

CHAPTER THREE: SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM POLICY AND THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 1998-2000 (TOURISM IN GEAR): A REVIEW FROM A RURAL TOURISM PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Introduction

According to the Institute for Future Research, vol. 1 (1996) South Africa has a potential to become one of the world's primary tourists' destinations. To ensure that South Africa realises its potential, its sustainable growth in the tourism industry, and for the tourism industry to act as an engine for economic growth, the government published its White Paper called: the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa in 1996.

Cabinet approved the White Paper on Tourism in June 1996. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism launched various initiatives to work and consult around the consolidation of a strategy through which the White Paper could be implemented. The consultation process resulted in the formulation of the tourism strategy, better known as the Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000: Tourism in Gear. Other documents published by the department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism includes, (1) Investing in Tourism (1997) and (2) The Institutional Guidelines for Public Sector Tourism Development and Promotion in South Africa (May 1999).

The main aim of this study is to critically analyse the tourism strategy of South Africa from a rural tourism perspective and to compare it with other international tourism strategies such as the Australian National Rural Tourism Strategy. Once the analysis has been done, key issues and gaps will then be identified for further discussions and will, together with the empirical research

results, serve as the basis for the envisaged rural tourism development strategy for the Limpopo Province.

3.2 Tourism White Paper: The Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa, 1996: A Review

In October 1994, the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism appointed the Interim Tourism Task Team (ITTT) with the mandate of drafting a tourism discussion paper as the basis for the future National Tourism Policy. The Interim Tourism Task Team (ITTT) produced a Tourism Green Paper in September 1995, which was widely distributed for comment. It was acknowledged that the process of arriving at a White Paper for Tourism is as important as the White Paper itself (South Africa, 1996). Cabinet approved the Tourism White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa in June 1996. The Tourism White Paper provides for a policy framework and guidelines for tourism development in South Africa (South Africa, 1996).

For decades South Africa has been relatively isolated from the rest of the world as a result of its apartheid policies. With the dawn of the “new South Africa”, which came as a result of the democratically elected government, it became clear that tourism potential should be unlocked to the benefit of both the tourists and the host country. It was clear that with a population of approximately 41 million and a land area of 1.27 million square kilometers (nearly five times the size of UK), South Africa’s resource base for tourism is phenomenal. The country’s tourism attractiveness lies in its diversity: diversity in wildlife, in its people, urban life and rural life (South Africa, 1996). Despite the appreciation of rural life, the White Paper does not mention rural tourism as a distinct product that can be developed.

The Tourism White Paper (South Africa, 1996) describes the development of tourism in South Africa as essentially a missed opportunity. According to the White Paper, the tourism industry in South Africa had been protected from foreign competition (limited international investment in tourism facilities), from demanding long-stay tourists (limited international visitors), and from itself (suppliers cater for a largely homogenous and predictable clientele, i.e. the easily identifiable needs of the privileged class). As a result, the potential of the tourism industry to spawn entrepreneurship, create new services, drive other sectors of the economy, strengthen rural communities, generate foreign exchange and create employment has not been realised (Human Science Research Council, 2001).

According to the Human Science Research Council (2001) the importance of tourism in South Africa is slowly being realised since 1996; and more efforts and financial resources are put into tourism. However, Naguran (1999) argues, as stated earlier that tourism in South Africa has a poor history of involving local communities and previously neglected groups in tourists related activities. People had been forcibly relocated from their land to make way for conservation areas and, as a result, there was much anger and a feeling that animals were thought to be more important than people. Naguran's argument supports the Human Science Research Council observation.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the Tourism White Paper (South Africa, 1996) is the absence of any specific section that focuses solely on rural tourism. Actually, no National or Provincial government in South Africa has a direct policy which deals exclusively with rural tourism development or even an exclusive section focusing on rural tourism issues. In other words, the Tourism White Paper of South Africa does not make specific provisions for Rural Tourism Development. Rural Tourism is not recognised as a special product as it is the case in Australia. This is in spite of the fact that South Africa has some of the best rural areas in the

world. The Limpopo Province is one of the most predominantly rural provinces. As much as there are many good things about the Tourism White Paper, it should be stated that it appears to be silent on rural tourism product and its potential in the country. Although the White Paper on Tourism regards South Africa, as a global leader in ecotourism, a lot has to be done in order to involve rural people in tourism activities. Even though the White Paper acknowledges that tourism brings development in rural areas, rural tourism as a product is yet to be appreciated.

It is the conviction of the researcher that South Africa and the Limpopo Province in particular, should follow the route the Australian government took several years ago and develop and package rural tourism products for the reasons highlighted in chapter two. According to the former Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Dr Pallo Jordan (1997) South Africa is gearing up for a sustained growth phase in international tourism arrivals- a growth that will energise both the tourism industry and create the momentum for the African Renaissance. If, indeed tourism is to contribute towards the African Renaissance, its products should therefore be reflective of the Africaness. It is against this understanding that rural tourism should be seriously considered for the poor rural Limpopo Province.

According to the Institute for Future Research (1996), the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa provides valuable objectives, policy guidelines, and principles concerning the full potential of tourism in South Africa. However, the Institute for Future Research has failed to realise that the Tourism White Paper of South Africa is rather silent about rural tourism product potential in a country that is more rural in many more ways than one. There is therefore a gap in terms of Rural Tourism Development. The following South African provinces are generally considered rural: The Limpopo Province, Kwazulu-Natal and The Eastern Cape Province. On the other hand, the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa does not make any reference about this emerging tourism product; i.e.

rural tourism. The full potential of the tourism industry in this country may not be realised if rural tourism product is not explored.

Many rural areas around the globe are now changing their image and aggressively marketing aspects of their rural heritage, authentic or otherwise, to would-be urban purchasers. Increasingly, rural areas have come to realise the economic benefits, which can accrue to rural areas from tourism and recreation development. It is ironic that after years of neglect, tourism and recreation have quickly come to be seen as major agents of economic redevelopment for rural and other areas. Government policies at all levels have begun to appear in recent years in efforts to increase access to rural areas for urban and rural residents, coupled with the realisation that some reallocation of wealth can also occur through such an activity (Butler et al, 1998).

