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**Implementing the fundamentals of ecotourism:
the case study of Mkambati Nature Reserve,
Wild Coast, South Africa**

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EM	Environmental Management
EA	Environmental Change
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NCA	Nature Conservation Area
NOO	Nature Organisation
Pondocron	Partnership Resource Optimisation Programme
PPDP	Partnership Development Programme
SATOUR	South African Tourism Organisation
SDI	Sustainable Development Initiative
SMME	Small Medium and Micro Enterprise
SUBM	Subsistence and Biological Resources
TCCA	Trans-Carrier Conservation Areas
TBN	Transboundary Working
TRACOR	Transnational Corporation
WESSA	Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS

CERT	Care and Environmentally Responsible Tourism
ConsCorp	Conservation Corporation
DEEP	Deep Ecology Elephant Programme
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HDI	Human Development Index
IEM	Integrated Environmental Management
LAC	Limits of Acceptable Change
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NCA	Ngorongoro Conservation Area
NGO	Non Government Organisation
Pondocrop	Pondo Community Resource Optimisation Programme
PPDP	Peace Parks Development Programme
Satour	South African Tourism Organisation
SDI	Spatial Development Initiative
SMME	Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise
SUBIR	Sustainable Use of Biological Resources
TFCA	Trans Frontier Conservation Areas
TNW	The Nature Workshop
TRACOR	Transkei Agricultural Corporation
WESSA	Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

INDEX OF SOUTH AFRICAN TERMS

Braai	Barbeque
'Die Gat'	The Hole
Izithebe	Mat associations
Kraal/boma	Cattle fold
Kloofing	Canyoning
Lapa	Thatched outdoor entertainment area
Rondavel	Traditional round dwelling hut
Stoep	Porch
Strandloper	Individual living on the beach and gaining livelihood from it.
uMuzi	Zulu homestead
Veld	Natural grasslands
Veldkos	Food made from the <i>veld</i>

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on the model of the ecotourism tetrahedron, which illustrates the four fundamentals of ecotourism, namely, the natural and cultural resource base, the local community, the tourist, and the ecotourism industry, as well as their interrelationships. The model clarifies understanding of ecotourism. To further increase comprehension, an in-depth literature study is done on each of the four fundamentals and on the problems and challenges in the respective interrelationships. The theoretical background is used to develop practical guidelines for the implementation of ecotourism at Mkambati Nature Reserve on the Wild Coast of South Africa, focussing on the accommodation and facilities, fauna and flora, culture and community, and activities.

SAMEVATTING

Hierdie studie berus op die model van die ekotoerisme vierhoek, waardeur die vier grondliggende elemente van ekotoerisme geïllustreer word, te wete die natuurlike en kulturele hulpbronbasis, die plaaslike gemeenskap, die toeris, en die ekotoerismebedryf, sowel as die wisselwerkings tussen hulle. Met behulp van die model word ekotoerisme beter verstaan. Diepte-literatuurstudie is gedoen oor elk van die vier elemente, en oor die probleme en uitdagings onderliggend aan die onderlinge verhoudings. Hierdeur word die begrip van ekotoerisme verder uitgebou. Uit die teoretiese agtergrond is praktiese riglyne vir die implementering van ekotoerisme in Mkambati Natuurresewaat aan die Wilde Kus van Suid-Afrika ontwikkel, waarin gefokus is op akkommodasie en fasiliteite, fauna en flora, kultuur en gemeenskap, en aktiwiteite.

Chapter 1

Laying the foundation for the study

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Problem statement, aim, and objectives

The concept of ecotourism comprises four fundamentals, namely the local community, the ecotourism industry, tourists and the resource base (Hattingh, 1996). Each one must be considered when implementing ecotourism. However, the **problem** has been identified that the concept of ecotourism is seldom understood and implemented in its totality, and the term is often misused.

The dissertation therefore **aims** to explore the four fundamentals of ecotourism in depth, and to demonstrate their holistic application by putting them into practice, using Mkambati Nature Reserve on the Wild Coast of South Africa as a case study.

To achieve this aim, the following **objectives** have been established:

1. To conduct a literature study on the four fundamentals of ecotourism and problems that occur within their interrelationships;
2. To provide a background to Mkambati Nature Reserve, and to examine its setting within the context of tourism on the Wild Coast; and to
3. Based on the literature study, research the implementation of ecotourism in the following aspects of Mkambati Nature Reserve, and to provide guidelines in this regard:
 - accommodation and facilities;
 - fauna and flora;
 - culture and community; and
 - activities.

1.1.2 Methodology

The study consists of a literature study on the fundamentals of ecotourism, along with its problems and challenges. To illustrate how theory derived from the literature is applied in practice, a case study was undertaken on the Mkambati Nature Reserve, situated on the Wild Coast between Port Edward and Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. As instructor

and facilitator, the author took the Ecotourism Honours students of the Department of Tourism Management, University of Pretoria, to the reserve for their practical project. Using the literature study as a base, the facilitator and students formulated initial guidelines on the implementation of ecotourism at the reserve. These were subsequently refined by the author. More detail on the *modus operandi* is provided in Section 4.6.1.

1.1.3 Structure of the study

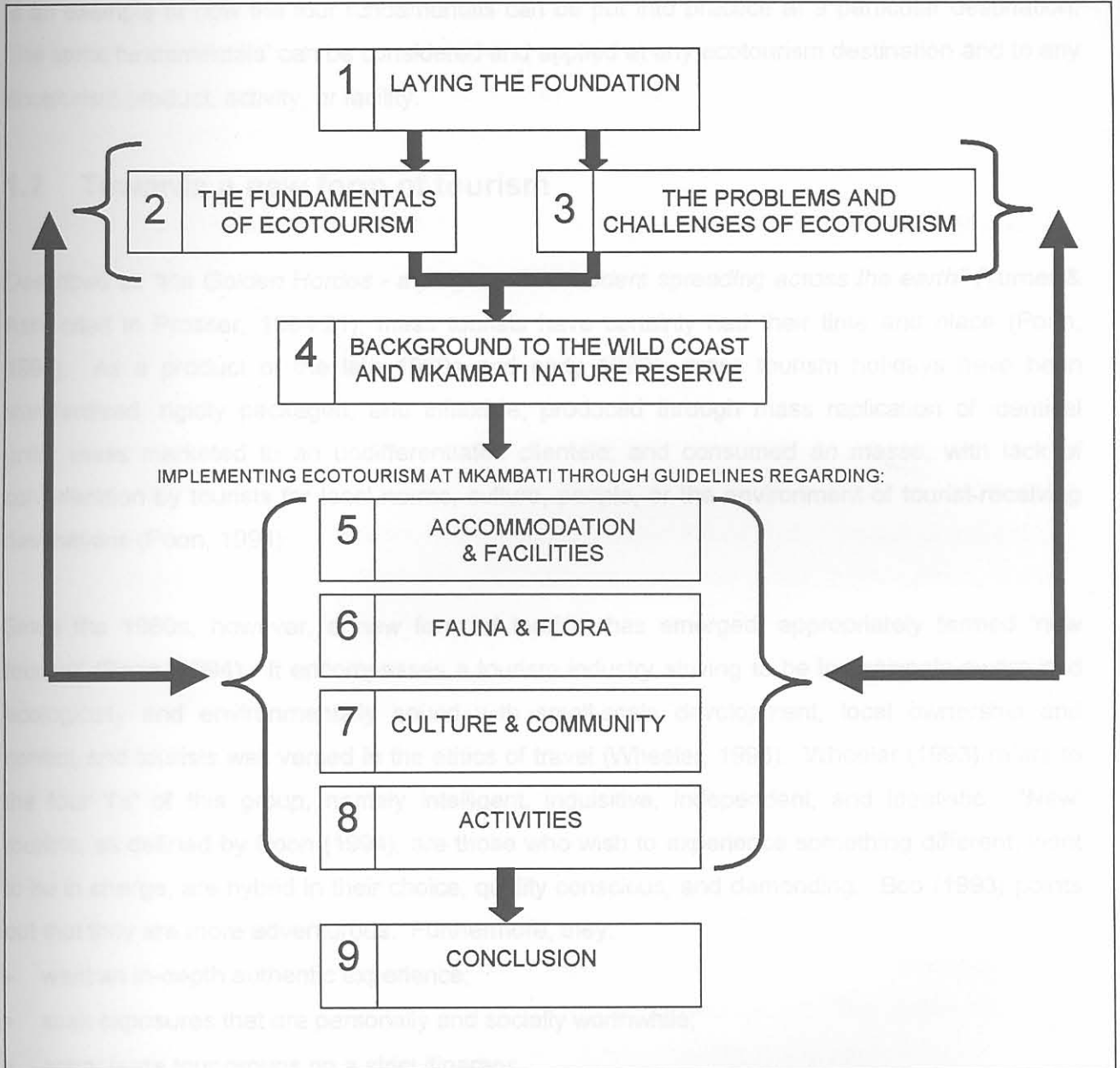
A diagrammatic representation of the structure of the study is given in Figure 1.1. This is reproduced at the beginning of each chapter to place the chapter in the context of the wider study. **Chapter 1** lays the foundation to the study, introducing the concept of 'new tourism', with ecotourism as a by-product. The confusion surrounding ecotourism is also described, as well as its connection to sustainable development and nature-based tourism. Finally, the overlap is explained between the fundamentals of ecotourism, as well as between ecotourism and other forms of tourism. These important points of departure set the context for this dissertation.

Chapter 2 is the first and most extensive component of the literature study. It examines the fundamentals of ecotourism, namely, the environment, local communities, the tourist, and the ecotourism industry. This chapter forms the theoretical base from which the guidelines for Mkambati Nature Reserve will be derived in Chapters 5 to 8. **Chapter 3** continues the literature review, investigating the problems and challenges that occur in ecotourism when the four fundamentals are not in place.

To set the stage for a practical implementation of the literature study, **Chapter 4** introduces the reader to the Wild Coast and describes the tourism development in this region. The history and primary constraints of Mkambati Nature Reserve, the area selected for the case study, are described. To set the context for subsequent chapters, Chapter 4 gives the *modus operandi* of this study, followed by an explanation on interpretation, outsourcing, and zoning at Mkambati.

The theory in the literature study is then practically applied (indicated by the arrow connecting Chapters 5 to 8 to Chapters 2 and 3) by providing guidelines for implementing the ecotourism fundamentals at Mkambati. These guidelines are divided into four key areas, namely, accommodation and facilities (**Chapter 5**), fauna and flora (**Chapter 6**), culture and community (**Chapter 7**), and activities (**Chapter 8**). **Chapter 9** concludes the study and presents a summary of the extent to which the literature study was applied in Chapters 5 to 8.

Figure 1.1 Structure of the study



1.1.4 Relevance of the study

This study makes two major contributions. First, the literature study is a valuable contribution to writings on ecotourism, because it uses a simple model, from which the four fundamentals are drawn and described in detail. Each aspect of ecotourism fits within one of these four fundamentals. Ecotourism has not previously been explained using such a format, and the author believes that it simplifies the concept, facilitating understanding.

The second point of relevance relates to practical application. The case study in the dissertation is an example of how the four fundamentals can be put into practice at a particular destination. The same fundamentals' can be considered and applied at any ecotourism destination and to any ecotourism product, activity, or facility.

1.2 Towards a new form of tourism

Described as "*the Golden Hordes - a plague of marauders spreading across the earth*" (Turner & Ash, cited in Prosser, 1994:21), mass tourists have certainly had their time and place (Poon, 1994). As a product of the late 1960s and early 1970s, mass tourism holidays have been standardized, rigidly packaged, and inflexible; produced through mass replication of identical units; mass marketed to an undifferentiated clientele; and consumed *en masse*, with lack of consideration by tourists for local norms, culture, people, or the environment of tourist-receiving destinations (Poon, 1994).

Since the 1980s, however, a new form of tourism has emerged, appropriately termed 'new tourism' (Poon, 1994). It encompasses a tourism industry striving to be increasingly aware and ecologically and environmentally sound with small-scale development, local ownership and control, and tourists well versed in the ethics of travel (Wheeler, 1993). Wheeler (1993) refers to the four 'I's' of this group, namely intelligent, inquisitive, independent, and idealistic. 'New' tourists, as defined by Poon (1994), are those who wish to experience something different, want to be in charge, are hybrid in their choice, quality conscious, and demanding. Boo (1993) points out that they are more adventurous. Furthermore, they:

- want an in-depth authentic experience;
- seek exposures that are personally and socially worthwhile;
- abhor large tour groups on a strict itinerary;
- seek physical and mental challenge;
- desire cultural learning and interaction with locals;
- are adaptable and often prefer rustic accommodation (although some demand luxury even in the most remote destinations);
- seek involvement and are not passive in behaviour;
- prefer to pay for experience rather than for comfort; and
- are more nature-oriented and concerned for the environment (Poon, 1994).

The last characteristic is very timely, considering the scrutiny currently focussed on the tourism industry, both from the public and internally, in terms of how it may contribute to sustainable development (Wight, 1995). Prosser (1994) mentions the dilemma that the tourism industry faces as each component place more focus on quality (for the environment and the tourist) while simultaneously confronting the inexorable growth in quantity.

The tourist engaging in ecotourism falls within the bracket of new tourism, yet has specific characteristics moving beyond those mentioned above. These are described in Section 2.4.

1.3 A proliferation of terms

In recent years, there has been a growth in tourism niche terms relating to an environment and community ethic. Some of this terminology appears very similar - such as 'eco', 'environmentally friendly', 'green', 'soft', 'responsible', 'low-impact', 'nature-based', and 'sustainable' tourism (Marajh & Meadows, 1992:2). Prosser (1994:32) mentions the terms 'harmonious', 'gentle', 'sensitive', and 'appropriate', while Wheeler (1993:122) uses the term 'new wave'. The above terms have been largely grouped under the generic title of 'alternative' tourism (Prosser, 1994:32), with some people viewing the latter as synonymous with sustainable tourism (Clarke, 1997). Although some of these terms have been described as vague and meaningless (Isaac, 1991 cited in Wight, 1993), all have arisen due to dissatisfaction with existing products and increased environmental awareness (Pearce, 1989 cited in Prosser, 1994).

This proliferation of terms has created inconsistency (Hvengard & Dearden, 1998) and confusion in the industry, with many disregarding ecotourism as another buzzword. Although these concepts have merit, they do not address the complexity of ecotourism. The author takes the position that, although the existence of so many terms is regrettable, it is of prime importance that certain fundamentals are addressed. These are laid out in the definition of ecotourism used in this dissertation (Section 1.4) and described in Chapter 2. Once industry members are committed to a responsible form of tourism, balancing the roles of the tourism industry, the local community, the tourist, and the environment, then the term used is not critical. In this regard, Ceballos-Lascuráin, the founder of the concept 'ecotourism', argues for less purism and more pragmatism in ecotourism (Van der Merwe, 1995).

1.4 Defining ecotourism

Since the inception of the term 'ecotourism', the concept is perceived as both controversial and vague (Addison, 1997). There are numerous definitions of ecotourism, none of which is universally accepted (Litvin, 1996; Weiler & Richins, 1995; Wight, 1993). Sirakaya *et al* (1999) reveal the underlying themes found when doing a content analysis of ecotourism definitions. The term was most often associated with environmentally-friendly, responsible travel, educational travel, low-impact travel, eco-cultural tourism, sustainable/non-consumptive tourism, and community involvement. The environmental aspects are easy to derive because of the 'eco' for ecology in the word 'ecotourism' (Singleton, 1997).

This study has determined that most definitions include the two key aspects of sustainable utilisation of the resource base (both natural and cultural) and involvement of the local community. The definition used in this study includes two further aspects, namely, those of the interaction of the tourist and the role of the ecotourism industry. These four are the fundamentals on which this dissertation is based. If all these fundamentals are in place in a balanced manner, it dictates that ecotourism cannot merely be a product, destination, or an experience - as some have described it. It must rather be viewed as an approach to tourism and as a philosophy – a way of life.

Some authors go beyond a definition, differentiating between different types of ecotourism. Plant & Plant (1992 cited in Weiler & Richins, 1995:30) refer to light green and deep green tourists, Weaver (1999:793) mentions active and passive ecotourism, Acott *et al* (1998:238) use the terms deep and shallow ecotourism, while Fennell (1999:242) distinguishes between hard and soft ecotourism. These various types refer to differences in the level of environmental and community responsibility, level of activities undertaken, and type of accommodation used. This study does not use any of these terms, but recognizes that, even within the definition of ecotourism given below, there are various levels of compliance. This is explored in Section 2.6.

The definition used in the study follows:

“Ecotourism is an enlightening, interactive, participatory travel experience to environments, both natural and cultural, that ensures the sustainable use at an appropriate level of environmental resources, while producing viable economic opportunities for the ecotourism industry and host/local communities, which make the sound environmental management of the resources beneficial to all tourism role players” (Hattingh, 1996. Adapted).

This definition can be subdivided into the following elements.

- An enlightening, interactive, participatory travel experience.
- Natural and cultural environments.
- Sustainable use of resources.
- Economic opportunities for industry and host/local communities.
- Sound environmental management beneficial to all role players.

Two terms need to be qualified. First, a distinction is made between the host and local communities with the latter being a spatial concept, i.e. the people living within and around the ecotourism destination, and the former referring to the host responsible for the tourists' experiences, which may not necessarily be a local. The host forms an integral part of the ecotourism industry. For the purposes of this study, however, the focus is on the local community, because it is more applicable to the situation at Mkambati Nature Reserve. Second, the term 'ecotourist' is not used since the study adopts the view of Boo (1990) and Wight (1995) who report that there is no specific and definable 'ecotourist'. People visit ecotourism ventures for a variety of reasons, ranging from casual observation to intensive research (Boo, 1990). Furthermore, within a single trip, an individual may be an 'ecotourist' on some occasions but not on others. The term 'tourist' is therefore used.

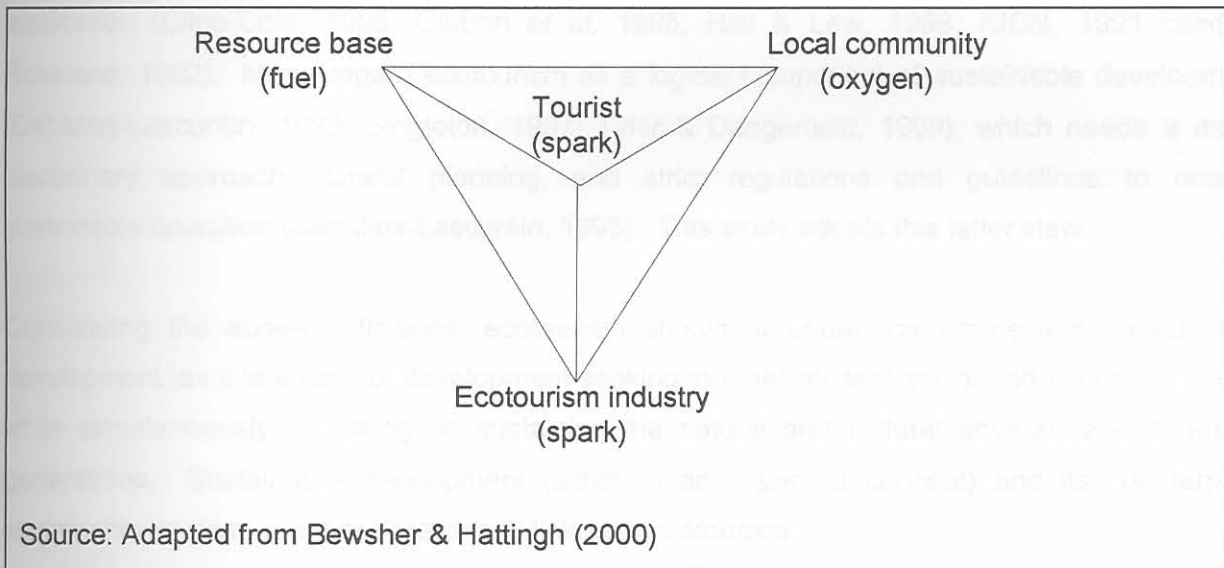
The fundamentals of ecotourism (as set out in the definition), and their interrelationships are simplified through the ecotourism tetrahedron model (Figure 1.2). This model serves as the basis of this dissertation, since all four fundamentals (the four corners of the tetrahedron) will be expanded in the literature study (Chapter 2) and the inherent principles implemented in the case study on Mkambati Nature Reserve (Chapters 5 to 8). Furthermore, the problems and challenges of ecotourism will be investigated using the relationships within the tetrahedron (Chapter 3). These will also relate to Mkambati in Chapters 5 to 8.

One way to understand the fundamentals of ecotourism and their interrelationships is to use the analogy of a fire (Bewsher, 1997). Fire consists of three basic components, namely fuel, energy (the spark), and oxygen, which need to act together. Ecotourism has its four fundamentals, each of which can be related to a component of fire. The 'fuel' of ecotourism is the natural and cultural resources on which the tourism product is based. The ecotourism industry, together with the tourists provides the 'spark' or 'energy' to light the ecotourism fire. One can have plenty of 'fuel' and 'energy', but without 'oxygen', there will be no fire. The local communities are seen as the 'oxygen', the lifeblood of a good fire. Tourism products often lack 'oxygen' and lie smouldering,

getting sold to the undiscerning tourist or one who is not concerned about community involvement.

Bewsher (1997) takes this analogy further when he explains three alternative cases of a fire. First, if left without care and attention in confined spaces, it will be reduced to a heap of ashes. This illustrates that the ecotourism fire needs to be carefully tended. Second, there can be too much fuel, energy or oxygen, with the ecotourism not being planned, managed, and controlled. This leads to a wild fire, another undesirable situation. Third, and the ideal, is to have a correctly managed, attended, and controlled fire, with balance between all four fundamentals.

Figure 1.2 The ecotourism tetrahedron



1.5 Connecting sustainable development and ecotourism

Now that ecotourism has been defined, one needs to understand its linkage with sustainable development, as the two concepts are so interrelated in the literature. More recently, an off-shoot of sustainable development, namely sustainable tourism, has also been closely linked with ecotourism (Weaver, 1999). At the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment, the idea of 'eco-development' was proposed. In the 1970s and 1980s, coordinated and integrated development and resource management was proposed. The mid-1980s saw the ecological principles of community-based development being propounded (Hall & Lew, 1998). In 1992, Agenda 21 was drawn up, as a policy statement aimed at taking the world into the 21st century. It states that only whatever can be sustained by nature and society in the long term is permissible (Cooper *et al*, 1998). By this time there was an awareness of the environmental crisis requiring solutions, and the term sustainable development emerged in an attempt to reconcile conflicting

value positions with regard to the environment (Hall & Lew, 1998) and to protest the negative impacts of development (Hattingh, 1994a). Sustainable development was defined in 1987 as “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987:43 cited in Smith, 1993). Another definition (among the many) is “... *an approach to development aimed at harmonizing social and economic objectives with ecologically sound management, in a spirit of solidarity with future generations*” (Sachs, in Adams, 1990 cited in Marajh & Meadows, 1992:24).

Although writers like Murdoch (1993) propose that sustainable development is an idea whose time has come, the term is ambiguous and open to a wide range of interpretations as to its application (Cline-Cole, 1995; Gibbon *et al*, 1995; Hall & Lew, 1998; IUCN, 1991 cited in Roseland, 1992). Many regard ecotourism as a logical component of sustainable development (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993; Singleton, 1997; Tyler & Dangerfield, 1999), which needs a multi-disciplinary approach, careful planning, and strict regulations and guidelines to ensure sustainable operation (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993). This study adopts this latter view.

Considering the above definitions, ecotourism should fit under the umbrella of sustainable development, as it is a form of development seeking to meet present social and economic needs while simultaneously focussing on sustaining the natural and cultural environment for future generations. Sustainable development (although an imperfect concept) and its counterpart, sustainable tourism, are therefore clearly linked to ecotourism.

1.6 Nature-based tourism versus ecotourism

Confusion arises in the ecotourism industry due to the association of ecotourism with nature-based tourism. Nature-based is, as the name implies, tourism based on nature. Many authors view ecotourism as nature-based tourism that needs to be sustainable. A handful recognize the vital role of the local community, whilst very few acknowledge the participatory, interactive, and enlightening aspect for the tourist. It is the latter two that distinguish ecotourism from nature-based tourism and they appear to be lacking in many sources. Books such as Lindberg and Hawkins' (Eds.) (1993) ‘*Ecotourism: A Guide for Planners and Managers*’ and Weaver's (1998) ‘*Ecotourism in the Less Developed World*’, among others, may mention these elements, but do not view them as critical to ecotourism. Even the book edited by Cater & Lowman (1994), ‘*Ecotourism: a sustainable option*’, appears to deal more with nature-based tourism than ecotourism. Although Beeton (1998) in ‘*Ecotourism: a practical guide for rural communities*’,

understands the importance of the visitors' enlightenment and interaction, and the role of the local community, even some of her examples appear to be more nature-based. Boo's (1990) book 'Ecotourism: the potentials and pitfalls', where she compares 'ecotourism' in Belize, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, and Mexico, is also a cause of concern. Although elements of ecotourism are present, the examples discussed appear to fit the definition of nature-based tourism rather than ecotourism. Quite a few authors have focused on the above mentioned destinations as topping the charts of 'ecotourism'. Other authors, including some of the above, simply view ecotourism and nature-based tourism as synonymous, for example, Marajh & Meadows (1992). The author, however, agrees with Burton (1998), who clearly states that strict ecotourism is a far cry from nature-based tourism.

Within this context of uncertainty, there are references to ecotourism being the fastest growing segment within the tourism industry (Cater, 1993; Jeffreys, 1998; Litvin, 1996). Furthermore, Sator (South African Tourism Organisation) stated in 1994 that South Africa is to become the leading ecotourism destination (Singleton, 1997). These proposals cause concern since, in the light of conflicting meanings, it is more likely that **nature-based tourism** is the fastest growing segment of the industry. If ecotourism should move into the mainstream of tourism, as Litvin (1996) claims it is doing, it is doubtful that it can indeed be pure ecotourism. This issue of remaining small-scale and out of the mainstream is discussed further in Section 2.5.

1.7 Overlap

It is also important at this stage to mention the increasing overlap between various niches of the tourism industry. As seen in Section 1.6, there is obvious encroachment between the terms ecotourism and nature-based (Queensland Ecotourism Plan, 1999). Ecotourism is often based on nature (unless culture is the main attraction), while some nature-based tourism, with all four fundamentals in place, can certainly be termed 'ecotourism'. There is extensive overlap between adventure tourism, ecotourism, and nature-based tourism (Queensland Ecotourism Plan, 1999; Wight, 1996) while tourism under the banner of cultural, heritage, ethnic, afro, rural, etc. has clear elements of ecotourism due to the involvement of local people. Getz & Page (1997) also link this cultural side (occurring in a natural environment) to adventure tourism. However, even extensive overlap does not imply that terms are synonymous.

A further form of overlap clearly evident in this study is that between the four fundamentals of ecotourism. Since ecotourism exists when the fundamentals are in balance, there is definite linkage throughout Chapter 2. Numerous practical examples are used to illustrate the

implementation of fundamentals, and more often than not there will be clear reference to another fundamental. To illustrate this, an example on the involvement of the local community may have a strong emphasis on the interactive enlightenment of the tourists through the community. A summary of the fundamentals of ecotourism is given in Table 2.1, where the overlap between rows is indicated in bold.

The fundamental of a responsible ecotourism industry is left till last (Section 2.5) since the implementation of the other three fundamentals is, to a large extent, the responsibility of the ecotourism industry. By the time the reader reaches Section 2.5, he/she will already have a comprehensive idea of the role of the industry in ecotourism due to Sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4. The division of a holistic concept such as ecotourism into different fundamentals has its weaknesses. However, the author believes it is conducive to understanding ecotourism.

