
**ECOTOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF TSOLWANA AND
ADDO NATIONAL PARKS IN THE EASTERN CAPE**

By

Mrs. T.Kwinana

University of Fort Hare, South Africa

Abstract

The declaration of certain important areas to be part of reserve in the Eastern Cape has led to severe restriction on consumable natural resources. Restriction is the result of Addo and Tsolwana natural park management strategies, which in turn deny local people access to resources such as fuelwood, hunting and food products within the parks. Survey research methods in the form of Questionnaires, interviews and personal observation were used to obtain both primary and secondary data.

The study examines the potential of ecotourism in stimulating economic activities and resource management practices in rural areas around Tsolwana and Addo national park in Eastern Cape. This study also investigates the extent of involvement of the Parks in stimulating both social and cultural benefits to the neighbouring communities. Public participation of indigenous communities in the activities such as the creation of job opportunities should be encouraged to improve living standards and increase incomes. The capacity of the neighbouring communities should be improved to ensure proper representations in the management activities of these parks.

Introduction

Ecotourism is a purposeful travel to natural areas, understanding the cultural and national history of the environment and also taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people. Ecotourism is also defined as a tool, which effectively manages the environment to ensure sustainability and also ensuring that local population, as part of the environment will share in the benefits.

Eastern Cape has all the requirements to use Ecotourism as an option that can improve the well being of local people and conserves the environment. Eastern Cape offers a variety of scenic beauty, a magnificent coastline teeming with marine life, abundance of indigenous fauna and flora and cultural diversity. Addo and Tsolwana national Parks are used as case studies to prove that that Ecotourism can solve problems or has brought changes in the circumstances faced by rural communities. In this study, the focus is on Ecotourism as an option that can improve the economic and the social well being of the people living nearby the resource centers. The focus is also on Ecotourism as an alternative compensation to people who were resettled from their original land as a result of Parks development. The challenge for this study is to identify negative constraints that prevent tourism from contributing to development and propose strategies that will improve socio-economic profile of the communities.

Problem Statement

It is now a well established fact that South Africa's rural agriculture can not support and sustain the rural communities. In recent years agricultural contribution to total household income has dwindled to less than 7% and rural households have to seek alternative sources of income to supplement income. The collapse of rural peasant economy and the slow development of urban industrial sector have pushed unemployment and poverty levels to almost crisis positions. This is particularly the case in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province, Northern Province and KwaZulu\Natal where unemployment levels are more than 45%. Rural population has entered into various income generating activities including rural informal sector and small rural industries involving poultry farming factory, brick making factory.

In recent years increasing attention has been given to rural tourism as a strategy for rural development. The strategy is to develop and integrate tourism industry to rural development strategies. In the Eastern Cape Province, the previous nationalist government and later the homeland government developed many Game Parks with the purpose of attracting tourists. There was no intention or attempt at integrating rural tourism with the strategies for rural development. Planning and implementation of the Game Park did not include neighboring communities and in some instances communities were relocated from their land and resettled in

places, which later developed as rural townships. In this process communities lost access to some basic environmental, natural and land resources including land, grazing land and to trees which for centuries have been used for medical purposes. Game park development in these areas has therefore imposed negative implications on the land and neighboring communities. The challenge facing the government and development agencies is how to refocus the activities, practical operations and objectives of the existing Game parks so that they embrace ecotourism not only as an ideal but also the new approach to rural development.

Research Questions:

- How were the present national parks developed?
- What is the contribution of the existing game park to rural tourism in these regions?
- What is the role played by the existing game parks to rural development of these areas?
- Were the local communities consulted during the implementation of national parks?
- How were the principles and procedures in the development and establishment of the existing Parks formulated?
- Who were involved in formulating Management and developmental programmes of the Parks?
- How can rural tourism be integrated into rural development strategies?
- How can tourism be developed towards community based tourism development?