The observation highlighted above by Butler and his co-writers is not applicable to South Africa where, as stated earlier, tourism policies are generally silent about rural tourism. It is indeed against this background that a Rural Tourism Development Strategy for the Limpopo Province in particular is not only important but urgent as well. It can therefore be argued that in terms of Rural Tourism Development, South Africa is far behind other countries (e.g. Australia). The potential for rural tourism in South Africa in general, and in the Limpopo Province in particular, is promising, provided it is well planned, developed and marketed.

3.3 The Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000: Special focus on the South African Tourism in Gear Strategy

3.3.1 An overview

After the approval of the Tourism White Paper of South Africa by cabinet in June 1996, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism launched various consultative initiatives to consolidate ideas and formulate a strategy through which the Tourism White Paper could be implemented and realised. The consultation process resulted in the formulation of the strategy called Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000 (also known as Tourism in Gear). This section is about a critical analysis of the Tourism Development Strategy, mainly from a rural tourism perspective. Put differently, this section seeks to find out if the Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000 (Tourism in Gear) considers rural tourism product potential in its endeavor to develop tourism.

The idea is to analyse the Tourism Development Strategy of South Africa and also to compare it with other similar strategies around the world. In more specific terms, the idea is to compare it with the National Rural Tourism Strategy of the Commonwealth of Australia (1994). Key issues and principles which are considered relevant to the situation in the Limpopo Province, as well as research findings will form the basis of the strategy for rural tourism development in South Africa and in particular, for the Limpopo Province. However, it should be unintelligent to assume that a strategy for another country will squarely fit in another country. That is why according to this school of thought, only those aspects which are relevant and appropriate to conditions and situations in the Limpopo Province will be considered for the purposes of developing a Strategy for Rural Tourism Development for the area in question.

3.3.2 The Current status of tourism in South Africa

The tourism sector has been in an expansion phase for the past 9 years, and has grown beyond expectations since the 1994 general elections. The total tourist expenditure in 1996 was approximately R26.8 billion. Domestic and international tourists contributed approximately R14.8 billion and R12 billion respectively. Exceptional growth occurred in 1995, when

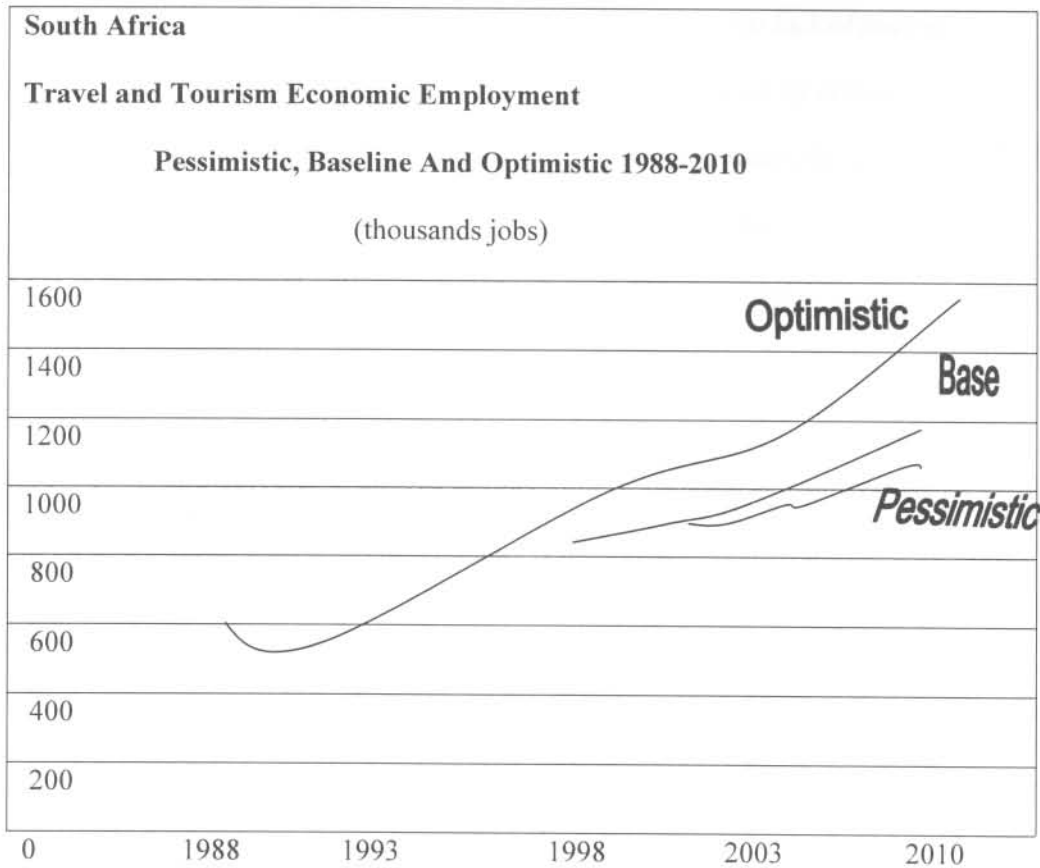
international tourism grew by 22% in 1994. The overseas component of the international market, which is the most lucrative, grew by 44% from 704 000 visitors in 1994 to 1 015 000 in 1995. Arrivals from the rest of the continent grew by 12%. This accounted for an increase of more than R3 billion in foreign exchange earnings for the year, from approximately R7 billion to almost R11 billion (South Africa, 1997).

The South African's Travel and Tourism (1998) believes that by 2010 more than 174,000 new jobs could be created directly by the Travel and Tourism industry, and 516,000 jobs (see figure 1) could be created, directly or indirectly across the borders of the South African Economy.

According to the latest Tourism Survey results (2000) the popularity of South Africa as a tourist destination increased by 24%- from 115 891 foreign air visitors in August 1998 to 144 097 in August 1999. The country's revenue from foreign visitors in August 1999 is estimated to have grown to over R2 billion – a substantial increase of 23% as compared to the previous August (<http://satour.com.News/2000>). The cumulative visitor arrivals during the first eight months of 1999 grew by 2.5% to 3.7 million (<http://satour.com/news/2000>).

The Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000: Tourism in Gear further points out that in spite of the healthy growth experienced during the period following 1994 the elections, the country has not been able to optimise its tourism potential. It is mainly because of this reason that this study is conducted, in order to unlock some of the tourism products yet to be acknowledged. Rural tourism is one such a product. The Tourism in Gear strategy is also silent about the potential of rural tourism in this country. The potential of Rural Tourism Development appears to be and overlooked despite the international trends of focusing on rural areas as tourist destinations.

Figure 1: South Africa travel and tourism employment pessimistic, baseline and optimistic 1998-2010



(Source: South Africa's Travel and Tourism, 1998)

3.3.3 An analysis of the tourism sector (SWOT analysis)

According to the Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000 (1997) an analysis of the tourism sector reveals the following key findings:

- *Strengths: diversity of attractions and unique selling features; well-developed core tourism infrastructure that has been able to absorb and accommodate high growth; largely deregulated, privately operated; competitive airspace policy; offers good value for money due to a favourable currency.*

- *Weaknesses: absence of a clear product branding and fresh marketing strategy; poor international promotion coverage due to major lack of marketing funds and a weakening currency; poor product diversification; lack of institutional capacity at all tiers; fragmentation and lack of partnership; lack of access and tourism activity in many areas due to past policies; lack of ownership and spread of benefits to disadvantaged communities; poor service ethic and culture; lack of skilled manpower; poor perception of safety; lack of sustainable management practices.*
- *Opportunities: growing world market to tap into; our product base compliments global trends and market needs; increasing freedom of airspace introduces competition and affordable access; availability of community resources (e.g. land) in many areas with tourism potential; many underdeveloped areas with tourism potential where economic growth is most needed; major new markets opening up after elections; tourism sector conducive to SMME development; major opportunities for human resource development.*
- *Threats: increasing incidence of crime against tourists may have a severely negative impact on the industry; danger of becoming unknown in the marketplace due to lack of marketing funds; potential irreparable damage and over- development of resource base; danger of overpricing by some industries; potential degradation of service and product quality.*

3.3.3.1 Strength

(a) Diversity of attractions:

While one of the strengths the tourism sectors in this country lies in its the diversity of attractions, it is clear that this feature is not yet fully exploited hence the absence of a clear product branding (e.g. rural tourism product branding). It may be said that until such time rural tourism product

development is looked at seriously, the advantage of diversity of attractions as pointed out in the Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000 will only remain on paper.

3.3.3.2 Weaknesses

(a) Absence of a clear product branding:

By taking the advantage of the above-mentioned strength, we would have partly addressed one of the weaknesses pointed out in the Tourism Development Strategy: an absence of a clear product branding and fresh marketing strategy.

(b) Poor product diversification:

Another weakness indicated in the Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000 (South Africa, 1997) is that of poor product diversification. Rural tourism product development would play a major role towards diversifying tourism products in the country, thereby affording tourists a true African experience. This, in turn, would give tourists a wide range of choice in terms of varied places of interests. It will not only spread the benefits of tourism to peripheral areas where such benefits are most needed, but would also lessen the pressure on the dominant destinations such as Durban Central, Cape Metropole, Garden Route, Gauteng Central and Kruger National Park.

(c) Fragmentation and lack of partnerships:

One of the major problems in South African Tourism sector, especially in rural areas, is the fragmentation and lack of partnerships (South Africa, 1997). Each tourist attraction is often by it's own (Butler *et al*, 1998). It is hereby envisaged that with the development of the Rural Tourism Development Strategy, tourism destinations could be better coordinated in such a way that a clear picture of regional tourism attractions could be drawn. In that way, partnerships could be reinforced. It is encouraging to note that there exist a partnership programme of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, the Business Trust, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa and South African Tourism (<http://satour.com>, 2000).

(d) Lack of access and tourism activity in many areas due to previous policies:

This is one weakness the study aims to address. It is true there is lack of access and tourism activity in many areas, particularly in rural areas. Tourism is mainly seen as an elite white man's activity. Most poor black people are left out and hardly benefit from the enterprise in spite of the fact that they are the inhabitants of the tourist's destinations. The strategy therefore aims at increasing access and tourism activities not only by branding the rural tourism product, but also by ensuring that communities are involved in the planning, management, monitoring and sharing of the benefits.

(e) Lack of ownership and the spread of benefits to local communities:

As highlighted in the above paragraph, the benefits of tourism are rarely shared amongst the most needy citizens. Because of that scenario, local people next to tourism destinations often see tourists as elite people and as a result, become hostile to tourists. There is less likelihood that destructive resource use practices can be stopped without changes in the social and economic situations facing communities. According to Carnea (1991) there is ample evidence that projects which focus on generating economic benefits without effectively encouraging local participation in the identification, design, implementation or evaluation of the development activities are less likely to provide widespread community benefits.

(f) Lack of skilled manpower and poor perception of safety:

Due to our history, many people were denied access to education and training; and this in turn, led to the prevailing lack of skilled manpower. It is predicted that, with the introduction of the rural tourism product, people will be trained in hospitality and the management of tourism enterprise. The Limpopo Province is generally perceived as a peaceful province, safety and security concerns are therefore not fully applicable in this area.

3.3.3.3 Opportunities

(a) Growing world tourism market to tap into:

Tourism is the largest industry in the world, and it continues to grow. By the year 2005, it will have doubled its present size if it continues to grow at current rates (World Travel and Tourism Council, 1992). Back home, South Africa is currently at the dawn of a new era. There are high expectations that the tourist industry will attract oversea investments and 'kick-start' the local economy. Whether the industry is capable of doing this, remains to be seen. However, with diversifying tourism products in the country, this seems possible.

(b) South Africa's product base complements global trends and market needs:

While it is true that South Africa's products complement global trends and market needs, our country has not yet developed all the products it has to offer the world. A clear example is the Rural Tourism Product, which is yet to be developed into a vibrant tourist attraction. Other countries like Australia are way ahead in terms of rural tourism development. According to Butler et al (1998) the recent years have witnessed a change from the passive, low key use of rural areas for recreation to the explosion of tourism as a highly active and dominant agent of change and control in the countryside and rural communities. In Australia, rural tourism provides an opportunity for the country to share in the nation's spectacular tourism growth (Australia's Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994).

