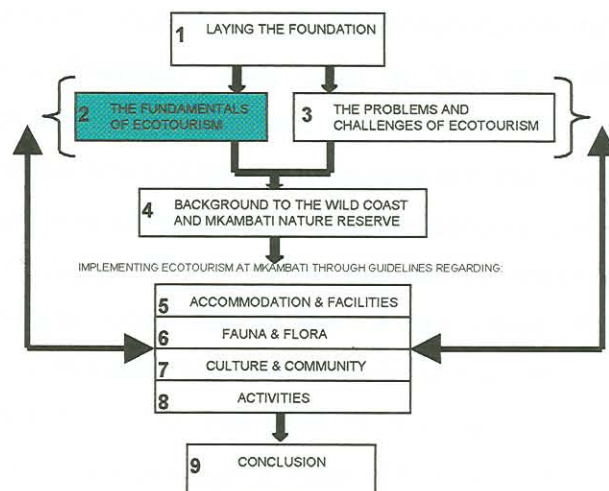# Chapter 2

The fundamentals of ecotourism

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter laid the foundation to the study. Chapter 2 is the first component of the literature study, and examines each fundamental of the ecotourism tetrahedron in turn, illustrating each one with practical examples. This theory is then applied in Chapters 5 to 8 as guidelines for the implementation of ecotourism at Mkambati Nature Reserve are proposed. Chapter 3 continues the literature study

2.2 The environment
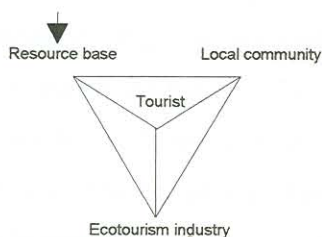
It is important first to define the 'environment'. Hurry (1980) points out that the environment comprises biophysical, human, and cultural components, with humans as an integral part of the ecosystem, dependent on it for their biological needs. At the same time they are cultural beings, and part of a cultural environment. This applies to the definition of ecotourism used in this dissertation, where the term 'environmental resources' is used to describe both the biophysical (natural) and the cultural, meaning that either or both can be the attraction. The definition continues, stating that these resources must be sustainably used at an appropriate level. The focus here is mainly on the biophysical environment, since the cultural environment is examined in Section 2.3.

As indicated in Section 1.7, the local community (Section 2.3), the tourists (Section 2.4) and the industry (Section 2.5) have overlapping roles to play in sustaining the resource base. This section is therefore fairly brief since the principles involved occur numerous times in the following sections.

One of the most prominent benefits of ecotourism is the incentive value for conserving natural or semi-natural systems (Addison, 1997; Dixon & Sherman, 1990 cited in Weaver, 1999). Ecotourism must be based on the principles of ecosystem structures and functions (Prosser, 1994), which includes operating within the biophysical limits of natural resources and maintaining biodiversity (Hall, 1994). Tourism operators must also judge success against resource stability rather than pure profit (Tyler & Dangerfield, 1999). Wight (1993) proposes that ecotourism should move beyond conservation and encourage all-party recognition of the intrinsic value of the resource base. This greening of the marketplace is also occurring in other types of tourism. Lane (1990) cited in Wight (1993) states that it is not a fad, but that there is growing grassroots opposition to irresponsible environmental behaviour – a 'travel lightly' approach is being strongly advocated (Wight, 1993), with some tourists demanding it. The traveler interested in ecotourism often critically examines a company to determine their level of environmental sustainability, and local community involvement.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the sensitivity of ecosystems to tourism development. The operator is interested in profitability, and may overlook the greater environment, trying to push the limits. It is a narrow field of interest. McAvoy (1990) cited in Wight (1995) agrees, stating that the industry is frequently geared to instant gratification of tourist demands, thinking that if it sells, it must be good. They are not considering the interrelatedness of elements in the environment. The planner has a wider field of interest, but it is often only the ecologist who will consider the environment in its totality. The figure also demonstrates the sensitivity of the environment to perturbations. If the limits are pushed slightly, the ball (representing the ecosystem) can roll back into its original state in the bowl (representing stability). However, if the environment is strained to such an extent that the ball rolls out of the bowl, it cannot return to a state of stability (Tyler & Dangerfield, 1999). Therefore, Tyler & Dangerfield (1999) propose that scientific ecological principles play a central role in planning and managing ecotourism products, since the products of ecotourism are often entirely dependent upon the ecosystem. Only in this way can ecotourism remain sustainable for the environment, the industry, and local economies.

Examples of operators who have a wider field of interest with clear entrance into the planners' and ecologists' fields of interest are world-renowned bird artist and author, Kenneth Newman and Derek Solomon (from On Safari International). Their special interest product, 'Birding the Newman Way' (BNW) is a reaction to the many so-called eco-offerings, which are not actually ecotourism – examples of operators with narrow fields of interest. *"We are moving away from the sadly all too prevalent, 'bundu' bashing exercise for the sake of seeing all of the big five in one game drive. We will not be using lodges that insist on doing this, but rather using those*

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properties that subscribe to minimum impact experiences". "Our products will concentrate on supporting only those destinations that respect strict ecotourism principles". "Management must show a commitment to responsible conservation" and the local community must be involved wherever possible, *"either through employment, training of locals as bird guides, or developing joint venture ecotourism projects".* Many smaller, less known destinations will therefore be used (Sheridan, 2000a:1).

Figure 2.1   Ecosystem stability profile and fields of interest for operators, planners, and ecologists


Source: Tyler & Dangerfield (1999)
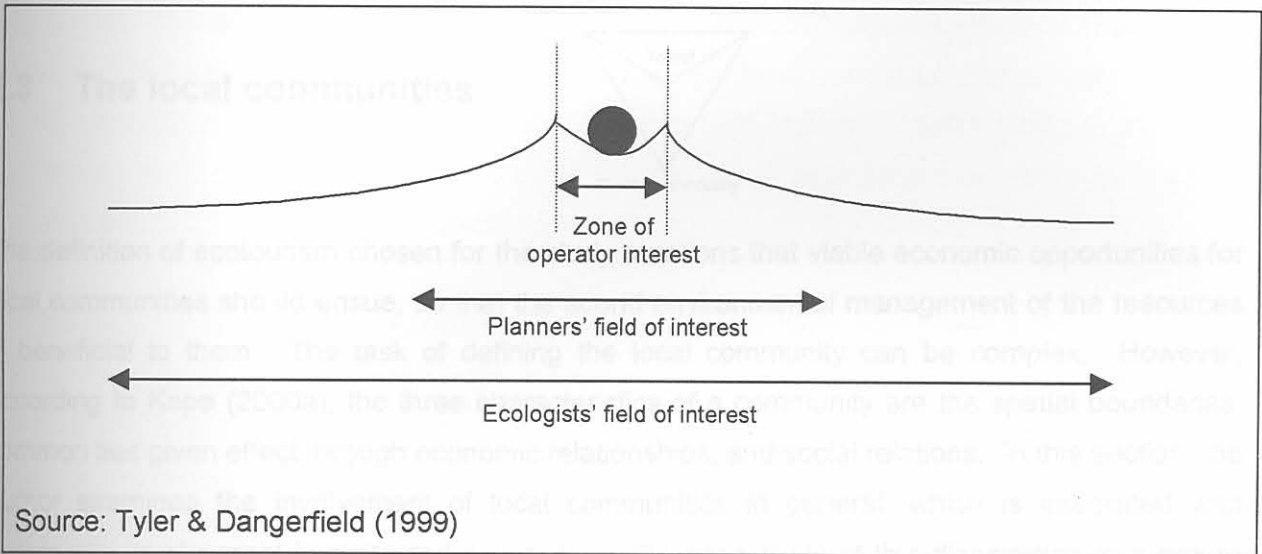
Through park entrance fees and other revenue possibilities, it is suggested that ecotourism can outbid other land uses such as forestry, agriculture, and hunting. A recent tendency in South Africa is for farmers to convert land unsuitable for agriculture to game farming purposes. There is also a move in Southern Africa to transform land into conservation areas. The Peace Parks or Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) initiative aims to join existing conservation areas, as well as to proclaim new ones to form massive fenceless land tracts across Southern Africa. This will enable migratory movements of animals and will conserve greater ecosystems. The first peace park, the Kgalagadi, opened in 2000 between South African and Botswana, and is the first across-border conservation area in Africa (Birns, 2000).

At this point, it is important to recognize that even ecotourism results in limited impact (Cater, 1993). Cater (1993) argues that if the primary goal is to protect and preserve the environment in an untouched form, then there can be no tourism development at all. Even the most responsible tourism will have an impact. One of the ideas of ecotourism is to minimize that impact – to 'take only photographs and leave only footprints'. Zimbabwe has inspiring demonstrations of

grassroots-initiated ecotourism. One example is the unique environmentally sensitive two-week cross-cultural 'Bicycle Africa' tour to Zimbabwe. Using bicycles encourages people to consider the impact of the transport they usually use. There is also a strong local community element. Participants meet people active in the issues of the day, for example, education, women and development, rural health-care, environmental protection, sustainable food and cash crop production, etc. Visits to NGOs and development projects working on these issues are also included. Participants learn about endangered species and the harm of buying souvenirs made from such (Bicycle Africa Tours, 1998).

2.3 The local communities
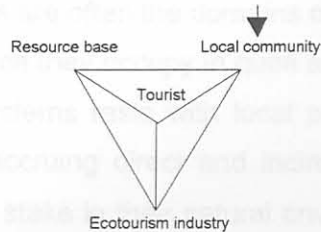
The definition of ecotourism chosen for the study mentions that viable economic opportunities for local communities should ensue, so that the sound environmental management of the resources is beneficial to them. The task of defining the local community can be complex. However, according to Kepe (2000a), the three characteristics of a community are the spatial boundaries, common ties given effect through economic relationships, and social relations. In this section, the author examines the involvement of local communities in general, which is integrated with community involvement in protected areas, since the case study of this dissertation is a nature reserve.

