

CHAPTER NINE

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

There are four aspects to this chapter: Firstly, it summarizes the major findings of the research in relation to the stated aim and objectives; that is, to develop a framework to monitor the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures in southern Africa and to test its applicability in a field setting. Secondly, the chapter identifies the limitations of the research. Thirdly, it provides conclusions relating to the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures in general. Finally, it presents recommendations on aspects that require further research and investigation.

9.2 Synthesis

This research set to address the research question: **“How can the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures be monitored to provide performance indicators to aid effective management?”** In order to address the research question the research constructed an evaluation framework for monitoring the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures and tested the framework for its applicability on six different community-based ecotourism ventures across southern Africa. The framework yielded useful results to inform the managers of the ventures on how to improve their sustainability performance. The summary of the findings offers an overview of how the research question was addressed in relation to the seven stated objectives of the study.

Objective 1: To compile an inventory of community-based tourism ventures in southern Africa

A comprehensive inventory of 331 community-based tourism ventures across southern Africa was compiled by using available databases, visiting travel shows and exhibitions, and conducting internet searches (section 3.5.1). South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Botswana have the most community-based tourism ventures. Ventures were also identified in Zambia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Malawi, Madagascar and Mauritius (Figures 3.2 & 3.3). No community-based tourism ventures were found in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo or Seychelles.

This comprehensive inventory, which serves as an important list of community-based tourism ventures in southern Africa, may be used by future researchers who wish to conduct research. The inventory also serves as a means through which the online website of the Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa (RETOSA), which lists community-based tourism ventures in

southern Africa, may be updated in order to ensure a more comprehensive coverage of existing ventures.

Objective 2: To define community-based ecotourism and establish which community-based tourism ventures may be categorized as community-based ecotourism

Community-based ecotourism was defined in section 2.7 as:

Responsible travel to natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and local culture) that promotes conservation of the environment, where the local community has substantial control over and involvement in development and management, while the majority of the socio-economic benefits accrue to the community.

A spatial selection of the ventures that could be safely and economically visited was conducted in order to refine the selection of cases for further investigation (section 3.5.3). The resulting ventures were subjected to a telephonic interview process (section 3.5.4) in order to establish which community-based tourism ventures might be categorized as community-based ecotourism (section 3.5.5). Some 44 ventures were identified as such.

This study has provided a richer and more accurate definition of community-based ecotourism which is not yet well defined in literature. The study affirms that seven important aspects have to be present for a community-based tourism venture to be classified as community-based ecotourism (section 3.5.5): (i) the presence of nature-based and (ii) culture-based products; (iii) support for conservation; (iv) educational experiences for tourists; (v) community control and decision making; (vi) employment of community members; and (vii) providing benefits to the community.

Objective 3: To classify and select representative community-based ecotourism case studies for further investigation

During the telephonic interviews, information necessary for the classification of the community-based ecotourism ventures into the six types (as discussed in section 2.7.1) was collected. The six governance types are: (i) individually operated; (ii) community-operated; (iii) informal joint ventures; (iv) formal joint ventures; (v) triple joint ventures; and (vi) organization-operated CBE ventures. The 44 cases were classified into the six governance types (section 3.5.6). Before the final cases were selected for further investigation, it was decided, where relevant, to refine the selection to include only ventures that had been operating for longer than five years. Based on these inclusion criteria, 34 ventures within the six types were identified (section 3.5.7). A random selection was performed within each type to identify the six representative community-based tourism ventures of which the

sustainability would be determined. The 331 community-based ventures that were originally identified (Objective 1) were refined to 44 community-based ecotourism ventures (Objective 2). A further refinement resulted in the identification of 34 community-based ecotourism ventures from which the six case studies were selected according to governance types.

The six different governance types provide an important means of distinguishing between the different types of community-based ecotourism ventures. Each governance type provides a unique set of benefits and disadvantages that influence the success and sustainability of that specific community-based ecotourism venture. The six different governance types, which are generally ignored in literature, are a crucial aspect which deserves more rigorous investigation in order to understand the impact that different governance has on the success and sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures throughout the world.