(c) The availability of community resources (e.g. land) in many areas with tourism potential.

Most of the land in South Africa is rural and presents rural tourism potential as an added advantage. The Limpopo Province, as indicated earlier, is predominantly rural, with its economic centres self-contained and strategically located. The result is that large areas still remain untouched by human development and are well-preserved, unmistakably, African ecosystems are found here (<http://www.tourismboard.org.za/wildlife/index.html>, 1999). It is therefore likely that

rural tourism in the Limpopo Province could provide real African experiences for tourists, both domestic and international.

(d) Many underdeveloped areas with tourism potential where economic growth is most needed:

The magnificent scenery, untouched, almost endless display of nature, and prolific wildlife of the Limpopo Province offer endless opportunities for excitement and adventure (<http://www.tourismboard.org.za/adventure/index.html>, 1999). On the other hand, lack of alternative forms of development apart from agriculture in rural areas is a worrying factor. However, rural tourism enterprises could help in the emergence of new entrepreneurs in this area, where lack of alternative economic activities is a real concern.

(e) Major opportunities for human resource development:

Alternative forms of development also provide for human resource development because people will learn new skills to carry out the new tasks. Rural tourism development can therefore, be the right recipe for human resource development.

3.3 3.4 Threats

(a) Increasing incidents of crime against tourists may have a severely negative impact on the industry. Crime is indeed the biggest threat in South Africa for tourism development. However, comparatively speaking, the Limpopo Province is the least affected area by crime; hence the province is also known as the "home of peace" (<http://www.tourismboard.org.za>, 1999).

Rural tourism development could help South Africa and the Limpopo Province in particular, to take advantage of the strengths and opportunities highlighted above for the benefit of the industry and the poor, while at the same time addressing the weaknesses and threats indicated. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (1998) South Africa has tremendous advantages in the

global tourism market and some critical challenges. The future prosperity of the sector will be assured only if these advantages are consolidated and the weaknesses minimised. The envisaged Rural Tourism Development Strategy can play that role by encouraging the consolidation of the advantages and strengths, as well as minimise weaknesses and threats.

3.3.4 Tourism Vision

The tourism vision as stated in the Tourism Development Strategy of South Africa is to develop the tourism sector as a national priority in a sustainable and acceptable manner, so that it will significantly contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of every South African. As a lead sector within the national economy, a global competitive tourism industry will be a major force in the reconstruction and development efforts of the government (South Africa, 1997). For South Africa to realise this noble vision, it calls for the proper branding of tourism products. Rural tourism product branding could play a vital role towards the realisation of this ideal vision, and also in meeting the growth targets, such as the one to increase the contribution of the tourism sector from 4.7 to 8% of GDP by 2000 (South Africa, 1997). However, the contribution of the tourism sector has actually dropped to 3.75% of the GDP as by August 2000. Preliminary forecasts of 6.2 million tourist arrivals for 1999 did not materialise (<http://satour.com>, 2000). The actual arrivals were somewhat less than the advanced figures released earlier by Statistics South Africa (<http://satour.com>, 2000).

3.3.5 Underlying Principles

The underlying principles of Tourism in GEAR strategy are, according to the views of the researcher, correct and reasonable. These principles are that:

1. Government should lead tourism. Given our history past Government should really lead by means of providing efficient policies and appropriate funding to the sector in order to create an environment for private enterprise to flourish.

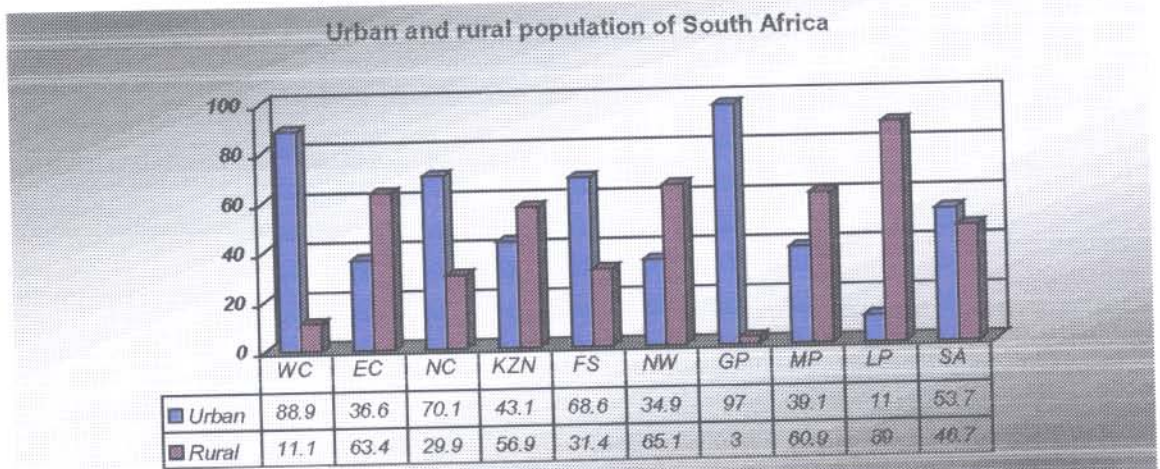
2. Tourism should be driven by private sector. Tourism should be directed, just like any other business by the principles of demand and supply, which make private sector a major partner.
3. Tourism should be community based. Without the support and participation by locals, tourism is likely to suffer.
4. Tourism should contribute to job creation.

3.4 The Limpopo Province Tourism Situational Analysis

3.4.1 Introduction

According to the Limpopo Provincial Government's Growth and Development Strategy (1999) the province covers an area of 123 910 square km, which is 10.2 % of the national land, and has a population of about five million people. The province is predominately rural (89%), see figure 2 below (Statistics SA, 1996).

