

**Perspectives on sustainable ecotourism with
specific reference to the Ingwavuma district
(northern KwaZulu-Natal)**

by

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The Ingwavuma district in Maputaland is an area where people still walk miles to collect water and firewood; where children are taught under a tree; where a cow is slaughtered beside the road, and an hour later the meat is sold under a tree in an outdoor butchery. A place where one can hear the beating of far off drums. The people are very poor, but they are always friendly and smiling. At night the area has an eerie silence, except for a cock crowing at a distant homestead or the desperate cry of a bushbaby. The sky is still filled with stars. During the day the area is hot and as an outsider one soon loses the anxiety of the city. One catches oneself slowing down from the rush, taking a different look at things. One starts noticing the difference; struck by the isolation and the quiet. The quietness one can only get in Africa. The people are friendly and relaxed, causing a city dweller to become sceptic. Why is it so different?



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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism in the Ingwavuma Region is closely linked to the natural environment: ecotourism being the revenue earner and the natural environment being the resource provider. Ecotourism is, in essence, the bridge between conservation, tourism and local communities. This finely tuned interdependence should be properly managed to ensure that ecotourism does not become a self destructive process, destroying the very resource on which it is based.

The value of ecotourism as a catalyst for development has long been recognised. This study, then, investigates how local people benefit from ecotourism. Ecotourism is not the answer to development, but can well be used to achieve development. Development studies is a very dynamic and changing field of study. A better understanding of the ecotourism phenomenon will go a long way to facilitate its use as a development tool. Ecotourism has a definite role to play within the larger context of rural development.

Mounting pressure from governments in developing countries is forcing nature conservation to become financially independent of state grants. Ecotourism provides the most viable solution towards achieving financial independence. However, the long-term sustainability of ecotourism is dependent on the involvement and support of the local communities. Ecotourism does therefore strive to manage the finely tuned dependence between tourism, conservation and local communities. It is within this context that this study was initiated. In order to facilitate future ecotourism planning and management, the study investigates various perspectives in relation to the ecotourism phenomenon in Southern Africa and the Ingwavuma region specifically. These perspectives, in turn, are used to make suggestions regarding ecotourism planning and land-use.

OPSOMMING

Eko-toerisme in die Ingwavuma gebied is nou gekoppel aan die natuurlike omgewing: eko-toerisme is die inkomste-verdiener en die natuurlike omgewing die hulpbronverskaffer. Ekotoerisme is, in essensie, dus die brug tot die interafhanklikheid tussen bewaring, toerisme en die plaaslike gemeenskap. Hierdie sensitiewe interafhanklikheid moet behoorlik bestuur word om te verseker dat eko-toerisme nie self 'n vernietigende proses word, en die hulpbronne waarvan dit afhanklik is, vernietig nie.

Die waarde van eko-toerisme as 'n katalisator vir ontwikkeling is al lank bekend. Hierdie studie kyk dan na die waarde van eko-toerisme vir plaaslike gemeenskappe. Eko-toerisme opsigself is nie die antwoord vir ontwikkeling nie, maar kan wel gebruik word binne die breër ontwikkelingsproses. Ontwikkelingstudies is 'n baie dinamiese en veranderende studieveld. Kennis omtrent die beginsels van eko-toerisme kan lei tot 'n beter begrip omtrent gebruiksmoontlikhede vir eko-toerisme binne die ontwikkelingsterrein. Eko-toerisme behoort dan ook 'n regmatige plek binne landelike ontwikkeling toegeken te word.

Toenemende druk deur owerhede binne ontwikkelende lande is besig om bewaring te forseer om finansiëel onafhanklik van staatsfinansiering te word. Die beste oplossing vir bewaring om onafhanklik te word, is deur die ontwikkeling van eko-toerisme. Die langtermyn volhoubaarheid van eko-toerisme is egter afhanklik van die ondersteuning daarvan deur plaaslike gemeenskappe. Eko-toerisme beoog dus om hierdie sensitiewe interafhanklikheid tussen toerisme, bewaring en plaaslike gemeenskappe behoorlik te bestuur.

Dit is binne hierdie konteks dat hierdie studie onderneem is. Om toekomstige eko-toerisme en bestuur te fasiliteer, ondersoek hierdie studie verskeie perspektiewe van eko-toerisme binne Suidelike Afrika en veral in die

Ingwavuma gebied. Hierdie perspektiewe word op hulle beurt benut om voorstelle te maak met betrekking tot die bestuur en implementering van ekotoerisme.



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Chapter 1

Introduction and Research Objectives



1.1 INTRODUCTION.

South Africa is a country that is slowly coming out of a long period of international isolation. Although crime and violence still plague daily life, the future of tourism looks better every day due to the international growth in the tourism industry. South Africa, together with its neighbours, have natural resources and tourist destinations in abundance, eg. oceans, wildlife, sunshine, mountains and deserts but the development of tourist infrastructure has been slow in the years of political isolation. This, together with a lack of marketing and promotion of the region as a tourist destination has, to a large extent, left the region lagging behind the worldwide increase in tourism. According to Sol Kerzner (1995:1), "If the region cannot offer something unique and unforgettable, then it has no place in the race."

Kerzner (1995:1) further states that, "we should not forget that tourism is the world's largest and fastest-growing industry. The industry can make a meaningful contribution to the development of the region's economy in terms of jobs and foreign exchange earnings." For this reason tourism has tremendous potential as a development tool in the economically underdeveloped regions of Southern Africa.

Along with these new opportunities in tourism comes the need for knowledge and research into tourism to ensure proper planning. Although there is an abundance of literature available on tourism, there is a definite lack of research covering tourism in the African context. This document intends to help share tourism perspectives in the Ingwavuma region.

The tourism industry, if developed properly, has enormous potential to kickstart many underdeveloped economies by means of outside investment and development. According to Efrat (1996:12), "The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that last year tourism contributed 10,9% to the GDP of the world economy. Travel and Tourism are also the world's largest creator of jobs, employing 212 million people. Last year the industry accounted for 10,7% of the global workforce and provided one in every nine jobs.

Between 1995 and the year 2000 travel and tourism will add one new job every 2,45 seconds and create 125 million new and indirect jobs."

Tourism has benefited directly from the 1994 elections through the mass media which drew world attention and interest to South Africa. Growth has not been purely in traditional "scenic" tourism, but also in the expanding ecotourism, adventure tourism, and specialist tourism (eg. whale-watching, steam trains, etc.). Interestingly, a market in "political" tourism (those coming to see South Africa's transformation for themselves) and in "cultural" tourism (interest in the various cultural traditions in South Africa) is also growing.

According to the White Paper on Tourism (1997), two-million jobs could be created by the year 2000 if South Africa developed its tourism industry effectively. Tourism could be an engine for growth, rejuvenating other sectors of the South African economy.

The potential for South Africa with its diverse attractions to increase both arrivals and spending from the overseas, regional and domestic markets, is substantial because until recently these markets were totally underutilised. In addition, the tourism industry has the lowest ratio of investment to job creation, which means more jobs can be created per unit of capital invested. South Africa's tourism sector currently employs about 480 000 people. "Since South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, tourism growth has exceeded all expectations, growing by 50% in the last year alone and contributing some 3% of SA's GNP. There is room for more - the world average is 10% of GNP, and tourism is a labour intensive industry" (Brooks, 1996:36).

The White Paper on Tourism stated that the tourist industry probably, more than any other sector of the economy, has the potential to create jobs and to create them quickly. For this reason the development of the tourist industry, and in particular the ecotourism industry more than any other, has the potential to uplift and improve the living conditions for millions in South Africa.

According to Krippendorf (1982:26) the importance of the natural environment cannot be over emphasised: "...the scenic attractions of the holiday destination stand at the central focus of tourist needs and are in fact the most important tourist motivation... The landscape is the real material of tourism." This quotation is of particular relevance to South Africa's tourist industry, because of the abundance of scenic attractions. Heath (1992:24) states that overseas tourists perceive environmental splendour, scenic beauty, wildlife and the cultural heritage as the most appealing characteristics that attract tourists to South Africa. All these attractions are "eco" or environmental attractions. The importance of developing ecotourism in South Africa cannot be over estimated because of the abundance of "eco" attractions. **The main objective of this study is to assess the value of ecotourism as a development tool in underdeveloped regions such as the Ingwavuma district in Northern KwaZulu-Natal.**

Chapter 2 deals in depth with ecotourism as a phenomenon. Ecotourism is part of the tourism industry, we however can differentiate between the terms ecotourism and tourism in the following manner. Tourism has a definite profit motive, while ecotourism always includes the following:

- * Environmental destination.
- * Sustainable environmental use.
- * Social improvement objective.

Growing interest in ecotourism amongst the governments of developing countries, commercial operators and organizations emphasises its enormous economic and conservation potential. The benefits of ecotourism, however, extend beyond figures, resulting in important environmental conservation efforts and in local participation and employment in the travel industry. "In Africa four million people (one in 10 of the workforce) are employed first-hand in tourism and another 10 million jobs are indirectly supported by the tourists, yet Africa grabs a relatively insignificant R350 billion or so of the world market" (Allan, 1995:127).

Ecotourism's emphasis on local resources and employment makes it an attractive means to improve the living standards of people in undeveloped countries. Countries rich in natural areas yet disadvantaged by rural poverty and a lack of export earnings, are good examples. Kenya earns some 500 million US dollars a year from tourism revenues. The direct and invisible earnings account for some 10 percent of Kenya's gross national product.

Costa Rica, another developing country, generated 336 million US dollars in tourist revenues in 1991 and registered a 25 percent growth in income from tourism over the previous three years. Nature-based tourism is the engine of many tropical island economies in the Caribbean, Pacific, and Indian oceans (Western, 1993:16).

Ecotourism therefore has the potential to provide much needed benefits to underdeveloped communities in Africa. The question therefore arises as to whether Africa should try to take a larger bite of the world tourism cake. Africa is no doubt the world's ultimate ecotourism destination because this continent has an unrivalled number of eco-destinations to offer the tourist. For this reason, Africa should focus its tourist industry on the potential "ecotourists" from developed regions of the world. Ecotourism on the other hand, is environment-based tourism. The environment being the product that is being sold. Therefore, ecotourism developments are largely based in rural surroundings which in itself are often the worst poverty-stricken areas. For this reason, ecotourism has the potential to alleviate poverty in the most destitute areas.

This study will focus largely on ecotourism destinations in the underdeveloped Ingwavuma district and how these developments can benefit the local communities. The Ingwavuma district is part of the Maputaland Region which lies in the extreme North of KwaZulu-Natal. This area is very isolated from the rest of South Africa because of its geographical location. The area also typifies a rural area that could be anywhere in rural Africa. For this reason, problems experienced here could be relevant to many other regions in rural Africa. From a tourist point of view, the region contains a wealth of natural attractions such as its wildlife,coasts and coral reefs. Despite these attributes, however, "tourism potential of the

region has remained largely untapped. This can partially be explained by the remoteness of the area" (Seneque *et al*, 1993:7).

Maputaland could be a tourist's paradise because of its abundance of possible tourist destinations. According to Bruton (1980) it has the potential of becoming one of the world's great national parks and natural resource areas, comparable to the Everglades, Okavango Swamps, Serengeti, Kinabalu in Borneo, the Great Barrier Reef, Gran Paradiso in Italy or the Henri Pittler National Park in Venezuela. Bruton (1980) has gone so far as to say that Maputaland has a diversity of tourist attractions which is unrivalled by any area of similar size in South Africa.

This study will therefore be important for the following reasons. It will highlight the value of the natural environment as a resource, that could be utilised by the local underdeveloped communities to uplift and improve their quality of life. In turn this would change perceptions giving the environment a "value" and encouraging local communities to manage their environment for long term sustainability.

1.2 THE STUDY AREA

The Northern part of KwaZulu-Natal is called the Ingwavuma region (Figure 1) and covers an area of about 3 800 km². The region is situated between 26° 50' S and 27° 28' S latitude and 31° 55' E and 32° 40' E longitude. The Ingwavuma district is part of the Maputaland Region which lies in the extreme North of KwaZulu-Natal bordering Swaziland to the West, Mozambique to the North and the Indian Ocean to the East. This area is one of the most beautiful regions in South Africa as far as natural features and tourism attractions are concerned.

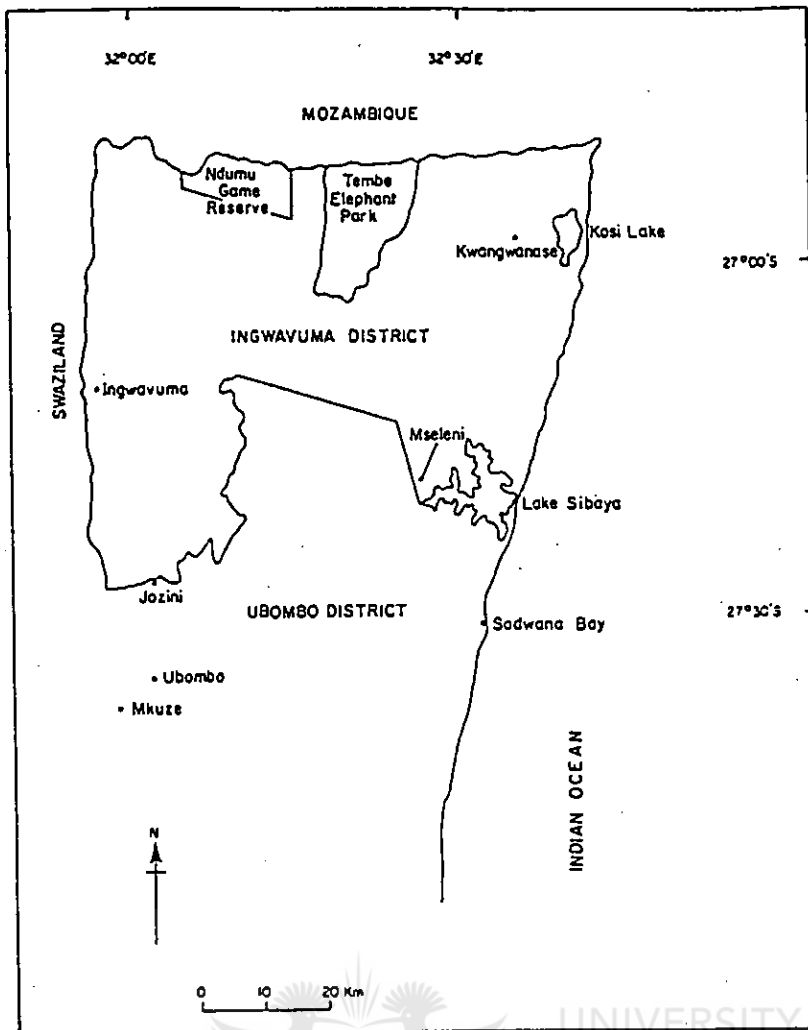


Figure 1: Location of the study area.

