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Adventure tourism: opportunities and management challenges for SADC destinations

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The international tourism industry is becoming increasingly segmented with the growth of different 'niches' or 'segments' of tourism. One notable and rapidly expanding niche segment in the international tourism economy is that of adventure tourism. Although adventure tourism has attracted a growing international scholarship, research on adventure tourism in Africa is currently undeveloped. Despite this, all Southern African Development Community (SADC) states are promoting themselves as adventure tourism destinations. This article identifies seven key management and policy issues relating to the development of the adventure tourism business in the SADC region.

Avontuurtoerisme: geleenthede en bestuuroitdagings vir SAOG-bestemmings

Die internasionale toerismebedryf word toenemend gesegmenteer met die groei van nisse of segmente van toerisme. 'n Belangrike en vinnig groeiende nis in die internasionale toerisme-ekonomie is dié van avontuurtoerisme. Alhoewel avontuurtoerisme 'n groeiende internasionale vakkundigheid lok, is navorsing op avontuurtoerisme in Afrika tans onontwikkel. Ten spyte hiervan, bevorder die Suider-Afrikaanse Ontwikkelingsgemeenskap-lande (SAOG) hulself as bestemmings vir avontuurtoerisme. Hierdie artikel identifiseer sewe belangrike bestuurs- en beleidskwessies verwant aan die ontwikkeling van avontuurtoerisme in die SAOG-streek.

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The global tourism industry is becoming increasingly complex and segmented in tandem with the growth of different 'niche' forms of tourism.¹ One growing niche or segment in the international tourism economy is adventure tourism, which is currently valued at over US \$1 trillion (Williams & Soutar 2009, Buckley 2010). This supports the work of Williams & Soutar (2005: 247) who suggest that "an explosive growth in adventure tourism" has occurred, with large numbers of consumers seeking novel, challenging and exciting adventure experiences while on holiday. In 2006, Cater maintained that the income derived from adventure tourism and travel was contributing some US \$220 billion annually to the US domestic economy. Using an internet footprint approach, this article presents evidence of the expansion of adventure tourism across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Thus, it is evident that this region is seeking to engage in this lucrative and expanding facet of the global tourism economy.

As most SADC countries are beginning to acknowledge the importance of adventure tourism to their economies, it is appropriate to analyse the scope of the business of adventure tourism and its key management issues. This article aims to provide a critical analytical review of this segment of the global tourism economy in order to identify the most important management issues relating to the business of adventure tourism. A shortcoming, however, is that the review is confined to literature published in English.

The discussion falls into three uneven sections of critical review. The first deals with the definition of adventure tourism, the international footprint of the adventure tourism industry, and Africa's iconic adventure tourism sites. The second section seeks to address the challenges facing adventure tourism by identifying several

1 Gratitude is extended to Wendy Job of the University of Johannesburg's Cartographic Unit, Esme Enslin for the translation, Venessa de Boer for language editing, critical readers and anonymous referees, and staff at the library of the University of Johannesburg for their assistance. Robbie Williams, among others, provided critical inputs on an earlier version of this article, which was presented at the International Tourism Sustainability Conference, Balaklava, Mauritius, from 21 to 24 September, 2011. Research funding was provided by the University of Johannesburg. This research forms part of a wider PhD thesis on adventure tourism. Errors and omissions are the author's own.

issues relevant to management and policy which affect the business of adventure tourism. It is argued that a deeper understanding and appreciation of these management issues will contribute to the successful growth of the adventure tourism industry and associated business enterprises in the SADC region. Lastly, the expansion of adventure tourism across the SADC region is explored using an internet footprint approach.

1. Definition and scope of the international adventure tourism industry

The definition and boundaries of adventure tourism remain highly contested. Several scholars place the adventure tourism industry as part of a broader category of Adventure Tourism, Cultural Tourism and Ecotourism (ACE tourism).² Other writers prefer to incorporate adventure tourism into the broad category 'NEAT', which includes nature, eco- and adventure tourism (Buckley 2006). In one of the earliest attempts at defining the scope of this field, Hall (1992: 143) considers adventure tourism as "a broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialized and involving an interaction with the natural environment away from the participants' home range and containing elements of risk". Hudson (2003: 8) argues that "adventure tourism is increasingly recognized as a discipline in its own right". Indeed, over the past decade, adventure tourism has been consolidated as a distinctive, albeit complex, field of academic endeavour (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, Beedie 2005, Buckley 2010).

Adventure tourists are defined as tourists who engage commercial operators to take them on a guided adventure tour, typically in an outdoor setting, where some physical activity, and often specialised equipment, will be required (Buckley 2006). Protected areas, such as national parks, are often selected as adventure tourist sites (Buckley 2010). Thus, adventure tourism sets itself apart from other forms of tourism in that the tourists deliberately seek some sort of adventurous adrenalin-rush activity, usually in an exotic or outdoor destination (Beedie 2005, Williams & Soutar 2005).

2 See Zurick 1992, Ryan 1998, Fennell & Malloy 1999, Fennell & Dowling 2003.

A distinction is usually drawn between different subcategories of adventure tourism (Cloke & Perkins 1998; Hudson 2003). The first category is that of 'soft adventure tourism', which is targeted at "non-adrenaline junkies and their families" (Hudson 2003: 8). Soft adventure embraces some elements of adventure, but is characterised by a high level of safety (Patterson & Pan 2002). Costa Rica, for example, markets itself as a soft adventure tourism destination with attractions such as birdwatching or nature watching, visits to volcanoes, canopy tours, and fishing (Villalobos-Céspedes et al. 2010).

