

# **Sustainable Ecotourism in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park: A Stakeholder Analysis**

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## **Introduction**

The stakeholder framework allows for the perceptions of various stakeholders within the tourism system to be considered. For any form of sustainable development and successful conservation efforts to be implemented it is necessary that all stakeholders are involved. South Africa's history of racial discrimination has resulted in a skewed development of the economy in so far as the exclusion of the Black majority from the mainstream developmental agenda. Post-1994, many sectors, including the tourism sector have been earmarked as potential sectors for economic as well as social development. Integral for any form of development is the assessment of the status quo. Hence, within the ecotourism industry, a current assessment is necessary if development is to be premised on the many experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders that have a vested interest in the ecotourism industry. This article uses the stakeholder approach to understanding the social, economic as well as environmental impacts of ecotourism with regard to biodiversity and sustainable development at the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site. It firstly provides a brief overview of ecotourism in South Africa and presents the conceptual framework used in the study, that is, a stakeholder approach to ecotourism. Background information to the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park and the methodological approach adopted are then provided. The data

analysis of primary data collected is undertaken. Finally, concluding remarks are forwarded.

The sustainability concept evolved from the environmental movement of the 1970s. Cater (1994) argues that ecotourism, which is the fastest growing sector within the tourism industry, is equated with nature or ecologically based tourism and the concept is most used as well as abused by the travel and tourism trade. Hardy and Beetan (2001) indicate that the concept of sustainable development gave rise to sustainable tourism. Tubb (2003) illustrates that ecotourism development was seen as the solution to natural environmental conservation whilst at the same time ensuring economic development, especially for developing countries. Wallace and Pierce (1996:846) define ecotourism as:

Travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas for study, enjoyment or volunteer assistance. It is travel that concerns itself with the flora, fauna, geology, and ecosystems of an area, as well as the people (caretakers) who live nearby, their needs, their culture, and their relationship to the land. It views natural areas both as 'home to all of us' in a global sense ('eco' meaning home) but 'home to nearby residents' specifically. It is envisaged as a tool for both conservation and sustainable development, especially in areas where people are asked to forgo the consumptive use of resources for others.

According to Stem *et al.* (2003), the Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of the local people. Weaver (1999) is of the opinion that the three core conditions or criteria for ecotourism are that it is nature-based, culturally-based and entails the educational or study aspects of the resources as opposed to the consumption of the resources for either direct or indirect utilisation. Also, ecotourism should be synonymous with the concept of sustainable development in that the carrying capacities of the site and support for the local communities should be adhered to. Tubb (2003) states that sustainable tourism emphasises the quality of visitor experiences, the continuity of tourism, natural resources and cultures and the balance of needs of tourists, operators, host communities and the environment.

### **A Stakeholder Approach to Ecotourism**

According to Watkinson (2002), stakeholder involvement is punted to be an important factor in sustainable ecotourism. However, the path to involving all stakeholders is not an easy one. In the case study of the Wet Topics World Heritage Site Area (WTWHA), Australia, the conservation sector and the Aboriginal people's representation on the marketing of the heritage site was rejected on the grounds that they were perceived to not contribute constructively. Watkinson (2002) further states that with stakeholder involvement in the marketing of WTWHA, conservation management can be balanced with the goals of the ecotourism industry and the local community. Davies (2002) illustrates that Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) is an organisation that undertakes more than one thousand volunteer programmes every year. CVA has developed stakeholder partnerships with government, protected area managers, conservation agencies, communities, tourism agencies, researchers and private landholders so as to achieve realistic conservation outcomes.

Western (1992) states that the exclusion of the rural communities as an important stakeholder in Kenya's National Parks from ecotourism benefits resulted in deep seated resentment from the local people. The ensuing results were an increase in poaching and attacks on tourists. Namwalo (1992) and Western (1994) state Kenya has some of the world's richest wildlife and marine habitats. Long term planning in ecotourism, therefore, requires both local as well as international support. Gakahu (1992) argues that the involvement of local communities in ecotourism projects serves to avoid developments and decisions that may be in conflict. Such a stakeholder approach ensures better planning so the benefits may be maximised and costs may be minimised. Lusiola (1992) maintains that involving local communities in all aspects of ecotourism development ensures that the industry is developed along sustainable lines. Okech (2004) asserts that the inclusion of local communities in the ecotourism industry is integral for sustainable development. Caalders *et al.* (1999) state that the involvement of all stakeholders of ecotourism serves to stimulate the efficiency of decision-making processes, improve the quality of the process and also serves to legitimise the process.

The Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN 1999) illustrates that stakeholders derive many benefits from

protected areas. In the public sector, for example, there are electricity providers that depend on protected areas upstream, water companies who have similar needs and health ministries who may need reservoirs of medicinal plants. The commercial sector may engage in profit-generating ventures in protected areas. Non-governmental organisations have a commitment to conservation. Research institutions may be interested in carrying out research in protected areas and local communities depend on natural resources from these areas. Zesmi and Ozesmi (2003) state that local stakeholders' direct participation is fundamental to protecting biodiversity as they may actively oppose or support conservation actions. Henriques and Sardorsky (1999) list four types of stakeholders that are necessary for environmental protection. They are:

- Regulatory stakeholders (governments, trade associations and informal networks)
- Organisational stakeholders (customers, suppliers, employees and shareholders)
- Community stakeholders (community groups, environmental groups and other potential lobbies)
- Media (mass communication)

Grimble and Wallard (1997) assert that the advantage of stakeholder analysis is that it provides a methodology and a conceptual framework for a better understanding of environmental and developmental problems and interaction through comparative analysis of the different perspectives and stakeholder interests at different levels. With regards to ecotourism development and consultation guidelines, Thomas and Duff (2003:48) place emphasis on the:

identification of all the stakeholders; approaching all stakeholders on the basis of equality and transparency; producing materials that are informative, clear and user-friendly; using a variety of culturally appropriate means to seek views; emphasising the draft nature of proposals; being ready to revisit any proposals; keeping a complete and documented record of all comments, logging all contacts; ensuring that all requests for meetings, materials etc. are responded to promptly; making sure that every view has been considered,

whether it is adopted or not; allowing time so that people do not feel rushed by the process, but not so much that they lose interest; engaging in further consultation if changes in the plan are envisaged that will affect other stakeholders than those seeking these changes; feeding back the results of consultation to all who commented; and above all treating all the stakeholders as essential partners in the conservation of the protected areas, and not as obstacles.

Ronald *et al.* (1997) argue that there is not much disagreement as to whom or what qualifies as a stakeholder. Persons, organisations, communities, neighbourhoods, institutions, society and even the natural environment can be regarded as actual or potential stakeholders.

### **Overview of Ecotourism in South Africa**

Groenewald (2004) says that tourism is South Africa's third largest earner of foreign money. The industry contributes 8.2% or in excess of twenty five billion rands to South Africa's economy. The Centre for Public Participation (2003) maintains that whilst South Africa has made headway since the first democratic elections in 1994, the economy is still very much in the hands of a few White males. The political breakthrough also ushered in deepening poverty, widening of income gaps, extensive job losses and high levels of unemployment. The ecotourism industry in South Africa must be seen within such a context. South Africa is a well established and high profile ecotourism destination within the region. Dieke (2001) states that of the twenty countries that were profiled by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), South Africa came up as the most favourable destination. Weaver (1998) asserts that South Africa, also, has a competitive advantage because of its well developed network of protected areas, its economy and its relatively sophisticated transport network.

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT 1996) states that after Brazil and Indonesia, South Africa is ranked as third in the world as an international biodiversity hotspot. It is the only country in the world to have an entire floristic kingdom within its border. South Africa has over 100 species of mammals, over 900 species of birds—of which 77 are endemic—and 120 species of amphibians. South Africa is signatory to

the Convention on Biodiversity (1992), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971), the Convention to Combat Desertification (1994), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (1973), the Convention on Migratory Species (1979) and the World Heritage Convention (1972). The environmental legal framework includes the National Environmental Management Act (1998), the Protected Areas Bill (2003) and the Biodiversity Bill (2003). According to Goudie *et al.* (1999), the tourism industry has often come under fire for the discrepancies that arises from the different components of the industry. The promised economic benefits of tourism, especially at the community level, is seldom realised and when it is, there are other problems that plague the industry. Following closely on the heels of tourism development are social ills such as prostitution, drug trafficking and crime. Such thinking and findings about the tourism industry has particular relevance to the reconstruction and development of the South African economy since tourism has been identified as a vehicle for economic development.

