

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM PRACTICES BY SOUTH AFRICAN TOUR OPERATORS

Survey results from participants at the 2006 Tourism Indaba

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1. OVERVIEW

In 2001 a survey was published by Tearfund on the responsible business practices reported by 65 UK-based tour operators (Gordon, 2001). This survey revealed that most tour operators had examples of where their operations were making a positive difference to the lives of local people. At that time, the report noted that responsible and ethical tourism issues were not mainstream, but the move was certainly in that direction (Gordon, 2001).

The aim of this research was to replicate the 2001 Tearfund study in South Africa. The objective was to evaluate the extent to which South African tour operators were practicing responsible tourism activities, given the context of a post-apartheid country that has considerable poverty problems, but a country that has had responsible tourism guidelines since 2002.

Twenty South African tour operators attending Indaba 2006 participated in the study by completing a self-administered questionnaire on issues regarding local benefits, donations, partnerships, impacts on the natural and cultural environment, training, policies and tourist demand for responsible tourism.

Nearly all of the respondents reported delivering positive interventions in local communities. These included economic benefits such as employment, use of local services and products, and also providing benefits to local education, health and conservation initiatives. However, barriers included safety and crime concerns, access and problems relating to capacity – such as skills, language, lack of experience and understanding, lack of product, and inconsistent quality.

Responses to the issue of providing donations to charity were interesting because although many were philanthropic (providing a proportion of tour fees, materials, supplying volunteers or organising events), a couple indicated that they would rather assist people through ‘trade’ rather than ‘aid’. This route provides more sustainable and market-related benefits.

Partnerships were clearly important to nearly all of the operators, and were characterised by win-win situations where parties work together and cooperate. Partnerships required trust, good communication, commitment, and holding similar views of consumer needs.

Three-quarters of the operators indicated that they contributed positively towards the local natural and cultural environment by conserving wildlife and natural areas, providing education (on cultural and environmental issues), supporting local art forms, using environmentally sensitive products and monitoring the impacts of their partners. Only a few were using energy saving, recycling or water conservation interventions though. Respondents indicated that they needed projects to support and more information about options to improve the environment. Barriers to contributing included access, lack of government assistance, skills and training, and low levels of awareness.

About half of the operators purchase products and services based on social and environmental factors, and some even monitor their suppliers’ sustainability. Some use tourism products certified by Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa, and also community-based tourism enterprises.

Responsible tourism policies were held by about half of the operators, who would have a set of principles, a written code for tourist behaviour or a set of aspirations. Many indicated that the policy was integral to their company policy, and several had a policy in order to show customers and suppliers that they were serious about responsible tourism. Of those who did not have a policy, about half intended to develop one in the future, while a similar proportion stated it was not a priority.

About a quarter of the operators were monitoring their impacts in areas where they operated, but about half said that they kept stakeholders and their clients informed of what they were doing in destinations.

The operators were not yet experiencing significant demand from tourists for responsible products. Only a quarter indicated that their clients requested information about their Corporate Social Responsibility practices, and only three operators said that this gave them market advantage over other companies. It will be very interesting to see if this proportion grows in the future.

Despite only half of the operators having read the South African responsible tourism guidelines, the majority were implementing one or more of the responsible tourism guidelines. Most frequently, they were providing local economic benefits through employment and the use of local products and services. However, there were clearly constraints to providing local benefits, not least safety concerns, and levels of education and training.

If South Africa is serious about implementing its policy on responsible tourism, then there is clearly a great deal of work to be done in the tour operator sector. The operators who responded here are likely to be some of the more responsible in the sector (hence their effort to participate). In addition, more needs to be done to educate the tourist about responsible tourism, in order to grow the market for more ethical products. A major survey of tourists in South Africa would provide information on the level of awareness and understanding, and demand for responsible holidays.

International Centre for Responsible Tourism - South Africa (ICRT-SA)

International Centre for Responsible Tourism - South Africa (ICRT-SA) is a sister organisation to the International Centre for Responsible Tourism in the UK (see www.icrtourism.org). The ICRT-SA is a Section 21, non-governmental, non-profit, citizen-based organisation. Its mission is to contribute to economic development, social justice and environmental integrity through the development and promotion of Responsible Tourism. The ICRT-SA aims to do this by:

- influencing public institutions, the tourism industry, donors and tourists to integrate the principles of responsible tourism into their policies, operations and activities
- communicating the principles of responsible tourism by capacity building, education and awareness programmes to the broadest possible constituency
- initiating and undertaking research to develop knowledge to support the implementation of responsible tourism
- creating an network of individuals, institutions and the tourism industry who support the objectives of the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations.

The research presented in this report was undertaken by Dr Anna Spenceley on behalf of the ICRT-SA, and funding for the data entry and reviews of material were provided by Heidi Keyser of ICRT-SA. Valuable comments were made on a draft of this report by Dr Harold Goodwin and Heidi Keyser.

2. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is highly competitive and tour operators are under increasing pressure to differentiate their products. Research suggests that once the main criteria for a holiday are satisfied (location/facilities, cost and availability), clients will make choices based on ethical considerations such as working conditions, the environment and charitable giving (Gordon, 2001). Some examples consumer studies in the UK, USA and Germany indicating increased levels of awareness and demand for responsible tourism are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Consumer attitudes to environment and sustainable tourism		
Issue	Proportion of sample	Source and sample size*
Importance of environmentally sensitive policies and practices		
More likely to book hotels with a good environmental attitude	87% British 60% Australians 54% Americans	IHEI study, cited in Anon (2002) (n=300 travellers at airports in UK, Australia and US)
Important that their holiday does not damage the environment	71%	Stueve, Cook and Drew (2002) (n=4300 adults in the USA)
Importance that the holiday should not damage the environment	2000 – 85% 2002 – 87%	MORI study for ABTA, cited by Goodwin and Francis (2003) (n=963 British public in 2000; n=713 in 2002)
At least fairly important to use a company that accounts for environmental issues when arranging holidays and business trips	1995 – 52% 1997 – 61%	Martin and Stubbs (1999) (British Public)
Importance of socially responsible policies and practices		
More likely to book holiday using company with a written code guaranteeing good working conditions, protection of the environment and support of local charities in the tourist destination	1999 – 45% 2001 – 52%	Tearfund (2001; 2002) (1999: nationally and regionally representative sample of n=2032 adults in the UK; 2001 n=927)
Knowing that they had booked with a company with good ethical practice made their holiday enjoyable	24%	Mintel (2001) (n=2028; UK holiday makers=1636) July 2001
Important that holidays benefit people in the destination (e.g. through jobs and business opportunities)	2000 – 71% 2002 – 76%	MORI study for ABTA, cited by Goodwin and Francis (2003) (n=963 British public in 2000; n=713 in 2002)
Respect towards the ways of living and the traditions of the local host population is the most important criteria when booking a holiday	95%	Forschungsinstitut für Freizeit und Tourismus (FIF), Müller and Landes (2000) (German tourists)
* The sample size is indicated where known Source: Spenceley (2003)		

In 2001 a survey was published by Tearfund on the responsible business practices reported by 65 UK-based tour operators (Gordon, 2001). The Tearfund report considered four areas of ethical tourism: bringing benefits to local communities, charitable giving, partnerships and responsible tourism policies. This survey revealed that most tour operators responding had examples of where their operations were making a positive difference to the lives of local people. However, problems encountered include time and financial pressure on the industry and the quality of local services. Operators frequently mentioned the lack of good-quality services, which was coupled with few operators doing much to help with training and building the capacity of local service providers. Finally, many respondents complained that they could not afford to change, as it cost too much money and took too much time. At that time, the report noted that responsible and ethical tourism issues were not mainstream, but the move was certainly in that direction (Gordon, 2001).

The aim of this research was to replicate the 2001 Tearfund study in South Africa. The objective was to evaluate the extent to which South African tour operators were practicing responsible

tourism activities, given the context of a post-apartheid country that has considerable poverty problems, but a country that has its own responsible tourism policy.

2.1 Responsible tourism in South Africa

In 1996 the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) published its *White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism*, which recognised that tourism had largely been a missed opportunity for South Africa, but which also considered that tourism could provide the nation with an ‘engine of growth, capable of dynamising and rejuvenating other sectors of the economy’. A foresighted part of the paper promoted the development of *responsible and sustainable* tourism growth. The key elements of responsible tourism were (DEAT, 1996):

- Ensure communities are involved in and benefit from tourism;
- Market tourism that is responsible, respecting local, natural and cultural environments;
- Involve the local community in planning and decision-making;
- Use local resources sustainably;
- Be sensitive to the host culture;
- Maintain and encourage natural, economic, social and cultural diversity; and
- Assessment of environmental, social and economic impacts as a prerequisite to developing tourism.

Following the White Paper, DEAT also produced national *Responsible Tourism Guidelines*, which included targets for the tourism sector and emphasised the need to address the triple bottom line of sustainable development (economic, environmental, and social sustainability). They include guidelines relevant to this research including (DEAT, 2002):

- Exercise a preference for business and land tenure arrangements that directly benefit local communities and/or conservation;
- Develop partnerships and joint ventures in which communities have a significant stake, and in which they have a substantial management role (accompanied by appropriate capacity building). Communal land ownership can provide equity in enterprises;
- Buy locally made goods and use locally provided services from locally owned businesses wherever quality, quantity, and consistency permits. Monitor the proportion of goods and services the enterprise sourced from businesses with 50 kilometres (km) and set a 20% target for improvement over three years; and
- Recruit and employ staff in an equitable and transparent manner and maximise the proportion of staff employed from the local community. Set targets for increasing the proportion of staff and/or of the enterprise wage bill going to communities within 20 km of the enterprise.
- Consider developing and marketing fairly traded tourism products.
- Use local guides, and encourage them to continually improve their quality, to ensure that the community speaks for itself and to increase the revenues going into the local community (by higher fees for quality tours). Monitor and report this economic contribution to the community and set targets to increase it annually.
- Encourage visitor behaviour that respects natural heritage and has a low impact upon it.

