

CHAPTER 5

BENEFITS BEYOND BOUNDARIES – RHETORIC OR REALITY?

The objective of this chapter is to measure the level of awareness, attitudes and perceptions of communities living around the KNP regarding their involvement in tourism and conservation activities. A brief background is followed by a survey which tries to determine whether there are tangible benefits flowing from protected areas to adjacent communities.

The relationship between communities and protected areas is “a marriage of heaven and hell” (Borrini-Feyerrabend, 2003). When protected areas came into existence, park managers seldom thought of sacred community areas that date back centuries and the vast conservation contributions (refer to Chapter 3) made by indigenous communities to the management of natural areas. Indigenous and local communities have devised and implemented conservation regimes for millennia using mechanisms ranging from sacred prohibitions to detailed rules for access (Jaireth & Smyth, 2003). In all, community conservation is hardly ever acknowledged and local people are too often erroneously perceived as enemies of nature (Blignaut & Moolman, 2004).

The study by Els (1994) referred to in 3.15 is an example of the reflection of perceptions, attitudes and values that black employees in the rest camps of the KNP and the adjacent communities had about the KNP and nature conservation in general. They did not see any value in conserving wild animals and had a negative view about nature conservation and the KNP.

5.1 RATIONALE FOR THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted in the neighbouring communities of the KNP to determine levels of awareness, attitudes and perceptions with regard to their involvement in park activities as stakeholders and also to obtain information on future improvements on community relations and other issues that affect neighbouring communities.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective was twofold – on the one hand to obtain quantitative information in the form of a survey questionnaire (see Annexure 10) in terms of general attitudes and perceptions of the

communities about KNP-related issues. On the other hand, open-ended questions were also posed to obtain qualitative information that gives a more subjective, richer and deeper view of exactly how the neighbouring communities view various aspects of the KNP's conservation and tourism activities.

5.3 RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher drew up the initial questionnaire and allowed the Social Ecology division of the KNP to use their knowledge and experience in sharpening the questions. For piloting purposes, the researcher and his team went to the Belfast community outside Kruger Gate to pilot the questionnaires. Based on the initial feedback and experiences of this pilot run, some changes were made to the questionnaire. It was noted that the questionnaire took a long time to complete, since the researchers had to talk to the participants and write down their answers. The fact that the questionnaire had to be in English (for data to be captured and interpreted) often necessitated that questions first be translated into the local language, posed, and then the answers provided by participants in their own language had to be translated back into English and written on the form by the researcher.

5.3.1 Data collection

Members of the Social Ecology division and field researchers (five Nature Conservation Diploma student interns from Pretoria Technikon) were provided with copies of the questionnaire and asked to complete the questionnaires themselves when visiting the respondents' homes. A target of approximately 200 questionnaires was initially set but only 130 were returned.

The research team completed the questionnaires and these were sent back to the researcher for data capturing and coding.

5.3.2 Sample

The target sample were individuals from the neighbouring communities. These individuals were purposefully selected to participate in the survey by employees from the Social Ecology division of the KNP.

5.3.3 Method of data analysis

Quantitative questions were coded and percentages and/or number of responses on specific distracters could be conveyed using descriptive statistics – mostly frequencies. It was also possible to consider the mean scores per question, although with the Likert-type scale (statement with answer options ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), this would just give an indication of the general view or attitude, since it is not a standardized scale.

With regard to the qualitative questions, responses from participants were typed and grouped according to topic area. In the next phase, themes were identified under each topic, thereafter the data was again ordered and built into sub-themes.

Qualitative data provides a deeper understanding and does not attempt to generalize. To this effect, it is more subjective and provides the viewpoint from the respondent's position. Attempts were made to cover the richness of information received in such a way that no important themes or identified topics were omitted.

5.4 RESULTS

The results are presented in three sections. Firstly, descriptive information on the sample is given. Thereafter, the quantitative results and the qualitative results are provided separately.

5.4.1 Sample

A total of 130 questionnaires were returned. Some of the questions provided biographical information and the sample is thus described based on this information. Figure 5.1 shows the gender distribution of the sample.

Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of age groups for the participants.

It should be noted that this sample can not be considered representative, since participants were not randomly selected in any way. Nevertheless, a good age distribution is evident from the above figure.

Next, the language distribution for the participant group is shown in Figure 5.3. The largest two groups in terms of language were the Siswati and the xiTsonga groups.

FIGURE 5.1: Gender distribution (as percentage) of the sample

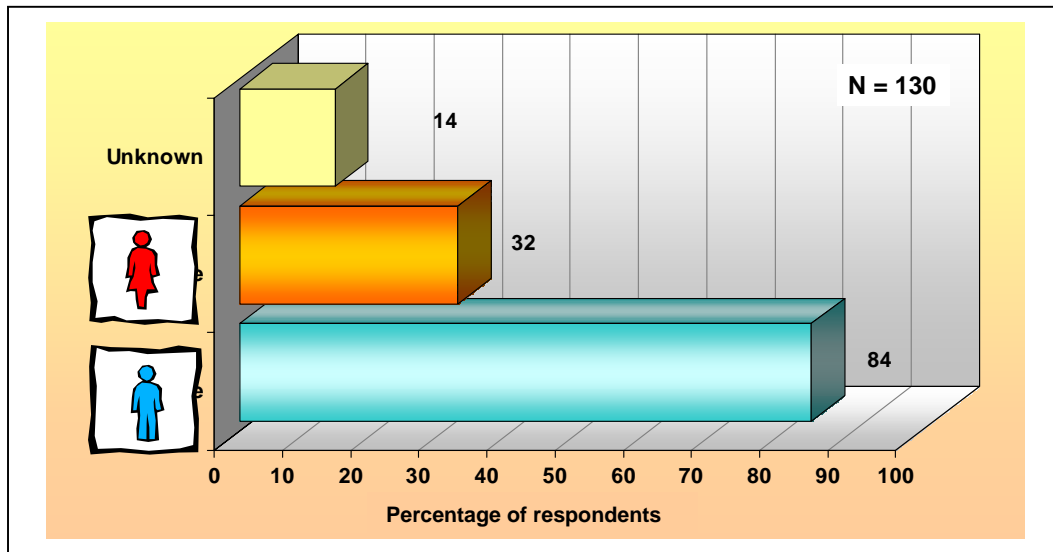


FIGURE 5.2: Age distribution (as percentage) of the sample

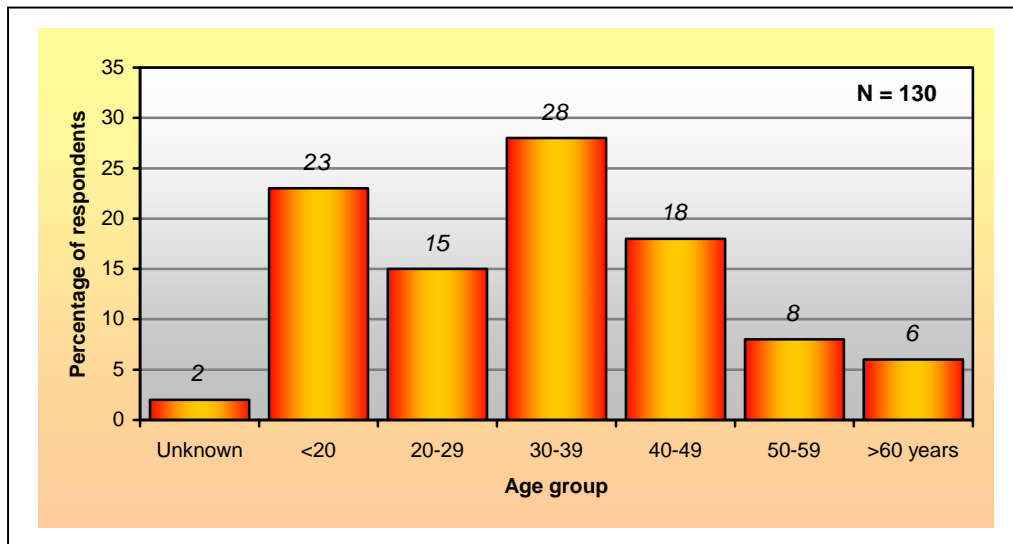
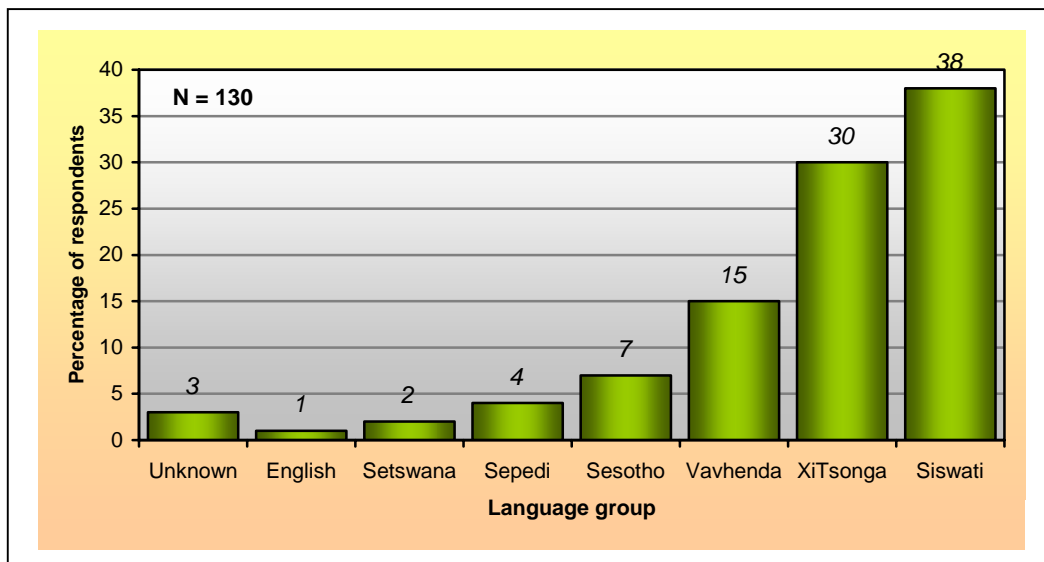
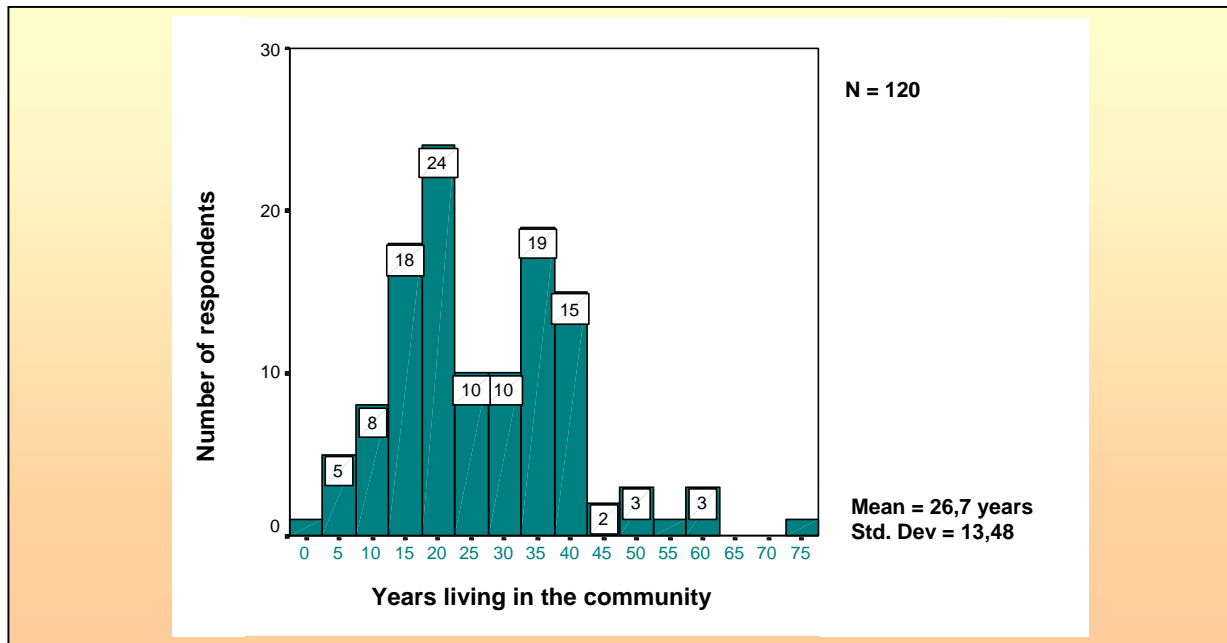


FIGURE 5.3: Language distribution (as percentage) of the sample



The average length of time that people have stayed in the community is 26,7 years, which is quite a long time (see Figure 5.4). It probably indicates that a large number of the participants have lived all or nearly all of their lives in the particular community.

FIGURE 5.4: Length of time lived in the community



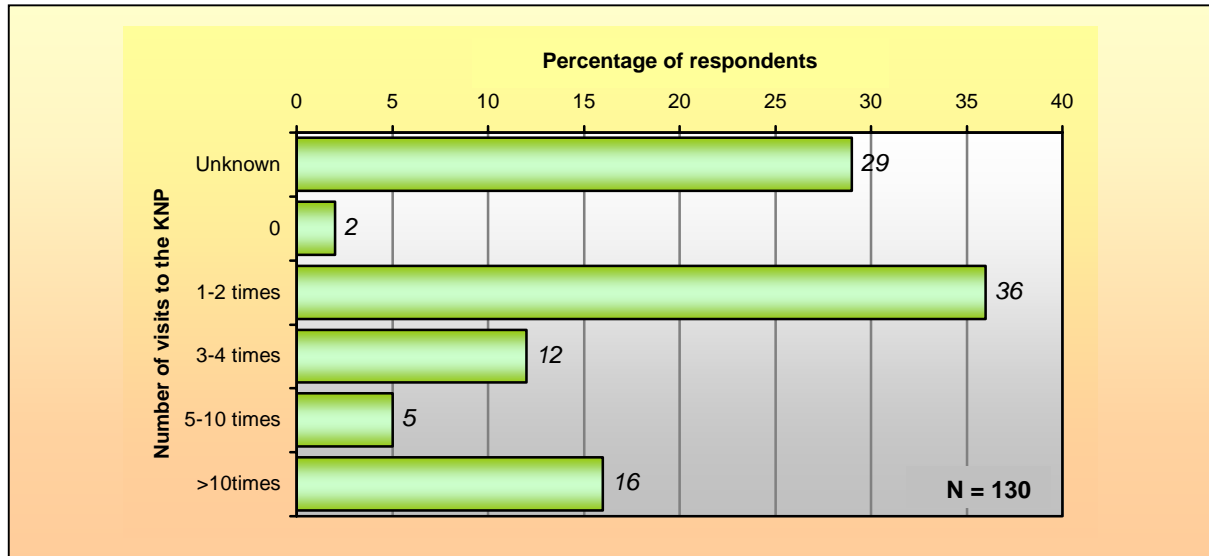
People from a total of 49 different villages in 30 tribal areas were included in the sample. Since very few individuals from each village and area were included, it would not make much sense to group their results in any way.

5.4.2 Quantitative results

The complete frequency distribution of alternatives chosen for the total group per question is provided in Annexure 11. In this section, an overview of the quantitative results is provided.

A total of 70,6 % of the sample indicated that they had visited the KNP, with almost half (35,3 %) indicating that they had visited the KNP for recreational purposes. With regard to questions posed about the number of times the KNP has been visited as a tourist, the results for those who have visited the park are provided in Figure 5.5.

A total of 9,4 % of the respondents indicated that they themselves had worked for (or are currently working for) the KNP, while 30 % of the sample indicated that someone in their family had worked for or are presently working for the KNP.