Objective 4: To construct an evaluation framework for monitoring the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures through identifying appropriate performance indicators under three broad categories (social, economic and environmental)

An evaluation framework was constructed to measure and monitor the sustainability of the identified case studies. The triple bottom line of sustainability has to be measured: the social, economic and environmental sustainability. A series of social, economic, environmental and cross-cutting sustainability issues and their associated indicators that would be used to determine the sustainability of the six identified community-based ecotourism ventures (section 5.3) was identified. In order to complete the evaluation framework, data collection instruments were identified and discussed for each of the predetermined sustainability issues and their associated indicators (section 5.4).

The constructed evaluation framework was developed to provide a generic, cost-effective, rapid, re-useable and comparable over time means for establishing the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures. The framework provides the means to create benchmarks against which future studies may compare their findings. In the past empirical evidence has largely been absent in the study of community-based ecotourism, which has been predominantly subjective in nature.

Objective 5: To measure the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the selected case studies using the constructed evaluation framework

This objective sought to determine the triple bottom line sustainability (social, economic and environmental) of the six identified community-based ecotourism ventures through applying the constructed evaluation framework (sections 6.2-6.7). The findings related to the triple bottom line for

each of the cases were discussed in detail. The practical application of the constructed framework, and the resultant findings provided evidence that the framework delivers measurable results. The results in each case provided comparable measures of the successes and the areas for concern relating to the various aspects of sustainability.

Objective 6: To compare the sustainability of the investigated case studies thereby providing baseline data for effective management

The results obtained from the determination of sustainability were compared in a cross-case analysis (section 7.2). The cross-case analysis yielded interesting results relating to the sustainability of the various types of community-based ecotourism. It was found that each community-based ecotourism venture had aspects where the sustainability could be improved. Recommendations relating to these improvements are put forward in sections 8.2-8.7.

The results of the investigation provided important results relating to the sustainability of the various governance types of community-based ecotourism ventures. As Poultney and Spenceley (2001) state, no single ownership structure or partnership will fit all scenarios or destinations. Each of the governance types has associated advantages and disadvantages. The advantages and disadvantages of each governance type are briefly outlined below.

The advantage of individually-operated ventures lies in the fact that the majority of decisions are made by a single individual, which allows for much quicker responses to prevailing conditions. The disadvantages of this governance are that the community is generally excluded from decision making and furthermore, that the primary focus of the individual who controls the operation is usually on personal financial gain.

Community-operated ventures have a high level of community decision making, and the improved well-being of the community is usually the fundamental aspect around which the enterprise is initiated and run. However, a disadvantage may be that this type of venture may not possess the skills base or capital necessary to compete in the market against private sector enterprises.

Informal joint ventures have the advantage that they draw in private sector partners with certain capital and intellectual resources, which could go a long way to leveraging a better tourism enterprise for the benefit of both the private sector partner and the community. The disadvantage of this type of CBE venture is that the agreements are not binding and are usually based on a gentleman's agreement that might be renegotiated at any time.

CBE ventures that have formal joint venture agreements have the advantage that the agreements reached are binding on both parties. Consequently, the community is usually assured of a certain set of benefits, while the private sector partner has assurances relating to time frames which allow for long-term planning and investment in tourism. The disadvantage is that both parties are locked into agreements for a longer time frame, which may not be to their mutual advantage if either of the parties is not delivering their agreed-upon contribution.

Triple joint ventures have the advantage that they often have a government partner in the form of a conservation authority that possesses resources that may be incorporated into the planning and management of the venture. In such cases, a private sector partner often provides the financial capital and the community the human capital. This type of CBE venture has the disadvantage that the needs and aspirations of all three parties have to be taken into consideration continuously before decisions can be made. A danger also exists that the community may become the lesser partner in this type of joint venture.

