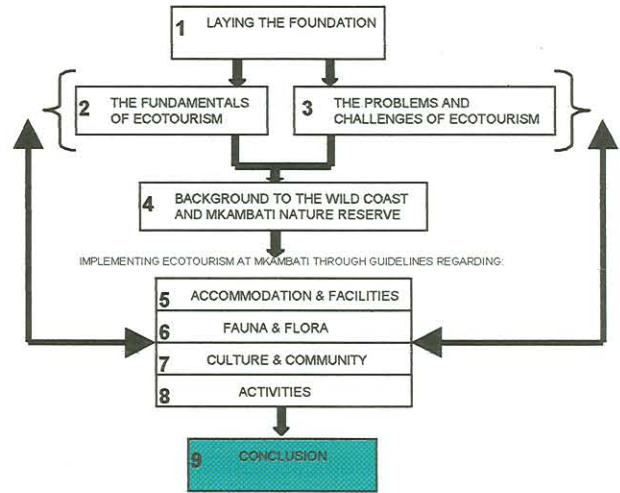


Chapter 9

Conclusion to the study



9.1 Problem statement, aim, and structure

In Section 1.1.1, the problem was identified that ecotourism is seldom understood and implemented in its entirety, and that the term is often misused. The aim of this dissertation was therefore to explore the fundamentals of ecotourism in depth via a literature study, and then to put them into practice at Mkambati Nature Reserve. Although the linkage between Chapters 5 to 8 and Chapter 2 was often clear, the author has indicated which aspects of the fundamentals were used in the guidelines for Mkambati in Table 9.1. The relevant aspects are marked using ticks. At the end of Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, the conclusion related the work back to the fundamentals of ecotourism displayed both in the ecotourism tetrahedron (Figure 1.2) and in the continuums of Figure 2.3.

The relationship of the guidelines for Mkambati (Chapters 5 to 8) to the problems and challenges of ecotourism (Chapter 3) was usually obvious. The author did not, however, directly refer back to these problems and challenges in Chapters 5 to 8, in order to avoid clutter. In the following section, the relevance of Chapter 3 to the guidelines will therefore be examined. Table 9.2 indicates which of the problems currently occur at Mkambati and which are potential future problems.

As mentioned in Section 1.1.4, the author believes that this comprehensive study on the fundamentals of ecotourism according to the ecotourism tetrahedron is a valuable contribution to this emerging field. In addition, it simplifies the implementation thereof, as has been seen with the case study of Mkambati Nature Reserve. The detailed theory on the fundamentals of ecotourism is supplied in Chapter 2, while Table 2.1 supplies a useful summary of the theory. The implementation thereof at Mkambati is shown in Table 9.1. The same aspects of the fundamentals as represented in this table can be used to implement ecotourism in any suitable destination, activity, or facility.

Table 9.1 Aspects of ecotourism fundamentals used at Mkambati Nature Reserve

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.	✓

KEY:	✓	Aspects of fundamentals used at Mkambati Nature Reserve
	Bold writing	Overlap between the fundamentals.

Table 9.2 The problems and challenges of ecotourism relevant to Mkambati Nature Reserve

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN:			
RESOURCE BASE & ECOTOURISM INDUSTRY	TOURISTS & RESOURCE BASE	RESOURCE BASE & LOCAL COMMUNITY	LOCAL COMMUNITY & ECOTOURISM INDUSTRY
Eco-sell. ✓	Lack of interpretation.	Community development & environmental protection not pursued simultaneously. ✓	Revenue leakage. ✓ ★
Destruction of resource base due to demand.	Lack of interpretation & interaction. ✓		Low-level involvement of local community. ✓
Lack of common vision. ✓ ★			Commodization of culture & demonstration effect. ★
Lack of attention to long-term sustainability.			
Monitoring & auditing. ★			Lack of linkage between conservation & broad-based development. ✓
Key: ✓ Present problems ★ Potential future problems			

9.2 The problems and challenges of ecotourism at Mkambati Nature Reserve

Part of the mission of Mkambati Nature Reserve is to utilize the resource base sustainably by means of ecotourism. However, the Management Planning Framework for Mkambati Nature Reserve (Prinsloo, 1999b) is written from a conservation perspective and has very little on ecotourism. The problem of 'eco-sell' then applies. Management must understand that being a protected area does not necessarily make the reserve an ecotourism venture, and that the specific guidelines proposed in this dissertation are essential for the successful implementation of ecotourism.

Common vision shared by all stakeholders is another aspect that needs attention. At Mkambati, the relationship between management and the local community is a tense and complex one, and is certainly not at the point where all agree on the future direction of the reserve. There should also be common vision between Eastern Cape Nature Conservation and the private sector body that will manage the tourism at the reserve. It is intended that these guidelines will aid all parties in understanding ecotourism, thus creating unified vision which will help in the implementation of ecotourism.

