

**THE RECENT SHIFTS IN TOURISM IN iSIMANGALISO
WETLAND PARK**

by

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Social Science, in the Graduate Programme in Geography,
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I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Social Science in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously, for any degree or examination in any other University.

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is the fastest growing economic industry and has become one of the leading sources of growth and development in South Africa. However, tourism is in a constant state of flux requiring continuous research to document and analyse these shifting trends. Since 1999, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park (South Africa's first World Heritage Site) has been using ecotourism as part of its development and conservation strategy. This has resulted in the shift in tourism from what used to be a fishing destination prior 1999 to its current form as a premier ecotourism destination. The aim is to analyse and document the shift from mass tourism to ecotourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park, using the Eastern Shores as a case study. Through modernism and postmodernism tourism discourse, this dissertation analyses visitor characteristics, behaviour and perceptions of both tourists and tourism businesses over time in an attempt to describe and explain the tourism shift on the Eastern Shores. This research reveals that there has been a distinct tourism shift in the Park from the 'mass' fishermen created by the Fordist mode of mass and standardised production to the more ecologically inclined 'niche' tourist where the de-differentiation of postmodernism has created diversified forms of tourists and tourism products. Within these broad classifications, this research has discovered the existence of more nuanced tourist profiles. Mass tourists range from the 'sun, sea, sand, sex and sangria' tourist to fishermen. Ecotourists on the other hand range from the casual or mainstream ecotourist who practices a shallow form of ecotourism to the dedicated ecotourist whose activities promote conservation and sustainable development allowing for a deeper form of ecotourism. Further, on the Eastern Shores, domestic coastal 'mass tourists' have also become more ecologically inclined. Previously these tourists would come for one activity, that is, to relax on the beach or fish. At present, the majority of these tourists now also pursue nature based activities, adventure tourism and/or sightseeing. The changes in the tourists visiting the Eastern Shores are representative of the global shifts in tourism that are currently taking place. Tourism is constantly evolving as part of global capitalism and will continue to shape tourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research project was conducted in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park¹ during national changes due to post-1994 social and economic transformation and global shifts in tourism. With the commencement of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI) in 1998; the establishment of the Park and the declaration of iSimangaliso as a World Heritage site in 1999, tourism became the main focus within the park and has had to serve both conservation and economic growth strategies (iSimangaliso Authority, 2008).

With the change of status of the Park to a World Heritage site, tourism within iSimangaliso is shifting to meet the needs of a growing local and global tourism market. In shifting its tourism products (services) to meet the changing demands of the ‘new tourist’, tourism within iSimangaliso has had to incorporate the mandates of both ecological and social sustainability (iSimangaliso Authority, 2008). It is this shift in tourism that will be investigated in this research project.

1.2 Rationale

The proposition of this thesis is that tourism in iSimangaliso is shifting from mass tourism, in the form of ‘sun, sea and sand’ tourism, to the more specific niche tourism, in the form of ecotourism. This dissertation will examine how these shifts have taken place and their resulting effects on tourism in iSimangaliso.

The motivation for choosing this research topic is the need to understand the dynamic shifts in tourism that have occurred in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park since the mid-1990s. As one of South Africa’s most valuable natural and economic assets, it is important to understand these ongoing shifts to ensure strategic tourism planning and development. Moreover, the iSimangaliso Authority has recognised the need to document the shifting tourism patterns in iSimangaliso and initiated a long term Visitor Market Survey in 2009 to track the changing

¹ Hereafter the iSimangaliso Wetland Park will be referred to as ‘iSimangaliso’. The Park was formerly known as the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park. The name change was approved by Cabinet and gazetted on 11 May 2007.

patterns in visitor profile, traffic densities and travel habits. The detailed case study documented in this thesis will serve a basis for these future comparisons and contribute to policy making by the iSimangaliso Park Authority.

Furthermore, this research will add to the growing body of social knowledge on iSimangaliso and World Heritage Sites more widely. The park's biophysical environment has been extensively studied and documented over the years. However, there is a paucity of social research about the park, and this study aims to contribute to this body of knowledge. The tourism research on the park has been relatively recently undertaken and most of it focuses on the economic benefits or the impacts of tourism on the natural environment (Caras, 2000; Turpie, 2005). This study, however, attempts to explain the shifts in tourism through the application of modernist and postmodernist tourism theory (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2001; Urry, 2002). It will provide an understanding as to how these tourism shifts have occurred and in doing so, will provide a knowledge base from which decision making can occur.

1.3 Aim and objectives

Aim: The aim of this study is to analyse the shift in tourism from mass to ecotourism in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, using the Eastern Shores node² in the Park as a case study.

Objectives: In order to achieve this aim, the study's objectives are:

1. To determine the characteristics of visitors to the Eastern Shores in terms of nationality, socio-economic and trip profile.
2. To interrogate the behaviour of tourists travelling to the Eastern Shores in terms of their visitation patterns, attraction to the destination and activities conducted in the Park.
3. To understand visitor perceptions of tourism on the Eastern Shores with regard to their needs and expectations of the destination.

² The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is made up of different nodes; namely: Kosi Bay, Coastal Forest Reserve, Lake Sibaya, Sodwana Bay, uMkhuze Game Reserve, False Bay, Western Shores, Ozabeni, Charters Creek, Eastern Shores and Maphelane

1.4 Overview of the study

Tourism shifts are difficult to analyse due to the complex nature of the tourist's demands, previous experience and expectations, and the variety of the tourist destinations. There are many interlinking factors to take into consideration when analysing shifts in tourism (Urry, 2002). This project will investigate the tourism shift in iSimangaliso from 1999 to 2005 by focussing on the changes in visitor characteristics, behaviour and perceptions.

The main conceptual framework within which this research project will be framed are modernist and postmodernist tourism theory. The shift from modernism to postmodernism in society is broad and has affected all sectors of society (Dear, 2001; Harvey, 1989; Harvey, 2002; Leonard, 1996) including tourism patterns. In terms of tourism, this shift has produced different ways of thinking about tourist destinations and tourist experiences. Thus new forms of tourism have had to be developed to cater for the changing demands (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002).

The modernist period commencing in the early 19th century is defined by the innovative technological advances which were made and which resulted in the intensification and continuous revolution of industrial production (Fordist mode of production) which led to the industrialisation, wage labour and generation of the age of mass consumerism by the working classes (Leonard, 1996). In South Africa, it was the onset of industrialisation in the 1920s that created the white working class concentrated on the Witwatersrand and in the cities and it was this class, with their accumulated wages, that formed the market for mass tourism. The birth of mass tourism led to the production of tourism spaces which were created for mass markets and mass consumption resulting in a very standardised and controlled form of tourism experience (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002). Caras et al (2000) and Turpie (2005) noted that the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso Wetland Park catered only to the mass tourist markets, that is, fisherman and recreational beach users from the mid 20th century until 1999.

The dystopia of modernity gave rise to postmodernism, with a shift from industrial production to a service economy. This in turn led to the gradual demise of mass tourism and the emergence of new patterns of leisure and forms of consumption (Dear, 2001; Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 2002). The diversification and fragmentation of tourist preferences coupled

with technological advances has changed how spaces are produced and interpreted by tourists (Buhalis, 2001). Previously inaccessible or unused spaces became tourist attractions for various niche markets allowing for the needs of the individual consumer to be catered to for (Meethan, 2001). Ecotourism is the growing niche market in the Eastern Shores node of the Park, which previously only catered to mass tourism markets (Caras et al, 2000; Turpie, 2005).

The concepts of tourism prevalent in the modern and postmodern period are useful as they provide a framework to explain why these shifts are taking place in iSimangaliso. These concepts allow for the local situation to be interpreted globally which provides an opportunity for the comparative analysis of iSimangaliso Wetland Park in an international context. It is important to note that that the tourism shifts occurring in iSimangaliso are also part of global tourism trends which have been affected negatively by economic factors like the global recession; political factors like terrorism (September 9/11 attacks in America); and serious health risks like the SARS outbreak (South African Tourism, 2009; Statistics South Africa, 2008). Like South Africa, many countries are changing their tourism practices to reflect ecotourism strategies (Dolnicar, 2006; Dufy, 2002; Duffy, 2006; Meethan, 2006).

Ecotourism has become entrenched as an emerging form of tourism in the postmodern world. In fact, it is one of the fastest growing tourism markets in the world (Duffy, 2006; Meethan, 2006). Ecotourism is based on the concept of sustainable development which assumes that this form of tourism is based on the ethical consumption of natural and cultural goods whilst also ensuring local empowerment and capacity building (Mustonen, 2006).

Theorists have postulated that ecotourism can be located on a continuum from weak to strong sustainability (Fennel and Weaver, 2005). Shallow ecotourism is an anthropocentric concept where propose that conservation activities should protect humans resulting in the tourism activity being superficially based on the principles of sustainable development (Dey and Sarma, 2006; Honey, 1999). Deep ecotourism on the other hand takes into account the intrinsic values of the natural and human environment, actively conserving the natural environment while also promoting sustainable economic development.

The researcher used primary and secondary data in her study. Quantitative and qualitative primary data was collected through structured interviews from the four main stakeholder

groups within the tourism environment; namely the tourists, tour operators, restaurants/ retail businesses and accommodation facilities as well as through a large scale visitor market survey. Primary documentary data was also collected through newspaper articles, tourism related magazines and other research and government documents. Secondary data was collected through a literature review which consisted of published books, journal articles, and unpublished/published dissertations.

1.5 Structure of thesis

Chapter two introduces the reader to the theoretical framework that will guide and inform the collection, analysis and interpretation of the primary data and will provide a conceptual framework for analysing the shift in tourism within the Eastern Shores. This chapter explores how postmodernism and modernism have influenced the shift in tourism. The chapter will also present a critique on mass and ecotourism paradigms in an attempt to further understand how tourism is constructed.

Chapter three provides the background of the study area where the research was conducted. It describes how tourism has developed in iSimangaliso Wetland Park. This chapter contextualises the study area by describing how the Park's tourism strategy fits into the national government's strategy for development and empowerment. It also gives an overview of the historical, biophysical and socio-economic environment of iSimangaliso focusing on the tourism trends that have taken place in the Park.

Chapter four describes the methods the researcher used to collect and analyse the primary data in order to meet the aims and objectives of this research. This chapter describes the interview design used to obtain the quantitative survey data and the qualitative narratives from different tourism stakeholder groups. The researcher also elaborates on the limitations faced during this data collection and analysis. It will also go on to explain the analytical methods used to extract patterns of meaning from the data.

Chapter five will present, interpret and discuss the findings of the study. In this chapter the shift in tourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park is explained in detail using a modernist and postmodernist tourism conceptual framework. The qualitative and quantitative data sets are

presented in themes to show the similarities, differences and interrelationships in the data. The qualitative business interviews will be used to substantiate and explain the statistical findings of the survey.

Finally, chapter six presents the conclusions of the thesis. This chapter provides a summary of the results discussed in chapter five and will also put forward recommendations that may help better define the tourism strategy of the Park. It will present a future tourism research plan for the Park that will allow for a more insightful understanding of tourism in iSimangaliso which should result in enhancing existing strategic tourism planning efforts.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

Since the 1970s there has been a restructuring of the global economy from an industrial to a consumptive form of capitalist accumulation (Harvey, 1989). The shift from modernism to postmodernism, which has taken place in different ways in different places, has affected all sectors of society in its production, distribution and consumption of goods (Dear, 2001; Harvey, 2002). In tourism, this shift led to the development of new forms of tourism that cater to the individual needs and wants of the consumer, constantly evolving in response to fluctuating market preferences (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002).

This chapter will discuss how the shift from modernism and postmodernism has fundamentally influenced and shaped tourism over time. Sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 review the literature on modernisation and postmodernisation and explain how these processes have influenced tourist space, typology and motives. They will also go on to critique the modernist and postmodernist tenets that shape mass and ecotourism paradigms respectively in an attempt to further understand how tourism is constructed.

2.2. Modernization and Mass Tourism

“The modern period was one of vertical and horizontal differentiation; the development of many separate institutional, normative and aesthetic spheres”
(Urry, 1995, 149).

Modernity is divided into two phases. Early modernity existed from the 1500s to the 1800s and laid the foundations for the industrial revolution. During this period, the way society was structured had functionally changed, through the development of the first European colonies; the formation and acceptance of centralised forms of government; and the birth of the nation state (Leonard, 1996; Mokyr, 2000). Simultaneously, technological advances, especially in shipping led to increased trade between European colonies and other countries resulting in the global exchange of money and culture.

At this point, apart from pilgrimages to places of worship, travel was reserved for the upper class. The elite few either travelled for health reasons to hot springs and beach spas; or travel was undertaken for educational purposes on fashionable grand tours which would last up to three years. Here the sons of aristocrats or the rising middle class travelled for scholastic pursuits throughout Europe, Egypt and the Holy lands (Goeldner, C et al, 1990; Urry, 2002).

The industrial revolution gave rise to the second phase of modernity which emerged during the early 19th century transforming the world economy through sustained and ongoing technological advances, particularly in mining, agriculture, manufacturing and transport (Leonard, 1996; Mokyr, 2000). These advances in technology resulted in the continuous revolution of production and subsequently led to the acceleration of economic activity on an unprecedented scale to meet the demands of consumer markets *en masse* (Mokyr, 2000; Urry, 2002). Meethan (2001, 69) succinctly defines this period as the “mass production of standardised products for mass consumption”.

This modernist economic model led to the concentration of labour at factories, mills and mines and facilitated the organisation of labour in the workforce. Trade unions began to institute structural changes within the workplace to improve working conditions (Mokyr, 2000; Urry, 2002). By regularising work hours (8 hours a day, 5 days a week), increasing standard wages and overtime pay, providing benefits, and instituting paid holidays and weekends, the working class could afford to take a vacation. Increasingly, employers also began encouraging their employees to take regular holidays as they believed it increased efficiency at work (Dear, 2001; Urry, 2002).

Prior to the 19th century, the high costs and lengthy time periods involved in taking a trip meant that only a few people could afford to travel. However, through technological advances in transportation through the invention of trains and automobiles, it became possible for more people of different social standings to afford travel (Urry, 2002). In Britain, for example, trains were responsible for the growth of mass tourism at seaside resorts, previously only accessible to the upper classes. Cheap train fares and faster travelling times meant the working class could afford weekend breaks or even day trips to the seaside. In fact, by 1911, fifty five percent of people in England and Wales had taken at least one trip to the seaside (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002).

By the early 20th century, aeroplanes had changed the nature and structure of international tourism leading to the phenomenal growth of new mass tourism markets overseas especially to the Mediterranean coastline with its warmer climate (Boniface and Cooper, 1987; Urry, 2002). The Mediterranean region continues to be a popular mass tourist destination for Europeans. It is estimated that 100 million tourists visit the Mediterranean region annually spending up to 100 billion US dollars (Amelung and Viner, 2007). The following sections will review modern tourist spaces (2.2.1), tourist typology and motives (2.2.2) and critique the modernist tenets that have shaped mass tourism (2.2.3).

2.2.1. *Tourist Spaces*

Tourism involves the commodification of space. Tourist spaces are not abstract concepts rather they are symbolic representations and constructions of a particular social and cultural ethos (Kneafsey, 1998, Meethan, 2006). Tourists consume these spaces and in the process will attach different meanings, values and beliefs to them (Brown, 1993; Ringer, 1998; Saarinen, 1998). Thus a tourist destination is “the creation of socio-spatial forms which provides the framework within which *sic* [a tourist] experience can be organised” (Meethan, 2006, 5). The choice of destination is important and is chosen by the tourist to cater to his/her particular needs and desires (Cooper, 2002; Cooper et al, 1998; Meethan, 2001; Pearce, 1995).

Modernity has restructured tourist spaces in two ways. Firstly, it clearly defined separate spaces for home/work and holiday (Jamal et al, 2003; Meethan, 2001). Theoretically, this binary split is a consequence of the modernist differentiation of space socially into distinct spatial zones according to their function and there is no mixing of social activities between the different zones. This binary differentiation resulted in tourist destinations that were both literally and symbolically separated from spaces of work and home (Dear, 2001; Urry, 2002). Thus mass tourism spaces fulfilled the demands of tourists in the modernist era as they fulfilled the need and demands of the tourist to ‘escape’ from their industrial urban living environments.

In this paradigm, destinations or holiday spaces are created as escapes from the drudgery and responsibility of everyday life (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 1995). In fact tourism destinations are seen as liminal zones in that they are a physical construction of the tourist’s perfect reality (Jansson, 2006; Styhre and Engberg, 2003). Costa (1997) states that spaces, like Hawaii,

represents an earthly paradise for the mainstream American tourist who is looking for respite from everyday responsibilities like work.

Further, mass tourism in developing countries created spaces that were socially and spatially distinct from the local environment. Tourist accommodation facilities, such as resorts, are built as enclaves and do not cater for, nor are accessible by the local people (Aili et al, 2007; Jacobsen, 2003; Urry, 2002). Rather, these enclave spaces are purified in that they conform to set standards of service, cleanliness, and ambience. Enclave tourist spaces are effectively environmental bubbles where tourists are safeguarded from the offensive sights, sounds and smells of the local environment in an effort not to taint the tourist's escape from reality (Edensor, 2001; Jansson, 2006; Wickens, 2002).

Secondly, modernism through Fordist modes of production influenced the nature of these spaces through the economic strategy of mass production (Haldrup, 2001; Meethan, 2001). The holiday camp, resorts, hotels and large scale self catering accommodation facilities reflect this modernist economic strategy in tourism. These accommodation facilities are designed to cater to large numbers of people (mainly families) through the concentration of services like restaurants, spa facilities and games rooms in or within walking distance of the holiday complex. Most resorts or hotels can comfortably accommodate up to 1000 people and rooms are designed to accommodate families (Haldrup, 2001; Urry, 1995).

Seaside towns in developed countries are also such examples of mass markets. In fact, these towns developed solely through catering for mass tourism. In the early nineteenth century, British seaside towns reported a faster population growth rate than manufacturing towns (Jedrzejczak, 2004; Urry, 2002). Brighton, for example, increased its population from 7 000 to 65 000 in just fifty years (Urry, 2002). Essentially these towns are clusters of mass accommodation facilities, restaurants and specialised shops which requires the regular presence of large numbers of people to be successful (Urry, 2002).

2.2.2. *Tourist Typology and Motives*

Tourist typologies and motivations are complex concepts. With the broad diversity of tourists and tourist experiences, there are many variations in the type of tourist visiting an area and the reason/s behind visiting a specific destination (Brown, 1993; Hvenegaard, 2002; Krippendorf, 1989; Pearce, 1995; Witt and Wright, 1993). Salazar (2004), states that most

research into tourist typologies and motivations are generalised and not based on empirical evidence. Thus, while a general distinction in the type of tourist typology and their motivation is helpful, specific case studies are necessary for deeper analysis and understanding. This thesis will use the Eastern Shores as a case study in its attempt to define the typical tourist visiting the Park using them as an indicator to discover whether the type of tourism and their motivations have changed in the area

The tourist experience is all about consuming goods and services that create a pleasurable experience that is different to everyday life. Tourists on holiday can be seen to be searching for stimuli to what is missing in their lives (Boniface, 2001; Pearce, 1995; Trauer and Ryan, 2004). As such, tourists view their holiday environment, both social and natural, with curiosity and appreciation, which Urry (2002) defines as the 'tourist gaze'.

There is no single universal tourist gaze, or way in which tourists gaze upon their holiday environment. Different social groups and time periods have shaped what tourists consider interesting and curious enough for them to consume or gaze upon. Thus the object of the gaze has had different meanings to tourists over time, always reflecting the current ideology and culture of an ever-changing society (Ryan, 2002; Richards and Wilson, 2005; Saarinen, 1998; Stronza, 2001; Wight, 1997).

Within this concept, Urry (2002) has defined two dominant types of gaze, that is,; the collective gaze which is associated with modernism and the romantic gaze which is associated with postmodernism. To the mass tourist, a beach (usually associated with the collective gaze) looks lifeless and strange if it is empty. In this gaze, the presence of many individuals gives the object of the gaze, the beach, a sense of energy and liveliness (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002). So, a tourist destination or experience is only popular or fashionable if it is inundated with tourists. As such, the modern mass tourist will only visit a destination if it is consumed *en masse* (Urry, 2002).

In the collective gaze, modernism organises and orders society into homogenous markets (Haldrup, 2001; Meethan, 2001). Bauman (1992), states that it is a movement towards the uniformity of a modernist society. Tourist commodities are mass marketed on the assumption that consumers share similar tastes; thus leaving them with limited choices. This

suggests that it is the supplier, rather than the consumer that influences and regulates market choices (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002).

As tourist choices in destination and experience are limited to what the holiday package offers, this results in a very controlled production of the tourist experience. (Jamal et al, 2003; Tepelus, 2004). Tourism operators like Thomas Cook, in the early twentieth century, in catering to the mass market, offered cheap standardized packages to popular resort destinations taking care to meet the needs of his mass tourist market by organising every aspect of the trip (Pudney, 1953; Urry, 2002). All the modern tourist had to do was to choose a pre-packaged holiday option and pay the bill (MacDonald, 2004; Urry, 2002).

The modernist differentiation of space separates spaces of work/home and leisure, which has led to tourism activities being seen as ‘an escape’. The modern tourist is involved in the “conspicuous consumption of time freed from the constraints of routine wage earning” (Meethan, 2001, 76). Holidays are not only predictable and controlled but also ensure that the tourist uses his/her time in an unstructured manner, serving no purpose other than to entertain the tourist (Jamal et al, 2003; Meethan, 2001).

Ritzer and Liska (1997, 96) describe the modern mass tourist as the “McDisneyfied tourist” in that they want highly predictable vacations with the creature comforts of home. They want to know in advance what their vacation will cost and where they are going. The mass tourist is almost always surrounded by other people, be it friends, family or the tour group (Redfoot, 1984; Urry, 2002). They will visit famous sites and avoid any real and meaningful contact with the local people or their surrounding environment and their behaviour and movement is controlled by a tour operator and itinerary list. Within this generalised representation of the modern tourist, there are two main variations of the mass tourist (Urry, 2002; Meethan, 2001).

The ‘*sun, sea, sand, sangria and sex*’ tourist, primarily in the United Kingdom and Europe, is a mass tourism model that has been successfully marketed since the 1950s (Buhalis, 2001; Meethan, 2001). This type of tourist is predominately under 35 years; spends their vacation primarily on the beach and parties till the late hours of the morning (Meethan, 2001). These tourists travel once a year to sunny climates, staying on average 10 days and spend their days searching for absolute pleasure and relaxation (Ashworth, 2004; Hamilton et al, 2005; Spode,

2004). Wickens (2002, 838) describes the visitors as “willing consumers of sensual pleasures”. Holidaymakers visiting the city of Kalimeria, a coastal tourist destination in Northern Greece typified the *sun, sea, sand, sangria and sex* tourist. Sex, getting drunk, waking up late and relaxing on the beach were observed to be the common theme among these tourists (Wickens, 2002).

Family tourism is another form of mass tourism that is still dominating the market. Children play an important factor in choosing destinations, in that there need to be appropriate holiday activities that suit their needs. This usually involves going to the seaside or amusement parks like Disneyland (England Research, 2005; Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, 2002). They also determine when the family goes on holiday, that is, during school vacations; and the length of holidays, which is usually a week or more (Jackson, 2003; Meethan, 2001).

Visiting friends and relatives is another form of family tourism where the determining factor in choosing a holiday destination is family obligations rather than personal choice. Here, the vacation will usually last four or more days over peak seasons (Braunlich and Nadkarni, 1995; Jackson, 2003). In Britain, in 2005, it was estimated that 32% of all trips taken were family holidays (England Research, 2005)

Importantly, tourists engaging in mass tourism of some form, will revisit the same destination and experience the same gaze either twice in their lifetime or will continuously return to the same destination (Rassing and Sørensen, 2001). These repeat visits allow the consumer to develop a sense of place or attachment to the destination that is further enhanced each time he or she revisits the destination (George and George, 2004). Here, safety and predictability are therefore important determining factors when choosing a destination as repeat visitors eliminate risk and uncertainty by using tried and tested destinations (Meethan, 2001).

Further, repeat visitors differ in their wants and needs to first time visitors. While first time visitors want to explore different activities in an attempt to create a unique experience, repeat visitors are usually content to focus on relaxation. Thus, whilst first time visitors are exploring and gathering information, repeat visitors are engaged in recreational pursuits, such as snorkelling, fishing and swimming, as they are already familiar with their environment and do not need to explore it. Hughes and Maurisson-Saunders (2002) and Maja and Ruzzier

(2006) state that repeat visitation is essential in maintaining an economically sustainable tourism destination as it provides a predictable and steady flow of tourists throughout the year sustaining tourism businesses.

2.2.3. *Critique of Mass Tourism*

This section will critique the tenets of modern mass tourism which is criticised as being an unsustainable model of tourism and is thought to cause large scale natural and social environmental problems through its modernist doctrine of economies of scale (Duffy, 2002; Yongong, 1996).

The technocratic ethic that modernism espouses is in direct conflict with environmental principles. Mass tourism's drive for unrestricted economic growth and development does not factor in ecological carrying capacities (Leonard, 1996; Meethan, 2001). Rather, mass tourism relies on technological solutions to overcome what it views as simply environmental constraints (Hajer, 1995). This assumption allows for growth to happen indefinitely resulting in negative environmental impacts (Vera-Rebollo and Ivars-Baidal, 2003).

Such is the case with coastal tourism development on the Pacific islands where unrestricted mass coastal tourism development has led to the degradation of the natural environment, habitat destruction and ecosystem damage, loss of marine resources, marine pollution and significant alteration of natural hydrological processes (Hall, 2001). The mass tourist, although appreciating the ecological values of the marine environment, will however consume them, purely for leisure experiences. This can be seen with the majority of 4x4 users in South Africa who, although concerned with protecting beach ecology, are still in favour of driving on the beach and protest strongly against the nationally implemented 4x4 beach driving ban (Turpie, 2005).

On the other hand, there is a rising school of thought that questions whether present day mass tourism is more destructive to the natural environment than small-scale tourism and argues that mass tourism has evolved from its early unsustainable beginnings (Honey, 1999a; Okech, 2009; Price et al, 1999; Tucker, 2001; Zwirn, 2005). Luck (2002), suggests that small-scale tourism does not necessarily equate to smaller impacts on the natural environment. Although mass tourism alters the natural environment quite substantially with its high concentrations of people and infrastructure, it is spatially contained within a certain area. As such, a mass

tourism destination absorbs the impacts of tourism in a 'sacrificial zone' and in so doing directs resource use away from ecologically sensitive areas (Luck, 2002).

Examples of this are seen in Phuket and Bali where National Parks occur near areas of high mass tourist concentrations. This enables the conservation of these natural ecosystems as the effects of mass tourism is siphoned off by the tourism towns. In addition, it also allows for sustainable forms of mass ecotourism to develop (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998). It may not be ecotourism in its purist form but mass ecotourism in Phuket and Bali is stated as being "low-impact and non consumptive; educational; ethical and locally orientated; and dedicated to environmental conservation (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998, 14).

Mass tourism is also seen as economically unsustainable for developing countries as foreign ownership usually dominates the mass tourism market. In fact, mass tourism favours the growth of transnational companies who create exclusive elite tourism islands that are detached from the local environment where locals are only able to access these markets through menial jobs (Brohman, 1996; EQUATIONS, 2007). In addition, these multinational hotels continue to outsource cheaper goods and services from foreign markets in an effort to maximise profit, resulting in further stifling in the empowerment and development of local enterprises (Martin de Holan and Phillips, 1997; Tepelus, 2004).

It could also be said that the international mass tourism is also to blame for the poor development of local markets as they do not find it easy to actively integrate themselves within their host environment. Their tourism experience is usually contained within the safety of the resort resulting in tourism spending being absorbed by the resort rather than filtering out into local markets (Brohman, 1996; Urry, 2002).

Furthermore, the system of mass production is largely criticised as being inflexible (Harvey, 1989; Leonard, 1996; Prasad, 2006). As a result, mass tourism products cannot respond quickly to changes in the market resulting in a slump in tourism. However, Conti and Perelli (2005) disagree with this assumption stating that mass tourism markets have changed to incorporate new production patterns.

It is argued that by "tapping into the increasing desire among mass tourists for novel, adventurous and natural experiences" the mass tourism market is now offering new and

diverse products (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998, 1; Papatheodorou, 2004). For example, shifting the location of the mass tourism market to more exotic locations gives modern forms of tourism a competitive advantage (Meethan, 2001). Further, packaged holidays have become far more exciting and adventurous than their predecessors in an attempt to cater to the changing needs of the modern consumer (Urry, 2002).

In addition, the conventional mass tourism industry is beginning to change by incorporating sustainable practices. Corporations like the Fair-Mont Hotels and resorts, Inter-Continental Hotel and British Airways are now leading the way in environmental responsibility by adopting a code of environmental ethics. Moreover, mass tourism activities, such as fishing, are incorporating ecotourism best practices into their operations in order to minimise the negative and enhance the positive aspects of mass tourism impacts on the host destination (Okech, 2009; Zwirn et al, 2005).