Some of the natural resources in the region include:

- * The Indian Ocean with both rocky and sandy shorelines.
- * The Coastal Forest Reserve.
- * The Ndumu Game Reserve.
- * The Tembe Elephant Reserve.
- * Lake Sibaya.
- * The Kosi Estuary and River mouth.
- * The Pongola Floodplain.

Although it has a multitude of natural resources, it is nevertheless an underdeveloped region. The people of the region have been politically, economically and socially

disadvantaged relative to other regions in South Africa owing to the geographical isolation and political insignificance of the area.

The problem facing the region is that, on the one hand, there is a wealth of natural resources, but on the other hand extreme poverty also exists. There is a scarcity of jobs, houses, education facilities and infrastructure. A strategy should therefore be worked out whereby this wealth of natural resources could be utilised for the long term economic benefit of the people in the region without negatively impacting on the resource base. The question that should therefore be asked is whether ecotourism could be developed by making use of the wealth of natural resources that exist in this region? There is no doubt that if this could be done it would lead to economic and social betterment of the people in the region.

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Put synoptically, the problem investigated was: how ecotourism can act as a development tool? In order to do this, the study will strive to investigate various perspectives on the ecotourism phenomenon in the Ingwavuma Region in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. This should lead to a better understanding of the importance and the value that ecotourism may have in developing regions such as the Ingwavuma Region. Therefore, in this study the influence of the existing ecotourism on the local developing communities will be investigated to determine what role it might play in future development. This study will therefore be important as it will help determine whether ecotourism can in fact address "poverty" within the region.

The primary objective of the study, however, is to investigate the value of ecotourism as a development tool in the Ingwavuma Region of Northern KwaZulu-Natal. This in turn should lead to a better understanding of ecotourism as a development option in other underdeveloped regions of South Africa.

To place the study in context, the following two issues were investigated:

- * The theory and development of the phenomenon of ecotourism.
- * The Ingwavuma Region's resources, both natural and human, which will have an influence on ecotourism.

The results obtained from researching the abovementioned provide input data for the investigation of the primary objective, which basically consists of two parts:

Firstly, investigating how ecotourism is benefiting local upliftment in various regions in Southern Africa.

Secondly, how locals are benefiting from ecotourism in the Ingwavuma region.

The insights gained should help facilitate effective planning of future developments and ecotourism initiatives in the Ingwavuma Region as well as other regions in Southern Africa.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The data collection phase of the research process is of cardinal importance, as all conclusions reached may be influenced by the type and quality of data collected (Daugherty, 1975:1). In order to achieve the objectives of the study, both quantitative and qualitative data has been collected.

Quantitative data was primarily collected through an extensive literature study. Literature collected covered both the ecotourism phenomenon and the study area, namely the Ingwavuma Region.

Qualitative data was collected during visits, interviews and discussions to ecotourism sites in Southern Africa.

The area was extensively visited between 1995-1999. Data collection was continuously undertaken over this period of time. The data collection was done by meeting and interviewing people in the study area. Wayne Matthews, the Chief Ecologist for this region, was instrumental in facilitating visits to various ecotourism sites in the Ingwavuma region. The people interviewed on ecotourism in the Ingwavuma region were very helpful and willing to provide assistance. Interviews and discussions helped provide perspective on the topic of ecotourism and emphasised gaps in available knowledge.

The interviews and discussions were unstructured, making use of the principles of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). This can be described as "conscious exploration without following a blueprint, but being adaptable in the learning process. This involves learning from local people, directly on site and face to face" (Chambers, 1994:9). Fieldwork in the form of interviews and discussions were imperative in order to understand local conditions. The fieldwork helped expose many of the qualitative complexities of ecotourism that are often not highlighted by literature.

Fieldwork further involved visiting ecotourism destinations all over the sub-continent, eg. Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana in order to obtain more insight into the ecotourism phenomenon. This fieldwork provided valuable insight into ecotourism projects in the African sub-continent. The principles of ecotourism project implementation are still generally at an early stage of development in some regions while in others, projects have been implemented for a number of years. These wide ranging scenarios provided various perspectives on the phenomenon of ecotourism. A study of available literature was done covering various aspects of the ecotourism phenomenon in the Maputoland region.

1.5 CONCEPTUALIZATION

A number of concepts have been mentioned in this introduction and before further work is covered, these concepts have to be explained as they form the nucleus of the research. As a result of the multifaceted nature of this study, the following concepts will be discussed in terms of their context within this study.

1.5.1 Natural resources

According to the Oxford Dictionary (1990), natural resources are defined as "materials or conditions occurring in nature capable of economic exploitation". The Ingwavuma region has an exceptional and unique range of natural resources of both national and international significance (Seneque *et al*, 1993) such as its coasts, forests, endemic species and sea life. The physical character of the area is the result of a combination of six different ecological zones, each with its own distinctive features. The diversity of fauna and flora in the region is immense, owing to the proximity of the six different ecological zones.

Other specific natural resources that could affect development in the region include the climate, rainfall and water resources.

1.5.2 Social dynamics

"Social" is defined in the Oxford Dictionary (1990) as "relating to society or its organization", while "dynamics" is defined as "consideration of forces or changes". The social dynamics of the region therefore refers to changes within the social organisation of people. Within the context of this study it refers to factors that influence the social make up or change of man in the Ingwavuma district. The social dynamics of a community can be influenced by, amongst other things, age/sex structure, urbanisation, education, age, sex ratio's and migration. These human/social factors have a very definite influence on any developments taking place in the Ingwavuma region.

1.5.3 Developing communities

To provide an understanding of developing communities, the focus must be on the concept of development. According to Coetzee (1989:1), "development is for people and concerns the way they experience the reality within which they find themselves". In other

words, the need for development will be determined by the environmental and social needs within a community. This is determined by their perception of the nature of the quality of life and their role in outside factors such as education, living standards and income in the improvement of the quality of life.

Development thinking in recent times has shifted its emphasis from the provision of infrastructure such as roads and electricity and has become more people-orientated, but this is no quick fix to the development problem. The development problem covers a much wider field and involves many aspects such as helping people to determine their own needs and allowing them to steer their own development thereby, allowing grassroots input instead of a top down approach which is often totally inappropriate in addressing the needs of the people. However, development can be conceptualised as "a process of directed change leading to economic growth, political autonomy and a broad basis of social reconstruction" (Coetzee, 1989:7). Per definition, this implies the broadening of choices of people with regard to reaching their self actualization.

For a long period of time, development within South Africa was regarded as the provision of infrastructure and facilities, eg. such as roads and electricity. These concepts in themselves do not, however, equate to development but are merely the tools with which to accomplish development. The objectives of development are to improve people's living standards and well-being. The difficult process of change between start and finish is "development". Development, therefore, essentially refers to an active process of "directed change and progress" (Coetzee, 1989:7).

Development is a difficult concept to understand owing to its varied facets. Development is also a concept that encompasses the process whereby certain objectives are reached, leading to the improvement of the quality of life of the affected people. In this study, the influence of ecotourism on the local developing communities will be investigated to determine what role it may play in their development.

1.5.4 Tourism

Tourism may be defined as "the relationships and phenomena arising out of journeys or temporary stays of people travelling primarily for leisure or recreational purposes" (Pearce, 1987:36). Middleton (1988:62) defines tourism as follows: "Tourism includes any activity concerned with the temporary short-term movement of the people to destinations outside the places they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at these destinations". According to Mearns (1997:6) "tourism is primarily a twentieth century phenomenon, which has been facilitated by increased knowledge of the world and its regions, advances in transportation technology and a modern industrialised lifestyle which affords both the time and money necessary for the enjoyment of travel".

Wood (1993:12) envisaged tourism development as: "leading to management of all resources in such a way that we fulfill economic, social and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems". This "mission statement" of tourism development shows the multi-disciplinary nature of such development while the statement makes note of the need to conserve resources, since tourism is a resource based industry.

This reaffirms the fact that tourism is an economic activity and needs to continue as such in order to survive and provide benefits to travellers and host communities. From these definitions it is clear that tourism involves the following elements:

- * It is concerned with aspects of daily life outside normal social and work commitments.
- * Travel to and from the destination.
- * Activities engaged in during the stay at the destination.
- * Facilities provided for tourists.

Increased worldwide tourism has led to increasing demands on the natural environment in the wilds, also resulting in competition, and often conflict, with local communities. The

increase of tourist activity in the Ingwavuma district will definitely have certain social and environmental impacts, both positive and negative. This study will briefly look at some of these impacts. The ecotourism concept will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

1.6 RESEARCH MODEL

The research model in figure 2 shows that the research done for this study may be divided into five sections. These sections are the introduction and identification of research objectives (Chapter 1); the ecotourism phenomenon (Chapter 2); Ingwavuma Region (Chapter 3); the potential of ecotourism in the Ingwavuma Region (Chapter 4); and the conclusion and recommendations (Chapter 5).



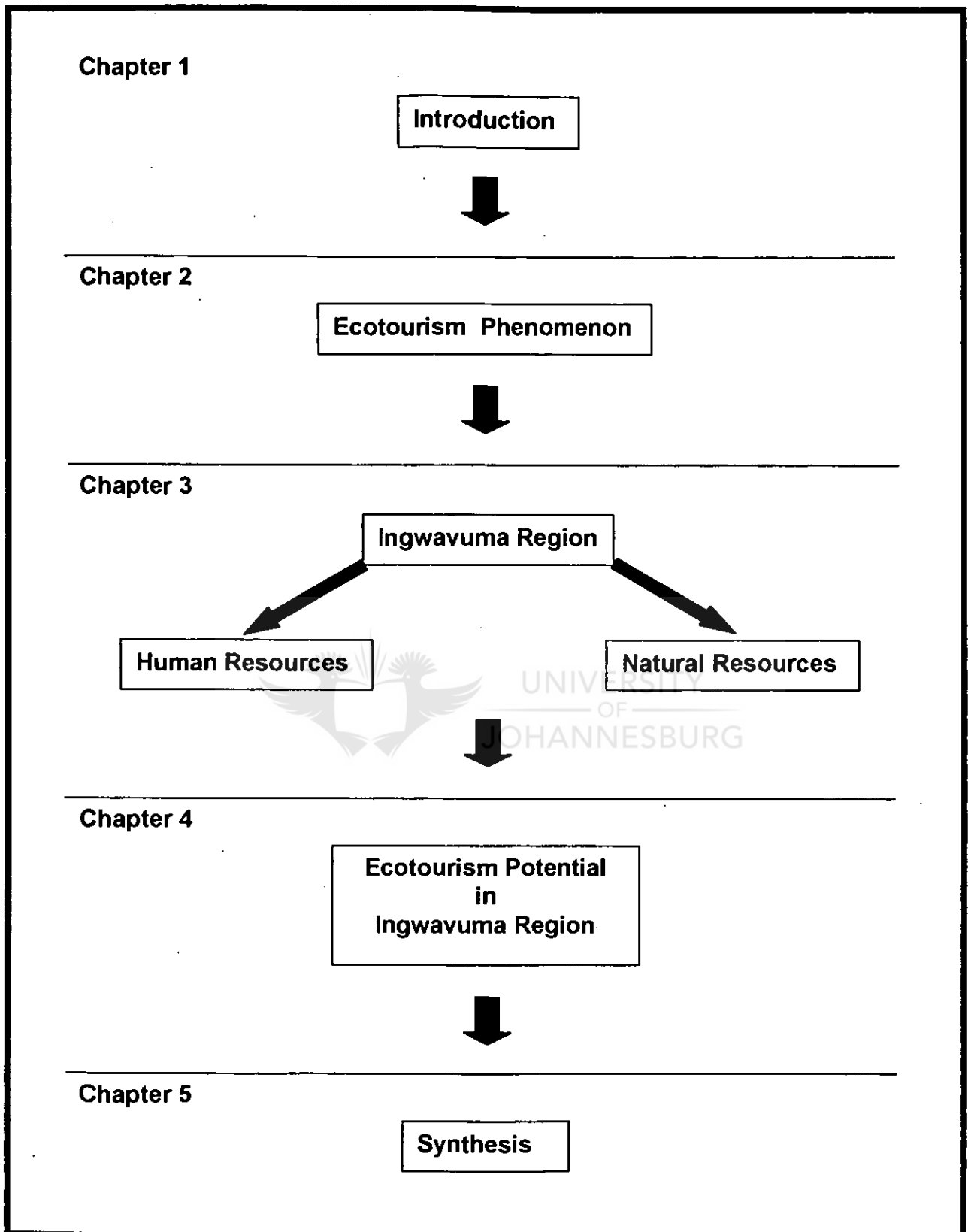


Figure 2: Flow diagram indicating the research process.

In Chapter 1 the focus of the study has been introduced and put into a broader context. In this chapter the study area is also briefly discussed, after which a statement of the problem and methodology are outlined, whilst the conceptualisation briefly describes the core concepts used in the study.