In 2002 it was envisaged that tourism industry groups will take the guidelines and develop sub-sector guidelines that are applicable to their business, and that codes of best practice would be derived. Through such a voluntary systems, it was hoped that enterprises would achieve market advantage over their competitors by being demonstrably ‘responsible’ (Spenceley, 2003).

As a tool to assist the tourism sector, a *Responsible Tourism Manual for South Africa* was published by DEAT in 2002. This aimed to provide ‘mainstream’ as well as community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) with information about responsible tourism and the opportunities that it presented for improving their business performance. Specific to South Africa, and in line with international best practice, the manual provided a range of practical and cost-effective responsible actions available to tourism businesses, and referred to many useful sources of information that could guide their implementation of responsible business activities (Spenceley et al, 2002).

Also in 2002, South Africa hosted the first conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations, just prior to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Cape Town Conference was attended by 280 delegates from 20 countries, and resulted in a declaration that called upon tourism enterprises to “ . . . *adopt a responsible approach, to commit to specific responsible practises, and to report progress in a transparent and auditable way, and where appropriate to use this for market advantage*” (Cape Town, 2002).

By 2002 South Africa had a strong policy basis for responsible tourism, and it was hoped that this would be followed by concrete and tangible evidence of activities and results of good practice. However, although both the responsible tourism guidelines and manual are freely available on DEAT’s website (www.environment.gov.za), there is concern that little has been done to put them into practice. Therefore, one of the objectives of this survey was to gauge their impact among South African Tour Operators.

3. METHOD

The questionnaire used by Tearfund in their UK survey (Gordon, 2001) was largely retained, but adapted in light of the UK findings, and also in relation to specific South African considerations. The questionnaire was reviewed by members of the ICRT South Africa before distribution, and the final version can be found in Appendix 1.

To maximise the level of participation by tour operators, over 100 were approached at Tourism Indaba in May 2006 to discuss the research. Operators were given a flyer briefing them of the research objectives, and at that time 77 operators agreed to participate. The ICRT South Africa was also referred to another 23 companies who might be interested in participating.

On 13 September 2006 questionnaires were emailed to representatives of the 100 tour operators, and they were requested to respond by 6 October. A reminder email was sent out to operators, and an extension was given until 25 October to encourage more participants.

In all, twenty operators returned completed questionnaires (20% of the sample), and a list of these enterprises is included in Appendix 2. This report provides an analysis of their responses. The majority of tour operators participating in the survey, 75%, were small (<5000 tourists per year) and the remaining 25% were medium sized. (5000-100,000 tourists per year). 50% of the operators had read DEAT’s responsible tourism guidelines.

4. RESULTS

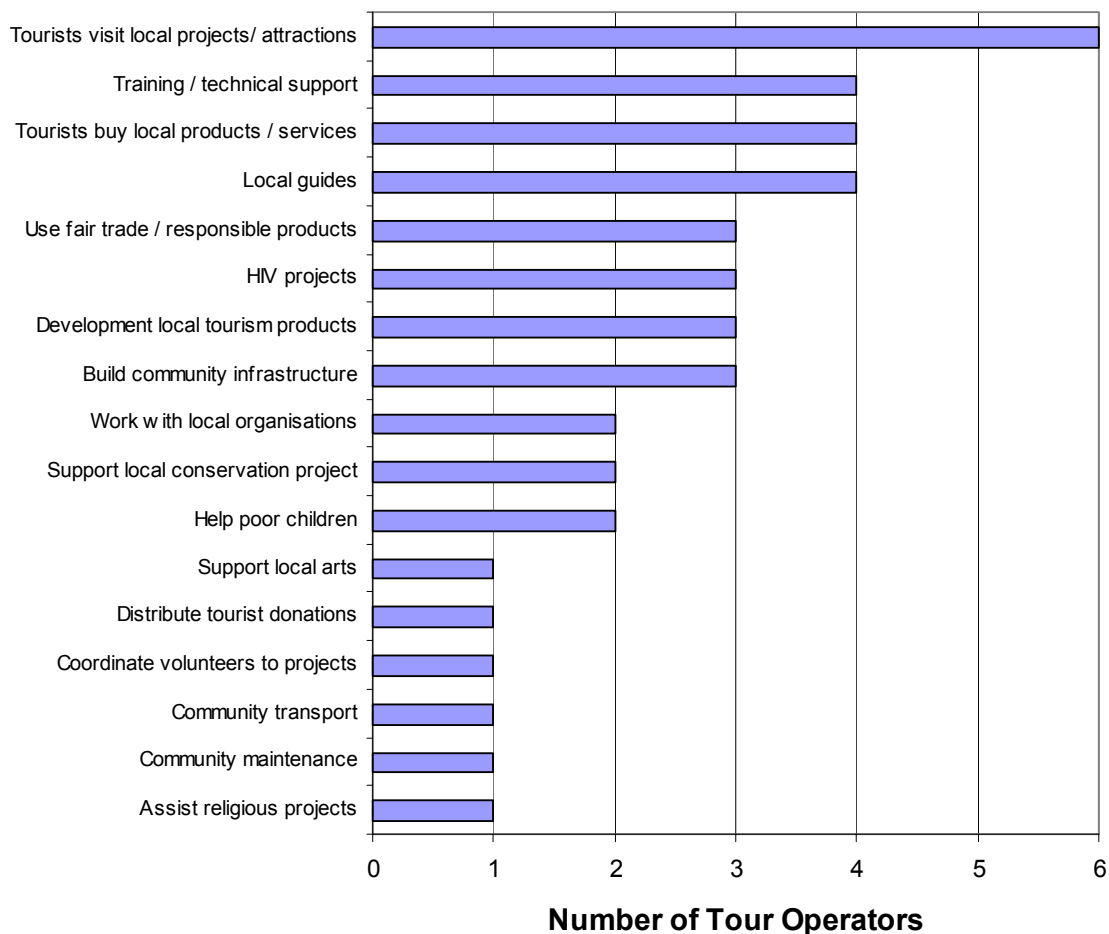
The results are presented under the following themes:

- Impacts on local communities;
- Donations to charity;
- Partnerships
- Training;
- Impacts on the local natural and cultural environment;
- Purchasing;
- Responsible tourism policies;
- Monitoring impacts; and
- Tourism demand.

4.1 Impacts on local communities

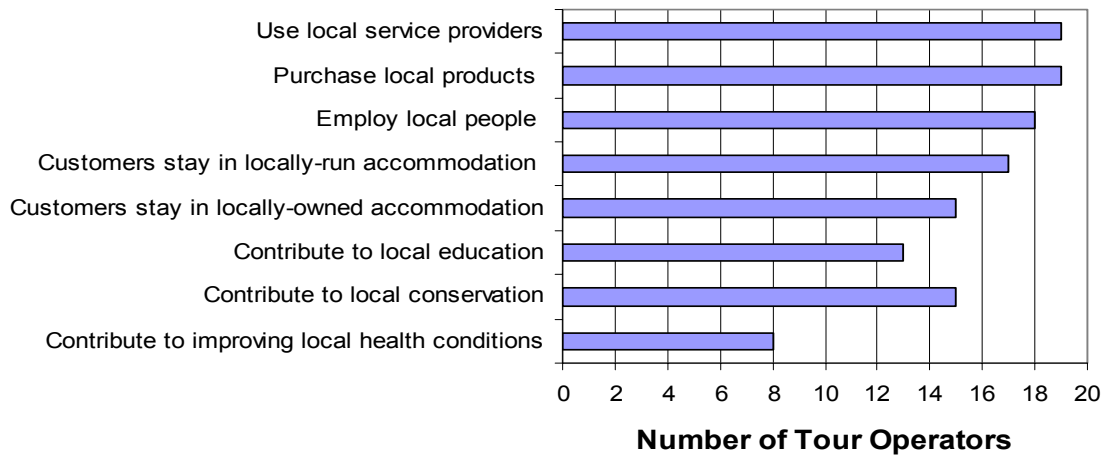
For the purposes of this survey, local communities were considered to be the settlements that are closest to the locations where they operated. When asked in general about their impacts on local communities (Question 1), operators reported a wide range of examples. Most frequently, their actions involved organizing visits to local projects or attractions, where they could buy local goods, providing training, and using local guides (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: How tour operators impact on local communities



Many tour operators reported that they also used local services and products and employed local people (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: How tour operators impact on local communities



One operator stated that they were, “... working together with different local Black Economic Empowerment operators and community projects. We send clients and visitors to unique locations with specialized local operators. In this way we increase money flow & development of tourism in rural, deprived areas and to the communities directly. Where possible we use sustainable and responsible tourism destinations (Fairtrade certified accommodations & excursions and Fairtrade certified farms to visit and NACOBTA [Namibian Community Based Tourism Association] excursions, projects and accommodations) and support projects in their needs – coordinate volunteering work if needed or we link the projects with financial & training / technical support if required.”