Harvey (1989) and Oakes (1998) further criticise the mass tourism industry for causing the loss of cultural heritage through its processes of creative destruction. In the effort to improve the pre-modern environment for the comfort of tourists, modern development completely destroys past structures to replace them with new spaces thus eradicating the distinctive history and cultural fabric of such environments (Harvey, 1989). Such an example is found in China where many parts of the traditional city have disappeared (within the context of creative destruction) to create China's new tourist landscape (Oakes, 1998).

Many theorists argue for the eradication of mass tourism based on the above criticisms (Duffy, 2002; Honey, 1999a). However, mass tourism is still an important industry that sustains the economies of many countries. And as long as there remain large numbers of tourists whose purpose is to relax and not do anything constructive, there will always be a market for mass tourism (Krippendorf, 1989).

2.3. Postmodernism and Niche Tourism

“Postmodernism involves de-differentiation. There is a breakdown of distinctiveness of each sphere and of the criteria governing each” (Urry, 1995, 149).

The shift towards postmodernism began in the 1970s when the political economy shifted towards the globalisation of markets (Dear, 2001; Yong Hak et al, 2006). Advances in communication technology with the creation of the internet and email allowed for easy access to information and instantaneous communication between countries. Simultaneously, the decentralisation of production and manufacturing led to the outsourcing of services across geopolitical boundaries. These two factors allowed for the unprecedented movement of information, money and people on an international scale in what has been called the 'network society' (Bertens, 2005; Prasad, 2006).

Postmodernism shifted society from "industrial capitalism", (a Fordist mode of production); to a "transnational information-age economy" (post-Fordist mode of production) where time and space is compressed and the creation of culture and identity is continuous (Taylor, 2004, 116). This translated into uncertainty and rapid fluctuations in consumer markets which led to the creation of a flexible, just-in-time production industry that is able to meet the demands of these ephemeral markets (Bauman, 1992; Meethan, 2006).

This continuous flux has also led to a market shift from the consumption of goods to the consumption of services, the latter being better able to cope with the transient nature of the postmodern consumer market. This change in consumption patterns has led to the development of new service sectors and markets as well as the intensification of innovation in commerce, technology and society (Dear, 2001; Meethan, 2006).

In relation to tourism, postmodernism has radically altered the industry by deconstructing mass tourism and segmenting it into new patterns of consumption creating diverse and novel types of tourism (Jamal et al, 2003; Mustonen, 2006). Through post-Fordism many different types of niche tourism have evolved and continue to evolve to meet the demands of a consumer driven market. Niche tourism is highly specific, focused and selective; concentrating its resources in narrowly defined markets such as adventure, urban, sport, and ecotourism to name a few. (Robinson and Novelli, 2005).

Theoretically, the fragmentation and diversification of tourism represents the tenets of postmodernity. Postmodernism generates a chaotic heterogeneity where there are no boundaries or hierarchies (Jameson, 2002; Urry, 2002). Harvey (2002, 170) describes postmodernism as acknowledging "the multiple forms of otherness as they emerge from

differences in subjectivity, gender, sexuality, race and class, temporal and spatial geographic locations and dislocations”. The following sections will review postmodern tourist spaces (2.3.1), and the tourist typology and motives (2.3.2).

2.3.1. Tourist Space

As previously stated, postmodernism ushered in an era of de-differentiation which diversified and fragmented tourism spaces in two ways. Firstly, the introduction of technology made it possible for both people and money to be transported around the world opening previously inaccessible spaces for travel. This resulted in increased and varied choices in tourist destinations and attractions that cater for the needs of the individual consumer (Bauman, 1989; Meethan, 2006; Urry 1995).

Secondly, manufacturing was replaced by the service economy as the main form of economic growth. New forms of investment and employment in the service industry have resulted in the re-interpretation or the revitalisation of (previously one dimensional) spaces into tourist attractions (Collings, 2004; Richards and Wilson, 2005). For example, many urban areas that were used solely for the purposes of work have been branded into distinctive tourist attractions through heritage, urban, sport and conference tourism (Haldrup, 2001; Hall, 1995; Millar, 1991). Furthermore, business and conference tourism is a niche market that is on the increase (International Trade Centre, 1999; Urry, 2002).

Postmodernism has also changed how space is produced and interpreted and in doing so created a spatial narrative that allows for new and fragmented consumptive patterns. These represent the diverse and eclectic preferences of the individual consumer (Meethan, 2001, 2006; Mustonen, 2006). In turn, the world has become a landscape of consumption where almost every space has the possibility of becoming a tourist destination, giving rise to very different forms of leisure experiences (Meethan, 2006; Urry, 2002).

For example, through the rise of ecotourism, areas once viewed as wild and harsh are now places of quiet contemplation, rejuvenation and scenic beauty (Garrod and Wilson, 2004; Urry, 2002). Even the most unlikely spaces are now popular tourist destinations. Regions once avoided and shunned by the global community are now popular products willingly consumed by tourists. Auschwitz-Brikenau, Changi Jail in Singapore, Pearl Harbour and Robben Island in South Africa are a just a few examples of popular destinations in the dark

tourism market where death and suffering have become the focus of the dark tourist gaze providing the consumer with a meaningful hyper real tourism experience (Stone, 2006; Strange and Kempa, 2003).

More recently, the de-differentiation of postmodernism has created greater specialisation in niche markets where specific aspects of a tourism product are aggressively marketed usually to revive declining tourist destinations (Formica and Muzaffer, 1996; Hoyle, 2001). In Wales, Swansea for example, the urban tourism niche market is being divided into many smaller products namely; the Swansea Summer Bay Festival and the Dylan Thomas tourism product (Swansea being the birthplace of this famous poet) (Jenkins and Jones, 2002).

Additionally, many destinations that previously catered to one major mass market segment are now diversifying their product offering different types of tourism products that cater to different niche market segments. The purpose of this strategy is to maintain a sustainable and viable tourism destination. The Mediterranean coast for example, which catered wholly to beach tourism, is now diversifying to include heritage tourism to sustain its market (Ashworth, 2004).

Globalisation of the tourism industry has led to substantial change in defining what is regarded as extraordinary enough to cast our gaze on. Mass tourism resorts were thought to be unique because of the concentration of sea, sun and sand. However, this can now be manufactured almost anywhere for tourists to gaze on. The popularity of the British seaside resort has declined as this once unique attraction is now easily accessible in many other parts of the world. Also, extraordinary experiences can now be found in many places not just the seaside (Meethan, 2006; Urry, 2002).

Postmodernity is the period in which a highly competitive market has emerged. Even before a holiday has begun, tourism spaces are not just compared on a national level, but now also on an international scale and almost instantaneously through the internet or television. This has resulted in certain countries specialising in one type of tourism product, for example the United Kingdom markets itself successfully as *the* historical and heritage tourism destination while Africa, is now known throughout the world as the premier destination for ecotourism. (Bauman, 1992; Nurick, 2000; Urry, 2002).

Following the de-differentiation of markets and sectors in postmodernity, tourist spaces have also become heterogeneous in that the boundaries between the tourist accommodation spaces and the local environment are now blurred (Urry, 2002). In other words, instead of the enclave bubble effect, tourists can mingle with the locals, a scenario normally only associated in the past with unplanned tourism destinations. In fact, tourist spaces are being purposely designed to integrate seamlessly into the local environment allowing the tourist to have a more authentic experience (Aili et al, 2007; Edensor, 2001; Redfoot, 1984).

Tourist accommodation is also changing. Small units in the form of bed and breakfasts, guest houses, country houses and small independent or boutique hotels are on the increase replacing hotel chains and self catering facilities. This change is in response to the erratic and variable tastes of tourists. The seasonality of postmodern tourism which facilitates the growth of small flexible businesses that can quickly adapt to the unpredictability of current tourism trends rather than the hotel consortia which are not designed to cope with such a volatile market (Boniface, 2001; Urry, 2002). As Ashworth (2004, 2) states, “tourists are simply more mobile than the hotels that accommodate them”.

Small hospitality businesses cater to niche markets and are flexible enough to customise their services to meet the needs of the individual guest creating unique tourist experiences (Main, 2002; Morisson 2002). The rise of luxury lodges in South Africa’s protected areas for example caters primarily for ecotourists who want a high end ecotourism experience. Luxury lodges such as Singita Ebony in the Sabi Sands Reserve, in South Africa, market themselves as a small, private and exclusive facility that offers travellers very personalized wildlife encounters that cannot be found anywhere else (Cejas, 2007).

2.3.2. *Tourist Typology and Motives*

This section will describe how postmodernist tenets have shaped the type of present day tourists. Postmodernism has created multidisciplinary and multidimensional forms of tourism that appeal to the diverse tastes of tourists (Buhalis, 2001; Trauer, 2004). In doing so, postmodernism caters to the individuals’ needs and wants, refusing to accept the modernist concept of the undifferentiated mass thereby transforming the way in which the tourist gaze is produced and consumed (Bauman, 1992; Urry 2002).

There is an increasing trend for people to want to go on real or alternative holidays which is not controlled and standardised for the mass market. These holiday-makers even differentiate themselves from (mass) tourists referring to themselves as travellers who, unlike tourists, consciously reject all forms of modernisation in search of an authentic tourist experience (Clark, 2004; Krippendorf, 1989; Myles, 2003; Salazar, 2004). Many tour operators now advertise holidays “not as a trip for the tourist but a voyage of discovery for the traveller” (Urry, 2002, 86).

Backpackers typify the profile of the alternative traveller. They assert their individuality through their travelling by actively rejecting the conformity and certainty of packaged holidays. Destination choice and experience is chosen and controlled entirely by the backpacker whose ad hoc planning is never certain or constant. Backpackers are constantly in search for destinations that are off the beaten track and willingly take risks to gain a more authentic experience of the host country and its people (Allon, 2004; Broad and Spencer, 2008; Scheyvens, 2002; Sørensen, 1999).

This change is reflected in Urry’s (2002, 43) concept of the ‘romantic gaze’ (typically associated with postmodernism) which is based on the notion that “the self is found not in society but in solitudinous contemplation of nature”. The romantic tourist wants to gaze at the object and not upon other people. In fact, the presence of crowds can negatively affect the emotional tone of the object and in doing so ruining the gaze. For the romantic tourist this is a personal and spiritual experience that he or she will only share with significant others (Krippendorf, 1989; Trauer and Ryan, 2004; Urry, 2002).

The tourism trend therefore, is towards real holidays where consumers want to be travellers rather tourists, preferring to customise their holiday experience (Myles, 2003). Tour operators have tapped into this growing market by offering services where the consumer has the opportunity to individualise their tourist experience through flexible holiday packages over the internet. Tourists are now able to build their own itineraries and thus control their holiday experience (Myles, 2003; Urry, 2002, 86). Moreover, automated booking over the internet allow tour operators to access various special interest holiday markets that were previously not economically viable if they had to do it manually due to the low numbers of customers (Karcher, 1996).

Tourism has always promoted the visual aspects of tourist attractions, thus the tourist gaze has always been attracted to spectacles like Niagara Falls and Disneyland (Urry, 1995; Urry, 2002). Postmodernism has increased the range of objects of the tourist gaze. Contemporary tourists do not want to gaze at the same objects rather; they want new and unique pleasures to gaze upon each time they go on holiday. This has allowed for the spread of a type of tourism on a global scale which continuously seeks to source ever new objects for the contemporary tourist to gaze on in solitude (Boniface, 2001; Saarinen, 1998; Trauer, 2004; Urry, 2002).

Whilst early forms of mass tourism catered to the working class, postmodern tourism targets the growing middle class, resulting in a different type of tourist. Generally, these tourists earn a higher monthly income and tend to be more conscious and careful in spending their money. They are usually highly educated and use their leisure experience to collect knowledge about their surrounding natural and cultural environment through meaningful and positive contact with local people and local forms of transport, food and accommodation (Meethan, 2001; Salazar, 2004).

Furthermore, postmodern tourists take the initiative to experience and explore their new environment using their time in a more conscious manner. Additionally, these tourists will tend to have shorter (usually 1-3 days) but more frequent vacations that are individually tailored to suit their needs, thus maximising their tourist experience (Pike, 2007; Salazar, 2004). It is estimated that 70% of the Western European market book their own tours and are increasingly taking two or more short breaks throughout the year (Buhalis, 2001).

Ashworth (2004, 4) categorically states that there has been a “shift in product from the mass production of a low cost homogenous products to a more heterogeneous higher cost product for a differentiated market”. This has resulted in forms of tourism that have developed not solely for the pursuit of leisure or escapism but which can also serve as a tool for development and conservation (Salazar, 2004). Such forms of tourism require relatively low capital investment and brings in much needed employment and wealth to struggling economies, the benefits of which are seen relatively quickly compared to other developments (Ghimire, 2001; Urry, 2002).

A rising conservation ethos among the middle classes has changed the way these consumers value and perceive the environment (Ashworth, 2004). Tourists are not only more sensitive

to their environment but also very proactive in choosing tourism alternatives that are geared towards conservation and sustainability (Myles, 2003; Wight, 1997). These travellers challenge their world view through their destination experience (Salazar, 2004). This type of travel, now popularly phrased as ecotourism, has provided an ethical alternative to the ‘sun, sea, sand, sangria and sex’ tourism resulting in a deliberate shift to more sustainable forms of tourism (Mustonen, 2006; Salazar, 2004).

Volunteer tourism, for example, developed through tourists being willing to use their vacation to work in and/or fund community and conservation related projects in developing countries like Africa, Asia and Latin America (Broad and Spencer, 2008; Gray and Campbell, 2007). Another variation within this niche tourism are NGO study tours. Here development organisations provide tours where participants visit development projects and meet with related community and development organisations to disseminate knowledge and ultimately work towards supporting and improving that community project (Broad and Spencer, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). Another example is the study tours offered to the Himalayan Home-stays in Ladakh where participants from South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and India shared their wealth of experience and skills which went on to enhance existing home-stay projects in the various countries (Govender, pers comm., 2009).

Tourism businesses also have changed to meet the growing demands of the rising eco-sensitive tourist market (Burton, 1998; Holden, 2003). Many tourism businesses now specialise in offering “conservation holidays” where they cater to a very specialised yet growing niche market (Carey and Gountas, 1997; Gray and Campbell, 2007; Hjalager, 1997). Further, businesses have also had to curb their environmental impact in an effort to be sustainable or eco-friendly (Honey, 1999a). In fact, many tour companies and accommodation facilities now advertise their environmental and socio-economic best practices, using it as a marketing tool to attract the conservation minded tourist (Tapper and Font 2004). The following section will elaborate on ecotourism as a form of alternative tourism and critique the postmodernist tenets that have shaped ecotourism. This thesis will only elaborate on the ecotourism niche market as ecotourism forms the tourism strategy for the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

2.4 Ecotourism

By the 1970s, environmental destruction in the pursuit of economic growth and development coupled with a failed preservationist management system, stimulated efforts to curb the rampant environmental degradation which led to the birth of an alternative conservation responses in the form of sustainable development (Holden, 2003; Honey, 1999a). Sustainable development is a conservation management tool that seeks to balance the use and protection of natural resources so that it occurs within the carrying capacity of the environment, allowing for the continuation of resource use for future generations (Holden, 2003; Honey, 1999b).

The notion of sustainable development has become entrenched in the postmodern world shifting to a degree the consumers' value systems from the pursuit of material goals and personal safety to making conscious choices that will lead them to personal growth and sustainable living (Tzortzaki, 2006). Consequently, most forms of development including tourism now incorporate the tenets of sustainability into their product so as to appeal to the changing consumer preferences (Meethan, 2001; Van Winkle, 2005).

By the 1980s, developing countries adopted sustainable tourism, now popularly phrased as ecotourism, in an attempt to put in place a viable alternative to their unsustainable economic activities (Honey, 1999b). Within ten years, ecotourism became the trend in travel and formed the main economic driver for many developing countries with tourists from the United States, Northern Europe, Great Britain, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands dominating the ecotourism market (Allen and Brennan, 2004; Eagles, 1995).

In 2000, ecotourism was a global brand and almost every country now markets some form of ecotourism opportunity (Allen and Brennan, 2004; Honey, 1999b). Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the tourism industry (Dolnicar, 2006; Dufy, 2002; Duffy 2006). According to Clifton and Benson (2006, 39) ecotourism is “enjoying buoyancy and growth exceeding that of the wider tourism sector”.

There are many definitions of the concept of ecotourism. From analysing various literature sources, there appear to be three key themes running through these definitions. Firstly,

ecotourism is defined as a nature based economic activity that is linked to sustainability (Brisassoulis, 2002; Diamantis, 1999; Fennel, 1999; Fennel and Ebert, 2004). The natural resource is the tourist commodity and has to be protected in order to accrue economic benefits (Fennel and Weaver, 2005; Hanna, 2009; Honey, 1999b; Liu, 2003). Thus the management principle behind ecotourism is focused on the ethical consumption of its natural asset (Mustonen, 2006; Sirakaya et al, 1999; Urry, 2002; Yongong, 1996).

Secondly, for ecotourism to be viable it must benefit and empower local people³. Economic incentives and capacity building of the local community ensure local commitment to the protection of ecotourism assets (Brisassoulis, 2002; Fennel, 1999; Fennel and Ebert, 2004; Fennel and Weaver, 2005). Additionally, ecotourism must also strive to maintain the cultural values and belief systems of the host population (Hanna, 2009; Honey, 1999b; Liu, 2003; Mustonen, 2006; Urry, 2002; Wiezsmann, 2001).

Lastly, the ethical consumption of the natural and cultural environment is a responsibility that lies squarely on the shoulders of the ecotourist who must endeavour to observe, understand and respect the cultural and natural history of their destination. For the ecotourist their holiday is a learning experience and a journey of self development rather than just a pleasure seeking exercise (Doan, 2000; Fennel and Weaver, 2005).

The de-differentiation of postmodernism has resulted in diversification within the ecotourism market leading to a range of ventures from adventure tourism, to research or volunteer tourism, to nature or wildlife tourism (Clifton and Benson, 2006). Within these tourism types, Vaughan (2000) classifies four very different types of nature tourists from the *hardcore ecotourist*, in the form of scientists, volunteer and environmental groups that visit destinations to actively conserve and protect the natural and social environment; to the *dedicated ecotourist*, in the form of nature and wildlife tourists who visit only protected areas thus contributing financially to conservation efforts; to the *mainstream ecotourist*, who are mass ecotourists that want to experience nature that has been popularised in the media or by other tourists. Examples of these activities are visiting the Amazon rainforests or experiencing Jane Goodall's mountain gorillas. Lastly, there are the *casual ecotourists*, for

³ Other community based tourism initiatives exist to also provide local beneficiation. These range from agri-tourism, homestays and cultural tourism initiatives

whom visiting protected areas or experiencing nature is not the main objective but rather incidental as it is part of a broader set of tourist experiences (Lindeburg, 1991; Sung, 2004).

Adventure tourists can be labelled as casual ecotourists as for them “nature is but a stage for human play” (Eagles, 1995, 4). Visiting a protected area is incidental for adventure tourists as the main reason for travelling to a particular destination is for the activity or sport it offers (Eagles, 1995; Sung, 2004).

As can be seen, the ecotourist⁴ is defined by the sustainability of the tourist activity ranging from weak to strong sustainability, thus resulting in many different types of tourism under the ecotourism label (Duffy, 2002; Vaughan, 2000). Tourists can play either a passive or active role in promoting environmental and socio-economic responsibility when interacting with the host destination. Acott et al (1998), Dey and Sarma (2006), Diamantis (1999), Dolnicar (2006), Fennel and Weaver (2005), Honey (1999a) and Ryan et al (2000) define ecotourists along a gradient of strong to weak sustainability (refer to Figure 2.1).

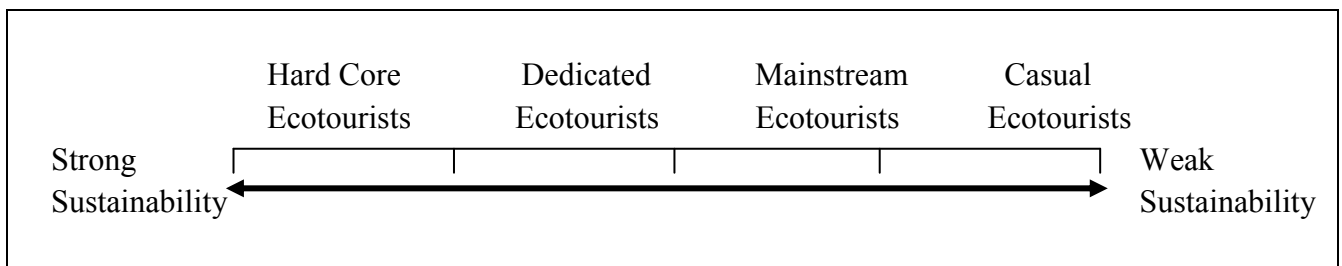


Figure 2.1: Spectrum of ecotourists (adapted from Alampay and Libosada, 2003; Burton, 1998; Fennel and Weaver, 2005; Vaughan, 2000).

Shallow ecotourism concentrates solely on benefiting humans where conservation only takes place to protect human health and welfare. It is a deeply anthropocentric concept, where nature is only valuable if it benefits people (Acott et al, 1998; Honey, 1999a). Shallow ecotourists seek only pleasure and are thus concerned with the spectacle of the natural and cultural environment, consuming standardized and commoditised tourism that provides a superficial aesthetic environmental experience (Dey and Sarma, 2006; Ryan et al, 2000).

According to Burton, (1998), shallow ecotourists are well educated, require full accommodation infrastructure and services and will spend usually a day or less of their entire

⁴ An ecotourist is a postmodern tourist and these terms are used interchangeably in the thesis

holiday on nature tourism activities. Shallow ecotourism supports “steady-state sustainability” where tourists have no impact on the natural environment in that they leave it in the same state that they found it in (Alampay and Libosada, 2003, 9).

Deep ecotourism promotes sustainable development, taking into account the intrinsic values and rights of both the human and the natural environment. It is designed to conserve the natural environment while also promoting economic development; in effect protecting the natural and human resources it depends on. Deep ecotourists will actively seek to connect to the natural and social environment around them in an attempt to understand and engage positively with their host destination and its people (Acott et al, 1998; Honey, 1999b; Ryan et al, 2000).

Burton (1998), describes deep ecotourists as usually having a postgraduate degree, requiring very basic accommodation facilities and services and spending their entire holiday immersed in natural and cultural tourism activities. Alampay and Libosada (2003, 9) state that “deep ecotourism supports a concept of sustainability wherein visitors can enhance or improve the natural environment through donations or volunteer activity”.

Critique of Ecotourism

The sustainability rhetoric of ecotourism has been debated by many theorists who question whether ecotourism is better than mass tourism, criticising the very tenets that ecotourism was founded upon (Campbell et al 2008;; Hanna, 2009; Tomaso and Butler, 2003).

It is widely known that ecotourism models have presented both opportunities and threats to the natural, social and economic environment in countries like Costa Rica, Goa, Nepal, South Africa and the Maldives to name a few (Nepal, 2000, Stem et al, 2003; Sugiyarto, 2003). Research on ecotourism in the Bay Islands, Honduras, for example, shows the negative economic and environmental costs in that the local poor bear the brunt of environmental degradation while receiving few of the benefits (Campbell et al, 2008).

Although deep ecotourists are thought to have a minimal impact on the environment, Fennel and Weaver (2005) believe that they cause more damage than shallow ecotourists. In their pursuit for pristine areas, deep ecotourists are inadvertently introducing foreign pathogens into these remote areas. For example, the penguins in Antarctica have contracted the poultry

virus from tourism. Shallow ecotourists on the other hand are concentrated in small areas thus minimising the impact of their presence to the environment (Cohen, 2002; Fennel and Weaver, 2005).

Additionally, with the current rapid growth of ecotourism, many in industry merely label themselves as green tourism destinations in an attempt to be more marketable. These supposedly 'eco-lite' developments are usually mass tourism models with little or no sustainable practices. Such an example is found in Papagayo resort in Costa Rica which holds two golf courses, shopping centres and a polo field but is officially labelled as an eco-development (Honey, 1999a).

Campbell et al (2008) and Nash (1977) perceive ecotourism as a form of western imperialism as it is the construction and presentation of a specific western idealisation of the natural and cultural environment. Even with the engagement of the local community, it is still a particular western view of conservation and tourism production that is defended, a view that might contradict the worldview of local people (Campbell et al, 2008).

Furthermore, this western protectionist paradigm also promotes pristine natural destinations and markets the image of a natural environment untouched by human activity. Usually this means disregarding local needs and historical resource use rights by restricting access and promoting low or no use zones, in other words creating unspoiled areas that tourists can visit (Alampay and Libosada, 2003; Campbell et al 2008; Wilshusen, 2002). Subsequently, this has led to the development of exclusive wildlife lodges and private game reserves which present the western idealisation of untouched areas for tourists to consume. These facilities offer a very high end tourism product and usually have negligible impacts on nature as the object of the gaze. This form of tourism is criticised for its elitism as only the wealthy few can afford this experience with local people only accessing these eco-elite spaces through unskilled jobs (Campbell et al 2008; Cohen, 2002). Thus, this ecotourism model is no different to a resort model as it produces the same enclavic spaces and little or no socio-economic development (Meethan, 2001).

Moreover, Campbell et al (2008, 207) states that when ecotourism includes local people it is often through stereotyping "the image of the noble savage, tribal people living traditional lifestyles in harmony with their environment". This attempt at preserving cultural

authenticity limits the way local people interact with the natural environment, removing their choice and agency and reiterating unequal power relations between developed and developing countries. However, it must be noted that in some cases local people have utilized this stereotype to gain further or exclusive access to natural resources and economic development (Greenwood, 1977; Hanna, 2009). Such examples are found in iSimangaliso Wetland Park where local communities have used their historical claims to garner land ownership and sole harvesting rights of mussels in marine protected areas.

For many countries, especially developing countries, ecotourism is seen as an acceptable and appealing model for economic growth and development with regions being planned and developed explicitly for tourism (Saarinen, 1999, 52). However, in places like Kerala, India, tourism has not been the foreseen “engine of growth” where despite a decade of concerted effort by the Kerala government to boost the tourism industry, tourism earnings in the State Domestic Product remains at less than 1% (Sreekumar and Parayil, 2002, 530).

In addition, deep ecotourism is not always the preferred economic model for sustainable development as it allows for very low volumes of visitors to an area and thus limited economic opportunities. In contrast, shallow ecotourism involves larger numbers of tourists thus providing more of an incentive for the conservation of habitats as it generates sufficient funds for local people to choose it as a viable economic alternative to more environmentally harmful practices like logging or farming (Fennel and Weaver, 2005). Further, shallow ecotourism could be similar to mass tourism ventures. Ecotourism is the precursor for mass tourism and there are many ecolite ventures which are similar to mass tourism models (Campbell et al, 2008; Honey, 1999a).

As the demand for ecotourism grows, so too has the consumption of unspoilt areas untainted by modernity. Crowded destinations are left behind in the search for new and solitary experiences resulting in a tourism diaspora (Edensor, 2001; Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002). Luck (2002) views ecotourism and ecotourists as the most destructive forms of tourism. In constantly discovering new areas ecotourists become the “vanguard of mass tourism” (Krippendorf, 1989, 38). Ecotourists put unknown destinations on the map thereby setting up market mechanisms that enables the penetration of the mass tourism market in these areas (Campbell et al, 2008).

Furthermore, Conti and Perelli (2005, 14) state that “niche tourism products can be sold as mass tourism products by supplying highly specialized and customised packages to a large number of tourists”. Although restricted by accessibility, this process of mass customisation means the development of mass niche destinations. Costa Rica, Zanzibar and Belize are such examples, once destinations that were hard to travel to, they now have major charter airlines flying directly to them which has paved the way for mass tourism in these ecologically sensitive areas (Luck, 2002).

Bramwell and Lane, (1993) further criticise ecotourists for wanting to only gaze at the spectacle, as this generates stylised and homogenous landscapes for tourist to consume, reflecting a popular tourism product. With almost every country being drawn into the ecotourists’ gaze, this commodification of places has resulted in many authentic spaces being replaced with created spaces, ultimately minimising the diversity in destinations and resulting in uniformity (Campbell et al 2008; Urry, 2002).

The search for the spectacle also illustrates the narrow context that ecotourism is framed within (Fennel and Weaver, 2005). Campbell et al (2008) calls this the ecotourist bubble effect where the ecotourist, in search of a particular plant or animal, does not take into account broader environmental concerns like resource consumption, climate change or even the impacts that they might be causing from their travel. As a result conservation of specific fauna and flora is encouraged rather than the wider environment.

Gray and Campbell (2007) and Tomazos and Butler (2008) also call into question the behaviour of the ecotourist whom they view as self indulgent rather than selfless in their consumption and commodification of the host environment. Even volunteer tourism, however sincere the tourists’ desire to interact and help other cultures, is ultimately for the tourists own self-absorbed purposes ranging from being just a different holiday experience to career advancement, prestige and self improvement (Tomazos and Butler, 2008).

2.5 Conclusion

The shift from modernism to postmodernism introduced many different forms of tourism which are constantly evolving to incorporate current market trends. At this time, the trend of

sustainable living influences the way tourism is shaped and constructed shifting tourism from unsustainable forms of the mass ‘sun, sea, sand and sex’ tourism to perceived sustainable forms of ecotourism ranging from nature, wildlife, volunteer and adventure tourism (Meetahan, 2001; Urry, 1995).