It is clear from Chapter 7, and is alluded to in the above paragraph, that **community development and conservation have not been pursued simultaneously**. However, it must be mentioned that outside parties have severely impinged on the ability of Eastern Cape Nature Conservation to have a positive relationship with the local community. For example, unrealistic expectations have been raised amongst communities, and too large a region has been identified as the local community. These issues will have to be resolved if ecotourism is to be successful at Mkambati. The guidelines offer suggestions on how to increase involvement of locals, which is a part of the solution.

Regarding **revenue leakage**, the problem is not that the income from tourists goes into the wrong hands. That is something that must be closely monitored once the tourism at Mkambati Nature Reserve is managed by a private sector body. At present, the revenue goes to conservation, where it is needed. The problem is that local communities receive very little benefit from the reserve. Again, cognizance is given to the current complex and volatile situation, but more benefits will have to accrue to the local people. This links directly with another problem, namely the **low-level involvement of local people**. In order for this to work optimally, skills training and education are vital. Encouraging initiative as well as a degree of control and ownership through ventures such as Gwe Gwe Cultural Village are essential to reap community support.

Lack of interpretation and interaction is another major gap at Mkambati. The proposals have placed much emphasis on this essential aspect of the tourist's experience.

Commodization of culture and the demonstration effect does not occur at present, but will need to be monitored at the proposed Gwe Gwe Cultural Village and at other community events which may be opened to tourists in future. Lack of **monitoring and auditing** is another aspect that must not become a problem in future. This is dealt with in Section 9.3.

9.3 The Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy

The guidelines merge appropriately with the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy, described in Section 4.2. Once the tender for the private sector body which will run the tourism at Mkambati has been finalised, the muscle and finances to fully implement the proposals of Chapters 5 to 8 will be in position. This will contribute towards achieving the objectives of the SDI, which were listed in Section 4.2. There will be numerous spin-off opportunities from the private-sector investment, which will provide long-term and sustainable employment for local communities, which will in turn stimulate economic growth in this underdeveloped area.

However, it is of major concern that the SDI shows a tendency towards conventional glitzy resort developments over small-scale sustainable ecotourism ventures. This was demonstrated by the fact that Khulani Ma-Africa was awarded the bid for Mkambati Nature Reserve. The author believes this is an inappropriate choice. It is also in direct contrast to the vision of the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy for the Wild Coast as a whole. The policy favours ecotourism, the success of which has been clearly demonstrated by Amadiba Adventures which is small-scale, sustainable, interactive, involves local communities, and is financially very viable.

The importance of monitoring and auditing also emerged from the policy. This is crucial to Mkambati. The effect of tourism activities, accommodation and facilities, and community ventures must be continuously monitored to determine the effects thereof on the natural resource base. Eastern Cape Nature Conservation should be primarily responsible for this. As suggested in the policy, outside independent bodies should also be involved in this.

9.4 Constraints at Mkambati Nature Reserve

The guidelines given also attempted to solve the constraints of Mkambati Nature Reserve described in Section 4.5. The guidelines have partially addressed these, for example, focus was given to developing and supporting SMMEs, training and educating local people on tourism, and eradicating alien flora. The constraint of poor services and facilities can be partially ameliorated through compliance with the proposed guidelines in areas where large financial input is not essential, for example, community-guided trails and daily servicing of accommodation units. Ultimately, however, an investment injection is needed, which will occur once the private sector becomes involved, which is imminent.

Some constraints are, however, beyond the scope of being solved through guidelines. These critical areas will have to be worked on if ecotourism is to succeed. The Eastern Cape government is one of these. They currently lack direction, do not provide Mkambati with essential equipment, and have slow bureaucratic procedures. Poor roads create a crisis – both those leading to the reserve and those inside the reserve. This diminishes investors' motivation to put money into the reserve. A complex and tense community set-up is a further constraint that can be aided through implementing the guidelines, but not solved. Land tenure and restitution are unclear, the local community is far too large, and there are too many institutions involved with the communities.

9.5 Trends

In concluding this dissertation, a few trends have been noted, which indicate the great potential of Mkambati Nature Reserve to attract tourists interested in ecotourism. Some of these have already been noted in Chapter 2. Schwaninger (1989 cited in Prosser, 1994) identifies the trend of demand becoming increasingly differentiated and specialised, with more emphasis on active, rather than passive holidays. Tourists are also seeking multi-activity holidays (Ayala, 1995 cited in Wight, 1996). Lew (1998) reports that the most pronounced trend recently has been the broadening of the clientele for ecotours, with an increase in the variation of age and income. Lew (1998) also mentions that there is more demand for 'off the beaten track' areas, and an increase in tourists seeking more adventure in their travels (Colman, 1999a). This growing need results in more remote destinations being sought out (Birns, 2000).