It could be argued that a large part of the tourist economies of several countries in Eastern and Southern Africa might fall within this soft adventure category, due to their emphasis on wildlife tourism, safaris and 4x4 drives. That said, one international scholar on adventure tourism, Buckley (2010) maintains that elephant safaris, gorilla hikes, walking with lions, swimming with dolphins and the like form part of the 'wildlife adventure tourism economy'. Nature-based adventure could then be considered to be a second category of adventure tourism, although it is acknowledged that there is a significant overlap between nature-based tourism, eco-tourism and adventure tourism (Swarbrooke et al. 2003).

The last category is that of extreme or 'hard' adventure tourism, incorporating activities which attract the 'danger rangers' and which usually involve strenuous physical exertion, presenting a potential risk to life and limb. Therefore, hard adventure activities involve a higher element of risk and are more extreme than those in the soft adventure category. Hard adventure activities include, among others, river rafting, skiing, snowboarding, kayaking, bungee jumping, mountaineering, scuba-diving, sky diving, ice climbing, horse riding, and surfing (Buckley 2007; Lawrey 2010). The three categories could be viewed along a continuum of risk, with soft presenting the lowest risk and hard the highest.

Although adventure tourism itself is nothing new, the business of adventure tourism has grown enormously in the past 20 years. It is important to note that it has expanded worldwide. Canada and the US offer a huge range of adventure tourist activities and both countries are also major source markets for adventure tourists (Sung 2004; Lawrey 2010). Asia also boasts adventure tourist activities in

China, Nepal, Mongolia, India, the Maldives, and Thailand (Beedie & Hudson 2003; Gyimóthy & Mykletun 2004; Buckley 2007). Adventure tourism has also left a strong footprint on European destinations such as Scotland, Switzerland, Russia, Norway, and Portugal. South America is also well represented by countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, and Ecuador.³ Even small island states such as Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, and the Polar regions have left their mark on the developing economy of adventure tourism (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010). Australasia also boasts a well-developed adventure tourism industry, with New Zealand going as far as to style itself as the “adventure capital of the world”.⁴ Geographically, then, the major hubs of the hard adventure industry are Australasia, Europe and North America.

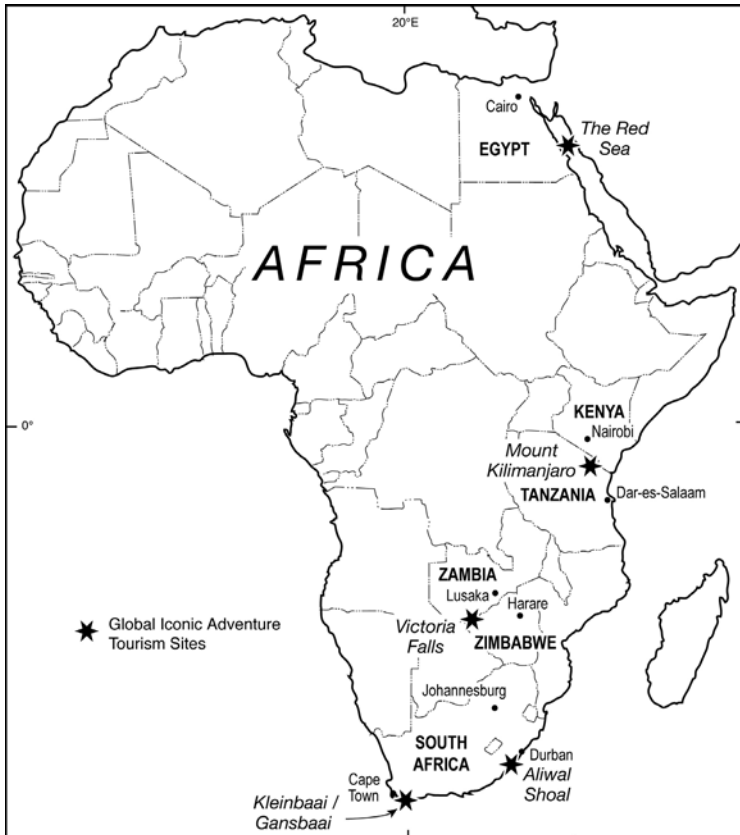
2. Adventure tourism in Africa

Africa is home to a number of globally iconic adventure tourism sites, namely Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania (trekking/mountaineering); the Red Sea in Egypt (scuba-diving), and the Victoria Falls on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe (bungee jumping, white-river rafting, elephant safaris), together with South Africa’s Aliwal Shoal for scuba-diving and the country’s Kleinbaai/Gansbaai coast, renowned for Great White Shark cage diving (See Map 1).

All of the iconic sites mentioned above are major tourist destinations, attracting thousands of adventure tourists annually. Buckley (2007) also found regional adventure tourism markets in Lesotho, Mozambique, Uganda, Namibia, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. However, of all the African destinations, South Africa has proved to have the best developed adventure tourism market (Rogerson 2007). Its strength is underpinned by a large and robust domestic market, as well as a growing stream of international adventure tourists (Visser & Hoogendoorn 2012).