Integrated Planning Services (PTY) Ltd (KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority, 1998) conducted a feasibility study for tourism development in the Mnweni Valley of KwaZulu-Natal, Drakensberg and found that there will be both positive and negative impacts on the social and cultural environment. The likely positive impacts would be employment opportunities, increased income, training and capacity building associated direct and indirect entrepreneurial opportunities, and the introduction of foreigners bringing different values and worldviews to the area. The likely negative impacts may be possible pressure for relocation of communities, potential for external damage to cultural sites and introduction of foreigners bringing different values and world views. The latter can be both a strength and a weakness. Groenewald and Macleod (2004) assert that in some areas, such as the Marakele National Park, the transition from farmlands to game reserves has not been smooth. Marakele National Park, which is situated in the Limpopo province of South Africa, is a public-private partnership set up for ecotourism purposes. Unhappiness on the part of farmworkers that reside on the land has resulted in law suits being filed against the private investors, the South African National Parks and the former farm owners. The lawsuit was about the unlawful eviction of the farmworkers from the farms. A lawyer, acting on behalf of the farmworkers, stated that the rights of the

environment took precedence over people's rights. Tapela and Omara-Jungu (1999) illustrate that many underdeveloped communities in Africa, in general, and South Africa, in particular, live close to or on the borders of national Parks. In the case of the Makuleke Community, a community living in close proximity to the Kruger National Park (KNP), 74.3% of the respondents used firewood as the main source of energy for the household, 77.2% required thatch for the roofing and of the 63.5% that were employed by KNP 77.8% earned less than R1 500.

South Africa, together with 170 other countries, has made official Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The underlying principle of Article 6 requires Governments to integrate biodiversity conservation and sustainability into economic planning. According to Fakir (nd), South Africa has a set of environmental tools that allows for problems of the natural environment to be resolved well before any development takes place. With regards to a proposed N2 toll road that was to link Umtata to the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast, Macleod (2004) states that fears were around sensitive ecosystems that would be destroyed. However, environmental rights occur, not in isolation, but within the context of other rights. Whilst the South African environmental laws have caused development to move at a snails pace, the welfare of the poor and the unemployed is now at risk. The threats are from groups that focus on the environment over everything else. Hence, any claims by dispossessed people of land within these protected areas are perceived as threats instead of opportunities.

The South African Government Gazette, Act 49 of Heritage Convention Act (1999) illustrates that the objectives of this Act are to ensure that the cultural and environmental protection and sustainable development of, and related activities within, World Heritage Sites, are provided for to encourage tourism and other associated development linked to the World Heritage Sites; the encouragement of investment, innovation, and job creation; the promotion of the development of culturally, environmentally and, if applicable, economically sustainable projects with regards to World Heritage Sites; and the promotion of empowerment of previously disadvantaged individuals in projects linked to World Heritage Sites. In addition, the Act strives to protect, conserve and present World Heritage values whilst, also, placing a strong emphasis on local economic development through the tourism industry. This is especially so in situations

where there exists high levels of poverty even though there may be plenty of natural resources nearby to support livelihood activities.

### **Background to the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park**

The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park is the largest protected area in KwaZulu-Natal. To the south of the province, the escarpment forms a natural border with Lesotho. It is also one of the main tourist attractions in South Africa (Aylward & Lutz 2003). The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park is 180 km in length and extends from Royal Natal National Park in the north to Bushmen's Nek in the South. The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park has been proclaimed a World Heritage Site for both its natural as well as its cultural significance. The Park comprises a range of mountains that reaches more than 3 000 metres in height. Evidence of *Homo Sapiens*, San hunter-gatherers, living on the mountains dates back to more than 8 000 years. Some 6 000 recognised San rock art sites within the Park dates back as far as 2 400 years (Chapman *et al.* 2003/4:60).