Ecotourism as a phenomenon will be discussed in Chapter 2. Its development, importance and effect on both the environment and local communities are emphasised. Furthermore, in this chapter special emphasis is placed on ecotourism within the broader context of tourism.

Chapter 3 in turn provides a more comprehensive focus on the study area, namely the Ingwavuma Region. Both the human and natural resources of the region are described as these constitute the resources to be utilised for ecotourism purposes.

Chapter 4 then studies the potential of the Ingwavuma Region for ecotourism development.

The final chapter concludes the study and contains various recommendations on the central theme, i.e. the promotion of ecotourism in the study area.



Chapter 2

Ecotourism



2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the ecotourism phenomenon, it should be seen within the larger tourism context. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (1992), tourism is now the world's largest industry, larger than the auto, steel, electronics or agricultural industries. Tourism employs 127 million people (one in fifteen workers worldwide). Within this perspective, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) (1992) has made the following forecasts: An average annual growth rate of 3,7% is expected throughout the 1990s, with the 450 million international travellers in 1991 expected to grow to 650 million international tourist arrivals by the year 2000. Ecotourism presently makes approximately between 7% and 10% of all tourism expenditure.

Ecotourism attractions include natural areas, their landscapes, wildlife and flora, together with any existing cultural elements. Uncontrolled or badly managed tourism can cause irreversible damage to the world's natural and cultural heritage having devastating long term effects on ecotourism and any other economic activity. Ecotourism therefore requires a multidisciplinary approach, careful planning and strict guidelines to guarantee a sustainable long term operation.

2.2 DEFINING ECOTOURISM

In 1983 Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, a Mexican architect, environmentalist and Special Advisor on Ecotourism to the International Union of the Conservation of Natural Resources (IUCN), was the first to refer to "ecotourism". Ceballos-Lascurain (1983:30) stated that "ecotourism is responsible travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the object of studying, admiring and enjoying the natural landscape and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas". Ceballos-Lascurain added normative elements, such as social and environmental responsibility, to the original definition so as to avoid misuse or abuse of the term.

It is impossible to accurately define what ecotourism precisely is, because it is such a dynamic concept, but it generally refers to:

"any aspirational form of tourism which simultaneously conveys value to natural resources, resident communities in visited destinations and the visitors themselves - without any of the negative and damaging implications inevitably associated with poorly managed mass tourism" (Bennett, 1994:409).

In order to more accurately determine what may be classified as ecotourism and what is simply tourism with an "eco" flavour, various definitions have been applied.

The University of Pretoria's Centre of Ecotourism defines ecotourism as:

"an enlightening, participatory travel experience in environments, natural or cultural or both, that contributes to the conserving of these environments by generating sustainable economic opportunities of direct benefit to the local people and maximises use of environmentally sound infrastructure."

Fundamental to the concept of ecotourism are the following key principles (Buchanan, 1996:6):

- * it should not degrade the resource and should be developed in an environmentally sound manner;
- * it should provide first-hand, participatory and enlightening experiences;
- * it should involve education amongst all parties before, during and after the trip;
- * it should encourage all parties involved to recognise the intrinsic values of the resources being marketed;
- * it should involve acceptance of the resource on its own terms and in recognition of its limitations;
- * it should promote understanding and involve partnerships between a wide range of players at all levels;

- * it should promote moral and ethical responsibilities and behaviour towards the natural and cultural environments by all players;
- * it should provide long-term benefits to the resource, the local community and industry.

It is essential to have a better knowledge of the ecotourism concept before understanding its relevance to the Ingwavuma region. Ecotourism is essentially the development of environmentally sensitive tourism, while allowing the local population to benefit economically by becoming directly involved through job opportunities, guiding, making of curios and a number of other economic activities. According to Ceballos-Lascurian (1991), the best ecotourism model is that which is being followed by the Cofan Indians in the Cuyabeno Reserve in Amazonian Ecuador. Here tourists are being lodged in rustic traditional cabins built by the Indians themselves. These cabins are located about 1,6 km downriver from their village in order to avoid visitors encroaching on the privacy of their hosts. There is a traditional museum nearby and a shop for selling handicrafts. Local community members guide the tourists on nature walks and canoe rides.

Therefore, since 1992, the following definition has been used: "ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features), that promotes conservation and sustainable development, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficial, active socio-economic involvement of local populations" (Van der Merwe, 1996:23). Porritt (1996:33) defined ecotourism as "the planned practice of tourism in which the enjoyment of nature and learning about living beings and their relationship with the environment are brought together. It is an activity which does not result in a deterioration of the environment and which promotes and supports the conservation of natural and cultural resources, thereby producing economic benefits which reach most of the population. Moreover, real ecotourism promotes justice for people and for nature." In line with this, the Ecotourism Society (Lindberg and Hawkins 1993:3) gives the following definition: **"Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people."**

For the purpose of this study ecotourism will be defined as travel to environmental destinations in as environmentally sustainable a manner as possible, while including and benefiting the local communities. In other words, environmental travel, with the definite objective of protecting the environment while improving the standard of living of local communities.

2.3 WHAT IS "ECOTOURISM"?

The term ecotourism has been used interchangeably in the literature with a host of other terms, not all of which accurately reflect its true meaning. Ecotourism has, for instance, variously been described as a product, a destination and as an experience, and has also been used to reduce the feelings of guilt associated with some forms of tourism and travel. Words such as "environmentally sensitive", "quality", "green responsibility", "low impact", "ecologically or environmentally responsible", "nature based", "appropriate", "alternative", "soft environmentally friendly", etc. have been used to promote the image of travel companies and of their products (Wood, 1993). It has also been noted as an overall reflection of the "greening of the marketplace" (Wight, 1993:31), and has been seen as promoting culturally and ecologically sensitive travel that ideally profits all involved parties. In addition, ecotourism can also be effective in promoting conservation and management of natural resources for long-term, sustainable economic development. As Boo (1990:84) states: "tourism to protected areas demonstrates the value of natural resources and wildlife to tourists, rural population, park managers, government officials and tour operators". As a result, ecotourism is now seen as a model of development in which natural areas are planned as part of the tourism economic base; biological resources and ecological processes are linked to social and economic sectors.

Ecotourism, therefore, boils down to an amalgamation of interests arising out of environmental, economic and social concerns applied to nature-related tourism. It can be accepted that ecotourism is about principles of balancing tourism, conservation and culture. In other words allowing tourist, conservation and human activities to continue without compromising any activity.

The need to explore "ecotourism" as an approach to tourism development arises out of the large number of tourists visiting natural areas in recent years. Unfortunately, this trend has overwhelmed the ability of many destinations to adequately plan and manage tourism in ecologically and culturally fragile areas (Lindberg, 1993:27) leading to irreversible long term environmental damage.

Ecotourism provides economic justification for protecting areas that may not be protected otherwise (Boo, 1990; Lindberg, 1991). For example, **ecotourism** has encouraged the use of natural resources, such as forests and wildlife for non consumptive uses that may be as profitable as any other type of exploitation. Successfully managed, ecotourism can provide additional revenues to public and private land managers as well as provide additional justification for managing the resource base for sustainable use. Apart from its economic importance, ecotourism development promotes the preservation of cultural and social values, including historical places of interest that might otherwise be lost.

Ecotourism also involves local people as partners and beneficiaries in conservation and tourism (Western, 1993). Ecotourism is therefore about creating and satisfying a hunger for nature, about exploiting tourism potential for conservation and development, and about averting its negative impact on ecology, culture and aesthetics. In other words, ecotourism incorporates both a strong commitment to nature and a sense of social responsibility, while allowing the tourist dollar to flow back into conservation. This is a way of paying for nature conservation and increasing the value of land left natural.

2.4 ECOTOURISM MODEL

The definition of ecotourism indicates that a close association exists between tourism, conservation and the concerned community (Figure 3). This figure illustrates that ecotourism is fundamentally made up of three concepts, namely: tourism, conservation and the local communities. Ecotourism involves a balanced approach whereby each aspect must have equal importance in the relationship. This should be properly managed

in order to maximise the benefits to all concerned. Ecotourism has the potential to provide economic upliftment and empowerment to the communities of underdeveloped regions such as in Northern KwaZulu-Natal.

The following model aims to illustrate this relationship.

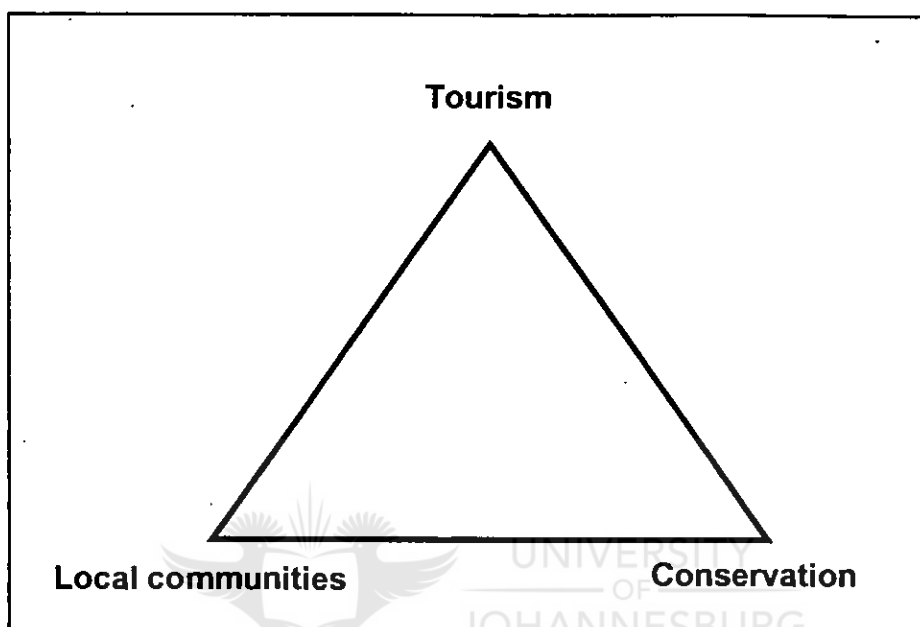


Figure 3: Ecotourism model

This study will give a perspective of the interaction and benefits tourism has for development in the underdeveloped region of Northern KwaZulu-Natal and, to a lesser extent, the benefits conservation has for the local communities. Presently there are very few studies which have looked at the relationship between tourism and local communities in underdeveloped regions. Most studies have focused on the other two arms of the model, namely the link between communities and conservation and conservation's benefits from tourism.

2.5 FACTORS AFFECTING TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The majority of African countries, and particularly those of Eastern and Southern Africa, are renowned destinations for safaris. Africa with its abundant and varied natural environment, together with its unique cultural make up, fills a special niche in the world tourism market. Therefore, the conservation of the environment and preservation of cultural assets should be the main aim of African decision-makers when planning policy on tourism in Africa. A problem faced by Africa is that of image. The continent is often described by the media as an unsafe tourist destination, with political tension and diseases.

South Africa is one of the world's prime ecotourism sites, for this reason the tourist product being sold is the environment. However, ecotourism should be seen within the larger context of tourism in the country.

According to the White Paper on Tourism (1997) released by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T), two million job opportunities could be created by the year 2000 if South Africa developed its tourism industry effectively. The White Paper provides a policy framework and guidelines for tourism development in South Africa and will soon be followed by an implementation strategy and action plan. The White Paper also states that tourism, perhaps more than any other sector in the economy, has the potential to create jobs and to create them quickly.

According to the document, tourism could be an engine for growth, rejuvenating other sectors of the South African economy through job creation. It could also sustain the Reconstruction and Development Programme. There is, however, scepticism in the tourism industry. Former Executive Director of Satour (the South Africa Tourism Board), Dr. Ernie Heath, says: "time is running out for South African tourism - international fever for the country is waning and the window of opportunity is beginning to close" (Holt-Biddle, 1996: 136).

One of the White Paper's specific targets is to increase the contribution of tourism to GDP to 8% by the year 2000 and to 10% by the year 2005. The White Paper claims that if tourism contributed 10% to South Africa's GDP, as it does in the USA, the industry would generate R40 billion a year and create 2 million jobs. In order to do so, the Government will have to overcome a host of constraints such as crime and violence (Liebenberg, 1996), inadequate funding, lack of infrastructure, and poor training, education and awareness.

The White Paper, launched in February 1997, gave a thorough overview of tourism in South Africa. This included the dominance of the tourism industry by the formal sector, and calls for interventions to open it more to emerging business people and to ensure that benefits are spread to neighbouring communities. Involving black business people in this sector is, however, more problematic. Investigations into giving emerging entrepreneurs access to credit are continuing. The involvement of local staff in management positions within lodges and tourist destinations is minimal. This can largely be ascribed to poor education facilities and poverty in the region. Then there are infrastructural blockages, as tourism becomes the victim of its own success, with shortages in accommodation, tour buses and tour guides and mediocre standards of service.

There are concerns that the restructuring of SATOUR, South Africa's official tourism promotion body with offices overseas, is taking too long, and that SATOUR along with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism is under-funded. Responsibilities of this Department have been too diverse, not enabling it to focus effectively on tourism. Trade unions within this industry too, are beginning to flex their muscles, most recently expressing concern at the lack of affordable facilities for poorer domestic tourists.

The private sector has launched the Tourism Business Council of South Africa to assist in the restructuring of the industry, the development of an infrastructure and increasing the funding for tourism promotion. The National Conference Bureau wants to expand the existing R26bn industry to R35bn over the next three years and the prospects of this being achieved remain good. With lack of finance considered a major constraint to tourism

growth, the Government should consider a large initial capital injection to “kick-start” tourism development over the next three years. The Government should also investigate broadening the tourism funding base through a single departure tax and review the levy system.