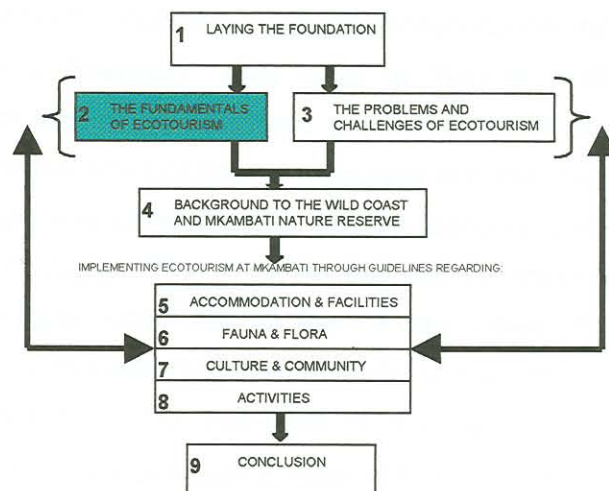
2.2 The environment

It is important first to define the 'environment'. Huxley (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 implies, saying that these resources must be sustainably used at an ecosystem 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.

Chapter 2

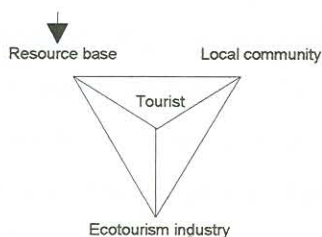
The fundamentals of ecotourism



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



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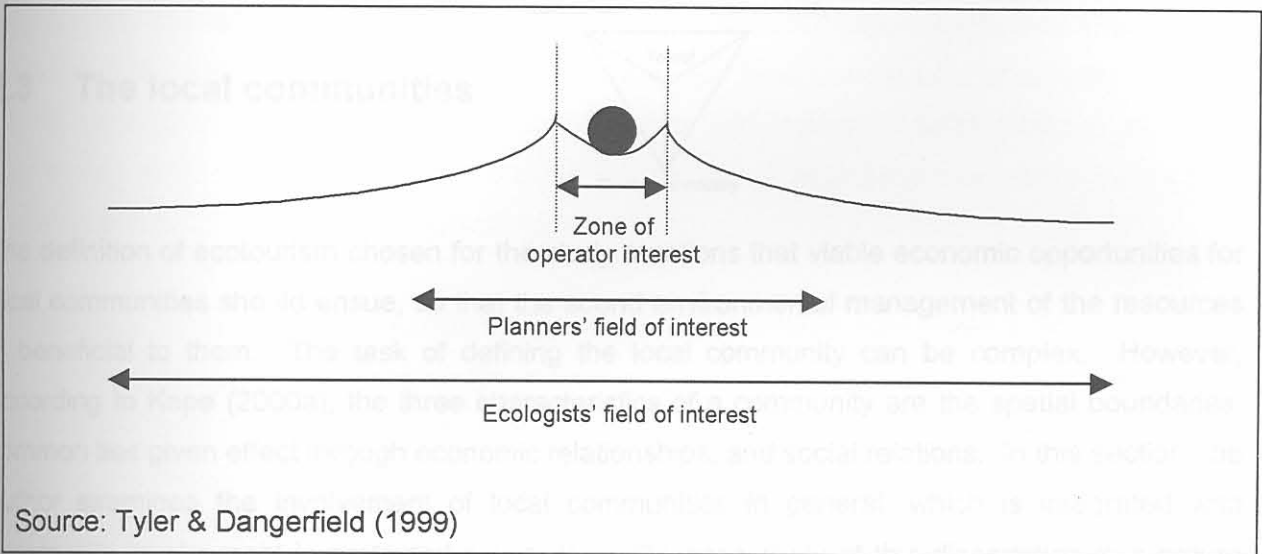
One of the most prominent benefits of ecotourism is the incentive value for conserving natural or semi-natural systems (Addison, 1997; Dixon & Sherman, 1990 cited in Weaver, 1999). Ecotourism must be based on the principles of ecosystem structures and functions (Prosser, 1994), which includes operating 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*

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

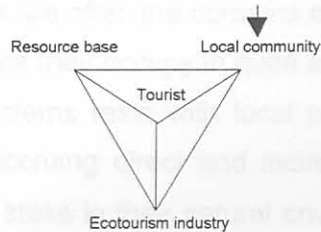


Through park entrance fees and other revenue possibilities, it is suggested that ecotourism can outbid other land uses such as forestry, agriculture, and hunting. A recent tendency in South Africa is for farmers to convert land unsuitable for agriculture to game farming purposes. There is also a move 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 cross-border conservation area in Africa (Birms, 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.

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).

Cerneia (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

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

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

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

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).

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).

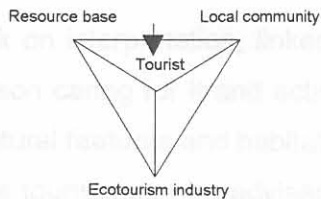
ConsCorp, mentioned earlier in this section, own various lodges within protected areas throughout Southern Africa. They are also committed to local community beneficiation, and apply a balanced approach to tourism, conservation, and local community involvement while promoting ecological sustainability, 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 Park¹.

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.

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



2.4 The tourist

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).

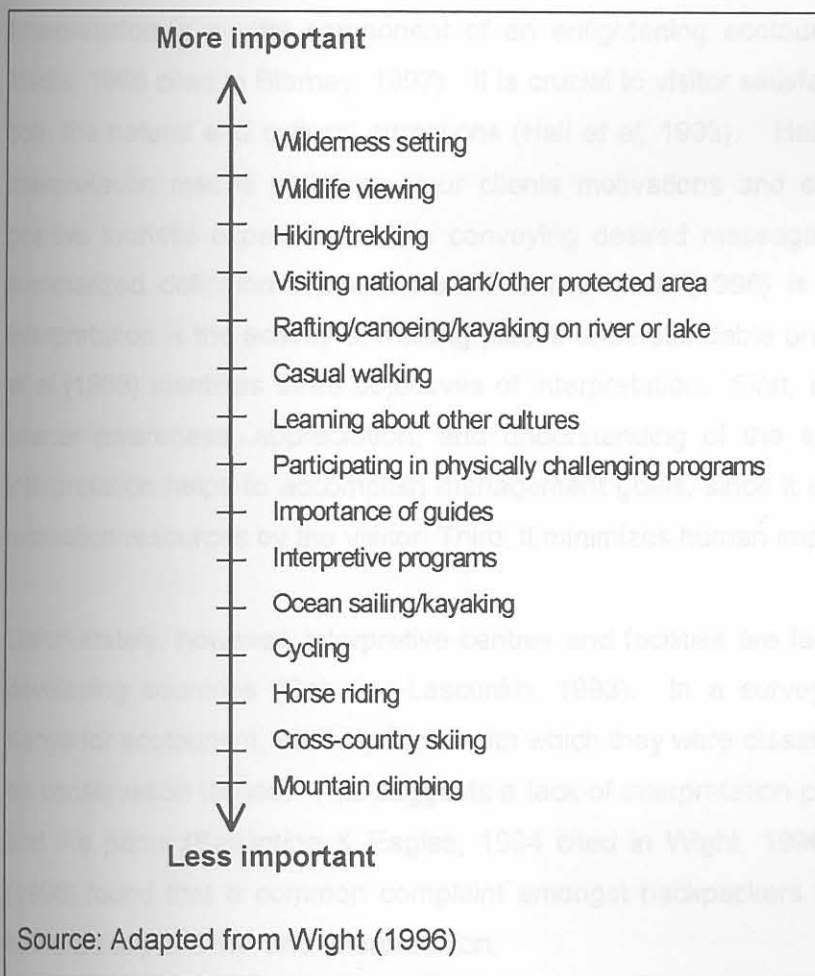
It is important first to understand what tourists engaging in ecotourism seek from a destination. Wight (1996) refers to various studies in this regard. Weiler & Richins (1995) also touch on this. Figure 2.2 adequately summarizes the benefits sought by tourists that are mentioned in these two sources.

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



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).

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

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).

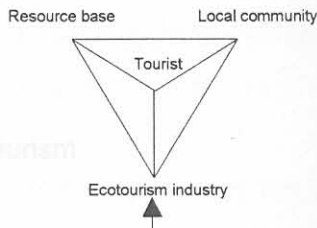
There is also a growing interest in the culture of local communities, as has been illustrated in the preceding case studies. Tourism figures show that South Africa's heritage and culture together account for 54% of foreign tourists' motivations (Koch, 1998), second only to scenic beauty and far in excess 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.



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

- 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 ..."*.

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).

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.

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

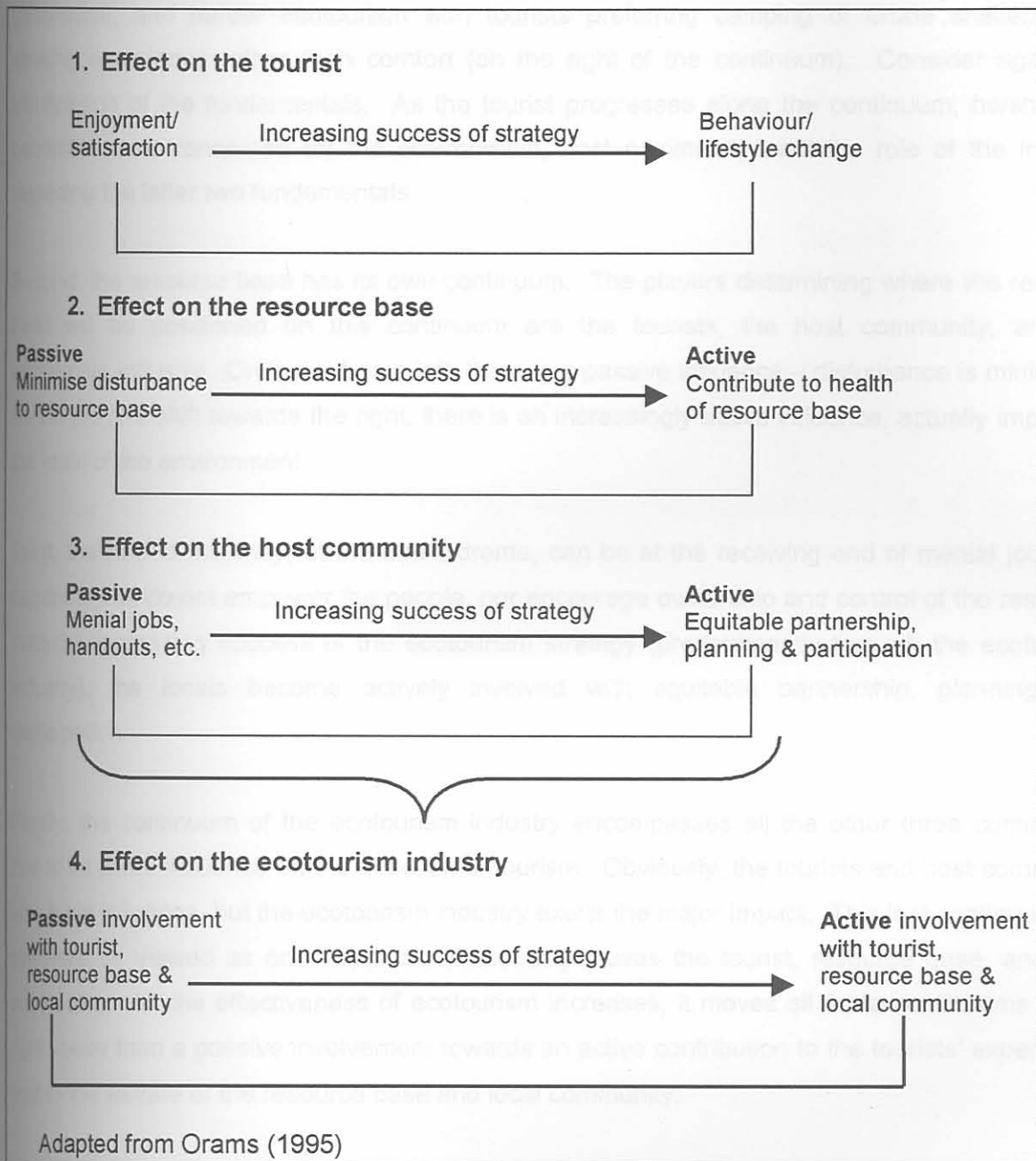
It is clear that the potential market for ecotourism experiences is significant and growing (Ryan *et al*, 2000; Wight, 1996). Successful ecotourism ventures depend on an integrated management philosophy that considers the various fundamentals, and then responds with products/experiences which meet environmental,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

Figure 2.3 The objectives of ecotourism



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

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.

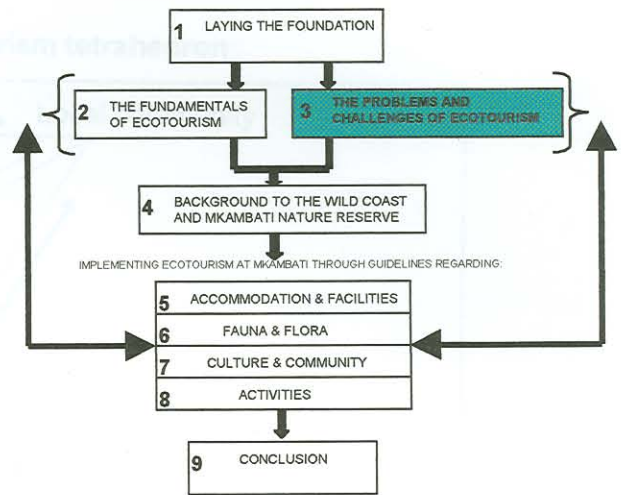
	LC should be uplifted, with skills imparted and capacity built.	Contribute to community/ environmental upliftment.	Contribute to community/ environmental upliftment.
	Locals should be employed and given responsibility.		Employ locals/ allocate responsibility.
	LC should make local products/ food/services/ 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.

Chapter 3

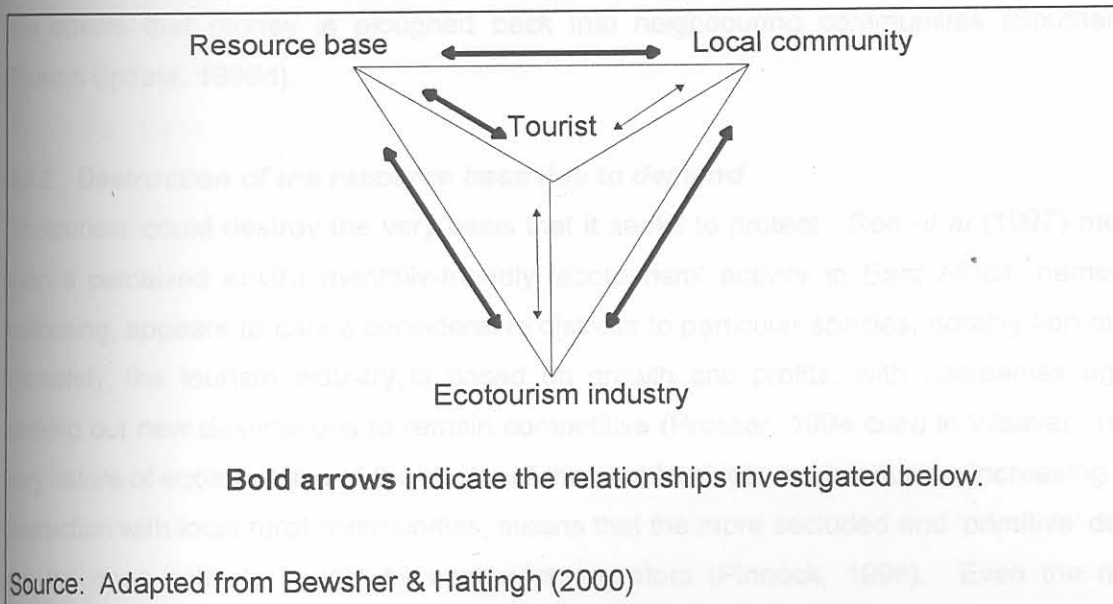
The problems and challenges of ecotourism

3.1 Introduction

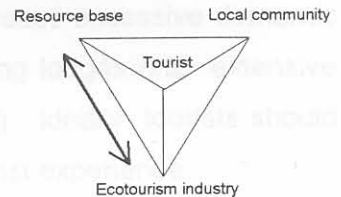


Ecotourism is proclaimed as a mode of eco-development which represents a practical and effective means of attaining social, economic, and environmental improvement for countries (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1991 cited in Brandon, 1993). These concepts recur frequently in literature, but are often rhetoric rather than practice, with 'ecotourism' sometimes leading to numerous problems, instead of providing the intended benefits (Brandon, 1993). This is because the fundamentals of ecotourism are not being incorporated into its conception, development, operation, or marketing (Wight, 1995). In an attempt to minimise these problems, the definition of ecotourism used in this study is narrower than the definition of nature-based tourism with specific measurable fundamentals which are clearly set out in the ecotourism tetrahedron (Figure 1.2). It comprises the ecotourism industry, tourists, local community, and resource base (natural and cultural environments). This chapter identifies problems that emanate from the **relationships** between the components of the tetrahedron, indicated by the arrows in Figure 3.1. Four of these relationships, shown with the bold arrows, are described in this chapter. These four have been chosen, because it was determined from the literature study that they are the areas of chief concern. As in Chapter 2, various examples are used to illustrate the discussion – some of these examples highlight the problems, while others demonstrate possible solutions. Although ecotourism will seldom contain all the elements of the ecotourism tetrahedron in perfect equilibrium, one can still strive towards achieving the ideal, which is to be as far to the right as possible in the continuums of Figure 2.3.

Figure 3.1 The relationships within the ecotourism tetrahedron



3.2 The resource base and the ecotourism industry



This first relationship investigated is the one between the resource base and the ecotourism industry, which entails some of the most significant and identifiable problems, in particular **ecological damage** and **environmental degradation** (Boo, 1991; Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1991; and West & Brechin, 1991, all cited in Brandon, 1993). This is partly due to the following:

3.2.1 Eco-sell

Addison (1997) refers to eco-sell as 'greenwashing' of products. It has also been termed 'eco-exploitation' (Wight, 1993), 'light-green' (Plant, 1991 cited in Wight, 1993) and 'environmental whoring' (De Mooij, 1994 cited in Litvin, 1996).

Many 'ecotourist' operators label their products as ecotourism merely because 'green' sells (Dowling, 1999; Wight, 1993). These products, however, may not adhere to the components of ecotourism (Horwich *et al*, 1993) and often misrepresent and dilute the concept (Malloy & Fennell, 1998). Despite increasing awareness, there is still a general lack of understanding of ecotourism in the travel industry, amongst most tourists, and within society in general (Lew, 1998). Colin Bell from the South African company, Wilderness Safaris, reports that ecotourism is seldom practiced in accordance with its true definition, and that people need to be made aware that it involves far more than taking tourists to a national park in a minibus. Wilderness Safaris is active in direct

shareholder involvement and local upliftment and education. They adopt a long-term approach and ensure that money is ploughed back into neighbouring communities (Southern African Tourism Update, 1999d).

3.2.2 Destruction of the resource base due to demand

'Ecotourism' could destroy the very basis that it seeks to protect. Roe *et al* (1997) mention that even a perceived environmentally-friendly 'ecotourism' activity in East Africa, namely, hot air ballooning, appears to cause considerable distress to particular species, notably lion and buffalo. Ultimately, the tourism industry is based on growth and profits, with companies aggressively seeking out new destinations to remain competitive (Prosser, 1994 cited in Weaver, 1998). The very nature of ecotourism and the desire of the new tourist to experience an increasing amount of interaction with local rural communities, means that the more secluded and 'primitive' destinations are the ones actively sought by ecotourist operators (Pinnock, 1996). Even the most basic services and infrastructure required can place pressure on the environment. Furthermore, some tourists engaging in ecotourism demand a high level of luxury, which places excessive demands on the resource base. In the Nepalese Himalaya, for example, trekking lodges offer extensive menus which create excessive need for scarce wood fuel (Cater, 1994). Ideally, tourists should consume local foods which are readily available and also add to the tourist experience.

Potential destruction of the resource base due to demand is an area of current concern. The United Nations has proclaimed 2002 as the 'International Year of Ecotourism'. This may encourage numerous tourists who usually engage in conventional tourism to seek out ecotourist destinations, and could result in remote, relatively unspoiled destinations being exploited. Concern is also being expressed that local communities will not be sufficiently involved³.

As ecotourism expands in South Africa and previously secluded areas become more popular, planning, monitoring, and auditing must be done to ensure that the resources which are attracting tourists in the first place are sustainably maintained.

An example where the environment was damaged due to the influence of outsiders relates to the Community Baboon Sanctuary in Belize. Under the Belize Audubon Society, park development and conservation have been integrated with local economic development by promoting local trail guides, bed-and-breakfast establishments run by locals, and local craft industries. The Community Baboon Sanctuary, for example, which began in 1985 to protect the black howler monkey, *Alouatta pigra*, operates on land owned by numerous different landowners who have all

³ Electronic communication with Mr. N. De Villiers, Open Africa Initiative, 20 November 2000.

preserved tracts of forest for these monkeys and benefit from having part of the sanctuary on their land. This is a good example of community involvement and also illustrates that one does not need pristine environment for such projects (Horwich *et al*, 1993). The problem began in 1988 when American guided tour groups streamed into the area. Tour leaders frequently circumvented local guides and took tourists through the forest trails themselves, thus removing control from the locals. Since these trails are on private land, this caused damage to crops and reduced wildlife populations. It also mitigated against tourist revenues contributing to conservation in the area and reaching local guides (Horwich *et al*, 1993).

In some cases, tour operators contribute to the maintenance of tracks, campsites, etc., causing them to care more actively for the resource. Active participation in the conservation of resources creates better understanding between the land managers and tour operators, whose aims are sometimes conflicting (Beeton, 1998; Boo, 1990). Beeton also suggests that tour operators form partnerships with locals and develop codes of practice and other programmes, benefiting both the environment and local community. An example of tourists and the ecotourism industry contributing to community upliftment is that of ConsCorp's Rural Investment Fund (introduced in Section 2.3) which has funded schools, clinics, a charcoal producing project for locals, and other small business initiatives (Conservation Corporation Africa, 1997). However, such spin-offs do not necessarily imply active participation of local people in ecotourism operations.

Paradoxically, smaller companies often contribute more than large companies. For example, a tour operator in Costa Rica, Victor Emmanuel, donated US\$ 500 per tourist to help purchase threatened rainforest (Boo, 1990). Tourists too, can be so enthused by their experience that they contribute personally to conservation (Boo, 1990) and community upliftment programmes. Victor Emmanuel encourages his tourists to make a pledge for every bird seen on a particular trip. In so doing, he raised US\$ 16 000 (Boo, 1990).

Locals, tourists, and the industry need to actively endorse ecotourism regulations if the environment is to be protected. At Cod Hole diving site on the Great Barrier Reef, for example, tour operators need a permit to operate in the area, but in the past their behaviour was not restricted. 'People pressure' increased, and ecosystem changes occurred, such as an increasing population of small predatory fish. Moray eels also began competing for food handouts. In 1992 the tour operators and management staff formed an association to develop management objectives and a code of conduct for the area. The code related to mooring use and anchoring, fish feeding, diving behaviour, scheduling of visits, etc. Operators adopted it enthusiastically

because it was a form of self-regulation and not imposed 'from above'. This has contributed to the long-term sustainability of the area and improved the visitor's experience (Beeton, 1998).

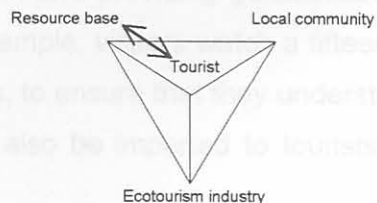
3.2.3 Lack of common vision

For ecotourism to succeed, a common vision is needed amongst all stakeholders, with each understanding and adhering to the philosophy and approach of ecotourism. Although there are examples of ecotourism that involve all four aspects of the tetrahedron, there are many 'jumping on the bandwagon' of ecotourism and not adhering to sustainable practices. This ties in with the problem of lack of attention to **long-term sustainability**. Weaver (1998) warns that any insistence that ecotourism does not negatively affect the environment or host society is restrictive, since a particular action or development may have long term negative consequences which are not initially realised. Practices that seem sustainable in the short term may not be so in the long-term. This is particularly due to the lack of effective sustainability indicators. Even the most environmentally sensitive tourists traveling to distant places will contribute implicitly to ozone depletion and other environmental problems, because they travel by air.

3.2.4 Monitoring and auditing

The ecotourism industry, tourists, and local communities must all avoid practices with negative impacts. This requires continual monitoring and auditing, and readjustments to practice and/or behaviour if necessary. Driver *et al* (1987), Graefe *et al* (1990) and Stankey *et al* (1985) all cited in Wallace (1993) believe that monitoring should assess the positive and negative impacts on the biophysical environment and on the experience of the visitor. It should be an ongoing and participatory process, involving local communities and providing short-term as well as long-term benefits. With a history of bad relationships between conservation officials and local communities in South Africa, all parties should work hard at creating trust. Part of this is providing clear benefits towards the beginning of a project.

3.3 The tourists and the resource base



The main problem identified in the relationship shown above between the tourists and the resource base, is that of **minimal meaningful and interpretive education for tourists and lack of interaction and participation at the destination**. As mentioned in Section 2.4, enlightenment of the tourists is vital. Many tourists engaging in ecotourism are environmentally responsible people, but may still need to be informed by the ecotourism industry (tour operators,

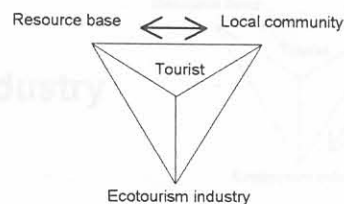
guides, etc.) on how to behave in certain settings. This is often the missing factor in ecotourism. Even where the industry is fully playing its part in conserving the environment - if this is not conveyed to the tourist much damage can be done. Furthermore, the lack of enlightenment and interaction will detract from the tourist's experience.

Rocktail Bay Lodge in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, belonging to Wilderness Safaris, has set an example in helping to fund the turtle tagging programme of the Natal Provincial Conservation Services. Wilderness Safaris pay the salaries of the park scouts who protect the turtles during the breeding season. They patrol the beach, count the eggs, and tag the mother before she returns to the sea. Guests staying at the lodge are allowed to accompany the park scouts (Bayman, 1998). Guests are therefore able to experience the turtles within a controlled and informative environment. More programmes such as this are needed. An urgent plea was sent out during 1999 to the South African industry to protect the marine resources that are open to uncontrolled exploitation, much of it in the name of ecotourism. Examples are whale watching, turtle watching (and even riding), and snorkeling with dolphins. The animals, and the consequences of irresponsible behaviour should be understood before tourists attempt any of these activities. For example, dolphins have been seen with propeller cuts caused by ski boats which tried to contain them, and turtles (who have no eyelids) have been blinded due to their corneas being cracked by photographer's strobe lights⁴.

Tourists also need to understand that animals should be seen in their natural environment and in chance encounters. Guides often promise their guests certain sightings, and in order to deliver, they may attract animals by feeding them or throwing stones at birds' nests to force them to emerge. Tourists and guides alike need to be educated on these matters. In Australia, tourists may seek to cuddle a koala bear, with some viewing this as true ecotourism due to the direct interaction with wildlife. According to Beeton (1998), however, this causes stress to the animals. Further focus needs to be placed on enlightening the tourist and providing guidelines/codes of conduct. Prior to entry into Galápagos National Park, for example, visitors watch a fifteen-minute video on low-impact techniques and backcountry regulations, to ensure that they understand how to behave (Wallace, 1993). Similar enlightenment should also be imparted to tourists prior to interacting with local communities.