Community ecotourism ventures that are operated by organizations have the advantage that the organization usually has the ability to leverage donor funding and know-how for the establishment of the venture. The disadvantage may often be that the organization may not possess the skills and knowledge needed to run a successful tourism enterprise and that the goals of the organization may be driven around social goals and aspirations rather than around developing a successful tourism enterprise.

Each of these different types of CBE ventures therefore has associated advantages and disadvantages that should be taken into consideration when communities, donor agencies and private sector organizations and government consider planning and implementing CBE ventures.

Objective 7: To review the utility of the constructed evaluation framework

The utility of the constructed evaluation framework was reviewed and recommendations were made for the improvement of the framework (section 7.3). The recommendations included the need to collect additional data, the rephrasing of interview questions and the need to utilize additional indicators. It was also recommended that the constructed framework be amended and the sustainability of the case studies be re-evaluated after a period of time to determine any changes in sustainability.

The constructed evaluation framework provides a valuable tool by which the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures may be monitored. Although the framework proposes a generic means by which the sustainability of CBE ventures may be determined worldwide, it is

foreseeable that the framework should be adapted when applied in different contexts. The framework, with minor adaptations and additions, should also be reapplied continuously over time to the same case studies. This will lead to the fine-tuning of the framework and it will also serve as a means to establish which changes in sustainability may have occurred since the last application of the framework. Each new and repeated application of the framework will lead to a series of recommendations relating to aspects which need attention in order to improve the sustainability performance of the investigated case.

The summary of the results obtained from the investigation of the abovementioned seven objectives has led to the successful fulfilment of the aim of the study, namely the development and field testing of a framework for monitoring the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures in southern Africa.

9.3 Limitations of the research

Although the development and the application of the evaluation framework yielded useful results, a number of limitations have to be acknowledged. These limitations will be discussed under two sub-headings, namely the limitations associated with the research process and the limitations of the evaluation framework.

9.3.1 Limitations of the research process

A number of limitations relating to the research process that was undertaken are indicated here. These limitations should be taken into consideration in future studies to improve the research process and the resultant application of the evaluation framework.

Telephonic interviews: Telephonic interviews were seen as the most appropriate technique for collecting the required data from the 241 identified CBT ventures across southern Africa, in terms of safety and economics. However, a number of shortcomings were experienced. The first shortcoming relates to the large number of ventures that could not be contacted, either as a result of not having telephonic contact details (11 ventures), the incorrect telephone number being listed under contact details (40 ventures), numbers being out of service (1 venture) or the intended interviewee simply not answering the telephone call after 10 attempts (24 ventures). Thus a total of 76 (31.5%) of the CBT ventures were excluded from the telephonic interview. The second shortcoming relates to the honesty of the interviewee at the CBT venture. If the interviewee was not honest in their replies, or did not provide detailed answers together with elaborations on critical questions, it is possible that a true CBE venture might not be categorized as such.

Selection of case studies for future investigations: In order to facilitate comparison, it is suggested that in future case studies should be selected from the same country and same region (or province) if possible. This will ensure that the similar national and provincial rules and regulations are applicable to all the cases selected. The relevant government departments and other institutional players should also be the same for the study areas, as this would facilitate better comparison. By selecting cases from the same area the likelihood of having uniform cultural, language and ethnic groups across selected case studies is also greater.

Staff member interviews: Ten staff members who were conversant in English or Afrikaans were interviewed at each CBE venture. However, all available staff members should be interviewed where possible, as these are the individuals who have the best knowledge of the daily functioning and operation of the CBE venture. By including as many staff members as possible a more complete and representative view would be obtained. Language problems might have been overcome by employing well trained interpreters to assist in conducting interviews.

Community interviews: In each CBE venture investigated only five members of the community, who were conversant in English, were selected for the interviews through accidental sampling. Although this provided an indication of the views and opinions of the community, these opinions are not representative enough of the entire community. In future, investigations should include a greater number of community members, from a wider range of community stakeholder groups. Representatives from a wider and more representative profile of the community should be included, such as representatives from community leadership structures, cultural and religious groupings, resource utilization groups, and other interest groups representing different sectors of the community such as the elderly, men, women and youth groups. Although interpreters were not used in this study, the use of well trained interpreters is also advocated, as many members of these communities are not conversant in English or Afrikaans. The use of interpreters will also broaden the number of possible community members that may be interviewed. The disadvantages, limitations and costs of research using interpreters should be managed for such future research.

