Ecotourism & Certification
Setting Standards in Practice

EDITED BY
Martha Honey

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Preface

This book grew out of the common experience I shared with most of the other authors at the Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Certification Workshop held at Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York, in November 2000. That three-day gathering turned out to be an extraordinarily productive and congenial event. It brought together some forty-five participants from twenty countries, many of whom have been involved in creating, running, and evaluating socially and environmentally responsible tourism certification programs. As these practitioners shared their experiences, it became clear that we had sufficient theoretical analysis and first-hand experience to formulate the basic principles and components that should be part of any sound sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification programs. The resulting Mohonk Agreement was unanimously approved by the workshop participants, along with a proposal, presented by the Rainforest Alliance, for a feasibility study examining the possibilities of creating an “International Accreditation Body for Sustainable and Eco-Tourism.”

After meeting with and listening to these experts, it seemed to me that a wider audience could benefit from a volume that included the history, theory, evolution, and implementation, as well as the challenges and problems, of some of the leading tourism certification programs. A number of those who participated in the conference agreed. In the end, twenty-one authors based in nine different countries were involved in writing the chapters in this book.

The introduction and the first three chapters provide an overview and conceptual framework for analyzing the current proliferation of socially and environmentally responsible tourism certification programs. In the introduction and chapter 1, we examine the rise of the ecotourism movement, its place within the tourist industry, how ecotourism and the 1992 Earth Summit spawned the development of certification and ecolabeling schemes, and two ways to analyze certification programs—by their methodology or by the sector of the tourism industry they address. Chapter 2 covers the nuts and bolts of a certification program. Its author, Robert
Chapter 2

Exploring the Concepts Underlying Certification

Robert Toth

Discerning hotels, tour operators, and destinations recognize that no single aspect of their services, facilities, or site determines success, and measures of success can be difficult to define and hard to quantify. However, just as retailers, automobile manufacturers, airlines, and others have found, there is general agreement that the most reliable, monitorable indicator is customer satisfaction. In a service sector such as tourism, customer satisfaction directly correlates with repeat visits, longer stays, and referrals, all of which have direct impact—for better or worse—on revenues and profits. The impressions that tourists take home from their vacations are the aggregate of a number of factors or experiences encountered during their vacation. These can be categorized in three areas:

1) Quality: Tourists’ needs and expectations are determined principally through personal interactions with service providers. Staff in maintenance, housekeeping, food preparation, and others whose processes affect the customers and the appearance and functioning of facilities and furnishings also affect the guests’ overall vacation experience.

2) Health, hygiene, and safety conditions: Vacations can be ruined when tourists experience food poisoning, encounter infectious diseases, are concerned about safety and security, or encounter inadequate pest control, sewage treatment, and the like.

3) Sustainability: Experienced tourists and tourism professionals recognize the need to reduce or prevent the adverse impact of tourism to ensure a future for a destination. In addition to the environment, tourists today are more aware of socioeconomic and cultural issues and protecting and conserving nature.
Figure 2.1. The tourism industry's three-legged stool of customer satisfaction

There can be considerable overlap within these areas, but each is sufficiently distinctive to warrant attention, and a special set of tools has developed to address the challenges in each area. Distinctive as they may be, from the standpoint of customer satisfaction, these areas are totally interrelated. They can be viewed as a three-legged stool (figure 2.1). If any leg fails, then the stool (customer satisfaction) collapses.

Certification schemes are widely used in commerce and industry to promote implementation of standards, to reward those who achieve specified objectives, and to enable customers to identify operations that comply with applicable standards. The oldest rating systems for hotels and restaurants (e.g., Michelin, Mobil, AAA, etc.) certify quality.

Most tourists take for granted that the second leg of the customer satisfaction stool—health, hygiene, and safety—will exist wherever the destination. In North America, Europe, and many other regions we can assume that unless otherwise specified, the water is safe to drink, the sewage system is functioning, we can swim at the beaches, and security measures are in place so tourists are not the prey of criminals. All of these services and many more are provided or monitored by government agencies with checks and balances complemented by infrastructure to see that the standards or regulations are met. Many of the local standards are based on international norms set by bodies such as the World Health Organization, and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Certification is a major tool for achieving results. In many places, restaurants are regularly inspected for hygiene and food handling. Although in some jurisdictions, this is pass/fail, many have a grading system and the rating (a certificate) must be prominently displayed where customers can see it. The performance of many systems is dependent on the practices of individuals, such as food handlers, operators of sewage treatment plants, lifeguards, or pesticide applicators. Responsible government agencies usually require that such individuals demonstrate their knowledge and competence and be certified. Evaluation may be by a government agency or by specialized nongovernment organizations. In many parts of the world, however, there are no standards, regulations, or the infrastructure to enforce them. Often, where standards and regulations are in the statutes, there are insufficient resources to implement them. In a few parts of the world, the tourism industry has recognized that if it cannot depend on government to address these issues, then the private sector must take action. Most of these initiatives are based on voluntary prescriptive and management system standards coupled with certification.

Regarding the third leg of the tourist customer satisfaction stool, there is as yet no universally accepted definition of sustainability. Other chapters in this book highlight various interpretations of the term and the components and priorities that should be incorporated in sustainable tourism and ecotourism programs. This chapter will use a very general definition: Sustainable tourism is about creating a balance between social, environmental, cultural, and economic interests. Worldwide, there are approximately 100 ecological programs that certify or grant awards to tourism operations—primarily hotels. Sixty of these are viable ongoing programs, while the others have limited applications, are retrenching, or are still in the planning stage. Five of these programs are being implemented on several continents, forty-five are in Europe, and the remaining ten are functioning outside Europe.1 The large portion of the world's tourism certification programs focuses primarily on environmental matters—pollution prevention, environmental protection, and energy conservation—and does not address cultural and socioeconomic issues. Because no international standard exists for sustainable tourism, each program has developed its own standard.

These next sections describe the major elements of effective tourism certification systems, essential concepts that should be addressed in such systems, and lessons learned that should be heeded when establishing tourism-related certification programs. Although certification programs are relatively new to the tourism industry, other sectors have used standards and certification for many years. Some practices can be traced back many centuries. The Code of Hammurabi (1800 B.C.) set standards and certification practices for building materials, and since A.D. 1300, the Goldsmiths' Company has been independently testing and hallmarking (certifying) gold and silver articles to guarantee conformity to standards.

As a result, there is a considerable body of certification experience and proven practices that have been codified into standards. These standards are readily available and widely used in all types of industrial, commercial, and service sectors. There is little reason for the tourism industry to reinvent the wheel, grope for effective procedures, or develop new terminology. Tourism certification programs will be more readily understood and
Box 2.1. Accepted Standards and Guides for the Components of Conformity Assessment Systems

Any organization planning to establish a certification program should consider using the documents listed here to define the system, as well as its procedures and practices. Not only will this save considerable time and resources, but the resultant system will be recognized and accepted more readily by government agencies and NGOs.

There are thousands of existing standards that could be used in tourism certification programs. For example, there are more than 350 ISO standards defining products and procedures for monitoring such aspects as the quality of air, water, and soil. There is no reason to reinvent these; they already exist and just need to be cited in any tourism-specific standard. In the same vein, ISO 14001, Specification for Environmental Management Systems, provides a framework for identifying and addressing environmental obligations that could be adaptable to applications within tourism.

STANDARDS
Existing standards for writing standards have been prepared for highly technical applications. The Standards Engineering Society is in the process of releasing guidance intended for nontechnical applications, such as tourism.

SES-2: Simplified practice for designating and organizing standards
ISO/IEC Guide 7: Guidelines for drafting standards suitable for use for conformity assessment

ASSESSMENT
The International Auditor and Training Certification Association (IATCA) has harmonized the qualification requirements for auditors, the contents of training courses, and certification requirements of course providers. Although these initiatives focus on ISO 9000 and 14000, IATCA is a resource for criteria and procedures that could be adapted to tourism certification. Other resources include:

ISO Standard 14001: Environmental management systems—Specification
ISO Standard 14010: Guidelines for environmental auditing—General principles
ISO Standard 14011: Audit procedures—Auditing of environmental management systems
ISO Standard 14012: Guidelines for environmental auditing—Qualification criteria for environmental auditors

Standards 14010 through 14012 and their counterparts for auditing quality management systems (ISO 10011 series) are being combined into a single standard, ISO 19011. This standard provides more specific guidance for audit program management and qualifications of auditors. A committee draft is currently available, and a final approved standard is to be released in 2002.

CERTIFICATION
Guidance for establishing and managing certification systems can be found in the following:

ISO/IEC Guide 65: General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems
ISO/IEC Guide 66: General requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification of environmental management systems
ISO/IEC Standard 17021*: General requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification of management systems
ISO/IEC Standard 17024*: General criteria for certification bodies operating certification of personnel
ISO/IEC Guide 23: Methods of indicating conformity with standards for third-party certification systems
ISO/IEC Standard 17030*: Marks of conformity assessment and their use
ISO Guide 27: Guidelines for corrective action to be taken by a certification body in the event of misuse of its mark of conformity

ACCREDITATION
Guidelines for operating accreditation programs are included in the following:

ISO/IEC Guide 61: General requirements for assessment and accreditation of certification bodies
ISO/IEC Standard 17011*: General requirements for bodies providing assessment and accreditation
ISO/IEC Standard 17040*: General requirements for peer assessment of conformity assessment bodies

RECOGNITION
Nearly all guidance on recognition exclusively addresses criteria and procedures leading to mutual recognition agreements. The following may be useful as background information or as a source of definitions for specialized terminology.

ISO/IEC Guide 68*: Agreements for the recognition and acceptance of conformity assessment results

Committees responsible for standards and conformity assessment within the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) have developed model mutual recognition agreements.
Box 2.1. Continued

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

As most certification programs have the potential to restrict trade, World Trade Organization requirements must be taken into account.

Final Act, April 1994: Agreement on Standards and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement)

WTO TBT Annex 3: Code of good practice for the preparation, adoption and application of standards

A World Trade Organization code of good practice for conformity assessment (including certification) is currently being considered. ISO and IEC have published:


*These guides and standards are in various stages of development. Check the ISO Web site (http://www.iso.org) for their status and availability.

adopted when they use the accepted principles and practices that are used and recognized worldwide. The standards and guides that are most relevant to sustainable tourism certification are listed in box 2.1.

Essential Concepts

Certification is one of a number of interrelated activities by which a product, process, service, or system is evaluated for conformance against a standard. These activities are illustrated in figure 2.2. The generic term for the process depicted in the figure is conformity assessment, which encompasses a wide range of sectors and techniques ranging from verifying the capabilities of testing laboratories to acceptance of critical aircraft parts; hallmarking jewelry; certifying the competence of computer technicians; determining the quality of care provided by hospitals; and ascertaining the effectiveness of fire extinguishers. Conformity assessment is important to suppliers, consumers, and regulators. It enables conscientious producers to distinguish their products from those made by less reputable ones. It provides consumers with a reliable means to select products in the marketplace and enables government agencies to enforce regulations that protect the public's health and safety.

This broad application of conformity assessment in diverse sectors has resulted in the use of different terminology between sectors and different interpretations or applications of terms that are often synonymous. Such terms as "registered," "listed," "qualified," "validated," "verified," "approved," "rated," "accepted," "classified," "accredited," and "licensed" are used in various sectors to indicate that a product or service is "certified." Similarly, instead of "assessment" we find use of "audit," "inspection," "evaluation," "validation," and "assay." The terms listed in figure 2.2 are accepted as the primary terminology by the World Trade Organization. To improve readability, the term product will be used throughout to refer to a product, service, facility, process, or system. Similarly supplier will be used when referring to service providers, such as tour operators, hoteliers, or guides, or producers of products, processes, or systems. The reader will also note that the examples illustrate a variety of practices used in many industries, some of which may be particularly appropriate for adaptation in the tourism sector.

The conformity assessment process leading to certification can verify that a particular product meets a specified level of quality or safety or sustainable tourism model and provides explicit or implicit information about its characteristics. Conformity assessment can increase a buyer's confidence in a product, furnish useful information to a buyer, and help to substantiate a supplier's advertising claims. The quality and credibility of conformity assessment information conveyed by certification is dependent on the competence and impartiality of the auditor; the technical expertise of the certifier; the procedures that incorporate effective controls; and the adequacy and appropriateness of the standards against which the product is assessed.