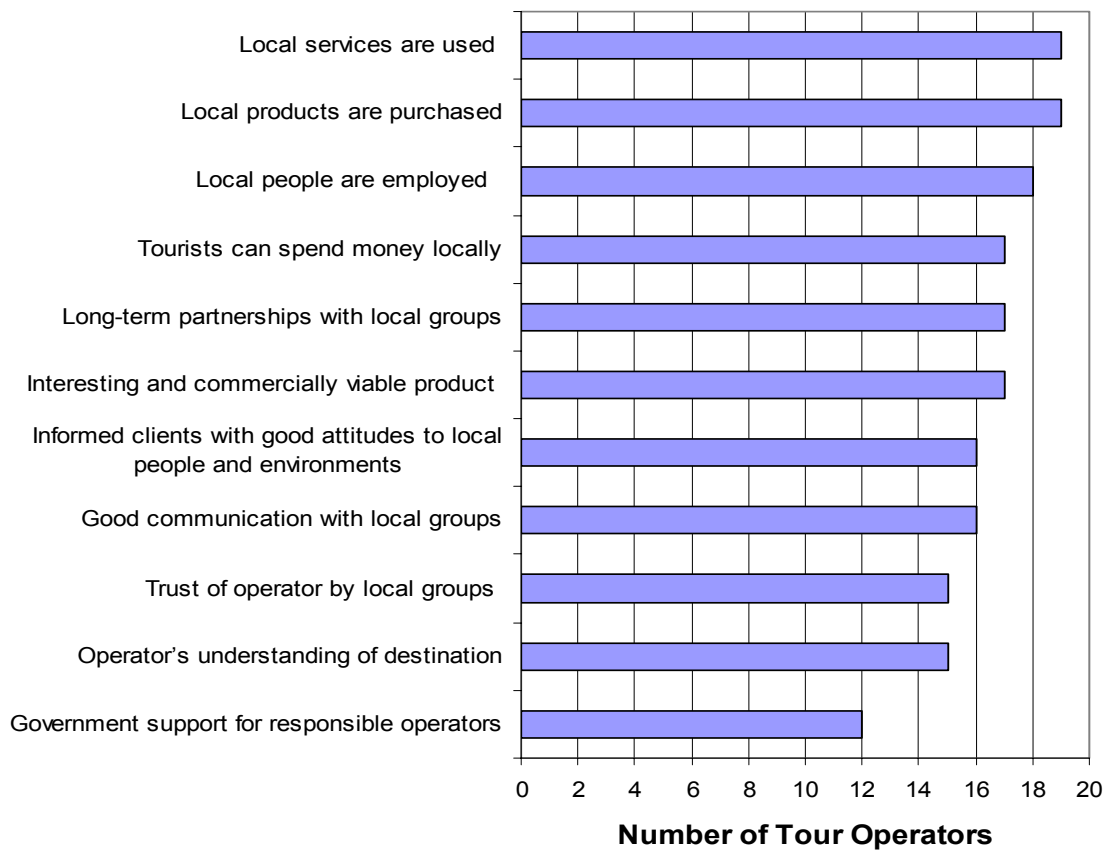
Another reported, “We not only monitor environmental sustainability of [our] partner companies, but also aim to include various socially responsible products into the tour packages where possible.”

One operator said, “I have developed a tour that takes tourist into our local communities and to people I have developed economically in their own small tourism business. I therefore do the marketing for them and bring the bulk of their business to them where they own 100% of their business and retain 100% of the income from the tourism. They also do not pay for the marketing”

Regarding the scope of benefits, an operator said, “Tourists stay in the local accommodation, buy artifacts, visit local community projects and pay entrances to sightseeing areas that filter down to the local communities. Our tours run countrywide therefore the benefits are national.”

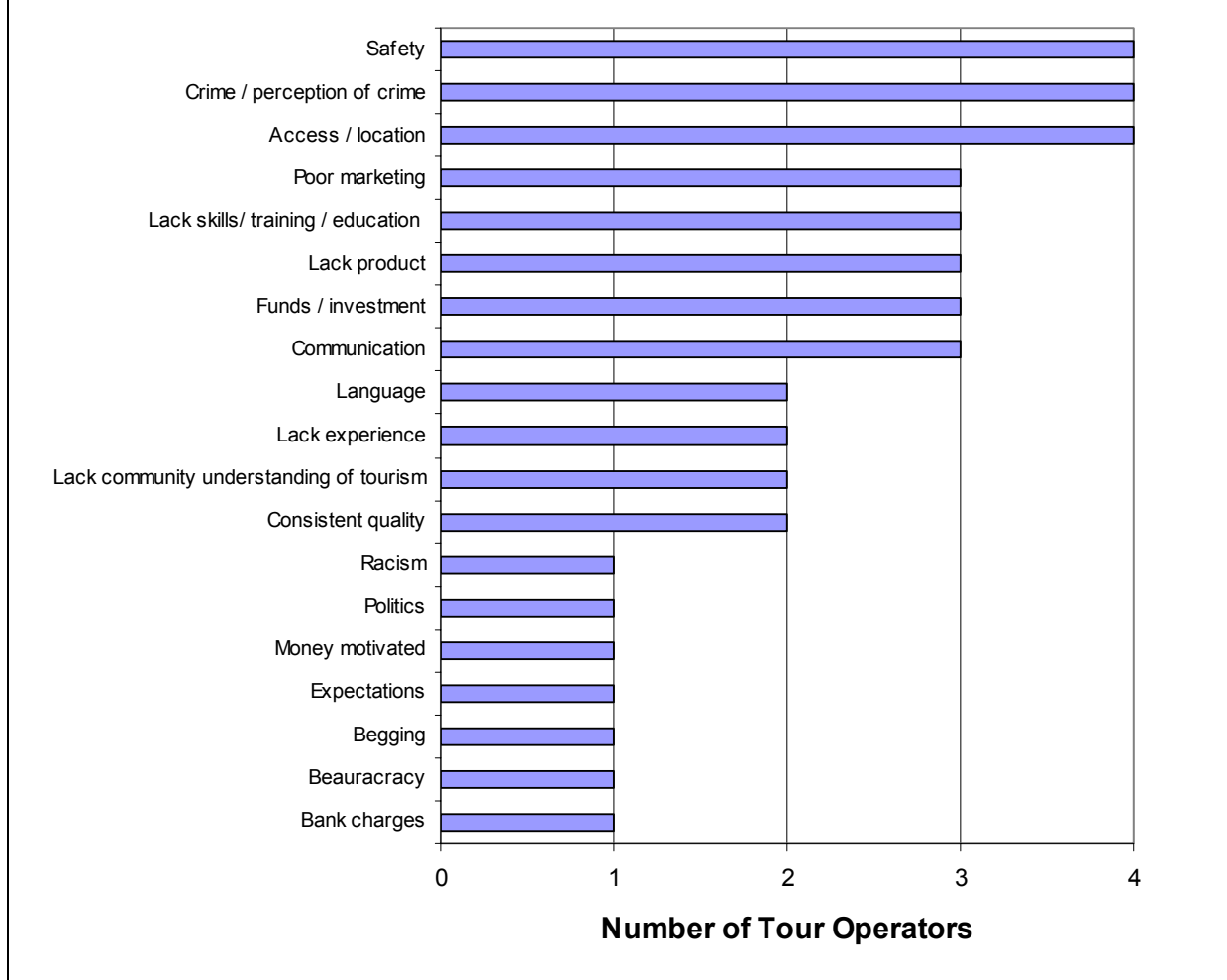
16 operators reported that some of their tour price remained in the local area. Of these the maximum was 100%, the minimum was 2%, and the average was 55.4% (Question 2). A range of factors were considered necessary for local people to benefit from tour operators (Question 3). These again included the use of local services, purchasing local products and services, providing opportunities for tourists to spend money locally and creating partnerships with local groups (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Factors necessary for local people to benefit from tour operators



A wide range of barriers faced by tour operators bringing benefits to local people were reported (Question 4). The most frequently reported problems were safety, crime (and the perception of crime), accessibility and location, and poor marketing (see Figure 4).

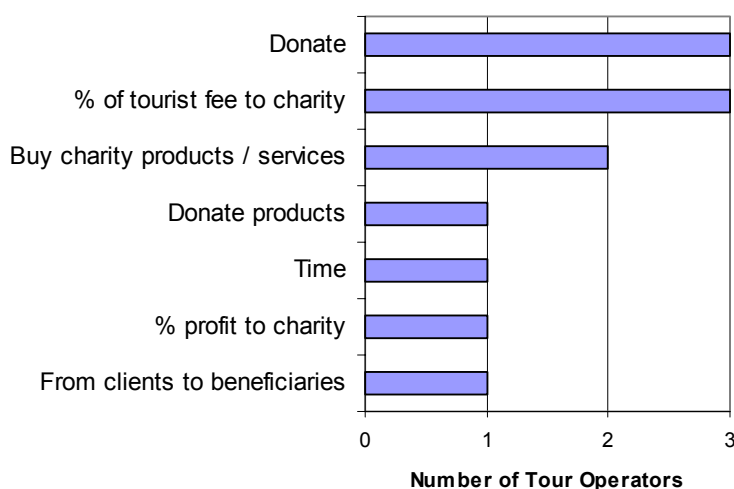
Figure 4: Barriers to tour operators bringing benefits to local people



4.2 Donations to charity

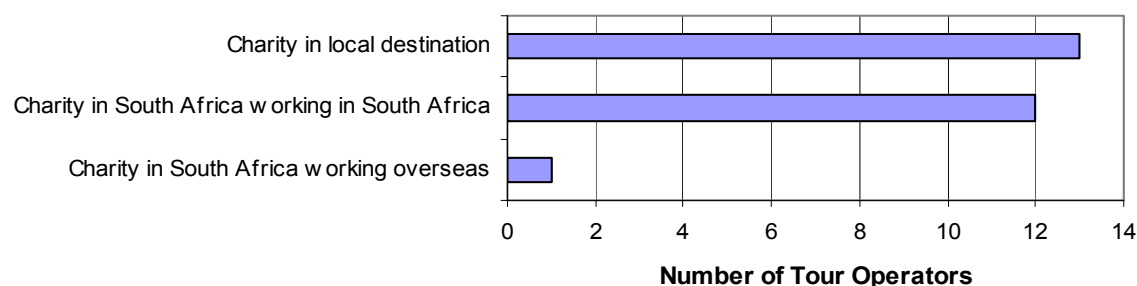
Sixteen enterprises indicated that they donated money to charity (80%), while 4 did not (20%) (Question 5). Activities included distributing a percentage of the tour cost to a charity, and buying services or products from charities (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: The way that tour operators donated to charity



