

**CRITICAL MARKETING SUCCESS FACTORS
FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM ROUTES:
A KWAZULU-NATAL STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE**

by

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*“The route is a way of pulling people to where tourism needs to do its magic.
So they take the money magic and you exchange it for experience magic.
That’s what a route is.
It is the magic of the tourism dollars and the magic of the tourism experience.”*

Michael Tatalias
Chief Executive Officer, Southern African Tourism Services Association

ABSTRACT

If tourism is to contribute to the reduction of poverty and create employment, tourists also need to be attracted to smaller towns and rural areas. Development of rural tourism routes are often supply-side driven and the role of marketing is not well understood. This study therefore explores the experiences and insights of key supply-side stakeholders in two rural KwaZulu-Natal tourism routes, regarding the marketing of these routes, as well as the critical success factors that ensure future sustainable competitiveness, which may lead to local economic development and thus poverty relief.

The researcher adopted an interpretivist epistemology along with subjectivist ontology, to allow for empathetic investigation of the perceptions of the stakeholders in rural tourism routes and of the marketing of such routes. Three approaches converged in the empirical study namely: a qualitative approach which allowed the researcher to gain more in-depth understanding of the factors related to route marketing; an exploratory approach which allowed the researcher to pursue new issues uncovered during the research process; and a case study approach which triangulates a variety of sources of information. Two very different routes were selected to provide wider insight into the research problem, namely the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route. The population was restricted to supply-side stakeholders and semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 29 respondents, selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling.

The literature review explores rural tourism as a catalyst for economic development. The role of stakeholders in tourism routes is examined and the range of stakeholders is identified. The concept of societal marketing as an orientation that may give support to local economic development is explored. Destination marketing and the destination marketing mix, is discussed as the foundation of tourism route marketing. Particular attention is paid to destination branding and positioning, and a number of critical success factors in destination marketing are identified. The nature of tourism route marketing, the elements in the route marketing mix, and critical success factors in rural tourism route marketing are identified from the literature. The marketing practices of several international rural tourism routes are examined to determine good practice. Existing marketing activities

and structures within KwaZulu-Natal are described as the background against which the two routes market their offerings.

The empirical findings of the study reports on the benefits of rural tourism routes as perceived for various stakeholders. The roles of product owners on the route, the local community, and municipal and tourism marketing structures are described. Strategic route marketing issues are reported on, including sustainability of a route, insufficient visitors, responsibility to market the route, market targeting and factors that impact on marketing success. The elements of the route marketing mix are reported on with reference to the route product offering and experience, people, physical evidence and signage, pricing, and promotion.

The study revealed a number of enabling factors that need to be in place for a route to succeed, namely leadership and co-operation on all levels; a functional route structure with broad representation; financial viability of the route; and route accessibility and signage. Several factors critical for the successful marketing of rural tourism routes are identified. These include the establishment of a strong identity and brand; providing a unique experience; balancing the route product mix, promotion of the route by all stakeholders; and effective use of electronic media. Recommendations are made for further research on rural tourism routes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
Amafa	Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali (Heritage KwaZulu-Natal)
B&B	Bed and breakfast establishment
CBR	Product owner on the Battlefields Route
CMM	Member of the Midlands Meander Association
CTA	Community tourism association
DACT	Department of Arts, Culture and Tourism, KwaZulu-Natal
DEAT	Department of Environment and Tourism, South Africa
DEDT	Department of Economic Development and Tourism, KwaZulu-Natal
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
e-brochure	Electronic brochure
EKZWN	Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
e-mediaries	Electronic intermediaries
GPS	Global positioning systems
HRTA	Heritage Run Tourism Association
LED	Local Economic Development
N3TC	N3Toll Concession (Pty) Limited
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PAR6	Pennsylvania Route 6
PAR6HC	Pennsylvania Route 6 Heritage Corporation
PAR6TA	Pennsylvania Route 6 Tourism Association
RHR	Rideau Heritage Route
RHRTA	Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association
SW	The Savannah Way
SWL	Savannah Way Limited
TGCSA	Tourism Grading Council of South Africa
TIC	Tourist information centre
TKZN	KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority (operating as Tourism KwaZulu-Natal)
UK	United Kingdom
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization ¹
USA	United States of America
VFR	Visiting friends and relatives
VTTA	Viking Trail Tourism Association

¹ UNWTO is used as the abbreviation for both United Nations World Tourism Organisation and World Tourism Organisation in this dissertation.

CHAPTER 1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM IN CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The growth in tourism since the democratisation of South Africa has been encouraging (South African Tourism, 2007:17). However, the uneven development of tourism in the country has been perpetuated with foreign visitors spending 73% of their nights in three of the nine provinces namely, Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and with 74% of domestic bednights spent in the same three provinces plus the Eastern Cape (South African Tourism, 2009a:56, 69). Two of six key objectives stated by South African Tourism in their Tourism Growth Strategy 2008 - 2010, are to “improve geographic spread” of tourism and transformation of the tourism industry to include previously disadvantaged groups (South African Tourism, 2007:13). South African Tourism therefore accept the challenge of distributing tourism to areas beyond the current nodes to less developed areas so as to enhance tourism’s contribution to economic upliftment of formerly disadvantaged communities in those areas (South African Tourism, 2007:28).

In countries such as Australia, recognition of the growth in drive-tourism as a key catalyst for spreading tourism benefits to rural areas, has led to the development of themed touring routes (Hardy, 2003:314). As a result, more remote rural areas have experienced economic growth (Olsen, 2003:336). Many routes have also been developed in South Africa, but not all have been successful in achieving a pro-poor focus, with a commitment to the development and inclusion of local small businesses on the route (Rogerson, 2007:57).

Some routes have failed to link the product to the potential market in order to sustain the route development (Rogerson, 2007:55). Other marketing problems related to poor route performance include a general lack of marketing skills, under-pricing of products with the resultant lack of profitability, inaccurate representation of offerings leading to visitor disappointment, inadequate promotion and ignorance of visitor needs (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:199, Gilbert, 1989:39; Meyer, 2004:26).

Effective marketing can contribute to increasing visitor volumes, improving the image of the route and ensuring quality standards (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:199). In the final instance, stakeholders have to make a tourism route work. Their understanding and acceptance of the role played by all the elements of the marketing mix are critical to develop and market a route that will attract visitors in sufficient numbers to ensure the continued success of the route and so to bring sustained benefits to the local communities it traverses (Meyer, 2004:24-26; Rogerson, 2007:56).

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study explores the experiences and insights of key supply-side route stakeholders (including route members and route enablers) in two rural KwaZulu-Natal tourism routes, regarding the marketing of these routes, as well as the critical success factors to ensure future sustainable competitiveness, which may lead to local economic development (LED) and thus poverty relief.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study is guided by the following specific research objectives, namely to determine:

- the context of respondents on the supply-side of tourism routes;
- the perceived purpose of joining or enabling tourism routes;
- the perceptions of stakeholders of the role of the elements of the tourism marketing mix in the success of a tourism route;
- the perceived factors that contribute to the successful marketing of tourism routes;
- the perceived factors that impede the successful marketing of the tourism routes;
- the perceived influence stakeholders have on the successful marketing of a tourism route; and
- to isolate the key critical success factors for sustainable tourism routes.

1.4 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

If tourism is to contribute to the reduction of poverty and create employment, tourists need to be attracted both to provinces currently not visited by large numbers of tourists and, in all provinces, to smaller towns and rural areas (Binns & Nel, 2002:238; South African Tourism, 2007:28). The rural tourism routes, which are the subject of this study, traverse areas that have both a dire need for economic upliftment and the potential for the development of a thriving tourism economy (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), 2005:13).

An increase in tourism provides local unemployed workers with greater opportunities to find either full-time or seasonal employment (Reeder & Brown, 2005:30). Tourism routes may also open up entrepreneurial opportunities in small towns and rural areas along the route to the previously disadvantaged (Meyer, 2004:2). However, this is not always the case in South Africa, as is evident from studies of tourism routes in several provinces (Meyer, 2004:19; Rogerson, 2007:57, 65).

Development of tourism routes are often supply-side driven and the role of marketing is not well understood by participants (Meyer, 2004:25; Rogerson, 2007:66). This study therefore specifically investigated the perceptions of participant stakeholders in tourism routes and not those of consumers. Rural KwaZulu-Natal, with its rich resources, has the potential to meet the needs of the tourism market in terms of wildlife, wellness and cultural experiences. However, for a tourism route to achieve a critical mass of attractions and to draw visitors to the route, many small destinations need to co-operate in operating and marketing the route, rather than to compete with one another (Meyer, 2004:2; Roberts & Hall, 2004:260).

This study investigates the factors that contribute to the successful marketing of rural tourism routes thereby facilitating a greater pro-poor contribution.

1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

This study involves a number of key concepts that, for purposes of this study, are defined as set out below:

Community-based tourism is “... tourism that takes place in a community, identified by a common culture, common interests, or geography, either in an urban or a rural environment” (ECI Africa, 2006a:iv).

Critical success factors are the “... limited number of areas in which results, if they are satisfactory, will ensure successful competitive performance for the organization. They are the few key areas where ‘things must go right’ for the business”. (Rockart, 1979:7).

A **destination brand** is a “... name, symbol, logo, work mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience” (Ritchie & Ritchie, in Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:165).

Drive-tourism is “... tourism that centres on travelling from an origin point to a destination by car that is either privately owned or rented, and engaging in tourism activities during the journey” (Prideaux, Wei & Ruys, 2001:209).

Marketing is defined by the British Chartered Institute of Marketing as “... the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements, to meet organisational objectives profitably” (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:23).

The **marketing concept** is a business philosophy that embraces long-term profitability, a consumer orientation and organisational integration, while taking cognisance of the society within which the business operates (Kotler, 1997:23-24, 20, 28-29).

The **marketing mix** consists of the four basic marketing elements namely product, price, distribution (place) and marketing communication (promotion) (McCarthy, 1964:38). For

services such as tourism offerings, the mix is extended to include people, process and physical evidence (Zeihaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2006:26-27). Programming, packaging and partnerships are added for the tourism product marketing mix (Morrison, 2010:242-246). (See section 3.5 on page 42).

Route tourism is a marketing mechanism that bundles a number of tourist attractions and destinations into a single branded offering or route. A tourism route links a series of small towns, encouraging tourists to travel from one town to the next and the route is marketed collectively as a single entity (Rogerson, 2007:50).

Rural tourism is defined as "... tourism in areas either of low population density and/or poor level of economic development that are situated in non-first world urban areas" (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:194).

Stakeholders in a route are defined as "... any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objective" (Freeman, 1984:46).

Sustainable tourism implies the use of "development guidelines and management practices [that] are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability." (UNWTO, 2004).

Tourism routes are defined as "... enterprises that are conceptually joined together as if they are located *en route*, in proximity or in logical sequence to each other, despite their physical separation over a large area" (Mathfield in Rogerson, 2007:57).

Tourism is "... 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 not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited" (South African Tourism, 2008:6).

Tourist icons are “... major pull factors of a destination that attract the attention of potential tourists” (Becken, 2005:21).

1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to:

- tourism routes as defined in Chapter 5;
- rural routes in KwaZulu-Natal that have been in existence for at least two years;
- supply-side stakeholders and enablers of the specific tourism routes (demand-side stakeholders namely visitors who travel such routes, were not included); and
- traditional rural tourism and not mass events in rural destinations such as music or food festivals and sports events in rural settings.

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is based on the following assumptions:

- marketing plays an important part in the overall success of tourism routes;
- members of tourism routes, being involved in the route as suppliers, are able to inform the research question;
- parties not directly involved in a particular tourism route, influence the success of such a route by creating an enabling environment or one that hinders the success of the route. These parties can also inform the research problem; and
- the marketing of the route encompasses the entire marketing mix and not just the promotional element, even if respondents may not recognise this fact.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted an interpretivist epistemology for this study along with a subjectivist ontology, to allow for empathetic investigation of the perceptions of the stakeholders in a tourism route of the marketing of such a route. This study is an empirical,

exploratory investigation using qualitative research methods to gain in-depth understanding of the factors that are critical to the successful marketing of tourism routes from a supply-side stakeholder point of view. Two tourism routes were the focus of this study, namely the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route, both located within the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The two routes were selected for their differences to provide wider insight into the research problem.

Following the framework proposed by Mouton (2001:146), the macro level design of this study may be described as an empirical, exploratory qualitative study. Three approaches converged in this study namely: a qualitative approach which allowed the researcher to gain greater in-depth understanding of the factors related to route marketing; an exploratory approach which allowed the researcher to pursue new issues uncovered during the research process; and a case study approach which triangulates a variety of sources of information.

The study was based on two rural tourism routes that have both been in existence for more than two decades and that traverse areas with poor local populations that may benefit from tourism development. The population was restricted to supply-side stakeholders in the tourism routes and excluded visitors, since supply-side stakeholders are in a good position to inform the research question by virtue of their involvement in the marketing of the tourism routes. Supply-side stakeholders included both product owners and service providers on the tourism routes, and enablers who influence tourism route marketing either directly or indirectly.

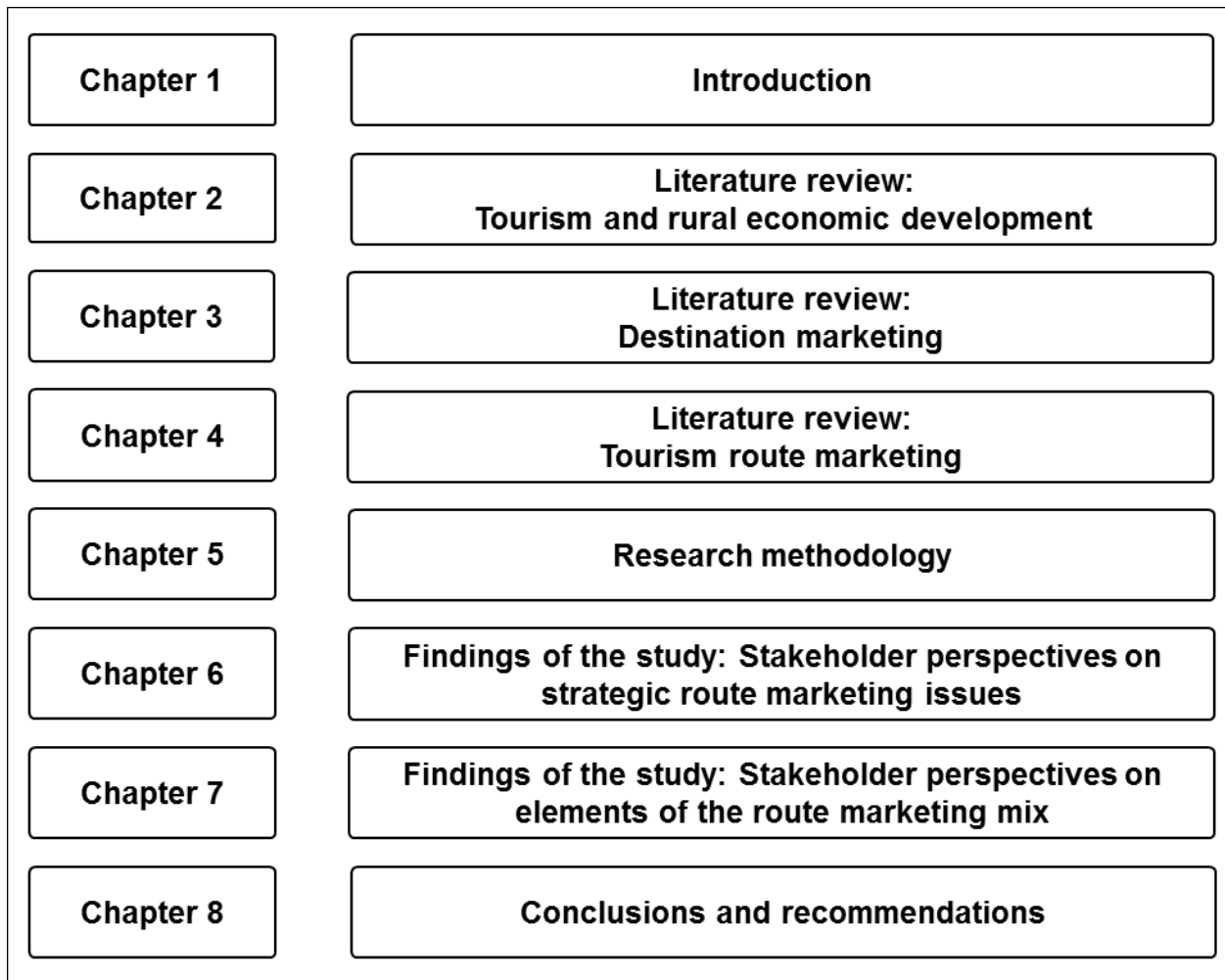
A sample of 29 respondents was selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews were recorded to allow the researcher to collect thick descriptions that provide insight into and the context of the multiple realities of tourism route marketing. The recordings were transcribed and analysed to identify themes which aided in identifying critical success factors in route marketing. Throughout the study attention was paid to the quality and rigour of the research.



1.9 DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

The diagram in Figure 1 below depicts the structure of this dissertation. This diagram will appear at the start of each chapter to assist the reader in navigating this dissertation. The topics discussed in each chapter are briefly outlined below.

Figure 1: Structure of this study



Source: Developed by the author for this report.

Chapter 2: Tourism and rural economic development

This chapter takes cognisance of the uneven distribution of tourism and economic development in South Africa and explores tourism as a catalyst for economic development. Rural tourism is considered as a possible contributor to such development in rural areas. Finally, the roles of stakeholders in tourism routes are examined and the range of stakeholders are identified.

Chapter 3 Destination marketing and routes

The chapter starts with perspectives on marketing and further explores the concept of societal marketing as an orientation that may give support to local economic development. Destination marketing and the destination marketing mix is discussed as the foundation that informs tourism route marketing as a special case in destination marketing. Particular attention is paid to destination branding, image and positioning. The chapter concludes by isolating a number of critical success factors destination marketing.

Chapter 4 Marketing of tourism routes

This chapter describes the nature of tourism route marketing and identifies the elements in the tourism route marketing mix. Some critical success factors in rural tourism route marketing are identified from the literature. The marketing practices of several international rural tourism routes are examined to determine good practice. The existing marketing activities and strategies within KwaZulu-Natal are described as the background against which the two routes investigated, market their offerings.

Chapter 5 Research design and methodology

This chapter motivates the overall research design in which qualitative, exploratory and case study approaches merge. The methodology employed in the study is described in terms of the sampling, data collection, and analysis. The quality and rigour of the study is demonstrated. Attention is paid to aspects of ethical consideration and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 6 Research findings: Stakeholder perspective on strategic route marketing issues

The first part of the empirical findings of the study is presented in this chapter. The chapter reports on the purpose and benefits of rural tourism routes for the local economy, the community, tourism product owners and non-members of the route. The roles of various stakeholders, including members and product owners on the route, the local community, and municipal and tourism structures, are described. Strategic issues in route marketing are reported on, namely sustainability of a route, the failure of marketing to attract sufficient visitors, the responsibility to market the route and targeting markets. Finally, stakeholders' perspectives are given on factors that they perceive to impact on the success of the route.

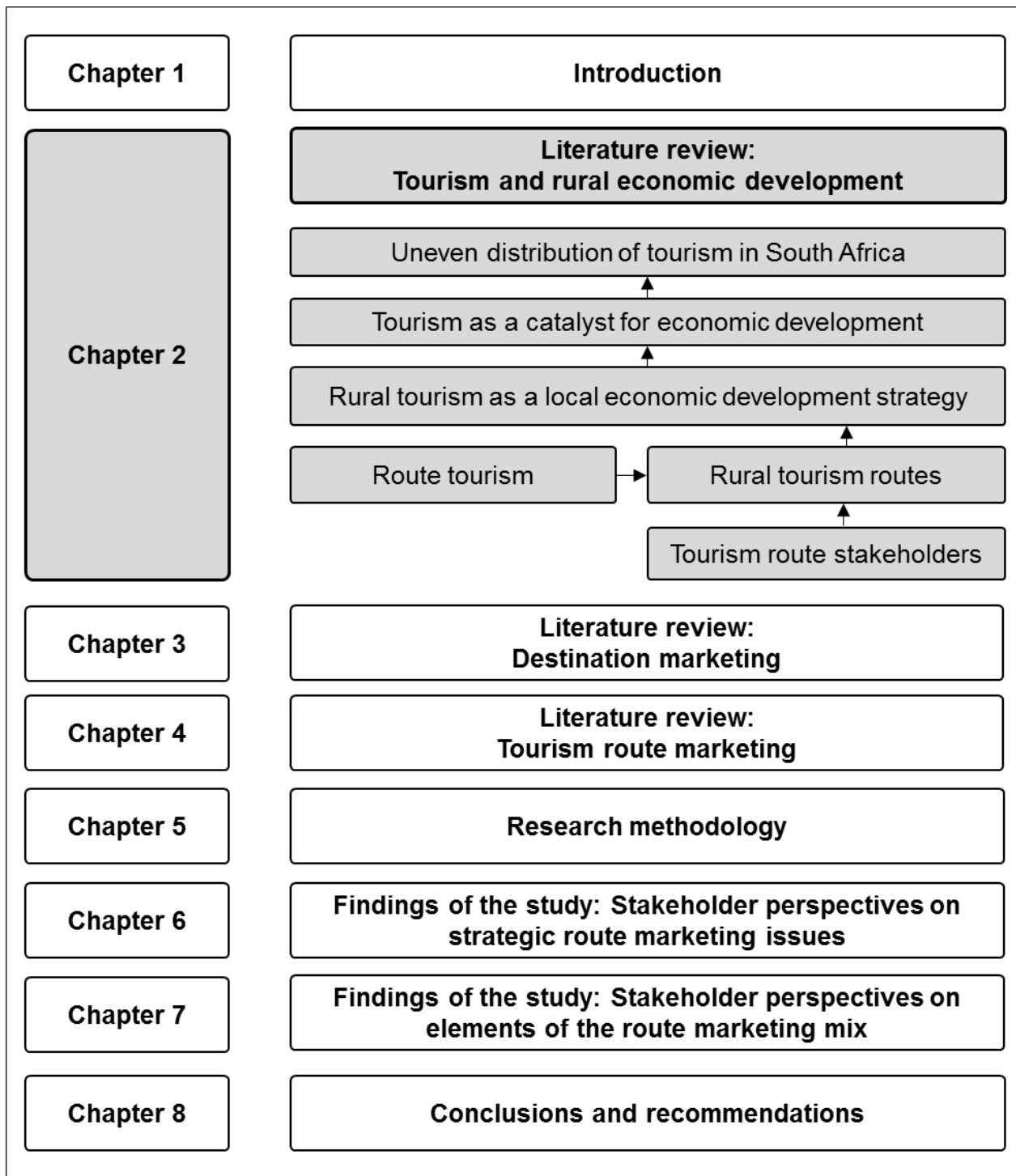
Chapter 7 Research findings: Stakeholder perspectives on elements of the route marketing mix

This chapter continues the report on the empirical findings. Stakeholders' perspectives that relate to the individual elements of the route marketing mix are recounted. The route product offering is discussed with particular reference to route branding and positioning, and the route experience. The marketing mix elements of people, physical evidence along the route, pricing, distribution and route promotion are reported on. Route signage is discussed in some depth as it proved to be problematic on both routes investigated.

Chapter 8 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter reports on the researcher's conclusions based on the empirical research findings. Enabling factors that need to be in place for the successful marketing of tourism routes are identified, as well as critical success factors that relate directly to the marketing of rural tourism routes. Recommendations are made for further research related to rural tourism routes.

CHAPTER 2 TOURISM AND RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background against which this study was undertaken. It describes the characteristics of tourism and explores tourism in South Africa, with a particular focus on the uneven distribution of tourism and its benefits, as evident in this country. The relationship between tourism and economic development is discussed, with specific reference to the contribution of tourism to local economic development (LED) and poverty relief in rural areas. The focus then turns to route tourism; defining and examining tourism routes in more detail and the contribution that route development may make in LED. A brief examination of the factors critical for successful route tourism reveals the pivotal role of marketing of such routes, which is investigated in greater depth in Chapter 3.

2.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISM

Tourism is fast becoming one of the world's largest industries, which, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) in 2008 generated some 922 million international tourist arrivals worldwide and US\$ 944 billion, or 30%, of the world's services exports (UNWTO, 2009). The Tourism Society in 1979 (in Middleton & Clarke, 2001:3) included in tourism "... any activity concerned with the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and their activities during the stay at these destinations". Thirty years later, this definition still holds true. In essence, it is the same as the UNWTO aligned definition used in South Africa today: "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 not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited" (South African Tourism, 2008:6).

The tourism sector is not characterised by the goods and services it produces, but rather by consumption that depends on the status of the consumer as that of a visitor (South African Tourism, 2008:4). A visitor is defined as "... any person travelling to a place other than that of his/her usual environment for less than 12 months, and whose main purpose of the trip is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place

visited” (South African Tourism, 2008:39). The tourism sector spans a diverse range of activities and businesses from different industries, since a trip may include both “tourism characteristic” and “non-tourism characteristic” products and services (South African Tourism, 2008:5). The tourism characteristic establishments include those whose principal activity is the production of goods and services for which, in the absence of visitors, the level of consumption would be drastically reduced or may even dwindle to uneconomical levels (South African Tourism, 2008:5). The touristic goods and services typically include transport to the destination, accommodation, hospitality offerings, visitor attractions, and amenities used by the visitor at or *en route* to the destination (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan & Ranchod, 2009:11). Businesses that facilitate tourism are also considered to deliver touristic services, such as tour operators and travel agencies (South African Tourism, 2008:6). Thus all the establishments that provide touristic goods form the tourism industry (South African Tourism, 2008:6). The non-tourism characteristic group includes many other suppliers affected by tourism consumption such as transport, banking, retail and security, but, should tourism disappear, these institutional units would continue to exist (South African Tourism, 2008:6). Together the tourism characteristic and non-tourism characteristic suppliers form the tourism economy, respectively having direct and indirect effects on this economy (South African Tourism, 2008:6).

Visitors to a destination include all travellers who fall within the abovementioned definition and whose trips do not last longer than one year (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:5; South African Tourism, 2008b:39). In contrast, tourists are defined as visitors who stay overnight at a destination for at least one night and exclude same-day visitors or excursionists, who do not stay over and who arrive and depart on the same day (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:5; SA Tourism, 2008:39). Tourists, who stay longer in a destination than excursionists, generate more income for the destination by virtue of their purchase of additional goods and services such as meals and accommodation (Meyer, 2004:3).

Having described the main tourism characteristics, the next section investigates the shape of tourism in South Africa.

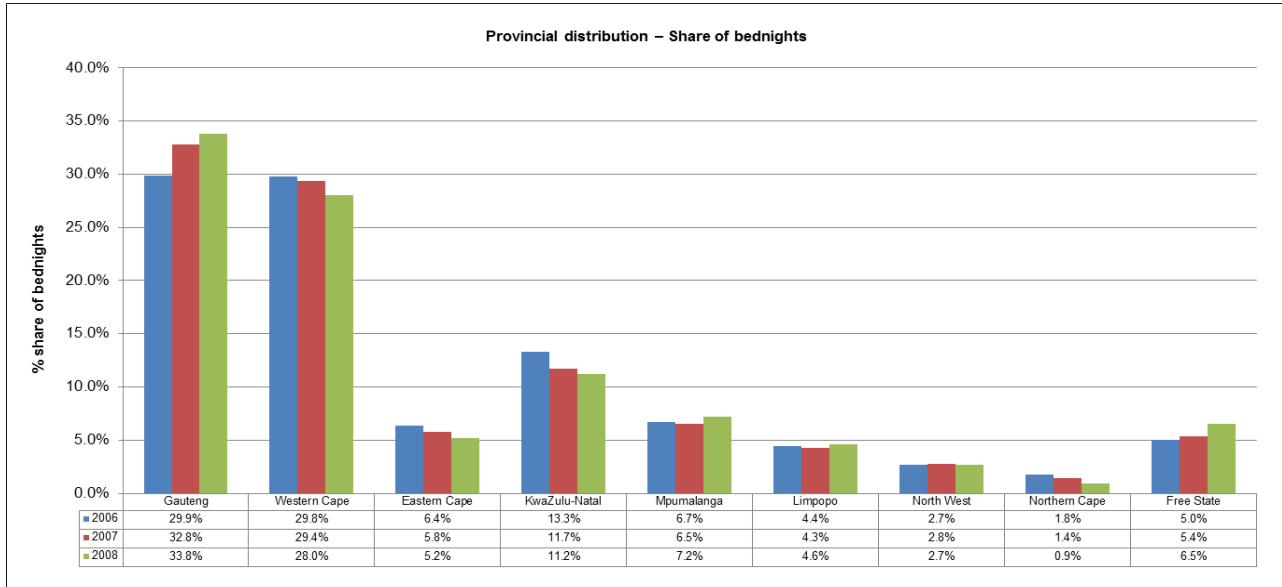
2.3 THE DISTRIBUTION OF TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

In 2008, foreign tourism directly and indirectly contributed R194,5 billion to South Africa's gross domestic product. The country attracted 9 591 828 foreign arrivals, of which 2 504 376 or 26.1% arrived by air, with the balance of 7 087 452 or 73.9% being land arrivals from Africa (South African Tourism, 2009b:1). Foreign visitors arriving in South Africa by air in 2008, on average, stayed more than three times longer than those arriving by land (17.8 and 5.1 nights respectively), accounted for proportionately higher shares (52.8 %) of the 75,3 million bednights occupied and of the total foreign direct spend (41.4%) (South African Tourism, 2009b:1).

Domestic tourism contributed R25.8 billion in direct expenditure from 32.9 million trips in 2008 (South African Tourism, 2009b:2). Although 120.9 million bednights were generated, 81% of these bednights were spent in unpaid accommodation by tourists visiting friends and relatives (VFR), who also engaged mostly in unpaid social activities (74%) associated with VFR trips (South African Tourism, 2009b:22). While these VFR trips account for 71.4% of the domestic tourism volume, they contribute only 44.8% of the domestic tourism revenue but holiday trips, which account for just 15.7% of domestic volume, contributed 38.8% of total domestic revenue (South African Tourism, 2009b:18).

Tourism in South Africa is concentrated in five of the nine provinces. Figure 2 overleaf illustrates this pattern with respect to foreign visitors who spent 80.2% of bednights in four provinces, namely Gauteng (33.8%), the Western Cape (28.0%), KwaZulu-Natal (11.2%) and Mpumalanga (7.2%) (South African Tourism, 2009b:55).

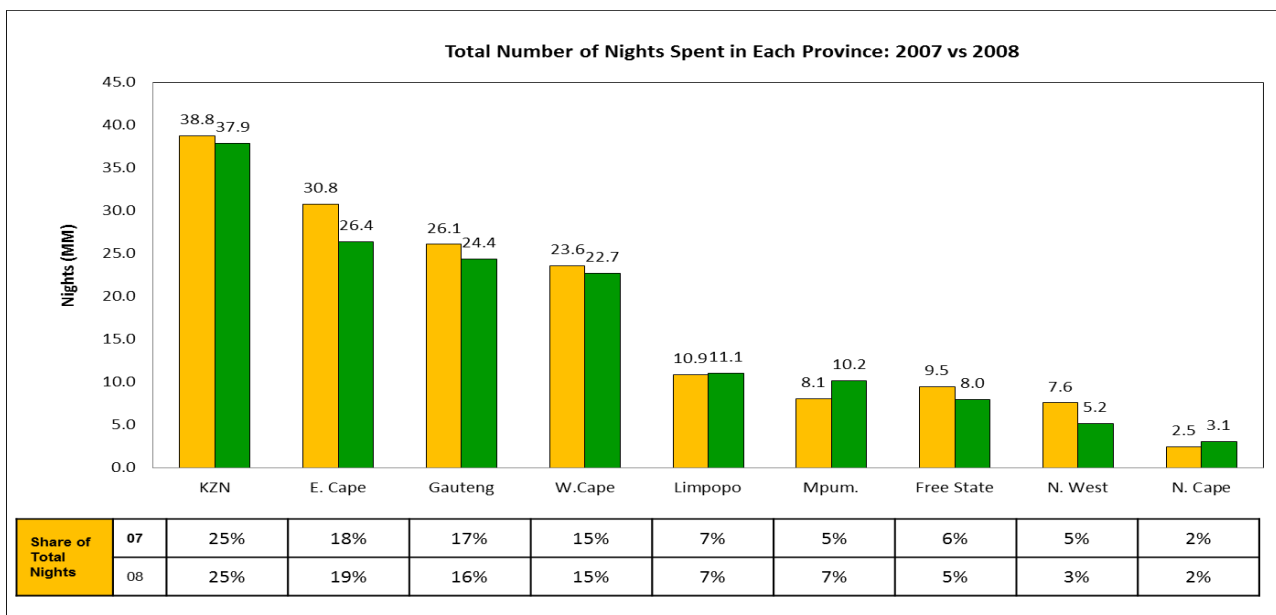
Figure 2: Provincial distribution of share of bednights for foreign visitors



Source: South African Tourism (2009b:55).

A similar pattern is evident for domestic tourists in Figure 3 below. In 2008, 74% of bednights spent away from home by domestic tourists, were spent in four provinces namely KwaZulu-Natal (25%), the Eastern Cape (18%), Gauteng (16%) and the Western Cape (15%) (South African Tourism, 2009b:69). In these four provinces, tourism is furthermore largely limited to the main metropolitan areas (Donaldson, 2007:307).

Figure 3: Provincial distribution of share of bednights for domestic tourists



Source: South African Tourism (2009b:69).

The above analysis points to the benefits of tourism originating mainly from the foreign air market and the domestic holiday and business markets, and with Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga deriving the most benefit. The tourism growth strategy for 2008-2010 addressed the skewed geographic distribution of tourism in South Africa, since tourism has the potential to relieve poverty in areas that do not currently benefit from tourism (South African Tourism, 2007:13).

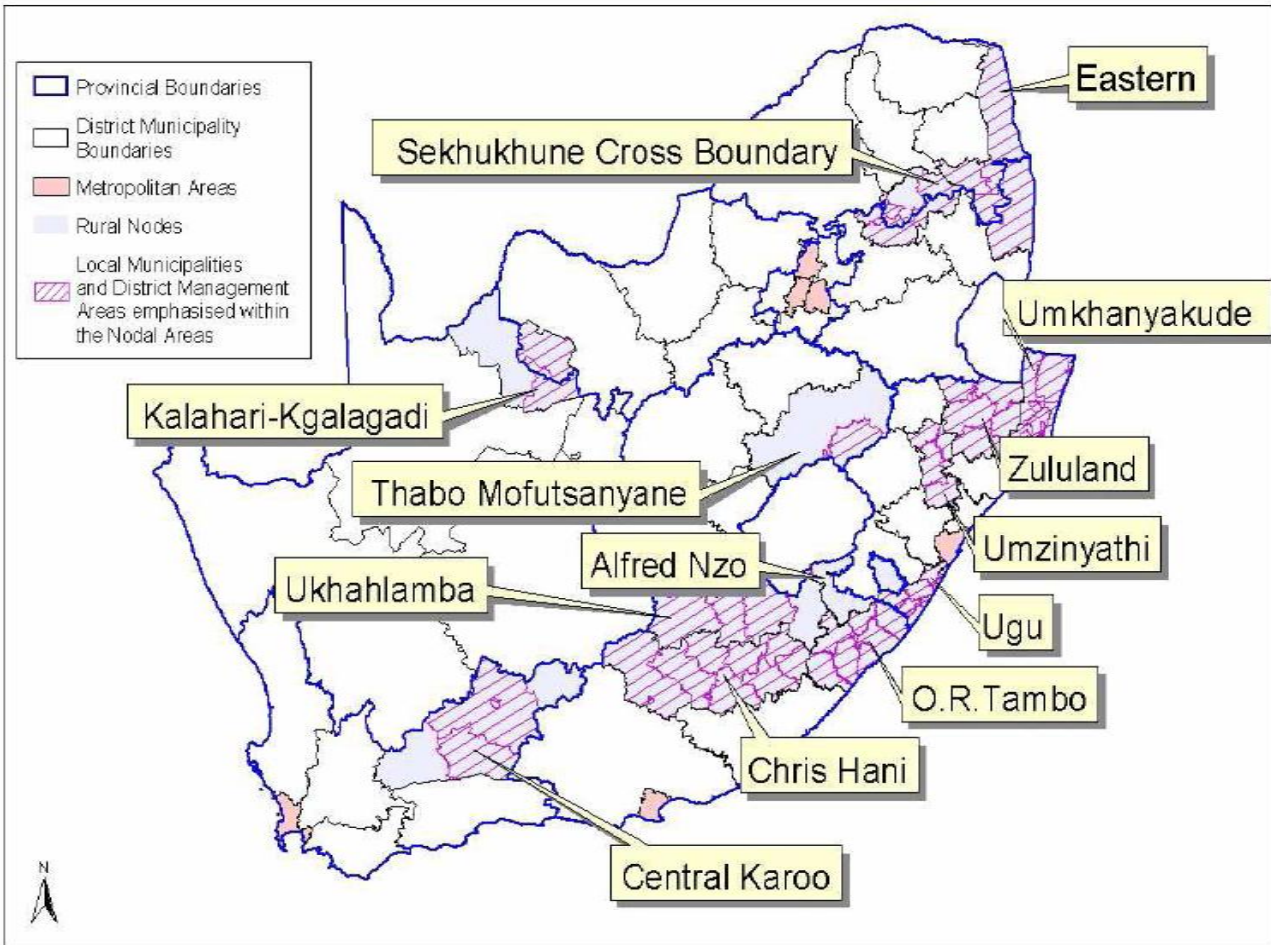
2.4 TOURISM AS A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tourism is seen by many as the panacea for economic development and poverty relief in South Africa, as elsewhere in the world (Blake, Arbache, Sinclair & Teles, 2008:107; Chock, MacBeth & Warren, 2007:34). Many examples demonstrate how tourism has indeed contributed to economic development in remote rural areas, for example in Queensland, Australia (Olsen, 2003:336), Still Bay in the Southern Cape (Nel & Binns, 2002:188) and Clarens in the Free State (Donaldson, 2007:307).

One of the six key objectives stated by South African Tourism in their Tourism Growth Strategy 2008 - 2010 was to "... improve geographic spread ..." of tourism, with a view to stimulate economic development in provinces and regions that currently do not benefit satisfactorily from tourism (South African Tourism, 2007:28). South African Tourism thus accepts the challenge of expanding tourism to areas beyond the current popular nodes and routes to less developed areas in order to contribute to economic development in those areas (South African Tourism, 2007:28).

A second objective aims to extend participation in tourism to the previously disadvantaged majority (South African Tourism, 2007:13, 28). Large numbers of previously disadvantaged people live in rural areas in South Africa where there is little economic development and few job opportunities to provide an income to the poor, as is evident from Figure 4 overleaf that maps the poverty nodes in South Africa.

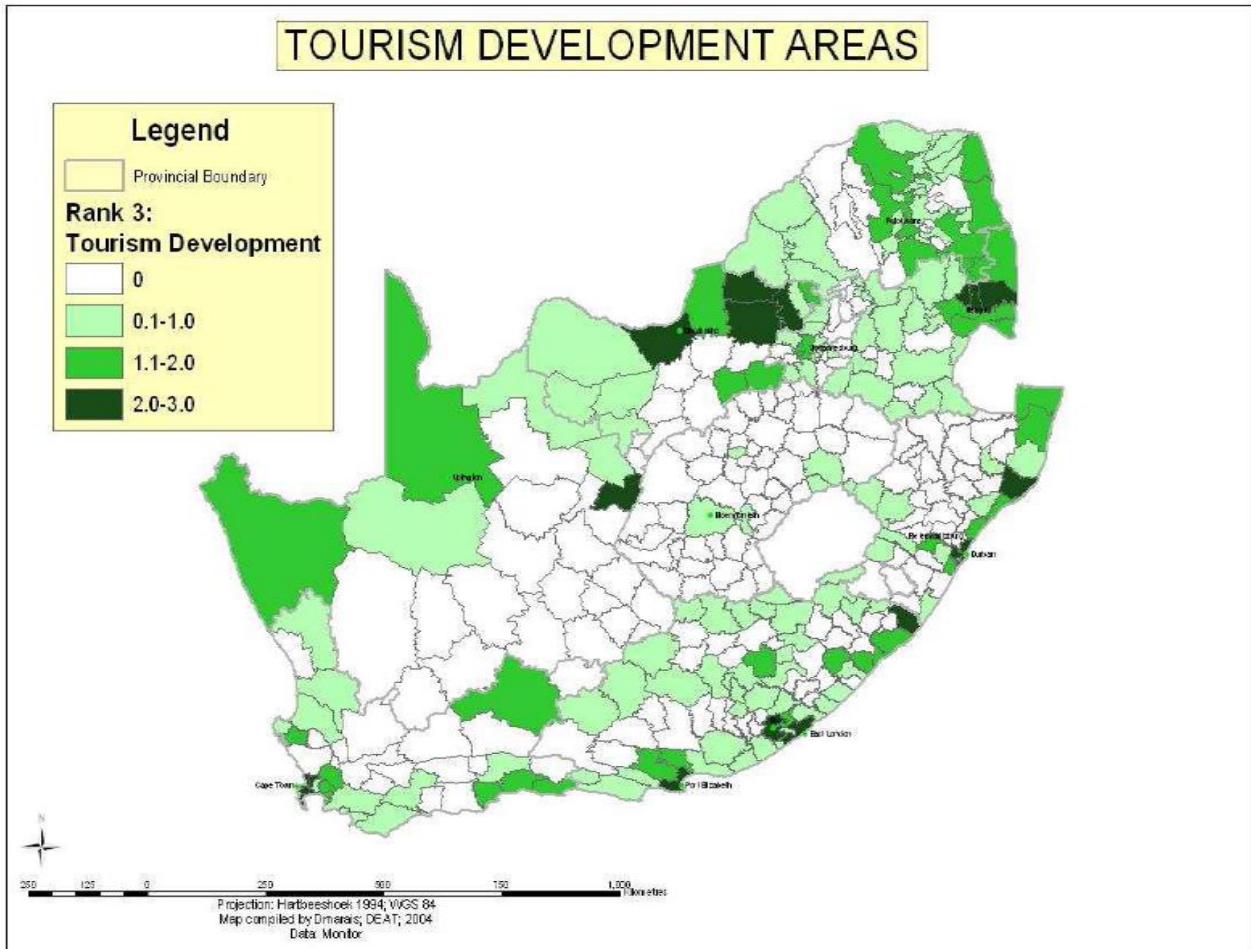
Figure 4: Poverty nodes in South Africa



Source: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, (2005:3).

For tourism development to be successful, tourism market potential and the infrastructure must exist (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), 2005:9-11). The map in Figure 5 overleaf shows many rural areas in South Africa with minimal tourism development, which may have potential for tourism infrastructure initiatives.

Figure 5: Potential areas for tourism infrastructure initiatives



Source: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (2005:7).

When comparing Figures 4 and 5 above, it becomes clear that many poverty nodes in South Africa also have low tourism development. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's Global Tourism Competitiveness Project identified 20 areas with such potential and then prioritised nine of these areas for tourism product development (DEAT, 2005:13). Since many of these areas are rural, their tourism development may well contribute to the achievement of the objectives to improve the geographic spread of tourism and economic upliftment of the poor, as stated in the Tourism Growth Strategy for 2008-2010 (South African Tourism, 2007:28). The next section therefore explores rural tourism development in greater depth.

2.5 RURAL TOURISM AS A LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Briedenhann and Wickens (2004a:194) explored the difficulties of defining the concept “rural” in a South African context. The customary descriptions of “quiet and unspoilt” are problematic because areas such as large black settlements would be ruled out in spite of their being situated far from developed urban areas. Briedenhann and Wickens (2004a:194) finally defined “rural” as “... areas either of low population density and/or poor level of economic development that are situated in non-first world urban areas”.

The demand for rural tourism products is highly segmented and a wide range of motivations for rural travel exists, ranging from “... ecological uniqueness, special adventure opportunities, cultural attractions ...” to “... the peace and quiet of the countryside ...” (Kastenholz, 2000:280; Meyer, 2004:3). This provides an opportunity to achieve economies of scope rather than of scale by offering a varied range of attractions and tourism products to attract tourists from many niche markets and so to maximise the amount spent in the community (Grefe, 1994:26).

The challenges in rural tourism development in South Africa are considerable and include existing power structures, lack of marketing and business skills, “... overemphasis on creating supply and virtually none on creating demand ...”, insufficient support from intermediaries and lack of co-operation of many small firms at the destination (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:200). In a study of community-based tourism in Kenya, Manyara and Jones (2007:642) found “... awareness and sensitisation, community empowerment, effective leadership and community capacity building ...”, to be of critical importance to the success of community-based tourism enterprises. Meyer (2004:23) points out the improbability of finding a “unified community” and cautions that power struggles occur at all levels of decision making, including the “grass roots” level.

2.5.1 Types of rural tourism

Roberts and Hall (2004:280) distinguish two types of rural tourism. The first type is “pure” rural tourism that conjures up images of the unspoilt, idyllic countryside with activities related to enjoying that setting. This type of rural tourism typically targets a number of

niche markets offering a range of the traditional, peaceful rural experiences such as hiking, fishing, picnicking, observing wildlife and enjoying the countryside and its people.

The second type of tourism in rural areas, is a large-scale, high-impact phenomenon in which the rural location is far less important (Roberts & Hall, 2004:280). This type of rural tourism imposes urban values on the rural space. It attracts large numbers of people who collectively participate in activities like leisure shopping, competitive events such as cycle races, marathon races, and 4x4 rallies, and cultural events such as the Ficksburg Cherry Festival, Oppikoppi (music festival), the Mighty Men's Conference (religious gathering) and others that have mass market appeal. The latter three events attracted 24,000, 15,000, and close to 200,000 people respectively during 2009 (Cherry Festival 2009, 2009; South Africa The Good News, 2009; Independent Online, 2009). The rural setting is not integral to these experiences (Roberts & Hall, 2004:280).

A number of market trends favour growth in traditional rural tourism, among them the search for solitude and a growing interest in heritage, tradition, authenticity and rural life (Gartner, 2004:158). Consumers today look for memorable experiences more than just service delivery (Pine & Gilmore, 1999:11). Experiences are an integral part of tourism and visitors travel away from their usual places of residence to seek new and different experiences elsewhere (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007:45).

Tourism, and rural tourism in particular, lends itself to poverty alleviation in poor rural areas where few other possibilities for economic development exist, since it can be "... labour intensive, inclusive of women and the informal sector ..." and can be based on the natural and cultural assets owned by the poor community (Ashley & Roe, 2002:61). Small local tourism providers may be in a better position than larger ones to provide visitors with the authentic rural experiences sought (Open Africa, 2009a). The likelihood of finding niche markets for small businesses is also greater with the higher importance of the countryside to the visitor (Roberts & Hall, 2004:258).

2.5.2 Potential negative impacts of rural tourism

Rural tourism unfortunately also has the potential to bring negative effects. Some have argued that rural tourism is an "... aggression against an environment and a way of life

with no real compensations ...” (Grefe, 1994:25). That tourism development impacts on natural environments cannot be denied, but many rural habitats are changing regardless of the influence of rural tourism (Caalders, 2000:191; Grefe, 1994:25). Rural tourism exposes local communities to people with different cultures and values to their own, influencing not only their economic situation, but also areas of morality, social structures, politics and local identity (Macleod, 1999:453-454). Rural tourism may not generate sufficient income to recover considerable development costs (Grefe, 1994:25). Although tourism may facilitate an inflow of an income stream into a rural area, much of the economic gain may leak out of the area if local residents do not get their fair share of the profits (Grefe, 1994:25; Binns & Nel, 2002:240). As Carbone (2005:565) aptly states, “... only when there is proper respect between tourists and hosts, full participation of local communities, fair distribution of economic gains, [and] effective protection of the environment ...”, will developing rural areas benefit from tourism development “... while conserving the human, cultural and ecological qualities of their sites”.

Rural tourism does not automatically benefit poor rural communities (Manyara & Jones, 2007:629). Projects owned by external parties do not always bring benefits to local inhabitants, and therefore community-based tourism seems to offer a possible solution to this problem.

2.5.3 Characteristics of community-based tourism

Defining the concept community is not a simple matter. Richards and Hall (2000a:1) question whether community should be defined in terms of spatial, social or economic terms. Urry (1995:10) identifies four different uses of the term, namely:

- “belonging to a specific topographical location;
- a particular social system;
- a feeling of “comunitas” or togetherness; and
- an ideology.”

The views of community are not entirely disconnected and as Richards and Hall (2000a:2) point out, community provides “... the essential social ‘glue’ between locality and inhabitants ...” and tourists travel to different locations to experience different communities. The context of this study dictates a spatial use of the term community, but

setting the boundaries of the “local” community is once again problematic, as visitors may not all have the same definition or geographic boundaries in mind for the same destination (George, 2008:400). For example, visitors to Nottingham Road may variously define their destination as KwaZulu-Natal, the Midlands, the Midlands Meander, the vicinity of Nottingham Road or Nottingham Road village itself. Each destination definition in turn results in a different definition for the “local” community.

Community-based tourism is “... an integrated approach to tourism that incorporates attention to the environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of tourism” (Shores in ECIAfrica, 2006a:3). This approach may be based on culture, common interests or geography, either in an urban or in a rural environment and communities involved in tourism need not necessarily be poor (ECIAfrica, 2006b:15). However, local communities have a vital role to play in successful tourism development, as they need to accept tourism as an agent for change (Donaldson, 2007:309). Many local communities do not understand and distrust the participation process and genuine community participation is cited as most difficult to achieve (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:76).

Community-based tourism may simply be described as tourism that takes place in a community (ECIAfrica, 2006b:15). Richards and Hall (2000a:1) maintain that a basic reason why tourists travel is to experience the “... way of life and material products ...” of different communities. Visitors “consume” the community as a commodity and expect the community to conform to their often-idealised tourist image of what “rural” should be (Richards & Hall, 2000b:301). It is inevitable that tourists will alter the community, however slightly, as tourists expose the community to cultures, languages, and ideas that are different to their own (Macleod, 1999:451-452). Richards and Hall (2000b:302) caution that it is essential that the way of life that makes a region attractive, is not spoiled in the process of tourism development lest the destination loses its appeal.

2.5.4 Community based tourism as a contributor to local economic development

LED has become a priority and local governments are mandated to promote growth in their areas (Donaldson, 2000:309). Local authorities now recognise tourism as a way to gain benefits for their communities and accept tourism promotion as an important element

of their economic development strategies (Binns & Nel, 2002:239). Community assets are valued for their potential tourism developmental impact, be they natural, cultural, historic or events (Binns & Nel, 2002:239).

Meyer, (2004:11) points out that extending tourism to previously disadvantaged communities increases the prospect of economic development and reduction of poverty through the following opportunities:

- “enterprise development – increasing demand for goods and services of the poor;
- employment and income opportunities;
- collective income;
- conservation and rejuvenation (cultural and natural);
- capacity building; and
- infrastructure development.”

Carbone (2005:560) postulates that these opportunities may benefit the unskilled, women and those in the informal sector in particular. LED may also lead to indirect benefits such as better levels of education and health for the poor (Carbone, 2005:560). Increased tourism may furthermore increase the likelihood that local and regional authorities may improve accessibility by upgrading the physical infrastructure that supports tourism, such as roads and signage (Meyer, 2004:11; Carbone, 2005:560).

Few of the smaller community ventures in rural areas are actually economically viable as the market can sustain only a limited number of similar enterprises (Binns & Nel, 2002:240). It is the larger projects such as conference centres that are successful, but they have been criticised because benefits do not devolve to the community (Binns & Nel, 2002:240). Rural communities therefore need a strategy that will generate sufficient tourism demand to bring about LED. Route tourism presents one such a mechanism to draw tourists into an area (Eby & Molnar, 2002:104).

2.6 ROUTE TOURISM

Tourism development policies on national and provincial levels encourage tourism route development (Donaldson, 2007:316). Route tourism is a marketing mechanism that

bundles a number of tourist attractions and destinations into a single branded offering or route which is then collectively marketed as a single entity (Rogerson, 2007:50). A tourism route links a series of small towns encouraging tourists to travel from one town to the next with the route travelled forming an important component of the product. (Meyer, 2004:8; Rogerson, 2007:50). Thus, a tourism route is a destination-level partnership that brings people from all levels of the community together in promoting tourism to their area (Open Africa, 2009b).

Tourism enterprises in rural areas typically are small, scattered and unorganised (Gilbert, 1989:41). The rationale behind route tourism is to influence tourist travel patterns by grouping such tourism products together to provide a unique tourism experience (Donaldson, 2007:315). The routes are designed to attract tourists away from the major tourist nodes and off the main roads to small towns that would not normally be visited by tourists (Donaldson, 2007:316). Local travel is promoted as tourists are encouraged to travel from one place to another along the route (ECIAfrica, 2006b:19). Lesser known attractions and destinations thus have a greater opportunity to attract visitors when they are included in the route (Meyer, 2004:3). With more on offer, visitors can be enticed to stay longer and to spend more, thus increasing the sustainability of the route as a tourism offering (Meyer, 2004:3).

Successful routes can contribute significantly to the local economy. The Midlands Meander for example, is estimated (based on 180 members) to generate an annual turnover of R359 million, creating 2100 jobs in all categories with a wage bill of R63 million, and make local purchases of R38 million (Coetzee, Oldham, Schroenn & Tang, 2009:[15]). Furthermore, the market value of land and buildings utilised by Midlands Meander members has an estimated value of R1.15 billion (Coetzee, *et al.*, 2009:[15]).

2.6.1 The characteristics of tourism routes

Routes vary tremendously in length. Short tourism routes that visitors can cover by walking, cycling or on horseback, are referred to in the literature as “trails” (Lourens, 2007:475). Trails typically explore a localised area such as a town or precinct providing an organised way to take in all the attractions systematically. Geographic proximity is often

the only binding element in town-trails that tend to target the generic visitor (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007:45).

On the other hand, the term “route” is used for longer distances that necessitate driving along the route from one town or attraction to the next (Olsen, 2003:334). These routes too vary greatly in length. In Australia three classifications of drive-routes are used, namely (Olsen, 2003:334-335):

- “themed tourist ways of national, state or regional significance;
- tourist drives of regional or local significance; and
- short drives of local significance only.’

The Federal Highway Administration in the United States of America (USA) distinguishes between National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads. The former are “... roads less travelled ...” with at least one significant quality to offer. The latter have multiple intrinsic qualities of national significance so that the road itself is considered a “... destination unto itself ...” and the drive along the highway is the main motivation for the trip (Federal Highway Administration, 2002). The six requirements used by the Federal Highway Administration in the USA are scenic, natural, historic, cultural, archaeological and recreational quality (National Scenic Byways Program, 2009b).

Some of the best-known and successful routes are typically corridor-style drive experiences, linking key destinations and having a clear beginning and an end, but visitors can enter or leave a route at any point (ECIAfrica, 2006b:18). Indeed, even linear routes such as the Camino de Santiago or the circular Cascades Loop in Washington State, USA “... can be experienced without necessarily ever arriving at its destination, and in turn the destination can be experienced without following the route.” (Murray & Graham, 1997:514; National Scenic Byways Program, 2009a). Along the route, there may be many hubs and by-ways to explore (ECIAfrica, 2006b:18; Olsen, 2003:334-335). Some routes suggest detours from the route to places of interest, such as the Midlands Meander which has many byways branching off from the R103 and the Valley of 1000 Hills Route, in its route map, suggests six different routes to travel through the area (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:12-13; Valley of 1000 Hills Visitor's Guide 2007/2008: 22-23).

Routes usually have a theme that binds the elements together and the destinations and attractions to visit along the way, comply with the theme (ECIAfrica, 2006b:18). Route themes could relate to almost anything such as history, architecture, culture, iconic figures, activities, nature and more. Route themes may be narrowly defined, such as The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail that is built around birding habitats (Hardy, 2003:321). Other route themes are broad enough to include almost anything worth seeing along the route, as is the case with the outback routes, in Queensland, Australia, that each link a series of outback towns and places of interest with unique stories to tell (Olsen, 2003:335). Some routes are bound by a common product rather than a theme as is the case with the Western Cape wine routes and the Waterloo-Wellington Ale Trail in Canada (Nowers, de Villiers & Myburgh, 2002:197-198; Plummer, Telfer, Hashimoto & Summers, 2005:451).

Themed tourism routes offer special interest experiences and therefore appeal to special interest or niche markets (ECIAfrica, 2006b:19). A niche product or service is expressly designed to meet the needs of a very particular market segment that seeks a very specific tourism experience (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005:369). Tourism routes offer such bundles of competitive advantages that appeal to smaller groups within the rural market segment (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2006:297). Such special interests are not necessarily limited to ecotourism or cultural tourism in impoverished areas (ECIAfrica, 2006b:19). This is borne out by both routes in this study namely the Midlands Meander, which traverses a well-developed farming area and the Battlefields Route which has war history as its theme (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:12-13; KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998:1). The Midlands Meander furthermore combines attractions in the developed area with an ecotourism experience in the Karkloof Reserve and a Zulu cultural attraction in the poor community at Mpophomeni Township outside Howick (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:12-13).

2.6.2 Iconic tourism routes

Tourist icons are "... major pull factors of a destination that attract the attention of potential tourists" (Becken, 2005:21). Since all the elements of a tourism route are marketed as a single offering, the route may become a destination in itself (ECIAfrica, 2006b:19). A number of tourism routes have achieved such iconic status as destinations in high demand. The Camino de Santiago Pilgrim Way in northern Spain and Historic Route 66

that stretches from Chicago to Los Angeles in the USA, are routes travelled for their own sake, rather than to visit any particular attractions along the routes, although visitors may well do so (Lourens, 2007:480; Federal Highway Administration, 2002). The Great Texas Coastal Birding Route, The scenic Cascade Loop in Washington State near Seattle and the Matilda Highway in Queensland, Australia are further examples of such iconic routes that attract visitors in their own right (Hardy, 2007:320-322; Olsen, 2003:334). As stated before, to be designated as an All-American Road by the USA Federal Highway Administration, a route has to achieve iconic status and attract visitors in its own right and many of the routes that have achieved this status, traverse particularly scenic areas (Federal Highway Administration, 2002).

2.6.3 South African tourism routes

In South Africa, routes appear to be more loosely defined. The proposed iconic Nelson Mandela Freedom “route”, consists of a number of destinations across five provinces in South Africa, that are not necessarily linked corridor fashion, as in typical iconic routes elsewhere (ECIAfrica, 2006b:25). Both the Magaliesberg Meander in Gauteng and the Midlands Meander in KwaZulu-Natal, created cumulative attractions where “... despite their physical separation over a large area, enterprises are conceptually joined together *as if* (own emphasis) they are located *en route*, in proximity or in logical sequence to each other” (Mathfield in Rogerson, 2007:57). The very word “meander” suggests that visitors wander where their fancy takes them, rather than follow a particular predetermined route (AskOxford.com, Not dated.). Open Africa, a non-governmental organisation involved in the development of tourism in rural Africa, promotes “routes” in different locations, but on its website just provides tourism information, which allows travellers to compile their own routes in a specific area, without necessarily suggesting any particular routes to be travelled (Open Africa, 2009c). This differs from other options that suggest a particular predetermined route, as is the case for linear routes such as the Santiago de Compostella Pilgrim Way in northern Spain, and Historic Route 66 from Chicago to California (Lourens, 2007:477; Federal Highway Administration, 2002).

The theming of tourism routes in South Africa, as indeed elsewhere in the world, vary from very narrow to broad. The wine routes in the Western Cape are built around wineries and wine producing areas, whereas Route 62, similar to Historic Route 66 in the USA, links

towns along the former highway between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn in the Eastern Cape (now overshadowed by the N2), with each town offering its own unique attractions (Nowers, *et al.*, 2002:197; Anon., Not dated:1-2). The requirement of compliance with the route theme is not necessarily strictly adhered to as route promotional material often communicates attractions along a route that do not tie in very closely with the route theme. An example of this is the Battlefields Route in KwaZulu-Natal that promotes not only the historical battle sites, but also nature attractions, annual events like the Dundee Biltong Festival and other attractions in the area quite unrelated to the military history that the name suggests, such as the Ladysmith Black Mambazo Beat (KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998:5). Themes may also be quite broad. The Midlands Meander has “a good place” as its theme, which encompasses just about everything that is offered in this rural area (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:2).

With a generally higher level of customisation, themed tourism routes may appeal to particular niche markets with very special interests for example the numerous avitourism routes promoted on the BirdLife South Africa website (2009). Niche tourism is a concept borrowed from niche marketing, with a niche market being a more narrowly defined group of tourists with similar specialised needs and for whom specific products to meet these needs, may be tailored (Robinson & Novelli, 2005:4-5; Hsu, Lillion, Brown, Gross & Huang, 2008:85). Route themes link in with the needs of the target markets that they appeal to (Meyer, 2004:5). Special interest tourism is aimed at niche rather than mass markets and lends itself to small providers who can “... get close to their market and offer personalised service and high levels of product knowledge” (Robinson & Novelli, 2005:8). Rural tourism routes, as a form of special interest tourism, offers the prospect of harnessing the knowledge and resources of rural communities for their own development.

2.7 TOURISM ROUTES AS THE MEANS OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Route tourism is a form of tourism that lends itself to a pro-poor approach, but for poor communities to benefit, an unambiguous pro-poor stance by the route management body is necessary (Rogerson, 2007:56; Meyer, 2004:26). Both the Midlands Meander in KwaZulu-Natal and the Highlands Meander in Mpumalanga are private sector initiatives that successfully boosted tourism, but without devolving much of the benefits to surrounding local poor communities through entrepreneurial involvement in the routes

(Rogerson, 2007:65). The somewhat less successful Magaliesberg Meander (straddling Gauteng and the North West Province), similarly failed to benefit the local poor community though concerted efforts are now being made to draw local black artists into the meander membership (Rogerson, 2007:66).

Pro-poor LED becomes even more important in areas where tourism is not well developed and where poverty prevails, such as the deep rural areas of the KwaZulu-Natal (DEAT, 2005:3). Responsibility for tourism development in these areas falls onto public sector and non-governmental organisations, as the local communities do not have the resources, funding or skills to do it themselves (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:76). Individual tourism businesses, where they do exist, are too small and lack the resources to market their offerings effectively. Furthermore, few formal tourism structures exist in the rural areas to assist the community as they themselves lack marketing capacity and funding (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:76).

Route tourism simultaneously offers opportunities to address LED, conservation of the local heritage, and marketing of the tourism offerings in an area (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:76). Developing a route in a rural area may bring about LED through establishing “hubs” of anchor attractions along the route. Each hub has accompanying “spokes” or clusters of supporting micro attractions and service providers supplying accommodation, food, craft shops, cultural and nature activities and more (ECIAfrica, 2006b:27). In turn, these tourism businesses require “upstream goods and services” including agricultural produce, crafts, buildings, infrastructure development, and more (Grefe, 1994:25). All of these can present opportunities for entrepreneurs to provide inputs, or, at least, create employment opportunities to local community members (Grefe, 1994:25).

