

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND



RESEARCH REPORT

For the Doctor of Philosophy degree

In the field of Development Studies

Titled:

**ASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTION OF ECO-TOURISM TO SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IN UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY**

FACULTY OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism has positively been contributing to job creation, small business development and poverty alleviation. Guided by this perspective, this study sought to assess the contribution of ecotourism to sustainable development in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The participants were selected through a combination of simple random and purposive sampling techniques; thus, 32 participants were purposively sampled from each of the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana), while 172 respondents were selected using simple random sampling, resulting in a total of 204 participants. The study employed a parallel convergent design consisting of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from programme officials, project managers and owners of ecotourism ventures; while questionnaires were administered to elicit data from community members between May and June 2018. The study found that ecotourism had been partially implemented in UMkhanyakude's four local municipalities, with the scope and intensity of such projects varying across the municipalities. The results reveal a degree of excellence in some of these initiatives, particularly in Mtubatuba (40%); Hlabisa (30%), UMhlabuyalingana (20%) and Jozini (10%) which, to some extent, helped mitigate poverty and unemployment in these areas. Contrary, the results show that ecotourism in areas such as Jozini had been largely underdeveloped and under-resourced. In this area, perceptions around the benefits of ecotourism were low (20%) and community participation was also significantly low (20%) in comparison with other local municipalities. These results indicate that despite lack of financial resources, opportunities still exist in terms of improving the implementation of ecotourism in UMkhanyakude, provided that local communities are properly capacitated to participate and benefit from these services. To this end, the study recommends the adoption of the Community-Based Sourcing Model to ensure that the people of UMkhanyakude benefit from ecotourism.

DECLARATION

I, Fikile Xaba, declare that this thesis is my own work submitted to the University of Zululand in partial fulfilment for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Development Studies. I declare that this work has not been submitted to any other institution for examination and all the sources used in this thesis have been properly acknowledged.

FIKILE XABA

November 2

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, especially my son Andamangwane Dlamini, my daughters Zekhethelo Dlamini and Sinegugu Dlamini-Kunene, and my dear parents Mr and Mrs Xaba.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBT	Community-Based Tourism
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HLM	Hlabisa Local Municipality
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
JLM	Jozini Local Municipality
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LED	Local Economic Development
LSDI	Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative
MLM	Mtubatuba Local Municipality
NGP	National Growth Path
NTSS	National Tourism Sector Strategy
PPT	Pro-Poor Tourism
RIDM	Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan
SD	Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
ST	Sustainable Tourism
SMMEs	Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises
TFCA	Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation Area
TIES	International Ecotourism Society
UDM	UMkhanyakude District Municipality
ULM	UMhlabuyalingana Local Municipality
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background of the study

International tourist arrivals reached 1.4 billion by 2018, exceeding merchandise exports by +3%. The growth of tourism has been predicted to reach 1.8 billion by 2030 (Calderwood, Soshkin & Fisher, 2019: v). However, these gains might decline sharply owing to the devastating impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Tourist destinations worldwide have implemented stringent travel restrictions and many have shut down completely as a result of the pandemic. It has been predicted that global visitations for 2020 may drop by a huge margin ranging between 60% and 80% as a result of lockdown induced by COVID-19, resulting in 50 million job losses worldwide (Russo, Van der Duim & Duncan, 2020:42).

In developing countries, the contribution of ecotourism to sustainable development has also been weakened by economic leakages. These include outflow of capital from ecotourism as most of the investments in the industry are owned by foreign investors rather than the supposed local beneficiaries. In nearly all the inclusive ecotourism package tours, 80% of the generated revenue flows to airlines, hotels and related multinational businesses rather than small local businesses and workers (Abakorma, 2017). Regionally, the growth of ecotourism in Africa has remained firm partly because of the diversity and abundance of attractive wildlife species (Backman & Munanura, 2015).

The Tanzanian experience of ecotourism indicates that the sustainability of ecotourism as a driver of development in Africa has not been fully realised as the sector is still confronted by serious institutional and structural constraints, including too much localisation, inadequate marketing efforts, and difficulty in accessing resources (Mgonja, Sirima & Mkumbo, 2015). In the South African context, the Travel and Tourism Council reported that the total contribution of tourism to South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was \$27 154 693 980 in 2016 (9.3%) of the GDP and grew by 2.5% to \$27 830 183 880 (9.4%) of the GDP in 2017 (Mzekenyi, Nheta & Tshipala, 2017).

In developing countries such as South Africa, ecotourism is perceived as a promising initiative capable of unlocking sustainable development and poverty alleviation (Sander, 2012; Kavita, 2014; Koki, 2017). Consequently, ecotourism has been incorporated into development, conservation policies and strategies being implemented at local government level as part of local economic development (LED) initiatives (Silent, 2017; De Bruyn, 2018; Puah, 2018).

As an alternative to mainstream tourism, ecotourism entails visiting natural areas in order to learn, study, or undertake environmentally friendly activities. Ecotourism focuses on the natural experience which, if harnessed well, can unlock the socio-economic development of local communities, thus helping to reduce poverty and unemployment (Song, 2016; Lee, 2017; Rogerson, 2018).

The distinguishing feature of ecotourism is that it focuses on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora and fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artefacts found in the locality. Its primary objective is to conserve resources, including biological diversity, thus ensuring sustainable use of resources that bring ecological experience to travellers (Kiper, 2013; Dimitrou, 2017; Martinez, 2018).

The most important contribution of ecotourism to development is its provision of products and services while simultaneously accommodating the socio-economic and environmental aspects of society. It supports sustainable development by ensuring a balance between human needs (that is, natural experience) and preservation of natural ecosystems and biodiversity (Eriksson & Lidstrom, 2013; Mathis & Rose, 2016; Connell, 2018).

Owing to its emphasis on the natural experience, ecotourism promotes and supports non-consumptive use of wildlife; for instance, photographic tourism, bird-watching, hiking and horseback riding and raising awareness about the local environment and the plight of local communities with minimal adverse impacts on the environment (Taylor, Lindsey & Davies-Moster, 2015; Sharma, 2018).

Well-crafted ecotourism strategies encourage the participation of poor rural communities and could generate benefits that mitigate the saturation of natural and cultural resources, thus ensuring the sustainability of local communities and the environment (Nayomi, 2015;

Ndlovu, 2018). Ecotourism directly influences sustainable development through resource management in order to address the socio-economic challenges facing local communities, while preserving cultural integrity, ecological processes, biological diversity and life-supporting systems (Irina-Ramona, 2016; Bricker, 2017). Therefore, sustainable ecotourism is central to the creation of independent and self-sustaining communities (Amir, 2015; Espinner, 2017).

Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. The link between ecotourism and sustainable development is also stressed by Kenny (2017), who posits that the SDGs provide a broad general frame of reference for the analysis of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism. Specifically, goal 8: target 8.9 states the need to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products by 2030 (UNWTO, 2015). Goal 12, target 12b, mirrors the prior statement emphasising the need to develop and implement tools to monitor the impact of sustainable tourism on sustainable development (UNWTO, 2015). The contribution of ecotourism to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation is further reinforced by Chapter 7 of Agenda 21, which seeks to achieve sustainable human settlements by 2030 (UN-DESA, 2017).

Feil (2017) highlights the view that sustainable development implies a state of quality and of something that should be defended and maintained into the future. It logically follows that sustainable development is primarily concerned with the needs of both the current and future generations, as well as the natural environment. At the heart of sustainable development is the need to integrate human, material and ecological imperatives in a manner that resonates with the United Nations' resolution on poverty alleviation (Hauenstein, 2019). This resolution projected that during the new millennium, humanity would be faced with unacceptable disparities in the levels of socio-economic development. These disparities and inequalities are the main source of conflict that threatens peaceful relations between and within countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2018).

A more plausible theorisation of sustainable development derives from the classical works of Evelyn (1664) who posited that sustainable development characterises a society in which resources are mobilised and used optimally in order to meet human development needs and priorities whilst preserving natural resources for future generations. Sustainable development

seeks to create a society in which resource allocation is guided by principles of equity, stability and equilibrium. Contemporary understanding of sustainable development suggests that the concept needs to be appreciated within the context of rapid climate change and its impact on both human and ecological systems (Pandy, 2017; Chiappa, 2018; Kattumuri, 2018).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The key variables for this study are ecotourism, which seeks to build sustainable communities in rural areas, and sustainable development, which aims to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Zuzana, 2015; Kenny, 2017; Guo, 2019).

Much of the literature that addresses the links between biodiversity conservation and community development assumes that nature-based tourism under the purview of indigenous communities will result not only in conservation of natural resources, but also in increased development. Cash income realised from ecotourism has the potential to stimulate income diversification and risk management among households (Ahmad, 2016; Abeli, 2017; Kimengsi, 2019).

However, in practice, ecotourism has often failed to deliver the expected benefits to local communities due to shortages in endowments of human, financial and social capital within the community, lack of mechanisms for a fair distribution of the economic benefits of ecotourism and land insecurity (Mbaiwa, 2015; Getz & Page, 2016). This problem has been compounded by the scantiness of literature on the role of ecotourism in poverty alleviation and unemployment in rural areas. The study seeks to address this knowledge gap by determining the extent to which ecotourism supports and/or hinders sustainable livelihoods, particularly in areas that are largely underdeveloped (Singh, 2016; Viljoen, 2019).

The two rich knowledge domains evolving along parallel pathways in tourism studies are sustainable tourism (Bramwell, 2015; Laitamaki, 2016; Qiu, 2018) and community-based tourism (Ribes, 2018; Manyaka, 2018). While the discourse around sustainable tourism is oriented towards long-term sustainability (Ruhanen, 2015; Pikirai, 2017), the literature on community-based tourism (CBT) focuses on responsibilities and practices of tourism

development and management at local level (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). There are diverse definitions, principles, criteria, critical success factors and benefits sought or outcomes desired, advocated by different stakeholders ranging from quasi-governmental and non-profit organisations to public-private sector and academic interests (Nguyen, 2015; Kezo, 2015; Ayachi, 2017; Samdi, 2019). This poses significant challenges to theory building, research and practice in the sustainable development and management of tourism (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). Given this conundrum, this study looks at ecotourism in terms of the first principle, that is, sustainability, with a particular focus on the ability of ecotourism to contribute to poverty alleviation and the reduction of unemployment to improve the quality of life for rural communities of UMkhanyakude.

Precisely, the central problem that stimulated this study, therefore, is that while ecotourism is being promoted in UMkhanyakude District, its efficacy in terms of alleviating unemployment and poverty remains unclear, owing to insufficient research done on this issue. The implementation of policies regulating ecotourism in UMkhanyakude is unequivocally imperative because the area faces severe socio-economic challenges, including persistent unemployment, which currently stands at 31% in the entire UMkhanyakude region. Approximately 35.2% of the unemployed population is younger than 25 years of age, with a further 34.9% aged between 25 and 34 years. Thus, more than 70% of the unemployed population is younger than 35 years of age (UMkhanyakude District Municipality IDP, 2016/2017:32-46). National statistics indicate that 64.2% of Black South Africans live below the poverty datum line, followed by the Coloured population at 41.3%; the Indian population at 5.9% and White poverty levels stand at 1% (SABC News Online, 2019). Aggregated, these challenges suggest little sustainable development taking place in UMkhanyakude Community. Additionally, the area has relatively high levels of illiteracy; for example, more than 27% of the adult female population and 22% of the male population never received any form of schooling; suggesting the need for skills transfer through ecotourism. There are vast opportunities existing in terms of promoting ecotourism in UMkhanyakude, as the area is endowed with natural beauty, an outstanding landscape, favourable climate and fertile soils for agricultural production (Jozini Local Municipality [LED Review Report], 2015).

1.3 Aim of the study

The main purpose of this research is to assess the contribution of ecotourism to sustainable development in UMkhanyakude District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, this aim can be achieved through an achievement of the objectives of the study outlined below.

1.4 Research objectives

- 1.4.1 To establish whether ecotourism can reduce poverty and unemployment in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality;
- 1.4.2 To assess whether local communities have been capacitated to participate in the implementation of ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality;
- 1.4.3 To explore the experiences of local communities on the implementation of ecotourism projects in the Umkhanyakude District Municipality, and
- 1.4.4 To evaluate whether the implementation of ecotourism initiatives has improved the livelihoods of the communities of UMkhanyakude District Municipality.

1.5 Research questions

- 1.5.1 In what way is ecotourism used to reduce poverty and unemployment in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality?
- 1.5.2 How are local communities capacitated to participate in ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality?
- 1.5.3 How are local communities involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality?
- 1.5.4 What can be done to improve the contribution of ecotourism to the sustainable development of UMkhanyakude District Municipality?

1.6 Significance of the study

First, the study will enhance an understanding of how improved access to tourism resources and services may be leveraged to boost income generation opportunities for the local Zulu people through labour-intensive projects (for example, construction of ecotourism infrastructure, such as roads and heritage sites), skills transfer and support for small

businesses and cooperatives in the study area. Second, the study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by advancing a participatory-based approach to the identification and implementation of ecotourism projects in line with the principle of sustainable livelihoods in rural contexts. Third, the study seeks to contribute to the existing body of empirical studies in addition to providing critical information for policy design in the planning process towards addressing the goals of sustainable development through its findings. Fourth, the study will expose some of the constraints that hinder community participation in ecotourism initiatives in the study area. Fifth, potential areas for cooperation and collaboration between government and the private sector will be identified to promote ecotourism in rural contexts. Finally, the study will generate information that may assist policy makers, programme officials and project managers to conceptualise and implement ecotourism projects in a manner that benefits local communities and the local economy as part of the government's local economic development (LED) strategy.

1.7 Research methodology and procedure

The study adopted a parallel convergent design comprising qualitative and quantitative research methods. This method suited this study because it allowed the researcher to use both numeric and non-numeric data to address the research questions. Consistent with this research design, data collection methods were triangulated to elicit sufficient data from the participants. Thus, data were collected through semi-structured interviews (qualitative) and questionnaires (quantitative).

The parallel convergent design enabled the researcher to obtain multiples of perspectives in order to get a complete understanding (Creswell, 2013) of how ecotourism is implemented to reduce poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude. The study employed the interpretative paradigm to analyse the subjective experiences and perceptions of programme officials, project managers and community members on the provision of ecotourism services. For analytical purposes, quantitative and qualitative data sets were integrated to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact of ecotourism on poverty reduction and employment creation.

1.8 Outline of the study

The study is structured into nine chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction/orientation, problem statement and aims

This chapter presents the background to and purpose of the study, including the motivation for conducting the research and its delimitations.

Chapter 2: Literature survey

This chapter delves into local and international literature in order to provide a theoretical framework for the study and to gain deeper insights into the research phenomenon, that is, the contribution of ecotourism to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment and to learn what other studies have found in this area. This is critical to establishing the research gap.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

This chapter details the relevant theoretical perspectives to enhance an understanding of the research problem and to provide the basis for data analysis.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

This chapter details the methodological aspects of the study, including the research approach and design, sampling strategies, data collection methods, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: Community demographics of the participants

This chapter presents the results and the community demographic profiles of the participants and shows how these variables impacted on the implementation of ecotourism projects in UMkhanyakude's four local municipalities, namely; Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana.

Chapter 6: The role of ecotourism projects in community empowerment to reduce poverty and unemployment

The primary objective of this chapter is to establish whether or not the empowerment of local communities in ecotourism projects helped to reduce poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District. Achievement of this objective is crucial because the primary aim of the study was to determine if ecotourism projects were helping to mitigate poverty and unemployment. The results reported here were obtained from the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude, namely; Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana.

Chapter 7: Community participation in ecotourism initiatives

One of the key objectives of this inquiry was to determine the experiences of local communities regarding the implementation of ecotourism projects in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. This was done in order to find out whether or not community members were satisfied with ecotourism services in their respective municipalities (Jozini, Hlabisa, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana).

Chapter 8: Ecotourism initiatives and sustainable livelihoods

Chapter eight flows directly from the fourth objective of the study which sought to establish whether or not the implementation of ecotourism initiatives contributed to the reduction of poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. In addressing this objective, the study examined the role of local government, ecotourism enterprises and agencies in promoting ecotourism for the benefit of local communities.

Chapter 9: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents an integrated summary of the research results and their implications for the research problem. The conclusions are drawn in line with the objectives of the study, reviewed literature and the relevant research questions.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the background to and rationale for the study. It outlined the statement of the problem and the research objectives and research questions underpinning the study. This chapter also highlighted the significance of the study and the methodological paradigm that shaped the study. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature in order to enhance an understanding of ecotourism as a potential tool for alleviating poverty and unemployment in poor rural communities.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

While Chapter 1 focused on the background, rationale and objectives of the inquiry, Chapter 2 provides an integrated review of the literature on ecotourism in order to establish lessons and best practices that can be assimilated to UMkhanyakude as the focal point of this study. More importantly, this literature review seeks to provide a synopsis of the knowledge gaps left by previous and current research on ecotourism. Thus, the identified knowledge gaps and the theoretical and operational contributions of the study to the existing body of knowledge are then presented to demonstrate the value of this inquiry.

2.1.1 Framing ecotourism

The supply of and demand for ecotourism have grown significantly. Thus, ecotourism has, as a particular form of tourism development, become increasingly recognised and legitimised to achieve sustainable development in destination areas (Sander, 2012; Reisinger, 2015; Kenny, 2017). The increased focus on ecotourism stems from the notion that governments, worldwide, can boost economic growth and reduce poverty by supporting ecotourism initiatives (Haralson, 2012). This growing interest in ecotourism has also been attributed to ecotourists' changing attitudes towards the environment, with many of them now looking for authentic natural experiences (Dibra, 2013; Debski, 2014, Reisinger & Moufakkir, 2015; Gnapala, 2016).

However, ecotourism remains a contested issue among scholars in different spheres. As a result, several definitions of ecotourism have been proffered, with levels of convergence being noted. For example, Mwesigwa (2016) postulates that ecotourism is underpinned by a wide range of resources mainly natural and cultural artefacts, events and the natural environment, and aims to advance ecologically and socially sustainable development. Ecotourism presupposes a small-scale activity undertaken in relatively undisturbed natural sites within highly protected areas and other settings. It also involves the responsible travel to natural areas, which necessitates the conservation of the environment, thus improving the well-being of local people. It is environmental tourism conducted in natural areas. Precisely,

ecotourism seeks to promote a sustainable, natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature; hence ecotourism should ethically be managed in order to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented in terms of its control, benefits and scale (Mwesigwa, 2016).

Although ecotourism is defined differently, a number of salient elements, such as environmental conservation, maintenance of biodiversity, a satisfying experience for the ecotourists, study and appreciation of nature and sustainable community development, are included in most of these definitions (Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017; Morales, 2018). For this study, ecotourism draws its appropriateness from the much heavier weight it puts on conservation, education and ethics than what other forms of tourism do. Ecotourism represents a developmental trajectory that benefits both the local people and the area they inhabit; although keeping a symbiotic balance between environmental protection and the wellbeing of the local community is always a challenge spurred by the conflicting stakeholder needs and priorities (Dologlou & Katsoni, 2016). While mass tourism focuses on consumption, ecotourism is preoccupied with enhancing public awareness of environmental protection, reducing the negative impacts of human activities on the environment and improving the living standards of local residents. Ecological and environmental protection forms the core component of ecotourism (Zhong, 2014).

Further, ecotourism is central to this study because, despite the lack of consensus on its meaning, the initiative holds promise for economically deprived rural communities. It has been claimed that ecotourism links economic and environmental impacts in a model which promotes community development activities while protecting and preserving local resources (Nikolla & Miko, 2013). Socially, ecotourism provides an opportunity for cross-cultural dialogue as it allows both ecotourists and local communities to learn about one another (Abuamoud, Alrousan & Bader, 2015). From this perspective, ecotourism is capable of unlocking economic transition, regional development, community empowerment and the creation of employment opportunities for peripheral and indigenous communities (Brouder, 2014; Alshboul, 2016). Recent conceptions of ecotourism emphasise conservation, education, environmental ethics, sustainability, impacts and local benefits as the main variables (Chiutsi, 2011).

One strand of the empirical literature on ecotourism dwells on the economic outcomes of ecotourism. It interrogates whether or not there is a balance between the transformative power of ecotourism and the discomfort that locals have about the dominance of foreign tourist influences in decision-making and policy outcomes in ecotourism. While policy intent generally prioritises participation by local people, this has not translated into significant tangible benefits for local communities. In terms of local development, the impact of ecotourism projects remains largely scattered and inconsistent and is altogether very low (Ayachi, 2017).

Another strand of the reviewed empirical literature theorises the negative consequences of ecotourism. It maintains that while ecotourism helps create opportunities for income generation and wealth creation for both developed and developing countries, it also has the potential to destroy the very resources on which it depends, especially if it is improperly planned (Dimitriou, 2017). Intensive and unregulated ecotourism activities have a negative impact on the structures of wild species. There is therefore a genuine need to mediate demand for ecotourism services and policy management and regulatory processes (Pablo-Cea, Velado-Cano & Noriega, 2020).

Other empirical studies specifically focus on the growing tensions relating to control and management of fly-fishing as a form of angling ecotourism resource. Locally-based management approaches have been advanced as the most viable option in terms of mitigating foreign influence and therefore optimise the involvement of local stakeholders in ecotourism activities.

From another angle, ecotourism has been viewed as capable of providing ample opportunities for shared learning and an essential resource for building and strengthening collaborative networks necessary for the promotion of sustainable development in vulnerable communities.

On the contrary, it has been asserted that there is no consensus on the meaning of ecotourism as the concept itself is a complex notion which strongly emphasises an alternative development model that addresses the needs of local communities (Mtapuri, 2019).

The absence of a clearly stated definition hinders the sustainable development of ecotourism as this dilutes and compromises the coordinated and collective interests and activities of

public and private organisations, groups and community-based organisations. This study argues that ecotourism aims to alleviate poverty in rural communities. Table 2.1 below

Table 2.1: Selected definitions of ecotourism

Author/s	Definition of ecotourism
Boo (1990:xiv)	Travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas;
Ziffer of Conservation International (1989)	A form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures; An ecotourist visits relatively underdeveloped areas in the spirit of appreciation and sensitivity. The ecotourist practises a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited areas through labour or financial means aimed at directly benefiting the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the local residents.
The Ecotourism Society (2002)	A responsible travel to natural areas with the aim of conserving the environment and sustaining the well-being of local people.
Honey (1999)	Ecotourism is the travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas. The travel strives to be low impact and is usually small-scale. It helps educate the traveller; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and human rights.
Fennell (1999)	A form of tourism which focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, and is ethically managed to be below impact, non-consumptive and locally oriented.

Adapted from Mathews (2002:4)

The definitions presented in Table 2.1 reveal several dimensions of ecotourism that are worth considering in this review. First, ecotourism occurs in natural settings (mostly protected areas) and/or places of unique ecological or cultural interest. Second, ecotourism contributes to the conservation or preservation of natural resources and promotes the stewardship of natural and cultural resources. Third, ecotourism seeks to create the necessary funds to promote permanent protection of ecological and socio-cultural resources. Fourth, the local residents benefit from socio-economic development, thereby contributing to the success and sustainability of ecotourism projects. Fifth, ecotourism incorporates environmental and cultural education. Sixth, ecotourism should be effectively managed to minimise negative impacts on the host environment. Finally, ecotourism seeks to provide a quality tourism experience (Matthews, 2002). The following discussion focuses on how ecotourism relates to sustainable development goals.

2.1.2 Ecotourism and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The impetus characterising the implementation of ecotourism has also been fuelled by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Paris on 25 September 2015. Officially known as “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the SDGs include ecotourism as one of the targets to be achieved by 2030. Ecotourism manifests in three of the 17 SDGs as outlined below (UNWTO, Annual Report, 2016:6):

- Goal 8, ‘Decent Work and Economic Growth’, target 8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products;
- Goal 12.b, ‘Responsible Consumption and Production’, target 12.b: Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products;
- Goal 14.7, ‘Life Below Water’, target 14.7: By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing states and least developed countries from sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

In the Southern African region, it has been observed that trends in the tourism markets show a paradigm shift from the traditional tourism based on the sun, the sea and sand mass to more

personalised tourism based on responsible and experiential holidays. Tourists are attracted by ethical values that relate to social, cultural and environmental responsibility within the places they visit and the products they use. Furthermore, growth in the ecotourism sector's different market segments is being influenced by the consumer's search for "authentic experiences". This shift has, in many ways, benefited the African continent, mainly because of the nature of its cultural and geographical diversity. Tourist arrivals on the African continent increased from 46 million in 2009 to 49.8 million in 2010. The Sub-Saharan region registered the highest growth of 14% during the same period. Total tourist arrivals in the SADC region grew from 20.5 million in 2009 to 21.5 million in 2010 (RETOSA Annual Report, 2011). The SADC region has responded by deploying a number of strategies to retain and sustain this contemporary market. One of the strategies is the development of Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) to ensure the ease of movement of tourists across the SADC region, wilderness protection, employment creation and income generation in rural areas, which translate into an improved quality of life for the citizens of this region. The Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan (RIDMP) indicates that the number of tourists coming to the SADC region could triple by 2027; hence, there is an urgent need to have physical infrastructure in the TFCAs to capture and increase the market share (Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan, Executive Summary, 2012).

In South Africa, the ecotourism sector has grown considerably since the country's attainment of democracy in 1994. The number of foreign visitors or tourist arrivals increased from slightly more than 3 million in 1993 to over 9.9 million in 2009 of which just over 7 million were tourists. According to the White Paper on the Promotion and Development of Tourism in South Africa (1996), tourism creates opportunities for the small entrepreneur; promotes awareness and understanding among different cultures; breeds a unique informal sector; helps preserve the environment; creates economic linkages with agriculture, light manufacturing and curios (art, craft, souvenirs); creates linkages with the services sector (health and beauty, entertainment, banking and insurance); and provides dignified employment opportunities.

With a population of approximately 50 million and a land area of 1.27 million square kilometres (nearly five times the size of the United Kingdom), South Africa's resource base, for both mainstream tourism and ecotourism, is phenomenal. The attractiveness of the country's tourism lies in its diversity. Some of the features which make South Africa's tourism to be increasingly attractive include accessible wildlife, varied and impressive

scenery, unspoiled wilderness areas, diverse cultures (that is, traditional and township African cultures); a climate that is generally sunny and hot; a well-developed infrastructure and virtually unlimited opportunities for special and interesting activities such as whale-watching, wild water rafting, hiking, bird-watching, bush survival, deep-sea fishing, hunting and diving. In addition, unique archaeological sites and battlefields, excellent conference and exhibition facilities, a wide range of sporting facilities, good communication and medical services, internationally renowned attractions (for example, Table Mountain, Cape of Good Hope, Sun City and the Kruger National Park) make South Africa an attractive tourist destination (White Paper on the Promotion and Development of Tourism in South Africa, 1996).

The White Paper (1996) further acknowledges that ecotourism plays a strategic role in dynamising other sectors of the South African economy; for instance, the agriculture sector benefits from the tourism industry through increased demand for products and services such as organic agriculture and farm tourism; the manufacturing sector benefits through the supply of furniture and fittings, construction, linens, pots, pans, and so on and the crafts industry benefits from wood-work and fine art. The weakest economic linkages within the tourism industry in South Africa exist in the services sector, specifically in the entertainment, health and beauty services (White Paper on the Promotion and Development of Tourism in South Africa, 1996:7). These dynamics are likely to negatively affect both the practice and outcomes of ecotourism for tourists and local communities.

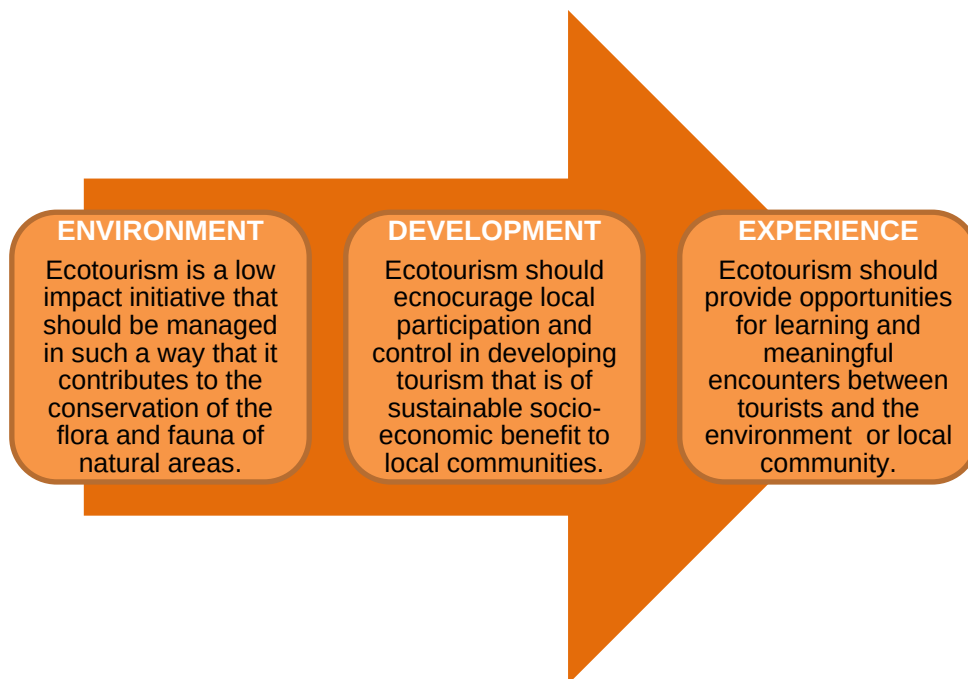
Like many other developing countries, South Africa adopted tourism policies that advocate the active participation and involvement of local communities in ecotourism initiatives to improve sustainable livelihoods. In part, this was necessitated by the country's discriminatory practices, which resulted in local rural communities being disposed of in order to make way for conservation areas. This dispossession was also associated with local people being denied or allowed limited access to natural or biological resources in these designated natural conservation areas or parks and pave way for beneficiation through income-generating activities such as ecotourism. Research indicates that many historically disadvantaged communities adjacent to South Africa's national parks remain impoverished and have limited access to resources and benefits deriving from conservation areas (Nsukwini & Bob, 2016).

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, the tourism environment in South Africa is also influenced by many factors due to its complex and systemic nature. It is negatively influenced by external factors over which it has little or no control; for instance, weather events (such as drought), social events (such as terrorism, violence, and diseases) and economic events (such as the global financial crisis and exchange rate fluctuations). These and many other factors negatively influence the choices of potential tourists towards destinations. Technological events such as the advent of the Internet and the subsequent strides made in the application of digital technology have also changed how potential tourists access information, plan and book their trips. Precisely, tourists can find facilities in a location, and choose between them; such choices are based on reviews posted by other tourists recounting their actual experiences at the location. The tourism sector, therefore, needs to be flexible and pro-active to promote the tourism industry (Department of Tourism: Strategic Plan, 2015-2020). Direct jobs in the industry accounted for approximately 680, 000 jobs, but when indirect and induced jobs are added, over 1.5 million jobs are linked to the tourism industry, representing 10.4% of all employment in South Africa in 2014 (DoT, Strategic Plan: 2015-2020:10). In the next section, the study focuses on the importance of ecotourism as one of the potential sources of income in rural contexts.

2.1.3 Why ecotourism?

In the South African context, ecotourism has the potential to provide environmental, socio-economic and cultural benefits (Matthews, 2002). Buckley (2008) concurs, stating that ecotourism is widely recognised for its positive impacts on the environment; ecotourism operators and lobbyists argue that the ecotourism industry has contributed to the socio-economic and cultural development of local communities through conserving and supporting protected areas. Logically, the major building blocks of ecotourism can be framed diagrammatically as follows:

Figure 2.1: Building blocks of ecotourism



Source: Adapted from Sharpley (2006:10)

Ecotourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors in the tourism market. It is influenced primarily by public demand for more environmentally responsible tourism. Arguably, ecotourism can integrate the conservation of biodiversity with socio-economic development of local communities if planned properly. For this reason, many governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are eager to develop ecotourism in protected areas in order to maximise these benefits (Matthews, 2002).

It has been argued that ecotourism promotes an enhanced appreciation of natural environments and fosters environmental education by exposing tourists and local people to nature and conservation (Bob, Swart, Maharaj & Low, 2008, in Bob, 2016). Closely linked to ecotourism is the concept of sustainability which, according to Morelli (2013), fosters a developmental trajectory that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987).

According to Liu et al. (2013), sustainable ecotourism seeks to strike a balance between protecting the environment, maintaining cultural integrity, establishing social justice and

promoting economic benefits in order to improve the living standards of the host population both in the short and long term. In ecotourism, the principle of sustainability is applied to improve the quality of life for local residents by optimising local economic benefits, protecting the natural and built environment and providing a high-quality standard of life.

Ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism industry worldwide (WTO, 2003) and it is often described as a type of nature-based tourism that has attracted a huge number of tourists as an alternative type of tourism. Ayala (1995) defines ecotourism as “a form of tourism that seeks to promote the enjoyment and understanding of the nature and culture of a destination while producing economic benefits and actively promoting environmental conservation.” The management of ecotourism encounters many challenges which include establishing a profitable and ecologically sustainable industry, simultaneously achieving a satisfying experience for visitors and improving the standards of living for the inhabitants of the host community (Lim & McAleer, 2005).

Neto (2003) observed that in Namibia, the financial returns accruing from community-based natural resource management and tourism ventures usually exceed the investments made and are thus a viable option for the generation of sustainable economic returns, while promoting environmental conservation and cultural traditions in rural areas. For example, wildlife and tourism utilising freehold land contributed more than 200 million United States Dollars to the Gross National Income (GNI) in 2009 (Lindsey et al., 2013). This indicates that the correct implementation of ecotourism can be a sustainable source of income for local communities. This study seeks to show whether ecotourism is being appropriately applied in UMkhanyakude, which continues to experience relatively high levels of poverty and unemployment due to lack of access to the much-needed economic opportunities.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Matthews (2002) investigated the environmental, economic and social impacts of fourteen ecotourism development projects in six developing countries (Belize, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Indonesia, Nepal and Peru) and found that local communities adjacent to protected areas are often not fully involved in the planning processes of tourism development. If poorly planned and managed, ecotourism can have significant negative impacts, including severe environmental degradation, negative cultural changes and a decreased welfare of local individuals or communities.

Zhong (2014) found that ecotourism activities in China's protected areas often resulted in environmental damages. For example, problems emanating from garbage had the highest selection ratio among the main negative environmental effects. Garbage problems were as high as 53% in some of the protected areas; damage to conservation objects amounted to 23% and air pollution-related problems accounted for 22%. Graffiti and other forms of environmental damage were observed in 5.9% of the protected areas. In 6.2% of the protected areas, goods made from endangered species or rare species were being sold. The proportion of protected areas with issues of random rock blasting, random sand sampling, causal tomb building, deforestation and trapping and hunting of wild animals was 6.4%, 9.4%, 6.5%, 6.8% and 5.5%, respectively (Zhong, 2014). Ecotourism creates negative environmental externalities that damage the environment. Such adversity can have serious implications for the tourism industry because the very natural resource that forms the raw material for ecotourism is damaged (Herath, 2002). The negative social effects of ecotourism could outweigh the positive ones, as loss of culture and tradition occurs. Ecotourism should not be regarded as a panacea for the harmonisation of rural development with environmental conservation until the industry's influence on developing countries has been thoroughly analysed (Abuamoud, Alrousan & Bader, 2015).

Research conducted on ecotourism in KwaZulu-Natal shows that properly- implemented ecotourism initiatives are likely to benefit local communities, especially where the community members are involved in the planning and monitoring of these activities. For example, Moodley (2012) examined the potential of cultural tourism both as a draw card for visitors to South Africa and as a means of alleviating poverty in the province. The study found that cultural tourism, as a dimension of ecotourism, had a positive impact on income generating activities in communities in and around Durban. Thus, well-conceived ecotourism initiatives could yield income that benefits the locals (Moodley, 2012).

Govindasamy (2012) investigated adventure tourism in KwaZulu-Natal Province, with a focus on the identification of hotspots and mobile knowledge. The study found that the management of ecotourism hotspots in remote areas was generally satisfactory, with efforts being made to positively influence the behaviour of visitors, educating them to prevent degradation and destruction of natural resources in these areas.

A recent study by Nsukwini (2016) examined the socio-economic impacts of ecotourism on rural areas, focusing on Nompondo and Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park as case studies. This research found that community involvement increases the importance of nature conservation, access to biological resources and the need for communities to benefit from ecotourism. Apparently, this research underscores the fact that while ecotourism may be saddled with challenges, it's potential to alleviate poverty remains strong. The next section dwells on ecotourism as part of community conservation.

2.2 Community conservation issues

Greater attention has been paid to the growing importance of linking ecotourism with community conservation. It is argued that community-based conservation practices can be strategically positioned to achieve environmental conservation and promote socio-economic development at the local level (Nkambule, 2016). Consequently, local communities are increasingly taking a centre stage in biodiversity management efforts. This approach reiterates that conservation is developed from the ground going upwards and involves networks and linkages across various levels of organisations such as government, environment non-governmental organisations (ENGOS), community-based organisations and beneficiaries. Community conservation is based on the notion that if conservation and development could be simultaneously achieved, then the interests of both could be served. In this regard, indigenous knowledge and perspectives could be tapped to inform ecotourism projects.

However, issues around community conservation have been controversial because the objectives of community development are not necessarily congruent with the goals of nature conservation in a given context (Berkes, 2007). Conservation is influenced by social and geopolitical dynamics, particularly the politicization of conservation in protected areas, as well as the different views, values and attitudes of local communities that affect and modify the framing of conservation and the discourses and actions underpinning it (Benitez-Capistros, 2016).

Researchers such as Mwesigwa (2016) advocate the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as women and the youth in ecotourism activities. Without considering factors such as the

gender-based division of labour, gender relations, and differential access to and control over livelihoods and environmental and cultural resources, ecotourism projects may inadvertently exacerbate existing gender inequalities in local communities (Walter, 2011). In their study of the participation of women in private and community-based tourism business in the Bays of Huatulco, Mexico, Aldecua and Baron (2011) found that the role of women in terms of their gender obligations has not changed, even though development centred on tourism has opened the opportunity for them to become efficient entrepreneurs. Both the private entrepreneurs as well as women in cooperatives must balance their housework and their roles as mothers and wives, just as they would if they were not entrepreneurs. This can be interpreted as exploitation and gender-based segregation since men do not share these tasks which are considered feminine.

Regarding the youth, Dzikiti and Leonard (2016) note that not all youths, especially along class and racial lines, are actively involved in domestic tourism, especially in developing countries. Various social ills experienced by the youth, such as unemployment, lack of participation due to inadequate resources and inadequate access to social services, illiteracy, and poverty, may hinder engagement in domestic tourism activities. In South Africa, unemployment rate among youth is more than twice that of adults each year while the absorption rate for youth is substantially lower than that of adults (Duma & Okem, 2017). Ecotourism has the potential to reduce these challenges; hence the inclusion of women and youths in the survey.

From the above explanations, it can be deduced that the implementation of ecotourism projects is not a simple and straightforward matter, due the multiplicity of stakeholders and the complexities surrounding local cultures. Therefore, ecotourism is shaped by a myriad of variables that include stakeholder involvement and environmental justice among others, which, if not properly considered, may lead to the failure of ecotourism projects in rural areas.

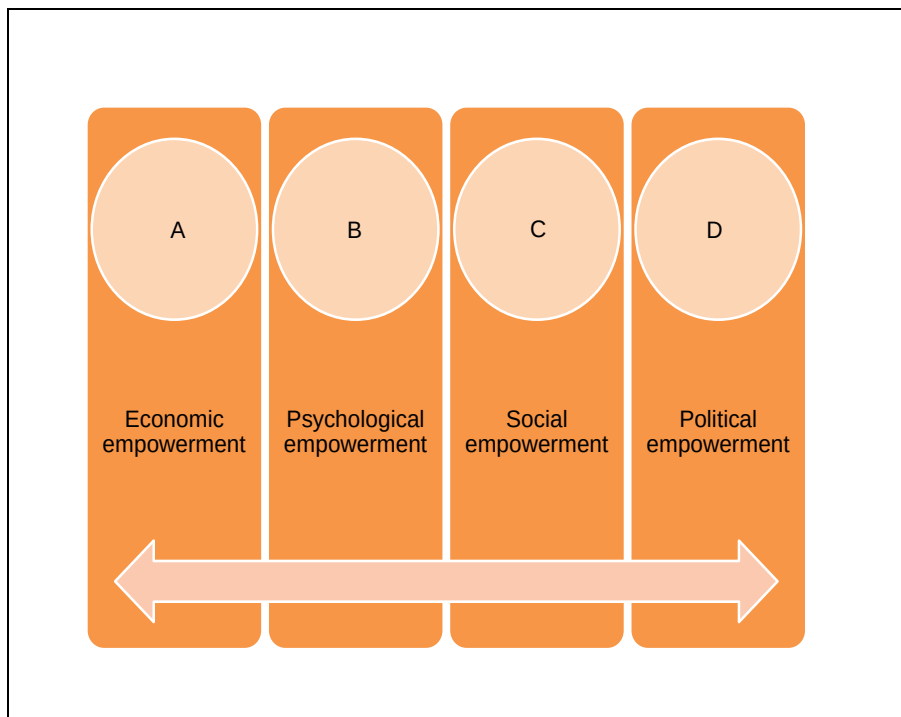
2.3 Community participation in ecotourism

The reviewed literature emphasises that ecotourism would not be implemented and sustained effectively without active involvement and participation of local communities in such endeavours. Local communities must be empowered for them to participate in the

management of protected ecotourism areas; thus, they can have a say in the distribution of benefits and sustainable use of their environment (Van der Merwe & Wocke, 2007). The same principle applies to the communities of UMkhanyakude, the foci of this inquiry.

The empowerment of rural communities is vital as large segments of these communities grapple with extreme poverty, high unemployment levels and very limited options from which to derive an income. Thus, when compared with other sources of income, ecotourism has the potential to augment the income that some households may expect from opportunities in the protected area; no matter how marginal these opportunities may be, they can make a substantial difference in terms of alleviating the plight of people living in poverty and surviving on a subsistence basis (Van Wijk et al., 2015, in Bob, 2016). Based on these explanations, the key dimensions of effective community participation are as follows:

Figure 2.2: Dimensions of community empowerment



As shown in Figure 2.2 above, the first dimension of community empowerment is economic empowerment, which focuses on income and employment; for example, economic benefits, local ownership of businesses, small and medium business enterprises (SMEs), management of external and internal financial resources, vision, goals, strategies, marketing or networking

(integrated planning), economic benefits, capacity building, training and entrepreneurship or skills development, equal distribution of land among residents/equity and community assets (Bob, 2016).

The second dimension concerns the psychological empowerment of local communities. The community's pride and self-esteem manifest themselves in their participation, involvement, collaboration and educational activities that aim at identifying self needs; easy and affordable access to ecotourism information and opportunities; general satisfaction of both ecotourists and local residents and the protection of local identity.

The third dimension relates to social empowerment, whose goal is to bring about community cohesion. Successful community cohesion manifests itself in the meaningful participation of local people in ecotourism decision-making processes and structures; enhanced networking activities, meaningful interactions between ecotourism stakeholders, improvement in the quality of life, tourism resource conservation and active involvement of women in ecotourism development initiatives.

The fourth dimension is political empowerment, which advocates a shift in the balance of power to enable meaningful participation of local residents and the formation of ecotourism development partnerships with them and, most importantly, visible support from local and national government institutions along with visionary and passionate leadership.

Besides the empowerment dimensions listed in Figure 2.2 above, the reviewed literature also emphasises the fact that community participation can be effective if community empowerment initiatives guard against three potential risks (Raymond, Fazey, Reed, Stringer, Robinson & Evely, 2010). The first risk is the adoption of centrally-driven, top-down, dictatorial and economically biased approaches, which have not been very successful. The second potential risk is the re-assessment of the potential and inherent capacity for communities to help themselves. The third consideration is recognition of the sustainability and appropriateness of 'indigenous' skills and expertise in the form of 'appropriate technology' (Raymond et al., 2010).

Having considered the key dimensions of community empowerment needed to ensure the success and sustainability of ecotourism initiatives in poor communities, the study now focuses on the economic, social and ecological impacts of ecotourism on local communities.

2.4 Empirical review on the impacts of ecotourism

Numerous studies have evaluated the impact of ecotourism on local communities through economic, social and environmental indicators (Mathews, 2002; Wearing, 2001). These are considered briefly below.