Subsequently, there is no one universal or unique way of interacting with natural environment rather, it is a pluralistic interaction that ranges from stewardship, exploitation, scientisation and visualisation (Simon, 2003; Urry, 1995). Thus there is no one ideal construction of sustainability especially within the tourism market resulting in many different interpretations of what sustainable tourism means.

Further, both mass tourism and ecotourism have positive and negative effects on the natural, economic and cultural fabric of a destination (Kalidas et al, 1998; Liu, 2003). Lindeberg et al (1996, 560) states that even within a sustainable framework “tourism often achieves some but not all ecotourism objectives”. In saying that however, comparatively speaking, tourism seems to be the best commercial venture for the environment when it is carefully planned and managed within a sustainable framework (Stronza, 2001; Vaughan, 2000; Yongong, 1996).

The aim here is not to debate which form of tourism is better as both are susceptible to spontaneous and unregulated development (Harrison, 2004; Urry, 2002). However, the conceptual framework of modernist and postmodernist tourism which describes the shifts in tourism from mass tourism to ecotourism, will be applied using the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso Wetland Park as a case study.

CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the background for the study. The chapter will discuss how iSimangaliso Wetland Park fits into South Africa's broader tourism strategy. It will also describe the general tourism trends in South Africa, focussing more specifically on KwaZulu-Natal and the local context of tourism in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park⁵. Section 3.2 will provide a general synopsis of tourism in South Africa while section 3.3 will detail the tourism strategy and discuss how tourism was shaped in iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

3.2 Tourism in South Africa

Tourism is a major economic activity of global importance (Buhalis, 2001; Dinh et al, 2011; Fennel, 1999; Kadt, 1979; Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002). "Globally, international tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million in 1950, to 534 million in 1995 and 803 million in 2005" (Dubois et al, 2011, 1031). Further, there was a substantial increase in international tourist arrivals from 803 million in 2005 to 903 million by 2007 (Dubois et al, 2011).

Crompton and Christie (2001) and Dinh et al (2011) state that Africa has an exceptional resource base for tourism and for most countries of this continent, tourism contributes significantly to their GDPs. In 2010, tourism contributed 5% to the global GDP and generated 6–7 % employment worldwide. However, most African countries have barely developed their tourism potential especially with regard to international markets (Dinh et al, 2011). The African continent receives only 4% of all international tourism (Mitchell and Ashley, 2006). As a result, African countries have now focused on tourism to be the "source of growth and diversification" (Dinh et al, 2011; Crompton and Christie, 2001, 5).

The following sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 will provide an overview of South Africa's national tourism strategy and describe the current tourism trends, respectively, in an effort to

⁵ The empirical research undertaken in this thesis sets out to examine the shifts in tourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park from 1999-2005. However, an attempt has been made to also include the most recent tourism statistics that describes tourism in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal and the Park in the contemporary period. This will provide a broader context within which the empirical research can be situated.

understand how tourism is being developed; to identify the constraints and threats to the tourism industry; and to gauge how the tourism market is changing.

3.2.1 South Africa's tourism strategy

South Africa has been portrayed as one of “the world’s fastest growing tourism destinations” (Brand South Africa, 2009; DEAT, 2005; Koch and Massyn, 2001, 142). Tourism is one of the largest generators of foreign exchange in the country and is the third largest contributing sector to South Africa’s economy, after manufacturing and mining. Additionally, tourism has been recognised as the fastest growing sector in the country (DEA, 2011; Spencely, 2001).

The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), in its White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa recognises that tourism has the potential to achieve government’s socio-economic objectives (DEAT, 1996). Further, through the more recent 2011 National Tourism Sector Strategy, national government has identified tourism as a “priority economic sector” (DEA 2011, 1). The tourism sector is seen to have the potential to create entrepreneurial opportunities for small, medium and micro enterprises in both the formal and informal sector; support sustainable cultural and natural environmental practices; and promote economic growth by linking and revitalising other sectors of the economy (DEAT, 2002, 2011).

However, South Africa is not meeting its full tourism potential and tourism is being underexploited. There is a need for growth and development (DEAT, 1996; Palmer and Viljoen, 2001). South Africa is not listed amongst the top ten countries that are expected to grow their travel and tourism economy GDP the fastest from 2010-2019 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2009). This could be attributed to poor marketing, as for the past ten to fifteen years South Africa has only been marketed as a wildlife destination, not recognising other unique natural and cultural assets of South Africa (South African Tourism, 2008).

DEA has also identified a number of constraints in the past that have limited the growth of the industry and continue to have a negative effect of South Africa’s tourism potential (DEAT, 1996). Such impediments are a) the insufficient resources and funding by government; b) a private sector that catered mainly to domestic tourists; c) low levels of education and training of local people combined with poverty (due to apartheid) that severely restricted who benefited from tourism; d) poor service delivery; e) unplanned development; f)

lack of appropriate tourism infrastructure; g) poor integration of national, provincial and local structures to manage tourism; h) limited international market due to apartheid; and i) high crime levels which negatively affects foreign market travel (DEAT, 1996).

South Africa's national government perceives tourism as "one on the six core pillars of growth" and is looking to intensively develop the sector (DEA, 2011, 1). Industry stakeholders view this approach to growth as a sound investment as there is an existing tourism market in South Africa which caters to a large number of domestic and international tourists. Additionally, the demand for tourism is viewed as being continuous as there will always be tourists who want to go on holiday. The challenge is to develop South Africa as a premier tourism destination (DEA, 2011; Monitor Company Group and Ministry of Tourism, 2011). To date, the government has invested quite substantially in tourism by improving and diversifying its resource base; upgrading and building new infrastructure; and supporting the growth and development of poor and marginalised communities through poverty alleviation and SMME programmes (Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and DEAT, 2005).

Brown (1998, 244), states that "any meaningful tourism development in Africa should capitalize on the unique features of the country in order to make use of local resources". South Africa is an attractive tourist destination and already has a diverse array of popular tourist experiences which ranges from beaches and a sub-tropical climate for resort tourism; to spectacular examples of natural diversity for ecotourism; to a unique historical legacy for cultural tourism (DTI and DEAT, 2005; Dinh et al, 2011).

Further, in developing South Africa's tourism potential the government is looking to practice 'responsible tourism' which it sees as the "promotion of balanced and sustainable tourism and focus on the development of environmentally based tourism activities" (DEAT 2002). The tenets outlined in the responsible tourism manual generated for DEA defines responsible tourism as being economically and environmentally sustainable (DEAT, 2002). In creating a responsible tourism experience, the emphasis is placed on supporting and growing local economic opportunities through the natural and/or cultural heritage that is marketed to tourists (DEAT, 2002; Spenceley et al, 2002; TKZN, 2006).

The government's strategy to market environmentally based tourism activities is consistent with international trends. Literature shows that "parks and protected areas have become the

cornerstone of tourism and recreation” (Campbell et al, 2008, 200). Additionally, nature based tourism is fast becoming *the* accepted model for responsible development (Bimonte, 2007; Luzar et al, 1995). The World Tourism Organisation (in Buhalis, 2001, 84) estimates that worldwide “ecotourism is growing by 25-30% per year”. Further, South Africa is a prime ecotourism destination due to its abundance of natural resources thus catering to a wide variety of nature based tourism experiences (Chiutsi et al, 2011).

3.2.2 *Tourism trends in South Africa*

The 1970s and 1980s were dominated by a period of stagnation in both the foreign and domestic tourist markets because many foreign tourists, in protest against apartheid policies, refused to visit South Africa. Additionally tourism was focused mainly on a narrow white domestic market (South African tourism, 2008).

Since 1994, South Africa has grown as a tourism destination experiencing radical growth following a period of investment growth and development from 1990-1998. Overall, from 1998, tourism in South Africa has grown steadily with a few sudden dips due to global events like the SARS virus, September 9/11 attacks in the USA and unstable economic markets due to the global economic recession (South African Tourism, 2009; Statistics South Africa, 2008). In 2008, tourism contributed to around R120 billion to South Africa’s GDP and had “outperformed all other sectors in terms of both GDP and job creation” (South African Tourism, 2008, 24). By 2009, the tourism sector’s GDP contribution increased to R173.9 billion. Moreover, through the National Tourism Sector Strategy, government plans to increase the GDP contribution of tourism to R338.2 billion by 2015 (Ministry of Tourism, 2010).

Foreign tourist arrivals in South Africa have grown from less than 1 million in 1980 to over 7 million in 2005 and 9.9 million by 2009 (Ministry of Tourism, 2010; South African Tourism, 2008; Statistics South Africa, 2008). However, due to the global economic recession, foreign tourist numbers to South Africa have dropped substantially to 8.07 million in 2010 (TKZN, 2011). Similarly, in KwaZulu-Natal foreign tourist numbers have been steadily decreasing, from 1.6 million in 2005 to 1.4 million in 2007 and 1.2 million in 2009 (TKZN, 2011).

South Africa’s foreign market arrivals can be divided into two market shares. Firstly, there is an overseas market which receives the majority of its tourists from developed countries

(Lehohla, 2009; Seymour, 2010). A recent tourism study conducted by South African Tourism (2011a) shows Europe to be the largest overseas market making up approximately 57% of all overseas tourists travelling to South Africa; followed by North America with 17%, Asia with 14%, Australasia with 6%, Central and South America with 4% and the Middle East with 2%. Secondly, there is a foreign African market where 95% of tourists came from the SADC countries, that is, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi and Zambia (Seymour, 2010; South African Tourism, 2011a).

As can be seen from Figure 3.1 below, from 1994-2007, both markets are increasing, but the foreign overseas market has dominated international tourist arrivals increasing sharply from about 4.1 million tourists in 1994 to around 10 million tourists in 2007 (Lehohla, 2008). It must be noted however, that the foreign African market has doubled, increasing from about 3.1 million tourists in 1994 to around 6.9 million tourists in 2007. Between 1994-2007 overseas tourists dominated the total foreign market to South Africa accounting for 60% of arrivals (Lehohla, 2008).

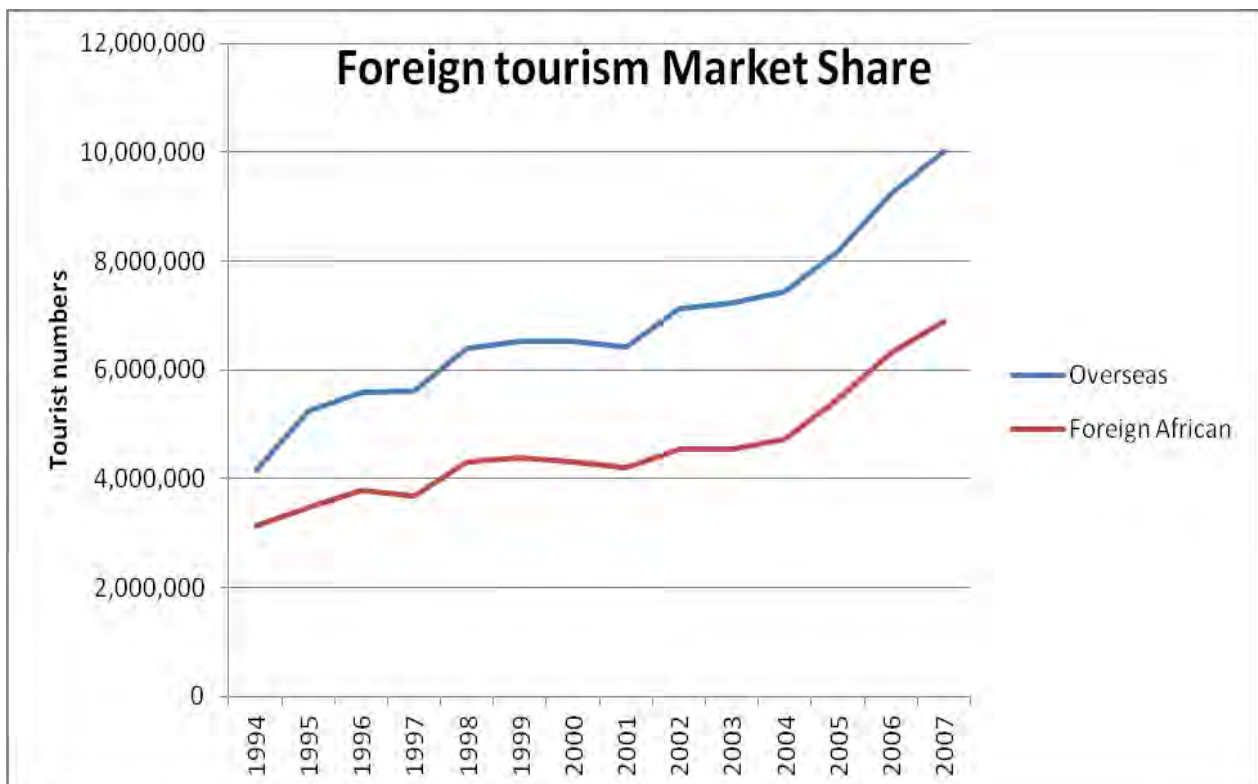


Figure 3.1: Foreign Tourism market share (adapted from Lehohla, 2008)

In KwaZulu-Natal, the top overseas source markets from 2003-2008 have been the mature travel markets, that is, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands and France, and growth travel markets, that is, Australia, United States of America and Canada (TKZN, 2009a). Year on year, the United Kingdom has remained the largest of these overseas markets (South African Tourism, 2009). Currently, the United Kingdom remains the largest overseas market in 2011 with 297, 741 tourists accounting for 20% of the total overseas market. The second largest international market was the United States of America taking up 14% of international arrivals (TKZN, 2011a). Tourists in the mature travel markets are well informed, cost conscious and leisure focused and are more likely to be repeat visitors, while tourists in the growth markets are characterised as information seekers and are constantly searching for new opportunities and leisure activities (South African Tourism, 2008; South African Tourism, 2007).

The total revenue of domestic tourism in South Africa has decreased by 31% from R5.7 billion in 2010 to R3.9 billion in 2011 (South African Tourism, 2011b). Pearce (1995), states that domestic tourism is vital to many countries in sustaining tourism as foreign tourism is a very seasonal market – such is the case with South Africa. South Africa's domestic tourism has decreased substantially from 7.2 million domestic trips taken in 2010 to 6.3 million domestic trips taken in 2011. This decline was attributed to economic constraints, in particular the recession, which has negatively affected domestic travel since 2007 (South African Tourism, 2011b).

Domestic tourists travelling South Africa can be categorised into four main market segments; namely the “Upmarket Camper” who is prepared to pay for good camping and self catering facilities; “Game and Bush Lover” whose holiday will involve experiencing a nature or game reserve; “Beach Brigade” who are classified as low income mass coastal tourists and “Economy Trippers” who will stay with family and friends (Seymour, 2009, 16).

Eighty four percent of KwaZulu-Natal's domestic tourists originate from Gauteng (27%) and KwaZulu-Natal (57%). Referring to Figure 3.2 below, the domestic tourism market is highly seasonal, peaking around school holidays and public holidays (that combine with weekends to form long weekends), with the highest peaks occurring during May, July and the latter half of December. Foreign arrivals peak in mid July to August and again from October to February. The lowest foreign arrivals occur in June and September (TKZN, 2009b).

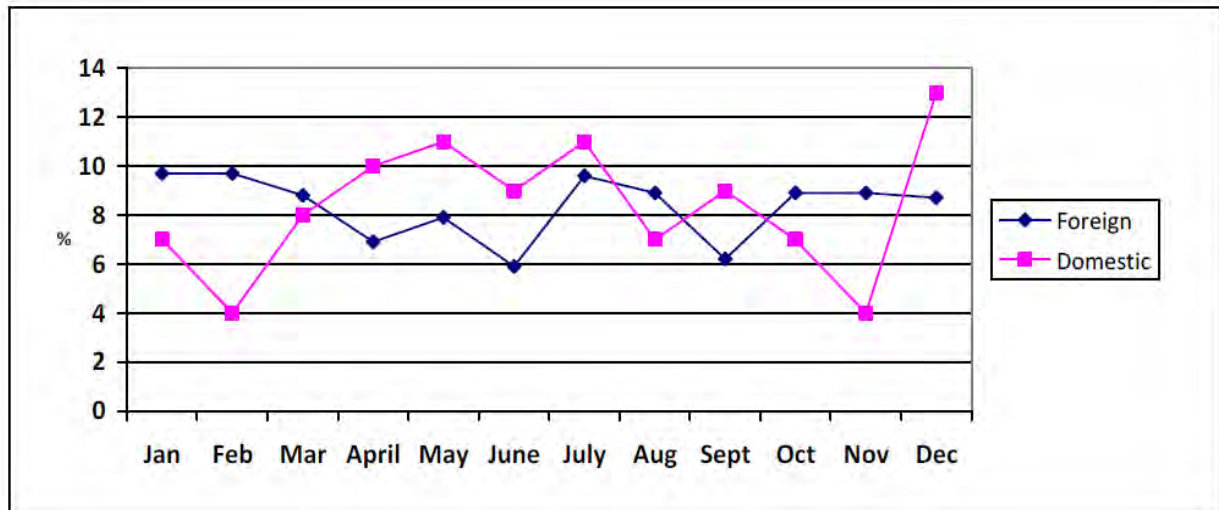


Figure 3.2: Foreign and Domestic Seasonal Flow in KZN (Source: TKZN, 2009b, 7)

It is reported that South Africans choose to travel for five main reasons: that is, to go on a holiday (41%); to visit friends and relatives (37%); for business intentions (10%); religious reasons (5%); medical purposes (5%) and other⁶ reasons (1%) (South African Tourism, 2011c). From Table 3.1 below, South Africans on business currently spend more per trip (R2, 030) than domestic tourists on holiday (R1, 650). Whilst tourists visiting friends and relatives although increasing their per trip expenditure from 2007 to 2010, currently only spend R490 a trip (South African Tourism, 2011d).

Table 3.1: Spend per trip by purpose from 2007 – 2010 (adapted from South African Tourism, 2011d)

Spend per trip by purpose	2007	2010
Business	R1, 050	R2, 030
Holiday	R1, 240	R1, 650
Visiting friends and relatives	R360	R490
Religious	R240	R340
Medical	R160	R210

The average length of stay of tourists visiting South Africa has been steadily decreasing. With particular reference to KwaZulu-Natal, domestic tourist bed nights dropped from 7.5

⁶ South African Tourism do not define the category 'Other'. Further, the percentages (taken directly from South African Tourism paper) do not add up to 100%

nights in 2003 to 4.3 nights in 2009 while foreign tourists length of stay halved from 13 nights in 2003 to 6.5 nights in 2009 (TKZN, 2005c; TKZN, 2009c).

Over the period from 1994-2007, the business and holiday tourist sectors have seen the largest shift with business tourists decreasing from 22% in 1994 to just 2% in 2007, while holiday tourists increased from 75% in 1994 to 95% in 2007 (South African Tourism, 2011d). This illustrates that South Africa is growing as a holiday destination. Further, South African Tourism (2011d) show business trips decreasing from 7.1% in 2007 to 4.7% in 2010 while holiday tourists increased from 83.6% in 2007 to 87.7% in 2011.

Lehohla, (2008) estimated that foreign tourists on average spend up to R8 600 per trip in South Africa, of which R4 175 is spent in KwaZulu-Natal. In 2011, South African Tourism (2011b) estimated that foreign spend per trip in South Africa was R8 800 decreasing from R9 500 in 2010. The average domestic tourist spends between R616 to R1, 300 per trip (Altman, 2002). According to TKZN (2010), domestic spending has increased from an estimated R300 per trip in 2002 to R730 per trip in 2009. Domestic tourists spend most of their money on accommodation, food and travel and shopping (Statistics South Africa, 2011). However, foreign tourists will spend more on accommodation and food than domestic tourists. Over two thirds of domestic tourists will stay with friends and relatives or self catering accommodation facilities while two thirds of foreign tourists choose to stay in upmarket hotels or lodges (Caras et al, 2000).

South Africa's core tourist attractions range from wildlife/nature, beaches, culture and visiting friends and family. These vary in importance in the domestic and foreign markets (TKZN, 2003; TKZN, 2009a). It is estimated that about 57% of foreign tourists and 40% of domestic tourists make up the nature tourism market in South Africa (Aylward, 2003; Spenceley, 2001). A recent study in 2008 shows that the top tourist activities of both foreign and domestic visitors involved going to the beach and visiting nature reserves. However, nature tourism was far less popular amongst domestic travellers with only 19% electing to travel to game reserves compared to 51% of foreign visitors (TKZN, 2009b).

KwaZulu-Natal received 1.2 million foreign visitors in 2009, amounting to 12% of South Africa's total foreign market. Of the foreign tourists attracted to KwaZulu-Natal 48% came for wildlife activities while 62% wanted to visit natural attractions (South African Tourism,

2009; TKZN, 2010). In contrast only 15.4% of domestic tourists visiting KwaZulu-Natal engaged in nature-based activities (TKZN, 2010). According to TKZN's (2007) conservative estimation, ecotourism contributes about R376.4 million per year to KwaZulu-Natal's economy.

3.3 The iSimangaliso Wetland Park

It is important to contextualise this study within an understanding of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Section 3.3.1 provides an overview of the historical, biophysical and socio-economic context of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park (iSimangaliso) and will discuss how tourism is being used as a strategy for the economic empowerment of previously disadvantaged communities by the iSimangaliso Authority. Section 3.3.2 will describe tourism in iSimangaliso, looking specifically at the types of tourists visiting iSimangaliso and how national and international events have shaped tourism in the area.

3.3.1 Overview of iSimangaliso Wetland Park

The Establishment of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park

The eventual establishment of iSimangaliso Wetland Park was as a consequence of the Richards Bay Minerals application, in 1989, to mine the dunes on the Eastern Shores of Lake St Lucia for titanium dioxide. This resulted in a huge public outcry and the formation of a no-mining petition signed by more than half a million people including that of former President Nelson Mandela and Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi (CSIR, 1993). As a result of this application, the government initiated an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to assess the consequences of the mining option and evaluate other forms of sustainable development for the area, namely tourism (CSIR, 1993; iSimangaliso Authority, 2008; Kruger and van Wilgen, 1993).

The Leon Commission, an independent review panel, was appointed in 1994 by national government to assess the outcome of the EIA. In 1996, the Commission took the decision that Richards Bay Minerals could not mine the Eastern Shores of Lake St Lucia as it would cause unacceptable damage to a very special national asset (CSIR Environmental services, 1993; Spenceley, 2001). The Commission made many recommendations to ensure the conservation of the area; namely that a) iSimangaliso should apply for World Heritage Site

status and that adequate South African legislation needs to be established to protect the Park to effect this status; b) previously disadvantaged communities historically removed from iSimangaliso should be involved in the management of the Park and should accrue tangible economic and other benefits; c) ecotourism is selected as the only viable development alternative to mining; and d) a dedicated Authority be established to integrate development and conservation within iSimangaliso (Allen and Brennan, 2004; iSimangaliso Authority, 2008).

Following these recommendations, iSimangaliso was inscribed onto the World Heritage List and was listed as a natural World Heritage Site in 1999 under three of the four natural criteria, namely; a) iSimangaliso represents outstanding examples of unique ecological and biological processes of terrestrial, fresh water and marine ecosystems; b) iSimangaliso contains superlative natural phenomena and scenic beauty; and c) iSimangaliso has exceptional biological diversity including threatened species of universal value (iSimangaliso Authority, 2008; United Nations Environment Programme: World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 2008; UNESCO, 2008).

In 1999, the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI) was launched. The LSDI was a macro-economic strategy undertaken jointly by South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique, which identified economic potential in northern KwaZulu-Natal, an area with a history of socio-economic neglect (Koch et al, 1998). The aim of the LSDI was to develop the Lubombo region into an internationally competitive tourism destination by creating easier access for travellers between the three countries. iSimangaliso Wetland Park, being a World Heritage Site, was conceived as the anchor project of the LSDI (Koch et al, 1998).

The LSDI delivered many benefits to the three countries. Key infrastructural upgrades to the major route networks between the three countries were undertaken to the value of R234 million providing thousands of local people with access to tarred roads; and a R40 million malaria control programme was initiated significantly reducing the incidence of malaria in the high malaria zones of northern KwaZulu-Natal and Mozambique (Koch et al, 1998; Spenceley, 2001). The LSDI also provided water and electricity to previously disadvantaged people in some areas. Further, visa requirements would be minimised and streamlined to facilitate travel between the three countries and several Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) were developed (Jordan, 2001; Spenceley, 2001). These developments aimed to

remove the obstacles that prevented the three countries from realising their latent tourism potential thereby unlocking investment opportunities (Koch et al, 1998; TKZN, 2004).

In 2000, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority was established as a national body to manage the complex natural and social environment of the Park. iSimangaliso Authority has contracted Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, a provincial nature conservation organisation, to manage the day to day enforcement and conservation on the ground (CSIR, 1993; iSimangaliso Authority, 2008).

The iSimangaliso Authority has three primary objectives that were defined in legislation and uphold the recommendations made by the Leon Commission. Following on the developments undertaken as part of the LSDI, the iSimangaliso Authority has further expanded on these developments by transforming the tourism potential of the Park while also creating economic empowerment opportunities for the surrounding previously disadvantaged communities (iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, 2008).

Firstly, there is a need to “protect, conserve and present the cultural and natural heritage of iSimangaliso Wetland Park and give effect to the values of the (World Heritage) Convention in and around the Park” (iSimangaliso Authority, 2009, 22). Successful alien clearing and afforestation programmes have been implemented for the last ten years. In addition, there is a phased long term programme to re-introduce game to Ozabeni, Eastern and Western Shores of the Park. More recently, the iSimangaliso Authority has successfully removed illegal developments in sensitive coastal forest environment. The Authority also supports and funds research efforts and monitoring in the Park to ensure updated data is available for management decisions (iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, 2008; Spenceley, 2001).

Secondly, the iSimangaliso Authority must promote the empowerment and development of surrounding historically disadvantaged communities (iSimangaliso Authority, 2009). Over 50% of the value of contracts for infrastructure in the park has gone to Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) (iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, 2008; Spenceley, 2001). Further developments initiated by the iSimangaliso Authority include a craft programme in 13 communities living adjacent to the Park which has built capacity amongst local women and linked them to higher value domestic and international markets (Spenceley, 2001; iSimangaliso, 2009). Supplementing the tourism development are successful training

programmes developed by the iSimangaliso Authority which has trained and built the capacity of the rural poor in skills such as tour guiding and chef training. Rural entrepreneurs have also been trained to run and manage tourism related businesses (Herrington, 2000; Spenceley, 2001; iSimangaliso, 2009).

Lastly, the Authority must market, manage and facilitate optimal tourism and related development in iSimangaliso (iSimangaliso Authority, 2009). The tourism infrastructure programme has upgraded and built new public access infrastructure (picnic sites, accommodation facilities and game viewing roads, hides, viewing sites, game fences). Further, the Authority manages all tourism and related activities in the Park through concessions (iSimangaliso, 2009).

Biophysical and Socioeconomic characteristics of iSimangaliso

The Park is located in the north-east of KwaZulu-Natal and is made up of approximately 324 441 ha of coastal and terrestrial land, extending from Kosi Bay in the north bordering Mozambique, to Maphelane in the south (See Figure 3.3 below). When the Park became a World Heritage Site, sixteen fragmented parcels of land that was previously used for military, forestry and conservation efforts were consolidated into one contiguous area (iSimangaliso Authority, 2008)⁷. The World Heritage Site includes a Marine Protected Area which extends 5.6 km offshore and includes 155 km of pristine coastline.

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is made up of a diverse range of habitats varying from marine and estuarine systems to the terrestrial habitats. These ecosystems provide important habitats for a large number of rare, threatened and endemic species like Black Rhino, Leatherback turtles and Coelacanths (iSimangaliso Authority, 2008; Kyle and Combrink, 2005). As such, iSimangaliso provides a suitable environment to market ecotourism.

iSimangaliso is situated in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality. Apart from the LSDI project and subsequent development initiatives by the iSimangaliso Authority, the Umkhanyakude district is an area of economic stagnation and decline with little or no regional economic development. Agriculture and government sectors are the major sources

⁷ The uMkhuze Game Reserve has been amalgamated into the Park but is not part of the World Heritage Site (see Figure 3.3 below)



Figure 3.3: iSimangaliso Wetland Park (Source: iSimangaliso Authority, accessed 06 July 2011)

of employment opportunities in the area. However, the agricultural sector is declining and the district is experiencing a negative growth rate (iSimangaliso, 2008; UDM, 2008).

Additionally, the high incidence of HIV/AIDS; high population growth and unemployment rates; increasing casualisation of labour; low levels of economic diversity; high levels of illiteracy; and inadequate infrastructure and services, further exacerbate the rural poverty and underdevelopment of the region (DCOGTA, 2011; iSimangaliso, 2008). However, in this region, “the tourism sector is making an increasingly important contribution to the economy both in terms of employment and in terms of contribution to the Gross Geographic Product” (iSimangaliso, 2008, 42; UDM, 2008).

The uMkhanyakude district is often perceived as an area of ‘poverty amongst plenty’ with the rich cultural and natural resources of iSimangaliso Wetland Park lying adjacent to the underdeveloped community areas. In response to this disparity, the strategy of the iSimangaliso Authority in this region is to facilitate development with the aim to conserve, where ecotourism is seen as the key to revitalising and diversifying the formal and informal economic sector (CSIR, 1993; iSimangaliso, 2008; Preston-Whyte, 1996).