- **Placing emphasis on community awareness**

Poor local communities have but a vague understanding of what tourism is, and are therefore often unaware of the tourism potential that they harbour (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:76; Stoddard in Rogerson, 2007:65). Unless a community realises the economic value of their heritage, they are likely to destroy it and with it also the cornerstone of their tourism potential (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:197). Conservation is therefore a key element of economic tourism regeneration (Donaldson, 2007:309). Involving the community in the tourism route can create a sense of ownership of their

tourism-generating heritage and gather the community support needed for a route to be successful (Nel & Binns, 2002:202; Van Rekom & Go, 2006:781). If tourists show an interest in identity markers of a relatively lower status group, this may lead to the host community not only becoming more conscious of their identity, but also of the possibility to improve their status in the larger community (Van Rekom & Go, 2006:781).

- **Routes as a catalyst for co-operation and co-ordination**

Tourism routes provide a good way for small towns to co-operate to attract tourists, rather than compete against each other (Donaldson, 2007:315). Routes also offer the opportunity to form development partnerships with poor local communities and so to bring them into the tourism fold (Lourens, 2007:475). An essential ingredient for successful route development is a "... collective culture of co-operation to compete" (Rogerson, 2007:53). However, co-operation is a difficult challenge to overcome; gaining the trust of local communities may be difficult as many have seen outsiders come in and destroy opportunities for local participants (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:198).

- **A sustainable approach is critical**

To benefit poor communities in the long run, tourism development, including tourism routes, needs to be sustainable. Carbone (2005:564) identifies six aspects that need to be taken into account in this regard:

- "ecological, to minimise potential damage to the external environment;
- cultural, to minimise the negative impact of outside influences on the host community;
- social, to minimise potential tensions derived from economic inequalities due to tourism development;
- economic, to improve the benefits to local people vis-a`-vis multinational corporations;
- ethical, to improve the relationships between tourists and host communities; and
- planning, to improve the integration of local communities in all stages of the development process."

The success of a tourism route is judged by whether it is commercially viable and attracts tourists and spending to the area, which then also benefits the poor (Meyer, 2004:2).

However, more attention seems to be paid in the literature to the development of tourism routes than to the marketing of such routes. Route development is often supply-side driven to provide LED opportunities (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:76). Without effective marketing, tourism cannot be sustainable (Van der Straaten, 2000:230). Tourism projects that are not market-led may end in market failure, with ensuing disillusionment of the communities that desperately need them to succeed (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:201).

Since tourism routes pass through different towns and areas, and link privately and publicly owned sites and enterprises, a wide variety of stakeholders are drawn into the route (Hardy, 2003:325). These stakeholders are central to the success of the route and this aspect is therefore considered in more detail in the next section.

2.8 TOURISM ROUTE STAKEHOLDERS

Since travel is increasingly about experiences, it is fundamental that stakeholders of a tourism route understand what they need to deliver in order to create a satisfactory experience for the traveller along the route (King, 2002:107). The stakeholders need to be identified, but this is not such a simple matter.

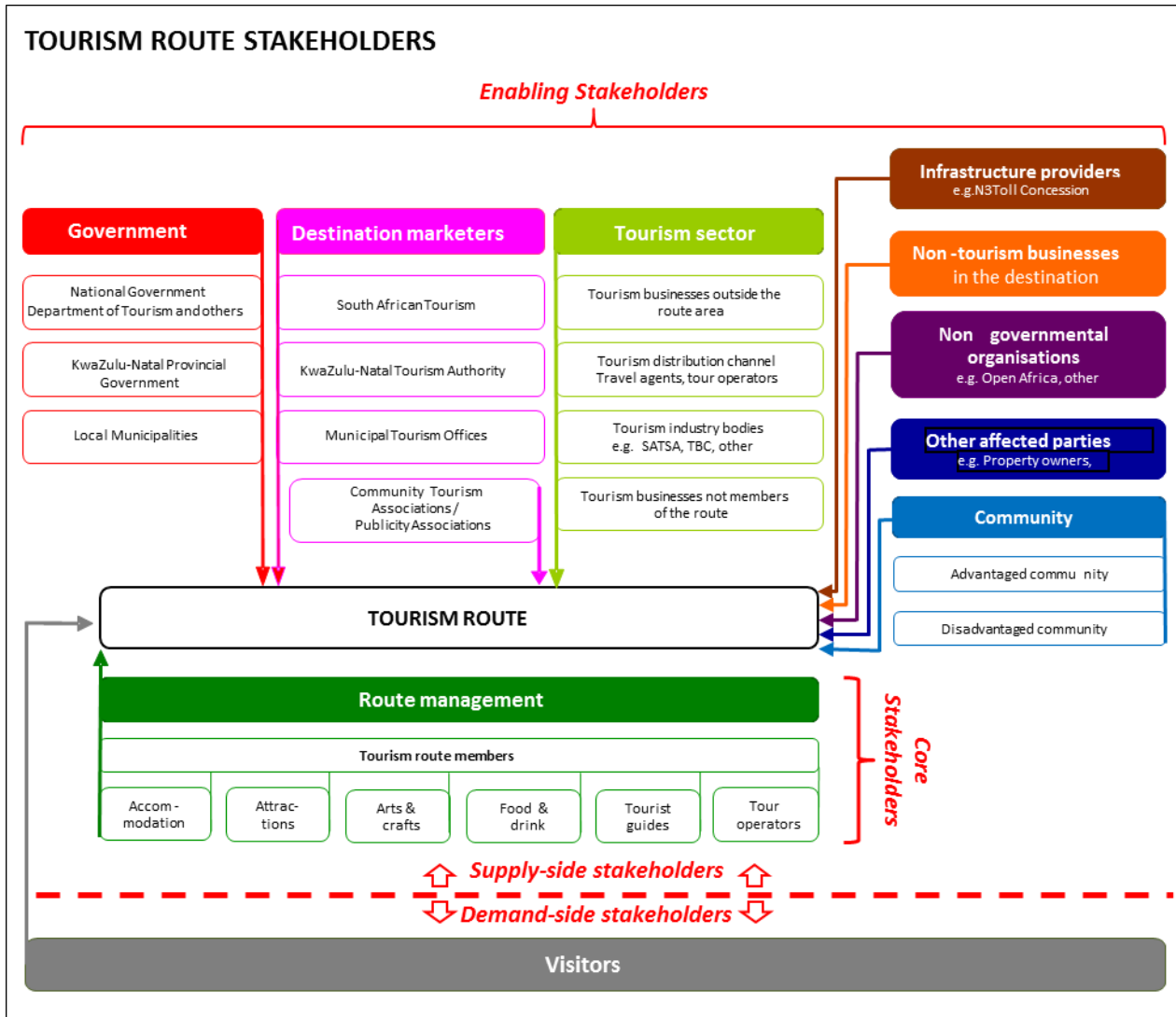
Friedman and Miles (2006:4) identified some fifty-five definitions of stakeholders in the literature. The most widely quoted definition is that of Freeman, who, in his 1984 seminal work, defined a stakeholder in an organisation as "... any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objective" (Freeman, 1984:46). This broad definition goes beyond those that have purely formal, official or contractual ties with an organisation (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005:713). Thus, parties not directly involved in the route may also be stakeholders in the route, such as communities, those who have interests that may be affected by route operations, future generations as well as non-human entities such as the natural environment (Starik, 1995:215). Community participation, in particular, is central to tourism route development and management (Meyer, 2004:23; Olsen, 2003:339).

Buhalis (2000:104) highlights the importance of bringing together all the stakeholders to co-operate rather than to compete in order to develop and market a destination successfully. Such “co-opetition” may be a difficult task as the interests of different stakeholder groups may be in conflict, especially where the use for tourism purposes of public goods, such as the natural environment, is concerned (Buhalis, 2000:104). Divergent timeframes for deriving benefits from these resources may cause further conflict as short-term exploitation may harm long-term preservation for future generations (Buhalis, 2000:104). Wang (2008:162) suggests that the collaboration process develops through a series of stages and that if critical issues for a particular stage are not addressed, it could hamper collaboration at a later stage. Trust among stakeholders is a fundamental requirement for a collaborative project to succeed (Wang, 2008:162). In a study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) Peak National Park, Saxena (2005:284) found, that stakeholders tended to fall into four participation categories namely:

- “enthusiasts who see participation as a self-regulating process generating its own targets;
- activists who aim to counter threats from other destinations;
- pragmatists who network as they recognise their interdependence on others; and
- opponents who perceive networks and partnerships as interference, especially those initiated by public sector bodies”.

Tourism routes by their very nature have many different stakeholders. The routes link both traditional tourism structures and poor communities who may own the resources that make the route attractive, such as a rich culture and unspoilt land (Meyer, 2004:11). Figure 6 overleaf illustrates the diversity of stakeholders that may be identified in a South African tourism route.

Figure 6: Stakeholders in a tourism route



Source: Developed for this dissertation by the author.

Tourism route stakeholders may be divided into two broad groups, namely demand-side stakeholders and supply-side stakeholders (See Figure 6 above).

2.8.1 Demand-side stakeholders

As shown in Figure 6 above, demand-side stakeholders comprise of the visitors or consumers of the route product (Buhalis, 2000:104). This group of stakeholders may include many different market segments, both for the route as such and for individual members of the tourism route. However, since this group of stakeholders is not the focus of this study, more attention will be directed at the supply-side stakeholders.



2.8.2 Supply-side stakeholders

The supply-side stakeholders comprise of entities that benefit from the success of the tourism route and/or influence the success of tourism routes (Freeman, 1984:46). These stakeholders are a more diverse group, which in turn may be divided into two distinct groups: the core stakeholders, who are actively involved in the route as members or suppliers of tourism offerings directly linked to the route; and the enabling stakeholders, who create the environment that may enable or impede the successful operation of the route.

- **Core stakeholders**

The core stakeholders are the member establishments of the tourism route organisation that provide services to tourists, such as attractions, hospitality facilities, amenities, transport and other route service providers (See Figure 6 on page 33). This would be the case for a private sector managed route, such as the Midlands Meander, where members have a membership relationship with the route organisation (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:2). However, in a public sector driven route, such as the Battlefields Route, a two-tier system exists. The “members” of the route are the 15 towns in the area, represented by their local tourism offices or community tourism associations that in turn, represent their members in their respective towns (KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998:1). These stakeholders’ interest in the route is summarised by Rogerson (2007:56) as the “... pooling of resources, provision of a focal point for dispersed local attractions, small villages and services, provision of economies of scale for spending of technical, financial and human resources, creation of an identity for an area and facilitation of the community bond”.

- **Enabling stakeholders in tourism routes**

The enabling group of stakeholders are not necessarily members of the route. They are termed enablers for purposes of this study, as their goodwill or support, or lack thereof, influence the success of the route in an indirect manner. This group is more varied, as is demonstrated in Figure 6 on page 33.

Local, provincial and national authorities provide the enabling environment for the route to operate in and influence tourism planning, funding, the physical infrastructure, marketing

and distribution for the areas that the route traverses (Buhalis, 2000:104). These authorities often have separate departments or offices specifically tasked with destination marketing (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:195-196). In addition, there may be independent marketing bodies with voluntary memberships such as publicity associations, which also market the destinations (KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998:1). The success of these collective marketing efforts may affect the success of the route management's own marketing.

Many other stakeholder groups stand to benefit from successful route operations. The first group includes tourism related businesses that are not members of the route, but who benefit from visitors attracted to the destination by the route. The second group that may benefit are businesses that are unrelated to tourism that provide amenities to visitors such as medical and personal care, banking and normal retailing. This does not mean that stakeholders are necessarily confined to the route destination only and businesses outside the destination may also benefit from visitor flow to the tourism route, such as airlines, car rental companies, distribution channels, transport infrastructure providers and other service providers along the way to the tourism route. However, in a study that explored the salience and identity of stakeholders of destination management organisations, Sheehan and Ritchie (2005:711) found that as their physical distance from the destination increases, the prominence of stakeholders tend to decrease.

Enablers may further include landowners along the route itself, non-governmental organisations, industry organisations and other stakeholder groups with whom the route management need to collaborate on matters that may affect the success of the route. The principal interest of these enabling stakeholders may not be the success of the route *per se*, but more likely other benefits that may be derived from its success, such as LED, job creation, poverty alleviation, preservation of natural, cultural and built heritage, increased property values and political advantage (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:197-199). By the same token, they may have concerns about the negative aspects brought about by increased tourism activity (Aronssen, 2000:137).

The final group of enabling stakeholders in Figure 6 (page 33) is the community (Aronssen, 2000:137). In a South African rural community, there is likely to be an advantaged group who possess the resources and the skills that enable them to benefit

from the opportunities presented by a successful tourism route in their vicinity (Briedenhahn & Wickens, 2004b:72). On the other hand, black rural communities in South Africa are often poor and have neither the resources nor the skills to benefit fully from tourism opportunities (Briedenhahn & Wickens, 2004a:197-199). The latter group should be considered as a separate stakeholder group from their advantaged counterparts, otherwise their stakeholder interest in the tourism route might easily be overlooked (Binns & Nel, 2002:240).

It is essentially the task of marketing, through managing the extended tourism marketing mix, to deliver the experiences that the visitors seek (Kotler, *et al.*, 2006:13). As was stated earlier, marketing is everybody's responsibility; in other words, marketing of the route in its fullest sense, is the responsibility of all the stakeholders in the route (Kotler, *et al.*, 2006:27-28). In South Africa, tourism routes as marketing ventures, and in the upliftment of local communities, has met with varied degrees of success (Rogerson, 2007:66). Tourism routes are complex marketing phenomena. Stakeholders immersed in the operation of tourism routes are in the best position to inform on the factors that are critically important to the success of a route. This study will thus investigate what stakeholders in tourism routes perceive as the marketing-related critical success factors for sustainable tourism routes in rural areas.

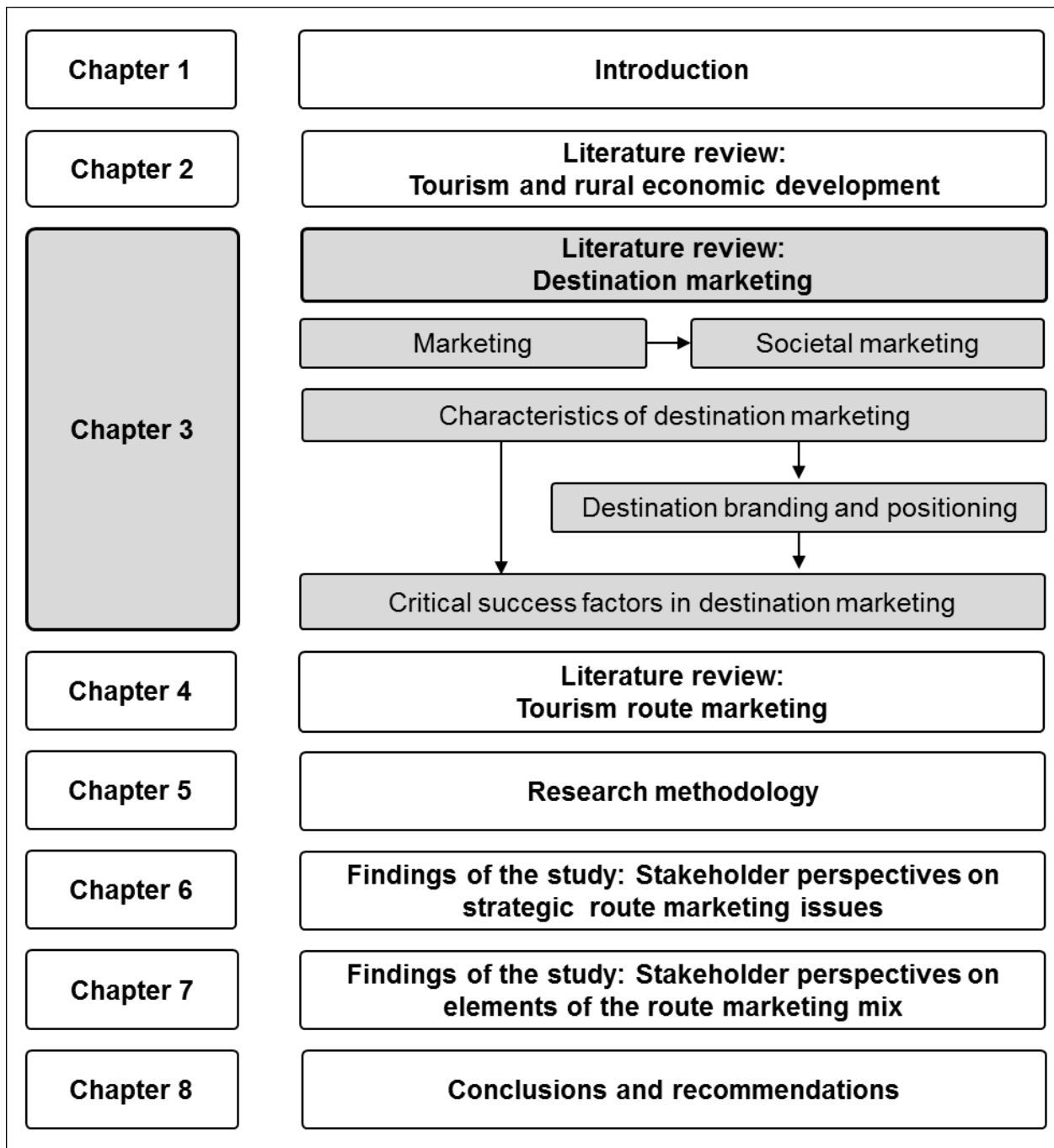
2.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the concepts of tourism and a tourism sector were defined. Attention was paid to the skewed distribution of both international and domestic tourism in South Africa and it was pointed out that many rural poverty nodes have tourism potential. Evidence was found in the literature that rural tourism offers economies of scope by attracting many niche markets to rural communities and that tourism market trends favour what rural areas offer, namely experiences in different and unusual surroundings, heritage, tradition, authenticity and rural life. Community based tourism is a means to secure a range of benefits for local communities, but for previously disadvantaged communities to benefit from tourism, a strategy is required that will attract sufficient visitors to the area to bring about LED. The literature presents evidence that route tourism is a viable option, but it was pointed out that not all routes are successful as projects are often supply-side driven with

too little attention paid to marketing aspects. Stakeholders who may influence the marketing success of a tourism route were identified and described in a model which was used as a guideline to achieve a representative sample of respondents for the study.

Marketing has a determining influence on the long term success of tourism routes and hence their capacity to bring about LED and to devolve benefits to the rural poor community. The next chapter will therefore examine the marketing of tourism destinations as the foundation for tourism route marketing.

CHAPTER 3 DESTINATION MARKETING



3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, marketing is defined and the societal marketing concept is explored as the link with pro-poor tourism. Destination marketing is examined from a generic perspective

as the foundation for tourism route marketing. In examining the destination marketing mix, particular attention is paid to destination branding and positioning since tourism routes are in essence the collective branding of a group of tourism offerings. Some critical success factors in destination marketing are highlighted. The marketing of tourism routes as a special case in destination marketing is discussed in Chapter 4.

3.2 PERSPECTIVES ON MARKETING

The American Marketing Association (2009a) defines marketing widely as "... the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". The British Chartered Institute of Marketing defines marketing somewhat more narrowly as "... the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements, to meet organisational objectives profitably" (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:23). Kotler, *et al.* (2006:13) define marketing as "... a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others". From a South African perspective marketing has been defined as "... a combination of management tasks and decisions aimed at meeting opportunities and threats in a dynamic environment in such a way that the firm's marketing offerings lead to the satisfaction of consumers' needs and wants in such a way that the objectives of the enterprise, the consumer and society are achieved" (Cant, Strydom, Jooste & du Plessis, 2006:19). All four definitions recognise that marketing is a process and therefore an on-going activity carried out over time.

Peter Drucker, stated that marketing "... is a central dimension of the entire business. It is the whole business seen from the point of view of the final result, that is, from the customer's point of view" (Wilson & Gilligan, 2005:4). Drucker shifted the emphasis from the functional to a managerial orientation that recognises that "... success primarily depends upon identifying changing customer wants and developing products and services which match these better than those of competitors" (Doyle 1987:131-132).

The other definitions cited above, also capture the essence of a marketing orientation to conducting business. Kotler (1997:20) identifies four pillars in the marketing concept,

namely the target market, customer needs, integrated marketing and profitability. This business philosophy recognises the importance of the business meeting both the customer's needs and being profitable in the long-term. At the same time, the business should recognise that achieving the first two stated objectives will require organisational integration and therefore marketing becomes the responsibility of everybody in the firm (Kotler, 1997:23-24; Kotler, *et al.*, 2006:29; Hsu, *et al.*, 2008:22).

In spite of the fact that the marketing concept has long been accepted as sound business practice, it is still sometimes misunderstood and often ignored (Wilson & Gilligan, 2005:705). The emphasis on tourism development and local economic development in particular, raises the risk that tourism and route development will be supply-side driven, with insufficient attention paid to the demand-side of the equation (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:76). The marketing actions of destinations and the tourism offerings within them, therefore take on added importance for the success of the destination and the benefits that may be derived by the local community because of this success. The next section looks at this societal aspect of marketing in more detail.

3.3 THE SOCIETAL MARKETING CONCEPT

Societal marketing enlarges the marketing concept by requiring that marketers take social and ethical concerns into account in their marketing activities (Kang & James, 2007:303; Kotler, 1997:28). Marketing takes place within the context of the greater environment outside the business and in particular, the society in which the business operates – a philosophy that is especially relevant to sustainable tourism, which demands both environmental and social responsibility (Page & Dowling, 2002:14).

Kotler (1997:34) questioned whether satisfying individual consumer wants is necessarily in the long-term interest of both consumers and the society and he asserts that the marketing concept actually "... sidesteps the conflict between consumer wants, consumer interests and long-run societal welfare". This recognition gave rise to the concept of societal marketing, which is based on the following premises (Kotler, 1980:35):

- “consumers’ wants do not coincide with their long-run interests or society’s long-run interests;
- consumers will increasingly favour organisations which show concern with meeting their wants, long-run interests, and society’s long-run interests; and
- the organisation’s task is to serve target markets in a way that produces not only want satisfaction, but long-run individual and social benefit as the key to attracting and holding customers.”

Although the societal marketing concept is concerned with consumers’ and society’s long-term welfare, it does not state the nature of such welfare (Kang & James, 2006:303). The question has been raised whether consumers, management, regulators such as governments, or civil activists are in the best position to decide whether individual products are “good” or “bad” and just what is in the best interest of society’s well-being (Crane & Desmond, 2002:561). A societal marketing approach may be adopted because acting in the interest of others is in the self-interest of the organisation, but this does not mean that the outcome does not have a positive social effect (Crane & Desmond, 2002:562).

A study conducted by Ward and Lewandowka (2006:231) suggests the societal marketing approach may not be the best strategy in turbulent environments with high levels of uncertainty, but that organisations in more static environments may use it to prevent a turbulent environment emerging. Kang and James (2006:311) identify five domains of a societal orientation namely physical consequences, psychological well-being, social relationships, economic contribution, and environmental consciousness. Examples abound, also in the tourism sector, of advocacy groups that have formed where societal well-being has been violated or threatened in these domains. So, for example, Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (2009) promotes, amongst others ...“equitable distribution of benefits and respect for human rights, culture and environment”. Other examples are the promotion of sustainable tourism development by the United Nations (2002:33) and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, adopted as long ago as 1999 (UNWTO, 1999a).

Nicolau (2008:1002) asserts that tourism firms acting as responsible “citizens” may gain greater consumer trust in the information-sensitive tourism market where uncertainty is high. This uncertainty stems from the inherent characteristic of tourism products where the

visitor moves from their familiar surroundings to an unfamiliar destination to consume services that they cannot evaluate before purchase and they are therefore uncertain of what they will eventually get (Nicolau, 2008:1002).

Although the societal marketing concept was originally formulated with product marketing in mind, it fits in well with the current emphasis on sustainable development in the tourism economic sector. Sustainable development is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in a report titled "Our Common Future" (also known as the Brundtland Report), as "... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 1987:[54]). The UNWTO (2004) defines sustainable tourism as follows:

"Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability."

Sustainable tourism development has the same long-term perspective as the societal marketing concept. Sustainability rests on the carrying capacity of a tourism area and denotes the number of visitors that the area can sustain without deterioration of the physical, economic and social environment (Wall & Mathieson, 2006:33). This implies that visitor numbers may have to be capped or diverted and that on occasion, de-marketing of a destination may even become necessary to protect future sustainable use (Weaver, 2006:178).

The destination marketer thus does not work in isolation and for marketing to contribute to the sustainability of the organisation or the destination in the long-term, cognisance must be taken of the environment within which it functions. The next section examines the characteristics of destination marketing.

3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF DESTINATION MARKETING

The literature on destination marketing is more extensive than that on the marketing of tourism routes and it is therefore worth looking at destination marketing as a frame of reference for route marketing. The destination lies at the heart of the tourist's travel decision (Hsu, *et al.*, 2008:398). A tourism destination is defined as a geographic area, which its visitors see as a unique entity; it may be a town, a city, a region, a country or indeed, a tourism route (Buhalis, 2000:98; Shoemaker & Shaw, 2008:305). Since destinations are so different from other products, it makes sense that the marketing of destinations may also differ from product marketing.

Destination marketing differs from conventional product or service marketing, and even tourism product marketing, in significant respects. The marketing of a destination takes place on two levels. Firstly, the destination is marketed as a whole, usually by a destination management organisation² (DMO); and secondly, the individual attractions and service offerings at the destination follow their own individual marketing strategies (Buhalis, 2000:101). The most important challenge for the DMO is to facilitate co-operation among the destination stakeholders for the collective benefit of the destination, rather than have them compete against each other (Buhalis, 2000:104). The branding of destinations has become a major element of place marketing (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2010:xxiii). Since tourism routes are essentially a branding strategy for a group of tourism offerings, this aspect of the destination product will be discussed separately and in greater depth in section 3.6 below.

Marketing the destination encompasses much more than just promotion, albeit an important element of destination marketing (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:22). The next section explores the key elements that make up the destination marketing mix.

² DMO is also used to denote Destination Marketing Organisation by some authors. This document assumes that marketing is a function of management and therefore uses DMO to denote Destination Management Organisation.

3.5 THE DESTINATION MARKETING MIX

Based on an analysis of the destination's strengths and weaknesses, the first task of the DMO is to match the visitor experiences for which the destination has a competitive advantage, with the market segments that it could provide with the experiences they seek (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:189). A destination cannot match all types of demand, and it should therefore develop experience offerings for the specific visitor markets that the destination actively wants to target, within the constraints of cost, distances, cultural and operational factors (Buhalis, 2000:100; Ritchie & Crouch 2003:189). The DMO can then develop a marketing mix to attract the targeted visitor segments (Buhalis, 2000:100).

The traditional marketing mix consists of four elements, colloquially known as the four Ps, namely product, price, place (distribution) and promotion (marketing communication) (Perreault, Cannon & McCarthy, 2009:33-34; McCarthy, 1964:38). Kotler (1997:94), following Lautenborn, restated these elements as four Cs to reflect the customer's point of view: customer value (product), cost to the customer (price), convenience (distribution) and communication (promotion). Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2006:26-27) add three additional elements to the marketing mix for services, namely people, process and physical evidence. Morrison (2010:242-246) also identifies additional elements in the tourism product marketing mix namely partnerships, people, packaging, and programming, which are added to product, price, place and promotion. Since some of Morrison's elements overlap with the traditional four marketing mix elements and the additional three services elements, only packaging, programming and partnership will be added to the discussion that follows.

3.5.1 The destination product offering

A destination is a composite offering of tourism products and services, referred to by Buhalis (2000:98) as the six As framework of tourism destinations as listed below:

- “attractions (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events);
- accessibility (entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles);
- amenities (accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourist services);

- available packages (pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals);
- activities (all activities available at the destination and what consumers will do during their visit); and
- ancillary services (services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunications, post, newsagents, and hospitals).”

George (2008:403) adds the ambience of a destination to this list, describing it as the atmosphere created by the physical, social, cultural, and service features of a destination that give it its special feel. Ritchie and Crouch (2003:19) stress that the tourism product is an experience tied to the destination, and consists of an amalgam of all the elements.

The DMO has an overall marketing responsibility to ensure that the destination product mix meets the demands of visitors and that the resources and the image of the destination are preserved (Buhallis, 2000:109). Although the destination product is a composite one, offered by a range of service providers, to the visitor the trip or holiday is one integrated experience (Buhallis, 2000:100; Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:120). The social sciences tend to view the tourist experience from the dimension of a peak touristic experience provided mainly by the attractions that are the motivation for the trip (Quan & Wang, 2004:300). The marketing point of view sees the tourist experience from a consumer dimension concerned with satisfying basic consumer needs on the journey such as food, accommodation, and transport, and which do not constitute the main reason for travelling (Quan & Wang, 2004:300). The total touristic experience comprises of both these dimensions and, while disappointment with the former cannot be fully compensated for by the latter, the peak experience also cannot replace the consumer supporting experience (Quan & Wang, 2004:300).

Mossberg (2007:65-69) identified five factors that create the circumstances and environment that influence the visitor's experience, namely the physical environment, personnel, other tourists, products and souvenirs to purchase, and the presence of a theme or story. The first three factors mentioned overlap with two of the additional elements in the extended services marketing mix, namely the physical evidence in the service environment and the people in the service process (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:26-27). Tourism offerings are essentially service offerings that share the basic service characteristics with other types of services, namely intangibility, inseparability of

production and consumption, perishability of capacity and variability of the service offering (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:46-49; Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:22-24). This brings in the additional services marketing mix elements of process, people and physical evidence, regarded by some authors as an extension of the product element of the marketing mix (Zeithaml, *et al.* 2006:26-27).

3.5.2 Process

Zeithaml, *et al.* (2006:27) define the service process as the series of service delivery steps that the customer experiences. Because tourism services are simultaneously produced and consumed, the customer is present to experience the service process first hand (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:23). Destinations compete on the experiences that they offer which makes the visitor process particularly challenging to create and manage, since the tourist's role is critical and there are so many diverse suppliers involved (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:19).

The visiting process starts with the visitor's first encounter with promotional material for the destination and includes the excitement and anticipation of the impending trip. It furthermore extends to their return home after the visit, through memories and discussion triggered by memorabilia of the visit (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:121; Palmer, 2008:107). The process encompasses a series of encounters with service providers, the physical evidence at the destination, and the host community (Hsu, *et al.*, 2008:166; Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:120). Service encounters are not all of equal significance, and some may stand out in the visitor's memory as critical incidents or "moments of truth" that were particularly satisfying or dissatisfying (Hsu, *et al.*, 2008:166; Palmer, 2008:116; Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:123). The destination marketer needs to pay particular attention to the prevention of negative critical incidents that lead to visitor discontent (Hsu, *et al.*, 2008:166). To prevent such incidents from tarnishing the image of the destination, a service recovery strategy should be in place and here the DMO can play a pivotal role through quality assurance schemes (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:357). The local tourist information centre (TIC) can provide information to smooth the visiting process, and also assist with visitor problems (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:357).

3.5.3 Packaging and programming

Packaging and programming are closely related and, while each may be offered without the other, packages frequently include programming (Morrison, 2010:310). Packages combine two or more tourism products and services into an inclusive offering at a single price (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:429). Considering the staggering number of travel options faced by the consumer, packages offer more than just a bundle price advantage; they also simplify the travel decision for the consumer and offer the assurance of consistent quality (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:431; Morrison, 2010:394-397).

Programming is the development of once-off or a series of special activities and events to increase customer spending at a destination (Morrison, 2010:392). Both packages and programmes benefit tourism service providers by stimulating demand in slow periods, more focussed market targeting and by increasing the length of stay and concomitant spending by visitors (Morrison, 2010:394). Packaging and programming involve partnering through the use of complementary tourism and other offerings (Morrison, 2010:405).

3.5.4 Partnerships

Morrison defines marketing partnerships as "... co-operative promotions and other marketing efforts ..." by tourism organisations, which may range from once-off co-operative promotion to long-term strategic agreements (Morrison, 2010:352). Although it may be argued that this is merely a form of promotion, the ubiquity of such partnerships in tourism justifies separate discussion, and indeed, tourism routes themselves are examples of partnerships.

Morrison identifies partnerships with customers, other businesses and digital alliances (Morrison, 2010:351-353). The shift towards relationship marketing, with its emphasis on attracting, maintaining and enhancing relationships with consumers, progresses from no post-sale contact with customers, through the reactive, accountable and proactive levels, to the partnership stage where the supplier continuously works with the customer to increase value (George, 2008:430; Kotler, *et al.*, 2006:397). Customer partnerships or relationship marketing programmes seek to reward customers' loyalty and many examples of such loyalty programmes are evident in the airline, accommodation and even attraction

sectors, for example, South African Airways' Voyager programme, City Lodge's Lodger Club, and South African National Parks' Wild Card (South African Airways, 2010; City Lodge, 2010; South African National Parks, 2009).

Partnerships and alliances between businesses may involve other organisations in the same, related or non-related fields (Morrison, 2010:353). Similar businesses may form partnerships to offer better customer value, for example South African Airways' participation in the Star Alliance allows travellers a much wider choice of flights and destinations (Star Alliance, 2010). Destination marketing is an example of tourism related businesses co-operating to the benefit of all at the destination. The DMO can play a pivotal role in bringing together the partners in joint destination marketing schemes (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:355). Alliances between non-related businesses allow tourism businesses to build relationships outside the tourism sector with organisations such as banks, education institutions, sports administrators, retail shopping centres and the media (Morrison, 2010:353).

3.5.5 People

The service experience at the destination is delivered by the people that the visitor interacts with at the destination (Hsu, *et al.*, 2008:157). These include the employees working in the various service operations, the visitors receiving the service, other customers in the service system and the host community (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:144; Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:26). Employees deliver the service to the customer and are seen by the customer as representing the service, the organisation and the brand (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:354). However, the visitors co-create the service and their participation influences the quality of the service that they receive (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:389). Fellow visitors in the service system or at the destination can enhance or detract from the visitor experience (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:393).

The host community or local population at a destination, who may or may not be part of the tourism sector, can be friendly or hostile towards visitors, enhancing or spoiling the visitor experience at a particular destination (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:144). At popular destinations, visitors can even outnumber the local inhabitants during peak seasons, (George, 2008:413; Weaver, 2006:142). The host community's attitude towards visitors

may be measured on the irritation index developed by Doxey, ranging from initial euphoria through apathy, annoyance and antagonism toward visitors to developing a more realistic outlook as the community becomes more experienced (Hall & Lew, 2009:175).

3.5.6 Physical evidence

The physical evidence of a service consists of the external and internal elements of the servicescape or service facility, as well as all other tangible elements of communication such as staff uniforms and brochures (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:317). These tangible elements of the servicescape form the “stage” on which the visitor will live out the experience in the destination and as such, affect the quality of the experience through the flow of encounters, the meaning visitors attach to the experience, their emotional connection with the destination, and their eventual satisfaction with the visit (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:320).

The physical evidence plays four different roles in marketing service offerings and these may be applied to destinations (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:324-326). The first role is that of the package or “wrap” of the offering, which conveys to the visitor what to expect and is particularly important in creating the initial expectation (Hsu, *et al.*, 2008:183). In this regard, the promotional material and especially the visual images, are important in the formation of the brand promise, destination choice by visitors, whether expectations will be met, and post-visit word-of-mouth communication (Hanlan & Kelly, 2005:175).

The second role is that of facilitator, whereby physical evidence either aids or hampers the service process and hence the visitor experience (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:324-325). In the context of destinations, good access infrastructure such as roads and parking, is particularly important for destinations targeting self-drive markets, as is signage, interpretation, maps and guidebooks to assist visitors in finding their way, in directing their gaze and in understanding and appreciating what they experience and gaze upon (Urry, 2002:3).

The third role of physical evidence at the destination level is that of socialiser, conveying to the visitors their expected roles, behaviours and relationships with employees and other customers (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:325). Examples include barricades and hardened walkways in natural areas, uniforms to identify employees or guides, brochures on visitor

safety and behaviour appropriate to the culture and traditions of the host community, traffic signs and many more (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:325-326).

The fourth role is the differentiator role of the physical evidence (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:325-326). Together with the local culture and service levels, the built and natural environments create the unique atmosphere or *ambiance* for the destination and may be the reason for visiting the destination (George, 2008:403; Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:134). So, for example, more than anything else, it is the backdrop of Table Mountain, the sea, the Cape Dutch architecture, and the narrow streets, that differentiate Cape Town from other destinations in South Africa. Similarly, the smaller scale of buildings, evidence of agricultural activity, rural settlements, and open spaces differentiate rural destinations from the urban ones. The nature of the physical evidence may attract certain market segments, while deterring others (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:153).

The physical evidence of a destination is not limited to the environment, but the tourism service providers' facilities within the destination collectively contribute to the physical evidence of the destination offering. The design features of the servicescape influence the customer's cognitive, affective, behavioural, and physiological responses through spatial layout, ambient conditions, and signs, symbols and artefacts (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:334-336).

3.5.7 Pricing

Although there is no single charge to visit a destination, the cost to the visitor may range from affordable to expensive (George, 2008:400). The cost to the visitor of visiting a particular destination is a function of the cost of getting there, exchange rates, and the cost of the individual tourism offerings at the destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:76). The transport providers, the individual enterprises at the destination, and distributors serving their target markets determine prices (Buhalis, 2000:110). Therefore, to achieve a uniform pricing strategy for the destination as a whole is almost impossible (Buhalis, 2000:110). The value to the visitor is the difference between the cost paid and the benefit gained by visiting the destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:241). Premium pricing at a destination is therefore only viable if a destination offers an exceptional experience (Buhalis, 2000:103). At the same time, premium pricing may be used to de-market a destination where visitor

numbers need to be reduced or mass tourism discouraged (Buhalis, 2000:100). While there is little that the DMO can do to manage the cost-competitiveness of the destination, the value perception that visitors hold of a destination, can be influenced, as can policy that impacts on these perceptions (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:243; Buhalis, 2000:110). Independent travellers use information communication technology, such as the Internet, to compare the cost of visiting different destinations (Buhalis & Law, 2008:611).

From the perspective of suppliers at the destination, the prices charged need to provide sufficient profit to ensure the viability of their operations (Buhalis, 2000:110). Tour operators have sufficient bargaining power to reduce prices at the destination, because of the large number of tourists that they bring to the destination (Buhalis, 2000:110). Some DMOs provide guidelines on minimum prices to shield small operators from debilitating competition on the one hand, and maximum prices to protect visitors from exploitation on the other hand (Buhalis, 2000:110). The underlying cost structure in the local economy also has a major influence on the level of prices in one destination in comparison to those in other destinations, and developing countries and rural areas are often cheaper to visit than popular developed destinations because of lower cost structures (Buhalis, 2000:110). While prices at the destination may be constant, exchange rate fluctuations may render the destination more or less expensive to international visitors (Buhalis, 2000:110).

3.5.8 Distribution

The destination distribution channel consists of the "... entire range of players that bring together tourism demand and supply" (Buhalis, 2000:111). Both Middleton, *et al.* (2009:284) and Buhalis (2000:111) estimate distribution costs in excess of 15 per cent of the total cost of the travel product. International visitors especially, are likely to use travel intermediaries such as travel agents and tour operators (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:281). In the domestic market, a degree of disintermediation is evident as domestic travellers usually use their own transport, make their own travel arrangements directly with the supplier or use electronic intermediaries such as central reservation systems and Internet channels, rather than booking through a travel agent or going on an inclusive tour (Buhalis, 2000:111; Mamaghani, 2009:365; Pearse & Schott, 2005:61). As seen in section 2.3 on page 14, many domestic tourists also stay in unpaid accommodation, provided by friends and relatives, which do not require reservations (South African Tourism, 2009b:22).

There is a close link between promotion and distribution in tourism marketing since the distribution channel fulfils a dual function by facilitating reservations and payment, and simultaneously facilitating promotion through the dissemination of information to the market (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:283; Pearce & Schott, 2005: 62). The Internet has become a widespread means of interactive communication delivering up-to-date information and it was a logical step that information websites also offer online reservations (Buhalis & Licata, 2002:208; Mamaghani, 2009:365). Traditional electronic intermediaries (e-mediaries) such as global distribution systems, were only accessible to the travel trade, and they had to enter the online community through consumer interfaces such as Travelocity (owned by Sabre) to compete with new e-mediaries such as Microsoft's Expedia, and electronic commerce applications which allow consumers to make airline, accommodation and car rental online reservations directly with the supplier or through multi-supplier websites (Buhalis & Laws, 2008:619; Buhalis & Licata, 2002:208). As 3G mobile devices and interactive digital television become more prevalent, new types of competitors will emerge in the tourism distribution network (Buhalis & Licata, 2002:208; Mamaghani, 2009:372). Pearce and Schott (2005:62) caution that sight must not be lost of how consumers interact with the new technologies and they allege that, for example, whereas consumers have accepted online transport booking, reservation by telephone is still the dominant channel for accommodation.

Many independent travellers only decide on what to see and do, and even where to stay, once they are at the destination (Pearce & Schott, 2005:61; Woodside & King, 2001:19). The local TIC is therefore an important member of the distribution network providing an *in situ* facility at the destination (George, 2008:271). The TIC fulfils a dual role by not only distributing information, but also by facilitating reservations for tourism offerings at the destination (George, 2008:272; Pearce & Schott, 2005: 62).

3.5.9 Marketing communication

Hyde (2008:713) identifies three distinct stages in the tourists' pre-trip decision-making, starting with the search for travel and destination information, followed by the planning of the holiday, and finally, the booking of specific elements of the vacation, such as the transport to be used and where to stay. He sees the search for information on potential destinations as quite separate from making decisions and the subsequent reservation

process (Hyde, 2008:713). The destination marketer needs to promote the destination during the entire decision-making process to increase awareness of the destination and to persuade the target market to visit (Buhalis, 2000:112).

Marketing communication includes not only advertising through the traditional media, but also electronic and below-the-line media, pricing, contact with distribution outlets, publicity and interaction with staff (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:294). The principle of integrated marketing communication dictates that all communication with the customer should deliver the same clear message (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:294). Targeting the right market with the right message may be challenging as the market may be dispersed over a large number of geographical areas with a variety of cultures and languages (Buhalis, 2000:112).

Advertising and public relations used to be the primary means of influencing the purchasing behaviour of potential visitors (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:237). Such above-the-line promotion is costly and may well be beyond the resources of individual enterprises at the destination, which consequently rely on the DMO to promote their offerings along with the destination as a whole (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:355). Three trends in tourism marketing communication warrant greater attention.

- **The importance of below-the-line promotions**

Below-the-line promotions play an important part in promoting destinations. Travel and tourism fairs, such as the annual Indaba Trade Fair held in Durban, South Africa, and various other international fairs, expose the destination to intermediaries (Buhalis, 2000:112). DMOs distribute promotional material to potential visitors not only at these fairs, but also through the distribution channels. Since the purchase of a tourism product often takes place a long time before its consumption, printed promotional material and especially brochures, serve to make the purchase tangible and to provide reassurance in the interim (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:322, 324). The local TIC at the destination itself serves as a one-stop information centre where information on offerings available at the destination may be collected, especially in the form of brochures and maps (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:329). Since destination marketers see themselves as facilitators, rather than selling agents, no specific offerings are promoted against any others and their printed material usually contains information on a range of local tourism offerings (Buhalis, 2000:112).

- **The importance of electronic media**

Electronic media, and the Internet in particular, have become an important source of tourist information (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:246). Powerful search engines and links to related websites have not only contributed to disintermediation, but also given visitors much greater independence to plan and organise their own holidays (Buhalis & Law, 2008:611, Mamaghani, 2009:369). Significant network developments now enable destination marketers to target niche markets through advertising on search engine and social networking media such as Google, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:249).

- **The importance of word-of-mouth marketing**

One source that is not directly under the destination marketer's control is word-of-mouth communication, which strongly influences both the decision to visit a destination and the brand image communicated after the visit (Hanlan & Kelly, 2005:174). This source has gained added importance with the popularisation of electronic social media such as Facebook, MySpace and blog sites, as well as blogs on service provider websites where visitors relate their experiences for others to read and see (Stokes, 2008:140-141). Viral marketing or "word-of-mouth" is an electronic version of word-of-mouth where good offers are passed from one person to another by e-mail, often exponentially (Stokes, 2008:148-150).

Marketing messages must be associated with a specific market offering to be of any value. This association is facilitated by attaching the message to a particular brand that represents the offering. Section 3.6 therefore looks at destination branding as a special case in branding.

3.6 DESTINATION BRANDING AND POSITIONING

Originally used as a method to distinguish a manufacturer's products from those of competitors, brands have developed into a key component of marketing (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:132). Branding is used in the promotion of much more than just consumer products and the technique has been extended to the promotion of services, corporations,

sports teams, performers, individuals, events and, of course, places or destinations (Allen, 2007:60).

Although places are not single products, a city or country can create the feeling (or illusion) that one is dealing with a single entity, with which one could have a relationship (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:191). The proviso is that the core values that the brand represents "... are bound together by a vision, which gives them meaning, impetus and direction" (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998:438).

Baker and Cameron (2008:87) regard branding as fundamental in destination marketing planning. Pike (2004: 69) supports this view and sees branding at "... the very heart of destination marketing". However, when marketing places and destinations, the process of creating brands is more complicated and challenging than the traditional consumer product branding described in the marketing literature (Hankinson, 2001:128; Murphy, Moscardo, & Benckendorff, 2007:5).

3.6.1 The nature of destination branding

Brands have a dual function, serving firstly to identify and differentiate the destination, and secondly, providing a means on which to hook the destination's image in the target market.

- **Identifying characteristics of brands**

According to Hannam (2004:258) a brand is the "... unique combination of product characteristics and values that have taken on a particular meaning in the minds of consumers". The more functional definitions of a brand usually state that a brand is a name, term, symbol, logo, design, work mark, or other graphic that identifies and differentiates the destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:165; American Marketing Association, 2009b). It is a way to identify a product or service for customers and to distinguish it from that of competitors and, as such, the brand is a statement of ownership (American Marketing Association, 2009b; Middleton & Clarke, 2001:132).

While a brand needs an identity, it also needs to be differentiated from other products at individual and family brand levels (Keller, 2008:98). The product is differentiated from other

products by clearly identifying and clarifying the brand identity (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:187). However, many definitions have developed the brand concept beyond just the identification level to reflect the growing applications to which the principles of brands and branding are applied (Kerr, 2006:276). This aspect is explored below.

- **Image characteristics of brands**

It is widely agreed in marketing literature that a brand is more than just the name that identifies a product (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:185). Alongside their identifying and differentiating functions, brands are symbols or devices to which associations may be attached (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:132). In marketing terms, Macrae, Parkinson and Sheerman (in Morgan & Pritchard, 2002:12) see a brand as "... representing a unique combination of product characteristics and added values ... which have taken on a relevant meaning which is inextricably linked to that brand". Strong brands exist in the minds of consumers "... as a fusion of readily understood values and benefits" (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:132). Awareness of these values and benefits may be conscious or intuitive (Macrae *et al.* in Morgan & Pritchard, 2002:12). De Chernatony and McDonald (2003:25) define a successful brand as "... an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values, which match their needs most closely". Thus, brands are multidimensional constructs whereby products or services are augmented with values, allowing consumers to recognise and appreciate these values (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998:436).

Branding is increasingly applied to places (Hankinson, 2004:6). A place brand is people's perception of a place; how the citizens, potential investors and visitors regard that place (Gold, 2005:221). In the tourism context, a destination brand is the perception of a place or a destination held in the tourist memory through associations with that place (Cai, 2002:723). In addition, the brand both conveys the anticipation of an unforgettable travel experience associated with a destination, and serves to bring together and strengthen the pleasant memories connected to visiting the destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:165). This image that the visitor has, is then typically communicated and strengthened by destination branding (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:131).

Every destination or place has an image, which is often the result of historical events rather than the current situation (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:127). Three processes create images of places in people's minds (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:185):

- “planned interventions like planning, urban design and so on;
- the way in which they or others use specific places; and
- various forms of place representations like films, novels, paintings, news reports and so on.”

Holloway and Hubbard (2001:48) explain that interactions with places come about through direct experiences with the place, through the environment or through media representations. This information is then processed into cognitive maps of stable and learnt images of the place (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001:48). Branding purposefully creates such mental images of destinations (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:185). There is evidence that experience with a destination will change the image held by the visitor of that destination (Awaritefe, 2004:278). Fakeye and Crompton (1991:15) postulate that the images held by consumers evolve through three stages namely:

- “organic stage: images held prior to exposure to promotional material;
- induced stage: images formed through exposure to promotional messages; and
- complex images: images formed through personal experience at destinations.”

The image aspects of brands may be classified further into two groups of attributes, namely functional/tangible attributes and psychological/abstract attributes (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993:3). They are also referred to by Gardner and Levy (1955:33) as the technical capability and the personality dimensions of the brand. De Chernatony and McWilliam, (1989:164) differentiate between the two dimensions as follows:

- functionality is what the brand does for the user, the functional benefits that the brand delivers to satisfy the consumer's needs; and
- representationality is what the brand says about the user, what the consumers signal about themselves to others by making use of visibly consumed brands.

- **Functional characteristics of destination brands**

Consumers associate functional characteristics of products with brands. This association aids decision making by distinguishing between competing products and rapidly recalling

relevant performance benefits (De Chernatony & McWilliam, 1989:165). Here the brand value centres on the destination's functional capabilities and physical attributes that can satisfy the visitor's needs (De Chernatony & McWilliam, 1989:165). In terms of destinations, functional characteristics will refer to the destination mix including attractions, accommodation, access, amenities, activities and service quality that satisfy consumer needs while visiting the destination (Buhalis, 2000:98; Middleton & Clarke, 2003:126).

- **Representational characteristics of destination brands**

Marketers deliberately create a geographical sense of place through their destination marketing activities (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008:151). It is therefore necessary that the marketer adopts a consumer (or visitor) orientation to understand the way consumers, as the end users, "... sense, understand, use and connect ..." to the destination (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:190).

Consumers convey messages about themselves to others through the brands they choose (De Chernatony, 1993:179). The degree of congruity between the destination and the buyer's self-image influences the consumer's attitude towards a product and loyal consumers in particular may identify with a destination (Kastenholz, 2004:722). Therefore, the image created in the minds of consumers may be central to the success of the destination brand (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:61). The UNWTO sees destinations developing as a "fashion accessory" (UNWTO, 1999b:42). Consumers "... enrobe themselves ..." with brands from their own "brand wardrobe" making selections to express their emotions, personalities and memberships (De Chernatony, 1993:178-179). The choice of a destination to visit offers a way for people to define their identities and set them apart from the mass of other travellers (Luhman, 1998:14). The aspirational consumer thus selects their holiday destination as a lifestyle indicator (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:60).

It is clear that brands do not only satisfy functional needs, but also fulfil intangible self-expression needs of visitors (Caldwell & Freire, 2004:51-52). At the same time, a brand cannot be seen as completely representational, but will always have some functional quality inherent in the offering as well (Caldwell & Freire, 2004:53). Destination branding has the task of linking meaningful image components, both functional and

representational, to the destination brand name in the consumers mind. This task is examined in the next section.

3.6.2 The task of place branding

The consumer seeks a memorable experience made up of a stream of high-quality product and service transactions (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:165). Anticipation and memories are important aspects of a quality experience; the brand reassures the consumer with regard to the promise and afterwards consolidates perceptions of the experience (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:165).

To encourage the consumers to select a particular destination, the destination needs to first differentiate itself from competitors in the consumer's mind and then position itself in line with the consumer's perceived needs and expectations.

- **Differentiation**

Marketers are faced with increasing product parity and creating differentiation is particularly challenging (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggot, 2003:285). Ritchie and Crouch (2003:190) state that, while it is important that a destination is perceived positively, the destination should also develop a unique image that distinguishes it from the many competitive destinations targeting the same markets. Tourist icons, such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris and Table Mountain in Cape Town, help to symbolise the destination and to reinforce its uniqueness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:193).

Park and Petrick (2006:263) see the main reason for practicing destination branding as building an attractive image that is different from that of competitors in order to draw higher spending visitors. Images that tourists have of a destination strongly influence their choices (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:126). Gardner and Levy (1955:33) pointed out early on that the image may have a greater influence on buyer decisions than technical facts about a destination. The conceptualisation of the different brands must generate subtle variation in feelings about the destinations (Gardner & Levy, 1955:33). Travellers seek out destinations because of their special characteristics; careful consideration of the destination's unique set of geographical factors, cultural and natural resources, traditions

and host communities can form the basis of a unique image for the destination (Gunn & Var, 2002:267). Morgan and Pritchard (2010:65) caution that though the brand needs to be seen as original and different, it should be in a sustainable, believable and relevant manner.

A place name alone is not sufficient to differentiate a destination and in most cases does not adequately communicate the positioning sought in the market (Pike, 2005:258; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:196). Many places add logos and slogans to their place names, but places do not all of a sudden gain a new identity because of such an added slogan or logo (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:185). However, a slogan does link the brand's identity to the brand image in the market place, which makes a slogan a useful expression of the destination brand's positioning strategy (Pike, 2005:258). A single slogan is not a synonym for a brand as destinations are complex and it is difficult to capture all elements in one succinct slogan (Pike, 2005:258). Some destinations value the logo more than the slogan, although both are important (Park & Petrick, 2005:263).

Branding entails more than just distinctiveness, it is the formation of associations with the destination (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:186). Positioning provides the next step towards this goal.

- **Positioning**

As for any other product, positioning the image of a destination in the minds of consumers is an important marketing activity (Day, Skidmore & Koller, 2001:177). Positioning is the way a product or destination is perceived by consumers on important attributes relative to competing destinations or brands (Kotler, *et al.*, 2003:282). Pike (2004:74-75) provides a useful insight into the relationship between brand image and brand positioning and brand identity:

- “Brand image: How the brand is perceived;
- brand positioning: That part of the value proposition communicated to a target group that demonstrates competitive advantage; and
- brand identity: How the owners want the brand to be perceived.”

Thus the brand represents "... an identity for the producer and an image for the consumer ..." and the brand positioning is the interface between them (Pike, 2004:74). The brand construct is therefore bound by the activities of the organisation on the one side, and by the consumers' perceptions on the other (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:186).

The destination image formed in the minds of consumers is a summary of many beliefs, ideas and impressions and bits of information associated with the place (Day, Skidmore & Koller, 2002:178). Their destination's positioning is not something that marketers leave to chance. (Kotler, *et al*, 2006:280). They deliberately build this image by identifying the most relevant attributes of the destination and then strengthen their association with the destination brand by designing marketing mixes to realise the planned positions (Keller, 2008:98).

Positioning decisions need to be made at strategic policy-level by destinations, but there is also a tactical aspect (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:164). An effective image positioning strategy will result, not just in differentiating the destination from its competitors, but also in achieving favourable differentiation (Day, Skidmore & Koller, 2002:178). Product positioning entails both the creation and the careful maintenance of the brand image (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:186). Marketing needs to develop, change and maintain destination images to influence potential buyers' expectations, and it is in this field that some interesting planned tourism image engineering is taking place (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:127-128).

Images and the expectations of travel experiences are closely linked in prospective customers' minds (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:126). Many countries' images are based on stereotypes or excessive simplifications of the reality that may be inaccurate (Kotler & Gertner, 2002:25). Images held by consumers may not necessarily be based on facts or experience, may represent exceptions rather than the norm, and may be dated, but they nevertheless remain strong motivators in consumer decisions (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:126; Kotler & Gertner, 2002:25). It follows that misperceptions of a destination may lead to disappointment with the visitor experience.



3.6.3 Building destination brands

Brand building is a process (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:68). In a study of eight destination marketing organisations, Park and Petrick (2006:263) found that most of them saw the branding process as more complicated for destinations than for products, even though the same principles were used. It is therefore worth examining this process in more detail.

- **The role of branding**

Branding offers important benefits to both the consumer and the marketer. Clarke (2000:330-331) identified six benefits that may be derived from branding in tourism:

- “As tourism is typically high-involvement, branding can simplify the choice;
- branding can assist in reducing the effects of intangibility;
- branding conveys consistency across multiple outlets and through time;
- branding is a valuable risk reducing mechanism, ... in particular ... temporal risk associated with a perishable product;
- branding facilitates precise segmentation; and
- brands provide a focus for the integration of producer effort, helping people to work towards the same outcomes.”

Destination branding is important both before and after the visit. Ritchie and Crouch (2003:165) identify the following primary roles of destination brands in this context:

- Pre-experience: Selection of the destination experience
 - Identification
 - Differentiation
 - Anticipation
 - Expectation
 - Reassurance
- Post experience: Recollection of the destination memories
 - Consolidation
 - Reinforcement

Allen (2007:64) adds a further stage in his Brand-Experience Model, namely the place experience itself and his model thus includes the pre-place experience, the place experience, and post-place experience. Olsen (2003:337) confirms that visitors seek information both before and during visits to destinations.

- **Building the destination brand**

Morgan and Pritchard (2010:96) identify five different stages in the brand building process:

“Phase one: Market investigation, analysis and strategic recommendations.

Phase two: Brand identity development.

Phase three: Brand launch and introduction – communicating the vision.

Phase four: Brand implementation.

Phase five: Monitoring, evaluation and reviewing.”

The starting point in brand building is the establishment of the core values of the brand, which must be durable, relevant, communicable and salient for the potential market (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:68). The brand marketer engages with the customer on three levels (Park, Jaworski & MacInnes, 1986:136):

- Functional (providing solutions to consumer problems);
- symbolic (providing satisfaction of psychological desires); and
- experiential (providing sensory pleasure, variety, and cognitive stimulus).

Park, *et al.* (1986:136) warn that though many brands offer benefits on all three of the above levels, it may be difficult to manage a brand based on more than one concept.

- **Destination brand architecture**

The key components of a destination brand’s architecture include its positioning, emotional and rational benefits and associations, and its brand personality (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:70). The tourism literature suggests that destinations can be successfully differentiated using brand personality (Murphy, *et al.*, 2007:13.). Brand personality imbues the brand with human characteristics giving it a richer, more interesting identity (Aaker, 2002:83). A brand’s personality incorporates both rational (head) and emotional (heart) values (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:73). The extent to which the destination brand’s

personality interacts with the target market is critical to the success of the brand (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:70).

In attempting to distil the quintessence of a brand's proposition, the destination brand benefit pyramid is a useful tool (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:71). The five levels are as follows (with five being the top level):

- Level 1: Tangible, verifiable, objective, measurable characteristics of the destination.
- Level 2: Benefits to the tourist that result from this destinations features.
- Level 3: Psychological rewards or emotional benefits that tourists receive by visiting this destination.
- Level 4: The meaning of value to the typical tourist.
- Level 5: The essential nature and character of the destination.

Kavaratzis (2004:71) feels that a brand needs to be associated with "stories" about a destination, that are built into the destination by planning and design interventions, infrastructure development and the organisational structure of the destination. These stories are then communicated through the attitude of the destination and promotional activities (Kavaratzis, 2004:71). Three main techniques are currently used to build brands, namely personality branding (using personalities associated with the place, for example, Nelson Mandela's association with Soweto), flagship construction (using large projects, for example, the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town) and events branding (for example, the 2010 Soccer World Cup held in South Africa) (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:192).

Morgan and Pritchard (2002:19) state that "... the essence of creating a successful brand is to build an emotional link between the product and the consumer". They go on to say that the challenge is to "... make the destination live ..." so that visitors can experience the uniqueness of the place and the promised brand values (Morgan & Pritchard, 2002:20). The branding needs to convey the "spirit" of the destination with a few key attributes or associations (Morgan & Pritchard, 2002:22). This spirit is captured particularly well in the slogans such as "India changes you", "Amazing Thailand" and "100% pure New Zealand" (Morgan & Pritchard, 2002:21-22). To build successful emotional links, a destination brand needs to be credible, deliverable, differentiating, convey powerful ideas, enthuse trade partners and resonate with the consumer (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:70).

A destination's image or how it is presented, is all important in its appeal and celebrity value (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:65). Considering that places are viewed as "fashion accessories", destinations should aspire to be "must-see" places (WTO, 1999:42; Luhrman, 1998:13). Here both the physical and the virtual elements of the brand experience need to be clearly understood and new research frameworks to drive the creation of meaningful customer experience need to be developed (Allen, 2007:61).

Morgan and Pritchard (2010:66) bring the above two factors together in the destination celebrity matrix. They state that places that achieve celebrity status have both emotional pull and celebrity value, while losers have neither and places with strong emotional pull are potential stars that may achieve celebrity value in the future, but problem places are talked about for the wrong reasons that may actively deter potential visitors. It is interesting that the authors locate South Africa in the quadrant for potential stars (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010: 67).

3.6.4 Destination brands as corporate brands

According to Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008:152), some authors see destination brands as no different from product brands, but others see them as fundamentally different. Destinations are much more multidimensional than consumer goods and services (Pike, 2005:258; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000:58). Consistent branding is therefore improbable because perceptions of a destination may vary between market segments, and a single slogan is unlikely to be meaningful to diverse market segments (Pike, 2005:258).

Destination brands have more in common with corporate brands than with product brands (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008:158). A corporate brand represents a mark of assurance expressed through the behaviour of the corporation and its staff, and through its product and service offerings (Balmer & Greyser, 2003:246). This means that the whole organisation is branded, not individual products, and since the company name is attached to the entire product portfolio, each product will benefit from belonging to the corporate umbrella brand³ (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:191; Wilson & Gilligan, 2005:505). In destinations, the images of the individual businesses are often closely related to the image of the destination, thus sharing the same image (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:127).

³ Where corporate brand is referred to, corporate umbrella brand is intended.

Kavaratzis (2004:71) explains that destination brands need to be treated as “... the whole entity of the place in order to achieve consistency in the messages sent”.

Unlike product brands, corporate brands have a multi-stakeholder focus, rather than a customer focus, and destination brands resemble corporate brands in this respect (Balmer & Greyser, 2003:246). Corporate brands and destination brands differ from product brands in disciplinary scope and management, requiring a reappraisal of the traditional marketing framework (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008:158).

The notion of treating destination brands as corporate brands is useful, but they are not identical and destination brands present their own set of challenges, as discussed in the next section. Allen (in Allen, 2007:61) lists the distinctions between corporate brands and place brands as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distinctions between corporate brands and place brands

Corporate brand	Place brand
Single component product/service	Multiple component product/service
Cohesive stakeholder relationships	Fragmented stakeholder relationships
Lower organisational complexity	Higher organisational complexity
Functional	Experiential/hedonic
Individual orientation	Collective orientation
Sub-brand coherence	Sub-brand inequality and rivalry
Private enterprise	Public/private partnerships
Lack overt government role	Overt government role
Product attributes consistent	Product attributes subject to seasonality
Flexibility of product offering	Inflexibility of product offering

Source: Allen (In Allen 2007:61)

3.6.5 Difficulties of destination branding and marketing

Destination marketing is particularly challenging due to the complex nature of the destination product. The overall tourism product is a composite one, consisting of many components such as transport, accommodation, attractions and amenities (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:122-123). There is no natural harmony between these components; they are seldom under the ownership and control of a single organisation and each will act in their perceived own interest, which may not be congruent with the destination brand positioning (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:127). This situation is demonstrated in the Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site⁴ where golfing estates on islands in the Vaal River and uncontrolled private development along the river banks, conflict with the nature and image of the destination as a natural World Heritage site (Independent Online, 2007:1). Furthermore, a destination may portray diverging images targeted at the tourism and investor markets (Therkelsen & Halkier, 2008:165). Whereas touristic images represents the place as exotic or different from everyday life, the investor images are more likely to be "... like home but better ..." and creating a cross-sectoral umbrella brand may be problematic (Therkelsen & Halkier, 2008:165).