Too many sustainable tourism and ecotourism initiatives appear to focus almost exclusively on the certification component and pay insufficient attention to the other components depicted in figure 2.2. Although the topic of this chapter is certification in sustainable tourism, it should be recognized that certification per se is one component of a system. To fully understand this component, it is important to understand the overall sys-
tem and related components. The ultimate need is a cost-effective, credible sustainable tourism conformity assessment system, not just a certification program. A particular challenge is that unlike sectors with long-established conformity assessment practices, the tourism sector does not yet have in place some of the system components or infrastructure that would expedite implementation of certification.

**Standards**

Products, facilities, and services are assessed by measuring their level of conformity to prescribed requirements or achievement of specified objectives. These requirements or objectives are specified in standards that also spell out how to measure conformance. The critical difference between many standards is how requirements or objectives are specified. Within tourism, these standards are often classified as either performance or process methodologies (see chapter 1), however, more accurately, there are essentially three different approaches. No single approach is appropriate for every type of application; each one has its strengths and weaknesses.

"Prescriptive standards" describe the way required characteristics can be achieved by prescribing how a product will be made and used or how a process will be accomplished. Usually, there is no test of the final product as long as the prescribed components are used. The entire building construction industry functions on this basis. A typical prescriptive requirement in a tourism standard might read: "Each guest room shall have a master switch so that all electrical circuits are activated only by insertion of the guest’s key and are turned off when the guest departs with the key."

One advantage of prescriptive standards is that although the specified solution may not be the best or most cost-effective, everyone knows what is required to comply with the standard. Prescriptive standards have many drawbacks, most significantly in the way they restrict innovation and alternative solutions.

"Performance standards" describe what functional or operational characteristics are to be achieved but not how to accomplish them, for example, "Provision shall be made to turn off all electrical circuits automatically when a room is unoccupied." This requirement allows for alternatives such as acoustic and motion detectors, sensors in the door lock, or some new technology introduced in the future. But the hotelier has the burden of demonstrating to the certifier that the selected solution fully complies with the intent of the standard. Performance standards are subject to a greater degree of ambiguity and imprecision, which raises questions of the intent of the specified requirement. This in turn can lead to delays, debate, and additional costs. Certification programs based on performance standards need efficient communication channels so that applicants and auditors can quickly obtain authoritative interpretations.

"Management system standards" specify the elements and processes of a model management system on the premise that such a system demonstrates the capabilities of a supplier. Such standards specify the processes, not how specific characteristics are to be achieved, as in prescriptive standards or the functional or operational characteristics of a performance standard. A management system standard for tourism might specify that "The hotel shall undertake a detailed assessment of energy use throughout its operations, establish the type and amount of energy required for all activities, and monitor and review use on a regular basis." Management system standards do not set minimum levels of performance but provide a framework for achieving levels set by customers or the organization itself. Although benchmarking may be a requirement, as illustrated in the example, there are seldom requirements to improve on that performance level.

The most widely recognized management system standards are ISO 9000 for quality and ISO 14000 for environmental management. The twenty-one standards, guides, and technical reports that make up the ISO 14000 family are designed to assist companies in managing and evaluating the environmental effectiveness of their operations. The standards and guides are intended for organizations of any size or type on the premise that the requirements of an effective environmental management system are the same, whatever the business. At the end of the year 2000, quality management systems at more than 408,000 facilities, including 1,187 hotels and restaurants, had been certified to ISO 9000, and 22,900 facilities, including sixty-six hotels and restaurants, had ISO 14000-certified environmental management systems.

Unlike Michelin, Mobil, and AAA, assessment and certification of a quality management system does not evaluate the quality of the product or service offered to the customer. The ISO 9000 certification provides some assurance that once the supplier has demonstrated that its processes yield a particular level of quality subsequent deliveries will be at that same level. Similarly, certification to the ISO 14000 environment management system standard does not ensure that the supplier does not pollute, waste energy, etc.; it verifies that the supplier has systems in place that should enable the supplier to avoid such problems. Because these standards are intended for all types of applications, they are necessarily generic and written very broadly. Suppliers planning to implement these standards have many questions as they read through the requirements, and often it is not self-evident what methods would constitute compliance at their operations. As a result, a whole subsector has developed, providing consultation, training, and self-
help books. Many businesses are deterred from pursuing certification to management system standards because of the need for such support.

Each of the three approaches has its strengths and weaknesses. Many of the standards for newer certification programs, particularly those concerned with sustainability, combine the best features of each. To differentiate performance and prescriptive standards from the process-based management system standards, these standards are often called *performance-based standards* because they usually specify qualitative and quantitative criteria or benchmarks that establish minimum acceptable performance levels. Many certification programs for the tourism industry are really hybrids because they also include management system requirements regarding processes as well as specific solutions that characterize prescriptive standards. This is exemplified in these excerpts from the standard for the Rainforest Alliance’s Smart Voyager certification program for tour boats.3

- **Performance:** “Noise levels to which a worker can be exposed must not exceed 85 decibels for a maximum period of 6 continuous hours.”
- **Management systems:** “An environmental education program for all employees in the craft must be in place and designed in a way that allows for regular monitoring and evaluation.”
- **Prescriptive:** “The operation must use recycled, bleach-free paper for printing at least 50 percent of its promotional or informational literature.”

Hybrid standards, particularly those specifying a series of graded criteria or benchmarks, are particularly adaptable to systems that award certificates reflecting achievement of increasingly higher levels of performance.

Standards can be classified in numerous ways. One classification distinguishes between voluntary standards, which by themselves impose no obligations regarding use, and mandatory standards. A mandatory standard is usually published by a government regulatory body and imposes obligations to conform on specified parties. The distinction between voluntary and mandatory standards may be lost when voluntary consensus standards are referenced in government regulations, effectively making them mandatory. Voluntary standards may also become quasi-mandatory due to conditions in the marketplace. One example is the wide adoption of ANSI Z80.3, Requirements for Nonprescription Sunglasses and Fashion Eye-wear. There is no market among large U.S. retailers for glasses that do not conform to the standards. Another demarcation among standards is between those developed by recognized standards-developing organizations, which are designated “formal” standards, and those developed by consortia, ad hoc groups, and individual organizations, which are characterized as “informal” because they ignore or short-cut traditional standards-development procedures and do not usually reflect a broad-based consensus.

Standards are also categorized by their range of usage (i.e., local, national, regional, global), or the status of the standards developer (e.g., industry, national, regional, international). International and global standards have the widest acceptance and recognition. Although the 13,000 standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) are probably the best known international standards, more than 175 international organizations (seventy-five government/treaty bodies; 100 voluntary organizations and federations) also publish international standards.

### Assessment

The crux of conformity assessment is determination of the level of conformance to a particular standard and the validity of findings. These are directly related to the method and level of investigation required for adequate assurance that findings are representative and correct, and the competence and professionalism of the agent performing the assessment. For products, the agent is usually a testing laboratory or inspection service. For facilities and management systems, the agent is an individual or team of specialists. For reasons that are lost in time, individuals who assess laboratories and management systems are called *auditors* not assessors.

There are three types of assessment:

- **First-party assessment** or self-assessment is the process by which a supplier declares conformance with a particular standard. In some cases (e.g., ISO 14000, environmental management), self-audits are components of the standard and are the basis for a supplier’s declaration of conformance.
- **Second-party assessment** is accomplished by the purchaser, who mandates that potential suppliers and/or their products will be assessed by the purchaser prior to entering into a transaction. The nature of these programs varies greatly and may involve delegation of assessments to a trade association of purchasers or a commercial inspection service. Second-party assessment has always been common practice in the mass tourism markets dominated by major tour operators/wholesalers. These are the organizations that assemble package tours by contracting for hotel rooms, transportation, and guides. Most of the major wholesalers have their own standards and auditors or contract with inspection services. Recent action by the European Union that facilitates law suits by tourists has motivated European tour operators to intensify these assessments to demonstrate compliance with their obligation for “due diligence.”
- **Third-party assessment** is carried out by a party other than the

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plier or the purchaser, an organization that is independent of buyer or seller. Third-party assessments may be mandatory or voluntary. Reliance on a third party may be required by a government agency or specified by the customer. Often, the supplier may seek it as a means of market differentiation or to obtain independent feedback on the effectiveness of the supplier's internal programs.

The level of uncertainty inherent to the assessment process has a direct bearing on findings and conclusions, their reliability and credibility, and to a large extent, the cost. The level of uncertainty is determined by the standard against which the product is evaluated and assessment methods specified in the standard. For example, a pressure test of a water pipe is very straightforward. It either passes or fails. Most standards specify unambiguous finite limits and explicit performance requirements that can be readily measured on-site or in a laboratory. A few standards, particularly those for management systems, depend on the personal judgment and interpretation of the auditor. Although product tests are replicable worldwide, subjective assessment may not be uniformly rigorous and consistent from country to country or among the auditors used by a certification organization. For these reasons, certifiers and their accreditors have established comprehensive requirements for auditors and checks and balances to forestall complaints of lax or overly rigorous audits. These are listed in box 2.1. Accredited certifiers must use certified auditors. A certified auditor must demonstrate detailed knowledge of the applicable standards and their application and possess professional and personal attributes to ensure there are no conflicts of interest or biases.

Certification of an auditor's qualifications is usually done by the accrediting organization. This is based on:

- an appropriate level of formal education;
- specified work experience involving accountability and the exercise of judgment;
- specified experience in the particular field (e.g., environmental management) in which the auditor will function;
- satisfactory performance under the supervision of a senior certified auditor; and
- successful completion of an auditor training course approved by the accredditor.

Because specialized auditor training is so critical, accreditors either provide training themselves or specify course content and certify training courses that comply with the accredditor's requirements and utilize the accredditor's examinations. Although few certifiers provide initial auditor training, most certifiers (and some accreditors) periodically hold workshops to enable auditors to share experiences and to promote uniform interpretations.

Certifiers seldom maintain a staff of auditors but engage freelance certified auditors. One reason is that full-time staff requires full-time funding. Another is the need to utilize auditors with experience in the sector being assessed, for example, pharmaceuticals, financial services, or hotels. Most certifiers offer services to many sectors but cannot justify retaining certified auditors to accommodate all of them. Similarly, tourism certifiers may need auditors with specialized training or experience. Auditors trained to assess hotels, for example, probably would need additional training and experience to qualify as auditors of tour operators or cruise ships.

**Certification**

The process of providing documented assurance that a product or management system conforms to a standard or that a person is competent to perform a certain task is called certification. The documentation may be through a certificate, a label, a listing in a publicly accessible register, or all of these media. Depending on requirements specified in the relevant standard or standards, the certificate may be awarded on the basis of compliance with a specific criterion, a minimum number of criteria, or achievement of a minimum score. An alternative to this pass/fail approach is a grading system. The applicable standard provides a baseline of prerequisite criteria and a rating system that awards additional stars, leaves, or qualifiers (good, choice, and prime) to products that exceed specified thresholds.

The use of certification in the marketplace goes back to earliest times, and until recently, has been used primarily for products affecting health and safety, as well as precious metals and gems. Most of these certification programs were established by government regulators (e.g., drugs and building materials); some were instituted by insurance underwriters with the introduction of new technology (e.g., electrical wiring devices, steam boilers); and others were established by associations of manufacturers to promote acceptance and confidence in their products by the public (e.g., gas appliances, civilian aircraft). Certifying the qualifications of personnel goes back to the ancient guilds, and to this day, most personnel certification programs are managed by professional societies.

A common way to categorize certification programs is based on the way a product, facility, or service is assessed.

1) **First-party certification** or supplier's declaration of conformance is more common than generally realized. Manufacturers of computer peripherals and telecommunications equipment self-certify confor-
mance with interoperability standards. Many trade associations enable their members to apply the association's certification mark. Most of these merely certify compliance with the association's code of business practices or commitment to the environment. Some trade associations do provide checks and balances, such as for manufacturers of room air conditioners, which self-certify cooling capacity. In the event of a complaint by a competitor or other party, units are tested at a recognized laboratory. If the units fail, the manufacturer is liable for all costs and relabeling. If the units pass, the complainant is responsible for the costs of testing.