Within this focus on development, the Authority has also initiated co-management agreements with communities in iSimangaliso whose land claims⁸ have been settled, within the national land claims restitution process. The co-management agreements facilitate benefit sharing and access rights to the Park for these previously disadvantaged communities (Gowans, 1999; iSimangaliso, 2008; Walker, 2003). Through ecotourism opportunities, many land claimant communities are already accruing tangible economic benefits⁹ (Gowans, 1999; Groenewald, 2004; Herrington, 2001). A study shows that there had been a shift in attitude among the local communities towards iSimangaliso by 2002, where 94% of respondents positively associated iSimangaliso with revenue and employment. This contrasts with a previous study where only four out of 151 (6.04%) individuals thought tourism was beneficial for the community (Picard, 2002).

⁸ Of the 14 land claims covering the entire iSimangaliso Wetland Park, nine land claims (making up 75% of Park land) have been settled

⁹ Land claimants benefit from revenue sharing, mandatory partner status in tourism developments, access to natural resources, cultural heritage access, education and capacity building, and jobs

3.3.2 *Tourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park*

This section will describe tourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park (iSimangaliso) and how iSimangaliso's tourist profile was shaped by national and international events. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park has ten main tourism nodes; namely Maphelane, Eastern Shores and Cape Vidal, Lake St Lucia, Western Shores and Charters Creek, False Bay, uMkhuze, Sodwana Bay, Lake Sibaya, Coastal Forest and Kosi Bay (refer to Figure 3.3 above) (iSimangaliso Authority, 2008). This research will focus on the Eastern Shores as a case study in describing the tourism shifts in the Park.

The Eastern Shores of iSimangaliso Wetland Park is a popular tourism node attracting domestic and foreign tourists who are interested in either marine and nature/wildlife tourism. The Eastern Shores node contains two prime fishing and recreational beaches¹⁰, bird and game hides, picnic spots, viewing decks and self drive game loops¹¹. Self catering chalets and camping accommodation facilities are also available for tourists wanting to overnight in the Park. During the school holidays and long weekends, these accommodation facilities are fully booked by domestic tourists. The Eastern Shores node is also a popular destination for tour operators as it offers both the bush and beach experience for their clients. Tour operators operating from St Lucia, offer a variety of packages from day and night game drives to turtle tours and horse rides into the public access area¹² of the Park.

Pre-1994, iSimangaliso was labelled a fishing destination (Nel, 2003). Barker (1997), in Allen and Brennan (2004, 84), states that St Lucia town lying at the southern entrance to the park, "was popular with Afrikaans speaking holidaymakers and caricatured as a stomping ground for beer swilling cowboys". It was also a holiday town with a reputation for being racially exclusive (Allen and Brennan, 2004). However, after the 1994 democratic elections, with the nomination of the Park as a World Heritage Site in 1999 and the appointment of a new Park management Authority, iSimangaliso was re-branded as an ecotourism destination that promoted equitable access¹³. These changes in the status of the Park and its mandate has

¹⁰ Mission Rocks and Cape Vidal beaches are used to host annual fishing competitions

¹¹ New tourism infrastructure (hides, viewing decks, picnic spots, loop roads) were built to not only enhance the tourist experience but also to attract more 'day' visitors

¹² The public access area allows for free non-motorised entry into a section of the Eastern Shores. Tourists may take walks or cycle along maintained trails. Various game and birdlife can be viewed.

¹³ Equitable public access enables previously disadvantaged communities to access the Park either through discounted or free access. iSimangaliso Authority also runs programmes which provide positive recreational and educational experiences in the Park for both learners and adults

changed the profile of the tourists coming to iSimangaliso shifting it from those who visit the Park to exploit nature unsustainably, to those who want to protect and conserve nature (Acer Africa, 2002).

iSimangaliso Wetland Park attracts both foreign and domestic tourists. Domestic tourism is still more dominant but foreign tourism is on the increase (Turpie, 2005). The majority of domestic and foreign tourists visit the Eastern Shores and Sodwana Bay nodes of iSimangaliso (Acer Africa, 2002). In 2000, annual occupancy rates were around 50-65% varying greatly between peak and low seasons. Domestic tourism peaks during school holidays in December, January and April and over long weekends while foreign tourism markets peak from August to December with October and November being the busiest months (Caras et al, 2000). Refer to Appendix 1 to view Plates 1 and 2 of the beaches located on the Eastern Shores during the domestic peak seasons. Although domestic peak seasons are busy, Plate 1 reflects a mass tourism event on a scale that only occurs only during Easter and New Years day. The iSimangaliso Authority view these events as a form of sustainable mass tourism as it encourages local access to the Park and has no permanent negative effects on the natural World Heritage values (Zaloumis, pers comm., 2011),

The typical domestic tourist visiting iSimangaliso Wetland Park is primarily from Gauteng, travelling in a group size averaging five people and using the Park as their annual holiday destination. These tourists visit the coastal areas of the Park mainly to fish. They are from lower to middle income groups, usually staying in self catering accommodation facilities. In 2000, their average length of stay was approximately one week. However, previously these holidaymakers would spend two to three weeks in the area (Caras et al, 2000).

In 2000, foreign tourists visiting iSimangaliso Wetland Park mainly came from the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Netherlands with markets starting to emerge in the United States of America, Belgium and Italy. Tour operators believe that foreign tourists visit iSimangaliso specifically to see a World Heritage Site, rhinos and the Park's reputed scenic beauty (Caras et al, 2000). Typically, foreign tourists visiting the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso are on their way to Durban from where the majority will fly to Port Elizabeth to commence a road trip to the Cape, or the Kruger National Park. Caras et al (2000) found that these foreign tourists are mainly self drive couples or independent small groups (not large tour groups) and will sometimes extend their stay to two or three nights in the area, usually

staying in more upmarket accommodation facilities and spending on average 60% more per day than domestic tourists. This was confirmed in a later study by Turpie (2005).

Overall, in assessing visitor trends from 1999 – 2004, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, particularly the St Lucia node, was negatively affected by the combined effects of a malaria outbreak in 2000; the world trade centre 9/11 attacks; the Asian SARS virus; the tsunami of December 2004¹⁴; the national 4x4 beach driving ban in 2001¹⁵; the extended drought that South Africa was experiencing during that period; and allegedly higher crime rates in the area (Comins, 2003; Gowans, 2004; South African Tourism, 2007; TKZN, 2004a; TKZN, 2004b).

On the Eastern Shores, the 4x4 beach driving ban was the main reason cited for the downturn in businesses with many businesses stating that they depended entirely on the 4x4 tourists (Comins, 2003; Gowans, 2002; Ryan, 2005; Scott et al, 2006). The 4x4 tourists can be classified as those who visit the Park to fish along the beaches of the Park. However, since the 4x4 ban, Turpie (2005) found that the accommodation sector has shown a healthy growth with a 25% increase in the number of businesses. In addition, the study showed that 52% of businesses in the accommodation sector have increased the number of beds they have on offer, while approximately 50% of tour companies have increased in size. This shows that although there was an initial decrease in the number of tourism businesses just after the 4x4 ban, this sector did recover by adapting to the shifting market preferences and catering for the rising number of domestic and foreign ecotourists (Turpie, 2005).

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Acer Africa in 2002 on beach driving and boat launching in the Park¹⁶, various submissions taken from the public showed that other user groups of iSimangaliso Wetland Park, particularly international tourists, criticised the use of 4x4s in a World Heritage Site. The argument of these groups was that the 4x4 users are a smaller group of tourists than those who do not use 4x4s. The latter group therefore is a

¹⁴ Malaria in northern KZN frightens away tourists, especially international tourists due to serious health risks; 9/11 and SARS virus made people fearful of global terrorism and the widespread occurrence of infectious and possibly deadly viruses; the tsunami had the effect of making people fearful of coastal destinations and the 4x4 ban on beaches meant that 4x4 users probably preferred travelling to Mozambique where such practices could be pursued

¹⁵ In 2001, national government promulgated legislation banning 4x4 vehicles from driving on South Africa's beaches due to its' damaging effects on the coastline. Driving on the beach was also seen to negatively affect the visitor experience of other recreational users

¹⁶ This study was commissioned by the Authority at the time of the national 4x4 ban to ascertain its effects tourism related economies. This was in response to negative public statements and perceptions.

larger potential tourism market for iSimangaliso than the existing 4x4 market. Additionally, it has also been reported that the environmental damage from using 4x4s is not compatible with ecotourism which is the fastest growing market in South Africa and iSimangaliso (Acer Africa, 2002).

Massyn's study in 2002, (cited in Turpie, 2005, 29) provided evidence that there was a decline in visitor numbers in the fishing and diving market in iSimangaliso Wetland Park prior to the Park becoming a World Heritage site in 1999, in particular, those visiting Sodwana Bay. He stated that the decline "could be attributed to longer-term market displacement towards Mozambique and that the (beach driving ban) regulations were probably exacerbating a longer-term trend that was already affecting the area prior to the beach driving ban".

It is apparent that the Park is in the decline phase of the tourism life cycle model (Turpie, 2002). In the decline stage of this model, tourist numbers decrease as visitors explore newer resorts and destinations. It is postulated that a tourist destination in the decline phase only attracts tourists on day trips and weekend tourism. The market can thus not sustain many tourism businesses resulting in a high turnover of property while tourist facilities and accommodation are converted for other uses (Cooper and Jackson, 1989; Haywood, 1991). However, in this phase there is a chance to rejuvenate the destination and in the process attract a new tourist market thus increasing tourist numbers and initiating a recycling pattern in the tourist area life cycle where the destination reverts back to the exploration phase rather than remain in the stagnation and decline phase. In the case of iSimangaliso Wetland Park, the declaration of the Park as a World Heritage Site, the national 4x4 ban and the promotion of ecotourism activities resulted in iSimangaliso being rejuvenated as an ecotourism destination replacing its previous status as a fishing and diving attraction.

3.4 Conclusion

Tourism has become one of the leading economic drivers for many countries and remains one of the fastest growing economic industries (Dwyer et al, 2009). The South African national government is looking to the tourism industry as a source of untapped growth and development for the country (DEA, 2011). KwaZulu-Natal has a range of different attractions

that is attractive to both the domestic and foreign tourism markets. Nature tourism, beach tourism and visiting friends and family form the major attractions with foreign tourists dominating the nature tourism market whilst domestic tourists dominating the beach and visiting friends and family tourism market (TKZN, 2003; TKZN, 2009a).

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority is using ecotourism as part of its development and conservation strategy, following the national government's resolution to stimulate ecotourism as the only viable alternative to mining (Thompson, 2002). Overall, ecotourism is expected to provide tangible benefits to historically disadvantaged communities by generating jobs and stimulating local economic development while also maintaining iSimangaliso's natural world heritage values (Bainbridge, 2003).

Pre 1994, the Park used to only attract a domestic fishing and/or dive tourism market who stayed in self catering accommodation facilities and fished, relaxed on the beach or conducted scuba diving. However, post 1994 the iSimangaliso Wetland Park has evolved as a destination and is now marketed as a premier ecotourism site which attracts a foreign and domestic market and as well as more nature based tourists. This thesis will investigate this shift in tourism.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park (iSimangaliso) has undergone significant changes since its inception onto the World Heritage Site List in 1999. As mentioned in chapter three, iSimangaliso is now being managed to fulfil broader local economic development and capacity building as well as national and international conservation goals (iSimangaliso, 2009). Subsequently this has influenced the tourism strategy of the Park resulting in a shift in the type of tourism from mass tourism for the fishing and diving market, to a more specialised type of tourism in the form of ecotourism (iSimangaliso, 2009; Nel, 2003; Spenceley, 2001). The aim of this thesis is to analyse and explain this shift in tourism through examining the types of tourists that frequent the area; the demands of these tourists and the types of services being offered to meet the changing tourist needs.

This chapter will describe the methodology used to collect and analyse the primary quantitative and qualitative data in order to fulfil the research aim and objectives. Section 4.2, which outlines the data collection process, will detail the design of the interview schedule and the limitations the researcher encountered during and after the data collection process. Section 4.3 will detail the sampling approach used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data sets. Section 4.4 will describe how the different types of data were analysed to produce the set of themes that will be presented and discussed in the results chapter. Lastly, section 4.3 will discuss the limitations the researcher faced in collecting and analysing the data.

4.2 Data Collection

This study adopts a mixed method design. Therefore, data was collected by the researcher through combining two interview strategies; namely the *closed quantitative interview* and the *structured open-ended interview* to produce both quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The reason behind merging these two interview techniques was so that the researcher could collect both quantitative and qualitative data through a standardised and structured approach. This allowed for data production that provided for an in-depth

qualitative explanation (intensive research) to a generalised statistical description (extensive research) (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Mottier, 2005; Sayer, 1984). The data collection took place during the period of 22 July 2004 to 15 July 2005 and all interview schedules were administered by the researcher. The next sections will elaborate further on the interview design (4.1.1), sampling approach (4.1.2), interview medium (4.1.3), ethical considerations (4.1.4), as well as the limitations, successes and lessons learnt by the researcher during the data collection process.

Interview design

Interview schedules were designed as the research instrument for the *closed quantitative* and the *structured open-ended interviews* to obtain the primary data. Four interview schedules were generated to capture the responses of the different sets of stakeholders within the tourism industry; namely tourists visiting iSimangaliso Wetland Park; tour operators who have concessions or conduct ad hoc tours in the Park; tourism related businesses situated in the town of St Lucia; and accommodation owners operating in St Lucia and on the Eastern Shores (refer to Appendix 2 to view the interview schedules). This allowed for the triangulation of data in the quest to investigate the shift in tourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park from both the supply and demand side of tourism.

In developing the interview schedules, relevant literature sources were consulted on interview construction and design (Barnes, 2001; Bourque and Fielder, 2003; Cloke et al, 2004; Foddy, 1993; Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992; Parfitt, 1997; Peterson, 2000; Robinson, 1998). From these sources, a set of standardised rules were derived that framed the interview approach and determined the content of the interview schedules; length and layout; and question type. These will be described in the paragraphs to follow (Peterson, 2000; Robinson, 1998).

The content of an interview schedule refers to the wording, formatting and sequencing of questions which pertain to the flow of the interview and can add or detract to the quality of the data that is produced (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992). Careful consideration went into formulating questions in order to avoid the respondents becoming confused during the interviews and to allow for variability in the range of possible answers. To achieve this, it was ensured that there were no double-barrelled questions; proverbs and popular sayings; and sentences with double negatives or ambiguity (Barnes, 2001; Peterson, 2000).

Further, simple words were used in posing the questions, and the use of acronyms, abbreviations, slang, jargon and technical terms were avoided, so that the respondents fully understood the question and could thus answer with confidence. In some cases, the researcher had to resort to holding the interviews in Afrikaans¹⁷ so that the respondents felt comfortable and confident enough to answer the questions (Foddy, 1993; Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Parfitt, 1997).

The interview length and layout determined the success of the interview. With regard to the layout of the interview schedule, three main sections were included; namely an “introductory section, a substantive question section and a classification question section” (Peterson, 2000, 102). These three sections are explained further below.

The introductory section formed the first part of the interview schedule and engaged the attention of the respondent. This briefing section is integral to the interview process as it encourages participation among respondents while also validating and authenticating the research being conducted (Peterson, 2000). During the interviews, the introduction was read before each respondent to establish a rapport with them before the questions were asked. The respondents thus understood the reason for the research (reducing suspicion); who I was and where I was from; and that a minimum of time and effort was required to answer the questions. This resulted in the interviewees being more likely to respond to the interview schedule. The researcher aimed to administer 310 interviews with tourism stakeholders visiting or providing tourism services to those tourists visiting the Eastern Shores node of the Park. However, I finally managed to complete 298 interviews with only 2 potential respondents declining to be interviewed. The rejections accounted for only 4% of the total projected sample size.

The substantive section “contains those research questions critical to accomplishing the research objectives of a research project” (Peterson, 2000, 108). Questions were set in a logical sequence according to themes to encourage the flow of information during the interview (Bourque and Fielder, 2003; Peterson, 2000). In addition, there was a progression from easy to more thought provoking questions. This was done to ease the respondents into the interview, promoting their confidence, trust and cooperation thus enhancing the quality of

¹⁷ A large proportion of the traditional fishing and diving tourists are Afrikaans speaking.

the data production (Bourque and Fielder, 2003; Peterson, 2000). Furthermore, for each of the interview schedules (aimed at the four sets of tourism stakeholders), respondents were asked the same questions and in the same order allowing for a comparative analysis of the data across these sets of stakeholders. The interview schedule consists of three broad themes that asked questions pertaining to tourist characteristics, behaviour and perceptions.

Whilst conducting the interviews, the researcher chose to maintain a rapport with the interviewee by upholding a neutral position about the topics discussed within the interview so as not to influence the respondents' answers. The researcher wanted to ascertain the respondents' own ideas and thoughts on the questions being asked (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). For example, the researcher did not dispute incorrect facts provided by some respondents regarding the controversial national 4x4 beach driving ban.

The classification question section aims to determine the interviewee's demographic or socio-economic status. The interview schedules designed for this research only included in their classification section details of the time, date and place where the interviews were conducted. This provided information on the context in which the interviews were administered which allowed the researcher to determine the extent to which this context influenced the respondents' answers (Peterson, 2000). In hindsight, the researcher acknowledges that the demographic and socio-economic status of the respondent should have been captured as part of the classification questions, as many South African tourism surveys use these indicators when classifying different types of tourists.

The time taken to complete the interview depended on the length and depth of the respondents' answers. The length of the interview took into account the fact that the potential interviewees did not want lengthy time consuming interviews. However, the interview also had to collect adequate and appropriate data so that the researcher could fulfil the aim and objectives of this thesis (Peterson, 2000). Consequently, the interview length was determined to be between 8 to 15 minutes for tourists and 40 to 60 minutes for the collection of more qualitative data from the tour operators, businesses and accommodation owners. The interview length was satisfactory resulting in a high response rate.

The question types were categorized as either closed ended (answers are pre-determined) or open ended (respondents are free to give any answer) (Foddy, 1993; Kitchin and Tate, 2000;

Parfitt, 1997; Peterson, 2000). According to Parfitt (1997), a good interview is one that uses a range of different question types thus providing many ways of obtaining data relevant to the research. In this research, the question types used in the interviews worked well in producing a blend of descriptive and analytical responses. The tourist interview schedule contained mainly closed ended questions, and hence can be called a structured interview schedule. The business, accommodation and tour operator interview schedules were semi – structured as these consisted of both closed and open-ended questions which were aimed to elicit qualitative data.

The closed-ended questions asked in the interviews were mainly in a list/multiple choice format with a few dichotomous (yes/no) and category questions. Additionally, the tourist interview schedule included a scaling question. The open ended questions were used as follow-up questions and aimed to probe the respondents' knowledge on certain subject matter being discussed by encouraging him/her to further elaborate on their yes/no answers. This also allowed the researcher to better comprehend the level of understanding and thought the interviewees possessed on certain issues being discussed (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Peterson, 2000).

In addition, introduction and funnel questions were also asked in the interviews. The introduction and funnel questions were either in open and/or closed ended formats and allowed the researcher to gain more information on certain themes. Introduction questions were used to secure the attention of the interviewee and raise his/her confidence and were thus easy to answer, usually requiring a yes/no response. For example, the first question asked to tourists was where they lived followed with a simple yes or no question, which asked them if this was their first visit to St Lucia. Funnel questions however were more substantive and were used to gain specific information on a general topic. For example, after asking tourists whether this was their first visit, they were then asked to provide more detail if they indicated that they were repeat visitors, like how often do they visit the Park and what time of year do they frequent the Park. Introduction and funnel questions worked well in garnering more detailed information about the shift in tourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park from businesses, tour operators and accommodation owners.

The tourist, tour operator and accommodation interview schedules were piloted in St Lucia over a period of five days, from 22 July 2004 to the 28 July 2004 - during the peak winter

domestic tourist season. This pilot survey tested the flow of the interview and whether the questions generated will produce the required data for this research (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). The sample size consisted of 40 interviews, of which 36 were completed successfully. Various locations within the town were used as sampling sites to ensure that a diverse range of tourism stakeholders were included in the pilot survey.

From the results of the pilot survey, the interview schedules were revised. Firstly, a fourth structured interview schedule was developed to incorporate restaurants and tourism businesses, an important stakeholder group that was only identified through the pilot survey. Secondly, a number of closed ended questions were amended to remove and reword ambiguous and confusing questions that respondents found difficult to answer. Lastly, in conducting the interviews with key tourism stakeholder groups represented by the accommodation owners and tour operators, the researcher was able to rapidly assess whether the interviews were producing the required data to answer the research questions. During the pilot interview process, the researcher recorded new themes for inclusion in the final interview schedule. This resulted in the insertion of additional questions to fill the data gaps identified in the pilot survey.

4.3 Sampling approach

In designing the sampling strategy the following points were considered; whether the sample population was to be representative of a larger population; the size of sample; and costs in terms of the researcher's time and money to administer all the interview schedules. These points are discussed further below (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Robinson, 1998).

For the purposes of the quantitative survey of tourists, a large sample size was necessary in order to obtain statistically significant results. The sampling method adopted was non-probability sampling where a selection of tourists were purposively sampled thus allowing for greater representivity within the sample size (Frechtling, 1994). Kitchin and Tate (2000) state that the general rule of thumb is that larger the sample size the more representative the statistics are of the greater population. The researcher could not determine the size of the tourist population. However, in most tourism surveys n is usually set at a minimum of between 200 to 300 as this ensures that results are representative of the larger population

(Caras et al, 2000, Kohler, 2004). For example, a visitor survey conducted by Turpie (2005), sampled 330 tourists from the Eastern Shores ($n=192$), Sodwana ($n=120$) and Kosi ($n=18$) nodes of iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Based on logistical constraints and the need to obtain a representative sample size, it was decided that 250 tourists would be interviewed. The final number of tourists interviewed on the Eastern Shores was 239.

Additionally, as there was no convenient sampling frame, this research used two sampling methods that did not require access to one as creating a sampling frame would have been too costly and impractical. First, the researcher required the tourist sample population to be representative of a larger population and thus used the quota sampling technique where “sampling elements were selected subject to a predefined quota control” (Kitchin and Tate, 2000, 55). The researcher decided to sample 250 tourists, over 18 years old that were visiting iSimangaliso Wetland Park, specifically the Eastern Shores node of the Park.

Second, for the qualitative research a purposive sampling method was used to sample respondents from the tourism supply chain (accommodation suppliers, tour operators and representatives of tourism related businesses). This sampling technique allows the researcher to select individuals on the basis that they will provide the responses the interviewer is seeking (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Thus the researcher purposively selected Eastern Shores based tour operators, accommodation owners and tourism related businesses as they were better able to narrate the shift in tourism in iSimangaliso seeing that they worked and lived in this tourism node. The researcher decided to sample 60 respondents from these groups, of which the researcher managed to conduct 59 interviews. Table 4.1 presents a breakdown of the groups of respondents sampled for the quantitative and qualitative research (refer to Appendix 3 for a list of key stakeholder informants interviewed during 2004/05 period).

The original intention of the research was to undertake a survey of all the main tourist nodes of the Park. Data was proposed to be collected from the Eastern Shores and Sodwana Bay tourist nodes. However, due to logical considerations, time and cost, it was decided to sample only the Eastern Shores as a tourist node for the purposes of this course-work Masters thesis. The researcher collected data via the interview process in the Eastern Shores node via four

data collection trips to the area¹⁸. The researcher acknowledges that the inclusion of data from the Sodwana Bay, uMkhuze and Kosi Bay nodes of the Park would have been interesting to include in the study but due to time and budgetary constraints the researcher could not extend her research to these areas or conduct further data collection trips. The Eastern Shores is the most visited tourist node of the Park and the focus of the iSimangaliso Authority's development programme after the establishment of the Park. Data collection took place during three peak tourist seasons and one off-peak tourist season (see Table 4.1). This ensured that a significant proportion and diversity of tourists visiting the Eastern Shores was captured (Caras et al, 2000).

Table 4.1 Number of interviews undertaken: place, season and date

Survey	Place	Season	Date	Number of Interviews Undertaken			
				Tourists	Tour Operators	Accommodation	Businesses & Restaurants
Pilot Study	St Lucia beaches and town	Peak Winter	22/07/04 - 28/07/04	28	2	6	-
Survey 1	Cape Vidal, St Lucia beaches and town	Peak Summer	06/01/05 - 13/01/05	100	6	23	22
Survey 2	Cape Vidal, St Lucia beaches and town	Off Season	30/03/05 – 01/04/05	35	-	-	-
Survey 3	Mission Rocks, Cape Vidal, St Lucia beaches and town	Peak Winter	08/07/05 – 15/07/05	76	-	-	-
n = 298				239	8	29	22

¹⁸ At the time of the study, the researcher was living close to Durban. Each data collection trip necessitated a trip of approximately 250 kms and two or more overnight stays.

4.3.1 Interview medium

There are two basic ways interviews can be conducted namely; face-to-face and over the telephone. The researcher decided to use the face-to-face interviewing method as this is rated as being the most successful in obtaining data. This interviewing method is also the most costly and time consuming. As mentioned above, cost and time constraints were a factor but not an impediment to this research. The telephone methodology, although easier to conduct is an impersonal ways of gathering data and thus has low response rates (Cloke et al, 2004; Parfitt, 1997).

Face-to-face interviewing receives high response rates as the interviewer maintains a personal rapport with the interviewee encouraging the respondent to partake in and complete an interview. As noted previously, the researcher only had a 4% negative response rate from tourists approached for an interview in the quantitative survey. Further, this method of interviewing also allows for a more representative sample as the researcher is able to obtain interviews from a variety of respondents (Cloke et al, 2004; Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Parfitt, 1997).

Furthermore, in conducting a face to face interview, the researcher is more likely to collect a full and accurate set of data from each respondent as the interviewer engages personally with each respondent. This allows the researcher to probe deeper into questions thus allowing for the collection of richer data sets, which is not possible with the telephonic and postal survey methods (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Parfitt, 1997).

4.3.2 Ethical considerations

All Masters proposals and ethical forms have to be approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Post-Graduate Committee before the research can commence. The proposal for this research project was approved through this Committee.

The researcher interacted with many tourism stakeholders during the research process. All respondents that participated in answering the researcher's interviews did so voluntarily. Before each interview commenced, the respondent was asked whether he/she would like to participate in the study. Each respondent was also briefed to the aims and objectives of the research before they started answering any questions. Additionally, each respondent was also informed that they were not obliged to answer every question and could decline to answer if

they felt uncomfortable by the question. This ensured that none of the respondents were coerced or duped into participating in this study (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). The introduction section of the interview schedule contains these statements and commitments to an ethical process.

Moreover, when interviewing the tour operators, businesses and accommodation facilities, all information regarding the identification of a particular individual within the tourism establishments was kept confidential. No form of identification was presented in the findings that would connect any of the answers to an individual within business, tour operator or accommodation facility on the Eastern Shores (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

4.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The first stage in the process of data analysis is the conversion of oral evidence into text. The literature indicates that interviewers should record interviews and transcribe the interviews at a later stage, especially when asking open ended questions (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). However, due to the large sample size ($n=298$) transcription of recorded interviews would have been impractical as transcribing would have taken a minimum of 4-5 hours per interview. Additionally, interviews were conducted at specific tourist sites and tape recording the tourists responses would have been challenging due to high noise levels. For all closed questions, the researcher was able to immediately fill the answers to the questions on the interview schedules when the respondents replied to a question. The answers to the open ended questions were captured by the researcher who wrote down answers in the exact wording and phrasing used by the interviewee. In doing so, quotes and expressions used by the interviewee were captured, giving depth to the analysis of the quantitative data in the Results section of this thesis.

The data obtained from tourist and tourism establishment interviews was analysed and interpreted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. These analytical and interpretive methods will be described below in section 4.4.1 (Analysis of quantitative data) and section 4.4.2 (Analysis and interpretation of qualitative of data).

4.4.1 *Analysis of quantitative data*

The tourist interview schedule produced a quantitative data set. Although the tourist interview schedule contained *open-ended questions*, the short duration in which the interview had to be completed resulted in short answers from respondents that were easily coded into categories and quantified like the pre-coded *closed-ended questions* (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

The first step of data analysis required coding the responses collected in the 239 interview schedule. The researcher coded each response in the interview schedule and prepared a response grid within an Excel database where the data from each interview schedule would be collated. That data was inputted into the prepared Excel spreadsheet by Ms Caili Forrest, a research assistant (student in School of Environmental Science). The researcher validated the accuracy of the data in the Excel spreadsheet by checking the responses from 50 randomly selected interview schedules against the inputted data. Authenticating all the interview schedules within the data set would have been too time-consuming.