Hypothesis

Taking into account the historical context within which the existing game parks were developed in rural areas of the Eastern Cape, it is hypothesized that there is a need to refocus and change not only the principles and objectives of game parks, but also the operational management of the game park so that they would include principles of sustainable rural development. It is hypothesized that an appropriate approach to Ecotourism development is a viable option for rural development and that rural tourism would provide rural communities with wider options for income generating activities. Existing management strategies should be reviewed to encompass local needs. Available infrastructures can be redeveloped to provide and sustain rural development programs. It is also hypothesized that Ecotourism conserve the environment and also allows rural people to share in the benefits of tourism development, therefore ecotourism can make a significance contributions to rural development.

Objectives

- ☞ To identify and examine parameters used in the parks for natural resource management.
- ☞ To identify the difference in the management strategies between Tsoelwana and Addo parks.
- ☞ To investigate the impact of the activities in the parks, on the physical component of the environment.
- ☞ To investigate economic and social benefits of the surrounding communities from the parks.
- ☞ To investigate the extent to which the management of protected areas have been transformed to be in line with RDP philosophy.

Aims

- ☞ To enhance the potential of ecotourism in stimulating rural economy activities and resource management practices in rural areas around Tsoelwana and Addo parks.
- ☞ To reformulate methods used in formulating the management and development programs of the Parks.
- ☞ To propose methods that can be used to show the communities that ecotourism is a viable option for rural development.

Significance of the Study

Ecotourism has been under estimated as an industry that can promote both sustainability and development for rural community. Many people regarded tourism only as a traveling agent. Some have negative images of tourism that, it is for rich people and local people are denied access to their indigenous trees, which they use for medical purpose. In the past, few black South African were allowed to the tourism industry either as tourists or managers (Goudie et al, 1999).

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that ecotourism can be an instrument for rural development. Tourism, if integrated to rural development can lead to rural rehabilitation.

The study seeks to examine the opportunities and constraints to tourism development in the two parks. It will

seek to show the communities that ecotourism can protect natural resources and related objects of cultural heritage. The study can also shows the local people that ecotourism can be a tool for environmental education and also help in resource management for the preservation of the future generation.

Study Areas

The study will be undertaken in Addo Elephant Park and Tsolwana Game Park. The two parks are protected areas found in the Eastern Cape Province. Tsolwana Game Park was developed during the homelands era, under the Ciskei Government. It is found in the Hewu district with Sada and Whittlesea as the neighboring areas. The area is located nearer to Ntabethemba rural villages and Hewu rural areas.

Addo National Park

Addo Elephant Park was proclaimed in 1931 to protect the last remaining Eastern Cape elephants, which were living in the Addo bush (Kerley et al, 1997). The park was proclaimed when only eleven elephants remained in the area. Today this finely tuned ecosystem is a home to a herd of over 300 elephants, the most concentrated elephant reserve in Africa. There are also black Rhino, Cape buffalo, Eland, Kudu and other antelope species. The park is situated 72 kilometers from Port Elizabeth in the Sunday River Valley and Zuurberg Mountain range (South African National Parks, 2000). The proclamation of the park also protected the last remaining buffalo in the Cape Province.

Neighbouring Community

The neighbouring community in the Addo region is Nomathamsanqa. Most of the people employed by the park are from Nomathamsanqa rural community. It is a mixed community with both Xhosa and coloreds. Nomathamsanqa is approximately 10 kilometers from the Addo park. Some of the workers from Nomathamsanqa are commuting everyday to and from the work place, they are transported by a bus provided to them by the park. Some are staying inside the park. Addo park has also employed people from nearby area like Paterson and Kirkwood, there also people from far away places like former Transkei.

Tsolwana Game Reserve

Tsolwana Game Park marks the start of the Karoo plains and contains a range of unique habitats. Its name is derived from the Xhosa word "spike" since the reserve is characterized by a prominent hill in the area. It lies between Whittlesea, Queenstown and Tarkastad encompassing an area of 8500 ha. Nestled on the edge of the great Winterberg mountain range, Tsolwana offers some of the best game viewing in the Eastern Cape. Some

of the wildlife to be seen include Bontebok, Cape Mountain Zebra, Eland, Gemsbok Vaal Rhebok springbok and white Rhino.