The participation of local communities is a fundamental of ecotourism (Cater, 1994; Taylor, 1995) and should occur from the start. Campbell (1999) mentions that locals should be involved in the planning stages to ensure that benefits reach them. Pinnock (1996:161) mentions the South African National Parks involvement with the community of Hondeklip Bay on the Cape West Coast, where a national park has been proclaimed which combines endangered vegetation types - the rare succulent karoo, *strandveld fynbos* and *sandveld*. The area also has wildlife such as the caracal, black-backed jackal, springbok, gemsbok, etc. The local community have been intimately involved with the development of the park and have elected representatives to serve on the planning committee. Revenue will be shared with the locals who are being trained and employed to run the park. Natural resources such as *veldkos* and other locally made products will also be used.

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Ideally, communities should be the ones to start businesses that are traditional in character and linked to local families (Getz & Page, 1997), utilizing existing resources and skills (Pederson, 1991). This is impractical where communities lack the skills needed to commence a venture, and it is more common to find outsiders initiating community involvement. However, control of ecotourism should remain with the locals as far as possible and benefits be spread through the community (Campbell, 1999; Western, 1993). The industry must also be committed to training locals for management. In return, the community should contribute to environmental conservation and enhancement (Prosser, 1994). Using local communities to protect the environment is preferable in any case, since these areas are often the domains of long-established societies who perceive the plants, wildlife, and the space they occupy in quite a different way from the incoming tourists. Ultimately, the state of ecosystems rests with local people who should therefore be taking more of the responsibility and accruing direct and indirect benefits (Getz *et al*, 1999). Ecotourism helps to give local people a stake in their natural environment and encourages them to develop their cultural assets (Addison, 1997).

An example of a local community being empowered to take ownership and control is at Damaraland Camp, an up-market lodge in the Haub River Valley, Namibia. It is a joint venture between Wilderness Safaris and the local community (the *Riemvasmaker* people), and strives to integrate the local villagers, the environment, and wildlife. They see themselves as privileged to share the land with the locals. The company depends upon the active involvement and ownership of local people, and supplies jobs and training and gives monetary returns to the community. What is unique about Damaraland camp is that after the tenth year, a phased hand-over will occur, devolving ownership to the local community. In the meantime, they are being trained in the necessary skills to be able to run the lodge. This has been an extensive process, with Wilderness Safaris working with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, and other concerned parties. They perceive it as a truly sustainable venture, where locals are learning to see wildlife as an asset, due to the income, training, and pride of ownership which they are experiencing. The community appear to completely back the joint venture, as they recently rejected another deal which was potentially more lucrative, but involved more risk and less genuine partnership (Wilderness Safaris, 1999a; 1999b). This is only one of Wilderness Safaris projects. According to a company founder, every one of their 24 lodges and tented camps adheres comprehensively to community upliftment and conservation principles, believing in a long-term approach to sustainability. They also contribute to the Wild Dog Conservation Fund, the Okavango Community Trust in Botswana, and the Rocktail Bay Turtle Conservation Project in KwaZulu Natal (Southern African Tourism Update, 1999d).

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Cernea (1985) cited in Wells & Brandon (1992) defines participation as a process going beyond simply sharing in social and economic benefits. It is empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors rather than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives. Utting's (1994) definition also includes these elements. Colchester (1994:71) defines participation as the *"organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements ... hitherto excluded from such control"*. The common elements of these definitions are that participants take active initiative and strive for control and ownership.

Brandon (1993) sets out three categories for community involvement in ecotourism, namely the 'who to involve', the 'why to involve them', and the 'how to involve them'. It is often complex to decide who the local community is, and can lead to conflict as different groups compete for limited benefits. In this regard, Taylor (2000) suggests a two-tier benefit system, where local communities living closer to a protected area or tourism venture benefit more than those living further afield. The 'why to involve' refers to giving people a stake in ecotourism and allowing them to actively manage their surroundings. Quality of life should improve and the benefits should result in improved resource management and conservation. The 'how to involve' deals with how to identify community leaders, how to bring about change, and how to identify important site-specific conditions. Prosser (1994) mentions important factors that should be in place when involving local communities. He notes that communities need to have readiness and enthusiasm, and that the skills and resources needed for the project must be developed. The scale and type of development should also be appropriate to the environment, community, and the expected experiences of tourists.

Focussing on how to involve communities, Cohen & Uphoff (1977), Paul (1987), and Salmen (1987) (all cited in Wells & Brandon, 1992), and Colchester (1994) identify five theoretical steps in which locals can participate, namely:
- the gathering of information;
- consulting on key issues during the project;
- making decisions;
- initiating action; and
- evaluating the project and its implementation.

In practice, local communities can be involved in many ways, in line with the theory above. They should initially be involved in the planning and decision making processes. Once work commences, local workers and local materials should be used wherever possible, with traditional

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ideas and architecture being incorporated. Furze *et al* (1996) mention the importance of designing ecotourism facilities and systems in such a way that locals are in support of the role they are to play.

McNeely *et al* (1992) point out that locals frequently have a very practical and ancestral knowledge of their areas and can be trained to be excellent guides. They can be involved in providing enlightening, participatory, and interactive nature and cultural activities for tourists. Many tourists are increasingly requiring contact with authentic local communities, desiring to learn about local cultures in an interactive manner (MacGregor & Jarvie, 1994 cited in McPherson, 2000). Another emerging trend is that an increasing number of overseas tourists visiting South Africa are expressing interest in combining game viewing with a cultural experience (Southern African Tourism Update, 1997b).

In New Zealand, an early 20th century Maori parliamentarian championed the idea that tourism could be used to protect indigenous heritage … *"We need to sell it or lose it"* (Koch, 1998:73). He began a centre and college which has revived the ancient sculpting and weaving of the Maori (Koch, 1998). In many cases, therefore, the local community can be the main attraction, as is the situation at cultural villages. However, Valentine (1993 cited in Hattingh, 1994b) warns that the reliance on culture as part of an ecotourism programme can place pressures on the culture to conform to tourists' expectations. Ecotourism operators must take cognisance of this balancing act.

Locals can also participate directly in economic activities derived from the operation of hotels, restaurants, and other tourism facilities and activities. Another form of involvement is through small business development, for example, selling arts and crafts, and even the ownership and management of tourist activities and accommodation. Involvement can initially be small-scale, and need not be a complex procedure. For example, outside Hluhluwe Nature Reserve, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, women are growing organic vegetables for the restaurant (Addison, 1997).

Cater (1994) mentions that involvement must move beyond economic survival, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural integrity, to enabling the local community to appreciate their own natural resources. One means of doing this is to ensure that locals can also enjoy their own environment. Differential pricing (although contested by some) is an option (Sherman & Dixon, 1994 cited in Cater, 1994). Management must also consider options such as educational displays in the community, special use areas for locals, and field trips. Some tour operators in Galápagos, for example, give their employees one day in every ten to accompany guided tours

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and thus also enjoy the parks resources (Wallace, 1993). Conservation Corporation Africa (ConsCorp) (1997), considered as a leading ecotourism company in Southern Africa, provides local school children with game drives and conservation lessons at Londolozi and Ngala. Studies indicate that once local communities are involved and benefit, they have a sense of ownership over the environment, and will therefore protect it (Cater, 1994).

Access to resources for livelihood is also a vital factor that must be negotiated with local peoples. In South Africa many protected areas are allowing controlled access to resources, for example, in Hluhluwe Nature Reserve, KwaZulu Natal, and Mkambati Nature Reserve, women collect thatch grass within the reserve. At Nduma, locals can take the meat from hippo and elephant culls (Addison, 1997).

Communities need to be made aware that ecotourism is economically viable and can generate return on investments of time and money (Sisman, 1994; Prosser, 1994), and can be integrated into their way of life (Prosser cited in Cater, 1994). Caution should, however, be exercised before removing a traditional means of livelihood from a community. If this has to be done, it must be replaced by an alternative (Cater, 1994). Ideally, local communities should not abandon traditional income generation since, in order for ecotourism to be truly sustainable, it needs to be small-scale (see Section 2.5) and will therefore not be large enough to support big communities as the only source of income. Furthermore, the mere continuation of a culture would be reason enough to encourage communities to continue with their traditional livelihood in addition to ecotourism.

San Miguel is a traditional village in the rainforests of Ecuador consisting of 100 indigenous Cayapas Indians living in 20 houses. San Miguel has developed a small-scale ecotourism venture with money from the US-based international charity CARE, and from the Ecuadorian agency, SUBIR (Sustainable Use of Biological Resources). However, the main sources of livelihood – fishing, subsistence agriculture, and basket weaving have been maintained. In 1994, a wooden building was provided with 20 beds and basic bathroom facilities (cold water only). Electricity for light only, and for four hours each evening, comes from a small diesel generator, with a gas cooker in the kitchen. Drainage and sewage disposal is by septic tank, with water supply coming from rainwater collected in tanks. No entertainment is offered, except on departure and arrival when the villagers treat guests to traditional song, dance and music. Visitors often get involved in community projects, as well as read, sunbathe, swim, and enjoy the nature. Fees are paid partly to SUBIR and partly to the president of San Miguel, thus preventing

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revenue leakage. Only local food is provided which avoids the importing of Western foodstuffs at a great cost, and the locals run the venture entirely (Jeffreys, 1998).