Rather than generalise the coding lists, extensive coding categories were developed for each response to ensure that no detail was lost when ordering the data from the tourist interview schedule into the Excel spreadsheet. These extensive categories were then collapsed to similar themes thus allowing for generalised statistical trends to be developed while still keeping the detail within each category. For example, when tourists were asked about their activities conducted in the Park, a list of 22 activities was compiled. Each activity received a separate code. From this list, the activities were grouped into similar categories resulting in five broad categories; namely: Fishing and boating; Beach and related activities; Adventure and/or sport activities; Nature based activities; and Sightseeing. However, within these broad categories, it could be ascertained that nature based activities involved diving, whale watching, game drives, turtle tours, visiting the crocodile centre, going on the boat on the lake and birdwatching. Furthermore, statistics for each of the specific activities within the broader category could be ascertained thus producing a richer data set (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

From the categories within the Excel spreadsheets, tables were created to summarise the statistics. From these tables, a set of graphs were formulated in Excel, to give a visual representation of the data. These graphs are presented in the Results section.

4.4.2 *Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data*

The data collected via the tour operator, business and accommodation owner interview schedules were analysed qualitatively. Since the interviews were 45 minutes to an hour long, they produced detailed responses to each question and thus a rich data set.

In analysing the *open-ended questions* from the tourism establishment interviews, each response was read through so as to see what patterns were emerging. These patterns formed the basis of the broad response categories that were listed. Each response was given one or more categories. From these broad categories, the responses were analysed further and broken down into smaller categories. In doing so, trend and patterns could be ascertained from the qualitative data set. For example, tourists were asked whether the world heritage site stimulated tourism. First responses were broadly categorised as positive or negative. With regard to the positive responses, they were then further categorised into the natural site attracting tourism or the media attention of the site being a World Heritage Site attracted tourists. Coding the broad media category even further, it was ascertained that the site was better advertised as a prime destination for nature tourists and the destination more publicised overseas (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

Thus, the researcher was also able to identify connections between different categories and important patterns (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). For example, by grouping different categories within the broader themes of repeat visitation, frequency of visits, visitor attraction, tourist activities, trip highlight and the willingness to visit a World Heritage Site, the research was able to identify particular nuances of tourists visiting the Park and thus able to better define tourist typology. This data is presented in the Results chapter.

Further, the interrogation of the qualitative data sets allowed for deeper understanding of the quantitative statistics while in turn, the quantitative data provided descriptions of trends and patterns to the qualitative responses. Thus the combination of the qualitative and quantitative data sets have allowed for a level of depth and clarity to the tourism data collected for the purposes of this research.

4.5 Limitations to the study

The researcher faced a number of limitations during the data collection and analysis. Firstly, during data collection the researcher was faced with the financial and time constraints of travelling to iSimangaliso Wetland Park which limited the frequency and number of field trips. This led to the researcher concentrating her efforts during the domestic and international peak seasons in an effort to collect an adequate sample size. As a result the research managed to capture only one off peak season.

Additionally, interviewing tourism businesses, tour operators and accommodation facilities during these peak seasons was difficult as many of these establishments were family owned and managed. This meant that during the interview, the respondents had to stop the interview to deal with their clientele. This meant that the researcher had to re-establish a rapport with the interviewee after an interruption, thus spending more time on the interviews than was initially calculated.

Secondary data collection was hampered by the lack of historical tourism data on the newly formed iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Very little quantitative and qualitative tourism data is available prior to 2000. This is unfortunate as, apart from a few quotations in a study conducted by Allen and Brennan (2004) who investigated tourism and social responsibility, the researcher could not acquire detailed data on the mass coastal tourism that led to the development of St Lucia and the Eastern Shores tourist node. Moreover, the two tourism studies that were accessed were published in 2000 and 2005 and focus mainly on the economic potential of the Park and the economic impacts of the 4x4 beach driving ban respectively, thus having limited information on visitor profiles. This limitation, however also demonstrates the need for a detailed tourism analysis of the Park.

Lastly, the researcher also faced minor problems with the data analysis. The data was originally entered into an Excel spreadsheet in a format that could not be exported to SPSS or EPI-info. The researcher was able to extract descriptive statistics but is unable to perform bi-variate and multi-variate analyses. Although these analyses would have added value to the data set, their absence does not diminish the descriptive statistics presented in Chapter 5 .

4.6 Conclusion

Data collection was conducted through closed quantitative interviews and structured open ended interviews. All interview schedules were administered by the researcher over a period of one year in an attempt to collect data over different tourist seasons. The interview schedules were carefully designed and pilot tested to ensure adequate data was collected to meet the objectives set out in this thesis.

Probability and purposive sampling techniques were used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data sets respectively. All interviews were done face-to-face as this provided for richer data sets from which to analyse and interpret the results. Interviews were not tape recorded due to the sample size and locations interviews were conducted. Interviewee responses were written down in the exact phrasing and wording of the respondent. All interviewees participated voluntarily with full knowledge of the purpose of the study. Individual's identities have been kept confidential.

Responses received from tourist interview schedules were coded into extensive categories and quantified. Tour operator, businesses and accommodation facility interview responses were grouped into one or more categories or themes so as to ascertain patterns and relationships between different responses. In combining both an extensive and intensive research design the methodology applied in this thesis allowed for the integrating of statistical analyses and in-depth narratives to provide answers to the research questions. This allowed for not only the corroboration of findings, but also it provided a description and an explanation of the shifts in tourism which are occurring in iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

CHAPTER 5:

SHIFTS IN TOURISM IN THE ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an understanding of the dynamic shift from a declining mass fishing tourism market to an increasing ecotourism market on the Eastern Shores of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. The results of this study will describe the characteristics of tourism on the Eastern Shores in 2005. This descriptive analysis will provide the basis for comparison with the data gathered from previous studies and international/domestic statistical trends¹⁹ thus allowing for an interpretation of the shifts in tourism on the Eastern Shores since the late nineties.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the characteristics of visitors to the Eastern Shores in terms of nationality, socio-economic and trip profile.
2. To interrogate the behaviour of tourists travelling to the Eastern Shores in terms of their visitation patterns²⁰, attraction to the destination and activities conducted in the Park.
3. To understand visitor perceptions of tourism on the Eastern Shores with regard to their needs and expectations of the destination.

Section 5.2 will present the characteristics of the visitors to the Eastern Shores in terms of their nationality; their socio-economic profile and trip attributes. Section 5.3 will describe the pattern of the visitors, what has attracted them to the Eastern Shores and what activities they engaged in on their visit. Section 5.4 outlines the visitors' perception of tourism on the Eastern Shores, and their needs and expectations when visiting this tourism node in the Park.

¹⁹ Visitor trends are also presented in pages 47-49 as part of the Background Chapter

²⁰The author is comparing the shift of tourism with data from previous studies to the data she collected in 2005. It is a comparison rather than a prediction of long term trends

The data reveals that there is a different kind of tourist visiting the Eastern Shores which can be classified as a postmodern tourist. This chapter will provide the data which supports this conclusion. The empirical evidence presented here is a combination of statistical data, which describes general characteristics of the visitors, and qualitative data, in the form of narratives to support and enhance the statistical findings and provide an understanding of why the shifts have taken place. Postmodern and modernist tourism theory will be applied to the findings to describe and explain the nature of the tourism shift occurring on the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso Wetland Park. In doing so, it allows for the tourism occurring at the local level in the Park to be interpreted more broadly and in an international context.

5.2 The characteristics of visitors to the Eastern Shores

This section will describe the characteristics of the foreign and domestic tourists visiting the Eastern Shores. The data collected in 2004/05 will be compared with the results of Caras et al (2000) survey conducted in June/July 1999 and Turpie's (2005) survey conducted in April 2004.

Referring to Table 5.1 below, the evidence from the survey shows that three quarters of tourists (77%) visiting the Eastern Shores are South African with 23% of visitors originating from abroad. The dominance of domestic tourism has not shifted since the Park changed from a typical fishing destination to a natural World Heritage Site. Both Caras et al (2000) and Turpie (2005), through the use of occupancy figures and interviews with businesses, accommodation facilities and tour operators, also found that the proportion of domestic tourists was more dominant than foreign tourists.

Table 5.1: Place of residence of tourists visiting the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005

	Domestic and international tourists visiting the Eastern Shores (n = 238)		
Site	South Africa (%)	International (%)	Total (%)
Eastern Shores	77	23	100

However, international tourism has been found to be on the increase since the Eastern Shores was rebranded as an ecotourism destination (Caras et al, 2000 and Turpie, 2005). From 2001

to 2004, Turpie (2005) recorded a 35% increase in foreign clientele at St Lucia²¹ bed and breakfast establishments (from 50 to 85%) whilst tour operators, who were already providing services to foreign clientele in the early 2000s, recorded a negligible increase by 2004. Additionally, the same pattern was reported by restaurants in the earlier studies which reported major increases in the numbers of foreign tourists (Turpie, 2005). In the research interviews conducted in 2004/05, retail and restaurant businesses, accommodation facilities and tour operators noted that part of the change in the type of tourist visiting the Eastern Shores was that foreign tourist numbers were on the increase. Responses from these interviews included: “there are more overseas tourists since the 4x4 ban”(A/2, 10/01/05 and A/16, 12/01/05); “there are more foreigners now that the Park is a World Heritage Site” (A/26, 24/07/04 and BR/19, 08/01/05); “overseas tourism has increased since World Heritage status” (BR/2, 12/01/05); “there are more international tourists - it has gone from fisherman to foreigners”(TO/4, 11/01/05). Additionally, 12 of the 14 bed and breakfast facilities interviewed stated that their foreign clientele in 2005 accounted for 60 -80% or 81- 100% of their occupancy rates. Only one bed and breakfast establishment (A/15, 12/01/05) stated that their occupancy rates were dominated by South African visitors (81-90%).

Figure 5.1 below shows the distribution of foreign markets by country .The European Union (EU) dominates the foreign market with 64% of the tourists visiting the Eastern Shores. The mature markets of United Kingdom (31%), Netherlands (29%) and Germany (17%) make up two thirds of all EU travellers to the Eastern Shores. These statistics coincided with the statistics for the top overseas mature markets that visited KwaZulu-Natal from 2003 - 2008 (TKZN 2009a). Tourists in the mature travel markets are broadly defined as being well informed, cost conscious and leisure focused and are more likely to be repeat visitors (South African Tourism, 2007; South African Tourism, 2008). The rest of the EU visitors to the Eastern Shores originate from Belgium (9%), France (6%), Italy (3%), Poland (3%) and Austria (3%).

Other foreign tourists visiting the Eastern Shores were from North America (9%), Switzerland (7%), neighbouring African countries (7%), Asia (6%), La Reunion Islands (5%) and Australia (2%). These statistics coincide with the top overseas growth markets of tourists who visited KwaZulu-Natal between 2003 -2008 (TKZN, 2009a). Tourists in the growth

²¹ St Lucia town is adjacent the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Many of the restaurants, businesses, accommodation facilities and tour operators that service tourists visiting the Park are based here.

markets are largely characterised as information seekers and are constantly searching for new opportunities and leisure activities (South African Tourism, 2007; South African Tourism, 2008).

Caras et al (2000) also found that the main tourist markets to iSimangaliso Wetland Park come from the United Kingdom, Germany and Netherlands with markets starting to emerge in the United States of America, Belgium and Italy. From the 2004-2005 research interviews, the only apparent shift in the origin of tourists visiting iSimangaliso Wetland Park when compared to Caras et al (2000) study, is that foreign tourist markets visiting the Eastern Shores seem to be emerging in Asia and other African countries.



Figure 5.1: Place of residence of international tourists visiting the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=55)

In analysing the domestic market, the results of this study portrayed in figure 5.2 below show that 79% of visitors to the Eastern Shores were from the two main sources, namely, Gauteng (40%) and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) (39%). The remaining 21% of tourists originate mainly from Mpumalanga (5%), North-West (4%), Free State (4%), and Limpopo (4%). From the

above statistics, one can ascertain that distance seems to play a role for visitors travelling to the Eastern Shores with the more remote provinces providing fewer visitors. Turpie's (2005) study confirms these findings showing Gauteng and KZN visitors to dominate the domestic market with 56% and 19% of tourists respectively²². The Caras et al (2000) study noted that visitors originating from Gauteng were the dominant domestic tourist market when the Eastern Shores was a fishing destination. Subsequently, Gauteng visitors have remained the dominant domestic tourism market even after iSimangaliso Wetland Park was declared a natural World Heritage site in 1999 and was rebranded into an ecotourism destination.

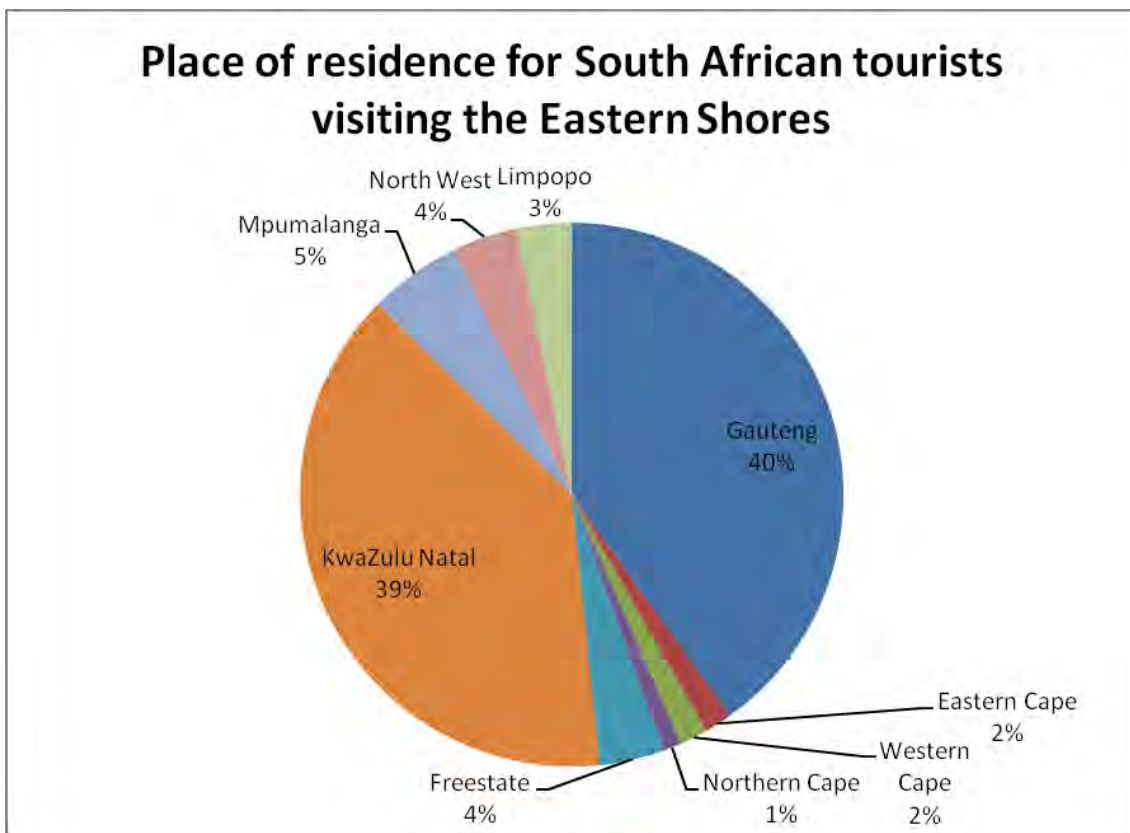


Figure 5.2: Place of residence for South African tourists visiting the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=182)

Referring to figure 5.3, tourism on the Eastern Shores peaks in the months of February to April, July, and December to January. These peak seasons reflect the time when domestic tourists prefer to travel which coincides with the South African school vacations, and the Christmas and Easter holidays. These domestic peaks have not shifted since the Eastern

²² The higher percentages recorded for Gauteng tourists by Turpie (2005) are due to that survey being conducted over one peak season compared to this study which was conducted over four tourist seasons thus generating a more balanced depiction of the domestic tourists visiting the Eastern Shores.

Shores changed from a primarily fishing destination to an ecotourism destination. Jackson (2003) and Meethan (2001) state that children play an important role in determining when the family will go on holiday which is usually during school vacations. To support this statement, 71% of tourists in the 2004/05 research interviews mentioned that they travelled to the Eastern Shores with their families.

By supplementing the tourist survey with data collected from interviews from tourism businesses, it was established that the main foreign peak season for tourism on the Eastern Shores was from August to November. Twelve out of 22 businesses interviewed indicated that there was a marked difference between domestic and foreign tourist seasons. Of these 12 businesses ten stated that August to November was the peak foreign season. Additionally, five of the 12 businesses also stated that February to April was also becoming a peak foreign season. Prior to the World Heritage inscription, the Eastern Shores favoured domestic peak seasons and long weekends. The months of February, August and November were off-peak seasons and did not receive many tourists. However, since attaining World Heritage status, the Eastern Shores node now attracts the foreign market thus resulting in more peak seasons during the year.

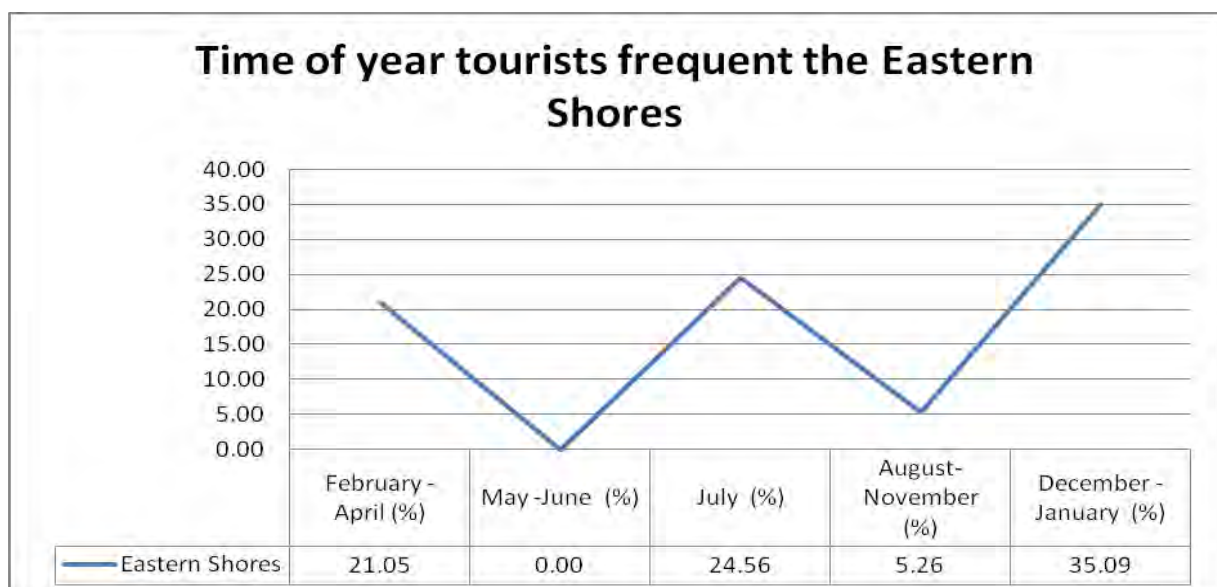


Figure 5.3: Time of year tourists frequent the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n = 171)

To further validate the above data, responses from businesses interview were sampled. Business owners stated that “it is now busier in November – this month used to be quiet” (BR/08, 12/01/05) and that “the peak season changed from December to August” (BR/17,

08/01/05). Moreover, this increase in peak seasons during the year due to the influx of foreign tourists is confirmed in the surveys done by Caras et al (2000) and Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (2005) which provided the same findings for the domestic and foreign peak seasons in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and South Africa.

Of importance is also to understand whether there was a shift in the numbers of tourists coming to the Eastern Shores in 2005. Sixty two percent of tour operators, 41% of accommodation facilities and 18% of retail and restaurants had experienced an overall decrease in tourists. This was in response to the comments made by some businesses which stated that numbers of tourists decreased dramatically after the implementation of the national 4x4 beach driving ban in 2001 (Caras et al, 2000 and Turpie, 2005). Most of these businesses catered for the South African fishing market which could explain the initial decrease in the number of tourists after the national 4x4 beach driving ban. However, the remaining 56% of tourism and related businesses noted that tourist numbers were increasing, stating for example that “this guesthouse picked up 60-70%” (A/25, 24/07/04). As one businesses owner noted, “there was an initial decrease but tourism is picking up again after the 4x4 beach driving ban” (A/2, 10/01/05).

Since the Eastern Shores became an ecotourism destination, Turpie (2005) recorded that 42% of accommodation facilities increased their number of beds between 2000-2003, while 50% of tour companies also increased in size during this time period. She goes on to state that accommodation establishments increased from 48 establishments in 1999 to 76 establishments in 2004 in St Lucia town (Turpie, 2005). Thus, this perceived decrease in the number of tourists could also be attributed to the distribution of tourists amongst more businesses. One accommodation owner interviewed stated, “it is difficult to say whether the numbers of tourists have shifted. A few years ago there were a few guesthouses...now there are more...whether tourists decreased or amount of rooms increased...it is difficult to say” (A/1, 11/01/2005).

When comparing whether visitors travelled alone or in a group, the researcher calculated that out of the 237 responses in the survey, 25% of tourists travelled alone while 75% travelled in a group. In 1999, Caras et al (2000) found that the mean number of people travelling together on an average holiday trip in KwaZulu-Natal, in what he describes as family groups, totalled five tourists. However, although KZN may attract family groups, the Eastern Shores

prior to 1999 differed in that it attracted mainly fishermen who often did not bring their families with them. A business owner (BR/14, 08/01/05) stated that “St Lucia used to a fishing area for fishermen...now it’s shifted to be a general family area”. He further validates the above statement by commenting on how he has had to change his stock from “fishing gear to family beach gear” to cater to the changing clientele.

Figure 5.4 describes the size of tourist groups on the Eastern Shores evident from the research interviews. Fifty percent of tourist groups numbered 4-6 people while just under a third (29%) of tourist groups numbered 2-3 people. These two categories of tourist groups account for 79% of visitors to the Eastern Shores²³. As stated previously, 71% of tourists mentioned that they travel with their family. Thus the majority of foreign and domestic visiting the Eastern Shores are family groups. Meethan (2001), views family tourism as another form of mass tourism as families tend to visit coastal destinations en masse. However, this will not occur on the Eastern Shores as the Park has defined a limit to the number of visitors allowed to visit per day. Thus the destination will never be consumed at the scale found in Disneyland or the Mediterranean coastline (Amelung and Viner, 2007). Additionally, Urry (2002) states that romantic tourists can and do share their personal and spiritual experiences with significant others, like family members.

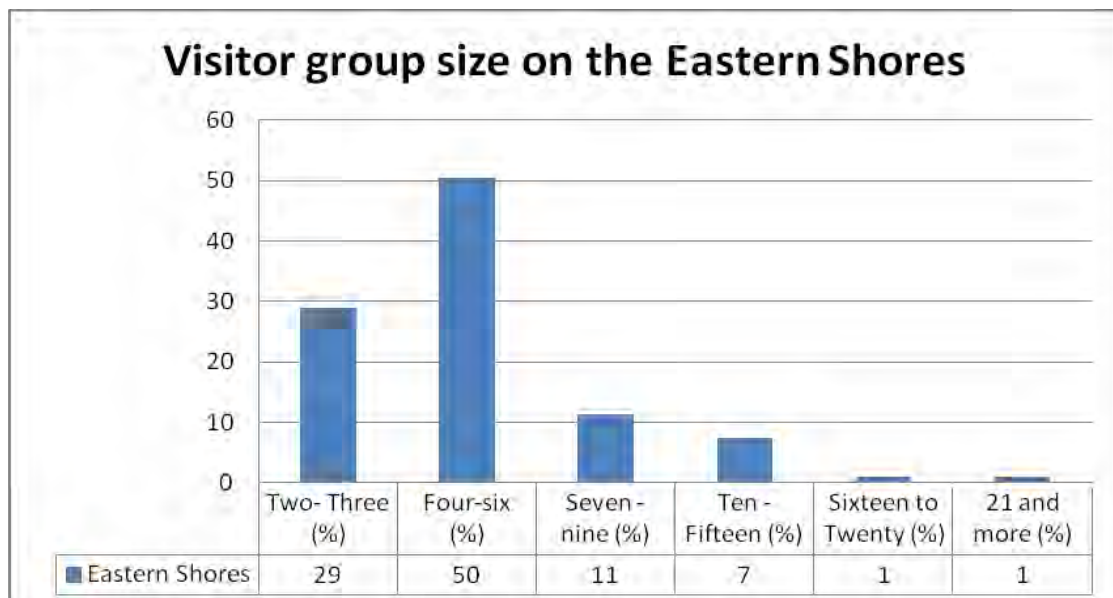


Figure 5.4: Size of tourist groups on the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=204)

²³ Group sizes between foreign and domestic travelling parties were not recorded in previous studies and thus no comparisons can be made

When examining the length of stay of tourists to the Eastern Shores, it is evident from the survey that one third (31%) of tourists stay an average of 7-8 days; one fifth (21%) of visitors stay an average of 1-3 days and 16% of visitors averaged 4-5 days of stay (figure 5.5). In 1999, Caras et al (2000) found that the average length of stay for domestic tourists visiting iSimangaliso Wetland Park in 2000 was longer, averaging seven days with foreign tourists only spending two or three nights in the area.

Further, tourism businesses interviewed have also seen a decrease in the length of stay of tourists currently visiting the Eastern Shores. Fifty eight percent of accommodation facilities, 43% of retail outlets and restaurants and 50% of tour operators noted that there was a decrease in the length of stay of tourists coming to the Park after 1999, from 10 -14 days to 2-3 days or from one week to just 4-5 days. This is confirmed in Caras's (2000) study which reports that prior to 1999 (when the Eastern Shores was a fishing destination), fishermen used to spend two to three weeks in the area (Caras, 2000). From the literature, Meethan, (2001) and Pike, (2007) state that postmodern tourists tend to have shorter vacations, usually 1-3 days. Thus since the Eastern Shores has transformed into an ecotourism destination, it is attracting a different type of tourist.



Figure 5.5: Length of stay of tourists visiting the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=237)

Additionally, the researcher found that some retail and restaurant businesses noted a difference in the length of stay between foreign and domestic tourists. The length of stay of South Africans varied between 2-8 days whilst the length of stay of overseas tourists averaged between 2-5 days. These statistics are confirmed by Caras (2000) and Turpie (2005) who stated the average length of stay for a typical foreign tourist visiting the Eastern Shores was two or three nights. Further, of the 17 accommodation facilities that noticed a shift in length of stay, seven facilities recorded positive shifts in the length of stay of foreign tourists stating from July to September, tourists are staying for longer periods on the Eastern Shores. One tour operator also noted that the foreign bus tours are now “over-nighting rather than just coming to the Eastern Shores for a day trip” (TO/8, 27/07/04). This suggests that St Lucia town has changed, from a stopover destination when it was primarily a fishing haven, to a destination that tourists want to explore since its rebranding into a premier ecotourism location.

Figure 5.6 below, shows the range of different accommodation facilities used by Eastern Shores visitors. The top five accommodation types used by tourists are self catering chalets (37%), bed and breakfast facilities (13%), time share (12%), camping (12%) and the backpackers (9%). Five of the 11 self catering facilities interviewed by the researcher stated that South Africans accounted for over 60% of their occupancy rates while 13 of the 14 bed and breakfasts noted that they catered mainly to foreigners. However, one guesthouse stated that “their tourist clientele was 80-90% South African and only 0-10% foreign” (A/15, 12/01/05). The Caras, (2000) study also states that the South African tourist visiting iSimangaliso prefer to stay in self catering accommodation facilities while foreign tourists stay in more upmarket accommodation types like bed and breakfasts.

Turpie (2005) recorded a growth in number of upmarket accommodation facilities in St Lucia. These findings indicate that tourism accommodation distribution in St Lucia town is shifting towards an increase in smaller units in the form bed and breakfast facilities, lodges and guesthouses, rather than self catering which are more able to cope with the unpredictability of current tourism trends. The seasonality of postmodern tourism facilitates the growth of small flexible businesses that can quickly adapt to the unpredictability of tourism trends rather than large accommodation facilities which are not designed to cope with such a volatile market (Boniface, 2001; Urry, 2002). The researcher also recorded a growth in bed and breakfast establishments as she interviewed four bed and breakfasts that had been

open for just under a year. This supports Caras's (2000) findings which showed that domestic fishermen visiting the Eastern Shores prior to 1999, were usually from middle to low income groups and stayed mainly in self catering accommodation facilities thus accounting for the lack of upmarket facilities during this time (Caras, 2000).

