

**THE SUSTAINABILITY OF
COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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A thesis

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ABSTRACT

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The global trend towards sustainability is influencing humankind on a daily basis. One of the aspects of human life that is significantly influenced by this trend is decision making with regard to travel and holidays. The investigation was initiated in an attempt to monitor the sustainability of community-based ecotourism in southern Africa and to set a baseline for future comparison.

A comprehensive inventory of 331 community-based tourism ventures across southern Africa was compiled as part of the study. A spatial selection was undertaken to refine the selection of ventures which could be safely and economically visited in southern Africa. A telephonic interview was carried out with each of the remaining 241 community-based tourism ventures in order to determine which ventures may be categorized as community-based ecotourism ventures. The results of the telephonic interview were used to classify the community-based ecotourism ventures into types. A random selection within types followed to select six case studies for further investigation.

An evaluation framework was constructed to monitor the sustainability of the selected community-based ecotourism ventures. The evaluation framework made use of a number of sustainability issues and their associated indicators. The evaluation framework was then tested for its applicability to investigate the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the six case studies. Thereafter a cross-case analysis was undertaken to compare the results and to obtain baseline data for future comparison. The utility of the constructed evaluation framework was subsequently commented on and changes were recommended.

The study provided a time- and cost-effective evaluation framework for monitoring the sustainability performance of community-based ecotourism ventures. The constructed framework also makes an important contribution as a departure point in the adaptive learning cycle for the development and implementation of sustainable tourism indicators for community-based ecotourism ventures. Case study specific recommendations were made in order to improve the sustainability performance of the investigated case studies. The results of this study serve as a benchmark against which future investigations into the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures in southern Africa may be compared. Conclusions relating to the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures in southern Africa are drawn, and a number of recommendations for further research are made.

Keywords

Community-based ecotourism, sustainable tourism, sustainability indicators, southern Africa

June 2010

DECLARATION

Whilst registered as a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Signed: _____ (candidate)

Date: _____

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DECLARATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
FIGURES	ix
TABLES	xii
ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Research problem, question and aim	2
1.3 Research design and methodology	4
1.4 Organization of the investigation	5
CHAPTER TWO	8
LITERATURE REVIEW, ORIENTATION AND DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS	
2.1 Introduction: Conceptualizing the sustainability of community-based ecotourism	8
2.2 Changes in development theories and the emergence of sustainable development	10
2.3 Community-based natural resource management and common property theory	17
2.4 Tourism	24
2.4.1 Defining tourism and the tourism product	24
2.4.2 Worldwide tourism trends	25
2.4.3 Tourism trends in southern Africa	30
2.4.4 The changing face of tourism and new tourism	32
2.4.5 Trends and growth in African tourism research	33
2.5 Pro-poor tourism	34
2.6 Ecotourism	36
2.6.1 Origin of the term 'ecotourism'	37
2.6.2 Definition of ecotourism	37
2.6.3 Conceptual ecotourism framework	39
2.6.4 Characteristics of ecotourism	41
2.6.5 Responsible travel	42
2.6.6 Evolution of ecotourism research towards community involvement	44
2.7 Community-based ecotourism	45
2.7.1 Types of community-based ecotourism	46
2.7.2 Sustainability of community-based ecotourism	47
2.8 Indicators for sustainable development of tourism	49
2.8.1 History of indicator development and application to tourism	50
2.8.2 Types of indicators	51
2.8.3 Indicator applications	52
2.8.4 Growing indicator initiatives worldwide	53
2.8.5 Development and implementation of sustainable tourism indicators	54
2.9 Summary	58