Destinations are not corporations and lack the clear organisational boundaries of corporate governance (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008:159). Whereas corporate brands are under full management control and compliance can be enforced, destination brands rely on co-operation and persuasion instead (Middleton & Clarke, 2001:134). The prevalence of many small businesses and a diversity of larger organisations, each with their own objectives and branding, exacerbate the situation and impede the implementation of strategic destination marketing plans (Laws, 2002:67).

Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008:151) identified seven issues that appear to hinder place marketing:

- "The need for a collective understanding and appreciation of place marketing before the marketing effort starts;
- the significance of wide co-operation and clear role allocation as well as effective coordination of marketing activities;

⁴ Vredefort Dome is the world's largest meteoric impact crater. The site incorporates both sides of the Vaal River, which forms the border between the Free State and the North West Provinces, South Africa.

- the importance of implementing marketing as a process and not undertaking sporadic or fragmented activities;
- the extension of marketing understanding to fields other than tourism development;
- the need to involve to a much higher degree local communities in the marketing effort and integrate their needs in all phases of the marketing process;
- the widening of current understanding of inter-urban competition, which will open up possibilities to take better advantage of opportunities in the environment; and
- the better comprehension of monitoring and evaluating marketing activities as to their results.”

The number and variety of stakeholders involved and the complexity of the tourism product amplify the challenge of destination marketing and, more specifically, branding a destination (Baker & Cameron, 2008:83). Marketers have little control over the factors that shape brand identity (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:62-63). Allen (2007:61) advises that understanding the role of government is particularly valuable in dealing with the challenge of politics. Morgan and Pritchard (2010:64) point out that the really successful brands are the ones that are able to resist the political forces at work in the destination.

Branding campaigns must be focussed internally as well as externally (Allen, 2007:61). Visitors interact with the host population and the latter should identify with the brand as representing their sense of place too (Pike, 2005:259). Tourism destination marketing is no longer just presenting destination images, it needs to sell the experience and it is the local people who have to provide the experience (Hannam, 2004:256). Developing effective stakeholder partnerships is therefore an imperative for effective service delivery (Hannam, 2004:257).

3.6.6 Brand equity

Brand equity represents a way in which to measure the success of a brand. Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2006:187) define brand equity as the extra benefit that the customer gains above the basic utility or need satisfaction provided by the product. Brand equity is a function of brand awareness, or how well the brand is known, and brand value, which represents the associations formed in the mind of consumers with the particular brand

(Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006:187). Brand equity thus represents an asset that the destination may exploit to attract visitors.

The literature provides ample evidence that, if it is complex to brand products, it is much more so when branding destinations (Park & Petrick, 2006:263; Pike, 2005:258; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003:19). However, destination branding has not only become a widespread activity, but many destinations have been very successful in establishing their brands in the minds of the consumers such as India and Spain (Morgan & Pritchard, 2010:65, 72). Although still a relatively new field, significant literature is emerging to guide the destination marketer in branding the destination. What is becoming clearer is that a place name is not automatically a destination brand and that simply applying product branding to destinations is not enough; the unique characteristics and demands of destination branding needs to be taken into account (Kavaratsis & Ashworth, 2008:152).

3.7 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN DESTINATION MARKETING

The objectives of destination marketing may be summarised as follows (Buhalis, 2000:100):

- Enhance the long-term prosperity of local people;
- delight visitors by maximising their satisfaction;
- maximise profitability of local enterprises and maximise multiplier effects; and
- optimise tourism impacts by ensuring a sustainable balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs.

It follows that in order to reach these broad objectives, a long-term, strategic orientation is necessary (Baker & Cameron, 2008:83). The destination marketing plan needs not only to be integrated into regional development and resource planning, but, on occasion, may even involve de-marketing to ensure the long-term sustainability as a tourism destination. The development and achievement of strategic objectives furthermore depend on the co-operation of the destination stakeholders, both public and private sector (Buhalis, 2000:99).

In an increasingly competitive environment, a successful destination brand strategy has become a critical tool to gain competitive advantage (Baker & Cameron, 2008:85). Pike (2004:69) warns that many destinations have become substitutable or commoditised, as Pine and Gilmore (1999:9-10) describe it. The destination brand needs to build brand equity through awareness, consumer franchise, perceived quality and the desired associations with the brand (Aaker, 2002:8). A single brand identity and image is important and without the co-operation of stakeholders, this identity could become fragmented (Prideaux & Cooper, 2002:49).

Planning processes often fail in the implementation stage (Simpson, 2001:10,18). Plans should therefore include a time frame for implementation against which progress may be monitored and continually adjusted to remain relevant and reflect changes in the market and competitive environments (Baker & Cameron, 2008:93-4).

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter first defined marketing and then examined the marketing concept, with particular emphasis on societal marketing, which emphasises responsibility towards the community, and in the case of tourism routes, especially towards the disadvantaged in the community. Societal marketing shares the concern of sustainable tourism towards long term benefit of the community and the environment. Attention was paid to destination marketing as the basis for the marketing of tourism routes as a special case in destination marketing. The traditional marketing mix was expanded for destinations to ten elements, which include three services marketing elements as well as elements unique to tourism such as packaging, programming and partnerships. Particular attention was paid to destination branding and positioning, since route marketing relies heavily on creating a separate route brand within a bigger destination. A long term strategic orientation, strong brand strategies and implementation of plans were identified in the literature as critical success factors for destination marketing.

The next chapter takes a closer look at route marketing planning and the route marketing mix as well as the marketing practices of international tourism routes and describes the tourism marketing structures and activities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

CHAPTER 4 TOURISM ROUTE MARKETING

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Chapter 5	Research methodology
Chapter 6	Findings of the study: Stakeholder perspectives on strategic route marketing issues
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4.1 INTRODUCTION

A tourism route needs to attract visitors in sufficient numbers to provide markets that will enable tourism businesses along the route to survive (Roberts & Hall, 2004:260). Effective marketing to attract the visitors to the tourism route is therefore critical to the success of the route (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:76; Lourens, 2007:486-487; Roberts & Hall, 2004:260; Rogerson, 2003:66). The next section examines the nature of tourism routes and the factors that may contribute to the successful marketing of rural tourism routes. This is followed by a discussion of the route marketing mix and critical success factors identified in the literature, as well as good marketing practice for six international tourism routes. Finally, tourism marketing in KwaZulu-Natal is described as the background against which route marketing in the province takes place.

4.2 THE NATURE OF TOURISM ROUTE MARKETING

The rationale for tourism route marketing is that, rather than each element of the route marketing itself individually, the whole route is marketed collectively as one unit and as a single brand (Hardy, 2003:326). This not only allows for more effective use of route members' pooled resources, but also increases the chances of success for the route as a whole and for the route members individually. Just like a destination, a route consists of many independent enterprises, from both the private and the public sector, that co-operate to market the route. Route marketing therefore has more in common with destination marketing than the marketing of individual service offerings. Indeed, visitors regard routes that achieve iconic status as destinations in themselves (ECIAfrica, 2006b:19).

4.3 TOURISM ROUTE MARKETING PLANNING

The success of a tourism route affects not only the route members, but also a range of other stakeholders ranging from government to the local community. The route management organisation has the difficult task of aligning many, and possibly conflicting, interests in a marketing plan (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004b:75). However, co-operation may enhance alignment of the individual offerings as an integral part of the route marketing planning process (Olsen, 2003:336).

To accomplish appropriate formulation of the route product and branding, requires adequate information about the needs of the potential target markets (Hardy, 2003:326-327; Lourens, 2007:486; Meyer, 2004:20). As marketing research is costly, individual tourism operators may have neither the funds nor the skills to conduct their own marketing research, but becoming part of a tourism route, may enable them to conduct marketing research collectively by pooling their resources and sharing information to the benefit of all the route members (Lourens, 2007:486).

The themed nature of many tourism routes imply that a route may appeal to a particular target or niche market. However, what appeals to one target market may not appeal to others (Meyer, 2004:20; Rogerson, 2007:53). In South Africa, what may appeal to international tourists may be of little interest to the domestic segment and it is therefore fundamental that the route developers understand what appeals to the intended target market (Meyer, 2004:20; Rogerson, 2007:35). Several authors recommend that a thorough assessment be made of the tourism assets in the region to determine the area's unique selling proposition to particular potential target markets (Lourens, 2007:487; Meyer, 2004:21; Rogerson, 2007:53). These unique features form the basis of the brand identity for the route (Lourens, 2007:487).

With many independent suppliers, each with their own branding, it is a challenging task to create a cohesive brand for the route. Co-operation rather than competition among route members needs to be established; otherwise the best-laid plans are unlikely to succeed (Lourens, 2007:487). In fact, it is essential for the route stakeholders to understand that they need to co-operate in order to compete with other destinations (Rogerson, 2007:53).

The brand identity and positioning of the route form the basis for the subsequent formulation of the marketing mix elements that will embody the route marketing strategy (Olsen, 2003:336). These elements are explored in the next section.

4.4 THE ROUTE MARKETING MIX

The elements of the destination marketing mix equally apply to tourism routes. These elements contribute to the service quality that the visitor experiences along the route, and

collectively determine the total route experience. The marketing mix elements as they relate to routes, are discussed below.

4.4.1 The route product

Development of a tourism route, though usually regarded as a tourism development matter, is actually development of the eventual “product” or “experience” that will be offered to the market. Marketing should therefore begin with marketing research so that all marketing actions may be aligned with visitor needs and wants (Hardy, 2003:326-327; Lourens, 2007:486). Personal satisfaction and experiences are becoming more important (King, 2002:105). Many see the tourism industry as a service industry, but services are essentially experiences (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007:46). Trails and routes offer a means to interpret history, culture and nature, thereby providing the visitor with a sense of place and community (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007:48). Together, the above aspects aim to create a market offering that will attract visitors to travel the route to engage in the experiences they seek, be they educational, entertaining, aesthetic or escapist (Pine & Gilmore, 1999:30). The route should therefore be conceptualised in line with target market needs (Lourens, 2007:486). Hardy (2003: 327) cautions that the natural, built or cultural heritage that forms the route attraction needs to be protected to ensure the future sustainability of the route.

The route product stands for the benefit that the customer hopes to gain in return for the sacrifice made to obtain it. In this instance, it is the total route experience, which includes the elements of the tourism product, such as attractions, interpretation, roads and signage along the route, accommodation, amenities and ambience of the route. Although a route is marketed as a single entity, it nevertheless consists of a collection of the mentioned individual offerings that need to be aligned to form an integrated and worthwhile whole in the mind of the visitor. Consequently, the route should encompass a critical mass of attractions to justify the distance that needs to be travelled to reach the route (Olsen, 2003:336). “Distance” may be perceived in the following ways (Meyer, 2004:3-4):

- “geographical distance between the generating region and the tourism destination (i.e. the actual travel distance. The willingness to cover this distance might be considerably different for various segments and is determined by the ‘appeal’ and attractiveness of the product);

- travel time needed to cover the geographical distance (i.e. the possibility to cover the distance as part of a ‘day-tripping’ excursion, or conversely the need to plan a longer trip and design a route that has sufficient attractions to appeal to longer-staying visitors);
- amount of money needed by the tourist to cover the distance (i.e. how much is a segment willing to spent on reaching and travelling the route, and does the route offer value for money, i.e. are there sufficient attractions that would entice visitation); and
- cognitive distance between the generating region and the destination (i.e. the perception of the tourism product and route as being similar or distant to the home environment).”

The infrastructure to reach and travel the route, in other words, a basic road network of a standard acceptable to drive tourists, is a fundamental requirement (Meyer, 2004:21). There needs to be a clear path with good signage to guide visitors along the route, as well as on roads leading off the route (Hardy, 2003:326). Travelling along the route is an important aspect of route tourism and provision needs to be made for more leisurely travel with opportunities for scenic detours and stops *en route* (Meyer, 2004:21). The basic infrastructure should therefore provide for travellers’ comfort in terms of refuelling, refreshments and toilet facilities (Meyer, 2004:22). Longer drive routes need to have accommodation to provide for overnight visits (Meyer, 2004:22).

4.4.2 Process or route experience

The service process refers to how the visitor experiences the service delivery or in this instance, how the visitor experiences the route itself, the attractions and the services used along the route (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:27). Sivijs (2003:348) sees the purpose of developing tourism routes in its simplest form as threefold:

- “increase visitor numbers and expenditure along the routes;
- maximise driver confidence to allow opportunities to take alternative routes and improve road efficiency and increase road safety; and

- raise understanding among road travellers of the heritage and cultural assets that exist along such corridors”.

The latter two purposes both aim to improve the visitor experience while on the route. Theming of the route not only links the route to sites and attractions in a destination region, but also turns the route into a visitor experience and directs the tourist gaze (Pine & Gilmore, 1999:46-47; Sivijs, 2003:346; Urry, 2002:3). Since drive-tourism is unguided, the visitor relies on interpretation material to discover the local stories and place identity that make a trip a memorable and satisfying experience (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007:56; Saxena & Ilbery, 2007:249). Imaginative engagement options assist visitors to construct individualised experiences based on their particular interest, thus allowing visitors to control their experiences rather than the provider (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007:56). Because of this flexibility afforded to visitors to match their own needs, there is the perception that themed routes provide a higher quality experience than other routes (Sivijs, 2003:348).

4.4.3 People

The local community, its culture and nature, is the “raw material” for tourism, adding to the overall visitor experience on the route (Aronssen, 2000:137). Visitors encounter the host community when buying products or services from them, where they occupy the same space, and when tourists and hosts meet in structured experiences such as guided tours (Hall & Lew, 2009:167). At the same time, the destination is the everyday living environment for local residents and visitors sometimes bring with them problems of congestion, drugs and crime, which could hinder the local community to carry on with their daily living (Aronssen, 2000:137). This is particularly true of indigenous territories when visitors may fail to respect local norms of behaviour through ignorance or carelessness (Weaver, 2006:174). On the other hand, the special interest tourists that a themed route attracts may be very knowledgeable about the route and its theme, sometimes more so than the local population (Weaver, 2006:178).

The very nature of tourism routes brings together multiple suppliers and stakeholders from the region through which the route passes, making the formation of co-operative networks fundamental to the success of the route (Meyer, 2004:16). Such collaboration is central not

only to avoid conflict of interest, but also to achieve effective marketing of the route as people are the key to the quality of the tourism product, which in turn is the key to competitive success (Saxena, 2005:278). The supply-side stakeholders form part of the people element of the route marketing mix as already discussed in more detail in Section 2.8.2 on page 33.

4.4.4 Route physical evidence

The physical evidence of a tourism route would encompass the cultural, natural and built environments through which the route passes and the road infrastructure that facilitates travelling along the route (Meyer, 2004:22). A survey conducted among drive tourists in the United States of America (USA) by Eby and Molnar (2002:99) found that tourists' first consideration is with aspects associated with physically driving along the route, such as directness, travel time, road conditions, safety, congestion and distance. Olsen (2003:337-338) too highlighted the importance of road safety and an efficient road network. Factors that make the drive a pleasurable experience such as scenery, roadside development and historical and cultural aspects, though rated as less important on the whole, took on greater importance for travellers on holiday, especially when trips were planned well in advance (Eby & Molnar, 2002:103-104).

Signage along the road is a particularly important element of physical evidence that enables tourists not only to find and follow the route, but also to direct visitors to activities and different kinds of gaze that provide the unique route experience (Hardy, 2003:326; Meyer, 2004:22; Roberts & Hall, 2004:260). Tourism routes are flexible packages which allow tourists to deviate onto byways. Signage therefore is an important reassurance factor that facilitates the freedom to safely explore, to stop and engage with local people, and to spend more in the process (Hardy 2003:326; Olsen, 2003:338; Sivijs, 2003:348). Signage should form part of an integrated visitor information system (Olsen, 2003:335). The corridor management plans for routes in Queensland, Australia, for example, provides for both "hard infrastructure ... such as signage, interpretation panels and road markers ..." and soft infrastructure, which refers to items such as brochures, maps and promotional items with a shorter lifespan (Sivijs, 2003:350). Furthermore, signage can create "... a visual sense of travelling along a themed route ...", enhancing the visitor experience

(Sivijs, 2003:351). To this effect, a whole family of signs needs to portray key images, themes and story lines associated with a route, supported by promotional literature and advertising repeating the same visual theme (Sivijs, 2003:52).

4.4.5 Route branding, image and positioning

Tourism routes are a special case in destination branding, because they are located inside a country or region and may combine several smaller destinations in one offering. To be identifiable as a separate destination to visit, a distinctive brand identity must be developed for the route (Lourens, 2007:486). Consistency in the presentation of route branding elements such as logos, signage, *en route* information and promotional material is essential to establish and reinforce the route brand as distinct from that of the area it traverses (Hardy, 2003:327).

Caldwell and Freire (2004:58) found that there are differences in how people perceive countries, regions and cities. For large destinations, such as countries, the representational aspects of their brand identity are important. On the other hand, somewhat smaller destinations that are functionally less diverse are viewed more from a functional point of view (Caldwell & Freire, 2004:58). As they are geographically smaller, routes have more in common with regions than countries and, by implication, may be viewed more like the former than the latter type of destination.

When planning a trip, tourists tend to select the destination first and then the routes to travel within the destination (Olsen, 2003:337). However, by establishing a clear brand identity, based on the unique positioning of the route, tourism routes can achieve destination status in their own right (Lourens, 2007:487). To be successful, tourism routes need to be conceptualised in line with target market needs (Lourens, 2007:486). All the individual offerings along the route must be aligned to form, in the consumers' minds, one integrated offering that is worth visiting (Olsen, 2003:336).

The components of a tourism route share the route's brand identity, and they also share in the brand reputation, as visitors expect consistency throughout their journey along the route (Hardy, 2003:326; Olsen, 2003:338). Quality assurance therefore becomes important to ensure that at least, minimum standards are upheld along the entire route (ECIAfrica,

2006b:38; Hardy, 2003:326; Lourens, 2007:486). The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) already grades accommodation, restaurants and conference centres (TGCSA, 2007). As more types of establishments are graded and as grading becomes more prevalent, grading of route members will imprint the TGCSA's endorsement onto the route image as well, reducing the visitor's perceived risk, especially when routes traverse impoverished rural areas (TGCSA, 2007). Attractions also need to provide consistently high service quality to ensure visitor satisfaction and brand integrity (Hardy, 2003:326). Here issues such as the opening hours and local cultural nuances come into consideration (Hardy, 2003:327).

4.4.6 Pricing of tourism routes

Although the route may be promoted as a single entity, the visitor buys, pays for and experiences individual tourism products. As for destinations, there is no single price for experiencing the route as a whole, but the visitor pays separately for each component selected (George, 2008:400). Travelling a route involves a series of payments and visitors see buying a package that includes several offerings, as a saving, which benefits suppliers too (Hardy, 2003:327). Routes need to be cost effective to both suppliers and visitors in order to be sustainable (Hardy, 2003:327). Furthermore, Pine and Gilmore (1999:62) suggest that visitors value experiences that they pay for more highly, and that providers will pay more attention to ways in which to enrich experiences that they charge for.

4.4.7 Distribution of tourism routes

Place is the next element of the marketing mix, which Kotler translates into convenience (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:149). As rural tourism routes are located away from visitors' places of residence, convenience means easy physical access to the routes, as well as quick and simple access to distribution channels and reservation systems. The distribution system plays a dual role in tourism marketing, insofar as it facilitates reservation, as well as the dissemination of information to the potential market. In drive-tourism, where both pre-trip planning and the flexibility to alter these plans *en route* are important, information and booking facilities need to be provided *en route* as well (Olsen, 2003:334-335). E-mediaries such as the Internet allow visitors to search for and make reservations with service

providers along the route (Middleton, *et al.*, 2009:353). Route management offices may act as intermediaries for route members, either as a central reservations point or through links to their members on the route website.

4.4.8 Route promotion

Creating integrated information networks is fundamental to the successful marketing of tourism routes (Olsen, 2003:336). Olsen (2003:335) states that a tourism route is "... more than just roads with signage – it is part of a tourist information network, supported by maps, brochures, signage, interpretation and experiences". Such networks comprise of both pre-trip information dissemination through the existing tourism-marketing infrastructure and providing information *en route* (Olsen, 2003:337). The former comprises of making available informative literature including guidebooks, brochures, maps and websites, as well as entries in the publications of local, regional and national tourism marketing agents (Hardy, 2003:326). The *en route* visitor needs adequate route signage, brochures and interpretation along the route and at the tourist information centre (TIC) (Olsen, 2003:336). Effective communication with visitors will need the support and co-operation of key agencies, as well as route members. It is important not to misrepresent route attractions as it may lead to disappointment and such a reputation may be difficult to overcome (Lourens, 2007:487).

Routes, more so than destinations, attract independent drive-tourists who are likely to make their own arrangements and select the elements of the route they wish to experience (Olsen, 2003:337). Promotion media that enable potential visitors to plan their own holidays may therefore be more important for routes than for destinations (Olsen, 2003:339). In this regard the Internet is particularly flexible and propositions may be developed for different target markets to create themes to explore, turning the trip into a memorable experience (Buhalis & Law, 2008:618; Pine & Gilmore, 1999:46).

Drive tourists also need interpretative material while on the route (Hardy, 2003:327). Such material includes road signage, brochures, guide books, maps, visitor centres and tourist guides (Hardy, 2003:327). Tourism hubs along the route present ideal tourism information points (Meyer, 2004:10). By definition, routes draw tourists to remote destinations that are not well known, and therefore signify not only a new experience, but also a greater degree

of risk to the tourist (Olsen, 2003:338; Rogerson, 2007:50). Thus safety is an important consideration, both during pre-trip planning and while travelling the route (Olsen, 2003:338). Route marketing material provides a vehicle through which to communicate vital safety information to visitors, who expect reassurance both before and throughout their journey (Olsen, 2003:338). Consistency in the use of logos and signage and the availability of TICs is important as it provides the visitor with a measure of reassurance in an otherwise unfamiliar environment (Hardy, 2003:237).

4.5 SUCCESS FACTORS IDENTIFIED IN THE LITERATURE FOR TOURISM ROUTE MARKETING

A number of authors have investigated tourism route development and some have touched on marketing issues. Though there is a paucity of literature dealing specifically with the marketing of tourism routes, some guidelines on best practice for successful route marketing have been gleaned from the literature.

4.5.1 Undertaking appropriate market research

Sound marketing research should underpin the development of the route and be conducted on an on-going basis (Hardy, 2003:326; Lourens, 2007:486). In fact, interacting and the sharing of market information is considered as one of the benefits of belonging to a route organisation (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:201). Meeting consumer needs is equally important in community-based projects, which must meet the same consumer needs as any other business since visitors are unlikely to support the venture purely on altruistic grounds (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:197).

4.5.2 Ensure a distinctive brand identity and integrated marketing approach

Routes are marketed as a single entity (Hardy, 2003:326). To be successful, the route needs to be effectively promoted and adequate information on the route must be made available to potential visitors, both before and *en route* (Hardy, 2003:326; Olsen, 2003:337; Rogerson, 2007:55). A clear brand identity needs to be developed for the route,

based on the unique selling proposition of the area and its tourism offerings (Lourens, 2007:486). It is imperative that a true and accurate portrayal of the tourism product just as it is, is communicated, as misrepresentation may have dire consequences when visitors are disappointed (Lourens, 2007:487; Rogerson, 2007:55). Visitors who feel let down may well become advocates against the route (Morgan, *et al.*, 2003:290).

4.5.3 Focus on the unique selling propositions of the route

Visitors must have a reason to visit a route (Hardy, 2003:327). Since most rural routes may have few tourist icons to draw tourists and the routes are unlikely to be icons themselves, the mix of products on the tourism route is extremely important (Becken, 2005:21; Lourens, 2007:486). The route membership base needs to be diversified and incentives may be necessary to achieve the right product mix (Lourens, 2007:487). The product mix also needs to reflect the nuances of the local culture, as visitors are attracted by the natural and cultural heritage on which the route is based (Hardy, 2003:326). This heritage needs to be protected to ensure the sustainability of the route in the long term (Hardy, 2003:327).

4.5.4 Provide meaningful and memorable experiences

Interpretation is a key requirement to engage the visitor in a memorable experience (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007:46). Pine and Gilmore (1999:46-47) suggest that the experience should have a “... compelling and captivating theme ...” that “... alters the visitor’s sense of reality to something other than the everyday – for doing, learning, staying and being”. They further suggest the use of positive cues that affirm the nature of the experience; providing memorabilia as a physical reminder of the experience and to stimulate participants; and enhancing the theme by engaging all four realms of experience namely entertainment, educational, escapist and aesthetic (Pine & Gilmore, 1999:31-36). Consistency in presentation is central and applies to the use of logos, signage, *en route* information and promotional material (Hardy, 2003:327). A clearly identified path and good signage along the route provide the reassurance that draws visitors to routes in otherwise strange territory (Hardy, 2003:326; Olsen, 2003:339).

4.5.5 Implement a sound operating strategy

Operating the tourism route, though not strictly a marketing function, determines the nature and quality of the visitor's experience, since production and consumption of service offerings cannot be separated (Zeithaml, *et al.*, 2006:23). The route therefore needs a sound operating strategy with good communication between members (Lourens, 2007:487). Route members should meet clearly defined minimum quality standards and members should regularly be reassessed to ensure that quality is maintained (Lourens, 2007:486). Lourens (2007:486) goes on to recommend that standards should at least be equal to or higher than the national standard for equivalent products.

4.5.6 Adopt a long-term and strategic approach

Tourism routes are long-term endeavours. Tourism route developers and managers therefore need to think long-term as well (Lourens, 2007:487). They also need to think bigger than just the route and link in with the macro level strategic plan for the area on the local, regional and provincial levels, taking into consideration broader funding initiatives for route financial planning (Lourens, 2007:486-487). Route planning requires a good "... understanding of local tourism assets, area carrying capacity and infrastructure requirements, physical planning, market analysis, the creation of local institutions and tourism quality standards" (Rogerson, 2007:56).

At the same time, route members should compete with other areas, rather than with one another (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:201). By working together, small firms can collectively target markets that would be inaccessible to the individual firms (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004a:201).

4.6 MARKETING PRACTICES OF SELECTED INTERNATIONAL TOURISM ROUTES

Tourism routes have become a strategy to spread tourism to rural areas in many countries, and this section examines a number of tourism routes to gain insight into international best practice in the marketing of tourism routes, that can be relevant to this study.

4.6.1 Routes selected for investigation

Routes in the United States of America, Canada and Australia were selected for examination, as these countries, even more so than South Africa, are geographically large and the routes examined traverse remote rural destinations. Since these routes are not the focus of this study, examination was limited to information available on these routes on the Internet. The selected routes published at least some information on the route association itself, its membership or route management documents. This information was supplemented by documents produced by various government organisations that support and promote tourism in the states or countries in which the routes are located. The following four routes were examined:

- **Rideau Heritage Route (RHR)** (Ontario, Canada) was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007 and the Rideau Canal National Historic Site was rated by The National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations as second best on the 2008 "Places Rated" in the world wide Destination Stewardship Survey (Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association (RHRTA), 2008a:2). The route is managed by the RHRTA, a "... not-for-profit, partner-based organization ..." founded in 2005 (RHRTA, 2006:4).
- **The Viking Trail (VT)** (Newfoundland, Canada) is the largest themed highway in Newfoundland and Labrador taking in two UNESCO World Heritage sites at Gros Morne National Park and L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site (Viking Trail Tourism Association (VTTA), Not dated d). The VTTA was formed in 1988 and spearheaded community-based tourism and infrastructure development through the VTTA Accord signed in 1994 (VTTA, Not dated a).
- **The Heritage Run** (Burin Peninsula, Newfoundland, Canada) The Heritage Run comprises of four drives on the Burin Peninsula through a rural coastal area rich in historical and natural heritage (The Heritage Run Tourism Association (HRTA), 2007b). HRTA, started in 1992, manages the route through a volunteer board of directors who represent tourism interests throughout the Burin Peninsula (HRTA, 2007a).
- **The Savannah Way (SW)** (Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland, Australia) crosses three states, linking Cairns on the east coast to Broome on the west coast. SW was listed in 2010 by the London Times as one of the "Ten Best

Adventures of a Lifetime” (Times Online, 2010). The route is managed by Savannah Way Limited (SWL), which was formed in 2007, a “... not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, independent of government” (SWL, 2009).

An additional two routes, namely Pennsylvania Route 6 (PAR6) and Historic Route 66 (HR66), were examined. They differ from the above routes insofar as the first route is institutionally driven and membership resides in tourism associations rather than tourism product owners, while the second route is promoted by a collection of route associations which heavily focus on preservation of the historic road, Route 66.

- **Pennsylvania Route 6** (Pennsylvania, USA) crosses eleven counties in northern Pennsylvania from New York state to Ohio, and is referred to by National Geographic as “...one of America's most scenic drives” (Pennsylvania Route 6 Tourist Association (PAR6TA), Not dated a). The route is managed by the Pennsylvania Route 6 Heritage Corporation (PAR6HC), which was established in 2003, and marketed by Pennsylvania Route 6 Tourist Association (PAR6TA), representing nine county convention and visitor bureaus. (PAR6TA, Not dated b).
- **Historic Route 66** (USA) is the iconic American “mother road” from Chicago, Illinois, to California, crossing Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. In each state there is an independent route organisation dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the route in that state, as well as a National Historic Route 66 Federation which aims to “... preserve the historic landmarks and revitalize the economies of communities along the entire 2,400-mile stretch of road”. (California Historic Route 66 Association, 2010; National Historic Route 66 Federation, 2009).

The following discussion highlights a number of elements common to at least two routes.

4.6.2 Inclusive membership and broad collaboration drives tourism routes

A broad membership base is a common feature of the RHRTA, VTTA, HRTA, and SRL. All four routes extend membership beyond tourism businesses to other businesses interested in furthering tourism, to development, community, funding and marketing agencies, as well as to government at municipal, state and even federal level. The VTTA deliberately

broadened the narrow membership base of its predecessor when it was formed in 1988, to “... include tourism and all other businesses, municipalities, government agencies and other groups and individuals with an interest in tourism ...”, and recognise eleven sector groups in all (VTTA, Not dated a). The RHRTA has three categories of membership namely government, organisations/associations and businesses, with *ex officio* representation on the board for partner municipalities, the Ministry of Tourism and Parks Canada (RHRTA, 2006:4). HRTA also has *ex officio* members “... from the Department of Development and Rural Renewal, Schooner Regional Development Corporation and the Department of Tourism, Cultural and Recreation, as well as business and professional advisors, who provide invaluable tourism related insight and information to the staff and Board of Directors of the Association” HRTA, 2007a). Similarly, SWL has directors from Tourism Northern Territory, Tourism Western Australia and Tourism Top End as well as Gulf Savannah Development (SWL, 2009:[1]).

With the broad representation in the tourism route organisations, it is not surprising that the planning perspectives of these routes appear not only to have included the totality of the routes, but also to gain the support of regional tourism entities as is evident from funding obtained from provincial and even federal sources (HRTA, 2007a; RHRTA, 2006:13; VTTA, Not dated c).

4.6.3 A wide range of membership levels are available

While VTTA has a single membership category, they do recognise eleven “sector groups” and the HRTA list their members under 13 different categories (VTTA, Not dated d; HRTA, 2007c). Other routes offer membership options with different benefits at varying fees. For example, RHRTA offer a free basic partner membership with website listing, associate membership for non-tourism organisations with no advertising and a “Trailblazer partner” or advertising partner category with enhanced web listing and co-operative marketing opportunities (RHRTA, 2009a). SWL has five membership categories ranging from the free Friends of the Savannah Way category who receive the newsletter and merchandise; through to bronze, silver and gold memberships at fees ranging from \$77 to \$990 and that offer progressively better website coverage, greater advertising and web listing discounts, and branding rights and benefits; to platinum members at \$5500 who have specific service agreements with SWL (SWL, 2009:[2]). SWL furthermore makes it possible for interested

individuals to join as Friends of the Savanna Way at no cost. Savanna Guides, who may well operate as one man businesses, may elect to join as Friends of The Savanna Way or at 25% discount on other categories (SWL, 2009:[2]). Membership of the PAR6TA is vested in the nine county convention and visitor bureaus, through which individual tourist product owners may become involved with PAR6. (PAR6TA, Not dated b).

4.6.4 Funding is generated by the route association and sourced externally

Funding of tourism routes varies from those with no external funding provided at all, to large sums of money for development projects channelled through the route association. SWL receives no base funding and support their association activities through membership fees, an annual symposium, funded projects, and through website advertising and branded merchandise (SWL, 2009:[1]). On the other hand, VTТА played an important role in the development and signing of the Viking Trail Tourism Accord in 1994, and the Canadian government has since then invested \$40 million to develop tourism infrastructure in the region towards realising the vision of the VTТА (VTТА, Not dated c). This investment, in turn, led to a further \$10 million private sector investment (VTТА, Not dated c).

4.6.5 Tourism routes are instruments for rural development and conservation

Tourism route websites mention development and conservation as goals, either directly or indirectly. The 1994 vision statement of the VTТА details a list of infrastructure, attraction and service developments envisaged along the route, many of which have since been realised through The Viking Trail Tourism Accord, by gradually building community-owned and operated developments along the trail (VTТА, Not dated b; VTТА, Not dated c). The mission of the HRTA is "... to put in place all steps toward sustainable tourism development so we may enjoy long-term prosperity and environmental protection for this region ..." (HRTA, 2007a). SWL was formed to market the route "... for the economic and social well-being of communities in the region." (SWL, Not dated c). The Queensland Government states unequivocally that it is committed to "... deliver more opportunities for Queenslanders ..." by making Queensland "... Australia's number one tourism destination ..." *inter alia* through the Queensland Heritage Trails Network and by stimulating drive

tourism (Queensland Government, 2010). PAR6 aims to sustain and enhance the small communities along the route, as well as to preserve the transportation heritage that the route represents (PAR6TA, Not dated b).

Historic Route 66 in the USA presents a unique situation in that the route is promoted and preserved by numerous groups along the route. Members are motivated by a deep love for the mother road and contribute substantial amounts of time, money, and effort to keep it alive (California Historic Route 66 Association, 1995). Close ties often exist between those who have a business interest in the route and those who want to preserve the iconic route for its own sake (California Historic Route 66 Association, 1995).

4.6.6 Tourism routes are volunteer driven

Voluntary membership is an important characteristic in all the routes examined. Some of the Route 66 associations are entirely volunteer-based (California Historic Route 66 Association, 1995). SWL does have a manager, but it is not clear whether the person is a full time employee or a volunteer (SWL, 2009:[1]). Although the VTTA has an office manager, management of the route is effected through a board, sector meetings, and subcommittees consisting mostly of volunteers (VTTA, Not dated a). The neighbouring HRTA have a volunteer board and, after obtaining external funding for this purpose from Human Resources Development Canada, also employ a Business Manager and a Marketing Manager full time (HRTA, 2007a). The RHRTA board, consisting of appointed municipal representatives and elected private sector representatives, is supported by an executive director (RHRTA, 2006:5). Although the PA Route 6 Heritage Corporation, a 501(c3) corporation, manages the route, the marketing aspect is handled by PAR6TA, whose members again are county tourism associations with voluntary membership (PAR6TA, Not dated a; Potter County Visitor's Association, 2005). If members make a route work, it is also apparent that full time or part time staff may be needed to carry some of the workload as is evident from the many routes that do employ staff (RHRTA, 2006:5; HRTA, 2007a; VTTA, Not dated a).

4.6.7 Tourism route associations support their members in many different ways

While marketing is a major focus, tourism route organisations support their members in other ways as well. An important function of the route association is advocacy and representation on behalf of members to government and other organisations. So, for example, RHRTA made a submission to the Ontario Legislature taskforce on the revitalization of Ontario Tourism (RHRTA, 2008b:1). The California Route 66 Association secured signage from California Transportation Authority for the first directional signs to guide visitors to the Route from Interstate Highways 40 and 15 (California Route 66 Association, 2010). In July 2010, SWL led a \$173,376 grant project from the Queensland Tourism Network Grant Scheme to develop a co-operative marketing and development platform to promote North Queensland to the self-drive tourism market (Tourism Queensland, 2010).

Route tourism associations also support their members with training and learning opportunities. RHRTA has proposed service excellence and a localised product knowledge program to familiarise front line staff with their region's offerings (RHRTA, 2008b:4). In 2009 SWL organised the Savannah Symposium, presenting a networking and strategizing opportunity for delegates from across Northern Australia (North Australia Economic Development Forum, 2009). SWL also runs online marketing training workshops and RHRTA offer marketing training workshops from as little as \$20 per participant (SWL, 2009:[2]; RHRTA, 2009a).

Tourism route associations furthermore support their members by providing marketing and planning information. This may range from keeping visitor statistics to providing a situational analysis and marketing research (VTTA, 2008; RHRTA, Not dated; SWL, 2009:[2]). Route associations keep in touch with members through newsletters which keep members informed about market developments, association news and upcoming events (RHRTA, 2008c:1; SWL, 2009:[2]).

4.6.8 Tourism routes are used as a destination marketing strategy

A number of the tourism routes were set up for the express purpose of attracting more visitors to the route area. SW is one such route, which was formed in 2007 "... to increase

the promotion of the drive route” (SWL, 2009:[1]). By marketing SW, the association assists its members through branding and targeted promotion of the route, networking and business opportunities (SWL, 2009:[1]). RHRTA’s business plan states as its objectives not only the promotion of tourism and increasing tourism revenue in the RHR Corridor, but also to create the right climate for tourism growth and to direct and assist with the development of tourism products along the RHR Corridor (RHRTA, 2006:3). A major focus of both VTTA and HRTA is the marketing of their respective routes (VTTA, Not dated a; HRTA, 2007a). PAR6HC, early on in its formation process recognised the importance of the existing PAR6TA, and therefore established a partnership in which PAR6TA forms the marketing arm of the route, and PAR6HC provides management support in return (PAR6HC, 2004:22).

4.6.9 Marketing strategies of the selected tourism routes

The marketing strategies discussed below were collected by perusing the websites of the selected routes. While route documents are mostly privileged to members only, in a few instances marketing and other planning documents were accessible and these provided valuable insight into the marketing strategies employed by route marketing organisations.

- **Strong branding of the routes is evident**

Route associations appear to appreciate that branding is more than just a name and a logo and pay attention to the positioning of their brand. The RHRTA (2006:10) in its 2006 marketing plan aimed to contract a professional agency to develop its “... actual brand including the brand name for the RHR Corridor, the logo, and the positioning statement.” The route is positioned as “... a natural and cultural heritage destination by promoting the region’s authentic arts, recreation, cuisine and historical experiences” (RHRTA (2006:10). SWL positions SW as “Australia’s Adventure Drive” mentioning wide horizons, ancient gorges and abundant wildlife (SWL, Not dated c). PAR6HC (2004:3) promote the route’s rural look, feel and image as part of the “message” for the corridor, at the same time identifying developmental issues that may have implications for this “message”.

All the routes examined used distinctive logos to identify the route and its members, and reflecting the brand’s positioning. Examples of the logos are reproduced in Appendix A

(p. 313). These logos form an integral part of the marketing communication of the routes examined, and they appear prominently on web pages, membership application forms, printed promotional material, merchandise, and road signage.

Both logos and brand names are used on road signs to identify the routes, as may be seen in Appendix B (p. 315). Instead of using directional signage, PAR6HC opted for some 860 mile markers (see Appendix B, p. 315) to “brand” the more than 400 mile long and diverse corridor (PAR6HC, 2004:10). Although road signage is intended for direction rather than promotion, clear visual identification and awareness of a route is created by including the logo and name of the route on directional signs along the route as illustrated in Appendix B, (p. 315) (Queensland Heritage Trails Network, 2004:3; RHRTA, 2007:1). On an iconic route, branded signage may well attain souvenir status, as the California Route 66 Association discovered when the first directional signs to Route 66 “... were stolen almost immediately” (California Historic Route 66 Association, 2010).

Enterprising routes extend their branding through branded merchandise made available to route members to use or to sell. Apart from guidebooks and maps, the Route 66 Superstore sells branded T-shirts, sweatshirts and caps (National Historic Route 66 Federation, 2009). RHRTA further brands their route, by not only selling clothing, but also through full colour swallow-tail boat flags, customisable full colour banners, static-cling decals, and presentation folders, as well as by encouraging members to include the RHR logo on their own letterheads, websites and marketing tools (RHRTA, 2009:6). Savannah Way membership brings with it free samples of SW branded merchandise (SWL, 2009:[1]).

- **Targeted marketing attracts visitors**

In order to target effectively, the marketer needs good information about possible target markets. Route associations do have access to such information as is evident from the documents of RHRTA and SW (RHRTA, 2006:3; SW, 2009:[1]). RHRTA initially focused on the cultural and heritage oriented domestic consumer markets in the older age groups before moving on to international and trade markets (RHRTA, 2009:3-4). Savannah Way targets the Australian domestic drive market and the German market (SW, 2009:[1]).

- **The route offering is tailored to different target markets**

A common feature of the websites examined is that attractions and activities are clustered under themes to appeal to visitors with different interests (VTTA, Not dated d). RHRTA promotes their route as a "tapestry of experiences" with four distinctive themes that embody the entire route namely: "Story of a Nation", "Celebrations and Diversions", "Colours and Flavours", and "A day in the countryside" (RHRTA, 2009b:2). PAR6 (Not dated c) suggests theme based five-day itineraries for "Soft adventure", "Family" and "Authentic Americana". The longer routes also suggests areas or sections of the route to travel, for example SW breaks the route into three sections namely Broome to Katherine, Katherine to Normanton and Normanton to Cairns (SWL, Not dated c). Within each section of the route, information is grouped under headings such as bird watching, fishing, the land, history and the people. They also suggest self-drive itineraries of varying duration for each section of the route. In short, the route websites provide enough information for self-drive tourists to plan their holidays and this process is further supported by downloadable brochures and links to more detailed information (RHRTA, 2009c; SWL, Not dated b).

- **A range of co-operative promotion options enable all businesses to participate**

Route Associations like RHRTA and SWL not only offer a range of membership options, but they also offer a variety of advertising and promotion options linked to these membership categories which allows members to select the level of involvement in route promotions that suits their budget (RHRTA, 2009a; SWL, 2009:[2]). In addition, members may, for an added fee, opt to participate in further promotions such as homepage rotation images, racking of member brochures, and inclusion in travel guides (RHRTA, 2009a).

Members also benefit from route association participation in travel shows aimed at consumers and the trade; inclusion in the itinerary of media and trade familiarisation trips; sale of route branded merchandise; and identification with the route by displaying route banners, window decals and including route branding in their own promotional material (RHRTA, 2008c; RHRTA 2009a; SWL, 2009:[2]).

- **An excellent website distinguishes a route**

Recognising that potential visitors need information to plan their trips, websites have become an essential communication tool in making information about the route accessible

before the trip (Buhalis & Law, 2008:611). All the routes that were investigated invested in good websites, but that of RHRTA stands out: The website is easy to navigate with clear, easily visible links for visitor information, an events calendar with weather forecasts for major towns, an orientation map, and a map icon on the home page (RHRTA, 2009c). Each visitor information page in turn contains extensive information, a search facility and links to external websites where more detailed information is available. All pages are Google searchable. Maps and brochures are downloadable. One click translates the entire site into French and information for international travellers is available in five additional languages. The RHR website's business-specific links are aimed at "Media", "Groups" (such as tour operators), "Partnership Opportunities" and a "Partner's Centre" aimed at RHRTA partners (the term is used for members) and all of the information is accessible without restriction (RHRTA, 2009c). That the RHRTA value their website is further evident from the investment that they are prepared to make in it; in the first RHRTA business plan nearly a third of the total marketing spend went to website development and in 2009 \$60 000, or more than a third of the marketing budget, was earmarked for web updates and new images, although \$53 000 thereof was financed through grant funding (RHRTA, 2006:15; RHRTA, 2009b:5).

- **Maps are used as a marketing tool for the route and its members**

Tourism routes are not identified on normal maps and the route therefore needs to be identified on a map, either printed or on the route webpage. Since planning takes place before the visit, a map on the website becomes an important resource for the potential visitor. A map of SW forms a banner across the top of the website and is always visible, while downloadable maps were easily located under "Brochures & Maps" on the menu (SWL, 2009 c). The RHR website has a prominent "MAPS" tag in the heading which leads to a downloadable map, as well as links to more detailed maps (RHRTA, 2009c). A "smart mapping" feature on the RHR website provides printable directions with an accompanying Google map, for all members properties listed in the RHR website, at no additional charge to members. (RHRTA, 2009a).

Maps on some of the other sites were not so easy to find and were hidden under headings such as "Take a historic drive" (Heritage Run), and "Welcome/How to get here" (VT) (HRTA, 2007b; VTTA, Not dated e). On the PAR6's website, clicking through "Maps & Transportation/Transportation and other resources" led nowhere, but an interactive map

was located under “Regions & Counties” although the whole PAR6 is not visible at one time and the map cannot be printed (PAR6TA, Not dated a).

- **Events attract visitors**

All the route websites examined displayed a calendar of events. These may be events staged by individual route members in the area or collective ones, involving the whole route, such as the commemoration of the 1000 year anniversary of the landing of the Vikings in Newfoundland or the 175th anniversary of the completion of the Rideau Canal (VTTA, Not dated e; RHRTA, 2006:9).

From the above discussion it is clear that the international routes regard marketing as a major route activity. Attention now turns to the local tourism marketing scene in KwaZulu-Natal, where the two routes investigated in this study are located.

4.7 THE MARKETING OF TOURISM ROUTES IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Tourism routes are not marketed in isolation and route marketing needs to be seen in the context of destination marketing activities on provincial, district and local level. To fully appreciate the setting in which the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route are marketed, it is necessary to first look at the tourism marketing structures that exist in KwaZulu-Natal and then to examine the marketing activities that take place on the various levels in the province. The marketing activities of other bodies that might influence route marketing, such as Amafa and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Open Africa and the N3Gateway project, are also examined. Finally, this section will examine the marketing undertakings of the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route at the time that the fieldwork was conducted.

4.7.1 Provincial tourism structures in KwaZulu-Natal

The tourism structures operative in KwaZulu-Natal are outlined in Table 2 overleaf, which shows the tiers at which tourism operates, the political and executive leadership and the respective co-ordinating structures.

Table 2: Tourism tiers, leadership and coordinating structures

TIER OF GOVERNMENT	Political Leadership	Co-ordinating structure	Executive/management Leadership	Co-ordinating structure	Destination Marketing Structure	Co-ordinating structure	PRIVATE SECTOR
FUNDING	Public Sector/Government						Private sector
National	Minister of Tourism	MINMEC Portfolio Committee	Director General DEAT	Miptec	South African Tourism	CEO's Forum	Fedhasa TBCSA SATSA NAA, etc.
Province	MEC for Tourism	Portfolio Committee, Provincial Tourism Committee	Head of Department – DACT (Now DEDT)	Provincial Tourism Forum	KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority	Provincial Tourism Forum	Provincial chapters of above
District	Mayor	Mayoral Committee, Portfolio Committee or similar structure	City /Municipal Manager	District Tourism Forum	District Tourism Office	District Tourism Forum	CTAs Local Private Sector Forum
Local	Mayor	Mayoral Committee, Portfolio Committee or similar structure	Municipal Manager	Local Tourism Committee	Local Tourism Office (market/ community focussed)	Local Tourism Committee	CTAs Local Private Sector Forum

Source: KwaZulu-Natal, 2008:51.

The tourism marketing structures are discussed in more detail below along with two other entities that impact on wildlife and heritage tourism.

- **Provincial government departments**

The Province of KwaZulu-Natal does not have a department that is responsible exclusively for tourism. In KwaZulu-Natal, tourism previously fell under the Department of Arts, Culture and Tourism (DACT), but is currently part of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT) (KwaZulu-Natal, 2009). Other provincial departments and entities also impact on rural drive-tourism, for example, the Department of Transport is responsible for roads and road signage, the Department of Sport and Recreation oversees facilities and large events such as the 2010 Soccer World Cup, and the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs regulate agricultural land use which may affect rural tourism developments (KwaZulu-Natal, 2009).

- **KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority**

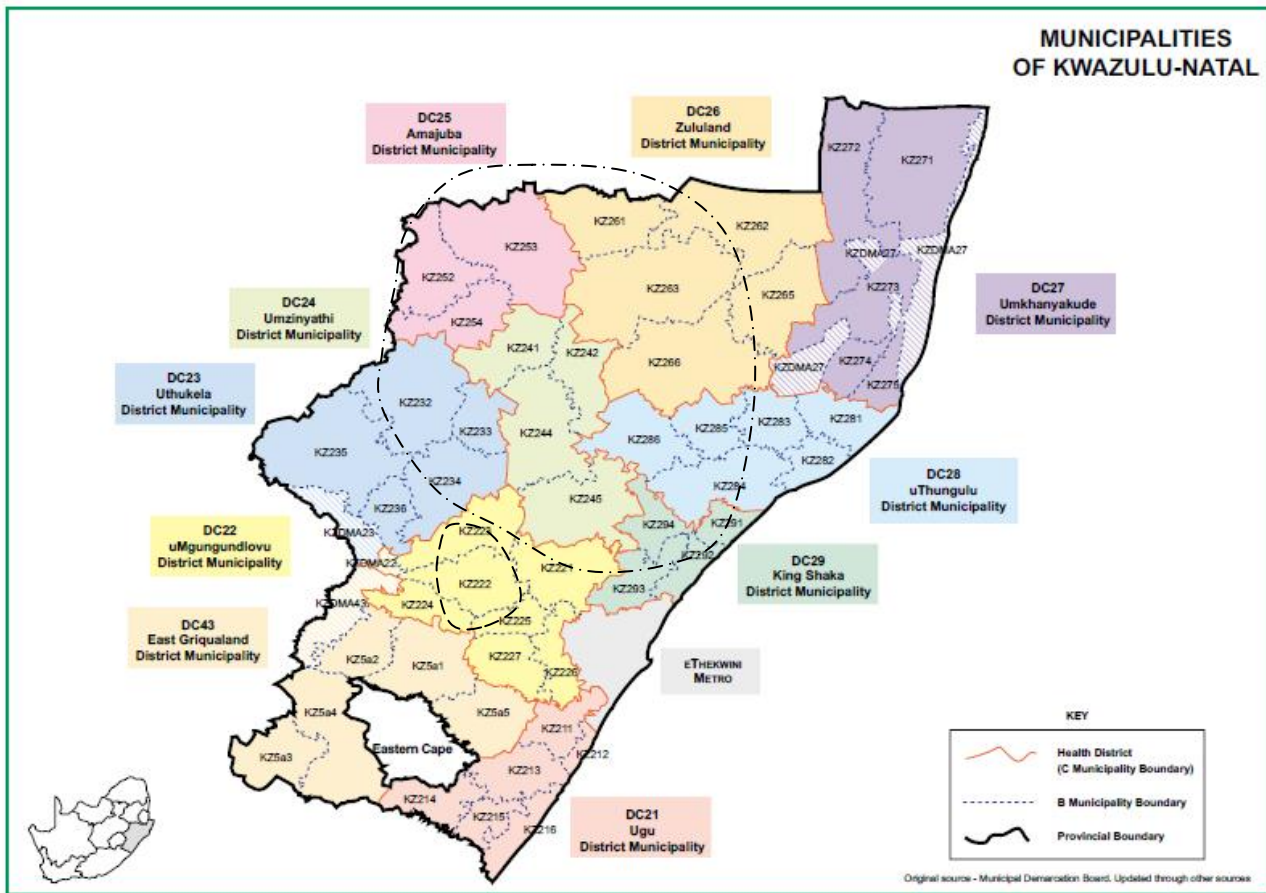
The entity that takes responsibility for the province as a tourism destination, is the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority, which was set up under the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Act 11 of 1996 (as amended, including No. 2 of 2002), and operates under the name Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN). According to Section 2 of the Tourism Act (11/1996) the objective of TKZN is to “... work with the Minister, Provincial Tourism Committee, department, municipalities and tourism stakeholders in the Province in order to implement and advance national and provincial tourism policies”. TKZN is funded by the KwaZulu-Natal provincial legislature, through funds raised by the Authority itself, and from other sources approved by the Minister (KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Act 11/1996, Section 23). Section 26 of the Tourism Act (11/1996) tasks TKZN with the development of an annual tourism promotion, marketing and development action plan for the Province. To execute such a plan, TKZN must, amongst others, address both international and domestic marketing and attend to tourism product development and quality control (Tourism Act 11/1966, Section 30). In terms of Section 3(g)iv of the Tourism Act (11/1966), all tourism operators and establishments in KwaZulu-Natal must register with TKZN and, in terms of Section 3(g)v of the same Act, pay an annual levy to be allowed to operate in the Province.

- **District and local municipalities**

In terms of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (117/1998:Definitions), rural local government in South Africa has a two-tier structure, consisting of district municipalities that have executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one local municipality, with which it shares such authority. KwaZulu-Natal is divided into 11 district municipalities, each of which consists of three to seven local municipalities as shown in the map in Figure 7 overleaf (eWisa, 2010). In terms of Section 25 of the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Act (11/1996), TKZN must “... establish a forum with municipalities in the Province to facilitate co-operation between the Authority and municipalities ...” in order to achieve the objectives of TKZN more efficiently by eliminating duplication of effort. The White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal (2008:52-59) reiterates the roles of various tourism role players in the province, stated in the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa of 1996. The KwaZulu-Natal White Paper in Section G5 tasks the District Councils, *inter alia*, to specifically “... budget for the effect[ive] implementation and growth of tourism in line with the Provincial objectives ...”, and to create and co-ordinate “...

tourism experience routes across its district and beyond municipal boundaries” (KwaZulu-Natal, 2008:55).

Figure 7: Municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal



Source: eWisa (2010).

It is the responsibility of the local government to promote community tourism associations (CTAs), which replaced the former publicity associations, and to provide financial support for their establishment, in terms of Section A1d xii of the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal (KwaZulu-Natal, 2008:20). Registration with TKZN does not automatically mean membership of the local CTA, which is an autonomous entity based on voluntary membership.

- **Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife**

In KwaZulu-Natal, tourism attractions such as nature reserves fall under Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW), a juristic entity set up under the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Management Act, 1997 (EKZNW, 2010c). EKZNW manages and protects 110 wilderness and public nature reserves in the province, 68 of which offer ecotourism, including two UNESCO World Heritage Sites (EKZNW, 2010b). A number of nature reserves under the administration of EKZNW lie in the Battlefields region, with the following also providing

accommodation: Ithala, Nthsingwayo (Chelmsford Dam), Spioenkop, Wagendrift, and Weenen Nature Reserves (EKZMW, 2010a; Battlefields Route Association, Not dated a). In the Midlands Meander region, EKZMW administer Kamberg, Highmoor, and Midmar Dam Nature Reserves which all provide accommodation, as well as the Karkloof, Fort Nottingham, Craigie Burn and Umgeni Valley Nature Reserves (EKZMW, 2010a; Midlands Meander Association, 2008:11-12).

- **Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali (Heritage KwaZulu-Natal)**

Another statutory body affecting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal is Amafa, the heritage conservation agency for the province, which was established in terms of the KZN Heritage Act of 1997 and which has since been replaced by the KZN Heritage Act of 2008 (Amafa, 2010). Amafa manages historically important heritage attractions such as battlefields, public monuments and memorials, military cemeteries and important graves which form major draw cards on the Battlefields Route (Amafa, 2010). Amafa is also the custodian of rock art sites such as those found at the Kamberg Rock Art Centre in the Midlands Meander (Amafa, 2010; Midlands Meander Association, 2008:18). Amafa depends on grant funding from the Department of the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal (Amafa, 2010).

4.7.2 Tourism marketing in the Battlefields Route and Midlands Meander areas

In line with the provincial tourism structures, marketing takes place on several levels in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. While overall marketing of the province is led by TKZN, tourism is also promoted on the local level by district and local municipalities, as well as private sector initiatives by the route associations, product owners and other organisations. What follows is a brief overview of tourism marketing in the areas traversed by the Battlefields Route and the Midlands Meander in KwaZulu-Natal.

- **Marketing by Tourism KwaZulu Natal**

As the tourism marketing organisation for the province, TKZN markets the Zulu-Natal as a whole. TKZN has formulated their vision and mission as follows (TKZN, 2010a):

“The vision of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is to position the Province of KwaZulu-Natal as Africa’s leading tourism destination, nationally and internationally. The mission of this organisation is to initiate, facilitate, co-ordinate and implement:

strategic tourism marketing, and demand-driven tourism development programmes, which grows tourism and thereby serving to achieve: the transformation of the tourism sector within the Province; [and] economic benefits to all stakeholders and the Province.”

To this effect, TKZN has divided the province into eight tourism destinations as shown on the map in Figure 8 overleaf. In the Pietermaritzburg & Midlands destination, the Midlands Meander, which is a small part of the destination, attracts most of the attention and the most visitors, and this has led to the establishment in 1997 of The Amble, a route formed to market the remainder of the Midlands to the east of the Meander (The Amble, Not dated). The Boston-Bulwer Beat is a small route in the Midlands along the R617 to the south of the Midlands Meander (Boston Bulwer Community Tourism Association, 2010). It too is listed under routes on the TKZN website and TKZN is currently establishing a new website to promote this route (TKZN, 2010g). All three routes are listed under the “Routes” link on the TKZN website, but the Midlands Meander is listed only as “Midlands” and the full brand name is not shown. A small visual, short descriptions of the routes and additional links are given for The Amble and the Boston-Bulwer Beat, but for the Midlands Meander, only a small visual and a link to the Midlands Meander website is shown, with no additional information to promote the route (TKZN, 2010e). Before the Midlands Meander launched their own website, TKZN hosted the Meander on its website in the same format as for the other routes. A search for accommodation in the Midlands Meander using the search facility on the TKZN website, yielded only 11 results, while 71 accommodation establishments were listed in the 2009/2010 edition of the Midlands Meander brochure at the time (Midlands meander Association, 2009:30; TKZN, 2010e).



Figure 8: Tourist map of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal destinations



Source: KwaZulu-Natal (2008:14).

The first of the eight “Destinations” listed on the TKZN website is “Battlefields” (TKZN, 2010g). Although no specific mention is made of the Battlefields Route, enquiries are directed to route@battlefields.org.za, which is the e-mail address for the Battlefields Route Association, and the website refers visitors to the Battlefields Region Guides for a map of the Battlefields Route and details of registered guides in the area (TKZN, 2010b). Although both route organisations have websites, there is only a link to the Midlands Meander website and the Battlefields Route is also not among the ten links to “Routes” on the TKZN website. TKZN thus positions the Battlefields as a destination rather than as a route (TKZN, 2010b). The TKZN Battlefields destination furthermore does not coincide with the area served by the Battlefields Route Association, since towns like Eshowe, Ulundi and Vryheid are located in TKZN’s Zululand destination, thus disregarding the fact that these towns are both part of the Battlefields Route and closely related to the military history that forms the main theme of the Battlefields Route (See Figure 8, p. 100).

TKZN makes an extensive range of publications available to registered tourism organisations described on their website as in the list below (TKZN, 2010f):

- Travel & Tourism Guide: The official tourism A4 48 page tourism guide of the Zulu Kingdom covers all regions within the province, highlighting their main attractions and the uniqueness of each destination. 35 000 freely distributed and the provincial tourist map is included.
- Provincial Tourist Map: An A1 tourist map of the Zulu Kingdom folded to DL format. It includes private enterprise advertising, useful tourism-related contact details and information on the province. 65 000 distributed free of charge.
- Adventure guide: DL 44 page brochure highlighting adventure activities in the Zulu Kingdom and providing details of fully registered and qualified adventure tourism service providers. 20 000 distributed through TKZN tourism partners.
- Accommodation guide: Covers accommodation in the eight destinations within KwaZulu-Natal in an 80 page DL brochure and includes brief descriptions of accommodation types. 30 000 distributed through tourism partners.
- Self-Drives in the Zulu Kingdom: A series of self-drive tours are outlined in a 36 page DL format brochure outlining a series of self-drive tours in the province. Approximately 30 000 brochures are distributed annually to self-drive tourists and tour operators.

- WWW: The A4 32 page What Where and When brochure, in magazine format, promotes the core events in each of the eight KZN tourism regions or destinations. 40 000 copies are distributed every two months throughout the year.

TKZN has an excellent website containing a large amount of information about the province and links to further sources of information (TKZN, 2010g). For example, the main towns within a destination are listed with a brief description, interactive Google map, search links for tourism facilities, links to downloadable brochures and links or contact details for TICs. Apart from general information, the website also provides articles on aspects of particular interest such as famous battles and natural attractions, Web Cam features, a YouTube channel, social media share links and a reservations facility (TKZN, 2010g).

To support tourism operators and entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal, TKZN also publish a series of “How to” brochures on twelve different topics, statistics on the tourism industry and research reports, of which the most recent ones are available on the TKZN website (TKZN, 2010c). The Minister of DEDT in his 2010 budget speech, envisaged educational tours with key tour operators to turn the awareness created by the 2010 Soccer World Cup into repeat visits; destination development that includes route development; and the targeting of neighbouring provinces and countries, not only to gain tourists, but to collectively exploit tourism as a block in the south east of the SADC region to the benefit of the entire region (DEDT, 2010:23, 29).

- **Marketing by local and district municipalities**

Tourism marketing efforts by district and local municipalities vary considerably. At least one district municipality in the study area, uThukela, has a comprehensive tourism development plan, while others deal with tourism as part of their integrated development plan (uThukela District Municipality, 2005:1; uMzinyathi District Municipality, 2010:42-43, 77). Considering that KwaZulu-Natal has some of the poorest and least developed areas in South Africa, it is not surprising that social upliftment projects attract far greater budgets than tourism development and promotion (uMzinyathi District municipality, 2010:147-163).

The tourism destinations identified by TKZN do not coincide with district or local municipal boundaries, with the result that many municipalities tend to market their own areas (See map in Figure 8, p. 100). Where tourism routes transcend district or local municipal boundaries, co-operation becomes necessary as is the case with the Battlefields Route which extends across six district municipalities, namely Amajuba, uMzinyathi, uThukela, uThungulu, Zululand and King Shaka District Municipalities (see map in Figure 7, p. 97). Even the much more compact Midlands Meander lies in two local municipalities namely uMngeni and Mpofana Local Municipalities (See map in Figure 7, p. 97). That co-operation is not always achieved is demonstrated by the brochure “Discover the legends of the Battlefields” which, because of the demarcation of TKZN “destinations”, was published by only two of the five district municipalities namely Amajuba and uMzinyathi, and therefore covered only their own areas, leaving out significant battlefield sites in the uThukela, uThungulu and Zululand District Municipalities (Amajuba District Municipality & uMzinyathi District Municipality, Not dated:1).

4.7.3 Marketing partnerships beyond KwaZulu-Natal

Two organisations, with which partnerships have been formed in KwaZulu-Natal are of particular interest to route tourism in the province, namely Open Africa and the N3 Gateway project.

- **Open Africa**

Open Africa is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that aims to “open up” Africa to travellers by establishing what they refer to as “... off-the-beaten track, self-drive routes” (Open Africa, 2010c). The routes support economic development in rural and marginal areas by linking existing community-based tourism businesses to markets through the Open Africa travel website and other marketing initiatives (Open Africa, 2010a). Open Africa has established the Amajuba and Nguni Routes in the Battlefields Route area and the Mngeni Footprint Route in Mpophomeni and Howick in the Midlands Meander (Open Africa, 2010a). Open Africa considers itself a development agency to facilitate the establishment of tourism routes in rural and marginalised areas and markets these routes primarily by hosting them on its excellent website, thus connecting them with potential markets (Open Africa, 2010b).