Local Communities

Tsolwana park is situated in the Ntabethemba area neighboring Tsolwana is Thembaletu, Tentergate 1, Tentergate 2 and Tentergate 3 rural areas. Most people from these rural areas are employed by Tsolwana park. During the proclamation of the park, people were resettled and were located in an open space in the boundary of the park. This open space was occupied by twenty households and was named Thembaletu. Thembaletu rural area has developed and is now occupied by thirty households.

Research Methods

Survey research methods in the form of questionnaires and interviews were used to obtain primary data. Both tools were used to investigate the impact of tourism industry in Addo and Tsolwana park on the social economic conditions and physical component of the environment. The questionnaire is divided into three sections according to the sub theme of investigation.

Section A: History and the Development Planning of the Park

Section A focused on the planning and the development of Tsolwana and Addo parks. The intention of the study is to access the development strategies of these parks against the development of the local rural communities.

- ☞ Objectives of developing Addo and Tsolwana parks
- ☞ Period of the proclamation of the parks
- ☞ Current plans for parks development
- ☞ Resettlement process (number of people resettled, compensation process, conditions of living)

Section B : Demographic and Socio Economic Profile of Tsolwana and Addo Communities

Section B focused on demographic and socio economic profile of the communities adjacent to the national parks. The primary intention of this study is to assess the social and economic impact of the Parks as tourism

industry and how it could contribute towards development of the neighbouring communities. Questions in this section were design in the following structure:

- ▶ The number of people of living in a house.
- ▶ Their source of income
- ▶ Their monthly income

Section C: Community Based Wildlife Management and Ecotourism

Development

Section C focus on the involvement of local communities in ecotourism development. The aim of this study is to assess on how the traditional way of environmental management together with tourism management be used for ecotourism development. Questions that examine and identify parameters used for natural resource management forms the structure of this section. This section constitute the following structure:

- ▶ Strategies and procedures for resource management
- ▶ Involvement in formulation of rules and regulations
- ▶ Views on the wildlife management strategies
- ▶ Involvement on Ecotourism development strategies

Interviews

Interviews were used in this study to obtain data on the reasons of developing the park in that area, on the impact of tourism on rural development. The interviews were also conducted to obtain data on the strategies and procedures used for resource management. Interviews were conducted with the key respondents in the Tourism industry (Park mangers, tour guides, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism). Interviews were directed to the Park managers. The interview section focuses on the development of the parks in Addo and Tsolwana regions.

These questions will assess if the development of these was for rural development or the conservation of the existing wildlife. Questions were also directed to the tour guides of the parks. The focus is to assess and examine whether the management strategies covers all the activities of the park. Knowing the types of activities offered by the park, enables the investigation of the impact of these activities on physical environment.

The last sections of the interviews were conducted with the tourism agents of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. The section focuses on the future plans of the tourism industry in Eastern Cape. The focus is also on the impact of tourism industry to development of the Eastern Cape.

Discussion of Findings

Ecotourism As a Rural Development Strategy

Through ecotourism development in Addo and Tsolwana number of people are employed. The data reveals that the parks have employed number of people in one household. In Tsolwana, Tembalethu rural area has shown to have the highest percentage of people employed by the park. The results indicate that people of Tembalethu were once the occupants of the area, which is now occupied by the park. They were resettled and located in an open space in the borders of the park. For compensation communal stand water taps were built in and around the area, each household was given a land to practice agriculture and the park employed most of the unemployed people.

The results indicate that local people in both Addo and Tsolwana are employed in various sectors. Employment sectors in these areas are categorized into three sections; administration, conservation and domestic. The results show that most people are employed in the conservation and domestic sectors. Conservation is composed of many departments and each department requires a number of workers due to the nature of work involved. Domestic sector comprised of many departments and it requires a number of workers. Domestic sector requires both illiterate and literate people.