2.4.1 Economic impacts

As pointed out in subsection 2.2.3, one of the key principles of community-based ecotourism is that the indigenous host community should receive a fair share of the economic benefits deriving from ecotourism projects. These include foreign exchange earnings, increased employment opportunities, infrastructural development and a more diversified local economy (Lindberg, 2001; Wight, 1994). Direct positive impacts include revenue from initial tourism spending on food and lodging; while indirect positive impacts accrue to local communities when, for example, restaurants and lodges buy local goods and services.

Although local communities sometimes receive all the income generated from tourism, a large amount of profit generated in local communities eventually ends up in the hands of the local elite, outside operators or traditional leaders presiding over those ecotourism destinations, as is the case in some parts of KwaZulu-Natal where much of the land still belongs to traditional authorities. Table 2.2 summarises the positive and negative economic impacts of ecotourism on rural communities. These impacts were also used to measure the efficacy of ecotourism in alleviating poverty and unemployment.

Table 2.2: Economic impacts of ecotourism

Positive	Negative
Increased employment opportunities	Leakage of revenues and inflation-increased prices for goods, services and land

• Increased household income	• Uneven distribution of revenue/ income inequalities
• Funding for infrastructure	• Reduced access to resources (for instance, wood, medicinal plants)
• Funding for protected areas	• Locals lose income from resources because of a public protected area
• Revenue-sharing	• Foreign ownership of businesses

Adapted from: Matthews (2002:14)

Direct and indirect economic benefits of ecotourism can be realised if the resource capacity of the ecotourism destination is not exceeded by the tourism demand; which is generally unachievable, given the conflicting needs and priorities of stakeholders in ecotourism projects (Matthews, 2002). These issues will be elucidated in the later parts of this dissertation. The next subsection deals with the social impacts of ecotourism.

2.4.2 Social impacts

The literature indicates that the success of ecotourism development projects can last if there is active participation of local indigenous communities in all the planning and implementation phases. Nonetheless, the reality on the ground is that ecotourism-centred development is often imposed from the national level, with local communities being excluded from the planning processes (Butler, 2013; Oladeji, 2016). In the long term, the success of ecotourism depends on the agreement and level of support of the adjacent local community. Often, however, the residents of these protected areas do not fully understand the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts of ecotourism; thus, making them unsupportive of ecotourism development (Lee, 2016; Solberg, 2017). The positive and negatives social impacts of ecotourism are summarised in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3: The social impacts of ecotour

Positive	Negative
• Increased interest in traditional practices or ceremonies	• Shifts away from traditional practices; loss of indigenous knowledge
• Government protection of valued cultural resources	• Move away from self-sufficiency to dependency
• Preserved cultural identity and pride of the local community	• Changes in cultural landscape such as housing, employment
• Promotion of cultural exchange	• Restricted access to natural resources
• Development of local cooperatives	• Changes in family economies
• Training and education	• Increased exploitation of local people
• Funding for protection or maintenance of natural and cultural attractions	• Injury to residents, livestock, crops by wildlife within protected areas
• Reduction of poaching or other illegal activities	• Local obligation to perform traditional dances or activities
• Increased market for [development of] local goods	• Growth of vandalism, prostitution, and crime
• Increased use of local labour and expertise	• “Commodification” of culture and changes in family structures and values

Wearing (2001) in Matthews (2002:15)

2.4.3 Environmental impacts

The literature dwells on both direct and indirect impacts of ecotourism activities on the natural environment. These are listed in Table 2.4 below. The severity of these impacts depends on the nature of activity as well as the type of ecosystem being affected. Research has often dwelt on the obvious impacts of ecotourism such as the trampling of vegetation and changes in wildlife habits and patterns; hence, little research has addressed the less obvious ecological impacts such as noise disturbance and human-wildlife conflict (Diedrich, 2016).

Table 2.4: Environmental impacts

Positive	Negative
• Creation of wildlife reserve or sanctuary	• Disruption of breeding habits
• Justification for park protection	• Change in wildlife migration patterns
• Habitat restoration	• Water pollution by sewage or petroleum disposal
• Less intensive resource use option	• Visual impacts (litter, facilities)
• Reduced incentive for other more resource intensive uses	• Compaction of soils causing increased run-off and erosion
• Environmental education	• Over-exploitation of biological resources (over-fishing)
• Increased stewardship	• Land use changes in primary production areas
• Impetus for private conservation efforts	• Destruction of vegetation

Matthews (2002:13)

Based on the above impacts, Scheyvens (1999) contends that mitigating and reducing poverty through ecotourism requires proper capacitation of locals to ensure that they participate in and benefit from ecotourism initiatives. It can be deduced that effective capacity building is key in addressing poverty in rural communities, particularly UMkhanyakude.

According to Tuohino and Hynonen (2001), ecotourism with the environment in the framework is a two-way process; environmental resources provide the basic ingredients for the production of a tourist product, and tourism produces a variety of negative environmental externalities. According to them, successful tourism development depends on the proper handling of the relationship between tourism and the environment. Precisely, it depends on integrated tourism and regional planning providing for optimal allocation of environmental

resources, other production factors to tourism and other competing economic activities (Tuohino & Hynonen, 2001).

Below is a summary of the impact of ecotourism in South Africa. In 2016, the tourism sector directly contributed 2.9% of South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (StatsSA [Annual Tourism Satellite Account for South Africa], 2018). Thus, the contribution of the tourism sector is larger than that of agriculture, but smaller than other industries such as construction and mining. Despite the various challenges that the tourism industry has endured over the last few years, it outperformed other key industries in terms of job creation, adding slightly over 40 000 new jobs to the economy over the five-year period from 2012 to 2016. This number is higher than the number of jobs gained in the industries such as trade and utilities (electricity, gas, and water) (Statistics South Africa, 2018/2019).

2.5 Perspectives on ecotourism

The literature on ecotourism falls under three strands. The first strand is the ecological view, which sees ecotourism as a means of promoting environmental sustainability (Liu et al., 2013; Kenny, 2017). According to this view, the purpose of sustainable tourism is to strike a balance between protecting the environment, maintaining cultural integrity, establishing social justice and promoting economic benefits, and improving the living standards of the host population both in the short and long terms (Liu et al., 2013). In ecotourism, the principle of sustainability is applied to improve the residents' quality of life by optimising local economic benefits, protecting the natural and built environment and providing high-quality service to the clientele. In this regard, Dwyer, Edwards, Mistilis, Roman and Scott (2009) suggest that ecotourism should incorporate the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) approach to sustainable development to ensure that firms integrate social, environmental and economic information into managerial decision-making.

The second strand of literature views ecotourism as instrumental in alleviating poverty and unemployment through the transfer of skills and business opportunities (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). In this view, the viability of ecotourism or rural tourism lies in its being compatible with and complementary to traditional activities, as opposed to being a substitute to previous incomes. Moreover, it preserves all the countryside's habitats, values and lifestyle. According

to Zolfani (2014), rural tourism has become a favourable and suitable alternative for tourists, particularly in developed countries. This is possibly because it is hustle free since there is not international travel involved.

The third strand of ecotourism critiques ecotourism, rejecting the view that ecotourism is a panacea for sustainable development. According to this strand, ecotourism is a marketing tool that seeks to address the needs of the tourist rather than those of local communities. A number of factors limit the ability of the tourism industry to contribute more meaningfully towards the national economy. Some of the key constraints to ecotourism include inadequate funding, limited integration of local communities and previously neglected groups into tourism, inadequate tourism education, training and awareness, and inadequate protection of the natural environment.

While the literature makes reference to the importance of tourism in both the least developed and developing countries as well as rural and marginalised areas, very little attention has been paid to the impact of ecotourism on the poor (Diedrich, 2016; Ibanescu, 2018). Much of the research undertaken so far emphasises the link between ecotourism and environmental sustainability and thus, the potential role of ecotourism in alleviating poverty and unemployment in rural contexts has been overlooked. Very little has been done to establish the extent to which ecotourism has contributed to or hindered sustainable development in rural communities. It is this lack of sufficient empirical data on ecotourism that prompted the current study to investigate whether or not ecotourism helps to alleviate poverty and unemployment in relatively underdeveloped areas such as UMkhanyakude.

2.6 Challenges affecting ecotourism

A number of factors limit the effectiveness of the tourism industry in terms of contributing meaningfully to the national economy. Some of the key constraints are: tourism has been inadequately resourced and funded; limited integration of local communities and previously neglected groups into tourism; inadequate tourism education, training and awareness; inadequate protection of the environment; poor service; lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas; the ground transportation sector that is not geared towards serving tourists, and lack of inclusive, effective national, provincial and local structures for the development.

These challenges undermine tourism's potential to support sustainable development, particularly in rural areas like UMkhanyakude (Jozini Integrated Development Plan, 2014).

Another challenge affecting ecotourism is that the growth of the tourism industry, particularly in developing countries, has not been accurately planned and predicted, rendering it poorly organised; this has resulted in the degradation, depletion and, in some cases, total destruction of essential natural resources supporting the economy (Zolfani, 2014). Various socio-economic and cultural factors at each level of the tourism system affect the implementation of sustainable tourism (Day & Cai, 2012, in Zolfani, 2014). Individual attitudes, often influenced by culture, play an important role in understanding the perspectives of residents and other stakeholders regarding sustainable tourism (Chen & Jim, 2010, in Zolfani, 2014).

Seetanah (2011) points out that ecotourism has the potential to induce over-dependence on a single product (for instance, tourism) for economic growth and welfare, as just depending on any other single product can make some countries or communities susceptible to economic instability. Additionally, Nzama (2010) cautions that ecotourists are often seasonal, resulting in unreliable income as well as stress brought about in the process of promoting ecotourism, especially if not well-planned and properly understood. Within the same context, wildlife conservation imposes significant costs on rural people living in, adjacent to or in close proximity to the parks through crop damage, livestock predation and human deaths, and restricted access to natural resources (Brockington, 2007).

Furthermore, Chilli and Mabaso (2016) indicate that although ecotourism has the potential to develop small enterprises in South Africa, challenges such as lack of support and shortage of basic business formation skills remain. Other problems affecting ecotourism include increased commercialisation of ecotourism activities, resulting in local communities running the risk of losing their assets through what Hall (1994:154) calls "ecological imperialism". Consequently, everything is commercialised and used up, including local handicrafts, local dances, nature and natives.

Despite these concerns, overwhelming evidence in the literature suggests a strong case for ecotourism projects in poverty-stricken communities that have limited access to the economic opportunities enjoyed by their counterparts in urban areas. Such opportunities include

employment, skills development and business information. This line of argument is supported by research conducted by Zambrano et al. (2010) in Eriksson and Lindstrom (2013), which found that local communities were generally positive towards expanding ecotourism activities since they would provide more working opportunities for them. For ecotourism to contribute to sustainable development in local communities there is a need to reduce social inequality and motivate the local community members to contribute to the protection of the local environment and culture (Powell & Ham, 2008 in Eriksson & Lindstrom, 2013).

The implications for the current study are that ecotourism initiatives can benefit local communities in UMkhanyakude if these communities are involved in the planning, execution and control of ecotourism projects. In other words, participatory planning processes may help offset some of the challenges mentioned above, thus contributing to poverty alleviation and an improvement in living standards. The next section interrogates the policy and legislative frameworks that impact ecotourism practice in South Africa and their implications for this study.

2.7 Ecotourism policy and legislation in South Africa

This investigation has partly been motivated by the fact that the South African Government has promulgated a range of policies and legislation that promote the implementation of both mainstream tourism and ecotourism at national level. Theoretically, an enabling environment has been created to facilitate interactions and dealings between ecotourism operators, ecotourists, and local communities in a manner that promotes sustainable development. The key policies and pieces of legislation impacting ecotourism are discussed below.

2.7.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)

The South African Constitution (1996) outlines the roles and responsibilities of national, provincial and local governments, providing the basis on which these are regulated in all spheres of activity, including tourism. Specifically, Part A of Schedule 4 of the Constitution lists tourism as a functional area of concurrent national and provincial legislative competence. The promotion and development of ecotourism is therefore a constitutional imperative that permeates all three spheres of government in South Africa. Municipalities are required to

incorporate ecotourism in their Local Economic Development (LED) plans. This principle also applies to UMkhanyakude District Municipality, which is the focus of this study.

2.7.2 White Paper on Development and Promotion of Tourism in SA (1996)

Drafted by the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, the White Paper on Development and Promotion of Tourism (1996) outlines the Government's tourism strategy. The document prioritises the mobilisation of the country's human and material resources in order to obtain a bigger share of the increasing world tourism pie. It further acknowledges the tourism industry's potential to create opportunities for emerging and small entrepreneurs, thus supporting access to greater socio-economic benefits for the wider population. In addition, this document also calls for a participative and inclusive approach to the implementation of ecotourism programmes to ensure that these services benefit local communities and stakeholders in that sector.

2.7.3 National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS)

The National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS), whose objectives are to foster domestic tourism, has applied itself to an 8-year programme meant to raise the contribution of domestic tourism from the current 54.8% to an envisaged 60% by the year 2020. In its vision the NTSS sought to increase the impact of domestic tourism by introducing more local participation in the local industry; it aimed to increase the expenditure on the industry through raising the number of local tourists and to counter the seasonality bumps that plague the industry so that a more evened out flow is observable where the slack is taken by local tourists when the incoming long-haul tourists are not in 'town' (Maphumulo Tourism Development Strategy, 2011).

More importantly, the NTSS also sees local municipalities as key role players in the advancement and attainment of the goals of ecotourism. In other words, local government is responsible for planning and implementing ecotourism programmes as part of local economic development strategy. All the social, economic and ecological indicators used in this study are informed by Subsection 15.3 of the South African Tourism Charter of 2005.

2.7.4 Tourism Act (1993)

The Tourism Act (1993) promotes tourism to and in South Africa. It regulates and rationalises the tourism industry, standardises measures to maintain and enhance facilities and services available to tourists. It coordinates the activities of people and businesses that are active in the tourism industry. This Act, therefore, paves the way for local municipalities to work with tourism developers and local communities to promote, develop and manage ecotourism resources and assets in their constituencies.

2.7.5 Tourism Amendment Acts (1996, 2000)

The Tourism Amendment Act (1996) clarifies the relationship between provincial and central government in relation to tourism. The Tourism Second Amendment Act (2000) provides for the registration of tourist guides in an attempt to regulate the industry, set standards and develop a code of conduct aimed at improving tourism services in South Africa.

2.7.6 The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (2005)

This Act is designed to promote and facilitate both the participation and beneficiation of previously disadvantaged communities in all economic sectors, including ecotourism. The specific indicators of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE), which are of particular significance to this study, include access to employment and business opportunities; venture creation, enterprise development, skills development, partnerships and small business support services.

2.7.6.1 Tourism Black Economic Empowerment Charter (2005)

Launched in May 2005, the Tourism Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Charter is a commitment by all stakeholders in the tourism sector to ensure that in South Africa, tourism is more globally competitive and to transform the industry by empowering previously disadvantaged people and communities in this sector. The BEE Charter has set timeframes and requires that empowerment targets be achieved through ownership, strategic management, employment equity, skills development, preferential procurement, and enterprise and social development.

2.7.6.2 The BBBEE Scorecard (2005)

The BBBEE Scorecard (2005) outlines the specific indicators that need to be considered when evaluating the impact of ecotourism on local communities. These indicators include education, training, community development, job creation, health, conservation, participation and enterprise development. Most of these indicators were included in the presentation and analysis of findings (Chapters 5-9).

2.7.7 South African Code of Good Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work (2012)

One of the primary objectives of this Code is to formalise the implementation of HIV/AIDS policy in the South African work environment; including ecotourism enterprises. This Code, therefore, seeks to promote a healthy and safe work environment in both public and private sector organisations in South Africa. The Code particularly recognises the fact that the widespread prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the workplace poses a serious threat to the health and well-being of workers who are part of the community. Specifically, HIV/AIDS impacts negatively on community development, employment, human rights and sustainable development in rural areas. This Code justifies the inclusion of the HIV/AIDS variable as one of the social indicators necessary in determining whether HIV/AIDS life skills, as a statutory requirement, had been transferred to the communities served by UMKhanyakude District Municipality.

2.7.7.1 South African HIV/AIDS Life Skills Education Materials (2005)

In institutionalising and legitimising the provision of HIV/AIDS life skills education, the South African National Department of Health introduced the Life Skills Education policy (1999). The policy is applicable to all sectors, including ecotourism. This document was central in determining the inclusion of HIV/AIDS as one of the key variables measuring the effectiveness of skills transfer to the communities around UMKhanyakude District Municipality.

As such, HIV/AIDS and early childhood services were operationalised as part of the social indicators that determine the overall impact of ecotourism on the improvement of the well-being of the community of UMkhanyakude Municipality. The South African HIV/AIDS Life Skills Education Materials (2005) also provides a formal definition of life skills as they apply to the South African context.

2.7.8 The National Heritage Resources Act No. 25 of 1999

The Act established the South African Heritage Resources Agency whose council seeks to promote and co-ordinate management. Section 2 (2) of the Act particularly defines “responsible tourism” as seeking, among other things, to:

- Avoid negative economic, environmental and social impacts;
- Generate greater economic benefits for local people;
- Enhance the well-being of host communities;
- Improve working conditions in and access to the tourism sector and involve local people in decisions that affect their lives;
- Provide enjoyable experiences for tourists through meaningful connections with local people and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues, engendering respect between tourists and hosts;
- Building local pride and confidence, and
- Make positive contributions towards conserving natural and cultural heritage and maintaining the world’s diversity.

Source: <http://devplan.kzncogta.gov.za/idp>

2.7.9 National Development Plan (NDP)

The aim of the NDP of 2012 is to eliminate poverty and inequality by the year 2030. In achieving this, the plan outlines a new development approach that seeks to draw energies from all walks of life, including local communities, the youth, workers, the unemployed and the business sector. While the achievement of the NDP requires progress on a broad front, three priorities stand out:

- Raising employment through accelerated economic growth;
- Improving the quality of education, skills, development and innovation, and
- Building the capability of the State to play a developmental, transformative role.

In relation to ecotourism, the NDP embodies South Africa's 2030 vision. It envisions employment creation, productivity and elevated incomes as a way of reducing inequality, thus improving living standards and ensuring a dignified existence for all South Africans.

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. Ecotourism was hard hit by the global economic crisis, with the GDP of the travel and tourism contracting by 4.8% in 2009. However, the World Tourism Organisation's (WTO) Report (1995-2015) shows that the number of tourists arriving in South Africa increased to 256 in 2015 alone, suggesting the sector's potential opportunities for growth and expansion. This growth shows a good recovery following a sharp decline attributable to the global economic recession of 2009. Emerging economies remain the main drivers of this recovery for the tourism sector. Africa, the only region that experienced a positive growth in 2009, registered a growth rate of 6% in 2010.

2.7.10 The Local Government Tourism Development and Growth Support Programme (2013)

Co-produced by the National Department of Tourism and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) in 2013, this programme prepares local municipalities for ecotourism by providing the necessary education, training, and technical support services to boost ecotourism initiatives at the local government level. The programme also facilitates the financing of ecotourism initiatives by fostering partnerships between development finance institutions and local municipalities and by ensuring that municipal plans are properly aligned with ecotourism initiatives to increase employment opportunities within the local tourism sector (Local Government Tourism Development and Growth Support Programme, 2013).

2.8 Contribution to the body of knowledge

Despite the growing interest in community-based tourism, especially for the underdeveloped, less-developed and developing places, ecotourism is largely explained from a supply-side perspective, with little empirical research being carried out on the demand side, which investigates interactive relationships between visitors and the local communities (Mtapuri, 2015). Consequently, the experiences of communities regarding the provision and benefits of these services remain largely under-researched. Given this knowledge gap, the current study seeks to enhance an understanding of how improved access to tourism resources can be used to expand employment and business opportunities for the poor, simultaneously providing adequate training to enable them to maximise these opportunities. Through its findings, the study hopes to contribute to the existing body of empirical studies in addition to the enrichment of policy designing in the planning process; thus, addressing the goals of sustainable development through ecotourism.

The study also contributes to policy reform by advocating the participation of the poor in the planning, development and management of tourism activities pertinent to them. This may help mitigate the barriers that prevent poor rural communities from participating in ecotourism decision-making processes and foster enduring partnerships between local communities, ecotourism operators and local agencies. Finally, the recommendations of the study may assist policy makers, programme officials and project managers to conceptualise and implement ecotourism projects in a manner that benefits local communities and the local economy as part of the government's local economic development (LED) strategy.

2.9 Conclusion

This literature review highlighted three strands of literature on ecotourism, namely: the sustainable development perspective; the conservation perspective and the ecotourism perspective. Of these three strands, the study is inclined towards sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the sustainable livelihoods and pro-poor approaches as the bases on which the research problem can be understood. While the current discourse generally focuses primarily on the merits and demerits of ecotourism (Butcher, 2003), this study adopted a more pragmatic approach as it assessed the contribution of ecotourism to poverty

alleviation in relatively underdeveloped areas like UMkhanyakude. The next chapter outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework underpinning the study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the relevant literature in order to enhance an understanding of ecotourism practice. This chapter examines the theories of ecotourism in order to illuminate the research problem, which is to explore the role of ecotourism as an important cog in the development of selected rural settings in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. For the purpose of this study, a theory is an organised body of concepts and principles intended to explain a particular phenomenon (Leedy & Omrod, 2010). Although three theories were discussed, this study mainly focused on the Sustainable Livelihoods Theory. The particular phenomenon for this study concerns execution of ecotourism projects as a means of alleviating poverty and unemployment in rural contexts. The chapter covers the following aspects: introduction, principles of ecotourism, approaches to ecotourism and their implications for the study, the link between ecotourism and sustainable development, and conclusion.

3.2 Tourism, poverty, unemployment and sustainable development

Research has generally underscored the vital link between tourism, poverty reduction and sustainable development (Obour, 2017; Manwere, 2014). The World Tourism Organisation (2016) characterises tourism as activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. In recent years, tourism has experienced sustained growth as a result of the growing global demand for ecotourism. Arguably, however, tourism is not a value-free or neutral concept. Rather, like any other industry, it is prone to politics and vested interests which have a direct impact on both the allocation and distribution of resources and outcomes in rural communities (Chock, Macbeth & Warren, 2008). While this explanation resonates with the study, the primary focus of the current investigation is the role of the ecotourism sector in poverty alleviation and advancement of the goals of sustainable development in rural contexts. Thus, this study argues that sustainable ecotourism practices are likely to improve both sustainable livelihoods and the preservation of natural capital in rural areas. Therefore,

this study avers that there is a close association between ecotourism policy practice, poverty alleviation and unemployment.

Poverty continues to baffle policy makers and development practitioners, especially in developing countries such as South Africa. A central problem South Africa is grappling with is how to mobilise and involve the poor in sustainable ecotourism initiatives in order to reduce hunger and economic deprivation without depleting the natural resources. Balancing these policy imperatives remains a major challenge for both the national and local governments (Mthembu, 2018). In development literature, poverty is defined as a multidimensional phenomenon comprising several factors, such as poor health, lack of education, poor living standards, lack of income or consumption, lack of decent work and threat from violence (Victor, 2014; Mahembe, 2019). Unemployment is defined as the state of being without a job or the number of people without jobs in a particular area (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020). South Africa's unemployment rate is considered very high at 26.7%. UMkhanyakude's current unemployment rate stands at 31%; this underscores the need for the accelerated implementation of ecotourism to mitigate this challenge.

Ecotourism is seen as a viable solution to the problems facing marginalised rural communities, which have little or no access to meaningful economic activities. This has necessitated the need to adopt sustainable ecotourism. The Oxford English Dictionary defines sustainability as “the property of being environmentally sustainable; the degree to which a process or enterprise is able to be maintained or continued while avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources”. Therefore, sustainable ecotourism development implies development that balances the needs of present generations without compromising the needs of future generations in terms of resource allocation, utilisation and preservation (Manwa, 2014). Empirical studies covering social, economic and environmental impacts of ecotourism have been reviewed to highlight some of the key variables used to measure the general efficacy of ecotourism in alleviating poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District.

3.2.1 Principles of ecotourism

Like any other development strategy, ecotourism is guided by specific principles that ensure consistency in its practice. These principles are relevant to this study as they reveal the manner in which ecotourism initiatives should be carried out in order to benefit all

stakeholders, including host communities. The World Tourism Organisation (2005), in Laitamak (2016), has summarised the philosophy and principles of sustainable ecotourism: thus, sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and social aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. The primary principles attributed to ecotourism, which also apply to UMkhanyakude ecotourism projects, according to Erdogan (2015) and Thompson (2018), include:

- Minimising the negative impact on natural and cultural environment which could harm the destination,
- Training travellers on preserving the environment,
- Emphasising the importance of conducting business in a way that meets the needs of the local community, thriving in cooperation with the local administration and the local community,
- Resource allocation to oversee natural and preserved areas,
- Tourism zoning of the planned visitor management for regions evaluated and areas preserved as eco-destinations,
- Emphasising social research and long-term observation programmes oriented towards the environment in order to minimise and assess the overall impact,
- Maximising economic benefits of the hosting community or local community, that is, those who live in or near these protected areas,
- Conducting research activities which ensure that the progress of ecotourism does not exceed the social and environmental capacity of the region within the boundaries of acceptable changes, in cooperation with the local community, and
- Establishing an environmentally friendly tourism infrastructure in which cultural and natural environment intertwine, with the use of fossil fuel being minimised, while regional flora and wildlife are preserved.

Three important points can be deduced from these principles and these are pertinent to the current study. First, ecotourism efforts must be cognisant of the need to balance the needs of local people, visitors (tourists) and the natural environment. Second, ecotourism initiatives should be promoted in cooperation with local communities; thus, they are also key stakeholders in these initiatives. Third, there is need for ecotourism operators to show

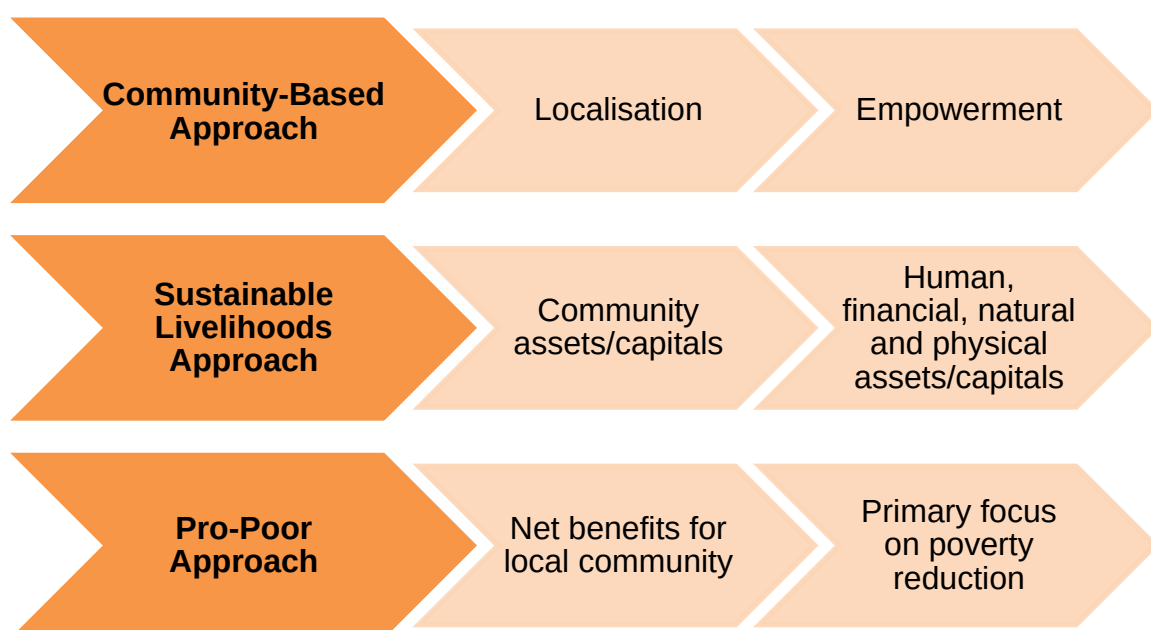
sensitivity and respect towards local culture and the environment. Precisely, there should be synergies between ecotourism activities, nature conservation and community development.

The above perspective is supported by Mwesigwa (2016), whose study concluded that ecotourism facilitates natural conservation, local participation and sustainability and, resultantly, it ought to be implemented and promoted as one of the central alternatives to the empowerment of women, particularly in rural areas, where development opportunities are limited.

3.3 Approaches to ecotourism

A new strand of literature on sustainable tourism and community-based tourism has emerged over the past three decades, necessitating the need for adopting more responsive approaches to the reduction of poverty and unemployment in rural areas. Consequently, numerous and diverse interpretations and criticisms have been advanced in each approach (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). Despite variations in scope and emphasis, these approaches are important for the study as they all perceive ecotourism as a vehicle for community participation and empowerment in rural areas. These approaches are illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Approaches to ecotourism



3.3.1 The Community-Based Approach

As indicated in Figure 3.1 above, community-based ecotourism (CBT) emphasises the localisation of ecotourism strategies to foster self-sustenance among local communities through empowerment so that the poor can partake in their own development (Wearing, 2019). Dangi and Jamal (2016) aver that community-based tourism emerged in the early 1980s as an alternative to mainstream tourism. Hopes were especially high as the ecotourism initiative was meant to combat mass tourism in the developing world and therefore aid rural communities in the global south through grassroots development, resident participation, empowerment and capacity building. It advocates a systems perspective of community tourism where “community” refers to a group of people living in a defined space, with ecotourists interacting with local people and the landscape for a tourism experience. In some cases, community-based ecotourism can be characterised as follows:

- CBT applies the objectives of sustainable tourism (ST) with an emphasis on community engagement and development.
- CBT is an approach that involves the host community in the planning and development of the ecotourism industry. CBT is generally small-scale and involves interactions between visitors and the host community, particularly suited to rural and regional areas. CBT is particularly understood as being managed and owned by the community for the community.
- CBT is a type of sustainable tourism that seeks to involve local residents in the running and management of small-scale tourism projects as a means of alleviating poverty and providing an alternative source of income for community members.
- CBT refers to tourism that involves community participation and aims to generate benefits for local communities in the developing world by allowing ecotourists to visit these communities and learn about their culture and the local environment (Dangi & Jamal, 2016).

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the empowerment and participation of residents are considered essential principles of CBT in the sense that development and use of the community's goods and resources should be locally controlled, community-based and community-driven. Like other approaches discussed below, CBT is consistent with the orientation of the study as local communities need to take the centre stage in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ecotourism projects as key beneficiaries in the entire development process.

3.3.2 The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)

The notion of sustainable livelihood is said to have been the brainchild of the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 which promulgated the Agenda for the 21st Century. The aim of Agenda 21 is to afford everyone the opportunity to have a sustainable livelihood. Since then, various attempts have been made to conceptualise and institutionalise the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Eddins (2013) characterises a livelihood as comprising the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with, and recover from stress and shocks; it can maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and can provide opportunities for the next generation. It must contribute the net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term. Central to the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach is the identification and assessment of the different assets or capitals that are deemed to underpin livelihood at individual, household, village or group level (Ibrahim, 2017). The formation and preservation of these community assets are important for the study as they help to determine whether or not real development is taking place in remote areas such as UMkhanyakude. These assets, which include human, social, physical, natural and financial capital, are summarised in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Livelihood assets

Type of capital	Description
a) Natural capital	Natural resource stocks (soil, water, air, genetic resources et cetera) and environmental services (hydrological cycle, pollution sinks et cetera)
b) Social capital	Social resources (networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations)

c) Human capital	Skills, knowledge, labour (includes good health and physical capability)
d) Physical capital	Infrastructure (buildings, roads), production equipment and technologies)
e) Economic/financial capital	Capital base (cash, credit/debt, savings, and other economic assets)

Source: De Haan (2012:346)

These assets are indispensable for poor people in the community as they are used to build and strengthen livelihood strategies (De Haan, 2012). These assets (Table 3.1) are assessed in terms of their vulnerability to shocks and the institutional context within which they exist. Once this is understood, interventions can then be put in place to enhance livelihoods and their sustainability by either increasing the available capital or by reducing vulnerability. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach seeks to avert a situation where ecotourism interventions are unguided, thereby giving little positive impact on or is at its worst detriment

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach resonates with the current study in two ways. Firstly, it provides useful guidelines for the situational analysis and planning of ecotourism projects as it encourages a strong focus on the various types of community assets that should be promoted and preserved by ecotourism operators in collaboration with local communities. A number of studies have identified the essential elements of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach that resonate with the purpose of this study. These elements include the following;

- A set of principles guiding development interventions (whether community-led or otherwise). Fundamentally, an intervention has to be evidence-based rather than being instigated in a top-down fashion without adequate knowledge of the community. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach can thus be seen as a loose checklist of points that must be considered before ecotourism projects are formulated, developed and formalised.
- As a formal, analytical framework to help understand what ‘is’ and what ‘can’ be done, the framework helps appreciate the capitals which are available to households, their

vulnerability and the involvement of institutions in the planning, execution and monitoring of, for example, ecotourism projects in rural settings.

- As an overall developmental objective; in this case, development is seen as the improvement of livelihood sustainability, perhaps by making capital less vulnerable or by enhancing the contributions that some capitals can make or even by improving the institutional context (Serat, 2017).

The major contribution of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, which resonates with this study, is the principle that successful development interventions, especially if led by local communities, must begin with a reflective process of deriving evidence sufficiently broad in vision and not limited to what may seem to be a good technical fix (Loison, 2015).

3.3.3 The Pro-Poor Approach (PPA)

Several researchers have highlighted the need for adopting a pro-poor approach to ecotourism to ensure that local communities benefit (Croes, 2015; Ndivo, 2016). Neto (2003) posits that the Pro-Poor Approach prioritises the needs of the poor when allocating and distributing project resources and economic benefits. While pro-poor tourism (PPT) and ecotourism may have similar objectives, the key difference is that the former focuses on poverty reduction rather than a secondary component of the mainly environmental sustainability strategy. In other words, although environmental protection remains an important goal of PPT, the quality of the environment in which targeted poor groups live is only one part of a broader poverty reduction strategy. The apparent emphasis on poverty alleviation resonates with the purpose of this study as it seeks to assess the contribution of ecotourism to the reduction of this challenge.

Pro-poor ecotourism is now being advocated as a means of alleviating poverty in developing economies through venture creation and self-employment opportunities (Chaichi, 2017); this, to some extent, resonates with the goal of the study, which seeks to investigate whether or not UMkhanyakude Community benefits from ecotourism initiatives being implemented in the area. The pro-poor framework has generated a lot of interest and promotion, not only among researchers, but also amongst international and donor organisations. For example, the

United Nations World Tourism Organisation came up with the Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty Initiative (STEP) in 2002. The STEP focuses on encouraging the promotion of activities that promote sustainable tourism (social, economic and ecological) with a focus on alleviating poverty through the development and creation of jobs for poor people living on less than a dollar a day (Manwa, 2014).

The growing emphasis on pro-poor ecotourism was also boosted by the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, which saw poverty alleviation being a key priority. Hence, the role of ecotourism in advancing social sustainability made a significant headway under discussions around responsible tourism and pro-poor tourism. “Making Tourism Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers” by UNEP-UNWTO is a comprehensive policy document that describes 12 aims of sustainable tourism development (Dangi & Jamal, 2016).

The Department of International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom has defined pro-poor tourism as generating net benefits for the poor (that is, benefits are greater than costs). The DFID clarifies that benefits should be viewed as holistic and not restricted to economic benefits, thus, they should also include social, environmental and cultural benefits. Additionally, pro-poor tourism should not be viewed as a tourism product, but rather as an approach to tourism development and management through which linkages are developed between tourism businesses and poor people in order to leverage and increase the benefits of tourism for the poor (Santos, 2016; Mensah, 2017). The emphasis on helping the poor cope with poverty is consistent with the purpose of the study; which avers that ecotourism can be effective if it contributes positively to job creation and poverty reduction in rural communities.

However, like other ecotourism models, the Pro-Poor Approach has received substantial negative criticism (Chaichi, 2016; Akrong, 2019). For instance, it has been argued that pro-poor ecotourism perpetuates inequalities prevailing in society, since both the rich and the poor benefit from pro-poor tourism activities. In this view, there are inherent structural barriers militating against the poor involved and benefiting from ecotourism activities (Kala, 2018). These include low levels of educational attainment, lack of micro-finance targeted at ecotourism development and marginalisation in decision-making. Further, ecotourism operators have been censured for showing little ethical commitment to ensuring that their

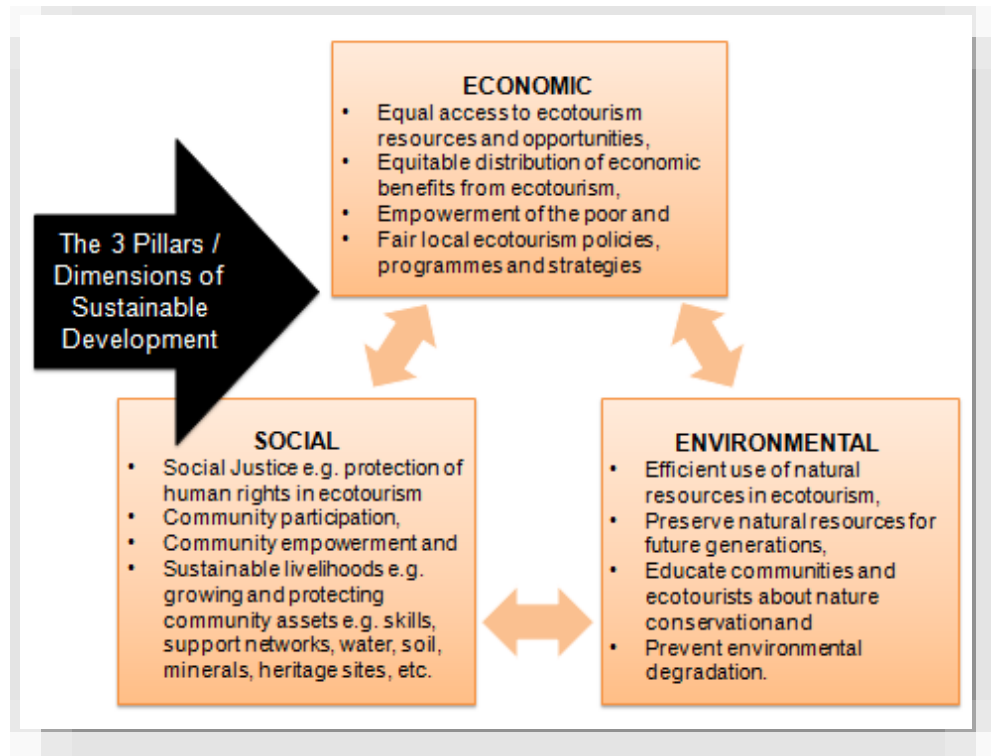
businesses contribute to poverty alleviation in local communities. As a result, it has been suggested that protection measures be instituted to ensure that big multinational players do not set the agenda and monopolise decision-making in the global arena (Chili, 2017; Yanes, 2019).

It is evident from the foregoing that, despite their limitations, these three approaches (the Community-Based Approach, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and the Pro-Poor Approach) have received considerable attention as viable strategic interventions that could successfully combat poverty and unemployment in underdeveloped areas such as UMkhanyakude. Neither of these ecotourism strategies is better than the others. Instead, they are complementary as they all put local communities at the centre of the ecotourism development process. The next section addresses the link between ecotourism and sustainable development, as the study assumes that ecotourism holds greater prospects for promoting sustainable livelihoods in rural areas.

3.4 The link between ecotourism and sustainable development

Ecotourism is conceptually linked to sustainable development; hence, it is vital to unpack this relationship as it aligns with the theoretical framework of this study. Literally, sustainable development refers to maintaining development over a certain period (Elliot, 2013). Thus, a sustainable society or community is one which continually enhances people's ability to do what they have good reasons to value (Neupane, 2016). Stephen (2016) describes development as a process of change and growth which improves people's lives in terms of better standards of living, happiness and freedom. Perhaps a more comprehensive and enduring definition of sustainable development is that proffered by the Brundtland Commission (1987), which views sustainable development as that which meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Klarin, 2018). Therefore, sustainable ecotourism aims to strike a balance between human development needs and nature conservation to ensure continuity. Though these definitions are varied, they suggest that sustainable development is a complex, multi-level phenomenon shaped by the context in which it occurs (Yeoman, 2015; Kabote, 2017). Thus, for ecotourism to be sustainable, it must be based on the three pillars of sustainable development, which are as follows:

Figure 3.2: Dimensions of sustainable development linked to ecotourism



As indicated in Figure 3.2 above, the economic dimension of ecotourism aims to measure the economic benefits that ecotourism projects generate for local communities; these benefits include income, jobs, and entrepreneurial opportunities. The social dimension determines the extent to which ecotourism projects contribute to the eradication of poverty and the gradual improvement of living standards, the social cohesion and well-being of the community. The environmental dimension looks at the impacts of ecotourism activities on the natural environment and the surrounding communities. These three dimensions were the general criteria used to assess the contribution of ecotourism to sustainable development in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. The researcher asserts that well-conceived ecotourism initiatives could be the panacea for the challenges facing poverty-stricken communities in this area. Therefore, this research does not delve into the merits and demerits of ecotourism emphasised by other researchers. Rather, this study is bent on establishing whether or not local communities benefit from ecotourism projects as a means of enhancing sustainable livelihoods in UMkhanyakude. This pragmatic approach marks a departure from the current notions of ecotourism which significantly emphasise the complexities surrounding the promotion and practice of ecotourism.

As depicted in Figure 3.2 above, the appeal and relevance of ecotourism to this study, therefore, are encapsulated in its advocacy for the provision of tourism products and services while accommodating the economic, social and environmental aspects of society (Eriksson, 2013). Without concern for the environment, it is impossible to attain sustainable economic development for local communities, as the only way forward is to adopt a holistic approach at the initial planning stages of the ecotourism experience (Moodley, 2012). Be that as it may, the need to take cognisance of environmental issues remains a moral imperative.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the theoretical framework underpinning ecotourism development within the South African context. Apparently, this discussion reiterated the notion that although the theory of ecotourism has evolved over time, it is still largely grounded in community participation, which has prompted the need to understand whether host communities in UMkhanyakude are benefiting from ecotourism initiatives or not. Overall, the various ecotourism theories or approaches examined above suggest that socio-economic development and natural resource preservation are compatible goals (Chiutsi, 2011). The involvement of host communities in ecotourism decision-making processes is important for the study as it provides the basis for understanding whether these communities derive any social, economic or environmental benefits from these ecotourism initiatives. The next chapter presents the research methodology underpinning this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the following aspects; study setting, which is UMkhanyakude District Municipality comprising Mtubatuba, Jozini, Big Five/Hlabisa and UMhlabuyalingana, research design, study population, the study sample and sampling technique, data collection methods, and the data analysis technique. It further addresses the theoretical principles underpinning data analysis, the validity and reliability of data, ethical considerations, a summary of the research methodology, limitations of the study and conclusion.

Figure 4.1: UMkhanyakude District Municipality Locality Map



Source: www.municipalities.co.za

4.1.1 UMkhanyakude District Municipality

UMkhanyakude District Municipality (UKDM) is situated in the far northern region of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province in South Africa. Covering 12, 818 km² and with a population of 625, 846, the UKDM is the second largest district in KwaZulu-Natal after Zululand District Municipality. The UKDM boasts of the World Heritage site known as Isimangaliso Wetland Park which encompasses the entire coastline of more than 200 kilometres. The UKDM consists of the four local municipalities, thus: UMhlabuyalingana Municipality, Jozini Municipality, The Big Five/Hlabisa Municipality and Mtubatuba Municipality. The key statutory functions of the UKDM, which are shared with its local municipalities, include but are not limited to the following: the promotion of local tourism; fire-fighting services; municipal airports; municipal planning, municipal public transport; cemeteries; and waste removal. The advancement of local tourism is the most crucial task of the UKDM. Prioritisation of tourism in general and ecotourism in particular has prompted the need to understand whether such efforts are helping to build sustainable livelihoods in this area (UKDM [IDP], 2016/2017). The following is a locality map of the UKDM and the targeted local municipalities.

The key questions this study sought to address were as follows: How does ecotourism reduce poverty and unemployment? Are local communities empowered to participate in the implementation of ecotourism? What experiences do local communities have regarding the implementation of ecotourism projects in the area? Has ecotourism improved the livelihoods of communities? The complexity of these questions warranted the application of both quantitative and qualitative research methods as explained in more detail below.