- **N3Toll Concession**

The N3Toll Concession (Pty) Limited (N3TC) manages a 412 kilometre stretch of the N3 highway between Heidelberg in Gauteng and Cedara, just south of the Midlands Meander in KwaZulu-Natal (N3TC, 2010a). The N3 is the busiest road in Africa and forms a major access route to both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route (See maps in Appendices C and D on p. 316 and p. 318 respectively) (N3TC, 2010a). N3TC formed the N3 Gateway Tourism Association, a Section 21 Company, in 2009, as a social investment project to promote tourism in the areas to which the N3 forms a major access road (N3TC, 2010b). Nine tourism information nodes were identified along the N3, with the purpose of cross marketing, most notably the Woza Woza Centre at Mooi River (N3TC, 2010b:14, 21). N3 Gateway has a Memorandum of Understanding with Open Africa, which now lists the N3 Gateway among the Open Africa tourism routes (N3TC, 2010b:14). Four new routes were developed after two workshops were conducted by Open Africa and SATourism, but these routes all fall outside the Midlands Meander and Battlefields Route areas (N3TC, 2010b:14). N3 Gateway also supports the Midlands Meander Association Education Programme (MMAEP) and sponsors the Battlefields Route Association's website (N3TC 2010b:6-7; Battlefields Route Association, 2010).

4.7.4 Marketing of the Midlands Meander

The Midlands Meander Association was formed in 1985, became a Section 21 company in 2000, and in 2003 established an office at Midmar Dam Resort, staffed by a marketing officer and a reservations clerk (Midlands Meander Association, 2010a). The office provides an administrative base for the Association; keeps members informed through a newsletter; distributes marketing material; fields enquiries; and provides a reservations service for members, although the latter plays a minor role (Coetzee, *et al.*, 2009:[15]).

The main marketing tools of the Midlands Meander are its brochure and a website launched in July 2009. The Midland Meander Brochure is an almost A3-size, full colour publication with a map of the Midlands Meander (see Appendix C, p. 317) as the centrespread (Midlands Meander Association, 2009:16-17). The brochure has grown in size from 24 pages for the 2008/2009 edition to 36 pages for the 2010/2011 edition (Midlands Meander Association, 2008; 2010). Each member, as part of their membership

benefit, is eligible to place a small numbered panel advertisement in the brochure for a map fee of R2500⁵ The location of the member is indicated on the map by their panel advertisement number, and since the 2008/2009 edition of the brochure, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) co-ordinates are listed for all the members in the brochure (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:12-13). Members may also place larger advertisements in the brochure at additional cost. The brochure is available free of charge in target market areas, such as Gauteng. Distribution of the brochure is handled by Brochure Distribution, who also provides regular feedback on the number of brochures distributed at their various distribution points. In the Midlands Meander the brochure is sold for R5-00 at various visitor information centres and members may buy the brochure at R2-00 for resale at R5-00. A smaller brochure, folded to DL size, is mailed by the Meander office in response to enquiries received.

While it previously had web presence through the TKZN website, the Midlands Meander Association launched its own website in July 2009. The website is user-friendly and well organised with a search function and links to member information organised by product type such as accommodation, cuisine, arts, craft and décor, hospitality, leisure and activities, and more. There is an interactive map, but the map is not downloadable. Member information contains contact details, GPS co-ordinates and an indication of pricing.

The Midlands Meander exhibits at the annual Tourism Indaba trade show in Durban, although the cost is considered steep. The Midlands Meander gets considerable exposure in a local glossy magazine, called Midlands Life and the local newspaper, the Weekend Witness, as well as in national travel and lifestyle publications, and television programmes made in the area. The Meander office serves as a contact point for crews filming in the area. Whereas Lourens (2007:481) found in 2007 that more than 40% of members relied only on the Association for promotion, in 2009 Coetzee, *et al.* (2009:[15]) reported that 82% of members marketed their businesses through brochures, 75% advertised, 77% used web sites and 67% special media features.

⁵ Amounts quoted apply to 2009 when the fieldwork was conducted.

The Midlands Meander Association is very conscious of their social responsibility and supports pro-poor initiatives such as the Midlands Meander Education Project, co-sponsored by N3TC, and registered with the World Wildlife Fund. They also have a mentoring programme for emerging disadvantaged artists and crafters, who are mentored by Meander members and are given free advertising exposure in the 2009-2010 brochure as emerging artists (Midlands Meander, 2009:12)

Although the Midlands Meander Association has no direct involvement, members benefit from large events that attract substantial numbers of visitors to the area such as the Midmar Mile (swimming event) and a myriad of smaller events such as boarding school functions that bring in parents, and events organised by product owners and other organisations (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:20-21). The Association are co-organisers with the Weekend Witness, the local newspaper, of the Midlands Meander Festival and the Midlands Meander Marathon (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:24). In 2009, the Association organised a Slow Food Festival and a Rolling Arts Exhibition, in which members participated by offering special menu items and hosting exhibits by well-known artists respectively (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:20-21). Events in the area are promoted in an event calendar in the A3 brochure (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:20-21).

4.7.5 Marketing of the Battlefields Route

The Battlefields Route stretches over Amajuba, uMzinyathi, uThukela, Zululand, uThungulu and King Shaka District Municipalities (See Figure 7, p. 97). TKZN does not refer to the Battlefields Route on their website, and the route is not listed under the “Routes” link on their website (TKZN, 2010g). However, “Battlefields” is listed under the “Destinations” link (TKZN, 2010g).

The Battlefields Route Association was formed by four towns, Dundee, Ladysmith, Newcastle and Vryheid, and at the time of the fieldwork, 14 towns are members of the Battlefields Route Association with a secretariat in Vryheid (Battlefields Route Association, Not dated). Members of the Battlefields Region Guides are the main drivers of the marketing of the route, in spite of the fact that membership rests mainly with the

municipalities. Membership was only recently opened to product owners and individuals, and a number of them have already joined the association.

The Battlefields Route Association appointed a marketing agency in 2009 to handle the marketing of the route and launched their new website, sponsored by N3TC, in March 2010 (Battlefields Route Association, 2010). “Explore the largest concentration of battlefields in Southern Africa” is an A2 brochure, folded to DL size, which is published and distributed by the Battlefields Route Association in conjunction with its member district municipalities and TKZN. The brochure contains a comprehensive map of the battlefields, a brief history of the wars of the region, a list of TICs and a list of Registered Battlefield Tour Guides (Battlefields Route Association, Not dated).

4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the nature of tourism route marketing and the planning thereof. The literature confirmed the similarity between destination and route marketing, but also highlighted the critical importance of a distinctive route brand, a unique route experience based on appropriate marketing research and a sound operating strategy, and adopting a long-term and strategic approach. Investigation of a number of routes in Australia, Canada and the United States of America revealed a broad-based collaborative approach with flexible and inclusive membership structures. Marketing practices of these routes showed strong branding, targeted marketing, and good utilisation of co-operative promotions, websites, maps and events in their marketing strategies.

The chapter concluded with a review of the tourism marketing that takes place in KwaZulu-Natal showed that the province not only has marketing authorities on multiple levels, but other statutory bodies such as Amafa and EKZNW, and NGOs such as the N3TC, also influence tourism marketing. The Midlands Meander appears to be well marketed, but the Battlefields Route seems to struggle.

The next chapter describes the research methodology that was followed during the empirical study of the stakeholders’ perspective of the marketing of the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route in KwaZulu-Natal.

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Literature review: Tourism and rural economic development
Chapter 3	Literature review: Destination marketing
Chapter 4	Literature review: Tourism route marketing
Chapter 5	Research methodology
	Research design
	Sampling
	Data collection
	Data analysis
	Quality and rigour of the research
	Limitations of the research
Chapter 6	Findings of the study: Stakeholder perspectives on strategic route marketing issues
Chapter 7	Findings of the study: Stakeholder perspectives on elements of the route marketing mix
Chapter 8	Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research design followed in this study. It first outlines the overall research design and then gives a detailed description of the research methods that

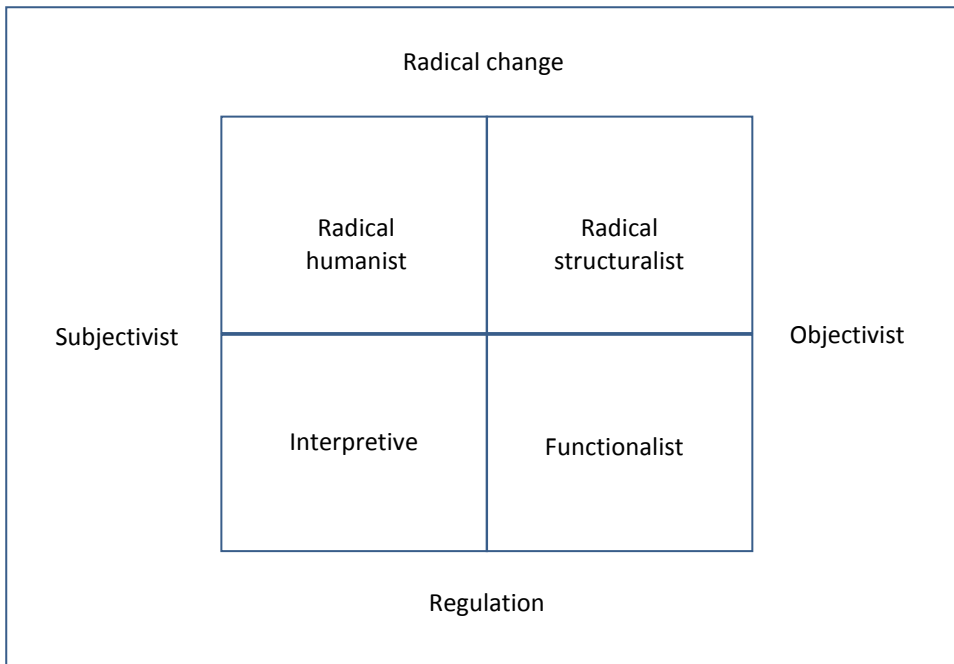
were used in the study covering the sampling, data collection and data analysis procedures followed. The quality and rigour of the research methods are considered as well as the research ethics involved. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher adopted an interpretivist epistemology for this study. It was therefore critical for the researcher to assume an empathetic stance to gain insight and understanding of the world in which product owners on a rural tourism route conduct their business (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007:107). It is argued that an interpretive perspective is suitable for business research in fields such as marketing, because the situations are both complex and unique, as was the circumstance in this study (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:107). The ontology adopted for this study is subjectivist, rather than objectivist, in the sense that the researcher is of the view that social phenomena, or in this instance a marketing phenomenon, such as a tourism route, is created from the perceptions and consequent actions of the stakeholders in the route (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:108).

The research paradigm is a way of examining social phenomena and the paradigm adopted for this study is an interpretive one. A regulatory perspective seeks to explain how routes work and how they may be improved within the existing framework (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:112). Together with the subjective ontology, this study is thus placed in the bottom left quadrant in the model by Burrell and Morgan (1985:22) in Figure 9 overleaf, which implies that the researcher's concern is "... not to change the order of things, but to understand and explain what is going on" (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:113).

Figure 9: Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory



Source: Burrell & Morgan (1985:22).

Mouton (2001:146) identifies a framework of four dimensions for the classification of research design types:

- “Dimension 1: Ranging from empirical to non-empirical (conceptual);
- Dimension 2: Primary or new data collected versus analysing existing data;
- Dimension 3: Type of data, ranging from numeric to textual; and
- Dimension 4: Degree of control or structure in design.”

Using the above framework, the macro level design of this study may be described as an empirical, exploratory, qualitative study. The study is an empirical study addressing problems in real-life as it attempts to identify critical success factors in the marketing of tourism routes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:133; Mouton, 2001:53). Primary data of a textual nature was collected from interviews with supply-side stakeholders in the tourism routes studied. Qualitative research methods were employed to discover and describe programmes such as the marketing of tourism routes, in their natural settings (Mouton, 2001:161).

Three approaches converge in this study namely a qualitative approach, an exploratory approach and a case study approach. These approaches are described in more detail below.

5.2.1 A qualitative approach

Qualitative research has gained acceptance, in both the marketing and the tourism disciplines as one of a variety of research tools (Walle, 1998:526). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133) state that all qualitative research share two characteristics namely a "... focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings ... and ... studying those phenomena in all their complexity". The goal of qualitative research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors related to a phenomenon and to uncover the deeper meaning of the lived experience, which indicates that a constructivist research paradigm is appropriate (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001:66). Rather than to measure, qualitative research instead examines processes and meanings, producing a rich yield of detailed data about a relatively small number of cases (Labuschagne, 2003:100). The concern here is the real life experience and the meaning of the phenomena observed (Labuschagne, 2003:103). To gain greater understanding and insight, questions of how and why things occur need to be answered (Carson *et al.*, 2001:66).

This study employed a qualitative research approach to the problem, as the researcher is interested in what really happens in tourism route marketing and how members of the tourism route organisations experience this (Carson *et al.*, 2001:65). By including a varied range of participants from different sub-groups in the study, richer data revealed more nuances of the phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:242).

5.2.2 An exploratory approach

A qualitative research approach is particularly suited to exploratory research, as it allows the researcher the freedom to pursue new issues uncovered as the study progresses (O'Neil, Not dated:6). Exploratory research requires that the researcher be willing to change as new data emerges and new insights occur (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:134). Tourism route marketing is a complex phenomenon that cannot be studied adequately in neatly

arranged compartments in an isolated and artificial setting (Carson *et al.*, 2001:66). Qualitative research was therefore a suitable approach, as it allowed for the flexibility needed to interpret the complex situation related to the successful marketing tourism routes (Carson *et al.*, 2001:65).

This study explored how marketing is implemented in two tourism routes, which places it in the framework of fundamental research, rather than applied research, which is of immediate relevance to a management problem (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:7). To facilitate wide-ranging exploration of route marketing phenomena, two actions were taken: firstly, two very different routes were selected for this study to allow the investigation of diverse scenarios in route marketing; and secondly, a wide cross-section of respondents either involved in the selected tourism routes or having an influence on these routes, were included in the study. The paucity of literature that deals specifically with the marketing of tourism routes indicates that an exploratory approach is appropriate for this study.

5.2.3 A case study approach

A case is defined as a "... a phenomenon of some sort in a bounded context ..." that is the unit of analysis in a qualitative study (Miles & Huberman, 1994:25). The term 'case' is broadly understood and may refer to an individual, a community, an activity, event, programme, or an organisation (Flick, 2006:141; Fouché, 2002:275). In this study, the two tourism routes selected for investigation, namely the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route, represent bounded systems and therefore form the two cases which were the subject of investigation.

A case study is a research strategy that triangulates a variety of sources of information that are rich in context (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:139). In this study, sources included qualitative research techniques such as in-depth interviews with a wide range of participants, observations by the researcher and printed and electronic marketing material. Case studies allow the researcher to capture "... nuances, patterns and more latent elements that other research approaches might overlook" (Berg, 2009:318). Case studies are therefore particularly suited to studies that are exploratory in nature, such as this study (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:139).

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007:242) maintain that "... within-case analysis is appropriate in samples of more than one case, if the researcher's goal is not to compare cases". The purpose of investigating two routes was to achieve a wider representation of route marketing experiences and so adding to the variety and richness of the data, rather than to draw comparisons between the two routes (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:248).

5.3 SAMPLING

The sampling design represents the "... framework within which the sample occurs, comprising of the ... sampling scheme and the sample size" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:239). As it is impractical to interview all stakeholders in a tourism route, this study made use of a sample. The sampling design is expounded below.

5.3.1 Geographic context of the study

The geographic area selected for this study was KwaZulu-Natal. Although this province attracts a large number of visitors, tourism activity is heavily concentrated in Durban and along the coast, with the inland areas attracting proportionately fewer visitors. Inland rural KwaZulu-Natal is an area both with exceptional tourism potential and in need of economic development (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), 2005:3, 7).

The routes selected needed to meet the following criteria:

- the routes should traverse rural areas;
- the rural areas should have poor local populations who may benefit from tourism development; and
- the routes should have been in existence for at least two years.

Based on the preceding criteria, the two rural routes selected are the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route, both located in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The Midlands Meander is set in a well establish farming area, but it also incorporates Mpophomeni and Lidgetton townships, which are situated in rural areas some distance outside Howick, as well as townships attached to local towns such as Howick and Mooi River as can be seen on the map in Appendix C (p. 317). The Battlefields Route is more extensive, with battlefields

often located on or close to well established farmland or Zulu tribal land. The Battlefields Route incorporates some 14 small towns, often with their township attached, as well as extensive rural settlements in tribal areas as the map in Appendix D (p. 319) shows. In both these routes unemployment and poverty are common as can be seen in Figure 4 (p. 17) (DEAT, 2005:3). Both routes are well established and have been in operation for many years. In addition, the two routes differ in their route themes, as well as the co-operative structure that markets each route insofar as the Midlands Meander is private sector driven, while the Battlefields Route is public sector driven (Midlands Meander Association, 2008:3, KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998:1). The Midlands Meander attracts mainly domestic visitors who come to enjoy the country and arts and crafts, while the Battlefields Route attracts predominantly international visitors with a special interest in military history and Zulu culture.

The Midlands Meander, although the subject of previous studies, has not been investigated from the marketing perspective of this study (Rogerson, 2007:66, Lourens, 2007:480). This route is a well-established route in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands region that has operated successfully since 1985 when a group of artists and crafters agreed to market their products collectively (Midlands Meander Association, 2009b:11). The Midlands Meander has grown to approximately 180 members and covers the area on either side of the N3 toll road between Hilton in the south and Mooi River in the north, with six different self-drive tours suggested as day trips or longer combined routes (Midlands Meander Association, 2009b:16-17). A map of the Midlands Meander is shown in Appendix C (p. 317). The route is positioned as a country experience with “a good place” as its slogan, and offers many traditional country attractions such as scenery, accommodation in country houses, restaurants, art and crafts, hiking, trout fishing, mountain biking and more (Midlands Meander Association, 2009b:3). Approximately 160 of the 180 members were included in the 2008/2009 edition of the brochure (Midlands Meander, 2008b:2).

The second route selected for this study is the Battlefields Route in northern KwaZulu-Natal, which was formed in 1990. As may be seen on the map in Appendix D (p. 319), this route comprises of an area bounded by Volksrust and Paulpietersburg in the north, and Estcourt, Greytown and Eshowe in the south (KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998: 3-4). The area has the largest concentration of battlefields in South Africa, representing

clashes involving Voortrekkers, Boers, Zulus and the British (KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998:1). As the name suggests, the Battlefields Route predominantly revolves around the rich military history of the area, but attractions are not restricted to this theme and there are many country, cultural and natural attractions as well (KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998:1). As the map in Appendix D (p. 319) illustrates, this route is not a typical corridor route that has a defined beginning and an end, but rather is an area comprising of some 14 small towns and attractions that the drive-tourist can explore, following their own route. The towns co-operate in marketing the Battlefields Route and are represented by tourism offices attached to the local municipalities and community tourism associations (CTAs) (formerly known as publicity associations) representing product providers in the towns (KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route, 1998:7). This route forms part of the focus of the DEAT's Second Economy Strategy and Global Competitiveness Project 2 (2005:8).

5.3.2 Population

The unit of analysis for this study are the two cases or tourism routes described above (Miles & Huberman, 1994:25). In this study, the individual stakeholders in the tourism routes within the geographic areas of the study, are bounded by their involvement in or influence on the two tourism routes or cases in the study. Although a case is singular, it is a bounded system and as such has subsections (Stake, 2008:120). Tourism routes typically have two such subsections of stakeholders, namely supply-side stakeholders or members and enablers of the route, and demand-side stakeholders or visitors who travel the route or support tourism establishments that form part of the route. This study included the supply-side stakeholders, but excluded the demand-side stakeholders as time and resource constraints precluded a consumer study.

The population of supply-side stakeholders in this study was therefore defined as supply-side stakeholders in the two selected tourism routes in KwaZulu-Natal at the time the research was conducted during July 2009 to December 2009. These stakeholders were further divided into the following two categories:

- The core stakeholders included the route management organisation, and product owners or providers of actual tourism offerings on the route, such as attractions, accommodation, restaurants, tourist guides, retail shops and other suppliers. Product owners have first-hand experience of operating their businesses as part of the tourism routes, and are therefore in a position to provide first-hand information on aspects of success and failure of route marketing efforts.
- Enablers of the tourism operations on the routes included any organisation that has a direct or indirect influence on the tourism route marketing. As is evident from Figure 6 (p. 33), enablers may be found in a wide range of organisations. This category thus includes local, district and provincial municipal tourism marketing officers and organisations independent of the route, government agencies whose activities impact on tourism, tour operators, community leaders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), tourism trade organisations, infrastructure providers, and other enablers outside the tourism route.

5.3.3 **Entities from which data were obtained**

Respondents in this study were selected as follows:

- In the Midlands Meander, members of the Midlands Meander Association were interviewed. Since the membership of the meander consists largely of small tourism businesses, often family owned, the owners of these businesses were interviewed. Where the organisation was collectively owned, interviews were conducted with either the manager or the person responsible for marketing.
- Membership of the Battlefields Route Association primarily vests in the local and district municipalities, but municipalities that belong to the Battlefields Route Association were not included in this sample, but in the enabler sample, as were municipalities that recently joined the Midlands Meander Association. Since the Battlefields Route Association membership was only recently opened to businesses and individuals and such membership was still fairly limited at the time the fieldwork was carried out, interviews were not restricted to members, but also included other product owners and service providers in the area of the Battlefields Route. The Registered Battlefields Guides are very active in the Battlefields Route Association

and several of these guides from different towns, who are committee members of the Battlefields Route Association and who also run their own businesses, were interviewed. Other respondents included two museum curators, both also Registered Battlefield Guides, and the owners of accommodation establishments, several of whom served on the committee of the Battlefields Route Association at the time that the fieldwork was conducted.

- The enabler stakeholder group consists of a very varied range of organisations as pointed out in section 5.3.2 above. In these organisations the individuals interviewed were those most likely to influence, have knowledge of, or have personal experience with marketing aspects of tourism routes. These individuals mostly held managerial positions in their organisations or businesses.

5.3.4 Sampling scheme

A sampling scheme comprises of the specific techniques that are utilised to select entities from which data are obtained (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:239). Purposive or judgement sampling is commonly used in qualitative research (Marshall, 1996:523). Purposive sampling enables the researcher to select the most productive participants to answer the research question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:145, Marshall, 1996:523, Saunders *et al.*, 2007:230). The units of investigation were included in the sample for a specific purpose and in selecting participants, the emphasis was not on random representation, but rather on the contribution that each participant could make to inform the subject of this research as a representative of a specific route product or enabler group. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:206; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:242).

This study utilised a stratified, purposive sampling scheme. The stakeholder population was divided into two strata namely core stakeholders who were directly involved with the routes as tourism product owners, members or administrators; and secondly, enablers who influenced the route operation. Core stakeholders were further stratified into the two routes under investigation and purposeful samples were selected for each route to obtain representation of route members and product owners offering different products and situated in different geographical locations on the routes to obtain maximum demographic variation. (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007:286; Sandelowski, 1995:181). Within-case

sampling is an iterative process and talking to people and observations by the researcher lead to new informants and observations (Miles & Huberman, 1994:29). In this study, purposeful sampling was initially employed and then supplemented by snowball sampling, where subsequent respondents were obtained through information provided by initial interviewees (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:611).

In the Midlands Meander, respondents were selected to represent as varied a cross-section of members as possible. Characteristics that guided inclusion in the sample were the type of operation, degree of involvement with the route association, duration of membership, and location on the route. In line with purposive sampling, valuable information in this regard was obtained from the Midland Meander Marketing Officer. The researcher also used her own discretion to ensure representation of respondents across the geographical route area, the type of tourism product and involvement with the Midlands Meander Association.

The Battlefields Route Association consists of representation by local and district authorities and membership was only recently opened to individual service providers and tourism product owners. The researcher relied on published marketing material and the Internet to select initial respondents that matched the categories required. Snowball sampling was used to identify influential respondents that could contribute to the study. Battlefield tourist guides proved to play a pivotal role in both the Battlefields Route Association and the Provincial Tourist Guides Association of KwaZulu-Natal in the Battlefields Region. Again the researcher endeavoured to include respondents from as wide a range as possible with regard to participating towns, product owner groups, and involvement in the route organisation.

Enabling stakeholders were purposively sampled to include representatives from entities known to influence tourism decisions in the areas where the routes are located. Snowball sampling was particularly useful here since members of the target population were difficult to identify (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:232). Recommendations of both route members and other enablers were followed up to identify such respondents, particularly where enablers were initially not known to the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994:29).

In both samples, a broad range of participants were sampled to cover maximum variation, key informants with special expertise, and some outliers with deviant experience (Marshall, 1996:523). To avoid bias when using snowball sampling, the researcher endeavoured not to include only like-minded participants recommended by the abovementioned sources, by determining the reasons for their recommendation before finally selecting the recommended participants.

5.3.5 Sample size

A review of the literature on sample size considerations in qualitative research reveal that many authors recommend small samples, ranging from 3-5 participants for case study research, to 30-50 interviews in ethnographic research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005:282). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007:242) caution that too large a sample may hinder the researcher in extracting thick, rich data. In the literature reviewed in chapter 4, small sample sizes were evident when qualitative studies were carried out. So, for example, Briedenhann and Wickens (2004a:194) used nine semi-structured interviews and one focus group with seven participants, Becken (2005:23) interviewed samples of 13 and eight participants and Hardy (2003:314) used two case studies. On the other hand, too small a sample may not achieve data saturation or informational redundancy (Sandelowski, 1995:197). Marshall (1996:523) states that the appropriate sample size is one that enables an adequate answer to the research question. The sample required usually becomes apparent as the study progresses and data saturation is achieved with no new categories or themes emerging (Marshall 1996:523). For this reason, it is difficult to determine beforehand exactly what the eventual sample size will be. Where there is more variability in a population, as is the case in this study, more sampling units are required to reach informational saturation (Sandelowski, 1995:181).

Researchers can make four types of generalisations namely case-to-case transfer, analytical generalisation, internal statistical generalisation and external statistical generalisation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:241). The size of the sample determines the type of generalisation that the researcher can make (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:241). This study did not aim to make any statistical generalisations, as the sampling method is a non-random one. The goal was to be able to make analytic generalisations and qualitative inferences (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:240).

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007:245) argue that with a subgroup sampling design, such as in this study, at least three cases should be included in each subgroup to facilitate saturation. Tourism product owners on the two routes that are the subject of this investigation, form the core stakeholders, and represent two subgroups within the sample. To allow for greater diversity of participants to be included in the study, nine product owners were sampled from among the Midlands Meander members. Since membership of the Battlefields Route Association is vested mainly in the municipalities, nine product owners in the area covered by the Battlefields Route were sampled, some of whom were individual members of the Battlefields Route Association or represented their organisations or municipalities on the committee of the Battlefields Route Association. Municipal employees were included in the enabler sample.

The enabling stakeholders (Enablers) constitute a further subgroup. Many route enablers were not necessarily linked to a specific route and were able to relate to both routes. Nine enablers were interviewed in KwaZulu-Natal. A further two interviews were conducted with enablers who were based in Johannesburg but were familiar with or involved in tourism routes in KwaZulu-Natal. The final sample thus totals 29 interviews. Table 3 below gives a complete list of respondents interviewed in each sub-sample.

Table 3: List of respondents interviewed

Interview	Respondent's position	Type of organisation
SUB-SAMPLE: CORE STAKEHOLDERS: BATTLEFIELDS ROUTE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS AND PRODUCT OWNERS (CBR)		
1	Owner	Accommodation
2	Owner	Accommodation & crafter
3	Museum curator & Registered Battlefield Guide	Attraction & tourist guide
4	Owner & Registered Battlefield Guide; Chairman, Battlefields Route Association	Accommodation & tourist guide
5	Owner	Accommodation:
6	Member of Zulu tribe who own accommodation & nature reserve	Community, accommodation & attraction



Interview	Respondent's position	Type of organisation
7	Owner; Registered Battlefield Guide & tour operator;	Accommodation & tourist guide
8	Museum curator & Registered Battlefield Guide	Attraction & tourist guide
9	Registered Battlefield Guide; Honorary Secretary, Battlefields Route Association	Tourist guide
SUB-SAMPLE: CORE STAKEHOLDERS: MIDLANDS MEANDER ASSOCIATION MEMBERS (CMM)		
1	Marketing Officer, Midlands Meander.	Route management
2	Owner; Director of Midlands Meander Board	Crafter & retailer
3	Co-owner Past Director of Midlands Meander Board	Accommodation & restaurant
4	Manager	Community & attraction
5	Co-owner;	Accommodation & restaurant
6	1 Co-owner 2 Co-owner	Retailer
7	Co-owner of family business	Accommodation & attraction
8	Owner; Past Chairman of Midlands Meander Board	Crafter
9	Owner	Accommodation & retailer
SUB-SAMPLE: ENABLING STAKEHOLDERS (Enabler)		
1	Co-Owner	Tour Operator to Midlands Meander & Battlefields Route
2	Provincial Project Manager KZN	Central Government
3	Tourism Manager	District Municipality
4	Chief: Community Service	Local Municipality
5	Director, Heritage Conservation	Provincial Government
6	Branch Manager	Estate Agent



Interview	Respondent's position	Type of organisation
7	Deputy Manager: Roads Cost Centre	Provincial Government
8	General Manager: Tourism Information Services	Provincial Government
9	1 Founder/Director 2 Route Development Officer	NGO: Development Agency
10	Chief Executive Officer	Industry Organisation
11	Marketing Officer	Infrastructure

5.4 DATA COLLECTION

As this study is exploratory in nature, qualitative data was collected. The section below describes the data collection method and nature of the data that was collected.

5.4.1 Data collection method

The qualitative data collection method selected for this study was semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Focus groups were not considered for this study, because of the anticipated difficulty to assemble such groups. The study population is dispersed over the whole area of the two routes and they may not have been willing to travel long distances to attend such a discussion. Most of the enablers were not located in the route areas, but in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, the South Coast and Gauteng. Individual interviews allowed the researcher to engage with a greater variety of respondents at a venue convenient to the respondents, and in all instances, this was at the premises of the respondent's tourism establishment or their offices.

Potential participants were contacted by telephone or e-mail to set up interviews. Before the interviews commenced, a brief explanation of the purpose of the interview was given and participants were asked to read and sign the Informed Consent Letter which is reproduced in Appendix E (p. 321). Participants were reassured verbally of the confidentiality of their responses and the fact that their responses would be reported on anonymously. To protect the anonymity of participants when reporting on the findings, they

are identified only by their sampling groups and a randomly allocated letter as follows: CBR-A; CMM-A; Enabler-A.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted, following a list of themes and questions to be covered. This type of interview is not standardised, allowing the researcher to vary the order of questions depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:312). Questions also varied from one interview to the next allowing the researcher to probe for further explanation or elaboration on responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:316). Such deviation from the set questions added new insight and meaning to the data and lead the discussion onto significant topics not previously considered (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:315). Some interviews with participants in the enabler group did not necessarily cover all the questions in the interview guide but tended to concentrate the participant's area of expertise and involvement in the tourism routes as these participants were not necessarily informed about all the marketing aspects of tourism routes.

All interviews were conducted in English, with the exception of one interview which was conducted in Afrikaans as the participant was more comfortable in that language. Questions were phrased in non-technical language, as not all participants were familiar with the theoretical concepts and jargon related to marketing (Carsen *et al.*, 2001:78, Saunders *et al.*, 2007:324).

The interview schedules used during the interviews with core stakeholders and enablers are shown in Appendix F (p. 323) and Appendix G (p. 326) respectively. The Interviews started with a general, non-threatening question to place the respondent at ease and to establish *rapport* between the respondent and the interviewer (Questions 1). Questions 2 to 7 probed the respondent's experience with the tourism route. Question 8 determined the people that influence the success of tourism routes and allowed the researcher to identify stakeholders in the routes. Questions 9 to 12 focused on tourism route marketing in particular. Question 13 probed for perceived benefits of being part of a tourism route. Question 14 identified factors that the participants considered to be critical to the marketing success of the route with which the respondent is associated. Finally, Question 15 provided the respondent with the opportunity to mention any topic thought to be of importance that was not covered in the interviewing guide, and such topics, where appropriate, were incorporated in subsequent interviews.

All interviews were audio taped with prior permission of the participants on a digital recorder. Copious notes were made during the interviews to supplement these recordings. The notes provided an important back-up to the audio tapes and aided the researcher during transcription where recordings were unclear, and substituted for 20 minutes of one interview when recording failed after an interruption. The notes also served to show participants that their responses are important to the researcher (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:326). Tape recordings were transcribed by the researcher. Contextual data was recorded for each respondent, but kept separate from transcriptions to protect the confidentiality of participants (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:326).

Additional information was obtained by collecting as many examples as possible of route and individual members' marketing material and documents and by observing evidence of route signage and interpretation. Pertinent examples of signage were recorded photographically by the researcher and are included in Appendices J, K, L, M, O, and Q. (pp. 332-343; 347).

5.4.2 Forms of data

The data was collected in the form of audio recordings of verbal conversations. Recordings were made on a Speed-Link Digital Voice Recorder, model PDR3. The verbal data was transcribed verbatim to preserve the nuances and richness of what was said. Notes were made during the interviews and contextual data about the respondents noted to support the recordings. Stake (2008:133) considers triangulation as a way to clarify meaning by using multiple perceptions, and for this purpose respondents' websites were accessed and marketing documents were collected, to verify whether the documents corroborate what was said during interviews although very few such documents, other than brochures and business cards, were available. Verbal data was further supplemented by observation of the physical evidence of the tourism routes, such as signage and interpretation. Where appropriate, observations were recorded photographically, otherwise field notes were made. The qualitative data gathered is non-standardised and complex, but the researcher is interested in the multiple realities in which routes are marketed (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:474; Stake, 2008:133).

5.5 DATA ANALYSIS

“Qualitative data begin as raw, descriptive information about programmes and people in programmes” (Labuschagne, 2003:102). The data gathered in transcripts, field notes, documents and photographs need to be organised in a non-numerical manner to reveal patterns, themes, forms and qualities (Labuschagne, 2003:103). This process follows five stages namely (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000:116):

- “Familiarisation – immersion in the raw data by listening to tapes and reading transcripts;
- identifying a thematic framework – identifying the key issues, concepts and themes;
- indexing – applying the thematic framework systematically to all the data;
- charting – rearranging the data according to the appropriate part of the framework to which they relate and forming charts; and
- mapping and interpretation – using the charts to define the concepts, map the range and nature of phenomena and find associations with the view to find explanations for the findings”.

The researcher transcribed the audio tapes herself. The researcher next engaged with the data, by reading through the transcripts several times, to “... get a sense of what it contains as a whole” (Cresswell, 2007:150). Next, general categories or themes were identified and data classified into these categories (Cresswell, 2007:151). The researcher used ATLAS.ti 6 to code and analyse the data. An excerpt from a coded transcript and an example of a list of quotes for a particular code, are included in Appendix H (p. 328) and Appendix I (p. 330), respectively. Finally, the data were integrated and summarised for the reader. While computer packages may be useful to organise the data, no package can link the data to the theory as this requires the researcher’s analytical skills to uncover propositions about the data. (Pope *et al.*, 2000:115).

Using direct quotations in the report reveals the level of emotion of respondents, their thoughts, experiences and perceptions thus providing depth and detail to the reader (Labuschagne, 2003:102; O’Neil, Not dated:2). By comparing sub-groups in the two cases, the data were disaggregated to prevent readers from incorrectly concluding that findings are similar across all subgroups included in the study. This type of analysis is in line with

the tenet of qualitative research, which values the uniqueness and complexities of the subgroups that add to the richness to the data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:248).

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:142) define content analysis as a “... detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes or biases”. The authors point out that content analysis need not necessarily be a stand-alone exercise (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:142). In this study, content analysis of both the marketing documents collected and the evidence related to signage and interpretation were used to supplement and validate data obtained in the interviews, and also served the purpose of triangulating the findings of the study.

5.6 ASSESSING AND DEMONSTRATING THE QUALITY AND RIGOUR OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research cannot be measured with the same yardsticks as quantitative research, because of the very different paradigms in which they reside (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:112-113). Bryman and Bell (2007:411-412) suggest that internal validity, reliability, objectivity and external validity used in quantitative research, be replaced by credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability respectively, when evaluating qualitative research. Carson *et al.* (2001:67) propose “that credibility, dependability and confirmability all stem from three sources:

- “careful use, interpretation, examination and assessment of appropriate literature;
- careful justification of the qualitative research methodologies employed in a study and specifically their appropriateness, merits and values, all of which will have substantial previous justification in the methodological literature; and
- careful structuring of data analysis to ensure full and descriptive evaluation and assessment, particularly in relation to data of key significance.”

The researcher therefore paid particular attention to these aspects in the execution of this study. The qualitative measures to assess the quality of this study are discussed in more detail below.



5.6.1 Credibility (Internal validity)

Bryman and Bell (2007:411-412) suggest that respondent or member validation be used to measure credibility. The researcher needs to provide each research participant with an account of the findings to seek corroboration or divergence (Bryman & Bell, 2007:411). Whereas this may be done in studies with very small samples, it was not feasible in terms of cost and time constraints of this study. Bryman and Bell (2007:13) themselves question whether participants actually have the ability to validate the researcher's analysis and a further problem with respondent validation is that participants want to add to or change the language and sometimes also what was said during interviews.

Another way through which the credibility of the research may be established is triangulation, whereby more than one method, interviewer and source is used to gather data (Bryman & Bell, 2007:413). Triangulation was achieved in this study by analysing marketing documents and physical evidence observed along the route, in addition to the data gathered in the semi-structured in-depth interviews. While the researcher conducted and analysed all interviews herself and admits her subjective involvement, she has extensive enough experience in marketing research to guard against bias (O'Neil, Not dated:9).

5.6.2 Dependability (Reliability)

The researcher strived to leave a clear audit trail (O'Neil, Not dated:9). This required that complete records be kept for all phases of the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2007:414). The researcher kept evidence of the problem formulation in the research proposal and the literature review that informed it. Evidence of the research process is contained in records of the sampling procedures followed, field notes, audio tape recordings, interview transcripts, ATLAS.ti 6 data analysis files, documents and photographic evidence studied (Bryman & Bell, 2007:414). Both the processes and the outcome were examined for consistency (O'Neil, Not dated:8).



5.6.3 Confirmability (Objectivity)

Bryman and Bell (2007:414) state categorically that while “... complete objectivity is impossible ...”, the researcher should at least be shown to have acted in good faith. Alternatively, relevance is an important criterion for the confirmability of qualitative research (Hammersley, 1992:72). Hammersley (1992:73) identifies the importance of the topic and the contribution of the findings, either to the literature or to practitioners, as two aspects of relevance to consider. Relevance will be demonstrated by relating the findings of the study to the information mined in the literature review and by identifying success factors not previously described in the literature, which may contribute to more effective marketing of tourism routes.

5.6.4 Transferability (external validity)

Qualitative research entails the intensive study of a small group of people, which implies contextual uniqueness (Bryman & Bell, 2007:413). What is important here is the thick description and rich accounts of the complex, intertwined details of a situation that will enable the researcher to first grasp and then render the meaning of (Geertz, 1973:10). This will be attained by making use of verbatim quotes in reporting on the findings as well as comparison of sub-groups in the analysis, thus providing enough information to determine whether the findings are applicable to other situations (O’Neil, Not dated:8)

5.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

Research ethics was a consideration throughout this study. The researcher adopted a deontological view that precludes the use of deception in the recruitment of respondents (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:178). Respondents’ consent was obtained prior to the interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:181). Appendix E (p. 321) contains the informed consent form that was used in this study. Participation in the study was voluntary and no incentives were offered to respondents, neither to encourage them to participate, nor to thank them for their participation, though the findings of the study will be made available to interested respondents. Respondents were not pressured to reveal information that they may regard as confidential.

In in-depth interviewing, it is important that the respondents are at their ease in order to achieve a free-flowing discussion. Therefore, no respondent was subjected to pressure or embarrassment and he/she could withdraw from the interview at any stage (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:181). Interviews were tape-recorded to capture the discussion more completely. This fact too was pointed out to respondents before their participation was secured (See Appendix E, p. 321). Respondents may find the audio-taping of the conversation inhibiting at first, but they are likely to habituate or become accustomed to the procedure (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:335). The initial part of the interview was consequently used to set respondents at ease and to establish good *rapport* with them to ensure the free flow of conversation during the remainder of the interview. Generally, respondents were willing to participate in the interviews and the researcher experienced no difficulty in obtaining appointments in the rural areas and small towns in KwaZulu-Natal. In Durban and Gauteng it was more difficult to secure appointments, not because respondents were unwilling to participate in the study, but as the result of their heavier time commitments.

The anonymity of respondents, and the confidentiality of the data that they provide, is an important ethical consideration (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:181). Care was taken not to reveal the identity of respondents during the analysis and reporting of data (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:181). Audio tapes, transcripts and data files were numbered and not identified by respondent. Responses and verbatim quotations are identified by respondent categories only and such categories are large enough so that the identity of individual respondents remains confidential. For verification purposes, the numbered list of respondents and consent forms, which contains respondents' particulars, are kept in a separate file.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, the research question was broadly defined by design and therefore sacrificed some depth of discussion on some aspects. Tourism route marketing as a subject of investigation is in itself extensive with ten destination marketing mix elements identified in the literature in addition to other marketing functions, such as research and planning. Furthermore, a wide variety of tourism businesses make up a tourism route, and while each bring a different perspective to the marketing of the route, it was impossible to include all types of participants in the sample lest the data

became unmanageably voluminous. Full saturation was therefore not achieved in this study and some aspects touched on in this study warrant further investigation. Nevertheless, valuable insights were gained on the marketing of the two tourism routes from the perspective of a broad range of stakeholders.

Respondents were not always familiar with marketing terminology, nor did they always associate some of the marketing mix elements with marketing *per se*. This necessitated more extensive probing and explanation before respondents could discuss topics, even though they were familiar with these topics.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the overall research design of this empirical study, in which qualitative, exploratory and case study approaches converged. The research methods used in this study were described. The sampling strategy was discussed with reference to the geographic context of the study, definition of the population and entities from which data were obtained, the sampling scheme employed and the sample obtained. The data collection and data analysis methods were described and the quality and rigour of the research design were assessed. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the research ethics and the limitations of the study.

The next two chapters document the findings of this investigation. Chapter 6 reports on stakeholders' perception on strategic issues, while Chapter 7 covers their perceptions on the elements of the route marketing mix.

CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON STRATEGIC ROUTE MARKETING ISSUES

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Literature review: Tourism and rural economic development
Chapter 3	Literature review: Destination marketing
Chapter 4	Literature review: Tourism route marketing
Chapter 5	Research methodology
Chapter 6	Findings of the study: Stakeholder perspectives on strategic route marketing issues
	Perceived benefits of tourism routes
	The roles of stakeholders in effective route marketing
	Strategic issues in route marketing
	Factors that impact on route marketing
Chapter 7	Findings of the study: Stakeholders perspectives on elements of the route marketing mix
Chapter 8	Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The marketing of the two tourism routes that are the subject of this investigation, does not take place in isolation, but alongside the marketing efforts of many other entities in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter should therefore be read against the background sketched in Section 4.7 (p. 94) of the marketing structures that are operative in KwaZulu-Natal; the marketing activities that take place in the province on various levels; and the marketing undertaken by the two routes under consideration. This chapter presents the information gathered during the interviews with stakeholders of the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route. The chapter starts by examining the perceived benefits of rural tourism routes to the local economy, the community and tourism product owners (both members and non-members of the routes). The roles played by various stakeholders are described. These include product owners, the local community, municipalities and provincial and local tourism organisations, as well as a private sector route initiative. A number of strategic issues in route marketing are identified and stakeholders' perspectives on factors that impact on successful route marketing are highlighted.

6.2 PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND IMPACTS OF TOURISM ROUTES

Joining a tourism route, such as the Midlands Meander is a voluntary decision that product owners make, and while the Battlefields Route is still largely municipality driven, product owners in that region may now also choose to join the route association. The decision to join is influenced by the perceived advantage that such a step may provide to the prospective member. This section will examine stakeholder perceptions of the purpose of tourism routes and the perceived benefits that the establishment of rural tourism routes may bring to members of the route, other businesses, disadvantaged communities and the region in general.

6.2.1 The perceived purpose of rural tourism routes

The purpose of establishing tourism routes was viewed from two perspectives by respondents, namely creating tourist appeal and generating benefits for the area itself.

Considering the tourists, respondents see routes as a way ⁶ “*to package the destination for our tourists ... and market it as a package deal that is more attractive to tourists ... who instead of coming only to Ladysmith, they go to Ladysmith and the surroundings, which is part of the Battlefields Route*” (Enabler-A). The tourism route “*is going to be so much more attractive to people [because] there’s just so much more on offer, I mean around here you can spend a couple of weeks here, and there’s so much to do and so many different places to stay and so many different places to eat and lots and lots of places to visit*” (CMM-C)⁷.

One respondent explained that the route may also provide the tourist with a structure for the visit, as the “*idea behind promoting a route is that the person will start at the beginning of the route and work his way through the route till he was out the other side*” (CBR-I)⁸. In a way the route is giving visitors “*a shortlist of what they can do, it’s helping them out*” (CMM-I). For a widely dispersed route such as the Battlefields Route, presenting the route as a unit, rather than having individual elements promoted by each respective municipality, is also less bewildering to the visitor in an unfamiliar environment because “*it is all incorporated from point A to point B up to point C ... where all those battles and the towns are linked together in one body*” and “*it’s confusing to the visitors ... who come to Vryheid and stay over, look at Blood River because Blood River falls under Vryheid, and then you go to Isandlwana, you go to uMzinyathi. That’s confusion*” (CBR-I). The route structure provides some reassurance to the visitors because “*people feel comfortable when there’s something that the feel is generally organised*” (CMM-E). For example, “*if I were in a strange country, if I was in Hungary looking for superb Tokai wines, I’d feel much more comfortable if they were in the wine route*” (CMM-E).

However, most respondents recognised that the purpose of tourism routes is much more self-centred in that routes are primarily established to benefit the local economy, the local community and product owners along the route.

⁶ Italics in quotation marks indicate verbatim quotes from interviews. To protect respondents’ anonymity, only the sampling group and a randomly allocated code is indicated in brackets to identify the source of the quote.

⁷ CMM indicates a product owner on the Midlands Meander

⁸ CBR indicates a product owner on the Battlefields Route

6.2.2 Perceived impacts of tourism routes on the local economy

Respondents generally perceived the benefits derived from tourism routes to be widespread, benefitting the local economy as a whole and the many businesses that comprise the economy, both those related to tourism and non-tourism businesses.

“I think in a small way, the whole town will benefit, somewhere down the line they are going to generate some income from it” (CBR-E).

“The whole area does ... everyone benefits, everybody from that petrol jockey who cleans the windscreen to all the way down, ja, everyone” (CBR-D).

Tourism generates an inflow of funds into the area, which stimulates local economic activity through tourist spending as well as capital investment in the area.

“Anybody coming in, every rand that is spent in our area, somebody’s going to benefit, somebody is going to benefit down the line” (Enabler-D).

“There are people coming in[to] the area you know, they leave some money behind” (CBR-F).

“That report, it’s got stuff on how people are going to be investing, you know the capital investment people are thinking of. The Meander is one of the key drivers of economic development in this area.” (CMM-G).

Visitors are seen to engage in a series of transactions to satisfy their needs, spreading the benefit to a range of tourism service providers.

“Tourists want to eat, tourists want to sleep, tourists want to buy a cool drink. So, basically the local economy will benefit” (Enabler-J).

“The local community, they benefit [from] whatever product they are selling on the side of the road ... fruit hawkers, they also benefit ... those that benefit a lot are the restaurants, guest houses and the filling stations. Most of the guys need something to refresh, to quench their thirst. And the filling station, that’s where they get service and their repairs” (CBR-I).

The benefits of tourist spending extends to non-tourism businesses insofar as visitors also patronise other businesses in the area that are not particularly targeting tourists, such as supermarkets that benefit from *“backpackers and self-catering that come here, people like Pick ’n Pay and Spar will benefit will benefit because they buy there” (CBR-E).*

The tourism industry's own expenditure is increased too, as for example *"the guesthouses, the accommodation industry are going to spend more and on a wider variety of items than an ordinary household ... there is maintenance and that type of thing too"* (CBR-E). Even further down the supply chain, *"agriculture in the area becomes revived, because the agricultural products can be utilised in tourism related houses to benefit tourists"* (CBR-F). In fact, a whole range of non-tourism businesses benefit because *"before you can have a visitor in any town, you first have to have a room, which means you start with an architect, draftsman, the builder, the building supplier, the furniture, the furnishings and all the rest of it, everybody"* (CBR-G). However, the same respondent lamented that *"they [other businesses] never look down the line"* and do not appreciate that *"every business in town should be knocking on the door to make sure the tourism officer has the money to get to the places to advertise their town to get visitors here"* (CBR-G).

A notable effect of a successful tourism route is manifested in the scarcity of rental properties and increased property values in the area. A discussion with an enabler in the Midlands Meander area confirmed that *"certainly it has become more expensive here"* as a result of the tourism route creating a *"vibrant area ... with numerous places to shop and to see the different things"* (Enabler-H). A distinction is drawn between farmland on the one hand, and agricultural properties of 20 hectares and below, sold at much higher value as "lifestyle" properties than as agricultural land. These "lifestyle" properties are sold as second or even third homes and also as businesses that don't have to generate immediate income from the land. Being largely financed with *"company finance or personal cash"* rather than bond finance, these properties exert a stabilising influence on the property market as owners *"are not as desperate to sell as in other environments [bank finance], they either just hang on to it or wait for the tide to swing"* (Enabler-D).

Other respondents confirmed the above trend in the Midlands Meander:

"We saw land values increase because of the success of this [Midlands Meander]. Land values increasing and suddenly when it became popularised, there was a big influx of Joburg refugees, you know, coming in to buy and the bed and breakfast thing suddenly kind of flourished" (CMM-G).

Residential properties in the Midlands Meander are still affordable and prices are influenced much more by the prevailing economic conditions. A number of large

developments with 400 and even 900 units have also taken place in the area of the Midlands Meander and they too are “selling well” (Enabler-D). Some respondents have expressed concern that “squashing in as many houses as possible is not really what people are looking for here” and that “it may not be beneficial for the area” (CMM-I). A further concern is that insensitive development may destroy the ambience of the route.

“Like at Nottingham Road, they’ve opened up what to me was one of the most beautiful pieces of land across from Beer, that had this lush green and big fat cows and that to me was part of the ambience of the Meander. It’s now been opened up to a development. I think you start to lose that country feel. It now becomes a town.” (CMM-B).

While tourism may stimulate the local economy, it also renders it vulnerable to the effects of economic downturn, which was felt in both routes.

“Where before they walk in and think nothing of spending R1000, they’re very cautious ... they wander from shop to shop on that country road, but they don’t necessarily come to buy” (CMM-B).

“A lot of the people who go into the Battlefields are British ... so at the moment I think they are feeling the impact of the economy in England and not because they are doing anything wrong” (Enabler-G).

6.2.3 Perceived benefits of tourism routes to the local disadvantaged community

Although two respondents felt that the local community benefits very little from having a rural tourism route in their area, the majority were of the view that the local community benefit in many different ways, which are elaborated on below.

- **Rural tourism routes create employment**

Tourism enterprises attached to a rural tourism route create employment and these jobs are often filled by people from the local community.

“There are 30 or 40 people doing things, employing a hundred whatever people” (Enabler-J).

Rural tourism enterprises, even if they are run by the advantaged entrepreneurs, create job opportunities for the disadvantaged community.

"Well they get employed. They're people who live around us. We've created a tremendous number of jobs for the people who live on this farm [and] lots of people who live on neighbouring farms get employed by us" (CBR-B).

"I know one establishment in the Midlands...they've got about 250 employees ...and all of them are actually community based, from that area there. Just the farm people they sent [for training] from that establishment, they all work there" (Enabler-B).

The employment created by tourism enterprises has a multiplier effect because tourism businesses trigger further entrepreneurial and employment opportunities in the feedback chain.

"Now, for every one job created for tourism, x more jobs can be created on the periphery of tourism. What they refer to as the feedback chain. ... There are all sorts of things they need in their way. They need laundering facilities, they need eggs and bacon and so forth. If you can get the feedback chain working, then you are actually doubling up on the value of this base [created by the tourism enterprises on the route]." (Enabler-K).

"R7.6 million was invested there and some of that money, most of it in fact, benefitted the local community in terms of salaries, in terms of small scale business people, entrepreneurs, contractors." (CBR-F).

On the battlefield sites, Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali (Heritage KwaZulu-Natal) (Amafa) have created jobs by appointing local people as custodians of the sites which often are located on or close to tribal land. Visitors pay the custodian an entrance fee to visit the site and the latter then keeps the site neat and trims the grass. The system works very well at sites that are frequently visited, but at less visited sites, it does not provide sufficient income to sustain the custodians, and they leave (Enabler-F).

- **Training by tourism product owners uplift the skills in poor rural communities**
Another benefit to the local community is the training that comes with the employment created by tourism enterprises. Indeed, many accommodation establishments train their own staff, who then acquire skills that lead to better jobs, some of them outside the area.

"We've trained them in a small boutique hotel where they get the best training because it's personal and they're taught skills within the industry. And from a

little lodge like this, they go into the Drakensberg and they get themselves jobs in big hotels.” (CBR-B).

Training is not limited to accommodation, but extends to arts and crafts as well. Crafters have trained their own staff in their particular skill or have taken disadvantaged crafters under their wing to assist them with both business and technical guidance.

“More people are being employed and trained in different skills. My staff were all farm labourers ... with very basic skills ... and they are now quite competent [artisans].” (CMM-D).

Training is not restricted to employees, for example, members of the Midlands Meander Association have mentored fledgling tourism businesses in the Mpophomeni and Mpendle communities to uplift their business and technical skills.

“They have actually said they would adopt about two or three B&Bs [Bed and breakfast establishments] in the community of Mpophomeni whereby they would actually work with those people there. They even... transport people there [to the establishment providing training] ... to assist those B&Bs in training, housekeeping in general, how you prepare food, how you do that.” (Enabler-I).

“So they have provided us with expertise. We have asked some of the businesses in the Meander to come and help us [community project]. We’ve got a leather group here and we can say arts and crafts, so [we’ve] have been helped by them in improving our side.” (CMM-F).

When tourism projects are built in rural areas and local people are trained to work on these projects, the skills so acquired may be used to the benefit of the community long after the project has ended.

“Those that have been in construction ... can now see the benefits of actually taking some raw material from just around, behind their houses and build those houses ... it becomes a direct benefit in terms of house construction.” (CBR-F).

- **Rural tourism routes creates marketing opportunities for the poor local community**

An organisation such as a route association does not only create a market by attracting tourists to the rural area, but is also well positioned to assist the local community in marketing their arts, crafts and produce.

“Also the local communities along the route, you promote your arts and culture, you can promote craft.” (Enabler-A).

“They’ve got some community projects like beadwork, craft, selling spears. They’ve got a market from the tourism sector although they’re a rural area.” (CBR-I).

In the Midlands Meander, emerging artists and crafters from the disadvantaged community exhibit their wares at the outlets of their employers or mentors, galleries, venues of Meander members, and the Woza Woza information centre at Howick Falls (Midlands meander Association, 2009:12-13). The Midlands Meander Association has embraced the development of these emerging artists by facilitating the marketing of their art and craft.

“We actually have concentrated quite a lot on this new brochure to introduce what we call the emerging artists. They don’t pay anything to be in our brochure, they don’t pay an entrance fee or any sort of yearly sub or anything and literally people can phone in to make an appointment to see them or their products can be seen at a Midlands Meander member.” (CMM-C).

- **Tourism routes can facilitate community upliftment in poor rural areas**

To bring tourism to a rural area may necessitate upgrading infrastructure which then benefits the local communities as well.

“People like the Mgobeke clan, those are the people that benefit a lot because with the interest of the tourists coming here, they’ve got access to clean water.” (CBR-I).

However, it is not only government funded upgrading that improves the lives of the rural communities. The private sector contributes through tourism product owners along the route who make individual efforts towards upliftment of the communities where they operate, as the examples below illustrate.

“The place where the Prince Imperial was killed, ... where they have those commemorations every year round about May, those people have benefitted a lot. The first rural school to be electrified by the French embassy was that Oquequa High School” (CBR-I).

“He employs a lot of people. His wife is a trustee of the local school. She runs a classroom at [establishment in the Midlands Meander] in the afternoon for all the people there, for the staff and make sure that the kids do their homework. She runs the kids in and out of school every day.” (Enabler-D).

“Somebody like [name], she owns [lodge in the Battlefields], she built football fields, she built a school in the area, so she’s done a lot.” (Enabler-G).

The Midlands Meander Association run an education project where *“co-educators actually co-educate with the teachers from the rural schools within the Meander area and we teach them about life skills, or gardening ...and saving water and insects and reptiles ... and we try and enthuse them” (CMM-C).* In this way the association provides the members of the route with an opportunity to contribute in upliftment without necessarily being involved themselves.

“For me there is a big benefit in being associated with the education project, so, so I’ve got a social responsibility link through that project and it’s not something that we’ve got to be managing ourselves, but we contribute to by being members” (CMM-G).

This project was considered by one of the enablers as *“... a good project, I must say. I think that is one of the highlighted ones in terms of uplifting the community” (Enabler-I).* Yet the perception remains that *“nothing much has changed there because I can’t point out that is a community college that was built.” (Enabler-I).*

- **Successful community involvement requires mutual co-operation between the disadvantaged community and the route association**

On both routes *“... there are communities from the previously disadvantaged community that have not fully benefitted from the route as yet” (Enabler-I).* If the local community does not benefit, they may fail to see the value of tourism resources such as battlefield sites, and *“... they might tend to vandalise everything” (Enabler-B).* On the other hand, a custodian appointed by Amafa can *“... pocket something, almost as a tip and she can now*

maintain that area in a good [state] because she is now aware ... that that Prince Imperial Memorial is so significant to the French people” (CBR-I). When the local indunas [tribal chiefs] are involved in projects and see the benefits, “... it is difficult for them to say no, that development should not take place, because they know that in their locality there are no industries that provide job opportunities” (Enabler-B). Since the indunas know which individuals in their community are in need of employment and training, they play a valuable facilitating role in rural projects (Enabler-B).

Small enterprise development is another important ingredient of rural development and opportunities need to be provided for such businesses to emerge.

“So you can have these routes developed and have whatever is the needs and wants of the tourists, but if those people around the community cannot benefit and do not have the means of starting those small businesses for people who are doing crafts, they might end up vandalising everything.” (Enabler-B).

While funding for enterprise development is available through structures like Tourism Enterprise Partnership (TEP) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), one respondent believed that “... the assistance that the rural communities are getting in relation to the kind of opportunities they’ve got, are insufficient” (Enabler-K). Another problem is that communities themselves need to embrace the development for it to succeed.

“There is a huge vacuum in respect of self-confidence ... they would love to believe that they can do it, but they don’t ... so we work with people who have started a something already ... We can only make a difference for the active poor.” (Enabler-K).

“If you build a laundry for the staff to operate, it’s something you’ve done and it’s not theirs. The venture has just got to belong to the person who is doing it.” (Enabler-J).

6.2.4 Perceived benefits of tourism routes to product owners

This first group of stakeholders to benefit directly from rural tourism routes are the tourism product owners who join as members of the route association, or who own tourism

products in the vicinity of such a route. The benefits are primarily business benefits, but route members may also benefit on a more personal level.

- **Benefits to businesses in general**

A strong motivation to join a route association is the potential benefit that members perceive for their businesses in general:

“It’s a well spoken about route and we thought it would be beneficial for our business.” (CMM-E).

Running two or even three businesses in the family is not uncommon among product owners. In the Battlefields guiding and accommodation are combined and museum staff are often Registered Battlefield Guides as well. Midlands Meander accommodation owners may also run restaurants, shops and tours or have art and craft workshops. Enablers ascribe the motivation for operating multiple businesses as the pull of entrepreneurial opportunities presented by the route environment, rather than the push of insufficient income (Enabler-C; Enabler-K).

It is interesting to note that members who have not been members for long and those who have never been involved in route management tend to view the route primarily as a medium through which to advertise their businesses. Longer standing members and committee members (present or past) tend to have a much broader view of the benefits derived from being part of the route. Members with particular business expertise can apply their knowledge and skills to the benefit of the route organisation and all its members. In the case of the Midlands Meander Association, it was *“corporate refugees”* on the board *“who knew how to do things ... and turned it into a Section 21 company; they put in a lot of procedures and standards and quite business-like things ... which was a very crucial thing that needed to happen”* (CMM-A). Another young board member drove the *“website project and changed people’s thinking about it”* (CMM-A). Other benefits mentioned include information sharing among members; the fact that route members as a group, have a lot more clout in dealing with municipal and government departments; the spinoff members get from media exposure of the route as a whole; and the maintenance of product standards across the whole route.



- **Marketing related benefits**

The route is seen as a major marketing tool through which the business may be promoted.

“We were new to the area ... and it was the major marketing tool round here. I think in this area, if you’ve got a sort of serious business, you would be mad not to join them, I mean it’s just a major, major thing here.” (CMM-A).

“How else do we market ourselves? There’s no other way to market ourselves.” (CBR-D).

“If you are a member, you are going to have your establishment marketed internationally and the chances are you might get a few people coming to visit you” (CBR-B).

The collective pull of the route attracts more visitors to the area, but to succeed in doing so requires a critical mass of route offerings.

“The more people we have down this tiny leg of the Meander, the more likely visitors would come.” (CMM-D).

“It’s critical mass, it attracts tourists for people who want to use that critical mass and the competition feeds off itself and attracts more people to the area.” (CMM-E).

Equally, a *“collective marketing effort ... can stimulate tourism demand for the area and by getting that critical mass into an area it can stimulate greater spending and it becomes a snowball effect”* (Enabler-C). By belonging to the route, individual product owners can not only *“combine resources to do far greater marketing than you can as an individual”* (CMM-D), but also benefit from *“the cost effectiveness of the group marketing; co-operative marketing”* (CMM-D). As a group who *“are already talking to each other”* (Enabler-K), it is not difficult to engage in collective promotional events since *“the route platform makes it so much easier to do that kind of thing”* (Enabler-K).

- **Market your neighbour concept**

The success of the Midlands Meander is attributed to the fact that the *“individual product owners market each other’s products as aggressively as they market their own”* (Enabler-C). It was with this very same spirit of co-operation that the Midlands Meander was started in 1985 when four potters, a weaver and a couple of artists, all based within 20 kilometres of each other, got together and agreed to send customers on to each other’s studios as a

rolling exhibition (Midlands Meander Association, 2009:11). The spirit of co-operation is still very much a Midlands Meander philosophy, which is actively supported by members.

“They encourage tourists that are on that route to visit the surrounding services that exist on the route.” (Enabler-C).

“I love their current philosophy ... of marketing your neighbour versus a terribly competitive attitude. I do believe in a tourism area like this ... the pie is big enough and if we look after each other we also look after ourselves” (CMM-A).

“And also, it’s not the cut-throat type of thing. If I can’t help you, then Joe down the road can.” (Enabler-D).

The mutual marketing is not limited to accommodation establishments that refer guests when they are fully booked, but extends to other businesses such as crafters and retailers as well.