9.3.2 Limitations of the evaluation framework

These limitations need to be taken into consideration in the future application of the evaluation framework to improve the applicability and effectiveness of the framework.

Selected issues and indicators: The baseline issues, as suggested by the WTO (2004), and a series of other issues that have particular significance for CBE ventures and their associated indicators, were selected for investigation in the study. However, a number of important issues and their associated indicators which were omitted from this investigation are becoming increasingly

important. In particular, climate change and the extent to which CBE ventures might be able to adapt and prepare for the effects of climate change should also have been investigated. Issues and indicators that relate to the institutional sustainability of the ecotourism ventures also need to be included in future applications of the evaluation framework.

Data collected by Global Positioning Systems (GPS): Although GPS were the most appropriate tool for measuring the footprint of the CBE ventures it is important to note that the GPS generally had an accuracy of 4-6 metres throughout the investigation. This error was, however, uniform throughout the entire data collection at all the cases investigated. Since the costs associated with achieving higher accuracies would negatively affect the data collection process, it would not be cost-effective or practical for implementation. Future advances in technology may however lead to cost-effective ways to achieve higher accuracies.

Data from other stakeholders: Data should have also been collected from other stakeholders in the tourism industry, such as government departments, conservation organizations and non-governmental organizations. These organizations often have valuable information which could have a strong bearing on the sustainability of CBE ventures. These organizations also often play a supportive role in the CBE ventures. The collection of data from other stakeholders will however have cost implications.

Collection of economic sustainability data: It was foreseeable that the community-based ecotourism ventures would not provide data which could be used to determine their economic sustainability (such as their income, turnover and profitability). For this reason, the income had to be calculated from data which was made available. In order to provide an indication of income, the revenues earned through the sale of accommodation were calculated using data which was made available, namely the occupancy data and the rates charged for the accommodation. This shortcoming may be resolved in future applications of the evaluation framework where the staff members, community members, owners and managers of the ventures are more involved in the development and use of the evaluation framework.

Practical implementation of the evaluation framework by communities: Although efforts were made to make the evaluation framework time- and cost-effective, some communities wishing to apply the evaluation framework in future may still find that they do not have the necessary resources to apply some of the indicators. Two particular indicators which may present a problem are the 'drinking water quality' and the 'controlling use intensity' indicators. The drinking water quality indicators present a problem as they need to be tested in an accredited water quality analysis laboratory, which may be located a considerable distance away from the CBE venture, and the costs of the testing may be very high. In terms of the controlling use intensity indicator, the data

collection is done using a GPS which may present problems in terms of cost and technological usability. In these cases the evaluation framework should be adapted to include a number of additional questions for visitors, staff and community members relating to the taste, odour and colour of the water and whether any stomach ailments had been experienced. Visitors, staff and community members could also be requested to indicate their perceptions of the levels of use intensity at the CBE venture; this could serve as an alternative indicator for controlling use intensity. The evaluation framework should therefore be amended to adapt to the local conditions and demands from CBE ventures wishing to implement the framework.

The interpretation of results: The results obtained from the field testing of the evaluation framework were difficult to interpret as no previous baseline data for comparison exists. Each case study's results may only be interpreted as a snapshot of the sustainability at that particular time. The interpretation of the results between cases is also very difficult as each case study represents a specific governance type of community-based ecotourism and as a result does not necessarily facilitate interpretation of the data. After the same case study sites have been re-monitored for their sustainability, and as the number of case studies within each governance type is expanded over time, the interpretation of results will be more feasible.

