

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

### 2.1 Background Information

The recent years have witnessed a change from the passive, low key use of rural areas for recreation to the explosion of tourism as a highly active and dominant agent of change and control in the countryside and rural communities (Butler, et al, 1998). The trend, whereby countries develop rural areas and their countryside as an integral part of the tourism industry is already set. One example of such countries is Australia, where rural tourism provides an opportunity for the country to share in the nation's spectacular tourism growth (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994). Other countries that have taken rural tourism seriously have been mentioned in the first chapter.

According to Butler et al (1998) there has been major changes within tourism activities in rural areas. Until the last decades or so, tourist activities in rural areas were mostly related to the rural character of the setting. They could be characterised, at the risk of generalisation, by the following terms: relaxing, passive, nostalgic, traditional, low technological, and mostly non-competitive. The lists of activities include walking/rambling, picnicking, fishing, sightseeing, boating, visiting historical and cultural sites and festivals, horse-riding and nature and farm based visits. Butler et al goes on to say that in the past two decades, while the above activities were still common and frequently practised in rural areas, there are many other activities now engaged in which are quite different. These could be characterised as active, competitive, prestigious or fashionable, individual and fast. They include trail biking, orienteering, survival games, parasailing, adventure tourism and eco-tourism.

There is therefore, a far wider range of tourist activities being engaged in within rural areas in many parts of the world. Many rural areas are now changing their image and aggressively marketing aspects of their rural heritage, authentic or otherwise, to would-be urban purchasers (Hopkins, 1998). Increasingly rural areas and the governments, which control and serve them, have come to realise the economic benefits, which can accrue to rural areas from tourism development. It is ironic that after so many years of neglect, tourism has come to be seen as a major agent for economic redevelopment for rural areas. Government policies at all levels have begun to appear in recent years in efforts to increase access to rural areas (Butler et al, 1998).

According to Hall and Jenkins (1995) tourism offers many prospects for rural areas. They are geographically widespread, offering employment and income opportunities, often repeatedly utilising the same resources, and possessing the potential to conserve rather than destroy assets. In addition, other industries such as aviation and transport, entertainment, construction, agriculture, horticulture and manufacturing benefit from tourism. Nevertheless, there are, and there will continue to be contested opinions on what is desirable in tourism development in specific rural areas (Bramwell, 1994).

Given the downturns in rural economies over the past three decades, it is perhaps understandable that much government attention has been given to the economic benefits of tourism, particularly in those rural areas which are struggling to keep pace with, and adapt to the vagaries of a globalised economy. Tourism development therefore has received an increasing recognition as a regional and national economic development tool over this period. In Japan, long been held as a model economy for many of the developed nations of the west, the countryside has suffered from rural outmigration. As a result, 'It is the policy of the national and regional governments as well as business to hold the line on population loss by replacing the declining industries (e.g., forestry, farming and fishing) with rural tourism (Graburn, 1995; Hall and Jenkins, 1995). Government

intervention in tourism is widespread. Tourism is in particular, being promoted as a source of rural economic growth and employment generation at all levels of government in developed nations (e.g., Australia, Canada, the European Union, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States (Cabinet Office, 1985; Williams and Shaw, 1988; Hall and Jenkins, 1995; LEADER, 1995), the former state socialist countries of Eastern Europe (Hall, 1991), less developed countries (e.g., Kenya, Cuba, and Sri Lanka) (Harrison, 1992), and the Pacific region generally (Hall, 1994b; Hall and Page, 1996). With the decline in many traditional industries in rural areas, tourism offers an opportunity to revitalise the rural areas through the diversification of economic activities. There is considerable evidence that more and more people are visiting and appreciating rural areas (Hall and Jenkins, 1995).

While the goals of rural tourism development, e.g., economic growth and diversification, employment generation, increased investment, population retention, infrastructure and facility provision and conservation are fairly standard policy goals; the actual strategy process by which they can be achieved is not. Little attention has been given to the objective setting process as well as strategy formulation. Despite the focus on tourism as a tool for regional development, there is rarely a clear concept in strategy or planning terms of rural tourism or of the role of tourism in rural regions or local communities. It is in this context that the study of this nature (to formulate a strategy for rural tourism development) becomes not only important, but also necessary. Perhaps what makes this study even more important is the observation made by Butler and Clark (1992) that the literature on rural tourism is sparse and conceptual models and theories are lacking. Many of the references in tourism are case studies with little theoretical foundation and they focus on specific problems. There is, therefore, a lack of theory and models placing rural tourism in a conceptual framework.