While tourism in itself is not a specific RDP project, it has been identified in the RDP and again in the government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR) as a contributor to economic growth and job creation. Tourism has advantages over other economic sectors in that the time frame for new projects is relatively short, and the fact that it can reach isolated rural communities as effectively as the urban centres.

Many factors, however, limit the meaningful involvement of local communities in the tourism industry. These include a lack of information, know-how, training, finances and interest on the part of existing establishments in building partnerships with local communities and suppliers. To ensure responsible development of tourism, the Government encourages the development of partnerships between private sector and local communities.

Tourism is able to provide immediate employment. For example, if South Africa's tourist establishments began offering live entertainment to guests, thousands of performers could be employed. The tourist industry draws on a number of skills from accountants and hairdressers to tour guides and trackers, providing enormous potential for on-the-job training. The industry is able to accommodate a lively informal sector as many of its activities are within the reach of small operators. By facilitating the involvement of those groups previously neglected by the tourism industry, not only is the supply of labour services, but also entrepreneurial activities, promoted.

Tourism offers entrepreneurs endless opportunities ranging from entertainment, laundry, interior decorating, and construction to tour guiding, hunting services and selling African foods. Entrepreneurs could also fill the gap in South Africa's tourist infrastructure. For

example, taxis and other disadvantaged transport operators could be used to improve ground transport facilities.

While the tourism industry has tremendous potential to create jobs, the government recognises that appropriate skills and experience are necessary to facilitate employment growth. With large projected staffing needs and the lack of physical and financial capacity to deliver education and training, the industry will increasingly be faced with a critical skills shortage. Various ways to boost education and training should include promoting private sector involvement and creating dedicated funding mechanisms. Access to training opportunities could also be fostered by a system of scholarships, student loans and incentives.

According to the Sunday Times (13th April 1997), tourism in South Africa is increasing, but South Africa is to a great extent going to have to compete with other emerging tourist destinations. Is South Africa prepared for this competition and is enough planning and advertising being done to meet this challenge? Estimates are that South Africa earned about R9 billion in foreign exchange from tourism in 1996.

The Central Statistical Services show a 7,8% increase in tourists visiting South Africa during 1996. But a number of concerns about the industry remain (Sunday Times, 13 April 1997) even though there are positive signs such as; the construction of 100 hotels and resorts across the country; Cape Town's shortlisting for the Olympics; the privatisation of Sun Air and Aventura, etc.

Msimang, Ex-Executive Director of SATOUR, highlights some of these concerns: 'We also need adequate funding to be able to market this country in the face of extremely fierce competition. We also need to address the service problem, to cater for the needs of highly demanding international tourists. We need to develop a tourism ethic, a tourism culture that says that a guest is a friend who needs to be looked after. South Africans need to realise that hospitality pays, as there is money to be made. We have the richness, the diversity, the underdeveloped capacity to sustain an industry growth rate of 20% a

year, and with that ethic, that culture of tourism, just imagine what we can achieve, for tourism, and for the country" (Holt-Biddle, 1995: 130).

Presently, however, the situation is very different. A SATOUR survey of foreign visitors had 65% of them going home thinking South African service was unacceptable and 60% saying they spent much of their holiday in this country "looking nervously over their shoulders".

However, "a cautionary note needs to be sounded. Tourism worldwide is the single sector most swiftly and dramatically affected by perceptions of rising crime and of social political instability. It can evaporate as quickly as it emerges, leaving the associated infrastructure and employment high and dry. Attention to this issue is a priority for the future rapid growth of the industry"(Brooks, 1996: 38).

Tourism is definitely on the increase - so which side of the story should South Africa be looking at, or should South Africa be taking the middle road? Tourism is not the only answer to all South Africa's economic woes, but it can be a significant contributor. Tourism employs people on the lower skills level, where the worst unemployment is to be found. Tourism generates tremendous foreign exchange at a very low initial outlay. With tourism comes foreign exchange, with foreign exchange comes economic growth, and with economic growth comes employment, housing, health services and everything else (Holt-Biddle, 1997).

2.6 ECOTOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

As indicated above, ecotourism has the ability to generate income and employment in areas relatively untouched by traditional development efforts. There is a realization that little of the money spent by tourists remains at or near the tour destination itself. Recently, however, an effort has been made to keep more money in local circulation.

Ecotourists are aware of the harm they can do to the ecology, to wilderness areas and to the concerns of local people. Ecotourism is a combination of interests arising out of environmental, economic and social concerns.

Ecotourism argues the case for making local people partners and beneficiaries in conservation and tourism. Ecotourism incorporates both a strong commitment to nature and a sense of social responsibility. Ecotourism is concerned with creating and satisfying a hunger for nature, and exploiting tourism's potential for conservation and development and averting its negative impact on ecology, culture and aesthetics.

There are at least three reasons for increasing local benefits from ecotourism development:

Firstly, ecotourism reduces or eliminates traditional resource utilization.

Secondly, when residents receive benefits, they usually support ecotourism by protecting the site against poaching. But if residents bear the costs without receiving benefits, they often turn against ecotourism.

Thirdly, the ecotourist often supports the importance of tourism, thereby benefiting local residents.

Some of the mechanisms for increasing local benefits from ecotourism include: local ownership and management of the ecotourism resource; leasing, partial ownership, or profit sharing arrangements between the tourism industry and local residents; direct payments to communities from tourism revenues; and local employment in the tourism industry. In practice the most appropriate mechanism will depend on local cultural, political and economic conditions. The following examples illustrate some of the methods used.

Example 1: Local Ownership

Zimbabwe developed the Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) model, under which district councils have been granted "appropriate authority" to manage wildlife within the region, directly managing and profiting from hunting, photographic tourism and other forms of wildlife utilisation.

Example 2: Direct Payment and Employment Generation

The Lupande Development Project near the South Luangwa National Park provides for hunting and other wildlife utilisation, the benefits being channelled back into wildlife management and local communities. Forty percent of the funds raised are given to local chiefs to implement community projects. In addition to the direct financial benefits, 114 local residents were actively employed in the conservation programs, hunting operations and hippopotamus harvests. This contribution to local employment demonstrates how ecotourism can support rural economic development. Employment encourages local support for the conservation programs that have generated the jobs.

Example 3: Direct Payment

One of Kenya's priorities is to share 25 percent of entrance fee revenue with communities bordering the protected areas. This program is designed to reimburse communities for costs associated with establishing the protected area.

Example 4: Eco - destination acting as stimulus for development.

Damaraland (Namibia) is a dry, semi-desert region where tourist numbers visiting the area are increasing steadily. Most of the local Damara people are subsistence farmers, farming with pigs, cattle, goats and sheep. Recently, however, one of the locals started a campsite known as the Aba-Huab-Camp. People are attracted to the area to study the Geology such as the petrified forests, the rock engravings at Twyfelfontein and the Desert Elephant.

Within the camping area, there is a small bottle store, an A-Frame hut to sleep in and various campsites. The camp employs a number of people. The tourist destinations in the area all have locals who have appointed themselves as guides. New destinations and curio shops have been established all along the route to cater for the tourists.

The people in the area live in harmony with their environment. The author spoke to Elias Kuiseb who said: "Die olifante is belangrik, ons lewe saam met hulle. As hulle iemand doodmaak moet hulle eers gevonniss word. As hulle skuldig is word hulle gevonniss en geskiet. Een keer het 'n olifant in 'n gat geval. Sy vriende het hom uitgehaal. Hy was vol bloed. Toe skiet natuurbewaring die olifant omdat hy dalk iemand mag doodmaak. Ons lewe saam met die olifante, ons pla hulle nie en hulle pla ons nie."

The Ecotourism destinations (Conservation areas) formed the basis of a number of other tourist related local industries run by local communities, eg. concessions, partnerships etc.

Example 5: Increasing Economic Development by Reducing Leakage and Improving Linkages.

The most obvious opportunity for providing local benefits is employing local residents in the tourism industry and the industries which support it. Money spent by tourists is circulated through the economy as the tourism sector buys goods from other businesses. Thus, tourism might support not only a local lodge manager but also a local farmer who grows the food sold in the lodge. On the other hand, if a local lodge imports its food, the money "leaks" away and produces fewer benefits. To increase local development, tourism should be "linked" to other sectors so that money helps develop the local economy rather than being leaked away (Lindberg, 1991).

Some further examples of locals benefiting from ecotourism.

(i) The Nata Sanctuary (Botswana) is a unique undertaking in that it is a community operation. The management of the Sanctuary is the responsibility of a Board of Trustees selected from four villages in the area. Surplus revenue from the Sanctuary will be used for capital development in the four villages.

Although the tourist use of the Sanctuary has grown, a number of problems are starting to appear. The staff managing the Sanctuary are unskilled and are incapable of managing the facilities. These facilities are dirty and becoming degraded. The excessive number of tourists using the amenities is resulting in a degraded environment and loss of the tourism experience. A number of the tourist destinations are not properly controlled which results in further destruction. As an example, there is a large baobab tree which is being destroyed by graffiti, litter and people taking pieces of bark as mementoes.

(ii) In the Okavango Delta (Botswana) tourists are met by locals at the Makora village from where they act as guides and their *mokoros* are used as transport.

(iii) In the Matopos National Park (Zimbabwe) a local resident collects and sells thatch which he cuts in the Park for 6 Zimbabwean Dollars a bundle, while another sells curios from a stall inside the Park which he rents for 50 Zimbabwean Dollars a year. During this period he sells between 300 and a 1000 Zimbabwean Dollars worth of curios supplied by working groups which make anything from mats, wooden bowls, spoons, baskets, grass hats, bangles, wooden candlesticks to walking sticks.

(iv) At the Zimbabwe Ruins many people are employed as guides, taking tourists through the ruins, explaining the cultural history and present day culture to the tourists. This includes tribal dancing and visiting a sangoma.

(v) At the Chinhoyi Caves (Zimbabwe), C. Sithole has formed a co-operative of six people who make and sell curios. The co-operative earns between 2000 and 12 000

Zimbabwean Dollars a month.

- (vi) Isaac Mukukwa has opened a co-operative curio shop along the Masvingo Road (Zimbabwe). He is paid by the people of the co-operative who all make curios. Co-operative members make the goods and he acts as the salesperson. There are approximately 1 500 active members in the co-operative.
- (vii) At Mopani Bay, Kariba (Zimbabwe) local people provide tourists with a number of essential services such as supplying wood at 15 Zimbabwean Dollars a load and washing clothes at 50 Zimbabwean Dollars a bundle.
- (viii) At Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe) locals have formed their own cultural village, offering tourists an opportunity to have a cultural experience visiting tribal dancing and drinking beer with the locals.
- (iv) In Livingstone (Zambia) the river-rafting companies support the local economy by buying petrol and beer from the locals. The companies use local labour to carry rafts and train local people as guides.

At Kariba there is a signboard outside the town which sums up the situation. This signboard reads: "No animals, no visitors, no jobs." Many local economies are based on the environment which is the "product" that is being sold. A number of related industries developed around the initial eco-development as with this eco-development comes jobs and development.

In this section various examples in Southern Africa have been used to illustrate how local communities can be included and benefit from ecotourism ventures. There are a number of approaches, none of which are hard and fast rules. Each ecotourism project should be planned and adapted to suit local conditions. Furthermore, the benefits of ecotourism can't easily be measured in rands and cents. The informal developments around eco destinations are even more difficult to measure. The possibilities for locals to use their own

initiative and benefit from ecotourism are limitless and can be seen in the examples discussed above.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Chronic problems, such as under-budgeting and under-staffing of many protected areas, especially in developing countries, could finally begin to be solved if adequate mechanisms for pumping tourism dollars into national parks were set in place (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991). The alarming poverty in many rural areas around the world could perhaps be alleviated if local communities were involved in the ecotourism process.

It is against this background of extreme poverty in a rural undeveloped Ingwavuma that ecotourism will be studied. Various perspectives to the ecotourism phenomenon will be looked at to find out how the ecotourism process could help address these environmental and social problems.



Chapter 3

The Ingwavuma Region



3.1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE REGION

The present inhabitants of Maputaland are a mixture of Nguni and Thonga people, the latter being an offshoot of the Shangana - Tsonga who live along the eastern border of South Africa and in southern Mozambique. When Shaka built up his mighty empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the fertile and fever-ridden lowlands of Maputaland escaped his attention. As a result, the region remained largely outside Zululand's turbulent history. The first white explorers of Maputaland were shipwrecked sailors (Bruton, 1980:83).

Despite Maputaland's reputation, the vast herds of game that roamed across its grasslands attracted hunters and adventurers from all over the world. Those who managed to penetrate its natural defence systems of malaria and blackwater fever made considerable fortunes from the sale of ivory. Some of the white men who came to Maputaland were ruthless outlaws who ruled the local people through the barrel of a gun (Bruton, 1980:85).

One of the main barriers for early trade in the region was the tsetse fly that caused nagana or sleeping sickness amongst most cattle. Nagana leads to death amongst cattle and other domestic stock. The Nagana Campaign was a sad and shameful saga in the history of the region. In 1917 the Government decided to try and rid Maputaland of the dreaded nagana disease which made it impossible for cattle and domestic livestock to survive in that area. It was argued that if the game were removed, the disease would cease to exist and Maputaland could be opened up to settlers. So, instead of trying to eradicate the flies, the authorities set about systematically eliminating the game (Mountain, 1990).

The slaughter of the wild animals of Maputaland achieved absolutely nothing. It was finally discovered that the tsetse fly used restricted and permanent breeding sites and that the best policy was therefore to destroy the fly while it was breeding in those areas. This was achieved by aerial spraying with DDT. This was not a much better move, because the toxic results are of a long-term nature effecting every facet of the environment.

