

# “Sustainable Tourism Development and Environmental Management for Developing Countries”

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## **Sustainable Tourism Development and Environmental Management for Developing Countries**

Emaad Muhanna

### **Abstract**

The rise of the concept of sustainable development in discussions and debates concerning development has been phenomenal since the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) issued *Our Common Future* in 1987, reinvigorated by the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It offers a vision of complementarity between economic growth and environment as opposed to the view that more of one means less of the other.

Sustainable development is understood here to imply sustainable human development because development is, to state the obvious and oft-repeated wisdom, about people and that human societies are ultimately dependent upon their natural environment. The fundamental reason why humankind today faces unacceptable and increasing levels of poverty, inequality, and environmental penury is that the past practices of development have transgressed both of these principles. In analytical terms, sustainable development thus invokes those issues surrounding human societies and their activities, which can ultimately be specified in terms of two kinds of relations – human-human and human-natural environment relations.

The economy of the Developing Countries, aiming to pursue tourism, as a development strategy needs fast and efficient implementation of Environmental Management principles in order to achieve its desired growth potential. Land and other bio-physical resources are finite. Therefore, the only way to enhance economic growth is better innovations and efficient management of resources.

The paper examines the present understanding of environmental management principles and its role in achieving sustainable tourism. It further aims to explain the environmental management to clarify the interrelationship between sustainable tourism and environmental management.

**Key words:** Tourism development, sustainable development, environmental management, policy, strategy, local community, developing countries.

**JEL classification:** Q, Q01, Q26.

### **Introduction**

Any form of industrial development brings impacts upon the physical environment in which it takes place. In view of the fact that tourists have to visit the place of production in order to consume the output, it is inevitable that tourism activity is associated with environmental impacts (Cooper et al., 1998: 149). For that reason, traditionally some authors have pointed out that tourism can lead to environmental negative consequences. The highly polarised nature of development also generates intense environmental problems. This reduces the quality of life for locals as well as for tourists and, ultimately, may threaten the viability of the tourist industry itself (Williams & Shaw, 1991).

Depletion of natural resources can result in water shortages; create great pressure on other local resources like energy, food, etc., that already might be in short supply or destroy beautiful scenic landscapes. Pollution from tourists has impacts on the global level that disturbs the local population of the caused community. Solid waste and littering in the nature despoils the natural environment. The more physical impacts are degradation and loss of wildlife habitats and of scenery, and disturbance and erosion of the local ecosystem caused by clearing forested land and construction of tourism facilities and infrastructure (UNEP, 2001). However tourism could be positive for the preservation of natural areas. In many tourism projects the conservation of the natural, cultural and built environment is an important motivation for the initiation of the project.

Moreover, some of the projects tend to deter local communities from illegal use and overuse of natural resources as well as they try to integrate the protected natural areas in regional and local development plans and programs. Therefore, tourism could and should contribute positively to environmental preservation. This sentence has more sense when we think about tourist motivation in visiting one specific place. The basic attributes must be preserved as a main goal benefiting the sustainability of the project. The benefits and costs on environmental impacts will be highlighted below.

This study attempts to provide a framework for tourism development in South Africa, maximising benefits for local communities, and especially contributing to poverty alleviation.

The modern industry has been contributing to poverty alleviation since the beginning of its existence, however, in the last few years we have realised about the potential possibilities that tourism development brings to local communities and it is time to boost its positive impacts.

The research methods provide primary data about the relation between tourism development and its impacts on local community in a wide range of projects and sectors. The analyses of the results gathered provide a valuable tool in order to establish some general conclusions. The paper analyses tourism development and its achievements for local communities, as well as, on the other hand; it tries to define the negative impacts. In doing so, a wide range of guidelines and recommendations are provided in the paper, which could help for correcting and achieving an appropriate tourism development under a sustainable basis both for host communities and tourism in general.

This paper also concludes that tourism development resembles for some Developing Countries, a possibility which goes perfectly along with their global objective of development, economic diversification and poverty reduction.

## **Introduction and Overview**

The growth of tourism as the world's fastest growing industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought with it major environmental problems, which need to be addressed and resolved in order to achieve sustainability on the short and long term. Land degradation, pollution, desertification, waste, damage of species and inadequate utilisation of natural resources have caused many natural resources to be endangered or even destroyed.

On the national side; fragmented legislation, ineffective enforcement, inadequate health and safety and poor environmental practices for pollution and waste management and more importantly the lack of the involvement of people have contributed to loss of many natural resources.

As a result of natural depletion in many tourist destinations internationally, the world had gathered to discuss and present solutions to eliminate inadequate utilisation of natural resources. As a result many international protocols, conventions, and reports have been produced involving major governmental and nongovernmental bodies addressing the environmental crisis and providing solutions. In 1992, the world's efforts have resulted in producing the most significant document, where 178 countries gathered in a global conference in Rio and agreed on *Agenda 21*, which is considered to be an ideal blue print providing guidelines and recommendations to serve sustainable development and environment as a vital component of modern tourism.

In 1994, at the end of the apartheid era the South African government announced its ambitious campaign to make tourism its number one industry in the creation of jobs and generation of foreign exchange earnings. South Africa following its transition to the democratic stream has always realised the importance of tourism as vehicle for poverty alleviation, economic growth and achieving socio-economic equality. Part of the South Africa transformation were major changes in its legislative and institutional structures, which involved drawing new legislation to serve the economic activities one of which is tourism with a special focus on environmental protection laws. The environmental management legislation involved both inter-governmental and public-private partnerships in order to promote and maintain the ecosystem services to serve the natural assets.