The last sector is known to have a lower percentage, which shows it has employed a smaller number of people. Administration requires skilled and literate workers. Therefore the results indicate that ecotourism is a viable option for the improvement of rural communities, in the sense that, it is an indiscriminative industry, which accommodates skilled and unskilled or illiterate and literate labor.

The data presented on the incomes of people employed by the parks indicates that high skills go with high income. The results shows that those who are employed in the administrative sector earn the highest incomes than other sectors. The data also shows that most people an amount, which is between R501 and R1000 per month, and they are employed in the domestic sector. The results indicate that a lowest income, which is an amount less than R500, is earned by casualities. Casualities are people who are employed when tourism business is at a high rate. Tourism business is mostly high during the hunting season and during holidays.

In the industry local people does not only get employed, there are benefits that they get from the protected areas. The results indicates that local communities especially children from local schools do not pay the entrance fee at the gate of the parks. Free access to the park is the benefit that local schools get from the park to encourage schools to visit and be informed about environmental education.

The results indicate that hunting is one of the tourism activities found in Tsoelwana. Hunting in this park is not the all year round activity, there is a certain period that has been set as a hunting season. This period was set looking at the conservation of the hunted animals and their mating season. Hunting activity is one of the tourism activities that generates a lot of revenue from the park. Local people are also given a free opportunity to be involved in the game of hunting. Hunting is said to be a benefit to the local because they are given the hunting vehicles and the hunting rifles without any cost, however their hunting activities under the supervision of the field ranger.

The results also indicates that local people gets firewood from the dry trees of the parks. Ecotourism in Addo and Tsoelwana have not only employed local people but it has led to the establishment of developmental projects. Most people are employed, obtained skills and environmental educated through this projects.

Impact of Tourism on Environment and Society

This section discusses the relationship between tourism activities and the local environment. It discusses the impacts of tourism to the local environment, be it socially, economically and environmentally. In this discussion environment is referring to natural resources and local communities.

The results indicate that Addo and Tsoelwana are different in their tourism activities however they both have interesting and exciting activities to attract tourists. Tourism activities are different in the sense that there are activities that are not offered in Addo but part of the tourism activities in Tsoelwana

Impact of Ecotourism in Addo national Park

Addo park is an exploration of rural development and the conservation of wildlife in the Addo region. Addo started as a tool to conserve the remaining Eastern Cape elephants, which were living in the Addo bush. Addo has developed to be one of the greatest national park in the Eastern Cape. The results indicates that the number of elephants has grown to 350 and the area is now being supported by four of the big five animals, buffalo, elephants leopard and black rhino. The data also shows that there are also mammals found, bird species and an impressive array of plant species.

Ecotourism in Addo has played a role in the infrastructure development of the area. Through the development project local people has built schools, clinics and school children are taught environmental education through exhibition and workshops run by the park. Ecotourism has also helped in empowering rural communities with skills and through their income they are able to develop themselves socially. Through Mayibuye development projects Addo park has established a sound and good relationship with the neighboring communities. The results indicate that Addo area due to ecotourism development is an ecological sound area and the local communities are environmentally orientated.

Local people in Tourism development

The majority of South African have not been involved in the planning, decision making and development of the tourism industry. Communities have not been involved or consulted in respect of the major investment decision or development proposed for areas in which they live (White paper, 1996). It was only after the new democratic South Africa that the government together with tourism private sector worked on redressing the previous imbalances

The results indicate that local communities in both Addo and Tsolwana are involved in tourism development. In Tsolwana there is a tribal game park that was developed through the development projects. This game park was developed for the benefit of local people and also to bring and promote tourism development in the area. Amaqwathi tribal game was developed in a way that makes Ntabethemba area to offer a variety of tourism activities. This game park is also specializing cultural tourism.

