & Hall, 2015). Poorly maintained road infrastructure should not be taken lightly as its implications has far reaching effects on tourism growth and development (Odeke, 2020).

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