Figure 2. Urban and rural population of South Africa



Source: Statistics South Africa, Census 1996

The Province is strategically situated at the northern most tip of South Africa, and is ideally positioned for easy access to African markets (see appendix A). It shares borders with Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique. The Limpopo Province has identified mining, agriculture and tourism as the three pillars of the Growth and Development Strategy. In terms of tourism, the province offers a mosaic of exceptional scenic landscape, a fascinating cultural heritage, an abundance of wildlife species and many nature-based tourism opportunities. It is the land of legends and myths and of ancient civilisations. Those in search of history will find many places of archaeological significance that yielded relics dating back millions of years (<http://www.tourismboard.org.za>, 2000). However, according to the website, people are probably the greatest assets of the province. People are warm and friendly, and ready to share the abundance of their province.

This populace consists of several ethnic groups distinguished by culture, language and race. There are the Northern Sotho, who speak Sepedi, and they make up the largest group (about 57%) of the population. The Tsonga, who speak Shangaan, constitute 23% with the Venda, who speak Tshivenda, comprising 12%. There are also a significant number of Ndebele speaking people, Afrikaans and English speaking people. The province offers the widest diversity of cultures, languages and traditions (Northern Province Department of Finance, Economic Affairs and Tourism, 1999). More information regarding the cultures and traditions of the above-mentioned ethnic groups is provided as part of the tourism resource package of the region they belong to (see page 57-61).

As stated earlier nature-based tourism is well established in the province. In the mean time, initiatives to commercialise or privatise all government-run nature and game reserve and parks (54) is underway. Eco-tourism has been identified as the preferred tourism brand for the province (Northern Province Department of Finance, Economic Affairs and Tourism, 1999).

As indicated in the previous chapter nature conservation has left people out of the equation of tourism and development in South Africa. Like it has been said already, cultural tourism is seen as a major factor in tourism development for the province. Cultural tourism is yet to be nurtured and integrated with nature-based tourism in order to offer tourists a complete tourism product. It is in this context that rural tourism, which combines nature-based activities and cultural activities could put the province on the tourism map.

In the past people or cultural tourism was not part of the nature conservation process; these were the times when nature and game reserves were government run. Obviously, the commercialisation and the privatisation of these provincial game and nature reserves can only push locals further away, because fees are likely to raise. Rural people are generally poor and can hardly afford high fees. It would appear as if eco-tourism and the commercialisation of nature reserves could not be compatible, given the poverty levels in the Province. The province is divided into four tourism regions. The four regions represent a microcosm of varied tourism activities.

3.4.2 Provincial tourism regions

The four provincial tourism regions are the Soutpansberg, the Capricorn, the Bushveld and the Olifants.

3.4.2.1 The Soutpansberg region

According to the Northern Province Tourism Board (2000) there are few places that give one a greater feeling of being in Africa, than the Soutpansberg-region. Endless expanses of undulating indigenous bush, marked by the grotesque forms of the baobab, wonderful wildlife, a profusion of birds and to top it all, fascinating history and cultures which truly make it "the Land of Legend". The area boasts one of the most varied natural, geological, archeological and cultural systems in the world and abounds with fascinating history dating back many centuries ago when the San roamed the veld and left us their artworks on the rocks and caves. These were the times when

Arabs and Indians sailed down the south and traded ceramics for gold and ivory of the ancient African kingdoms, which built their fortresses at Mapungubwe and Thulamela.

New cultural groups (e.g. Luvhola cultural village and Pfuhanani youth centre; all part of the Ribolla Tourism Association) are gradually moving into the tourism picture. These new cultural villages bring with them the cultural and traditional elements, which have been overlooked for years in the tourism sector, especially in South Africa. The region boasts the histories and cultures of VhaVenda, Shangaans and Afrikaners. There are traces of colourful characters such as Popi, who united the Venda nation and later became known as Thohoyandou, and Joao Albasini, the Portuguese trader who became headman of the Shangaans.

According to the Northern Province Tourism Board website, Venda is truly the Land of Legends as there is so many beliefs and stories about the supernatural. The traditional deity of the vhaVenda is Raluvhimba, a bird-likebeing. He travels like a shooting star and his voice is heard in thunder, lightning, droughts, floods and earthquakes. There is also the Guvhukuvhu waterfall, which is a sacred place. However, the best known sacred place in Venda is the mysterious Lake Fundudzi in the Mutale River. It is said that Lake Fundudzi is the only lake in South Africa.

When trying to answer a question posed by one of the German tourists, as to how African people really live today, Dugmore (2002) says that the beauty of Venda is that traditional practices are still very much a part of everyday life, and age-old rituals like the *domba* or python dance are still regularly performed. Teenage Venda girls lead this dance as a rite of passage to womanhood, just as their great-grandmothers did. There are many more traditional dances and practices by VhaVenda and Shangaan people which could fascinate tourists.

With regard to archeological places, Mapungubwe is truly one of the most remarkable icons of the province, and is in the process of becoming a World Heritage site. The name means "the Hill of Jackals" and reflects the fact that the first kingdom in Southern Africa was actually situated here. After scientific study had been conducted, carbon dating tests revealed that Mapungubwe has been the forerunner to what is currently known as, the Great Zimbabwe ruins. People occupied this area since 850 AD, but the top of the hill was only occupied from 1000-1200 AD. This is about two and a half centuries before Great Zimbabwe (<http://www.tourismboard.org.za>, 2000).

The Soutpansberg is a unique wilderness area. It has over 500 tree species. There are 465 species of birds as well as numerous mammal, reptile and amphibian species. Game farming is more ideal in the mopani bushveld (Northern Province Tourism Board, 2000). Other places and practices of interests include (but not exhaustive to) Manyeleti Game Reserve, Dongola-Vhembe Park, Makuya Park, Kruger National Park, Baleni Park, Elim Nature Reserve, Messina Nature Reserve, Fundudzi Lake, Phiphidi Waterfalls, Beit Bridge, Louis Trichardt, Thohoyandou, Giyani towns, cultural villages (Tshakuma, Dzata, Luvhola, Pfluxhanani), academic institutions such as the University of Venda, Madzivhandila Agricultural college, and the Giyani Nursing Campus, and a variety of traditional dances and customs (see appendix B).