“It’s kind of like a big sort of family and people help each other out. And even with the same business, there are other woodworkers on the Meander and often I’ll refer customers to them if they are making stuff that works out less expensive...and likewise they would refer people to me ... so, it’s a mutual support from members, ja.” (CMM-D).

“There’s [name] on the bedding side, we’re selling beds for him. Selling beds with the linen. He came here and looked at our stuff and he said he’s doing a show and can he take some of our linen. He displayed it” (CMM-H).

“B&Bs often buy [product] here and then people say ‘oh, that’s so nice, where did you get it?’ and they say [shop name] ...and they refer people to us” (CMM-H).

The Midlands Meander Association actively encourage members to “*market your neighbour as you would want your neighbour to market you*” (CMM-C). To this effect the Midlands Meander Association have organised several tours: ‘Who is the Meander’ tour which is of a general nature; ‘Market your neighbour’ tour which is a day trip along the Meander visiting a number of neighbouring establishments; and the ‘Sleep with your neighbour’ program aimed at getting to know the accommodation establishments in the area. Participation is voluntary and there is no fee attached to these tours, but members are encouraged to contribute in kind “*if they’ve got vehicles, to try and help ... with the transportation around or offer a meal or snack on our way around to these various*

establishments” (CMM-C). The purpose of these tours is to train staff, and receptionists in particular, on what is available in their neighbourhood so that they are not only able to answer visitors’ questions, but can recommend other establishments with enthusiasm. The need for such interventions is evident from respondents’ remarks below.

“The girls in my shop have no clue where anything is ... but in our shop we get a lot of people coming through and they ask where this is or that and I know my staff aren’t able to field the questions.” (CMM-H)

“We find that a lot of the receptionists and front office staff get asked by guests ‘How far is Nottingham Road from here?’, ‘How far is Mooi River from here?’ or ‘What can you do here?’ or ‘What can you do there?’ and a lot of them didn’t know”. (CMM-C).

“We had some friends out and we took a drive the other day and I saw a whole lot of new things that I didn’t even know on my doorstep, and they were wonderful.” (CMM-A).

On the Battlefields Route the philosophy of co-operation does not appear to be quite as strongly developed among accommodation establishments, and though *“there is a certain amount of it ... it is not done with a gracious heart, ... they were sending people they didn’t want to accommodate”* (CBR-C). The Battlefields guides do seem to realise the benefit of co-operation: *“If we pass the business around, the pie will get bigger. It’s no sense in me sitting on information and doing nothing with it, or not referring it on”* (CBR-A).

- **Personal benefits derived from route membership**

Product owners, and especially those in accommodation, mentioned that making a living is hard work and it can be emotionally taxing too.

“There is the perception that the ideal life is to stay in the Midlands and run a B&B. A lot of folks are disillusioned when they realise what’s involved in running a B&B, the hours and what have you.” (CMM-D).

“You know a lot of people think oh, you open a craft shop, it is on your doorstep, but actually earning money to survive and having a decent living is very difficult.” (CMM-A).

“It is nice in many respects, but hard work and a good school for life ... in some cases, as people differ from each other, it can be a thankless task ...

when people are so unnecessarily rude ... you have to keep smiling and you have to satisfy your client.” (CBR-E)

Most of the route members interviewed were small business owners. Being part of a tourism route association brings the benefit of interaction with other business people on a collegial rather than a competitive level. Getting to know other product owners on the route provides the moral support and friendships that might not otherwise be there.

“When you are in your own business, you miss having colleagues and stuff, you run everything yourself. I’m a director there, so we have regular meetings. That’s very nice, you’re talking to people, you’re planning ... you’ve got colleagues to interact with.” (CMM-G).

“We are all friends, so it helps too. We are all doing the same thing at the same time and you can sympathise with each other. You know, you have people that don’t work in this kind of industry, they don’t actually appreciate what is involved.” (CMM-B).

Being part of the same route association helps members to *“get to know each other better, and the moment we get to know each other better, there’s more trust involved.” (CBR-D).*

- **Negative aspects of belonging to a tourism route**

As with all things, there is a downside to tourism routes. Unfortunately the *“... people who are driving these routes ... do not have marketing experience” (Enabler-C).* Tourism has become *“... very specialised ...”* and *“... that understanding and knowledge of how it works”* is essential (Enabler-C). For example, it was pointed out that one of the failings of both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route, is that *“... they have not sufficiently engaged the distribution channel, such as big tour operator groups, to sell on their experiences.” (Enabler-C).*

Because route associations are run by committees, it may be difficult to *“move things forward with eight directors with very different opinions because you come from vastly different backgrounds” (CMM-A).* As in any organisation run by volunteers, there will be *“some personality clashes and people who think they know how to do things better” (CMM-G),* but at the same time, the Midlands Meander has won an award for innovative

marketing which *“speaks wonders for the Meander itself and the fact that they have lasted for so long”* (Enabler-C). Serving on the route association’s committees or board is unpaid time, and it may be difficult to balance the demands of the business and the route association.

“While you’re desperately trying to make a living, to then split your time to sit on board meetings, which can last anything from three to five hours, is very tricky. Most venues are owner run as well, so the owner is also the receptionist. With restaurants the owner would be working in the front and the husband will be cooking in the back sort of thing.” (CMM-A).

Operating a route naturally incurs costs that have to be borne by the route members. Small businesses pay a once off fee of R2500⁹ to join the Midlands Meander, but it may be substantially more for a *“big hotel with hundreds of beds”* (CMM-A). The annual membership fee is R3500 and a further R2500 entitles members to a panel advertisement and map entry in the Midlands Meander brochure. Though the bill *“looks heavy when it comes in ... if you divide it into twelve monthly amounts, it is not that bad”* (CMM-A), or *“if you work it out, it is 56 cents a day or something ridiculous and you can put it on a debit order”* (CMM-D). What does become expensive for accommodation establishments on the Midlands Meander is the membership requirement that the establishment be graded by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA). Separate grading is required by the TGCSA for each category of accommodation and establishments with for example, a country house and self-catering cottages, will need to pay for multiple grading. Some very small businesses have found this requirement, together with the Meander fees, just too steep to afford.

Members of the Battlefields Route perceive Midlands Meander membership as being very expensive or costing *“huge money”* (CBR-G). The key reason being that the Battlefields Route has a municipal membership with some fees as low as R300 per annum, while product owners, who are not members, do not pay anything to the Battlefields Route Association. Their perception appears to be erroneously based on the R17,000 fee for additional advertising in the Midlands Meander brochure, which is an optional expense. At the same time it must be pointed out that whereas the Midlands Meander receives no

⁹ 2009 rates.

government subsidy at all, the association has sufficient finance to market the route effectively (CMM-A). The Battlefields Route on the other hand, relies on municipal funding, lacks the finance to carry out any noteworthy marketing and “struggles” to survive (CBR-G).

While the Midlands Meander office handles enquiries for the route as a whole and refers callers to route members, all establishments may not benefit equally from such referrals.

“I think they tend to favour certain places. I’ve heard other members saying: ‘We’ve never been rung up asking about availability, and I hear so and so is always being rung up.’ ” (CMM-E)

“There is this young girl doing booking at the reservations office ... she was very young and naïve and novice when she started, and of course our receptionist was very sweet and gentle with her ... so we got a lot of phone calls from this lovely young girl, which is delightful. I suppose she is influential in bringing clients to us here, but not in the correct way.” (CMM-A).

6.2.5 Perceived benefit of routes to non-members on the route

While not all tourism businesses in the area of a tourism route necessarily belong to the route association, they nevertheless benefit from the tourism demand generated by the route.

“The Midlands Meander and everything that’s part of it has drawn a lot of people into the area, and ja, there are a lot of places that aren’t on the Meander and they still do a lot of business because there’s trade going through” (CMM-I).

“There are a few people who don’t bother joining the Midlands Meander because there are so many of us ... that bring the people here anyway and they consider themselves on the route, so they don’t feel they have to pay to be in the Midlands Meander, which irritates the hell out of the rest of us.” (CMM-E).

However, by not belonging to the route association, such businesses may miss out on the support of other businesses that do belong to the route since route members would rather support other route members than outsiders.

“Whereas you find there are B&Bs on the Meander that aren’t members, Meander members are reluctant to send clientele to them. If you are full, you’d rather support Meander members.” (CMM-B).

It is evident that the benefits discussed above will not be gained unless the route meets with a measure of success. Marketing makes a significant contribution to such success, but attention first needs to turn to the role that the stakeholders play in the marketing of rural tourism routes.

6.3 THE ROLE PLAYERS IN EFFECTIVE TOURISM ROUTE MARKETING

Tourism routes are a means to collectively market a number of small destinations as a single entity (Rogerson, 2007:50). It is therefore essential that stakeholders, on all levels of involvement with the route, recognise the role that each one needs to play to support effective marketing of the route. This support starts with members and product owners on the route, but it is also required from the local and district municipalities, the provincial tourism marketing structures, and other role players that impact on route marketing activities.

“My opinion: Battlefields Route is not working. It is not working at all. The association is sort of not empowered. [It stems] from all stakeholders, I would say. Starting at your provincial level, and even local authority and to a certain extent unfortunately, and sadly, even the product owners. ... There’s almost a shift of responsibility. They say local authority must do it; local authority will say we can’t do it. No clear definition of the roles of the different stakeholders.” (Enabler-A).

6.3.1 Members and tourism product owners on the route.

In the Midlands Meander Association, product owners and accommodation establishments in particular, make up the majority of members. As seen in section 6.2.4 (p. 141), route members join the route association primarily to further their own business interests, but to make the route work, there needs to be a collective commitment to the success of the route as a marketing instrument.

“We are doing it together ... it needs to be collective, because even in your small something that you do, that can be part of the promoting of the whole experience” (CMM-F).

- **The membership base**

The question arises as to who should be the members of a tourism route. There is broad agreement that “mainstream” tourism businesses should be members of the route association. In KwaZulu-Natal, a tourism enterprise must register with Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN), but it cannot do so unless it is a member of the local community tourism organisation, and this also applies to route associations.

“To actually formally recognise an association, you need to have been recognised by the local government at the ground floor. So, for instance, you have to go to TKZN, Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, and you say: ‘No, we are a registered association.’ But they say: ‘No, you are not registered, you’re not recognised by your own municipality back at home.’ ” (Enabler-I).

Respondents preferred that members join voluntarily and resisted the idea of any form of *“forced registration”* where every tourism business has to join the route. There is already the *“forced situation where you’ve no option but to become a member of TKZN, and to become a member of TKZN, you have to be a member of the CTA [community tourism association] – that’s a legislated thing”* (CBR-B). A better option is the free market situation where *“if you show your membership that it is benefitting from the effort you are putting in, they’ll want to be members”* (CBR-B). The Midlands Meander has actually achieved a state where *“people phone in and say we want to join”* (CMM-C), whereas the Battlefields Route, where municipalities have to be members, has an on-going struggle to get the municipalities to pay their membership fees (CBR-B; CBR-G).

As far as the membership of tourism businesses is concerned, three points of view were expressed by respondents namely have the route be open to all comers, be selective to maintain standards and recognise that some product owners cannot afford to join the route. Some Battlefields Route members and respondents from the municipalities preferred the first option.

“We’re happy to have them all being members of the association.” (CBR-B).

“For us as a municipality, we’d love everyone in the area to be part of the route” [Enabler-I].

Some Battlefields Route members and almost all Midlands Meander members felt that the *“... route should definitely have a set of standards because you are going to put some sort of stamp of approval on things”* (CBR-A). The Midlands Meander built its reputation on the quality of service and arts and crafts offered, and members felt the route should be *“special”*, so there should be *“criteria right at the beginning and you should have to fit those criteria in order to join”* (CMM-A). At one stage the Meander did allow *“anybody to join and then you start getting a lot of rubbish also being advertised which dilutes the whole impact of the Meander route”* (CMM-A) because *“people might go to one particular outlet that maybe isn’t so good and they will be left with that impression as the whole Meander”* (CMM-A). The Meander brand’s core value is one of *“high quality; high quality crafting, high quality experiences, and for that reason they want their members to be graded by the TGCSA ... They want the route to uphold certain standards”* (Enabler-C). Admission criteria may act as an incentive for prospective members to raise their own standards in order to meet the route criteria.

“The route should be so recognized that people say ‘Oh, I’m desperate to get onto the route, I need to raise my level.’” (Enabler-G).

While protecting the route brand through standards, Midlands Meander members recognized that route membership may be financially beyond the reach of some product owners, especially micro businesses like artists and crafters who work on their own, and small B&Bs or someone *“with a cottage that sleeps two and don’t have enough money to go through the whole grading thing”* (CMM-E). The Midlands Meander partially solved this dilemma by supporting artists, sculptors and crafters with free advertising in their brochure and exhibition space provided at their Woza Woza Information Centre or at members’ venues (Midlands Meander Association, 2009:12-13). B&Bs in the Mpophomeni township, for which the grading requirement has been waived, are supported indirectly through the Meander membership of the Mpophomeni Zulu Tourism Experience, of which they form part. By the opening up of the Battlefields Route Association to the private sector, some members fear that it may now become the kind of organisation where, *“its members will dictate where the money goes ... and not do something that’s going to help Joe Soap previously disadvantaged; where every one of my cents goes to getting back for me”*

(CBR-G). The Midlands Meander has proven that it need not be so and indeed have a number of initiatives to help the poor communities in the Midlands as discussed in sections 6.2.3 (p. 136) and 7.2.2 (p. 205).

There was a plea for routes to “... *open up their membership to anybody who is committed to making a success of the route*” (Enabler-C). The route should extend its membership to partners that help to make the route a success and “... *partners don’t necessarily have to be establishments that are primary tourism focussed, but it could also be secondary, that are aligned to tourism, those businesses that add to the process of developing a successful tourism environment*” (Enabler-C). Such partners could include “... *petrol stations, estate agents, or what have you, as long as they are committed to ... portray ... a positive image to the tourist that enters the area*” (Enabler-C). These partners would naturally include the local municipality.

One should also accept that not all businesses and not even all tourism businesses, may want to belong to the route.

“We would seriously like them to become members and we have sort of approached them and we do e-mail them on a yearly basis when it’s time for new applicants ... and then it is generally up to them.” (CMM-C).

“I ask myself, this is someone whose business is buzzing and they are not part of it [Midlands Meander]. There seems to be those that are in and those that are out and I have not been able to work it out why that is.” (CMM-H).

- **A route needs a structured body to drive it**

There is “a need for a tourism route to have a structured body that’s driving it. So either a tourism association, a Section 21 company, a co-operative, [and] within that framework you’re going to have a committee that is responsible for driving that marketing.” (Enabler-E). Thus it is the “management of the route that takes responsibility for marketing” (Enabler-B), and members do expect them to take that responsibility.

“I think it is probably the office, not the members. I mean we pay our subscription to have the marketing done for us. I suppose that’s the way eh, people are ... that’s part of the reason for joining the Midlands Meander so that you didn’t have to then spend a lot of time doing your own marketing.” (CMM-E).

“No, I think some of them are quite happy to let someone else do the work, and reap the benefits, as long as it does not cost them too much to become members” (CBR-B).

However, the route structure still consists of members and *“in order for the route to function properly, you need for its members to be active” (Enabler-A)* and *“50 really good members are better than 200 members who are not really interested” (Enabler-A)*. On the other hand, there is the risk that one passionate individual *“unfortunately becomes the whole route association”* and the rest sit back, as has happened in the Battlefields Route Association in more than one instance (Enabler-A). The Midlands Meander Association, which is a Section 21 company, has a membership of 180 members and is managed by an elected Board of Directors that meets once a month (CMM-C). The Battlefields Route is an association run by an elected committee that also meets once a month, and which is made up of representatives from the district and local municipalities, Kwa-Zulu Natal Tourist Guides Association (Battlefields Region) and other interest groups (CBR-B).

- **Members’ responsibility regarding the marketing of the route**

To market the route, *“... somebody’s got together in this route ... to be able to put this thing together and say: ‘Look what we’ve got to tell you’ “ (CBR)*. Some respondents see marketing of the route as an entity, as the *“responsibility of the route management” (Enabler-B)*, and the responsibility thus *“lies in a body of people that have been voted to do that job and is actively committed to doing it” (Enabler-E)*. Indeed, as was mentioned before, some route members *“are quite happy to let someone else do the work and reap the benefits as long as it does not cost them too much to become members” (CBR-B)*. But marketing is not a function that can be ring-fenced and the full responsibility delegated to a committee alone. The members also have to market the route along with their own establishments, and some do seem to realise this.

“You can’t just join an association and expect them to do all of it. No, I think it is a joint thing. I think for me, the fact that I am on a route, I can’t just leave it to the office to publicize it, I will publicize it as much as possible because you are a small part of a whole. We all have to publicize it, and how.” (CMM-A).

“I know no one can paddle the boat better than you paddle it yourself, so the responsibility is on all the people to actually get out there and paddle the boat.

And don't expect someone else to do it, because if you do, you'll go out of business." (CBR-B).

For the route to be viable, there has *"to be ownership from the people on the ground as well, you've got to involve them in the proper process"* (Enabler-J), but *"for the route to function properly, you need for its members to be active"* (Enabler-A). A viable route *"should be able to contribute to the marketing of that particular facility, you shouldn't rely on government subsidy for it"* (Enabler-F). Unfortunately, the importance of marketing and the need to adequately fund route marketing is not always recognised.

"I think one of the core problems in tourism in South Africa is that there is a general lack of awareness of the power of marketing and the need to invest in marketing. And I think that's why sometimes routes struggle to raise the fees that they need in order to be successful." (Enabler-C).

In the Battlefields *"there is almost an expectation in that area that the government must provide"*. (Enabler-F). Similarly some people look to the province or even South African Tourism to market the route, and although these authorities may assist, it is the members that drive the route marketing effort, or ignore it to their own detriment. In the Battlefields Region another route, the Nguni Route, lacked marketing support by its members and as a result did not meet with much success.

"Everybody got together and they all signed up and it was all wonderful and you've now got a Nguni route and everybody sat back because Open Africa was running it. Open Africa are merely facilitators, they're not implementers and drivers of the process. ... And hence it just sort of died." (Enabler-E).

"They approached us and they said: 'You can join for free, so it is not going to cost you anything, so what are you going to lose?' So, you have all these people who then agree to go onto this [Nguni] route, but nobody wants to do any work because they are not paying for it. So then they turn round and start throwing accusations because nothing happens. But nothing will happen if you don't make it happen." (CBR-C).

In the end the members have to take responsibility for the marketing of the route, individually and through the route structure.

"If we didn't do it ourselves, nobody would." (CBR-D).

“That’s one of the important key things in a route that works, because you’ve got that passion, someone wants to make it work, they can identify that road is a problem ...and put their municipality under pressure.” (Enabler-G)

In the Midlands Meander, where the route is effectively marketed, there is a realisation that *“obviously, each individual has to do their own marketing”* (CMM-G) as well. The Association does *“more of a generic marketing for the Meander than specific places”* (CMM-G), and *“can only work for the better of the whole community, they can’t promote individual members as such, so it is still important that one gets up there and does your own marketing”* (CMM-D). Joining the Midlands Meander is not *“the be all and end all of everything, that they’ll market you”* (CMM-D). Members would be wise not to *“rely totally on a route marketing initiative”* (Enabler-C), and *“route marketing should only be one element of the marketing communication mix” albeit “a very powerful element”* (Enabler-C).

6.3.2 Local non-tourism businesses

In the towns, the non-tourism businesses most likely to encounter tourists are filling stations that not only provide refuelling and vehicle repair services, but often also have a shop and restroom facilities. Clean toilets are an essential tourist amenity. Since garages are usually situated on the main thoroughfares through the town and therefore easy to find, they provide an important service to tourists. They are open 24 hours a day, unlike tourist information centres (TICs), museums, and other attractions that are only open for part of the day. So, although Talana Museum has 42 toilets on the premises, they are not accessible after closing time (CBR-A).

Another important function fulfilled by petrol attendants is providing directions to travellers, a task that they are *“excellent at, because petrol attendants generally know where everything is”* (CBR-B). This was also the experience of the researcher, especially along the Battlefields Route. Both Ladysmith and Dundee have run training courses for petrol attendants and various other front line staff.

“We did last year train people like petrol attendants and we teach them how to give directions to the tourists you know. And we even give them some pamphlets with some directions on B&Bs and that stuff.” (Enabler-A).

“We ran a training course one year for traffic officers, petrol pump attendants, policemen and hotel and accommodation receptionists. The first thing I did was teach them to smile. The second thing we did, we managed to convince our traffic officers not to fine somebody in a foreign registration vehicle. You can fine the locals, but you let the foreigners off by saying: “Listen, welcome to our area but please don’t do it again.” (CBR-A).

6.3.3 The local community

A rural tourism route in South Africa may traverse small towns, agricultural land, and tribal land. Each of these areas represents communities that may be affected by route activities and they will be considered in turn.

- **Poor township and rural tribal communities**

The local disadvantaged communities’ support for tourism is vital, but they may neither appreciate the tourism potential of resources in their area, nor understand the repercussions on tourism of defacing these resources. At Howick Falls, perhaps the biggest tourism natural attraction in the Midlands, there is an on-going problem with litter and with residents from a nearby settlement doing their laundry just above the waterfall, in spite of repeatedly having been chased away and the area being fenced off by Howick Municipality (Enabler-I).

Vandalising of war graves is a problem that is specific to the Battlefields Route where battle sites are often located in deep rural areas with very poor communities.

“People are destroying all those monuments. I won’t say people like the stone on the graves or all these monuments. They thought maybe there is some money, like there is that belief that people that died long time ago, buried with their belongings, so money, all that stuff. So, some of them has been dug so as tough they find money.” (CBR-A).

Furthermore, there is a residual problem relating to South Africa’s political past that has to be overcome before the entire community can take ownership of the historical heritage represented by all the Battlefields. The community *“also of course get the story that they*

are all colonial wars, what do we care?" (CBR-A). Some saw it as *"an anti-apartheid thing, you know, because it belonged to the previous era and it had to be destroyed"* (CBR-A). Fortunately there are leaders in the community who have a broader vision.

"And yet, you go to somebody like Dr Buthelezi, and he'll tell you the Anglo-Zulu War is what made the Zulu famous all over the whole world. And [that is] one of the things that we tell you when you are on the Battlefields." (CBR-G).

Another problem in the Battlefields is the theft of signage and fencing, both of which provide building and fencing material to poor communities in rural areas. Since there may be few landmarks in these areas, visitors rely on directional and attraction signage to find sites.

"They didn't know where Bhambatha Lodge is. They passed Bhambatha Ambush Rock, they went right up to Kids Drift, and from Kids Drift back past the Bhambatha Ambush Rock and then to the Nkome, because there's no signage. Somebody has taken it." (CBR-F).

"You want to get to the Prince Imperial and ... the sign's up for a week to two and the sign's down for a week or three. They use the pole for building in a hut or building something somewhere." (CBR-D).

"Some of those people, who I can say who are arrogant, doesn't know anything about what this sign is standing for and they just take off the signage or they used to steal the poles to make their fencing." (CBR-I).

Fencing is not just a problem at attractions such as war graves, but in tribal areas where roads are not fenced off, cattle and goats on the roads pose a danger to traffic, especially at night, as in rural areas, roads are not lit.

"Mostly there were fences before. People are removing all those fences." (Enabler-A).

One empathetic respondent put the problems experienced with rural people into perspective:

"Man, let's not be too harsh. When you've got nothing, you don't think further than today. If you don't feel for people like that, then do we have a place anywhere? If you've got absolutely nothing, those little niceties [like tourism] don't even come into your life." (CBR-D).

The key to community support lies in education: *“You need to sensitise them, you need to educate them, but it has serious implications, financial being one ... capacity is another”*. (Enabler-A). Tourism education and training is a function *“that is supposed to be performed by the Provincial Department of Tourism”*, but apparently the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Act is not clear on whose responsibility this is (Enabler-B). This function includes *“the issue of tourism awareness in our local communities [so that] that they do accept and embrace this concept of tourism”* (Enabler-B). Sensitive negotiations with tribal authorities, who in turn influence the community, can overcome cultural beliefs that may hamper tourism development, for example certain areas may be regarded as *“no go areas in some rural areas, so they come across tourists and they show some negative attitude to them because they perceive their area as an area that should not be gone into”* (Enabler-B). Another productive education channel is schools programmes *“about tourism, how does it work and does it benefit people, and who are the major people that bring money to the community”* (Enabler-E).

- **Developed rural communities**

In order to carry on their tourism business in the more developed rural areas, tourism product owners need the understanding and co-operation of the neighbouring farmers as well as the rural “lifestyle” community who live on farms, but do not necessarily farm the land.

“They live here because of the ambience. Ja, our boards became a big contention. We in our little valley here was the first one to put that board up on the shop there, and by our gate. They actually wrote a letter to the newspaper to say ... this is disgusting for our valley. They don’t want to see boards ... And I’m sorry, they eventually get used to it, the locals around me.” (CMM-B).

Rural tourism and agriculture share the rural environment which means that they compete for scarce resources, such as water, to ply their respective trades, and the situation can easily polarise the two interest groups.

“I’m now having people for Sunday lunch looking over a stagnant pool which is not very nice at all. And it turns out that there are farmers up top storing water for their cattle, etc, etc. And [accommodation establishment], they were in dire straits because they had no water for their hotel ... And as much as I can understand they were battling with their livestock, we were also having to

battle with our tourism. Their livestock is their livelihood, but tourism is our livelihood. So, and as we are all working for the same thing, our livelihood, and it very much became a Meander versus the farmer thing and I think that is sad.” (CMM-A).

More can be achieved if the two communities work together and this does seem to happen eventually. When tourism providers get together with other local people in the rural area, they can get things done to their mutual benefit, for example getting roads repaired.

“Two years ago ... they brought all the stone for this, and they dumped it at all these strategic points at the road and just left it. And at night it became so dangerous, you’re suddenly faced with huge mounds. And [name] from [tourism establishment] went and said: ‘What is the problem? This is now dangerous. When are you going to spread this?’ And they said: ‘No money for diesel.’ So, they all got together as the locals and they said: ‘Here’s the money for diesel, will you please spread the stuff.’ ” (CMM-B).

The understanding between rural tourism businesses and their neighbours needs to be mutual. Just as neighbouring farmers need to appreciate that their actions can impact on the satisfaction that the visitors experience, such as weeds blocking a view, tourism operators need to remember that farmland is not common property and that boundaries need to be respected by visitors and operators alike.

“If you stop at that board over there, the view down this valley is unbelievable ... and because we cut from our board up and on to the pavement, cut all the bugweed and poisoned it, the guy on that farm said: ‘That is my bugweed, will you leave it alone.’ ... But he actually got over that too, because he now phones and says: ‘I see this has got out of hand, why don’t you send your boy up with the brush cutters,’ Ha, ha, ha”. (CMM-B).

“If you want to organise proper walks you’ve got to get permission from all the farmers who are not comfortable with every Tom, Dick and Harry walking through with all their prize cattle and all that.” (CMM-A).

6.3.4 District municipalities

One of the key functions of both district and local municipalities is the promotion of tourism within their particular areas, but tourism is not necessarily their main priority. Provincial authorities in KwaZulu-Natal deal with district municipalities and not directly with local municipalities. The district municipalities therefore form an important conduit for funding and communication between the province and the local municipalities with respect to tourism. However, the way in which the district municipalities carry out their role is problematic.

- **District municipalities do not appreciate the potential contribution of tourism**

The lack of support for tourism in general seems to indicate that the district municipalities do not always appreciate the economic impact of tourism and the contribution that a route such as the Battlefields Route can make in economic development.

“A district Municipality has three legs, they’ve got to do their development, one of them is tourism, but tourism is a very little bit, a sort of half leg.” (CBR-G).

The Battlefields Route was established long before the two-tier municipal structure was implemented and there is a perception amongst stakeholders that the district municipalities *“never really quite understood or [are] willing to take on the responsibility to continue this project (CBR-G). Some district municipalities “don’t give us any monetary support at all and still expect things to work.” (CBR-B). The situation needs to be addressed by getting “the district municipalities to realise that we’re bringing a vast amount of tourism income, probably most of their tourism income, and that for the little bit that they’re asked to support it”. (CBR-G). The route thus aids the district municipality in fulfilling their legislated obligation to promote tourism.*

Where the district municipality does embrace tourism as a development strategy, both the funding and the support is forthcoming both for tourism and for the Battlefields Route Association. This is the case in the Zululand District Municipality, where they have realised the tourism potential of the Zulu culture and appreciate the role of the Battlefields Route in stimulating interest in Zulu cultural attractions.

"In Zululand they are spending what's it, R25 million on rebuilding Dingane's kraal and the orientation and all the rest of it there. That they see [to it] that there is highly equipped tourism interest. They are talking about tarring that section of the R66 which is untarred coming out of Pongola. Take the people off the coastal route and see something else." (CBR-G).

"A motivated council like Zululand [District Municipality], who do appreciate that the Battlefields has created an interest in Zulu culture, [say:] 'We're booming in Zulu culture, we must continue to support the Battlefields'. They give us not only their R5000 a year membership fee, they gave us another R35000 as a grant today. (CBR-G).

- **District municipalities need to demonstrate their support for tourism**

For the Battlefields Route, with a membership of five district municipalities and fifteen towns, the district municipalities play a particularly significant role because they control the tourism funding received from the province through TKZN, the KwaZulu-Natal provincial tourism authority. However, it does seem as if this money does not always reach the local municipalities, and that it is not an isolated occurrence either.

"Now, the money goes to the district municipality who is then supposed to distribute it and it sometimes disappears and it doesn't seem to get to the right places" (CBR-G).

"You must remember uThukela [District Municipality] also gets funding from province for tourism that also doesn't filter down." (Enabler-A).

As with funding, TKZN communicates with the district municipalities and not directly with the local authorities. It is not only the funding that does not reach the local municipalities, but communication also does not go through to them, which means that even if a local municipality may have wanted to participate in an initiative, they are not in a position to do so.

"KZN Tourism as a provincial authority would communicate with their district municipalities. So, notices of meetings, notices of training, anything that has got to do with tourism lands on uThukela District Municipality and doesn't filter down then to us and we then we fight: 'Why have you left us out? We're not getting anything.' And then they say: 'But you don't attend meetings, you're not interested.'" (Enabler).

Part of the tourism funding would be used to pay the Battlefields Route membership fees, but not all the district municipalities do so. This a complaint levelled against both uThukela and uMzinyati District Municipalities, in spite of the significance of Ladysmith and the fact that two of the most visited sites fall under uMzinyati. Non-payment of membership fees leaves the Battlefields Route in a dire financial position.

“And it’s a big struggle at the moment. The Battlefields Route almost went broke, and at the beginning of this year [2009] we had about R4000 in our kitty.” (CBR-G).

Non-payment of fees by the district municipalities is also seen as *“not right”* since these municipalities benefit from the tourism that the Battlefields Route generates in their areas.

“That eh, brings a bit of a confusion and a frustration because we as a route, we can’t take one municipality because of non-payment because they benefit from the route, ... the tourists that come and stay over. The rates they collect from the guest houses, from the retail, from the restaurants, that is what the municipality make money out of if they don’t pay their membership fees.” (CBR-I).

“I believe that there should be an active, supported committee that can do it. The finance for it has got to come from the district municipalities that earn the income from the traveller. They are earning the tax and all the rest of it that comes from it.” (CBR-G).

The situation is quite different in the Midlands where the Midlands Meander Association is private sector driven. The route association does not look to the district municipality for funding, but finances its operations from member contributions. The uMngeni District Municipality does support the Midlands Meander Association financially, but unlike the situation in the Battlefields, in a manner that is mutually co-operative and willing rather than reliant (route) and reluctant (district municipalities).

“As a municipality we provide the operational support of the association. We also assist with marketing. We do joint marketing ventures, that’s where we have trade shows that are taking place overseas. As a municipality, we pay for all the expenses and then they go and advertise. And the question we all know, that whatever spinoff, that is for the whole area.” (Enabler-I).

The uMngeni District Municipality has joined the Midlands Meander Association as a member and has a seat on the Board of Directors. This relationship has not always been so amicable, and the two parties had to break down arrogance and suspicion through engagement in the District Tourism Forum *“for the greater benefit”*. (Enabler-I).

“Up until ... three years ago, the association and the municipality were not seeing eye to eye. Because you have a decision made by the district municipality which was so arrogant: ‘You don’t want us, you don’t want to come to our side.’ And the Midlands Meander association were saying: ‘OK wait a minute, why is the municipality now wanting to join us? What do they want out of it?’ ” (Enabler-I).

6.3.5 Local municipalities

The route association’s relationship with the local municipality is a much closer one than with the district municipality simply because there is a greater degree of interaction and inter-dependence between the local municipality and product owners on the route. The relationship is in many ways more problematic and some of these problems are examined below.

- **Lack of appreciation of tourism’s contribution to economic welfare**

Respondents complained that the local politicians, and even tourism officials, do not really understand what tourism is about. Firstly, there is a lack of understanding of the contribution that tourism in general and a rural tourism route in particular, can make towards the economic activity and the municipal tax base in the area.

“They need to understand that the people who are contributing the money to the local authority, in other words the businesses that are paying the rates and taxes, if those businesses are not supported, they may go out of business and your tax base will shrink and then you can scratch your head and say: ‘Well, I wonder where that went to?’ ”.(CBR-B).

Secondly, the people who make the decisions are not always familiar with the tourism sector and its products, and therefore may have little understanding of the implications of their decisions.

“Only problem that lies with tourism are the people, or the officials who are appointed to officiate that department, because they are clueless to what is happening within the tourism industry and then they’ll come at the end, they say: ‘That component is demanding so much.’ Of which we’ve had to see that kind of a person has never even been to one of the family restaurants in town.” (CBR-I).

“Maybe you need to put a sweetener, [it] does not mean a bribe, what it means is that you expose people that are decision makers to the type of industry that you are going to build. If you go to Natal Spa, in order for them to see the effect of tourism, the effect of Natal Spa, organise that you host them for that weekend.” (CBR-F).

In the third place, local authorities, in some instances, do not seem to appreciate the role played by the tourism route association in attracting tourism to the area and therefore do not understand why they should fund such an organisation.

“I think the big problem is getting the local authority to understand why they should be funding the association. What the benefits are to the people, because you know, they’re sort of crying out we want jobs, we are going to create jobs and blah-di-blah-di-blah, but they don’t bother to put the money in and if they don’t put the money in, the organisation can’t operate effectively.” (CBR-B).

“I don’t think they understand it. When you go and do your annual budget and you see the Battlefields Route Association wants this amount for you to be a member and you just go through the items and you’ve got to balance the book, you say: ‘Ag, we won’t pay them this year, we don’t need to be a member.’ So you get marked off the list and you don’t get your money. So they think that bit of money might be better spent on some other area of the budget.” (CBR-B).

- **Tourism is not a priority in the local municipality**

Looking at the two routes in this study in the context of the rural areas where they are located, it is no surprise that tourism is not the top priority on the agenda of the local municipalities. Some of the poorest districts in South Africa are situated in the Battlefields region such as Msinga and Nquthu local municipalities, and in the midst of the Midlands

Meander there are very poor communities in Mpophomeni, Lidgetton and the townships attached to Howick and Mooi River. More pressing demands that have an immediate impact on the quality of life of the poor are therefore addressed before tourism is considered.

“Ja, there’s always more other priorities like providing people with homes and providing them with like running water, that takes preference over tourism.” (Enabler-A).

“Even their will, they do not have the will to do it. What they are interested in, they are interested in issues that relate to water, electricity, houses, construction of roads, but the issue of [tourism] marketing is not what they think they should do.” (Enabler-B).

While the above is understandable, respondents felt that the potential of investment in tourism to uplift poor communities is not appreciated to the full, even though tourism may present a long term solution to the very problems that are now pushed ahead of it.

“There doesn’t seem to be as much interest coming from the current councillors as there was from the previous councillors, councillors up to 1999. They don’t seem to be quite as enthusiastic. I think they don’t quite appreciate or realise where the potential in tourism onto battlefields lies. There’s a whole lot of money that could be made.” (CBR-B).

“That’s now the problem that we are experiencing, where they prioritise the items in their agenda or their budget, but when it comes to the delivery, they seem to push it under the table because they are clueless to what is happening [in tourism].” (CBR-I).

The low priority given to tourism by the local municipalities is underlined by the fact that the municipality may not have tourism as a separate budget item. For example, at the Emnambithi-Ladysmith Local Municipality, funding does not filter down from the uThukela District Municipality with the result that *“finances are extremely limited”* and with tourism included in the operating budget, staff have *“got to fight”* for every tourism expenditure, and this in a municipality where they mayor is *“very passionate about tourism”* (Enabler-A).

“But until the year before last, the budget for uMzinyathi District Municipality was less than 1% of total budget ... There are only two drivers of the economy in this area, tourism and agriculture. And so therefore they suddenly, it’s taken

a year now, I think their budget something like tripled last year ... there's been a tourism strategy done now.” (CBR-C).

The low priority is further reflected in the non-payment of the Battlefields Route Association membership fees by some local municipalities, as was also the case with district municipalities. In spite of the fact that the fees are in fact quite modest, the Route is obliged to consider lowering them just to get all the municipalities to participate.

“But our last meeting we had that some of the smaller municipalities had not paid their membership fees.” (CBR-I).

“Financially the Battlefields Route it's battling on the fence that eh, some of the district municipality, they didn't contribute or pay the membership fee. But we've decided that we must try, in order to get all the role players in the field, we must put a nominal fee for the district and local municipalities, and well for the museums that want to be part of the Battlefields Route.” (CBR-I).

- **Tourism development and planning is lacking**

Local municipalities are seen as not doing enough about tourism, though *“they [Umvoti] are starting to show some signs of maybe being interested in tourism, but they have not shown that interest to a level where I would call it an optimal” (CBR-F)*. Many municipalities have neither tourism departments nor separate tourism budgets. For example, in Ladysmith tourism is included in the *“operating budget”* and at the time of the fieldwork, the town had no a tourism officer, let alone a department. Tourism development plans have been non-existent in the past, but at least some municipalities have appointed consultants to assist in the development of tourism strategies.

“It's, it's a very comprehensive strategy to address the lack of marketing, the lack of product, uhm, and generally just to give guidelines, I guess, to the municipality to know what they should be concentrating on and how they should look for money, because nobody knew what to do, nobody knew where to do it, or anything like that. There was no structured tourism that took place before last year. You go and look for the funds with that document. Nobody has done that.” (CBR-C).

- **Politics and corruption permeate tourism decisions**

Helping the poor is clearly not the only concern in taking decisions that may affect tourism. Other considerations such as personal gain and political favour influence decisions.

“It is an unfortunate fact that the politicians, if they can’t get the money in their own back pocket, can’t see the value in tourism.” (CBR-A).

“I think the biggest problem really in Ladysmith has been [that] too many role players are involved in it for personal gain as opposed to the benefit of the whole of Ladysmith, to be quite honest with you.” (CBR-H).

Another factor to take into account is that politicians in the local councils have to toe the party political line. Where district and local municipalities have different political parties in the majority, it may lead to poor co-operation between the two levels of local government and it may affect the funding made available to the local municipality.

“The district municipality up until now from the last the elections, local government elections, has been governed by an IFP led council. ... It’s still IFP, and [the local] municipality has a majority of the ANC led council....So it actually, so it really is party politics — yes it is ... Officials would communicate, on the official level we communicate, but when it comes to politics, and you know, the politicians, our lives are ruled by the politicians unfortunately.” (Enabler-A).

“In spite of her [the mayor] being passionate, you must remember she is only a figurehead. The whole council decides. We have 50 councillors. Well, they’re also very passionate about tourism. We get their support in our projects. But, financially, as a priority, tourism is not enjoying, you know, the hot spots.” (Enabler-A).

Politicians make decisions with the view to re-election, and rewarding supporters is part of their strategy. The result is that decisions and appointments are sometimes made to advantage certain communities and individuals instead of for the greater good of the whole region.

“They can’t always see it, and ja, it’s about benefitting those who you know. And one of these projects will go ahead in an area that is quite beautiful and could be run, but they give it to the wrong people. And those wrong people are often connected.” (Enabler-G).

“I think you need to change the municipal officials’ mind sets. They are so busy fighting each other for possessions within their organisations and within the municipality and within their constituencies that they sometimes lose sight of what they are trying to do as far as promoting the local economy is concerned.” (CBR-H).

The result of political appointments is that job titles do not necessarily mean that the incumbent has the knowledge and expertise in tourism that the title implies or that the job requires,

“They do not have capacity, they do not have tourism officials in their municipality although they usually call them development officers and managers, but specifically for tourism they do not have capacity.” (Enabler-B).

One of the advantages of a private sector driven route such as the Midlands Meander, is that there is no party political rivalry and political nepotism to influence decisions. These routes are driven by their members rather than by politicians and officials.

“Midlands Meander, and I think there, because they’ve got autonomy, ... it’s not influenced by politics. They are more private sector driven and more product owned.” (Enabler-A).

“If I’m absolutely realistic, generally, the routes that are successful, the municipalities don’t have a say in them. Only once they become successful, then the municipalities will allocate a certain amount of their tourism budget to marketing or something because now they’ve seen it. After the route has been established, to then present it to municipality; not municipality getting them working together at all.” (Enabler-G).

- **The lack of a business orientation in local municipalities is problematic**

It is not only tourism expertise that is lacking in local municipalities, they also lack sound business orientation.

“How many of those tourism authorities have ever run a business, any business, let alone a tourism business.” (Enabler-J).

“I think they haven’t yet come to accept that they have to run themselves; like running a business of sorts ... So as you research, you can’t give them money

because they can't even master their own, promote their own municipality, town. So, to look up to them to take responsibility for marketing is something that cannot work as a business, they do not have capacity." (Enabler-B).

The lack of business discipline reflects in municipal employee behaviour, which is in stark contrast with the private sector members of the Committee of the Battlefields Route Association who pay their own way as volunteers, while municipal employees, by all indications, do not. The committee meets regularly in Dundee and for one representative from the private sector, that is *"a 120 kilometre return trip and I do it out of my own pocket"* (CBR-G). Municipal staff are *"given mileage to go there, but still they hardly ever go."* (CBR-G). However, *"everybody loves its [the government's] conferences, it loves Indaba where its staffers can go and live in a big hotel, but they can't market what they have."* (CBR-G) So government is seen to *"talk big about tourism, and everybody should be involved"*, but it *"puts very little into it"* (CBR-G).

The appointment of the "wrong people" referred to above, leads to apparent incompetence in the local municipalities and frustration amongst tourism product owners, who were not shy to express their feelings.

"We had a meeting where we got all stakeholders together and said alright, we're going to discuss this. And they all had electronic copies of the strategy, and we went into the meeting and I and Ndaba Khoza from TKZN were the only two who had read it." (CBR-C)

"Local government is incompetent. People who run local government, they have never been trained, they do not understand what they are handling, they think that the money just comes off a money tree somewhere and they don't realise that if they don't stop trying to kill the golden goose, eventually the golden goose will get so sick that it will stop producing the gold and they will have nothing." (CBR-B).

Tourism product owners from time to time have no choice but to interact with the municipalities since they *"can't do anything without them ... because whatever development you do, you can't do [it] without the permission from the municipality."* (CMM-F). There is unhappiness with *"so much red tape and you know everything has got to be another council resolution and you put it on council minutes and it does not make it*

to the next council meeting and so on and so on.” (CBR-G). The pace of service delivery is described as “very, very slow” resulting in product owners not getting “what we want in a given time” and causing them “to lose, sometimes momentum, because they make us lose very good people, because they [do] not appreciate enough just to wait and wait, what we’re told to wait” (CMM-F). The municipalities also make it difficult for new businesses to establish themselves in the area.

“If they want to increase the interest in the area, they would need to look at the restriction that’s actually placed on people starting up and bringing business in. And they need to clean up their act on being more efficient.” (CMM-H).

“It is lack of vision, of leadership, a lack of accountability.” (CBR-H).

A number of district and local municipalities have appointed consultants to assist with tourism strategy formulation. That in itself is not a problem, but local tourism operators do not seem to be invited to participate in these projects, even though they are willing to contribute their experience, local knowledge and insight into tourism in the area.

“The company that was appointed to do a whole tourism exercise on [town], the report, I got a copy of the report that was just so full of flaws it was scary ... I think a lot of the time they are excluding role players that have knowledge of the industry.” (CBR-H).

The result is that investment may be channelled into projects that promise job creation and upliftment, but that may not succeed and the jobs may not be realised.

“The tourism authorities, they don’t speak to the operators who have experience, they don’t use that experience. They are so busy trying to uplift an area, that won’t necessarily work.” (Enabler-G).

“So who’s going to want to zap down the Thukela Mountain from the top to the bottom into that mess down there? ... That’s the kind of thing they are thinking of putting money into over here ... to me it’s not viable, sustainable or make a difference to the people of the area.” (CBR-C).

- **Lack of co-operation across political boundaries hamper routes**

Tourism routes, by their very nature, cross municipal boundaries. This means that different municipalities need to co-operate to market the route which is a requirement that is not always appreciated by the municipalities involved.

“They haven’t always understood the need to co-operate and work together and there is this problem between, we’re only going to spend our money in our district and our local municipality. We’re not interested in what happens in somebody else’s, and you know, the more we try and say that this route crosses all those borders. It has taken a long time to get this message across.” (CBR-A).

“As a local authority, you know, we have a district municipality...and one of their key functions is also the promotion of tourism in the five local authorities that belong to them. And, unfortunately, because of politics, there is absolutely no co-operation.” (Enabler-A).

The lack of an integrated tourism strategy for the region at district and local municipal level exacerbates the problem on CTA level as the CTAs need the support of their municipalities.

“I think obviously the various town tourism organisations and associations probably need to get together and set some sort of vision, some sort of blueprint as to what they are trying to achieve ... but for that to happen they obviously need the support of their local municipalities. Their municipalities aren’t prepared to support them.” (CBR-H).

Greater co-operation can bring benefits of increased tourism to all parties involved. For example, the two routes in this study can *“feed off each other enormously”* through *“word-of-mouth which is far more powerful than a website, than a brochure”* (Enabler-E). Thus tourism product owners on the one route can recommend the other route.

“Ideally what we would like, if someone from Britain wants to see a bit of this and a bit of that, the Battlefields guides would say, hang on, wouldn’t you like to experience a bit of something else and put together a package that is far more than just the Battlefields.” (Enabler-E).

- **Destination marketing by local municipalities is seen as inadequate**

Since the responsibility of the local municipality is to promote their destination, the question arises as to how well are the destinations along the route actually marketed? The lack of commitment to tourism is apparent and respondents were not very positive about the marketing endeavours of local municipalities. Municipalities are seen as passive in

their marketing insofar as *“all they do is, they would have to pay for part of the marketing done by TKZN”* (CBR-C) and they *“would go to Indaba and they would go to the local domestic show and they’ll take out ads every now and again”* (CBR-H). One respondent even doubted that the municipality does much beyond producing a brochure.

“But actively marketing? I can honestly tell you there’s nothing that I’m aware of what we actually do to market [town]. Nobody has communicated with us.” (CBR-H).

Ladysmith Municipality *“themselves admit that they have messed up tourism ... because that is not what their function is.”* (Enabler- E). However, tourism *“does not belong to the government, it is private sector that is driving tourism”* (Enabler- E), and furthermore, it is also *“driven by accommodation establishments...[that] do all sorts of funny things to get people here”* (CBR-C).

Part of the problem lies in a lack of marketing capacity in terms of staff with marketing expertise.

“Eish, I used not to believe that our local authorities are up to scratch in terms of capacity. It’s worse when it comes to marketing.” (Enabler-B).

“I think the biggest problem is they haven’t applied their minds and put the infrastructure in place. They actually haven’t appointed the right people to market the town.” (CBR-H).

In contrast, Vryheid Local Municipality not only promotes itself as a destination, but actively promotes tourism in the community through a schools program to create awareness and understanding of tourism.

“Each ward councillor invites two or three schools and then the funds will be used [for] hiring the Kombi’s to take the pupils from their schools, show them the tourism office, the museum, the municipal building and then they were so lucky to see the council chamber; how it’s working. And then finishing that day they go out to environment centre where they can have an idea of tourism how it works, ecotourism... Because they don’t know even why that hill was named Lancaster...and then you can see in front of the church square there’s two monuments about it and then they need to be told about it. And then I tell them.” (CBR-I).

- **Promoting the route versus promoting the destination**

The local municipalities' mandate is to “*promote the whole tourism in the area, which automatically involves the route, but not just the route, as actually we have other attractions that are not part of the route*” (Enabler-I). Thus marketing of the route is included in the marketing of the destination as a whole and the local municipality therefore has a responsibility to promote the route, just as it would any other tourist attraction in the destination. One would therefore expect to find information about the routes in the municipal area in the promotional material of the municipality.

Destination brochures are produced by most towns in the Midlands and the Battlefields and these may be purely tourism related (Ladysmith Tourism, Not dated; Nottingham Road Tourism, Not dated; Vryheid Tourism, Not dated b) or may be aimed at a broader market, that includes industry and investors (Tourism Newcastle, Not dated). Brochures typically contain a map of the town and/or area, a brief history, descriptions of places of interest, and a host of advertisements by tourism product owners. Smaller destinations in the same local municipality may be included in the brochure of a larger destination as is the case with Colenso and Van Reenen, which are included in the Ladysmith brochure (Ladysmith Tourism, Not dated: 18-22) and Paulpietersburg which is included in the Vryheid brochure (Vryheid Tourism, Not dated b). On the other hand, some local municipalities do minimal destination marketing, such as Greytown, which does not even have a brochure:

“But eh, there is no brochure, there is no Greytown brochure, I’ve never seen one. There is no brochure which is talking about Greytown, why you should come to Greytown, what is so attractive in Greytown. There is no such.”

(CBR-F)

None of the destination brochures procured by the researcher promoted the Midlands Meander or the Battlefields Route, nor did the routes have advertisements in the brochures. A flyer produced by Tourism Dundee (now Endumeni Tourism) does show the Battlefields Route Association’s logo and promotes the destination as “Northern KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route”, but Dundee is but one of fifteen towns currently part of the Battlefields Route and both Newcastle and Vryheid also lie in northern KwaZulu-Natal (Tourism Dundee, Not dated:1).

6.3.6 Community tourism associations (CTAs)

In terms of legislation, a CTA has to be established in each local municipality to promote tourism in the area (KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Act 11/1996, Section 25). A distinction needs to be drawn between the old publicity associations which promoted municipalities to attract businesses, investment and tourists, which were replaced by CTAs that market the municipality as a tourism destination (CBR-G). In practice the distinction between the CTAs and the municipal tourism office seems blurred since one of the main activities of the CTAs, namely the TICs,¹⁰ may be run by CTAs, but are financed by the local municipalities and, in instances where no CTA exists, the TIC is run by the municipality itself, often housed in an attraction such as a museum, as is the case in Ladysmith and Greytown. That the CTAs do not all function as they should was confirmed by respondents.

“Coming out of the 80s into the 90s, a lot of tourism offices opted to change from being a publicity office, which was part of the municipality, to being a community tourism office. The idea being of course they were far more independent. The government, the municipality would give them an operating grant of whatever, and all they had to do was to provide their financials at the end of the year...And it hasn’t worked.” (CBR-G).

“Howick Tourism was fraught with differences of opinion and personal and political and it never got its feet of the ground and obviously the funding comes from people who want to put their money where there are a few things happening that is not falling apart.” (CMM-D).

By contrast, the tourism office in Vryheid seems to be doing well, because it has the support of the local municipality.

“Vryheid, especially the tourism office, eh I find it’s really, it’s doing well...Now the [Vryheid Local] Municipality from its side, has been so good to the tourism sector because the provision or the grant that they give the tourism for the young generation, especially the primary and the high schools.” (CBR-I).

Just as at municipal level, the lack of tourism planning and co-operation also manifests itself at CTA level in both the areas studied.

¹⁰ TICs will be discussed more fully in chapter 7 in section 7.9.1(p. 244).

“I think obviously the various town tourism organisations and associations probably need to get together and set some sort of vision, some sort of blueprint as to what they are trying to achieve ... But for that to happen they obviously need the support of their local municipalities. Their municipalities aren’t prepared to support them.” (CBR-H).

“The sad thing is that they always seem to be working independently versus working together. I mean there is Nottingham Road Tourism Association and there is Howick Tourism Association and they are all doing their own little things and they are all very protective of their own turf, instead of sitting around a table and saying how do we work this to all our benefits. I think a lot of money and resources get wasted.” (CMM-A).

For a tourism route association to be recognised by TKZN, it first has to register with the local authority. The tourism route association also needs to register with the CTA before it can register as a tourism service provider with TKZN.

“To actually formally recognise an association you need to have been recognised by the local government at the ground floor. So for instance you have to go to TKZN, Tourism KwaZulu-Natal and you say no, we are a registered association. But they say no, you are not registered, you’re not recognised by your own municipality back at home.” (Enabler-I).

6.3.7 Provincial tourism authority (TKZN)

Three key issues surfaced during the fieldwork namely multiple registrations of tourism enterprises, the marketing support provided by TKZN and the confused branding that resulted from TKZN actions.

- **Multiple registrations are required of tourism product owners**

In KwaZulu-Natal, every tourism product owner has to be registered with TKZN in order to operate a tourism enterprise. This also applies to the members of organisations such as tourism route associations, which then means a double registration: first with TKZN and then with the route association. If the product owner also joins the local CTA, there is a third registration, and each registration brings with it an annual fee, which may become

expensive for small businesses to afford. Since TKZN does not deal directly with product owners, or even local municipalities and CTAs, members do not see any direct benefit in registering with TKZN.

“I have no idea what their role is. I get their newsletters and whatever coming through and none of it is relevant to me...and my area” (CMM-A)

“As far as TKZN goes, I don’t know how you benefit. I don’t. Nobody has ever phoned me and said we got your information from TKZN, ... I’ve never ever, other than paying the subs. That’s where it stops.” (CBR-D).

For a private sector route association, such as the Midlands Meander, to register with TKZN as a tourism entity, all members have to be registered with TKZN before the latter will promote the route, which places the onus on the route association to ensure their members are registered with TKZN.

“Theoretically all our members have to be part of TKZN for them to be able to distribute our brochure ... we have enquired that we can, on behalf of Midlands Meander, subscribe for our members ... but we’re waiting to hear from them.” (CMM-C).

- **TKZN provides marketing support to routes**

TKZN sees their mandate as marketing *“the Province of KwaZulu, not individual products” (CBR-C)*. However, TKZN does *“actively support initiatives such as tourism routes [by] providing funding for their brochures”* and by *“ensuring that outbound operators from South Africa’s core source markets and media, both South African and foreign media, are taken on educational of those routes” (Enabler-C)*. Thus TKZN has *“the responsibility to go outside the province to market ... because it was designed specifically for that purpose” (Enabler-B)*. TKZN also supports routes by distributing brochures and representing the routes at tourism trade shows *“within the country, SADEC region, as well as internationally beyond the borders of Africa” (Enabler-B)*. The TKZN brand is a *“well-known, established brand of tourism ... and with their logo on our brochure” (WWW-C)*, people can refer to the TKZN website to find the route again once they leave the area. Perhaps one of the most highly regarded marketing initiatives of TKZN is their map of KwaZulu-Natal, of which some 65000 are distributed free of charge.

“The support they give us are the maps. They’re bloody good... I do a lot of coach tours and each and every one of my tourists gets one of those.”
(CBR-D).

- **Branding confusion caused by TKZN**

While TKZN supports both routes in many ways, the tourism authority is also responsible for diluting the brands of both routes by using the route names or part thereof in the naming of their own “destinations” within the province. The Battlefields Route covers about two thirds of KwaZulu-Natal encompassing five district municipalities and some 15 different towns. Eight years ago, when TKZN demarcated their tourism “destinations”, they decided to have a Battlefields Region *“and then gave the brand to only two of those municipalities, uMzinyathi and Amajuba, leaving off the whole of the Zululand battles, all of the Ladysmith battles”* (CBR-G).

“We’ve got a problem, they as the TKZN side, have taken out two district municipalities, that is Newcastle and Dundee, and then they...do a brand as the Battlefields....No, this is not good because the Battlefields does not end there.” (CBR-I).

“Why they pinned those brands down on district municipalities, I have no idea.”
(CBR-G).

The two district municipalities subsequently produced a brochure with the title “Discover the legends of the Battlefields”, which further entrenched the misconception that the Battlefields consists of Amajuba and uMzinyathi District Municipalities alone (Amajuba District Municipality & uMzinyathi District Municipality, Not dated.) This situation is a source of frustration to the Battlefields Route Association since their own brochure, “Explore the largest concentration of Battlefields in Southern Africa”, covers all of the Battlefields on the route. (Battlefields Route Association, Not dated b).

“Big confusion also that was created by that brochure that was saying Battlefields [referred to above] and then we’ve got our own brochure from the Battlefields Route that says ‘Explore Battlefields’.” (CBR-I).

The Battlefields Route Association *“only this year ... finally persuaded TKZN to ... go to the two main municipalities and tell them they will not provide any more money until they get the five municipalities on board.”* (CBR-G). Co-operation remains difficult and at the

first meeting “*three of the five municipalities were present*” (CBR-G). Non-payment of fees also causes dissention as some members feel non-paying municipalities should be excluded from TKZN sponsored Battlefields Route brochures, because they benefit unfairly.

“That eh, brings a bit of a confusion and a frustration because we as a route, we can’t take one municipality because of non-payment because they benefit from the route...the tourists that come and stay over. The rates they collect from the guest houses, from the retail, from the restaurants, that is what the municipality make money out of if they don’t pay their membership fees. (CBR-I).

The branding confusion is extended on the TKZN website as already discussed in section 4.7.2 (p. 98). The Battlefields brand was further diluted when the province started to misuse the registered Battlefields Route logo on brown road signs to indicate all battlefields and not just those on the Battlefields Route. The logo, registered as red on white and white on red, is now also used for battlefields in the Northern Cape.

“The Kimberley area realised it was working and they jumped on the bandwagon and they used it blue on white and there’s absolutely nothing we can do about it, because they now promote it as the N12 Battlefields Route.” (CBR-G).

The Midlands Meander experienced a similar problem with the TKZN “destination” north of Pietermaritzburg being named Midlands after the Midlands Meander, with little regard for the integrity of the brand name or whether the tourism products are Midlands Meander members or not. Non-members of the Meander were listed on the TKZN website under the Midlands Meander link and this prompted the Association to set up their own website and currently the TKZN website only shows a link to the new Meander website.

“The Midlands Meander is the primary attraction or facility in our area. It is actually our draw card. We actually brand our whole area as the Midlands, it’s taken from the Midlands Meander. Then all the other products, for example your Howick Falls, your Midmar Dam, your cultural, then we try and filter them to be part of this big brand which is the Midlands Meander.” (Enabler-I).

6.3.8 Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali (Heritage KwaZulu-Natal)

Amafa is the custodian of cultural heritage attractions on both routes investigated. In the Battlefields, Amafa maintains and develops battlefield sites, while in the Midlands they look after rock art attractions. Amafa sees themselves as a *“heritage body and conservation body first, and a secondary objective would be tourism”* (Enabler-F). That tourism and conservation are not always compatible is evident from the anecdotes below.

“[When], the Lions were here, there were like busloads of 60 and what have you arriving and they drink on the bus the whole way, and when they get to the site, we’ve only got two toilets, which is normally adequate. Next thing they’re peeing against the walls.” (Enabler-F).

“Rock art is one of the areas where there is huge conflict between marketing of sites and the exploitation of sites because obviously ... tourism operators, the more people that they take to rock art sites the more money they make. ... We can show you empirical evidence that increased numbers of visitors leads to the deterioration of rock art ... because people breathe on them, and the water vapour reacts with chemicals and breaks it down, and they kick up dust which has that stuff in it, they touch them and they spray Coca-Cola on it so they get a better picture.” (Enabler-F)

That Amafa is under-funded in relation to the task that they have to do, is not appreciated by some product owners in the Battlefields Route, who have unrealistic expectations *“that every grave of every dead soldier on the Battlefields is important for tourism and therefore [Amafa] have to mow the lawn around it and keep it in this wonderful condition as they expect.”* (Enabler-F). The outlook of these product owners is that *“you are mos the government and the government must do their job”* (Enabler-F). Respondents indeed complained that *“some sites are not maintained at all”* (Enabler-A); that *“Rorke’s Drift and Isandlwana ... are not well maintained ... because Amafa has their own political agenda ... spending a fortune in Ulundi”* (CBR-C). On the other hand, the tourism sector does not contribute towards maintaining the resource base that is used to generate tourism income.

“Amafa guys have been hammering and hammering at it on the basis that they should get some of the tourism spend money to help maintain these sites and they couldn’t.” (CBR-G).

“Immediately what happened, once we had a decent project, a product, instead of attracting private sector developers to come and develop facilities at Isandlwana, the people on the white side of the river, their operations started exploiting and they just drive across the battlefield, and across the Buffalo River ... and all the lodges on the other side of the river, are doing very well, or nicely thank you. It doesn’t make any difference to [Amafa] because they don’t contribute any special levy or anything.” (Enabler-F).

Amafa is *“the biggest employer in the area”* through employing local people to patrol and do maintenance work on the Battlefields and also through their system of custodians licensed to look after sites such as remote graves and rock art sites. The custodians’ function is to allow controlled access and to carry out basic maintenance at the site (Enabler-F). The custodian is allowed to charge and keep the entrance fee to a site as their income. Custodians enter into a contract with Amafa who can withdraw the licence if the custodian *“starts doing the wrong thing”* (Enabler-F). Where tourism infrastructure such as interpretation centres, have been developed, the local community gets 25% of the gate takings (Enabler-F), which gives them *“a stake in the process and they are more inclined to assist with conservation and protection.”* (Enabler-F).

Apparent lack of communication between Amafa and district municipalities creates new problems. When municipalities have their tourism meetings *“often we’re [Amafa] not there, we don’t have enough people to attend every meeting the municipality organises.”* (Enabler-F). A substantial amount of money was spent by the district municipality on *“attraction signage”* in the Battlefields, but apparently without adequate communication with Amafa, because signage was put up that *“de facto opened up a site that we [Amafa] are not able to maintain. Simply by putting up a sign up, people who drive past will go in”* (Enabler-F).

The way in which provincial departments are structured in KwaZulu-Natal do not seem to foster communication either. *“You have tourism reporting to the Department of Arts, Culture and Tourism [now to the Department of Economic Development and Tourism], you have heritage reporting to the Office of the Premier and nature conservation reporting to Agriculture. And those are the three entities that should be talking to each other:”* (Enabler-F). Although a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with TKZN 50 years

ago, *“part of which is that we will communicate and we will meet regularly, in practice it is not working”* (Enabler-F). Furthermore, the Battlefields Route Association have to work through TKZN and cannot liaise directly with Amafa on matters such as opening times (CBR-I).

6.3.9 The N3Gateway project

The N3Gateway project plays a supportive role in marketing the *“areas that can be reached with the N3 as conduit”* (Enabler-E). They identified an important need among tourism associations to *“have their voice heard”* because they *“were not getting the support from the tourism bodies and the formal government (municipal) structures”* (Enabler-E). The N3Gateway’s viewpoint is a supporting one, also of government tourism structures.

“Government has its role to play, but we cannot as the private sector sit back and say well, government should be doing it. We actually have to take the responsibility upon ourselves, we have to engage with them, we have to partner with them, we have to hold hands with them, and we have to move together. The days of saying well, government is not funding us, we can’t do this, are over, we actually can’t afford to do that. And we’ve seen that.” (Enabler-E).