4.2 Research design

Within the context of this study, a research design implies a procedural plan employed by the researcher to validly, objectively, accurately and economically address the research questions (Du Ploy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The study used the parallel convergent research design comprising qualitative and quantitative research applications to evaluate whether ecotourism projects were undertaken in a manner capable of alleviating poverty in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. This design enabled the researcher to use both

numeric and non-numeric data to address the research questions. The parallel convergent design enabled the researcher to obtain different, multiple perspectives, or more complete understandings (Creswell, 2013) of how ecotourism is implemented to reduce poverty and unemployment in UKDM. This mixed methods research facilitates a detailed exploration of complex phenomenon (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015).

While the qualitative strand of the study helped to explore the complexity and meaning of a social phenomenon (Bailey, 2018), the quantitative aspect of the study provided the hard facts necessary to substantiate qualitative explanations (Creswell, 2014).

For analytical purposes, data were merged to produce a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this case, the research phenomenon is the role of ecotourism in poverty alleviation and employment creation. Interpretivism also enabled a meaningful analysis of the subjective experiences and perceptions of programme officials, project managers, owners of ecotourism enterprises, and community members on the implementation of ecotourism projects in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. Fundamentally, interpretivism avers that reality is socially constructed (Thanh & Thanh, 2015), suggesting that context is really important in extracting meaning from the collected data. Thus, by probing, participants express their views, feelings, thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, and perspectives (Pham, 2018); the researcher was able to establish how ecotourism projects impacted the lives of community members in so far as poverty and unemployment were concerned. Data were extracted from the participants through qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative methods (questionnaires). For analytical purposes, data were merged to produce a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

4.3 Population, sample and sampling technique

4.3.1 Characteristics of the study and the profile of the participants

The characteristics of participants are central to any research endeavour as they help to clarify and give meaning to participants' responses to the research problem, that is, the implementation of ecotourism to alleviate poverty in UMkhanyakude District in KwaZulu-Natal Province (KZN Online). Consistent with the interpretivist paradigm, the characteristics

of the study were explained within the socio-economic context shaping participants' lives and ecotourism practice across the four local municipalities of UKDM; Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana.

4.3.2 Profile of the participants

Table 4.1 provides an integrated summary of participants' profile drawn from the four local municipalities of UKDM: Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana.

Table 4.1: Participants' profile per local municipality

As indicated in table 4.1 above, participants were selected from each of the four local municipalities targeted by the study. In order to obtain the total sample for the entire study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The sample was fairly balanced, with all the categories being represented in the study. These include programme officials, project managers and vulnerable groups such as women and the youth. The inclusion of women ensured gender equity in the study.

4.3.3 Sampling techniques

The study population comprised 614, 046 people residing in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality (UKDM: Integrated Development Plan, 2012:11). A total of 204 participants were selected from this population. To select the final sample of 204, both random and purposive sampling techniques were used. Details of how this was achieved are provided as follows: The total sample for the quantitative component was based on Yamane (1967:886):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Based on the above formula, the intended focus was 400 participants; as a result, only 172 participants were selected. This number excludes the 32 participants for the qualitative component. To arrive at 32 participants, eight participants were selected per local municipality and this figure was determined by data saturation. Data saturation was achieved

at the seventh interview in the first municipality, then the number was maintained in the subsequent municipalities for purposes of consistency.

4.3.4 Simple random sampling

Simple random sampling fairly selects a representative sample from the research population because every member of the population stands an equal chance of being selected or included in the final sample. Thus, the simple random sampling technique reduced the chances of bias generally associated with the non-probability sampling methods, particularly the convenience sampling and purposive sampling techniques.

In selecting respondents for the quantitative dimension of the study, the researcher used two types of databases obtained from each of the local municipalities. The first database comprised community registers. The second database included a list of companies registered with the municipality's supply chain or procurement unit.

4.3.5 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling falls under non-probability sampling methods, which entail the selection of participants on the basis of their prior knowledge and familiarity with the research phenomenon, ecotourism, for example. Specifically, the criteria used to select participants included expertise, understanding of ecotourism programme implementation processes; skills, and proximity to ecotourism projects.

In this study, four (n=4) officials and four (n=4) programme managers, giving a total of 8, were selected from each of the four local municipalities, precisely Halbisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and Umhlabuyalinga. This resulted in a combined purposive sample of 32 participants (8X4 = 32) for the interviews. The next paragraphs describe how the random sample was designed for the survey component of the study.

The blending of qualitative and quantitative techniques is permissible when the study intends to address research questions posed by the mixed methods research design (Yu, 2007). Simple random sampling created the breath of statistics from a large number of selected units to represent the target population (Etikan, 2017), whereas purposive sampling identified rich

cases from which to extract qualitative data (Patton, 2002) on the implementation of ecotourism projects in the UKDM. The flexibility of mixed sampling strategies especially suits multisite investigations; where different sub-cases are then reflected in the final sample and the data analysis process (Sharp & Hammond, 2012).

4. 4 Methods of data collection

This study utilised two data collection methods. These are in-depth interviews for the qualitative component and a survey for the quantitative component. This triangulation of methods served to generate rich and thick data capable of answering the key study questions. The rationale for using these two methods was to ensure that the weaknesses in one method would be supplemented by the strength in the other method.

4.4.1 Data collection process

For simplicity and ease of operation, the data gathering process was divided into two phases. In Phase One, semi-structured interviews were conducted with programme officials, project managers and owners or operators of ecotourism enterprises between May and June 2018. In Phase Two, standard questionnaires were printed and administered to participants (employees of ecotourism enterprises and community members from each of the four local municipalities) in their workplaces and homes between February and March 2018.

4.4.2 Phase 1: Semi-structured interviews

An interview guide was used to collect data. This interview guide is provided in Annexure 5 of this thesis. The interview guide was generated after a thorough literature search was done to identify gaps in the current body of knowledge on ecotourism. Each interview session lasted for approximately one hour. This time slot had been negotiated and agreed upon with interviewees before the study was conducted. The interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription, with permission having been sought prior to the interview. The interviewer also took field notes, which were later used as a frame of reference during the data analysis process. The key themes covered in semi-structured interviews included the following:

- The process followed in the planning, implementation and monitoring of ecotourism initiatives,
- Key stakeholders required to support the implementation of ecotourism policies /programmes and their roles and responsibilities,
- Benefits of ecotourism for local communities,
- Participation/non-participation of local communities, capacity-building initiatives designed to foster community participation and access to the opportunities created by ecotourism programmes,
- Successes and challenges in implementing ecotourism projects and the mitigation strategies used.

4.4.3 Phase 2: The survey

Questionnaires were administered directly to the respondents by the researcher, providing guidance and clarity on questions that some of the respondents could not comprehend. Employees in the ecotourism ventures were the first to be surveyed in their workplaces. Thereafter, community members were surveyed in their homes, at taxi ranks and shopping centres. The survey took 45 minutes with each respondent. Since some of the community members could not read and write, the questionnaire was translated into IsiZulu, the commonest language spoken across the four local municipalities of UKDM (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana) to enable effective data collection. Regarding structure, the questionnaire was divided into five sections, including biographic data, access to employment opportunities, income levels, working conditions and additional information. Samples of both the English and translated version of the questionnaire are provided in Annexure 4. The response rate was 100 per cent as all the issued questionnaires were fully completed and returned as planned.

4.5 Data analysis technique

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed to analyse quantitative data solicited from ecotourism operators and their employees. The descriptive data in the form of statistics were transformed into percentages and were later reported in pie charts and

bar charts. The study was interested in describing “what is” rather than the relationship between variables. The qualitative data collected from programme officials and project managers in each of the four local municipalities of UKDM (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana) were processed through the ATLAS TI application, which entailed the creation of a Hermeneutic Unit (HU) where all the interview and focus group transcripts and text-based information from document reviews were stored. To prevent damage, loss and distortion of collected data, a computer was used to save and protect all the data.

Data were presentation and analysed in a sequential order, starting with qualitative findings and then descriptive statistics in the form of percentages to substantiate qualitative explanations. This served to maintain the link between qualitative and quantitative data and to enhance the meaning of the results. Although the processing of data was largely accomplished through computer applications, the transcription of semi-structured interviews was necessary to identify the main themes and subthemes, especially in qualitative data. With mixed methods research application, data analysis invoked inductive and deductive reasoning (Best & Khan, 2006).

4.5.1 Theoretical principles underpinning data analysis

Data analysis in this study was guided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and the Pro-Poor Approach. The SLA aided the analysis in two ways: first, it provided useful guidelines for situational analysis and planning of ecotourism projects as it has a strong focus on the various types of community assets that should be promoted and preserved by ecotourism operators in collaboration with local communities. Examples of community assets include human, financial and natural assets. Equally, the Pro-Poor Approach to ecotourism enhanced the data analysis process by highlighting such important variables as the transfer of economic benefits to local communities, including job creation and income generation to benefit poor households.

4.6 Validity and reliability

Validity in qualitative research means the appropriateness of the research tools, process and data. Whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of the research methodology is appropriate for answering the research question, the design is

consistent with the methodology, the sampling and data analysis is appropriate, and finally the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context (Leung, 2015). Reliability is defined as the extent to which the results are consistent over time and if the same results can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument can be considered reliable (Joep, 2000, in Golafshani, 2003).

In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the current study, a number of techniques were applied: the first method entailed the triangulation of data sources (programme officials, project managers, employees and community members). The second one was use of more than one data collection method (questionnaire and semi-structured interviews) to ensure that the research results are reflective of multiple perspectives (Patton, 1990, in Bowen, 2009). The third method entailed piloting (pre-testing) the questionnaire with a group of 10 potential participants randomly selected from the participating local municipalities to enhance the accuracy and efficacy of the data collection instruments. The fourth method involved cross-checking, comparing and contrasting the data from the different participants to identify similarities, dissimilarities, contradictions, deviations and new issues.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Before executing the research plan, the researcher secured institutional approval from the University Ethics Committee (Annexure 3). Letters of permission (Annexure 1) and consent forms (Annexure 2) were also sent to participants requesting them to participate in the study. To uphold the principle of anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to conceal the identities of the participants. Thus, participants' names were not directly published in the final research report.

Prior to the study, consent forms were sent to participants from each of the four local municipalities of UKDM (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba, and UMhlabuyalingana). The informed consent and the consenting process meant to protect and respect the research subjects. Informed consent is the subject's voluntary agreement to participate in the research. It is not merely a form that is signed but a process, in which the subject is made to understand the research and its risks. Participants were also informed about the purpose of the study and encouraged to ask for clarification of certain research aspects they did not understand. The

participants were also made aware of their right to voluntary participation in and withdrawal from the research if necessary, and their right to privacy and protection against any harm that may arise from the research. The informed consent process aimed at providing sufficient information to the participants for them to make an informed decision regarding whether or not to enrol in a study or to continue with participation. A sample of the consent form used in this study is provided in Annexure 2 of this thesis.

Owing to the challenges of illiteracy in the study area, questionnaires were provided in both IsiZulu and English. Finally, given that the study would be conducted in areas predominantly under traditional authorities, it was vital to write letters requesting the local chiefs to authorise the study. A sample of these letters is provided in Annexure 1 of this thesis.

Below is a summary of the research methodology, showing how the several objectives were achieved:

Table 4.1 Summary of research methodology

Objectives	Data collected	Data collection techniques	Analysis
To establish whether ecotourism can reduce poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District	Quantitative data comprising demographics, employment, education, and skills transfer	Questionnaire and Pilot test used to facilitate data collection during the survey with community members and employees of ecotourism enterprises	Analysis of descriptive statistics and comparison of results across the four local municipalities using bar charts
To assess whether or not local communities have been	Qualitative data focusing on access, skills transfer, business	Semi-structured interviews with programme officials, project managers and	Thematic analysis involving transcription and categorisation of

capacitated to participate in the implementation of ecotourism projects in UMkhanyakude District	opportunities and income generating activities	owners of ecotourism enterprises	data into themes within the sustainable livelihoods as a theoretical framework
To explore the experiences of local communities on the implementation of ecotourism projects in UMkhanyakude District	Quantitative data	Questionnaires	Descriptive statistical analysis and comparison of results across the four local municipalities using bar charts
To evaluate the implementation of ecotourism initiatives to ascertain whether they have improved the livelihoods of the communities of UMkhanyakude District	Quantitative data	Questionnaires	Descriptive statistical analysis and comparison of results across the four local municipalities using bar charts

4.8 Limitations

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously. Thus, data analysis was only done when data collection was completed. It is possible that had the data in one phase been analysed prior to data collection in the other phase, the quality of data would have been richer. However, the researcher made an effort to ensure that rich and thick data were collected, especially in the qualitative phase.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter described the research process and methodology in the case study organisation. The data collection process was accomplished in two phases, particularly semi-structured interviews with operators of ecotourism businesses and a survey of employees and community members. The processing and reporting of the research results was accomplished through computer-aided data analysis applications. This subject is fully covered in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the study. The study investigated the role of ecotourism in reducing poverty and unemployment in Umkhanyakude District Municipality. To ensure consistency and uniformity in data presentation, the results are presented in accordance with the research objectives which are as follows:

- To establish whether ecotourism can reduce poverty and unemployment in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality;
- To assess whether local communities have been capacitated to participate in the implementation of ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality;
- To explore the experiences of local communities on the implementation of ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality;
- To evaluate whether the implementation of ecotourism initiatives has improved the livelihoods of the communities of UMkhanyakude District Municipality.

5.2 Data presentation procedure

The data were presented in accordance with the mixed methods research design comprising qualitative and quantitative research applications to evaluate whether or not ecotourism projects were undertaken in a manner capable of alleviating poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. The rationale for using the parallel convergent design in this study was to obtain different, multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2013) regarding the role of ecotourism in reducing poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. This enabled the researcher to compare quantitative and qualitative results from semi-structured interviews. Thus, data were presented sequentially starting with quantitative data in bar charts; this was then substantiated by participants' words in verbatim solicited from semi-structured interviews. The merging of quantitative and qualitative results was done in line with mixed methods research (MMR) guidelines, which advocate the integration of results from the quantitative and qualitative dimensions in order to yield a comprehensive

understanding of the phenomenon under study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2014).

The researcher then presented a discussion of the results under each research objective. To support the points raised in the discussion of results, the researcher drew from the literature (Chapter 2), theoretical framework (Chapter 3), and the relevant empirical studies to enhance understanding of the research findings. This chapter starts by presenting the demographic profile of the participants. The importance of presenting demographics is that they support arguments raised regarding the ability of ecotourism to reduce poverty and unemployment in the Umkhanyakude District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal Province. The specific variables (factors) that are used to determine the extent to which ecotourism contributes to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment in UKDM are as follows:

- Variables for measuring poverty and unemployment included jobs, income, induction, training, quality of jobs (for example, full-time, part-time, temporary)
- Variables for measuring community empowerment in ecotourism projects included education, access to ecotourism resources and opportunities, skills development, health, for example, HIV/AIDS and early childhood development
- Variables for measuring the impact, for example, the extent to which poverty and unemployment have been reduced or mitigated and how significant this has been for the Umkhanyakude Community and how this compares existing base line information at provincial level.

These indicators were considered valid because the South African Tourism Charter (2005) explicitly explains the specific indicators to be considered when determining whether or not tourism makes a meaningful contribution to people's lives in all communities. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Education
- Participation
- Job creation
- Health
- Conservation
- Community participation

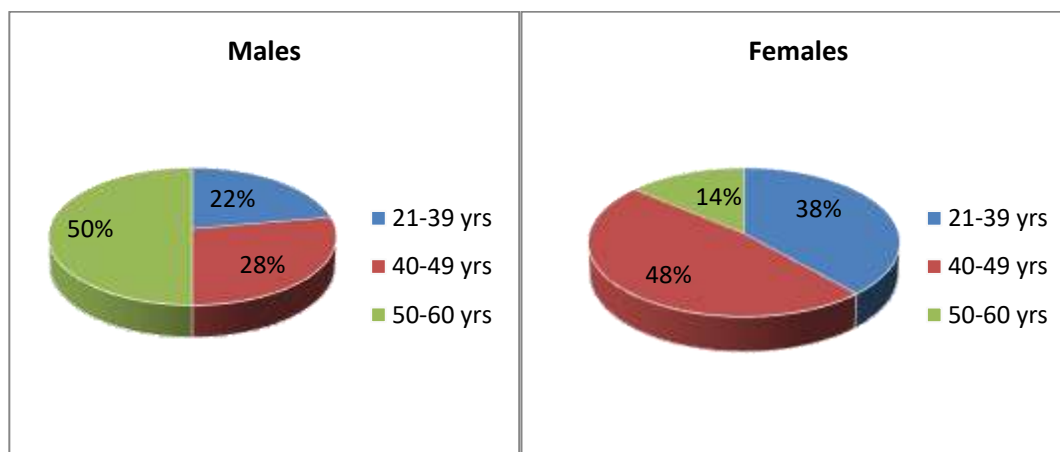
- Skills development
- PromotionsEnterprise development
- Community empowerment
- Income distribution

In analysing the data, the study utilised three interrelated theories of ecotourism cited in Chapter 3 (subsections 3.3.1; 3.3.2 and 3.3.2). These include the Community-Based Approach, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and the Pro-Poor Approach as per literature discussed in Chapter 2. These theories were chosen as an analytic lens mainly because they all emphasise the involvement, participation and beneficiation of local communities in ecotourism projects.

5.2.1 Age profile of the participants

As part of the survey, community members were requested to provide details of their age in the questionnaire. The results revealed the following:

Figure 5.1: Age profile of the participants



According to the results in Figure 5.1, the number of young males (21-39 years) involved in ecotourism initiatives was relatively smaller (22%) than that of young women (38%) taking part in these activities. In addition, only 28% of males between 40 and 49 years were involved in ecotourism initiatives, compared to 48% female participants. However, more (50%) adult males in the senior age bracket (50-60 years) who took part in ecotourism activities, than females; who constituted 14% of the participating groups. Overall, these data sets highlight

that the number of women involved in ecotourism projects was significantly higher than that of men. These results imply that ecotourism initiatives were also used to mitigate poverty and unemployment among vulnerable groups such as women and the youth. A relatively higher rate (38%) of young women (21-39 years) who were involved in ecotourism projects holds greater prospects for addressing youth unemployment in the UKDM. Adversely, other researchers have established that limited participation of young people in ecotourism activities is due to low perceptions they hold regarding the benefits of ecotourism as most young people are influenced by the negative perceptions held by their peers, parents and the communities in which they live Tackling these perceptions may help increase youth participation in ecotourism activities (Randrianasolo & Rwigamba, 2018). In other instances, the involvement of young people in ecotourism is constrained by barriers such as lack of knowledge on how and where to find the relevant information as well as lack of funding and relevant business experience (Mureithi, 2010). The following are the findings on the gender profiles of the participants.

5.2.2 Gender profile of the participants

Gender equity is one of the critical indicators of effective and meaningful participation of women in ecotourism opportunities; hence, it was necessary to establish whether or not women were fairly and equitably represented in ecotourism projects within the UKDM. The study found the following:

Figure 5.2: Gender profile of the participants

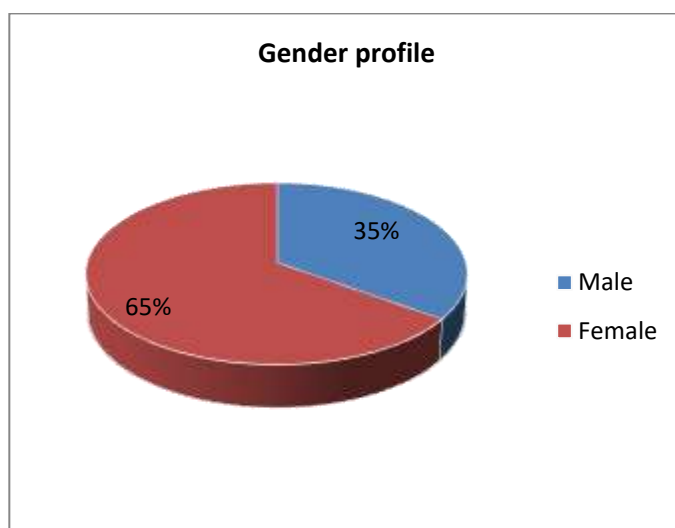


Figure 5.2 reveals that most (65%) of the community members who participated in ecotourism activities in the UKDM were women, with men constituting only 35% of the local ecotourism industry. These results imply that more women were involved in ecotourism activities than their male counterparts. To some extent, this finding negates the claim in the literature that cultural norms and values in rural communities generally prevent many women from participating in ecotourism activities. In both the survey and semi-structured interviews, it was repeatedly stressed that women took a lead in using available opportunities to generate reasonable income to sustain their families. The next section focuses on the marital status of the participants and how this impacted their participation and beneficiation in ecotourism projects. To some extent, these results corroborate the literature which depicts gender relations as an important factor in the equitable allocation and distribution of resources in ecotourism projects. Inattention to gender relations may worsen the inequality between men and women in ecotourism initiatives (Water, 2011). On the contrary, Torto (2015) reports that in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, women did not benefit substantially from ecotourism as most of the chosen activities benefited men, with 98% of the decisions on revenue sharing projects being taken by men with little input from women. In an earlier study, Scheyvens (2000) reached a similar conclusion, contending that ecotourism runs the risk of disadvantaging and marginalising local women. Ecotourism is an industry most likely to engage revenue to locals, and as such, women's involvement cannot be underestimated (Mwesigwa, 2016). Below is data on participants' marital status.

5.2.3. Marital status

Marital status is an important indicator of household structures and support systems, particularly in rural areas where the family institution plays a key role in both productivity and in the building of sustainable livelihoods. The results were as follows:

Figure 5.3: Marital status

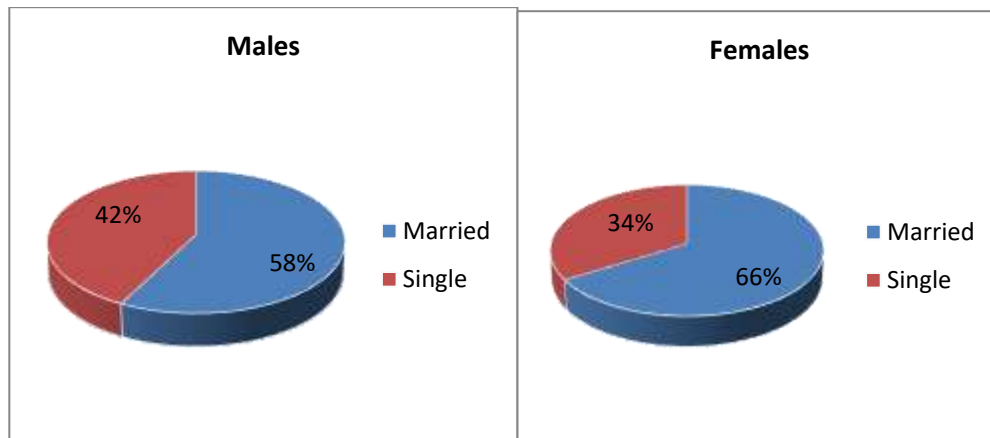


Figure 5.3 indicates that 66% of the females were married; compared to 58% males in the same category. Contrary, the number of single men was significantly high at 42%, compared to 34% for women. To some extent, this finding corroborates the observation made by Baum (2013) that the ecotourism sector is characterised by diversity, complexity, and fragmentation in terms of employment and working conditions. Fergus (2009) concurs, stating that the greater incidence of unemployment among women, particularly in developing countries, is largely attributed not only to low skills levels but also to social status, which indirectly perpetuates inequality in both ecotourism jobs and business activities. Men and women enter the ecotourism market places with unequal bargaining capacities and resources. Other researchers have found that in some cultures, women's involvement in and beneficitation from ecotourism activities is hampered by perceived traditional marital roles; including child-rearing; housekeeping; fetching water and wood, et cetera (Dilly, 2003). Besides marital responsibilities, women in ecotourism also suffer the brunt of discrimination, as some cultures still treat them as inferior to men (Mbogori, 2014). This has resulted in the creation of privileged and underprivileged classes, with women being relegated to the disadvantaged status in the available tourism opportunities (Chinonso, Alex-Onyeocha & Anyanwu, 2015). However, this study has shown that women were relatively more involved in ecotourism activities than their male counterparts, suggesting that gender inequity and marital responsibilities were not a major issue for many women in ecotourism projects in the UKDM. Below is the educational profile of the participants.

5.2.4 Educational profile of the participants

It was crucial to establish the educational backgrounds of the participants and how this potentially affected their participation in ecotourism activities in the UKDM. The results are as follows:

Figure 5.4: Educational profile of the participants

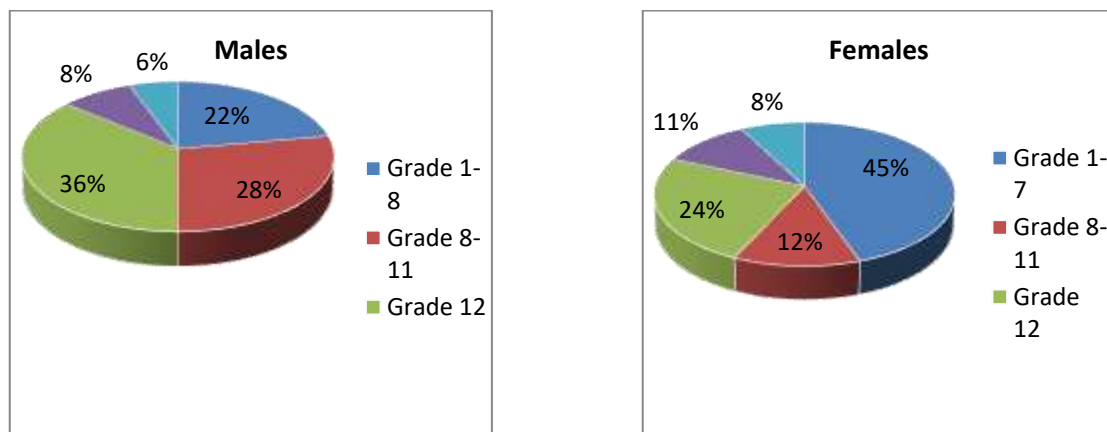


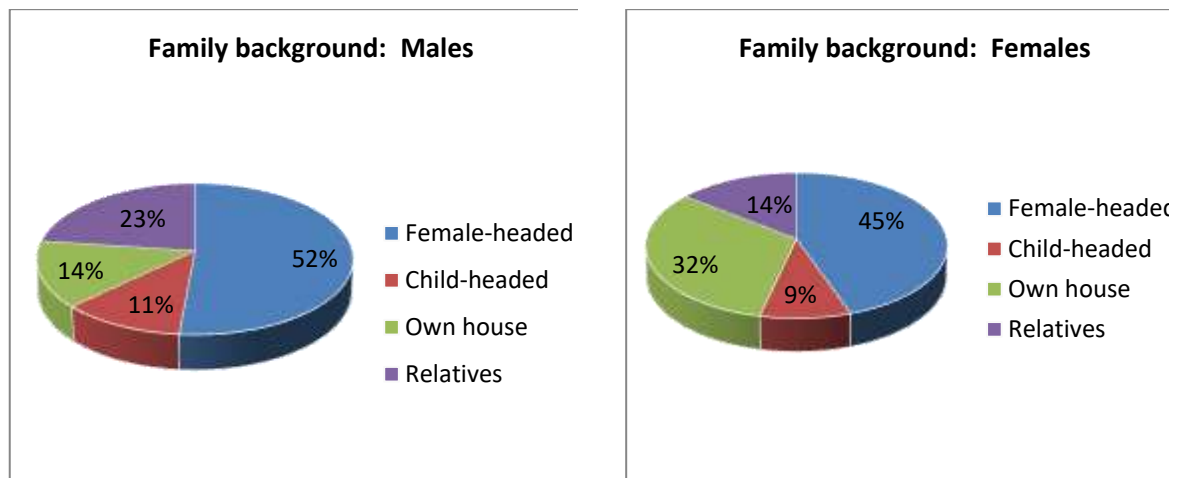
Figure 5.4 reports that 22% of the males had educational backgrounds ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 8. The number of women in the same grade was significantly high at 45%, suggesting that the majority of women in ecotourism projects lacked formal education. This finding is corroborated by international studies which show that unequal access to education prevents many women from participating in ecotourism activities (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2011). Equitable access to educational opportunities for women does not only promote greater equality in employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, but also helps reduce early marriages and infant mortality rates; overall, it improves health for future generations (International Labour Organisation, 2015). The Global Report on Women in Tourism (2010) found that educational attainment for women in ecotourism activities was disappointing as very few women had the basic skills necessary to actively participate and contribute to their own development through ecotourism projects. If women are to benefit substantially from ecotourism, it will be vital to close the gap between women and men in terms of capacities, access to resources, learning and development opportunities, and vulnerability to violence and conflict.

In the Grade 8-11 category, men (28%) surpassed women, who constituted only 12% at this level. Again, there were more men (36%) with Grade 12 (Matriculation certificate) than women (24%). However, women fared well in the junior qualifications category (diploma), notching 11%, compared to 8% for men. In the senior qualifications category (degrees), both men (6%) and women (8%) were hugely underrepresented. These findings, which confirm low educational levels in ecotourism projects, contradict the literature which tends to emphasise the fact that education and training are positively associated with success in ecotourism occupations and business activities (Perman, 2014; Renfors, 2017; Shakeela, 2013). The lack of educational or training opportunities in ecotourism has also been confirmed by other researchers such as Monterrubio and Espinosa (2016), who reported that education or training was generally perceived to be insignificant for low-wage jobs in Mexico. Education or training was only needed for ensuring the safety of tourists and not necessarily the development and retention of human resources. Education and training play an important role in both sustainable ecotourism and sustainable development, especially in rural settings (Gough & Scott, 1999). The next paragraph reports the results on participants' family backgrounds.

5.2.5 Participants' family backgrounds

Consideration of family factors was important given the inherent social and economic inequalities in South Africa in general and the UKDM Community in particular. The study uncovered the following:

Figure 5.5: Family background



The results in Figure 5.5 show that slightly more than half (52%) of males came from female-headed households, indicating that they were probably dependent on their mothers for a living. Approximately 45% of the females were also linked to female-headed households. Male participants from child-headed households constituted a slightly higher percentage (11%) than that of females who fell in the same category (9%). Males who came from their own homes constituted only 14% of the group; while the number of females who also had their own households was significantly high at 32%. Roughly 23% of males lived with relatives. Finally a few female participants depended on relatives for shelter. Further, the results in Figure 5.5 reveal some of the serious patterns of poverty that characterise South Africa's rural communities in general and female-headed and child-headed families in particular (Schatz, 2011; Mogotlane, Chauke, van Rensburg, Human & Kganakga, 2010; Pillay, 2016). Participation in ecotourism activities was therefore critical in enabling members of these households to make a living in the UKDM.

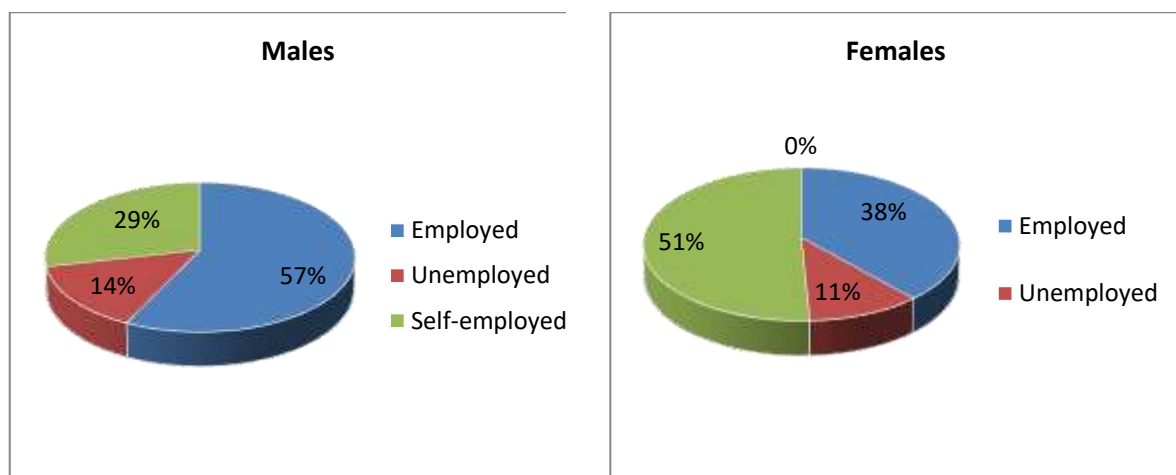
The findings on the potential of ecotourism to bring relief to marginalised groups are consistent with data from other empirical studies. For example, Nkemngu (2012) established that the gains deriving from ecotourism have been instrumental in combating poverty and uplifting disadvantaged communities by increasing access to economic and social benefits. Positive relationships with marginalised local communities are as desirable as they are a pre-requisite for the long-term viability and sustainability of ecotourism resources and the people whose lives depend on them (Snyman, 2013). Thus, overcoming long-standing imbalances between social groups ought to be considered in laying the groundwork for sustainable

ecotourism (Van der Duim & Peters, 2006). Below are the findings on the employment status of the participants (community members).

5.2.6 Employment status

Data on employment determined whether or otherwise ecotourism assisted in reducing the number of unemployed residents in UKDM. The research findings are as follows:

Figure 5.6: Employment status



Comparatively, the results in Figure 5.6 show that the majority (57%) of men in the UKDM depended on formal employment generated by ecotourism, while only 38% of the women relied on employment for income. These results also show that men constituted a slightly greater percentage (14%) of unemployment than their female (11%) counterparts in UKDM's ecotourism industry. Furthermore, approximately 29% of the men were involved in self-employment activities; this contrasts sharply with the significantly high number (51%) of women who engaged in similar activities. These findings are corroborated by the literature which posits that ecotourism is one of the best pathways to self-employment particularly for women.

As noted in Figure 5.6, the high participation rate for women in self-employment activities in UKDM's ecotourism industry can be attributed to the patterns of poverty reported earlier

in Figure 5.5. Most men (52%) and women (45%) involved in ecotourism activities came from female-headed households. This probably forced many women to grab available employment opportunities and venture creation in order to earn enough income to support their dependents.

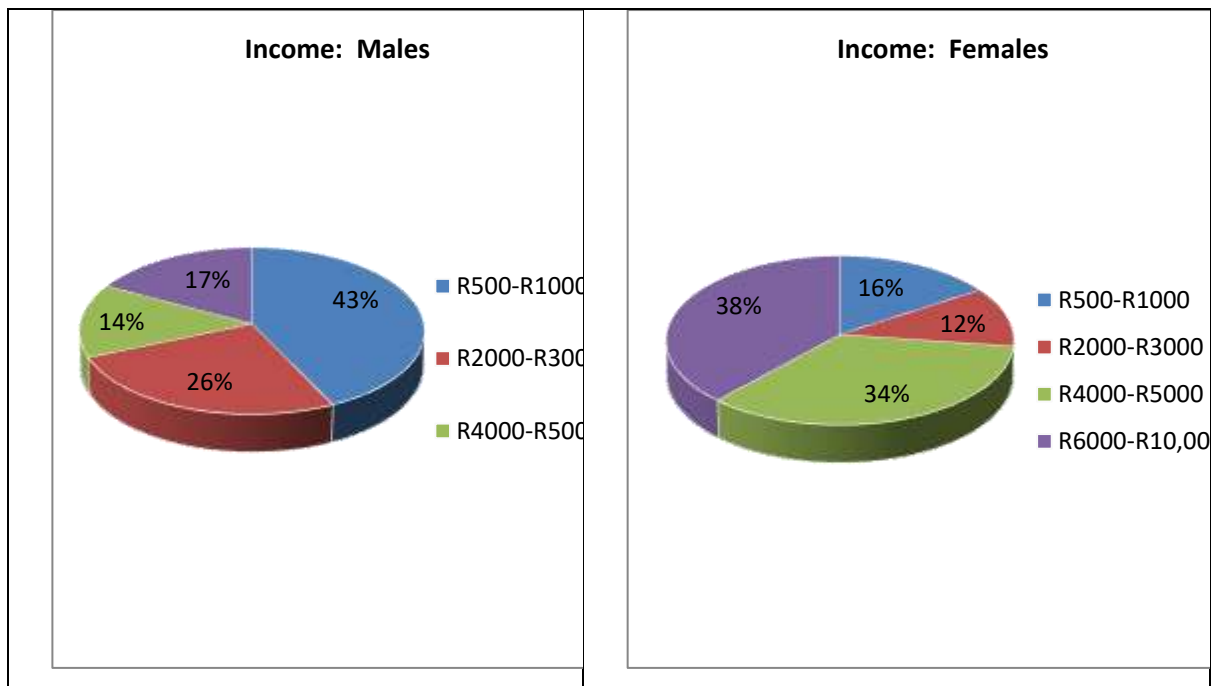
Equally, the prevalence of child-headed households also meant that young people aged between 20 and 29 (Figure 5.1) had to find income opportunities in ecotourism. This finding is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Irandu and Shada (2016) which revealed that ecotourism provides the much-needed employment opportunities to help improve sustainable livelihoods among poverty-stricken rural households.

The data on ecotourism as a source of employment for rural communities were corroborated by empirical studies. For instance, Servoz (2016) confirms that ecotourism significantly contributes towards job creation for women, youths, migrant workers, rural communities and indigenous people and has numerous linkages with other sectors. Consequently, ecotourism can significantly reduce poverty and through the promotion of socio-economic development and decent work. Ecotourism has shown its strong potential for creating both skilled and unskilled jobs. It combines South Africa's diverse natural beauty with the protection of its natural resources in a manner that fosters and develops communities living on or near tourist destinations (Khathi, 1999).

5.2.7 Income levels in ecotourism activities

Income levels significantly indicate progress or regression in addressing the challenges posed by poverty and unemployment in any policy intervention, including ecotourism (Irandu & Sha, 2016). Thus, it was vital to find out from community members what their income levels in ecotourism projects were. The study uncovered the following:

Figure 5.7: Income levels in ecotourism activities



According to Figure 5.7, a significant number (43%) of males earned between R500 and R1,000 per month compared to only 16% of the females who were in the same income bracket. Additionally, 26% of males earned between R2,000 and R3,000 per month. Comparatively, the number of women in this income bracket was significantly low at 12%. Meanwhile, the number of males earning between R5,000 and R6,000 per month was significantly low (14%), compared to 34% of female participants who earned this amount. In addition, very few men (17%) in the higher income bracket earned between R6,000 and R10,000 per month. In contrast, the number of women who earned this amount was relatively high at 34%. On the positive side, these results show that some women benefited more equitably from ecotourism activities than most of their male counterparts, who were largely earned between R500 and R1,000. These results are consistent with the findings of other researchers (Croes & Rivera, 2017; Palmer & Chuamuagphan, 2017); this shows that ecotourism has the potential to generate substantial benefits for the poor in terms of both income and local infrastructural development. The income differentials between men and women can be explained by analysing the gender profile of the participants (Figure 5.2), which revealed that more women (65%) took part in ecotourism activities than men (35%). Women were also more likely to earn extra income from both formal and informal trading activities than their

male counterparts, who provided mostly unskilled labour to the ecotourism industry (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2016). The next section reports data on sources of income for male and female participants.

5.2.8 Sources of income

This question aimed at establishing whether there were any specific ecotourism activities that provided income for male and female participants in UKDM's ecotourism industry. The study discovered the following:

Figure 5.8: Sources of income for the participants

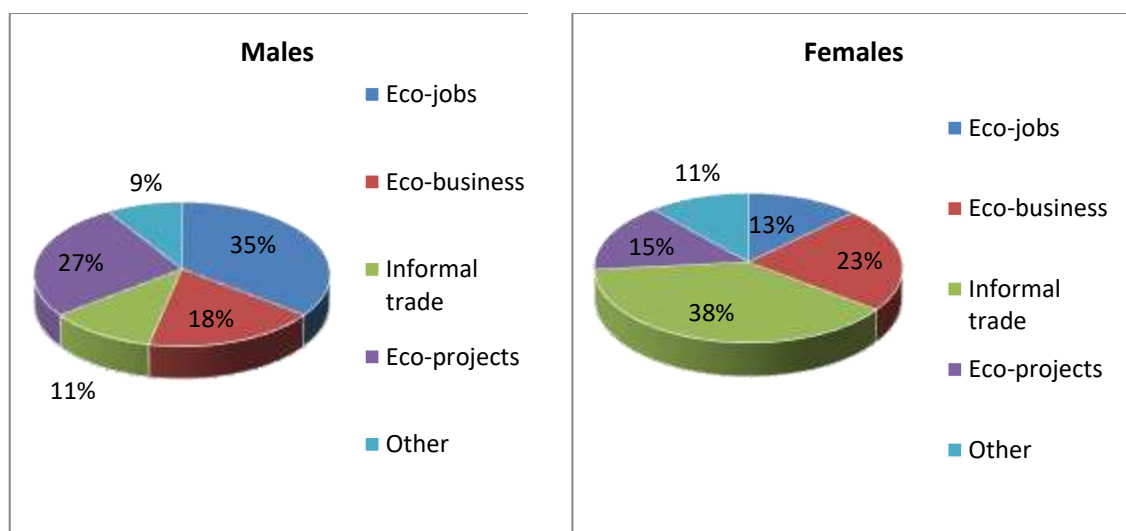


Figure 5.8 shows that 35% of the males derived income from jobs in the ecotourism sector. Comparatively, very few women (13%) relied on income from ecotourism jobs. Meanwhile, 18% of the men got their income through participation in ecotourism business activities. Contrary, 38% of the women obtained income from similar activities, suggesting that more women were becoming involved in venture creation activities in the local ecotourism industry. The findings from the interviews confirmed that women were actively involved in both formal and informal ecotourism business activities in areas like Hlabisa and Mtubatuba, although such activities were relatively low in Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana, partly due to lack of awareness and underdevelopment. Evidently, these results indicate that ecotourism plays a critical role in employment creation and poverty alleviation (Duma & Okem, 2017).

The above finding on more participation of women in ecotourism activities than men is not peculiar to UKDM. In Malaysia's Abai Village, women were actively involved in ecotourism and this empowered them economically (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2016). The relatively higher rate of participation among women in ecotourism activities (Figure 4.6) can also be explained by analysing the typology offered by Arias (2001) in Aldecua and Baron (2011), who maintain that women participate in ecotourism activities in two ways:

- **Women in business:** This category includes women who, owing to unforeseen circumstances (for instance, widowhood, death of a father, or husband's emigration) are unexpectedly prompted to embark on new entrepreneurial activities or take over existing ones in order to eke out a living. Such ventures tend to be survivalist in nature, with little emphasis being put on profit maximisation.
- **Business women:** This category includes women who are motivated to start and run their own businesses, independently. Many of these women venture into business following a conscious and rational decision inspired by the desire to succeed, make money and attain self-fulfilment.

Overall, these results are consistent with what other researchers say about the need to get local communities more involved in ecotourism activities to reduce poverty. Mbaiwa (2005) underlines the importance of empowering marginalised local communities through resource ownership, marketing, entrepreneurship and managerial skills to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism. Such initiatives should be underpinned by a desire to balance environmental conservation issues with sustainable livelihoods imperatives (Dunn, 2007) as part of poverty alleviation.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented and explained the profile of the participants within the context of the role of ecotourism in poverty alleviation. Evidently, these results show that a growing number of ecotourism beneficiaries come from child-headed and female-headed households, suggesting the need for more labour-intensive ecotourism initiatives to create enough employment opportunities for vulnerable groups. The next chapter reports on community participation in ecotourism activities in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana.

The next chapter presents the results on how ecotourism empowered local communities and eventually reduced poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District.

CHAPTER 6: THE ROLE OF ECOTOURISM PROJECTS IN COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT TO REDUCE POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results in line with the first objective of the study, which sought to establish whether ecotourism projects helped in empowering local communities and reducing poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District. This objective is crucial because the study primarily aimed at determining if ecotourism projects mitigated poverty and unemployment in this area. The results reported here were obtained from the four local municipalities of UKDM, namely: Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana.

6.2 Capacity building

Within the context of this study, capacity building refers to concerted effort designed to improve the knowledge, skills and capabilities of poor rural communities so that they can participate in and assume ownership of their own development. Examples of capacity-building initiatives include the building of technical, financial, business, political skills, as well as social and institutional capital needed to facilitate and promote ecotourism development (Merino, 2015).