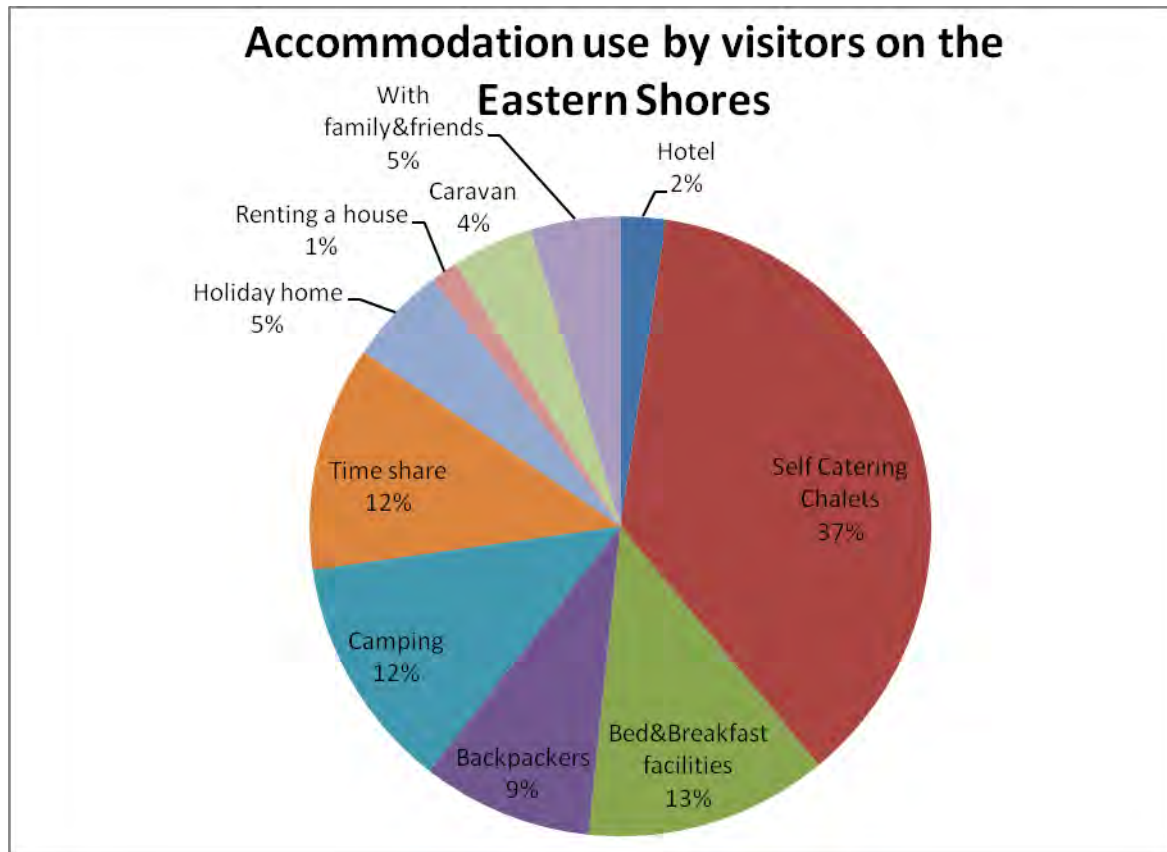


Figure 5.6: Accommodation use²⁴ by visitors travelling in the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=213)

Figure 5.7 below, shows the proportion of tourists travelling to other nodes of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Overall, 42% of tourists indicated that they had travelled or intended to travel to other nodes of the Park. Sodwana Bay proved to be the most popular node with 27% of Eastern Shores tourists already having travelled there or still wanting to go there at the time of the survey. Scuba-diving and fishing are the two main activities in Sodwana Bay which attract visitors. Maphelane, Kosi Bay and uMkhuze game reserves were the next most popular nodes attracting 19%, 17% and 16% of tourists respectively. The coastal nodes of iSimangaliso are more popular than the terrestrial (uMkhuze) node.

²⁴ As mentioned previously there is dominance of South Africans in the sample size resulting in the largest proportion of accommodation use by tourists being self catering.

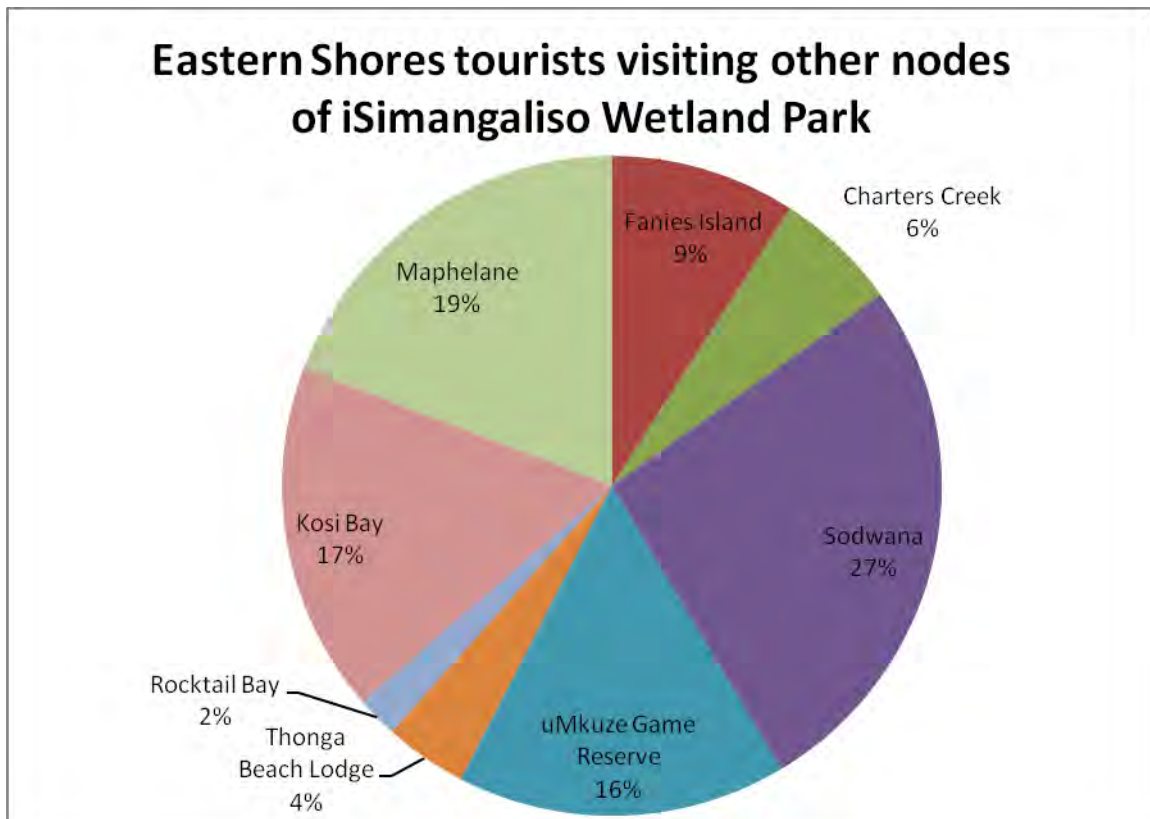


Figure 5.7: Eastern Shores tourists visiting other nodes of iSimangaliso Wetland Park during 2004-2005 (n=100)

Figure 5.7 also illustrates that Fannies Island and Charters Creek are not very popular destinations relative to the others and this may be because there was a lack of water during the research period leading to the eventual closing of these nodes. Physical inaccessibility also impacts on the tourist's willingness to visit destinations; hence destinations such as Rocktail Bay and Thonga Beach Lodge, situated in the Coastal Forest Reserve of the Park attracted only 2% and 4% of tourists respectively. These are also upmarket lodges and are inaccessible to many tourists on account of their high accommodation rates²⁵. The rise of luxury lodges in South Africa's protected areas caters primarily to ecotourists who want a high end ecotourism experience. These are often small, private and exclusive facilities that provide experiences that cannot be found anywhere else (Cejas, 2007). The upmarket lodges found in the Coastal Forest Reserve are marketed to attract ecotourists offering these tourists pristine beaches and coastal dune ecosystems as well as a unique chance to see Loggerhead and Leatherback turtles nesting or hatching.

²⁵ There were no comparable data in the other surveys to look at the shifts in the visitation patterns of tourists wanting explore other nodes of iSimangaliso Wetland Park

According to the survey, approximately 60% of the average tourist expenditure per day on the Eastern Shores in 2004/2005 ranged from R0-200 (20%), R201-400 (18%) and R401-600 (21%)²⁶ (Figure 5.8). To add to the understanding of the tourist's spending patterns, Turpie (2005, 44) states that in iSimangaliso Wetland Park, "foreign tourists spend 60% more per person per day than domestic tourists (R235 versus R146 *sic* [respectively])". The businesses interviewed in St Lucia during 2004/05 (13 of 22 businesses) reported a downturn in their annual profits due to the national 4x4 beach driving ban implemented in 2001 which resulted in an initial decrease in South African tourists. However, this thesis will also present other factors related to the negative turnovers some businesses have been experiencing since the Eastern Shores shifted from a fishing village to an ecotourism destination.

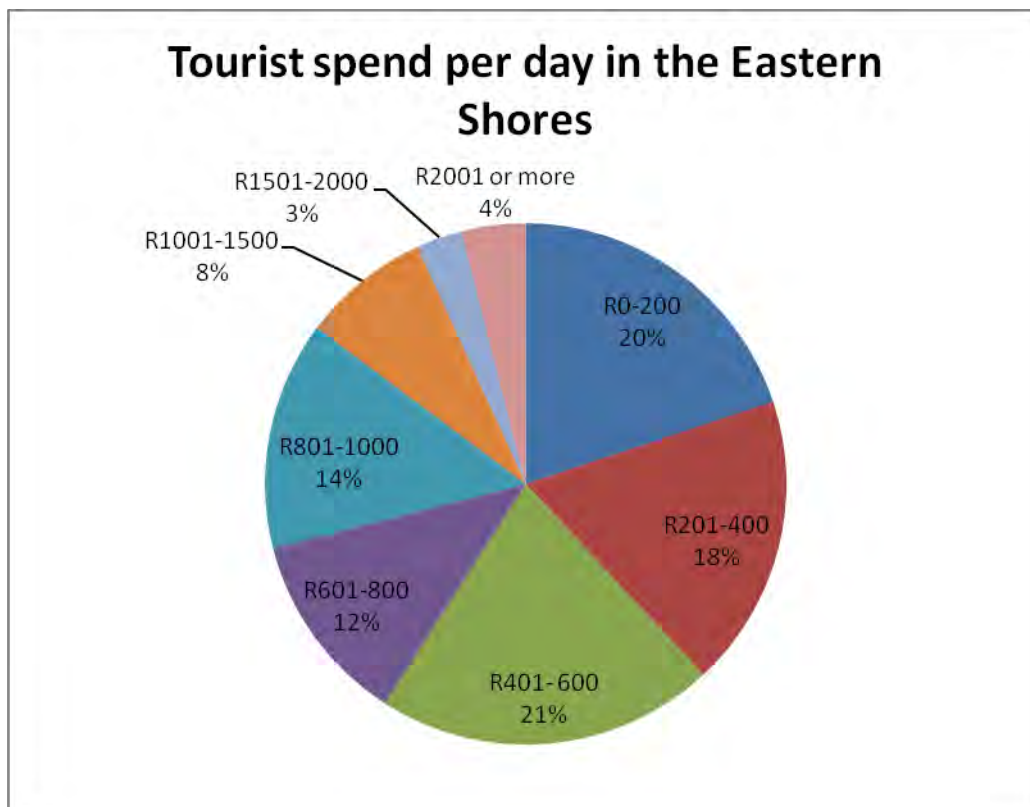


Table 5.8: Average tourist expenditure per day on the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=176)

Sixty three percent of all the tourism and related businesses interviewed agree that more foreigners, nature orientated tourists or upmarket tourists are coming to the Eastern Shores. However, they also claim that these tourists do not spend like the fisherman that used to come

²⁶ Daily expenditure included accommodation, meals, tours and curios

to the Park. One tour operator stated, “South African tourists buy a case of beer; international tourists buy two loose beers...South Africans eat a full English breakfast; international tourists eat a toasted sandwich” (T0/8, 27/07/04). This contradicts Turpie’s (2005) study which states that, on average, foreign daily spend is 60% when compared to South African tourists. This contradiction could be attributed to the differences in what foreign and domestic tourists are more likely to spend on, thus businesses that do not cater to the demands of foreign tourists will not benefit from foreign spend (this point will be discussed further below). Additionally, the differences in spending between international and domestic tourists can be accounted to an increase in a different type of tourist visiting the Park. According to Meethan, (2001) and Salazar, (2004) postmodern tourists although usually earning a higher monthly income, tend to be more conscious and careful in spending their money.

The downturn in profits reported above may also be attributed to the reluctance of some businesses to adapt to meet the needs of the new type of tourist visiting the Eastern Shores. Ten of the 22 retail businesses did not change their services to meet the demands of tourists coming to St Lucia. One accommodation owner noticed that although “4x4 trade” has died down, certain businesses are benefiting from this change stating that

“the Park is now on the map...attracts overseas tourists...everyone knows what and where St Lucia is. Housing property price has increased - this is an exclusive place to be...but only certain businesses benefit like the whale watching tours. 4x4 trade/businesses have died down...it all used to depend on Mpumalange and Transvaal” (A/16, 12/01/05).

Further, interviews with accommodation facilities revealed that they were more ready to adapt than retail businesses and restaurants to meet the changing needs of tourists. Nineteen of the 23 accommodation establishments interviewed stated that they had changed their services to meet the demands of the tourists visiting St Lucia by either upgrading their rooms, changing their decor, improving their service levels and being flexible enough to meet changing tourist demands. Four of the five self catering establishments stated that they had upgraded their facilities and levels of service to meet the standards of tourists coming to the Eastern Shores. Even though a self catering facility owner stated “I cater to SA

holidaymakers...I'm not catering to the foreign market” he also noted that “I’m thinking about changing to capture the overseas market” (A/8, 11/01/05).

The reluctance to adapt could also represent the inflexibility of mass tourism products to respond quickly to market changes resulting in a slump in business (Harvey, 1989 and Prasad, 2006). Large self catering accommodation facilities require substantial time and investment to change its product base in order to appeal to postmodern tourists (Ashworth, 2004; Boniface, 2001). As one of the business owners asserted, the changes in the type of tourist visiting St Lucia has resulted in “an adapt-or-die situation for businesses that used to cater only to fishermen” (BR/4, 13/01/05). Additionally, one business owner noted that, “It’s going to take time for businesses to adapt to the changes...not sure if some of the businesses in St Lucia have this *time* to keep themselves running” (BR/7, 12/01/05).

Further, only seven of the 22 retail businesses were aware of the shift in customer needs and had adapted their services to capture this shifting tourist market. Turpie (2005, 30) confirms these findings, stating that the negative economic impact of the national 4x4 beach driving ban has “mainly been on retail and restaurant businesses and the lower end accommodation establishments (*sic* [like] self catering) that were most frequented by beach-driving tourists”. High end accommodation establishments, such as bed and breakfast facilities, experienced little or no negative economic impact from the decrease in fishermen as this was not their targeted clientele base. (Turpie, 2005). These establishments targeted the foreign market or ecotourists.

Over 80% of businesses in Turpies’ (2005) study recorded a decline in turnover from 2000-2003 and nearly all businesses attributed this downturn in profits to the national 4x4 beach driving ban. Businesses also stated that crime and closure of St Lucia estuary mouth due to the drought have also led to their economic downturn. The evidence from the researcher’s 2004-2005 found similar results from businesses that reported a decline in profits. The 2004-2005 study presented here however, also lists other reasons provided by respondents for the decline in business such as: the poor exchange rates; world events like the Olympic games; the devastating tsunami that occurred in Thailand; and the September 9/11 attack in New York. These reasons were said to have caused a decrease in foreign travel. More locally, fuel price increases was also given as one of the main reasons for the decline in the tourism market of the Eastern Shores.

Additionally, Massyn (2002, cited in Turpie, 2005) states that the decline in tourism reported by the business communities in the Park could be attributed to the fact that the 'Park' as a popular fishing destination was in the decline phase of its life cycle. In the decline stage of this model, tourist numbers decrease as visitors explore new destinations (Cooper and Jackson, 1989; Haywood, 1991). However, as can be seen from the above evidence, the rebranding of the Park as an ecotourism destination rejuvenated the Eastern Shores by attracting a wholly new tourism market which is currently growing.

5.3 The behaviour of tourists travelling to the Eastern Shores

This section will compare the behaviour of the typical tourist who used to visit the Eastern Shores for a fishing holiday in the past to the current visitors interviewed in the survey who have come for a diverse range of experiences, in particular nature/wildlife and the beach since the transformation of the Eastern Shores into an ecotourism destination. Ecotourism is a form of postmodern tourism. Through its' de-differentiation the tourism market has been segmented into various niche markets, leading to the development of ecotourism (Ashworth, 2004, Jamal et al, 2003; Meethan, 2006; Ryan, 2002).

Table 5.2 below shows more tourists were repeat visitors (55%) than first time visitors (45%). Rassing and Sorensen (2001) describe mass tourists as repeat visitors who develop a strong sense of attachment to a destination by experiencing a place either twice in their lifetime or by continuously returning to the same gaze. This rather broad distinction would therefore suggest that the 55% of tourists visiting the Eastern Shores were mass tourists as they are returning to a place that they are attached to. However, evidence presented below, shows that this is not always the case.

Table 5.2: First and repeat visits to the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005

	First and repeat visits to the iSimangaliso Wetland Park area (n=236)		
Site	Yes, first time (%)	No, repeat visit (%)	Total (%)
Eastern Shores	45	55	100

The fairly high number of new tourists (45%) could be attributed to the increasing number of tourists coming to experience the natural World Heritage Site. Postmodernism has led to an

increase in the range of objects a tourist gazes on. The literature shows that contemporary tourists do not want to experience the same objects, rather they want new and different objects to gaze upon (Ashworth, 2004; Trauer, 2004; Urry, 1995; Urry, 2002). Thus the Eastern Shores also presents a new and unique destination for postmodern tourists to consume. In addition, previously new visitors would have been mass tourists while now they are ecotourists. These data in the table therefore provide evidence that there is a shift taking place, with new ecotourists as well as returning mass tourists

Figure 5.9 demonstrates the frequency of visits by repeat tourists²⁷ showing that these tourists repeatedly visit the Park over a long period of time. Repeated visits allow consumers to develop a personal attachment to the destination that is further enhanced each time he or she revisits the destination (George and George, 2004). From the data, repeat tourists to the Eastern Shores can be classified into three distinct categories: those repeat visitors who visit the Eastern Shores at least once a year (33.3%); those who visit the Park repeatedly during the year ranging from twice to five or more times year (32.5%); and those who visit the Park occasionally, that is every 2, 3 or eight years (34.09%).



Figure 5.9: Frequency of visits for repeat tourists travelling to Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=132)

²⁷ Of the 23% international tourists travelling to the Eastern Shores, only 7% of tourists indicated that they were repeat visitors with 3.6% visiting once a year; 1.8% visiting three times a year and 1.8% visiting occasionally

Table 5.3 illustrates that over three quarters of tourists (85%) would like to revisit the Eastern Shores with only 4% of tourists stating that they would not repeat their trip. Urry (2002) states that postmodern tourists do not want to repeat their gaze; they would rather explore different destinations in search of new tourist products to consume. Rather than attributing the repeat visitation of tourists to the Eastern Shores as just a form of mass tourism, the majority of tourists wanting to visit the Park again can also be attributed to the predominance of domestic tourists (77%) interviewed in the survey who will visit holiday destinations in South Africa more than once (South African Tourism, 2007 and South African Tourism, 2009).

Table 5.3: Likelihood of 2004-2005 tourists returning to the Eastern Shores

	Likelihood of tourists returning to iSimangaliso Wetland Park (n=231)			
Site	Yes (%)	No (%)	Maybe (%)	Total (%)
Eastern Shores	85	4	11	100

Niche tourists on the other hand, are usually associated with the ‘romantic gaze’ where these tourists prefer to gaze at the object and not upon other people. For the romantic tourist this is a personal and spiritual experience that he or she will only share with significant others rather than with crowds of people who will negatively affect their experience (Trauer and Ryan, 2004; Urry, 2002). In contradiction to the typical mass tourist definition, the 2004/05 research evidence also shows that repeat tourists visiting the Eastern Shores do not necessarily experience the Park through a collective gaze. Some repeat visitors also viewed the Park with a romantic gaze in that they felt that “too many people” made a destination “lose its quality” and become “too touristy” and they preferred to “explore the Park on *sic* [their] own” and conducted their “own touring”. The evidence thus shows that repeat visitors to the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso Wetland Park cannot always be categorised as mass tourists. It can also be ascertained that the Eastern Shores as an ecotourism destination is attracting a different type of tourist who is interested in exploring the Park’s ecosystems in relative solitude.

Table 5.4 below provides examples of comments of tourists captured in the survey reflecting the differences in the way they experienced the Eastern Shores. The comments reflect typical

differences between mass and niche tourists as defined in the literature by Meethan (2001) and Urry (2002).

Table 5.4: Selected illustrations of the collective gaze and romantic gaze of tourists on the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005

Collective gaze: Mass tourist	Romantic gaze: Niche tourist
“Estuary must be opened. What’s the use if the estuary is closed? This is a fishing place. Ten years ago there were thousands of people on the beach.”	“The downside of high tourism...too many people... <i>sic</i> [the destination] loses its quality like Sodwana. Used to go to Sodwana...now too touristy...I prefer St Lucia.”
“Open the beach again...it is a ghost town...this is a big reason why people are not coming here to the beach.”	“I like to explore the Park on my own...do my own touring.”

To further define the type of tourist visiting the Eastern Shores, the reasons why tourists were attracted to this area were investigated. Figure 5.10 below, shows that two thirds of the tourists visiting the Eastern Shores are attracted to the Park’s nature, wildlife and scenic beauty (31%); beach and weather (23%); and fishing (15%). Overwhelmingly, 22 of the 29 accommodation facilities interviewed by the researcher also listed the ‘Big 4’ animals, that can be viewed on the Eastern Shores (rhino, leopard, buffalo, and elephant), as the main attraction of tourists currently visiting the Eastern Shores.

Many of the accommodation facilities have also noted a change in the character of the Eastern Shores. Since the establishment of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park as a World Heritage Site and premier ecotourism destination, a large scale afforestation removal programme has been implemented on the Eastern Shores, rehabilitating and restoring the area to its former natural state. This has been accompanied by an animal re-introduction programme whereby cheetah, buck, elephant, and rhino were released back into the Park. As can be seen, the natural value of the environment which was once viewed as worthless²⁸ or troublesome is now being appreciated for its universal beauty and biodiversity. One respondent A/26 (24/07/04) stated that the Eastern Shores used to be “a fishing destination”

²⁸ Grasslands and wetlands were thought to have no economic value by modernist apartheid planners in the 1950s thus leading to extensive plantations within these ecosystems on the Eastern Shores

but with the “beach driving ban” and the Park gaining “*sic* [World] heritage status” the destination has “completely changed” from a “fisherman’s paradise” to a place for “nature lovers”. Further, through the rise of ecotourism, areas once viewed as wild and harsh are now places of quiet contemplation, rejuvenation and scenic beauty (Garrod and Wilson, 2004; Urry, 2002).

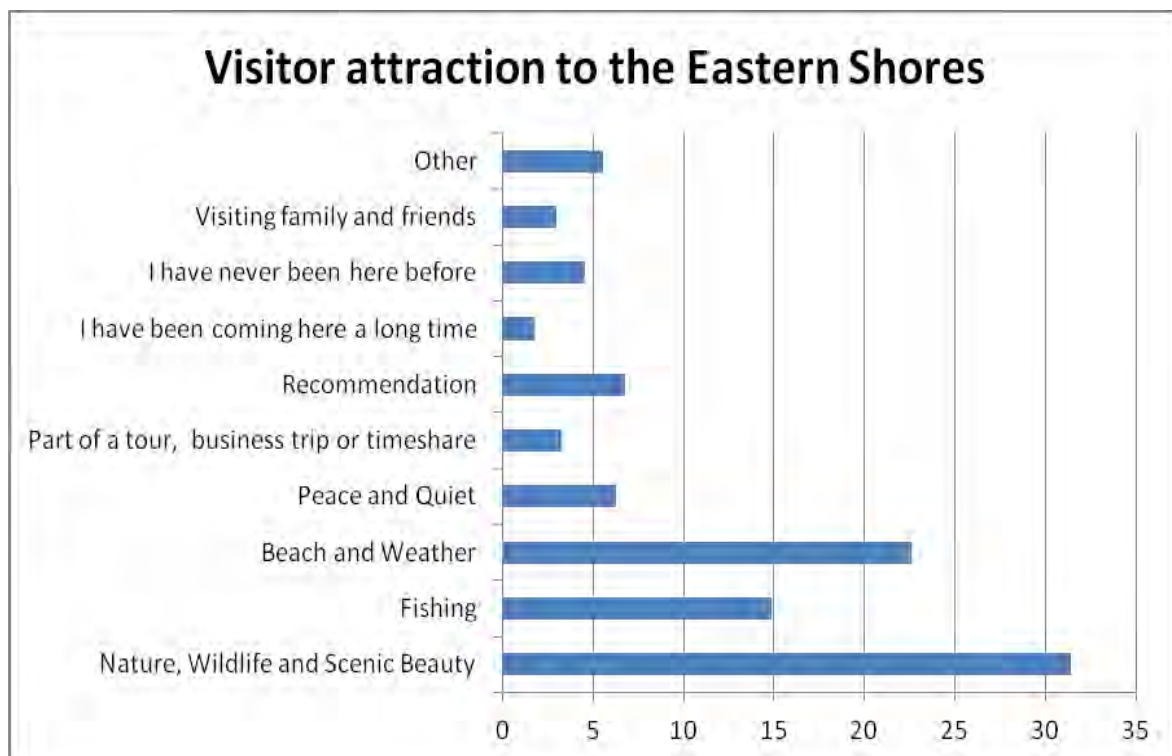


Figure 5.10: Reasons why visitors were attracted to the Eastern Shores (n=398)

Caras et al (2000) stated that in 1999, domestic tourists came for fishing while foreign tourists visited the Park to see the World Heritage Site, rhinos and the Park’s reputed scenic beauty. The researcher found a similar distinction in the interviews with 30 of 59 businesses, accommodation facilities and tour operators who categorised South African tourists as “fishermen” while foreign tourists were classified as either nature, wildlife or cultural tourists.

While these binary categorisations of local and foreign tourist activities are useful, the tourist interviews reveals a more nuanced description of the type of tourists visiting the Eastern Shores through the activities they engage in when visiting. Figure 5.11 shows that the top

four activities conducted by domestic and foreign visitors were beach activities²⁹ (27%); nature based activities³⁰ (25%); fishing and boating (15%); and sightseeing (13%). Due to the high number of multiple responses to the question about their activities, the researcher then asked visitors to define their main tourist activity which they similarly listed as beach activities (31%); nature based activities (26%); fishing (20%); relaxing (11%); sightseeing (8%); and adventure activities (4%).

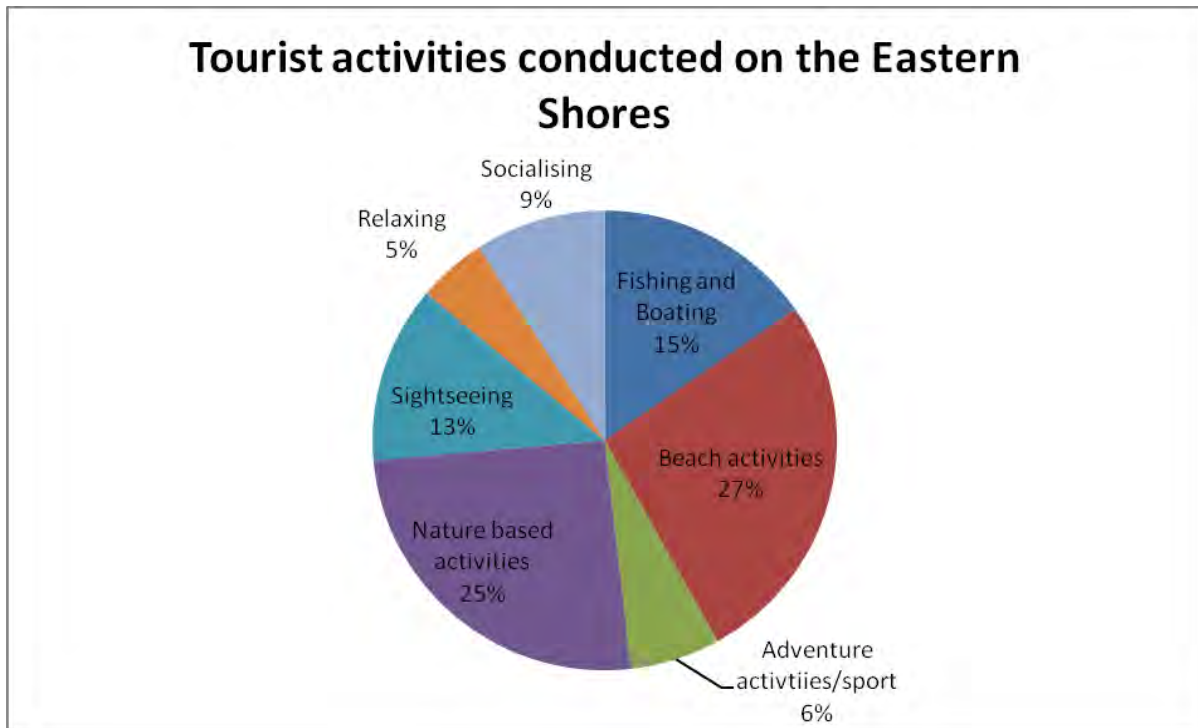


Figure 5.11: Tourist activities conducted on the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=940)

Further analysis of the activity statistics above, revealed that each visitor conducted an average of 3.9 tourist activities on the Eastern Shores. From the literature, postmodern tourists take the initiative to experience and explore their new environment using their time in a more structured manner to create a unique experience (Meethan, 2001; Pike, 2007; Salazar, 2004). The survey also revealed that 50% of the respondents who came to the Park to fish or go to the beach also conducted nature based activities. Further, 69 of the 109 respondents that fished also conducted beach activities with their families, like snorkelling, swimming and surfing. As mentioned previously, St Lucia used to attract mainly fishermen who only came

²⁹Beach activities range from swimming, sunbathing surfing and snorkelling

³⁰Nature based activities range from bird-watching, scuba diving, game drives, whale-watching, and hippo and crocodile boat tour

to fish and thus did not usually bring their families as there were no other activities for their family to experience. The research evidence thus shows that there is a gradual shift in the type of tourist frequenting the Eastern Shores from those who previously came only to fish, to an increasing number of tourists who are now wanting to experience a range of different activities. As one accommodation facility noted, “the time of the lazy tourist is in the past...people are looking for activity filled experiences...the demands and needs of tourists has changed” (A/18, 12/01/05).