Continuous monitoring: The results of this research have to be communicated to the six ventures that served as the test cases for the evaluation framework. As a result of the findings of the research these ventures should become aware of the benefits associated with the application of the evaluation framework. These six case studies could, as a consequence of this research, serve as possible pilot cases for the re-application of the updated evaluation framework. These ventures could also serve as longer-term sustainability monitoring sites. Part of this process would be the evaluation of the results obtained from this study and the application of management actions to improve their sustainability. After the management actions have been taken, the stakeholders need to be involved in the refinement of the evaluation framework to include site specific issues and indicators. The buy-in of the management of the CBE ventures and the community stakeholders is critical to ensure ongoing monitoring using the evaluation framework as a basis for future monitoring of sustainability.

Many of the limitations relating to both the research process and the constructed evaluation framework will be overcome through the continual updating and adaptation of the evaluation framework to the local circumstances and conditions within which the evaluation framework is applied.

9.4 Conclusions relating to the sustainability of CBE ventures in southern Africa

This study has succeeded in constructing an evaluation framework for monitoring the sustainability of CBE ventures in southern Africa. Through the use of indicators, the framework provides a means for collecting empirical evidence for the measurement of the sustainability of CBE ventures in southern Africa. The framework also facilitates the identification of key areas that need to be addressed in order to achieve better performance in terms of sustainability and effective management. These key areas are presented in Chapter 8.

The overall sustainability of any CBE venture is dependent on progress being made simultaneously in terms of the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability. Progress in only one or two categories is insufficient. The social sustainability of CBE ventures within a southern African context presents an additional challenge above the normal aspects of community decision making and community benefits. This challenge relates to the fact that, historically, communities in the southern African context have been disempowered and disenfranchised with respect to natural resource management and governance. These governance rights and responsibilities have only recently been devolved from central government back to communities. Communities need to be empowered through various interventions so that they may take responsibility for the governance and management of their own natural resource assets. Decision-making structures are lacking, and these have to be established and supported to fulfil their functions.

The economic sustainability, which is the very driver of CBE ventures, is also presented with a unique challenge as community members are expected to deliver levels of service and quality for tourism with which they may be totally unfamiliar. Appropriate training is necessary to provide community members with the necessary skills to be able to deliver the expected levels of service.

The environmental sustainability of CBE ventures, which are often located in fragile ecological environments, is dependent on the continuous monitoring and management of the impacts these ventures have on the natural environment. These impacts need to be managed to ensure that CBE ventures do not become caught up in a self-destructive process, thus destroying the very basis on which the venture was established.

The continual improvement of the sustainability performance of CBE ventures in southern Africa is critical for the alleviation of poverty and the development of sustainable livelihoods while simultaneously providing an impetus for the conservation of natural areas.

9.5 Contribution to knowledge and wider significance

This thesis has provided a time- and cost-effective evaluation framework for monitoring the sustainability performance of community-based ecotourism ventures in a southern African context. The framework may be applied by tourism managers, tourism developers, joint venture partners and non-governmental organizations to monitor the sustainability of CBE ventures across southern Africa. The framework can also be utilized, with minor amendments if necessary, by communities involved in community-based ecotourism to measure their sustainability. As a result of the generic nature of the evaluation framework it is foreseeable that the framework can be applied to community-based ecotourism ventures worldwide. The constructed evaluation framework therefore provides a means to monitor the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures.

The constructed framework makes an important contribution as a departure point in the adaptive learning cycle for the development and implementation of sustainable tourism indicators for community-based ecotourism ventures. Although the framework includes 12 baseline issues and their associated indicators (as well as six specific community-based ecotourism issues and their indicators), it does not include local site-specific indicators. The site-specific indicators should be added after stakeholder involvement and engagement through an adaptive learning cycle for indicator development and use. The evaluation framework should therefore be seen as an adaptive evaluation framework that may be adapted and amended to fit a wide range of local circumstances.