3.4.2.2 The Capricorn region

According to the Northern Province Tourism Board (2000) the Capricorn region is an area of extreme variations. From the grassy plains and hills of Pietersburg, to the pleasant bushveld of Potgietersrus to the misty mountains of Haenertsburg, it boasts a rich variety in geological formations, plant and animal species. Its historical and cultural attractions are significant, incorporating San rock art, legendary characters such as King Makgoba of the Ba-Tlou people, Voortrekker-histories, Anglo Boer War remnants, and many more.

The capital city of the province is Pietersburg, but is now known as Polokwane, and is situated in this region. It was founded in the 1880s. Another town in the Capricorn region is Potgietersrus, which is now known as Mokopane, and it is one of South Africa's richest agricultural areas. It boasts one of the biggest citrus farms in the southern hemisphere. One of the most notable sites near Potgietersrus is the Makapans Valley, currently in line for World Heritage Status. Nowhere else in the world exists such an extended and complete record of hominid occupation. There are bones of Ape-men, which are 3,3 million years old and extinct animals. The Cave of Hearths is presumably the earliest evidence of man's use of fire (Northern Province Tourism Board, 2000).

Other places of interest for tourists include the magical mountains of Haenertsburg, Magoebaskloof and Agatha, which are linked together by the spectacular Georges Valley, and are characterised by indigenous forests, cascading waterfalls and lakes. The tallest man-planted tree in the world is situated in this region. There are many more places of interest such as the Chuene Crocodile farm, Eersteling Monuments, Museums, Sekhukhuneland, Zebediela, Nature Reserves, cultural villages, Hiking trails and the University of the North (see appendix B).

3.4.2.3 The Bushveld region

To most people, the bushveld is the most typical and the most beautiful veld-type in South Africa. More recently, the histories of the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho tribes are gradually being uncovered. The greatest draw-card however, remains the extraordinary natural attractions that are part of the bushveld: The Waterberg, a geological wonder supporting a biome covering approximately 14 500 km² offering spectacular vistas and scenic valleys; the Nylsvley wetlands, where the greatest variety of waterbirds are concentrated; the Marakele National Park and the Lapalala Nature Reserve (Northern Province Tourism Board, 2000).

The Bushveld region boasts the following important towns: Warmbaths, Nylstroom, Naboomspruit, Vaalwater, Thabazimbi and Ellisras. Each town in itself is worth visiting, since each has a surprising number of historical, cultural and natural attractions and activities. Perhaps the most notable town of them all is Warmbaths. It is estimated that two million tourists visit this resort per annum. It is also known as a "paradise" in the bushveld. It is a modern and internationally renowned Spa. The hot mineral springs bubble out of the earth at about 22 000 litres per hour. This town is only an hour's drive from Gauteng province. Other places of interest around Warmbaths resort are the Carousel Entertainment World, Warmbaths Waterfront, and Thaba Kwena Crocodile Farm (see appendix B).

3.4.2.4 The Olifants region

As the name suggests, this region fall in the valley of the great Olifants River, which stretches, from Giyani through to the Kruger National Park (see appendix B). It includes towns such as Phalaborwa, Tzaneen, Hoedspruit and Bosbokrand. The Olifants Valley is rich in wildlife, scenery, mountains, rivers, dams, history and cultural and ethnic attractions. The Valley of the Olifants encompasses some of the largest remaining wilderness areas in the country. It harbours the heartland of the lowveld, unspoiled indigenous forests, the beautiful escarpment and mountain ranges of the Northern Drakensberg (Northern Province Tourism Board, 2000).

There are numerous private Game Parks, such as Timbavati and Tshukudu Reserves, as well as easy access to the northern section of the Kruger National Park. The Valley of the Olifants is also the home of the late Modjadji V, the legendary Rain Queen (also known as the Queen of Rain). Modjadji means "Ruler of the Day". It was on this legendary figure that Rider Haggard, over 100 years ago, based his famous novel SHE. Time has done little to erode her reputation. Her history can be traced back to Zimbabwe some 400 years ago. She was a princess that had to escape her father's wrath after having fallen pregnant by her half-brother. Her mother helped her to steal her

father's rain-making medicines. She then settled on the Lobedu mountains near Duiwelskloof and practiced her rainmaking powers. A trip to the Limpopo Province without a stay at Modjadji Cycad Nature Reserve is arguably incomplete (<http://www.tourismboard.org.za>, 2000). The region is also a meeting place for the vibrant diverse cultures of the Shangaan, Pedi and Venda people (Northern Province Tourism Board, 2000).

3.4.3 The Limpopo Province tourism icons

The Limpopo Province, also known as the Great North, boasts a number of icons. Icons are places of interest and experiences that are a "must see, do, or experience". These icons consist of living cultures, ancient places, Nature Reserves and National Parks, trees, myths and legends, things to do, and things to experience. These icons are the Makapansgat Valley, Mapungubwe, Modjadji, the Kruger National Park, The African Ivory Route, Baobab Trees, Domba Dance, Venda Myths and Legends, and the Anglo-Boer War (<http://www.tourismboard.org.za>, 2000).

Since these icons form part of the regions, most of them have been elaborated in the above item with the exception of the African Ivory Route and the Baobab trees. The African Ivory Route cut across all the regions and brings together major interesting places in one trip. With regard to the Boabab trees, it is argued that there is no tree in South Africa that embodies the spirit of Africa more than the boabab tree. *Adansonia digitata*, as the boabab tree is scientifically known, is one of the trees in Africa with the longest lifespan. Some of them that can be seen in the province are already 3,000 years old, but average ones in the northern part of the province are between 300 and 500 years old.