The environmental management actions by the South African government as well as public and private sectors have contributed significantly in producing and maintaining adequate utilisation of resources, elimination of air and water pollution, and biodiversity. The environmental

management legislation has also enforced regulations regarding the consuming of water and energy, land use, reduction of pollution and protection of habitats and species.

Agenda 21 has been incorporated in the government legislation as guidelines to ensure adequate utilisation of natural resources. Furthermore, the concept of accreditation scheme has been implemented to provide standards and performance indicators for sustainable tourism. South Africa has at the stage no adequate certification scheme to provide guidelines and criteria to assess the tourism organisations' competencies and service delivery standards. Moreover, it has been noted through the research that the private sector has limited access to investment in most tourism development areas particularly protected areas, the government organisations and public sector have sole mandate to invest and manage protected areas with outsourcing of certain types of expertise from the private sector.

Tourism in South Africa has been dependant to a large extent on environment; yet, major environmental needs have received no proper attention to preserve the environmental assets for sustainable tourism today and for the new generations of tomorrow.

This paper provides a critical analysis of the current environmental management strategies in South Africa, providing recommendations to improve environmental management techniques to achieve sustainable tourism.

## **Tourism environments**

It must be acknowledged that tourism takes place in a diverse range of environments; a landscape to observe and enjoy, activities to participate in, and experiences to anticipate or remember.

Lew (1987, 359) had identified three broad approaches towards developing typologies that encompasses ideographic, organisational, and cognitive perspectives. The first and most important of these frameworks is the ideographic approach, which focuses on the concrete uniqueness of "environment" and, as such, stresses the differences between nature-orientated and human-orientated attractions.

The organisational approach focuses on the spatial characteristics of size and scale, carrying capacity, and the temporal nature of attractions. Finally the cognitive approach stresses classifications relating to tourist perceptions and experiences.

Each of these three main bases of classification reveals important characteristics of tourism environments, which in turn can contribute to understanding of developments and their impacts on the destination.

### ***Mass tourism***

According to Williams and Shaw (1997) mass tourism involves the movement of large numbers of tourists with relatively little surplus income. High gross income is yielded from relatively low expenditure per capita. Mass tourists are seeking more and more exotic holiday destinations. Given the income constraints, these can only be provided at relatively minimal levels of services and facilities.

This trend of mass tourism provided an ideal situation for South Africa as an affordable destination for many of developing countries, attracting large millions of people who seek affordable services and facilities. In addition, South Africa has the potential to attract an equal number of people from developed countries for many reasons, of which its political stability, beaches, richness of culture and natural sites are.

### ***Urban tourism***

Jakle (1985: 246) states that tourists and visitors approach cities with definite expectations of their signs and attractions. Such expectations are formed not only by a variety of social experiences and information sources which produce distinct images of urban areas, but they also vary with the type of visitor.

Urban tourism can be also an ideal source of attraction for foreign tourists to experience its cultural and social heritage. Such trend will enable the country to create more jobs for locals and enhance local communities' participation in achieving tourism growth.

Policy-making process surrounding urban tourism projects is led by the demands of private investment. Clearly, this is not always the case, since there are a number of possible outcomes from mixed public and private tourism ventures. However, what appears to be happening is a shift towards urban tourism and leisure schemes becoming more institutionalised as they become strongly linked with economic policy (Williams and Shaw, 1997: 207).

### ***Rural tourism***

Williams (1997) states that in the late twentieth century the growth of incomes, leisure time and mobility amongst all except the underclass has led to more intense demands being made on rural areas as locales for recreation and tourism. At the same time, the social construction of rural areas has undergone further, often subtle changes. As a result, the conflicts over the use of the wilderness and national park areas are being replicated more widely throughout the tourist destinations.

The construction of the countryside as a zone of consumption necessarily results in a number of sharp contradictions. The first of these is the reality that in most tourist destinations, the vast majority of rural lands are in private ownership, which severely constrains accessibility. Second, there are many social constructions of rural areas. Such factors provide a potential for host-guest conflicts.

Rural and farm tourism can provide more jobs of rural communities as a secondary source of income, which will in turn reduce the unemployment rate in South Africa (Williams and Shaw, 1997: 231).

### ***Ecotourism: Planning and Development***

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing trends in the world-wide tourism industry. The term ecotourism refers, as defined by Ziffer (1989), to a trend of tourism that is managed by the host country or region which commits itself to establishing and maintaining the sites with participation of local residents, marketing them appropriately, enforcing regulations, and using the proceeds of the enterprise to fund the area's land management as well as community development (Ziffer, 1989).

Policy-makers and planners must work with the knowledge that tourism can have negative impacts on personal security, transportation, urbanisation and cultural integrity. Good tourism management means assessing the physical and social carrying costs of tourism development (Tourism Policy Forum, 1991).

### ***Ecotourism strategies***

A policy that promotes sustainable tourism development will be created when the efforts and active participation of three groups are coordinated in one joint enterprise. A new political paradigm of developing countries requires each sector to play a well-defined role in the planning and policy development process and that the combined efforts of all sectors be integrated into policy. If tourism leaders from all sectors work together they will eventually mobilise the human resources necessary to design and implement a series of tourism development policies and plans which truly address the enormous tourism potential of developing countries.

***A four strategy approach has been proposed by Williams and Shaw (1997, 267), these include***

#### **1. Consumer awareness and education**

Although the average consumer has been sensitised to environmental issues, such as global warming, depletion of ozone layer, more needs to be done to develop an awareness of tourists' responsibility to preserve and enhance environmental quality of the destination. It is essential to promote ethical standards concerning the use of natural and cultural resources and to assist consumers in choosing tour operators who follow conservation guidelines.

