CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND GOAL OF STUDY

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is

- to determine the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer as an important resource in the aesthetic environment in terms of both its benefits and impact; and

- to provide user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

STATEMENT OF SUB-PROBLEMS

The following sub-problems are formulated as questions:

- What are the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society?

- What are the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in terms of both its benefits and its impact?

- What are the nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses flow out of the sub-problems:

❑ The perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society and forms part of sustainable environmental management. The role of the perceptual environment is not yet adequately recognised.

❑ While outdoor information transfer, as an important part of the perceptual environment, benefits society and the environment, it also impacts negatively on society and the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, its negative impacts will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.

❑ General principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in order to make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and to provide a basis for control and legislative measures. Such principles and guidelines can be used as an objective measurement for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

1.1.1 THE ROLE AND STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

Sub-problem 1: **What are the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society?**

Hypothesis 1: **The perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society and forms part of sustainable environmental management. The role of the perceptual environment is not yet adequately recognised.**

The escalation in urbanisation, the complexity of modern man's living environment and the rapid pace of everyday life have produced a totally new perspective on the quality of human life and have highlighted the ever-increasing importance of the psychosphere or psychological

environment for all social groups. Kane and Starke (1992, p.21) make the following statement with regard to the contemporary urban environment:

> *With more than half the world expected to be living in cities by the end of this decade, efforts to make urban areas more **livable**, more self-sufficient, safer, and less polluted – both **visually**[1] and in their daily output of waste – are increasingly important.* (Emphasis added.)

Apart from more pleasant urban environments we also should not forget man's psychological need for contact with the natural environment. Despite the vital role played by aesthetics in man's psychological environment, the perceptual environment is in most cases still treated as an environmental stepchild.

> *The fact that significant official, even private, segments of the South African society regard urban aesthetics as supremely unimportant is proven by the visual appearance of a great many residential areas that have come into being since the war. The drabness and uniformity are so impressive as to reinforce the belief that they must have been purposefully planned* (Engineering Week, 1982, p.53).

According to the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (1998, April, p.v):

> *The importance of the visual environment is often underestimated or is perceived as a fashionable and luxury environmental concern with no relevance outside the extravagant lifestyle of the upper reaches of modern society.*

The ever-increasing contribution of the tourism industry to the economy is also a factor to be taken into consideration when evaluating the role of the perceptual or aesthetic environment. In many cases the managers of tourism resources show a tendency to concentrate exclusively on isolated resources of high quality. According to the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (April 1998, p.v) the importance of visual resources should not be limited to major tourist attractions such as scenic landscapes and cultural streetscapes.

> *The visual environment also forms a backdrop to most other tourist activities such as game watching, touring, entertainment, shopping and sport. The visual environment can be seen as the fabric that gives meaning and substance to any tourism experience.*

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[1] It should be noticed that the perceptual environment not only involves sight, but all the other human senses, although sight might be the most prominent sense. (For a definition of the perceptual environment see par. 1.3.1)

From time to time certain voices have been raised against modern man's treatment of and indifference to his aesthetic environment. Peter Blake's *God's Own Junkyard - The planned deterioration of America's landscape* can be seen as a pioneering work in this regard. The main title of this book has been derived from a cynical adaptation of the phrase *God's Own Country,* a reference to the natural beauty of the United States. Blake (1979, p.24) made the following statement with regard to the treatment of the American landscape:

> *Our towns and cities boast many isolated handsome buildings – but very, very few handsome streets, squares, civic centers, or neighborhoods. ... Our suburbs are interminable wastelands dotted with millions of monotonous little lots and crisscrossed by highways lined with billboards, jazzed-up diners, used-car lots, drive-in movies, beflagged gas stations, and garish motels. Even the relatively unspoiled countryside beyond these suburban fringes has begun to sprout more telephone poles than trees, more trailer camps than national parks. And the shores of oceans, lakes and rivers are rapidly becoming encrusted with the junkiness of industries that pollute the water on which they depend.*

The following quotations also clearly reflect dissatisfaction with modern man's disregard for the aesthetic environment:

❑ Charles Kuralt (online):

> *I have been to the place (Roanoke Island) often. As you arrive from the South through the Cape Hatteras National Sea Shore Park, you see nothing but sand and surf and sea oats and water birds in great profusion and your impression is of the "Goodliest Land Under the Cope of Heaven." If you arrive from the North, through Kitty Hawk and Nags Head, which is the way most people arrive, you pass through a clutter of clapboard and a forest of billboards, ... and a chaos of hotdog stands and tee-shirt shops and strip malls and amusement parks. These two environments collide at the Mobil Station at Whalebone Junction. North of the gas station, nothing but scenic discord which depresses people. South of it, all natural harmony which elevates people. I think of that Mobil Station as the fulcrum upon which is balanced the worst nightmare and the best hope of all of us in this room*

tonight. Two Americas meet there: the ugly one and the beautiful one. And of course, Americans of their own free will created them both.

❑ John Barr (1970, p.1) referring to Britain:

...today our senses are being peculiarly and extravagantly abused. In town and in country an ever-spreading ugliness assaults our eyes. ever-increasing noise assails our ears.

❑ Charles Kuralt (online):

America does not belong to the franchisers and the developers and spoilers who do not give a damn about their country. The land is ours. Ordinary Americans, I am persuaded of this with all my heart. ordinary Americans want a beautiful country.

❑ Ian McHarg (1971, p.20):

What are the visible testaments to the American mercantile creed – the hamburger stand, gas station, diner, the ubiquitous billboards, sagging wires. the parking lot, car cemetery and that most complete conjunction of land rapacity and human disillusion, the subdivision. It is all but impossible to avoid the highway out of town, for here, arrayed in all its glory, is the quintessence of vulgarity, bedecked to give the maximum visibility to the least of our accomplishments.

Notwithstanding the beginning of an apparent awakening amongst the public with regard to the importance of the perceptual environment, environmental aesthetics can still be seen as a new and relatively young field of study. (Berleant, 1992, p.xi). The effort of most environmental managers are still focused on environmental priorities such as water and air pollution and biodiversity while excluding the perceptual environment. Most environmental manuals and handbooks do not cover the perceptual environment at all, with the only exception being a casual reference to this topic now and then. It is also excluded from most environmental policies and guidelines, as well as from the state of the environment reports of most countries. According to Matlack (1991), billboard-control advocates have to concede that they have trouble countering the billboard industry because the billboard issue has never moved to the environmental movement's front burner. It is often difficult to counter the argument that the billboard issue is not as important as toxic waste or nuclear war. The perceptual environment is furthermore not seen as part and

parcel of sustainable environmental management. This tendency can be attributed partly to the abstract nature of the aesthetic environment, which defies both the development of concrete norms and standards and a balanced and effective management system for the perceptual environment that would include it as part of sustainable environmental management.