Since its inception in 2008, the N3Gateway Project has evolved into *“basically a marketing body, marketing all the tourism routes along the Gateway.”* (Enabler-E). Tourism organisations have responded positively to this initiative

“I see the N3 now have a thing called the Gateway. They have a responsibility towards the community on each side of that arterial route. And they [are] now getting actively involved in marketing and I think that those sort of bodies need to put something in.” (CBR-B).

“Ja, at the moment the N3 Toll Concession is busy setting up the entire N3 from Cedara all the way through to the other side near Gauteng, as a tourism route. So obviously now we are going further afield and a bigger entity than just our local Meander, but it ties in with marketing the Battlefields, marketing other places of tourist interest, all the way. Those sort of things do help, ja, definitely.” (CMM-D).

The N3Gateway have been supportive of marketing efforts by the routes. So for example, “they fund our Midlands Meander education project, and they give us quite a lot of funding towards the map by buying advertising space in the map.” (CMM-G); and “this year, we were part of Indaba with N3 Gateway whereas in previous years we’ve always had our own stand.” (CMM-C). The website of the Battlefields Route Association is sponsored by the N3Gateway.

While they are supportive, the N3Gateway does not want to take over the tourism function entirely. The N3Gateway’s concept is that they “we take people to the nodes” (Enabler-E). Once tourists are off the N3 and in the area, the local tourism organisation has to look after the tourists “otherwise we are doing their job for them, otherwise it is not sustainable” (Enabler-E).

Having identified the major role players in the tourism routes, attention will now turn to strategic issues identified by these role players.

6.4 STRATEGIC ISSUES IN ROUTE MARKETING

This section first explores stakeholders’ perceptions of the importance of marketing to the sustainability of the route and who needs to take responsibility for the marketing of the route as well as the offerings along the route. Market targeting is considered and a number of target markets are referred to. Finally attention is paid to marketing research before the elements of the marketing mix are examined in the next chapter.

6.4.1 Sustainability is affected by visitor numbers and seasonality

Route members on both routes, as well as enablers, recognise that marketing is not as effective as it may be and this leads to problems of capacity utilisation. On both routes there are insufficient visitors to fully sustain tourism businesses on the route and there is a high degree of seasonality. These aspects are discussed in more detail below.

- **Insufficient visitor numbers is a threat to sustainability**

Route members lamented the lack of sufficient visitors in spite of the fact that there is much on offer on both routes.

“And because they are coming past Africa, they thought they should see Rorke’s Drift ... I mean that is as strong as Table Mountain, in my opinion. So why is Table Mountain getting so many visitors and we are not?” (CBR-C).

“I think that’s the problem with the Midlands Meander because there isn’t enough people coming onto the area and there isn’t enough money coming into the area that they can sustain [artists]. There are people who are very, very talented but they just can’t afford to stay on the Meander.” (CMM-B).

“There are probably four township tours in a year and that’s usually because we’ve got some visiting group of dignitaries or somebody coming. At the same time, that would change round dramatically if we had visitors every day.” (CBR-G).

The reality of the above concerns reflects in the relatively low occupancy rates of accommodation establishments on both routes. On the Battlefields Route, occupancy is *“anything between 20, the average is 40% and Fugitives Drift is the only exception, they reckon they get 80, maybe in their heyday, ha, ha”* (CBR). Some product owners in the Midlands Meander have made a lifestyle choice, or they are retired and their tourism business is a side line, therefore *“running at 15% occupancy, that’s fine, because they want to travel and close their doors on a Monday and not see anybody till Friday”* (Enabler-D). However, if tourism businesses on the route are to thrive, the first challenge is to attract a greater number of visitors in order to generate sufficient turnover to first break even and then to make a profit.

“[On a tour] you then need two, that’s how you cover your costs, so you need four to start making money, six to make an investment.” (Enabler-J).

“The name of the game in tourism is occupancy. The difference in the money you make on 60% and 70% is absolutely huge.” (Enabler-K).

- **Seasonality is a threat to sustainability**

The lack of visitor numbers is exacerbated by fluctuations in demand, which may lead to periods without any visitors at all.

“In your quiet months you can easily go through two weeks without one guest, so it is sort of an on and off business” (CBR-E).

“The majority of Midlands Meander members are open from Thursday, Friday, Saturday, [to Sunday]. (CMM-B).

The result is that tourism businesses on the route cannot always weather the dry periods and they either close down, move elsewhere, or change their line of business to something more sustainable.

“You get young people who come into the area and say ‘Wow!’. And they’ll come when it is a busy weekend and think this is like it’s all the time and let us this and let us that and then it doesn’t work ... because it wouldn’t pay, especially if they are paying staff to run [the business] and [who then] stand by for nothing.” (CMM-B).

“If you arrive in town today and want to go on a township route, she’ll say it will take me about two weeks to organise it. And so it is not a marketable product. You will find it in the Amajuba brochure, it is advertised there, but it is not the same people she visits, she phones round, phones round, until she’s got enough of them to make it worthwhile.” (CBR-G).

For route operations to be sustainable, the second challenge is then to increase capacity utilisation during the week in the Midlands Meander and during the quiet periods on the Battlefields Route.

“Our big challenge is to try and fill up the midweek trade, and I think this is something that you will hear a lot of in the Midlands.” (CMM-I).

“If you teach people how to make money out of tourism, you will be teaching them how to sell out of season.” (Enabler-K).

6.4.2 Perceived causes of marketing’s failure to attract sufficient visitors

Respondents identified several aspects that were lacking in their marketing efforts. These include lack of knowledge and expertise in route marketing; lack of understanding of tourism; lack of funding for route marketing efforts; and lack of marketing support on the different levels of tourism marketing in the province. The first three aspects are discussed in this section and the last one in the next section.

- **Lack of knowledge and expertise in route marketing**

Tourism routes are co-operative organisations and managed by a committee consisting of members of the association who usually run their own businesses, but are not necessarily marketing professionals.

“The people who are driving these routes are not trained, they do not have the marketing experience and that’s a problem in South Africa as a whole. Tourism is a very specialised field and there is a lack of experience and knowledge that often leads to failure.” (Enabler-C)

For example, one enabler, speaking from a central vantage point in the province, commented that unless the routes *“have an understanding and knowledge of how it works and that in tourism marketing, intermediaries are so important”*, they will fail to engage the distribution channel and he sees it as a failing of both routes.

“And I think that’s a failing of the Midlands Meander. They have only recently been engaging your big tour operator groups. And I think they still make the mistake that they are not actively engaging your tour operators to sell those experiences and that’s a big mistake of the Battlefields” (Enabler-C).

Both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route Associations have appointed marketers. The Midlands Meander currently employs a marketing officer on a contractual basis after having done it *“internally by the office and using marketing specialists prior to that”* (CMM-D). The Battlefields Route Association appointed a professional marketer for the first time in 2009 to market the route, both locally and internationally, on the basis that her remuneration would be the income that she can generate from advertising on the website and in the brochure. Both routes have come to realise that marketing is a task that requires more than the part time input of a member who also has to run his own business, and that it requires expertise to fulfil the function properly.

“We can’t just leave it just to a guide in the area. Somebody’s got to be able to put this thing together and say; ‘Look what we’ve got to tell you!’ “ (CBR-D).

“There’s poor [individual] that is marketing it, but he is also a product owner. You see, I think it needs to be a combined effort of intensive marketing.” (Enabler-A).

Furthermore, paying somebody else to do the marketing ensures impartiality as a staff member may be “*open to market some members more than others*”. (CMM-D).

- **Lack of adequate funding for route marketing**

A sound membership base provides finance to run and market the route. While this was not a problem in the Midlands Meander, funding was widely mentioned in the Battlefields Route. The Midlands Meander raises sufficient funds to run and staff an office, produce and distribute two brochures and maintain a website through entrance fees for new members based on a differentiated scale, a membership fee of R3500, and a map fee of R2500 to be included in the brochure (and the map). Additional income is generated from the sale of advertising in the brochure. A number of years ago the Midlands Meander Association embarked on a membership drive to increase its funding base and the route currently has a membership base of around 180 members. Fees may be paid monthly and unpaid fees lead to cancellation of membership, with the result that fees are usually paid when due.

“But for a small business like ourselves a once off fee of about R2500, the membership is sitting at round about R3500 at the moment I think, I could be wrong. And the map fee is about R2500. The first year you join it does like hit you with one big lump sum, but after that it is only the annual fee and the map fee and if you work it out it is 56 cents a day or something ridiculous and you can put it on a debit order.” (CMM-D).

In contrast, the Battlefields Route Association, experiences chronic funding difficulties. The membership of the Battlefields Route vests mainly in the municipalities. Fees vary for the different municipalities, some of which do not pay even a modest fee of R300 per annum.

“The most popular sites [Rorke’s Drift and Isandlwana] fall under uMzinyathi [District] Municipality, who have yet to pay their annual fees.” (CBR-G).

The Battlefields Route Association opened its membership to businesses and private individuals to increase the funding base, but there needs to be a change of mind-set for the Association to attract members.

“The thing is, it is the individual guys that benefit from somebody else that is doing the basic marketing that they haven’t even contributed to. Why should they join?” (Enabler-F).

“I think if a thing is commercially viable you should be able to contribute to the marketing of that particular facility, you shouldn’t rely on government subsidy for it. With the Battlefields, they have had massive sponsorship over the years. And there is almost an expectation in that area that the government must provide.” (Enabler-F).

“Often product owners don’t understand the value of marketing and they are not willing to pay the membership fees that are required by these routes to be viable.” (Enabler-C).

For the present, the Battlefields Route Association remains cash strapped and marketing efforts are dependent on sponsorship, which may be raised for the printing of a brochure, but does not necessarily cover the effective distribution thereof.

“Our biggest problem is actually in marketing, marketing in terms of being able to get our brochures and information material to the source of our major visitors which are obviously UK [United Kingdom] and Europe. Costs me, I think, just to post that to the UK costs me what, R4 something or other. How many can I post?” (CBR-G).

“Huge problem, you know, funding for marketing is always a problem.” (Enabler-E).

“It’s the distribution of the brochures that’s the killer. You can get a brochure produced for, a respectable brochure produced for under R50 000 if you do a bit of the artwork yourself. But then try and distribute it, it can be R200,000.” (CBR-G).

6.4.3 Responsibility for marketing the route

To market the route, *“somebody’s got ... to be able to put this thing together and say: ‘Look what we’ve got to tell you’ “ (CBR-D).* Some respondents see the marketing of the route as an entity as the *“responsibility of the route management.” (Enabler-B),* and the responsibility thus *“lies in a body of people that have been voted to do that job and is actively committed to doing it” (Enabler-E).* Indeed, some route members *“are quite happy to let someone else do the work and reap the benefits as long as it does not cost them too much to become members” (CBR-B).*

But marketing is not a function that can be ring-fenced and the full responsibility delegated to a committee alone. The members also have to market the route along with their own establishments, and some do seem to realise this.

“You can’t just join an association and expect them to do all of it. No, I think it is a joint thing. I think for me, the fact that I am on a route, I can’t just leave it to the office to publicize it, I will publicize it as much as possible because you are a small part of a whole. We all have to publicize it, and how.” (CMM-A).

“I know no one can paddle the boat better than you paddle it yourself, so the responsibility is on all the people to actually get out there and paddle the boat. And don’t expect someone else to do it, because if you do, you’ll go out of business.” (CBR-B).

For the route to be viable, there has *“to be ownership from the people on the ground as well, you’ve got to involve them in the proper process”* (Enabler-J), so, *“for the route to function properly, you need for its members to be active”* (Enabler-A). A viable route should also *“be able to contribute to the marketing of that particular facility, you shouldn’t rely on government subsidy for it”* (Enabler-F). Unfortunately, the importance of marketing and the need to adequately fund route marketing is not always recognised by route members, who complain about fees and advertising costs.

“I think one of the core problems in tourism in South Africa is that there is a general lack of awareness of the power of marketing and the need to invest in marketing. And I think that’s why sometimes routes struggle to raise the fees that they need in order to be successful.” (Enabler-C).

“I think it’s actually very expensive, enormously so. A little advert costs you about between 16 and R17,000 And so, our perception is that it is a money making business. And I don’t see myself drawing any benefits out of it for my business.” (CMM-H).

In the Battlefields *“there is almost an expectation in that area that the government must provide”*. (Enabler-F). Similarly some people look to the province or even South African Tourism to market the route, and although these authorities may assist, it is the members that drive the route marketing effort, or ignore it to their own detriment. Another route in the Battlefields Region, the Nguni Route, lacked marketing support by its members and as a result did not meet with much success.

“Everybody got together and they all signed up and it was all wonderful and you’ve now got a Nguni route and everybody sat back because Open Africa was running it. Open Africa are merely facilitators, they’re not implementers and drivers of the process. ... And hence it just sort of died.” (Enabler-E).

“They approached us and they said: ‘You can join for free so it is not going to cost you anything, so what are you going to lose?’ So, you have all these people who then agree to go onto this [Nguni] route, but nobody wants to do any work because they are not paying for it. So then they turn round and start throwing accusations because nothing happens. But nothing will happen if you don’t make it happen.” (CBR-C).

In the end the members have to take responsibility for the marketing of the route, individually and through the route structure.

“If we didn’t do it ourselves, nobody would.” (CBR-D).

“That’s one of the important key things in a route that works, because you’ve got that passion, someone wants to make it work, they can identify that road is a problem ... and put their municipality under pressure.” (Enabler-G)

In the Midlands Meander, where the route is effectively marketed, there is a realisation that *“obviously, each individual has to do their own marketing.”* (CMM-G) as well. The Association does *“more of a generic marketing for the Meander than specific places”* (CMM-G), and *“can only work for the better of the whole community, they can’t promote individual members as such, so it is still important that one gets up there and does your own marketing.”* (CMM-D). Joining the Midlands Meander is not *“the be all and end all of everything, that they’ll market you”* (CMM-D). Members would be wise not to *“rely totally on a route marketing initiative”* (Enabler-C), and *“route marketing should only be one element of the marketing communication mix”,* albeit *“a very powerful element”* (Enabler-C).

For members to gain the full benefit from their route membership, *“a lot of the time it is up to the properties themselves to make the most of the Meander office or the tourism office”* (CMM-I); and the route marketer *“can easily ignore people who just sit in the background and don’t actually ask you to do anything, and they are going to be the ones that moan too”* (CMM-D). This means that members need to co-operate with the route office or

committee in submitting requests and providing their information on time, and also that they attend meetings and read circulars.

“The staff can only market using the material that the members put forward to the staff. You’ve got to phone in or send an e-mail and say we are having an exhibition, can you put it out there?” (CMM-D).

“I must admit, we did not attend their annual general meeting.” (CMM-H).

6.4.4 Targeting markets

The two routes investigated are currently targeting very different markets. The Midlands Meander is almost entirely targeted at the domestic market, while the Battlefields Route has a strong international market. From the discussions with respondents it is evident that product owners are very aware of the markets that their products appeal to and that they also aim to provide satisfaction to those customers. This section will first discuss the self-drive market and the domestic market, before looking at the international market, the tour operator market and finally, the business market.

- **The self-drive market**

The Midlands Meander is considered a route that can easily be negotiated with a map, and much of the success of the Meander has been attributed to the Meander map. The attractions in the Midlands Meander are concentrated in a relatively small area and need little or no interpretation at all, such as arts, crafts, shopping, restaurants and just enjoying the countryside.

The Battlefields Route presents a very different situation. The route does not *“look very far apart”* on a map, but the big problem is that *“nobody understands the distances and the time you need to do it”* (CBR-A). The roads *“generally in this area are not in a wonderful condition”* (CBR-A) and visitors who do not know them, drive slowly, so it does take time to get to and from the battlefield sites, which are the main attractions. Furthermore, roads are not always well signposted and even with a self-drive brochure, visitors may feel uncertain of their whereabouts.

“It’s also to an extent with visitors, the fear of the unknown. We’re not quite sure where we are going. And if there isn’t a signpost when you get to the

junction, you're told to take this dirt road and head up a hill. You're a little bit concerned, you're not sure you are actually on the right road." (CBR-A).

Whether the Battlefields Route can be done on a self-drive basis depends on *"the level of interest that the individual visitor has"* (CBR-F). There is enough *"basic information available in the museums and shops"* for the self-drive visitor with a basic interest in the history, but those who *"have a great interest or ... might become more interested if you get more information, then you need to go with a guide"* (CBR-F). Some of the guides feel quite strongly that *"they still don't get anything out of it"* (CBR-D) if visitors try to do the route on their own. The following anecdote illustrates the situation.

"He came up and he stood there and I could hear he was listening to me, so I said to him: 'Kom nader as jy wil' [Come closer if you want to]. ... When I was finished, the guy was absolutely amazed, he said 'Ek kan dit nie glo nie' [I can't believe it]. You know there's a story to be told here. And I said: 'Wat het jy gemaak? Jy't hier ingery. Jy wil 'n halfuur hier deurbring, toilet toe gaan, Coke koop, OK, en dan weer uity. Is dit die moeite werd om hier te kom?' [What did you do? You drove in here. You want to spend half an hour here, go to the toilet, buy Coke, OK, and drive out again. Is it worth coming here?] And he said: 'Nou besef ek eers' [Now I only realise]." (CBR-D).

- **The domestic market**

Several respondents pointed out that for tourism to succeed, it must first succeed in the domestic market. International markets have very long lead times and tourism businesses *"need [the] instant business"* that the domestic market can bring *"to keep tourism destinations alive with income on a regular basis"* (CBR-F). So, *"if you can't make it fly for South Africans, it's not going to fly at all"* (Enabler-J).

The Midlands Meander attracts many visitors from Durban, but the biggest potential domestic market for both routes lies in Gauteng and *"Joburg people"* in particular:

"We get a huge amount of trade from the passing Joburg-Durban run."
(CMM-H).

"And more and more of them are discovering it. You know they are discovering it because it is a way of life that Joburg people need." (CMM-B).

There are six upmarket private schools in the Midlands Meander area and *“their parents are from Joburg, funny enough ... every two weekends they drive down to visit their kids when there’s sports or staff-parent meetings”* (Enabler-I). There is little doubt that the schools not only boost Meander visitor numbers through repeat visits by *“parents that come in constantly and they all have their rooms”* (CMM-B), but also because parents that may *“come for a meeting, then they see something nice and so next year they come back here for holiday.”* (Enabler-I).

Within the domestic market, a number of other groups were identified as target markets with potential. In both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route, Afrikaans-speaking people were singled out as a good potential market.

“I think the Afrikaans-speaking group is a huge market and I think they are beginning to realise they’ve got to travel.” (CBR-D).

“Certainly we have found ... Afrikaans people, particularly Pretoria families, are more adventurous in terms of getting off the highway.” (CMM-A).

In both the Battlefields Route and the Midlands Meander there is a realisation of *“where the economics are in this country and who has got the money”* (CMM-B). The Midlands Meander recognised that their image was too “white” and they therefore changed the look of their brochure to appeal to wider markets.

“We need to actually change the aspect of this brochure [from] being all white to bringing in that it’s actually also black and other colours that would like to be in this thing.” (CMM-B).

Already *“quite a lot of Indians from Durban love the Meander.”* (CMM-B). However, one respondent, an African himself, lamented that *“Africans don’t travel, Africans don’t value their own history to such an extent that they’re prepared to pay.”* (CBR-F). The black people that do visit the routes, tend to come from other African countries, for example, *“they come from Botswana”* (CMM-B). However, some product owners still need to fully accept visitors from other population groups.

“South Africans need to train themselves how to be warm to everybody. One lady said to me she nearly moved out of this hotel because she felt like we were being watched.” (CBR-F).

- **The international market**

The general consensus was that KwaZulu-Natal does not get a fair share of international visitors to South Africa.

“It was just flabbergasting how the tourists fly into Joburg for whatever, catch connecting flights to Cape Town, spend time in Cape Town, come up to the Eastern Cape for a game reserve experience, back to Cape Town, back to Joburg, maybe to Sun City and out. They don’t even know Durban, KwaZulu-Natal exists.” (CBR-C).

The Midlands Meander *“is very well aimed at the domestic market”* (Enabler-G). One estimate by an upmarket accommodation establishment is that only *“between 5 and 10 per cent of our business is from overseas”* (CMM-I). Tour operators do not usually include the Meander in their itineraries for overseas visitors unless *“they’ve really got spare time”* (Enabler-G).

The Battlefields Route relies heavily on international visitors and has been *“well marketed on the international front”* (CBR-F) although interest lies mainly in British (Anglo-Boer and Anglo-Zulu wars) and, to a lesser extent, in French (Prince Imperial) military history (CBR-F). However, it is difficult for a *“private individual to get into that market”* (CBR-D). The Battlefields get a lot of support from the UK military regiments that were involved in the KwaZulu-Natal wars and regularly send groups to visit the Battlefields.

Because *“dollars pay more than rands, people will prefer to have visitors from America than visitors from Magoebaskloof, or visitors from Helpmekaar or Greytown”* (CBR-F). But international tourists *“also know what their pound is worth ... they would be pricing ourselves against Thailand”* (Enabler-J), and they will *“go where there’s value”* (Enabler-J). The international market may also demand a particular type of experience and a certain standard of service.

“You can’t bring people into an area ... with a very rural presentation where it doesn’t matter if there are goats running across the road and that sort of thing. But the people who are coming to South Africa don’t want that, that’s why they are in South Africa and not Timbuktu.” (CBR-C).

On the other hand one should not make assumptions for international tourists. Thus the Midlands Meander may well appeal to the British tourists on their way to the Battlefields or the mountains as *“an astounding development, so the success is that we are actually packaging a little bit of England to a very unique group”* (Enabler-J). Visitors also differ in what they are looking for, and international tourists tend to be the people who visit cultural attractions and seek authentic township and cultural experiences, for example the people interested in the Mpopophomeni Zulu Experience in the Midlands Meander are *“mainly international”* (CMM-F).

“[It is the] American and European students who come and have the township and home stays, and working at the same time.” (Enabler-E).

“They like to see this guy is struggling we’re part of his struggle, that’s why we are here.” (Enabler-K).

- **The tour operator market**

Although tour operators form a vital link in the distribution chain, rural tourism routes do not attract large tour groups and it is questionable whether they are appropriate for these routes. One reason is that the roads are often dirt roads that are in poor condition, and *“you will never get a bus coming along these dirt roads, they’re too scared they’re going to fly off”* (CMM-G). Some establishments are inaccessible because *“it’s tough getting a bus up there [up the hill] so her lodge is inaccessible”* (Enabler-F). Product owners on both routes, as well as enablers, felt that the routes should not be *“done in a coach with somebody sitting in the front of a bus and 40 people behind you, talking”* (Enabler-G). The rural route experience is a more intimate one.

“The Battlefields is much more expert than that, and you’re sitting with a small group on the Battlefields and you’re bringing the whole story alive.” (Enabler-G).

“They will take tourist busses up to Howick and I’ve seen tourist busses at Nottingham road, but because the majority of us are on dirt roads, we don’t see tourist busses and those tourist busses are actually missing the real Meander.” (CMM-B).

Large tours can kill the rural experience for the visitors *“who see South Africa at 140 kilometres an hour outside a tour bus window”* (CBR-A) and then *“spend 20 minutes on a world renowned battlefield [Isandlwana]”* (CBR-D). Furthermore, *“they put a bloke or a lady*

on that coach in Durban and they send them up here for the day and they know sweet bugger-all” (CBR-I). The tour operator business is “a feast or famine kind of job” and they are not always “prepared to pay a specialist [battlefield guide]” (CBR-D), with the result that the visitors lose out on the real experience.

”I hope they don’t treat the others as badly as they treat us. And they won’t pay a proper guide fee and they find anybody to be a guide and when you’re going to somewhere like the Battlefields ... it’s got to be somebody who’s knowledgeable, who knows where the points of the battle are and who was involved and what movements took place.” (CBR-G).

“We were finding that there we’ve got our little group, this lot would come off a bus with no guide, or no guide that can tell them about the place, and they’re asking, they start to stand around your group and you are getting a little bit worried, are your clients now worried they paid you a fee. They’re getting it, the others get for free.” (CBR-G).

Some tour operators and tourist guides also object to paying the custodians at the battlefield and rock art sites, who make their living through looking after the sites. Their attitude is one of *“I’m a licenced cultural guide therefore I should be allowed to take people there”* (Enabler-F). But, at the same time, the tour operators do not contribute to the upkeep of attractions through a levy; in fact, they tend to allow their deterioration.

We can’t trust them ... their function is to keep the tourist happy, and if he wants to get close to the shot, the painting, they’re going to allow him. They’re looking for the tip at the end.” (Enabler-F).

- **The business market**

The business market is not really the focus of this study, but it does play an important part in keeping the rural route establishments going when there are not enough tourists. Some accommodation establishments, especially in the larger towns on the Battlefields Route, *“rely heavily on commercial business”* (CBR-H), but even a town such as Dundee, with major military history attractions, *“lot of it is commercial, a lot”* (CBR-C). Leisure tourism can benefit from commercial tourism as business travellers may well have some free time.

“I take our publicity material in and leave it in their main receptions ... and when they are waiting, that it’s there. And they come over a weekend ... the [company] bloke will phone and say: ‘We’ve got some guys from UK or

America who want to go on the Battlefields.’ ... so it’s really worthwhile.”
(CBR-G).

The Midlands Meander was described as *“the prime function and wedding destination”* and indeed many establishments promote themselves as wedding and conference venues. The smaller venues in the vicinity of a function or wedding often benefit from either accommodating the overflow of guests or service staff such as drivers and DJ’s (CMM-B). Regular business travellers also have their preferred guest houses or B&Bs to which they return repeatedly.

“I’ve got a guy that comes for the cultures for the yogurt and he comes on a very regular basis.” (CMM-B).

6.4.5 Stakeholder perspectives on marketing research

The Midlands Meander Association *“commissioned a big research report from the University of Natal”* (CMM-G) and in the Battlefields Route, several towns have employed consultants who have conducted investigations regarding the marketing of those towns (BR-H). Individual members too, realise the importance of information to support their promotion decisions and some actually do keep track of visitors.

“We [do] our questionnaire of where you heard about us.” (CMM-A).

“I actually want to do a comment thing, and leave them in the rooms and say how did you find us?” (CMM-B).

“How do we know that because of this advertising we get X amount of business?” (CMM-H).

Customer satisfaction, though not mentioned in a survey context, is foremost on most product owners minds, and they do assess it in their own ways.

“Analyse yourself every, at the end of every day. Self-appraisal. OK. Because I do it. In fact, I even know now some of the operators phone afterwards: ‘How did the tour go?’ ” (CBR-D).

“You can become a little bit slack in a sense of one’s service. I know in our establishment here, I’m always on that you cannot become complacent, ever.”
(CMM-A).

"[If] I don't meet my client's expectations, that is the downfall of my business."
(CBR-I).

6.5 STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON THE SUCCESS OF RURAL TOURISM ROUTES

Stakeholders were asked to identify factors that contribute to the success of a rural tourism route, as well as factors that impede the success. The factors discussed in the next two sections were the response to the questions and also include factors mentioned in this context elsewhere during the interviews. A factor that may contribute to the success of a tourism route if it is well implemented may just as easily become a stumbling block to the route if it is lacking or poorly handled. For this reason the factors identified by respondents are not discussed separately as leading to success or failure, but rather as factors that are important in making a success of a rural tourism route.

6.5.1 Route drivers

In the route initiatives that succeed, there are *"one or two people who have become passionate"* (Enabler-A). The Battlefields Route was started by the ladies running the publicity offices of three of the towns on the route; *"the three ladies, actually they got it all going"* (CBR-G). The Midlands Meander's success is ascribed to the leaders.

"The main drivers have been chairmen and the leaders that have come to the fore, voluntary leaders, and [name] got the people enthusiastic and he really took it to the next level, that there was a much bigger buy-in from the whole community." (CMM-G).

"There is often a clash of personalities and natural rivalry that comes to the fore ... there needs to be very strong leadership in terms of people that actually chair those associations." (Enabler-C).

Enthusiasm may not be enough; leaders must also have the expertise to take the route forward as a business, which includes extracting sufficient funds out of the associations' members, a long term view and ability to adapt to changes in the environment.

“I would say the most important factor is the leadership, that you’ve got committed leadership that is willing ... that has the enthusiasm to ... lobby for the necessary funds that is required to ensure the route is a success.”
(Enabler-C).

“Right now there isn’t anybody with enough business acumen to take it further.” (CMM-A).

“I don’t think there’s been enough vision of where the technology is going ... there hasn’t been enough early vision.” (CMM-A).

6.5.2 Members’ co-operation

Route leaders can achieve little success without the members and product owners on the route. The members firstly need to be good at their own business as this is what attracts visitors and keeps making them return.

“Ultimately the people who make it work are the members, the members around the route. If they were no good at what they did, then nobody would reappear.” (CMM-E).

“If it wasn’t for the members, the people of the Meander, the Midlands Meander wouldn’t exist.” (CMM-C).

Secondly, the members need to support the route as an entity. Successful routes rely heavily on voluntary input from their members and, even though a route, such as the Midlands Meander employs staff, the board and committee members are all volunteers.

“You are going to start off with good will. You are going to help make it work. You are going to use your own time and resources to try and help make the route work.” (CMM-C).

“I think people that make the route a success are the people that participate in the affairs of the Meander, in that you can easily become a member and sit back and do your own thing and not become involved in the community and not get on the board and subcommittees and not be involved.” (CMM-D).

In the third place, members need to associate with the route as an entity and co-operate for the greater good of all the route members and product owners along the route.

“It is vitally important that everybody works together and that you operate as a community and not a hundred different businesses each doing their own thing.” (Enabler-D).

“I think people have realised that if we co-operate, we all benefit at the end of the day.” (CBR-A).

The elements of voluntary input and co-operation for the greater good, appears to have been lacking in the Nguni Route, which became dormant because *“the people on the route didn’t have the passion and drive to get people there.”* (Enabler-G). The same problem is encountered in rural tourism initiatives where *“they all want to know what’s in it for them.”* (Enabler-G). Thus it is important for the route to *“attract people that are actually interested”* (Enabler-G) because members, *“unless they really are madly interested in the concept, will not work.”* (CBR-C).

Occupancy is usually critical in the accommodation sector and it is therefore not surprising that in both routes this sector plays an important role in driving tourism and the routes.

“Your accommodation sector seems to really ... have a very significant influence on the success and establishment of tourism routes.” (Enabler-C).

“Tourism in this area is driven by accommodation establishments. We do the marketing, we sell the tours to the Battlefields. We do all sorts of funny things just to get people here because if we didn’t do it our beds wouldn’t be full.” (CBR-C).

Similarly, in the Battlefields Route the Battlefields Region Guides play a major role in driving the Route. They are found on the committee and put in many unpaid hours to promote the route.

“Well I built the website, but I do a bit of work but I’m not a professional. It’s good enough for purpose and it’s bringing us visitors.” (CBR-G).

“I’m doing this [running the tourism office] on a voluntary basis. I get calls at 8 o’clock at night, people lost in town or looking for some place.” (CBR-G).

6.5.3 Financial viability

Sufficient funding to be able to administer and market the route is seen as an important consideration on both routes. However, there is a noteworthy difference in the point of departure for the two routes. In the Midlands Meander, funding is seen as important and the expectation is that the members will provide the funds through membership fees and the vast majority of members of the Midlands Meander Association are product owners on the route. Routes that work well, such as the Midlands Meander and the Wine Routes in the Western Cape, are funded by members and not by the government or external donors (Enabler-F). Members who pay, have something to lose and are therefore more likely to “*look after the product*” (Enabler-F). A sufficiently large membership base then becomes important for the route to raise the necessary funds without becoming a financial burden to its members.

“And it’s also made the organisation more financially viable, bigger membership. There’s more subsidy, more people subscribing to be in the guide. Ja, that has been a good thing ... we’re very lucky, we’ve done it with membership.” (CMM-G).

In the case of the Battlefields Route, funding is also seen as an important success factor. Since the membership of the Battlefields Route Association consists mainly of the municipalities, the expectation is that the municipalities must provide the funds, but the money is not always forthcoming, with the result that the Battlefields Route Association is chronically short of cash and struggles to survive (CBR-I).

“The Battlefields Route almost went broke, and at the beginning of this year we had about R4000 in our kitty.” (CBR-G).

The Association recently opened up their membership to private enterprises in an attempt to secure greater and more reliable funding, but to succeed in attracting more paying members, may first require a change in mind set.

“With the Battlefields, they’ve had massive sponsorship over the years ... and there is almost an expectation in that area that the government must provide. ... And the thing is, it is the individual guys that benefit from somebody else that is doing the basic marketing that they haven’t even contributed to. Why should they [rush to join]?” (CBR-F).

However, funding alone does not secure success, as was sadly demonstrated by the Nguni Route where generous funding was provided by Open Africa to set up the route, but the members did not take charge of the route themselves (CBR-C).

“They said: ‘You can join for free, so it is not going to cost you anything, so what have you got to lose?’ So, you have all these people who then agree to go onto this route, but nobody wants to do any work because they are not paying for it.” (CBR-C).

“This Ladysmith case, where everybody got together and they all signed up and it was all wonderful and you’ve now got a route and everybody sat back because Open Africa was running it. Open Africa are merely facilitators, they are not implementers and drivers of the process.” (Enabler-E).

In conclusion, if a route is to be sustainable, it should be able to finance itself.

“As a final word, I think if a thing is commercially viable you should be able to contribute to the marketing of that particular facility, you shouldn’t rely on government subsidy for it.” (Enabler-F).

6.5.4 Taking a long term perspective

There is tendency for new route organisations to expect that success will be immediate. The route should be viewed as a long term association and that it will take time to reap the benefits. The Midlands Meander started 25 years ago and for 18 years it was entirely volunteer run, before an office with paid staff was established (CMM-C).

“A lot of routes do look up to the Midlands Meander because of how far we have come, but they’ve got to realise how long it has taken to get to where we are. Things don’t happen overnight.” (CMM-C).

6.5.5 Extraneous events

Finally, two surprising extraneous success factors emerged during the fieldwork, namely snow and old movies. In the Midlands Meander, snow brings in large numbers of visitors. The central part of the Meander is located in a valley that gets snow once or twice every

year. In South Africa in general, snow is a newsworthy event, and in Durban, one of the Meander's main markets, it never snows.

“That is the biggest draw card, is snow. When it snows up here, Durban comes up in droves.” (CMM-B).

“An enormous amount of interest” is generated in the UK by an *“event that is entirely out of our control”* (CBR-C), and that has *“done quite a lot to help us”* (CBR-B) to attract visitors to the Battlefields Route. Two old movies, Zulu and Zulu Dawn, are *“played by BBC1 at least a few times a year”* (CBR-C). The film Zulu Dawn is about the battle of Isandlwana. Zulu deals with the battle of Rorke's Drift with Sir Michael Caine in his first role, which gives it *“a huge appeal in the UK”* (CBR-C), and attracts visitors to the Battlefields.

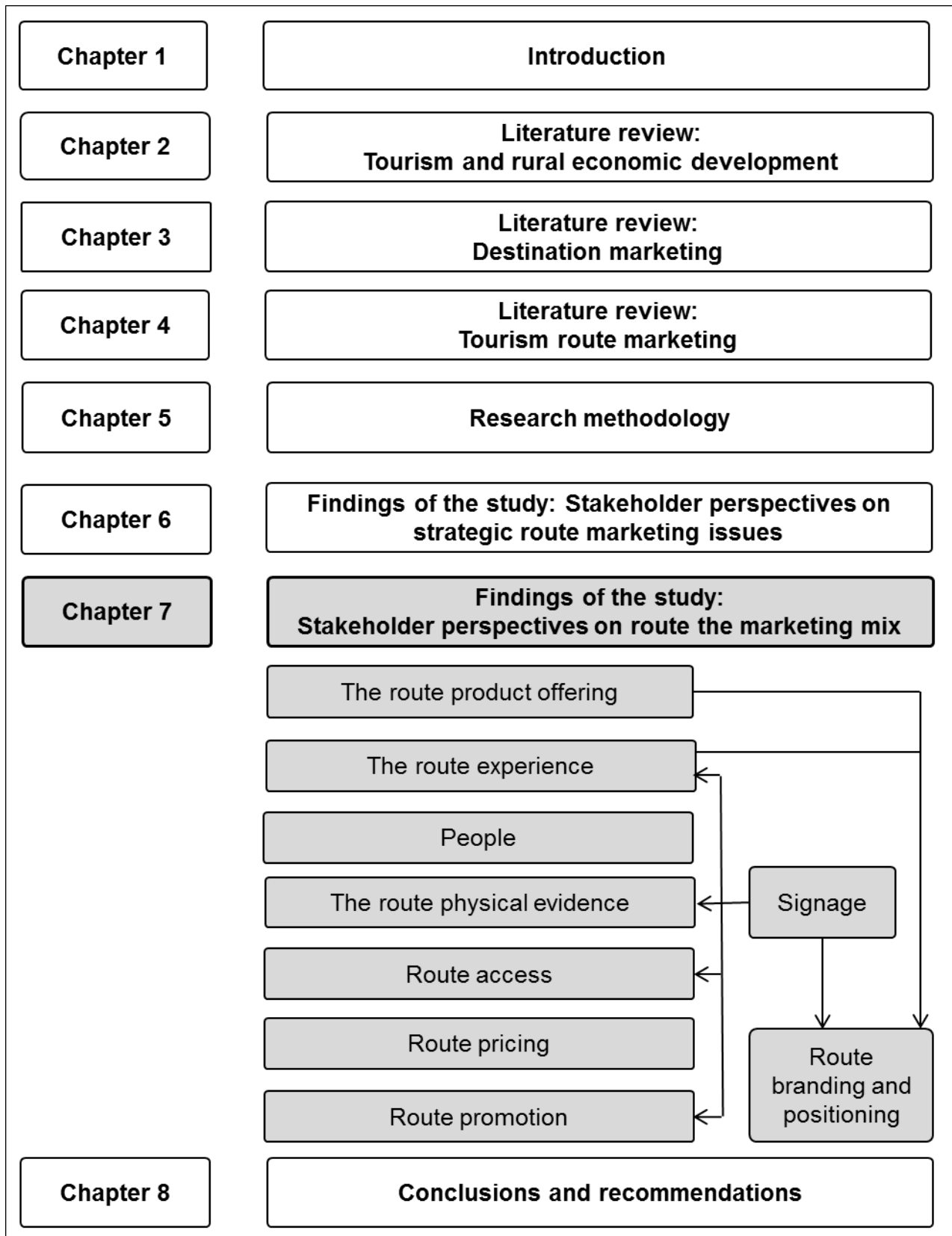
“I think a lot of people, if I read between the lines, actually identify with Michael Caine and therefore the movie has much more ... than actually it's lifespan should have been as a movie...and it is an enormous amount of guys that is around thirty.” (CBR-C).

6.6 CONCLUSION

Chapter 6 started by examining the perceived benefits of rural tourism routes to the local economy as a whole as well as to various stakeholders including the local disadvantaged community, product owners along the route and also non-members of the route. The roles of stakeholders on a tourism route were discussed with reference to the members and product owners along the route, the local community, district and local municipalities, and community tourism organisations. A number of strategic issues regarding routes were highlighted and the chapter concluded with a discussion of factors that stakeholders identified as contributing to or hampering the success of a route.

Only one enabler specifically mentioned promotion of the route as a critical factor that impacts on the route's success. This does not at all mean that marketing is not important or that product owners do not see it as important. The next chapter examines stakeholders' perspectives on route marketing mix elements in greater depth.

CHAPTER 7 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON THE ELEMENTS OF THE ROUTE MARKETING MIX



7.1 INTRODUCTION

Since tourism routes are in essence the collective branding of a number of tourist attractions and destinations into a single branded offering, this chapter starts with a discussion of the branding and positioning of the two tourism routes focussed on in this study. The elements of the route marketing mix, discussed in Section 4.4 (p. 73), are then examined. The product offering of a tourism route is examined with reference to the overall visitor experience on the route, the route product mix and the offering standard. The key role of people in the route offering is discussed, followed by stakeholders' perspectives on the physical evidence of the routes, with particular attention paid to signage. The final three elements of the marketing mix covered in this section are pricing, distribution and promotion of the route. Morrison's elements of the destination marketing mix, namely packaging, programming and partnerships are integrated in the discussion of the abovementioned elements as they form an integral part of the route itself as well as the promotion of the route.

With very few exceptions, product owners interviewed tended to spontaneously associate promotion with marketing and to a lesser extent, their own product offering. It is also interesting to note that the more involved product owners are with route management, their view of what marketing entails, seems to be broader and other elements of the marketing mix are also associated with the marketing function. This does not at all mean that product owners do not manage the other elements of the marketing mix, and once prompted on these elements, it is clear that they intuitively know that such elements need to be addressed as well, even though they may not readily be seen as part of the marketing function.

7.2 ROUTE BRANDING & POSITIONING

Since tourism routes are in essence a marketing strategy to attract more visitors to the route, branding of the route takes on a pertinent role. It is through branding that the route becomes an identifiable entity and that the route can package and promote its collective offering.

7.2.1 Identifying characteristics of the route brands

Both route associations have registered logos for their routes. Looking at the Midlands Meander first, the logo, as shown in Appendix N (p. 340), uses a distinctive and attractive font for the brand name and, as the symbol for the route, uses a stylised rendition of the endangered Karkloof Blue (*Orachysops Ariadne*) butterfly, also shown in Appendix N. The distinctive lilac and green colours of the font and the butterfly reflect the green of nature and the bluish-purplish hue of the Karkloof blue's wings, and reproduce well against a range of background colours. The butterfly symbol and colours have been used since about 1995 when the first brochure was produced in the current format. The logo was updated in 2004 to the current version (Midlands Meander Association, 2009:32).

The Battlefields Route's logo consists of the wording "The KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields Route" below the symbol, which consists of a cannon with a stack of three cannon balls as shown in Appendix O (p. 343). The name "Battlefields Route" is registered to the Battlefields Route Association (CBR-G), as is the symbol. The logo was registered "*as red on white and white on red ... with Bureau of Heraldry*"(CBR-A), but, as also noted in section 6.3.7 (p. 175), the Kimberley area now uses it blue on white to "*promote the N12 Battlefields Route, and there's absolutely nothing we can do about it*" (CBR-A). The Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) Battlefields "destination" also has a logo (see Appendix O, p. 343) showing the name Battlefields and a Zulu shield, to promote basically the Amajuba and uMzinyathi District Municipalities, which represent only part of the area covered by the Battlefields Route. Thus the confusion regarding names and areas pointed out in section 6.3.7 (p. 175) is continued in the branding of the route and the region.

7.2.2 Image aspects of the Midlands Meander brand

The image aspects of a brand may be grouped into functional and psychological attributes (Echtner & Ritchie, 1933:3). Functional or tangible attributes include the more technical aspects of what the brand does to satisfy the visitor's needs. The psychological or abstract attributes say something about the user of the brand. The image of each of the two routes is discussed in the context of both functional and psychological attributes.

- **Functional attributes of the Midlands Meander brand**

The Midlands Meander Association has well-articulated mission and value statements, published in their brochures and on the website and which support the functional and psychological positioning of the brand (MMA, 2009:3). The functional characteristics of the Midlands Meander brand are embodied in the association's mission statement: "To provide an enriching experience for the tourist by means of a varied array of hospitality, art and crafts, and outdoor activities in a beautiful and unique country setting" (MMA,2009:3).

The Midlands Meander appears to be in the fortunate position that they are mostly approached for membership (CMM-C). However, the association is "*very careful about lowering standards*" (CMM-G) and prospective members are assessed on their ability to create "*a memorable experience for people coming into the Meander*" (CMM-C).

Some years ago, when the association opened up membership to broaden the financial base, (CMM-G), "*there weren't any criteria, so anybody was allowed to join and then you start getting a lot of rubbish also being advertised which dilutes the whole impact of the Meander route.*" (CMM-A). Since 2006, grading by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) (CMM-C) is a requirement for all Midlands Meander accommodation establishments, because "*they were starting to get lots of people complaining about the quality of where they were staying*" (CMM-E). Among the 71 accommodation establishments listed in the 2009/2010 brochure, there are three five star establishments; 54% attained a four star rating by the TGCSA and 34% a three star rating, leaving only five accommodation establishments rated lower or not rated yet (MMA,2009:30). Nonetheless, some members have reservations about the consistency and standard of TGCSA star ratings.

"It would appear that the different agents have a different idea of quality. I might have a very strict person and next door doesn't, so they get away with a lot of things overlooked ... it seems they don't all have the same book." (CMM-B).

"I think it is a good thing, but it seems very easy to be highly rated ... It does concern me a bit that there is quite a difference between the rating system over here and the rating system in Europe." (CMM-I).

An important aspect of the Midlands Meander brand's functional characteristics is its link with the countryside. The vast majority of members are located out of town on what was previously farmland, as may be seen on the map of the route (see Appendix C, p. 317). Previous slogans used by the Meander underscored the association with the country. The first slogan "Take to the country" was introduced in 1998, and from 2003 to 2007 the slogan was "Experience the country at its best" (MMA, 2009:32). The brochure and website reinforce the country association with images of nature and country scenes and artefacts, as do many of the member advertisements (MMA, 2009:1-32).

- **Psychological attributes of the Midlands Meander brand**

The psychological attributes of the Midlands Meander brand are expressed in the association's value statement as follows (MMA, 2009:3):

"Our association is a collective of creative and hospitable people, making a living at a gentler pace. We strive at all times to conduct our business in harmony with our community and the natural environment. We deal honestly and respectfully with visitors, fellow members, employees and surrounding communities."

Whereas the early slogans emphasised the functional attribute of the brand's country locality, the current slogan "A good place", introduced in the 2008/9 brochure, leans more towards the psychological attributes of the brand. (MMA, 2009:32). The slogan associates the brand with what is good in the country, and not just the country location.

"And we have also positioned our branding into 'A good place' ... and that we kind of identify the place and that there are good things happening here, and that they are going to get service, good hospitality, the ethics and morals of how people conduct their [business] ... our brand's become very centred in our value statement of the business." (CMM-G).

Thus the Meander brand's first psychological appeal is to people who want *"to get away from their rushed pace of their own lives in the city and their careers, and spend a day in the country where there's old country values and atmosphere and ethics"* (CMM-G). The second appeal relates to *"uniqueness of coming here and finding something that is produced from the area."* (CMM-G).

Local craft is encouraged through awarding a butterfly symbol to outlets “where more than 80% of the work displayed is created under the auspices of the owner in the local community” (MMA, 2009:2). The butterfly symbol identifies “Butterfly crafters” in the brochure and at their premises (MMA, 2009:7). Having craft produced locally, furthermore enables the visitor to engage with the crafters, and also with local artists. Meeting the people, and watching them work, serves to enhance the uniqueness of the Meander experience, and as a result, the uniqueness of the brand.

Having established “*a reputation of kind of high end arts and crafts and hospitality*” (CMM-G), the route “*guards against reducing that standard*” (CMM-G). Some retail members are a cause for concern as they “*go overseas and they choose what they want to bring back*” (CMM-C) and then there are complaints that “*you find the same kind of stuff that you can find in the mall in Joburg and that it is just more expensive*” (CMM-G). The Meander “*discourages that kind of retail*” as it is considered “*not good for the whole image, for the whole brand*” (CMM-G) of the Meander, since the route positions itself as an arts and crafts route that offers something unique that is made in the area.

The third psychological appeal of the Meander brand is that of social responsibility. The brand is linked to several projects aimed at upliftment of the local community, such as the promotion of local emerging artists; mentoring of crafters from disadvantaged communities; funding research on the endangered Karkloof blue butterfly; the Midlands Meander Association Education Project; and support for the Zulu-Mpophomeni Tourism Experience project in that township (MMA, 2009: 3,12, 13, 27).

7.2.3 Image aspects of the Battlefields Route brand

In contrast to the Midlands Meander’s well developed brand strategy, the Battlefields Route branding is weak. Although the new website for the Battlefields Route has a banner showing the Battlefields Route logo, the only other references to the route is one mention on the home page, a section labelled “*Towns on the route*” with links to articles on ten of the fourteen towns usually associated with the route, and the contact details of the Battlefields Route Association (Battlefields Route Association, Not dated c,).

- **Functional attributes of the Battlefields Route brand**

Considering the strong military history theme of the Battlefields Route, it follows that the major functional attribute of the route brand is the large concentration of battlefields in the area. Six different conflicts are represented in some 68 battlefields, numerous gravesites and monuments, historic buildings and a number of museums and interpretation centres.

Because of the very large area of the route, it incorporates a varied range of sometimes spectacular scenery from grassland to mountains to bushveld scrub; the route ranges over agricultural and tribal land; and includes several nature reserves. Little is said in Battlefields Route Association publications about tourism amenities and, perhaps because of the size of the area and the number of towns, these are linked to the towns rather than the route brand.

- **Psychological attributes of the Battlefields Route brand**

Since the Branding of the Battlefields Route is not strong, attributes are associated with the Battlefields area rather than the route. The Battlefields have a strong emotional appeal for those target markets that have a military or personal connection with the battles fought in the area, such as military regiments, descendants of soldiers and pioneers, or cultural groups involved. The Battlefields brand is about the stories that need to be told, but this does not come through strongly in either the brochures or the website. Perhaps the best exponents of the emotional appeal of the Battlefields are the expert guides, but they reach only a relatively small number of visitors.

7.2.4 Representational characteristics of the route brands

The Battlefields Route brand is probably not strong enough, but the Midlands Meander brand seems to be approaching a representational status level that attracts discerning visitors, due to its reputation for high quality art, craft and cuisine, with accommodation to match.

“So now it is not just about any shop that you get in Joburg. You meet the guys who make the stuff. But here it is high class stuff and you can go back to Joburg and brag. That’s the important thing, I think. You’ve got some stuff on your mantelpiece, artworks, that you can do on the Midlands. And now you are

the envy of all your mates, because they all want to do it too, because it looks like England or Scotland.” (Enabler-J).

“What I think is different, is you have some of these wonderful places where you can experiment with the world’ best cooking, where they create the fusion stuff, with phenomenal art stuff ... there’s just so much going for the domestic tourism.” (Enabler-J).

7.2.5 Building the route brands

In building a route brand, cognisance needs to be taken of the relationship of the tourism route brand to other tourism brands in the broader destination. Because routes are not naturally visible tourism offerings, the route brands needs to be built by making the route visible through media such as publications, signage and the Internet.

- **Route brands within the KwaZulu-Natal tourism branding context**

The brand architecture for KwaZulu-Natal tourism brands consists of the provincial brand, “The Zulu Kingdom”, and eight sub-brands representing each of the tourism “destinations” in the province referred to in Section 4.7.2 (p. 98). Within these sub-brands there are smaller brands for individual towns and tourism initiatives such as routes.

Branding problems arose for both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route when the TKZN destinations, Midlands and Battlefields, took their names from the respective routes *“when the authorities got involved and messed the whole bloody thing up”* (CBR-G). The areas covered by the TKZN destinations do not match those of the routes, creating a confused branding situation. Whereas the Midlands Meander, which is a private sector owned brand, jealously guards its brand, the municipality driven Battlefields Route brand has been usurped by the TKZN destination brand, which represents only two of the five district municipalities covered by the route. Tourism sub-brands *“shouldn’t really be defined by physical boundaries, but by the broad experience”* (Enabler-C), and *“ideally the tourism sub-brand and the route brand [should] be one and the same thing”* (Enabler-C). TKZN is now encouraging the municipalities to *“embrace all the Battlefields and make that the experience”* (Enabler-C), which is what the Battlefields Route brand is

about. However, it is not yet clear whether the overriding brand will emerge as Battlefields or Battlefields Route.

- **Publications as brand building media**

Their brochures have done much to promote the Midlands Meander brand ever since the first map was printed on brown paper in 1990, right through to the 32-page commemorative 2009/2010 - 25th anniversary edition (MMA, 2009:11). The unusual A3 size of the brochure makes it stand out and the centre page map makes it useful to self-drive visitors. Ever since the early versions, the brochures have exhibited strong branding with a prominent logo on the front cover and provided ample information, not just about the products on the route, but also about the route association itself, positioning it as a socially responsible, visitor oriented organisation (MMA, 2009:1-32).

“The actual brochure, the map thing is fantastic, fantastically designed thing. I mean, it’s a decent size. I think they’ve laid it out very well. It’s very user friendly.” (CMM-E).

“Wherever you go, the first thing they will ask is: ‘Can I get a Meander map?’ ” (CMM-F).

The Battlefields Route has also produced an informative brochure (A2 folded to 1/3 A4), with a map of the battlefields and information about the various wars and battles as well as contact details of guides and tourism offices (Battlefields Route Association, Not dated b). Only slightly more prominence is given to the Battlefields Route logo on the cover page than those of TKZN Zulu Kingdom and the TKZN Battlefields destination, but it is more prominent on the inside when first opening the brochure. There is no information, other than contact details, about the Battlefields Route Association, with the result that the brochure does little to brand or position the Battlefields Route as an entity (Battlefields Route Association, Not dated c).

- **Signage as a brand building medium**

As a tourism route is not distinguishable from its surroundings, signage is necessary to indicate where the route is. Thus signage is also *“about branding and awareness”* and *“bringing the whole route together”* (Enabler-K). Considering that tourism routes are essentially a destination marketing and branding exercise, the level of branding observed on both routes was disappointing, as neither route adequately uses road signage to brand

the routes. On the Battlefields Route, “a tourist will not find a route marker on the entire route” (CBR-G) as it is almost devoid of signage to indicate the existence of the route. The only sign with the full Battlefields Route logo seen by the researcher was displayed at the Lucas Meyer House in Vryheid (See Appendix O on p. 343).

“We do have an approved sign, the cannon with the three cannon balls. But there’s no indication of the route like ... the wine routes in the Cape. You know you are on this wine route and you’ve got your symbol and the number and everything. It has never quite worked like that with the Battlefields Route.”
(CBR-G).

While the logo appears on a few brown attraction signs (See example of Talana Museum sign in Appendix O, p. 343), usually only the generic symbols for museums and monuments are shown (See example of Isandlwana sign in Appendix O, p. 343). Where the Battlefields Route symbol is used on signage, the Battlefields Route name is not used to identify the route.

The lack of Battlefields Route road signage is not surprising since the route itself does not suggest a route or sub-routes for drive tourists to follow through the Battlefields region, although some years ago, such routes which were related to particular wars, were suggested. The Battlefields Route e-brochure on the Dundee website suggests areas to visit rather than roads to travel along, even though the names of these areas sound like routes (See Appendix P, p. 345) (Endumeni Tourism, Not dated a).

The Midlands Meander still has some old route signs that state the name and display the butterfly symbol, as well as a number of old attraction signs that do the same (See Dunroamin’ sign in Appendix N, p. 340), These signs are considered as illegal by the KwaZulu-Natal Roads Department (Enabler-H), although the Maloti Route in the neighbouring Free State, has legal branded route signage with the Maloti Route symbol and sometimes also the name, on it (See Appendix Q, p. 347).

Signage to identify members of the Midlands Meander, is only allowed inside the premises and not outside in the road reserve (See Appendix N, p.340). Subsequent to the fieldwork for this study, the Roads department have agreed to allow a sign similar to the Meander member signs currently displayed inside the properties, to be displayed in the road reserve

at the entrance to the property (Enabler-H). The new ruling will provide for much greater visibility of the route, especially since the members' map numbers will also appear on the new signs. No other signage will be allowed as shown in the Dunroamin' sign in Appendix N (p. 340).

In the past, T-route signage used on the Midlands Meander to indicate sub-routes, showed the route name, although no logo was allowed and signs only showed the generic symbols to indicate an arts and crafts route, namely an artist's palette and a pot with brushes (See Appendix N, p. 340). The proposed new T-route signs for the Midlands Meander will carry no branding and will be similar to the small T-route signs in Appendix N (p. 340).

- **Websites as brand building media**

To brand the route, the Midlands Meander uses its new website well. As in the brochure, the website contains the association's vision and value statements, the history, some statistics and information on the Midlands Meander Association Education Project, and contact details of the Midlands Meander Association. (Midlands Meander Association, 2010b).

While the Meander's website advertises the route's members, the converse does not always apply. Members of the route are permitted to use the Meander logo and slogan on their own websites, but not many do so. Some websites use it as a link to the Meander's website, while others only display the static logo. Members who do not display the Midlands Meander logo on their websites, not only do not promote the route brand, but they also do not benefit from the Meander brand's endorsement of their own tourism establishments.

The Battlefields Route's new website prominently displays the logo in the main banner, but as previously pointed out, provides very little information to position the association itself in the mind of the visitor to the website. Very few establishments on the Battlefields Route display the Battlefields Route logo on their websites, including those that advertise their establishments on the Battlefields Route website (Battlefields Route Association, Not dated b).

The route brand, and especially the positioning of the route brand, promises the visitor a particular route experience. The next section therefore examines the route experience more closely, before the elements in the marketing mix that will facilitate this experience, are discussed.

7.3 THE ROUTE EXPERIENCE

As was discussed in Chapter 4, visitors are looking for authentic and memorable experiences when visiting a destination. Rural routes thus need to create such experiences to ensure visitor satisfaction and to convince tourists to return in the future or, at least, to generate positive word-of-mouth communication. In creating memorable experiences, the nature of the visitor attractions and accommodation play an important role, and from this point of view the two routes provided rich and varied material on facets that add to the visitor experience.

7.3.1 Interaction with local people is important

Interactions with people, and especially those who may be labelled “characters”, add to the visitor experience. For example, in an accommodation establishment it is the people that the visitor interacts with, such as “*the owner or some characters on the staff [that] bring the destination part of the lodge to life*” (Enabler-J); the “*women who understand how to make a guest feel happy*” (Enabler-K).

In the Battlefields “*that guide makes or breaks your tour, because they can be drier than dust; their history can be absolutely top class, but if they’re not a people person, forget it.*” (CBR-A). In the Midlands Meander, it is the interaction with the artists and crafters that makes the experience memorable; the opportunity “*to meet the guys who make the stuff*” (Enabler-J). Meeting and talking to the local people is an additional bonus, especially for international visitors.

“*They found it fascinating, because now they could talk to a local and they could say: ‘Do all South Africans live in houses your size? Where are your children? Why do they go to boarding school?... Do South Africans eat meat three times a day?’*” (CBR-A).

7.3.2 Engage the visitor in the experience

Experiences need to engage the visitor and they can range from the *“intrigue”* of watching *“her little dinner plates being done for her”* (CMM-H) in the Midlands Meander, to *“those uniquely special things [like] lessons on how to carry water on your head, lessons on how to do stick fighting for boys and girls, scouting activities with Zulus”* (Enabler-J), to experiencing the emotion generated by the story of a battlefield.

“And you take them through the battle and suddenly they are very quiet, and some tough ou [bloke] just drifts over there to wipe his glasses when you’re not looking.” (CBR-D).

A personal link to an attraction makes the experience all the more memorable. So, for example, Meander crafters will make items to the customer’s specifications (CMM-D).

“She wanted some-body pillows. I didn’t have. Then I said: ‘If you wait ten minutes I’ll run them up for you,’ ... and she watched her make them up.” (CMM-H).

Both the Ladysmith Siege Museum and Talana Museum will extract *“original letters and original memorabilia”* from their archives that they *“share then with the families”* (Enabler-A; CBR-A). Many visitors indeed have regimental or personal connections with a particular battle, such as wanting to *“see the grave of like their great grandfathers.”* (Enabler-A). The better guides adapt their offering to meet the visitors’ needs.

“I can tell it entirely differently and I pitch it at my audience.” (CBR-D).

“Wednesday last week, I happened to place more emphasis on one particular individual, and when I finished ... two of the lads came up to me, and they’re both from a tiny little village in Wales, and they were very emotional and the guys said look, we’re from this little village, ... John Fielding [recipient of Victoria Cross, Rorke’s Drift] came from our village.” (CBR-D).

7.3.3 The stories need to be told

In the Battlefields area *“everything tells a story”* (CBR-A), but without the story, a battlefield remains just *“koppies en klippe [hills and rocks]”* (CBR-B). With a specialised offering such as the Battlefields, the drive-tourist who *“does not know the story or have an interest in*

history” (Enabler-F), will gain “*very little benefit*” and the visit will only “*give them a feel to say I’ve stood on the Rorke’s Drift Battlefields, I suppose, but that’s it.*” (CBR-C). Contrast such a lean experience with the rich stories that make the battle come alive, for example those told by the late David Rattray, who pioneered guided tours to the KwaZulu-Natal Battlefields:

“It was just that he was a personality in his own right. He always said he wasn’t a historian, he was a raconteur, but he could hold you spellbound for three hours. When he was finished, they would say: ‘Is that it? Aren’t you carrying on?’ ” (CBR-A).

“And they get emotional and whatever, and you come home and you know it is not ‘koppies en klippe’ ”. (CBR-D).

Likewise, wildlife experiences are enhanced by stories, especially when birds or game remain elusive.

“And any big five field guide worth his salt will have a hundred stories to tell on the night you don’t see lion, because you’re going to have those night drives that you see bugger-all and it’s going to be the worst night drive in your life unless you can fill in.” (Enabler-J).

“If you can’t find whatever [bird] you are looking for, they’ll teach you the noise ... if you can’t find the bird, tell them about the beauty of these trees and the interactions with the birds.” (Enabler-J).

Since rural tourism routes are essentially self-drive routes, provision should be made for interpretation or site guides at attractions, such as battlefields and San rock art sites, that have a story to tell that is not immediately apparent. Not all visitors necessarily want to spend three hours on one battlefield site, and they also need to be accommodated.

“If you’re doing this self-drive thing, if you could arrive at a sight and pick up a site guide, who will talk to you for half an hour, you pay your fee, and then you drive off to the next site and pick up a site guide.” (CBR-A).

“The sort of average visitor is: ‘I can stand half an hour of Isandlwana, and I’ve got a feel of the battlefield and I want to move on’.” (Enabler-F).

There is a perception that “*if you are driving from one craft shop to another on the Midlands Meander, it doesn’t really matter what is in between*” and you “*can look at the*

pretty scenery” but there is not necessarily a story attached *“to that particular hill that you are driving past”*.(CBR-A). Others disagree and feel that *“no matter what your route is, we should be incorporating history”* (CMM-A). Every place has a history and stories that need to be told as *“people want to know what happened”* (CMM-A). The history does not necessarily have to be preserved in museums only. Two good examples of history being preserved in Midlands Meander tourism products are Caversham Mill, where the Midlands Meander originated 25 years ago, and Fordoun Hotel and Spa. The history of Caversham Mill and the surrounding Lions River area is on display at the restaurant. At Fordoun, which was originally a dairy farm, the history is preserved in framed family photographs; the original farm homestead, now the restaurant; and portions of the original farm buildings, such as the flotation pool that was built in the old silo or granary, and the dairy that was converted into the conference venue. Owners of both establishments confirmed guests’ delighted interest in the history, which adds to their experience.

7.3.4 Authenticity enhances the experience

While tourists are seen to be passive, travellers are *“people who are active, they are seeking experiences”* (Enabler-K). To the traveller market segment, meeting the local people *“in their raw state”*, adds to the experience, but *“once whitewashed, that automatically becomes no longer an authentic experience and it loses its appeal.”* (Enabler-K).

“They like to see this guy is struggling, we’re part of his struggle, that’s why we are here.” (Enabler-K).

“What we’ve done is to set up those four room houses to be B&Bs [Bed and breakfast establishments] in the homesteads, so for people to come and experience our life in a four room house” (CMM-F).