## 2. Tourism industry action

The private sector is responsible for delivering the products and services to tourists and therefore, they should take the responsibility for the protection of biosphere by minimising pollution, which causes environmental damage.

The industry should also work together to develop guidelines for resort developments and concession operations which utilise low-impact design criteria and the latest technologies for recycling and conserving resources.

## 3. Destination planning and development

Government and non-government organisations need to share responsibilities for ecotourism development. Listed below are some of the responsibilities that should be assigned to the government and non-government organisations.

Governments:

- Undertake research into the environmental, economic and cultural areas of tourism.
- Support the development of tourism economic models to help define appropriate levels of economic activities.
- Assist and support lower levels of government to develop their own tourism development strategies.
- Apply a sectoral and / or regional environmental accounting system for the tourism industry.
- Educate the public on issues of sustainable tourism development.
- Regulate and control tourism in environmentally and culturally sensitive areas.

Non-government:

- Be part of sustainable tourism advisory boards at all levels.
- Seek local support for appropriate sustainable development.
- Promote education of the public on the economic importance of sustainable tourism development and environment protection.
- Be encouraged to identify and communicate to the appropriate agencies those issues related to sustainable development as well as solutions to those problems.

## 4. An extended concept of marketing ecotourism

Traditional marketing has been described as the four Ps

- Price: assigned to the product or service offered to tourists
- Promotion: a range of communication and sales activities are needed to stimulate actual potential customers to become aware of ecotourism products and buy it.
- Place: the distribution system in which the customers buy ecotourism products. This includes for-profit and non-profit organisations.
- Product: is a mixture of benefits, products and services. (Williams and Shaw, 1997: 162-270).

## **Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Management**

The World Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism as “tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be filled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (WTO Report 2002:7).

During the 1980s, it became apparent that major global environmental changes were occurring suddenly and silently and that these changes had not been predicted by scientists. The world also became more aware that there was an element of uncertainty and risk in relation to the effect of a range of human activities on global environments. To rectify these problems, fundamental changes were required in our style of living.

Tourism is most ideally suited to adopt sustainability as a guiding philosophy. There are many reasons for that:

- Apart from transport, tourism does not consume additional non-renewal resources.
- A community's resources, its culture, traditions, shops, leisure facilities, etc., represent the core resources base for tourism.
- Tourism use of resources, both natural and cultural, should be non consumptive, making them renewable.
- Tourism represents one of the few economic opportunities available to remote communities.
- Tourism provides real opportunities to reduce poverty, create employment for disadvantaged people and stimulate regional development.
- Tourism has proven to revitalise cultures and traditions.
- Tourism can provide an economic incentive to conserve natural and cultural assets.
- Tourism has been shown to foster greater understanding between people and a greater global consciousness.

And so, sustainable tourism is really an issue of how best to encourage tourism growth while minimising costs (McKrecher, 2003: 4). Sustainable tourism entails adequate utilisation and management of resources to achieve economic, social and cultural needs while maintaining social, cultural integrity, ecological processes as well as biological diversity for the present as well as for the future generations. Therefore, modern tourism with its trends and characteristics can not be promoted without considering the environmental management as a main component of the economic aspects of tourism.

The principles of sustainable tourism are various one of which is the ecological sustainability, which entails the implementation of development that is compatible with the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and resources.

As a result of the significant dependence of tourism on environment, maintaining the attractions of the tourism destination and its natural assets contributes to tourism growth and increases the popularity of the destination. Tourism through its ability to generate income is able to enhance environment, provide fund and preserve the cultural heritage of the destination.

On the other hand poor tourism planning can destroy vegetation, create overcrowding, pollute beaches, eliminate open space, and ignore locals' interest. Various approaches have been introduced to maximise the tourism's consideration to nature to retain popularity as an attractive tourism destination, these approaches include: ecotourism, nature tourism, sustainable development and carrying capacity.

Ecotourism is one of South Africa's main tourist attractions, therefore, the ecotourism market can not be sustained with adequately protected environment, which requires not only from the government but also from the tourism industry to implement appropriate environmental management programmes.

Tourism as the world's largest industry is able to provide healthy and safe environment for the tourist market as well as for other industries. The co-operation between environmental and tourism issues was highlighted by the Manila Declaration (Edgell, 1990) as well as by the study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

## **Environmental Impacts of Tourism and Its Sustainability**

As tourism moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the enterprises have to make the environment a priority. Because tourism now is the world's largest industry, the environment is taking centre stage in tourism development. Tourism is not only a powerful economic force but a factor in the physical environment as well.

Any form of industrial development brings impacts upon the physical environment in which it takes place. In view of the fact that tourists have to visit the place of production in order to consume the output, it is inevitable that tourism activity is associated with environmental im-

pacts (Cooper et al., 1998: 149). For that reason, traditionally some authors have pointed out that tourism can lead to environmental negative consequences.

The highly polarised nature of development also generates intense environmental problems. This reduces the quality of life for locals as well as for tourists and, ultimately, may threaten the viability of the tourist industry itself (Williams & Shaw, 1991). Depletion of natural resources can result in water shortages; create great pressure on other local resources like energy, food, etc., that already might be in short supply or destroy beautiful scenic landscapes. Pollution from tourists has impacts on the global level that disturbs the local population of the caused community.

Solid waste and littering in the nature despoil the natural environment. The more physical impacts are degradation and loss of wildlife habitants and of scenery, and disturbance and erosion of the local ecosystem caused by clearing forested land and construction of tourism facilities and infrastructure (UNEP, 2001). However tourism could be positive for the preservation of natural areas.