The essence of the problem of disregarding and misusing the perceptual environment can be traced back to contemporary society's consumeristic mindset and lack of proper environmental ethics. Although the problem lies deeper than the perceptual environment, namely society's disrespect of the environment as a whole, the misuse of the perceptual environment, and especially outdoor information transfer, symbolises society's consumeristic mindset and lack of respect for the environment. Through the misuse, disregard and destruction of the perceptual environment, society is making a clear statement that everything in life is about consumerism with a corresponding lack of care for the environment. This symbolism can play an important role in conditioning members of society and may have a very negative effect on any environmental awareness campaign. When reviewing the problem of insufficient environmental ethics it seems as if the influence of the Western World and Christian society played an important role in this regard. (cf. White, 1966; Ice, 1975). Placing the emphasis for today's environmental crisis on the Christian's influence is justified in terms of the important role Christian society has played and is still playing in shaping world opinion and world society. It therefore also makes sense that Christian society should rectify this matter and provide sufficient ethics for environmental management. A more detailed exposition of sufficient Christian environmental ethics is given in Appendix 3.

1.1.2 THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE NEED FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANGEMENT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

Sub-problem 2: What are the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in terms of both its benefits and its impact?

Hypothesis 2: While outdoor information transfer, as an important part of the perceptual environment, benefits society and the environment, it also impacts negatively on society and the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed

with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, its negative impacts will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.

Shop signs have always formed an important feature of many a streetscape, while billboards have long since become a familiar landmark in both rural and urban landscapes. However, signs, advertisements and other forms of outdoor information transfer are among the components of the much-neglected aesthetic environment that have so far received the least attention as far as environmental management goes. Apart from the impact of outdoor information transfer the aesthetic potential of outdoor advertisements[2] is, according to Gordon Cullen (1971, p.151), also not realised today.

In the past various individuals or organisations have drawn attention to the negative effects of outdoor advertisements and signs as well as ineffective control measures. As far back as 1961 Constantine and Jacobson (1961, p.9) have made this statement with regard to the proliferation of urban signs:

> *…throughout the world, we are confronted with a vulgar and mistaken notion of free enterprise, expressed in the sign language of our time. We are assailed with a confusion of words, names and slogans in all sizes, in all forms, in all colors and shapes – a never-ceasing roar that moves, blinks, flashes warnings, pleads and cajols, demands, reminds, but seldom instructs.*

One of the best-known voices raised against the negative influence of billboards on the landscape is undoubtedly that of Ogden Nash in *Song of the Open Road* (quoted in Blake, 1979, p.27):

> *I think I shall never see*
> *a billboard lovely as a tree.*
> *Indeed, unless the billboards fall,*
> *I'll never see a tree at all.*

The following quotations serve as a further indication of dissatisfaction in this regard:

❑ Pat Brown:

> *When man throws an empty cigarette package from an automobile, he is liable for a fine of $50. When a man throws a billboard across a view, he is richly rewarded* (Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online, (1)).

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[2] For the difference between outdoor information transfer and outdoor advertising see par. 1.3.2

Scenic America
http://www.scenic.org

Photo by Nicole Rosenthal: Billboard Liberation Front
http://www.billboardliberation.com/home.html

Photo dates: March 2000

Billboards and signs may have an *impressive* impact on the aesthetic environment, whether it be in the United States of America (top left and right) or in the Republic of South Africa (bottom left and right). Impacts like these are giving rise to individuals and organisations speaking out against the negative effects of outdoor advertising and the ineffectiveness of control measures.

Figure 1.1

The negative impact of signs and advertisements

❑ Stephen Mulholland regarding the situation in South Africa:

> *A sort of anarchy is being loosed on our country which threatens to festoon our roads and suburbs with environmentally destructive signs and massive, garish billboards. All this flows from the greed and total disrespect for the law of local authorities, aided and abetted by national legislators who treat the Constitution with contempt…There is at work in our country a lethal combination of grasping outdoor advertisers with scant regard for the environment and politicians bent on squeezing every last cent out of every possible source* (Sunday Times, 2000 February 13).

Since it seems only logical that signs, advertisements and other elements of outdoor information transfer should, in terms of their role and function, also fulfil a positive and even crucial role in the perceptual environment of everyday life, it is no surprise that voices have also been raised in defence of the environmental potential of advertisements and signs. In the words of Gordon Cullen (1971, p.151) street publicity or advertisements can be seen as *the most characteristic, and, potentially, the most valuable contribution of the twentieth century to urban scenery.*

In many cases the reaction to outdoor advertising is characterised by opposing and extreme viewpoints, with a total ban on all billboards opposing no control at all, and which either excludes all benefits or all impacts. Certain factions in the outdoor advertising industry have for long been campaigning for a *laissez-faire* policy and for self-control. These factions often have a narrow vision with regard to the management and control of outdoor advertising and do not always recognise the benefits of effective management. They seem to ignore the fact that inadequate management and control may have a corrosive effect on those benefits of crucial importance to their own industry. Although on the one hand many parties in the outdoor advertising industry tend to behave responsibly, there are always the rogues and political pressure groups that do not. On the other hand certain environmental and community groups opposing outdoor advertising often tend to throw the benefits of outdoor information transfer out the window in their effort to tackle the impacts.

In many cases legislative instruments may exist for controlling outdoor information transfer. However, in most cases the public, controlling authorities and the outdoor advertising industry might have only a vague notion about the real importance of the effective management of outdoor information transfer. This tendency can mostly be ascribed to the lack of background information

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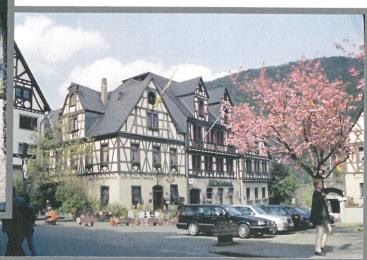UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
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Signs and advertisements may make a positive contribution to the aesthetic environment. In many cases this potential may not be fully realised. Signs in Oberwesel (above left and right), a town on the Middle Rhine in Germany, supplement local placeness or sense of place (bottom left and right), which plays a crucial role in the aesthetic environment.

Characteristic German letter type (top right) harmonises with the informal lines of the vine on the wall and supports a sense of place created by German architecture (bottom right). A stylish and unobtrusive advertisement on a street lamp (top left) enhances the sense of tranquility reflected by the leisurely pedestrian pace on narrow cobbled streets (bottom left).