CHAPTER THREE	60
RESEARCH DESIGN, RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES	
3.1 Introduction	60
3.2 Research design	60
3.2.1 Mixed method	60
3.2.2 Exploratory and descriptive design	61
3.2.3 Case study research design	62
3.3 Ethical research design considerations	64
3.4 Phases of the research	65
3.5 Data collection methods for the case study selection	65
3.5.1 Step 1: Compiling an inventory of community-based tourism ventures in southern Africa	66
3.5.2 Step 2: Converting the CBT venture spatial co-ordinates to ESRI ArcGIS file format	69
3.5.3 Step 3: Spatial selection	70
3.5.4 Step 4: Telephonic interviews	72
3.5.5 Step 5: Categorization of CBT ventures as CBE ventures	76
3.5.6 Step 6: Classification	78
3.5.7 Step 7: Final selection of case studies	79
3.6 Summary	81
CHAPTER FOUR	82
RESULTS OF TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS	
4.1 Introduction	82
4.2 Age of ventures	82
4.3 Themes of the ventures	83
4.4 Price categories for visitors	85
4.5 Overnight accommodation offerings	85
4.6 Day visitors	87
4.7 Busiest periods	88
4.8 Conservation	90
4.9 Culture	91
4.10 Education	92
4.11 Ownership of CBE ventures	92
4.12 Joint ventures	93
4.13 Land ownership	94
4.14 Community control and decision making	95
4.15 State involvement	95
4.16 Support organizations	95
4.17 Community employment	96
4.18 Community benefits	98
4.19 Summary	98
CHAPTER FIVE	99
CONSTRUCTION OF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK	
5.1 Introduction	99
5.2 Defining social, economic and environmental sustainability	99
5.3 Construction of the evaluation framework	100
5.3.1 Selecting the issues and indicators	100
5.3.2 Discussion of selected issues and indicators	103
5.4 Compilation of data collection instruments	116
5.4.1 Questionnaires and interviews	116

5.4.2	Direct observations and photographic records	122
5.4.3	Secondary data collection	122
5.4.4	Water sampling and analysis	123
5.4.5	Global positioning system (GPS) data and GIS mapping	124
5.5	Preparation before conducting fieldwork	124
5.6	Conducting data collection	126
5.7	Summary	126
CHAPTER SIX		127
THE SUSTAINABILITY OF SIX SELECTED COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM VENTURES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA		
6.1	Introduction	127
6.2	Individually owned: The Aba-Huab campsite	127
6.2.1	Background	127
6.2.2	Social issues	129
6.2.3	Economic issues	140
6.2.4	Environmental issues	145
6.2.5	Cross-cutting issues	149
6.3	Community-owned: Kaziikini Campsite and Shandreka Cultural Village	150
6.3.1	Background	150
6.3.2	Social issues	151
6.3.3	Economic issues	159
6.3.4	Environmental issues	166
6.3.5	Cross-cutting issues	169
6.4	Informal joint venture: Malealea Lodge and Pony-trekking Centre	170
6.4.1	Background	170
6.4.2	Social issues	172
6.4.3	Economic issues	179
6.4.4	Environmental issues	185
6.4.5	Cross-cutting issues	188
6.5	Formal joint venture: Damaraland Camp	189
6.5.1	Background	189
6.5.2	Social issues	191
6.5.3	Economic issues	199
6.5.4	Environmental issues	205
6.5.5	Cross-cutting issues	209
6.6	Triple joint venture: Tembe Elephant Lodge	209
6.6.1	Background	209
6.6.2	Social issues	211
6.6.3	Economic issues	220
6.6.4	Environmental issues	225
6.6.5	Cross-cutting issues	228
6.7	Organization operated: !Khwa ttu – San Culture and Education Centre	229
6.7.1	Background	229
6.7.2	Social issues	232
6.7.3	Economic issues	239
6.7.4	Environmental issues	245
6.7.5	Cross-cutting issues	249
6.8	Summary	250
CHAPTER SEVEN		251
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE UTILITY OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK		
7.1	Introduction	251