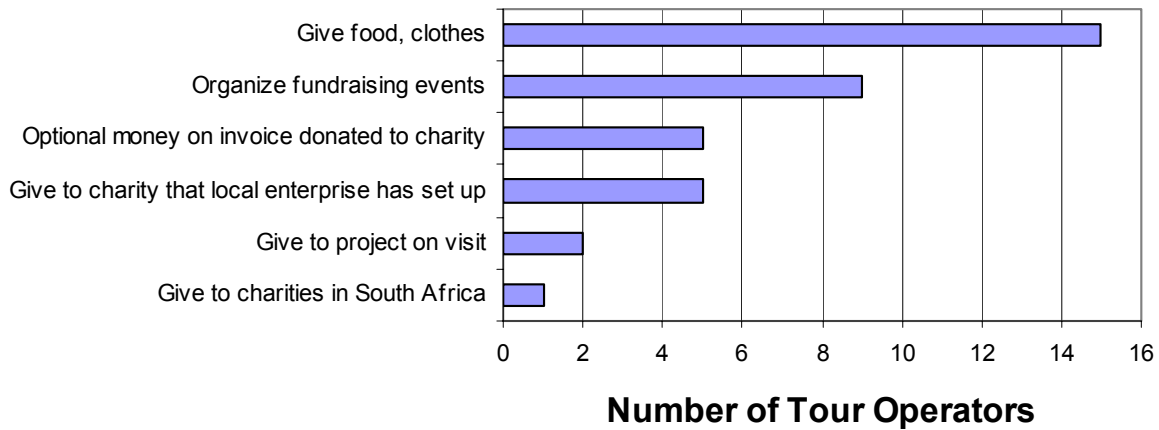
Seventeen enterprises said that clients were not charged additional fees that were used towards donations (85%) while two enterprises did (10%) (Question 6). The type of charities they donated money to (Question 7) included those in local destinations, charities located in South Africa (and working in South Africa), and South African charities working overseas (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Type of charities tour operators donate to



Eight operators reported that a proportion of their post-tax profits were donated to charity. There was a maximum of 19% reported, and an average of 3.4% (Question 8). Also, sixteen operators stated that they encouraged their clients to give to charity (89% of respondents), while two did not (11%) (Question 9). Many operators donated clothes or organized fundraising events (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: How tour operators donate to charity

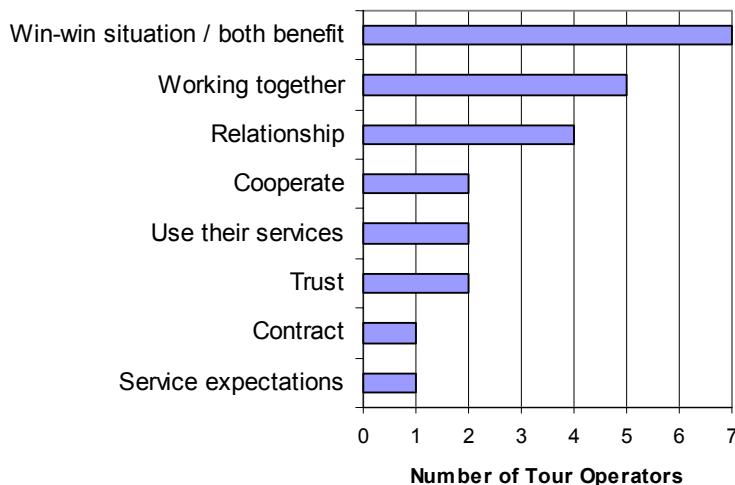


Some also provided in kind contributions such as assisting in local schools or facilitating volunteers on local projects. One operator noted *“We have two successful volunteer work programmes where participants raise a set amount of funds per person which is used to buy materials to do the work.”* However, said that they did not like to use a donation approach, and stated, *“By staying overnight at local community home stays, by visiting uplifting local tourism destinations, people do positive “trade” instead of “aid” or charity. They start up a commercial activity increasing economic growth”*

4.3 Partnerships

Fourteen operators used the word ‘partnership’ to describe the relationship with some of their suppliers (73.7%), while five did not (26.3%). Their definitions of partnership (Question 11) most frequently included win-win situations where both parties would benefit, and the characteristic of working together (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: What operators meant by partnership

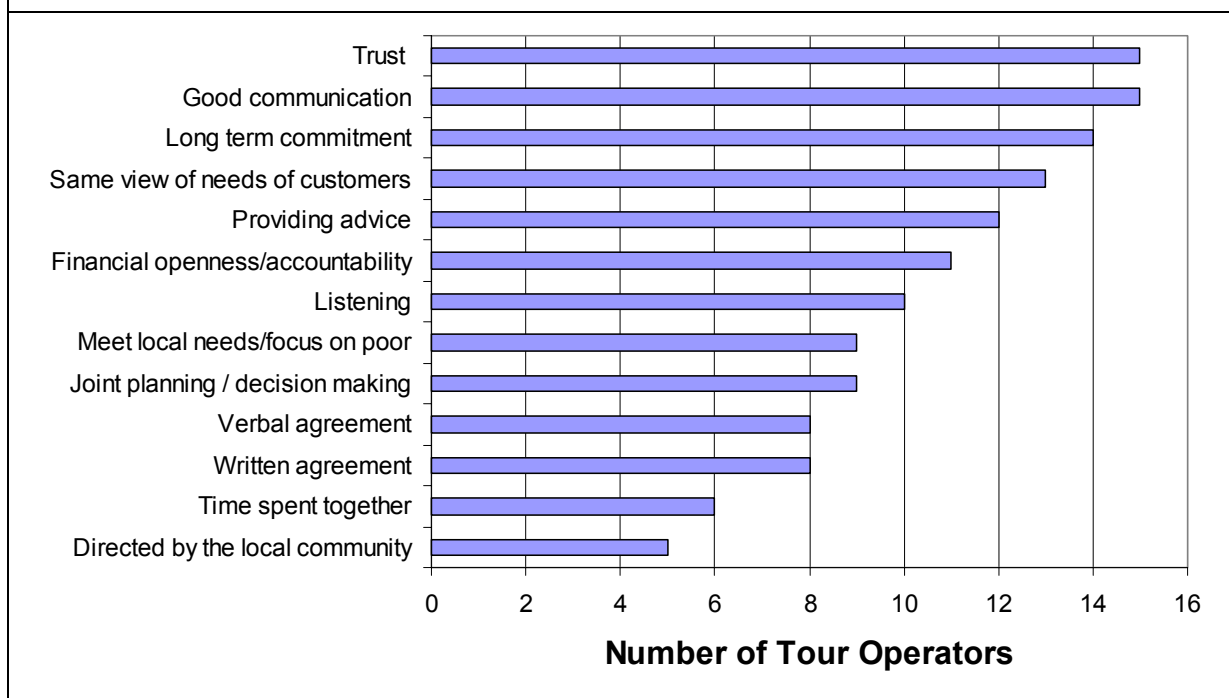


One operator stated, “The effectiveness and reliability of suppliers have a direct bearing on customer satisfaction and future business – my suppliers are therefore an extension of my business or business partners”.

Another noted, “We cooperate with local (tour) operators, specialists in their field, where possible fairtrade in tourism accredited and/or following responsible tourism guidelines. We cooperate with “wheels” companies, guides, accommodations. These cooperations are partnerships as we build a future together. We also help them in doing bookings and guide the local operators to grow in a sustainable manner.”¹

The characteristics of their partnerships often involved trust, good communication, a long term commitment, similar views of consumer needs, providing advice and accountability (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Characteristics of partnerships

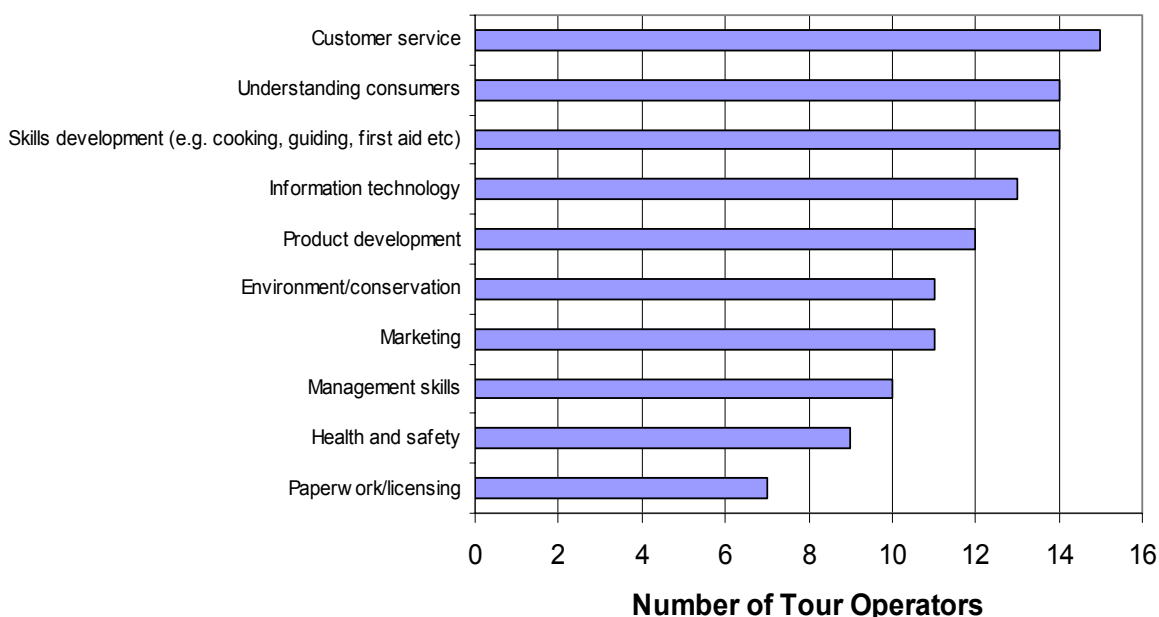


4.4 Training

Types of training operators provided for their staff and others (Question 12) included customer service, understanding consumers, skills development, information technology and product development (see Figure 10).