The results obtained after the field testing of the evaluation framework provides important baseline data for future sustainability investigations of community-based ecotourism ventures. The results do not only provide valuable baseline data for the six case studies investigated, but also provide baseline data for comparative purposes for other community-based ecotourism ventures worldwide wishing to benchmark their sustainability performance. Besides providing baseline data the results of the study also provide valuable data for communities all over the world that wish to develop new community-based ecotourism products. Guidance on the advantages and disadvantages of the different governance types might prove to be valuable to communities deciding to develop CBE ventures. The evaluation framework can be applied worldwide, because the six case studies that were used to test it were selected to be representative of the six different governance types of community-based ecotourism.

These important contributions to the monitoring of the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures provide an important contribution to performance instruments to aid the effective management of community-based ecotourism ventures worldwide.

9.6 Placement of the study within the literature

The results of this study confirm that community-based ecotourism ventures fit firmly within the alternative and bottom-up development theory. All six of the common elements of alternative development strategies as suggested by Brohman (1996) form the very principles on which CBE is built. Community-based ecotourism ventures are usually small-scale ventures that are developed to benefit poor rural communities in order to alleviate poverty and provide for the basic needs of the community. Community-based ecotourism ventures are, by definition, ventures managed by the community for the community, thereby achieving a large degree of community participation. Through their efforts, the communities involved in CBE are becoming more self-sufficient and self-reliant for the development of their communities. The community-based ecotourism ventures investigated find themselves developing their ventures in a sustainable way, so as to ensure their long-term survival and existence. The monitoring of sustainability fits firmly within the alternative and bottom-up approaches to development.

Community-based ecotourism ventures are described as a type of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). CBNRM ventures adhere to the principles of Common Property institutions. Several of the principles suggested by Ostrom (1990) are confirmed in this study. First, the CBE ventures take place within very clearly defined geographical boundaries, which delineate which community members are included in the rights to benefit from the resources. In the case of Aba-Huab, however, the geographical boundaries of the resource and the members of the community who should receive benefits do not correspond. A large group of households live within the Uibasen conservancy (which has resource management and utilization rights) but they are excluded from benefits. This situation has led to a high degree of resentment from these community members – a situation that could have very detrimental consequences for the CBE venture. Attempts should be made to include these households in benefit sharing. Second, all CBE ventures have very strong community decision-making structures that govern resource use, which are usually nestled in multiple layers. The first level of the organization usually manages the daily operations of the tourism venture. The next level of decision making (which is commonly referred to as the 'collective choice' level) governs all the various resource users' rights and responsibilities, of which the tourism venture is one. The collective choice level usually comprises all the community members in the form of a community trust or a community board, on which all the different resource user groups are represented. The community trust manages disputes and sanctions for resource users who break the defined rules. All the CBE ventures with their associated community trusts are recognized by the governments of the countries in which the study was undertaken.

The results from the study also provide evidence to support the guiding principles for CBNRM suggested by Van der Jagt and Rozemeijer (2002), the National CBNRM Forum (2005) and Thakadu (2005). The decision making at CBE ventures has to be representative at a community level, and the leadership has to be accountable. In cases where the decision making has not been representative and accountable, the community and the staff of the CBE ventures often become disillusioned and suspicious of the decision-making structures. Two particular cases investigated, namely Aba-Huab and Tembe Lodge, are examples of this. Every attempt should be made to create more transparent, accountable decision-making structures where community members are represented. This study confirms the principle that the size of the community should be as small as practical, as this assists with the equitable distribution of benefits and makes decision making easier. Kaziikini Campsite represents a small community of only a few hundred members, which simplifies the equitable distribution of benefits and makes decision making much easier. However, Tembe Lodge represents a community of several thousand people, which makes the equitable distribution of benefits difficult and makes community decision making very challenging.