The results indicate that local people are involved in the tourism development by dancing for the tourists, selling craftwork and beadwork to the tourists. Some of these craftworks are being sold to the tourism operators where they are placed in the Curio shops.

Development of Ecotourism in the Eastern Cape

Eastern Cape, because of its accessible wildlife, diverse cultures and impressive scenery has been one of the incredibly attractive areas in South Africa. Ecotourism has become a competitive business in the Eastern Cape because it benefited even the previously neglected groups. Ecotourism has generated incomes from previously neglected group it has brought infrastructure to the rural community.

The study is mainly concentrated on two of the wildlife and nature reserves in the Eastern Cape. The results indicate that Eastern Cape because of its attractive diversity has the support of other Provinces in tourism development. The flow of national tourists to Addo and Tsolwana marks the development of tourism in these

areas and in the Province of Eastern Cape. The results show that Western Cape, by records has been the most visiting Province in both parks.

The development of tourism in the Eastern Cape has not been due to the flow of national tourists only, international tourists have also played a role, spending long vacations in the national parks. The results shows that German has contributed in the development by having a big number of people visiting Eastern Cape.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Addo and Tsolwana national parks has been used as case studies to prove that, ecotourism can be a solution to economic can be a solution to economic and social problem facing rural communities. The focus of the study is on ecotourism being an option for the improvement of the social well being of the people living nearby the attraction center. The challenge in this study has been to identify constraints that prevent ecotourism from contributing towards rural development and propose strategies that will improve socio economic profile of the communities.

Ecotourism is a viable option for rural development in the Eastern Cape. This is supported by the development strategies that have developed in Addo and Tsolwana. Data on the discussion of findings reveals that, ecotourism has made a significance contribution to rural development. A great number of people have been employed in Tsolwana and Addo national park in various employment categories. The findings reveal that a high income goes with high skills and qualification. The contributions of ecotourism to the areas has not only been on employment, there are number of benefits that local people gets from the park.

Although the management strategies of the parks encompass rural people, there are problems related to the management. In Tsolwana most people have indicated that, although they are represented in they are not involved in decision making of the park.

Most of the people employed by the park belongs to low-income group therefore the money from ecotourism cannot fully support and maintain the welfare of the communities. Local communities in this region indicated that although they have representative in the management they are not involve in the decision making. Their representatives are not in senior position they are just ordinary members.

Tourism management should review their management members to include local people in senior positions. Rural communities should participate in the decision making of the park. Rural participation can help in resource management. The traditional way of conserving natural resource together with tourism strategies can help in sustainable tourism development. Tourism operators should grant local people legal authority to

manage its wildlife resource, granting local people control over their resources will make wildlife valuable to them.

References

Ambio journal of the human environment (1998), **Tourism and biodiversity conservation**, published by Royal Swedish academy of Science.

Ashley C., (2000), **Applying livelihood approaches to Natural Resource Management Initiatives: Experiences in Namibia and Kenya**, Overseas Development Institute.

Ashley C, Boyd C. and Goodwin H., (2000) **Pro poor tourism: Putting poverty at the heart of the Tourism Agenda**, Overseas Development Institute.

Barkin D, (1996), **Ecotourism: A tool for sustainable development**.

Barkin D (2000), **Social tourism in rural communities: An instrument for promoting sustainable resource management**.

Barkin D, Pailles C., (1994), **Non governmental organization's community collaboration for ecotourism: A strategy for sustainable regional development**.

Behr A.L., (1983), **Empirical research methods for the human Sciences**, Butterworths publishers, South Africa.

Burgess R.G., (1984), **In the field an Introduction to field research**, Allen and Unwin publishers, London.

Carruthers J., (1995), **The Kruger National Park: A social and political history**, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg.

Doswell R., (1997), **Tourism how effective management makes the difference**, published by Butterworth-Heinmann

Fennel D.A. (1999), **Ecotourism an introduction**, Routledge, London

Fennell D. A. and Smalle B. A., (1992), **Ecotourism and Natural Resource**
Protection: Implication of an alternative form of
Tourism for Host Nation.