In many tourism projects the conservation of the natural, cultural and built environment is an important motivation for the initiation of the project. Moreover, some of the projects tend to deter local communities from illegal use and overuse of natural resources as well as they try to integrate the protected natural areas in regional and local development plans and programs. Therefore, tourism could and should contribute positively to environmental preservation. This sentence has more sense when we think about tourist motivation in visiting one specific place. The benefits and costs on environmental impacts are highlighted below.

Table 1

Environmental Impacts: A Comparison

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Costs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conservation of natural areas and wildlife.</li> <li>- Re-evaluation of ecological values by the local population and authorities as a result of tourism interest.</li> <li>- Increasing awareness of the environment and nature in general among tourists.</li> <li>- Rehabilitation and often also transformation of old buildings and sites into new facilities.</li> <li>- Introduction of planning and management.</li> <li>- Tourism may be less damaging to nature compared to alternative economic sectors such as agriculture and forestry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of aesthetic value.</li> <li>- Noise.</li> <li>- Generation of waste.</li> <li>- Deforestation for building accommodation or to obtain firewood, pollution of water and air</li> <li>- Disturbance of ecosystems, disruption of animal breeding patterns and habitats.</li> <li>- Destruction of beaches, dunes, coral reefs and many National Parks and Wilderness Areas through trampling and/or use the use vehicles.</li> <li>- Change of landscape –permanent environmental restructuring.</li> <li>- Seasonal effects on population densities and structures.</li> <li>- Conflicts over use of resources.</li> </ul>

Source: adapted from France, 1997: 83 and Cottrell, 2001: 2.

According to Cooper et al. (1998: 164) there are no generally accepted models for environmental impacts. Basically, we need a wide overview in order to be able to develop tourism as carefully as possible, taking into consideration the wide range of possible impacts. In doing so, we will be able to achieve a satisfactory tourism development management. Environmental impacts are not unique to tourism and tourism receives a disproportional share of criticism for its negative environmental impacts.

The criticisms directed at tourism from an impact of development view have tended to focus on the deterioration of natural and cultural environments that tourism can cause. The development of tourism is frequently justified on the basis of its potential contribution to the broader socio-economic development of destination areas. Indeed, tourism is generally considered an effective vehicle of development, yet the meanings and objectives of “development” and the extent to which it can be achieved through tourism, is rarely questioned. Moreover, the relationship be-

tween tourism and development remains to be an under-represented area of study and research (Sharpley & Telfer, 2002).

WTTC subsequently proceeds to examine the key environmental issues under five headings, namely:

- Global warming
- Depletion of ozone layer
- Acid rain
- Depletion and pollution of water resources
- Depletion and pollution of land resources

According to Goeldner (2003: 464) in examining the possible implication for tourism, the WTTC expresses particular concern with respect to the depletion and pollution of land resources. It states that the long-term implications of resource depletion are obviously extremely serious. Even over the next few decades the travel and tourism industry could find that:

- Political instability or increased competition for land could lead to loss of potential new tourism destinations and degradation of existing destinations.
- Loss of landscape and wildlife could cause a decrease in customer satisfaction with tourism products and hence lower propensity to travel to some areas.
- Higher fuel prices could lead to operational price increases and corresponding decreases in the number of travellers in the price-sensitive markets.

WTTC (2003) also presents a positive vision of tourism and the environment, stating that:

- Tourism is an integral aspect of modern societies.
- Global awareness of environmental damage is developing rapidly.
- The resources of the world's largest industry can and must be harnessed to achieve environmental goals.
- The industry has the potential to influence customer to achieve beneficial environmental effects.
- Environmental lobbies will add pressure to develop good environmental practice (Goeldner, 2003:464).

#### ***Carrying Capacity and multiple-use***

Carrying capacity and multiple-use are two important concepts that enable societies to make more efficient use of tourist facilities and land resources. Carrying capacity is a notion which recognises that both natural and man-made attractions have upper limits in their capacity to absorb visitors.

Multiple-use is a strategy which recognises that a limited supply of recreational land often needs to be used for several purposes. It is possible, for example for some forest recreation areas in Southern Africa to be used for logging as well as tourism.

#### ***Conservation/Preservation***

Conservation refers to planned management of sites and places. Plenty of positive evidence about tourism's part in conserving Europe's building treasures and historic sites, much less written about the sort of impact in the third world. Four main conservation influences are noted by Mathieson and Wall (1995) in their review of the worldwide literature, namely:

- There is the rehabilitation of existing buildings and historic sites.
- There is the transformation of old buildings to new uses
- There is the conservation of natural resources
- There is the introduction of planning procedures and control to ensure good management of the environment (Adopted from John Lee, 1998: 54-55).

### **Responsible Tourism and Environmental Impact on South Africa**

Tourism still plays a relatively small role in the South African economy and it has a long way to go if it is to fulfil its potential to significantly contribute to national income. Traditionally

the main focus of governments has been on the growth in international arrivals and total foreign exchange earnings, and is now than on fostering entrepreneurial opportunities for the historically disadvantaged, poverty relief, employment and local economic development. Both domestic and international tourism can create employment; it is a relatively labour intensive industry and it employs a multiplicity of skills from accountants and hairdressers to tour guides and trackers. Tourism can provide very good skills development opportunities for local communities.

The White Paper concluded in 1996 that tourism development in South Africa had largely been a missed opportunity; and that the focus on a narrow market has reduced the potential of the industry to spawn entrepreneurship and to create new services, like local entertainment and handicrafts, and to drive local economic development. In fact formal tourism sector provides major opportunities for the informal sector. Tourists travel to the 'factory' to consume the product; they travel to the destination to enjoy their holiday. Tourism is a "final good", all the final touches have to be provided in South Africa and so the value is captured here.