Van der Jagt and Rozemeijer (2002), the National CBNRM Forum (2005) and Thakadu (2005) also suggest that the benefits derived should outweigh the costs. All the existing CBE ventures studied generated benefits (monetary and other) that outweigh the costs associated with the establishment and operation of the ventures. The importance of reinvesting some of the benefits into the conservation of the natural resources on which the tourism venture is based is also suggested. Besides the staff members of the tourism ventures being involved in resource conservation projects, the community management authority or trust also has a number of initiatives which support natural resource conservation, such as the escort guides at Kaziikini and the community game guards at Damaraland and Aba-Huab, who oversee the enforcement and management of the environment. All CBE ventures have a continuous capacity building and skills training element to improve the skills of the staff and the community members involved in tourism. The skills training and capacity building include a wide range of areas from hospitality, guiding, plumbing and maintenance to bookkeeping. The training interventions usually result in the better operation and maintenance of the tourism venture. The planning and development of CBE ventures take place within a much broader context and, as a result, need to be co-ordinated and carried out in conjunction with other resource users and various government departments. This is happening at all the ventures investigated, although the levels of visible government efforts and initiatives in the rural areas in which these CBE ventures find themselves is usually very limited. However, communities are organizing themselves in such a way that they are not entirely dependent on the central government for planning and development. Although the last principle of CBNRM states that CBNRM must be facilitated, this study found that some of the ventures (such as Aba-Huab, Damaraland and Malealea) have developed as a result of the initiatives by 'champions' within the

community. Other CBE ventures (such as Tembe, Kaziikini and !Khwa ttu) needed outside facilitation to develop and establish the tourism ventures.

It is expected that tourist arrivals will increase to 1.6 billion by the year 2020 (WTO, 1998). Over and above the increase in arrivals, tourists are expected to become more discerning in their search for quality and value for money. Tourists are also expected to become increasingly conscious of their impacts on the environment and as a result will demand more sustainable tourism products. An increased demand for nature-based products is also expected (Siegfried, 2002). Community-based ecotourism ventures are well positioned to fulfil the demand arising from these changing trends in tourism demand. The expected increases in the number of tourist arrivals and tourism receipts to Africa and southern Africa have not yet filtered through to all the CBE ventures investigated. Some of the ventures are starting to experience higher occupancy rates and associated increases in revenue. However, clarity regarding this aspect is hampered by the unavailability of long-term arrival and occupancy data at most of the CBE ventures investigated. Regarding the demand for quality and value for money, the majority of the visitors in all six case studies indicated that they had experienced high levels of satisfaction and value for money during their visits to the investigated CBE ventures. Visitors also indicated that they perceived all the CBE ventures investigated to be sustainable, which indicates that all these ventures are well placed to take advantage of the increasing demand for sustainable tourism and nature-based products. It is, however, important that the sustainability of CBE ventures be continuously monitored to maintain this market advantage.

During the field testing of the evaluation framework, the poverty alleviation contributions made by the various CBE ventures became apparent. The CBE ventures provide employment opportunities in rural areas where few other employment opportunities exist. The majority of the employment opportunities in all six cases were filled by local community members, the only notable exceptions being the managers and special skills personnel of the formal joint venture, the triple joint venture and the organization-operated venture. All staff members at all six CBE ventures were permanent employees, with the exception of 11 temporary employees at Malealea Lodge. Some of the CBE ventures also made dividend and pension payments to members of the community. Besides employment opportunities and the payment of community dividends, a wide variety of community development projects were facilitated either through the capital raised by the community-based ecotourism ventures or by community development trusts. These include educational, health, entrepreneurial, agricultural, skills training, natural resource utilization and environmental projects. CBE ventures also endeavour to support the establishment of small businesses which support the tourist operation. Examples of these are the laundry service and the parking facilities at Damaraland Camp, which were initiated in association with the community.

The study has also highlighted the highly critical role the managers of the CBE play in ensuring that a mutually interdependent relationship between the three core elements of ecotourism, namely community, conservation and tourism, are maintained. Besides maintaining this critical relationship, the managers of the CBE ventures are also responsible for implementing the recommended actions for the improvement of the sustainability performance emanating from the application of the evaluation framework. These recommendations (Chapter 8) fall under the three broad categories of sustainability: social sustainability (communication and liaison; training and development; community benefits), economic sustainability (tourism operation; tourism offer; tourist information) and environmental sustainability (resource management).