Lew (1998) and Prosser (1994) report growing environmental awareness and cultural sensitivity, as well as realisation by destination regions of the precious human and natural resources they have, and their vulnerability. WTTERC (1994 cited in Bewsher & Hattingh, 2000) and MacGregor & Jarvie (1994 cited in McPherson, 2000) recognise green consumerism and voluntary improvements as international trends.

Regarding tourists, Lew (1998) reports that they are better behaved and more accepting of cultural and environmental guidelines, even requesting more. Tourists also have greater interest in indigenous societies, and desire increased interactive contact with them (MacGregor & Jarvie, 1994 cited in McPherson, 2000). Furthermore, an increasing amount of overseas tourists visiting South Africa want to combine game viewing with a cultural experience (Southern African Tourism Update, 1997a). Besides contact for the benefit of the tourist, it has been acknowledged that protected areas cannot be successfully managed without the involvement of communities

(Ghimire, 1994) and the implementation of people-orientated conservation. Regarding the overseas tourists, however, it must be recognised that those interested in ecotourism are increasingly expecting and demanding high standards of conservation, facilities, and service (Prinsloo, 1999b).

Weaver (1994) finds that protected areas are often the primary venue for ecotourism, with the people visiting the parks being willing, on average, to pay more for their experiences. According to a Satour survey, these areas attract 58% of all foreign visitors to South Africa (Addison, 1997). Wight (1996) reports that visiting a park or protected area is seen by tourists engaging in ecotourism as both a reason for the trip and an activity on the trip. Setting is also vital for the ecotourism experience, with most of the top-rated factors mentioned in Figure 2.2.

Not only is Mkambati Nature Reserve a protected area, but, if these guidelines are implemented, it will offer the tourist most of the activities and facilities that they see as important according to Figure 2.2: a remote wilderness setting, wildlife, hiking, canoeing, casual walking, learning about other cultures, participating in physically challenging programmes (via the 'enthusiastic routes'), guides, interpretation, cycling, and horseriding. With adequate staff training and investment, the reserve will also be able to offer the high standard which overseas tourists demand. Considering the above, and the fact that domestic tourists also make good use of protected areas, the market for Mkambati certainly exists. This is confirmed by the other trends mentioned, which complement all four of the fundamentals of ecotourism.

The marketing of Mkambati has not been addressed in this study. Alternative forms of marketing such as the Internet are, however, suggested. This will prevent Mkambati from falling into the trap of mass marketing and attracting the wrong sort of tourist.

9.6 The future: Mkambati Nature Reserve and ecotourism

As seen above, there is clearly a market for the attractions of Mkambati. The reserve is clearly unique, and is situated in a very special part of South Africa, one which has been described as an unpolished gem. The hope is that *"government will make a serious commitment to sensitive and low-impact ecotourism options, and let the gemstone shine naturally as a crown jewel"* (Gray, 2000:39).

This is the author's wish for Mkambati Nature Reserve on the Wild Coast. The approach and philosophy of ecotourism is the correct form of development for this reserve. As part of the Wild

Coast treasure chest, it must be planned wisely and developed sustainably, with all four fundamentals firmly in place and operating in balance. Concerning the continuums of Figure 2.3, the ecotourism industry (Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, the private sector, and other stakeholders) should strive to keep the fundamentals of the tourist, resource base, and local community as far right as possible on these scales.

Adkins, G. 1997. The great outdoors debate. *Out There*, August 1997: 34-41.

Underlying this process must be ongoing consultation with key stakeholders together with the development of management strategies which, to be effective in the long term, must be based on detailed research. The reserve, associated communal lands, TRACOR, and the Msikaba and Mtentu catchment areas must be planned, developed, and managed in a holistic integrated manner. Continual review is also needed as good management is never static (Prinsloo, 1999b). Essential to review, monitoring, and auditing are key performance indicators, against which the success of ecotourism can be determined, for example, equitable community benefits, visitor satisfaction (including the extent to which the experience has been participatory and authentic), and sustainable usage of the natural resource base.

Edwards, M. 2000. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 8(4): 215-220.

Implementing the guidelines given in this dissertation will take time, but is definitely a long-term investment that will have far-reaching benefits to the reserve as well as the surrounding communities. Mkambati Nature Reserve has the opportunity to show that ecotourism can work, and that a healthy and controlled ecotourism fire based on a good stock of fuel (resource base), with enough oxygen (community involvement) and energy (tourists and the ecotourism industry) is attainable.

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Bewsher, P.K. 1997. Ecotourism into the 21st Century. Paper presented at the International Conference on Environment and Development in Africa: an Agenda and Solutions for the 21st Century, 30 June, Pretoria.

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