4. Electronic communication with Mr. A. Cobb, Natal Sharks Board, 19 July 1999.

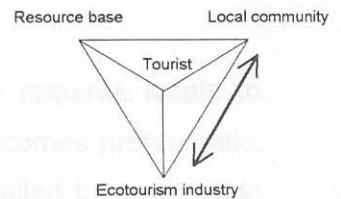
3.4 The resource base and the local community



Brandon (1993) points out that there are few examples of tourism ventures that have successfully pursued the **dual goals of community development and environmental protection**. Ecotourism is often promoted as the means of achieving this, but, according to the definition used in this study, it has frequently failed. This is the major issue at stake in the relationship between the resource base and the local community.

It is ironic that, in numerous cases, the local community and the resource base have a very successful relationship until outsiders interfere. The author could find no references to problems in the relationship between the environment and the local community prior to external interference. Beeton (1998) writes that indigenous communities often have a close relationship with the land and a long-term approach to its management. Their burning policies, consumptive utilisation of wildlife, agricultural systems, etc. have often been passed down over the generations and are fully sustainable. For example, Maasai in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), Tanzania have burned the land for decades to prevent the growth of grass types unsuitable for grazing. Burning was banned once the NCA was established, and since then, the number of cattle has declined (Sikar, 1996).

Once there is interference, even in the form of well-meant ecotourism ventures, there may be stress on resources that could cause social conflict. Beeton (1998) describes how the need for additional, or a different type of, sewage and waste treatment, litter control, and the alteration of scenic attributes, can create resentment towards tourists and operators. Locals are sensitive to land degradation from both a practical and spiritual aspect. Returning to the example of the NCA, cultivation has also been prohibited, and the grazing areas for cattle have been drastically reduced since the Serengeti National Park and the NCA were proclaimed. These two factors as well as the ban on burning have seriously impeded the survival of the Maasai, and caused major conflicts (Sikar, 1996; Wambui, 1996).



3.5 The local community and the ecotourism industry

When examining the relationship between the local community and the ecotourism industry, Boo (1991), Ceballos-Lascuráin (1991), and West & Brechin (1991) all cited in Brandon (1993) identify **negative impact on local culture** and the **creation of local economic hardships** as the most significant problems. This can be caused by the following:

3.5.1 Revenue leakage

A recent World Bank study revealed that only 45% of tourist expenditure remains in developing countries, and the figure is often much lower (Pinnock, 1996). Revenue leakage is a problem that impacts on local communities, primarily caused by the ecotourism industry (Weaver, 1998). Although ecotourism emphasises the consumption of local goods and services (Weaver, 1998), and the provision of benefits to members of local communities (Boo, 1990), revenue leakage still occurs because some goods and services must be imported, for example, petrol, some food, certain furnishings, equipment to build roads, etc. (Boo, 1990; Weaver, 1998).

Ecotourism should use as many local people, products, and materials as possible to minimise leakage. At Makalali Resource Reserve in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa, for example, local Shangaan and Pedi people were trained on site. The architect used 3-dimensional plans which they could understand, and even incorporated the ideas of locals into the design, allowing them the freedom to experiment with their own skills. The design elements and architectural details were copied from surrounding communities. Furniture was made on site, using timber from the bush-clearing programme, and many of the materials were obtained locally (EPM, 1995).

3.5.2 Low-level involvement of the local community

If ecotourism is correctly implemented, communities should be involved in the planning stages right from the outset. Brandon (1993) and Koch (1998) emphasise that communities should decide on the type of growth they would like to see, and the ecotourism industry should then help them implement those plans. Pederson (1991) supports this, warning that it can be difficult to funnel economic benefits to local communities, and that in order to maximise benefits, planners must first concentrate on activities that utilize the skills and resources already possessed by communities. For example, ecotourism projects in Talamanca, Costa Rica have been developed solely by the local community, and adhere closely to the definition of ecotourism used in this study in their operations. An example of how they use existing ability amongst locals is that they assist local cooks in setting up their own businesses, and urge tourists and tour operators to

patronize these establishments (Salazar *et al*, 1991). When the industry requires locals to perform tasks in which they have no experience, community involvement becomes problematic. In Mexico, for example, a cooperatively owned and run ejido hotel project failed because ejido members lacked training in the necessary administration skills needed to run the business effectively (Pederson & Ceballos Lascuráin, 1990 cited in Pederson, 1991). McKercher (1998) and McKercher & Robbins (1998) cited in Dowling (1999) mention that Australian ecotourism businesses generally do not have the skills required to run successful operations, and that they need multi-skilled employees with appropriate personal qualities, as well as business planning and management skills. This constraint often drives the industry to using outsiders rather than training and equipping locals.

In Section 2.3 it was mentioned that locals should have a degree of control and ownership. Pinnock (1996:159) refers to 'power relationships', saying that if the balance of power between the industry and local communities is wrong at the ground level, then "*ecotourism will be no different in its effect from Third World copper or coal mining: the locals have it and work it for the foreigners who use it and get rich*". Kahn (1996 cited in Pinnock, 1996:159) reports that "*there are few successful ecotourist ventures which involve indigenous Southern African people on a basis of an equal partnership*". One aspect of this unequal partnership which is becoming increasingly publicised is the issue of intellectual property rights. An example of a community with little ownership is that of the Monarch Butterfly Overwintering Reserves in Mexico, where locals were viewed as beneficiaries, having no involvement in the project design, and certainly feeling no ownership over it. Furthermore, locals believed that the high tourism numbers and the existence of the reserve had resulted in numerous negative impacts. The men involved in the project served as guides and the women sold food – activities that do not require long-term investment, resulting in few people becoming stakeholders. Local people were also asked to plant trees and were paid with food handouts. It is not surprising then that few of the trees were maintained, once planted, because the locals had no sense of ownership over them (Brandon, 1993).

3.5.3 *Commodization of culture and the demonstration effect*

Beeton (1998) writes that tourism can have negative impacts on indigenous cultures. This has even occurred in some ecotourism cases. If culture becomes a commodity, it can lose some of its original value, and become sanitised and generalised. Pinnock (1996) refers to 'cultural warping' while Taylor (1995) uses the term 'community show' where locals may 'act' according to the expectations of the tourists, and in so doing, not reflect their true culture. Beeton (1998) uses the example of visitors expecting to see Aborigines playing the didgeridoo, even though it is not a

traditional instrument in the southern areas. However, due to tourist demand, few ventures in southern Australia do not incorporate the playing of didgeridoos and sell the instruments.

When offering culture to a tourist, the stress should be on diversity and change rather than static and simplistic notions about culture. This is classically represented by the story of a taxi driver who picked up a wealthy American tourist at Johannesburg International Airport. The American said: *"I'd like to see some Zulu's"*. *"I am one"*, replied the taxi driver. *"I mean a real one"*, responded the American (Koch, 1998:72). This has been one of the criticisms of Kagga Kamma Game Reserve (mentioned in Section 2.4) where visitors can see the last surviving Bushmen living in a supposedly authentic way. However, out of sight, they wear ordinary clothes, buy food from shops, and send their children to a conventional school (Pinnock, 1996). However, Southern African Tourism Update (1999e) claims that the media crying 'exploitation' are misguided. One of the Bushmen, David Kruiper, says: *"We are very happy here. This is as close to our traditional existence as we can hope for in a modern world"* (Southern African Tourism Update, 1999d:15). It has also been cited as one of the region's finest examples of ecotourism (Southern African Tourism Update, 1998a). It has already been mentioned that the community must choose what they would like to present to visitors. It does seem, in the case of Kagga Kamma, that the local communities are benefiting and are in control of what they offer. This is demonstrated by the fact that, being nomadic, they come and go as they please (Southern African Tourism Update, 1998a). However, these issues are complex and there is seldom a clear answer. One could criticise the 'community show' on the one hand, but have to admit, on the other hand, that it is enabling the Bushmen to retain their culture and experience pride in it.

Conclusion

It frequently occurs, when two cultures come together, even within an environment of mutual exchange and benefit, that the one can dominate the other. The tourist's holiday culture, disposable cash, etc. may cause false expectations and demands, and leave the community desiring a similar lifestyle (Beeton, 1998). This is the 'demonstration effect'. According to Gartner (1996), this phenomenon raises concerns and can eventually result in resentment in host communities. In Isinamva, South Africa, locals have decided to limit the number of tour groups because they fear that their children will mimic the European way of life instead of respecting their own (Koch, 1998). Since many people engaging in ecotourism seek direct meaningful interaction with local communities, this may cause an invasion of the local community's privacy. This goes beyond the privacy they would need in their own homes, often extending to religious/sacred sites and rituals which locals would prefer to keep private. The Cofan Indians in the Cuyabeno Reserve in Amazonian Ecuador house their tourists in rustic wooden cabins which they have built

1.6 km down river from their village, so as to avoid visitors encroaching on their privacy (Ceballos-Lascuráin cited in Van der Merwe, 1995).

3.5.4 *Lack of linkage between conservation and broad-based development*

This problem was already mentioned in Section 3.4, but also applies to the relationship between the local community and the ecotourism industry. Ecotourism has often managed to bring about conservation, but the development of local communities and their area has left much to be desired.

Brandon (1993), however, makes a key point that ecotourism will only promote conservation if locals can clearly link the benefit they receive to the protection of the resource base. The most ideal example here is the CAMPFIRE programme, where locals have distinctly recognized that conserving the wildlife brings revenue from hunters and substantially improves their standard of living (Pinnock, 1996). Unfortunately, not all are success stories.

Ecotourism should result in broad-based development. However, this is not always the case. Brandon (1993) and Bunting *et al* cited in Brandon (1993) propose two reasons for this. First, there is an absence of political will and commitment on the part of governments to mobilize resources that will ensure the integration of ecological principles with development. Second, tourism is often promoted by large-scale external parties, resulting in lack of benefits to locals and leading to increased revenue leakage

3.6 Conclusion

This section has focussed on the problems and challenges within the relationships of the ecotourism tetrahedron. Each of these needs to be addressed in order for ecotourism to succeed and become a tourism niche in its own right.

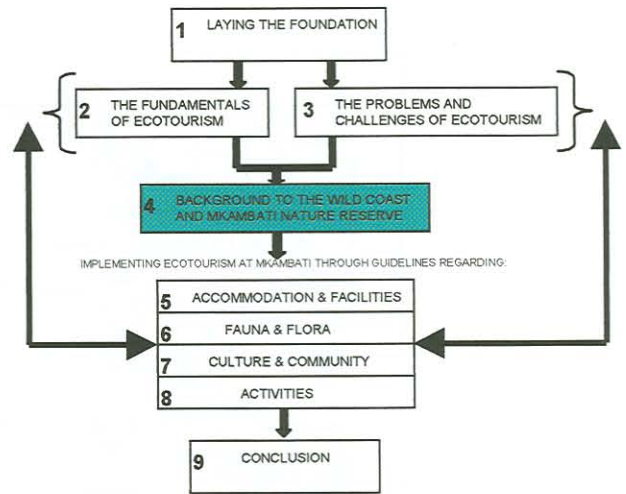
If all stakeholders in the ecotourism tetrahedron could have a common philosophy and vision, adhering to the four fundamentals, most of the problems identified could be solved. Good planning and monitoring are also crucial elements of the solution. The problems identified in this chapter are listed in Table 3.1. This summary is reproduced in Table 9.2 where the problems and challenges applicable to Mkambati Nature Reserve are indicated. In Chapters 5 to 8, guidelines are proposed which aim to ameliorate these problems. Section 9.2 describes the relevant problems and where possible, indicates how the guidelines aim to solve them.

Table 3.1 Summary of the problems and challenges of ecotourism

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 interaction & participation.		Low-level involvement of local community.
Lack of common vision.			Commodification of culture & demonstration effect.
Lack of attention to long-term sustainability.			
Monitoring & auditing.			Lack of linkage between conservation & broad-based development.

Chapter 4

Background to the Wild Coast and Mkambati Nature Reserve



4.1 Introduction to the Wild Coast

"Any paradise worth its salt inevitably lies a little off the beaten track – and Transkei's Wild Coast, with its pothole punctuated roads, is no exception. Here, only adventure is guaranteed. Whether you opt to hike down the rugged 254 km coast or savour unspoilt beaches and fishing from the comfort of a reasonably priced hotel, the chances are you'll soon be back for more"

(Oakes, 1991:212).

The Wild Coast on the Indian Ocean is part of the former Transkei. This 254km coast stretches from the mouth of the great Kei River in the south-west to the Mtamvuna River and Port Edward in the north-east. Figure 4.1 indicates the delimitation of the Wild Coast as well as the position of Mkambati Nature Reserve. Specific positioning for the latter is given in Section 4.3. In terms of the previous South African government's policy of separate development, the Transkei was granted autonomy in 1976 as a state for some of the principal Bantu groups (Erasmus, 1995; Mayhew, 1985). Shortly before South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the Transkei was reincorporated into the country as part of the Eastern Cape Province (Erasmus, 1995).

The Wild Coast has earned its name because it is truly wild – deep gorges, impenetrable forests, remote white beaches fringed with indigenous vegetation, high cliffs, pristine estuaries, unusual stone sculptures, and huge waves crashing on a rugged coastline. The latter has claimed numerous ships, including the famous treasure ship, The Grosvenor, in 1782. Mkambati Nature Reserve has also had its fair share of shipwrecks, with the São Bento (1554), Weolmi (1968), and The Sensation (1984). Occasionally, coins, trinkets, and fragments of crockery from sunken hulks still wash up on the shores of the Wild Coast (Mayhew, 1985; Reynierse, 1988; Wannenburg, 1984).

Figure 4.1 Delimitation of the Wild Coast



Source: Mayhew (1985)

The Wild Coast has relatively unspoilt beauty, with many lagoon-like estuaries and numerous rivers snaking through deep valleys towards the sea. These are interrupted by numerous waterfalls. The highest of these are the Magwa Falls, which are 140m high complete with hanging forests, the Mateku Falls which are 142m high (Erasmus, 1995), and the Mfihlelo Falls of 160m. The latter is unique because it falls directly into the ocean, and is the highest waterfall of this type in the world. Waterfall Bluff with a main fall of 100m also drops into the sea. (Mayhew, 1985; Reynierse, 1988; Wannenburgh, 1984). Mkhambati Nature Reserve also has its share of beautiful waterfalls, which are mentioned in Section 4.3.

At higher altitudes, the vegetation is predominantly tall grasslands dotted with proteas, aloes, and patches of forest (Oakes, 1991; Reynierse, 1988; Wannenburgh, 1984). The coast is washed by the warm Agulhas current which makes bathing possible almost all year round (Erasmus, 1995).

The first people to live in the Transkei were the San and Khoi Khoi. Neither group were numerous and were displaced in medieval times by the ancestors of the Xhosa people who occupy the area today. The Transkei Xhosa are divided into a number of tribes, with rivers forming the natural boundaries between them (Mertens & Broster, 1987). The Transkei is also home to one of the most important political figures of South Africa, former President Nelson Mandela, who was born in 1918 into the Thembu royal family in the tiny village of Qunu near Umtata (Erasmus, 1995).

The traditional Transkei homesteads of hardened mud rondavels with thatched roofs are an enchanting spectacle (Mayhew, 1985). The doorways face east, a practice believed to have been derived from the Khoikhoi belief that the good power lived in the east and the evil in the west. Most huts are incompletely painted, but with good reason. The part facing the rising sun is often painted with a gloss paint or white to deflect heat, thus keeping the hut cool on hot summer days. As the sun continues west, by evening it shines on the unpainted mud which absorbs the heat so that the hut is warm after dark (Mayhew, 1985; Oakes, 1991).

The people of the Wild Coast are probably the poorest in South Africa, with the only permanently employed people being those working for government. The Human Development Index (HDI) (a composite index measuring income, life expectancy, and literacy) of the area is similar to Niger which has the lowest HDI world-wide (LAPC, 1996 cited in Prinsloo, 1999a). Against this backdrop, locals are desperate for development and social upliftment (Bristow, 2000b). This makes the tourism development earmarked for the region so important (Prinsloo, 1999a). However, there is a real concern that the wrong type of tourism development could lead to the Wild Coast being an extension of the already degraded KwaZulu-Natal South Coast (Bristow, 2000b; Derwent, 1998), which would be a terrible loss.

At this point in time, great changes are looming for the Wild Coast, with important decisions on the horizon. Bristow (2000b:5) reports that *"what the Wild Coast needs is not 'seven star' hotels ..., but environmentally appropriate and sustainable ones"*. The following section examines the plans for tourism in this region.

4.2 Tourism on the Wild Coast

With this background to the scenic wonders and people of the Wild Coast, the role of tourism in this unique part of South Africa will now be examined. Most of this information comes from the first draft of the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy (Taylor, 2000), released by the Province of the Eastern Cape on 31 July 2000 for comment. At the time of writing, the final draft was not yet available. The policy covers the area between the Kei and Mtamvunu Rivers and a 1000m strip inland of the high tide mark, including the tidal portions of estuaries (Taylor, 2000). The policy applies to all proposed developments and commercial activities within this area whose prime activities relate to tourism. It provides tourism development and management guidelines, environmental policy guidelines, institutional arrangements, and procedures for development applications, right from the conceptualisation stage through to the operational stage (Taylor, 2000).

The Wild Coast has been recognized as a prime tourist destination due to the relatively unspoilt environment along the coast. This valuable and unique asset that warrants protection will be the basis for tourism rather than traditional coastal recreation resorts (Prinsloo, 1999b). If the right type of tourism development occurs, it will impact the environment less than other developments. For this reason, tourism has been identified as the lead economic sector for the region.

Due to the inherent potential of the Wild Coast (which has remained unrealized), it was delineated as a Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) area by government in 1998 (Taylor, 2000). The SDI programmes are strategic initiatives by National Government to unlock the underutilised economic development potential of certain areas in South Africa (Prinsloo, 1999a). For the Wild Coast, the SDI has determined that all other proposed developments must be measured in terms of their impact on tourism. The objectives of the SDI are to:

- generate sustainable economic growth and development in relatively underdeveloped areas;
- generate long term and sustainable employment for locals; and
- enable locals to exploit spin-off opportunities arising from public and private sector investments (Taylor, 2000).

However, Gray (2000) reports that the SDI is being criticized for its slow delivery on providing impoverished communities with economic opportunities through tourism. A further criticism is that the SDI *“appears to favour glitzy, capital-intensive bids that seem inappropriate in a region which draws visitors simply because of its unique rural beauty”* (Gray, 2000:37).

In contrast to this, however, the policy has determined that tourism on the Wild Coast must be sustainable, private-sector driven, equitable, and provide a special quality experience to all visitors (Taylor, 2000). It needs to have its own distinct identity, which is then used in promotion. In order to ensure that development is environmentally sustainable, various environmental funders such as Nedbank's Green Trust, TOTAL, and the WWF South Africa, have supported initiatives that include and train local people in environmental and tourism projects, for example, helping to set up information centres (Derwent, 1998). The European Union (EU) has also set aside R80 million for responsible community-driven tourism initiatives. The EU has appointed the Triple Trust Organisation to develop and build the capacity of local Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in the Wild Coast region to enable them to take advantage of tourism development initiatives. One of these is Pondocrop (Pondo Community Resource Optimisation Programme) which has identified 300 small-scale, low impact projects for local communities. The Amadiba Adventures Horse Trail (mentioned in Section 8.3.2.2) is one of these (Gray, 2000).

Along the coast there are important and environmentally sensitive areas, for example: nature and marine reserves; the Pondo Centre of Diversity along the Pondoland Coast, with high levels of endemism and biodiversity; indigenous coastal forests; muti/ethnobotanical plants; marine and estuarine resources; and rich archaeological and cultural heritage (Taylor, 2000). Despite this, the Wild Coast region together with the inland areas of the former Transkei, has less than 1% of land formally protected within nature reserves. This is in comparison to international norms of approximately 10%. This makes reserves like Mkambati extremely important (Prinsloo, 1999b).

It is clear that the area is unique and valuable. However, being in a developing country, and part of a previously neglected homeland, there are several constraints to long-term sustainable development through ecotourism. The following have been singled out, predominantly from Taylor (2000).

Tourism constraints

- There is little incentive for private sector developers to enter into arrangements that facilitate local community participation, benefit, and empowerment.
- Derwent (1998) points to the so-called 'ecotour' operators who have little concern for the environment and local people. There are no mechanisms in place to regulate or stop unscrupulous operators.
- SMME development is not realised due to a lack of support mechanisms and information.
- Lack of education, training, and awareness exists regarding tourism.
- The poor physical infrastructure results in limited communication and access to facilities.

- Marketing and promotion are limited by funding constraints.
- A negative perception exists with regard to the safety of tourists in the region.
- Tourism standards and services are low, with little incentive for improvement.
- Institutional arrangements within the industry are not clear (Taylor, 2000).

Environmental constraints

- Access to natural resources on which people depend must be ensured. Where access is denied, compensation must exceed the benefits of being able to use those resources.
- Maintenance of biodiversity must receive attention due to its national and international importance.
- There is heavy exploitation of marine resources.
- Agriculture and forestry activities can negatively impact the environment.
- The uncontrolled spread of illegal holiday cottages damages the environment and tourism development potential.
- With increasing tourism development, effective waste management and pollution control must be ensured.
- Alien plant invasions must receive attention (Taylor, 2000).
- There is low environmental management capacity due to a lack in skilled personnel and financial resources. Many reserves are understaffed and conservation staff lack financing, training, and resources (Derwent, 1998).
- Management of the cultural resources of the Wild Coast has received little attention (Taylor, 2000).

Institutional constraints

- Too many institutions are involved, resulting in confusion and lack of clear decisive decision making.
- No specific development policy for the region exists, which has resulted in ad hoc developments and investor insecurity.
- Limited uncoordinated government capacity results in lengthy procedures and a poor response time to development applications.
- Land tenure and restitution has not been finalised.
- Too many pieces of legislation are in force, some of which are contradictory and could limit development (Taylor, 2000).

Local community constraints

- It is not clear who comprises the local community⁵.
- It is difficult to move locals beyond passive beneficiation to active involvement in the core activity as well as in related SMMEs.
- Locals and other interested and affected parties must be able to access information on the proposed development for the sake of transparency.
- Appropriate local development institutions do not exist at community level. Community trusts, which enter into joint ventures with investors, are one solution, with benefits being channeled to the local community.
- Tourism development plans should clearly outline a training and capacity-building programme to ensure active community involvement.
- Local people should be better off than previously due to the development.
- A two-tier benefit system may be required since immediate local community members may feel they have more right to benefit from resources than people further afield.
- Some tourism developments require exclusivity. This must be carefully negotiated at local community level and sensitively introduced.
- Tourism enterprises must offer some form of immediate return. Deferred gratification is not sufficient.
- For joint ventures, there must be a clear contract between local communities and investors (Taylor, 2000).

A positive note is that roads will be built far from the coast with coastal access roads perpendicular to the shoreline in order to minimise impact on drainage patterns (Derwent, 1998). This was not the initial intention. In fact, the Wild Coast SDI, in an attempt to fast-track development, had planned a major tarred toll road along the coast. This was a highly controversial proposal, with many convinced that it would be environmentally and socially problematic (Derwent, 1998). The SDI policy also bans vehicles on beaches, and jet skis and powerboats, except in demarcated rivers (Taylor, 2000).

The zoning of the Wild Coast proposes that tourism will be concentrated in first and second order nodes followed by ecotourism zones/special control environments. Each of the three have their own specific parameters laid down in the policy.

5. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, manager of Mkambati Nature Reserve, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

1. **First order nodes** will be extensively developed with large hotels and cluster developments, for example, in Port St Johns and Coffee Bay. The main focus here will be on recreation.
2. **Second order nodes** will be family holiday resorts/cottages, cluster developments, and family hotels. They will be less developed and less urban in nature, for example, Msikaba, The Haven, and Hole in the Wall. The current proposal for The Haven is a Mauritian-style luxury resort (Bristow, 2000b). This is regrettable since it does not fit with the proposals of the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy in terms of being appropriate to the surrounding environment and communities.
3. **Ecotourism zones**, of which Mkambati Nature Reserve is one, will allow for low impact environmental and cultural tourism developments to capitalise on the special qualities of the environment. Development here will be subject to Integrated Environmental Management (IEM) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures and must comply with ecological guidelines. In these areas where remote locations and seclusion are the prime attractions, the number of visitors must be limited in accordance with carrying capacity or LAC. Accommodation will be in the form of camps, small clusters, or specialised lodge facilities, with some of an up-market standard. Accessory supportive tourism developments, for example, free standing shops, petrol stations, and laundries will not be located in the ecotourism zone but in first and second order nodes. If absolutely essential in an ecotourism zone, they must be on the landward side.

Compatible mix of tourism uses will be permitted within each node. In all zones there should be buffer areas of 1km between permanent shoreline residences and coastal waters (Derwent, 1998; Taylor, 2000). No development will be permitted without permission from the local government authority. Outside of these three zones, no permanent tourism development will be allowed, except for certain tourist activities. These minimal development areas contain special biological communities; great ecological sensitivity; special breeding, nursery or migratory stop-overs; great archaeological interest; special historical, social or cultural value; special or traditional resource use; or outstanding natural scenery (Taylor, 2000).

Within the above zoning, a range of accommodation types, facilities, and intensities will be offered to accommodate a wide range of people. The various use areas must be separated from each other where different recreational activities and behaviours may clash. The spatial environmental

guidelines will prescribe the various zones according to outstanding scenery, cultural-historical value, or biological conservation importance (Taylor, 2000).

Regarding siting and design, cluster development has been chosen for first and second order nodes since it maximises open space. Developments must blend into the natural indigenous landscape and be inobtrusive, for example, no development will be allowed in undeveloped areas, on the skyline, or prominent open hillsides. The maximum height of hotel buildings will be three storeys. The policy entails a 'minimum development footprint', incorporating existing groundform into project design, and disrupting it as little as possible during site preparation. Rehabilitation is also an integral component of development. There should be a sense of privacy, seclusion, and refuge. Development must not exceed the carrying capacity and must be sensitive to, and reflect local heritage, architecture and land use, using natural and local materials where possible. The policy has set out aesthetic design principles in this regard. These apply more stringently to the lower intensity ecotourism zones than to the highest intensity first order zones. Accessory infrastructure will also be subject to the above guidelines. Regarding camping and caravanning sites, natural topography and vegetation should be used for layout. Individual sites should be separated by natural vegetation, with as much as possible of the original vegetation remaining. Cottages may be a maximum of two storeys high, no walls or fences will be allowed (except with special permission), and no alien plants may be introduced (Taylor, 2000).

Concerning the spatial planning, the policy mentions that traffic flow should be minimised while pedestrian flow will be encouraged. Both of these will steer away from environmentally-sensitive areas. There is a particular focus on the landscape as an important tourism commodity which must be protected and managed in its natural form. Special landscape features or symbols can be tourism attractions. These must be used sensitively, allowing access to local people and respecting traditions and beliefs relating to them (Taylor, 2000).

Sewage and solid waste disposal must comply with specific requirements set out in the policy, while the impact of water extraction practices on coastal waters must be minimised and carefully assessed. The policy also mentions provision of sustainable energy practices and efficient and non-wasteful use of water. Solar panels and 'other measures' are mentioned, particularly for implementation in the ecotourism zones. This part of the policy is somewhat vague, and unless a developer has a firm personal commitment to sustainable development, non-compliance could be possible. Guidelines are also given for resource consumption, such as a prohibition on felling indigenous timber, and controlled use (monitored by a committee) of local materials such as

environmental hazard is the building of illegal cottages (Taylor, 2000). Approximately

stone and thatch. Regulations are also given regarding the use of plant and animal resources (Taylor, 2000).