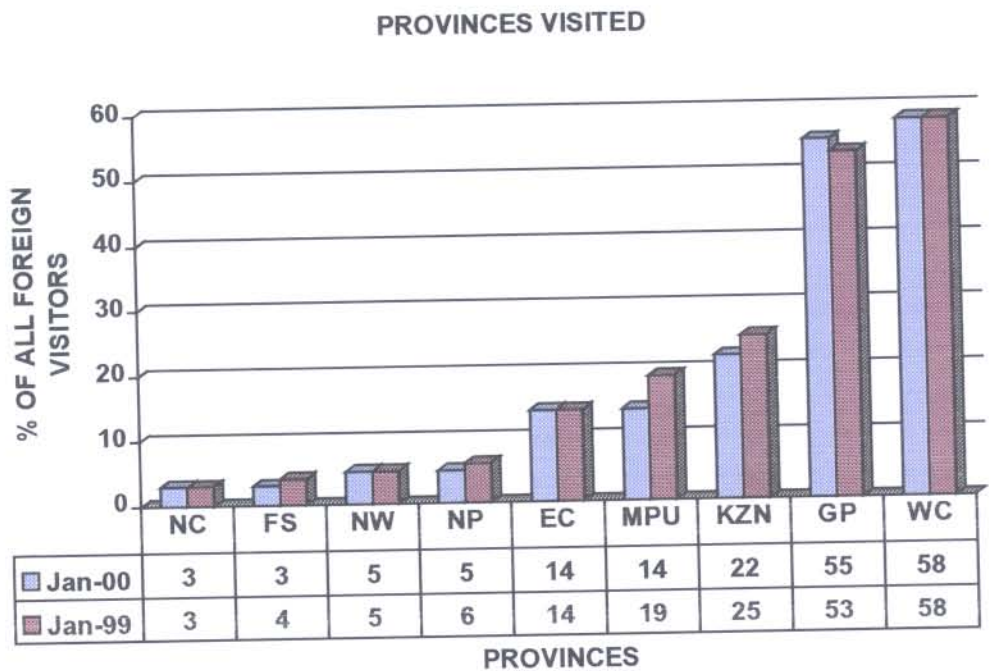
There is a baobab specimen near Sagole, a rural village in the North East of the province that can be visited. It is 3,000 years old and measures 43 metres in circumference at base (<http://www.tourismboard.org.za>, 2000). These icons are but few of the interesting places in the

province. The following item is on the most visited areas in the province as supported by the previous surveys.

3.4.4 International and Domestic tourism patterns in the province

According to a survey of South Africa's International Tourism Market (2000), the Limpopo Province's shares in the international tourism market amount to only 5-6% as compared to Western Cape (58%), Gauteng (55%), Kwazulu-Natal (22-25%), Mpumalanga (19%) and Eastern Cape (14%). These statistics, as indicated in figure 3, show that the Limpopo Province receives the least number of foreign tourists.

Figure 3: South African Tourism International Market, South African Tourism



Source: South African International Tourism Market, South African Tourism, 2000

With regard to the domestic tourism patterns, the HSRC (2001) reveals that of the total number of domestic tourism trips undertaken in South Africa, 12,9% of them (Table 2) were to destinations in the Limpopo Province. This figure is low as compared to other provinces such as Gauteng (19,6 %) and Kwazulu-Natal (19.0 %).

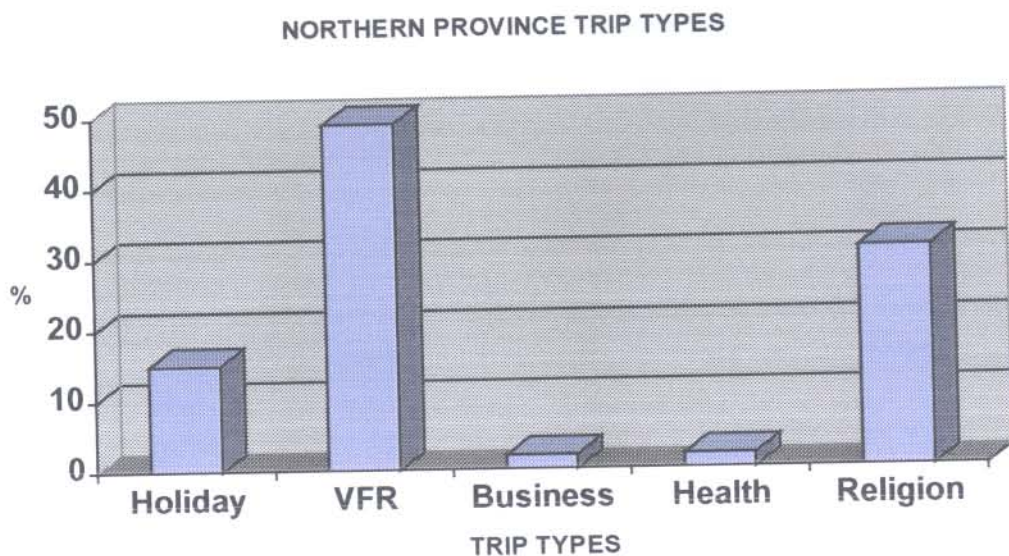
Table 2. Provincial destinations of domestic trips, May 2000 - April 2001

Province	Number of trips	%
EC	4296 765	12.8
FS	2429 088	6.7
GP	6579 421	19.6
KZN	6378 010	19.0
MPU	1913 403	5.7
NC	9063 48	2.7
NP	4330 333	12.9
NW	2651 910	7.9
WC	4196 059	12.5
Total	3350 1338	100.0

Source: South African Domestic Tourism Survey: HSRC 2001

Most travelers to the Limpopo Province destinations were residents of the province itself (53,7%), followed by Gauteng and North West residents (26,5% and & 7,3% respectively). The survey shows that there are different reasons for trips to the Limpopo Province. Recent travelers to the Limpopo Province destinations differed according to type of the trip. The tourism survey differentiated between leisure, business, visiting friends or relatives (VFR), health and religious trips.