2) Second-party certification is commonly used by major corporations when central purchasing departments certify that products from certain suppliers meet specified standards. Local operations or franchises are required to purchase certified products from these suppliers. This practice is quite common among food and hotel chains to maintain a uniform level of quality as well as benefit from economies of scale. Certification of its members by a trade association is second-party certification whether the assessments are by contracted freelance auditors or the association's own auditors.

3) Third-party certification is a type of certification in which the producer's claim of conformity is validated by a technically competent organization not controlled by or under the influence of the supplier or buyer. Some trade association certification programs that claim to be third-party schemes do not meet this last criterion of arm’s length neutrality and are more properly classified as first- or second-party programs. The certifier may perform tests to collect data, collect data from the supplier, and/or conduct assessments. The certifier may delegate all or part of these assessment activities to another party or parties, but the certifier is responsible for reviewing results and making a final determination on conformance or lack of conformance. The degree of confidence that can be placed in third-party certification programs varies greatly depending on:

- the scope of the standard(s) defining requirements; these should address relevant characteristics that correlate with expected performance;
- the assessment methods used to determine conformance;
- the adequacy of the producer's quality control system to ensure consistent performance between assessments; and
- the competence and reputation of the certifier.

4) Supplier's audit confirmation is a type of certification that involves elements of both first-party and third-party certification. In this approach, a third party assesses the effectiveness of the supplier's internal audit program. It aims to reinforce the credibility of the supplier's declaration of conformance based on first-party assessment. Australia's Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) currently uses this approach. Award of certification is based on a "desk audit" of an applicant's self-assessment questionnaire. Certified operations respond each year to a paper audit on one set of NEAP criteria and receive an on-site audit on all criteria at some stage during the three-year period of certification.

Certification programs mandated by government regulations are usually much more rigorous and expensive than voluntary private sector programs. A primary reason is that government programs are usually limited to matters of health, safety, and the environment in which the consequences of noncompliance can be catastrophic. Many government certification programs specify use of the agency's laboratories or auditors, but many are starting to use private sector certified auditors or accredited laboratories to acquire data. Evidence of conformance then results in certification by the agency. The increase of regional trade pacts and mutual recognition agreements, together with pressure from citizen groups to address environmental and socioeconomic issues, has resulted in more government involvement in setting criteria for assessment, certification, and accreditation.

Voluntary certification programs have many variants. Many certifiers are standards developers and assess conformance only to their own standards; others will assess against any standards, including those of competing certification programs. To provide global recognition for their certifications, certifiers in less-developed countries will enter into joint venture arrangements with one of the dozen or so multinational certifiers. An auditor from the multinational participates with its local partner in the initial audits, and the client receives a joint certificate or certificates from both certifiers. The local certifier then handles periodic reassessments and recertifications. The Rainforest Alliance and its Ecuadorian partner, Conservación y Desarrollo, exemplify this approach, as described in chapter 11.

Accreditation

Not all certification programs are equally thorough or rigorous, and not all certifiers are equally competent. Accreditation is a process for certifying the certifier. One of the criticisms of first-party self-certification is that producers do not have a third party checking competence and the integrity of results. Many third-party certification programs also do not have anyone
looking over their shoulders to ensure the quality of their programs. Like a supplier, a certifier can self-certify compliance with applicable ISO/IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) guides and standards, or users of certification results can validate a certifier’s compliance through third-party assessment. The accepted and most efficient practice, however, is through an accreditation program conducted by a third party independent of the certifier and the purchasers or users of the certification. Certification program accreditation indicates that the certifier is capable of performing specified certification procedures correctly, not that the certifier has competently certified all products or facilities in each and every instance. Accredited certifiers can be expected to achieve at least a minimal level of performance with greater consistency in the services they offer and uniformity in the results they produce.

Accreditation is an important element of decentralized third-party systems in which many certifiers are awarding certification to the same standard. For example, ISO itself does not award certification to the ISO 14001 environmental management system standard; nearly five hundred certifiers award their own certificates. ISO does not accredit these certifiers; nearly fifty national accrediting organizations fill that function. There are many examples of international certification programs with wide recognition and acceptance that do not delegate certification to organizations outside their control. These international certification programs support a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, electronics, textiles, sporting goods, electrical equipment, and seeds. Because they take full responsibility for certifications, there is no need for the complexities and expense of accrediting others. There are no questions about credibility, consistent interpretation of requirements, or the qualifications of auditors that are the raison d’être for accreditation. To date, there is no international accreditation program for tourism, but, as described in chapter 11, a study is underway to determine the feasibility of creating one.

Certifiers participate in accreditation programs in expectation of some type of economic return for their investment in obtaining accreditation, such as new business opportunities. Some may want to distinguish themselves from their competitors by having an impartial evaluation of their competence based upon internationally recognized criteria. The underlying reason in most cases is to use their status as an accredited certifier to enhance credibility with clients and the public.

Most accreditation bodies contract with specially trained freelance auditors, and the process of accreditation follows the same practices as certification, with the one notable alternative of utilizing peer review. Typically, a peer review process includes (1) self-evaluation by the certifier, (2) an on-site assessment by a team of auditors, and (3) judgment by an accreditation body that the certifier complies with applicable standards and guidelines. The two to five auditors of the assessment team come from other peer certifiers. Reciprocal assessments between peers are prohibited.

In most cases, the accreditation body is a primary unit within a national, regional, or international association or cooperative. Accreditation confers membership in the association. To ensure that the interests of users and other stakeholders are addressed, the association usually includes representatives of these groups on their policy board.

Accreditation bodies are often the developers or custodians of the technical standards against which products, services, processes, or systems are assessed by certifiers. Standards development, revision, and interpretation are usually accomplished by a separate operation parallel to the accreditation activity within an umbrella association or cooperative structure. Other accreditors leave responsibility for technical standards to well-established standard developers. Standards used by accreditors for assessing the professional qualifications of certifiers usually include the following criteria:

1) The certifier should have no conflict of interest. If the process is to be credible, no relationship should exist between the operation being certified and the certifier or its auditors that might influence the objectivity of the process. This precludes certifiers or auditors from providing training or consultation services to organizations that they would certify.

2) Procedures should be published and readily available. They should cover all aspects of granting and withdrawing certification, confidentiality of proprietary information, and conditions under which the certification mark can be used.

3) The certifier should have sufficient financial resources to satisfactorily perform its functions and allow it to refuse certification should that prove necessary.

4) The certifier should be able to demonstrate that its personnel are qualified. Each staff member’s and auditor’s training should be kept current and documented.

5) The certifier should have a quality system appropriate to the type and number of certifications performed. A comprehensive, up-to-date quality manual should be maintained and internal audits should be conducted periodically.

6) The certifier should demonstrate thorough understanding of applicable standards and channels for obtaining authoritative interpretations, should there be questions.

7) The certifier should have means of ensuring fair and equitable auditor selection and assignment and verification of their competence and impartiality.
8) Responsibility for certification decisions should not be delegated by the certification body to another party and should be based on all the evidence collected during the certification process.

9) The certifier should have a system for periodic reassessment to ensure that those certified and/or their products continue to comply with all certification requirements.

10) The certifier should have procedures in place that minimize the potential for fraud or deception by those certified regarding their certification status or the meaning of that status. There should be a system to enforce requirements for use of the certification mark, including swift withdrawal of certification from products and operations that fail to comply with the terms and requirements for certification. Appropriate action should be taken against uncertified producers that misrepresent their certification status.

11) The certification program should have an impartial appeals mechanism to handle disagreements that cannot otherwise be resolved. Procedures should be documented, with minimal limitations on their timing and on who may file.

With only minor changes, these criteria are applicable to accreditors as well and are incorporated in the bylaws and operating procedures of most accreditation bodies. It is important that all parties, particularly customers, understand the scope of a particular accreditation program. Some accreditation programs just evaluate compliance with a code of conduct. Others also evaluate the certifier’s technical operations.

Recognition

The ultimate objective of the process outlined above is not only to improve competence and capability within a sector but also to enable those who deal with the sector to make decisions with confidence. They may not have the special knowledge or insight of those within the sector, but they can rely on the certificate and the way in which the certificate was granted. Certification and accreditation systems earn acceptance in the marketplace on the basis of their credibility and reputations of the certifiers and accreditation body. In many cases, a prominent nongovernmental organization or a governmental body at the national, regional, or international level may endorse or officially recognize that an accreditation program is competent or that a conformity assessment system fulfills objectives established by the NGO or government body.

Over the past decade, growth in international trade has highlighted the proliferation of different standards and regulatory requirements. Alleviating problems resulting from this proliferation has been concentrated in two areas: (1) harmonization of existing standards and preferential adoption of international standards, and (2) agreements to recognize the results of assessments, or certificates of conformity by responsible authorities located in two or more nations. Both approaches are cited in the World Trade Organization’s Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, and all member nations are obligated to implement these policies. Harmonization and mutual recognition are divided into two areas. For regulatory matters, negotiation is being accomplished government to government. In areas involving voluntary standardization and conformity assessment, a wide range of private sector players are involved. Negotiations have proven to be contentious and time-consuming because each accreditation body has had slightly different requirements in areas such as auditor experience and training, time between reassessments, conditional certifications, and breadth and depth of internal quality controls.

After many years and a countless number of person-hours, the first mutual recognition agreements are emerging within and between regional blocs in both the regulated and nonregulated (voluntary) areas. Individual accreditation bodies or accreditors within a region are recognized as equally competent under the umbrella of an international recognition agreement. This is the pattern for the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF). There is no international accreditation forum for all sectors or areas of conformity assessment. As a result, sectoral accreditors are organizing alliances and consortia patterned on ILAC and IAF to promote recognition and wider acceptance of their programs. A number of accreditors of sustainable development and social accountability have organized the International Social and Environmental Accrediting and Labeling (ISEAL) Alliance. Members include the Forest Stewardship Council, Social Accountability International, Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International, International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, International Organic Accreditation System, Conservation Agriculture Network, and the Marine Stewardship Council.

It is noteworthy that truly international conformity assessment systems do not need multilateral agreements to achieve recognition because from the beginning these systems used a common set of standards and procedures worldwide that assured consistency and uniformity.

These recognition initiatives and dozens of successful international and regional certification programs for industrial and consumer products provide insights that warrant consideration by the global tourism industry.

1) It is easier and more cost-effective to establish a single worldwide con-
formity assessment system than to organize a number of similar programs into a harmonized, cohesive system.

2) Government agencies, NGOs and other affected interests more readily recognize certification and accreditation procedures documented in international standards and guides, such as those in box 2.1, than systems that do not have this kind of documentation.

3) Availability of a single accepted set of technical standards against which products are assessed not only facilitates worldwide implementation but also recognition. The corollary is that accreditation of certifiers applying a multitude of technical standards is not only problematic, but may not garner adequate recognition or acceptance.

4) The level of recognition and acceptance of a certification system is directly proportional to the number of certificates in effect and their dispersion throughout a wide geographic area.

5) International and regional organizations readily recognize conformity assessment systems that support the objectives of these organizations or assist their constituents.

**Acceptance**

In the regulated areas of safety and health, government recognition of a conformity assessment system confers automatic acceptance by all affected interests and, in many cases, a monopoly to manage conformity assessment in a particular field. In other areas, general acceptance of a certification mark and the system that granted it does not automatically result from recognition. Users and producers need to be convinced of the benefits each will derive, as well as the credibility of the mark and the certification process. Accreditation and recognition effectively address concerns about credibility, but producers and their customers need to be educated on the benefits each party can derive from certification.

Successful certification programs take into account the various factors that motivate suppliers to become certified. A significant underlying consideration is that most enterprises (and some government agencies) prefer voluntary certification programs based on realistic voluntary consensus standards rather than government regulation, which often means inflexible enforcement of broadly written legislation. Acceptance of certification schemes can be facilitated when government agencies work together with the sponsoring organization to achieve common goals. For example, certified tour operators can be given preferential access to wilderness areas or marine parks. When governments support incentives or preferences for certification, suppliers find it much easier to weigh the pros and cons of certification and whether to do it now or later. The benefits and incentives

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**Box 2.2. Certification Benefits and Incentives**

There are many factors that can motivate a hotel to seek certification of its operations. Realizing tangible return for the investment of time and resources to comply with applicable standards is often the primary motive, but intangible benefits are also influential. The more significant motivating factors are listed here.