Following the early hunters were the traders, but their numbers were kept to a minimum because of the tsetse fly. Stock and oxen could not penetrate the cordon of death that these little insects drew around Maputaland. The first trader of significance was David Leslie (Bruton, 1980), who sailed up the Maputa River (known in South Africa as the Pongola River). Leslie traded cloth, blankets, guns, liquor and brass for ivory, agricultural produce and hides. This eventually sparked an international incident between Portugal and Britain when his British-registered schooner was seized by the Portuguese authorities. A major row erupted between the two imperial powers over the boundary which was finally settled by arbitration in 1875. The dispute was referred to the President of France, Marshall MacMahon, who settled the matter by deciding that the boundary between Portuguese Mozambique and British Zululand should run along the Usutu River down to where it meets the Pongola. From their confluence he drew a straight line across the plains to meet the sea just north of the Kosi Estuary. This boundary making had little immediate effect on the Thonga people, whose homeland was now cut in two.

The first whites who settled in Maputaland were missionaries. They did much to improve the quality of life of the people living there. They brought medicines, hospitals and general health care to the people. By the middle of this century, over 29 mission stations, most of them providing either medical or educational services, had been established in Maputaland. Their contribution to the well-being of the community was substantial.

The coastline of southern Africa has only a few places where the land gives way sufficiently to create a natural harbour. The Kosi system has such potential. Kosi Bay and the strip of Maputaland separating it from the hinterland had been a sought after prize for the landlocked Transvaal Boer Republics and Swaziland. The first government to express interest in acquiring Kosi Bay for a harbour, was the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek (Bruton, 1980), or the Transvaal Republic. President Paul Kruger saw Kosi Bay as his opportunity for a "road to the sea" which would free his republic from dependence on either the British in Durban or the Portuguese in Maputo. The British, sensing Kruger's tactic, blocked this move by annexing the land of the remaining tribes in the south of Maputaland.

Maputaland was finally completely annexed by the British and so the Boers' hope for their own route to the sea was finally dashed.

The attraction of a route to the sea lost its political significance once the Transvaal and Natal became provinces of the same Union in 1910. But this was not so for Swaziland whose only outlets to the sea are through foreign territory - either South Africa or Mozambique. In 1982 this prize was nearly awarded when South Africa decided to investigate the possibility to cede to Swaziland the magisterial district of Ingwavuma and the Swazi populated homeland of KaNgwane in the Nelspruit district. However, as a result of extreme pressure from the KwaZulu Government and from KaNgwane itself, the South African Government eventually abandoned the idea.

3.2 SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN THE INGWAVUMA REGION

3.2.1 The natural resources

The abundance of natural resources in an area is essential to make any ecotourism venture viable. The Ingwavuma Region is therefore a good example of a viable ecotourism destination. The Ingwavuma Region is made up of six interlocking ecological zones that run from north to south parallel to the coastline (Figure 4). Stretching from the Lebombo Mountains in the west across the bushland of the Makhatini flats to the Indian Ocean in the east.

Each of these six zones has their own distinctive features. In the west is the Lebombo Zone which is made up of mountains rising up to 700m above the plains below. The Pongola Zone lies just east of this, encompassing floodplains and an extensive pan system on the banks of the Pongola River. The next zone is the Sandforest Zone of Sihangwane, followed by the Mozi-Swamp and the Palm Belt Zone. The Coastal Lake Zone is made up of a series of lakes and marshes just inland of the Coastal Zone. The latter includes the dune forests, the inter tidal zone and the coral reefs that are just offshore.

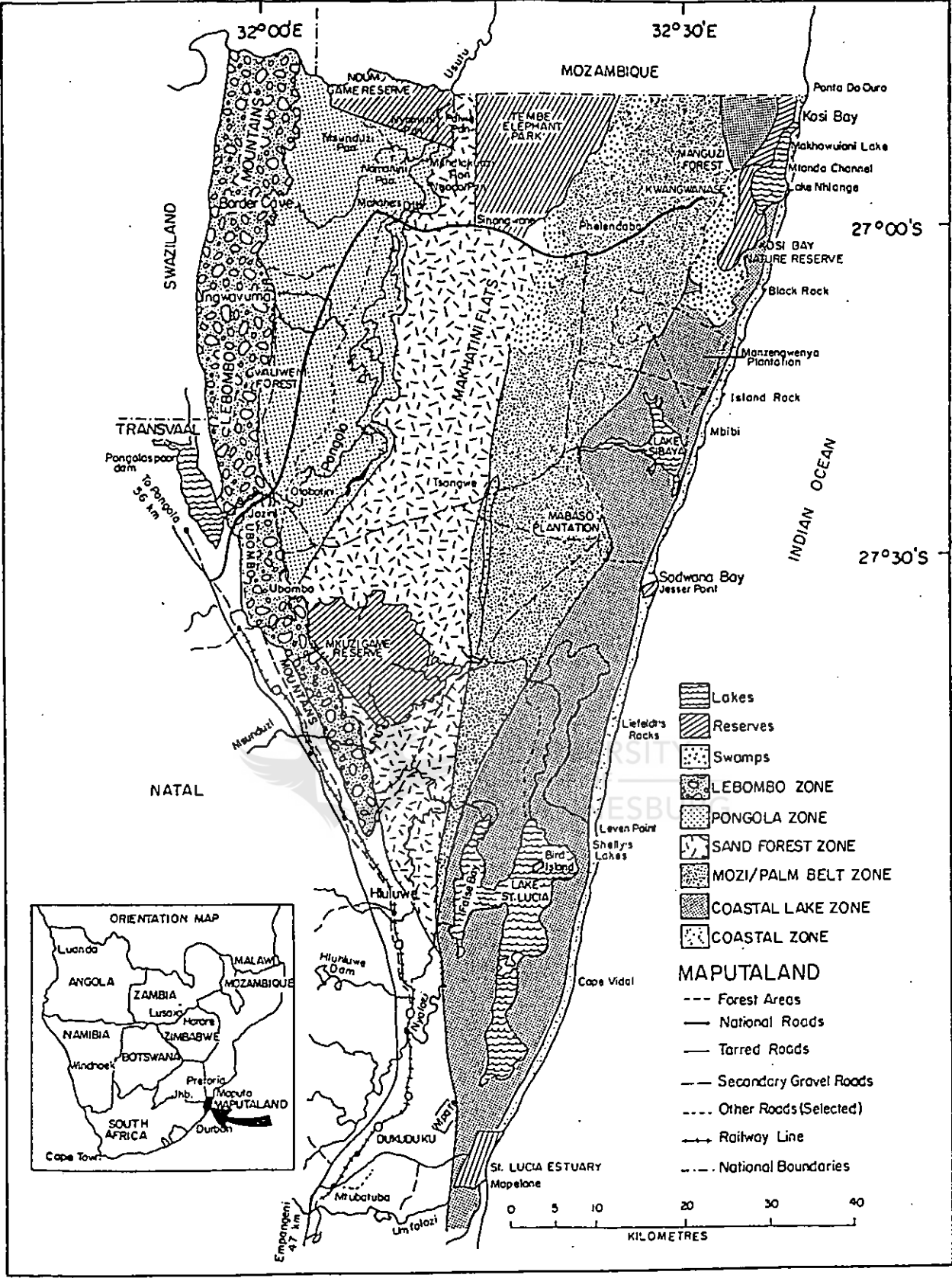


Figure 4: Ecological zones in the Ingwavuma region.

a. **The Lebombo Zone**

The Lebombo Mountain range flanks the western boundary of Maputaland. It is also the boundary between South Africa and Swaziland.

This mountain range is relatively narrow and is approximately 10-15 km in width. It extends for 800 km from the south of the Mkuze River to the Kruger National Park. The altitude varies between 500 m and 700 m above sea level. As part of the Zululand Thornveld bioclimatic region, this area has low agricultural potential. Rainfall is high at an average of 1 800 mm a year varying between 1 350 mm at the coast to 2 000 mm at the Pongola floodplain. The area supports a broad range of plant communities. Wildlife within this zone includes klipspringer, mountain reedbuck and red rock hare.

b. **The Pongola Floodplain Zone**

The most spectacular part of this zone is the Pongola River itself, along with its associated pans. These pans vary in size, permanence and importance within the 13 000 ha area which comprises the Pongola Floodplain. The Pongola Floodplain Zone falls within the Riverine and Interior Lowveld bioclimatic zone, and has a high agricultural potential.

Most of the floodplain lies below the 50 m contour line. This zone boasts one of the most dynamic ecosystems in South Africa because it is continually changing. A wide range of fish - about 48 species in all - form part of this rich ecosystem. Several of these are important as a source of human protein exploited at a subsistence level by the local population. Wildlife found in this zone includes crocodiles and hippos. Kudu, nyalas and buffaloes were historically common in this area, but are now scarce.

c. **The Sandforest Zone**

The Sandforest lies between the Pongola Floodplain and the Mozi Swamp and Palm Belt zone. It is characterised by gently undulating linear dunes, which run in parallel lines from

north to south. There are a number of conservation areas within this zone which have a variety of fauna and flora. The Tembe Elephant Park has a substantial elephant population of about eighty elephant.

d. The Mozi and Palm Belt Zone

The distinguishing feature of the zone is the predominance of the *ilala* palm. The indigenous population use these palms to brew a highly nutritious wine or cider. The sale of this cider is an important source of income. In terms of vegetation, this zone includes evergreen thickets and Acacia shrub. Wildlife in this area includes Reedbuck, Red and Grey Duiker.

e. The Coastal Lake Zone

The Coastal Lake Zone is characterised by a chain of barrier lakes, lagoons and swamps, which are connected behind a line of high forest dunes. The zone is typified by broad open and rolling grassland, interspersed with lines of swamp forest, thicket patches and heavily wooded savannahs. The Kosi system comprises a number of lakes covering an area of approximately 37 km² and the total system drains a catchment area of approximately 500 km².

f. The Coastal Zone

The Maputaland Coastland (Figure 5) is characterised by long narrow beaches of silica sand, sandwiched between a continuous barrier of forested dunes and the Indian Ocean. The relative straightness of the coastline is relieved by indentations which form bays behind remnant dune rock points, such as Lala Nek and Black Rock.



Figure 5: Maputaland Marine Reserve at Manzengwenya.

There is a rich diversity of tropical marine life as well as certain fish species indigenous to the colder waters of Europe. The Marine Reserve forms part of this delicate ecological zone.

The vast diversity of natural resources varying from the mountainous Lebombo zone to the untouched coastlines, all within close proximity make the area an ideal ecotourism destination. The ecotourist can experience anything from the big five, to fishing and snorkelling within the Ingwavuma region.

3.2.2 The human resources

The socio-economic character of a region's population is an important factor in assessing the potential role of ecotourism because this will determine how conducive the local

population are to tourism development. Particularly so, given the focus on tourism as a means for development and social upliftment of local communities.

3.2.2.1 The social environment of the Thonga

"The Thonga are divided into clans and each clan adopts the name of the chief who is their original ancestor" (Mountain, 1990: 24). The Thonga clan structure has remained intact up to the present.

Owing to the region's isolation, the Thonga were never completely assimilated into the traditional social and political structures of their Zulu and Swazi conquerors. The Tembe-Thonga are collectors and cultivators and the Thonga way of life was foreign to the Zulu, although the Tembe-Thonga of Maputaland today consider themselves to be Zulu. "Few males today are able or will admit to being able to speak Thonga" (Mountain, 1990: 27). As far as the women are concerned, it is different, as they can speak Zulu but speak Thonga amongst themselves.

Today the social and political organisation of the Tembe-Thonga still remains largely intact: the land tenure system, the arrangement of huts in the homestead, the customs and laws that govern marriage, funeral rites, rituals and taboos. Homesteads are small, often consisting of only one hut (Figure 6) in which the husband, wife and children live. A homestead usually has a granary placed on stilts a few feet above the ground to protect the contents against rotting, rodents and pests.

The women are responsible for cultivation once the bush and trees have been cleared by the men. The economy of the Thonga people is at a subsistence level and each member of the family has his/her specified contribution to make. The daughters assist in gardening and fetching water whilst the sons assist their fathers in herding cattle.



Figure 6: A typical Thonga homestead close to Kwangwanase

3.2.2.2 The politics of the Thonga

"The political and judicial organisation of the Thonga is pyramidal in structure with the homestead at the base or primary level of control. The father is responsible for controlling the behaviour of his family and he is answerable to the outside world for their actions" (Mountain, 1990: 27).

The next level in the political structure of the Thonga society is the sub-headman, who is responsible for between 20 and 50 homesteads. The sub-headman is accountable for the maintenance of law and order in his district. He relies on persuasion and arbitration rather than force in order to settle disputes. Heads of individual homesteads assist him. Another of his tasks is that of representing the chief in his district.

At the top of the pyramid is the chief. The chieftainship is hereditary and passes from father to son. The chief is advised by a council of headmen. He seldom, if ever, acts independently of them.

A thorough understanding of the political and social structure of the Thonga people is essential to make any meaningful longterm success of ecotourism ventures in the region. Without consideration and consultation of the local political and social structures no new development would take place without resulting in conflict and confrontation.

3.2.2.3 The social dynamics of the region

Population profile

Maputaland's population is estimated to be around 204,000 of which 95% are rural and have settled in villages. Fifty six percent of the population of Maputaland are found in the Ingwavuma district (Seneque *et al*, 1993: 23).

The Ingwavuma magisterial district has a gross population density of 27,8 persons per km². This is low in comparison to other areas of KwaZulu-Natal. On average, the population growth in the Ingwavuma region between 1985 and 1990 was 0,6% which is low (Department of Development Aid, 1989). However during the early 1990s the population growth increased substantially.

Within the region, 55% of the population is youthful. This skewed age structure is typical of many rural African communities. This is often the result of migration by economically active adults who leave in search of jobs. The young children, the women and very old are left behind. The implications of this can be very detrimental to the family unit and therefore the social fabric of the society.

Sex ratio

There is also a higher number of females compared to males within the region, the ratio being 0,8 males for every female (Seneque *et al*, 1993: 25). This can be attributed to the fact that there are few employment opportunities within the region, and economically active males thus leave the region in search of employment in urban areas. This is supported by the fact that more females reside in rural areas and live by means of subsistence agriculture from which to support their families at home. More than 98% of females in the region reside in rural areas.