Figure 1.2

The positive contribution of advertisements and signs

ate of photos: April 1999

to motivate these parties and to ensure commitment and involvement in a holistic and balanced manner. In South Africa the *South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC)* (DEA&T, 1998) was developed as a national guideline document to provide detailed conditions for the management and control of outdoor advertisements and signs. This manual recognises the differences in local needs and circumstances and suggests that controlling authorities should adapt the prescribed conditions in this regard. SAMOAC has been incorporated into legislation such as the Advertising Along Roads and Ribbon Development Act 21 of 1940 and the South African National Roads Agency Limited and National Roads Act 7 of 1998 in the form of regulations and is also applied by most local authorities through local outdoor advertising bylaws. Together with this legislation, SAMOAC forms a very effective mechanism for the management of outdoor information transfer. However, up till now, these mechanisms have not been implemented successfully by the relevant controlling authorities. Outdoor advertisements of all sizes are increasing at an alarming rate in South Africa to the detriment of the perceptual environment and tourism resources. One of the most obvious reasons for this is the lack of motivation amongst the controlling authorities together with the persistency of the outdoor advertising industry and the lack of involvement of local communities. The role of outdoor advertising as a source of income to controlling authorities is often overemphasised while sufficient information constituting a holistic rationale for the effective management of outdoor information transfer is not available as a motivational tool. In many cases, authorities, who want to implement effective management, do not have the necessary facts to defend such a step. Up till now the debate on the effective management of outdoor information transfer has been centred around a single aspect of road safety, while ignoring a multitude of other impacts and benefits. It seems as if the problem of ineffective control and inadequate application of legislation is also shared in other parts of the world. In the United States the 1965 Highway Beautification Act, which can be seen as an effective instrument of control, was rendered almost powerless due to the influence of the outdoor advertising industry and a lack of motivation amongst controlling authorities (Altoona Mirror, 1991; Matlack, 1991).

Another major problem is the tendency to limit the aesthetics of outdoor advertising to advertising contents while the relationship between advertising contents, advertising structure and the surrounding environment is ignored. This limited approach means that the important issue of placeness and the character of the surrounding environment is not taken into consideration when designing and evaluating outdoor advertisements and signs.

In the past no holistic approach has been followed in studying the subject of outdoor information transfer. Most studies concentrated on a single aspect – in most cases the correlation between traffic safety and outdoor advertising - and then only a single facet of such a correlation, namely the correlation between billboards and the distraction of driver attention. The meaningful management of outdoor information transfer will not be possible without a holistic approach that will give a true indication of the nature and extent of the benefits and impact of all types of outdoor information transfer.

1.1.3   THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF USER-FRIENDLY GUIDELINES

<u>Sub-problem 3:</u> **What are the nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer?**

<u>Hypothesis 3:</u> **General principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in order to make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and to provide a basis for control and legislative measures. Such principles and guidelines can be used as an objective measurement for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.**

The subjective nature of aesthetics and the perceptual environment has already been mentioned as a problem in managing outdoor information transfer effectively. In the words of Barr (1970, p.8):

> *The physiology of the eye, the act of perception, how the eyes see, are common to all sighted men; though the psychology of the eye, the art of perception, what is seen is an individual as a fingerprint.*

This problem is enhanced even further by the evasive nature of the concept of sustainability. A great need exists for sufficient guidelines and principles to involve controlling authorities, the public and the outdoor advertising industry in the effective, balanced, holistic and sustainable management of outdoor information transfer. Such guidelines should provide a logical and universally applicable basis for the formulation, interpretation and application of regulatory measures, as well as for the design of outdoor signs and structures.

1.2 FIELD, METHOD AND PERSPECTIVE OF STUDY

The following is necessary in order to clearly delimit the study:

❑ This study covers all forms of outdoor information transfer, with the exclusion of any signs forming part of an official roads traffic sign system.

❑ This study focuses to a certain extent on commercial advertisements provided by outdoor advertising contractors, which is the most dominant part of outdoor information transfer in terms of numbers, size and investment.

❑ Although the emphasis is placed on the aesthetic role and impact of outdoor information transfer, the economic, ecological and the other social aspects of outdoor information transfer cannot always be separated from the aesthetic. This study therefore covers the social, economic and ecological impact and role of outdoor information transfer as an aesthetic element in an integrative and holistic manner.

❑ Outdoor information transfer occurs mostly in urban areas due to population density and the concentration of economic activities. However, although outdoor information transfer does not feature as strongly in non-urban areas, its impact might frequently be more severe, owing to the *natural* state of the environment. This study therefore includes both urban and non-urban environments.

This study is based solely on a literature study of both written and electronic information which varies from peer-reviewed research reports on outdoor advertising and traffic safety to electronic newspapers and websites of pressure groups such as Scenic America. Care was taken to ensure the credibility of Internet resources. Although many of the sources are not and cannot be peer-reviewed due to its nature, it made a valuable contribution in identifying viewpoints, problems, opportunities and trends regarding outdoor information transfer. The Internet served a valuable function in tracing the most recent information in this regard. Older sources were also used in order to trace the roots of current problems and in some cases older sources were seen as crucial and *timeless* sources regarding the aesthetic environment.

With regard to study perspective, this study is conducted against the background of a Christian world-view and axioms. (In Appendix 3 an exposition is provided on a Christian environmental world-view. This also includes a Christian perspective on sense of place or *genius loci*).

1.3   MAIN DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are relevant to the problem statement and hypotheses:

1.3.1   PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT
(For more detail see par. 1.4.1)

In the simplest terms the perceptual environment can be seen as that which can be perceived by the human senses. It can also be defined as that which is concerned with the appreciation and evaluation of beauty, including the manifestations or absence of natural beauty and nature, as well as the manifestations or absence of cultural beauty, and which involves all human senses. Seen in this light, the perceptual environment can therefore be equated to the aesthetic environment.[3]

The following three characteristics constitute the essence of the perceptual environment out-of-doors:

❑ **Anthropocentrism**

Since the environment is perceived through the human senses, man can be seen as central to the perceptual environment. (See 1.4.1.2.)

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[3] According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary the term *aesthetic* is defined as *concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty* or *having such appreciation; sensitive to beauty* or *in accordance with the principles of good taste.* The term *aesthetics* is defined as *the philosophy of the beautiful, esp. in art* or *a set of principles of good taste and the appreciation of beauty.* For the purpose of this study, a broader meaning is bestowed upon the terms *aesthetics* and *aesthetic environment.* It is not limited to aesthetic appreciation in the sense of good taste, applying the rules and principles of art and the appreciation of fine arts by the cultural elite. The aesthetic environment also includes *natural beauty* or the aesthetics of nature and is not limited to areas of outstanding natural or cultural beauty but encompasses a diversity of cultural and natural landscapes to be experienced by ordinary people as well. For the purpose of his study the aesthetic environment is interpreted in terms of various degrees of beauty. Beauty and ugliness can therefore be seen as the opposite ends of a continuum of aesthetical experience. In order to understand and appreciate real beauty the antithesis of beauty is also necessary. The aesthetic environment is seen as that which can be **perceived and aesthetically evaluated** whether it has a higher or lower degree of beauty. Seen in this context the aesthetic environment can therefore be equated to the perceptual environment since the perceptual process also involves the evaluation of perception and imparting meaning and responding emotionally to what is perceived. For the purpose of this study, the discipline of environmental aesthetics also entails addressing that which has a very low aesthetic value in order to improve its value through the process of environmental management.