7.2	Cross-case analysis	251
7.2.1	Colour coding	251
7.2.2	Cross-case analysis of social issues	252
7.2.3	Cross-case analysis of economic issues	263
7.2.4	Cross-case analysis of environmental issues	273
7.2.5	Cross-case analysis of cross-cutting issues	283
7.2.6	Summary of cross-case analysis	284
7.3	Assessment of the utility of the evaluation framework	284
7.3.1	Recommendations relating to social issues and indicators	285
7.3.2	Recommendations relating to economic issues and indicators	285
7.3.3	Recommendations relating to environmental issues and indicators	285
7.3.4	Recommendation relating to cross-cutting issues and indicators	286
7.3.5	General recommendation on the utility of the evaluation framework	286
7.4	Summary	286
CHAPTER EIGHT		287
CASE STUDY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS		
8.1	Introduction	287
8.2	Individually owned: Aba-Huab Campsite	288
8.3	Community-owned: Kaziikini Campsite and Shandreka Cultural Village	289
8.4	Informal joint venture: Malealea Lodge and Pony-trekking Centre	291
8.5	Formal joint venture: Damaraland Camp	293
8.6	Triple joint venture: Tembe Elephant Lodge	295
8.7	Organization operated: !Khwa ttu – San Culture and Education Centre	297
8.8	Summary	299
CHAPTER NINE		300
SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS		
9.1	Introduction	300
9.2	Synthesis	300
9.3	Limitations of the research	305
9.3.1	Limitations of the research process	305
9.3.2	Limitations of the evaluation framework	306
9.4	Conclusions relating to the sustainability of CBE ventures in southern Africa	309
9.5	Contribution to knowledge and wider significance	310
9.6	Placement of the study within the literature	311
9.7	Recommendations for further research	314
9.8	Conclusion	316
REFERENCES		317
APPENDICES		330
Appendix A:	Inventory of CBT ventures in southern Africa	331
Appendix B:	Telephonic interview schedule	344
Appendix C:	Visitor questionnaire	349
Appendix D:	Staff interview	352
Appendix E:	Community interview	355
Appendix F:	Manager interview	358
Appendix G:	Case study protocol	364

FIGURES

Figure 1.1:	Community-based ecotourism in context	3
Figure 1.2:	Illustration of research process and breakdown of chapters	7
Figure 2.1:	Conceptual framework of the literature review	9
Figure 2.2:	Development theories	13
Figure 2.3:	International tourist arrivals for the World and Africa between 1950 and 2008	26
Figure 2.4:	International tourist arrivals for Africa between 1990 and 2007	27
Figure 2.5:	International tourist receipts for the World and Africa between 1950 and 2008	28
Figure 2.6:	International tourist receipts for Africa between 1990 and 2007	29
Figure 2.7:	The relationship between mass tourism, alternative tourism and ecotourism	33
Figure 2.8:	Linking ecotourism to sustainability	39
Figure 2.9:	Conceptual framework for ecotourism	40
Figure 2.10:	A model of sustainable community-based ecotourism	48
Figure 2.11:	Illustration of the adaptive learning process of developing and implementing sustainability indicators	56
Figure 3.1:	Steps followed in the selection of case studies for the field testing of the evaluation framework for monitoring the sustainability of CBE ventures in southern Africa	66
Figure 3.2:	Identified CBT ventures in southern Africa by country	69
Figure 3.3:	Spatial distribution of CBT ventures in southern Africa (N=331)	70
Figure 3.4:	Spatial distribution of CBT ventures which can be reached safely and economically (n=241)	71
Figure 3.5:	Categorized CBE ventures by country	77
Figure 3.6:	Spatial distribution of resultant CBE ventures	77
Figure 3.7:	Spatial distribution of final 6 case studies	80
Figure 4.1:	The number of years CBE ventures have been operating	83
Figure 4.2:	Tourist themes offered by CBE ventures	84
Figure 4.3:	The availability of overnight beds (accommodation and camping) at CBE ventures	86
Figure 4.4:	The availability and size of day visitor facilities at the CBE ventures	88
Figure 4.5:	Reported busiest days of the week at CBE ventures	89
Figure 4.6:	Reported busiest months of the year at CBE ventures	89
Figure 4.7:	Distance in kilometres from CBE ventures to their nearest conservation areas	91
Figure 4.8:	Total number of employees at CBE ventures	96
Figure 4.9:	Number of employees according to employment categories at CBE ventures	97
Figure 6.1:	Geographic location of the Aba-Huab Campsite	127
Figure 6.2:	The Aba-Huab Campsite (a) bar, (b) reception and restaurant building, (c) typical pitch and (d) A-frame thatch shelters	129
Figure 6.3:	Grey-water waterhole at Aba-Huab Campsite	132
Figure 6.4:	Visitor opinion on cultural appreciation and conservation at Aba-Huab Campsite	139
Figure 6.5:	Progress already made with the construction of a new cultural village in close proximity to the Aba-Huab Campsite	139
Figure 6.6:	Signage to the Aba-Huab Campsite	140
Figure 6.7:	Visitor responses to tourist satisfaction at Aba-Huab Campsite	141
Figure 6.8:	Visitor scores relating to perception of value for money at Aba-Huab Campsite	142
Figure 6.9:	Visitor scores relating to return visitation at Aba-Huab Campsite	142
Figure 6.10:	Total number of tourists visiting the Aba-Huab Campsite from January 2005 to September 2008	144