Urbanisation

Maputaland is largely rural in nature with the vast majority of the population resident in rural areas and small villages. Although there are a number of small towns, such as Ingwavuma and Kangwanase, these are generally of a low order with small population concentrations.

Education

The level of education in the Maputaland region is low. This can be attributed to a number of factors, the most important of which is the rural and isolated nature of the area. The low level of education contributes in turn to low levels of income and thus poverty.

3.2.3 The economic structure of the Ingwavuma region

The economy of Maputaland is based on four activities: fishing, the gathering of veld foods, subsistence agriculture and cattle breeding. Earnings from migrant workers in the cities supplement these activities. Jobs in tourism and related activities are very new to the area, but there has already been tremendous growth in this sector.

The regional economy is dominated primarily by agriculture (subsistence and commercial), with government and service activities playing a secondary role. The overall picture of the local economy is one of an undiversified and vulnerable economy based mostly on agriculture and cattle farming (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Outdoor butchery close to Phelendaba

The employment structure of the Ingwavuma district is concentrated in agriculture, community and social service and the informal sector (which is "Not Defined" in the 1991 Census). The employment structure is both an indication of the region's traditional role as an agricultural area as well as an economic backwater. The necessity for welfare services has been a major contributor to employment in the community and social services sector. The vast majority of the population are involved in subsistence activities.

3.2.3.1 Agriculture

The agricultural potential of the region is low, because of the poor soils and agriculture is therefore limited as a source of food and income. "Nowhere in Maputaland is sufficient food grown to support a family all year round, even on the relatively fertile alluvial plains along the Pongola River and on the Makhatini Flats. The gathering of veld foods is an important supplement to each family's food supply. In the dry central zone up to 75 % of the annual food intake is gathered from the veld" (Mountain, 1990: 79). Cattle ownership is not nearly as important to the Thonga people as it is to the Zulu and Swazi.

Often patches of sandforest are chopped down and burnt, thereby returning nutrients to the soil. Planting of maize and other crops in the area is generally unsuccessful, resulting in low yields. The main reason is because the soils are very poor and nutrients are leached out in about three seasons owing to the high rainfall.

The planting of maize in the Pongola floodplain where the soils are able to sustain maize growth is also very problematic. Maize is planted in the floodplain, but the maize is often washed away when the Pongola dam releases water. This in turn leads to claims being submitted to the Department of Water Affairs. For this reason the Department has stopped flooding the area which is part of the natural flooding regime. No flooding is now leading to no mud and nutrient deposits, weakening the agricultural potential of the floodplain. This in turn is leading to no fish being washed down from the dam, thus negatively affecting the *izinfonya* fishing that supplies many people with their only source of protein.

3.2.3.2 Fishing

Fishing in Maputaland occurs principally in two areas: firstly in the lakes, pans and estuaries in the coastal region and secondly in the pans along the Pongola River. "For over 400 years the people of Maputaland have used elaborate fish traps, known locally as

fish kraals, to trap the fish that migrate into and out of the estuary and lakes of the Kosi system" (Mountain, 1990: 80).

The principle employed in trapping the fish is simple. In the shallow waters of the lakes, guide fences are constructed. The guide fence is made of poles or sticks driven into the mud. The fence is crescent or hookshaped, with the concave side facing upstream. Its purpose is to prevent the fish passing through to the sea and instead to guide them towards the end of the guide fence. Once the fish swim through the opening of the enclosure, they are finally trapped.

Fish kraals are successful owing to the fact that fish constantly migrate into and out of the kraals and estuary of the Kosi system (Figure 8). The fish are trapped on their way back to the sea. The fish migrate at night during high tide and the baskets and enclosures are cleared the next day at low tide. In order to ensure that this situation is maintained, a 30-metre channel between the fish kraals is kept open so that the mainstream of the inflowing tidal water is not entrapped by fish kraals. This measure, which was introduced by the Natal Parks Board in the early fifties, demonstrates a clear understanding of the importance of maintaining a balance between man's needs and nature's ability to supply those needs on a continuing basis.

The fish kraals produce about 40 000 kilograms of fish per annum. "Approximately 56 families are directly involved in operating these fish traps, but through family connections almost all families in the area have links in one way or another with this form of fishing" (Mountain, 1990: 81).

The Pongola floodplain plays a major role in the economic life of people living in Western Maputaland. When the pans are shallow, large fishing drives are organised, using thrust baskets, or *izifonya* in Zulu. Baskets are cone-shaped and can be pushed into the mud on the floor of the pan. This prevents any big fish caught in the basket from escaping. *Izifonya* fishing is a community activity. People form themselves into a long line across the pan and steadily move forward, slowly driving the fish into a corner of the pan. Once the

fish are cornered, the fishermen thrust their baskets down into the water, hopefully trapping fish.



Figure 8: Fishing kraals at Kosi Mouth

Fishing by using homemade rods and fishing tackle is practised throughout the year at Lake Sibaya. "Marine fishing plays no significant role in the economic life of the people of Maputaland. The people have neither the equipment nor skills to exploit this food resource properly. The only use that is made of the sea is to strip red bait, mussels, oysters and crustaceans (Figure 9) from the rocks that line the shore at various places along the Maputaland coastline" (Mountain, 1990: 85).



Figure 9: Collecting oysters from the coastline near Lala Nek

3.2.3.3 The use of indigenous fruits, plants and trees

The reliance on nature is an important factor in the economy of Maputaland. The availability of veld foods provides a buffer against drought, seasonal famine, unemployment and poverty (Pooley, 1980). Craftwork made from hard woods and wine made from lala and wild date palms provide a source of income for approximately 1000 workers. "Tapping lala and wild date palms to make wine is a major economic activity thus providing an important supplementary income to nearly 500 people" (Mountain, 1990: 86). These wines can be quite intoxicating if used in excessive quantities (Personal observation). Fruits (76 edible species) and spinaches (26 species) are utilized by the people. Reeds, thatching grass, binding material made from bark and creepers as well as

poles are used to build houses. A variety of household items are made from reeds and sedges while grain stampers, dishes, eating utensils and curios are made from hard woods.

The natural resources of Maputaland are considered to be common property and therefore available for free use by everyone. The rising commercialisation of craftwork due to the need to supplement income and the increased demand by tourists, is leading to exploitation of hard woods.

Most of the people in the Ingwavuma region are unemployed or seek employment outside the region. Generally the population is very youthful with a very low level of education. Most of the people follow a subsistence lifestyle, supporting themselves by small scale farming, fishing and living off the land by collecting veld plants. The development of ecotourism in the region would bring much needed employment and the money brought into the region via ecotourism and jobs created would circulate through the local economy leading to further economic growth in the region.

3.3 CONCLUSIONS

The regional economy is poorly diversified and largely based on agriculture and the social services sector. Development in terms of diversification should be encouraged and this development should facilitate the further diversification and spread of economic activities. Employment and income levels are low, which contributes to the general poverty.

Socially and politically, the traditional way of life of the region's people is still largely intact, and is characterised largely by the following factors:

- * relatively low population density of 27,8 persons per km².
- * skewed male:female ratio of 0,8 males per female reflecting a high degree of male absenteeism and a high degree of dependency on economically active persons.
- * high proportion of young people- approximately 55%.

- * fairly low levels of education, due to a lack of schools, both primary and secondary.

Owing to the diverse natural environment which is largely unspoilt, the suitability of the area as a potential ecotourism destination cannot be questioned. Ecotourism developments in the region could create much needed job opportunities and much of the revenue earned from tourists is spent locally, thereby stimulating the local economy. Such developments, on the other hand, would have little negative effect on the environment because ecotourism is environmentally friendly, taking the environment and local communities into consideration.



Chapter 4

The Potential of Ingwavuma as an Ecotourism Development Region



4.1 INTRODUCTION

If ecotourism is developed soundly, responsibly and sustainably, it can become a powerful force for creating more jobs, combating poverty and simultaneously protecting the natural and cultural environment. However, for ecotourism to become a more effective development tool in Africa, a regional planning and development programme should be pursued. This thought was emphasised in 1997 at the World Tourism Conference, where, according to Francesco Frangialli from the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), "African nations could raise their foreign exchange earnings by further developing and effectively marketing socially responsible and sustainable ecotourism" (Citizen, 27 March 1997).

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) stated that Africa presently draws only 3,3 percent of the world's tourists and earns 1,8 percent of the income from world tourism. World tourism has a turnover of at least R1 850 billion (420 billion dollars) a year. Frangialli (1997) expressed optimism in the African tourism sector owing to a 2,9 percent increase in tourist arrivals last year increasing to 19,6 million travellers (Citizen, 27 March 1997).

4.2 ECOTOURISM RESOURCES

Ecotourism resources can be both natural and socio-cultural in nature. Natural attractions include landscapes, animals, plants, beaches, geographical features and water. Socio-cultural attractions relate to history, religion and a way of life of a particular community or particular culture.

Studies conducted among overseas tourists to South Africa indicate that the natural environment and its various facets are the main drawcard for tourists. According to Krippendorf (1982: 28), "scenic attractions of the holiday destinations stand at the central focus of tourist needs and are in fact the most important tourist motivation... The landscape is the real material of tourism." According to Heath (1992) the four pillars of South Africa as a tourist destination are the environmental splendour/scenic beauty,

wildlife, cultural heritage/diversity and the First World infrastructure. Most foreign tourists are attracted by South Africa's scenic beauty (23.4%), followed by wildlife (21.7%) and climate (11.5%). The Ingwavuma district as a tourist destination caters for all these needs.

The Maputaland area has an abundance of ecotourism resources in terms of landscapes and wildlife, etc. to offer. The natural attractions in the region include beautiful beaches, coral reefs, lakes, forests, birdlife, wildlife and excellent fishing opportunities. The socio-cultural attractions include the strong mix of modern and traditional ways of life of the region's Thonga people. They have much to offer historically and culturally, especially their traditional way of life, although the ecotourist destinations in the area are still largely unknown and underdeveloped due to the relative remoteness of the region. Should the region be developed as an ecotourist destination, many of the cultural and natural attractions could be used as the basis, or initial stimulus, for development.

4.3 FACTORS AFFECTING TOURISM IN THE INGWAVUMA REGION

4.3.1 Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP)

In the Ingwavuma district the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) has done a lot in the area to upgrade clinics and make water supply easily available to communities. Most of the projects initiated are labour intensive, providing jobs for only a short period of time. One of the newest RDP initiatives is a R170 million road development project which will be a duplication of the present road system. The question that needs to be asked is whether the money which is being pumped into this labour intensive income project can be justified. This project will need upkeep and on completion most of the jobs provided will no longer be available. Could this money not be put into a long-term money earning project? Why not develop community based tourist initiatives, that will be owned locally and provide jobs for years to come?

The RDP is intending to fund agricultural projects in the Ingwavuma settlement. The problem is that the soils there are very rocky and shallow. The RDP should rather look at

projects in the area that are working such as the Sileza/ Nguni Cattle Project. Sileza is a neighbouring area adjoining a nature reserve, with its main objective the breeding of cattle, whilst the Nguni Cattle Project is a local initiative, controlled by local people of the area. The management of the two areas is, however, done jointly. Should projects like this not be supported?

4.3.2 Politics

One of the major threats to ecotourism development for a number of years has been the inability of joining up of the Tembe - Ndumo corridor. Political parties in the region, especially the ANC and Inkatha, have politicised the issue, using it as an opportunity to draw support. At stages negotiations were successful, but this was then followed by a total breakdown in communication resulting in very little progress and no development in the area for years. Outsiders have also come into the area, influencing locals to resist any development and to boycott negotiations.

4.3.3 Land disputes

Land disputes cause instability in the region. The most recent threat to ecotourism is a number of land claims made against the various reserves in the area, where local communities are claiming land for settlement and agriculture. The Minister of Land Affairs visited the area during 1997 to have meetings with the different complainants about their land claims.

Eco-developments in the Sileza area are being held up by disagreement between two chiefs in the region (B. van Rensburg, personal communication). Sileza is a nature reserve owned by two tribes, which could bring money, jobs and development to the people but the project can't get off the ground due to local disagreements. Local politics and departmental power struggles, whether between chiefs and tribe or government, result in lengthy delays.

The resolution of conflict between communities and the Parks Board is an important part of land reform. Formally, nature conservation authorities regarded local communities and conservation as incompatible. As a result, many communities who once lived on nature reserve land were removed, often with disastrous effects on their lifestyles such as losing their access to grazing and farming land. Now the various parties are required to cooperate and jointly manage natural resources.

4.3.4 Culture and language

A constraint on development that should not be underestimated is that of witchcraft and the mystical. People in rural areas are very cautious about these matters. On one occasion the author encountered a minibus at Jozini. The minibus was filled with 15 *Sangomas* that were singing and clapping. On closer investigation, it was found that they were on their way to a village on the Pongola floodplains to go and drive out evil spirits. The local community had paid them R11 000 to do this. For people to collect such a large amount of money for this purpose in a region of such poverty, it is obvious that witchcraft still plays an important part in people's lives.

Culture and language can also play a role that can be either positive or negative; different cultural groups emphasising or perceiving things differently. The following example given by W. Matthews (personal communication) goes a long way to explaining what is meant. In the Tembe Elephant Park a number of students came to do mammal research. One of the students doing research came from Malawi. While working in the veld, he was approached by two Zulu game guards. After a conversation of a few minutes the game guards realised the student from Malawi did not speak Zulu. The game guards could not understand this. Often things are taken for granted, such as language in this example. But this is something that can create a lot of misunderstanding or even friction.

4.3.5 Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy within various government departments often slows down development. People on the ground do not understand this holdup and often with good reason. An example of the delay being experienced is the proposed integration of the Natal Parks Board and the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources. Three years down the line they still have not integrated. This results in duplication by two government departments within one province.