❑ **Holism**

The principle of holism is relevant to both the perceiver and the perceived. With regard to the perceiver, although sight is the most prominent sense, all human senses supplement each other to produce a holistic experience. With regard to what is perceived, elements of the biophysical and cultural environments interact in a synergistic manner to create perceptual experiences. (See 1.4.1.1.)

❑ **Environmental or natural order**

Certain natural perceptual laws and principles exist through which the environment expresses itself and which man can use to create pleasant environments. These laws create beauty and order and give meaning to man's experience of his environment. (See 1.4.1.3.)

1.3.2   OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER AND OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

For the purpose of this study the following is understood under outdoor information transfer:

Outdoor information transfer can be seen as the act or process of guiding, warning, informing, notifying, advising, promoting, advertising or any other act or process of transferring information in the outdoor environment by means of one or more of the human senses.

Outdoor advertising can be seen as the act or process of describing favourably or drawing attention to products, goods, commodities, activities, services, enterprises or business entities in the outdoor environment by making use of one or more of the human senses in order to evoke or promote sales, consumption or participation.

In terms of the number of messages and amount of money spent, commercial or outdoor advertising can be seen as the most prominent part of outdoor information transfer. However, outdoor information transfer encompasses much more than commercial advertising. It is also aimed at various other informative functions of benefit to the community. It is not always possible to distinguish between outdoor advertising and the rest of outdoor information transfer, or in other words, between commercial and non-commercial messages. The terms *outdoor information*

transfer and *outdoor advertising* might often be interchangeable. The link between outdoor advertising and the promotion of goods and services is not always clear-cut. For instance, should a guidance sign to a guest house, which forms part of an official roads traffic sign system, perhaps be seen as a commercial advertisement since it can be associated with the promotion of goods and services?

In the light of the aforementioned, it is preferable and safer to use the more inclusive term *outdoor information transfer.*

Conventionally outdoor information transfer consists of posters, billboards and various other sign types, ranging from the small *Beware of the dog* sign on the garden gate to the massive internally illuminated sign on a skyscraper. However, outdoor information transfer may make use of a variety of other instruments and media such as radio and television broadcasts at open-air gatherings, large television screens at sports events, and even technologically more advanced gimmicks such as talking bus shelters.

Seen in this light, outdoor information transfer means any perceivable presentation with the purpose of transferring information in the outdoor environment. An outdoor advertisement is furthermore not only limited to advertising content, but also includes any supporting structure or instrument or device necessary to convey the message.

It is also important to define the term *outdoor environment*:

In the simplest words the outdoor environment means the environment outside any building. The word *building* can be defined as any roofed structure, with or without walls, and which has a means of ingress and egress underneath the roof. The outdoor environment is interpreted anthropocentrically, with the position of the perceiver as the key element rather than the position of the advertisement or sign. In terms of this study outdoor information transfer will therefore also include any advertisement or sign inside a building which can be perceived by one or more of the human senses from outside such a building.

Outdoor information transfer and outdoor advertising should be clearly distinguished from the term *out of home advertising* which, if interpreted in its fullest sense, would also include any

advertisement inside a building other than a home and which is not perceivable from outside such a building.

1.3.3 EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Effective management is seen as an optimisation of the benefits of outdoor information transfer, as well as a minimisation of the impacts thereof.

1.3.4 IMPACT

For the purpose of this study impact is seen as the negative effect or influence on the biophysical, cultural or socio-economic environment.

1.3.5 USER-FRIENDLY GUIDELINES

User-friendly guidelines refer to guidelines which may be interpreted and applied by anybody who cares to appreciate the aesthetic environment without the need for specialised skills and qualifications.

1.3.6 SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
(For more detail see par. 1.4.2)

Sustainable environmental management is management aimed at sustainable development. Sustainable development can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987, p.43).

For the purpose of this study sustainable development is aimed at the following:

❑ Improving the quality of human life, emphasising qualitative development instead of quantitative growth, and including all needs and all communities.

❑ A long-term commitment to future generations. Man does not own the earth's resources, nor does he have any exclusive rights regarding the utilisation of the earth's resources; he is merely holding the position of manager and steward of resources.

❑ A holistic approach which recognises the interrelationship between environmental and economic goals and includes all aspects of the environment.

❑ Order and the conscious limitation of human activities, which should be based on more than a mere pragmatic and materialistic approach to the improvement in the quality of human life.

1.3.7 HOLISM OR SYNERGISM

Synergism or holism refers to a unity where the whole is more than the sum of the parts and the relationship between units is more important than the individual units themselves. For the purpose of this study and viewed from a Christian perspective, this unity cannot be interpreted in pantheistic terms where all creation is seen as being of the same essence. Creation is not simply an extension of the essence of God, but was created by God outside Himself. This unity therefore also refers to a creational order upheld and maintained by God through his Son even today, despite the fact that the environment has been wounded by the Fall. Although man plays an important role in managing the environment there should be no polarisation between man and nature or culture and nature. Holism therefore also implies a unity between cultural and natural environments.

1.3.8 PLACENESS AND SENSE OF PLACE

Placeness or *genius loci* is a concept that cannot be ignored since it forms such a crucial element in the perceptual environment.

According to Motloch (1991, p. 296), placeness can be seen as the *innate ability* of a place or setting to form vivid mental images, to effect major changes in emotional state, and to be remembered over extended periods of time, whereas sense of place can be seen as the *mental construct* of place in the form of a vivid mental image.

Bell (1996, p.197) defines *genius loci* as: *The intangible qualities which contribute to the identity of a place and help determine the differences between one place and another.*

The totality of natural and man-made things, together with history, culture and tradition, assembled in a unique way, contribute to placeness. However, there may be key elements which dominate and which are of particular significance. Placeness is more than relatedness and character. It refers to uniqueness of quality and individuality of character which makes one place or location different from any other. *While all places have a character, this in itself is not adequate to induce genius loci. It is the uniqueness which makes it special and with which we can readily associate* (Bell, 1996, p.107).

Placeness is abstract and intangible, it tends to be more commonly understood on an emotional and subconscious level and it may require trained senses and aesthetic skills to recognise the factors contributing to it. *One of the difficult aspects of "genius loci" is that we may instantly sense its presence but be unable to identify what has created it* (Bell, 1996, p.107). It is sensitive, fragile and vulnerable and may be very easy to destroy and difficult to create. *... "genius loci" is an elusive quality which tends to be easier to conserve than create* (Bell, 1996, p.108).