Another important aspect is that social and cultural traditions of local people must be respected. The way in which these traditions are interpreted to visitors should reflect this sensitivity. This includes respecting communities' privacy. This is also addressed in Section 3.5.3. At the Tourism Partners '95 conference in Sydney, the need was stressed for spaces that are kept for communities and spaces developed for tourism (Bushell & Jafari, 1996). Keeping the two apart is one way of ensuring privacy.

Some examples of ecotourism in protected areas have already been given in this section. The study now deals with the specifics of community involvement in these areas.

The main purpose for establishing protected areas and parks has been the conservation of biological diversity and natural formations, while little attention has been paid to the local communities (Wells & Brandon, 1992). Currently, as protected areas are becoming islands in a sea of development, conservation needs to adopt a new perspective that stretches beyond park boundaries and involves affected rural/local communities (Wells & Brandon, 1992). The connection between protected areas and the needs of local people has become increasingly important, particularly in developing countries (Miller, 1988).

Today it is acknowledged that communities bordering protected areas often bear substantial costs due to their lost access. Furthermore, it is generally accepted that protected areas cannot be managed successfully without taking into consideration the subsistence and natural resource requirements of local people (Ghimire, 1994). Inamdar in Getz *et al* (1999) refers to the 'win-win' scenario where communities generate social benefit flows from wildlife. They need to be included in the planning and benefits of protected areas, and viable alternatives must be proposed to illegal encroachment and use of protected areas. The need has arisen for functional sustainable development and people-oriented conservation, with local communities from surrounding areas contributing to and benefiting from this. Kemf (1993) notes that conservationists and park managers are finally learning what local communities have known for a long time - that electric fences, fire trucks and armed guards do not protect parks and the diversity of nature; people do.

With this in mind, there has been a call for increased support for communities next to parks through education, participation in decision-making, revenue sharing, appropriate development schemes near protected areas, and access to resources where possible (McNeely & Miller, 1984

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cited in Wells & Brandon, 1992). Fennell (1999) mentions that stronger linkages should be made between educational institutions and local people by providing locals with the training required to work in the industry. He also advocates the development of a template to determine the percentage of ecotourism revenues that should accrue to local populations and to the resource base. It is also vital not to view local communities as welfare cases, but as essential elements of the long-term management of protected areas, and as participants that can add to its success.

A case study to illustrate local community involvement in and around protected areas is that of the TFCAs introduced in Section 2.2. A strong component of the TFCAs is community involvement and beneficiation. Communities in these areas live in small isolated rural villages, and their livelihoods depend on the natural resources. The Peace Parks Development Programme (PPDP) therefore needs to make the economic value of TFCAs greater than the existing subsistence value in order to get communities to support conservation. However, as custodians of the environment, they must be equal partners with government and private sector, and receive economic benefit. In an attempt to achieve this, the PPDP helps to design, develop, budget, and raise money for projects as well as implement those that strengthen the linkage between conserving biodiversity and communities standards of living. They also seek to add value to work already being done in communities, rather than introducing new elements. Communities will still be encouraged to maintain other forms of livelihood due to the seasonal and cyclical nature of tourism - various factors could result in reduced visits to a certain place (De la Harpe, 1999).

The PPDP is first focussing on projects that will have relatively immediate positive impacts on small groups of people, and will provide food availability, jobs, and skills related to tourism. *"Our objective is to unleash the creative entrepreneurial spirit in a small group of people in such a way that they themselves become the force for development in their communities"* (De la Harpe, 1999:4). There is acknowledgement though, that these processes will take significant investments of time and money. A specific initiative in which the PPDP is involved is the facilitation of workshops for communities who have had successful land claims in national parks, and seek to set up cultural tourism projects that will benefit communities and be compatible with conservation. One of the most controversial issues facing the Peace Parks is the matter of people living within newly proclaimed conservation areas. An example is a community who own land in the Maputaland TFCA who have built their own lodge which will house up to 12 backpackers and adventure travelers. The PPDP have actively supported them (De la Harpe, 1999).

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In South Africa, since the first democratic elections in 1994, the spotlight has been on community empowerment. The ANC has embraced ecotourism as a means of meeting basic needs and building capacity (Addison, 1997). Furthermore, both the White Paper on the conservation of biodiversity (South Africa, 1997a) and the White Paper on environmental management policy for South Africa (South Africa, 1997b) stress the importance of involving local communities in conservation.

Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve in South Africa was one of the first reserves to train its local people for positions of responsibility in the park and, in 1986, was the first private reserve to appoint a local Shangaan to the position of game ranger. Sabi Sabi also uses locals for many of the park's maintenance projects, assists entrepreneurial businesses, and generates funds to educate the local people (Black, 1999).

ConsCorp, mentioned earlier in this section, own various lodges within protected areas throughout Southern Africa. They are also committed to local community beneficiation, and apply a balanced approach to tourism, conservation, and local community involvement while promoting ecological sustainability, a quality experience for guests, and viable returns for investors (Varty, 1998). Since its inception in 1991, it has been bringing funds and employment opportunities into remote, poor rural areas. The philosophy is that local communities should benefit and regional economies be stimulated before one can expect them to care for the land and wildlife. The company encourages entrepreneurship, education, and the upgrading of skills for locals bordering the reserves. One means of doing this is through resource utilisation programmes, for example, collecting wood and thatching grass. Small businesses on the periphery of the reserves, such as brick making, building, charcoal production, fruit bottling, chicken farming, coal yards, and sewing have also been established. In addition to these, ConsCorp has funded clinics, schools, and community and entertainment centres. A major means of raising funds for the local communities is through the Rural Investment Fund which has already raised more than five million rand. A striking story is that of Mazibuko Zibane who was arrested for poaching and sentenced to three months community service as a bricklayer at Phinda Resource Reserve. After this, he established a brick making partnership, and in 1993 was awarded the contract to produce the 300 000 bricks needed for Phinda's Forest Lodge. The entire R7 million contract was undertaken using local labour and limited use of trained artisans. Another feat was that no tree or bush was uprooted during the construction of the lodge, which was built on stilts to avoid disturbing the forest floor (Pinnock, 1996; Varty, 1999).

Community empowerment is also being demonstrated in the Northern Province of South Africa, where Chief Joao Makuleke and his tribal authority have been successful with their land claim in the section of the Kruger National Park between the Luvuvhu and Limpopo rivers. Pinnock (1996) reports that this community will not demand that they return to live on the land, but desire to operate lodges there in partnership with the private sector and South African National Parks. The community have recently been awarded a hunting concession, which also applies to elephant. This has caused conflict since it is the first of its type to be awarded within the Kruger National Park[1].

McNeely cited in Kemf (1993), gives pointers for a successful partnership between people and parks. The author has combined these with Kemf's suggestions for conflict management, which can be applied to almost any protected area in the world where community benefits are at stake. Ideally, these guidelines should be employed before conflict arises:

- Build on, and incorporate the local culture. Support the diversity of different people groups.
- Allocate responsibility to local people. Involve them in preparing management plans, in technical research, and social impact analysis. Hire locals.
- Consider returning ownership of at least some protected areas to indigenous people and provide compensation for damage or loss.
- Link government development programs with protected areas.
- Give priority to small-scale development.
- Have the courage to enforce restrictions.
- Develop personal relationships with community leaders and individual stakeholders.
- Establish a management committee (which must have locals on it).
- Set up a roundtable or dialogue.
- Appoint a liaison officer to maintain relationships with local people.
- Involve a neutral mediator or other respected third party to assist.
- Establish zones with varying kinds and intensities of protection and use.
- Develop alternatives so that people are not dependent on park resources that require protection.
- Revive or adapt formerly used methods of stewardship.

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1. Telephonic communication with Mr. P. Bewsher, Ecotourism Afrika, Pretoria, 6 November 2000.

Resource base   Local community

Tourist

2.4   The tourist

Ecotourism industry
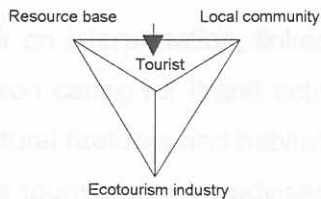
In Section 1.2, the concept of new tourism was introduced. The author now delves deeper into the tourist engaging in ecotourism, who falls under the category of the 'new tourist'. According to the definition of ecotourism used in this dissertation, experiences need to be interactive, enlightening, and participatory. Tourists are there to be changed by the environment, not to change the environment. Research has shown that some tourists have a genuine sensitivity to the environment and local communities (Wight, 1993) and are seeking environmentally responsible tourism products (Southern African Tourism Update, 1999a). Such tourists also tend to be well-educated professionals (Weiler & Richins, 1995) with high-income levels (Meric & Hunt, 1998).
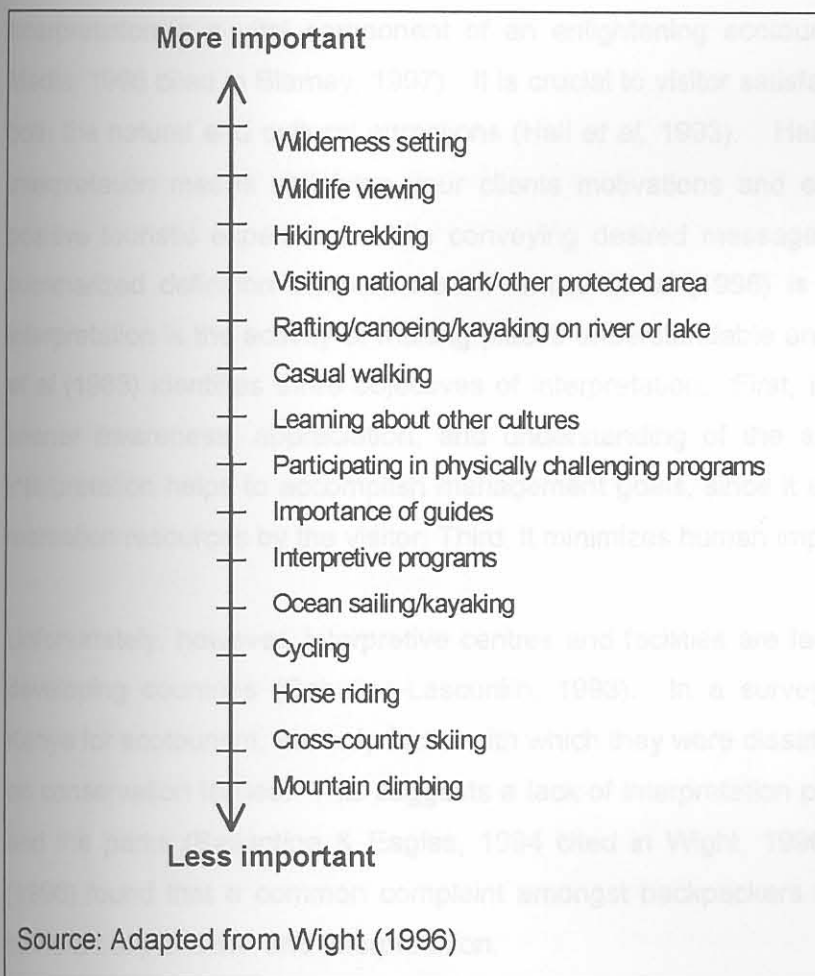
It is important first to understand what tourists engaging in ecotourism seek from a destination. Wight (1996) refers to various studies in this regard. Weiler & Richins (1995) also touch on this. Figure 2.2 adequately summarizes the benefits sought by tourists that are mentioned in these two sources.