### 2.1.1 A Concept of Rural Tourism

Keane et al. 's (1992) innovative, but little known study on rural tourism offers a number of insights into the definition of rural tourism, acknowledging that there are a variety of terms used to describe tourism activity in rural areas: agritourism, farm tourism, rural tourism, soft tourism, alternative tourism and many others, which have different meanings from one country to another. Keane also points out that it is difficult to avoid some of this confusion in relation to labels and definitions because the term 'rural tourism' has been adapted by the European Community to refer to the entire tourism activity in a rural area (Keane et al, 1992; Page and Getz, 1997).

But such definitions do little to convey the true meaning of tourism in rural areas because of the difficulty in establishing what is 'rural'. Robinson's (1990) invaluable synthesis of rural change illustrates that the term 'rural' has remained an elusive one and difficult to define in academic research, even though popular conceptions of rural areas are based on images of rusticity and the idyllic village life. However, Robinson argues that:

*Defining rural ... in the past has tended to ignore common economic, social and political structures in both urban and rural areas ... In simple terms, ... 'rural' areas define themselves with respect to the presence of particular types of problems. A selective list of examples could include depopulation and deprivation in areas remote from major metropolitan centres; and a reliance upon primary activity; conflicts between presentation of certain landscapes and development of a variety of economic activities; and conflicts between local needs and legislation emanating from activities from urban-based legislators. Key characteristics of 'rural' are taken to be extensive land uses, including large open spaces of underdeveloped land, and small settlements at the base of the settlement hierarchy, but including settlement thought of to be rural.*

(Robinson, 1990)

Therefore any definition of rural tourism needs to recognise the essential qualities of what is 'rural'. While national governments use specific criteria to define 'rural', often based on the population density of settlements; there is no universal agreement on the critical population threshold that distinguishes between urban and rural populations. What is important is the diversity of approaches used by many researchers, who emphasise the concept of an urban-rural continuum as a means of establishing differing degrees of rurality and the essential characteristics of ruralness (Page and Getz, 1997).

According to Cloke (1992), rural places have traditionally been associated with specific rural functions- agriculture, sparsely populated areas, geographically dispersed settlement patterns and rurality has been conceptualized in terms of peripherality, remoteness and dependence on rural economic activity. However, new approaches in social theory have argued that rural areas are inextricably linked to the national and international political economy. As Cloke (1992) rightly argues, "changes in the way society and non-urban places are organised and function have rendered traditional definitions of rurality less meaning due to the following:

- increased mobility of people, goods and messages;
- delocalisation of economic activity;
- new specialised uses of rural spaces (as tourists sites and parks)"

(Cloke, 1992)

Poon (1989) illustrates the practical implications of such changes for the tourism industry. Poon interprets these changes in terms of a shift from an 'old tourism' (e.g. the regimented and standardised holiday package) to a 'new tourism' which is segmented, customised and flexible in both time and space. In fact, recent research on services has analysed the change in society as one from a 'Fordist' to 'post Fordist' stage, which has involved a 'shift in the form of demand for tourist services from a former patterns, with greater differentiation and volatility of consumer

preferences and a heightened need for producers to be consumer-driven and to segment markets more systematically (Urry, 1991).

Hummelbrunner and Miglbauer (1994) support both Poon's (1989) and Urry's (1991) assessments, arguing that these changes to the demand for, and supply of tourism services have contributed to the emergence of a 'new rural tourism'. From a supply perspective, this has manifested itself in terms of 'an increasing interest in rural tourism among a better-off clientele, and also among some holidaymakers as a growing environmental awareness and a desire to be integrated with the residents in the areas they visit' (Bramwell, 1994:3).

Now the question is, do the special characteristics of rural areas help shape the pattern of tourism so that there is a particular rural tourism? The following paragraph attempts to answer this question.