For the purpose of this study, sense of place is purely an experience of beauty, aesthetics, culture and customs, and cannot be associated with any esoteric or mystic interaction between people and place advocated by practices and beliefs such as geomancy, Feng Shui, pantheism or paganism.

1.4 A MORE DETAIL DISCUSSION OF PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Two concepts, namely *perceptual environment and landscape* and *sustainable development*, which are of great importance to this study, and which are contentious and complex in nature, justify a more detail discussion.

1.4.1 PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

The term *landscape* can be broadly defined as the perceptual environment out of doors. It can be used to describe a singular and undefined entity as well as more defined entities or specific environs and settings. Since human perception involves abstract qualities and subjectivity, landscape can also be associated with the psychosphere and psychological values. The following characteristics are of relevance in defining the term *landscape* more specifically:

1.4.1.1 Holism

Holism firstly implies a spatial synergism. Earlier definitions were rather restrictive and *reserved the term landscape only for those lands modified for permanent human occupation and defined landscape as the "anti-thesis of wilderness"* ... (Motloch, 1991, p.1).[4] In modern times, however, man and wilderness cannot be separated, since man's influence, such as the phenomenon of acid rain, extends to the most isolated corners of the globe. According to Berleant (1992, p.3), any kind of natural setting is difficult to identify in modern times,

> *...since nature, in the sense of a landscape unaffected by human agency, has long since disappeared in nearly every region of the industrialized world. Most wilderness areas are not primeval nature but regions that reflect the earlier and ongoing consequences of human action in the form of land clearing, erosion, strip-mining, reforestation, acid rain, modifications of the surface of the land and in the distribution of water, alternations of climate induced by the vast expanses of paved surfaces in urbanized areas, introduced species of fauna and flora, and now the dessication [sic] of the ozone layer, from whose consequences in global warming and increased solar radiation no area of the planet is immune.*

City and countryside are interrelated. According to the ecological footprint concept, urban centres are influencing the environment on a regional and global level. On the other hand the urban-dweller cannot be isolated from the natural environment, not even in high-density areas. There is a constant interaction between man-made urbanness and natural elements such as wind, sky,

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[4] The term landscape originated from the German word *landschaft,* meaning a small collection of buildings as a human concentration in a circular pasture or cultivated space surrounded by wilderness (Motloch, 1991, p.1).

rain, shadows, plants and birds. In its contemporary sense, therefore, landscape should be used as an inclusive term, embracing both wilderness and urbanness. In the words of Berleant (1992, pp.10; 174), landscape or the aesthetic environment is an inclusive concept, it *does not differentiate between the human and the natural and... interprets everything as part of a single continuous whole...*, and *the entire sensible world is included within the purview of aesthetics.*

Holism also embraces environmental influences and forces. According to Motloch (1991, pp.7; 45):

> *Landscapes are point-in-time expressions of a myriad of influences that are ecological, technological, and cultural. Settings are particular locations, designed or nondesigned, that are generated by these influences, ... Landscapes are, in a positive sense, the environmental litter left behind by a multitude of forces.*

The landscape or aesthetic environment is everything that there is; it is all-inclusive, a total, integrated, **continuous process** (Berleant, 1992, p.9). (Emphasis added.) Any single perceptual element can therefore not be perceived in isolation, but should be seen within the context of setting and process.

The landscape is also inclusive in terms of the perceiver. Landscape is not limited to specially designed areas, settings or scenes that can be seen as a form of art and that can only be enjoyed or truly perceived and appreciated by the experienced, the artist, the cultivated or the talented. The aesthetics of landscape should be interpreted as *applied* or *practical aesthetics*, the application of aesthetic values and principles by ordinary people to matters of daily life. According to Foote (online), the experience of place *is not reserved for academics, planners, and writers. It is for everyone, for you and me. And it's fun to figure out what place is all about.* And in the words of Sharp (1968, p.67):

> *The appreciation and enjoyment of townscape as such is not in the least limited to places where good architecture exists, nor to those who have expert eyes to see it. It is a pleasure to be got in any town that has some interest of form: and it can be enjoyed by anyone who cares to enjoy it.*

In the same sense landscape is also not limited to the perception of rural and natural areas of outstanding beauty or scenic value by the more privileged. It also includes the perception of a variety of landscapes with a diversity of character during everyday-life by ordinary people.

According to England's Countryside Agency landscape character occurs everywhere although it may be valued more in some places than others (Swanwick, 1999, June, p.C25).

Synergism in terms of the perceiver also refers to the human senses. The perceptual process implies a simultaneous involvement of all the human senses in perceiving our environment. Sight can be seen as the most dominant sense, with the other senses playing a supplementary role.

1.4.1.2 Anthropocentrism[5]

Landscape is in essence an anthropocentric concept since it necessitates the involvement of man as perceiver: *...the notion of man as the perceiver is central to the idea of landscape. Without man there would be no landscape, only land* (Kirkbride, 1997, p.24). Or as Berleant (1992, p.10) puts it: *Environment is nature experienced, nature lived.* Human experience and perception can therefore be seen as a key element of landscape. However, landscape implies something more than a mere perceptual process. It implies a participating experience through which the perceiver ascribes meaning to the perceptual characteristics of a setting and which involves a change in emotional state. The environment cannot be interpreted as a surrounding area that *lies outside the person, a container within which people pursue their private purposes* (Berleant, 1992, p.3). The landscape is not something that can be perceived from a distance, *as if it were outside and independent of ourselves* (Berleant 1992, p.4).

1.4.1.3 Natural order

Man perceives the landscape in terms of a natural or creational order which is interpreted and experienced by means of natural principles such as line, form and pattern. Berleant (1992, p.164) talks about *an aesthetic that bases our appreciative response on the awareness, selection, and understanding of the order by which natural forces have produced the objects we admire.* He compares the appreciation of order in nature with the appreciation of the skill and creativity embodied in the design of a human art object.

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[5] For the purpose of this study *anthropocentrism* should be distinghuised from *egocentrism*. Anthropocentrism is interpreted as man performing a leading role regarding the environment, while egocentrism is interpreted as everything being done for personal gain or for the sole benefit of man.

The same approach of experiencing order can also be applied to the cultural environment shaped by man and interacting with natural forces and elements. The same natural principles are also used to order man's experience of cultural landscapes.

Natural order implies that beauty and aesthetics should harmonise with nature and culture rather than clashing with it.