An empirical study conducted by Lopez (2015) emphasises that capacity-building initiatives in rural settings should be based on proper analysis of the development needs and priorities of local communities. If implemented well, capacity-building interventions may enhance community development competences, self-efficacy, policies, behaviour change and strengthening of reciprocal relationships necessary to drive the implementation of ecotourism projects in rural areas (De Corby-Watson, 2018). It is on the basis of this logic that the study revealed that capacity-building initiatives in UKDM's ecotourism projects included the following:

6.2.1 Awareness building

This dimension involved the dissemination of the relevant information on ecotourism services to local communities. The information was disseminated in various ways, including holding meetings (imbizo) with local communities and distributing pamphlets in taxi ranks, post offices and wildlife offices. The meetings were attended by representatives of local municipalities and local chiefs (UMhlabuyalinga and Hlabisa). One programme official from Jozini described community awareness building efforts in ecotourism efforts as follows:

“The IDP is the most effective way of connecting the community not just with ecotourism projects but with the entire municipal service delivery process. IDP meetings also provide the opportunity for the municipality and community members to ask questions and to get information on available tourism projects” (Interview, programme official, Jozini Municipality).

The results regarding the building of community awareness on ecotourism benefits are consistent with Lekaota (2014) who found that the awareness of ecotourism benefits was slightly higher among the Ha Lejone, Lesotho compared to the relatively low perceptions about ecotourism benefits in Phelandaba. This was attributed to uneven distribution of information on ecotourism and lack of education and training of stakeholders and residents on the benefits of ecotourism.

6.2.2 Resource sharing and skills transfer

As part of the skills transfer process in the ecotourism industry, community members in each of the participating local municipalities were asked to indicate whether ecotourism enterprises in their areas had assisted them with training and development for them to be able to find jobs and to start their own ecotourism ventures as part of the South African Government’s Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment policy framework. The primary objective of this question was to find out if there were any skills development initiatives designed to support ecotourism initiatives at community level, given the challenges of poverty and unemployment in the UKDM. The data sets from the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana) revealed the following results:

6.2.2.1 Early childhood development (ECD) skills

Like all forms of business, ecotourism companies have a social responsibility towards the communities in which they operate. Building ECD skills is crucial in ensuring that teachers and practitioners provide quality services to children in elementary schools (Sharpley, 2014). The competencies of ECD teachers determine effective learning among children and their resultant success throughout the school system (Sheridan, 2009). As reflected in Figure 6.1 below, ECD services received very little from ecotourism companies in the UKDM.

Figure 6.1: Skills transfer to ECD workers

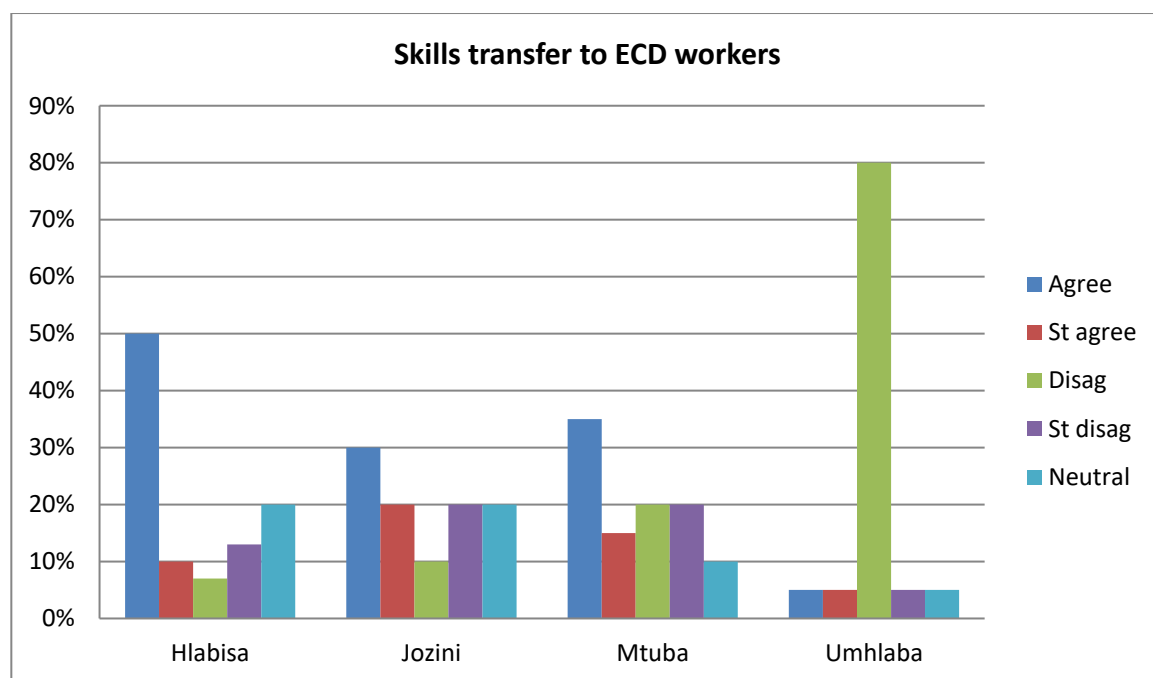


Figure 6.1 shows that only Hlabisa (50%) and Mtubatuba (35%) enterprises offered early childhood development services to ECD centres as part of their skills transfer efforts at the community level. This was part of corporate social investments (CSI), as opposed to direct investment in early childhood development services. This was also confirmed by some of the managerial employees in these enterprises during the semi-structured interview sessions in Hlabisa and Mtubatuba. Exactly 80% of the participants in UMhlabuyalingana denied having received early childhood development support services in their community. Thus, none of

the ecotourism enterprises in this area provided support to ECDs. This may be attributed to the fact that most of these enterprises generally commercialised their business activities as opposed to community development. This perception has to change if sustainable development has to be achieved through ecotourism in the UKDM.

The adverse finding that very little had been done by ecotourism enterprises to support skills transfer in the ECD sector contradicts the literature. Foong's (2018) study found that qualified educators in early childhood development programmes made a significant difference in providing quality education to young children, resulting in improved learning outcomes.

In their study of early childhood development services in South Africa, Mbarathi, Mthembu and Diga (2016) found unevenness in the provision of resources to ECD centres and programmes, which compromises the full potential for early childhood development to influence change in human development, especially for children in poor households.

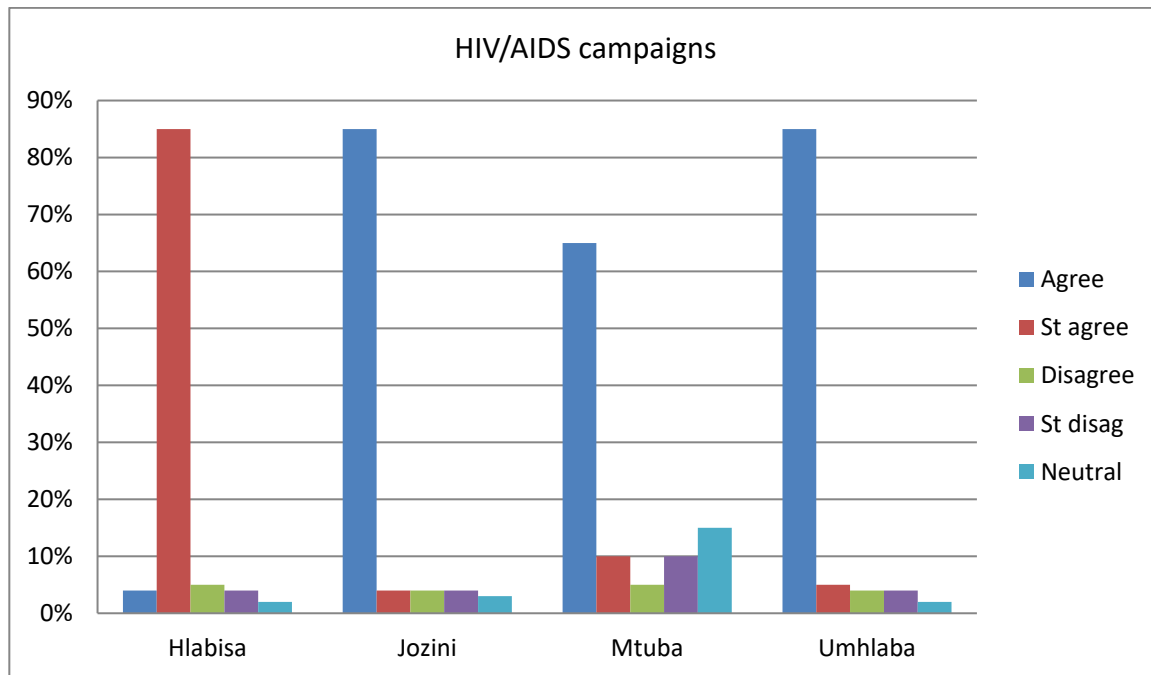
A study on the causes of inequality in South African early childhood development concluded that if ECD is to contribute to a more equitable future, it ought to avoid practices that merely privilege those children already positioned more powerfully by social and cultural capital, race, gender, age and access to quality education (Aubrey, 2016). Ensuring that children have access to quality ECD services is critical to the building of a strong foundation for the nutritional, healthcare, cognitive, and socio-emotional development of children. This lays sufficient groundwork for children to be able to enter school ready to learn, stay in school longer, reduce grade repetition, and achieve higher education levels that set them on the path to success (Gustafson-Wright, 2017). The following subsection presents the finding of the study on HIV/AIDS education at the community level.

6.2.2.2 Support for HIV/AIDS campaigns

In line with the South African Code of Good Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work (2012), which promotes a healthy and safe workplace environment, including the ecotourism industry, this study canvassed the views of community members regarding their participation in any campaign as part of HIV/AIDS education. Posing this question was critical as the HIV/AIDS pandemic poses huge social challenges highlighted in the UKDM's Integrated

Development Plan (2018). The data sets from the four local municipalities (Figure 6.2) confirm that ecotourism companies supported these initiatives at varying degrees.

Figure 6.2: HIV/AIDS campaigns in the community



These results in Figure 6.2 suggest that community members in all the four local municipalities had been informed and/or educated about HIV/AIDS with varying degrees of success. Surprisingly, the highest confirmation of HIV/AIDS education came from Jozini, where close to 85% of the participants (community members) confirmed that indeed they had been informed and/or educated about the dangers of HIV/AIDS. Equally, Hlabisa and UMhlabuyalingana had the highest number (85%) of community members who had been sensitised about HIV/AIDS; followed by Mtubatuba with 65%. Very few (10%) community members had negative experiences of HIV/AIDS education campaigns across the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude, a clear indication that the coverage was relatively good here. Overall, these results show that ecotourism projects played a significant role in raising awareness about HIV/AIDS in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. This was also confirmed by some officials during semi-structured interviews, particularly in Hlabisa and Jozini, where it was generally agreed that partnerships between local municipalities, wildlife management services and ecotourism companies provided the much-needed resources to

tackle HIV/AIDS challenges in the UKDM. One participant summed up the matter as follows:

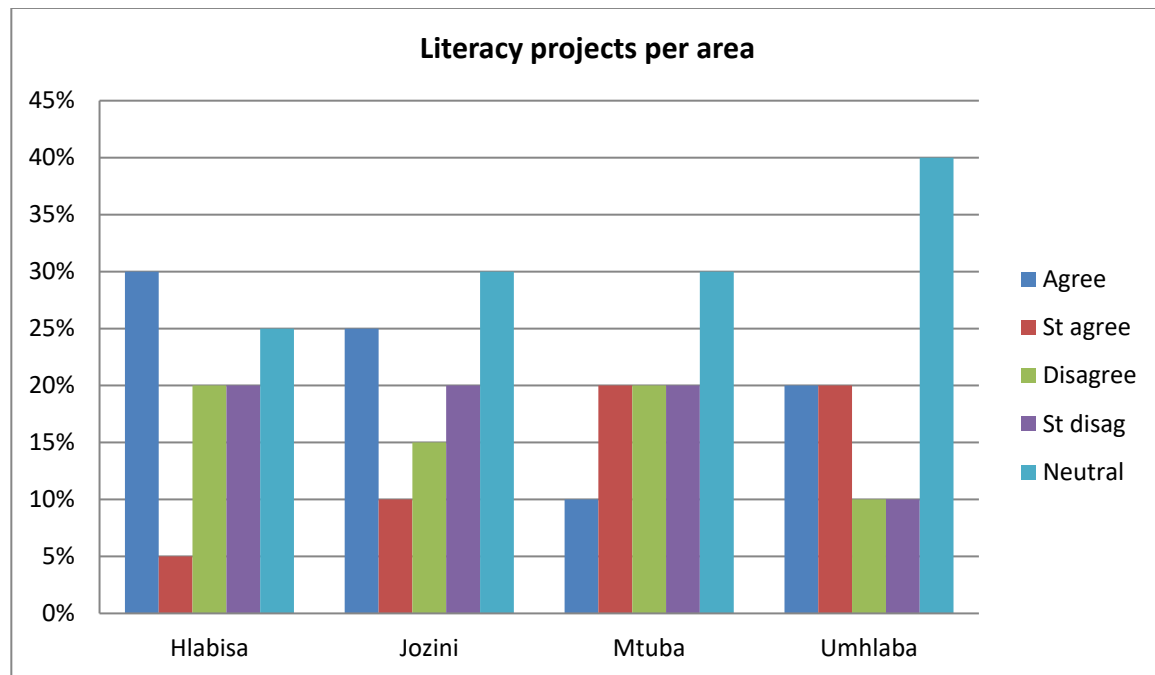
“Tourism develops our communities in various ways, including socio-economic issues. HIV/AIDS affect workers, the community, the youth and children; so, people need to be aware of these things. Thus, ecotourism provides the platform for our people to learn how to protect themselves against the HIV/AIDS pandemic”.

These results contradict the findings of a study by Teweldemedhin (2017), which found that of the 108 ecotourism companies sampled in Namibia, none had an effective workplace programme meant to combat HIV/AIDS; while a few had some undocumented HIV/AIDS management activities. Many HIV/AIDS management activities were centred on the World Aids Day. This was attributed to budgetary constraints, and the perception that HIV/AIDS management is the responsibility of the Government of Namibia. The study further revealed that within the Namibian tourism sector, including ecotourism, 3, 840 employees were HIV positive, of which 2, 266, which translates to 59% were female. This study reiterates that employees in the ecotourism industry are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS; thus, ecotourism enterprises must strengthen their HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns to reduce the devastating impact of the disease on workers. Below are the community responses on literacy projects or adult education.

6.2.2.3 Community literacy projects

Given the emphasis put on life-long learning in both the National Qualifications Framework (2008) and the National Skills Development Plan 2030, it became vital for the study to determine whether or not ecotourism companies supported basic literacy projects in their respective communities. As was the case with ECD, the data sets from the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Mtubatuba, Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana) show that these efforts were generally low across these municipalities.

Figure 6.3: Literacy projects/adult basic education



Taken together, the results presented in Figure 6.3 indicate that very few (less than 30%) community members across the four local municipalities of UKDM had witnessed the provision of literacy projects by ecotourism enterprises operating in their areas. Overall, community-based literacy projects were below 40% across the participating local municipalities with the exception of Hlabisa, where some ecotourism companies reportedly sponsored netball and soccer in local schools, providing uniforms and supporting under-resourced schools with learning materials. This was confirmed by some managers and owners of ecotourism ventures during interviews in Jozini, thus:

“Many people in this place do not have formal education. So the challenge is trying to accommodate them, to help them learn and grow, to understand their work and that takes time. So you always try to educate and mentor them on the job. Sometimes it works but sometimes it does not because some people just look for money and not skills. That is the problem”.

To some extent, the results in Figure 6.3 show that very little had been done by ecotourism enterprises to promote community literacy in the UKDM. This finding contradicts the literature which depicts education and training as important considerations in rural areas since

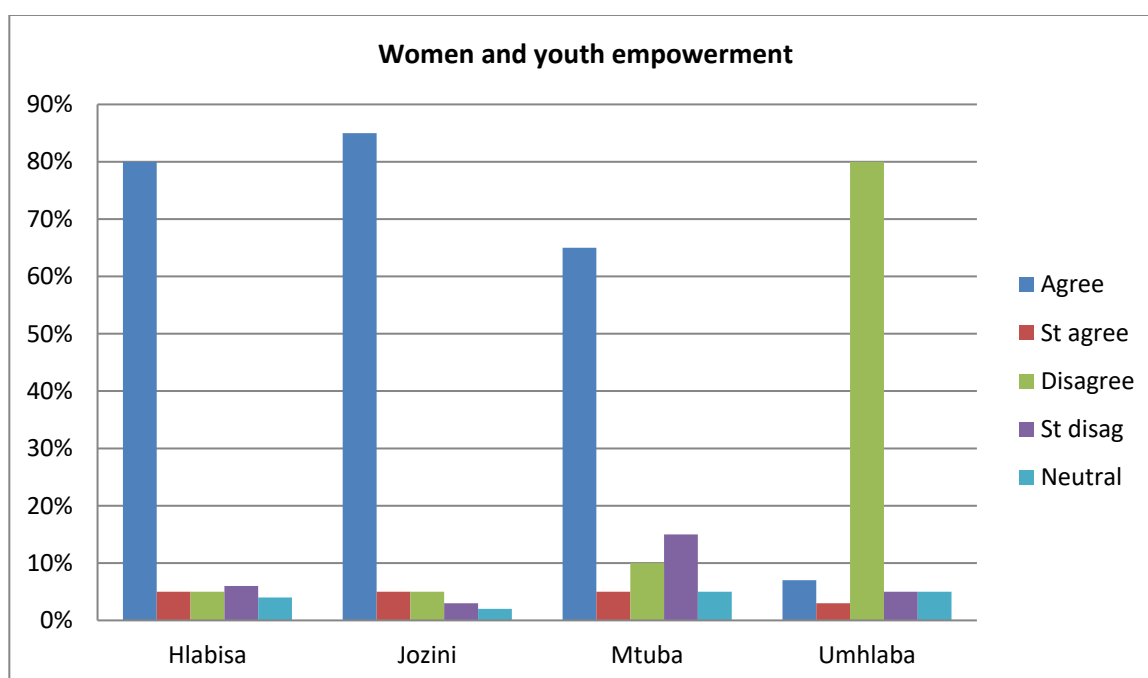
these communities are still characterised by high levels of unemployment and poverty, low skills levels and a heavy reliance on natural resources (Snyman, 2014). Snyman's (2014) study also highlights the importance of formal education and livelihood diversification, which may help to increase the benefits accruing to local communities if they are included in ecotourism projects. The data sets in Figure 6.4 show women and youth development/empowerment in ecotourism projects.

Empirical studies show that supporting life-long learning initiatives at community level opens up opportunities for strengthening social capital, improving social cohesion and promoting cross-cultural dialogue, while promoting social inclusion (Downes, 2014; Degu, 2016).

6.2.2.4 Women and youth empowerment

Women and the youth constitute a part of vulnerable groups; especially regarding issues of poverty, unemployment, economic deprivation and social exclusion (Rajamani, 2013; Mrema, 2015; Jugmohan, 2017). It was on the basis of this reality that the participants were asked if ecotourism contributed to the empowerment of women and youths in their respective areas. The results presented in Figure 6.4 below suggest that participants had both positive and negative experiences on these issues.

Figure 6.4: Women and youth development/empowerment

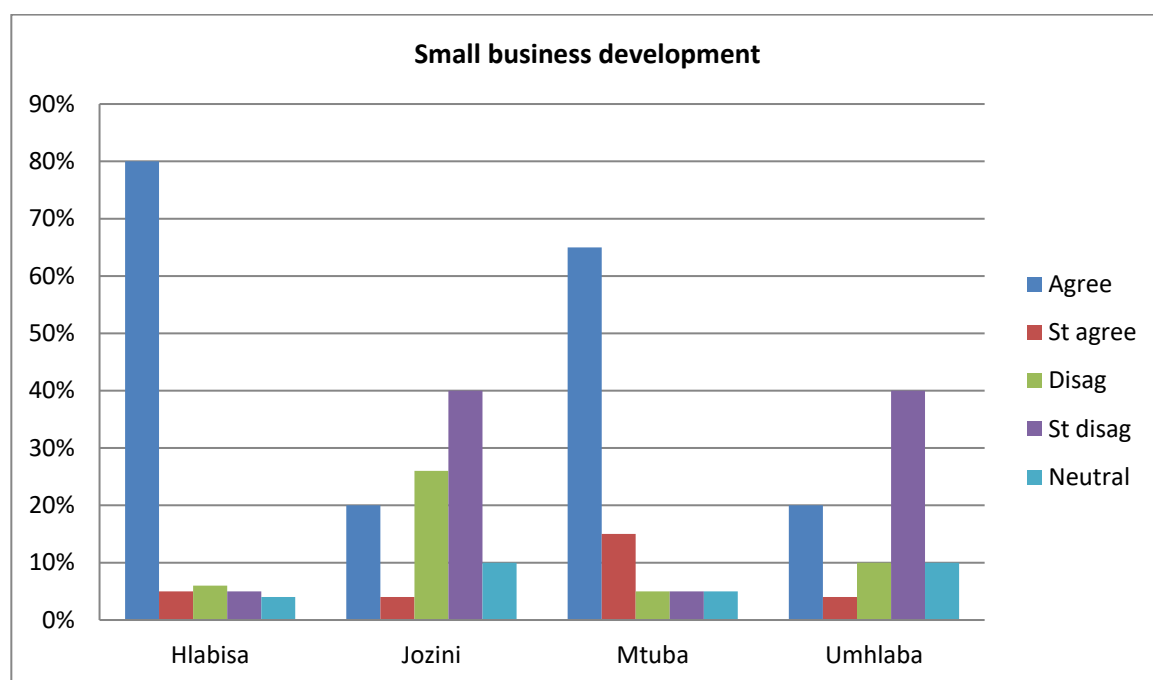


Hlabisa and Mtubatuba had significant numbers (80% and 65%, respectively) of community members who confirmed that ecotourism empowered women and youths through in their areas. Strikingly, Jozini dominated the other three local municipalities regarding the empowerment of women and youths through ecotourism projects, with 85%. This is despite the fact that this area lagged behind in terms of the scale and intensity of ecotourism projects. In contrast, the majority (80%) of community members in Umhlabuyalingana disagreed with this statement, suggesting that empowerment efforts for women and the youths were probably inadequate and/or intermittent in this area. However, one owner of an ecotourism enterprise in Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana) described how local ecotourism businesses empowered youths in the area. The following was said:

“We have realised the challenge associated with accommodating young people in the ecotourism industry so that they can acquire knowledge and skills that increase their participation in employment and business opportunities. We use both education and training to inform young people about nature conservation, water resource management and fishing skills. We also create temporary jobs where we train young people on how to clean and paint small boats used by tourists in the area.”

In some way, these results replicate the findings of a related study conducted by Nyazema (2013), which found that efforts had been made to promote the empowerment of local people in ecotourism projects. This study further notes the progress recorded by hotels in human resource development, although compliance levels did not meet the requirements of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). On enterprise development, the engagement of ecotourism hotels with small Black-owned enterprises was slow both quantitatively and qualitatively. Hotel management indicated that the implementation of tourism charter was problematic, as tourism straddles several industries with different certification requirements. The results, in respect of small business development opportunities, were as shown in Figure 6.5 below.

Figure 6.5: Small business development



According to Figure 6.5, Hlabisa and Mtubatuba had the highest numbers of community members who had received more support services in small business ventures than the other two local municipalities (80% and 65%, respectively). UMhlabuyalingana and Jozini had the lowest number (20%) of small business development services rendered to local communities. The majority of participants in these two local municipalities had negative experiences of small business support services. The findings in Figure 6.5 corroborate the point made by

some programme officials and project managers during semi-structured interviews that the potential of ecotourism had not been fully developed in these areas; hence the dominance by few large enterprises. One official from Mtubatuba explained the problem as follows:

“Due to illiteracy, transport problems and lack of information on how to use ecotourism for self-development, many community members are oblivious of the potential ecotourism has in terms of improving their lives. Another challenge is that ecotourism projects are seasonal and short-lived. So, opportunities are only available during peak times when tourists visit the area.”

To some extent, these results on the limited support for local ecotourism SMMEs are corroborated by McLaughlin's (2011) study which established that major barriers to paddle-based recreation ventures in Canada's Paddle-Based Recreation in St. Lawrence Islands National Park and Environs was partly hampered by lack of support and collaboration among local tourism businesses. Owners of these ventures faced many challenges, including lack of property rights, lack of knowledge on how to market their ecotourism services, and inadequate infrastructure. Clearly, this situation contradicts one of the most fundamental principles of ecotourism, which seeks to promote local economic development for the benefit of rural communities. Ecotourism, argues Akin (2015), offers an opportunity to develop small business and home-based business development skills locally.

Wood (2010) posits that the Ecuador experience indicates that assistance given to community-based ecotourism ventures must not be undertaken without considering the full business planning cycle for any business venture, including an analysis of the investment needs of the business venture, market potential, competition, transportation time, food and beverage availability, logistical concerns for making the venture viable, potential for partnerships, joint promotions, joint ventures, and other vital links to the commercial sector of the tourism industry. Presented below is data on training and induction in ecotourism projects.

6.2.3 Training and induction

In St. Lucia (Mtubatuba) and Thanda Safari (Hlabisa), community members recruited to serve in ecotourism ventures went through induction and training courses to help them find permanent jobs and/or start their own ecotourism ventures in future. This training was also confirmed by women's groups involved in formal trading activities in St. Lucia; the women indicated that they had been trained by local ecotourism enterprises on a range of business skills, including financial planning and control; bookkeeping; inventory management, and customer service. In Sodwana Bay, (UMhlabuyalingana) local ecotourism enterprises and wildlife management services educated and trained young people on nature conservation as part of their social responsibility programmes.

These findings dovetail with the literature, which reveals that community education and empowerment through capacity building strengthens the ability of communities to fully participate in the ecotourism industry by engaging in alternative income generating activities that provide revenue for the conservation of the community's natural assets and the upliftment of the community's quality of life. Despite the differences in both scope and intensity of the training provided, most of the ecotourism enterprises confirmed that some form of on-the-job-training had been provided to their employees. One ecotourism business owner described the situation as follows:

“It is because of the (labour) laws that people are equipped with the basic skills they need to do their jobs; otherwise the business risks losing customers as the industry is a very competitive one, with international tourists coming into the area. Some of our staff members have formal qualifications, but this can hamper the start-up of ecotourism companies which cannot afford high labour costs. So, they leave quickly in search of better jobs with higher chances of advancing their careers.”

6.2.4 Local sourcing of fruits and vegetables

In Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana) and St. Lucia (Mtubatuba), ecotourism lodges and hotels sourced organic fruits and vegetables from local community-based producers at market price quoted in United States dollars and Euros. Products that were sourced from the

community included avocados, tomatoes, cabbage, banana, oranges and pine apples. Local traders also had access to a foreign exchange facility specifically designed to facilitate trade between international tourists and local entrepreneurs.

The above findings contradict a recent study, which found that most of the edible items such as meat and meat products, groceries, vegetables, beverages, et cetera, were imported from India, as Bhutan communities did not have the capacity to produce these items which are necessary to ecotourism. Consequently, there was an outflow of capital from the Bhutan Community to India. Contrary to that, community members in Mtubatuba were able to supply ecotourism enterprises with fresh organic fruits and vegetables.

In analysing community empowerment in ecotourism projects, it may be helpful to evaluate the results against the four dimensions of community empowerment suggested by the literature (Chapter 2). This is achieved in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1: Community empowerment in ecotourism projects

Empowerment dimension	Description	Findings
Economic empowerment	Income and employment; for example, economic benefits, local ownership of businesses, SMME development, management, management of financial resources, vision, goals, strategies, marketing, integrated planning, economic benefits, capacity building, training and entrepreneurship/skills development, equal distribution of land among	A few pockets of excellence were identified in Hlabisa; Jozini, UMhlabuyalingana and Mtubatuba. Examples include stable income from employment; for example, R2, 500-R5, 000 and SMME activities; for example, R6, 000-R10, 000 for formal traders and R100-R650 for informal traders Entrepreneurial education and training efforts were randomly done and limited

	residents/equity and community assets.	in scope, focusing on basic SMME skills such as financial planning and marketing.
Psychological empowerment	Local community's pride and self-esteem as reflected in participation, involvement, collaboration and educational activities which aim to identify self needs	Across the four local municipalities, community pride was diminished by lack of consultation and weak participation mechanisms
Social empowerment	Community cohesion, participation in decision-making processes and structures; enhanced networking activities, meaningful interactions between ecotourism stakeholders, quality of life, tourism resource conservation and active involvement of women in ecotourism development initiatives	Community participation in decision-making was only confined to the general integrated planning process and not necessarily through the LED which included ecotourism. The current forms of participation are sporadic and inconsistent across the four local municipalities.
Political empowerment	equitable balance of power to enable meaningful participation and formation of ecotourism development partnerships with local communities and visible support from local and	There were tensions among the key stakeholders in ecotourism; for example, community and ecotourism developers due to perceived imbalances in power relations, with tourism

	national government institutions along visionary and passionate leadership	operators and formal traders enjoying more power than informal traders, who felt excluded and marginalised.
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The analysis in Table 6.1 demonstrates that community empowerment in ecotourism initiatives had been partially achieved and that there were shortcomings in the strategies or approaches used to empower local communities across the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude. The power relations remained fragmented and uneven, prompting many informal traders to break the law and sell directly to passing tourists even in prohibited areas. With the exception of St. Lucia (Mtubatuba) and Hluhluwe (Hlabisa), interactions between the various stakeholders were characterised by minimal contacts and sporadic exchange of information; this did very little to improve community empowerment in ecotourism projects. Community empowerment in ecotourism was also confirmed by one of the ecotourism entrepreneurs in Mbazwana (UMhlabuyalingana) who said that:

“The community and local chiefs contribute towards ecotourism development in the area. Ecotourism projects cannot be implemented without the blessing of the local chief and his community. As business, we work closely with local chiefs to bring tourism services to the community, including skills development and self-employment opportunities.”

Overall, these findings show that skills transfer partially took place in all the local municipalities. From a community perspective, this was considered insufficient and less helpful, given the relatively high levels of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment in all the four local municipalities. The literature emphasises the vitality of community empowerment as large segments of the rural communities are grappling with extreme poverty compounded by high unemployment levels, with otherwise very limited options from which to derive an income (Van Wijk et al., 2015, cited in Bob, 2016).

6.2.5 Income-generating opportunities

The question required community members to indicate whether or not they had been encouraged to (a) apply for jobs in ecotourism companies; (b) start tourism businesses; for example, cooperatives (c) partner with big ecotourism companies locally; (d) get information about Black economic empowerment opportunities in the ecotourism tourism sector and (e) get advice on how to access finance for business start-up. The results were as follows:

Figure 6.6: Encouraged to apply for jobs in ecotourism companies

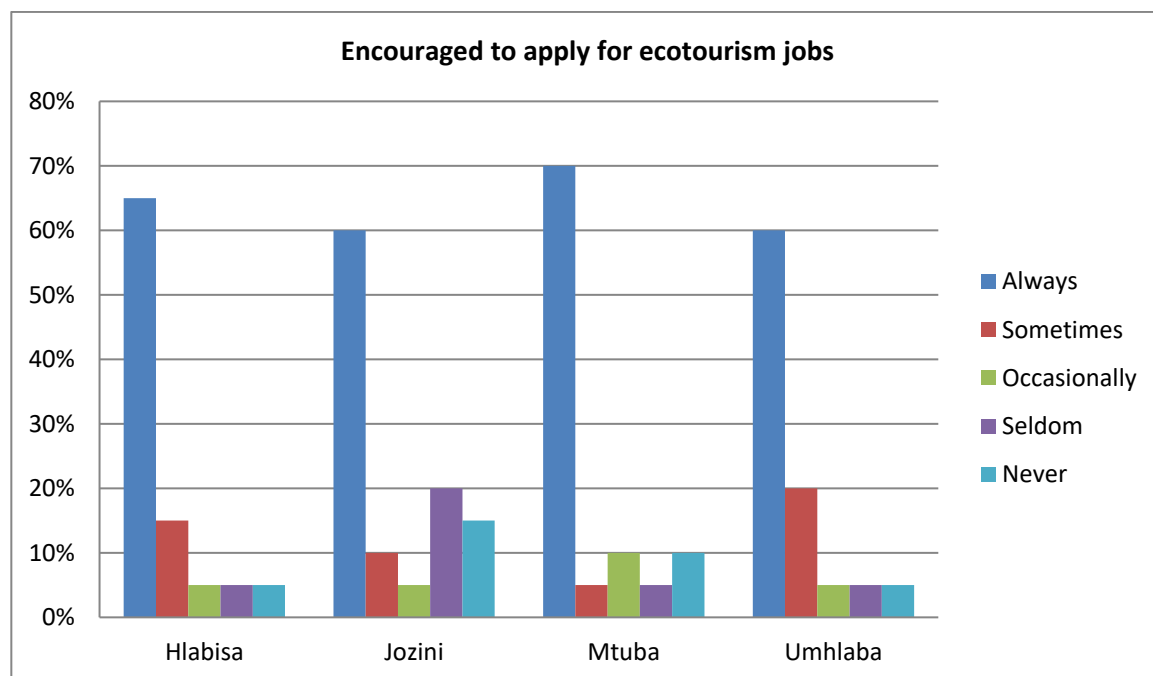


Figure 6.6 reports that community members in Hlabisa and UMhlabuyalingana local municipalities were always encouraged to apply for jobs in the ecotourism industry. Similar results were reported in Mtubatuba, where approximately 70% of the locals confirmed their having been encouraged to look for jobs in the ecotourism sector. Meanwhile, UMhlabuyalingana had a significantly high number (20%) of locals who were sometimes encouraged to find employment opportunities in this sector. Therefore, there was no consistency in communicating the available job opportunities to community members in this area. Furthermore, very few (10%) of the locals across the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana) had never been encouraged to find jobs in the

ecotourism services operating in their areas. To some extent, the results in Figure 6.6 demonstrate that local municipalities in the UKDM were generally aware of the need to reduce unemployment in their communities. One project manager in Hlabisa described his efforts in disseminating employment information to community members as follows:

“We basically work with the local business chamber to alert community members about opportunities in the tourism industry. We also discuss these issues with transport operators and wildlife management services as they also interact directly with community members. So, there are many ways of keeping the community informed about tourism issues; these include radio stations, newspapers and television.”

The above result indicates that the majority of community members in the four local municipalities of UKDM had not been actively encouraged to find employment opportunities in ecotourism projects, this negates the findings of similar studies (Snyman, 2014) which established that if community members are supported and encouraged to find jobs, they may later use the income earned from such activities to buy goods and services from other community members, thus distributing the income to other households in the village. As a market-based conservation strategy, ecotourism strengthens household economies and improves the attitudes of local people towards conservation efforts (Das & Huissen, 2015).

Furthermore, limited efforts to encourage community members to apply for jobs in ecotourism projects contradict the findings of a research conducted by Mofokeng (2018), which established that employment equity, as an essential component of the BBBEE, is crucial in ensuring meaningful transfer of skills in order to adequately involve Black people in the operational, professional and executive decision-making processes in their employment entities. Allowing Black people active involvement in management fosters racial diversity and the introduction of novel and innovative business ideas (Smit, Cronje & Brevies, 2011 in Mofokeng, 2018).

6.3 Reducing poverty and unemployment

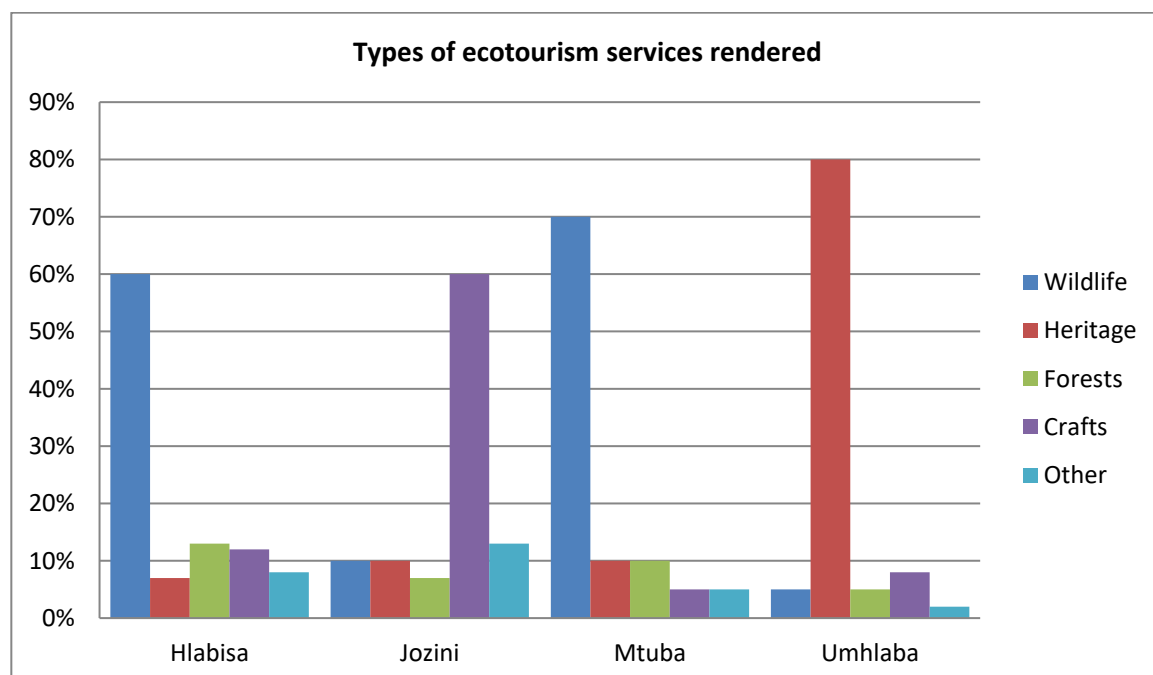
It is imperative to establish whether ecotourism can reduce poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District. This is crucial because the study primarily aimed at determining if

ecotourism projects were helping to mitigate poverty and unemployment. To address this issue, the study focused on the following:

6.3.1 Types of ecotourism services available

The question sought to determine the type of products and services offered in UMkhanyakude's ecotourism sector. The obtained data sets indicate that the ecotourism services and business models found in each of the four local municipalities was largely shaped by the kind of natural resources available in that area. In other words, community members chose their business models on the basis of demand, sensing what ecotourists wanted and then packaged their service offering according to what is popular on the market. The results are revealed in Figure 6.7 below:

Figure 6. 7: Types of ecotourism services rendered



According to the results in Figure 6.7, Hlabisa and Mtubatuba had more (80%) wildlife services than the rest of the local municipalities. In Jozini, crafts services were the most common forms of ecotourism; while UMhlabuyalingana dominated with heritage sites (80%). Overall, these results suggest that ecotourism services remain largely underdeveloped

in areas like Jozini and Umhlabuyalingana. This concern was also confirmed by programme officials and project managers during focus group discussions. Faced with a largely underdeveloped ecotourism industry, local communities in Jozini relied heavily on crafts as the major entrepreneurial activity though it was largely small-scale and survivalist in nature. In UMhlabuyalingana, 80% of the entrepreneurial activities occurred at the Isimangaliso Heritage Site where mostly women sold crafts and related goods to tourists. Evidently, these results show that entrepreneurial activities in ecotourism were severely limited, which made some households more vulnerable to poverty and unemployment. Describing the nature and distribution of ecotourism services in UKDM, one programme official from Jozini indicated that:

“Our areas (municipalities) are endowed with different, precious natural resources and species which then determine viable business options to be promoted in each area. Hlabisa and Mtubatuba are blessed with wild animals which attract a large number of tourists each year. If you go to UMhlabuyalingana, you find that the Isimangaliso World Heritage Site is also a major draw-card for tourists.”

The above finding on the modes of ecotourism found in the UKDM is consistent with the findings of other researchers. For instance, Jing (2011) established that ecotourism activities are based on ecological culture, ecological technology, ecological products, content and civilisation. For these services to be demanded by ecotourists, they must be of high quality. Quite often, however, quality is neglected in the provision of these services (Yusof, 2014).

Nsukwini and Bob (2016) also found that community members living near ecotourism sites partially benefited from ecotourism activities. The results revealed that the Nompondo Community benefited in various ways, though they were not satisfied. Members of the community were allowed access to products such as meat, thatching grass, firewood and water. They also enjoyed positive relations with the management and staff at the parks as well as selling their crafts and cultural activities to tourists. Nonetheless, substantial improvements are necessary to ensure that the community benefits more from ecotourism initiatives.

6.3.2 Encouraged to start ecotourism business

As indicated in Chapter 2, one of the fundamental requirements of the BBBEE legislation is to ensure that previously disadvantaged South African communities have access to business opportunities, including ownership of equity in bigger companies. Thus, the study elicited the views of community members in Hlabisa, Mtubatuba, Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana local municipalities to discuss their experiences on this issue. The results were as follows.

Figure 6.8: Encouraged to start ecotourism business

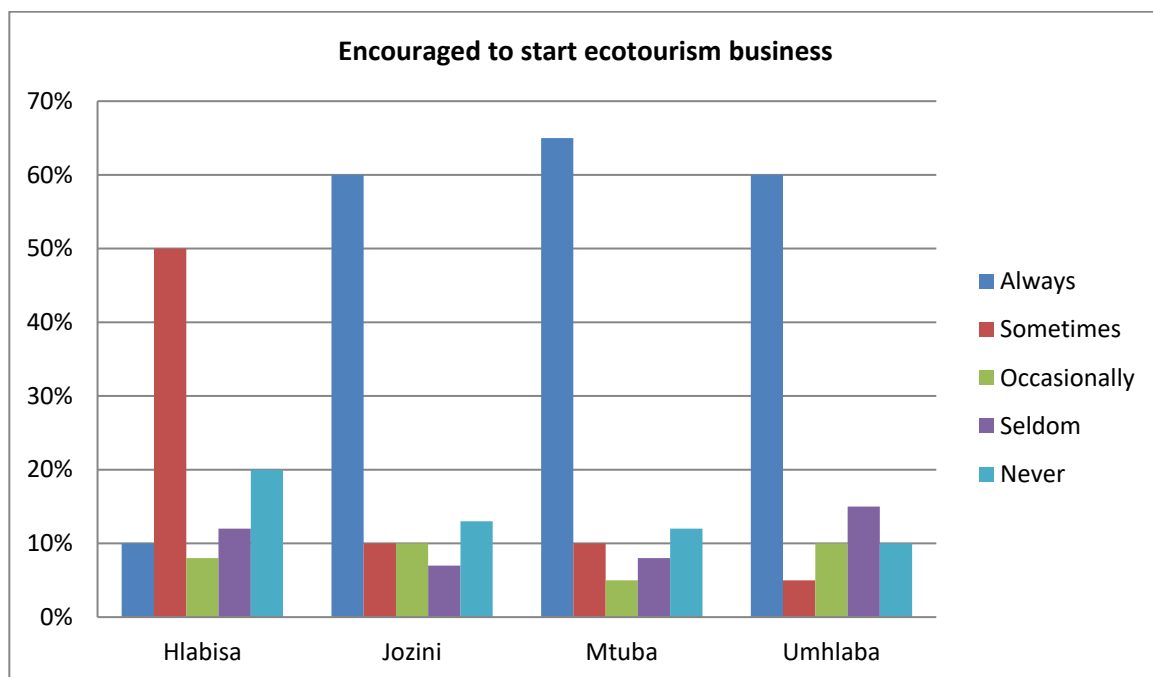


Figure 6.8 indicates that the majority of the community members in Mtubatuba (65%), UMhlabuyalingana (60%) and Jozini (60%) had always been encouraged to start their own ecotourism ventures. Contrary, Hlabisa had the lowest number (10%) of community members who had been encouraged to start such businesses. At the same time, the number of local people who had never been encouraged to start their own businesses was relatively high (20%) in Jozini, compared to the other two local municipalities with 10% each. Meanwhile, the number of locals who were sometimes encouraged to start their own ecotourism ventures was relatively high (50%) in Hlabisa compared to the other local municipalities, where only 10% had been encouraged to do this. During the interviews, one programme official in Mtubatuba local municipality indicated that:

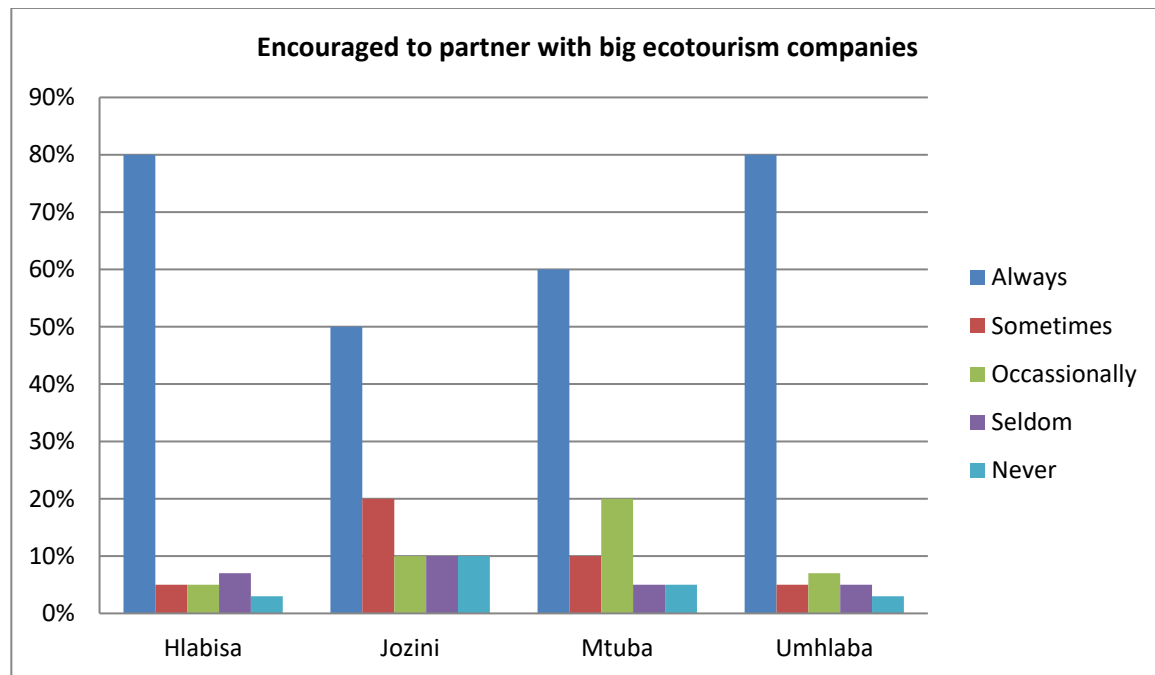
“We are not only supporting established small businesses, but we also support people who engage in informal trading activities to earn incomes in order to support their families. These informal traders need to be respected and given the necessary support for them to be able to grow their businesses. Currently, we encourage them to use the available opportunities side-by-side with established small businesses, and tourists buy from all businesses irrespective of size”.