3 See Gyimóthy & Mykletun 2004; Page et al. 2005; Buckley 2007; Carnicelli-Filho et al. 2010.

4 Cf Bentley et al. 2001; Bentley & Page 2001; Callander & Page 2003; Cater 2006; Bentley et al. 2007.



Map 1: Global iconic adventure tourism destinations in Africa

3. Problem statement

With the expansion of the global adventure tourism industry, there has been an accompanying growth of research into international tourism. Currently, several authors have made important contributions.⁵ By contrast, research on adventure tourism in Africa is, to a large extent,

5 See Buckley 2006, 2007, 2010; Beedie 2005; Cater 2006; Weber 2001; Swarbrooke et al. 2003; Sung 2004.

undeveloped (Rogerson & Visser 2011b) and limited to only a scattering of investigations which have probed the development of adventure tourism in South Africa (Rogerson 2007; Mograbi & Rogerson 2007), Zambia (Rogerson 2005) and Tanzania (Spenceley 2010). Despite this, there is evidence presented later in this article that adventure tourism is growing across the SADC region. Thus, key themes emerging from the international experience of the adventure tourism industry are claimed to offer important management lessons for this developing business sector. In particular, international research highlights various distinctive organisational and management aspects of the business of adventure tourism, seven of which emerge as specific themes. Their implications, or recommendations emanating from them, are set out below.

3.1 Risk versus safety: a defining feature of adventure tourism

As a whole, the issue of risk versus safety is the most distinguishing feature of adventure tourism. A great deal of research addresses the apparent contradiction between safety and risk within the concept of adventure tourism. On the one hand, a number of authors argue that without risk, there is no adventure; it is the very possibility of injury - or even death - that draws in the adventure tourist, in particular the hard adventure tourist (Weber 2001; Kane 2010). Paradoxically, adventure tourism enterprises have to downplay risk and emphasise safety, because if the risks are deemed too high, only a few people would engage in such activities (Jonas et al. 2003, Kane & Tucker 2004; Fletcher 2010). Indeed, Beedie (2005: 38) maintains that “risk and adventure are celebrated in a social sense but exist in the context of risk reduction and control”. This situation leads authors such as Gyimóthy & Mykletun (2004) and Kane & Tucker (2004) to introduce the concept of ‘play’ as a characteristic feature of adventure tourism. It is apparent that the activities of hard adventure tourism offer adults a ‘space to play in’, where they can experience a challenge, concentrate and apply their skills, and deal with uncertainty. Nevertheless, the experience cannot be described as ‘real adventure’ in that there is a set of rules or operating procedures that manages the risk so that levels of potential morbidity and mortality are within an acceptable range. Cater (2006) argues strongly that such procedures are essential for

adventure tourism, as participants do not want to face real danger; rather, their motivation is to enjoy only thrills and excitement.

Real danger is bad for business. Consumer rights and the propensity for litigation exacerbate this situation (Bentley & Page 2001; Callander & Page 2003). Accordingly, risks must be managed if the adventure tourism operator is to thrive. One particular vehicle for risk management is to have systems in place whereby datasets, such as incident reports, hospital records and insurance claims, are maintained by both the operators and the authorities. Without comprehensive datasets, risk is in fact difficult to measure. In Scotland, for example, the rate of injury proved to be difficult to fully quantify on account of the lack of data (Page et al. 2005). The lack of data means that adventure tourism may have an unjustifiably bad reputation. It may be that, while perceptions of risk are high, actual risk is low. In New Zealand, long-term datasets enabled longitudinal research projects to be conducted, the outcome of which showed that adventure tourism is not inherently life-threatening.⁶ Thus, although apparently counter-productive, keeping records of all incidents could demonstrate that the risks associated with participation in adventure tourism are minimal. Improved monitoring should, therefore, impact positively on both tourist perceptions and insurance premiums.

3.2 Risk management as a crucial element of the adventure tourism business

Many injuries can be prevented by having good safety practices and risk management programmes in place, as injury is the outcome of interplay between client, equipment and environmental factors (Page et al. 2005; Bentley et al. 2010). International research conducted on risk and injury in adventure tourism showed, for example, that the greatest risk is when a client either falls, trips or slips (Bentley et al. 2001). A crucial aspect of any adventure tourism business, therefore, is risk management. Safety policies and procedures must be in place to actively manage the adventure activity in order to reduce risk. If an incident should occur, it must be dealt with immediately - and correct procedures should be employed - to produce a positive outcome.

6 See Bentley et al. 2000; Bentley et al. 2001; Bentley & Page 2001; Callander & Page 2003; Bentley et al. 2010.

Adventure tourism operators must have access to a first aid station, guides need to be trained in first aid, and should a client become seriously injured, medical evacuation must be possible.

What a newly formed adventure tour company might not appreciate is the crucial role that adventure tour guides play in risk management. All employees, but the guides in particular, who operate at the crucial interface between client and company, need to be cognisant of the risks involved. They must enforce procedures that mitigate risks (for example, by insisting that clients wear lifejackets), and must be equipped with appropriate equipment which is in a satisfactory condition. They are expected to be alert to potentially risky situations and to adapt the tour to reduce the risk effect, or even abort it, should the situation have the potential to spiral out of control. Adverse weather conditions, in particular, can dramatically increase the potential for unfortunate incidents (Buckley 2010). Thus, adventure guiding is a skilled activity and most operators insist that guides should, for example, undergo formal tests in first aid, rope work, or dive-master skills (Buckley 2010). Besides formal training, experience is highly valued, along with good communication and interpersonal social skills, physical and mental fitness, and a strong, internalised sense of personal responsibility.

The majority of adventure tour operators rely heavily on waivers, disclaimers and 'at-your-own-risk' policies. However, as waivers alone will not protect an operator completely, insurance is essential. Indeed, the international record shows that a whole suite of insurances is usually required - from insurance for loss or damage to equipment to medical insurance and legal insurance - should an injured client sue the operator (Buckley 2010). A significant risk is the level of clients' medical fitness. Not all adventure tourists are necessarily honest about, or aware of, their levels of fitness. They might even have an undiagnosed underlying medical condition. In such instances, clients could embark upon activities such as kayaking or trekking that could seriously threaten their health and well-being. It is important to note that any country with the object of promoting adventure tourism should insist that all tourists purchase medical insurance prior to their trip. In addition, adventure tourism operators could also reduce risks by setting particular age limitations in place, for example, or by

stipulating that clients are able to swim or that they have a medical certificate (for example, in the case of scuba-diving) (Buckley 2010).

Above all, it is evident that national governments should consider legislation (for example, promulgate laws to limit the size of the pay-out, should an accident occur, as is the case in New Zealand), and enforce the purchasing of insurance by operators and clients alike.⁷ This comes with a word of caution, however. Too many pieces of legislation, policies and regulations usually hinder doing business, drive up costs, and do not automatically ensure an impeccable safety record. In general, there needs to be a balance between legislation, implementation, enforcement and self-regulation between government and the adventure tourism industry enterprises.

3.3 Fostering the emergence of lifestyle entrepreneurs

International literature identifies lifestyle entrepreneurs as an extension of the artisanal or 'craftsmen/women' tradition (Gomez-Velasco & Saleilles 2007; Koster et al. 2009). Such entrepreneurs dedicate their time, talents and treasure (capital resources) to tourism enterprises, because the pay-off for them, beyond income and independence, is to satisfy their clients' need for self-fulfilment, often reflected as quality-of-life or self-realisation.⁸ The establishment of a small tourism enterprise geared to fostering a satisfactory lifestyle is usually a deliberate life choice (Hollick & Braun 2005). It has been found that many lifestyle entrepreneurs derive deep psychological pleasure from interacting with people, which makes them ideally suited to the business of tourism (Hultman & Cederholm 2009; Koster et al. 2009).

It is argued in this instance, after Spinosa et al. (1997), that lifestyle entrepreneurs are able to function as business catalysts. Their deep passion for the services they render is the driving force behind the establishment and success of an enterprise. The important role that lifestyle entrepreneurs play in providing such tourism products

⁷ Milne, personal communication 2011.

⁸ See Lardies 1999; Lewis 2008; Gomez-Velasco & Saleilles 2007; Morrison et al. 2008; Koster et al. 2009.

as bed-and-breakfast accommodation is well known.⁹ Much less is known or appreciated as to how significant lifestyle entrepreneurs are for the establishment and long-term sustainability of adventure tourism enterprises, in particular (Hackett 2006). It is important to note that these lifestyle entrepreneurs are more likely, and more able, to offer adventure tourists the authentic experiences that they crave (Gomez-Velasco & Saleilles 2007). Such lifestyle entrepreneurs take pride in their enterprises, which they view as an extension of themselves. As such, individuals often rate integrity and 'love for the activity' ahead of revenue; they are more likely to initially forgo personal income in order to get the enterprise into a financially strong position. This is often possible, because the business represents the economic manifestation of what was a serious leisure activity.¹⁰

It is posited that adventure tour operators, at the very least, need to be 'adventure enthusiasts'. In particular, enthusiasm for the activity or activities (for example, white-river rafting, scuba-diving, or bungee jumping) will drive such individuals to master the particular skill – that is, to refine an innate ability, develop strengths in the activity, become recognised as an expert, and/or acquire additional skills/knowledge for perfecting the activity. Their passion for the adventure activity may then act as a catalyst to entrepreneurialism – seeing business opportunities where others do not – and imbibe them with a sense of confidence to take on the risk of establishing an adventure tourism enterprise. Their passion can drive them to make a success of the adventure venture, as well as enable them to work the networks of contacts they forged while mastering the exercise. This situation considers the individuals as 'ideal' lifestyle entrepreneurs in a fashion envisaged by Maritz & Beaver (2006).

Arguably, the significance of lifestyle entrepreneurs in opening up and 'growing' the adventure tourism business is often not appreciated. It is recommended that it would be beneficial for SADC governments to acknowledge the role of lifestyle entrepreneurs in this niche segment of tourism. Two key specific sub-recommendations emerge: first, for financial support to be given to recognised adventure

9 See Williams et al. 1989; Shaw & Williams 1997, 1998, 2004; Maritz & Beaver 2006; Cloesen 2007; Morrison et al. 2008; Koster et al. 2009.

10 See Weber 2001; Beedie 2003; Trauer 2006; Buckley 2007.

enthusiasts to establish their own adventure enterprises and, secondly, to provide enterprises with support in terms of staff- and owner-training, investment decisions, and fostering networks with other tour operators or enterprises in order to establish the destination as an entity to rival others. The latter issue is especially important, because lifestyle entrepreneurs are notoriously weak in this area (Hollick & Braun 2005).

3.4 Shaping identity, shaping customer relations

A fourth significant theme that emerges from research into international adventure tourism relates to issues of identity. A number of authors have revealed that some tourists pursue adventure tourism to shape their self-image or define themselves. This action can be for the personal reasons of, among others, positive transformation, emotional engagement, or personal insight.¹¹ By providing the tourist with a personal challenge, adventure tourism enables tourists to explore their inner self. This situation can lead to a deeply transformative experience, which is often good for business, as clients identify the positive transformation with either the place (location) or the activity (for example, bungee jumping) or both. The positive effects of generating such goodwill on businesses include the possibility of repetitive business arrangements, of positive word-of-mouth advertising, and of enhancing brand value.

In addition, if an adventure tourist takes on a new identity (such as a 'scuba-diver' or 'skier'), a situation arises where the need to repeatedly participate in such an activity affords him/her the opportunity of retaining this new identity. This positive cycle is obviously good for business. Significantly, much of this identity is linked to the geographical location of the adventure site or the number of times that the activity is undertaken. A question often directed at an adventure tourist is: "Where did you dive/ski/white-water raft?" This serves to engage such tourists in the activity on numerous occasions and at different locations. Thus, adventure sites do not necessarily have to compete with one another directly, but rather to focus on adding

11 See Rowan 1999; Weber 2001; Willig 2008; Allman et al. 2009; Brymer & Oades 2009.

value to the location in question, making it one of the many that the adventure tourist must place on his/her 'bucket' list.

Adventure tourists also participate in adventure activities for social reasons. Thus, an adventure tourist often joins a particular adventure 'community' (for example, kayakers) in order to attain social status. To retain this status, however, they must continuously participate in adventure tourism (Jonas et al. 2003; Trauer 2006; Berger & Greenspan 2008). In addition, those with the social status motive usually need to be seen to be "living out or performing the adventure" in order to reap such intangible social benefits as 'honour and glory'.¹² This is good news for the operator, as many people engage in adventure tourism in groups, either with friends, business colleagues, or family members. Group discounts, therefore, are a positive and powerful tool to drive demand. Furthermore, social media play a crucial role in the adventure tourism market, as adventure tourists post their 'adventures' and the photos to prove them on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, for example. This situation fosters additional demands for engaging in the activity. Thus, enterprising adventure tourism operators can harness the potential market by reflecting this on their own websites, encouraging tourists to 'like' their Facebook page and to re-tweet Twitter posts.

Some scholars, however, maintain that adventure tourists are merely sensation seekers looking for a high.¹³ If this is the case, adventure tour operators need to guard against being placed under constant pressure to create the next 'high' by going bigger, better, or riskier to satisfy the cravings of customers. Constantly trying to do this would not be sustainable in the long term. Fortunately, authors such as Pomfret (2006) and Wu & Liang (2011) assert that, as adventure tourists become truly immersed in the adventure activity, they tend to lose sense of everything for a moment in time - time stands still for them - and so pure is the participation in the activity, that it guarantees them true satisfaction. In the light of this, the adventure tourist operator merely has to facilitate the realisation of this state of

12 See Perkins & Thorns 2001; Kane & Tucker 2004; Bott 2009: 290; Woods 2010.

13 See Litvin 2008; Lawrey 2010; López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla 2010; Sirgy 2010; Woods 2010.

being in their clients, without having to push the limits or boundaries of safety or environmental impacts.

3.5 Packaging and marketing 'adventure'

For Trauer (2006: 183), adventure tour operators are typical "post-industrial capitalists" in that they are purveyors of an "experience". It is argued that emotional stimuli or "feelings" and immaterial goods such as "ambiance, aesthetics and atmosphere" are sold in the adventure tourism industry. Thus, adventure tour operators need to carefully craft notions of risk and adventure to ensure that their product, which is a service, matches client expectations (Williams & Soutar 2009). As the experience of actual adventure (uncertainty and high risk) is very limited, there is a great deal of certainty and sameness.¹⁴ Arising out of this, a key management challenge for adventure tour operators then is the need to disguise the manner in which the adventure tourism experience has become commodified (Beedie 2005; Varley 2006; Berger & Greenspan 2008). Clearly, adventure tourism has 'commercialised outdoor recreation' as the case studies of white-water rafting in California by Weber (2001), in Chile by Jonas et al. (2003), and in the Grand Canyon by Fletcher (2010) demonstrate.¹⁵ Despite some adventure tourism being authentic and commodification-proof, most is merely "adventure-flavoured" (Beedie 2005, Varley 2008: 173). In spite of this, the adventure tour operator must ensure that the experience remains highly personal and authentic - at least in the minds of the tourists (Weber 2001; Jonas et al. 2003; Fletcher 2010). Skilled marketing, using images and rhetoric, is critical to the creation of a veneer of adventure. To this end, the actual location may even serve as a mere backdrop to the activity (Cloke & Perkins 1998).

Adventure tourism operators need to embrace a suite of marketing strategies in order to market themselves to potential clients (Buckley 2010). Globally, there is a trend towards the serial marketing of adventure tourism, and its distribution channels, following classic post-industrial service industry patterns. That is, competition comes in the form of price competition and the competition of other

14 See Trauer 2006; Buckley 2007; Berger & Greenspan 2008; Lawrey 2010.

15 See Buckley 2005: 56; Morgan & Pritchard 2005; Sainaghi 2008; Wu & Liang 2011.

locations, of competition relating to the duration of the activity, and of competition in terms of the level of personal interaction with guides (Buckley 2007, Schott 2007). It is important to note that financial sustainability is unlikely to be achieved if operators merely compete on the price front, because this type of strategy invariably involves a race to the bottom. Therefore, it is recommended that operators make it a priority to target subniches within this niche tourism market and focus, in particular, on adding value, quality of service and client satisfaction instead (for example, through t-shirt sales, photographs and posters).