Figure 6.11:	Occupancy at the Aba-Huab Campsite from January 2005 to September 2008	144
Figure 6.12:	One of three wood-fired boilers at Aba-Huab Campsite ablution facilities	146
Figure 6.13:	Aba-Huab Campsite development footprint	148
Figure 6.14:	Geographic location of Kaziikini	150
Figure 6.15:	Kaziikini Campsite (a) reception, (b) bar and restaurant, (c) typical pitch and (d) traditional hut accommodation	151
Figure 6.16:	Visitor opinion on cultural appreciation and conservation at Kaziikini Campsite	158
Figure 6.17:	Shandreka Cultural Village activities: (a) traditional singing and dancing, (b) basketry and crafts, (c) traditional trap demonstration and (d) traditional foods	159
Figure 6.18:	Visitor responses to tourist satisfaction at Kaziikini Campsite	160
Figure 6.19:	Comparison of signage to Kaziikini Campsite and other tourism ventures	161
Figure 6.20:	Visitor scores relating to the perception of value for money at Kaziikini Campsite	162
Figure 6.21:	Visitor scores relating to return visitation at Kaziikini Campsite	162
Figure 6.22:	Total number of tourists visiting the Kaziikini Campsite from August 2006 to June 2008	164
Figure 6.23:	Occupancy at the Kaziikini Campsite from August 2006 to June 2008	164
Figure 6.24:	Waste disposal at Kaziikini Campsite	168
Figure 6.25:	Kaziikini Campsite and Shandreka Cultural Village development footprint	168
Figure 6.26:	Geographic location of Malealea Lodge	170
Figure 6.27:	Malealea Lodge (a) accommodation, (b) restaurant and (c) pony trekking	172
Figure 6.28:	Visitor opinion on cultural appreciation and conservation at Malealea Lodge	178
Figure 6.29:	Crafts and cultural activities: (a) handicraft centre, (b) museum, (c) choir and (d) band	179
Figure 6.30:	Visitor responses to tourist satisfaction at Malealea Lodge	180
Figure 6.31:	Deteriorating state of the signage to Malealea Lodge	181
Figure 6.32:	Visitor scores relating to perception of value for money at Malealea Lodge	181
Figure 6.33:	Visitor scores relating to return visitation at Malealea Lodge	182
Figure 6.34:	Total number of tourists visiting the Malealea Lodge from January 2007 to September 2008	183
Figure 6.35:	Occupancy at the Malealea Lodge from January 2007 to September 2008	184
Figure 6.36:	Malealea Lodge development footprint	187
Figure 6.37:	Geographic location of Damaraland Camp	190
Figure 6.38:	Damaraland Camp: (a) bar and pool area, (b) lounge and dining area, (c) accommodation unit exterior and (d) interior	190
Figure 6.39:	Visitor opinion on cultural appreciation and conservation at Damaraland Camp	199
Figure 6.40:	Visitor responses to tourist satisfaction at Damaraland Camp	200
Figure 6.41:	Signage to Damaraland Camp	201
Figure 6.42:	Visitor scores relating to perception of value for money at Damaraland Camp	201
Figure 6.43:	Visitor scores relating to return visitation at Damaraland Camp	202
Figure 6.44:	Total number of tourists visiting the Damaraland Camp from January 2007 to September 2008	203
Figure 6.45:	Occupancy at the Damaraland Camp from January 2007 to September 2008	204
Figure 6.46:	Damaraland Camp development footprint	208
Figure 6.47:	Geographic location of Tembe Lodge	210
Figure 6.48:	Tembe Elephant Lodge: (a) bar, (b) lounge, (c) standard tented	211