- **Satisfaction**: Many hoteliers feel the need to conserve energy and protect the environment and to be responsible community members. Certification standards provide guidelines that indicate how they can contribute back to the surroundings that provide such rich benefits by reducing ecological impacts and improving health and safety.

- **Sustainability**: Hoteliers with vision want to ensure a future for their businesses. Their objectives include cost reduction, income growth, superior management practices, and continuity of tourism in the region. Certification programs help hotels to improve their management techniques and to find the best route toward sustainability.

- **Maintenance of Markets**: Certification enables hoteliers to focus on the primary factors affecting customer satisfaction. Achieving a requisite level of performance decreases complaints from clients and from clients to their travel agents and tour operators, with long-term direct benefits to all parties. Certification distinguishes operations and products in the market, making them increasingly more competitive.

- **Proficiency**: Achieving certification requires implementation of practices that conserve resources and reduce direct and indirect costs while improving performance.

- **Public Image**: Certification improves the image of a hotel in the eyes of clients, friends, suppliers, government, and the general public. Certification results in prestige, pride, and publicity.

- **Dialogue**: Certification programs motivate hoteliers, health professionals, and environmentalists to work together in the search for equitable solutions to problems and permits sharing of information and ideas.

- **Credit Opportunities**: Certified hotels are viewed favorably by banking institutions. A hotel that effectively manages safety, health, and hygiene conditions, conserves resources, and takes into account security issues and disaster planning has competitive advantages when it comes to opportunities for credit.

- **Insurance Costs**: Insurers recognize that certification attests to a level of commitment and achievement that can have a positive effect on risk assessment, which translates into lower rates.

- **Reduced Liability**: The systematic assessment of procedures and upgrading of operations that characterizes certification programs can significantly reduce the potential for accidents, discharge of wastes, and other incidents. Insurers take this into account in calculating insurance premiums.

(continues)
Box 2.2. Continued

- **Capable and Dedicated Workers**: At certified hotels, workers receive adequate training, equipment, and motivation. This translates into worker pride and efficiency and thus a higher level of competitiveness.

- **Proactive and Participatory**: In contrast to government regulations, certification is voluntary, market-motivated, and independent. In this way, it allows hoteliers to participate actively in the search for solutions to health, environmental, and management challenges and permits citizens, scientists, and all other sectors to participate. Many times, it is more innovative and advanced than government regulatory processes.

- **Technology Transfer**: Certification programs facilitate technical discussions at all levels, strive for the best available technology, and provide incentives for the development of clean and innovative operating procedures.

Associated with certification of hotels are listed in box 2.2. These benefits are also applicable to other tourism subsectors.

A critical ingredient found in successful, widely accepted certification programs is a complementary ongoing marketing initiative that alerts all affected interests to the program, promotes participation by producers, and encourages users to realize the added value inherent to certified products. At times, organizations that have endorsed or recognized a particular conformity assessment system help to promote acceptance of the system and its certification mark. Some conformity assessment systems spend as much on direct and indirect marketing as they do to operate the technical side of the system. Many systems do not achieve their full potential because they concentrate on procedures and practices but overlook the importance of marketing. This is especially true for tourism certification programs because tourism depends so much on public perception and image.

**Lessons Learned**

**Due Process and Consensus**

The image and reputation of a certification program are directly related to the adequacy and appropriateness of the standards against which the product, facility, or service is assessed. Certification enhances the value of standards by increasing the confidence of customers that products actually conform to the standards. The effectiveness of a certification program is determined by its technical standards. The best certification program in the world will not succeed if it does not assess against standards that reflect the requirements of the major stakeholders and unambiguously specify measurable levels of acceptable performance and not just goals or good intentions. If topics and criteria such as those listed in the appendix are not in the applicable standards, the certification program cannot compensate for the oversight. Special attention must be given to standards and the way they are developed if a certification program is to be successful. A few key points are:

Although the hundreds of private sector developers of formal voluntary standards have widely varied constituencies and charters, nearly all share two important features—due process and consensus. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) supplies the following definitions:

"Due process means that any person (organization, company, government agency, individual, etc.) with a direct and material interest has a right to participate by: (a) expressing a position and its basis, (b) having that position considered, and (c) having the right to appeal. Due process allows for equity and fair play."

Minimum acceptable requirements for due process are:

- **Openness**: Participation open to all persons who are directly and materially affected; no undue financial barriers or technical requirements; and adequate notice of any action.

- **Balance**: There shall be balance of interests and no single interest category shall constitute more than one-third of the membership.

"Consensus means substantial agreement has been reached by directly and materially affected interest categories. This signifies the concurrence of more than a simple majority but not necessarily unanimity. Consensus requires that all views and objections be considered and that an effort be made toward their resolution."

Note that definitions of both due process and consensus limit participation to persons (i.e., organization, company, government agency, etc.) with a direct and material interest. The intention is to put decision making into the hands of those directly affected—not the consultants, the academicians, or dilettantes. This principle is reinforced by the requirement for balance that is based on the number of participating representatives in what are called interest categories, or stakeholders. For ecotourism and sustainable tourism, these categories would be:

1) Suppliers, such as hotels, tour operators, tour boats;
2) Users, such as tourists and consumer associations and travel agents;
3) Directly affected public, including indigenous people and local communities;
4) General interest, including conservation organizations, universities, consultants, and government.
The principles of consensus and balance make good sense because if the potential benefits of the standards are to be realized they must be accepted by as many "materially affected interests" as possible. A consensus among such parties during development of a standard clearly increases its prospects for broad acceptance. It should be noted that initial drafts of standards need not be developed from scratch by a full balanced committee. They may delegate preparation to task groups or even contract out, but the balanced full committee must consider the revised and final drafts.

Procedures that include due process and consensus, as well as an appeals mechanism, are also the prudent way to reduce exposure to litigation. Understandably, any organization that sponsors programs that dictate how businesses will operate, has the potential to restrict trade or increase prices, or establish criteria that affect safety and health eventually can expect to wind up as a defendant or codefendant in a legal action. Surprisingly, many NGOs considering establishing a standards or certification program are under the impression that somehow, as nonprofit organizations set up to promote worthy objectives, they are immune to such action. There is ample case law to demonstrate that this is a false assumption. Depending on the circumstances, a plaintiff may see fit to bring action against anyone or everyone in the supply chain, including the certifier and its accredditor. However, diligent implementation of procedures that foster equity and fair play and standards that represent a true consensus of balanced interests can be some of the best defenses, should there be a lawsuit. Potential legal problems can loom large as an organization considers establishing a certification or accreditation program, but the liability exposure is usually limited and the cost of liability insurance is reasonable. Hundreds of NGOs have weighed these issues and decided to establish certification programs. Nevertheless, experienced legal counsel should be consulted prior to initiating any program to develop standards, certify operations, or accredit certifiers.

Supply and Demand

There are many factors that prompt demand for certification, but any in-depth study will identify two characteristics that are common to all successful systems that are widely recognized and accepted:

1) They are demand-driven, that is the systems were established because of demands from major stakeholders, usually suppliers, and the systems continue to be responsive to the demands of the marketplace and stakeholders; and
2) They are self-supporting and financially stable.

Obviously, there is a cause and effect relationship between the two. Although some entrepreneurs have the attitude "Let's build it and customers will come," very few organizations can afford to invest in a conformity assessment system just on the hope that once it is established people will use it. If for no other reason, senior management and boards of directors have a fiduciary responsibility to see that the organization, its constituency, and sectoral stakeholders will realize tangible and intangible benefits as returns on the investment. Good intentions and expectations based on limited research are not enough. It is essential that the factors critical to supply and demand be identified and analyzed.

One of the most challenging tasks of tourism certification is to balance effective principles of sustainable tourism and ecotourism against criteria that tourists expect a certification program to address. To communicate effectively with tourists, it is important to understand which of the criteria in the appendix are of high interest and value to them. Although all these criteria should be included in the applicable standards, effective communication and marketing require a sharper focus. Creating awareness about certification among tourists is particularly challenging because tourism is worldwide. There is a plethora of ecolabels, and they continue to proliferate. As yet, however, there is no single, sustainable tourism certification mark that has achieved sufficient critical mass among tourists to elicit recognition. This problem is exacerbated in the global context of sustainable tourism certification. Ideally, a sustainable tourism certification mark will mean the same thing wherever a tourist goes, and tourists will have confidence that certifiers apply the same (or equivalent) criteria and that all assessments are equally rigorous. To make it easier for tourists, as well as to promote recognition, the same mark should be incorporated in certification of hotels and ecodolges, dive boats and tour buses, golf courses and jungle safaris.

The demand for some well-established sustainable tourism programs (e.g., in Australia, Costa Rica, Quebec) came from hoteliers and tour operators who were sincerely committed to sound sustainability, environmental, ecological, and socioeconomic practices. They faced what they perceived as unfair competition from "cowboys" or "greenwashers," who claimed similar practices but had taken no concrete action. The image and reputation of the entire tourism industry could suffer if tourists came away with the impression that sustainable tourism was just a marketing theme that was not really put into practice. Differentiating conscientious suppliers from less reputable ones has always been an objective of certification.

Field studies by the author have identified a key factor that determines whether hoteliers seek certification. They prefer to invest in a certification program with a grading mechanism rather than an absolute pass/fail deci-
sion. Truly committed operations that are willing to invest time and resources and motivate their staff to understand that if deficiencies are found in a few areas they would be denied any indication of their commitment to sustainable tourism in a pass/fail system. This perceived risk can be divisive in choosing to seek certification. Hoteliers also report that a grading system is an incentive to address deficiencies and continually improve their operations. Motivation is particularly strong when a hotel with a four- or five-star quality rating merits a sustainable tourism rating of only two or three, or when a lodge that claims to have a comprehensive eco-friendly operation receives a low rating after third-party assessment.

The most critical factor on the supply side is cost. There are two types of costs. One is direct costs of assessment and certification and periodic reassessments. The second is implementation costs. These include time to learn about the certification program, its criteria, and what needs to be done to comply. Then there is orientation of staff, training of key people, working with suppliers, setting up mechanisms for monitoring performance, outreach to the community, and obtaining feedback. Up to this point, the supplier should have very limited out-of-pocket expenses. However, when equipment needs to be upgraded and new systems installed to handle wastewater, conserve energy, and other capital-intensive initiatives, the costs can be substantial. There has been little study of this aspect. Consultants glibly point out that investment in conservation of energy and water can soon pay for itself. Nevertheless, the supplier must somehow find the cash or credit to make these improvements so as to be certified. This is where a credible, recognized certification program can make a difference by showing government agencies, banks, and NGO lenders that supporting such investments is not only good business, but good for the community and the economy. Low-interest or subsidized loans, matching grant funds, tax credits, and waiver of taxes and duties on imported equipment are possible approaches. Some jurisdictions already provide relief of taxes or duties on energy-efficient equipment, while others provide subsidies. A related need, particularly for smaller operations, is information on sources of equipment, suppliers, and services that can facilitate compliance with the sustainability standards, as well as authoritative interpretations of those standards.

Discussions of certification in the tourism sector often start with the premise that suppliers cannot afford the direct costs of assessment and certification. This has been repeated so often that the premise has become an accepted dictum even though there may be no information on the true costs of assessment and certification or pricing limits within the marketplace. But there is another way to look at these costs. The cost issue is related to the marketing advantages. If you pay $200 and do not get any exposure or more clients, it was an unwise expense. If you pay $350 and get exposure, tools to differentiate your business, a better image, and more clients, it was a sound investment and a good deal.9

The assumption that assessment and certification costs are unaffordable to most tourism operations appears to be based on the fees charged by multinational certifiers to ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 and fees charged by two of the earliest certifiers of hotels to their criteria for sustainability. In all these cases, the auditors were foreign-based and traveled long distances for reassessment surveys as well as the formal assessment. In addition, nearly all of these certifiers are for-profit organizations. One of the lessons learned is to use qualified local assessors who are paid fees prevailing in the area, not international rates. Another is to keep a flat management structure without numerous levels of indirect staff, who add to overhead. A recent study in Central America concludes that in some parts of the world it is more cost-effective to establish regional rather than country-specific sustainable tourism certification programs.10 Centralized regional programs would make better use of trainers and auditors, and funding goes further for awareness and marketing within the industry and to tourists. This approach has the added advantage of exposing a larger pool of tourists to certified sustainable tourism, generating demand-side spillovers. Costs of assessment and certification for small suppliers can also be reduced when there is a mechanism enabling assessment teams to evaluate a number of applicants during a visit. Tourism-related trade associations, such as the Caribbean Hotel Association, have demonstrated that they are well-positioned to handle this and other aspects of scheduling, training, and orientation at very low cost.