4.3.6 Unrealistic expectations

The creation of high expectations and failure of ecotourism to deliver within a short period of time, leads to disillusionment (Fawkes, 1994: 15) and rejection. For this reason, too high expectations among locals should not be created. Cognisance must be taken of these issues, before ecotourism development action can be successful.

Tourist numbers can have a positive or negative effect on the ecotourist experience. Large tourist numbers place pressure on the environment, resulting in the loss of experience and environmental degradation. Too few tourists result in the under utilization of facilities and environment resulting in locals considering alternative forms of land use.

4.3.7 Marketing and management

Very little marketing of the region is done and, when it is done, the marketing is very superficial, not giving the first time visitor to the Ingwavuma region enough background to the region. Better marketing can go a long way to bringing tourists to the region.

The lack of management skills of locals often leads to misunderstanding and problems. A number of locally owned tourist projects have failed due to a lack of know-how and knowledge about the tourism trade. A concerted effort to train locals should be made by assisting them to run and start local tourist facilities.

4.3.8 Proximity to Mozambique

Another factor that should not be underestimated is the fact that this area is bordering on Mozambique. This corridor from Mozambique provides an easy access route into the country for stolen cars and gun running. Forced removals of people in areas to create a nature reserve have resulted in much resentments and easy politicising of the land issues.

4.3.9 Seasonal nature of tourism

The tourism market is also seasonal, resulting in many seasonal jobs. This in itself creates problems, with many people being without work for long periods of time. Skilled staff will often leave the area in search of more permanent jobs, resulting in a local brain drain. This in turn affects local tourism negatively over the long-term.

4.3.10 Conclusion

The discussion of factors affecting ecotourism in the Ingwavuma district, indicate that ecotourism can be influenced by a number of factors: land claims, local politics, geographical location, etc. The importance of being aware of local conditions and factors is essential to ensure longterm functioning of any ecotourism venture. Even the establishment of new developments are not viable without a working knowledge of local issues.

Ecotourism has now become a big business and is going to get bigger. The biggest threat to the future of ecotourism in the Ingwavuma region is that ecotourism promoters and developers do not possess sufficient ability to convert ecotourism into a profitable business (at the same time making it sustainable in terms of respecting of the natural and the cultural resources on which it relies); and the risk of having pseudo ecotourism developers arriving first in pristine areas (natural or cultural or both) and ruining them before true ecotourism gets there. In this respect, Van der Merwe (1996: 37) concludes as follows:

"the trouble with ecotourism is that it can all too easily reach the point where the tourism tail is wagging the eco dog. When this happens, is it any better than ordinary tourism?", in other words when the stage is reached that tourism takes place at the expense of the local communities and the environment.

4.4 ECOTOURISM AND UPLIFTMENT IN THE INGWAVUMA REGION .

4.4.1 Introduction

The potential of tourism, particularly as a developmental tool, has been recognised, which has led to a series of initiatives aimed at harnessing this potential. Ecotourism recognises that people and their many needs are part of a larger picture and therefore they must be integrated into development. Conservation of nature and development of people must no longer be viewed as mutually exclusive.

However, the central question that must be asked is: "What does tourism as development option mean to the people of Maputaland?" What does tourism mean to a tribesman, battling against great odds in order to merely survive and who is expected to give up or share his land so that tourism may take place?

To open Ingwavuma to tourism without first answering these questions, would lead to increased confrontation and tension as the local people see their land and their traditional access to important natural resources on communally owned land being lost to outsiders. Tourism does provide employment to those who are directly involved in the administration, servicing and management of the resorts and it does bring buyers of curios and craft work into the area. But, is this all tourism has brought?

4.4.2 Case studies from Ingwavuma

Case study 1: George Mpontshane, A Local Entrepreneur

George Mpontshane was the first man in the Ingwavuma district to start a curio shop (Figure 10) for tourists passing through the region. With time, the type of product he sells has changed, catering more for what the tourists want. George says: "If you talk to the tourists, you can learn to make things that the tourists want." Three years after starting the stall, he now competes with about eight other curio stalls in the region.



Figure 10: George Mpontshane's curio shop.

He has now also started his own nursery, selling plants to passing tourists. George says: "God gave me the talent and the idea to start my business called King Crafts." More recently he has started a farming business to complement his income to support his three wives and 15 children. George has planted over a hundred mango trees along the Pongola Floodplain. He also farms with other crops such as paw paws, chillies, guavas and oranges together with cattle farming. George says that he can plant anything and it

will grow. The most recent addition to the farming business is bees. He hangs old logs in the trees that provide a nesting site for the bees.

George is of the opinion that Nature Conservation is good and the people of the region benefit from meat that is sold cheaply, eg. Hippo, Nyala and Impala. He also thinks that the tourists bring money and jobs to the region. They also have very good ideas.

It should be remembered that ecotourism developments stimulate the local economy in a number of ways. A good example being George Mpontshane and his small enterprising business. His business started just catering for tourism curios. This was the stimulus for a number of other enterprises. In the same way ecotourism developments in these rural areas have a ripple effect, stimulating a number of other developments.

Case study 2: Kosi Bay Nature Reserve.

Kosi Bay is one of the few pristine estuarine systems remaining in Southern Africa. It is also the ancestral home of a community whose roots in the area allegedly date back to the 13th century. At the mouth of the estuary, fish are harvested from traps built with poles - an ancient skill, passed down through the generations.

The community's way of life was severely interrupted when, in 1988, the area was declared a nature reserve. A flashback to July 1994 gives an idea of the development that has taken place over the past five years. "We women are no longer working - we're just sitting." A woman from the KwaDhapha community addressed Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom during a meeting in Kosi Bay by saying: "What have they (KwaZulu-Natal Bureau for Natural Resources) brought us? Our children are hungry and we have no one to support us. If I send a man to the forest to cut thatch or poles, the conservation police threaten him with guns or arrest him. Our forefathers preserved the trees they found here. They have planted no different trees. When we visit our graves, they point at us with firearms. We do not trust them."

"We have problems with the hippos that destroy our vegetables. They come from the water at night and not even our fires will chase them away. We are not allowed to kill them." The Minister remarked that the hippos could be turned into a tourist attraction, worth more than the vegetables patches. At the time, the women met his comment with curiosity only.

At the same time as they suffer the burdens of poverty, this community is enveloped in Kosi Bay's unique atmosphere. The narrow reed-lined channels of the lakes are home to rich variety of bird life, including flamingoes and malachite kingfishers. On the other side of the dunes, turtles which have migrated down the currents of the east coast of Africa lay their eggs during early spring. Mangroves and cycads grow on the sandy slopes, along with a variety of indigenous medicinal and food plants.

Five years ago, ecotourism was simply a vague dream. Today, it is a reality, and the same women who were powerless, now earn an income by hosting tourists from all over the world. The same hippos became an economic resource.

The community has built small chalets on the dunes, where low-impact tourism has grown into a unique experience. The local women make use of the environment's natural plant foods to offer visitors a unique menu-palm wine and crushed peanut relish is served with fish roasted on a spit. The community has not only regained security of tenure on the land, but has turned this into an economic opportunity.

Case study 3: Sodwana Bay.

Sodwana Bay is an ecotourism destination in Northern KwaZulu-Natal where people go to scuba dive. Initially the area consisted of only a campsite. Tourists had to bring all their own supplies. In time, a number of supporting industries developed, eg. shops, curios, bottle stores, petrol stations etc. The Natal Parks Board later became involved in order to manage the environment and control the tourist utilisation of the area. The local infrastructure was improved which in turn led to even more tourists and more supporting

industries, eg. equipment and boat rentals, safari operators, more campsites and lodges. More jobs were created and most of the money earned was spent locally which had the effect of stimulating the local economy.

Ecotourism was thus the initial stimulus for the economy in the area. The environment and tourist utilisation is being managed by the conservation authority, while the locals became involved in the tourist and tourist related activities.

Case study 4: Communities benefiting from ecotourism.

Two landmark developments in Northern KwaZulu-Natal took place when two rural communities became beneficiaries of ecotourism (Trendler, 1996). The Mqobela and Matenjwa communities received substantial cheques, representing their share of the rentals from the Rocktail Bay Lodge and the Banzi Pan Tourist Camp in the Coastal Forests Reserve and Ndumu Game Reserve respectively. In the case of the Rocktail Bay Lodge, the Mqobela community own a 15% share of the lodge itself and 13% in the company operating the lodge. At Banzi Pan, the Matenjwa community own a 14% share of the camp and a 15% share in the wilderness safari operation.

The intention behind these developments is for local communities in the area to share in the ownership of private sector developments and thereby share in the income generated. According to Nick Steele, Director of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Nature Conservation, people should recognise the crucial importance that such a marriage of interests plays in this type of ecotourism development. Without private enterprise, tourism and conservation simply cannot start to create the necessary infrastructure for the advancement of ecotourism, especially having to deal with State and Government Departments. These tourist camps represent a sense of real community ownership, without which Game Reserves in future will not survive.

4.4.3 Perspectives on ecotourism in the Ingwavuma region

Two towns in the region that have started growing quite rapidly are Jozini and Manguzi. Most of the developments are the result of a number of tourists moving through the region either on their way to Sodwana or Ponto do Ouro in Mozambique. A number of shops and a large informal sector have developed.

Developments in Manguzi have also been stimulated by ecotourism in the region. Manguzi has a very interesting informal market where hawkers sell locally grown fruit, vegetables, indigenous fruit, clothing, curios, dried fruit etc. A number of the articles available in the market also come from Mozambique, and these articles are sold in South Africa for rands.

While interviewing local people, it was found that their perception with regard to tourism in the Ingwavuma district varied greatly. Responses varied from very positive to being totally unperturbed by the tourism issue. Communication was difficult due to the limited number of people able to speak English and the author's limited proficiency in Zulu.

Generally, the people interviewed were very positive towards tourism and the possible developments it could bring. James Ndlovu (Ingwavuma), a teacher looking for a job, stated that there were not many jobs in tourism but in the future there would be many. Langa Gumede from Mboza said: "If tourism is developed properly it can benefit a lot more people than at the moment." This supports the perception that people are starting to attach value to tourism.

When personally involved in a situation it is often difficult to see the situation in perspective without expressing some bias. The author has made a concerted effort to express views in an unbiased manner. It should, however, be noted that perceptions are temporal and only relevant to a specific time frame. Perceptions can often vary over a short period of time depending on the factors playing a role. Therefore, the perceptions expressed by the

local people are very relevant to the situation they find themselves in when they were interviewed.

Often conservation is the first form of outside development in remote rural areas, as in the case of the Ingwavuma district. With conservation comes development and the first forms of infrastructure, eg. roads, water, jobs, etc. Conservation opens up the area to further development. To many local communities, conservation is synonymous with development, but in actual fact it has totally different objectives. Often the locals see it as the obligation of conservation to help them. A good example is in the region of Tembe (L. Gumede), where during the drought, locals were supplied with tanker loads of water. However, when the drought was over, the locals still expected the water and were very upset when the water delivery was stopped. Wayne Matthews, the Regional Ecologist, is of the opinion that conservation is not there to implement development, but that this is actually the portfolio of a number of other government departments. More and more, however, the perception is being created that conservation authorities have a responsibility to help develop their neighbours.



According to K. Hanekom, Research Scientist (personal communication): "Die plaaslike mense sien die reservaat as hout: daar moet werk geskep word, geld verdien word, waarde geheg word aan gebied in die oë van die plaaslike bevolking." This is very difficult in a time when the Nature Conservation budget has been cut by 80%. Many of the temporary staff have been laid off due to the cut. Local communities are so desperate that many of the local people have suggested that two people are willing to work for one salary.

In the Ingwavuma district, conservation areas are often found in seas of poverty, resulting in these areas and their resources being put under immense pressure. Locals must therefore be accommodated to alleviate this pressure. But how is this to be done without placing these conservation areas in jeopardy? A good example is the development of tourism in those areas surrounding the conservation areas.

Enoch Mabuza from the Kosi Bay Lodge explained how the lodge was a partnership between private individuals and the local community. The lodge is situated on tribal land bordering the Kosi Bay Nature Reserve and the tribe receives 25% of the profit made in the lodge. The land was donated by the tribe in exchange for the 25% profit share. Most of the building materials are bought from local people, while people working in the lodge are also locals. The lodge employs 15 locals on a permanent basis and another 30 on a seasonal basis. This is an example where the people in the region are very positive about tourism because they can see tangible results.

Symbiotic tourist partnerships between local people and outsiders have a good opportunity of working. While local people often lack the understanding of the tourist trade to make tourist development work, outsiders are brought in who have a better understanding of the tourist trade and what their needs are. Locals, on the other hand, own land and have a knowledge of the environment that can be offered to the tourist, while the outside partner has the money and the business acumen to make the partnership work. The impact of ecotourism developments do not change land use much nor does it negatively affect the culture of the local people.

A number of small scale tourist developments are shooting up all over the region at Lake Sibaya and in the Kosi Lake area. A good example being at Kosi Bay where a new ecotourism venture has started between the Natal Parks Board and locals from communities living within the Maputaland Marine Reserve. Participants come from "Kwa Dapha, Nkobokeni and Emalangoni, three tribal wards that have long been associated with the turtle conservation project "(Ward, 1997: 56). Now locals have been given the opportunity to earn money and benefit from years of community involvement in turtle conservation, by taking guided tours to see the turtles as they come to the shore to lay eggs.

The author is of opinion that this symbiotic relationship between locals and investors is to the benefit of both parties. Value is given to the natural environment which encourages

locals to protect and conserve the environment. Ecotourism ventures are often partnerships with local communities who benefit financially.