	accommodation exterior and (d) interior, (e) bush camp accommodation exterior and (f) interior	
Figure 6.49:	Visitor opinion on cultural appreciation and conservation at Tembe Lodge	219
Figure 6.50:	Craft shop at Tembe Elephant Park	220
Figure 6.51:	Visitor responses to tourist satisfaction at Tembe Lodge	221
Figure 6.52:	Visitor scores relating to perception of value for money at Tembe Lodge	222
Figure 6.53:	Visitor scores relating to return visitation at Tembe Lodge	222
Figure 6.54:	Total number of tourists visiting the Tembe Lodge from January 2006 to June 2008	223
Figure 6.55:	Occupancy at the Tembe Lodge from January 2006 to June 2008	224
Figure 6.56:	Tembe Lodge waste dump site in community area adjacent to Tembe Elephant Park	227
Figure 6.57:	Tembe Lodge development footprint	228
Figure 6.58:	Geographic location of !Khwa ttu	230
Figure 6.59:	!Khwa ttu: (a) restaurant, (b) conference room, (c) craft shop and (d) photo gallery	231
Figure 6.60:	!Khwa ttu accommodation: (a) guest house, exterior (b) interior, (c) bush cottage and (d) bush camp	231
Figure 6.61:	Visitor opinion on cultural appreciation and conservation at !Khwa ttu	238
Figure 6.62:	Signage to !Khwa ttu	239
Figure 6.63:	Visitor responses to tourist satisfaction at !Khwa ttu	240
Figure 6.64:	Visitor scores relating to perception of value for money at !Khwa ttu	241
Figure 6.65:	Visitor scores relating to return visitation at !Khwa ttu	241
Figure 6.66:	Total number of tourists visiting !Khwa ttu from October 2006 to June 2008	243
Figure 6.67:	Occupancy at !Khwa ttu from October 2006 to February 2008	243
Figure 6.68:	!Khwa ttu (Main complex) development footprint	248
Figure 6.69:	!Khwa ttu (Western complex) development footprint	248

TABLES

Table 2.1:	Definitions of ecotourism	37
Table 2.2:	Types of community-based ecotourism	46
Table 2.3:	Indicator workshops organized by the WTO between 1999 and 2008 (WTO, 2010)	54
Table 3.1:	Inventory of community-based tourism ventures in southern Africa	68
Table 3.2:	Community-based tourism ventures excluded after spatial selection	71
Table 3.3:	Responses received after the first round of telephonic interviews (n=241)	75
Table 3.4:	Responses received after the second round of telephonic interviews (n=241)	75
Table 3.5:	Responses relating to CBE criteria resulting from telephonic interviews	76
Table 3.6:	Classification of CBE ventures into governance types (n=44)	78
Table 3.7:	Classification of CBE ventures by governance type after refinement (n=34)	79
Table 3.8:	Results of the random selection of case studies by governance type	79
Table 4.1:	Reference guidelines of the different price categories of CBE (in South African Rand, Botswana Pula and United States Dollars)	85
Table 4.2:	Price category responses of the CBE ventures	85
Table 4.3:	Ownership types as indicated by the CBE ventures	92
Table 4.4:	Responses of the CBE ventures in relation to the various joint venture types	94
Table 4.5:	Ownership of land on which CBE ventures are situated	94
Table 5.1:	Baseline issues and baseline indicators for monitoring the sustainable development of tourism	101
Table 5.2:	Community-based ecotourism specific issues and indicators	102
Table 5.3:	Evaluation framework listing the selected evaluation issues and indicators	102
Table 5.4:	Energy conversion table (into kWh)	112
Table 5.5:	Biographical information of visitors who completed questionnaires at the six selected CBE ventures	117
Table 5.6:	Issues and the associated indicators with visitor questionnaires as data source	118
Table 5.7:	Biographical information of staff members interviewed at the six selected CBE ventures	119
Table 5.8:	Issues and the associated indicators with staff interviews as data source	119
Table 5.9:	Biographical information of community members interviewed at the six selected CBE ventures	120
Table 5.10:	Issues and the associated indicators with community interviews as data source	121
Table 5.11:	Issues and the associated indicators with secondary data as data source	123
Table 5.12:	Issue and the associated indicator with water quality analysis as data source	123
Table 5.13:	Issue and the associated indicator with GPS as data source	124
Table 6.1:	Average monthly energy use at Aba-Huab Campsite	146
Table 6.2:	Aba-Huab Campsite water quality analysis results	147
Table 6.3:	Average monthly energy use at Kaziikini Campsite	166
Table 6.4:	Kaziikini Campsite water quality analysis results	167
Table 6.5:	Average monthly energy use at Malealea Lodge	185
Table 6.6:	Malealea Lodge water quality analysis results	186
Table 6.7:	Average monthly energy use at Damaraland Camp	206
Table 6.8:	Damaraland Camp water quality analysis results	207
Table 6.9:	Average monthly energy use at Tembe Lodge	225
Table 6.10:	Tembe Lodge water quality analysis results	226
Table 6.11:	Average monthly energy use at !Khwa ttu	245
Table 6.12:	!Khwa ttu water quality analysis results	247