The results on the encouragement of local people, especially the youth to participate in ecotourism venture creation activities are consistent with the conclusion reached by Neleman and de Castro (2015) in Brazil, where it was established that the youth face distinct daily struggles and their aspirations differ from those of the older generation. Therefore, opportunities and constraints in ecotourism have a direct impact on their lives. On the other hand, the fact that there were few business opportunities for women and the youth in the UKDM suggests a negative impact on the formation of capital assets in these groups; including human capital (skills, health, education, capacity; financial capital (money and savings) and social capital (networks and institutions). Below are the findings on whether community members had been encouraged to collaborate with established ecotourism entities.

6.3.3 Encouraged to partner with big ecotourism companies

Enterprise development was promoted through incubation and partnerships form part of the BBEE policy framework across all the economic sectors, including ecotourism. Given this background, the study assessed participants’ views on whether they had been encouraged by their municipalities or tourism promotion agencies to form partnerships with established companies in the sector. As indicated in Figure 6.9, there were mixed reactions to this question. While some participants confirmed receiving encouragement from their municipalities, others reported that they had never been encouraged to partner with big ecotourism companies for them to learn about ecotourism services.

Figure 6.9: Encouraged to partner with big ecotourism companies



Interestingly, the results in Figure 6.9 show that most (80%) community members in Hlabisa and UMhlabuyalingana had always been encouraged to work with big ecotourism companies in their areas; followed by Mtubatuba with 60%. This is understandable, as these areas are often described as among the most attractive tourist destinations in KwaZulu-Natal due to their spectacular natural beaches (Sodwana Bay in UMhlabuyalingana) and the “Big Five” (Hlabisa). In Jozini, the number of community members who were sometimes encouraged to work with big tourism companies was significantly high at 20%. Only 20% of community members across the four local municipalities had never been encouraged to work with big ecotourism businesses in their areas. In Umhlabuyalingana, project managers reported that partnerships between small local enterprises and established ecotourism occurred in the Isimangaliso World Heritage Site in Sodwana Bay. Here, some small-scale local ecotourism ventures collaborated with big businesses to maintain and service boats; supporting nature conservation literacy projects for young children and training youths on surfing to keep them away from crime and other social ills. Overall, this suggests that the four local municipalities have attempted to promote collaboration between small and big ecotourism enterprises in the UKDM, although more effort is needed to ensure that community members understand the financial benefits of such partnerships. In Hlabisa, one project manager said:

“For small businesses to grow, they need the support of bigger ones, so we encourage the local business chamber to mentor and assist budding entrepreneurs in all aspects of tourism, not just ecotourism. We have started to see the fruits as many people are starting to engage in formal and informal tourism activities to improve their earnings.”

The growing emphasis on the need for partnership between local and big ecotourism companies resonates with the findings of a research conducted by Odede (2015), which revealed that in Kenya’s Kisumu County, communities that once had very little industrial experience and misguided management systems are now flourishing owing to the employment of local people. By involving the local people in these empowerment programmes, and when a direct stimulus is returned to the community, rather than having the profits sent elsewhere, these programmes have proven to be very successful. Odede (2015) concludes that where local communities have control over ecotourism activities, community-based ecotourism can effectively alleviate poverty in rural areas.

6.3.4 Informed about BBEE opportunities

As indicated in Chapter 2 (Subsection 2.7.6), equitable access to economic empowerment opportunities is one of the key strategies facilitating entry and participation of previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa’s mainstream economy. In terms of the Tourism BBEE Charter (2005), tourism organisations can achieve this goal through the implementation of several measures, including ownership, strategic management, employment equity, skills development, preferential procurement, as well as enterprise and social development. The implementation of the BBEE policy is therefore mandatory for companies in all sectors of the economy, including ecotourism (Nyazema, 2013; Mofokong, 2018). It was on the basis of this understanding that the study canvassed the views of community members to establish if they had been informed about BBEE opportunities. The results from the four local municipalities of UKDM are shown in Figure 6.10. Apparently, the participants had different experiences regarding BBEE information.

Figure 6.10: Informed about BBBEE opportunities in ecotourism

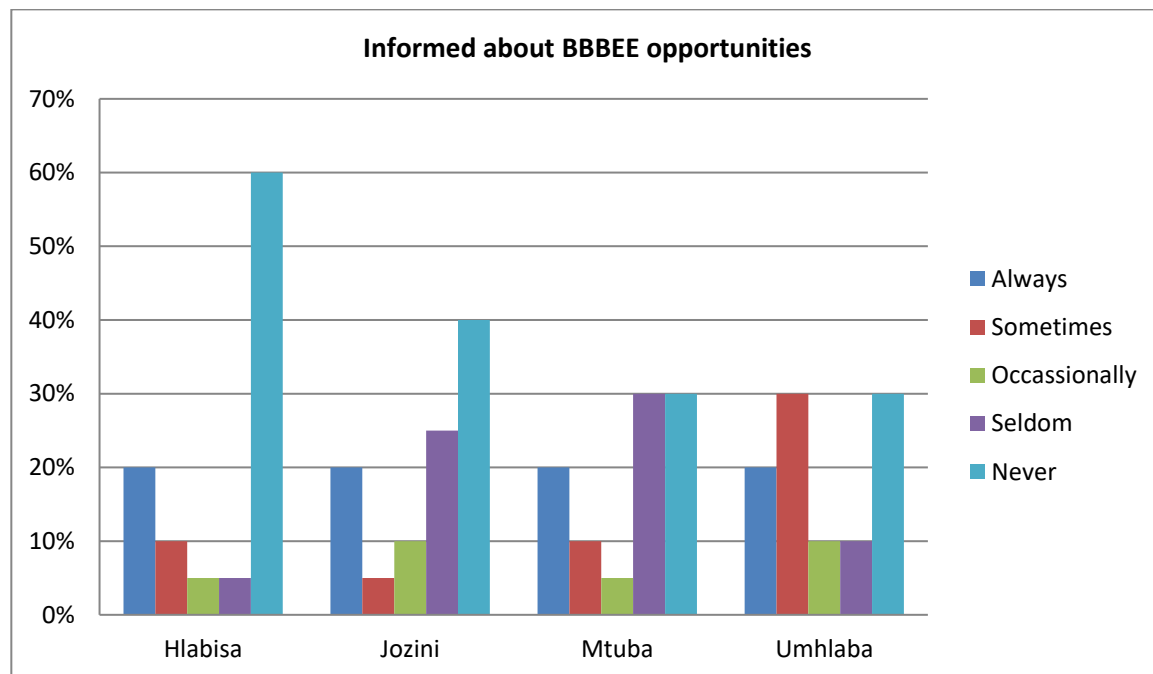


Figure 6.10 shows that approximately 20% of the community members across the four local municipalities of UKDM had always been informed about the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment opportunities in the ecotourism sector. In addition, a significant number (40%) of these participants had only been occasionally informed about the BBBEE opportunities in their areas. However, the results in Figure 6.10 also show that the majority (80%) of community members in these four municipalities had never been informed about these opportunities in their respective areas. This finding is suggestive of the gaps in the manner in which ecotourism services are packaged and communicated to local communities in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalinga. This also implies lack of a standard procedure for conveying such information to local people. In the absence of a standardised communication framework, community members in remote areas hardly access the relevant ecotourism information in these local municipalities. According to one programme official in UMhlabuyalingana:

“The challenge is long distance coupled with transport shortages. People have to travel long distances to get business-related information. Even attending IDP meetings poses problems

because some areas have no electricity and road infrastructure. So, people who are keen to start ecotourism businesses often use friends and relatives to get (BBBEE) information. The information is there but the problem is how to get it to the community because of the constraints I have just mentioned.”

On the positive side, the results in Figure 6.10 concur with the literature on the positive impacts of ecotourism on local communities. For instance, ecotourism has brought financial resources to poverty-stricken areas worldwide. With the right effort and adequate planning, ecotourism may decrease the world’s poverty levels, increase education levels and create jobs (Pinsof & Sanhaji, 2009). In Kenya, empowerment initiatives were diversified to ensure the empowerment of women in all aspects of ecotourism; such as business management, leadership, customer care, driving skills, structured skills identification and fling programme for female entrepreneurs and the provision of temporary jobs to young girls to facilitate their entry into the ecotourism industry (Odede, 2015).

On the contrary, Mofokeng’s (2018) study established the factors hindering the active participation of local communities in BBBEE opportunities in the ecotourism sector. These include the negative attitude exhibited by Black people towards the tourism sector; thus, tourism is considered a ‘White peoples’ thing; lack of entrepreneurial skills, high entry costs; for example, the material resources required to acquire ownership are expensive; low literacy levels among rural communities; access to opportunities benefit the politically connected Black people; and corruption within the tourism industry.

In another recent study, Bogopane (2017) attributes the failure of the BBBEE interventions in district municipalities to a number of internal factors, including lack of clear responsibilities, lack of accountability for the implementation of BBBEE programmes; and the inability of managers at district level to establish the relevant and adequate BBBEE policies, plans, strategies and procedures for the entire district and this contributed negatively to the functionality and performance of the BBBEE initiatives. In the case study, ecotourism was reflected only in local economic development plans and IDPs of the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana).

The findings reveal that management’s capacity to enhance the functionality and performance of the BBBEE initiatives could not be easily ascertained due to the fact that the

responsibilities and accountability pertaining to the implementation of these initiatives were non-existent. With regard to the adequacy and/or inadequacy of the BBBEE policies, plans, strategies, and procedures, it was established that managers in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality failed to establish the relevant and adequate BBBEE policies, plans, strategies, and procedures for the entire District and thus negatively affecting the functionality and performance of BBBEE.

The finding affirming that ecotourism contributed to the reduction of unemployment and poverty in the UKDM is corroborated by a similar study undertaken by Abdullah (2015) in Malaysia's Kuala Tahan National Park. His study found that on average, 47% of the average monthly income of villagers was generated from ecotourism-related activities. The highest percentage was from villagers' engagement as tour guides. The income from these sources accounted for 13% of the household income. In addition, ecotourism-related retail stores or restaurants also significantly contributed to the average monthly household income at 10%. The incidence of poverty among the households in the village was 4% in 2014 compared to 3.4 among rural Malaysian households in 2012. Drawing on these results, Abdullah's (2015) study concluded that the income received from forestry and ecotourism indeed reduced poverty among local households.

6.4 Measuring the impacts of ecotourism on poverty alleviation

This section demonstrates the extent to which ecotourism has reduced poverty and unemployment in the UKDM. In addressing this issue, the study measured four variables in the quantitative dimension of the study. These included: (a) job creation, which averaged 95% across the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana); (b) Income whose aggregate amounted to 72% across the four local municipalities; (c) skills transfer, which totalled 30% and entrepreneurship, which gave a combined total of 58.7% across the four municipalities. These results are also consistent with the findings of a recent research conducted by the KZN Department of Health, which showed that the status of economically employed persons in the UKDM stood at 41.4%, compared to the provincial rate of 57.7% (UMkhanyakude District Health Plan, 2018-2019).

From these figures, it can be deduced that to a larger extent, ecotourism is contributing towards the reduction of poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. Thus, ecotourism projects had a significant positive impact on sustainable livelihoods in the UKDM. Overall, these figures show a positive trend pointing to a gradual improvement in poverty alleviation in the UKDM. This may help contribute to the reduction of the provincial poverty rate of 36% (The KwaZulu-Natal Province: Socio-Economic Review and Outlook for 2019-2020). This gradual improvement in household income from ecotourism activities holds promise for UKDM as the 2017 Provincial Population Statistics show that household income for the entire KwaZulu-Natal Province stood at 40.2% in 2019 (The KwaZulu-Natal Province Socio-Economic Review and Outlook for 2019-2020).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter showed that despite the severe constraints in financial resources and lack of education and skills in the UMkhanyakude community, efforts had been made to empower local communities for them to participate in and contribute to their own development in ecotourism projects. The empowerment interventions ranged from awareness campaigns, skills development, and collaboration to local sourcing. This chapter also demonstrated the manner in which ecotourism contributed towards the reduction of poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District. The overall analysis revealed that ecotourism partially contributed to the eradication of poverty and unemployment in the area and that the degree of success differed from one local municipality to the other. The next chapter presents the findings on community participation in ecotourism projects in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana.

CHAPTER 7: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ECOTOURISM INITIATIVES

7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second objective of the study, which sought to assess whether or not local communities have been capacitated to participate in the implementation of ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality. The study established a number of facts in the following sections.

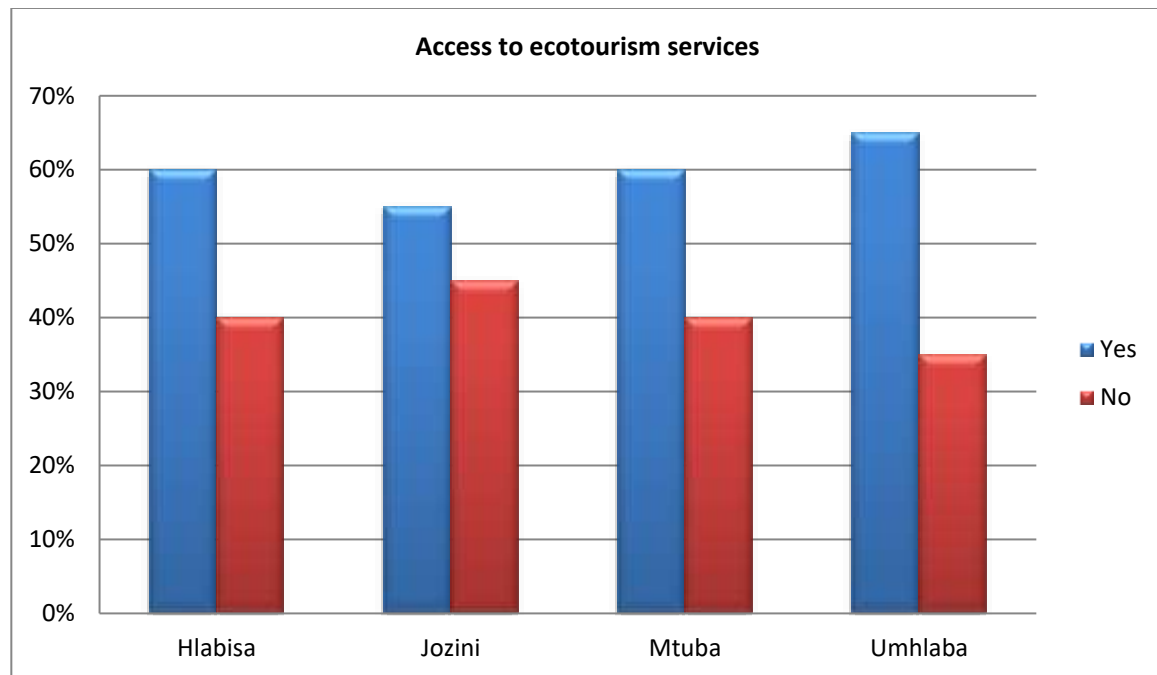
7.2. Community perspectives

Community members reported their thoughts and experiences regarding ecotourism services in their respective local municipalities.

7.2.1 Access to ecotourism services

As explained in Chapter 2, the White Paper on Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa (1996) underscores the vital role ecotourism ought to play in creating opportunities for the participation and beneficiation of local communities in the ecotourism activities. The White Paper further recognises that the apartheid policies created barriers that limited the participation of previously disadvantaged communities in tourism activities. Consequently, the White Paper calls on sector stakeholders to implement transformational policies to improve access to ecotourism services for all stakeholders, including local communities. In this context, the study question aimed at determining whether community members in the UKDM's four local municipalities had easy access to ecotourism services, given the high levels of poverty and unemployment these areas are facing. The results were as follows:

Figure 7. 1: Ecotourism services and opportunities



From Figure 7.1 above, it is evident that the majority (60% to 65%) of the community members in Hlabisa, Jozini and Mtubatuba had been informed about available employment and/or business opportunities in ecotourism projects in their respective areas. Overall, these results show that most community members in these three areas were properly informed about ecotourism opportunities, an indication that ecotourism communications were generally better in these areas. Contrary, a significant number of community members in Mtubatuba (40%) and UMhlabuyalingana (35%) had not been informed about the availability of opportunities in ecotourism projects. Generally, these results suggest that ecotourism communications were inadequate in some of these local municipalities. This was highlighted by one official in Hlabisa, thus:

“In most cases, distance and transport costs pose problems. The information on employment is available though no one gets it on time because transport is unaffordable as many do not earn enough. Others just prefer food gardens instead of being employed”.

The finding that community members had not been sufficiently informed about ecotourism services across the four local municipalities of UKDM is corroborated by Aseres (2015) who found that although ecotourism is introduced with greater emphasis on the participation of

residents, this often does not translate into visible and meaningful participation in the lucrative ecotourism trade. Ideally, the word ‘participation’ implies the manner and extent to which communities are able to share their views, take part in an ecotourism activity, project, programme, decision-making, profit-sharing and other issues related to tourism development processes. The most important rationale for the inclusion of local inhabitants in ecotourism is equity and taking into consideration the conservation of the area through ecotourism development, which inevitably entails restrictions in the traditional usage of local resources by the residents (Aseres, 2015).

7.2.2 Knowledge of ecotourism information services

An understanding of where and how to get information on ecotourism services is crucial as it facilitates job search and identification of entrepreneurial opportunities. Easy and affordable access to this information also facilitates community participation in decisions that pertain to ecotourism. The study asked community members if they knew where to find such information. The empirical evidence from the four local municipalities revealed the following results:

Figure 7.2: Knowledge of information on ecotourism

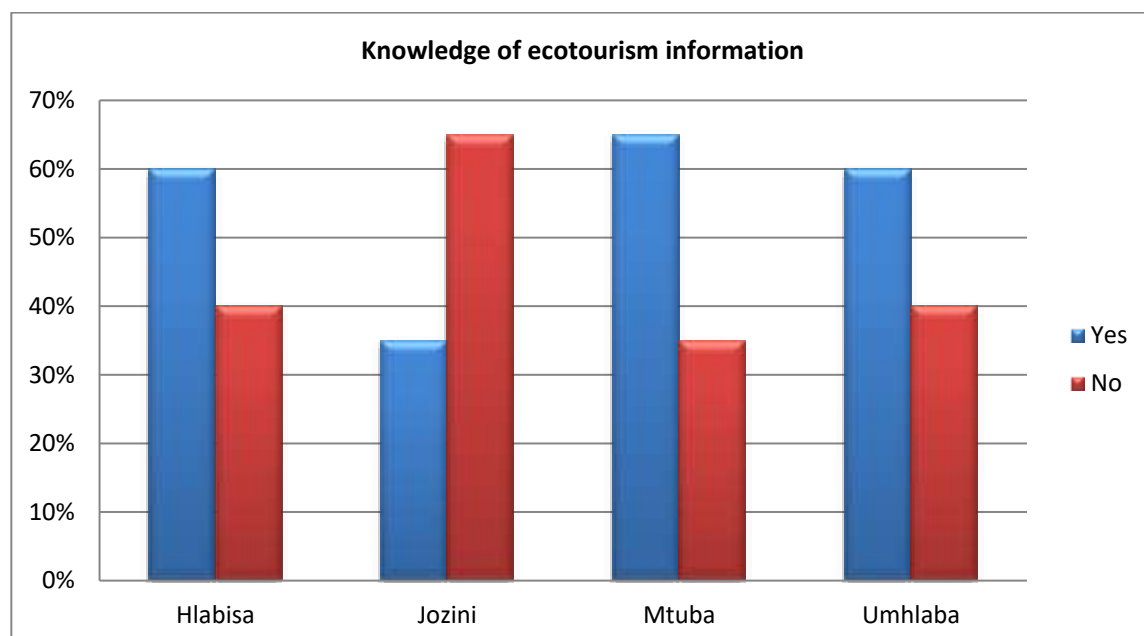


Figure 7.2 reveals that a significantly high number of participants in Hlabisa (60%), Mtubatuba (65%) and UMhlabuyalingana (60%) seemed adequately informed about the sources of information on ecotourism, such as the wildlife management services, local municipality, family and friends, and local ecotourism companies. Approximately 35% of community members in Jozini knew where to find the relevant information on ecotourism, compared to 65% that had a negative experience of these services. To some extent, this finding suggests that communication on ecotourism had not penetrated the entirety of this community and as such, many could not benefit from ecotourism services. Lack of adequate, accurate and current information made it virtually impossible for community members in remote areas to exploit the opportunities, particularly in the Jozini area, where ecotourism remains largely underdeveloped. Insights from the interviews confirmed this finding. A participant had this to say:

“The problem is that most people do not take the initiative. They think that the government (municipality) must do everything for them. Until that mindset has changed, nothing will come right in the community”.

The finding on the lack of relevant and current information on ecotourism services has also been documented by several researchers. For example, in their study of Namaqua National Park, Loubster, Le, Mouton and Nel (2001) found that the supply of information on the available ecotourism services was both inadequate and infrequent. Stakeholders wanted this information in two formats, namely brochures and information centres. The visitors were even prepared to pay for this information as long as it was provided in high quality brochures. This research confirmed that lack of information on ecotourism services is not only unique to Jozini and the other local municipalities of the UKDM; rather, it is a national problem that needs to be addressed to improve the provision of ecotourism services. Similar experiences on the dearth of information on ecotourism services were also reported in Romania, where concerns were raised regarding the absence of databases and calendars of cultural events and festivals necessary to ensure effective promotion of ecotourism benefits (Gheorghe, 2015). In the following subsection, the study presents data on the role of ecotourism companies in job creation.

7.2.3 Job creation in ecotourism

As discussed in Chapter 2, the National Heritage Resources Act (1999) provides that ecotourism initiatives should be implemented in such a way that they generate greater economic benefits for the local people and enhance the well-being of host communities. In line with this provision, community members were asked if there were job opportunities in the local ecotourism industry. The results were as follows:

Figure 7.3: Ecotourism companies help create jobs for the community

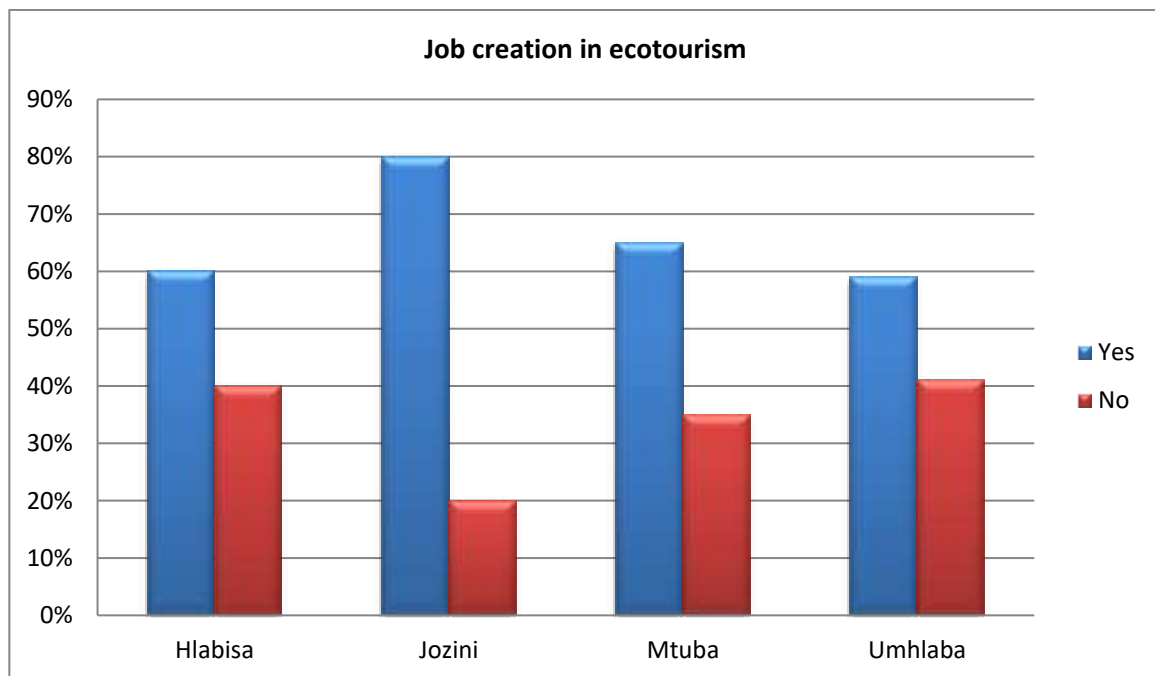


Figure 7.3 indicates that most community members in Hlabisa (60%), Mtubatuba (65%) and UMhlabuyalingana (59%) agreed that ecotourism initiatives indeed created jobs for local people in their areas, although these were said to be limited and intermittent at times. Very few of community members in these three local municipalities disputed or denied the role played by ecotourism enterprises in job creation. By contrast, 80% of community members in Jozini felt that ecotourism initiatives had not created enough employment opportunities local people in their areas. What this means therefore, is that the majority of community members in this area had negative experiences of ecotourism as a driver of job creation. A similar sentiment was expressed by 40% and 35% of the participants in Hlabisa and

UMhlabuyalingana and Mtubatuba, respectively. The findings in Figure 7.3 are consistent with the admission by some officials and project managers during the semi-structured interviews that:

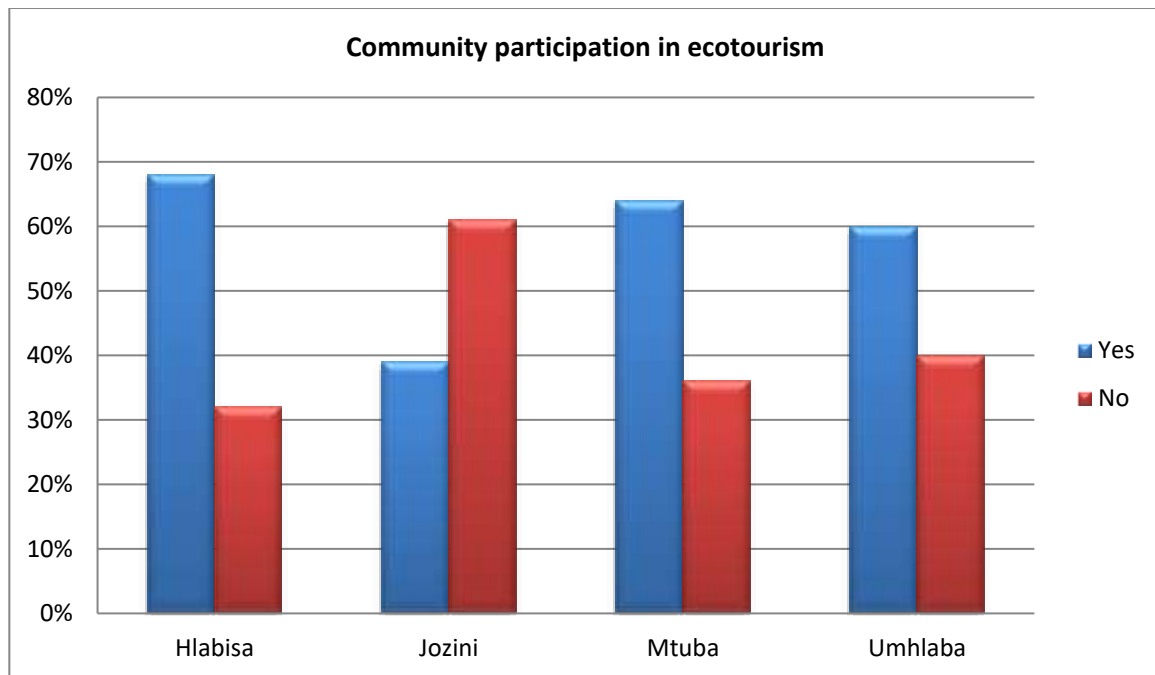
“Ecotourism in UKDM has been largely neglected and underdeveloped, rendering the industry unable to absorb the thousands of unemployed persons in this community. A great deal of cooperation is needed between the municipality and stakeholders in the tourism industry to correct the situation”.

The above finding on the underdevelopment of ecotourism in areas like Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana resonates with the observation reported in the literature. For instance, Zolfani (2014) posits that ecotourism has been inadequately resourced and funded; there has been limited integration of local communities and previously neglected groups into tourism; there has been inadequate education, training and awareness on tourism; inadequate protection of the environment; poor service; lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas; a ground transportation sector not geared to service tourists, and lack of inclusive, effective national, provincial and local structures that enhance development.

7.2.4 Community participation

The vision of the National Tourism Sector Strategy is to increase the impact of domestic tourism by promoting greater local participation in the local industry and by fostering partnerships between local municipalities and local communities to implement ecotourism initiatives. Against this background, the aim of the question was to establish if community members had been afforded the opportunity to participate and contribute to their own development in ecotourism projects. The data sets from the four local municipalities suggest that the participants had positive and negative experiences of ecotourism.

Figure 7.4: Community participation in ecotourism activities



According to Figure 7.4, Hlabisa (68%), Mtubatuba (64%) and UMhlabuyalingana (60%) were generally more active in encouraging community participation in ecotourism activities than Jozini, where only 39% of the participants had positive experiences of ecotourism activities. Collectively, these findings indicate that attempts have been made by the four local municipalities to motivate community members to partake in ecotourism activities. The evidence from the interviews also proved that some community members were actively involved in ecotourism projects. It was said that:

“Those who seize the opportunity benefit because there is little competition in terms of education and skills. Individuals simply tell their municipality what they want do and the municipality will link them with stakeholders in the tourism industry. We can only provide advice, information and education”.

The findings on the participation of local communities are corroborated by a similar study (Aseres, 2015), which found that apart from participating in accommodation and transportation facilities, local communities in Choke Mountain had great roles to play in terms of providing different tour services such as guiding and escort services, renting of

horses for horse-riding, and providing guardianship services for tourists and their property during their stay.

Despite the positive experiences reported above, some of the participants in the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana) denied having been encouraged to participate in ecotourism business activities. For example, nearly 60% of the participants in Jozini reported not having been motivated to take part in these activities. Similarly, 30% of the participants in UMhlabuyalingana denied knowledge of having received encouragement from their municipality, implying that this had never happened in their village. Regarding the other three local municipalities, Hlabisa also had a group of participants that challenged this statement, indicating that their municipality had not encouraged them to get involved in ecotourism activities.

The above results showing limited opportunities for community participation in ecotourism activities are consistent with Stone's (2014) study, which assessed community-based ecotourism in terms of community participation and empowerment. Notably, his study found that community participation in biodiversity conservation and community livelihoods was somewhat limited due the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the design, planning and implementation of such projects. This made the empowerment of communities highly complex.

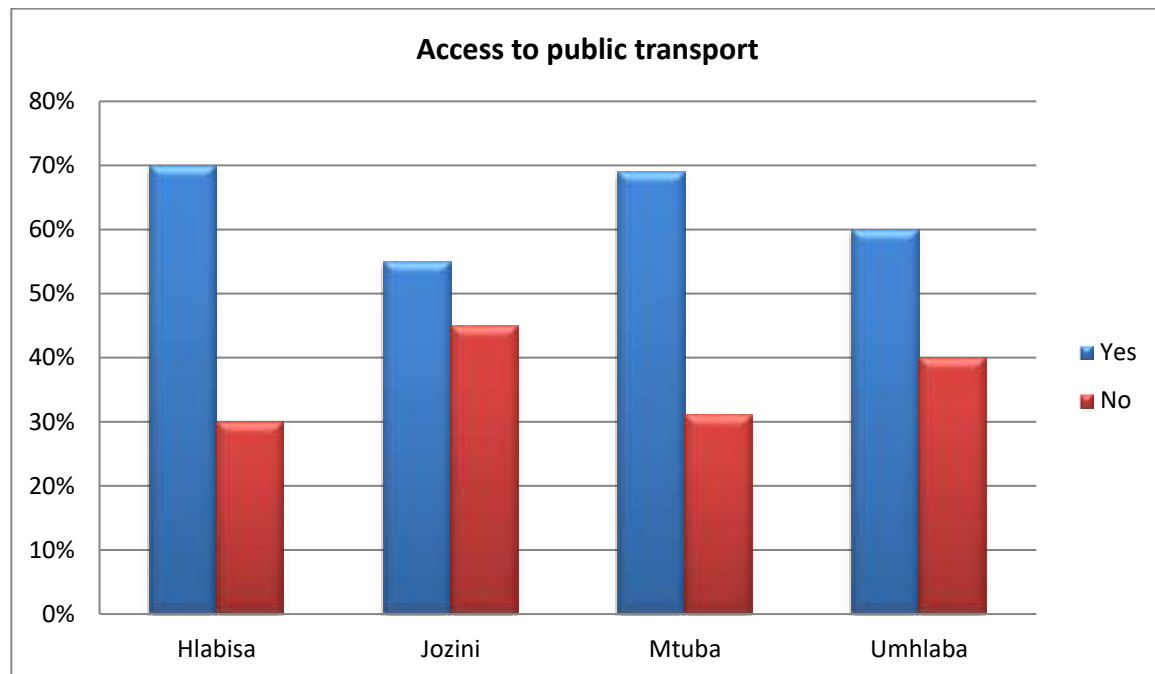
Overall, the results in Figure 7.4 demonstrate that community members had both positive and negative experiences regarding participation in ecotourism projects in the four local municipalities of UKDM. To some extent, the strategies and/or methods used by these four local municipalities to encourage community participation did not appeal to all the community members. The findings on access to public transport services are presented in Figure 7.5 below.

7.2.5 Community access to public transport

Public transport plays a critical role in facilitating access to ecotourism destinations for tourists, employees, entrepreneurs and community members. Arguably, transport has contributed immensely to the rapid growth of ecotourism in developing countries (Hall,

2017). It was on the basis of this logic that the participants were then asked if they had access to public transport to ferry them to and from ecotourism sites. The results were as follows:

Figure 7.5: Access to public transport services in ecotourism



Exactly 70% of the community members in Hlabisa reportedly had access to public transport services in ecotourism, making it relatively easy for opportunity seekers to get to ecotourism destinations. Similar results were reported in Mtubatuba where 30% confirmed having access to these services. The situation was different in Jozini, where 55% of the community members reported having had access to public transport services linking them with ecotourism sites. Thus, most people here walked to such places daily. Resultantly, long distances limited their participation in ecotourism activities. However, a significant number (40%) of community members living in remote areas such as UMhlabuyalingana encountered difficulties getting access to public transport, as many of the taxi and bus operators were largely confined to main routes linking Mbazwana and Manguzi, which are the prime ecotourism destinations. Consequently, some community members traversed long distances before connecting with the main roads to these tourist destinations. Insights from interviews with participants corroborated this finding:

“Those who stay next to the main roads do not encounter serious transport problems. People residing in mountainous areas face acute problems. They cannot get to work on time, and they cannot carry their goods on foot”.

The findings on the uneven provision of transport services in ecotourism sites are corroborated by Kimbu's (2011) study on the role of transport and accommodation infrastructure in Cameroon's natural parks. This study found that tourists were somewhat sensitive to the local ecotourism transport system as it did not meet general safety standards. The current study found that the available transport services were predominantly used by formal and informal traders who travelled to and from three ecotourism destinations (Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana). The only exception was Hlabisa, where community members who owned vehicles were hired during peak tourist seasons to ferry tourists to and from different heritage sites.

7.3. Community experiences of ecotourism services

Overall, the results indicate that community members across the four local municipalities had different but complementary experiences regarding the implementation of ecotourism projects. The experiences of the community regarding ecotourism services are analysed within the context of the following thematic aspects: perceptions about ecotourism, access to ecotourism opportunities, and participation in ecotourism activities, empowerment, and benefits from ecotourism projects.

7.3.1 Community members' perceptions of ecotourism

With the exception of St. Lucia (Mtubatuba) and Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana), the majority of community members in all the local municipalities conceded being partially aware of the benefits of ecotourism. Several factors were responsible for this scenario; these included the apparent weak consumer education efforts across the local municipalities; inability of community members to take the initiative to create and own ecotourism initiatives; high dependence on municipality for support; unhealthy competition, conflict over resources, and lack of relevant skills. A limited understanding of ecotourism opportunities also came out strongly during the in-depth interviews. A community member said:

“Our problem is that we entirely depend on hand-outs. We want help all the time. Until we unite and speak in unison as a community, (ecotourism) development won’t happen. Our people need to clearly understand this message. Opportunities may be there, but if you do not use them, your life won’t change. That is the challenge that we are facing here. People do not take initiatives in their individual capacities”.

The finding on the community’s low perceptions regarding ecotourism is not unique to UKDM. A recent study by Abeli (2017) found that local communities’ perceptions of ecotourism and their attitudes towards conservation in Tanzania’s Lake Natron Ramsar Site varied across the villages as ecotourism investments, activities and benefits were concentrated in only one village. In light of this finding, the study recommended that the right balance should be struck over ecotourism benefits in order to ensure increased local support for conservation.

7.3.2 Access to ecotourism opportunities

While community members who resided along the tourist routes and heritage sites easily accessed tourism information and opportunities, those living in remote areas often found it difficult to access these opportunities partly because of the long distances they travelled, high transport costs; poor road conditions (gravel roads), lack of current and sufficient information on available ecotourism services. Exceptionally, St. Lucia (Mtubatuba) had an organised transport system led by local taxi associations. This made it relatively easy for community members to move between ecotourism sites and destinations undertaking their trade transactions. The overall analysis reveals that ecotourism opportunities were not easily accessible to most community members in UMkhanyakude. In Jozini, these opportunities had not been fully tapped into due to the highly underdeveloped nature of ecotourism in the area. One project manager explained the situation as follows:

“Not everyone is aware of what is happening, especially the youth. They do not come forward with business plans. We are still lagging behind in terms of consumer education. A lot still needs to be done to make people aware that tourism is not for White people, that tourism is not about holidays only, that there is more to tourism than what people think; for instance, jobs, business, wealth, et cetera”.

The above finding that there was limited access to ecotourism opportunities across the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana) contradicts the literature, which emphasises that when communities have access to resources and have control over ecotourism activities, they will support conservation practices as these affect their livelihoods and well-being (Greening, 2014).

7.3.3 Challenges affecting community participation in ecotourism

Across the local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana), community participation in ecotourism activities was somewhat sporadic, inconsistent and informal. Most community members affirmed that their participation was largely prompted by hunger, rather than the motivation and courage to independently start and run sustainable ecotourism projects.

The remnants of formal participation were only visible in St. Lucia and Mbazwana, where well-organised groups of women operated stalls in prime areas along tourist routes, which enabled them to market their goods and services directly to passing tourists. However, a number of challenges impacted community participation in all the local municipalities and these included the following:

Table 7.1: Challenges in ecotourism

Local municipality	Challenges in ecotourism
a) Hlabisa	• Weak risk management systems and processes led to the depletion of community assets. • Uncoordinated community participation processes undermined community involvement in ecotourism. • Risk from straying wild animals such as lions
b) Jozini	• The ecotourism industry is characterised by high levels of informality and imbalances in resource allocation and property rights.

	• Ecotourism driven by commercial interests.
c) Mtubatuba	• Excessive regulation of the ecotourism trade restricted informal trading activities. • Exclusion and marginalisation of informal traders from mainstream ecotourism activities;
d) UMhlabuyalingana	• Geographical constraints: formal and informal traders travelled long distances to tourism sites. • Strong influence of urban tourism; • Increased commercialisation deflects attention from local needs. • Urban influences brought by tourists;

Table 7.1 depicts bottlenecks across the four local municipalities and these undermined poverty alleviation efforts. In Hlabisa, insufficient and/or weak security management systems in and around game reserves put community assets at risk, suggesting lack of planning and control in the management of ecotourism activities in the area. Wild animals such as lions escaped from the game reserves killing livestock, valuable assets on which the community's livelihoods depended. Coupled with this reality was the fact community participation across the villages was somewhat disjointed and dissipated, with little coordination from local government authority and ecotourism operators. This finding is corroborated by the literature (Chapter 2), which indicates that wildlife conservation imposes significant costs on rural people living in or in close proximity to the parks through crop damage, livestock predation and human deaths, and restriction of access to natural resources (Brockington, 2007).

In Jozini, the worst challenge was that a lot of ecotourism activities at the community level remained largely informal, underdeveloped and therefore unsustainable. Added to this scenario was non-recognition of property rights for some local communities in and around the Jozini Dam (one of the key tourist attractions in the area); making it difficult for them to leverage the opportunities presented by ecotourism projects. None of the surveyed community members was satisfied with the way in which ecotourism was being implemented in this area, a clear indication that more still needs to be done to improve the provision of these services in this community.

In Mtubatuba, ecotourism efforts were impeded by stringent regulation prohibiting informal trading activities along lucrative tourist sites and in farming areas. Consequently, some of these traders, especially bee harvesters, felt excluded from the ecotourism market. With little local government support, some of them abandoned operations indefinitely (Dukuduku Village, Mtubatuba). The findings on the legal constraints contradicts Nyazema's (2013) study, which found that flexible regulations were crucial in enabling owners of small to medium-size businesses to participate in ecotourism activities simultaneously retaining their ownership.

In UMhlabuyalingana, especially in Sodwana Bay, ecotourism was affected by two factors: the first one was that community members in remote areas had difficulty reaching ecotourism markets due to lack of transport and poorly maintained gravel roads, rendering their trading activities weak and unsustainable.

The second factor was urban influences brought by local tourists from big cities such as Johannesburg and Durban. Here, the once flourishing natural resort has become a bustling tourist hub with five-star hotels and prime restaurants largely owned and operated by private interests, with little control from the local municipality. According to one community member:

“This has left the community powerless because we do not have a say in the planning of ecotourism projects, yet the local government tells us that this is our land.”

Like many similar situations elsewhere, this illustrates the inherent danger of over-commercialisation of ecotourism sites in rural settings which, as alluded to in Chapter 2, often deprives locals of the opportunity to make a living out of ecotourism. The literature emphasises that ecotourism activities would be difficult and unsustainable without active involvement and participation of local communities in such endeavours (Van der Merwe & Wocke, 2007).

The above findings, which indicate that there were challenges in community participation, are supported by the literature which posits that as much as the role of local communities in ecotourism has been lauded, it has been realised that in practice, community-based ecotourism has failed to garner widespread active community participation throughout the

design, planning, implementation, and monitoring of such programmes. This has not only resulted in failed projects but it also negatively affected the ecosystems that they were trying to conserve (Reimer & Walter, 2012).