The value of a taxi ride from the airport, wildlife viewing and restaurant meals all accrue to the local economy – the challenge is to maximise it by reducing leakages and developing the multiplier effect. Tourist enterprises attract domestic and international tourists and create opportunities for small entrepreneurs and economic linkages, for example agriculture, hunting, handicraft production, and a wide range of service industries which tourists are likely to consume in the destination.

South Africa is now beginning to work on maximising the local economic benefits which tourism can bring to an area; there is much to be gained from creating a more diversified tourism product and marketing a wider range of experiences, activities and services to tourists. Established enterprises can gain by encouraging and assisting the development of complementary product – the larger and more diversified the local tourism base is, the more successful enterprises in the area will be.

The White Paper identified a wide range of opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups ranging from small guesthouses, shebeens and restaurants with local cuisine, through community tour guiding, music, dance and story-telling, arts and crafts, traditional hunting and medicine to laundry, gardening and speciality agriculture. Tourism provides particular opportunities for local economic development in rural areas where it can provide people with an alternative to moving to urban areas.

Tourism must be market related. If community-based and other tourism development processes are not planned, implemented and managed according to market demands then far too many South Africans, especially the poor, are facing not merely "missed" opportunities, but the hard realities of failed or under-performing products to which tourists simply do not come. The African cultural tourism experience needs to be woven into the fabric of the mainstream South African tourism product.

Responsible tourism implies a proactive approach by the tourism sector to the environment through the promotion of balanced and sustainable tourism. This is particularly important where the focus of the tourism sector and of the activities of tourists is the natural environment, as is the case with wildlife viewing, hunting and marine tourism. There are particular challenges in making nature-based tourism sustainable.

Furthermore, responsible tourism development has to be underpinned by sustainable environmental practices. In the environmental sphere only conservative decisions based on the precautionary principle can be considered responsible. Cultural heritage is also part of the environment, and the responsibility of the tourism sector towards the cultural environment was considered in the social responsibility guidelines.

Central to environmental responsibility is thinking about the life cycle impact of an enterprise or product, and so these guidelines apply to the stages of design, planning, construction, operation and decommissioning. The process of managing the business should be fully integrated with environmental management, throughout the project life-cycle (from conceptualisation to decommissioning). In constructing concessions and leasehold developments it is particularly important to ensure that during decommissioning it will be possible to remove all structures and restore the area. Larger businesses should be using Environmental Management Systems to exercise envi-

ronmental responsibility; for businesses above a defined size in each sector it would be irresponsible to operate without one.

All tourism enterprises can make a contribution to environmental sustainability by exercising care in purchasing decisions – by seeking out and supporting responsible producers of the products that are required to run the enterprise, and by making clients aware of the responsible purchasing policy.

The practical guidelines and indicators that follow are organised around the key environmental elements of responsible tourism identified in the 1996 White Paper.

## **Environmental Problems in South Africa**

The environmental problems in South Africa are many, most of which are a result of people and business organisations including those operating in the tourism industry. Early tourism development has given little consideration to natural resource limitations, impacts on wildlife and indigenous cultures. The human environment and development have been largely ignored. Within the process of globalisation local communities' participation and nature conservation are threatened and often overlooked.

If tourism is to be sustainable, it must improve the lives of local people, protect their environment and health and offer a better future. In many instances tourism can be seen as a vehicle to empower local communities and protect the environment through the development of new employment opportunities, the enhancement of local economies, preservation of indigenous knowledge and practices, public awareness and education.

Sustainable tourism can create positive opportunities for community development in remote areas. The business sector can choose sustainable tourism over other more polluting ventures. Long and short term development plans should be developed so that tourism and its benefits are spread within the area. To develop tourism in a sustainable manner it is necessary to define optimal tourism destinations in local areas and regions, ensuring enjoyment for the tourist and minimum impact or disruption for the environment and local communities.

Complex and broad based local communities' involvement in tourism development requires targeted investment strategies implemented by local decision-makers. Those strategies do not exist in many areas and the development of tourism is not planned. Tourism investments are too often imposed from the outside, and the potential for sustainable forms of tourism is weakened. Alternatives to mass tourism, e.g. cultural and ecotourism can be influential in changing the nature of tourism. Tourism can benefit both tourists and local communities and allow for two-way interaction and education.

### ***Access to natural resources and environmental degradation***

Tourism is not, as many people assert, a clean and non-polluting industry. A major problem is the lack of a common understanding of what sustainable tourism or ecotourism mean. This ambiguity leads to violations of environmental regulations and standards. Hence, the environmental problems evolving from tourism are manifold. First of all the tourism industry is very resource - and land intensive. Consequently, the interest of the tourism sector will often be in conflict with local resource- and land use practices.

The introduction of tourism will imply an increased stress on resources available. An influx of tourists into the area leads to a competition for resources. This competition is compounded by employees working at the tourist sites. Almost as a rule tourists are supplied at the expense of the local population.

Tourist activities imply an intensified utilisation of vulnerable habitats. Investors and tourists do not necessarily possess awareness on how to use natural resources sustainably, and subsequently this utilisation often leads to a degradation of resources. Tourism is also a major generator of wastes. In most tourist regions, sewage, waste water and solid waste disposal are not properly managed or planned. Lastly, tourism is also responsible for a considerable proportion of increased volumes and mileage in global transport and hence the associated environmentally damaging pollutant emissions. The tourism industry has not shown sufficient willingness to (internalise

or) compensate the cost of conservation of biodiversity by for instance protected areas, even though they profit from it.