Table 7.1:	Colour coding categories of selected responses to aid analysis	252
Table 7.2:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 1: Local satisfaction with tourism	253
Table 7.3:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 2: Effects of tourism on communities	255
Table 7.4:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 3: Education	258
Table 7.5:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 4: Community decision making	259
Table 7.6:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 5: Community benefits (SI=staff interviews, CI=community interviews)	261
Table 7.7:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 6: Culture	263
Table 7.8:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 7: Sustaining tourist satisfaction	265
Table 7.9:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 7: Sustaining tourism satisfaction (continued)	267
Table 7.10:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 8: Tourism seasonality	270
Table 7.11:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 9: Economic benefits of tourism	273
Table 7.12:	Daily per capita energy consumption benchmarks at hotels (in kWh)	275
Table 7.13:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 10: Energy management	276
Table 7.14:	Daily per capita water consumption benchmarks at hotels (in litres)	277
Table 7.15:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 11: Water availability and conservation	278
Table 7.16:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 12: Drinking water quality	279
Table 7.17:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 13: Sewage treatment	280
Table 7.18:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 14: Solid waste management	281
Table 7.19:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 15: Controlling use intensity	282
Table 7.20:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 16: Biodiversity and conservation	283
Table 7.21:	Summary of cross-case responses relating to Issue 17: Development controls	284
Box 1.1:	Extract from the Northwest Tourism Master Plan (NTMP)	149

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	African Development Fund
AT	Alternative Tourism
BOCOBONET	Botswana Community Based Organization Network
CBE	Community-Based Ecotourism
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
CPR	Common Property Resources
CPT	Common Property Theory
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
DFID	Department for International Development
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
EA	Ecotourism Australia
EKWS	Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife Service
FTTSA	Fair Trade in Tourism in South Africa
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KCS	Kalahari Conservation Society
LDC	Less Developed Countries
LTDC	Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation
MDC	More Developed Countries
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDT	Malealea Development Trust
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
NACOBTA	Namibian Community Based Tourism Association
NBT	Nature-Based Tourism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PPT	Pro-poor tourism
RETOSA	Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCT	Sustainable Community Tourism
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
STCRC	Sustainable Tourism Co-operative Research Centre
SUNTAT	Sustainable Nature-based Tourism Assessment Toolkit
TFCA	Trans-frontier Conservation Area
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WIMSA	Working Group for Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

***“Ultimately conservation is about people.
If you don’t have sustainable development
around these wildlife parks,
then people will have no interest in them,
and the parks will not survive.”***

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela