

NATURE BASED TOURISM IN SWAZILAND: THE CASE OF THREE NATURE  
RESERVES

By

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## ABSTRACT

Swaziland is presently experiencing many fiscal and economic challenges. The current fiscal crisis and the economic growth slowdown has brought renewed attention to tourism as a sector that could help revive its economic growth. Trends in the performance of tourism in Swaziland show that for the last decade, tourism has grown to be an important sector in this country. Hence, there is a great consensus that tourism in Swaziland has great potential to make significant contribution to economic development.

The research work explored ways and strategies for harnessing the potential of nature-based tourism in stimulating socio-economic development in Swaziland, with specific reference to three nature reserves namely Malolotja, Mlilwane and Mantenga Nature Reserves. The study was a survey, which used self-administered questionnaires for collecting data. Two different sets of questionnaires were constructed. The first set aimed at obtaining information from the tourists visiting the reserves whether from foreign countries or local. The second set aimed at obtaining information from the employees of these reserves and the organisations responsible for managing them. Purposive sampling was employed, whereby a sample of 30 tourists found in each reserve was used as well as 15 employees of each reserve and the organisations responsible for managing them.

Findings in this study have shown the need for strengthening the awareness and marketing of the nature reserves in the local and international media. Secondly, the study also showed that the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs should reinforce co-operation and commitment from all parties concerned in the tourism sector. Lastly, the increase of government funding to effectively carry out tourism related operations in nature reserves e.g. improvement of infrastructure was seen to be of necessity.

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# NATURE BASED TOURISM IN SWAZILAND: THE CASE OF THE THREE NATURE RESERVES

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Swaziland is located in the South Eastern part of Africa and is the third smallest country in the continent, with a size of 17364 km<sup>2</sup> (Mthethwa 2003:3). The country lies between latitudes 25 & 28 degrees south and 31 & 32 degrees east (Swaziland Environment Authority 2001:2). This country is landlocked; it is surrounded by the Republic of South Africa on all sides except the east which is bordered by Mozambique (Maphanga & Pato 2004:1). It is also classified as a lower middle income country and its population is estimated to be 1.2 million. This value does not change much as Swaziland is characterised by both high birth rates and high death rates (African Development Bank 2011:7). Unlike most African states e.g. South Africa, Swaziland has primarily one socio-cultural linguistic grouping- the Swazi- and the small heterogeneous population of non-Swazi citizens accounts for only 2% (Maphanga & Pato 2004:2).

Swaziland is divided into four regions namely the Hhohho, Lubombo, Manzini, and Shiselweni regions. The Hhohho region is situated in the North Western part of the country. The Mlilwane, Phophonyane, Mantenga and Malolotja nature reserves are found in this region. This region also encompasses a concentration of hotels and lodges, the capital city which is Mbabane, the Ezulwini valley which is considered the tourism hub, the Lobamba royal area and many more tourist areas. The Manzini region is situated in the central part of the country. It is characterised by beautiful hills, gorges, creations and display of handicrafts, lodges, hotels, and the main airport. The Lubombo region on the other hand is situated on the eastern part of the country and is characterised by mountains, the Shewula mountain camp, a number of nature reserves namely the Nisela Safaris, Mkhaya, Hlane, Royal National Park, Mlawula and the Mbuluzu nature reserves. Lastly the Shiselweni region, which is situated in the southern part of the country and it is characterised by fewer tourist attractions (Mahamba 2010:20-21; Forsyth-Thompson 2012).

### 1.1.1 Socio-economic overview of Swaziland

In the 1980s, the Swazi economy was one of the fastest growing economies in the world but as the years went by, the economic growth slowed down. This was as a result of the decline in investment levels, the country's countless complex regulations and processes which diminished Swaziland's attractiveness as an investment destination, weak fiscal management and stunted export growth among others (World Bank 2011). Swaziland's economy is extremely open and has most of its imports from neighbouring South Africa which accounts for over 90% of Swazi's imports and about 64% of its exports (World Bank 2011; Feulner et al. 2013:413). Principal imports include basic manufactured goods, machinery and equipment, fuel chemicals, food and live animals. Exports to South Africa include edible concentrates, textiles, cane sugar, refrigerators, and cotton yarn (Maphanga & Pato 2004:1; Feulner et al. 2013:413). Swaziland is home to over 50 foreign firms from United States of America, UK, Japan, Germany and the Republic of China (Mthethwa 2003:45). The currency is pegged to the South African Rand, effectively subsuming Swaziland's monetary policy to South Africa (CIA 2013). The Tourism Industry accounts for only 2.8% of total GDP in Swaziland (Mahamba 2010:23).

In addition, the wood pulp company which used to be one of the major foreign exchange earners closed down in January 2010, and sugar is now the main export earner. The closure of the wood pulp firm left a number of people unemployed increasing the unemployment rate (CIA: 2013). Mining was once the major contributor to the Swazi economy but this changed over the years as well as the only minerals mined include coal and quarry stones.

The CIA (2013) also states that in the past few years especially in 2012, customs revenues plummeted due to the global economic crisis and a drop in South African imports resulting to a decline in revenue. In 2012, and early 2013, Swaziland requested financial assistance from other countries, including South Africa, in order to meet its monthly payroll and to fund government programs. In addition, the majority of the population are engaged in subsistence farming and resides in the rural areas (African Development Bank 2011:7). There is also a high dependency rate as more than 40% of the population is under 15 years. About 43% of the people are said to live in chronic poverty and more than one-quarter of the adult population have been infected by HIV/AIDS and a higher percentage of the people are illiterate (IFAD 2007:1). In recent years, Swaziland also experienced a major increase in child-headed households as a result of the HIV/AIDS disease (IFAD: 2007:2). Furthermore, the country's Title

Deed Land that accounts for the bulk of the country's land in commercial and industrial use, and which is characterized by high levels of investment and productivity is becoming increasingly scarce. The Swazi Nation Land, which is under subsistence agriculture attracts little investment and suffers from low productivity (World Bank 2013).

The socio-economic overview above, paints a picture of the current state of the Swazi economy, highlighting some of the strengths and weaknesses. As it can be seen, the state of the economy is not at its best and this whole research is essentially trying to find ways of how the country can harness the potential of its tourism industry so it can stimulate the socio-economic development of the country.

## **1.2 Main purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study is to find ways for harnessing the potential of nature-based tourism in stimulating socio-economic development in Swaziland. To achieve this purpose, the study uses the case of three nature reserves namely the Malolotja, Mlilwane and the Mantenga nature reserves. For the purposes of this study, nature based tourism will mean all the nature related attractions found in the nature reserves namely ecotourism, adventure tourism, extractive tourism, wildlife tourism and nature retreats. The findings from this research will assist decision makers/managers of these reserves in taking operational decisions that will contribute to the economic growth of the country.

## **1.3 Problem Statement**

There is a great consensus that tourism in Swaziland is poised to make a significant contribution to economic development because of the following advantages that the country has namely; it is described as a peaceful country with natural biodiversity and rich traditional heritage, a young and highly literate population with potential to acquire technical and vocational skills to make the country a suitable place for tourism development (Maphanga & Pato 2004:2). Additionally, the country enjoys historical political stability and has indigenous culture, pristine natural environment, it is located in major tourist routes, has warm hearted dignified people, low crime rate, adventurous trails, accessible wildlife, varied and impressive scenery, historic culture, a generally sunny and hot climate, it has mountain capes, a range of attractions within a short travel distance and has capacity to cater for diverse interests, beautiful images of magnificent mountain scenery and lush green pastures (SIPA 2008: 6; Mthethwa 2003:1-3).

The country's cultural traditions, combined with its unique attractions, will continue to have positive impact on the growth of tourism industry over the next years. Overseas interest in Swaziland continues to rise sharply with visitors from different countries like Belgium, France and Germany (Maphanga & Pato 2004:4). Swaziland has made every effort to unlock the potential of its tourism sector since many years ago. In the late 1990s, the government identified the tourism sector as a priority sector to achieve high economic growth and development and in 1996 it saw the creation of a Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Communication with a vision stated, "to develop the tourism sector as a national priority in a sustainable and acceptable manner, taking full advantage of regional and international trends and developments so that it will significantly contribute to the continued improvement of the quality of life in the Kingdom of Swaziland" (Maphanga & Pato 2004:4).

The ongoing fiscal crisis and the economic growth slowdown in Swaziland has brought renewed attention to tourism as a sector that could help revive economic growth and job creation (UNDP 2011). The three (3) nature reserves (Mantenga, Mlilwane and Malolotja) have over the years attracted a number of tourists and contributed a larger value to the GDP of the country; but it's still has undeveloped tourism potential hence strategies to harness this potential should be exploited (Mahamba S. 2010). Despite the fact that these reserves are characterised by strong cultural heritage, tradition and biodiversity, tourism in Swaziland has not kept pace with high levels of growth experienced in South Africa and other countries in the region; hence more effort should be put into improving these nature reserves. Therefore this research is based on how Swaziland can use these three reserves to allow for rapid growth in the tourism industry, consequently contributing to the growth of the economy.

### **1.3.1 Main research question**

What are some of the ways and strategies for harnessing the potential of nature-based tourism in stimulating socio economic development in Swaziland, with reference to three nature reserves found in the Hhohho region, namely the Malolotja, Mlilwane and the Mantenga nature reserves?

### **1.3.2 Sub questions**

1. Does the tourism industry of Swaziland have potential to be a major contributor in the socio-economic development of Swaziland?

2. What are the factors prohibiting these three nature reserves and the whole tourism industry as a whole in Swaziland from reaching their full potential?

3. How can Swaziland improve the three nature reserves so that they become major contributors in the socio-economic development of Swaziland?

#### **1.4 Motivation of the study**

With more improvement in nature based tourism, a country can generate more jobs, create entrepreneurial opportunities, be an engine of economic growth and also bring development to both the urban and rural areas (Maphanga & Pato 2004:5 ;Mthethwa 2003:5). Furthermore it can generate new and innovative employment opportunities, foster international relations and international trade, generate foreign exchange reserves, as well as create domestic and foreign investments in tourism infrastructure and services (Maphanga & Pato 2004:5 ;Mthethwa 2003:5). Lastly it can also stimulate economic development through agriculture, manufacturing and also promote international trade (Maphanga & Pato 2004:5 ;Mthethwa 2003:5). Therefore it is important to explore how nature based tourism can be enhanced to improve the socio-economic structure of a country.

#### **1.5 Study areas**

The following section provides a brief discussion of the three study areas:

##### **1.5.1 Mantenga Nature Reserve**

It is a small protected area of 725 hectares found in the Hhohho region. This reserve comprises of lodges, restaurants, the Mantenga waterfall (which is Swaziland's best-known falls, and the largest in terms of volume of water), a living museum of old traditions which represents the lifestyle of the Swazi people where visitors are encouraged to interact with the people in the village and can do so by grinding maize, plaiting mountain grass or joining in the Swazi song and dance (Mahamba 2010:29; Forsyth-Thompson 2012).

The Mantenga Craft Centre is also found in the reserve. It consists of shops that offer a wide variety of local art and craft items, a range of vegetation species and a number of wildlife such as monkeys, baboons, bush pigs, porcupine, kudus, birdlife and a diversity of invertebrates such as butterflies which live in the river banks and wooden areas. Furthermore, people can also

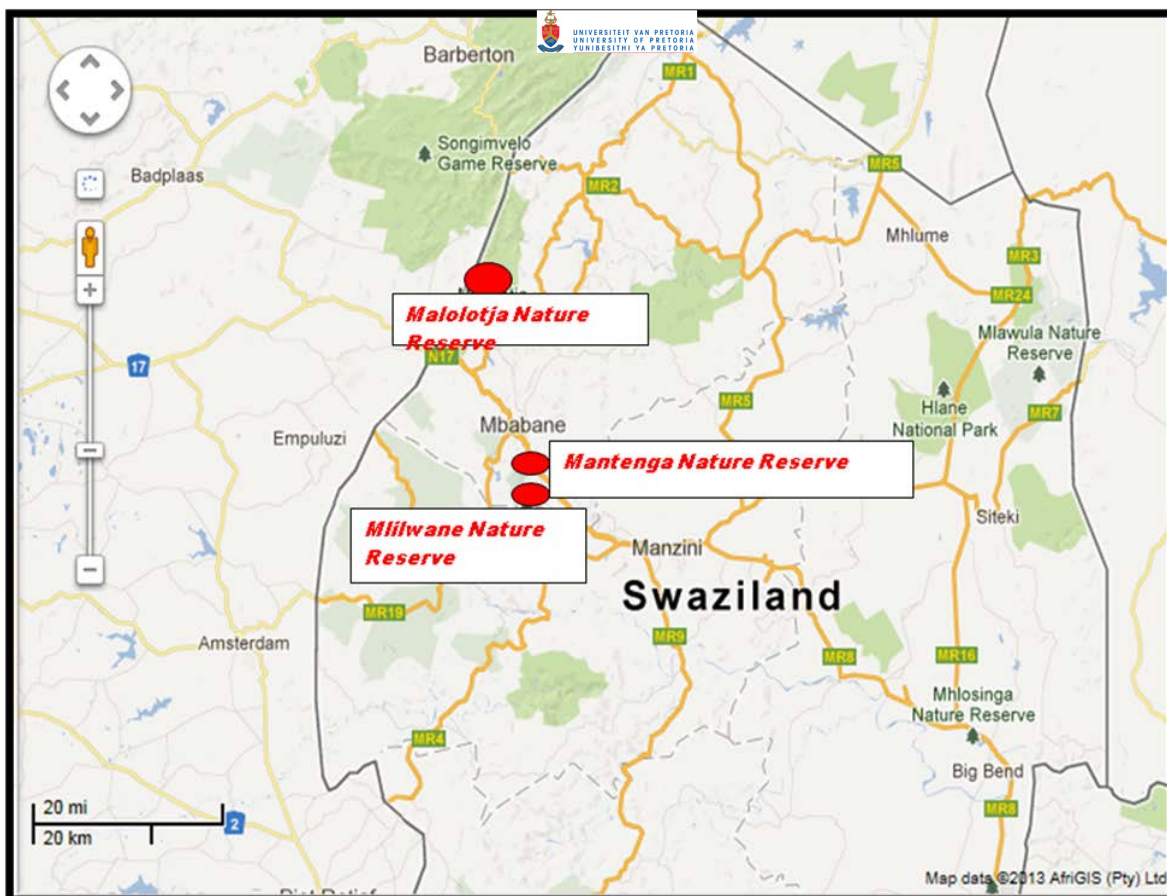
enjoy walking, enjoy a guided hike to Sheba's breasts, bird watching and also enjoy the picnic area closest to the waterfall (Mahamba 2010:29; Forsyth-Thompson 2012).

### **1.5.2 Mlilwane Nature Reserve**

It is situated in the Hhohho region and is Swaziland's oldest nature reserve .It is known as the mother of conservation in the Kingdom and is the most frequently visited reserve .It is characterised by a rest camp, restaurant, the Reilly's Rock which is surrounded by the Royal Botanical Gardens, the hippo pool, and a variety of endangered antelope species. Also within the reserve is the Sondzela Backpackers, where the country's thriving backpacker industry took root .Visitors may stay overnight in a variety of accommodation, enjoy game drives ,horse riding and walks, as well as cultural experiences (Forsyth-Thompson 2012).

### **1.5.3 Malolotja Nature Reserve**

It is a small protected area of 18000 hectares found in the Hhohho region .It is characterised by rest camps, the last mountain wilderness area in Swaziland, wild flowers, wildlife such as blue crane, blue swallow and over 280 species of birds, a variety of freshwater fish such as southern mouth brooder and the stargazer mountain catfish (Forsyth-Thompson 2012). The reserve is also home to a number of mammals, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates. It offers hiking trails, accommodation, and a restaurant. There are approximately 200 km of hiking trails and seventeen backpacking camps which allow hikers to embark on.



**Figure 1: Location of Malolotja, Mantenga and Mlilwane nature reserves in Swaziland**

## 1.6 Methodology, data collection and analysis

The study covers three (3) nature reserves found in the Hhohho region, which is in the north-western part of Swaziland. These reserves are the Mlilwane, Mantenga and the Malolotja nature reserves. Below is a brief explanation of the reasons for the choice of these three sites; firstly they were chosen because they have many tourist attractions which have in the past proved to be of advantage and beneficial to the economy. These attractions include sparkling streams, countless waterfalls, mountains, a wide variety of wildlife and vegetation, dams, rivers, the highest mountain in the country, hiking trails, waterfalls, canopy tours etc.

Secondly, these reserves are closest to the busiest border gate (Oshoek/Ngwenya border gate) and an improvement in these reserves could result in an influx of people into the country, thereby increasing tourist arrivals. This may consequently promote socio-economic development. Thirdly a significant area is located next to the reserves called the Lobamba area or the “royal area” and is regarded as the kingdom’s spiritual home where the queen mother resides and where the sacred incwala ceremony and the reed dance is held.

Furthermore, the strategic location of these sites is of advantage as the main route into Swaziland from the world famous Kruger national park passes through these reserves, making



the hotels and lodges in the area ideal stop-overs for visitors. Therefore with more improvement of the tourism sector in these sites, it could create a spill-over effect to other regions in terms of socio-economic development, especially since many tourists pass through these reserves. Lastly these sites are surrounded by many underutilized attractions and this research seeks to unpack and enhance them.

### **1.6.1 Research design and sampling**

The study was a survey with the use of self-administered questionnaires as an instrument for collecting data. This survey followed a qualitative methodology. A qualitative research is an umbrella phrase covering an array of interpretive techniques which seeks to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world; it is thus called a descriptive form of research (Cloete 2001:188). Two different sets of questionnaires was designed and both sets used the simple random sampling; the first set of questionnaires aimed at obtaining information from the tourists visiting the reserves whether from foreign countries or local. The second questionnaires aimed at obtaining information from the employees of these reserves (namely the wardens, managers and some of the officials presently managing the reserves namely the Swaziland National Trust Commission and the Big Game Parks). These questionnaires were structured differently but covering the same analogue.

A sample size of 30 tourists found in each reserve were used and only 15 workers of each reserve were purposively selected as respondents (the wardens, managers of the reserves and some of the officials presently managing the reserves namely the Swaziland National Trust Commission and the Big Game Parks who were visited in their respective offices during their office hours).The sample size amounted to 135 respondents. Structured interviews using the same questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents who were illiterate. Both structured questionnaires included the following broad dimensions namely;

- Strategies of enhancing the nature reserves e.g. questions related to the main research.
- The relationship between economic development and nature based tourism e.g. questions pertaining to the contribution of these reserves on the country's socio-economic development.

- The views on the current state of the reserve e.g. general questions regarding the available attractions, opinions and views of the respondents with regard to the desirability/attractiveness of the reserve.