Marketing is a crucial aspect of the adventure tourism business. Retail shop-front displays on site, or in the vicinity, for instance, are common requirements for successful marketing, as is the widespread distribution of brochures and flyers. Often adventure tour operators make use of specialised trade shows. In South Africa, for example, there are annual scuba and boat shows, as well as the Getaway Magazine Show, all of which take place in major cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town, and are geared to domestic adventure tourists. Such shows are replicated worldwide. Thus, SADC governments wishing to promote this sector need to assist their operators to attend such events.

Many African operators (for example, those marketing Mount Kilimanjaro, the many adventure activities at Victoria Falls, and Red Sea diving) also make extensive use of packaged holidays that are sold through tourist middlemen. Thus, approaching these organisations or operators should be a top priority for SADC states wanting to grow their adventure tourism segment. Usually accommodation, flights and the tours themselves come in all-inclusive packages for which the tourist pays in advance. Such packaged holidays are marketed primarily through regular marketing channels, such as newspaper advertisements, paid advertorials and websites. Nevertheless, it is increasingly evident from international research that by far the most important marketing mechanism is the use of the internet (Levinson & Milne 2004; Lew 2008).

Social media (for example, blogs, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook) play a vital role in promoting adventure tourism, by mainstreaming extreme activities (for example bungee jumping). However, since these social media are not usually managed or controlled by the

adventure tourism operator, a number of such operators have had to establish their own Facebook pages and Twitter accounts in order to 'feature' in the social media space. It is important to note that a successful adventure tourism operator needs an effective website, with links to Facebook and blogs, for example. That said, blogs may soon be overtaken by Twitter in terms of importance. Websites need to be up-to-date and fashionable, and should not have an old or slow feel to them. They should be loaded with recent photos and videos of tourists participating in the activity in question. Crucial details such as contact e-mail addresses, safety records and prices should be made available. Ideally, websites should have an on-line booking and payment system. To achieve this, adventure tourism operators either rely on contacts with web-building skills or hire individuals to create or update their pages. They must also gain credibility with financial service providers to guarantee their access to on-line payment systems, such as those managed by Visa/Mastercard or PayPal.

It is recommended that governments wishing to support this sector provide support for the launching and hosting of websites, preferably under one national adventure tourism website or a number of local adventure tourism websites. Such websites must be well-constructed with effective keywords that can easily be found by search engines, and with many links to other websites, the e-mail, YouTube, blogs and Facebook pages, for example. A good website is a highly interactive one that is regularly updated. One good example is the SouthAfrica.info site, which was established and is hosted by the South African government. From this site, internet browsers can access a large number of adventure tour operators.

In addition, international experience shows clearly that those countries wanting to compete in the adventure tourism sector must acknowledge that destination branding is a crucial tool. Destination branding helps to raise awareness of locations in the market place, and to distinguish them from their competitors. Branding (the use of names, symbols, and so on) is an investment that governments and tourism promotion agencies have to make in the tourism sector (Morgan & Pritchard 2005). Branding is also well-known for its ability to enable the seller to command higher prices for the goods or services on offer. For SADC governments, the purpose of a branding campaign would be to start an association in the minds of tourists

between their particular country and adventure. Currently, the branded market for adventure tourism in the Southern Hemisphere is dominated by New Zealand, with Queenstown self-branding itself as 'The adventure capital of the world'. Significantly, Zambia has also sought to replicate that marketing strategy by labelling the city of Livingstone as 'Africa's adventure capital' (Rogerson 2005). Merely copying other countries, however, will fall short of competing in this highly globalised segment of the tourism market.

3.6 Managing the environmental impacts

The close relationship between adventure tourism operators and the natural environment inevitably focuses attention on the potential environmental impacts of adventure tourism and their associated management issues. It must be admitted that the precise measurement of the critical environmental impacts of adventure tourism operations has so far been researched to only a limited extent and that, correspondingly, the impacts of adventure tourism on sustainability have not yet been fully documented. This is especially true for Africa. The vital nexus of adventure tourism and environmental management is evident, however, in many international case studies. Both Williams & Soutar (2005: 247) and Thomas et al. (2011) found that adventure tour operators often operate "close to the edge", impacting negatively on natural resources. Similar findings were recorded in investigations undertaken by Marques and Cunha (2010), as well as by Blichfeldt & Pedersen (2010). A great deal of research has been conducted on the negative impacts of nature-based adventure tourism, such as the disruption of breeding habits, habituating animals to human beings, noise pollution, interrupting animal behaviour, and causing increased stress among animals (Bunnell et al. 1981; MacArthur et al. 1982; Brattstrom & Bondello 1983). There have been recordings of impacts of adventure tourism on whales, dolphins, manatees, and seals (Orams 2004; Constantine 2000; Buckley 2010), for instance, which show behavioural changes and changes in swimming and vocalisation patterns.

Negative impacts are not confined to animals, but are found across a wide range of adventure tourism activities, such as skiing (Hadley & Wilson 2004), mountain biking (Thurston & Reader 2001), horse

riding (Newsome et al. 2004), rock climbing (Farris 1998), off-road driving (Buckley 2004), hiking (Cole 2004) and boating (Burfeing & Stunz 2006). In addition, there is a considerable body of research demonstrating the negative impacts of scuba-diving in Africa, including Egypt and South Africa.¹⁶

Overall, it is evident, from both the international experience and current African records, that states seeking to promote adventure tourism need to ensure that full environmental impact assessments are undertaken so that negative outcomes are avoided, or at least mitigated. A strong focus on managing the adventure industry sustainably is, therefore, essential. The scuba experience provides a good example of this. Hawkins et al. (1999) and Worachananant et al. (2008), for example, identified extensive coral damage by scuba-divers, making the management of scuba-divers crucial. Measures to do so would include the proper logging of dives and the requirement that divers attend pre-dive briefings to educate them on how to treat coral. Luna et al. (2009), for instance, demonstrated how such briefings, as well as the use of underwater guides – examples of the pro-active promotion of minimal impact behaviours – can significantly reduce damage to the seabed. Even then, the overall numbers of divers need to be limited to protect marine life, as even minimal-impact diving appears to have a negative effect on marine life (Rouphael & Hanafy 2007). Thus, the challenge is to develop the industry, which relies heavily on the biophysical environment and marine or land species to attract adventure tourists, in a manner that is sustainable (Uyarra et al. 2009). An example of how this could be done is proposed by Stolk et al. (2007) who suggest artificial reefs to draw divers away from natural ones.

3.7 Maximising development impacts, including pro-poor benefits

The economic footprint of adventure tourism is apparent, in particular from the records of developed countries, where adventure tourism is a catalyst for economic growth and enterprise development. The multiplier effects of this tourism segment can be extensive.

16 See Riegl & Velimirov 1991; Hawkins & Roberts 1994; Jameson et al. 1999; Schleyer & Tomalin 2000; Walters & Samways 2001; Zakai & Chadwick-Furman 2002.

Buckley (2003, 2006) documents the important role that adventure tourism plays in driving global purchases of sports clothing, active wear and sports equipment. Other writers (Rodenburg 1980; Wanhill 2000; Marques & Cunha 2010) reveal how backward linkages from this industry – which is dominated by small- and medium-sized enterprises – can generate local economic growth through job creation and income generation. This body of work suggests that, in order to support the development of adventure tourism, attention needs to be paid to facilitating the supply of capital for enterprises that are starting up (for example, funds to purchase boats, ropes and other equipment) and to cover their overhead expenses (for example, rent in particular, salaries and insurance). As most adventure tourism businesses fall into the category of small and medium enterprises, SADC governments need to take cognisance of the fact that these enterprises are usually less resilient to financial stresses or sudden/extensive regulatory changes.

The developmental impacts of the growing adventure tourism industry have been little explored outside of North America and Australia, where the size and growth impacts on the industry have been highlighted extensively (Buckley 2006, 2010). Of particular importance in the developing world are emerging findings which suggest that adventure tourism has the potential to contribute significant benefits to favour the poor. Indeed, there is evidence from research undertaken on diving tourism at Sodwana Bay in South Africa (Mograbi & Rogerson 2007) and on trekking tourism at Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania that this is in fact the case, thus making it a very attractive policy option, *per se*, for the SADC governments to pursue (Spenceley 2010).

4. Adventure tourism in the SADC countries: the internet footprint

Table 1 reflects the internet footprint of adventure tourism across the SADC states. While there are limitations to drawing inferences from internet footprinting, since the size of the web footprint and the actual number of enterprises offering adventure tourism products and associated activities might differ, the extremely insignificant web footprint of some SADC states reflects that this is an industry that

is still in its infancy in most countries, other than South Africa, Swaziland, and Namibia. The impact of political instability on the growth of adventure tourism is also evident, with a poorly developed adventure tourism industry being associated with politically unstable states or with those in turmoil, such as Zimbabwe, the DRC, and Angola.

Map 2 shows the spatial distribution of adventure activities in the SADC states. Hard adventure activities dominate (55%), followed by soft adventure (34%), and nature-based activities (11%). The contested nature of adventure tourism is also clear from Table 1. It is difficult to formally categorise activities as either hard, soft, or nature-based all of the time. In some instances, the nature of the hike may make it soft adventure (for example, Namibia), whereas in others it might be hard adventure (for example, Madagascar). Furthermore, whether shark cage diving is nature-based or hard adventure is also debatable.

Crucially, the majority of SADC states leave the web marketing of their adventure tourism enterprises to private companies - either individual adventure enterprises or large-scale tour operators. For example, adventure tourism operators at the Victoria Falls rely on out-sourced IT staff in South Africa to build and maintain their websites. This is not an entirely satisfactory or productive relationship, partly because of time delays, partly due to communication failures, and mainly, perhaps, because it is difficult to build or maintain a website that exudes passion and excitement if one is not intimately connected to the activity. Challenges such as these are similar to those found by Levinson & Milne (2004) in the Cook Islands.

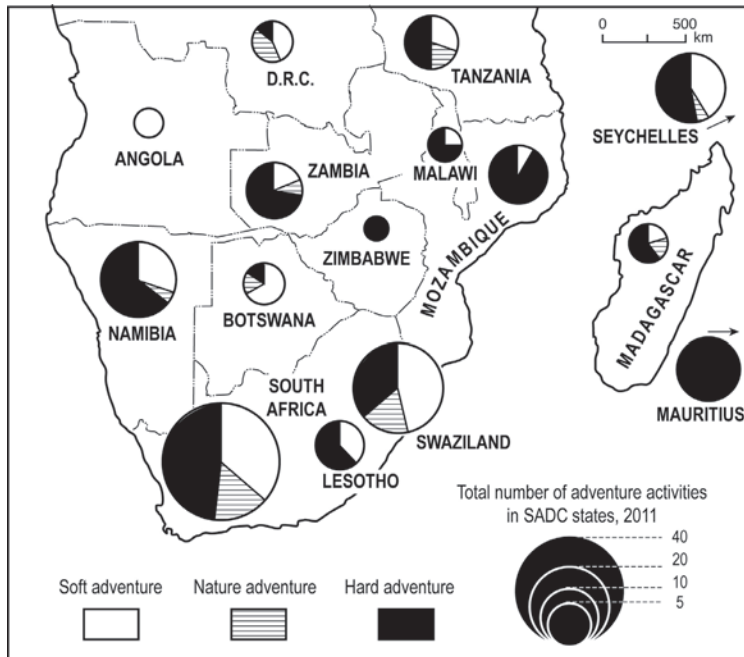
Table 1: Internet Footprint of Adventure Activities, SADC states