### **Ecotourism: Opportunities and Challenges**

There are various challenges and opportunities for Ecotourism in terms of sustainability and involvement of local communities. Ecotourism provides clearly a major opportunity for the South African communities as an emerging market, which holds a great promise for Ecotourism development. The relatively undeveloped and/or unexploited areas of the country possess a rich natural diversity and a unique cultural and historical heritage which can provide a solid base for the nationally and internationally growing Ecotourism activity.

South Africa hosts a great variety of climate zones and eco-systems, for example impressive nature and wildlife are potential tourism resources and many historic sites. Such historic sites and monuments together with the living cultures preserving traditions like the Zulu heritage provide today outstanding tourist attractions.

When exploiting this great potential, it is fundamental that Ecotourism development takes place in a sound planning framework that ensures the conservation of the resources that Ecotourism relies on and the meaningful participation of the host communities.

The challenge faced in South Africa is obvious: there is a need to preserve and protect the fragile natural sites, wildlife and ecosystems, and at the same time there is a need to educate people and to create employment in order to fight poverty and misery. If properly managed, sustainable Ecotourism can provide for both these objectives, as it depends on intact nature, rich local culture and many services carried out by local people. If natural resources are used wisely, for example, by providing sensitively designed tourist facilities in game parks and nature reserves and using the resulting income to manage those protected areas, conservation and development would become complementary forces. Ecotourism offers a win-win-situation for the benefit of the environment and the local economy.

### **Local communities and natural resources**

In general, the tourism industry should engage in promoting sustainability as a hole-mark for investors. More specifically, the investors in tourism should strive to adopt environmentally sound technologies or other measures to minimise the consumption of the local ground water. Using various types of resources in a sustainable manner is of course also crucial.

There is a need to use ecological materials and installation of renewable sources of energy systems (solar energy) in all new buildings and new constructions. Furthermore there should be an acceleration of installation of solar/wind power in all public work projects of communities where tourism will be introduced.

Pollution of ground and coastal waters must be prevented, and recommendations made (perhaps even legislation) for tourism investors to invest in proper sewage treatment facilities. Appropriate waste disposal systems and ways to separate garbage into organic and non-organic waste should be developed. Organic waste can be composted and possibly reused on hotel gardens or even for local farming. This could be done through collaboration with local residents. Residents could organise themselves and manage the allocated dumping sites and hence benefit from the system in receiving payment from the hotel for services rendered. A system to separate the different materials, and recycle some should be in place at the land-fill site thus reducing the waste even further.

To avoid degradation of the natural environment, tourism projects can help finance protected areas and safeguard ecologically sensitive regions against further environmental deterioration. By empowering local populations and have them participating in the entire process, sustainability will be ensured as it becomes accepted by and adjusted to the local communities. A protected area may certainly also be a suitable tourist-attraction, where tourists can experience amazing nature and learn about conservation and traditional uses of natural resources in the area.

Investors in tourism should always respect the traditional land tenure system in the area and the traditional user-right systems of resources. In regard to this the communication and consultation with the local communities about resource-use are important. Tourism investors should not exclude local people from using local resources, and thus take away what they depend on for maintaining their well-being.

The tourism industry can and must take initiatives to implement the polluter-pays principle for pollution related to tourism operations. This may be organised and carried out through local tax systems or through funds established by the tourism industry for local community development. The polluter-pays principle should be applied for minor pollution only and should not be developed into a possibility for investors to pay a symbolic fine for imposed irreversible negative impacts on the local environment.

Inaccurate and/or mild environmental legislation may possibly attract more foreign investors contributing to fast economic growth and development but without environmental damage as a consequence. To avoid the dilemma, South Africa will have to face in choosing between economic development or environmental protection international and multinational companies enterprises must be committed to follow the environmental standards of the country.

### **Coastal Protection**

Tourism is one of many South African economic activities with a special focus on coastal areas. The two most popular locations for holiday makers are the mountains and the coast. New concepts including the whole watershed area seem to be the best approach, especially when aquatic pollution problems are considered. Most problems are related to conflicts between different uses and access restrictions. Tourism leads to increased traffic flow and overcrowding in already densely populated areas. Therefore tourism adds substantially to the following pressures:

- Pollution by waste water, garbage, heating, noise and traffic emissions.
- Encroachment of buildings, facilities and roads close to the coastline.
- Beach erosion due to building, dune removal and dredging.
- Excessive use of natural areas.
- Destruction of natural areas to accommodate tourism or other needs.
- Inter-sectoral competition and conflict over (marine and terrestrial) space.
- Exclusion of local communities from any role of significance in decision-making.
- The loss of natural and architectural heritage in the face of rapid expansion.
- Strain on public utilities and facilities.
- Displacement of local population.
- Creation of restricted exclusive zones that are off-limits to the local people.
- Loss of business to the local enterprises as all-inclusive resorts supplies all the needs of their guests.

Additional typical tourism impacts are socio-economic conflicts as property and general costs of living are increasing and small communities can be overrun by summer guests, changing the social structure significantly. Foreign customs and expectations can create conflicts and a deterioration of cultural and regional values.

### **Proposed action plan for sustainable tourism development**

A proposed action plan includes:

- Promoting, at the national, regional, and community levels, the development of tourism in harmony with the natural and cultural environment, through development, education, and training programmes.
- Developing tourism strategic development plans that promote environmentally sound and economically, culturally, and socially sustainable development.
- Drawing up strategic plans to protect the health and safety of tourists, in close collaboration with health authorities, tourism operators and security service providers and the

police in all areas, as an essential component of good service offered at different sites, as well as designing promotional activities that take into account the social-cultural and economic conditions of the country.