Community participation and beneficiation emerge strongly in the policy. Community awareness is important. Locals should be informed of the possibilities of being involved in ventures, as well as of the costs and benefits. This can be done through workshops, pilot programmes, school modules, and short courses. The policy refers to consultation occurring right from the beginning and maximum benefit accruing as desired by the community. There is a detailed description of the methods and time constraints whereby local communities should be informed of meetings. Small-scale enterprises are also encouraged. The idea is that the Wild Coast Development Organisation (which will coordinate the implementation of the policy) will facilitate training, while the provincial government will provide funds for these enterprises. In areas outside of the three zone types, communities should be encouraged to start their own activities such as guided trails. Furthermore, legal entities should be established to protect local communities. The issue of access to resources has already been mentioned. The policy is adamant on retaining access to resources, since most locals depend on it, to a certain extent, for their livelihood. Quality of life will decrease if access is denied (Taylor, 2000).

The extent of community participation, benefit, and empowerment will be evaluated in terms of the following:

- contribution to economic growth in the community;
- community equity;
- encouraging conservation by the community;
- allowing community empowerment and decision-making powers;
- skills development;
- income generation;
- local sourcing of skills, inputs, and materials; and
- employing locals (Taylor, 2000).

With South Africa's ratification of the Biodiversity Convention, the country has taken on global responsibility for the conservation of biodiversity. This is particularly important along the Pondoland Coast where a large number of endemic species found nowhere else in the world occur in a relatively small biome (Taylor, 2000). Mkambati is the largest reserve in the Pondo Centre of Diversity (described in Section 4.3), and must therefore be managed wisely (Prinsloo, 1999a). The policy also gives attention to the overexploitation of resources, particularly marine. A further environmental hazard is the building of illegal cottages (Taylor, 2000). Approximately

250 of these have been erected, mainly by white holiday makers. This has severely impacted the environment because roads are graded and trees indiscriminately chopped down. Estuaries and pristine mangrove swamps have also been damaged in this process (Derwent, 1998). The Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa (WESSA) has taken the matter to court. Although winning the first round, little has been done to remove the cottages or prevent more from being built (Derwent, 1998). Derwent (1998) & Prinsloo (1999a) mention that the Heath Commission, which has been appointed by parliament to examine the illegal occupation and allocation of state land, will attempt to determine how outsiders have 'acquired' the land on which these houses are built. Most of the cottages are close to the coast, despite the law clearly stating that no permanent structure may be erected along the Wild Coast within one kilometre of the coastline (Derwent, 1998).

Tourism services on the Wild Coast must be of international standard. This will be attained by regular inspection. However, small basic facilities will be allowed to increase their standards gradually (Taylor, 2000). Derwent (1998) mentions that, despite low standards, tourism is doing well along the Wild Coast. Port St Johns, for example, is a popular destination for foreign backpackers. Operators such as Hilihili Hikes and 'Lekker-like-a-cracker' have started trails into the hills to overnight at local homesteads, and visit traditional healers. A drawback is that backpackers are inherently content to accept inferior service and facilities. Operators consequently have little incentive to develop and improve facilities, do regular refuse removal, repair potholes, and ensure that telephone and water systems function effectively.

The policy recognises tourism operators as part of the coastal community who therefore have a role to play in the protection and effective management of coastal ecosystems (Taylor, 2000). Regular inspection and monitoring is vital to ensure implementation of this policy, and to identify the impacts of tourism developments and activities on the natural environment and on the culture of local people. Ameliorative measures will be proposed and implemented where necessary (Taylor, 2000).

With this bold and thorough policy in mind, the constraints to sustainable development along the Wild Coast (described previously) must be taken into account. This policy will be difficult to implement in the current situation. An enormous amount of training is required to bring local people to a point where they can understand and implement tourism. Mr. D. De Villiers, Regional Manager, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, has expressed concern over the future of the Wild

Coast, saying that whatever happens in the next two years will be crucial. Particular concerns are the illegal cottages, and the rapid destruction of forests⁶.

Besides the policy, another idea with major consequences to the Wild Coast is the proposed Wild Coast National Park/ Biosphere Reserve from the Mtamvuna River in the north (the northeast boundary of the Wild Coast) to the boundary of the municipal area of Port St Johns in the south. This is close to the north bank of the Umzimvubu River (Guy Nicolson Consulting, 1997). The area is approximately 30 000 Ha and has been identified by WESSA as one of South Africa's four unconserved biodiversity 'hotspots' (Gray, 2000). Most of this land is already under some form of legal protection, for example, state forest reserves and nature reserves. It is proposed that the park be bordered by buffers of appropriate intensity land use (Guy Nicolson Consulting, 1997). The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mohammed Valli Moosa, has endorsed the idea. The plan is still in its early stages as discussions are being held with Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and feasibility studies are being done in conjunction with them, the Department, and South African National Parks. Once this is done, land negotiations will be entered into with the Eastern Cape Government. This could be a complicated procedure, since the land ownership system was fairly complex under the former Transkei government (Mackenzie, 2000b). Population densities in the area are very low, meaning that nobody will need to be relocated. The cultural landscape and people are seen as valuable resources, and the proposal has stated that there must be participation, beneficiation, and acceptance by all interested and affected parties (Guy Nicolson Consulting, 1997). A further note of interest is that Mkambati Nature Reserve is expected to form the keystone of the biosphere reserve (Gray, 2000). It is strange that the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy made no mention of this proposed park, which would enormously influence the area.

Tourism can certainly provide the Wild Coast with a much-needed impetus for development. However, it is not a pollution-free industry and can cause severe environmental, social, and cultural damage. This has already been seen in many of the coastal towns littering South Africa. Places like the Wild Coast with such spectacular unspoilt beauty are rare and must be developed in the right manner (Derwent, 1998). The policy described in the above section is a sustainable option for the Wild Coast. It fits well with the concept of ecotourism and its four fundamentals. The challenge remains, with the constraints of this region in mind, to implement this policy in a strict controlled manner.

6. Personal communication, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 19 July 2000.

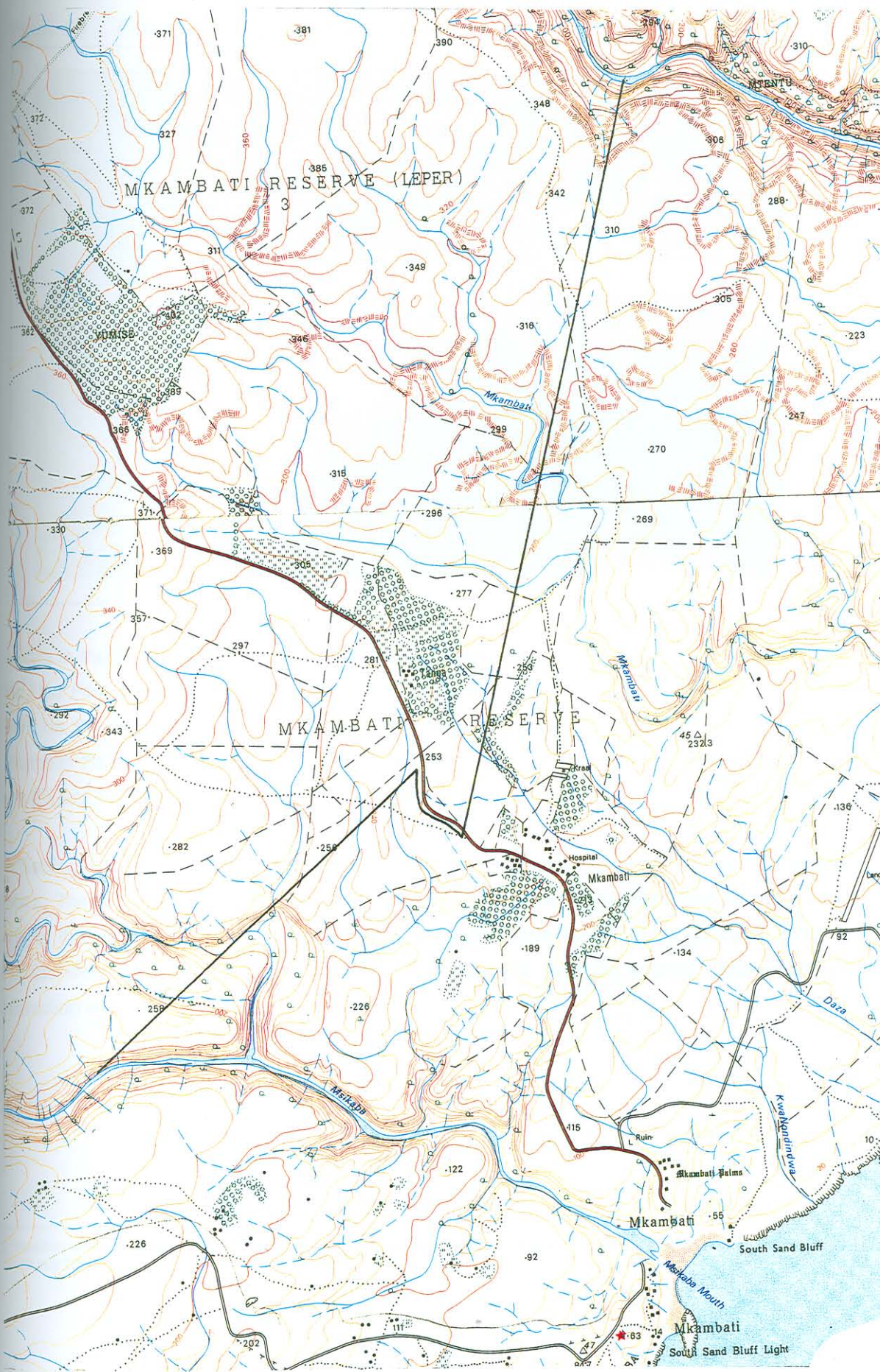
4.3 Introduction to Mkambati Nature Reserve

Mkambati Nature Reserve is on the north-eastern Pondoland coast of the Eastern Cape - the heart of what many regard as the real Wild Coast (Erasmus, 1995; Prinsloo, 1999a). It is situated between the Msikaba River on its western side and the Mtentu River on its eastern side. These two rivers are approximately 12km apart (Janse van Rensburg, 1995; Prinsloo, 1999b). The inland fence to the west is the only human-made boundary, with the width ranging from 5.5 to 8.2 km (Prinsloo, 1999b). A topographical map of the reserve is shown in Figure 4.2. Mkambati is the largest reserve in the Transkei (7720 Ha) and contains (among other species) eland, blue wildebeest, kudu, red hartebeest, impala, springbuck, gemsbok, blesbok, southern reedbuck, Burchells and Hartmans zebra, baboon, and vervet (Prinsloo, 1999b). Animals being considered for reintroduction are Cape buffalo, oribi, and klipspringer (Prinsloo, 1999b). Being able to view wildlife against the backdrop of the ocean is just one of the aspects that makes Mkambati unique (Figure 4.3).

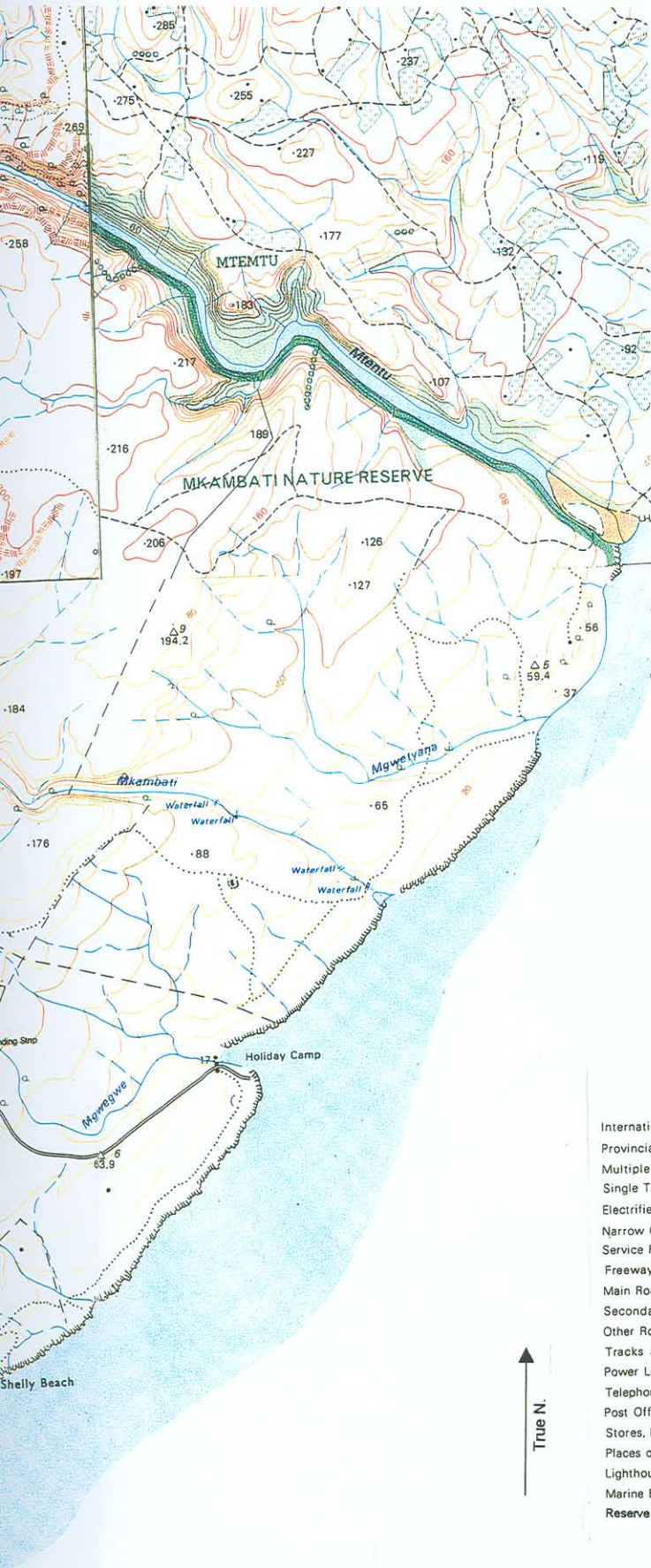
The Msikaba estuary is the deepest in South Africa. This one and possibly the other estuaries in the reserve contain the only endemic fish species in the Pondoland region. The Msikaba and Mtentu estuaries are particularly wide, with thick indigenous forests extending to the waters edge. Other smaller estuaries within the reserve include the Gwe Gwe, Butsha, and Mgwetyana Rivers. All are important for biodiversity conservation as they act as nursery areas for marine fish. They also enhance the scenic beauty and variety of the coast (Prinsloo, 1999b).

On the southern bank of the Msikaba lies South Sand Bluff which has a camping ground and a few holiday shacks. On the northern banks of the Msikaba and Mtentu Rivers are clusters of the rare Pondo coconut palm or Mkambati palm, (*Jubaeopsis caffra*), from which the reserve derives its name. These trees bear miniature coconuts only 2cm in diameter (Oakes, 1991; Wannenburg, 1984). This is the only place in the world where this palm occurs naturally (Prinsloo, 1999a).

Figure 4.2 Topographical map of Mkambati Nature Reserve



Source: South Africa (1998a, b, and c)



REFERENCE

VERKLARING

International Boundaries		Internasionale Grense
Provincial Boundaries		Provinsiale Grense
Multiple Track Railways		Veelvoudige Spoorlyne
Single Track Railways		Enkelspoorlyne
Electrified Railways		Geëlektrifiseerde Spoorlyne
Narrow Gauge Railways		Smalspoorlyne
Service Railways		Diensspoorlyne
Freeways and Arterial Roads		Deurpaaië en Hoofverkeerspaaië
Main Roads		Hoofpaaië
Secondary Roads		Sekondêre Paaië
Other Roads		Ander Paaië
Tracks and Hiking Trails		Dowwe Paaië en Voetslaanpaaië
Power Lines		Kraglyne
Telephone Lines		Telefoonlyne
Post Offices, Police Stations and Posts.		Poskantore, Polisieostasies en -poste. Winkels, Hotelle, Skole en Plekke van Aanbidding
Stores, Hotels, Schools and		
Places of Worship		
Lighthouses and Marine Lights		Vuurtorings en Seevaartligte
Marine Beacons		Seevaartbakens
Reserve boundary		Reservaat grens

1:50 000

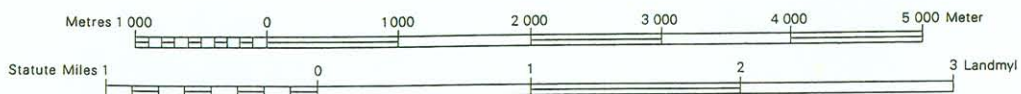


Figure 4.3 A rare sight: eland against the sea



Adding to the beauty of this area are the numerous waterfalls within the reserve. One can view the Four Falls in the Mtentu River and its tributaries; the Strandloper, Horseshoe, and Mkambati Falls on the Mkambati River; the Icicici Falls; and numerous other smaller cascades. The Mkambati Falls are the third unique waterfall on this stretch of coastline that fall directly into the sea (Figure 4.4).

In Section 4.1 it was mentioned that the Xhosa people of the Transkei are divided into different tribes. The reserve falls within the Pondo tribal land, and is therefore called 'Pondoland'. This is one of the most under-developed regions of the Wild Coast, which is no accident, since the Pondos were traditionally known as a difficult people and previous colonial regimes avoided interaction with the tribe⁷.

7. Personal communication with Mr. D. De Villiers, Regional Manager, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 19 July 2000.

Figure 4.4 The Mkambati Falls cascades into the ocean



As mentioned in Section 4.2, the reserve falls within the Pondo Centre of Diversity, which is 1880km², and is one of only 235 sites identified world-wide as having important global diversity (Prinsloo, 1999a). Over 80% of the reserve is grassland (Prinsloo, 1999a), containing one of the largest coastal grassland communities in Southern Africa (Mkambati Nature Reserve Regulations, 2000). Besides grassland, Mkambati also has indigenous forests – afromontane, swamp, dune and mangrove forests, as well as approximately 490 Ha of wetlands (Prinsloo, 1999b). With regard to its marine area, the reserve is part of a Marine Protected Area (described in Section 4.6.4). This is necessary, since there has been over-harvesting of sea resources and ecosystem productivity is low (Prinsloo, 1999b). A further point of note is that Mkambati has more endemic tree species than the Kruger National Park which is far larger (Pooley, 1993 cited in Prinsloo, 1999b).

The concept of the Wild Coast SDI was introduced in Section 4.2. Mkambati Nature Reserve forms one of the anchor nodes of this development initiative, aimed at injecting private sector investment into underdeveloped areas (Prinsloo, 1999b). The mission of Mkambati is to:

- conserve biodiversity and sound environmental management in the terrestrial and marine environment as well as on communal land associated with the reserve;

- sustainably use the reserve for local and regional economic benefit by means of **ecotourism** and direct utilisation of natural resources; and
- have the participation, on an equal partnership basis, of the local community in the planning and management of the reserve. Regarding the latter, there will be a legal framework and institutional arrangements to formalise the relationship between the community and nature conservation. Local culture will also be integrated into the planning, development, and management.

Flowing from the mission statement, the following goals have been set:

- Conservation management for biodiversity and sustainable use.
- Tourism development for local and regional economic benefit.
- Community participation and capacity building.
- Administrative management (Prinsloo, 1999b).

A recent study conducted by Kepe (2000b) shows that the majority of Mkambati's guests come from Kwazulu/Natal (74,5%), while just over 10% come from Gauteng. One fifth of the respondents had visited the reserve on more than ten occasions, with about 45% spending more than five nights in the reserve. School holidays and other special holidays, such as Christmas, New Year, and Easter, were the most frequently visited times. The busiest time is from the end of November to the end of January. Approximately 90% of visitors came to Mkambati due to a recommendation from a family member or a friend. This indicates the limited role that advertising has played with respect to promoting Mkambati thus far (Kepe, 2000b).

Virtually no marketing is done, but the reserve is always full in season. Bookings for December are full within three hours of the booking office (Keval Travel in Kokstad) opening on the first business day of each year⁸.

4.4 History of Mkambati Nature Reserve

Shackleton (1989 cited in Prinsloo, 1999a) reports signs of hunter-gatherers in the area over the last 150 000 to 500 000 years. The first European people to make use of Mkambati were missionaries, who built the stone cottages near today's Reception which are approximately 100 years old (De Villiers, 1995; ⁹). In 1922 the government expropriated approximately 18 000 Ha of

⁸ Personal communication with Mr. D. De Villiers, Regional Manager, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 19 July 2000.

⁹ Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, Manager of Mkambati, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

land to be used as a leper colony (Kepe, 2000b). The beautiful sandstone homestead, termed 'The Lodge', was the superintendent's home (De Villiers, 1995). When leprosy decreased in the 1950s, the hospital began to cater for people with tuberculosis. In 1976 the hospital was closed and handed over to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry of the Transkei. The following year, 7720 Ha became a reserve, with the remaining 10 000 Ha being run by a para-statal, TRACOR (Transkei Agricultural Corporation) as an agricultural concern. The reserve was run by two private companies as a hunting concern (De Villiers, 1995; Kepe, 2000b; Prinsloo, 1999a), with animals being brought in and an airstrip laid out. In 1982, Mkambati was taken over by the government, offering full-scale services. Those were the heydays of the reserve, with The Lodge as a tastefully refurbished guest house, self-catering holiday units, a shop and Clubhouse (De Villiers, 1995).

During 1988 and 1989, funds were misappropriated and the government decided to place it under conservation, to curb, amongst other things, illegal hunting. In the early 1990s, buildings and facilities began deteriorating. It was then that the shop and Clubhouse closed, and The Lodge ceased to function as a hotel. Only the self-catering units continued to be operated, with The Lodge also being hired out as a self-catering establishment. The community lamented its downfall demanding to know who owned it and asking for the hospital back¹⁰.

4.5 Primary constraints at Mkambati Nature Reserve

According to reserve manager, Mr. Vuyani Mapiya, one of the greatest problems is that the reserve is state run. The reserve's budget has been drastically cut. In addition to this, the reserve has to apply for funds from their budget through Eastern Cape Nature Conservation. This was done in the past because of misappropriation of funds at other reserves. However, in practice, this ties the hands of personnel at the reserve in their day-to-day operations. For example, if a window pane is broken or a small tool is needed, the necessary items must be applied for, which means it can be a few weeks before the matter receives attention. Moreover, new purchases must be made on a tender system, which is highly time-consuming. Such bureaucratic procedures decrease the motivation of personnel and make it difficult to manage tourism at the reserve. Furthermore, there have been no promotions for several years¹⁰. Looking to the future, Bristow (2000b) reports that the biggest stumbling block for the Wild Coast as a whole appears to be the lack of direction from the Eastern Cape Government.

¹⁰. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, Manager of Mkambati, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

A further reason why the tourism side of the reserve has also been a burden to management is that their core interest is conservation. This is why outsourcing is such a viable option (Section 4.6.3).

Besides being responsible for the running of the reserve, Mkambati personnel are also responsible for patrolling the coastal region up to Port St Johns. A boat or additional vehicle is essential for this, but the reserve has been unable to obtain either¹⁰.

The bad roads leading to Mkambati are a further major constraint, as well as the poor condition of the reserve's internal roads. These deter tourists from visiting Mkambati, and deter private sector investors from investing in the area. The internal roads are the responsibility of the Public Works Department, but it is a struggle to get them to repair the roads¹⁰.

Community involvement has been very complex and problematic¹⁰. Six large communities (falling under the Thaweni Tribal Authority) stretching as far as Holy Cross, 50km from the reserve property, consider themselves as the local community due to expectations set by the SDI, and are expecting to be involved and to benefit (Prinsloo, 1999a). They are also politically divided, with some supporting the African National Congress and others the United Democratic Movement¹⁰.

Prinsloo (1999a) believes that the complex conflict in the area has not been identified and managed correctly. There has also been a delay in identifying the legal landowners of the reserve. This obviously hampers the security of potential investors, and therefore the future of the reserve (Prinsloo, 1999a).

Some of these constraints are repetition of those identified for the Wild Coast as a whole (Section 4.2). Further constraints from Section 4.2 that are applicable to Mkambati, but are not mentioned above, are that:

- SMME development lacks support mechanisms and information;
- education, training, and awareness regarding tourism are lacking;
- tourism standards and services are low with little incentive for improvement;
- alien plant invasions are a problem;
- the management of cultural resources has received little attention; and
- too many institutions are involved resulting in confusion and lack of clear decision making.

¹⁰. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, Manager of Mkambati, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

4.6 Introduction to the ecotourism planning guidelines for Mkambati Nature Reserve

4.6.1 *Modus operandi*

From the 17th to the 23rd of July 2000, the Ecotourism Honours students in the Department of Tourism Management at the University of Pretoria visited the Mkambati Nature Reserve to formulate guidelines for ecotourism development at the reserve as part of their practical. The author acted as leader and facilitator, selecting and defining tasks, allocating students to groups and suggesting resources. She coordinated the activities while at the reserve and during the following weeks, while the students developed their products. She assessed the students' deliverables, which were moderated by a co-lecturer. The author then refined them and integrated them into a cohesive report, which was presented to Eastern Cape Nature Conservation. The guidelines that were formulated by both the author and students are used in the following sections as a base. Numerous additions, changes, and refinements were made by the author in the process of converting the original versions into the present document.

The students were allocated tasks based on MacGregor & Jarvie's (1994, cited in McPherson, 2000) groupings of natural or environmental, community, heritage or historical, cultural, outdoor recreation, tourism services, special events, and information/interpretive services. Adapting these to suit the nature of Mkambati, the author used the following four groups:

- accommodation and facilities (Chapter 5).
- fauna and flora (Chapter 6);
- culture and community (Chapter 7); and
- activities (Chapter 8).

Information and interpretation are so vital to ecotourism that each group examined this in the context of their topic. A general introduction to codes of conduct and interpretation follows as it applies to all four of the ensuing chapters. Outsourcing is also examined in Section 4.6.4, as this is the departure point from which the guidelines in Chapters 5 to 8 are developed. Section 4.6.3 describes the proposed zoning for Mkambati Nature Reserve up front, as an important base for the following four chapters.

4.6.2 Codes of conduct and interpretation

A code of conduct for Mkambati Nature Reserve needs to be formulated, and should be adhered to by tourists, as well as staff. It will form part of what has been termed the 'Mkambati guide booklet', which is an all-encompassing guide to the reserve. The code of conduct would include the general rules of the reserve. There may be separate rules for various activities, but these can be dealt with in the section of the booklet regarding that activity. Examples of basic rules include: staying on designated roads and paths; not removing objects from the reserve; behaving appropriately when near wild animals; staying off the sand dunes, etc. All these should be communicated using soft management techniques. Information on Mkambati is currently communicated to visitors by means of a black and white photocopied map that is provided in the booklet 'Mkambati Nature Reserve Regulations'. This booklet makes use of hard management; for example, "No fires may be made in the reserve" and "No boats or any vessel on Mtentu River". These same rules should rather be communicated via soft management. For example, to keep tourists off the majestic dunes on Main Beach, a sign could be erected: "Please preserve our beautiful sand dunes by staying off them". In the guide booklet, information can be given on why it is important to stay off the dunes. Alternatively, a large sign could be erected supplying brief points on the ecology of sand dunes, thus helping tourists understand why they should not clamber on them. If tourists are informed and enlightened, they will help to maintain the beauty of the reserve.