MacCannell in Moscardo & Pearce (1999) suggests that these tourists also desire authenticity, often demanding it. However, once something becomes a tourist attraction, authenticity is virtually impossible. Greenwood (1982, cited in Bramwell & Lane, 1993) refers to 'staged authenticity'. Fortunately, Moscardo & Pearce (1999) point out that some tourists can enjoy contrived spectacles while being aware of their inauthenticity.

With the benefits that tourists seek from ecotourism as a background, the study now examines how an ecotourism experience can be interactive, enlightening, and participatory, with due respect to the environment and local community. In a study done on nature-based tourists to Australia, 69% felt that an educational or learning experience (enlightenment) was important or very important in their decision to do a nature-based activity (Blamey & Hatch, 1998). One could assume that this percentage would be even higher with tourists engaging in ecotourism specifically. Obua & Harding (1997) found that visitor behaviour affected the environment and that through disseminating information, one could inform tourists on how to behave in a particular context. Tourists can also affect local culture. They should therefore be informed on both culturally and environmentally acceptable behaviour with their understanding of the local community moving beyond a simplistic or idealised notion (Furze et al, 1996; Wight, 1993).

Tilden, who did much work on interpretation, linked greater knowledge of a subject or area with greater likelihood of a person caring for it and acting responsibly towards local people and their lifestyles, as well as the natural features and habitats (Bramwell & Lane, 1993). Cater (1994) and Orams (1995) suggest that tourists can be advised on ecotourism etiquette once they arrive by having a code of conduct printed on the menu or framed in their room. Even large-scale tourism is now attempting to induce shifts in tourism behaviour. Thompsons, for example, now provide environmental guidelines for their tourists, and TUI have produced an environmental ranking for products featured in their brochures (Clarke, 1997).

Figure 2.2   Importance rating of activities and services

More important

- Wilderness setting
- Wildlife viewing
- Hiking/trekking
- Visiting national park/other protected area
- Rafting/canoeing/kayaking on river or lake
- Casual walking
- Learning about other cultures
- Participating in physically challenging programs
- Importance of guides
- Interpretive programs
- Ocean sailing/kayaking
- Cycling
- Horse riding
- Cross-country skiing
- Mountain climbing

Less important

Source: Adapted from Wight (1996)

The Ecotourism Society urges tourists to educate themselves about a destination before arrival there. Behaviour should be altered for each place visited, with tourists being sensitive to local customs relating to culture, religion, photography, and tipping. This pre-knowledge aids cultural interaction and appreciation of local ecosystems, and also encourages tourists to ensure that money spent goes back into the local economy. Local foods should be consumed and use made of local transport. When buying souvenirs, the tourists should consider whether the goods are

locally made and legally acquired. The above actions will encourage locals to conserve the environment (The Ecotourism Society, 1998). Acott *et al* (1998) mention the Ladakh farm project in Kashmir run by the International Society for Ecology and Culture. In Ladakh, young people leave the farms to seek urban employment which is increasing the poverty of farmers. This project places Westerners into the homes of Ladakh farmers. It is a requirement that tourists do prior reading on the Ladakh culture. Once there, tourists help with running the farm, which raises the status of agriculture in the eyes of the locals. Visitors are also expected to talk to locals and explain the problems facing Western societies. This project has stimulated and inspired the tourists involved.

Interpretation is a vital component of an enlightening ecotourism experience (Social Change Media, 1995 cited in Blamey, 1997). It is crucial to visitor satisfaction and needs to be applied to both the natural and cultural attractions (Hall *et al*, 1993). Hall *et al* (1993) state that effective interpretation means satisfying your clients motivations and expectations through providing a positive touristic experience while conveying desired messages and information. However, a summarized definition adapted from Prentice *et al* (1998) is preferred, which proposes that interpretation is the activity of making places understandable and meaningful to visitors. Sharpe *et al* (1983) identifies three objectives of interpretation. First, it assists visitors in developing a keener awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the area they are visiting. Second, interpretation helps to accomplish management goals, since it encourages thoughtful use of the recreation resources by the visitor. Third, it minimizes human impact on the resource.

Unfortunately, however, interpretive centres and facilities are lacking in most protected areas of developing countries (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993). In a survey of Canadian tourists going to Kenya for ecotourism, the only factor with which they were dissatisfied was the lack of information on conservation issues. This suggests a lack of interpretation programs from both the operators and the parks (Ballantine & Eagles, 1994 cited in Wight, 1996). Loker (1993) cited in Wight (1996) found that a common complaint amongst backpackers was that organized tours lacked sufficient explanation and interpretation.

Forestell (1993) cited in Fennell (1999) has developed a unique model of interpretation and environmental education that he used for whalewatching. He describes how the interpreter should disseminate different information during three periods, namely, pre-contact with whales, contact, and post-contact. During the pre-contact phase, tourists learn how they should interact with whales. In the contact phase, the interpreter focuses on the questions that the tourists may ask while observing the whales. The aim is *"to generate motivation to learn by ... uncovering an*

imbalance between an individual's knowledge base and current perception of the world" (Forestell, 1993:274 cited in Fennell, 1999:200). Forestell suggests that the ecotourism experience can empower people to synthesize unscientific observation with scientific fact that is experiential and practical. Post-contact interpretation is when participants make pre- and post-trip comparisons of whales. They also consider broader environmental issues, such as supporting a conservation programme. This model can be applied to ecotourism at large, and highlights the need for interpreters to be sensitive to the various stages of the ecotourism experience. Forestell's stages of interpretation are expanded on by Fridgen (1984) and Hall (1991) cited in Hall *et al* (1993:132) who include the 'anticipation stage' (before the tourist has arrived) and the 'travel home' and 'recollection of the holiday' stages. Implementing interpretation during all these phases certainly poses challenges to the interpreter, but would definitely enhance the tourists' experience.

It is clear that high-quality well-trained guides are vital for interpretation in ecotourism (Henning, 1993 cited in Wight, 1996; Getz & Page, 1997). High on the tourist's list is the desire that guides have skills in language, natural and cultural history, environmental interpretation, communications, service, and ethical principles (Ryan, 1997; Wight, 1996).

The Deep Ecology Elephant Programme (DEEP) in South Africa has a strong focus on interpretation. It is an experiential journey towards a better understanding of the intertwined destinies of humans and elephant, and is based on the principles of ecotourism (Bewsher & Hattingh, 2000). A high-quality information brochure is given to tourists before leaving Johannesburg. En route to Mashatu Game Reserve, Botswana, the guides talk informally about what the tourists will experience once there. This is repeated in more depth once at the reserve. Trained local rangers join the tourists for their time in Mashatu, as well as experts in elephant behaviour. The enlightenment is constant, with informal discussions and questioning throughout the day while in the field, and a slide show and further discussion in the evening. Tourists sleep in tented camps, and in an open-air camp fenced by tree trunks. One of the activities is for tourists to sweep a patch of ground clear in a dry riverbed at sunset, and to return at sunrise. Guides then interpret the various spoor and markings made overnight. Tourists are also taken on a bicycle safari, and are given advance instructions on how to behave, as well as the reasons for these rules (Deep Safari, 2000; [2]).

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[2] Personal communication with a participant in the DEEP programme, Pretoria, 6 November 2000.

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In addition to being enlightened, tourists require a participatory and interactive experience. Simunye is a small lodge in KwaZulu Natal where visitors can actively experience and learn about contemporary Zulu life. To get to Simunye, there is a six-kilometre journey on horseback or horse cart. As tourists approach the lodge, they dismount and continue on foot. There are no lights to indicate where the lodge is. The following account illustrates what happens next: *"The sudden shouts and crashing of spears lifted our whole group off the ground, adrenaline pumping. Spinning around, we were horrified to see an impi rushing towards us carrying formidable spears and shields and a few bore flaming torches. As we readied ourselves for the final battle, we noticed that the warriors were smiling … hands outstretched in welcome"* (De la Harpe, 1997:93). Young boys then start practicing stick fighting, inviting the tourists to join in. All entertainment is educational, with visitors learning why dancers imitate cattle, why some wear Scottish kilts, etc. Tourists also get to learn some dance steps, as well as try their hand at ploughing and milking Nguni cows. Accommodation is either in the lodge (furnished in typical settler style) or at the Zulu kraal (*uMuzi*) in a more traditional hut (with en suite bathrooms, however). The cuisine is a combination of traditional Zulu food and western, and is served on a giant rock table (De la Harpe, 1997).