The integrity of the wider physical environment also needs to be protected in order to retain the authentic feel of the visitor experience on a rural route. Thus the country ambience needs to be preserved in the buildings, the roads and the development of attractions in both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route.

“You don’t want a 20 storey building and you are losing the value of that mountain and the quiet and everything”. (Enabler-G).

“If you had tarred roads all around [the Battlefields]... you’d certainly start losing a certain amount of the experience.” (Enabler-G).

“I tend to feel that leave the Battlefields as much as you can. Don’t start fiddling with them. If it is a virgin site, leave it like that, because it has its charm and its history and this is what it did look like a 150 years ago.” (CBR-A).

Insensitive development can destroy the authenticity of a destination or site and therefore needs to be handled with great circumspection, including tourism considerations.

“That development does not take into consideration that the route, that area is of cultural importance. Then, if you bring in certain settlements closer to that ... it defeats the purpose of that area being [a] cultural route.” (Enabler-B).

7.3.5 Visitors need to feel safe

While authenticity enhances the experience, it may also increase the risk to the visitor venturing into deep rural areas to experience the real Africa. That South Africa has a bad reputation in this regard, is evident and tourist related incidents in particular, have a very negative impact.

“You don’t need to go out and get somebody like David Rattray murdered. World headlines can make or break your place, irrespective of how much you’ve ploughed into marketing ... He was killed on a Friday night. You don’t want to know how fast the cancellations came through on Saturday morning, it was amazing.” (CBR-A).

The support of the local community, already referred to in section 6.3.3 (p. 156), takes on added importance when it comes to visitor safety.

“One of our big things here, we get it every time: ‘How safe are we going to be coming into your area?’ ... You don’t want to say: ‘If you go down that road you stand a damn good chance of being shot.’ Doesn’t do great things for marketing.” (CBR-A).

Safety, other than bad roads, was not much of an issue in the Midlands Meander, which is a compact route in a developed agricultural area. The Battlefields Route covers a widespread area that includes both farmland and deep rural tribal land with poor road

conditions and poor signage, and where visitors experience “a little bit of a fear of the unknown” (CBR-A).

“We’re not quite sure where we’re going. And if there isn’t a signpost when you get to a junction, you’re told to take this dirt road and head up a hill. You’re a little bit concerned, you’re not sure you’re actually on the right road.” (CBR-A).

In the above circumstances it becomes important that visitors “feel safe enough to be able to pull up alongside a stranger walking along the road and know by questioning that person about where they are and where they are trying to get to, that they feel safe to do that.” (CBR-B). In some areas where tourism is well established, such as Isandlwana, good relationships with the local community have been achieved and “your people from the settlement, they like to see the bakkie [guide’s pick-up truck] driving through and then waving their hands” (CBR-I). But people are not the only safety consideration in rural Africa, especially if the visitor wants to experience the real Africa that offers “something that is globally supreme, then that’s the authentic thing in its raw state” (Enabler-K).

“You can’t guarantee the area at some point ... and then maybe it’s a dangerous game species [that] can attack you.” (CBR-I).

“You know, there are aspects about it that are dangerous. You might tread on a spider, you might get bitten by a snake...It’s part of it, that’s what Africa is about.” (Enabler-K).

7.4 THE ROUTE PRODUCT OFFERING

As for a destination, the product offering of a tourism route is a composite one which involves many different suppliers. This section first looks at the product mix that makes up a route and then examines the offering standard for accommodation, guiding and attractions as part of the product offering.

7.4.1 The route product mix

A tourism route brings together a number of different tourist products. So, for example, the “whole Meander is about your customer coming here and sharing the experience of a countryside, the people, the crafts, the places to stay, just the whole combined

experience". (CMM-D). The salient characteristics of a successful combined product mix are highlighted below.

- **Accommodation alone does not attract visitors to the route**

Accommodation establishments, *"because their businesses are based on occupancy levels and constant demand for their services ... are very often the first to get involved in the establishment of route initiatives"* (Enabler-C). This was the case with the Southern Explorer (Enabler-C), and the Nguni route, which started with 62 of the 68 members being accommodation establishments (CBR-C). Even on the Midlands Meander there is a substantial accommodation membership presence (CMM-A). However, accommodation alone is not sufficient reason to attract visitors to the route and the route needs activities and places for visitors to see.

"People do not travel to an area to stay in accommodation unless it is a farm or a casino." (CBR-C).

"If there were only places to stay, with nothing to see or do, then what would be the attraction of coming here?" (CMM-D).

- **Unique attractions draw visitors**

Both routes examined offer the visitor something that is distinctive and unique to that route. The Midlands Meander identified *"this thing of 'countryness', of craft and the values and the ethics, hospitality and the family, the wholesomeness ... that's what's pulling people here, to get a taste of that."* (CMM-G). However, what sets the Meander apart from any other country area, is their emphasis on quality craft and accommodation, and the fact that they're *"actually packaging a little bit of England"* (Enabler-J) in South Africa, through the unique English ambience of the Midlands.

The Battlefields Route has the largest concentration of battlefields in South Africa, which cover six different conflicts and 120 battlefields of which 68 have been developed so far (Enabler-F). The conflicts involved early Zulu struggles, Zulu-Voortrekker clashes, the Anglo-Zulu War, two Anglo-Boer wars and the Bhambatha Rebellion, with battles that captured the world's interest at the time, such as the battles of Isandlwana and Rorke's drift, and the siege of Ladysmith. In addition, *"it doesn't matter which battlefield you go onto, you go into the rural part of the province and you are seeing some of the most spectacular scenery"* (CBR-B), some with 360 degree views.

- **A route needs a mix of attractions to satisfy different visitor needs**

Having started as purely an arts and crafts route, the Midlands Meander benefitted from opening up their membership to other types of tourism products, since new members have not only improved financial viability, but new products have also increased the appeal of the route.

“Now Midlands Meander has got a good diversity of products, you know, whether its arts and crafts, or fine art, or adventure things, or birding. So, either that has definitely made the place more attractive to visit because there is more stuff going on.” (CMM-G).

Although the Battlefields Route is fortunate in that there are battlefields from a number of different conflicts concentrated in the area, that attract different interest groups, not all visitors are interested in military history or *“want to go trotting round battlefields for days”* and there is a need for other attractions too because *“you need a bit of light relief as well”*. (CBR-A).

“Something that I’ve hammered for years is that we need to broaden what’s available in the Battlefields Route. It is not just Battlefields, that’s the core theme, that’s what most people are coming for, but then you need the add-ons.” (CBR-A).

In fact, the Battlefields Route has benefited from recognising that attractions not related to military history exist, that may attract other visitors to the area because *“there will be those interested in the wildlife, those who are interested in golf,”* (CBR-B), and for the drive tourist *“going into the rural part of the province, you are seeing some of the most spectacular scenery”*. (CBR-B).

“What we realised within the route, is that we have this incredible beauty and within that beauty there are game farms, there are golf courses, there’s bird watching, you name it.” (CBR-B).

Drive-tourism often includes families on holiday, and the route therefore needs to offer a mix of attractions that will interests all members of the family, offering activities that appeal to adults and some suitable for younger children.

“When the family tour, you see that young man, he’s not interested, he’s kicking stones ... that one is getting bored.” (CBR-I).

"Because when you've got daddy doing the Midmar Mile, mommy doesn't want to watch for the tenth year and she wants to go and take a drive and spend his money, so one balances the other." (Enabler-J).

- **Different attractions can complement one another**

Different attractions in the route product mix can complement one another, for example an early morning activity such as birding can be combined with visits to battlefields or cultural and shopping activities in the middle of the day. Thus the primary attraction can generate visitors for other attractions on the route.

"I'm a birding guy and I'm going there. What do I do in the middle of the day? I can go and look at Battlefields, I can go and look at that in the middle of the day, or the game or Zulu culture or yes, the Drakensberg." (CBR-G).

"We've got to try and create something that is going to allow it to become a destination, so people will say: 'OK, we'll do crafts one day and the next day let's and all do a family canopy tour'." (CMM-A)

- **There needs to be a balance between attractions and accommodation**

The relationship between accommodation and other tourism offerings on a route is "very symbiotic", for example, in the Midlands Meander , "one can't have craft and nowhere to stay." (CMM-D). But this relationship is also a synergistic one. Accommodation benefits from attractions that draw people into the area, and at the same time accommodation facilitates longer visits which, in turn, benefit the other tourism products on the route.

"The initial magnet for the Midlands Meander has always been this image of quality craft that people can purchase from the route. And the fact that you can actually spend time on the route, and perhaps overnight, and experience great countryside cuisine and things like that, are the secondary attractors." (Enabler-C).

While opening up the Midlands Meander and bringing in hospitality "was a good decision" (CMM-G), a fine balance between accommodation and attractions needs to be maintained in order for both groups to benefit from the route.

"There was a period that the emphasis was so much on the hospitality side of it that it got quite swamped with hospitality members ... and the hospitality members were the ones that came to general meetings and complained that

they were not getting enough business ... that focus has now swung back again towards craft and I think activities as well.” (CMM-D).

“The accommodation sector on the Midlands Meander seems to have a lot of influence, but they realise that the crafts balance is so important.” (Enabler-C).

On the Battlefields Route, without nearby accommodation, some attractions may not be accessible, such as battlefields in the more remote areas that necessitate an overnight stay, and for others the experience is enhanced by an overnight stay, such as birding and wildlife attractions which are best viewed at dawn and dusk.

“The birding guys, they’re up at the crack of dawn for daylight ... Birding is not a midday occupation ... How do you go to a game park? You’ve got to be there early in the morning and in the evening, you’ve got to stay a night.” (CBR-G).

- **There needs to be a range of accommodation options**

Something that has worked well on both routes, is that there has been a definite growth in the number of accommodation establishments, and in the range of accommodation offerings, which allow visitors a greater choice.

“What we saw in the Battlefields Route was big growth in B&Bs, and in farm lodges and in farm lodges going into ecotourism and game lodges.” (CBR-A).

“A lot of people do not want the stuffiness of a five star establishment and feel more relaxed and probably [want] a more child friendly environment.” (CMM-I).

7.4.2 Maintaining the standard of the route offering

The tourism industry is a service industry and a very demanding one with regard to service standards. As one respondent stated:

“This industry demands that you are at the beck and call of the tourists ... If you don’t understand the service industry, then you should not be in this industry, because in this industry ... everybody who comes here must be treated like they were the only people that were ever going to come onto the place, and therefore you make them happy.” (CBR-B),

- **Service standards**

Service standards are important for any route and a route should “*aspire to offer the very best in service*” (Enabler-C). High standards should be a motivation rather than a deterrent to joining the route, which “*should be so recognised that people will say: ‘Oh, I’m desperate to get onto the route, I need to raise my level’*” (Enabler-G).

Being in the country with its slower pace, there is a risk of product owners becoming “*a little bit hill-billyish [because] one can too easily forget that you are in the service industry ... and become a little bit slack in a sense of one’s service [since] you do lose that business sense of urgency*” (CMM-A). Such a situation is detrimental because the route competes with other destinations and if one member is slack, the whole route’s reputation may be affected. (CMM-A). Equally important is consistency; it is “*no good being good today and off tomorrow, because it doesn’t help; the backlash on negativity is considerable*” (CBR-A).

- **Accommodation standards**

The route association may have certain requirements for accommodation establishments. In the case of the Midlands Meander, establishments need to be graded by the TGCSA, but the membership evaluation also has a subjective component and is not based on grading alone.

“We don’t just look at the product; we look at the facilities for the establishment. Is it going to be a memorable experience for the people coming into the Meander ... when they come and visit this establishment?” (CMM-C).

As a development initiative, the Midlands Meander has exempted B&Bs that are part of the Zulu Mpophomeni Tourism Experience from the grading requirement as these establishments can neither afford nor meet the standards for grading. One of the enablers cautioned that, having met the minimum standards for the route, these establishments should now “*aspire to offer the very best in service delivery, which would be the standards prescribed by the Grading Council.*” (Enabler-C).

Grading by the TGCSA is questioned by some respondents, describing it as “*kind of hogwash*” (CMM-A) and blaming it for causing establishments to falling into “*sort of a lull in cross-commonality, where everybody has the same number of hat stands, they all look the*

same” (Enabler-K). Thus upgrading for example the B&Bs in Mphophomeni township would destroy the “*authentic township experiences*” that have proved to be “*quite popular with overseas people*” just as they are (CMM-G). These respondents feel that the most important criteria for accommodation is cleanliness and safety, especially at the lower end establishments.

“If you can offer a warm, clean, pleasant, (Did I say clean for women?), clean accommodation, with a lot of personality and fun for R300 a night, R400 a night, you’re going to get a lot of people there.” (Enabler-J).

“My attitude is that the standards question has to do with cleanliness and with safety. The rest is up to the buyer.” (Enabler-K).

In the final instance, it is the individual product owner who makes a business decision on what service level they will offer:

“I think the moment the guest walks through your door, you need to decide what service you will give him and what you, as owner, what do you want that guest to take out of your gate and what message he must take out and what marketing you want him to do for you out there.” (CBR-E).

- **Tourist guiding standards**

While many attractions on the Midlands Meander can be enjoyed without a tourist guide, the Battlefields Route has a highly specialised subject as its theme. The latter route is fortunate in having “*an exceptionally good core of guides*” (CBR-A) who furthermore specialise in certain areas. The passion, the depth of knowledge and the amount of preparation that the Battlefields Region Guides put in for a tour, amazed the researcher.

“I spent ten years researching, no not ten years, I’m not exaggerating, 50 years, my entire adult life, working and interest at these issues. It’s a passion, I know my subject.” (CBR-D).

“Your level of education now is supposed to be just short of a degree. You know, it is Diploma level. You read and read and read. A lot of us just don’t realise just how much we’ve read and absorbed and put into it when we take these tours and so on. And somebody comes out with a new book and new research and all you think of is getting hold of it and you just soak it up.” (CBR-G)

Considering the standards maintained by the Battlefields Region Guides, it is disconcerting that the reputation of battlefield tours is allowed to be marred by unregistered guides employed by large tour operators.

“At Isandlwana, at the height of the rush [visit by Lions Rugby supporters] the other day, there were unregistered guides walking around, we know them. And the tour operators knew it too, because they couldn’t get a guide, they woke up too late.” (CBR-D)

The tourism authorities *“say it’s not their job”* to charge the unregistered guides and an individual laying a criminal charge in terms of the Tourism Act, serves little purpose because *“policemen in rural areas don’t know how to handle it”* (CBR-D). Another problem is that *“the tour guides are old, [and] we need young people coming into the business”* (CBR-A). A number of African guides have been trained and registered as Battlefields Region Guides, but *“they are not easy to find”* because when *“told what the demands are of the tourist, half the class empties”* (CBR-B).

- **Attraction standards**

Attractions on the Midlands Meander are privately owned businesses and it is in the interest of these businesses to maintain high standards of upkeep. In the Battlefields, most of the sites are maintained by municipalities and Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali (Heritage KwaZulu-Natal) (Amafa), with limited funding available for their upkeep. Battlefields, memorials and war graves are considered *“very important assets to the municipality, assets to the route, assets to the country, and they need to be maintained and they are not.”* (Enabler-A).

The quality of attractions, be they interpretation centres, arts and crafts, retail outlets, activities, nature experiences or whatever the route has to offer, is important. The Midlands Meander has built its reputation on *“high quality crafting [and] high quality experiences”* (Enabler-C), but some years ago the Midlands Meander did accept certain retailers as members who stock *“Chinese imports, your cheap imports from overseas”* (CMM-C), and there is now a feeling that shops that sell *“Chinese trinkets”* are *“taking away from the whole focus of the Meander”* (CMM-D). The Meander has since introduced *“quite strict standards”* because they realised that offering *“stuff you can find in the mall in*

Joburg...just more expensive,” has set the Meander back as an arts and crafts route and that *“there’s got to be uniqueness”* (CMM-G).

The next aspect examined is the route experience which, together with the product offering, has a bearing on the route branding and positioning discussed in Section 7.2 (p. 204).

7.5 THE KEY ROLE OF PEOPLE IN ROUTE MARKETING

As has already been stated in section 7.3.1 above, interaction with the local people enriched the visitor’s experience on the route. This section examines aspects of behaviour that may enhance the visitor satisfaction and route stakeholders’ perspectives on training.

7.5.1 People make the difference to the visitor’s experience

In tourism, *“every single person plays a role”* (Enabler-E). This includes tourism service providers, but also other people like the *“people in town, people you meet on the roads”* (CBR-A) that one asks for directions, petrol attendants, policemen and traffic officers. *Without “the passion and the enthusiasm and the commitment of the people on the ground” (Enabler-E),* a tourism route will not work. This is evident in the Midlands Meander where the owners of tourism businesses often are *“not in it to make a lot of money to retire early, they’re in it because they love the lifestyle, they love what they are doing.”* (Enabler-D). Similarly, many guides on the Battlefields Route spoke of their passion for the history of the area (CBR-B; CBR-D: CBR-I) and some even left previous occupations to become full time guides.

The involvement of the owners is seen as important because *“you’ve got to be part of your business, you can’t pass it off to somebody else to do it for you.”* (CMM-B). Staff tend to get so used to the job, that they need to be reminded that the visitor can never *“be taken for granted and that any person who walks through that door must be treated like Barak Obama...like King Zweletini, because the customer is king and every one is the king.”* (CBR-F). At establishments that are not owner run, or where *“the owner is not happy with what they are doing, you immediately get that feeling that you don’t really want to be here”*

(CMM-B). Even where people are doing what they enjoy, just like everyone else, they are still subject to human emotions although they are not expected to let it show.

“People think you live in the country, it must be glorious and happy. They don’t want to know that you still get as grumpy as a person in the city” (CMM-A).

7.5.2 How visitors are treated is important

South Africa is known for its warm hospitality, but hospitality is something that needs to be consciously practiced to create this feeling of warmth. Visitors quickly sense the insincerity of routine behaviour because the *“warm feeling”* of true hospitality is something that *“you don’t talk, you send it”* (CBR-F).

“I think if your host or shop owner or whatever you want to call it, is engaging and interesting and friendly, and you come away feeling ja, that was interesting and that was good, that was worthwhile. If he kept his distance, that is not going to be a good experience.” (CMM-D)

In the past, tourism in South Africa has mainly been an activity for white people and transformation of the industry still needs to filter through to all staff levels, especially front line staff.

“There are some places that I don’t take my family to, because there is something that you feel ... you know, it is though my money is worthless here. Racism kills people in South Africa, so people need to be trained in doing that ... every customer is the first customer.” (CBR-F).

How visitors are treated is pivotal in their decision to return or to spread positive word-of-mouth communication about their experience on the route.

“We bend over backward on the Battlefields. To this day every product owner in the Battlefields, every tour guide in the Battlefields, everyone who has got anything to do with the Battlefields is passionate about it. They really make it work. And that’s why people come back. Or if they don’t come back, at least they tell their friends to come and see us.” (CBR-B)

However, there is a fine line that should not be crossed when extending hospitality.

“Before we bought this place, we stayed in a few places and it used to drive me mad with people coming over, the owners of the B&Bs coming over all the time to find out whether we were OK and actually if I am not, I’ll bring it to you.” (CMM-E).

7.5.3 Everybody needs to have knowledge of the local tourism products

While many respondents felt that there are people who are doing a good job, there were also concerns about lack of skills and knowledge in some instances. One area where knowledge is apparently lacking is an awareness of what is on offer to visitors to the area. One would at least expect that all full time tourism staff should *“have knowledge about the area, the routes and the attractions in the area and surrounds”* (CBR-H), but ignorance seems to be more common.

“My girls in the shop have no clue where anything is.” (CMM-H).

“I walked in at our newspaper ... and I said to the girl ... I’m from [lodge]. ‘Oh, you’re out there where they had that battle, hey?’ So I said: ‘Yes that’s right.’ ‘You know my brother said this is such a lot of rubbish, we should forget about the past and we shouldn’t be worried about who shot who, where.’ ... I mean, what if a tourist walked in there and heard that, what on earth would they think?” (CBR-C).

Petrol attendants play an important role in drive-tourism since they have contact with visitors refuelling and they may be a convenient source of information since *“you’ll find the petrol attendants are excellent ... because petrol attendants generally know where everything is.”* (CBR-B). Moving deeper into the rural areas, the situation changes somewhat.

“If you stop at our petrol stations here...some of them don’t even know where [major attraction] is. They can’t tell you, half of them can’t speak English...you talk to people that speak only Zulu.” (CBR-C).

Ladysmith Municipality ran a training course for front line tourism staff, such as *“people at the garages, at the [garage shop], people at the B&Bs, regarding tourism at Ladysmith, regarding our products, regarding about where the museum is, where the B&Bs are...and we gave them some pamphlets on where the B&Bs are.”* (Enabler-A). Dundee also trained

traffic officers, petrol pump attendants, police men, and hotel and accommodation receptionists (CBR-A) in how to treat visitors to their town.

The first thing we did was to train them to smile. The second thing we did, we managed to convince our traffic officers not to fine somebody in a foreign registration vehicle [not from Dundee]. You can fine the locals, but you let the foreigners off by saying: 'Listen, welcome to our area but please don't do it again'." (CBR-A).

There have been other initiatives "to educate school kids, because that's where you need to start" (Enabler-B) when educating the community about tourism, but concern was expressed that "those who are not in schools, we never cover them." (Enabler-B).

7.5.4 Tourism related skills need to be recognised and utilised

In the private sector driven Midlands Meander many product owners train their own staff. Meander members are hesitant to send staff on external training courses, even those run by the association, as the investment may be lost through other establishments poaching trained staff.

"A lot of members will spend money and they will train their staff up and three months down the line the establishment from down the road who is bigger and better has high-jacked all of that staff and they have spent all that money on training just to lose it in three months' time. So a lot of our members have actually said they will either train themselves and so they are not going to be paying for any more training." (CMM-C).

Respondents on the Battlefields expressed concern about the level of expertise of some guides on the battlefields (CBR-D) and the fact that most of the guides are "old men" (CBR-A) with not enough young people entering the field. On the other hand, many young people who do have qualifications in tourism and history do not find employment at all.

"Those [government] departments that are concerned with tourism, I don't think they have taken it seriously to absorb people who have had a tourist related training...there is so much skills, there are so many graduates ... ask the unemployed graduates how many have done tourism? You find that maybe 50% of those have done tourism, but yet they are unemployed." (CBR-F).

“We are in terms of land space the largest museum in the country ... But you look at what we do, our municipality has a position for a curator and a museum assistant. That is the sum total of professional staff to run this museum ... [the others are] Board of Trustee contracted ... Unless you are a large national museum, there isn’t infrastructure in the museum to absorb those history students ... although the people are needed, there’s no job structure to slot them in.” (CBR-A).

At the same time, posts are not filled or volunteers are expected to do the work, especially on the Battlefields Route.

“A professional curator went off this house [museum] last year May. Since then they advertise now and then” (CBR-I).

“Pay people, they expect volunteers.” (CBR-A).

7.6 ROUTE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The physical evidence on a rural route encompasses the cultural, natural and built environment. This section first looks at the country ambience and the scenic environment of the two routes. Thereafter three other important elements of the physical evidence of rural routes and drive-tourism are discussed namely roads, the signage on these roads, and maps.

7.6.1 Preserving the country ambience of the rural route

Both routes investigated in this study are located in particularly scenic rural environments, described below by product owners on the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route respectively.

“It’s quite seasonal. There’re times of the year, this particular time of the year there are big black lines everywhere where we have to burn firebreaks, and the air is full of smoke, and one good thing about the smoke is the magnificent sunrises. But it’s quite dull and monotonous and boring, but other times of the year it’s beautiful. Spring with fresh green is fantastic. Summer is just lovely, damp and it’s not cold and wet like the Cape. Lovely sunny days with a good

thunderstorm. And autumn is just spectacular, it's fantastic." (CMM-D).

"It doesn't matter which battlefield you go onto, you go into the rural part of the province and you are seeing some of the most spectacular scenery. You go onto the top of Spioenkop for instance ... you have a 360 degree view. And you've got the eastern Free State mountains on the one side, you've got the Drakensberg on the other. You've got the Biggarsberg that leads over into the Transvaal, you're looking down into the Isandlwana area. All from the top of one mountain. It's Incredibly beautiful." (CBR-B).

Development can either destroy or enhance the route's rural ambience. Sensitive development that "*keeps this country feel*" may enhance the appeal of the route with better facilities, but many think that the change from a village to a town, will detract from the experience. As one respondent cautioned: "*I think we have to be very careful with regards development; I think that will be fundamental in that whole keeping the country country.*" (CMM-I).

Conservation and preservation of not only attractions such as battlefields and rock art sites, but also of the nature areas and the ambience of the countryside that form part of the attraction of rural routes, is important. Route associations, if not actively involved, need to at least communicate with conservation initiatives, since the pockets of nature preserved in conservancies are in themselves potential tourist attractions along the route, as "*a lot of the people that do come into the area [come] just for the peace and the quiet and the nature*" (CMM-B) that such areas provide.

"There's a lot of walks and things that are in the area and the conservation [group] is now trying to encourage people to go there and get hold of the map for walks. But the Meander doesn't take part in that. You know, there should be more discussion between the two parties." (CMM-B).

Conservation is no longer an option and "*we've all got to try*" (CMM-A) to consider the environment. However, this is a task that all parties need to support and not just the tourism product owners.

"Now we set this whole thing up, glass, plastic, cans, compost garbage and it all gets taken in these different packets to the dump and at the Howick dump there's no facility for separation, oh dear." (CMM-A).

The physical environment at a destination tells much about the people who live there. The route should “*nourish a sense of place ... there’s got to be something that the customer feels these people are proud of what they are, they’re proud of what they’re doing*” (Enabler-K). The route association is in a good position to “*polish that brand*” (Enabler-K) and to lobby the local municipality to clean up the town by seeing to “*the state of the roads, that the lines are properly and neatly painted, signs are up everywhere so that you know where you are going, and keeping [the town] clean*” (CBR-E). Although there has been much improvement since the “Keep South Africa neat” campaign, towns are not yet as “*clean and tidy as the municipality would like us to believe that we are* (CBR-H). Although this is usually a collective effort as on the Cape wine routes, one individual can make a big difference as was demonstrated in Dundee where an entire street was transformed.

“The wine routes have cleaned up their fences and painted their gate posts and put up decent signs and taught their staff to be nice to customers.” (Enabler-K).

“We have here a series of buildings that all belong to one Indian man and he painted the whole street’s buildings and it is absolutely a pleasure. And he painted it nice bright colours which fit in with their culture and it was very nice to see that.” (CBR-E).

7.6.2 Roads

Roads in rural KwaZulu-Natal were described as “*in a shocking state*” (CBR-B). Tarred roads have potholes and “*just before the bridge there is always a dip*” (CBR-D), which make them particularly dangerous at night. There are additional hazards on rural KwaZulu-Natal roads which make them even more unsafe when visibility is poor, especially in the rain or at night.

“We crept along; there were people, there were goats, there were cattle ... there were cars without lights” (CBR-C).

Most secondary rural roads are gravel roads. These roads are not a problem when they are well maintained, but the Natal Roads department admit that “*there’s a lack of gravel and we have such a backlog in re-gravelling of the roads*” (Enabler-H). Without gravel, roads become muddy and slippery when it rains (Enabler-H). In winter, “*there is just dust and more dust*” (CMM-B), and the roads “*get worse, because the rocks come up, and then*

you get this slippery surface” (CBR-C). Such road conditions add to the cost of conducting a tourism business in the rural areas.

“They’ve been grading the roads, but it still costs me a tyre a year. Repairs, the money just goes there ... I bought an expensive set of shocks, two years, 30,000, 40,000 and they’re gone, they’re finished.” (CBR-D).

“Some of the tour operators say we cut out Battlefields ... due to the state of their roads, the gravel, and fearing the damage that might be caused to their busses”. (CBR-I).

The state of the roads is blamed on *“the incompetence of the Roads Department and the fact that they have allowed the roads to deteriorate to that extent” (CBR-B)*. The Roads Department blames heavy vehicles like overloaded timber trucks that *“haul timber on the gravel roads whether it’s raining or dry and it destroys the road” (Enabler-H)*. Accidents on the N3 highway, as well as trucks that want to avoid the tolls and law enforcement on the N3, divert traffic to the R103, which runs through the Midlands Meander, and to secondary dirt roads (Enabler-E). That the funding allocated to road maintenance is inadequate, is evident and adds to the problem.

“One section of the road became completely impassable. Eventually they all got together and bought stone or crusher or whatever and the Roads Department then just spread it for them.” (CMM-B).

“Two years ago, they brought all the stone ... and they dumped it at all these points in the road and just left it. And [someone] went and said: ‘What is the problem?’ And they said: ‘No money for diesel’. So they all got together as the locals and they said: ‘Here’s the money for diesel, will you please spread the stuff?’ ” (CMM-B).

On the other hand, dirt roads are part of the rural experience; *“it gives you the whole feeling of going to a rural area and experiencing that ruggedness to be out on that road” (Enabler-A)*. Visitors need to take the dirt roads into account in planning their trips as *“sitting overseas and [you] look at a road map, it does not look very far”,* but travelling on these roads takes much longer than the map may suggest (CBR-A). Visitors also need to learn how to drive on dirt roads as they tend to either *“drive too fast and have a very close encounter with a barbed wire fence, or else they drive too slowly” (CBR-A)*. How the visitor

experiences the rural dirt roads depends on how they drive, as the following two anecdotes illustrate.

“The first thing was that a person who became a customer of mine, drove over here in a BMW X5. Now that is a little two-seater sports car about two millimetres off the road. And the first thing I said was; ‘Ooh, you must be nervous with your car coming up the road’. He said: ‘No, you just drive slowly’, and he wasn’t stressed at all.

Then about three months later, we happened to have six BMWs, nobody knew each other, all parked up there and a guy drove up to the front door in a cloud of dust, jumped out of the car swearing at me about my road and he hadn’t yet seen all the BMWs parked in the ground over there. And he walked into the shop and he saw all these people and then he saw the BMWs, and he got in his car and drove away.” (CMM-D).

Product owners on both routes have resigned themselves to the fact that tarred roads are “*not going to happen*” (CMM-D), as much as they would like to have them. Though there are times when the roads get potholes or are very rutted, “*in essence, they’re very good dirt roads*” (CMM-A). Access to the routes is considered as a more important issue than local roads. Important deficiencies are a short, untarred stretch of the R66, which diverts traffic away from the Battlefields to the N2 along the coast, and the fact that there is no easy air access to the Battlefields Route, which makes it inaccessible to international visitors with limited time available in South Africa.

“There is no airfield here where you can land a plane properly; it’s got potholes in it too.” (CBR-C).

“They only have seven days and they have to construct an itinerary that takes them everywhere and if Rorke’s Drift is on it, it swallows two days, which is very bad because we are so inaccessible” (CBR-C).

7.6.3 Signage

In the early stages of the fieldwork it already became apparent that signage was an issue on both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route. Signage impacts on the visitor experience and has implications for the marketing of the route and tourism products on the

route. Furthermore, signage on rural tourism routes is, by all indications, fraught with problems.

- **Visitors need good signage**

The primary function of directional and attraction road signage is to get the visitors to their destinations, but lack of clear signage is described by respondents as *“one of the hugest issues”* (CBR-H), *“a big challenge, non-existent”* (Enabler-A), and *“an absolute heartbreak”* (Enabler-K). That signage is deficient is clear from the anecdotes below.

“They didn’t know where Bhambatha Lodge is. They passed Bhambatha Ambush Rock, they went right up to Kids Drift, and from Kids drift back past the Bhambatha Ambush Rock and then to Nkome, because there’s no signage.” (CBR-F).

“We’ve had the odd guy phone us in the middle of the day and say: ‘God, where am I, how do I get there?’ And they’ve driven straight and ended up in the grammadoelas [back country]...and we have to try and work out where the hell they are and lead them back on the phone, lead them to the main road so that they can get there.” (CBR-D).

While good signage is important to visitors at all times, at night it takes on a critical safety dimension. For example, visitors to the Midlands Meander may typically *“leave Joburg at two, three in the afternoon ... [and] by the time they come here, it is dark”* (CMM-B). In unfamiliar rural surroundings, and driving on an unfamiliar dirt surface, visitors may misjudge the distance covered because of *“that psychological phenomenon, when you don’t know it, you feel you are going far”* (CMM-A).

“We often find we give directions [to] go straight till you get to a ... true’s Bob, especially because you’re a city person, you’re driving much slower and you think you’ve gone further than you actually have, and at night you always get people taking the wrong turn, even though you say drive for eight kilometres. They’re so very agitated, they’re on the dirt, it’s very dark and there are no landmarks” (CMM-A).

Although the use of global positioning systems (GPS) for navigation is becoming more prevalent, not all visitors use them. Using GPS may aid visitors in finding their

destinations, but the systems are not infallible, as the information may not have been uploaded correctly or at all.

“We need to get our GPS co-ordinates organised so that we can actually end up on Satmaps, because I had a phone call from a man who said to me: ‘I’m lost. I’m using my Satmap to find [attraction].’ ... So when he got here, I went out and said: ‘So please tell me where you were.’ He was actually on the dirt road below our property. That’s where it took him” (CBR-A).

“Sometimes the GPS, you have errors, and the signage help too, they are both tools to help you get around more effectively, and maps.” (Enabler-C).

Road signs are very expensive (Enabler-C), and GPS offers a cheaper alternative. It is *“the way the world is moving”* and *“we need to move with it”* (CBR-A). Most of the rental cars come with GPS now or one can hire them; and international visitors are used to GPS. However, several respondents felt that GPS will never entirely replace signage. Signage helps to orientate visitors as to where they actually are and serves to reassure them that they are indeed on the right road to their destination.

“I think also road signs are nice when you are on tours, busses and that, looking out the windows and you can pick up a sign. If you are driving down the barren road, with GPS, only the driver knows where he is going, nobody else does.” (Enabler-D).

“Ten kilometres after you have been travelling on the R600, there should be a sign saying Winterton 30 kilometres away, and then Winterton 10 kilometres away, so that you know that you are getting close to this town, you haven’t missed the place you are looking for. There are no reassurance signs.” (CBR-B).

- **Product owners need good signage**

Good signage is also imperative to product owners who *“need signage because that is their livelihood to get people to come to their establishments”* (CMM-A). On rural tourism routes, tourism products are not only located along the main route, but are dispersed in the surrounding area on secondary roads that are mostly not surfaced, and may even be located in deep rural areas. Self-drive visitors to the routes are drawn from the major metropolitan areas in Gauteng and Durban, and signage therefore becomes particularly

important to entice visitors to venture off the safety of the tarred road onto unfamiliar dirt roads.

“We need people to turn off the tar, which is difficult to get people to do in the first place, if you don’t have a sign to help you.” (CMM-A).

Regulations only allow attraction signage *“at the nearest road back from the road you live on”* (CMM-D). While it does not appear to be a problem on the Battlefields Route, in the Midlands Meander where the R103 (See map in Appendix C, p. 317) *“has become the main Meander route”*, product owners *“on a road or two beyond that”* get little benefit from their signage as people travelling on the R103 do not see the signs (CMM-D).

“So we live on this little road. The next road back is the Dargle road...we have to put it up at the Dargle road. I would like to put signs up where the Dargle road leaves the R103. To me that makes sense.” (CMM-D).

“They won’t allow it unless it is right outside your doorstep, which for us is pointless because we need people to turn off the tar [R103].” (CMM-A).

The fact that the regulations do not allow for signage that meets the needs of the product owners, has resulted in an on-going problem on the Midlands Meander with illegal signs being erected by product owners.

“We went the very illegal route when we first started here and what we decided was, we’re off the tarred road and how do we get people to know us? And we made lots of little signs and we put them everywhere. And needless to say, after a while we were told to take them all down, which we then did, but we’ve achieved quite an impact in letting people know where we were.” (CMM-A).

“For this exhibition that we’ve just had ... I went and put up two huge illegal signs on the R103 ... and the number of visitors ... must have gone up a hundredfold compared to normal. So many people came here and said we saw your sign and turned round and came back to come down. So the signage is a big issue.” (CMM-D).

Any sign that is not approved by the Roads Department is considered illegal, and *“then Roads Department go round every six months or so, and chop down all illegal signs”* (CMM-C). While some respondents had no problem at all, others described the application procedure for legal signage as *“horrendous” (Enabler-K)*, probably because *“people don’t*

know who to speak to and there's no clear procedure in place" (Enabler-E). Unfortunately, the sign companies "*see the money*" and they are only too willing to make the brown signs even if they have not been approved (CMM-C). While the Roads Department "*look at the speed on the road*" and set the font size accordingly, illegal signs may be too small to be effective (Enabler-H).

In the Midlands Meander, where a large number of tourism product owners are concentrated in a relatively small area, signage clutter can be a problem. So for example, if every product owner on a secondary road branching off the R103, "*wants a sign there, you're going to have about 30, 40 signs there ... because there are so many facilities down that road.*" (Enabler-H). Numerous signs are not only hazardous to traffic, but the area also "*ends up looking messy and ...trashy*" (CMM-A).

The proposed solution is to re-instate "T-routes" or tourism routes, whereby a sub-route is given a number such as T1, T2, and so on. A sign with the T-route number is placed on the main route at the turn-off to the T-route; the T-route is shown on the map. The T-route number is then used when providing directions to the establishments on the sub-route. More than seven years ago, large sign boards (called an "*Info lapha*") displaying a map and a list of all the attractions on the sub-route, were erected in the Midlands Meander by the Roads Department, before the turnoffs to the sub-routes. In some places lay-byes¹¹ were built by the provincial authorities to allow visitors to stop to read the signs, but in other cases there was nowhere to pull off the road, rendering the signs largely ineffective, as they contain too much information to assimilate in passing, Appendix J, (p. 332) shows some examples of *info laphas*. In the past, these boards were not kept up to date and therefore contained some wrong information. The facilities listed on an *info lapha* are not restricted to members of the tourism route, but are all those willing to pay to have their names added to the board. Similar *info laphas* are also found on the Battlefields Route at some of the district boundaries and entrances to towns, and with similar problems.

Unlike the Midlands Meander, where most of the accommodation establishments are in the countryside, there are many accommodation establishments in the towns on the Battlefields Route. These establishments may be difficult to find without a street map, especially in sizable towns, resulting in an untidy plethora of individual signs. The town of

¹¹ A lay-bye is a short additional lane which allows vehicles to stop outside the main traffic flow.

Ladysmith addressed the problem by replacing all the individual signs with large brown signs at strategic intersections, listing all the B&Bs and guest houses in a particular direction. Visitors are thus able to find the accommodation establishments by simply following the signs. Appendix K (p. 334) shows a series of such signs leading to the Thorold's Treasure Retrieve B&B. However, not everybody in Ladysmith is in favour of these signs, which were described as "*distasteful*" and "*unsightly*" by one respondent, who admonished that money should rather be spent "*to promote history around Ladysmith*" (CBR-H).

"I find it quite amusing that they are allowed to stick up all these signs advertising accommodation establishments...I think they could have spent a lot more time and money to have proper signposts advertising the various places of interest in and around Ladysmith." (CBR-H).

Some accommodation owners in Dundee make use of advertising tacked on to the *info lapha* to direct visitors to their establishments (See Appendix J, p. 332). Though not completely eliminating such illegal signage, the town of Vryheid addressed the problem by putting up signs at the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) with maps indicating the location of accommodation and restaurants (See Appendix L, p. 336). These signs are lit at night and information signs on the main street point the way to the TIC.

- **Signage problems specific to rural areas**

The harsh South African sun causes signs to fade and lettering to peel off, and signs therefore have to be replaced frequently (See Appendix M, p. 338). In KwaZulu-Natal all road signs are mounted on wooden, and not metal, poles to prevent fatalities in case a vehicle collides with the poles. However, the Roads Department no longer always cut the grass on the verges, which can grow up to two metres tall with the result that signs and poles are damaged by veld fires, which are a common occurrence during the South African winter (See Appendix M, p. 338).

The theft of signage is a problem in rural areas. The Roads Department "*used to put up aluminium signs, and they were taking them down and selling them for scrap*" (Enabler-H). Wooden poles are stolen for building and fencing material, particularly in deep rural areas.

"You want to get to the Prince Imperial [monument] and you go to Dundee Tourism and they give you a map that's drawn out and that says travel so

*many Ks and turn left and then come across a school, 100 yards and turn left. Because the sign's up for week or two and it's down for a week or three. They use the pole for building in a hut or building something somewhere.” (CBR-D).
“The only problem we have with the signage, some people who I can say are arrogant, doesn't know anything about what this sign is standing for, and they just take off the signage or they used to steal the poles to make their fencing.” (CBR-I).*

Signage plays an important part in the branding of tourism routes. This aspect of signage has already been discussed in section 7.2.5 (p. 210).

7.7 PRICING

Prices of tourism products may be difficult to set at the right level. Rural tourism routes already have a significant transport cost component because of their remote location. The cost to the visitor of the other elements of the holiday therefore need careful consideration. These costs include accommodation, the attractions visited and goods on sale at the destination.

7.7.1 Pricing of accommodation

Two enablers suggested that there should be guidelines for pricing accommodation (Enabler-B; Enabler-E), so that *“people have some idea of what is reasonable”* to charge (Enabler-E). Product owners, especially accommodation owners, do compare their offerings to similar competitive products and then set their prices accordingly.

“I've compared it in the area to people's and priced it in that sense” (CMM-A).

“It's very difficult working out a price of anything. If you've got three star properties or four star properties, you try and be much the same” (CMM-E).

Accommodation rates in the country tend to be lower than those in the cities, and even those along the coast.

Accommodation prices are really quite pitiful if compared to those in the cities.” (CBR-H).

“The fact that it is relayed as the country, automatically makes people feel that your costing is going to be a bit lower because the countryside is a bit rustic and not as chic, so therefore you can’t qualify your costing higher.” (CMM-A)

“If you went to [coastal resort]... it’s all sort of budget accommodation for what we are charging here. Our standards are very high. To encourage people to come here, we keep our prices low.” (CMM-B).

Within both routes there was a range of accommodation options at different price levels which allow visitors to match the cost of the accommodation to their budgets.

“Tourists have budgets. You give them options, anything from self-catering cottages, B&Bs, hotels game lodges, right the way to where you want it.” (CBR-A).

“What’s nice about the route is that there is a large selection. You can go to really upmarket expensive places, and you can go to places that are far more reasonable, you can go to backpackers.” (CBR-B).

“I think there is a broad range of pricing. There are expensive upmarket hotels, resorts. There are inexpensive B&B s and self-catering cottages. There is a place for everyone.” (CMM-D)

While the Midlands Meander *“does tend to be in the higher end”*, there is a *“big gap for backpacker type accommodation...to attract the younger market with much cheaper rates”* (CMM-G). With the emphasis placed on the domestic market, respondents felt that *“South Africans can’t afford even going, or staying there”* (Enabler-E). A two tier price structure was suggested whereby *“if you are a local person, you’ll be charged the local price”*, so that domestic tourism may *“keep destinations alive with income on a regular basis”* (CBR-F). Regardless of the level of accommodation prices, there is wide agreement that providing good value for money is important.

“And tourists, even if they are travelling in South Africa with their exchange rate, know when they are being ripped off”. (CBR-A).

“As long as the experience is good and you think you got value for money, whether you are paying R900 a night at a fancy hotel or R150 a night at a self-catering. If the experience you get out of it is that it’s good value for money, then that’s great.” (CMM-D).

7.7.2 Pricing of attractions and shopping

The main attraction on the Battlefields Route is the battlefields. While entrance fees to the sites are low, fees for a registered guide is legislated between R1000 and R1500 per day and the fee remains the same, regardless of the number of people in the group. If a guide charges less than R1000, *“that gives hesitation to our client, because why is it so cheap?”* (CBR-D). Tour operators and local visitors are not as willing to pay for the expert services of a Registered Battlefields Guide as the international clients are.

“Those tour operators say they have a budget and they have over the years been happy to pay 600, 650 a day. And they say that’s what we pay. I won’t work for that anymore, with due respect.” (CBR-D).

“A guy phones and says: ‘How much for the day?’ And you look at it and you work it out and you give him the price... and the guy says: “Ag jy’s laf man, jy’s laf” [Oh, you’re crazy man, you’re crazy] and then he puts the phone down...and [they] go and do their own thing and go away and still don’t know anything about it.” (CBR-D).

A rural tourism route needs to offer *“a lot of affordable attractions”* (Enabler-J). Low prices may well encourage greater total spending by visitors when they spend smaller amounts at a time, or spend the amount repeatedly. When a family travels together, the cost of visiting an attraction is multiplied by the number of people in the party and attractions can become prohibitively expensive very quickly, which may lead visitors to avoid spending anything at all.

“If you tell me it’s R500 a person on a zipline, I don’t go near. I’ll never hear the end of it. I can probably spend R150 a person to do something. I’ve got four or five to send on that trip on the zipline.” (Enabler-J).

“The lady does this tour on a donkey cart, but they only charge R10. I mean I can send my kids on five trips round the thing while I’m looking at [attraction]. And the oke’s making money. It’s fifty bucks for income, it’s more than they earn in those towns – ten years ago it was.” (Enabler-J).

The Midlands Meander positions itself as an arts and crafts route, but arts and crafts are also difficult to price, especially items made for sale in the showroom and not to order.

“I always find it the most difficult thing to price something that is going to be in the shop; it is very easy to price something that you’re making for somebody ... We get such varied comments, from local people who say: ‘Ooh I’ll come back when I’ve won the Lotto’ to Joburg people and they kind of look and say: ‘Why are you so cheap?’ Almost like what’s wrong?” (CMM-D).

From the above discussion it is apparent that pricing influences visitors’ perceptions of a destination, not only in terms of value for money, but also the quality of the offering and the experience they expect to get.

7.8 DISTRIBUTION

Both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route seem to rely heavily on promotional elements such as their brochures and websites to attract visitors. Both routes make provision to handle enquiries and reservations; the Meander through an office opened in 2003 (CMM-C) and the Battlefields Route through a volunteer (CBR-G). However, it was pointed out that both routes *“are not engaging the distribution channel” (Enabler-C)* and don’t seem to understand *“that distribution is such a big component of tourism marketing” (Enabler-C).*

“And I think that’s one of the failings of the Midlands Meander. They’ve only recently been engaging your big tour operator groups and things. And I think they still make that mistake that they are not actively engaging your tour operators to sell those experiences and that’s a big mistake of the Battlefields. (Enabler-C).

It may be argued that the dirt roads on rural routes make it unattractive or even impossible for large tourist busses to venture off the tarred road. However, there are tour operators that deal with smaller groups and that are prepared to travel on dirt roads.

“The thing is there are tour operators who want to do that sort of thing, your Battlefields specialist tour operators, and you know there are many of those.” (Enabler-C).

“Busses can’t go there, you should only be dealing with people who do combi loads.” (Enabler-J).

Thus, unless the routes build “*very well structured partnerships with distribution channels*”, and “*unless you are engaging those tour operators, you know they [the routes] are going to struggle to be successful.*” (Enabler-C).

7.9 ROUTE PROMOTION

Promotion is the one element of the marketing mix that is readily associated with the marketing function by most respondents. This section will examine the wide range of promotion methods used by the routes. Emphasis is placed on the role of the tourist information centres (TICs); brochures and maps; electronic media, events and word-of-mouth in promoting rural tourism routes.

7.9.1 The role of the tourist information centres (TICs)

Tourist information centres (TICs) may be run by local municipalities, by community tourism associations (CTAs) and even by the route association. Regardless of who takes the responsibility, there is a need for “*somebody that, ...at a central point somewhere, with a computer that’s online all the time, and a phone and a fax that works all the time, with all the information around them*” (CBR-D), can handle specific enquiries about the route. Existing TICs do not appear to meet these needs adequately; for example, Greytown “*has no dedicated tourism office*” (CBR-F) and the TIC is attached to the local museum, with limited opening hours; Ladysmith’s “*tourism officer has just resigned and left and gone to work on this new Eskom project*” (Enabler-A), with the result that the TIC, which is located in the Siege Museum, is run by museum assistants; in Newcastle the “*Director of Tourism doesn’t even get paid all year round, he’s now gone to go and earn his own money; I’m doing this on a voluntary basis [manning the Tourism Office]*” (CBR-G). The TIC in Dundee is situated in the main street and is closed over weekends because of staff issues, whereas the nearby Talana Museum, Dundee’s biggest tourist attraction, is open seven days a week.

“But you know they are two old ladies, why would they want to work over weekends? They want to go home to their husbands. I said to them ... why don’t they make use of tourism students to run those offices? Then it became

a thing: 'Oh, then we have to lock up the cool drinks.' But that's why I think it should be [at museum], because they're open seven days a week.' (CBR-A).

The Midlands Meander Association teamed up with Howick Municipality to set up the Woza Woza (“come, come” in Zulu) information office near the Howick Falls. The Municipality provides the building rent free and the Midlands Meander Association pays the operating costs (CMM-C). Product owners pay to have their establishments advertised at Woza Woza and although the facility is available to members of other tourism organisations, it is mostly supported by Midlands Meander members. The N3Toll Concession (N3TC) do not want “a zillion signs on the N3” and they are “actively pursuing tourism nodes just off the N3 to bring people off the N3 to explain to them what is on offer” (Enabler-E). The Howick and Mooi River Woza Woza information centres are two of these nodes supported by the N3TC, while the Battlefields area is served by the Montrose and Harrismith nodes.

Product owners on both routes expressed reservation as to the effectiveness of the TICs to generate business.

“You know, it is actually quite poor. They give them an amount per annum to run the tourism office, to pay the two ladies’ salaries and I think the paperwork and computers they also provide. But I think that is basically where it stops....I don’t think it is a strong priority.” (CBR-E)

“When it first opened, I had a bit of feedback from there, but in the end it wasn’t worth paying the money; and every time I went past, the office was closed.” (CMM-B).

Drive-tourists do not necessarily plan their entire trip ahead and they may look to the TICs for information about the local area.

“Generally they know what they want to do when they come into the area, but they want sort of to find finer things out ... so they come into the office. Generally they buy the brochure.” (CMM-C)

Whereas information on the area or town where the TIC is located, may be readily available, drive-tourists looking for information on the next town on a widespread route, such as the Battlefields Route, may have difficulty getting assistance from the TIC.

“And the tourism offices, since they created this CTA story, and even the publicity of things, have been terrified that they are advertising another town’s wares. And we’ve got a ... lady in the front who is very sweet, never travelled anywhere out of [town], doesn’t know where anywhere else is.” (CBR-G).

Although road signage to direct visitors to the local TIC generally appeared to be adequate, there are some problems that deserve attention. Neither the font used for the letter I on the information signs (even within one town as can be seen in Appendix L, p. 336), nor the background colour of the signs, are consistent. The researcher observed black, brown, green, and blue signs, which make it more difficult for visitors to spot the I-signs while driving in traffic. Sometimes signage is missing altogether.

“They’ve got no I-signs. The one outside fell down in the wind about three months ago and the municipality have never put it up again. It is lying there broken. They said: ‘Does the tourism office have money?’ No.” (CBR-G).

“An I-sign was to be painted on the tar. He got permission from that part of the municipality, the traffic offices part, to do it. The funds, they were never forthcoming.” (CBR-G).

7.9.2 Printed material

Tourism routes can be “*simply represented in marketing media, such as maps and brochures*” (Enabler-C). In addition to signage, brochures and maps are major ways in which the route can be made “visible” to visitors and the two are often combined in one publication.

- **Brochures**

The Midlands Meander annually produces two brochures; a 24 page A3 brochure and a smaller A2 brochure folded to “*cubby hole size*” (1/3 A4), which contains the map and most of the information published in the larger brochure, except for the advertising. What sets the Midlands Meander brochure apart from other destination and route brochures, is not just its large size, but the small panel advertisements of almost all the Meander members, the Meander map showing the location of every member in the brochure; an alphabetical list of all members advertised in the brochure with contact numbers and GPS co-ordinates;

and a list of members classified by category of offering. Members have “*four free options of what [category] they want to fall in. They might be in accommodation but they also have a restaurant.*” (CMM-C). Since 2009, the map also shows colour coded T-routes. (MMA, 2009:1-24).

“I think the actual brochure, the map thing, is fantastic, fantastically designed thing. I mean it’s a decent size; I think they’ve laid it out very well; it’s very user friendly.” (CMM-E).

The Midlands Meander brochure, and the map in particular, is a key element in the marketing of the Meander, because the route is essentially a self-drive experience.

“Promotional material for the Midlands needs to provide the route and provide the advice on what to do ... because they pick it [Meander brochure] up and they use that to follow the route...The route is not a route without it.” (Enabler-G).

“A lot of people get the magazine and that’s how they get around the Meander and get to the places they want to go to.” (CMM-E).

The Midlands Meander brochure, distributed by Brochure Distribution , is available gratis outside the Midlands Meander, but on the Meander itself, it is sold for R5-00 at the Woza Woza centres. Members buy the brochure at R2-00 for resale at R5-00. The researcher did see the brochure for sale at retail members’ outlets, but not at all of the other establishments visited. The large size of the brochure makes it noticeable, but also difficult to display in standard brochure racks, resulting in wastage.

“The information centres don’t have space for our big brochures so what happens is that they either lie on the counter or under the counter and by the time the end of it comes, they still have piles left.” (CMM-C).

Midlands Meander members complained that enough brochures do not reach the target markets outside the Meander. The brochure with its map is considered a key promotional item because many visitors collect the map in their home areas to plan their trips.

“It’s not getting out enough to Joburg people. We were Joburg people ourselves and ... we travelled regularly down to the coast and never even vaguely knew what was just off the highway in this area.” (CMM-A).

“The map is a key, because some people, they look at the map and then phone me directly.” (CMM-F).

The Battlefields Route differs from the Midlands Meander in that many visitors, and especially international visitors, use guides or tour operators to take them to the battlefield sites. When targeting the international market, promotional material *“needs to be that much more informative so that it sells the Battlefields”* (Enabler-G) and convinces the visitor to include it in their South African itinerary. With the limited funds available to the Battlefields Route Association, distribution of the brochures remains a problem, even if the brochures are sponsored by TKZN or other parties.

“Our biggest problem is actually marketing ... in terms of being able to get our brochures and information material to the source of our major visitors which are obviously UK [United Kingdom] and Europe. Costs me, I think just to post that to the UK costs me R4 something or other. How many can I post? Cost you R2-50 to post it locally.” (CBR-G).

- **Maps**

Right from when it was first published on brown paper in 1990, the Midlands Meander map has contributed to the success of the route. (See Appendix C, p. 317)

“Wherever you go, the first thing they will ask is: ‘Can I get a Meander map?’ ” (CMM-F).

“Then it became a bigger thing when we published this map.” (CMM-G).

“We know they sit in their cars in Howick and they pick up the map, and they look where the most red dots are.” (Enabler-D).

The Battlefields Route Association publish a map showing all the main battlefields (See Appendix D, p. 319). While the latest Midlands Meander map has colour coded areas to indicate T-routes, neither of the maps suggest routes along which visitors could travel, although the Battlefields Route did so in the past.

“In the past they had different colour coded routes that you could follow ... but it tended to revolve around the different Battlefields experiences. For example if you were interested in the Anglo-Zulu war, you would follow a Anglo-Zulu War route.” (Enabler-C).

“The Battlefields Route, they provide maps, but you know it’s these, what is it about 14 municipalities now that are involved? But they don’t suggest a route as such, to go from here to there to there.” (Enabler-C).

Neither of the two maps are drawn to scale. The Midlands Meander map does show distances but it contains almost no other features such as rivers, railway lines and towns that the traveller can use as markers. The Battlefields Route map does show such features but no distances are indicated. The maps are “*often difficult to understand.*” (Enabler-D) and without identifiable markers and good signage along the route to reassure the visitor that they are on the right road, getting lost is not ruled out, even when driving with a map.

“Ja, it’s not 100% right, is it? Did you get lost now and then?” (CMM-A).

“People need to know where things are in the area, but a lot of them come into the shop [with the map] and we try and direct them.” (CMM-H).

The *info laphas* on the Midlands Meander and in the Battlefields contain maps (See Appendix J, p.332) and the N3TC have plans to have “*a map on a board*” (Enabler-E) at the TIC offices. These maps are helpful, but once the visitors move away, they have to rely on memory. GPS units do provide on-going information, but they only show the road the vehicle is on and a very small portion of the bigger map. Maps, printed or on boards, provide the big picture of the area, thus serving to orientate visitors. Neither the boards nor GPS can entirely take the place of printed maps.

7.9.3 Electronic media

The impact of electronic media is also evident in the two routes studied, but while websites abound, social media is not used to the full extent yet. In fact it is recommended that “*the route have its own website and then recommend the individual players on the route to have their own websites, you can’t overdo this. I mean the way the web works, success breed success; the more you generate, the more you get kind of thing.*” (Enabler-K).

- **Midlands Meander website and links**

The Midlands Meander Association’s website was hosted by TKZN until July 2009 when the association launched its own website. Several Midlands Meander members commented on the fact that the route did not “*have enough early vision of where technology is going*” and that the website was launched “*way late*” (CMM-A). The website is very extensive, easy to navigate, attractive and lists all the members of the Meander under different search categories. The website was launched days before the fieldwork for

this study was conducted in 2009, and those members that had seen it, reacted favourably to the Meander having its own website.

“Well now that they’ve got the website, I actually think they plan to help. Because once you’ve mentioned to somebody Midlands Meander and they go onto the Meander website, which had never happened before because there’s never been anything... So, now that there is a website, yes, I think it’s going to do wonders.” (CMM-B).

“My only real complaint would be the fact that it took them so long to get a website up and running. And I think people are so into booking their holidays through the Internet nowadays. I think it was a mistake for them to leave it so long.” (CMM-E).

However, more than a year after the launch of the Midlands Meander website, relatively few member websites have links to the Meander website. Where websites do have a link to the Midlands Meander’s site, the link does not necessarily appear on the home page and it may be on a subsequent page as one of several links to organisations with which that the web owner is associated (Ardmore Ceramic Art, 2008; Shuttleworth Weaving, Not dated; Indigo Fields, Not dated):

“I just feel it will be beneficial for all. People do their shopping on the website, so they go on to our website initially and they are having a look around and they are thinking what can we do in the area?”. (CMM-I).

Websites of the smaller CTAs in the Midlands Meander area, such as Howick and Nottingham Road, are hosted by TKZN on the provincial website, but Mooi River Tourism has its own website (Mooi River Tourism, Not dated; TKZN, 2010d). None of these sites mention the Midlands Meander or have links to the Meander website although Howick, Nottingham Road and Mooi River are inside the Meander area. uMngeni Municipality has a link directly to the Midlands Meander website, but Mpofana Municipality does not (uMngeni Municipality, 2011; Mpofana Municipality, 2010). Thus, the Midlands Meander is not supported on the websites of the local CTAs and only on one of the two municipalities.

- **Battlefields Route websites and links**

The Battlefields Route Association has had a new website since 2010. The previous website *“has lacked a little over the years, because once again it is dedication to get the*

thing organised and going” (CBR-A). The new website, www.battlefields-route.co.za, is well organised, easy to navigate and informative, providing information on some 66 battlefield sites on the route and a printable map (Battlefields Route, Not dated c). There is a second Battlefields Route website, www.battlefieldsroute.co.za, which only directs visitors to various other websites related to the area and the new official Battlefields Route website.

Larger CTAs in the Battlefields Route region have their own websites, such as Endumeni Tourism, Ladysmith Tourism Association (still under construction), and Tourism Newcastle (Endumeni Tourism, Not dated b; Ladysmith Tourism Association, Not dated; Tourism Newcastle, Not dated). There may be a link for tourism on the local municipality’s website as in the case of Vryheid, or no reference to tourism as in the case of Greytown (Vryheid, Not dated a; uMvoti Municipality, 2008). Whereas tourism destination brochures do not promote the routes, some CTA websites in fact do. Endumeni Tourism has a “Battlefields” link, which also leads to a link to an excellent 34-page Battlefields Route electronic brochure (e-brochure) covering the entire Battlefields Route, but there is no link to the Battlefields Route Association’s website (Endumeni Tourism, Not dated a). The e-brochure is sponsored by the uThungulu District Municipality, but there is no link to this e-brochure on their own website, nor on any of the websites of other Battlefields Route towns (uThungulu District Municipality, 2009). Newcastle Tourism’s website has links to information on the battlefields in the district, and while there is no link to the Battlefields Route Association, there is a link to the Battlefields Region Guides, though only labelled “Click this link for more information” (Tourism Newcastle, Not dated). It is evident that the promotion of the Battlefields Route is, at best, rather patchy.

- **Route members own websites**

That using electronic media is the way to market, is appreciated by product owners on both routes. In the 2009/2010 Midlands Meander brochure, 96% of the member panel advertisements give e-mail addresses and more than 75% list web addresses as well. Having their own websites does generate business for these members.

“Most of our bookings come through Internet nowadays.” (CMM-E).

“I think access to [the] Internet had a huge impact and that’s what we see now.

When we first came here, when we did our questionnaire of where you heard

about us, it used to always be Midlands Meander brochure and that is now changing and Internet is on the up and up when I plot my graph.” (CMM-A).

“We have a very strong website, that’s how we got on to the international community.” (CBR-B).

In addition to their own websites, product owners also list their products on other websites that serve the tourism sector. These include private sector sites for which they pay a fee.

“I have my own and I’m on others, on two others and I would say my bookings come from the other websites rather than the Meander ... So now that the Meander’s got its own website, we may benefit more from them.” (CMM-B).

A listing on the TKZN website is part of the TKZN membership package, but it does not always seem to materialise.

“One of the women up on Nottingham Road, she said to me: ‘Have you ever been to TKZN’s website?’ and I said: ‘I actually haven’t.’ So she said: ‘Try and find yourself.’ She said: ‘I can’t find me, you try and find you.’ “ (CMM-B).

- **Perceived advantages of route websites**

Web technology allows for the web owner to “*measure what’s happening in terms of traffic on the website*” (Enabler-K), measuring not just the number of hits, but page views and number of messages sent from the website (Enabler-K). Accessing international markets (CBR-B) and carrying out targeted marketing to “*reach the segment of the market that you are actually appealing to ... that has been made a heck of a lot easier by technology*” (Enabler-K). Misconceptions about a destination or facility can also be expelled by a good website.

“Smaller towns have stigmas that we are in the sticks, so we must be backwards. And the stigma is something you can negate by having a proper website, professionally designed, professionally hosted, and obviously professionally marketed and promoted through it.” (CBR-H).

Websites are important to the visitors “*who research their destinations before they even leave the comfort of their lounge, so I think [a good website] is vitally important.*” (Enabler-D). From a visitor perspective, “*as long as it is informative about things*” the Internet “*makes the guest make the choices*” (CMM-I). It also makes the product owner’s offering “*a better sale*” if visitors have “*more options of things they can do in the area*”

(CMM-I). Interactive websites furthermore provide visitors with “*an easy way to make decisions*” and then to act on those decisions by booking online (CMM-I).

- **Problems experienced with websites**

One of the problems in rural areas, which the researcher also experienced, is that connectivity can be poor or even non-existent.

“I’m not a website fan simply because out here the speed of the connection is so pathetic it takes forever to connect to anything. We get excited when we get 30 kilobites per second; that’s fast.” (CMM-D).

Websites do not function in isolation of other marketing activities. To be of value, the website firstly needs to be made known to potential visitors, and in this regard, brochures and advertising can be valuable. Secondly, a system to respond to enquiries must be in place.

“The website is going to do you absolutely no good unless somebody knows it’s there and somebody’s looking for it. So, you’ve got to be connected to the places that do it [distribute information].” (CBR-G).