1.4.1.4 Process and change

No landscape is static. In the words of Bell (1996, p.5): *...all are subject to evolution and change over time as the result of natural or man-made processes.*

The landscape also shows change and variations over the short term since it does not consist of static elements only. Much vitality and interest come from non-static elements such as people, birds, animals, the weather, changing light conditions, cloud patterns and the wind. Short-term change is also reflected by the state of the perceiver. According to Motloch (1991, p.279), the sensing of landscape and place is *temporal, that is, it ebbs and flows with user movement, changes in setting (or the manner in which these are displayed), and changes in emotional state...* Sharp (1968, p.43) describes the relation between change and movement by the perceiver as follows:

> *The townscape becomes anything but static, anything but a series of set scenes, a succession of architectural still-lifes. It becomes a living moving unfolding kinetic experience, becomes a complicated resolution of changing relations.*

1.4.1.5 Character

The landscape can be categorised into different *landscape groups* based on elements such as the intensity of human activity, for example natural landscape, rural landscape, cityscape or streetscape, or the distinctive character of specific geographical areas[6], such as Bushveld

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[6] The concept of geographical diversity in the character of the rural England landscape forms the basis of the Countryside Agency's *Character of England Initiative*. A character map of England has been produced which divides the countryside into 159 *character areas*. These character areas and their landscape descriptions will form a framework for more detailed landscape assessments. In this manner an effective mechanism will be established for

landscape, Western Cape landscape, Highveld landscape, etc. Geographical areas imply different ecological forces (ecosystems) and different cultural forces.

> *Ecological forces operating over time create regional landscapes, that is, regionally differing sets of expressions. ... Each landscape is an integrated set of expressions, which holistically responds to a multiplicity of influences. As systems, they function differently, one from another; as visual resource they express themselves quite differently; but each has its unique spirit of place, or "Genius Loci"* (Motloch, 1991, p.53).

1.4.2   SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

Sustainable development and sustainable management are key environmental concepts.

> *Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

The above definition, formulated by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987, p.43), also known as the Brundtland Commission, is one of the first and best known definitions of the term *sustainable development*.

However, there are numerous other definitions of sustainable development and just as many interpretations of this concept. Unfortunately, most of the definitions leave room for misinterpretation to *greenwash* environmental damaging projects or to justify unhealthy economic growth and excessive consumerism.

The majority of definitions tend to limit the scope of sustainable development to the biophysical environment by emphasising aspects such as ecosystems (cf. IUCN *et al.*, 1991, p.10) or natural capital (National Commission on the Environment, 1993, p.2). However, some definitions also include the social environment by referring to community systems (cf. ICLEI *et al.*, 1996, p.3) or social systems (cf. Meadows *et al.*, 1992, p.209).

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the management of the perceptual environment in England. This will ensure the responsible and creative management of change in order to maintain, restore and enhance the distinctiveness of landscape character. (cf. Countryside Commission, 1993; Swanwick, 1999.)

Most definitions on sustainable development have the following attributes in common:

1.4.2.1 Anthropocentrism: Improving the quality of human life

Most definitions reveal a very strong sense of anthropocentrism by striving for the improvement of the quality of human life.

Although quality of life implies ensuring that every individual has a decent standard of living in terms of basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, it does not necessarily imply economic growth under all circumstances and at all cost. In order to achieve sustainability, economic growth will have to be abandoned, postponed or transferred to another area in certain cases (cf. Badke, 1991, p.108).

Meadows *et al.* (1992, pp.xvi,xix) distinguish between growth and development and see growth as quantitative expansion and development as qualitative improvement, thus distinguishing between *quantity of output* and *quality of life*. According to this approach, improving the quality of human life in the first place implies qualitative development instead of quantitative growth.

Certain schools of thought have a purely materialistic approach to quality of life and see the improvement of the quality of human life as being limited to the provision of *basic* services to poorer communities (cf. ICLEI *et al.*, 1996, p.3). However, obtaining sustainable development necessitates a broader view of *quality of human life* that should include all needs and all communities. Although non-material needs are also relevant to poorer communities, it becomes more prominent and critical in wealthier communities. Such unmet non-material needs can be seen as a crucial factor, giving rise to unsustainable growth. It should therefore be taken into consideration and be provided for in a profound manner.[7]

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[7] *Poorer people desperately need more food, shelter, and material goods. Wealthier people, in a different kind of desperation, try to use material growth to satisfy other needs, which are also very real but are in fact nonmaterial-needs for acceptance, self-importance, community, identity. ... People don't need enormous cars; they need to feel attractive and they need excitement and variety and beauty. People don't need electronic entertainment; they need something worthwhile to do with their lives. And so forth. People need identity, community, challenge, acknowledgement, love, joy. To try to fill these needs with material things is to set up an unquenchable appetite for false solutions to real and never-satisfied problems. The resulting psychological emptiness is one of the major forces behind the desire for material growth. A society that can admit and articulate its nonmaterial needs and find non-material ways to satisfy them would require much lower material and energy throughputs and would provide much higher levels of human fulfillment (Meadows et al., 1992, pp.41; 216). Christians, along with the rest of society, have*

1.4.2.2 Long-term commitment and future generations

Although this attribute is still anthropocentric it is less pragmatic. The emphasis is not totally egocentric since it is diverted from the self to future generations.

Man does not own the earth's resources, nor does he have any exclusive rights in the utilisation of these resources. His position is merely that of *manager and steward of resources* to be passed on to future generations. This includes not only natural resources, but all material and non-material things and therefore also cultural resources.

1.4.2.3 Synergism and interrelationship

The National Commission on the Environment (1993, p.2) recognises the interrelationship between environmental and economic goals:

> *The key element of sustainable development is the recognition that economic and environmental goals are inextricably linked. Long-term growth depends on a sound environment, and resources to protect the environment will be forthcoming only from a strong economy. Both goals are intended to improve the quality of life of individuals, communities, and society. To the extent that either environmental or economic policy impoverishes the quality of life, it has failed.*

If a true holistic approach to sustainable development is followed such an approach should include all aspects of the environment, including the perceptual environment. This supposition is supported by Bell (1997, p.23):

> *... there is a need to develop the moral base for our environmental actions as a society drawing on the knowledge of ecology, natural sciences and aesthetics. This moral perception has weakened, along with the retreat of traditional religious beliefs. The resulting land use decisions based on poorly developed understanding and half knowledge may prove unsuitable and unsustainable. ... We need a better awareness of the link between nature, healthy ecosystems and aesthetics, and of*

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come to believe the unspoken maxim: A certain amount of damage to the earth is the cost of the lifestyle we require; we dare not sacrifice this lifestyle, because there is nothing else to give life meaning (Badke, 1991, p.130).

the wider meaning and value of aesthetics beyond the superficial level which the subject frequently receives.