Besides this type of interaction, there is a clear indication that tourists engaging in ecotourism desire multi-activity holidays (Ayala, 1995 cited in Wight, 1996). Wight (1996) regards the activities, programs, and interpretation as crucial to the tourists experience, and the deciding factor as to whether the tourist will recommend the venture or do a repeat visit. It is also these factors that encourage extended stays. *"Tourists don't just want a bed, they want an activity"* (Colman, 1999b:11). The Coconut Beach Rainforest Resort in Australia, for example, experienced a 30% increase in average length of stay after introducing an extensive list of nature tours and activities (Kerr, 1992 cited in Wight, 1996). Operators should therefore offer a wide range of accessible experiences, and promote the environment as a means of meeting the needs of these tourists. Another alternative is to develop product linkages with others in the industry who can provide complementary experiences (Meric & Hunt, 1998; Wight, 1996).

A recent Getaway magazine focussed on South Africa's best parks, all of which have activities for tourists. Some examples follow. Addo Elephant National Park offers canoe trails with an overnight in a beautiful hideaway (Lanz, 2000) and the newly proclaimed Kgalagadi has walks or 4x4 drives with a knowledgeable ranger (Pinnock, 2000). The Kruger National Park offers activities ranging from bush braai's to hikes to visiting local settlements and having lunch with the people there. In addition, mountain biking activities are in the planning stage (Fox, 2000). Tsitsikamma National Park is one of the world's few marine national parks, and offers multi-

activities. The tourist has a choice of self-guided walks with clear signage, a 4x4 trail outside the reserve on private land, a short river trip, and the Gorge Challenge which is an all-day adventure combining abseiling, tubing, and mountain biking (Bristow, 2000a).

Another emerging trend is that tourists choosing ecotourism have a concern for the environment. Weiler & Richins (1995) mention that tourists going on the ecotourism Earthwatch Expeditions in Australia were not only environmentally responsible, but also wanted to enhance the environment. In this regard, the Ecotourism Society encourages tourists to avoid peak times so as to minimise environmental damage and to adopt low-impact camping and hiking behaviour. Tourists should leave no trace of their visit and dispose of waste properly, attempting to minimize the disposable products taken along (The Ecotourism Society, 1998).

There is also a growing interest in the culture of local communities, as has been illustrated in the preceding case studies. Tourism figures show that South Africa's heritage and culture together account for 54% of foreign tourists' motivations (Koch, 1998), second only to scenic beauty and far in excess of climate and wildlife (Mafisa Consultancy, 1999). The South Africa Arts 2000 Guide confirms this, mentioning that tourists want to see more than wildlife and beaches and are interested in art, culture and heritage (Arts, 2000). Guests staying at Kagga Kamma Private Game Reserve in the Western Cape can enjoy natural and mutually beneficial interaction with some of the last surviving Bushmen families of the Kalahari without disrupting the community. Such an approach optimizes what is naturally available, and does not entail the creation of artificial environments. Guests have luxury accommodation in en-suite caves, are offered a menu of indigenous dishes, and can visit the reserve's educational information centre which gives an overview of the lives of hunter-gatherers (Southern African Tourism Update, 1997a & 1998a). Besides being an interactive learning experience, the unique cave accommodation is also an attraction.

Wight (1996) mentions that experienced tourists engaging in ecotourism are far more likely to select rustic, intimate, adventure type accommodations such as the above, as well as cabins, lodges, camping, huts, bed and breakfasts, and farms. In some places, ecotourism has become associated with high levels of luxury. A North American study, however, found that 56% of tourists engaging in ecotourism preferred middle-range levels of luxury, with only 6% desiring high luxury. Tourists engaging in ecotourism also look out for sensitivity of the accommodation to the environment, and the green practices in operation (Wight, 1996).

In South Africa, a Cape-Town based company, Kontrei Toere, specialise in ecotourism experiences that highlight South Africa's rich natural and cultural heritage. *"Tailor-made 'learning through participation' tours are researched in detail and guides selected for their expertise. Every client receives a carefully researched handbook of information collated by leading academics"*. An example is a living history tour through the Cape Karoo where tourists follow in the tracks of the early pioneers who trekked north from the Cape. *"How was the hostile terrain crossed by ox wagon?" "What sort of food did they eat?" "How was it prepared?"* These are some of the questions answered. Tourists are expected to help with the cooking and other 'household' activities. The company also aims to provide economic opportunities for local communities (South African Tourism Update, 1997c:28).

In KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, the province's first black tour operator, Sandile Msimango, has launched his *Ubuntu Kraal* cultural tours. These involve visiting several cultural memorials of the Zulu people. There is a focus on the present with a visit to a township, and on the past with trips to the site of the freedom struggle, and then to the rural areas where some Zulu's are still living traditionally. Tourists also eat a traditional Zulu lunch, and can stay overnight in Zulu huts (Mackenzie, 2000a).

To conclude this section on the tourist, it is appropriate to mention the increasing responsibility and concern that some tourists feel towards local communities, questioning tour operators as to the extent of benefits that locals receive through their tourism products. This goes beyond mere interest in the culture of local communities. Beneficiation for these people has been addressed in preceding sections, and is encountered again in this dissertation. One example is in Guatemala, on the periphery of the Maya Biosphere Reserve. A local non-profit organisation, Pro Peten Conservation International, has made a firm commitment to work with local communities there. Ecotourism training has been taking place in one of the villages since 1993. Guides are professional and possess a wealth of knowledge regarding the fauna and flora. One of the tourism products is the Scarlet Macaw Trail through tropical forests. Tourists sleep in hammocks with mosquito nets, which adds to the adventure. Booklets are given out by Pro Peten in which tourists can mark down sightings as well as tracks, smells, and sounds (Wood, 1998). This type of product will be actively supported by the tourist who is genuinely concerned about how an ecotourism venture has involved, and continues to involve the local people.

Resource base   Local community

Tourist

Ecotourism industry
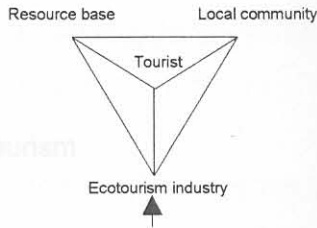
2.5   The ecotourism industry

The term 'ecotourism industry' applies to all players involved in delivering the ecotourism product to the tourist. Ecotourism is complex and multidisciplinary. Its implementation requires extensive planning, management, and monitoring. All parties must recognize the intrinsic value of the natural and cultural resource base and all parties must be educated (Wight, 1993). Much of what will be described here has already been mentioned in previous sections. This is due to the fact that the ecotourism industry has a major responsibility in ensuring that the other fundamentals are in place – that locals are involved and have viable economic opportunities, that the resource base is sustainably used at an appropriate level, and that tourists have an enlightening, interactive experience. The definition also states that ecotourism must be economically viable for the ecotourism industry.

Both tourist and ecotourist operators are becoming increasingly aware of the pressures being placed upon them by environmentalists. Prosser (1994) mentions the difficulty of the tourism industry changing from a culture based on an economic balance sheet to one with an environmental base. Yet, the industry at large is making efforts towards a more sustainable approach, balancing profitability with sensitivity and responsibility. However, not all those studying the industry are convinced of the sincerity of these efforts, claiming it to be a marketing ploy (Prosser, 1994). However, in de-emphasising the industry at large and focussing on the segment interested in ecotourism – if it is to be true to its name and inherent principles – this part of the industry has no choice but to be sustainable.

An obvious way in which the ecotourism segment of the industry has attempted to make a difference is through the creation of ecotourism guidelines/ codes of conduct/ fact sheets for tour operators and for tourists. Wight (1993) compiled the following list of policies, codes or principles that have been formulated, directed at natural and cultural resources. Others have been added to her list.

- The National Audubon Society
- Sobek International
- Australian Tourism Industry Association
- American Society of Travel Agents
- The Center for Responsible Tourism (California)
- Alliance Internationale de Tourisme

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- ITT Sheraton Corporation
- Field Studies Council (UK)
- Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism
- Countryside Commission (UK)
- CP Hotels and Resorts (Canada)
- Pacific Asia Travel Association
- Ecotourism Society

These codes of conduct are usually developed for the tourist, but since all players must share the responsibility (Wight, 1993), a few codes have also been developed for the operators (industry). To illustrate what is covered in these guidelines, the author has chosen two examples, for the tourists and industry respectively.

The Ecotourism Society (1998) has an Independent Ecotraveler Fact Sheet, which gives the following guidelines to **tourists**:

- Educate yourself about the destination – culture, language, ecosystems, etc. Be aware of local customs concerning photography, tipping, etc.
- Maximize positive impacts and minimise negative impacts on the natural and cultural environments. Remember that you are the guest. Ensure that the economic impact of your visit directly affects the locals.
- Consume local foods, and use public or locally-owned transport to maximize financial benefit to the local community. When buying souvenirs, ensure that they are locally made. Don't purchase goods made from endangered species.
- After your visit, inform the relevant authorities if any problems were experienced.
- Before visiting natural areas, check with local authorities for site-specific regulations, guidelines, and maps. Offer to pay even if there is not an entrance fee.
- Avoid peak times for visiting sensitive areas and adopt low-impact camping and hiking behaviour.
- When viewing wildlife, do so from a distance and move slowly and quietly. Animals always have the right-of-way.
- Don't litter. Better still, take a bag with you and pick up other litter. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

The following guidelines for **tour operators** seeking to implement environmentally responsible safaris have been adapted from Lubeck (1991) cited in McIntyre (1993).