## 1.7 Framework of the research

Chapter one presents an overview of the research as a whole. The purpose of this chapter is to give a clear picture of what the research is all about by describing the objectives, aims and the importance of the study. This research project is about exploring ways of improving the potential of the tourism industry in Swaziland, specifically nature based tourism of three nature reserves found in the Hhohho region. The research seeks to find ways of improving these three nature reserves in such a way that they end up becoming major drivers of the socio-economic development of the country. Firstly this chapter gives a general idea of the country of Swaziland as a whole; its location in comparison to other countries, its socio-economic status, population size, and its environmental attractions. Secondly, a description of the objectives, problem statement, main research question, sub questions, and the motivation of the study is discussed in detail. Thirdly, a general idea of the study areas (Mantenga, Malolotja and the Mlilwane nature reserve) with the help of a map is discussed. Lastly the research design, data collection and methodology to be followed is discussed briefly as well.

Chapter two provides a detailed and thorough research of what different authors have written concerning the topic at hand. As chapter one gives a general idea of what the whole research is all about, chapter two gives detailed information about the different aspects of the research. Firstly, literature on the overview of nature based tourism is outlined with emphasis to the importance of this kind of tourism as a whole, how much it contributes to the global GDP, its advantages and disadvantages to the global economy and if it's worth pursuing, outlining few countries that are successful in the tourism industry and what can be learned from them.

Secondly, a detailed literature of Swaziland as a whole is discussed with more emphasis to its economic status, the different economic sectors that contribute to its economy; the contribution of tourism to the country's economy, nature based tourism and its strengths and weaknesses. Thirdly, a thorough description of the nature reserves (Mantenga, Malolotja and Mlilwane) is discussed; their location especially in terms of major roads and major urban centres, their contribution to the economy of the country, a description of all the nature related attractions found in the areas in terms of ecotourism, adventure, extractive, nature retreats and wildlife

tourism, the relationship and comparison of the socio- economic development in terms of the three nature reserves.

Chapters three & four give a detailed discussion of all the responses deduced from the questionnaires about the nature reserves. Responses from tourists visiting the reserves, the officials presently managing the 3 nature reserves namely the Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC) and the Big Game Parks as well as responses from the warders and the employees of the reserves is analysed and then illustrated in graphs.

Chapter five concludes the study and then recommends the best options and solutions of the main research problem. This chapter also provides a clear discussion, views and arguments of the main research question which states” What are some of the ways and strategies for harnessing the potential of nature-based tourism in stimulating socio economic development in Swaziland, with reference to 3 nature reserves found in the Hhohho region, namely the Malolotja, Mlilwane and the Mantenga nature reserves?”.This chapter further gives a clear discussion of the sub-problems. The discussion and arguments in the chapter will be deduced from the literature read and the responses from the questionnaires and interviews.

## **1.8 Chapter Summary**

Trends in the performance and growth of tourism in Swaziland show that for the last decade, tourism has grown to be an important sector in Swaziland. The country has been enjoying a positive mirror on the tourism sector; tourists have been seen flocking to the country both for vacation and for business visits .So since this sector seems to be improving for the better; the country should see this as an opportunity and invest more on it so to assist in improving the economy.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Overview of tourism in the world

The World Tourism Organisation (2002:101) defines tourism as the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. Tourism was recognized in the Manila Declaration on world tourism of 1980 as an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations (WTO 1995:1).

According to the figures on employment and expenditures, tourism is said to be the largest industry in the world and also a dynamic component in the world's economy (UNEP 2011:423; Kuenzi et al 2008:1). This industry is believed to be the engine of prosperity, a global force for economic and regional development and a generator of jobs (Spinelli 2002:5; Dwyer & Spurr 2010:1; UNEP 2011:419,423). Additionally tourism is also said to be a leading global industry, responsible for a significant proportion of world production, trade, employment, and investments (UNEP 2011:438).

Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification consequently becoming one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world (UNWTO 2012:2 ; Glasser & Kester 2013:49). Neto (2003:212) states that tourism changed from being an activity enjoyed by only a small group of well-off people during the first half of the last century to becoming a mass occurrence from the 1970s onwards. Mthethwa (2003:1) states that in terms of direct and indirect employment generation, tourism is the largest industry in the world and could easily become the largest single sector of the world trade in the next century.

Furthermore, tourism has proven beyond doubt to be an important industry in most countries as it provides income to national infrastructures such as airports, rail systems, road networks, electric power systems, agricultural production and water supply systems (Gardiner & Kester 2002:1; Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:1).Cater (1987:202) similarly states that the development of tourism has been regarded as a solution for the economic depression of many of the least developed countries (LDCs), faced with a narrow resource base and serious balance of payment difficulties. He further mentions that tourism stimulates employment, investments, foreign exchange, modified land use and economic structure, and also make a positive contribution to the balance of payments in many of the developing nations (Cater 1987:202 ;

UNEP 2011:438).The Government of Zambia for example has realised the importance of tourism industry and has identified tourism as one of its four pillars of economic development (the other three being agriculture, manufacturing and mining) (World Bank 2007:1). “Tourism is therefore identified as the most promising driving force for the economic development of less developed countries and other regions endowed with areas of natural beauty as it offers them a valuable opportunity for economic diversification”(Neto 2003:216).

The tourism industry is human-resource intensive as well; it is among the world’s top job creators and allows for quick entry into the workforce for youth, women and migrant workers (UNEP 2011:422).The tourism industry’s contribution to employment is said to be slightly higher and it is about 6-7 per cent of the total employment globally (UNWTO 2012:9). As it has been said that tourism could become the largest single sector of the world trade in the century in providing employment opportunities to developing countries (Mthethwa 2003:1); UNEP (2011:414) recommends the establishment of sustainable tourism investment, especially for the poorer section of the population as well as the greening of tourism, which could involve efficient improvements in energy, water, and waste systems. This is said to assist in reinforcing the employment potential of the sector with increased local hiring and sourcing and significant opportunities in tourism oriented towards local culture and the natural environment (UNEP 2011:414).People always want to discover the world so tourism is and will always be one major contributor to the economy. Over 800 million people (which is equivalent to 12% of the world’s population) travel internationally each year and many others travel within their countries of residence and this figure is projected to double by 2020 (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:1).

International arrivals grew by 4.6% to reach 983 million worldwide up from 940 million in 2010 and it is expected to increase by 3.3 % a year on average from 2010-2030 (UNWTO 2012:2; Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:2). UNEP (2011:414) states that “tourism ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and automotive products in global exports, with an industry value of US\$1trillion a year, accounting for 30% of the world’s exports of commercial services or 6% of total exports” (UNWTO 2012:3 ; Gardener 2002:1). In over 150 countries, tourism is one of the five top export earners, and in 60 countries it is the number one export (UNEP 2011:414).

Tourism is a major contributor to national income of many countries and it provides a large and steady contribution to global GDP (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:10).Kuenzi & Mcneely (2008:2) also states that tourism accounts for as much as 11% of global GDP, and offers jobs to over 200 million people. In addition, the tourism industry contributes differently to developed and

developing countries, as it only makes up 3-10% of GDP in developed countries and up to 40% in some developing countries. In countries where tourism is a small sector, its contribution to GDP is approximately 2% and over 10% to countries where tourism is a large sector. In small islands and developing countries, the weight of tourism is larger accounting up to 25% in some destinations (UNWTO 2012:3). For 83% of developing countries, tourism is amongst the top five shares of exported goods and services; for 38% of countries it is the primary source of foreign currency. Furthermore, it is said that tourism will grow faster in less developed countries than in developed economies in the next ten years (UNEP 2011:420).

“A number of destinations have opened up and invested in tourism development turning modern tourism into a key driver of socio-economic progress through export revenues, the creation of jobs and enterprises and also infrastructure development” (UNWTO 2012:3). The UNWTO world tourism barometer (2012:4) further states that “the capacity of tourism to drive growth and create jobs needs to be accompanied by strong supportive public policies”. In the G20 meeting held in 2012 at Mexico, tourism was identified as one of the sectors that could stimulate global economic recovery. The G20 meeting emphasized the role of tourism in the economy and committed to working on advancing travel facilitation as a means to stimulate demand and spending, and also job creation. To further strengthen the tourism sector, one of the outcomes from the G20 meeting was that there is a need for increased political commitment in order to support the sector (The UNWTO world tourism barometer 2012:4). Many international programmes and national policies around the world have identified tourism as an appropriate mechanism for sustainable development, poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation (Goodwin & Spenceley 2008:255).

According to Kuenzi & Mcneely (2008:2), “tourism is said to be the sum of government and private sector activities that shape and serve the needs and manage the consequences of holiday, business and other travel”. A primary function of the government with regard to tourism is to create an environment that enables or influences patterns of visitor flows and behaviour so as to maximise the benefits and minimize the negative impacts of tourism (UNEP 2005:23). The tourism industry comprises of a number of stakeholders and actors which have an influence in the identification, assessing, managing, monitoring and communication of risks related to tourism (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:4). Furthermore other participants include developers, tour agencies, guides, hotels, facilities, transport operators, governments, international organisations (e.g. the world conservation union), transnational organisations, international outreach like the

world wildlife fund, local authorities e.g planners for the protected areas ,local communities, tourists and many more (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:4).UNEP (2005:11) further states that strong political leadership within the different stakeholders is vital for the growth of the tourism industry.

According to UNEP (2005:11), tourism should be sustainable at all times meaning it should take full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. “This should be done through making optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural resources and biodiversity. Secondly by respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserving their built, living cultural heritage and traditional values, and also contributing to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance” (UNEP (2005:11).

”Thirdly by ensuring a viable long-term economic operations providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment, income earning opportunities and social services to host communities and contributing to poverty alleviation” (UNEP 2005:11).UNEP (2011:438) also states that “making tourism businesses more sustainable will promote the industry’s growth, create more and better jobs, consolidate higher investment returns, benefit local development and contribute to poverty reduction, while raising awareness and support for the sustainable use of natural resources”.

Through all of the benefits that come as a result of this industry, it is said that countries should not rely entirely on it as it is a volatile industry. Some of the challenges that are associated with the third world tourism industry include high rates of foreign ownership contributing to a loss of control over local resources, substantial overseas leakages of tourism earnings, lack of articulation with other domestic economic sectors, low multiplier and spread effects outside of tourism economic enclaves. Other challenges associated with this industry include reinforcement of patterns of socioeconomic inequality and spatial unevenness (widely fluctuating earnings due to factors such as global recessions and the seasonality of tourism in some places), environmental destruction ,natural disasters ,outbreak of infectious diseases, the irreversible loss of non-renewable resources and foundation assets ,problems such as increasing crime, overload infrastructures, overcrowding and pollution, civil unrest, and terrorism (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:10; UNWTO 2009:4; Brohman 1996:54,58).

## 2.1 Nature-based tourism

Currently, nature-based tourism is considered to be one of the most important industries in many countries (Törn 2007:13). Balmford et al (2009:1) states that across Southern Africa, nature-based tourism is reported to be now generating approximately the same revenue as farming, forestry, and fisheries combined. A large percentage of tourism's contribution to global GDP comes from nature based tourism such as wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation; therefore this particular type of tourism is and has widely been recognised to be an important ecosystem service capable of generating substantial resources for both conservation and local economic development (Balmford et al 2009:1).

Nature-based tourism is actually referred to the tourism activities concerning the use of natural resources which remain in a relatively undeveloped state, including scenery, topography, waterways, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural heritage whether for relaxation, discovery or adventure (Hussin et al 2011:282; Responsible Nature based tourism strategy 2003:8). Nature based tourism encompasses aspects like visitors total experience of the destination such as food, culture, relaxation, wealth, health, escape, family needs, accommodation and transport. Nature-based tourism is believed to be the fastest growing element of the global tourism industry, and it involves tours to national parks and wilderness areas. A large portion of the world's biodiversity is said to be concentrated in developing countries (Allnutt et al 2001:936; OECD 2009:105; Diagne et al 1995:552).

Nature based tourism is one of the few export or service sectors in which poor countries can develop a clear comparative advantage on, given that they often possess a rich natural resource base (OECD 2009:107). Its primary attraction involves activities that are on the natural environment and is also associated with travelling for the purposes of enjoying undeveloped natural areas or wildlife (Spenceley 2003:7; Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:2). Examples of such activities include visiting national parks, trekking, scuba diving, wildlife watching, birding etc (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:2; OECD 2009:107).

Diagne et al (1995:544) additionally states that nature-based tourism (also known as ecotourism or nature tourism), is defined as "tourism that consists of travelling to uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestation found in these areas". Gregerson & Laarman (1996:247) states that it refers to travel motivated totally or in part by



interests in the natural history of a place where visits combine education, recreation and adventure. Similarly, the Tourism western Australia (2006:3) states that any consumptive or non-consumptive tourist activity that takes place in a natural environment setting is generally termed “environmental” or “nature based tourism”; a broad term that includes a range of tourism experiences including adventure tourism, ecotourism and aspect of cultural and rural tourism.

This type of tourism is different from other types of tourism as it is motivated by enjoying wildlife or undeveloped natural areas and may incorporate natural attractions including the scenery, topography, waterways, vegetation, wildlife, cultural heritage and nature activities like hunting or white-water rafting (Spenceley 2003:30). The demand for nature-based tourism has steadily grown and this demand has created opportunities for nature-based tourism to become an economic development driver within regions rich in natural resources such as northern Europe (Fredman et al 2011:5).

Nature based tourism also means any form of sustainable nature and community-based kind of tourism, which is non-consumptive, and has a low environmental and cultural impact. It is mostly structured in accordance to the carrying capacity and economic generation of the destination, and its purpose is to fulfil the wishes and aspirations of all kinds of visitors (Soleimanpour 2005:336). It is also an effective instrument for sustainable use of biodiversity (Soleimanpour 2005:335). Furthermore, nature based tourism promotes more culturally and ecologically sensitive travel, which perfectly profits all people involved and is also effective in promoting conservation and management of natural resources for long-term sustainable economic development (Diagne et al 1995:545).

Similarly this type of tourism is also important because it preserves cultural and social values, including historical places of interest. They further state that nature-based tourism provides economic justification for the protection of areas that may not be protected otherwise. It is thus seen as a model of development in which natural areas are planned as part of the tourism economic base and biological resources and ecological processes are linked to social and economic sectors (Diagne et al 1995:545).

One more advantage with this type of tourism is that it encourages the use of natural resources such as forests and wildlife for non-consumptive uses that may be as profitable as any other type of exploitation .So in that way help provide extra revenues to public and private land managers as well as offer additional justification for managing the resource base for sustainable

use (Diagne et al 1995:545). This type of tourism proves once again to be significant as it has a propensity to generate a more rapid increase in revenue, employment and alleviate poverty.

Nature-based tourism has a potential for pro-poor growth so to lift the poor out of poverty. On the basis that firstly “it brings consumer’s right to the product, thereby generating huge marketing opportunities for local producers of goods and services. Secondly it creates demand for locally produced inputs, which can contribute to economic development through indirect multiplier impacts – particularly in agriculture and fisheries. Thirdly it provides opportunities for off-farm diversification, relatively labour-intensive opportunities and it employs a reasonably high proportion of women and can contribute to gender equality. Furthermore, it is one of the few industrial sectors that use master-plans enabling governments to have direct influence on its domestic development by local stakeholders. Lastly, adequate compensation for protection of land for nature-based tourism can serve as a safety net for some of the poorest communities” (OECD 2009:108).

Nature based tourism includes nature tourism, ecotourism, wildlife tourism, adventure tourism and sustainable tourism. Wildlife tourism includes activities historically classified as non-consumptive as well as those that involve killing or capturing animals. Adventure tourism on the other hand is nature tourism with a kick and involves a degree of risk taking and physical endurance (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:3). Ecotourism is based upon ecologically sustainable visitation to natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation (Tourism Western Australia 2006:1).

Amongst the other types of tourism, nature tourism and adventure tourism have become the fastest growing segments within the tourism industry. Kuenzi & Mcneely (2008:2), states that the nature based type of tourism has an annual growth rate of 10-30% and its share in the world travel market is approximately 20%. One main threat that affects the growth of nature based tourism is the global extinction, as it is said that about 24% of mammals and 12% of birds are thought to be endangered within global extinction. In addition population growth has proven once again to have a negative effect as protected areas have decreased due to the increasing developments caused by the increase in population.

### **2.1.1 Socio-economic benefits of nature tourism**

Tourism has widely been used as a component of conservation interventions which are intended to deliver benefits to local people, in so doing contributing to economic development

and creating incentives for conservation (Sandbrook 2009:21). Nature-based tourism has been one mechanism that has been chosen to turn biodiversity into a marketable commodity creating new revenue streams for conservation management and benefits for local people (Sandbrook 2009:21). Similarly nature-based tourism provides additional revenues to public and private land managers as well as offer additional justification for managing the resource base for sustainable use (Diagne et al 1995:543). When well managed, nature-based tourism industry can also contribute to alleviating poverty; it is one means by which local people can derive economic benefit from protected areas, their habitats and wildlife, creating incentives for protection of those resources (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:16).

In addition, tourism is also an important source of employment as most of the work done is labour-intensive, and has turned out to be a main source of income for most countries especially developing countries e.g. through airport taxes (Coxhead & Wattanakuljarus 2008:930; Neto 2003:214-215). Some of the funds generated through tourism can be used to protect the biodiversity of the host country .The rapid growth in nature-based tourism and recreation add significant weight to the economic case for biodiversity conservation, and its development is usually accompanied by considerable investments in infrastructure such as airports, roads, water and sewerage facilities, telecommunications etc (Neto 2003:215).These benefits in turn contribute to improving the living conditions of local populations and improve economic development. Neto (2003:215), further states that increase in social overhead capital invested to improving tourism can also help attract other industries to a disadvantaged area and be a stimulus to regional economic development.

For people living in remote and peripheral regions with few industry options, this kind of tourism can provide a vital contribution to livelihoods (Greiner 2010:2198). Tourism can bring people of the host country together and increase their national pride in their festivals, customs and traditions. This kind of tourism can serve as an approach to market a place to potential residents and firms, and they may later return to start a business locally. In addition, since jobs in the tourist industry often do not require advanced training, local residents with few skills can readily work as food servers, retail clerks, and hospitality workers. Nature based tourism is also nature dependent, and is primarily concerned with the direct enjoyment of some relatively undisturbed phenomenon of nature, so people get to relax and enjoy all the natural activities found in nature reserves e.g. bird watching, hiking, downhill skiing and primitive camping (Choi & Shafer 2003:3;Valentine 1992:108 ; Tourism British Columbia 2005:5).

## 2.1.2 Risks of nature based tourism

Hussin et al (2011:282), states that millions of people travel to different areas everyday to experience natural environments and this leads to many physical, ecological, and environmental damage. The following basically summarises some of these risks and disadvantages.