The current regulations booklet provides a map which indicates most sites of interest. However, certain sites could easily be missed. Some tourists are entirely unaware of the Strandloper Falls and the huge pool below them, as well as all the wonders of the Wilderness Area. The proposed booklet will replace the existing one and should package and theme all the attractions. It should include colour maps and illustrations.

In Section 2.4 the various stages of interpretation were given. A visit to Mkambati should be enhanced by interpretation during the anticipation (pre-contact) phase and for the time that the tourist is at the reserve. Attempting interpretation during the other stages mentioned in Section 2.4 would be unrealistic for Mkambati due to the fact that reserves have minimal contact with guests after they have departed. Interpretation during the visit is addressed throughout the next four chapters. For the anticipation stage, it is suggested that the tourist receive a simple leaflet, notifying him/her on what is available at the reserve, and providing the code of conduct. The comprehensive guide booklet can be disseminated once the visitor arrives. It is suggested that the guide booklet be included in the admission fee, as this lowers the perception of cost to

the tourist, and ensures that every tourist receives one. The booklet would also serve as a superb marketing tool.

Other creative ways of enlightening tourists could be via:

- information on the back of menu cards in restaurants;
- attractive notices in the accommodation establishments and at Reception;
- informal presentations at announced times on the natural and cultural history of the area by a local or ranger;
- the Environmental Education Centre/Games Room proposed for the Loft where slide and video presentations, as well as group discussions can be held (Section 5.3.9); and
- signage throughout the reserve explaining reserve regulations to tourists, as well as the reasons for these rules.

Mkambati has a special and unique environment. Rich diversity is to be found among the flora and fauna, and tourists should contribute towards the preservation of this uniqueness. The reserve management and all staff must therefore encourage tourists to abide by the code of conduct and encourage compliance by providing adequate interpretation. Providing more interpretation at the reserve also creates job opportunities for locals as guides, presenters, and information specialists.

4.6.3 Outsourcing as a departure point

In order to formulate meaningful guidelines, it is important to know the future direction of Mkambati Nature Reserve. The most feasible option for Eastern Cape Nature Conservation regarding the reserve, and the one which they have opted for, would be to outsource the tourism related activities and facilities to a private concession, and for Nature Conservation to focus on conservation alone. Under the Transkei Environmental Conservation Decree No. 9 of 1992, applying to Mkambati, the leasing of land to private investors is not expressly prohibited or allowed. It therefore appears that private investors would be allowed to develop tourism facilities and provide services (Prinsloo, 1999a). Furthermore, the Wild Coast SDI plans to put reserves such as Silaka and Mount Thesiger out to tender, in order to draw investors (Derwent, 1998). This move would, therefore, be in line with the plans of the SDI.

There is a clear current trend towards outsourcing in other parks. In August 2000, South African National Parks announced that 12 lodge sites in the Kruger, Addo Elephant, and Kalahari Gemsbok Parks have been identified for outsourcing to the private sector as part of their 'Commercialisation as Conservation' strategy. They believe that it will improve efficiency and

customer service, and enable them to concentrate on what they do best – conservation (Hattingh, 2000). However, Derwent (1998) expresses concern that locals do not have the skills needed to fill any of the positions that may be offered by developers. Without additional funds for training, unemployment and the related social and economic problems will continue to prevail. Investors will have to be committed to developing local communities.

The fact that the accommodation, activities, and facilities at Mkambati will ultimately be run by the private sector has been used as a departure point for the guidelines formulated. The fact that this process may be prolonged has also been considered, with some of the suggestions made being viable for the interim period, taking the financial constraints of Eastern Cape Nature Conservation into consideration. Eastern Cape Nature Conservation has already asked the private sector to tender for the development and management of tourism at Mkambati. The winning bidder was Khulani Ma-Africa, a business consortium that includes the leading Independent Hotels of Southern Africa group (Gray, 2000). The author has studied the development plan of Khulani Ma-Africa, and does not believe it is the best option for Mkambati. The plan appears to be similar to the up-market Umngazi River Bungalows, including a safari-style beach lodge aiming at international tourists. Among others, tennis courts, squash courts, and a television games room are mentioned. Khulani Ma-Africa is clearly aiming for the traditional stereotyped resort development, which will not capitalize on the unique environment of Mkambati. This reserve needs something different, something in harmony with its natural surroundings.

To date (end of 2000) no changes have occurred at Mkambati because the consortium are currently struggling to clinch an investment deal (Gray, 2000). Furthermore, the surrounding communities were reportedly not effectively involved in the tender process, and therefore do not support the winning bidder¹¹

4.6.4 Zoning at Mkambati

The approach of Wallace (1993), described in Section 2.4 was followed, namely, determining zones within Mkambati based on the proposed guidelines developed for the reserve, which are related in Chapters 5 to 8. Although the zoning and guidelines are integrated, and were worked out together, it is important to give the proposed zoning at this stage in order to set the scene for the next four chapters.

11. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, Manager of Mkambati, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

The **existing zoning** at Mkambati consists of:

- A Wilderness Area where no fishing and vehicles are allowed.
- A Marine Protected Area (MPA) and open shore angling zone - the MPA extends six nautical miles seawards between the eastern bank of the mouth of the Mtentu River and the western bank of the mouth of the Msikaba River, including the inter-tidal portions of the two rivers (Mkambati Nature Reserve Regulations, 2000).
- The rest of the reserve where visitors can enjoy a wide variety of activities within reserve regulations. Within the latter, there are areas specifically set aside for accommodation and woodlots.

The **proposed zoning** (Figure 4.5) consists of a:

- Wilderness Area – no vehicles and consumptive activities allowed.
- Primary tourism zone – this is in the area with most of the roads, accommodation units, favourite beaches, and a concentration of trails.
- Secondary tourism zones – these are allocated to areas that are further afield in the reserve, but covered by trails. Fewer visitors will be in these areas as one must either hike, cycle, or ride a horse there.
- Accommodation zones.
- Administration zone.
- Woodlot zones.
- Hunting zone – this does not penetrate the Wilderness Area because vehicles will not be allowed in to remove carcasses.
- Marine Protected Area and open shore angling zone.

The trails recommended in Chapter 8 that do not cover the road network are shown on the map as dotted lines, to explain the choice of secondary tourism zones.



Key

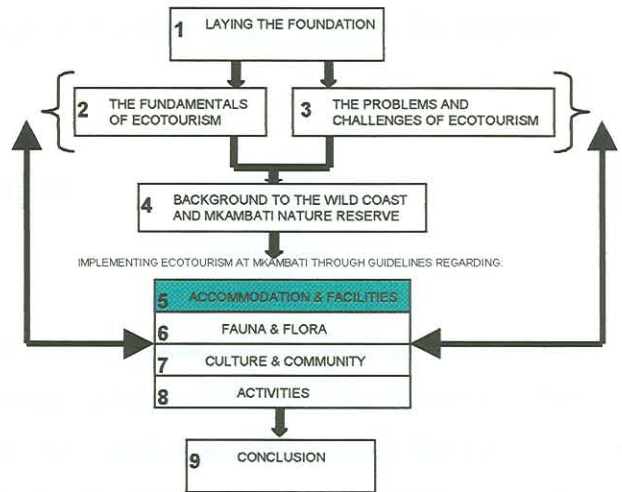
- Mkambati Nature Reserve border
- Major roads
- Trails
- Rivers
- Waterfalls
- Swimming
- Shipwreck
- Airstrip
- Mkambati Palms

Zonation

- Primary Tourism
- Secondary Tourism
- Accommodation
- Administration
- Woodlots
- Wilderness
- Marine Protected Area (MPA)
- Hunting

Chapter 5

Implementing ecotourism: accommodation and facilities



5.1 Introduction

The theoretical base set is now put into practice by determining guidelines for the implementation of ecotourism at Mkambati Nature Reserve in Chapters 5 to 8. The proposals involve all four fundamentals of the ecotourism tetrahedron operating in balance. The first aspect of focus is the accommodation and facilities at Mkambati. This chapter deals primarily with the fundamental of the ecotourism industry. Their approach in respect of activities and facilities impact on the enlightening experience of the tourist, and should incorporate local community input and culture.

Mkambati Nature Reserve falls into an ecotourism zone on the Wild Coast (Section 4.2). Not intentionally intended for ecotourism, Mkambati offers a range of accommodation that can be developed to reflect the reserve's cultural heritage while being appropriate to the environment and catering for different tastes and income ranges. This is in keeping with the requirement for ecotourism zones as stipulated by the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy (Section 4.2).

At present, the reserve has approximately 90 beds. The accommodation includes a colonial style Lodge, the Gwe Gwe rondavels, family orientated houses/cottages, a large isolated Riverside house, and Point Cottage near the beach. This variety of accommodation provides management with the ability to, with minimum effort, provide a reflection of Mkambati's rich cultural heritage, while blending into the environment.

Appendix 1 shows the position of existing accommodation units. In the current proposal these will remain predominantly the same, with the additions of a proposed camping site and additional cottages at the Main Complex, a bushcamp at Four Falls, a bird hide and treetop walk in the forest at Riverside, and an up-market development at the Mkambati Gates. The position of these is also indicated on Appendix 1, as well as all other structures mentioned in this chapter. Each site is discussed separately below. All accommodation developments have been planned in

accordance with the zoning and instructions prescribed in the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy described in Section 4.2.

5.2 Present accommodation and facilities

5.2.1 *The Lodge*

The Lodge (Figure 5.1) is a charming sandstone single storey house with a panoramic sea view. In the days of the leper colony, this was the superintendent's home (Section 4.4). It contains five en-suite double rooms, a large formal lounge, dining room, and a second smaller lounge. The Lodge has a large kitchen, ideal for catering for big groups. It has its own swimming pool and easy access to the beach. The 'Biggy Best' décor reminds one of Mkambati's colonial past.

The Lodge is currently hired out as a single unit, and visitors must therefore pay the tariff for a full house, even if the rooms are not all in use. Mkambati's current charge is R44.00 per person per night. The Lodge, which sleeps ten, is thus R440.00 per night, and is reserved by families and groups.

Figure 5.1 The Lodge



5.2.2 Cottages

The Main Complex near Reception contains six self-catering houses, accommodating approximately 30 people. The cost is R44.00 per person per night. Two of them are built of sandstone, in the same theme as The Lodge. The other four units do not fit in with the colonial theme and little thought was given to style, layout, or the appropriateness to the environment. Most of these units were not built for tourism, but as staff accommodation during Mkambati's period as a hospital. The term 'Main Complex' refers to the area containing Reception, Executive Flat, Clubhouse, Loft, and the six cottages. A road of approximately 200m leads from Main Complex to The Lodge.

5.2.3 Point Cottage

This is a single unit, close to Main Beach, accommodating six people. It has two bedrooms, a lounge, dining room, and open plan kitchen. The cost is R44.00 per person per night.

5.2.4 Riverside

Riverside is a large thatched L-shaped house on the banks of the Gwe Gwe River. It has five large bedrooms, three bathrooms, a kitchen/dining room, and a separate lounge. It accommodates a maximum of 20 people. As with The Lodge, Riverside must be booked as a whole at R528 per night. Figure 5.2 shows the position of Riverside (on the left) relative to Gwe Gwe (on the right), which is described in the following section.

Figure 5.2 Riverside and the Gwe Gwe Rondavels



5.2.5 *Gwe Gwe Rondavels*

Gwe Gwe (Figure 5.3) consists of six rondavels, each equipped with two beds, a shower, toilet, hand basin, small gas fridge, hotplate, and wash up sink. There is a seventh rondavel, which acts as a lounge and contains a communal fridge. Each rondavel is hired out at R88.00 per night. Due to the current run-down state of Gwe Gwe, visitors are allowed to sleep three in each rondavel at no extra cost.

5.2.6 *Executive Flat and Reception*

The Executive Flat is a small flat adjacent to the Reception area. It accommodates five people. Reception is situated between the Executive Flat and the Clubhouse.

Figure 5.3 Gwe Gwe Rondavels



5.2.7 *Shop*

At present there is a small rural cash store at Main Gate. It is run by a community member and sells milk, bread, and basic groceries. Both locals and tourists make use of this facility.

5.3 Proposed accommodation and facilities

5.3.1 The Lodge

The Lodge is ideal as a guesthouse with its en-suite rooms and large kitchen, and will take minimum effort to convert from its current self-catering status. Due to its previous days as a small hotel, the kitchen is already equipped to handle high volume food production. The dining area can seat 20 people, which will give guests not staying in the lodge the opportunity to enjoy meals in such a lovely setting. Guests can also be seated outside on the large stoep. Dinner, bed and breakfast should be served. Guests should be able to book for the meals they want, and to get picnic hampers for the days when they will be out during meal times, bearing in mind that guests will not always want to hurry back for a meal.

The interior of the house should be restored to the 1920s colonial theme to incorporate the reserve's history. Current décor fits in with the theme but is in need of a revamp.

Attractive notices should be placed in each room explaining Mkambati's past, and specifically the history of The Lodge itself. Information on Mkambati's cultural heritage should also be strategically placed. Mention must be made of the fact that the palm tree next to The Lodge is one of the Mkambati palms, from which the reserve derives its name. This palm was planted outside The Lodge, whereas those up the Msikaba River are natural.

The information provided should only give a brief introduction to the reserve and its history, enticing guests to find out more about this topic, and encouraging them to visit the Gwe Gwe Cultural Village (referred to in Section 5.3.5). Information posted up in accommodation units is supplementary to, and in some cases repetition of what is in the Mkambati guide booklet.

5.3.2 Cottages

The recommendation is to keep these as self-catering cottages, but to recondition them to an acceptable standard. The future success of Mkambati depends on whether the accommodation can be run as a profitable business or not. The main driving force behind this profitability lies in guest satisfaction. It is thus crucial that the cottages be maintained, for example, painted regularly, and that an uninterrupted supply of electricity is ensured, supplies of toilet paper in the cottages are adequate, refuse removal is regular, and animal-proof dustbins are installed.

Once the reserve makes a reasonable return, it is suggested that the four cottages not built of sandstone should be replaced with houses of sandstone to blend with the environment and the

colonial theme. If cost is a limiting factor, normal brick structures can be built in the same style as the two existing sandstone houses, and covered with artificial sandstone slabs.

Eleven more self-catering units, each sleeping five, can be built at the Main Complex in the same theme. Once the small staff houses between the tourists' accommodation are removed, there is ample room for additional units, while still retaining space around each one. There must, however, be some staff accommodation at the Main Complex.

It is essential to plant indigenous vegetation between the cottages in order to add privacy and shade. Extensive use can be made of coast silver oak - *Brachylaena* Spp., forest num-num - *Carissa* Spp., wild blue plumbago - *Plumbago* Spp., and Cape honeysuckle - *Tecomaria* Spp.

At present the only unit being serviced is The Lodge, yet guests staying in the other accommodation units pay the same price. All the cottages at Main Complex should be serviced on a daily basis, as well as Point Cottage, Riverside, and Gwe Gwe Rondavels. The cost thereof can be included in the overall price. Visitors on holiday do not want to be concerned with house cleaning and washing dishes. There is an ample supply of staff maintaining the grounds, some of which can be delegated to the up-keep and servicing of tourist accommodation.

5.3.3 *Point Cottage*

Point Cottage is currently dilapidated and needs to be restored. A small thatched lapa should be constructed. The strength of Point Cottage lies in its ability to attract multiple markets. It lends itself to family holidays (being able to sleep six), but is also an ideal honeymoon spot, due to its isolation and tranquillity. Special emphasis should be placed on its allure by marketing it in, for example, bridal magazines.

5.3.4 *Riverside*

Riverside can remain a venue for large groups (20), and can also be used to accommodate parties of school children. As one of the historical buildings of the reserve, it should be restored and upgraded.

5.3.5 *Gwe Gwe Cultural Village*

Mkambati currently reflects very little of the indigenous culture. Gwe Gwe has the potential to offer visitors a unique ethnic experience in the Xhosa culture. Most overseas, as well as domestic tourists are very interested in, and want to experience indigenous culture (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1999). It is therefore suggested that Gwe Gwe be

upgraded to provide a true ethnic Xhosa experience, that guests from all over the reserve could visit on specified evenings, for example, once or twice a week. Places such as the Lesedi Cultural Village and the Khaya La Bantu Xhosa Village can be used as benchmarks for the development and management of the new Gwe Gwe Cultural Village. The Eastern Cape currently has several of this type of venture, but the uniqueness of a traditional Xhosa experience in a coastal wilderness environment should distinguish Gwe Gwe.

This section has clear linkages to Chapter 7 on culture and community, but the accommodation and cultural aspects need to be described together in this case.

A major hurdle to be overcome regarding Gwe Gwe is its problematic status from an environmental perspective because of its proximity to the shoreline¹². With the law prohibiting any new permanent structures from being built within one kilometre of the coastline, the reserve is reluctant to demolish this existing structure, since it cannot be replaced on the same site. It is therefore essential that an EIA be done to determine how the negative effects of Gwe Gwe can be mitigated.

A further constraint is that Gwe Gwe is far from the Main Gate, making it difficult for locals to get there. As is done at Lesedi Cultural Village, it is suggested that two or three families run the venture and live on site. The existing accommodation for the Riverside caretaker can be used for this purpose. These families will be responsible for everything, from servicing rooms to entertainment at Gwe Gwe Cultural Village, as well as servicing Riverside.

The entire 'village' should be designed around the culture of the Xhosa people. The six sleeping huts can be restored to house two people each, including the small bathroom and kitchen. The self-catering approach is suggested because Mkambati Gates Lodge (Section 5.3.7) and The Lodge already offer full services. It remains important to provide adequate accommodation for the self-catering market. The rondavels should be painted in the traditional two-tone mud and white paint colour scheme, with the doorways facing east, as described in Section 4.1, and shown in Figure 5.4. The main colour scheme used by the Pondo for blankets and decorations such as beadwork is blue, turquoise and white (Mertens & Broster, 1987). This colour scheme should be used inside the huts, the interior of which can be luxurious.

¹² Personal communication with Mr. D. De Villiers, Regional Manager, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 19 July 2000.

The cattle fold/*kraal*//*boma* is another important part of the culture of a Xhosa *umuzi*/ homestead, and is a sacred place where ceremonial occasions take place such as ritual slaughter and burial of chiefs (Iafrika, 2000). This can be constructed using sticks matted together, and can be used for storytelling, traditional dances, music performances, Xhosa stick fighting, and the explanation of the use of medicinal herbs by traditional doctors. In the storytelling and dances, the emphasis should be on the relationship between the Xhosa people and their environment.

Locals clothed in cultural dress should serve traditional cuisine here. Dishes such as *umfino* (turnips; potatoes; and wild leaves from bean plants, beetroot, and sweet potato), *umbhako* (baked bread served with tripe or tea or coffee), *umnqusho* (samp and beans), and the staple diet of *pap* (porridge) can be served (Ndukwana *et al*, 2000:14).

Figure 5.4 Traditional Xhosa huts



Continuing with the cultural attributes, traditional beer stools can be made for the visitors to sit on in the *boma*. These low, small stools are made by Pondo men, and decorated with geometric designs burnt into the wood with hot wires (Mertens & Broster, 1987). Not only should the guests sit on these at night, but they should also be for sale. Visitors can also try their hands at making a stool, as a souvenir from Pondoland.

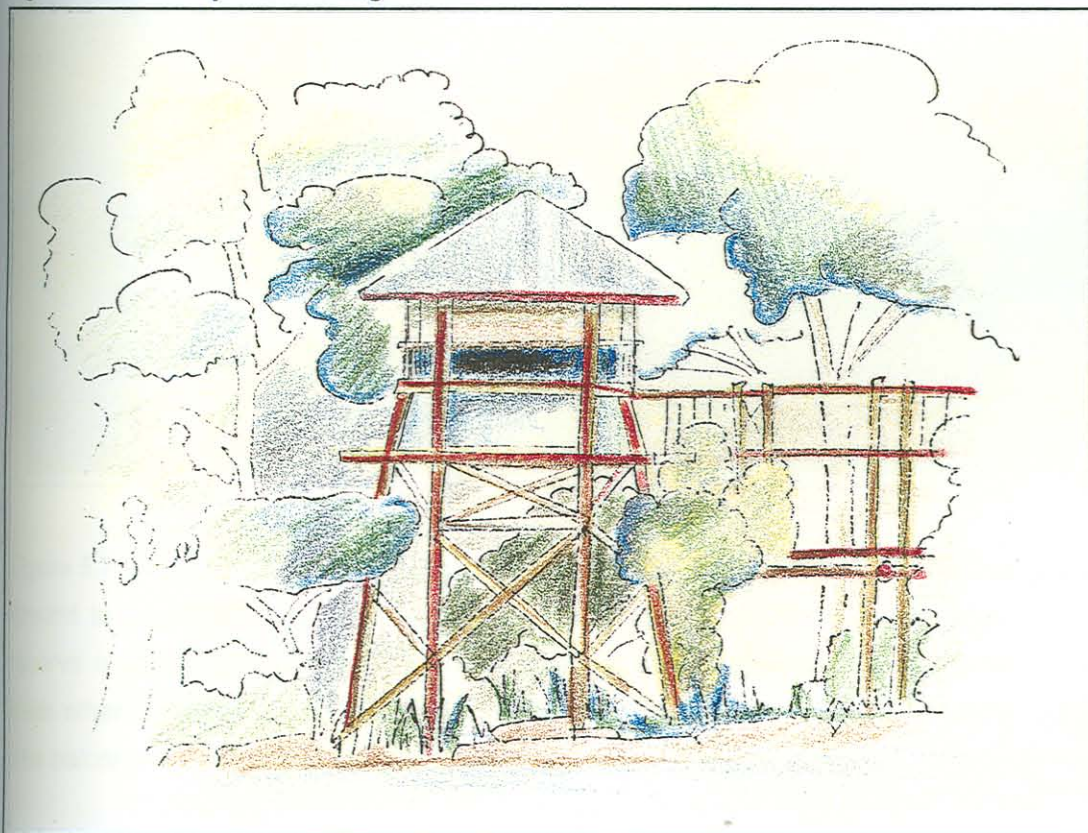
A vital part of ecotourism is that guests are made aware of these aspects of homestead layout, decoration, and purpose as part of the interactive and enlightening experience. This can be communicated via plaques/posters/wall hangings etc. explaining the history and folklore behind these aspects, such as the reason for the colours of huts both inside and outside, and other aspects of the décor where the purpose thereof is unknown to the tourists. The Mkambati guide booklet should also have a section dedicated to Xhosa culture. Another wonderful way of communicating culture to tourists is through storytelling by local people.

The development and management of this village should be tendered-out to the local community. This initiative could be 'sold' to the private sector body awarded the tender, as a flagship project. For a successful joint venture of this nature, financing, training, and mentoring are critical aspects.

5.3.6 Treetop walk and bird hide

As is shown in the aerial photograph in Figure 5.2, Gwe Gwe is close to the forest. A short treetop walk into the forest on a raised walkway is therefore suggested. This could incorporate a bird hide over the Gwe Gwe River. Figure 5.5 shows the proposed design of the bird hide, which blends into the surroundings. Bluegum timber can be used for the construction of both the bird hide and walkway. Selected trees should be marked with nametags on the level of the walkway.

Figure 5.5 Proposed design of the bird hide



5.3.7 *Mkambati Gates Lodge*

Whereas Gwe Gwe will form the cultural hub of Mkambati, the proposed exclusive Mkambati Gates Lodge will focus on the natural environment and its sustainable use. The site chosen is on the Mkambati River above Horseshoe Falls, where the river enters a steep gorge formed by the two 'gates'. Figure 5.6 shows the proposed position of the lodge, nestled sympathetically into the western side of the gate.

It is suggested that five chalets be built, each accommodating four people. This limits the number of lodgers to 20. If families are larger than four, luxurious sleeper couches can be used, as is done at accommodation establishments of the same level. The chalets must be built with utmost consideration to the natural environment. Natural features, such as trees and rocks, should be included in the chalet's design wherever possible, thus minimising disturbance to nature.

Figure 5.6 Proposed position of Mkambati Gates Lodge

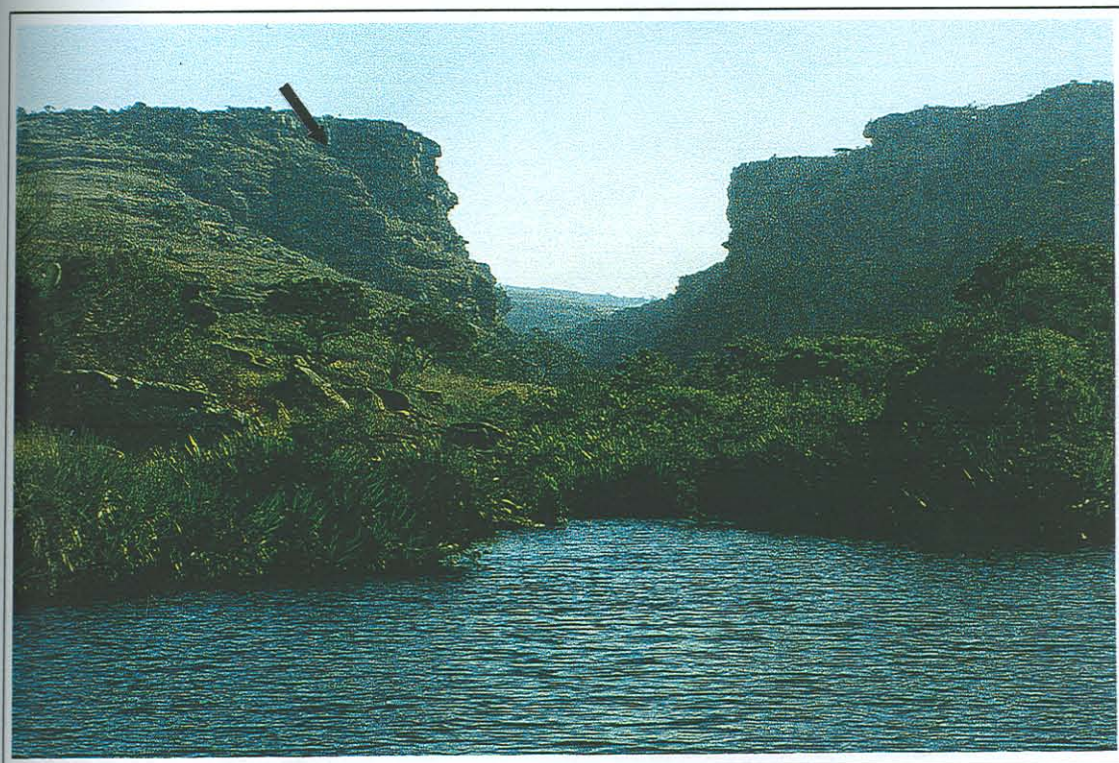
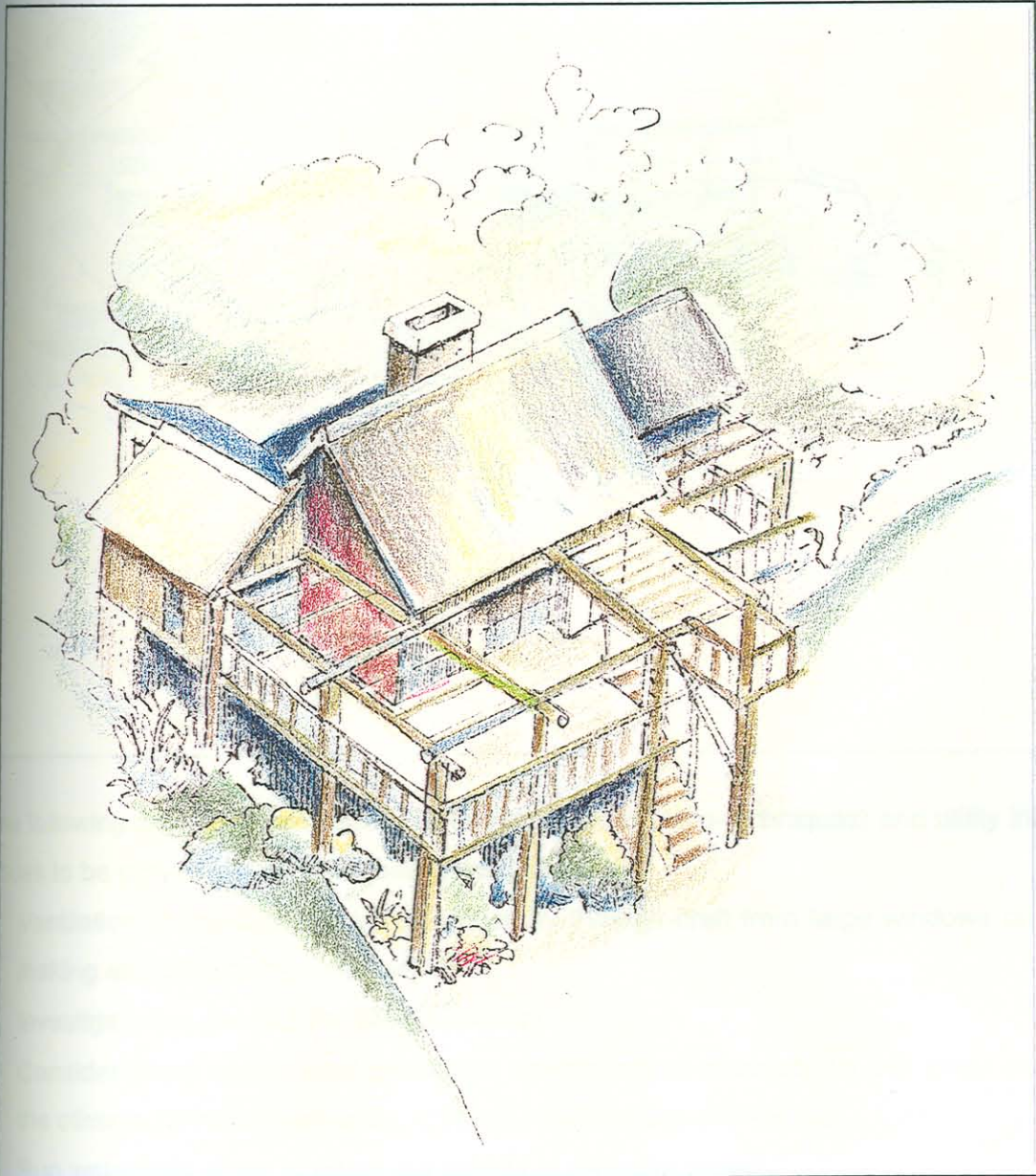


Figure 5.7 indicates the proposed design of the chalets. These structures should be raised off the ground to minimise disturbance to the vegetation, and be built out of the bluegums that the reserve is currently eradicating. With the absence of tall vegetation to screen the chalets from each other, privacy must be ensured by placing the five chalets on different levels of this slope. The balcony of each chalet will open up onto the view of the river below.

Figure 5.8 is a representation of the main building at Mkambati Gates Lodge. This building will be situated just beneath the highest point of the gate, with a magnificent view down and across into the Wilderness area. It will house a kitchen, dining and lounge area, and ladies' bar on the deck. It can also be constructed from bluegum timber. These draft designs must be discussed with the local community, with opportunity being afforded for their inputs. For all new structures, local labour should be used in the construction thereof.

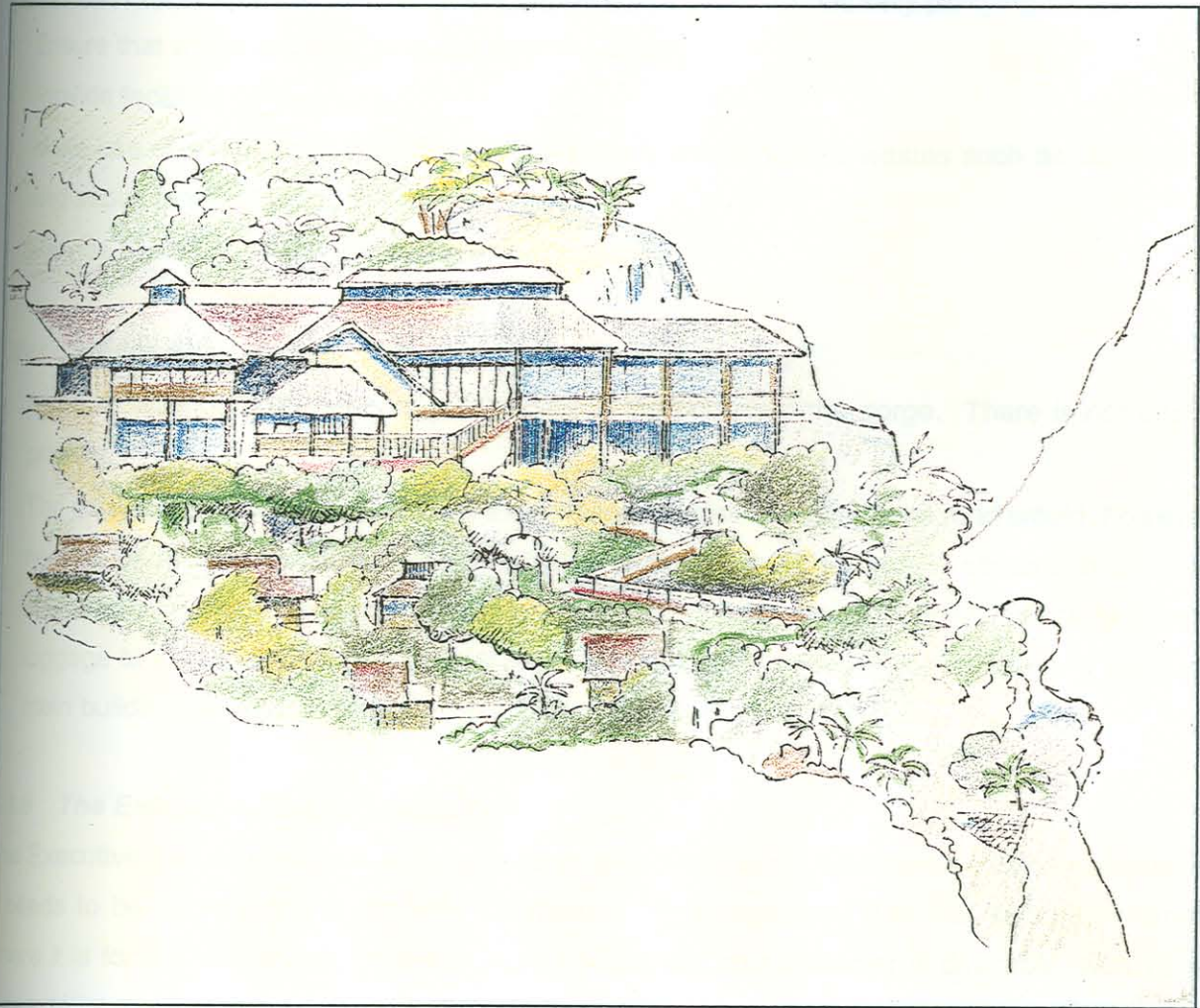
Figure 5.7 Proposed design of individual chalets for Mkambati Gates Lodge



This type of accommodation can cater for two very distinct markets. On the one hand, tourists interested in ecotourism will enjoy experiencing the sustainable use of the natural resources, whereas the opulence provided will attract tourists from the higher income bracket, which can

include the latter as well as hunters. As with The Lodge, three meals a day will be provided, but guests must have the option of a picnic hamper should they be out during a mealtime.

Figure 5.8 Proposed design of main building at Mkambati Gates Lodge



The following are guidelines regarding energy resource (eco-techniques) and utility infrastructure issues to be considered at Mkambati Gates Lodge.

Ventilation of facilities can be enhanced by through draft from large windows on two sides, making air conditioning unnecessary.

Investigate the use of solar energy sources.

Consider photo voltaic/wind generation and storage of electricity for this lodge as well as for the other accommodation units, buildings, and facilities at Mkambati.

Run waterlines along or under the chalets to minimise impact.

Waste management is becoming an area of severe concern for managers. The following pointers drawn from Andersen (1993) should be followed to ensure that it is effectively handled.

- Provide ecologically sound restrooms, for example, enviroloo's (such as those provided by Amadiba Adventures at their campsite on the Mtentu river) or naturally purifying toilets.
- Ensure that waste disposal units are animal-secure.
- Provide facilities for recycling.
- Make use of appropriate technology for the treatment of organic wastes such as composting and septic tanks.
- Provide ecologically sound rubbish disposal facilities.

Other considerations at Mkambati Gates Lodge are the following:

- A proper walking path must be constructed to the bottom of the gorge. There is not one at present.
- The existing road goes very close to the proposed lodge. A new access road would, however, need to be made so that tourists can drive up to the lodge. The parking space should be as secluded as possible, and must not be situated next to each chalet. Porters can carry guests' luggage to their chalets. Only footpaths should be allowed between the chalets and up to the main building, so as to enhance the experience of being in nature.

5.3.8 *The Executive Flat and Reception*

The Executive Flat can continue to be utilized as accommodation. However, as with the cottages, it needs to be upgraded and regularly maintained. It is suggested that the Reception remain where it is for the time being. However, a more light and airy character is desirable, with visual presentations and interpretation on the reserve as a welcoming and stimulating first point of contact for the visitor. As more interpretation is provided in this venue, the Reception may need to expand or relocate to become more of a visitor centre.

5.3.9 *The Loft*

The Loft should be utilised as a Games Room for children and an Environmental Education Centre. Children and scholars' groups, as well as other interested guests, can be enlightened on aspects of Mkambati such as Xhosa culture, fauna, and flora. This is dealt with in more depth in the activities chapter (Section 8.3.6). The Environmental Education Centre can also be used for audiovisual presentations and group discussions when required.

5.3.10 *The Clubhouse*

The existing structure of the Clubhouse is ideal for use as a small bar and centre for light refreshments. Although the interior is in need of maintenance, it is generally well laid out and can be used very effectively.

The décor of the Clubhouse should also reflect the history and cultural heritage of the reserve. This could be accomplished by using posters and photographs to relate the history of Mkambati and the whole of Pondoland. Beading, woodwork, and local woven ware can be utilised to convey the lifestyle of the traditional Xhosa's.

A main consideration of running such an establishment in a fairly small reserve with seasonal demand is the matter of covering overheads. This includes the cost of keeping it operational during low seasons. To overcome this problem, it is suggested that the Clubhouse be run on a forecasted time schedule. The reserve should make use of casual labour and, on a weekly basis, project the occupancy for the following week and organise staff accordingly. This will be difficult to implement while tourism at the reserve is state run with permanent positions awarded. Once the accommodation and tourist facilities are privatised, this suggestion will be more feasible.

As part of the same structure it is strongly suggested that a shop be opened for basic goods, including fresh produce, so that guests will not have to travel up to the existing shop at Main Gate.

5.3.11 *Camping*

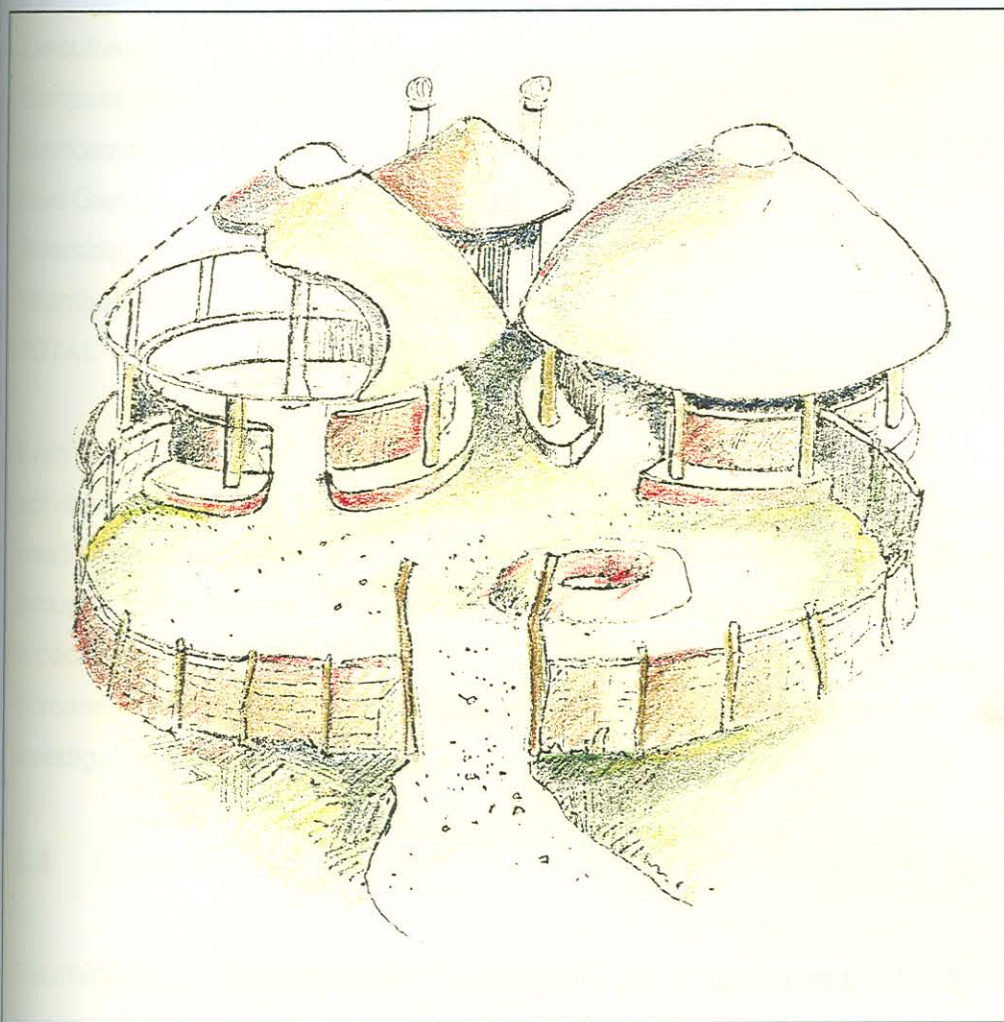
To diversify the market for Mkambati, and to ensure that it is accessible to various income groups, a campsite is proposed for the area just outside the main complex, behind the lining of bluegum trees (see Appendix 1). These will act as screening between the proposed campsite and the rest of the accommodation. Once these bluegums have been eradicated, it is essential that they be replaced by indigenous species to maintain the privacy. This camping area should have eight campsites for approximately four people each, as well as ablution facilities.

A further suggestion is to create an overnight bushcamp for hikers and horse riders near the Four Falls, providing visitors with a small-scale, rustic, and remote experience. Utmost care should be taken to minimise environmental impact when establishing this camp, since the proposed site is in the Wilderness Area. Minimal permanent structures should therefore be erected. In keeping with the theme of the Xhosa huts at Gwe Gwe, two 'huts' can be built with low walls, and an opening between the roof and the wall. The envisaged design is shown in Figure 5.9. The cross section

on the left hut shows the interior. Each hut will sleep five people on mattresses, thus accommodating ten altogether.

It is important that this should be a low maintenance site, offering basic facilities only, as no vehicles will be able to service it. Basic cooking facilities must therefore be provided in a separate open air cooking area/boma as is indicated in Figure 5.9. For tourists on guided trails, food can be pre-prepared at the Main Complex by staff of The Lodge or Mkambati Gates Lodge, depending on from where the tourist departs. Enviro loo's are situated behind the 'huts'.

Figure 5.9 Proposed design of bushcamp near the Four Falls



5.3.12 Learning Centre for locals

An unused education centre is situated near the Main Gate of the reserve. It is proposed that this become a Learning Centre, which can be used as a teaching hub for the locals to learn skills such as craftwork, to learn about conservation, and where guides, room attendants, and waiters can be trained.

5.3.13 Visitor carrying capacity at Mkambati

Mkambati currently accommodates 90 people. The Natal Parks Board proposed a carrying capacity of 200 for Mkambati¹³. Conservationists who have worked in Mkambati and know the area well support this¹⁴. The recommendations are therefore in accordance with this number.

The following indicates the allocation of visitors to the various accommodation units.

The Lodge	10
Cottages	85
Point Cottage	6
Executive Flat	5
Campsite at main camp	32
Bushcamp near Four Falls	10
Gwe Gwe	12
Riverside	20
Mkambati Gates Lodge	20
TOTAL	200

Even with 200 people in the reserve, concentration in one area is unlikely due to the numerous activities proposed in Chapter 8, and the many places of interest. The ecotourism will still be small-scale and private due to the fact that the different types of accommodation are spread throughout the reserve. The reserve can start with this carrying capacity and evaluate the visitor impact over a period of time. This monitoring will reveal whether visitor numbers should be increased or decreased. A comparative analysis could also be done on a reserve of similar size, investigating its carrying capacity and impacts.

5.4 Conclusion

Returning to the fundamentals of ecotourism, this chapter deals with the ecotourism industry's responsibility to provide environmentally sound accommodation and facilities that complement the natural environment. Furthermore, local culture and materials should be incorporated, as well as using local peoples ideas, skills, and labour in the process. In so doing, ecotourism

13. Telephonic communication with Mr. D. Prinsloo, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, 6 November 2000.

14. Personal communication with Mr. D. De Villiers, Regional Manager, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 19 July 2000; telephonic communication with Mr. D. Prinsloo, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, 6 November 2000.

accommodation becomes a window to the natural and cultural environment, drawing on its character and providing the tourist with a unique and enlightening experience.

Implementing ecotourism:

Interesting aspects regarding the design and management of facilities should also be communicated to tourists, for example, the use of local building materials and ideas, the reason for above-ground construction, recycling programmes run by the reserve, etc. It is clear that many tourists are interested in measures the industry are taking in order to be sustainable. Management should volunteer such information as part of tourist enlightenment.

Introduction

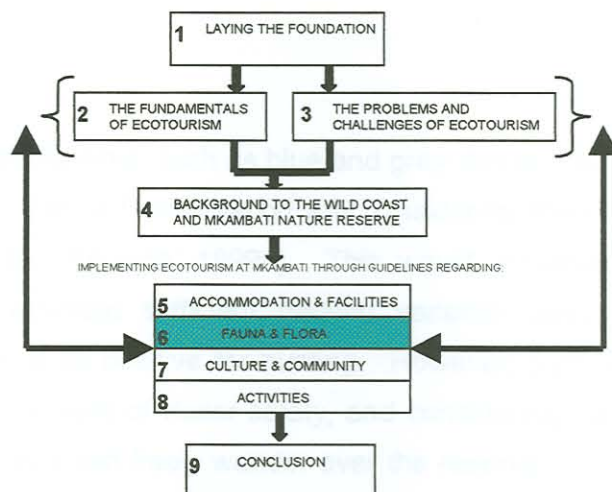
Through the accommodation and facilities, the ecotourism industry should be moving the resource base, tourist, and local community to a point where the environment is improved, the tourist is enlightened, and the community are partners, giving their inputs and incorporating culture as a crucial element of design (Figure 2.3).

The natural resource base, although the fundamental of the ecotourism industry, local community, and tourists are also involved due to their influence on the resource base.

It is currently much easier, for the sake of tourism, to introduce the 'Big Five', into the area (Parks & 2002). The White Paper Tourism Development Policy suggests that the area be developed using its natural beauty as a basis, rather than artificially creating 'Big Five reserves or restoration-based tourism' (Fisher et al. 1998). The proposed guidelines aim to achieve this. This chapter reveals the suggestions made for the management of faunal flora, so that it complies with the fundamentals of ecotourism and is appropriate to the environment at Mkombezi. This is in keeping with the mission statement and goals of the reserve (section 4.3), which deal primarily with the fundamental that the natural resource base should be sustainably used at an appropriate level. However, the community, tourists, and industry (including Eastern Cape Nature Conservation) have a role to play in this. Conservation of faunal flora is a major part of implementing ecotourism, and already receives considerable attention at Mkombezi in spite of the constraints faced. Certain recommendations are made which build upon existing proposals concerning the conservation aspects, namely, numbers and reduction of game, reserve expansion, and invasive species. Recommendations regarding aspects which link with the faunal and flora, are also given in this chapter, namely, hunting and the use of Geographical Information Systems.

Chapter 6

Implementing ecotourism: fauna and flora



6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the implementation of the theoretical base by proposing guidelines for the fauna and flora management of the reserve. It deals mainly with the fundamental of the natural resource base, although the fundamentals of the ecotourism industry, local community, and tourists are also involved due to their influence on the resource base.

There is currently much pressure, for the sake of tourism, to introduce the 'Big Five', even into small areas (Prinsloo, 1999b). The Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy suggests that the coastal area be developed using its natural scenery as a basis, rather than artificially creating 'Big Five' reserves or recreation-based tourism (Futter *et al*, 1998). The proposed guidelines aim towards achieving this. This chapter reveals the suggestions made for the management of fauna and flora, so that it complies with the fundamentals of ecotourism and is appropriate to the environment at Mkambati. This is in keeping with the mission statement and goals of the reserve (Section 4.3), which deal primarily with the fundamental that the natural resource base should be sustainably used at an appropriate level. However, the community, tourists, and industry (including Eastern Cape Nature Conservation) have a role to play in this. Conservation of fauna and flora is a major part of implementing ecotourism, and already receives commendable attention at Mkambati in spite of the constraints faced. Certain recommendations are made which support existing proposals concerning the conservation aspects, namely, numbers and introduction of game, reserve expansion, and invasive species. Recommendations regarding other aspects which link with the fauna and flora, are also given in this chapter, namely, hunting and the use of Geographical Information Systems.

6.2 Game

As far as possible, species occurring originally in the reserve, such as blue and grey duiker, must be re-established. As mentioned in Section 4.3, Nature Conservation are considering the re-introduction of Cape buffalo, oribi, and klipspringer (Prinsloo, 1999b). This would, however, involve close monitoring and management to maintain sufficient genetic variation among populations. The introduction of Cape buffalo would be positive for hunting. However, such a decision would have to be carefully considered in the light of visitor safety, and considering that the proposed activities (Chapter 8) require that visitors can freely wander over the reserve. The impacts on the grassland ecosystem, as well as on the surrounding communities who collect thatch grass within the reserve are further considerations.

Excess blesbok, blue wildebeest, and impala should be removed from the reserve until the correct number of units is attained. This can be done through hunting or game capturing. These animals can then be replaced with target viewing species. Swap-out arrangements could be promoted between neighbouring parks and reserves, which would enable Mkambati to obtain these target viewing species more easily.

6.3 Reserve expansion

Eastern Cape Nature Conservation would like to reincorporate the TRACOR land (described in Section 4.4) as part of the nature reserve (Prinsloo, 1999a; ¹⁵). This is highly recommended as it will produce a more dynamic and stable unit. A larger reserve may also allow for more animals, which can attract more tourists, ultimately adding to the monetary benefit of the reserve. The management of catchment areas will also improve. In this regard, reserve management should come to an arrangement with communities living around the area to ensure a healthy water supply to the reserve.

6.4 Invasive species

There are a number of invasive species in the reserve. To date, ten different invasive species have been identified (Prinsloo, 1999b). The problem is regarded as serious. Species such as eucalyptus and acacia mearnsii (Prinsloo, 1999b) spread vast quantities of reproductive units (seeds) every season. With the windy conditions of Mkambati, this will become an expensive

15. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, manager of Mkambati Nature Reserve, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

problem. At present the problem is manageable, since only some of the invasives have grown into substantial tracts, which are easy to spot and eradicate. These must be removed as quickly as possible to avoid further spread. The reserve should develop and implement a sound management plan to detect new infestations, especially in and around watercourses, so that they can be removed prior to unnecessary environmental damage.

The reserve should start an aggressive replanting of indigenous and endemic plant communities around the disturbed areas. These communities will provide sufficient shade for tourists in 10 to 15 years time.

Eucalyptus is the predominant invasive specie at present (Prinsloo, 1999b). Measures have been taken to systematically remove them from the reserve. Some of these plantations will remain to serve as woodlots for firewood and building material (Prinsloo, 1999b). Although eucalyptus is not well suited for firewood, it is suggested that the reserve use it for this purpose to aid in removing it. Eucalyptus, however, has definite construction capabilities and can be used for bridges, wooden decks, jetties, shade structures, stables, walkways, chalets etc. With regard to timber that the reserve cannot use, a contract for removal can be signed with a private party, which would allow them to sell the wood once they have removed it.

Pioneer grasses on the roads, propagating due to continual disturbance, must be monitored on an annual basis. These grasses are usually aggressive and spread quickly (Liddle, 1997). It creates an excellent opportunity for a community arrangement – the removal of the pioneer grass in exchange for cutting thatch. Biological control can also play an important role here and should be explored as a possible management tool.

6.5 Hunting

Hunting at Mkambati was very successful in the past. Although the reserve is small (7720 Ha), hunting has the potential to be a major income generator, also involving local communities as wildlife custodians. Sport hunters are often prepared to spend large sums of money and travel long distances for the opportunity to shoot a highly valued animal. According to Baker (1997), *the total cost of a hunting safari is approximately US\$ 50 000. The area proposed for hunting was indicated in Figure 4.5. If the proposed expansion into TRACOR land occurs, this will allow for a larger tract of land to be used for hunting.*

At Mkambati, animals currently overstocking the reserve should be hunted first, which would create initial funds for further planning and development. This is also important to prevent further overgrazing, which is particularly noticeable close to the coastline.

Sport hunting should be mainly limited to male animals, with an emphasis on the quality of the trophy. Specimens taken should be older males who contribute little to breeding. If hunting quotas are a fraction of natural population growth rates, controlled hunting will have a negligible impact on overall population sizes. In order to attract trophy hunters to Mkambati Nature Reserve, there must be a sufficient choice of wildlife. The introduction of Cape buffalo has been mentioned. Trophy hunters pay between US\$ 5 300.00 and US\$ 5 500.00 for buffalo¹⁶.

To keep large and valuable animals within the reserve, fences would have to be upgraded. This will cost approximately R18 000.00 per kilometre for conventional fencing, and R46 000.00 per kilometre for electric fencing. The energiser for the latter costs R2 200.00¹⁷. Natural boundaries such as deep ravines do not need to be fenced. The airstrip will also need to be repaired, so that hunters can be flown in on an organised basis during the hunting season.

Social considerations include the surrounding community and the impacts of sport hunting on them. By allowing locals to benefit economically from hunting, a positive attitude towards conservation will be ensured. Specialised outfitters selling hunting packages, will make most of the logistical arrangements for the trip, including acquisition of the necessary permits and providing a professional hunter to accompany the tourist. Hunters may be charged a range of fees by the host government, including a conservation fee, firearms and ammunition, permit fees, trophy export fees, etc. Governments may also charge a fee for each animal shot. The outfitter collects the money and then allocates the funds to management staff, who in turn pay the government and local communities their fair share. All conservation, permit, and trophy handling fees can be divided and deposited in a nature reserve fund for administration and other conservation activities, and into community funds. Communities can decide whether to divide the proceeds equally among village heads of households, or to finance community projects such as schools and clinics.

16. Telephonic communication with Mr. C. Hoogkamer, involved in professional hunting in the Northern Province, South Africa, 12 November 2000.