¹ For more information on Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa see www.fairtourismsa.org.za

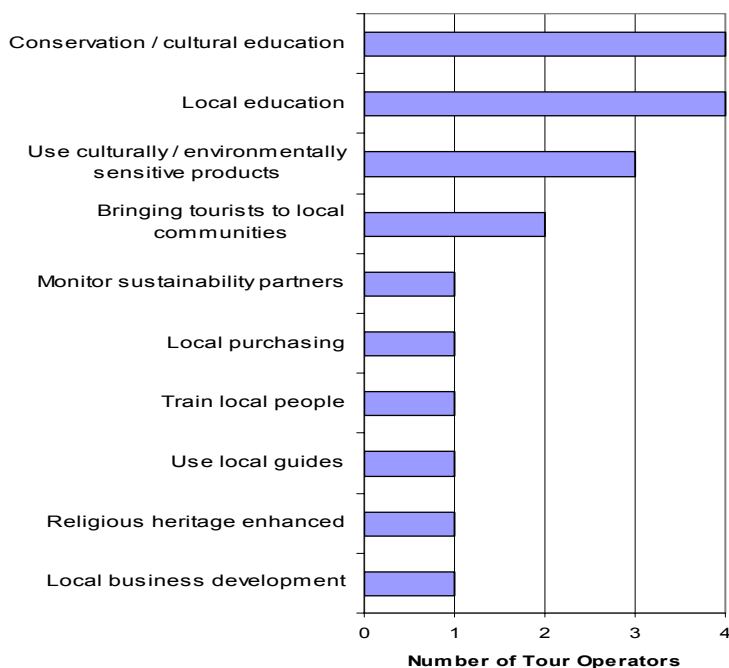
Figure 10: Training provided to staff and others



4.5 Impacts on the local natural and cultural environment

Operators had a series of examples of where their company has had a positive impact on the local natural and cultural environment (Question 13). These included education (particularly cultural or conservation education), using environmentally sensitive products, and monitoring the sustainability of their partners (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Examples of positive impacts on the local natural and cultural environment



Some comments from operators included:

“By bringing people to the area’s where there is very little set up. The communities have seen the potential and with our help have set up sustainable operations and with our ongoing support have managed to develop economically viable operations.”

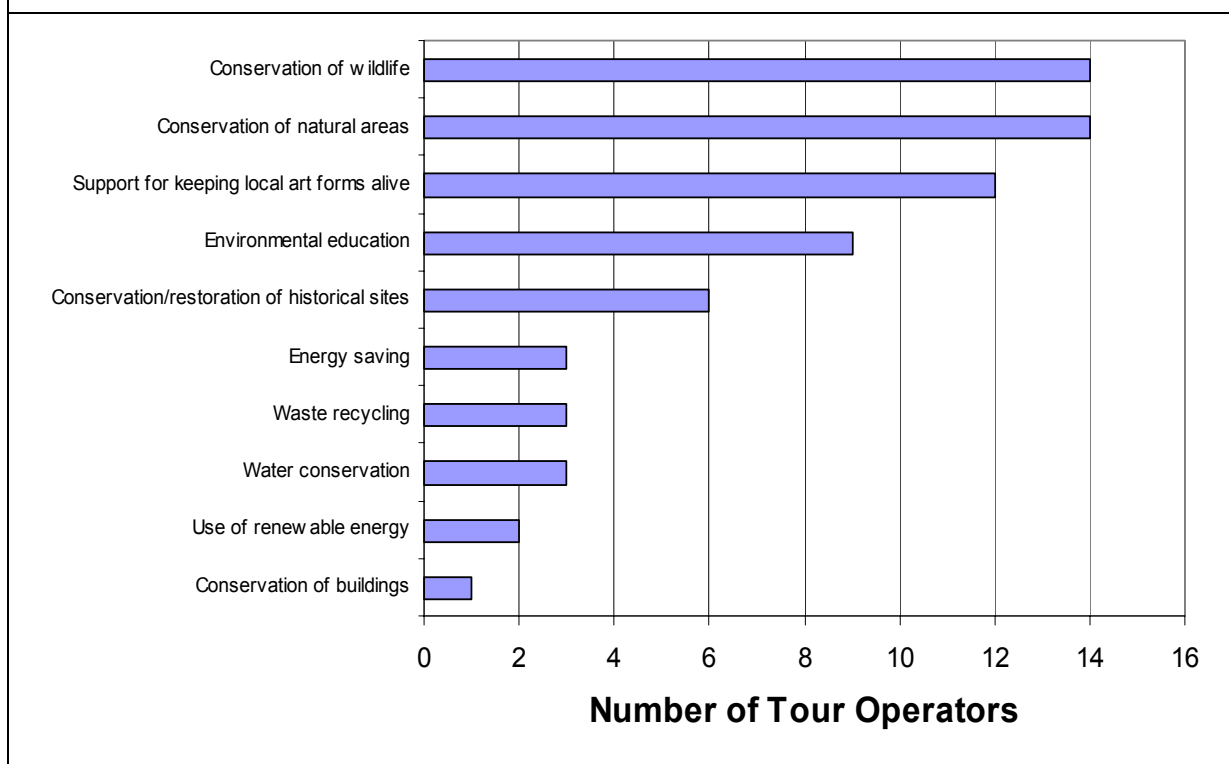
“We have helped build schools & churches, painting, maintenance, skills, supplies, AIDS, etc. We work through local organisations or missionaries so that there is follow up and support.”

“We always encourage our clients to buy local goods in order help in fighting unemployment and poverty.”

“We monitor environmental sustainability of our partner companies and aim to include these into the tour packages where possible.”

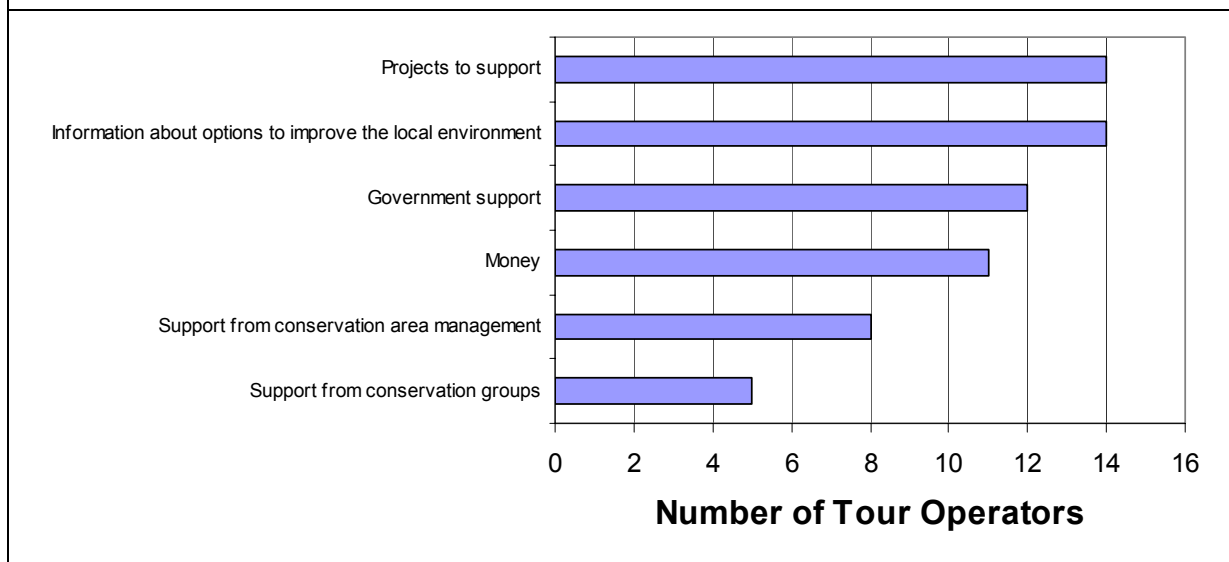
When asked specifically about the type of impacts they had on the environment, many said they conserved wildlife and natural areas, supported local art, and helped to conserve or restore historical sites (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Positive impacts on the local natural and cultural environment



A number of factors were cited as necessary for the local natural and cultural environment to benefit from tour operators (Question 14). They needed projects to assist, information about options to improve the local environment, government support, and money (see Figure 13).