To maintain their independence and credibility, certifiers must have a sound financial footing. Decisions on whether an applicant qualifies for certification should not be influenced by the need to maintain a positive cash flow. Although some certification programs start out with government support, trade association contributions, and donor grants, these sources of funding cannot be counted on for the long term. No one can guarantee that financial support will be maintained, and there are many examples of worthwhile, proven conservation programs that have collapsed when support was not renewed. Any organization establishing a certification program needs to shape the program so that it will be self-supporting. A widely used approach in conservation circles is user fees. As with national forests and coral reefs, operating costs should be covered by the beneficiaries—in this case, the tourism industry and its customers.

Another side of certification that needs to be taken into account when considering demand factors is the negative attitude of many business people toward any initiatives that might be construed as a form of regula-
tion. They question the value of management system standards and complain about the intrusiveness of auditors and the high direct costs of certification and actual and hidden implementation costs. Attempts to apply similar conformity assessment practices to other areas, such as occupational health and safety, risk management, and social accountability, have reinforced the view that assessment and certification are driven by the suppliers of these services, not by the users nor the marketplace. Whether these attitudes are justified or not, such views and other doubts exist within the tourism sector. They must be weighed and addressed and factored into a certification program's business plan and marketing efforts.

Some Caveats

Certification is not the silver bullet that assures that all tourism facilities and services will magically implement best practices. Well before a certification program is introduced the affected jurisdiction must develop a tourism policy and plan. This is primarily a political process, and indigenous people and local communities must have the opportunity to participate. Standards and certification are not the drivers of this process but are tools that can facilitate implementation of policies and plans. Some of the biggest impediments to sustainable tourism are inadequate (or nonexistent) land use planning; ineffective enforcement of statutes on land use when they do exist; and failure to integrate environmental considerations into tourism policies. Voluntary standards and certification programs can help make some progress, but they may not be the complete answer when political will is lacking.

Stakeholders in sustainable tourism should not fixate on certification to the extent that more significant achievements become secondary. The primary objectives are to implement the principles of sustainable tourism and thereby improve environmental performance and the quality of life in local communities, to enable disadvantaged groups to share in the benefits of tourism, and to meet the expectations of tourists. Tangible results come from commitment, effective use of available resources, and striving to improve operations. Certification verifies that systems are in place, determines if improvements have been realized, motivates proprietors to participate in the program, and can be a strong marketing tool. But sustainable tourism certification should not be the end in itself.

Notes

Chapter 8

Getting Started: The Experiences of South Africa and Kenya

Eddie Koch, Peter John Massyn, and Anna Spenceley

South Africa and Kenya are two of the many countries on the African continent that rely extensively on tourism to promote economic growth, job creation, and reductions in the high levels of poverty that afflict both nations. The term ecotourism, together with an assortment of other terms—“community-based tourism,” “nature-based tourism,” “pro-poor tourism,” “responsible tourism,” “integrated conservation and tourism,” “community private-public partnerships (CPPPs) in tourism”—is currently being applied to efforts to make the industry respectful of and beneficial to both the natural resources and local people. This chapter looks at these initiatives in general and then, more specifically, at certification programs that are emerging in both Kenya and South Africa to codify and formalize criteria for socially and environmentally responsible tourism. It examines initiatives to provide incentives for government, the private sector, and citizens to abide by these criteria when they develop and operate various tourism enterprises.

The tourism industry in South Africa and Kenya is heavily reliant on Africa’s wildlife and the extensive system of national parks in each country. Various types of nature-based tourism form the most strategic sectors within the industry in each country, and for this reason, the certification programs that are being developed draw on practices and standards that have been developed in the ecotourism sector. However, in both these countries, these principles are also being applied and adapted in other sectors of the tourism industry.

Planners and policy makers in both countries are explicitly aware of standards and criteria for responsible tourism that have been developed in...
other parts of the world, and many of these are being integrated into the plans for certification programs. However, there is also a strong awareness in both countries of the need to devise some home-grown standards specifically in the area of encouraging strong linkages between tourism growth and social development. The South African and Kenyan experiences may, therefore, provide innovative examples of how developing countries can use certification as a tool for linking tourism to an improvement in the quality of life for ordinary people.

The governments in both of these countries have tried to attract foreign investment and make their tourism industries globally competitive. They have partially achieved this objective. There is substantial foreign participation through partial or complete ownership of tourism facilities—in particular the hotel sector—in both Kenya and South Africa.

However, this process of private sector mobilization, promoted as a strategy for economic growth and job creation, has been accompanied by major problems, many of which are typical of mainstream tourism around the globe. One is that foreign ownership substantially reduces the revenues that actually stay in the country. Tourism investments in Kenya and South Africa have highlighted the huge danger of leakages—revenues and benefits that flow out of the local area rather than remaining to improve life for the local population. Another is the low quality and seasonality of the jobs available to local people. In the town of Malindi, on the Kenyan coast, it is estimated that as much as 90 percent of the local population work directly in the tourism industry. Activities include mostly menial labor in hotels and restaurants; with local construction companies, bus and taxi companies, and local tour operators; and as boat operators and crew, fish sellers, curio sellers, shell collectors, beachboys, prostitutes, thatch-roofing makers, woodcutters, wood carvers, and food growers and sellers. Although this employment pattern suggests good multiplier effects, the downside of reliance on a tourism-driven economy is that in the off-season there is widespread suffering and poverty because there are no alternative sources of income.

Another problem has been the instability of foreign capital. In the latter half of 2001, South Africa began feeling the effects of an exodus of foreign airline carriers from the country. The reasons for this withdrawal are complex and relate to high costs of travel to South Africa and apparently hostile practices by the national carrier designed to protect its own privileged position. Although this controversy is not explored in detail here, it has contributed to a decline—for the first time since 1994 (the year apartheid officially ended and Nelson Mandela became president)—in the number of foreign tourists arriving in South Africa. Private sector leaders and government officials began, as a result, to express concern about relying only on the fickle international market for tourism investment and growth.

Another pervasive concern in both countries is that local communities are generally excluded from decision making in government and private sector development processes. In Kenya, for example, serious political tensions have emerged as the country’s policy of “indigenization,” which made considerable headway in the 1960s and 1970s, saw Africans being appointed to the top management of companies but being afforded little involvement of local communities in the booming tourism sector (see below). Coastal communities have been forcibly removed from some areas and prevented from gaining access to certain marine and other resources that are monopolized for tourism purposes. In addition, many of the jobs generated by the burgeoning industry have been taken by better educated up-country people who have migrated into the coastal areas because of perceived opportunities created by tourism. The resulting tension between the poor and up-country elite in the coastal tourism belt laid the basis for political clashes in the run-up to Kenya’s 1997 elections that left most of the country’s coastal resorts looking like ghost towns.

Between 1997 and mid-1998, elections unrest, politically instigated ethnic clashes and killings along the Kenyan coast, unusually heavy rains, and a crime wave combined to cause coastal tourism to plummet by two-thirds. By mid-1998, about 50 percent of Kenya’s tourist hotels, mostly along the coast, had closed down or reduced their staff, and about 50,000 workers (30 percent of the tourism sector workforce) had been laid off.

An awareness of these and other generic problems associated with an overreliance on conventional tourism to deal with underdevelopment and poverty has led government agencies, the private sector, NGOs, and ordinary citizens in both countries to develop a set of standards for responsible tourism with criteria that seek to protect the natural resource base as well as the interests of poor communities. These approaches—and the way in which they conform to but also diverge from experiments in other parts of the world—form the subject of this chapter.

South Africa

By the early 1990s, South Africa’s tourism industry had come to assume a strategic importance in the political economy of the country. The potential of the sector to generate jobs, thus dealing with the single biggest social and economic problem facing the country during its transition to democracy, was highlighted in a 1998 report entitled Benchmarking South Africa for Labor Intensive Development: International Lessons and Strategic Implications. Prepared by a group of consultants from Stanford University, the report argued that tourism—especially wildlife, adventure, and sport—had more potential to create new jobs than any other form of economic activity in
Many of the policies were aimed at promoting forms of rural growth and job creation through tourism. A national program of spatial development initiatives (SDIs) (see box 8.1) was set up concentrating on mobilizing private sector investment into parts of the country where there was a

**Box 8.1. The Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) and Community Private Public Partnerships as a Particular Approach to Economic Growth and Job Creation in South Africa**

A critical aim of the SDIs is to redress the inequality in the economy that was inherited from apartheid by promoting new entrepreneurs and community involvement in investments. Thus, the SDI program encourages investors to go into partnerships with rural people. A number of SDIs are located in areas that have a rich set of natural resources: forests, dams, the ocean, beaches, wildlife. There are such SDIs in the northeast of KwaZulu Natal, the Cape west coast, the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape, the Northern Province, and the North West Province.

- Tourism is a major investment sector in these SDIs. The key objectives of the tourism-led SDIs are to:
  - Generate sustainable economic growth and development.
  - Generate sustainable long-term employment creation.
  - Maximize the extent to which private sector investment and lending can be mobilized into the process.
  - Change the ownership base of the industry so that men and women previously excluded from the mainstream of the economy by discriminatory practices can play a meaningful role as workers, managers, and owners of new tourism enterprises.
  - Exploit the opportunities that arise from new tourism and ecotourism developments for the creation of upstream and downstream business opportunities, especially small businesses owned by previously marginalized groups.

The Department of Trade and Industry has established a Community Private Public Partnership (CPPP) program to facilitate these objectives. The CPPP program aims to revitalize South Africa's rural economies by linking resource-rich communities with appropriate public and private sector investor interests.


the country. The Stanford report was designed to feed into the Presidential Job Summit, held in late 1998, so that the South African government and its social partners—organized labor and business—could devise strategies for dealing with unemployment in South Africa.

The study argued that tourism had the potential for creating 450,000 new jobs by the year 2005. The only other sectors with job creation potential were construction (which the report says could create 60,000 jobs by the year 2005), agriculture (50,000 jobs), furniture (30,000), labor-intensive export manufacturing (20,000), and information service industries (10,000). The report thus gave tourism a massive 72 percent of the job-creating potential in South Africa's current economic circumstances.

Then, in 1999, the Cluster Consortium (a group of planners and researchers from South Africa, North America, and New Zealand who were appointed by the government to develop an action plan to enhance the performance of the tourism industry) released a report called *South Africa's Tourism Challenge: A Profile of the Tourism Cluster.*

The optimism of The Standard and Cluster Consortium reports regarding job creation was based on data that indicated that South Africa at the close of the millennium was enjoying the longest period of tourism growth in its history. The year 1999 marked the eleventh successive year of increased overseas visitor arrivals, which had grown at a compound rate of over 15 percent per annum during the decade. Recent analysis has shown that much of this expansion was due to above average increases in the number of tourists attracted by South Africa's beautiful scenery and wildlife.

The growth in international tourism came on top of a large, established domestic tourism market worth approximately twice as much as its foreign counterpart. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimated that, in total, South African tourism in 1998 contributed about Rand (ZAR)53 billion (about US$6.6 billion) a year to the economy, and the WTTC expected this to grow at around 12 percent annually, reaching ZAR211 billion (about US$27 billion) by 2010.

Based on the assessment of tourism's strategic role in the South African economy, the post-apartheid government has adopted a range of policies aimed at making tourism one of the lead growth sectors for the country. In 1996, the government approved a tourism White Paper (*White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa*) that had a notion of responsible tourism at its core and laid the basis for the development of an extensive set of responsible tourism guidelines (see below). By 1998, tourism had become a key driver of the country's macroeconomic strategy of growth, employment, and redistribution (GEAR). A national tourism council made up of representatives from the private sector and government departments made substantial funds available for a new marketing drive.
surfeit of natural beauty, landscapes, and wildlife but historically little development. These represent a new economic paradigm aimed at moving away from a protected and isolated approach to economic development under apartheid toward one in which international competitiveness, regional cooperation, and a more diversified ownership base are paramount.