Although the researcher developed the evaluation framework according to a top-down approach, it is important that community members be enabled to take ownership of the evaluation framework. The evaluation framework and the associated results from the field testing provide a useful tool and valuable starting point to encourage community-based ecotourism ventures to embark on the adaptive learning process of indicator development and use. The framework should not be seen as a fixed, rigid framework but rather as an adaptable tool which will be amended continuously to fit local circumstances and conditions. The framework provides a time- and cost-effective method of monitoring the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures, which may be applied by CBE ventures worldwide.

9.7 Recommendations for further research

Two kinds of recommendations for further research are given in this section: (1) recommendations relating to research that needs to be conducted within the tourism industry, and (2) recommendations regarding research relating to the development of the body of knowledge of the field of CBE venture sustainability.

Research for industry initiatives

- The spatial co-ordinates need to be included in the RETOSA databases so that searches for appropriate community-based tourism ventures can be more easily facilitated. This could be done through an Internet-based map server which allows Internet users to search the digital database from a spatial platform. Suitable programmes for this purpose could be ArcIMS (Arc Internet Map Server), ArcServer and even Google Earth.
- The RETOSA community tourism website (www.community-tourism-africa.com) requires an update facility where CBT ventures can update their contact details and include any new developments and marketing promotions.

- Investigations need to be done on the advancement of marketing of CBE tourism ventures, using collective marketing platforms, booking intermediaries, and other innovative marketing strategies.

Research for academic purposes

- The training needs of community leaders and CBE venture managers to use and adapt the evaluation framework need to be identified. Once the identified training has been provided, the applicability and usability of the framework by rural communities involved in CBE can be established.
- The evaluation framework that has resulted from this study needs to be compared with the now agreed upon Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) to evaluate their alignment. The framework resulting from this investigation may have to be amended to include criteria from the GSTC which have not been included.
- In future applications of the framework the evaluation framework from this study also needs to include climate change indicators and indicators evaluating the preparedness of community-based ecotourism ventures for changes associated with climate change..
- Research needs to be done on the characteristics of the different types of CBE ventures in southern Africa. The research should concentrate on the differentiation between the six types of CBE ventures in order to arrive at stronger conclusions and make recommendations relating to the application of these different types of CBE.
- Research is also needed on the quantification of renewable sources of energy, such as the amount of energy per kilogram of indigenous southern African wood species. This will provide more accurate estimations of the amount of energy utilized at CBE ventures across southern Africa, as it is foreseeable that all CBE ventures will continue to make use of indigenous wood as a source of energy. Once the amount of energy produced by a particular amount of indigenous wood is known, this may also be taken into consideration during the quantification of the energy consumed at CBE ventures.
- Additional CBE ventures in other SADC countries should also be investigated and compared with the results so that a much boarder benchmarking of sustainability indicators can be compiled.
- Follow-up indicator investigations need to be done at the identified case studies to monitor the changes that have occurred over time. These follow-up investigations will also lead to the refinement of the framework and the improvement of the sustainability performance of the case studies investigated.
- Specific guidelines need to be compiled for sustainability reporting at CBE ventures that adhere to the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines.
- An investigation of the generic and specific training needs at CBE ventures ought to be undertaken. This will allow educational service providers the opportunity to service CBE ventures with appropriate skills development programmes and training courses.

9.8 Conclusion

The sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures can be monitored effectively through the use of an evaluation framework incorporating specific performance indicators. The results from the field testing of the evaluation framework also provide information relating to a number of performance indicators that need to be acted upon in order to achieve effective management. The results of the study have created the platform and baseline data for future research into the sustainability of community-based ecotourism ventures in southern Africa.

Dr Nelson Mandela highlighted the view that conservation is ultimately about people: “If you don’t have sustainable development around these wildlife parks, then people will have no interest in them, and the parks will not survive.” However, the success of community-based ecotourism in southern Africa will be determined by the extent to which all the relevant role players are able to take collective responsibility for achieving sustainable tourism in order to create better places for people to live in and to visit. Reaching agreement on suitable monitoring tools forms an important first step in such collective action.