Although the concept of *holism* implies unity and order it also implies diversity within such unity and order, which is a key aesthetic principle. There is therefore no reason for a sustainable society to be uniform and aesthetically dull and dreary. According to Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.213): *Diversity is both a cause of and a result of sustainability in nature, and it would be in human society as well. … Cultural variety and local autonomy could be greater, not less, in such a world.* They refer to the necessity of the *preservation of ecosystems in their variety, with human cultures living in harmony with those ecosystems – therefore high diversity of both nature and culture, and human tolerance and appreciation for that diversity* (Meadows *et al.*, 1992, p.226).

Placeness is an imperative for sustainability. Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.227) refer to a sustainable society that harmonises with local ecosystems, which they relate to the need for re-establishing *the sense of community and of* **relationship to place** *that has been largely lost since the Industrial Revolution* (Emphasis added.)

1.4.2.4 Limitation and order

Sustainable development should imply order and conscious limitation of human activities and should be based on more than a mere pragmatic and materialistic approach to the improvement in the quality of human life.[8] (See 1.4.2.1.) The emphasis should therefore be placed on *sustainable management* of the environment rather than on *sustainable development,* since sustainable management includes sustainable development and will lead to sustainable development. This will require a radical change in cultural perceptions and values. Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.192) talk about existing *cultural expectations and practices that maldistribute income and wealth, that make people see themselves primarily as consumers and producers, that associate social status with material accumulation, and that define human goals in terms of getting "more" rather than having "enough."*

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[8] *There is a constant flow or "throughput" from the planetary "sources" of materials and energy, through the human economy, to the planetary sinks where wastes and pollutants end up…. There are limits to the rates at which human population and capital can use materials and energy, and there are limits to the rates at which wastes can be emitted without harm to people, the economy, or the earth's processes of absorption, regeneration, and regulation* (Meadows *et al.*, p.45).

The industrialist and economist never fail to emphasise the importance of the interrelationship between environmental and economic goals as far as sustainability goes. Although this interrelationship should be recognised there is often a lack of honesty and seriousness amongst economists and developers in this regard. This interrelationship is more often applied in terms of how environmental concerns can be used or rather misused as a marketing mechanism to promote sales and consumption.

A sustainable society should not be seen as antagonistic to economic growth or commercial advertising *per se*. In the words of Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.210):

> *A sustainable society would be interested in qualitative development, not physical expansion. It would use material growth as a considered tool, not as a perpetuate mandate. It would be neither for nor against growth, rather it would begin to discriminate kinds of growth and purposes for growth.*

1.5   THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

❑   To look at the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer in a holistic manner. Most studies and reports on outdoor information transfer focus on a single facet or type of outdoor advertising. The variety and interrelationship of impacts and benefits are mostly overlooked. Most interested and affected parties are guilty of tunnel vision – the outdoor advertising industry tends to ignore the impacts of outdoor advertising while groups opposing outdoor advertising tend to ignore or underestimate the value of outdoor advertising.

❑   To provide the necessary motivation for involving controlling authorities, the outdoor advertising industry and the public in the meaningful and sustainable management of outdoor information transfer as an important part of aesthetic resource and environmental management. The aim of the study is to stimulate interest and participation in the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

- To provide general principles and user-friendly guidelines that will be universally applicable and will form a basis for outdoor information transfer control and management by controlling authorities, the public and the outdoor advertising industry in a sustainable and less subjective manner. The aim is not to provide principles and guidelines of such comprehensiveness and magnitude that they would constitute the beginning and end of all principles and guidelines relating to outdoor information transfer, but rather to develop a framework and point of departure that would hopefully be added to by other practitioners in the field of outdoor information transfer.

- To provide useful recommendations regarding the management of outdoor information transfer.

This study is aimed at a wide variety of target groups:

- The main target group consists of non-design professions and people without design skills at controlling authorities, environmental bodies and pressure groups, and such people in the outdoor advertising industry and the public in general. This study will also provide graphic designers at advertising agencies with a more holistic approach to the perceptual environment and the design aspects of outdoor advertising. It is also aimed at emerging local authorities in South Africa and neighbouring countries, which for the first time have to grapple with the problem of controlling a flood of Western advertising types.

- This study will also benefit design professions such as architects, landscape architects, urban designers and planners.

In order to be of benefit to the main target group this study is presented in a more user-friendly style instead of the traditional academic style. This includes language, structure, layout and the use of a large number of quotations and photographs as practical illustrations. Although the length of the study may limit its practical use to a certain extent, a too concise exposition may have the same limitations. A more lengthy discussion of the various components of this study was seen as a mechanism for conveying new and often difficult concepts to diverse target groups, which might often have opposing views and motives, and to involve these groups in the effective management of outdoor information transfer. It would also provide the necessary material and

arguments for defending an approach of effective management. In order to solve the limitation of length, summaries of the key components of this study may be provided as an introductory mechanism while the original study would still serve as main reference for the effective management of outdoor information transfer. (See Recommendations 1 and 11)

1.6 A PREVIEW TO THE STUDY AND PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

1.6.1 THE ROLE AND STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

The first problem to be addressed in this study is to determine the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society. With this in mind a hypothesis was formulated which states that the perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society while also forming part of sustainable environmental management. It furthermore assumes that the role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised.

Outdoor information transfer operates mainly within the realm of the aesthetic or perceptual environment, which in its turn forms a crucial part of the psychosphere. Seen against the intricate nature and complex demands of modern life it seems as if the psychosphere has assumed a role of ever-increasing importance in recent times. Should the role of the psychosphere and the perceptual environment be seen as an issue of critical importance, or should the voices being raised against the neglect of aesthetics be seen as an over-romanticised concern far removed from the realities of modern life – a life of rationality, of science and technology, and the realities of poverty, the unequal distribution of wealth and the freedom of commercial speech? Chapter 2 of this study will give more clarity in this regard by analysing the role and status of the perceptual environment in more detail and by testing the above hypothesis. Various issues will be addressed with regard to the role of the perceptual environment, such as the creation of more pleasant and healthy human living environments, the conservation and enhancement of tourism resources and the stimulation of economic development. The status of the perceptual environment will also be measured against its recognition in environmental legislation.

The following preliminary conclusions can already be made from Chapter 1 regarding the role of the perceptual environment:

- If an anthropocentric and holistic approach is followed, aesthetics cannot be ignored in defining the environment, but should be seen as an integral part of the environment. This will mean that the importance of and need for perceptual resource management can be equated to the need for and importance of environmental management in general. The perceptual environment should therefore be included in any holistic strategy for environmental management.

- Holistically spoken both basic human needs and non-material needs will have to be addressed in order to prevent the unsustainable utilisation of resources. Both types of needs may be seen as equally important contributing factors to environmental degradation and environmental collapse.[9] Unhealthy non-material needs, such as the craving for luxury and status items, will have to be channelled to more healthy expressions of such needs, for instance aesthetic enjoyment.