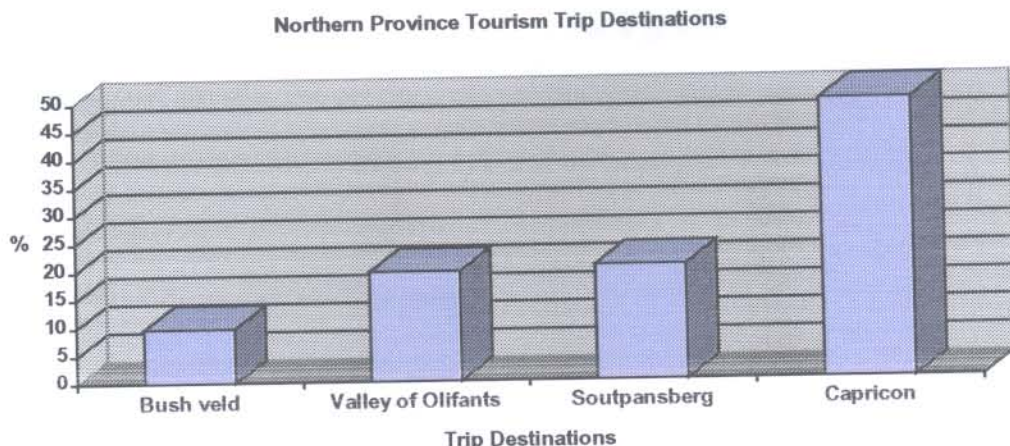
Figure 4: The Limpopo Province trips types.



Source: South African Domestic Tourism Survey: HSRC 2001

Most trips (49%) to the Limpopo Province destinations in the last twelve months had been for the purposes of visiting friends or relatives (VFR). After VFR trips, the most popular trip types were the religious trips, which represented about 30,7% of all trips to the Limpopo Province. Trips for holiday and leisure purposes represented about 10% of all trips, while business and health accounted for 2% each (see figure 4 above).

Figure 5: The Limpopo Province tourists' trip destinations



Source: South African Domestic Tourism Survey: HSRC 2001

Figure 5 shows that the most popular region is the Capricorn (49%), followed by the Soutspansberg region (20,6%). The Valley of the Olifants region is just below the Soutspansberg region with 19,7% while the Bushveld region accounts for 9.8%. Of all the trips, VFR trips were well spread across all the regions, but peaked up for the Valley of the Olifants. The location of Moria (the ZCC headquarters) made the Capricorn region a particularly important destination for religious trips. After the VFR trips, the most common reasons for visiting the Limpopo Province were leisure and religion (South African Domestic Survey, HSRC, 2001).

Asked about the sorts of activities they enjoyed, most travelers sited religious gatherings, visiting nature reserves, African cultural villages, shopping and soccer as reasons why they travelled to the Limpopo Province destinations. Peace and tranquility, and the availability of fresh produce (vegetables and fruit) were also mentioned as positive factors for tourist attraction. The least enjoyed activities were cricket, cycling, conferencing events and golf (South African Domestic Survey, HSRC, 2001). However, a concern was raised about the poor service (service standards and education and training) and facilities (roads and transport), as well as the lack of the African

culture and tradition as part of the tourist experience. These are issues that need to be addressed by tourism authorities in order to enhance the attractiveness of the Limpopo Province to potential tourists. Despite some of the challenges, the province still has a great potential to improve its domestic and international arrivals. The province can use the solar eclipse opportunity, coming December 2002, to improve and showcase its rural tourism opportunities.

3.4.5 The 2002 Solar Eclipse and The Limpopo Province

Every now and then, the universe conspires to give a place a shot at fame. And this time, it's the turn of the freshly renamed Limpopo Province to get the proverbial 90 seconds. On 4 December 2002, a total solar eclipse will be visible from the northern parts of the province, and up to 100 000 people are expected to descend upon the area in the hope of experiencing 90 seconds of total darkness during daytime. An eclipse is when the sun, earth and moon all line up, for people to experience total darkness during the day. The path followed by the 2002 eclipse will travel over parts of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique, as well as the northern parts (Venda) of South Africa. The eclipse happens at 06:32 and there won't be another one until 2030 (Hilton-Barber, 2002).

There is nothing in nature to rival the glory of a total eclipse of the sun, says astronomer Patrick Moore. No written description, no photograph can do it justice. But since someone's got to give it a shot, the best description I found was the one by journalist Phillip Briggs: 'Totality itself is profoundly disorienting. The brightest stars and planets appear in a suddenly darkened sky. Diurnal birds go silent, nocturnal insects start to chatter, flowers close their petals for the night, and large mammals mill around in aimless confusion. Equally, a total eclipse is majestically beautiful' (Hilton-Barber, 2002).

It is going to be a big moment. About 90% of the accommodation in the areas around the eclipse's path are already fully booked. And there's not a room left in the Kruger National Park. It is believed that tourists will also have a chance to explore other places of interests as explained above, such as African cultures and Maphungubwe (the first and greatest African civilisation). The Province will obviously be on the international tourism map. Hopefully, such an opportunity will bear better fruits for tourism development in the province.

3.5 Conclusion

The analysis of the Tourism in Gear Strategy reveals a number of opportunities and strengths the tourism industry in South Africa is blessed with. A gap however, exists in terms of exploiting these opportunities. The rural nature of our country and of the Limpopo Province in particular, calls for a special attention for this internationally recognised tourism emerging product: rural tourism. Branding a true African tourism product will not only benefit the rural poor population, but will also broaden our spectacular tourists attraction base. According to Mvuko (2001) more and more tourists are asking for an authentic African experience. They don't want to stay in accommodation facilities that make them feel as if they were still in Europe.

The Tourism Development Strategy 1998-2000 appears to be silent about the potential of rural tourism, and yet most of the weaknesses indicated in the strategy could be addressed partially by focusing on rural tourism. According to the Human Science Research Council (2001) survey, the Limpopo Province receives a relatively smaller number of domestic tourists as compared to other provinces. A Survey for South African International Tourism Market (2000) shows that in terms of international travel, the Limpopo Province received, for the period between January 1999 and January 2000, 5-6% visitors as compared to 58% of the Western Cape, 55% of Gauteng, 22% of Kwazulu -Natal, 14% of Mpumalanga, and 14% of the Eastern Cape. The Human Science

Research Council (2001) advised that rural and remote areas should be targeted for tourists who prefer such places. This would lessen the pressure on the dominant areas.

The branding of a special African experience in the form of rural tourism could perhaps therefore, help put the province on the tourism map. It seems advisable to look upon countries like Australia, which have taken the advantage of their rural areas by turning them into vibrant tourist destinations.