



PARTICIPATION OF KWAZULU-NATAL COOPERATIVES IN THE HERITAGE TOURISM SECTOR

Project overview

This study assessed the extent of cooperative participation in the heritage tourism sector and identifying strategies to unlock their potential in this segment of the tourism sector. It specifically assessed the level of awareness, involvement, and readiness of 1057 cooperatives across all 11 district municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal.

1

Demographics

Majority Were Female **60.5%**

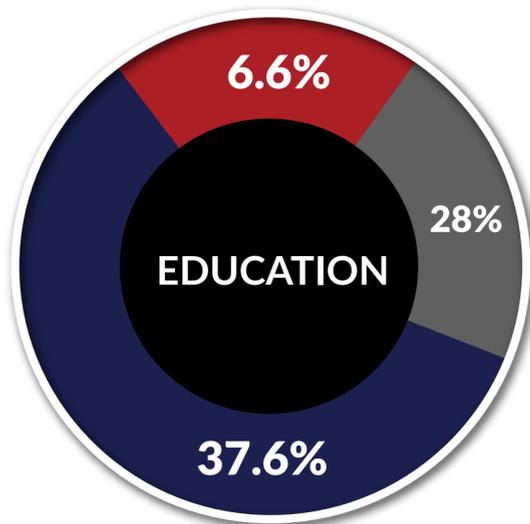
Most in the 35-44 age group **33.1%**

Nearly All South African **99.3%**

Predominantly Black African **99%**

2

Education



- **Degrees**
- **Certificates**
- **Secondary Education**

3

Operational status and Heritage Tourism awareness

- Operational status: 74.3% cooperatives active, but 25.7% inactive citing lack of capital, conflicts, red tape, and infrastructure issues.
- Heritage tourism awareness: Only 35.9% aware of the sector, leaving a significant 64.1% unaware.

4

Sector Distribution

HOSPITALITY

7%



RETAIL

7.2%



TOURISM

8.9%



AGRICULTURE

60%





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5

PARTICIPATION FORMS: Product supply (27.2%), crafts (24.5%), museum visits (14.0%), walking tours (7.9%).

ECONOMIC ROLE: Cooperatives see themselves contributing mainly through job creation (44.3%) and income generation (26.7%)

PERCEIVED BENEFITS: Heritage tourism, seen as contributing to sustainable development (59.8%), employment (15.9%), and income diversification (14.0%)

CHALLENGES: Key barriers include lack of awareness (59.6%), government support gaps (39.3%), resource shortages (33.6%), and management conflicts.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT EXPECTATIONS: Majority (69.2%) want comprehensive support (financial and non-financial).

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES: Skills development (71.1%), awareness campaigns (49.5%), funding opportunities (42.2%), and partnerships (27.2%).

6

Recommendations

AWARENESS & EDUCATION

Launch provincial awareness campaigns on heritage tourism opportunities.

Integrate heritage tourism education into cooperative training programmes.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Provide targeted training in tourism management, customer service, financial literacy, and cooperative governance.

Prioritise youth and women-focused skills development.



FINANCIAL & RESOURCE SUPPORT

Expand access to grants, loans, and equipment to strengthen cooperative readiness.

Invest in infrastructure such as community halls, workspaces, and water systems.



MARKET ACCESS & PROMOTION

Create marketplaces, cultural festivals, and tourism fairs for cooperatives.

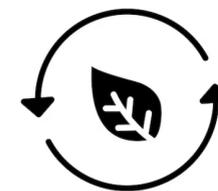
Strengthen marketing through branding, digital platforms, and partnerships with hotels and tour operators.



STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

Foster collaboration between cooperatives, municipalities, NGOs, and heritage institutions.

Ensure equitable distribution of support, avoiding political bias.



SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS

Promote environmentally responsible and culturally sensitive heritage tourism practices.

Encourage cooperatives to align activities with sustainable development goals