- Seen from a holistic perspective the perceptual environment plays a crucial role in the sustainable management of environmental resources. Sustainability is not possible without a solid moral basis and higher values. The aesthetic environment may induce such values and may contribute towards a moral basis. Aesthetics stimulates and sharpens man's consciousness of the need for responsible environmental management. Aesthetics forms the stage and decor in experiencing nature.[10] Even wildlife cannot be truly appreciated without a favourable aesthetic setting – without experiencing an appropriate sense of place. The elephant in the Pretoria Zoo is not exactly the same as the elephant on the banks of the

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[9] Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.275) present a hypothesis which states that collapse will take place in the form of *an uncontrolled decline in a population or economy induced when that population or economy overshoots the sustainable limits to its environment and in the process reduces or erodes those limits. Collapse is especially likely to occur when there are positive loops of erosion, so that a degradation of the environment sets in motion processes that degrade it further.* Since Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.3) see economy and the environment as one system that is irreversibly linked it may be concluded from the above hypothesis that collapse also refers to environmental systems, which may also include the aesthetic system. Aesthetic collapse may therefore be seen as the erosion and degradation of local cultures and placeness by a global culture and global economic growth, by introducing aesthetic elements not compatible to local character or placeness and destroying aesthetic elements that are important in expressing local character, until a point of now return is reached where it may be virtually impossible to restore any local character and placeness. This must be seen in the light of the fact that placeness or *genius loci* is sensitive, fragile and vulnerable and tends to be easier to conserve and enhance than to create (Bell, 1996, p.108).

[10] *Visual resources such as scenic landscapes and cultural streetscapes constitute major tourist attractions. The visual environment also forms a backdrop to most other tourist activities such as game watching, touring, entertainment, shopping and sport. The visual environment can be seen as the fabric that gives meaning and substance to any tourism experience* (DEA&T, 1998, April, p.v).

Letaba River in the Kruger National Park. The perceptual environment can either restore the human soul and spirit or pull it down in despair – this is true even in the case of the slum dweller. The landscape should be seen as the spatial and aesthetic setting for the activities of man.

❑ In order for the perceptual environment to generate a moral basis for the sustainable management of environmental resources a proper world-view on environmental management will have to be established. At the moment it seems as if the perceptual environment is providing negative values instead of providing a positive value base and inspiration for sustainable environmental management. It furthermore appears as if Christian society should take its part of the blame for the current lack of environmental ethics and the misuse and abuse of the perceptual environment. It also seems as if the western World and Christian society can play an important role in providing sufficient environmental ethics due to its prominent role in shaping world society. This issue is covered in more detail in Appendix 3.

❑ From a philosophical point of view the importance of the aesthetic environment is clearly reflected by the anthropocentric character of the landscape. Without man as perceiver no landscape would exist. Man has been created with a sense of appreciation of beauty in order to enjoy the aesthetic environment. He needs the enjoyment of aesthetics in order to exist. According to Nan Fairbrother (cited in Bell, 1996, p.6): *Man is ... the only species who deliberately alters the design of its environment for no other reason than to give itself aesthetic pleasure.*

❑ In discussing the term *sustainable development* in 1.4.2, an element of Hypothesis 1, namely that the perceptual environment forms part of sustainable environmental management, has already been partly proven. This is mainly based on the essence of a holistic and anthropocentric approach to sustainable development and sustainable environmental management. The argument follows that if such a holistic approach is followed, all aspects of the environment, including the perceptual environment, would have to be included. The same argument follows in the case of an anthropocentric approach since the perceptual environment is in essence anthropocentric.

1.6.2   THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE NEED FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANGEMENT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

The second problem to be addressed in this study is to determine the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in terms of both its benefits and its impact.

The following hypothesis has been formulated with regard to the above problem and will be tested in Chapter 3 of this study: *Outdoor information transfer as an important part of the perceptual environment benefits society and the environment, but it also impacts negatively on the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a laissez-faire policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, the impacts thereof will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.*

Since history tends to repeat itself, a historical perspective of the benefits and impact of outdoor advertising is used as starting point in Chapter 3. The benefits and impacts of outdoor advertising in contemporary society are covered in a holistic manner while public opinion and preferences regarding outdoor advertising are also included.

However, the following preliminary conclusions can already be made from Chapter 1 regarding the above hypothesis :

❑   It seems as if outdoor information transfer plays an important role regarding the perceptual environment.

❑   It was shown that while on the one hand there seems to be a certain discontent with the negative impact of outdoor advertisements and signs, on the other hand there seems to be a displeasure with the planning and designing professions not realising the design potential of advertisements and signs. The fact that voices are raised for and against outdoor information transfer therefore suggest that outdoor information transfer involves both benefits and negative impacts.

❑ It seems as if the impact of outdoor information transfer can be traced back to a lack of environmental ethics in contemporary society.

1.6.3   THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF USER-FRIENDLY GUIDELINES

The third problem to be addressed by this study relates to determining the nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

With this in mind, a hypothesis was formulated which states that general principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in order to make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and to provide a basis for control and legislative measures. It furthermore states that such principles and guidelines can be used as an objective measure for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

The above problem and hypothesis are covered by Chapter 4 of this study. Both general principles as well as aesthetic principles and user-friendly guidelines are provided for the effective management of outdoor information transfer. However, certain important principles can already be identified from Chapter 1, which serves as a starting point for Chapter 4.

❑ Since landscapes are generated holistically by a myriad of influences and forces no single perceptual element should ever be perceived in isolation, but should always be seen within the context of a setting.

❑ Landscape is not limited to specially designed areas, settings or scenes that can be seen as a form of art which can be enjoyed or truly perceived by, and are of value only to the experienced, the artist, the cultivated or the talented. It includes a variety of landscapes with a diversity of character and it is to be enjoyed by all members of society.

❑ The management of the perceptual environment should not be aimed only at areas of outstanding aesthetic value, but should rather be aimed at maintaining, restoring and enhancing the diversity and distinctiveness of landscape character.

❑ Man perceives the landscape in terms of natural aesthetic principles through which an inherent environmental order is experienced and interpreted. Beauty and aesthetics should harmonise with nature and culture rather than clashing with it.

❑ The perception of landscape is a kinetic experience.

❑ Landscape character forms the basis for placeness and *vice versa.*

❑ Placeness is sensitive, fragile and vulnerable and should be managed carefully.

❑ Sustainable development should imply order and conscious limitation of human activities and should be based on more than a mere pragmatic and materialistic approach to the improvement of the quality of human life. Man must not allow himself or his technology to do everything he or it can do

1.6.4   A SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the conclusions arrived at in Chapters 1-4, as well as useful recommendations regarding the effective management of outdoor information transfer.