The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park satisfied the following criteria for its natural significance:

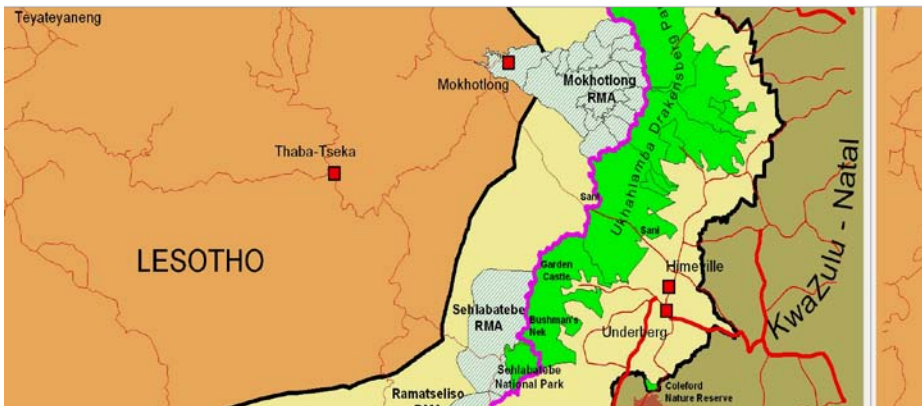
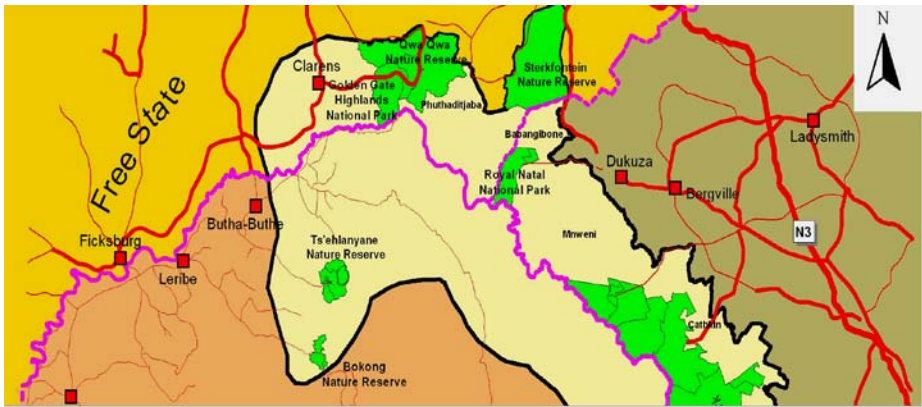
- Outstanding example of the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history;
- Outstanding example of communities of plants and animals or land forms;
- Area or feature of superlative natural beauty; and
- Important habitat of threatened species of plants and animals. (National Parks Board Commission as cited in Integrated Planning Services, KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority, 1998:12-13)

The Park satisfied the following criteria for its cultural significance:

- Represent a unique artistic or aesthetic achievement, a masterpiece of the creative genius;
- Have exerted considerable influence over time or within an area on subsequent cultural developments;



Map 1: Map of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park



Source: Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Project

- Be unique, extremely rare, or of great antiquity;
- Be amongst the most characteristic examples of a type of structure;
- Be a characteristic example of a significant, traditional style of architecture, construction or human settlement; and
- Be most importantly associated with ideas or beliefs, with events, or with persons, of outstanding historical significance.

(National Parks Board Commission as cited in Integrated Planning Services, KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority, 1998:12-13)

## **Methodology**

Survey questionnaires with three key stakeholder groups (tourists, tour operators, local communities and accommodation personnel) were conducted at the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park. Using purposive sampling, a total of one hundred (100) tourists were surveyed. A questionnaire survey was conducted with ten tour operators who were purposively selected using a list obtained from the accommodation outlets. A total of ten (10) accommodation personnel located in and around the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park, were purposively selected and surveyed. A convenient sampling approach was used to identify the accommodation personnel to be interviewed. In this regard, accommodation personnel who were available and willing to participate in the study were interviewed. One hundred households living alongside the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park in two communities were surveyed using a systematic sampling approach. Fifty households in each community were identified. The two communities bordering the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park that were surveyed were Mnweni and Obanjaneni. Two communities were included in the study to ensure geographical spread. Additionally, key informant interviews were conducted with Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT). An interview was conducted with a representative of the Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (WESSA) which is a NGO that advocates on behalf of the natural environment. An interview was also conducted with a representative from Ezemvelo KZN-Wildlife (a parastatal organisation).

Both WESSA and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife are responsible for biodiversity conservation at the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park. An online questionnaire was partially completed by a representative from the DEAT. The DEAT representative did not respond to all questions posed.

## Data Analysis

This section presents pertinent findings of the primary data collected. This is undertaken in relation to the stakeholders. This is followed by a general discussion of key issues emerging.