FIGURE 5.5: Respondents' number of visits to the KNP as tourist

In response to a question about their awareness of formal meetings between the KNP and their local community, 46,8% (n=59) of the respondents indicated that they were aware of such meetings.

The above information indicates that the sample can be considered to be reasonably well-informed about matters pertaining to KNP issues. Since a large percentage (70,6 %) of them have actually visited the park, their comments were based on their own personal experience of the park.

The mean scores on the remaining quantitative questions (5-point Likert scale) are indicated in Table 5.1 below. The distribution of responses is indicated in Annexure 11.

Only questions 39 and 45 were phrased in a negative manner (i.e. so that agreement would indicate a negative attitude or a potential problem area). On the whole, the means scores show responses in the direction of agreement (means > 3). More useful information can be obtained by viewing the distribution of responses per question (see Annexure 11).

In the present sample there are no clear groupings that could sensibly be compared with each other. Therefore the results for this survey are presented for the group as a whole.

5.4.3 Qualitative results

The qualitative results are based on transcriptions of comments covering 30 pages made in response to the open-ended questions posed in the questionnaire. These were first grouped

together per question thereafter themes were identified. The most prevalent themes are summarized as part of the discussion and interpretations in 5.5 below.

TABLE 5.1: Descriptive results for quantitative Likert-scale questions

Descriptive Statistics					
Question	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q28	122	1	5	4,87	0,655
Q29	122	1	5	4,90	0,552
Q30	121	1	5	4,79	0,686
Q31	120	1	5	4,55	1,114
Q32	117	1	5	4,70	0,780
Q33	120	1	5	3,31	1,576
Q34	117	1	5	3,06	1,604
Q35	121	1	5	2,62	1,685
Q36	121	1	5	4,36	1,365
Q38	121	1	5	4,23	1,283
Q39	120	1	5	3,71	1,652
Q40	121	1	5	4,39	1,150
Q41	117	1	5	3,96	1,392
Q42	112	1	5	3,46	1,681
Q43	118	1	5	4,52	1,175
Q44	117	1	5	4,33	1,333
Q45	116	1	5	4,75	0,864
Q46	116	1	5	4,11	1,394
Q47	117	1	5	4,56	0,995
Q48	114	1	5	4,84	0,525
Valid N (listwise)	102				

5.5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

The sample was not representative but one of convenience due to the preparedness and availability of the respondents to answer the questionnaire. The Social Ecology group drew participants from their operational regions named Forums. Most of the participants therefore had some prior exposure to the park's activities. The fact that most of the respondents in the survey have lived on average 26,7 years in areas adjacent to the park made them knowledgeable about what is happening in the region.

From the mean scores reflected in Table 5.1 and Annexure 11 it is evident that the respondents were positive about the KNP, nature conservation and its value for future generations. Communities want to participate and they view the park in a positive light. This is quite a dramatic swing from the results of the study carried out by Els (1994) and referred to in

3.15, and from perceptions currently held by some park managers who think that communities do not appreciate nature conservation. The Social Ecology division has succeeded to a relative extent in the last six to seven years of its existence to normalize relations between the Park and its neighbours. There are a few issues that communities are concerned about.

The neighbouring communities' attitudes and perceptions towards the KNP were also measured and found to be positive. This was an unexpected finding, given the fact that previous studies by Els (1994), Carruthers (1995), Cock & Fig (2000), Pollard *et al* (2003), and Blignaut & Moolman (2004) detected intense animosity between communities and the KNP. This finding is also confirmed by Magome (in press) in his survey on relationships between the KNP and 10 communities on the western boundary of the KNP. Magome (in press) states that there is no animosity between communities and the KNP and that communities are willing to be involved in conservation and tourism management activities. It is therefore evident that communities are prepared and willing to be part of their heritage although they have expressed concerns on how Park management relates to them as stakeholders.

However, mixed feelings prevailed about the affordability of prices charged for admission, accommodation and other services. There was a strong feeling that a special rate should be created for local communities. It was also felt that, although tourists bring much needed revenue to the local economy, they also unwittingly push up prices of goods in the area.