### 2.1.2.1 Risks to ecosystems

The risks to ecosystems include unplanned development of tourism infrastructure and facilities in the area, meaning development without management standards and guidelines ;secondly the revenue from tourism results in continuous major alteration of the ecosystems ,namely deforestation ,drainage of wetlands ,soil erosion or compaction, desiccation through excessive groundwater extraction ,fragmentation and disruption of habitat, potential encroachment on protected areas, littering, eutrophication, increased risks from fires, loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:8;Valentine 1992:115).Thirdly, the type of transportation used by the tourists may facilitate the introduction of invasive alien species. Furthermore, wildlife tourism can also cause changes in the behaviour of birds and animals e.g. deserting their nests and eggs, stopping foraging due to restricted patterns of movement, changes to the physiological component of the animal (like heart rate) ,mortality due to exotic infectious diseases introduced by tourists, and lastly reproductive process is also disturbed (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:8).For example in Kenya, wildlife-observer disruption drives cheetahs off their reserves, increasing the risk of inbreeding and further endangering the species( GRA 2010:45).

### 2.1.2.2 Risks to socio-economic systems

Due to tourism activities and protected areas, local communities may find it difficult or impossible to access important resources like gathering wood, water and hunting because of laws and legislations put in place by the tourism management. Kuenzi & Mcneely (2008:9), states that tourist's consumption of fresh water supplies, foods and electricity in areas where such resources are scarce further competes with the needs of the local population .Secondly an increase in tourism related demand of infrastructure,facilities ,goods and services can put financial burden on local communities in the form of taxes and rising property values causing people to migrate to places less suitable for earning a living (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:9). Kuenzi & Mcneely (2008:9) further states that "economic speculation about a rising tourism market can lead to over development and the creation of overcapacity decreasing economic viability and leading to additional environmental damage". In addition another risk could be the potential

disruption of indigenous culture and ways of life, caused by the immigration of new residents in search of jobs and business opportunities and lastly tourists can also be a significant vector for diseases as travel necessitates multiple interactions.

#### 2.1.2.3 Environmental effects

In many developing and developed countries alike, tourism destinations are becoming overdeveloped up to the point where the damage caused by environmental degradation and the eventual loss of revenues arising from a collapse in tourism arrivals becomes irreversible (Neto 2003:217). Impacts caused by transport activity and facility power include air and noise pollution from vehicles and increased carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from fossil fuel combustion which contributes to global climate change (Spenceley 2003:138). Secondly the Impacts caused by the disposal of waste into water bodies include the introduction of minerals, nutrients, sewage, petrol and toxins to the environment and also this contamination reduces water quality which may lead to potential health hazards to animals (Spenceley 2003:138).

Thirdly, “impacts caused by clearing for construction and tourism facility include decrease in natural habitat e.g. in wetlands, due to resource use or tourism construction ,competition between native and invasive plant species from resort gardens, and increased fire frequency leading to habitat change”. Furthermore, impacts caused by pedestrian and vehicular traffic include a negative change in the germination, establishment, growth, reproduction of species and also the disappearance of fragile species (Spenceley 2003:138; GRA 2012:45). In addition, impacts that are caused by the development of highways and trails in natural areas include barrier effects to carnivores, collisions, and increased accessibility to wild areas by poachers. Lastly Impacts of hunting and fishing include changes in species composition and social behaviour, disappearance of rare species; and reduction of habituated animals.

#### 2.1.2.4 Other negative impacts

Nature based tourism results into quite a lot of negative environmental and social costs since it is a major user of the natural resources and biodiversity (Greiner 2010:2198). Other negative impacts of nature based tourism include the following; due to crowding of the natural space of tourists , this creates an environmental stress and changes in animal behaviour, the access to vehicles and movement of people causes trail erosion; vandalism causes mutilation, the feeding of animals causes behavioural changes and poor diet, and lastly souvenir and wood collection results into removal of natural attractions ,disruption of natural processes and loss of habitat

(Valentine 1992 :109). “In addition, a great amount of money is being spent and human resources continue to be used for tourism despite unsuccessful outcomes, and even more money is put into public relation campaigns to dilute the effects of criticism”( GRA 2012:44).

## **2.2 A way forward**

The SPI Paper (2010:3) states that “tourism still has a lot of potential for growth and job creation, but in a long term perspective it would be extremely important to develop and implement sustainable, nature-based and cultural heritage-based tourism concepts to avoid mistakes and disadvantages since many regions still suffer from mass tourism developments from 1960s to 1990s”. There have been many risks and challenges associated with the tourism industry, namely nature based tourism, and Kuenzi & Mcneely (2008:16) states that “one challenge that has been persistent for years is making nature based tourism symbiotic with conservation”. They state that such a balance can probably be achieved best if it is based on a polycentric, nested system of governance, which is in line with the characteristics of a tourism location; and that also the system has to ‘have teeth’; meaning it must be able to regulate those whose behaviour creates risks, that is, the industry and eventually, the tourists themselves. It is said that if this it is done successfully, nature-based tourism could become a role model for sustainable development, thereby clearly outperforming other forms of land-use.

Education is also important in letting people know about the risks associated with tourism and the different ways that they can do to help minimize the risks. Kuenzi & Mcneely (2008:13) suggests that awareness about the impacts of tourism, the importance of biodiversity, and the need for conservation efforts needs to be raised within the tourism industry and it should be integrated all along the tourism supply chain, from tour developers to the indigenous communities e.g. tour guides can influence tourists actions .Secondly Increased research and monitoring efforts are necessary to improve knowledge about both the potential and actual impacts associated with nature-based tourism, particularly at the local destinations (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:13).

Nature based tourism is the only type of tourism that focuses on sustainable development (Soto 2001:7). Sustainable tourism seeks to minimise the negative footprint of tourism developments and at the same time contribute to conservation and community development in the area being developed. Soto (2001:6) states that for tourism to remain sustainable ,it must adopt a community economic development strategy based on economic self reliance ,ecological

sustainability, community control, meeting individual needs and building a community culture; these initiatives should strive to encourage rural communities to conserve and wisely manage their natural tourism resources and to empower local entrepreneurs to seize and optimise the opportunities presented through the development of tourism facilities and services required to meet the tourists demands.

To also help manage risks associated with nature based tourism or tourism in general “relevant government agencies need to be convinced that tourism should be seen as a major means to generate funding for the management of sensitive ecosystems; secondly for conservation and protection initiatives for endangered animals; thirdly patrolling for poachers and other illegitimate users of resources; lastly control of visitor numbers and support of neighbouring communities” (Kuenzi & Mcneely 2008:12). Tourism should be sustainable and Butler (1993:23) states that “tourism should be developed and maintained in an area in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment in which it exists on to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and wellbeing of other activities and processes”.

## **2.3 Swaziland**

### **2.3.1 Country Profile and Tourism Industry**

Swaziland is the third smallest country in Southern Africa, completely land locked. It is surrounded by the Republic of South Africa on all sides except the eastern side which is bordered by Mozambique along the Lubombo Mountains (Harrison 1994:436; Mccrea et al 2008: 787; Maphanga & Poto 2004:1). It lies between latitudes 25 & 28 degrees south and 31 & 32 degrees east (Swaziland Environment Authority 2001:2). The country has a size of 17364 square kilometres, roughly the size of Wales and has 4 regions namely the Lubombo, Hhohho, Manzini and the Siteki region (Mthethwa 2003:41; Harrison 1995:139). The African Development Bank (2011:7) states that Swaziland’s total population was estimated at 1.2 million in 2010 and has remained roughly unchanged since then regardless of the high annual birth rate of 28.3 births per 1000 people and about 77% of people reside in the rural areas (Mthethwa 2003:44; Maphanga & Pato 2004:1; African Development Bank 2011:7).

It is a homogenous society with 98% of the population belonging to the Swazi with only a small heterogeneous population of non-Swazi. It is classified as a lower middle income country and tourism alone accounts for only 2.8% of total GDP in Swaziland (African Development Bank

2011:7; Maphanga & Pato 2004:2). The STA Report (2007:8) noted that visitor arrivals in Swaziland are mostly from Southern African states and the Republic of South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Lesotho account for more than half of the total visitor arrivals in Swaziland. As a sub-sector of Retail, Hotel and Restaurants in the whole economy, it represents an annual average of 11 percent in total economic activity. Tourism continues to be one of the biggest contributors to Swaziland's economy, with a diverse range of authentic experiences on offer to tourists (Maphanga & Pato 2004:1-2).

Many international tourists have successfully used the tourism industry to encourage other sectors of the economy (e.g. agriculture) to generate new and innovative employment opportunities and Swaziland is no different case (Mthethwa 2003:5). The ongoing fiscal crisis and the economic growth slowdown in Swaziland has brought renewed attention to tourism as a sector that could help revive economic growth and job creation (UNDP 2011). The Swaziland's Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Communication's vision states "to develop the tourism sector as a national priority in a sustainable and acceptable manner, taking full advantage of regional and international trends and developments so that it will significantly contribute to the continued improvement of the quality of life in the Kingdom of Swaziland" (Maphanga & Pato 2004:4). Tourism remains an attractive industry to developing countries, as the start-up costs and barriers to entry are generally low, while income may flow quickly under favourable strategic and marketing conditions (Spenceley 2003:41).

"Swaziland is characterised by high levels of inequality, poverty (63% of population in 2010), food insecurity (29% of population in 2010) and unemployment (29% of the labour force in 2010); the uneven income distribution stems from low job creation and the absence of adequate social protection "(African economic outlook 2012:2). Furthermore for Swaziland, 2011 and 2012 was not an easy year as the economic and social development decreased drastically; in 2011 real GDP grew by 1.1% while the 12-month inflation reading hit 7.8% in December. The country faced a severe fiscal crisis due to a sharp fall in SACU receipts, high level of expenditures (especially wages), and the government's limited access to borrowing. The crisis led to cuts in capital and social spending, undermining future growth (African economic outlook 2012:2). The report further puts emphasis in the fact that these challenges need to be addressed in order to achieve a meaningful and sustained improvement in people's lives. For that reason tourism has been seen to be one industry that could actually assist in reducing the rate of these economic challenges.



Swaziland makes a great desirable tourist destination. Tourism in this country has a huge potential in making a significant contribution to its economic development because of the following characteristics that it possesses; unsurpassed scenery, accessible and unspoiled wilderness areas, unique historical culture and sites ,adventurous trails, breathtaking views, unlimited nature, moderate climate, a rich heritage of ancient rocks, mountain capes, indigenous plants, colourful birds, a wide variety of handmade crafts along the main roads, wide range of medical services, cheerful and friendly people, good conference and exhibition facilities, and a low crime rate (Mthethwa 2003:2-3).

In addition, it is mostly described as a peaceful country with natural biodiversity and a rich traditional heritage which presents a chance for tourists to experience the real culture of Africa in a safe and friendly environment. It has extensive links to both the region and internationally with a developing infrastructure, a young literate population with potential to acquire technical and vocational skills to make the country a suitable place for tourism development (Maphanga & Pato 2004:2; Mthethwa 2003:41; [www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)) Furthermore the country enjoys political stability and has indigenous culture, pristine natural environment ,it is located in major tourist routes (the country has a major route between tourist growth points in the Mphumalanga /Kruger National Park, Witbank through Swaziland to Mozambique and KwaZulu-Natal/ Maputo land),a range of attractions within a short travel distance and has capacity to cater for diverse interests, beautiful images of magnificent mountain scenery and lush green pastures (SIPA 2008: 6; Mthethwa 2003:1-3).

Swaziland has diverse and unique landscapes of high aesthetic and cultural value, which offer opportunities for tourism. Furthermore the country has plenty of adventure activities from mountain biking and horse riding to white water rafting (Mccrea et al 2008:787).The tourism industry is therefore of great strategic and economic significance to Swaziland. “This significance not only relates to Swaziland's competitive advantage as far as the quality and uniqueness of its tourism resources are concerned, but also in terms of the economic growth and job creating possibilities”(Mthethwa 2003:41).

Tourism is foreseen as a key sector for Swaziland's economic development. The economic performance report (2009:2) states that the Kingdom of Swaziland faces countless number of problems affecting the production levels, and there include increase of poverty rate, investment challenges, revenue shortages, unemployment and increased demand for health and education services. The African economic outlook (2012:5) states that in order to put the economy on a

path of rapid and inclusive growth, the Cabinet approved the Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) in 2011, with the aim of raising annual economic growth to 5% and create 30 000 jobs by 2014.

The strategy identified the tourism industry as a key to creating economic growth. According to the Economic Performance Report (2009:12), government's vision to reduce the poverty rate up to 50 % by 2015 (in line with the targets in meeting MDGs) requires a minimum annual economic growth rate of 5 percent given an assumed population growth rate of 2.75 percent. The economy is growing at a less than the target growth rate, demonstrating a reduction in GDP per capita in real terms. It is said that tourism has a key role among the instruments to fight the economic depression and also against poverty, thus becoming a primary tool for sustainable development (STA report 2006:4).

In a paper by the minister of tourism on the 4<sup>th</sup> IIPT African conference on peace through tourism in 2007 called for tourism that specifically focused on addressing poverty, by introducing tourism that will eventually benefit the lower social and economic classes and consequently generating net benefits for the poor. This approach was called "pro-poor tourism" and was designed to unlock opportunities for the poor. She further stated that the outcomes of this particular approach could be livelihood benefits such as easy access to portable water, roads which will bring benefits to the poor producers through improved markets, improved health, education etc (Shongwe 2007:5).

Another outcome would be to make certain of all the opportunities and capacity for engagement in decision making so that the people are able to improve their livelihoods by securing better access to tourists and tourism enterprises. Thirdly economic development would be gained through the creation of full or part-time employment or the development of SME opportunities through sales to tourism businesses or tourists. In her speech the minister continued to say that policy making is a clear and important step towards ensuring the role of tourism in alleviating poverty and improving the economy of the country. In addition she said there is a need for the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group in order for the different ministries and policy makers to begin to understand the important role tourism can play in poverty reduction (Shongwe 2007:5).

Swaziland reflects both traditional and modern administration with peace and social stability which is said to be the cornerstone of its foundation to progress (Mthethwa 2008:2). Mccrea et

al. (2008:787) states that Swaziland offers an interesting mix of colonial heritage and home grown confidence giving the place a friendlier, more relaxed and often a safer feeling and offers good value accommodation. Swaziland has committed itself to preserving natural habitats and their associated Wildlife. This thinking led to the establishment of Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC; which is one of the two organisation responsible for the conservation of protected areas) in 1972 to oversee its conservation program (Carruthers & Hackel 1993:61). The Swaziland National Trust Commission was established with the mandate to oversee the conservation of natural and cultural heritage throughout the four ecological zones of the country (SNTC, 2002: 1).

The Swaziland National Trust Commission based in Lobamba manages the Malolotja nature reserve in the northwest Highveld in the Hhohho region ,the Mlawula nature reserve in the eastern part of Swaziland and the Mantenga nature reserve in the Ezulwini valley in the Hhohho region(Swaziland National Biodiversity Strategy and action plan 2001:42) .The other organisation responsible for the conservation of protected areas is called the Big Game Parks(BGP) ; it is a private non-profit trust which is held in trust for the nation by the king and it manages three game reserves in Swaziland namely the Hlane royal national park in the lowveld region, Mlilwane nature reserve in the Hhohho region and the Mkhaya game reserve(Mccrea et al 2008:787).These nature reserves enjoy a common management, have a good choice of accommodation, an interchange of staff, a wide diversity of habitats and a common vision which is to conserve the rich biodiversity of Swaziland's natural heritage .Part of The Big Game Park's mission statement is "to achieve and sustain optimal economic viability in order to facilitate a safe and secure future for Swaziland's historically beleaguered Wildlife within representative habitats"(Swaziland National Biodiversity Strategy and action plan 2001:42).

### **2.3.2 Nature Based Tourism in Swaziland**

Nature-based tourism is an important economic activity and source of income and foreign exchange in Swaziland (Hassan & Ngwenya 2005:278). Tourism in the country is incredibly vital as it is an engine of growth, capable of energising and reviving other sectors of the economy. Swaziland has been able to use nature-based tourism to assist in improving the economic development through, creating opportunities for small entrepreneurs, promoting awareness and understanding among different cultures, generating an inflow of capital and expertise, it has stimulated economic growth in many industries like agriculture, and fostering international relations and international trade and has brought economic and social benefits.

Additionally it has also been able to bring development to rural areas, created a unique informal sector, assisted in preserving the environment, created employment income and economic linkages, provided foreign currency exchange, created domestic and foreign investment in tourism infrastructure and services, created linkages with the services sectors and lastly it has assisted in job alleviation by providing employment opportunities (Mthethwa 2003:4; Maphanga & Pato 2004:5). Natural features are also widely visible in the country; it includes a range in altitude of about 120 metres in the east to over 1860 metres in the northwest. Mthethwa (2003:55) states that the economy has within its borders every feature of the terrain of the African continent except for desert. The country's landscape which is comprised of natural beauty varies according to the 4 geographical regions.

The natural attractions are mostly found in the nature reserves and these attractions include waterfalls, a range of vegetation species, a diversity of wildlife, botanical gardens, mountains, a variety of freshwater species, hiking trails, valleys, dams, rivers etc. "The Hhohho region is the most scenic region with mountains transverse by rivers that cut deep gorges in the landscape, with a natural heritage of rock structures, mountains, caves indigenous trees and plants ,birdlife, rivers and bush lands" (Mthethwa 2003:57). The country offers a range of trails through unspoiled landscaped of nature lovers. Due to the country's natural features and landscape ,tourists are able to enjoy adventure sports and water sports such as abseiling ,paragliding to caving, horse riding, mountain biking and 4x4 trails, sailing and water skiing (Mthethwa 2003:57).

Furthermore it is said that the country has a subtropical climate with plenty of year round sunshine and this is an advantage to tourists as whatever activity they want, they can enjoy it without worrying about the weather conditions e.g. hiking, pony-trekking and golf ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). "Bird watchers are also advised to visit the country during the summer months as some of the species are migratory and the greatest number of birds are seen during the summer season "([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)).The country has numerous dams which are stocked with fishes e.g. trout, yellow fish, bream, barble, tiger fish etc ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)) The kingdom of Swaziland also offers visitors a royal experience amongst mountainous grandeur, lush forests and fertile valleys. There is the greatest diversity of birds so it makes the country a bird watchers paradise with more than 470 species of birds available. Swaziland's game reserves encourage hiking and bird watching on foot ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)).

The Malolotja game reserve is the prime birding venue on the Hhohho region where rare species are even found. There are a number of tournaments that come as a result of the available nature in the country e.g. full stop is required the golf tournament and horse riding tournaments done mostly in the Hhohho region. There are also a number of challenging golf courses in and around the kingdom.

### **2.3.3 Current Tourist Attractions**

If tourists want to take a break from nature attractions they can visit the cultural places that are found in the country. In terms of Cultural heritage, Swaziland has a strong historic culture and the promotion of its unique culture, ancient customs and tradition serves as the most important focus for creating a product image. An example of this is the Mantenga Swazi cultural village and the Swaziland national museum which plays an important role in preserving past traditions and culture for future generations. Mthethwa (2003:52) states that the Swaziland National Museum protects and displays traditional Swazi ethnological instruments and materials, early and natural history, agricultural development, religious and traditional culture e.g. pictures and information about King Sobhuza II's life ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za))

Furthermore it is responsible for the national cultural heritage programme that prepares publications in Swazi culture and industry and lastly an outreach educational programme on the importance of cultural and environmental preservation is conducted in this museum. For people who are interested in the history of the country, there is the "King Sobhuza II Memorial Park set in a large open manicured garden which has a rich history of the Swazi nation"; this park was established as a tribute to King Sobhuza II who led Swaziland to independence from British rule in 1968. The Memorial Park also features a three-metre bronze statue of the late king (Southern African Tourism Update 2010:12; Mthethwa 2003:52).

The Mantenga Swazi cultural village is also an open air living museum found in the Mantenga nature reserve and it displays the way of life of the Swazi people through the demonstration of traditional dance and displays of crafts and traditional artefacts (Mthethwa 2003:52). Another tourist area to visit could be the Ngwenya glass factory; this glassblowing factory has become one of the most popular tourist spots in Swaziland. On weekdays, visitors are given the chance to observe the art of glassblowing first hand. All of the items are made of 100% recycled glass thus promoting an environmental friendly area (Southern African Tourism Update 2010:2). Other guided tours include trips to bushmen paintings and to the world's oldest mine (43 000 BC) .All

of these attractions are conducted by qualified guides ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). The Swazi trails is a company that specialises in exclusive interactive tours to all the country's major attractions by using all the most experiences local guides offering quality transport ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)) .

Other attractions include the ritual ceremonies; the major traditional ceremonies that are held annually, which are the “incwala” and the “umhlanga” (also called the reed dance) .The sacred “Incwala” (festival of the first fruits) is a ceremony of kingship, a mystical rite of powerful spiritual significance for the nation and is meant to renew the strength of the king and the nation for the coming year. This ritual ceremony is not watched, everybody takes part in the dancing so tourists get to participate in the ceremony (Mthethwa 2003:52-53).The umhlanga reed dance takes place annually around August/September and the girls in their teens and early twenties of the country gather together wearing their colourful tradition costume to pay homage to the king and the queen mother. On the final day of their gathering, the girls dance and sing in front of everyone and tourists from different countries get to watch the proceedings and dance along if they want to (Mthethwa 2003:53-54).

The Mantenga and Mlilwane nature reserves are surrounded by numerous tourist attraction areas, like the Swazi craft industry in the Ezulwini area. The handicrafts industry is said to draw many tourists because of the creativity involved. The formal craft sector comprises of specialised products such as mohair fabrics, ornamental candles, tapestries and glassware and the informal sector which is done mostly by people living in the rural areas and it includes traditional sandals, leather bags and traditional Swazi prints and batiks. Other items include wooden sculptures, soapstone carvings, glassware, mohair tapestries, pottery, imaginative silk screened batiks and clothing. All of these items have fantastic designs, colours and textures that attract a lot of visitors and these items are situated on the side of the road and visitors are able to view them ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). The crafts are sold in specialist stores and roadside markets and stalls and others are found in nature reserves and tourists get to buy and carry them as so souvenirs (Mthethwa 2003:54). Harrison (1994:436) states that Swaziland's tradition has increasingly figured in the marketing of the country as a tourist destination.

## **2.4 Study Areas: Contribution of the Nature-Based Reserves to Economy**

### **2.4.1 Mantenga Nature Reserve**

Mantenga Nature Reserve is located in Ezulwini Valley and is a small protected area measuring 725 hectares, established in 1994 (SNTC, 2008: 15-22). Located just at the entrance to

Mantenga reserve is the Mantenga craft centre which consists of attractive purpose built village of craft shops. The shops have exclusive and individual crafts which include fabrics, traditional art artworks and better carvings, toys, clothing and pots (Mccrea et al. 2008:800; Southern African Tourism Update 2010:5). Also available in the reserve is the tourists office where one can organise a wide range of cultural and adventure trips including a half day arts and craft trail ,white-water rafting and carving (Mccrea et al. 2008:800). Across the crafts centre is the legends backpacker lodge which consists of a camp yard, internet access, communal kitchen, and a bar and this lodge is affordable (Mccrea et al. 2008:800). The Mantenga lodge which is said to be an excellent choice for mid-priced accommodation in the area consists of rooms, a pool, terrace bar, top of the range restaurants with a good view. There is also a gallery called the guava galley which consists of jewellery hand crafted out of gold, silver, semi-precious stones and even elephant and giraffe hair, local arts and crafts which includes paintings, sculptures and woven mats.

The nature reserve incorporates Swaziland's authentic cultural village also called "ligugu lemaswati" (meaning the pride of the swazi nation) (Mccrea et al. 2008:801; Southern African Tourism Update 2010:4). The Mantenga cultural village which is strictly traditional, is represented by an open air living museum which replicates a nineteenth century Swazi homestead with 16 beehive huts, all built in traditional style using wooden frames joined by leather strips, reed thatch, cow dung and termite-hill earth (Mccrea et al. 2008:801). Just to create a mental picture of the cultural village; there is also a mini complex sixteen huts, each with its own specific purpose; kraal and byres for cattle and goats, reed fences that serves as windbreaks.

Mccrea et al. (2008:801), also states that to further demonstrate and experience the Swazi lifestyle, traditional activities and crafts, cattle and goats wander about the nature reserve next to the cultural village. There is an open air arena where tourists are made to watch traditional music and dance performance. To experience an even more of the Swazi lifestyle and tradition, tour guides are available to take tourists inside the beehive huts where there is no electricity and bedding and the inside is dark and only a small fire lights the room (Mccrea et al. 2008:801).

"The objective of the cultural village is to enable visitors from all over the world as well as Swazis from all corners of the country to visit it and to maintain a positive interest in the Swazi cultural heritage including language, customs and practices, rituals, dance, music, folklore, arts and crafts ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). On entry the village people warmly welcome visitors wearing

their traditional attire. Visitors are encouraged to interact with the local people, by grinding maize, through dancing, and singing” ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za); Southern African Tourism Update 2010:12).

Mantenga nature reserve is said to be an area of beauty because of its 95 metre Mantenga Falls (SNTC 2008:15-22; Southern African Tourism Update 2010:4) .The Mantenga falls also serves as an excellent tourist attraction and directly opposite it, is the comfortable accommodation with luxury tents with each located on a sturdy wooden platform and quipped with a shower, a toilet and a deck. The tents are said to be grouped around a thatched Swazi river cafe which serves local food. Furthermore also available are the hikes, picnic areas and swimming pools (Mccrea et al. 2008:801; Southern African Tourism Update (2010:4).The following are some of the projects that the reserve has done to assist in promoting the country's economy.

#### **2.4.1.1 Contributions to the economy**

- Environmental Education

The National Environmental Education Programme (under the patronage of the Swaziland National Trust Commission) is mandated by the SNTC Act (no.9, 1972) to co-ordinate and promote environmental education in Swaziland. The overall aim of environmental education programme is to promote the understanding, acceptance, application and evaluation of environmental conservation principles and practices by all the people of Swaziland to promote a better living. Environmental education awareness teaches on environment crisis issues which is achieved primarily through focussing on the social, economic, political, and biophysical dimensions of Swazi inhabitant ([www.sntc.org.sz](http://www.sntc.org.sz)). Through the knowledge gained, people are able to learn more about the attraction places and then visit them; basically it promotes exposure .Furthermore letting people know about the importance of conserving the nature and not over exploit it, helps the country to continue having these attractions and continue getting revenue from it .

- Park Management

“The Parks management section is necessary in order to protect the natural fauna and flora for the benefit of present and future generations of mankind, through recreational, educational, scientific and other forms of sustainable utilisation”. Some of the objectives of the Parks



Management Section are: to promote ecosystems conservation ;to promote and conserve indigenous flora and fauna and their habitats (e.g. biodiversity protection) ; to promote public appreciation of the social, economic and aesthetic value of nature conservation ;to facilitate sustainable resource utilisation within the protected area ;to provide enjoyment to visitors to the park. All of these objectives are successfully done by the management so to generate more and more revenue into the country's economic system ([www.sntc.org.sz](http://www.sntc.org.sz)).

- Culling and Management of Vegetation

The reserve has management rules in place to help maintain the high biodiversity in the reserve in order to continue to generating more returns and profits from it. Culling in the reserve is carried out when there are ecological grounds for reducing the population size of the species, and secondly, so that good neighbour relations can be promoted through provision of affordable meat. The meat is sold at a cheaper price so the majority of people are able to afford it even the poor people and are able to use the extra money to earn a living ([www.sntc.org.sz](http://www.sntc.org.sz)).

#### **2.4.2 Mlilwane Nature Reserve**

This reserve is Swaziland's pioneer conservation area and a beautiful secluded nature situated in the Ezulwini area in the Hhohho region. It is Swaziland's first game park, and it opened in 1964. It now holds a major conservation movement in Swaziland resulting in the saving of over 22 species from local extinction across the 3 reserves owned by the big game parks ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). The reserve is said to be the highlight of the Ezulwini area (Mccrea et al 2008:803).The name Mlilwane refers to the little fire that sometimes appears when lightning strikes the granite mountains. The area covers 4560 hectares. The reserve allows a 24 hour gate access enabling guests to enjoy the neighbouring tourist's hubs of Ezulwini and Malkerns with their attractions and craft shops ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). Furthermore it offers a relaxed atmosphere and attractive game filled plains, good game viewing and activities (Mccrea et al. 2008:803).

The animals available in this reserve include giraffes, zebras, antelopes, warthogs, crocodiles, hippos etc. Tourists can watch the hippos playing in the hippo pool which is opposite the hippo haunt restaurant at the main rest camp. The wide roads make it possible for tourists to drive/walk through it for better viewing as guided walks and drives are available (Mccrea et al. 2008:803). At the north of the reserve there is the "execution rock" where the most adventurous tourists can climb. In addition guided mountain bike tours and horseback trails are also available

and they tend to be a good way of viewing all the reserves attractions (Mccrea et al. 2008:803). Additionally, overnight trails are available which involves camping in caves and rustic trail camps in the more isolated parts of the reserve.

This reserve has received a 2013 Trip Advisor certificate of excellence award honouring it for achieving outstanding excellence in hospitality (Swaziland Tourism Authority 2013:10). Closer to the reserve is the Chubeka trails which is another way of experiencing culture, adventure and wildlife from the horse saddle, bike saddle or on foot ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). The Chubeka Trails is the horse trailing arm of big game parks based in the Mlilwane sanctuary which offers excellent hourly, daily, overnight and multi day trails. "With well trained horses suitable for all levels, Chubeka Trails offers fantastic opportunity to get up close and personal with the flora and fauna of Mlilwane reserve" ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). Swaziland owes the creation of this reserve to a man named Ted Reilly; the son of a British Anglo- Boer war soldier who was born in the Mlilwane area. He established the reserve as a way of protecting the wildlife and its natural habitats from serious threats of poachers and commercial farmers. So through his persuasion and negotiation with the previous ruling government, he eventually opened it in 1963. This reserve like the Mantenga nature reserve offers a wide variety of accommodation which should be booked prior to the visit through the Swaziland big game parks central reservations. Other types of accommodation include the traditional beehive huts and the two person huts.

The Sondzela Back Packers Lodge is located within the Mlilwane Reserve's southern boundary overlooking the beautiful Mhlambanyatsi valley where tourists can stay in dorms, doubles or comfortable adobe huts overlooking the valley (Southern African Tourism Update 2010:4). Tourists can also relax in the gardens or have a swim in the swimming pool. The Sondzela backpackers offers riding, biking, hiking, table tennis, the hog and wart bar, internet cafe. Affordable breakfast and dinner at the Sondzela lodge is served in front of the campfire. A free Sondzela shuttle is also offered to and from the nearby towns like Malkerns ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)).

Closer to the Sondzela Back Packers Lodge is the Reilly's hilltop lodge (Mccrea et al. 2008:804; Southern African Tourism Update 2010:4). The Reilly's rock hilltop is surrounded by the royal botanical gardens featuring aloes, abundant bird life, threatened and endangered antelope. ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). This lodge is said to be a lovely colonial home full of antiques and hardwood furniture situated on a hilltop surrounded by woodland and abundant birdlife. Tourists

here enjoy the awesome view from the balcony over the close Mzimba Mountains. There are regular shuttle buses which drive tourist inside the attractions found in the reserve.

The stunning setting of the Reilly's rock has spectacular views of game studded plains ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). It also offers comfortable colonial accommodation with an intimate and friendly atmosphere. Other types of accommodation available in the reserve include rondavels, private rooms, dorms and camping. Other available tourist attractions include a 4x4 game viewing, walking trails, horse trails, mountain biking, adventure and craft tours. The following are some of the projects that the reserve has done to assist in promoting the country's socio-economy;

#### **2.4.2.2 Contributions to the economy**

- Hlabazonkhe Community Project

The reserve has been raising money for various community projects. An example of a community that has been assisted is the Hlabazonke Community. There is also the Imvelo Mountain Bike Classic, which occurs on Mlilwane reserve in June every year which is used to raise money for various community projects. The Hlabazonkhe School, nearest to the Mlilwane reserve has been a project for some years as the reserve assisted it in constructing a Water Spring project. Some of the outcomes of the water spring project included the Construction of a storm water diversion furrow, spring source with the construction of a catchment wall, installation of an Industrial Pipe sub-surface carrying water from source to the schools and the construction of a Concrete slab with space for 4 x 10000l Water Tanks etc ([www.biggameparks.org](http://www.biggameparks.org)). Such projects do not only become an advantage to the communities but they also tend to be beneficial to the country's economy as well, as a certain percentage of the funds collected through events like the Imvelo Mountain Bike Classic, is taxed by the government.

- The Umphakatsi Experience

The Umphakatsi Experience is an activity offered at Mlilwane Wildlife nature reserve and is also one of the ways in which Big Game parks assists the community. The experience consists of a visit to the nearby chief's village at Esitjeni for guests to see and experience real Swazi culture through dance. The guests engage with the residents as they show them their culture and traditions by inviting them to participate in their cultural practices e.g. grinding grain to make the

Swazi local staple food. Big Game Parks markets the activity at no cost to the Umphakatsi (meaning chieftain in English) through the “nothing for nothing” concept. A share of the costs of the experience goes directly to the Chief and this is in turn used by the chief for the upliftment of the community by helping the needy, offering start-ups for aspiring entrepreneurs of small businesses etc. Indirect benefits to the economy are also made as other guests come from outside the country and pay a tax at the border gate to come watch the proceedings ([www.biggameparks.org](http://www.biggameparks.org)).

- Esitjeni Paper Mache Project

The reserve and the Grand Circle embarked on a project called the Piggy Bank Project to assist in the alleviation of poverty at the Esitjeni Community. This project includes interested individuals within the community; anyone who supports orphans, orphans themselves, anyone who is jobless or those that just want to earn a little extra by selling piggy banks. In 2007 when it started, the group of people made piggy banks out of balloons, scrap newspaper and egg boxes. “Grand Circle Travel then sponsored better materials for the project as the years went by, while Mlilwane Management set about holding a number of skills and workshops on paper mache and dishing out the reserves raw materials”. This group of people now hold accounting books which contain the records of their materials and sales and 10% of every sale is paid back to the project to buy materials at cheaper bulk rates. A large percentage of the money goes to the group of people as their own and it has really contributed to their well being and in alleviating poverty ([www.gameparks.org](http://www.gameparks.org)).

- Harvesting of Thatching Grass

One of the ways in which the Big Game Parks (BGP) assists the community with, is the 50-50 exchange of thatching bale. A group of women cut grass as building materials for a semi-open accommodation. The 50-50 approach simply means that with however many bundles one harvests, half of them are kept by BGP and half is taken home by the members of the community. This grass is used by the community to thatch their own homes or sell it for profit ([www.gameparks.org](http://www.gameparks.org)).

- Subsidised Meat

“Big Game Parks is widely known for being the pioneers of conservation in the Kingdom of Swaziland. One of the methods of which conservation is practiced is the controlled culling process. This is also another way of giving back to the community of Swaziland by selling game meat at subsidised rates” ([www.biggameparks.org](http://www.biggameparks.org)). During the culling process, the animal’s carcasses from the reserves are all collected and placed at Mlilwane Nature reserve and the public is then informed through newspaper advertisements to purchase the carcasses at Mlilwane reserve. The meat is sold at a cheaper price so the majority of people are able to afford it even the underprivileged people .Furthermore through the money that is made by the Big Game Parks; the government also takes a certain percentage of money as tax ([www.biggameparks.org](http://www.biggameparks.org)).

### **2.4.3 Malolotja Nature Reserve**

In the mountains of north-west of Swaziland is the Malolotja nature reserve. Malolotja Nature Reserve was designated a conservation area in 1978 and is administered by the Swaziland National Trust Commission under the SNTC Act of 1972. The Malolotja Nature Reserve is located in the north west of Swaziland and is approximately 18,000 ha (SNTC, 2008: 15-22). It is situated in the Hhohho region and it offers fantastic scenery and some of the finest hiking areas in Southern Africa. The mountains found in the reserve are said to be among the oldest in the world, about 3.6 billion years old (Mccrea et al. 2008:810).The mountains are covered in grasslands and are surrounded by streams and waterfall (the 95 m high Malolotja falls).“The reserve consists of approximately 300 species of birds with an impressive colony of the rare bald ibis just by the waterfalls”(Mccrea et al. 2008: 810).Other animals other than the birds include wildebeest, blesbok, zebras, leopards and elephants which are mostly found in the tracts of mountains and valleys.

Tourists can walk, hike and go by horseback to view the area like the other reserves. Accommodation is also available in this area and facilities include catering log cabins, and campsite. This nature reserve due to its geology is home to a number of old mines as near the reserve is the Ngwenya mine also known as the lion cavern which most tourists like to visit and is said to be the most ancient at 43 000 years old. The Ngwenya mountains contained deposits of high grade iron ore which have been worked continuously for the past 50 000 years (Swaziland Tourism Authority 2013:9; [www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)) .In addition, it is said that the stone age workers here once dug for specularite and haematite which they used as cosmetics and for

religious rituals (Mccrea et al 2008: 810). This reserve is also home to forest species such as knysa lourie, cape batis, green twinspot, bush blackcap, starred robin, chorister robin, olive bush strike, grey cuckoo strike and narina trogon ([www.azalea.co.za](http://www.azalea.co.za)). Mountain biking is also possible at the reserve as well as catch-and-release fishing. Southern African Tourism Update (2010:9) states that the reserve supports a significant number of globally threatened or near-threatened species.

The reserve contains a wide variety of mammals and bird life including rare species such as the forest canary and ground woodpecker. Other animals seen during the guard tours are blesbok, reedbuck and the chasma baboon. The Malolotja canopy tours consists of eleven elevated forest platforms, ten slides and a 50 metre long suspension bridge that crosses across the reserve called the Majolomba river (Swaziland Tourism Authority 2013:8). The canopy tours offers the most beautiful views of rock formations, towering cliff faces and views across the lush forest canopy towards the Malolotja mountain peaks (Swaziland Tourism Authority 2012:8). The reserve contains plenty of game, amazing birdlife and a world renowned display of wildflowers in spring. The canopy tour is said to be safe as it has been designed and built by a qualified civil engineer and all groups are escorted by a lead guide to ensure their safety (Swaziland Tourism Authority 2013:8). Some of the projects that the reserve has done to assist in improving the country's economy;

#### **2.4.3.3 Contributions to the economy by the reserve**

- The Malolotja community Outreach Programme

“This outreach programme started operating in 1994 and is intended to improve relations with surrounding communities by offsetting the limitations on resource use within the reserve that are inherent in Protected Area (PA) Management’ ([www.sntc.org](http://www.sntc.org)). The community Outreach Programme (COP) officer identifies appropriate community development projects, secures their funding from development agencies, and facilitates their implementation. Some of the programmes that the reserve is responsible for includes; Soapstone Carving Re-orientation Project which the local community is heavily dependent upon for income generation, secondly the Community Water Projects where the community is assisted in setting up water schemes, mainly through transport and related assistance towards ultimate water provision and this becomes beneficial to them as they use the water for their small businesses e.g. gardening and animal care.

Thirdly is the book keeping schemes; “The favourable environmental conditions around Malolotja are excellent for beekeeping, and this is a worthwhile source of revenue for surrounding communities, which uses least inputs in the production process”. Furthermore, fuel wood pressures for heat and cooking fires result in a high rate of deforestation and the COP always tries to increase sustainability in the surrounding areas of the reserve. The major intervention is in exploration of alternative energy forms such as biomass fuel energy. Another benefit which is purely created just for environmental sustainability is range management; since overgrazing is a constant problem in the surrounding areas, and assistance in developing a system of control over grazing pressures has benefited the surrounding communities ([www.sntc.org](http://www.sntc.org)).

- Trans-frontier Conservation Areas

The Kingdom of Swaziland, through the Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC) is involved in various Trans-frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) together with the governments of South Africa and Mozambique. These countries are working together and have initiated different programmes to assist in each country’s development. “The Trans-frontier Conservation Areas (TFCA) concept aims at improving the quality of life of the people of the participating countries by means of the interstate collaboration and promoting sustainable use of natural resources, whilst at the same time managing for the conservation of trans-boundary ecosystems and associated biodiversity” ([www.sntc.org](http://www.sntc.org)). These projects seek to encourage and support integrated and sustainable biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development in Swaziland through cross border collaboration with the Republics of Mozambique and South Africa. Furthermore it encourages socio-economic upliftment throughout the subcontinent where rural areas are constantly subject to high unemployment and low income, as well as greatly improve regional ecosystem management ([www.sntc.org](http://www.sntc.org)).

The TFCAs in which Swaziland is currently involved in are as follows; the Songimvelo-Malolotja TFCA, Lubombo Conservancy-Goba TFCA, Nsubane-Pongola TFCA and Usuthu-Tembe-Futi TFCA incorporating the Usuthu Gorge. The Lubombo Conservancy-Goba TFCA ‘s major objective is “to promote sustainable economic development and the sustainable utilisation of natural resources in the area for the benefit of present and future generations by identifying and establishing appropriate and viable economic activities and initiatives in the area”.

The Nsubane-Pongola TFCA's "major objective is to realize economic returns from tourism and associated activities within the area, while safeguarding its ecological integrity, and to promote the sustainable socio-economic development of the area, for the benefit of all Parties and to develop, market and promote the TFCA to this end". Usuthu-Tembe-Futi TFCA incorporating the Usuthu Gorge 's objective is "to stimulate, promote and market the sustainable economic development of the area focussing on tourism and associated activities, as well as to build the local economy" ([www.sntc.org](http://www.sntc.org)). The Songimvelo-Malolotja TFCA (S-MTFCA) is the one that involves the Malolotja nature reserve and is discussed below.

Trans-frontier Conservation Areas - Songimvelo-Malolotja TFCA(S-MTFCA); the TFCA comprises Malolotja Nature Reserve in Swaziland and Songimvelo Nature reserve in South Africa, both located adjacent to one another and situated in the Barberton Mountain range. The major objective is to collaboratively establish and manage on a sustainable basis a viable trans-frontier conservation area with stakeholder participation, including local communities, fostering regional cooperation, biodiversity conservation, and cross-border socio-economic development.

The S-MTFCA provides a wide variety of nature activities such as game viewing, unguided nature walks in Malolotja and specialised guided walks to interpret the geology, the Barberton mountain range has a rich history of gold mining, dating back from the Dravidian era, the well known Barberton gold rush in the late 1800's to present day mining operations, due to the richness in soil minerals the S-MTFCA provides for an extremely rich flora, three vegetation types, approximately 1400 plant species and 15 endemic plant species, such as two threatened cycads etc. ([www.sntc.org](http://www.sntc.org)).



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.1 Introduction**

A research design simply refers to the plan according to which researchers obtain research participants and collect information from them (Kruger et al. 2005:52). In research design, the researcher describes what the participants will be doing with a view to reaching the conclusions about the research problem (Kruger et al. 2005:52). Burns and Grove (2003:195) defined a research design as “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings”. In this chapter, the details of the methodology and research design are explained in detail of the research objectives, the rationale for the selection of the study areas, the target population, the procedures for conducting the research, the rationale for choosing qualitative approach, the measuring instrument, procedure for data collection, ethical considerations, the sampling method and finally the limitations.

### **3.2 The main objective**

Swaziland's economy declined in the past few years and it led to the increase of unemployment rate and poverty in the country (CIA: 2013). The on-going fiscal crisis and the economic growth slowdown brought renewed attention to tourism as a sector that could help revive the economic growth and job creation of the country (UNDP 2011). Therefore the main objective of the study is to find solutions to this crisis hence a considerable research was carried out in determining the different ways and strategies for harnessing the potential of nature based tourism in stimulating socio-economic development in Swaziland. This study only focused on 3 nature reserves namely Malolotja, Mlilwane and Mantenga nature reserves. The reasons for choosing these reserves are clearly outlined below and they revolve around the fact that these reserves have a potential of improving the socio-economic development, judging from the attractions available as well as the existing and upcoming developments surrounding them.

### **3.3 Rationale for choosing the study sites**

These three reserves were selected because of the following reasons:

- They possess plenty of available tourist attractions which have in the past proved to be of advantage and beneficial to the economy. These attractions include sparkling

streams, countless waterfalls, mountains, a wide variety of wildlife and vegetation, dams, rivers, the highest mountain in the country, hiking trails, waterfalls, canopy tours etc.

- They are closest to the busiest border gate (Oshoek/ Ngwenya border gate) and an improvement in these reserves could cause an influx of people into the country thereby increasing tourist arrivals consequently promoting socio-economic development.
- A significant area is located next to the reserves called the Lubombo area or the “royal area” and is regarded as the kingdom’s spiritual home where the queen mother resides and where the sacred Incwala Ceremony and the reed dance is held.
- The strategic location of these sites is of advantage as the main route into Swaziland from the world famous Kruger national park passes through these reserves, making the hotels and lodges in the area ideal stop-overs for visitors. Therefore with more improvement of the tourism sector in these sites, it could create a spill-over effect to other regions in terms of socio-economic development, especially since many tourists pass through these reserves.
- Lastly these sites are surrounded by many under-utilized attractions and this research seeks to unpack them and then enhance them solely for the improvement of socio-economic development.

### **3.4 Rationale for using a qualitative approach**

A qualitative research is an umbrella phrase covering an array of interpretive techniques which seeks to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world; it is thus called a descriptive form of research (Cloete 2001:188). The study was a survey, and it relied primarily on the data collected through the use of self-administered questionnaires and also the use of secondary data namely theoretical texts books, internet search, academic journals, articles, newsletters and pamphlets of the different reserves which are clearly outlined in the bibliography. This survey followed a qualitative methodology. A qualitative approach in the research was so that the opinions and views of the tourists and the workers of these reserves can be explored and described. Furthermore, it was fit for this particular study because of the characteristics that it has, which are clearly listed below;

- “Unlike a quantitative research, a qualitative research deals with subjective data that is produced by the minds of the respondents and presented in language instead of numbers.
- A qualitative research is based on flexible and explorative methods and it enables the researcher to change the data progressing so that a deeper understanding of what is being investigated can be achieved.
- It bases their results on the daily events and behaviour of people unlike a quantitative research which bases their results on probabilities derived from the study of large numbers of randomly selected cases.
- Qualitative researchers achieve an insider’s view by talking to subjects or observing their behaviour in a subjective way as they believe that first hand experiences of the object under investigation produces the best data.
- Finally it involves samples of people, studied by means of in depth method” (Kruger et al 2005:8-9).

### **3.5 Pilot Study**

The pilot study also called the “dress rehearsal” entails the administering of the measurement instrument to a limited number of subjects from the same population as that for which the eventual project is intended (Kruger et al 2005:148). The questionnaires were thoroughly pilot tested before given to the respondents to detect any errors or confusing questions that could have resulted in to possible unanswered questions or illogical responses. About 10 questionnaires were first given to a couple of people and their comments and feedback was used to adjust some of the questions. Five revised questionnaires were further redistributed to other people and their feedback was also used to adjust some of the questions. This led to the development of the final version of the questionnaire. After the pilot study was done, the questions were simpler, clear, and understandable. So undertaking the pilot was very helpful as it identified possible errors found in the questionnaire and also identified unclear and ambiguously formulated questions (Kruger et al 2005:148).

### 3.6 Research design and Data collection

Two different sets of questionnaires were constructed; the first set of questionnaires aimed at obtaining information from the tourists visiting the reserves, either from around Swaziland or a different country. The second questionnaires aimed at obtaining information from the workers of these reserves (namely the wardens, managers and some of the officials presently managing the reserves namely the Swaziland National Trust Commission and the Big Game Parks). The questionnaires consisted of 17 questions with the first page containing a cover sheet which explained the purpose of the study and instructions. Both questionnaires were divided into four sections and the questions were structured differently but covered the same analogue and broad dimensions namely;

- Section A (The background information): this section included the respondents demographic details namely the age, gender, educational level, country of origin, occupation level and there was an extra question in the worker's questionnaire which sought to find out "how long workers have been working for the reserve/organization". Though not central to the study, the personal data assisted in contextualizing the findings and formulating appropriate recommendations with regard to enhancing the nature reserves especially since input came from both the locals and people from outside the country.
- Section B (The views on the current state of the reserve): This section had general questions regarding the available attractions, opinions and views of the respondents with regard to the desirability/attractiveness of the reserve, management of the reserves, the different issues surrounding the reserves operations or its daily activities and lastly marketing of the reserves to increase the rate of tourists arrivals.
- Section C (The relationship between economic development and nature based tourism): This section had questions pertaining the contribution of these reserves to the country's socio-economic development; issues which acts as barriers to the progress of the country's economic development, and lastly the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats surrounding the reserve (SWOT) analysis of the reserves.
- Section D (Enhancing the nature reserve): this section basically had questions related to the main research which is "how the country can improve these 3 nature reserves so

that they end up becoming major drivers in the socio-economic development of the country”.

### **3.7 Target Population and Sampling**

Both sets of questionnaires used the simple random sampling. This type of sampling refers to a sample taken in such a way that each combination of an individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Kruger 2005:59). For this particular research a purposive sample of 30 tourists found in each reserve was used and only 15 workers of each reserve were purposively selected as respondents and the sample size therefore was 135

All the 135 questionnaires were completed making a 100% response rate. The response rate was high because the questionnaires were administered during the festive season when a lot of people visit these reserves, secondly because the questionnaires were fully administered by the researcher and the respondents asked for assistance where they did not understand. Kruger et al (2005:52) explains that in sampling, the term population is not used in its normal sense as the full set of cases need not necessarily be people, but it is actually any study object which could be individuals, groups, organizations, human products and events.

The questionnaire was given to individuals of different age groups, professional backgrounds, educational levels and nationalities .In order to ensure extensive and accurate information regarding the main research problem, the data was collected during the festive season where a concentration of people from different countries and cultures visit these reserves. Furthermore, the questions were both closed and open ended and the respondents were supervised. Structured interviews using the same questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents who were illiterate (10 tourists were found to be illiterate; 2 from Mantenga reserve and 8 from Mlilwane nature reserve).

### **3.8 Data capturing and reporting**

Information from both questionnaires was captured, coded and reduced to manageable and understandable data. Furthermore, the data was corrected for mistakes in order to ensure accurate reporting. This step was followed by data analysis and interpretation which is shown clearly in the following chapter (Chapter 4).

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

According to Kruger et al. (2005:184), ethical considerations need to be considered when conducting a research especially if it involves people. Furthermore, they also state that whatever method of data collection used, ethical considerations are of extreme importance and must always receive the necessary attention. Ethical guidelines were carefully followed when collecting data in this research study. The respondents were free to sign on the first page of the questionnaire if they were interested in taking part in the study. The informed consent page communicated to the respondents on the purpose, procedure, time, risks and benefits of undertaking the study and the confidentiality of the information given plus privacy was assured as questionnaires were completed individually. The respondents had the right to participate in the research and the freedom to decline at anytime if they wanted to.

### **3.10 Limitations**

Limitations of the study were its validity and generalizability. Because of the sample size the results could not be generalized to the whole population.

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to describe in detail the research methodology and research design of this study, explain the sample selection, procedure for collecting data, provide a description of the research objectives, the rationale for the selection of the study areas, the target population, the procedures for conducting the research, the rationale for choosing qualitative approach, the measuring instrument, ethical considerations, the sampling method and the limitations of the study. In the next chapter attention turns to data analysis and interpretation.

## **CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS & INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

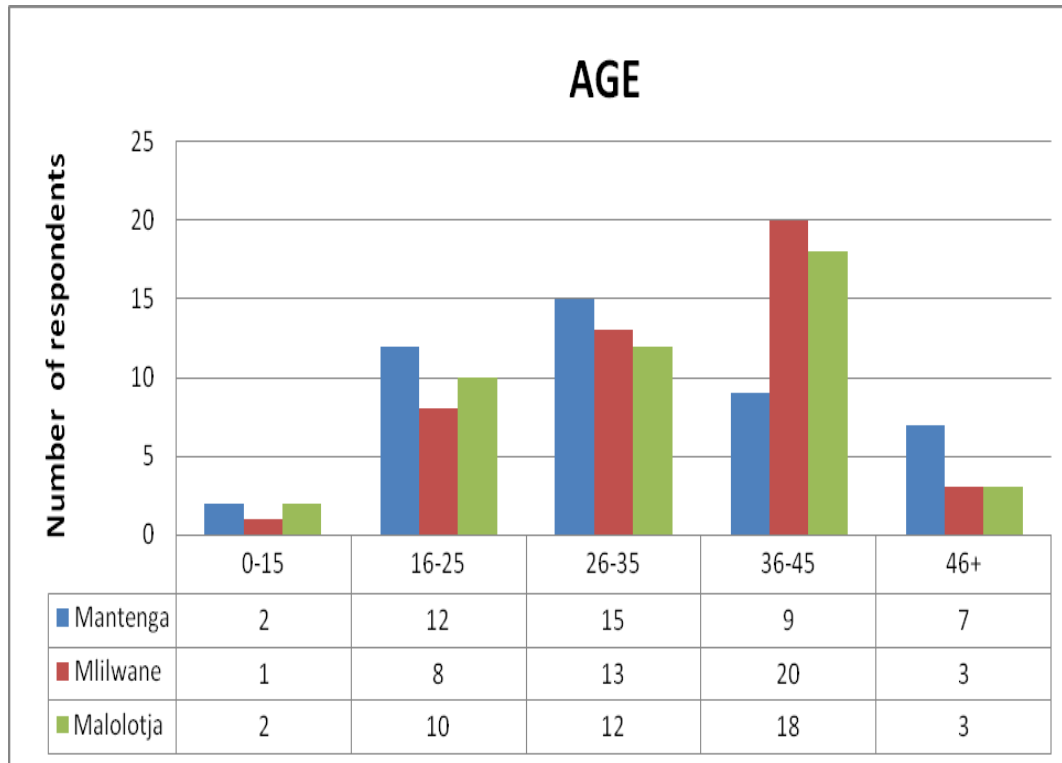
This chapter comprises of the analysis, presentation and interpretation of the study findings. The analysis and interpretation of the data was based on the results of the 135 questionnaires given to the tourists visiting the reserves and the employees of the reserves and the organisations. The research followed a qualitative method in order to reveal detailed information about nature based tourism in these nature reserves and to achieve a clear understanding of the problem under review. Furthermore, in this particular study, both qualitative and quantitative variables were utilized.

### **4.2 Analysis and interpretation**

The analysis of the background data of both the employees and the tourists visiting the reserves was combined and then the analysis of the other sections B-D was analyzed separately according to tourists and employees.

## 4.2.1 SECTION A: Background information

### 4.2.1.1 Age structure of respondents



**Figure 2: Age structure of respondents**

The above graph depicts the respondent's age in the different nature reserves, and shows that 35% of the respondents were in the 36-45 age range.



### 4.2.1.2 Gender

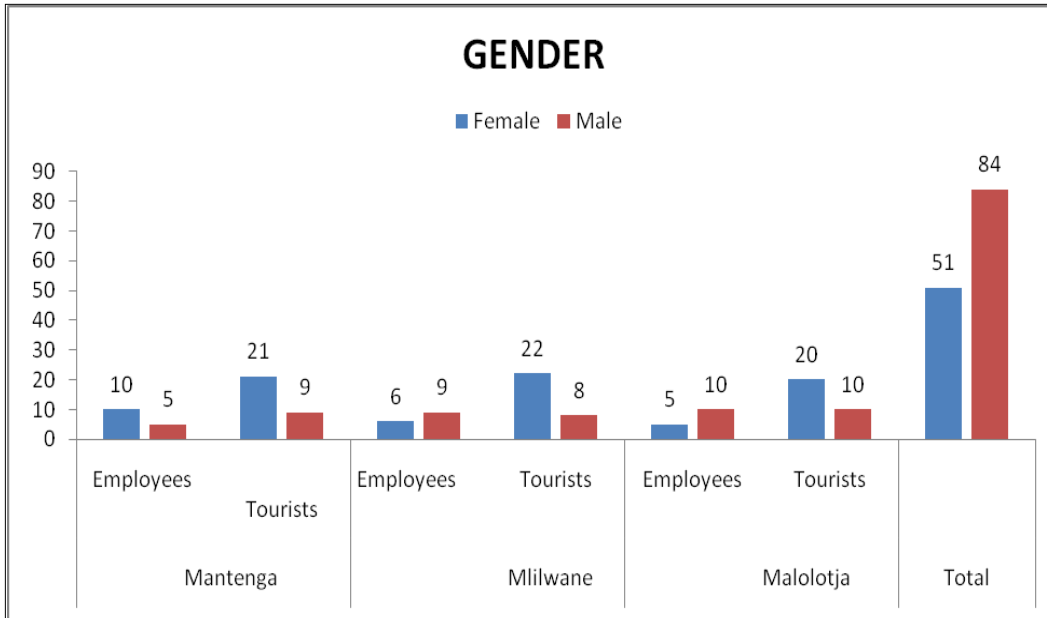


Figure 3: The gender of respondents

### 4.2.2.3 Educational level

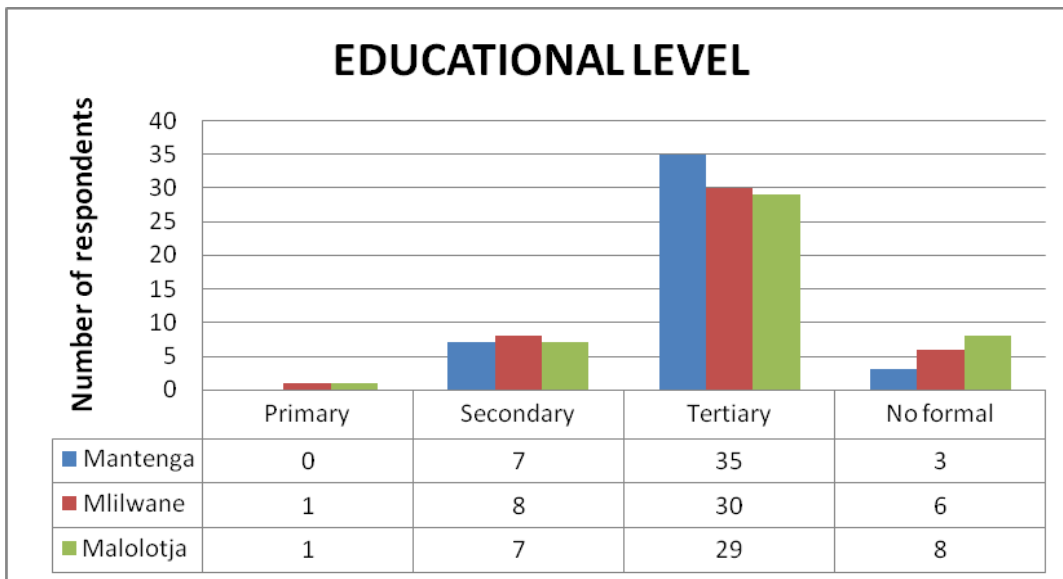
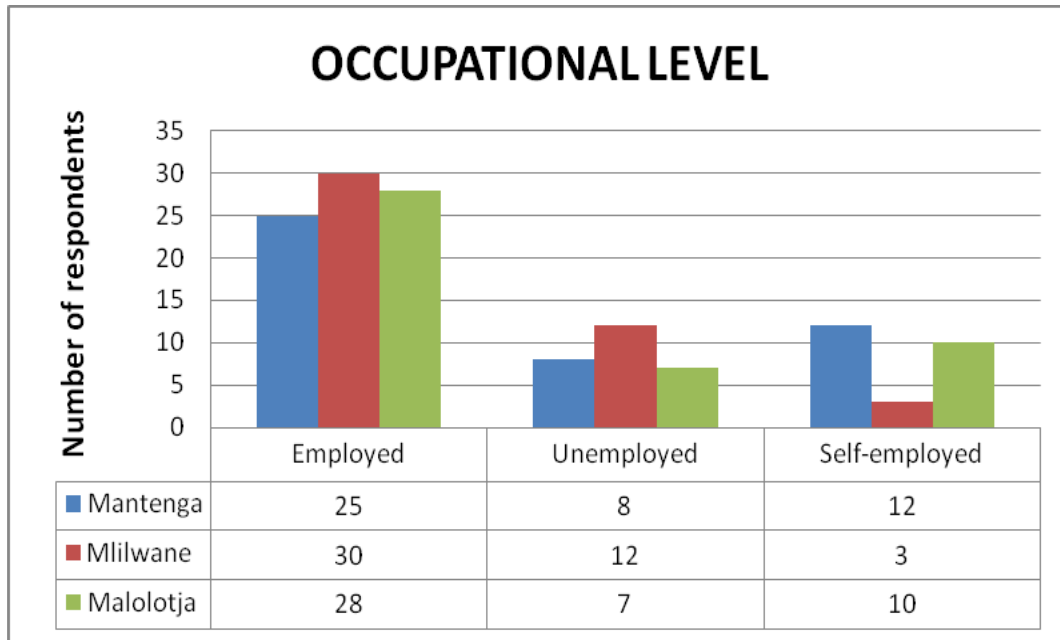


Figure 4: The educational level of the respondents

Figure 4 indicates that most of the respondents had tertiary education (about 70%).

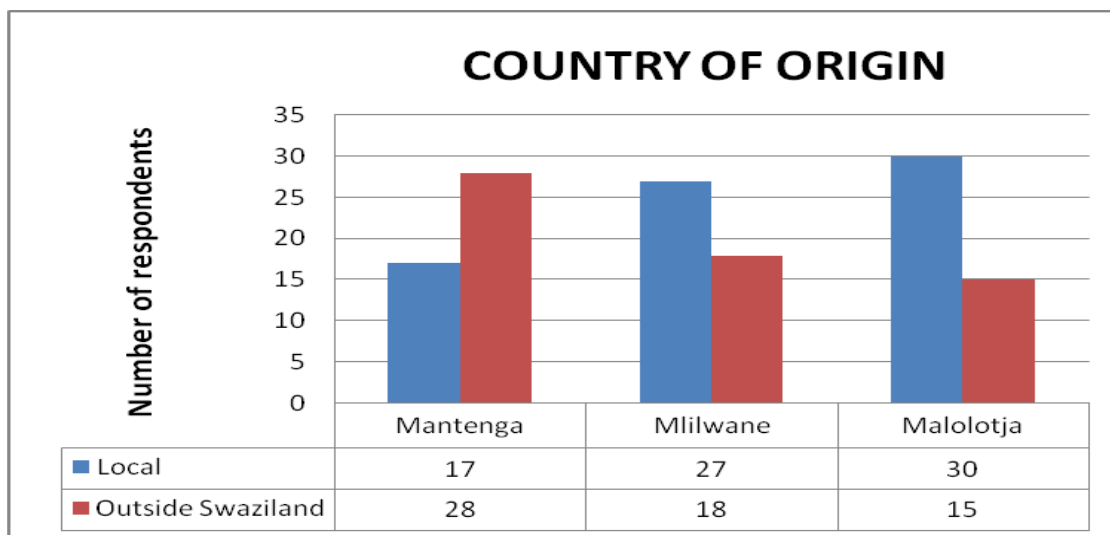
#### 4.2.1.4 Occupational level



**Figure 5: Occupational level of respondents**

Most of the unemployed (n=12) visited Mlilwane where very few self-employed (n=3) respondents were touring. The majority of the tourists in all nature reserves were employed (61%).

#### 4.2.1.5 Country of origin for respondents



**Figure 6: Country of origin for respondents**

With reference to the graphs above, there were a number of international tourists due to the fact that it was the festive season. There were 61 international respondents (45%) from eight different countries and 74 local tourists (55%).

Table 1: Number of respondents from each of the eight foreign countries

Country	Number of respondents
Ivory Coast	2
Lesotho	1
Mozambique	4
Netherlands	3
Nigeria	2
South Africa	37
USA	10
Zimbabwe	2

:

4.2.1.6 Number of years working for the nature reserves? (This question only applied to the employees).

Most of the employees had worked for over 5 years in these nature reserves, and only about 6 out of the total number (45) of employees interviewed had worked for less than this period. This suggests respondents with experience about nature based tourism and the reserves.

## **SECTION B: Tourists' views of the current state of the reserves**

The first question in this section was: *"Is it your first visit to the reserve,"* which had a follow up question: *"if you answered no to the question above please state how many times you have visited it"*. It was important to ask the respondents this question in order to find out if people are actually attracted by these reserves through the number of visits. With regards to the number of visitors in Mantenga Reserve, the annual statistics for the year 2012/2013 was 24,457. In

Mlilwane Nature Reserve, the annual statistics for the year 2012/2013 was between 30 000-350 000. For Malolotja nature reserve, the number of visitors for the year 2012/2013 was 13,068. From the data drawn from the questionnaires, it was found that a lot of people have visited the reserves before.

For Mantenga nature reserve, 24 out of 30 of the respondents (80%) were found to have visited the reserve more than three times. These respondents said that this reserve depicts such a vivid and clear picture of the culture of Swaziland so they like to visit it now and again.

About 22 of the respondent tourists (73%) found in Mlilwane nature reserve were found to have visited the reserve more than three times. The respondents said that they loved getting closer to the animals, through riding a bicycle or horse riding beside them. Secondly they enjoy jogging right beside some of the animals like the zebras and the kudus and as well as watching the hippos and crocodiles while enjoying their meals in the restaurant .Only 18 respondents in Malolotja nature reserve (60%) were found to have visited the reserve more than 3 times. The remaining 12 respondents (40%) said that they loved the reserve's scenery, the wildlife and the canopy tours but the reserve and the surrounding areas are extremely quiet and, moreover, they do not provide television or radios in the accommodation places so they felt like there is not much entertainment to compel them to come back.

- a) The attractions that the respondents enjoyed the most.

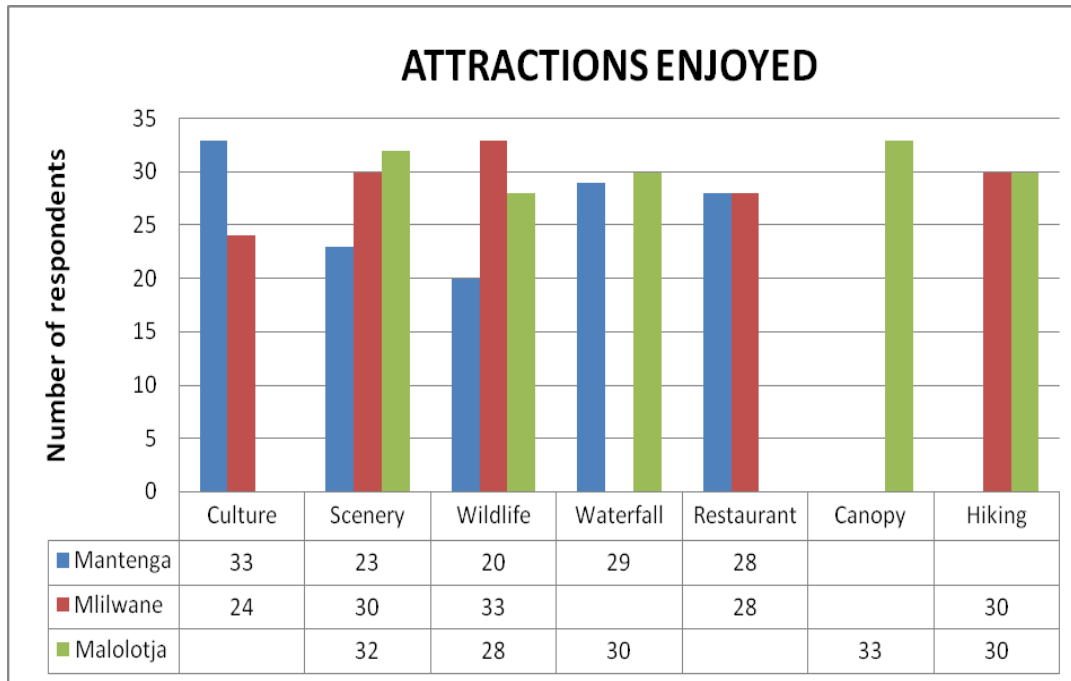


Figure 7: Numbers of Respondent Tourists and the Attractions they enjoyed

**NB: Blank spaces mark the absence of the activity in the reserve**

In Mantenga nature reserve, about 29 respondents (97%) actually enjoyed learning and experiencing the culture present in Mantenga reserve. The respondents loved the setup of the cultural village which incorporates an open air living museum with 16 beehive huts, built in traditional style and also the mini complex sixteen huts, with kraals and byres for cattle and goats. Furthermore, the cultural village has an open air arena where tourists get to watch traditional music and dance performance which the respondents enjoyed it the most. About 21 respondents (71%) loved the scenery, and about 25 respondents (83%) loved watching the waterfall and the nature surrounding it. This reserve has less wildlife compared to the other two reserves hence few people enjoyed watching them (17 respondents). Most of the international tourists said that they loved all the attractions and felt like Swazi's deserve a much larger audience.

In Mlilwane Nature Reserve, about 29 respondents (97%) enjoyed watching the wildlife especially the crocodiles and the hippos, which were clearly visible from the hippo haunt restaurant. The respondents also enjoyed the sight of the reserve's scenery which they described and perceived as beautiful. About 96% of the respondents enjoyed hiking, they drove

and others walked through the roads for better viewing e.g. some even drove to the north of the reserve to the “execution rock” which is said to be the highest point in the reserve. Furthermore, some even camped in caves and rustic trail during their hiking adventure. Horse riding was also one of their favourite attractions.

In Malolotja nature reserve about 95% of the respondents enjoyed the canopy tours, some of the overseas tourists reported that they came to this reserve specifically for these tours and the nature surrounding the reserve. About 92% of the respondents loved the scenery of the reserve; they said it was beautiful and soothing. They also enjoyed the history behind some of the natural features e.g. the oldest mine and also the mountain found in the reserve which is said to be among the oldest in the world, about 3.6 billion years old. The respondents also enjoyed watching the waterfall and also the mountains which are always covered in grasslands and are surrounded by streams.

*c) Do you think this nature reserve makes a great desirable tourist destination? Please explain your response.*

Most of the respondents reported that the nature reserves make a great desirable tourist destination and others thought there were not desirable enough to attract tourists. The following is a brief summary of all the responses drawn from the said question;

### **Mantenga**

About 26 respondents (87%) said that the reserve makes a great desirable destination because it co-operates nature together with culture. The respondents said that the cultural village draws tourists from all over the world with the unique culture. They also remarked that the cultural dance performances were fascinating, entertaining, very professional and well done. Furthermore, they noted that it offers the opportunity to learn more about the Swazi culture. In addition they also reported that the nature aspect of the reserve attracts a number of tourists and they are able to hike and view the landscape, waterfall and the wildlife which is quietly tolerant of human presence. They believed that the Mantenga waterfall is without a doubt a great desirable tourist destination because of its beauty and tranquillity which is set on an amazing setting.

Furthermore, the workers were friendly, welcoming and engaging and they said that upon entering the reserve the personal guides showed them around the reserve. In addition, the

respondents said it was situated in a beautiful location and it was closer to the busiest border gate (Ngwenya border gate) and also has a restaurant with great food and accommodation. About 4 respondents (13%) said that this reserve does not make a great desirable tourist destination because they feel like the facility level is not competitive enough to attract tourists to its maximum level and the infrastructure is very poor especially the roads leading to the reserve which has a lot of potholes and it really needs to be improved. They also said that the tour guides are not living up to the standard of the reserve and also felt like the style of the dance performances is poor.

### **Mlilwane**

All the respondents believed that this reserve makes a great desirable tourist destination. They said that the reserve makes a great desirable tourist attraction destination because it offers an amazing nature experience; from the animals freely roaming around the campsite, staying in the immaculately constructed beehives, taking a mountain bike around the reserve, taking fine walks on which zebras, hippos, warthogs, crocodiles, impalas, kudus & various birds could be spotted, hanging out with Pumbas and Nyalas on the premises, fantastic surroundings, the scenery which they said is a marvel to watch, the location of the restaurant is spectacular as some of the animals roam freely next to it and lastly enjoying a meal overlooking the hippo pool seeing hippos and crocodiles makes the experience of nature more remarkable.

### **Malolotja**

All the respondents said that this reserve makes a great desirable tourist destination because of its natural beauty, namely the high altitude meadows which are beautiful, stunning views of the mountains and the waterfall, offers great hiking, a stunning area and it gives an opportunity for serious backpacking down into the valley. The respondents also said that the main attraction of the reserve; the canopy tours, is very safe, as the 10 zip lines and the suspension bridge are engineering masterpieces and are beautifully designed to show off the beautiful scenery.

Furthermore, they said if one is looking for a place to rest without any noise or disturbance, this reserve is the best as it is wonderfully quiet and an easy place to visit. The quality of the accommodation is clean, modern, and comfortable, and the view from the log cabins is awesome and is well equipped with all the crockery and cutlery needed to cook and wood for braai. There are also numerous mammals to see like the Blesbok, Black Wildebeest, Eland and Zebra which the respondents also enjoyed watching. Lastly, the respondents noted that the

information regarding the reserve was abundant and clear and the workers were polite, extremely safety conscious, friendly and willing to show them around.

### **SECTION C: The Relationship between economic development and nature based tourism.**

Firstly, this section was also included in the questionnaire so to get an idea of what the respondents think of these nature reserves and nature-based tourism of Swaziland in general . Secondly, so to get an idea of how much they think these nature reserves contribute to the socio-economic development of the Swaziland. For the purposes of this study, nature based tourism meant all the nature related attractions found in the nature reserves namely ecotourism, adventure tourism, extractive tourism, wildlife tourism and nature retreats.

a) The first question was an open ended and closed ended questions which sought to find out if people thought tourism was important in contributing to the economy of the country and it stated that *“Do you agree with the statement; tourism in Swaziland has potential to make a large significant contribution to the country’s socio-economic development”*. Please explain your response.

All the respondents in all the reserves answered “yes” to the question and had the following as explanations to their response:

The country has a lot to offer but the resources are under explored like the wildlife that is still roaming around and not found in the game reserves for people to see. Furthermore they believed that the country still has a lot to offer as it has a number of scarce natural plants and indigenous animals which are not available in other countries that are present in the country; they felt like, if there were to be explored more tourists would be attracted into the country. In addition, they further noted that in order for these scarce natural resources to be explored, the right people who have knowledge about tourism can introduce policies and approaches of exploring these resources.

Additionally, they say that the industry is relatively in its growing stage hence improving it can really attract more tourists from different places around the globe. Furthermore, Swaziland has potential in making a large significant contribution to the country’s socio-economic development because of its unique culture and the respondents thought that it should be advertised well so to attract more and more people and also the industry itself needs to be aggressively marketed as



well. The respondents also said that tourism in Swaziland has potential in stimulating new and expanded community facilities and infrastructure initiatives, such as the improvement of retail, restaurant and entertainment options, transport services, education and sporting facilities. The tourism industry in Swaziland has shown so much potential and has already made a difference in communities as a number of projects have been established to assist the poverty stricken communities e.g. through selling subsidised meat to the communities, donation of Christmas hampers to their constituencies, donating water tanks to communities and many more.

b) The next question was specifically directed for each nature reserve not nature based tourism in general and it stated that *“In your opinion, do you think this nature reserve contributes positively to the country’s socio-economic development;”* and a follow up question was *if you answered “yes” to the question above, in what ways do you think this particular nature reserve contributes to the country’s socio-economic development?*

### **Mantenga**

All the respondents answered “yes” as a response to the above question which states *“In your opinion, do you think this nature reserve contributes positively to the country’s socio-economic development;”* if you answered “yes” to the question above, in what ways do you think this particular nature reserve contributes to the country’s socio-economic development?

They had the following to say: the revenue collections from gate entries is one activity that contributes positively to the country’s socio-economic activity; providing employment for the people working there; through the development of this reserve, it has stimulated the development of a variety of allied infrastructure and facilities around it, such as hotels, lodges, camps, shops, and malls. In addition, the respondents also said that the Mantenga nature reserve has contributed to the country’s GDP and export receipts.

Furthermore, they said that this reserve promotes economic growth, alleviate poverty, and advance food security indirectly. Direct spending by the tourists also has a positive impact on business profitability and employment growth. This reserve also works with the communities nearby, in a number of projects and the community benefit from these projects which have become a source of income and helps them develop their skills. One respondent also said that since this reserve is surrounded by many developments in the Ezulwini town where it is situated, he reckons that this might have been a result of the expectations and needs of visitors which led to the creation of new businesses and commercial activities. Lastly, this reserve

promotes the conservation of cultural heritage, which in turn ends up being an injection to the economic system.

### **Mlilwane**

All the respondents (i.e. 100%) of the sample population answered 'yes' as a response to the above question which states *"In your opinion, do you think this nature reserve contributes positively to the country's socio-economic development;"*; they noted that this reserve has been an engine of economic growth. Firstly, through the provision of employment opportunities to the people working in there; secondly, contributing to GDP, export receipts and investment. Thirdly, indirect spending which results from the money that is circulated and re-spent in the economy, which is from the tourists visiting this reserve. This reserve, like the Mantenga Nature Reserve, does a number of projects with the community nearby and the community benefits from it by getting money from sales and profits. The respondents said that this was a way of redistributing wealth from urban to rural areas, which in turn creates a more diverse economic base and reduces reliance on one or two established businesses found in the communities. Lastly, the services that the reserve uses and pays for them e.g. electricity and water also serves as an injection to the economy as well the revenue collections from gate entries contributes to the socio-economy of the country.

### **Malolotja**

All the respondents answered 'yes' as a response to the above question and had the following to say; since tourism is a labour intensive industry, this reserve offers employment opportunities for many people and even to people who lack formal qualifications get hired e.g. gardening, and this reduces the rate of unemployment in the country. This reserve has been a development tool as it positively contributes to economic growth and poverty reduction. Some respondents said that this reserve plays a huge role towards balancing sustainable development, which in turn generates net benefits for the poor.

Direct spending by visitors in other areas of the country has a positive impact on business profitability and employment growth. The respondents further said that this reserve has resulted to indirect benefits which include supporting growth in other sectors, such as transport, engineering, town planning, construction and agriculture and assumed that the growth of this reserve has resulted in many opportunities for small businesses to develop thus increasing the

economic rate. Lastly the services that the reserve uses and pays for e.g. electricity, sanitation and water also serve as an injection to the economy.

#### **Section D: Enhancing the nature reserve**

a) *“Do you think improving this nature reserve would actually assist in improving the country’s socio-economic development?”* And a follow up question was *“in your own view, how do you think this nature reserve can be improved in such as a way that it becomes a major contributor to the socio-economic development of the country?”*

#### **Mantenga**

About 28 out of 30 (93%) respondents answered ‘yes’ as a response to the above question and had the following to say; the infrastructure needs to be improved for instance the roads are in a terrible condition, and the pot holes are extremely frustrating especially if you are driving a smaller car. The respondents said that when they were travelling to the reserve, they almost went back because the roads were in a bad state. Almost all the respondents wanted swimming pools to be provided since it is risky to swim in the large natural pool at the base of the waterfalls. Furthermore they wanted the reserve to provide a place for children to play in e.g. have a separate place for children’s games and in that way it will increase the number of children coming into the reserve.

Diversifying the wildlife or just the nature reserve itself further and improve both the traditional and modern facilities. The reserve is strategically based and hence it is easy for it to gain popularity amongst tourists thus it should be given the opportunity to diversify at least to the level of other local game reserves or international reserves. Other respondents noted that this reserve can improve the economy of the country if other services can be added like spas, few clothing shops and, a kiosk that sells handicrafts. They also felt that the road signs were not clear at all, some respondents even got lost and they said it was bad for the industry especially if they still want tourists to come back. Some respondents further said that security needed to be improved especially along the roads from the entrance leading to the cultural village as it was too quiet and they did not feel safe.

Most of the respondents enjoyed the dance performances and felt like they should perform at least four times a day instead of two times and also add more forms of entertainment. They further said that the Mantenga falls could be improved as a tourist attraction by building a water

theme park which could incorporate the cultural village as well as the waterfall itself. Some respondents said that the activities offered in this reserve like the gallery shop and the cultural village are far-away from each other and in between them there is total silence as there is no activity between and the respondents felt like there should be some sort of activity along the road e.g. build a shop, tourist office or a game room. They also wanted to see the creation of more braai areas. Only 2 respondents out of 30 thought this reserve needed no improvement and felt like its uniqueness makes it different from the other nature reserves not only in comparison to local reserves but to other reserves outside Swaziland. They felt like nothing should be added to it, it should just remain natural and in that way it will attract tourists because of its uniqueness.

### **Mlilwane**

All the respondents answered “yes” as a response to the question and had the following to say; the road leading up to the campsite and the reserve itself has potholes all the way through and makes for a long bumpy ride. Two respondents said that at night, there was no interior light in their rooms, and it became dark so they said one needs to carry a torch when they visit the reserve which they said was an inconvenience. They also felt that the signs leading to the reserve were not clear enough, and some respondents even got lost. Furthermore, they also said the reserve should provide proper furnished stands away from the dam for watching the hippos and crocodiles.

The place where the traditional beehive huts are situated seems to be dirty, it had long uncut grass, so to attract more tourists they said cleanliness should be a priority. The respondents also wanted the reserve to add traditional food in their menus. They also felt like the reserve should add more kinds of entertainment to keep the area lively. In addition, the respondents also said this reserve is not marketed and advertised well and this is not good for the industry, they felt like more thought should be put into establishing the marketing strategy of the reserve to help promote it.

### **Malolotja**

All the respondents answered “yes” as a response to the question and had the following to say; in order for the reserve to improve and assist in promoting the socio-economy of the country, the respondents had a few changes that they wanted to see namely; they wanted the rooms to have televisions and radios because the area is too quiet, since the reserve has fewer animals

so the respondents thought the introduction of more animals would assist in attracting more tourists, furthermore the introduction of traditional foods in the restaurant, the creation of a bigger open space next to the waterfall so they can get a clearer view of it, marking the hiking routes ;the present hiking routes are not clearly visible and lastly this reserve like the other two reserves also needs to be marketed and advertised more. In terms of marketing, they said the relevant authorities could be marketing this reserve by at least putting up posters and providing brochures about the reserve or the country as a whole at major airports around the world especially with flights to Johannesburg and Maputo; in that way tourists travelling to South Africa and Mozambique could also include Swaziland in their tours.

### **Employees of the reserves**

Since there were two questionnaires; one for the tourists and the other for the employees, this next section clearly describes only the opinions of the workers whereas the above discussions and finding were collected only from the tourists. The reason for the separate discussion is because the questions in both of the questionnaires were not the same. So therefore the discussion below outlines the collected information of the employees.

In order to collect a lot of data and clearly answer the research question which is “what are some of the ways and strategies for harnessing the potential of nature-based tourism in stimulating socio economic development in Swaziland, with reference to 3 nature reserves”?, information was not only collected from the tourists, but from the employees of the reserves as well.

The questions sought to find out the opinions of the employees on different issues namely; their views on the nature reserve itself and the attractions that these reserves offer. Secondly, their thoughts with regard to the relationship between economic development and the nature reserve as well as nature based tourism in general. Thirdly, finding out more information regarding the projects that these reserves are currently involved in and how much there contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. Lastly the workers gave their ideas on how they thought these nature reserves can be improved in order to attract more tourists.

### **Views on the current state of the reserve**

a) The first question was “describe some of the attractions found in the reserve”?

### **Mantenga**

Mantenga Nature Reserve offers the unique twin focus of discovering both the Swazi culture and the local natural environment. When entering the reserve, one is surrounded by the sounds of the birds, barking baboons, drum beats and singing from the dance performances. The Swazi culture is fully incorporated in the cultural village and the workers said that the village's main objective is to enable visitors from all over the world, as well as urbanized Swazis, to maintain a positive interest in Swazi cultural heritage; meaning the language, customs, practices, rituals, dance, music, folklore, arts and crafts. There is occasional wildlife in the area such as warthog, nyala, vervet monkey, duiker, bushpig, porcupine, otter, rock dassie, bush baby, snakes and mongoose.

Also present is the diversity of indigenous plants and also invertebrates such as butterflies and dragonflies. Other attractions include the restaurant with a "traditional design" which consists of an open aired wooden deck and an inside area with a bar counter. They further said that restaurant offers breakfast, lunch and dinner and the cultural village occasionally offers local food and traditional brew. The restaurant also allows booking for functions, lunch meetings, weddings and conferences. The reserve also provides one of the best value accommodation venues for tourists visiting the reserve. Other attractions include the waterfalls and the picnic areas which consist of braai and table facilities which are placed near the waterfalls and along the riverbed near the camp.

### **Mlilwane**

The workers said this nature reserve offers a number of attractions namely; a wide range of accommodation including camping, caravanning, traditional Swazi beehive huts, self-catering cottages and rondavels, a swimming pool, a diverse range of wildlife e.g. wildebeest, blesbok, zebras, leopards and elephants. Furthermore it offers numerous activities, such as walking, hiking, mountain biking and horse riding, overnight camping and cave trails which are available for hikers, cyclists and riders. Other attractions include the hippo haunt restaurant, education centre, the Rest Camp and the hippo pool.

### **Malolotja**

The different attractions found in this nature reserve include a vast diversity of flora and fauna namely the wildflowers which are widely seen in spring, protected wetlands, woodland, grasslands and the birdlife includes the blue swallow, bold ibis, striped flufftails, blackrumped buttonquails, gurney's sugarbirds, Stanley's bustard and ground woodpeckers. Some of the

available mammals include the rock hyraxes, shrews, white-tailed mongoose, antelope blesbok, zebra, wildebeest, serval, eland and oribi or aardwolf. Furthermore there are threatened species such as the barberton and Kaapsehoop cycads, *Streptocarpus dunnii*, and almost forty species of orchids. The reserve is also home to 25 species of amphibians and 66 species of reptiles. Other attractions include the world's oldest mine at Ngwenya, and Swaziland's highest waterfall (Mccrea et al. 2008:810). Other Attractions include extensive hiking trails of up to seven day hikes, a campsite and log cabins. Lastly the canopy tour is also available and it offers views of the beautiful scenery.

### **The relationship between economic development and the nature reserve as well as nature based tourism in general.**

a) The first question was "Describe your visitor numbers?"

#### **Mantenga**

With regards to the number of visitors to the reserves the workers reported that the annual statistics for the year 2012/2013 was 24,457. The numbers increased because of the SNTC turnaround strategy which enabled the SNTC to take over the full operations of the tourism facilities through the establishment of the business and commercial affairs department that led to the marketing and positioning of all the SNTC product offerings.

#### **Mlilwane**

This is Swaziland's most frequently visited reserve and the workers reported that the annual statistics for the year 2012/2013 was over 30 000.

#### **Malolotja**

With regards to the number of visitors to the reserves, the workers reported that the annual statistics for the year 2012/2013 was 13,068. This reserve like the Mantenga reserve also had an increase in the number of tourists visiting because of the SNTC turnaround strategy which enabled SNTC to take over the full operations of the tourism facilities through the establishment of the business and commercial affairs department that led to the marketing and positioning of all the SNTC product offerings.

b) The second question was *“Are there any projects that the reserve did lately/ is currently busy with that could assist in improving the country’s socio-economic development? If you answered “yes” to the said question please state them”*.

To promote the reserves the employees recently started advertising the reserves by giving out newsletters concerning the reserves, e.g. what is happening in Swaziland and Vakasha newsletter. Furthermore, the reserves once a year showcase their different attractions in the country, in Durban and in Mozambique. In all the reserves, the employees said there are many projects that they want to pursue but the main problem is that the money that they receive from the government is far less for helping them undertake some of their projects, so they really need financial aid. They reported that if government were to assist with regard to finances, more entities can be added to the reserves and more people can get employed and an increase in visitor numbers can be seen.

## **Mantenga**

There are quite a lot of projects and activities that the reserve is busy with and there are as follows:

- The Environmental Education Programme: The overall aim of environmental education programme is to promote the understanding, acceptance, application and evaluation of environmental conservation principles and practices by all the people of Swaziland in order that a better quality of life can result e.g. through rural communities training on Issues of environment/ nature conservation, through incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems in order to promote 'sustainable 'attitudes, and providing academic service to the tertiary institutions through the nature reserve public facilities, where various kinds of studies are being undertaken on the biodiversity therein.
- The Parks Management Section: this is done in order “to protect the natural fauna and flora for the benefit of present and future generations of mankind, through recreational, educational, scientific and other forms of sustainable utilization”.
- Culling: The meat at the reserve is sold at a cheaper price so the majority of people are able to afford it, even the poor people and are able to use the extra money to earn a living.



- The reserve also gives permits to the public for fetching water from the waterfall intended for ritual purposes.
- It also gives permit to the public for harvesting lutindzi, lukhasi, likhwane and collecting firewood.
- The reserve is in process of adding more activities to the reserve for entertainment.
- Still ongoing talks regarding the farming of livestock and goats in the reserve, adding traditional Swazi food to the menu, selling firewood and also thatching grass.

## **Mlilwane**

The following includes some of the projects /activities that the employees in this reserve said they have done to help improve the socio-economic development of the country:

- The “Umphakatsi” Experience: this is an activity offered at this reserve in which it assists the community economically. The experience consists of a visit to the nearby chief’s village at Esitjeni for guests to see and experience the Swazi culture through dance performances. A share of the costs of the experience goes directly to the Chief and this is in turn used by the chief for the upliftment of the community.
- Hlabazonkhe Community Assistance: The reserve raised money for various community projects and the Hlabazonke Community was one example of a community that was assisted. They constructed a water spring for the Hlabazonkhe School.
- The Imvelo Mountain Bike Classic event: it takes place on Mlilwane Nature Reserve premises every year in June, and the money raised is used for various community projects.
- Esitjeni Paper Mache Project: the reserve provided help to the Esitjeni community on a project called the “Piggy Bank Project” to assist by providing jobs for them, as a percentage of the profits went to the community as their own.

- The harvesting of thatching grass: this reserve assists the communities through what is called the 50-50 exchange of thatching bale. This basically means that however many bundles, half of them are kept by the reserve and half is taken home by the members of the community either for building their houses or selling it.
- Subsidised meat: this is also one method of giving back to the community of Swaziland by selling game meat at subsidised rates.
- The Ngwenya Glass Recycling Project: The collected glass from bottles discarded in bins is cleaned at Mlilwane reserve and thereafter sent to the Ngwenya Glass for recycling purposes.
- Offering reduced rates to schools and churches when these groups organise a group visit in advance with the central reservations.
- Donation of Christmas hampers to their constituency.
- In response to the over increasing threat of rhino poaching in Swaziland, the big Game Parks which is an organization responsible for managing this reserve, introduced the use of dogs in the fight against rhino poaching. This organization has partnered with almanac publishers and stoprhinopoaching.com to send a number of rangers and dogs to attend an extended anti-poaching course where they receive specialized training over a number of months.
- Stocking on Shops with locally produced products only.
- The reserve also assisted in the provision of water tanks at KaPhunga and Sigcaweni areas.

## **Malolotja**

The following briefly outlines the different activities and projects that this reserve is involved in which promotes the socio-economic development of the country;

- The Environmental Education Programme: The main purpose of the programme is to promote and strengthen environmental education & awareness in the youth of Swaziland at a subsidized fee.

- The reserve helps the neighbouring poor homes by buying them seeds and fertilizers for agricultural purposes.
- They assist the communities with getting clean water the reserve.
- Transfrontier Conservation Areas - Songimvelo-Malolotja TFCA(S-MTFCA): The Kingdom of Swaziland, through the Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC) is involved in various trans-frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) together with the governments of South Africa and Mozambique. The major objective is to collaboratively establish and manage on a sustainable basis a viable trans-frontier conservation area with stakeholder participation, including local communities, fostering regional cooperation, biodiversity conservation, and cross-border socio-economic development.
- The reserve also gives permit to the public for harvesting lutindzi, likhasi and likhwane and collecting firewood.
- The harvesting of thatching grass: this reserve assists the communities through what is called the 50-50 exchange of thatching bale. This basically means that however many bundles, half of them are kept by the reserve and half is taken home by the members of the community and make baskets to sell them not only in the country, but outside as well.
- Subsidised Meat: this is also a method of giving back to the community of Swaziland by selling game meat at subsidised rates and also helps with conservation efforts and indirectly discourages poaching.
- The reserve has an educational centre which educates people on the importance of protecting the environment.
- The reserve comprises of a small shop that sells handicrafts, paintings, clothes and other items that are clearly marked “Malolotja nature reserve”.
- Allowing the public to book for events in the beautiful grasslands e.g for weddings.
- The Community Outreach Programme (COP) officer identifies appropriate community development projects, secures their funding from development agencies, and facilitates their implementation, and these projects include:

- Soapstone Carving Re-orientation Project with the local community
- Community Water Projects where the community is assisted in setting up water schemes.

### **Enhancing the nature reserves**

The question for this section was, *“In your own view state how you can improve this reserve so to make it a major contributor to the socio-economic development of the country?”*

The employees of the Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC), which manages the Mantenga and the Malolotja nature reserve, reported that last year, they introduced a number of strategies for attracting tourists into these reserves, which was a success. The first strategy was direct marketing, whereby SNTC sent emails to potential tourists in order to encourage repeat visits; secondly through promoting these reserves by creating a brand awareness and pushing its products through advertising in local and international media; thirdly through marketing improvement whereby new products were offered like tented camps and game drives and lastly enhancing marketing strategies for the strong competitive markets such as Swaziland, South Africa, Germany and Netherlands so to protect and expand the market share.

In order to improve the socio-economy of the country and also reach out to its target market (which are the international tourists, corporate groups, schools groups and tour operators), the SNTC aims at protecting and expanding its market share through reaching a wide scope of target market and increasing public awareness, secondly by addressing customers needs and increasing the level of competitiveness against competition and lastly through various marketing strategies which will be developed according to the needs of the tourists thereby resulting in sustainable profitability. The workers also said that the SNTC at times cannot accomplish its operational costs because the money that government allocates to them is not enough for running the ecotourism facilities. This has stalled the ability of the organisation to generate more revenue from internal sources since there are no funds for marketing the SNTC products as well as keeping them at a good condition that will attract and retain the visitors (this information given by the workers is also found in the Swaziland tourism Authority (2013:29).