- Developing, adopting, and implementing legislation to promote responsible practices in tourism development.
- Collaborating with the private sector and local communities in formulating criteria for the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Involving local communities to design programmes aimed at raising awareness for the development of sustainable tourism at all levels of society, promoting and facilitating their full participation.
- Elaborating environmental impact studies for the design of tourism projects, in order to ensure sustainable development.
- Working with national authorities to use tourism earnings as one of the means to alleviate poverty and generate employment in the country.

### ***Promoting tourism towards sustainable development***

Tourism is considered a mean for income generating for the local communities. Actually the government has been considering helping the local government to develop income generating at the conservation area as an Eco-tourism base on the local community participation with exploring the potential ecosystem. Hopefully through these Eco-tourism activities the income generating for local communities will be increased and the ecosystem will be more protected with sustainable resources.

The government should manage the activities of local communities to achieve Eco-tourism by introducing recycling of domestic waste to a consumption product. Developing tourism for poor community's growth in the country has great advantages such as:

1. It will increase the participation of local communities of the informal sector which provides opportunities for producing handicraft of recycling products.
2. Tourism areas that have an asset from cultural, wildlife, scenery, etc., will increase access of the poor to achieve additional income generating if they explore these potentials in a sustainable manner, such as developing the city which implement a cleaner production as a green city.
3. Tourism can be more labour intensive if they could diversify the activities around the areas such as building and running hotels or cottages, improving management of domestic waste, involvement in minimising the use of non-renewable energy and materials, extensive use of recycled materials and Eco-farm implementation.
4. Maximize the potential of tourism for eradicating poverty by developing appropriate strategies in cooperation with all major groups, local communities and indigenous.
5. Increase of local community's capacity and capability on managing of their environment.

Such initiatives can achieve the following benefits:

1. Increasing the benefit (income generating, knowledge, etc.) from sustainable tourism resources for the population in the local communities.
2. Maintaining the cultural and environmental integrity of the local communities.
3. Enhancing the protection of conservation area.
4. Developing technology of cleaner production for supporting tourism activities.
5. Managing of local conservation resources.

*Proposed scope of work for such initiatives includes*

1. Technical assistance to local communities to develop sustainable tourism in tourism area.
2. Training on sustainable tourism for local government, supporting system of tourism such as hotel, tourist guide and other relevant stakeholders.
3. Inventories of endangered species and culture as an interesting object of sustainable tourism.

4. Conducting research of current situations in the tourism areas determined as a pilot project.
5. Promotion of public awareness to implementation of cleaner production in the tourist areas and developing new tourism product with recycling program.
6. Collaboration with other countries, which have similar object as a sustainable tourism.
7. Creating an information system base and providing web-site for information and guidelines.
8. Exchange of experts between South Africa and donor organisations.
9. Providing tourism infrastructure which promotes utilisation of environmental friendly technology.

*Proposed activities*

1. Encouraging public awareness of local communities and private tourist agencies.
2. Organising local communities in order to engage effectively in tourism and encourage them, such as utilise their house as a cottage for tourists.
3. Cooperation with partner and donor countries to develop the sustainable tourism.
4. Identification of interesting objective of sustainable tourism.
5. Providing information of sustainable tourism with producing leaflet, advertisement, etc., and present of web-site.
6. Building the infrastructure to conduct sustainable tourism in the tourist areas including health sanitation, emphasis on renewable resources and other facilities to support the areas.
7. Launching Eco-tourism as a national program.
8. Training, workshops and comparative study of Eco-tourism.
9. Engaging in exhibitions, competitions in the tourist areas without deteriorate of ecosystem.

*Expected results:*

1. Increase income generating of host community by use of environmental or local products.
2. Emphasis on renewable resources, comprehensive recycling and environmental friendly waste disposal.
3. Increase capacity building in order to contribute to the strengthening of rural and local communities.
4. Implementing cleaner production for supporting system of tourism in rural and urban, areas.

*Coordination and implementation mechanisms:*

1. Cooperation with partner and donor organisations. At national level DEAT as coordinator will cooperate with other appropriate departments, local governments and major groups. At international level there will be cooperation with other developing countries who have similar object of tourism and with donor organisations for technical assistance and financial assistance.
2. Identification of tourist location in each area for a pilot project with different criteria such as natural heritage, cultural, conservation areas and existing condition of local communities.
3. Research of current situation in the area of sustainable tourism pilot project.
4. Developing program including education and training through technical assistance of experts and engaging comparative study for training. Targets of training are local government and supporting system for sustainable tourism such as hotel, tourist guide and other stakeholders (informal private sector and the host communities).
5. Providing plan of action for improving tourism and its sustainable development.
6. Assistance of host communities in managing visits to their tourism areas for their maximum benefit (e.g., mechanism for improving income generating of host communities, tax for tourism activities, major authority for host communities and land tenure, preference for using local products and suppliers).

7. Promoting of diversification of economic activities, through the facilities of access to markets and commercial information between partners.

8. Infrastructure construction implementation by environmental friendly technology utilisation.

Many of the South African regions are homelands of indigenous peoples. At the same time, these regions are increasingly becoming tourist destinations. Being economically and politically marginalised, indigenous peoples often bear a disproportionately large share of the costs of tourism development. The demarcation of protected areas, which are often being made available for ecotourism use, often deprives indigenous communities of their hereditary land and their resources.