Fakir S. (1997) **People and Park**, Enviro Feature.

France L., (1997), **Sustainable Tourism**, Earthscan Publication, United
Kingdom.

Fuggle R.F., (1992), **Environmental Management in South Africa**, Juta and
Company, Cape Town.

Ghimire B. K. (1994), **Parks and people livelihood issues in national parks**
management, published by Blackwel publishers, United Kingdom.

Goudie S.C., Khan F., Kilian D., (1999), **Transforming Tourism: black**
empowerment; heritage and identity beyond apartheid, South
African Geographical journal, volume 81.

Honey M., (1999), **Ecotourism and Sustainable Development**, Island Press,
Washington D.C.

Honey M. S., (1999), **Ecotourism's impact on the environment**, Washing D. C.

Kerly G., Boshoff A., (1997), **A Regional and National Conservation and**
Development Opportunity, University of Port Elizabeth.

Mcintosh R.W., Goeldner C.R. & Ritchie J.R. (1995), **Tourism principles,**
practices & philosophies, published by John Wiley & Sons
Canada

Mowforth M. & Munt I., (1998), **Tourism and sustainability, New Tourism in**
the Third World, Routledge, London.

- Murphy P.E., (1994), **Tourism and Sustainability**, in W. F. Theobald (ed),
Global Tourism: The next Decade, Butterworth- Heineman Ltd,
London.
- Peters K., (1994), **Background on Rural Tourism and Regional Development
presented at the Central and East European Federation for the
Promotion of the Green Soft Rural Tourism Conference**, Karlovo
- Ratz T. & Puczko L., (1998), **Sustainability in Hungarian Rural Tourism**,
Scotland.
- Rogerson C.M., (2001), **Tourism and Spatial Development Initiatives: The
case of the Maputo Development Corridor**, South African
Geographical Journal.
- Shackley M., (1996), **Wildlife tourism**, published by International Thomson
Business Press United State of America.
- Skead C.J., (1987), **Historical mammal incidence in the Cape Province**, Vol 2,
Chief Directorate of Nature and Environmental Conservation, Cape
Town.
- Sundriyal R .C., (1997), **Tourism and Biodiversity Conservation**, the Sikkim
Himalaya- Ambio.
- Swarbrooke J., (1996), **Tourism the development of sustainable rural tourism in
Eastern Cape**.
- Taylor J.S.& Boddan R. (1984), **Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods**
John Wiley & sons, Canada.
- Tapela B.N.& Omara Ojungu P.H. (1999), **Towards bridging the gap between
Wildlife Conservation and Rural Development in Post Apartheid
South Africa: The Case of the Makuleke Community and the Kruger
National Park**, (1999) Vol 81, South African Geographical journal.

Tribe J., Font X, Griffiths N., Vickery R and Yale K., (2000), **Environmental Management for Rural Tourism and Recreation**, Cassell, London and New York.

Tourism Concern and WWF (1992), **Beyond the Green Horizon, A discussion paper on principles for sustainable tourism**, WWF, UK, Godalmig.

Tom Le Quesne, (1997), Southern Africa Environment Project, **Ecotourism Development in the entire Eastern Cape.**

Van Niekerk L., (2000), **Tourism the Eco-connection**, Conserva, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Pretoria.

Wells M.P.& Willams M.D. (1998), **Russia's protected areas in transition, the impacts of Perestroika's economic perform and the move towards democracy.**

Government Publications

Culture, Explore South Africa, Eastern Cape Tourism Board, South Africa.

Eastern Cape Tourism Board (1994), **Eastern Cape, South Africa.**

The Africa Resources Trust, **Sustainable Rural Development**, Driven by CAMPFIRE, Zimbabwe.

Rural Development strategy of the Government of National unity, (1995), Putting Rural people in charge, Pretoria.

White paper on the development and promotion of Tourism in South Africa, (1996), Government of South Africa Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