So they state that the organisation is appealing for adequate funding to carry out their projects so to enable it to effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate (this information is also found in

the Swaziland tourism Authority 2013:29). The workers also said that, this organisation needs capital funding to upgrade and introduce new projects that will enable SNTC to attract a number of visitors, lengthen their stay and increase their spending in these reserves. Workers in the Big Game Parks said that, there is also a need to improve coordination with other departments that are linked to the property of the tourism sector like transport, communication infrastructure and immigration.

Furthermore, they also said that there is a huge need to increase budget allocation towards the whole nature based tourism sector so as to ensure the fulfilment of the role that it can play towards poverty alleviation and employment creation. In addition, the workers also said that as a tourist destination, the country has much to offer in terms of competitive products for both traditional and emerging consumer groups hence the Swaziland Tourism Authority (STA) ended up partnering with the Commonwealth to help improve travel and tourism competitiveness, and also broaden the nation's range of global tourism products.

### **Mantenga**

The employees reported that they have many changes that they want to introduce in order to attract more tourists but they need the government to assist them financially and the changes are:

- Improving the roads and road signs.
- Increase the number of braai areas.
- Increase more facilities and increase entrance fee.
- Introduction of more wildlife.
- By marketing the reserve more, especially in the internet.

In order to protect some of the attractions found in the reserve, the workers said that there have general patrols, observation patrols, river walk patrols and control of problem animals. Furthermore illegal harvesting of medicinal plants and debarking, trespassers, littering and domestic animals were among other problems which they still have to solve.

### **Mlilwane**

The workers felt like this reserve is not marketed overseas as a tourists destination and they said that the government sometimes focuses on building airports and hotels more when fewer tourists visit the country when he should be focusing on creating the conditions necessary to promote tourism like adding more entities in the reserves/improving the reserves road infrastructure. They also have comments forms found at the reception area and also people leave their comments in the reserves website; these comments are incorporated in their yearly strategic plans. The workers like the Mantenga nature reserve have so many changes that they want to implement but they need funding. Lastly, they reported that the community based tourism is contributing to the socio-economic development of the country through the creation of employment for people in the rural areas who had been depending on agriculture only.

### **Malolotja**

In order for the reserve to become a major contributor of the socio-economic development of the country, the workers wanted a lot of changes to be introduced in the reserve.

Firstly, the workers were worried about the recently re-opened Ngwenya mine which is part of the Malolotja nature reserve premises. They were worried that the mine next to the reserve contradicts with the conservation principle that the reserve is trying to uphold; many tourists especially environmentalists argued about relationship between conservation, preservation and restoration of natural and built resources and also the noise that the mine makes becomes destructive. Furthermore, the mine releases red dust which sometimes blows to the side of their accommodation area.

In addition, one of the projects that the reserve contributes to the nearby community which is the provision of clean water has been compromised by the dirty water caused by the operations in the mine. Secondly, introducing new proposals and ideas regarding the reserve to the ministry responsible takes a long time to be processed and this tends to cause an inconvenience to the operation of the reserve. Finally, introducing new animals to the reserve is not easy because the reserve is situated in a cold region and many animals enjoy a hot weather. The workers continued to say that this reserve has had a problem with illegal activities related to poaching and in an effort to counter this problem; the SNTC continues to increase its law enforcement activities through continuous strategic patrols which are done day and night.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a brief recap of the entire study; it summarises the objectives, problem statement, and rationale of the study, research questions, literature review, methodology and the findings. The chapter concludes with recommendations for improving nature based tourism and the whole tourism industry in Swaziland.

### 5.1 *Potential of tourism Sector in Swaziland*

#### *5.1.1 The potential of the tourism industry of Swaziland have to be a major key in the socio-economic development of Swaziland*

Through this research, it has been seen that the tourism industry is indeed the most powerful vehicle for economic growth and job creation all over the world. Tourism's visitor expenditures has been seen to have a catalytic effect across the economy in terms of production and employment creation (Christie et al 2013:2).The tourism sector is directly and indirectly responsible for 8.8 % of the world's jobs (258 million), 9.1% of the world's GDP, 5.8 % of the world's exports and 4.5 % of the world's investment (Christie et al 2013:2). The research has also shown that the Swaziland tourism industry has a much higher potential to be a major key towards the improvement of its socio-economic development.

This has been realised through the number of employment opportunities that it has provided for its people; the major socio-economic changes that have occurred in communities closer to the tourism entities (which were in terms of job creation ,entrepreneurial opportunities, skills development, development of communities and provision of water services); through the improvement of tourism, other sectors have benefited like agriculture, mining, manufacturing and the built discipline e.g. construction, town planning and engineering.

Furthermore, this industry brought development in Swaziland both to the rural and urban areas and a whole lot of lodges and hotels were built to support and beneficiate from the tourism industry. In addition, through the nature reserves that the research dealt with (Mantenga, Mlilwane and Malotja nature reserves), it was gathered that the communities located closer to them were truly assisted through the creation of employment opportunities to people who had only depended on agriculture alone. Furthermore, from the research it became clear that tourism in Swaziland will continue to be an important industry because of its strong cultural heritage, traditional and biodiversity which has remained strong attractions for tourists.

### *5.1.2 Factors limiting these 3 nature reserves and the whole tourism industry in Swaziland from reaching its full potential*

From this research and some of the literature reviewed it was found that apart from the advantages and strengths that this industry possesses; there are a number of factors working against its success. These include the following list:

- (i) Swaziland is relatively an unknown destination
- (ii) there are limited funds for marketing and promotion, weak tourism facilities
- (iii) lack of trained staff,
- (iv) low level of tourism infrastructure development
- (v) low level of government commitment towards tourism development
- (vi) slow progress with development approval and poor systems to monitor tourism statistics effectively and to enhance strategies decision making enhancing the visibility of sub sectors contribution to the economy (Maphanga & Pato 2004:6).

Furthermore, some of the workers of the nature reserves noted that the industry receives very little funding support and also that the Swaziland Tourism Authority lacks the appropriate strength of institutional and human resource capacity and is subjected to high expectations on the hard and slow bureaucratic society on the other side. Hence it was suggested that the tourism industry in the country must build on its existing strengths to make it work. Strengths like the pristine natural environment, and the fact that it is located in the heart of a major tourist routes.

### *5.1.3 How Swaziland can improve the 3 nature reserves so that they become major contributors in the socio-economic development of Swaziland*

Nature based tourism has indeed proved to be a vital contributor to Swaziland's socio-economic development and has potential to contribute even more. The response from the questionnaires provided insight into a number of strategies which could be used for improving the nature reserves for the benefit of the socio-economic development of the country. A summarised version of the strategies brought up by the workers in the 2 organisations responsible for



managing these 3 reserves (the Swaziland National Trust Commission and the Big Game Parks) during data collection includes the following;

- a. Promoting direct marketing whereby potential tourists are sent emails to encourage them to visit these reserves again;
- b. Creating a brand awareness and advertising the nature reserves attractions in local and international media;
- c. Through marketing improvement whereby new products are offered;
- d. Enhancing marketing strategies for the strong competitive markets to protect and expand the market share; and
- e. Increase of government funding to effectively carry out its operations or increase of budget allocation towards the nature based tourism industry.

This study sought to find ways and strategies of how tourism can become one of the main pillars and economic drivers of Swaziland by playing a major role in terms of employment, income and maintenance of infrastructure etc. A number of strategies were mentioned by both the workers of the reserves and the tourists visiting the reserves. Some of these ways and strategies included;

- (i) The improvement of infrastructure e.g. roads, and upgrading some of the buildings;
- (ii) Having comments forms both at the entrances of the reserves and also in their websites and then having those comments incorporated in the reserves yearly strategic plans;
- (iii) More marketing of the reserves especially in overseas countries; more community development projects to promote skills ;having the reserve's annual projects encourage entrepreneurship, employment creation and reducing poverty;
- (iv) Reducing of the length of time it takes for proposed projects to be processed and approved ;the addition of more animals and other kinds of entertainment ;improving road signs and increase of entrance fees;
- (v) The increase of law enforcement laws to counteract problems in the reserves e.g. littering, poaching, trespassing, and illegal harvesting of medicinal plants.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The tourism sector can contribute significantly to socio-economic development of a country. Tourism will continue to be a vital component of the global economy, and in particular, the economy of cities, bringing large economic benefits and playing an important role in terms of income and maintenance of urban infrastructure and public services. Indeed Swaziland's nature reserves, exemplified in the three nature reserves of Malolotja, Mlilwane and Mantenga, have huge impact on communities by providing employment opportunities and stimulating entrepreneurship. Properly managed, the tourism potential of these reserves could be exploited to significantly raise the living standards of the Swazi people.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Firstly, the success and sustainability of the Swaziland tourism industry will be based on the meaningful involvement of the Swazis themselves in the tourism sector. Since tourism in Swaziland has a high potential to make significant contributions to society and the economy of the country, an in-depth investigation is needed to establish the exact needs of the tourism industry in Swaziland with a view of strengthening institutional capacity and efficiency in delivering the quality and quantity of appropriate education and training required.

Secondly, tourist sites in the country should be clearly identified on relevant maps and made available at border posts and hotels in the country and neighbouring countries as a marketing strategy. Furthermore, such marketing instruments must specifically indicate cultural activities, dates (holidays) and venues in the brochures.

Thirdly, there is a need to implement training and awareness programmes that will be aimed at changing negative attitude towards tourists so that Swazis appreciate the nature of tourism and be aware of the potential opportunities that can be exploited to achieve social, economic and environmental benefits. In addition, there is a need to give priority support to community owned initiatives aiming to develop cultural, historical and natural sites and attractions with tourism potential. Furthermore, there is need to raise awareness amongst Swaziland's diplomatic missions to promote the country throughout the world. Additionally, it is important that Swaziland develops new products that reinforce the strengths of its tourism image; it is expected that the potential areas includes adventure activity, sport tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism, festival tourism and water-based tourism at dams and rivers. Finally, as suggested by Mthethwa (2003 :104-107), Swaziland's tourism industry needs to "learn to utilise limited resources and funding

such that it can contribute to the development of the industry to its full potential and this requires co-operation and commitment from all parties concerned in the tourism sector”.

The tourism industry in Swaziland is said to be affected by the following constraints namely land availability, investor access to finance, taxes on tourism investments, low levels of tourism skills, lack of security, safety and high crime, public health, visa requirements, and red tape and bureaucracy (Christie et al (2013:5). In order to promote the tourism industry in the country, the above constraints should be avoided by all means. Christie et al. (2013:5) further states that Swaziland is one of the countries in Africa that has potential in having its tourism industry a huge success, The noted inadequacy of governance of the sector, lack of basic infrastructure for tourism and market failures, such as with regulation, resources, and institutions, which also affect the macro economy. The report suggests that such countries with these characteristics should target more on the tourist areas that have the highest potential and invest and set up policy reforms on them.

Furthermore, in order to have a tourism industry that works well; the sector should work towards pursuing the four pillars of a successful tourism development:

- a. Financial sustainability,
- b. Economic sustainability, which means that tourism should be a catalyst for entrepreneurial activity and one that causes maximum economic benefits from tourism.
- c. Environmental sustainability, meaning it should be a well-managed tourism sector which protects its natural resource base and mitigate negative impacts on the environment from previous developments and from external sources
- d. Social sustainability, meaning tourism should extend the tourism benefits to the poor and to local communities.

The World Tourism Organisation (2012:49) outlines a list of recommendations that the tourism industry of Swaziland can learn from and it includes the following;

- Integrating nature based tourism as a key pillar of government’s policies at all levels.
- Establishing effective and renewed instruments for partnerships between all stakeholders involved with tourism in order to ensure the sharing of information, initiatives and knowledge to benefit the destination, tourists and local residents.

- Implementing innovative strategies to provide the city with new and more specialized products with high added value, addressing niche markets and upgrading the quality of the visitor experience.
- By facing the world with an open mind; the tourism industry today requires a workforce that has an open mind, with digital capabilities and intercultural skills, with an “ability to easily discover and interpret the intersection of disciplines and different visions of the world.
- Having the various destination stakeholders learning to work together through an integration of interests at all levels of government and with strategic planning in the medium long term, setting limits for development where appropriate and conducting periodic audits and assessments.

Efforts should be directed towards advising local communities to come up with tourist projects that use locally available knowledge, skills and materials. These projects can include leatherworks, curio shops, campsites, community tour operations, cultural tourist activities that may involve provision of traditional accommodation, traditional dishes, music, dances, walking and boat safaris. This is because local people lack the necessary entrepreneurship and management skills to participate in the tourism business in the area. This, therefore, suggests that strategies should be developed with emphasis on ways that will increase local participation and enhance the use of local knowledge, material and labour in order for local people to obtain meaningful benefits from the tourism business (Mbaiwa 2003:463).

Nature based tourism is said to be a promising means of advancing not only economic objectives of developing countries but of social and environmental objectives as well. To make nature based tourism work well in countries, it requires policies that foster responsible nature tourism development, broad based and active local participation in its benefits and conservation of developing countries biological heritage ([www.untamedpath.com](http://www.untamedpath.com)). Furthermore, the reserves and or the tourism management in Swaziland should set up a research unit that which will incorporate annual statistics reports in terms of tourist inflow to identify improvements strategies and developments. According to the Swaziland Tourism Authority (2013:27), the prime minister of Swaziland in his speech said that any successful tourism strategy was highly dependent upon a vibrant partnership between the public and private sectors and that the private sector needs to be consulted during policy formulation and be involved at every stage of implementation .Lastly

there is also the east 3 route which is a tourism partnership between the Republic of South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland. This East 3 Route initiative was created as a vehicle for cross border development that would ensure economic growth and job creation for all 3 countries (Swaziland Tourism Authority 2013:27).

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## TOURIST QUESTIONNAIRE

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESPONDENTS

Good morning/Afternoon, my name is Lindiwe Maphalala. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Environment & Society at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. I am conducting a research project to determine ways and strategies for harnessing the potential of nature-based tourism in stimulating socio-economic development in Swaziland, with reference to three nature reserves namely the Mantenga, Mlilwane and Malolotja nature reserves. You are kindly requested that you complete the following short questionnaire. To fill in the questionnaire will take you no longer than 10 minutes. The information collected remains for research purposes only, and the information entered will be treated confidential. Please note that your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone be able to determine which company or organisation you work for.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Indicate your answer by placing a tick in the box beside the appropriate response and fill in your responses where a blank line is provided.

### SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section refers to your biological information. Although I am aware of the sensitivity of some of the questions in this section, the information you provide will allow us to compare groups of respondents. Once again I assure you that your response will remain anonymous.

1. Age	0-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	46+	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16-25	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	26-35	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	36 -45	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Gender				
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>		Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Educational level

Primary

Secondary

Tertiary

No formal education

4. Country of Origin

5. Occupation level

Employed

Unemployed

Self-employed

**SECTION B: VIEWS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE RESERVE**

6. Is it your first visit to the reserve? YES  NO

\*If you answered NO above, please proceed to question 7

7. Approximately how many times have you visited this reserve?

8. What natural attractions did you enjoy the most?

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9. In your own view, do you think this nature reserve makes a great desirable tourist destination? Please explain your response.

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10. Do you think the nature reserve needs some kind of improvement, in order to attract a larger number of tourists? Please explain your response.

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**SECTION C: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & NATURE BASED TOURISM**

12. Do you agree with the statement; "Tourism in Swaziland has potential to make a large significant contribution to the country's socio-economic development"

YES  NO

\*Please explain your response

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13. In your opinion, do you think this nature reserve contributes positively to the country's socio-economic development?

YES  NO

\*If you answered yes above, please proceed to question 13.1

13.1 In what ways do you think this particular nature reserve contributes to the country's socio-economic development?

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## SECTION D: ENHANCING THE NATURE RESERVE

14. From your knowledge or experiences of the country's economy, do you think the economy of Swaziland needs to be improved?

YES  NO

15. Do you think improving this nature reserve would actually assist in improving the country's socio-economic development?

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16. In your own view, how do you think this nature reserve can be improved in such a way that it becomes a major contributor to the socio-economic development of the country?

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***Thank you for your co-operation.***

## WORKERS AND ORGANISATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESPONDENTS

Good morning/Afternoon, my name is Lindiwe Maphalala. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Environment & Society at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. I am conducting a research project to determine ways and strategies for harnessing the potential of nature-based tourism in stimulating socio-economic development in Swaziland, with reference to three nature reserves namely the Mantenga, Mlilwane and Malolotja nature reserves. You are kindly requested that you complete the following short questionnaire. To fill in the questionnaire will take you no longer than 10 minutes. The information collected remains for research purposes only, and the information entered will be treated confidential. Please note that your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone be able to determine which company or organisation you work for.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Indicate your answer by placing a tick in the box beside the appropriate response and fill in your responses where a blank line is provided.

### SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section refers to your biological information. Although I am aware of the sensitivity of some of the questions in this section, the information you provide will allow us to compare groups of respondents. Once again I assure you that your response will remain anonymous.

1. Age	0-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	46+	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16-25	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	26-35	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	36-45	<input type="checkbox"/>		

2. Gender				
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	

3. Educational level

Primary

Secondary

Tertiary

No formal education

4. Title of position held in the reserve/organisation (compulsory)

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5. Number of years of working for the reserve/organisation

**SECTION B: VIEWS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE RESERVE**

6. What are some of the natural attractions found in the reserve?

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7. With reference to the tourist attractions mentioned above, what are some of the attractions that most tourists enjoy?

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8. In your own view, does this nature reserve make a great desirable tourist destination? Please explain your response.

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9. Would you say this nature reserve needs some kind of improvement, in order to attract a larger number of tourists? Please explain your response

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**SECTION C: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & NATURE BASED TOURISM**

10. Do you agree with the statement; "Tourism in Swaziland has potential to make a large significant contribution to the country's socio-economic development"

YES  NO

\*Please explain your response

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11. Do you think this nature reserve contributes positively to the country's socio economic development?

YES  NO

\*If you answered yes above, please proceed to question 11.1

11.1 In what ways does the reserve assist in improving the socio-economic development of the country?

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12. Do you agree with the following statement “Nature based Tourism in the country is incredibly vital as it is an engine of growth, capable of energising and reviving other sectors of the economy”.

Yes  No

13. Are there any projects that your reserve/organisation is currently busy with that could assist in improving the country’s economy?

\*if you answered yes, please state them.

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**SECTION D: ENHANCING THE NATURE RESERVE**

14. Do you think improving this nature reserve would actually assists in improving the country’s socio-economic development?

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17. In your own view, how do you think this nature reserve can be improved in such a way that it becomes a major contributor to the socio-economic development of the country?

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***Thank you for your co-operation.***