### **2.1.2 What makes Rural Tourism Distinctive?**

Lane (1994) discusses the historical continuity in the development of rural tourism and examines some of the key issues that combine to make rural tourism distinctive. Bramwell (1994:3) suggests that, despite the problems of defining the concept of 'rural', 'it would be a mistake to deny our commonsense thoughts that rural areas can have distinctive characteristics, or that these can have consequences for social and economic interactions in rural areas. The views and perceptions people hold of rural areas is different from the ones they have of urban areas, an important starting-point for establishing the distinctiveness of rural tourism'. On the other hand, if people recognise urban tourism as a product, why can't rural tourism be given the same recognition?

According to Lane (1994:14), supported by Butler (1998) rural tourism in its purest form should be:

- Located in rural areas;
- Functionally rural - built upon the rural world's special features of small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, traditional societies and traditional practices;
- Rural in scale - both in terms of buildings and settlements - and, therefore, usually small-scale;
- Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families;
- Of many different kinds, representing the complex pattern of rural environment, economy, history and location

Lane (1994:16) further argues that the following factors also have to be considered in defining rural tourism:

- holiday type;
- intensity;
- style of management;
- degree of integration with the community.

By using the continuum concept, one can distinguish between those tourist visits, which are specifically rural or urban, or those, which fall in the intermediate category. Both Butler et al (1994) and Lane (1994) seem to agree that there is a theoretical basis for the development of rural tourism as an enterprise of its own. Countries such as Australia have a rural tourism strategy, something, which is still missing in South Africa and the Limpopo Province in particular. In fact, in 1998 the World Travel and Tourism Organisation suggested that the government of South

Africa should particularly take note of the existing highly successful Travel and Tourism Promotional models developed by the Australian and the Canadian governments (World Travel and Tourism Organisation, 1998). It is against this background that the Australian Rural Tourism Strategy will now be critically reviewed with the aim of identifying principles and key issues that may be relevant and appropriate for the situation in the Limpopo Province.

## **2.2 An Australian National Rural Tourism Development Strategy (1994): A Review**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

The main aim of this study is to compare the South African tourism strategy with other countries' rural tourism strategies in terms of product development and promotion. The idea is to learn from the highly successful tourism models in the world. South Africa is competing with other attractive destinations. It is therefore important to understand how other countries develop and market themselves, how they spend their tourism budgets and how they undertake tourism research. Australia has strong similarities with South Africa and a competing market. A comparison between the tourism industries of South Africa and Australia is therefore relevant (Human Science Research Council, 2001).

Although Australia has a population of 19 million people in comparison to South Africa's 41 million; the relative strengths of their respective economies present the opposite picture. The size of the 1994 economy in Australia was \$287 billion and that of South Africa was a mere \$90 billion. This translated into an Australian GNP per capita of \$16352 in relation to South Africa's \$2520. In addition, the rate of unemployment in the same year was 10% in Australia and 30% in South Africa (Castello-Cortes, World Reference Atlas, 1994; Human Science Research Council, 2001). Consequently, therefore, the tourism marketing budget of Australia was R600 million in 1998, while the budget for South Africa in the same year was in the region of R50 million



(Muller, 1998). Australia undertakes three major tourism surveys annually, while South Africa has since 1992 undertaken only four national domestic tourism surveys (Human Science Research Council, 2001).

The importance of rural tourism in Australia can hardly be over-emphasised. The fact that by 1994 the Federal Ministry for Tourism published a National Rural Tourism Strategy shows how serious the ministry takes rural tourism product. According to Micheal Lee M.P. (1994) Federal Minister for Tourism, the National Rural Tourism Strategy provides the framework required for government and industry to successfully advance the rural tourism industry into a prosperous and sustainable future. Rural tourism provides an opportunity for a countryside (rural) Australia to share in the nation's spectacular tourism growth. Australia seems to be much further advanced in terms of rural tourism development than South Africa.

Through planned development and targeted marketing of the diverse range of rural tourism products available, country towns, local communities and individuals can benefit from this emerging segment of the tourism industry. Enciting tourists to venture beyond Australia's capital cities will not only benefit rural areas, but will demonstrate a greater diversity of tourism product that can make Australia more competitive as an international tourism destination (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994). To realise the potential of rural tourism, it is necessary to develop and package new and better tourism products that are responsive to the current demands of visitors, both domestic and international. Travelers are seeking environments in rural Australia that combine recreational, cultural, educational and social experiences with country living. To capitalise on this demand for a 'country experience', a number of key issues must be addressed (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994).