- State your commitment to conservation in brochures and other pre-departure information.
- Conduct orientations on conservation and cultural sensitivity before and during the trip.
- Provide guidance in pre-printed materials about endangered species products sold in souvenir shops and why to avoid them. During the trip, patronize only appropriate craft concessions that sell locally produced goods benefiting the local economy. Explain when it is or isn't appropriate to bargain/barter for goods.
- Build in a contribution to a conservation, cultural, or archaeological project. Alternatively, encourage donations by clients directly to the reserve or hold a fund-raising drive. Another option is to give tourists membership to a wildlife organization as a tour benefit.
- Equip clients with information to help minimize any negative impact, for example, don't wear bright clothes, don't smoke, don't crowd the animals, etc. Provide copies of park rules for clients and explain why they are important.
- Discourage negative social ramifications that result from giving sweets and inappropriate gifts to children along the route. If there is something to donate, let the tour guides give it to a village elder or teacher to distribute.
- Ensure that ground operators train drivers/guides. Give recognition or monetary rewards for safety excellence and sensitivity to the rules of the reserve. Ask drivers to turn off the engine to alleviate noise and reduce diesel fuel exhaust when viewing wildlife or scenery.
- Follow up on the safari with newsletters and information on wildlife appeals. Give a progress report on any project the client supported.
- Explain your commitment to the environment to tour operator colleagues, travel agents during office visits and trade shows, and in-bound ground operators.

Since codes of conduct are voluntary and a form of self-regulation, enforcement by law is functionally unavailable at present. It is therefore important to provide some type of incentive strategies, for example, a rating system of ecotour operators based on compliance scores (similar to the star ratings of the lodging industry) (Sirakaya & McLellan, 1998). Dowling (1999) reports that litigation for non-performance is coming to the forefront, as well as the accreditation of operators. Two examples of organisations awarding accreditation are given in the following paragraphs. On the other side of the coin, however, Genot (1995:166) states that ..."*voluntary proactive approaches are now recognised as the best way of ensuring long-term commitments and improvements ...*".

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In South Africa, The Nature Workshop (TNW) was established in 1996. This company represents 59 'nature destinations' in a marketing and consultant management capacity. They will only represent the company if they feel that it ascribes to the fundamentals of ecotourism, and is small scale (12-24 beds). TNW has now become affiliated with a UK based company, CERT (Care and Environmentally Responsible Tourism). Lodges can become CERT-affiliated (with TNW facilitating the process) if they have the correct community and environmental plans in place (Southern African Tourism Update, 1999a).

A similar programme is run by Green Globe, which was developed in 1994 by the World Travel and Tourism Council to assist businesses in sustainably managing environmental and social aspects. Three businesses in South Africa have been awarded membership. They *"all adhere to the accepted environmental practices, which include recycling, waste minimisation, energy efficiency, fresh water resource management, and social and community involvement"* (South African Tourism Update, 1999c:12).

Another of the ecotourism industry's responsibilities is good eco-design which is sensitive to the environment, enhances the experience of the tourist, and incorporates local ideas and traditions, as well as providing employment. Andersen (1993) suggests that the ecotourism facility is the footprint of concern and understanding. Planning, design, and siting should be compatible with and enhance the environment, with as low an impact as possible (Fennell, 1999; Prosser, 1994). The lodging should be an imaginative extension of the environment – an engaging and vibrant design that promotes an educational and participatory experience (Andersen, 1993; The Ecotourism Society, 1998). Some authors use the term 'ecolodge', which is defined as *"a nature-dependent tourist lodge that meets the philosophy and principles of ecotourism"* (Russell *et al,* 1995:10 cited in Fennell, 1999:234). Local communities should also be encouraged to share their ideas during planning and to be part of the construction phase with local materials being used where possible and practical.

The scale of ecotourism development should remain small. In a study done by Russell *et al* (1995) cited in Fennell (1999) on ecolodges in nine regions around the world, it emerged that the majority of these lodges accommodated approximately 24 guests. The author believes that it is easier for ecotourism to be sustainable if small-scale. This is in agreement with Andersen (1993:131) who writes that *"if ecotourism is to live up to its potential for contributing to environmental quality, it must ... remain a small niche in the huge global tourism industry ... a grass roots effort firmly based in local economies"*. This quote touches on two of the fundamentals, namely, the resource base and local communities. In support of the effect on the

resource base, Obua & Harding (1997), in their study on ecotourism in Kibale National Park, Uganda, found that environmental impact depended mainly on visitor numbers, and suggested keeping these low. To strengthen the argument that small-scale means more local benefits, Knill (1993) mentions that it is small-scale tourism that makes a direct contribution to the local economy.

Boo (1990) in her study on ecotourism in Belize, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, and Mexico points out that ecotourism in private protected areas is run by individuals highly conscious of environmental impacts and maintaining the natural environment. The accommodation ranges from tents to small hotels, many goods and services are purchased locally, and community participation is high. Their secret of success is that they are small-scale. This touches on the fundamentals of a healthy industry running the ecotourism, community involvement, as well as a sustainably utilized resource base. A large component of achieving the latter relates to the complex task of determining carrying capacity (Weaver, 1999) or Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) (Singleton, 1997; Tyler & Dangerfield, 1999). This requires increased understanding of the relationship existing between tourists, the industry, local communities, the resource base, and government (Fennell, 1999). The last fundamental that must be related to the discussion on remaining small-scale is that of an interactive learning experience for the tourist. This too is easier to comply with if ecotourism remains small-scale. In addition, tourists seeking ecotourism prefer small groups (Blamey, 1997), a good size being 12-20 (Hugo & Bewsher, 1994).

Western (1993:10) disagrees with the viewpoint on remaining small-scale, arguing that if there are not enough tourists, there will be insufficient revenue to benefit local communities and the environment. ... "In reality the [ecotourism] principles applied to the mass market can do more good for conservation – and alleviate more harm – than a small elitist market".

The response to this is threefold. First, nature-based tourism (without community involvement/ beneficiation and tourist enlightenment/ interaction) is on the rise and can do much for conservation, since larger amounts of people patronize it. Ecotourism (with its four fundamentals) should remain a small niche within this larger setting. Second, mass 'ecotourism' is unlikely to benefit sensitive environments, and third, some communities may withstand the onslaught from the "mass market", but isolated rural ones will only suffer, and very little benefit will trickle down. The aspect of local ownership/partnership will also be less viable due to high tourist volumes. It would require extensive involvement from outsiders, which is in contrast to the philosophy of ecotourism. By definition, ecotourism is inherently different from mass tourism.

The role of the ecotourism industry goes beyond design of the facilities. Andersen (1993) describes the importance of having a low-impact approach when implementing ecotourism. He mentions the following principles that need to be examined. These have been combined with pointers from Ceballos-Lascuráin (1993).

- Organisational issues (for example, analysing the areas ecological sensitivity).
- Site planning issues (for example: minimising trail crossings at streams and rivers; using boardwalks; carefully designing buildings, roads, signs, nature trails, and observation towers to minimise abrupt interference with the environment; using endemic species for landscaping, etc.).
- Building design issues (for example: maintenance of the ecosystem taking precedence over view sites or dramatic design statements; above-ground construction; using local building materials and ideas, etc.).
- 'Eco-techniques'/energy resource and utility infrastructure issues (for example: solar or wind energy sources; natural cross-ventilation; capture and reutilization of rainwater; use of natural light, etc.).
- Waste management issues (for example, recycling of vegetable waste, wastewater, timber, etc.).
- Evaluation (for example, accessibility to disabled people and the elderly).

A case in point, although not an ecotourism destination, is the African Wildlife College west of the Kruger National Park's Orpen Gate. Extreme care was taken to minimize environmental impact, with the functional areas being spread thinly over a 700m stretch of pristine lowveld. The buildings are thatched ochre coloured structures which blend naturally into the surroundings. They have been kept low, mostly beneath the treetops to minimize visual obstructiveness. The contractors were local and the builders themselves made most of the bricks used, built all of the buildings, and cut and combed 700 000 bundles of thatching grass for roofing. The director, Dr Peter Norton pointed out the tremendous investment made by using the locals, and the invaluable learning process it had been. Only one major tree was sacrificed during the entire building operation. Plumbing was designed for stringent water conservation, with toilet systems of low-volume dual-flush type, and shower and bath water supplying water to the gardens. The gardens are mainly natural and rainwater is collected in tanks. No indigenous hardwoods were used in the building or roofing – all came from plantation exotics and invasive aliens. This philosophy was even extended to the furniture (Marsh, 1997).

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Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve (mentioned in Section 2.3) has received attention due to its waste management and recycling programmes. Top on the list is their recycling wetlands system. Approximately 90 000 litres of waste water per day passes from a septic tank to a holding tank, and is then pumped to a system of oxygenating spillways, gabions, and ponds, where the water is purified within acceptable drinking limits. In addition, the wetland is a popular settling and feeding site for birds and other fauna. Sabi Sabi also recycles its vegetable matter, glass, tins, and paper. The little that is left is burnt using invasive wood. This private reserve has applied to become the first game lodge in the world to be accredited under the ISO 14000 series, which demands ongoing adherence to sound environmental management practices (Black, 1999; Southern African Tourism Update, 1998b & 1999b).

Fennell (1999) gives some further directives pertaining to the role of the ecotourism industry in ecotourism. The author has combined these with Phillips (1988 cited in Prosser, 1994).