“If you want a response from your website, you need to have a person to whom queries are going, actually being able to respond.” (CBR-A).

“If you’re not on the Internet, you’re not doing business. If you are not responding in four hours, go away and do something else.” (Enabler-J).

- **Social media**

Little mention was made of social media by respondents. Neither route has links to social media or a blog site on their websites yet, although for the Midlands Meander a blog is “*something that is in the pipeline, that we are thinking of putting onto our website*” (CMM-C).

7.9.4 Events

Rural tourism routes can benefit from two types of events, namely those organised by the route association and those organised by others on the route or in the vicinity of the route. Both routes organise their own events. The Midlands Meander Association has run “*creative exhibitions for about three years, where people can come and learn arts and*

crafts at different places” (CMM-G) and staged a successful rolling sculpture exhibition in 2009 with sculptures exhibited at different craft outlets on the route.

“We’ve had a fantastic long weekend, 20% up on the previous year and this is because people are coming to see the sculptures and people are in my shop, and buying [goods].” (CMM-G).

Not all events are equally successful. The Slow Food festival involving Meander restaurants and hotels, was less successful in attracting visitors.

“I think they may even stop the slow food festival because I don’t think it was that successful.” (CMM-E)

The Battlefields Route regularly stage commemorations of various battles, which attract large numbers of visitors and media coverage.

“More than 5,000 people coming to Spioenkop; last year there were more than 38,000 people to commemorate the 180 years of Blood River; whereas Isandlwana, most of the Zulus participated and that gave more than 50,000 people.” (CBR-I).

“The Bambatha centenary commemoration of 2006 brought to Greytown more people than Greytown has experienced over a period of five, ten years ... in fact we ran short of accommodation, people were spread throughout this area as far as Dundee; and we had live coverage on SABC Africa the whole day.” (CBR-F).

Mass events such as *“the Mighty Men’s Conference [which] drew 150,000 people* “to Greytown on the Battlefields Route, and the Midmar Mile (swimming), not only attract large numbers of visitors, but also gain media coverage and *“huge exposure, because for one day you have the whole country ... looking at you and that opens up the area and does wonders for marketing purposes”* (Enabler-I). The Midlands Meander Association participates in marketing some of these external events, which in turn also promote the Meander, so *“one balances out the other”* (CMM-C). Route members benefit directly from such events, even smaller ones, which attract visitors to the route.

“A lot of enquiries is: ‘Right, my husband is doing this triathlon again and I want to take the children. Where can we have lunch and what is nice for them?’ And things like that.” (CMM-C).

“Those [school] football matches are hugely popular, and the marathons and the bike rides and there’s all sorts of stuff that goes on around here, which obviously brings people up.” (CMM-E).

7.9.5 Word-of-mouth communication

Respondents have little doubt that word-of-mouth communication is a very effective and credible marketing tool, considering it as *“the best marketing there is” (CMM-E)*, and as *“far more powerful than a website, than a brochure, than anything else” (Enabler-E)*. Visitors would more readily believe someone they know and who has personal experience of the destination. Even when there is good printed material available, visitors look for the reassurance from someone with first-hand knowledge.

“I’m not going to believe the travel agent, but I am going to believe my friend.” (Enabler-K).

“A lot of them come into the shop ... even if they have the map in front of them, they would still ask for local word-of-mouth.” (CMM-H).

Positive word-of-mouth communication has the potential to generate new business as it spreads information about the route experience to others who have not visited yet, starting a *“snowball effect”* or *“conversational viral marketing” (Enabler-C, Enabler-K)*.

“That’s what works, somebody telling somebody else to go and do it, because it was fun.” (Enabler-K).

“Or if they don’t come back, at least they tell their friends about it.” (CBR-B).

“No customer is worth anything unless they are going to be your repeat customer, or unless you are going to get some viral marketing from them.” (CMM-E).

To benefit from word-of-mouth marketing, product owners on the route need to create a positive experience as word-of-mouth communication works both ways and negative experiences will also be communicated to others. The product owner has to decide *“the moment the guest walks through your door, what service you are going to provide ... and what message that guest must take out through your gate and what marketing he must do for you out there”*. (CBR-E). So, whichever people the visitor comes into contact with, *“they need to make sure that [the visitors] were taken care of” (Enabler-I)*.

“We’re hoping they get treated so well that they’re also our ambassadors to spread the good news of [destination].” (Enabler-A)

“If he or she is well satisfied, then she tells others about his or her experience and that motivates other people to say you must go and see that because of her, it’s the wow factor.” (CMM-F).

Many product owners have small businesses with limited marketing budgets and word-of-mouth communication therefore represents a very cost-effective form of marketing to them.

“I rely heavily on word-of-mouth; I believe so strongly that if people have a nice experience, they go home and tell at least 20 people. That is one of the most vital forms that I’m using for marketing.” (CMM-A).

The domestic market tends to make their travel decisions themselves and they do not rely on intermediaries as much as international visitors have to. They have a ready source of information because they *“live with people who have experienced these places all the time; so, if they haven’t experienced it for themselves, a friend will tell them and it will work via the grapevine” (CMM-I).*

7.9.6 Tourism trade shows

The Indaba Travel Trade Show (Indaba) held annually in Durban is considered to be *“quite crucial”* for the Midlands Meander as *“a lot of relationships are being built there”*, but it also *“is a thing of going back every year”* as *“a form of keeping it up” (CMM-G)*. By joining the N3Gateway at a nominal annual membership fee, member routes and CTAs along the N3 freeway can exhibit at the Indaba at the N3Gateway stand. The Midlands Meander Association now participates in this initiative instead of having their own stand.

The Battlefields Route Association also attend the Indaba *“because if you are not at Indaba, people think you no longer exist” (CBR-B)*. There are some reservations about the cost-effectiveness of the Indaba, which was described as *“just one big party” (CBR-B)*, and a waste of time, because there are *“more people trying to sell you stuff than you get people coming to you that want to come to your [product]” (CBR-B)*. The Indaba is considered *“an expensive business” (CBR-G)* and the money may be *“far better spent*

buying an air ticket, flying over to the United Kingdom, sitting in front of a whole lot of travel agents and telling ... what they can offer their client” (CBR-B) or to do a promotion in London with “Zulu dancers properly kitted out in their Zulu warrior uniform ... on the steps of South Africa House on Trafalgar Square” (CBR-B) to attract attention and get media coverage for the Battlefields Route.

7.9.7 Other promotional activities

Part of the motivation for joining a route association is that Members pay their *“subscription to have the marketing done for us ... so that you didn’t have to then spend a lot of time doing your own marketing.”* (CMM-E). However, to be successful, members cannot rely totally on the route marketing initiative (Enabler-C), and it would be wise to regard the route as but one element of the marketing communication mix, and as long as it brings enough business, it is worth subscribing to. It is therefore not surprising to find that product owners also subscribe to other portfolios such as Country Roads and the Automobile Association publications to advertise their establishments. Some even place their own advertising in travel publications and local media.

7.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined route branding in terms of the identifying, image and representational characteristics of the route brands and the brand architecture. Publications, signage and websites were shown to be solid brand building media. Examination of the elements of the marketing mix from the perspective of rural tourism routes highlighted the importance of having a balanced route product mix and of maintaining the standard of the product offering. The route experience is influenced by the people that that visitor interacts with and the stories that need to be told. The physical evidence on the route makes an important contribution to the visitor experience through the country ambience, the roads, and signage along the route. The need to engage with the distribution channel was pointed out. In the promotion of rural routes printed material, electronic media, events, word-of-mouth and trade shows are valuable. The final chapter that follows contains the researcher’s conclusions and recommendations as well as suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Literature review: Tourism and rural economic development
Chapter 3	Literature review: Destination marketing
Chapter 4	Literature review: Tourism route marketing
Chapter 5	Research methodology
Chapter 6	Findings of the study: Stakeholder perspectives on route marketing
Chapter 7	Findings of the study: Stakeholder perspectives on the route marketing mix
Chapter 8	Conclusions and recommendations
	Critical enabling factors that need to be in place
	Critical route marketing success factors
	Recommendations for further research

8.1 INTRODUCTION

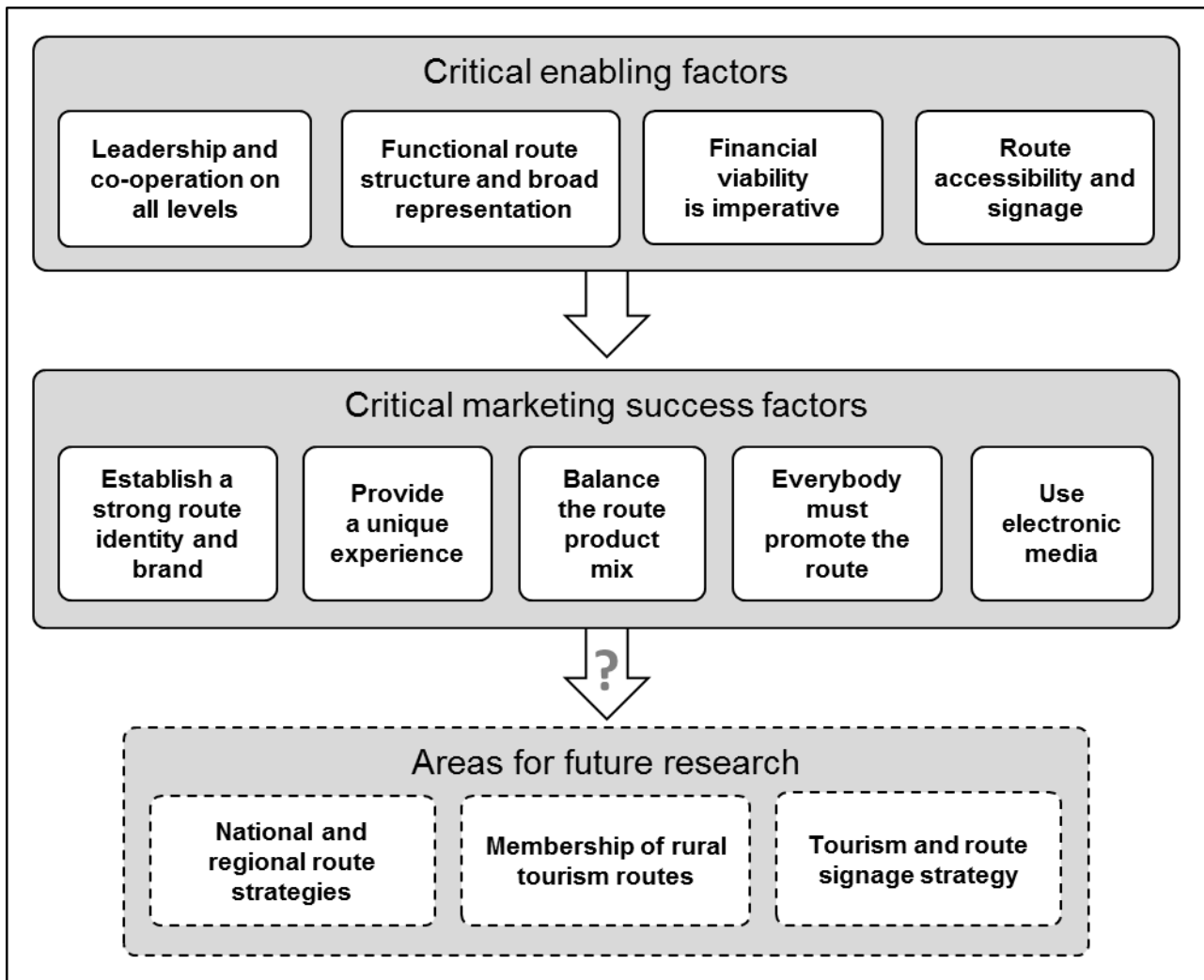
In this final chapter, factors that have a critical impact on the successful marketing of rural tourism routes are identified. These factors include both factors that create an enabling environment for successful route marketing and factors that relate more directly to the

actual marketing of rural tourism routes. Recommendations are made for the marketing and of rural routes as well as for further research in this field.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and insights of key supply-side stakeholders (including product owners on the routes and route enablers) in two rural KwaZulu-Natal tourism routes, regarding the marketing of these routes, in order to identify the critical success factors to ensure future sustainable competitiveness, which may lead to local economic development and thus poverty relief.

From the literature reviewed, the websites of international routes, observations by the researcher, and the analysis of the interviews with enablers and product owners on the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route, it became apparent that marketing is not an isolated activity. Certain factors that enable successful marketing of the route need to be in place. These enabling factors concern how the route relates to entities outside the route organisation, the environment in which the route operates, and the route organisation itself. Within the marketing function, a further set of critical success factors emerged that influence the effectiveness of marketing activities and marketing mix elements used by rural tourism routes. The diagram in Figure 10 overleaf shows the two types of critical success factors, as well as some areas that need further investigation.

Figure 10: Critical enabling and marketing success factors



Source: Developed for this dissertation by the author.

8.2 CRITICAL ENABLING FACTORS THAT NEED TO BE IN PLACE FOR EFFECTIVE ROUTE MARKETING

Critical enabling factors are those factors or circumstances, the presence of which may increase the likelihood of successful marketing of a rural tourism route, but which, if absent, may impede marketing success. This study revealed four such enabling factors that may contribute to the success of a route, namely leadership and co-operation on and between all levels; a functional route structure with broad representation; financial viability; and route accessibility and signage. These factors are discussed below.

8.2.1 Leadership and co-operation on all levels

Though tourism routes are, by definition, co-operative structures, co-operation is by no means a given. For a tourism route to flourish, strong leadership is critical. Co-operation and mutual support is not only necessary between the different levels of tourism structures in the route area, but also among entities on the same level, such as neighbouring municipalities, and within the route itself.

- **Strong leadership**

Respondents attributed the success of the routes largely to individual leaders who championed certain developments at critical times during the lifespan of the routes. So for example individuals on the Battlefields Route drove the centennial celebrations and re-enactments of battles. Similarly, individuals on the Midlands Meander Association Board pushed for greater business discipline in route administration, conversion to a Section 21 Company, social responsibility projects and setting up the website. The Midlands Meander Association recognises individuals who have made outstanding volunteer contributions to the route with a “Butterfly Award”.

While chairpersons and committee members of the route associations were often mentioned, it transpired from discussions that individuals in the province, and district and local municipalities, can influence decisions that may have a beneficial impact by acting as champions for tourism and by implication, the route. Although legislation requires all municipalities to support tourism, funding is only forthcoming to any significant extent in those municipalities where tourism has been embraced by the leadership, such as the Zululand District Municipality, which provides the Battlefields Route with more funds than uMzinyathi District Municipality where the most visited battlefields are located.

- **Co-operation and mutual support among route members**

The first line of co-operation, and probably the most important, is among members of the route. It is essential that route members work together in a spirit of co-operation for the greater good of the route as a collective, rather than working in competition against each other. The success of the Midlands Meander was from the very beginning, built on a spirit of co-operation with members supporting each other and marketing their neighbour’s offerings.

- **Co-operation and mutual support between the route association and government entities**

The second area of co-operation is between the route and government departments and agencies on local, district and provincial level. A route needs government support on many fronts, for example with road maintenance and signage; maintenance of government owned or maintained attractions, such as battlefields, San art sites and nature areas; tourism development initiatives, such as the Mandela capture site in Howick; development mindful of preserving the rural ambience; funding of community tourism associations (CTAs); and even support for route administration and marketing projects, such as development of websites and brochures. In return, routes need to co-operate with government in complying with regulations and working towards solutions for common problems. Examples in point are illegal signage erected by route members on road reserves and tolerating behaviour by their clients that is not in the long term interest of tourism resources, such as coming too close to San paintings to take photographs.

- **Co-operation between the route and the local community**

Co-operation between the route and the local community, especially the disadvantaged community, is important. The goodwill of the local communities is essential to support route endeavours or at least not to thwart these efforts by for example, theft of signage, damage to tourism resources such as monuments, or the community being a threat to visitor safety. To secure the goodwill of the local community, the route needs to not only share the benefits of tourism with these communities through employment, training and upliftment projects, but also through respecting the heritage and dignity of the community. The Midlands Meander has been particularly active in this area through the Midlands Meander Education Project, marketing and mentoring support for emerging artists and crafters, and by employing local people and sourcing certain supplies locally. However, such efforts often go unrecognised by the community as there is no edifice of the route's goodwill, such as a school building or clinic that benefits many people, while only a small portion of the poor community is seen to be employed by route members and the benefit multiplier effect of such employment is overlooked. It is therefore recommended that the route engage with community leaders to be guided by them in their social responsibility initiatives in the community, as well as to gain their support and recognition of the route as an instrument of development that can create opportunities for upliftment of the disadvantaged and the poor.

- **Co-operation among provincial, district and local tourism authorities**

Finally, co-operation between the route and provincial, district and local tourism authorities is critical. The mandate of the tourism authorities is to promote tourism in their areas of administration, and that includes rural tourism routes. It would almost seem as if some destination marketing entities on provincial, district and local level, instead of promoting the routes, regard them as competitors to their destinations, since little evidence was found of the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route on the websites and in the brochures of the towns, local and district municipalities through which the two routes go. For example, now that they are no longer hosted on the Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) website, the Midlands Meander only has a link to their own website on the TKZN site and no promotional write-up to encourage the viewer to click through to the Meander site, in spite of the fact that it is one of KwaZulu-Natal's most successful tourist attractions. It is also difficult to find information on neighbouring towns at most tourism information centres (TICs), which points to a lack of mutual marketing support among some municipalities to promote the bigger region. Greater co-operation and cross-marketing on all levels can serve to stimulate drive-tourism in the province to the mutual benefit of all destinations, the routes and the communities along the routes.

8.2.2 A functional route structure with broad representation is critical

A tourism route needs a formal structure to represent its members, manage the affairs of the route, and provide a permanent contact point for communication with the route organisation. The need for a properly constituted route organisation with an elected management committee or board is more important than the form of association, which may change as the route grows and its needs evolve. The Midlands Meander, for example, transformed from an agreement to work together in 1985, to an association in 1993, and finally, to a Section 21 Company in 2000 (Midlands Meander Association, 2010b).

- **Tourism product owners are the core members of a route**

A critical element of the route structure is membership. The question arises whether membership should be open to all tourism establishments, and even to other businesses in the area, or not. Though this matter needs further investigation, what is apparent from

the research, is that wide representation in the route organisation by tourism product owners on the route is critical. Where product owners, whose businesses stand to benefit directly from their involvement in the route, form the core membership category, the route is likely to be well financed and successful, as is demonstrated by the Midlands Meander. Product owners who can benefit from the success of a rural tourism route, are more likely to be interested members, willing to pay the membership fees that finance the route organisation, and to contribute towards making the route work through voluntary participation in route management and activities. By contrast, product owners in the Battlefields have benefitted from Battlefields Route endeavours without ever having to commit to route activities or to contribute financially through membership fees, relying instead on municipalities to fund the route. The Battlefields Route Association, with municipalities as its main membership base, struggles financially due to lack of commitment from some municipalities that have other demands to meet and where tourism is not a priority.

- **Include government entities in the route membership**

Product owner based membership of the route does not mean that government is necessarily excluded; for example, uMngeni Municipality is represented on the Midlands Meander Board of Directors to facilitate greater co-ordination and co-operation. Other government organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may also need to be drawn into the route's fold, such as Amafa AkwaZulu Natali (Heritage KwaZulu-Natal) (Amafa), Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Open Africa and the N3Gateway Project. This practice is also demonstrated by the international routes examined, which all have broad membership representation, including government and other organisations, though the prime members remain private sector enterprises on the routes.

- **Membership categories make route membership accessible**

Whereas both routes investigated in this study had only one membership category, two successful international routes, the Savanna Way in Australia, and the Rideau Heritage Route in Ontario, Canada, have several levels of membership categories which make it possible for government departments and organisations, tourism enterprises of different sizes, as well as interested individuals to be members of the route association. The different membership categories come with different membership fees, benefits and levels of involvement in the routes. Such a structure allows very small tourism businesses like

crafters, artists, guides, small tour operators and bed and breakfast establishments (B&Bs), to join the route at a fee that is affordable to them, as well as interested individuals not necessarily involved in tourism, such as historians and military or art enthusiasts. Membership benefits can then range from only receiving a newsletter, through to advertising options in brochures and websites, voting rights and eligibility to serve on the committee or board.

- **The route structure should provide for both volunteers and employees**

The route structure needs to provide for both volunteers and paid employees. Both routes in the study rely heavily on members who give freely of their own time and resources, but as the route grows, the workload may become too much for volunteers alone. The route structure therefore needs to define the roles of volunteers and staff, and regulate the relationship between them. The Midlands Meander and several of the international routes studied, appear to have successfully integrated volunteers and staff in their associations. The Midlands Meander Board consists of elected members, with the office manager attending the meetings. Members populate the sub committees and, when necessary, outside consultants are engaged to supplement both staff and volunteers, for example for the development of the website.

8.2.3 Financial viability is imperative

Sufficient funds need to be available for a route to engage in meaningful and effective marketing. Provided that the membership base is large enough, willing to pay initial entrance and membership fees, and to buy advertising space, a route can be self-funding. This is borne out by the Midlands Meander, which financed its growth over 25 years almost entirely through its own resources. Too narrow a membership base, limits route budgets, also for marketing, and opening membership beyond tourism product owners, allows the route to tap the wider resources of municipalities, NGOs, CTAs, other local businesses and individuals through fees and volunteer contributions.

Furthermore, it is recommended that route organisations establish partnerships with entities that can provide funding or expertise for particular projects, such as district and local municipalities, the provincial tourism authority such as Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, and

NGOs such as Open Africa and the N3 Toll Concession's N3 Gateway project. In order to have easier access to such funding, routes would be wise to demonstrate social responsibility and that the benefits flowing from the funding, will devolve to the local community, especially the disadvantaged and the poor. Part of the Midlands Meander's success in gaining the support of the district and local municipalities is attributed to their continued community involvement and development (Enabler-C).

8.2.4 Route accessibility and signage

The success of rural tourism routes is affected by the ease with which potential visitors can reach the route and once there, drive along the route and find their way to accommodation establishments and attractions. The following aspects are important in this regard.

- **Good connecting infrastructure is necessary**

To make rural tourism routes more accessible and to overcome their remote location, good access infrastructure is necessary. This means good roads that connect the route with major tourism nodes and arterial roads such as freeways; and for market segments with limited time such as international visitors, airfields near the route. Poor connecting infrastructure and lack of signage that indicates the route's existence may inhibit visitors from turning off the main roads to visit the route. For example, there is no signage to indicate the existence of the Midlands Meander on the N3 and tourism to the Battlefields Route is dissuaded by a short, very bad stretch of road on the R66.

- **Good road infrastructure is necessary on the route itself**

On the route itself, good infrastructure is equally important. While dirt roads are very much part of the rural scene, such roads must be well maintained. Potholed tarred roads and rutted dirt roads are dangerous, damage vehicles and detract from the route experience. Animals and people, especially children, are a danger on rural roads and in this regard, the co-operation of the local community is critical to keep the roads clear and to prevent the theft of fencing.

- **Good signage is fundamental to a route**

When travelling on remote rural roads, directional, as well as attraction signage takes on added importance. When good signage is not in place, visitors driving in unfamiliar surroundings experience more of the fear of the unknown, and may land in unsafe situations getting lost. Here too community support is essential to prevent the damage and theft of signage. Branded directional signage, albeit only through the route logo, will assist visitors in finding the route and the attractions that they seek. A fine balance need to be struck with regard to signage between tourism needs and safety needs and the need to preserve the rural ambience of the route without signage clutter.

8.3 CRITICAL ROUTE MARKETING SUCCESS FACTORS

The study identified a large number of factors that relate directly to the marketing of rural tourism routes. The most salient of these factors are discussed below.

8.3.1 Establish a strong route identity and brand

Although both routes have brand identity elements in place, perhaps the most disappointing finding of this study was the limited branding of the routes, particularly in the case of the Battlefields Route. A tourism route is identified to the visitor through route related physical evidence, such as advertising, brochures, websites and signage.

- **Identify both the route and the members through signage**

The route needs to be identified by name and logo on road signs and signage at the premises of the members and attractions along the route. Neither route is identified on signs at entry points to the route area, on sub-route directional signs or on *info lapha* boards. Whereas some old Midlands Meander boards still survive, no such signage exists for the Battlefields Route at all. Previously Midlands Meander route membership boards were not visible from the road as they were only allowed inside members' premises. The Roads Department have now approved their display in the road reserve at the entrance to a member establishment, which should substantially improve the visibility of the Meander, and the route management should ensure that members actually do so.

- **Members need to promote the route brand**

Unlike a CTA, a route is membership-based and therefore admission criteria can be applied to ensure that members adhere to the ethos and standards of the route brand. The route brand should therefore be a commendation in the market place for the individual members' brands. Although members do display the Midlands Meander boards at their premises, relatively few of the product owners on the Meander seem to include the route branding on their brochures and websites. Members fully expect the route association to market their products, but the reciprocal marketing of the route by members, rarely takes place. It is recommended that members be required to carry the Midlands Meander branding on their advertising, brochures and websites, in accordance with criteria set by the route. Although members do not have control over publicity, they should at least request that their association with the Midlands Meander be mentioned in articles about their establishments and events.

Branding of the Battlefields Route is problematic insofar as there are very few product owners who are members. The same guidelines as described above for the Midlands Meander, should be followed for product owner members as they join the Battlefields Route Association. Furthermore, the route needs to negotiate with the municipalities and Amafa to brand the route through signage at attractions that form part of the route, since the route is one of the main avenues for promoting these sites.

- **Maps give the route tangibility**

Maps play a particularly important role in route marketing as they assist visitors in planning their itineraries, and, in addition to signage, they provide further tangibility to the route. Both the Midlands Meander and the Battlefields Route have maps indicating members or battlefields, but neither map is to scale and therefore have to be supplemented by the free KwaZulu-Natal Tourist Map issued by TKZN, which is to scale. While it is appreciated that it is difficult to indicate all the route information on a map, ideally, the route map should be sufficiently clear so that no other map is necessary. Maps of both routes are on their respective websites, but only the Battlefields Route map is printable; as are the maps on the websites of the international routes that were examined. The Midlands Meander map, on the other hand, cannot be printed, and this needs to be rectified. Although both route maps are available in brochure format and brochures are widely distributed, visitors may not have the brochures available when using the Internet to plan their visits.

- **Provincial brand architecture must support route brands**

The tourism brand architecture of TKZN needs to be reviewed as the duplication of names between the routes and TKZN destinations creates confusion, as is evident from the TKZN website, and as was pointed out in Sections 4.7.2 and 7.2.5 (p. 98 and p. 210 respectively). This problem is only likely to be resolved once TKZN clarifies their own standpoint regarding the place of tourism routes in the province's tourism brand architecture and branding strategy, because routes are larger than individual attractions and more akin to local destinations.

8.3.2 Provide a unique experience

Rural tourism routes need to create a unique experience to attract visitors in the first place, and to facilitate their return. The study suggests that there are at least three ingredients for such a unique experience.

- **People provide the warmth in the experience**

The first component is the interaction with the people on the route, be they hosts at the accommodation establishments, tourist guides, crafters, artists, or simply local people, and especially the characters among them. The slower pace and warm hospitality of rural communities allows for easy interaction with visitors, but this does not mean that service levels can be compromised.

- **The rural ambience makes an experience memorable**

The second component is the ambience of rural routes that is created by the quiet sounds of nature and agriculture; the closeness to the land; the remoteness of destinations; and rustic elements of "ruralness" such as dirt roads, and even French drains¹². A successful rural route may attract development that has the potential to destroy the rural ambience on which the success was built. Conservation and sensitive development therefore take on particular significance in protecting the rural ambience. The popularity of the Midlands Meander has already attracted developers of large estates with hundreds of city style units around Howick, but thus far the central part of the village has remained intact.

¹² French drain: Septic tank in which organic matter in sewage is disintegrated through bacterial activity and water is soaked away through rubble.

- **The stories make a route unique**

The third component of a unique route experience is the stories that belong to that route alone. The importance of telling the stories is borne out on the Battlefields Route where some guides refer to themselves as raconteurs rather than historians, as the stories they tell transform a battlefield from a bare piece of land into a moving experience. The stories do not only relate to history, but also to generating memorable experiences that become the stories that visitors will tell once they are home again, be it how the artefact they bought was made, meeting the artist, an encounter with a rural community or even the goodness of country cuisine.

8.3.3 Balance the route product mix

The mix of route offerings is of critical importance to attract visitors. The balance, the range and the standards of the route product mix all need attention.

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- **Maintain a balance between accommodation and attractors**

The first challenge is to attain a balance between accommodation and attractors. Possibly because entry barriers are relatively low, accommodation establishments have tended to dominate some South African route associations, such as the Nguni Route and even the Midlands Meander at times. Accommodation alone is not sufficient to attract visitors to the route. A route needs to offer the visitor a reason to come and it therefore also needs attractors in its offering, such as experiences, ambience, scenery, history, activities, shopping, food and the like.

- **Offer visitors a range of choices**

Drive-tourists are often family groups and the route therefore needs to offer a choice of attractions and activities for the family as a group, as well as for individual members of the family, if they are to spend more time on the route. The route also needs to offer the visitor choices in both accommodation type and price, especially since accommodation is a significant component in the total cost of the holiday. On both routes there is a realisation that a variety of offerings is important. On the Midlands Meander, the husband and children may want to do something active while mom goes shopping. Similarly, on a themed route such as the Battlefields Route; the husband may be interested in visiting

several battlefields, but one battlefield visit may be enough for his wife and children, who then need something else to do. Furthermore, not everybody wants to spend three hours at one battlefield site, and a themed route such as the Battlefields Route may extend their market by adapting their offering to also provide a meaningful experience for market segments with a less intense interest in the military history of the area.

- **The route association must manage the route product mix**

Since many rural route members typically are small businesses, it is important that management take balance in the route product mix into account when admitting new members. An oversupplied offering type becomes unsustainable when the owners cannot make a living, as has been demonstrated by the turnover in B&B and guest house ownership. An imbalance of offerings may necessitate discouraging some membership categories, while actively pursuing new members in others, as the Midlands Meander indeed does.

- **Maintain standards of welcome, cleanliness and safety**

A route is a branded offering and the image of the route is superimposed on all the members of the route. If one member of the route delivers poor service, it reflects on the route as a whole. It is therefore important that the route demands a certain minimum standard of service from its members. This does not mean that all establishments must be of the same standard or Tourism Grading Council of South Africa grading; what is imperative is that members deliver on the promises of their individual establishments and that they are welcoming, clean and safe.

8.3.4 All stakeholders need to promote the route

It is clear from the research that the responsibility to promote the route does not solely lie with the route association, and that many stakeholders need to contribute to marketing the route.

- **Members must market the route, as well as their own products**

All members should promote the route along with their own offerings. Furthermore, route members need to promote each other. The success of the Midlands Meander has been

ascribed to the fact that the members actively market each other, and by doing so, they increase the likelihood of visitors spending more and staying longer on the Meander as a whole. The co-operative spirit extends not only to non-competitive offerings, but also to referrals to similar establishments where overflows occur.

- **The route association can facilitate co-operative promotions**

Since the route has a range of offerings that can be packaged to appeal to specific segments, there is scope among members for co-operative promotions to targeted market segments. The Midlands Meander for example, promotes to the wedding market by listing members that can meet the needs of this segment in its brochure and on the website. The route can also team up with outside events or entities in joint promotions that benefit both parties. For example, the Midlands Meander's calendar of events lists all events in the Meander area and not only those organised by members or the association.

- **Government tourism structures must promote the route**

The provincial tourism website is a gateway for all tourism in the province and the site needs to be as informative and inclusive as possible. It would appear as if TKZN does not promote independent routes such as the Midlands Meander, once they have their own websites. Municipal websites usually mention the attractions in their areas, provide search facilities for accommodation, list restaurants and other tourism amenities, but routes are strangely missing. Similarly, CTA brochures and websites do not mention routes, for example the Midlands Meander is not indicated in the Nottingham Road Tourism brochure, although Nottingham Road is in the middle of the Meander. Tourism routes are entities that market only their members, but by attracting visitors to the route, they are also attracting visitors to the whole area or destination, and the benefits of the increased tourism are not confined to route members alone. Again, a policy of inclusion, rather than exclusion should be applied by municipalities and CTAs, even if a route extends beyond municipal boundaries, and not all tourism enterprises at the destination belong to the route association.

8.3.5 Use electronic media effectively

The increasing prominence of electronic media in tourism promotion makes it essential for routes to make full use of the connectivity such media offer and in this regard websites and social media are particularly important.

- **Establish a strong presence on the Internet**

At least, the route should have its own website containing information on the route and its members. More use needs to be made of reciprocal links to facilitate cross-marketing between the route and its members. Websites provide an easy and cost-effective medium to provide up-to-date information and it is imperative that the site be kept current. Much of what rural routes are about can be communicated on the website through good quality visual material in the form of video clips and photo galleries. Since the Internet is widely used to plan visits, the website needs to provide downloadable information such as maps and electronic brochures that can be studied by potential visitors at their leisure off-line, or printed out. Web and e-mail addresses need to appear on printed material and in advertising and for purposes of search engine optimisation, attention needs to be paid to website design and content. In this regard, links to sites such as TKZN's site and the right search words need to be built into the website to facilitate hits on search engines.

- **Tap into social media**

Considering the importance of word-of-mouth marketing, the routes need to embrace social media to provide first-hand information about the route experience to potential visitors. The website should therefore have a blog or, failing that, testimonials from visitors to the route as well as links to social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. With a little creative searching, the Internet can provide much useful information for targeted e-mail campaigns to, for example military history societies, birding clubs, art groups and other niche market segments. Granted that there is a cost involved, routes nevertheless need to continuously explore and evaluate the creative use of new media to promote the route.

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study revealed two areas of concern with much wider applicability than just the routes studied. The first concern relates to tourism route signage and the second to the development of a national strategy regarding tourism routes.

8.4.1 National and provincial tourism route strategies

More and more tourism routes are being established in South Africa, but relatively little research has been conducted on routes. The following areas for further investigation are suggested:

- **Develop national and provincial route strategies**

While the Department of Tourism encourages the development of tourism routes and rural routes in particular, no master plan exists for the establishment of new tourism routes in South Africa, nor are there guidelines on what constitutes a tourism route per se. While the generic term “route” implies a certain path or itinerary that will be followed and that the drive along the route itself forms an important part of the tourist experience, some tourism routes in South Africa make no such suggestion. This is in contrast with countries like Australia where a “route” denotes a particular road that will be travelled, and the United States of America, where Scenic Byways and All American Roads, constitute a particular itinerary along a stretch of road, where the drive along the road is the main motivation for the trip. Some South African routes do not seem to encourage drive-tourism by linking a series of small towns, as the term route suggests, with the result that these route associations appear to differ little from community tourism organisations marketing an area, a destination or a cluster of tourism offerings. That the word “route” seems to galvanise the enthusiasm of the route participants, is not questioned. However, a more accurate description can distinguish routes from tourism nodes, clusters or destinations.

Furthermore, with the establishment of more routes, overlapping of routes will occur as is already evident with the KwaZulu-Natal Birding Routes and the Nguni Route that overlap the Battlefields Route, and the former Hilton Meander that overlapped the Midlands Meander. The overlapping of routes is in itself not a problem, but with no branding of the

routes or sub-routes on road signage in KwaZulu-Natal, the visitor may be confused as to which route a T-route or tourism sub-route belongs.

While private sector initiative should be the main driver in route development, further research may provide valuable guidelines for a co-ordinated national route development strategy for South Africa. When a route becomes very successful, the route identity may overshadow that of the local towns, CTAs or regions, as is already evident in the Midlands where the Midlands Meander is the dominant brand. How the brand architecture needs to be structured by provinces and South African Tourism to include routes as a category of tourism offerings or destinations in their own right in provincial tourism marketing, warrants further investigation.

- **Themed rural tourism routes**

Another aspect that deserves further investigation is the theming of routes to stimulate drive-tourism in rural areas. A themed tourism route can assist in pulling visitors through rural areas by targeting niche markets to drive along the route, visiting attractions linked to the route theme on the way, such as birding, cultural or historical sites. Themed drive routes present a way in which South Africa's rich diversity of resources can be packaged for niche markets to explore and to "collect".

8.4.2 Membership of rural tourism routes

Although they have many characteristics in common, tourism routes differ from destinations and CTAs insofar as route membership tends to be selective, while CTA membership is more inclusive. The relationship between the route and the CTA, or indeed several CTAs along the route, needs further investigation, as does the question whether all tourism establishments in the area that the route traverses, should be members of the route or not. Since a route is a branded entity, these decisions impact on the positioning of the route brand and the financial viability of the route.



8.4.3 Tourism and route signage

In a widespread route such as the Battlefields Route, signage clutter is not yet a problem, but in the more compact Midlands Meander where there are large numbers of route members concentrated along the R103 and on sub-routes, a concentration of signs can spoil the ambience of the area. A similar problem exists in towns where accommodation owners erect signs to their establishments in the suburbs, causing comparable untidiness. The Ladysmith solution shown in Appendix K (p. 334) though very effective, is unattractive and the large initial signs are rather overbearing.

Drive tourists and tourism routes traverse different municipal districts and even provinces, but tourism signage in South Africa is not consistent. It seems each province, district municipality and even local municipality has their own regulations regarding tourism signage. So for example, KwaZulu-Natal does not allow signs branding the routes while such signs are allowed in the neighbouring Free State Province. Furthermore, the researcher observed several different colours and a range of fonts used for signs directing visitors to (TICs), whereas they should all be the same to facilitate easy recognition.

The entire matter of tourism signage merits further investigation to provide policy guidelines for signage that will enhance the tourism experience in South Africa within the constraints of visual pollution and road safety requirements.

8.5 CONCLUSION

While this study fulfilled the research objective of identifying critical success factors for the marketing of rural tourism routes, additional value was added by uncovering non-marketing factors that may enable or hinder the successful marketing of such routes. Although the study provided a uniquely KwaZulu-Natal perspective, the findings provide useful insights into rural route marketing that may be applied in other provinces in South Africa and by rural routes elsewhere in the world.

As more rural tourism routes are developed in South Africa, there is a need for academic enquiry into the many facets of route tourism, ranging from strategic route development to

operational matters. This study mainly addressed the marketing aspects, and it is proposed that further research be conducted on other aspects of rural tourism routes to develop a body of knowledge that will eventually, through the success of rural tourism routes, contribute to the upliftment of the communities in the areas that these routes traverse.

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APPENDIX A

INTERNATIONAL TOURISM ROUTE LOGOS



Rideau Heritage Route logo



Source: Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association, 2009a

Historic Route 66 Arizona logo



Source: Route 66 Association of Arizona, 2010.

Pennsylvania Route 6 logo



Source: Pennsylvania Route 6 Tourism Association, 2010.

The Savannah Way logo



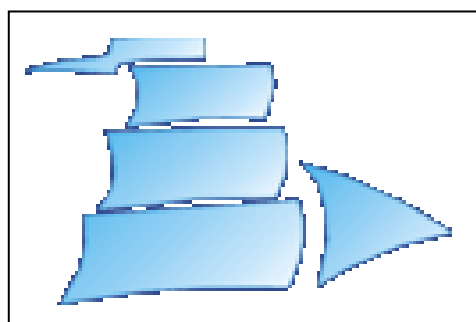
Source: The Savannah Way Limited, Not dated a.

The Viking Trail logo



Source: The Viking Trail Tourism Association, Not dated a.

The Heritage Run Logo



Source: The Heritage Run Tourism Association, 2007a.



APPENDIX B

INTERNATIONAL TOURISM ROUTE SIGNAGE DISPLAYING ROUTE LOGOS AND NAMES



Pennsylvania Route 6 mile marker displaying route logo



Source: Pennsylvania Route 6 Tourist Association, 2010.

Savannah Way directional sign displaying route name and logo



Source: Savannah Way, Not dated b.

Historic Route 66 logo painted on road surface



Source: Veitch, 2007.

Heritage Run informational sign with route name and logo



Source: Nomadic Spirit. 1997.

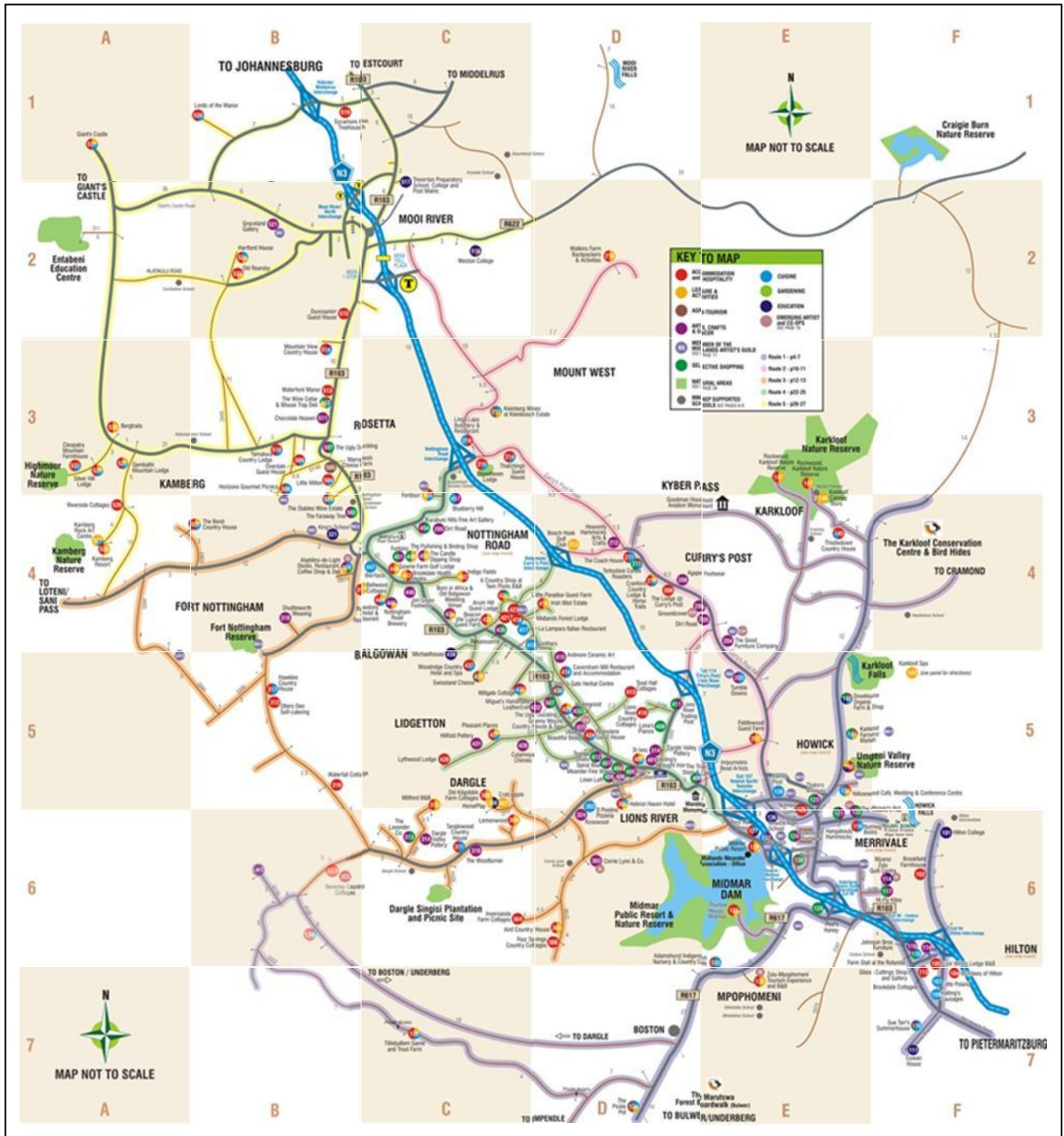


APPENDIX C

MAP OF THE MIDLANDS MEANDER



Map of the Midlands Meander



Source: Midlands Meander Association, 2009.

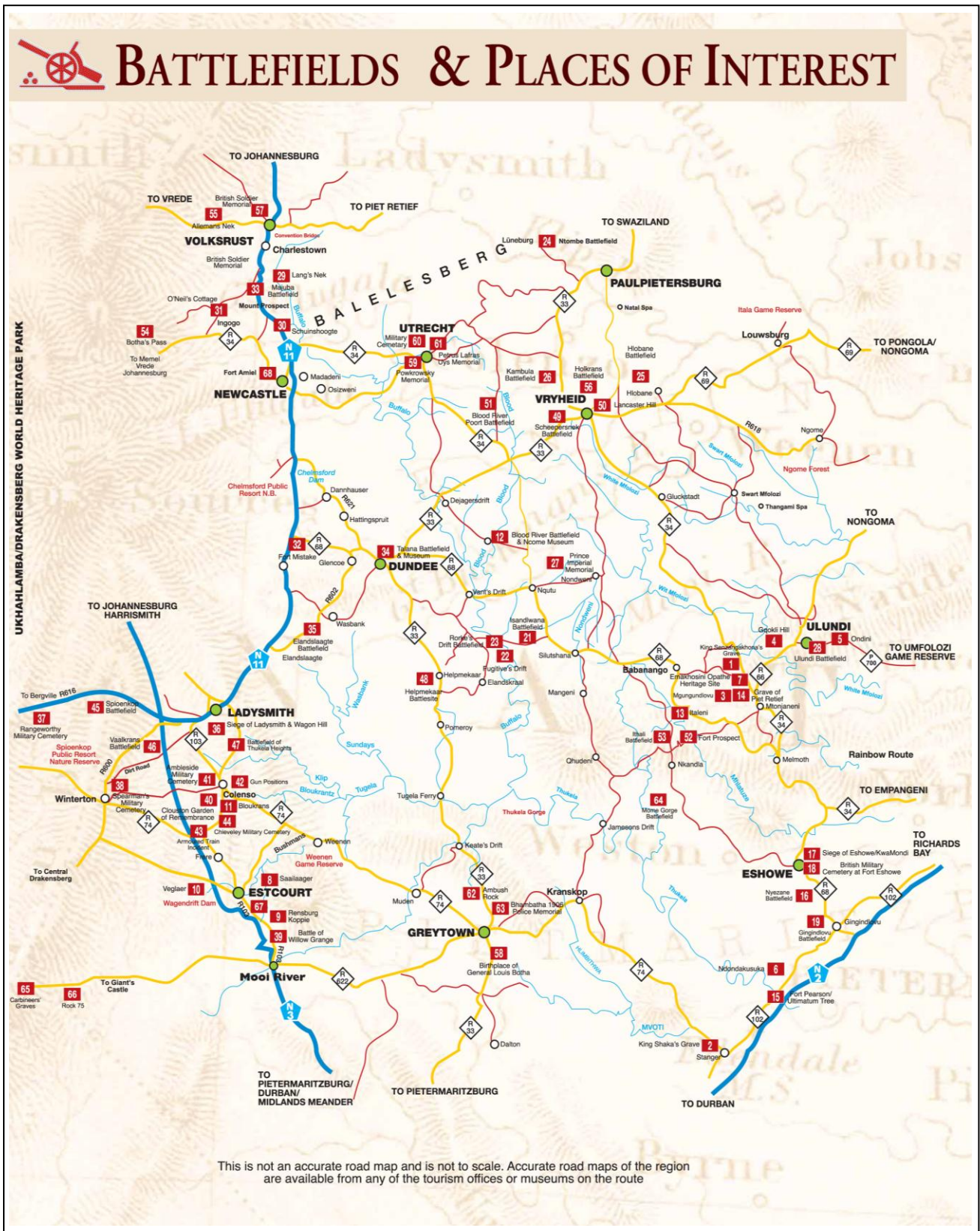


APPENDIX D

MAP OF THE BATTLEFIELDS ROUTE



Map of the Battlefields Route



Source: Battlefields Route Association. Not dated.



APPENDIX E

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT



Informed consent for participation in an academic research study

Dept. of Tourism Management

Critical Marketing Success Factors for Sustainable Rural Tourism Routes: A Kwazulu-Natal Stakeholder Perspective

Research conducted by:

Mrs. L. McLaren (64016952)
Cell: 082 508 3749

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Linde McLaren, a Masters student from the Department of Tourism Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to determine what stakeholders in rural tourism routes see as the marketing-related critical success factors for sustainable operation of a rural tourism route.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an anonymous survey. Your name will not be linked to the answers you give and all answers will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- The research will take the form of a tape-recorded discussion on the topics listed in the attached interview schedule. This should take approximately an hour of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of the findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Prof. E. T. Heath at 012 420 4000 or e-mail him at Ernie.Heath@up.ac.za if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Respondent's signature

Date



APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: ROUTE MEMBERS



STAKEHOLDERS: ROUTE MEMBERS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to talk about the Battlefields Route/ Midlands Meander (Mention route to be discussed). Just so that we understand each other, the Battlefields Route/Midlands Meander is defined as ____ (provide succinct description of the route discussed)

- Q1 How long have you been in the ... (mention type of business) business? And how long have you had this ... (mention type of business)? How long have you been a member of the Battlefields Route/Midlands Meander?**
- Q2 What made you decide to join the Battlefields Route/Midlands Meander?**
Probe: Any other reasons?
- Q3 And how do you feel about your decision to join the Battlefields Route/ Midlands Meander?**
Probes: Why do you feel that way?
What was good about joining?
What was not so good or disappointing?
- Q4 Now that you have been a member of the Battlefields Route/Midlands Meander for a while, what would you say works well?**
Probes: What is done right?
Why do you say that?
- Q5 What problems, if any, have you experienced as a member of the Battlefields Route/ Midlands Meander?**
Probes: What went wrong? Why did that happen?
What would you have done differently?
- Q6 What do you think is the main purpose of developing tourism routes, such as the Battlefields Route/Midlands Meander from your point of view?**
Probe: Any other benefits?
- Q7 Who else could benefit from the establishment of a tourism route?**
Probes: Does a tourism route bring any benefits to other types of members of the route?
And to the community?
- Q8 Who do you think are the key people that may influence the success of the Battlefields Route/Midlands Meander route as a tourism route?**
Probes: Who are the people actively involved in the Battlefields Route/Midlands Meander route?
What role do they play?
Who else influences how the route operates? How?
Who influences your operations in particular? Why do you say that?
- Q9 How is the route marketed?**
Probes: Probe on marketing mix elements.
- Q10 What other activities do you see as part of the marketing of the route?**
Probes: Probe on marketing mix elements.
Probe on branding.
- Q11 Whose responsibility do you think is the marketing of the route?**
Probes: What should the route management do?
What about the route members?
What other parties need to market the route?
- Q12 How do you think the marketing of tourism routes can be improved?**
- Q13 What are the key benefits you derive from being a member of the route? Do these benefits warrant the money you spend to be part of the route?**



- Q14** What in your view are the critical success factors to ensure the effective marketing and sustainable competitiveness of this route?
- Q15** Is there anything else that you would like to say about marketing tourism routes that we have not discussed?

Thank you for your participation.



APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: ENABLERS

STAKEHOLDERS: ENABLERS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to talk about the Battlefields Route or Midlands Meander. Just so that we understand each other, the Battlefields Route or Midlands Meander is defined as ... (provide succinct definition of both routes).

- Q1 What is your interest or involvement in these routes?**
- Q2 What, in your view, is the purpose of developing tourism routes such as the Battlefields Route and the Midlands Meander?**
- Q3 Who should benefit from the development of a tourism route? Do they?**
Probes: Does a tourism route bring any benefits to members of the route?
What are these benefits?
And to the community? What are these benefits?
- Q4 Who do you see as the key people that may influence the success of the Battlefields Route and the Midlands Meander as tourism routes?**
Probes: Who are the people actively involved in the Battlefields Route and Midlands Meander?
Who else influences how the route operates?
Who influences your operations in particular?
- Q5 What roles are played by these stakeholders in the Battlefields Route and the Midlands Meander?**
Probes: Refer to route persons/entities mentioned above.
Do they co-operate well? How? Why not?
- Q6 What aspects of each route work well?**
Probes: Why do you say that?
- Q7 What problems have been experienced in the operation of these two routes?**
Probes: What went wrong? Why did that happen?
What would you have done differently?
- Q8 How are these routes marketed?**
Probes: Probe on extended marketing mix elements.
- Q9 What do you see as part of the marketing of the route?**
Probes: Probe on extended marketing mix elements.
Probe on branding.
- Q10 What other activities do you see as part of the marketing of the route?**
Probes: Probe on extended marketing mix elements.
- Q11 Whose responsibility is the marketing of the route and what is their responsibility?**
Probes: What should the route management do?
What about the route members?
What other parties need to market the route? How?
- Q12 How may the marketing of these tourism routes be improved?**
- Q13 'What in your view are the critical success factors to ensure the effective marketing and sustainable competitiveness of this route.**
- Q14 Is there anything else that you would like to say about marketing tourism routes that was not discussed?**

Thank you for your participation.



APPENDIX H

EXCERPT FROM A CODED TRANSCRIPT



Excerpt from a coded transcript

Interviewer: And accommodation and food?

Respondent: It does tend to be in the higher end. In the ...The restaurants and stuff are very good quality restaurants. I think there's a big gap for backpacker type accommodation. That's where the gap is now, much cheaper rates into a younger market. Looking, ja.

Interviewer: Ja, that's an interesting segment.

Respondent: Ja. And the other thing with marketing is signage and having a relationship with the Roads department, so. In the early days we got quite a good subsidy from the Roads Department and we put up Meander signage all around. That's become, become a bit extinct now or expired. We're busy talking to Roads Department again relooking at the whole signage thing and then our branding will also be on the signage, so there will be the butterfly.

Interviewer: Ja, that's something I noticed, it's not there. Do they have an objection to this?

Respondent: Roads Department? No they want to go along with this because they would like to get rid of all this, this kind of guerrilla signage that everyone's put up. You know, makes the place look really untidy and actually a road hazard from their point of view. So, you know, the organisation would like to see that cleared up. That the signage becomes more.... You know that it works better for the tourist, and that the countryside is not cluttered with you know, every guy's plastic signs all over the place. And then you've got the branding as well that is going through with the signage and I think that brings the whole thing together.





APPENDIX I

EXAMPLE OF A LIST OF QUOTATIONS FOR A CODE



Route_Cameraderie

Report: 4 quotation(s) for 1 code

HU: M_Transcripts
File: [C:\Users\Linde\Documents\Scientific Software\ATLAsTi\TextBank\M_Transcripts.hpr6]
Edited by: Super
Date/Time: 10/08/30 12:23:19 PM

Mode: quotation list names and references

Quotation-Filter: All

P 6: BR_Mem_10_Int D.docx - 6:3 [Respondent: What is good about..] (28:30) (Linde)

Codes: [Route_Cameraderie]
No memos

Respondent: What is good about the Battlefields Route?

Interviewer: Ja, about joining the Battlefields Route Association?

Respondent: Uhm. Being on, I think the main thing is uh, uh, we obviously get to know each other better. And the moment we get to know each other better, obviously there is more trust involved. And the moment there's more trust involved, then everybody get some of it. You know you can't handle something on your own. As I mentioned as an individual it is difficult enough to get to the overseas tourists, which is the bulk of our business. South Africans are not really... travelling all that much. They are beginning to, I'm pleased to say.

P18: EN_15_Int K.docx - 18:17 [This year for the first time t..] (75:77) (Super)

Codes: [Promotion_Events] [Route_Cameraderie]
No memos

This year for the first time they organised an event called a Paasmark, an Easter Market and it was run under the brand of the route, and the feedback that we got was that it was an incredible success and they are going to do it again next year. The route platform makes it so much easier to do that kind of things, because people are already talking to each other.

Respondent 1: Wasn't there a story that AI received that this year they did much better than the year before?

Respondent 2: About five times. Ja, the route definitely played a role, it did play a role. And in fact they have a platform that they can use.

P22: MM_Mem_20_Int G.docx - 22:68 [Being part of an organisation...] (20:20) (Linde)

Codes: [Route_Cameraderie]
No memos

Being part of an organisation. When, when you are in your own business, you tend to... you miss having colleagues and stuff, you run everything yourself.

P26: MM_Mem_6_Int B.docx - 26:10 [So I think in that fact, in th..] (30:30) (Linde)

Codes: [Route_Cameraderie]
No memos

So I think in that fact, in that respect it sort of brought the community together to try and work as a team. And we are all friends so it helps too. Huh, huh. We are all doing the same thing at the same time. And you can sympathise with each other. You know you have people that don't work in this kind of industry, they don't actually appreciate what is involved. All of these people around here are doing it because they are doing it.



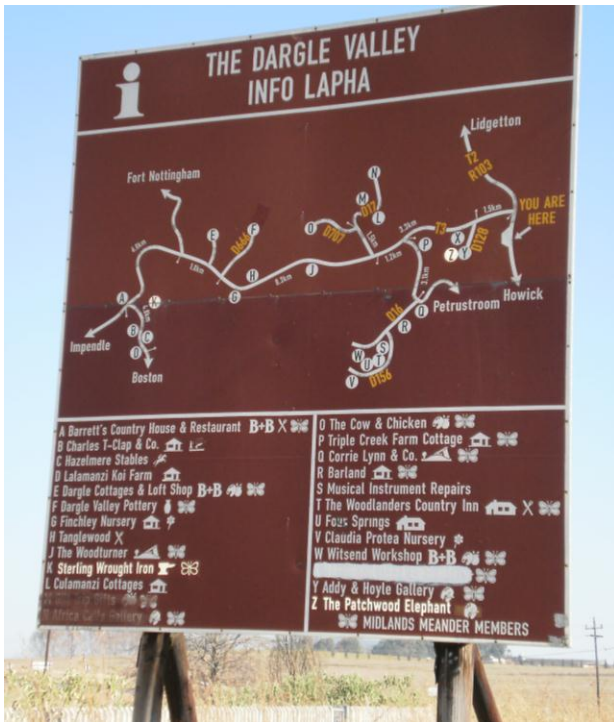
APPENDIX J

ATTRACTION SIGNAGE FOR SUB-ROUTES



Info Lapha on the Midlands Meander for the Dargle Valley sub-route¹³

Info Lapha on the Midlands Meander with layby before turnoff to the Dargle Valley



Info Lapha on Battlefields Route at Endumeni Local Municipality boundary

Battlefields Route Info Lapha at the entrance to Dundee with no layby and with additional tourism and non-tourism advertising



¹³ Where the source is not indicated, photographs are by the author.



APPENDIX K

ACCOMMODATON SIGNAGE IN LADYSMITH



Ladysmith accommodation signage





APPENDIX L

ACCOMMODATION SIGNAGE IN VRYHEID



Accommodation map in Vryheid



Information signs in Vryheid





APPENDIX M

DAMAGE TO SIGNAGE



Weather damage to signage on the Battlefields Route



Fire damage to signage on the Midlands Meander





APPENDIX N

MIDLANDS MEANDER LOGO AND SIGNS



Midlands Meander logo with slogan



Source: Midlands Meander Association, 2010b.

Karkloof Blue (Orachysops ariadne)



Source: Midlands Meander association, 2010b.

Midlands Meander: old signage with logo



Midlands Meander: logo inside premises

Midlands Meander: no logo at turn-off



T-route signage with Midlands Meander name



Unbranded T-route signage





APPENDIX O

BATTLEFIELDS LOGOS AND SIGNS



Battlefields Route logo

TKZN Battlefields destination logo



Source: Battlefields Route Association, Not dated c

Source: KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority, 2010b.

**Battlefields Route: name and logo used
Lukas Meyer House, Vryheid**



Battlefields Route: logo not used

Battlefields Route: logo used



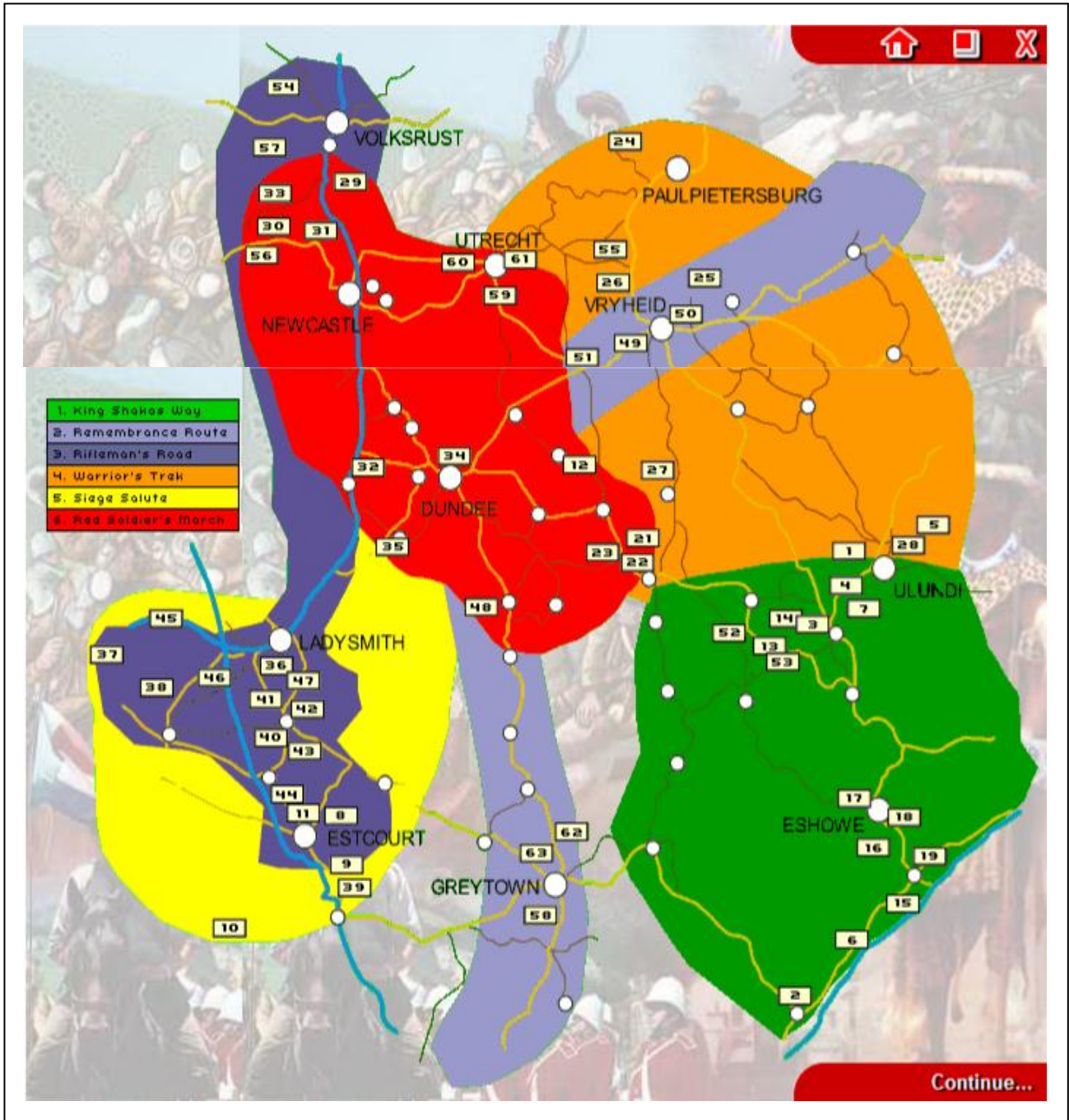


APPENDIX P

BATTLEFIELDS ROUTE SUBROUTES



Battlefields Route E Brochure: Subroutes



Source: Endumeni Tourism, Not dated a:10-11.



APPENDIX Q

MALOTI ROUTE SIGNAGE



Branded Maloti Route signage



Maloti Route logo