The National Rural Tourism Strategy of Australia examines the importance of rural tourism as an industry and looks at how industry and government can contribute to its growth through considered planning, development and management. Tourism can have a significant impact on the economic and social well-being of rural communities, and affect the environment, there is a need to consider fully the variety of changes tourism can bring and to seek outcomes that are sustainable over medium and longer term (Australia' Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994). This calls for a clear strategy to guide the development of any project.

### **2.2.2 Rural tourism as a distinctive product**

In Australia, as in many countries, the value of tourism for rural development is increasingly being recognised (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994). The National Rural Development Strategy (1994) of Australia indicates that local communities can gain significant benefits from rural tourism, provided it is properly planned and managed. Benefits include:

- increased non-agricultural income;
- diversification of the region's economic base; and
- Improved employment opportunities in rural areas from associated activities.

There are also social and environmental advantages such as:

- the use of visitor facilities for community purposes;
- greater community cohesion with fewer young people drifting to the cities to find work;
- opportunities for interaction with people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds;
- Recognition of the need to preserve the 'natural' landscapes for both tourists and others. Indeed, tourism can promote more interest in repairing environments through

such activities as tree planting, sustainable farming practices, repairing coastal sand, etc; and the enhancement of the built environment;

- Preservation and enhancement of cultural attributes, arts and crafts, etc.

However, one must always guard against the negative impact of any form of development and try to avoid or minimise the impact. According to Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism (1994) unwanted effects of rural tourism could include:

- disruption of daily life owing to the invasion of privacy, invasion of traditional community events and activities causing loss of heritage, traffic congestion and overcrowding;
- site use conflict where tourism developments compete with other land uses;
- environmental degradation as a result of exceeding carrying capacity;
- increased prices of facilities, food and services;
- The perception of increased crime rates due to the presence of tourism.

(Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994)

The National Rural Tourism Strategy (1994) of Australia further goes on to highlight that many of these negative effects can be minimised or even avoided if, in the initial stages of planning tourism development, a community consultation process is put in place and community perspectives are obtained. Tourism's advantages to an area can greatly outweigh its disadvantages. Tourism management policies, which place a high priority on integrated strategic planning and community participation at local and regional level, can successfully alleviate potential environmental and social problems. The need for a deliberate and thorough assessment of an area's potential as tourism destination is pivotal as a first step.

Of equal importance is to note that tourism is not necessarily for every rural community. It should not be seen as a quick fix for all economic ills. Factors such as long distance from major getaways, poor scenic attractions and lack of tourism infrastructure can mean that rural tourism may not be appropriate for a particular region. Sometimes even communities that have the physical assets may rightly choose not to develop tourism if they perceive the costs to outweigh the potential benefits. Tourism is but only one option for economic diversification.

### **2.2.3 Why develop a rural tourism strategy?**

For rural tourism to prosper and meet its target, it is important to plan and package the tourism product in such a way that it becomes:

- Environmentally sustainable
- Economically sustainable/viable
- Socially and culturally compatible

In order to ensure that the above principles are met, it is vital to formulate a framework in the form of the strategy through which tourism destination should be developed, marketed and promoted (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994).

According to Page and Getz (1997) in many parts of the world, tourism organisations and their promotion focus on urban areas and resorts. Rural areas have often been marginalised as sightseeing territories, or have been viewed as space in which development might occur, rather than as a distinct and important tourism product or market segment. Pigram (1993) observes that rural tourism often constitutes a disjointed and reactive policy field, while Long and Nuckolls (1994) conclude that support for local and regional tourism in the United States is fragmented or non-existent. Page and Getz (1997) argued that the development of specific approaches to tourism planning and their application in a rural context have attracted comparatively little attention.

As agricultural employment declined with changes in the economic structure of rural areas, Australia adopted a more positive strategy towards rural tourism. This was an attempt to generate employment and to offset out-migration and a declining population base, and to sustain threshold for service provision (Page and Getz, 1997). In this context, tourism has been perceived as one activity that could assist in rural development in declining areas. A strategy has to ensure both a facilitating and a controlling role for rural tourism to develop, protect and enhance the quality of rural environments (both natural and cultural).