The supply-side response changed substantially from the late 1990s, with the award of concessions in a number of national parks and other concerted attempts to attract new investment into lodge opportunities in other wilderness areas of the country, including the North West Province and the northern parts of KwaZulu Natal. In the past, commercial development in public parks was undertaken almost exclusively by state and parastatal (semi-state) agencies, such as South African National Parks and the Natal Parks Board. The state thus effectively monopolized commerce in most of the country’s prime wildlife estate, with private sector development confined to relatively small privately owned reserves (such as the Sabi Sands Game Reserve next to the Kruger National Park) on the margins of the major public parks. As part of the government’s broader economic restructuring, state parks and reserves are being opened, for the first time, for private commercial activities.

A number of South Africa’s conservation agencies are undertaking programs to commercialize the wildlife estate under their control, thus opening possibilities for private sector investment in lodges and related commercial activities. The lead agency in this regard has been the North West Parks and Tourism Board, which has facilitated the development of private tourism facilities in major provincial reserves, such as Pilanesberg and Madikwe in the North West Province of South Africa. More recently, South African National Parks (SANP), with assistance from the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation, has awarded concessions to private developers in a number of the country’s national reserves, including the Kruger National Park. Both agencies have increasingly used their procurement practices to advance the economic empowerment of historically disadvantaged South Africans, particularly those residing in the immediate hinterland of the parks. The Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park Authority, a dedicated management institution set up by terms of national legislation in late 2000 to facilitate the commercial development of South Africa’s first and largest World Heritage Site, is implementing a similar strategy to promote black economic empowerment.

This approach, which twins commercialization of state assets with a procurement method that favors black South Africans, is in line with recent national legislation on public procurement and employment equity and is likely to be adopted by other state agencies controlling valuable wildlife estate (such as the provincial conservation bodies). If efficiently implemented, it promises to reshape ownership and business practices in the country’s wildlife sector, which to date have been dominated by the public and white business sectors. The first round of seven concessions awarded by the SANP in late 2000 provides an early example of the impact of affirmative procurement in the wildlife sector: according to SANP, previously disadvantaged South Africans own, on average, 53 percent of the equity in the successful bidding companies. The conditions under which the concessions were acquired require the new owners to employ local labor, utilize the services of local small businesses, and pay dividends from profits to previously disadvantaged shareholders. New game lodges in these wildlife areas are still being built, and it remains to be seen whether these objectives of commercialization of state assets and black economic empowerment will be successfully realized.

South Africa’s land reform program, which aims to create land and resource rights for those who were denied them in the past, has also started transferring conditional ownership of portions of the country’s public wildlife estate to groups dispossessed under apartheid. South Africa’s magnificent national and regional parks were created during the twentieth century, frequently by forcibly evicting the local people and barring them access to their land. With the end of apartheid, many black communities assumed the Mandela government would dismantle the parks and return their lands to them. The government decided instead to keep most of the parks but to allow communities to file land claims to be adjudicated on a case by case basis. Large sections of South Africa’s premier parks are currently under claim, but the restitution program has been slow and heavily contested.

By 2001, there was growing consensus that the landmark Makuleke case offered a model for how to transfer important protected areas to claimants. After a long struggle, the Makuleke people regained title to a prime piece of African wildlife estate in northern Kruger National Park, which lies at the heart of southern Africa’s largest proposed transfrontier park. They have decided not to resettle on the land and to leave it as a contractual park within the wider Kruger Park wildlife system. The Makuleke have full commercial rights to their land and have initiated an advanced program for the development of a range of nature tourism lodges and other commercial activities in partnership with the private sector. They are thus relying on a responsible form of nature tourism to alleviate poverty, provide jobs and revenues, and remedy the negative effects that the forced removal had on their livelihoods.
Responsible Tourism and Certification

The South African state has made attempts to promote racial equity, labor standards, and integrated environmental procedures across all industries. It has also encouraged ethical forms of investment into enterprises and companies whose values are inscribed in contracts between companies from the private sector and various groups in civil society. The South African government and the private sector are clearly encouraged by indications that various forms of wildlife tourism are able to bring into the mainstream of the economy some rural people who were previously discriminated against. This is being done either by creating joint ventures between local communities and private investors on communal land or by creating opportunities for small businesses to service a main tourism enterprise. There is also a pervasive belief within government that tourism, unlike the highly damaging mining industry that drove the apartheid economy, can be an industry without smokestacks, that is, one that conserves rather than consumes the natural resources upon which it is based. There are a number of areas of the country where these principles are being implemented.

There are, however, a number of daunting obstacles in the way of achieving these objectives of economic empowerment combined with environmental protection, including the lack of capacity in rural communities, high levels of poverty, and fragmentation of government’s ability to implement its own policies. Although the models are too young to assess as being successes or failures at this stage, they are examples of where South Africa is making a new contribution at a policy level to the setting of standards for responsible tourism.

Despite these government initiatives aimed at achieving an ethical and sustainable form of tourism, industry and government were slow in the 1990s to convert the principles of South Africa’s tourism White Paper (see below) into a formal system aimed at monitoring and rewarding sustainable tourism practices. By the end of 2001, there were a couple of fledging efforts by government, parastatals, and/or the main private sector players in the tourism sector to arrive at tourism grading systems that would ensure hospitality levels of quality, health, and safety standards, as well as some ethical environmental and social standards. Some of the larger private sector tourism establishments subscribe to international certification programs, such as Green Globe 21 and ISO 14001-based programs, but to date, very few have applied for such certification.

Qualitour and the Heritage Ecotourism Rating Program

However, in September 2001, Qualitour, a private South African company that runs a small certification program rating service, hospitality, and quality, announced that it was linking up with Green Globe to launch a Heritage Ecotourism Rating Program. Qualitour, which offers a variety of services to both the industry and travelers, has certified less than two dozen hotels, lodges, and resorts using a scale of one to five diamonds. In a press release, managing director Greg McManus explained that Qualitour is partnering with AJA South Africa, the registered Green Globe auditors for the region, to launch a new product designed to “reward establishments and service providers who operate environmentally responsible businesses in the South African tourism industry.” The Heritage program is designed to offer certification to businesses throughout the tourism industry but does not contain measurable, performance-based criteria. McManus explained that the Heritage program is based on the International Hotels Environment Initiative, which goes further than Green Globe. He recognized that Green Globe is not wholly suitable to South African realities, especially because it does not work at the community level. However, McManus stated that all enterprises enrolled with the Heritage program will automatically receive Green Globe affiliate status but that qualification for Green Globe certification will take longer (see chapter 10).

AJA South Africa auditors will carry out the environmental assessment and will offer three levels of certification. By early 2002, no hotels had yet been enrolled in the new program, but Qualitour said it planned to announce the first Heritage certifications and Green Globe affiliates at several trade shows and forums leading up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) taking place in South Africa in August–September 2002. In addition, in May 2002, the Minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Valli Moosa, launched the government’s new national guidelines for “responsible” tourism. Although these initiatives remain fragmented and embryonic, they are opening many possibilities to constructively influence a fluid process that is underway in South Africa.

South African Tourism Board Hospitality Standards

In addition to the small Qualitour program, hotels, guest houses, and other types of accommodations in South Africa were, until the late 1990s, governed by a system of grading that awarded stars to the enterprises, primarily for its hospitality standards. This system was administered by the South African Tourism Board (Satour), a parastatal or quasi-governmental body. The code of conduct accepted by members of this scheme emphasized the need to maintain standards of courtesy and quality in facilities and services in hotels and guest houses. There were no environmental standards or social criteria involved in the grading scheme, and the closest the Satour system came to enforcing any kind of social equity was a clause in the code...
stating that members were required “to ensure that no guest is discriminated against in any manner whatsoever.”

With the end of white rule in 1994, the hotel sector in South Africa experienced substantial growth in line with expanding tourism arrivals. Leading local hotel chains, owned by domestic capitalists who had maintained a major presence in the hotel sector under apartheid, along with the big multinational hotel groups who were attracted to the country after the democratic elections, began in the late 1990s to resist the grading system and the levies that went with it. “The big groups argued that their brands were far more effective in the marketplace than the official grading system. They questioned whether it was worth paying for the grading system when it brought them little benefit,” said Mike Fabricius, chief executive officer for Western Cape Tourism.

Thus, a group of owners of the big hotel franchises, local and international capitalists who jointly held some 60 percent of tourism beds in the country, formed an organized lobby called the Hotel Industry Liaison Group. They argued against the grading system, which they saw as outmoded and ineffective, and called for it to be replaced by a more dynamic and effective, in marketing and branding terms, certification program. In the meantime, they relied on their own branding, marketing, and ability to attract consumers. The old Satour grading system was thus abandoned.

Tourism Grading Council Standards

At the same time, the big hoteliers attempted to set up their own private sector–controlled scheme. But this, on its own, did not amount to an effective certification program. In the late 1990s, a Tourism Grading Council, comprising government officials, the major players in the organized hospitality sector, and organized labor, was set up to devise a new grading system primarily to rate hospitality standards, but not socially or environmentally responsible practices.

The new Tourism Grading Council set about conducting a series of discussions and consultations within the tourism sector and within government agencies responsible for tourism management to work out how to implement a new grading system and what criteria to include in it. There were three issues that dominated the debate. These are summarized below:

- How should a system involving a voluntary commitment to a set of accommodation and service standards by all groups in the tourism sector be devised? A key issue of contention, articulated primarily by organized labor, was a potential form of elitism: a set of standards imposed by big global and domestic hotel chains that may create problems for emerging and smaller enterprises in the sector.
- Should there be a mandatory system for businesses to adhere to safety, health, hygiene, and tax standards in the sector, and if so, what kind of policing/monitoring/auditing body should be set up to administer this system? A major factor favoring a mandatory framework was the fragmented and diverse nature of local government bylaws and municipal regulations then governing these issues. The general consensus in the Tourism Grading Council appears to have been in favor of creating a not-for-profit company to carry out this role.
- Should social, environmental, and equity standards be included, and if so, how should they be worded? Paradoxically, these issues were less prominent within the Tourism Grading Council’s deliberations, probably because these factors are seen as being the subject of various government-led programs.

By June 2002, there was a major drive by the Tourism Grading Council to implement a new grading scheme to replace the abandoned Satour system. It will be important to monitor how this scheme unfolds, as it will shed light on the attitudes of large portions of the country’s tourism sector (those represented in the Hotel Industry Liaison Group) toward the monitoring of their hospitality standards and possibly also toward the other standards for responsible tourism that are emerging in the country. Early indications are that most sectors of the tourism industry will accept a new grading system but will want this to be simple, effective, and impose minimal cost on tourism enterprises. It is also clear that the big hotel groups will want to participate in the assessment of their hospitality standards and will not feel comfortable if auditing and assessment is conducted by an independent external body.

Conservation Corporation Africa/National Geographic Society Branding Experiment

In part because of this hiatus in Satour’s grading system, there was an innovative attempt in 2000 by South Africa’s leading nature tourism lodge development and operating company, Conservation Corporation Africa (CCA), to enter into a strategic partnership with the National Geographic Society (NGS). This NGO engaged in negotiations with CCA to establish an alliance between two organizations with similar values and missions. In essence, these revolved around a commitment to various forms of nature and cultural tourism that help protect biodiversity and heritage while at the same time promoting economic growth and development of a type that improves the livelihoods of local residents. A central objective of the alliance was for NGS to certify select CCA lodges with its logo for marketing and branding purposes.

A list of criteria reflecting the shared values of the parties to the proposed
alliance was drafted for the purpose of conducting the audits. This list covered a range of issues relating to impacts and performance of the lodges in the following four broad headings: ecology, economy, sociocultural, and a number of factors specific to the interests of NGS members. Although pilot audits were carried out at CCA lodges throughout southern and eastern Africa, the proposed strategic alliance failed to materialize for a number of reasons that had little to do with the content of the proposed scheme. The audits included a qualitatively derived but numbered rating system for environmental and social performance criteria, but in the absence of quantifiable and measurable criteria, it was open to the assessor's own interpretation to determine the score. This is a problem seen in the environmental and social assessment field globally and is not unique to the CCA/NGS scheme.

The branding experiment is mentioned here because it demonstrated a willingness in some sections of the private sector to adopt for commercial reasons a set of responsible tourism codes that incorporate quality standards as well as environmental, sociocultural, and economic equity criteria. It also indicated the possibility that a well-established and credible (rather than new) global brand, the NGS logo, could be used, especially in the ecotourism sector, to overcome the proliferation of brands that afflicts global certification attempts. CCA is continuing efforts to develop its own assessment methodology, independent of NGS.

Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa

Yet another effort is being spearheaded by the South African chapter of the IUCN (World Conservation Union), which coordinates a Fair Trade in Tourism program. This is linked to the global fair trade movement, which seeks to address North-South inequalities through the creation of fair trade labels, trading partnerships, and ethical trading initiatives (see chapter 3). Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) has been active since late 1998, when it began to establish a relationship with five small tourism projects in the Northern Province, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. The IUCN-South Africa now plans to expand this program primarily for the benefit of community-based tourism destinations and businesses. The project aims to:

- Establish and strengthen the concept of fair trade in tourism in South Africa.
- Promote the implementation of the fair trade principles that are quite well known in Northern European markets.
- Promote and market the tourism activities of FTTSA products (formal or informal tourism enterprises that meet the FTTSA trademark criteria), thus helping to create viable and sustainable businesses that can create employment and wealth.

- Establish a Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa brand and trademark to channel a portion of the country's growing numbers of international arrivals and domestic trips (and tourist expenditures) toward South Africa's disadvantaged communities and population groups.

Blue Flag Certification for South Africa's Beaches

Apart from hotel certification efforts, there has been movement toward protecting South Africa's renowned beaches from pollution and overuse through tourism. In 2001, a nongovernmental organization, the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) became the first organization outside Europe to join the Blue Flag certification program (see chapter 7). Although certified beaches must comply with all criteria in fourteen different groups, WESSA tailored the criteria to take into account South Africa's unique geographical conditions and social issues. There are, for instance, additional criteria relating to visitor security, including the requirement that a uniformed official must patrol the area twenty-four hours a day. A South African beach must first apply to run a pilot phase and only one year thereafter may it apply for a full Blue Flag status. Although run by an NGO, the campaign is being supported by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T), which is using Blue Flag status to market South African destinations internationally.

DEA&T's Initiative for National Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism

Concerned with the lack of formal standards in South Africa, the DEA&T began a participatory process of developing responsible tourism guidelines for the South African tourism industry with the aim of promoting these guidelines during the May 2002 International Year of Ecotourism summit in Quebec, Canada. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) was pushing to have some country develop a model set of national guidelines for sustainable tourism, and South Africa, as the host of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in August–September 2002, hoped its emerging set of standards would achieve this status.

As noted, the DEA&T initiative takes as its starting point the South African government's White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa, published in 1996 after a wide stakeholder consultation process with the tourism industry and wider society. The DEA&T believes that the White Paper contains nearly all the elements necessary to create responsible strategies that can be put into action in each subsector of the tourism industry. However, although the wording of policy is supportive of rural livelihoods and empowerment, there have been major difficulties transferring the aspirations of government policy into practice on the ground. The nature, language, and style of legislative documents often...
Box 8.2. Principles and Elements Taken from the 1996 White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa

Responsible tourism is the key guiding principle for tourism development. It takes "a proactive approach by tourism industry partners to develop, market, and manage the tourism industry in a responsible manner so as to create a competitive advantage." In addition, this type of tourism "recognises the responsibility of the government and private sector to involve the previously neglected in the tourism industry."

Key elements are to:

- **Market tourism that is responsible, respecting local, natural, and cultural environments.**
- **Involve local communities through meaningful economic linkages and use tourism as "a development tool for the empowerment of previously neglected communities," particularly the empowerment of women in those communities.**
- **Involve the local community in planning and decision making.**
- **Assess economic impacts as a prerequisite to developing tourism.**
- **Ensure that communities are involved in and benefit from tourism.**
- **Respect, invest in, and develop local cultures, protect them from overcommercialization and overexploitation, and involve local communities in the tourism industry "to practise sustainable development and to ensure the safety and security of visitors."**
- **Maintain and encourage economic, social, and cultural diversity.**
- **Be sensitive to the host culture.**
- **Assess social impacts as a prerequisite to developing tourism.**
- **Foster "responsibility of both employers and employees in the tourism industry both to each other as well as to the customer," including responsible trade union practices.**
- **Show responsibility to the environment.**
- **Maintain and encourage natural diversity.**
- **Avoid waste and overconsumption.**
- **Use local resources sustainably.**
- **Assess environmental impacts as a prerequisite to developing tourism.**
- **Foster responsibility of tourists to "observe the norms and practises of South Africa, particularly with respect to the environment and culture of the country."**
- **Monitor impacts of tourism and ensure open disclosure of information.**


do not lend themselves to direct translation into action. A number of the key principles and elements from the White Paper are shown in box 8.2.

To implement the policy, both DEA&T and the private sector set out to develop detailed guidelines for implementation and benchmarks against which to monitor and assess progress. International tourism and certification expertise from the British-based Centre for Responsible Tourism (CRT) and the Institute of Natural Resources (INR) in KwaZulu Natal province was used to facilitate the process of developing the guidelines. The British government's Department for International Development provided funding for this process. The criteria for responsible tourism were drawn from a review of international best practices and key economic, social, and environmental objectives in the 1996 White Paper. Thus, by late 2001, a comprehensive set of responsible tourism guidelines had been developed through a series of national workshops and a paper-based consultation process that involved government, the private sector, consultants, academics, and civil society organizations. These new national guidelines for responsible tourism contain a comprehensive set of standards too long to summarize here, but they deal with the "triple bottom line" (economic, social, and environmental) categories agreed to at the 1992 Earth Summit.

DEA&T intends that these guidelines will contain among the most extensive strategies for sustainable tourism development in the world and plans to showcase these during 2002 at the Ecotourism Summit in Canada and, in South Africa, at both the World Summit on Sustainable Development and a special tourism summit meeting. Johann Kotze, an official with the DEA&T, stated that the guidelines are significant due to the way in which they stress human rights, basic labor standards, and social empowerment objectives, along with environmental safeguards. Kotze explained that the guidelines are also unique in that they provide the government with concrete targets against which to cumulatively monitor their progress toward implementing the White Paper policy of responsible tourism. In 2002, DEA&T commissioned the development of a Manuel for Responsible Tourism in order to guide trade associates and tourism enterprises in responsible business practices and in reporting their performance in a transparent way.

**Uncertain Future**

The South African government is relying on voluntary adherence on the part of industry to the responsible tourism guideline rather than any form of enforcement or set of incentives. Several major private sector groups, including the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (FEDHASA) and the Bed and Breakfast Association of South Africa (BABASA), have already initiated discussions to develop specific guidelines for responsible practice for their members in implementing the national guidelines.
In addition, a four-wheel-drive vehicles group called Off-Road Tactix has already drawn up its first draft. These associations have recognized the commercial advantages of implementing responsible tourism, especially in light of new research by Tearfund and the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), which clearly shows the importance that British tourists place on environmental and social responsibility in the holidays they choose.

In addition, the members of the British Association of Independent Tour Operators (BAITO) have signed on to their own responsible tourism guidelines. These require quantifiable information from destinations to show their clients that they are acting to use responsible ground handlers. Therefore, the members of FEDHASA, BABASA and the four-wheel-drive market will gain significant advantage if they can be the first to conform to these guidelines.

Given the previous reluctance on the part of the large hotel groups to accept a independent grading schemes, it will be interesting to see whether the big players in South African tourism convert in-principle support into real adherence to the set of new sustainable tourism standards. Initial indications are that they will only do so if there is clear evidence that their operations will increase by doing so, if the standards are simple and easy to administer, if they do not involve substantial cost, and so long as industry groups are involved in monitoring and assessing compliance with the standards. Any external monitoring by an independent body is likely to be viewed as interference in internal industry matters. However, in order to encourage and showcase sustainable business practices, FEDHASA has relaunched its Imvelo award in line with the responsible tourism guidelines.

By June 2002, there were no plans for independent monitoring of companies and the scheme did not include a logo or ecolabel. However, these may evolve as the work of developing guidelines proceeds, as well as the forthcoming work of developing subsector guidelines with quantifiable criteria for the land and marine nature-based tourism sector.

Thus, although a number of certification initiatives are now underway and several are hoping to use the International Year of Ecotourism and the pre-WSSD Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations to gain international recognition, by mid-2002, the reality was that the situation in South Africa remained fluid, and more work appeared to be needed to bring all key stakeholders into agreement behind a single certification program for responsible tourism.

Kenya

History of Ecotourism in Kenya

At independence in 1963, Kenya inherited many of the problems related to neocolonial economies, including reduced investment, capital shortage, and severe unemployment. The government relied from the outset on tourism to promote economic growth, employment creation, private sector investment, and foreign exchange earnings. There was a strong drive to attract private sector investment in the tourism industry. This objective was also supported by easygoing policies on repatriation of foreign capital, profits, and dividends, enabling investors who wished to remit funds to do so without hardships.

The nature-based tourism industry in Kenya is centered around the country’s abundant wildlife in protected areas and its scenery, beaches, and coral reefs. The tourism industry has grown significantly from 65,000 tourists per annum at independence in 1963 to 832,000 in 1994. Tourism is a critical national foreign exchange earner and has generated around 150,000 direct and 360,000 indirect jobs.

The Kenyan government allowed the international private sector to purchase land on which they were to develop their hotels. The strategy provided security of tenure that was regarded by both government and the private sector investors as a critical precondition to securing fixed foreign investment. Any benefit flows to the local community from the sale of this land were to be achieved via trickle down effects.

During the 1960s and 1970s, tourism was the second largest sector of the national economy (average 13 percent) after agriculture (37 percent). Although tourism stagnated between 1978 and 1983, it picked up sharply after 1984. It was stimulated by an improved international economic climate and Kenya’s economic liberalizations, promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which provided new incentives and tax breaks for foreign investment. By 1987, tourism had become Kenya’s number one foreign exchange earner, surpassing coffee and tea (although the agricultural sector as a whole generated more export earnings than tourism). In the early 1990s, no other African country was earning as much as Kenya from wildlife tourism.

But decline set in during the mid- and late 1990s, with earnings dropping 20 percent in 1995 alone. The downturn was caused by a combination of factors: an economic recession, declining infrastructure, increasing insecurity and crime, bad press coverage, excessively recycled tourism products (mainly beach holiday and game safaris and a failure to diversify its range of attractions), poor international marketing, and increasing competition from eastern and southern Africa (particularly Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, and Zimbabwe).

Post-Independent Indigenization and Ecotourism

In 1966, the recently independent Kenyan government, apparently aware
of the potentially adverse effects of foreign private sector dominance of the tourism industry, attempted to counterbalance ownership by foreign and white settlers by creating the Kenya Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC). The main aim was to diversify the ownership of assets and of economic activities and to indigenize the tourism economy. KTDC's mission was to buy shares in foreign-owned tour companies, travel agencies, hotels, and lodges and then sell these shares "to promising Kenyan entrepreneurs on special terms." In practice, KTDC served as a vehicle for using public funds to help handpicked, politically well-connected black Kenyans get a piece of the tourism pie.

During this same period, Kenya also introduced what are often considered to be Africa's earliest experiments with "pro-poor" ecotourism, that is, tourism that is culturally sensitive and economically beneficial to local communities. Kenya established revenue sharing of park fees and tourism profits in several of its most famous game parks. Under an agreement reached in 1961, Maasai Mara, Amboseli, and a few other Kenyan game reserves were to be managed by the local district or country councils rather than the central government, with the aim of channeling earnings into development programs for the local Maasai pastoralists. These innovative programs embodied the principles of local community participation in wildlife conservation and tourism and mixed land use in the buffer zones around the parks. The revenues were intended for local development—schools, water, roads, health clinics, and other basic services—but, after initial successes, these programs were undermined by local Maasai leaders who diverted entrance fees and lodge levies into their own pockets. Like the KTDC, these early experiments at local control eventually served largely to enrich a politically powerful elite. By the early 1990s, these game reserves, the local people, and tourism were all suffering from the corruption, land grabbing, diversion of resources, and unplanned and inappropriate investment in both the parks and surrounding areas.