To further illustrate this shift in the type of tourists, visitors were also asked to state the highlight of their trip to the Eastern Shores (refer to Figure 5.12 below). The top four highlights were nature, wildlife and scenery (36%); the beach and weather (26%); to fishing (6%); and relaxing (6%). Although fishing is a highlight for some visitors, six times more visitors are ranking nature, wildlife and scenery as their highlight. Thus, the Eastern Shores is no longer a destination just for fishermen. In fact, the evidence from this study shows that the Eastern shores has successfully established itself as an ecotourism destination. Postmodernism has changed how space is produced and interpreted on the Eastern Shores allowing for new and fragmented consumptive patterns to occur (Meethan 2006; Mustonen, 2006). St Lucia, once known only as a fishing destination is now being rebranded as a popular ecotourism destination.

Additionally, the destination seems to have also retained its appeal for coastal tourism. The research evidence shows that only 38% of tourists who conduct beach activities also conduct nature based activities. The Eastern Shores is thus able to cater to the eclectic and diverse preferences of the postmodern consumer visiting the Park (Buhalis, 2001; Trauer, 2004; Urry, 2002). Moreover, like many destinations that previously catered to one major mass market segment, the Eastern Shores has now diversified their product offering different types of tourism products that cater to different niche market segments namely; ecotourists, scenic tourist, beach tourists, adventure tourists; fishermen and boaters and those tourists who are just wanting to relax (refer to figure 5.11 above). As one accommodation owner surveyed stated, “they are very few fishermen...people now come here to swim, retreat and relax...now also seeing people interested in nature and wildlife” (A/9, 11/01/05).

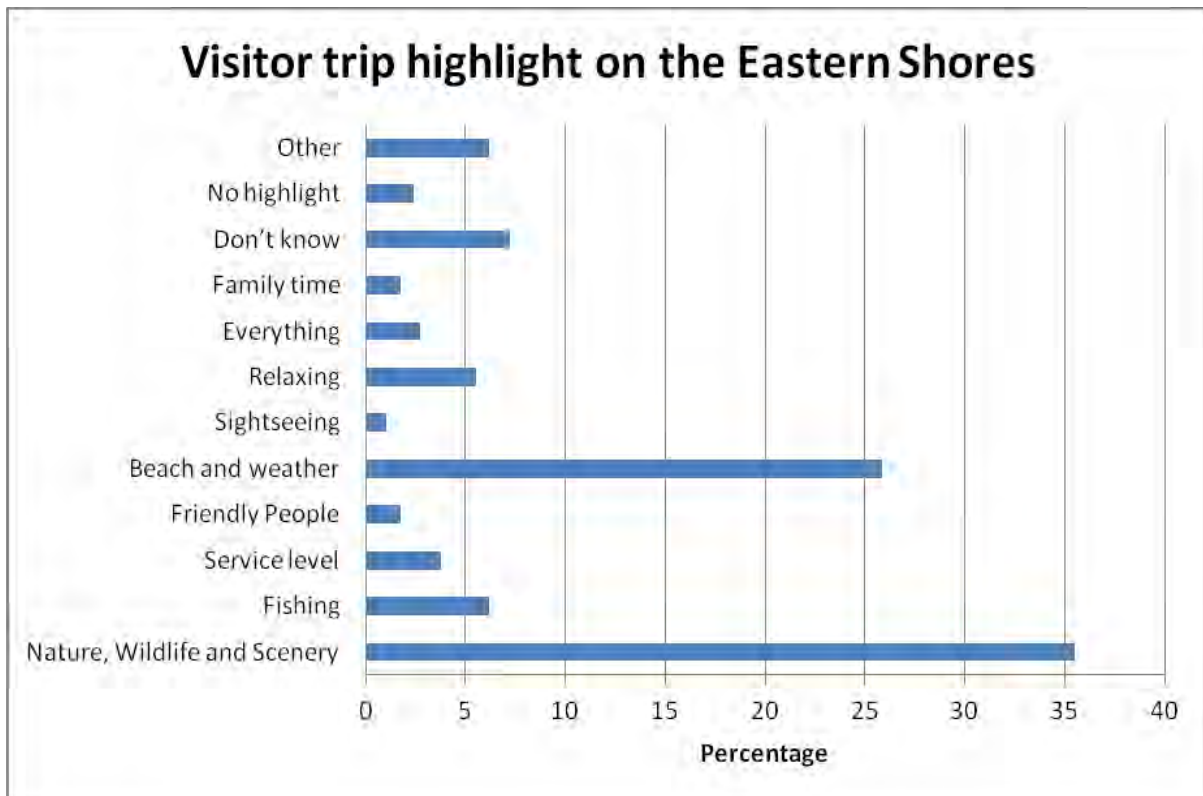


Figure 5.12: Visitor trip highlight on the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=290)

In combining the above data with that of tourists' willingness to travel to other destinations around iSimangaliso Wetland Park, the researcher is able to confirm where tourists' interests lie. Referring to Table 5.5 below, 48% of tourists are content to spend all their time in iSimangaliso Wetland Park while 42% of the Eastern Shores tourists indicate a willingness to travel Hluhluwe/Umfolozi Game Park. Only 10% of visitors stated that they visited other local areas adjoining the Park. From this data, it can be stated that tourists visiting the Eastern Shores are more inclined to visit areas where they can experience similar nature based activities.

Table 5.5: Other places visited around iSimangaliso Wetland Park during 2004-2005 (n=240)

Site	Other places/attractions around the Park that visitors have visited or intend visiting			
	Umfolozi/Hluhluwe Game Park (%)	Surrounding local areas (%)	None (%)	Total (%)
Eastern Shores	42	10	48	100

Considering this increasing shift towards more nature focused tourists on the Eastern Shores, the ecotourists that visit the Park will be defined further according to the categories defined by Alampay and Libosada, (2003); Burton, (1998); Fennel and Weaver, (2005) and Vaughan, (2000). In doing so, this will further describe the characteristics and nuances of the ecotourists that are increasingly visiting the Park.

Three types of ecotourists visit the Eastern Shores node, ranging from shallow to deep ecotourism. Firstly, there are ‘casual ecotourists’ visiting the Park, for whom the destination is coincidental. For these tourists, it is the activity rather than the destination that is the driving force behind the need to travel (Lindeburg, 1991; Sung, 2004). This depicts a shallow form of ecotourism as it is a superficial aesthetic experience that is created (Dey and Sarma 2006; Diamantis, 1999; Ryan et al, 2000). In looking at the data on the visitor attraction to the Eastern Shores casual ecotourists travelled to the Park as part of a larger group tour, business trip or conference; or their visit was on account of their time-share scheme (refer to Figure 5.10 above).

In addition, adventure or sport tourists visiting the Eastern shores can also be labelled casual ecotourists as their main reason for visiting the Park was to hike, horse-ride, play golf, kite-surf or kayak rather than experience the natural World Heritage – the main attraction of the destination (See Figure 5.11 above). Thus visiting the destination was incidental rather than the main reason for scheduling their trip within the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

Secondly, the Park is also visited by ‘mainstream ecotourists’ who are defined as mass ecotourists as they want to experience a destination that is popularised by media or other tourists (Vaughan, 2000). On the gradient of weak to strong sustainability, these types of ecotourists are moving towards stronger sustainability but still remain a shallow form of ecotourism (Dey and Sarma 2006; Diamantis, 1999; Ryan et al, 2000). Of the 220 responses, 120 tourists stated that the Eastern Shores’ World Heritage Site status added to their attraction to the Park. Referring to table 5.6 below, almost a third (30%) of tourists stated that their only reason for visiting the Park was to see the World Heritage Site, while 2% travelled to the Eastern Shores because they “heard tourists talking about the area” or “saw tourists going to the Park”.

Lastly, the Park also attracts the ‘dedicated ecotourists’ in the form of nature and wildlife tourists (Vaughan, 2000). These tourists fall on stronger side of the sustainability gradient and are part of a deeper form of ecotourism (Dey and Sarma 2006; Diamantis, 1999; Ryan et al, 2000). From table 5.6 above, it can be ascertained that for many visitors, the World Heritage Site was an added attraction rather than their main reason for visiting. Forty six percent of visitors travelled to the Park because it was “a pristine area”, while 9% of tourists visited the area because they were attracted to the uniqueness of the site. As stated previously, iSimangaliso Wetland Park is a World Heritage Site based on its natural values which are superlative scenic beauty, unique ecological and biological processes and biological diversity (iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, 2008). Thus these visitors wanted their tourist experience to concentrate on natural or wildlife tourism.

Table 5.6: Attraction to the Eastern Shores based on the Park’s World Heritage Site status during 2004-2005

The extent to which the park as a South African world heritage site added to the attraction of the Park and how (n=120)	
Reason	Percentage (%)
“I wanted to see the World Heritage Site”	30
“I heard tourists talking about it or I saw tourists going there”	2
“It is a pristine area”	46
“I want to put my money into conservation”	8
“It is a unique place”	9
It is safe and peaceful”	4
“I do not know”	1
Total (%)	100

Additionally, dedicated ecotourists will only visit protected areas so as to contribute financially to conservation efforts (Vaughan, 2000). Table 5.7 shows that 8% of Eastern Shores respondents stated that they wanted “to put *sic* [their] money into conservation”. And, as previously stated, when looking at what attracted tourists to the Park, 31% of respondents stated that nature, wildlife and scenery were their main reason for visiting the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso Wetland Park (refer to Figure 5.10). Thus these tourists are wanting to conserve the natural ecosystems and biodiversity found on the Eastern Shores.

Through the interviews with the accommodation sector, an additional ecotourist characteristic starts to emerge for those visiting the Eastern Shores. Terms like “more educated tourists” (A/21, 11/01/05) and “knowledgeable tourists” (A/6, 11/01/05) were used to describe the more ecologically inclined tourists visiting the Park. From the tourism literature, Buhalis (2001), Meethan (2001), and Salazar (2004) describe these aforementioned characteristics to be associated with that of the postmodern tourist in that they are more educated and spend their leisure time collecting knowledge about their destination.

To determine how knowledgeable these tourists were about the Park, visitors were asked a question that dealt with iSimangaliso Wetland Park’s World Heritage Site status, which it received in 1999 (refer to table 5.7 below). In 2004/05, only 39% of respondents knew that iSimangaliso Wetland Park was the first of five World Heritage sites in the country. These visitors garnered this information from print media (38%) - specifically newspapers, guide books and magazines, television (26%) and word of mouth (24%). As can be seen, these tourists made an effort to find out more information about the destination they were travelling to.

Table 5.7: Extent of tourist’s knowledge of the Park’s World Heritage status during 2004-2005

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Maybe (%)	Total (%)
Knowledge about the Park’s world heritage status (n=207)	39	59	2	100

However, the majority (59%) of tourists did not know the Park’s World Heritage status. This could be attributed to various reasons, ranging from lack of widespread media coverage, the relative newness of the World Heritage status and the lack of a coordinated, factual and consistent information on the internet. During this 2004/05 time period, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park did not have a website. Myles (2003) states that eco-sensitive travellers tended to individualise their holiday packages over the internet. The survey revealed that only 5% of tourists obtained this information from the internet.

The analysis so far describes the majority of tourists visiting the Park. However, the survey also revealed that the Park still retains a small core group of the fishermen who continue to

visit the Eastern Shores since St Lucia was still a fishing village. These tourists are a part of the former mass fishing tourism market that continues on a smaller scale on the Eastern Shores. The survey reveals that these fishermen only come to the Eastern Shores to fish. This is the only tourist activity that they engage in and is subsequently the highlight of their trip to the Park.

Evidence from the survey shows that for the fishermen who visited the Park prior to 1999, the change in the Eastern Shores to an ecotourism destination has not added value to their experience of the Park. This is illustrated in Table 5.8, which indicates that 68% of the 90 respondents stated that the World Heritage Site status does not attract them to the Eastern Shores. These tourists stated that the “*status sic* [did] not mean a thing to them” as they have been “coming here before it was a World Heritage site”; that the “status is an attraction for foreigners and not for locals”; and that since the Park received World Heritage status, “there are too many rule and regulations”.

Table 5.8: The added attraction of the world heritage status to visitors and the reasons during 2004-2005

The added attraction of the World Heritage status to visitors and the reasons (n=90)	
Reason	Percentage (%)
“The status does not mean one thing to me, I ‘ve been coming here before it was a World Heritage site”	63
“The status is an attraction for foreigners and not for locals”	2
“There are too many rules and regulations”	3
“I don’t know”	1
“It is part of my tour”	1
“I didn’t know it was a World Heritage Site”	11
“I just came to South Africa for the wildlife in general”	7
“It was recommended to me”	12
Total (%)	100

Further, among this group the only activity they stated that would add value to their tourist experience would be the “lifting of the national 4x4 beach driving ban so that they could drive on the beach to their fishing destinations”. This is representative of typical mass tourist behaviour, as although the fishermen appreciate the ecological values of the marine environment, they are persistent in their fight to open the beaches to 4x4 driving, purely for their leisure experience (Meethan, 2001; Turpie, 2005).

5.4 Visitor perceptions of tourism on the Eastern Shores

This section will use visitor perceptions to further analyse whether the destination of the Eastern Shores meets the changing needs of the tourists visiting this area. Visitor perceptions play an important role in the selection of a destination by a tourist. The tourist experience is about consuming goods and services that create pleasurable experiences (Boniface, 2001; Trauer and Ryan, 2004). Increasingly, tourists want better or higher quality of services from their destination (Meethan, 2001; Urry, 2002).

The Eastern Shores cannot only be perceived as a fishing destination or provide low quality tourist experiences. Postmodernity has created a highly competitive market. Even before a holiday has begun, tourism spaces are not just compared on a national level, but now also on an international scale and almost instantaneously through the internet or television (Nurick, 2000; Urry, 2002). Subsequently, former mass tourism markets have diversified their product in an attempt to make the destination more exciting or unique in order to have a competitive advantage (Meethan, 2001; Mustonen, 2006; Papatheodorou, 2004).

Table 5.9, shows visitors responses when they were asked to compare the Eastern Shores to other holiday destinations. Only 13.6 % of tourists viewed the Park negatively providing reasons including the lack of activities; crime and the poor quality of service; while other tourists simply stated for example, that the Eastern Shores does not rate highly as “there are other better destinations out there”. However, the majority (86.5%) of tourists viewed the Eastern Shores in a positive light stating that the Park is “nice”, “good”, “better”, “excellent” or of “high standard” (refer to Table 5.9). From this, it can be deduced that the destination is meeting the needs of the majority of tourists who come to the Park for nature or beach based activities.

Table 5.9: Comparison of the Eastern Shores with other holiday destinations during 2004-2005

Comparison of the Eastern Shores with other holiday destinations (n=215)	
Negative comparisons	Percentage (%)
“Not much to do here...need to have more activities”	6.6
“It is bad because of crime”	0.9
“Poor quality of service”	1.9
“Not good, there are other better destinations out there”	4.2
Positive comparisons	Percentage (%)
“Better”	5.6
“Nice or good”	53.5
“Excellent or of a high standard”	27.4
Total (%)	100

In analysing visitor experience further, tourists were asked to rate the services of the Park. Two thirds (68%) of visitors rated the service of the Eastern Shores as either good or excellent; 21% stated that the Park’s services were average; while only 11% of respondents assessed the services to be fair or poor (refer to figure 5.13 below).



Figure 5.13: Tourist service rating of the Eastern Shores during 2004-2005 (n=230)

The evidence also shows that although majority of tourists are having their needs met, but there is still a need to improve the level of service of business in and around the Park. One third (32%) of tourists gave the Eastern Shores node an average to poor rating for tourist services stating that the low levels of service were attributed largely to “unfriendly and unhelpful people”. This could be attributed to those businesses not able to change their product to service the changing consumer preferences. Further, only three businesses acknowledged the importance of providing good levels of service. One accommodation facility even noted that “services in South Africa are generally poor resulting in a negative effect on tourism” (A/1, 11/01/05).

Tourists were also asked to comment on the eight development sites that were proposed in iSimangaliso Wetland Park in 2003. Generally, tourists were negative about the proposed development. Of the 49 tourists who commented, 70% of respondents felt that the proposed development would detract from their tourist experience. Their responses can be divided to describe two categories of tourists which will be discussed further below.

Fifty five percent of tourists felt that the development would ruin the “beauty” and “nature” of the Eastern Shores, the very things they had come to visit in the Park. Examples of responses from the survey are:

“it’s a tragedy...the Park is beautiful as is...the last thing you need is further development...you need to have to have some places that are not developed. I doubt I would come back if these developments happen”

“it sounds like Umhlanga is moving in...development shouldn't be allowed... it will spoil the natural beauty”.

From the above response these tourists are in pursuit of pristine areas and often promote the western protectionist concept of natural areas untouched by humans (Alampay and Libosada, 2003; Campbell et al 2008; Wilshusen, 2002). For these tourists just the idea of development in a natural area is a negative concept to them. None of these tourists stopped to question whether the development would be managed towards sustainable principles; rather they automatically assumed that the development, “any development”, would have a negative impact on the environment.

Additionally, these tourists did not consider the positive economic and social impacts the proposed development could have on the previously disadvantaged communities surrounding the Park. Their preconceived idea of what pristine natural beauty is disregards the local needs of the people living in and around the Park (Alampay and Libosada, 2003; Campbell et al 2008; Wilshusen, 2002). This is a shallow form of ecotourism which rather than promoting economic development through conservation these notions of “untouched nature” actually opposes the concept of sustainable development by marginalising local communities.

The above comments also raise one of the main criticisms of ecotourism in that ecotourists put unknown destinations ‘on the map’ thereby setting up market mechanisms that enables the penetration of the mass tourism market in these areas (Campbell et al, 2008). Furthermore, Conti and Perelli (2005, 14) state that “niche tourism products can be sold as like mass tourism products by supplying highly specialized and customised packages to a large number of tourists”. It remains to be seen whether the Eastern Shores node of iSimangaliso Wetland Park would become a typical mass ecotourism destination. At the moment, the research suggests that the Eastern Shores currently only attracts elements of the mass tourism sector, from the repeat and domestic tourists to the casual ecotourists that visit the Park. However, also important to note, is that the Park is currently managed towards the conservation of it’s listed natural World Heritage values on which the iSimangaliso upon which the Authority’s community beneficiation and capacity building programmes, necessary for local, regional and national economic development, are dependent (iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, 2008).

Further, the evidence shows there are a group of South African tourists (14%) who felt strongly against the proposed development because they perceived the development would benefit foreign tourism and that it would lead to the exclusion of the local domestic market to places in the Park that domestic tourists have always visited. These responses included:

“this is a hidden agenda to get locals out of this place”

“this is not targeting locals...it is only for overseas people”

“rather have small local businesses rather than multinationals”.

These tourists view the changes in the destination as an attempt to exclude the local South African tourists who visit the Eastern Shores to fish. These visitors feel that they were excluded when the Eastern Shores was transformed into an ecotourism destination. Again, these tourist responses represent a small core group of fishermen that still visit the Eastern Shores regularly. As one fisherman from the survey stated “this is a hidden agenda to get locals out of this place...why the gate fee...why the access road to the beach and campsite...why the change...this is not a game reserve”.

There are however, a third of the respondents, who stated that the proposed development on the Eastern Shores would be “a boon to the Park” and that it was a “good idea” as it would “attract more tourists” and “create jobs for local people”. For these tourists, the proposed developments would not hinder their experience of the Park, “as long as it is well done and controlled”. These statements reflect the characteristics of deep ecotourist who want to conserve the natural environment while also promoting economic development (Honey, 1999b; Ryan et al, 2000). These tourists see conservation and development as an integrated concept and feel tourism should be used as a development to enhance local economic development rather than serve only as a pristine experience for tourists to consume.

5.5 Conclusion

From the above analysis, the researcher concludes that there has been a definite shift in tourism on the Eastern Shores since 1999. This shift can be broadly classified as the change from the fishing as a form of mass tourism to the more ecologically inclined postmodern tourists as a form of ecotourism.

The new type of tourist visiting the Park demands a different tourist experience from that which was previously offered by the St Lucia business community servicing the Eastern Shores. Subsequently, the change in the tourist market has resulted in changes to the tourism supply chain. Visitor characteristics, behaviour and perceptions were interrogated to produce a description of the visitors travelling to the Eastern Shores as well as to demonstrate the changes in the tourism supply chain. When the Park attained World Heritage status anecdotal evidence from the tourism supply chain and two tourism surveys conducted in the Park allow

for a comparison of the Eastern Shores from a former fishing village to an ecotourism destination.

Tourists currently visiting the Eastern Shores are characterised as predominantly South Africans travelling with their families in groups of four to six people. They usually take their holidays during school vacations and long weekends staying either 7-8 days or 1-3 days. The South African tourists prefer to stay in self-catering accommodation with their average spend ranging from R0-600 per day. Family tourism has grown on the Eastern Shores from the previous market of fishermen who usually came with or without their families and spent up to three weeks in the area. Though domestic tourism is dominant, there has been a substantial growth in the foreign markets. This can be seen in the rise of upmarket establishments in St Lucia and the emergence of foreign peak seasons thus providing new markets for businesses to cater to. Additionally, those businesses that have not changed to cater for the changing tourism market reported a downturn in their profits thus demonstrating that tourism has changed on the Eastern Shores.

Visitor behaviour has shifted from the mass fishing tourist to the ecotourist. Tourists visiting the Eastern Shores are attracted to the Park's nature, wildlife and scenic beauty or the beach and weather. Further, visitors are undertaking more tourist activities than the mass tourist who used to come to the Park to only fish. Increasingly, these postmodern tourists are also incorporating at least one or more ecotourism activity into their holidays. This change in the market is reflected in the St Lucia business community who note that the town has changed from a fishing village to an ecotourism destination.

A small core group of fishermen still frequent the Park but feel marginalised now that the Park has become an ecotourism destination. These mass tourists only come to the Park to fish and do not see the value of the changes to the destination as it does not benefit them. The Park receiving natural World Heritage status is viewed in a negative context as it brought about the changes to the destination.

The rising number of ecotourists visiting the Eastern Shores can be defined into three groups ranging from shallow to deep ecotourism. Shallow ecotourists visited the Park incidentally as part of a group tour, business trip, conference, time share or adventure sport while mainstream ecotourists only visited the Park due to its World Heritage site status, popularised

by the media or other tourists. Lastly there are dedicated ecotourists who only visited the Eastern shores to contribute to the conservation of the Park and to local economic development.

Visitor perceptions also contribute to further defining the type of ecotourist that travel to the Eastern Shores. The majority of tourists felt that the proposed future developments to the Park would jeopardise the pristine natural environment, which denotes a shallow form of ecotourism. These ecotourists do not question the sustainability of the development, but view all development as negative to the environment. They also do not take into account the need to create jobs for previously disadvantaged communities surrounding the Park. Only a third of the respondents were positive about the proposed tourism developments as long as it was ecologically sustainable. These tourists see the value development will have to local communities thus promoting a deeper form of ecotourism.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Ecotourism is the fastest growing tourism market in the world with many countries like South Africa marketing themselves primarily as ecotourism destinations (Koch and Massyn, 2001). Buhalis, (2001) predicts ecotourism to increase in South Africa by 25-30% year on year. For South Africa, a developing country, this represents a continuous market base for socio-economic growth and development (Aylward, 2003; Spenceley, 2001).

In analysing the tourism literature, the pattern that emerged showed tourism to be a constantly shifting and dynamic form of economic activity. As such, tourism research can never be stagnant, requiring continuous investigation and documentation to allow for strategic tourism management, especially in areas like iSimangaliso Wetland Park where tourism is being used as a tool to develop, uplift and build capacity in previously disadvantaged communities.

This study is aimed at analysing and documenting the shift from mass tourism to ecotourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park using the Eastern Shores as a case study. This thesis examines the shifts in tourists and their resulting effects on tourism in iSimangaliso Wetland Park. To achieve this aim, This research investigates visitor characteristics, behaviour and perceptions over time and how these have shaped tourism businesses on the Eastern Shores. In this chapter, the main findings of this research are summarised with recommendations for future tourism management and research in the Park.

6.2 Summary of study

In order to explain the shift in tourism on the Eastern Shores of iSimangaliso Wetland Park, it is important to understand the theoretical underpinnings that shape these changes. Chapter two describes how modern and postmodern paradigms have influenced mass tourism and the relatively newly formed ecotourism concept. Modernization gave rise to mass tourism through the acceleration of economic activity and the standardisation of production (Meethan, 2001 and Urry, 2002). Mass tourism is part of the Fordist mode production through a

‘continuous revolution of production’ which in turn creates standardised tourism products that are consumed *en masse* (Haldrup, 2001; Meethan, 2001). This chapter also describes the characteristics of the mass tourist’s typology and motives as well as the types of spaces they frequent. The mass tourist is essentially part of a homogenous market that comes on holiday to relax in familiar destinations. The archetypal mass tourist is the ‘sun, sea, sand, sex and sangria’ tourist (Buhalis, 2001 and Meethan, 2001).

Chapter two goes on to then describe the concept of postmodernism and how it has radically influenced tourism. Postmodernity shifted society to a post-Fordist mode of production where the globalisation of markets has led to a time-space compression and the creation of continuous forms of culture and identity (Haldrup, 2001 and Meethan, 2001). To meet these ephemeral markets, flexible modes of production have evolved. This translated in tourism to the deconstruction of mass tourism into smaller niche markets to meet these transient consumer patterns. For the purposes of this thesis, only the ecotourism niche market will be elaborated on (Bauman, 1992; Dear, 2001; Meethan, 2006; Prasad, 2006; Taylor, 2004).

Within ecotourism, the constant de-differentiation of postmodernism has led to heterogeneous groups of ecotourists that fall on a gradient from weak to strong sustainability. As a result, there is no archetypal ecotourist definition; rather ecotourists can range from casual and mainstream ecotourists who conduct more superficial aesthetic environmental activities (shallow ecotourism), to dedicated and hardcore ecotourists who are interested in supporting conservation and development (deep ecotourism) (Dey and Sarma, 2006; Diamantis, 1999; Ryan et al, 2000; Vaughan, 2000).

Information was also gathered to describe the context of the study. Chapter three describes the South African tourism trends and strategies so as to contextualise tourism within iSimangaliso Wetland Park. In South Africa, tourism is being used as one of the main growth strategies. Nature based tourism has formed a large part South Africa’s and KwaZulu-Natal’s tourism market. Through a national government directive, iSimangaliso Wetland Park is mainly marketed as an ecotourism site. Part of the iSimangaliso Authority’s mandate, is to develop optimal tourism and related development that will promote local empowerment and regional economic growth. Prior to iSimangaliso, receiving World Heritage Status, the Park used to be frequented by domestic ‘mass’ fishermen. After 1999, however the destination has

changed substantially and now attracts both a foreign and domestic market that are more ecologically inclined.

To be able to compare the shifts in tourism from the historical data presented in the Background chapter, both qualitative and quantitative data was used. Chapter four details the methodology used to collect and analyse the data as well as the limitations the researcher faced during the interview and data analysis process. Both statistical and descriptive data were collected through closed quantitative interviews with tourists and structured open ended interviews with the St Lucia business community. A pilot study was undertaken to test the functionality of the interview schedules in being able to extract the data needed to meet the aims and objectives of this thesis.

The researcher conducted 239 tourist interviews and 59 tourism business interviews over a period of a year (2004-2005) incorporating both peak domestic and foreign seasons in an effort to accurately portray tourism of the Eastern Shores. The statistical data was analysed in Excel while an interpretative approach was used to extract results from the qualitative data. This allowed the researcher interpret the general statistical trends found in the tourist interview schedules thus enhancing the findings. Secondary data collection was hampered by the lack of historical tourism information prior to 2000, while primary data collection was limited due to financial and time constraints. However despite these limitations, this combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques proved to be a useful methodological tool in that it not only corroborated findings, but also in providing a detailed narrative to the general statistical trends.

The assimilated quantitative and qualitative data sets were used to present the results and discussion. Chapter five uses modern and postmodern tourism theory to explain visitor characteristics, behaviour and perceptions as well as the subsequent changes to the tourism supply chain. Both tourist and business interviews were compared with previous surveys to analyse the shift in tourism from fishing to ecotourism on the Eastern Shores (Caras, 2000; Turpie, 2005).