There was an overwhelming consensus that the KNP should invest a portion of its tourism earnings into a community development fund to assist in the building of public facilities like schools, roads and clinics. Communities want to benefit from the business of supplying services to the Park. In general, communities would appreciate the opportunity to formally participate in the development of conservation and tourism policy in the KNP because they are affected by these activities in various ways. They still experience serious problems with escaped animals from the Park that plunder their crops, kill their livestock and threaten their lives.

From the qualitative remarks it transpired that the respondents regard the KNP as a national asset. Such a status warrants cheaper rates than those of private lodges. Communities regard the Park as a preferred recreational destination where they can also learn about wildlife and the environment. However, the reality is that most members of neighbouring communities visit the Park as day visitors and there are not enough day-visitor areas where they can achieve this "spiritual upliftment". Communities would want to share not just craft and art

experience with tourists but their culture too. Unfortunately, the current management system in the Park offers them limited opportunities to realize their aspirations.

While communities acknowledge that there are some job opportunities for them in the Park, there are no other tangible benefits from the Park's existence in their midst. They do not know "how and what should they benefit from the Park". There is no formal relationship or mechanism in place to facilitate such a benefit-sharing scheme thus confirming the findings of Blignaut and Moolman (2004). They (communities) would like to see a closer and more frequent contact with the Park authorities in meetings and to discuss matters of common interest. The Park can only become "*Xa Mina – Xa Wena*" (Its Mine -- its Yours) if both the Park and communities work together and share benefits. Communities are protective of the Park's resources and would not like to see an unsustainable use of resources. They do not want to graze their livestock in the park, collect firewood or hunt animals (although they had earlier expressed such desires in Els' (1994) study). The use of medicinal plants should be regulated and managed by trained people. Animals should be conserved for future generations. Overall the survey found the community's attitude and perceptions about the Park to be positive. Communities seem to be ready to participate in tourism and conservation policy formulation and implementation activities in the KNP whilst management is under the impression they are not.

5.6 SWOT ANALYSIS

Based on the surveys and findings discussed in the previous chapters, the researcher suggested a cascade of Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis that should be considered when formulating the KNP's integrated tourism management framework. The SWOT Analysis Table is attached as Annexure 13.

The chapters on literature review, historical overview and the cascade of surveys conducted in this study reveal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) for the KNP tourism service-delivery system. A comprehensive evaluation of the findings of the survey follows.

5.7 COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF SURVEYS

The respondents in the KNP surveys discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 manifest mixed feelings about their overall experience. A comprehensive summary of the survey findings is:

- the KNP lacks an overall vision/mission and management framework to manage tourism;
- there has been no adequate and effective identification and management of tourism and recreational values which underpin service-delivery in KNP;
- exist no system to evaluate tourist motivation, expectations and satisfaction and market segments;
- although there are pockets of service and product excellence in some camps, service-delivery is generally unpredictable, inconsistent and suffering from perennial poor quality effects;
- tourism service-delivery is fragmented with both tourism and conservation activities operating in isolation from each other;
- the Park's unique selling point, the vast wilderness areas, are grossly under-exploited;
- tourism staff are under-qualified and untrained in hospitality management to effectively and competently manage tourism;
- the perennial shortage of money results in tourism facilities being poorly maintained;
- there are concerns about the implementation and effect of the commercialization strategy on the wilderness qualities of the Park;
- there are no indicators to manage tourism impacts to protect the Park's wilderness qualities and enhance tourist experience;
- tourists are attracted by the Park's natural and wilderness qualities and the KNP should manage these through its management plans; and
- although communities display positive attitudes towards the KNP and aspects of conservation and tourism activities, they do not derive any tangible benefits towards the improvement of their socio-economic status.

5.8 CONCLUSION

From the findings of these surveys it is evident that the KNP needs an integrated tourism management framework that describes how tourism and recreation values will be managed in accordance with the Park's primary objectives. Such a management framework should be a broad policy guideline with clear performance indicators to measure effectiveness. Chapter 6 suggests such an integrated management framework in detail.