A similar study conducted by Subedi (2014) on the prospects and challenges of ecotourism in Nepal's Megghauli Village identified several constraints that hindered development and prosperity of ecotourism in the area. These included poor management of ecotourism activities by local authorities and operators; environmental degradation which disturbed wildlife patterns; limited knowledge of ecotourism among the residents of Megghauli, which ruined community participation in ecotourism activities; and, finally, the lack of information and promotional activities.

7.3.4 Ways of improving community participation

Given the challenges cited above, the participants were also asked to indicate how these problems could be resolved to ensure that local communities benefited more from ecotourism. Different perspectives came up from each local municipality. In Hlabisa, it was suggested that empowerment opportunities should be spread to all villages around ecotourism centres. This stemmed from the fact that at the time of reporting, only communities closer to the game reserves and hotels benefited from employment and business opportunities there. This led to a skewed distribution of income and benefits, leaving communities in remote areas destitute.

In Jozini, community members had low perceptions regarding the benefits of ecotourism. This impacted negatively on the participation of community members in ecotourism activities. Given this situation, participants suggested that the municipality and wildlife services should scale up consumer awareness campaigns to help local people understand the benefits of participating in ecotourism projects. The problem of low community perceptions regarding ecotourism benefits is not unique to Jozini. In Malaysia, it was discovered that where community members lacked the basic knowledge of ecotourism, they tended to become more passive and less involved in ecotourism activities (Aslam, Awang & Samdin, 2015). Environmental knowledge, environmental attitudes and environmental behaviour are

crucial in enabling local communities to understand and therefore benefit from ecotourism activities (Fang, 2018).

In Mtubatuba, the participants suggested that the local municipality and chiefs should address land rights issues to ensure that local communities have land tenure, especially in areas with ecotourism opportunities. In UMhlabuyalingana, the participants proposed that the municipality should improve community consultation and engagement services so that poor households could appreciate the benefits of participating in ecotourism activities in their areas. A similar problem (violation of the community's land rights) was reported in the Maasai community in Tanzania, where ecotourism companies bought land indirectly through the government and not the local people; thus undermining the local land tenure system.

The findings on how to improve community participation in ecotourism activities in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana resonates with the pre-conditions for successful ecotourism suggested in the literature. These pre-conditions include infrastructure, market, community-appropriate capabilities, easy access to ecotourism information and resources, financial resources and leadership (Jugmohan, 2015). Other important pre-conditions for effective community participation include the involvement of low income groups who are vulnerable to poverty (Garraway, 2008) and ensuring quality community well-being in ecotourism projects (Eshun, 2015). In the absence of these pre-conditions, local communities fared poorly on the principle of economic sustainability as they tended to benefit very little from ecotourism activities (Thaingthae, 2017).

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the results on community participation in ecotourism projects in the UKDM. The overall analysis indicated that despite the challenges, efforts had been made to encourage community participation in the four local municipalities. The strategies employed by local municipalities and tourism promotion agencies to facilitate community participation included consultation, engagement and formal meetings. While these strategies were effective in some areas, in some remote areas, messages could not reach communities such as Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana. The next chapter focuses on ecotourism

initiatives and sustainable livelihoods as perceived by participants from the four local municipalities of UKDM.

CHAPTER 8: ECOTOURISM INITIATIVES AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 flows directly from the third and fourth objectives of the study, which were: (i) to explore the experiences of local communities on the implementation of ecotourism projects and (ii) to evaluate whether the implementation of ecotourism initiatives has improved the livelihoods of the communities of UMkhanyakude District Municipality. To address these objectives, the study examined the role of local government, ecotourism enterprises and agencies in promoting ecotourism for the benefit of local communities. Hence, the qualitative findings from the in-depth interviews addressed these objectives.

8.2 Role of local government in the implementation of ecotourism projects

The results presented and discussed here are reflective of the perspectives and experiences of programme officials and project managers regarding their support for the implementation of ecotourism projects in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana Local Municipalities.

8.2.1 How ecotourism is used to improve community life

Across the three local municipalities, the implementation of ecotourism was facilitated through the integrated development planning process and the local economic development strategy. In all the three cases, tourism featured strongly in these documents, although practical implementation had been limited. These results are consistent with the literature presented in Chapter 2, showing that well-implemented ecotourism initiatives are more likely to benefit local communities, especially where community members are involved in the planning and monitoring of ecotourism activities. One official in UMhlabuyalingana said:

“There are many programmes in place. We teach community members about water resource management, conservation of wildlife, protection against wild animals, self-employment, wellness and HIV/AIDS management. We work with wildlife management services. It is starting to bear fruit”.

Corroborating the above finding, Moodley (2012) found that ecotourism contributed to poverty alleviation in KwaZulu-Natal Province. Cultural tourism, as a dimension of ecotourism, positively impacted on income generating activities in communities in and around the Durban. The above finding on local government's efforts to improve community life through ecotourism initiatives resonates with a recent research conducted by Vieira and Lamego (2016), which found that positive attitudes and strong political leadership at local government level positively influenced the successful implementation of ecotourism projects and strategies. This was evident in Jozini and UMkhayanyakude where, despite the hugely underdeveloped ecotourism sector, programme officials and project managers were confident that the perceptions of the community regarding ecotourism would gradually become positive with increased awareness programmes in remote villages.

8.2.2 Budget allocation for ecotourism, and how is it spent

This question sought to find out if adequate financial resources had been allocated to improve the implementation of ecotourism projects in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalinga. The results partially confirmed that ecotourism was being funded through the Local Economic Development Strategy (LEDS). In Hlabisa, it emerged that the municipality only facilitated the achievement of the objectives of ecotourism through promotions and awareness campaigns; hence, there was no specific budget set aside for ecotourism projects in Hlabisa. One official from the Hlabisa Local Municipality described the situation as follows:

“Lack of funds does not inhibit the municipality from supporting the development of ecotourism. We work in tandem with wildlife offices and tourism safaris (companies) to develop the whole tourism sector, including ecotourism. The idea behind these concerted efforts is that tourism should benefit all our people, not just tourists. It is a long process, but we are making progress”.

In St. Lucia (Mtubatuba), local government had spent approximately R200, 000 to build a fruit and vegetables market for small ecotourism ventures owned by local groups of women. In Jozini, the municipality had spent R120, 000 (special grant) to support the establishment of a women empowerment programme linked to ecotourism. One official described ecotourism support services as follows:

“Ecotourism has not yet realised its full potential in our community. We still need to speed up the transformation process so that all the resources flowing from tourism can also benefit local communities. However, there is a challenge emanating from lack of understanding. People here still think that tourism is meant for visitors. They do not realise that they can earn a living from tourism activities”.

These results indicate that the funding arrangements for ecotourism were severely limited across the four local municipalities. The general understanding in the four local municipalities was that the municipality was not directly involved in the implementation of ecotourism; rather, it allocated financial resources for marketing purposes.

8.2.3 Activities to promote ecotourism at the community level

None of the local municipalities had a programme dedicated to the promotion of ecotourism awareness at the community level. Officials conceded that there was no formal communication strategy for ecotourism and as such, information about opportunities in ecotourism was very scarce, especially in remote areas. Generally, only communities situated along the main tourist routes had access to the relevant and current information on the available tourism services. Examples of promotions used included exhibitions and community awareness campaigns (Jozini), IDP meetings and budget speeches (Hlabisa), meetings between local businesses, municipality and small business owners (Mtubatuba) and community meetings organised by local chiefs in collaboration with tourism operators (UMhlabuyalingana). In all these cases, promotional activities were largely sporadic and unsustainable, as they were not formally scheduled. This finding contravenes the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) which provides that:

“Local Tourism is singled out in Schedule 4 (B) as one of the competency areas of local government; and also a concurrent responsibility between National and Provincial government (Schedule 4 (a))”.

This finding on the commitment of local government to promote ecotourism resonates with the literature. For instance, Cole (1994) predicted that poverty reduction is likely to be the central aim of economic policy in post-apartheid South Africa, with ecotourism as an

essential component of socio-economic development. Since unemployment is a major cause of poverty in South Africa, a strategy to ensure labour absorption is one important element of policy direction, particularly at local government level and ecotourism promises exactly that, putting local communities at the centre of the development process.

8.2.4 Community empowerment initiatives

In Hlabisa, the participants indicated that communities are empowered in various ways, such as allowing people to set up their stalls along tourist routes; thus, they could use that space without fear of eviction. Officials in Mtubatuba expressed a similar view, saying that any community member could sell their produce to tourists freely. One official intimated, thus:

“People here have access to public space where they can ply their trade”.

Participant 2B emphasised the role played by his municipality in community empowerment. He stated that:

“Our move to support ecotourism supports our mandate of providing basic services and therefore bringing development to our communities. Tourism, not just ecotourism, is an important driver of job creation. We are working on our policies and procedures to ensure that more resources are channelled towards the development of tourism.”

However, this view was dismissed by some community members who were involved in informal trading activities, saying that they faced harassment from local law enforcement agencies and farmers, with the municipality doing nothing to protect them, despite repeated attempts to bring this matter to its attention.

In Jozini, one participant reported that:

“Women groups involved in craft works had been assisted with education and training; including awareness-building activities to sensitise women about the benefits of ecotourism to the villages” (Participant 3A).

Participant 3B described community empowerment initiatives as follows:

“The idea is to bring all stakeholders, including traders, safaris, hotels, municipality, community leaders, public transport operators, and wildlife management services together so that we pool our resources to increase community beneficiation in ecotourism”.

However, these claims contradicted data from the survey, which showed that perceptions about ecotourism were relatively low in this municipality and that ecotourism opportunities were largely underutilised here.

The results on the limitedness of community empowerment efforts conflict with the reviewed literature, which emphasises that an important factor in the overall growth and sustainability of ecotourism activities is community capacity building for effective participation. Ecotourism is an extremely complex sector, requiring local communities to have an array of competencies. Quite often, these competencies are hard to develop as most rural communities grapple with high levels of illiteracy. There is a need to train local residents in customer care and in appreciating the service dynamics in the tourism industry to enable communities to create and sustain demand by maintaining high levels of guest satisfaction (Chiutsi, Mukoroverwa, Karigambe & Mudzengi, 2011).

8.2.5 How ecotourism is used to reduce unemployment and poverty

The question aimed to establish how each of the four local municipalities used ecotourism to mitigate unemployment and poverty.

In Hlabisa, the participants reported that the municipality, through the wildlife management agencies, identifies and allocates land for tourism development. This requires collaboration between the municipality, local communities and tourism operators. This view was corroborated by Participant 3D in Jozini, who said that most tourism projects are labour intensive and thus absorb a large number of local people; for example, game rangers, tour guides, professional chefs, and waiters. Upon leaving employment, some of these people go back to the community and start their own small businesses that supply goods and services to local and international tourists. This was the general view across the local municipalities regarding the contribution of ecotourism to the reduction of poverty and unemployment at

the community level. In UMhlabuyalinga, Participant 4A indicated that ending poverty through tourism involved both short-term and long-term investments in a wide range of tourism-supporting initiatives, including:

- *Regular upgrading of the basic infrastructure*
- *Improving security for tourists*
- *Electrifying tourism sites and destinations*
- *Training employees in wildlife management services*
- *Infrastructure maintenance services*
- *Enforcing bylaws to improve quality standards and security*

The finding that local municipalities supported the implementation of ecotourism as part of their local economic development (LED) strategies resonates with Vieira and Lamego's (2016) study, which revealed that local government perceived ecotourism as a development tool and an important source of employment, income and wealth. Based on the Philippine experience, Javier and Elazigue (2011) established that local government supported ecotourism for the well-being of its communities. There were opportunities for local ecotourism development programmes to be integrated into regional or provincial plans to ensure consistency and uniformity in the delivery of ecotourism services to tourists and local communities. The current study found this thinking pervasive in areas like Mtubatuba and Hlabisa, where some officials viewed ecotourism services not just in terms of local economic development, but as an engine to build resilient and sustainable livelihoods in remote villages.

Chili and Xulu (2015) contend that even though the local government may want to support ecotourism earnestly, this is often hampered by an array of challenges; including the inability to integrate the management of tourism with other functions and activities of local government. Proper ecotourism planning requires strategic orientation, which most local governments do not have due to lack of high-level skills. Another challenge facing local government in ecotourism is that most municipalities are encouraged to grow ecotourism as a means of economic development and growth; thus, the policies being pursued are mostly suited to the interests of the economy and the commercial sector of the tourism industry rather than local communities where ecotourism resources are concentrated.

8.3 Perspective of project managers

Underpinning the question on this aspect was the need to establish what project managers were doing to ensure that ecotourism initiatives benefited local communities in their respective areas. The results were that ecotourism projects were managed as part of the LED strategy; as such, the role of project managers was to coordinate and liaise with the various stakeholders involved in ecotourism. This required the convening of frequent meetings with ecotourism operators and the wildlife management office to monitor progress in the implementation of identified ecotourism initiatives in each area. The responsibilities of project managers were not only confined to ecotourism but to all the development projects the local communities agreed to and prioritised.

8.3.1 Transfer of skills and income in ecotourism projects

The primary objective of the question on this aspect was to find out whether ecotourism projects had been used to promote skills development in each of the participating local municipalities in UMkhanyakude. The results were as follows:

“In Hlabisa, the youth from the community get trained in catering, performing arts and traditional dance. Training is also provided to young people employed on a temporary basis when the tourism season reaches its peak. The targeted competency areas include tour guide skills; communication skills (especially the ability to narrate local history using different international languages such as French, German or Swiss”.

This finding is corroborated by Malik (2018) who found that the most important aspect of human resource development in ecotourism is having the right knowledge, skills and ability to provide top service by providing the employees or personnel with an effective training in the related work or job they are doing. Training and development had become an integral part of all business activities as they help maintain business productivity (Malik, 2018).

At Jozini, there were learnerships that specifically related to tourism though they were limited as the municipality faced severe financial challenges due to lack of diverse revenue-generating activities. Training efforts in this municipality were limited and not available to all members of the community. This partly explains why there were low perceptions

regarding the importance and benefits of ecotourism in this community. A municipality employee shared the following:

“We are still trying to reach out to community members in remote parts of the municipality. However, this is taking long because of the poor road infrastructure, which renders some of these areas inaccessible. So, it’s hard to get the message to people living in those areas. As a rural municipality, we are constrained when it comes to resources”.

The finding on limited access to skills development opportunities for local communities resonates with the findings of other researchers. For example, Backman and Munanura (2016) found that shortages of financial capital and entrepreneurship skills among local communities coexisting with wildlife constrained the potential of ecotourism practitioners in Africa to take full advantage of a growing ecotourism market. Corruption and the top-down governance approach to wildlife and protected area management has also limited the success of ecotourism in some African countries with tremendous ecotourism potential. In Mtubatuba, it emerged that:

“Women groups involved in ecotourism activities receive regular training on venture creation, financial planning and control, and customer care. They are also taught about foreign exchange rates because tourists come from different countries, including Germany, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom”.

However, these comments were contradicted by some youth representatives who denied having received support from their municipality. These respondents indicated that skills development opportunities had not been extended to the youth, and as result, they could not get jobs or start their own businesses because they lacked the relevant skills in ecotourism.

At UMhlabuyalingana, women and youths are trained on hotel management services and crafts; but this largely happens in Sodwana Bay, with little support for community members in remote areas of the municipality. The women close to the Isimangaliso World Heritage Site in Sodwana Bay received better training opportunities than those living in remote villages as they had no easy and direct access to such opportunities. Overall, these efforts were generally considered inadequate and intermittent in nature. Most participants generally

accepted that a concerted effort was needed to improve community beneficiation in ecotourism activities.

The finding that not all community members were able to access skills development opportunities and finance for the start-up of their ecotourism ventures was consistent with Qongo's (2013) study, which found that even though skills development programmes were plentiful, they were largely out of reach for the people who needed them. A significant challenge was therefore to incentivise officials to create awareness programmes and also to lobby institutions presenting these skills programmes to localise training so that local people benefit from these programmes. Access to finance was the greatest barrier to entry for new participants and other smaller operators. The requirements for accessing finance were also prohibitive as merely developing a business plan was beyond the means of most of those who wished to access the finance (Qongo, 2013). Similar results were reported by Ogechi and Igbojekwe (2012), who discovered that in Nigeria local government, has not created an appropriate environment capable of removing barriers and lure the private sector and community members into participating in ecotourism development. Local government has not put in place the necessary infrastructure required for sustainable ecotourism development.

8.3.2 Opportunities and challenges in ecotourism projects

Across local municipalities, project managers conceded that while ecotourism brought socio-economic opportunities for local communities and the municipality, these were not without problems. From the perspective of the municipality, ecotourism-specific communications had not successfully attracted and encouraged poor households to partake in these activities. From the perspective of the community, inability and/or reluctance to proactively identify and use available opportunities was considered a major stumbling block to ecotourism development. The opportunities cited by the majority of project managers included:

“Most of the available land was under traditional authorities. In this regard, people have the right to approach their chief and ask for land if they wish to start an ecotourism project. However, in most cases, this does not happen because people depend heavily on the municipality which should do everything for them”.

These findings, which border on the challenges impeding community participation in Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana, are consistent with the results obtained by Adele (2015), showing that the intentions of residents to participate in ecotourism were directly influenced by barriers such as inadequacy of time, low income and lack of transportation. In addition, high levels of unemployment and illiteracy were regarded as being responsible for poor attitudes towards ecotourism activities, with many residents (43.4%) unwilling to support the implementation of ecotourism projects, especially in KwaDlangezwa.

In a similar study conducted in Nigeria, Ogeji and Igbojekwe (2010) discovered that the sustainable development of ecotourism in rural areas was severely hampered by poor involvement of the local people and other stakeholders. Most ecotourism activities were largely uncoordinated and influenced by tourism development agencies, with little support from the local government and the local community.

Thus, as Mendoza-Ramos and Prideaux (2017) discovered in their study, most of the issues confronting indigenous peoples result from their disempowerment in ecotourism activities. Conversely, where local communities are usually empowered through land ownership, they are able to actively participate in, and benefit from, economic activities including ecotourism. The current study found that small, informal ecotourism ventures were disempowered in areas like Mtubatuba, where legal restrictions prevented informal ecotourism trading activities such as harvesting and selling of honey by community members in some areas along the main roads.

8.3.3 Steps taken to address challenges in ecotourism projects

Corrective measures designed to enhance the implementation of ecotourism initiatives varied in accordance with the unique challenges facing each local municipality. For example, in Hlabisa, the immediate challenge was how to deal with the imminent risk posed by straying wild animals such as lions, leopards and elephants. Apart from posing a danger to the community, some of these animals, especially lions, devoured livestock, thus reducing the primary assets that supported the families of community members. As articulated in the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), sustainable livelihoods depend largely on the availability and preservation of community assets, which form the bedrock of rural communities. In all the four local municipalities, the emphasis was on building and strengthening partnerships

between the various stakeholders in the ecotourism industry, including tourism operators, the community, local chiefs and industry bodies to improve the outcomes in tourism projects. One official in Mtubatuba described the improvements in his municipality as follows:

“We have developed a strong relationship with local businesses (for instance, ecotourism companies) and that is helping us to align our tourism projects with their activities. We see this as an opportunity to build community awareness and self-reliance. They have the resources and we have the infrastructure. So, we can make it work”.

8.4 Perspective of ecotourism development agencies

Wildlife management services are central to both the promotion and development of the ecotourism industry as they influence policy direction and practices in the industry in various ways. For this reason, this study avers that there were prime stakeholders in this industry. Wildlife management services provided a wide variety of support services to ecotourism operators and local communities. At industry level, this included research and the management of natural resources. At community level, efforts were made to educate local communities about the various aspects of ecotourism, including nature conservation, water resource management, protection against wild animals, and venture creation provided mainly to youth groups as part of their learnerships.

8.4.1 How local people are involved in ecotourism

Efforts to involve local people in ecotourism differed from one area to another, depending largely on the type of natural resources found in that area. In the case of game reserves, for example, emphasis was often put on the recruitment and training of more young people to become game rangers (Hluhluwe in Hlabisa). This was done in partnership with operators of hotels and game lodges in each area. In places with the natural resources such as wetlands (St. Lucia in Mtubatuba), the focus would be on rowing and tour guides. In areas endowed with natural beaches (Sodwana Bay in UMhlabuyalingana), training efforts would target the development of diving skills, fishing skills and boat operating skills. Intensive recruitment of locals occurred during peak seasons when many tourists visited areas like Hlabisa, St. Lucia

in Mtubatuba and the Isimangaliso World Heritage Site in Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana).

8.4.2 Role of ecotourism in job creation and poverty alleviation

The aim of the question on this aspect was to establish whether or not ecotourism projects helped to mitigate the twin problems of poverty and unemployment in the UKDM. From the results presented so far, it would appear that ecotourism projects partially contributed to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana. In all the cases, the distribution of socio-economic benefits from ecotourism was generally skewed and biased towards communities living adjacent to ecotourism sites and the well-established ecotourism companies that dominated the industry.

8.4.3 How local communities benefit from ecotourism services

The community in every local municipality benefited from ecotourism activities in various ways. From the perspective of wildlife management services, it was reported that:

“We ensure that local people are informed about these services; that priority is placed on developing and hiring local people before resorting to external recruitment measures. This applies to our own offices and the ecotourism companies we work with.”

Most of the people plying their trade in these tourist destinations come from the local community; there are few people from other areas. This ensures that income-generating activities are accessible only to local people. Thus, local people benefit immensely from ecotourism initiatives managed by wildlife.

These positive developments dovetail with the literature (Chapter 2), which states that in ecotourism, the principle of sustainability is applied to improve the residents' quality of life by optimising local economic benefits, protecting the natural and built environment and providing a high-quality life. In this regard, Dwyer, Edwards, Mistilis, Roman, and Scott (2009) suggest that ecotourism practice should incorporate the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) approach to sustainable development to ensure that firms integrate social, environmental and

economic information into managerial decision-making. Ecotourism firms must aim to achieve sustainability in their operations if the destination as a whole is to conform to sustainability principles.

Furthermore, the finding that community members living adjacent to ecotourism projects partially benefited from ecotourism activities in the UKDM are corroborated by a recent study undertaken by Nsukwini and Bob (2016) which investigated community involvement and beneficiation in ecotourism activities in Nompondo Community. The results revealed that the Nompondo Community benefited in various ways, though not to their envisaged level of satisfaction. Members of the community have access to resources such as meat, thatching grass, firewood and water. Additionally, a range of opportunities for positive interactions with the national park's management and staff included job opportunities, good working relations with the tourists, sale of crafts and the opportunity to profile cultural activities. However, there is a need to improve beneficiation, given the high poverty and unemployment rates in Nompondo.

On the downside, the finding that only communities adjacent to ecotourism sites benefited at the expense of the larger rural communities are consistent with a study conducted by Coria and Calfucura (2011), which found that uneven distribution of economic benefits manifested itself in significant inequality between indigenous communities and stakeholders outside the protected areas. Most of the financial incentives derived from ecotourism activities were amassed by outside interests, with little beneficiation for local people. This situation was evident in St. Lucia where most of the ecotourism activities were dominated by international ecotourism enterprises at the expense of local communities.

8.5 The perspectives of ecotourism enterprises

The aim of the question was to determine if ecotourism enterprises in each of the local municipalities supported job creation. The data yielded the following results:

Table 8.1: Contribution to job creation and skills transfer

Enterprise	Location	Company contributions
A	Hlabisa	Temporary jobs during peak seasons; Training of tour guides;

B	Jozini	Recruitment and training of hotel or lodge staff;
C	Mtubatuba	Recruitment and training of drivers and technical staff, such as mechanics, to maintain safari /touring /patrol vehicles;
D	UMhlabuyalingana	Training of women on how to market their crafts Recruitment and training of the youth to become life savers on the beach

The finding that ecotourism enterprises and agencies played a key role in job creation and skills transfer is consistent with the findings from a similar study conducted by Postica (2014) which established that these organisations contributed to the improvement of staff hired in ecotourism agencies by elaborating a programme for their training; selling touristic products as the main activity; facilitating contractual relations between consumers and suppliers and providing assistance in the dissemination of information on ecotourism and business plans for community members interested in ecotourism ventures (Postica, 2014). Another study conducted by Trisilian (2006) found that ecotourism enterprises also facilitated consultations with local communities in the planning and implementation of ecotourism projects, thus ensuring that project design meets local conditions and fulfils local needs. In addition, there was also a strong commitment by ecotourism agencies to ensure that ecotourism activities are managed and owned by local people.

8.6 Benefits for local people employed by ecotourism companies

This study sought to determine whether or not employees of ecotourism enterprises derived any financial or non-financial benefits from their respective employers. The results, as reported by the participants, are presented in the following subsections:

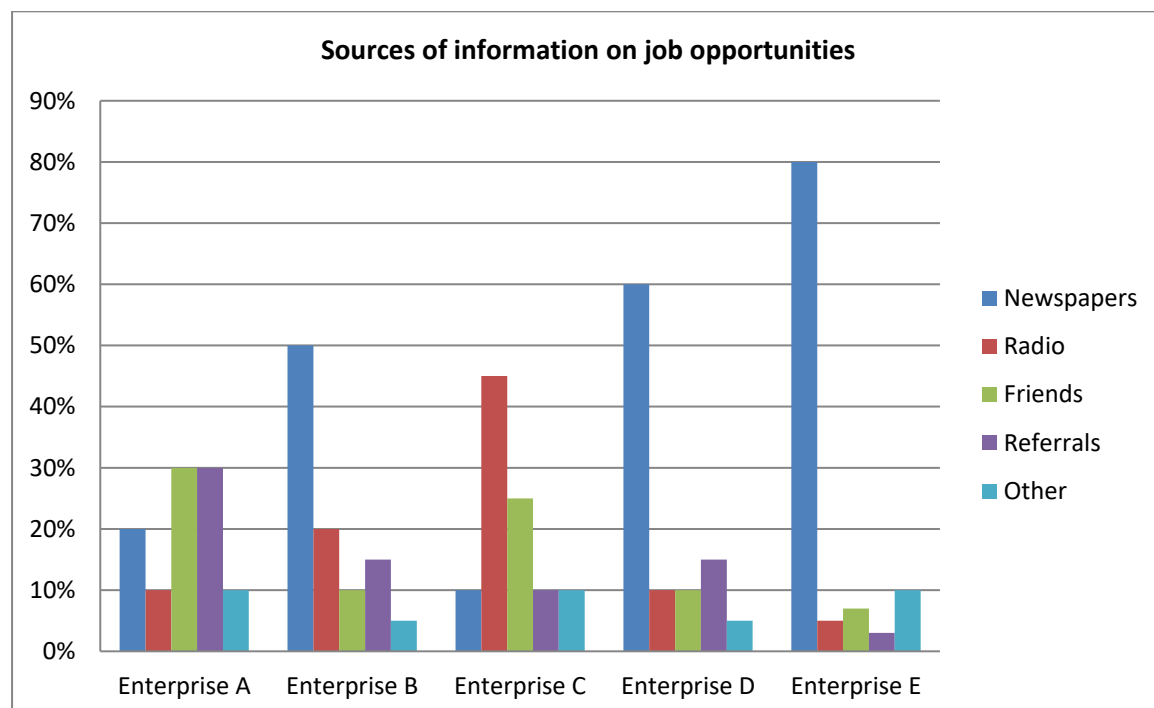
8.6.1 Access to employment opportunities

Access to job opportunities was crucial to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment in the UKDM. For this reason, the participants were asked to indicate whether they had access to employment opportunities in terms of the following general criteria: sources of information used to find employment opportunities, current job status, income levels, employment benefits and working conditions. The results on each one of these issues were as follows:

8.6.2 Sources of information used to find job opportunities

A number of empirical studies suggest that access to the relevant, current and adequate information on ecotourism is central in facilitating job search, venture creation and decision-making processes (Benea, 2014; Altman, 2015). In view of this aspect, the aim of the question was to identify the most common sources of information available to existing and potential employees in terms of finding job opportunities in ecotourism in the five ecotourism enterprises in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana. The results are as follows:

Figure 8.1: Sources of information on job opportunities



The results in Figure 8.1 evince that most employees in Enterprise A (30%) identified job opportunities through friends and referrals; while radio was the primary source of job information in Enterprise E. During the survey, 45% of community members in Enterprise E reported that they relied on the local community radio station to find job opportunities in ecotourism services.

Strikingly, the majority (80%) of the community members in UMhlabuyalingana (Enterprise E) relied heavily on newspapers to find job opportunities, compared to 20% (Enterprise A) that used alternative sources to locate job opportunities. This trend can be attributed to the fact that these areas are frequented by tourists who make use of newspapers, increasing the demand and supply of newspapers in local supermarkets.

Very few (10%) of the surveyed employees in the five ecotourism enterprises had used other means of finding or locating employment opportunities. Overall, the results in Figure 8.1 suggest that friends, referrals, radio and newspapers were the most commonly used sources of information in the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude. On average, very few community members across the five local municipalities reached out to other sources of information. The difficulty characterising access to the relevant information on employment and business opportunities in the UKDM was confirmed by one municipal official, who said:

“Many households here do not have the Internet, email or cell phones. So, access to information depends on travelling. They have to go to town to get information, with some of them living 100 kilometres away from town. Taxis are so expensive that many of them cannot afford them. So, even if information is there, they cannot get it on time. We encourage them to visit wildlife management offices and municipal offices because most companies advertise on our notice boards because they know that many people come to the municipality because we also encourage them to give tourism information to us”.

8.6.3 Current employment status

The low quality of jobs in both mainstream tourism and ecotourism is increasingly becoming a major concern among policy makers and development practitioners (Tsangu, 2015;

Aynalem, 2016; Davis, 2018). This happens despite the fact that the National Tourism Strategy calls for decent and sustainable employment practices within the tourism sector.

In light of these issues, the primary objective of the question was to determine job quality by examining the types of employment relationships that existed in ecotourism enterprises in UMkhanyakude. The survey revealed the following results:

Figure 8. 2: Employment status in ecotourism enterprises

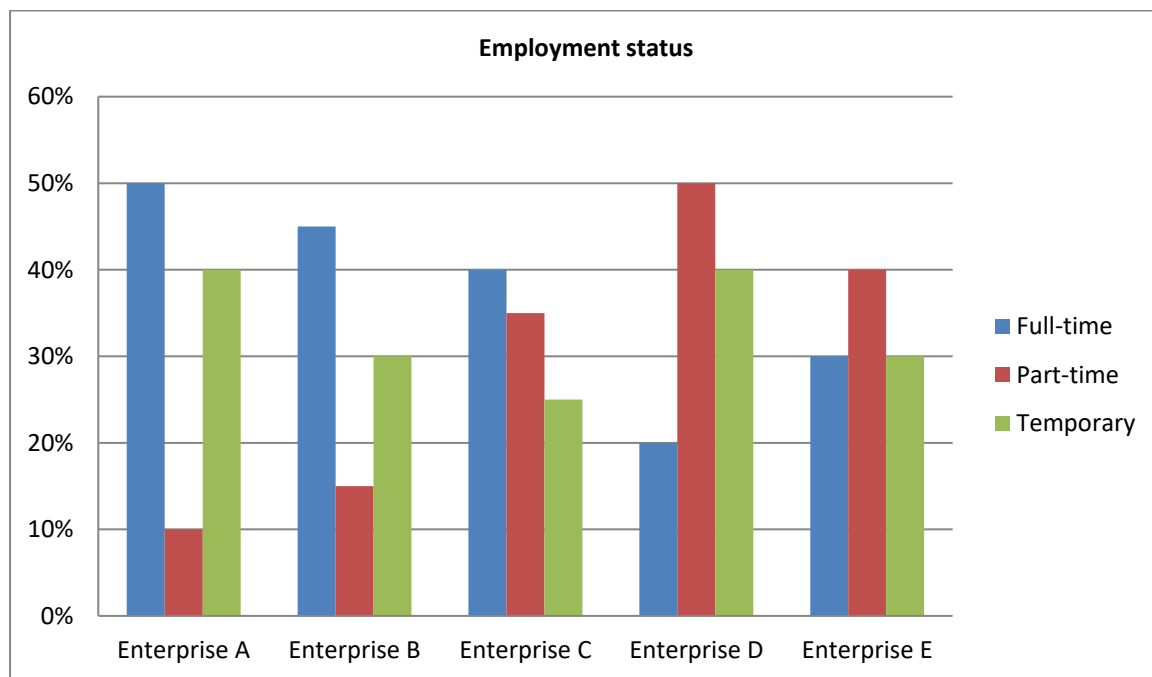


Figure 8.2 reports that employment patterns differed slightly across the five ecotourism enterprises. For example, in Enterprise A, approximately 50% of the surveyed employees reported that they were in full-time jobs; followed by Enterprises C and E, with 40% and 30%, respectively. Between 20% and 80% of employees in Enterprise B were in temporary jobs. This variation could be linked to the fact that ecotourism is largely underdeveloped in Jozini; an issue also confirmed by project managers during semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, a significant number (29%) of employees in all the five enterprises served in temporary jobs. This is a promising trend because the UKDM is generally thought to have one of the highest unemployment rates in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The relatively high number (30%) of people in temporary jobs correlated to peak times in the ecotourism industry, when thousands of tourists flocked to the UKDM region, especially during summer,

to appreciate the natural beauty and the warm weather conditions. The interviews with owners of ecotourism companies revealed the following results:

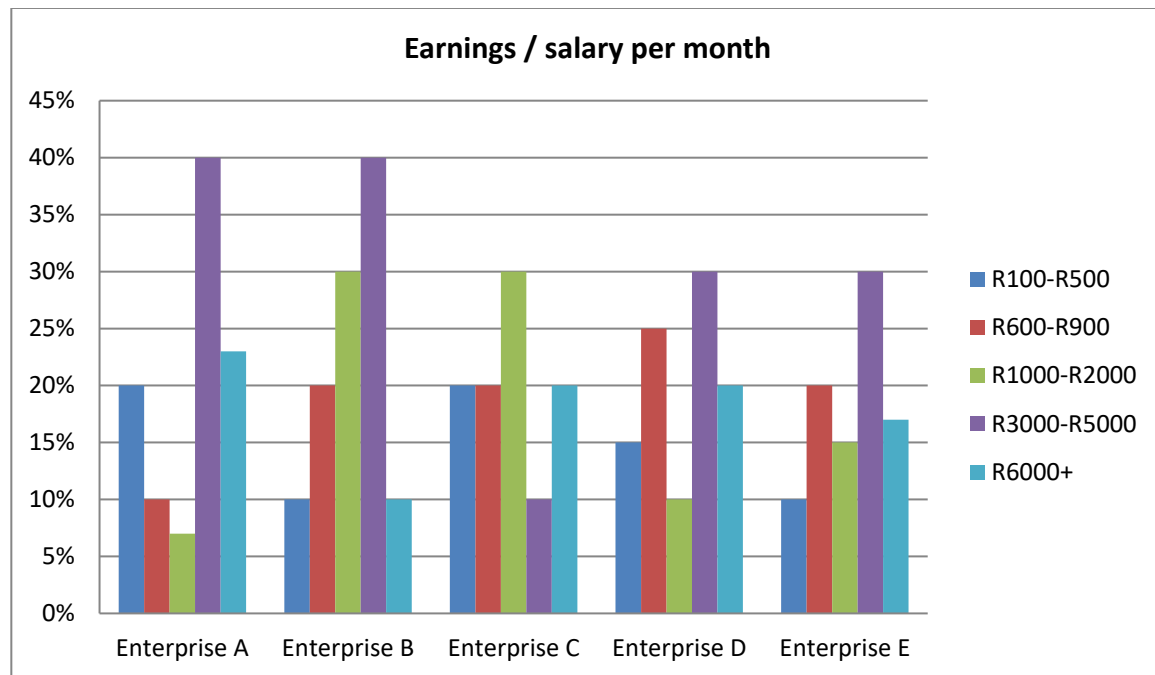
“We are very busy during summer because people love the sunshine here. So, we hire everybody, especially the youth to help. Our staff members search for them in their places and they often bring good people. We often take up to 100 people in one month to help with tour guides and stuff like that. It’s good for both the business and the community because there are no factories here”.

These results are corroborated by the ILO-UNWTO Research Report (2018), which confirmed that the tourism industry is largely labour intensive and provides jobs to many people, including well-trained professionals and also a large number of workers with difficulties finding jobs elsewhere, particularly newcomers to the labour market (young people and migrants), women with family responsibilities who can only do part-time work, and workers with insufficient qualifications in general. Tourism provides working people with income and experience; therefore, it contributes to their social inclusion and personal development.

8.6.4 Income levels in current jobs

The question under this aspect required participants to indicate their monthly income as employees of ecotourism enterprises. Income generation is an important indicator of the critical role that ecotourism plays in poverty alleviation among rural communities. With its high income-generating potential, ecotourism represents the most viable option to support sustainable livelihoods in rural areas (Manu, 2012; Parid, 2015). The results show that incomes from ecotourism activities varied across the four local municipalities of UKDM.

Figure 8.3: Earnings/ salary per month



With the exception of Enterprise B, most employees in Enterprises A, C, D and E (Figure 8.3) earned better salaries, ranging from R3, 000 to R5, 000 per month. The high earnings ratio for Enterprises C and E was attributed to the highly priced tourist resorts in Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana) and St. Lucia (Mtubatuba). However, a significant number (45%) of the employees in Enterprises B and E still earned between R900 and R1, 000 per month, suggesting the prevalence of income differentials between the ecotourism enterprises. On average, the number of employees in the lower income bracket (R100-R500 per month) in all the five enterprises was less than 20%. Only a few (3%) employees in Enterprises A and B earned more than R6, 000 per month and these were mainly professional employees in either managerial, professional or technical jobs, such as general managers, drivers, or game rangers. On average, only 10% of the surveyed employees had a monthly salary exceeding R6, 000 in the five ecotourism enterprises. The findings from semi-structured interviews confirmed these earnings, thus:

“The minimum wage follows the standard procedure stipulated by the unions. So, we try to match what others are paying locally, though very costly. Small ecotourism businesses suffer these setbacks. You know, our industry has got ups and downs; it’s very cyclical. You have

got to pay that amount because if you don't, then you risk losing your good staff due to competition”.

The above findings on the ability of ecotourism to generate income for local communities is consistent with the literature (Chapter 2), which posits that large segments of the rural communities grapple with extreme poverty and high unemployment levels, with otherwise very limited options from which to derive an income. Thus, when compared with other sources of income, the potential for an additional income that some households may expect to derive from opportunities in the protected areas, no matter how marginal these may be, can make a substantial difference to people living in poverty and surviving on a subsistence basis (Van Wijk et al., 2015 in Bob, 2016).

8.6.5 Employment benefits

On this aspect, the question was primarily designed to determine if there were any benefits that employees of ecotourism enterprises derived from their respective employers. Fair and equitable employee benefits have been found to have a positive impact on staff morale, employee commitment, productivity and talent retention (Kumar, 2013; Zhang, 2016; Mabaso, 2018). In this regard, the study established that employees of ecotourism companies had different experiences of financial and non-financial benefits in their respective organisations. These results are presented in Figure 8.4 below.

Figure 8.4: Employment benefits

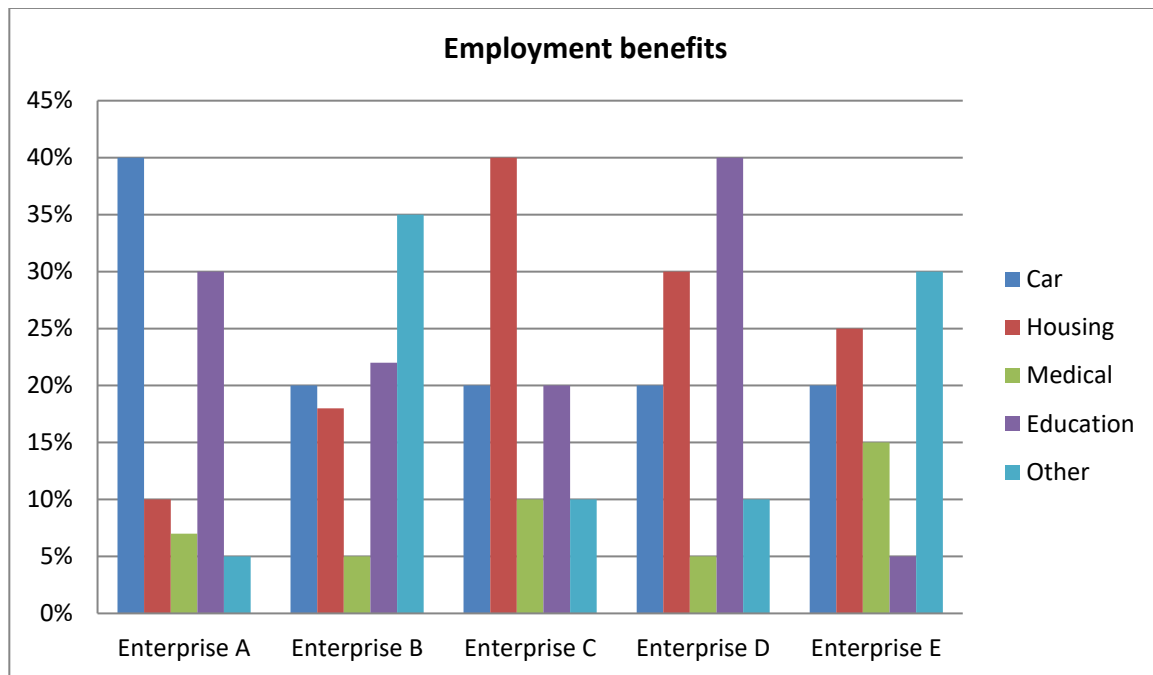


Figure 8.4 reports that 40% of the employees in Enterprise A had access to a car allowance, which was largely attributed to the fact that some senior employees could use company cars to travel to and from work; other than that, no other car benefits were reported here. Approximately 20% of employees in Enterprises B, C, D and E had access to car benefits. Only employees in Enterprise D had access to housing benefits, which were described as “sleep in” by some of the participants, rather than normal housing allowance where employees would be able to secure mortgage bonds. Meanwhile, positive signs were generally reported for education in Enterprises A and C, where some employees reported that their employer had offered to assist their children with tuition fees for university education. Education benefits in the other three enterprises were generally low at 1%. In addition, only a few (10%) of the employees across the five enterprises had alternative benefits to supplement their monthly earnings; such as clothing and food allowance. Evidence from the semi-structured interviews confirmed that some of the ecotourism companies did provide benefits to their employees:

“We always ensured that when the company grew, we would award them some bonuses and other additional benefits. However, that was not easy until 2014 when the company started

making profit. And the little that we can afford at this stage is supporting their children at school, and they seem to like that very much”.

The above findings that local people employed by ecotourism companies had access to employment benefits is consistent with the reviewed literature (Chapter 2), which revealed that employment in ecotourism is one of the most reliable sources of income for local people, allowing residents to earn more than other forms of livelihoods (Miller, 2017). The next paragraph presents the findings on the working conditions as perceived by employees of the five participating ecotourism enterprises in Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana.

8.6.6 Working conditions

The aim of the question was to establish how employees of ecotourism companies felt about the working conditions in their respective organisations; hence, the study focused on induction, training and development opportunities, as well as advice on career development options. Improved working conditions increase staff morale, commitment and productivity. Below are the results on induction.