SADC state		Soft adventure	Nature-based adventure	Hard adventure
Zimbabwe	2			Canoeing , white-water rafting
Angola	3	4x4 trails, camping, fishing		
Malawi	4	Sailing		Kayaking, scuba-diving, trekking
Botswana	6	Sailing, fishing, caving, 4x4 trails	Elephant-back riding	Horse riding

SADC state		Soft adventure	Nature-based adventure	Hard adventure
Madagascar	6	Forest walks	Nature watching	Trekking, white-water rafting, scuba-diving
DRC	7	Trekking, fishing, 4x4 trails	Gorilla safaris, chimp trekking, bird watching	MTB (mountain-bike riding)
Lesotho	8	4x4 trails, rock climbing, fishing		Pony-trekking, skiing, MTB, abseiling, horse riding
Tanzania	10	Snorkelling, fishing, hot air ballooning	Swimming with dolphins, camel rides	Scuba-diving, kayaking, quad-biking, MTB, trekking
Zambia	11	Fishing, scenic flights	Elephant-back safaris	White-water rafting, river-boarding, bungee jumping, abseiling, gorge-swinging, kayaking, canoeing, ATV
Mozambique	12	Yachting		Hiking, parasailing, ATV, sandboarding, sea-kayaking, canoeing, sailing, surfing, water skiing, windsurfing, horse riding
Mauritius	14			Kite-surfing, windsurfing, surfing, kayaking, MTB, trekking, canoeing, canyoning, parasailing, rock climbing, scuba-diving, skiing, wakeboarding, zip lining
Seychelles	17	Sailing, fishing, yachting, helicopter flips, snorkelling, trekking, hiking	Birdwatching	Canoeing, kayaking, scuba-diving, horse riding, kite-surfing, windsurfing, deep-sea fishing, paragliding, jet skiing
Namibia	21	Hiking, scenic flights, fishing, 4x4 trails, camel riding, hot air ballooning	Dolphin cruises	Cave diving, sandboarding, dune skiing, river rafting, micro-lighting, canoeing, rock climbing, mountaineering, parasailing, cable sliding, kayaking, ATVs, horse riding

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SADC state		Soft adventure	Nature-based adventure	Hard adventure
Swaziland	28	Aerial boardwalks, aerial cable trails, aquarium diving, snorkelling, acrobatic flights, hot air ballooning, beach horse rides, bi-plane rides, bicycle tours, board sailing, canopy tours, dragon boat racing, fly fishing, foot safaris	Aquarium shark diving, boat-based whale watching, dolphin watching, elephant-back safaris	Deep-sea fishing, quad-bike tours, bakkie skiing, bridge swinging, cable water skiing, cage diving, abseiling, canoeing, canyoning, zip lining
South Africa	38	Hot air ballooning, canopy tours, fly fishing, nature walks, hang-gliding, sailing, scenic flights in helicopters and light planes, hiking, aerial board walking, aquarium diving, aquarium snorkelling, acrobatic flights, aerial cables, dragon boat racing, geckoing, gyrocopters, jet-skiing, kloofing, zorbing, 4x4 trails	Birdwatching, nature watching, whale watching (boat and shore), camel rides, dolphin watching, elephant-back safaris, rhino trekking	Horse-back safaris, deep-sea fishing, bungee jumping, bridge swinging, scuba-diving, white-river rafting, mountaineering, rock climbing, abseiling, sea and river kayaking, caving, skydiving, quad biking, surfing, mountain biking, zip lining, paragliding, hard and soft shark cage diving, free shark/whale/dolphin/manta ray diving, bakkie skiing, cable waterskiing, cave diving, caving, hanggliding, ice-climbing, kite boarding, ocean floor walking, parasailing, rap jumping, rock climbing, wake boarding, water skiing.



Map 2: The Geographical Internet Footprint of Adventure Tourism offerings in SADC states

5. Concluding remarks

Adventure tourism is one of the most rapidly growing segments or niches of the global tourism economy. Although the current state of the international adventure tourism industry is dominated by developed countries, it is clear that there are opportunities in many parts of the developing world for the promotion of both 'soft' and 'hard' adventure tourism operations. In building up the adventure tourism operations of developing countries, not least those in Africa, certain lessons can be learnt from the existing documented experience of the adventure tourism industry and its enterprises. It has been argued in this critical analysis that at least seven themes emerging from the international experience of this industry can provide management guidelines for

assisting the developing business of adventure tourism in sub-Saharan Africa. The suite of issues thus highlighted relates to, *inter alia*, risk and safety; risk management; the role of lifestyle entrepreneurs; identity and adventure; packaging; marketing and branding environmental impacts and their management for sustainability, and maximising local developmental impacts, including pro-poor benefits. Further research on these critical issues is essential for addressing the barriers to expanding sustainable adventure tourism in Africa.

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