### *Tourists*

**Table 1: Respondents perceptions of the main aspect of what sustainable ecotourism should entail (in %)**

	<b>Percent (n=100)</b>
Using resources sustainably	34
Reducing over-consumption and waste	14
Maintaining diversity	3
Integrating tourism into planning	6
Supporting local economies	9
Involving local communities	6
Training staff	6
Marketing tourism responsible	2
Undertaking research	20

Table 1 illustrates that the 34% of the respondents indicated the use of resources sustainably as being most important to sustainable ecotourism. This was followed by undertaking research (20% of the tourists). Reducing over-consumption and waste was identified as the most important component of sustainable ecotourism by 14% of the tourists interviewed. Supporting local economies, training staff and integrating tourism into planning was identified by 6% of the tourists to the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park. A few

respondents identified maintaining diversity (3%) and marketing tourism responsibly (2%). The responses indicate that sustainable use of the natural resource base and responding to community needs were deemed to be important components of sustainable ecotourism. The latter position (that of supporting local communities) was also reinforced by other results as well. Seventy nine percent of the tourist respondents of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park thought that local communities should benefit from sustainable ecotourism to the Parks with only 3% stated that they should not. The rest either did not respond or stated that they did not know.

**Table 2: Respondents' observations of environmental impacts at the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park: Multiple responses**

	<b>Percent (n=100)</b>
Too many vehicles	95
Soil erosion of trails	67
Vegetation damage	32
Too much city-type recreation	25
Fire which damages vegetation	24
Too many tourists	23
Too much water use	23
Litter	20
Polluted rivers and watering holes	20
Burning plastic at rubbish dump	1

Table 2 illustrates that the responses of the visitors indicate that they had observed various forms of environmental deterioration. The vast majority of the respondents (95%) stated that they were too many vehicles visiting the Park. Two thirds of the respondents said that they observed soil erosion in the Park. Other responses from a significant proportion of the respondents were vegetation damage (32%), too much city-type recreation (25%), fire which damages vegetation (24%), too many tourists (23%), too much water use (23%), litter (20%) and polluted rivers and watering holes (20%). One

respondent observed burning plastic at a rubbish dump. The responses clearly allude to the over-use of Park resources. Too many tourists were perceived to be unappealing within a World Heritage Site setting. For example, Deng *et al.* (2003) show that at the Zhangjiajie National Forest Park in China, visitor perceptions indicated that some spots within the Park were unacceptable. Visitor usage was found to be proportionate to trampling impacts.

### *Tour Operators*

**Table 3: Types of tours offered by tour company (in %) (n = 10)**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No response</b>
Nature tours	90	-	10
Culture tours	10	90	-
Adventure tours	70	-	30
Other tours (township, golf, beach)	70	-	30

Table 3 shows that ecotourism or nature tourism was offered by 90% of the tour companies surveyed. The results indicate that ecotourism is high on the visitors' list of demands. However, the results could also indicate the high supply of ecotourism by tour companies. Cultural tours were offered by only 10% of the tour companies surveyed. The marked absence of the community component of ecotourism is evident. Additionally, the high demand for ecotourism is likely to place even greater pressure on conservation areas to deliver the tourist experience.

**Table 4: Problems experienced by the tour business (%)**

	<b>Percent (n=10)</b>
Exchange rate	40
New reservation system at South African National Parks problematic	60

Regarding problems that were experienced by the tour companies, 60% indicated problems about the new reservation system at South African National Parks and 40% indicated that the new exchange rate is a problem (Table 4). Interestingly the tour companies did not state problems of an environmental or a social nature. In terms of the former, this implies that tour operators see the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park as a marketable tourist product.

*Accommodation Managers*

**Table 5: Respondents' specific perceptions of ecotourism principles (in %) (n=10)**

	No response	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Minimise negative environmental impacts	10	20	50	10	10
Environmental awareness	10	30	60	-	-
Conservation and management of protected areas	10	30	60	-	-
Local people participation	30	10	50	-	10
Economic benefits to local people	30	-	70	-	-
Opportunities to visit natural areas	10	10	60	10	10

Most respondents (20% strongly agreed and 50% agreed) felt that ecotourism entails minimising negative impacts on the environment. Most respondents (30% strongly agreed and 60% agreed) stated that ecotourism promoted environmental awareness. Sixty percent of the accommodation respondents agreed and 30% strongly agreed that ecotourism entails the conservation and management of legally protected and other natural areas.