8.6.6.1 Induction

Induction is one of the most important aspects of human resource management as it prepares new employees for their new roles and helps to align their attitudes and behaviours with the organisation's strategic goals (Ahmed, 2014; Salau, 2014). The findings of the study on this issue are as follows:

Figure 8.5: Received induction on the current job

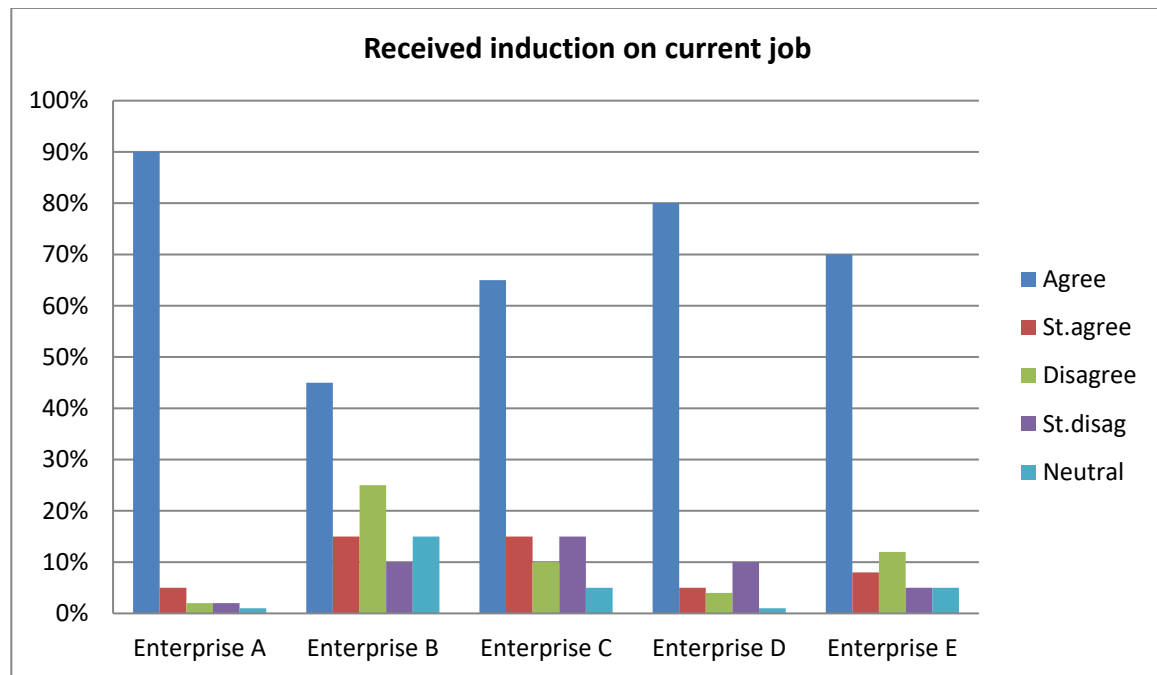


Figure 8.5 shows that the majority of employees across the five ecotourism enterprises (Enterprise A= 90%; Enterprise B = 45%; Enterprise C = 65%; Enterprise D = 80% and Enterprise E = 70%) confirmed having been inducted before starting their jobs. Apparently, staff induction was a common practice in the ecotourism industry in the UKDM.

Only a small number (10%) of the surveyed employees in each of the ecotourism companies had not experienced meaningful induction not been inducted on ecotourism practices when they assumed duties in their organisations. In addition, only 1% of the surveyed employees could hardly recall whether they actually received induction prior to assumption of their jobs; thus, some of these employees either neglected their role in induction or they simply did not feel that such induction was necessary.

“The reality is that if the new employees do not go through induction on the first day of work, they lose focus and perform poorly. So, you have got to have their induction plan and be aware of their job needs and career goals before they start work. It helps as it gives them confidence when executing their jobs. So we do it quite often”.

To a larger extent, the results in Figure 8.5 show that the surveyed ecotourism companies indeed provided induction to most of their employees at the commencement of their employment. This positive development (that is, staff induction) is commendable because most entry level employees learn and master job skills through induction rather than formal training.

The quality of employment is very important in determining beneficiation for local people employed by ecotourism companies. This includes improving salaries and working conditions as well as making the jobs available to everyone regardless of gender, race or any other discriminative motives. Employment activities must engender a fair and equitable distribution of economic benefits among the residents of the recipient community to improve opportunities, services and income to alleviate poverty (Marika, 2013).

8.6.6.2 Advice and information on training opportunities

Effective dissemination and sharing of human resource development information with all employees is critical as it improves skills levels in UKDM's ecotourism sector. It is against this background that the study sought to establish whether participants had been assisted to access training and development opportunities in their respective organisations. Overall, the data sets in Figure 8.6 from the four local municipalities suggest that employees had mixed feelings about information on training.

Figure 8.6: Information and advice on training

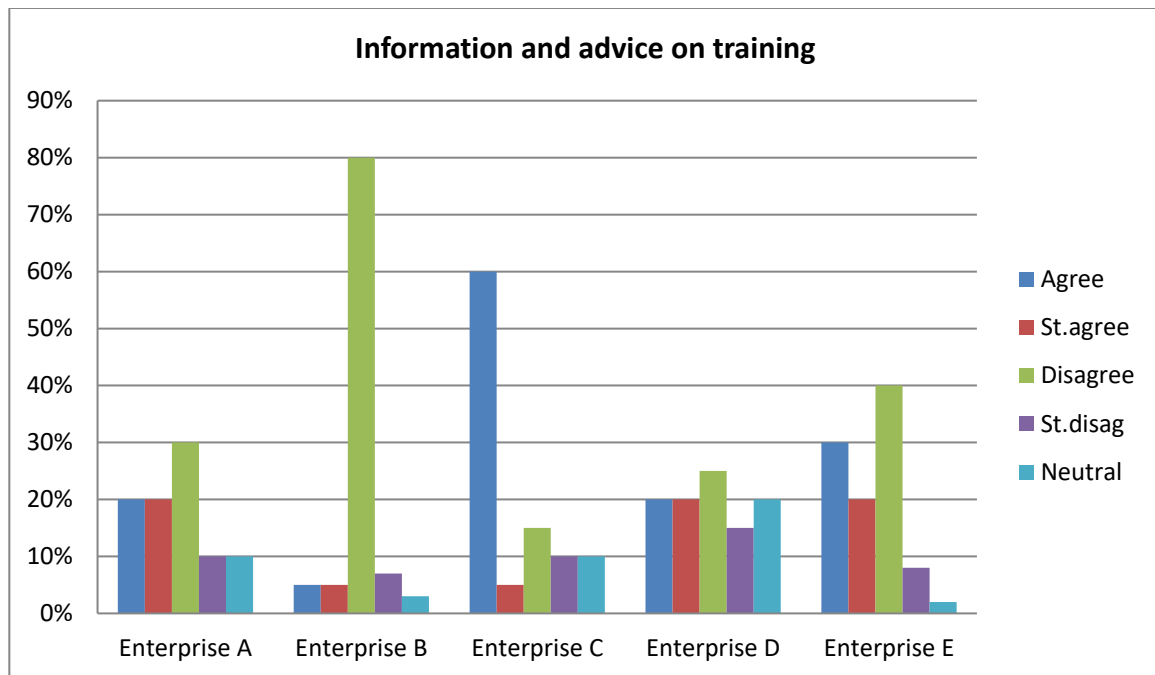


Figure 8.6 indicates that approximately 40% of employees in Enterprises A and D had been informed about training opportunities; followed by Enterprise C where more than 60% of employees had received such information. Data from semi-structured interviews revealed that this information had been obtained from supervisors and/or owners of the ecotourism enterprises, as employees had to be trained before they officially assume their duties. Meanwhile, Enterprise B had the highest number (80%) of employees who had not received information and advice on training. This indicates that skills development opportunities had not been fully extended to all employees in this enterprise. In some way, this has deprived the employees of the opportunity to learn and improve their knowledge and competencies on the job. Only a few (10%) of the surveyed employees across the five ecotourism enterprises hardly remembered whether or not they had received training-related information from their respective employers. This finding suggests that some employees were not fully responsible for their own learning and development in these ecotourism enterprises. One employer (an ecotourism company in Mtubatuba) described lack of motivation to learn as follows:

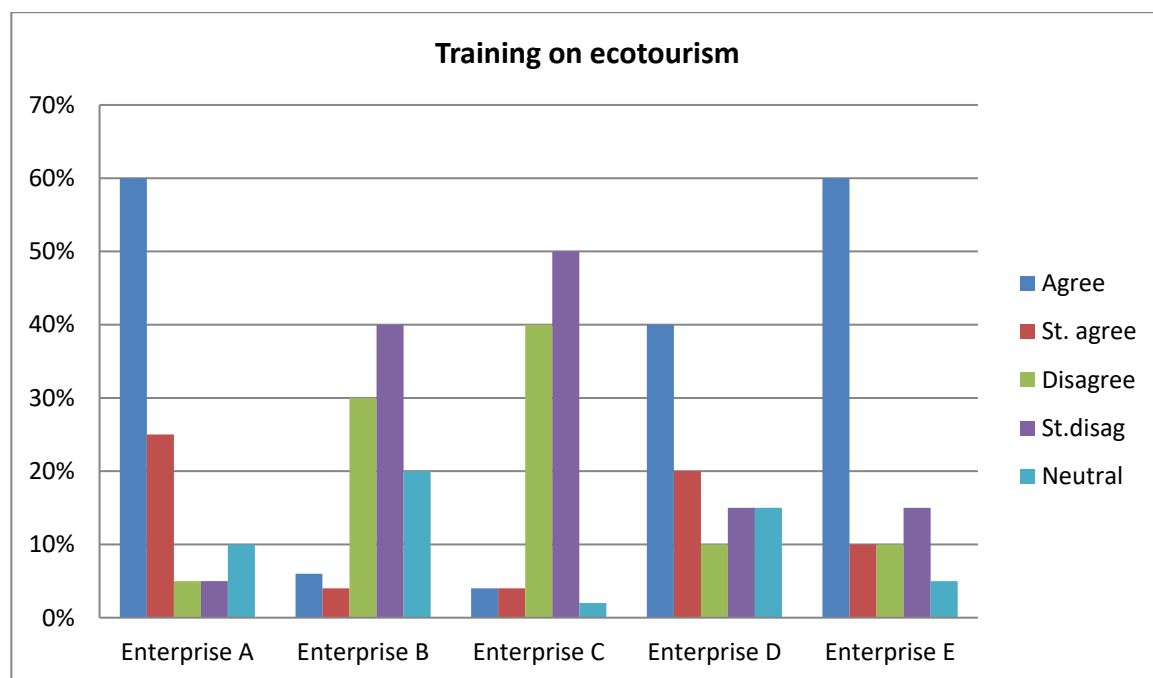
“Sometimes I have got to be hard on employees who do not want to learn. I remind them that they will be the first to lose their positions and that helps them to attend courses and improve their qualifications. This applies to administration staff. They are the ones who deal with

people at the reception and on the help desk. So, we rely on them. No one should miss training in the administration section. So, they know that they always have to check on the notice boards and emails because that is how we keep them informed about current trends, including training”.

8.6.6.3 Training on ecotourism and related activities

Based on the Skills Development Act (1998) and the National Skills Development Plan 2030, which encourage organisations to support the skills revolution in South African workplaces, the question sought to determine if ecotourism companies implemented training programmes to up-skill their workforces for better performance and retention of human capital. The results were as follows:

Figure 8.7: Training on ecotourism and related activities



According to Figure 8.7, more than 80% (60%+25%) of employees in Enterprises A had received relevant training in ecotourism; followed by Enterprises C and E with 60% respectively. In contrast, Enterprise B had a significantly low number (10%) of employees who had received such training; suggesting gaps in the provision of ecotourism training in this particular enterprise. Similarly, the majority (90%) of employees in Enterprise D had not received training on ecotourism services; compared to 40% that had received such training

in Enterprise E. This situation is not unique to the UKDM. For example, another study by Otarra (2018) found that most developing countries, including South Africa, find it difficult to build ecotourism skills and resultantly, ecotourism enterprises continue to underperform due to lack of proper staff training to ensure high quality services in the industry.

Furthermore, only 10% of the employees across the five ecotourism enterprises hardly remembered whether or not they had received on-the-job training. Taken together, the data sets in Figure 8.7 suggest that most employees had received basic training on ecotourism-related activities; however, in most cases this was just once-off preparatory training rather than an ongoing human resource development process. Most of the training reported by the participants focused mainly on the operational needs of the ecotourism businesses as opposed to the growth and development of the employees. During the interviews, ecotourism business owners confirmed this:

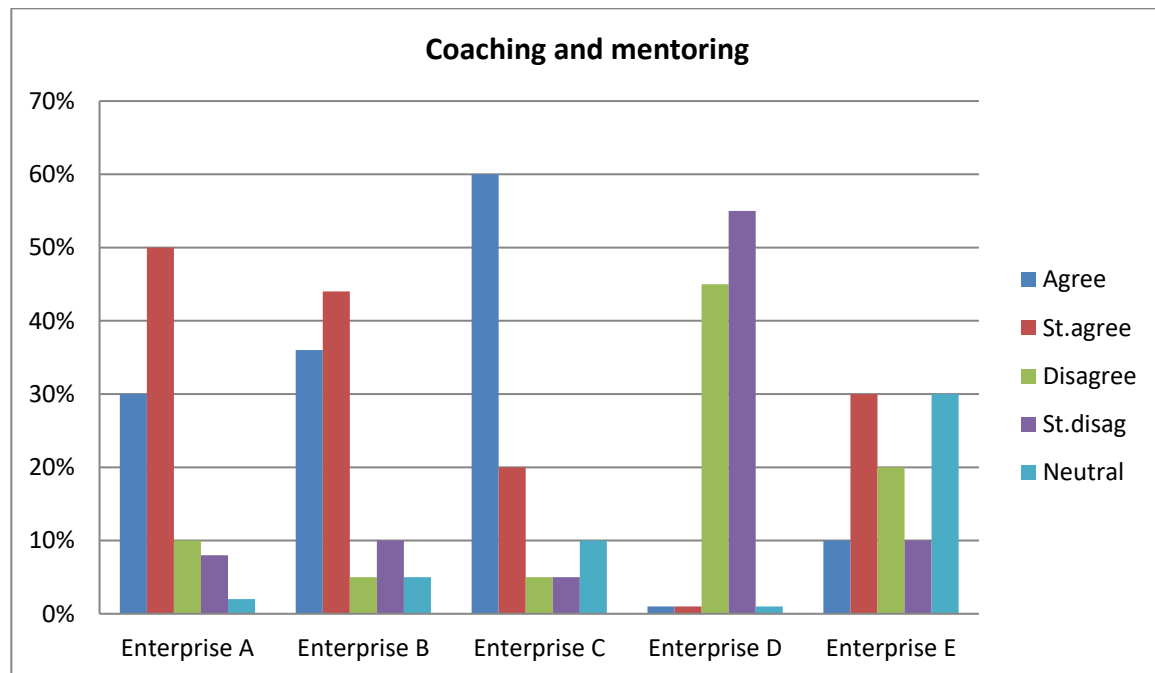
“We do not take chances. From day one, there is induction and real training begins where new employees learn everything from cooking to cleaning. Most of the time, we do job rotation. It’s very effective. The new employees learn fast because they do one job today and tomorrow it’s another. It’s mostly soft skills like teamwork and customer care, because that is what we need at the moment. Nonetheless, some people want professional training; hence, some of our staff are sent to food and catering training colleges. Some stay on and others leave after training in search of better salaries”.

The above results are corroborated by the reviewed literature, which has highlighted that skills development plays a central role in ensuring effective and sustainable transformation and the development of ecotourism in developing countries. In the South African context, ecotourism development ensures that poor communities benefit from these activities. Currently, the lack of an integrated and co-ordinated approach to tourism skills development seriously limits the potential of skills development to impact positively on tourism transformation and development in South Africa (Kaplan, 2004).

8.6.6.4 Coaching and mentoring at work

The question sought to establish whether employees of ecotourism companies had received coaching and mentoring as part of their personal development plans. Coaching and mentoring was viewed as one of the most effective ways of building skills and accelerating the professional growth and development of employees on the job (Achi, 2016; Terblanche, 2017). These activities were also said to positively impact on the overall performance and contribution of employees to the attainment of an organisation's strategic goals (Neupane, 2015; Hollywood, 2016). The results of the survey highlighted the following issues on the coaching and mentoring of employees in ecotourism companies.

Figure 8.8: Coaching and mentoring at work



Generally, the results in Figure 8.8 confirm that the majority (80%) of the employees in Enterprises A, B and C had received coaching or mentoring in their respective jobs. Close to 95% of the employees in Enterprise D disagreed, arguing that they had not received any coaching or mentoring in their jobs. The reason for this deficiency could be that most of these enterprises were run by people with limited educational backgrounds, and therefore, they were unable to provide high level human resource development services to their employees. Approximately 40% of the employees in Enterprise E had received coaching or mentoring in

their jobs. Very few (10%) employees in each of the participating ecotourism companies denied having been provided with coaching/mentoring services in their workplaces. The confirmation by some employees that coaching had been provided by their employers suggests that on-the-job training had been the standard practice in some of these ecotourism companies. To some extent, coaching or mentoring facilitated human resource development in some of these ecotourism enterprises. One ecotourism business owner concurred, thus:

“Skills are important for us because we always handle large volumes of international visitors coming to Sodwana Bay. Those visitors have their own standards and they expect to see that when they come to our lodges. We do train people on the job. My husband does the training most of the time while I work with cleaning staff. So, he does the coaching most of the time”.

The finding that some ecotourism companies offered coaching and mentoring as part of on-the-job training strategies is consistent with the findings of other researchers. For example, Nunez-Cacho's (2013) study confirmed the existence of a direct relationship between coaching and organisational performance. Mentoring and coaching help businesses grow by supporting the development of their human capital.

A similar study by Woo (2016) found that if supervisors are trained well, they can provide effective coaching and mentoring to workers in the workplace, including ecotourism settings. Additionally, Tanoli (2016) established that continued mentoring and managerial support played a key role in raising staff motivation, commitment and productivity. This is particularly important because the current study established that owners and/or managers of ecotourism businesses were largely responsible for providing on-the-job coaching and mentoring services to their employees.

8.6.7 Life skills training on HIV/AIDS

In line with the Tourism Charter (2005) and the Code of Good Practice on HIV/AIDS (2005) discussed in Chapter 2, participants were asked if they had been capacitated with HIV/AIDS Life Skills in ecotourism projects to improve their awareness and understanding of the serious negative impacts of HIV/AIDS on their lives and careers (Mohapi & Pitsoane, 2017). HIV/AIDS Life Skills education and training make workers more assertive, and display a

positive attitude towards people living with HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Given this reality, the study was therefore interested in understanding whether HIV/AIDS management skills had been transferred to employees of ecotourism companies in UKDM. The data sets from the five enterprises yielded the following results:

Figure 8.9: Life skills training on HIV/AIDS

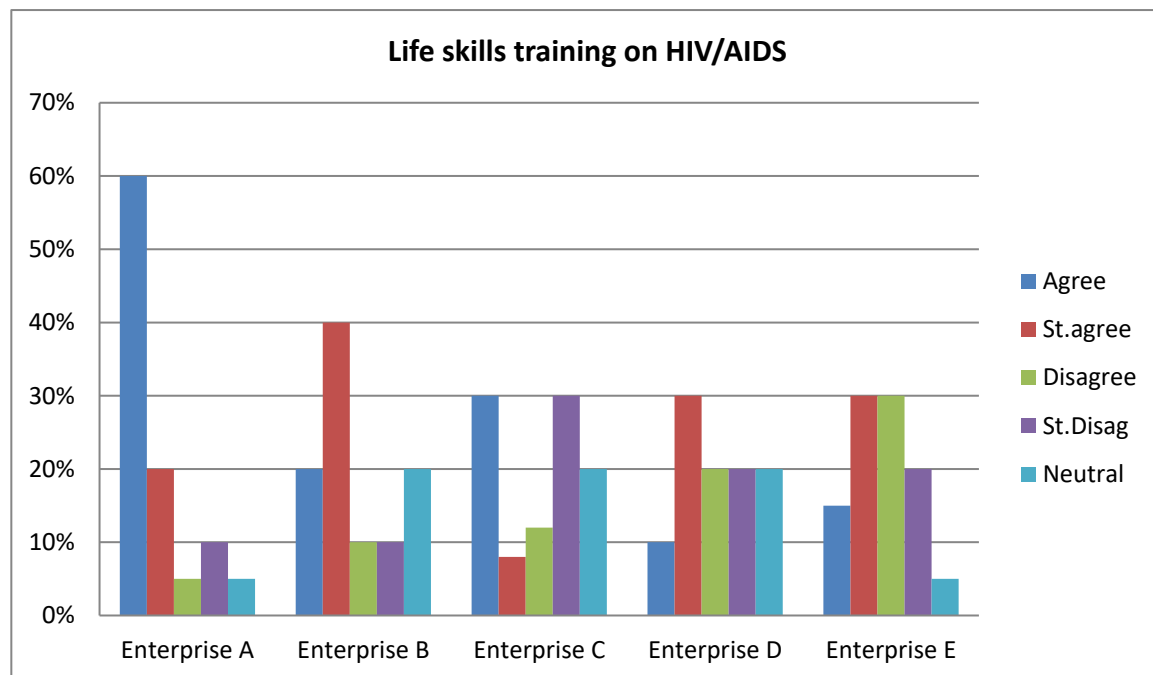


Figure 8.9 demonstrates that most employees across the five ecotourism enterprises (Enterprise A = 80%; Enterprise B = 60%; Enterprise C = 38%; Enterprise D = 40% and Enterprise E = 45%) had been trained HIV/AIDS Life Skills. Precisely, HIV/AIDS received significant attention in these enterprises. Very few (10%) of employees in each of the five ecotourism enterprises had not been informed and/or educated about HIV/AIDS, suggesting that such messages had not penetrated certain occupational levels and/or categories in these companies. Insights from the semi-structured interviews with programme officials and project managers attributed low perceptions of HIV/AIDS to illiteracy, which is one of the major development challenges facing local communities in UKDM.

On the whole, the findings in Figure 8.9 demonstrate that the level of awareness about the risks of HIV/AIDS was generally high in the participating ecotourism enterprises; this basically means that these organisations were doing their best to alert their staff about the

dangers of HIV/AIDS. One of the ecotourism employers described the implementation of the HIV/AIDS awareness programme in her company as follows:

“We are mindful of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the performance, lives and families of our employees. So, we always encourage them to take care of themselves, especially the drivers, who do our safaris and tours. They must be in good health. Our private nurse from our head office in Durban comes twice a year to give them free eye test, diabetic tests and stress management”.

These findings replicate a study by Zengeni and Zengeni (2012) who found that ecotourism is significantly affected by HIV/AIDS due to the mobility of the workforce, the nature of the industry, the presence of ‘sex tourism’ and the heavy reliance of many countries on the revenue generated from tourism. Hotel employees faced a much higher risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS as they were more likely to interact with tourists than back office employees. The consequences of HIV/AIDS included reduction in skills formation, staff morale and poor service delivery.

The transfer of life skills to employees and community members in ecotourism enterprises (Figure 8.9) is particularly important because UMkhanyakude is one of the municipalities with relatively high incidents of HIV infections, poverty and unemployment in KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Life skills can be qualified as adaptive and positive abilities that enable people to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Chips, 2012). Life skills interventions can provide ecotourism employees with knowledge and values to ensure that they make the right choices in their lives. Not only does HIV/AIDS training improve the quality of life for the workers, but also empowers them to be role models in their families in terms of safe sexual behaviours and moral responsibility.

Recent empirical works suggest that effective HIV/AIDS detection and prevention require employees to be properly equipped with life skills. In view of this guide, the study sought to determine whether or not ecotourism employees had been capacitated with HIV/AIDS management skills. This is particularly important if HIV/AIDS skills are considered within the context of community empowerment and the challenges facing UMkhanyakude District

in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in the community. The following subsection presents the results on the working conditions as described by employees of the participating ecotourism enterprises.

8.6.8 Health and safety in ecotourism enterprises

The question intended to gauge employees' perceptions regarding the working conditions in the ecotourism companies they worked for. A number of empirical studies confirm the importance of an effective health and safety management programme in the workplace as a catalyst to employee protection, productivity and mitigation of labour turnover (Agwu, 2012; Matsaung, 2017). Additionally, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1996) obliges employers in all sectors of the South African economy to promote and maintain the highest health and safety standards for employees and the general public. As shown in Figure 8.10 below, participants rated health and safety issues in their organisations differently.

Figure 8. 10: Health and safety at work

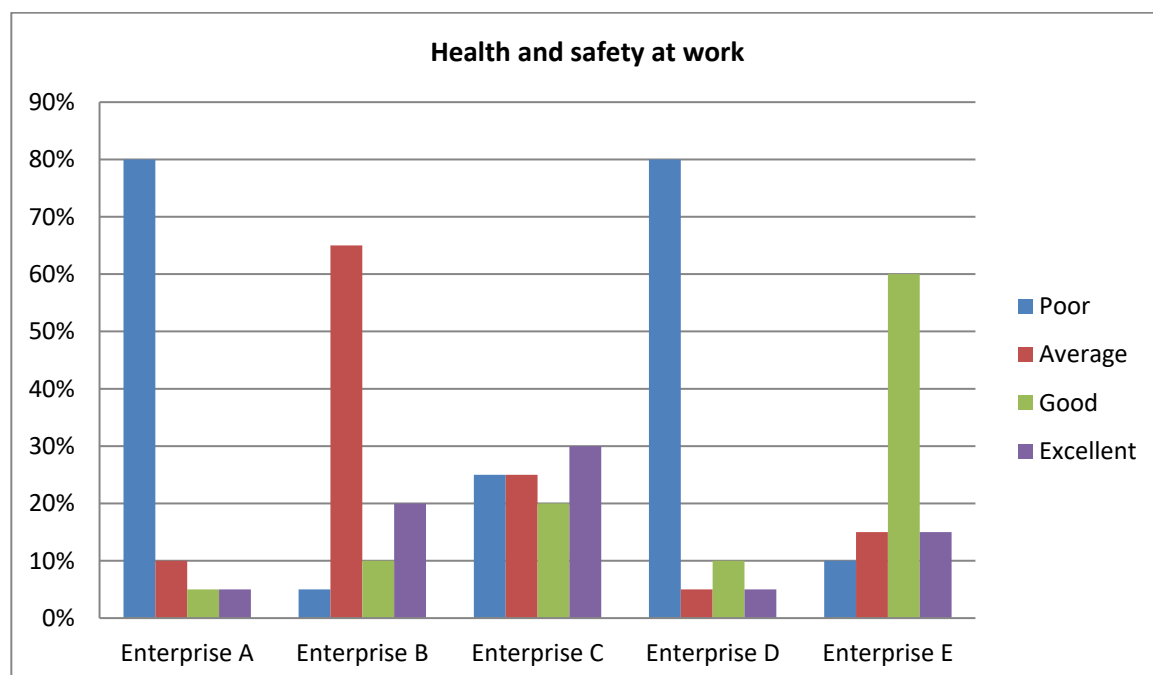


Figure 8.10 shows that the majority (80%) of the employees in Enterprises A and D perceived health and safety conditions in their organisations as generally poor. Enterprise B had the highest number (65%) of employees who thought that health and safety in their organisation was somewhat average. Furthermore, roughly 60% of the employees in Enterprise E felt that

health and safety conditions in their workplaces were good. Enterprise C had the lowest number (25%) of employees who thought that health and safety conditions were poor in their workplace. In addition, only 20% of the employees across the five ecotourism enterprises felt that health and safety issues were excellent in their organisations. To some extent, these results dovetail with insights from owners of ecotourism companies. One company owner said:

“We talk to staff about safety every day. They acknowledge the need to follow the rules. We even facilitate their training. We also do fire drills every month so that everyone knows what to do in an emergency. This works perfectly for us. So, we do not experience accidents resulting from carelessness or something like that. People know their duties very well”.

Some researchers have found a positive relationship between a conducive working environment and employee performance and productivity. For instance, Shrivasti and Bhola (2015) observed that a work environment exhibiting high levels of health and safety impacts positively on staff morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. Similarly, Raziqa’s (2015) investigation into the impact of the working environment on job satisfaction in Pakistan discovered that for business to increase employees’ efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and job commitment, they must satisfy the needs of their employees, particularly good working conditions. This same principle applies to ecotourism enterprises in UKDM. Figure 8.11 illustrates the findings on the promotion opportunities as perceived by employees of the five ecotourism enterprises.

8.6.9 Promotional opportunities in ecotourism jobs

Creating and providing equitable access to promotional opportunities is key to attracting and retaining talent in any organisation, including ecotourism companies (Mustapha, 2013). Participants were asked if there were any opportunities for career advancement in their ecotourism companies. Not only do meaningful promotional opportunities enhance staff morale and professional development, but also help to reduce labour turnover, which is detrimental to both organisational performance and customer satisfaction (Hambuda, 2017). The participants rated promotional opportunities in their organisations as follows:

Figure 8. 11: Promotional opportunities

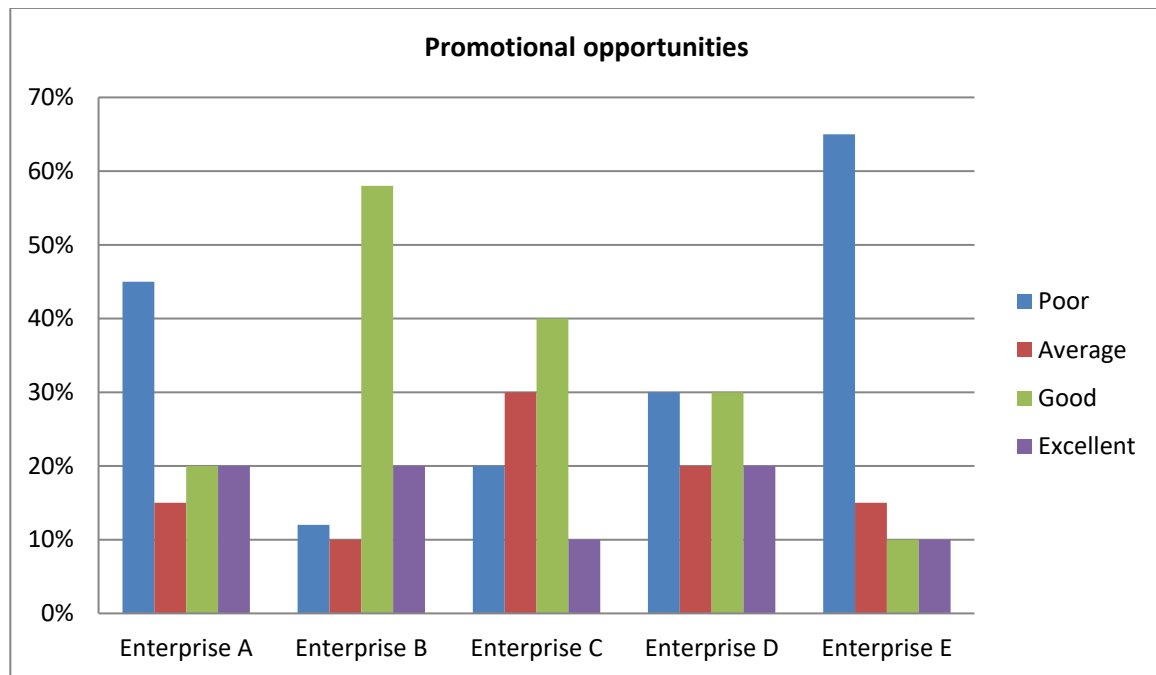


Figure 8.11 suggests that employees had different perceptions about promotional opportunities in their respective organisations. For example, in Enterprise A, the employees felt that opportunities for promotion were poor (45%); average (15%), good (20%) or excellent (20%). More than half (58%) of the employees in Enterprise B were generally positive about promotional opportunities in their organisation, compared to 40% who shared similar views in Enterprise C. In Enterprise D, only 30% of the employees thought that promotional opportunities were poor in their organisation. Similarly, two thirds (65%) of the employees in Enterprise E felt that promotional opportunities were poor in their organisation. Less than 20% of the employees across the five enterprises thought that promotional opportunities were excellent in their workplaces. Despite the variations in the promotional opportunities available in each ecotourism enterprise, these results confirm that there were chances for career advancement in some of the ecotourism ventures in the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude. One ecotourism enterprise owner reported:

“We tell our employees that they can be anything they want in life if they worked hard and respected the rules; we will support and keep them. It all depends on each person’s attitude. If they are motivated to work and show respect to others, they get promoted; but if they are not cooperating, we sometimes decide to release them”.

The only challenge, as corroborated by some officials and project managers during the semi-structured interviews in areas like Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana, was the lack of relevant skills on how. The study presents the results on treatment/working relationships as reported by employees of these ecotourism companies.

To some extent, the results support the findings of Aynalem, Bierhanu and Tesefay (2016) who discovered that ecotourism created diversified employment opportunities in different sectors; for instance, accommodation, food and beverage establishments, transportation services, travel agencies, tour operation companies, as well as natural and cultural attraction sites. On the contrary, Baum (2016) found that ecotourism employees were disgruntled with their working conditions, owing to a number of factors, including lack of clear career paths, challenging working conditions, dirty and difficult work, poorer incentives, lack of opportunities for gender and minority groups, precarious, seasonal employment and low status at work.

8.6.10 Treatment at work

The aim of the question was to understand how employees felt about the treatment they got from their employers. Fair and equal treatment of all employees at work has been found to improve staff perceptions about the organisation and their interactions with management (El-Said, 2014; Cheon, 2016, Karch & Peters, 2017). In other words, the way in which an organisation treats and handles its human resources determine the success or failure of organisations. Figure 8.12 below presents mixed results, with many employees rating their organisations as good or average.

Figure 8.12: Treatment /working relationship

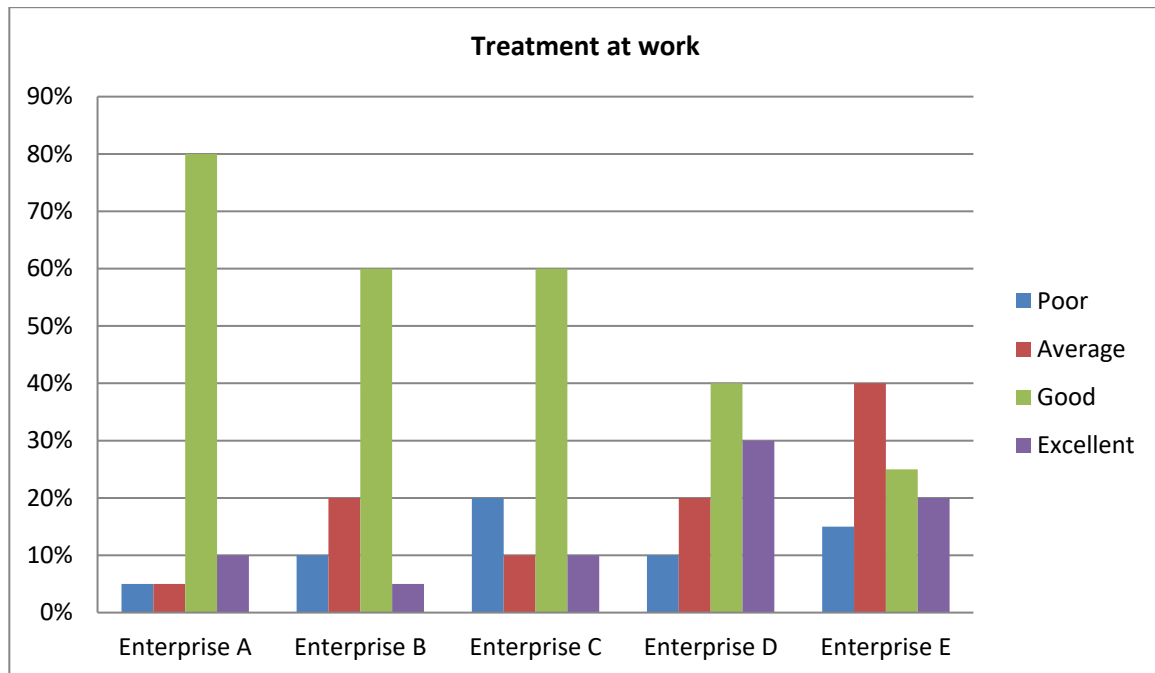


Figure 8.12 indicates that almost 80% of the employees in Enterprise A felt that the treatment they received in their organisation was good. Similarly, 60% of employees in Enterprise B and C had a positive experience of treatment at work. In contrast, Enterprise B had a slightly higher number (40%) of employees who thought that the treatment they received in their organisation was poor. In addition, close to 40% of the employees in Enterprise E felt that the working relationship was average; followed by 20% in Enterprises C and D with a similar experience. On average, the number of employees who experienced excellent treatment across the five enterprises was significantly low, at 15%. The only exception here was Enterprise A, where “excellent ratings” averaged 30%. On the whole, these findings suggest that job satisfaction can be achieved in ecotourism enterprises if working conditions are gradually improved in order to accommodate the employees’ diverse needs. The interviews revealed the following:

“As soon as they join the company, we ensure that they understand what we do and how we work and what they are expected to do. So, our people will know from day one that we are a company that loves its guests and that we always strive for excellence in what we do. So, trust

and mutual respect are our important values, and many of our staff members are comfortable with that”.

The results presented above are consistent with the literature which underscores the importance of human resources in ensuring high quality ecotourism services. Employees were found to be the most indispensable assets of the ecotourism enterprises. Ecotourism enterprises benefit immensely from an adequate supply of high-quality staff or sustainable workforce. Fair treatment of staff by management is important because the quality of tourists' experiences and images in an ecotourism destination highly depends on the level of professionalism displayed by staff in each ecotourism enterprise (Aynalem et al., 2016).

8.6.11 Workload in ecotourism enterprises

The participants were asked to rate their employers in terms of work allocation. Arguably, a happy and committed staff compliment guarantees organisational success. Positive attitudes and feelings about work, co-workers, and management determine high staff morale, which drives productivity and customer satisfaction. Contrary to this reality, it has been contended that heavy workloads and poor treatment of workers at work exacerbate stress levels among employees, thus discouraging creativity and innovation (Butali, 2013). The participants rated workload in their organisations as follows:

Figure 8.13: Workload in ecotourism enterprises

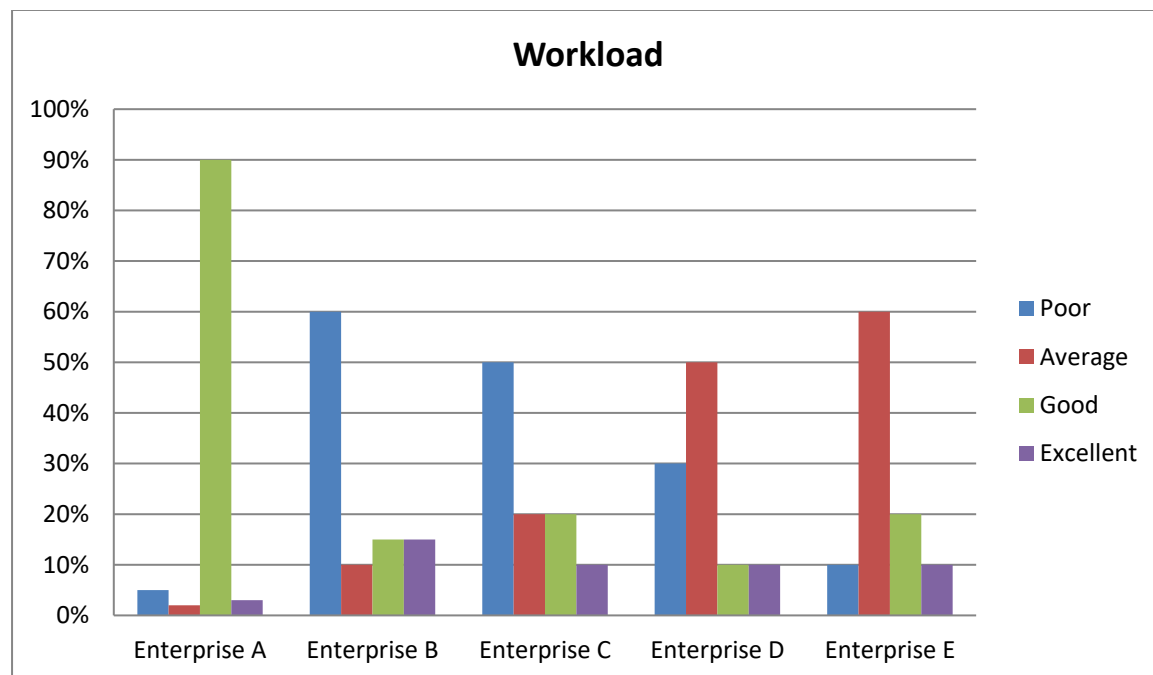


Figure 8.13 shows that the majority (90%) of employees in Enterprise A felt that their workload was good. Contrary, most employees in the other four enterprises felt that their workloads were either poor or average; an indication that some of these employees were generally unhappy with the current work allocated to them in these organisations. Most of the negative experiences about workload were reported by employees who occupied either temporary or part-time positions, which were said to be very demanding during peak times when more tourists visited areas like St. Lucia (Mtubatuba Local Municipality); Hluhluwe Game Reserve (Hlabisa Local Municipality) and Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana Local Municipality). Insights from the interviews held with owners of ecotourism enterprises confirmed the cyclical nature of ecotourism work as follows:

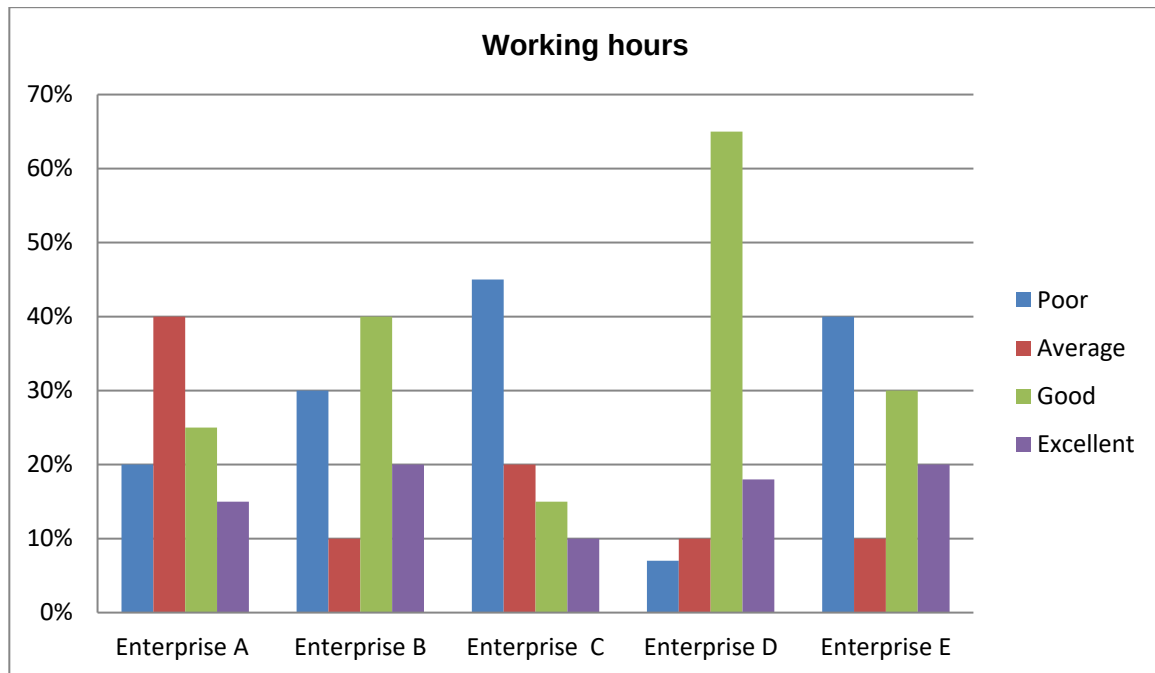
“The amount of work given to staff each day is determined by the orders and bookings that we get from visitors; hence, there is no fixed work. Our employees know that because we talk to them about that and they know that if opportunities arise, we have got to use them because we may not have them again in future. So, everyone is committed and they realise the fruits of putting an extra effort into their work-related bonuses when they have met their performance targets.

The adverse findings on workload presented in Figure 8.13 in ecotourism jobs are consistent with a research undertaken by Poulston (2009), which found that staff shortages, time constraints, work overload, long working hours, shift work and difficult customers all contributed to a stressful working environment for employees. Unhappy employees were prone to stress, resulting in absenteeism, dishonesty, exacerbated staff turnover; thus, decreasing the profitability of the ecotourism business. Baum (2016) posits that, ironically, the structural features of the ecotourism industry are unequivocally capable of delivering the benefits that increase workers' well-being, strong social connectivity, an interesting variety of work, flexible work options, and development opportunities. Nonetheless, the industry continues to exhibit poor working practices. Presented below are the results on working hours.

8.6.12 Working hours in ecotourism enterprises

Basically, the question intended to explore how employees felt about the working hours in their respective organisations. Research shows that the manner in which working time is allocated, utilised and managed directly impacts on the achievement of an organisation's strategic goals and the retention of human capital (Holly & Alwine, 2012; Shoukat, 2016; Stroup & Yoon, 2016; Abid, 2017). Coupled with heavy workloads, long working hours impact negatively on the employees' health and well-being (Fransman, 2014). Worse still, poor management of these issues may prompt the resignation of some employees from the organisation as a result of depression, fatigue and burnout (Dwesini, 2016; Lu, 2017; Jackson, 2018). Against this backdrop, the participants rated working hours in their organisations as follows:

Figure 8.14: Working hours



The results in Figure 8.14 show that most (65%) employees in Enterprise D perceived the working hours as generally good; followed by Enterprise C where almost 60% of the employees also thought that their working hours were good. To some degree, the majority of employees in these two enterprises were generally satisfied with the working hours stipulated by their employers. In contrast, a significant number (40%) of the employees in Enterprise E felt that the working hours in their organisation were poor. A similar situation was reported in Enterprise D, where 8% of the surveyed employees also felt that working hours in their workplace were poor. In some way, these findings suggest that some of the employees in the participating ecotourism enterprises probably worked longer hours than their counterparts in the other ecotourism companies. Very few (1%) employees across the five ecotourism enterprises (Figure 8.14) felt that their working hours were excellent; suggesting that improvements were necessary in ensuring that the working hours conform to the generally accepted norm of 48 hours per week for all salaried employees in South Africa. This common low rating also implies that the perceptions of employees regarding working hours were somewhat identical across the five ecotourism companies in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. During the interviews with operators of ecotourism companies, one participant revealed that:

“This is a very unpredictable industry. Sometimes we have work and sometimes we don’t. So, we always think about tomorrow, worried about the survival of the business. This affects our decisions regarding the number of people we can afford to keep and what we can do for them in terms of skills and welfare”.