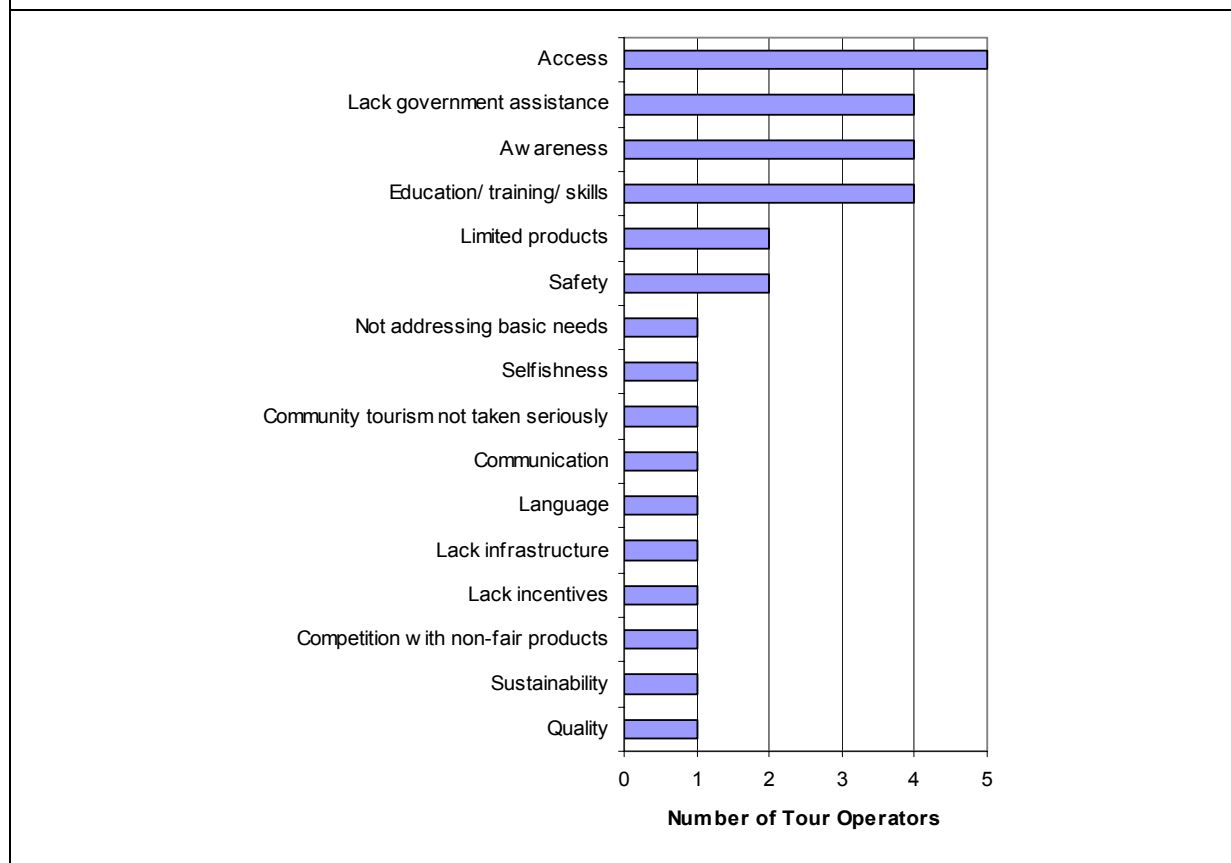
Figure 13: Factors necessary for the local natural and cultural environment to benefit from tour operators



When asked what barriers they faced to benefiting the local and cultural environment (Question 15), one operator observed that it was, *“Difficult to explain to clients (travel agents and customers) to choose “fair” holidays if price competition is harsh on accommodation & excursions which are nature & cultural unfriendly – in many cases there is no measure to stimulate the growth of sustainable tourism and growth in tourism is the only goal. This makes implementation of sustainable measures difficult (for example – lead free gasoline only introduced in South Africa in 2006, public transport still not widely available) and costly and choice limited.”*

Other problems included access, lack of government assistance, awareness, and education, training and skills (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Barriers to benefiting the local and cultural environment



Two operators had already replicated their models of benefiting natural and cultural resources elsewhere. However, one operator was sceptical of superimposing successful models from one location to another (Question 16). Some had a more general approach, and one operator noted, “*Our practices are not a company policy in particular; they are more a way of doing business for us and thus could be implemented by anyone.*”

4.6 Purchasing

Nine of the operators said that they selected their suppliers (accommodation, catering, etc.) based on their social and environmental policies and practices (45%) while the remainder did not (11 enterprises: 55%) (Question 18). Two operators indicated that they monitored companies’ sustainability, and two others said they applied these policies where possible. However, other companies stated that it depended on their clients’ needs (2 enterprises) and that such products had never been offered (2 operators).

Operators were asked what kind of characteristics their suppliers had, (Question 19), and a high proportion were reported to be environmentally friendly (average of 82.3%), locally based (78.1%) and socially responsible (75%). Nine operators commented on the use of Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) products who on average used 25% FTTSA products on their tours (see Table 2).

Table 2: Proportion of responsible suppliers used by tour operators				
Type of supplier	Average (%)	Min (%)	Max (%)	No. responses
Environmentally friendly	82.3	30	100	11
Locally based	78.1	10	100	16
Socially responsible	75.0	0	100	10
Star-graded	69.6	0	100	14
Approved by an environmental body	41.0	0	90	10
Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) companies	35.1	0	65	14
Approved by Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa	25.2	0	100	9
Have their procurement rated by a BEE rating agency	15.8	0	40	6

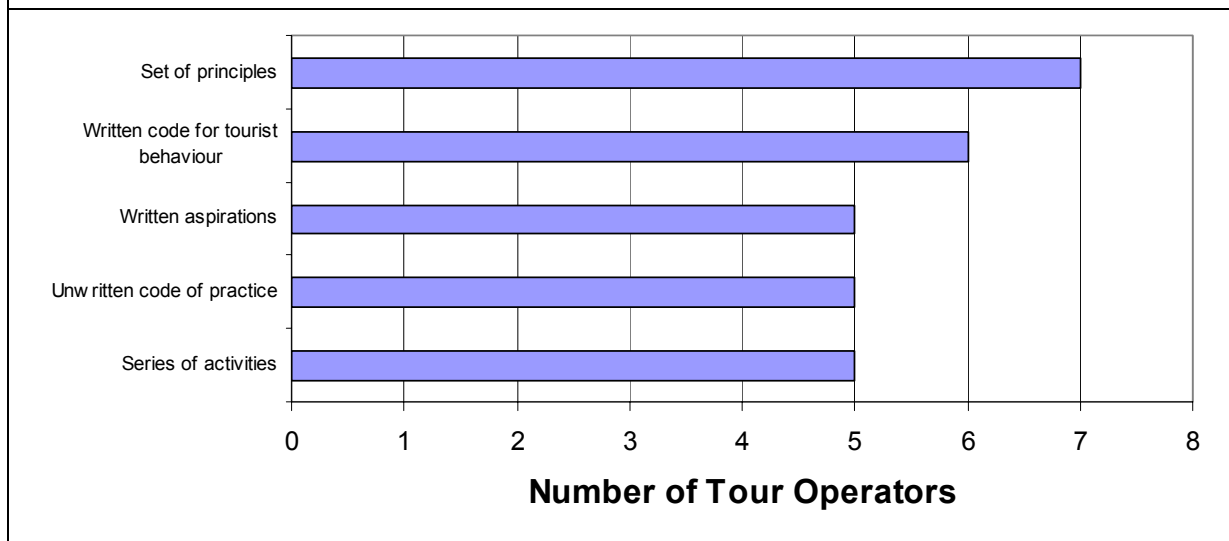
One operator commented “...where possible and applicable we use accommodations & excursions accredited by Fairtrade in Tourism and or NACOBTA [Namibia Community Based Tourism Association]. If these are not available we ask for responsible tourism guidelines implemented & we promote sustainable tourism.”

Only two of the twenty operators had entered an award for responsible tourism practice (10%) (Question 20), despite the annual Imvelo Awards hosted by the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (FEDHASA).

4.7 Responsible tourism policies

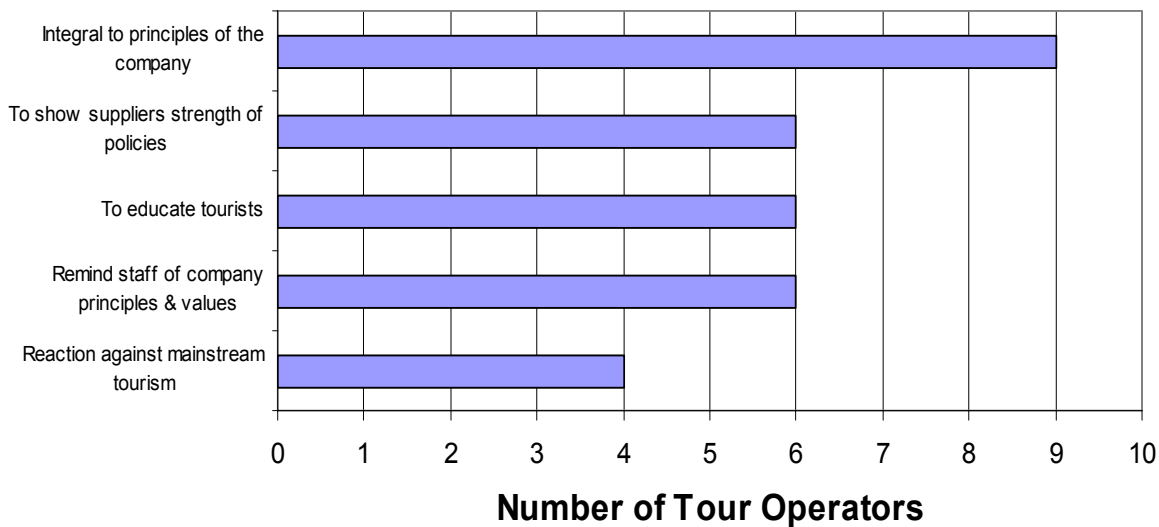
Nine of the eighteen operators responding to the issue of responsible tourism policies said that they had one (50%) (Question 21). The policy was generally in the form of a set of principles, a written code of conduct for tourists, or a written set of aspirations, or an unwritten code of practice (Question 22: see Figure 15). One operator stated that they had a written code for tourist behavior in cooperation with the travel agent, and also a memorandum of understanding with FTTSA to support their projects, and make their excursions of as high quality as possible.