17. Telephonic communication with a consultant from Sinoville Fencing, 12 November 2000.

Non-hunting tourists must also be considered. Visitors currently enjoy a wide variety of activities all over the reserve, including hiking, mountain biking, swimming, fishing, etc. There is insufficient space for simultaneous sport hunting; there is a risk element as well as the annoyance factor when shots are heard. It is therefore suggested that hunting only be allowed during part of the hunting season, which extends from May to September. During the designated period, no tourists other than hunters should be allowed in the reserve, unless they are willing to accept restricted activities and range of territory.

6.6 Using Geographical Information Systems

The responsibilities of Eastern Cape Nature Conservation management staff include not only conservation, but also the sustainable usage of the resources at Mkambati, for example, grass harvesting and recreational use. This also forms part of the reserve's mission statement. Assessing the compatibility of multiple uses and trading-off competing values are difficult planning processes that can be greatly aided by using GIS (Geographical Information System) techniques (Davis, 1996).

A GIS for Mkambati may include maps of vegetation associations (plant communities, land types, and zones, including sensitive areas such as the Superbowl and dune forests); land ownership; the drainage network with important catchment areas; topography; and hydrology. To obtain this data, interpreters have to identify stand boundaries and enter information into the GIS such as: species composition and structure; the location of invader species, soil types, drainage systems and road networks; and historical information relating to each stand, for example, burning blocks, and harvesting and regeneration of grasses. Technicon students could be used to collect this data as part of their practical projects. The GIS can then be used for analyses such as harvest planning (for example, timber and thatch); critical wildlife habitat protection; planning routes for roads, activities, and hunting; and modeling the spread of veld fires (Davis, 1996).

To find the most suitable site for a specific activity, route, construction, etc., ecological sites that may be damaged by a proposed project or activity should be mapped and given a certain weighting (extent of sensitivity). The different maps relating to information on each parameter (for example, topography, hydrology, and vegetation cover) are then overlaid to deliver a final map revealing the most suitable site for a specific structure or activity. Plans can be progressively refined and re-evaluated to optimise a solution. Another useful capability of GIS is the determination of zones, including buffer zones.

6.7 Conclusion

In order for the reserve not to be stretched to its limits, as has occurred in other reserves in South Africa, an overall recommendation would be to conduct further studies. These should focus on the influence of the proposed activities and facilities on Mkambati's natural resource base (Ehlers, 1999). As mentioned in Section 2.2 and illustrated in Figure 2.1, it is essential to approach ecotourism from a scientific and ecological perspective.

To achieve the above guidelines, Mkambati Nature Reserve must strive to build partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders such as Pondocrop, TRACOR, and the Triple Trust Organisation, and conservation bodies such as WWF and Nedbank's Green Trust.

Returning to Figure 2.3 on the objectives of ecotourism, this form of tourism should move the resource base from a passive state, where environmental disturbance is minimised, to a point where there is active contribution to the health of the environment. All three of the other fundamentals, namely the tourist, industry, and local community are key to achieving this.

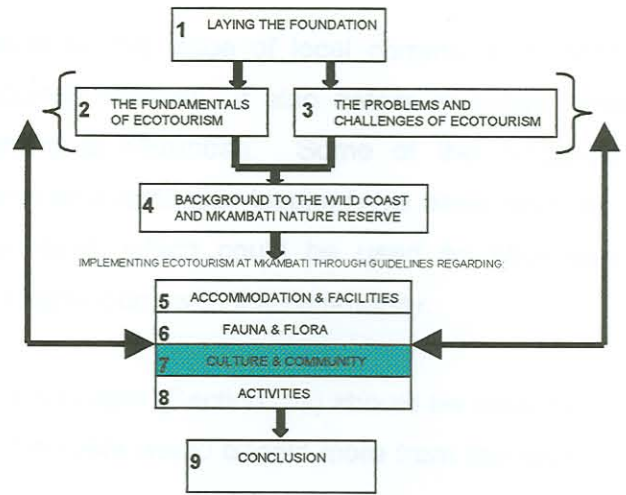
Mkambati has a special and unique environment. Rich diversity is present among the flora and fauna, and in order to preserve this uniqueness, tourists should play a role. The reserve management and all staff must therefore encourage tourists to comply with the code of conduct of the reserve, and must build on this by providing adequate interpretation. If tourists are sufficiently informed and enlightened, they will utilize the resource base wisely.

The local community also has a vital role to play. If they do not receive tangible short-term benefits, such as income through sport hunting, building, guiding, and harvesting resources within the reserve, they will be unlikely to support conservation at Mkambati. Frustration on the part of locals can lead to problems such as poaching and crime. Although long-term objectives are also essential to sustainability (Section 2.6), attention must be paid to ensuring short-term benefits. Once communities view themselves as custodians of the resource, it will be easier for the ecotourism industry to progress along the continuum.

The ecotourism industry plays a key role in ensuring that the tourists and local communities care for and appreciate the environment. A heavy onus lies also on the industry as it plans, zones, designs, and builds, to ensure that every action contributes to sustainability. Continual monitoring and evaluation is another important function. In keeping with the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy, monitoring from an external source is also recommended.

Chapter 7

Implementing ecotourism: culture and community



7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 continues putting theory into practice at Mkambati by developing guidelines for the implementation of ecotourism in the area of culture and community. The fundamental of the local community forms the focus, but the ecotourism industry and the tourist also have roles to play in utilizing culture as a resource and fostering community involvement. Part of Mkambati's mission statement is to achieve participation, on an equal-partnership basis, from the local community in planning and managing the reserve. The statement also mentions the integration of local culture into the operation of Mkambati.

Mkambati falls under the Thaweni Tribal Authority of the Lusikisiki district. This Authority consists of six administrative areas, each of which is led by a headman, all of whom are responsible to Chief Mhlanga. Each administrative area is comprised of several villages which are further divided into various *izithebe* or mat associations (Kepe, 2000a).

The issue of who the local community is and, more importantly who has rights to what land, and can benefit from developments, is highly contested in this area. This constraint was introduced in Section 4.5. Currently, several communities have laid a claim to land rights in Mkambati Nature Reserve and TRACOR land. All have some basis for their claim if the three characteristics of a community provided in Section 2.3 are taken into consideration. The process of determining to whom the land belongs has been complicated by the Wild Coast SDI, which included all six administrative areas under Thaweni as a single 'local community'. Expectations were raised and 'locals' are now reluctant to exclude themselves from any possible restitution benefits (Kepe, 2000a). Furthermore, the reserve is seen by the local community as one of the few economic opportunities available to them, that can improve their quality of life (Prinsloo, 1999a). Livelihood is currently gained through arable and livestock farming, and the collection of a range of natural resources and external sources of income, including remittances and pensions (Kepe, 2000a).

For various historical, political, and economic reasons, the issue of local community benefit, participation, and empowerment is a source of current tension. It also deters investors, and poses a serious threat to ecotourism development at Mkambati. Some of the proposed guidelines will only be feasible once community and land restitution issues have been resolved. However, the guidelines provide some practical ideas, which could be used by Mkambati management as points of leverage in the on-going negotiations with the community.

In light of the above complications, the two-tier benefit system (Section 2.3) should be considered at Mkambati, whereby immediate local community members would benefit more from the reserve than those further afield.

Besides examining how communities can be involved, this chapter also has a strong cultural and historical element, setting guidelines for the utilization of the culture of the local people and the history of Mkambati as resources for tourism. The Wild Coast SDI also promotes a focus on cultural-historical tourism as a unique drawcard. This chapter deals mainly with the fundamentals of the local community, followed by the ecotourism industry and the tourists.

7.2 Current involvement in Mkambati Nature Reserve

Currently, the only direct economic benefit for local residents is to those employed by the reserve. There are 130 people on Mkambati's staff, but it was not possible to ascertain how many of them are from villages in the Thaweni Tribal Authority. Local people have seasonal access to the following natural resources of Mkambati, for which they pay a small fee:

- woodlot trees for construction and firewood;
- thatching grass; and
- angling fish (Prinsloo, 1999b).

7.3 Using culture as a resource for tourism at Mkambati

Attempts are being made to create a strong 'sense of place' for the region, one which is deeply rooted in the cultural-historical context of the Xhosa people. However, there is currently very limited information on, and use of the Xhosa people and their history and culture at Mkambati.

The reserve has an opportunity to carve a unique niche for itself within this macro picture – not by replicating what is being done in other areas, but by linking its cultural ventures to the natural environment.

Considering the ecotourism fundamental of the local community, Mkambati Nature Reserve needs to ensure that the local communities benefit equitably from the tourism development of this area. However, since the core business of Mkambati Nature Reserve is conservation management (Prinsloo, 1999b), it should not be required of Mkambati to invest a significant amount of their time and resources into the training and capacity building of local Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), except for local guides for fauna, flora, and cultural/historical tours within the reserve.

However, Mkambati should play a role in identifying opportunities for local SMMEs to benefit financially from the development of the reserve, for example, arts and crafts, the management of an indigenous nursery inside the reserve, and the provision of accommodation within the community. SMMEs should also be used as far as is possible, in the production of information materials, for example, recycled unbleached paper. To aid this process, Mkambati management should work in close partnership with the Triple Trust Organisation introduced in Section 4.2, who have been appointed by the EU to develop SMMEs on the Wild Coast.

Environmental education and capacity building for local people should also be a key priority and must be integrated into all management objectives, goals, and strategies (Prinsloo, 1999b). Local universities or other training institutions with a broad base of expertise could be enlisted to conduct training courses to improve the management and public relations skills of local entrepreneurs as well as to educate them on ecotourism.

A further valuable way of involving local communities is through indigenous knowledge systems. Prinsloo (1999b) mentions the importance of recognising local customs, traditions, and indigenous knowledge regarding the conservation of biodiversity. This knowledge can also be interpreted to visitors.

It is important to keep in mind that most of the employment or income-generation opportunities offered by Mkambati Nature Reserve to the local community will be seasonal and dependent on visitor interest. In the study on current visitors to Mkambati, the main draw-card was the solitude and natural resources. Cultural and historical pursuits were not high on their agenda, while rest and relaxation were priorities (Kepe, 2000b). While most visitors were not averse to the idea of

visiting local communities and purchasing local goods, it is unlikely that their interest would be high enough to provide sustained and viable economic opportunities for the local community. Active marketing is therefore vital to draw more international tourists, who are interested in learning about natural and cultural resources. In addition, the local community needs to understand that, given the fluctuating context within which tourism takes place, ecotourism ventures need to supplement, not replace other livelihood sources. If this is not established, unrealistic expectations will be raised.

7.4 Promoting an ecotourism ethos and culture amongst staff, visitors, and the local community

Staff, visitors, and the local community need to be informed and educated about the benefits of ecotourism and the role each group can play in promoting ecotourism. If Mkambati is to provide an authentic ecotourism experience, it needs to ensure that the principles of ecotourism permeate the organisation. To do this, the following suggestions are made:

- Develop an education programme on ecotourism in the form of information sessions and workshops for management and staff.
- Use existing governance forums and education programmes to present ideas and information on ecotourism to the local community.
- As mentioned in Section 4.6.2, an ecotourism code of conduct must be developed. This should include guidelines on interacting with, and supporting the local community.

7.5 Interpreting Mkambati's culture and history to visitors

In this regard, the following recommendations are made:

- Conduct participatory action research to document and map the culture and history of Mkambati. The 'story' of Mkambati needs to be told as experienced by people who lived there in both the recent and distant past, bearing in mind that Mkambati has both an indigenous and colonial history.
- In the Mkambati guide booklet, cultural-historical sites should be pointed out. These could include the shipwreck, the island, the two churches, and buildings over 100 years old, and be linked to its history as a mission station, leper colony, and tuberculosis hospital. Existing historical sites will have to be restored, for example, the two churches, one of which is in a particularly derelict state. Local people could be employed or contracted to assist with the restoration efforts.

- Provide a trail guide and information on the historical and cultural significance of Mkambati as part of the guide booklet. This map can also be displayed on the back of menus at the Clubhouse, inside toilet doors, at Reception, and at the Environmental Education Centre. One large colourful map should be displayed prominently at Reception. Display information in small perspex holders/wooden frames at cultural and historical sites. Telling the story of The Lodge, for example, has already been mentioned in Section 5.3.1. A short cultural ramble at Main Gate is also advised, taking tourists past the two churches and the units where the lepers were housed. Interesting information can be displayed at these places.
- Interpret fauna and flora to the visitor from a cultural perspective. For example, place an information board on the mahogany tree explaining its cultural significance to the indigenous Xhosa people of the area. In this instance its significance is medicinal. In addition, if local people have contributed to natural resource management using indigenous methods, these practices should also be interpreted to tourists.
- Identify and train young people to conduct guided cultural-historical trails within Mkambati. These guides could also be trained to conduct fauna and flora trails. While trained by Mkambati, they should be self-employed with their income dependent on visitor interest. In addition, these guides should demonstrate their commitment by paying a nominal fee to undergo the training.
- Display traditional household items in the accommodation. For example, place traditional kitchen utensils in the kitchens, against the walls, or in corners. Another idea is to buy traditional straw brooms made by local women for use in the accommodation units. Use information boards to explain how these items are used in traditional homesteads. Make some of these items available for tourists to buy at Reception.
- Reception should source and provide information on cultural and historical sites and routes around the Mkambati area, extending throughout the Wild Coast region.
- Post up useful Xhosa translations at the Reception, Environmental Education Centre, Clubhouse, and accommodation units. These could include phrases such as *Molo* (hello), *Unjani?* (how are you?), *Enkosi* (thank you), *Ngubani igama lakho?* (what is your name?), *Simkile* (we are on our way), etc. (Ndukwana *et al*, 2000:20). Many tourists are keen to learn some phrases of the local language.
- Approach local people to perform cultural activities. The use of traditional dance, music, and storytelling at Gwe Gwe Cultural Village has already been proposed. Authenticity and quality are important, although items may need to be shortened. Special training programmes may be needed to ensure high quality performances.

7.6 Provision of opportunities for visitor interaction with the local community

The following are suggested:

- A tourism node at Ndindindi on the southern side of the Msikaba has been proposed where tourists can stay with the local community in huts. This idea should be pursued, since many tourists engaging in ecotourism seek this type of experience.
- Amadiba Adventures, on the eastern bank of the Mtentu River, promote local cultural events to tourists, and the process is working well. It is recommended that Mkambati establish a 'Local Cultural Events Calendar' in conjunction with the local community. The events open to tourists could then be clearly displayed at Reception. In this way the locals can also benefit by charging a reasonable admission fee and Mkambati enhances its image among the local community and tourists. However, tourists need to be informed about appropriate respectful behaviour at such events. The same applies to tourists staying with locals at Ndindindi.
- Offer visitors an opportunity to spend a morning with Mkambati grass-cutters where they can learn about traditional ways of thatching and weaving. Grass-cutters would be self-employed.

7.7 Provision of opportunities for small businesses in the local community to benefit from tourism developments

The following suggestions are made regarding the above:

- Encourage the local community to sell their home crafts, for example, sleeping mats or conventional rush mats, popular Xhosa bags made from goat skins, wire bracelets, and traditional pots used for decoration and serving beer. This could initially be done from Reception. A separate shop may be needed at a later stage. The pricing of these products should ensure a market-related profit for the producers. All locally-made products should have information on the origin of the product, informing tourists of materials used as well as any cultural or historical significance attached to the item.
- Retain the authenticity of local designs, materials, and skills in arts and crafts. When mobilizing the community around Mkambati to make these items, the existing knowledge base regarding crafts must be tested. Where traditional arts and crafts have deteriorated, a programme may be needed to research the original methods.
- Develop a nursery growing indigenous trees and traditional herbs. This nursery could be positioned behind the Learning Centre at the Main Gate allowing easy access for the locals. The nursery would be situated on Mkambati property but owned and managed by locals. It

would provide trees to locals as well as to the reserve, with the reserve purchasing the seedlings from the locals.

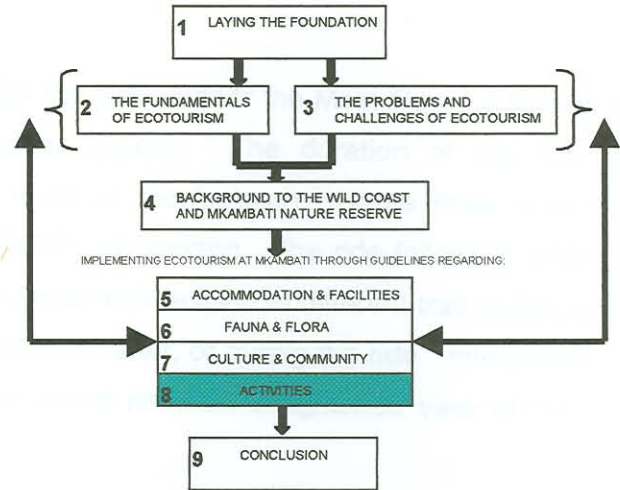
- Use local produce and services as far as possible in the provision of all of Mkambati's services, including accommodation, food and beverages (for example crayfish, poultry, fruit and vegetables), and laundry and maintenance services. The locals need encouragement and initial support in establishing such services.
- Develop a formal organisational statement regarding the procurement of local goods and services from SMME service providers.

7.8 Conclusion

In keeping with the continuums in Figure 2.3, emphasis must be placed on moving local people from passive involvement to active participation through equitable partnerships in both planning and implementation. Attention must be given to both short-term and long term benefits, and to building good relationships. The ecotourism industry, in particular, has an important role to play in doing this. It is important in planning new ventures, activities, and accommodation, that the community are aware of it and are given the opportunity to participate. The tourists' involvement, in this case, is their interest in learning about, and interacting with local communities. This often extends to a genuine concern about local people and their welfare through tourism development. It is therefore essential, when dealing with this 'new tourist', to include culture as a tourism product. Furthermore, the involvement in, and benefit to the locals should be communicated to tourists. All this is part of moving the tourist from a place of only enjoying an ecotourism destination to a place where enjoyment is coupled with a behavioural and lifestyle change.

Chapter 8

Implementing ecotourism: activities



8.1 Introduction

This chapter is the final chapter on the translation of theory into practice at Mkambati Nature Reserve. It deals with the activities that can be offered at Mkambati Nature Reserve, describing how these can involve local communities and provide an enlightening, interactive, and participatory experience for tourists. Activities, and particularly multi-activities are essential for the 'new tourist', of which the tourist engaging in ecotourism is an example. In the recommendations regarding activities that Mkambati is already providing or could provide, the local repertoire in terms of knowledge, interpretation, and skills should not be overlooked. The local community can add much to the activities offered. This chapter therefore deals with the ecotourism fundamentals of the ecotourism industry as the instigators of activities, the local community as contributors to activities, and the tourists as the recipients. The fundamental of the resource base is also important here, as activities must be sustainable.

Adequate training of guides is essential to provide tourists with valuable experiences. Training must be done on a continuous basis and not only provides the local employees with employment and skills, but should also highlight any problems that might be experienced by tourists. Staff involved in interpretation need not have any formal qualifications, as practical experience is often the most useful base from which to enlighten tourists (Fennell, 1999).

8.2 Activities currently offered at Mkambati

8.2.1 Trails

8.2.1.1 Mountain biking

Mountain biking is allowed within the reserve. At present, there are no set trails for cyclists, the result being that riders use reserve roads and foot paths, as well as making their own tracks.

8.2.1.2 *Horseriding*

Mkambati offers one horse trail, which departs from the stables near the Main Gate. It follows a circular track past the Superbowl and the Vulture Colony. The duration of the trail is approximately two hours and follows the same route as the footpath. Horse rides must be booked the previous day at Reception and cost R40.00 per person. The ride follows a walking pace and is led by a guide. Visitors do not have a choice with respect to different trail routes, and the pace of the ride. No interpretation is provided before, after, or during the ride. Interpretation would enhance the trail experience, as the visitor would have an enlightened view of his/her environment and of horseriding itself.

8.2.1.3 *Hiking*

Walking trails are key elements in any protected area (Andersen, 1993). Trails are currently available in Mkambati Nature Reserve, although they do not cover all the areas that tourists would enjoy visiting. Some scenic views and waterfalls, for example, are not on set trails. Another drawback is that walking trails are not all in good condition, lacking thorough and regular maintenance. They are also not clearly marked, for example, the trail from the Mkambati Falls to Four Falls.

The existing trails are set out below.

- The Gwe Gwe Forest trail.
- The Vulture Colony trail, following a circular route past the Superbowl and Vulture Colony (Figure 8.1), returning to the Main Gate.
- The trail from Point Cottage, along the coast towards Riverside as far as Gwe Gwe.
- The trail from the Mkambati Falls, through the Wilderness Area to the shipwreck and the mouth of the Mtentu.
- The trail from the Mkambati Falls through the Wilderness Area to the Four Falls viewpoint.

8.2.2 *Fishing*

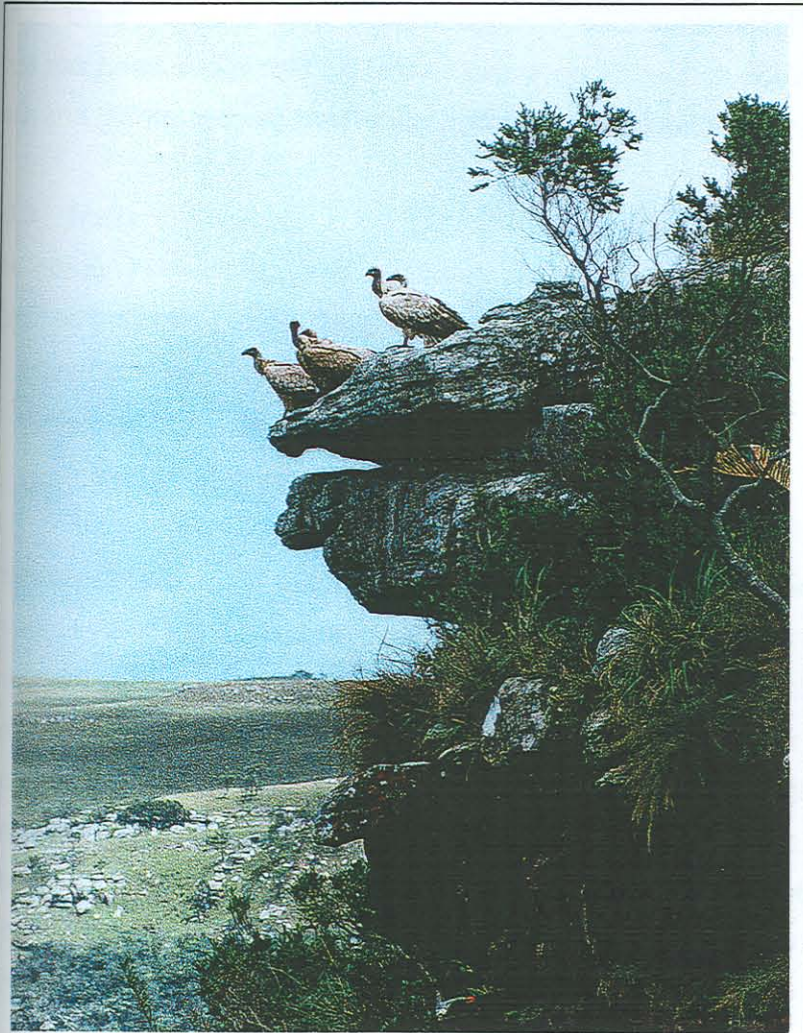
Fishing is probably the most popular activity at Mkambati. At the mouths of both the Mtentu and Msikaba Rivers, the fishing is good (Oakes, 1991; Reynierse, 1988; Wannenburg, 1984). For sea fishing, Gwe Gwe is by far the favourite spot, with the rondavels usually being booked by fishermen and their families.

8.2.3 Children's entertainment

Children's entertainment has received little attention at Mkambati. Fortunately, Mkambati has existing resources, which complement the guidelines given later regarding children's entertainment. Existing facilities and activities include:

- The beaches.
- The loft, situated near Reception and currently not in use.
- The swimming pool in front of the Clubhouse.
- The existing horse trail.
- Short walks, for example, the Vulture Colony trail, walking from Reception to the mouth of the Msikaba River, and from Reception to 'Die Gat'.
- A ferryboat ride on a rowing boat up the Msikaba River to see the Mkambati Palms.

Figure 8.1 The Cape Vulture Colony on the Msikaba River



8.3 Activities proposed for Mkambati

Mountain biking is a fairly new sport with popularity soaring in recent years. It is also seen as an activity that is becoming more popular among tourists. It is clear that Mkambati has much to offer the tourist. However, the greatest barrier to the success of activities is the fact that the current offerings are not packaged and promoted properly. The following section gives guidelines in this regard. The correct pricing is also vital. Tourists do not mind paying for a quality experience. However, prices must remain affordable while still covering overheads and generating profit.

8.3.1 Theming/packaging

One of the latest tourism trends is to package different attractions within an area according to a theme. At Mkambati, the themes are the natural and cultural environment. Within that, one can expand further, for example, indicating all the waterfalls in the reserve and their access routes, thus creating a waterfall theme. Most of the falls are covered in the routes proposed in Section 8.3.2. On the cultural side, the creation of a cultural-historical ramble in the vicinity of the Main Gate has been suggested. A further theme could be rock pools, encouraging tourists to swim in each one (some of them freshwater and others salt) during their visit.

8.3.2 Trails

The hiking, horseriding, and mountain biking trails have been divided into three groups and classified according to difficulty, with each group being awarded a colour scheme as follows:

- 'Hard Core route' indicated with red (most difficult).
- 'Enthusiastic route' indicated with blue.
- 'Novice route' indicated with green (least difficult).

Wherever possible, the proposed trails have been confined to existing tracks. In certain places, the same routes are used by hikers, cyclists, and horse riders in order to avoid the creation of new trails. This will, however, need to be monitored, as multi-use of trails can cause more damage to the environment than that caused by creating a new trail. The approximate time that each trail will take is also indicated. This includes adequate time to stop, and enjoy the attractions en route. Natural signage, using wood or a flat rock, must indicate the route type and difficulty by means of the appropriate colour. In grasslands Beeton (1998) suggests using raised wooden signposts as an alternative. The following sections (8.3.2.1 to 8.3.2.3) expand on the activities and their respective routes.