The mixed results on the working conditions, particularly the working hours, treatment, pay et cetera, are consistent with the findings of other researchers. For example, Aynalem, Birhanu and Tesefay (2016) found that while ecotourism brought jobs and income for locals, the challenges were poor pay and working conditions, sexual harassment, discrimination, unequal treatment, low educational attainment and training, rigid and undemocratic corporate culture, drastically reduced number of visitors while also exacerbating staff turnover in ecotourism enterprises (Aynalem et al., 2016).

In a related study, Poulston (2009) found that employee motivation had been severely impeded by dissatisfaction with pay, supervisors’ (management style), and general working conditions. The most likely outcome of their poor motivation and dissatisfaction is that they would seek alternative work elsewhere. Too much emphasis on achieving results through tight performance management measures often results in the exploitation of workers, as those at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy may work hardest for the least pay. Based on Herzberg’s (1959) Two-Factor Theory, Poulston (2009) concluded that unless an employee’s ‘hygiene’ factors are satisfied by ecotourism enterprises, motivational factors, such as opportunities for advancement, will be ineffectual, leaving the employee unmotivated and dissatisfied.

Other researchers found that satisfying hygiene factors, such as clear job responsibilities and consistent working hours (Milman, 2002), quality supervision, leader facilitation and support, professional and organisational esprit, low conflict and ambiguity, work group cooperation, friendliness, and warmth (Manning, 2005), and a team environment (Gustafson, 2002), improves staff retention. Ricci and Milman (2002) found that retention in the tourism and hospitality industry was predicated more on self-fulfilment and positive working conditions than on monetary rewards. Workers were attracted by flexible working hours, introductory training (induction) and working with sociable people (Poulston, 2009).

8.6.13 Support for women/youth-owned ecotourism ventures

The question primarily aimed to establish whether women and youth groups had been empowered in ecotourism projects. In Hlabisa, participants reported that apart from learnerships, wildlife management services, in partnership with local ecotourism companies and community structures, provided relevant information and consumer education targeted all age groups, not just women and the youth, although these cohorts are considered to be the primary and strategic focus. In Mtubatuba, a participant reported that:

“Wildlife expands youth development opportunities in ecotourism by exposing more young people to wildlife education. This requires a change of the mindset because many young people generally have negative perceptions about nature conservation and related activities. Owing to lack of knowledge, most people here think that ecotourism is a boring job meant for less educated people in the community. Our responsibility in wildlife conservation is to ensure that young people are aware of the immense opportunities in ecotourism as in any other profession, business or occupation.”

The results on efforts to support women and youth groups are consistent with the Pro-Poor Approach (Chapter 3), which sees the centrality of empowerment in advancing gender equality, where men and women enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Effective and meaningful women and youth empowerment in ecotourism entails identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women the autonomy to manage their own lives. The empowerment of women is central in building and strengthening sustainable livelihoods in rural areas where women remain largely marginalised and excluded from mainstream ecotourism activities such as venture creation. Ecotourism is capable of assisting women to increase power and control over natural resources and thus foster economic, political and educational empowerment. One of the fundamental tenets of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is the formation, development and preservation of community assets in order to shield the community against external shocks and to build resilience against poverty. Women owned enterprises such as guiding and providing accommodation and food to tourists, which provided them with an opportunity to communicate and express their views. Through their interaction with tourists, women who have long been confined to home-based roles and responsibilities, particularly

house chores and rearing children, get empowered psychologically by learning internationally spoken languages such as English and French (Ampumuza, 2008).

However, Nedelea's study (2006) found that some ecotourism activities were biased against female members of households in the allocation of income, food, nutrition, healthcare and educational resources. The general misconception and marginalisation of women's role in conservation strategies, which is directly related to their lack of power and their low status within society, have often resulted in researchers and policy makers ignoring women's skills and needs as focal issues in mainstream sustainable tourism development. Similarly, Sproule (1995) established that many communities and cultures have unspoken restrictions on the roles that are appropriate for women within ecotourism enterprises. Though many women in rural areas may welcome ecotourism, they are often restricted from accessing the most lucrative aspects of the enterprise, often working as cooks or cleaners.

Similar results have been documented by Wakelin-Theron (2018) who notes that ecotourism exhibits high labour intensity, job insecurity, and high staff turnover rates. The industry relies heavily on semi-skilled and unskilled labour. The provision of training is also very low, with many employees receiving informal on-the-job training (Wakelin-Theron, 2018).

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter reported the findings of the study and noted that challenges remain in the execution of ecotourism projects; however, to some extent, community members benefited from these activities. Examples of benefits or advantages accruing to local people included employment opportunities in hotel and lodge services; small business opportunities in local sourcing; high value returns as goods were bought in foreign currency at market price; and reduction in illiteracy owing to skills transfer to local communities through employment and small business development. Nonetheless, some community members were disadvantaged in ecotourism projects, especially those living far from the ecotourism sites. The disadvantages included limited access to the relevant information; lack of transport; and tough local government regulations, which discouraged informal ecotourism trading activities in some areas. Overall, these results suggest that despite the prevailing challenges, opportunities exist regarding improvement in the implementation of ecotourism projects and the beneficiation

of local communities. At the time of reporting, the UKDM Development Agency Strategic Plan (2019-2022) had planned the following ecotourism-supportive initiatives in the district: Phase 1 encompasses the implementation of targeted tourism training, focusing on building scarce skills. Phase 2 entails the creation of a tourism training centre. The UKDM realises that inadequate skilling of its population would imply that its people would not be able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by ecotourism. The next chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations arising from the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this inquiry was to assess the implementation of ecotourism projects in UMkhanyakude District Municipality. Through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, the study found that ecotourism initiatives were being implemented at varying degrees of success across the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude, precisely Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana, and that these were largely driven by wildlife management services and private ecotourism operators. Despite the difficulties in funding and project control, pockets of excellence were reported in Mtubatuba, where a group of community members owned and ran a successful fruit and vegetable market, supplying fresh produce to five-star lodges and hotels in the St. Lucia. Conversely, the study established that community members had not been properly capacitated on how to participate and benefit from ecotourism services; this explains why most of those who participated could hardly diversify their product offerings. They sold similar products (for example, handcrafts and fruits) to tourists. Locals could not take advantage of the huge economic benefits brought by ecotourism across the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude.

9.2 Summary of the study

The primary aim of this inquiry was to establish whether or not ecotourism, as one of the potential pillars of sustainable development, helped to alleviate poverty and unemployment. The fundamental proposition that directed this inquiry was that well-conceived ecotourism initiatives could possibly help in alleviating poverty and unemployment. This proposition was partially confirmed by the data sets obtained from Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana Local Municipalities.

This inquiry was guided by the parallel convergent research design, which allowed the blending and application of qualitative and quantitative research strategies to understand whether or not ecotourism projects being implemented alleviated poverty in the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude District. The triangulation of research techniques was

permissible in the investigation of a complex phenomenon such ecotourism whose nature, scope and activities could hardly be understood through the application of a single research method.

The universe for this inquiry included 614, 046 people in UMkhanyakude. In total, 204 participants were selected from this population; thus, 51 participants were derived from each of the four UKDM local municipalities ($51 \times 4 = 204$). This sample was selected using a combination of random sampling (probability sampling) and purposive (non-probability) sampling to reduce bias generally associated with heavy reliance on one research method.

The study pursued four research questions, namely: How does ecotourism reduce poverty and unemployment? Are local communities empowered to participate in the implementation of ecotourism? What experiences do local communities have regarding the implementation of ecotourism projects in the area? Has ecotourism improved livelihoods of communities? To tackle these questions, the study employed both semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

In assessing the contribution of ecotourism to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment, the study was informed and guided by the interpretivist paradigm, which facilitated the interpretation and understanding of the data from the perspective and experiences of the participants, as they were directly impacted by the implementation of ecotourism projects.

The first phase of the study involved semi-structured interviews with managers or owners of established and emerging, community-based ecotourism enterprises. The second phase involved the survey involving employees of ecotourism enterprises and community members, who were also the beneficiaries of ecotourism services.

The study's quality aspects (validity and reliability) were addressed through the triangulation of data collection methods, translation of some of the questionnaires into the local language (IsiZulu) to mitigate the challenge of illiteracy and to improve the accuracy of the answers proffered by the participants; quality was further guaranteed through the pre-testing of the research instruments, that is, questionnaires and the interview guide. The enthusiasm to participate and contribute to the research overtly manifested in participants' faces as the study spoke directly to their interests in and experience of ecotourism services in their areas.

Ethical considerations were equally observed as the researcher sensitised participants about their rights before the survey and semi-structured interviews were conducted; rapport and mutual trust were established through consultation and open communication, with the researcher encouraging participants to ask questions on issues that were either perplexing or unclear in the survey and/or interviews; and treating all participants with dignity and respect throughout the research process.

9.3 Conclusions

The primary research question guiding this study was: What contribution does ecotourism make to sustainable development in UMkhanyakude District Municipality, given the challenges of poverty and unemployment in this community? In addressing this question, the study made the following conclusions regarding the contribution of ecotourism projects to poverty alleviation in the UKDM.

Objective 1: To establish whether ecotourism can reduce poverty and unemployment in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality

This objective directly followed from the first research question, namely: In what way is ecotourism used to reduce poverty and unemployment in UMkhanyakude District? The results on whether or not ecotourism helps to reduce poverty and unemployment varied across the four local municipalities. The results from Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana (Figure 6.5) show that ecotourism remains largely underdeveloped and dissipated, with little (60%) involvement of local communities. In Mtubatuba, the results revealed isolated pockets of excellence in St. Lucia and Dukuduku at 48%, where some community members confirmed that the income they earned from ecotourism activities ranged from R3, 000 to R5, 000 per month for employees and R600 to R10, 000 for small business owners (Figure 5.7 and Figure 5.8). In Hlabisa, data in Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.3 indicate that ecotourism enterprises supported education through sponsorship of sporting activities and temporary employment of the youth during peak seasons when thousands of tourists flock into the area to see the “Big Five”.

In Jozini Community, earnings from ecotourism were relatively low, ranging from R500 to R1, 000 per month, mainly from the sale of braai wood and precious stones; while income from ecotourism jobs ranged between R2, 000 and R3, 000 (Figure 5.7 and Figure 5.8). Basing on these success stories, it can be concluded that ecotourism has the potential to enhance sustainable livelihoods and therefore reduce poverty and unemployment in rural communities in line with the dimensions of sustainable development goals mentioned in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.2). The earnings from ecotourism fulfil the economic principle; while the social principle manifested itself in the fair representation of women in both ecotourism jobs and related business activities at the community level. To some extent, the socio-cultural context of the UKDM was supportive of the participation of women in ecotourism jobs and venture creation.

The environmental principle was fulfilled by the greater emphasis that both the community and ecotourism operators placed on nature conservation. Nevertheless, these gains were slightly reversed by lack of knowledge and expertise on how best to capacitate local communities for them to take advantage of ecotourism opportunities in their respective local municipalities. This is partly attributable to the local municipalities' weakening programme and project management capabilities, as evidenced by fragmented approaches to the implementation of ecotourism initiatives across the UKDM.

Parallel studies conducted by Thiry (2000), Jing and Fucai (2011), Crispin and Whikham (2010), Stronza (2010), and Miller (2017) emphasise the importance of incorporating programme management principles in ecotourism initiatives to enhance learning, the carrying capacity of sites, resource utilisation, delivery of benefits and value creation for all stakeholders, including local communities. The National Tourism Sector Strategy and the Tourism Act (2011) provide that municipalities should collaborate with other spheres of government to facilitate planning and the implementation of tourism programmes, as well as the achievement of tourism development goals.

Overall, the analysis in Chapter 5 suggests that current approaches used to implement ecotourism initiatives are highly centralised, with wildlife management services, local municipalities and private operators being the sole custodians of ecotourism activities in the entire UMkhanyakude region. Communities across the four local communities surveyed for

this study had little say in the planning and execution of ecotourism projects. Consequently, most participants were dissatisfied with the manner in which this lucrative industry was being regulated in their areas. The overall impression was that international ecotourism companies benefited immensely from ecotourism projects at the expense of the local people. This uneven allocation and distribution of resources in ecotourism initiatives was not peculiar to UMkhanyakude. Similar empirical studies from other countries confirm that in some instances, the planning and implementation of ecotourism projects are done without proper consideration of the development needs of local communities (Greening, 2014). Rarely do ecotourism activities sufficiently and equitably benefit all community members, socially and economically (Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler & Scheihas, 2003; Fiorello & Bo, 2012).

The beneficiation of local communities in ecotourism is a moral concern, as some researchers have argued that ecotourism involves the use of local resources for consumption by tourists (Garrod, 2003). Including local people in the benefit-sharing scheme may help reduce the perceived gap between the importance and outcomes of ecotourism initiatives. If local people are to accept ecotourism initiatives as genuinely reflective of their needs and interests, they need to receive real benefits from them; otherwise they risk refutation and resistance (Ekwale, 2014). Inequitable sharing of ecotourism benefits with local residents is one of the major impediments to the success of ecotourism projects in rural areas (Birendra, Paudyal & Neupane, 2018).

The use of top-down approaches in the implementation of ecotourism initiatives directly contradicts the three approaches outlined in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.1), namely; the Community-Based Approach to ecotourism, the People-Centred Approach and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, which all underscore the importance of using bottom-up participatory mechanisms that put local communities at the centre of ecotourism development activities. Incorporating bottom-up approaches in the planning and management of ecotourism may assist in nurturing positive attitudes towards ecotourism, creating a clearer understanding of the needs of the local communities and how they may be roped into these processes; hence the centrality of ecotourism in building sustainable livelihoods in peripheral communities (Kumara, 2016).

This finding on the use of top-down approaches and the limited involvement of local government in ecotourism development has also been challenged by recent empirical studies;

for instance, Shone, Simmons and Dalziel (2016) in New Zealand's Hurunui District found that tourism is being transformed into a vibrant economic sector, with the role of local government in promoting and supporting ecotourism having increased considerably over the last twenty-five years. Given that policy discussions and resourcing decisions occur at local government level, the role of local government in encouraging initiatives that foster sustainable ecotourism becomes paramount (Vieira, Rodrigues, Fernandes, & Pires, 2016). The inability of local government to effectively manage ecotourism activities often creates a host of problems, particularly degradation of the natural environment, high prices of tourism goods and services, poor wages, and the marginalisation of local communities (Nunkoo, 2015).

This problem of limited involvement of local government in tourism development has also been explicitly acknowledged by the South African Local Government Association Programme, which notes that not all local government establishments clearly understand the marketing and management of tourism initiatives in their areas. This has been compounded by lack of skills and severe resource constraints, rendering it difficult for local municipalities to deliver on their tourism mandates. The complexity of the legal framework and the multidisciplinary nature of ecotourism have made it difficult for policy makers and programme managers at the local government level to leverage tourism opportunities as part of their development mandates.

Objective 2: To assess whether local communities have been capacitated to participate in the implementation of ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality

This objective directly followed from the second research question: What are the advantages and disadvantages of ecotourism in the area? Overall, the results attest to the limited and uneven patterns of empowerment and beneficiation of local communities from ecotourism activities, with Mtubatuba leading the pack (40%); followed by Hlabisa (30%); and Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana with 30% each (Figures 6.4, 6.5, 6.8 and 6.9, respectively). Common ecotourism capacitation and/or empowerment initiatives included briefings through local chiefs and municipal IDP meetings on planned ecotourism projects (UMhlabuyalingana) as well as information sharing, which was hampered by illiteracy as half of the adult population across the four local municipalities could neither read nor write.

In Jozini, community-based capacity building for ecotourism was almost non-existent; most of the ecotourism enterprises were White-owned and mainly included bed and breakfast ventures and rowing in the Jozini Dam. There were no major cases of empowerment reported in this area. The only source of information on ecotourism was the municipal IDP and wildlife management services. Perceptions on the benefits of ecotourism were extremely low, with most participants denying knowledge of the existence of these services in their areas. In view of these results, it can be inferred that local communities had not been properly capacitated to participate in ecotourism activities across the four local municipalities of UMkhanyakude. Evidently, these results conflict with the provisions of the White Paper on Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa (Chapter 2, Section 2.7.2), which calls for mobilisation of human and material resources to create opportunities for emerging and small entrepreneurs to ensure that marginalised communities have greater access to the socio-economic benefits accruing from tourism, including ecotourism.

Objective 3: To explore the experiences of local communities on the implementation of ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality;

This objective flows directly from the third and fourth research questions: Are local communities capacitated to participate in ecotourism projects? Are local communities involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of ecotourism projects? The study achieved this objective by showing that local communities in Jozini, Hlabisa, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana had different experiences regarding the implementation of ecotourism projects. On the positive side, the overall impression was that some communities were knowledgeable about ecotourism services; however, most of this information was essentially the preserve of key role players, such as tourism developers, wildlife management services and established ecotourism companies. Adversely, it was felt that the available ecotourism opportunities were accessible to White-owned ventures. To some extent, these results contradicted the thrust of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (2003) and the Tourism Charter discussed in Chapter 2, which encourage, inter alia, a meaningful transformation of the ecotourism sector through increased participation of previously disadvantaged groups in the sector. The common trend was that, owing to extreme poverty, communities tried everything to get a share of the ecotourism pie, including the harvesting and selling of honey along the routes frequented by tourists (Mtubatuba); collecting and

selling braai wood and precious stones such as quartz to tourists (Jozini); hand craft in Mbazwana (UMhlabuyalingana) and performing arts (Hlabisa). Most of these activities were informal and focused on meeting the subsistence needs of community members; these findings suggest gaps in both management and coordination of ecotourism activities in the study area. In light of these findings, the study concludes that communities in these local municipalities had more negative than positive experiences of ecotourism practice, partly due to lack of relevant information, support, knowledge and business skills on how best to capitalise on ecotourism opportunities and related activities.

Empirical works conducted by King and Stewart (1996), Jamal, Stronza and Borges (2006), Hunt and Durham (2012), and Buffa (2015) back these claims, as they revealed that ecotourism interventions have largely been commoditised, modernised and formalised in a manner that hugely benefits the main players at the expense of the local communities. Not only have ecotourism goods and services been commercialised, but they have also been packaged and branded exclusively without proper consideration for the negative impacts of commercialisation on local cultures and the natural environment. Consequently, a paradigm shift is inevitable to ensure that ecotourism retains its originality and authenticity in the eyes of local people and tourists (King & Stewart, 1996).

Objective 4: To evaluate whether the implementation of ecotourism initiatives has improved the livelihoods of the communities of UMkhanyakude District Municipality

This objective resonates with the primary research question: What contribution does ecotourism make to sustainable development in UMkhanyakude District Municipality, given the challenges of poverty and unemployment in this community? This objective was somewhat challenging because of the vast differences existing across the four municipalities in terms of both the scale and intensity of ecotourism projects being undertaken. Also, the fragmented approaches adopted in the implementation of ecotourism projects often produced vastly different outcomes.

Despite these limitations, data from the four local municipalities confirmed that ecotourism initiatives were benefiting local communities. The evidence from Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana) proved that ecotourism enabled community members to support their families, providing them with shelter, food and education. Similar results were reported in

St. Lucia (Mtubatuba), where some community members operated their own (traditional) boats to ferry tourists along the wetlands, with earnings averaging R260 per trip, depending on the distance being travelled.

Furthermore, although income differentials were recorded across the four municipalities in terms of wages and salaries, the rates in Mbazwana (UMhlabuyalingana), Hluhluwe (Hlabisa) and St. Lucia (Mtubatuba), were almost similar, ranging from R2, 500 to R5, 000 for hotel and bed and breakfast (B&B) staff. Some community members used money acquired from ecotourism to support tertiary education for their children; others used training opportunities to find better jobs. These results are corroborated by similar empirical works conducted by Batta and Roger (2013), which established that geographically expanded, labour-intensive ecotourism initiatives helped to bring the much-needed employment opportunities to remote communities grappling with extreme poverty.

The implementation of ecotourism in the UKDM can also be understood by comparing the results against the three approaches to ecotourism (that is, the Community-Based Approach, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and the Pro-Poor Approach discussed in Chapter 3). The results are summed up in Table 9.1 below:

Table 9.1: Testing the results against the three ecotourism approaches

Ecotourism approach	Findings	Implications for practice
a) The Community-Based Approach	Localisation and empowerment of local communities were overshadowed by increased commercialisation of ecotourism activities.	Unlimited commercialisation is likely to diminish the value of ecotourism for local communities.
b) The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach	Overregulation threatens formation and preservation of community assets in some areas.	Reconfiguration of regulatory mechanism may be necessary to ease tensions between

	• Heightened restrictions on use and consumption of natural resources increases rather than reduce poverty for poorer households.	ecotourism projects and indigenous practices.
c) The Pro-Poor Approach	• Economic benefits of ecotourism were reported in employment (for example, R2, 700-R5, 000 earnings) and small business activities (R5, 000 – R10, 000 profit).	• The net economic benefits of ecotourism are currently not evenly spread across local communities. Consequently, some communities have become poorer than they were before the introduction of ecotourism projects (Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana) • There are risks posed by wild animals.

Additionally, the study uncovered several challenges (Table 9.1) that impeded the implementation of ecotourism initiatives in UKDM. The first is lack of sound monitoring and control systems. The finding that communities around Hlabisa and Hluhluwe faced risks posed by straying wild animals, particularly lions, tigers and elephants, resonates with the literature, which asserts that ecotourism can have significant negative impacts including severe environmental degradation, negative cultural changes and decreased welfare of individuals or communities if improperly planned and managed (Mathews, 2002).

The second challenge concerns lack of equity in the distribution of net economic benefit from ecotourism activities, particularly in Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana, where a larger share of the ecotourism economy went to foreign-owned ecotourism enterprises. This finding contradicts the principles of ecotourism cited in Chapter 2 which, among other things, underline the importance of fair distribution of resources and benefits in such projects. In

Namibia, financial returns from community-based natural resource management and tourism ventures usually exceed their investments and are thus a viable option for generating sustainable economic returns, while promoting environmental conservation and cultural traditions in rural areas (Neto, 2003). The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 emphasises the need to design ecotourism efforts in a manner that maximises economic benefits for the hosting local community situated in or near these protected areas (Erdogan, 2015).

The third hurdle is that current empowerment initiatives, such as consumer education, skills development, awareness campaigns and dissemination of information are centrally-driven, with little input from the community (Jozini and Hlabisa); thus, they do not yield greater economic benefits for local communities. These results suggest the need to re-assess community capacity in order to determine communities' potential to help themselves as opposed to depending on once-off payments from ecotourism activities driven by large ecotourism enterprises.

The fourth obstacle is neglect and/or underutilisation of indigenous knowledge systems by local communities. Appropriate indigenous knowledge, skills, expertise and technology have neither been maximised nor integrated with ecotourism efforts (Raymond et al., 2010). A case in point is what is traditionally termed Isimfonyo (fish-catching net or trap) in Manguzi (UMhlabuyalingana). With increased regulation and restrictions imposed on the use of this traditional fishing technology, more local communities are turning to illegal means of obtaining fish, which is a primary source of livelihoods for most poor households in this area.

While increased commercialisation of ecotourism activities in St. Lucia (Mtubatuba) and Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana) have created job opportunities for some, it has also put pressure on community assets such as land, wildlife and cultural practices. Restricting finishing, hunting and bee harvesting activities made life very difficult for poor families whose lives depended entirely on these natural resources prior to the introduction of ecotourism projects in their areas. In this regard, excessive use of top-down implementation approaches has rendered ecotourism unsustainable, leaving local communities desolate and disempowered.

The question on what could be done to improve the contribution of ecotourism to sustainable development in the UKDM highlighted salient issues that impact directly on ecotourism

policy practice at local government level, including local municipalities' weakening capacity to deal with ecotourism and the dissipated nature of ecotourism efforts across the participating local municipalities. This finding contradicts the spirit of Section 153 and Schedule 4(B) of the Constitution which provides that municipalities should partake in both national and provincial programmes designed to support development in their areas, including ecotourism. Schedule 4(B) specifically declares that tourism is one of the key competencies of municipalities. Schedule 4(a) further suggests that tourism development is precisely a concurrent responsibility between the national, provincial and local governments. Thus, the slow progress characterising the implementation of ecotourism projects suggests that the participating municipalities are falling short of meeting these constitutional requirements.

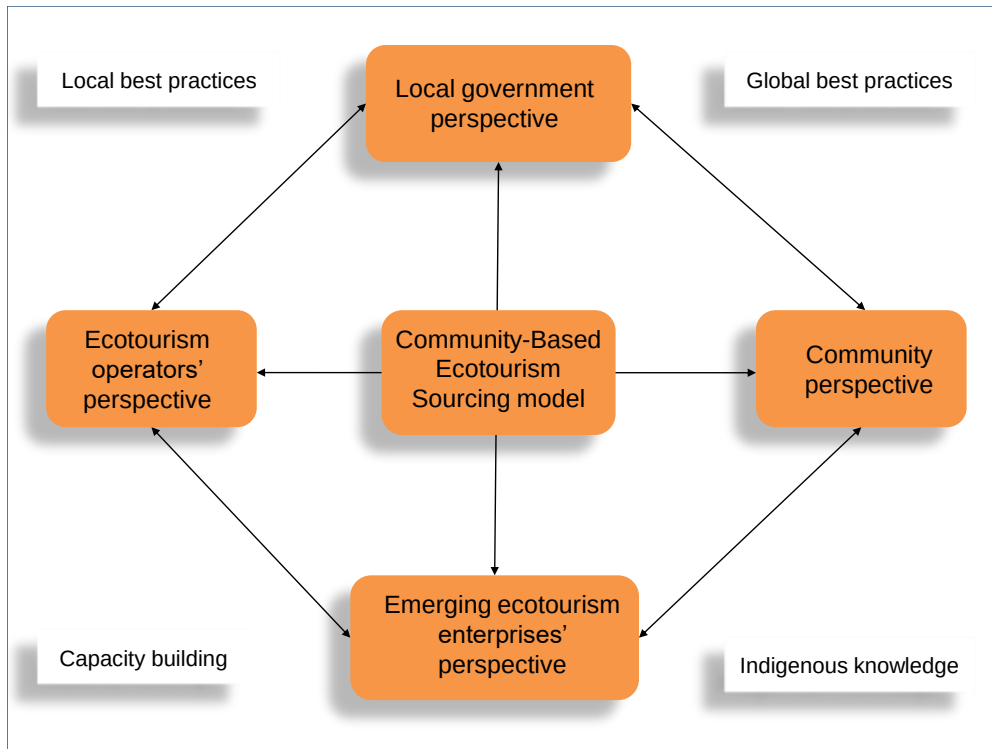
In the ensuing paragraphs, the assumptions underpinning this study are revisited to demonstrate whether they were affirmed or negated by the data.

Until now, focus has been on the conclusions of the study. Evidently, the implementation of ecotourism projects in UMkhanyakude has been impeded by a wide range of difficulties, including lack of knowledge and skills on ecotourism among beneficiaries; widening inequality gap between emerging and established ecotourism enterprises; suppliers' limited production capacity at the community level, and inadequate support from the local municipalities. The following section outlines some of the contributions of the study to the existing body of knowledge.

9.4 Contribution to knowledge

The proposed Community-Based Ecotourism Sourcing Model responds specifically to questions two and four: How are local communities capacitated to participate in ecotourism projects in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality? What can be done to improve the contribution of ecotourism to the sustainable development of UMkhanyakude District Municipality? Drawing on the results, the reviewed literature, and relevant empirical works, this study contributes to the current body of knowledge by proposing the adoption of the Community-Based Sourcing Model to help build sustainable livelihoods through direct involvement in, and ownership of, ecotourism initiatives by local communities. The envisaged Community-Based Ecotourism Sourcing Model comprises the following aspects:

Figure 9.1: The Community-Based Ecotourism Sourcing Model



As depicted in Figure 9.1, the envisaged sourcing model puts local communities (beneficiaries) at the centre of ecotourism activities. Data from community members across the four local municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalingana) revealed that community members had inadequate access to ecotourism opportunities, although they were supplying goods and services to the local industry, including organic fruits, vegetables, honey and crafts. This model mitigates this discrepancy as it fosters close collaboration between the key role players in ecotourism, including local municipalities; communities; emerging (Black-owned) ecotourism ventures, and tourism operators. This integrated approach to the ecotourism practice could assist in reducing inequality and the fragmentation of ecotourism activities in the UKDM.

Figure 9.1 further suggests that ecotourism activities may yield the desired outcomes if they are informed and guided by local and global best practices. More importantly, such efforts should also be underpinned by capacity-building efforts to strengthen the skills and competencies of local communities in ecotourism. To ensure congruence, indigenous knowledge and/or technologies also ought to be incorporated into ecotourism activities. The key strength of this model is encapsulated in its ability to shift attention away from cause-

and-effects accounts of ecotourism in rural areas (Yeo, 2005; Mitchell & Muckosy, 2008; Kirkby, 2010; Ndou, 2012; Backman & Munanura, 2016; Dodds, Ali & Galaski, 2018) to a more pragmatic approach that makes ecotourism a shared responsibility for all key stakeholders in these settings. Outlined below are recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the proposed Community-Based Ecotourism Sourcing Model (Figure 9.1).

9.5 Recommendations

The following interventions are proposed as part of the Community-Based Sourcing Model to help improve community participation in and beneficiation from ecotourism activities in UMkhanyakude District Municipality.

9.5.1 Explore opportunities to promote community-based sourcing

The results attest to the untapped opportunities for community-based sourcing in areas like Mtubatuba. Community members who owned small ecotourism enterprises in Mtubatuba reportedly used informal means to source fresh produce from the community; but this was unsustainable as it had not been institutionalised. To address this deficiency, there is need for a partnership between the local municipality, established ecotourism ventures and emerging businesses to train fruit and vegetable growers in each participating village. Such training should aim at imparting basic skills in commercial agriculture to create independent and self-sustaining food production units in the community.

9.5.2 Capacitate small ecotourism enterprises on community-based sourcing

Data sets from Mtubatuba show a few pockets of excellence existing in St. Lucia (Mtubatuba and Hlabisa); these could be leveraged to create a vibrant and sustainable supply chain model for community-owned ecotourism enterprises. In the case of Mtubatuba, this initiative requires intensive education and training to help locals embrace the opportunities presented by international tourists in the area. In Hlabisa, there is a need to increase access to relevant business information for start-up enterprises which operate informally. In Hlabisa, the business relationship between established ecotourism enterprises (Thanda Lodge Group, for

instance) and local performing arts groups (for example, traditional dance) needs to be formalised to ensure a standardised pricing structure that benefits small local players. This requires proper engagement between small business representative structures, local economic development (LED) support structures and the community.

9.5.3 Strengthen relations between small and big ecotourism enterprises

As part of its LED strategy, the UKDM should play an active intermediary role between emerging and established ecotourism companies. This especially applies to Jozini and UMhlabuyalingana, where the majority of community members reported lack of cooperation between established and emerging ecotourism enterprises as the former controlled lucrative ecotourism activities near the Jozini Dam and the beaches along the Sodwana Bay (UMhlabuyalingana). Relations between emerging and established ecotourism enterprises can be strengthened through such interventions as a joint business *indaba* or summit and workshops where owners of established ecotourism companies can share knowledge and expertise with small ecotourism ventures.

9.5.4 Revitalise ecotourism communications strategy

Across the four municipalities (Hlabisa, Jozini, Mtubatuba and UMhlabuyalinga), most community members indicated that they had not been informed of existing ecotourism opportunities, owing to a number of factors, including low community perceptions about the benefits of ecotourism; difficulty in accessing ecotourism information and support services; high transport costs; lack of business skills; political interference and inadequate support from local municipalities. As part of their LED strategies, all the four local municipalities should consider reviewing and aligning their ecotourism communications to ensure wide coverage. Such efforts could be fostered by outreach programmes, municipal IDP processes and small business exhibition fares at the community level.

9.5.5 Benchmark ecotourism activities against best global practices

Success stories in ecotourism projects have been widely reported in Namibia (Brown, 2016), Brazil (Kim, 2015) and Kenya (Fikeni, 2014). With assistance and guidance from the

KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Tourism, structured benchmarking exercises may be undertaken to learn how other countries involve and capacitate local communities in ecotourism projects. Lessons and best practices deriving from the benchmarking processes could then be adapted and used to improve the implementation of ecotourism in UMkhanyakude. Preferably, the benchmarking activities should focus on (a) community roles and responsibilities; (b) awareness-building strategies at community level; (c) stakeholder consultation and involvement; (d) capacity-building programmes and (e) supply chain management systems and processes.

9.5.6 Consider reviewing and moderating current regulatory mechanisms

The need to control ecotourism activities is inevitable; however, this needs to be done in a manner that encourages participation by poor local communities, especially informal traders who strongly felt that the current restrictions on areas where they can ply their trade were unfair and discriminatory. Thus, the affected local municipalities (Hlabisa and Mtubatuba) should address the negative effects of over-regulation on small ecotourism ventures. One way of mitigating the problem is for the Hlabisa and Mtubatuba municipalities to moderate by-laws that impose restrictions on informal trading activities.

9.6 Considerations for future research

As indicated in earlier parts of this dissertation, this study was preoccupied with assessing the implementation of ecotourism initiatives to determine if such efforts contributed to the building of sustainable livelihoods specifically in UMkhanyakude. Thus, the entire study was dedicated to the process of evaluating the impact of ecotourism on local livelihoods. A more comprehensive, longitudinal study is therefore needed to track and measure the socio-economic impact of ecotourism projects in KwaZulu-Natal Province in its entirety.

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11. ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Letters for permission



OFFICE OF THE MINISTERIAL REPRESENTATIVE

(DC27)

P. O. Box 449

Stand 13433, Kingfisher Road

Tel: 035 573 8604

Mkuze

Remainder of Harlingen Farm

Fax: 035 573 18730

3965

Mkuze

nomfundo@student.com

23 August 2017

Enquiries: Office of the Administrator

University of Zululand

PO Box X1001

KwaDlangezwa

3888

To whom it may concern

Re: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

It is with pleasure to inform you that FG DLAMINI, a student doing PHD in Department of Anthropology and Development studies in University of Zululand has been given access/permission to do Research at UMkhanyakude District Municipality on the topic: **Assessing ecotourism contribution to sustainable development in UMkhanyakude District Municipality.**

Regards

PM Maseko

Ministerial Representative

Annexure 2: Participant Consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

The risk to the study is moderate as humans are involved in the entire research process. All participants are categorised as adults above the age of 18 and therefore capable of making their own decisions regarding participation or nonparticipation in the study.

EXPLANATION TO PARTICIPATIONS

Welcome to this Research project. My name is Fikile Xaba and I am going to ask you questions about ecotourism projects in your area.

The aim of this research is to find out whether ecotourism projects benefits you and your community in terms of job creation, income and business opportunities

The research does not involve any risk as the topic is directly related to development issues that affect your life.

Please note that your participation in this research project is voluntary. This means that you have a right to withdraw from this research if you wish to do so. You will not be forced answer the research questions.

Please feel free to provide answers to the research questions. There is no right or wrong answer. All your comments, inputs and contributions are welcome.

Except for employment and income, the research questions do not require you to provide confidential information about your personal life or that of your family.

The interview questions / survey will only take 60 minutes of your time; meaning that I am going to spend one hour with each one of you.

Please feel free to ask questions if there are any issues or concerns that you might have about this research project. Thank you.

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box)

- 1 I have read and understood what the research is about
- 2 I have been briefed about the aim and objectives of the research
- 3 I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research
- 4 I have been assured that the research project will not violate my privacy
- 5 I have been informed that my participation is voluntary
- 6 I have been assured that I will not be forced to respond to the questions
- 7 I have been assured of confidentiality and anonymity in the research project
- 8 The use of the data from the research has been explained to me
- 9 I have been assured that the research will not cause harm to my life
- 10 I have been informed that other researchers may have access to this research

Participant _____

Date _____

Annexure 3: Ethical Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
 (Reg No: UZREC 171110-030)



RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Website: <http://www.unizul.ac.za>
 Private Bag X1001
 KwaDangweza 3886
 Tel: 035 902 6731
 Fax: 035 902 6222
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ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Number	UZREC 171110-030 PGD 2018/214		
Project Title	Assessing the contribution of eco-tourism to sustainable development in Umlhanyakude district municipality		
Principal Researcher/ Investigator	FG Xaba		
Supervisor and Co-supervisor	Prof BM Selepe	Dr JM Moiniso	
Department	Development Studies		
Faculty	Arts		
Type of Risk	Med Risk-Data Collection from people		
Nature of Project	Honours/4 th Year	Master's	Doctoral ☒ Departmental

The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project. The Researcher may therefore commence with data collection as from the date of this Certificate, using the certificate number indicated above.

- Special conditions:
- (1) This certificate is valid for 3 years from the date of issue.
 - (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format [due date-08 May 2019]
 - (3) Principal researcher must submit a report at the end of project in respect of ethical compliance.
 - (4) The UZREC must be informed immediately of any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the meeting.

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting research.

Professor Gideon De Wet

Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee
 Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation
 14 June 2018

CHAIRPERSON
 UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND (RESEARCH
 ETHICS COMMITTEE (UZREC)
 REG NO: UZREC 171110-030
 14 June 2018
 RESEARCH & INNOVATION OFFICE

Annexure 4: Questionnaire: Employees of ecotourism enterprises

1. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA		
1.1 Which of the following best describes your age?		
1		15-20
2		21-26
3		27-35
4		36-49
5		50-65 and above
1.2 Which of the following best describes your gender?		
1		Male
2		Female
1.3 Which of the following best describes your marital status?		
1		Single
2		Married
3		Divorced
4		Widowed
1.4 Which of the following best describes your educational background?		
1		No schooling
2		Grade 1-7
3		Grade 8-11
4		Grade 12
5		Diploma / degree

1.5 Which of the following best describes your family background?

1	Female-headed home
2	Child-headed home
3	Orphaned /without parents
4	I own the house
5	Other (Please specify)

--

--

2. ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 Which of the following sources do you probably use to find job opportunities in ecotourism companies in your area?

--

1	Newspapers
2	Radio
3	Friends
4	Referrals
5	Other (Please specify)

--

2.2 Which of the following best describes your current job?

1	Full-time
2	Part-time
3	Temporary
4	Fixed-term
5	Other (Please specify)

--

3. INCOME LEVELS

3.1 Which of the following best describes your earnings or salary at work?

1	R100-R500
2	R600-900

3	R1000-R2000
4	R3000-R5000
5	R6000 and above

3.1 Which of the following best describes your employment benefits?

1	Car allowance
2	Housing allowance
3	Medical aid
4	Education for my children
5	Other (Please specify)

4. WORKING CONDITIONS
4.1 Which of the following best describes your experience in accessing training and development opportunities in your company?

	Agr ee	Stron gly agree	Disa gree	Strong ly disagr ee	Neutra l
--	-----------	-----------------------	--------------	------------------------------	-------------

I have received induction in my current job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have received information and advice on training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have received training on tourism and related activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.2 Rate working conditions in your organisation in terms of the following issues:

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Please provide any relevant information on ecotourism services that you think my help improve this research.

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Questionnaire: Community members

SECTION 1: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA		
1. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA		
1.1 Which of the following best describes your age?		
1		15-20
2		21-26
3		27-35
4		36-49
5		50-65 and above
1.2 Which of the following best describes your gender?		
1		Male
2		Female
3		Other
1.3 Which of the following best describes your marital status?		
1		Single
2		Married
1.4 Which of the following best describes your educational background?		
1		Grade 1-7

2	Grade 8-11
3	Grade 12
4	Diploma
5	Degree

1.5 Which of the following best describes your family background?

1	Female-headed home
2	Child-headed home
3	Orphaned
4	I own the house
5	Other (Please specify)

1.6 Employment status
Which of the following describes your employment status?

1	Employed
2	Unemployed
3	Self-employed

1.7 Income
Which of the following describes your monthly income?

1	R500-R1000
2	R2000-R3000
3	R4000-R5000
4	R6000-R10,000
5	Other please specify

1.7.1 Sources of income		
Which of the following describes your source of income?		
1		Ecotourism jobs
2		Own ecotourism business
3		Informal trading activities
4		Temporary ecotourism projects
5		Other please specify
2. ACCESS TO ECOTOURISM SERVICES		
	Yes	No
I have been informed about ecotourism services and opportunities in my area /village	☐	☐
I know where to find information on ecotourism business opportunities	☐	☐
Ecotourism companies are helping to create jobs for our community.	☐	☐
The municipality encourages us to participate and take advantage of opportunities in ecotourism services	☐	☐
People working in tourism companies here have access to public transport services everyday.	☐	☐
3. TYPE OF ECOTOURISM SERVICES AVAILABLE		
Which of the following probably describes the type of ecotourism services available in your area / village?		
1	Heritage sites (Historical monuments)	

2	Game /animals e.g. “Big 5”
3	Natural forests
4	Crafts market
5	Other (please specify)

3. SKILLS TRANSFER TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS
Place a cross (X) next to the statement that best describes your answer.

	Agr ee	Stron gly agree	Disagr ee	Strong ly disagr ee	Neut ral
Ecotourism companies support early childhood development (e.g. crèches and child welfare centres)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ecotourism companies support HIV/AIDS campaigns in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ecotourism companies support literacy projects / adult basic education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ecotourism companies support women development in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ecotourism companies support youth development in the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. INCOME-GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES						
Place a cross next to the statement that best matches your answer.						
As a community, we have been:	Al wa ys	someti mes	Seld om	Occasio nally	Nev er	
Encouraged to apply for jobs in ecotourism companies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Encouraged to start tourism businesses e.g. cooperatives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Encouraged to partner with big ecotourism companies locally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Informed about black economic empowerment opportunities in the ecotourism tourism sector	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Advised on how to access finance for business start up	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION						
Please provide any relevant information on ecotourism services that you think my help improve this research project.						

Annexure 5 Interview Guide: Programme officials& Project Managers

1. As part of your local economic development strategy, how is ecotourism used to improve the lives of local communities in your municipality? Give examples.

2. What is the budget allocation for ecotourism, and how is it spent? Give examples.

3. What specific activities are targeted to promote ecotourism at the community level? Give 5 examples of major activities pursued.

4. To what extent are local communities empowered to participate, contribute to growth and success of ecotourism in your municipality? Give 5 examples of activities undertaken to achieve this goal.

5. In what way is ecotourism used to reduce unemployment and poverty in your municipality? Give five examples.

Additional information

Please provide any additional information on ecotourism services that you think might add value to this research project.

Thank you.

Interview Guide: Project managers

1. What is your role in promoting ecotourism projects to benefit the people of Jozini/UMhlabuyalingana/Mtubatuba/Hlabisa local municipality?

2. In what way are ecotourism projects used to transfer skills and income to local communities in your municipality?

Skills transfer

Income-generating activities that benefit local people

3. What are the opportunities and challenges in promoting ecotourism projects in your municipality? Give examples.

Opportunities for ecotourism projects

Challenges / problems hindering ecotourism projects

4. What steps are you taking to deal with the identified challenges or problems?

Additional information

Please provide any additional information on ecotourism services that you think might add value to this research project.

Thank you.

Interview Guide: Owners of ecotourism ventures

What exactly do you do in your (ecotourism) business? Comment.

How did you gain access to ecotourism business opportunities? Please explain.

How long have you been involved in this type of business? Comment

Do you get support from big tourism companies here? Discuss.

How does your company contribute to job creation and skills transfer? Give examples

Do you get support from your municipality or other government agencies to be able to grow your business? Give reasons.

In your view, what can be done to ensure that local communities get more benefits from tourism in your municipality?

Additional information

Please provide any additional information on ecotourism services that you think might add value to this research project.

Thank you.