Ten percent strongly agreed and 50% agreed that ecotourism entails maximising the early and long-term participation of local people in the decision-making process that determines the kind and amount of tourism that should occur. Seventy percent of the accommodation respondents of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park agreed that ecotourism entails the direct economic as well as other benefits to local people. The accommodation respondents of the World Heritage Site were, generally, in favour of local people benefiting directly from ecotourism. Ten percent of the accommodation respondents of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park agreed and 10% strongly agreed that ecotourism entails the provision of special opportunities for local people and natural tourism employees to utilise and visit natural areas and learn more about the wonders of nature. The responses indicate that similar to tourist responses, sustaining the natural environment and responding to local community needs were deemed to be important components of ecotourism.

### *Community*

**Table 6: Occupation of community respondent**

	<b>Percent (n=100)</b>
Unemployed	71
Labourer	5
Business owner	4
Manager	1
Professional	2
Pensioner	17

Table 6 illustrates that 71% of the respondents were unemployed. This is reflective of the high unemployment rates in rural communities adjacent to many conservation areas. A low 4% of the respondents are business owners. Thirteen percent of the respondents rely on government pensions. The unemployment and poverty levels of the rural areas surrounding the World Heritage Site is linked to past disparities in land distribution, colonialism and migrant labour, racial legislation, and the power relations between the colonists and the indigenous farmers. Within the current economic context, the challenge for the surveyed communities is to meet their needs through

subsistence farming as well as selling of their labour to private as well as public buyers. This can only be done if there are plentiful private and public buyers of labour. The Durban Action Plan (V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress 2003), in order to realise the theme of the Congress, calls for action at different and many levels: international action, regional action, national action, local action, and protected area authority action. The Plan (IUCN 2003:3) states:

too often protected areas are governed in the absence of a system of shared objectives, values and principles; and increasing levels of poverty result in degradation of natural resources.

The ecotourism sectors of the World Heritage Site have not (yet) addressed the unemployment challenge of these communities. The V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Park Congress' theme of 'Benefits Beyond Boundaries' is yet to realise itself within the unemployment maze of the communities residing adjacent to the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park.

**Table 7: Respondents' utilisation of natural resources within the Park (in %) (n=100)**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No response/ don't know</b>
Plant resources	67	33	-
Water	56	11	33
Wood	60	7	33
Medicinal plants	52	11	37
Animals	52	11	37
Ancestral worship	2	22	76

Table 7 shows that 67% of the respondents indicated that they utilise plant resources from the Park. Fifty six percent of the respondents stated that they use water from the Park. Water is a relatively scarce commodity for many rural communities. Rural communities commit a lot of time and effort to access water. The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Mountains forms part of the important natural phenomena in terms of providing water for a significant



proportion of the South African population. Sixty percent of the respondents access wood from the Park. Wood in particular remains an important source of fuel for cooking and heating purposes in rural households. Additionally, poles are used for the construction of traditional homes. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) use medicinal plants and animals from the Park. Only two percent of the respondents stated that they use Park resources for ancestral worship.

**Table 8: Respondents' views as to how the community can contribute towards local economic development and environmental sustainability in the Park: Multiple responses**

	<b>Percent (n=100)</b>
By making handwork (craftwork)	32
Having cultural activities that will attract tourists	32
By communicating with the Parks (having a good relationship with Park management)	27
By not killing animals	26
By not cutting down of trees	25
Community must fight against crime	23
The community must expose themselves by doing local projects	15
By forming stakeholder forums	14
Communities must protect our areas and mountains against fires	14
By working together	12
Community can help by informing other communities about the Park	9
By keeping land clean and beautiful	10
Tribal Nkosi can work together with Park authorities	5
Have a committee representing local communities	5
Community must stop stealing animals from the Park	3
Community members must not rob the tourists	3