Figure 15: Form of responsible tourism policy



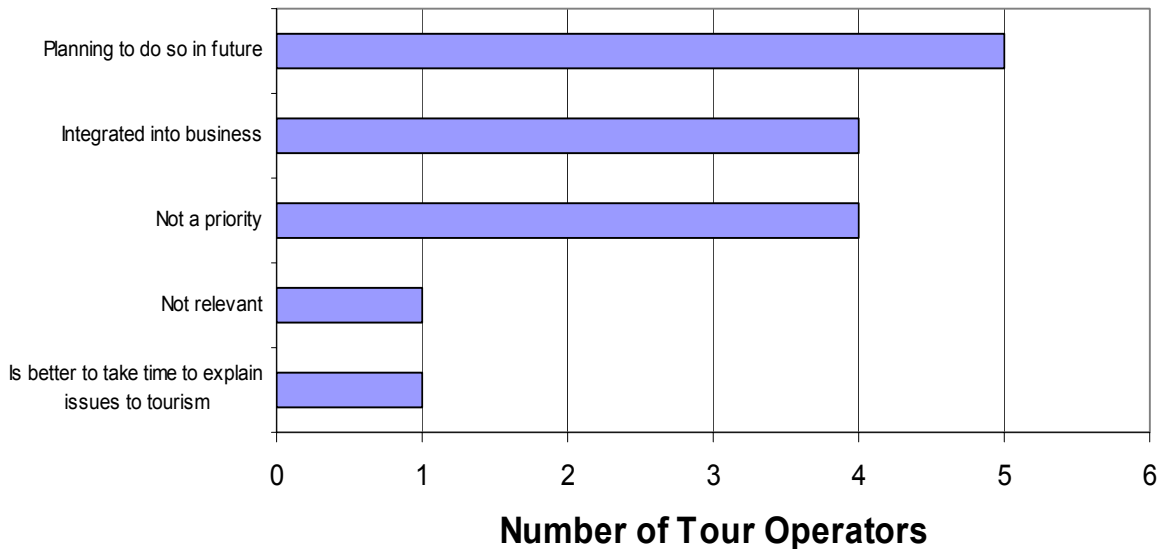
Reasons for producing a policy (Question 23) included that it was integral to their company principles, to show their suppliers the strength of their policies, and to educate staff and tourists (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Reason for producing a policy



Most of those who did not have a policy at the time, intended to develop one in the future, and many said that it was integrated into their business (Question 24). One operator, however, thought that it was “90% a load of nonsense” (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Reasons for not producing a policy



Of the 11 operators who did not have a policy already, 5 operators indicated they planned to produce a policy in the future (45%) and 6 did not (55%) (Question 25).

4.8 Monitoring impacts

Six companies reported monitoring their impacts on local areas (30%), while the remaining fourteen companies did not (70%) (Question 26). One operator stated, “We get feedback from our crew on

the state of each venue and the surrounding environs we use and based on this information we make our decisions on future support, constructive information on improvements.”

Eight companies stated that they reported the impacts they monitored to stakeholders and their clients (42%) while eleven did not (58%) (Question 27). Operators used a mixture of newsletters and meetings to distribute this information.

4.9 Tourist demand

5 enterprises noted that their clients asked about their Corporate Social Responsibility practices (25%) but a majority of 15 operators stated that they did not (75%) (Question 28). Only 3 operators indicated that clients chose them over other operators because of their CSR practices (16%) while 16 operators said that it did not make a difference (84%) (Question 29). One operator stated that mostly their customers were interested in the itinerary and price.

4.10 Other comments

Other comments included the positive:

“This interesting issue is not one that comes up with tour operators that sell Southern Africa from the rest of the world at all! But an interesting concept – we would certainly like to have some guidelines in order to formulate our policy.”

The sceptical:

“Most tourists could not care less about responsible tourism practices – they are on holiday and want a safe, enjoyable, value for money experience. I believe responsible tourism starts with ethical business practice IRO both suppliers and clients

Quite frankly, I think that this whole ‘responsible tourism’ thing is a load of rubbish which distracts the operator from his most important objectives – making a reasonable living while providing a good value for money product to his clients. If the local communities can provide attractions that interest certain travelling parties then I am quite happy to support them. But if they are not self sustaining, then making donations from time to time is not helping them in the long term. It is just creating a society that is dependent on charity for survival. And that is not a responsible way of running a business or governing a nation.”

The frustrated:

*“What can we do to get government to seriously spend **time** and the **budgeted money** on the Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs) in the **rural areas**. They do not even reply when we apply for funding. The people responsible for funds are not available on their phones and do not return calls. The processes and procedures are so confusing that I cannot get it done within a year – how do you expect HDI’s to do it in 10?”*

And the practical:

“Its not easy for the smaller operators, with limited budgets etc to incorporate all above. It would also be good form Gov side to include the smaller persons in their proposals, and not lonely speak to the big fish. I believe I am responsible to ensure quality services and experiences to clients when visiting South Africa, which is a responsible tourism on its own, to ensure good feedback on the

country as a whole. It need not only be where and whom you visit, but rather the whole experience.”

“In a small company like ours responsible tourism is a progressive development, one cannot hope to set out to achieve everything that one would like to from day one. Having a plan for responsible tourism development is as important as a responsible tourism policy. Growing people and making a difference is where the real profit is not what the books say. the practice of responsible tourism must be primarily be for personal reasons -a lifestyle choice -and therefore the public relations and auditing aspects should not consume energy and resources that could be used on doing the job-holidays that make a difference. It is not how much you give but what is left after you have given that is important.”

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Responsible tourism among South African tour operators

Nearly all of the tour operators reported delivering positive interventions in local communities. These included economic benefits such as employment, use of local services and products, and also providing benefits to local education, health and conservation initiatives. However, barriers included safety and crime concerns, access and problems relating to capacity – such as skills, language, lack of experience and understanding, lack of product, and inconsistent quality.

Responses by tour operators to the issue of providing donations to charity was interesting because although many were philanthropic (providing a proportion of tour fees, materials, supplying volunteers or organising events), a couple indicated that they would rather assist people through ‘trade’ rather than ‘aid’. This route provides more sustainable and market-related benefits.

Partnerships were clearly important to nearly all of the operators, and were characterised by win-win situations where parties would work and cooperate together. These relationships required trust, good communication, commitment, and holding similar views of consumer needs.

Three-quarters of the operators indicated that they contributed positively towards the local natural and cultural environment by conserving wildlife and natural areas, providing education (on cultural and environmental issues), supporting local art forms, using environmentally sensitive products and monitoring the impacts of their partners. Only a few were using energy saving, recycling or water conservation interventions though. They indicated that they needed projects to support and more information about options to improve the environment, and barriers included access, lack of government assistance, skills and training, and low levels of awareness.

About half of the operators purchased products and services based on social and environmental factors, and some even monitored their suppliers’ sustainability. Some were even using tourism products certified by Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa and community-based tourism enterprises.

Responsible tourism policies were held by about half of the operators, who would have a set of principles, a written code for tourist behaviour or a set of aspirations. Many indicated that the policy was integral to their company policy, and several had a policy in order to show their tourists and suppliers that they were serious about responsible tourism. Of those who did not have a policy, about half intended to develop one in the future, while a similar proportion stated it was not a priority.

About a quarter of the operators were monitoring their impacts in areas where they operated, but about half said that they kept stakeholders and their clients informed of what they were doing in destinations.

Clearly the operators were not yet experiencing significant demand from tourists for responsible products. Only a quarter indicated that their clients requested information about their Corporate Social Responsibility practices, and only three operators said that this gave them market advantage over other companies. It will be very interesting to see if this proportion grows in the future.

5.2 Limitations of the survey

The major limitation of the survey was the level of response from operators. This was particularly surprising given that over seventy representatives of local tour operator companies had acknowledged their interest and had agreed, in face-to-face meetings, to participate.

Whether this is a result of companies simply being agreeable during an Indaba event, or a reflection of the issues they were asked to respond to on the questionnaire, is not known. However, it is hoped that the results of this survey will encourage improved responses in the future.

5.3 Implications for responsible tourism in South Africa

Despite only half of the operators having read the South African responsible tourism guidelines, the majority were implementing one or more of the responsible tourism guidelines. Most frequently, they were providing local economic benefits through employment and the use of local products and services. However, there were clearly constraints to providing local benefits, not least safety concerns, and levels of education and training.

If South Africa is serious about implementing its policy on responsible tourism, then there is clearly a great deal of work to be done in the tour operator sector. The operators who responded here are likely to be some of the more responsible in the sector (hence their effort to participate). In addition, more needs to be done to educate the tourist about responsible tourism, in order to grow the market for more ethical products. A major survey of tourists in South Africa would provide information on the level of awareness and understanding, and demand for responsible holidays.

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7. APPENDIX 1: TOUR OPERATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

International Centre for
Responsible Tourism –
South Africa

2006 South African Tour Operator Survey on Responsible Tourism

The International Centre for Responsible Tourism – South Africa (ICRT-SA) is a not-for-profit organisation with the mission of contributing to economic development, social justice and environmental integrity through the development and promotion of Responsible Tourism.