8.3.2.1 *Mountain biking*

Mountain biking is a fairly new sport with popularity soaring in recent years. It is also seen as an environmentally sound alternative to motorised transport, and is therefore appropriate within a nature reserve. However, proper guiding and instruction is essential. A cycling section should be provided in the guidelines booklet outlining all the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of sound cycling practices within a reserve. These guidelines must include issues such as:

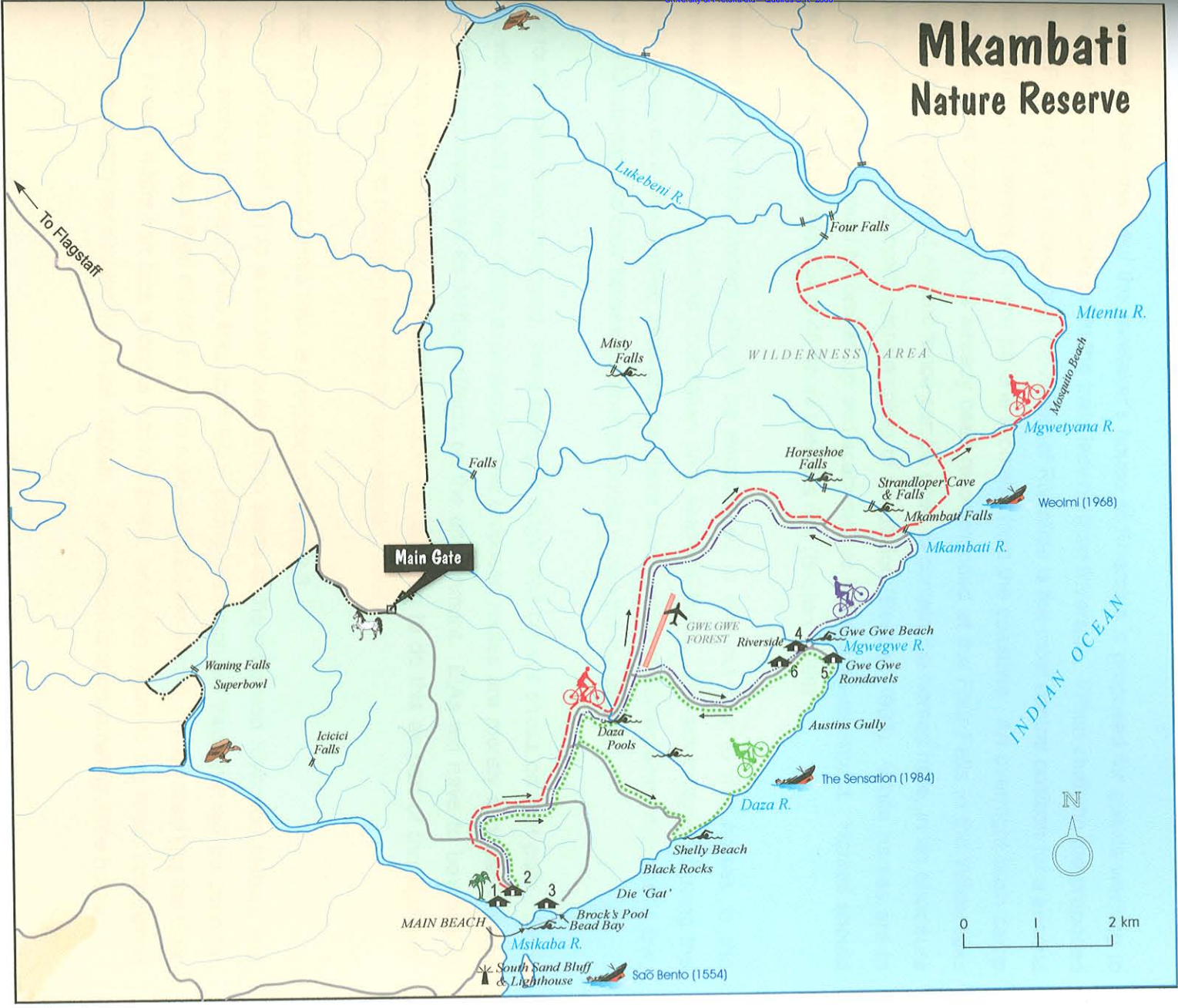
- No skidding. This can damage tracks and lead to erosion. Try to keep to the middle of the tracks at all times.
- Avoid muddy tracks wherever possible, as tire tracks will channel water into new areas and increase erosion.
- Cyclists should give right of way to horses and be aware that a frightened horse can be dangerous.
- Keep to the designated tracks and never cut corners as this may damage flora and create imbalances (Beeton, 1998).

The proposed routes are outlined in Figure 8.2 and described below. They consist of a combination of dirt road and track. In addition to these, cyclists can ride on any reserve roads open to visitors' vehicles.

- The **Novice route** takes approximately two and a half hours. It starts at Reception and follows the road down to Shelly Beach. From Shelley Beach, the route proceeds on the existing track along the coast to Gwe Gwe. The cyclist then returns via the road, passing the Gwe Gwe Forest and Daza rock pool.
- The **Enthusiastic route** lasts between four to five hours. It leaves from Reception, and follows the road past the Daza rock pool and Gwe Gwe Forest and down to Gwe Gwe Beach. From here the route proceeds along the coast to the mouth of the Mkambati. From the Mkambati River, the route follows the main road past the airstrip and back to Reception.
- The **Hard Core route** takes one day. This route also begins at Reception, and follows the main road to the Horseshoe Falls, and then on to the Mkambati Falls. At this point the cyclists continue into the Wilderness Area on the existing track, which curves inland, returning to the coast at the mouth of the Mgwetyana River. Cyclists then ride across Mosquito Beach, and will arrive on the rocks near the bank of the Mtentu River. From here, bicycles must be carried up to the field rangers' hut on top of the cliff, using the existing footpath. The route then continues to the Four Falls. After viewing the Four Falls, cyclists return to the route they came on using the existing track that runs roughly parallel to the Mgwetyana River. On leaving the Wilderness Area, cyclists could enjoy a swim in the Mkambati River or a refreshing shower in one of the twin drops of the Mkambati Falls. Cyclists return via the same route.

Figure 8.2: Proposed mountain biking trails

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Mkambati Nature Reserve

Key

- Mkambati Nature Reserve
- Major roads
- Rivers
- Waterfalls
- Swimming
- Cape Vulture Colonies
- Stables
- Shipwreck
- Airstrip
- Mkambati Palms

Existing Accommodation

- 1 The Lodge
- 2 Reception & Cottages
- 3 Point Cottage
- 4 Riverside
- 5 Gwe Gwe Rondavels
- 6 Caretakers house

Mountain Biking Trails

- Novice
- Enthusiastic
- Hard Core

8.3.2.2 *Horseriding*

It is important that the visitor understands how to manage horses while on a trail (Beeton, 1998) and that the trails are laid out correctly. Visitors should ride in single file, and keep to existing paths. Some trails at Mkambati will be used by walkers, horse riders, and cyclists. The varying motivations and relationships with the environment that different trail-users may have must therefore be considered (Beeton, 1999). Codes of conduct will help in this matter, so that tourists understand and respect others.

A second stable area near the caretaker's house at Riverside is proposed for guests wanting to spend the night at Gwe Gwe or do the trails leaving from Riverside. When studying the proposed routes (Figure 8.3), it is clear that the vicinity of Riverside is the most central position for a second stable. It must, however, at least be one kilometre from the coastline. An overnight bush camp for horse riders and hikers has already been recommended at the Four Falls in the Wilderness Area. A battery-operated electric fence can be used to contain the horses here, in an enclosure that is large enough to avoid over-trampling of vegetation (Beeton, 1998). While horses are in this area, manure should be broken up and scattered, as it has a visual impact. Horses should also be fed weed-free feed 24 to 48 hours before a ride (Beeton, 1998).

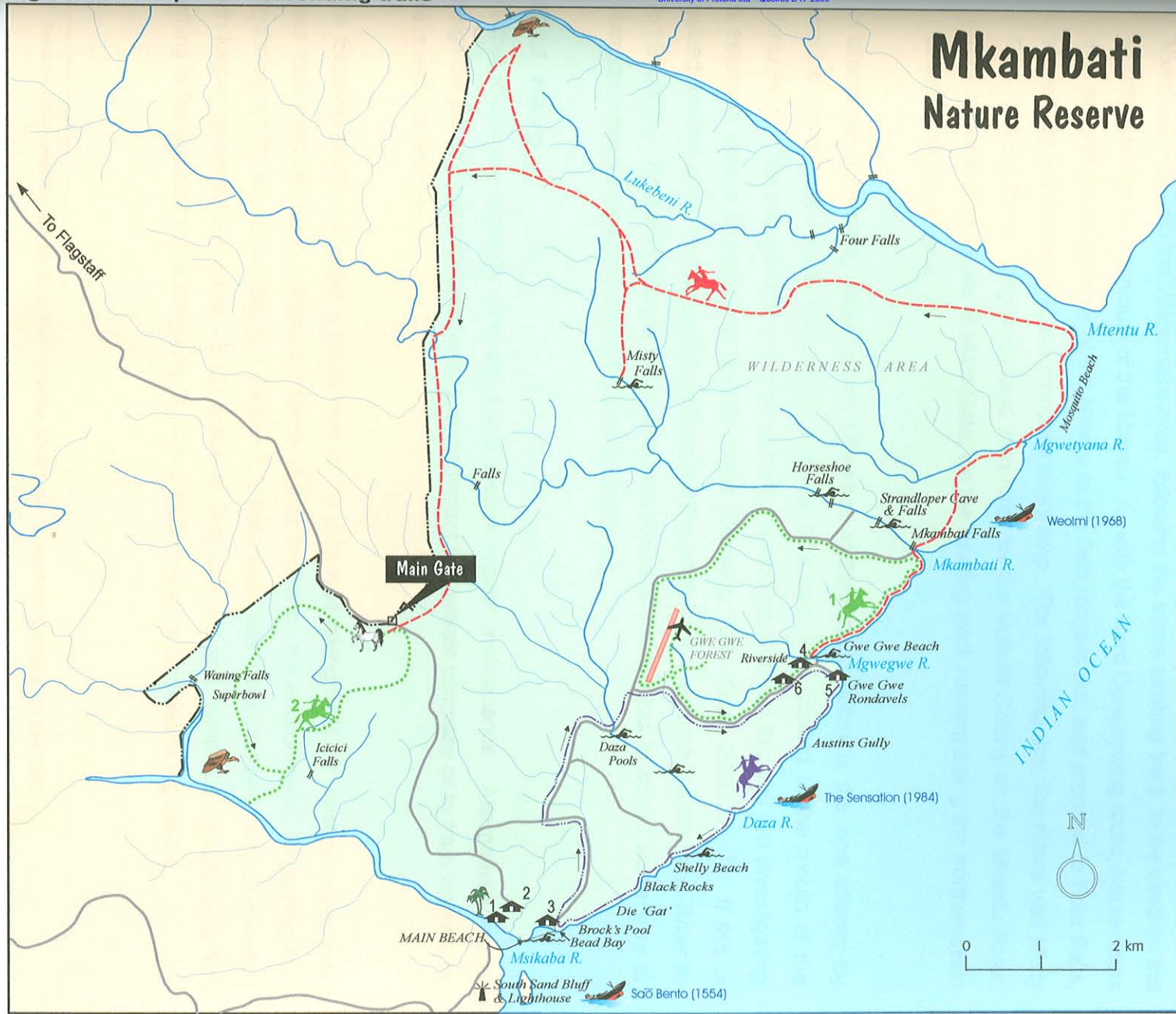
Interested local horse owners should be encouraged to hire out four to five horses to the Riverside stable. This could be undertaken on a seasonal basis. The advantages of using the local's horses on a hire-to-need basis are that there is no upkeep of horses when demand is low, and the locals can use their horses for other purposes during the low season.

Four routes have been proposed, since having a single trail causes stress on that path. More trails will also add to the visitor experience. The proposed routes are merely suggestions and have not been examined as to their effects on the environment. EIAs will have to be done in order to test their feasibility. Universities could be called on to do this as part of the students' practicals, in order to minimize the cost for the reserve.

A map of the suggested horse trails is provided in Figure 8.3.

- The **Novice trail (1)** is a circular route, which starts at the proposed Riverside stables and heads along the coast to the Mkambati River (along the proposed track that will be used for cyclists). The route then continues on the road and past the airstrip. When reaching the Gwe Gwe Forest, riders can take a detour into the forest, and then return to the road, completing the homestretch back to the Riverside stables. The duration is approximately three hours.

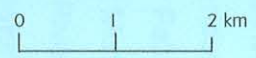
Figure 8.3: Proposed horseriding trails



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Key

- Mkambati Nature Reserve
 - Major roads
 - Rivers
 - Waterfalls
 - Swimming
 - Cape Vulture Colonies
 - Stables
 - Shipwreck
 - Airstrip
 - Mkambati Palms
-
- Existing Accommodation
- 1 The Lodge
 - 2 Reception & Cottages
 - 3 Point Cottage
 - 4 Riverside
 - 5 Gwe Gwe Rondavels
 - 6 Caretakers house
-
- Horseriding Trails**
- Novice
 - Enthusiastic
 - Hard Core



- A second **Novice trail (2)** is the current route, which takes tourists to the Superbowl and on to the Vulture Colony on the Msikaba River. This route takes approximately three hours.
- The **Enthusiasts trail** will take approximately four to five hours, and starts at the proposed Riverside stables, heading along the coast to Austin's Gully, Shelly Beach, Black Rocks, 'Die Gat', Brock's Pool, and Bead Bay, joining the road at Point Cottage to return to the Riverside stables via the road or the same way back along the coast.
- A **Hard Core two-day trail** starts at Riverside, goes along Gwe Gwe Beach and across the Mkambati Falls into the Wilderness Area, following the same existing track to be used by the mountain bikers, to the mouth of the Mtentu. As with the Hard Core cycling route, horse riders then ascend the steep bank of the Mtentu to the field rangers hut, and proceed to Four Falls, where they will overnight at the proposed bushcamp. The following day, the riders visit Misty Falls, utilizing the existing track, and then head for the Vulture Colony on the Mtentu River. They return to the stables at Main Gate, via the existing track running along the northwestern boundary of the reserve.

An alternative horseriding route, which Mkambati visitors could utilize is the one offered by Amadiba Adventures Horse Trail, which currently runs from Port Edward to the mouth of the Mtentu River. The non-government organization, Pondocrop, who run this trail are investigating its extension across Mkambati to Port St Johns (Derwent, 1998; Gray, 2000:37; ¹⁸). If this is realized, trailists could use Mkambati as their starting point for the leg from the Msikaba River to Port St Johns. Another option is for tourists with Amadiba Adventures to spend some time at Mkambati, after completing the Port Edward to Mtentu leg.

8.3.2.3 Hiking

Internal routes are currently dilapidated and require regular maintenance. Alternatives are to assign the job of route maintenance and management to a private company or to train workers in the reserve for this job.

The following section provides a breakdown of the proposed hiking trails. It must be noted that these trails have not been assessed in terms of their impact on the environment. Regarding the psychology of the tourist, as raised in Section 2.5, each route has more than one point of interest, with longer routes having more. Each scene is very different and numerous opportunities for bathing in the sea and rivers are given. A map of these routes is provided in Figure 8.4.

¹⁸. Personal communication with Mr. E. Russell, Amadiba Adventures, Mtentu River Campsite, 21 July 2000.

- **The Novice route (1)** – The duration of the route is approximately three hours. The trail starts at Reception, taking the walker past The Lodge, and down the existing path through the dune forest to the Main Beach. It then proceeds past Point Cottage and along the coast to Shelley Beach on the existing walking path. At the mouth of the Daza, the trail heads northwest to the Daza rock pool next to the road. It then follows the road back to Reception.
- An alternative **Novice route (2)** is the one hour walk from Shelley Beach to the mouth of the Daza River, and then up the Daza to the roadside rock pool, or in reverse order. Ideally, this walk should be done with one car parked near Shelley Beach and the other at the Daza pool.

Three **Enthusiastic routes** have been proposed, all of which have a three to four hour duration.

- **Enthusiastic route (1)** - A vehicle is driven to the start of the signaged footpath near main gate. The route takes hikers past Icicici Falls and on to the Vulture Colony. Heading northwards and in a clockwise direction, the route passes the Superbowl, and returns to the point where the walker began.
- **Enthusiastic route (2)** - A vehicle is taken to the mouth of the Mkambati River. The walk commences from here, goes to the Mouth of the Mtentu and returns along the track used by mountain bikers and horse riders.
- **Enthusiastic route (3)** - This walk also proceeds from the Mkambati River mouth, and goes to the Four Falls (on the existing track used by the mountain bikers) and back.
- **The Hard Core route (1)** – Walkers drive to the entrance of the Wilderness Area (at the mouth of the Mkambati), and walk northeast towards the mouth of the Mtentu. From there they hike in a westerly direction to the Four Falls, and then on to the less known Vulture Colony in the northwestern part of the reserve. The final stretch of the hike takes the walker back past Misty Falls and then back along the trail they came on to the mouth of the Mkambati or along the track running roughly parallel to the Mgwetyana River.
- An alternative **Hard Core route (2)** is the 22km return trip of six hours across the Msikaba, and out of the reserve to the site of the Grosvenor wreck (near Port Grosvenor) and back.

8.3.3 *Abseiling and cliff jumping*

Abseiling is an activity that can be done within a nature reserve, because no permanent fixtures are needed since ropes are attached to a sturdy rock or tree. Areas that could be used for abseiling are the Superbowl and most of the falls. In environmentally sensitive areas, abseiling must be prohibited. Proper guidelines should be given in the Mkambati guide booklet, also supplying tourists with the reasons for these regulations - an informed tourist is a wise tourist. For the daring, Mkambati offers cliff jumps ranging from 3m to 14m high from the cliffs around Strandloper Falls, and out of the Strandloper Cave.

Figure 8.4: Proposed hiking trails

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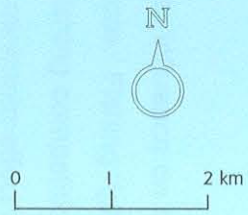


Key

- Mkambati Nature Reserve
- Major roads
- Rivers
- Waterfalls
- Swimming
- Cape Vulture Colonies
- Stables
- Shipwreck
- Airstrip
- Mkambati Palms

- Existing Accommodation**
- 1 The Lodge
 - 2 Reception & Cottages
 - 3 Point Cottage
 - 4 Riverside
 - 5 Gwe Gwe Rondavels
 - 6 Caretakers house

- Hiking Trails**
- Novice
 - Enthusiastic
 - Hard Core



8.3.4 *Canoeing*

With the Main Complex situated close to the banks of the Msikaba River, canoeing is an ideal activity. Canoes could be hired out, allowing tourists to explore the river mouth, including the Mkambati Palms, or to journey higher upstream. A second suggestion is to provide canoes on the Mtentu River. Alternatively, Mkambati tourists can make use of the guided canoe trips offered by Amadiba Adventures to the bottom of the Four Falls. The Mkambati guide booklet should indicate the points of interest that one can experience from the water.

8.3.5 *Fishing and swimming*

If planned, conducted, and supervised in a sustainable manner, fishing has little influence on the environment. The latest project undertaken by Pondocrop is an excellent example. Fishing rights to the Mtentu River were sold by the reserve to Pondocrop in order to host a fishing competition. Kingfish were merely caught and released back into the river. This project had minimum effect on the environment and a substantial return on investment. The annual value of recreational marine angling is thought to exceed R100 million, including some R2 million in prize money (Swart, 2000).

Mkambati should investigate the viability of hosting a fishing competition, or continue to outsource resources to companies such as Pondocrop. An 'Mkambati fishing guide' section should be included in the guide booklet, where even the most avid fisherman can learn something. A general overview of the marine area could be given, indicating the most popular fish types and other interesting facts for the tourist/fisherman. Guidelines on sustainable practices should also be included and must address issues such as:

- the danger of fishing line to animals that get tangled in it;
- proper disposal of fish remains, so as not to lure unwanted insects (Beeton, 1998); and
- indicating the season for harvesting certain species, for example, crayfish.

The abundant fresh and seawater pools at Mkambati should be packaged and promoted for the visitor. The safe beaches for bathing must also be indicated.

8.3.6 *Children's entertainment*

Guidelines for the provision of entertainment for children and/or school groups are based on the assumption that the existing loft is converted into an Environmental Education Centre/ Games Room, as recommended in Section 5.3.9. This room should contain:

- board games relating to nature;
- games played by local children, which are taught by a community member;

- simple games that are durable and/or permanent, for example, painting hopscotch on the floor, darts, and table tennis; and
- traditional musical instruments.

Traditional storytelling (even via video) and arts and crafts, with a specific focus on the interpretation of the natural environment from a cultural perspective, could be offered to children as entertainment alternatives. Other activities could include drawing competitions of anything that the children saw or participated in that day. The prize need not cost the reserve a lot of money, for example, a free ride on horseback or by canoe. The walls of the loft should be used for information displays, simple colourful maps of the reserve, and posters that children have made. Should a television be provided in the loft, it is recommended that it be used for educational purposes. Interest groups, for example, recycling enthusiasts, could be invited to display their posters and leave videos for the children to watch. Children will only have access to the Environmental Education Centre at certain times and under the supervision of an environmental education officer. The children will learn more in a controlled environment and the facilities and games will be better protected for future use.

A proposal is that one or two local people are trained as environmental education officers for children. It would be their job to run and oversee the above activities and centre. Mkambati already has one environmental education officer, but more training would be needed before she is ready to 'entertain' and provide environmental education to holidaymakers children.

8.3.7 *Additional activities*

There are many activities that are not currently offered in the reserve. These activities need not necessarily be expensive, but would enhance the tourist experience at Mkambati, and assist in attracting a diverse clientele. These include spotlighting, helicopter rides, rubber duck trips, whale and dolphin watching, and stargazing. The latter two cannot be scheduled like the other activities, but do, however, require interpretation.

- **Stargazing** – The clear night skies ensure that this will be a valuable activity. The first step would be to include a stargazing section in the guide booklet, identifying all the clusters in the Southern Hemisphere that can be seen from Mkambati. Further explanation and interesting facts could also be mentioned, as most visitors probably do not have extended knowledge of astronomy. A telescope which functions once a R2 or R5 coin has been inserted into it, could also be bought and erected on the platform outside the loft.

- **Whale and dolphin watching** – A marine section could be compiled and included in the guide booklet which identifies the local marine resources and provides interesting facts relating to them. In addition, a guide/interpreter could be available for visitors interested in marine life.
- **Spotlighting** – This activity involves wildlife viewing at night by foot or from a vehicle, and will have to be coordinated and led by a ranger who has a sound knowledge of the area and its fauna.
- **Helicopter flights** – These can be offered on certain days during holiday seasons by helicopter operators from outside the reserve, who would be willing to fly in to Mkambati (the heli-pad near The Lodge is in good condition). They could take tourists to see the various sights of the reserve from the air, as well as going further to places such as Waterfall Bluff.
- Although **rubber ducks** are prohibited in the reserve, once Nature Conservation owns one for patrolling the coastline, it could also be used for the following trip, which can provide extra income, and if done properly would have no environmental or social impact. A trip could depart once a day, taking people out of the reserve, 20km southwards along the coast to Waterfall Bluff and then on to the Mfihlelo Falls, both of which cascade directly into the sea, with the latter being higher than the Victoria falls at 160 m. This activity would take place only if a viable number of people have booked at least 24 hours in advance, and if the weather and sea conditions permit. It would also depend on the schedule of conservation officers. The rubber duck should never be used to take people on wave rides, as this is a noisy irritant, and not suited to a nature reserve.

8.3.8 Mini activities

These are activities that can be fitted in anywhere during a day or part of a day. They are suitable for tourists wanting to enjoy the attractions at Mkambati without doing a major hike or ride. Ultimately, it is these activities that will be done the most, and they require no effort on the part of the reserve, besides packaging them within the Mkambati guide booklet and erecting clear signs to them.

- Gwe Gwe Beach is the best swimming beach in the reserve, being very safe with large waves.
- Walking from Gwe Gwe Beach in a northerly direction along the rocks. There are magnificent cliff edges and sea sprays.
- Swimming at Main Beach.
- Taking the ferryboat or the proposed canoes up the Msikaba River to view the rare Mkambati Palm.

- Swimming or paddleskiing up the small river in the middle of Main Beach.
- Rambling along the shore from Main Beach to 'Die Gat'. At high tide there are spectacular sprays and at low tide, beautiful rock pools can be seen.
- Walking to the island at the mouth of the Msikaba River at low tide. The island is known for the wreck of the Saõ Bento in 1554. Beads and fragments of china still wash up on the beaches, hence the name, Bead Bay.
- Walking to South Sand Bluff and to the lighthouse across the Msikaba River at low tide.
- Clambering on the wreck of the Weolmi (from 1968) to the northeast of the mouth of the Mkambati River. This is a one-hour round trip from the parking area at Mkambati Falls, including time at the wreck.
- Swimming in the rock pools above the cascades at the Daza River mouth. These pools are ideal for small children.
- Swimming at the beautiful Daza rock pool next to the road. This is a lovely stopover after visiting Main Beach.
- Swimming in the rock pools above the Mkambati Falls.
- Exploring the Strandloper Caves on the Mkambati River.
- Swimming up the Mkambati to the Strandloper Falls, and the olympic sized pool beneath them.
- Cliff jumping off Strandloper Falls.
- *Kloofing* up stream in the Mkambati River. One can start at the Mkambati Falls and *kloof* quite a distance beyond the Horseshoe Falls until the river becomes too narrow and overgrown in the vicinity of the Mkambati Gates. There are numerous large and beautiful pools *en route*.

8.4 Conclusion

Mkambati Nature Reserve is a unique destination. In order to comply with new tourism, of which ecotourism forms a part, and to become more financially viable, certain improvements have to be made in the activities. This is necessary to ensure repeat visits and extended stays. The different attractions have to be linked to one another, themed, and well promoted. If these proposals are implemented, Mkambati will certainly have multi-activities, which today's tourists seek in a destination. This is in line with developments in many other South African parks, although some of the above activities are certainly unique.

This chapter has focussed mainly on providing tourists with a unique participatory experience from which they are also enlightened. These activities are based on both the natural and cultural resources of the reserve. Ideally, as is indicated in Figure 2.3, they should move tourists to a point where they experience a behavioural and lifestyle change. This task lies primarily with the ecotourism industry, although the involvement of the local community is essential and adds much value to the tourist experience. The sustainable usage of the resource base through the activities is also important.

1.1 Problem statement, aim, and structure

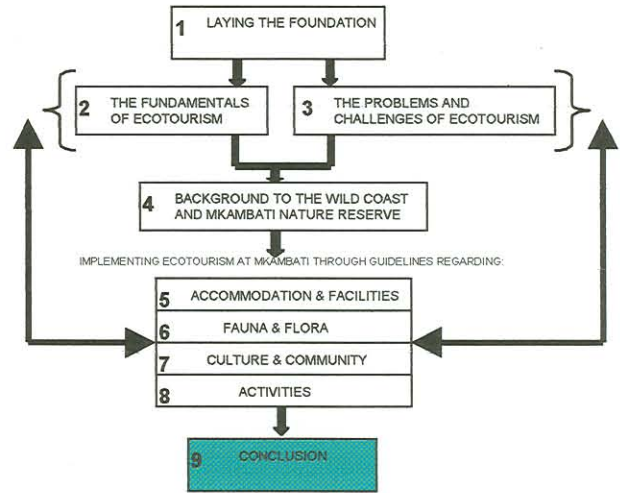
In Section 1.1.1 the problem was identified that ecotourism is seldom understood and implemented in a healthy way, and that the term is often misused. The aim of this dissertation was therefore to explore the fundamentals of ecotourism in depth via a literature study, and then to put them into practice at Mkomazi 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 implementation at Mkomazi in Table 2.1. 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 (Table 2.1), both in the ecotourism introduction (Figure 1.2) and in the comparison of Figure 2.3.

The relationship of the guidelines for Mkomazi (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 2.2 indicates which of the problems currently occur at Mkomazi 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 introduction is a valuable contribution to this emerging field. In addition, it simplifies the implementation thereof, as has been seen with the case study of Mkomazi 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 Mkomazi is shown in Table 2.1. The same aspects of the fundamentals as reproduced in this table can be used to implement ecotourism in any suitable destination, activity, or facility.

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.

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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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Key

- Mkambati Nature Reserve
- Major roads
- Rivers
- Waterfalls
- Swimming
- Cape Vulture Colonies
- Stables
- Shipwreck
- Airstrip
- Mkambati Palms

Existing Accommodation

- 1 The Lodge
- 2 Reception & Cottages
- 3 Point Cottage
- 4 Riverside
- 5 Gwe Gwe Rondavels
- 6 Caretakers house

Proposed Buildings/Structures

- A** Main Gate [Shop, 2 Churches & proposed Learning Centre & Nursery]
- B** Camping Site
- C** Main Complex [Reception, Executive Flat, Clubhouse, Loft (proposed EE Centre), Cottages 1-6, 11 more Cottages & shop]
- D** Stables
- E** Treetop Walk & Bird Hide & Gwe Gwe Cultural Village
- F** Mkambati Gates Lodge
- G** Bushcamp