Table 8 illustrates the communities' views as to how they, as a stakeholder, could contribute towards local economic development and environmental sustainability within the Park. Thirty two percent of the respondents stated by making handwork (craftwork) and having cultural activities that will attract tourists. A further 15% stated that the community must expose themselves by doing local projects. This illustrates that respondents felt that the community must engage in activities that will generate economic opportunities linked to the presence of tourists in the area primarily as a result of them being attracted to the Park. Additionally, several respondents identified good collaboration/relationship with Park authorities. More specifically, they highlighted communicating with the Parks (27%), forming stakeholder forums (14%), working together (12%), tribal Nkosi working together with Park authorities (5%) and having a committee representing local communities (5%). Clearly, there is a strong feeling among respondents that working with the Park authorities will be beneficial. Also, there is strong support for community engagement with the Park and various mechanisms for this were forwarded. A significant proportion of the respondents also indicated that community members should protect the natural environment by not killing animals and cutting down trees (26% and 25%, respectively), communities must protect their areas and mountains against fires (14%), by keeping the land clean and beautiful (10%) and community members must stop stealing animals (3%). Assisting in addressing crime also emerged as an issue with 23% of the respondents stating the community must fight against crime and 3% suggesting that community members must not rob tourists.

### *Conservation Organisations*

The Ezemvelo-KZN Wildlife indicated that there are major challenges with regards to balancing ecotourism and conservation principles. Infrastructure, for the provision of electricity and water, has been laid underground. The representative indicated that there are high demands from visitors to the Park for more modern facilities such as restaurants, satellite TV, etc. The Royal Natal National Park is also embarking on projects and programmes in collaboration with the surrounding rural communities. Some of the projects are job creation through recycling, arts and crafts projects as well as training of guides and rangers. In response to the questions on how the Park entrance

fees should be structured and whether differential pricing should be used (in particular, whether foreign visitors should be charged more), respondents stated that foreign tourists should pay at least twice the fees as domestic tourists.

The positive impact of globalisation on the ecotourism industry in South Africa has resulted in more tourists visiting South Africa. However, a concern was raised that ecotourism is not really understood and the environment is 'used' rather than 'appreciated'. It would appear that the negative impact of globalisation on the ecotourism industry in South Africa results in foreigners getting a Western notion of ecotourism rather than an African experience. The ecotourism industry is money-orientated. The environmental concern with regard to ecotourism development was that the incremental increase in economic development may occur at the expense of the environment. One respondent stated that 'we could be killing the goose that lays the golden egg'. The social concerns with regard to ecotourism development were that a few get richer with very little trickle down effects, especially to poorer communities. The economic concerns with regard to ecotourism development suggest that surrounding communities are not brought on board and trained, and that the flow of money to countries overseas will be increased.

The respondents agreed that although there are small pockets of change, the ecotourism industry has not transformed significantly to address past imbalances in South Africa. The constraints the ecotourism industry faces in relation to addressing past imbalances were that it is a relatively new industry and that it lacks adequate and appropriate resources. The respondents again reiterated the concerns that 'money rules' the industry. According to one of the key informants:

Ecotourism entails wilderness trails, inclusion of local people, education of the natural ecological principles of life systems and the peculiarity of the destination. It is not ecotourism when there are luxury hotels built on a wetland or on sand dunes, sunbathing and watching animals from a car.

### *Government*

Together with the private sector, government also generates revenue from

ecotourism. Government revenue occurs both directly and indirectly from ecotourism. Direct income is in the form of income tax from businesses and operators involved in ecotourism and value added taxes (VAT) on goods bought by tourists and operators. Indirect income is in the form of bed taxes, airport taxes, etc. Other ecotourism generating income is from tourists using health services, communications infrastructure, etc. (Bennet *et al.* 2005).

A representative of the National Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism stated that there are many ecotourism operations established all over the country with new ones emerging every day and others closing. No national cost-benefit analysis has been undertaken to determine the net benefits of the ecotourism or nature-based tourism economy. As to whether local communities benefit from ecotourism, he stated that they do benefit to a greater or lesser extent from ecotourism. Ways to increase these benefits would be through implementation of responsible tourism principles, fair trade in tourism practice, Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and measuring of these by applying the tourism scorecard. As to the positive impacts of globalisation on the ecotourism industry in South Africa, the representative outlined the following: improved positioning of South Africa as an important global ecotourism destination; exposing ecotourism (including culture products and attractions) to foreign demand; improved local awareness of the importance of responsible ecotourism planning, development and management; strengthening of the local ecotourism sector's economic base; creation of job opportunities; increase in opportunities for SMME entrepreneurs; and reduction in local economic leakage.