The ecotourism phenomenon can be likened to the planting of maize in the sandforests of Maputaland: one must first clear and burn patches of the forest. This returns nutrients to the soil, making it fertile enough for cultivation. However, in a few seasons the nutrients are leached out of the soil. This results in the soil becoming barren and unsuitable for agriculture. The sandforest never returns, but is replaced by grass (W. Matthews). The sandforest is affected by man's destruction, low rainfall, elephant damage, fires, grass and bush encroachment. If this plant community becomes stagnant and does not adapt, it will become less important and eventually disappear. Ecotourism must not try to replace that which already exists, but must use what is available. Ecotourism must be adaptable and change to meet the different social, environmental and tourism needs. This dynamic relationship is constantly changing. Likewise, ecotourism must also constantly adapt to the changes. These changes must be made, but not at the cost of either the local people (social) or the environment. If ecotourism in an area like the Sandforest becomes stagnant, it will become redundant and die.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Maputaland is experiencing a rapid increase in human population together with high fertility rates and a low prevalence of contraceptive use. This high population growth increases demands for water, food, energy, housing, employment, medical services and education. Economic development is urgently needed to foster growth and employment, alleviate poverty and raise hopes for the future in the region. Ecotourism has proved to be a powerful vehicle in providing countries, particularly poor ones, with the resources they badly need to reduce their debts and pay for their imports. It has the potential to create jobs without the long lead times needed for major capital projects - and it is most accessible to young people, women and small entrepreneurs.

Development programmes that add economic value to the environment have a much better chance of being accepted by disadvantaged communities. Developing sustainable tourism affords a splendid opportunity to meet people's material needs, while facilitating the preservation of the environment. For this reason ecotourism in the Ingwavuma region has probably become the single most important economic incentive for environmental protection. It is a dynamic, market-led phenomenon. Wise planning will be needed to optimise the economic impact of ecotourism, create new jobs and continue the fight against poverty, while protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural environment.

The case study of ecotourism in the Ingwavuma region could be used as an example where rural people have made use of their local skills and knowledge to better themselves. The people have started realising that there is a tourist demand for the resources in their environment. The people of the region have started tapping into the ecotourism potential in a twofold manner. Firstly, through their own doing and initiative and, secondly, through outside stimulus, generally with successful results. However, there is a great need to educate and train locals in the fundamentals of ecotourism matters to ensure long term sustainability of ecotourism.

Sustainability concerns both ecotourism's effect on the environment and the distribution of its economic and social costs and benefits. Natural resources cannot be stretched beyond certain limits: they cannot be depleted to less than critical levels or consumed faster than they can regenerate or reproduce themselves. They must be utilised sustainably if countries are to continue reaping their benefits.

If the balance between man and the environment cannot be restored, impoverished and overcrowded rural communities in the Ingwavuma region have no alternative but to eventually destroy the common resource base on which their very survival depends. Ingwavuma's forests, woodlands, grasslands, soil and estuaries could be caught up in an accelerating spiral of degradation, thereby exacerbating human deprivation. The region must therefore find appropriate forms of development that will break the vicious cycle of poverty, population growth and the degradation of renewable resources.

Ecotourism can be linked to development because it has the ability to kick-start economies in otherwise underdeveloped regions. Northern KwaZulu-Natal is a good example of an area where ecotourism has, in a modest way, already kick-started an, until recently, "non-existent" economy. This region can, therefore, be used as a model for many underdeveloped regions in Southern Africa.

If governments, however, neglect to provide for sound and sustainable tourism planning, destinations will be degraded with scant regard for the environment or communities' socio-economic needs. The benefits will be short term, and neither the quest for more jobs or the fight against poverty will be advanced. Many examples across the world demonstrate how the lack of proper land use and planning policy has created development chaos and depleted fragile resources.



Chapter 5

Conclusion



5.1 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As Africa becomes more developed and human populations grow, so the environment is put under ever increasing pressure. Agricultural and industrial developments such as cash crops, cattle ranching, irrigation dams, and exotic timber plantations are often practised with short-term objectives in mind, giving little consideration to the long-term effects of these activities. Droughts, fires and floods and other natural phenomena, to which the African environment has adapted, regularly wreak havoc to ill-suited agricultural projects rendering the land useless and people destitute.

In contrast, the setting aside of land for wildlife reserves has the potential to safeguard vital ecological processes and contributes to the economic growth of African countries. Many African countries rate wildlife-orientated tourism as a major source of foreign revenue. In the past, however, the people living closest to the national parks have not benefited from the influx of visitors. In fact, in many cases these communities look at the facilities provided in the reserves with envy and resentment.

The only way of securing the long-term future of wilderness areas is to ensure that the country profits from the inflow of foreign exchange. This will help to foster the desire within governments to protect the environment and to permit local people to benefit directly from wildlife reserves and associated tourism ventures. Individuals should be encouraged to become stakeholders in tourism operations and entrepreneurs should be assisted in setting up associated industries (such as transport and crafts). Part of the revenues from parks should be distributed to the communities in the form of schools, clinics and other community services. When local people benefit, the future of the reserves can be considered secure.

Holt-Biddle (1997: 143) supports this view saying that an improvement "in the local economy tends to have a ripple effect, as more and more people become involved and that cake is shared by more and more people. There is, however, a limit to the cake and the size of the slice must be in direct proportion to the amount of input. The size of the

community will also determine the size of the slice." But still, the element of sharing is there. This sounds good but for how long can ecotourism be sustainable when the benefits have to be shared fairly amongst fast growing rural African communities? For this reason the manner in which benefits are distributed and how these benefits are administered is very important. The other question that should therefore be asked is who are the beneficiaries?

The problem with resource utilisation is that the population growth rate in rural Africa is very high. One cannot accommodate the increasing demand for resources with a natural resource base that is being utilised to its optimum (carrying capacity) sustainable level. The perception is being created that conservation is obliged to accommodate and develop people. What will happen when the resource base cannot sustain the people? This will lead to conflict and demands being made, especially if this is the perception that is being created.

The tourism industry makes use of a lot of outside expertise and has a much wider resource base. Therefore, tourist operations could have a great impact when addressing development issues. This could be done in a twofold manner.

- * **Firstly**, by directly negotiating with local communities, eg. concessions, partnerships, etc.
- * **Secondly**, by stimulating local communities to such an extent that they develop the resources and know how to address development issues themselves, eg. training people, buying local produce and starting their own tourist ventures.

The conservation authorities in turn should limit themselves to the actual resource utilisation in and around the reserve, eg. working with local communities to cut reeds in the reserve. The environment has a limit to which any resource can be utilised, and once this limit is exceeded, it is to the detriment of the resource-base in the long-term.

The author wishes to make the following recommendations based on the issues studied in this document. These recommendations are based on discussions, case studies, perceptions of local communities, and various documentation. The author made use of the Biosphere Reserve model to address the problem of land use in and around ecotourism destinations. This adapted model would link the management of tourism, development and conservation, allowing for multiple land use that could facilitate various land uses without compromising the state of the natural environment and resources. A Biosphere Reserve is a unique type of protected area designed to combine both conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. To carry out these activities, a biosphere reserve consists of three interrelated zones: a core area containing a minimally disturbed ecosystem characteristic of a major type of natural environment; a buffer zone where uses and activities are managed in ways that help protect the core, and a transition zone where conservation and sustainable activities such as forestry and agriculture are combined.

In ecotourism, the environment is the product that is being sold. For this reason the product must be conserved in as pristine a state as possible, while still benefiting local communities. Conservation areas could form the basis of development in many rural areas. Conservation areas would form the core area (Figure 11) and should be managed by conservation authorities, while ecotourism operations would be located on the periphery of this core area and would be managed by the tourist operators. The upliftment, empowering and capacity building within the local communities should be linked to the tourism developments in the area. Conservation authorities should limit themselves to resource utilisation and tourist activities within the conservation area or core area. Community developments should be linked to the tourism industry which is based close to the periphery of the conservation area (core area). Within the core area, land use would be dictated by the preservation and conservation of a specific resource, eg. Kosi Bay Mouth estuary. All activities and developments would be limited to ensure the long-term sustained conservation of the resource at hand. The buffer zone in turn would allow various activities that are conducive and compatible to the preservation and long term utilisation of the core area, eg. fishing kraals, in the Kosi mouth. The development of any

ecotourism facilities and activities would take place in this area. The transition area in turn would allow large scale agriculture, settlements, ecotourism ventures and other activities.

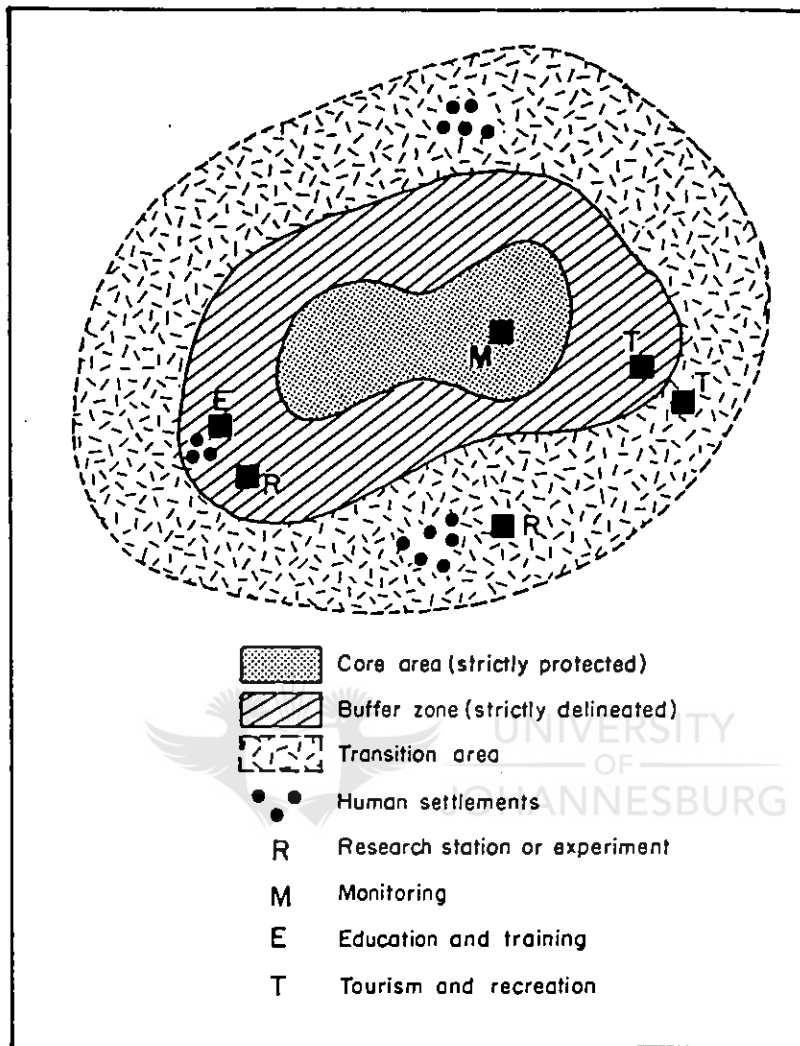


Figure 11: Ecotourism development model (adapted from the Biosphere Reserve model in Corson, 1990)

The idea behind this concept is not to limit access or development, but to take a holistic approach to land use in an area. Land use would then be planned to ensure the long-term sustainability of the resources to the benefit of all parties involved, eg. conservation authorities, ecotourism ventures and the local community. When considering the tourist potential and the growth of the tourist industry, it is logical to link development to tourism,

the concept being that local communities benefit from tourism, rather than from conservation. Within a Third World context, as in Southern Africa, conservation authorities do not have the finance nor the skilled personnel to be held accountable for the development (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991) of the people surrounding these areas. This can be seen over and over where conservation is moving down the list of priorities in Third World Africa, while tourism is presently the largest growing industry in Southern Africa.

This model is the result of extensive travels to ecotourism destinations in Southern Africa. Although it is not a hard and fast answer to land use and development, it could, however, be used to rethink present rural development models and could possibly be used in conservation, ecotourism and developmental circles in Southern Africa.

Although there is no single or simple answer to the problems of socio-economic development, there are few economically viable development options in the Ingwavuma region. The only viable development options open to Ingwavuma's planners are those which maintain the essential ecological processes and life-support systems. The development potential for a large-scale agricultural scheme in Ingwavuma is limited by poor soils, poor infrastructure, poor technology and poor people. Intensive agricultural schemes in the coastal region have failed. Afforestation has been only moderately successful and has provided employment for a limited number of people. Ingwavuma has little mineral wealth. The soils are poor, being low-nutrient, saline marine sediments. The region has little infrastructure and has no viable industrial development potential owing to its isolation from the main markets in South Africa.

The Ingwavuma region is eminently suited to outdoor recreation and this form of land use is compatible with the way of life of the people living there. The demand for wilderness-orientated recreation is increasing rapidly and because of its exciting diversity, Maputaland offers considerable potential for this industry. Therefore, ecotourism developments should be fully explored as it offers one of the few economically viable alternative land uses in this region. According to Bruton (1980) the development of ecotourism makes the best long-term use of the natural attributes of the area. Socio-economic development is complex

and its resolution lies not in one single solution but rather in an amalgamation of many different facets. Multiple use management as suggested in the model will maximise the ecotourism potential and utilisation of natural resources by integrating conservation, tourism and rural development. This in turn will improve household incomes and quality of life. However, it will not be able to do so on the scale that is required to break the poverty cycle.

This holistic integrated development approach as suggested in the model therefore should be the logical option for development in the Ingwavuma region and similar underdeveloped regions in Southern Africa. This development should, however, be done sensitively, taking into account the needs of the environment as well as the needs of the people living in this region. Despite the diversity of the tourist attractions, ecotourism is a problematic development option. This is because of the fragility of the ecosystems combined with the poverty of the people and their heavy dependence on the natural resources of the region.

However, "with man's ingenuity and nature's tolerance perhaps the irreconcilable may be reconciled, but this can only be done by means of compromise, patient negotiation and superb communication" (Mountain, 1990: 125).

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