This is an opportunity for you to participate in, and benefit from, cutting edge market research of the southern African tourism sector. **This is research that could have important implications for the way that you do business, and your understanding of an increasingly sophisticated market.**

To date there has been no comprehensive survey on responsible tourism practices by tour operators in South Africa. The ICRT-SA proposes to remedy this gap and to provide the operators who participate with the benefits of the results. The survey is based on a previous study by Tearfund in the UK² and considers:

- demand from tourists for responsible tourism;
- benefits that are currently reaching local communities from tourism operations;
- impact of tourism on conservation;
- awareness of responsible tourism within the tourism sector;
- responsible tourism activities practiced by the tourism enterprises;
- level of corporate social responsibility practiced by tourism operators; and
- monitoring and reporting of impacts.

The questionnaire should take about 20 minutes to complete.

All participants will receive copies of the results of the survey, which will also be available free of charge to participating operators on www.icrtourismsa.org

Please return your questionnaire to icrtsa.survey@gmail.com by 25 October 2006

Name of your company:		Postal address:	
Your name:		Phone:	
Job description:		Fax:	
Email:		Website:	
Size of your company (please indicate which)	Large >100,000 tourists per year	Medium 5,000-100,000 tourists per year	Small <5,000 tourists per year

² <http://www.tearfund.org/Campaigning/Policy+and+research/Tourism+policy+and+research.htm>

Q1 – Do you have any examples of where your company has had a positive impact on local communities? (Please describe, or attach information)

Note: *Local communities are the settlements that are closest to the locations where you operate.*

Please tick the boxes below to indicate which local impacts your company has:

Employ local people	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contribute to local education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Purchase local products	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contribute to local conservation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customers stay in locally-run accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contribute to improving local health conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use local service providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Customers stay in locally-owned accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other . . . (please specify):

Q2 – What percentage of the tour price paid by your clients remains in the local areas they visit?

Percentage (%)

Q3 – What factors are necessary for local people to benefit from tour operators visiting their areas? (please tick boxes)

Local services are used	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trust of operator by local groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local products are purchased	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-term partnerships with local groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local people are employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Operator's understanding of destination	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tourists can spend money locally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Informed clients with good attitudes to local people and environments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government support for responsible operators	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting and commercially viable product	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good communication with local groups	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

Other . . . (please specify):

Q4 – What are the barriers to tour operators bringing benefits to local people? (Please describe)

Q5 – Does your company donate money to charity? (Please describe how)

Yes

☐

No

☐

Q6 – Are clients charged an additional fee, that they are aware of, in order to generate money for donations?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Q7 – To what type of charities have you donated money?

Charity in South Africa working in South Africa

☐

Charity in local destination

☐

Charity in South Africa working overseas

☐☐

Other . . .(please specify):

Q8 - What percentage of post-tax profits did your company donate during the previous financial year?Percentage
%**Q9 – Do you encourage your clients to give to charity?**

If yes, please indicate how by ticking boxes below

Yes

☐

No

☐

Give to project on visit

☐

Organize fundraising events

☐

Give food, clothes

☐

Give to charities in South Africa

☐

Give to charity that local enterprise has set up

☐

Optional money on invoice donated to charity

☐In-kind contributions
(please specify):

Other . . .(please specify):

Q10 – Would you use the word ‘partnership’ to describe the relationship with any of your suppliers?

Yes

☐

No

☐**Q11 – What do you mean by partnership?****Please tick characteristics of your partnerships** (tick as many as are appropriate):

Long term commitment

☐

Financial openness/accountability

☐

Good communication

☐

Meet local needs/focus on poor

☐

Trust

☐

Providing advice

☐

Time spent together

☐

Directed by the local community

☐

Listening

☐

Written agreement

☐

Joint planning / decision making

☐

Verbal agreement

☐

Same view of needs of customers

☐☐

Other . . .(please specify):

Q12 – What type of training do you provide for your staff and others? (tick all appropriate):

Skills development (e.g. cooking, guiding, first aid etc)

☐

Health and safety

☐

Understanding consumers

☐

Paperwork/licensing

☐

Customer service

☐

Marketing

☐

Product development

☐

Environment/conservation

☐

Management skills

☐

Information technology

☐

Other . . .(please specify):

Q13 – Do you have any examples of where your company has had a positive impact on the local natural and cultural environment? (Please describe, or attach information)

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Please tick the types of impact that your company has:

Conservation of natural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Energy saving	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conservation of wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use of renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water conservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waste recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conservation of buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conservation/restoration of historical sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support for keeping local art forms alive	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other . . . (please specify):

Q14 – What factors are necessary for the local natural and cultural environment to benefit from your business?

(please tick as many as are appropriate):

Information about options to improve the local environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support from conservation area management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Projects to support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support from conservation groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	Money	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other . . . (please specify):

Q15 – What are the barriers you face to benefiting the local and cultural environment?
(Please describe)

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Q16 – Would it be possible to do something similar elsewhere?
(e.g. could your responsible practices be repeated in other settings?)
Please describe

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Q17 – Have you read the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's Responsible Tourism Guidelines?
(available at www.environment.gov.za)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Q18 – Do you select your suppliers (accommodation, catering, etc.) based on their social and environmental policies and practices?
Please explain

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Q19 – What percentage of your suppliers are

	%			%
Star-graded	<input type="text"/>	Approved by Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa	<input type="text"/>	
Approved by an environmental body	<input type="text"/>	Environmentally friendly	<input type="text"/>	
Locally based	<input type="text"/>	Socially responsible	<input type="text"/>	
Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) companies	<input type="text"/>	Have their procurement rated by a BEE rating agency	<input type="text"/>	

Q20 – Have you entered a local or international industry award for responsible tourism practice?

(Please describe)

Yes

No

Q21 – Do you have a responsible tourism policy?

(if No, please proceed to Q24)

Yes

No

Q22 – If yes, what form does this policy take? (tick as many as are appropriate):

Set of principles

Written aspirations

Series of activities

Written code for tourist behaviour

Unwritten code of practice

Other . . . (please specify):

Q23 – If yes, why did you produce your policy? (tick as many as are appropriate):

Integral to principles of the company

Pressure from NGOs

To educate tourists

Pressure from tourists

Reaction against mainstream tourism

Remind staff of company principles & values

To show suppliers strength of policies

Other . . . (please specify):

Q24 – If no, why have you not produced a policy? (tick as many as are appropriate):

Not a priority

Not relevant

Planning to do so in future

Integrated into business

Is better to take time to explain issues to tourism

Other . . . (please specify):

Q25 – Do you plan to produce a policy in the future?

Yes

No

Q26 – Do you monitor and record the impacts of your company on local areas visited?

Please describe what you monitor

Yes

☐

No

☐

Q27 – Do you report your local impacts to stakeholders and clients?

(Please describe)

Yes

☐

No

☐

Q28 – Do potential clients enquiring about your products ask about your company's Corporate Social Responsibility practices?

(If yes, please explain)

Yes

☐

No

☐

Q29 – Do clients indicate that they chose your company over other similar operators because of your Corporate Social Responsibility practices?

(If yes, please explain)

Yes

☐

No

☐

Q30 – Please add any other comments you would like to make about responsible tourism practices in your business

Thank you very much for participating in this survey, and we look forward to sending you the results.

Please email your completed questionnaire to icrtsa.survey@gmail.com by 25 October 2006

8. APPENDIX 2: TOUR OPERATORS PARTICIPATING

Tour Operator	Website
Abang Africa Travel	www.abangafrica.com
African Encounter Safari Operator	www.africanencounter.org
African Insight™	www.africaninsight.co.za
Allround Tours	www.allroundtours.co.za
All-Ways-Africa Tours	www.awa.co.za
Ambula Golf & Safari Tours	www.ambulatours.co.za
ATC African Travel Concept	www.atctravel.co.za
Back Road Safaris	www.backroadsafaris.co.za
Bono Tours and Safaris	www.bonosafaris.com
Golf and Game Safari Company	www.golfandgame.co.za
Jenman African Safaris	www.jenmansafaris.com
Kuoni Private Safaris	www.privatesafaris.com
Macit Tours	www.macit.co.za
McFarlane Safaris	www.mcfarlanesafaris.co.za
Rand Coach Tours and Charters	www.randcoach.co.za
SafariWise	www.safariwise.net
Shongololo Express	www.shognololo.com
Southern Circle Tours and Safaris	www.southerncircle.com
Sunway Safaris	www.sunway-safaris.com
Thompsons Africa	www.thompsonssa.com

9. APPENDIX 3: MORE INFORMATION ON RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

International Centre for Responsible Tourism The International Centre for Responsible Tourism is a post-graduate training and research centre based at the University of Greenwich. The ICRT has a sister organisation in South Africa. “..making better places for people to live in, better places for people to visit.”	www.icrtourism.org www.icrtourismsa.org
DEAT’s South Africa Responsible Tourism Guidelines Guidelines based on the 1996 Tourism White Paper, that promote environmentally, social and economically responsible tourism.	www.environment.gov.za www.icrtourism.org.uk www.anna.spenceley.co.uk
DEAT’s Responsible tourism Manual for South Africa A practical and technical manual which provides tourism enterprises with information about Responsible Tourism and opportunities for improving business performance. A range of practical and cost-effective examples of best practice are provided, that can help to guide users’ implementation of responsible business activities.	www.environment.gov.za www.icrtourism.org.uk www.anna.spenceley.co.uk
Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership A collaborative research initiative between the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).	www.propoortourism.org.uk
Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa A non profit marketing organisation promoting the fair trade in tourism concept and tourism businesses of disadvantaged communities.	www.fairtourismsa.org.za