The typical tourists currently visiting the Eastern Shores are predominantly domestic travellers who derive mainly from KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. They tend to travel with their families in groups of four to six and frequent the Eastern Shores during school holidays

and long weekends staying anywhere from 1-3 days to 7-8 days. These tourists also stay at self catering facilities, camping sites or time-share and their average spending ranged from R0-R600 per day. Prior to the Eastern Shores becoming an ecotourism destination foreign and family tourist groups were minimal. It was a destination for fishermen who usually came without their families and stayed for two to three weeks in self catering facilities. However, after 1999, foreign tourists visiting the Park are on the increase and the Eastern Shores has become a family destination.

As a result of the rising foreign market, the number of upmarket establishments popular with foreign tourists has increased substantially to meet the growing demands. The growth of foreign peak seasons have resulted in fewer low seasons thus making the Eastern Shores a more viable tourism destination. It has also created new markets for businesses to cater to. However, businesses need to be flexible to accommodate these changes in the tourism industry. It is apparent in St Lucia that some businesses still report a downturn in profits despite the growth in the tourism industry. Further investigation into their businesses saw that these businesses have not changed, mainly due to their inflexible Fordist business models that cannot adapt quickly to fluxes in the market.

Examining visitor behaviour with both quantitative and qualitative data, allowed the researcher to develop a nuanced profile of the types of tourists travelling to the Eastern Shores. The Eastern Shores currently attracts high numbers of first time and repeat visitors. The majority of repeat visitors were typical mass tourists and experienced the Park through a collective gaze where the presence of people was necessary to enjoy the destination. However, there were some repeat visitors who did not fit the mass tourist archetype and wanted to explore the Park in solitude (romantic gaze).

Majority of tourists, both foreign and domestic, were attracted to the Park for either its nature, wildlife and scenic beauty or the beach and weather. Each visitor conducted on average 3.9 tourist activities with 50% of respondents who come to fish and go to the beach now incorporating ecotourism activities into their holidays. Subsequently, the St Lucia business community also notes the change in the character of the destination in that it attracts ecotourists rather than fishermen. The business community describes the ecotourists visiting the Park as being educated, well informed and activity focused.

There are three types of ecotourists that visit the Park ranging from shallow to deep ecotourism. Shallow ecotourists on the Eastern Shores were defined as those tourists who visited the Park incidentally as part of group tours, business trips, conferences, time share or adventure tourism activities. Mainstream ecotourists were defined as mass ecotourists who want to experience popular ecotourism destinations. On the Eastern Shores this meant they only visited the Park due to its World Heritage status or because they saw other tourists visit the Park. Lastly, there are the dedicated ecotourists who visit the Park as it will contribute to conservation efforts.

However, the Park still retains a small core group of fishermen who come only to fish and thus feel marginalised with the changes that have occurred since the Park became an ecotourism destination. Game introductions and the Park's natural World Heritage status are viewed negatively as these changes do not benefit the fishermen. Rather, it makes these mass tourists feel more excluded from the destination as these changes are perceived to have impacted negatively on their traditional Eastern Shores fishing experience.

Visitor perceptions were analysed to gain a better understanding of whether the tourism destination was meeting the needs of the current tourists visiting the Park. In doing so, we could understand whether the destination was producing the appropriate ecotourism experience for visitors. Majority of tourists viewed the Eastern Shores in a positive light with two thirds of the visitors rating their experience as either good or excellent. However, a third of the respondents rated their experience as either average or poor stating that unfriendly and unhelpful people were the cause. This could be attributed to those businesses that were not able to change their product and thus could not cater to the changing consumer preferences. These mass business models are inflexible to rapid changes and thus are not able to take advantage of fluxes in the tourism market.

Finally, the conservation ethic of tourists visiting the Park was interrogated. Half of the tourists felt that any development would lead to destruction of the natural environment. This pursuit of pristine natural areas promotes a shallow form of ecotourism. These tourists in their pursuit to preserve natural environments do not take into account the needs of communities living in and around the Eastern Shores. However, a third of the respondents, viewed the development as beneficial as it would create more jobs for communities. For these ecotourists, the concept of sustainable development was promoted. This reflects a deep

form of ecotourism as these tourists see conservation and development as an integrated tool that can be used to benefit previously disadvantaged communities.

6.3 Recommendations for future work

This section will focus on proposing a tourism research strategy for the iSimangaliso Authority to ensure effective destination management as current and long term data collection and analysis will support decision making in a tourism market that is in constant flux.

Currently the iSimangaliso Authority is conducting a baseline visitor market survey to inform the Park's tourism strategy. The survey aims to collect trend information by documenting visitor profiles and travelling habits over time. The Authority also gathers occupancy statistics in their attempt to define visitor trends. Due to the volatility of the tourism market, these long term surveys become important tools in documenting the changing tourism trends over time.

From this thesis, it has become evident that further tourism research is needed to supplement the data collected by the long term surveys mentioned above as certain types of data are not collected by these surveys. The following *research gaps* have been identified which the researcher feels need to be investigated as it will support iSimangaliso strategic tourism management of the Park:

a) *Long term surveys of all iSimangaliso nodes:*

Currently, three Park nodes; namely Eastern Shore, Sodwana Bay and uMkhuze Game Reserve are being surveyed as these destinations have proven to be the most popular sites with visiting tourists. The researcher feels that the inclusion of Kosi Bay and Maphelane will add to the current survey data and ensure suitable marketing of all nodes within iSimangaliso. Additionally, the Western Shores, Charters Creek and False Bay will also need to be included in the surveys when these sites have opened to tourists. Understandably, the possibility of conducting surveys in these nodes will be subject to the availability of budgets.

b) *Research on day visitor characteristics:*

In 2004, 11% of visitors took day trips to the Eastern Shores. From the tourism literature, postmodern tourists are taking shorter (1-3 day) trips but more frequent vacations or visits. Given the Eastern Shores proximity to Durban (just two hours away), this may become a growing trend for the destination. In turn, this will affect the types of tourism activities and products on offer. Thus, it is important to understand the needs of these tourists to ensure the destination can meet these requirements.

c) *Market research on 'growth tourism markets':*

This thesis has shown that new 'growth markets' seem to be emerging from Switzerland, Asia and Africa. These markets offer potential for future and thus sustained tourism growth on the Eastern Shores. Market research on understanding their needs will shape an effective marketing strategy to target these 'growth markets' and thus tap into this latent tourism potential.

d) *Research on cultural heritage tourism:*

As the notion of sustainability becomes more entrenched in postmodern society the notion of sustainable tourism will not just mean travel to natural areas, but also travel for cultural heritage tourism (Honey 1999b). In addition, providing a cultural tourism experience within the Eastern Shores makes the destination more attractive to tourists who now come to experience a variety of activities. Thus, determining the expectations and perceptions of what tourists want from cultural tourism will help iSimangaliso Authority in shaping potential and viable cultural tourism activities in the Park.

e) *Survey of tour operators and travel agents:*

Often forgotten in research, tour operators and travel agents are often the first link between the tourist and a tourism destination. These businesses are also the first to realise tourism market changes. So far surveys have only been conducted of tourism businesses located in St Lucia. Conducting a survey with selected businesses, both domestic and abroad, will help iSimangaliso stay ahead of future tourism trends but also assist in marketing the destination to meet current tourist needs.

f) *Web based consumer survey:*

Postmodernity has led to the market change from the consumption of goods to the consumption of services (Meethan, 2006). Additionally, from this research, postmodern tourists are found to want better levels of service which influences whether they have a negative or positive tourist experience. A web-based consumer survey will allow the iSimangaliso Authority to maximise use of budgets as they will be able to reach large numbers of visitors that have travelled the Eastern Shores thus gaining a good perspective of visitor satisfaction. Web based surveys also have the ability to generate almost instantaneous results which Park management can use to improve the destination in 'real time'.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Plates of St Lucia and Cape Vidal beaches during peak season

Appendix 2: Interview schedules used to collect quantitative and qualitative data

Appendix 3: Respondent tables for interviews conducted with tour operators, accommodation owners and tourism related businesses

Appendix 1



Plate 1: St Lucia beach car park during domestic peak season (Photo courtesy of Mr Bheki Mlodo, iSimangaliso Authority staff member)



Plate 2: Cape Vidal beach during domestic peak season (Photo courtesy of Mr Bheki Mlodo, iSimangaliso Authority staff member)

Appendix 2

**Note: iSimangaliso Wetland Park was formerly known as the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park. In May 2007, after an extensive consultation process, the new name for the park – iSimangaliso Wetland Park – was gazetted. The data was collected prior to the name change.*



School of Life and Environmental Sciences

A. TOURIST INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Date: _____
Time: _____
Place: _____
Interview number: _____

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Nerosha Govender and I am a Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Here is my student card. I am undertaking a survey to try and understand the types of tourism that are taking place around the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park. Would you mind answering a few simple questions? It will take less than 5 minutes of your time.

1. Place of residence: Country _____ Town _____
2. Province Gauteng Eastern Cape Western Cape Northern Cape
 Freestate Kwazulu-Natal Mpumalange North West Limpopo
3. a) Is this your first visit to the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park area? Y N
b) If No, then how regularly do you visit the park? _____ (needs to be coded)
c) What time of year do you come to the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park area? (more than one answer possible)
 February – April June – July August – November December - January
 If other, specify: _____
d) Have you travelled to St Lucia/Sodwana alone or in a group? Alone Group
e) If in a group, how many people are travelling with you? _____ (needs to be coded)
4. How long will you be staying in the area? 2-3 days 4 -5 days 1 week
 10 days 2 weeks If other, specify: _____

5. What type of transport did you use to get to the park? Hitchhike Taxi Baz Bus
 Tour bus Private car Rental car If other, specify: _____

If type of transport was a tour bus – refer to question 6; if Baz Bus, refer to question 7

6. a) Are you here on an organised tour? Y N
 b) How long is the tour? _____ (needs coding)
 c) What proportion/percentage of the tour is spent in St Lucia and the surrounding region?
 _____ (needs coding)
 d) Was the tour organised in South Africa or from overseas? S.A Overseas
 e) Has your tour guide provided adequate information about the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park and the surrounding region? Y N

7. a) How did you find out about the Baz Bus? _____ (needs coding)
 b) How long is your trip? _____ (needs coding)
 c) What proportion/percentage of your trip have you decided to spend in St Lucia and the surrounding area? _____ (needs coding)
 d) What is the main source of information in this area? _____ (needs coding)
 e) Name of guide book/s or information brochure/s? _____
 _____ (needs coding)

8. Where are you staying during your visit?

- a) Name _____
 b) Type Hotel/lodge Self Catering/Chalets B&B Backpackers Camping Time share Holiday home If other, specify _____
 (if not known, can find question 'b' later – through brochures)

9. What has attracted you to come and visit the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park? (more than one answer possible)

- Nature Wildlife Fishing Beach Scenic beauty Peace and Quiet
 Weather Business Part of the tour Read in a travel guide/brochure Food
 Recommended, specify who _____ If other, specify _____

- a) Which areas in the park have you visited or intend visiting? (more than one answer possible)

- Lake St Lucia Cape Vidal Lake Bhangazi Fannies Island Charters Creek
 Sodwana uMkuze Game Reserve Thonga Beach Lodge (Mabibi)
 Rocktail Bay Kosi Bay Mission rocks Maphelane
 If other, specify _____

b) Which other places/attractions around the park have you visited or intend visiting?

Umfolozi.Hluhluwe Game Reserve Surrounding local areas

If other, specify _____

10. a) On this visit, what types of activities have you done or intend doing in the park with the use of a tour operator? (more than one answer possible)

Fishing Boating Swimming Sunbathing Snorkelling Surfing

Diving Kayaking Hiking Horse riding Cycling Bird watching

Whale watching Game drive 4x4 self drive safari adventure Golf

Croc Centre Sightseeing Relaxing Turtle tours Restaurants

Meet people/Socialising Walking Drinking Boat on the lake (hippo/croc)

Exploring by vehicle Adventure tours (Paragliding, Absailing, Microlights, shark diving, etc)

If other, specify _____

b) Which was the main activity (*circle one of the above blocks to indicate the main activity*)

11. a) On this visit, what types of activities have you done or intend doing in the park on your own? (more than one answer possible)

Fishing Boating Swimming Sunbathing Snorkelling Surfing

Diving Kayaking Hiking Horse riding Cycling Bird watching

Whale watching Game drive 4x4 self drive safari adventure Golf

Croc Centre Sightseeing Relaxing Turtle tours Restaurants

Meet people Walking Drinking Boat on the lake

Exploring by vehicle If other, specify _____

b) Which was the main activity (*circle one of the above blocks to indicate the main activity*)

c) What has been the highlight of your trip to this area? _____

12. a) Is the fact that this park as South Africa's world heritage site added to the attraction of the park?

Y N Maybe

b) If yes, how; and if no, why not?

c) Did you know that it was the first of 5 World Heritage Sites in the country?

Y N Maybe

d) If yes, how did you obtain this information?

13. a) How does the park compare as a holiday destination as opposed to the other holiday places you may have visited?

b) How would you rate the services in the park?

Excellent Good Average Fair Poor

c) Will you come back again? Y N Maybe

14. a) Are you aware that 8 new developments sites have been identified by government in the park?

Y N Slightly

b) If yes/slightly, what is your understanding of these developments?

15. Do you think that the developments in the park have and will attract more tourists? (improved roads, game introduction, improved facilities – toilets etc)

Y N Slightly

17. What are your estimated costs per day for accommodation, meals, tours, curios, etc? (just give a vague estimate – don't push for answers)

18. Any further comments you would like to make about tourism in the area and the changes that are taking place?

Thank you for you time

Interviewer's comments



School of Life and Environmental Sciences

B. TOUR OPERATOR INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Date: _____
Time: _____
Place: _____
Interview number: _____

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Nerasha Govender and I am a Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Here is my student card. I am undertaking a survey to try and understand the types of tourism that are taking place around the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park. Would you mind answering a few simple questions? It will take less than 5 minutes of your time.

1. a) Name of tour company _____
 b) Which tourist association do you belong to? _____

2. Do you have a concession to work in the GSLWP?
 Y N

3. What areas of the park do you visit in the tours? (more than one answer)
 Lake St Lucia Cape Vidal Lake Bhangazi Fannies Island Charters Creek
 Sodwana uMkuze Game Reserve Thonga Beach Lodge (Mabibi)
 Rocktail Bay Kosi Bay Mission rocks Maphelane
 If other, specify _____

4. Which areas around the park do you visit in your tours? (more than one answer)
 Umfolozi.Hluhluwe Game Reserve Surrounding local areas
 If other, specify _____

5. What are the different tour packages that you offer? (more than one answer)
 Nature tour Game reserve Night Drives Deep sea or fly fishing Beach tour
 Estuary tour Whale Watching Turtle tour Croc center Cultural tour
 If other, specify: _____

6. a) How long are your tours? (more than one answer)

1-2 hours 3-4 hours Half day Full day If other, specify: _____

b) What is the average size of groups on your tours _____ (needs to be coded)

7. What are the peak tourist seasons during the year? (more than one answer)

February - April June – July August - November
 December - January If other, specify: _____

8. How long does the average tourist stay in the park and the area around the park?

2-3 days 4 -5 days 1 week 10 days 2 weeks
 If other, specify: _____

9. What types of transport do you use? (more than one answer)

Tour bus/Kombi Rental car Private car Safari Vehicle
 If other, specify: _____

10. How would you characterize the type of tourist that comes to the park and the area around the park in terms of their interests? (more than one answer)

Nature tourists Wildlife tourists Cultural/Heritage tourists Business tourists
 Beach tourists Fisherman If other, specify: _____

11. a) Are your clients on bus tours or do they drive themselves? (more than one answer)

Bus tours _____ Self Drive _____

b) What are the demands of tourists in terms of what they would like to see? (more than one answer)

Big 5 Whales Hippos/crocodiles Bird life Nature Culture Biodiversity
 World heritage site If other, specify: _____

c) What is your perception/impression of what tourists do if they don't go on tours?

12. a) What proportion of South African versus overseas tourists use your services? (%)

South African _____ Overseas _____

b) Where in South Africa do most of the domestic/local tourists come from? (more than one answer)

Gauteng Eastern Cape Western Cape Northern Cape
 Freestate Kwazulu-Natal Mpumalange North West Limpopo

13. Have you noticed a shift in tourism in terms of

a) i) the type of tourist Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

b) i) how long they come for Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

c) i) peak seasons Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

d) i) activities/tours undertaken Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

e) i) numbers of tourists Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

f) Why in general do you think that these shifts are taking place?

4x4 ban Financial (rand/dollar exchange rate) Crime Price increases

If other, specify: _____

14. a) Has the status of the park as a World Heritage Site stimulated tourism

Y N Maybe

b) If yes, in what ways; and if no, why do you think so?

15. What would really help your business to improve?

16. Do you think that the developments in the park have attracted more tourists? (improved roads, game introduction, improved facilities – toilets etc) Y N

b) If yes, what developments particularly and how?

c) If, no, why do you think so

17. Any further comments you would like to make about tourism in the area and the changes that are taking place?

Thank you for your time.

Interviewer's comments



School of Life and Environmental Sciences

C. ACCOMODATION INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Date: _____
Time: _____
Place: _____
Interview number: _____

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Nerosha Govender and I am a Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Here is my student card. I am undertaking a survey to try and understand the types of tourism that are taking place around the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park. Would you mind answering a few simple questions? It will take less than 5 minutes of your time.

1. a) Name of lodge/B&B/accommodation _____
 b) Which tourist association do you belong to? _____

2. a) How long have you been operating? _____
 b) Are you accredited by any organization? Y N
 Which _____

- c) What is your star rating? _____ (needs to be coded)

3. a) What are the demands/needs of tourists that use this type of accommodation?

 _____ (needs to be coded)

- b) Have you changed your services to meet these demands in any way Y N

- c) How _____ (needs to be coded)

4. a) Do you supply them with information about the area? Y N

- b) What activities do you recommend they do? _____
 _____ (needs to be coded)

5. What meals do they mainly eat with you? Breakfast Lunch Supper

6. In what way do you try to create the tourist experience that represents the uniqueness of the area?

a) How do you advertise?

7. What are the peak tourist seasons during the year? (more than one answer)

- February - April June – July August - November
 December – January If other, specify: _____

8. a) How would you characterize the type of tourist that comes to the park and the area around the park in terms of their interests? (more than one answer)

- Nature tourists Wildlife tourists Cultural/Heritage tourists Business tourists
 Beach tourists Fisherman If other, specify: _____

b) Does the type of tourist vary with the season? Y N

If yes, how? _____

9. a) How long does the average tourist stay in the park and the area around the park?

- 2-3 days 4 -5 days 1 week 10 days 2 weeks
 If other, specify: _____

b) Does the length of stay vary with seasons? Y N

If yes, how? _____

10. What types of transport do they use? (more than one answer)

- Hitchhike Taxi Baz Bus Tour bus Rental car Private car
 If other, specify: _____

11. a) Are your clients mainly on bus tours or do they drive themselves?

- Bus tours _____ Self Drive _____

b) What are the demands of tourists in terms of what they would like to see? (more than one answer)

- Big 5 Whales Hippos/crocodiles Bird life Nature Culture Biodiversity
 World heritage site If other, specify: _____

c) What activities do you think these tourists like to do in the park with the use of a tour operator? (more than one answer)

- Fishing Boating Swimming Sunbathing Snorkelling Surfing
 Diving Kayaking Hiking Horse riding Cycling Bird watching
 Whale watching Game drive 4x4 self drive safari adventure Golf
 Croc Centre Sightseeing Relaxing Turtle tours Restaurants
 Meet people/Socialising Walking Drinking Boat on the lake (hippo/croc)
 Exploring by vehicle Adventure tours (Paragliding, Absailing, Microlights, shark diving, etc)
 If other, specify _____

d) What activities do you think these tourists like to do in the park on their own? (more than one answer)

- Fishing Boating Swimming Sunbathing Snorkelling Surfing
 Diving Kayaking Hiking Horse riding Cycling Bird watching
 Whale watching Game drive 4x4 self drive safari adventure Golf
 Croc Centre Sightseeing Relaxing Turtle tours Restaurants
 Meet people/Socialising Walking Drinking Boat on the lake (hippo/croc)
 Exploring by vehicle Adventure tours (Paragliding, Absailing, Microlights, shark diving, etc)
 If other, specify _____

12. a) What proportion of South African versus overseas tourist use your services? (%)

South African _____ Foreign _____

b) Where in South Africa do most of the domestic/local tourists come from?

- Gauteng Eastern Cape Western Cape Northern Cape Freestate Kwazulu-Natal
 Mpumalange North West Limpopo

13. Have you noticed a shift in tourism in terms of

- a) i) the type of tourist Y N Maybe
 ii) What is this shift _____
 b) i) how long they come for Y N Maybe
 ii) What is this shift _____
 c) i) peak seasons Y N Maybe
 ii) What is this shift _____
 d) i) The extent to which they eat out instead of self catering Y N Maybe
 ii) What is this shift _____
 e) i) numbers of tourists Y N Maybe
 ii) What is this shift _____

f) Why do you think in general that these shifts are taking place?

- 4x4 ban Financial (rand/dollar exchange rate) Crime Price increases
 If other, specify: _____

15 a) Has the status of the park as a World Heritage Site stimulated tourism

- Y N Maybe

b) If yes, in what ways; and if no, why do you think so?

16. What would really help your business to improve?

17. a) Do you think that the developments in the park have attracted more tourists? (improved roads, game introduction, improved facilities – toilets etc) Y N

b) If yes, what developments particularly and how?

c) If, no, why do you think so

18. Any further comments you would like to make about tourism in the area and changes that are taking place?

Thank you for your time.

Interviewer's comments



School of Life and Environmental Sciences

D. BUSINESS/RESTAURANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Date: _____
Time: _____
Place: _____
Interview number: _____

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Nerosha Govender and I am a Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Here is my student card. I am undertaking a survey to try and understand the types of tourism that are taking place around the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park. Would you mind answering a few simple questions? It will take less than 5 minutes of your time.

1. a) Name of Business _____
 b) Type: What services do you provide for tourists? _____

2. How long have you been operating? _____ (needs to be coded)

3. a) What are the demands of tourists that use the services you provide?

 _____ (needs to be coded)
 b) Have you changed your services to meet these demands in any way Y N
 c) If yes, how _____
 _____ (needs to be coded)

RESTAURANTEURS ONLY

4. What meals do they mainly eat with you? Breakfast Lunch Supper

5. What type of tourist tends to eat out the most? _____ (needs to be coded)

6. a) Have you noticed a shift in tourism in terms of the extent in which they eat out instead of self catering
 Y N Maybe

b) If yes, what is this shift and why do you think it is taking place? _____

7. What are the peak tourist seasons during the year? (more than one answer)

February - April June – July August - November
 December – January If other, specify: _____

8. How long does the average tourist stay in the park and the area around the park?

2-3 days 4 -5 days 1 week 10 days 2 weeks
 If other, specify: _____

9. How would you characterize the type of tourist that comes to your business in terms of their interests?
 (more than one answer)

Nature tourists Wildlife tourists Cultural/Heritage tourists Business tourists
 Beach tourists Fisherman If other, specify: _____

10. In what way do you try to create the tourist experience that represents the uniqueness of the area through your business _____

11. a) How do you advertise? _____ (needs to be coded)

b) Is signage an important means of attracting tourists Y N

12. What proportion of South African versus overseas tourist use your services? (%)

South African _____ Foreign _____

- c) Where in South Africa do most of the domestic/local tourists come from?

Gauteng Eastern Cape Western Cape Northern Cape Freestate Kwazulu-Natal
 Mpumalange North West Limpopo

13. Have you noticed a shift in tourism in terms of

a) i) the type of tourist Y N Maybe ii) What is
 this shift _____

b) i) how long they come for Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

c) i) peak seasons Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

d) i) numbers of tourists Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

e) i) services demanded Y N Maybe

ii) What is this shift _____

f) Why are these shifts taking place?

4x4 ban Financial (rand/dollar exchange rate) Crime Price increases

If other, specify: _____

14. a) Has the status of the park as a World Heritage Site stimulated tourism

Y N Maybe

b) If yes, in what ways; and if no, why do you think so?

15. a) Do you think that the developments in the park have attracted more tourists? (improved roads, game introduction, improved facilities – toilets etc) Y N

b) If yes, what developments particularly and how?

c) If no, why do you think so

16. What would really help your business to improve?

17. Any further comments you would like to make about tourism in the area and the changes that are taking place?

Thank you for your time.

Interviewer's comments

Appendix 3

Table 4.3: Interviewed respondents: tour operators

Tour Operator Respondents (n = 8)				
	Respondent	Name of Establishment	Speciality	Date Interviewed
1	TO/1	St Lucia Safaris	Estuary boat trip	25/07/04
2	TO/2	ShakaBarker and St Lucia Leisure	Game drives and turtle tours	11/01/05
3	TO/3	Harlekyn Deep Sea Charters	Deep sea fishing	11/01/05
4	TO/4	St Lucia Kayak Safaris	Kayak tours	11/01/05
5	TO/5	Shonalonga Tours	Game drives	12/01/05
6	TO/6	Bloo house backpackers and tours ³¹	Adventure tours	12/01/05
7	TO/7	FaFa Tours	Cultural tours and game drives	25/07/04
8	TO/8	Advantage Tours and Charters	Estuary boat trip and Whale Watching tours	27/07/04

³¹ Bloo House backpackers and tours was an accommodation facility that also ran tours for their clients

Table 4.4: Interviewed respondents: accommodation owners

Accommodation owner respondents (n = 29)				
	Respondent	Name of Establishment	Accommodation Type	Date Interviewed
1	A/1	St Lucia Wetlands B&B	Bed and breakfast	11/01/05
2	A/2	Ezemvelo log cabins and campsites	Self Catering	10/01/05
3	A/3	Maputoland Guesthouse	Bed and breakfast	11/01/05
4	A/4	La Rochelle	Time share	11/01/05
5	A/5	iGwalaGwala Guesthouse	Bed and breakfast	11/01/05
6	A/6	Seasands Lodge	Lodge	11/01/05
7	A/7	Ndiza Lodge and Cabanas	Bed and breakfast	11/01/05
8	A/8	St Lucia Holiday Flats	Self catering	11/01/05
9	A/9	Mangoes	Bed and breakfast	11/01/05
10	A/10	St Lucia Wilds	Self catering	11/01/05
11	A/11	Estuary Guest Chalet	Self catering	12/01/05
12	A/12	Zulani Guesthouse	Bed and breakfast	12/01/05
13	A/13	Namib Safari Lodge	Bed and breakfast	12/01/05
14	A/14	Manzini Resort	Time share	12/01/05
15	A/15	Lidiko Lodge	Bed and breakfast	12/01/05
16	A/16	Perna Perna	Time share	12/01/05
17	A/17	Bibs International Backpackers	Backpackers	12/01/05
18	A/18	Elephant Lake Hotel	Hotel	12/01/05
19	A/19	Frangipani	Self catering	13/01/05
20	A/20	Avelone Guesthouse	Bed and breakfast	13/01/05
21	A/21	Kingfisher Guesthouse	Bed and breakfast	11/01/05
22	A/22	Bloo House Backpackers	Backpackers	22/07/04
23	A/23	Heritage Backpackers	Backpackers	23/07/04
24	A/24	Jo-a-lize	Self catering	23/07/04
25	A/25	Lalapanzi Guest house	Bed and breakfast	24/07/04
26	A/26	Shonalonga Holiday flats	Self catering	24/07/04
27	A/27	Lai-La Log Cabins	Self catering	26/07/04

28	A/28	Hornbill house ³²	Bed and breakfast	11/01/05
29	A/29	Elephant Coast Guesthouse	Bed and breakfast	11/01/05

³² Hornbill house and Shakabarker and St Lucia Leisure are owned by one proprietor

Table 4.5: Interviewed respondents: Business/Restaurant owners

	Respondent	Name of Establishment	Service	Date Interviewed
1	BR/1	Wimpy	Restaurant	12/01/05
2	BR/2	St Lucia Hardware	Hardware and camping equipment retail	12/01/05
3	BR/3	Spar	Food, clothing and general retail	13/01/05
4	BR/4	Lakeview Liquor Store	Liquor retail	13/01/05
5	BR/5	Fast Fotos	Photo processing and web page development	13/01/05
6	BR/6	Piranha Bait and Tackle	Fishing bait and tackle retail	12/01/05
7	BR/7	Ponta Lucia Beach and Surf Shop	Clothing Retail	12/01/05
8	BR/8	Mighty Bite	Restaurant	12/01/05
9	BR/9	Dolfyn Supermarket	Food and general retail	13/01/05
10	BR/10	La Gosta	Restaurant	11/01/05
11	BR/11	Total Petrol station	Petrol and food retail	11/01/05
12	BR/12	Quarterdeck	Restaurant	13/01/05
13	BR/13	Greek Sizzler	Restaurant	08/01/05
14	BR/14	St Lucia Fishing Den	Fishing bait and tackle retail	08/01/05
15	BR/15	Alfredos	Restaurant	08/01/05
16	BR/16	St Pizza	Restaurant	08/01/05
17	BR/17	Scatterings of Africa	Art, craft and curio retail	08/01/05
18	BR/18	Fishy Pete	Restaurant	08/01/05
19	BR/19	St Lucia service station	Petrol and food retail	08/01/05
20	BR/20	Ice and Bait Box	Fishing bait and tackle retail	08/01/05
21	BR/21	Cape Vidal Take Away	Food take-away	09/01/05
22	BR/22	Cape Vidal Curio Shop	Food and curio retail	09/01/05