#### **2.2.4 Rural tourism in Australia**

Rural tourism was not regarded as tourism market in Australia, yet estimates of domestic and international visitations to rural areas are substantial. In 1992-93, rural tourism was estimated to have accounted for nearly 60% of the total domestic tourism market. It was estimated to be worth \$11.2 billion to the Australian economy (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994).

The Federal Government believes that an overall policy framework for planning, development and management of rural tourism is fundamental in optimising the benefits tourism offers. The National Rural Tourism Strategy provides the basis for rural tourism policy formulation and planning for both government and industry. By acting as a catalyst in developing rural tourism as part of wider regional development initiatives, the Federal Government intends to provide a focus and direction for rural tourism development that will achieve economic, environmental and social gains nationally (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994). If there were a model that South Africa could adopt in developing and marketing its own rural tourism destinations, the Australian model would be an obvious choice

### 2.2.5 Rural tourism participants

Long and Nuckolls (1994) argue that 'developing a sustainable industry will only be possible if a rural community has the necessary leadership, is effective in its planning efforts, and can access technical assistance to supplement local expertise and eliminate the information and resource gaps'. In support of Long and Nuckolls, the National Rural Tourism Strategy for Australia indicates that community participation is the core of the rural tourism enterprise. People need to have a sense of ownership for the development of the project. In this way, the level of success and sustainability could be high. Chances of success for development projects are low in cases where people were not involved from the beginning. The support of the host communities can be essential to the successful development of rural tourism (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994).

The Australian National Rural Tourism Strategy (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994:13) examined the stakeholder organisations and their roles, and noted that they were 'many and varied.' Specifically, the strategy discussed private operators, host communities; tourism industry bodies, non-industry bodies (e.g. agriculture and automobile clubs), and transports operators, educational institutions and financial institutions. Although development is primarily an industry function, government is involved in research and planning, development assistance schemes, facilitation, infrastructure supply, regulation and accreditation, attractions and services, and marketing. Various strategies arising from the Australian review of rural tourism are indicative of the kinds of role government and industry partnership can pursue, as illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1** the Australian National Rural Tourism Strategy 1994: strategic actions

- encourage the sustainable development of high-quality tourism products and product variety in rural areas
- support accreditation and introduction/recognition of standards for rural tourism ventures
- ensure that educational and training needs are known and are met
- promote coordinated and cooperative marketing of rural tourism opportunities
- encourage the provision of reliable regional data and research on rural tourism supply/demand functions
- encourage and support industry and community leadership as a means of developing tourism in rural areas and contributing to regional growth
- encourage improvements in rural transport and infrastructure
- further enhance local-government understanding of the benefits and requirements of tourism, and the value of integrated industry and government planning.

**Source: Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994**

The strategic actions as highlighted in table 1 set clearly what need to be done in order to develop and promote rural tourism businesses in Australia.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

The contextual framework for rural tourism as a special and unique product together with the specific rural tourism strategies have been highlighted in the beginning of this chapter. Rural tourism is clearly very important throughout most of the world, and is likely to become more important as countries and destinations compete for niche markets (Page and Getz, 1997).

Business opportunities, both small and large, will therefore continue to expand for rural residents and those preferring to set up businesses in rural areas. Without sharing experiences, many mistakes will be repeated and successful strategies missed. It is in this context that a comparative approach was adopted for this study.

While defining rural tourism has proven difficult, most authors agree that rural tourism is a special product, which require special attention. It has been shown that tourists are seeking specific opportunities that might satisfy their needs and preferences. Many forms of rural tourism are unique and can be experienced in rural areas. Rural tourism activities can benefit both conservation and tourism development and most importantly, the host communities.

In the final analysis of the National Rural Tourism Strategy of Australia, it became clear that the Australian Government takes tourism and rural tourism in particular very seriously, something that South Africa does not do. Rural tourism in Australia has contributed substantially to the economy of the country. The key issues that emerged strongly from the literature review, and in particular, the Australian National Rural Tourism Strategy are:

- product and enterprise development;
- accreditation and industry standards;
- education and training;
- marketing and image making;
- market analysis or research;
- industry and community leadership;
- transport and infrastructure;
- the role of provincial and local government;
- lack of policy and supporting strategies.