### **General Discussion**

The Mnweni and Obanjaneni communities are but two of the many rural communities that reside alongside the World Heritage Site in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Both communities are predominantly Black Africans, Zulu-speaking, have a low level of formal education and are relatively poor. Tourists that visit the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Region comprise both domestic tourists and foreign tourists. However, the World Heritage Sites attract more domestic tourists than foreign tourists. Overall, the tourists to the World Heritage Site were White. Black South Africans, as

visitors to the World Heritage Site, were few. Tourists that were mostly White, were relatively wealthy, had good formal educational qualifications and good jobs. Most of the visitors to the World Heritage Site stated that their knowledge about environmental matters was gained through self-teaching and most considered themselves to be environmentalists of some kind. They also possess enough money to visit natural areas many times a year and their primary reason for visiting natural areas was for relaxation. Owners of accommodation for tourists visiting the World Heritage Site were predominantly White and of South African origin. They also possessed a relatively good formal education. Owners of the tour companies were all White. Most were self-taught about environmental issues, marketed their operations nationally as well as internationally and described their operations as 'businesses that sell nature'.

The tour companies surveyed did not only specialise in ecotourism but their business practices were diversified to include other tourism products as well. These included township tourism, beach tourism, golf tourism, etc. Tours to the World Heritage Site was but one aspect of their business depending both on demand and financial feasibility. Diversification of this sort is indicative of the stakeholders' vested interest within the ecotourism industry, the integral interest being that of profit-making. Whilst there was no overwhelming support as to the aims and objectives that ecotourism should strive towards, there was general agreement by the accommodation respondents of the World Heritage Site that ecotourism should be about providing special opportunities for local people. Additionally, natural tourism employees should utilise and visit natural areas and learn more about the wonders that other visitors come to see, and direct economic and other benefits to local people, maximising the early and long-term participation of local people in the decision-making process that determines the kind and amount of tourism that should occur. Contributing to the conservation and management of legally protected and other natural areas; the awareness and understanding of an area's natural and cultural systems and the visitors' involvement in issues affecting those systems; and a type of use that minimises negative impacts to the environment and to the local people were also highlighted.

There were also mixed responses as to whether ecotourism to the World Heritage Site translated into tangible benefits for the communities in

the form of schools, clinics, educational trusts, housing, sports facilities, sponsoring of events, establishment of community gardens, or any other form of social investments. The responses in general raise concerns pertaining to access, ownership and the sharing of benefits.

With regards to decision-making and stakeholder involvement it was unclear as to what the extent of community involvement was. Some of the comments were that decisions that involve the Park are made by the community Nkosi (Chief) and tribal authorities are involved on local boards. The economic impacts of ecotourism to the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park are positive as well as negative. The economic impacts are highly positive for the tour companies and the well-resourced accommodation sector. These two components of the ecotourism industry are mostly White-owned enterprises. The economic impacts are satisfactorily positive for the up and coming Black-owned enterprises. The economic impacts of ecotourism to most residents of the local communities are negative in that it further deepens the class divide within the ecotourism industry.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that stakeholders felt that the ecotourism industry could contribute to the social upliftment of the community by assisting with various projects and programmes. Stakeholder perceptions also indicated that incremental increase in economic development may occur at the expense of the natural environment.

The profile of the stakeholders of the ecotourism industry reveals distinct disparities in terms of race and class. South Africa is often said to have two distinct economies, one rich and White and the other poor and Black. With regard to the stakeholders that are involved in the ecotourism industry generally, those that are Black are poor and those that are White are rich. Hence, the ecotourism industry is a microcosm of South Africa. The stakeholders within the ecotourism industry are, therefore, not equal partners. For ecotourism to be sustainable, it is imperative that the local communities be an integral, if not the central focus of any ecotourism development. With regards to tours to the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Region, the benefits from cultural tourism by the communities residing within and outside the Park have not been fully realised. Cultural projects that form part of the tourism industry are mushrooming in present day South Africa. Whilst

the demand may not be as great as wilderness tourism it does have the potential to grow in demand. This growth in demand may be accelerated through more injection of resources into the formation of such projects, marketing, and including it in the ecotourism itinerary. The supply of cultural tourism products may help to increase its demand resulting in benefits accruing to all stakeholders within the ecotourism industry.

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