- Minimise the number of operators and tourists according to the capacity of the environment to absorb the impacts.
- Allow only operators with proven track records to conduct tours. This will involve accreditation and monitoring.
- Government and industry should work together to determine fair guidelines that will regulate the ecotourism industry and promote sustainable development principles.
- Uphold the community's integrity and use a bottom-up approach. The control of tourism should remain as far as possible in local hands, contributions should be made towards local income, and various benefits should spread throughout the community.
- Assist conservation, and bring new value and use to historic structures.
- Tourism investment should encourage steady dispersal of activity, thus minimising impacts and congestion.
- Actively increase the understanding of both the tourists and local communities through information, interpretation, and education.
- The tourist experience should draw upon the character of the environment - its aesthetics, vegetation, culture, and wildlife.

Zoning is another important component of ecotourism planning. Wallace (1993) explains that zoning should be done to protect the resources and to provide a range of experiences for visitors. He describes that one must first determine management objectives for an area and then establish corresponding zones, by examining aspects such as visitor density, number of encounters between visitors, amount of evidence of human activity and infrastructure, type of travel, level of visitor freedom, etc. Zoning in different areas will therefore differ considerably.

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The different zones are given various names in the literature. Putting terminology aside, the main zone types mentioned by MacGregor & Jarvie (1994 cited in McPherson, 2000) and Wallace (1993) have been summarized below.

- Reception, accommodation, food outlets, and concentrated tourist activities.
- Trails, interpretive centres, and appropriate tourist activities.
- Prime conservation areas - minimal tourists allowed.
- Scientific study - no tourists allowed.
- Linkages between zones.

Wallace (1993) also mentions the importance of proper trail route selection and design – a further responsibility of the ecotourism industry. Trails usually arise from use rather than by initial design, resulting in extreme damage to the environment. It is, however, vital that these are planned, selected, and designed prior to opening the area up for tourism. The planning should be done from an ecologically and a culturally-sensitive viewpoint, ensuring that it will be profitable to the local community on a long term basis (Hugo, 1999). Aspects such as soil surface, gradient, and vegetation type must be taken into consideration. This also applies to boardwalks or suspended walkways that can be used to traverse sensitive ecological areas, for example, mangrove swamps and dunes. Sources such as Beeton (1998) and Andersen (1993) give detailed guidelines on how to design ecotourism routes. Hugo & Bewsher (1994) state that good trail planning focuses on minimum environmental disturbance and maintenance costs while ensuring maximum user satisfaction. Regarding the latter, Hugo (1999) points to the importance of psychology in good trail planning. Some examples demonstrating this follow. Trail width should increase when there are good views, so that tourists can enjoy it together without trampling surrounding vegetation. A good map and a well-marked trail make the hiker feel more at ease. Ideally, one should be able to see from one marker to the next. A trail also needs to have beautiful sites spread out to prevent boredom; a stiff climb should be followed by a good view; and a lovely rock pool should be reached by mid afternoon, and not in the cool morning (Hugo, 1999).

An example here is one of the most popular trails in Galápagos National Park, that climbs the hill at Bartolomé which is a famous photo site. It was formed in sandy soils, probably to avoid the nearby lava beds. Since the trail is not firm, areas on the sides of the trail have become damaged and eroded as visitors sidestep the path to gain better grip. Scars have also been formed by large groups which huddle together on the narrow path to hear the tour guide speak (Beeton, 1998; Wallace, 1993). Beeton (1998) suggests having a second guide at the rear who can provide information and answer questions. This will prevent bunching. This may be necessary

even in as small a group as ten people. A positive step for South Africa regarding trail planning is that the Hiking Federation of South Africa will, in future, only include trails into their database if they have passed a critical evaluation in terms of quality and design (Hugo & Bewsher, 1994).

Striving for minimum impact is an all-encompassing task. Wight (1995) uses the example of Arctic Edge Tours in the Yukon, which is a locally owned company with a focus on adventure tourism, but incorporating elements of ecotourism. Arctic Edge facilitates wilderness travel, natural history activities, and cultural visits that are based on best environmental practices. These involve educating the tourists, low-impact travel, transfer of benefits to local economies while using local knowledge and perspectives, and accepting limits to growth. Arctic Edge has also expanded into Siberia where local firms are being trained to manage the industry there. The following are some of their minimum impact travel techniques:

- Group size is less than ten.
- Few to no resources are used in the field for food since meals are pre-planned and packed.
- Washing water is disposed of far from water sources.
- All rubbish is burned or carried out.
- Tourists must travel single file on trails.
- It is suggested to guests that they wear shallow-tread hiking boots.
- Hardy sites are chosen for campsites.
- Only dead wood or fuel-burning stoves are used for campfires.
- No crowding of wildlife is permitted.
- No trace camping practices are allowed.

The ecotourism industry would do well to implement the principles given in this section since good eco-practice is good business practice (Bewsher & Hattingh, 2000). A truly sustainable, environmentally moral company will live long and prosper, while its less considerate competition withers in the waste of its own misunderstanding (Black, 1999) and loses its competitive edge (Lipman cited in Sheridan, 2000b).

2.6 Discussion

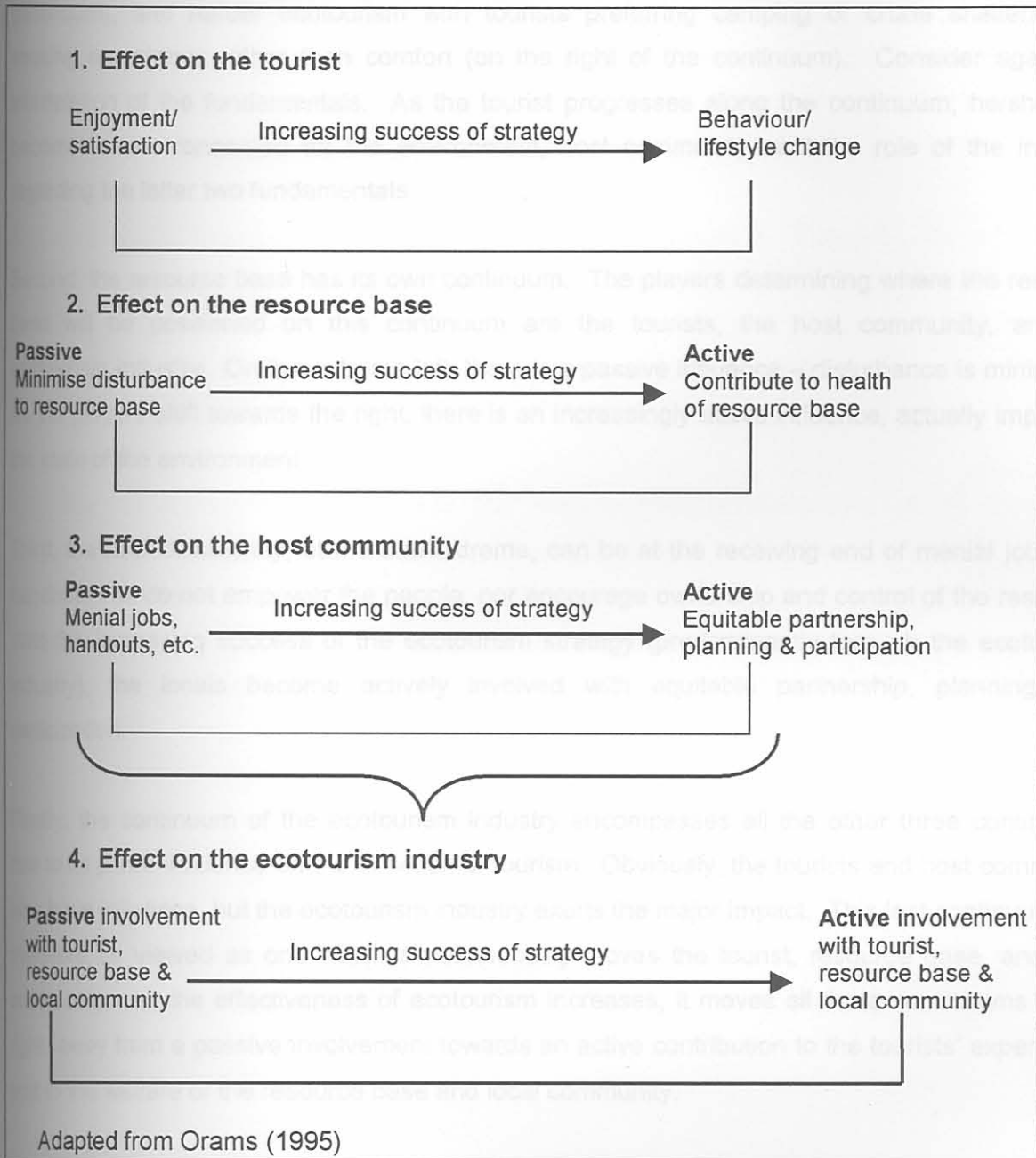It is clear that the potential market for ecotourism experiences is significant and growing (Ryan *et al*, 2000; Wight, 1996). Successful ecotourism ventures depend on an integrated management philosophy that considers the various fundamentals, and then responds with products/experiences which meet environmental, cultural, and economically sustainable principles (Tyler & Dangerfield, 1999; Wight, 1996).

To achieve ecotourism, all parties need to be educated – local communities, industry, tourists, as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations. There should also be partnership and understanding between all role players (Wight, 1993). There is always pressure to produce immediate results and benefits, particularly when involving local people. Singleton (1997), however, warns that short-term economic gain should not take precedence over long-term viability. However, in order to establish local credibility of projects, and to overcome distrust and skepticism amongst locals, one needs tangible short-term benefits. Both are therefore essential – initial short-term objectives and successes, but with the long-term objectives of sustainability in mind.