Resentment toward the parks and reserves had, in fact, been building for decades. In Kenya, as elsewhere in eastern and southern Africa, local residents had often been forcibly removed as parks and reserves were created, first for the benefit of trophy hunters and European scientists and later for wildlife camera safaris. Those evicted ended up living on the edges of protected areas and were barred from access to water, grazing grass, and other resources on what had historically been their land. In addition, wildlife tourism was largely for foreigners or local white settlers. Although a substantial amount of money was set aside for overseas promotion, nothing was done to promote domestic tourism in the first decade of independence. This meant that as tourism gained momentum, locals became increasingly distanced and alienated from the parks, hotels, and lodges.

Even when local people have received some income from tourism and the parks, it has been accrued with complications. For example, Arhem noted in the mid-1980s, "From being self-sufficient pastoralists, capable of maintaining a modest but adequate standard of subsistence... the Maasai have turned into impoverished pastoral peasants, tied to the market and subject to increasing state control." In addition, the Maasai fear that, as Paul Ntiati, one of their leaders in Kenya, put it, "if we designate specific areas within our ranches for wildlife sanctuaries, the government will come along one day and take them from us as they did with Amboseli [National Park], saying that these wildlife areas are a national asset, so the nation must control them." Today, indigenization has brought few sustainable benefits to local communities and rural poor, and wildlife tourism is, by and large, still seen as a luxury activity for rich, conservation-minded foreign tourists.

The growth of tourism has caused ecological deterioration and shortfalls of vital resources as well. The negative impacts directly attributable to tourism include overuse and overharvesting of sea shells, corals, and precious woods; pollution from sewage, solid waste, and oil; soil erosion in popular game viewing areas; shortages of fresh water; and deforestation. Within the context of Kenya's rapid tourism development, any environmental impact planning, monitoring, and regulation has been, according to various observers, largely haphazard and ad hoc. In practice, no viable and integrated development plan was implemented at the start of the tourism development program, and this situation remained essentially unchanged by the end of the millennium.

Today, there is widespread agreement that both the Kenyan government and private sector must change the tourism industry as a whole if the problems of degradation, decline in tourism quality, decreasing per capita tourist revenues, and inequitable distribution of national tourism earnings are to be addressed. As Kenya's assistant director of tourism Sam Okungu explained at a March 2001 workshop, "tourism today is seen as a set of principles and practices intended to ensure the sustainability to the entire nature-based tourism industry." Okungu went on to list three main objectives of sustainable tourism development in Kenya:

- Improve the quality of life of the tourist host communities.
- Provide high-quality visitors' experiences.
- Maintain the quality of the environment on which the host community and the tourists depend. This encourages understanding of the impacts of tourism on the natural, cultural, and human environment and ensures a fair distribution of benefits and costs.

The philosophy also builds on the work of some conservation NGOs and aid agencies in Kenya that have initiated programs in recent years link-
Setting Standards and Establishing a Certification System

Over the last several years, there has been a growing consensus that the development of a domestic ecotourism system will help both to curb destructive and unjust practices and to demonstrate to the rest of the world that Kenya is dealing with its problems. During the late 1990s, calls for a domestic rating scheme were made at various conferences, including the 1997 workshop “Ecotourism at a Crossroads,” organized by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES). The TIES forum was attended by a range of national and international NGOs, academics, and private sector representatives and took place as Kenya’s tourism industry was experiencing a serious decline, caused in part by government and industry failure to address environmental and social impacts of tourism operations. One of the outcomes of this forum was the endorsement of the need to develop a code of conduct for ecotourism operations in Kenya. Subsequently, a National Tourism Conference, held in July 1998, deliberated over what should be done to improve Kenya’s image, including the need to set standards and examine the possibilities of creating a certification system.

Then, in October 1999, the Kenyan Tourism Federation (KTF) initiated a workshop to stimulate support for the development of a domestic certification scheme. This so-called Eco-rating Initiative was aimed at assessing the broader tourism industry (not just the ecotourism slice) with a view toward assisting in the development of a sustainable tourism industry. The workshop was attended and supported by the donor community, tourism associations, conservation organizations, NGOs working with communities, community representatives, and individuals interested in tourism. The workshop participants agreed to move ahead with development of a domestic ecotourism scheme.

The Ecotourism Society of Kenya (ESOK) was given the responsibility of developing the ecotourism scheme, and a broadly representative steering committee was created to guide the process. This committee is made up of representatives from the industry, government, and NGOs and has embarked on a number of activities aimed at pursuing the ecotourism ini-

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<tr>
<th>Table 8.1. Summary Table of Discussions about the Major Ecorating Issues</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Issue</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the eco-rating scheme have to be Kenyan?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What should be the focus of the scheme?</td>
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<td>What approach to assessment would be desirable?</td>
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<td>What sort of criteria should be used?</td>
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<td>Should there be different levels of certification?</td>
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<td>How is compliance with the criteria assessed?</td>
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<td>Who should manage the ecotouring scheme?</td>
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<td>What if a company fails the test?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What sort of support should the scheme offer to companies?</td>
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<td>Should there be links with other schemes?</td>
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(continues)
Table 8.1. Continued

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Overall Outcome of Discussion</th>
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<td>What resources might be needed for a Kenyan scheme?</td>
<td>A general discussion occurred, but no conclusions were reached, although delegates began to appreciate the considerable resources that will be needed to implement a scheme. The hiring of a consultant was considered essential, and some indication of donor support was provided.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much would certification cost?</td>
<td>All of the parameters for determining certification charges were regarded as imperfect, although annual profit was perhaps considered the most appropriate. The proposed process and schedule were accepted as realistic. A general feeling emerged that it was important to develop the scheme as quickly as possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a process for developing an ecorating scheme?</td>
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tiative. These have included consultation with the Kenyan tourism industry regarding principles of sustainable tourism and ecorating, a survey of international certification schemes, and organizing two more workshops. In his opening remarks to a workshop held in Mombasa, ESOK chairman Jake Grieves Cook argued that because “some are... just paying lip service to the principles of ecotourism as a means of obtaining marketing advantage,” an ecorating system was necessary to help set standards and ensure that tourism businesses that claimed to be acting responsibly were actually adhering to sustainable practices. Table 8.1, prepared by ESOK, summarizes the ecorating discussions.

Although some key tourism industry players were absent from the early ESOK workshops, those who were present expressed support of the ecorating initiative and agreed to act as leaders for the process. A technical committee was established that includes both tourism and conservation representatives, and a process and time frame were agreed upon for creating the rating system, beginning in 2002.

In addition to this ecorating scheme, there is a parallel effort to set sustainability standards within a craft closely linked to the tourism industry. The so-called People and Plants Initiative, begun in 1994, is aimed at protecting the hardwood carving industry in Kenya, which produces popular animal and human figures for the tourism market. This US$20 million per year industry supports over 60,000 woodcarvers with an estimated 300,000 dependents, and yet it is based upon a rapidly diminishing timber resource. Just two woodcarving centers at Mombasa and Malindi, for instance, use over 20,000 logs per year. The most preferred species, such as mahogany and ebony, are now in extremely short supply. In addition, some 9,000 of the 20,000 mahogany trees felled each year are hollow. While living, these hollow trees provided shelter for mammals, reptiles, birds, and invertebrates, some of which are endangered species.

With the support of the Mennonite Central Committee, the People and Plants Initiative has brought together all the major stakeholders, including the carvers, traders, concerned NGOs, conservation and forestry organizations, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in an “inclusive approach” intended to “increase the reliability of the results and raise the likelihood” that its recommendations would be implemented. Kenyan researchers have been working with woodcarvers to record the history, economic value, and ecological impact of the trade. As a first step, the findings were communicated to woodcarving centers in a unique way, using live and videotaped dramas enacted by woodcarving families themselves. Secondly, they identified additional tree species, including jacaranda, mango, and neem, that are both more available and suitable for carving. The People and Plants Initiative is now working on developing a certification system similar to the Forestry Stewardship Council’s for Kenya’s carving industry so that consumers can easily identify carvings that have been produced from environmentally friendly raw materials. This certification program will give “Good Woods” ecolabels for carvings from fast-growing, farm-produced trees. In addition, exporters and importers can contribute to tree nurseries run by woodcarvers so that sustainable, cultivated sources of a range of woodcarving species are always available.

Conclusions

Although in different ways, these two African countries are moving toward adopting and implementing best practice standards and ecolabeling programs that draw on the expertise and lessons from other countries considered to have the most responsible tourism industries in the world. In many ways, the emerging certification programs in Kenya and South Africa are similar to CST in Costa Rica, NEAP in Australia, and PAN Parks and Blue Flag in Europe. They include an emphasis on performance standards; involve a range of stakeholders, with a heavy reliance on NGOs; and are heavily focused, at least initially, on evaluating nature-based tourism facilities.
Although the architects of these new African programs are not reinventing the wheel, they are conscious that the criteria must be tailored to fit the realities of their countries. South Africa’s Blue Flag program, for example, has added criteria for beach security. More fundamentally, the emerging certification programs in Kenya and South Africa are being shaped by debates around wildlife park management and ecotourism as a development tool. They include a number of important innovations and differences in emphasis that reflect the need for African nations to initiate responsible forms of tourism that grapple with conditions of poverty and inequality deriving from a history of colonialism, racial discrimination, and underdevelopment. In South Africa, for instance, proponents of what has been dubbed “pro-poor” tourism argue that poor communities must see tangible benefits from wildlife tourism. Similarly, in Kenya, the ecotourism movement has been propelled by economic equity demands from poor, rural communities that, despite policies of indigenization and community-run conservation, have seen scant benefits from either tourism or national parks. As in Fiji (see chapter 9), issues of economic and social justice are central to discussions of both ecotourism and certification programs.

There is a strong emphasis, especially in South Africa, on building responsible practices into the investment phase of new tourism developments rather than on regulating industry. Thus, there are powerful incentives in place for new investors to come up with policies that ensure environmental protection but also bring previously disadvantaged citizens into partnerships with them. With recent research from Britain (mentioned above) showing that there is tourist demand for responsible holidays, trade organizations such as AITO (The Association of Independent Tour Operators) are telling tourists that they offer socially and environmentally responsible tours. They must find operations in South Africa and Kenya that meet these performance standards. In South Africa, new investments are not only aimed at conserving the resource base upon which tourism depends but also at restructuring the economy so that previously disadvantaged groups are brought into the tourism industry as active participants rather than menial laborers. The investment and procurement policies that apply in South Africa’s spatial development initiatives provide a useful example of how the tourism economy can be restructured rather than just regulated in the interests of achieving a responsible and pro-poor set of environmental, social, and economic impacts. In striving to put these worthy principles into practice, South Africa must learn from Kenya’s failed efforts at indigenization and work to avoid the pitfalls that derailed its early community conservation experiments in income redistribution.

Today, in both countries there is a far greater stress on pro-poor criteria for achieving responsibility; this differentiates these emerging certification programs from those in more developed countries, such as Australia and Europe, where establishing environmental standards have been more important than economic equity criteria. In Kenya and South Africa, as in the rest of Africa, it is clear that governments do not have the resources to provide effective national social welfare systems of the types that have been developed in Australia, Costa Rica, and Europe. In East and southern Africa, tourism is being asked to play a huge social development role normally handled by the state in more developed countries. This provides an innovative set of challenges and problems, all of which are reflected in the sustainable tourism standards that are emerging in these countries—models that hopefully contain some useful lessons for other underdeveloped countries that also find themselves asking tourism to deal with the challenges of postcolonialism, underdevelopment and free-trade led globalization.

Notes

6. The average shareholding across all seven concessions, either immediately or contractually within three years, was 53 percent. South African National Parks, “Information memorandum on the second round of concession opportunities: Important notice,” (SANP, Pretoria, April 6, 2001); Mike Fabricius, chief executive, Western Cape Tourism Board and Paul Bannister, adviser to the Minister of Environment and Tourism, interviews with Eddie Koch, November 2000.
8. Greg McManus, managing director, Qualitour, interview with Anna Spencerley, January 8, 2002; Ad-Uppe Public Relations, “Qualitour Launches First

9. Ibid.
10. Mike Fabricius interview.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
18. Dr. Johann Kotze, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T), South Africa, interview with Anna Spenceley, January 7, 2002.
23. De Beer and Eliffe, Tourism-led Development.
24. Honey, Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, 297; Okungu, “Kenya’s Strategy.”
27. Ibid., 308–321.
32. De Beer and Eliffe, Tourism-led Development.
34. Okungu, “Kenya’s Strategy.”
35. Honey, Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, 298–308.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
43. Ibid.