The traditional forms of economy of the indigenous cultures visited are very diverse. The diversity of the anthropogenic landscape is irretrievably linked to these. More than eleven different indigenous languages nation-wide are still in use today. Most of the tourists come from the about six world-wide dominating consumer cultures with their respective behaviour patterns and languages. This contributes to the disappearance of the indigenous economic systems, local knowledge and the languages directly tied to this context. If all this knowledge, the economic systems and languages of these cultures fall into oblivion, this will have negative impacts on biological diversity. Therefore, the protection and sustainable use of biological diversity in South Africa cannot be achieved in a fair way without taking into account the cultural and social concerns of the local population. Various human activities, especially in traditional societies, have had a decisive influence on agro-biological diversity. The direct connection between the high diversity of species and cultural diversity has to be adequately taken into account.

Instead of prohibiting traditional forms of land use in protected areas and subsequently developing more or less successful forms of income (like tourism), traditional sustainable forms of land use should remain untouched. They might – in the framework of sustainable tourism development – be made usable in addition.

In this sense, the acknowledgement of the property rights of indigenous communities to their hereditary territories and of the use and administration of the natural resources has to be guaranteed in the framework of the community-based sustainable tourism (CBST).

In-depth, consultations with the communities concerned are the first step towards a full participation of the local population/indigenous peoples in the planning and implementation of tourism projects. In this context, it has to be considered that the local population is often not a homogeneous group and that there may be divergent interests. The communities concerned have to be put into a position of being able to decide if and in what form tourism projects are being realised in their catchment area.

If the indigenous communities want tourism development or the opening up to tourism, tourism concepts have to be developed which at the same time contributes to the conservation of biodiversity by the indigenous population and to the preservation of their languages. Therefore, Sustainable tourism projects should be based on the decisions made by the community, should increase the value of traditional knowledge and reinforce cultural values.

Indigenous people have to be actively involved in the development of National Guidelines on Biological Diversity and Sustainable Tourism. If an ad-hoc Working Group is set up to develop National Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism, it is indispensable that it also includes representatives of indigenous groups.

## **Incentives and regulation and the impact on tourism development**

There were widely differing views expressed on what role regulation should have in the tourism industry but it is thought that it might be a mix of regulation and voluntary codes by the industry.

### ***Incentives***

The ability of big and small operators to utilise their supply chain to support sustainable tourism could be an important driver for change. This might require financial support for SMME's

to enable them to both change their own operational practices and also to understand the opportunities that they have in influencing the supply chain. The involvement of the community could also be an important marketing point.

The impact of media focussing on the health and safety programme of tourism is already having an impact. A similar approach for environment might also result in a positive incentive for the industry to take action.

### ***Regulation***

There was disagreement about the need for new regulation at any level. On the one hand, it was seen as necessary due to the differences in power of the relevant stakeholders. On the other hand, it was seen as an obstacle which might deter investment. Finally, it was pointed out that the development of voluntary codes often leads to regulation further down the road.

### **Possible tourism industry actions**

- Promote sustainable tourism products, using market related instruments and incentives, such as contests, awards, certification, model projects, culturally sensitive quality labels covering both environmental and social sustainability.
- Reduce inappropriate consumption, use local resources in preference to imports in a sustainable manner; reduce and recycle waste, ensure safe waste disposal, develop and implement sustainable transport policies and systems, e.g., efficient public transport, walking, cycling in destinations.
- Provide tourists with authentic information, enabling them to understand all environmental and related aspects (e.g., human rights situation) of tourism when selecting any destination or holiday package; educate visitors in advance of arrival and give guidance on 'dos' and 'don'ts'; make tourists aware of their potential impact on and their responsibilities towards host societies.
- Provide information on respecting the cultural and natural heritage of destination areas; employ tour guides who portray societies honestly and dispel stereotypes.
- Ensure that the marketing of 'green' tourism reflects sound environmental policy and practice; use non-exploitative marketing strategies that respect people, communities and environments of destinations, dismantle stereotyping, integrate sustainable tourism principles when creating new marketing strategies.
- Train staff to foster tourist responsibility towards the destinations, encourage multi-cultural education and exchange.
- Actively discourage exploitative sex tourism, particularly sexual exploitation of children, and tourism which causes or contributes to social problems.
- Adopt, observe, implement and promote codes of conduct.
- Reduce financial leakage and support local economies by buying food and resources locally, develop long-term partnerships with local operators, businesses and suppliers; train and hire local staff and contract with local businesses, promote management opportunities for women; prefer accommodations owned, built and staffed by local people, promote locally made handicrafts and traditional products.
- Encourage clients to study and understand their destinations, respect local cultures and co-ordinate visits with local communities, authorities and women's organisations, being aware of and sensitive to local customary laws, regulations and traditions, respect historical heritage and scientific sites.
- Educate staff to avoid negative environmental and cultural impacts and create incentive schemes to promote sustainable behaviour.

### **Conclusion**

The concept of community-based tourism provides substantial benefits of resources utilisation at community level as well as encourages a more sustainable use of these resources. How-

ever, the management of resources and the community that utilises these resources becomes a crucial issue, and the research proposes that through building up a representative and transparent community based organisation can assist the national government in adequate management of resources and facilities, dealing with conflicts of interests as well as enforcing the government regulations in terms of environment protection, human resources development and sustainability of the area.

Community based tourism management creates suitable environment for tourism development to take place in the spirit of volunteerism and to strengthen the non-government organisations to take part in the development process. Furthermore, community based tourism can:

1. Make use of the traditional knowledge systems, and activities can be arrived at in line with the ability of the target group to deliver.
2. Be an effective and sustainable mean for making use of the available natural resources.
3. Result in clear and substantial economic benefits with well-established and implemented strategies.
4. Encourage community to claim access to land and natural resources.
5. Encourage partnerships among all stakeholders.

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