Even though ecotourism has the potential to make positive contributions to local people and the resource base, it is not the panacea for all ventures wishing to integrate environmental protection and community involvement. The tourist engaging in ecotourism is not some magic breed mitigating all of tourism's ills (Cater, 1993). There is still a need for other types of tourism – nature-based, adventure, cultural, etc., and even mass tourism. When considering all four fundamentals simultaneously, it is clear that ecotourism is complex (Finance Week, 1998), and therefore easier to implement on a small scale. Burton (1998:757) notes that the term 'ecotourism' should be used sparingly, since there are few ventures where all four fundamentals are in place. With the trend of other tourism types leaning towards environmentally sound practices, one can hope that the industry as a whole is moving in the right direction. Ayala (1996 cited in Weaver, 1999) reports evidence of a gradual convergence between ecotourism and mass tourism, with mass tourists and the industry alike becoming more aware of environmental concerns and adopting sustainable practices. However, ecotourism should still remain a unique concept, set apart for those who are serious about integrating sustainable environmental principles with community involvement and the interaction and enlightenment of the tourist.

Even in the context of the definition selected for this study, there are varying degrees of ecotourism which still comply with the four fundamentals. This was mentioned in Section 1.4. These varying positions of ecotourism are shown in Figure 2.3, which has been considerably adapted and extended from Orams (1995) for this study. It shows the four fundamentals of ecotourism, each one as its own continuum.

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Figure 2.3   The objectives of ecotourism

1. Effect on the tourist

Enjoyment/
satisfaction   — — — Increasing success of strategy — — — ▶   Behaviour/
lifestyle change

2. Effect on the resource base

Passive
Minimise disturbance   — — — Increasing success of strategy — — — ▶   Active
Contribute to health
to resource base   of resource base

3. Effect on the host community

Passive
Menial jobs,   — — — Increasing success of strategy — — — ▶   Active
Equitable partnership,
handouts, etc.   planning & participation

4. Effect on the ecotourism industry

Passive involvement
with tourist,   — — — Increasing success of strategy — — — ▶   Active involvement
with tourist,
resource base &   resource base &
local community   local community

Adapted from Orams (1995)

First, the tourist engaging in ecotourism can be at the one extreme of having an enjoyable satisfying experience. They are interested in interacting with local people, learning something, and being in nature, but demand luxury, and may not actively contribute to the welfare of local communities and/or the resource base. As the tourist moves along the continuum, he/she moves closer to having a behavioural/lifestyle change. On the extreme right, is the purist who will hike to a destination rather than using a car, make use of simple accommodation so as not to harm the environment (Meric & Hunt, 1998), remove other people's rubbish, and ensure that their money goes to the local community. Fennell (1999) distinguishes between softer ecotourism

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experiences where there are fixed-roof units, for example cabins and lodges (on the left of the continuum), and harder ecotourism with tourists preferring camping or crude shelters, and seeking experience rather than comfort (on the right of the continuum). Consider again the interrelation of the fundamentals. As the tourist progresses along the continuum, he/she also becomes more concerned for the environment, host community, and the role of the industry regarding the latter two fundamentals.

Second, the resource base has its own continuum. The players determining where the resource base will be positioned on this continuum are the tourists, the host community, and the ecotourism industry. On the extreme left, there is a passive influence – disturbance is minimised. As the players shift towards the right, there is an increasingly active influence, actually improving the state of the environment.

Third, the host community, at the one extreme, can be at the receiving end of menial jobs and handouts that do not empower the people, nor encourage ownership and control of the resource. With the increasing success of the ecotourism strategy (predominantly through the ecotourism industry), the locals become actively involved with equitable partnership, planning, and participation.

Finally, the continuum of the ecotourism industry encompasses all the other three continuums due to its prime influence on the direction of tourism. Obviously, the tourists and host community also have influence, but the ecotourism industry exerts the major impact. This last continuum can therefore be viewed as one which simultaneously moves the tourist, resource base, and host community. As the effectiveness of ecotourism increases, it moves all three continuums to the right, away from a passive involvement towards an active contribution to the tourists' experience, and to the welfare of the resource base and local community.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to give the reader an idea of what the fundamentals of ecotourism entail. There is obvious interrelation and overlap which illustrates the need for ecotourism to have all four fundamentals operating in balance, as is signified in the ecotourism tetrahedron (Figure 1.2). This chapter forms the bulk of the literature study and is used to develop guidelines for ecotourism at Mkambati Nature Reserve in Chapters 5 to 8. These proposals for the reserve attempt to move the tourist, resource base, host community, and ecotourism industry to the right of the continuums in Figure 2.3. To simplify the implementation of the literature study, the main

aspects under each fundamental have been summarized in Table 2.1. In Chapter 9, this summary will be used again to indicate the extent of the implementation of this section of the literature study (Chapter 2) in the guidelines for ecotourism at Mkambati Nature Reserve (Chapters 5 to 8). When implementing ecotourism, not all the aspects shown in Table 2.1 will be used. The aspects implemented depend on the destination and its history.

This chapter has focussed on the positive aspects of ecotourism. However, there has been misuse of the concept, with numerous problems occurring. These are described in the following chapter. The problems and challenges of ecotourism are included because it is essential to understand this side of ecotourism, so that the guidelines proposed can assist in overcoming the problems present at Mkambati Nature Reserve.

Whatever the destination, practitioners first need a solid understanding of the theoretical ecotourism fundamentals as well as the problems/challenges. This forms a base from which ecotourism implementation can be planned. In an ideal scenario of clear commitment to and understanding of the fundamentals discussed in this chapter, balance would be achieved within the ecotourism tetrahedron. The problems described in Chapter 3 would then be less likely to occur.

Table 2.1   Summary of the fundamentals of ecotourism

ENVIRONMENT (=E)	LOCAL COMMUNITIES (=LC)	TOURISTS (=T)	ECOTOURISM INDUSTRY (=EI)
Ecotourism must be explored as an alternative landuse.		T want to be enlightened.	EI must profit.
Ecotourism must operate within the biophysical limits of E and conserve biodiversity.			EI must understand participation.
	LC must participate right from the planning stages.		Involve communities right from the planning stages.
E must be considered in its totality from a scientific and ecological perspective.			Consider the E in its totality, making use of scientific ecological principles.
		T need codes of conduct.	Develop and enforce codes of conduct.
		T desire interpretation.	Interpret natural and cultural environment for the T.
E must be conserved.	People-oriented conservation must be practiced.		Conserve E.
	Locals should be trained as guides.	T desire well trained guides.	Provide well trained guides.
	LC should be educated on ecotourism.	T should be educated on ecotourism.	Educate on ecotourism.
Intrinsic value of E must be recognized.		T are interested in the culture of LC.	
	Interaction between LC and T should be encouraged.	T want to interact with LC and E.	Encourage interaction between LC and T.
LC are custodians of E.	LC should see themselves as custodians.		See the LC as custodians.
	Appreciation of E must be encouraged.	Appreciation of E must be encouraged.	Encourage appreciation of E among T and LC.
E must have minimum impact placed on it.		T must travel lightly.	Be responsible towards environment.
	Traditional forms of livelihood should be retained where possible.	Check that goods sold are local and legal.	Implement sustainable organisational issues.
	LC must identify existing resources and skills that can be used for ecotourism.		Concentrate on activities that use existing community resources and skills.
		Seek environmentally responsible products	Implement sustainable site-planning issues.
	LC should decide on the type of growth they would like to see.	T desire physical challenge and adventure.	Implement sustainable trail design.
			Use 'eco-techniques' regarding energy, ventilation, water, etc.
	Controlled access to resources for LC should be allowed.		Allow the LC controlled access to resources.
	LC must benefit.	T want to see that LC benefits.	Ensure LC beneficiation.
	LC must develop and protect cultural assets.	T desire unique experiences.	Encourage development and protection of cultural assets. Use for tourism where appropriate.
	Revenue should stay within local economies.	T want to ensure that revenue goes into local economies.	Ensure revenue goes into local economies.

	LC should be uplifted, with skills imparted and capacity built.	Contribute to community/ environmental upliftment.	Contribute to community/ environmental upliftment.
	Locals should be employed and given responsibility.		Employ locals/ allocate responsibility.
	LC should make local products/ food/services/ ideas available.	Use local products/ food/ transport/ services.	Use local products/ materials/ food/ transport/ services/ ideas.
	LC should seek joint ventures		EI should encourage and take part in joint ventures.
	LC should insist on a bottom-up approach.		Use a bottom-up approach.
	LC must have a degree of control and ownership.		Give LC control and ownership as far as possible.
	Some locals should be trained for management.		Train some locals for management.
	Traditional designs should be used in the architecture.		Use eco-design principles, incorporating ideas from E and LC.
	Make indigenous knowledge systems available.		Tap into indigenous knowledge systems.
E needs well planned zoning.			Implement well planned zoning.
	LC must build on relationships with EI.		Build on relationships with LC.
Ecotourism must be kept small-scale.	Keep it small-scale.	T desire small-scale ecotourism.	Keep it small-scale.
	Seek small business/ entrepreneurial development.		Encourage small business/ entrepreneurial development.
Carrying capacity/ LAC must be determined.			Determine carrying capacity/ LAC.
Limit impacts by keeping it uncrowded.		T want an uncrowded place.	
A remote E is favoured.		T want a remote place.	
			Create experiences for T that draw on the character of the E.
		T want multiactivities.	EI must implement multiactivities.
			Monitor and evaluate continually.
	LC want local traditions to be respected.	T should respect local traditions.	EI should respect local traditions and encourage T to do so.
	LC want their privacy to be respected.	T should respect the privacy of LC.	EI should respect privacy and encourage T to do so.

NOTE: Overlap between the fundamentals is indicated in bold.